

Engaging Strategies to Develop Oral and Writing Skills

Maricela Cajamarca

Pedagogical skill: Speaking skills	Teaching	Topic: Happy Rhymes
Curricular Thread: Communication	Oral	Sub thread: Spoken production

Strategy 1: Happy rhymes

Description

Children enjoy listening to music and reproducing a rhythm repeatedly when they like the sounds. It is common to see children sing and reproduce the lyrics they hear. Introducing rhymes into the language learning of children is beneficial for them based on the learning process they are subjected to and the fun they experience while doing the activities such as vocabulary building, generation of expression and constructions of phrases, among others.

Through happy rhymes, children can develop speaking abilities because of vocabulary input, the exposure to activities that focus on rhythm and sound production. These activities increase motivation through rhymes,

which raise confidence and lower the affective filter when they imitate rhythm and intonation by singing.

Implementation of the Teaching Strategy

To implement rhymes in your lessons you will need to use your creativity to let students imagine and learn. You will require a cloth bag, the worksheet of the two dicky birds, a flashcard of the sky, and a feather. First, you need to take one object at a time from the cloth bag to introduce the two characters of the rhyme. The characters are the two little dicky birds, two famous birds from European folktales. As you show the vocabulary related to the characters, let students guess what is coming out next from the bag by eliciting ideas. For example, take the sky flashcard. Say: “These animals fly in the sky.” “What animals fly in the sky?” Then, show them a feather or a picture of one. Tell them that Pedro and Paul, the dicky birds, have colorful feathers. Elicit the colors while you show them the feathers. Students guess the animal that is coming out. They can say words in Spanish, and you reinforce what they say in English. This technique is a way to pre-teach vocabulary related to the characters.

In the second stage, you need to draw a wall on the board. Make sure you let your children guess what you are drawing. Elicit possibilities as you draw. Another option is to have the wall done on a big paper before class. You can use markers of different colors to motivate your students.

Place the pictures of the birds on the wall. Introduce them and ask your students to say “hello dicky birds”. A good idea to introduce the characters of the story is by pointing at Pedro and saying, “one named Pedro”, then point at Paul and say “one named Paul”. Take Pedro out and say, “Fly away Pedro”, and then take Paul out and say, “Fly away Paul”. As you do it, make sure you act in an unhappy way because they are gone. Students get into the story if you act it out, and even more if you include them in it. Use your hands to call them back. Invite them to be part of the story by saying together “Come back Pedro, Come back Paul”.

Show them a happy face and paste them back on the wall that was drawn on the board to show that they came back.

Once the kids are familiar with the characters, tell them that the two little dicky birds came into the classroom to visit, and they want to go to their homes to meet their families. Therefore, they need to decorate them with colors and feathers. Hand out the copy with the puppets (See Appendix 1) and have your students work on the decoration as you help them.

Present vocabulary with simple instructions (Paul is a yellow bird. Pedro is a blue bird). It is a good idea to teach them how to use the scissors to cut the puppets, but help them if they cannot do it. After the puppet is decorated, they need to glue it to a Popsicle stick. Kids love to do it! Make sure you practice the vocabulary: scissors, glue, paper, cut, share as you lead the activity.

When the puppets are ready, sing the “two little dicky birds sitting on the wall” using the audio. If you do not have access to a stereo or a computer, you can always memorize the song and sing it at any time. Actually, singing the song along with students is the best way for them to learn.

If you have access to a projector and a computer, you can play the story “two little dicky birds” through a video retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C-IR1cgpX8c>. Remember that children enjoy repetition, which is very good for learning a language, so take advantage of it, and sing as many times as you can during the following lessons.

Differentiation

Rhymes and songs can be used with both, small and large groups because of the active nature of singing. This strategy is great with or without extra resources. You can use the video and the audio if you have access to technology, but if not, just use photocopies and memorize the rhymes to convey the same objectives. If the school does not have a radio or

projector that you can borrow, print out the pictures of the birds on a big paper or just draw them in advance. The great thing about singing is that it does not require you to have lots of materials and resources.

