Teaching Reading and Writing

Reading and writing genres

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Learning outcomes

This module focuses on teaching reading and writing through genres. It considers how different text types and styles and help learners to develop their reading and wrting skills. By the end of the module you will be able to:

- explain a number of benefits of teaching reading and writing skills through genres
- recognise a number of genre types that can be used to develop reading and writing skills
- identify a number of appropriate activities and techniques that exploit different types of genres, and different features within genres, in reading and writing tasks.

1 Before you watch

> In English language teaching a **genre** is a type of text, defined by its purpose and intended audience and identified by its format, style and language. An advertisement, a letter, an e-mail and a fairy tale are all examples of genres.

a. What are some examples of genres that you have used with your learners?

b. How do you use these different genres to help teach reading and writing?

c. What are the benefits of teaching reading and writing through genres?

2 Watch

2.1 Text genres

Watch and listen to the commentary at the beginning of **Reading and writing genres: Part 1** (00:00 to 00:58). Then pause the video and answer the following questions.

a. The trainer uses an example of the genre of advertisements to show how the purpose and intended audience of a text affects the format, style and language. Complete the table below with her examples.

Advertisements	
Purpose	
Intended audience	future buyers
Format	
Style	
Language	

b. What benefits of teaching reading and writing through genres does the trainer identify?

-
-
-

c. Complete the trainer's sentence with three of the following words.

levels | interests | needs | choices | classes | age | preferences | ideas | activities | likes

"First of all we need to use a range of genres that match learners' _____,
_____ and _____."

Listen again to check your answers.

2.2 Applying text genres

a. Use the information about purpose, intended audience and features of their format, style and language in the box below to complete the genre table.

Purpose

1. to give instructions
2. to inform
3. to inform and persuade

Intended audience

4. a manager
5. a person who cooks
6. a friend

Style

7. informal, direct and concise
8. direct, clear steps to follow
9. fairly formal, polite

Format

10. pictures and numbered points
11. two addresses at the top, date, salutation and closing
12. may include symbols ☺

Language

13. Mainly content words such as nouns or verbs, few function words such as articles or auxiliary verbs. Sometimes words are shortened or abbreviated, for example, gr8 = great, or txt = text

14. Use of present perfect to show experience and few contractions, so cannot rather than can't

15. technical terms for cooking, imperatives and use of signposting language such as, first… then …

	Text message	Recipe	Application letter
Purpose			
Intended audience			
Style			
Format			
Language			

2.3 Different genres

The trainer says *"…we need to use a range of different genres that match learners' age, interests and needs."*
Watch the rest of **Reading and writing genres: Part 1** (01:03 to 14:37) and answer these questions.

a. Which different text genres can you identify?

Genres	My class
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

b. Which of the genres would appeal to your learners? Put a tick (✔ next to each one in the right-hand column.

c. Put these techniques in the order that you see them.

_____ Using a text as a model for writing.

_____ Identifying cohesive devices, for example, but.

_____ Comparing texts within a genre.

_____ Analysing the features of a genre.

_____ Identifying topic sentences and supporting points.

d. Here is the text that the trainer uses to demonstrate the use of cohesive devices. Can you find examples of the following cohesive devices?

> Once upon a time, there lived a witch with a secret. The old woman had never told anyone her secret and she never intended to. But someone had discovered it, and he intended to reveal it. First this person …

Cohesive device	Examples
Linking words and phrases	
Pronouns	
Articles	
Repeated words	
Similar words	

Watch the last technique again (14:00 to 14:37) to check your answers.

2.4 Exploiting a film review

a. Watch the first classroom sequence of **Reading and writing genres: Part 2** (00:00 to 08:15).
   What activity do the learners do with the film review text? and what is the purpose of the activity?

Activity	Purpose

b. Watch the second classroom sequence of **Reading and writing genres: Part 2** (08:33 to 16:25)
   What resources help the learners to write their own film reviews?

