

Building Proficiency



Across Communication Modes



Joshua Cabral

Communication Modes

Interpersonal	Interpretive	Presentational
Exchange of communication between speakers who are in personal contact. Involves interpreting and producing language in real-time and negotiation of meaning.	One-way listening and reading that does not require a response or reaction in real time. Familiar or unfamiliar context impacts comprehension.	Prepared presentation of information and ideas in spoken and written form.

Proficiency Levels

Single words

Novice

Phrases

Phrases with add-ons

Discrete sentences

Intermediate

Strings of sentences

Connected sentences

Advanced

Paragraphs

Supporting Interpersonal Speaking

Start with a Purpose	The goal of interpersonal speaking isn't just "to talk," but to share information, express opinions, or solve a problem. Purpose adds meaning and motivation.
Use Authentic Communicative Prompts	Avoid scripted dialogues. Instead, provide open-ended or choice-based prompts.
Scaffold and Support Risk-Taking	Use visuals, sentence starters, and reference tools to lower affective filter. For Novice students, provide support like sentence frames and chat mats
After speaking tasks	Students use the details and information learned in the interpersonal speaking task in a communicative way, such as reporting out or writing a summary.

Key Strategies for Listening Tasks

Prediction (Before):	Sparks curiosity and sets a purpose for listening
Focus Tasks (During)	Directs attention to important details, structures, or key ideas
Summarizing (After)	Encourages students to process and communicate what they understood

Designing Listening Tasks for Each Stage

Pre-Listening	Use visuals, headlines, or key vocabulary to make predictions
During Listening	Chunk the audio and give focused goals for each segment
Post-Listening	Summarize main ideas, retell, react, or complete a task based on what was heard

Key Strategies for Reading Tasks

Pre-Reading Tasks	○ Build interest and purpose for reading. ○ Preview essential vocabulary and structures. ○ Activate background knowledge and spark curiosity.
During-Reading Tasks	○ Break the text into chunks to make it manageable. ○ Focus on small wins to build confidence. ○ Guide comprehension with target tasks.
Post-Reading Tasks	○ Move from interpretation to communication. ○ Encourage personal responses, creative output, or cultural comparisons. ○ Extend the reading into interpersonal speaking or writing tasks.
Align Reading Tasks with Proficiency	○ Choose or adapt texts that match your learners' proficiency levels. ○ Keep tasks aligned with what students can do with the language at that level. ○ Use AI tools to create or adjust level-appropriate texts if authentic materials are too difficult.

Key Strategies for Writing Tasks

Frames and Scaffolds

- Help students move beyond isolated vocabulary to full, meaningful sentences
- Support writing fluency, confidence, and grammatical accuracy across proficiency levels Reduce cognitive load while helping students internalize structure and syntax

Types of Scaffolds

- Sentence Frames (*I like to ____ because ____.*)

- Word Banks categorized by function (connectors, verbs, adjectives) Cloze Passages with blanks for key structures
- Graphic Organizers with structured prompts for writing tasks

Strategic Use of Scaffolds

- Start with more support at the Novice level, then gradually reduce scaffolds Use models and mentor texts to show how scaffolds turn into full writing Offer multiple scaffold options different learning needs

From Support to Independence

- Use scaffolds during drafting, then guide students to revise with less support Celebrate risks and approximation as students internalize structures
- Use their written output to determine future scaffolds and areas for focus

Planning Routine

- Choose a writing goal or genre
- Identify the linguistic structures students need
- Design sentence frames that include those structures
- Use word banks or prompts to expand expression
- Plan to remove support gradually over time

Short Writing Tasks

- Frequent writing builds comfort, fluency, and ownership of language
- Short, intentional writing tasks encourage language processing and expression without requiring lengthy output
- These moments promote consistent growth and make writing feel less intimidating
- Use these tasks at lesson openers, closers, or transition points to build routine and maximize impact

What Are Some Short Writing Tasks?

Summaries, personal reactions, predictions, comparisons, exit slips, do nows, image caption, lists, text messages, or notes.

The Short Writing Framework

- **Level-Appropriate:**
 - Scaffolded to match what students can do with language **Focused:** Promotes a single idea, function, or structure
- **Connected:**
 - Tied to recent input or classroom themes
- **Frequent:**
 - Ideally 3–5 times a week to build fluency
 - 2–5 minutes (keep it short and focused)
 - Students write in a journal, digital document, or section in their class notebook
- **What Happens Next?**
 - Share aloud or with a partner (builds confidence)
 - Teacher collects/spot-checks for formative insight
 - Use for later revision or expansion into speaking or longer writing

Integrated Performance Assessments

- a **proficiency-based assessment model** designed to reflect real-world communication.
- **three communication modes: Interpretive, Interpersonal, and Presentational.** Each task builds on the previous one and focuses on a **realistic scenario**
- students demonstrate what they *can do* with the language at their proficiency level.
- IPAs assess **language performance** in context—not isolated vocabulary or grammar—while encouraging meaningful, purposeful communication.

Assessment Categories

%	Category	Measures
25	Formative	HW, Participation, Discrete Point Quizzes
25	Interpersonal (<i>speak</i>)	Spontaneous exchange of info and messages
25	Interpretive (<i>read, listen</i>)	Understanding of spoken and written language
25	Presentational (<i>speak, write</i>)	Conveying message in prepared writing or speaking

Teaching Grammar in Context Implicit and Explicit

Proficiency Level	CI Foundation	Explicit Instruction	Key Characteristics
Novice Low - Intermediate Low	90-95% of instructional time	5-10% (pattern recognition)	Massive input, storytelling, reading, listening. Grammar emerges from patterns.
Intermediate Low – Intermediate High	70-80% of instructional time	20-30% (Focus on Form, strategic explicit instruction)	Input remains primary. Explicit instruction targets complex, low-frequency structures.
Advanced Low - Superior	60-70% of instructional time	30-40% (explicit instruction, register awareness, pragmatic competence)	Rich input in authentic texts. Explicit focus on style, genre, persistent fossilized errors.