

The Teaching & Learning Cycle: Writing an Explanation

Theme: System Explanation (of the female reproductive system)

Level: Foundation VCAL (low-level literacy)

Resource Guide

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Learning Context

River Nile School delivers the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) to female refugee and asylum seekers aged between 16-24. The majority of students come from Horn of Africa countries, and most have had disrupted education. All students are EAL learners and as part of the VCAL program, there is a large focus on developing literacy.

The group that this resource was implemented with was a small group of learners (between 4-8 students attend on most days) who have very low levels of literacy and some have been diagnosed with mild intellectual difficulties prior to arriving at RNS (NB: we do not always agree with the diagnosis of these students as the assessments that are done with them are not designed or appropriate for EAL learners).

This resource was designed to introduce students to the female reproductive system, with the culminating task being to write two paragraphs about the female reproductive system.



Building knowledge of the field: Learning intentions and success criteria

Establish the learning intention in simple terms:

- Write two paragraphs describing the female reproductive system

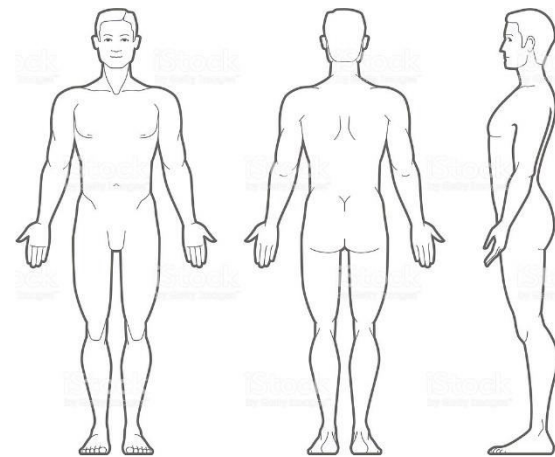
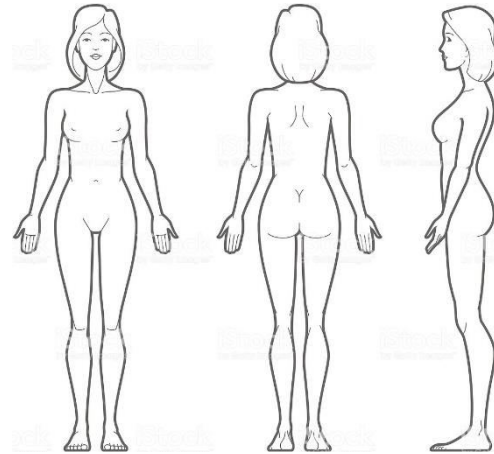
Explicitly identify success criteria that correspond with each stage. The success criteria for this stage are:

- *I know the names of parts of the female reproductive system (ovary/ovaries, fallopian tubes, uterus, vagina, eggs)*
- *I can label the parts of the female reproductive system on a diagram*
- *I can identify the parts of the female reproductive system on a diagram*



Building knowledge of the field: Activating Prior Knowledge

1. Present students with two blank outlines, one of a male and one of a female.
2. Working in pairs, students label the body parts that they know
3. Report back to the class - teacher labels a large outline of a male and female that can remain up in the classroom as a reference point
4. Students draw their own diagram in their books and label it

