

## 8 STRATEGIES TO HELP ELL STUDENTS

**1. Closed captioning isn't just for the hearing impaired.** If you're showing video content, turning on closed captioning supports ELL students' comprehension as well as everyone's literacy skills.

**2. Voice typing in Google Docs** (under the Tools menu) provides students with a voice-to-text option that can help learners who have some oral language but struggle with spelling and writing. By clicking the arrow next to the language, students can even dictate a text in their native language, if need be, and then use Google Translate to translate it.

For older students, or for those who are somewhat more advanced in English but need material translated immediately, the Google Translate app also lets you hold your camera (on a smartphone/iPad, etc.) up to a document and instantly see it in another language, no typing required.

**3. Add gestures to reinforce communication.** Remember that in order to communicate, we need to ensure that the sounds coming out of our mouth create a mental image or concept in our listener's mind. You can increase comprehensible input (the amount of language that's understood) by using good, old-fashioned gestures. If you want to take it a step further, TPR (Total Physical Response) is a method of teaching vocabulary that uses physical movements to react to verbal input, similar to how young children naturally learn language at home.

**4. Draw or write key words frequently** as they come up during instruction to help students further decode what you're saying. You can also use Google Image search to help students visualize what your words refer to and share the images.

**5. Add images:** A picture is truly worth a thousand words, but for ELLs, images are worth exponentially more. Document cameras provide ELL students with much-needed visual input of texts, worksheets, books, and other printed materials or realia. Project pages from a novel or picture book as the students follow along, display handouts and student writing samples, or use math manipulatives to solve a problem together.

**6. Pair up:** If you want to pair an ELL newcomer with a bilingual student to help them, ask the ELL student to choose a student or two whom they'd prefer to work with, if possible.

**7. Give students a “language toolbox,”** a notebook full of pages of illustrated vocabulary words organized by theme that students can use as a reference. This is like a simplified version of an illustrated dictionary that younger ELLs can look through by theme to see vocabulary related to the colors, days of the week, classroom items, family members, and so on.

## **8. Speak slowly and increase wait time**

Speaking too quickly can make it difficult for ELL students to process the new language, so slowing down your words can be helpful. This can allow students additional time to listen and process the information. I also always try and model, point to, or visually show while I am verbally giving directions.

Consider that students might need the extra time to answer a question or might need a question to be restated or rephrased. Be patient and encourage students to become comfortable with asking for more time or asking a teacher to repeat a question. Teaching students to ask for help can benefit them in many ways as they learn the English language.