Your students and you can sing rhymes everywhere. Enjoy its advantages in indoor and outdoor spaces. You can sing in the patio, the ground, the classroom floor or simply on the regular classroom chairs and tables.

Remember that you are teaching English to children, therefore, you ought to be aware that they need to move and enjoy learning. It is important to think outside the box and take advantage of all possible spaces that are available at your school. It is important to consider the nature of activities and the lesson aims to organize the spaces. For instance, singing can happen anywhere at school, but cutting and pasting with your students will require a more controlled space such as with the chairs and tables in an organized manner. You need to be sensible about when to encourage free and fun activities while learning a language, and when to develop organizational skills as well.

Reference

Dooley, J., & Evans, V. (2013). Hello happy rhymes nursery Rhymes and songs. Express publishing.

Pedagogical skill: Speaking and Writing	Topic: Story retelling
Curricular Thread: Oral Communication	Sub thread: Speaking production

Strategy 2: Story bag

Description

Story bag is a comprehension strategy that helps students develop and improve their oral language skill while reporting events from a story. It

is a retelling strategy, which not only lets students analyze and practice literacy and cognitive skills, but it also improves students' listening skill. Moreover, they can practice grammar, increase vocabulary, and develop complex utterances.

This strategy aims to raise students' confidence when speaking in English by sequencing the events of a story and retelling it; as well as, developing speaking abilities and building vocabulary.

Implementation of the Teaching Strategy

In order to implement this strategy in your classroom; first, divide the class in small groups. There are many ways to form groups, for example, using puzzle pieces, Popsicle sticks, coins, numbers, etc. With puzzles, students need to look around and join the groups with the people who have the missing pieces to complete the picture. You can also use scrap paper with the name of animals, colors, places, fruits or any other option to form the groups.

Once the groups are organized, hand out one paper bag per group with the sequencing cards of the daily routines story (See Appendix 2 as an example). Ask students to display the pictures on their tables to get used to the nature of the images. Elicit their ideas about the story by asking them simple questions like: What is the person in the picture doing?

Next, ask learners to organize the events as they listen to you. Make sure you use an appropriate intonation and voice to set the scene. After listening to the story, they need to glue the pictures on one side of the paper bag and recall the main events to rewrite the story using colored pencils, pens or markers.

Students retell the story to their peers in small groups first. In this stage of the lesson, the aim is to develop students' speaking skills in a stress-free setting. After they have practiced retelling the story to their peers, they can report the events to the whole class or to another group using

their own words to express their understanding of it. This is a great way to develop their listening, writing, reading and speaking skills.

Differentiation

This strategy is a good way to integrate all your students in the classroom because it is organized in teams. Your role as a teacher is to be a facilitator and a monitor during this strategy. Make sure you give clear instructions with graded language and monitor group work efficiently.

The Story Bag strategy requires you to have the copies of the sequencing cards, the story, paper bag, and school supplies like markers or coloured pencils. However, if you are into using recycled materials in your teaching, you could even be more creative and change the bag for used plastic bottles, old jeans, or many other things to achieve the same language goals. Do not be afraid of trying different materials.

Pedagogical skill: Teaching Speaking skills	Teaching	Topic: Read, Look Up and Say
Curricular Thread: Communication	Oral	Sub thread: Spoken production

Strategy 3: Read, look up and say

Description

Reading allows students to retell and echo what they have learned to someone else. Sometimes, when we ask students to read aloud to the whole class, the result might not be what we expect. In fact, the stress level that reading aloud produces might not help students overcome their fear to speak. Therefore, using the activity, Read, look up and say

is a good way to help children develop self-confidence to speak in a less stressful situation.

This strategy aims to raise students' confidence when speaking in English by reporting small portions of written text. It helps develop speaking abilities and vocabulary building through exposure to activities that focus on sight-reading. It also, improves social skills and listening abilities with teamwork; due to the fact that, learners practice the language in an organized way respecting the turns and paying attention to the production of each participant.

