

Implementation of a Multilingual Booklet to Accommodate First-Year Students with Academic Work

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Abstract: Academic writing is a major challenge within Higher Education. Poor writing skills and low academic literacy increase the chances of dropout among students from disadvantaged backgrounds and communities. A multilingual booklet was developed as a tool for improvement among first-year students. The multilingual booklet aims to allow students to engage their study material in their mother tongue. As an academic literacy lecturer, the researcher will be sharing what has inspired her to suggest such a project. This paper follows an educational approach through personal reflections. Availing and promoting multilingual reading material to students may reduce failure rates. Students may be equipped to understand their academic work when it is presented in their home language. Another advantage of the translated open resource material is that multilingual education provides monolingual students with the opportunity to learn a second language and become bilingual. The booklet can be accessed by other institutions as they are loaded on the university website. The booklet aims to contribute towards the decolonization of tertiary curricula—a notion to which first-generation students have no reference. The booklet is in line with the vision of enabling a smart university, rooted in the spirit of Ubuntu. Recommendation: South African universities should adopt multilingual tools in their curricula to accommodate the students who are not English, or first language speakers to do better in their academic work.

Keywords: Booklet, First-Year, Language, Multilingualism, Translation, Students, University

1. Introduction and Background

This paper introduces a response to the high failure rate in higher education, through the development of a multi-lingual language guide. Cushner, McClelland and Safford (2009: p.22) describe multicultural education as “a process of educational reform that assures that learners from all groups (racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, ability, gender) experience educational equality, success, and social mobility”. This translation of open education resources reduces the dropout rate during first years because students will read them in their mother tongue without fearing the medium of instruction of the university which is usually English most of the time. Another advantage of the translated reading material is that multilingual education provides monolingual students with the opportunity to learn a second language and become bilingual. Kaschula & Maseko (2014) claim that universities should ensure that there are initiatives for the development and use of African languages. This perception is supported by Afolabi (2020, p.203) that “students comprehend better when they are taught through their mother tongue or indigenous language”

The issue of higher education failure rates is not new and it persists. For instance, as far back as the 1990s Nyamapfene and Letseka (1995:160) studied the failure rates and the University of Fort Hare where they categorized the problems into “failure to understand the objective and structure of university education, and failure to understand processes involved in university learning”. Drawing on the Human Science Research Council (HSRC)’s Ford Foundation-funded study on ‘Why University students drop out’, Letseka and Maile (2008:5) argued that “30% of South African university students dropped out in their first year of study. A further 20% dropped out during their second and third years. While only 22% graduated within the specified three years’ duration for a generic Bachelor’s degree”. To that end Cosser and Letseka (2010:3) concluded that “If student attrition is a worldwide phenomenon, the problem is acute in South Africa”. With reference to UNISA, Letseka and Pitsoe (2014) ‘shock dropout rates’. For instance, while the university student intake had grown in excess of 300 000, there was absence of a commensurate increase or improvement in the institution’s throughput. For instance, 59% of first-time undergraduates dropped out in 2004, while only 14% graduated while 27% did not complete.

1.1 Analysis

The Higher education statistics in South Africa indicate a 47 percent dropout rate, and only 23 percent of students earn a qualification (Council of Higher Education (CHE), 2015). Academic writing has been a problem in

higher education, and there is ample research on the subject (O'Toole and Archer 2010). Students are expected to be fluent in English as an international language (Hsu, 2014). Many lecturers assume that students have the necessary basic language skills and knowledge of academic writing. Many universities consider academic writing to be a high-stakes activity, as written work remains one of the main forms of assessment (Archer, 2008 p.248). Students from South Africa who are not English-speaking are required to know English to master educational concepts and engage meaningfully in the information age on a global stage Department of Education (2009, p. 41).

Only a third of students graduating from high school are prepared or ready for college-level coursework (Bettinger, Boatman, & Long, 2013). Besides, this lack of academic preparedness has resulted in the need for remedial or developmental education at the post-secondary level (Crisp & Delgado, 2014). Writing is the highest and most complex form of human communication and it is considered to be the most complex because it develops after, and as a result of one's ability to speak and read (O'Toole 2010). Numerous factors such as students' academic background and psychosocial factors in South Africa contribute to students' success (Dumont 2009). There are four facts that universities and writing centers in South Africa need to keep in mind when assessing how language and writing impact students: (1) most students need to write in English, a language other than their mother tongue; (2) students are academically under-prepared, particularly those from previously disadvantaged communities; (3) all students need to learn the academic discourses of different disciplines; and (4) students come to tertiary institutions with different literacies and cultural conventions (Archer 2010).

