

Effective Practices for the Mainstream Classroom

Goal for students: to develop academic competence while also developing English proficiency

Most of the following recommended strategies are promoted as good teaching strategies **for all students**. This is an important point because teachers don't usually have the time to prepare a separate lesson for their LEP (*Limited English Proficient*) students and/or to work with them regularly on an individual basis.

A. Total Physical Response (TPR)

TPR activities **greatly multiply the amount of language input that can be handled by beginner learners**. These activities tie comprehension with performance in non-threatening, low-anxiety, whole-body responses. 5-10 minutes is recommended at the beginning or end of each class. Develops listening skills, vocabulary, and English word order.

Steps:

1. The teacher develops scripts that provide students with the vocabulary related to learning situations such as using a pay phone, getting ready for school, shopping, preparing a sandwich, conducting an experiment etc. (*May vary according to level*)
2. Students follow the teacher's set of commands to act out the event.
3. The teacher and students make a written copy.
4. Students play the roles of the teacher/reader of the series and performer of the actions.

B. Cooperative Learning (CL)

CL is student-centered learning activities completed by students in heterogeneous groups of two to six. Students of different linguistic and educational backgrounds and different skill levels work together on a common task. CL assigns roles to each member of the group. Through a shared learning activity, LEP students benefit from observing learning strategies used by their peers. LEP students further benefit from face-to-face verbal interactions, which promote communication that is natural and meaningful. Small group learning enhances LEP students' language acquisition. CL is proven to be **effective for both academically advanced and lower achieving students**.

C. Language Experience Approach

The student is asked to tell about his/her "experience" (a drawing, something brought from home, group experience, topic to discuss). The student then dictates his/her story to the teacher or another student. The writer copies down the story exactly as it is dictated (without correcting). The teacher reads the story back and students read along. Students can rewrite the stories later as their language development progresses and then illustrate them.

D. Dialogue Journals

A dialogue journal is a written conversation in which a student and teacher communicate regularly (daily, weekly, etc.). Students write as much as they choose and the teacher writes back regularly, responding to students' questions and comments, introducing new topics or asking questions, and promoting language development. **The teacher never corrects students' entries. The students must be assured that journals won't be graded and that nobody else will read them.**

E. Games

Games are especially helpful when the repetition of words or concepts is necessary to increase a student's knowledge of vocabulary and concepts that require memorization. It is recommended that competition be downplayed for most games, that **the rules are few, and that they be clearly explained and demonstrated before the game begins.**

F. Content-Centered Language Learning

Content-based ESL instruction is a method **that integrates English as a Second Language instruction with subject matter instruction.** The technique focuses not only on learning a second language, but on using that language as a medium to learn mathematics, science, social studies, or other academic subjects. The theory behind it is that language acquisition is based on input that is meaningful and understandable to the learner (Krashen, 1981). Research shows that language is effectively learned when it is a vehicle of instruction, not the object; students reach a high level of second language development while mastering subject matter.

It is taught by content area teacher or by the ESL teacher, or some combination. **By using modified curricula and appropriate teaching strategies,** Content-Centered Language Learning can be used wherever and whenever English language learners receive academic instruction in English. Input is made comprehensible through a variety of means: **demonstrations, visual aids, graphic organizers, hands-on-materials, and manipulations of the content.**

Basic principles for teaching English to LEP students through content areas:

- Write the lesson's objectives and activities legibly on the board
- Develop and maintain routines
- List instructions step-by-step
- Present information in a variety of ways. Put information in a context that is more comprehensible to the students. Emphasize key words and phrases through intonation, repetition, and summarizing on the chalkboard. Give concrete examples. Use pictures and charts. Clarify new concepts (e.g. "The government's funds were diminished. That means the government was almost out of money.")
- Provide frequent summation of the salient points of the lesson
- Try to answer all questions that your students ask, but avoid overly detailed explanations. Point to objects and pictures, or demonstrate actions to help get the meaning across
- Use a variety of questioning techniques
- Check for understanding often (e.g.: "In Arizona, rainfall is minimal during most of the year." To check for understanding, you might ask: "Does it rain much in Arizona?")

G. Multi-Sensory Approach

- Increase "doing" or hands-on activities
- Use as many different kinds of media as possible
- Encourage small group and paired projects
- Increase use of demonstrations

H. Adapting and Modifying Materials

ESL teachers **collaborate** with content area colleagues.

Adapting (Using the same materials as the rest of the class)

Examples: On a math test, delete word problems and add more computational problems, or grade only the computation part of the test. Social studies: grade memorization (like states and capitals), or matching words and definitions. Let LEP students draw the definition of words for a spelling assignment. For a science project: have students create a detailed picture or model of the subject being studied (heart, plant, weather) with labels copied in English.

Modifying (Using different or additional materials, teaching the same content)

Examples: Use assignments from a lower level textbook or workbook that correspond to what the class is learning at the time. Use lower level reading materials.

- Remember:**
- 1. Materials still need to be interesting!**
 - 2. Vocabulary can be simplified, but key technical terms must be retained.**
 - 3. Always consider students' language development.**

Ask some of your native-speaking students to simplify the textbook by rewriting the chapters. The task can be more manageable by giving each native-speaking student a few pages to rewrite. The simplified materials not only help your LEP students, but also other students who may find the regular text too difficult. The students who do the rewriting have the opportunity to review and reinforce initial concepts and understandings. Ask native-speaking students who take comprehensible notes to duplicate them for LEP students to use as study aids.

Tips for adapting materials (reflecting the student's language proficiency):

1. Put the topic sentence first, with supporting detail in the following sentences.
2. Reduce the number of words in a sentence and the number of sentences in a paragraph.
3. Consider word order. Use the subject-verb-object pattern for most sentences.
4. Simplify vocabulary that will be used, but retain key concepts and technical terms.
5. Limit the use of synonyms on a written evaluation and in texts.
6. Introduce new vocabulary with clear definitions and repeat those new words as frequently as possible within the text passage.
7. Use the simpler verb tenses such as present, simple past, and simple future.
8. Write in the active voice, not in the passive voice.
9. Eliminate repetitive clauses with "who," "which," or "whom" wherever possible. Make the clause into a separate sentence.
10. Convert the content into maps, charts, tables, lists, diagrams, semantic webs, etc.

Sources:

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