First the Abstract, 🚀 Tomorrow the Moon!

Breaking Down Barriers to the Scholarly Conversation Through Close Reading

Annie Armstrong, Catherine Lantz, Glenda Insua
University of Illinois at Chicago
1

The Problem

Why we developed the activity
“I would say the biggest challenge was looking for academic journals because they’re written for an audience at such a high level that even though I would read the abstract and think to myself, ‘Oh yeah, I want this,’ [when] I would start reading, I would think, ‘I have no idea if this person is even speaking English.’”
How the Problem Manifests Itself

- Frustration, alienation, feeling dumb
- Patch-writing
- Surface understanding or misinterpretation
- Overreliance on non-scholarly sources
- Lack of meaningful engagement
“While novice learners and experts at all levels can take part in the conversation, established power and authority structures may influence their ability to participate and can privilege certain voices and information.”
Learners who are developing their information literate abilities...

- **Knowledge Practice:** identify barriers to entering scholarly conversation via various venues

- **Disposition:** recognize that systems privilege authorities and that not having fluency in the language and process of a discipline disempowers their ability to participate and engage
“Shouldn’t we, as instructional librarians, be concerned about students’ abilities to use the information they have discovered?”

Rosenblatt, 2010
2
In Class Activity
Introduction to academic texts and librarians
Class Visits

○ A pre-library orientation
  ○ Exposure to us
  ○ Exposure to academic language

○ Inner sectum: Reading, writing, and researching about insects and their intersection with humans
  ○ 4 sections
○ Read the half-sheet abstract
○ Briefly answer the questions in Part 1
○ Write a tweet about the article
3

Student Work

What went well and what didn’t
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Correctly answered</th>
<th>Incorrectly answered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who?</td>
<td>90.7%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where?</td>
<td>99.1%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What concept?</td>
<td>90.7%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What findings?</td>
<td>69.4%</td>
<td>30.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When?</td>
<td>93.5%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How?</td>
<td>74.1%</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why?</td>
<td>84.3%</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How well did students paraphrase and communicate information to different audiences?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Basic (1)</th>
<th>Intermediate (2)</th>
<th>Advanced (3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Writing - language, grammar, syntax
Accuracy - basic facts from study

*If student did not complete section - 0
How well did students paraphrase using an academic tone?

- **Basic**: 9.3% Writing, 11.1% Accuracy
- **Intermediate**: 40.7% Writing, 50.0% Accuracy
- **Advanced**: 43.5% Writing, 32.4% Accuracy
- **Did not complete**: 6.5% Writing, 6.5% Accuracy
How well did students paraphrase using a conversational tone?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Accuracy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>43.5%</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>37.0%</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not complete</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bugs in the food; a little maybe, a lot #eww [link]
#don’tjudgeaninsectbyitscover
#eatmoreinsectsnacks

Put aside your emotional barriers, try crickets as a protein alternative! #beefsucks

Bugs bug people [link]
4

Next steps
How else could librarians break down barriers to working with academic texts? Discuss potential...

- Activities (analog or technology enhanced)
- Student populations
- Forms of student communication (besides twitter)
Modifications under consideration:

- Google forms for assessment
- Engagement apps (e.g. Padlet, polling, Kahut)
- Student-selected abstracts
- Sharing activities with instructors
Questions?