4 Strategies to Make Your Push-In Model Effective

by Eman Magableh

In English language push-in models, only so much can be done in a very short amount of time—from teaching language to teaching content. In push-in models, an English language professional brings the instruction and any necessary materials into the content class of a multilingual learner of English (MLE), as opposed to pull-out models, where students receive English language instruction separate from their general education classes.

Because the push-in model aims to give MLEs equal opportunities with general education students by providing them access to the same content knowledge, it's important to provide your students with the academic content they are learning. In my years as an English as a new language (ENL) push-in teacher, I've found that a focus on content—more than on language skills—has been most beneficial for my MLEs, especially given the limited time allotted for language instruction. Following are strategies that I have found work effectively in making the best of the instructional time in the push-in model.

4 Effective Push-In Strategies

1. Teach Language in 10-Minute Blocks

Instead of taking half or more than half of the period on teaching a language skill or aspect, teach the language skill in 7–10 minute blocks by following these steps:

a. Define the language skill or aspect in student-friendly language. If your MLEs are at the starting level (e.g., CEFR Levels A1–A2), you can translate the definition to their preferred language.
b. Provide two to four examples of the language skill or aspect. Model the first example to show students what is expected from them in producing the language.
c. Give students an opportunity to produce the language in pairs or groups. Give them feedback and focus on what they need support in.

2. Identify Key Concepts and Make Content Comprehensible

Before teaching any text, whether it's a language learning text or a content-area text, review it to rephrase or substitute difficult words and phrases. It's important to provide learners with student-

friendly language that's accessible to them. If you want to teach certain target words, keep them for that purpose, and, during the reading, pause and teach them. One of the most important questions before teaching a text is to ask yourself, "What concepts do students need to know to understand the text?" Then work on identifying the key concepts and scaffolding the language so it's at a level your MLEs can access. This strategy makes the content comprehensible when students read it, even on the first read.

3. Use Students' Home Languages

Using students' home (or preferred) languages is one of the easiest and fastest ways to explain content to students at the entering level. And even if you don't know the student's home language, you can use a translation tool (e.g., Google Translate, the say hi app, itranslate), or allow students to use one, to ensure they're grasping important concepts.

4. Model Frequently

When teaching content, it's crucial to model concepts you want your students to understand and language skills you want them to produce. Keep a dry-erase board with you to model sentences and annotate. If it's a complicated language aspect that needs to be modeled and you think it will take a lot of time, show students a completed version of the assignment/project.

Push-In Strategies in Practice: Example Lesson

Following is an example lesson implementing the aforementioned strategies in a push-in English language arts class.

> **Grade**: Grade 6 English Language Arts
> **Model:** Push-in
> **Learners:** 4 students, proficiency levels starting to emerging
> **Lesson:** *The Serena Slam*
> **Materials:** Rewritten "The Serena Slam" text (1 for each student), printed cards with images representing cause and effect, dry-erase board, chart paper (2)
> **Language Objective:** Students will be able to recognize cause and effect in the text.
> **Content Objective:** Students will be able to demonstrate comprehension by verbally summarizing the text "The Serena Slam."

Step 1. Prepare the Lesson
Review the text you'll be using for the activity and rewrite it to suit the level of your learners. In this lesson, "The Serena Slam" (Meagher, 2020) is rewritten for emerging level students (see the Appendix). You'll also need to create, print out, and cut up the cause-effect cards.

Step 2. Teach the Language
Begin the lesson by teaching the language skill for 5 minutes. On the dry-erase board, write "cause" and "effect" and define each word using simple definitions: *Cause* is why something is happening, and *effect* is what happens. Write key words on the board (*because*, *so*, and *as a*

result) so students can refer to them later. Explain that these words tell us when there is a cause and effect.

Show students an example by drawing a flower and a rainy cloud. Ask them what makes a flower grow. The rain is why the flower grows.

