

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

~ MAGIC ~

30 CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT SECRETS YOU'LL NEED TO SUCCEED

TROUBLESHOOT
ANY ISSUES
BEFORE
THEY ARISE

MANAGING
AND LEADING
GROUPS OF PEOPLE IS
NEVER EASY



TUNE INTO
YOUR STUDENTS
TO FIND OUT
WHAT THEY WILL
RESPOND TO AND
GET REWARDED WITH
**AWESOME
RESULTS**

 FOLLOW THESE STRATEGIES & YOUR CLASSROOM WILL BE BRIMMING WITH ENGAGED LEARNERS

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Top 5 Classroom Management Strategies that Really Work

Developing classroom management skills will save you time, develop a positive learning environment, and help students succeed.

ARE YOU USING THESE TOP 5 CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES?

1 SET CLEAR GUIDELINES AND CREATE CLASS RULES

Too often classroom management is mistaken for setting rules, but it is so much more than that. ESL teachers tend to be very talented at speaking clearly and delivering clearly-outlined goals. Put those skills to work and make sure that you spend a chunk of time at the launch of every new class to set clear guidelines, offer-up expectations, and do a group activity to devise your classroom rules. First off, guidelines can be defined as anything that the teacher deems a necessity in his or her classroom. You might be very strict on one matter, but flexible on another. Your code of conduct needs to be clearly defined in order to set students up for success. Some possible guidelines you may want to focus on are:

Correction: How do you handle it with each of your levels? Outline very specifically how you plan to correct students, whether or not they should correct each other, and what you hope students gain for your correction technique.

Translation: How much translation will you allow at any given time? Do you have zero tolerance for it, or are there activities and exercises where it will be incorporated? If you have a uni-cultural class, be careful to determine how often students can use electronic dictionaries, write out translations for vocabulary, or help one another by explaining directions in their native language. If you happen to have a multi-cultural class translation should only be done in very specific exercises, otherwise your class will become noisy with many languages other than English.

Academic Expectations: What are the specific expectations upon students? Inform them about your views on testing, quizzes, homework assignments, group work, and individual projects.

Defining Rules: This should be done as a group. Spend some time creating a list of classroom rules that are impor-

tant to the students. This way, when a rule is broken students will often step in to offer warnings or discourage particular behavior. It can be a helpful reminder to write the rules out on sheets of poster-sized paper and hang them in prominent places around the room. Point to them for reminders and warnings before you discipline.

2 TRUST BUILDS CONFIDENCE

If students are going to be extremely productive they need to trust their teacher. This isn't an automatic state simply because you are at the front of the classroom. You have to gain and build trust, mutually. Students must trust that you are an expert on everything to do with the English language and the culture you are representing. That means you must set a good example, do as you say, and always speak correctly. You have to be grammatically sharp and able to field tough questions on your feet. It's also helpful if you can explain complex principles and vocabulary in simple terms. Your language should be simple, but not over-simplified, and your demeanor should be relatively animated and easy to interpret. When students see that you help them problem-solve, provide gentle direction when they are stuck, and make the class about them, not you, you will gain their trust. You will notice their confidence growing as shyness is shattered, and they begin taking risks and jumping in to assist each other.

3 BE CREATIVE AND PROVIDE VARIETY

No one likes to be bored to tears, no matter what subject is being studied. You must do your very best to make the most mundane topics appealing, entertaining, and memorable. Add in humor where it fits best, and spontaneity can breed creativity. If you are afraid to take risks with your students they also will be afraid of change or challenge. Create your own games, and tweak traditional ideas. Take a game like hangman and add in a speed round, or give teams certain challenges. Let students take the lead in games instead of the teacher always providing the puzzles. Variety is also important, but it needs to be balanced with continuity. For example, if you always correct

the homework at the beginning of class, change the routine by doing it at the end, and making a game out of it. Switch the order of your lessons, make additions to exercises to bring on more challenge, or try something completely new and different for a whole lesson. Grammar doesn't have to be dry! Involve students in your presentation by teaching to their interests, providing silly examples with students' names, and extrapolating from them what they already know! You must involve them, and if you feel them slipping, change gears, crack a joke or have them stand and stretch. If they begin to glaze over, it may be time for a break or a change in pace.

4 FIND OUT WHAT'S IN IT FOR THEM

One key to teaching any group is to find out why they are there. What does each individual stand to gain from your class? Do a series of activities that get students talking about their interests and why learning English is important to them. Then remember the details and bring their desires into your lessons. If you don't ask you may never know what motivates them. Some students may be learning English for fun, while others need it for their jobs, a college degree, or GED work. Find out so that you can tailor lessons to their needs.

5 PET PEEVES

Everyone has pet peeves, or things that irritate them. Communicate yours and devise fun ways for students to define their own pet peeves. Students need to know what really irks you, and also what behavior just will not be tolerated. For example, if you get really upset when students neglect to do homework, you need to let them know that there will be steam coming out of your ears if this is a regular occurrence! Perhaps you cannot stand it when students chew gum or eat during class since speaking is expected. If it bothers you, you may want to include it on your list of rules or classroom guidelines. If they are simple annoyances, then you might just want to have fun doing lessons on pet peeves - they can really be enlightening.

MAKE YOUR CLASSROOM A POSITIVELY WONDERFUL PLACE TO LEARN AND DEVELOP.

3 Surefire Ways to Expertly Manage Your Classroom

Students look to their teachers for direction, tone, and communication. Start off on the right foot and create the best classroom environment possible.

TRY THESE 3 SUREFIRE WAYS TO EXPERTLY MANAGE YOUR CLASSROOM

1 SET THE TONE AND OWN IT

From day one, it is essential to set the tone of your classroom, and provide students with continuity. Setting the tone is not just having sets of applicable rules or a welcoming classroom design. It is about creating a complete environment that is approachable for learning, and also focused on getting work done in a cooperative manner. Obviously every teacher has his or her own style and it will come through in the tone in which you handle yourself, how you will deliver lessons, and how you involve students. Set the tone according to your personality, and what is comfortable for you because some of the worse mistakes are made when teachers try to be something they are not, or present in a way that is alien to them. So choose your delivery method combined with your in-class personality and stick to it. Be confident that you are providing the learning environment students need, and that your demeanor is predictable. That's not to say that you have to be boring or never take risks - just do those things within your own comfort zone and with your own flair.

You may need to make adjustments or tweak the way you present yourself or the material. Ask students for feedback at the end of classes or quarters, and really look at the suggestions or constructive criticism as a way to be better for the next group. The tone of each class may also be slightly different from the next. If you have one class of extroverted beginners and another class of shy advanced-level students, devise ways to get the most from each group as a whole. The class should be a place students want to be, and they should feel always feel comfortable,

challenged, and welcomed.

Are you the type of teacher who is extremely strict regarding homework and tardiness? Or are you a bit of a softie that allows students to often get away with poor behavior or lack of participation? Do you think your class is out of control or not progressing? Each of these presents a different issue, and each one can be remedied by examining your own trouble areas and rectifying them. Teachers who are overly-strict, especially in an ESL classroom, generally don't do well because they lack the flexibility needed for students to thrive. However, if you are too nice or come off as someone who doesn't follow through, students will not respect you. It might be difficult to reckon with at first, but if there are constant issues in your classrooms, your tone, or lack thereof, could be to blame. So troubleshoot from the very first class, and define your tone with each new group.

2 ALWAYS GIVE FEEDBACK THAT MATTERS

All students, no matter what the subject, want feedback. Language learners, in particular require a lot of positive reinforcement and sometimes constant praise that they are indeed doing it right, speaking correctly, or having success. However it is not appropriate to provide praise where it is not earned or deserved.

Feedback must be carefully tailored to each learner for it to have desired impact. The painfully shy student needs to see a lot of smiles and get a lot of encouragement when he or she speaks. Even if it is not completely correct, you have to give them kudos for trying. More extroverted students should also receive positive feedback, but it will mean more to achieve it rather than getting it just for trying.

It is also necessary to provide constructive criticism and there is an art to doing this for groups and individuals. In order to consistently provide accurate feedback, you must be aware of the

students' performance, goals, issues, and interests. When you show an interest in students' goals and progress they will be more apt to listen to your advice, take criticism and run with suggestions. Be honest, speak from the heart, and sugarcoat only when absolutely necessary.

3 COMMUNICATE LONG AND SHORT TERM GOALS

Students need to know what is coming, what is expected, and what will be happening in the now as well as in the future. It is advisable to put together a syllabus for each individual class. It should roughly outline each week detailing topics, assignments, and materials. It doesn't have to be exact or tremendously specific. You can specify five to seven key topics that you will definitely cover, two to three milestone projects or assignments, and your overarching expectations for the class.

For your own organization, it is vital to know your materials, what topics you will put a spotlight on, and what you might skip over. You can then tailor lesson plans to what you realistically expect to finish. Teaching ESL is very situational, and it can be difficult to gauge just how much material you will complete in a given time frame. There are a lot of variables at play so be sure to give students a rough idea of what they can expect. If you have plans for one big project, it is only fair to tell them at the beginning of the quarter, so that they are mentally prepared when it comes up. You should also always alert them to how much testing they will encounter, your grading criteria, the homework expectations, as well as attendance policies.

TEACHERS OWE IT TO THEIR STUDENTS TO DEVELOP SOLID CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT SKILLS.

It is essential that your style shines through, students are given feedback, and you are organized in all your communications. Following these tips will help free you of problems and troubleshoot any issues before they arise.

5 Things You Should Never Do When Managing ESL Classroom

Classroom management skills require teachers to remember a lot of details and specific techniques. It's also important to remember those attitudes and behaviors that have no place in your management style. Take a look at these 5 things you should never do and develop your classroom management accordingly.

NEVER DO THESE 5 THINGS WHEN MANAGING YOUR ESL CLASSROOM

1 EMBARRASS YOUR STUDENTS

Language learning is tough enough at any age, and requires learners to take risks, speak up, and try things they have never done before. Of course teachers out there aren't wondering how they can embarrass their students. In fact there aren't many teachers who would do this intentionally, but it is easier than you might think to do this unintentionally. Be careful not to push your students when they just aren't ready. Give them time to gather their thoughts, and guide them to the answer instead of glaring it out of them. In ESL classes, there is always a certain amount of on-the-spot speaking and sharing, but you can see very clearly when a student is panicked or dreading their turn. Don't ever take that as an opportunity to embarrass the student or berate them for being unprepared. We all have bad days, and as we know, there are a lot of personalities in our classes. If you can be sensitive to a student in their time of need, hopefully they will learn from that, and know that the next time, they will be challenged no matter how unprepared they are. Sometimes teachers think they are using humor or cracking a joke when in reality, the joke happens to be at the expense of a student. Take care not to make light of student's mistakes, missteps, or inappropriate behavior. Take the high road and support even the most difficult student every chance you get.

2 TALK OVER THEIR HEADS

Wonderful ESL teachers speak to the students at the level they are, not where the teacher ideally would like them to be. It can be difficult sometimes

to restrain speech or speak simply, especially with beginners, but it isn't just about speech patterns. It is about grammar structures, vocabulary, speed, and tone. If students have a hard time deciphering your grammar explanations or directions for exercises, you are setting them up for failure. You have to assess where your students are in their language acquisition to be able to teach to their level. Don't use a lot of idioms or street language unless they are learning it. Don't speak in high level tenses to students who are just studying past tense. Do your best to define new words on the spot and if you tend to use certain expressions often, teach them to your students so that everyone is on the same page. Keep instructions as simple as possible, and lay out how you are going to explain a complex game in beginner language. One habit you definitely don't want to slip into is in trying to speak simply, you start speaking incorrectly, leaving out articles or helping verbs. Don't fall into this trap. Always maintain correct language as you are the primary model of perfect English.

3 RUN OUT OF STUFF TO DO

An ESL teacher's best friend is her toolbox of games and activities that can be tapped into at a moment's notice. There is no excuse for running short on material for your lessons. You can always find more practice opportunities. Students should never see a teacher flustered because you don't have anything lined up next. If you see that your lesson planning underestimated the time it would take to do certain activities, you will be able to tell ahead of time that you will run short. While students are going through an activity, think quickly about what you can do to end the class on a high note. Is there a board game that you can play to practice new vocabulary? Is there homework that was only quickly reviewed and barely discussed? Do you have any pictures or cards with you that you can use to set something up very quickly. Sometimes in using a bit of creativity and thinking on your feet you can throw something together to fill the last minutes of the lesson, and it becomes your go-to activity.

4 SPEND TIME ON MATERIAL THEY CAN DO AT HOME

Learning a language is a very hands-on experience. To reinforce active learning, students should always have some take away work which they can do independently and hash out any problems. It is rare, if ever, to have students sitting doing fill in the blank grammar exercises as a part of a lesson. There might be a special circumstance where this might be necessary like if the students are preparing for a big exam like the TOEFL test or other college entrance exams. And even then, filling in the blanks or reading silently should be a very small percentage of the time that you spend deciphering the questions, vocabulary, and strategies to read and comprehend. Don't waste precious class time on work that is meant for the student to do at home. Do one or two examples of the homework in the grammar book, and then answer questions. If you have a free two to three minutes left at the end of class, students might appreciate being able to get a jump on their homework, but this should not be an everyday occurrence.

5 FOLLOW THE BOOK EXCLUSIVELY

A good textbook is a godsend, but even then, it shouldn't be the only material the students are exposed to. Unfortunately there are a lot of bad text books out there that leave out a lot of key information, are organized strangely, have outdated examples, or don't have much substance. Whatever book you are using, first find its good points and its faults. Become accustomed to your textbooks and do your best to make them work for you. Because language learning is so interactive and requires such varied practice for fluency, turning pages in a book is no way to make the best use of class time. Engage your students in active learning and use the book as a jumping off point.

POSITIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT IS ESSENTIAL TO YOUR STUDENTS' SUCCESS. FOLLOW THESE 5 RULES OF THINGS YOU SHOULD NEVER DO IN THE ESL CLASSROOM, AND YOUR STUDENTS WILL THRIVE AS YOU HELP DRIVE THEM TO THEIR GOALS.

The Golden Rules: 10 Tips for Expert Classroom Management

Heightened classroom management skills are essential for anyone wishing to be successful as a teacher and a language instructor.

TRY THESE 10 TIPS FOR EXPERT ESL CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

1 CREATE A STUDENT-CENTERED ENVIRONMENT

“Student-centered” sure is a buzz word these days, but what does it really mean for the teacher? Well, in a nutshell creating a student-centered environment means putting the students’ needs ahead of your own goals, and in practicing language, the students are the focus, not the teacher. The learners should be doing most of the talking and engaging, and the teacher should be a secondary figure who facilitates the way students are communicating. The teacher also guides students to correct language usage, and employs strategies for students to practice in a safe environment. Activities should incorporate student interests, and should cater to getting students actively involved.

2 PRACTICAL APPLICATION

In most classes, especially those focusing on language acquisition, practical application is vital for successful classroom dynamics. Practicing language points should provide learners with opportunities to employ everyday usage, and participate in memorable activities. It’s also a good idea to practice multiple uses of points separately when applicable. For example, present simple tense can be used to talk about professions (I am a doctor), family (My sister is 14), and likes and dislikes (He likes pizza). Each of these practical applications will require own amount of practice.

3 BE REPETITIVE

Building upon what students already know and reviewing those topics frequently will lead to increased language retention and confidence. Focus on what they know whenever possible and review grammar, vocabulary, and syntax often and with variety. Repetition doesn’t have to be boring or rote. Find new and interesting ways to practice old topics, introduce stories with a range of grammar points, and play games that

allow students to review many topics at once.

4 GRAMMAR DISCUSSION

English language learners are notoriously book smart when it comes to grammar. Sometimes though their application of that knowledge can be a bit more challenging. Encourage students to ask questions, and engage in regular dialogue about the nuances of grammar. If students want to learn about the hows and whys of grammar, you can take their learning to a whole new level by indulging them.

5 INCORPORATE INTERESTS

Find out what motivates your students, what interests them, and what will get them talking. Do activities where students define their preferences, and listen carefully to student conversations. Learn about their goals and hopes. You can tailor exercises and games to the group when you have a gage of what will move them to participate.

6 GOOD CITIZENS

Teaching English can also be an opportunity to discuss meaningful topics, and influence students to make good choices. Realize that you can empower students to be better citizens in their classroom and local neighborhoods. Provide lessons that approach acts of kindness, giving advice, or solving difficult problems. Students can learn new ways of helping one another as well as assisting others in their community.

7 A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

Exploring other cultures fits wonderfully into the framework of the ESL classroom. This especially holds true in multi-cultural classes where students can share their own cultural perspectives while learning about classmates. Take opportunities to examine global cultures including topics like food, clothing, manners, and similarities as well as differences.

8 TAP INTO EXPERIENCES

ESL students of every age and every level have past experiences that you can utilize to make learning more meaningful for them. Allow your students to share their previous knowledge so they can grow into better speakers and gain confidence. It is always a good idea to

showcase each student’s strengths, and focus on what your students can contribute by allowing them to express opinions, talk about topics that are relevant to them, and share their experiences with language learning, or English specifically.

