Teaching Elementary ESOL Students through the Silent Period
2017 TESOL International Convention and English Language Expo
March 21-24, Seattle, Washington

Presenters

Jeff Chandler, Ed.S.
Arleen Folorunsho, Ed.D.
Mae L. Wlazlinski, Ph.D.

Cobb County School District, Georgia
What would help the speaking process?

Comprehensible Input and comprehensible output

- Opportunities for students to practice language at their level of English proficiency
- Practice with English-speaking peers
- Cooperative learning allows for comprehensible input and output
  - Small group—teacher can adapt the lesson to the listener’s needs
  - More opportunities for oral practice and repetition of content information
  - Talk is center to what is happening at the moment where corrective feedback and recasts are immediate and non-judgmental

Strategies for Classroom Teachers

Provide Clues to Meanings

Use drawings, dramatic gestures, actions, emotions, voice, mime, photographs, and visual materials to provide clues to meaning.

If necessary, repeat your actions using the same simple structures and actions.

Simplify your message as much as possible breaking them into smaller, manageable chunks.

Make sure the student’s attention is focused. Don’t insist, however, that students make eye contact with you when you are speaking to them. This is considered rude in many cultures.

Be an Active Listener

Give full attention to your newcomer and make every effort to understand his/her attempts to communicate.

Talk in a calm, quiet manner.

Demonstrate your patience through your facial expressions (smile) and body language.

Give your EL students extra time to respond.

Encourage new learners of English to act out or to draw pictures to get their meaning across if they are not ready to speak.

Don't jump in immediately to supply the words for the student.

If the student’s response is heavily accented, reformulate and recast.

Resist the urge to over correct.

Modify Your Speech

Talk at a slow-to-normal pace, in short sentences.

Use a pleasant tone.
Use simple sentence structure (subject-verb-object) and high-frequency words.

Use names of people rather than pronouns.

Pause after phrases or short sentence.

Avoid using the passive voice and complex sentences.

If you have something important to convey, speak one-on-one to the newcomer rather than in front of the class.

Ask simple yes/no questions so that newcomers have an opportunity to respond.

Accept one-word answers or gestures.

**Identifying Vocabulary while Increasing Speaking Skills**

**Goals:**
- Practice speaking skills: asking for and giving information and opinions, agreeing and disagreeing, speculating, telling a story.
- Identify key vocabulary.
- Practice reading skills: scanning a text for key points.
- Generate interest in the film clip next lesson.

1. Hold up the text from a distance and ask how long they think it would take to read it. Deliver the bombshell that they will have just (15/20/30/45) seconds to look at it!

2. Show them how to tackle this challenge (bad example, good example, writing key words, not looking at conjunctions and articles, etc.)

3. Hand out texts face down. Say “go” and then start timing. Say “stop.” They turn their papers face down again.

4. Individuals write down all the words they can remember.

5. Students compare answers in pairs, then groups, and add words from classmates’ lists to their lists. Make sure everyone has the same longer list of words by monitoring carefully.

6. Elicit the key words from the class and write all over board.

7. In pairs, then groups, have them discuss how the words could fit together into a story.

8. Elicit some possible story ideas from the class and write them on board or just do it orally. Accept all ideas; don’t try to guide them to the right answer. It doesn’t matter!

9. Ask students if they would like to read the text again – more slowly this time – to see if they were right. This usually gets a very enthusiastic response. They turn over and read again with a much longer, more “normal” time limit.

10. Students check their understanding with a partner and then conduct class feedback to see if they got the story right. Usually they manage to come pretty close, which is very encouraging for all concerned.

11. Depending on time, you can then move on to further reading exercises as per normal (e.g., comprehension questions, key vocabulary, retelling the story from memory). Have them elicit a good title for the film, or look at the real title together and discuss its meaning. Does this sound like the kind of film they would enjoy watching?

12. Conclude the lesson by praising the fact they understood so much after just 15 seconds. Anything is now possible! Build interest and anticipation by telling them that next lesson they will be watching a little bit of the film itself.
Short time limits can be great fun and add variety to many different activities. Don’t use them all the time (you can have too much of a good thing) and remember they don’t suit every lesson or learning style, but with some imagination and encouragement you can apply them to lots of things. The main aim is usually to encourage speaking skills—opinions, agreeing and disagreeing, storytelling and so on. But understanding a text quickly or pulling out key vocabulary is secondary result that comes from this kind of activity. It also serves as a strong motivator and confidence booster.
Give yourself a short time limit to apply this strategy to your classroom, and enjoy!

