

Strategies for English Language Learners

INTRODUCTION

Cause and effect, compare and contrast, evaluation, analysis, and synthesis of complex issues, events, and ideas are processes that are highly dependent upon background knowledge, content learning, critical thinking skills and high level language proficiency. Heavy reliance on proficient language skills and the general lack of hands-on and manipulative activities in many History/Social Science classrooms, creates incredible challenges for English Language Learners (ELL) in accessing and understanding abstract concepts. Unless teachers are sensitive to the educational background and language needs of second language learners, much of the valuable content of the History/Social Sciences will remain inaccessible and incomprehensible by students.

Below is a list of strategies and activities that can assist the classroom teacher in providing content that is comprehensible for second language learners.

Adjust Delivery

By adjusting the level of speech and simplifying input, the affective filter for learning is lowered and information can be more easily comprehended by non-native speakers:



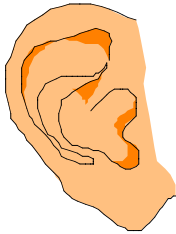
- Repeat key words and phrases
- Speak slowly
- Pronounce words clearly
- Control vocabulary and use of idiomatic expressions
- Control the complexity and length of sentences
- Define words with double meanings
- Use body language, gestures, and facial expressions
- Use props, objects, and visual aids to convey meaning

Build Background Knowledge

Activating and building background knowledge helps students identify and relate to key concepts to be learned and helps teachers understand what it is students need to know and be able to do to reach the identified standard. This can be accomplished through the following activities:

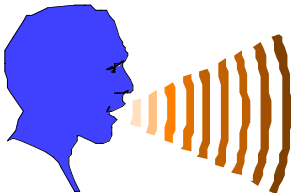
- Brainstorm what it is students already know about the topic
- Use study prints, posters, and other visuals to prompt discussions
- Use quickwrite activities to allow for uninterrupted, free form writing of ideas
- Utilize Venn Diagrams to identify similarities and differences of ideas or events

Listening Techniques



- Tape record lessons for English Learner (EL) students to replay more than once.
- Provide students an outline or notes before lectures.
- Provide “advance organizers” to help students focus on key ideas when listening to presentations.
- Face the class when speaking.
- Write instructions on the chalkboard or overhead projector.
- Avoid overly-complex speaking patterns but do not speak abnormally slowly or loudly.
- Demonstrate ideas and concepts whenever possible with the use of realia, visuals, media, gestures, and body language. Reference concrete objects and shared experiences.

Speaking Techniques



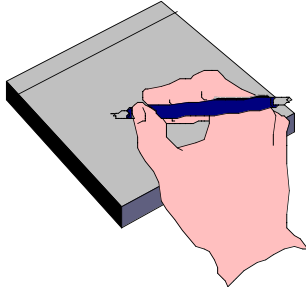
- In oral discussions, allow extra time for responses from EL students.
- Provide “practice” time for students to respond orally .
- Provide opportunities for EL students to work in small groups with native English speakers.
- Encourage EL students to express their points of view and opinions on different issues.

Reading Techniques



- Preview material in the student’s native language.
- Provide alternative reading material that is more comprehensible to students (easier editions of textbook, magazine articles, newspaper clippings, etc.)
- Re-write portions of textbook for easier reading.
- Tape record portions of reading material for students to “read along” when working independently.
- Read aloud selected passages. Discuss and explain ideas and concepts as you go along.
- Paraphrase and summarize key concepts and ideas.
- Provide support materials (bilingual dictionaries, glossary of terms, target vocabulary lists, cloze activities, integrated language, contextual cues, etc.).

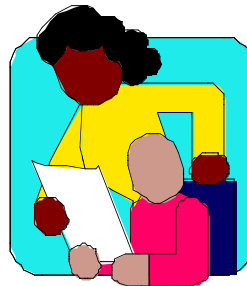
Writing Techniques



- Dictate sentences for students to write. Include key vocabulary.
- Ask students to maintain a vocabulary book or glossary. Words, definitions, and native language translations should be added as new concepts are introduced.
- Encourage students to use content area vocabulary in their written work.
- Ask students to label items (diagrams, objects, maps, etc.) Labeling helps students become familiar with items and their names.
- Adjust expectations for writing based on language proficiency. For example, students at beginning proficiency levels should focus writing on recall of “who, what, where, when, and why”. As proficiency increases, encourage writing at interpretive and evaluation levels.
- Ask students to outline written material.
- Maintain Learning Logs or Double Entry Logs.
- Create reflective or synthesis journals.

Other Instructional Strategies

- Directed Reading Thinking Activity (predict, read, prove).
- SQ4R (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Record, and Review) .
- Language Experience reading materials created by students for content learning.
- Semantic Webbing/Graphic Organizers/Thinking Maps
- KWL charts
- Dramatization (Reader’s Theatre, skits, plays, role play situations, character reenactments, etc.)
- Demonstrations
- Games (flashcards, bingo, puzzles, etc.)



- Use of Manipulatives and Multimedia Materials
 - Artifacts, memorabilia, and collectibles
 - Photographs and images
 - Charts and maps
 - Timelines
 - Primary source documents (reports, records, newspapers, wills, letter, diaries, memoirs, etc.)
 - Music
 - Art
 - Filmstrips
 - Videotape
 - Technology
- Integrate historical literature and picture books
- Cooperative Learning
 - *Corners*
 - *Inside-Outside Circles*
 - *Jigsaw*
 - *Numbered Heads Together*
 - *Pairs Check*
 - *Pairs Compare*
 - *Team Discussion*
 - *Team Web*
 - *Think-Pair-Share*
 - *Three-Step interview*
- Service-learning. Provide students with opportunities to perform community service related to history/social science themes and concepts.
- Independent work
- Provide students with a variety of assessment methods to demonstrate learning