

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 401 724

FL 024 196

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 TITLE Suggestions for Comprehensible Input for Limited English Proficient Students in the Content Area Classroom.
 PUB DATE Oct 96
 NOTE 9p.
 PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Teaching Guides (For Teacher) (052)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
 DESCRIPTORS *Classroom Communication; Classroom Techniques; Context Clues; English (Second Language); *Instructional Materials; *Limited English Speaking; Linguistic Input; *Listening Comprehension; Media Selection; Peer Teaching; *Reading Comprehension; Reading Strategies; Study Skills; Teacher Behavior; Test Construction; Testing; Writing Strategies

IDENTIFIERS *Comprehensible Input; *Content Area Teaching

ABSTRACT

A list of suggestions for the content-area teacher dealing with limited-English-proficient students is designed to help increase the comprehensible input provided to the students. A brief introductory section reviews theory underlying the approach. Subsequently, nine lists outline specific classroom activities (speaking/listening), teacher behaviors, instructional material choices, audiovisual aids, features of the classroom environment, presentation techniques, interaction patterns, reading and writing instructional methods, study skills, evaluation techniques, test modifications, and testing techniques for teachers to use. Contains nine references. (MSE)

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Suggestions for Comprehensible Input for Limited English Proficient Students in the Content Area Classroom

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October, 1996

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etc Katherine McFarland is a teacher educator specializing in language, literacy, and special populations at Texas A&M University where she currently teaches multicultural education and works with student teachers. She continues to keep an active schedule with ESL consultant work in schools, districts, and educational service centers across the southwest.

Many thanks to the participants of the Turnkey Workshops at the Southwest Educational Development Lab / Multi-Resource Center in Austin, Texas.

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**Suggestions for Comprehensible Input for
Limited English Proficient Students
in the Content Area Classroom
(Katherine P. McFarland, Ph.D.)**

ESL students are a diverse group of learners with language, economic, cultural, and learning differences. And like most students, they benefit from a variety of metacognitive and instructional strategies to make content more comprehensible. At the same time, content area teachers struggle with the task of presenting difficult concepts to ESL students who must confront linguistic difficulties on a daily basis. Furthermore, textbooks create comprehension nightmares for many English-only students, let alone Limited English Proficient (LEP) students. The resounding question for many content teachers becomes, "What can I possibly do to teach ESL students with tremendous linguistic and academic needs the academic content in math, science, social studies, and other content areas?"

Certainly, there are no band-aid solutions. So, after much thought the need for a "user friendly" list of suggestions was created and field tested with student teachers, new ESL instructors, and seasoned content teachers alike. After several revisions and feedback from teachers, such an instrument proved to be highly effective particularly with: 1.) Content Area teachers from all disciplines, 2.) Bilingual / ESL teachers, 3.) Content Area and ESL teachers in collaborative efforts, and 4.) ESL teachers in pull-out programs.

This list of suggestions for the content-area teacher reflects Krashen and Terrell's (1983) definition of "comprehensible input," from their transformational work, *The Natural Approach*, which changed the direction of second language acquisition theory in ESL and Foreign Language classrooms. One of their assumptions, the Input Hypothesis, addresses how we acquire language. Krashen (1992, p. 4) writes, "We

acquire language in one way: when we understand messages, or obtain comprehensible input We acquire language . . . when we understand what we hear or what we read, when we understand the message." Thus, "comprehensible input" involves numerous modifications and teaching strategies to make learning discernible.

Furthermore, this list has been designed to foster suggestions for teachers who could not enroll immediately in courses or attend workshops on successful ESL program models such as: Integrated Language Teaching (McCloskey, 1986), Sheltered English Teaching (Northcutt & Watson, 1986), and the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach or the CALLA (Chamot and O'Malley, 1994). However, this "user friendly" list places emphasis on many of the same instructional practices employed used in successful ESL models such as: realia, visuals, media, body language, grouping, learning, metacognitive, and process strategies. Other influences include: Whole Language (Goodman & Goodman), Process Writing (Elbow, Murray, Emig), Cooperative Learning (Johnson & Johnson), Content Mastery, Study Skills, and Metacognitive strategies.

