

SESSION 2 THE NATURE OF LANGUAGE

GROUP REFLECTION ON SESSION 1

Introduction

Sharing our experiences and thoughts within a supportive environment gives us the opportunity to begin to make explicit our beliefs about language and learning. Group Reflection time is therefore an important learning experience and will begin each of our sessions.

Purpose The purpose of this time is:
to share participants' experiences of the Between Session Instructional Strategy they tried and the insights they gained from the Between Session Reading.

Discuss the Between Session Instructional Strategy.
groups 3
Show OH 2:1 Discussion Questions.

OH 2:1 Discussion Questions

What did you do?
How did it work for you?
What would you do again next time?
What would you do differently?
What do you think the students learned from the strategy?

Discuss Between Session Reading.

Show OH 2:2 Discussion Questions

OH 2:2 Discussion Questions

What insights did you gain from the reading?
What ideas did you find that were of particular interest?
What puzzled you?
Discuss any connections you made with what you read and what happened with the Instructional Strategy.

INTRODUCTION TO SESSION 2

5 mins

whole group In the last session we:

¥ explored the learning and the nature of learning

¥ examined our own learning process and the role that language plays in this learning

¥ explored the conditions of learning that Cambourne argues operate in natural learning contexts
¥ examined how we might set up similar learning contexts within the classroom.

The focus of this session is to explore what language is; how it 'works' and the role it plays in learning.

It examines:

¥ the nature of language, that is:

- language is social
- language is functional
- language is meaning-based
- language is a three-level system; there is a semantic system, a syntactic system and a graphophonic system

¥ the relationship between language and learning

¥ the relationship between language and the context in which it is used

¥ the notion of the 'linguistic data pool'

¥ the concept that we learn language, learn through language and learn about language simultaneously as we use language.

To assist us to understand these key points we will be participating in a series of workshops.

WORKSHOP/INPUT 1: LANGUAGE IS SOCIAL AND FUNCTIONAL

45 minutes

5 of 45mins

Introduction There are two main functions for using language. We use language to fulfil our basic needs and we use it to help us make sense of the world around us. We expect to use language in social interactions, in collaboration with others, to fulfill various social purposes, and in turn we continue to learn language through such interactions. Thus as we use language we learn language, we learn through language and we learn that we use it differently in different settings or contexts. The language demands of one context can be quite different from those of another context. This is true also for the different curriculum contexts within the classroom.

Purpose The purposes of this Workshop are:

¥ to consider the language demands made on language users in different settings

¥ to discuss the relationship between purpose, audience and type of language (genre) used in those settings

¥ to examine the relationship between reading, writing, talking and listening.

Procedure Refer participants to page ** in their Notebook.

whole group

NOTE: The settings described in the participants' Notebook are:

¥ buying a new video recorder over the telephone

¥ writing a letter to the Editor about the deteriorating condition of the neighborhood playground

¥ changing a tire on a rental car with which you are unfamiliar, on a back road.

whole group

Explain to participants that they are to place themselves in particular settings as outlined in their Notebooks on page **. In their groups they are to consider the type of language or 'genre' they should use in each of the settings, the purpose that the language serves and the audience for the language. They are to fill out the grid provided in their Notebook.

Demonstrate with the example in the grid on OH 2:3. If you feel the group would feel more comfortable with an airport setting, change the setting accordingly.

Share grid briefly.

I am at a country railway station, 30 miles out of town. I am alone and have never traveled on this particular train before. I need to get to the city as quickly as possible. This is how I might use language in this setting and these are the purposes of and audience for this language. Remember my overall purpose is to catch that train to the city.

Continue by suggesting the 'language acts' that you might do and say.

groups 3
8 of 40mins Ask groups to participate in their tasks. They should try at least two of the settings in their Notebooks to become aware of the different language choices they needed to make for each setting.

Point out that there are no right or wrong answers. The aim of the task is to help them become conscious of why they might choose to use certain language in a particular setting for a particular audience.

Tell participants that they will be expected to share their findings at the end of the Workshop.

Remind groups of the time so they keep moving and attempt at least two of the three settings.

whole group
8 of 32mins Share a few examples from the groups' notes with whole group.

