II. Methods of Sheltered English

Introduction

By: Noelle Branch, Ruth DeCrescentis, Satrina Chargualaf, Vicki Duerre, Lori Garcia

By: Noelle Branch

Welcome, everyone. We are going to spend the next few minutes giving our audience an overview of the ESL course that they’re going to be taking. This overview will include some short clips of classroom strategies, and we’re going to greater depths with these strategies later on in the program. For right now, we’re going to just be doing a brief synopsis of what is going to be in store for our learners.

We have already introduced earlier today Ruth and Satrina, but I would like to now introduce two teachers from Thompson Valley School District – Vicki Duerre and Lori Garcia. They both work in ESL classrooms, and some of the video clips that the audience is going to be seeing are from some training sessions that they have done Thomson Valley teachers.

Vicki, your ESL students are primarily elementary or secondary?

By: Vicki Duerre

Secondary.

By: Noelle Branch

Secondary. Okay. And Lori, you are an ESL teacher also, and—
By: Lori Garcia

Largely elementary school.

By: Noelle Branch

Largely elementary. Well, welcome. We’re really, really happy to have both of you here as a part of our panel discussion this afternoon.

I know that most of you are fluent in languages other than English. That’s right; isn’t it?

By: Satrina Chargualaf

Yeah.

By: Noelle Branch

Sort of; not completely. However, you know, if I were taking this course myself, I think the first question I would have is – Is it necessary for me to speak a language other than English myself, or can I still be effective without this expertise?

By: Lori Garcia

In Thompson School District, I would say about half of our teachers know a second language, primarily Spanish. That’s the language of most first second language learners. I would say about half our teachers don’t speak a second language. What we do is we do an ESL program, so lots of sheltering of English is what those teachers do; that’s what our program is.

By: Noelle Branch

Vicki, let me ask you that same question. Is it necessary for me to speak a language other than English?
By: Vicki Duerre

I personally am a person who speaks a little bit of Spanish or survival Spanish. Most of my population in my classes are Spanish speakers; however, I do have Chinese, Mandarin and Korean, and my students speak those two languages in my classroom. I really can’t use Spanish very much. I mean, I do because there are some times where I need to clarify or make sure instructions are understood; but I have to be thinking that those girls, the two Korean girls especially in one class, are looking at me like, That doesn’t help me a bit.

I think you have to be sensitive to the other languages, and that’s why English is the language of instruction. The other language, even though, again, it’s great to have another language—and we do look for teachers who have acquired a second language themselves—but it’s not a requirement, and it’s not something that is used in the classroom a whole lot.

By: Ruth DeCrescentis

And I agree with you that you, as an ESL teacher, you can’t possibly speak all of those languages that come through your door, whether it’s 13, which is the case in my district, or 50-some, which is the case of your district. You can’t speak all of those languages. So, of course, you can’t communicate always in the native language.

But I, in my opinion, it is a real, real advantage to speak another language, any other language, even if it’s not the language of any of your students; because then you have a real empathy for what your students are going through and you know what it’s like to be learning and speaking and taking risks in a second language. That can be really,
really scary for a lot of students. So, if you, yourself, are learning another language at
whatever level, I think it really is an asset when you’re teaching so you can empathize
with those students if nothing else.

By: Vicki Duerre

I agree with that.

By: Noelle Branch

So, from what you’re saying, I guess I would assume that the strategies that will
be covered in this course are going to be helpful for basically for all students, it sounds
like.

By: Ruth DeCrescentis

No matter what their language background is.

By: Noelle Branch

No matter what their language background is.

By: Satrina Chargualaf

I like what Vicki said when you talked about having students that are very
diverse, and if you have two or three students who speak another language other than
Spanish, which is our majority, and using English as the vehicle and allowing them to
process in their own language is very important. But coming back and responding in
English is the type of responses we are trying to encourage our students to do.

By: Lori Garcia

In my classes, when I’ve emphasized, when I’ve had students other than Spanish
speakers in my classes, I have emphasized the importance of using English as a vehicle of
communication between each other because a Vietnamese boy, unless he learns the English to communicate with the Spanish speaking or a Japanese boy, they’re not going to have some common language to complete some group projects. It’s an incentive for them also to use the English language to communicate with each other; not necessarily just academic language, but in social situations.

By: Ruth DeCrescentis

I know a lot of teachers get frustrated and they’ll say, How much should I let them speak their language in my classroom? I really personally don’t discourage it very much. I have a very sort of high tolerance for that and allow students to process in their native language if they do have at least a partner or someone they can—Is that what you got out of this? This is what I got out of it—in their native language. That’s okay to have them speak in their native language in class, I think.

By: Noelle Branch

That’s really interesting. I really hadn’t thought that much about the interaction of the kids themselves and what they’re learning from each other in addition to what they’re learning from you.

