Standards-Based Instruction: Teaching the Four Skills

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Reaching B1 level means that when I am listening…

“I can understand extended speech and lectures and even follow complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar. I can understand most TV news and current affair programmes. I can understand the majority of films in standard dialect”

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“I can read articles and reports concerned with contemporary problems in which the writers adopt particular attitudes or viewpoints. I can understand contemporary literary prose.”

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In Spoken Interaction...

“I can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible. I can take an active part in discussion in familiar contexts, accounting for sustaining my views”

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In Spoken Production...

“I can present clear, detailed descriptions on a wide range of subjects related to my field of interest. I can explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages or disadvantages of various options”

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In Writing…

“I can write clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects related to my interests. I can write an essay or report, passing on information or giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view. I can write letters highlighting the personal significance of events and experiences.”

CEF Reference Documents

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We know where we are going, but we find some problems

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Poor Teaching Conditions

• There is no textbook
• Few hours a week available for instruction
• Excessive use of the L1 in the classroom
• Explicit grammar instruction

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No Textbook Used in the Class

Textbooks are a necessary tool for guiding Ts and Ls. If you can’t use one, use ready-made material taken from pages like

www.bogglesworldesl.com

http://www.handoutsonline.com/members/free_downloads.htm

http://www.mes-english.com/

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Not enough time in class

- Use project work where learners need to interact to reach a goal and create something (bulletins, newspapers, brochures, posters, ads)

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Excessive L1 use

- Teach classroom English through commands to establish routines

**Checking understanding**

**TEACHER** ‘[Name], is that right?’
(or ‘[Name], is that right or wrong?’)

**LEARNER** ‘Yes, it is.’ or ‘No, it isn’t.’
(or ‘It’s right.’ or ‘It’s wrong.’)

‘What is the right answer?’

‘What do you think?’

‘Has anybody else got an idea?’

‘Put up your hand if you don’t understand.’

**LEARNER** ‘Please, I don’t understand.’
**TEACHER** ‘What don’t you understand? Tell me in [the name of your language].’

‘Tell me in [the name of your language] what you have to do.’

‘[Name], tell [name] in your own language what you have to do.’

‘Put up your hands if you know the answer.’
Overuse of Explicit Grammar Instruction
Can you ______?  

Yes, I can.

No, I can’t. But I can ______.
Problems with the skills - Listening

• Students believe they have to understand every single word they hear
• Students only understand when people speak slowly and clearly
• Students need to hear things more than once to understand
Speaking

• Students are inhibited (fear of making mistakes, criticism, attracting attention)
• Students have nothing to say
• There is low or uneven participation
• Students use the L1 too much
Reading

• Students read without understanding
• Students overuse/misuse the dictionary
• There is no purpose in reading
• There is no extensive reading
Writing

• Students take too long to produce a few lines
• Students do not produce original pieces of writing
• Students often neglect aspects like spelling, punctuation, organization of ideas

Ur, P. (1996) A course in language teaching

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Knowing this, what can we do to work around these problems and still get our goals?

(We don’t need to become “superteachers”)

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In any task you create remember

- Student-talk over teacher-talk
- Clear directions are needed
- Every activity must have a learning purpose
- Contextualize the task
- Provide examples, clues, key words, models before asking students to do something
• Her friend is ill, so she’s sad
• Someone stole his cell phone. He’s very angry.
• He got a special email today, so he’s very happy.
• She’s been fixing her car, so she’s tired.
• The sun is shining, so he’s very hot.
• She went out without a coat, so she is very cold
1. Three women
2. A woman
3. A Young Man
4. An Old Woman
5. A Young Woman
6. Everyone

- walking her dog.
- selling flowers.
- Standing at the bus stop.
- Waiting for a bus.
- sitting outside the cafe next to the butcher’s.
- carrying a heavy basket.
- looking up.
- coming out of the butcher’s shop.
- drinking coffee.
Speaking

When do you ...

got up?  have breakfast?
go to work?
have lunch?
go home?
have supper?  watch TV?  go to bed?

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Me</th>
<th>Friend 1</th>
<th>Friend 2</th>
<th>Friend 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Get up</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have breakfast</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Go to school/work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have lunch</td>
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<tr>
<td>Go home</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have supper</td>
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<tr>
<td>Watch TV</td>
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<tr>
<td>Go to bed</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Dawn...

Every day, people of Verbo City face new problems.

Speling errors, incorrect tenses, poor punctuation, missing articles...

What on earth...?!?

Arg! How can I possibly understand that badly written report?

PIppPPP!!!

Thanks goodness for... Grammarman!

The mysterious hero who defends Verbo City...

...and fight those responsible for bad English.

With the help of his genious Android, Alpha-Bot...

Bzzt - present perfect... has / have plus the past participle - Bzzt.
Creative Writing

SAVING SANTA

The alert came over the radio:

"Emergency! Santa Claus trapped in chimney. Christmas will likely be canceled."

As soon as I heard it, I knew I would have to do something—and do it fast. I quickly gathered my gear and headed out the door...
The Strange Machine

My uncle is an inventor. One day, I was searching through the attic of my uncle’s house. I found a very strange machine with many buttons, knobs, dials, and levers. I had never seen a machine like it before. On one side, there was a button that said ‘on’.
The Prank

when I woke up this morning, I decided I would pull the greatest prank ever.
The Monster Match

When my friend Mary called and told me that we would be playing a bunch of monsters this weekend for the soccer playoffs, I thought she was just kidding. But when I arrived at the field, my eyes nearly fell out of my head. There, in the middle of the field, was a horde of the nastiest, meanest looking trolls, ogres, and goblins I had ever seen. They were huge with long horns, sharp teeth, and ugly warts all over their bodies. I knew there was going to be trouble when the first thing they did was eat the referee...
Your Turn…

Choose a standard and the corresponding descriptor, and create two class activities you can use with your students. Also, describe how you would assess the task in order to check students’ achievement of the standard (indicators).

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References


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