Academic Language for English Learners: Focus on Non-Fiction

TESOL 2011   **Mary Lou McCloskey** *mlmcc@mindspring.com*
New Orleans   **Lydia Stack** *lstack@mac.com*
March 18,2011   **Molly Staeheli** *molly_staeheli@yahoo.com*

Strategies

READ, RETELL AND SUMMARIZE (Duff & Maley, 2007)

PURPOSE: The Read, Retell and Summarize strategy is a way for learners to test their comprehension of text and process what they read..

Target learning strategies: retelling, summarizing, reviewing, sequencing
Lesson Stages: Through, Beyond
Language Levels: Intermediate and Advanced

Procedure:

1. **Select a passage** for learners to study**.**
2. **Read** the passage aloud to the students
3. **Select key words** in the passage and ask students to **underline** these words.
4. Ask students to **copy the key words** onto another piece of paper
5. Using the key words as guides, students **retell** the reading to a partner
6. Using the key words, students **write a summary** of the reading and/or predict what will happen next.

SHARED SENTENCES (McCloskey, Stack & All, 2011)

This cooperative learning strategy is an entertaining way for learners to review and analyze a text while they learn to construct good sentences to ask and answer questions. Learners answer questions about a text with sentences – but each learner speaks only one word of the answer at a time. As a result, learners have to think "on their feet" about the answers, but also about many aspects of language – including grammar, collocation (what words "go together"), and word choice.

Target learning strategies: summarizing; synthesizing; reviewing; retelling; using physical action to remember language; word order
Lesson Stage*:* Beyond
Language Levels*:* Intermediate to Advanced

Procedure:

1. Ask students to work in groups of four. Have each group write three questions about the text they have read. Questions may be general or may be directed to a particular character in a story. (Note: some characters can be imaginary -- even inanimate objects.)
2. Each group then sends one representative to stand in the front of the room.
3. Have the students in the front of the class stand in a line facing the class.
4. Have them practice the process of answering questions with sentences, each person speaking one word at a time (when an unfinished sentence gets to the end of a line, it "wraps" around back to the first). Use general questions to help students get started. For example, ask, "What is your name?" Students answer the question in a complete sentence, one word at a time, e.g., student #1 says "My", student #2 says "name", student #3 says "is", student #4 says "(her first name), student #5 says "(his last name) ."
5. Invite a student from one of the groups to ask one of that group's questions. If the question is addressed to a character, remind the student to name the character.
6. Students in the front of the class answer the question in complete sentences, one word at a time. (Especially at first, the group will need considerable modeling and prompting from the teacher and other group members. Note issues of grammar, word choice, word endings that students need help with and that will be valuable "mini-

lessons" for the future.)
7. Continue until all questions are asked and answered.
Sample questions for shared sentences after reading "The Magic School Bus" by Joanna Cole

- What is the story about?
- Where does Ms. Frizzle take her class?
- What forms of water do they see?
- What is the water cycle?
- Where does water go after it rains?
- How does water get back in the sky?

FRAYER VOCABULARY CARDS

PURPOSE: Frayer Vocabulary Cards are a variation on the standard vocabulary "flash card" that requires learners to conceptualize new words in a variety of ways, including definitions, pictures and non-examples.

Target learning strategies: Vocabulary development

Lesson Stages: Into and beyond

Language Levels: All

Procedures:

1. After discussing and defining new words with students, hand out blank cards and assign each student a word or two. If students have reading groups, a list of new words from a text can be made into Frayer cards and shared between group members as study/review tools.
2. Model for students an example of a Frayer Vocabulary card that has 4 quadrants – the top left quadrant has a simple definition, the top left quadrant has the words characteristics or situations when this word is relevant. The bottom left quadrant has some sort of illustration of the word and the bottom right quadrant has a NON-example of the word. This can be the word's opposite, or some other picture or phrase that illustrates what the target word is NOT.
3. Allow students time to be creative with their illustrations and non-examples. Each student may conceptualize words differently depending on his/her prior knowledge and experience.

I HAVE -- WHO HAS? (McCloskey, Stack & All, 2011)

The "I have, who has?" activity is a way to practice vocabulary or literature concepts.   This activity helps students reinforce a particular skill that involves matching a word with a definition or a problem with an answer. It is a quick paced activity that requires everyone in the class to participate in each round.

Target learning strategies: vocabulary development

Lesson Stages: Into, Beyond

Language Levels: All

Procedures:

1. After teaching students the definitions for new vocabulary words, prepare a set of vocabulary cards by writing one of the new words on each card with the statement "I have _____. On the bottom of the card, write the definition for one of the other vocabulary words with the stem "Who has… (see samples below). The word and the definition on each card should not match. However, each word should have a definition on one of the other cards in the set.
2. Make enough cards so that each student in the class has a card.
3. Pass out one card to each student. You must use all the cards in the set when playing the game. If there are more cards than students, give some students two cards.
4. Give students a few minutes to look-up or check their notes for the definition for their "I have" word.
5. The first student says, "Who has…" and reads the definition on his/her card.
6. The student with the word that matches the definition says, "I have … (the word).
7. This student now reads the definition on his/her card, "who has …" and someone answers, "I have (word).
8. Play until all words have been defined.
9. Exchange cards and play the game again.