

Standards-Based Strategy 1

Language Ladders

A Recurring Question

How can I get my students to use the target language for informal conversation?



Language ladders

increase student use of the target language,
particularly in expressions that may or may
not be related to a particular unit.

Definition

A Language Ladder

is a set of four or five phrases that cover a range of expressions for a particular function.

Example: asking for permission

Language Ladder

A Language Ladder

may cover a range of registers.

Example

- informal to formal or
- from less courteous to more courteous.

Language Ladder

Sample Functions

- Lack of understanding
- Agreement
- Apologies
 - Oops!
 - My mistake!
 - Excuse me.
 - I'm sorry.

Apologies

Spanish

¡Ay!

¡Mi culpa!

Perdón

Lo siento

French

Op-là!

C'est ma
faute.

Pardon

Je suis
désolé(e).

German

Ups!

Das ist meine
Schuld.

Entschuldigung!

Es tut mir Leid.

Creating a Language Ladder

Steps

- Select function or context
- Select expressions
- Illustrate the ladder

Language Ladder

What determines the content?

- Words that students usually blurt out in English
- Interjections and rejoinders to extend student expression
- Functions carried out in the classroom
- Register variations

Language Ladder

Implementation

- Focus on one language function at a time.
- Present one expression for that function each day.
- Have students learn and use each expression as appropriate.

Language Ladder

Teaching an Expression

- Create opportunities to use the expression in the class.
- Use the expression as a natural response.
- Associate a visual with the expression.
- Add it to the ladder at the end of class.

Sample Language Ladder



Confusion!?!



I don't know.

I don't understand.

Please repeat.

Once again, please.

What?

Sample Language Ladder



Surprise!!!

Tiens!

Ça alors!

Sans blague!

Ça m'étonne!

C'est pas croyable!

Sample Language Ladder



Sample Language Ladder



No la
terminé.

Se la comió
el perro.



Está en la
consigna.



¡Excusas!



Está en
casa.



La
perdí.



Sample Language Ladder

**UBI EST TUUM OPUS
DOMI FACTUM?**

Barbarus/-a id cēpit!

Meus/Mea canis id dēvoravit!

Ego id āmisi!

Ego id non perfēcī!

Ego id in meō saccō āmisit!

Ego id nōn intellexi!

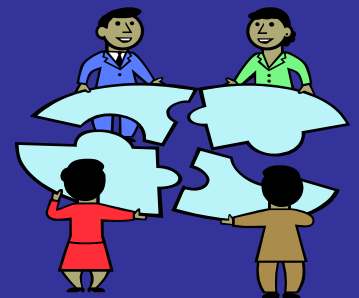
Ego id invenīre nōn possum!

It's Your Turn



In a small group, choose a new language ladder function and write the phrases in your target language.

Think of a graphic to accompany the phrases.



Conclusion

Language ladders are the glue that holds a conversation together. They enable students to keep conversation flowing and respond appropriately. These functional chunks of language help prevent moments of silence or gaps in conversation.

Final Reflections

- When should I use a language ladder?
- How do I create a language ladder?
- Why does a language ladder ensure use of the target language in the classroom?