9 DISPLAY WORK

Students work hard in your classes, so be sure to take the opportunity to display their work prominently. When students create poster boards, presentations, stories or anything else that shows their progress as English speakers, showcase their work in your classroom. It will mean a lot to students and they will also continue to learn from each other as well as celebrate each other’s successes.

10 NON-VERBAL SIGNALS

Non-verbal signals can be very useful to manage the volume of your class, classroom etiquette or warnings that discipline is about to ensue. These signals can be tailored to your individual classes, and you can have students come up with their own ideas of how to institute non-verbal signs. A popular example used in a lot of classrooms today is when the teacher raises one hand, it means he or she is asking for the class to quiet down. As each student sees that that the teacher’s hand is up, they too raise a hand and close their mouth so that other students notice it is time to be quiet. This can be used to stop an activity, to make an announcement, or simply to calm them down at the beginning of the lesson. Another popular one to use is the American Sign Language equivalent of applause. Students shake their hands in the air instead of clapping hands together. One last one that you could employ during discussion is some type of sign (like the forefinger and pinky raised) to show agreement. This way the student who is speaking is getting affirmations without necessarily being interrupted by other students. Come up with your own set of non-verbal signals to manage all sorts of elements in your classrooms.

THERE ARE LOTS OF ELEMENTS TO REMEMBER FOR EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT. TAKE THESE 10 GOLDEN TIPS AND MAKE THEM YOUR OWN FOR AWESOME STUDENT RESPONSES.

5 Tips to a Student-Centered Classroom

Creating a student-centered classroom will allow your students to blossom, work hard, and develop determined confidence. Follow these 5 tips to build your own confidence in creating a student-centered environment.

HOW TO CREATE A STUDENT-CENTERED CLASSROOM

1 BE A POLITICIAN, BUT NOT POLITICAL

If you think about it, teachers are a lot like politicians. You have to please a lot of different people, stick to your promises, and meet and remember a lot of details about many different people. So one way to build a student-centered environment is to be like a politician without getting political. Teachers should never show favorites, give in simply because a demanding student is challenging you, or get entrenched in disagreements or bickering. Leave the politics to the politicians.

Be democratic whenever possible. Get their ideas and involve them in decision-making. Allow students choices when it comes to assignments, but don't leave it wide open unless it really serves the assignment. For example, if they have to write a paragraph using a particular grammar point, give them two to three options to choose from. However if they have to do a two-minute persuasive speech, allow them to brainstorm and formulate a topic that is meaningful to them.

Get to know their likes and dislikes and remember the details. In order to help them succeed you need to learn about them as individuals, and bring their interests into classroom discussion and activities. Also, discovering why they are studying and what motivates them will help you inspire them.

2 SHARING IS CARING

It is essential to build community in your classrooms. Allow the students room to work in all types of different

situations and with all different people. Vary group and pair work, and try out unlikely combinations or completely random ones. When you involve students on a personal level they begin to get to know one another and a sense of camaraderie will develop naturally. Give them a forum to share their experiences, family details, goals, and most of all, their personalities. Students should feel comfortable and encouraged to be themselves and to develop healthy classroom relationships. Be careful not to push students who are more private or who wish to remain more professional with their classmates. Respect boundaries, and if they don't want to share, don't force the issue.

3 WEAR DIFFERENT HATS

Students respect a teacher that protects them, and has their best interests at heart. If problems arise in the class, students need to know that they can count on you to be firm and resolve the issue. Find ways to diffuse difficult situations, use humor whenever possible as long it is appropriate, and set boundaries that students can easily understand and adhere to. If there are personality conflicts in the class, put on the hat of mediator. If there is an upset student, try your hand at counseling the student or the group. If there is a crisis of some kind, remain calm and take the best care of students that you can. Wear all the different hats necessary to foster a safe and secure environment.

4 REVIEW, REVIEW, REVIEW

Language learners need constant reinforcement and varied review. A portion of each lesson should focus on reviewing the familiar and going over previously learned topics. This gives students a chance to show what they know which builds confidence, practice something that comes easily which reinforces what they learned, and work out any kinks in a safe environment. Review can be done in many different ways, and you can involve students by asking them to define principles, tell you something they know about a topic, or ask them for examples of a particular

point. This is an extremely student-centered and student-friendly approach to bringing in the old and making it fresh again. Allow students to shine and display what they know so that they always remember that they are learning a lot.

5 LEARNING CONTRACTS

In developing a student-centered environment, you will learn a great deal about students and their goals, desires, and setbacks. Some teachers really like students to assess their own goals for the class and how they believe it will impact their lives. One way to document this is to have students do learning contracts or goal sheets. A learning contract is simply a formal way for students to record things like:

What they want to accomplish
In what timeframe they would like to accomplish it
How they plan to reach their goal, with concrete examples
What help or support will they need to reach their goal

If you decide to have students do one of these contracts, it is important that you revisit the contracts at specified times and create open dialogues about accomplishments. You can also take on the role of calling them out when they might be slacking a bit, praising them when they are making great strides, or troubleshooting with them in order to gain more headway. This type of contract may really appeal to some students who take it very seriously. Others may not like it, and may only go through the motions. It is up to you to determine if this type of agreement is a good fit for the whole group or if you would rather just do some personal goal-setting exercises with students.

THERE'S NO END TO THE WAYS IN WHICH YOU CAN CREATE A STUDENT-CENTERED CLASSROOM EVERY DAY OF THE WEEK.

Follow the above 5 tips and you will find that centering on students builds confidence in everyone, and provides innumerable benefits.

5 Best Practices for Classroom Management You Should Know

It's probably happened to most teachers. You look around your class one day, in the middle of a lecture or reading aloud, and you realize no one is paying attention.

Joe and buddies are in an intense conversation, spiked with bursts of laughter, about their weekend. Lanie is, as usual, playing with her long hair, smoothing out the invisible split ends. Kyle is reading something that looks like part of the "Star Wars" series. And Debbie is off in a corner talking on her cell phone. How did we ever get so dysfunctional? you wonder. While such classroom dysfunction is unfortunately not uncommon, it can be fixed. However, since the problems didn't start overnight but rather have been building from the first day of class, they can't be fixed overnight, either. It will be gradual process based on several methods.

5 WINNING METHODS FOR CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

1 INTRODUCE CLASS POLICIES FROM DAY ONE.

One of the biggest mistakes teachers make, the most detrimental to a well-run class, is the failure to communicate expectations from the beginning. Classroom management is about teacher expectations and student adherence to them—the expectation that students will speak one at a time and listen to each other, for example. If the expectation is not clearly communicated, students can't be blamed for not understanding it. In addition, different teachers have different expectations—some instructors are really bothered by the use of electronics during class, others not so much—so instructors have to communicate clearly what is important to them. In addition, students can be involved in this process early in the class by having them with the instructor brainstorm 5 to 10 rules for running the class efficiently. Most often, students themselves have knowledge of what works and does work in running a classroom well, having been in classes of varying management effectiveness most of their lives, and they appreciate being involved in

the process.

If class policies have not been established from the beginning, it will be hard but not impossible to establish them later by calling an informal class meeting and discussing the need to establish some policies for the sake of the a smoothly run learning environment. Students will usually agree, and then the class can proceed to establishing a few key rules.

2 ENFORCE CLASS POLICIES.

Class policies are of little value, of course, if they are not enforced. It may seem a little mean to speak to the student about being late the very day after the class policies have gone into effect: the tendency may be to let it go "just this once." The problem with that is, of course, that "just this once" gets extended to "just this week" and "just this month." And then arises the problem of trying to belatedly enforce the rule, and thereby enforcing it with some students and not others, which leads to confusion and resentment. Fair and equal enforcement of the class policies is necessary for a well-run classroom.

3 SET UP CLASS ROUTINES.

As important to classroom management as rules are classroom routines. Few things are more annoying and nonproductive in a classroom that students wandering around aimlessly, sitting at their desks listlessly, or whining "I have nothing to do." This is a problem of lack of classroom routines, which aid students in knowing what they should be doing throughout a class session. Ways to communicate the class routines early in the class are each day posting what the class will be doing on the board as well as on the class website if possible so that students may view it to find out what materials to bring to class and know what they will be doing - having a set procedure each day, such first attendance by signing in, next listening to a short lecture from the instructor, then extended practice with an established group. Also important are accessible materials, such as all handouts placed at the edge of the instructor's desk to be picked up by students if they come

in late. Knowing what they will be doing ahead of time each class session contributes to well-run class and allows the students to focus on their learning, not on what to do.

4 MODEL RESPECT.

Classroom management is really at its core about respect of teacher and students: their time, their boundaries, and their individuality. If the teacher models this respect by arriving on time consistently, actively listening to students, and recognizing their individual needs and contributions to the class, this value will be communicated by example to the students and they will demonstrate the same respect to each other and the teacher.

5 FOCUS ON COURSE CONTENT, NOT MANAGEMENT ISSUES.

It may sound counterintuitive, but the ultimate goal of focusing on class management issues is to eventually not focus on them and shift attention to class content. Few things are more frustrating to an instructor than taking up a significant portion of a class to (again) discuss the procedure for coming in late, for obtaining the handouts, for getting into groups, etc. If these management issues are thoroughly covered in the beginning days of class, they eventually become internalized and the focus can shift to the content and learning, the primary reason students are there—and students are usually as relieved as the teacher when then change occurs.

MANAGING AND LEADING GROUPS OF PEOPLE IS NOT EASY. It is not coincidental that most world leaders age quickly or even die in office. This is especially true of managing groups of young students, for whom the pack instinct is strong—their rules are often internal to their peer group, not the classroom and teacher. However, by involving students in developing some reasonable class rules, enforcing those rules for the good of the group, and then shifting the focus from the rules to the content, students begin to see and appreciate a well-managed classroom.

Why Can't We Just Interact? 4 Tips for Encouraging a Class to Speak

HAVE YOU EVER ASKED A QUESTION OF YOUR ESL CLASS ONLY TO BE REWARDED WITH UNWAVERING STARES AND THE SOUND OF CRICKETS IN THE BACKGROUND? I KNOW I HAVE, AND FOR TEACHERS IT CAN BE VERY FRUSTRATING WHEN STUDENTS JUST DON'T RESPOND.

Of course there are times when no one knows the answer to a question you or I pose, but other times students understand the question, know the answer, can produce the answer and still stay silent. What is a teacher to do when her class just isn't in the mood to speak? Here are some tips you can use today to get your quiet class speaking up.

HOW TO ENCOURAGE A QUIET CLASS TO SPEAK

1 LAY DOWN THE RULES

Sometimes students have different expectations for class participation than you do. In some cultures it is inappropriate for students to speak up in class, even in language classes.

To combat this cultural clash, take a few moments to explain the rules for speaking in class to your students. Give your students a short paragraph that explains your expectations for their participation. Your paragraph should state that in English speaking countries and English classes, students should speak during class. Answering the teacher's questions is good, and it's also good to interrupt with questions they have during lessons. Make sure your students know that talking in class shows they are interested and paying attention and it is not a sign of disrespect.

Once you give your class the paragraph with the rules, put your students in groups to read the paragraph, talk about any difficult words and share their own experiences and expectations about talking in class. Come together as a class and talk about any surprises students may have found in their group discussion.

2 BE PERSONAL

When you have reluctant speakers in your class, throwing a question out to the group as a whole may get you nothing more than blank stares. No one may feel the need or the confidence to speak up. But by looking at or addressing specific students or groups of students when you ask your questions, they are more likely to give you an answer. This isn't to say you should put your class members on the spot. Pressuring individuals to answer when they are not ready will only increase their stress and make them even more quiet. When you ask questions, though, make eye contact and wait for a student to speak before moving on to another person and making eye contact with them. Taking just one minute to stop talking and wait for an answer can make a big difference in how often and how willingly your students respond to questions!

3 KEEP IT SPECIFIC

"Do you understand?" How many times have I caught myself using this question in class? And even though my intention in asking is to make sure my class is tracking with me, this type of general comprehension check often does less than nothing toward helping students. This is true for two big reasons. First, if your students do not understand what you are saying, it may be just as wrong to assume they understand your question checking their comprehension. Secondly, students who do not understand are not always willing to admit their confusion in front of the entire class. Shyness or shame can keep their mouths closed even when speaking up would be a help to them. Combat this reluctance by being more intentional in your comprehension checks. Rather than asking general comprehension questions, help your class by asking specific questions about the material you have covered. With specific questions come specific answers, and these answers will give you a better read on how much your students really understand.

4 CREATE FEEDBACK

Positive reinforcement is one of the most effective means for encouraging your students to speak in class. When students offer answers to your questions, show them that you value and appreciate their participation. Praise your students when they speak and let them know that the best students participate in class. If you can, make class participation part of their grades, and make sure they know it counts. Give your students periodic updates on how their participation meets your expectations, and always be positive in your attempts to get your students to speak in class.

IF YOU FIND YOURSELF IN FRONT OF A QUIET ESL CLASS, JUST REMEMBER THIS. YOUR JOB IS TO TEACH THEM LANGUAGE, BUT IT IS ALSO TO TEACH THEM CULTURE, AND THAT INCLUDES SPEAKING UP IN CLASS.

Make a point of teaching your students how to participate in English class successfully. Be patient with your quiet students, but don't settle for a quiet class for long. If you encourage your students, give specific opportunities for them to respond and let them know it's more than okay to talk, you will see these same students start to open up and speak up in class more each day.

Up and At 'Em: 3 Strategies to Reach Every Learner

Inject new energy into your lessons and develop fresh ways to motivate yourself and inspire your students. Explore these 3 strategies to reach and inspire each and every learner in your encounter.

HOW TO REACH EVERY LEARNER

1 THE FOUR SKILLS

Every student has his or her strengths when it comes to learning English. Some students are effective listeners, but have trouble speaking or articulating grammar. Many students are expert grammarians, but have no way to practically apply their knowledge. Use their strengths and even their weaknesses to your advantage. You should be developing the four skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening to some degree in every lesson. Assess students' abilities and recognize intimately what their weaknesses and strengths are. Recognizing these attributes will help you reach your students in many ways. If you are aware, you can showcase their talents, provide perimeters for what each student needs to work on, display often where they are excelling, and how they can better blend skills. Students themselves provide you with all the information you need to tailor your lessons, subject matter, and activities to students' needs. Challenge them to focus on improving trouble areas, and build confidence by reinforcing those areas where they are excelling.

2 PROJECTS AND CLARITY

Creating project-based assignments that appeal to the individuals in your class will develop skills while furnishing confidence and independence. Determine what project would best suit your class, then provide methodic delivery and build-up of the topics students will need to be successful. This will appeal to each student because you can give them time to brainstorm ideas, develop a plan, and devise a timeline for each milestone of the project. Students will

respond by pouring themselves into their projects, injecting their personality and approaching projects with enthusiasm. Projects produce individual, self-paced learning with an accent on sharing knowledge, and honing all the skills it takes to deliver language.

It is imperative to always provide extensive clarity for ESL learners. Spell out clear explanations before each and every exercise, and also make it a habit to tell students why they will like the activity or why it is important for their learning process. This will decrease the time you spend re-stating scattered directions or answering lots of questions once they get going. It seems simple, but all students appreciate these efforts and respond by actively participating. Your students will work better in groups, get more excited when a task is presented to them, and they will work together to share their outcomes in the debrief. By doing these simple things in every lesson, you are consistently punctuating the positive.

3 VARY YOUR APPROACH AND LET STUDENTS LEAD

Intersperse lessons with interesting dialogues, entrancing games, competitive assignments, and anything else that you think will go over really well for any given class. All lessons should have a mix of the practical combined with the entertaining. It is a fact that if learners have fun doing it, they will retain the information and build upon what they know in a more rapid fashion.

One way to ensure that your lessons are not getting entrenched in the mundane or too focused on routine, is to vary how you present material. It can be as simple as changing around the order of your day, and you might possibly want to turn things upside down and entertain students with an opposites day. This is especially appropriate for driving home what opposites are and giving them the lead. You can start the day by telling them everything should be the opposite of what it nor-

mally is, and take suggestions for how to go through the rest of the class. It is humorous to see what ideas they generate, and you can help them along at the start. Perhaps the students who are most talkative must be quiet, and those students who usually take the back seat, now turn into leaders. They might challenge you with something like, teacher always spends twenty minutes on grammar. This is switched by having the students provide a down and dirty grammar lesson. Put them in groups and let them devise a fun way to do some grammar review of topics of their choice. This opens up a whole can of worms, and of course you want to let them have fun and take the lead, but don't lose control.

Another way to vary things up from the usual day is to allow students to teach a portion of a class. You can set it up in many different ways, but generally pairs work really well here. Giving them the freedom to choose how and what they will present in a given time-frame can be very exciting for them. It doesn't have to be grammar. They could explain a game, correct the homework, or approach a common mistake and how to fix it. Grant them flexibility and work with them to create an activity that is all their own. You will be there to support and guide them, and jump in if the class gets confused or too hyper. This type of activity should be done once students are comfortable in the class and the group dynamics are at a high point. Doing this during the first week when most students are still testing the waters would most likely be unsuccessful. Devise your own ways to turn lessons on their side, and offer students the lead. Your students are full of surprises so let them reign for a day!

