

Accommodations for ESL Learners

ESL teachers were asked for suggestions for accommodations they have suggested or had seen used successfully in their various schools. The list was quite extensive. Four teachers got together and pored over the list. Realizing that the length might be intimidating and therefore less useful, they decided to find common threads and place the suggestions into separate categories. The shorter lists would be less daunting and the categories would provide ideas and assistance in specific areas. The resulting categories are : Orientation, Teacher Delivery, Materials and Resources, Instruction Strategies and Tools, and Test Taking and Assessment

ORIENTATION

choose a proficient English-speaking student to serve as the student's partner. Try to rotate or vary the student so the helper is not always "on"

- use hand signals – student can give secret signals to indicate when they don't understand something
- prepare an outline describing daily instruction (the day's timetable)
- provide a quieter work place
- place beside an independent learner
- teach appropriate class behaviours (turn-taking, raise hands)
- seat students together with similar backgrounds so they can help each other with instructions and understanding
- provide preferential seating

TEACHER DELIVERY

- repeat and/or rephrase your statements when it seems to be necessary
- ask questions often to check for comprehension
- model proper speech
- correct pronunciation errors only when they interfere with communication
- speak slowly and clearly
- remember, some cultures do not encourage eye contact when speaking one on one
- write legibly and do not use abbreviations
- provide individual instruction whenever you can
- use a parent/EA to assist with

previewing and language concepts before reading

- use peer tutoring
- cue student to stay on task; i.e., private signal
- repeat directions or have student repeat directions
- shorten directions
- provide immediate reinforcement
- give verbal praise for positive behaviour

MATERIALS/RESOURCES

- if doing a novel study, have the book on tape if possible
- make bilingual dictionaries available if possible
- use picture dictionaries
- use other specialized resources. Technology Ò i.e. Science/Math/ Language Trek
- use audiovisual aides; i.e., tape recorder
- find lower grade level materials with more illustrations and less language but at an appropriate age interest (i.e. especially for older students)
- prepare audiotapes of reading/ textbook materials, tasks

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES and TOOLS

- provide word banks for stories/ worksheets/activities
- present new vocabulary in context - with pictures if possible
- use highlighters to highlight key vocabulary, direction words, etc.
- use manipulatives/visuals/charts
- pictures with labels, can replace written explanations
- ensure students understand all vocabulary (word-games, scrambles, word searches)
- activate prior knowledge with KWL
- preview of vocabulary and concepts
- provide graphic organizers to simplify information and stress important concepts
- list instructions, and review them step by step
- give extra time on assignments if the student needs more time to comprehend the material
- permit classmates to share notes
- rephrase information or repeat key vocabulary
- check for understanding of expectations, instructions before students begin a task
- make use of peer tutoring (vary the

student helpers)

- provide opportunity for group work (group according to Language ability)
- use hands-on activities and frequent modeling
- relate information to student's prior knowledge/background
- when asking a question, allow ample wait time to give them a chance to develop an answer before being called on
- don't speak too quickly, avoid using slang
- have literature available at the ESL student's reading level
- repeat some questions using same or different words
- allow previewing questions
- provide student with a photocopy of notes
- provide a student buddy for reading
- highlight important concepts and information and/or passages
- allow use of personal word lists, dictionaries, thesaurus
- allow use of calculators
- allow use of word processor/spell checkers
- increase use of pictures, diagrams, concrete manipulators
- permit student to print
- don't force an older student who prints to learn cursive
- if you use cursive, be aware that an older ESL student may not be able to read it
- our math symbols /numbers may resemble different numbers (e.g. the symbol for # 5 in Arabic looks like our zero)

TEST TAKING and ASSESSMENT

- provide simplified language version of a test
- use drama (tableaus) to demonstrate knowledge
 - allow student to do an oral presentation to teacher only
 - to demonstrate knowledge, accept an oral interview in place of a written test
 - use open book tests
 - create alternative tests to meet the needs of learners with limited knowledge of English (e.g. have student to do only a portion of the test)
 - provide assessment tasks in different formats
 - reduce or substitute required assignments
 - adjust level of in-class assignments to academic level
 - break long-term assignments into shorter tasks
 - adjust amount of copying
 - accept scribed homework assignments
 - provide extra assignment time
 - adjust the test appearance; i.e., margins, spacing
 - adjust readability of test
 - allow taped reports for essays and/or long answers
 - read test questions
 - allow use of a scribe
 - vary grading systems for special projects

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Taken from ESL Times, February 2005, a newsletter of the Ottawa-Carleton Catholic School Board

See also "The Centre for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition" at www.carla.umn.edu/cobalt/. This site features resources to help language teachers create content-based lessons and units using technology. There are lesson plans and units, graphic organizers, tutorials and ideas for educators.