

Strategy Name: Say It or Silence

Say it or Silence is a form of checking for understanding* that asks students to recognize whether or not a given example fits a particular quality or category. It is a type of whole class checking for understanding.

What it looks like:

1. Teacher presents a given word/term/category from instruction, and explains that if the given example fits, the students say that word/term/category. If not, they stay silent.
Examples: Science: “biotic” or silence (meaning abiotic); Math: “negative” or silence (positive); Spanish: “ser” or silence (estar); History: “first amendment” or silence (all other amendments)
2. Teacher presents a series of statements, examples, problems, etc.
3. After each one, students respond either with a given word/term or with silence. Silence represents the alternate or alternatives.
4. Teacher judges understanding based on number of students responding correctly as well as number of students responding

Essential elements:

- ☺ Whole class response (not individual or group)
- ☺ Students have two response options: say “_____” or silence.
- ☺ Students should be able to recognize the answer relatively quickly, not have to read for information or solve a problem to answer.

Possible times/ways to use it:

- ✓ When there is a clear distinction between two concepts.
- ✓ As a review to synthesize material.
- ✓ Show a power point with pictures (more preparation)
- ✓ Read a sentence with a blank in it; if the given word fits the sentence, then students say it out loud.
- ✓ To review previous day’s instruction
- ✓

Possible times/ways not to use it:

- ✗ When there are gradations or multiple possible responses
- ✗ When the question is subjective
- ✗ For self-assessment (i.e., asking the students questions about their level of understanding)
- ✗

**checking for understanding should be considered a formative assessment. It is a way for the teacher to determine what clarifications or re-teaching are necessary.*