

Newscast

THEME: LEISURE (MEDIA)

LANGUAGE: ANY

STANDARDS: COMMUNICATION CULTURES CONNECTIONS COMPARISONS COMMUNITIES

1.2 1.3

2.1 2.2

3.1 3.2

4.2

5.1

Time Frame:

One-two weeks

Materials Needed:

- Access to current printed or on-line news (see website below)
- Videotaped news broadcasts from the target culture
- TV and VCR
- Videotaping equipment
- Rubric for assessing newscasts (provided)

Description of task:

This activity has at least six stages—viewing, investigating, writing, rehearsing, performing, and presenting. It involves the creation of a newscast in the target language.

Preparation (previewing):

As a homework assignment, students are asked to view national TV newscasts (different individuals or small groups should be assigned to watch the national news on different channels) for one week. As they are watching the news, they are to keep track of the order of events (e.g., national news, international news, sports, entertainment, weather, human interest or feature stories, commercial interruptions, etc.) and the approximate amount of time spent on each. They should also focus on the point of view that is emphasized during the reporting of news events. What is the tone/style of reporting? How do the reporters engage the viewing audience? [A full week of viewing is suggested so that students can gather a representative overview of newscasts and derive a general sense; however, students may also be assigned to view just one newscast as

Level:

Intermediate-High

Purpose:

To gather, organize, summarize, and restate appropriately facts about current events in the target culture

Communicative Function(s):

Referential: Reporting facts about things, actions, events, or people in the environment; understanding descriptions; summarizing; comparing and contrasting

Imaginative: Discussing a TV program; creating scripts

Language Structure(s):

Past, present, future tenses; embedded clauses; question formation

Cultural Aspects:

Current events in target culture; culturally appropriate staging and delivery of newscast

Modalities:

Listening

Speaking

Reading

Writing

NOTES

a homework assignment the night before the activity is to begin or to view at least two during a weekend prior to the beginning of the activity.]

At the beginning of the following week, students report the information they gathered for the homework assignment. The information is recorded by the teacher on an overhead transparency or on butcher paper and displayed in the classroom. They should discuss the implications—for example, why is international news given limited attention? What does this suggest about U.S. culture? Essentially, this exercise encourages students to bring to consciousness their perceptions of “self” (i.e., U.S. culture) with respect to the topic of news reporting (Kramsch, 1993).

Viewing:

The teacher shows a videotaped national newscast from the target culture (ideally, the newscast should be as current as possible; the closer it is in terms of time frame to the U.S. newscasts the students viewed, the better). Students are to view the newscast, taking note of the types and order of events, the approximate amount of time spent on each, and the point of view emphasized during reporting. In other words, the same types of issues they focused on while viewing the U.S. newscasts are now emphasized during the viewing of the target culture newscast. It will be necessary for students to view the newscast a number of times. After viewing, the students discuss the information in the newscast and compare it with the information they gathered about the U.S. newscasts. A chart of similarities and differences between the two should be generated.

A final viewing of the video should provide students with an opportunity to focus on language issues: what vocabulary and structures are needed to report events succinctly? what are the common verb tenses used? Lists of terms that groups are likely to use to develop the newscasts should be created and displayed in the classroom. The teacher can provide a review of the grammatical structures as needed.

Investigating:

Students are assigned to groups of 4-6 students. Each group is expected to write, rehearse, and perform a 10-minute newscast in the target language. They are to record their performance on video and the videos will be shown to the class as well as to other classes having lower proficiency levels. The newscasts must:

- include reports of a minimum of 3 major news events (at least one international and one national)
- include a weather report

- include a sports report
- include at least one special interest/feature story or entertainment piece
- include props/photos/images to support the stories
- reflect a target culture perspective
- allow for each group member to have a speaking role

In order to create their newscasts, students are to research print (actual magazines and newspapers as well as on-line sources) and television or radio media (cable channels, satellite channels, BBC radio broadcasts, world news on NPR, etc.). Students select events that should be of interest to the target culture audience. They may use information that is provided in English, but will need to summarize that information in the target language when writing the script for the newscast.

Writing the script:

After having selected the stories they will report, the groups write scripts for newscasts. The groups need to summarize the information they have gathered into succinct news reports. The class and/or teams may work together to edit the scripts. During this stage, it may be necessary for students to view the target culture newscast again to ensure that their newscasts are comparable in terms of content, tone, language, and point of view.

Rehearsing:

Students should rehearse their newscasts. They should focus on providing smooth, fluent presentations with few hesitations. They should also focus on pronunciation, fluency, and good eye contact. The rubric that will be used to assess the newscasts should be distributed to students so that they understand the expectations.

Performing:

The groups videotape their rehearsed newscasts. They should also create a series of at least 5 questions about the content of their newscast. These questions will be distributed to the “audiences” who will view their newscast. The questions should be written in the target language but may also be written in English for audiences having lower proficiency levels.