Highlight the following points:

the setting demanded that certain language should be used (reading the telephone book, writing down telephone numbers, quotes, being able to ask the appropriate questions)
the language used depended on the purpose for and audience of this language
they used reading, writing, talking and listening in these settings in ways that each supported the other.

Consider what might have happened if anyone had used an inappropriate option, such as 'Hey you!' instead of 'Excuse me.'

groups 3-4

5 of 26mins List all the things about language they needed to know in order to use language in the different settings. These will include:

¥ the appropriate vocabulary
¥ how to ask the right question
¥ how to order words in order to make sense
¥ how to listen for the main gist of the message
¥ how to read an instruction manual, and so on.

whole group

5 of 21mins Share what they wrote with the whole group.

6 of 16mins Close the Workshop by asking the participants to spend a few minutes considering the question, 'Where and how did you learn this language?' and 'What does this mean for the classroom?'

groups of 3

10 of 10mins Ask participants to refer to page ** in their Notebooks and read to or have them read the short input. Point out that the terms and concepts they will meet in this input will be revisited many times in the next workshop and sessions.

##INPUT BE IN SMALLER FONT AND PUT IN THE NOTEBOOK ALSO

The Nature of Language

For you to operate as successful language users in the different settings, you knew:
the background of the topic (semantic system)
the grammar of the language (syntactic system)
the sound and sound/symbol system of the language (graphophonic system)
what to ask and how to ask it (you knew how to use the appropriate genre)
a range of possible options for using certain language but chose particular ones to fulfill your purposes (linguistic data pool).

Linguistic Data Pool

As proficient language users we were able to choose language from a range of language options which we have learned through various experiences in using language. We each have developed what Carolyn Burke calls a linguistic data pool.

Show OH 2:4 The Linguistic Data Pool

[INSERT LDP - see existing manual and disks]

This pool of linguistic data or language knowledge is added to every time we talk, listen, read or write. We draw on this growing knowledge every time we talk, listen, read, write and so on. The more opportunities we have to use language in a variety of settings for many purposes and audiences, the more language we learn. The more we add to our linguistic pool, the more linguistic options we then have to choose from. Thus when put into a particular setting, like ordering clothing over the telephone, we are able to choose appropriate language to achieve our purpose for using that language. We are able to use a particular genre of language to achieve a particular social function.

Genre

A genre is a particular form of language which has particular features and is used to achieve a particular purpose. Buying something over the telephone involves us using a shopping genre; writing to the editor may require us to write in the genre of complaint.

Show OH 2:5 The Three Cueing Systems of Language.

[INSERT CUEING SYSTEMS - see existing manual and disks]

The Three Cueing Systems of Language

In order to be able to choose the appropriate genre to achieve our purpose in the workshop we needed to have background knowledge of the situation. This is referred to as the semantic system of language. We also needed knowledge of the grammar of the language; the word order of the language. This is known as the syntactic system. And finally we needed to know the sounds to make when we talked, or the symbol system of the written language when we read and wrote. This is referred to as the graphophonic system of the language. To use language we needed knowledge of all three of these systems; we used the knowledge of these three sub-systems of language simultaneously. We constantly use all three simultaneously to compose meaning about what is happening around us.

The next workshop will further highlight the role of purpose and audience in the choice of language we use while also highlighting the notion of the linguistic data pool, in particular the reading-writing connections.

WORKSHOP 2: THE READING-WRITING CONNECTIONS

35 minutes

5 of 35mins

Introduction Language is both a social and functional process. It is more than simply communication. It is a powerful tool for thinking and learning; for coming to know about ourselves and our world. The four language modes of reading, writing, talking and listening are thus also tools for learning and are highly connected. The following workshop highlights this connectedness, particularly the reading-writing connection. It further highlights the role that purpose and audience play in the choice of linguistic options which shape the appropriate genres we use.

Purpose The purposes of this Workshop are to give participants an understanding of:

- ¥ how reading, writing, talking and listening are interrelated
- ¥ how we have a pool of language knowledge in our brain which we draw on when required to use language for a specific purpose and audience
- ¥ how we process language; the linguistic data pool is a visual metaphor which explains how language works
- ¥ how we draw on what we have read when we write
- ¥ how we learn to write from reading

how we read like a writer.

