

ESL Developmental Continuum P–10

Teaching strategy – Deconstruction

Focuses on

Speaking Listening Reading **Writing**

Most useful for students at stages

A1 **A2** BL B1 **B2 B3** SL S1 **S2 S3 S4**

Purpose of this activity

Text deconstruction explores the social contexts in which texts are written, the social purpose of texts (e.g. to inform, to persuade) and involves explicit teaching about the structural organisation and linguistic features of text types. It is one of the writing strategies that form the Curriculum Cycle, based on a genre approach to teaching writing.

How this helps ESL students in particular

Deconstruction:

- exposes students to the text types which are part of the school curriculum
- develops the students' metalanguage, that is, a language to talk about language
- provides a context for students to be taught explicitly about the structures and features of different text types
- develops and extends the students' knowledge and understanding of English grammar
- supports students to understand how purpose and audience impact on language choices
- allows students to work with models of texts to understand how they are constructed
- provides a means of examining models of texts which students might refer to when writing independently.

Procedure

The key steps of deconstruction are:

- The teacher decides on the genre to be taught and identifies which aspects of the text type will be focussed upon.
- The teacher also needs to select a model or models of the text type to support explicit teaching about the genre.
- Using the model or models, the teacher works with the students to identify:
 - the purpose of the text
 - the intended audience
 - the structural organisation of the text (e.g. for an information report: Classification, Description)

- o the specific linguistic features of the text type.

Using deconstruction with ESL students

Provide students with models of a text type to reorganise and sequence.

Examine models of texts on overhead transparencies and highlight or label examples of the organisational structure and the purpose of each element or section. Identify the names of the various organisational elements (e.g. for a narrative: Orientation, Complication, Resolution) and their purposes.

Examine models of texts on overhead transparencies and highlight examples of the linguistic features of the text, for example connectives in an argument such as: therefore, consequently, in addition, in conclusion etc.

Create a flow chart for a procedural text or an explanation to reflect the steps or the stages.

Complete cloze activities which focus on specific language features of a text type, for example imperatives in a procedural text, adverbial phrases of time or place in a recount.

Provide students with different examples of the same text type about the same topic or have them collect samples themselves. Compare the examples to evaluate their effectiveness as models of the text type. Expect students to use the metalanguage which has been developed through explicit teaching and modelling as they compare and discuss the texts.

Identify topic specific vocabulary or examples of technical language within a text.

Acknowledgments/reference

Derewianka, B. (1991). *Exploring how texts work*. Newtown, NSW: PETA

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