

From Concept to Content: *Reading Strategies for Secondary English Language Learners*

Kristen M. Lindahl

Naomi Watkins

University of Utah

UCIRA

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Session Overview

- Theory in brief: concept→content connections
- Before-During-After Reading: Social Studies
- Adapting activities for ELL students
- Questions/Comments

Concept → Content Connections

- Exposure to literacy events is most important as students develop early literacy skills.
 - Not the language of the written materials or even the language of the discussion about the written materials.
- Introduce students to more difficult concepts through concrete approaches and then progress to more abstract ones.
- Reading is the primary access point for gaining information about nearly any domain and about the world.
- ELLs will have a wide variety of worldly experiences and perspectives to contribute.

Concept → Content Connections

- Students gain conceptual knowledge when five conditions exist:
 - Existing knowledge activated
 - New info/experiences are related to existing knowledge
 - Intrinsic motivation is developed
 - New knowledge is built
 - New knowledge is applied, evaluated, and revised

(Glynn, 1994 as cited in Swan, 2003)

Concept → Content Connections

- **Concepts...**

- tend to be universal; thus, more students, if not all, will be able to connect with an identified concept in some way, and
- help students make connections, develop deeper understanding, generalize to other situations
- Are understood and represented by learners through their personal knowledge and experience (schema theorem: Rumelhart, 1980).
- Help teachers scaffold new information by allowing for a connection between factual information to the overarching concept of the content.

Concept → Content Examples

- CONTENT TOPICS:
(concrete, narrower application, more specific, less interdisciplinary)
 - Measurement
 - Civil War
 - Poetry
 - Fractions & Decimals
 - Diet
 - Electricity
 - Literature
- CONTENT CONCEPTS:
(abstract, broader application, general, more interdisciplinary)
 - Change
 - Patterns
 - Symbols
 - Relationships
 - Influence
 - Systems
 - Point of View

Adapted from Catlin, B. (2003)

Expository Text in Social Studies

- Concept: Diversity within Cultures
- Concept question: How does life differ from one city/area to another?
- Content Topic: Ancient Civilizations
- Middle School Social Studies class of 35 Students
 - 20 native English-speakers
 - 15 students read at or above grade level
 - 5 students read slightly below grade level
 - 15 ELL students who represent 4 different L1 languages and are considered advanced/fluent (FEP).

Before Reading: Journal Entry

In your journal, respond to the following questions:

If you had a time machine and were able to visit the future, what would you tell the people about daily life in Salt Lake City in 2007? What do people do at their jobs? Where do they shop? What do they do in their free time? What other things would you tell people in the future?

Purpose for Reading

- Today we're going to read about daily life in two cities in ancient Greece—Athens & Sparta. As you read today, think about the following:
 1. How does life in Salt Lake City compare to the life of the ancient Greeks?
 2. How does life differ for the people of Athens and the people of Sparta? How is life the same?

During Reading: Pair Reading

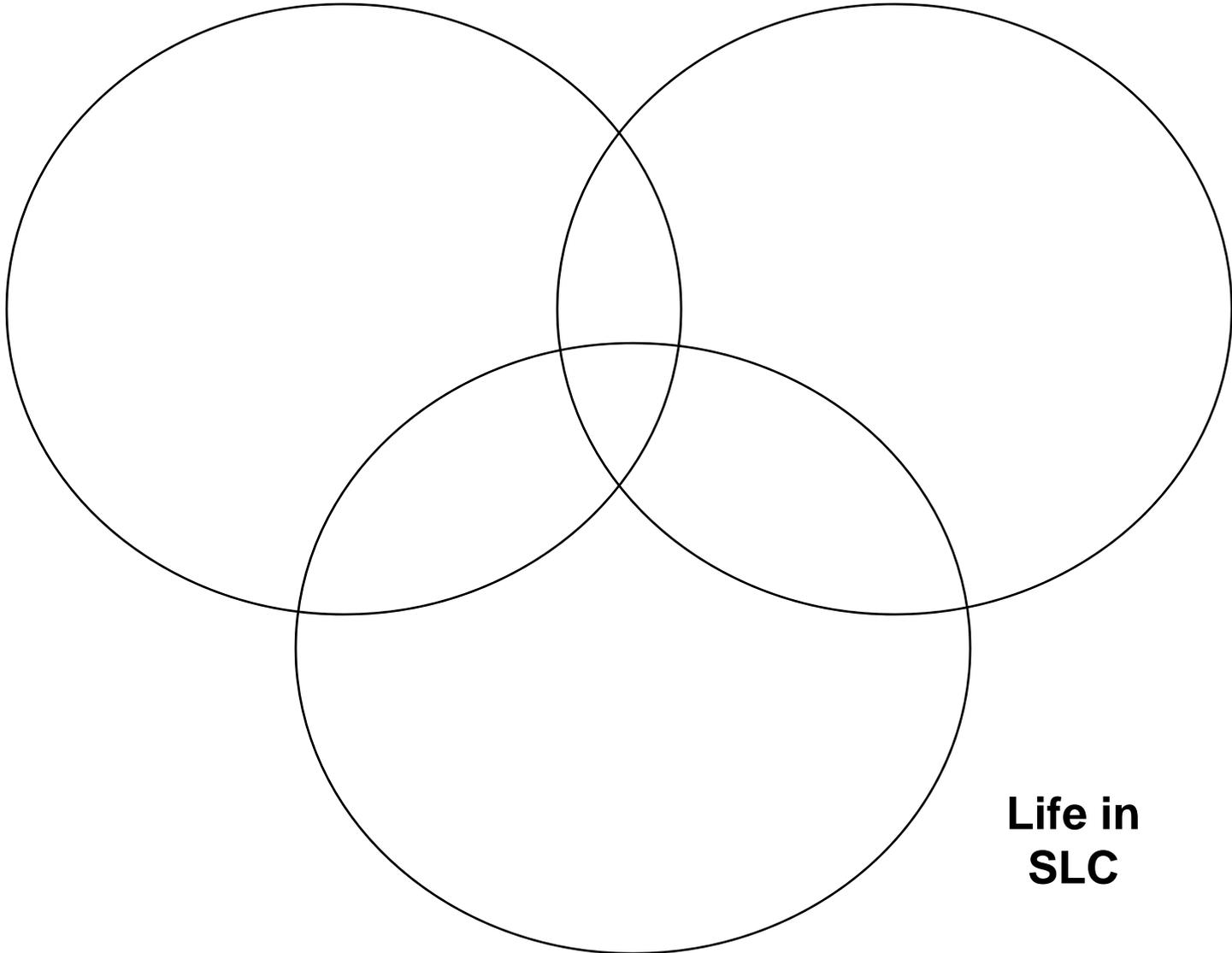
Directions:

