



LANGUAGE AND CULTURE BULLETIN

Information and Tips from *The Multilingual and Multicultural Center* - Donald L. Bouchard

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COMPREHENSIBLE LESSON DELIVERY

With the delivery of instruction, there are many possible areas of miscommunication between teacher's intent and learner's comprehension. In particular, English Language Learners (ELLs) are susceptible to a variety of perceptual mismatches - cognitive, communicative, linguistic, pedagogic, strategic, cultural, evaluative, procedural, instructional, attitudinal - common to daily teaching. This Bulletin discusses ways in which teachers can minimize miscommunication by examining how lessons can be "tweaked" to become more comprehensible.

LESSON PREPARATION

1. *Clearly state the content objective orally and in writing using language the students will understand.* This mirrors in some way the state or local content objective upon which the lesson is based. The written objective should be referred to and discussed before, during, and after the lesson.

2. *Clearly state the language objective orally and in writing using language the students will understand.* Process (e.g., "explore", "discuss", "recognize") or product-based ("define", "write", "orally present") uses of language displays *how*

learners will use language as they engage in learning the content in the lesson. It may refer to key vocabulary to be learned; language functions (e.g., "comparing and contrasting", "summarizing", "describing"); a listening, speaking, reading, or writing task; an aspect of English grammar; or a language-learning strategy (e.g., "making a prediction", "relating to personal experience", "posing a question").

3. *Use jump start mini-lessons with student(s) who lack background knowledge or experience with grade-level concepts.* These mini-lessons include the requisite knowledge a student must have in order to understand what is being taught.

4. *Activate or build background knowledge by reading something about the topic; view a video related to it; or using supplementary materials such as pictures, models, demonstrations, etc.*

5. *Consider three types of academic vocabulary which students need to know as part of the lesson: content words, academic words, and process/function words (e.g., transition words).*

6. *Make explicit connections with previously learned material and the new concepts in the lesson.* Posing questions such as "Who remembered what we learned about

_____?" or setting up poster stations with question prompts for a carousel brainstorming activity on previously learned content as a tie-in to new concepts, are examples of making connections.

LESSON DELIVERY

"The teacher doesn't explain it well." "I don't understand because she doesn't talk clearly." "He talks too fast." "I don't want to ask for explanation. It's too embarrassing." These comments relate to the need to provide clear explanation when delivering a lesson.

1. *Use a variety of techniques to ensure clear oral delivery.* For example, do not use indefinite pronouns (*'it', 'that', 'those', etc.*) or abbreviated or slurred speech (e.g., *gotcha* for *got you*) when delivering a lesson; preview material for words or concepts which may be problematic; *'parenthesize'*, i.e., offer a simple word or explanation as an addendum to a complex concept or explanation; provide repeated exposure to words, concepts, and skills; use visual supports and graphic organizers; or use sentence strips as a tactile-kinesthetic way to engage learners in reviewing new concepts.

2. *Use a plethora of varied strategies: teacher-centered (lecture, direct instruction, demonstration, recitation); teacher-assisted (drill and practice, discovery learning, brainstorming, discussion); peer-assisted (role playing, peer tutoring, reciprocal teaching, cooperative learning); and student-centered (repeated readings, selective underlining, two column notes, imagery and analogies, clustering, graphic organizers, outlining).*

3. *Allow for frequent interaction and discussion opportunities.* This can be in the form of oral discussions, written journals, computer use, and games to practice what is being taught.

4. *Provide practice with hands-on materials or manipulatives whenever possible.*

Whenever possible, develop written materials, realia, etc.) to enable learners to physically work with models or their written representation.

5. *Promote engagement through think-pair-share, 10-2 sharing (after teaching concepts, have students review material in pairs), idiot questions (posing a ridiculous question such as "So the leader of the U.S. is called 'king', right?" to elicit a correct response).*

LESSON REVIEW & ASSESSMENT

Review, review, review(!) through a variety of activities: ABC summaries (asking students to write a word, phrase, or sentence beginning with key letters), learning logs, 'best test' (students create a test around the information they have learned), erasable response boards, special assignments in lieu of taking a test, etc.

CAUTIONS

1. *Beware of polysemous words or words with multiple meanings such as: arm, band, bank, bar, cabinet, cap, cell, change, chest, chip, club, cross, cup, date, deck, fall, hand, land, mine, note, nut, park, plate, pen, race, roll, set, shot, slide, slug, spring, story, string, table, tie, trunk, vice* are examples of words with meanings across content area and are therefore problematic for many ELLs.

2. *Beware of words that sound the same but have different meanings: brake, break; cell, sell; facts, fax; heal, heel; steal, steel, etc. These words confuse many learners.*

SOURCES

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