

This document is an opportunity for you to respond to the article that you've read for this month's Master Trainer Certification Program Meeting. What you need to do:

1. Summarize your article. Aim for 100-150 words.
2. Respond to one of the prompts below. Aim for approximately 200 words.
3. Comment on one of your fellow trainer's responses below. For example, if you respond to question one, after another trainer has responded to question two, comment on their response.

August 12th

Focus on Basics:

1. Discuss how the findings from the study support using the 8-Step Lesson Flow as a model for teaching.
2. If an instructor training participant were to ask you whether or not using a certain textbook is okay, how would you respond? Use examples from the study to support your argument.

Innovative Programs:

1. List 3 innovative practices, providing a brief description of each.
2. Discuss how innovative practices are reflected in the design of the English Forward Curriculum and incorporated throughout the lessons.
3. How would you respond to a participant who insisted that lessons should have a focus on grammar? Use examples of innovative practices to support your argument.

Please write your responses below.

Focus on Basics

1. Karen's Responses:

Article Summary:

The study looked at the phenomenon of a shift of the population in ESOL classes to a large percentage who did not complete their formal basic education in their countries of origin. The majority are from Mexico, but others are from Asia and Africa and lack literacy skills, yet are enrolled in ESOL classes in order to get ahead in the U.S.

They bring with them many survival skills that can be used in the classroom.

The study looked at 500 students with 20 different native languages.

The premise is that ESOL should include using written language for a variety of purposes as well as learning the constructs of grammar, pronunciation, etc.

What works:

connecting oral and written language

bringing content that is relevant to students' lives (print-rich authentic materials, field trips)

including problem solving in class

having many ways for students to interact with each other

not too many different tasks, but a variety of ways to practice the same task

demonstrating and modeling are important in order to make instructions clear and lower anxiety about trying to figure out what the teacher wants students to do

rate of attendance matters more than the number of hours attended, i.e. consistency and persistence are more important

using written language created by students helps connect oral and written English

using students' native language sparingly and only in order to clarify and move the learning process forward more quickly so that students understand the task and can practice without feeling confused about what they are supposed to do.

1. Discuss how the findings from the study support using the 8-Step Lesson Flow as a model for teaching.

The study supports the use of modeling to clarify instructions for tasks as well as have manageable chunks of language that students are expected to learn in any given lesson. The article also highlights using authentic materials as prompts to get students ready by activating their background knowledge. Authentic materials are also a way to bring in print materials that students would see in their daily lives and thus provide ways to connect oral and written English. The study gives the example of using grocery store flyers, menus or bills in the classroom.

In order to practice "How English Works," it would be beneficial to use real life language. For example, going on a field trip to a restaurant would include preparation of the chunks of language that are needed for ordering and having a conversation with people at the restaurant.

2. If an instructor training participant were to ask you whether or not using a certain textbook is okay, how would you respond? Use examples from the study to support your argument.

I would say that using a textbook is fine, but needs to be supplemented with student-created materials and real life language and print material from their communities.

Relying heavily on a textbook assumes that students have a certain level of literacy, which many of them may not.

This article is also helpful for responding to participants' questions about when and how much to use students' native language in class, if the teacher does know it.

Toni's Response to Karen's Posting Question #1

1. I agree with Karen's posting. Gone are the days where the students listened and took notes while the teacher talked out all the information without student's interacting. That model doesn't really work, especially since we all have different learning styles. I find that ESL students are more focused and engaged when I use real items to teach them something. The students can manipulate the item and they learn to "not be scared" of the item, especially if it's print material. They also learn oral information that they can contribute in their daily lives because they've had the opportunity to practice it in the classroom, which is their safety environment where they can take those risks or errors without being embarrassed. The students learn their information in chunks because there isn't a need for speed learning. The teacher is using the student's responses as a guide on how much time is allowed for practice and learning.

2. Toni's Response

Focus on Basics interviewed Heide S. Wrigley about a study that was done on literacy students who were new to the English language and how they developed oral and reading/writing skills.

Ms. Wrigley goes on to say in the interview how the differences of learning English were significant between ESL students and ESOL students. ESL students, which on the average, had less educational background than ESOL students, who at least were at fluent in one language and more at the level of increasing their skills that they were unable to finish in their native country.

