The Purpose and Meaning of the Standards in Practice

**Prepared by**

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The Standards for the Education, Competence and Professional Conduct are intended to honour and advance the profession by highlighting the complex and varied nature of educators’ work. They articulate the knowledge, skills and attitudes that professional educators shall possess as well as the responsibilities that accrue to them as professionals who hold the trust of the Malaysian Ministry of Education and the people of Malaysia they represent. In doing so, the Standards contribute to a safe and high-quality learning environment for students and provide a basis for professional efficacy. Taken together, the Standards define the professional attributes and expertise that educators bring to bear for the benefit of students, their educators and society.

As a tool for the Brighton Education Teaching Fellows, the Malaysian Ministry of Education and the people of Malaysia they represent, the Standards are intended to support the goals of Malaysian society by helping to support the education of citizens to live productive and fulfilled lives. Educators who embody these Standards must be able to relate intellectually, pedagogically and ethically with students and their educators as they teach the specific subjects and curriculum of the Malaysian Ministry of Education.

Standards are a profession’s way of communicating to its members and the Malaysian Ministry of Education and the people of Malaysia they represent the description of the work of professionals – what they know, what they are able to do, and how they comport themselves as they serve the Malaysian Ministry of Education and the people of Malaysia they represent. The Standards provide the foundation and stability on which the teaching profession can grow, articulating both the values and characteristics that distinguish the profession. Professionals enter into a contract with the Malaysian Ministry of Education and the people of Malaysia they represent that provides the professionals with a level of autonomy and self-regulation in return for an agreement that the profession will place the interests of the Malaysian Ministry of Education and the people of Malaysia they represent above individual interests. Professionals agree to be accountable to the Malaysian Ministry of Education and the people of Malaysia they represent, and the Standards serve as a touchstone for this responsibility.

Even the most eminent and competent professionals will continue throughout their careers to learn about and build their repertoires in pedagogy and subject area knowledge. Indeed, standards serve both as ideals to which educators aspire and expectations that can be reasonably held.

One critical consideration that often accompanies the development of standards is the question of how they will be used in practice. The practice of education is an ongoing journey of growing understanding and developing skills. The notion that a professional can attain perfection in practice flies in the face of the notion of continual learning and suggests that “meeting” a standard can be relative. The question should not be “Has the Standard been met?” but “To what extent has the Standard been met for the particular context in which the educator is preparing or working?”

A deficit in a single standard is not necessarily a fatal flaw that destroys professional competence, though in certain substantive circumstances it may be.

STANDARDS

**1. Educators value and care for all students and act in their best interests.**

Educators are responsible for fostering the emotional, esthetic, intellectual, physical, social and vocational development of students. They are responsible for the emotional and physical safety of students. Educators treat students with respect and dignity. Educators respect the diversity in their classrooms, schools and communities. Educators have a privileged position of power and trust. They respect confidentiality unless disclosure is required by law. Educators do not abuse or exploit students or minors for personal, sexual, ideological, material or other advantage.

**2. Educators are role models who act ethically and honestly.**

Educators act with integrity, maintaining the dignity and credibility of the profession. They understand that their individual conduct contributes to the perception of the profession as a whole. Educators are accountable for their conduct while on duty, as well as off duty, where that conduct has an effect on the education system. Educators have an understanding of the education system in The Malaysian Ministry Of Education and the law as it relates to their duties.

**3. Educators understand and apply knowledge of student growth and development.**

Educators are knowledgeable about how students and their educators develop as learners and as social beings, and demonstrate an understanding of individual learning differences and special needs. This knowledge is used to assist educators in making decisions about curriculum, instruction, assessment and classroom management.

**4. Educators value the involvement and support of parents, guardians, families and other stakeholders, in the school community.**

Educators understand, respect and support the role of parents and the community in the education of students. Educators communicate effectively and in a timely manner with parents and consider their advice on matters pertaining to students and their educators.

