



## Suggested Strategies for Teaching Young English Language Learners

- Teach key concepts associated with classroom activities, e.g. share, partner, line up, sit in a circle, clean up, come here. Use photos to illustrate the ideas.
- Identify some key vocabulary to teach, e.g. help, no, yes, bathroom, want, finished, more.
- Use songs and actions to teach simple commands, e.g. Simon Says.
- Use songs for routines e.g. “Hands up, hands up high, hands up, touch the sky, toys away, toys away, everybody toys away” and “Hands on top .... That means stop.”
- Use repetitive songs, chants and rhymes to teach essential vocabulary and sentence forms. e.g. Everyone sits in a circle. Going around the circle, begin with the first line, pointing to yourself when you say “I” and to the child whose turn it is to respond when you say “you”. Each child has a turn to respond with the full sentence “My name is ----“. Children are learning this common sentence form as well as pronouns I/you/he/she, syllabication, and are also learning the names of all classmates.

Whole group: I have a name, you have a name, I have a name, tell me please!

One child: My name is -----

Whole group: Her name is ----- (repeat and clap the syllables)

Or: His name is ----- (repeat and clap the syllables)

- Always have a visual agenda (boardmaker symbols) displayed low enough for children to touch and use it every day.
- Use the statement “First -----, then -----.” Supported by boardmaker symbols to help children understand what is going to happen next.
- Create boardmaker sequences for routines e.g. entry, snack time, etc.
- Have boardmaker symbols readily available at the carpet to pass to a child rather than giving a verbal instruction (e.g. symbol for sitting cross-legged to pass to a wiggling child).
- Use children’s photos to indicate where they should go on arrival before calling the group together.
- Use a visual timer for activities and transitions.
- Use smart board with children’s photos to take attendance or to answer a question for the day. Children move their photo to indicate their presence or their response to the question.
- Use pictures of children or outlines of children (like a gingerbread man cut-out) to indicate number of people allowed at a given centre.
- Rehearse emergency routines before practice alarms/lock downs actually occur. Go through the entire procedure physically – don’t just talk about it. Use visuals to help with the rehearsal and have a visual to match with each procedure. Teach the necessary vocabulary to match with emergency procedures.
- Use social stories to rehearse social situations and emergency procedures.
- Use boardmaker visuals for steps to complete activities.

- Keep verbal instructions and teacher talk to a minimum. Always pair talking with gestures.
- Use language along with demonstration when introducing a new skill or concept.
- Think about the amount of time and number of opportunities for children to talk.
- Think about the type of talking required by children under different circumstances and provide opportunities for different types of talking e.g. labeling, discussing, questioning, commenting, describing, responding, expressing likes and dislikes, comparing and contrasting, guessing/hypothesizing, sequencing.
- Use simple but explicit language to “label” your own actions as you carry them out, e.g. “Now I am stopping.” “Now I am putting on my smock.”
- Label children’s actions as they carry them out the same way you label your own actions.
- Verbalize your thinking and the strategies you use to solve a problem.
- Consider developing an overall **thematic or project-based framework** with language functions embedded in it. Themes and functions should be oriented to children’s everyday lives, surroundings and routines.
- Consider **media and popular culture-based themes** because they are what ELL children have in common with their peers from the majority culture and from other newcomer backgrounds. Access to peer group culture is important so children can make friends with each other and learn to play together, no matter what their cultural and linguistic background is.
- Consider **activities that enhance children’s oral language development**. Literacy should not be the only goal of early education programming. At this age, children’s language development is the foundation necessary for literacy development later on.
- Direct correction of vocabulary and grammatical errors is **not helpful** to young children because they are not likely to know why they are being corrected. They are not likely to learn from direct correction, and it can inject a negative tone in the dialogue.
- Shaping young children’s formulation of language is best done through **recasting** what they said using the correct form, and then moving on with the conversation. Recasting is a way of giving children a good model of language without drawing attention to errors.
- Focus on language progression by always **expanding** on children’s speech. For example, if a child says, “My shoes,” you can talk about the colour or type of shoes the child is wearing.
- Use **communication temptations**: These are activities designed to make children feel the urge to talk. Pictures or stories with unexpected images or events, such as swimming in sand or wearing a snowsuit to the beach, create the temptation to comment. “Spot the differences” picture pairs are a variation of this. Images/pictures of cartoon/media/book characters known to most, if not all, children of this age are appropriate for this type of activity.
- Use **Language-based games**: Examples of these are “Simon says” and “I spy with my little eye”. Simon Says is a game that can be used for teaching body part names and verbs like “touch”, “pull”, “tap”, “stomp”, “press”, “squeeze”, “clap”, “tickle”, “kiss”, etc. The nouns are used in full sentences like “Simon says pull your ear”, “Simon says kiss your hand”, “Simon says stomp your feet”. The language function involved is giving commands.
- Use storybook reading to improve the acquisition of new vocabulary; repeated reading, explanations of target words and incidental exposures to new words.
- Use read-alouds with proficient readers & choral read-alouds of familiar, patterned stories.

- Use some wordless books during story time and have children contribute to the telling of the story.
- Pair props with stories e.g. puppets, masks, etc. Set out the props and book for children to practice retelling the story.
- Use DVD's to support repeated story telling.
- Use the Language Experience Approach. Have the child tell a story while an adult scribes. Use the written text as the basis for literacy activities.
- Use children's first language knowledge and highlight connections between languages.
- Include dual language books in classroom instruction, both commercially made and home-made.
- Use tools that support vocabulary development such as The Frayer Model. This model helps to develop a better understanding of complex concepts by having students identify what something is, what are examples of it, and what it is not. The center of the diagram shows the concept being defined, while the quadrants around the concept are used for providing the details. This model can be the basis of oral discussions or can be created visually over several sessions during a thematic unit.

## A STRATEGY FOR VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT: FRAYER MODEL

- ✘ New word or concept: butterfly
- ✘ What is it? An insect. Has a 4 stage life cycle including egg, caterpillar, pupa, adult.
- ✘ Examples: Monarch, Crescent
- ✘ Non-examples: Ladybugs, ants, beetles