Teaching the ESL Learner

Transcript of Speaker

III. Extralinguistic Cues

By: Noelle Branch, Ruth DeCrescentis, Satrina Chargualaf, Jason Reynolds

Extralinguistic Cues – Part 1

By: Noelle Branch

In this next module, you will be learning about extralinguistic cues. We have a new panel member joining us today. Jason, welcome. We’re really glad to have you here.

By: Jason Reynolds

Thank you.

By: Noelle Branch

Jason Reynolds teaches at Indian Peaks Elementary here in Longmont, Colorado; and he’s going to be telling us a little bit about his classroom and some of the things that he’s going to be doing with his kids.

The audience is going to be hearing a lot about extralinguistic cues, and they’re going to be seeing a lot of classroom examples of what that’s all about. But I would like to have Satrina and Ruth talk a little bit about what extralinguistic cues are and why they are important to the classroom work that Jason is going to be doing.

By: Ruth DeCrescentis

Extralinguistic cues are what it sounds like – they’re anything outside of language that we use to communicate. And, actually, a lot of what we do naturally is
extralinguistic when we communicate. That can be anything from facial expressions, gestures. In the classroom, it could be pictures, graphic organizers, realia—the real objects or close to real objects; you know, the plastic fruit that’s in a bowl. That kind of thing could be used to help students understand.

By: Satrina Chargualaf

Sure. Any type of body language, visuals, props that you use in your classrooms; that’s examples of extralinguistic cues.

By: Jason Reynolds

You know, Ruth, I think you may have a really good point about how a lot of language is extralinguistic cues, a lot of communication. I think that as native speakers we don’t realize how much we use extralinguistic cues. But as a second language Spanish speaker myself, I notice that I use them a lot. And in face-to-face conversations, I can do pretty well. But when I speak on the phone with a parent, I often notice that I’m at a loss because I can’t use facial expressions to gauge how they’re feeling; I can’t use the hand gestures. I really notice when the extralinguistic cues are absent that it makes it very difficult for me as a second language learner.

I think that it’s important for teachers to realize that this isn’t something they start from scratch. We already use a lot of extralinguistic cues all the time, and that maybe with our second language learners it’s important to just think about how we can expand upon those a little bit more to help them with their comprehension of the material in class.

By: Noelle Branch
Well, Jason, before people start observing you in your classroom at work, are there some things that you could tell us a little bit about your background and the students that they’re going to be seeing in your classroom.

By: Jason Reynolds

When I went through my Master’s program in education, I did take a few classes on ESL training and how to approach teaching second language learners. I feel like that helped me get ready for teaching this population.

The population at Indian Peaks is about 54 percent Hispanic, so we’re a bilingual centered school. We do have Spanish literacy instruction for children from kindergarten through third or fourth or grade, depending on the kids and when they’re ready to transition.

In fifth grade, which I teach, it’s considered a forced transition year. My class that you’ll be seeing is a literacy class that is all second language learners. In my homeroom class, which I teach math to, I have a heterogeneous mix of native English speakers and native Spanish speakers.

We kind of do things a little bit differently in each class. In my literacy class, I can really focus on language; in my math class, I focus on language but it’s not as primary an objective.

By: Noelle Branch

As you think about working with the students in your class and in the planning that you do, what are some of the things that are really important to you? What do you focus on when you’re thinking about that population of students?
By: Jason Reynolds

First of all, I just assume from the get go that they’re not going to know what I’m talking about. I think that really helps me to get me thinking about the language. I think a lot of times when people teach to native English speakers they assume that the kids will know what they’re speaking about. Even since I’ve been working with second language learners a lot, now when I’m speaking to our native English speakers I never assume that they’re going to know what I mean.

I’m always stopping and asking if they know what something means. To my surprise, many of the times only two or three kids in the classroom know what I’m talking about. Even the native English speakers need that time to stop, clarify and really help to get them to know what I’m talking about before we keep going.

By: Ruth DeCrescentis

That’s an interesting point. I was talking to a science teacher one time, and she was teaching native English speaking students. We were talking about strategies to help all kids, and she was saying, But we talk about limited English proficient students, but all of our students are limited science proficient or limited math proficient. It really does help all kids to learn that new body of vocabulary for each different content area.