In the development of this booklet the ADDIE (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation and Evaluation) will be followed. This paper describes the Analysis, Design and Development. Future work will include the implementation and summative evaluation.

1.2 Aims and objective of the study

The aim of the study is to develop a guide/resource for academic writing of first-year students.

1.3 Objectives

- To analyse the target population of the study as well as their learning need.
- To design and develop a tri-lingual booklet that may address that need
- To consider ways of implementing such a booklet.

The aim of the booklet is:

- To allow students to engage their study material in their mother tongue.
- To make first-year students to comprehend the booklet in different languages

1.4 Theoretical Underpinning

Teaching for second-language acquisition has always shown a pendulum effect between behaviourist direct instruction methods, such as grammar-translation, and generative communicative methods (Kilfoil & Van der Walt, 1997). There has been a call for a more unified theory of second language acquisition (Gervain & Mehler, 2010; Miller, Jungheim & Ptok, 2014). In this respect, an integrative model of blended learning based on learning theory may provide a point of departure. The pendulum effect resonates with the traditional division between behaviourists and constructivist teaching, which are generally seen as opposite ends of a continuum. There has been a call for the integration of behavioural and constructivist learning (Ertmer and Newby 2013; Rieber 1992; Shabo 1997; Trollip and Alessi 2001).

Bearing in mind that the two models, behaviourism and constructivism have different points of departure, one being a model of instruction and the other a model of language acquisition it could be argued that they should rather be plotted orthogonally than in a straight line (Cronjé 2006). The resultant model would have four quadrants, as is shown in Figure 1.1.

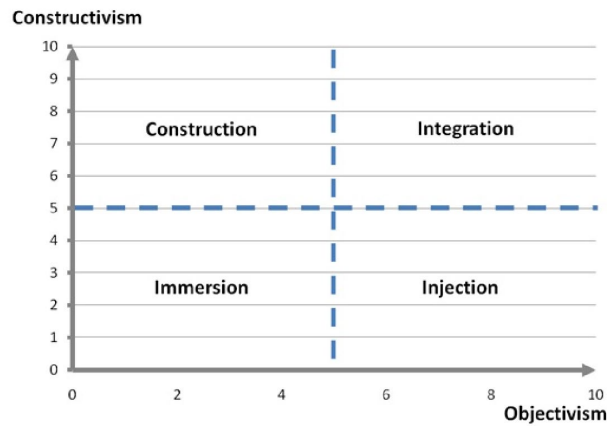


Figure 1.1: A model integrating Constructivism and Behaviourism/Objectivism (Cronjé, 2006)

The Injection quadrant in Figure 1.1 would consist of teaching and learning that is high in behaviourist characteristics, such as stimulus, response, and reinforcement. It would correspond largely with drill-and-practice models and the grammar-translation method and therefore fall in the behaviourist theory of language acquisition (Miller, 2014). Diagonally opposite, the Construction quadrant is high in constructivist (Miller, 2014) characteristics such as free exploration, communication, and scaffolding. The Immersion quadrant, being low in both direct instruction and scaffolded construction where the learner learns mainly through trial and error and Darwinian acceptance of what works and rejection of what doesn't corresponds with Millers (2014) nativist theories. The Integration quadrant corresponds with Interactionism (Miller, 2014) where the language learner interacts both with the language and with other speakers.

The aim of the open-source downloadable booklet that is described here, was to act as an electronic tool for language acquisition in either of the four quadrants described above. In subsequent work by Aylward and Cronjé (2022) it was shown that, depending on learner competency, students would work through the four quadrants working anti-clockwise from Injection through Immersion and Construction to Integration, as is shown in Figure 1.2.