Until the day comes when teachers receive the training to work more effectively with LEP students, a "user-friendly" list of suggestions may help in the interim to stimulate thinking about how to simplify comprehensible input. This instrument is not meant to be comprehensive, only representative. Feel free to add or subtract as needed.

**Suggestions for Comprehensible Input for
Limited English Proficient Students (LEP)
in the Content Area Classroom**

(Katherine P. McFarland, Ph.D.)

- I. **Speaking / Listening Activities** - Provides time and adequate delivery for LEP students to receive comprehensible input.
- _____ Enunciate and Pronounce Words Correctly
 - _____ Control Vocabulary and Sentence Length
 - _____ Limit Use of Idiomatic Expressions
 - _____ Use Fewer Pronouns
 - _____ Restate to Clarify if Problem in Comprehension Arises
 - _____ Use Pauses Between Phrases
 - _____ Use Repetition; Restatements; Examples
 - _____ Use Review in Beginning / Middle / End of Activity
 - _____ Use Recorded Tapes at Listening Stations
 - _____ Tape Key Mini-Lectures for Listening Stations
 - _____ Provide Listening and Speaking Games
 - _____ List Key Concepts on Overhead during Discussions
 - _____ Provide the ESL Teacher with Content Vocabulary
- II. **Contextual Clues** - Provides clues to clarify the meanings of new words and ideas to aid in the visual impact of information.
- _____ Provide Gestures / Facial Expressions
 - _____ Use Kinesthetic / Body Language for Emphasis
 - _____ Teach with Props / Realia
 - _____ Use Texts with Visuals
 - _____ Provide Graphics / Visuals / Illustrations
 - _____ Use Overheads / Transparencies
 - _____ Supply Geographic Maps
 - _____ Use Pictorial Models
 - _____ Reinforce with Use of Media / Video / Slides
 - _____ Apply Manipulatives to Lesson
 - _____ Provide Classroom Labels to Equipment
 - _____ Have Students Practice with Flash Cards
 - _____ Create Bulletin Boards to Reinforce Units
 - _____ Schedule Field Trips
- III. **Organizers** - Provides opportunities for students to graphically represent difficult academic content to be stored in long term memory .
- _____ Use Visual Representations of Content
 - _____ Use Webbing / Clustering / Mapping Devices
 - _____ Outline Main Ideas using Graphic Organizers
 - _____ Sort / Categorize / Group Information Graphically
 - _____ Use Venn Diagram for Comparison and Contrast

- _____ Apply Who / What / Where / When / Why Formula
- _____ Use K / W / L - What you know / What you want to know / What you learn.
- _____ Incorporate Study Guides for Chapters
- _____ Preview Vocabulary Terminology
- _____ Have Students Create Margin Notes
- _____ Model Methods of Outlining and Notetaking
- _____ Have Student Model Notes on Overhead
- _____ Provide Acronyms and Pneumonic Devices
- _____ Teach Color Coding to Organize Information

IV. Classroom Strategies - Provides active learning opportunities that have proven to be successful.

- _____ Orchestrate Peer Tutoring Opportunities
- _____ Utilize Cross-Age Tutoring
- _____ Model What is Expected and Provide Examples
- _____ Experiment with Various Cooperative Learning Strategies
- _____ Coordinate Activities that Involve Working in Pairs
- _____ Design Pair / Share Activities
- _____ Arrange Team Projects / Joint Projects
- _____ Create Learning Centers
- _____ Provide Manipulatives / Hands-On Experiences
- _____ Reinforce a Variety of Learning Styles
- _____ Reinforce Multiple Intelligence
- _____ Emphasize Drama and Pantomime for Classroom Activities
- _____ Provide Time for Role Playing and Student Dialogues
- _____ Arrange Weekly Conferences for Goal Setting and Follow-up
- _____ Integrate Songs, Chants, and Choral Readings