By: Jason Reynolds

Right. And like I said, when I’m teaching math, it’s a heterogeneous group; but the language is so new that I feel like it’s even easier to shelter because nobody knows what we’re talking about. When we first start fifth grade, kids don’t know what obtuse and acute mean; kids don’t know what factors and multiples are. I really have to shelter
it for everybody, and we do a lot of things that will help everybody learn what it means. A lot of visual cues, like when we talk about obtuse and angles, we use our arms and get them way out for obtuse and acute. Of all of the things we go through, of all of the little tricks to learn what things are, it seems like the physical things are the ones that the kids remember most.

**Extralinguistic Cues – Part 2**

By: Noelle Branch

Jason, one of the things that I have noticed as I have watched some of the classroom videos that we have taken this year is that some of the cues that teachers use that I know are really effective with kids are pretty subtle. I’m just wondering whether the audience, as they watch the classroom videos, will be able to pickup on those. Could you give us a couple of examples of some of the cues that you use and what people maybe should be paying attention to as they watch the video.

By: Jason Reynolds

One of the things I think people will see is I try to do a lot with hands and just visual movements with hands. One of the items we’ll see is when we talk about shutters and what shutters mean. A lot of the kids will be doing this. And we talked about how the shutters sit. If your face was a window, the shutters would sit on the outside of the window and they would close if there was a storm. As I’m going around the classroom, you’ll see a lot of kids doing that to each other. I try to use a lot of hand motions and visual cues.
Another thing I try to do is be expressive with my face. I don’t know that they will actually pick that up on the video. But I think that with any children it’s important to be as expressive as possible, and they really enjoy it. It’s not like I’m putting on a show, but it makes it a little more exciting, it makes it a little more—they get a sense of what I’m thinking. And sometimes I’ll be over-expressive if we’re talking about emotions or if we’re getting close, I’ll be like, Give me more, just to let them know they’re doing great and really trying to give a lot of praise when kids use new words or they really take a risk and pointing it out to the rest of the class.

By: Satrina Chargualaf

You had them doing a lot of hand movements and actions where they were actually reaching into the bag and pulling out and looking at the word. And you gave them time to look at the word and respond as to what the word was. And then you gave them time to process in small groups as to what this vocabulary word meant and then to show the actions, for example, which you refer to as the shutters.

By: Ruth DeCrescentis

Yeah, I think those are two really good examples.

By: Noelle Branch

I know one thing that we have talked about a number of times in our training with teachers is the importance of students feeling accepted, feeling a part of the group. I think it’s a way of thinking about language not just as spoken language but also language that has more to do with just that sense of belonging. Can you guys talk a little bit about
that and what are some of the things that either you do or you observe teachers doing that you think are really helpful to second language students.

By: Ruth DeCrescentis

As Jason was just talking about his expression and, Yeah, come on, you’re doing a good job and that kind of thing. I think people who haven’t learned a second language, for example—I know that a lot of Americans fit into that category—they don’t understand what sacrifices you make when you’re learning a second language. In your first language, you might be funny, you might be a poet, you might be a beautiful orator, but when you’re learning a second language, at least for a while, you give up those things. So it’s really important to value students, make them feel like they belong – even though they’re in a second language – and that you might be loved in Korean or Mung or Russian, English is also a language in which you can be loved and accepted; and it’s really important. That may be the only place at school with their teachers where they get to have those feelings about English. We want students to love English as well as their native language.

By: Satrina Chargualaf

Right. And students move here, and that in itself is a big and a huge adjustment—it’s a cultural adjustment that they are trying to understand because it’s different from probably what they were experiencing in their own culture. To make that move, we assume—like what you had mentioned—that they might know what a grocery store is or what the post office looks like; but, in reality, many of our kids might not know what that means or may not have books at their homes or things like that. As a teacher, to be able
to decrease the affective filter would help students to fill that notion that the teachers do
care, and they’ll be able to take risks to learn the English language.

By: Ruth DeCrescentis

Jason was talking about sort of assuming that the kids don’t know what you’re
talking about, and it’s really important to get to know your students and get to know their
culture and their background. You might start at a base of assuming they don’t
understand, but they have different experiences, rich experiences, that maybe they can
share with you as an educator that are different from your experiences. It’s important to
value what they do know also.

By: Jason Reynolds

I start off every year with all about me reports. All of my students do a report
about themselves to the rest of the class. I feel like it’s a great way for me to get to know
my students, and it also is a great way for the students to get to know each other.
Through these reports, we learn that so-and-so likes to ride motorbikes or so-and-so has
two horses and a ranch in Mexico that we normally would never get to know. I think it’s
a great way for me to help build a comfortable environment where students are not afraid
of taking risks.