**5. Educators practice effective classroom a) management, b) planning, c) instruction, d) assessment, e) evaluation and f) reporting.**

Educators have the knowledge and skills to facilitate learning for all students and know when to seek additional support for their practice. Educators thoughtfully consider all aspects of teaching, from planning through reporting, and understand the relationships among them. Educators employ a variety of instructional and assessment strategies.

**6. Educators have a broad knowledge base and understand the subject areas they teach.**

Educators understand the curricular, conceptual and methodological foundations of education and of the subject areas they teach. Educators must be able to communicate effectively in English. Educators teach students to understand relevant curricula in a global context. Educators convey the values, beliefs and knowledge of Malaysia’s democratic society.

**7. Educators engage in career-long learning.**

Educators engage in professional development and reflective practice, understanding that a hallmark of professionalism is the concept of professional growth over time. Educators develop and refine personal philosophies of education, teaching and learning that are informed by theory and practice. Educators identify their professional needs and work to meet those needs individually and collaboratively.

**8. Educators contribute to the profession.**

Educators support, mentor or encourage other educators and those preparing to enter the profession.

Educators contribute their expertise to activities offered by their schools, districts, professional organizations, post-secondary institutions or contribute in other ways.

Additional Specific Principles of Practice for Brighton Education Teaching Fellows:

1. [**Teachers and Students Producing Together**](http://www.crede.ucsc.edu/standards/1jpa.shtml)

Facilitate learning through joint productive activity among teachers and students. Learning occurs most effectively when experts and novices work together for a common product or goal, and are therefore motivated to assist one another. "Providing assistance" is the general definition of teaching; thus, joint productive activity (JPA) maximizes teaching and learning.

1. **Teachers are responsible for Managing students’ Motivation**

If one begins with the notion that teachers do not manage classrooms, that they manage people, then one is taken beyond the physical boundaries of rooms to the limitless possibilities in the human mind and spirit. There, one can begin to understand and affect behaviour, guiding it in such a way that ideally is demonstrated in a complete engagement in the most important human activity – learning… for *each* student.

1. **Teachers must encourage and respect Creativity in the process of Learning**

The teacher sets an example by teaching in a creative, innovative manner, setting tasks and facilitating activities which inspire and motivate students to express and explore their inner creativity.

The teacher works on the principle that all human beings are creative in their own way.

The teacher strives to create a positive, supportive learning environment which allows and encourages learners to express their own ideas, thoughts and feelings.

The teacher draws on a variety of media and arts and exposes learners to a wide range of task types, for example, creative expression, problem solving, critical thinking.

The teacher responds to learners creative output positively, non-judgementally, in a way which motivates learners to further expand and explore their creativity and therefore their language and personal development.

1. **Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.**

Accomplished teachers have a rich understanding of the subject(s) they teach and appreciate how knowledge in their subject is created, organized, linked to other disciplines and applied to real-world settings. While faithfully representing the collective wisdom of our culture and upholding the value of disciplinary knowledge, they also develop the critical and analytical capacities of their students.

Accomplished teachers command specialized knowledge of how to convey and reveal subject matter to students. They are aware of the preconceptions and background knowledge that students typically bring to each subject and of strategies and instructional materials that can be of assistance. They understand where difficulties are likely to arise and modify their practice accordingly. Their instructional repertoire allows them to create multiple paths to the subjects they teach, and they are adept at teaching students how to pose and solve their own problems.

1. **Teachers Respect Diversity**

The study of Learning Styles and Multiple Intelligences (Frames of Mind - Gardner, 1983) is still developing and there are different interpretations of the two concepts and the relationship between them. For now, it is important to simply recognize that not everybody learns or acquires a second language through a single method or set of techniques.

Teachers shall understand the practice of culturally responsive teaching.