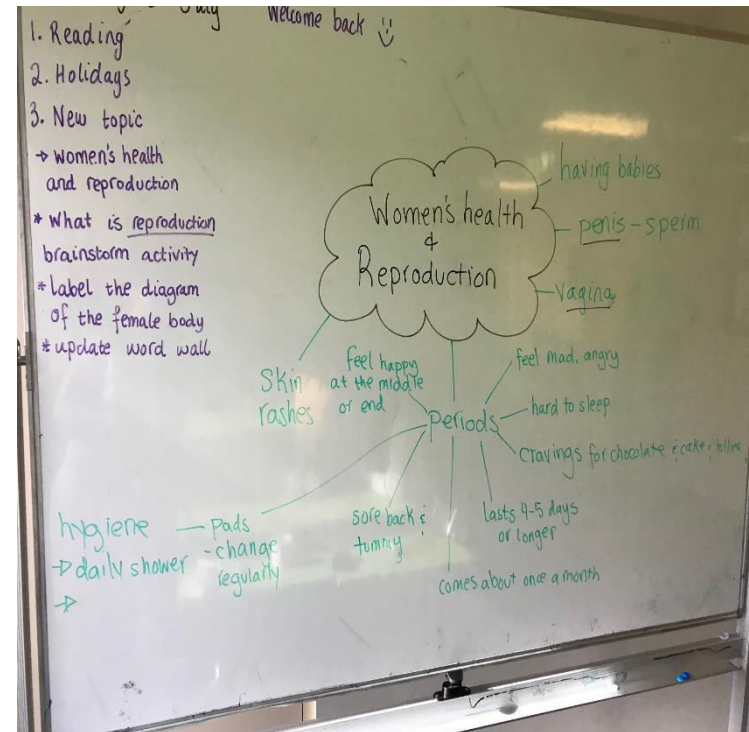


Building knowledge of the field:

Activating Prior Knowledge - Brainstorm

Ask students questions to find out what they already know about the female reproductive system:

- ▶ What does reproduce mean?
- ▶ What happens inside a woman's body?
- ▶ How do women have babies?
- ▶ Are periods linked to having babies?



Building knowledge of the field:

Viewing

- ▶ View a short video describing the female reproductive system titled menstruation
https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/menstruation.html?WT.ac=ctg#kha_21
- ▶ ** This activity will include multiple opportunities for students to view the short clip**

Prior to viewing:

- Write the title on the board
“menstruation”
- Brainstorm what students know about this topic prior to viewing (activating prior knowledge)

First view:

- Watch, then ask the questions:
What did you see?
What did you hear?

Second (& more if needed) view:

- Instruct students to write down important/key words during/after watching
 - Students share key words with the class.
 - Teacher writes the key words on the board (spelling and pronunciation can be a focus here)
 - Students work in pairs to reconstruct with a partner the definition of the key terms and their understanding of the reproductive system (NB: this task took many more viewings with this group)
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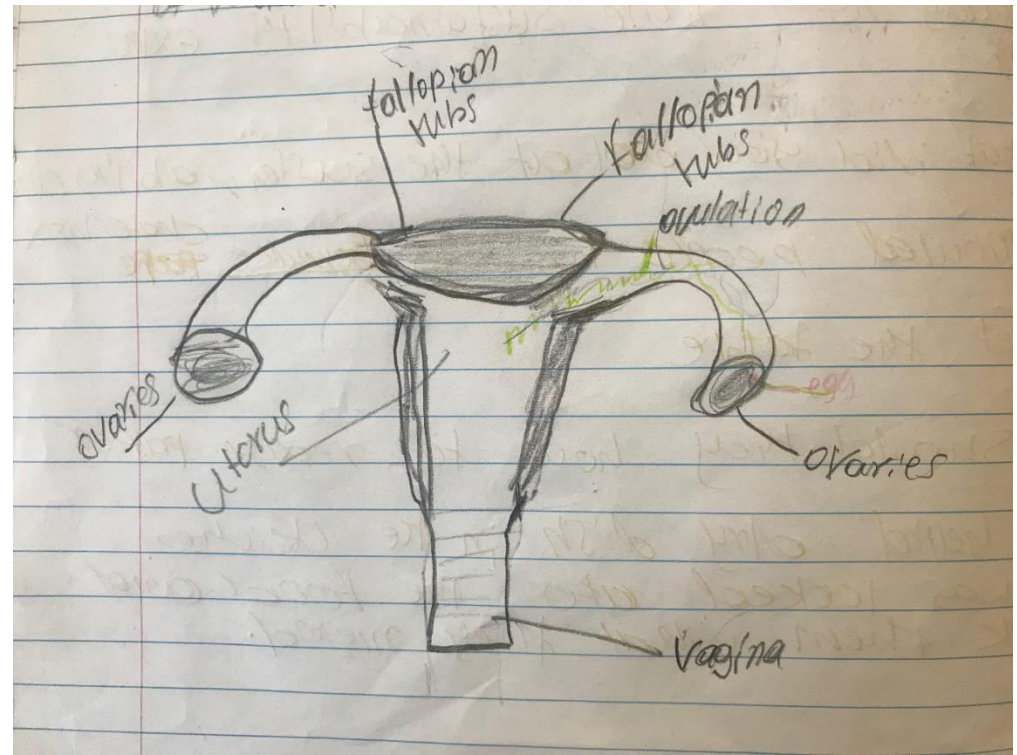
Building knowledge of the field: Viewing (continued)

