

Making sense – context and translations

a. Synthesis workshop (see individual Instructor's Guide for this activity)

b. Including additional findings

In this assignment students read a completed paragraph and a list of conclusions from additional studies. The students choose which additional conclusion to include in the paragraph and discuss how it can be used to strengthen the main argument.

After completing this activity students will have practiced synthesizing information from different studies to build an argument.

Note on alternate approaches: This assignment also works well as a small group activity. This can also be assigned as a homework assignment if you don't have time in class for a discussion on the topic.

Suggested assignment

- 1) Have students read a paragraph (on paper or projected on screen).
- 2) Ask students to identify the topic sentence / main point of the paragraph
- 3) Give students 3-4 additional conclusions on the same general topic
- 4) Ask students to discuss with their neighbor which of the conclusions they would include. How do they think it strengthens the argument being made in the paragraph? Where would they include it?
- 5) Ask a few students to share with the whole class which conclusion they chose, why, and where they would incorporate it.

Suggested assessment with writing

Have students incorporate one additional study conclusion into the sample paragraph and write 1-2 sentences on why they chose to include that conclusion.

c. Choosing relevant citations

In this activity for mid-level students, each student reads a different paper on the same topic. In a group they discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the papers. The groups are given a description of a particular topic and instructed to choose which of the papers presented they would cite when writing a paper on this topic. *After this activity students will be able to both critically read and evaluate the relative importance of papers to predetermined topics.*

Note on sequencing: In addition to providing general preparation for students to select appropriate sources, this activity can be integrated with students' own writing of a literature review. That is, after collecting a body of relevant papers, students can practice making decisions to include/exclude sources in support of their own topic. This will help them immediately apply the lessons of this activity to their own writing.

Suggested discussion questions:

- For each paper, briefly summarize for the group the authors' hypothesis and main findings. Do you think they are supported by the results? Why or why not? (3–5 min per paper)
- Each group is given the topic of a paper (can be drawn from previous students' final papers, if desired)
- As a group, decide which subset of the papers (must exclude at least one) you would use in writing a paper on that topic.
- Each group explains to the rest of the class why they chose to include/exclude individual papers based on the topic.

Suggestions for assessment via a writing assignment:

Write a one-paragraph conclusion to a paper on a new topic that refers to a subset of the papers discussed in class.

Write an additional paragraph providing your justification for why you chose to include/exclude the papers you did.