1. **Teachers Set Clear Achievable and Challenging Goals and Objectives**

Goals encompass a variety of endeavours, including academic performance, career achievements, and personal fulfillment. Setting and achieving one's personal goals requires self-monitoring. Appropriate academic goals are challenging yet achievable and teachers assist students with strategies for setting and achieving general goals, course and study goals, and career goals are then discussed as well as strategies for learning.

1. **Teachers are responsible for monitoring and assessing students’ progress in learning**

Teachers use appropriate formative and summative tools and provide feedback to students promptly and constructively.

1. **Teachers cultivate appropriate, productive and respectful relationships with all stakeholders**
2. **Teachers encourage learning that is contextual, situational and relevant through reflective, responsive and inclusive practice**
3. **Teachers build safe, comfortable classroom environments that encourage risk-taking and innovation.**

***Teachers should be FREE - Flexible, Resourceful, Engaging and Enriching***

Principles Specifically for Facilitation of

English as a Foreign Language Acquisition

**Key Principles of the PRIME© Approach and Method**

By William M. Tweedie

Communication is the *primary* goal in the facilitation of English Language Acquisition. The implications take us beyond the accepted axiom that we should teach language *usage*, not *about* the language. English, like all human languages, has one general purpose, which is to convey our thoughts and feelings to other beings, to communicate. English is not the end. It is one means to the end.

Communication is PRACTICAL. People communicate for specific, identifiable purposes. We need to know and understand why people communicate and how English can be used as one means to accomplish these purposes.

Human communication exists when intelligible signals are transmitted and received in the context of the satisfaction of needs and wants, fulfilling purposes. All else is communicatively useless action or noise.

Students acquire English if it is RELEVANT to their lives, that is, if it satisfies real needs and wants, involves them as individuals, addressing their backgrounds, interests, and goals.

The choice of language used in oral and written communication involves interactional uncertainty. The language used in communication is, largely, unpredictable. Providing students with strategies to manage this uncertainty and the unpredictability in discourse is essential to building beginners’ confidence and sustaining their motivation.

Communication is accomplished through a variety of INTEGRATED means that should not be isolated in the learning/acquisition process. Observation takes its rightful place as an essential skill along with Listening, Reading, Speaking, and Writing. All other motional and emotional means of communication figure importantly in the process. Beginners need as many options as possible to support their efforts to communicate. All communication options should be explored before resorting to their native language and translation.

Communication is context dependent, must be comprehensible, and MEANINGFUL to both sender and receiver. Facilitators must ensure that their communication with students and the language students are engaged in acquiring are both comprehensible and meaningful and that the understanding and conveyance of meaning takes precedence over correctness of form, content, and structure.

The most important criteria in assessing students’ progress are first, the degree to which the student is actively engaged in the process of English language acquisition and secondly, how effectively s/he comprehends, negotiates, and conveys meaning, not the correctness of form or grammar.

Facilitators of language acquisition have the responsibility of providing students with the tools necessary for progress. These include an array of strategies for learning in general and language learning specifically. Language learning strategies, direct and indirect, must be incorporated into the curriculum.

Students will acquire the English they want and agree they need to. Therefore, Studentsmust first Initiate, then Direct, Control, Monitor, and Evaluate (SIDCME) their own learning (The PRIME© METHOD). Facilitators provide the framework and guideposts, students provide the substance. The most significant implication of this principle is in the facilitator’s acceptance of the role as ‘guide on the side, not sage on the stage’. To achieve the objective of students becoming autonomous learners, the facilitator must have patience, resolve and be flexible, resourceful, engaging (motivating) and enriching (FREE) in taking this Approach.

Language acquisition is an indefinite process with characteristics distinct from other subject matter learning. The psychological and emotional factors in language acquisition must figure largely in the approach facilitators and students take to the process because communication is the expression of self, one’s identity, in the process of fulfilling its purposes. Students cannot be expected to achieve goals set out on a continuum of grammatical structures, forms, and functions. The content they need and want to express in achieving relevant purposes will require different and varied structures and forms at different times. The facilitator must have sufficient command and knowledge of English usage to be an effective model for the students and provider of the information they need.