1. Find a partner.
2. One student will be the coach. The other student will be the reader.
3. Both students read the 1st paragraph silently.
4. After reading the 1st paragraph, the reader summarizes the paragraph for the coach. The coach asks clarifying questions.
5. Students then reverse roles, read the next paragraph silently, and the reader then summarizes for the coach with the coach asking questions.
6. The process continues until the entire article has been read and summarized.
7. Once the entire article is read, the students cooperatively summarize the main idea of the passage.

After Reading: Venn Diagram

**Life in
Athens**

**Life in
Sparta**



**Life in
SLC**

Before Adapting for ELL: Assessing a Text

Student Factors:

- Grade/Age
- Strengths
- Weaknesses
- General Background Knowledge
- School and Classroom Climate
- Attitudes Towards Texts and Reading
- Languages Spoken and/or Read

Text Factors

- Vocabulary,
- Sentence Structure
- text features,
- Text structure
- Content familiarity
- necessary background knowledge,
- length,
- elaboration,
- Coherency and unity.

--Graves, Juel, & Graves (2007).

Before Reading: Adaptations for ELL students

- Provide a categorized word bank (vocabulary):
 - Jobs: teacher, bus driver, police officer, business people, students, lawyer, doctor, server, construction worker, ski/snowboard instructor, etc.
 - Hobbies/Pastimes: skiing, hiking, biking, reading, going to movies, shopping, playing a sport, spending time with family, cooking, scrapbooking, swimming, etc.
- Provide sentence stems(functional/formulaic):
 - “In Salt Lake City, people shop at...”
 - “In Salt Lake City, people spend their free time...” etc.

Before Reading: Adaptations for ELL students

- Allow responses in the first language (L1) or about the L1 culture (newcomers).
- Allow visual responses (comprehension): students draw a typical day in SLC.
- Ask students to do a Think-Pair-Share with a partner BEFORE writing in their journals.

During Reading: Adaptations for ELL students

- Pair students with other students of varying proficiency (one higher, one lower).
- Consider the positive and negative aspects of pairing L2 students together all the time.
- Provide a list of specific summary questions to ask (by answering the questions, the students will be summarizing).
- Provide question stems for the coach that will work for each type of questions:
 - “What did you mean when you said...?”
 - “What do you think about ...?”
 - “Why did you think ... about ...?”

During Reading: Adaptations for ELL students

- Provide a word bank with definitions of more difficult vocabulary terms:
 - Splendor, p. 199. Greatness or richness. The **splendor** of Athens' architecture was impressive.
- Alternatives to summarizing:
 - Look at and describe all the pictures in the chapter
 - Skim & Scan for chapter headings and predict the content; confirm prediction with their partner or during class discussion

After Reading: Adaptations for ELL students

- Provide a categorized word bank with terms that apply to Athens, Sparta, and Salt Lake City.
- Work with a partner of a different L2 proficiency.
- Draw pictures in the Venn Diagram in addition to words.
- Allow responses about the L1 culture in the Salt Lake City circle or even add a 4th circle.

Points to Remember

- Linking Before-During-After reading activities to a content concept allows for greater generalization of the information, deeper understanding, and appropriate accommodations for ELLs.
- The difference between a *meaningful* ELL accommodation and a “*busy work*” accommodation is whether or not the accommodation ties in to the content concept.
- Content does not need to be reduced in any way, nor do cognitive demands. What will vary is the strategies and levels of scaffolding available so that each student may access the content in his/her own way.

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For more information...

Contact:

- Kristen M. Lindahl
 - kristen.lindahl@comcast.net
- Naomi Watkins
 - naomiwatkins@gmail.com

Thank you!