Primary Academic and Social Needs of Students

By: Noelle Branch

Now, I know all of you’ve been ESL teachers for a number of years, but I’m wondering in terms of just the primary needs of these students, I know there’s going to be a lot of varied needs; but could you speak to what some of those just real primary needs are going to be for all of these kids.
By: Lori Garcia

There are so many. Are you talking about their academic needs?

By: Noelle Branch

I think both—academic and social because I would imagine that there are probably a lot of social needs as well as academic needs that the students are going to have.

By: Vicki Duerre

Well, they definitely will go for the social first. I think we spend a lot of time at the beginning getting them some survival language and some social language so that they can start feeling at home. But the academic language needs to come rather quickly because they are in school, and it is critical for them to start understanding some academic language so that they can get some comprehension out of the classes that they’re taking. But as we go through the language acquisition model, we know that that survival language is going to come more quickly, with research, one to two years for that as compared to the five to seven that you always hear as the number of years for academic competence.

It’s going to be a long process, but I think socially the playground, the cafeteria, at least especially for middle school kids—actually all kids, but I have a lot of middle school connection, and that’s where social is so important. They are wanting to—they have high a motivation levels to get that social language, especially the survival language— even if it’s just go to the bathroom or drink water – that comes fairly quickly because they have those needs and it is critical.
By: Ruth DeCrescentis

I think a need that these students have and maybe you forget about often is many of these students are immigrants, and they are not choosing to immigrate here; especially those students that I get at high school. They’re a 16-, 17-year-old being drug here by their parents, and it’s not their choice to be here and immigrate. A need that they have is to belong and to fit in and, of course, they have those survival and social needs, but they need to feel like they can be here and be comfortable, because they are immigrants and it’s not necessarily their choice; and oftentimes they’re quite angry about that, so they need to feel like they can get over that anger.

And I think another difference that these students have is learning English is not like me learning French in the United States, because I’m not going to be immediately, almost immediately, held accountable for my learning in that language. I can be learning French here but still be conducting my business and living in my native language; whereas, these students are coming here and, bam, immediately they are responsible for surviving and succeeding in that foreign language. That’s a real difference, I think, for those students.

By: Lori Garcia

In addition to those two, I think another critical need for our students is to have teachers who understand how to work with them; teachers who understand best practices for working with English language learners and who understand the timeframes that they need in which to acquire their language. I just think that’s a critical need for our kids to be able to have access to those people who can help them.
By: Satrina Chargualaf

I agree with the time factor. Every student and every child has his or her own rate to learning that piece, and we can’t rush it. As teachers, sometimes we go to pressure about standards and state testing and mandated testing, we kind of want to rush them, Come on, come on. But it just doesn’t work out like that. They need to be given that time to process and digest their knowledge and then see if they’re comfortable enough to try to respond back. As teachers, we need to allow them for that time.

By: Vicki Duerre

Another thing, I think, that classroom teachers need to understand is the difference between the social language and the academic language, because I constantly hear, He talks greats, so why is he flunking in my class? They equate verbal proficiency and fluency with literacy proficiency, which that’s a learning curve they need to understand. I think our job is to teach that to teachers.

Mastering Content and the Language

By: Noelle Branch

Well, I know that our students, regardless of whether they’re English speakers or not, are all acquiring language and that proficiency growing and becoming more sophisticated as they get older. And I think maybe, Ruth, you hit on this a little bit in your last comments that, obviously, the process is going to be different for second language students than it is for students whose primary language is not English. What are going to be the differences in their ability to master the content in addition to the
language that they’re working for? What will our audience need to know as they progress through this course about these students?

By: Ruth DeCrescentis

I think a lot depends, as far as that speed or their ability to pickup English—a lot of it depends on their own base foundation in their native language. If a student is highly literate in their native language, it’s just putting new labels on those same concepts and those labels are now in English. They will learn more quickly.

Some students who come to us, come to me at the high school level, have very limited formal school. They’re not literate in their native language. They don’t even understand the structures or the systems of being in school. I have students who dropout in the second grade and then come to the United States and want to enter school at age 16 and have a second grade education which, I think, is becoming more and more common. I don’t know if you all are experiencing that. It will take those students longer to acquire the English, especially at the academic level, in order to succeed in school.

By: Vicki Duerre

And then the question is – Should we teach them their first language first?

Because, again, best practice is, it seems, for a student to be literate in his first language before he starts learning a second language, at least academically. That’s a big issue when you have a second grade level 16-year-old and you put them in the age-appropriate grade that they haven’t learned that cognitive process in their brain, learning to read in their first language; so where do you start for the second language? Is it going to be
possible to teach them to read in English if they haven’t learned to read in their first language?

I think that’s a big question in our district. Do we take them back? Do we try to find them someone that can help them in their first language first?

By: Ruth DeCrescentis

That’s a big debate in our field, and the Thomas and Collier studies have shown that the best way and the quickest way for students to acquire English is to be in a two-way or dual language emergent program—and I use those interchangeably and not everyone does.