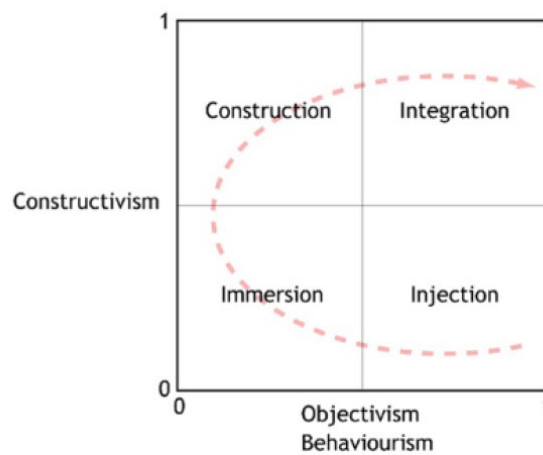


Figure 1.2: The path of learning from Injection to Integration (Aylward & Cronjé, 2022)

2. Design and Development

This section will clarify the design considerations for the study guide and describe how it was developed.

2.1 The Role of Academic Writing

This study describes the development of a multilingual guide to academic writing. The purpose of any academic writing is to inform, explain, compare, or persuade the readers. It is an essential skill for students and professionals of all disciplines (Gimenez, & Thondhlana, 2012). Academic writing usually requires students to look at somebody else's work or ideas and then form an informed opinion on it. This type of writing makes

students take in what they have read and decide how much importance it holds for their subject. When students learn about a complex subject at university, it can be difficult for them to explain what they have understood if they struggle with academic writing. Academic writing may be unnecessarily complicated, pompous, long-winded, technical, impersonal, autoreactive, humourless, elitist, and excludes outsiders (Hartly 2008). It necessitates providing and discussing information on a particular topic referencing literature to back up your writing, all the while trying to keep the reader's attention. It is an important practice for constructing knowledge and creating values and identity of a discipline. Research writing involves the "process of research, critical thinking, source evaluation, organization, and composition" (Rutten, 2011). According to students need to gain fluency in writing in English to develop their learning capacity (Hyland 2013).

2.2 Feedback

Feedback is an essential part of effective learning. It helps students understand the subject being studied and gives them clear guidance on how to improve their learning. Besides, Jessop, Hakim, and Gibbs (2014) argue that a feedback dialogue is seen as essential to student learning, enabling students to take control of their learning and improve their performance. However, Molloy, Borrel-Carrio, Epstein (2013) contend that feedback is a characteristically sensitive issue either verbal or written can have a long-lasting impact, beyond its intent and can affect students' performance. This assignment reports on the findings of a research study conducted at CPUT. The purpose of this activity is to critically examine to what extent feedback practices as part of the strategies used in the assessment of student work - are meaningful to the expected learning process. McBride (2012) claims that after all, university students are thought to write not because we expect them to become writers, but because writing is the evidence that they are mastering intellectual concepts.

2.3 Advantages of Feedback

Boud and Molloy (2013) and Carless (2015) argue that feedback can guide students on how to implement what is required from them as gives them a clue of the structure of academic writing. Kaufman and Schunn (2011) claim that stronger students must provide feedback to weaker students. Feedback is an essential part of effective learning. It helps students understand the subject being studied and gives them clear guidance on how to improve their learning. feedback to be sustainable, students in higher education cannot rely predominantly on the teacher to provide insights in that they need additional ways of developing their own capacity to make informed judgments (Carless, Salter, Yang, & Lam 2011). Besides, Jessop, Hakim, and Gibbs (2014) argues that a feedback dialogue is seen as essential to student learning, enabling students to take control of their learning and improve their performance. According to Hendry et al., (2011), feedback dialogue is learning to apply criteria; make judgments about samples and suggest how they can be improved. The feedback dialogue is good for their assignments and essays because it will guide them on what needs to be corrected and why. However, Molloy, Borrel-Carrio, Epstein (2013) contend that verbal or written feedback is a characteristically sensitive issue that can have a long-lasting impact, beyond its intent and can affect students' performance. McBride (2012) claims that after all, university students are thought to write not because we expect them to become writers, but because writing is the evidence that they are mastering intellectual concepts.

2.4 The Promotion of Multilingualism

The objective of creating multilingual and multimodal spaces of learning and teaching aligns with the goals of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT)'s Vision 2030 and its priority to create a campus and university structure that embraces the Principles of 'Smartness' and 'Oneness'. Specifically, the inclusion of African languages through translanguaging and other multilingual practices speaks to the V2030 objectives to "build the capacity of students to engage in a CPUT student experience in ways that are both individually transformative and that build the social capital of CPUT and its broader community" and creating an "embed a suite of comprehensive and quality services for students that are integrated, responsive and focused on supporting students' holistic well-being and academic success and supported by smart technologies" (Cape Peninsula University of Technology 2021: p.23-24).

