

Description of ESOL Level 5

Because each class is filled with students with different goals and interests, it has worked well to make the class as transparent as possible. That is, I want the students to understand why we are doing whatever we are doing, and for them to see the value of the SKILL underneath the particular content. They can apply the skill to whatever goal they have. This is a key feature of a standards based curriculum. Through needs assessment and goal setting you can uncover content and skills to focus on for each particular class.

Our current population in the higher levels leans to high verbal, low R/W skills. If this holds true for your class, the high verbal can make the R/W work varied and interesting.

Writing

The purpose of writing at this level is to develop fluency, so if a student wants to pursue his or her education, they will be in a good strong position to tackle academic writing in the morning Level 6, ABE and Developmental classes. Remember ESOL classes are the only place students will be able to focus on the right side of the writing rubric. That is, if students could enter level 6 having control over basic sentence structure and syntax, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation, common verb tenses, development of a controlling idea with support and organization, that would be HUGE. If students are not pursuing more education, increased fluency in writing will help them be more successful in their other pursuits. For a more detailed description of our program's orientation to writing, and specifically, the writing support classes, please read the document entitled Writing Manifesto on the instructor website.

Grammar

In a related vein, we do have grammar points at each level that we expect students to be conversant with. In level 5, we spend a lot of time filling in the gaps. I have developed a grammar survey (available under level 5 curriculum materials) that I use to pinpoint the gaps. If 2/3 of my class indicates a problem with past tense, then I better review it, even though it's something they SHOULD already have. The day in the lab is a good opportunity to address more individual needs. I always work on grammar in context. I'm sure we could make a whole list of ideas of how to do this if we shared our ideas. Here are two I like for starters.

- Morning Note: I write a note and leave the verbs out. The students must choose a verb and put it in the correct tense for the context. As there is often more than one possibility for choice of verb, I can use the occasion to increase their vocabulary. I use the note to communicate useful content including schedules, holidays, campus information, and the weather. Sometimes I have them read it back to me changing the "I" to "Catherine." Pronouns are usually on the list of things they need to practice.
- Five Question Drill: I ask a series of five questions related to the day's material. The first student repeats the question. The second student identifies the verb tense. The third student answers the question. The fourth student asks a follow-up question which the third student also answers. I can involve 20 students in a few minutes of class time. (Thanks to Mary T and Jean J for this idea.)

Please share your ideas for grammar in context.

Outside Reading

The library currently has sets of several readers which have worked in level 5. We will continue to expand this collection as library resources become available. I have developed reading journal worksheets which students complete. I collect and correct these. Then I distribute blue books so students can copy their corrected work into their blue book. At the end of the quarter, if they have done their work, they have a collection of chapter summaries, reactions, and new vocabulary. The reading journal worksheet and more

detailed explanations of its use are available in the document "Using Readers in the Classroom" on the ESOL curriculum web site.

StoryCorps

I have developed a whole group of StoryCorps stories. The stories can be accessed from the NPR website, or directly from the StoryCorps website. If you go directly to the StoryCorps website, the stories do not have the introduction that you hear on the NPR version. I have found that I prefer this, because it makes locating the main idea more of a challenge. I have updated all the worksheets for use with the StoryCorps website. (That is, they have no questions that require the introductory material.) They are in the ESOL level 5 curriculum folder on the website.

I chose the particular stories because I felt they would be of general interest to a majority of the students. The activities involve both global and discrete listening, summarizing, writing grammatical answers, conversation, and narrative writing. Listening to these stories also gives students practice with different accents and speech rhythms. If you choose to use these materials, please use the stories I have designated for a particular quarter in that quarter. That way if a student switches classes, she will not run into a repeat of the same material. I only have a year's worth so any student in 5 longer than a year will hear a story again. But if they are repeating 5 more than a year, perhaps they need to. I will keep adding to the collection as I can.

Movies

I use a movie every quarter to work on all the language skills. In the recent past, I have used "Because of Winn-Dixie," "The Long Walk Home," "The Lost Boys of Sudan," "Ratatouille," "Spellbound," "Whale Rider," and "Chicken Run." This quarter I am going to use "Fly Away Home." I have had a string of quarters with mostly high speakers, low readers/writers, so I have used the movie to develop R/W skills. A detailed explanation of how I use movies is available on the web site in the document "Using Movies in the Classroom."

Homework

Homework Policy: Successful completion of homework is an indicator of readiness for level completion. Keep in mind that in the morning Level 6, students must complete a lot of homework to exit the level and the program. Because of the busy lives all our students have, I have found it works well to give work that needs to be done at home over the course of a week. I do not give overnight homework. The only homework I have required in Level 5 is to read the outside reading book and complete the reading journal worksheets. Also, because I use part of our lab day as writing conference day, it's more time efficient if they already have something they have written at home during the week to talk about. I remind them that the more work they can manage outside of class, the quicker they will become fluent.

Placement after 5

The appropriate placement for all students who have completed Level 4 is to go to Level 5. For the students who exit Level 5, however, the teacher has to work with the students to find out what fits their needs. Students leaving Level 5 don't automatically fit into the morning Level 6 class. The morning Level 6 has been developed to be an "Academic Preparation Level 6." So before you read about level 5, please read the description of Level 6.

As I develop and refine materials, I will make them available on-line. If you have any questions, or would like to kick around ideas for Level 5, please email the whole group. We can talk about it more at the teacher meetings throughout the year. We also need to have a conversation each quarter about the end of quarter testing. We will need to find a passage appropriate for a C-Test, and create a reading test

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