

ELL Strategies
Language Arts: Vocabulary

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Content Area

All Content Areas

Title of Lesson/Unit

Word of the Day

Student Audience

All Content Areas and Levels

Timeline of Lesson

5-10 minutes; Monday-Thursday

Brief Overview of Lesson

This vocabulary activity was created as a bell-ringer and to teach ELLs how to decode vocabulary through a step-by-step process.

Illinois English Language Proficiency Standards

Since this is a general activity that goes across content areas, use those that are specific to your content area. In addition, since this activity involves language arts, the following would apply:

English Language Proficiency Standard 2: *English language learners communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of Language Arts.*

Language Domains:

Listening (5a and 5b)-Process, understand, interpret, and evaluate spoken language in a variety of situations.

Speaking (6a and 6b)-Engage in oral communication in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes and audiences

Reading (7a and 7b)-Process, interpret, and evaluate written language, symbols, and text with understanding and fluency.

Writing (8a and 8b)-Engage in written communication in a variety of purposes and audiences.

Materials Needed (Please list in order)

Word of the Day Handout (See attached)

Students should have a handout

A blank Word of the Day should be printed on a transparency

Binder

Students should have a binder for their Word of the Day sheets. You can copy these in advance (double sided) and distribute them.

Overhead Projector

It is important to complete this activity on the overhead so students can watch as they work with you.

Overhead Markers

Dictionary

Teacher Preparation

I make the Word of the Day copies in advance. I have them double-sided and three hole punched so the students can store them in their binders. The hole punch is really a nice touch since it eliminates students hole punching the sheets themselves and leaving a mess on the floor.

Teachers need to decide which vocabulary words they would like to use. I discourage using obscure words students will not encounter in their readings or in everyday conversation. Instead, select words from the class readings or from readings in the content areas. You should also allow students to make requests of words they may have heard.

If you haven't done so, you will have to review parts of speech with your students. You should teach them clues to look for, such as: words ending in "ed" are most likely regular past tense verbs. Or, words ending in "ly" are usually adverbs. You should also review what a noun, verb, adjective, and adverb are. Give the definition and example of each so students have a reference when completing their Word of the Day. I distributed these definitions and examples in a handout form.

A dictionary is mandatory in my classes. Students must purchase one and bring it to class every day. I make sure students purchase a comprehensive dictionary. They are often tempted to one that is tiny. I recommend the *Newbury House Dictionary* because it is very ELL friendly. There are different ways to go about getting the dictionaries. You can have students purchase their own or you can purchase them and collect the money. I have found that when students purchase dictionaries with their own money they rarely lose or forget them.

When selecting your Word of the Day make sure you offer a variety to students. Try to alternate between nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs so students are exposed to them more or less equally.

I did this activity as soon as class started every Monday–Thursday. On Friday I allowed students a variety of options. Some Fridays we played vocabulary games, such as Scrabble, or had a free reading day. I also used Fridays to give the students a quiz on their Words of the Day.

Some advice...I modeled Word of the Day for the first two weeks of school. After that I never did it again until the following year. Instead I had students, with my supervision, become the

teacher and complete the activity with their classmates. This really does work. There is always one student to volunteer to go first. Then I let that student pick the person who will present the following day. Students are much more receptive to participating this way, as they don't want to disappoint their peers.

Lesson Goal/Objective

This is an excellent activity for building vocabulary. Students can only express as much as they know...if their vocabulary inventory is low, then what they communicate will be limited.

The objective for this activity is two fold:

1. to build vocabulary
2. to use the vocabulary to develop the four language domains

This is a great opportunity for students to develop the four language domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Step-by-Step Procedures

1. Take your blank Word of the Day sheet printed on a transparency and place another sheet of transparency paper over it. It is best to write on this second transparency since overhead markers can stain. Also, if you do this in different classes you won't have to worry about cleaning it every time.
2. Present the Word of the Day by first saying the word and then reading the sentence to your students. Have your students repeat the word and select a few to read the sentence aloud.
3. The first step is for students to guess the speech. Ask around the room and when students answer ask them "why?" Their answers should make a direct reference to the example sentence. For example, if a student guesses the Word of the Day is a verb, he may say "...because it ends in ed, or because it describes an action."
4. The second step is for students to guess the definition using the context of the example sentence. Again, ask "why?" The answers can be guesses, but they really must be educated. For example, I used the following word and example sentence for a Word of the Day: *On Halloween children dress in **creepy** costumes.*

When I asked the students to guess the meaning, someone said "scary." When asked to explain, he said he associated scary things with Halloween. He later used an example of me being "creepy" when I was in a bad mood.

5. The third step involves students verifying their guesses. At this point the students can open their dictionaries and check the part of speech and definition. You should make sure students match the definition with how the word was used in the example sentence. Remember words can have multiple meanings and act as different parts of speech. This is very important for students to understand since they often like to copy the first definition they see in the dictionary.

The students can also write the word in their native language. Most likely they already know the word in their native language and have now begun the transferring process to English. This is also a crucial linguistic step for students. This activity helps

them develop the decoding skills they will need to be successful in all of their classes.

6. The next step involves students creating an example sentence of their own using the Word of the Day. At the beginning of implementing this lesson, you will find that students will spend more time on this portion of the activity. This is ok and you should encourage everyone to write a sentence. This allows students to practice using the word and thus reinforces its meaning.

I randomly ask students to read their sentences or write them on the overhead. Again, students need this practice. It is also a great beginning process for writing. When students write their sentences on the overhead most will make errors. That's a good thing because it is a great opportunity for you to ask the class questions like, "What do you think of this sentence? Are some things we can change?" You can do these activities as a class, involving everyone. Don't worry! Students do not get embarrassed, especially when everyone is involved in making mistakes. In fact, the students need to see this so they can learn how to construct written English correctly. Remember, students often write the way they speak.

7. You can also have students write a synonym or antonym for the Word of the Day. This is an option I use for my advanced ESL classes. You may want to eliminate this section for beginning level classes and replace it with a "draw the Word of the Day" option.

Homework

You can assign homework using your Word of the Day activities. I like to have students select ten words from their binder and include them in writing assignments. I've also had groups create board games using their Words of the Day. Again, there are many ways to connect these words to the "big picture" of your lesson. The important point is to use the Word of the Day for other assignments. You don't want to use isolated graphic organizers in your classes, as students will not find them valuable.

Assessment Based on Goals/Objectives

You can assess the students in a variety of ways. I like to give them quizzes in the form of crossword puzzles or scrambled words. I also dictate the words to them and have them write them on their papers along with the definition and an example sentence. For these types of quizzes I never give more than ten words. I test the students each week on the four new words they have learned for that week. I also include some Word of the Days they have had weeks before. Students are instructed that they must always go back and study the words in their binder.

I also encourage students to use these words in their written assignments and in their daily conversations. If they do and I witness it, they get extra credit points. I once had a teacher from another class bring an essay from a student we both shared. She asked me if I thought she had written it, as she suspected it was plagiarized. The student had included eight Words of the Day from my class in her essay. There was no doubt it was hers.

Possible Connections to Other Subjects

This can be used across the content areas. For example, teachers can use this activity for history, science, math, art, etc. I've included some variations that one of my colleagues used for her World Studies and Law and American Society class.

References Used

WIDA English Language Proficiency Standards 9-12
Content area texts
The Newbury House Dictionary of American English

Accommodations

If you have different levels within your classes then you can distribute varying Word of the Day sheets. Give some students a version without the synonym or antonym. Or, you can include a section where students can draw their Word of the Day too.

You may want to modify the part of speech sections depending on the level of your students. For example, start with nouns for ESL I students.