

DEVELOPING LITERACY SKILLS THROUGH LEARNING LANGUAGES

RESULTS FROM TPLT (TRANSFORMING PRACTICE IN LANGUAGE TEACHING)

Realising the importance of literacy development through Learning Languages, TPLT and Auckland UniServices have developed a series of readers for students learning languages.

Teacher participants of TPLT learn literacy strategies to employ with these readers and receive a set of them when they graduate from the year-long teacher support programme.

Teachers report that the readers are very popular and that their students often choose to read them at reading time and outside class time.



Data show literacy skills are developed through learning languages

Evidence from the professional learning programme, Transforming Practice in Language Teaching (TPLT) - formerly known as TPDL - suggests that learning an additional language affords all learners rich and novel literacy development opportunities. This is because, by learning another language, students learn and practise specific, discrete literacy strategies in a new context, and develop confidence in reading and writing, speaking and listening because they are making a 'fresh start'.

Developing Literacy Skills through Learning Languages: Results from TPLT

Effective literacy instruction incorporates specific teaching of the forms and meaning of language and of critical thinking skills. Students learning another language need to think critically to make connections between new language written and oral forms and their meaning, and between the new language and known languages.

As part of the TPLT programme, teachers are taught how to develop literacy strategies. TPLT In-School Support Facilitators collect data on how these specific literacy skills are being used in Learning Languages classrooms.

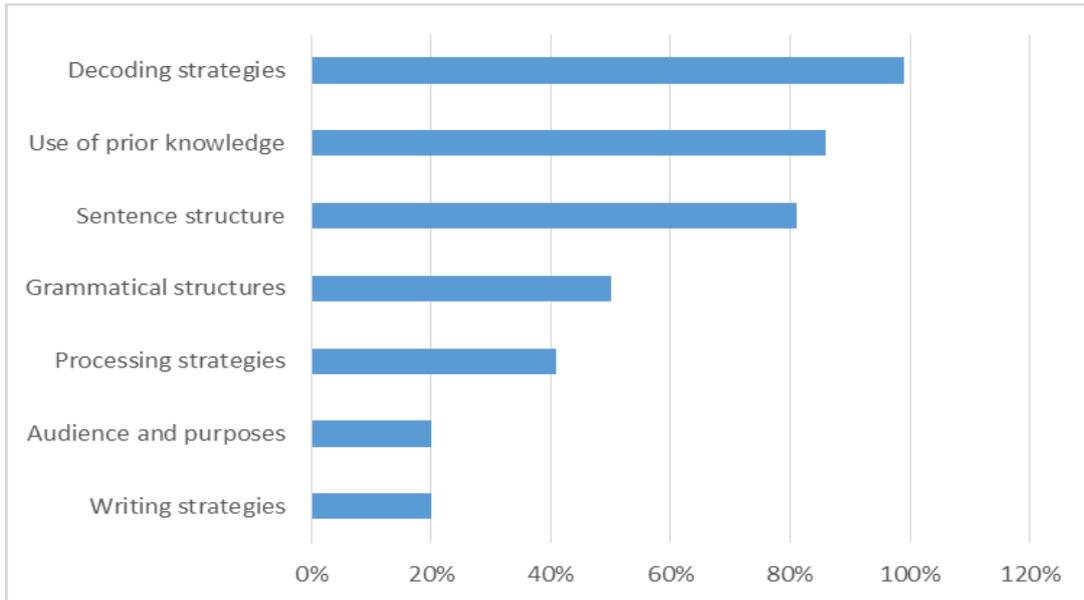
The five most common literacy strategies observed in language learning classes are listed below, in order of the frequency with which they were observed.

1. Paying explicit attention to form and meaning (decoding) - pronunciation, spelling, meaning, use and connotation of words or phrases.
2. Using strategies to guess at or predict meaning, such as using prior knowledge to work from the known to the unknown.

3. Developing understanding of sentence structure, for example, word order, simple / compound / complex sentences.
4. Paying explicit attention to how parts of words or symbols (e.g. prefixes and suffixes, characters) are put together to make meaning.
5. Developing the use of reading processing strategies, such as paying attention, searching for contextual references, predicting, cross-checking and confirming, self-correcting.

Other strategies observed in some Learning Languages classes were: paying attention to text-types and conventions; learning how writers use these conventions to achieve their purpose and communicate with a particular audience; and the formulaic language conventions associated with particular written and oral text types.

Figure 1: Specific literacy strategies used by TPLT teachers in Learning Languages lessons



Developing confidence in using literacy strategies in Learning Languages classrooms

Empirical data need to be collected on this topic, but anecdotal evidence is encouraging. Teachers reported anecdotally that their reluctant readers (in English) were taking the opportunity to begin reading again in a new language, using specific literacy strategies. Their assumption was that these students were developing confidence by being given a second chance to begin reading at the same level as all of the other students in their class.

Silvia Insley, former TPDL Professional Director and current part-time member of the TPLT team.