CREATING A CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT THAT FOCUSES ON THE GROUP AS WELL AS THE INDIVIDUAL IS THE IDEAL WAY TO MOVE STUDENTS INTO LEARNING MODE.

Give them the forum and the determination they deserve by trying out these 3 fail-safe strategies for reaching all of your learners.

Keeping'em in Check: Classroom Management for Young Adults

Young adults have a lot going on in their bodies and minds, so it is essential to structure classroom management around the needs and development of your teens. Keep them in check by catering to their interests and by commanding their attention. Follow these strategies to manage your young adults and your classroom will be brimming with excited and engaged learners.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES TO KEEP TEENS IN CHECK

1 SOCIAL MEDIA

Whether you are a fan of social media or not, you have to reckon with the fact that it is popular and prominent in our global world. If you find yourself in a classroom full of teenagers, you may want to examine ways in which you can discuss social media, bring it into focus in lessons, and even consider using it to reach your students. There are ways to focus on social media without starting up a page for your class on Face Book as this can be problematic anyway, depending on where you are.

Consider the elements of social media that are most popular and most used, and incorporate them into your lessons. One way to bring out your cool side is to devise a lesson around status updates. You could spend time defining them, discussing how they are used, and whether your students find them as irritating as you do. What information, or non-information do status updates provide? What are some examples that people you know have posted? Do students comment on these or post their own?

Have students give examples, and write out status updates at the beginning and end of class. These can be sarcastic, serious, or funny. You could also have students do check-ins. Ask them where they have been hanging out during the week, what events they have been attending, or what they are planning. Institute a weekly check-in, and ask them to alter it by tenses, utilizing present, past, and future very easily. like "Jack will be going to the Brooklyn Nightclub next week to see the band, Caribou." or "Marla went to the Madonna concert last Friday."

There's a whole range of possible discussion topics social media can generate and you might consider having students debate the pros and cons of using social media, or Face Book in particular. What are the negatives about it, especially for teens and college-age adults? What effect has it had on them personally, our society on a whole, or the members of their community or country? Social media is a part of their daily lives, so why not mix it into their English language learning as well?

2 PROJECT WORK

High school students enjoy the independence and individuality they can display by carrying out project work. Of course each group of students will respond differently to task-centered work, but you can come up with all kinds of interesting and engaging projects for varied levels. For teens, it is essential that you give them opportunities where they can expand upon and explore topics they have a vested interest in. To introduce task-centered work, provide perimeters they must follow and outcomes they must reach to be sure that the projects are task-centered. Then have students brainstorm several ideas before they settle on their choice. Give them time in class to organize and outline what their project will encompass. Once students have organized a proposal, they can present it to you for your approval. After everyone in the class has set their project topic, be sure to set clear dates for check-ins, revisions, and final presentations. Often, students may work on a project for several weeks so be sure that during the work sessions that work is getting done, and that students are always using English to accomplish tasks. If they are organizing debate topics in a group, give them feedback and things to build upon. If they are doing tag-team speeches or group role plays, make sure that no one person is dominating the work sessions and that each person in the group contributes an equal amount to the presentation. Come up with ways in which students can use their talents and their unique personalities to enhance project work. You may even want to consult your class for their opinion or give them some choices when introducing the idea of project-based work.

3 DORK OUT

Believe it or not, you can have a really good time with your high school students. As long as you remain the authority figure, there's no reason that you can't show them how to loosen up and get a little silly. After all, if you expect your students to stand up and speak organically you have to be willing to first set a safe and fun environment. Show them that you are not all homework and assignments. You have a sense of humor and sometimes you use it to make them do silly things. You have had a lot of funny experiences living overseas, so why not share some embarrassing moments, or situations only a foreigner can get themselves into. Talk about your home country and interests so that students get a sense of who you are. If you can dork out with them without losing control of your class, you will gain a high level of respect and they often will begin to show you their goofy sides as well.

A few teeny-bopper games that you might think about adapting for your ESL students are Truth or Dare and Spin the Bottle. Truth or dare can be adapted for conversation practice by creating a set of cards for each category that students will draw from when they choose one of the two categories. Come up with safe truth questions to ask, and simple dares that fit your group. Some examples might be: Walk down the hallway backwards during break, tell us about the last mistake you made, write a thank you card to a teacher you don't like, wear an orange shirt to the next class, talk about your happiest memory. The cards can be as safe or as risky as you think the class would respond to. For spin the bottle, it's simply a fun way to create teams, choose who is next or who goes first. Feel free to tell your students the history of the games or keep it to yourself.

YOUNG ADULTS HAVE A LOT OF ENERGY, ENJOY TECHNOLOGY, AND HAVE LEARNING NEEDS THAT ARE VERY SPECIFIC. TUNE INTO YOUR STUDENTS TO FIND OUT WHAT THEY WILL RESPOND TO AND GET REWARDED WITH ENTERTAINING RESULTS. TRY OUT THESE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES TO MOTIVATE YOUR STUDENTS AND GET LANGUAGE MOVING.

15 Essential Study Skills for ESL Students

LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION MAY NOT LOOK OR SOUND LIKE THE TEACHING HAPPENING IN OTHER CLASSROOMS, BUT OFTEN THAT'S EXACTLY WHERE YOUR ESL STUDENTS ARE PLANNING TO GO.

A large percentage of ESL students, especially those who travel to the U.S. to study the language, do so in preparation for higher education in the U.S. They plan to pursue undergraduate or graduate studies at a college or university. Students focus on English until their language skills are at a high enough level that they can flourish in English only classes. These students, however, will need more than just language skills if they are going to succeed in an American college or university. Here are some essential study skills that ESL students will need for success in higher education.

ESSENTIAL STUDY SKILLS FOR ESL STUDENTS TO SUCCEED IN HIGHER EDUCATION

1 READING SKILLS: SQ4R

One of the most popular reading strategies for textbooks is the SQ4R method. When students follow these steps, they will process and remember information better, and their textbooks are sure to be full of important information. These are the six steps to this reading strategy. Teaching your students this process can make a significant difference in how productive their study time is.

1. Survey the chapter to get a general idea of what material it covers.
2. Write questions for each heading and subheading, predicting what the chapter will cover.
3. Read the information, one section and one paragraph at a time.
4. Record the information for that paragraph using a variety of note taking strategies. This may include writing a summary of what the paragraph said or drawing a picture or chart that summarizes the information.
5. Recite the important information from each paragraph aloud.

6. Once the chapter is complete, review the information in the entire chapter.

2 LISTENING SKILLS

Understanding lectures will likely be one of the biggest challenges ESL students face when they enroll in full-time English classes. Active listeners listen with the intent of understanding and learning new information, and collegiate success depends on being this type of listener. Make sure your students are ready to make the most of their lecture time by teaching them these skills for active listening in the classroom.

1. Focusing on the speaker and his or her words is important. Keeping distractions to a minimum means concentrating on the words and ideas at hand. Ignore side conversations and put your phone where it won't distract so you can focus on your professor completely.
2. Get personal with the material before class. When students have a foundation of information, whether from a textbook or personal research, they will make connections with new information more easily and will retain information more effectively.
3. Students should go beyond the words and create visual representations of the information. This may mean picturing something in their heads or drawing a diagram or picture on the page. This not only helps students remember the information but also sidesteps trouble they may have due to the language barrier.
4. Asking questions for clarification or additional information shows professors students are interested and engaged, and it may also keep them from misinterpreting something they hear during class. Don't be afraid to raise your hand and contribute to the discussion, either with a question of your own or an answer to one of the professor's.

3 TEST TAKING SKILLS

Once they have read the text and listened to the lecture, your students will most likely be tested on the information.

Here are some tips to help your students do their best when it's time for the number 2 pencils!

1. Tell your students to immediately jot down important information. They can do this on the back of the test, in the margins or on a piece of scratch paper.
2. Encourage your students to get an overview of the test. They should note what types of questions are on the test and which sections of the test are worth the most points. Students should then budget their time. Each student should think about which areas of the test deserve more of their time and how quickly they will need to cruise through the other sections of the test.
3. Read the directions. Some of the most regrettable mistakes come from not being clear on the directions. Have students read carefully and encourage them to ask if they have any questions or confusion about what they are supposed to do.
4. Students should check their answers. Giving their test a last look could keep them from making silly mistakes and throwing their grade.
5. Don't leave blank spaces. Make sure your students know they should guess if they do not know the answer to a question (unless a wrong answer incurs a penalty). You may find that this idea clashes with some of your students' cultural expectations for test taking, so giving them permission upfront will help nullify that issue.

Some ESL students will be chomping at the bit to get into an all English classroom. Others will never feel ready no matter how many ESL classes they have under their belts. For either, though, developing these reading, listening and test taking skills before entering an American college or university can mean the difference between failure and success.

WHEN YOUR STUDENTS ARE READY, TEACH THEM THESE SKILLS TO HELP THEM MAKE THE MOST OF THEIR COLLEGE CAREERS AND LET THEM KNOW THAT YOU ARE CONFIDENT OF THEIR SUCCESS.

Moving from a Teacher Centered Class to a Student Centered One

In the past, classrooms were often all about the teacher. This “sage on the stage” was there to offer what he or she knew, and it was up to the student to make the most of it. These days, though, we know that student centered classrooms make a better and more effective learning environment for students. Sometimes knowing just how to change the focus from the teacher to the student is, well, hard. It’s easy to stand up front and talk for an hour but not as easy to create an environment where your students take the center stage. Whether you are just moving to a student centered classroom or are a pro at stepping back and letting your students take the stage, here are some tips for making the shift and staying there.

ISN'T IT TIME TO MOVE FROM A TEACHER CENTERED CLASSROOM TO A STUDENT CENTERED CLASSROOM?

1 KNOWLEDGE

In a teacher centered classroom, the goal is for the teacher to transfer his or her knowledge to the student. As a teacher, I have something important that my students should know, and I am going to give them that information. And although it is true that the teacher possesses more knowledge on his subject than his or her students, this outlook on learning is more about the teacher than the student. Student centered classrooms focus on the students’ desire and ability to acquire knowledge. I want to know something, and my teacher is here to help me figure or find it out. Ask your students what they want to know when possible, and let them play a part in determining what you learn in class.

2 FOCUS

It may seem obvious, but a teacher centered classroom is focused on the teacher. He or she stands at the front of the room, and all eyes are on him. A student centered classroom focuses on the student. Teachers move around the classroom and check in with students’ progress and productivity. Students do more of the talking, and class is designed to meet their needs rather than

the material the teacher hopes to cover. Make a point of avoiding traditional lectures. Make sure your students do more talking than you do each day, and let your students know that you are there as a resource for them.

3 STRUCTURE

Classrooms need some type of structure, but a teacher centered classroom puts more value on the plan than it does on the participants. There is an agenda or curriculum, and the material must be covered. Student centered classrooms, on the other hand, are more fluid and flexible. Sometimes the best lesson for the day is the unplanned lesson but the one that meets the needs of the students. Be flexible in what you cover in class. Take advantage of bunny trails and teachable moments. They may be the best lessons you cover all year!

4 OBJECTIVES

Those who look will see the subtle difference between the objectives of the teacher centered and the student centered classrooms. The former focus on teaching objectives. We must cover the material set out in the plans and do it in such a way to meet the teaching objectives. The latter classroom, however, focuses on the learning outcomes of the students. What will it take for the members of the class to learn particular points? That is what determines what is covered in class and how it is covered. Think about what you want your students to learn (or what they have said they want to learn) and then design a path to get them to that knowledge.

5 QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

In the teacher centered classroom, the teacher’s goal is to provide answers to his or her students. Again, it is a matter of the teacher having knowledge that he or she wants to impart to his students. The student centered classroom, however, focuses more on students asking questions. When students ask questions, they engage with the material and have a personal investment in the answers that are coming. Students and their interests influence what ma-

terial their classes contain. Encourage your students to ask questions. Pay attention to the questions they ask. Make sure you are meeting the needs of your students and not just the requirements of your curriculum.

6 GUIDANCE

Follow the leader might be an accurate description of the teacher centered classroom. I have material I am going to cover, and I want you to track with me. When a classroom is student centered, however, the teacher is more of a guide than a leader. The teacher points out important points on the students’ educational journey. They help students move in the right direction as they explore and motivate their own learning. Give your students a chance to discover knowledge or figure things out on their own. It may take longer to get to the final goal, but your students will gain more along the journey.

7 ACTIVITY

In the teacher centered classroom, students are passive. They are there to take in what the teacher presents. They are a sponge. In the student centered classroom, on the other hand, students are actively engaged in class. They influence so much of what happens in class, and they are actively participating. They are not a sponge taking in knowledge but an archaeologist digging for treasures of knowledge. Encourage your students’ inquisitiveness and curiosity. Show them you value their questions and their input, and make sure they know that you are there as a resource for them.

SOME DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TEACHER CENTERED CLASSROOM AND THE STUDENT CENTERED CLASSROOM ARE SUBTLE. OTHERS ARE BLARINGLY AT ODDS.

Some teachers may have a difficult time walking the narrow line between the two if they have pressure from administration but still want to meet the needs of their students. Ultimately, only you can decide what the best way to run your classroom is, but the more we can focus on students and their needs the better language learners they will become.

Be a Better Leader: Four Things Your Students Need to Know

The effort, determination and focus your students bring to their education is most important to successful language learning, but it is not the only piece to the puzzle. What you do and how you present yourself as their teacher can make a big impact on how engaged they are in classroom activities and, as a result, their language learning process. And while no teacher can please every student all of the time, you can make a difference in how your students view you and how engaged they are in class when you are sure to let them know these four things.

SHARE THESE 4 THINGS WITH YOUR STUDENTS

1 THEY NEED TO KNOW YOUR QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE.

Of course you are a qualified teacher. You wouldn't have gotten the job if you weren't. But it's important for your students to know your qualifications, too. Language instruction methods are not necessarily what they have experienced in their educational past, and these methods can sometimes seem silly or pointless. When your students understand your qualifications and respect your ability to teach, these unconventional methods become more palatable and more purposeful. Make sure your school advertises that its teachers are educated and qualified to teach, either in general terms (all of our teachers are certified) or with specific teacher bios posted on their website. In addition, don't hesitate to talk about yourself in class. That's not to say you should lecture about yourself and your past, but in icebreaker activities or other discussions where students will be sharing personal information, talk about your education and experience. Your students will be encouraged to know your professional history as well as your educational background.

2 THEY NEED TO KNOW WHEN OTHERS RECOGNIZE YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS.

Though your education and experience will say the most about your qualifications for teaching, your students will respect the achievements that others recognize as well. Feel free to talk about or display awards you have won, professional memberships or any other outside recognition of your teaching. Some foreign language classroom teaching methods may seem strange, in particular to adult students. When your students know that others in the educational field value what you do in your classroom, they will be more willing to trust you in these nontraditional activities and engage with the learning process. In addition, if you have published research or articles, encourage your school to publicize it. Bulletin boards and websites are great avenues for this. You can also use your publications in class with the copyright and authorship information still intact. Your students will see that you can not only help them, but that you are also helping other teachers in your field. And since some of your students will go on to be English teachers in their home countries once their studies are complete, they may appreciate the sharing of resources in your classroom and the permission to use them in their own classrooms.

3 THEY NEED TO KNOW THAT YOU KNOW THE LANGUAGE.

Your knowledge of the English language is essential for being a successful ESL teacher. Students will ask difficult questions from time to time, and you should be able to answer them. Not only that, you likely have additional knowledge that will garner respect from your students. Do not be afraid to show this knowledge in your classroom. You might do this by using the phonetic alphabet when teaching English words. You may point out common student mistakes

and instruct correct language use before those mistakes come up in class. Knowledge of language's origins will also go far to inspire respect in your students' minds. Be careful, though, when your knowledge contradicts that which your students have been taught in the past. It is bound to happen at some point or another, and you should be able to explain why your information is truer or better than what your students have been told in the past but with kindness and patience.

4 THEY NEED TO SEE THAT YOU ARE PROFESSIONAL.

Professionalism goes a long way in garnering respect from your students. Though different schools have different expectations and standards for teachers and different teachers themselves have different styles, you should give thought to how you present yourself to your students both in class and outside it. This includes the clothing you wear, how you behave in class, and your general preparedness. Be sure to arrive on time or early for class. Have your materials organized and ready to use. Make sure all necessary technology is working correctly before class, and end class on time. In addition, be aware of what may be appropriate and inappropriate for teachers where you teach and what your students will expect from you as their teacher.

THE BEST TEACHERS DO MORE THAN COVER THE CURRICULUM. THEY INSPIRE CONFIDENCE IN THEIR STUDENTS AND ENGAGE THOSE MEN AND WOMEN IN THE LANGUAGE LEARNING PROCESS. WHEN STUDENTS HAVE CONFIDENCE IN AND RESPECT FOR THEIR TEACHERS, THE LEARNING PROCESS IS SMOOTHER AND MORE EFFECTIVE.