It reflected on how differently these two groups learned their literacy skills and how different it affected them outside the classroom. An example of this is that ESOL literacy involved learning sometimes from book and curriculum, while the ESL literacy involved bringing in realia that students have come across in their daily lives.

The use of the student's native language and attendance were also a factor in learning English. The study found that using the native language judiciously helped those students because it helped clarify the information for them while at the same time, they are trying to figure out the print information and what the teacher wants from them as well as learning a new culture, so having some of their native language used in the classroom allows them some momentary relief.

In short, the article tells how bringing what the students deal with in their daily lives into the classroom is more relevant and productive versus the traditional book and curriculum model.

1. Discuss how the findings from the student support using the 8-step Lesson Flow as a model for teaching.

The article clearly shows that the 8-step Lesson Flow is a crucial component in learning English. It gives examples of how bringing realia into the classroom for the students to practice the actual items that they come across in their everyday routines. The article points out about the necessity of students having sufficient time practicing the realia and how these students improved more in their skills than those who are just using book and curriculum. It strongly supports the listening/speaking (practice/hands on) and the reading/writing cycles of the 8-steps. It helps the students "make a connection between the language and literacy used inside and outside of the classroom and lets these students see that they are gaining skills that reflect what's needed in daily life."

2. If an instructor training participant were to ask you whether or not using a certain textbook is okay, how would you respond?

I would say to the trainee to yes, use the book and curriculum if it is required from their provider, but use it as a guide to build a certain routine for their students, but add extension activities that help enhance more the information that you are trying to teach the students. In the article, it mentioned that students that had a chance to practice their learning in a variety of ways were more likely to show gains than those who just practiced what was in their book and curriculum. Adults learn in a variety of ways, so as an instructor, you must provide a variety of activities so to engage your learner's attention to what it is we want them to learn. The most important is practice, practice and more practice.

Julia's response to Toni: Textbooks are helpful. There are several good ones out there; however, most need to be supplemented. Most beginner teachers rush through the concepts presented in chapters and do not spend enough time working with the vocabulary and communicative language presented in the books. Probably the majority of ESL text books focus too much on grammar and not on communicating. These books can be helpful, but they do need to be supplemented as you said.

Jen's Response

This article presented an interview with Heide Wrigley about the results of an observational study of how classroom teaching practices connected to learner outcomes for ESOL students with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. While many students have had limited educational opportunities in their native countries, they bring goals into the classroom that are deeply connected to their identities (e.g., the parents who want to order food in English as part of their role). The background knowledge and achievement of learners in the study illustrate how the language we learn is the language that's relevant -

for example, Wrigley refers to the many sight words students have mastered before entering a classroom, and emphasizes the value of authentic materials. The study's results offer support for active learning, judicious use of native language, continuous (rather than sporadic) class attendance, and a variety of language input within structured, routine practice.

The other trainers have offered excellent responses to the prompts that I think sum it up well, so I only have a few additional thoughts on the prompts:

1. Starting the lesson flow by activating background knowledge is supported by many findings in this study, especially the diverse backgrounds of students in education and experience - it offers a chance for the teacher to pre-assess where students are with material and gauge their interest so that the following lesson can be as relevant as possible. The lesson flow's structure allows the teacher to present manageable chunks of information and offers learners multiple opportunities to engage with language in different ways - striking the balance between routine and variety that is so important yet sometimes difficult to achieve.

2. Textbooks are just one resource, but teachers and learners can/should use all resources at their disposal! As Karen, Toni, and Julia have all stated, the textbook has value but should be supplemented with materials that promote active, meaningful communication within a particular class, tuned to the interests and needs of your particular students.

Innovative Programs

1.

2.