The facilitator’s language and classroom material are known and perceived by the students to be models for their own language development.

The process must be enjoyable and ENRICHING to self and society. Is it not our ultimate goal, as facilitators of the acquisition of language for its practical use in achieving meaningful purposes, to help people understand each other so they can help each other progress towards a better world? This principle will guide facilitators and students in the selection or development of material for classroom modeling and practising.

Language acquisition is a process tangent to and reflective of the student’s development and growth across all the dimensions of learning. The next section takes a closer look at this important concept.

***The Dimensions of Learning***

ESL standards articulated by such organizations as TESOL, USA and most commercial ESL programmes pay little attention to the progress of students across all the dimensions of learning. It is important that the facilitators be aware of the students’ progress along these dimensions as it is likely they correlate directly to their progress in the acquisition process.[[1]](#footnote-1) The dimensions of learning commonly articulated are:

1. *Confidence and Independence*
2. *Skills and Strategies*
3. *Knowledge and Understanding*
4. *Use of Prior and Emerging Experience*
5. *Reflection - Contemplative and Critical*

‘Learning occurs across complex dimensions that are interrelated and interdependent. Learning theorists have argued that learning and development are not components of an assembly line that can be broken down into discrete steps occurring with machine-time precision, but an organic PROCESS that unfolds along a continuum according to its own pace and rhythm. The facilitator/facilitator and student should be actively searching for, and documenting positive evidence of the student’s development across the five dimensions listed above. These five dimensions cannot be separated out and treated individually; rather, they are dynamically interwoven and interdependent.’ (Iverson, S)

*Confidence and Independence*

Growth and development occur when learners’ confidence and independence become coordinated with their actual abilities and skills, content knowledge, use of their experience, and reflective of their own learning. It is not a simple case of ‘more is better’. The overconfident student, who has relied on faulty or underdeveloped skills and strategies, learns to ask for help when facing an obstacle; the shy student begins to trust his/her own abilities and begins to work alone at times, or to insist on presenting her own point of view in discussions. In both cases, students develop along the dimension of confidence and independence.

*Skills and Strategies*

Specific skills and strategies are involved in the process of language acquisition as well as other areas of learning that require instruction and the active participation of the students. These skills include technological skills for computer communication for all students if they are to become active participants in the global village. ‘Skills and strategies represent the “know-how” aspect of learning.’ How well students actually learn (performance ability or mastery of any given content ) or acquire, in the context of second language acquisition, depends on how well they know and use the skills and strategies laid open to them for their personal use.

*Knowledge and Understanding*

Content knowledge refers to the extent students understand the theory of new or revealed methods, techniques, and topics and the relationship between theories and practise. It is measured by how effectively the knowledge (ideas) is conveyed by facilitators of learning as well as by how well students demonstrate their understanding of the ideas through formal and informal presentations (examinations, writings, practical and relevant use of the knowledge). This dimension of learning is the most familiar as it has been the most quantifiable and justifiable in terms of historically modern educational systems. What is the simple past of the verb ‘to think’? What is a “web site” on the World-Wide Web? These are typical content knowledge/understanding questions.

*Use of Prior and Emerging Experience*

Use of prior and emerging experience involves the students’ awareness of the importance and relevance of their own experience, the ability to draw on this experience and connect it to their engagement in the process of learning. ‘A crucial but often unrecognized dimension of learning is the ability to make use of prior experience in new situations’ or when confronted with new learning challenges. It is necessary to overtly encourage and value learners’ experiences and more over to help them incorporate their experiences into the process of learning and acquiring a new language in that case. ‘Observing learners over a period of time as they are engaged in a variety of activities will allow this important capability to be accounted for.’ This dimension of learning is, after all, at the heart of new imaginings and their realization. In structured, inflexible, predetermined curricula we cannot discover, nor can the student, how his/her prior experience might help build new or greater understandings, or how ongoing experience shapes the content knowledge and understanding, skills and strategies, indeed, the confidence and independence he/she is developing. Imagine you have no imagination.

