Perhaps the most efficient way of assisting English language learners at any level of instruction is through a theme-based methodology. For these learners, thematic instruction teaches language use; creates a low anxiety environment for using the language; provides a language-rich classroom environment by focusing on many aspects of a particular topic; offers opportunities for students to make connections between what they know and what they are learning; and, finally, presents a variety of content-related activities through which learning can be accomplished. This Bulletin examines thematic instruction from the perspective of underlying language-related activities which can be used to support the English development of all learners.

Steps in Developing a Language Focused Theme-Based Unit:
1) Create and develop an idea web of language activities. Using the figure below, create a series of age- and language-appropriate activities expressing the chosen theme: a) interaction activity, which has oral interaction as its focus; b) experiential activity, which centers around an out-of-class experience; c) grammar-focused activity, which focuses on indirect use of an aspect of English structure; d) writing activity.

![Figure 1: ACTIVITY WEB](image-url)
e) total physical response activity, which follows a prescribed procedure; f) reading; g) listening; h) problem-solving activity; and i) games.

2. Develop a vocabulary list. Create a list of words appropriate to the theme.

3. Sequence the activities. Determine which activities are appropriate for promoting concept and vocabulary attainment.

4. Implement activities and revise for future use.

**Figure 2 SAMPLE THEME/ACTIVITY WEB: FOOD**

**FOOD & DRINK CATEGORIES**
*Interaction*

**SUPERMARKET VISIT**
*Experiential*

**PERSON SEARCH**
*Grammar-focused*

**FOOD CLASSIFICATION**
*Problem Solving*

**PRICE COMPARISON**
*Reading*

**STORY COMPLETION**
*Listening*

**FOOD PREFERENCES**
*Writing*

**RECIPE MODELING**
*Total Physical Response*

**WORD SEARCH**
*Game*

**Explanation of activities:**

**Food & Drink Categories (Interactive):** Students in pairs or small groups list items found under each of five illustrated headings: boxes, cans, bottles, bags, jars.

**Supermarket Visit (Experiential):** Students prepare for and are assigned tasks, observe and record during the visit, and process the visit through discussion and writing.

**Person Search (Grammar-focused):** Students have a list of different foods. They ask each other questions using the construction "Have you ever eaten...?" (e.g., "Have you ever eaten cous-cous?") and write down the names of individuals who answer "yes".

**Food Preferences (Writing):** In pairs, students interview, then write a paragraph about why their partner does not like or eat a type of food very often.

**Recipe Modeling (Total Physical Response):** After watching a demonstration of how to prepare a particular food, students imitate the process.

**Price Comparison (Reading):** Students read a list of food price ads from two supermarkets and compare the costs by answering "yes" or "no" to true-false statements.

**Story Completion (Listening):** Students make up an ending to a story about how tomatoes were considered poisonous.

**Food Classification (Problem-solving):** From a series of food pictures, each with prices, students list what they would have for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. With $20 students go "shopping", choosing foods that cost $20 or less.

**Word Search (Game):** Students circle food words hidden in assorted letters.

**Conclusion.** A thematic web of varied language activities greatly expands the potential of English language learners to comprehend and use language contextually. Students of all ages and proficiency levels can benefit from this approach.

**Source:**