

Using Technology to Help ELL Students Achieve

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School can be very overwhelming for many students. There is so much that is expected of them and the pressure to succeed and fit in is higher now than ever before. Now, imagine how a student would feel facing all this pressure while also having a language barrier. This is what English Language Learners face daily in education. English Language Learners (ELL) are students whose first language is not English. Due to ELL students not speaking English they often face many challenges in the classroom. Some of the challenges they face are often feeling left out as well as struggling to comprehend while listening to someone. To help ELL students overcome these challenges, I made a few adaptations to my literacy lesson.

ELL students may feel left out at times due to their struggles communicating with their peers. Due to this, it is important for teachers to create a welcoming environment for ELLs. One strategy that Colorin Colorado recommends to help ELL students feel welcome is to invite their culture into your classroom (2015). One way I did this with my lesson is by using an iPad app called iTranslate. With this app, I am able to put in the English word for characters and have it translated into their native language. By doing this, I am not only helping the ELL student to understand what a character is and what we will be learning during this lesson, but it also allows the other students in the class to learn another language. By incorporating their language into the classroom, ELL students begin to feel more comfortable because it gives them something they can understand and relate to. It also allows them to see that their teacher values and respects their culture and experiences by adding it into the lessons.

Another way I changed my lesson to make ELL students feel more welcomed in the classroom is by giving them the opportunity to listen to the story in their own language during small group. While their peers are listening to the story in English, they are given the opportunity

to listen to the story in their native language on the iPad. Once they have listened to the story they will complete work with their peers in small group. This helps to put the ELL students on the same level of understanding with the text as their peers before they work together to complete a task. It allows them to also make a connection between English words and meanings through the group interactions.

A second issue many ELL students may struggle with is listening comprehension. While the teacher is reading a story, ELL students are trying to use the pictures in the text to make meaning from the words being spoken by the teacher. While this can help them to learn new vocabulary, it may also cause them to miss important information or become confused. One suggestion Colorin Colorado has to help with listening comprehension is to use picture cards for explanations and retell of the story (2015). Due to this, I added picture cards to my lesson to help identify the characters in the story. This allows them to have visual connections to the words, which can help them to better understand the story they listened to.

Incorporating the native language of ELL students in the classroom allows them to feel welcomed and more comfortable. By providing pictures for ELL students, it helps them to better understand what is being discussed, as well as allowing them to make meaning of new words. This in turn helps them to focus more on their academics. Overall, I feel that although the changes made to my lesson may seem small, they will help ELL students to be more successful and better understand the skill.

References

(2015, December 01). Reading in Kindergarten. Retrieved from
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