

Content in Context

Participating in, reflecting on, and evaluating functional language lessons is a great way for students to come to understand the practical power of functional language skills and strategies. From the functional perspective, content is always grounded in context and participants' interactions are co-constructed, being driven by their competing and/or coordinated interests. As a result, a key opportunity inherent in functional language instruction is the emergence of learners as bona fide participants in an increasing variety of communicative contexts, discourse spaces, and language communities.

With this in mind, this week's AoW is designed as a wrap around activity for students to examine the effectiveness and potential of other functional language lessons they have already experienced. The lesson template can be used to evaluate a single or series of activities. In either case, it is suggested to only apply it to lessons with a single targeted function.

Outcomes:

Learners will identify the target language functions presented in learning activities

Learners will demonstrate understanding of the learning activities' purpose in relation to the target language function

Learners will identify and enlarge opportunities for self-directed implementation of the targeted language functions in their preferred contexts.

Resources:

Content in Context graphic organizer

Procedure:

1. Carry out any functional language lesson with your students, as directed by the activity/lesson.
2. Using the graphic organizer below, have students individually hypothesize the lesson's target language function.
3. In groups of two or three guide students through the graphic organizer section by section. Prompts are provided in each section to help frame and facilitate discussion around each item before students discuss with peers and record their responses.

Note: This graphic organizer may also be a helpful tool for teachers to confirm that learning activities and learning objectives are well aligned.



<p>Hypothesized Language Function: <i>Make an educated guess about what action in the world is this lesson would help you accomplish. E.g. buy something (service encounter), say hello (greeting), say goodbye (leave taking), make friends (build solidarity), etc.</i></p>
<p>Activity Description: <i>What is the (imagined) context, what happened in the lesson, and in what order?</i></p>
<p>Key Relationships: <i>What kinds of roles/relationships are essential to the targeted function? E.g. Service Encounter: clerk, customer, transfer of money; Leave Taking: host, guest, departure; Building Solidarity: self, friend/acquaintance, creating connection</i></p>
<p>Key Materials: <i>What environments, objects, and resources are essential context for the function to occur?</i></p>
<p>Actual Language Function and/or Skill: <i>What function or skill is actually being targeted? How close was your hypothesis?</i></p>
<p>Process of Action: <i>What strategies did you use to successfully complete the learning experience?</i></p>
<p>Process of Growth: <i>How might the lesson/scenario help you get better at performing the function/skill?</i></p>
<p>Extension: <i>How could you apply the strategies, functions, and insights you learned in this lesson in your everyday life? In the future?</i></p>