Implementation of the Teaching Strategy

To start, divide the class into small groups. Having four or five children in a group is highly encouraged. Having more than this number may not be as effective as it is originally envisioned. Once students are in a group, ask them to have a pencil. Then, hand out a short and meaningful text from the Internet or a book (See appendix 3 as an example). Make sure the text is not too difficult for them, but not too simple either. Remember that the text should be challenging and encouraging at the same time.

Model the activity first before asking them to do it. They need to read a portion of the text, and then cover it with one hand to look up and say what they remember. The parts of the sentence are broken down in such a way that each child can read a word or two; after which, they are asked to form the sentence under the guidance of the teacher. Therefore, the next student repeats the sequence: read, cover to look up and say what s/ he can remember. Let students read to each other in small groups as you monitor their production.

Differentiation

This works with small size classes preferably. Photocopies of the text will be required, as well as flashcards, board and markers. For the purpose of the activity, tables and chairs are necessary, too. Teachers need to post

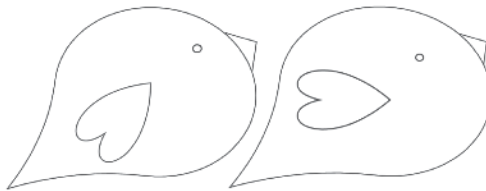
big pictures with key words that exemplify the steps of the activity in addition to modelling all the steps.

References

Williams, M. (2014). *The Elephant's Friend and Other Tales from Ancient India*. Candlewick.

Teacher Support Material 1

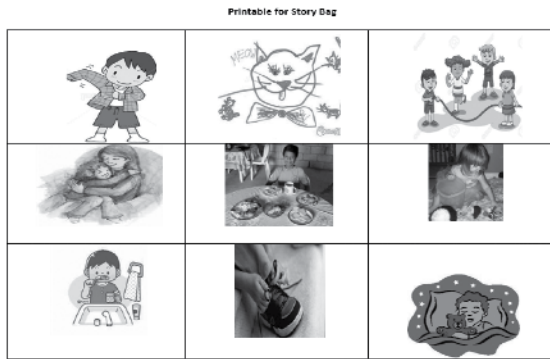
The two little dicky birds



Source: *Self-created*

Teacher-Support Material 2

Story bag: Daily routines



Source: *Self-created*

Teacher-Support Material 3

Story: *The Andean Condor and Friends*

The Andean Condor and Friends:

One day a young **condor** was flying in the sky looking for friends.

He saw an **armadillo** down in the ground.

"Will you be my friend?" asked the condor.

"You're too big. You can't hide in the ground like me," replied the armadillo.

Next, the condor met a naughty monkey. He asked him to be his friend.

But, the monkey said, "You are too big to play with me!"

Then the condor met a **toucan**.

"Will you be my friend? He asked. "How can I?" asked the toucan.

"You are not as colourful as I am."

The condor was sad. He met an Andean wolf next.

"Will you be my friend?" he asked the wolf.

The wolf said, "Sorry, sir, you're too big." The condor was sad and lonely.

The next day, the condor saw all the animals in the mountain tired and sad.



The condor asked them “What’s wrong?”

The **Andean wolf** replied, “There is a big truck and people with machines taking down all the trees, and we’re homeless and hungry.”

The condor wondered what he could do to help everyone.

Meanwhile, the people kept cutting all the trees.

The condor then had a great idea! He would scare the people away. So, he flew close to the truck, flew above it, and around it, and scared the people in it so badly.

The frightened people drove their truck away and never came back.

The condor flew back to the other animals to announce the good news to everyone.

All the animals thanked the condor.

They said, “You are just the right size and colour to be our friend.”



Source: Self-created story adapted from Williams, M. (2014).

References

Dooley, J., & Evans, V. (2013). *Hello happy rhymes nursery Rhymes and songs*. Express publishing.
Williams, M. (2014). *The Elephant’s Friend and Other Tales from Ancient India*. Candlewick.