STARTALK

Using the Target Language and Providing Comprehensible Input

Comprehensible Input

- **Language must be comprehensible.**
  Learners must understand most of what the speaker is saying.

- **Language must be meaning bearing.**
  Useful input must contain a message that learners want and need to understand. There must be some communicative intent.

- **NOT the same as total comprehension.**

Making Input Comprehensible

- **Visual Support**
  - images
  - manipulatives
  - graphics
  - realia
  - graphic organizers

- **Verbal Cues**
  - paraphrasing
  - slowed speech
  - repetition
  - emphasis
  - inflection

- **Nonverbal**
  - gestures
  - facial expression
  - demonstration
  - routines
  - pantomime

Making Input Comprehensible

Check for Understanding

Check for comprehension by creating interactions that ask learners to demonstrate their understanding.

- categorize
- identify
- find
- sequence
- sort
- choose
- recognize
- follow
- select
- order
- match

Sample Checks for Understanding in the Interpretive Mode

- Four Corners
- Story Maps
- This or That
- Three Card Matching
- Listen & Draw
- Picture Sequence
- See, Think, Wonder

Strategy Alert

When can I use English?

- To convey learning targets or can-do statements for a lesson
- To set and reflect on goals and progress
- Performance assessment prompts
- Interpretive assessment tasks
- Co-construction of grammar rules
- Safety and security of students

Community Creating

- Using a signal to indicate when use of English/native language is OK
- Requesting permission to speak English/native language
- Pledging to only use target language for a predetermined amount of time
- Rewarding risk taking
- Playing with language and being OK with ambiguity

Communicating target language expectations

Explore this STARTALK Principle in action:
startalk.umd.edu/public/principles

Input is to language acquisition as gas is to a car. An engine needs gas to run; without gas, the car would not move an inch. Likewise, comprehensible input in language learning is what gets the “engine” of acquisition going. Without it, acquisition simply does not happen.