**Instructional Strategies for ESL Students Checklist**

**Checking students’ comprehension of the**

**content:**

o Use sentence strips

o Set up dialogue journals between teacher and

student

o Plan activities using role play and drama

o Use student reading logs

o Use Cloze exercises

o Write summaries

o Encourage students to write headlines

o Write character diaries

o Have students present information with

illustrations, comic strips, or other visual

representations

o Allow students to provide answers and explain

processes instead of you telling them

**Helping ESL students adjust to the classroom:**

o State / display language, content and

metacognitive objectives

o List instructions / process steps and review

orally

o Present information in varied ways (oral,

written, demonstrations, with tangible

objects)

o Frequently summarize key points

o Repeat and paraphrase important terms

o Provide Word Wall with vocabulary for unit

/ chapter

o Have students maintain notebook

o Have student maintain learning log for

metacognitive strategies

o Allow sufficient response time

o **Adjusting teaching style:**

o Develop a student centered approach

o Speak a little more slowly (not louder ),

use shorter sentences, and avoid idioms

o Increase the percentage of inferential and

higher order thinking questions

o Provide correction for language errors by

modeling, not overt correction

@ B. Lewis-Moreno, 2002

o **Teaching a multi level class:**

o Use cooperative learning

o Incorporate peer tutoring

o Use the Writing Process

o Explicitly connect learning to students’

knowledge and experience

o Take time to preview and explain new

concepts and vocabulary before starting

instruction

o Use questionnaires / interviews

o **Motivating students and providing**

**background knowledge:**

o Use Semantic Webbing and graphic

organizers

o Use Anticipation Reaction Guides

o Have students brainstorm, then record

responses on overhead before starting

lessons

o Use KWL charts

o Use realia, maps, photos, and manipulatives

o Do activities where students can interact

and move around

o **Adapting ESL techniques to the content**

**classroom:**

o Have students do hands-on activities

o Do demonstrations

o Use CDs, cassettes and videotapes with

books

o Use a variety of groupings so that ESL

students can interact with different

classmates (not only the Spanish speaking

ones!)

o Provide students with outline of lesson and

questions that will be asked beforehand so

they have an opportunity to process

information and participate more readily

o The overhead projector is your best friend

– use it every day to model highlighting

text, identifying main ideas or new

vocabulary or to show pictures.

English Language Learners in Math

***English language learners have unique needs when it comes to mathematics instruction. Find out about several key strategies to help ELLs succeed.***

For some students, math seems to be a foreign language, consisting of words and concepts that don't mesh with their everyday experiences. For these students, successful teachers find ways to make math understandable, relevant, and familiar. In some ways, it is all about finding a common language.

So what is a teacher to do when there truly is not a common language shared between teacher and student?

Math classes for English Language Learners (ELLs) can be especially challenging because students are faced with learning both mathematics and English at the same time. Math teachers can and must make every effort to reach out to these students to create a class that is both positive and rewarding.

By employing the following strategies and techniques, you can help your ELL students increase their knowledge and understanding of math topics.

**Use Small Groups** The use of pairs or small groups is an instructional strategy that can be very effective for ELL students. By grouping students, you can:

* encourage communication and interaction in a non-threatening and more relaxed setting.
* help students feel more comfortable to ask questions or seek explanations.
* promote a positive support system for your ELL students.
* manage large classes with diverse student needs more effectively.

**Vary Math Instruction and Provide Interesting Problems** As a math teacher of ELL students, it is important to utilize multiple instructional approaches and to consider the individual learning styles of your students. This will help you better meet the varied needs of your students. Try one or more of the following instructional strategies.

* **Manipulatives and models.** Where appropriate, use models or manipulatives to demonstrate concepts and/or processes. Allow ELL students to use them as well to demonstrate their learning.
* **Think-Alouds.** Use a "think-aloud" technique to narrate the problem-solving process (including algorithms).
* **Informal language.** To increase understanding, use informal language as you demonstrate the various thought processes and steps to follow in solving a problem.
* **Clarity checks.** Be sure to check for understanding of the task and processes involved before students get started working on the assignment. ELL students often do not seek clarification for fear of calling attention to themselves.
* **Context.** Present activities that involve application problems in contextualized situations. These activities should encourage critical thinking and reasoning along with basic skills development and practice. Engaging your ELL students in this way is important because it makes learning relevant to the real-life experiences of your students. Sports, entertainment, and games can be good themes to do this.
* **Diagrams and Graphs.** Encourage the use of diagrams and other visual aids to help your ELL students develop concepts and understanding. For written and verbal communication, increase your focus on reasoning and decrease the focus on language. This emphasis can help to encourage your ELL students to expand their mathematical abilities without getting bogged down with issues related to language acquisition.
* **Assignments.** Consider limiting the number of problems you assign to ELLs to avoid overwhelming them. Focus on fewer problems that get at essential concepts and skills.

