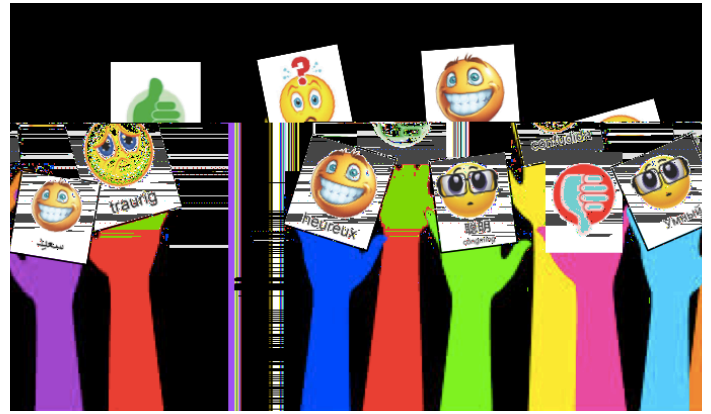


Checking for Understanding



WHY?

Consider the following three reasons that underscore the urgency for the continuous feedback loop that checking for understanding provides.

1. Unless you check for understanding you may not know what students have learned in your lesson. Since learners vary in catching on, it is important to identify who is ready for the next step and who needs more input.
2. Checking for understanding also helps to identify misconceptions that can interfere with learning and leads to lessons that show greater test results .
3. Checking for understanding provides students with a model of good study skills.

What matters most?

There are various ways to check for understanding aside from format tests:

- oral language techniques such as retellings, think-pair-share, partner & small group work
- writing techniques such as learning logs, exit slips and read/write/pair/share
- asking students to apply the concepts being taught
- effective questioning techniques including allowing students to ask clarifying questions and teach strategies for students to ask for help they don't understand the target language
- non-verbal responses such as using hand signals or response cards
- projects and performances such as multimedia presentations, portfolios, graphic concept organizers

Practical Applications

Have you noticed simply asking “Do you understand?” is the least effective way to check for comprehension. Students may be confused or may not know that they do not understand. Use other strategies such as having the student explain aloud what they heard.

Hold ups allow all students to demonstrate their level of comprehension in a visible way making a visual scan quick and effective.

More Information

Fisher & Frey (2007) *Checking for Understanding*, ASCD.

Himmele & Himmele (2012) *Total Participation Techniques*, ASCD.

Making it Personal...

- How can you vary the strategies you use to check for understanding to keep all students engaged and providing you useful feedback?
- What sorts of checks do you use now? How can you differentiate the strategies you use to check for understanding to keep the checks fresh and meaningful?

