

Enhancing ESL Students' Literacy Skills

Effective ESL teachers...

- *Show students what they mean when they give directions.*
- *Show students what they will be learning and doing.*
- *Build instructional context for students (realia, manipulatives, etc.).*
- *Use a preview-review format.*
- *Modify their speech.*
- *Provide more wait-and-think time.*
- *Use idioms freely, but explain them when necessary.*
- *Use lots of synonyms, paraphrasing and summarizing.*
- *Check often for comprehension.*
- *Integrate students' interest, backgrounds and home country experiences into activities.*
- *Write in front of students.*
- *Offer students nontraditional assessment options.*
- *Keep expectations high but reasonable.*

Successful ESL students...

- *Participate in the class curriculum in a variety of ways.*
- *Work in both heterogeneous and homogeneous groups.*
- *Talk and interact.*
- *Have language buddies and are language buddies.*
- *Serve as "home country experts."*
- *Expand their literacy spectrum (multiple intelligences).*
- *Move from the concrete to the abstract.*
- *Take "text tours" to increase their comprehension (as a pre-reading activity, examine photos, drawings, diagrams, boldface headings, etc. to extract information).*
- *Make and use key vocabulary word banks.*

Workshop Overview

ESL, a.k.a. ESOL, a.k.a. ELL, a.k.a. (insert abbreviation here). Whatever abbreviation you choose to you, large numbers of students who do not speak English as a primary language are entering our school systems. This is neither a new phenomenon, nor a detrimental one. It does pose challenges to teachers, though, and this workshop is designed to ease teachers' concerns. Effective ESL teachers need to exhibit three characteristics (acronyms will be explained during the workshop):

1. **AWARE:** _____
2. **CARE:** _____
3. **SHARE:** _____

Krashen's Five Hypotheses

- Affective filter:
- Natural order:
- Acquisition vs. learning:
- Monitor:
- Comprehensible input:

Comprehension Assessment Exercise

The Muntkees lived in Shakiri during the gop rantiki. They were chirky people with large rafworts. They enjoyed kwertzing and eating tadilkins. Tadilkins were their staple food. Muntkees drogged tadilkins right off the tree and shared them with their corvabiks.

1. Who is this paragraph about?
2. Where do these people live?
3. When?
4. What kind of people are they?
5. What do they enjoy doing?
6. What was their staple food?
7. Who did they share it with?

Four Language Varieties

- Standard:
- Dialect:
- Register:
- Slang:

A Sampling of Great ESL Songs & Chants

Boom – Chicka - Boom

I said a boom - chicka - boom (repeat)

I said a boom - chicka - boom (repeat)

I said a boom – chicka

Rocka chicka – Rocka chicka boom (repeat)

Aha! (repeat) Oh yeah! (repeat)

Months of the Year

(to the tune of "Ten Little Indians")

January, February, March, and April,
May, June, July, August, and September,
October, November, and December,
These are the months of the year.

Weather Song

(to the tune of "Oh My Darling")

What's the weather? What's the weather?

What's the weather, everyone?

Is it windy? Is it cloudy?

Is there rain? Or is there sun?

Eat Them Everyday

(to the tune of "Row, Row, Row Your Boat")

Milk, milk, eggs and cheese...

Fruits and vegetables...

Meat and breads and cereals -

Eat them everyday.

** Don't worry: Danny teaches gestures that accompany each song during the workshop.*

A Sampling of ESL Website Resources

- www.google.com: click the “Language Tools” to the right of the text box, and use the free program to translate English to multiple languages (and vice versa).
- www.babelfish.altvista.com: free translation; includes website translation.
- www.word2word.com: includes a number of resources for teachers and students
- www.languagegames.org: just what it says
- www.eslcafe.com: one of the oldest ESL websites; numerous resources for teachers and students
- www.bilingual-books.com: database of bilingual books (focuses on Arab English, Korean and Spanish)
- www.schoenhofs.com: database of books for language learning
- www.csusm.edu/csb: comprehensive English/Spanish library
- www.mantralingua.com: English with 46 different languages
- www.a4esl.org: activities for ESL students
- www.english-zone.com: more activities for ESL students (WARNING: not all are free)
- www.manythings.org: interesting resources and activities for ESL students
- www.esl-lab.com: contains audio exercises (including pre- and post-listening activities) for all levels

NOTE: Websites change frequently. If you are interested in searching for helpful ESL web resources, one tip is to look at university and school district websites in areas that serve student populations similar to your own, as many universities and school districts provide wonderful databases that will save you a lot of time surfing.