10 Creative Ways to Check for Student Comprehension

Quizzes. Tests. Projects. We're all familiar with the formal ways to assess student learning at the end of a unit, but what about at the end of a class? When is it a good time to move on? When should we stay in this topic and review a bit slower? We can ask our students. "Does this make sense?" We may get a few brave students willing to say no, but mostly it will be silence which we will then take as boredom and likely move on. But, did they get it? Here are some ways to check for your students' comprehension of the lesson objectives:

10 CREATIVE WAYS TO CHECK FOR STUDENT COMPREHENSION

1 KEEP A LEARNING JOURNAL

Throughout the year, have students keep a comprehension journal. At the end of a particularly challenging lesson or at the end of a unit, give them time at the end of a lesson to write down their understanding of the lesson of the day. Periodically collect these and review to see if students are understanding what you need them to before deciding what to do the next day. These journals can be used as often or as little as you like. Using a journal will help keep all of their information in one place and can serve as a way for them to go back and review what they've learned throughout the term. Students can also exchange journals with each other from time to time and give feedback to one another.

2 EXIT SLIP

A more simplified comprehension check is an exit slip. Before students leave, ask them to jot down a few things they learned in the lesson or to summarize the important points of the day's lesson. Encourage them also to list any questions they might have. You can then look over these exit slips to determine if and what you need to review or if you can move on.

3 DAILY WARM UPS – BELL RINGERS

A way to get students working right a way is to have a review question from the previous day on the board, document camera, computer etc., ready for students to do as they come in. Consider a short fill in the blank, example, or other question that you might have on an exam for them to practice. Discuss it in class after everyone arrives to activate the information they learned yesterday and prepare them for the day's lesson. Not only will you have a bridge from the previous lesson, but you will be able to transition quickly into your teaching without trying to get all your students to settle down or focus.

4 PAIR AND TEACH

Teaching someone else new information is a great way to review and solidify what you have learned. At the end of class or at the beginning of the next day, pair students together and have one student be "the teacher." They should review the lesson with their partner by explaining and summarizing all of the main points. The partner must think of at least two questions to ask their "teacher." Have students switch partners and then switch roles so each student gets to be the teacher and practice explaining.

If you don't have time in class, get students' parents or friends involved and tell your students that they must find someone not in the class to explain the day's lesson. Have this person sign their notebook to show that they did their homework.

5 TELL ME HOW YOU FEEL

Give students five cards with their names on the back of each card to keep in their notebooks. Each card should have a corresponding ranking (either a number or a smiley face) that indicates their comprehension/comfort level with this particular topic (e.g., a scale from 1 = totally confused to 5 = easy, ready to move on). After any particular les-

son, ask students to choose one card that describes how they feel about that particular lesson and leave it face down on your desk as they leave the room. No one will have to know which number they gave so students can feel comfortable enough to be honest about their comprehension level. The next day you can return the cards and use them again whenever you need to.

6 GUIDED QUESTIONING

The simplest and most effective way is to randomly ask students questions to sum up or review at the end of class. Use popsicle sticks or something with students' names written on it so that you can be sure to get each and every student. Ask students for examples and be sure they can explain why the answered the way they did.

7 LET STUDENTS WRITE NOTES ON THE BOARD

At the end of class or at the beginning of the following class, give each student a board marker and an opportunity to write something that they learned on the board. This can be a fact, rule, or an example. For instance, if we have been studying adjective clauses, Student X might write "A clause = Subject + Verb", Student Y may write "You use 'who' for people and 'which' for things", and Student Z may write "I know the student who wrote this sentence."

After all students have had a chance, you have a board full of information about what you learned and your students feel as though they have contributed greatly. This is a great time for student collaboration as they help each other write their facts on the board, and you can observe which students are struggling. After all of the facts have been written, as a class you can review and correct any misrepresented information.

Variation: For a faster approach, arrange the students in a circle and toss around a ball or soft object. When the ball comes to them, students must say

their fact or example out loud.

8 CONCEPT MAPPING

Students learn best when they can associate new material to things they have already learned. Have students reflect on the new topic they've learned and ask them to group it or relate it to a previously studied topic or something else they know about English. For example, if they have been learning adjective clauses, they might say how similar adjective clauses look to WH questions because they both use who / where / when / which / whose. Give students Venn diagrams or concept maps to link related topics or highlight differences between them.

ing (using sites like Voice Thread and their cell phones, iPads, or taking a video on their computer) or talking with students one-on-one. However, if students don't have the technology to record themselves, encourage them to write it out in bullet form.

EVEN THE BEST-PLANNED LESSONS CAN BECOME INEFFECTIVE IF THE STUDENTS DON'T COMPREHEND THE MATERIAL. KNOWING WHERE EACH OF YOUR STUDENTS IS STRUGGLING IS THE KEY TO HELPING THEM BE SUCCESSFUL, EVEN IF YOU'RE TEACHING A LARGE CLASS. TRY A FEW OF THESE WAYS IN YOUR NEXT LESSON TO SEE HOW THE MATERIAL HAS BEEN RECEIVED!

9 REFLECTION AT HOME

Often students think they understand while they are in class in the presence of their teacher, but when they go home, they find they didn't understand everything while trying to do their homework. Have students reflect at home to get a more realistic idea of what they comprehended. They could do a learning journal or you can involve technology. Create anonymous surveys (using sites like surveymonkey.com or the class management site Edmodo) and ask students how they feel about their grasp of the topic.

10 ERROR CORRECTION / PROBLEM-SOLVING

Pose a problem or editing task on the board or for homework. Instruct students that when they answer, they need to give a step-by-step analysis of what they were thinking when they chose the correct answer, similar to showing your work when doing a math problem. For example, I gave my students this fill in the blank question about adjective clauses: I like Mr. Smith _____ works down the street. Their task was to choose the correct relative pronoun and punctuation to fill in the blank. An analysis I might expect from a student would look something like this "Mr. Smith is a person => who or that. Mr. Smith is a name => non-essential adjective clause. Non-essential clauses= who (NO that) and comma because it's extra information so it needs extra punctuation. Final answer= , who."

This works best if they can explain their solution orally by voice record-

9 Items that Make a Perfect ESL Self Study Center

Do you want to give your students the freedom and independence to take charge of their own language learning but don't know where to start? Have you thought about setting up a self study center but don't know what you need? These nine elements of the best self study centers, if you use them, will you're your students everything they need to ensure success as they learn.

9 ITEMS THAT MAKE A PERFECT ESL SELF STUDY CENTER

1 READING MATERIAL

Reading material is a given for any self study center, but providing the right reading material is key for keeping your students interested and making sure they continue using the center. Provide authentic and ESL specific texts in a variety of difficulty levels, though most should be around the skill level your class targets. You should try to include different types of reading material including articles, stories, charts, letters and instructions. For each reading selection, try to have comprehension questions as well as an answer key for your students. If you like, sort material according to difficulty level or by topic.

2 LISTENING MATERIAL

Like your reading material, the most successful self study centers have listening materials at a variety of difficulty levels but will focus primarily on the current level of your students. You should include cds, podcasts, recorded books and radio programs if possible. You may want to make a computer available as well as cd players and digital recordings. To make sure your center is helpful to all your students, provide headphones to keep disturbance to a minimum. With each of the materials you should again include some comprehension questions or extension activities for your students to use after listening.

3 PRACTICE TESTS

Many students study who are studying ESL now will very soon find themselves taking a standardized test of their English skills. Giving your students practice TOEFL, TOIC and similar standardized tests will allow them to familiarize themselves with the types of questions these exams and the structure the tests follow. Actual test booklets are best, rather than texts explaining the tests, and make sure you have answer keys so students can check their own work.

4 PRONUNCIATION MATERIALS

Pronunciation is an issue most ESL students will struggle with for their entire English speaking lives. Though very few people ever attain absolute perfect pronunciation, many students enjoy practicing their pronunciation and getting feedback throughout their English studies. Though having pronunciation texts are helpful, what makes a bigger impact on your students is being able to hear their own voices. Having recording methods in your self study center can make a big difference in how your students view their own pronunciation. You can provide digital recorders, cassette recorders, language lab technology or language pronunciation software for students to record themselves.

5 GRAMMAR MATERIALS

Traditionally, books and grammar worksheets have provided the most self study instruction in language classrooms. As always, answer sheets are key to your students getting the most they can from your self study center. And while these still have a lot to offer ESL students, the best centers will also include software programs which make learning grammar more fun and interactive. Try bookmarking websites with grammar games or purchasing programs that do the same.

6 VIDEO MATERIALS

While some listening material will be nothing more than audio texts, video segments are another key to creating the best self study centers. Since a large part of communication is contained outside the words a person speaks, being able to watch speakers will be beneficial to your students. You may include digital videos, vlogs, movies and television programs at your center. For each, make sure you have comprehension materials or extension activities to follow up with.

7 A NOTEBOOK

Leaving a blank notebook in your self study center gives your students an opportunity to provide you feedback on what they have used and found useful or less than useful. Students can also make recommendations to their classmates as well as record questions they might have and answer those of their classmates. You can also put specific instructions in this notebook or include a page of FAQ for technology issues.

8 INSTRUCTIONS

To make sure your students get the most out of your self study center, give them some guidance. You can make recommendations for the material they should cover or simply explain what is available and how to use it. Posters work well for this, or give each student a checklist of the material they should use before the end of the semester.

9 YOU

The best self study centers do not throw students to the wolves and leave them to fend for themselves. Being present in your self study center will give you a chance to assess students' work, answer students' questions and evaluate what is and isn't working. The best self study centers are never complete. You will find adding and removing materials useful for keeping students interested as well as compiling the most effective set of materials.

We Need to Talk: 6 Conversations to Have with “Difficult” Students

Most of us hate those dreaded “We need to talk” conversations, having been on both the talking and listening sides. They are, however, sometimes necessary when dealing with unacceptable difficulties generated by one individual. This is true for the classroom as in other walks of life: there are the students who seem to have and cause more than their share of difficulties whether it be academic, interpersonal, commitment, etc. Ignoring the problem does not work, nor does sending the student subtle messages through body language that you are displeased with her behavior. What does work is a quiet and calm conversation. What I find helpful is having a set conversation for specific problems. This works because there are a limited set of student difficulties that take up most of our time, and if I have a set conversation in mind, a routine, I’m less likely to get derailed by an emotional response from the student or taken off on a tangent on an issue of less importance.

6 CONVERSATIONS FOR DIFFICULT STUDENTS

1 THE “ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?” CONVERSATION

Sometimes students display such bizarre behavior — sitting by themselves and glowering, openly hostile responses to peers and the instructor -- that it warrants investigation. This is especially true if it’s a sudden change from the student’s past behavior in class. A nonconfrontational inquiry about the student’s well-being after class might be in order and even appreciated. You might find he has been under extreme stress, for example, due to personal or academic difficulties. Listening to the student and suggesting some constructive ways to address his problems can help him get through the difficult period without further damaging his relationships.

2 THE “WHAT’S BEEN GOING ON?” CONVERSATION

Occasionally there is the student who is habitually late and/or truant. As with the difficult student, this may be a continuation of past behavior or a radical departure from it. Again, a calm discussion with the student about what is going on

in his or her life can offer clear things up: sometimes it’s as simple as loss of transportation to more complex sleep disorder issues that keep the student from waking on time. Usually these students are very apologetic, aware of the problem, and commit to improving in this area.

3 THE “I NEED YOUR COOPERATION” CONVERSATION

Sometimes a student will exhibit such poor peer relations — belligerent hostile attitude, confrontational, poor participation and help within groups — that a conversation with the student seems warranted. This is often best addressed as a team effort, as in “I need your cooperation.” Put this way, the student may see his efforts to better getting along with peers as part of a larger goal of a pleasant class atmosphere and is more likely to work with the student than if he sees his behavior as only about him. But in gently reminding him, in a call for cooperation, that his behavior affects others, which places him within the context of the human race as a whole, he might very well begin to make more of an effort in class.

4 THE “WOULD YOU LIKE EXTRA HELP?” CONVERSATION

Sometimes a student is doing so poorly in class, on nearly every paper and quiz, that it might warrant a private conversation on getting extra academic help in the form of tutoring. Often students are relieved at such an offer and may have been unaware that help was available, one of the reasons for their academic failure, of course. I can’t think of a time when a student rebuffed this suggestion, in fact. They probably wanted extra help all along, but were afraid to ask or did not know it was available.

5 THE “WELL, LET’S LOOK AT THE GRADEBOOK” CONVERSATION

In contrast to the student experiencing academic failure, realizing it, and wanting help but afraid to ask, is the student experiencing failure and in denial about it, despite the poor grades that come back on papers and tests. When the teacher takes aside the student at midterm and tries to approach the issue, the student may become defensive: there’s no

problem, her grades are no worse than her best friend’s, etc. Here the teacher should present the cold evidence, in the form of the gradebook. Usually here the student admits there is a problem, and then the teacher can suggest extra help.

Other times, however, the student continues to demonstrate denial and perhaps some paranoia: the teacher doesn’t like her, the quizzes are stacked against her, etc. Continued assurances that this is simply not true and the student should seek extra help may work but the student may have to experience more failure before approaching the teacher herself.

6 THE “WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS?” CONVERSATION

There is that occasional student who makes you wonder why he is in the class: he spends the time in class goofing off, joking with his friends, not participating in the work, and never turns in work. This may warrant a “What are your goals?” conversation, to find from the student what he wants out of life, what his plans are, how the class may help him. Often he can’t say — he registered for no better reason than his best friend did. Occasionally, though, he’ll mention a goal, usually so lofty that he can’t really think of a direct means of achieving it, probably leading to the slacker behavior — a too vague or too unrealistic goal is not much better than none at all. Helping the student clarify the goal with some specific questions: “You say you want to be an actor. What kind? Where do you want to work? How does this class help you toward that goal?” may begin to clarify with the student what he wants and how to get there.

ADDRESSING DIFFICULT STUDENT BEHAVIOR IS NOT AN EASY TASK AS STUDENTS ARE OFTEN IN DENIAL AND THESE MAY BE INGRAINED SETS OF BEHAVIOR. But by remaining open to being approached and having a set of suggestions for addressing core difficulties, a lot of difficult behavior can be alleviated. Not all “difficult” students are bad people, of course: in fact, most aren’t even difficult people in general. However, they are having, for whatever reason, difficulties in class. With some discussion and intervention, these difficult students can get back on track.

7 Ways to Get Through to Your “Unreachable” Students

We’ve all had the “unreachable” student who doesn’t seem quite “there,” mentally or physically. He sits in the back of the room, doesn’t respond to questions, doesn’t interact with the teacher or other students, often doesn’t turn in work, and leaves right after class without saying anything to anyone. He avoids eye contact and speaks in a whisper, when he speaks at all. What is going on with this student? He may just be terminally shy, or there may be drug or alcohol abuse involved, or he may have a physical or mental health problem. Whatever its source, what are some ways to deal with the problem?

HOW TO GET THROUGH TO YOUR “UNREACHABLE” STUDENTS

1 INCLUDE THE STUDENT.

As much as possible, persist in drawing the student into the class: call on her, try to get her to at least sit in on a group discussion, ask for her opinion. Treat the student as if she is “there,” in other words, even though her actions might say otherwise.

2 TALK TO THE STUDENT.

Make it nonconfrontational. Ask her about her life and interests. You might find a key interest – a shared interest in books, film, or cars, for example — that can help you relate to the student and share with her, throughout the term, even if the conversations seem one-sided. However, if the annoying teacher brings up a new film or movie enough times before or after class to Ms. Unreachable, she will eventually be forced to respond, especially if you bring in a book to lend her.

3 FIND A BUDDY / MENTOR.

Most students can by themselves develop relationships in class that in part keep them coming to class - the “unreachable” student may need some encouragement in this. With group or pair work, try to set this student up with the same person or people so that a relationship can form. Or speak to a student

who seems tolerant and nonjudgmental and see if he will work with the student, serving as a mentor. One of the key elements to success in a class is developing relationships within that class, and this is true even for “unreachable” students who mostly seem as if they don’t want anything to do with the other students. It’s probably not the case, and the not caring or “loner” attitude is mostly a defense mechanism against the possibility of being hurt and also a cover for poor social skills and lack of ability to relate to others.

4 TALK TO HIM AGAIN.

If your first attempt didn’t work, talk to the student a little more firmly. Ask what is going on, if he feels well, if he is having any problems. You might consider that if the student continues to act withdrawn and does not respond to any of your attempts to reach him, that there might be an underlying physical or psychological issue involved and try talking to him again — gently, very gently — about perhaps checking in at the student health center for evaluation. It’s a sensitive issue that teachers aren’t supposed to involve themselves in much, but you may be the student’s only available advocate. And if a student is showing some of the signs of chronic depression, someone needs to act.

5 ENCOURAGE JOURNAL WRITING.

Have the withdrawn student — or all of your students, so she won’t feel singled out — keep a journal to record responses to the class material. The student may then “open up” on paper in a way she wouldn’t have face-to-face, and you might find out some material that is useful in understanding the student — what is going on in her home life, for example, or a past or present learning or health concern that might be at the root of the behavior.