Trust Building Ice Breaker: Helium Stick
A trust building games for kids, allows students to develop trust and build confidence among friends and peers.
Students stand in a circle
Students hold out their hands parallel to the ground while sticking out their index fingers.
Teacher places an object on their index collective fingers (e.g. hula hoop, stick).
Students lower the object to the ground without losing finger contact with the object.
Students will find themselves formulating strategies as they collectively work together to place the object on the ground while each students’ fingers stays in contact with the object.

Check Comprehension Frequently
Don't ask "Do you understand?" unless you have taught it. This is not a reliable check since many students will nod "yes" when they don't really understand.
Teach the phrases (or have a bilingual volunteer teach them) "I don’t understand," "Slowly, please," and "Please repeat."
Write down messages so students have a visual as well as auditory input. Make a list of phrases you want your student to learn and to understand. Ask a bilingual volunteer to work with the student on those phrases.

Study the lyrics and vocabulary
In addition to digesting the content, it’s also important that you review the vocabulary on a regular basis. Break the song down, word by word, and try to master each word so that it’s a part of your vocabulary.
Regardless of your students’ singing ability, encourage them to sing out loud to the music. This forces the mouth to adopt the right shapes and move with the rhythm of the song.

Try to sing from memory
After practice, the next step would be to sing without looking at the lyrics. Notice how words from everyday speech improve.

Periodically review
The student doesn’t have to completely learn one song before moving to another. After enough time passes, they can go back to the first song. This is called “spaced repetition” and it’s been proven to be more effective than trying to learn it perfectly all at once.

Find new music that builds on top of what you’ve learned
This may be challenging for teachers to find the song(s) and students to build on prior knowledge. Each new song should have the right balance of totally new vocabulary and in progress vocabulary. This right level of overlap keeps the student motivated, and also naturally reinforces the previous learning.
Lyrics from Moana

So what I believe you were trying to say is "thank you."
"Thank you? You're welcome.
What? No, no, no.
I-I didn't... I wasn't...
Why would I ever...
(chuckling): Okay, okay.

I see what's happening, yeah
You're face to face with greatness and it's strange
You don't even know how you feel
It's adorable
Well, it's nice to see that humans never change

Open your eyes (shrieks)
Let's begin
Yes, it's really me
It's Maui, breathe it in
I know it's a lot
The hair, the bod
When you're staring at a demigod

What can I say except you're welcome?
For the tides, the sun, the sky?
Hey, it's okay, it's okay-- you're welcome
I'm just an ordinary demi-guy
Hey, what has two thumbs and pulled up the sky
When you were waddling yea high?

This guy
When the nights got cold, who stole
You fire from down below?
You're looking at him, yo
Oh, also I lassoed the sun

You're welcome
To stretch your days
And bring you fun
Also I harnessed the breeze

You're welcome
To fill your sails
And shake your trees
So what can I say except you're welcome?
For the islands I pulled from the sea

There's no need to pray, it's okay, you're welcome
Ha, I guess it's just my way of being me
You're welcome! You're welcome!
Well, come to think of it... Kid, honestly,
I could go on and on

I could explain every natural phenomenon
The tide? The grass? The ground?
Oh, that was Maui just messin' around
I killed an eel, I buried its guts

Sprouted a tree, now you got coconuts
What's the lesson? What is the takeaway?
Don't mess with Maui when he's on a breakaway
And the tapestry here in my skin
Is a map of the victories I win
Look where I've been I make everything happen
Look at that mean mini-Maui just tickety-tappin'!
Heh heh heh heh heh hey!

Well, anyway, let me say
You're welcome
You're welcome
For the wonderful world you know
Hey, it's okay, it's okay-- you're welcome
I'm just an ordinary demi-guy
Hey, what has two thumbs and pulled up the sky
When you were waddling yea high?

This guy
When the nights got cold, who stole
You fire from down below?
You're looking at him, yo
Oh, also I lassoed the sun

You're welcome
To stretch your days
And bring you fun
Also I harnessed the breeze

You're welcome
To fill your sails
And shake your trees
So what can I say except you're welcome?
For the islands I pulled from the sea

2017 TESOL Chandler, Folorunsho, and Wlazlinski 5
Beyond lyrics? Try reading aloud audio passages

The book is in the library. Jodi goes to the library. She wants to borrow it. She uses her card to check it out. She takes the book back home. She sits on the couch. She reads the first page. It is good. She reads twenty more pages. It is not that good anymore. Jodi returns the book.

