

SDAIE Teaching Strategies

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“All students are ELL (English Language Learners)!” All students are LEP (Limited English Proficient) at some point in their education (especially when faced with a new concept and vocabulary). What procedures and ideas can you provide that will help all students in the classroom as well as ESOL students? Good teaching strategies are good for everyone.

Indeed, good teaching strategies are good for everyone! This question in particular refers to “Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English” or SDAIE, that is, the academic classes taught by qualified teachers who are “endorsed” or “certified” in teaching methods for content area classes in which English Language Learners or ELL’s participate. In SDAIE classes ALL students can participate: English-only speakers and ELL’s at all stages of language acquisition: ELL’s at Pre-Production, Early Production, Speech Emergence and Intermediate Fluency levels, and former ELL’s now re-designated as Fluent English Proficient (FEP) students. What are the methods, techniques or strategies that a teacher can use to successfully promote content area concept development with such a heterogeneous group of students?

Here they are!!!

STRATEGIES USED IN SDAIE:

1. **Emphasis on the Academic Language:** This is the key instructional component in SDAIE. It is NOT to develop general English language skills, but to develop the use of, and proficiency in, the academic language of the content areas. This key component of SDAIE is the same for ALL students, English-only speakers and English Language Learners. Teachers must make sure that the academic language is mastered, otherwise teachers cannot obtain evidence of learning. To facilitate mastery teachers must implement two essential “best instructional practices:”
 - Posting the academic language: ALL words, not just a few key words. Words need to be organized by meaning categories, for example, “clean, tidy, neat, spotless, immaculate, impeccable, scrubbed, disinfected, sterilized, pristine, etc.” THEN POST THE CATEGORY!!!!
 - Consciously using the academic language constantly, and requiring that all students express themselves using the academic language, too. That is why all academic language words must be posted: For teacher and students TO ALWAYS REMEMBER to use them!
2. **Active Learning:** Students must be constantly giving the teacher EVIDENCE OF LEARNING. To provide the teacher with evidence of learning, students must DO some observable action or behavior that the teacher has requested. Throughout the lesson, the teacher must plan educational activities that give students opportunities to:
 - OBSERVE, RECOGNIZE, LOCATE, IDENTIFY, CLASSIFY, PRACTICE, COLLECT, DISTINGUISH, CATEGORIZE, REPEAT, MATCH, SHOW, SELECT, CONSTRUCT, ASSEMBLE, ARRANGE, PUT THINGS IN ORDER, ETC.
 - NAME, RECALL, GIVE EXAMPLES, DRAW, ORGANIZE, DECIDE, DESCRIBE, TELL, IMAGINE, RESTATE, CREATE, APPRAISE, DRAMATIZA, CONTRAST, COMPARE, QUESTION, MAP, DISCRIMINATE, ETC.
 - LIST, UNDERLINE, REVIEW, INTERPRETE, COMPOSE, DICTATE, POINT OUT, RECORD, REPORT, PREDICT, EXPRESS, PLAN AND EVALUATE.
 - RELATE, GENERALIZE, DEMONSTRATE, OUTLINE, SUMMARIZE, SUPPOSE, ESTIMATE, JUDGE, EXPLAIN, DEBATE, ILLUSTRATE, INFER, REVISE, REWRITE, ASSESS, INTERPRETE, JUSTIFY, CRITIQUE, ETC.All of the above are observable actions that help teachers obtain EVIDENCE OF LEARNING.
3. **Assessing/Tapping Prior Knowledge:** Teachers must become very familiar with the background knowledge that students bring to the learning situation so they can ALWAYS emphasize what students already know, have experienced, are familiar with, and build on those bases that prior knowledge,

experience and familiarity provide. Visuals, realia, posted academic language from previous lessons, all kinds of connections to prior knowledge, experience and familiarity need to become essential components of all lessons.

