

English Learner Review

“Do you understand,” is often a question asked either blatantly or in some form when we, educators, want to know if our students understand. As future educators, Rocky, and English Learner teacher pointed out many ways of working with diverse students who’s first language is not English and helping them to truly understand. He gave us many insights and tips not only for English Learner students, but our students as a whole!

As Rocky emphasized, asking if our students understand is not the question we should be asking. Most all of the time, they will respond yes whether they understand or not. It was also pointed out that most students can rearrange words to make it seem like they understand but really do not. A way to get around this is asking if they can *show* you that they understand.

Another key point he made, is that we can’t assume where our students come from. Just because they have the same 1st language, it does not mean that they have the same beliefs or that they will get along. It is important to see where each of our individual students come from and see who they are as an individual.

I never knew of the importance of vocabulary as much as I did when visiting with him. That if we do miss a key term, how that effects the rest of our learning. He gave a specific example of having a student frustrated coming from math and trying to solve for “x” in the equation. Rocky asked “Well, what does your teacher tell you to do? and the student replies “do the opposite.” Rocky then asked well what does opposite mean? The student just shrugged his shoulders. Using comparisons of boy and girl are opposites, night and day are opposites, the student’s light bulb went off and he understood! He then was able to do the algebra with no problem!

When learning English, one helpful thing to do in learning about the terms around us is to load the room with sticky notes and create flash cards. I think it would be fun, in a normal class,

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to have sticky notes around the room in both languages, if I had a student who was trying to learn English. That way they are still keeping their native tongue, but it helps bridge that gap and my other students may get to know just a little bit of that language too.

Throughout the presentation, he kept stating that there is not just one right answer and each student is different. He used a lot of different experiences to bring different concepts to life and also his reflection on what he learned with these experiences. I felt that I learned a lot of little tips in working with and EL student.