Fortifying Academic Conversations in the ENL Classrooms

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AGENDA

I.   **What have we been doing?**

II. **Strengthening Conversation Skills in Interaction Activities**

III. **Review of Effective Conversation Prompts**

IV. **ENL Curriculum Design and Adaptation**

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What have we been doing for and with conversations in ENL settings? And what questions do we have?

I.

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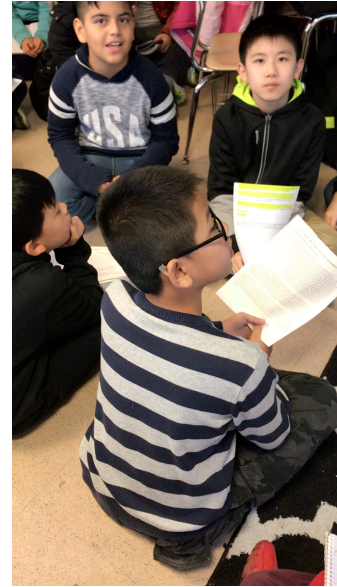
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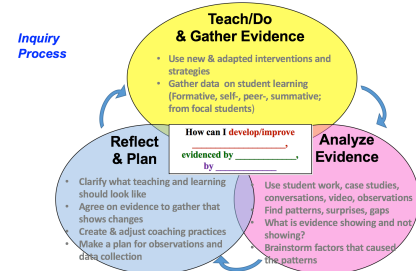
Anastasia Delfino's Class

After teaching the students the skill of determining a writer's point of view, we looked for language, tone, and details to help us identify MLK and Jackie Robinson's POVs on segregation. In Video A, students were working in groups of 4 to build on each other's ideas stating Martin Luther King, Jr.'s point of view on segregation while they used evidence from the letter they read.

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Anastasia Delfino's Class

In Video C, students engaged in a Socratic Style inner and outer circle, where the inner circle consisted of four students debating who had the stronger argument - MLK or Jackie Robinson. One student (standing by the board moving the Post-it) was deciding where she stands based on what the inner circle was saying (Stronger and Clearer-type activity). During these activities, I noticed my students using the transitions and sentence frames listed on the board while building on each other's ideas. I also noticed that many of these sentence frames transferred to their writing! The culminating writing task was to explain who they think presented a stronger argument against segregation.

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Ms. Seyedeshaghi's Class

Notes

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How can we use any interaction activity to build conversation skills?

1. **Think-Pair-Share**
2. **Jigsaw**
3. **Class Discussion**
4. **Small Group Work**
5. **Transition Improvs**
6. **Stronger & Clearer Activities**
7. **Information Gap Activities**

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Info Gap Activity: Describe & Compose

1. Give students in a small group or pair different pieces of information that can fit together into narrative or expository writing. (Character descriptions, ecosystem, historical figures, science data, etc.)
2. Students read their information and clearly describe it to partner(s)
3. Partners then work together to compose a product (written, visual, drama...), combining and filling in extra information, to communicate to others.

Alex is a rebellious teenager who hates to read and dislikes school...

Sonia only likes to read and never talks to anyone except her dog...

Alex waited for the bus to take him to school. As he waited he thought about how boring all the stories were that teachers made them read. Like the one about birthdays—who cares? Sonia was waiting at the bus stop, too, reading a thick book. They get on the bus and there are only two seats left, next to each other. Sonia keeps reading and, finally, Alex...

Features of Effective Conversation Prompts

1. Has an engaging purpose

2. Requires thinking & doing something with ideas

3. Has a need to talk

4. Incorporates student knowledge, skills, needs, interests, & choices

5. There are clear expectations & helpful directions

Analyze Conversation Prompts

1. Has an engaging purpose

2. Requires thinking & doing something with ideas

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ELA Expository: Decide whether or not to raise the max number of hours per day that teenagers should use screens. Engage in a collaborative argument conversation in which you and your partner build up both sides of the issue and choose the heaviest side. Use evidence and discuss the credibility of sources. Discuss and negotiate types of screen time, if necessary, for your final decision. Use evaluation language such as *outweigh, weak/strong because, credible*, etc.

Analyze Conversation Prompts

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5. **There are clear expectations & helpful directions**

ELA Literature: Work with a partner to co-construct an idea for the strongest and most important theme that the author intended for readers to learn. Build up the idea by clarifying it and supporting it with examples and evidence from the text. Explain how the evidence supports the idea. Use effective body language and facial expressions, and make sure to value one another's ideas.

