



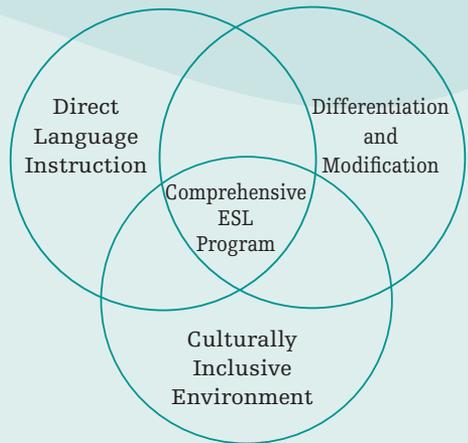
Understanding ESL Learners: Differentiating Instruction

ESL teachers know that differentiating instruction is the most effective way to teach ESL students, who come to class from a wide variety of backgrounds and circumstances. A comprehensive ESL program involves three major activities: direct language instruction, the creation of a culturally inclusive environment, and differentiation and modification of curriculum. These three activities are described below.

Direct Language Instruction

When using direct language instruction, teachers

- analyze the language needs of ESL learners and the language demands of academic curriculum;
- include language learning goals as part of lesson objectives;
- plan instruction that addresses specific language needs: grammatical and phonological structures, communicative and academic language functions, vocabulary development, discourse patterns; and
- work collaboratively with support staff to address language-development needs.



Culturally Inclusive Environment

In a culturally inclusive environment,

- resources, events and extracurricular activities reflect cultural diversity, and provide realistic and positive images of various cultural groups;
- schools find creative, meaningful ways to involve immigrant parents and offer services such as interpreters, bilingual aides, cross-cultural counselling, and mentorship and tutoring programs;
- signs, notices and displays are multilingual; and
- students' first language is valued and encouraged.

Differentiation and Modification

In differentiation and modification,

- classroom content, processes and products are adjusted to reflect the unique needs of ESL learners;
- instruction is scaffolded to enable ESL students to achieve grade-appropriate outcomes;
- teachers offer a variety of resources, grouping arrangements, assignments and tasks;
- teachers use various strategies to build background knowledge, make connections and encourage communication;
- teachers embed learning strategies into instruction;
- students can demonstrate understanding in many ways; and
- lessons are engaging and relevant, encourage higher-level, critical-thinking skills and focus on essential elements of core curriculum.

DIFFERENTIATING INSTRUCTION FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS

Teachers consider the following when

Profile of ESL Learner

Then

Identify essential outcomes (content) from the program of studies and adjust teaching to ensure understanding.

ADAPTING CONTENT

- Develop survival language/oral language skills first with beginner-level ESL students.
- Use techniques such as KWL or think/pair/share to activate and/or build background knowledge and experience.
- Use a variety of visuals, realia, manipulatives and other concrete materials to teach.
- Make extensive use of key visuals and graphic organizers.
- Focus on concepts and principles instead of facts through the use of graphic organizers such as compare and contrast, Venn diagrams, timelines, etc.
- Identify and develop key vocabulary through the use of word walls, predictograms, word sort, semantic mapping, concept frames etc.
- Provide literacy scaffolds such as framed sentences and paragraphs, patterned stories, framed research and lab reports.
- Reteach concepts/content in mini lessons.
- Use a variety of resources including multiple texts at different reading levels, Internet, CD-ROM software, video, picture files, etc.
- Consider students' culture/background when choosing resources.
- Provide authentic experiences through field trips, guest speakers, simulations, etc.

Adapt instructional strategies (if necessary) for students to reach

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

- Provide beginning-level ESL students with the same first language if possible.
- Use the Language Experience Approach.
- Allow for first-language discussion and use of resources.
- Present new information and concepts through writing.
- Model and demonstrate procedures through pantomime, role play, etc.
- Use gestures, facial expressions, etc.
- Modify speech by speaking slowly, clearly, and using simple words.
- Provide audio tapes of novel dialogues.
- Engage students in cooperative learning tasks such as jigsaw, reciprocal teaching, dialogue journals, literature circles, etc.
- Provide learning centres or stations for students to explore topics or practise skills.
- Focus on the development of effective learning strategies.

