A list of suggestions for the content-area teacher dealing with limited-English-proficient students is designed to help increase the comprehensible input provided to the students. A brief introductory section reviews theory underlying the approach. Subsequently, nine lists outline specific classroom activities (speaking/listening), teacher behaviors, instructional material choices, audiovisual aids, features of the classroom environment, presentation techniques, interaction patterns, reading and writing instructional methods, study skills, evaluation techniques, test modifications, and testing techniques for teachers to use. Contains nine references. (MSE)
Suggestions for Comprehensible Input for Limited English Proficient Students in the Content Area Classroom

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Katherine P. McFarland, Ph.D.
Texas A&M University (Lecturer)

Katherine McFarland is a teacher educator specializing in language, literacy, and special populations at Texas A&M University where she currently teaches multicultural education and works with student teachers. She continues to keep an active schedule with ESL consultant work in schools, districts, and educational service centers across the southwest.

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Suggestions for Comprehensible Input for
Limited English Proficient Students
in the Content Area Classroom
(Katherine P. McFarland, Ph.D.)

ESL students are a diverse group of learners with language, economic, cultural, and learning differences. And like most students, they benefit from a variety of metacognitive and instructional strategies to make content more comprehensible. At the same time, content area teachers struggle with the task of presenting difficult concepts to ESL students who must confront linguistic difficulties on a daily basis. Furthermore, textbooks create comprehension nightmares for many English-only students, let alone Limited English Proficient (LEP) students. The resounding question for many content teachers becomes, "What can I possibly do to teach ESL students with tremendous linguistic and academic needs the academic content in math, science, social studies, and other content areas?"

Certainly, there are no band-aid solutions. So, after much thought the need for a "user friendly" list of suggestions was created and field tested with student teachers, new ESL instructors, and seasoned content teachers alike. After several revisions and feedback from teachers, such an instrument proved to be highly effective particularly with: 1.) Content Area teachers from all disciplines, 2.) Bilingual / ESL teachers, 3.) Content Area and ESL teachers in collaborative efforts, and 4.) ESL teachers in pull-out programs.

This list of suggestions for the content-area teacher reflects Krashen and Terrell's (1983) definition of "comprehensible input," from their transformational work, The Natural Approach, which changed the direction of second language acquisition theory in ESL and Foreign Language classrooms. One of their assumptions, the Input Hypothesis, addresses how we acquire language. Krashen (1992, p. 4) writes, "We
acquire language in one way: when we understand messages, or obtain comprehensible input .... We acquire language . . . when we understand what we hear or what we read, when we understand the message." Thus, "comprehensible input" involves numerous modifications and teaching strategies to make learning discernible.

Furthermore, this list has been designed to foster suggestions for teachers who could not enroll immediately in courses or attend workshops on successful ESL program models such as: Integrated Language Teaching (McCloskey, 1986), Sheltered English Teaching (Northcutt & Watson, 1986), and the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach or the CALLA (Chamot and O'Malley, 1994). However, this "user friendly" list places emphasis on many of the same instructional practices employed used in successful ESL models such as: realia, visuals, media, body language, grouping, learning, metacognitive, and process strategies. Other influences include: Whole Language (Goodman & Goodman), Process Writing (Elbow, Murray, Emig), Cooperative Learning (Johnson & Johnson), Content Mastery, Study Skills, and Metacognitive strategies.

Until the day comes when teachers receive the training to work more effectively with LEP students, a "user-friendly" list of suggestions may help in the interim to stimulate thinking about how to simplify comprehensible input. This instrument is not meant to be comprehensive, only representative. Feel free to add or subtract as needed.
Suggestions for Comprehensible Input for Limited English Proficient Students (LEP) in the Content Area Classroom

(Katherine P. McFarland, Ph.D.)

I. Speaking / Listening Activities - Provides time and adequate delivery for LEP students to receive comprehensible input.

- Enunciate and Pronounce Words Correctly
- Control Vocabulary and Sentence Length
- Limit Use of Idiomatic Expressions
- Use Fewer Pronouns
- Restate to Clarify if Problem in Comprehension Arises
- Use Pauses Between Phrases
- Use Repetition; Restatements; Examples
- Use Review in Beginning / Middle / End of Activity
- Use Recorded Tapes at Listening Stations
- Tape Key Mini-Lectures for Listening Stations
- Provide Listening and Speaking Games
- List Key Concepts on Overhead during Discussions
- Provide the ESL Teacher with Content Vocabulary

II. Contextual Clues - Provides clues to clarify the meanings of new words and ideas to aid in the visual impact of information.

- Provide Gestures / Facial Expressions
- Use Kinesthetic / Body Language for Emphasis
- Teach with Props / Realia
- Use Texts with Visuals
- Provide Graphics / Visuals / Illustrations
- Use Overheads / Transparencies
- Supply Geographic Maps
- Use Pictorial Models
- Reinforce with Use of Media / Video / Slides
- Apply Manipulatives to Lesson
- Provide Classroom Labels to Equipment
- Have Students Practice with Flash Cards
- Create Bulletin Boards to Reinforce Units
- Schedule Field Trips

III. Organizers - Provides opportunities for students to graphically represent difficult academic content to be stored in long term memory.

