**WHAT IS LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE APPROACH?**

The learner’s own experiences and language are the reading material! You, the tutor put the learner’s words on paper. This technique provides a unique personal experience for you and learner. The writing’s content comes directly from the learner’s life and does not resemble “school work”. This technique combines, speaking, listening, reading and writing. The LEA (Language Experience Approach) is also a non-judgmental way of evaluating a learner.

LEA stories can be about anything which interests the learner; personal experiences, job, family, friends, hobbies, home life, etc. The key is the subject is of interest to the learner.

All you need to create your learners own LEA story are:

* Paper
* Pen or Pencil
* Scrap paper (for word cards)

PROCEDURE

# 1) Discuss to Identify an Experience

Encourage your student to talk – ask leading questions (those which can’t be answered with just yes or no)

Listen attentively

Organize your learner’s conversation into a story.

Ask questions to clarify learner’s statements.

Keep the story AS SHORT AS POSSIBLE

My name is Dan.

I live in the country.

I like to garden.

A few lines will do at first - this can be expanded on in further lessons

# 2) Record the Learner’s Words

Do not write in cursive. Use manuscript PRINT to record your leaner’s words. (You may have to write quickly and recopy later or you may record the story.) You and your learner may type the story. However you put the story on paper – make a copy and keep it for yourself.

In the beginning DO NOT correct learner’s grammar.

If he says “Me and my wife” or “I sure does…” write it down that way.

Mispronounced words (“ax” for “ask”) should be spelled correctly.

Slowly read the story back to your learner. *(Make sure your learner can see the page.)*

Point to each word as you read it, but keep your finger moving.

After reading it once, reread the first sentence, again sliding your finger along and pointing to each word as it is read.

Then ask the learner to read the sentence along with you, as you point to each word.

Be encouraging. Building your learner’s confidence is essential, particularly during the first lessons.

# 3) Select and Teach Target Words

You and your learner choose the words to be learned from the story. Print the words on the small word cards. Teach these words BY SIGHT. Teach these words by using flash cards.

These word cards can be used in many activities. Have your learner match the individual word cards with their corresponding words in the story. (This puts the newly learned words back into context.)

The number of words a student can learn will vary, depending on your learner. Choose only a few new words each session for a low level learner.

Give your learner the original copy of the story along with the word cards to take home and practice.

# 4) Expand the Procedure

Reread the story together or if the learner is able, allow the learner to read the story alone.

Continue the story, if the learner wants to.

The LEA story allows you to gain insights into the learner’s interests.

In later sessions you may include spelling punctuation, grammar, word patterns, phonics, and other techniques all based on your LEA story!

Eventually the student may be able to write his own LEA Story, leading into areas such as: sentence structure: paragraphs; form, etc.

Some learners may wish to expand their LEA story into a journal. VITAL has many examples of LEA stories by many learners, including “Missing Out” by Gary George a former VITAL learner.

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