

Teaching Strategies for English Language Learners & Special Education

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ESL Strategy: Natural Approach

This ESL strategy promotes learning through total immersion within the environment. It includes daily normal interactions in a non-threatening manner to help the student learn from peers as well as teachers—people that already know the language. This method is easy to use but does not focus on the mechanics or grammatical corrections.

How to use:

1. Present the message to the student in a way they can understand
 - a. Visual aids that reiterate what is said or written.
 - b. Gestures or movements linked to words.
 - c. Speaking slowly.
 - d. Pause often.
 - e. Be clear, refrain from using idioms.
 - f. Be enthusiastic
2. Do not pressure student to learn everything at that moment. Give them time to learn.
 - a. Encourage participation
 - b. Keep anxiety levels low.

When to use:

Use the natural approach often for ESL learners. The less anxiety they have the more likely they are to learn. Providing visuals and movement will help them learn faster. The natural approach is easy to incorporate in any lesson but does require some preparation to ensure visuals and gestures are consistent. Times to use Natural Approach include:

- Before introducing new material or vocabulary words
- After a unit to review comprehension and memory
- At the beginning of the year to ensure all students understand class rules and procedures
- Before an assignment to ensure understanding of expectations
- To remediate weak skills or lack of understanding
- To practice and strengthen skill set.

Variations:

Peer to Peer Natural Approach: Partner up each ESL learner with a non ESL learner. Have the partners engage in natural conversation about the lesson and what they learned. Both learners should build on what each other is saying and help each other understand the lesson in their own words. Both learners can also review the day's vocabulary and gestures.

Natural Approach with Word Wall: Prior to the lesson ESL students provide words to the teacher that still confuses them from the previous lesson or homework assignment. These words are added to a word wall and the teacher and student formulate a gesture for each word. The word wall should be reviewed daily with all ESL learners.

Natural Approach with Personal Dictionary: ESL students maintain a personal dictionary that they add any word or phrase that gives them problems to read, say, write or understand. The student can write the meaning in their native language along with the meaning in English so they can refer to it when needed.

Resources: <https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/strategies-teaching-english-language-learners/>

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ESL Strategy: Scaffolding

This ESL strategy promotes learning through slow and manageable data input with plenty of repetition. It includes daily interactions in a non-threatening manner that progressively gets more complex. This method is easy to use and similar to that of teaching a child how to ride a bike... step by step and with a lot of assistance at first and less assistance as the task is mastered. The student will build confidence slowly and be less likely to be discouraged.

How to use:

1. I Do: say the word for the student, provide a method of relating (gesture movement), provide a picture of the word and something to visualize the word with.
2. We Do: say the word together with the student, while looking at the picture and/or making the gesture
3. You Do: have the student say the word/gesture
4. Complete these steps as needed for full understanding

Note: depending on the students level of proficiency this approach may be used in more advanced settings (i.e. instead of words a concept is provided to the student, they then repeat the concept with you and then on their own like a science project).

When to use:

Use the scaffolding approach often for ESL learners. The less anxiety they have the more likely they are to learn. Repetition and working with the student will help them learn faster. The scaffolding approach is easy to incorporate in any lesson but does require some preparation to ensure gradual integration of concepts. Times to use the Scaffolding Approach include:

- Before introducing new material or vocabulary words
- Before completing an advanced task or project
- At the beginning of the year to ensure all students understand class rules and procedures
- Before an assignment to ensure understanding of expectations
- To remediate weak skills or lack of understanding
- To practice and strengthen skill set.
- To assess prior knowledge of concept

Variations:

Reverse Scaffolding Approach: Have the ESL partner say the terms or concept first, then together you say them as you correct any miscues, the student then says the terms again. This method can be used to test the understanding of the student and correct miscues.

Scaffolding with Word Wall: Prior to the lesson ESL students provide words to the teacher that still confuses them from the previous lesson or homework assignment. These words are added to a word wall and the teacher and student formulate a gesture for each word. The word wall should be reviewed daily with all ESL learners.

Scaffolding with Personal Dictionary: ESL students maintain a personal dictionary that they add any word or phrase that gives them problems to read, say, write or understand. The student can write the meaning in their native language along with the meaning in English so they can refer to it when needed.

