Teaching English As a Second Language to Young Children

Curriculum for Teaching English As a Second Language

พระมหาศุภชัย สุภกิจฺโจ

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Teaching English As a Second Language to Young Children

English is a complex language to learn, especially as a second language, but it is easier if you start young. When you are teaching English as a second language to young children you can use less formal teaching methods and make the process more fun. There are many tools available for the English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher that will make the language experience fun and educational.

Language as Game

For the young, formal instruction in rules and grammar can be hard, if not counterproductive, particularly in English when the rules are complex and there are many exceptions. As you teach ESL, keep the focus on fun, and children will learn virtually effortlessly. Use flash cards and other games to help them build vocabulary effortlessly.

Music

The structure of music lends itself to repetition and memorization, and is a great teaching tool for the young. Songs used to teach and entertain English-speaking children, like the alphabet song or nursery rhymes, also provide wonderful teaching tools for children studying ESL. In many cases, you may be able to find bilingual versions of popular children's songs.

Classroom Immersion
With Entertainment

As children begin to show some proficiency in the basics of English, use age-appropriate entertainment to provide an immersion experience in the classroom. There are a number of television shows and programs that are appropriate for virtually any age. The same shows that teach English speaking children how to read, like "Between the Lions" for example, are educationally sound and just as appropriate for children learning ESL. In the classroom, you can control the immersion experience, stopping the program at any time to allow for classroom time constraints, or to answer or ask questions.

Curriculum for Teaching English As a Second Language

An e as a second language (ESL) curriculum is designed to teach non-native speakers to communicate proficiently in English. Curricula contain lessons, activities and assessments that teachers of English can use in their classrooms. Most ESL (also known as ESOL and EFL, among others) curricula are developed to meet educational standards that specify what students should learn in each level of instruction. Although these standards differ from state to state and school to school, ESL curricula generally stress similar topics.

Topics Addressed

An ESL curriculum must always address the concepts of reading, writing and speaking. Teachers must cover pronunciation, idioms, vocabulary, grammar, reading strategies and punctuation. However, simply learning the basics does not make a person proficient in English. In fact, the organization Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) suggest that "it can take six to nine years for ESOL students to achieve the same levels of proficiency in academic English as native speakers." In other words, just because individuals can communicate in English on an interpersonal level does not mean they are ready to engage in learning or critical thinking in the nonnative tongue.

Topics Addressed

For this reason, an ESL curriculum must prepare speakers to understand and communicate complex topics. Finally, another important facet of an ESL curriculum is the sociocultural aspect of the language. TESOL argues that learning a new language also requires learning new cultural norms. Most ESL curricula not only teach the grammar basics, but they also teach students how to navigate the English speaking culture. Some topics covered may be nonverbal communication, values and cultural norms.
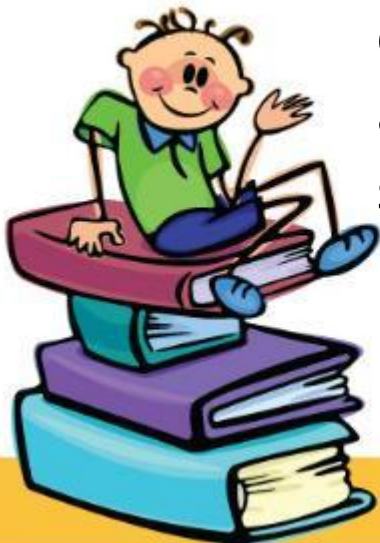
Types

According to the ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics, there are two primary types of ESL curricula offered in K-12 schools, standalone ESL curricula and ESL plus curricula. A standalone ESL curriculum consists of lessons and activities geared toward teaching the English language alone. Students may be taken out of their classrooms for a special standalone ESL period, or they may be given a specific ESL class period if they are in middle or high school.

Types

An ESL plus curriculum is offered to a group of students who have limited English proficiency (LEP). The program offers some ESL instruction, but it also offers instruction in another subject, such as history, math or science. Students may receive subject-area instruction in English or their first language. An example of an ESL plus curriculum is a sheltered curriculum in which ESL students take all of their subject classes in a "sheltered" environment with other LEP students and an ESL teacher

History

The first ESL curricula were based on the grammar-translation method. From the 1600s through the 1800s, students learning English were simply taught the rules of English grammar and to translate English into their native language and vice versa. In the late 1800s, Charles Berlitz developed a type of second-language learning curriculum that compared learning a second language to learning a first language.

Summer

History

However, English club contributor Dimitrios Thanasoulas writes that the curriculum was not very practical for classroom use. In the 1970s, however, Noam Chomsky's studies of linguistics and how language works shaped a variety of other language learning methods, called "designer" methods. Many of Chomsky's ideas are still used when ESL curriculum is designed today.

Controversy

Teachers, ESL experts, parents and taxpayers have expressed concern regarding the type of ESL curriculum that is offered in public schools. One the one hand, some taxpayers contend that the budget crunch placed on public schools requires those schools to place its ESL students in inclusion classrooms, which cost less. Some also argue that ESL students can perform just as well or even better in the inclusive classroom. On the other hand, some suggest that ESL students are in need of special staff in order to become fluent English speakers.

Design

ESL curriculum designers must take a variety of factors into consideration creating their curriculum. According to the ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics, curriculum designers must take into consideration the groups of LEP students represented, what individual students are like and available resources when designing their curriculum. By taking these factors into consideration, curriculum designers can ensure that students are getting realistic resources that are best for them.