

SPATIAL AWARENESS LANGUAGE FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

by

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Project Description

I studied the development of spatial awareness language because I wanted the Spanish-speaking ELs in Kindergarten to understand the meaning of positional words. Through my teaching experience, I have noticed that several ELs have had difficulty using positional words, such as *on top of*, *between*, *next to*, or *in front of*, in the correct context. They did not know how to describe pictures using the correct positional words. Sometimes they would just point to the picture or say one-word answers that were not positional words. They also had to draw pictures in a specific location on the paper such as *on top of*, *between*, *next to*, or *in front of* and that was a difficult task for them to complete.

As a Kindergarten teacher for the past decade, I have found myself struggling with teaching spatial awareness language to English learners (ELs). Thus, in the current project, I created a unit focusing on spatial awareness language to help answer the two questions: *How can Spanish-speaking ELs develop their spatial awareness language?* *What role do cross-curricular connections play in developing spatial awareness language?*

The setting is in a Kindergarten classroom, where all of the content areas are taught. The targeted students for this project are Spanish-speaking ELs, but the unit can also be used for other ELs. I chose Spanish-speaking ELs because that is the dominant EL group in the school. Even though the unit focuses on Kindergarten standards, other educators who have ELs at a Kindergarten level can also use this to help with their spatial awareness language.

For this unit, the Understanding by Design (UbD) framework was used to help the ELs come to an understanding of spatial awareness language and transfer their learning to other content areas. According to Wiggins and McTighe (2011), UbD allows me to think purposefully when it comes to creating lessons that best suit the ELs background knowledge on spatial awareness language. With Gardner's spatial intelligence adapted into the project, the UbD framework started with the long-term desired results for developing spatial awareness language. I started with the three-stage "backward-design" process of deciding on the desired results of what spatial awareness language that I wanted the ELs to develop, what kind of evidence they needed to show me to prove that they developed spatial awareness language, and how I planned to achieve the desired results (Wiggins & McTighe, 2011). At the end of the framework, I reflected on the learning of the ELs and made the needed adjustments to give better instruction.

The unit consists of social studies lessons that focus on reading a map and using positional words. The ELs were taught landforms in a previous lesson, so this unit expanded their knowledge on landforms, while introducing spatial awareness language. The lessons have two main objectives that include: recognizing where an object is in a given picture after listening to directions that include spatial awareness language and identifying where objects are in the given picture by using spatial awareness language. The first objective focuses on the listening domain that helps them with oral language and comprehension. I wanted the ELs to listen to the positional words that I say and recognize where the object is located in the picture. The second objective focuses on the speaking

domain that helps with the oral language. Besides listening to the spatial awareness language, I also wanted them to speak it through guided and independent activities.

There are eight lessons focused on spatial awareness language through a social studies unit. The first and last lessons consisted of a pre-assessment and post-assessment. The pre-assessment and post-assessment have a rubric to check if they made progress by the end of the unit. The first lesson focuses on the vocabulary words *on top of* and *bottom* and the students create a map of their bedroom. The second lesson focuses on the three vocabulary words *above*, *under*, and *below* and the students create a map of their house. The third lesson focuses on the vocabulary words *in front of* and *behind* and the students create a map of their street.

Each student has their own My Map Packet to create and keep all their maps in one packet. During the fourth and fifth lessons, the students create landforms and bodies of water out of clay and paint to complete their state map. The students do different interactive strategies to stay engaged while using the vocabulary words *between* and *next to*. The students create a treasure map after participating in a Jack Hartmann video of *Goin' On a Treasure Hunt* during the sixth lesson (Hartmann, 2016). They also describe their maps using the vocabulary words that they learned from lessons one through five.

The students use *Me On the Map* by Joan Sweeney as the example for how to create their maps (Sweeney, 1998). The book consists of a bedroom, house, street, and state map. The last lesson before their post-assessment is their map of choice. In their packet, they get to draw their favorite kind of map. There is also a checklist to use during informal observations while the students describe their maps. Supplemental lessons for

language arts, math, and physical education are also included in the project to give other educators ideas of how to use spatial awareness language in their content areas.

Lessons:

[Pre-assessment Lesson](#)

[Lesson 1 - Bedroom Map](#)

[Lesson 2 - House Map](#)

[Lesson 3 - Street Map](#)

[Lesson 4 - State Map part 1](#)

[Lesson 5 - State Map part 2](#)

[Lesson 6 - Treasure Map](#)

[Lesson 7 - Favorite Map](#)

[Post-assessment Lesson](#)

[Supplemental Lessons](#)

Rubrics and Checklists

[Checklist for Spatial Awareness Language \(SAL\)](#)

[Assessment Checklist](#)

Templates

[My Map Packet with Assessment, Rubric, and Vocabulary Words](#)

References

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