Examples of ESL Collaborative Groups

Type	Procedure	Purpose
Buddy system	Pair students; one more capable is paired with a student less proficient in English. The buddy helps the student in and out of the class until the ESL student becomes proficient and knowledgeable about class and school routines.	Helps the new ESL student become a member of the classroom society. Helps the student become comfortable in the school.
Writing response groups	Students share their writing with one another, concentrate on what is good in the papers, and help one another improve their writing. The teacher begins by modeling good response partners and giving students specific strategies for improving their papers.	Writing response groups have several purposes: making students independent; helping students improve their writing; and giving students an audience for their writing and immediate response to their writing.
Literature response groups	Teacher first models response to literature, emphasizing the variety of acceptable responses. Students learn to value individual responses and support responses with what they have read. Students focus on individual feelings first and later on structure and form of literature.	To help students use their own background knowledge to respond to literature. To value students' individual responses and to help them become independent readers of literature.
Cooperative groups	Students are given specific roles and responsibilities for group work. Students become responsible for the success of one another and teach and learn from one another, creating success for all members of the group.	Build individual and group responsibility for learning. Build success for all members of the group. Develop creative, active learners.

TPR-Based Activities

The following activities can be readily adapted to almost any age level:

The Pointing Game

With a small group of students, use a collection of pictures (such as those one might find in a mail order catalog) to reinforce concepts that have been taught. Ask students to point to various specific body parts, colors, clothing items, etc.

Identifying Emotions

After students have acquired simple commands such as “cry” or “laugh,” pictures can be placed across the front of the room that clearly demonstrate such emotional reactions. Students can be asked to take the picture of a person displaying a specific reaction. Later, this same procedure can be extended to other kinds of descriptions of emotions.

Bouncing the Ball

Concepts such as numbers, days of the week and months of the year can be acquired or reinforced simply by having students bounce a ball. For instance, each one of twelve students in a circle could represent a month of the year. The “January” student could be directed to bounce the ball and call out “January, August.” The student who is “August” would have to catch the ball before it bounces a second time. Conscious attention is centered on the act of catching the ball while the language itself is being internalized at a more or less peripheral level of consciousness. Good use of multiple intelligences, too.

Following Recipes

Creating a meal based on a recipe can provide a TPR experience and can also involve students in the cultures of other countries and those within the United States. First, display all the ingredients for any given recipe and introduce each item, one by one. Then present each student with a written recipe. An extra large version to which you and the students can refer can be placed at the front of the room. While you or a student reads the recipe, other students can measure, mix the ingredients, etc. As a follow-up, students can bring in favorite recipes to share. These can be put together to form a class recipe book to which others can be added. A great way to involve parents.

Information Gaps

Information gaps can be created in which one student has information that another does not have but needs (like the game “Battleship”). One student may give a set of directions or commands to another student, who will carry them out to meet some stated goal (e.g. making a peanut butter and jelly sandwich). This activity can be followed by a debriefing if the directions have not produced the desired result.

Dramatic Games & Activities for ESL Students

Charades

Give students a scenario (e.g. a student needs to go to the bathroom), and ask them to act it out for the class without saying anything. Classmates guess the scenario, and whoever guesses accurately gets to perform the next scenario (or choose the next actor).

Puppetry

Often, students who are shy of performing will perform when they are behind a barrier and acting with a puppet. By not being in front of classmates, they feel freer to experiment.

