



Syllabus for EDUO 9300

Teaching Strategies for Elementary English Language Learners

English Language Learners (ELL), students, for whom English is not their primary language, are the fastest-growing segment of the student population in the United States. Their first language (L1) is generally not used in instruction, and the instructor need not know the students' native languages. Many elementary schools use the *Sheltered Instruction Approach*, a class structure wherein content mastery and academic language skill are developed concurrently. Additional language support may be provided by a push-in or pull-out ESL (English as a Second Language) teacher. ELL students face additional challenges, such as acclimating to a new culture and status that interfere with learning English. For this reason, instructors should use culturally relevant materials to build on students' linguistic and cultural resources, while teaching language through content and themes. Because English language learning is a recursive process, educators should integrate listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills into instruction across the curriculum.

In this course, participants will learn to identify and understand the needs of English Language Learners, implement strategies for modifying academic content for better understanding, and put their new skills into practice. Following the principles of Response-to-Intervention (RTI), participants will be able to differentiate instruction to address the diverse needs of learners in the classroom. This course is based on the framework provided by *Universal Design for Learning (UDL)*: the development of adjustable materials, varied instructional approaches, and relevant assessment methods. Participants will learn to recognize potential barriers to learning, and subsequently identify possible solutions.

Materials

1. **Professional Development Materials:**
 - **PDF – *Professional Teachers Handbook*, Chapter 4 – Meeting the Needs of All Learners (“Ask the Students”), pages 94-96**
 - **PDF – *Professional Teachers Handbook*, Chapter 5 – Going Creative with Literacy: Managing Strategies for English Language Learners, pages 116-122**
2. **Supplementary Online Resources**
3. **Curriculum Projects**

Objectives:

By the end of Session 1, participants will be able to:

- Identify and understand the needs of English Language Learners.
 - A. Assess students' proficiency levels
 - B. Recognize cultural perspectives
 - C. Use second language acquisition terminology
 - D. Address the teaching of language skills

By the end of Session 2, participants will be able to:

- A. Implement strategies to modify academic content for English Language Learners.
- B. Simplify spoken language
- C. Modify written text
- D. Provide vocabulary support
- E. Vary reading techniques
- F. Employ cooperative learning groups

By the end of Session 3, participants will be able to:

- A. Put skills into practice.
- B. Employ multiple methods of assessment
- C. Review model Teachers Network curriculum units designed for English Language Learners
- D. Strengthen communication with families
- E. Develop a cohesive lesson plan with language and content objectives and assessments

Session 1: Identify and Understand the Needs of English Language Learners

Overview

You may have heard the term LEP, which stands for Limited English Proficient. In recent years this term has been replaced with ELL, English Language Learner. The term ESL (English as a Second Language) no longer refers to a program of instruction designed to support the ELL. There are three major categories (see chart) of ELL students, and you could have representatives from each group in your class at one time. It is always a good idea to consult with the student's guidance counselor, native language arts teacher (if applicable), and ELL support teachers to help you determine specific strengths and weaknesses that will influence performance in your class. Second-language acquisition is greatly impacted by proficiency in the native language.

An understanding of how students acquire a second language is crucial for the effective teaching of English Language Learners. Teachers need to know about the particular challenges and opportunities ELLs face as they acquire English language skills of **BICS** (*Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills*) and **CALP** (*Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency*). Lowering the affective filter of the classroom setting,

as well as providing comprehensible input to learners, will enable ELLs to better access content knowledge and participate actively in their learning.

In New York State, ELL students are served in bilingual education programs or in free-standing English as second language (ESL) Programs. A bilingual education program is implemented in school districts which have an enrollment of 20 or more ELL students of the same grade level assigned to a building, all of whom speak the same native language which is other than English. Two types of bilingual education programs exist: **transitional bilingual education program**, in which the primary language of the students is used for instructional support until some prescribed level of proficiency in English is reached; and **two-way bilingual education program** (also referred to as **dual language program**) in which two languages are employed, one of which is English, and involves students who are native speakers of each of these languages. Both groups of students in this case learn curricula through their native language and second language while continuing to develop skills and proficiency in both languages. (Harris, T.L. and R.E. Hodges, 1995).

Mainstream teachers need to explore the language and academic backgrounds of ELLs in order to anticipate the aspects of learning that are likely to be too difficult for their ELLs to handle without instructional supports. It is essential to gather data about your students' English language proficiency using assessment tools ranging from standardized formal language assessment testing to ongoing informal assessments made through your observation of everyday activities. Educators should use both these standardized scores and ongoing monitoring to help determine which instructional standards to focus on and to evaluate students' progress. Instructional plans should include multiple means of expression to provide learners with alternatives for demonstrating what they know.

