

Top Tips of Teaching English as a Second Language to Kids

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If you're a general education or prospective teacher, you may have students who are brand new to the country. Understandably you might be wondering how to best help these children who have limited English language proficiency. While language can certainly serve as a barrier to grade-level learning, the good news is that young children are well-equipped to learn a second alongside their usual academics. In fact, sometimes the greatest hurdles lie within factors that an educator cannot control, like the transition to a new country or home life.

With a little patience, love, and support, your English language learners (ELLs) can flourish when using the right techniques. Let's take a closer look at what teaching English as a second language to children looks like in schools across the country before discussing the best strategies to use, and tips for parents too!



What Does ESL Instruction Look Like in Schools?

Depending on your school, district, state, and area of the country, teaching ESL to children can vary in significant ways. While there are a set of recommendations put out by the federal government, programs for ELLs are mandated and regulated by the state, with each district sometimes following those procedures in their own unique way. Resource teachers and materials differ by campus, and some private schools do not include ESL personnel or services at all!

No matter where you teach, you might find the following models:

Pull-Out versus ESL Push-In Services

ESL classes may take place in a separate room when a teacher certified to teach ELLs pulls a student from a regular education class during the regularly scheduled ELA class. This is considered “pull-out” services, where the student will join others needing similar supports for a small group lesson that replaces the general ed class.

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On the other hand, “push-in” services require a designated staff member to co-teach a class with the general education teacher. This is a cooperative method that allows the regular instructor create lesson plans geared towards the entire class, while the ESL instructor provides accommodations to students needing services.

Resource Rooms

Some students arrive in the country not knowing a lick of English. As one might expect, these students need significant support. Not only must they learn the basics of a new language, but they run the risk of falling behind in critical subjects like math and reading. For this reason, many schools offer a resource class that completely replaces the mainstream classroom. This class will combine other students of like language proficiency to work with the ESL instructor for as long as necessary or required.

Bilingual and Dual Language Programs

What can be better than teaching English as a second language to kids alongside native speakers who are also learning your language learners’ home tongue? For Spanish speakers, this may be a very real option when it comes to dual language programs!

The programs usually take place in ordinary campuses within your community but can sometimes be found in private or charter schools. In general, they believe in the

importance of bilingualism. Students are grouped together with half of the day taught in Spanish, and the other taught in English. The idea here is that total immersion will promote second language acquisition quickly and can benefit both English and Spanish speakers.

Strategies for General Education Teachers

Regardless of the programs available for students at your school, it can be overwhelming trying to determine the best way to help ELL students. Try these ideas to offer meaningful support:

Use a Buddy System

Peer learning can be one of the most powerful tools in your teacher toolbox. As you get to know your students, find those that stand out as natural leaders and strong learners. Using a buddy system in your class can mean partnering all students and choosing a peer for your ELLs that makes them feel comfortable while providing some support during group activities and assignments. By partnering with a friend, language learners can pick up everyday greetings, colloquialisms, and refine grammar through their interactions.