Do needlework
Build a planetarium
Develop a collection
Design and conduct an experiment
Plan a journey
Make an etching or a woodcut
Do a demonstration
Create recipes
Demonstrate preparation of food

Choreograph dances
Design a new product
Write songs
Design a simulation
Develop an exhibit or experiment
Create a photo essay or album
Make a video documentary
Create illustrations
Design or create musical instruments

Suggested Activities for English Learners

Compile information or brochure
Draw a set of maps
Put on a puppet show
Create wall hangings
Go on an archaeological dig
Design and make a model
Generate character descriptions to explain ideas
Create a slide show



ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE STUDENTS

When differentiating for ESL students

Available Resources

they

process) in whatever way
the desired outcome.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

ESL students with a buddy (with
possible).
Success Approach.
Discussions and use of bilingual
instructions orally and in
procedures and thought processes
ay, etc.
Gestures and body language.
Speak slowly and clearly.
Visual aids, texts and lectures.
Cooperative/collaborative learning
Social teaching, reading buddies,
Learning circles.
Opportunities to allow learners to
practice skills independently.
Use of specific language-learning

Offer a variety of ways for students to demonstrate achievement
of an outcome. Students can use a variety of activities to show
knowledge in spite of limited English proficiency.

OUTCOME

- Allow students to demonstrate understanding in ways other than writing (for example: graphic organizers, art, performance, demonstrations, models, posters, etc).
- Allow students to take tests orally.
- Allow beginning ESL students to use texts, notes, dictionaries and other aids during tests so that the tests become learning opportunities.
- Allow extra time.
- Provide students with readers or scribes.
- Modify test questions by simplifying language.
- Use a wide range of assessment options.

Demonstrating Learning

Information for a booklet

Publish a history of one's family,
community or home town

Devise a survey

Blueprints or a graph

Do a pantomime

Draft and circulate a petition

Street show

Paint or collect pictures or diagrams

Design a webpage

Hangings or murals

Create an advertisement

Make a travel poster

Archaeological dig

Make a diorama

Create a bulletin board

Make costumes

Make a calendar

Devise a game or puzzle

Maps or diagrams to

Make a tape recording

Make a mobile

Show

Make a map

Compile a portfolio of sketches

Make a collage or piece of art

Develop a display

Make a time line



Learning Strategies

There are a variety of learning strategies, including metacognitive, cognitive and social affective. These three strategies are described below.

Metacognitive Strategies

- **Advance organization**—Previewing the main ideas and concepts of the material, often by skimming the text for the organizational pattern
- **Advance preparation**—Rehearsing the language needed for an oral or written task
- **Organizational planning**—Planning the sequence and parts of ideas to be expressed orally or in writing
- **Selective attention**—Paying attention to key words, phrases, linguistic markers, sentences or types of information
- **Monitoring**—Checking one's comprehension and oral or written production while they are taking place
- **Self-management**—Creating the conditions that enhance learning
- **Self-evaluation**—Judging how well one has accomplished a learning activity

Cognitive Strategies

- **Contextualization**—Placing a word or phrase in a meaningful sentence or category
- **Elaboration**—Relating new information to known information, and making personal associations
- **Grouping**—Classifying terms or concepts according to their attributes
- **Imagery**—Using visual images (either mental or actual) to understand and remember new information
- **Inferencing**—Using information in the text to guess meanings of new items, predict outcomes or complete missing parts
- **Note taking**—Writing down key words and concepts in abbreviated verbal, graphic or numerical form during a listening, reading or viewing activity
- **Resourcing**—Using reference materials appropriately
- **Summarizing**—Making a mental or written summary of information gained through listening or reading
- **Deduction/induction**—Applying or figuring out rules to understand a concept or complete a learning task

Social Affective Strategies

- **Cooperation**—Working together with peers to solve a problem, pool information, check a learning task or get feedback
- **Questioning for clarification**—Eliciting additional explanation, rephrasing, examples or verification from a teacher or peer
- **Self-talk**—Reducing anxiety by using mental techniques that enhance feelings of confidence and competence

(Adapted from *The CALLA Handbook: Implementing the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach*, Addison-Wesley, 1994)

Recommended Resources

Center for Applied Linguistics, www.cal.org.

Chamot, A U, and J M O'Malley. 1994. *The CALLA Handbook: Implementing the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Addison-Wesley.

Coelho, E. 1998. *Teaching and Learning in Multicultural Schools*. Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.

—. 2004. *Adding English: A Guide to Teaching in Multilingual Classrooms*. Toronto, Ont: Pippin.

Help! They Don't Speak English Starter Kits, downloadable from www.escort.org.

Meyers, M. 1993. *Teaching to Diversity: Teaching and Learning in the Multi-Ethnic Classroom*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Addison-Wesley.

National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs, www.ncela.gwu.edu.

Tomlinson, C A. 1999. *The Differentiated Classroom: Responding to the Needs of All Learners*. Alexandria, Va: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

—. 2001. *How to Differentiate in Mixed-Ability Classrooms*. 2nd ed. Alexandria, Va: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

