

Chapter 7

Learning Language, Learning Through Language, and Learning About Language

Developing an Integrated Curriculum

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The Curriculum: A Context for Language Learning

- ✓ Focus of this chapter is ways in which ESL teaching can be integrated into the regular classroom.
- ✓ The title of this chapter is actually the three aspects of children's language development.
- ✓ They are brought together in a classroom program that integrates curriculum and

Why Integrate?

- ✓ For almost all ESL learners, the regular classroom offers the best opportunity to learn a second language.
- ✓ Regular classrooms provide a cultural and situational context for a focus on those aspects of the second language most relevant to curriculum

Why Integrate?

- ✓ The integration of language and content is consistent with the notion that language is learned through meaningful use in a variety of contexts.
- ✓ It puts the focus on language as the medium of learning, rather than on language as something separate from content.
- ✓ Since it takes between 5 and 7 years for ESL students to match their English speaking peers in academic English, concurrent teaching and learning of both subject matter and language is a way of speeding up this process, and helping to ensure that children's classroom time is

Why Integrate?

- ✓ "Why go to the trouble of artificially recreating the mainstream classroom (in pull out classes) when the real thing is available next door?"
- ✓ "The curriculum is the hook on which to hang language development and vice versa."
- ✓ "The language-rich diet of an ESL group can turn out to be nourishing for the whole mainstream class. It can help all children use language for learning in ways which were not previously available to them."

Integrating Language & Subject Learning: What Do We Need to Know First?

- ✓ You need to know 2 sets of information to form the basis for the planning of a program that integrates second language learning and curriculum learning:
 - ✓ The language demands of the curriculum.
 - ✓ What children already know about language and what their language

Finding Language in the Curriculum

- ✓ We need to retrain the way that we think about planning. Teachers often look “through” language to the content. We should start thinking about the language that is integral to a particular curriculum topic.
- ✓ Teachers should look at their curriculum through the “lens” of language, to help you hold language up to the light, to look *at* it rather than *through* it.

Finding Language in the Curriculum

- ✓ Create a “language inventory” – determine the language children need to know in order to participate in learning a particular unit.

Finding Out About Children's Language

- ✓ You need to find out what children are already able to do with language and the areas in which they need help.
- ✓ Ongoing classroom assessment can occur in a number of ways, many of which are informal, and many of which you already use.

Finding Out About Children's Language

- ✓ Examples of such are:
 - ✓ Observations of how children work and interact with others, how much they make use of environmental print around the room, their level of interest in reading and writing, and how confident they are in speaking
 - ✓ Your interaction with individual children
 - ✓ The outcomes of listening, reading, speaking, and writing activities
 - ✓ Portfolios of work
 - ✓ Children's own self-assessments
- ✓ All of these are helpful in building up a profile of a learner's language use.

Assessment Task for Speaking: Paired Problem Solving

- ✓ Students work in pairs to solve one of two problems.
- ✓ After each student comes up with a solution, two pairs cross-question each other about their solutions, prior to solving the second problem themselves.
- ✓ To be used as an assessment task, the teacher should focus on the language involved in doing the task, rather than on the best solution to the problem.

Assessment Task for Speaking: Paired Problem Solving

- ✓ This task requires students to use language to describe their problem, and then to report their solution.
- ✓ The reporting will require them to use the past tense, to use appropriate vocabulary, and to give reasons for the various solutions they have tried.
- ✓ It will also require children to ask appropriate questions and give advice about the other pair's problem and solution.
- ✓ Used as an assessment procedure, these examples of task-related language can be translated into a set of criteria by

Assessment Task for Reading: Cloze Exercise

- ✓ Cloze tests were originally developed to reflect the theory that reading entails the prediction of what will come next.
- ✓ A well constructed cloze with selective deletions can give you specific information about children's reading strategies.
 - ✓ It can tell you what kinds of strategies children are using to gain meaning from the text, such as using **backward referencing** (using the preceding text to find a clue) or **forward referencing** (looking ahead in the text to find a clue).
 - ✓ Children who are unable to use these strategies will read word by word, and

Assessment Task for Reading: Cloze Exercise

- ✓ If your purpose is to assess a child's comprehension ability to process text, then ensure that the topic and genre are familiar ones, so that as much as possible you are focusing on the child's linguistic understandings.
- ✓ Finally, remember that the first and last sentences of a cloze exercise should be complete, since without these the reader has an unrealistic reading task, in being required to