V. Reading / Writing Strategies - Provides active methods to comprehend difficult content material through literacy.

- _____ Brief the Students on Key Points in Beginning of Lesson
- _____ Preview Text or Unit
- _____ Tap or Create Background Knowledge Needed
- _____ Provide Course Outline or Overview
- _____ Use Supplementary Materials on Multiple Levels
- _____ Simplify the Reading Materials
- _____ Set-up Purposes Prior to Readings
- _____ Grade without Emphasis on Grammar and Spelling
- _____ Give More Time for Students to Complete Assignments
- _____ Reduce the Length of Required Assignments
- _____ Use Thematic Units
- _____ Chart Progress through Portfolio in Reading and Writing
- _____ Provide Reinforcements for Concepts (Hints, Cue Cards, Visuals)
- _____ Use Computer Software (Word Processing, Spelling, Thesaurus)
- _____ Allow Alternatives to Oral Presentations
- _____ Allow Students to Give Responses in Native Language
- _____ Use Talk-Write-Compute Formula

- _____ Create Pair / Share Reading Opportunities
- _____ Create Stories through the Language Experience Approach
- _____ Have Student Use Own Experiences for Topics in Writing
- _____ Stress Authentic Writing Opportunities
- _____ Reinforce Stages in Process Writing
- _____ Have Students Paraphrase Content through Writing
- _____ Have Students Make Vocabulary Cards with Pictures
- _____ Have Students Create Language / Content Games (Password)

VI. Study Skills - Creates metacognitive strategies to be used to extract important information.

- _____ Use Focus Questions to Highlight Important Information for Students
- _____ Model Outlining and Notetaking Strategies
- _____ Present Alternatives to Outlining - Webbing and Mapping
- _____ Reinforce Active Methods of Extracting Info from Texts - Highlighting
- _____ Ask Students to Create Graphic Representations of Content
- _____ Have Students Write One Page Summaries
- _____ Preview Questions
- _____ Teach Skimming and Scanning Techniques
- _____ Ask Students to Create Word / Vocabulary Banks
- _____ Teach Reading Formulas - Survey/Scan/Read/Recall/Review
- _____ Provide Study Guide for Test Preparation
- _____ Emphasize Meaning of Key Words in Essay Questions
- _____ Audiotape Lessons
- _____ Encourage Students to Use Bilingual Dictionary
- _____ Have Fluent English Speaker Take Notes on Carbon Paper

VII. Evaluation - Provides alternatives for grading and tracking progress of LEP student.

- _____ Create Anecdotal Records of Progress
- _____ Hold Individual Conferences
- _____ Show Holistic Scoring Rubric in Advance of Assignment
- _____ Develop Checklists in Content
- _____ Arrange Partner / Group Scores
- _____ Offer a Contract System for Grading
- _____ Portfolio Assessment
- _____ Daily and / or Weekly Grades
- _____ Reinforce Self Evaluation

VIII. Test Modifications - Provides methods to evaluate LEP students' understanding of content knowledge.

- _____ Open Book Exams
- _____ Allow ExtraTime for Regular Exams
- _____ Give Oral Exam vs. Written Exam
- _____ Let Student Record Answers on Tape
- _____ Read Test Items to Student

- _____ Write down Test Responses for Students
- _____ Give Test to Small Group of Students
- _____ Allow Student to Make Questions for Test
- _____ Give Take-Home Exams
- _____ Substitute an Assignment for Test
- _____ Provide List of Test Responses for Student to Choose (Multiple Choice)
- _____ Allow Student to Demonstrate Competency by Performance
- _____ Teach Test-Taking Strategies
- _____ Teach Test-Taking Strategies for Essay
- _____ Address Essay Verbs - Describe, Retell, Compare / Contrast
- _____ Limit the Student's Choices on Multiple-Choice Tests.

IX. General Advice - Prepares teachers to work with multi-level LEP students.

- _____ Maintain a Library of Supplementary Books and Workbooks
- _____ Maintain a Variety of Reference Materials at Multiple Levels
- _____ Keep a Variety of Instructional Games
- _____ Maintain a Computer Lab with Educational Software.
- _____ Emphasize Accuracy Not Speed
- _____ Provide Materials that are High Interest / Meaningful / Relevant.
- _____ Provide Materials that Emphasize Culture without Stereotyping
- _____ Provide Biographies of Significant Men & Women from Different Cultures
- _____ Find a Variety of Classroom Activities and Learning Styles.
- _____ Redesign Classroom for Variety of Needs - Individual, Small Group Areas, Quiet Zone, Well-Lit Reading Area, Typing/Computer Center)
- _____ Provide Students a Choice of Materials and Activities
- _____ Keep Error Corrections to a Minimum

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