**Teach Math Vocabulary**

Math classes can present extra challenges for ELL students because they must learn the specific content vocabulary and expressions, along with their second language acquisition. Help your ELL students by directly teaching math vocabulary. Use the following ideas to plan your vocabulary building activities.

* **Topical Terms.** Identify and teach specific vocabulary that must be understood for each assigned activity.
* **Common Math Terms.** Teach the meanings of common math terms that have other definitions outside of the context of math-for example root, face, mean, and prime.
* **Solutions.** Create a plan for how you will help ELL students acquire the language of mathematics.
* **Visual Aids.** Consider using visual aids, multiple examples, and student explanations as possible techniques to help your ELL students grasp unfamiliar math terms.
* **Note Cards.** Encourage your ELL students to keep note cards to record math terms and vocabulary in their own words, sometimes with the use of their native language. Remind your ELL students to reference these note cards and to add to them as their understanding grows.
* **Math Journals.** Use journals to practice and strengthen new language skills and math terms in a non-threatening manner. Some ELL students may feel comfortable using their native language in their journals as a way to help solidify their understanding of math concepts.

**Monitor Your Interactions with ELL Students**

To help your ELL students follow lectures and understand class discussions, you will need to be aware of your speech and consider simplifying it when you can. Some ways to do this include:

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| **Effective Communication Strategies for Teachers** |
| * Pause frequently.
* Paraphrase often.
* Emphasize key ideas and vocabulary through intonation.
* Write key terms and concepts on the board.
* Use pronouns clearly.
* Shorten sentences.
* Increase wait time for students to answer and process information.
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| **Mathematical Concepts That May Differ or Be Difficult** |
| ***Measurement*** | Measurement may be especially challenging for ELL students, as their prior instruction most likely covered the metric system.  |
| ***Fractions*** | Fractions may be unfamiliar to ELLs. Some ELL students may have come from an educational environment where decimals received more emphasis than fractions.  |
| ***Geometry*** | The discipline of Geometry in particular has many terms that may cause difficulties in understanding.  |
| ***Algorithms*** | In some cases, algorithms may have been learned differently. Some ELL students may be used to algorithms that are different from traditional algorithms taught in your curriculum. Allow students the opportunity to share their algorithms. Use this as a learning opportunity by comparing algorithms and analyzing similarities and differences.  |

**Use Prior Learning as a Starting Point**

It is essential that you take into account the ELLs unique experiences, prior learning, and individual strengths to develop appropriate instructional strategies. Other cultures have different approaches to mathematics that even the ELL may be unaware of.

**Value Student Backgrounds to Improve Performance**

Be aware of and draw from your ELL students' prior knowledge. You should:

* Make sure ELL students know that their experiences and culture are valued. This will help their attitudes and increase their motivation.
* Focus on meaning. When your ELL students share answers and present ideas, remember to focus on the meaning they are conveying, not on their grammar and usage.
* Be flexible with student use of native language. You may want to have your ELL students record answers or solution steps in their own native language. You can have their work translated, if desired. This will help ELL students focus on the concepts and reasoning involved, without being slowed or hindered by their developing language skills.

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| **Multi-Stepped Problem Lesson Idea** |
| Present a multi-stepped problem to your class. Have your students identify the steps that they would need to undertake to solve the problem, but just identify the steps; do not have your students solve the problem. This will help ELL students practice their language skills by reading and interpreting problems. This type of exercise will help students practice language skills without worrying about solving the problem. This exercise can be used frequently as a quick warm-up activity. |

**Success Is Possible** As a concerned math teacher, your instructional goal should be to facilitate full participation in all aspects of a rich mathematical educational experience for all students. You can do this by lessening or removing some of the barriers to learning that are connected to the process of second language acquisition. Keeping a few of these instructional strategies and techniques in mind can help you make your math instruction better for not just ELL students, but for all of your students.