3. Alexia's Response:

There are many ways to teach grammar without explicitly focusing on grammar. There are many strategies will give your students the knowledge and practice they need, without overwhelming them with rules that may be hard to remember. Remember that language learning happens in chunks, and we can learn grammar in chunks, as well. For example, you can use a hands on approach where students perform an activity, such as taking a field trip in the neighborhood around the school, and then have the students work together to write a short paragraph about what they did. As they work together, you as the teacher can help them with the past tense of the verbs they want to use. While you will still want to explain the rule (add -ed to regular verbs to make past tense), you won't need to spend more than a few minutes on this grammar point. The students have already seen it many times while writing the story, and many of them may have figured out the rule on their own. Then, give them more opportunities to work with the story they have written (such as retelling the story to their classmates) and they will be more likely to remember how to use the past tense when they want to use it again.

Alexia's Summary:

In traditional adult ESL programs, literacy is taught as a skill and out of the context of the learners' lives. Innovative programs, on the other hand, seek to contextualize literacy learning by having learners talk about their own lives and therefore "make meaning" out of their learning. Three ways this is done is by providing a social context, such as exploring the language used in the learners' neighborhood; providing hands-on experience, such as making a fruit salad and writing the recipe; and using learner generated materials, such as having learners write their own stories for their classmates to read. Innovative also incorporate judicious use of the native language, emphasize communication over error correction, and employ technology to help literacy come to life.

Karen's response to Alexia:

Thank goodness that these articles are in line with each other. The similarities include using student-created text, including real life experiences in class such as field trips, and good ways to use students' native language in class.

Additional information included in the second article that aligns with English Forward is the way to focus on "making meaning" and genuine communication over error correction as well as how to focus on "how English works" by explicitly choosing a grammar point to highlight from a language task like retelling a story.

Julia's response to the above: It seems that the two articles are different in their suggested use of the native language. "Innovative Programs" advocates using the students' native language as a bridge to English for low literacy learners. A bilingual approach is advocated for beginners in order to give information about the American culture. This is more of teaching culture than communication, although both are important.

Julia's summary:

Innovative Programs and Promising Practices in Adult ESL Literacy. 1993. Wrigley, Heide Spruck

A new paradigm has emerged for effective instruction of adult ESL literacy. Innovative instructors teach literacy in context in a top down approach that allow students to access literacy in a meaningful context and eschew the outdated bottom up approach that slowly builds from alphabet to word to sentence. The best link the learners' own experiences to "culture, language, literacy, and learning." First of all, best practices tie learning to the lives of learners. In addition, students learn from hands on experience, and user generated materials show the validity of student stories. Furthermore, native language is included in monolingual situations to bridge the gap to literacy in English. Fluency and accuracy are taught as discrete concepts. Finally, video technology can enforce print.

3. How would you respond to a participant who insisted that lessons should have a focus on grammar? Use examples of innovative practices to support your argument.

Although grammar is an important part of language, its importance is often over emphasized. Most beginning learners and teachers cling to teaching grammar rules to the expense of developing meaningful language. Effective innovative programs use a top down approach. Successful programs such as REEP in Virginia use meaningful language introduced in context. By interviewing each other about food, students are immediately involved in using language to communicate, rather than the traditional way of slowly building up from grammar rules. Furthermore, if teachers focus too much on the accuracy of language though over reinforcing of grammar rules, teacher do so at the expense of building fluency. Better is the writing process approach to English practiced at the International Institute of Rhode Island that allows for fluid generation of ideas in one step and revising and refining in another. Furthermore, explicit learning of elements of language such as grammar is not necessarily the most effective way to gain language. Acquisition of language, which may be even more important in developing communicative competency happens in a more implicit way when learners engage cognitively with language such as the story-telling done at the Refugee Women's Alliance in Seattle.

Jen's Response to Julia

I definitely agree with your point that explicit learning of the mechanical elements in a language isn't as effective as focusing on communication. We need exposure and practice with a new language more than a set of rules because of the nature of constructing knowledge: if students don't already have the relevant context for a rule it will not be meaningful and will likely be forgotten. I love that you emphasized communicative competence, because to me it is the goal of language education. While grammar is one part of it, communicative competence is ultimately rooted in the life we live, the people around us, and our goals. Moreover, a person's knowledge of grammar rules is distinct from their linguistic performance... Using dangling participles all the time, other people still understand what I'm trying to say - and how many native speakers actually can explain the grammar they've implicitly learned? If learners engage with meaningful language, talk to others, and have the confidence to pursue more learning outside the classroom, they will develop their grammar through practice.