Analyze Conversation Prompts

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History: You will co-author a letter to a history journal. Converse with your partner to decide if Lincoln was more interested in abolishing slavery or more interested in preserving the Union.
Use evidence to support the claims on each side and evaluate the value of the evidence, along with any bias that might exist in the sources. Use historian language such as "This is strong evidence because…"

Analyze Conversation Prompts

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Math: Work with your partner to create a word problem that requires the solver to solve it using two equations.
Both of you contribute ideas and then decide which would make for the most interesting problem for your classmates to solve. Make sure the problem is clear; it can contain extra information and numbers, if you want to be tricky. Make sure to set up what is happening and use consistent units.
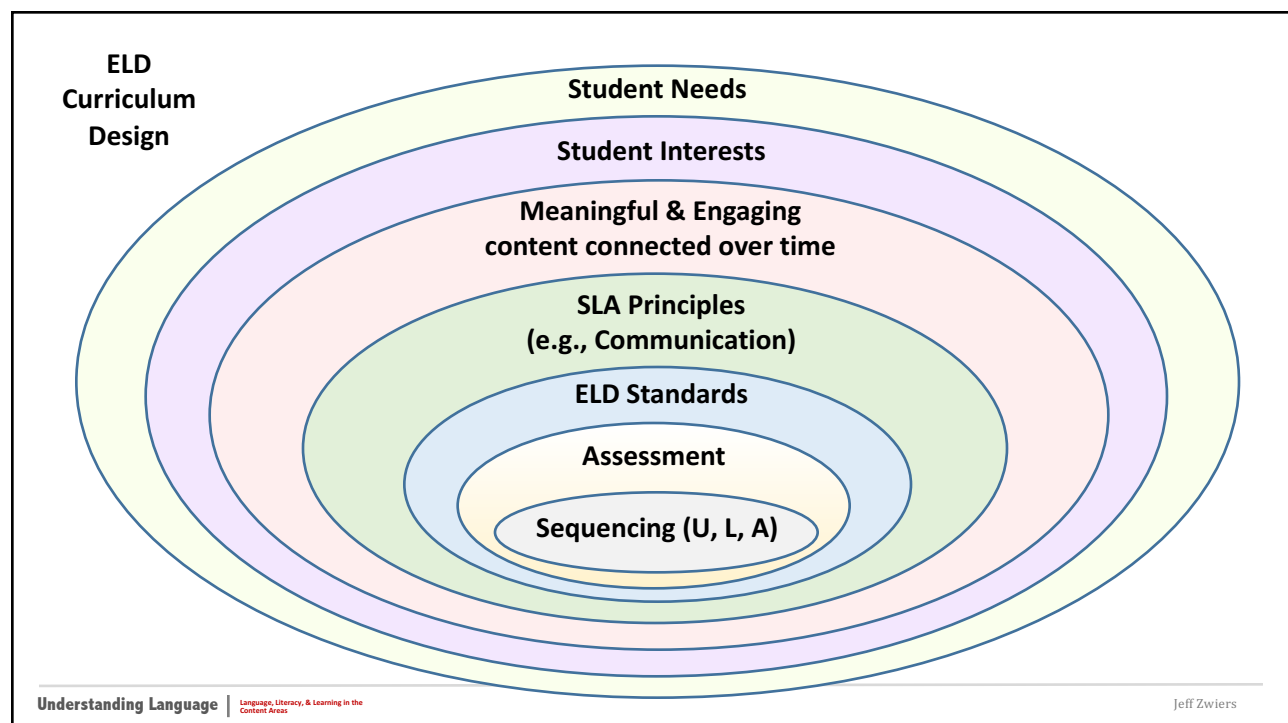
Analyze Conversation Prompts

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Science: In your conversation, compare the data that you got in the lab with that of your partner.
If the data are different, jointly come to possible explanations for this; if similar, explain why. Make sure your explanations are clear and use scientific language such as: We believe that differences in the data are due to…"
Come up with a final conclusion that describes what you learned—or were supposed to learn—from the lab.

Craft a Conversation Prompt for an Upcoming Lesson

1. **Has an engaging purpose**

2. **Requires thinking & doing something with ideas**

3. **Has a need to talk**

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5. **There are clear expectations & helpful directions**

ELD Curriculum Design

Student Needs

Student Interests

Meaningful & Engaging content connected over time

SLA Principles (e.g., Communication)

ELD Standards

Assessment

Sequencing (U, L, A)

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NEXT STEPS

I.   **Adapt interaction activities to help students develop skills of clarifying and supporting**

II. **Create conversation prompts and try them out**

III. **Observe conversations and ask students how helpful and engaging the prompts were**

IV. **Observe conversations for the use of core skills (posing ideas, clarifying them, supporting them with evidence, and evaluating/choosing (if an argument)**

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