Pre-Planning: Starting with Students

Language Proficiency Levels: Considering Students' Language Proficiency

Instructional design must begin with your students. For ELs, use language assessment data to determine students' proficiency levels (i.e., composite scores). You might also use proficiency levels by language domain (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, writing) to know students' specific linguistic strengths and needs to incorporate into the unit.

Prior Learning/Connections: Tapping into Background Knowledge

Diverse students bring unique resources for learning to the classroom. Be sure to tap into:

- Funds of knowledge from home (e.g., native language, traditions, home literacy practices)
- Prior knowledge from community (e.g., family employment, community environment)
- Academic knowledge from schools (e.g., previous classrooms, schooling in other countries)

Stage 1: Desired Results & Key Understandings

Transfer & Meaning Goals: Analyzing Academic Language Demands

Every unit of study requires students to use academic language to access and understand content. Analyze the language demands inherent in the unit's tasks and texts.

- Word level (e.g., content vocabulary, multiple meanings words, idioms)
- Sentence level (e.g., sentence types, grammatical structures, conventions)
- Discourse level (i.e., overall linguistic complexity of oral and written texts)

Essential Questions: Considering Comprehensibility of Questions

All students should be able to read, understand, and grapple with the essential questions. Consider providing essential questions in students' native languages. Additionally, write your questions to:

- Tap into students' interests and background knowledge.
- Use the active voice, rather than passive voice.
- Avoid complex sentence and grammatical structures.
- Leave out jargon, expressions, and technical language.

Knowledge: Building Knowledge of Academic Language

Language objectives are integral to instructional design for language development. When writing knowledge-based content objectives, target the academic language demands analyzed at the:

- Word level (e.g., discipline-specific vocabulary, everyday words used in scientific ways)
- Sentence level (e.g., cause-effect sentences, comparative grammatical structures)
- Discourse level (e.g., organization of laboratory reports, structure of oral hypotheses)

Skills: Integrating Language Domains & Functions

Language objectives are integral to effective instructional design for language development. When writing skill-based content objectives:

- Integrate all domains of language, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
- Prioritize domains most needing development based students' language proficiency.
- Revise objectives to include the varied language functions needed to authentically engage with content (e.g., predict, summarize, compose, critique, interpret, negotiate, defend).
**Stage 2: Assessment & Evidence**

**Performance Tasks: Integrating Content & Language in Tasks**
When designing performance tasks, consider the following:

- **Cultural lens**: Are students familiar with activities, people, and places required to understand the task?
- **Linguistic lens**: Does the content-based product (and related rubric) allow for differentiated language functions and performances by proficiency level?
- **Overall**: Is the task itself worded in such a way to allow access for all students, such as avoiding multiple meaning words, idioms/expressions, and complex sentence structures?

**Other Evidence: Assessment Considerations for English Learners**
When designing, selecting, or revising any assessment, consider the cultural and linguistic bias that may reduce the validity of collected data. In this way, assessments should:

- Measure content knowledge and skills, rather than language proficiency.
- Tap into students’ backgrounds, rather than requiring ancillary knowledge.
- Integrate content and language in a meaningful and authentic manner.
- Maintain cognitive complexity while reducing the language demands.

**Stage 3: Learning Plan & Activities**

**Pre-Assessment: Deconstructing Diverse Prior Knowledge & Experiences**
Diverse students bring unique sources of background knowledge, which might require deconstructing your bias of what knowledge/skills matter in relation to the content. Consider students’ funds of knowledge from home, prior knowledge from communities, and academic knowledge from previous schooling. Activate, build, and connect that background knowledge to unit-specific content to support both interest/motivation and language development.

**Learning Tasks: Scaffolding Learning to Support Language Development**
The goal is for all students, including ELs, to achieve grade-level learning goals and higher-order cognitive functions. Your learning plan should not have separate activities and texts for ELs, but rather approach learning to support language development for all students.

- Provide needed modeling and demonstration prior to independent practice.
- Utilize multiple learning contexts (e.g., whole group, small group, partners).
- Incorporate sensory, graphic, and interactive supports to engage with content.
- Allow for varied ways of engaging with content and demonstrating mastery.
- Foster meaningful and authentic interaction merging academic content and language.
- Strategically group students (e.g., same L1, intermixing native speakers with ELs).

**Texts/Resources: Considerations for Cultural Relevance & Linguistic Accessibility**
Students’ language development is also greatly supported by your selection of appropriate texts and resources for instruction. In addition to the learning plan, consider materials that are:

- **Culturally relevant**: Students can see themselves in texts and use their rich sources of background knowledge to make meaning.
- **Culturally authentic**: Texts are rich in nuances and details, rather than generalizing or perpetuating stereotypes of particular groups.
- **Linguistically accessible**: Students can have access to grade-level complex texts, but with appropriate modifications of text to support comprehension.