-
-
-
-

c. Which of the techniques from the previous activity did you notice in **Reading and writing genres: Part 2**?
   Put a tick (✓) next to each one you noticed.

_____ Using a text as a model for writing.

_____ Identifying cohesive devices, for example, but.

_____ Comparing texts within a genre.

_____ Analysing the features of a genre.

_____ Identifying topic sentences and supporting points.

2.5 Exploiting advertisements

a. Watch the classroom sequence in **Reading and writing genres: Part 3** (00:00 to 14:42)
   How many different ways does the teacher exploit the advertisements? Identify the activities.

Activities
1 –
2 –
3 –
4 –
5 –
6 –
Homework –

3 Coherence and cohesion

Two important concepts for understanding genres are coherence and cohesion. These concepts ensure the overall 'connectedness' of texts.

> **Coherence** is the connectedness of a text as a whole. If a text is coherent it makes sense and is logical and consistent.
>
> **Cohesion** is the relationship between grammar and words within a text or sentence. It can be defined as the glue that holds pieces of the text together and give these pieces meaning. Although cohesion contributes to coherence it does not ensure it.

It is important to raise learners' awareness of these concepts. Here are two techniques for each.

Raising awareness of coherence

1. Cut up three texts from different genres and mix them up. Learners sort and order the texts. When they have finished, ask them how they sorted and ordered.

2. Aliens - choose a text and insert into it two or three sentences that do not fit in terms of style and language – ask the learners to identify these sentences and explain why they are alien.

Raising awareness of cohesion

3. Cut up two or three paragraphs from a newspaper article or academic text into topic sentences and each supporting sentence. Mix them up and ask learners to match topic sentence with supporting sentences. Elicit how they completed the task.

4. Ask learners to read a story or fairy tale and write down as many words as they can that are used to refer to the hero, for example, man, prince, he, him … Do the same for the heroine, the villain, the setting and any other elements of the story. Ask the class why the writer uses so many different words.

a. Look at the following techniques. Do they raise awareness of coherence, cohesion or both?
   Tick (✔) the appropriate column(s).

Technique	Coherence	Cohesion
5. Find a story or fairy tale and blank out some of the words that refer to elements of the story, for example, the hero/heroine/villain. Ask learners to fill in the gaps.		
6. Hand out the first two or three sentences of a short text (emails, text messages and telephone messages are good for this activity). Working in groups learners have to finish the text. Collect all the finished texts and then read out all the possible endings from the groups plus the actual ending. Each group has to guess the correct one and say how they knew. You may wish to correct any errors from the group work which might make the game too easy.		
7. Divide the class into groups and give each group a folder containing three or four examples of the genre. Using the texts, ask them to complete a genre analysis table to identify purpose, audience, format, style, language and to include example phrases and content.		

4 Reflection

a. Which of the techniques (1 – 7) for raising awareness of coherence and cohesion would you like to try with one of your classes?

b. What other techniques in this module would benefit your learners and how?

Transcripts and answers

Transcripts of trainer's talk

2.1 Text genres

Every text is written for a purpose and has an intended audience. This affects its format, style and language and characterises it as part of a 'genre'. Let's take the 'genre' of advertisements for example.

The purpose of an advertisement is to persuade the reader to buy something. Therefore the format is attractive with pictures and few words. The style is direct and persuasive and the language uses short, simple sentences with powerful vocabulary.

Teaching these features of a genre can help set the context for reading. For writing, they provide learners with a starting point and ensure cohesion.

So how do we use 'genres' when teaching reading and writing? First of all we need to use a range of genres that match learners' age, interests and needs.

2.3 Different genres

Let's have a look now at how these text types are exploited in the classroom. Watch and make notes to answer the questions in the viewing task.

Let learners read and analyse genres before doing any writing. In this way, they can identify the purpose and intended audience of the text and see how this affects format, style and language.

Reading and analysing genres prepares the way for writing, giving learners models to copy and extend.

