

Teaching Strategies for ESOL Literacy (Levels 0-1)

Learner Traits at the Literacy Level:

See *NRS Level: BEGINNING ESL/ESOL LITERACY* handout (pages 4-5)

5 Strategies for Literacy Level:

- **Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing are the Four Skills of language acquisition.**
 - Making sure that each lesson incorporates these four skills is imperative. The textbooks that we use for this level, especially Interactive English, focus on all four skills. Follow them as your guide. We acquire receptive (passive) skills first, then productive (active) skills because the order of acquisition is:
 - Listening then speaking
 - Reading then writing

- **TPR = Total Physical Response**
 - A teaching technique that enables students to acquire new English vocabulary by listening to and carrying out spoken commands. The tutor models the commands and continually repeats and reviews them until the students can carry out the commands with no difficulty. For example: Pick up your pencil, open your book, turn out the lights, etc.
 - Select the commands and order that you will teach them (up to 5 at a time)
 - Gather props, pictures, etc. if needed
 - Model the command first. Then, do it with the students several times. Next, give command without doing action yourself. Finally, go on if they are ready, or model again if they are struggling.
 - First hand gestures to teach:
 - Stand up
 - Sit down
 - Listen
 - Do together (groups)
 - Show me

- **Get moving**
 - Getting your learners up and moving is a great way to learn while making the lesson more interesting. But if you are limited to space, it is not necessary to get up. Doing a hands-on activity that gives them a change of pace and allows for kinesthetic learning is movement enough. These types of activities:
 - Reduce brain bog
 - Tie learning to emotion (experience)
 - Build confidence
 - Are active learning
 - Methods
 - Photo scavenger hunt - finding items from a checklist and taking pictures of them
 - Photo vocabulary - taking pictures of things you don't know and using them to study
 - Use surrounding and people in your school - visit the café to reinforce vocabulary (money, food), ordering, to practice social norms
 - Board Activities (if you are in a classroom) / Hands-on Activities if seated
 - Story strips, modeling, writing a sentence and cutting it up to reorganize, categorizing by colors, etc
 - Games - memory, bingo, etc.

- **Realia**

- Objects and materials used in everyday life that are used to teach. These things connect what learners are learning to a real experience. Adults need to see the direct connection between what is being taught and how they are going to use that outside. Realia:
 - Is Authentic material that makes direct connections of understanding
 - Builds confidence through those connections
 - Helps them to realize they are learning the tools to succeed
 - Medicine bottles
 - Grocery store ads
 - Menus
 - Articles of clothing
 - Money
 - Checks
 - Forms

- **Repetition**

- It takes 5-16 exposures to remember something. Try to “touch” new vocabulary at least 5 times per lesson.
 - Get creative in “instruction” for repetition:
 - TPR
 - Oral drills
 - Reading the words in context
 - Review(a lot)
 - Get creative in “practice” for repetition:
 - Flashcards (ever growing word list- add words and review each time)
 - “Dictionary portfolio” (keep a list of new words in alphabetical order)
 - Dialogues and role-plays
 - Charades
 - Concentration
 - Example of how to repeat number vocabulary when teaching numbers:
 - Pronunciation of the numbers
 - Writing of the numbers
 - Phone numbers
 - Digital Clock
 - Birthdates (Numerical)
 - Calendars (Numerical)
 - Money

This solidifies number vocabulary and practices other skills at the same time!

Tips:

- Since adults need to see the direct connection between what is being taught and how they will use it outside of the classroom, try to connect what they are learning to real experiences. This way learners realize they are learning the necessary tools for daily life.
- As you are working through your lesson and textbook (for example: Interactive English 1A) adding pertinent information is acceptable but avoid straying from the lesson's focus. Learners at this level need structure, so straying from the lesson to talk about a different topic is often confusing.
- ESOL instructors and tutors should never be lecturing. If the instructor is the one doing most of the talking, the learner will not get the necessary practice time. Also, at this level especially, the learners will not be able to follow a great amount of lecture at one time. They will lose interest and feel defeated. Use the activities in the textbooks that require learners to become active participants.
 - Scripted role-play and practice - To build confidence in using English!
 - Reading with purpose:
 - Passages read aloud by instructor
 - Passages read aloud by learner
 - Discussion
- With regard to learning new concepts and vocabulary, the instructor always leads first (learner listens) followed by speaking practice:
 - Repetition
 - Scripted dialogue
 - Read aloud passages
 - Pronunciation practice
- It takes 5-16 exposures to remember something. Try to "touch" new vocabulary at least 5 times per lesson.
 - Try not to introduce more than about 5-10 vocabulary words per lesson (this can vary on the learner and how much he/she can handle)
 - Too many new words at once are overwhelming, although most words at this level are "new words". Try to have the **focused** words be no more than about 5-10. These focused words will usually be themed words that accompany the topic of the lesson.

Questioning Strategies for All Levels:

Instructors are asked to encourage discussion, even at these lower levels. A discussion at the literacy level may not be long, but it is important to build language skills. Using effective questioning is key in getting that discussion going.

- Understanding the question hierarchy:

1. Yes/No questions ->

1. for Beginning Level learners who struggle verbalizing their thoughts

2. Choice questions ->

1. for Beginning Level learners, to get them expressing information beyond “yes” and “no”, but who still struggle verbalizing their thoughts

2. for Intermediate Level learners who have some difficulty verbalizing their thoughts, to give them options that may trigger more speaking

3. Wh questions

1. for Intermediate Level learners who are ready to give more details

2. for Advanced Level learners

(All three types of questions can be appropriate at each level depending on the learners and the circumstances.)

- Ask ONE QUESTION at a time. And keep it simple – Don’t confuse learners with tricky or confusing language.
- Use wait time: Ask a question and let the learners think. Sometimes it feels like you are waiting a long time, but that is ok. A good rule: after asking a clear question, count slowly to 5 or 10 in your head before providing the answer yourself.
- If it seems like the learners do not understand the question, rephrase the question using different words or another technique “lower” on the hierarchy.

Good Practices: Things we have used that have worked

- Speak slow, deliberate and clear
- Use simple language; do not use language that is too advanced
 - Do not speak “over the heads” of the learners. They will not understand every word said, but if they cannot understand enough of what is going on, they will become overwhelmed and frustrated.
- Repetition is important
 - We might think repeating something over and over is too much, but it is necessary at this level.
 - For example: “My name is _____. My phone number is _____.”
- Clap out syllables; this helps with pronunciation and understanding
- If there is a pronunciation difficulty:
 - Write the word how it is spelled, then write it how it sounds, then practice with repetition and clapping out syllables
- Mime and act out new vocabulary (and everything!) as much as possible
- Draw pictures for vocabulary that is not understood by miming
- Do not ask “Do you understand?.” Instead, ask questions that show understanding by the answers given
 - For example: What is your address?
- When giving page numbers, write them down and/or hold up fingers to demonstrate the page
- During activities, observe your learner to check for understanding
- Write down important information
- Give short directions that start with an action verb and write them down in addition to saying them. Also, try to mime out the directions if possible. This makes it easier for learners to understand. If directions are too long, they will not be able to follow.
 - Example: “Listen to the conversation.” (instructor points to ear and then points to opening and closing mouth that looks like it is speaking)
- Model as much as possible
 - some cultures do not use the same types of activities
 - your learners may not understand what “circle the answer” or “fill in the blank” means because they may not have an education background in their first languages
- Don't use sarcasm; it goes over the heads of the learners and causes confusion
- Be patient
 - Working with learners at this level can sometimes be challenging, but the pay off is worth it. These are the students who need us the most.