Procedure Tell participants that they are going to participate in a series of activities in order to achieve the above purposes. Refer participants to page ** of their Notebook.

1 of 30min

SUBHEAD Activity 1 We all know the story of Cinderella. If you were to begin writing the story what would be the first two lines you'd write? Have a go at writing the lead, the first few sentences, of the story of Cinderella.

individual Ask participants to write for a few minutes.

2 of 29mins

pairs Share what they have written.

3 of 27mins

whole group Highlight that they all mostly began with 'Once upon a time' or similar fairy tale leads.

Ask the rhetorical questions:

how did they know how to write in that way?

why did they make such linguistic choices?

could they visualize the opening page of the book of Cinderella they knew?

Highlight the following: ##BOX FOLLOWING, OR PUT IN SMALLER FONT; OR USE A LOGO TO INDICATE THAT THESE ARE KEY CONCEPTS OR NOTES THE FACILITATOR HAS TO SHARE

¥ the notion that they have read this story often or have had it read to them, thus they were drawing on the many demonstrations of the language they have read or heard

¥ the notion that they were drawing on their semantic, syntactic and graphophonic cueing systems in order to write their leads

¥ the notion that all of the above information operates within their personal linguistic data pool.

Ask participants the question, 'what does this mean for your classroom?'

Accept several comments before moving onto the next activity.

SUBHEAD Activity 2 Cinderella's step-sisters and step-mother received a gold-lettered invitation to the Ball of Balls. Write the invitation that is sent to them.

individual Ask participants to write for a few minutes.

2 of 19mins

pairs Share invitations.

5 of 17mins

whole group Highlight the invitation language used. Note the use of old world language such as 'formally request,' 'cordially invite,' 'the pleasure of the company of.'

Ask how many people use that language in every day life. If someone wrote a spoof of the invitation such as 'Come to the Bash at the Castle,' point out that in order to write such a spoof the writer needed to know the features of the appropriate genre first.

Ask again how they knew how to write like that. Do they remember having set classes on how to write 'invitations for Balls?'

##AS ABOVE

Highlight:

¥ the reading-writing connections and the many demonstrations that written texts give to a writer on how to write and what to write, including the linguistic choices made available to the reader (their semantic, syntactic and graphophonic knowledge of the written genre of fairy tales which are stored in their linguistic data pool)

¥ the role that purpose and audience played in their semantic, syntactic and graphophonic choices of words used, the structure of the text and the layout of the invitation

¥ the Conditions of Learning; they have been immersed in that language, they have had demonstrations of that language, they have engaged in the language features and patterns to the extent that they have become part of their linguistic data pool.

SUBHEAD Activity 3 The Ball is over. There was great interest in the mystery girl the Prince danced with all night. The step-mother and step-sisters get up early to read the early morning paper. Write the headline and report in the morning paper.

individual Ask participants to write for a few minutes.
2 of 15mins

pairs Share a few examples of the writing.
5 of 13mins

whole group Ask again how they knew how to write like they did.
5 of 8mins

NOTE: Some people will have written from the perspective of the newspaper reporter, whereas some would have written from the perspective of the social writer. Note the different language used.

##AS ABOVE

Highlight:

¥ the reading-writing connections and the many demonstrations that written texts give to a writer on how to write and what to write, including the linguistic choices made available to the reader (their semantic, syntactic and graphophonic knowledge of the genre of newspaper report writing which are stored in the linguistic data pool)

¥ the role that purpose and audience played in the choice of words used, the structure of the text, the layout of the different reports written

¥ the Conditions of Learning; they have been immersed in that language, they have had demonstrations of that language, they have engaged in the language features and patterns to the extent that they have become part of their linguistic data pool.

Point out that as teachers we need to maximize these connections when teaching literacy in all content areas.

3 of 3mins

Ask participants to comment on what this all means for their classrooms.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

##BULLET POINT THESE

Language is a social process learned through social interaction for social purposes. To fulfil the various purposes of language used we need to have a repertoire of genres which are appropriate for the audience, purpose and setting. The greater the choice of genre, the more empowered is the language user.

