Discourse Frames Activities for Grammar Instruction

Grammar as a Communicative Resource

Development of communicative ability in lower levels is challenging because learners lack the linguistic resources to maintain a conversation. The ability to converse requires control of language at the discourse level, any use of the language beyond a single sentence. Celce-Murcia (2016) argues that lower-level learners can benefit from the presentation of discourse models in the form of short texts provided by the teacher from which sample organizational phrases or discourse frames can be introduced.

Contextualized Input and Scaffolded Output

The texts used by teachers to introduce new language structures to students are in the form of dialogues or monologues that show how the target forms fit within typical organizational patterns. After highlighting the target structures in their communicative context, similar discourse frames can be provided to allow students to communicate their own ideas using the same structures.

Instructional Sequence

Your teacher suggests a three-stage instructional sequence to follow while incorporating discourse frames is the following.

- **Introduce**: Introduce and clarify the target language structures in the form of a discourse level text rather than isolated sentences. Use guided noticing techniques to elicit form-meaning relations from students. Then provide a sample discourse frame similar to the original text.
- **Interact**: Have students interact with each other to ask and answer questions using the provided discourse frame. Additional useful language prompts to facilitate the interaction can also be provided at this time.
- **Report**: Students form new groups or return to the main group to report what they learned about their partners. The teacher can provide a slightly updated discourse frame for reporting if necessary.

Other Applications

Frames can also be a useful technique in teaching writing, particularly in the form of narrative or paragraph frames. These frames use prototypical organizational patterns and phrasing of different genres to help students produce original texts with their own ideas that are similar in structure to the target text genre. The technique is also helpful in designing guided reflection tasks for the purposes of affective engagement and metacognition.

References

Celce-Murcia, M. (2016). The importance of the discourse level in understanding and teaching English grammar. In E. Hinkel (Ed.) *Teaching English Grammar to Speakers of Other Languages.* Routledge.