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SA TfEL

# ESL teaching cycle

## Intentional teaching – the ESL Teaching Cycle

### Introduction

It is often said that children, as they use language, are constantly

> learning language
>
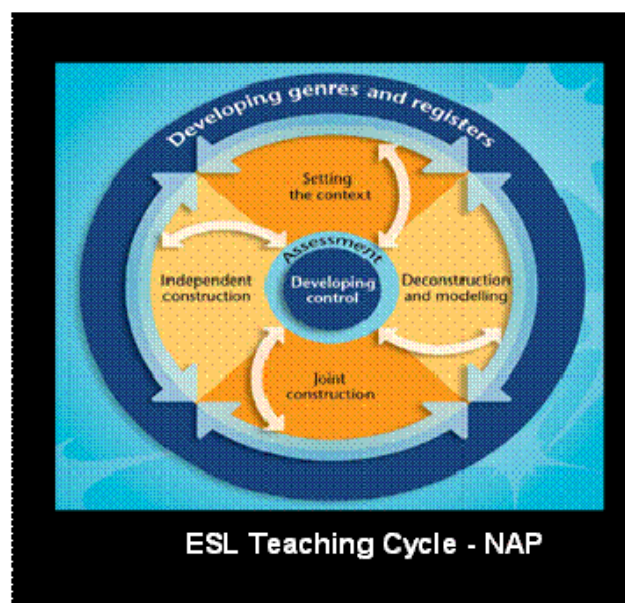> learning through language, and
>
> learning about language. [i]

Through using language in our every day interactions we develop a commonsense and implicit understanding about how language – English – works. Those children who learn Standard Australian English (SAE) as part of their childhood experiences have an implicit understanding of how English works in both formal and informal contexts. Children who speak a language other than SAE in their home and community, as part of their early language development, are disadvantaged in schools unless the working of verbal and written texts in more formal genres are made explicit and practised.

One successful approach is the intentional and direct teaching of the language, key structures, features and processes with students actively participating in the process. This approach to teaching English is called the functional approach to language learning and teaching, as its purpose is to enable students to get things done in their lives.

The ESL Teaching Cycle, which was developed to teach Non English Speaking Background or New Arrival students to write in a specific genre in English, is transferable across the curriculum and supportive of all students.

The advantages of this approach are that it focuses on students making sense and meaning of language as they interact with others. It is also applicable to language development across the curriculum, helping and expecting students to make informed choices about language as they use it with a range of audiences.[ii]

The ESL Teaching Cycle is based on this functional model of language.



ESL Teaching Cycle - NAP

Government of South Australia
Department of Education and Children's Services

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## What is the ESL Teaching Cycle?

There are four interdependent elements in the cycle which build on what students already know, can do and understand.

1. The first part of the cycle is discovering and documentation of what students know about genre.

2. A significant element is the modelling or deconstruction phase, in which the specific elements of the genre are brought out from the text, providing activities for learners to consolidate their understanding.

3. The third phase is the joint construction of the texts, with students contributing their ideas and understandings as a model of the text is developed.

4. As students feel more confident applying the language and structure of a genre they are ready for independent constructions, where they transfer the knowledge and skills developed in the previous phases to their writing.

## The ESL Teaching Cycle – strategies for implementation[iii]

### Building the field / Setting the context

*1. Find out what students know about a topic and/or genre:*

- Brainstorm about the topic and/or genre as a whole class, small group, paired activity
- Students can interview each other about the topic and/or genre
- Use a text / book / big book / video / DVD / object (possibly from students' homes) / diagram / art work / experiential activities to stimulate discussion about the topic and/or genre

*2. Document information the students know and display this around the room for later reference:*

- Photos/drawings/diagrams and captions
- A concept map
- Lists of words
- Sequence of information
- Written summary

*3. Identify the knowledge that is required for student success around this topic and genre. Use a range of experiential activities to further explore the topic and / or genre:*

- More experiences in the community
- Tactile contact with objects and spaces
- Real experiences with following instructions (eg cooking, making objects)
- First hand experience with art / music / drama
- Plan for, and conduct research through websites / books / video / speakers
- Role play to explore other perspectives of the topic (eg from different points of view)
- Explore the use and prevalence of the genre in the community
- Develop d continually add to lists, concept maps, charts, tables etc

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4. *Develop learning skills*

- Organisational skills
- Note taking
- Use the library and web search
- Concept mapping
- Reflection

## Modelling / deconstruction of the text

1. *Present model and extend understanding of the topic the text*

- Identify the genre (in contrast with other known genres)
- Build understanding of the text eg comprehension activities related to the text
- Jointly develop the text through sequencing parts of the text - cloze activity

2. *Deconstruct the text*

- Identify structural/visual features of the text
- Identify / label the stages of the text
- Develop a list of language features specific to the genre
- Use and learn the appropriate metalanguage explore the 'spoken-ness'/ 'written-ness' of the text

3. *Extend control of language*

- Identify selected elements of grammatical control and provide activities to practice grammatical control

4. *Develop learning skills*

## Joint construction

1. *Extend understanding of the topic by presenting activities to develop understanding of this new topic prior to setting the context for the construction of the text*

- do further research, note taking, concept mapping etc

2. *Establish the mode of joint construction*

- Set the context  and jointly draft the plan of the text using a genre proforma /outline
- Set the context for the joint construction eg
  - small groups develop different parts of / all the text and then jointly edit the text
  - jointly complete a cloze of a text
  - all students jointly contribute to the construction of a text which the teacher scribes
  - jointly deconstruct and assess the completed text for stages / language / understandings

3. *Scaffold language and meaning*

- Focus on the meaning and appropriateness as well as the accuracy
- Provide / ask for alternative ways to express sections of the language

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*4. Develop learning skills*

## Independent construction

- Build the context
- Set task
- Support with additional research if required
- Students independently create the text
- Conference and assess student text
    - self assessment
    - teacher assessment

Individual or whole class reflection.

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i Derewianka, B, 1990, Exploring How Texts Work, Primary Teaching Association, Newtown, NSW, p3
ii Ibid, p5
iii Program provided by the ESL Programme Curriculum Services, 2009

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