Prior to third view:

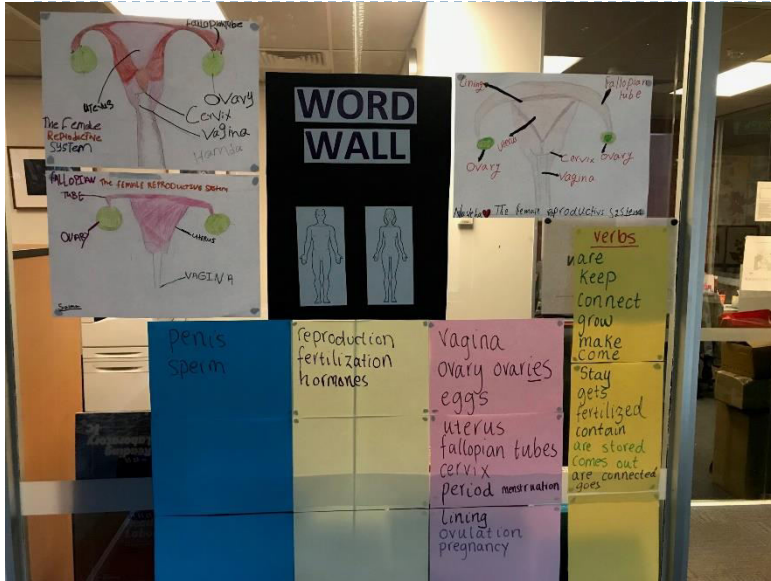
Teacher draws an unlabeled diagram on the board of the female reproductive system and students copy in their books (alternatively the teacher could also provide an unlabeled diagram to students to label).

Third (& more if needed) view:

Reconstruct through drawings – students label the diagram during/after this viewing



Building knowledge of the field: Developing vocabulary – word wall



- As new words are introduced, they are written on the word wall (key terms, key verbs for system explanation)
- Colour coding for male and female systems/parts
- Include key verbs on the word wall to assist when students get to the stage of sentence construction
- Throughout learning tasks, students can refer back to the list on the wall if needed
- Place student drawn diagrams on the wall for them to refer to

Building knowledge of the field:

Draft

- ▶ After completing the activities involved in building knowledge of the field, ask students to write a draft about what they have learnt about the reproductive system.
- ▶ Keep the drafts for once the whole teaching-learning cycle is complete when there will be time to reflect on the students development throughout the cycle.
- ▶ This could be done at the end of each stage in the TLC.



Supported reading:

Success criteria

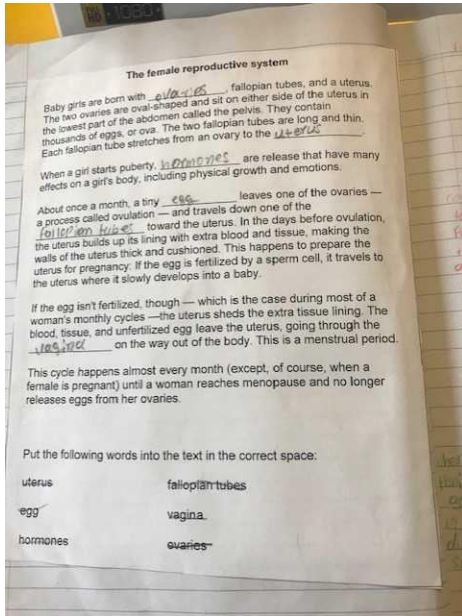
Two texts were selected to give students more information about the female reproductive system - both were modified to be accessible to students. They needed considerable scaffolding to access the texts, even in modified format.