Resources: <https://www.fluentu.com/blog/educator-english/instruction-strategies-for-ell-students/>

ESL Strategy: Collaborative Group Work Tests

This ESL strategy promotes understanding through shared accountability learning. It includes group interactions in a non-threatening manner that promotes inclusion and input from each student to complete a test. This method is easy to with all students at the same time, it will benefit the ESL learner to be able to see the test questions and gain understanding with peers. The student will build confidence slowly as they become more familiar with their group and the content material.

How to use:

1. Group the class up balancing out ESL learners with non ESL learners.
2. Students work together to answer the test questions (only allowing to reach out to the teacher twice per group- this will support the group working together).
3. Each student answers the test questions on their own paper.
4. Monitor engagements to ensure all are participating and completing each question together (nobody should be working ahead of their group)
5. Grading is based off of “responsibility to the group”
6. Individual assessment tests are performed at a later time this is to improve concept development and understanding.

When to use:

- After introducing new material concepts
- After completing an advanced task or project
- To remediate weak skills or lack of understanding
- To practice and strengthen skill set.
- To assess knowledge of concept
- To promote group engagements and interactions.

Variations:

Peer Tutor Collaboration: Partner up each ESL learner with a non ESL learner. Have the partner help the ESL learner in understanding the test questions and writing the answer correctly. The partners work together to collectively determine the answer.

Peer Tutor Share Collaboration: Partner up each ESL learner with a non ESL learner. Have the partner help the ESL learner in understanding the test questions and writing the answer correctly. The partners work together to collectively determine the answer. After completion the partners then partner with another set of partners to compare their answers and determine the best answer.

Timed Mix and Collaborate Group Work Test: Have groups work together as instructed above but place times for completing the test. Once time runs out the groups mix and share the answers they got for a specified time period. They then are given another amount of time to complete more questions. They continue the work, mix, share process until the test is complete. This gets the students working with other partners in the class and builds engagements.

Resources: <https://www.edutopia.org/article/supporting-students-interrupted-educations>

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Special Ed Strategy: Class-wide peer tutoring

An instructional strategy that uses group/partner pairing that enhances content learning while providing immediate error correction. All students are actively engaged and participating in the learning process. This strategy influences social and communication skills necessary to promote teamwork and a safe environment in the classroom. This strategy implements peer instruction in a dual role whereas each student is either the tutor or the tutee at different points in the learning process. Success has been shown with students in diverse skill levels including those with learning disabilities, ESL students and show achievement levels. I have selected the Reciprocal Peer Tutoring model.

How to use:

1. Introduce the concept of peer tutoring to the class. The expected etiquette, dos and don'ts, best practices. (Show respect, be polite, patient, listens, rephrases, don't give answers, ask questions, be helpful and dependable.)
2. Students are given a pre-test to measure his/her current knowledge of an upcoming lesson.
3. Students are then placed in pairs to teach/ learn/evaluate each other's progress during the week for the lesson. (Pairs can be random, low proficiency with high proficiency or formal placement by the teacher.)
4. The students work together throughout the week tutoring each other on the content in lesson. They should be allotted 30 minutes a day to peer tutor. 10 minutes student A is tutor and student B is tutee, next 10 minutes student A becomes the tutee and student B the tutor. As they work their way through the pre-test they receive immediate feedback from their partner. Praise for answering the question right and re-clarification if the answer is incorrect. The last 10 minutes should be devoted to reassessing wrong answers.
5. The teacher should be monitoring all groups during the peer tutoring period. Answering questions, praising behavior or readjusting pairs if necessary.
6. At the end of the week a post-test is given by the teacher to show the learning achievement made by each student during the week.

When to use:

- Before introducing new material or vocabulary words
- Increasing reading proficiency
- Increasing efficiency in math problems
- Before an assignment to ensure understanding of expectations
- To remediate weak skills or lack of understanding
- To practice and strengthen skill set.
- To assess prior and current knowledge of concept

Variations:

Groups Tutoring: The class can be divided into groups of 4 instead of pairing. The time limit for each will be decreased to 5 minutes but the others in the group will be observing and learning from several different individuals who may help increase understanding with various inputs in rephrasing and repetition.

Mixed grade Level Tutoring: Have volunteers from higher grade levels come in and tutor younger students. This may help build the self-esteem and productivity of the younger student. The older student would use their time to review by correctly enunciating reading/words, demonstrate how to solve problem, answer questions and rephrase for understanding. The time for the student should be increased to 15 minutes allowing 15 minutes of review for the older student.

