

English Language Learners: Questions and Concerns

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Q2: How do you use the classroom environment and routines to support second language development?

Answer:

Establishing a predictable and organized learning environment in kindergarten is vital in helping the children feel secure and to become autonomous in the classroom. It's the same for 2nd language learners. However, we want **take advantage of the established daily routine, and use the many contexts that it provides** as anchors, to help **develop vocabulary and comprehension** for those children who are processing the second language.

For instance, as the children arrive in the morning, they first spend time in **the cloakroom**. We have to remember that this is a social context for the children. At this time in the day, the children will be exposed to a wide range of vocabulary all throughout the year. Vocabulary relating to **seasonal clothing, weather, school materials** (backpack, lunchbox), **actions** (open, close, tie, zip, lift), and the many **social interactions** they will engage in while they get undress and organize themselves.

To help the students learn the vocabulary of the seasonal clothing that the children will need to learn, I place **pictographs** in the cloakroom.

I also have a **3 step process illustrated by pictographs** detailing the first thing they need to do when they arrive in the morning, the 2nd thing and the last thing. I refer to the visual aids and use the vocabulary I want the children to learn.

To further support the development of the second language, I **make a book** with pictures of the children taking off their backpacks, mitts, hats, coats and boots, and carrying out the 3 step process. I use one to two words highlighting the intended vocabulary I want them to learn. I then make the book available to the children during "book time". This provides the children with the opportunity to practice the new words and/or phrases.

There is **specific vocabulary the children can learn** during the specific social contexts found in our **daily routines like, free play, library, recess, snack and even relaxation**. What I have found over the years, is that the more often the children hear the language, the more often they are given the opportunity to practice it, the more successful they are at applying it.