Challenges and strategies for teaching and learners of English as a second language: The case of an urban primary school in Kenya


Abstract

With over 40 spoken tongues in Kenya, English serves as a language of instruction in schools and is taught from the onset of schooling, making the language a significant factor in academic achievement and subsequent social mobility. This article draws on a case study conducted in an urban multilingual primary school in Kenya and focuses on the challenges and strategies for teaching and learning English as a second language (ESL) in primary schools. The findings are based on evidence gathered from teachers, through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, and from pupils, through learner diaries. The data show a strategic approach to teaching and learning English and reveal the tremendous effort invested by teachers and learners in grappling with the challenges of learning English in the context of an unresolved national language policy, interference from regional linguistic heritage languages and an examination-oriented education system. The strategies deployed by teachers to address these challenges include varied instructional approaches and creating a warm classroom climate to provide a non-threatening environment for learning and language acquisition. Data from pupils shows that group based interactions with their peers and individual reinforcement strategies, such as keeping vocabulary notebooks, are the most common learner strategies. The study shows how school-based research can give teachers and learners a voice in the development of successful language teaching and learning strategies for complex and challenging multilingual environments.

Actions (login required)

6 Essential Strategies for Teaching English Language Learners. We interviewed educators with decades of experience in teaching ELLs and tapped a network of experts and observers to find the strategies that work. English language learners should not be learning the fundamentals of English in isolation; they should be applying their developing language skills to rich academic content in all subjects. “Researchers have found that typically most teachers give one to two seconds between asking a question and expecting a student response,” he says. “The same researchers have shown that if you wait three to five seconds, the quality of responses is astronomically greater.” 5. Differentiate—and Use Multiple Modalities. Learning English as a second language is even less easy. Particularly if you are learning English outside of an English-speaking country. For instance, English language learners in African countries like Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, Zambia, Malawi, and some other African countries face a lot of challenges because English is not the native language of these countries. Just as there are problems faced in learning English as foreign language, so there are challenges in learning English as second language. Question: What are the solutions to the problem of unqualified teachers teaching a second language? Answer: This is a broad problem. It may require the efforts of school administrations and governments. The Electronic Journal for English as a Second Language, Skip to content. This research brings broader understanding of strategies for teaching English reading and writing to students whose first language is not English. The rationale for the study stems from the need to gain greater international perspective of the teaching of English learners. Results reflect analysis of classroom observation field notes, face-to-face interviews with thirty three teachers and administrators, digital photo journaling, and artifacts. Many teachers in the United States are faced with the challenge of teaching children to read and write in English when the students have a heritage language that is not English and they are not yet proficient in English.