

4. You create a board situation, clarify a specific meaning and then elicit appropriate sentences from the students or model them yourself.
5. You hand out a list of 20 IF- sentences. You ask students to work together, discuss and find out what the rules are.
6. Students discuss interpretation of timelines on the board and try to make example sentences for them. You intervene when answers seem elusive and at one point explain the difference between two tenses.
7. Students decide they want to learn about reported speech. They go to the library or learning centre and find out more.

Teacher explanations

Most teachers want to give their class explanations about language points. Which of the following guidelines seem appropriate to you?

When explaining language,

- a. talk at length
- b. talk fast
- c. use language more complicated than the point you are explaining
- d. Bring in as many other language issues as possible
- e. don't give examples
- f. don't use any diagrams or visual aids
- g. assume that the class is following your points – don't waste time checking
- h. always explain every difficulty before students encounter the problem themselves

Guided discovery

Your role in guided discovery is to (a) select appropriate tasks (b) offer appropriate instructions, help, feedback and explanations (c) manage and structure the lesson so that all learners are involved and engaged and draw the most possible from the activity. The key technique is to ask questions, ones that encourage the learners to notice language and think about it. You can:

1. ask questions that focus on the meaning
2. ask questions that focus on the context
3. ask questions that focus on the form
4. offer appropriate examples for analysis and discussion
5. ask learners to analyze sentences from texts
6. ask learners to reflect on language they have used
7. ask learners to analyze errors
8. ask learners to hypothesize rules
9. set problems and puzzles concerning the language item
10. offer tools to help clarify meaning
11. help them to stay focused
12. raise their awareness as to what they have learned

Task

Study the following transcript from a lesson involving guided discovery techniques and decide what questions the teacher might have asked.

The elementary students read a text that reviews and compares different dictionaries. The teacher first ensured that learners had a good sense of the general meaning of the text and is now focusing on the use of comparatives (which learners have worked on before) and superlatives (which learners haven't explicitly studied before).

Teacher: How many dictionaries are mentioned in the text?

Student 1: Five

Teacher: OK. Look at this diagram. What does it show?



Student 2: How big

Teacher: Yes. How big or small the dictionaries are. Where can you put the different dictionaries on this diagram?

The teacher offers a pen to the student to add to the diagram. Various learners come up and write the names of the dictionaries on the diagram, placing them to reflect the writer's comments. As items are added, the teacher asks questions about their decisions, such as

The teacher then works in a similar manner with diagrams showing light, heavy, cheap, expensive, etc..

The teacher would be likely to ask questions that:

1. encourage learners to reflect on and articulate reasons for their choices
2. encourage learners to return to the text and find textual evidence that supports their choice
3. draw learners' attention to the specific language used in the text that leads to this meaning
4. focus on how the language item is formed
5. build on earlier questions and answers to construct a growing picture of the language item, ensure that all learners are grasping the issues and not just the faster ones

Questions might be:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.