LEA: Language Experience Approach

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Some of the components of the Language Experience Approach (LEA) were used in the 1920’s. It is has been recognized and more widely used for the past thirty years.

Van Allen, a well-known advocate for LEA, first described his approach in the 1960’s. He indicated this strategy could create a natural bridge between spoken language and written language.

**Van Allen’s Approach:**
What I can think about, I can talk about. What I can say, I can write. What I can write, I can read. I can read what I write and what other people can write for me to read.”
4 Theoretical Supports

Knowledge comes from the known to the unknown. The student must begin with his/her own spoken language.

Knowledge happens most effectively in a specific direction.

Adults who have difficulty in reading usually have a low self-concept and need to have a sense of immediate success.

Too often, adults tend to be time conscious and need to leave each lesson with a sense of accomplishment.
What is the Language Experience Approach? It is a method to reading instruction based on activities and stories developed from personal experiences of the learner.

Learners feel empowered, see the connection between the spoken and written word, and are more interested in learning to read if they can read their own words on topics of their own choosing.

Who is suitable for the Language Experience Approach? This method is for students who cannot get the hang of reading and/or writing and may balk at reading.
The LEA Process:

Engage students in some activity, and then provide a topic that the students will want to talk about.
As the student speaks, write down his/her experience in his/her own words; making no initial grammatical and/or spelling corrections.
After the student has finished the description/narration, review his/her “writing,” and read it together. It will be easy for the student to read his/her own words.
Encourage the student to illustrate and/or staple the “story” into the form of a book.
**Advantages of LEA:**

It is enjoyable, as well as, effective. Students will enjoy reading stories that they have created all by themselves.

It helps teachers create an emotional bond with their students.

It creates a natural bridge between the spoken and written languages.

It extends the learners' creativity in storytelling through writing.

It is learner-centered and demonstrates that the learners' thoughts and language are valued.

It provides reading material that is predictable and readable because it uses the learners' natural language.
Principles of LEA

1. Oral language and personal experience bridge the gap between spoken and written language.

2. Literacy instruction is organized around the learner’s personal experience.

3. The language arts (listening, talking, reading, and writing) must be integrated.

4. Language is for making meaning and is best acquired through meaningful use and practice.

5. Writing knowledge is acquired most easily in company with the acquisition of reading.

6. A sight vocabulary is derived from dictated accounts to support growth in word recognition.
LEA Activities (Whole Group)


Mystery Person

Cut-Apart Chart

Wordless Books
References


http://www.literacyconnections.com/InTheirOwnWords.php

http://www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/digests/LEA.html


http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Language_Experience_Approach