Cloze
The book is in the library. Jodi ______ to the library. She wants to borrow. She uses her card to check it ______. She takes the book back home. She ______ on the couch. She reads the first ______. It is good. She reads twenty more ______. It is not that good anymore. Jodi ______ the book.

Vocabulary

1. Book
2. Borrow
3. Card
4. Check out
5. Couch
6. Library

Listening and Speaking
Listen then read along. Practice intonation, fluency, sequence, confidence, pronunciation, comprehension, solo or with a partner.

The New Neighbors
The Johnsons realize that they have new neighbors. They visit the Taylors and say hello. The Taylors invite them in. They make spaghetti for the Johnsons to eat. The adults talk about the neighborhood. They also talk about what their jobs are. The kids all play in the Taylors' backyard. They get along well. The Taylors feel at home.

Cloze
The Johnsons realize that they have new ______. They visit the Taylors and say hello. ______ Taylors invite them in. They make spaghetti ______ the Johnsons to eat. The adults talk ______ the neighborhood. They also talk about what ______ jobs are. The kids all play in ______ Taylors' backyard. They get along well. The ______ feel at home.

Vocabulary

1. adult
2. along
3. backyard
4. eat
5. invite
6. kid

Listening and Speaking
Listen then read along. Practice intonation, fluency, sequence, confidence, pronunciation, comprehension, solo or with partner.

An Alternative to Reader’s Theater

Brushing Teeth
She walked into the bathroom. She took the cap off the tube of toothpaste. She squeezed some toothpaste onto her toothbrush. She turned on the cold water. She brushed her upper teeth and spit out some toothpaste. She brushed her lower teeth and spit out some more toothpaste. She rinsed out her toothbrush. She put the toothbrush back into the toothbrush holder. She put some water into a cup and rinsed out her mouth. She spit out the water and walked out of the bathroom.

First Day
He goes to class. There is an empty seat in front. He sits in the seat. He looks around. There are different people. He says "hi" to the girl next to him. She smiles. The teacher comes in. She closes the door. Everyone is silent. The first day of school begins.

~create comic strip ~create picture book and let partner retell w/your illustration
~sequential order ~take sentence strips and place in order, read story to partner / together
~partner and create a book with glossary (picture/words/L1) ~act it out as partner or individual reads

Bold print = homophones

**Variation in Reading Theater for ELs**

Turn lyrics from a song to a Reader’s Theater or vice versa. Peer Interaction
Combine language domains; listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Student can write scripts
Memorization Diversity in subject matter
Performance opportunities Excitement in performance
Entertaining and engaging means of improving speaking, fluency and enhancing comprehension

**Two-Way Information Gap Activity (Intermediate Level)**

Student A: Read the story to your partner.

Student B: Listen to the story. Help your partner with words on the list.

| 1. England | 2. 1620 | 3. The Mayflower Compact |

When you find a blank ________, ask your partner for help.

The Pilgrims came from (1) _____________. They came on the ship, the Mayflower, in the winter of (2) _________. Before these immigrants landed on shore at Plymouth Rock, they signed a document to form a simple government called the (3) _________________________.

Now, take turns reading the entire story.

Student B: Read the story to your partner. When you find a blank ________, ask your partner for help.

Student A: Listen to the story. Help your partner with words on the list.


The Pilgrims had a difficult time because many were sick from crossing the (1) _______________, the weather was very cold, and they had only a little food. Native Americans including (2) ____________ and (3) ____________ helped the immigrants by giving them food and advice.

Now take turns reading the entire story.

**Balloon Truth or Dare**

This activity allows students to relax and have fun participating in a comfortable nonthreatening setting.

Encourage, but don’t force

Have an outgoing student go first and have the shy students be somewhere in the middle (lessen anticipation)

Slight twist from classic truth or dare

Students chooses whether they want a personal question (a truth) or to do something silly (a dare).

The teacher should select student-friendly items for this activity by adapting the statements using vocabulary and grammar at the level being taught.

Write down on small strips of paper dares that most students probably would be willing to do and questions most would be willing to answer.

Take the strips of paper with the truths and dares and put them inside flat balloons.

Blow the balloons up and scatter them around the room.

You may want to have the truths in red balloons and the dares in blue balloons. Or, you can have truths and dares all mixed up.

Once class starts, each student picks a balloon and pops it to reveal the truth or dare.
References