The first author began working with students writing at the Stellenbosch University African Language department, where she assisted students writing in isiXhosa, as a second language. Those first-year students, both international and domestic, struggled to compose sentences in response to the queries. Her responsibility as a part-time instructor at the time was to sit down with them and analyse the question, as well as aid them with sentence form and comprehension of what they wrote. The lecturers would provide her with feedback on

their students' writing and possibly send more students to assist. She understood the students' problem was the language they were exposed to because they were English second language speakers. She would like to assist them further. After Stellenbosch University, she worked at CPUT as a part-time lecturer teaching communication to first-year students. She also observed that students struggled to comprehend the question that was being asked for their essays and the linking words were not correctly used. What the department did was expose them to a program called 'Readers are Leaders,' in which students were aided in understanding questions and responding in accordance with what was expected of them without making any assumptions. She also noticed from students' writing that punctuation was not used correctly on their pieces of writing, which was easy to spot, especially if students failed to include a full stop at the conclusion of the phrase. The communication class helped first-year students a lot since she focused largely on their writing, which is academic literacy. Her assessment of their writing was crucial because there were first-year students who needed to improve in this area.

She is currently working at a writing centre, where she is responsible for reviewing students' assignments and providing extensive feedback on their pieces of writing. Students' writing is a challenge, as she noticed earlier at Stellenbosch University and the Education Faculty because they struggle to comprehend the assignment questions and how to write in a logical right manner, cohesive academic work. At the beginning of the year, she also realized some students find it difficult to structure proper sentences. These problems have been happening for a while as students were complaining about the medium of instruction, which is English. She has decided to take the initiative of developing a multilingual booklet with her colleagues from the language unit. As universities have implemented blended learning, it's easy for students to access information online.

Multilingualism, which is the focus of this article, is derived from two Latin words, namely "multi", which means many, and "lingua", which means language (Bussmann 1996). Thus multilingualism is referred to as the ability of a speaker to express themselves in several languages with equal and native-like proficiency. According to the language policy for higher education LPHE, (2002: p.15) "guides the promotion of multilingualism and development of African languages as academic languages and institutions of Higher Education were given the responsibility of developing their three-year strategic plans to implement multilingualism projects". This is supported by National Census (2011), that 75% of the South African population uses an African language as their first language. claim that universities should ensure that there are initiatives for the development and use of African languages (Kaschula and Maseko 2014). Moreover "students comprehend better when they are taught through their mother tongue or indigenous language" Afolabi (2020, p.203). Government and stakeholders in education pay more attention to the colonial language education system, and they use it as a medium of instruction than the indigenization languages, although the South African Constitution (1996) recognizes eleven official languages, namely: Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sesotho, Setswana, Sepedi, siSwati, Tshivenda, and Xitsonga. Section 29 (p.2) states that "Everyone has a right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions where that education is reasonably practicable". In addition, the National Policy on Education (2014) claims that the government will ensure the medium of instruction is principally the mother tongue or language of the immediate community to teach students from early childhood to the first three years in primary education.

2.5 Benefits of Multilingualism

Barasa, (2005, p. 300) claims that "it is estimated that over a billion people in the world speak more than one language fluently". Kolosova and Poplavskaya (2018) found that the most important global trend in twenty-first-century education is its integration and internationalization, creating the conditions for forming a single-world educational space. Multilingualism can refer to the multilingual language abilities of an individual or the state of having more than one language when referring to that society, more specifically, is concerning to this research, within a classroom (cf. Baker, 1996: p.4; Kemp, 2009:12; Van Huyssteen, 2002: p.69).

A few teachers used their mother tongue to interact with those students whose mother tongue is similar to their language when they teach. Prasad and Poudel (2010: p.127) claim that most teachers agreed that there should be multilingual teaching methods because only when the students get exposure to their language will they be able to grasp the real meaning of the concepts or information. R'boul (2021: p.7) stated that "Broadening the scope of intercultural communication research and allowing for epistemological transformation cannot be done without first unlearning White, Western, Northern centric discourses to consider other forms of conceptualizing intercultural communication".

In response to the need for multilingualism, a glossary was created to include the definitions of key terms in the three most common languages in the Western Cape province of South Africa – English, Afrikaans, and IsiXhosa (See Figure 1).

