

Second Language Simulation: Conclusion

You have witnessed first hand how adjusting the presentation of a lesson can make a dramatic difference in how much a student understands. You have actually mastered the academic content of the lesson, and STILL do not know a word in Farsi (the language of instruction). So, you can see that it is possible for ELLs to comprehend the key concepts of a lesson, as long as differentiated strategies are used.

Differentiated instruction is key to giving second language learners access to curriculum content. However, the fourth focus question, **“What tense is the teacher using to teach the lesson: present, past, future...?”** still needed to be clarified even after Mrs. Amin adjusted the lesson. You will find that defining the grammatical aspects of the language of instruction are difficult to assess, even with differentiated instruction.

Therefore, it is the principle role of the ESOL teacher to instruct ESOL students in the grammar and characteristics of the English language.

Reflection: What made the difference?

Think about three or four ways Mrs. Amin made this lesson understandable.

In general, Mrs. Amin helped us understand the material by:

1. Using visual aids
2. Using paralinguistic cues such as gestures and facial expressions
3. Modifying her delivery or speech to include pauses
4. Using physical space to show contrast and comparison.

Visual aids are an integral part of instruction to ESOL students. Visual reinforcement of content is crucial. Visuals aid comprehension of the language. Moreover, research has shown that the cultural learning styles of many international students favor visual learning. Posting key words and phrases, as well as using props, photos and illustrations assist students who favor visual learning.

Paralinguistic cues such as facial expressions, gestures, and drama is another way of transmitting information. These non-verbal signals give the student important clues about content, and serve as a scaffold to help organize and comprehend the language.

- A **slightly** slower rate of speech
- Frequent pauses after key information
- Changing tone and intonation at key points

One of the important ways Mrs. Amin modified her delivery was to slow down her speech and pause at key moments. Pausing in mid-sentence, like wait time, gives second language learners the opportunity to process the information they're hearing and cognitively "catch up" to the teacher's message. In addition, using the appropriate emotional tone and emphasizing key words and phrases give extra context cues to the listener about what to listen for.

Finally, Mrs. Amin used the space around her to give important information to students about the content. By organizing her props into two distinct areas – the penguin to her left, and the duck to her right---she made it clear without words, that she was comparing two distinct concepts.

Reflection: How can you incorporate these ideas into your instruction?

- Visual Aids
- Paralinguistic Cues
- Modifying Delivery
- Using Physical Space

This video transformation of a lesson in a foreign language demonstrates that differentiating instruction for second language learners is neither complicated nor requires intense planning.

What you have seen are common strategies that many good teachers instinctively use everyday to get information across, even to native speakers of English. You can use the same basic strategies when planning any lesson.

However, classroom teachers today are already overwhelmed with their ever-changing roles and responsibilities. For many teachers, learning new strategies to differentiate for ESOL students may seem to be just one more extraneous chore to be added to an over-full day.

The good news is that meeting the instructional needs of the ESOL students does not require teachers to learn anything particularly new or different. Rather than offering up a long list of appropriate strategies for differentiation, the Center for Applied Linguistics, and other experts in applied linguistics, has organized the topic into three major principles of differentiation.

As we discuss these principles of differentiation, you may recognize that the strategies recommended for English language learners are identical to common "best practices" showcased in every other forum on improving instruction.

The truth is, “best practices” for ESOL students are also “best practices” for ALL students. Most teachers already know and incorporate a repertoire of these practices into their classroom instruction on a daily basis.

Therefore, during the next few content segments, make note of strategies and practices that you already use in your classroom. We predict that you already have knowledge and the skills to become an expert teacher of ESOL students in the mainstream classroom

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