Success Criteria

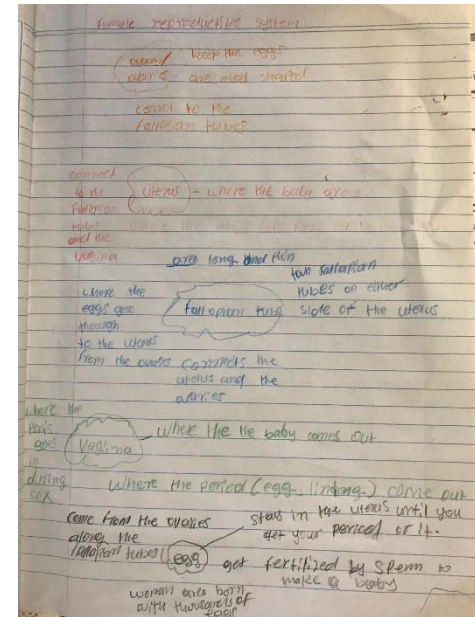
- ▶ I know what the purpose of the text is
- ▶ I can find the important terms in the text
- ▶ I can find adjectives that describe parts of the female reproductive system
- ▶ I can find verbs that describe the function of parts of the female reproductive system



Supported reading: Modelled and collaborative reading



1. Teacher reads text to students emphasizing the key vocabulary, and descriptions and functions of each of the key terms



2. Students complete a **cloze** exercise after reading the texts where key vocabulary has been removed

3. Students complete a matching activity – matching the key parts of the reproductive system with their definition

4. Students complete a brainstorming activity about the parts of the female reproductive system based on the texts that they have read.

Learning about the genre:

Success criteria

I wrote a model text to demonstrate what the target text would look like. It was divided into two paragraphs. The first paragraph introduces four of the important parts of the female reproductive system (ovaries, fallopian tubes, uterus, vagina). The second paragraph describes the female reproductive system, using the passive voice, with 'the egg' as the focus. All sentences were written in terms of what the egg does to make it very formulaic for students to follow and reproduce later.

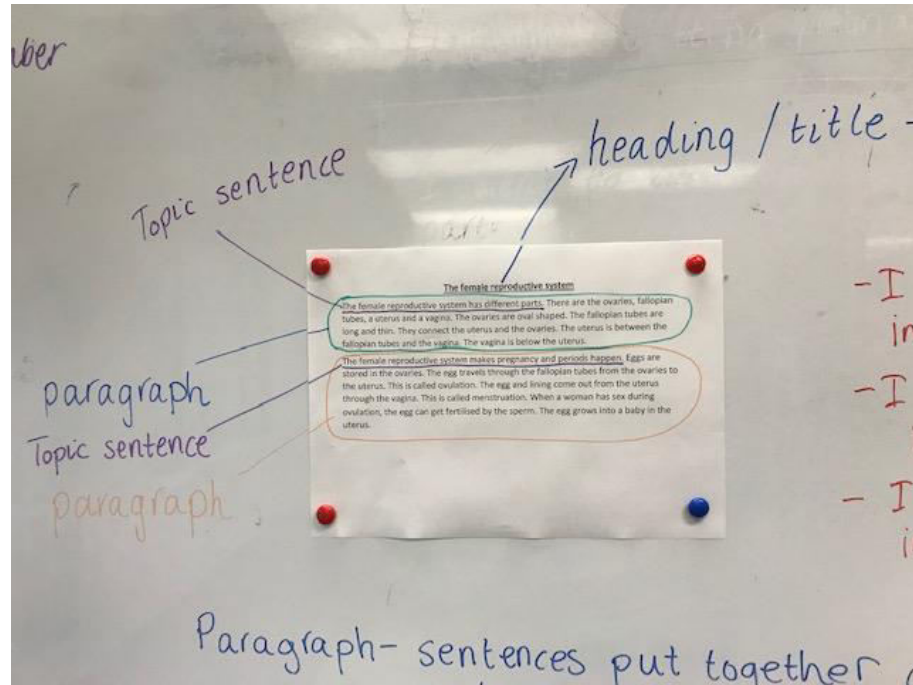
Success criteria:

- I can make sentences about the female reproductive system
- I can identify a paragraph
- I can identify a topic sentence
- I know the purpose of a topic sentence



Learning about the genre: Modelled reading & analyse model of text

1. Teacher reads text to students emphasizing the key vocabulary, and descriptions and functions of each of the key terms



2. Identify features of the text, eg heading/title, paragraphs and topic sentences. Explain what each of these are and the purpose of them

3. Sequencing activity – text is cut up into sentence strips and students order them, to ensure they can identify topic sentence.

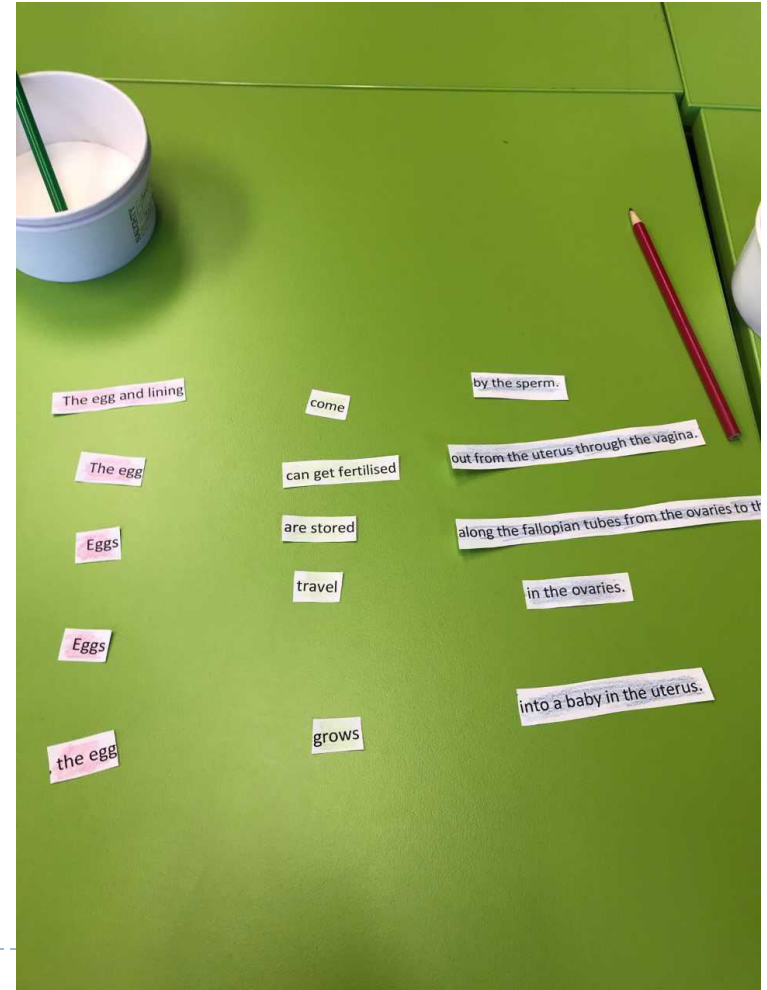
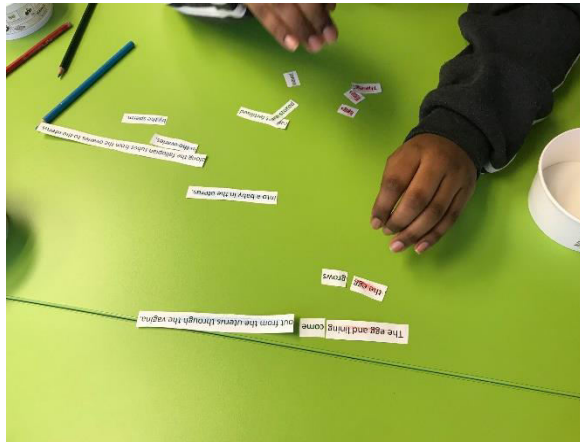


Learning about the genre: Functional grammar

Using functional grammar – students reconstruct sentences in the target text to help them identify the order and structure of sentences.

