

AVG 8.1 Classroom Strategies: Action as Advocacy



Think About

- How can I use Inclusive Pedagogy as a tool?

Collaboration's Content-Area Literacy Goal Question:

What does it mean to teach second language learners in contrast to monolingual learners?

Classroom Strategy's Goal Questions:

- How can I adjust my planning to meet the needs and utilize the strengths of language minority students?
- How can my teaching accommodate language minority students?
- How can I diversify assessment practices to enable language minority students to demonstrate their knowledge?

Classroom Strategy's Reflection for Change Question: What specific changes will I make in my own teaching to accommodate language minority students?

Conceptual Outline

Annela Teemant (Brigham Young University)

For language minority students, quality teaching is our strongest act of advocacy. Quality teaching begins not in planning, but in accountability. We need to take inventory before we plan. We take stock of our personal, school and community resources. We study our students, our school context, and the characteristics of our content. Our integrity as teachers requires us to be brutally honest about who our students are and what actions we are truthfully willing to take for them.

Meaning Making

Begins in accountability?

Truthfully willing?

Bonnie Brinton (Brigham Young University)

In terms of the culture of the classroom, who's in charge? The teacher's in charge. And who pretty much decides what's acceptable and what's valued? The teacher decides what's valued. And usually what's valued is closely tied to how well that child begins to learn to read and to write. The teacher decides what's currency in the classroom.

In charge?

My classroom currency?

Nancy Cloud (Rhode Island College)

A concern is that teachers celebrate who their learners are, respect who their learners are, know who their learners are, because you can't teach anything but children. You can't teach a subject in a vacuum. You can only teach subjects to specific children, which means you have to have deep knowledge of those children.

Teach children or subjects?

What is their proficiency in their two languages? What are their knowledge, background, and experience related to the subject? What is their interest in the subject? How motivated are they? What is their starting place? That is crucial to being successful with those children. You can't really be happy with your teaching unless you're successful, and to be successful you have to know who your kids are.

My learners?

When I go to see teachers in the field, I don't want to see a lesson that starts with "This is a third- grade lesson on American History." I want to see a lesson that starts with "These are my learners. This is who is sitting in front of me. These are the groupings of students that I've made because of who's in my classroom and because of the literacy level of my students. This is the text that I've selected to support them. This is the way that I'm going to teach the lesson to them. This is the way I'm going to develop the language that they need before we get into the concepts, because I know what experience they bring and what experience they're lacking." I can't make sense of a lesson that just starts with these rote objectives as if it doesn't matter who sits in front of you.

My learners?

Experienced teachers sometimes don't have to think about this overtly because they know it in their heart, in their gut, in their soul. But it's still being planned for. So, I'm not saying that it has to be conscious, that you have to write it all down if you've been teaching for twenty years, but you have to know it and you have to be teaching to it. And you have to be able to explain it to me.

Knowing the language level, knowing the background knowledge, knowing the life experience, knowing the cultural understandings that children bring, knowing the abilities or disabilities that children bring—the gifts, the talents, the special proficiencies—all of that is central to designing high quality instruction. Learner-centered instruction is critical in my view. Yes, a teacher has to have deep content area knowledge, but without the learner-centered knowledge, without the developmental understandings, you're not going to be effective.

Learner-centered instruction?

Conceptual Outline

Meaning Making

Annala Teemant (Brigham Young University)

Being aware of your students' language development and knowing their individual differences will guide your pedagogy and your work as teachers. You can guarantee student success by planning for it.

Guide your pedagogy?

Yvonne Freeman (Fresno Pacific University)

Teacher who understand second language theory are aware of the strengths students have, and they know their students. Teachers who are sensitive to second language acquisition theory aren't going to point to a student and ask him to answer a question. They are going to leave things a little more open ended. They are going to watch the kinds of questions they ask. If they really understand the natural approach, they'll give students either/or questions so students can show that they know the answer, but they don't have to come up with the language. Or they will allow time for brainstorming. Wait time is another thing that gives students time to think of the vocabulary they need. Or they will allow one-word answers so students can show they comprehend, but they don't have to come up with the language and the concepts.

Open-ended questions?

Either/or questions?

Wait time and vocabulary?

One-word answers?