Language is 'connected'. Reading, writing, talking and listening are all language; they feed into and out of each other. The brain processes all language modes in the same way. Burke's visual metaphor, the linguistic data pool, best demonstrates this concept.

As language users we draw on our semantic, syntactic and graphophonic knowledge from within our linguistic data pool in order to choose the appropriate linguistic options needed to achieve the purpose in any given setting.

We learn language, learn through language and learn about language simultaneously as we use language. Language is therefore more than communication. It is knowing, thinking, and learning.

The classroom is a setting in which students need to gain control of the range of genre necessary to successful classroom learning in all the content areas.

IMPLICATIONS FOR EVALUATION

We need to focus on strategies and the processes our students use and have control over rather than just skills. The evidence is there in our daily interaction with our students. Learning Journals, observations, interviews during class activities give us insights into what our students know about language. It is this information we draw on to plan future instruction for our students. This is how evaluation drives instruction.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Ask participants to reflect in their journals. Remind them to focus their reflections on what they have learned in the session and how this might relate to their role as a teacher of literacy.

Show OH1:8 to guide the reflections.

What do you think you learned in this session?
What might this mean for teaching in YOUR classroom?

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES FOR THE CLASSROOM:

1. TEXT-TAPPING

The activities we did in the Cinderella Workshop could be called Text-tapping. We were put into situations where we were required to draw on all the language knowledge we have accumulated in our linguistic data pool from the many talking, listening, reading and writing encounters we have had. Text-tapping is a strategy that can be used all the content areas to tap into students' existing, yet often subconscious, knowledge and control of a particular genre. It also helps to make explicit the reading-writing connections so they begin to realize that what they read can assist them with not only the content of what they write, but also the generic structure of the writing.

Refer participants to the instructional strategy, Text-tapping, on page ** in their Theory into Practice and ask them to skim through it.

Sum up by highlighting that purposes of Text-tapping in the classroom are:

- ¥ to improve students' ability to write a particular genre
- ¥ to tap into students' already existing knowledge of a particular genre
- ¥ to make explicit the implicit link between what we have read and what we can write
- ¥ to introduce the notion of 'reading like a writer'
- ¥ to introduce the concept of the linguistic data pool
- ¥ to evaluate the students' growing control over the features of a particular genre.

Ask participants to read Text-tapping carefully before trying it with their students.

2. READ ALOUD

In this session we were put into situations where we were required to draw on all the language knowledge we accumulated in our linguistic data pool from the many talking, listening, reading and writing encounters we have had. Being read to was a common encounter many of us cited as helping to fill our linguistic data pools. Reading Aloud immerses students in the language and styles of different authors. This strategy exposes students to texts and genres that may be unfamiliar to them or too difficult for them to read and understand on their own. The Read Aloud helps prepare students for text-tapping by adding to their linguistic data pools.

Refer participants to the Instructional Strategy, Read Aloud, on page ** in their Theory into Practice and ask them to skim through it.

Sum up by highlighting that purposes of Read Aloud in the classroom are:

- ¥ to immerse students in books-in the language and styles of different authors, in different illustrators' styles, and in different genres
- ¥ to let students hear models of good reading behaviors
- ¥ to let students hear models of good writing

¥ to expose students to texts and genres that would be too difficult for them to read and understand on their own

¥ to increase students' comprehension of different texts

¥ to challenge students' listening skills

¥ to build students' appreciation and enjoyment of literature and of reading.

FOR THE NEXT SESSION

SUBHEAD Between Session Instructional Strategy

BSIS 2:1: Text-tapping. Pages** in Theory into Practice

Ask participants to read and try, Text-tapping with a group of students. They should ask their students how they knew to write that particular form of writing and why they chose the particular words they did.

Ask participants to reflect on this activity and record their reflections and the students' responses in their Learning Journal.

BSIS 2:2: Read-Aloud. Pages** in Theory into Practice

Ask participants to read and try Read-Aloud with a group of students.

Ask participants to reflect on this activity and record their reflections in their learning journal.

Encourage participants to watch for any spill-over from what is read into what their students are writing and note it in their journal.

SUBHEAD Between Session Reading

##TO COME