Session 2: Implement Strategies for Modifying Academic Content for English Language Learners

Overview

As a teacher with English Language Learners in your class, you need to ensure that you are implementing activities that foster language acquisition at the same time as subject content and concepts. Using a variety of research-based literacy techniques, you can create a welcoming classroom environment rich in learning activities that are reflective of each student's level of language proficiency and learning style.

Here are a few quick tips to help teach academic content as well as increase your students' English language skills:

1) Simplify spoken language.

- Speak slowly and enunciate clearly.
- Limit use of slang and idiomatic language.
- Paraphrase student comments so other students can understand.
- Recognize that mistakes are part of the language acquisition process, and ask questions to check comprehension rather than asking, "Does everybody understand?"
- Use outlines or notes so students will know what to expect from their listening.

2) Modify written text.

- Use charts and graphs, timelines, maps, illustrations and artifacts to introduce a lesson topic.

- Begin with concrete examples/explanations before moving to abstract concepts.
- Use graphic organizers to present information, to review, and to teach students how to organize their own essays.
- Try to relate material to students' prior knowledge and experience.

3) Provide vocabulary support.

- Create webs or clusters for vocabulary by asking students to brainstorm ideas and vocabulary related to a specific topic.
- Encourage students to carry bilingual dictionaries and to keep vocabulary lists in their notebooks so they can keep track of new words.

4) Vary reading techniques.

- Give readings in advance so that students can prepare for the introduction of new teaching units. Include pre-, during-, and post- reading activities.
- Use reading logs and cloze activities to check comprehension.
- Ask students to summarize or illustrate what they have read.

English Language Learners require opportunities to practice language at their level of English language competency. Cooperative learning groups and pair groupings offer new language learners peer interaction, as well as language practice essential to improving social communicative language skills. Working in a small group setting allows for more comprehensible input, because the teacher or classmates modify or adapt the message to the listener's needs. Techniques such as "think-pair-share" work well with ELLs because they have the time to formulate their ideas on their own, test them out in a non-threatening way with their partners, and then, reinforced by their partner's feedback, share the ideas with the class.

Grouping should be heterogeneous, so that team members who are stronger in English language proficiency can help others with weaker language skills to carry out each activity. Second language learners who work together effectively in heterogeneous groups take responsibility for each other's learning and develop a positive attitude toward their new language.

Session 3: Put Your New Skills into Practice

Overview

"Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Willing is not enough; we must do." - Goethe

In addition to formal testing, teachers must constantly observe their students, making mental notes about their language proficiency through informal assessments. Finding ways to gather these data requires persistence and creativity. Keep in mind that evidence of learning takes many different forms (i.e., reports, projects, exhibitions, and demonstrations). Students can also be taught to participate in the assessment process, by monitoring and evaluating their own progress and growth through charts, logs, and conferencing.

Armed with data about students' language proficiency levels, you will be able to note growth and potential problems, and be prepared to evaluate your students. Educators who modify curriculum and differentiate instructional activities enable ELLs to improve language skills by having content delivered on their language level.

Thematic and content-based approaches have a strong research base, and have been used widely in elementary and middle school mainstream, ESL, and foreign language programs (Haas, 2000). Thematic curriculum units provide a planning structure that helps teachers organize and integrate subject area content around significant themes. The thematic approach helps students make connections among subject areas studied and prepares them for more rigorous academic content and testing. Planning a thematic curriculum begins with an organizing theme followed by the question, "What significant learning activities can we develop to engage students in learning about this theme?" Teachers plan projects and other activities that involve integration and application of knowledge in the context of a theme. Students learn content and skills as they are needed in solving authentic problems based on the theme.

Finally, it is important to keep in mind that academic achievement is known to improve when families are involved in their children's education. When a partnership between parents and their children's teachers exists, the school will be considered a warm and inviting place that is respected as an important institution within the community. Often, non-English speaking parents may feel they have no way to communicate with teachers. They are in a new world too and are experiencing all of the things that their children are experiencing, in addition to having the added responsibilities of work and caring for their families. Special efforts need to be made to reach these parents and open the lines of communication. Enlist the help of a translator whenever possible to overcome any language barriers.

GRADING RUBRIC

Exemplary: A+ to A-	Acceptable: B+ to B-	Unacceptable: Must be resubmitted
Reflective, thoughtful ideas relevant to the assignment are clearly stated	Presents some relevant ideas and connections to the assignment	Ideas are not clear or relevant
Very well organized	Generally well organized	Shows little or no organization
Responses relate numerous facts and specific details of the program materials	Some facts and specific details of the program materials are included	Few or no facts or specific details of the program materials are included
Free of spelling and/or grammatical errors	Writing contains a few spelling and/or grammatical errors	Numerous spelling and/or grammatical errors make the writing difficult to read