

Language Experience Approach

From the ESOL Starter Kit

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LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE APPROACH TO LITERACY INSTRUCTION

The language experience approach (LEA)—which uses learner experiences as lesson content—is a way to introduce multiple activities that appeal to learners' diverse backgrounds and preferred learning styles while offering instruction in language that is both comprehensible and interesting (Taylor, 1992).

The following is an example of a modified LEA lesson that could be used with low-level learners.

1. A shared experience, such as a field trip, a common situation (shopping, going to the doctor), a watched video, or a meaningful picture is a stimulus for class discussion.
2. Learners volunteer sentences about the experience and the teacher writes the sentences on the chalkboard.
3. The teacher reads each sentence aloud, running her finger under words as each is pronounced, verifying that she has written what the student has said.
4. When the story is completed, the teacher reads it aloud.
5. Learners are encouraged to join in a second and third reading of the story.
6. A number of activities can follow at this point:
 - A. Learners copy the story;
 - B. Learners underline all the parts they can read;
 - C. Learners circle specific words (e.g., words that begin with a designated sound, common sight words such as “the”, all the verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs, etc.);
 - D. Choral cloze: The teacher erases some words, reads the story, and asks learners to supply the missing words;
 - E. Writing cloze: The teacher types the story, leaving out every fifth word. During the next class the teacher passes out the cloze and asks learners to fill in the missing words;
 - F. Scrambled sentences: The teacher types the story. During the next class the teacher distributes copies of the story to the class. Each learner cuts the story into strips so that there is one sentence on each strip of paper. Learners scramble the sentences and rearrange them in the proper sequence;
 - G. Scrambled words: More advanced learners can cut sentences into words, scramble the words, and rearrange them in order.