I feel like language learning is all about risk taking, and the students that are more
comfortable and more willing to take risks learn faster because they’re willing to try and
fail and try again, and they know that in my classroom they won’t be ridiculed for trying.
But, in the opposite, they’ll be praised for trying—Oh, great try. It’s not quite correct;
let’s try it again. Things like that.
By: Ruth DeCrescentis

And that’s like that smile is the same in any language, and just an appropriate touch or a little hug or all those extralinguistic things that we can do for kids to encourage them is really, really helpful.

By: Noelle Branch

That’s really helpful, I think, getting that sense of not only the idea of making sure that kids have got that structure but also that feeling of acceptance. They can see that in your classroom, Jason. The classroom shots that we got are just, I think they’re just great. I really think people are going to get a real good sense of what that looks like and how those strategies can be used.

**Using Pictures & Realia in a Sheltered Lesson**

By: Satrina Chargualaf

The teacher will reinforce the vocabulary using realia, in this case stuffed animals.

Orenji neko.

By: Students

Orenji neko.

By: Satrina Chargualaf

. . Sorekara, kore wa . kuroi kumo.

By: Students

Kuroi kumo.

By: Satrina Chargualaf.

Hai. Tsugi wa akai inu. Akai inu.
Notice the student using her test from the previous lesson to organize the vocabulary she is learning.

By: Students

Kuroi kumo.

By: Satrina Chargualaf

Hai. Yoku ne kite kudasai. Ii desu ne.

The teacher will have the students respond physically by standing up and repeating their animal color and name. Notice the first group is used as a model for what the others will be doing. The students are praised for their response.


By: Students

Kuroi kumo.

By: Satrina Chargualaf

Hai, so desu. Tate, tate. Hai, jozu deshita.

**Using TPR in the Classroom**

By: Ruth DeCrescentis

At the beginning of the lesson, Jason demonstrates the hand movements for the word shutters. Observe how the students place their hands to the sides of their faces-their faces representing the window of the house, and their hands representing the shutters.
In using TPR, notice how each student is consistent with the action movement and comprehends the meaning. Notice how Gabriella is going to use TPR to help her associate and describe the word shutters.

By: Jason Reynolds

Gabriella, what are shutters?

By: Gabriella

They are like a little things or thing that you cover your windows when there’s tornadoes.

By: Jason Reynolds

Okay. Where are they located? Where are the shutters?

By: Gabriella

On the sides.

By: Jason Reynolds

On the sides of? Are they on the inside or the outside of the house?

By: Gabriella

Outside.

By: Jason Reynolds

On the outside.

By: Ruth DeCrescentis

After the students discuss the word digest in groups, Jason will frame the learning by asking questions. Observe how he will use the students’ responses to build and extend their understanding of the vocabulary.
By: Student

It digests.

By: Jason Reynolds

Okay. Your food digests in your body. What is digesting? What is actually happening? Roxanna?

By: Roxanna

It’s like breaking down sugars or food.

By: Jason Reynolds

Yeah, breaking down the sugars, breaking down the foods.

By: Student

Processing.

By: Jason Reynolds

Processing it.

By: Ruth DeCrescentis

In this example, students will have to draw on their background and make the connection between the alternative use of the word digest as in digestion of information.

By: Jason Reynolds

There’s another word we use for digest. It’s the same meaning but with information. What would it mean if I said, He digested all of the information? What would that mean? It’s the same meaning. Miguel?

By: Miguel

Like, he got the information.
By: Jason Reynolds.

Yeah. What did he do with it?

By: Student

He keeps it in his mind.

By: Jason Reynolds

Yeah. He processed it in his brain. He’s processing the information; he’s digesting it. Sometimes when something bad happens, people say it takes a while to digest it, it takes a while to process it and deal with it.

By: Ruth DeCrescentis

In cooperative learning, the group members are expected to help each other out. Here is an example of what happens when they don’t.

By: Jason Reynolds

Danny Rumeriz?

By: Danny Rumeriz

I don’t know what that is.

By: Jason Reynolds

What? Who’s fault is it that Danny doesn’t know? Whose fault? The whole group. It’s Martene’s fault; it’s Tatia’s fault; it’s Hymie’s fault; and it’s Martene Cresco’s fault. Let’s see if another group did a little better.