- ▶ *Circumstance: when, where, how, why, etc*
- ▶ *Participant: who/what are taking part*
- ▶ *Process - what's happening*

Example: **Eggs** are stored in the ovaries



Supported Writing:

Joint reconstruction – sentence focus

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Who/what	What's happening	Where/when/extra information
Eggs	<u>are</u> stored	in the ovaries.
The egg	goes	through the fallopian tubes
The egg	goes	to the uterus.
The egg	comes out	as a period
The egg	comes out	from the vagina.
The egg and the lining	come out	from the vagina.

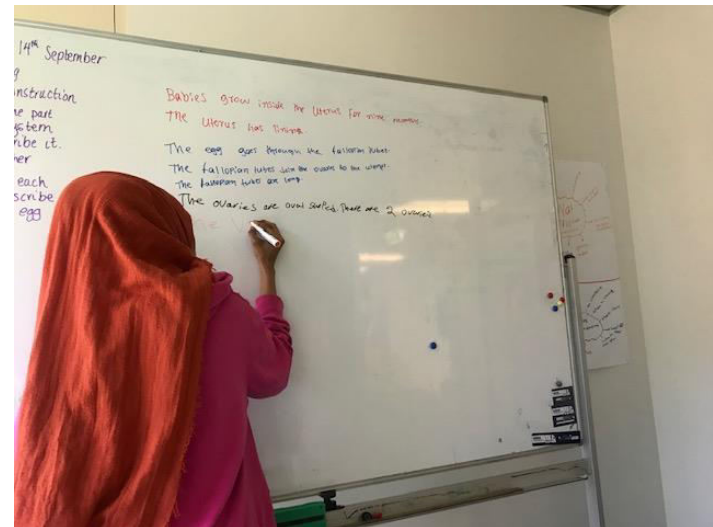
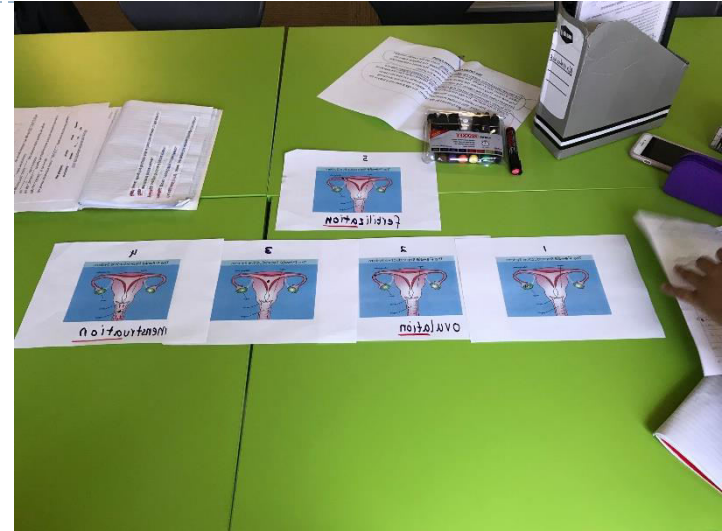
Teacher elicits contributions from students and demonstrates how to shape them into a coherent sentence using functional grammar (e.g. participant + process + circumstance). The focus of the sentences is the role of the egg in the female reproductive system.



Supported Writing:

Joint reconstruction – paragraph focus

Using scaffolds – a flow chart of five steps of what the egg does in the female reproductive system - small groups of students construct a sentence(s) about each step. They then write them on the board to form a paragraph. The group constructs a topic sentence retrospectively.



Independent use of the genre:

The end goal

The end goal – assessment:

Students write two paragraphs about the female reproductive system; paragraph one identifying/describing the parts; paragraph two explaining the role of the egg in the female reproductive system.

Teacher supports students with the drafting and editing process.

Once completed, students reviewed their work and looked back over their initial draft to see how their writing had progressed.

NB: students are not to refer to previous written forms of the text but can refer to the word wall which has a diagram, key vocabulary and key verbs.

