

Classroom Strategies for Teaching Older Language Learners Outline View

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“My body tells me, you are old, you are old...But I tell him [sic] you need study.”
<http://www.clese.org>.

“Studies of aged second language learners have established that the right physical and learning environment can compensate for physiological and socio-cultural variables... that are likely to affect their performance and progress...”
(Allender, 1998)

Workshop Outline

- Introduction
- Considerations and Strategies
 - Physical
 - Cognitive
 - Affective
- Conclusion/Resources
- Bibliography

Physical Considerations: Vision

- Acuity
- Near Focus
- Need for Light
- Sensitivity to Glare
- Adaptation to Dark
- Color Perception

Physical Considerations: Hearing

- Pitch

- **Volume**
- **Discrimination**

Physical Considerations:

- **Mobility**
- **Flexibility**
- **Stamina**

Physical Strategies: Vision

- Use 14 or 16 serif fonts for worksheets
- Double space
- Provide visual organizers
- Standardize format
- Use 24 font for O/H; Isolate items on O/H
- Have spare reading glasses on hand

Physical Strategies: Vision

- Increase level of light
- Use balanced lighting
- Allow time for eyes to adjust

Physical Strategies: Vision

- Ensure that content is in sharp contrast to background
- Avoid colors close on the color wheel – red and orange
- Limit use of colors at lower end of spectrum – blue, dark green, violet

Physical Strategies: Hearing

- Lower your pitch
- Increase the volume
- Limit background noise
- Separate groups

Physical Strategies: Hearing

- Speak slowly – fewer than 120 wpm
- Increase prosody
- Stand where there is good lighting and students can see your face
- Use facial expressions or gestures
- Seat students in circle
- Repeat questions asked from class

Physical Strategies: Mobility

- Provide frequent breaks
- Divide lesson into smaller segments
- Try self-paced activities

Cognitive Considerations

- Processing
- Working Memory
- Selective Attention

Cognitive Strategies: Processing

- Limit amount of material in each lesson
- Slow down pace of instruction
- Include self-paced activities
- Increase wait time
- Choose activities at which your students have an advantage: analyzing, generalizing, rather than rapid recall

Cognitive Strategies: Working Memory

- Avoid multi-tasking
- Allow students to 'discover' lesson
- Recycle content at increasingly deeper levels
- Present material in multiple modalities
- Contextualize
- Provide many opportunities to practice new skill and integrate new material
- Teach strategic memory strategies

Cognitive Strategies – Selective Attention

- Limit material presented
- Make structure of course, lesson clear
- Use visual and auditory organizers
- Make transitions clear
- Teach organizational skills

Affective Considerations

- Motivation
- Self-efficacy
- Risk-taking

Affective Strategies: Motivation

- Do wants/needs assessment
- Make material relevant; include task-oriented activities
- Create a sense of community; include opportunities to socialize
- Provide classroom leadership opportunities

Affective Strategies – Self-efficacy

- Know your students: strengths, weaknesses, expectations
- Provide a supportive environment that allows the student to experience success
- Individualize the program

Affective Strategies – Risk-taking

- Allow more time to accumulate evidence and make choices
- Modify assessment procedures
- Include individual projects

Conclusion: Physical

Your older students may be facing a variety of changes to vision, hearing, and/or mobility. In addition to accommodations listed above, consult:

- Lion's Clubs for free vision and hearing screening, low cost eyeglasses
- School ADA department: <http://ola.aacc.edu/ada/whoisaffected.htm>
<http://ola.aacc.edu/ada/resources.htm>
- Accessibility options for Windows:
<http://www.microsoft.com/enable/products/windowsxp/default.aspx> and Mac:
<http://www.apple.com/accessibility/>
- County Senior Centers

Conclusion: Cognitive

When designing lessons, remember to:

- Slow down the pace; narrow the focus
- Organize and structure the content
- Contextualize the lesson
- Have students 'discover' the lesson
- Review and recycle
- Tap into multiple modalities
- Teach memory strategies
- Consider: Hourglass model for language learning:
<http://www.american.edu/tesol/Lessonplans.htm>

Conclusion: Affective

- Create a supportive community in the classroom
- Make sure lessons are relevant to their worlds
- Individualize and personalize the program
- Focus on success; use authentic assessment
- Provide opportunities to lead
- Consider: Bright Ideas Curriculum: <http://www.clese.org>

A Final Thought

“...the majority of these techniques show the same positive effects under research conditions for younger learners.” (Twitchell)

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