

Content-based Instruction in Vietnamese

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Instruction material:

Authentic news article “*Nan giải bài toán thể thao cho giới trẻ*” (Difficulties of promoting physical exercises among Vietnamese youth)

Why did we choose this text?

- The Vietnamese intermediate syllabi taught in our three campuses all include this chapter topic—body and health
- The text meets the proficiency demand assigned to us (Intermediate-Mid/High)
- The text provides sufficient contextual support
- Its language is entirely authentic
- Its challenging level fits with my mid and high intermediate student group (100% are heritage students with at least one year of Vietnamese instruction)
- It includes some interesting socio-cultural features that could facilitate follow-up discussion
- Its content offers cross-cultural insights and intellectual challenge

Lesson goals:

- To enhance the current chapter's teaching content (Body and Health) with a revenue to use learned concepts in an authentic, interactive context
- To further activate the students' habit to use the specific terms and think of them in larger socio-cultural contexts beyond classroom textbook
- To provide an authentic learning experience that put the students' real life experience, opinions, and knowledge at the center
- To encourage students to try authentic materials, let them see that they can understand more language than they think with guided comprehension activities to guess the content based on context and existed vocabulary
- To provide a learning context in which students are able to perform in mid and high intermediate proficiency level, progressing from phrases and discreet sentences to strings of sentences and short paragraphs

Pre-reading activity

Warming-up and brainstorming class content, vocabulary, and concepts



Pre-reading tasks

- First, students are asked to look at the photo illustration in the handout and describe and speculate related information about it in as many details as they can (intermediate assignment)
- Second (demonstrated in the clip), students are asked to work in pair and find out the possible harms and benefits of physical exercises to their physical and mental health, as well as to their study
- Students are expected to contribute ideas, explain and elaborate their findings in full sentences after 5 minutes
- These are to make an informed, smooth transition into the next, more challenging pre-reading task—guessing the reading topic and main content, based on a brief excerpt of the article's sub-heading—and the reading for comprehension of the article

Reflections on the pre-reading activities

- Students were given clear instruction on tasks and expectations (instruction was given in Vietnamese language with written demonstration and illustration in the handouts, with minimal English explanation)
- The warm-up part went pretty well; 6 out of 8 students were in interactive and cooperative mode; two students in a low intermediate level (who happened to work in a pair) were slightly more quiet and less participatory but managed to keep up with lesson tasks
- The language produced was primarily in long phrases and sporadic discreet sentences; more reactive than creative (to respond to teacher's prompt questions and the handout's fill-in table)
- Students were adequately familiarized with the class topic and ready to engage in reading tasks as well as follow-up discussions

POST-READING ACTIVITY: Role-play

Work in groups of 4 (2 groups)

- Scenario 1: Campus tour/Q&A conversation about the sports facilities and PE options on campus, given to a prospective student (assigned to group 1)
- Scenario 2: The dilemma between developing a space for business investment in a city and reserving the space for sport activities in a nearby school (assigned to group 2)
- Team debate: Pick a position, make an argument for or against it and support your opinions about the benefits and harms of sports, using the terms and expressions in the text (students are encouraged to play the roles of both devil and angel advocates, as long as they offer rational supportive ideas)

Video illustration of group 2's role-play



Reflections on the post-reading activities

- Scenario 1 is slightly easier; students are able to ask questions (inquiry) and offer creative, realistic responses in full but short sentences (based on what UW Seattle has to offer regarding sports, recreational, and athletic programs). Solid intermediate level (IM) is expected and achieved
- Scenario 2 is a bit more challenging because students are expected to make convincing statements to express their plans and priorities (property development vs. reservation of public space for youth's sport activities) in complete sentences, strings of sentences, short paragraphs, and connected discourses. High intermediate level (IH) and even advanced levels (AL/AM) are expected (to explain current social situations and needs for property development) and partially achieved. Students are able to create with language, combine and recombine learned materials to make connected sentences and put their ideas across the table, but the explanation and backup of their opinions are minimal at best.

My reflections after teaching the lesson

- The warm-up activity is particularly helpful to refresh and activate students' existed vocabulary and elicit their curious requests for appropriate, new expressions or terms
- The guessing the content is more appropriate with strong intermediate students who can use the language at ease to explain and support their speculations
- The matching paragraph and main ideas is relatively manageable to all
- The comprehension check questions can be done individually but the teacher can choose what student to answer what questions to put them at ease at their comfortable proficiency level, i.e., give the weaker students the opportunity to answer slightly easier questions
- The multiple choice activity and matching picture/health and body expressions are more effective to work in pair to encourage peer learning and brainstorming
- The 2 post-reading role-play scenarios can also be assigned based on students' proficiency level; level and under level students do #1; strong and above level students do #2. Class seating rearrangement would be needed.

OVERALL REFLECTIONS ON THE PROJECT

- Our team work has been great and very helpful, from contributing texts, voting on what texts to use, writing lesson plans, reviewing and re-incorporating lesson plans despite one or two sporadic steps behind schedule due to our super busy teaching and academic service obligations
- Teaching for videotaping is always a bit awkward and less natural, more constrained than non-taped classes. Even though I tried my best to just speak, walk, etc as usual, what came out in the video was mildly amusing and a surprise to me—is that how I often look and sound in class??
- The unexpected difficulty was 2 students requested an absentee excuse from the class knowing that they would be video-taped. They simply said they would not feel comfortable speaking. Note: One was a weak but outgoing student, one was a strong but very reserved student
- Another (partly expected) difficulty is that our final lesson plan was too ambitious, i.e., created with the fantasy of a class with maximum productivity, and after about 20 minutes into the class, it became obvious that I must cut short two post-reading activities (matching health issues with photos and team debate) and assigned both of them for homework