6 SET UP PERMANENT OR SEMI-PERMANENT GROUPS.

What many “unreachable” students — as well as students in general — long for is belonging. This is a broader hu-

man need, of course, and exactly what tends to get lost at large colleges or even high schools, where students rush from fifty-minute class to class, don’t get to know their classmates, and where the instructors might not even know students’ names. My fondest memories of class was where some community was formed. For example, a favorite graduate course was in educational law, not something that would ordinarily be a favorite topic, but the instructor set up the class so that it became a community, where we researched and presented court cases together and in the process learned about each other and knew each other’s strengths and weaknesses. This is a community, and it is precisely what many students, like “unreachable” students, need to draw them into campus life and away from the alienation they are obviously feeling.

7 GET OUT OF THE CLASSROOM.

Many people feel “stifled” in the confines of a classroom, “unreachable” and less troubled students alike. So getting students away occasionally from an atmosphere of stale air, old books, and chalk dust can be beneficial, even if it’s for a walk across campus to the student union for a cup of coffee shared on the steps. Here students tend to drop their “class selves” and relax, engaging in more authentic interaction, such as laughing and joking, and that may be the case for the unreachable student as well. If this works, other such impromptu outings can be planned: e.g. “Take a walk around campus, note what you see, as many details as possible. Come back and write a paragraph about it.”

ONLY ONE OR TWO CASES A YEAR, AT THE MOST, OF “UNREACHABLE” STUDENTS TURN OUT TO BE ANYTHING MORE SERIOUS THAN AN INTROVERTED STUDENT MAKING A DIFFICULT TRANSITION TO COLLEGE, THANKFULLY. With a few steps such as including the student, getting to know her, setting up mentors, engaging in journal writing, and creating a community, the unreachable student can be reached and transformed into a well-adjusted college student.

How to Help the Student who May Have a L.D. or ADD

I've had a young man in my integrated skills ESL class for a couple of semesters now - I'll call him "Juan" - a class made up of mostly Latino/Latina migrant farm workers and their families in rural northern California.

They are drawn from a largely poor, migrant farmer population. Although many of them have been here for years, their English acquisition is low, given the circumstances of their lives: they haven't been able to attend school, and they have little contact with English speakers. Others have fairly strong basic conversational skills in English, having had contact with English speakers for years, but have limited literacy. All are motivated learners who take education seriously, seeing it as connected to upward mobility.

So far, there is probably nothing remarkable in this class description to the ESL teacher—it seems like a typical ESL class. This is correct. However, one of the learners in this class, Juan, is not so typical. He is obviously bright and articulate, has been employed in the farming industry in California for years, and seems to be an acculturated American in many ways - having a car, home, job, and family here. Some of his behavior in class, however, is not so typical. He arrives late on the days he comes and takes perhaps ten to fifteen minutes in locating his seat, the day's handouts, the schedule, and the sign-in sheet - although these items are always in the same place and have been since he first came to class months ago. He then takes another five minutes or so to locate the correct page in the book and only after consulting his peers in both Spanish and English - and the page is written on the board, as always. And this is on the days when he brings his book, and it is the correct book, which isn't always the case. When he becomes aware that he is causing a disruption, he is deeply apologetic and obviously embarrassed. While many might think his behavior is deliberate, or the result of

lack of concern for his education, or simply the result of not understanding English, I believe it may very well be the result of an undiagnosed learning disability and/or attention disorder due to a number of signs.

3 SYMPTOMS OF AN UNDIAGNOSED LEARNING DISABILITY OR ATTENTION DEFICIT

1 NO ONE ELSE IS CONFUSED

There would be an impulse among many educators to think that Juan's difficulties are simply the result of not understanding English well—he doesn't know what page we're on, that is, due to simply not speaking English, not because he's disabled in some way. This at face value seems reasonable: doctors, for example, have long gone by the dictum, "When you hear hoof beats, think horses, not zebras"—that is, rule out the most obvious and least exotic diagnosis first, as this is also the most likely. However, as in this case, if the student speaks English better than most in the class, and all of the other students understand what we are doing, something besides language seems to be at play.

2 REPEATED CONFUSION OVER THE ROUTINE

The assignment is always written in the same place. The handouts are always located in the same place. We always use the same book. Juan's seat has not changed since the first week of class, nor has the class time. Yet Juan remains confused and is still in the process of adjusting while other students learned the routine the first week of class and have long moved on to focusing on course content. Keeping track of details, routines, and schedules is a major symptom of an attention or learning disability.

3 TROUBLE WITH SIMPLE TASKS

Juan is capable of discussions in English on rather complex topics, like the economic difficulties in the U.S. today or inequities in our immigration policies. He's bright and even articulate. However, he has supreme difficulties in even simple tasks related to literacy like keeping his place in a book as we're reading aloud or copying something I've written on the board in the correct place in his text. While he doesn't necessarily "reverse letters," as is the stereotype of "dyslexia," this difficulty of maintaining his focus on the task enough to complete it in sequential order is suggestive of a processing problem or learning disability.

4 METHODS TO HELP A STUDENT YOU SUSPECT MIGHT HAVE AN LD/ADD

1 DIAGNOSIS/REFERRAL

While I might strongly suspect that a student like Juan has a processing/attention problem, of course I'm not qualified to make a formal diagnosis and wouldn't feel comfortable doing that. I can, however, without even mentioning anything about ADD or LD, tell Juan he might stop by the student services office of the campus and talk with them. He might actually open up about the problems he's having and get a diagnosis there, and short of that, at least get some extra tutoring, which also would be of help.

2 PROMPTING

Gently prompting Juan as to what we're doing when he comes in the door helps: "Class actually begins at 6 pm, the attendance sheet and handouts are up on my desk, we're on page 48 of your student text", remind him of what he should be doing. I direct these reminders at the whole class, and usually at least one other student realizes he's on the wrong page or she hasn't signed in, so Juan

doesn't feel alone—and he isn't. Human attention in our connected and fast-paced world is being taxed in a way it in no way has before in our evolutionary history, and most of us have attention problems to a more or less degree.

recognizing the difficulties the individual student might have in these areas and employing some relatively simple strategies, the teacher can help not only the individual student succeed and manage his learning, but also the entire class.

3 CHECKING IN

When students are working independently, I find going by Juan's desk frequently and just glancing at his work to make sure he's on the right track helps. In this way, he can check himself before he writes a whole column of words, for example, in the wrong place.

4 PEER TUTORING

Teaming Juan up with a strong learner in the class has been helpful. In addition to helping Juan individually, creating a supportive learning community where students feel they are working cooperatively, not competitively, is of benefit to the entire class. It's been observed that techniques that help a student with learning difficulties actually benefit the entire class. Juan is lucky in that he lives in a small, rural Latin community, the kind that is historically collective rather than competitive in nature, and his peers' impulse is generally to give assistance to him, as they would anyone, when he appears to need help. But even if the learning community is not so supportive already, this community can be built by the instructor through emphasizing community over competition, through setting up group projects, and by recognizing each student as a member of the "team" who contributes to that team through her unique strengths.

IT CAN BE EASY TO BECOME FRUSTRATED WITH THE STUDENT WHO APPEARS TO HAVE A LEARNING OR ATTENTION PROBLEM - THE TENDENCY, BECAUSE SUCH STUDENTS ARE OFTEN GENERALLY INTELLIGENT, MIGHT BE TO DISMISS THEM AS "NOT MOTIVATED" OR "DELIBERATELY DISRUPTIVE."

Students with these difficulties may in fact be used to being seen this way, and may begin to believe it of themselves. However, in a world that places increasing demands on our focus and attention, there are more and more students who present with difficulties in learning and attention. By

So Sorry to Keep Bothering You: Dealing with the Insecure Student

RECENTLY THERE HAVE BEEN MORE TEACHER CONCERNS WITH STUDENTS WHO HAVE A SURFEIT OF SELF-ESTEEM RATHER THAN A LACK OF IT.

Teacher staff rooms are rife with tales of the demands and inflated view of their own abilities from entitled students. This may, however, be more of an American phenomenon: the United States, after all, has traditionally placed a high value on confidence and self-esteem. ESL students, however, often come from cultures that value modesty and respect of others over confidence and self-respect. In some ways, this comes as a welcome relief: the student who acknowledges the teacher might just know more than herself in the specific area of study. However, there are instances when the student is so self-effacing, insecure, and apparently lacking in self-worth that it is cause for concern for both the student's education and overall well-being. What are some of the signs of critical insecurity and what are the ways to address it if it is actually interfering with the student's ability to learn?

SIGNS OF PROBLEMATIC INSECURITY IN STUDENTS

I say "problematic" because while many people may be insecure — in fact, most people, in specific situations — it is only a problem if it is to a degree that it is interfering with the student's ability to learn and function. Following are some of the signs that a student whose insecurity is problematic.

1 "HIDES OUT."

One of the major signs of a student with problems with self-esteem is that she "hides out" in the back of the class, where the teacher can't see her (or so she thinks), and where other students find it difficult to interact with her. She may also put up a "wall" of books or electronic devices, such as laptops or cell phones, that prevent the teacher or other students from interacting with her.

Excessive use of electronics in class is often regarded by instructors as simply rude, but often it is used as a vehicle to avoid social intercourse — the student is so involved with the device or book that she is relieved of interacting with people face-to-face.

2 SELF-EFFACING TO A FAULT.

Another sign of a student struggling with self-esteem is that he is extremely apologetic for asking for anything: for example, apologizes repeatedly for "imposing" on a couple of moments of the instructor's time. In fact, the repeated use of the phrase "I'm sorry," often in inappropriate situations for which the individual should feel no responsibility or guilt, is a strong sign of an insecure individual anywhere.

3 DEVALUES OR DISMISSES LEGITIMATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

In some cultures — including in the United States, at least traditionally — it is expected to shrug off compliments or accomplishments, as bragging about them seems rude. Therefore, students who do this — "Oh, that's okay, I'm not really all that good a writer, but I try hard" — are often just engaging in an expected show of modesty. However, if a student repeatedly pushes aside compliments over every achievement, she may actually be struggling with feelings of self-worth, really seeing nothing remarkable in her abilities or actually seeing them as drawbacks.

4 EXCESSIVE FOCUS ON SUPPOSED FAULTS.

Just as a student who is truly insecure may dismiss his real accomplishments, he may also focus excessively on a set of real or imagined shortcomings that are often minor in nature: poor handwriting or organizational skills, old clothes, lack of athletic ability, and so forth. Again, a student who makes a minor joke about a short-coming: "Oh, I am such an airhead, I forget everything," may be just engaging in a show

of conventional self-effacement, but if seems habitual, there may be more underlying concerns involved.

Again, all of these symptoms may indicate a lack of self-esteem. If they are extreme, they may actually be symptoms of underlying depression, and the teacher may consider referring the student to counseling services. Otherwise, if the insecurity seems mostly related to academic work, there are some ways the instructor can address it within the confines of the class. Since most students suffer from varying degrees of insecurity at different times, these methods are likely to benefit the entire class and need not be focused on a particular student.

METHODS TO ADDRESS SELF-ESTEEM IN STUDENTS

The following methods can help the entire class improve their academic self-confidence, which in turn creates a comfort zone and ability to learn as the student is not longer so focused on her alleged shortcomings and is freed up to learn the course content.

1 SET UP A LEARNING COMMUNITY.

One of the best ways to improve self-esteem is to set up opportunities for successful interaction with others. Humans are by nature social creatures - hence our sense of self is heavily related to how well we integrate in a community. A sense of community can be achieved by setting up common goals for the class, such as completion of a major project related to English learning, and roles for each student toward that goal. The classes I remember most fondly are those that recognized my individual contribution to the class.

2 RECOGNIZE THE STUDENT'S REAL EFFORTS AND PROGRESS.

Recognizing the individual student's

value to the group is another way to build self-esteem: it is extremely validating to have one's individual achievements acknowledged, such as how a student's graphic skills really contributed toward the class website. This recognizes both the student's individuality as well as the contribution to the group.

3 TEACH STUDENTS STUDY SKILLS TO TAKE CONTROL OF THEIR OWN LEARNING

Finally, a major way to build student self-esteem within an academic setting is to teach such study skills as keeping a calendar of due dates, skimming text for efficient reading, outlining compositions, and distinguishing between reliable and unreliable sources. Recognizing they are in control of their own learning, rather than dependent on the goodwill of the teacher, empowers students and builds their self-esteem.

IMPROVING SELF-ESTEEM IN STUDENTS GOES BEYOND SIMPLY OFFERING VAGUE COMPLIMENTS BUT RATHER INVOLVES TEACHING STUDENTS CERTAIN THINKING HABITS, SUCH AS HOLDING REALISTIC VIEWS OF THEIR OWN STRENGTHS AND SHORTCOMINGS AND TAKING CHARGE THEIR OWN LEARNING.

The results, however, in students who recognize their value as learners and as members of a community are gratifying.

But I'm Just a Student: Helping Students Improve Self-Esteem

The current generation of college students has been accused of suffering from not, as in generations prior, a lack of self-esteem but rather of too much, evidenced in their entitled attitudes, demands, lack of insight into their own weaknesses, etc. Some of this is true in a culture that has been focused heavily, especially in the past several decades, on building its young people's self-esteem, through sometimes dubious methods such as excessive praise for modest efforts and achievements. However, there are those students, particularly those of underprivileged backgrounds with little family support, for whom self-esteem is really an issue, evidenced by their timid manner, lack of eye contact, tendency to sit in the back of the room where they can't see or hear, lack of interaction with other students, extreme unwillingness to ask for help, and so forth. Is there anything a teacher—rather than a psychologist or parent—can do for such students? And if so, what?

IS IT TRULY A SELF-ESTEEM PROBLEM? AND IS LACK OF CONFIDENCE ALWAYS A PROBLEM?

Problems in American culture in general and its students in particular tend to be diagnosed as "lack of confidence" or "poor self-esteem." This is perhaps not surprising for a people for whom confidence is an important value: confidence in one's achievements and person is highly valued in the U.S., rather than the modesty that tends to be more so in other cultures. However, not every problem a student has necessarily stems from lack of self-esteem. For example, my inability to serve at tennis well had more to do with having been improperly coached than not having confidence in the ability to play. Sometimes it really is a lack of skill, not lack of confidence. And sometimes lack of confidence is not at all a bad thing: if the student lacks the confidence in getting up and delivering a speech, it may actually be the case that the student is able to deliver the speech and really does just need

some encouragement. However, it also may very well signal her lack of preparation for the task and the need to practice more, resulting in a reasonable lack of confidence. So before the teacher even begins to delve into the whole "confidence" issue, he should first determine if the student just needs further practice, better instruction, more explanation, and so forth, rather than a pep talk. And if it is actually a need for more instruction rather than esteem building, the student's increased confidence is actually likely to be a natural outcome of mastery of the task after further preparation.

However, if the teacher does find that the student does know the material well but has developed a case of nerves, or the student is so lacking in confidence in general that it impairs his ability to learn, some steps can be taken to increase the student's self-esteem and move toward content learning and mastery—the goal of instruction, after all (rather than confidence in and of itself).

HOW TO PROCEED

1 QUESTION STUDENT'S PRECONCEIVED NOTIONS

Often students enter class with preconceived notions that they "just aren't good at languages," they "aren't good in school," or they "aren't born writers," and so forth. Probing and discussing these preconceptions with students individually or the class as a whole—as they are common preconceptions worth addressing—can help: most people over the age of seven or so have to work hard to learn another language - no one is a born writer as humans don't just begin writing at certain age as they do walking or speaking, and writing is something everyone has to learn, etc., can help students ultimately banish some of these blocks to their self-esteem and see they are really in most cases in no worse shape than anyone else.

2 STOP COMPARING

One of the biggest confidence destroyers is comparing oneself to others. There will almost always, for most of us, be others who are better students, faster athletes, more interesting conversationalists, etc.—if not at our own school, then in our neighborhoods, or among the famous, etc. Rather than comparing oneself to others—ultimately futile, as we are never going to be like another person in achievement—I encourage students to, as athletes do, compare their performance to their own past performance, the athlete's notion of "personal best." What has been your personal best in completing homework or taking a test in the past? Can you do a little better on the next similar task? In this way, students will make reasonable progress without the destruction to confidence that is inevitable in comparing oneself to others.

3 HELP STUDENT MANAGE HIS OWN LEARNING

A major confidence builder for the student is the realization that she can manage and to a degree control her own learning: she doesn't have to rely on the goodwill of her teacher, help from her friends, or the mercy of the gods, and so forth, but rather her understanding of her own learning process, a very powerful confidence builder. Teaching students such self-management techniques for learning as setting reasonable goals, breaking those goals into steps, keeping track of important dates on a calendar, and scheduling time to study can serve students well not only in college later in the work force as these are really life skills as well as study skills.

4 PRAISE LEGITIMATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

I often hated to be praised as a student and did what I could to avoid it: nothing set my teeth on edge faster than a teacher's chirpy "great job!" In talking with peers, I've found I'm not

alone in this reaction, the hatred of praise to the extent of avoiding accomplishment to avoid the accompanying praise. Why would this be? It has, I believe, its origins in two negative qualities about praise: first its generic “great job!” nature—the teacher doesn’t even have to know who I am or what I did to deliver this praise, which I suspect might sometimes be the case. In the second place, it was so often delivered in the face of such modest accomplishment—correctly filling out a form or arranging desks in a straight line—that the implicit message of the praise was that not much more could be expected of me. Rather than this generic praise over nothing—which most students can correctly read as “phony”—praising legitimate accomplishments with specific recognition is much more helpful: “Esmeralda, this is such a powerful image here at the beginning of your story that it pulled me in, and I couldn’t put it down after that.” What student is not going to go on to complete her story in the face of such recognition?