Outside Tutoring: Similar to the mixed grade partnership the teacher assigns a parent, teacher aid or volunteer to take the place of an older student in the mixed grade level partnership.

Special Ed Strategy: Self-Monitoring Strategy

The behavior management strategy, self-monitoring, is a student-centered strategy effective in improving attention behaviors and academic performance. Self-monitoring allows the student to keep track of their behavior. It empowers the student to recognize his/her behavior, increase positive social behaviors while staying on task at school. Self-monitoring is effective for practicing skills, collaborative work times and independent study.

How to use:

1. Train the student to distinguish between paying attention and not paying attention. This can be done through direct instruction and teacher modeling on/off task behaviors. Use the behaviors that you have witnessed the child display.
2. Introduce materials: self-monitoring cue tapes and self-recording sheet. (Free downloads are available at TeachingLD.org)
3. Run self-monitoring cue tapes during the activity, when the student hears the chime have the student ask himself "was I paying attention?"
4. Have the student record by marking "yes" or "no" on a self-recording sheet
5. At end of task/day (end of task - if new to the process, end of class - if have been using for a period of time) assess the recording sheet. Praise increased time on task and productivity. If student has not improved rephrase training in #1.
6. When the child is exhibiting proper behavior after 5 or 6 days start to gradually decrease use of the process.
7. Keep data on improvements in time on task and academic productivity for the student to use in parent/teacher conferences, other teachers and their student file.

When to Use:

- At the beginning of the year to ensure all students understand class rules and procedures
- To improve focus and understanding of expectations
- To remediate weak skills
- To practice and strengthen skill set while maintaining proper behavior
- To improve attention and comprehension

Variations:

Audible Self-Monitoring: Utilize cue tapes to monitor focus and grasp understanding. Interactions can be tape recorded, recorded on a CD and downloaded to the student's computer.

Timed Self-Monitoring: If recording devices are not available an egg timer can be used to time how long they have to monitor their actions. A cue or signal from a teacher can also be used in place of a timer.

Peer Aided Self-Monitoring: Assign a peer who is not likely to engage in distraction methods to help monitor their peer buddy. They can have a signal to help the buddy regain focus when it is lost.

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Special Ed Strategy: Specialized Instruction

Specialized Instruction is a rapid fire Q & A lesson that relies on proper wording, timing, sequencing and repetition to be successful. There three main components to Direct Instruction programs: design, organization, and student/teacher interactions. Program design - the teacher uses wording, timing, sequencing and repetition to focus on basic skills, when mastered it continues on to harder content. Organization of materials – groups information based on the students current skill level. Teacher/Student Interaction – teacher asks individual/class question, student/students respond immediately. This strategy has been proven effective for core content.

How to use:

1. Review the skill, what they are going to learn and why it is important for them to learn it.
2. Teacher models the procedure: Teacher models procedure to students using rapid fire questions with immediate error feedback. Direct instruction takes only a small amount of time to practice. It is quick way to reinforce learning in only 20 minutes a day.
3. Teacher leads the instruction. Normal interaction has students answering ten questions per minute. The pacing of instruction is crucial in successful teaching.
4. Teacher assesses learning. Checks for understanding.
5. Re-tests the learning. Repetition is the key factor to retention.

When to use:

- Before introducing new material (math, vocab, reading)
- After a unit to review comprehension of material
- At the beginning of the year to ensure all students understand class rules and procedures
- Before an assignment to ensure understanding of expectations or content
- To remediate weak skills or lack of understanding
- To practice and strengthen skill set.
- To improve attention and listening abilities

Variations:

Partner Specialized Instruction: Have the students break into pairs and have them take dual turns asking/answering questions. Teacher needs to monitor individual progress and participation.

Student Led Specialized Instruction: Break the class up in groups based on skill level. Have a student from each of the levels who have mastered the skill lead the rapid fire Q & A using a pre-made list of questions. Teacher needs to monitor individual progress.

Student Input and Specialized Instruction: The students create the questions either individually or as a group on a skill set by the teacher for homework or when they require more help with the skill be taught. The teacher then includes these questions into the next Q & A in that skill area.

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