

Melinda Butler

Class 7430 – ELL Module

Initial Thoughts and Final Reflection

What do teachers need to know about students who are learning to speak English?- I would want to know how long they have been in our country or how long have they been exposed to the English language? Is there anyone at home who speaks English that will be able to help them? I would want to know those two things first to find out how much exposure they have had to English. I believe that makes a difference because the longer they have been exposed to it, then the more words they know. I also would want to know if anyone at home speaks English so that I'd be able to communicate with that person if I ever needed to in case of emergency or to explain anything related to school.

•**What are some general instructional practices that can be beneficial to students who are learning to speak English?** I would try to hook them up with a buddy that is close to their age who speaks their language so that they know there is someone at our school all the time in case they ever have an emergency or need help understanding or explaining something important. If the buddy is in our class, I would seat them near each other so that buddy can be of support to the ELL. I would use pictures to define as much as I can for the words that are labeled in our room. I would model as much as I could for him in regards to explaining something new.

•**What should teachers consider when testing students who are learning to speak English?** Teachers should consider modifying tests for ELL learners depending on their capabilities. They should grade the test on content and not on grammar if they are just learning the language.

Post Reflection

Wow, I've learned so much in this ELL Module and being of Hispanic descent, it was an even more meaningful module for me. My parents were these young children who lacked the CALP and had even very BICS. I agree that in order for the teachers to be able to help ELL students, teachers need to stop making generalizations about their ability based on their backgrounds and start fostering a more welcoming personality to these children. They are facing a very tough challenge by lacking in the area of their fellow classmates. I wish we could get that through to them to give these children a fair chance as they do the others! Yes, that does mean that they will have to go the extra mile and accommodate the ELL students in order for them to succeed but no one ever said teaching was going to be easy!

What do teachers need to know about students who are learning to speak English?

One thing a teacher needs to determine first off is the stage of an ELL student so the teacher can plan instruction. In each of the stages of Language Acquisition, the student's receptive language is usually better than the expressive language. It is important for teachers to understand that BICS and CALP develop simultaneously but the acquisition of the academic language takes longer so teachers should begin using academic language right away. Teachers need to know there are different types of programs that ELL students can benefit from when learning English. The bilingual program is ideal but is rare in most schools due to a lack of bilingual teachers for each language that students speak and lack of funding. A program called Sheltered Instruction was developed to help ELL students learn English as well as the academic content. The SIOP has eight components of instruction for teachers to use with ELL students. Comprehensible Input also provides excellent components for teachers to use with students that are ELL. Contextual Supports provides a quadrant of opportunities that range from cognitively demanding with extended context to undemanding and lacking context.

What are some general instructional practices that can be beneficial to students who are learning to speak English?

Activating Background knowledge helps ELL students make connections with new information, it validates their culture, and may foster greater interest in what the teacher is teaching. Teaching vocabulary is very important. Research says that ELL students need multiple exposure to vocabulary in a variety of contexts to completely understand their meanings. Teaching comprehension strategies influences whether ELL students can understand content across subject areas and be able to participate in the curriculum. Differentiating instruction can also be beneficial by the way teachers present the material, by the way they encourage students, or by the way they allow the ELL students to demonstrate their learning instead of maybe writing it out like the other students may be doing. This flexibility can really go a long way when ELL students may just need that little bit of a break/help to be able to achieve. Teachers can also provide opportunities by giving instructional support, allowing them to work in small groups, encourage the ELL students to discuss what they are learning. Last, teachers need to focus on the content of the ELL's responses in English and not on the grammar or pronunciation..

•What should teachers consider when testing students who are learning to speak English?

When testing students who are learning to speak English, special consideration should be given to them. They should have opportunities like being allowed to use a bilingual dictionary if their ELL teacher is not present. They should even be given extra time if needed. Semantic mapping is a way of informally assessing ELL students. Standardized Tests were created to compare a national norm of English speaking students and not students learning English. So, those ELL students may not receive accurate scores if they take them. Any sort of timed test may also show a poor score for those who still may need more time processing content information.

Knowing what I know now, I will begin each year differently with my ELL students. I will assess their stages before getting started. I will give them extra clues and label pictures to help them out more. I will encourage them to verbalize their answers more to get them to enlarge that vocabulary. I really have learned so many valuable skills that will definitely be used and shared with my teammates to help guide them as well. I will provide more opportunities and go the extra mile for my ELL students. They deserve it as just like my other students do!