



MAKE THE QUESTION SMALLER

Chunk complex language without reducing cognitive demand.



THE IDEA

Long, complex questions can overwhelm EAL learners before they even begin.

Breaking the question language into smaller chunks makes it clearer and more manageable — without making the task easier.

Same thinking.

Clearer language.

Better answers.



IN THE CLASSROOM

- Break long questions into smaller parts.
- Identify the key task and focus words.
- Use simpler wording or sentence frames.
- Keep the thinking challenge the same.
- Check understanding before students start.
- Build back up to full questions over time.

THE 4 STEPS

1



IDENTIFY THE PARTS

Break the question apart.

- Read the full question.
- Identify the task, topic and focus words.
- Separate information from instruction.

Example (full question):

"Evaluate the impact of deforestation on biodiversity and suggest solutions for the future."

2



REPHRASE IN CHUNKS

Rewrite in smaller steps.

- Turn the question into 2–4 smaller questions.
- Simplify wording, keep the key thinking.
- Order the steps logically.

Example (chunks):

1. What is deforestation?
2. How does it affect biodiversity?
3. What solutions could help in the future?

3



SCAFFOLD THE LANGUAGE

Support the language.

- Highlight key vocabulary.
- Provide frames or starters.
- Model one part together.

Frames: "Deforestation is ..."

"It affects biodiversity because ..."

"One solution could be ... because ..."

4



BUILD CONFIDENCE

Rebuild to the full question.

- Gradually combine the parts.
- Remove scaffolds as confidence grows.
- Celebrate when learners handle the full version.

Start small. Practise. Then go big.



WHY IT WORKS

It lowers the language barrier.

It reduces cognitive overload.

It helps learners access the thinking — and show what they know.



EAL UPGRADE

- Pre-teach key words.
- Use sentence frames or cloze stems.
- Model how to answer one part.



TRY IT TOMORROW

- Take one complex question from your lesson.
- Break it into 2–4 steps.
- Try it with your class.



TEACHER LANGUAGE

"Let's break this question apart."

"What is this question asking us to do?"

"Let's focus on one part at a time."

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