- Use Visual Representations of Content
- Use Webbing / Clustering / Mapping Devices
- Outline Main Ideas using Graphic Organizers
- Sort / Categorize / Group Information Graphically
- Use Venn Diagram for Comparison and Contrast
Apply Who / What / Where / When / Why Formula
Use K / W / L - What you know / What you want to know / What you learn.
Incorporate Study Guides for Chapters
Preview Vocabulary Terminology
Have Students Create Margin Notes
Model Methods of Outlining and Notetaking
Have Student Model Notes on Overhead
Provide Acronyms and Pneumonic Devices
Teach Color Coding to Organize Information

IV. Classroom Strategies - Provides active learning opportunities that have proven to be successful.

Orchestrate Peer Tutoring Opportunities
Utilize Cross-Age Tutoring
Model What is Expected and Provide Examples
Experiment with Various Cooperative Learning Strategies
Coordinate Activities that Involve Working in Pairs
Design Pair / Share Activities
Arrange Team Projects / Joint Projects
Create Learning Centers
Provide Manipulatives / Hands-On Experiences
Reinforce a Variety of Learning Styles
Reinforce Multiple Intelligence
Emphasize Drama and Pantomime for Classroom Activities
Provide Time for Role Playing and Student Dialogues
Arrange Weekly Conferences for Goal Setting and Follow-up
Integrate Songs, Chants, and Choral Readings

V. Reading / Writing Strategies - Provides active methods to comprehend difficult content material through literacy.

Brief the Students on Key Points in Beginning of Lesson
Preview Text or Unit
Tap or Create Background Knowledge Needed
Provide Course Outline or Overview
Use Supplementary Materials on Multiple Levels
Simplify the Reading Materials
Set-up Purposes Prior to Readings
Grade without Emphasis on Grammar and Spelling
Give More Time for Students to Complete Assignments
Reduce the Length of Required Assignments
Use Thematic Units
Chart Progress through Portfolio in Reading and Writing
Provide Reinforcements for Concepts (Hints, Cue Cards, Visuals)
Use Computer Software (Word Processing, Spelling, Thesaurus)
Allow Alternatives to Oral Presentations
Allow Students to Give Responses in Native Language
Use Talk-Write-Compute Formula
Create Pair / Share Reading Opportunities
Create Stories through the Language Experience Approach
Have Student Use Own Experiences for Topics in Writing
Stress Authentic Writing Opportunities
Reinforce Stages in Process Writing
Have Students Paraphrase Content through Writing
Have Students Make Vocabulary Cards with Pictures
Have Students Create Language / Content Games (Password)

VI. Study Skills - Creates metacognitive strategies to be used to extract important information.

Use Focus Questions to Highlight Important Information for Students
Model Outlining and Notetaking Strategies
Present Alternatives to Outlining - Webbing and Mapping
Reinforce Active Methods of Extracting Info from Texts - Highlighting
Ask Students to Create Graphic Representations of Content
Have Students Write One Page Summaries
Preview Questions
Teach Skimming and Scanning Techniques
Ask Students to Create Word / Vocabulary Banks
Teach Reading Formulas - Survey/Scan/Read/Recall/Review
Provide Study Guide for Test Preparation
Emphasize Meaning of Key Words in Essay Questions
Audiotape Lessons
Encourage Students to Use Bilingual Dictionary
Have Fluent English Speaker Take Notes on Carbon Paper

VII. Evaluation - Provides alternatives for grading and tracking progress of LEP student.

Create Anecdotal Records of Progress
Hold Individual Conferences
Show Holistic Scoring Rubric in Advance of Assignment
Develop Checklists in Content
 Arrange Partner / Group Scores
Offer a Contract System for Grading
Portfolio Assessment
Daily and / or Weekly Grades
Reinforce Self Evaluation

VIII. Test Modifications - Provides methods to evaluate LEP students' understanding of content knowledge.

Open Book Exams
Allow Extra Time for Regular Exams
Give Oral Exam vs. Written Exam
Let Student Record Answers on Tape
Read Test Items to Student
Write down Test Responses for Students
Give Test to Small Group of Students
Allow Student to Make Questions for Test
Give Take-Home Exams
Substitute an Assignment for Test
Provide List of Test Responses for Student to Choose (Multiple Choice)
Allow Student to Demonstrate Competency by Performance
Teach Test-Taking Strategies
Teach Test-Taking Strategies for Essay
Address Essay Verbs - Describe, Retell, Compare / Contrast
Limit the Student's Choices on Multiple-Choice Tests.

IX. General Advice - Prepares teachers to work with multi-level LEP students.

Maintain a Library of Supplementary Books and Workbooks
Maintain a Variety of Reference Materials at Multiple Levels
Keep a Variety of Instructional Games
Maintain a Computer Lab with Educational Software.
Emphasize Accuracy Not Speed
Provide Materials that are High Interest / Meaningful / Relevant.
Provide Materials that Emphasize Culture without Stereotyping
Provide Biographies of Significant Men & Women from Different Cultures
Find a Variety of Classroom Activities and Learning Styles.
Redesign Classroom for Variety of Needs - Individual, Small Group
Areas, Quiet Zone, Well-Lit Reading Area, Typing/Computer Center)
Provide Students a Choice of Materials and Activities
Keep Error Corrections to a Minimum

References


For Further Reading


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Signature: Phyllis P. McFarland, Ph.D.

Organization/Address: TEACH A FOREIGN UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF EDUCATION UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES + TEACHER EDUCATION COLLEGE STATION, TX 77843-4222

Printed Name/Position/Title: LECTURER + EDUCATIONAL CONSULTANT

Telephone: 409-845-8381

FAX: 409-862-2466

Date: 12/9/96

E-Mail Address: mcfarland@university.edu
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