Planning a Unit That Integrates Language and Curriculum Learning

- ✓ Key pedagogical principles for promoting second language learners' linguistic and cognitive development, and the growth of critical literacy skills
 - ✓ **A focus on meaning** - this requires input, or the language that children listen to or read, to be comprehensible. It also includes the development of critical literacy
 - ✓ **A focus on language** - this includes the development of children's awareness of language forms and uses, and the ability to critically analyze these
 - ✓ **A focus on use** - this involves using language to transform what has been learned, through generating new knowledge, creating literature and art and acting on social realities
- ✓ Integral to each of these is the acknowledgment that student learning is inseparable from the interactions between teachers and learners

Phonics, Spelling, and Grammar: Where Do They Fit in an Integrated Unit?

- ✓ Is it still relevant to focus on phonics, spelling and grammar?
- ✓ Is it possible to focus on them within an integrated meaning-focused approach?
 - ✓ **YES!!!** There is a place for the teaching of phonics, spelling and grammar - in other words, for a focus on language as "object". There is a place for children to learn about language, as well as to learn it and to learn through it. Critical question is, how can this be done in ways that do not compromise interactive and meaning-driven classroom practices.
- ✓ It is useful to bear in mind three principles:
 - ✓ Move from the whole to part
 - ✓ Move from meaning to form
 - ✓ Move from familiar to unfamiliar

Teaching Phonemic Awareness and Spelling: Recognizing Analogies

- ✓ There is a strong relationship between children's awareness of phonemic patterns and their ability to rhyme.
- ✓ Children's rhyming skills appear to be good predictors of later spelling and reading success.
- ✓ Being able to form *generalizations* about how words are read or spelled, through *analogy*, is a reasoning process that is essential for developing phonemic awareness in reading and recognition of orthography (spelling patterns) in writing.
- ✓ The use of rhymes and books containing rhyme are likely to be helpful for all children learning to read and write. Being able to recognize words that rhyme and to be helped to produce rhymes is probably especially useful for children who are less familiar with the sounds of the language.
- ✓ The teaching of phonemic awareness (knowledge of letter sound relationships) and spelling is usually seen as of

Teaching Phonemic Awareness

- ✓ An alphabetic system uses letters and symbols for sounds, so that it is possible for a reader to use letter-sound relationships in decoding words
- ✓ However, in English, letter-sound relationships do not always help, since they are not always consistent.
- ✓ Therefore, children need to become aware that letter-sound relationships lead to possibilities, rather than certainties
- ✓ Learning about phonic generalizations can help children in 2 ways:
 - ✓ When readers meet a word they do not know, one of the several strategies they need to use is checking their prediction against the first letter or letter cluster of the word. Phonic knowledge is essential for this.
 - ✓ Sometimes it is possible for an unknown word to be "sounded out" by the reader. If the word is already known aurally, this process may allow the reader to recognize the word.
- ✓ However, letters and sounds in isolation are very abstract

Teaching About Spelling

- ✓ Learning to spell is largely a reasoning process and one based on the learner's ability to develop generalizations.
- ✓ Once the child had discovered that written words are constant and can be named, then the sounds of the words can be related to the letters that represent the words.
- ✓ It is important to recognize that the phonetic spellings of a young learner are often indicative of positive understandings about the systems of orthography (spelling patterns) of English.
 - ✓ train written as chrn
 - ✓ elephant written as elft
 - ✓ shopping written as shpg
- ✓ One of the major ways that children learn to spell is to recognize and reproduce common spelling patterns.
- ✓ When children do not know the spelling of a word, try to scaffold *how* to spell:

In Summary

- ✓ Language is best learned through meaningful use in a variety of contexts, and the curriculum is an ideal and ready-made resource for a focus on language for learning.
- ✓ Simultaneous teaching of language and content allows ESL students to continue learning as they are developing their second language.
- ✓ Language and curriculum learning support each other via the ongoing recycling of concepts and knowledge and the language through which they are expressed.
- ✓ The “language-rich diet” of ESL teaching is of benefit to all students; it supports all children to use language in ways that are new and critical to academic learning.

Finally

- ✓ In an integrated curriculum, children learn language, learn through language and learn about language.
- ✓ They *learn* language in the process of using it.
- ✓ They learn *through* language when they use it to construct knowledge across all areas of the curriculum.
- ✓ They learn *about* language when there is a focus on "language as object".
- ✓ And in a well-planned integrated program, all