*Reflection - Contemplative and Critical*

It is important to contemplate our own learning process and to analyse how we are progressing in the process of acquiring our knowledge or a second language. How well are we using the skills and strategies available to us to communicate better our thoughts and feelings? Are our students and we developing the ability to distance ourselves enough from the process to reflect on it in the general terms of the extent we are engaged in it and how important it is to our development as human beings and as a global society? Is our ability to think critically of the specific aspects of the process, i.e., how well we using the skills and strategies we need? How much effort are we putting into developing our confidence? How courageous are we becoming in validating our own experiences and using them to build our futures on? This overview thinking and recognition of limitations and obstacles provides the impetus for continued progress and is a necessary dimension of learning and acquisition of language for stronger, clearer communication.

Facilitators in this programme must monitor all the factors articulated because language cannot be acquired effectively without management and accomplishment in these areas. While students are expected to achieve some of these minimum standards or learning outcomes, their efforts and progress should be the most important factor in assessments and evaluations, not the quality or quantity of English they have acquired. ***This is according to the unique nature of second language acquisition.***

**PRIME© Principles in Action in the EFL Classroom**

By William M. Tweedie

Adapted From the NCBE Program Information Guide Series, Number 19

***Silence is often needed***

Students must be silent at times as they learn to speak a second language.

Some learners need to focus more on listening than speaking, especially during the early stages of learning and acquiring a new language. For others, there may be a need to briefly "tune out" at points in the course of a day to "recharge" from the constant effort of listening and speaking in a new language.

Silence may also occur in extended pauses before a student answers a question. Allow students additional time to collect their thoughts and structure their answer. Moving too quickly to the next student discourages efforts to respond; in contrast, recognizing that the student needs more time to answer lets the student know that you are interested in listening.

***Errors generally indicate progress***

As with first language acquisition, errors can actually have a positive meaning. They often appear when a learner is trying out new grammatical structures. When the focus is on communicating, direct correction of errors can hinder students' efforts and discourage further attempts to express ideas with the language skills they have available. Rather than correct errors directly, a teacher can continue the dialogue by restating what the student has said to model the correct form.

***Valuing diversity***

Valuing the diverse backgrounds and resources that EFL students bring to the classroom and being sensitive to their unique needs can serve to build an instructional environment that can benefit all students.

Current education research and reform focus on increasing student participation in instruction and on basing instruction on the real-life needs of students. An active learning and acquiring instructional model for EFL students includes elements that address the special language-related needs of students who are learning and acquiring English.

Instructional content should utilize student diversity. Incorporating diversity into the classroom provides EFL students with social support, offers all students opportunities to recognize and validate different perspectives, and provides all students interesting information. Also, examples and information relevant to EFL students' backgrounds assist them in understanding content.

***Increasing comfort levels***

The classroom should be predictable and accepting of all students. All students are able to focus on and enjoy learning and acquiring more when the school and classroom make them feel safe - comfortable with themselves and with their surroundings. Teachers can increase comfort levels through structured classroom rules and activity patterns, explicit expectations, and genuine care and concern for each student.

Instructional activities should maximize opportunities for communication and as much as possible, language use. Opportunities for substantive, sustained dialogue are critical to challenging students' abilities to communicate ideas, formulate questions, and use language for higher order thinking. Each student, at his or her own level of proficiency, should have opportunities to communicate meaningfully in this way.

***Involving students***

Instructional tasks should involve students as active participants. Students contribute and learn more effectively when they are able to play a role in structuring their own learning and acquiring, when tasks are oriented toward discovery of concepts and answers to questions, and when the content is both meaningful and challenging.

Instructional interactions should provide support for student understanding. Teachers should ensure that students understand the concepts and materials being presented. For EFL students this includes providing support for the students' understanding of instruction presented in English.

