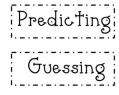
Sound Bites for Better Teaching

Language is functional:

What we do with language is more important than what we know about it. Marcel LaVergne Ed.D.







Describing

Predicting

Greeting

Language functions refer to what we do with language in every day conversation: we seek or give information, we ask for clarification, we greet and welcome people; we persuade, agree, disagree, compliment, insult, predict, express anger, sympathize and empathize. Every function comes with its own specialized vocabulary, stock words and expressions, and grammatical structures. For example, compare and contrast requires knowledge of words such as like, similar, different, etc., and the grammatical rule of comparative and superlative of adjectives and adverbs. Language conversation starters are helpful tools when students are asked to speak spontaneously because they encourage students to expand their fluency by varying what they say: when seeking clarification, in addition to the usual "I don't understand", they would be encouraged to use expressions such as "Sorry, would you repeat what you said?", or "Sorry, I'm not sure if I understood correctly." or "Can you give me another example, please?" The language thus becomes more natural and authentic.

Self Evaluation (no right or wrong answers)

Following the example below, how many ways can you fulfill the language functions listed? Example: Soliciting a Response: What do you think? Do you agree? How do you feel about that? What answer did you get? We haven't heard from you yet.

Expressing an opinion
Asking for clarification
Reporting a group's idea
Greeting someone

Paraphrasing
Affirming
Offering a suggestion
Declining an invitation

Predicting
Acknowledging ideas
Disagreeing
Persuading

TIP

Role play activities are an effective way to create real-life situations. Working in pairs or in small groups, students are given conversation starter cards as follows:

Conversation Card Situation: Going to the movies

Student 1: invite two friends to go with you

Student 2: agree to go

Student 3: decline the invitation politely Students 1 & 2: persuade student 3 to go Student 3: give an excuse for not going

Student 1: indicate that you are upset with student 3

Student 2: agree with student 1

Student 3: re-explain why you can't go Students 1&2: take leave of student 3