



***ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING TO YOUNG LEARNERS:
PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES***

**A PRESENTATION TO NORTHERN GREECE STATE SCHOOLS
ENGLISH TEACHERS ASSOCIATION**

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CHARACTERISTICS OF ENVIRONMENT THAT PROMOTES YOUNG LEARNERS' ENGLISH-LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT:

- Low anxiety
- Focus on message, not on grammatical form
- Plenty of comprehensible input (i.e., use of language so that children understand what's being communicated)
- Interactive tasks; engaging activities
- Immersion in age- & grade-appropriate subject matter
- Recycling of language elements (words, structures, etc.)
- Caring adult engages the individual child
- Allowance for a child's silence; allowance for a child to speak when ready
- Authentic opportunities for children to use English—i.e., to communicate for real purposes
- Tolerance for language errors
- Allowance for language experimentation—i.e., play with language
- Use of English is maximized—except to handle a crisis, teacher uses only English

BRIEF BIBLIOGRAPHY

Current thinking about language acquisition and communicative-interactive language instruction is based on research and publications initiated over 30 years ago. A very brief and partial list of early publications that helped lead the way:

Asher, J. (1982). *Learning another language through actions*. Los Gatos, CA: Sky Oaks.

Clark, J.L. (1987). Classroom assessment in a communicative approach. *British Journal of Language Teaching*, 25(1), 9-19.

Cummins, J. (1984). *Language proficiency, bilingualism, and academic achievement*. San Diego, CA: College Hill.

Krashen, S. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. NY: Pergamon.

Savignon, S., & Berns, M.S. (Eds). (1984). *Initiatives in communicative language teaching*. Reading, PA: Addison-Wesley.

FOUR STAGES OF LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

<p style="text-align: center;">STAGE I PRE-PRODUCTION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · MINIMAL COMPREHENSION · NO VERBAL PRODUCTION <p style="text-align: center;"><u>CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:</u></p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">LISTEN</td> <td style="width: 50%;">DRAW</td> </tr> <tr> <td>POINT</td> <td>SELECT</td> </tr> <tr> <td>MOVE</td> <td>CHOOSE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>MIME</td> <td>ACT/ACT OUT</td> </tr> <tr> <td>MATCH</td> <td>CIRCLE</td> </tr> </table>	LISTEN	DRAW	POINT	SELECT	MOVE	CHOOSE	MIME	ACT/ACT OUT	MATCH	CIRCLE	<p style="text-align: center;">STAGE II EARLY PRODUCTION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · LIMITED COMPREHENSION · ONE/TWO WORD RESPONSES <p style="text-align: center;"><u>CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:</u></p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">NAME</td> <td style="width: 50%;">LIST</td> </tr> <tr> <td>LABEL</td> <td>CATEGORIZE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>GROUP</td> <td>TELL/SAY</td> </tr> <tr> <td>RESPOND</td> <td>ANSWER</td> </tr> <tr> <td>DISCRIMINATE</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	NAME	LIST	LABEL	CATEGORIZE	GROUP	TELL/SAY	RESPOND	ANSWER	DISCRIMINATE	
LISTEN	DRAW																				
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<p style="text-align: center;">STAGE III SPEECH EMERGENCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · INCREASED COMPREHENSION · SIMPLE SENTENCES · SOME BASIC ERRORS IN SPEECH <p style="text-align: center;"><u>CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:</u></p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">RECALL</td> <td style="width: 50%;">SUMMARIZE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>RETELL</td> <td>DESCRIBE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>DEFINE</td> <td>ROLE-PLAY</td> </tr> <tr> <td>EXPLAIN</td> <td>RESTATE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>COMPARE</td> <td>CONTRAST</td> </tr> </table>	RECALL	SUMMARIZE	RETELL	DESCRIBE	DEFINE	ROLE-PLAY	EXPLAIN	RESTATE	COMPARE	CONTRAST	<p style="text-align: center;">STAGE IV INTERMEDIATE FLUENCY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · VERY GOOD COMPREHENSION · MORE COMPLEX SENTENCES · FEWER ERRORS IN SPEECH <p style="text-align: center;"><u>CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:</u></p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">ANALYZE</td> <td style="width: 50%;">LIST</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CREATE</td> <td>CATEGORIZE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>DEFEND</td> <td>TELL/SAY</td> </tr> <tr> <td>DEBATE</td> <td>ANSWER</td> </tr> <tr> <td>PREDICT</td> <td>HYPOTHESIZE</td> </tr> </table>	ANALYZE	LIST	CREATE	CATEGORIZE	DEFEND	TELL/SAY	DEBATE	ANSWER	PREDICT	HYPOTHESIZE
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Source: based on Krashen (1982)

PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNICATIVE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE TEACHING

1) Maximize use of the target language.

Am I giving instructions in Greek? Am I falling back on Greek to explain grammar points that can be introduced inductively? Am I teaching about English rather than directly modelling English? Am I creating in-class tasks that encourage responses in Greek? Do I permit students to use Greek when they could/should use English? *Answer “yes” and the teaching is NOT communicative. Answer “no” and your teaching is on the right track!*

2) Analyze student needs.

Am I teaching aspects of English most likely to be needed by students? Am I designing classroom activities that help students learn about the cultural contexts of English-language use? *YES, YES!*

3) Focus on content and task-based activities.

Am I teaching forms, patterns, and vocabulary that my students are likely to need for everyday use, or am I teaching language that is hardly used in common communication? Am I encouraging students *actually* to accomplish things with English or *just* observe things being done? Am I allowing an inferior textbook to dictate my lessons simply because it’s easier? Am I emphasizing the actual use of English, or do I spend class time (more than 2-3 minutes at once) explaining grammar and syntax? Do I vary the types of assignments I give students? *You know the “best” answers!*

4) Tolerate mistakes and encourage experimentation.

Do I discourage creativity by frequently interrupting students to correct their mistakes in speaking? Is it really essential that those mistakes be corrected right then, or could I address the points at a later time? Do I quickly and simply facilitate conversations or oral presentations, as appropriate to the activity, or do I impose correct forms and models inflexibly? *And the “best” answers are.....?*

5) Attend to affective issues in class.

Am I attentive to different learning styles? Do I know about personal issues—work, family matters, etc.—that may be affecting a student’s work? Do I address differences in students’ levels of competence that make creative use of all students’ skills? Do I praise students enough? Do I help them feel confident in English? Do I show them how much progress they are making? Do my students feel happy about coming to English class? *You know the answers!*

6) Diversify dynamics, skills, and activities.

Do I do most of the talking in class? Are students interacting mostly with me or do they have chances to interact with classmates in pairs, in small groups, or with guests? Am I dividing class time and homework appropriately among the different language skills – speaking, listening, reading, writing? Am I balancing guided vs. open-ended practices – i.e. guided language activities that focus on language form (e.g., memorization, repetition) vs. interactive practice (creating personal meaning, negotiating information gaps, simulating real-world tasks). *You know!!!*

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