

Assessing a student text using Lexis Education's Language and Learning Development Continuum

Case study 2: a 15-year-old Technology student

Which Phases in the LLDC should I focus on?

Since the text has been written by a 15-year-old Technology student, we would expect it to achieve Phase 7 of the LLDC but a reading of the text suggests instead Phase 3 or 4.

Global assessment

On the basis of this text alone, our analysis confirms our prediction that the student is working in Phase 4 and often slipping back into Phase 3.

GENRE

The title of the text suggests a Recount but, because the student is 15 years old and the subject is Technology, we would not expect a personal Recount and yet that is what we get for a lot of the text. Therefore, we could question the guidance that the task gave the student and we could also question whether the student was given guiding questions by the teacher – these are questions that would need to be answered in the text, thus providing a tight generic structure.

As mentioned, only part of the text attempts to focus on details relevant to Technology. Additionally, the paragraphing isn't organised so that there are clear boundaries between the personal and non-personal content. This lack of clear generic staging results in a short text with superficial discussion of what a student in Technology should get from an excursion to a manufacturing site. This text alone, with its lack of control of the intended Genre, identifies the student as working in Phase 4.

MODE

An analysis of the Themes in this text supports what we have discussed in Genre and Field. The first paragraph focuses on humans as Theme but these are not the humans directly involved in the furniture-making. The second paragraph has shifted to the machines and processes. In this paragraph, there are 2 marked Themes but these function to locate the time of the actions rather than foreground any issues. In the third paragraph, there are 3 marked Themes but they are concerned with locating the actions rather than doing something more complex. We can conclude that the student is not confidently able to separate the trip itself from the educational reason for going on the trip.

The other problems with the text are the many spelling, grammatical and punctuation mistakes. The original version of the text shows that the student has used a random mix of upper and lower case, eg "IT RUNS By hydrAulics". For Mode, we could say that the student is working in Phase 4.

Murphys Furniture Visit

Last week my class went to Murphys furniture. We arrived at Murphys at 9.40 am. We were greeted by Mr Garcia who told us about the furniture. We were shown around by his daughter. We went to a shed where we were shown the wood which the furniture is made out of. There was a shed near the wood shed which had all types of machines. The woman told us about the machines and how they work They pick wood carefully and try to get it to the right colour to match the cupboard.

The woman took us into the shed where they make the furniture. She was showing us the machine's which the furniture is made out of. There was one machine which is called a shapen. It runs by hydraulics. The machine has eight heads. There was a glue pot which glues the chairs and tables together After they use it they put a thin line of water on top which act's as a protection.

In the shed was a man working on furniture so the man next door can stain it. In the back corner of the shed was where they staple the cushion's to the chairs. Next door was a man who would spray the tables, chairs, cupboard when the furniture was finish. And dry it would be sanded lightly and then sprayed again.

I liked the trip to Murphys furniture. It shows time will bring out the best in you and time and effort as well.

FIELD

The main feature of this text in terms of Field is its concreteness because it focuses on material Processes, telling us what people and machines do. The student has shown they are capable of expanding the nominal groups (eg the wood which the furniture is made of, the back corner of the shed) and there are some very basic technical words (hydraulics, heads, glue pot, sanded), although an important tool - a shaper - is misspelt.

However there are problems with the Field. Because the text is organised as a Recount – according to events and a timeline (This happened, and then this happened, ...) – we don't get any details of what we would call abstractions, such as: causes of any problems and their effects, solutions, safety issues, apprenticeships, careers, or commercial considerations. The lack of any discussion of these kind of aspects is a major flaw in the text and we would conclude that for Field, the student is working in Phase 3.

Other texts by the student would be needed to determine whether this text is an anomaly, which is why several texts by a student should be analysed to locate them accurately on the Continuum.

TENOR

The limitations of Field are likely the result of the student taking on a restricted role – an observer and documenter of people's actions rather than a critical interviewer or analyst of the furniture-making processes. The closest the student gets to identifying that the processes might fail is in "pick wood carefully and try to get it right". The final paragraph ends the text in a way that we would expect of very young students, even apart from the final confusing sentence.

This text is a good example of how Field and Tenor are closely interrelated, with each opening or limiting opportunities for the writer to 'show off' to the assessor what they can do with language. This text shows us that the student is limited in Tenor to working in Phase 3 of the Continuum.