

ESL Developmental Continuum P–10

Teaching strategy – Using the curriculum cycle with ESL learners

Focuses on

Speaking Listening **Reading Writing**

Most useful for students at stages

A1 A2 BL B1 B2 B3 SL S1 S2 S3 S4

Purpose of this activity

Using the curriculum cycle with ESL students makes explicit aspects of the genres valued in school literacy.

How this helps ESL students in particular

The 'building knowledge of the field' stage helps them to either develop new concepts, or else map already acquired concepts on to their new language, English.

The extra scaffolding suggested will help students without literacy in English to move forward in their quest to acquire these skills.

Preparing for writing/ research (Building the field)

During this stage, the teacher works out what shared and prior knowledge or understandings of the topic the class has, and consequently what needs to be explored or researched.

This process for scaffolding writing will work best with structured research tasks and shared experiences including:

- note taking, focus questions, using graphic organisers
- guest speakers, interviews
- brainstorming, discussions
- vocabulary development
- problem solving activities
- hands on experiences.

Context exploration & explicit instruction (Modelling/Deconstruction)

This stage familiarises the students with the genre so they are able to 'read' it and deconstruct it (Rothery, 1996: 103). It involves collaborative interaction with the teacher to explore the context of texts and the text type.

Activities useful in this stage are those such as:

- sorting texts
- sequencing stages
- highlighting parts of texts
- constructing flow charts
- evaluating models of texts

- comparing examples of the text type
- cloze activities
- vocabulary building tasks.

Particular adaptations of the model that need to be added for ESL students who are beginning to develop literacy skills include:

- pre-teaching vocabulary – The teacher may need to use mime and visual or concrete material to make sure that students are able to say all the words they will need to use in their later construction of sentences.
- recycling – Write down the words on sticky notes or small pieces of paper or card and show matching pairs (word and object or visual). Pronounce the words slowly and have the students repeat. Depending on the topic and the students' level, students may be helped by sorting pictures or words into columns, or matching the object to the word and pronouncing it independently themselves.

Guided practice (Joint construction)

Metalanguage learned through explicit instruction is used to guide the joint construction of a text (or part of a text). The teacher acts as scribe while students contribute to the construction of a text or part of a text. Students are also provided with research strategies to guide them to build field knowledge.

To adapt this stage for ESL beginner students, this technique may be helpful:

- Write key structural or grammatical words on sticky notes or small pieces of paper or card, e.g. it, has, got, they, have, we, saw.
- Demonstrate on the board how to make a sentence with these words (and the other vocabulary already rehearsed).
- Ask the students to arrange their sticky notes to make a sentence. Then, for example, point to a picture of a lion and the students can arrange the words to make, e.g. 'we saw a lion'.

Independent application of newly acquired knowledge (Independent construction)

Students are ready to plan and complete their own research and construct their own text. The teacher monitors students' work and provides support and guidance as needed.

For beginners in English and literacy, this adaptation is suggested:

- Give out a worksheet with the pictures used for pre-teaching vocabulary down the side.
- After showing the students how to make a line with the ruler, ask them to draw a line next to each picture.
- Have the students arrange their word cards on the table to make a sentence that matches the picture, then write their sentence on the line they drew. (*This could be done with the line already drawn, but manipulating rulers etc is a skill they need to acquire.*)

Acknowledgments/reference

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Rothery, J. (1996). Making the changes: developing an educational linguistics. In R. Hasan & G. Williams (Eds.), *Literacy in society* (pp. 86-123). London: Longman.