Teaching English Strategies and Techniques

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ABSTRACT

This article dedicates teaching English strategies, terminology and classification of strategies, the effects of learner characteristics on strategy use, the effects of culture and context on strategy use, explicit and integrated strategy instruction, language of instruction, transfer of strategies to new tasks, and techniques.

Reading, writing and vocabulary exercises are essential building blocks for developing language fluency, but it is only part of what is needed. Students who appear fully fluent in English may nonetheless struggle to express themselves effectively in academic settings, as they lack the words and phrases needed to connect their ideas and discuss them with others. [1]

Numerous studies show that students perform better when their home culture and background knowledge are incorporated into the academic environment. When children and their families are represented and respected in the classroom, they are much more likely to be engaged and successful. [2]

Allowing students to express themselves in a safe environment and learn from one another is also a wonderful social-emotional learning opportunity that benefits the entire class, especially students of color. [3]

Educators should consider implementing the following tactics in their practice:

- Become familiar with your students' backgrounds
- Use examples that connect to their lives
- Represent students' cultures with art, music and literature
- Encourage students to tell stories in a variety of mediums: drawing, poetry, visual art, drama, essays, etc.
- Ask students to speak and write about their lives regularly in casual, low-stress ways without forcing them to share
- Allow students to use their native language and/or translation apps

Students should also be given ample opportunities to produce language, and they should receive direct feedback to increase their comprehension and improve their language skills. [4]

Strategies for increasing comprehensible input include:

- Read out loud or play audio versions of texts
- Front load vocabulary and key concepts before reading
- Provide a similar text in the student's first language
- Go beyond the textbook and include artwork, videos, guest speakers, stories
- Slow down your speech
- Use graphs and visuals when presenting

- Give students an outline of the information
- Use closed captioning for videos
- 10/2 rule: For every 10 minutes of lecture, stop for 2 minutes of student engagement

In order for students to deepen their understanding, and clarify and negotiate for meaning, they must talk about what they are learning. **Strategies for increasing language output include:**

- Provide multiple opportunities for structured and unstructured talk
- Opportunities for students to collaborate with each other
- Include open-ended questions in your lessons
- Provide daily low-stakes writing opportunities in all content areas [5]

Promote classroom interaction

When teaching English language learners, keep in mind that vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation develop faster when there are opportunities for interaction in the classroom using the language being learned. But many new teachers make the mistake of simply presenting a lesson and then pairing students up to discuss without providing guidance. [6]

She recommends that teachers explicitly model and practice academic language so that students can more fully engage with one another. This could take the form of question prompts, such as: [7]

- Can you tell me more about …?
- Let me see if I understand you …
- Following up on ___'s idea …

Teachers should also provide ample opportunities for more structured classroom interactions with a clear purpose and goal. There are hundreds of activities to consider, but here are a few ideas to get you started: [8]

- Think-pair-share
- Carousel or gallery walk
- Book clubs
- Student interviews
- Pick a Side:
  - What do you think/believe about…? Why?
  - How would you convince someone to…?

Stimulate higher-order thinking skills and use of learning strategies

Higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) are essentially critical-thinking abilities that go beyond rote memorization, concept formation and reading comprehension. Mastering HOTS is the ultimate goal of the learning process, as these competencies are needed to become an independent and creative thinker.[9]

Teachers can encourage the development of HOTS in their students by modeling and providing language scaffolding such as:

- What do you observe?
- "In this picture, I notice …"
- "I noticed that, too, and I want to add …

An example of a high school-level lesson plan that emphasizes HOTS might be having students learn about garment factory work in Cambodia, and then pairing them up to do the following: [10]

- Discuss what it might be like to sew their own clothes
- Review a video about the experience of a Cambodian garment worker
- Compose a list of the advantages and disadvantages based on the video

Embrace ELL strategies to maximize student achievement

As an educator, you work hard to make sure everyone in your class has what they need to learn and thrive. Implementing some of these innovative strategies for teaching English language learners is a great way to make content accessible for all students, regardless of language ability. [11]

Looking for more information on how to make your classroom more welcoming for all students? Read our article "**How to foster an inclusive classroom environment: Advice for educators.**" [12]

Learning strategies are the conscious thoughts and actions that learners take in order to achieve a learning goal. [13] Strategic learners have metacognitive knowledge about their own thinking and learning approaches, a good understanding of what a task entails, and the ability to orchestrate the strategies that best meet both the task demands and their own

learning strengths. An area of basic research in second language acquisition is the identification and description of learning strategies used by language learners and the correlation of these strategies with other learner variables such as proficiency level, age, gender, motivation, and the like. [14]

Current research is also investigating the effect of the task itself on the selection and use of learning strategies, including the influence of the target language. [15] Applied research on language learning strategies investigates the feasibility of helping students become more effective language learners by teaching them some of the learning strategies that descriptive studies have identified as characteristic of the "good language learner". [16] This paper first examines a number of current issues in language learning strategy research that have emerged from earlier descriptive and intervention research and discusses how these issues affect teachers and learners of second and foreign languages. Finally, suggestions are made for needed future research in discovering how language learning strategies can assist students in becoming more effective second language learners. [17]

In conclusion, this paper has examined a number of issues in language learning strategies research and practice that are important in helping students become more successful language learners. While we have learned much about the usefulness of including language learning strategy instruction in second and foreign language education, much still remains to be investigated. [18]

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