

HELPING ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE (EAL) STUDENTS GET TO FIRST BASE & BEYOND

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THE CONTEXT - STUDENTS



The sub-group of international students we worry about:

- are quiet, attentive, hard-working students
- are reluctant to contribute to whole class discussions
- ask questions after class, via email, sometimes 'gently' talk about comprehension difficulties – don't complain
- have a tendency to summarize literature rather than critique it or use it to build an argument
- sometimes just cite literature, possibly indicating a lack of comprehension
- submit essays which require considerable cognitive effort to understand and take a long time to correct due to language difficulties
- at risk academically, bare pass

THE CONTEXT: INSTITUTIONAL CONSTRAINTS

- Large classes
- Reduced (face-to-face) teaching time
- Conflation of teaching and assessing time frame
- 4000 words = 1 hour marking
- Online marking constraints through Turnitin/LMS
- Limited access to one-on-one Academic Support Services
- Summative vs formative assessment focus
- Casualisation/contract staff associated issues: how much time and effort do you invest in revising curriculum/pedagogy if you find out your teaching a course a week before it starts, or if you don't know if you're teaching that course next year

THE CONTEXT: STAFF

- 'It's not my problem. I'm a content expert. I don't have enough time as it is.
- They're Masters' students. They should have learnt this at Undergraduate level.
- These students shouldn't be let in if their English isn't good enough.
- They'll work it out (or not). Cream will rise to the top. They're adults.
- I don't know how to build students' academic literacy in my subject.
- I feel sorry for them but there's not a lot I can do.

THE CENTRALITY OF READING WITHIN ACADEMIC LEARNING



THE CHALLENGE

How can we support and scaffold NESB learners' comprehension of academic texts that also address the contextual constraints? We need tools that :

- are evidence-based
- do not require expert literacy skills
- don't add considerably to academic workload
- motivating for (busy) students
- are completed outside class
- facilitate interaction between students
- foster critical engagement with the content and deeper learning

FIVE POSSIBLE TOOLS TO FOSTER DEEPER ENGAGEMENT WITH TEXT

1. Thinking routines
2. Graphic organizers – graphically organized material
3. Triple Entry Journal
4. Text connections
5. Jigsaw reading

TOOL ONE: THINKING ROUTINES

From the Visible Thinking Project
(Harvard School of Education)

Example 1: **Parts, Purposes & Complexities**

<http://www.pz.harvard.edu/resources/parts-purposes-complexities-0>

- Think of an area in a course you teach (e.g. bridges, a balance sheet, democracy, a Gothic novel, past tense in French, sociocultural theory, global warming etc)
- Now name the parts of that area and list them
- Next identify the purposes of the parts
- Finally list the factors that make this area complex


TOOL THREE: TRIPLE ENTRY JOURNAL

Quotes (Identify 5 – 8 quotes from the text that you found interesting, significant or important)	Paraphrase (Re-write the quote using your own words. Explain what it means.)	Response (Explain why you chose this quote. What is its significance?)

TOOL FOUR: TEXT TO SELF – TEXT TO TEXT – TEXT TO WORLD

SELF What is your personal response to this text? How does it relate to what you already know or your own personal experience?	TEXT What other texts have you read/viewed that connect with this text? Explain how.	WORLD What are the real-world implications of this text? Can you think of examples or counter examples outside the academic context?

TOOL FIVE: JIGSAW READING



- Students are put into groups (up to 4)
- Each person has a different text (e.g. research article, short story, painting etc)
- Everyone has the same question to prepare (e.g how does your article define culture and how it is best taught in the classroom?)
- Students discuss the common question from the perspective of the text they have written and/or complete a grid task, collecting information about the texts they haven't read

OUR THESIS IN SUMMARY

- Academic literacy has to be explicitly taught/addressed and is best embedded in the context of specific subject
- Literacy tools from secondary schooling can be readily adapted to the tertiary context
- Scaffolding students' interaction with text outside the class promotes deeper engagement with the content of the text

➤ Gets students to 'first base'

SELECTED REFERENCES

- Triple Entry Journal Information
 - https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/wh1.thewebsite.com/wh/3241/images/AL_HTG_C11_TripleJournal.pdf (different applications)
 - <https://crmsliteracy.wikispaces.com/Triple+Entry+Journals> (used with (L2) vocabulary learning)
- Text to self, text to text, text to world
 - <http://www.readwritethink.org/professional-development/strategy-guides/making-connections-30659.html>
 - <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies/text-text-text-self-text-world>
- Jigsaw reading
 - <https://www.schreyerinstitution.psu.edu/pdf/alex/jigsaw.pdf>
 - <http://www.adlit.org/strategies/22371/>

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