

Time management



Lesson Pacing for ELL and Non-ELL es Lesson pacing is, in short, the speed at which a room teacher or other conducts a lesson. This should be adjusted in relation to several factors, including the academic level of the students being taught and the complexity of the material being covered. The importance of an appropriate pace is self-evident in the classroom. As Smith (2007) puts it, ' Pace is a critical feature of a well-disciplined classroom; if pupils are busy enough there is no time for off-task behaviour'.

Davison (2007) suggested several basic ways in which a teacher can judge whether they are moving through the work at a pace which is appropriate for their students. She suggests that they can work at the ' natural pace' of their class by paying attention to student reactions. By observing whether the students appear bored (the lesson pace needs to be accelerated), or whether students appear agitated or frustrated (the lesson pace needs to be decelerated), the teacher can tailor their style to their students. For example, they could repeat information more or less often, or break material down into smaller sections.

On a basic level, there are a number of easy ways in which a teacher can break up the pace of a lesson, to prevent learning becoming monotonous, which apply to both ELL and non-ELL students. As Regan (2003), proposed, they could have brief brainstorming sessions, put a time limit on some activities, or introduce some kind of competition, such as rewarding the first group to finish a set activity. Timing specific activities can certainly be effective, using tools such as quick fire tests on the material just covered. For this reason, Smith (2007) also suggests that each classroom should have a clock which is easily visible to all students. Setting tasks which involve a student preparing something which they will then share with the class as a

whole is also an effective method - they will feel a greater compulsion to complete the task in time if it is being shared collectively. Such activities can play a useful role in keeping up the pace of the lesson.

Davison (2007) also proposed several measures which can be taken by a teacher to ensure that they are providing an optimum lesson pace for their students, whether ELL or non-ELL. Many of her suggestions involve variety - it is important that the lesson should not follow a regular and predictable pattern, so that the students do not become bored and disengage from the lesson. Therefore, giving a short break in the class can allow students to reflect on the previous section, and prepare for the next one. By splitting lessons into sections, and not always making sure that the planned lesson is completed in time, regardless of whether it is too much for the students to digest in one session, a teacher can create flexible lessons, responding to the needs of students at different academic levels. The key rule here is that the teacher must ensure that the students have a firm grasp on the material being covered, before they move on to a new, and quite possibly more complex topic.

The teacher must ensure that the pace and content of their lesson are appropriate for the group of students. The appropriate lesson pace for a class of English Language Learner (ELL) students is clearly different from that of a class of non-ELL students.

ELL students will not respond well to a teacher who simply rushes through the material that needs to be covered. They will benefit more from a lesson where the material is broken down into several, easier steps. However, as Davison (2007) points out, it is also important that the teacher does not slow down so much ' that the natural rhythm of the English language is lost'.

Ganly (2007) supports this notion, suggesting that the teacher should not continually correct those ELL students whose attempts to communicate often depart from standard English; rather the teacher should foster an environment in which the students feel comfortable with trying to communicate as much as possible. As Hernández (2003) puts it, the teacher should 'maintain a comfortable participatory learned environment', where students practice their English without being too afraid of making errors (p. 128).

Hernández (2003) also gives some ideas as to how a teacher of ELL students can alter their lesson pacing and methods when dealing with more complex lesson content. She suggests that 'demonstrations', 'simplifications of explanations', and 'speaking with simpler syntax and added gestures' would all help a teacher to make this material accessible to ELL students (p. 128). Of course, the more complex the material, and the more it has to be broken down, the longer it will take to get through. However, it is important, as already mentioned, that the lesson pace should not be allowed to slacken too much. More complex content is best dealt with by breaking it down into more manageable sections, and working through them at a similar pace, rather than by constantly repeating the same content at a much slower pace. The former will allow the ELL students to grasp the complex content in simple steps; the latter will simply induce boredom.

In order to move through these steps, Hernández (2003) proposed several other strategies, including a short period of 'wait time' after each new section, to allow students to interpret the content and formulate any questions they may have, and frequently checking comprehension by taking in and evaluating samples of work, or by holding quick tests (p. 128).

If a teacher is responsible for a class which includes a mix of ELL and non-ELL students, there are some additional considerations which they should take into account. Their most important task in this situation, as Ganly (2007) agrees, is to 'make sure that the students respect each other's differences and do not discriminate against students of special needs'. It is obviously more difficult for the teacher to ascertain the ideal lesson pace when teaching students with very different levels of English proficiency, but there are some strategies which might offer a solution, including group work, using visual instruction where possible, and also using the student's native language at key points in order to make sure that they fully understand the material just covered.

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