

Language as a Skill

DynEd's RHR approaches language as a skill, not a subject, and like other skills it is best developed through repetitive practice.

Listening and Speaking Come First

Development of listening and speaking skills should precede reading and writing skills in a four-skills path. Just as with a first language, aural/oral skills facilitate and enable reading and writing.

Spiral Syllabus

Concepts and patterns need to be repeated over a series of lessons so that long-term acquisition takes place. The RHR language sequence is not linear, but is like a spiral. New language builds on and reinforces familiar language.

Selective Memory

The brain learns language through error-correction against a target. Learning occurs when perception (the target) is contrasted with actual performance. Selective memory, "saving" what makes most sense or is closest to the model, helps the brain adjust and improve performance over time.

Pattern Recognition

In language learning, the brain always tries to make sense of things. It uses patterns and fills in incomplete patterns automatically. Pattern recognition proceeds from familiarity, to recognition, to comprehension, to mastery and automaticity.

Temporal Tension

Ability-appropriate concepts and language patterns are important so that the level of "temporal tension" is right for each student. Material that is too easy causes boredom; material that is too difficult causes frustration. Correct tension engages the brain and optimizes the creation of new neural links.

DynEd[®]

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CORE
PRINCIPLES

Conceptual Syllabus

Language is organized in the brain around key concepts such as duration, location in time, size or frequency, so following a conceptual syllabus is preferable to a grammatical syllabus. Sequencing is hierarchical, and RHR's learning sequence focuses on A) concepts communicated most frequently and B) grammatical structures needed to communicate these concepts at each language level. Grammar is important, but RHR focuses on concepts first and the patterns used to express these concepts. Key language patterns are built around language functions—for example, requesting, apologizing and suggesting, that signal the type of speech act being expressed, and language concepts that structure those patterns.

Iconic Approach

Using icons to convey contextual clues to meaning during aural input is generally preferable to using other forms of visual support, such as video, photos or text. Text is actually disruptive as it activates slower brain processors and reduces temporal tension. Icons are more clearly and quickly understood by the brain. Context and language work together; context helps us understand the message, and the message helps us understand the words.

Blended Approach

A blended approach closely linking computer self-study with teacher-led personalization and extension works best. Computer self-study is not enough. Without extending and personalizing the language models, the language has no life. The life is in the students; their goal is to use English to express themselves, not memorize sentences that have no meaning for them. The teacher's role is to help make this happen.

Review

Review is important and should be part of every study session. Students should study a mix of review lessons along with new material to maximize effectiveness. This also helps students gain confidence and improve long-term memory. In RHR, understanding language is the beginning, not the goal. Once students understand the language model, they need to practice, then review. The goal is mastery and automaticity, not just comprehension. Without automaticity, fluency doesn't develop and students forget much of what they've learned.

Practice

Acquiring a new skill requires practice. However, not all practice is equally effective. With effective practice, students can develop both fluency and better pronunciation. DynEd monitors, measures and analyzes the effectiveness of practice activities using four dimensions: 1) the amount of practice (how much); 2) frequency of practice (how often); 3) the student's performance on practice activities (how well); 4) the quality (sequencing) of the language being practiced (what). DynEd "Study Scores" indicate how well students are practicing, and continual feedback guides students to more effective, efficient study behavior.

Repetition

Students must study and practice beyond the point of comprehension to the point of automaticity. Repetition, including "deep repetition," is essential. Deep repetition means to repeat the same concepts, but to vary the surface language. For example, when focusing on the language of a daily schedule presented in a computer lesson, the classroom activity moves to the daily schedule of the students in the class. This involves the same concepts of time, duration and events, but the words will vary.

Chunking

The ability to automatically recognize and process language "chunks" is the key to language fluency. In RHR, lexical items are presented in phrases such as "a book", "a red book", and "open the red book." Presenting language in this way—without text support at first—facilitates conceptual chunking while also teaching the vocabulary. Oral fluency is proportional to the ability to chunk language. In RHR, the goal is for students to master the framework of the language. This framework helps students learn and remember vocabulary. It also provides the patterns for chunking.