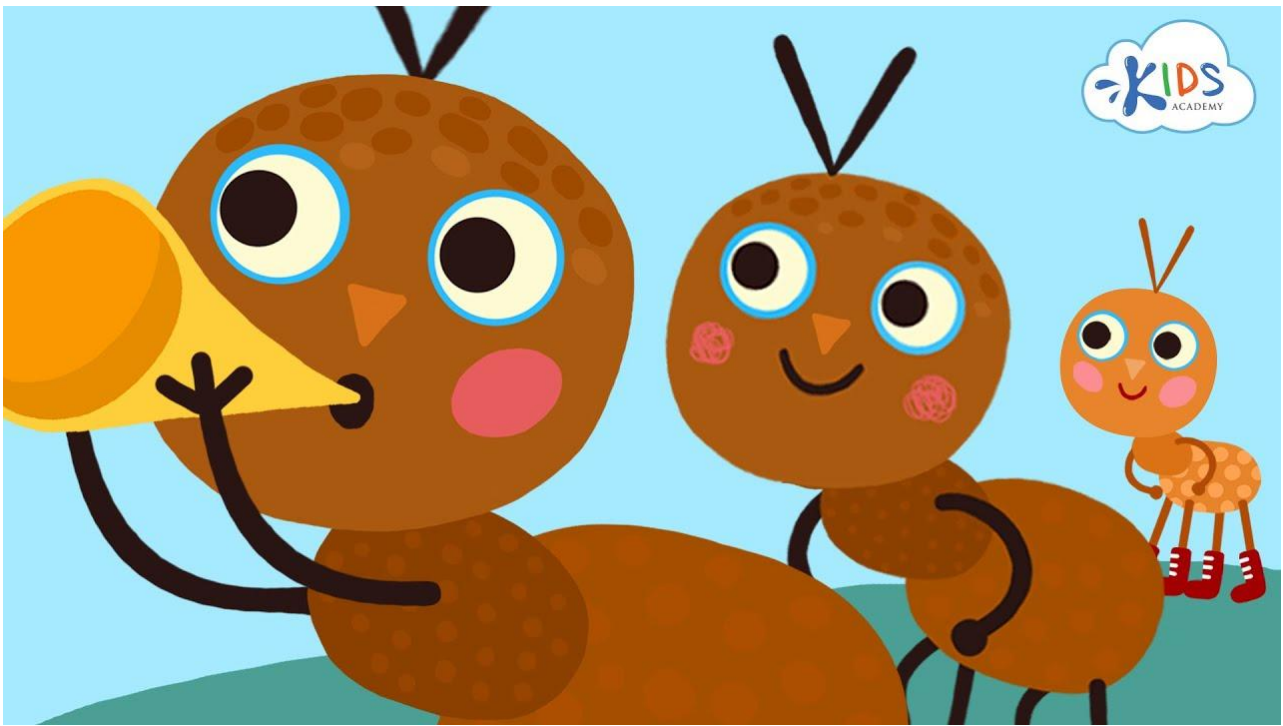
Plan Thematically-linked Vocabulary

Learning vocabulary in isolation rarely is helpful for the average child, let alone for students learning English! Plan your lessons connecting vocabulary to a theme you are teaching. For example, when reviewing new sight or spelling words, connect them to a topic or context that students are directly learning about at that time.

Utilize Technology

Apps have come a long way in recent years, especially those for students who need extra attention and help! Both parents and teachers can access apps through their district or for individual purchase. These programs run the gamut from translator tools to grammar games. Some apps to try include:

- Google Translate
- Duolingo
- Fun interactive [English worksheets](#)
- Grammar Up



Watch on [YouTube](#)

Pre-teach and Reteach

Previewing new and tricky words are important for all students, but especially for language learners! Pre-teach targeted words so kids can place them into context when they come across them in the text your class is reading.

After assessing for mastery, be sure to have a plan in place for reteaching and retesting. Follow your school's RTI process to ensure you are following campus and district guidelines. Within those limits, plan for specific reteaching of targeted skills or concepts.

Use ESL Techniques During Whole Group Reading

While previewing words and during whole class reading and instruction, it's important to use specific strategies to make sure children can identify words and begin to understand them when used in grade-level activities like read-alouds. Try the following ideas to help make words and their meanings "stick":

- Use facial expressions, gestures, and point to words and pictures to connect meaning
- Displaying real items, objects, or examples of the concept that is being presented
- Draw out explanations on the white board
- Ensuring that all language used is on the students' level and use simple sentences

Scaffold, Scaffold, Scaffold!

Break down projects and assignments into smaller parts and provide specific accommodations and supports that are right for the individual student. Refer to your

campus ESL coordinator to ask about bilingual dictionaries or assistive devices that may be helpful along the way and do your best to preview information before presenting it and reteaching any content necessary for mastery.

Parents and Teachers Working Together

As an educator, it's important to keep communication open and amicable between the school and your ELL's parents even though language can serve as a barrier for collaboration. Many buildings have staff available who can translate during conferences, so be sure to reach out to colleagues for assistance.

For parents, it's equally critical to keep communication open and to assist children in second language acquisition as well as in academics. Oftentimes different countries have new and different policies or curriculum; it can seem overwhelming at first, but students may only get further behind while adjusting to new surroundings and unfamiliar faces and words.

The following tips are helpful for both teachers and parents alike:

Continue first language development

Upon first thought, strengthening skills in an ELL's native language might seem counterproductive. But in fact, it's imperative that language learners continue to grow reading and writing skills using their home tongue. Parents and teachers should not expect English to replace a student's culture and native language. After all, the goal is to become bilingual, and a student's home culture should be welcomed and celebrated.

Educational TV Shows and Apps

Parents can learn along with their children by watching educational videos or utilizing apps. You might want to try our [English language videos for kids](#). Some popular and must-use resources include:

- Brainpop
- FluentU
- Sesame Street
- Leap Frog



Colors: BLUE



Watch on [YouTube](#)

Encourage parents to read with children

Some parents might not know how to read, or perhaps they only read or speak in their native language. If this is the case, parents might find that wordless picture books work perfect because students can use them to create words in both English and their home language and hold storytelling sessions with family. Additionally, parents are free to read books in their family's home language as much as possible with students.

Teaching ESL can seem overwhelming, especially as a general education teacher who must differentiate for a whole host of different personalities, abilities, and challenges. Fortunately, there are also a lot of tricks and techniques that can easily employ to support your ELL students in the best way possible.

And finally, don't forget that Kids Academy offers a wide array of learning resources that can be used for introducing or reteaching topics you present in class or to your own children. Check out the Talented and Gifted app, or logon to kidsacademy.mobi today to find the highest quality [English reading worksheets](#), games, and more!

