

Putting the Puzzle Together: Teaching English Learners Content and Academic Language (Grades K-6)

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This workshop will start with a short review of recent research on content and language learning for young learners. Using the theme of habitats, the presenter will demonstrate how to address academic language and content standards in the areas of social studies and literature. Interactive strategies such as pull-a-parts, cooperative structures and sentence frames that help students use academic language to discuss the content of the lesson will be demonstrated. Web-based sources for materials to support language and content teaching will be explored

Theme: Animal Habitats

Animals live everywhere on Earth. An animal's home is called its habitat. Most animals can only live in one or two habitats. A polar bear could not live in the desert while an anaconda could not live on the tundra. Students need to learn about the different animal habitats and which animals live in each.

What is Academic Language?

Academic Language Proficiency is the ability to construct meaning from oral and written language, relate complex ideas and information, recognize features of different genres, and use various linguistic strategies to communicate. (Dutro and Moran, 2003)

What is Scaffolding?

Teachers support English Learners to enable them to do what they cannot yet do on their own. When students achieve independence, the scaffolding is removed, and a higher goal is set.

How do we scaffold instruction for English Learners?

- English Learners need content that is comprehensible.
- English Learners need to interact with the teacher and peers.
- English Learners need to develop background knowledge about the topic.
- English Learners need to understand vocabulary related to the topic.
- English Learners need to develop strategies to learn content independently.

How do we design lessons to teach Academic Language?

A) Gradual Release of Information (Ellis and Larkin, 1998)

- a) Teacher models the task
- b) Teacher and Students do the task together
- c) Small groups do the task
- d) Individuals do the task

B) Choose accessible texts that students can connect to and that provide important content.

Criteria for selection:

- a) Accessible – students can read the text with support. Choose texts that are accessible regarding grammar, vocabulary, rhetorical structures, background knowledge expectations.
- b) Culturally relevant and affirming – choices should include texts that represent the cultures of students in the class as well as important US cultural groups, and that view these cultures positively.

- c) Important – ELLs cannot read as quickly as their native English speaking peers. When you can, select works that will make a difference in their education by looking for books that are well illustrated and contribute meaning to the text.

C) Become familiar with EL standards to write explicit objectives.

- a) Content standards are designed to help guide the progression of students toward meeting grade-level standards (Snow, 2000).
- b) California ELD standards determine what students are able to do by proficiency level (<http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/documents/englangdevstnd.pdf>)
- c) Objectives should be observable and written in a way students understand

D) Identify prerequisite background information that ELs may not have.

- a) Students may lack essential background knowledge to understand the text. Scaffolding strategies may help to pre-assess learners' knowledge and provide focus for teaching needed background. Students might, for example, complete a *survey* a few days before the lesson.

E) Analyze vocabulary to determine important terms that ELs may not know.

- a) A free online tool developed by Paul Nation, using Averil Coxhead's Academic Word List and maintained by Tom Cobb (Nation 2005) can be used to identify key academic words that a) may be challenging for learners of English, and b) are useful academic terms, likely to be found across various content areas.
- b) Word Squares

Vocabulary Web Resources

- c) Word lists for teachers
http://www.er.uqam.ca/nobel/r21270/freq_lists/
- d) The Compleat Lexical Tutor
<http://132.208.224.131/>
- e) Vocabulary Profiler, by Paul Nation, maintained by Tom Cobb
http://www.er.uqam.ca/nobel/r21270/texttools/web_vp.html
- f) Wordsift.com
<http://www.wordsift.com/>

F) 5. Plan ways for learners to interact with the teacher, one another, and the text.

- a) Effective strategies include Numbered Heads Together (Slavin, 1995), Roundtable (Kagan, 1994), Word Square (e.g. Frayer Cards, 1969) Pull-a-parts (Stack, 2007), Read, Retell and Summarize (Sherris, 2008), Conga Line (Echevirra and Short), Fortune Teller, (Stack, 2007)

1. Numbered Heads Together

Numbered Heads Together is a cooperative learning strategy that holds each student accountable for learning the material. Students are placed in groups and each person is given a number (from one to the maximum number in each group). The teacher poses a question and instructs students to "put their heads together" to figure out the answer. The teacher calls a specific number (e.g. #3) and that student responds for the group.

2. Roundtable

Purpose: Learners generate as many facts and ideas about a topic and review the ideas of others.

Procedure:

Round Robin (oral version)

1. Divide the students into groups of 3 or 4
2. Write the topic on the board (e.g. Animals that live in the forest)
3. The first student names an animal.
4. The next student names another animal but he/she cannot repeat something already said.
5. Students continue to name animals until the teacher calls time.
6. After 3 to 5 minutes ask one student from each group to name as many animals as he/she can remember. Teacher lists these on the board or butcher paper

Roundtable (written version)

1. Groups copy the questions or topic on a piece of paper.
2. Students pass the paper around the group and each student writes an animal on the paper.