ENGLISH	AFRIKAANS	ISIXHOSA
CREATE design, formulate, build, invent, create, compose, generate, derive, modify, develop	SKEP genereer, beplan, produseer, skep, ontwerp, maak 'n hipotese, uitvinding, ontwikkel, kategoriseer, voeg saam, hersien, herskryf, som op	YENZA yila, qulunqa, -akha, qamba, yenza, qamba, velisa, fumana, guqula, phuhlisa
EVALUATE choose, support, relate, determine, defend, judge, grade, compare, contrast, argue, justify, support, convince, select, evaluate	EVALUEER kontroleer, kritiseer, beoordeel, stel voor, regverdig, maak 'n gevolgtrekking, verdedig, verduidelik, evalueer, assesseer, interpreteer, ondersteun, kontrasteer	VAVANYA khetha, xhasa, balisa, fumanisa/gqiba, khusela, gweba, grade, thelekisa, qathanisa, xoxa, thethelela, xhasa, bonisa, khetha, vavanya

Figure 2.1 Multilingual translations

2.6 Punctuation

The section focuses on the various punctuation marks and their link to grammar. When punctuation is used poorly, it can obscure the meaning of the written text or create ambiguity. According to Mogahed (2012), the use of punctuation marks in academic writing has an effect on translation. Punctuation marks, according to Kirkman (2006), are necessary components of writing, one for grammatical aims and the other for rhetorical purposes. According to Field (2009), the comma should not be used in place of a full stop in English, and a sentence with two main clauses separated by a comma is improper; instead, use a full stop, a conjunction, or a semicolon to unite them. Furthermore, in grammatical words, adjective and adverb clauses and phrases might be necessary or non-essential (Woods, 2006). One of the reasons that punctuation in students' academic assignment writing must be exact is that misunderstandings might develop, uncertainty can ruin their work, arguments can become 'lost,' and marks can be removed for lack of clarity.

In response to students' poor understanding of punctuation, a section was included on its proper use, as is described in Figure 2.

3
COLON
:

A colon is used to introduce a list of items.

- ✗ I have three majors, including: mathematics, computing and physics.
- ✓ I have three majors, including mathematics, computing and physics.
- ✓ I have three majors: mathematics, computing and physics.
- ✗ I study: mathematics, computing and physics.
- ✓ I study mathematics, computing and physics.

A colon is used to introduce a word, phrase or full sentence.

- ✗ Every student knows to: study.
- ✓ Every student knows what to do: study.
- ✗ It's an absolute inspiration: Students who excel despite difficult circumstances.
- ✓ It's an absolute inspiration: students who excel despite difficult circumstances.
- ✗ The university bus was involved in an accident: two students were injured.
- ✓ The university bus was involved in an accident: Two students were injured.

Only capitalise the item following a colon if it is the start of a complete sentence.

- ✗ She got what she worked for: The SRC position.
- ✓ She got what she worked for: the SRC position.

A colon is used before quoted text.

- ✗ Karima said "I haven't studied for tomorrow's test."
- ✓ Karima said: "I haven't studied for tomorrow's test."

Figure 2.2: Punctuation

2.7 Bloom's Taxonomy

The introduction to Bloom's taxonomy for first-year students is critical for their academic work after they enrol at a higher education institution. Bloom (1913-1999) was an educational psychologist who was passionate about helping students learn better. Created in 1956, Bloom's Taxonomy provides a framework for developing strong learning objectives for children. It serves as a toolbox that teachers and students can use to classify and organise learning objectives (Akintolu, Dlamini and Letseka, 2022). In the late 1940s, Bloom and other educators worked on a framework to identify educational aims and objectives, which resulted in three learning categories: cognitive domain, affective domain, and psychomotor domain. Knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation are among the categories. Later, the six key features were changed and classified as remembering, understanding, applying, analysing, evaluating, and lastly creating (Crowe, Dirks, & Wenderoth, 2008:369).

