**Teaching ELL: Speaking Strategies**

Being able to speak English fluently is critical to our ELLs’ success both inside and outside the classroom. ELLs must pass a speaking portion of a language proficiency assessment to score out of ESOL services and be fully immersed in mainstream classes without support.   
  
We always see a number of students, from every cultural background, who are too shy to speak up in the classroom or to answer a question, even when they have the answer. These strategies help all students improve their language development in a supportive, encouraging way. At the end of the list are some strategies specific to helping ELLs acquire and use oral language.

* Model language by saying aloud and writing the ideas and concepts you’re teaching.
* Model what a fluent reader sounds like through focused read-alouds.
* Be explicit. Give each activity you do a name, the simplest and most accurate name that you can, and then repeat the activity, so students can learn the verbal and written cues and procedures.
* Tell students what they are learning about each day and whether they will be reading, writing, listening, or speaking.
* Make expectations clear for behavior, written assignments, independent practice, and group work. Write key expectations on a chart and keep the chart posted for reference
* .Use a rubric whenever possible to help students evaluate their behavior and work.
* Have students retell stories aloud. Record their retellings in their own words to create a language experience chart that can be used for future reading and writing lessons with this group.
* Teach choral speaking and reading (poetry may be the most accessible format with which to begin).
* Sing or read songs. Children can bring in a favorite song to perform alone or as a group, but make sure you have heard the song first and can approve it.
* Have students read and perform Readers Theater scripts.
* Practice dictation, especially for learning spelling. Allow students to take turns dictating, too. Use full sentences for contextualizing the spelling words.
* Experiment with speaking and writing in different tenses and using different types of expressive language. For example, say the same word or phrase using a tone that is happy, sad, angry, and so forth. Use facial expressions—a smile, frown, or quizzical look—to embed more meaning in your speech. For beginners, hold up picture cards showing expressive faces and have them act out these expressions.
* Explain by showing, not just telling. Act it out if you have to or use visual tools such as sketches and diagrams or actual objects.
* Correct content, not grammar. To model proper grammar and syntax, restate or rephrase students’ questions or statements. You can do this in writing too.

**Student:** I put mines pencil on that desk.  
**Teacher:** I put my pencil on that desk, too.  
OR  
**Student:** Who go to bring lunch count today?  
**Teacher:** Hmmm, let’s see . . . Who is going to bring the lunch count to the office today?

* To express proper intonation and pitch, be aware that you modulate your voice, make adjustments in tone, and use a range of pitch with everything you say to your students. We do this naturally anyway; for example, our voices rise at the end of a question.
* When asking questions, give choices for the answer. This will also help you check for understanding especially in the earlier stages of language acquisition. For example, ask, “Would you like pizza or a bagel for lunch?” Or, after reading a story, ask, “Did the first pig build his house of bricks or straw?”
* Respond to the interests of the children. Provide reading, speaking, listening, and writing  
  activities and opportunities in which students can share their hobbies and interests.
* Encourage students to describe, summarize, define, contrast, and compare by modeling. Be sure to show and not just tell when teaching a new concept, idea, or vocabulary.
* Be your own glossary. If you use an unfamiliar word, define it for the class as part of your lesson.
* Don’t assume that students truly understand the subject being discussed just because they are nodding and even answering your questions. Monitor what you say to make sure that they understand. When in doubt, ask the class to restate the directions you’ve given or the ideas you’ve presented.
* Ask students to give multiple meanings of a particular word or tell whether it can be labeled a verb or a noun. This will help students sharpen their grammar skills and place ideas in the context of your discussion.
* Develop vocabulary over time, in different learning contexts—use the target words in large and small groups and one-on-one formats. Post vocabulary words in the room on chart paper.