Step 3. Allow Student Practice
Give students picture cards of things that happen and the things that caused them to happen. Have students work together and sort the pictures in pairs, or have them place the pictures under the correct column on chart paper (See Figure 1). Model the first two examples by gluing them on the chart while doing a think-aloud.
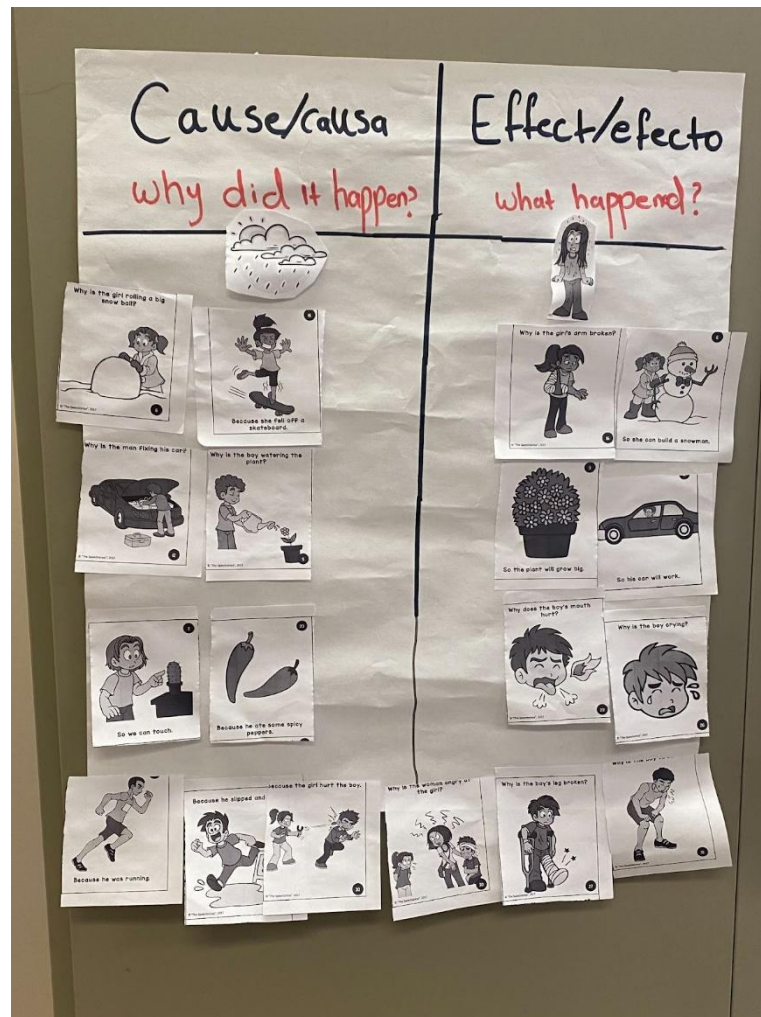

Figure 1. Cause and effect chart.

Step 4. Introduce the Key Concept
Shift to the reading. Before you begin reading, introduce the key concept. In this example lesson, the key concept is the Olympics. Write the key concept on the dry-erase board and ask students what they know about it. Explain what it is and how it is connected to the text you're going to read.

Step 5. Read the Text
Read the text aloud (Appendix). As they read along, students should highlight key words (referring to the board if needed). Also have them underline words they don't recognize. As you read, pause occasionally to observe their highlights and underlining, and you can explain the meaning of words to them before you continue. After the reading, have students summarize facts about Serena verbally.