Many genres provide opportunities to practise specific reading skills such as identifying topic and supporting sentences

We can also use genres to show examples of cohesion. Cohesive devices are words that 'glue together' words in a sentence or sentences in a paragraph. Look at this excerpt from a fairly tale. Linking words such as 'but', 'and' and 'first' are examples of cohesive devices. Pronouns such as 'her' and 'it' are also examples of cohesive devices. And we can repeat same or similar words to help cohesion.

2.4 Exploiting a film review

Now let's look at how this teacher exploits a model text for a film review. Look at how she gets the learners to notice important features of the text in preparation for writing their own film review.

2.5 Exploiting advertisements

Have a look now at how this teacher uses authentic texts to introduce her learners to the genre of advertising. How many different ways does she exploit these texts? Let's take a look …

Answers

2.1 Text genres

a   Genre analysis

Advertisements	
Purpose	To persuade the reader to buy something
Intended audience	Future buyers
Format	Attractive, pictures, few words
Style	Direct, persuasive
Language	Short, simple sentences. Powerful vocabulary

b. Benefits of teaching reading and writing through genres

- Helps set the context for reading
- Provides a starting point for writing
- Ensures the overall cohesion of a written text

c. Complete the trainer's sentence with three of the following words.

"First of all we need to use a range of genres that match learners' **age**, **interests** and **needs**."

2.2 Applying text genres

	Text message	Recipe	Application letter
Purpose	2.	1.	3.
Intended audience	6.	5.	4.
Style	7.	8.	9.
Format	12.	10.	11.
Language	13.	15.	14.

2.3 Different genres

a. Text genres
1. A factual text
2. A story book
3. An email
4. Advertisements
5. A film review

c. Order of techniques

2._____   Using a text as a model for writing.

5._____   Identifying cohesive devices, for example, but.

3._____   Comparing texts within a genre.

1._____   Analysing the features of a genre.

4._____   Identifying topic sentences and supporting points.

d. Cohesive devices

Cohesive device	Examples
Linking words and phrases	with | and | but | first
Pronouns	she | it | he | her
Articles	a | the
Repeated words	secret | intended
Similar words	witch – old woman | someone – this person

2.4 Exploiting a film review

a.

Activity	Purpose
Learners order jumbled paragraphs from the film review.	The activity focuses learners' attention on the function of each paragraph.

b. Resources

- *a vocabulary and ideas mind map*
- *a model film review text*
- *a genre analysis worksheet*
- *a review plan summary elicited from the learners (on the whiteboard).*

c. Techniques

✓	Using a text as a model for writing.
✓	Identifying cohesive devices – however
	Comparing texts within a genre.
✓	Analysing the features of a genre.
	Identifying topic sentences and supporting points.

2.5 Exploiting advertisements

a.

Activities
1 – Learners identify the text type and answer questions about advertisements.
2 – They categorise the advertisements into two types and note the differences.
3 – They look at advertisement examples and choose the best caption.
4 – Learners identify features that make advertisements effective.
5 – They create their own captions to match random visual images.
6 – They give feedback on each other's captions, noting positive aspects and points for improvement.
Homework – Learners create a new caption for a different picture.

3 Coherence and cohesion

a.

Technique	Coherence	Cohesion
5. Find a story or fairy tale and blank out some of the words that refer to elements of the story, for example, the hero/heroine/villain. Ask learners to fill in the gaps.		✓
6. Hand out the first two or three sentences of a short text (emails, text messages and telephone messages are good for this activity). Working in groups learners have to finish the text. Collect all the finished texts and then read out all the possible endings from the groups plus the actual ending. Each group has to guess the correct one and say how they knew. You may wish to correct any errors from the group work which might make the game too easy.	✓	✓
7. Divide the class into groups and give each group a folder containing three or four examples of the genre. Using the texts, ask them to complete a genre analysis table to identify purpose, audience, format, style, language and to include example phrases and content.	✓	

Acknowledgements