

Indexing Assignment

1. Document Analysis

In order to form a subject analysis of this document, I first read the byline, headline, and full text of the article. Had there been an abstract, table of contents, or other aids, I would have read those; however, in their absence and considering the extreme brevity of the article, it would be hard to justify not reading every word of the article. I paid particular attention to the first sentence of each paragraph, since that's what we were told to do in grade school when determining the subject of passages was on standardized tests all the time, but I'm afraid key sentences were more often than not buried inside paragraphs. To this extent, I followed the directions in the ISO standard, but as much as I can analyze my thought process, I considered each sentence or even each phrase individually and decided whether it expressed a central idea or a tangential one. If I had to classify my method using Wilson's terminology, it would probably be the purposive method, though I find it hard to think of it consciously that way.

2. Subject Description

The document is a review of a book about the role of school in a society where many children have parents who both work. According to the book's author, schools should educate both boys and girls about domestic skills such as cooking, child care, small repairs, and maintenance.

3. Subject Analysis: Derived Terms

My guiding principle in forming all three sets of terms was to let each term describe a different aspect of the subject in the hope that all five together would form a more complete picture than each one alone.

- "schoolhome"

This is a non-standard term but one which is used not only in the article but also in the title of the book of which this article is a partial review. Furthermore, it encapsulates better than any other the merging of school and home.

- “school’s responsibility”
This phrase is clearly imprecise and inadequate but expresses better than any other the idea of the school’s role.
- “three C’s (Care, Concern, Connection)”
I chose to include the whole phrase in order to allow people to search either by the three full words or by the “short form.” This is the phrase that appeared in the text (the title is different!).
- “domestic curriculum”
Although this phrase inadequately expresses the kind of curriculum espoused by the book and described by the article, it is short and not entirely false. It is also a phrase by which a user might potentially search (as opposed to the non-standard “schoolhome”).
- “hidden curriculum”
Martin refers to the “hidden curriculum” of misogyny in schools.

4. Subject Analysis: Assigned Terms

- “Care, Concern, Communication (three C’s)”
Other than changing the order around a little bit (and substituting “communication” for “connection” because I think it is probably the right version), I would assign this term little changed from its derived form, for the reasons given above.
- “school – moral purpose”
I debated the words “purpose” and “role” for this term and settled on “purpose” because it is roughly synonymous with “role” in one sense but also has another connotation which “role” does not. This heading has the same purpose as “school’s responsibility” above.
- “education – domestics – gender roles”
Similar to “domestic curriculum” but more specific.
- “hidden curriculum”
(as above)

5. **Subject Analysis: ERIC thesaurus**

- “School Responsibility”
These keywords were also present in the article.
- “School Role”
Similar to but different from responsibility.
- “Humanistic Education”
This heading speaks to the effect that the author says the revamped curriculum would have upon students’ emotional health, attachments, etc.
- “Home Economics”
This is the main curriculum discussed in the article.
- “Hidden Curriculum”
(as above)

6. **Discussion and Analysis: Comparison**

All three sets of terms cover more of the article’s subject than I first formulated in my two sentences, which in hindsight were very inadequate, superficial, and incomplete. I chose terms that complemented each other and tried to avoid duplication of meaning, so the three methods each have four or five terms that express different aspects of the article. On the other hand, none of the terms use complete sentences, so it’s harder to tell what the terms really mean or what they mean in combination. They’re like lots of nouns with no verbs between them.

To some extent, deriving terms was easiest since I had a limited vocabulary of terms that I could choose from the document, and it was easy to eliminate obviously inappropriate terms; on the other hand, it was hard to figure out which terms would make the most sense out of context. The final product does represent the article’s language very well, and it is probably likely that someone who uses that same language and discourse would find the article fairly easily. On the other hand, someone unfamiliar with that language could have trouble. Furthermore, I found it hard to express the exact subject of the article, since the words and phrases of the article had been written for explaining ideas, not for encapsulating and classifying them. The article could take a whole sentence to express an idea, where I had only a few words. There simply weren’t

very good phrases that clearly expressed what the document was about. The aspect of the “domestic curriculum” was the aspect that was the worst represented by its subject term; that term very badly oversimplifies the ideas in the article.

Freely assigning terms gave me some welcome leeway to make terms both more precise and more standard, but I am unsure of my choices of vocabulary. Would a user find my vocabulary choices more standard than the author’s? I have no idea. I may have given the terms a semi-standardized form, but I doubt that my vocabulary substitutions clarified much, as I am unfamiliar with the subject area. Thus the expression of the subject matter is probably not very good, and the coverage is also not as good as the other two methods, though better than my subject description. I was happier with my addition of “gender roles” to the terms for the domestic curriculum, because it

The ERIC thesaurus terms were good for overall conceptual coverage; not only do they use standard vocabulary and refer to ideas in a standard way, but they often have accompanying elaborations about what they mean! The terms “humanistic education” and “hidden curriculum” together probably form the best subject description of any two terms, since they hint at the broader societal implications of the educational reforms proposed in the article. On the other hand, these terms lack some precision.

6. Discussion and Analysis: Evaluation

It is really hard to decide which indexing language is best, because they all have their strengths and weaknesses, even for specific aspects like expression of the subject matter or access.

I believe that the assigned language expresses the subject matter most precisely, because it makes as much use as possible of the document’s own language while disambiguating some words and phrases. On the other hand, one of the strengths of the ERIC thesaurus is that it clearly places subject terms in the context of other terms, so that a term is informed not only by the words that make it up but by the other terms which stand in relation to it. That context gives ERIC terms a deeper meaning than stand-alone assigned terms can achieve by themselves, and that deeper meaning makes up for the lack of precision. I am unable to reach a definite conclusion about which method expresses the subject matter “best.”

I believe that the ERIC thesaurus terms provide the best access to the article, because they are more easily understandable and more easily placed in context. Furthermore, they consist of terms which are more likely to appear in a keyword search. Finally, they are standardized, so it is easier for a user to find a subject term that describes an information need and to search for documents linked to that subject term. That search strategy would be hard or impossible with a derived or assigned indexing language.