4. **Building New Knowledge:** Each and every lesson must result in the acquisition of new knowledge by students. To determine if new knowledge has been acquired as the result of a lesson, it is only necessary to check on the acquisition of new academic language. EACH WORD IS A CONCEPT. A student who has acquired and begins to use appropriately new academic language at the end of each lesson is a student who has acquired new knowledge.
If at the end of an instructional day the students go home without mastery of at least one new academic word, no new knowledge has been provided or mastered during that entire instructional day. It was a nice school day for reviewing what students already knew. But it was a day when students did not BUILD any new knowledge.
5. **Collaborative Problem-Solving; Cooperative and Other Groupings:** Teachers need to plan instruction through educational activities that provide for flexible groupings of students to meet specific purposes. In SDAIE there are many levels of language proficiency. ELL's may be at different stages of language acquisition: Pre-Production, Early-Production, Speech Emergence, Intermediate Fluency. Fluent English speakers may be English-only speakers or former ELL's now redesignated Fluent English Proficiency (FEP) students. Teachers need to implement varied instructional activities where heterogeneous students can work productively.
6. **Cultural Affirmation / Multicultural Perspectives:** English Language Learners (ELL's) and English-only students all bring to each and every lesson their prior knowledge, their own experiences, their cultural backgrounds. ELL's may come from many different countries and English-only students may come from many parts of the United States or the English-speaking areas of the world. Each and every student brings something unique to the learning situation. SDAIE content area teachers need to acknowledge that, and need to affirm the value of each student to the cooperative effort of the lesson by acknowledging the individual contributions of each student. SDAIE content area teachers also need to expand the limited experiences and knowledge of each student to include the contributions of many individuals from many backgrounds to the advancement of knowledge.
7. **Demonstration and Modeling:** Here is the most crucial instructional component in ALL lessons, but particularly in SDAIE lessons. The key role of the teacher is to demonstrate and model all the behaviors to be learned in the lesson, ESPECIALLY THE VERBAL BEHAVIORS EXPECTED TO BE MASTERED BY THE STUDENTS, that is, the language of the content areas. ALL teachers must remember that for most students, and especially for ALL English Language Learners, TEACHERS are the ONLY role models that students will ever come in contact with for the language of the content areas. In today's world, few parents have the time or the energy –or the knowledge—to discuss the concepts of the content areas using the language of the content areas at home. ONLY TEACHERS can provide that.
8. **Graphic Organizers:** The language of the content areas, the language of a new reading selection students are about to begin reading, all words students DO NOT KNOW that are used in what students are about to listen or read, all those words MUST BE UNDERSTOOD BEFORE students listen or read. Thus, the SDAIE and the ESL/ELD teachers, cooperatively, must help students acquire, practice, develop, learn, and master 95-100% of the new vocabulary BEFORE they listen or read. Instructional activities that, through visuals, manipulatives, realia, dramatization, or any other means, help students master the new academic vocabulary BEFORE the content area lesson begins, are very important. Graphic organizers can be used to help students become aware of what they know and the new words they are about to learn. Graphic organizers that group words in categories by MEANING are the most effective means to introduce new words. WORD DEFINITIONS, or looking up the meaning of words in a dictionary, **ARE NOT** the most effective means to introduce new words. For younger ELL's and for ALL young learners, graphic organizers can be used with pictures instead of printed words.

9. **Integrating Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing Across the Curriculum:** If all instructional strategies described above (1-8) for the implementation of effective practices in Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) for ALL students, both English-only and English Language Learners, have indeed been implemented, then it follows that students would have had ample opportunities: (I) to listen to the new academic language of the lesson as the teacher uses visuals, manipulatives, realia, and other means to physically convey the meaning of the academic language, (II) to speak the new academic language through active learning instructional activities, (III) to see—in posted graphic organizers or categories—the new academic language. Now students are ready to read the textbook or parts of the textbook or reading selection, and they will do so with 100% understanding the first time around! And then students can write about what they have learned—expressive writing—or answer the textbook questions **IN THEIR VERY OWN WORDS**. Only when students have been provided fully integrated visual, listening, speaking, reading and writing instructional activities would they be able to provide ample evidence of learning the language of the content areas.
10. **Higher Order Thinking Skills:** In SDAIE Strategy Number 2, above, we indicated that students must be engaged in Active Learning and suggested a series of observable behaviors that students can perform to give evidence of learning. That series of observable behaviors, (listed in #2 above) describe simple to complex or higher order thinking skills. Students who can perform these observable behaviors are giving evidence that they are operating and developing from simple to complex or higher order thinking skills.
11. **Questioning techniques:** The most effective tool a teacher has to promote all of the above SDAIE Strategies is the question. Every time a teacher asks a question the student must actively respond – active learning. Through questions, teachers can monitor student use of the language of the content areas. Questions help assess prior knowledge and provide the most effective tool to obtain evidence of learning. Through questions teachers can provide new information to students while demonstrating and modeling the use of the academic language. Questions can be asked at the lowest—knowledge—and the highest – evaluation—levels of thinking skills. Questions give teachers the best opportunity to provide opportunities for students to listen and to speak. In fact, questioning techniques allow a teacher to keep control of (h)is/er classroom while helping students succeed. How? By controlling the level of LANGUAGE difficulty of the questions. The following four questions all have the exact same answer. Thus, a teacher can choose which question to ask a student depending on how much knowledge the student has. By choosing the right question appropriate for each student, teachers can promote learning while at the same time allow students to experience success.
1. Who was the 22nd President of the United States?
 2. Who was the 22nd President, was it Nixon, Cleveland, John Quincy Adams or Zachary Taylor?
 3. Who was the 22nd President, was it Abraham Lincoln, Reagan, John Adams or Cleveland?
 4. Cleveland was the 22nd President of the United States, right?
12. **The Teacher is a Facilitator of Learning:** Because a teacher must be constantly interacting with students, teachers in SDAIE content area classes have a primary role of facilitators. Through **visual aids and manipulatives, verbal and non-verbal cues,** teachers guided students into practicing the academic language as they acquire the concepts represented by the words.

These twelve instructional strategies characterize effective lessons in Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English for ALL learners.