***Creating an accepting and predictable environment***

A supportive environment is built by the teacher on several grounds. There is acceptance, interest, and understanding of different backgrounds, beliefs, and learning styles or Multiple Intelligences. Explicit information on what is expected of students is provided and is reinforced through clearly structured daily patterns and class activities. These provide important social and practical bases for students, especially EFL students. When students are freed of the need to interpret expectations and figure out task structures, they can concentrate on and take risks in learning and acquiring. Provide a clear acceptance of each student.

***Maximizing opportunities for language use***

Communication in all its aspects, i.e., observing, listening, reading, writing, and all other means, including oral expression, is really central to learning and acquiring for all EFL students. Through experience in trying to express ideas, **formulate questions**, and explain solutions, students' use of their native as well as English language and other communication skills, supports their development of higher order thinking skills. The following points are important ways to maximize language use.

**Ask questions that require new or extended responses.**

* 1. The teacher's questions should elicit new knowledge, new responses, and thoughtful efforts from students. They should require answers that go beyond a single word or predictable patterns. Students can be asked to expand on their answers by giving reasons why they believe a particular response is correct, by explaining how they arrived at a particular conclusion, or by expanding upon a particular response by creating a logical follow-on statement.

**Create opportunities for sustained dialogue and substantive language use.**

* 1. It is often hard to give many students the opportunities needed for meaningful, sustained dialogue within a teacher-centered instructional activity. To maximize opportunities for students to use language, teachers can plan to include other ways of organizing learning and acquiring activities. For example, in cooperative learning and acquiring groups, students use language together to accomplish academic tasks. In reciprocal teaching models, each student/group is responsible for completing then sharing/teaching one portion of a given task.
  2. Opportunities for maximizing language use and engaging in a sustained dialogue should occur in both written and oral English. Students can write in daily journals, seen by only themselves and the teacher. This type of writing should be encouraged for students at all levels. Some EFL students may be too embarrassed to write at first; they may be afraid of not writing everything correctly. The focus in this type of writing, however, should be on communicating. Students should be given opportunities to write about what they have observed or learned. Less English proficient EFL students can be paired to work with other, more proficient students or be encouraged to include illustrations, for example, when they report their observations.
  3. The teacher should also ensure that there are substantive opportunities for students to use oral and written language to define, summarize, and report on activities. Learning and acquiring takes place often through students' efforts to summarize what they have observed, explain their ideas about a topic to others, and answer questions about their presentations. EFL students' language proficiency may not be fully equal to the task; however, they should be encouraged to present their ideas using the oral, written, and non-linguistic communication skills they do have. This can be supplemented through small group work where students learn from each other as they record observations and prepare oral presentations.

**Provide opportunities for language use in multiple settings.**

* 1. Opportunities for meaningful language use should be provided in a variety of situations: small groups, with a variety of groupings (i.e., in terms of English proficiency); peer-peer dyads (again, with a variety of groupings); and teacher-student dyads. Each situation will place its own demands on students and expose them to varied types of language use.
  2. The physical layout of the room should be structured to support flexible interaction among students. There can be activity areas where students can meet in small groups or the teacher can meet with a student, or the furniture in the room can be arranged and rearranged to match the needs of an activity.

**Focus on communication.**

* 1. When the focus is on communicating or discussing ideas, specific error correction should be given a minor role. This does not mean that errors are never corrected; it means that this should be done as a specific editing step, apart from the actual production of the written piece. Similarly, in oral language use, constant, insistent correction of errors will discourage EFL students from using language to communicate. Indirect modeling (echoing) of a corrected form in the context of a response is preferable to direct correction.