It really depends on your resources and what you have available. You could go everything from two-way emersion to just having support in a native language in content area classes and then just in literacy classes, and then English only. All four of those kinds of programs can work. It can work to tap into content area knowledge in English only. It’s going to take longer, and it’s going to be harder for the teachers, but it’s possible if you don’t have any other resources. It really depends on your student makeup, the makeup of your staffing and the resources that your district has available what kind of program you want to implement for these students. You know which is the fastest and the best, but we’re not always able to deliver that.

By: Satrina Chargualaf

You’re absolutely right, because we love to go and do the dual language program; however, due to resources and budget, we have to sit back and say, What can we really do. In our district, we do have the bilingual programs that are different within each
model but have the same components that are important to a bilingual program. Like you said, right now we’re doing the delayed exit transition model, and that seems to be working – that’s the best that we can do at this point.

By: Vicki Duerre

And in our district, we don’t offer any bilingual options at all, so isn’t an ESL model, English only, with maybe some native language support if it’s Spanish. But if it’s other languages, there are very little choices. Again, that was a choice of our administrators many years ago; so that’s what we work with.

By: Noelle Branch

Satrina, you mentioned a couple of minutes ago a delayed exit transition model. Could you explain what that is exactly.

By: Satrina Chargualaf

What happens is the students go through bilingual classes with an ESL component in it. The kids are studying in Spanish as well as having ESL, English only component. Again, it varies throughout each model. When the students reach maybe toward the upper grades—third, fourth, fifth—then they’re into transitioning into English, preparing them for the middle school level, because once they reach middle school in our district, we don’t offer bilingual programs anymore. The kids need to be able to understand instruction in English. That’s why we call it the delayed exit transition model.

**Program Approaches to Instruction**

By: Noelle Branch
I can tell by just everything that you’ve said right now that there clearly are a variety of different approaches and different ways that school districts could approach the instruction of second language students. In terms of this particular program, I know that it’s been designed with the regular classroom teacher in mind; the teacher who probably is not an ESL teacher or maybe does not speak languages other than English. Was there a reason that you chose that particular approach as opposed to something else? I guess I would imagine that as you designed this program those were some of the things that you thought about.

By: Ruth DeCrescentis

And these strategies, as you said, are accessible to teachers who don’t speak another language, who don’t have formal ESL training. It’s really targeted toward those folks and who don’t necessarily have a large number of second language learners in their classroom. These are strategies that will work for those two, three, five, ten students that they have that are not native English speakers as well as the native English speakers.

By: Noelle Branch

So, if I’m a brand new, first-year teacher, it sounds like this course would probably be helpful to me in terms of learning some of those strategies that would be good for my students and, hopefully, that this course will offer something that will be of benefit to, hopefully, all teachers, regardless of what they teach or what grade level they teach in.

By: Lori Garcia
I think in all of the training that we’ve done, other teachers who have taken the classes said, Oh, well, this is just good teaching for all kids. That’s something that we always emphasized with our classes that, You know, these are some things that probably a lot of you are already doing in your classrooms; you probably are already doing some of these modifications or differentiations, for different students’ learning styles; but these are some things to help pump it up some more. The teachers are really receptive to the learning of these strategies and say, Oh, this is just really good teaching for all kids. It’s like an, I can do this.

By: Ruth DeCrescentis

The difference is that second language learners need more good teaching. Maybe one strategy will work for your native English speakers, whereas you might have to do two or three for your second language learners; but it will also work for the others. They just need more of it.

By: Vicki Duerre

And I think another good reason for this course is the help that we’ve been hearing – Help! Help! They want—classroom teachers want strategies because they know that they’re responsible for the learning of these students. They are their teachers, and the professional responsibility they feel is theirs, so they know that they need some help in making their content comprehensible. I know that’s the language, but that’s what they’re saying – How can I help these students understand what the rest of my students are learning and not just sit in the back of the room doing something else—reading a book in their own language, or whatever.
That’s what we’ve heard in our district; is really a call for the, Give me the strategies I need to help these students. Because our numbers are growing. Maybe not as much as your districts are, but we do have 10, 15 percent growth each year, and Thompson is becoming much more diverse.

By: Noelle Branch

That’s a wonderful, wonderful segue into the classroom videos and modules that people are going to be experiencing. I thank you very much for those comments.

6 Strategies for ESL Teachers

Sheltered English includes a variety of instructional approaches aimed at making academic English instruction comprehensible to students learning English as a second language.

There are six general strategies that help students learn English more efficiently.

- Extralinguistic Cues
- Linguistic Modifications
- Interactive Instruction with Frequent Comprehension Checks.
- Active Learning
- Focus on Concepts, not Details
- Strategies that Develop Critical Thinking

This module offers video examples from professional development and classroom situations.