BLOOM'S TAXONOMY
Bloom's taxonomy is a classification system used to define and distinguish different levels of human cognition: **thinking, learning and understanding**

TAKSONOMIE VAN BLOOM
Bloom se taksonomie is 'n klassifikasiesistelsel wat gebruik word om verskillende vlakke van menslike kognisie te definieer en te onderskei: **denke, leer en verstaan**

ITEKZONOMI KABLOOM
Itekzonomi kaBloom yinkqubo yokuhlela esetyenziselwa ukuchaza ngokunabileyo nokwahlula amanqanaba ahlukileyo okuqondisisa kwabantu: **ukucinga, ukufunda nokuqonda**

	ENGLISH	AFRIKAANS	ISIXHOSA
	CREATE design, formulate, build, invent, create, compose, generate, derive, modify, develop	SKEP genereer, beplan, produseer, skep, ontwerp, maak 'n hipotese, uitvinding, ontwikkel, kategoriseer, voeg saam, hersien, herskryf, som op	YENZA yila, qulunga, -akha, qamba, yenza, qamba, velisa, fumana, guqula, phuhlisa
	EVALUATE choose, support, relate, determine, defend, judge, grade, compare, contrast, argue, justify, support, convince, select, evaluate	EVALUEER kontroleer, kritiseer, beoordeel, stel voor, regverdig, maak 'n gevolgtrekking, verdedig, verduidelik, evalueer, assesseer, interpreteer, ondersteun, kontrasteer	VAVANYA khetha, xhasa, balisa, fumanisa/gqiba, khusela, gweba, grade, thelekisa, qathanisa, xoxa, thethelela, xhasa, bonisa, khetha, vavanya

Figure 2.3 Blooms taxonomy translated verbs

3. Conclusions and Recommendations: Proposed Implementation and Evaluation

The booklet, which was produced as an open educational resource is available here: <http://https://mlg.cput.ac.za/resources/>

It is envisaged that it can be used in all four modes of learning described in Figure 2.3, depending on the level of Bloom's taxonomy at which the learning is pitched. At the level of knowledge, the booklet can be used as a resource for obtaining basic information, as well as drill and practice. Then, while the learners become accustomed to the work, they could be immersed in exercises where they begin to understand and apply the concepts. At the level of analysis and evaluation, they could work in the construction quadrant, and construct their own sentences and paragraphs. Finally, when they are proficient in the language, they could integrate all their skills to synthesize and create new works of their own, as is shown in Figure 3.1.

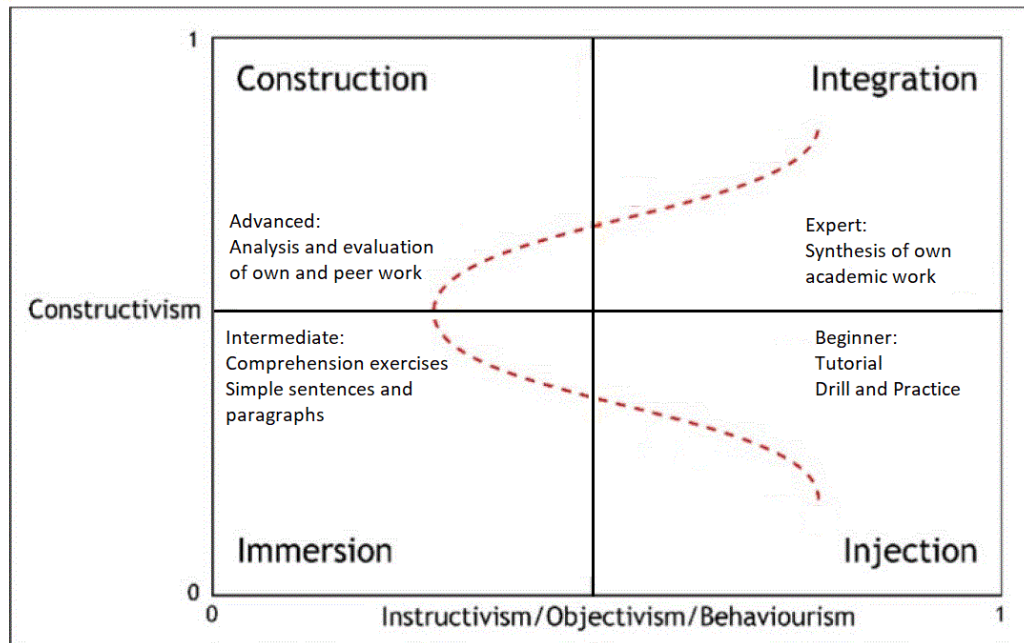


Figure 3.1 The proposed use of the booklet in all levels of blended learning

Limitations of this research are that the model has not yet been tested on a target population, and further research will be needed to develop exercises that accompany the booklet for each of the proposed quadrants of learning.

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