**Provide for active participation in meaningful and challenging tasks.**

* 1. Shifts in approach, that recent research and reform efforts indicate are effective for all students, are especially necessary in EFL contexts. For example, many descriptions of instructional innovation focus on increasing student participation in ways that result in students asking questions and constructing knowledge, through a process of discovery to arrive at new information that is meaningful and that expands students knowledge. An important goal is to create or increase the level of "authentic" (Newmann and Wehlage, 1993) instruction, i.e., instruction that results in learning and acquiring that is relevant and meaningful beyond success in the classroom task alone.

**Give students responsibility for their own learning and acquiring.**

* 1. In active participation, students assist the teacher in defining the goals of instruction and identifying specific content to be examined or questions to be addressed. Students also play active roles in developing the knowledge that is to be learned (e.g., students observe and report on what they have observed, write to organizations for needed information, and assist each other in interpreting and summarizing information). Active participation also involves some shifting of roles and responsibilities; teachers become less directive and more facilitative, while students assume increasing responsibility.
  2. EFL students need to participate. Their participation can be at a level that is less demanding linguistically, but still requires higher order thinking skills and allows them to demonstrate or provide information in non-linguistic ways. For example, using limited written text, an EFL student with very little oral or written proficiency in English can create a pictorial record of what was observed in a science class, noting important differences from one event to the next.

**Develop the use of a discovery process.**

* 1. When students take an active role in constructing new knowledge, they use what they already know to identify questions and seek new answers. A discovery process is one in which students participate in defining the questions to be asked, develop hypotheses about the answers, work together to define ways to obtain the information they need to test their hypotheses, gather information, and summarize and interpret their findings. Through these steps, students learn new content in a way that allows them to build ownership of what they are learning and acquiring. They are also learning and acquiring how to learn and acquire.

**Include the use of cooperative student efforts.**

* 1. Recent findings about how people learn emphasize the social nature of learning and acquiring. Many successful examples of classroom innovation with EFL students show the value of using cooperative working groups composed of heterogeneous groups of students, including students at different levels of ability. The composition of groups should be carefully considered and should be flexible so that students experience working with different individuals. Mixing less English proficient EFL and more English proficient students within groups promotes opportunities to hear and use English within a meaningful, goal-directed context.
  2. Learning to work in cooperative groups requires practice and guidance for the students. Formal roles should be assigned to each member of a group (e.g., note-taker, reporter, group discussion leader), and these roles should be rotated. At older grades, as students identify different tasks to be accomplished by a group, students might define and assign their own responsibilities. In all cases, the use of group work requires attention to ensure that each individual has opportunities and responsibilities in contributing to the development of the overall product. Teachers need to be sensitive to the fact that some students prefer independent rather than cooperative learning and acquiring structures and activities. Teachers may want to consider adjusting the balance of learning and acquiring activities for students to accommodate such differences and to provide more support, thereby allowing students to gradually become more comfortable in these activities.

**Make learning and acquiring relevant to the students' experience.**

* 1. Content matter is more meaningful for students when it relates to their background and experience. Furthermore, new knowledge is best learned and retained when it can be linked to existing "funds of knowledge" (Moll et al. 1990) so new content should be introduced through its relationship to an already understood concept. For example, a discussion of food cycles can begin with a discussion of foods commonly found in students' homes and communities.
  2. It is important that the learning experience regularly draws links between home, the community, and the classroom because this serves to contextualize and make content meaningful for students and ultimately to better acquisition of English. An active learning and acquiring instructional approach ultimately seeks to develop in students a view of themselves as learners in all aspects of their lives, not only in the classroom. Students should see opportunities and resources for learning and acquiring outside of the classroom as well. Whenever possible, the resources of the home and community should be used. For example, when a class is learning about structure, a parent who is a carpenter can be called upon to explain how the use of different materials can affect the design and strength of a structure (taking into account function, strength, flexibility, and so on).

**Use thematic integration of content across subject areas.**

* 1. Learning and acquiring is also made more meaningful when it is contextualized within a broader topic. Business administration, Telecommunications, and Information Technology can all become interrelated through their common reference to the same theme or topic of interest just as Maintenance, Production processes, and Food Technology can (or any combination for that matter). In this way different perspectives on the topic are developed through linkages across different types of learning and acquiring activities.