Step 6. More Student Practice
Once you finish the reading, model the placement of a sentence strip, split into cause and effect, onto another cause and effect chart. Give students sentence strips taken from the text and ask students to sort them on the chart (see Figure 2).
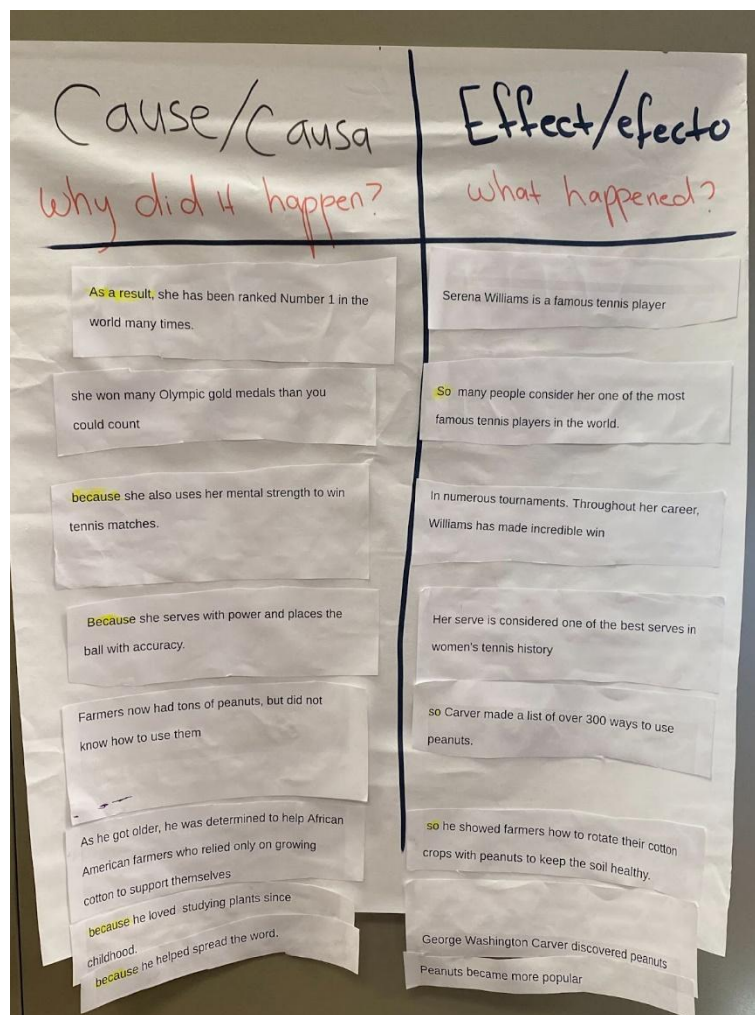

Figure 2. Cause and effect sentence strip chart.

A Note: Additional Scaffolding
When I last used this lesson plan, one of my MLEs was illiterate. To meet his needs, I used Google translate to explain cause and effect verbally, and I gave him headphones to listen to the

translation. Then, I asked him to cut and paste images (rather than sentence strips) and sort them under cause and effect.

Conclusion

I have found these strategies to be super helpful and easy to use in all push-in classes. What makes these strategies great is that they need minimal to no preparation. I hope they help you better meet the needs of your MLEs this school year.

Reference

Meagher, C. (2020). *The Serena slam*. Readworks. https://www.readworks.org/article/The-Serena-Slam/a5458576-50ac-4730-a2b3-e774cdcf700e#!articleTab:content/

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Appendix
Serena Williams

Serena Williams is a famous tennis player. As a result, she has been ranked Number 1 in the world many times.

She has won more Olympic gold medals than you could count. Many people consider her one of the most famous tennis players in the world.

Serena, who picked up a racket at the age of three, grew up playing tennis with her older sister Venus. They both had a talent for the sport.

Serena and her sister Venus supported each other constantly, whether they were playing as partners or competing against each other.

Serena won a total of 23 Grand Slam singles titles on her own, plus numerous doubles tournaments with a tennis partner. Serena dominates the court with her strength and agility. Her serve is considered one of the best serves in women's tennis history because she serves with power and places the ball with accuracy, making it difficult for her competitors to hit the ball back to her.

Throughout her career, Serena has made incredible wins because she also uses her mental strength to win tennis matches. Serena Williams reminds young people that they can accomplish their dreams through hard work and dedication.

*This text is based on Meagher, C. (2020). *The Serena slam*. Readworks.
https://www.readworks.org/article/The-Serena-Slam/a5458576-50ac-4730-a2b3-e774cdcf700e#!articleTab:content/