

G. Emphasizing Meaning Over Form Video Transcript

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[Maria to interviewer] So when I was doing this lesson, the first time that, um, I planned it out, I had students, number one, solve the equation, a two-step equation, and then number two, explain with words explicitly how they solved it. And as I was doing that, I noticed that a lot of the students were struggling with the math portion because I made, I made an assumption that many of my students being, even though they were newcomers, they might already have been exposed to two-step equations to this algebra, um, that we were focusing on. That was very simple. And I made that assumption that they had probably already maybe learned that in their home country or they had been learning it here. Especially because I collaborated with a colleague of mine, a math teacher, and he gave me these equations, um, and said that the students should be able to do it. So when we were, when I was going through that lesson with one of my periods, I noticed that, hey, like there's a gap there, right? They have not acquired that math skill yet. So then what I did to scaffold the lesson even more was I took the cognitive load off of having to solve the equation because that, that wasn't the point of the lesson. The point of the lesson was to learn the language of math.

[Maria to students] And what am I doing then, what's the next thing? The last step.
[student unintelligible] Okay, so then how do I explain that? [student] 5, 5 [Maria] 5.
[student unintelligible] [Maria] N [nods]. [student] equals [Maria] No, not equals.
[student] I know. Divide [Maria] By [student] 5. [Maria] Mm-hmm. [student writes on whiteboard] [Maria] No, but don't put the symbol, how do you say that in English?
[student speaking in Spanish—unintelligible] [student] ¿Cómo se dice en inglés? [Maria] Divide. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. [student writes on whiteboard] [Maria] 5. [student] Five.
[Maria] On left or right? [student] Left. [Maria] Okay. Left. [student writes] [Maria] And then? [student] Left. Okay. So then what do I say? Divide 5 on . . . [student] Left.
[Maria] I already said left. What's this side? [student] 5 on? No. Right. [Maria] Right. Okay. So write that, Divide 5 on the right.

[Maria to interviewer] In the end, I noticed that they were more successful because I had taken off that cognitive load of having to solve the math. And now their focus was only on creating that explanation of how you solve a math problem and how you explain a math problem using words.

[student in class] Is $2x - 3 = 7$. Then, plus 3 in the left, in the ah, yeah, in the left; in the right, $2 + 3$. Yeah. Next is, [another student] next, next is $2x =$ divided by 4, 3, 2 into the left; into the right is $x = -2$. [Maria] Perfect.

[Maria to interviewer] A lot of my students are Spanish speaking, and it helps a lot that I speak Spanish because it has helped me, um, realize that even though the students might not be writing the sentence completely grammatically and phonetically correctly, it is correct because they are using their native language and translating it word for word into English, which is different because Spanish and English, they're a different language. And thanks to that, it's also helped me with other languages too, to realize, hey, this student, they're not there grammatically yet, but they're still able to express it and it's, the grammar and all that will come later.

[first student speaking in Spanish] Ok vamos a practicar, entonces tu empiezas. [second student] Three plus . . . three? What it is? [first student] What I did. [second student] What I did to the left, what I did to the right, next $2x$ divide? [first student] Divided by [second student] Divided by 2, and what it, to the left, what did to your, [first student] to the right [second student] to the right $x = -2$. [speaking in Spanish] ¿En qué parte es donde se dice que se cancela el tres? [first student speaking in Spanish] Como cuando estás indicando que lo haces en izquierda y derecha, dices que cancelas esta y das el resultado de aquí, que es equals 4, minus 4.