5 RECOGNIZE STUDENTS. DON’T PRAISE THEM.

“Praise” again is generic and behaviorist: it’s what I do for my dog -- “Good job, boy!” – to get him to sit correctly because he knows nothing about individual accomplishments and only wants my approval. Students want their individual efforts recognized, for me to see how much they’ve developed in their willingness and ability to engage in conversation in English, for example. They don’t need a treat from me. Giving a student individual recognition is a little harder because it implies knowing the student and her accomplishments individually, but ultimately it’s the only “praise” that’s going to matter to a student.

BUILDING A STUDENT’S SELF-ESTEEM IS NOT EASY. IN FACT, I SUSPECT IT CAN’T BE DONE, ANY MORE THAN A TEACHER CAN LEARN FOR A STUDENT. HOWEVER, THROUGH TAKING THE STEPS OF DIFFERENTIATING BETWEEN TRUE LACK OF CONFIDENCE AND LACK OF SKILL, WORKING ON BUILDING STUDENT SKILL RATHER THAN FOCUSING SO MUCH ON EMPTY CONFIDENCE, HELPING STUDENTS MANAGE THEIR OWN LEARNING PROCESS WILL RESULT IN COMPETENT AND CONFIDENT LEARNERS.

Addressing the Flow of Students in and Out of Class

Adult-level, noncredit ESL classes offered at adult school and community college campuses are often designated “open-entry/open-exit,” which means that students can come and go as they please. In truth, because they are there voluntarily, students take their studies seriously and rarely abuse this privilege: if they stop coming to class, it is usually for a legitimate reason such as family or work commitments. In addition, that students may join the class whenever they can also has its advantages for them: they don’t have to wait until the beginning of the next semester (by which time they might very well have returned to their own countries) to begin study. So while the open-entry/open-exit model provides a lot of advantages to the student unable to commit to studying during a traditional semester, this model does also present unique challenges to the teacher. Fortunately, there are ways to meet these challenges and create a true learning community for students for the often short time there are in class despite the “revolving door” of students in and out of class.

CHALLENGES OF THE OPEN-ENTRY/OPEN-EXIT MODEL

1 UNSTABLE STUDENT POPULATION

The first challenge to the open-entry/open-exit/noncredit model is it has by nature an unstable student population — the group of students the teacher has on Monday is not necessarily the same group that will be there at the next class on Wednesday. This of course has in turn a number of administrative and instructional implications.

2 MULTILEVEL NATURE

An open-entry/open-exit class students are not taking for a grade is almost certainly going to be multilevel — students entering the class at different points of the course did not come from the same prerequisite course, as

would be traditional, but from a variety of backgrounds and are at different instructional levels with different needs. This presents another challenge in instruction and assessment.

3 NO GRADING

A class that is not for credit and which students can enter and leave at any point will also usually be nongraded. This is of course mostly a relief to instructors and students alike—no need to design, study for, take, and record quiz and other coursework grade—but it also presents a challenge for overall instruction: the point of assessment is of course to measure student growth: desirable for both student and teacher whatever the structure of the class.

THESE ARE INDEED CHALLENGES FOR THE OVERALL STRUCTURE AND LEARNING THAT TAKES PLACE IN THE CLASS. FORTUNATELY, THERE ARE SEVERAL METHODS TO ADDRESS THESE CONCERNS.

METHODS OF ADDRESSING CHALLENGES OF THE OPEN-ENTRY/OPEN-EXIT CLASS

1 ROUTINE FOR NEWCOMERS

Routines are in general important for both teachers and students, to keep the class on track, but especially so in an open-entry/open-exit program. If the teacher has a set routine for greeting the new student, getting the course syllabus/information to her, and otherwise orienting her to the class, the class can proceed relatively smoothly when a new student or students enter the class.

2 INITIAL ASSESSMENT

Initial assessment is important to inform instruction: are students mostly one level, or are they scattered evenly throughout? What are some common interests: vocational

or academic English, for example? Does a particular language skill need to be addressed: do most students need work on academic writing, for example, or everyday conversation? An informal initial assessment on the first or second class meeting, even if the class is noncredit/nongraded, helps enormously in choosing course materials and planning a tentative sequence of instruction.

3 FLEXIBILITY

Even if there is an overall course structure, as there should be, day-to-day flexibility in instruction and lesson plans, given that the student make-up can change from day to day, is required. So the activity you had planned to peer review each other’s essays, for example, or discuss a reading assignment, may have to change if the students who are in attendance did not complete this assignment. Having alternate activities ready, such as a set of journal or discussion topics, is helpful in this case.

4 MULTILEVEL GROUPS

While a multilevel class may seem at first to be a disadvantage to an open-entry class, it can actually be an advantage. A teacher’s first impulse may be to put students in leveled groups — having all of the more advanced students work together, for example — there are perhaps more advantages to having students work in multi-level groups. In multilevel groups, for example, there are opportunities for peer tutoring. The more advanced students can teach or model the material for less advanced students, and in explaining the material, the advanced students also further cement their own understanding.

5 INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS

What happens on those days when only five students show up because the other students are celebrating a cultural holiday or are taking care of a shared visa concern? This is a perfect time for students to catch up

work on individual projects. If students are all working on an individual project of interest, such as researching career opportunities in the health field in the U.S., not only are they improving research skills, adding to their knowledge bank, and making valuable contacts, they can work at their own pace and when they have unexpected free time. Students can also share their learning with each other, raising everyone's knowledge level.

6 PORTFOLIOS

In a nontraditional, noncredit class, traditional midterms and finals may be impractical, given the nature of the class and that students have not participated in the same sequence of learning. This is a challenge, but also a unique opportunity to engage in portfolio assessment. There are many different kinds of student portfolios: a common one in which students place representative pieces of their work, such as essays, over the course of the term. At the end of the term, they can be assessed or “graded” on overall development, more valuable than being judged against their peers’ work or a set of abstract standards, in most cases. Also, the instructor, instead of simply assigning a “B” grade, can write several individual comments on the portfolio: on its strengths, areas for development, and overall growth demonstrated — again, more valuable information than a single grade.

CERTAINLY THE UNGRADED, NON-CREDIT CLASS PRESENTS UNIQUE CHALLENGES. BUT IT ALSO PRESENTS UNIQUE OPPORTUNITIES IN TERMS OF FLEXIBILITY, PEER INSTRUCTION, AND INDIVIDUALIZATION OF CURRICULUM.

From Balkanization to Integration: How to Improve Student Relations

Almost every ESL teacher has experienced it: you walk in the first day, and find a sort of Balkanization going on in your class already, the students divided into two camps, the Soviet students on one side, for example, and the Asian students on the other.

They choose to sit with their friends and family, it seems, but at the same time they aren't interacting much with anyone outside of their tight-knit group. As the semester progresses, the situation does not get any better: while not openly hostile to each other, the two groups also don't talk much — which also interferes with their language learning, as English is generally not being used if students work within their own cultural groups. When you suggest and even direct students to work outside of their groups, they are resistant.

This is obviously not an ideal situation for a number of, namely because of the decreased use of English and because respect of and integration of cultural groups is an important value, as segregation was rejected in the United States many years ago. In addition, broadened world perspective does occur with learning about other cultural groups and their values and beliefs. I am a different and better person for having learned something about Mexican culture, for example, or African American culture. For these reasons, students should be nudged into leaving their own cultural groups and venturing into others, at least during the time of the class session.

METHODS TO DEVELOP RELATIONS BETWEEN STUDENTS OF DIFFERENT CULTURAL GROUPS

1 ACKNOWLEDGE THE UNKNOWN IS SCARY

Many of us have had the experience of attending an integrated high school where the lunch room was anything but — all the white kids, African American, and Latin kids in separate corners, for example. Would you go sit at another group's table? Probably not. Was it because of any inherent dislike of those kids? Again, probably not — it was just

that the act would seem strange. And it was intimidating. So understand how difficult this might be for your students, even if you don't explicitly discuss it during class.

2 READINGS OR MOVIES

Numerous stories and films touch the topic of cross-cultural friendship: a fairly recent one I can think of is Clint Eastwood's "Gran Torino," in which the Eastwood character, a grumpy old guy not at all happy about the Hmong family who has moved in next door, slowly, through a series of shared experiences, begins to see them more as family than his own daughter and grandchildren. Showing a movie like this or reading a short story on the topic can lead to discussions on the true nature of family and friendship and how important shared culture really is to that definition.

3 CONDUCT A "ROUNDTABLE"

Have students sit in a circle and all share one important thing about themselves — a hobby, interest, experience, etc. Students are likely to find shared interests and experiences across groups and might start a conversation right there.

4 PARTIES

Class parties, while having the danger of falling flat or seeming "lame," are also a good way, if planned and conducted properly, for students to get to know each other aside from as students. Besides refreshments, having some activities planned is important. More than one student usually plays an instrument and is willing to provide music, and having conversational topics prepared in advance is also important so the main goal — getting students to talk to each other — is accomplished.

5 CONDUCT SURVEYS

Students must gather information about different students in the class: what percentage likes different types of music, for example, which demands each student to talk to everyone. After they can pool results to come up with some statistics for the room. In the course of doing this, they are interacting

with and learning about each other.

6 SMALL GROUPS OR PAIR- WORK ACROSS CULTURES

Once students have completed some of the less threatening tasks of surveys and large group sharing, they are ready to move on to more complex groupings. Have students complete relatively simple tasks in pairs or small groups, such as sharing ideas about a reading, and do this in culturally mixed groups. In this way, students will also be forced to use English, their only common language.

7 LARGER GROUPS OR PROJECTS

Now that students have completed some of the simpler group tasks, they are ready to move on to large group, extended projects, such as a small research project and presentation on the some part of U.S. culture or history, like the history of the Gold Rush, important to my area of Sacramento, California. Within the group, goals can be laid out, such as what the final presentation will look like — PowerPoint? Film? — the roles within the group, such as leader and recorder, and the timeline for the project. Group projects are especially powerful in producing quality work and forming relations within the class, as students begin to rely on each other for the completion of the project, recognizing each other's individual strengths and weaknesses beyond culture and language.

ADMITTEDLY, BREAKING AWAY FROM ONE'S OWN GROUP AND VENTURING INTO THE UNKNOWN IS SCARY.

However, in a multicultural society it is a necessary and rewarding process, and there are methods to accomplish integration in a classroom through careful scaffolding of activities such as discussion of multicultural friendship, group discussion and sharing, parties, and projects so that, for the duration of the class, at least, students will work with members of other groups. However, the process of cross-cultural learning shows that once it has begun, it continues — once students take that first step, they continue moving forward in making cross-cultural friendships beyond the classroom.

Language Learning Styles & How To Make Sure Students Have Them

SOMETIMES ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHERS CAN GET OVERWHELMED BY ALL THE ACRONYMS THROWN OUR WAY: ESL, EFL, TESL, TOEFL, L2, ETC.

While these may not be that tough to decipher, LLS is a less common yet still important set of letters for you to know. It stands for Language learning styles. Language learning styles are related to but not the same as learning styles, and they are essential for effective language learning.

WHAT THEY ARE

Many studies have been done on language learning styles. Researchers have determined that unlike learning styles, language learning styles are not ingrained in people but are generated or developed by the learners themselves. They contribute to language fluency and the ability for a person to communicate in a second language. They are behaviors, external actions anyone can observe, and they are also internal actions or thought processes.

WHAT THEY ARE NOT

They are not communication strategies. Communication strategies are important for language learners putting their knowledge to practical use, but language learning styles are more than that. Language learning styles include everything a student does to learn a target language, and this includes communication strategies.

Language learning styles can be classified into six general groups, each important for your ESL students.

1 MEMORY STRATEGIES

Memory strategies are perhaps the most obvious actions language learners take in class and out of class. They are the actions that help students retain information and then access it later when they are trying to communicate. They include repetition, translation, note taking, deduction, contextualization and elaboration. They are the measures a student

takes to remember what he or she has learned.

2 COGNITIVE STRATEGIES

Language learners use cognitive strategies to understand and create messages in the target language. These include identifying words that they hear as well as retrieving words from their memory when needed. These actions help speakers identify what is being said and then find the information they need to respond appropriately.

3 COMPENSATION STRATEGIES

Compensation strategies help students overcome any gaps in their language knowledge. These are the creative uses of language that help second language students communicate even though they may not be at a perfect level of fluency. They include intelligent guessing and overcoming limitations. Compensation strategies help students work with what they know and creatively use language, gestures, paraphrase. When students use compensation strategies, they keep communication flowing despite struggles with the target language.

4 METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES

Metacognitive strategies help students take control of their own learning. These behaviors enable students to take an outside look at how they are learning and make and needed adjustments. With metacognitive strategies, students evaluate their learning and plan for further learning. Your role as a teacher is as the advisor to the student. It is the student's job to make a commitment, set reasonable goals, select resources, monitor progress and evaluate achievements when it comes to their own language learning.

5 AFFECTIVE STRATEGIES

Affective strategies help students control their emotions and attitudes related to language learning. Through

these behaviors, students lower anxiety and stress and encourage themselves. As a teacher, you can help your students remember that learning a language can be uncomfortable, and you can help create positive connections with English and their language learning.

6 SOCIAL STRATEGIES

Social strategies help students interact with others, often in conversational settings. Students should ask questions for clarification, comprehension and correction. They also cooperate with peers and those proficient in the language with social strategies. These behaviors also help students connect with and understand the culture connected with their language learning.

ULTIMATELY, ALL OF THESE LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES ARE INTERRELATED.

By teaching your students what language learning strategies are and then giving them examples they can use in the classroom and on their own, your students will become successful learners and speakers of English.

ESL Learning Styles: 9 Ways to Teach Visual Learners

As an ESL teacher, you've probably noticed that students learn in different ways, and more than that, you've started seeing some trends. Do you have students who consistently ask you to write down a new word? Or perhaps students who open the book and try to find the page with the language point you happen to be teaching? How about students who respond better to visual stimuli rather than audio? Then, in all likelihood you've got visual learners: these are students who learn more easily through images or written words.

5 CHARACTERISTICS OF VISUAL LEARNERS:

- They forget what they hear, but rather remember what they see.
- They enjoy puzzles, board games, building blocks and all types of crafts materials.
- They have a better sense of space than time.
- They are very imaginative and may come up with lots of ideas and/or solutions to a problem, especially if they can "see" it in their mind's eye.
- They learn words and their correct spelling more easily after seeing them written down.

Use these resources to capitalize on this particular learning style:

1 FLASHCARDS

Visual learners of all ages and levels learn better with flashcards. The great thing is that flashcards are highly versatile - there is a huge variety of activities you can do with your class - they'll never get bored! Use them to introduce new vocabulary, or practice, review or even test their knowledge. And don't forget flashcard games!

2 COMICS AND CARTOONS

Take a comic strip and write out the speech bubbles. Have your students complete them with their own story. Or have your visual learners

draw one themselves, or a cartoon to illustrate a scene. This type of activity also gives visual learners their much-needed quiet time. They thrive in learning environments where they can think and concentrate.

3 WORD PUZZLES

Having visual learners doesn't necessarily mean that they have to only use pictures or illustrations to learn. They also relate quite well to the written word because they can "see" it, and so it is much easier for them to remember words they have practiced. Use all types of puzzles from crosswords to word searches - create your own!

4 DRAW - Pictionary

One of the best games you can play with visual learners is Pictionary. But instead of using the board game as is (because it may be too hard), make your own version with word cards that you can create to suit your students' level.

5 WHITEBOARD GAMES

Whether you use it for drawing or writing, you should use the whiteboard a lot in classes with a great deal of visual learners. And don't just write or draw in them, be sure to play plenty of games. Use different color board markers - visual learners love colors! You can color code new vocabulary, for example, by writing verbs in green, adjectives in red and nouns in blue.

6 GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS

For visual learners, concepts and words often get lost if they are not organized in a graphic that is both clear and easy to remember - and this exactly is where graphic organizers come in. From Venn Diagrams to Sequence Charts, these graphic helpers really get the point across.

7 VIDEO

Visual learners may find listening to audio too hard. They have

trouble grasping concepts they can't clearly "see". But they must still develop their listening comprehension skills, which is why video is a lot better than simple audio. Visual learners get images and context to accompany what they hear, and this boosts their listening comprehension.

8 MULTIMEDIA

Multimedia presentations like PowerPoint slides also help students retain new concepts and words. They are easy to make and very effective in a classroom full of visual learners.

9 ILLUSTRATED READING

When reading with visual learners, it's much better if you use books with illustrations. There are wonderful graphic novel versions of classics like *Treasure Island*, *A Wrinkle in Time* or *The Odyssey*.