Presenting:

The groups present their videotapes to several “audiences”—the rest of their class and to other classes in the school. During the presentations, the audiences are to respond to the questions that each group prepared.

Assessment:

Informal assessment of students’ understanding of the newscasts can be done during class discussions. Group interaction and participation should be monitored by the teacher as the groups work together to create their newscasts. A multitrait rubric can be used to assess the presentations (provided). Because the presentations are videotaped, the teacher will be able to take time to view the videotapes and do a careful assessment with the rubric. The teacher can assess the audience’s comprehension of the newscasts by collecting their responses to the questions created by the groups.

Extensions:***Suggestions for adapting the task for various levels:***

For beginning levels:

- Students can view U.S. and target culture newscasts and compare them with discussions occurring in English.
- Just one segment of the newscast can be emphasized (e.g., the weather forecast).
- One newscast can be created by the whole class; small groups can be assigned to work on specific segments (e.g., weather).

For advanced levels: Longer and more sophisticated newscasts can be assigned.

Other extensions:

- The same type of activity can be done with different types of programs (e.g., talk shows, entertainment shows, newsmagazines, game shows, etc.).

- Instead of a videotaped newscast, students can create a print version (i.e., a “mini” newspaper).

Cultural extensions:

Students view U.S. and target culture news reports on the same major news story (e.g., a natural disaster, the death of a major public figure, etc.) and compare and contrast them.

References and Resources:

Kramsch, C. (1993). *Context and culture in language teaching*. NY: Oxford University Press.

Website:

<http://www.newspapers.com/country.htm>

This site provides an index of online newspapers worldwide.

Reflections:

Multitrait Rubric for Group Videotaped Newscasts

	Organization and Presentation of Newscast	Reflection of Target Culture Perspective	Word Choice and Language Control	Pronunciation, Fluency, and Eye Contact	Participation and Group Work	Use of Visual Supports
4	Well-developed and organized presentation; listeners are able to follow along easily; all required segments are included.	Presentation reflects target culture perspective quite well; it is clear that students put a lot of thought and effort into portraying a target culture point of view.	Includes a wide range of topic-specific vocabulary; clearly communicates ideas; mostly accurate use of verb tenses, embedded clauses, and word order.	Pronunciation and intonation are level-appropriate; smooth and fluent speech; few to no hesitations or groping for words; excellent eye contact.	Each group member assumes an equal and active role in the preparation and presentation.	Makes excellent use of previously prepared visuals that help to orient the listener and enhance the reports. Visuals are easy to see, read, and understand.
3	Developed and organized presentation; listeners can follow most of the report; most or all required segments are included.	Presentation reflects target culture perspective somewhat; it is clear that students put some thought and effort into portraying a target culture point of view.	Good range of topic-specific vocabulary; ideas are communicated; good control of verb tenses, embedded clauses, and word order.	Always intelligible, though one is aware of definite accent and lapses in intonation; speech mostly smooth; some hesitation and unevenness; some groping for words; eyes mostly focused on audience.	Each group member assumes an active role; 1-2 students take on the bulk of the work.	Makes use of previously prepared visuals; visuals serve to mostly support the reports; visuals are legible and mostly understandable.
2	Adequately-developed, somewhat organized presentation; important sequencing links missing; somewhat difficult to follow ideas; some (2-3) required segments missing.	Presentation does not reflect target culture perspective very well, although it is evident that students made some attempts to portray a target culture point of view.	Lacking some critical topic-specific vocabulary; somewhat limited vocabulary range; several instances of errors in verb tenses and word order; embedded clauses inaccurate and limited.	Pronunciation problems partially impede comprehensibility; speech is hesitant and jerky; some sentences are left uncompleted, some words/ideas incomprehensible; eyes focus more on notes and visuals.	Uneven participation among group members; some students mainly passive and contribute little to the presentation.	Visuals seem peripheral to presentation and are not well integrated; difficult to make sense of or read.
1	Presentation is undeveloped and unorganized; pieces of information seem disconnected; very difficult to follow and draw meaning from; several (3-4) required segments missing.	Presentation does not reflect target culture perspective at all; no apparent attempts to portray a target culture point of view.	Word choice seems inappropriate for topic; very basic, limited vocabulary impedes communication; inaccurate use verb tenses and word order impede understanding; embedded clauses non-existent.	Very difficult to understand because of pronunciation problems; speech is slow with many pauses; many words/ideas incomprehensible; poor eye contact.	Uneven participation among group members; some students do not participate; no effort made to distribute work among all group members.	No use of visuals or visuals have little to no supporting function; poorly represented and poorly integrated.

Adapted from Multitrait Rubric in Tedick and Klee (1997) *Alternative Assessment*

Group Names: _____

Date: _____

Score: _____

Reflections:

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