

Communication Skills

Objective: To teach students to communicate more effectively

Setting and Materials:

Settings: School classroom

Materials:

1. Pairs of simple schematic maps with eight landmark features common to both maps, four features present on the information giver (IG) map and absent from the information follower (IF) map (one of these features being a duplicate), and three features present on the IF map, but absent from the IG map.
 2. A screen to hide the map but low enough not to hide the faces of the students
- Resource for materials: Map drawing (*Concept Seven-Nine*, Schools Council, 1972)

Content Taught

1. Asking question if they do not understand
2. Answering questions when they are asked
3. Regularly checking their own and their partner's understanding
4. Emphasis on involving the students in discussion about why a particular strategy might be useful and when they might be best used in order to allow the student to monitor the effectiveness of their own and each other's strategy use

Teaching Procedures

1. Place a simple schematic map in front of both students sitting across from each other with a table between them
2. One student of a pair is assigned the IG role and the other is assigned the information follower (IF) role
3. Place a screen between the pair to hide each students' maps from their partner
4. Tell the IG to describe the route marked around the landmark features of the map so the IF can draw the same route on their map.
5. Explain to the students that in order to help each other they need to do three things:
 - a) Asking questions if they do not understand
 - b) Ask questions when asked
 - c) Regularly check their own and their partner's understanding
6. Throughout the sessions emphasize involving the students in discussion about why a particular strategy might be useful and when they might be best used, for example:
 - a) "Do you remember what three things are important for this game?"
 - b) "If someone asks you a question, what is it a good idea to do?"
 - c) "What about checking?"
7. Throughout the sessions provide guidance using the techniques *reminding*, *prompting*, and *giving feedback* through *praise and reassurance*, for example:
 - a) "You look a bit confused, perhaps this is a good time for a check how you're doing?"
 - b) "When _____ was checking with you, was there anything you were a bit worried about?"

- c) “That was a really good question, now that you have the answer, you should be able to work out where the problem is.”
- 8. At the end of each session encourage each student to reflect on the strategies which had been employed and discuss their effectiveness. for example:
 - a) “Why do you think you did so well?”
 - b) “Did you notice what you did to get yourself out of a mess?”
 - c) “You started asking for help. You started checking. And your answers were really clear.”

Evaluation

Evaluate the student’s performance by collecting data on the number of words used in their dialogue, the task oriented information contained in IG instructions, the correct responses to those instructions, and the number of clarification requests.

Lesson Plan Based on:

Lamb, S. J., Bibby, P. A., & Wood, D. J. (1997): Promoting the communication skills of children with moderate learning difficulties. *Child Language Teaching and Therapy*, 13, 261-78.