Using Print Media in the LCTL Classroom

Sample Lesson Plan Overview

**Levels:** Beginning-advanced

**Aims:** Practice critical reading and discussion skills; become acquainted with target-culture norms; expand knowledge of vocabulary and related grammatical forms

**Class Time:** Variable (30 min-several class periods)

**Preparation Time:** Variable (20 min-1 hr.)

**Resources:** Newspaper articles or classified advertisements (either newsstand copy or downloaded from the World Wide Web)

Newspapers, many of which are now available through the Internet, provide an easily-available source of authentic language materials. Through newspapers, teachers can access a wide range of materials, from articles to classified advertisements to comics to letters to the editors. These authentic sources provide an ideal venue for students to acquire and practice critical literacy skills. They can also serve as an excellent discussion stimulus.

The following three lesson plans exemplify ways in which newspapers can enrich language teaching and provide learners with new insights into the target culture.

- **He did what?!!—Reading headlines**
- **Did you know that??—Skimming for information in a newspaper article**
- **For sale, cheap—Reading classified ads**
He did what?!—Reading headlines

Level: Beginning

Aims: Practice literacy, make inferences about meaning

Class time: 5-10 minutes

Preparation time: 5 minutes

Resources: Newspaper headlines, possibly with accompanying picture

Many of us make it a daily habit to scan newspaper headlines. This is also a very useful activity in the language classroom as it promotes literacy and expands students’ knowledge of the target culture. In this activity, students are asked to use their literacy skills and knowledge of current events to infer meaning from known words in a given headline.

Procedure:
1. Before class, do the following:
   a. Locate a headline (or multiple headlines) from a recent edition of the newspaper. Headlines should correspond to events that students would have heard of in their own language/cultural setting. Choose headlines in which students will understand at least one important word. (ex. Lance Armstrong wins Tour De France again; North Korea disarms, Britney Spears retires).
   b. Prepare a display of headline (e.g., an overhead transparency, sign, etc.).
2. Tell students you are going to show them a current newspaper headline.
3. Display the headline and ask students to read it aloud. If a picture is available, use it as a reference point.
4. Solicit recognized words from the students and write these on the blackboard.
5. Ask students if they can infer the meaning of the headline.
6. Ask for volunteers to share what they know about the event.

Caveats and Options:
1. For a more extended exercise, multiple headlines may be used.
2. For group work, groups of students may each be given a headline (and picture) and asked to infer the meaning of the headline. They should then be asked to present their headline to the rest of the class and share what they discussed in their group.
3. Headlines are also excellent for focusing on difficult sounds (i.e., as a pronunciation exercise).
4. Students may discuss which section of the newspaper this headline would fit in.
5. For more advanced groups, you can select a short article and ask students in groups to create appropriate headlines. You can then ask students to vote on the most interesting headline.
Happenings around the world—Skimming for information in a newspaper article

Level: Intermediate-advanced

Aims: Practice skimming for main ideas

Class time: 40 minutes

Preparation time: 30 minutes

Resources: Newspaper articles, information table, overhead transparency

Another habit of newspaper readers is to skim articles for main ideas before deciding to read the article more carefully. Modeling this practice and training students to skim for information is a useful activity for the LCTL classroom. In this activity, students practice skimming multiple articles for main ideas and transferring these ideas to an information table.

Procedure:
1. Before class, locate newspaper or magazine articles with content that might appeal to the interests of the students.
2. In class, present the idea of skimming for specific content.
3. Tell students that they will be asked to quickly skim several newspaper articles.
4. Distribute the information table (see appendix) and explain to students that for each article they read, they should fill in the missing information under the column headings. Stress to students that they are reading for main ideas only and that they will not need to spend time understanding every word (or even all of the article).
5. Present the newspaper articles, having students skim each article successively in a set amount of time (e.g., 3-5 minutes per article). There are several options for this step:
   a. The articles can be posted around the room, with students asked to circulate and individually fill out the information tables.
   b. Students can be divided into groups of 3-4 each, with different students in the group receiving different articles. Once they have read the article and completed the associated task, they can then trade articles with another member of the group. This process continues until all students have read all articles.
6. Have students fill out their charts while skimming the articles.
7. Either as an entire class or in groups, have students compare the information they gathered.
8. Ask students which article they found most interesting and why.
Caveats and Options:
1. For more advanced students, the time allowed for skimming can be shortened. Alternatively, lengthier or more complex articles can be chosen.
2. It may be helpful to provide a limited list of relevant vocabulary words, being careful that the list does not distract students from the goal of skimming.
3. Get feedback from students on words, concepts, or information they observed. For lapses in comprehension, examine where the lapse occurred (a vocabulary problem, a grammar problem?) and discuss.

Appendix: Information Table

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For sale, cheap—Reading classified ads

Level: Beginning

Aims: Read classified ads, practice asking consumer questions

Class time: 40 min

Preparation time: 10-15 min

Resources: Newspaper classified ads

Who hasn’t used classified advertisements at some point in their life to buy a needed item cheaply? Using classified ads in the LCTL classroom provides students with a motivating opportunity to practice their reading and speaking skills while acquiring high-frequency vocabulary. In this activity, students become acquainted with the genre of classified advertisements, learn important abbreviations, and take on the role of consumer in a role play transaction.

Procedure:
1. Before class, locate classified ads, preferably those selling common items (i.e., covering vocabulary the students already know). At least 10-12 ads should be selected (using an entire page of ads is preferable as it is a more authentic task).
2. Ask students to locate the commonly used abbreviations and guess their meaning. On the blackboard, make a list of these abbreviations and their meanings.
3. Present an outline of a guided dialogue between a buyer and seller:
   a. “Hello, are you selling a ___________?
   b. “Yes, I want to sell a ____________.
   c. “No, the ________ has already been sold.”
   d. “How much is the ____________?  
   e. Etc.
4. Model this dialogue with a student volunteer.
5. In pairs have students create their own dialogues.
6. Ask for volunteers to role play the purchase transaction.

Caveats and Options:
1. The lower the level of the students, the more guided their dialogue will need to be.
2. This activity can easily be made more advanced by introducing bargaining terms and strategies.
3. This lesson can be used to focus on questions, numbers, or even idioms.