WHAT TO AVOID:

There are certain resources or strategies that will not work well with visual learners. These are mainly:

- Anything that relies too heavily on audio (without video)
- Following strictly verbal instructions - they must be written down
- Spelling out words without writing them on the board - visual learners need to see them

THERE ARE SEVERAL DIFFERENT LEARNING STYLES YOUR ESL STUDENTS COULD FIT INTO.

By figuring out how they learn best, and catering to this particular style, you'll be making use of abilities your students already possess. Struggling to get them to do something (like listen to a CD) simply because they "have to" or "it's what other classes do" is not only counterproductive, but also frustrating for your students. Work with them, and their abilities, and you'll soon see them making progress by leaps and bounds.

ESL Learning Styles: 9 Ways to Teach Tactile-Kinesthetic Learners

HAVE YOU EVER HAD STUDENTS WHO WERE TRULY "HANDS ON"? THE KIND WHO WANT TO TOUCH EVERYTHING, GESTICULATE WILDLY AND FIND IT HARD TO SIT STILL FOR EXTENDED PERIODS OF TIME?

Then, you have been faced with tactile-kinesthetic learners, the kind of student who needs to do things and use their whole body to learn.

CHARACTERISTICS OF TACTILE-KINESTHETIC LEARNERS:

- They use their hands to speak - they make lots of gestures and describe things with their hands or even their entire body.
- They enjoy working with their hands, so crafts are a must in the ESL classroom, as well as building blocks and toys.
- They need to move, do and touch. For this reason, they are better suited to activities with Total Physical Response.
- They need frequent breaks.
- They have excellent hand-eye coordination.

Use these resources/activities to capitalize on this particular learning style:

1 REALIA

The use of realia, or real life objects that you bring into the classroom, is the ideal strategy for tactile-kinesthetic learners. Plastic fruits and vegetables are a lot better than flashcards. Real clothes or costumes are better than illustrations. For instance, bring a toy tea set to teach asking for/offering drinks.

2 CRAFTS

Tactile learners are great with their hands. They have the ability to create masterpieces in watercolors, or build anything out of clay or blocks. Put those crafty little hands to good use, particularly during the holidays and let them enjoy fall, spring, Easter, Halloween, Thanksgiving or Christmas crafts.

3 EXPERIMENTS

Science experiments are ideal for tactile learners – but how do you introduce science experiments in an ESL classroom? Easy! Students may experiment with the speed at which ice melts. Plant seeds with them – you will see that a lot more than a garden will grow in your classroom. And how about some simple color mixing with your youngest learners? They will have loads of fun finding out how to make their favorites out of just the basic primary colors. And for more ideas visit TryScience.org.

4 MAGIC

Amaze your tactile learners with some simple magic tricks! Teach them how to make invisible ink. Here are some easy magic tricks that you can learn and teach your students: <http://bit.ly/fol2OG>. You can use them to fit into your lesson plan or as an added bonus for good behavior at the end of class.

5 SONGS WITH MOVEMENT

Most young learners enjoy singing, but tactile-kinesthetic learners will love songs with movement. It can be as simple as having them hold hands and go round and round as they sing. Or have them sing songs where they mime the actions, like *Wheels on the Bus* or *Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes*.

6 CHARADES

Charades is a classic game and an excellent choice for tactile-kinesthetic learners. Moreover, it is a very versatile game that you can adapt to suit your language teaching needs. For example, you can play charades for practice animals, sports or even musical instruments.

7 SIMON SAYS

Another classic game for tactile-kinesthetic learners, it is also best if you put a spin on it. Instead of having them just "touch your nose", have Simon ask them to carry out more challenging tasks: "Simon says take your student book and balance it on your head."

8 IMPERATIVES

Tactile-kinesthetic learners are great at "doing", so the best way to teach action verbs and their imperative form to these active learners is by doing the actions. Don't be afraid to open and close windows and doors, take items and put them in different places, or dance, skip or jump. Then, use the imperative form to tell students to carry out these actions themselves, and finally have them tell others.

9 GAMES WITH ACTION!

Tactile-kinesthetic learners love playing games like any child, but they will thrive in those with plenty of action. Prefer games where they have to race to the whiteboard to those where they have to only move pieces across a board. Choose games where they shoot baskets instead of those where they have to sit.

WHAT TO AVOID:

There are certain resources or strategies that will not work well with tactile-kinesthetic learners. These are mainly:

- Extended periods of reading.
- Extended periods of listening.
- Extended periods of writing. Instead of long essays or stories, opt for a written Q and A.
- Extended periods of sitting. Tactile learners will become restless – they need to move around!

Notice that the recommendation is to avoid "extended" periods of reading, writing or listening. Of course, even your most energetic, restless, tactile learners will need to practice these essential skills. Your best course of action is to alternate a quiet period of reading or writing with a more active game or TPR activity.

ONE FINAL NOTE: BE PREPARED TO JUMP, DANCE AND SHOUT.

Tactile learners will wear you out! But rest assured, they are such a happy bunch, so full of energy and enthusiasm, that you will have as much fun as they will!

Sustaining Interaction: Group Work That Works

LET'S BE HONEST. GROUP WORK CAN BE SCARY.

It involves relinquishing control of a uniform classroom as a teacher and suddenly having multiple micro-classrooms that you feel you need to run around and manage all at the same time.

It always sounds like a good idea. Put students into groups. Let them collaborate. They will effectively put their heads together and emerge with wonderful language skills. Instead, you see this: in one group, one student is doing all the work while the others chat about last weekend. In another group, one member refuses to let others help because they'll do it wrong, so the others sit around on their cell phones.

So why do group work? Because group work can double and even triple the amount of a student's language production as opposed to whole classroom instruction alone. In large groups, shy students get overlooked and students have mastered the "I-look-like-I'm-paying-attention-but-really-I'm-sleeping-with-my-eyes-open" look. You can't constantly make sure all students are engaged, especially if your class is large.

HOW TO MAKE GROUP WORK WORK FOR YOU

1 CHOOSE GROUPS STRATEGICALLY

There's a time and a place to allow students to choose their own groups or even assign groups randomly. If you've got a wonderful class that you can do this with, excellent! If you perhaps don't have that, try some of these strategies for choosing groups.

LINE-UPS

One way to get some energy out in this process is to have all students stand up in a line. Tell them that they have 15 seconds to rearrange themselves in a specific order, for example, alphabetical by birthday, number of siblings, alphabetical by favorite animal, etc. Take a look at these results. Count off by the number of students you want in each group, and take a quick mental calculation as to whether you think these groups will work. If you see right away that two stu-

dents are in the same group that probably will clash, try to regroup a different way or simply have them do another line-up until you get a more desirable result.

CHARACTER MATCH

You can also plan out groups ahead of time, but still make it seem random. One activity is choosing names of famous people, like presidents, Disney characters, superheroes, athletes, etc. Write individual names of these groups of people on sticky labels, and then attach them to students. For a quick version, put it on their front so they can see it, and for a longer version, put it on their back so that they have to ask others questions to figure out who they are. When they find out who they are, tell them to find the other students in their category and sit together as a group.

2 ASSIGN ROLES

The easiest way for students to mentally check out during a lesson is to feel they have no responsibility or ownership in the activity. This is lessened by having small groups complete an activity, but it can still occur even in groups as small as two. For every activity you do, assign each group member a unique and specific role to get them involved and feeling like they have something to contribute. You can create any number of roles or combination of roles, but here are some that work well:

1. Materials getter – gets and returns all materials from the teacher
2. Recorder - writes down everything the group discusses and completes any paper to be submitted to the teacher
3. Task manager - keeps the group on task, focused, and responsible for not talking about other topics
4. Time-keeper - watches the time and makes sure the group finished the activity in the allotted time
5. Interpreter - the only person allowed to talk to the teacher - must convey all questions from the group to the teacher
6. Question asker - Responsible for creating and asking questions to the group

7. Cell phone collector - collects all cell phones and puts them in a box to give to the teacher
8. Reporter - shares with the whole class what the group has done or discussed

Now, even though you've assigned roles, this still won't prevent all the previously discussed problems. One way to make sure each student is still contributing is by giving each role a unique color, and then put a sticker of that color on each student who is assigned that role. For example, if all the recorders have green stickers, you can quickly glance around and see if those students are maintaining their responsibility.

3 MODEL

One of the biggest causes for student distraction is an unclear expectation of what they're supposed to do. Demonstrate for your students what you want them to do and give them clear instructions. Do this before moving them into groups as the shift in the classroom causes chatter and a need for refocusing.

4 EVALUATE

Group work isn't simply a time-filler or an alternative way to teach. It should be producing valuable language production and students should get feedback on their performance. Whether you grade individually or as a group is up to you, but make your grading standards clear to the students before they begin. Consider alternative incentives as well such as stickers, candy, bonus points, or high-fives to groups who are working effectively together and staying on task. Seeing other groups positively rewarded for their group interaction will hopefully motivate other groups to do the same.

PRACTICE MAKES CLOSER TO PERFECT. THE FIRST TIME YOU DO GROUPS, IT MAY NOT GO WELL. IT MAY FAIL. AND THAT'S OKAY.

The more you do groups, the more students will understand the expectations and get used to working in a more student-centered environment. Collaboration is a valuable life-skill to learn for students and it will effectively build language production.

You're Mohammed, Right? Learning Names without Going Crazy

A couple of years ago, I had a student in a reading class, a very nice young man who traced his heritage to Saudi Arabia, whose name listed on my roll sheet was "Mohammed Al-Saad."

However, he told me on the first day of class he'd like to be called "Sean." I thought that was odd because, while ESL students often take on Westernized names or Western versions of their names, I'd never had a student called Mohammed change his name. And "Sean" seemed a particularly odd choice for someone of Middle Eastern heritage. I did, however, obligingly call him "Sean" in class — although it often took two or three times for him to look up. And he continued to write "Mohammed" on his papers. Finally, I approached him privately and asked if this was what he really wanted, to go by this name — "Mohammed" being, of course, a perfectly fine name. He then told me that this choice mostly stemmed from the "flying while brown" issue, of his family being subject to invasive searches by airport personnel each time they traveled because of their Arabic names and Mid Eastern appearance — even when meeting his cousin's flight when he was dressed in his U.S. military uniform at the time. And even that unfortunate situation aside, however, this issue of names highlights a particular concern in the ESL class. After all, the class roster should be routine, shouldn't it? Not course content in itself? However, the rosters and names students are called or call themselves do become a major part of the course, posing a bevy of problems for the teacher in knowing what to call students in the first place, then memorizing those names, and in the process opening a number of historic and cultural concerns.

CHALLENGES OF ESL STUDENT NAMES

1 UNFAMILIARITY

Sheer unfamiliarity contributes to the problem of learning ESL student names, such as remembering

with Asian names, the family name is usually first - unless the student has already chosen to adopt the Western custom of family name last. Students from Latin countries might have multiple given and family names - e.g., Jose Guadalupe Lopez y Martinez — usually to recognize multiple family members and sides of families. The teacher then must remember who prefers to be addressed by Jose and who by Lupe (the shortened form of "Guadalupe"). With European names, names ending in "a" are usually feminine, "o" masculine, but this isn't always the case outside of the West.

2 MULTIPLE VERSIONS OF NAMES:

Pet versions of names in other countries can be confusing: "Sasha" is the pet form of "Alexandra" and "Alexander," and this may be further shortened to "Sashenka", while "Mami" and "Mamiko" may be the same person in Japanese culture, the "-iko" ending being the diminutive. I've even had Starbucks personnel look at my suspiciously when I've given my name as "Stacy" when my credit card reads "Stacia." So what seems rather obviously to us the same name — of course "Bob" is short for "Robert" — is not necessarily so in another culture.

METHODS TO ADDRESS THE DIFFICULTIES IN STUDENT NAMES

1 NAME CARDS

Have students make up name cards the first day of class by folding a piece of heavy construction paper in half and writing the name they wish to be addressed by on the card and then setting them on their desks. I emphasize the point several times that it should be the name they wish to be called by, so this is the first step in class in making students feel recognized and respected for their individuality. I also make up my own card, writing on it "Stacia" rather than "Dr. Levy,"

my preferred mode of address. (You'd be surprised how many students forget or never learn their teachers' names.) I have students bring their cards the first couple of weeks until all names are thoroughly memorized.

2 PICTURES

I haven't tried this, but I've seen a colleague have students pose holding their name cards in front of them while she took pictures with her smart phone — so she had a record of individual student photos along with the student's name for each student to help her connect names to faces.

3 DISCUSS WITH STUDENTS THEIR NAMES

I don't know many people who don't like to talk about their own names. And names are a fascinating window into culture and language. My name, for example, as anyone's, reveals a lot of my personal history: my heritage is Russian - I am at least one generation removed from this culture because there was an attempt to Americanize it from "Anastasia" to "Stacia Ann," and then at various times I've further Americanized this to "Stacy," and so forth. The name also reveals something about history and culture: "Anastasia's" origin is actually Greek and the name found its way to Russia via the Russian/Greek Orthodox Church. The name fell out of favor for a time in the former Soviet Union after the Revolution because of the government's anti-church policy, so it's seen as an old-fashioned name in Russia. And the name also spread to other cultures via the Church, so there are Latin people named "Anastasia," and the masculine form is "Anastasio," which explains why some men may be called by the seemingly girlish "Stacy" (like actor Stacy Keach). Almost any name will reveal a lot about personal and cultural history.

4 ASSOCIATE NAME TO FACE

Look for the memorable: look at students' eyes and hair color, the jack-

et always worn, the ring or backpack, and or anything else memorable, at the same time you look at the card, and you will begin to connect the name to the person.

5 MAKE IT PERSONAL

Find out one thing per student the first week of class — where they are from, their hobbies, number of siblings, etc. During conversations with students, address them by name frequently in order to remember the name. This personal attention will also make the student feel recognized.

6 CIRCULATE. TALK TO ALL STUDENTS.

It's very easy to forget, especially in a large class, the quiet students hanging out in the back, but if you get back there at least once a session and address the students hiding behind their books by name, you will remember the names.

LEARNING A CLASS FULL OF ESL STUDENTS' NAMES IS A MAJOR INSTRUCTIONAL TASK IN ITSELF.

By accepting and recognizing this, the teacher can treat learning names as an actual part of the curriculum, rather than a tedious administrative task, and at the same time recognizing individual students and learning and teaching about their cultures and histories.

Culturally Correct: 5 Tips for Managing Classrooms Abroad

ESL teachers who live overseas enjoy an exciting world of change and differences. To be successful, it is essential to manage your classrooms with the local culture at the forefront of your decision-making. Follow these 5 tips for managing classrooms abroad, and you will learn just as much as you teach.

HOW TO MANAGE CLASSROOMS ABROAD

1 DO AS THE ROMANS DO

No matter where you come from, living in another country is an exciting and challenging adventure of self-discovery. When you are working in a classroom overseas, it is imperative to know the basic cultural dos and don'ts from day one. For example, in Thailand you don't want to walk into your classroom on the first day wearing a sleeveless blouse. Women generally should cover their arms, and dress in the workplace is particularly conservative. Men usually wear a tie, but a suit would be taking it too far. In China, you will be greeted by all the students standing and shouting, "Good Morning, Teacher," and they won't sit down until you give them permission. The point is simple. Do your homework before you step foot into your first class. Talk to other foreigners living in the same country, and working in the same type of school. Even when you read up on cultural norms, you won't be exempt from discovering surprises as you go. There are a lot of unspoken cultural norms that should be adhered to by foreigners and more importantly, teachers. Often you are expected to figure these out for yourself. It affects everything you do, including how you manage your classroom. You have to set realistic expectations and take culture into consideration.

2 UTILIZE THE LOCAL LANGUAGE

Even though you are instructing students in a second language, you will

find it to your advantage in and out of the classroom to gain some understanding of the local language. If you are in a place that has a local dialect, it might serve you better to learn useful phrases instead of the formal language that may not be utilized or even understood in some circumstances. In the classroom, you can utilize basic phrases to make your first days easier. Learn things like: please, thank you, sit down, stand up, etc. Generally, when you don't speak their language, students will inevitably speak in their local tongue despite your instructions not to do so. If you learn their language as they are learning yours, they will respect your efforts, and will attempt to be very helpful in your endeavor. Allow exceptions to "English only" policies, and provide instances where they are allowed to translate vocabulary, or ask questions to each other in their local language. If you limit their native language, and try your hand at their language students realize quickly that the best way to communicate with their teacher is with English.

3 COMPARE CULTURES

When setting up classroom rules and guidelines, give students some examples of how things are done in your country. Then ask them how it is done locally. They will enjoy hearing about the differences, and as a group you can devise guidelines that work for both cultures. An example might be that in many countries, students will simply address you as teacher. Become comfortable with this and inform them that they may also call you Mr. John or Miss Sarah. Students won't use your last name as it is too formal and often too hard to pronounce. Once the class guidelines are set, use the cultural comparison in other aspects of the class to keep communicating about your differing cultures. However, avoid always telling them how everything is done in your country, or comparing your country as if it is superior to theirs. Neither of those attitudes is going to get you very far in or out of your classroom.

