

Effective Teaching of Grammar-Focused Reading to L2 Students

University of South Carolina

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Opening Discussion

1. Do you ever use class texts (readings) to teach grammar? If so, what has worked for you (or not)?
2. How might grammar-focused reading instruction promote reading/writing development?
3. What concerns do you have about "grammar-focused reading instruction"?

Intensive Reading Framework



Prereading Getting Ready to Read Surveying the Text Making Predictions and Asking Questions Introducing Key Vocabulary
Reading First Reading Rereading the Text Looking Closely at Language Considering the Structure of the Text
Post-reading Activities Summarizing and Responding Thinking Critically Reading/Writing Connections

Hedgcock & Ferris (2009). *Teaching Readers of English*, Fig. 5.1, p.163.

Why Use Reading to Teach Grammar?

- *Authentic*: captures complexity better than isolated/contrived sentences
- *Engaging*: based on content students have already encountered
- *Integrated*: not disconnected from other reading/writing activities

Why Use Reading to Teach Grammar?

- Facilitates further reading comprehension, critical thinking, and writing development
- Promotes L2 acquisition because it teaches students to notice language in context

Principles for Grammar-Based Reading Instruction

1. Activities at this stage should *follow* careful reading and comprehension of content
2. Focus is on *correct, authentic* language usage (not errors as in sample student texts)
3. Not an end in itself (see benefits on previous slides)

Possible Grammar Topics to "Mine" from a Text

- Verb Tense Sequences
- Subject-Verb Agreement
- Article/Determiner Use
- Verb Phrases/Forms
- Phrase/Clause/Sentence Types
- Cohesion within/between sentences
- Punctuation usage

More Advanced Grammar Topics for Academic Reading/Writing

- Passive Voice
- Reporting verbs used to discuss sources (e.g., *argue, assert, suggest, note, claim* but usually not *say, mention*)
- Verb tense conventions across disciplines
- "Hedging" structures (modals, conditionals) and variation across genres

Grammar-Focused Reading & Writing Style

- Variation in sentence length & type
- Variation in cohesion (e.g., repetition vs. synonym vs. pronoun reference)
- Placement of old and new information within and between sentences
- Punctuation choices (e.g., colons, semicolons, dashes, parentheses)

Activity: Examining a Text

Read the article about mandatory attendance policies (handout) and note grammatical structures that could be the basis for a reading-based grammar mini-lesson for an intermediate-to-advanced L2 class. Discuss your findings with others around your table & come up with a group list of three structures you might teach using this text.

Designing a Language Analysis Reading Sequence

- ◆ **Discovery:** Have students examine a text excerpt to see what they already know about the topic.
- ◆ **Instruction:** Review any necessary terms or rules, with clear examples.
- ◆ **Practice:** Have students examine a longer portion of the text to understand the target structure.
- ◆ **Application:** Discuss how understanding of this structure can improve their own writing.

Sample Reading-Based Minilesson: Noun Plurals

1. Discovery (Chuck E. Cheese article, p. 1)
2. Instruction (review of noun types, pp. 1-3)
3. Practice (return to Discovery text, p. 3)
4. Practice (research count/noncount nouns, p. 4)
4. Instruction (problems/issues with noun plurals, pp. 4-6)
5. Application/Reflection (p. 6)

Activity

Consider the mandatory attendance article again. Return to your group's list and choose one of the three structures you identified. Discuss ways you could design a minilesson based on this text to teach or highlight this structure for L2 students in a reading/writing class.

Discussion

- What ideas do you have for teaching a grammar-focused reading lesson with this text?
- What questions or concerns do you have about this approach to reading and grammar instruction?

BREAK

Teaching Reading- Based Academic Writing Skills

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Discussion

- In what ways have you used reading to teach writing?
- What successes have you had?
- What problems have you had?
- What questions do you have?

Principles for Reading-Based Writing Instruction

1. Teach text-based writing early and often.
2. Teach reading/writing skills recursively and build on them within/across courses.
3. Don't underestimate the complexity of the task.
4. Don't assume students are "beyond" needing scaffolding.

Suggestions/Steps for Reading/Writing Connections

1. Pick appropriate texts.
2. Facilitate text comprehension.
3. Teach reading strategies.
4. Scaffold reading/writing connections.
5. Write clear text-based prompts.
6. Teach text-based writing subskills.

Pick Appropriate Texts-- Considerations

- Length
- Content (accessibility, interest)
- Vocabulary (general, academic, topic-specific)
- Syntax (length/difficulty of sentences)
- Text Structure & Style (difficult? interesting?)

Facilitate Text Comprehension

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Teach Reading Strategies*

- Text Previewing (handout, p. 1)
- Active Reading (pp. 1-2)
- Using Graphic Organizers (pp. 2-3)
- Analyzing Unfamiliar Vocabulary (p. 2)
- Thinking Critically (pp. 3-4)

*See "Mandatory Attendance" unit for examples.

Make Reading-Writing Connections

- Help students respond to and analyze what they've read (p. 3).
- Design prewriting tasks that connect reading and writing (p. 4).
- Help students with synthesis (of two or more texts or of text with own experience)
- Give students ideas for outlining/organizing their own texts.

Write Clear Text-Based Prompts

1. Specify *how* the text is to be used.
2. Make the *task* clear.
3. Consider wording (vocabulary) and phrasing of instructions (sentence length).
4. Write "plagiarism-proof" assignments.

Teach Text-Based Writing Subskills

- Summary, Paraphrase, Quotation
- Integrating Sources
- Citation (see next slide)
- Avoiding Plagiarism

Tips for Teaching Citation

- Decide how much is really needed
- Help students:
 - Identify source type
 - Know what to look for (order of information, capitalization, punctuation, etc.)
 - Notice differences across style manuals
 - Know where to look for updated citation styles

Take-Home Points

1. Doing the work of teaching reading makes the work of teaching writing much easier:
 - selecting texts carefully
 - facilitating comprehension
 - modeling vocabulary analysis
 - teaching reading strategies

Take-Home Points

2. Students can do challenging text-based work if the task is broken into manageable steps and subskills:

- Understanding the content/source text(s)
- Responding to and analyzing source text(s)
- Organizing their own texts
- Integrating source material effectively and appropriately

Activity: Reading-Writing Connections

"Spanking on Trial" text and activity handout

Discussion

Consider the six steps for facilitating reading-writing connections that we just examined.

What are:

- Ideas that you have tried and have worked well for you?
- Ideas that you have tried that have not worked well for you (and why you think they didn't)?
- Ideas that you have not tried but might like to?
- Questions you have how to implement any ideas?

Additional Resources

Birch, B. (2007). *English L2 reading: Getting to the bottom* (2nd Ed.). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Ferris, D. (2009). *Teaching college writing to diverse student populations*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Grabe, W. (2009). *Reading in a second language: Moving from theory to practice*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Hedgcock, J., & Ferris, D. (2009). *Teaching readers of English: Students, texts, and contexts*. New York: Routledge.

Seymour, S., & Walsh, L. (2006). *Essentials of teaching academic reading*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.