Teaching the ESL Learner

Transcript of Speaker

I. Unsheltered/Sheltered Language

Introduction – Part 1

By: Noelle Branch

Hi. My name is Noelle Branch. Like you, I’ve been a classroom teacher, a principal and a central office administrator. I have seen firsthand the huge increases in the second language population here in our schools.

One of the things that really surprised me recently was that I saw some figures that came out from the Census Bureau that we now have in excess of 5 million second language students in our schools today. For many, many teachers, handling the needs of second language students is really not that difficult, probably as a result of their background and experiences, and yet I know some people really, really struggle.

As we began to develop this program, one of the things that we decided to do was to keep the classroom teacher in mind—the teacher who works every day with these students in their classrooms, in many cases, without a lot of additional help or support.

We had a couple of goals. One of them is that we wanted to present concepts and strategies that were general, that could be used in regular education classrooms and that they would be strategies that not only would help the second language students but would help all students.
As we designed our ESL program, we wanted to include modules that had real classroom shots, that had training experiences, things that you as a classroom teacher could go back and use tomorrow in your classroom.

We also wanted to make sure that each module was a unit in and of itself. The reason for this is that if you have a tremendous amount of expertise in one area, that’s a module that you could skip and just move onto the next.

We recognize that for many of you the content and vocabulary will be new. For this reason, we have included a glossary in the handout section and numerous library resources.

Each module begins with a short panel. During this panel, you will have an opportunity to meet the classroom teachers that you will see in the video clips from their classrooms. We hope this will help you connect to their work in a very meaningful way.

Finally, we hope that you enjoy this course and get as much out of it as we have developing it. Thank you.

**Introduction – Part 2**

**By: Noelle Branch, Satrina Chargualaf, Ruth DeCrescentis**

By: Noelle Branch

Welcome. I’m so glad both of you could join us here today. I’d like to begin by introducing both of you to our audience. You are the two people that have been the experts and the designers of our online program, and we’ve got a number of questions we’d like to ask you today; and hopefully that we will help our audience as they go
through the program have a better understanding of what we’re trying to accomplish today.

To my right, our first person here, is Ruth DeCrescentis, and she is the Assistant Principal at Brighton High School in Brighton, Colorado.

Next to her is Satrina Chargualaf. Satrina is our ESL Coordinator for Saint Vrain Valley School District also here in Colorado. Thank you both for being here today.

Ruth, I know that there is a variety of different methodological approaches that are used in the teaching of second language students. Can you tell us which approach you feel is probably the most effective and what you’ve used in the development of this program; and maybe explain for our audience why those decisions were made.

By: Ruth DeCrescentis

Sure. You’re right, there are a lot of methodologies that can be used in teaching second language learners. When Satrina and I sat down and talked about putting together this program, what we wanted to do was create modules and information that teachers in any content area classroom, at any grade level could take and use tomorrow in their classroom.

We decided to focus on strategies that would work for nearly everyone, and those are sheltering strategies that make language comprehensible to second language learners. They’re pretty general strategies that almost anyone can use at any grade level, with modifications, of course. We wanted to present those without a lot of theory behind them. Second language acquisition is a huge, huge field, and we just wanted to focus on strategies that anyone can use; so we focused on sheltering strategies.
By: Satrina Chargualaf

Although you find that these strategies are very helpful for the second language learners; they’re really great for all kids.

By: Noelle Branch

You know, the other thing that I think might be helpful to the audience is to have some understanding of the demographics in our school district and also in Brighton and in the work that both of you have done with students and teachers.

By: Ruth DeCrescentis

Well, my own personal background – I started out teaching English as a second language in Japan for a few years. Then I worked in the Peace Corps for a while. Then I came back to the United States, which is really kind of a whole different ballgame.

I’ve been in Brighton for quite a while, 8 years now. What I’ve seen happen is we have a lot more immigrants from Mexico in Colorado. We’ve gone from about 10 percent of our student population speaking Spanish as their dominant language to almost 20 percent. We’ve seen a great, great change in our school district.

By: Satrina Chargualaf

I studied and taught ESL in Guam, an island in the Pacific. I, too, came to Colorado and noticed the huge Hispanic population here in Colorado. Our district, we have about 16-to-17 percent second language learner population. It’s the fastest growing population here in Saint Vrain.

By: Ruth DeCrescentis
Having said that, 98 percent of our second language learners in this area are Spanish speakers, but in our district, for example, we do have 13 different languages being spoken, and probably even more in your district.

By: Satrina Chargualaf

Yes. Last year we had 29 languages, and this year we have 55 languages, at least one student representation for each language. It is rapidly growing.

By: Ruth DeCrescentis

Right. And I think that’s a fairly typical trend across the United States, and that’s a challenge for those teachers who have students from different language backgrounds in their classroom to meet the needs of all of those students.

By: Noelle Branch

Based on the numbers you just gave, it would probably be highly predictable, I guess, that most teachers would have students that at least for whom English is not their first language.

By: Satrina Chargualaf

Right.

By: Noelle Branch

Ruth and Satrina, educators that are taking this course are going to be hearing a lot about sheltered and unsheltered English. Could you tell us a little bit about what that terminology actually means and why it’s going to be important to the audience’s understanding of the course that they’re going to be taking.

By: Satrina Chargualaf
Sheltered English is an instructional approach that uses academic language to teach limited English-proficient students. We try to use visuals and backward design planning, and there’s about seven sections that you can use with sheltered instruction.

The training of sheltered instruction is very important because you need to know, for example, like a visual— you need to have several different visuals and different varieties of visuals in your classroom so that students who are second language see what you are trying to say and understand and comprehend what the teacher is trying to project.

By: Ruth DeCrescentis

And a point I’d like to make here is that you said before that sheltered instruction works for all students.

By: Satrina Chargualaf

Yes.

By: Ruth DeCrescentis

And it does help all students. I think it’s important to remember, though, that second language learners need more of that. Maybe one sheltering technique like using visuals or comprehension checks or strategies to promote critical thinking will work for a native English speaker who is struggling, for example; and they will also help a second language learner. The second language learner needs more of those strategies. They might need four or five strategies to help them understand to the level of a native English speaker. While they do help all students, they need more.

By: Satrina Chargualaf
Yes. For example, wait time. Usually we give two minutes for processing for a native English speaker, but when it comes to second language learners, you might double or increase the time to four minutes for time to process what they just learned.

By: Noelle Branch

In this next module that the students that are taking this course will experience, it sounds like sheltered English will be part of that lesson.

What about unsheltered English. What is that?

By: Ruth DeCrescentis

What is it?

By: Noelle Branch

Yeah.

By: Ruth DeCrescentis

It’s also an approach that teachers mostly use when they’re working with a group of native English speakers. You’re not paying attention to using visual cues or increasing students’ ability to think in that language. You’re not doing as frequent comprehension checks. All of these strategies are not being used at the level that they need to be used for a second language learner.

By: Satrina Chargualaf

It’s so easy to see that I have, perhaps, one or two second language learners in my classroom; so the teacher might—my goal might be to approach the rest of the kids in my class. However, using sheltering techniques, as Ruth said, and giving the kids more time is so important because that one or two students in your class who are second language
learners are just as important as the other 26 students in a typical classroom. It’s so important for those teachers to take the time to design their lessons accordingly.

By: Ruth DeCrescentis

And in a regular English classroom the teachers assume that the students understand English, so the language itself is not part of a content objective. In a classroom where students do not understand English, it has to be part of the objective of the lesson, is to help them understand the language.