3. Habitat Word Square

Definitions from the *Newbury House Dictionary of American English*, Heinle Cengage Learning. An online dictionary for English Learners. <http://nhd.heinle.com/home.aspx>

1. Polar: An area near the north or south pole
2. Mountain: A tall land and rock formation that is higher than a hill
3. Ocean: the great body of salt water covering more than 70% of the earth
4. Desert: A dry region with little rain or water resulting in large areas of sand and rock
5. Savannah or Grassland: flat land covered with wild grass
6. Rain forest or jungle: a warm forest with a daily rainfall and very thick growth of trees and other plants
7. Tundra: treeless flat land found mostly in the Arctic Circle
8. Wetland: a watery area, such as a swamp
9. Pond: a body of water, smaller than a lake
10. River: a large body of water that moves in one direction between two banks
11. Lake: a large body of fresh water
12. Coral reef: a warm, shallow ocean habitat brightly colored made of tiny sea animals
13. Forest: a large area with many trees
14. Tide pool: areas of ocean water which flow into inlets
15. Cave: a hole in the ground, usually with an opening in the side of a hill or mountain

Word Square

Habitat:	
Definition	Characteristics
Animals found there	Animals not found there

4. Pull-a-parts

Purpose: To give English Learners real opportunities to talk about animals and their habitats

Procedure:

- Ask students to copy and cut-out the pull-a-part cards.
- Students write a sentence about their animal.
- Students line-up and read their sentences to their partners.
- Partners exchange cards and find a new partner.
- Students practice saying their partner's sentences.

5. Conga Line

Purpose: To give English Learners real opportunities to give and get information from a number of other students. Students practice asking and answering questions.

Procedure:

1. Ask students to stand in two lines facing each other.
2. One student shows the other student his or her word card and reads it to him or her. Then the second student reads his or her word card to the first student. Students exchange word cards
3. On the teacher's signal, one of the students at the head of one line goes to the end of that line and everyone else in that line moves down one person.

6. Read, Retell and Summarize

Purpose: A learning strategy in which students re-read a part of the story and underline key words. They retell the story from the key words and write a summary.

Procedure:

1. Read the story aloud to the students
2. Ask students to underline key words as you aloud a second time.
3. Ask students to make a list of the key words.
4. In pairs, students retell the story to their partner using the key words to remember the story
5. Advanced students can write a summary of the story from the key words.

Habitat	
<p>Animals live everywhere. An animal's home is called its habitat. Most animals can only live in one or two habitats. A polar bear lives in the Arctic Circle and could not live in the desert because it is too hot. An anaconda snake could not live on the tundra because it is too cold. It must live in the jungle. Every animal lives in a special habitat.</p>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>Summary:</p>	

7. Fortune Teller

Purpose: Students design Fortune Tellers to practice vocabulary and comprehension questions from a story.

Procedure:

- Students make a Fortune Teller by following the teacher's directions
- On the outside flaps they write new vocabulary words that they want to learn
- On the inside of the flaps they enter the numbers 1-8 or other vocabulary words from the unit. One entry in each triangle.
- Students open the triangles and write comprehension questions about the topic
- The student with the Fortune Teller asks a partner to
 - Pick a word (the student then spells the word as she moves the Fortune Teller)
 - Pick a number (the student then counts as she moves the Fortune Teller)
 - Pick another number (the student then opens the triangle with that number and asks the second student the question written there)
 - The second student answers the question.
 - Students trade places

Bibliography of Habitat Books for English Learners

- Canizares, S & Moreton, D. *Who Lives in a Tree?* New York, NY: Scholastic Inc. 1998.
- Chessen, B. & Chanko, P. *Animal Homes*. New York, NY: Scholastic Inc. 1998.
- Hirschmann, K. *Planet Earth: Big World, Small World*. New York, NY: Scholastic Inc. 2009
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- Kalman, B. *Homes of Living Things*. New York, NY: Crabtree Publishing, 2008.
- Squire, A. *Animal Homes*. New York, NY: Children's Press. 2001.

Websites

Newbury House Learner Dictionary <http://nhd.heinle.com/home.aspx> "Heinle's Newbury House Dictionary of American English contains over 40,000 entries. With simple, clear definitions, this online tool provides a wealth of sample sentences and idioms."

Reading A-Z <http://www.readinga-z.com/samples/preview.html> printable books

Teaching Heart - Reader's Theatre Plays
<http://www.teachingheart.net/readerstheater.htm>

WordSift <http://www.wordsift.com/> Vocabulary tool helps learners to visualize words and relate words to one another.

YouTube Videos -- there are so many, but you need to be selective. Try Children's songs with words by Icnelly: YouTube English Karaoke for young learners.
www.YouTube.com/icnelly: Songs by Eric Herman, like "The Elephant Song", with subtitles: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8cBtid-v_JE&feature=related