**Build in-depth investigation of content.**

* 1. Instruction is more challenging and engaging when it provides in-depth examination of fewer topics rather than more limited coverage of a broader range of topics. Furthermore, a comprehensive exploration of one or more content areas promotes understanding and helps students retain what they learn. Also, integrated, thematic curricula that address the same topic across different content areas provide students opportunities to explore a given subject in greater depth.

**Design activities that promote higher order thinking skills.**

* 1. Classroom tasks should challenge students by requiring them to develop and utilize higher order skills. Higher order thinking activities require students to use what they know to generate new information (e.g., to solve problems, integrate information, or compare and contrast). Higher order skills are utilized, for example, when students are asked to review a folktale from one country that they have just read, to identify another folktale from their own background that they think makes a similar point, and to explain the similarities and differences. This is in contrast to lower order thinking skills such as rote repetition of responses or memorization of facts.

**Provide support for understanding.**

* 1. Students need opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning and acquiring - to seek out information and formulate answers. This is what the active learning and acquiring instructional model provides. However, essential to the process, is the support provided by the teacher. As a partner in students' investigations of new content, the teacher should guide and facilitate students' efforts.
  2. The teacher's input as a facilitator and guide to students should be carried out in a variety of ways, such as:
     1. asking open-ended questions that invite comparison and contrast, and prompt students to integrate what they have observed, draw conclusions, or state hypotheses;
     2. assisting students in identifying needed resources, including setting up linkages with resources in the local community (e.g., local experts who could visit, field trips to organizations, and so on);
     3. structuring learning and acquiring activities that require students to work cooperatively, modeling the different group member roles if necessary;
     4. encouraging students to discuss concepts they are learning, to share their thoughts, and to express further questions that they would like to tackle;
     5. establishing long-term dialogues with students about the work they are doing, either in regular teacher/student conferences or dialogue journals; and
     6. setting up opportunities for students to demonstrate or exhibit their work to other classes in the school as a means of prompting further dialogue outside of the classroom

**Work together with others.**

* 1. The attempt to restructure activities in your classroom and to deal with new forms of diversity is a challenging one. It is not one that a teacher needs to face alone. Combine your expertise with that of other teachers.
  2. A significant body of recent research has focused on the value of teachers combining their professional expertise and sharing their experiences with one another. Teachers can offer important support to each other by serving as sounding boards for successes and failures, as additional sources of suggestions for resolving problem situations, and as resources to each other in sharing ideas, materials, and successful practices. Also, the more teachers who work with the same students share information, the more consistent and effective their students' overall instructional experience will be.
  3. Teachers should take steps to:
     1. collaborate and confer with EFL specialists;
     2. collaborate with other content area teachers who work with the same EFL students to share resources, ideas, and information about students' work;
     3. share ideas and experiences with teachers who are interested in trying out more active instructional activities with their students;
     4. involve the program director; let him know what you are doing; explain how you are implementing an active instructional model in your class, and the benefits for the students Ask for support; some of this support should come in tangible ways, such as assistance in scheduling joint planning periods or in-class sessions in co-teaching or straightforward observation.

***YOU CAN'T DO IT ALL AT ONCE***

If you are interested in moving toward an active learning and acquiring instructional model, starting small is okay. Begin by becoming more familiar with your students. Perhaps set up a regular time with each for discussion. Learn about models for cooperative group work and plan to try cooperative work for one specific type of activity on a regular basis. Talk with other teachers and develop ideas together. Step by step you will be able to build an active learning and acquiring approach that will benefit all students in your classroom.

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1. While great progress has been made in expanding the scope of factors that affect ELA facilitation in recent years such as Multiple Intelligence and Thinking Styles Theories, there is a need for more research of the relationships among emotion, the psychology of learning, and language acquisition. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)