


Selecting and Adapting Tasks for Adult Multi-level ESL Classes

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Linguistic Complexity: Multi-level Modifications



Complexity	Lower-level Proficiency	Higher-level Proficiency
Vocabulary frequency Task: Learners complete a medical form in a doctor's office.	Learners fill in a questionnaire that asks for name, address, phone number, and emergency contact information.	

How could the vocabulary frequency for this task (completing a medical form) be modified for higher-level proficiency students at an intermediate level?


Cognitive Familiarity: Multi-level Modifications



Familiarity	Lower-level Proficiency	Higher-level Proficiency
Familiarity of topic Task: Learners describe health symptoms.	Learners describe flu symptoms.	

What is a less familiar topic that could be given to higher-proficiency group of learners to increase task difficulty?


Cognitive Familiarity: Multi-level Modifications



Familiarity	Lower-level Proficiency	Higher-level Proficiency
Familiarity of genre Task: Learners report an injury/illness.		Learners complete a workers' compensation injury report form. https://my.wcb.ab.ca/tr2/public/worker/ctc/sale

Can you think of a different genre or text type that could be used to make this task easier for lower-proficiency learners?


Cognitive Familiarity: Multi-level Modifications



Familiarity	Lower-level Proficiency	Higher-level Proficiency
Familiarity of task Task: Learners give health advice to others.	Learners give instructions to a friend on how to avoid frostbite in winter.	


What's an example of a less familiar task that higher-proficiency learners could be given to provide health advice to others?


Cognitive Processing: Multi-level Modifications



Cognitive processing	Lower-level Proficiency	Higher-level Proficiency
Information organization Task: Learners narrate a picture story.	Learners will narrate a story based on a set of 6 pictures that are chronologically sequenced.	


How could you organize the information for this task to make it more difficult for higher-level students?

Cognitive Processing: Multi-level Modifications 




Cognitive processing	Lower-level Proficiency	Higher-level Proficiency
Amount of computation Task: Have learners select a bottle of painkiller.		Have learners examine three bottles of painkiller. Which type of painkiller is most appropriate to treat a strained or pulled muscle? Determine the cost per tablet. R4(III)

How would you reduce the amount of computation required for lower-level proficiency students to complete the task?

Communicative Stress: Multi-level Modifications 


Communicative Stress	Lower-level Proficiency	Higher-level Proficiency
Number of participants Task: Learners design a balanced meal for an adult using Canada's Food Guide		Learners work in pairs to design a balanced meal for an adult male or female.

How could the number of participants be adjusted to make this task more difficult?

Communicative Stress: Multi-level Modifications 


Communicative Stress	Lower-level Proficiency	Higher-level Proficiency
Time limit/pressure Task: Learners design a balanced meal for an adult using Canada's Food Guide.	Pairs have 5 minutes to design a balanced meal for an adult male or female.	


How could time pressure be adjusted to make this task more difficult?

Communicative Stress: Multi-level Modifications 

Communicative Stress	Lower-level Proficiency	Higher-level Proficiency
Speed of presentation Task: Learners design a balanced meal for an adult using Canada's Food Guide		Learners have 3 minutes to present their meal for an adult male or female while listeners complete a food group checklist.


How could time pressure be adjusted to make this task more difficult?


Communicative Stress: Multi-level Modifications 



Communicative Stress	Lower-level Proficiency	Higher-level Proficiency
Length of texts used Task: Learners read an article about healthy lifestyles.	Learners read a short summary of an article in preparation for a class discussion.	

How could you modify the task for higher-level proficiency learners?

Communicative Stress: Multi-level Modifications 



Communicative Stress	Lower-level Proficiency	Higher-level Proficiency
Type of response Task: Learners interpret information contained in caloric expenditure tables.		Learners rank activities according to the calories burned per half hour.

How could this task be made more difficult for high-level learners?



Communicative Stress: Multi-level Modifications



Communicative Stress	Lower-level Proficiency	Higher-level Proficiency
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Opportunities to control interaction

Task: Learners listen to a recorded interview about herbal medicine.

Learners listen to a recording several times while answering questions.

How could this task be adjusted to increase difficulty for higher-level proficiency students?

References



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