

Planning for interactive and engaging activities, while giving simple and concise instructions, is quite a challenge. Using the concepts presented in this topic, how will you ensure that your students are understanding and retaining the concepts being taught? What questions will you ask?

Great teachers are nimble, observant, and responsive, always keeping an open mind about how to best engage their students and get them excited about learning. Students often lose interest during lecture-style teaching, whereas interactive and engaging teaching styles promote an atmosphere of attention and participation. Make it interesting. Make it exciting. Make it fun. Make the material practical and relevant. As you well know, telling is not teaching and listening is not learning. Such a method is very helpful for the overall development of the student. It encourages student participation, use questions that stimulate response, discussion, and a hand-on experience, use teaching aids that press answers and capture or hold the student's attention, set up a workgroup environment and involve students as well as the teacher. Effective teaching involves much more than conveying to students what you, as an expert, already know and what you think they should know. Rather, effective teaching in these disciplines involves ascertaining what students know, what they don't know, and what they think they know but do not really understand accurately or fully. Using that information, you can help students establish a solid framework of understanding that can better support new knowledge. According to Steven Krashen's Input Hypothesis, learners learn the language when the input or language is understood. Further language learning development occurs when the input is one step beyond the learner's current language level, or the input +1 or  $i+1$ . Reading requires 6 subskills: explicit reading comprehension, implicit reading comprehension, inferencing skill, vocabulary knowledge, grammatical knowledge, and summary skill. Vandergrift (1999) defines listening comprehension as, "a complex, active process in which the listener must discriminate between sounds, understand vocabulary and grammatical structures, interpret stress. Using active teaching techniques can lead to more effective, gratifying, and memorable learning outcomes. Student attention often begins to decline after 10 to 15 minutes of lecture; retention also drops considerably after the first 10 minutes. This can be problematic when your class lasts for an hour and fifteen minutes! Utilizing active learning strategies can help. Most people learn better from actively engaging with material than they do from passively listening to a speaker or reading from a textbook. Active learning strategies have students "doing" things—analyzing, creating, role playing, experiencing, reflecting, etc.

To make sure that the students are understanding and retaining the concepts. The teacher can use different strategies to support the same like, a picture is understandable in any language. Students who may not comprehend everything a teacher says, an image will help clarify meaning and encourage understanding. While introducing new vocabulary, couple a picture with each important word. For example, while teaching *Romeo and Juliet*, you can give handout of five or six vocabulary words they would encounter in each scene while studying. The handout with the word in English, a picture, and a place for students to write the translation of the word in their own language. Including the images can boost comprehension and stamina, also adding images to the assessments will make it even more comprehensible for the students.

Often students will not tell us when they don't understand something because they don't want their classmates to know. In this a quick assessment can help determine where more instructions are needed. The useful strategy to help students in this case can be *Turn and Talk* as it will reduce the anxiety that

students often feel when asked to speak in front of the entire class. The teacher can provide a sentence starter or asking them to write down their answer before sharing it with a friend. As a teacher observing students during a Turn and Talk activity is useful for evaluating student's understanding. This will serve as an engaging activity for the students and helpful in retaining the concepts taught.

While asking students questions about, 'how much they have understood?', you'll come across students who are shy about speaking in front of the class especially less proficient ones. In addition, they struggle to form grammatically correct responses to questions. To help them out, you can provide sentence frames during class discussion. For example, if students are asked to give evidence, you can use the sentence frame "I know this because the text says \_\_\_\_\_." In case talking about historical events, a sentence frame could be: "One cause of (the event) is \_\_\_\_\_" or (Event) happened because \_\_\_\_\_."

Reading a text is a challenge for students because of its complex academic vocabulary, complicated syntax and density of text. One strategy could be to chunk passages into short, manageable sections. For each passage, choose two to three key vocabulary words and provide pictures of those items. Allow the students to translate the words into their native language if they're unfamiliar with the terms. After each chunk of text, ask the students to write a one-sentence summary of the section using the vocabulary words in their sentence. Then move on to the next section. For example, the students find Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech challenging, you can break the speech into five sections and spend one period on each section, focusing on the vocabulary and message. Then ask them to write the summary of entire speech.

Taking as an example the poem by Robert Frost "*The Road Not Taken*", to check how much the students are able to understand. The teacher can ask questions like,

### **Match a word with its synonym**

*Match the items:*

diverge	separate
trod	stride
undergrowth	uniform
sigh	shrubbery
equal	exhale

Or in the middle of the teaching to check the attention, you can also ask, "What is the speaker doing in the poem?"; "What does the speaker encounter?"; "What decision the poet has to make in the poem?"; "Formulate an idea of what you think the road may represent. Explain why you think so."; "Briefly explain what is happening in the poem\_\_\_\_"; "Talk about how the poet feels about the two roads\_\_\_\_" etc.

Asking questions like 'True or False', taking "*Macbeth*" by William Shakespeare as an example.

- 1) Is the play set in Scotland?
- 2) There are two witches.
- 3) Lady Macbeth is a kind and gentle woman.
- 4) Macbeth wants to kill Duncan.

5) Macbeth cannot be killed by anyone who is born naturally. Etc.

Teachers should use enough different individual and whole group techniques to check the understanding of what all students know. This means during a single class the same technique should not be repeated. Also, an advanced way of involving children so they stay engaged in their learning is to help them develop greater self-regulation skills. Remember that the ultimate goal is to help students gain a deeper understanding of course material and encourage critical thinking, beyond basic retention and surface understanding.