4 LEARN AS MUCH AS YOU CAN

Your students are going to be your best teachers when it comes to culture. You can learn a lot simply by observing them. You can also ask for their advice, their opinion, or their input when you come across confusing situations. This works well even with young adults. Get in the habit of telling them stories about your experiences, and asking them cultural questions. This is a great way to review tenses and other grammar while commanding their attention. You will also learn about things you may be doing incorrectly, nuances of the language that may get you into trouble, or gain a perspective you never would have seen if you didn't consult your students.

5 DON'T FORGET TO DISCIPLINE

Sometimes when teaching English overseas, it can feel strange to apply discipline in the classroom. Often the subject of English that is also taught by a native speaker is only looked at as fun time, and not as serious as other subjects. Young students might try to take advantage or become unruly. To counter this, you must set the tone of your class accordingly and early on. You will have to ride that fine line between supplying fun, interactive activities for practice, and maintaining a seriousness when it comes to completing assignments, following through on homework, and general student progress. It is perfectly acceptable to apply discipline, but be certain that your tactics are fair and fit in with what other teachers are doing.

WHEN TEACHING OVERSEAS IT IS VITAL TO BE A MODEL OF CULTURAL CORRECTNESS AND TO REPRESENT YOUR HOME COUNTRY IN WAY THAT YOU WOULD BE PROUD OF. EMPLOY THESE 5 STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING YOUR CLASSROOM OVERSEAS, AND YOUR STUDENTS WILL NEVER WANT YOU TO LEAVE.

English Only? Embracing L1 while Teaching L2

I am currently teaching an ESL of almost all native Spanish speakers.

While this may seem nothing remarkable for an ESL instructor in California, it is a somewhat strange experience for me as I live in Sacramento, which has been called “the most diverse city in the United States,” at least in terms of integration or variety of cultural groups living and working together. A class of students from language backgrounds such as Spanish, Russian, Cantonese, and Arabic is more what I’m used to, and it is in such an environment that most of the major ESL methodology that I’ve learned, such as having students work in mixed language groups to complete communicative tasks, makes sense: students have no choice but to speak English with their classmates if that is their only common language, and the teachers reminder to “use English” becomes somewhat redundant.

But the scenario shifts when all or most of the students speak the same language. If they are put in groups, often they will use their common language — that is, the home language, in this case. The teacher’s reminder to “Speak English” can sound ridiculous and perhaps even slightly racist under such circumstances. And after all, is it reasonable or even helpful to focus on complete use of English under such circumstances? Can’t the students’ first language be used productively in class? In fact, it can, and use of the learner’s L1 (first language) to learn L2 (second language) has long been accepted methodology. There are some useful ways to use L1 while teaching L2 while avoiding some common pitfalls.

METHODS TO USE STUDENT FIRST LANGUAGE WHILE TEACHING ENGLISH

1 LOGISTICS AND ORIENTATION

When a student enters a class for the

first time, or enters late, it can be very difficult to understand the teacher’s directions on finding the books, materials, signing in, attendance policy, and so forth. Having peers explain these policies in their first language can be less threatening and more helpful for students. Even a student who has been in the class for awhile but who may have come in late, having been speaking his native language all day with family or coworkers, can find it helpful to be told the page number in his first language rather than second while he readjusts to using English.

It is best, of course, for students to eventually learn to follow these directions in English, but some use of the first language in these areas, in the beginning days of the term, at least, can help both teacher and student.

2 EXTENDED EXPLANATION

Sometimes course logistics and directions go beyond a simple “We’re on page 48” and into more complex explanations.

For example, this semester, a student stronger in English than most of her peers stood up and translated for the class how to go about obtaining the course text online, instead of the student bookstore, where for some reason it had seen a twenty percent inflation rate from the prior term. After the student was finished explaining the process in Spanish, I, out of long habit, checked in with “Do you understand?” and then added, “Oh, I guess you understood that,” bringing laughter from the class. But the point is that this would have taken me a long time to explain in English — time better spent on course content rather than more routine matters.

3 ABSTRACT DEFINITIONS

How does one pantomime or draw “collectivism” or “indigenous people”? I have yet to figure it out. And if a student in class does know how to translate a term like this from the course language into the stu-

dents’ first language, why not use the student’s efficient, quick translation rather than the often round-about, partially-successful explanations from English? Then the students, once the term is translated, can practice its use in English having fully comprehended its meaning.

4 ACADEMIC DISCUSSION

There is even a role for translation in class discussion, a task where it perhaps most of all has been encouraged to use the second language as much as possible. And while it is true that while simpler, nonacademic discussions, such as on the topic of our favorite movies, should mostly take place in English, more academic discussions, on topics such as the relative benefits of the capitalist and socialist systems, often can be improved by some use of the student first language. Some of the lower-level students may be lost in the discussion, for example, and having a peer translate one or two key terms quickly and unobtrusively can be enormously helpful while not interfering with the progress of the discussion.

PITFALLS TO AVOID

While there are definite benefits to using the first language in a second language class, there are also some pitfalls to avoid, discussed below.

1 CLASS CONTENT DISCUSSION SHOULD BE MOSTLY ENGLISH

Perhaps the largest drawback to using students’ first language in an ESL class is drawing the line between using the first language as simply a vehicle to aid the logistics of the class and allowing it take over as course content itself. This pitfall can be avoided by establishing from the beginning when it is acceptable to use first language (explaining where things are, how we conduct the class) and when to use English (discussing the reading).

2 OVER-RELIANCE ON PEERS TO TRANSLATE

CAN CREATE A MORE SATISFYING AND RICHER CLASS EXPERIENCE.

Another drawback to using the first language in the classroom is the tendency for students of becoming over-reliant on their peers' translations. In fact, research has shown that the least effective bilingual classes are those in which the L1 and L2 are used simultaneously, rather than on alternate days, which has been proven more effective, as students just learn to listen for the first language explanation rather than trying to understand the second — the overall course objective, of course. Establishing limits of first language use at the beginning and gradually getting students less reliant on their peers and the first language should be therefore a goal of the class.

3 PARTICIPATION OF STUDENTS IN THE NON-DOMINANT LANGUAGE GROUP

Finally, even in a class that is comprised of ninety-five percent of speakers of one first language, there will of course be the five percent from another language background. This presents a problem with the use of the majority language in class, as the five percent will not benefit and will feel left out. Methods to address this are stepping up the encouragement to focus on the use of English in class as it is the common language. In addition, placing the minority language speakers in different discussion groups throughout the room, rather than in just one by themselves, will again result in English being used as the common language, with the added benefits of richer discussions as students will have different perspectives based on different backgrounds as well as the possibility of cross-cultural friendships developing. Finally, students will probably have the impulse to explain relevant terms from their first languages to each other, and again the explanation will have to take place in English, further developing English language and critical thinking skills.

THERE ARE DEFINITE PITFALLS TO AVOID WHEN USING STUDENTS' FIRST LANGUAGE IN CLASS, BUT IF THESE PITFALLS OF OVERDEPENDENCE AND OVERUSE OF THE FIRST LANGUAGE ARE ADDRESSED, USE OF THE STUDENTS' FIRST LANGUAGE

3 Techniques to Employ When You Don't Speak Their Language

You don't have to be the odd man out simply because you are the only person in your class full of people that doesn't speak the native language. Follow these 3 techniques to connect with students even when you don't have language in common.

HOW TO PROCEED

1 SLOW DOWN, SPEAK SIMPLY, AND REPEAT

When learners don't yet speak much English and you don't speak their language, you have to find ways to connect with them, and get them to start learning English fast. There are three key things to do in this circumstance—speak slowly, speak simply, and repeat yourself often. It sounds simple, but it isn't as easy as it might seem. You can master speaking slowly, clearly, and repeating yourself often, but it does take some practice. You want to announce for clarity without sounding condescending. Slowing down language means that you more clearly pronounce syllables, don't shorten words, and also focus on correct grammar. Speaking simply translates into using only tenses or vocabulary that the students have learned. That can be challenging when students have only learned the verb to be, because you are so limited in what you can say. If vocabulary comes up that they are unfamiliar with, you must define words in an uncomplicated manner and provide examples.

Repetition is important because students need explanations several times before they should be expected to master it. It might feel to you that you sound like a broken record, but in reality the students need to hear the record 10 more times. The same also goes for practice. For example, you might think that you have practiced the verb to be so many times the students will cringe if you attempt to review it again. However, when you listen to your students they are still making errors, or still seem uncertain about usage. This is a common occurrence at lower lev-

els, so it goes to show that students do indeed need a lot of repetition of grammar points. Think of each point as a building block to the next: in order to move forward, they must master foundational elements first. Students don't have to display perfect language skills to move on to the next point, but they should show good understanding and be able to occasionally discern their own mistakes.

2 TEACH SITUATIONALLY

When language is a barrier and students don't have much English to communicate with, focus on the function of how they are going to use any given point. Practicing grammar without providing practical application is not only dry, but also frustrating for learners. The main point of studying a language is to be able to use it in everyday circumstances. Keep practical application a focal point when creating activities and exercises. Students will gain a lot through situational examples, role plays, Q and A, and games that inspire lots of practice.

Most every point in an ESL curriculum can somehow be practiced within a situation. Many of them are obvious, like using prepositions of motion to practice giving directions, or creating recipes when talking about food vocabulary and quantities. Part of the fun of being an ESL teacher is devising entertaining and creative ways to elicit grammar points in natural language. Think of ways you can get your students talking outside of just following the examples on the board. Give them opportunities to branch out. For example, instead of just having students ask each other like/dislike questions, give them a situation where this could naturally happen. Tell students that they are attending a party where they don't know anyone. Their goal is to find at least three people with similar interests and start up a conversation. You could make this more interesting or challenging by assigning them particular personality traits or preferences that are not their own. That way they have to be

creative with their question-asking and try to create a connection through communication. This is a perfect example of giving students situational practice so that the language they are acquiring has meaning and practical application when they step out of the classroom.

3 ANIMATE

When language may be a barrier your best source of communication will be finding ways to animate your explanations and instructions. Using exaggerated body language and facial expressions should become second nature when you are communicating with little language. Smiling and laughing a lot also helps to lighten the mood and can help make students feel comfortable. Along with animated expressions, if you can show students time and time again that your instructions will be illustrated by clear examples, they will begin to learn your style and catch on very quickly. Utilizing hand gestures as you speak will also become a way that students can begin to infer language if they don't understand completely.

You can also involve students in getting in touch with their physical side by introducing the game of Charades. Students of all ages and levels love to challenge themselves with this interactive game in which they must represent language with actions. It's a wonderful way to practice vocabulary, sentence structure and comprehension checks for various points. Students will enjoy the challenge and find the game an interesting activity of self-expression.

TEACHING ENGLISH TO A CLASS OF STUDENTS WHO DON'T HAVE ANY EXPOSURE TO YOUR LANGUAGE MIGHT SEEM A BIT DAUNTING AT FIRST. THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO CONNECT WITH PEOPLE AROUND THE GLOBE WITHOUT LANGUAGE AS THE COMMON DENOMINATOR. TAKE A LOOK AT THESE 3 TECHNIQUES TO CONNECT WITH STUDENTS, AND GET IN TOUCH WITH ALL OF YOUR STUDENTS ALL OF THE TIME.

But We all Speak Spanish! How to Teach the Monolingual ESL Class

When people used to ask me at parties what languages my students spoke, I would tick off some of the common languages that might be spoken in a single ESL classroom in California: Spanish, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Russian...

This would usually bring a blank stare and the exclamation, “Oh, do you actually speak all those languages?” I was always tempted to answer “Yes.” However, I usually replied of course not and then offered a brief explanation of how an ESL class is conducted, and the listener would usually conclude the conversation with, “Well, that must be very difficult.”

However, as most ESL instructors probably agree, it is actually a lot less difficult in some ways to teach a class of students from twenty different language backgrounds than just one, and easier to learn a second language in a multilingual rather than monolingual ESL classroom, as well. We only need to look at the language situation of Americans to understand this: Americans are notoriously monolingual because we have little motivation to learn another language as everyone learns ours. In addition, even if I do summon up the motivation to learn a second language, I am probably going to have travel far from my monolingual culture to even practice this language in an authentic situation. Similarly, students in a monolingual class have a hard time mustering the motivation or gaining the opportunities to practice in order to learn a second language — and second language learning requires a great deal of motivation and practice — if they are surrounded by native speakers of their own language. Why bother? So one of the instructional problems of the monolingual English class is developing the motivation and the opportunities to practice that are not inherent in the situation. Although it is difficult, the ESL instructor can indeed help students develop the motivation to learn English and create the situations to practice to it move students toward acquisition of their second language.

METHODS TO ENCOURAGE ENGLISH USE IN A MONOLINGUAL OR NEAR-MONOLINGUAL CLASS

The first step in developing motivation and practice opportunities in English for your monolingual ESL class is to recognize some important underlying values for class.

1 PROMOTE IMPORTANCE OF ENGLISH.

The first step in addressing the lack of motivation to use English in a monolingual ESL class — again, understandable as I wouldn’t speak Russian to my American classmates without major incentive — is simply to promote the value of English, what knowing English can do for the students. This goes back to the United States as a largely monolingual culture: Americans themselves frequently bemoan our monolingual state - the fact remains, however, that lack of knowledge of Standard English will generally impede an individual’s opportunity to advance in mainstream American society. Open discussion of this, and referring to successful bilingual individuals who acquired English as adolescents or adults, is the beginning of developing motivation in this area as students usually recognize the concern — indeed, it’s usually what brought them to class in the first place. In addition, recognition of students’ particular advantage in their future status as proficient bilinguals, increasing professional opportunities, at least, provides additional incentive.

2 ENGLISH AS THE COMMON LANGUAGE:

Reminding the student that actually not everyone in class speaks their language — usually the teacher, for one — also is helpful in establishing English, for the class at least, as the common language, and this actually reflects the culture as a whole. While in reality the

United States has been multilingual since its inception, English has nearly always been the common language of the people, the expected “code” in most public situations, and the only really recognized “official” one — that is, while English in most places in the U.S. doesn’t carry the status as the official language, in practice it probably is — most educational and business settings, for example, use English as the language for communication. This is the starting point for establishing a course principle, the use of English as the common class language, reflecting the society as a whole — while at the same time validating the students’ first languages in specific situations.

3 THE NEED FOR PRACTICE

In addition, pointing out to students that practice is needed to acquire any language, and class may very well be their main opportunity to practice, especially if they don’t work outside their homes or cultural neighborhoods, will establish a further desire to use English in class. ESL students, having some experience as language learners, will usually readily, if grudgingly, agree on the need for continual practice to improve.

Once some underlying principles of an ESL class — the importance of English as a common language, the need for practice - have been recognized, the teacher then can move forward to creating opportunities for practice. This is admittedly difficult in the monolingual classroom, but it can be done.

METHODS FOR CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRACTICE IN THE MONOLINGUAL CLASSROOM

1 CHOICE OF MATERIALS:

Some materials are so heavily imbedded in their own cultures that it is near impossible to discuss them in a language other than of that culture.

Discussions of the Old West, for example, are perhaps best conducted in American English. (An essay by the humorist James Thurber on the hilarious attempts to translate the tales of Billy the Kid into French is one that has long remained in my memory.)

The teacher will probably see students who attempt to switch back to their primary languages to discuss something like panning for gold getting stuck and saying, “I don’t know how to say this in —” and then returning to English, the “natural” vehicle for discussing this particular phenomenon. In addition, students are likely to recognize more everyday conversations such as what to say to an arresting police officer when stopped for a traffic violation as best conducted in English, the language they will certainly be having these conversations in, and again so much of the conversation is again embedded in a culture of driving, traffic tickets, and car registration and insurance, that translating it becomes problematic in and of itself.

CALLED FOR. THEREFORE, USING STRATEGIES SUCH AS HELPING STUDENTS TO RECOGNIZE THE VALUE OF USE OF ENGLISH AND SETTING UP SITUATIONS IN WHICH IT SEEMS ALMOST NECESSARY TO DO SO WILL KEEP STUDENTS FOCUSED ON USING ENGLISH IN THEIR ESL CLASS — PERHAPS THE ONLY TIME THEY WILL HAVE EXTENDED PRACTICE IN THEIR SECOND LANGUAGE.

2 “MULTILINGUAL” GROUPS:

As much as possible, scatter your few “diverse” students, those whose primary language differs from that of the rest of the class, throughout different groups rather than allowing them to cluster together. Also, go around and sit in on the different groups a short time each yourself, thereby promoting the use of English to include everyone.

3 ROLEPLAY “AMERICAN” SITUATIONS:

As with materials, there are certain situations that are so quintessential to a culture that it seems almost ridiculous to conduct them in anything but the language of that culture. There probably are ways in other languages to talk to telemarketers and respond to “paper or plastic” in the grocery store, but English seems almost the native language to these situations. Setting up situations where it feels almost “right” to speak English is another strategy to use.

GETTING STUDENTS TO SPEAK ENGLISH IN THE MONOLINGUAL OR NEAR-MONOLINGUAL CLASS CAN BE CHALLENGING. SOME STRATEGIES BEYOND URGING STUDENTS TO “SPEAK ENGLISH” REPEATEDLY ARE