Chain of Motions

Students form a circle. The first student creates a unique movement (e.g. jumping in the air). The next student repeats the first student's motion and adds a new motion (e.g. painting a picture). The third student repeats the first two students' motions and adds another new motion. Etc.

On the Scene

One student acts out a scene without speaking while another student narrates the action like a reporter. As another option, the reporter can start to narrate events and the other student can act them out.

Storytelling

Illustrate a boring story (no gestures, changes in tone, etc.) and an interesting story (lots of gestures, changes in tone, etc.) to students. Ask them to tell an interesting story or to make one up. It is recommended that you give students a story topic (e.g. your most embarrassing moment, a scary ghost story, etc.).

Silly Improvisation

Ask students to come up with three words (e.g. an animal, an action verb and a food). Allow students in small groups to develop short, silly skits that use all three words.

Hot Seat

Allow student volunteers to take the "hot seat" and act like a character from a book that is being studied. Students can ask the person in the hot seat questions, and the person in the hot seat answers questions from the character's point of view.

Animal to Activity

Students act like an animal, then merge that motion into a profession (e.g. elephant to teacher wiping chalkboard).

American Idols

Here are some playful ways to get your ESL students interested in reading and writing, courtesy of K-6 bilingual teachers in the Lennox School District:¹

Books on Tape

Students narrate a story on an audiotape so that their classmates can follow along (tapes can also be shared with lower grade levels). For students who do not yet read conventionally, they can tape record a picture read. Tapes can also be used in student portfolios as assessment tools.

Live From Room 27

Tired of kids avoiding books in favor of the remote control? One teacher asks students to re-enact their favorite programs for the rest of the class. As a follow-up, the class creates Big Books based on the students' performances.

Laugh-a-Lots

Students love jokes, and humor is one of the most complex skills for ESL students to master. Make time for students to share any jokes or riddles they may know, and encourage students to create their own joke books to share with their families.

Choral Mottos

One way to keep students focused on classroom goals is to create mottos, chants, procedures – just about anything that allows the entire class to read together. When the entire class reads aloud, beginning ESL students tend to feel safer in speaking among their peers.

Weekly Readers

Get your students working with other students in a cross-age, peer-tutoring program. For example, third graders should read to kindergartners and be read to by fifth graders. Works as a wonderful incentive, as well.

¹ Special thanks to Clarita Muñoz, Araceli Lopez, Miguel Villalobos, Richard Cohen, Ruben Gonzalez, Lupita Mora and Francisca Alvarado of the Lennox Unified School District in Los Angeles, CA.

LIST OF RELATED CITATIONS
“ENHANCING ESL/BILINGUAL LITERACY SKILLS”

PRESENTED BY
DR. DANNY BRASSELL

- Christison, M. A. (2005). *Multiple intelligences and language learning: A guidebook of theory, activities, inventories and resources*. Burlingame, CA: Alta Books.
- Diaz-Rico, L.T. (2004). *Teaching English learners: Strategies and methods*. Boston: Pearson.
- Echevarria, J., & Graves, A. (2007). *Sheltered content instruction: Teaching English language learners with diverse abilities* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Fay, K., & Whaley, S. (2004). *Becoming one community: reading and writing with English language learners*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- Fisher, D., & Rothenberg, C. (2007). *Teaching English language learners: A differentiated approach*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Herrera, S. G., & Murry, K. G. (2005). *Mastering ESL and Bilingual Methods: Differentiated instruction for culturally and linguistically diverse students*. Boston: Pearson.
- Josel, C. A. (2002). *Ready to use ESL activities for every month of the school year*. West Nyack, NY: Center for Applied Research in Education.
- Lessow-Hurley, J. (2004). *The foundations of dual language instruction* (4th ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Peregoy, S. F., & Boyle, O. F. (2005). *Reading, writing and learning in ESL: A resource book for teachers* (4th ed.). Boston: Pearson.
- Richard-Amato, P. A. (2003). *Making it happen: interaction in the second language classroom* (3rd ed.). Boston: Addison Wesley.