Annala Teemant (Brigham Young University)

As experienced teachers, you carry your classroom in your head. You think about teaching all the time. As you plan for teaching, you teach the lesson in your head—checking for learning glitches, content errors, behavior problems. As you teach, you plan—thinking about what you will do next, how you will reshape content, and how you will prevent misbehavior.

Teach mentally while planning? Plan mentally while teaching?

Input? Interaction?

The concept of Communication guides decisions about texts you use as input and the way you adjust your teacher-talk in class. You enlist interaction—you conduct instructional conversations or use pair and share, study buddies, or cooperative groups. You attend carefully to how well students are doing their work—their motivation, their attention, their risk taking, their performance and proficiency. You listen for language development, adjust for individual differences, and constantly respond through improved pedagogy.

Types of performance? Types of proficiency? Feedback (errors)?

Stages of development?

Henry Widdowson (University of Vienna)

Teachers and learners play two kinds of roles in the teaching/learning process. The teacher is in charge of the teaching and the learner is in charge of the learning. It is the teacher who's responsible for setting the agenda; the teacher ultimately directs the process. Learners have to be guided and directed and a teacher's job is to direct operations while allowing for learning interventions. The teacher has to be sensitive to the reactions of the learner, be ready to take up opportunities not planned in advance, and use every opportunity to develop the learner's progress. There is a responsibility here to use the authority of the teacher to direct without restricting the autonomy of the learner. This has to be based upon expertise and knowledge. Unless teachers accept the responsibility of being professional, they really have no right to direct the learning

Sensitive to the learner?

Professional?

Expertise beyond experience?

process. They can't force the learners to learn; they can only set up conditions for learning. But they are in the business of setting up these conditions, and this must be based on some expert knowledge. There's no use in a teacher saying, "I can teach English because I know English and I have the experience of English, therefore I can teach it." It has to be an expertise beyond experience. This expertise has to do with understanding the nature of the subject—the relationship between the language, which is the destination the learners are going to arrive at, and the process that the learners have to go through in order to get there.

Conceptual Outline

Meaning Making

Trish Stoddart (University of California, Santa Cruz)

My focus on academic language?

We've just finished a series of case studies in classrooms where the students were all English language learners, but where the teacher was either monolingual English speaking or a certified bilingual teacher. In all these classrooms the majority of instruction took place in English, but we found differences in both teaching strategies and in student learning. The students with the bilingual teachers made significantly more growth in both English academic language and Spanish academic language than the students in classrooms with teachers who spoke only English.

What was going on in these classrooms? We found that the bilingual teachers did a lot more checking for understanding—they didn't assume that students understood. They used a variety of pre-assessment techniques, and they also talked to the students and asked them what they thought, individually and in small groups. Having the second language allowed them to do a lot of that checking in the child's native language, so a child who couldn't explain himself in English was able to explain himself in Spanish.

Multiple sources?

The bilingual teachers did more elaboration. When a student answers, they may rephrase it, say it back to the student, or add on to that explanation, and they did that in both English and Spanish.

These differences led us to the conclusion that two of the most important strategies that teachers can use with second language learners are this checking for understanding in multiple ways (not taking understanding for granted) and elaboration.

Build connections?

Annala Teemant (Brigham Young University)

Effective classroom strategies emerge in the classrooms of teachers who engage in a cycle that begins in accountability—they assess themselves and their students. They plan for language development. In their teaching, they adjust pedagogy for individual differences and then carefully assess student learning. When you engage in this cycle, your teaching is a daily act of advocacy for language minority students.

Throughout this course we have attended carefully to the standard for Classroom Strategies. We have tried to ensure that you have not only learned “what” works for language minority students but also “why” it works. In this process, we have helped you develop several tools. The first is based on concepts of second language acquisition: that is, Communication, Pattern and Variability. The second is based in sociocultural theory and the standards for effective pedagogy. Finally, our own framework of Inclusive Pedagogy with its standards, goals, and reflection for change questions helps you interrogate your practice in order to improve it.

Assess and accommodate?

What works? Why it works?

Classroom Strategies are only effective when a teacher knows what works and why it works. You plan to meet students’ needs and utilize their strengths. You teach in ways that address their language development issues, and you diversify your assessment practices to enable students to show you what they know.

In reflecting on the facts of second language acquisition and your classroom practices, you should ask yourself what specific changes you are willing to make in your own teaching to accommodate second language learners? How can you position your ESL students for success in language learning and content learning? Every action you take is indeed an act of advocacy.

My change?



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