ESL Insructional Strategies

**Building Background**

This strategy allows students to use their prior knowledge when learning concepts in English. This allows students to become more engaged and take greater interest in the material, improving their comprehension of the vocabulary.

**How to Use:**

1. **Ask students how they might relate to the material**

Engage students by asking about how they relate to the material. See if they have an experience that they may be able to relate to what they are learning or if they have prior knowledge.

1. **Emphasize key vocabulary**

When teaching the vocabulary related to the topic being taught, emphasize key words so students know their importance in understanding concepts. Encourage personal dictionaries as an aid/extra resource.

1. **Check for understanding**

Check for understanding to assure that student grasp the concepts by reviewing important vocabulary.

\*Students may be at different learning levels, but teachers can work with students one-on-one or in small groups. This allows for closer instruction and monitoring in a quiet environment for students.

**When to Use:**

Use the Building Background instructional strategy to use students’ past learning to tie in new learning.

* Before the lesson for review of vocabulary
* Assess students at different learning levels at one time
* When students are struggling to grasp concepts as written on paper
* During the closure portion of the lesson to wrap up ideas
* During enrichment and reteach activities for extra practice
* \*Any time a student may need it.

\*All students can benefit from this strategy and can learn from each other

**Variations**

* *Interaction:* Allows students to share and discuss their background knowledge and what they know about the topic at hand.
* *Scaffolding Reading for ELLs:* By using background knowledge or previous experiences, students can identify important events similar to those they have experienced to follow a story or text more closely.
* *Comprehensible Input:* Accommodate linguistic levels when communicating with them and use gestures that they are familiar with.

**Comprehensible Input**

This instructional strategy is used to engage and accommodate students with different linguistic levels by communicating with them in a way that they can better understand.

**How to Use:**

1. **Speak clearly**

Speak students in a way that they can understand best, accommodating different linguistic levels.

1. **Make concepts clear**

Clearly explain concepts in a clear, precise manner a little bit at a time. Use appropriate materials, such as visuals, hands-on materials, gestures, etc. to help students grasp ideas.

1. **Record what works**

Record what works best for students (as a whole and individually) to assure students continue to comprehend the material.

1. **Check for understanding**

Check for understanding by allowing students to share what they took away from the lesson and show off their language capabilities.

**When to Use:**

* Close the gap between students on different learning levels
* Test different skills of students at different learning levels
* During the Focus to grasp students’ attention and to allow them to become involved and engaged in the lesson
* Before a lesson to check for prior knowledge
* Allow students to open up throughout the school year
* During guided or independent practice to check for understanding
* During the Closure to allow students to review what they have learned

**Variations:**

* *Building Background:* Share their prior knowledge and experiences and how they relate it to the current lesson using their own linguistic level.
* *Scaffolding Reading for ELLs:* Determine their level of understanding using charts, visuals, and gestures while following a story or text.
* *Interaction:* Allow students to use their own linguistic level to share and discuss with their peers about key concepts.

**Interaction**

This instructional strategy allows students frequent opportunities to interact with their peers while sharing and discussing concepts that they understood or even found confusing. It allows them to consult with their peers and get a different point of view.

**How to Use:**

1. **Introduce the topic**

Introduce the lesson topic in a short lesson.

1. **Open a class discussion**

Allow students to discuss the topic together in an open-ended discussion.

1. **Write down student questions**

Write down any important questions or concerns that students may have about a topic.

1. **Encourage**

Encourage students to share with the class ways they understand the material best, including their prior knowledge and experiences.

1. **Check for understanding**

Review the topic with the class by addressing the questions they asked during the discussion. Use appropriate language that allows all levels of learners to comprehend.

**When to Use:**

* At the beginning of class to engage students at the beginning of a lesson
* During class discussions to allow students to express their level of understanding
* Before a test to review concepts they find confusing/ need more practice.
* After class to help students create peer study groups
* Encourage higher order of thinking

**Variations:**

* *Building Background:* Allow students to share their prior knowledge and experiences to express their level of understanding, and possibly helping students who were confused.
* *Verbal feedback:* Have students provide the teacher with verbal feedback about concepts they need more time on.
* *Peer tutoring:* Allow students to work with peers on material they may be struggling with.