Giving Students a Purpose to Read: A Lesson Plan

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To have the basis for improving learning environment: “It is essential for teachers to understand the nature of reading comprehension.” (Tierney and Pearson 1994, 496). Unlike rote learning, meaningful learning presents information within a context and uses students’ knowledge. According to Ausubel (1968), learning becomes permanent only if it is meaningful. In a reading class, the instructor is requested to teach students to engage with the text in a dialogue as stressed by Grabe (1988, 56) with a purpose for reading using students’ prior knowledge and expectations of the students.

In this paper, categorized as a tip from the classroom, I would like to share a very recent lesson plan (comprising all the activities covered in class for the last 4 weeks) at ADNOC Institute, where English in the oil and gas industries for future to be technicians is a must.

**LESSON PLAN**

**Theme:** Environment

**Topic to be tapped:** Marine Debris

**Step of the lesson:** Reading

**Students’ Level:** Intermediate

**Learning outcomes:**

**Short term outcomes:**
- Extract meaning from pictures
- Use graphics to comprehend the structure of text
- Recall and interpret information

**Long term outcomes:**
- Plan a recycling program.
- Design a packaging waste separation facility.
- Design a compost facility.
- Design an incineration facility.
- Make site selection for a landfill.

**Pre-reading:**

**Activity 1:** Look at the pictures (below) and try to work with your partner to tell what happened.

**Procedure:** The students work in pairs or groups and try to figure out what happened and decipher the message conveyed in picture three. The instructor walks around and assists students with vocabulary items, such
as spilled oil, beach cleaning up campaign, or pelican (bird).

**Activity 2:** The WORDLE strategy was used to make students find out the content of the text. The students are supported with questions like: What is marine debris? What does it affect? Why can’t aquatic animals move?

**Key to activity 2:** Very likely the passage will talk about the impact of all the things people throw into the sea. Trash affects marine life (plants and sea animals).

Special Note to readers: Wordle is a tool for generating “word clouds” from a text. The clouds give greater frequency to words that appear more frequently in the text. The wordle can obtained at: www.wordle.net

**Activity 3:** Cloudy text (not cloud text).

Students team up to predict the content of the text which bears clouds placed at different places. To develop the spirit of collaboration amongst students, the instructor hands out different cloudy texts, i.e, students receive texts whereby clouds are scattered at different places (see samples below). In case of confusion, the instructor can assist students through thought provoking questions.

**Reading:**

**Activity 1:** Reconciled reading: General questions are asked to link the information obtained in the pre-reading step with the information students will come across in the reading step. The instructor’s role is to elicit talk, reach reluctant students, and engage the students in the learning process. Answers are given orally.

**Questions:**

- What is marine debris?
- What does the word marine mean?
- What does marine debris affect?
- What happens to animals when they swallow debris?

**Activity 2:** Read the text and complete the cause/effect diagram:

*Marine debris is trash that gets into the marine environment as a result of careless handling or disposal. There are several sources of marine debris on the ocean and on the land.*

*Marine debris includes all the objects found in the marine environment. The term debris is reserved for trash used by people. It can come from beachgoers, improper disposal of trash, ships, offshore oil and gas platform.*

*There are primary problems that marine debris poses to wildlife: entanglement and ingestion. Entanglement results when an animal becomes encircled by debris.*

*Ingestion occurs when an animal swallows marine debris thinking it is a kind of food. Ingestion can lead to starvation if the ingested item blocks the intestinal tract, or accumulates in the digestive tract and makes the animal feel full.*

Source: *Turning the Tide on Trash, EPA catalog(1992).*
Activity 3: Find in the text words whose definitions follow:

a. the act of getting rid of something by throwing it away.
b. things that are no longer wanted or needed.
c. dishonest and against a law or a rule.
d. animals and plants that grow independently of people, usually in natural conditions.
e. a situation where one is involved in and that is difficult to escape from.
f. the process of absorbing nutrients, medications, or objects into the body by eating or drinking them.
g. surrounded by something.
h. the state of having no food for a long period, often causing death.

Keys:

disposal: the act of getting rid of something by throwing it away.
trash: things that are no longer wanted or needed.
improper: dishonest and against a law or a rule.
wildlife: animals and plants that grow independently of people, usually in natural conditions.
etanglement: a situation where one is involved in and that is difficult to escape from.
ingestion: the process of absorbing nutrients, medications, or objects into the body by eating or drinking them.
encircled: surrounded by something.
starvation: the state of having no food for a long period, often causing death.

Activity 4: Answer the questions given in activity 1:

Post-reading:

Activity 1: The text above contains more than 100 words. Summarize it in 60 words maximum.

Activity 2: The text does not mention the impact of marine debris on humans. Try to find some and include them in the diagram above by adding a box named “Impact on humans”.

Activity 3: Project work: What steps should be taken to reduce or prevent marine debris. Think of some solutions using pictures from the net.

The activities implemented in this lesson have enabled readers not only to predict the subject matter of the text, but also to infer meaning from context through illustrations and diagrams. Because the content relates to students’ needs and interests, the lesson was met with great enthusiasm. Simply put, when students are taught how to extract information from what they read and feel that in every act there is a purpose, they become strategic and lifelong readers.

References:

