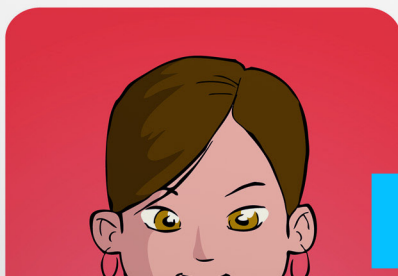
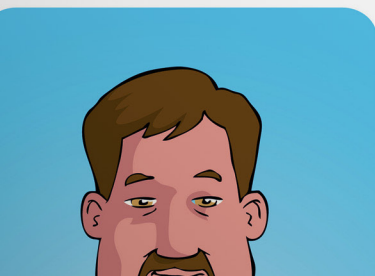
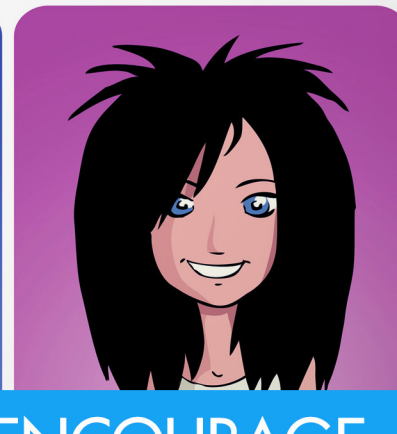
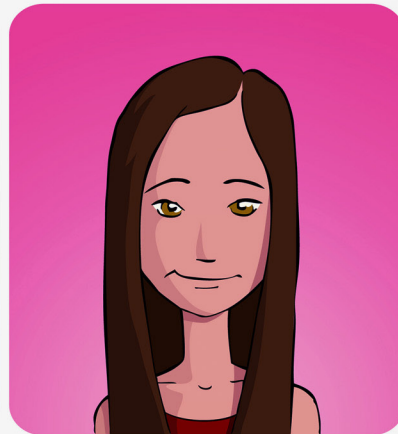
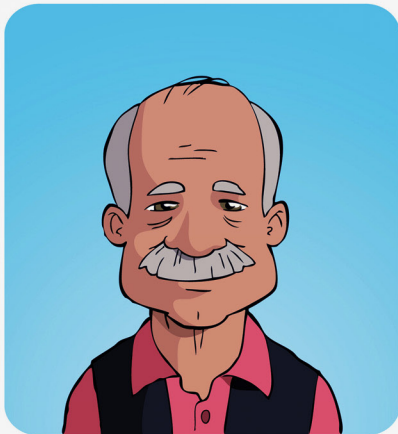
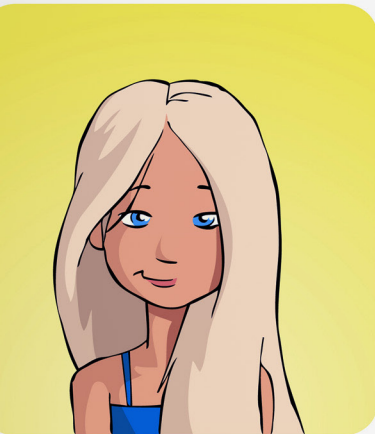


HOW TO TEACH DIFFERENT LEVELS

LIKE A PRO

45 TOP SECRETS EVERY TEACHER OF DIFFERENT LEVELS SHOULD KNOW



ENCOURAGE

STRESS FREE PARTICIPATION
FROM STUDENTS AT ALL LEVELS

WE'LL SHOW YOU HOW

CONTENTS PAGE 1

TEACHING DIFFERENT LEVELS

- | | | | | | |
|-------|--|----|--|----|--|
| 4 | MUST READ: Teacher, I'm Bored. Teacher I'm Lost - Teaching Multi-Level Classes | 15 | BEGINNERS & ELEMENTARY: How to Teach Word Order: Help Them Remember the Patterns | 24 | BEGINNERS & ELEMENTARY: How to Teach Shapes |
| 5 | BEGINNERS & ELEMENTARY: From ESL Zero to Hero: How to Teach Absolute Beginners | 16 | BEGINNERS & ELEMENTARY: Opposites Attract: Having Fun with Antonyms | 25 | BEGINNERS & ELEMENTARY: How To Teach Time: Telling Time Activities And Games |
| 6 | BEGINNERS & ELEMENTARY: Beginning at the Beginning: What You Need to Know if You Teach Absolute Beginners | 17 | BEGINNERS & ELEMENTARY: The 3 Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig: Teaching Opposites | 26 | PRE-INTERMEDIATE & INTERMEDIATE: I Don't Know What They Don't Know: 7 Steps for Teaching the Intermediate ESL Student |
| 7 | BEGINNERS & ELEMENTARY: How To Teach Days Of The Week | 18 | BEGINNERS & ELEMENTARY: Realia: 9 Ways To Bring Real Life Into The Classroom | 27 | PRE-INTERMEDIATE & INTERMEDIATE: Getting Past the Plateau: How to Assist Your Intermediate Students on Their Way to Fluency |
| 8 | BEGINNERS & ELEMENTARY: How to Teach Descriptions | 19 | BEGINNERS & ELEMENTARY: What Does She Look Like vs. What is She Like? Distinguishing Between Descriptions | 28 | PRE-INTERMEDIATE & INTERMEDIATE: How To Avoid Sensitive Issues When Teaching ESL |
| 9 | BEGINNERS & ELEMENTARY: How To Teach Directions | 20 | BEGINNERS & ELEMENTARY: What Time Do You Have? Telling Time Activities | 29 | PRE-INTERMEDIATE & INTERMEDIATE: How to Teach Current Events to ESL Students |
| 10 | BEGINNERS & ELEMENTARY: How to Teach Giving Advice | 21 | BEGINNERS & ELEMENTARY: What Would You Do? Advice on Teaching Giving Advice | 30 | PRE-INTERMEDIATE & INTERMEDIATE: HOWTO: 3 Easy Steps to Grading Student Essays |
| 11 | BEGINNERS & ELEMENTARY: How to Teach Nationality Adjectives and Nationality Nouns | 22 | BEGINNERS & ELEMENTARY: As Easy as OneTwoThree: 10 Ways to Practice Numbers in the ESL Classroom | 31 | PRE-INTERMEDIATE & INTERMEDIATE: Giving and Receiving Advice |
| 12 | BEGINNERS & ELEMENTARY: How To Teach Polite Phrases: 3 Secret Ingredients | 23 | BEGINNERS & ELEMENTARY: How Do You Feel Today? Teaching Emotions in | 32 | PRE-INTERMEDIATE & INTERMEDIATE: Extra! Extra! Putting Together a Class Newspaper is Easy, No Extra Work Required! |
| 13-14 | BEGINNERS & ELEMENTARY: How To Teach Sentence Structure: Easy Object Lesson With Zero Preparation | | | | |

Your ESL Classroom

CONTENTS PAGE 2

TEACHING DIFFERENT LEVELS

33 **UPPER INTERMEDIATE & ADVANCED:** Is Global Warming a Reality? Presenting Complex Topics for Advanced Learners

34 **UPPER INTERMEDIATE & ADVANCED:** Every Teacher Should Know: Reaching Advanced Learners

35 **UPPER INTERMEDIATE & ADVANCED:** Expert Sharing: Making the Most of Your Students' Knowledge

36 **UPPER INTERMEDIATE & ADVANCED:** In the Eye of the Beholder: What Will Your Students Say about the Media's Message

37-38 **UPPER INTERMEDIATE & ADVANCED:** Pro et Contra: 20 Stages of Teaching Controversial Topics

39-40 **UPPER INTERMEDIATE & ADVANCED:** All Americans are Fat and Lazy: Teaching the Fallacy

41-42 **UPPER INTERMEDIATE & ADVANCED:** How Do We Know He Killed His Wife? Teaching Inference

43 **UPPER INTERMEDIATE & ADVANCED:** My Brother is Very Successful: Teaching Morphology

44-45 **UPPER INTERMEDIATE &**

ADVANCED: My First Car was Unreliable: A Car was Ugly, Too. Teaching Devices for Coherence and Cohesion

46 **UPPER INTERMEDIATE & ADVANCED:** Practical Suggestions for Scaffolding in the Content Classroom

47-48 **UPPER INTERMEDIATE & ADVANCED:** Teacher, What's a Yankee? Well, It Depends. Contextualizing Language Learning

49 **UPPER INTERMEDIATE & ADVANCED:** Teaching U.S. Academic Values in the Classroom (Yes, You Must Come to Class, but that is Not Enough)

50 **UPPER INTERMEDIATE & ADVANCED:** Where's the Focus? Integrating the Skills in an Integrated Skills Class

51 **UPPER INTERMEDIATE & ADVANCED:** Why Tell a Story? The Academic Value of the Narrative Form

52-53 **UPPER INTERMEDIATE & ADVANCED:** Why was the Class Empty? Cultural Practices Your Students Should Be Taught

54 **UPPER INTERMEDIATE & ADVANCED:** You Never Knew it Could Be So Good: The College Application Process and Your ESL Students

55 **UPPER INTERMEDIATE & ADVANCED:** Don't

Address the Teacher as "Yo, Dude": Teaching Register

56-57 **UPPER INTERMEDIATE & ADVANCED:** Where To From Here? Teaching the Advanced ESL Student

Teacher, I'm Bored; Teacher I'm Lost - Teaching Multi-Level Class

ONE OF THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES OF THE ESL EDUCATOR IS TEACHING THE MULTI-LEVEL CLASS.

And all ESL classes are multi-level, even those not officially designated as such: for example, one student may be strong in speaking skills while another strong in reading.

A concern with teaching the multi-level class is holding everyone's interest and meeting everyone's needs, no matter their level. A variety of students study in a multi-level class: students who are just learning to speak English, students who are fluent but want to work on their pronunciation, as well as students who have conversational English but need to work on academic skills.

HOW TO MEET THE VARIED STUDENT NEEDS OF A MULTILEVEL CLASS

1 NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Start with a needs assessment. Find out **what students want to learn and are interested in**. If most in a class are career-oriented, for example, focus on the vocabulary needed for career success.

For example, academic English vocabulary is full of Latin root words such as "obese" that are different from the more Anglo-Saxon roots of conversational English, such as "fat." It is this vocabulary students need to succeed in college classes for later professional success.

2 SKILLS ASSESSMENT

In addition, do a skills assessment the first day and find out **what students' levels are** by an informal interview, asking students about their background and then taping it. Also do a writing assessment on a simple topic like "A Life Lesson." Then make decisions about grouping from this assessment. Sometimes it makes sense to group students of similar ability levels, such as when doing a listening comprehension task, while other times, however, such as when engaged in discussion, students can be grouped across levels.

3 THEMES

Choose themes. Find out what **themes students are interested in** by polling them and showing visuals: sciences, education, art, and so forth. Build your class around these themes, with easier materials for the lower levels and harder for the higher levels. Usually one week of focus on a theme is sufficient.

4 PLAN CAREFULLY

Plan carefully for the multilevel class. This is crucial, to have **enough activities for each of the levels, or flexible activities**, with different material for students at different levels of English acquisition. So while a beginning student could be working on vocabulary related to college life, for example, a more advanced student could be writing a paragraph or essay on the same topic.

5 PROPER APPROACH

Use the **whole-class-to-leveled groups approach**. In larger classes, you may group students by level or in heterogeneous groups while in smaller classes you can split your time effectively between individual students. Start an activity by discussing it in general with the class as a whole: the topic of family, for example. Allow students to offer comments as they wish at the beginning then break into leveled groups for learning vocabulary words related to family, for example, for lower levels, while higher levels can do a more advanced reading on the topic.

6 VARIETY OF STRATEGIES

Include a variety of modalities and strategies: **use visuals, stories, and movies**. These are amazing tools in a multi-level class because a variety of students at different levels will relate to and gain something from them.

Showing a movie, for example, provides opportunity for a variety of activities. If the movie can be shown with closed caption, in English, this helps students' reading skills. Higher level students can

write critiques and engage in discussions after about the movies, lower level students can focus more on short oral and written summaries.

7 VARIETY OF ACTIVITIES

Include also a variety of activities for different language skills within a class. This is a way to meet the needs of all students, from the student who needs work on basic literacy to the student who wants to work on more advanced pronunciation and accent reduction.

Referring back to your themes list, you may start out with an activity such as a **visual that all students will benefit from**: a provocative picture from a recent news magazine, for example, or a picture of an abstract painting. Have students first discuss the visual as a whole class, and then the higher level students may write their interpretation of the visual while the instructor can help the lower level students with vocabulary and grammar.

Language experience, in which **students dictate a story related to the theme**, and the teacher or another student writes it on the board, is also a useful approach involving a variety of skills and levels. Again, move from a broader topic and break it down by pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. This also presents an opportunity for teachers to mix up groupings, from heterogeneous to level based to skilled based.

8 ASSIGN PROJECTS

Projects are a great way for all students to be able to participate at a level that is comfortable yet also challenges them.

For example, in the project of setting up a class website, the student with excellent literacy and computer skills may find himself in a leadership role that challenges him to use his speaking skills more, skills he is not so sure of. The students who are just learning English may also participate by posting their profiles to the site. **Projects are a good way for everyone to participate, develop English skills, and make friends.**

From ESL Zero to Hero: How to Teach Absolute Beginners

IN TODAY'S GLOBALIZED WORLD, MOST BEGINNER ESL STUDENTS HAVE HAD SOME CONTACT WITH THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE, USUALLY THROUGH THE INTERNET, MOVIES OR TV.

They have most likely studied English at some point in their lives and abandoned their studies – they are often referred to as **false beginners**. But every now and then, we come across an **absolute beginner**, someone who has had so little exposure to English, they can't even handle the most basic greetings, verbs or vocabulary. Whether you are teaching a complete group of absolute beginners, or a few within a group of false beginners, here are some tips that will help your students go from ESL zeroes to heroes!

HOW TO Teach Absolute Beginners

1 PRIORITIZE LEARNING GOALS

Absolute beginners have had so little exposure to the English language, they have absolutely nothing to build on. Naturally, you'll start with the basics, but consider what they'll need to know first. Does it make sense to start with a list of foods in English? Or colors or numbers? Probably not. What they need to know first is how to introduce themselves and greet others. The natural progression from there is the use of the verb "to be" (*I am from... He is from...*, etc.). Then you'll progress on to possessives (my country, your name, his family) and so on... **Give priority to the language they will need first and foremost.**

2 DON'T ASSUME ANYTHING

Don't make assumptions about what your students know. **Assume they know nothing.** For example, to practice the verb *to be*, you ask them what nationalities they are, only to find out they don't know how to say nationalities in English. **Countries and nationalities** should be taught first, and then practiced with the verb "*to be*". And this goes for a multitude of vocabulary and

expressions. Don't assume a student will be able to answer you if you ask, "*How are you?*" Absolute beginners won't know how to reply, unless you've specifically taught them.

3 CELEBRATE SMALL ACHIEVEMENTS

Absolute beginners will tell you they don't speak English – till the very end of the course. What they're thinking is that they don't speak English fluently, or like you, for example. But make sure they're aware of what they can do. If on the first day of class they've learned to greet each in English, end your lesson by celebrating this, "*Congratulations! You can now introduce yourself and greet each other in English*". Take the focus away from what they can't do and **focus on what they can do** instead. This proves to be tremendously encouraging!

4 USE THEIR SENSES

Absolute beginners may not have enough knowledge to understand explanations, synonyms, definitions, i.e. anything you describe with words. Instead, use their senses to maximize learning. The easiest to use with beginners are visual aids like flashcards, but don't forget to include plenty of gestures, as well as real life objects. The use of realia will allow you to utilize several senses at the same time, and it's often more engaging than two-dimensional pictures. Don't forget to use things they can smell and taste, too!

5 SHOW, DON'T TELL

Because they haven't been exposed to the English language enough, try to **minimize their reading of dialogues and conversations, and act out the situations**, instead. Consider this: when you teach students to reply to a "*How are you?*" do you have them read this short exchange first or just act it out directly? Of course, it's a lot better to **simply show them how to reply.** This goes for most of the expressions and functions they will have to learn.

6 BUILD ON WHAT THEY'VE LEARNED BEFORE

It is essential for absolute beginners to **review what they've previously learned, and it's a great idea to start each lesson with a brief review.** But you can also re-use previously taught language points and introduce them into a new context. Say you are now teaching your students how to ask for directions. Student A is walking down the street with a friend, Student B, when they run into Student C. A introduces B to C (they review how to introduce someone), and then C asks A for directions.

7 KEEP IT REAL

Just because students are absolute beginners, it doesn't mean they can't handle real life situations. You should still **teach in context, and provide as many examples of real life situations and real props as you can.** Even though real maps, brochures or catalogues are filled with vocabulary they won't understand, it is important to help your absolute beginners deal with, precisely, these types of things. Show them how to pinpoint the information they may need like a phone number, address or website. Make sure they understand that it doesn't matter that they can't read the entire brochure, the important thing is that they learn to obtain what they need from it.

BY THE TIME YOUR ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS FINISH THEIR COURSE, THEY WILL PROBABLY STILL NOT FEEL CONFIDENT ENOUGH TO SAY THEY "SPEAK" ENGLISH. THAT'S OK. THE IDEA OF "SPEAKING ENGLISH" IS TOO VAGUE IN THIS CONTEXT.

Try providing them with some specific examples of what they can do now: go shopping by themselves, ask for assistance, order food in a restaurant, etc. Ask them to remember what it was like when they knew none of this. Tell them they are your heroes for learning so much and overcoming their language barriers. They will feel like heroes, too!

What You Need to Know if You Teach Absolute Beginners

Almost without exception, when I tell people that I teach English as a Second Language, they ask, “Oh, what languages do you speak?”

Though I would like to answer with polylingual authority, the truth is I am only fluent in English. “Well, don’t you need to speak their language before you can teach them English?” is the most common retort. The answer, as most ESL teachers have discovered, is NO. You do NOT have to speak a second language to teach English to those who know none whatsoever. Teaching English to absolute beginners, though, is not a simple task. Where does the teacher start when he or she has no common ground with the students waiting for instruction?

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT TPR (TOTAL PHYSICAL RESPONSE)

1 NATURAL LANGUAGE

Dr. James A. Asher developed an answer to that question with his second language learning method called Total Physical Response. He based this method on the idea that a person learning any language, particularly a first language, has a period of time in which he receives linguistic input without producing linguistic output. In other words, language learners take in information about a language before using that language for speech. In the early stages of Total Physical Response instruction, the teacher does the talking, and the students take it in. Later, after students have become comfortable and understand what they hear, do they speak the second language.

2 THE PHYSICAL CONNECTION

The key component of this language method, as one might guess from the title, is the physical response that the learners use while taking in the linguistic information. Students who mindlessly listen to a teacher they cannot understand are more likely to fall asleep than become fluent, but when they make

appropriate physical responses to the statements of their teacher, learning comes easily and quickly.

3 SUCCESS

It may be difficult to believe that students can have such a positive response to language instruction that needs no books and little preparation on the part of the teacher, but they do. I remember the first time I experienced the Total Physical Response technique from the other side of the desk. I was attending a lecture in graduate school when my teacher walked into the room on the first day and started speaking to the class in Hebrew. The class was confused initially: after all, we were there for a lecture on syllabus design. Our professor said several sentences to the class, pointing to herself (teacher) and pointing to us (students). She showed us the difference between two students in the front row (male and female form of the word), and wrote the corresponding words on the board. She sat down and stood up. Then she told us to do the same. Through that instruction and those movements, we learned the word for sit and the appropriate verb endings for first person singular, second person plural and second person singular. At each point, she wrote the vocabulary words and verb conjugations on the board. This exercise was the first ten minutes of class, and to my own astonishment, to this day I remember the Hebrew I learned in those few minutes, fifteen years later, though I have done no further study of the language!

4 IT DOESN'T TAKE MUCH

I can personally attest to the success of Total Physical Response as a student and as a teacher, and I believe that any ESL teacher with a class of absolute beginners will find TPR the best method of language instruction. To use TPR in class, talk to your students. Use repetition. Write down words on the board. Above all, get your students moving.

Start with imperative statements. Sit down. Stand up. Pick up your pencil. Then, tell your students narratives. I

am walking to the door. I am picking up my pencil. You are standing up. You are picking up your pencil. She is standing up. He is standing up. Be flexible when you teach with this method. Look for signs of comprehension in your students, and do not pressure them to produce language until they are ready to volunteer it. Keep reminding yourself that they are learning even if they are not producing English, and they will use that language to communicate when they are ready.

5 MANY BENEFITS

Many benefits come with instruction through TPR. Students feel less pressure to produce perfect language. You can use TPR with a mixed level class or with students with learning disabilities. TPR takes little preparation on your part. Kinesthetic learners, often the last that teachers think of when making lesson plans, are in their learning style glory! TPR is an effective language learning method for both children and adults, large and small classes. Most of all, your students will have fun moving around the classroom and engaging in their own learning process.

TEACHERS OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE WILL FIND, IF THEY TEACH ANY LENGTH OF TIME, THAT THEIR STUDENTS COME WITH ALL LEVELS OF LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY, AND SOMETIMES THOSE STUDENTS ALL SHOW UP FOR THE SAME CLASS.

But when you are teaching a class of beginners or have beginners in your mixed level class, TPR may be the way to connect with all of your students. This method of instruction will have long term positive effects for your students. Not only that, their language learning process may be more in line with how languages are naturally acquired by first language speakers. All this will come together to make your students more engaged in class and give them longer lasting language knowledge. Whether you teach in the east or west, north or south, or have students from every corner of the globe, TPR is a way to bring them together and help them achieve a common goal!

How To Teach Days Of The Week

DAYS OF THE WEEK ARE GENERALLY TAUGHT VERY EARLY ON IN ESL COURSES SO IT IS IMPORTANT TO INCORPORATE RECENTLY STUDIED MATERIAL INTO YOUR LESSONS WITHOUT OVERWHELMING YOUR STUDENTS.

For this example, it is assumed that students have studied ordinal numbers (1st-10th), subjects (math, science, art, music, etc), and the simple present tense.

HOW TO PROCEED

1 WARM UP

Use the start of class as a review of the previous lesson. Students will feel more confident in a class if you start out with material they have already covered and it will also prepare them to use that same material later on in the lesson.

2 INTRODUCE – DAYS OF THE WEEK (VOCABULARY)

Write the words Sunday through Saturday on the board one at a time demonstrating pronunciation and drilling as you go. Practice the days of the week in order using choral repetition and then challenge your students by pointing to words out of order to test their pronunciation as a class and individually.

3 INTRODUCE – DAYS OF THE WEEK (COMPREHENSION)

Tell students “Today is ~” using whatever the day of the week is. Tell them that they go to school on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday or that they study English on Monday and Wednesday. Use several very basic examples to give students an idea of what these words might mean. Ask students for the meaning and translation of each word. It should be easy once they get started.

4 PRACTICE – DAYS OF THE WEEK

Do an activity that gives students lots of practice with the days of the week. A card game such as Go Fish with days of the week cards would be appropriate to play in groups of three to four. If using the game Go Fish simplify the dialogue so that a student only has to look at the person he is asking for a card and say the day of the week while the student being asking for a card has to say only the day of the week as they hand over the card or “Go Fish.”

5 PRACTICE - REVIEW

In order to get students warmed up for the next step where they combine their new vocabulary with previously learned material, conduct a review activity. A good game to practice listening, reading, and pronunciation requires only a set of flashcards for each group of students. Ideally groups should be three to five students. Since there are only seven days of the week, perhaps combine days of the week with a review of ordinal numbers, for example 1st-10th, and a list of subjects they study at school. Once each group has a set of cards, ask them to spread the cards, face up, on their desks. Explain the activity and begin. You will say a word aloud and the first person to repeat the word correctly and slap the corresponding card gets to keep that card. Repeat until all the cards have been gathered. Whoever has the most cards in the class should read aloud all the cards he collected. Repeat one or two more times depending on your students' enthusiasm.

6 PRODUCTION – COMBO

At this point have the students do a pair activity. For example if you create a worksheet with a school schedule (a grid that has Monday to Friday along the top, the numbers one to seven or eight depending on your school along the left, and subjects

filled in for each day and number) do the following. Teach students this structure:

- A: *Do you study subject ordinal number period on day of the week?*

- B: *Yes, I do! or No, I don't.*

Have two worksheets prepared with different school schedules where only ten or fifteen classes during the week are the same. Ask students to work together (by taking turns using the model dialogue) to determine which ten or fifteen classes they have together.

7 REVIEW

Do a final class activity at the end of class to recheck comprehension. Ask your students true or false questions about their school schedule. For instance if the class studies English on Mondays and Wednesdays, say “You study English on Tuesday. True or False?” or “You go to school on Sunday. True or False?”

ASKING STUDENTS QUESTIONS ABOUT THEIR SCHEDULE USING THE SIMPLE PRESENT TENSE IS THE MOST BASIC WAY TO USE DAYS OF THE WEEK AT THIS EARLY STAGE.

Days of the week will come up time and time again during their English studies. When your students begin studying other tenses questions using days of the week as a time reference is common. “What did you do on Sunday?” or “What will you do on Friday?” type questions will continually review their day of the week vocabulary.

How to Teach Descriptions

Generally when introducing descriptions for the first time, textbooks and instructors focus primarily on describing people. The simplest way to teach descriptions is to use the structures “He/She is ~.” and “He/She has ~.” With these two simple structures, you can introduce and practice your new vocabulary quite extensively. Since learning how to describe someone is a lesson for beginners, more complex sentence structures such as “The tall girl with curly brown hair is in my class.” should not be used at this time.

HOW TO PROCEED

1 WARM UP

Use a warm up activity to review the basic sentence structures you plan to use in this lesson. You can ask for volunteers to answer questions which require them to use these particular structures. Another idea is to conduct a short activity. Have the first student in each column of desks stand up, and explain that only these students can volunteer to answer your question. The first student to volunteer and answer the question correctly can sit down and the person behind him must stand. This becomes a race to see what column of students can finish answering questions first. In order to play this game, the columns should be even but you can adapt it to work in most classes.

2 INTRODUCE BASIC VOCABULARY

Using flashcards or drawings, introduce a new set of vocabulary. Adjectives like tall, short, long, short (write it on the board twice because these words are usually practiced in pairs), straight, curly, thin, fat, old, and young would be a good place to start. Drill these using your flashcards or drawings.

3 PRACTICE

Have students complete some matching or fill in the blank exercises. The images used on these worksheets should clearly demonstrate what you are trying to convey to your students and should even match the images on the flashcards if possible.

This will help reinforce the flashcard image, word, and meaning.

4 INTRODUCE ADDITIONAL VOCABULARY

When describing people, there is some additional vocabulary that should be introduced. Words such as freckles, glasses, a mustache, and a beard, for instance, may be appropriate however your textbook will help determine which words should be used in this lesson. Use choral repetition to practice pronunciation. Check comprehension by asking questions such as “Who has glasses?” and have volunteers answer using people at your school, famous people, or cartoon characters.

5 PRACTICE

A short practice activity that combines both sets of vocabulary would be appropriate at this point in the lesson especially if only a few words were introduced in the second set. You could show students images and ask for volunteers to say one sentence about the person in the picture or have a worksheet that required students to write a few sentences about some images. Matching exercises may also be appropriate and be sure to check the answers aloud as a class for further speaking practice before continuing to the production activity.

6 PRODUCE

Students should now be able to accurately describe someone so give them the opportunity to produce material of their own. You can ask students to write a description of themselves or a partner and have students volunteer to read their descriptions aloud near the end of the lesson. You could also have students work in pairs and play a version of Guess Who? Obviously having enough of these games for your entire class is not feasible but you can adapt it for use in the classroom. Simply make up a worksheet with twenty to twenty-five images. Tell students to choose one image and then take turns answering yes/no questions based on the image they have chosen. Students can then put Xs next to images that have been

eliminated and the first student to correctly guess his partner’s chosen image wins. It may even be possible to play this game multiple times within a single class period.

7 REVIEW

You can ask students comprehension questions to review the new vocabulary words at the end of the lesson or ask for sentences that describe some of the images you used earlier in class. Whatever activity you use can be used as the warm up for the following lesson too.

LESSONS ON DESCRIPTIONS ARE IMPORTANT BECAUSE MOST OF THE VOCABULARY CAN BE USED TO DESCRIBE MORE THAN JUST PEOPLE AND THIS IS USEFUL IN MANY FUTURE LESSONS AS WELL.

Since this vocabulary will resurface during the course of their studies, it will be important to review it frequently. If students enjoyed a particular activity more than others, make a note of it and reuse that activity when it comes time for a review.

How To Teach Directions

DIRECTIONS CAN BE CHALLENGING TO TEACH HOWEVER ITS PRACTICAL USES ARE READILY UNDERSTOOD BY STUDENTS AND THERE ARE MANY FUN ACTIVITIES YOU CAN INCORPORATE INTO YOUR LESSONS TO MAKE THEM MORE ENJOYABLE.

Typically the first directions lesson would follow lessons introducing vocabulary such as post office, police station, school, bank, playground, park, library, etc. since these will be used extensively in directions lessons.

HOW TO PROCEED

1 WARM UP - DIRECTIONS

Get your students interested in learning how to give directions. On the board draw a rough map of the neighborhood, just a few streets and the school will do. Ask "Where is the school?" Have a student come to the board and point it out. Then ask where a few other landmarks are and have students draw and label them on your map.

2 INTRODUCE - DIRECTIONS VOCABULARY

Introduce the words 'right' and 'left'. Try to elicit the meaning or translation of these words from the students and write them on the board with arrows demonstrating each direction. Once their meanings have been made clear to the class, demonstrate proper pronunciation. It may be fun to teach your students this little trick to remember right and left: if you hold your arms out in front of you, flex your wrists up and extend just your thumb and index fingers on both hands, the left hand will have a capital L for left.

3 PRACTICE

Ask students to do some choral repetition. Call on students to model pronunciation in order to check their progress on the individual level and do some quick comprehension tests. Ask a student to "Turn right" or "Turn left" with a demonstration and after a few individual checks feel free to have the whole class join in making sure they are listening to the words right and left and not just turning from side

to side by occasionally instructing them to "Turn left, turn left" or "Turn right, turn right" which should end up with everyone facing the back of the classroom. Anyone who isn't facing the correct direction needs to focus on the words more closely.

4 INTRODUCE - DIRECTIONS PHRASES

Introduce the following phrases:

-Turn right/left (at the 1st/2nd/3rd corner).

-Go straight.

-You'll see it on the right/left.

-It's across from (the school, the park, the post office)

-It's next to (the police station, the playground, the library)

Explain the meaning of each phrase and lead some pronunciation practice exercises.

5 PRACTICE

Mark your imaginary present location on a rough map like the one from Step 1 and ask your students "How do I get to the ~?" Call on one student to give just the first section of directions, then another student for the second section, and then another until you've reached your destination. Repeat until your students feel comfortable enough with the new phrases to give a whole set of directions on their own. Next, mark a beginning position on the map and give a set of directions. Ask students "Where am I?" to see if they were able to follow along with you and repeat. If necessary, go back to review anything that seems difficult for the students.

6 PRACTICE - DIRECTIONS

After demonstrating the dialogue, ask the students to work in pairs to practice giving directions. The model dialogue should resemble this:

A: Excuse me. How do I get to the ~?

B: Turn left. Turn right at the 3rd corner. You'll see it on your left.

A: Thank you!

B: You're welcome.

Ask for volunteers to demonstrate their conversations to the class. Over-acting is always encouraged. Any difficulties during a demonstration can indicate which areas may need further review. See if classmates can correct errors if they occur.

7 PRODUCTION - DIRECTIONS

For further practice, if appropriate for your students and school, create a maze of desks in your classroom and have students give directions to a blindfolded classmate. Having teams race is generally discouraged in this situation as it may lead to injuries. Generally having friends guide each other through the maze has the most successful results. As an alternative, direction themed board games or worksheets will also provide the necessary practice and would be more appropriate for larger classes.

8 REVIEW - DIRECTIONS

Ask for translations or demonstrations of all associated vocabulary and phrases as well as directions from one place to another. Encourage students to ask questions if something is unclear. Start the next few classes off with direction related warm up activities to help students retain all this new vocabulary.

WHEN TEACHING DIRECTIONS, IT IS INCREDIBLY IMPORTANT TO CHOOSE ONE STRUCTURE AND STICK TO IT SO THAT YOUR STUDENTS DO NOT BECOME UNNECESSARILY CONFUSED.

The examples above use the structure 'Turn right/left at the 1st/2nd/3rd corner' but you may choose to teach 'Turn right/left onto Smith Street.' or 'Go three blocks and turn right/left.' or 'Take the 1st/2nd/3rd right/left after the school.'

How to Teach Giving Advice

GIVING ADVICE MAY NOT BE AN ENTIRE CHAPTER IN YOUR TEXT-BOOK SO DEVOTING JUST ONE LESSON TO IT MAY BE SUFFICIENT.

If this is the case, introduce only the very simple “you should ~.” or “You shouldn’t ~.” structures. If you want to devote more time to this topic, you can introduce other advice related structures and vocabulary such as “You ought to ~.” and “If I were you, I would ~.”

HOW TO TEACH GIVING ADVICE

1 WARM UP

Start out by having students give examples of when and who people ask for advice. Elicit from students the types of problems people face especially ones they may face as students such as having too much homework or not getting enough sleep at night. Write the problems on the board to refer to later and add in any you would particularly like to discuss. Be sure to include problems such as “headache” or “stomachache” because this is definitely a real life situation where students would give advice.

2 INTRODUCE GIVING ADVICE

Introduce the structures “You should ~.” and “You shouldn’t ~.” Have students repeat these two phrases after you several times for pronunciation practice. Use one of the problems written on the board as an example. First turn the problem into a sentence to make half of your model dialogue.

For example, “headache” would become “I have a headache.” Then show how to use these new structures to give advice. Using several examples, practice both the problem and advice sentences as a class until students are familiar with the structures and confident enough to perform individually as well.

3 PRACTICE GIVING ADVICE

Have a worksheet ready where students work in pairs or groups to match problem sentences with advice sentences. Using images on your

worksheet can make this task easier while leaving them off will make it more challenging. Using simple sentences and vocabulary your students know well, will ensure that the whole class can complete this activity with confidence.

While reviewing the answers, be sure to check students’ comprehension of all the sentences on the worksheet and any vocabulary they have difficulties with.

4 PRODUCE

Make a worksheet with several problem sentences and have students write advice sentences for each problem. If you chose to introduce more than one structure for giving advice, encourage or require students to use different ones in their answers.

To make this activity more challenging, have students write two advice sentences, one using the positive structure and the other using the negative structure. If students are struggling to work independently at this stage, have students work in pairs or groups for this activity so that they can brainstorm and come up with more creative sentences.

5 PRODUCE

In section two you created a model dialogue of a problem sentence and an advice sentence. At this stage, if you want to expand the dialogue, you can include sentences such as “I agree/disagree with you.” or “You’re right. Thank you!” Whatever dialogue you choose, be sure to write it out on the board and clearly mark who says each line by writing an A or B before each sentence. Have students work in pairs. Student A should make a sentence using a problem written on the board such as “I am so tired all the time.” and Student B should give advice such as “You should go to bed earlier.” and complete the model dialogue.

Students should take turns being Student A and B and practice this dialogue for five to ten minutes. Have students volunteer to demonstrate their conversation to the class and correct grammar and pronunciation

mistakes when necessary.

6 REVIEW

Ask students to volunteer to give you advice about problems. If there is plenty of time, you can turn this into a group activity where the first group to volunteer the answer and answer correctly, gets a point and when the bell rings, the group with the most points wins.

GIVING ADVICE IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF CONVERSATIONAL ENGLISH AND YOUR STUDENTS WILL BENEFIT GREATLY FROM STUDYING THIS IF THEY EVER HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK ENGLISH EXTENSIVELY OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM.

How to Teach Nationality

Adjectives and Nationality Nouns

WE LIVE IN THE WORLD WITH A LOT OF DIFFERENT ETHNICAL GROUPS.

We hear the names of different countries and nationality adjectives and nouns in the news all the time. Without proper practice students will make mistakes as they face problems with spelling, pronunciation, and memorizing different forms. That is why it is so essential to help them to put the words to work at your lessons. The first words are learnt at the beginners level but even upper-intermediate students need to expand their nationality vocabulary when they talk about emigration or Olympic Games. As a teacher you need to choose which words you want your students to learn. You can use your course book as a framework but you can use your own materials too.

STAGE 1: PRESENTATION OF THE VOCABULARY WITH THE HELP OF VISUAL AIDS

The teacher can use the world map or flashcards with people in national costumes to introduce new vocabulary.

Example 1: "Look at the map. This is Italy. Italians live in Italy. They speak Italian".

Example 2: "Look at this picture. This is Pedro. He is from Spain. He is Spanish. He speaks Spanish".

You can stick your flashcard on to the board and write key words underneath. In this way you introduce both the spoken and the written form of the vocabulary.

STAGE 2: ELICITATION

1

The teacher points to different flashcards and asks the students to answer the questions. For example:

T: Where is this man from?

S: He is from China.

T: What is his nationality?

S: He is Chinese.

T: What language does he speak?

S: He speaks Chinese.

2

The teacher asks the students to complete the sentences. For example:

He lives in Madrid. He is ...

She is from China. She is ...

They are from Tokyo. They are ...

My friend lives in Russia. He is ...

3

The teacher asks the learners to use the nationality adjectives in a sentence. They may make any sentences they like or you can choose a certain topic or grammar to review.

T: I like Italian pizza and Swiss chocolate. What kind of food do you like?

S1: I like Chinese food.

S2: I like English muffins.

T: Which language is more difficult Russian or Chinese?

S: I think Chinese is more difficult than Russian.

T: Are Japanese cars more popular than German cars?

S: Japanese cars are more popular than German cars.

4

Ask learners to create a little story using new words. Tell them your own story to provide a good model.

I am a teacher. I teach English. I like to read English and American literature. I enjoy listening to French songs. I drive a German car. I love Italian pizza and pasta. I'd like to go to Spain and study Spanish.

5

Ask your students to listen to world news and jot down all nationality words they hear. Then compare the notes.

6

Find a funny joke with an interesting plot and ethnical stereotypes. Stereotypes are different from racial prejudices and are not offensive. Ask the students to read the jokes and discuss the way people see people of different nationalities.

STAGE 3: FOCUS ON GRAMMAR

1

You need to show the difference between the nationality adjectives and nouns. Write on the board: He is from Po-

land. He is Polish. He is a Pole. It will take a minute to explain that we should use an indefinite article with a noun. You can also mention that nationality adjectives are also used to describe foreign products, culture and history while the nouns describe the people of that country. It is also important to draw their attention to capital letters of these words.

2

Divide your students into 2 groups. Give them the handout with nationality adjectives and nouns. For example: Spanish – a Spaniard, Swiss – a Swiss, Greek – a Greek, Swedish – a Swede, etc. Ask them to put the words into two different categories. It is not that difficult to see that some adjectives and nouns are the same but some are different. Ask the representative of each group to come to the blackboard and write the words from one of the categories.

3

Ask one of the students to choose a nationality noun. Other students should try to guess the word. For example:

S2: Are you a Pole?

S1: No, I am not. I am not a Pole. (I am not Polish.)

S3: Are you a Frenchman?

S1: Yes, I am.

STAGE 4: REVISION

To round up your lesson you can use the photos of celebrities and ask the students to identify their nationalities. If they have no idea about someone's background they can ask questions and then come up with the answer.

T: Millions of immigrants have moved to the USA. Some of them became very famous. Look at this picture. Who is this man?

S1: His name is Arnold Schwarzenegger. He is the governor of California. He is Austrian – American.

T: Do you know this actress?

S2: Her name is Nicole Kidman. Where was she born?

T: She was born in Hawaii but lived in Australia.

S2: She is Australian – American.

T: That's right.

How To Teach Polite Phrases:

3 Secret Ingredients

POLITE PHRASES ARE IMPORTANT WHEN LEARNING A LANGUAGE.

For anyone who has traveled, it is obvious that please and thank you are some of the most useful things to learn in any language. In the classroom, you will probably be the only one appreciative of polite language however if your students ever have the opportunity to speak English outside the classroom, this will be the most important thing you can teach them.

HOW TO PROCEED

1 CONTEXT

When introducing questions for the first time, it is important to put them in context. After the introduction of vocabulary, phrases and meaning, drill the target language and then ask your students to think about when they would use the new structure. For instance, you would not randomly walk up to someone on the street and say “Where is the bookstore?” When demonstrated, your students will see that in a real life situation, it would be best to add some polite words and phrases around the edges of the request. Once they understand the need for this and you have paired polite phrases with your target structure, they should always be practiced together in the same way that you teach a cat instead of simply cat. Starting to use polite language in the introduction phase will ensure that your students associate the two from the very beginning.

Practicing model dialogues is always an excellent opportunity to use polite phrases. For example, when teaching students the structure “How much is this ~?” have them practice a model dialogue or role-play based on the one below:

A: *Excuse me. How much is this book?*

B: *It's \$20.*

A: *Oh, thank you!*

B: *You're welcome.*

Half the dialogue is simple polite language which frames the target structure. This is much more beneficial for your students to study than the very simple two line target structure because it gives the question some context and enables students to see the purpose of such a question. If a math teacher explains that her classes will help students balance a checkbook, they may be more eager to pay attention or at the very least understand the purpose of learning such skills. In the same way, understanding the reason for studying English topics and structures can motivate your students. If your students practice dialogues like the one above throughout their studies, they should have extensive practice using polite phrases and will be more comfortable using English outside the classroom too.

2 CLASSROOM ENGLISH

Classroom English is another chance to have students practice polite phrases. If possible, make a set of flashcards for these words and phrases to post throughout the classroom. This will help students remember them and make prompting them much easier. Here are some examples of phrases for students to use in class:

- *May I have another handout?*

- *Can you please repeat the question?*

- *Excuse me.*

- *Please.*

- *Thank you.*

- *You're welcome.*

You can create your own set and add to it as necessary throughout the year. When working with very young children, it may be enough to have them say “Paper please.” instead of just “Paper.” when they would like a piece of paper or a handout from you. It is a very simple thing but important to reinforce as much as possible. Whenever students ask you for something, you can wait for them to say please before giving it to them. It will not be

long before students automatically say please when making a request.

3 TEACHER'S ENGLISH

Your language in the classroom will affect your students as well. Say please when giving directions, thank you when students hand in worksheets and you're welcome in response to students. The more you model polite language in your daily interactions with students, the more familiar they will be with when certain phrases are used and they will feel more comfortable using them when interacting with you and other students.

POLITE PHRASES ARE NOT COVERED EXTENSIVELY IN MOST TEXTBOOKS HOWEVER IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU GIVE YOUR STUDENTS MANY OPPORTUNITIES TO PRACTICE POLITE LANGUAGE AND MAKE THEM USE IT IN THE CLASSROOM.

Polite classroom English can be a short section on every exam and polite phrases can be included in many practice activities. The more practice and exposure your students have to polite language, the better they will be at using it.

How To Teach Sentence Structure: Object Lesson With No Preparation

COMPOUND? COMPLEX? COMPOUND COMPLEX? ANY SENTENCE CAN SEEM COMPLICATED WITHOUT KNOWING THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AN INDEPENDENT AND A DEPENDENT CLAUSE.

Use this simple object lesson with your class no matter what their age to teach or review sentence structure in English.

HOW TO PROCEED

1 WHAT IS A CLAUSE?

As you know, a clause is any group of words with a subject and a predicate. Clauses may be independent of other clauses achieving sentence status all on their own, or they may rely on a main clause to earn that same status. Either way, this simple object lesson will give your students a visual for sentence structure and the difference between independent and dependent clauses.

- Start by asking one student to volunteer to stand in front of the class. Tell your class that this person is a clause. He has a subject and a predicate. He is standing on his own feet, so he is free, independent. He does not need anyone else. He is an independent clause.
- Now ask another student to come in front of the class. Have this student kneel next to the first student. She is a person, and she still represents a clause. She has a subject and a predicate. However, the difference with her is she is not standing on her own feet. She needs help. She is dependent upon someone else. In this case, another clause. She is therefore a dependent clause. Stress to your students that she cannot stand alone and must be joined with an independent clause to make a grammatical sentence. Once your students understand these building blocks, reviewing the four sentence structures in English should be simple.

2 SIMPLE SENTENCES

A simple sentence, as anyone can

guess, is the most straightforward and uncomplicated of the sentence patterns in English. A simple sentence is one independent clause. The only necessary pieces are a subject and a predicate.

- Return to your first student and point out again that he is an independent clause with no other clauses attached. He is therefore a simple sentence.

A simple sentence may have a singular subject (the boy ran) a compound subject (the boy and his dog ran) or plural subject (the boys ran). It may have a direct object (the boy threw a stick) and or an indirect object (the boy threw his dog a stick). There may be adverbs, adjectives and prepositional phrases attached. It may even have a compound verb (the boy ran and played). Any of these embellishments can be paired with an independent or a dependent clause. In this case, though, as long as there is one subject and one predicate and the clause can stand on its own, it is a simple sentence.

3 COMPOUND SENTENCES

A compound sentence is two or more independent clauses joined together usually by a coordinating conjunction. Each of the independent clauses will have its own subject and predicate. These subjects and predicates follow the same patterns given above. On their own, each of these clauses would be a simple sentence.

- At this point, you can ask the second student to return to her seat and bring another student up in front of the class. She should stand alone as did the first student. She also represents an independent clause. (For example, the first student might represent the clause, the boy played. The second standing student may represent the clause the dog ran.)

There are seven coordinating conjunctions in English. A coordinating conjunction is used to join two independent clauses into a compound sentence. At this point, you can take a large piece of

paper and write the seven coordinating conjunctions on the paper. They are and, but, for, or, nor, yet and so.

- Have each of the standing students take hold of one end of the paper so that paper links them. These two students now represent a compound sentence. (The boy played, and the dog ran.) Each clause could stand independently just as each of these students can, but together with the coordinating conjunction they are a compound sentence. (The boy played, and the dog ran.) Your students should understand through this illustration that both pieces of the compound sentence are of equal importance and function. Neither is subordinate to the other just as each of the students is independent on his or her own feet. At this point, include a punctuation point and stress that students should include a comma before the coordinating conjunction in any structure of this type.

4 COMPLEX SENTENCES

Ask the third student to sit down and the second student (the one who was kneeling) to return to the front of the class. Explain to your students that a complex sentence contains one independent clause (the boy ran) and one or more dependent clauses (when he was at the park). There are several types of dependent clauses, but they will all have one thing in common. They are not able to stand alone without the main clause with which they are paired. At this point, you can have the kneeling student grasp one hand of the standing student. They now represent a complex sentence structure – one independent clause and one dependent clause. As for punctuation, stress the order of the clauses for your students. If the dependent clause comes at the beginning of the sentence, a comma should follow it. (When he was at the park, the boy played.) If the dependent clause comes after the independent clause, no comma is necessary. (The boy played when he was at the park.)

5 COMPOUND-COMPLEX SENTENCES

The final type of sentence structure in English is the compound-complex sentence. As one can guess from its name, a compound-complex sentence is the combination of each of the previous two sentence types. This means that this type of sentence will contain a two or more independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction (the boy played and the dog ran) as well as a dependent clause (when they were at the park).

- To illustrate this, have the third student return to the front of the class and take hold of one side of the coordinating conjunction with the first student on the other side of it. (This is the same arrangement they had earlier when explaining the compound sentence.) Then have the second student (the one kneeling representing the dependent clause) take the remaining hand of the last student to come up front. Your three students (two standing and one kneeling) now represent this compound-complex sentence structure. The boy played, and the dog ran when they were at the park. The order of the clauses does not matter in this sentence, but the punctuation will change if the dependent clause comes at the beginning of the sentence. When they were at the park, the boy played and the dog ran. Also make clear to your students that a sentence can have more than one dependent clause, but it will still be either a complex sentence or a compound-complex sentence.

STUDENTS LEARN IN MANY DIFFERENT WAYS, BUT A VISUAL REPRESENTATION OF GRAMMATICAL SENTENCE STRUCTURE IN ENGLISH CAN DO NOTHING BUT HELP.

Your students will remember seeing their classmates represent the different types of clauses in the different sentence structures in English. It will be a memorable object lesson and one that may make a potentially confusing subject easy to grasp, no props required.

How to Teach Word Order: Help Them Remember the Patterns

CORRECT WORD ORDER IS OFTEN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BEGINNER AND INTERMEDIATE STUDENTS.

When moving on to more complex structures, students may find word order confusing and struggle to remember all the various patterns. There are many ways you can help them.

HOW TO PROCEED

1 WHEN INTRODUCING NEW STRUCTURES

It is best to teach word order when introducing new structures. For example, when teaching the simple past tense of make, it is important to emphasize “Mary made a cake.” as opposed to “Mary a made cake.” The second sentence of course is incorrect. Breaking structures into sections will help your students immensely. For this example, teach them Subject + Verb + Object or SVO to help them remember. How the board is organized will also aid your students. For this lesson, be sure to use three columns where column one has subjects, column two has made, and column three has a list of objects. If students are having difficulty arranging phrases during a particular lesson, for example a lesson about giving directions, then a lesson specifically designed to teach word order when giving directions may be necessary. In such a case, try to focus the first lesson or two on the pronunciation and meaning of new words with the following lessons on sentence structure, word order, and dialogue.

2 DRILLING WORD ORDER

After introducing new material, move onto drilling it. Have students repeat each section of the new structure after you. “Mary made a cake.” is really simple but say it in three parts anyway to start off with. If using columns on the board, assign part of the class to each column so that each group contributes one part of the structure.

3 PRACTICE WORD ORDER

Students must also have the opportunity to practice word order on their own or in pairs. Worksheets can provide your students the necessary practice. Activities such as Maze are fun. Break sentences into grids like the ones below. The idea is to connect the words in the correct order with a line. Only words that share a side may be connected. For simple sentences six boxes is enough but for more complex sentences add another row or two and see what your students can do. To make the exercise easier, capitalize the first word and add a period to the last word of each sentence.

Mary	Made	a
me	For	cake

Jane	Card	for
made	A	Jack

Fill in the blank exercises are good practice. To make them easier, list the words or phrases students need to put in the blanks. Songs can be a useful teaching and learning tool in ESL. If you find a song that reinforces the structure you are teaching, create some worksheets to go along with it and perhaps that will help your students remember word order better.

4 WHEN REVIEWING

Word order lessons can also be useful before tests because it is possible to combine many different grammatical points in a word order review lesson. While it is tempting to give students worksheets with both correct and incorrect sentences, it is best not to expose them to intentionally incorrect material but to simply reinforce proper sentence structures. Any activity where students write or say complete sentences can be used to review word order as can a variety of worksheets such as those explained above.

5 PRODUCTION

There are many activities which you can use to help your students practice word order when producing sentences on their own as opposed to working from material you have given them. In small classes an exercise such as Story Time can be used. The idea of this exercise is to build a story one sentence at a time: each student adds a sentence to what his classmates have already said. This can be a lot of fun and since students have no limitations, they can really draw on all their combined knowledge of English. Often, Story Time is based around a theme so you can choose to start a love story on Valentine’s Day or a scary story on Halloween. Fruit Basket is a great way to get the class moving and is good for larger classes too. To play Fruit Basket, arrange chairs in a circle so that there is one less chair than the number of students participating. The person in the middle of the circle has to make a sentence, for instance “I like apples.” if you are teaching the structure I like ~ and all the students who like apples have to stand up and find a different chair. This exercise works well with lessons on telling time too: the model sentence would be “I get up at 7:30.” or something similar. If sentences are getting too specific and certain students haven’t changed places in a while, sentences such as “I like ice cream.” or “I go to school at 8:30.” will get the whole class switching seats.

BY FOCUSING ON WORD ORDER IN YOUR EVERYDAY LESSONS, YOUR STUDENTS WILL HAVE MORE PRACTICE WITH AND UNDERSTANDING OF WORD ORDER WHICH WILL LEAVE THEM FEELING MORE CONFIDENT IN THEIR ENGLISH SPEAKING ABILITIES.

Opposites Attract:

Having Fun with Antonyms

AFTER ALL THESE YEARS, PAULA ABDUL HAD IT RIGHT. OPPOSITES DO ATTRACT, BUT WE ARE NOT TALKING ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS HERE.

Antonyms are a fun and lively way to teach your students new vocabulary and improve their English language skills, so now there is no need to look high and low for vocabulary development strategies.

FUN ESL ACTIVITIES WITH ANTONYMS

1 VOCABULARY GROWTH

Start your antonym lesson by reviewing the words synonym and antonym, pointing out that they are antonyms. Make sure that your students understand that synonyms are similar and antonyms are opposites. Give your class a little warm up by encouraging them to brainstorm as many synonyms of “big” as they can. Then brainstorm a list of antonyms for that same word. Ask your students to share why they think it would be beneficial to add synonyms and antonyms to their vocabularies. What might they gain through a more extensive vocabulary?

To give your students an engaging method to practice using synonyms and antonyms, you can play the game of trees. You will need to do some preparation ahead of time, but the set up could be used many times throughout the year for reviewing and learning new vocabulary. Start by choosing one specific word you want your students to learn, and then make a list of eight synonyms and eight antonyms for that word. For example, you may choose intelligent as your main word. Your synonyms could include clever, bright, smart, gifted, intellectual, sharp and able. Your antonym list could include stupid, dim, unintelligent, thick, slow, dull, brainless and dim-witted. You will need to write “intelligent” on a full sheet of paper and then write each of the synonyms and antonyms on a smaller piece of paper cut in the shape of a leaf. Post the intelligent paper in the middle of a bulletin board and then cut out the shapes for two large trees to fill the space on either side of the word. When it is time to play the game, divide your class into two groups and one student

at a time will draw a leaf from the stack. His group must determine whether it is a synonym or an antonym of intelligent and then use it correctly in a sentence. If the group can do both, the person who drew the leaf should pin it to the correct tree. Then a person from the other team takes a turn. Once you have made your way through all the leaves, whichever team was able to put more leaves on the trees is the winner.

You can repeat this activity several times throughout the year using a new set of vocabulary. You may choose words that will enhance vocabulary you are teaching for another unit, or you may choose new vocabulary at random. Either way, the leaves will remain on the trees to remind your students of the new words they have learned. You should also make blank leaves available to your class to add words to each tree as they learn new synonyms and antonyms of the word you have chosen to post at that time.

2 ANTONYM BINGO

Bingo is a useful way to review vocabulary with your students for just about any vocabulary unit you are teaching. To play antonym bingo, you will need a list of words and their antonyms with which your students are already familiar. Ideally, you should have twenty-five pairs to draw from. Print out blank bingo boards for your class, one per person, and give each person a list of the antonym pairs. Ask each student to fill their bingo board with random words from the list using some words from both sides of the paper. You should have already written each word on an index card and shuffled the deck. To play the game, you draw a card and read the word on it. Your students may then mark a box on their board if it contains the opposite of the word you have read. Remind your students as you play that they should not mark the word that they hear but they should mark its opposite. When someone calls bingo, review the words you called and the appropriate antonyms to make sure the win is true. This will also be another opportunity to review the antonym pairs with your students. Play as many rounds as you like. You can repeat this vocabulary review game as often as you like provided you have enough antonym pairs in

your vocabulary bank.

In a similar manner, you can make word searches or crossword puzzles using antonyms as the clues for the words your students must either find in the puzzle or fit into the boxes.

3 GONE FISHING

If your students are at the age where they can appreciate Dr. Seuss, read to them his book *One Fish, Two Fish* which contains several antonym pairs. Read the book again and ask your students to listen for these antonyms as you read. Ask students to share any antonyms they heard as you read. Then give each student a copy of the book’s text so he or she can read the antonyms on his own. Using fish shaped die cuts that you make or purchase at a craft store, show your students how to write each word on one cut out to make a deck of cards. Encourage students to add their own antonym pairs to those Dr. Seuss offers so each person has a unique set of fifteen antonym pairs, thirty cards total. Then teach your class how to play “Go Fish” if they do not already know how. Let them use their own decks of cards to play the game in class and then take home to play with friends or family.

For another activity with the same cards, your students can use the antonym deck of cards in a Memory style matching game. On a large, flat space, have one student lay out all of his shuffled cards face down. He and his partner must then take turns flipping over two cards. If the two cards make an antonym pair, he may keep the cards and take an additional turn. If he does not find an antonym pair, his opponent gets a turn. Players continue until there are no cards left. The one with the most cards at the end of the game is the winner.

WHEN YOUR STUDENTS EXPAND THEIR VOCABULARY WITH SYNONYMS AND ANTONYMS, THEY INCREASE THEIR COMPREHENSION OF ENGLISH AND LEARN TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES WITH GREATER CLARITY. Though these games may seem like more fun than learning, in fact your students will accomplish both while they advance their English language skills and develop their vocabularies!

The 3 Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig: Teaching Opposites

WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF A BIG, BAD PIG TRIED TO BLOW DOWN YOUR LITTLE BRICK HOUSE?

Run away as the bricks tumbled, just like the three little wolves did in Eugene Trivizas' story *The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig*. As strange and as entertaining as it sounds, this book might be just what you need to liven class up the next time you teach opposites! Here's how you can use it in your ESL class.

HOW TO TEACH OPPOSITES

1 THE THREE LITTLE PIGS

Do your students know the story of the three little pigs? As a class, allow students to share anything they already know about the story and retell it if they already know it. If no one knows the story already, ask them what they think might happen based on the title. Once your students have offered some ideas, read the story to them. Ask your students to notice any words that describe the pigs and the wolf as you read. After you finish the story, work with your class to make a list of these descriptive words on the board.

2 RETELLING

To make sure your students have the story clearly in their minds, ask your students to retell the story in their own words. If your students would like, allow them to illustrate their stories. You might want to let students type up their retellings and illustrate them on the computer. You can print them out and display them on a wall of your classroom.

3 ANTONYMS

Next, explain to your class that you are going to talk about antonyms or opposites. Give them several examples of antonym pairs. Take one pair, big and little for example, and write them on opposite ends of the board. Now draw a symbol at each

end, one big and one little. Show your students that antonyms are words at opposite ends of a spectrum. Draw several of the same symbol along the spectrum getting increasingly big or little. Point out to your students that the antonyms are the words farthest from one another. As a class, brainstorm as many antonym pairs as you can think of. When you are finished, you may want to have your students illustrate one or more of the other antonym pairs you listed on their own spectrums.

4 THE BIG, BAD PIG

Now that your students know the traditional tale and are familiar with antonyms, it is time for the fractured version. Read Trivizas' *The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig* to your class. Ask them to listen for two things as you read. First, challenge them to note any differences between this story and the original version. Second, ask them to note any descriptive words used for the wolves and the pig.

5 COMPARE AND CONTRAST

Explain to your students that a Venn diagram is a way to look at the similarities and differences between two things. Show your students how to create a Venn diagram by drawing two overlapping circles on the board. Label one circle "3 little pigs" and the other "3 little wolves". Ask your students to write the similarities between the two stories in the overlapping section. Then ask them to write the parts unique to each story in its circle.

6 WHAT OPPOSITES CAN YOU FIND?

Looking at the lists of descriptive words, can your students find any opposite pairs among them? Give groups of two to three students some time to work together to find opposites in and between the two stories. You will want to have copies of each text for each group of students. If students are unable to find a pair of opposites

for the descriptive words within the text, ask them to think of word that would be the opposite to the ones that were used.

7 OPPOSITES PERFORM

Now that your students have seen and worked with the opposite version of the three little pigs, challenge your students to write their own fractured fairytales! Supply groups of three to five students with some traditional children's tales. Ask each group to choose one traditional tale and to plan a skit that tells an opposite story. They should write their skit as they prepare. Reassure them that not every element in their skits will be opposite of the original, just as Trivizas' version of the three little pigs was not a complete opposite. Each skit should, however, have at least one major opposite from its original version. After the groups have planned their skits, have them perform for the rest of the class.

PLAY DAY MAY BE A GOOD OCCASION TO HAVE OPPOSITE DAY IN YOUR CLASS AND CELEBRATE THE IDEA OF ANTONYMS.

Do your classes in reverse order! Face your desks to the opposite wall! Read a book from the last page forward or do any of a number of opposite things! Your kids will have fun and they will really understand the concept of opposites!

Realia: 9 Ways To Bring Real Life Into The Classroom

WHAT DO WE USUALLY DO WHEN WE HAVE TO TEACH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES IN ENGLISH? WE USE FLASHCARDS AND ILLUSTRATIONS, RIGHT?

But what if we were to bring a basket full of fruits and not only have students name them, but also take part in a surprise indoor picnic? Students will be both surprised and thrilled, and even though they may not be in the mood for a fruit salad, one thing is certain: this is one lesson they'll never forget. This is what the use of realia in the classroom is all about: the use of real life objects that students can touch, feel, and even smell to effectively teach ESL components.

1 5 O'CLOCK TEA

This is by far the best way to teach table manners, requests, or expressions related to ordering or serving tea, coffee, or any meal in a home setting. For the following dialogue:

- *Would you like some tea?*
- *No, thank you.*
- *What would you like?*
- *I'd like some coffee, please.*
- *With milk and sugar?*
- *Just black coffee.*

Simply bring a children's tea set (it's a lot easier to bring to class) complete with tea cups, saucers, spoons, teapot and/or coffee pot, sugar bowl, creamer, etc... and have students practice offering and serving each other coffee or tea. You may also choose to add cakes, pies, cookies, or anything that will make your 5 o'clock tea truly unforgettable.

2 EATING OUT

Design and print out a simple menu with the food you'd like to teach including starters, main courses, and desserts. In small groups, have one student play the role of waiter and take orders, while the other students order their meals. Then have students switch roles. You may also include as many props as you'd like, like a full table setting to teach tableware vocabulary. Students may ask the waiter for a missing item like a spoon, fork, or napkin.

3 LOCATION, LOCATION...

To teach prepositions of place take common classroom objects like pens, pencils, books, etc. and place them on

or under desks, and around the classroom. Then have students simply tell you where each item is, or take turns asking each other where their own personal items are. This also works great for teaching "this", "that", "these", and "those", as the perspective of having items near and far from you clearly illustrates the differences between the demonstrative pronouns.

4 ASKING FOR DIRECTIONS

Get some real city maps from the local tourist office and give one to each pair of students. Have them take turns asking and giving directions to popular city sights.

5 TELL ME ABOUT YOUR FAMILY

Real family photos are great for not only learning about relationships but also physical descriptions. Have students bring one family photo each and describe family members. Students may also take turns asking classmates questions.

6 LET'S HAVE A FASHION SHOW

Children love to play dress up, and what a better way for them to learn items of clothing and colors than put them on and strut around the classroom to show off their unique style? Adult learners can also model the clothing they're wearing.

7 CELEBRATE THE HOLIDAYS

Learning English is not only about learning to speak in a foreign language. Students should learn about cultural elements as well. Special holidays like Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas offer unique learning opportunities. To teach students about Halloween, plan a celebration complete with pumpkin carving, costume contest, and typical games like bobbing for apples. Give your students the chance to experience the holidays and not just read about them.

8 THE JOB INTERVIEW

Do you have students who will be applying for jobs in English? Try to get your hands on some real job applications and have students practice filling them out in class. You may also conduct job

interviews using real life interview questions. This type of practice will not only teach them the vocabulary they should know, it will give students the boost of confidence they need.

9 WHAT'S THE WEATHER LIKE TODAY?

It's as easy as starting each class by having students comment on what it's like outside. You can get as basic or as complex as you like, from simply saying it's "raining", to it's "drizzling", "pouring" or even "raining cats and dogs"!

YOU WILL HAVE PROBABLY REALIZED BY NOW THAT INCLUDING REALIA IN THE CLASSROOM INVOLVES A GREAT DEAL OF PREPARATION IN SOME CASES. IS IT REALLY WORTH YOUR TIME? THE ANSWER IS, YES. ABSOLUTELY! AND YOUR STUDENT'S FACES WILL BE LIVING PROOF.

Here are the reasons realia should be included in the classroom:

- Kinesthetic learning is the type of learning that students will most effectively acquire, mostly because they will have hands-on experience.
- The use of realia brings a welcome change in the class, a break from typical class activities like reading and writing.
- The unexpectedness of having to suddenly interact with real objects will keep students on their toes, it will create excitement, and they'll have fun.
- Students have the chance to practice real life situations like using maps and asking for directions in a foreign language, but with the guidance of someone who speaks fluently and will help them get it right. Once they hit the street, they will feel more confident in speaking the language with the locals.
- Students will clearly understand the reason they're learning a particular ESL component. Instead of wondering when and where they might have use for a particular language element, they'll know the reason.

When it comes to using realia in the classroom the sky's the limit! The best part is that your students will learn, have fun, but you'll also enjoy your classes all the more.

Distinguishing Between Descriptions

ONE OF THE TOPICS ESL LEARNERS REALLY ENJOY IS DESCRIBING PEOPLE. IT IS A UNIVERSAL NEED AND WANT TO BE ABLE TO TALK ABOUT THE PEOPLE CLOSE TO US. I

adore teaching this topic because students are especially creative: it's a great opportunity to get to know them better.

DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN DESCRIPTIONS

You'll want to start out with the easier of the two questions in order to build upon it. Begin with physical description and let them practice and arrive comfortably at natural usage before moving on to the more complex issue of describing personality.

1 WHAT DOES SHE LOOK LIKE?

To us native speakers it feels quite obvious what this question is asking, but for ESL students it may be easily confused with the more idiomatic question of *What is she like?* What does he or she look like is a question that is a perfect jumping off point for some combined grammar practice. At once, you will teach and practice new vocabulary, subject-verb agreement, adjective placement, and question and sentence formats.

You can break this all down if you would like or try a more combined method. I find it easiest to start out by discussing the meaning of the question and providing some concrete examples weaved in with explanations. Keep excess language to a minimum and describe the concept of appearance and describing people and objects. You can use students in the class as examples and begin with basic appearance subjects such as: hair color, eye color, height and weight, and then move into the more general subjects that describe overall appearance with opposites. You'll want to draw out from the class what they know and then build on it with more information. Here are some examples of what you'll want to include:

Blond hair
Blue eyes
Mustache/beard/goatee
Wears glasses
Bald/balding
Long/short hair
Straight — curly

Shapes: circular, round, square, rectangular, oval, big, small

Also some opposites to include:

Tall — short

Handsome / beautiful / attractive / lovely — ugly / unattractive

Pretty / cute — plain

Young / old

Heavy-set (a better option than fat) — thin / slim / slender

You can continue to add to this list and split it up into different lessons if need be. Once they have some of the basic vocabulary they can begin practicing usage in any number of ways. You could have them do question and answer in rounds about family members or people in the class. You could also have them play guessing games like 20 questions or I spy. You may also want to review the basic grammar of subject-verb agreement using the usual example for "to be" which is as follows:

<i>I am</i>	<i>They are</i>
<i>You are</i>	<i>We are</i>
<i>He/she/it is</i>	
<i>She is tall</i>	<i>They are bald.</i>
<i>Is she tall?</i>	<i>Are they bald?</i>

2 WHAT IS SHE LIKE?

This question sounds similar to the one above but has a totally different meaning. Explain to students that we are no longer focusing on physical appearance, but character. Ask the students for examples of personality traits they already know. Some of their examples may resemble states of being (sad, happy, tired), so be sure to point out that while describing someone as happy is not incorrect, it means that the person is generally happy all the time, not just at that moment. Here are some good adjectives to start with and add to.

Confident
Smart/intelligent/clever
Silly/funny
Nice/lovely/cute
Sweet
Generous
Honest
Friendly
Shy/quiet
Outgoing
Polite/rude

After comprehension checks, you'll want

to begin practicing, utilizing the same subject-verb agreement example from above. Some ideas for practicing describing personalities are:

- Have students answer questions about their best friends or family members (Does your friend work hard?).
- Give them a list of several of the new adjectives and have them describe how someone they know shows that characteristic or more simply, come up with a list of (famous) people that has each particular trait, create some worksheets or matching activities.
- Have the students describe a famous person and have everyone guess who it is. There are numerous ways in which you can practice this point that can really get students interacting and sharing.

3 DISTINGUISH BETWEEN THE TWO DESCRIPTIONS

The last step in solidifying the use of these two types of descriptions is to distinguish between the two of them. Do some activities that combine the two points together in order to compare and contrast. Give them opportunities to describe people they know both by how they look and how they behave. You can do more surveys here to reinforce the language and to add to the ever-growing list of new vocabulary. One of my favorite activities to practice the two together is by providing the students with a blind date scenario. Put them in pairs and tell them that they are going to match up one of their friends or classmates with their partner. The partner can ask questions about the friend/classmate and can then decide if they would like to have a blind date. You can take it one step further and do a dating role play or get into discussions regarding meeting new people and relationships.

DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN PHYSICAL APPEARANCE DESCRIPTIONS AND PERSONALITY TRAITS ARE ENTERTAINING AND OFTEN ENLIGHTENING LESSONS FOR EVERYONE INVOLVED.

It's also a topic that can be re-visited often and offers innumerable opportunities for practice and discussion.

What Time Do You Have?

Telling Time Activities

ONE OF THE MOST BASIC LESSONS YOU WILL APPROACH IS TELLING TIME. IT IS SUCH A KEY ELEMENT FOR BEGINNERS WHO MAY JUST BE LEARNING NUMBERS AND LEARNING HOW TO NAVIGATE BASIC CONCEPTS IN ENGLISH.

I find that the more hands-on you can be with telling time, the faster the students will master it. These activities will give you a collection of tools to approach telling time for adults and children.

TELLING TIME ACTIVITIES

1 INTRODUCTION

A fun way to introduce telling time is to simply ask students, "What time is it?" You'll be amazed at all the glazed looks you may get and the unique attempts to answer correctly! It is good to let them try and some of them may already know the basics. You can then tell them what time it is and then jump right in. There are a lot of details and variables to telling time correctly. You need to teach vocabulary which include: o'clock, a.m., p.m., quarter after, quarter till compared to :45, 6:30 compared to half past 6.

To practice all of the above the best way to start out is with a blank clock drawn on the board with no numbers. Have the students help you fill it in. Go through which numbers are after the hour and which are before, and how those are expressed.

Then draw the two hands and explain that one hand is for hours and one is for minutes. You can do a lot of practice just with drawing different times on the board. What could be a drill can be made a lot more amusing by getting students up to the board to draw in the hands for different times. You can also create handouts that they can then use for pair activities or homework.

2 WHAT TIME DO YOU...?

One of the best ways to practice telling time is to associate time with things you do at that time of day. You can do it with worksheets, cards, or even on the board. Explain morning, afternoon, and evening and what the cutoffs are for each. Here are some points to explain:

- 7a.m. until 11:55 am is morning time.
- 12:00 or noon (also lunchtime) until 5:30p.m. is the afternoon.
- After 5:30 p.m. (or when it becomes dark) until 12:00 midnight is the evening or night time.
- Midnight until 6a.m. is early morning.

These provide good guidelines to then lead into the questions

*What time do you _____ ?
and When do you _____ ?*

Assigning activities to times of day as well as a specific time will ensure that they understand the entire concept of time. There are lots of ways to practice this like simple question and answer. For example: What time do you brush your teeth/wake up/eat dinner/have English class? Have students come up with their own ideas and take the opportunity to teach and use new vocabulary.

3 WALL CLOCKS

Being able to use real clocks that the students can manipulate will make for hours of enjoyment and good solid review. It's a good idea to have at least three to four wall clocks for this purpose. You can make good use of them in several ways. Young learners especially love manipulating the clocks, playing teacher and doing Q and A with the clocks. Adults also enjoy the hands-on activities using the clocks and it really does make the lessons very memorable. You can have students play a variety of games and adapt them for difficulty. You could have a student mark a time on

the clock and not show anyone. The group then has to ask questions to deduct what time is on the clock. Or you could have them do races — shout out a time and see who can put the accurate time on the clock the fastest. Really your options are endless when you have a few old wall clocks at your disposal.

4 HOW MANY WAYS CAN I SAY...?

There are lots of variable ways to ask and answer questions regarding time. Give them lots of options and provide lots of examples. Some of those are:

*What time do you have?
What time does ----- start / finish?
What time is it?
Do you know the time?
Do you know what time it is?
What time do you... (do something — wake up, go to sleep, etc.)
When is the movie / class / concert / etc.?*

MAKE TELLING TIME STIMULATING AND MEMORABLE AND STUDENTS WILL WALK AWAY FEELING REALLY ACCOMPLISHED. THIS LESSON IS ALSO ONE WHICH ENABLES THEM TO THEN GO OUT INTO THE WORLD AND USE A NEW SKILL.

It's good to encourage them to practice it with their friends or even ask strangers what time it is. It is empowering for the students and you can generate many different ways to reuse these activities time and time again.

What Would You Do? Advice on Teaching Giving Advice

GIVING ADVICE IS ONE OF THOSE TOPICAL LESSONS THAT HAS A LOT OF SUBSTANCE TO IT. IT COMBINES THE TEACHING OF MODAL VERBS WITH VALUABLE DISCUSSION-GENERATING SUBJECT MATTER.

There aren't many ways to go about teaching giving advice other than to practice doing just that. Here you can get your own advice about how to broach giving advice in the classroom.

ADVICE ON TEACHING GIVING ADVICE

1 TEACH THE MODALS AND INTENSITY

Throughout a students' career they are exposed to modal verbs for different uses and purposes. Giving advice enables them to provide opinions and to analyze problem situations. The first thing to do when teaching giving advice is to focus on the modal verbs themselves and their strength or intensity. When giving advice there are levels of intensity that are inferred. It is necessary to explain this to students first. You'll want to explain levels of intensity as well as provide a lot of example for how we use each modal in particular. Here is an explanation:

Most Intense:

- Have to / Don't Have to: You have to do something — means you have no choice.
- Must/Must not: You must do something — similar to have to and is fairly strong.
- Had Better: You had better do something — less intense, it is a good idea to...
- Should/Shouldn't: You should/not do it — implies a choice -- not intense.
- Would/Wouldn't: If I were you, I would/not — different structure — not forceful.

Least Intense:

- Might /Might Not: You might want to — very timid, least intense.

2 PROVIDE SAMPLE SCENARIOS

Along with the above modal explanation you'll need to provide concrete examples for each. Give the students a sample scenario and apply it to each of the modal verbs to make your point. For example: John has a problem. He saw his best friend's girlfriend with another boy, holding hands at the mall. He wants to tell his friend, but he is afraid. What would your advice be to John? What would you do? Use a student in the class so that they can give advice directly to John. At this point you can go through each modal and let students give you some examples like: You have to tell him. You must call him right now. You shouldn't get involved. You can do a few rounds of this with various problems, until your comprehension check is completed.

3 ROLE PLAYS

Role plays are an excellent way to create an even more personal experience for the students. It is similar to the above in which you either provide a scenario, or you have the students come up with one. Then choose two or three students to have a spontaneous conversation. They should take on the different roles, acting as if they are the one with the problem, and the ones giving advice. Stress to the students that before they begin giving advice, they should ask clarification questions and get as many details on the problem as they can. After that they can begin to counsel and give advice. You want to start out with problems that aren't too complex, and then increase the difficulty as you see your students' engagement. You can adapt these to students' level, interest, age and maturity. A few example role plays could be:

- *Mary has a job offer at a great new company that she is excited about. The pay is good, but the hours will be long and she won't get to see her family very much. Her husband doesn't*

want her to take the job. What should Mary do?

- *Your best friend met the man of her dreams. The problem is that he is moving to another country for a year in just a few weeks. What should she do?*

4 DISCUSSION

Giving advice is a great topic for discussion as well as for debriefing. You can discuss what happened in the groups' role plays, the difficulties of giving good advice and the reactions of the students. Discussing problems is not easy and trying to find solutions is complex and often there are no simple black and white answers. Often after a few activities, students are ready to share some of their own experiences of problems, advice they have received or past experiences. It is effective to make these lessons as real to life as possible, and using the students' own experiences is a very constructive tool. Be careful not to get too personal and if a student volunteers a problem that they would like advice about, be sure to be a good mediator and offer some guidelines regarding the advice that can be given. This could also lead into other discussion topics, such as different types of problems. You could focus on problems related to the poor economy, health, teenagers or other socially relevant topics. Let your students have a say in these discussions, and you'll find that they will get a lot of natural practice giving advice and analyzing problems.

EVERYONE HAS OPINIONS AND EVERYONE HAS PROBLEMS. LESSONS FOCUSED ON GIVING ADVICE AND ANALYZING PROBLEMS HITS HOME ON A PERSONAL LEVEL WITH EACH AND EVERY STUDENT. This is one of those topics that is more than a grammar point, it is a life lesson. Give students good guidelines and you'll find that your advice-giving lessons bring the class closer together.

As Easy as OneTwoThree:

10 Ways to Practice Numbers

USING NUMBERS IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IS DIFFICULT FOR MOST SECOND LANGUAGE SPEAKERS.

TRY THESE 10 WAYS TO PRACTICE NUMBERS IN YOUR ESL CLASSROOM

1 GO FISH

“Do you have any fours?” You may hear this question frequently if you allow your students to play Go Fish as part of their number practice. To make the game more challenging and give your students more numbers practice, use two decks of cards for around eight students for one game. Require that a player must have all eight matching cards before he can claim them for his own. Your students will laugh at how confusing the game can become with sets of cards passing back and forth between all the players!

2 TWENTY-FOUR

A deck of cards can entertain your students with more than Go Fish. Play the game Twenty-Four in groups between two and four players. Each round of a four-player game, each player lays one card down. (Two players lay two cards each. Three players rotate who lays down the extra card.) Each card has the number value on the card, with aces counting as one and face cards counting as ten. The players race to make a mathematical equation using the four numbers so the answer is twenty-four. When someone has an answer, he taps the table and shares it with his opponents.

3 BOLOGNA

Another card game that gives your students a chance to practice numbers in English is Bologna. To play, groups of four to six students divide a deck of cards between them. Starting with the first person, he places one or more cards into the center of the table and announces the quantity of two's that he is placing there, face down. The second player must announce how many three's she is putting in the center of the table, face down. Play continues around the circle with each player announcing a quantity of cards ordered from three to ace and then starting back at two. In reality, players may or may not lay down the quantity or denomination of cards they announce. The

key to the game is bluffing and knowing when others are doing the same. At any point during play, any player may call “Bologna!” if she thinks or knows another student is lying. If the player was lying and did not put down the cards she announced, she must take all the cards in the center. If that player was telling the truth, the player who called bologna must take the entire pile. Play continues until someone is out of cards and wins the game.

4 MAP IT

Review with your students all the personal information that contains numbers. Address, phone number, birthday and even email address often contain numbers. Have students work in groups of four or five to create a map of where their classmates live. Give your students some time to interact and collect the addresses of each of their classmates. Then, have groups of students make a map of the town and nearby area to show where each person lives.

5 MY TIMELINE

To challenge your students with longer numbers, have them create a timeline of the significant events of their lives. If you can, get a long roll of paper and encourage students to include photographs or illustrations of their significant events. To make sure your class is practicing numbers in English, have them write out the years rather than using numerals on their timelines.

6 WEATHER

Whether you realize it or not, tracking the weather is a great way for ESL students to use numbers. Take some time each day to access basic weather information – temperature, dew point, humidity and barometric pressure – and talk about it at the start of the school day. You may want your students to keep a record of the weather patterns.

7 CLASSROOM MARKETPLACE

With a classroom market place, your students can practice buying, selling and bargaining with numbers in English. Start by having each person imagine a product they might want to sell at the classroom marketplace. It is easier

to make the items hypothetical, but you may choose to have your students create actual items from art supplies you have in the classroom. Then, make copies of special classroom dollars and give each student ten dollars to spend in the market. Let your students haggle (explain this concept before opening the market and do not allow anyone to purchase anything without haggling) and then see what everyone ends up by the end of the activity.

8 MENTAL MATH

New math is not as new as it used to be, but challenging your students to do mental math problems will get them using numbers in English. Give your students a chance to do some simple mental math problems, and then let the real challenge begin. Using a spelling bee format, ask your students to do increasingly difficult mathematical equations without using paper. If a student gets one wrong, he sits down. The last one standing is the Mental Math champion!

9 CLASS SURVEYS

Class surveys are another way your ESL students can practice using numbers in English. As a class, make a list of demographic or statistical categories that might apply to your students. For example, how many students have dogs, how many have more than one sibling, how many have grandparents still living, etc. Brainstorm a large list, and then ask each student to choose five questions he will ask each of his classmates. Give your students time to interview one another, and then have each person write a sentence for each of his categories. For each question, the student must write a statement using words and not numerals to represent the answers.

10 NUMBERS IN PROVERBS

Many proverbs and idioms contain numbers. Alex Case compiled this list, which you can use in your ESL class. Challenge students to guess which number completes each phrase and then match that phrase to the correct definition. **THOUGH YOUR STUDENTS MAY NOT ENJOY MATH CLASS, THESE ACTIVITIES WILL BE A FUN WAY TO REVIEW NUMBERS IN YOUR ESL CLASS.**

How Do You Feel Today?

Teaching Emotions

EVERYBODY FEELS. TODAY I FEEL HAPPY. TODAY I FEEL SAD. TODAY I FEEL FRUSTRATED. FOR YOUNG STUDENTS, THOUGH, EMOTIONS CAN BE DIFFICULT TO TEACH BECAUSE THEY ARE SO INTANGIBLE.

Bring emotions to a tactile level for your students with these concrete activities, and you'll all feel better at the end of the day.

HOW TO TEACH EMOTIONS IN YOUR ESL CLASSROOM

1 START THINKING ABOUT FEELING

The first step in teaching about emotions is to engage your students. If you have younger students, picture books are a great way to do this. Some good ones to try are *Today I Feel Silly*: and *Other Moods That Make My Day* by Jamie Lee Curtis or *I Feel Orange Today* by Patricia Godwin. After reading these or other books that your class likes, encourage your students to share how they are feeling today. Make sure they know that any answer is a good one: the key is to be honest. Also, remember that younger children may not be as attuned to their feelings as more mature students can be, so keep from forcing an answer if all they can say is that they feel fine.

Another way to engage your students at the beginning of an emotional lesson is to sing some songs about feelings. "If You're Happy and You Know It Clap Your Hands" is a great way to engage young children. The rhythm of the verses also helps with sentence intonation and pacing for students who struggle with their fluency. You could also sing "Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf" or any other songs they might know and love that mention any kind of emotion.

2 TAKE A CLOSER LOOK

Now that your class is thinking about emotions, it's time to start some more structured work. Give a second

use to old magazines by cutting out pictures of faces displaying different emotions. The bigger the face, the easier it will be for your students to see the emotion. Show one picture at a time during circle time or during a class discussion, and ask your students how they think that person is feeling. Ask them why they think the person is feeling that way. What are the clues they take from the person's facial expression? Then have a little fun and ask your students to mimic the face from the picture to show that same emotion. Even better than magazine photos, take some candid pictures of your students prior to teaching on this topic and use the faces they make for the same activity. Kids will love seeing themselves larger than life in front of the class and will feel a deep connection to the lesson when you involve their personal photos.

Today I feel board. That's not to say I feel bored. Maybe I feel happy, confused, concerned, elated, hysterical, nervous or loved. Our emotions change from day to day, so give your students a venue through which to share their emotions. Choose a selection of simple cartoon faces and print them out on full sheets of paper. (If you are nice to the art teacher at your school, he or she may draw you some original ones.) You can then post them on a bulletin board with a label under the picture naming that emotion. Then give each of your students a name tag with a push pin and ask them to place their name next to or under the emotion they are feeling today. (Be careful not to hang the faces too high for your students to reach.) This will give them some reading practice, but an even more beneficial activity is to ask your students to share why they feel a particular way on the day of the discussion. This promotes discussion and also gives your students an appropriate place and time to share special news. You can keep this bulletin board up all year if you choose to do so, and you can add more descriptive emotions as the year progresses

thereby increasing your students' vocabulary.

3 WRITE IT OUT

Remember those pictures of faces you used in your class discussion? Now it's time to use them for a little writing practice. You will want to choose your writing activity based on the ages of your students. For younger students, give them one of the pictures you discussed earlier. Have them spend some time thinking about the emotion that person is feeling. Then ask them about a time they felt that same emotion. You can allow some time for class sharing or break your class into smaller groups so everyone can share their personal story. Then get in your writing practice by having students write about that time they had that particular emotions. This is especially good for younger children since it is easiest for them to share from their personal experiences. If your students are more mature, you can make the writing practice a little more challenging and a little more creative. Have them think beyond what the person in the picture is feeling and challenge them to think why the person feels that way. What could that person's story be? When your students write, have them do some creative writing telling the story of the person in the picture. Encourage them to use detailed descriptions and strong verbs in their creative writing.

EMOTIONS ARE SOMETHING PEOPLE EXPERIENCE EVERY DAY. THESE ACTIVITIES ARE ONLY THE BEGINNING OF WHAT YOU CAN DO WITH YOUR CLASS WHEN TEACHING EMOTIONS.

Either way, when you teach about emotions, your students are sure to feel excited, eager, thrilled, animated, energized, full of life, absorbed...

How to Teach Shapes

STUDENTS MAY NOT OFTEN USE SHAPES IN THEIR EVERYDAY CONVERSATION OR ENGLISH LESSONS BUT IT IS STILL WORTH TEACHING YOUR STUDENTS CERTAIN BASIC SHAPES ESPECIALLY IF YOU ARE GOING TO TELL THEM TO "CIRCLE THE CORRECT ANSWER." ON THEIR WORKSHEETS OR EXAMS.

Knowing basic shapes can also be useful when students try to explain objects that they do not know the word for because if they can describe something accurately enough, you will be able to give them the correct vocabulary word. This article provides some ideas and activities on teaching shapes to preschool and kindergarten kids and teenagers.

HOW TO PROCEED

1 WARM UP

Shapes are another topic for very beginners so it is worth spending time reviewing the previous lesson. If you choose to do the production activity suggested in this lesson, you may want to devote some time to reviewing numbers, description words and body parts as well. You can simply ask students to name the body part or number you are pointing to as a class or by volunteering. You can also review all this vocabulary using flashcards or by eliciting vocabulary from your students to see what they can remember. Warm up activities for beginning students may take up to ten minutes of your class time depending on how much material you feel the need to include. When it comes to vocabulary, repetition is the key.

2 INTRODUCE SHAPES

Drawings on the board or flashcards will be the easiest way to introduce shapes. You may choose to only teach square, rectangle, circle, and triangle but feel free to include other vocabulary such as star and diamond if appropriate. Use choral repetition for pronunciation practice and drill by pointing to the drawings on the board or using flashcards. If you are only using basic shapes and working with young learners, have them make the shapes using specific hand gestures

as they practice the words. This will help reinforce what the new words mean.

3 PRACTICE SHAPES

After practicing the vocabulary as a class, have students practice writing the words by labeling images on a worksheet or making sentences for each image. For example, if there is a picture of a circular clock, students can write "It's a circle." while if there is an image of a photograph, students can write "It's a rectangle." You can also continue practicing as a class by naming familiar objects or objects in the classroom and having students tell you what shape they are. Students should be encouraged to use full sentences when responding to these questions.

4 PRODUCE

At this stage in the lesson students should be able to produce their own material. You could have them write as many objects as they can think of for each shape, for instance. You could also conduct an activity which combines students' knowledge of shapes, numbers, descriptions and body parts. Assuming you have covered all of these topics, you can do this activity called Monsters. Have students work in pairs sitting back to back. First give students time to draw a monster on the top half of their worksheets. Student A will then describe his monster to his partner while Student B listens to the description and draws a monster based on the description he is given. Students will say sentences such as "He/She/It has one small nose. It's a circle." When Student A is finished describing his monster, students should switch roles. When both partners have described and drawn a monster, have students compare their drawings. It is amusing to see how different they are even if students were listening carefully.

5 REVIEW

If possible, it may be fun to get the class moving and working together. In the last minutes of class have students position themselves to cre-

ate the shape you call out. For example, if you say "Triangle." students should try to organize themselves into a triangle. It may be a bit of a challenge but depending on the class, may be quite enjoyable as well. It is good to conduct activities, such as this one, which require cooperation among your students.

Shapes may not be the most important section of material that students study and this vocabulary is unlikely to come up repeatedly in the course but teaching basic shapes is still necessary. Later on when students are taught the adjective form of these words, such as circular and triangular, at least they will be building upon previously learned material.

How To Teach Time: Telling Time Activities And Games

Telling time can be tricky for some students so it is important that they have a very strong grasp on numbers before trying to proceed with this lesson. Depending on the age of your students, they may struggle because they have not learned to tell time in their native language so teaching general references to time such as 'in the morning' and 'at night' would be more beneficial.

HOW TO PROCEED

1 WARM UP

Get your students in a numbers frame of mind by doing some pronunciation practice. Only the numbers one through fifty-nine are going to be used but review zero through one hundred anyway. A game or two of bingo would be good practice. Give students a five by five grid with the center square filled in. Ask them to write any numbers zero through one hundred in the remaining squares, say random numbers (starting with the one already filled in) and play until a few students have gotten bingo.

2 INTRODUCE – TIME: HOURS

Draw a clock face on the board to demonstrate. Start by showing times such as 7:00 and 11:00 and writing them on the board next to clock faces. Check to ensure that your students understand that the short hand indicates the hour and should be both said and written first. Have students repeat "One o'clock, two o'clock..." after you. Ask students to come to the board to both write and draw times you give them. For example, say "Rachel, it is 9 o'clock." The student should write 9:00 and draw a clock face indicating that time.

3 INTRODUCE – TIME: MINUTES

Move on to minutes. Show that there are sixty minutes in an hour and that the long hand indicates minutes which should be said and written after the hour. Now demonstrate times such as 8:10 and 3:42 just as you did for hours in the previous step. Ask students "What time

is it?" after drawing new clock faces on the board. Ask a student "What time is it?" while pointing to the clock in your classroom. See if there are any volunteers to draw clock faces on the board and ask the class what time it is. Make sure your students understand that "It's 8:10 o'clock." is incorrect.

4 PRACTICE – TIME

Have a worksheet prepared with a section containing clocks showing various times. Ask the students to complete this section independently and check the answers as a class. If students are struggling, more practice may be necessary. In the second section ask students to draw in the hands of the clock and then ask their partners "What time is it?"

5 INTRODUCE – TIME: VOCABULARY

Once your students have a basic grasp on numbers and telling time, introduce time related vocabulary such as those listed below:

- a quarter past
- It's a quarter past 4.
- half past
- It's half past 9.
- a quarter to
- It's a quarter to 12.
- AM
- It's 7:50 AM.
- PM
- It's 11:20 PM.
- noon
- midnight

Your textbook will determine what exact vocabulary you need to cover. Practice pronunciation of all the new words and ask students to tell you the time shown on the board in two different ways. For example "It's 7:15. It's a quarter past 7." Extensive drilling and practice activities are necessary at this stage.

6 PRACTICE – TIME

Continuing the worksheet used above, students can match sentences

with clock faces or even with images. For example "It's 9:30 AM" might match up with an image of a student at school while "It's midnight" would go with an image of a person sleeping.

7 PRODUCTION – TIME

Teach your students the model dialogue below:

- A: Excuse me. What time is it?
- B: It's 9:30.
- A: Thank you.
- B: Your welcome.

Have students practice this dialogue in pairs using clock faces drawn on the board or printed on their worksheets. Students should take turns being A and B. After five to ten minutes of practice ask for students to demonstrate the conversation to the class in order to ensure that students are correctly saying the time that corresponds with each image.

8 REVIEW

To end the class use another short activity to review what has been covered in class. Ask students to tell you the time shown on the board, translate phrases, and ask for the time to ensure that students are comfortable using all the new material and review anything that gives them difficulty both before the class ends and at the beginning of the next lesson. To build upon this lesson, the following lessons may be based around the structures "What time do you ~?" and "I ~ at 7:30" which practices both time and the simple present quite extensively.

General references to time such as at night, in the morning, and on Sunday come up quite often in ESL classes while specific times such as 9:35 do not. **BE AWARE OF THE FACT THAT STUDENTS WILL NEED PRACTICE TELLING TIME THROUGHOUT THE COURSE OF THEIR STUDIES SO DURING WARM UP ACTIVITIES OR ON WORKSHEETS TRY TO INCLUDE SPECIFIC TIMES REGULARLY.**

7 Steps for Teaching the Intermediate ESL Student

So you've been assigned an intermediate ESL this term after a number of terms teaching beginning ESL students. This should be a breeze!

The students understand everything you say, can follow directions, and can carry on a conversation. After a week or so, however, you realize it is **NOT** a breeze. In fact, it's much more challenging than any class you've taught yet! A small contingent of students complains of being bored while other students say they can't understand any of the material. You seem to spend more time on lesson planning than ever before, with only student boredom and confusion to show as a result. **What's going on?**

Well, the first problem is to paraphrase a scholar on the topic of assessment, *"there are many rooms in the house of 'intermediate.'"* Many different students with different levels of English skill can be legitimately called "intermediate": for example, those with strong conversational and life skills in English but almost no academic or literacy skills as well as those with strong reading and writing skills who have trouble carrying on a conversation. **This creates a problem for curriculum and instruction:** what exactly do you focus on and teach in such a class? How may these problems be addressed?

HOW TO Teach Intermediate Learners

1 DIAGNOSTIC

Give a short diagnostic at the beginning of the term. For example, a small dictation followed by a reading with short answer questions is a versatile tool. This doesn't take a long time to administer, and it reveals some important information on each student's reading, writing, and listening skills. In addition, the instructor can get some information about the class, collectively: if it is trending toward the low or high end of intermediate, or if the class as a whole seems to have better reading and writing skills than listening. This information can inform future lesson planning.

2 NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Unlike beginning students, stu-

dents at this level can be asked what they need to work on and what their goals are, both short and long term. If most of your students are job-oriented, for example, it might make more sense to work on conversational and pronunciation skills than on academic reading and writing. However, if more students have ambitions of obtaining a university degree, then additional emphasis can be placed on developing their academic vocabularies.

3 VARIETY OF MATERIALS

Textbooks often cannot meet the varied needs of an intermediate class because of the range of abilities and interests, and instructors may find themselves relying on supplementary materials such as newspaper and magazine articles and websites for teachers or chapters from select textbooks that allow duplication of class sets. If you notice a problem with present perfect tense, for example, you can just select a chapter from a grammar text to focus on that specific point rather than going through the whole text.

This variety of different materials increases the probability of reaching more students and holding student interest.

4 VARY INSTRUCTION

Just as the materials should be varied, so should the instruction. Instructors find themselves sometimes locked into a favorite mode of instruction, such as giving dictation, or playing vocabulary games, or student reading followed by class discussion. Using a variety of instruction rather than one type increases the probability of meeting all students' needs.

5 VARY GROUPINGS

And just as the materials and instruction should be varied in an intermediate class, **so should the grouping strategies.** Many ESL teachers have been trained in the value of group instruction, but not all students learn best this way. Some students learn best while working individually. The instruction should be varied from individual, to small group, to large group instruction throughout the course of a lesson.

6 FINE TUNE AS YOU GO

As the semester progresses, you may note common problems in paragraphing, for example or in stress and intonation. Give lessons in these areas as you note the problems. **Give frequent assessment,** both formal assessments of quizzes and tests to the more informal homework checks as well as just walking around and noting student interactions in English during discussion.

7 STUDENT FEEDBACK

Ask the students periodically how the class is going for them - they can give their feedback anonymously. Do several of these checks throughout the semester, starting several weeks in, perhaps after the first test. Ask students to write on a piece of paper the answer to the questions *"How is the class going for you?"* and *"Are there any changes you'd like to see?"* They then fold the paper and hand it in - no need to give a name. Most students just write things like *"It's great,"* or *"So far so good,"* but sometimes they have valuable feedback like *"I'd like more reading,"* or *"The teacher speaks too quickly"* — sometimes painful but important information! You'd better know about concerns near the beginning of class when they can be addressed than in the course evaluation at the end.

THE TERM "INTERMEDIATE" ENCOMPASSES A VARIETY OF DIFFERENT STUDENTS: THOSE WHO HAVE JUST A LITTLE CONVERSATIONAL FLUENCY BUT STRONG READING SKILLS, OR THOSE WHO HAVE GOOD CONVERSATIONAL FLUENCY BUT POOR GRAMMAR AND WRITING SKILLS, THOSE WITH DEFINED VOCATIONAL GOALS, AND THOSE WHO WANT TO CONTINUE PURSUING A UNIVERSITY EDUCATION...

Serving all of these different students with different skills and needs is not easy. In fact, the intermediate level may be the most difficult of the ESL levels to teach. However, by gathering information on the students and the class, varying materials and instruction, and gathering student feedback, the ESL teacher can meet student needs and set up a strong class.

How to Assist Your Intermediate Students on Their Way to Fluency

SOMETIME AFTER THE HIGH BEGINNING LEVEL OR A YEAR OF STUDY, SOMETHING HAPPENS TO MANY ESL STUDENTS. Formerly attentive eyes glaze over, always before enthusiastic students now are lethargic, absences go up, and sometimes students stop coming to class all together. “I’m so bored,” and “We’ve done this before” are frequent refrains about the class and instruction. What is going on? Instead of giving in to frustration, you might consider facing your students are dealing with the dreaded plateau.

WHAT IS THE PLATEAU?

This is a basically intermediate level where students have acquired a certain amount of fluency. They can understand and be understood in most routine social situations in English. They are still markedly nonnative speakers, however, with distinct differences between their grammar and pronunciation than that of native speakers. Getting past this plateau and on the way to true advanced, fluent, and correct English speech is difficult, and it’s not coincidental that most second language learners worldwide don’t get past the intermediate level. So how do we help our students avoid getting stuck at eternal intermediate speakers and beat the odds in making it to the advanced level?

5 METHODS OF GETTING PAST THE DREADED INTERMEDIATE PLATEAU

1 ADDRESS CLASS NEEDS

Do a diagnostic at the beginning of class, such as having students write a “phone message” dictated by you and then do a simple writing assignment, such as a “life lesson” students learned. In this way, teachers can begin to get an idea of students’ varied skills and can begin to plan the activities around common needs—if most students need to work on past tense verbs, for example, or sentence fragments, then that is where the focus should be, no matter what the class text might suggest.

2 ADDRESS INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

If possible, interview each student,

discussing his or her future plans and what he or she wants to get out of the course. If it’s not possible to interview each student, have them make tapes of themselves addressing their plans and goals. In this way, can the teacher can find some common goals to focus on: perhaps a majority of students want to go into the health care industry, for example, suggesting a focus for vocabulary instruction. In addition, some common areas for pronunciation instruction, such as stress and intonation, can also be identified.

3 ADDRESS CURRICULUM AND MATERIALS

Many institutions are not prepared for addressing the needs of the intermediate student. I remember teaching a group of high beginners/intermediates the distinction between the simple and progressive present tense—over and over. The school had a “grammar –centric curriculum” and most of the materials seem to focus on this particular verb tense distinction. If the same material is repeated, of course students will complain of boredom. Look into instead some of their more advanced needs: grammar such as the passive voice and stress and intonation patterns for pronunciation, for example, are issues that can begin to be addressed at an intermediate level.

4 RELEVANT CURRICULUM

Most students at this level have identified specific goals, and may find some curriculum too elementary or irrelevant to their needs, hence the complaints of boredom. While the short stories of O’Henry and poetry of Robert Frost, for example, might be charming, especially to students of literature, ESL students might have limited patience for this as their needs are more immediately related to developing job or academic—usually non-arts and literature related—skills to survive in the work or academic world. Tie these goals to the curriculum by having students read and write relevant workplace and academic documents such as memos, reports, and essays.

5 TIE THE CLASS TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD

Because they will shortly be entering this outside world, connect students to it!

Have them go on fieldtrips, if possible, to important local sites.

For example, my city of Sacramento, California is the seat of government of the largest and one of the most influential states in the nation, so taking students to the State Capitol and learning about what the government does and jobs that are generated by it is valuable learning for students. In addition, Sacramento is located in the Central Valley of California, one of the richest sources of agriculture in the world. A trip south to Lodi, California, for example, will give students exposure to the powerful wine industry. In addition, right in our city is a branch of C and H, the sugar company, again giving students exposure to the agricultural industry. These field trips can be tied back the classroom with related readings, as the history of wine and sugar production are long, multicultural, and rich in human interest. In addition to the readings, study of individual industries usually is replete with new vocabulary: for example, the word for the study of wine is “oenology,” something I learned not long ago.

Besides field trips to places off campus, students can stay on campus and sit in on lectures of classes related to their interest by prior arrangement - usually the professors of these classes are happy to have them there. Finally, guest speakers in the fields of medicine, law, and technology can visit the class and talk about fields related to the students’ interests - other teachers might be good resources for these speakers as these are fields their spouses and friends could be in!

SATISFYING THE NEEDS OF INTERMEDIATE STUDENTS IS NOT EASY. IT CAN BE ALL TOO EASY TO FALL INTO THE TRAP OF REPEATING THE SAME CURRICULUM OF PRESENTING THE VERB TENSES OVER AND OVER AGAIN UNTIL STUDENTS “MASTER” THEM.

However, given that it might take several years for such mastery and that students at this level have other needs, it is important for the growth of the intermediate student to expand the curriculum into more academic and work-related curriculum and materials to truly meet their needs.

How To Avoid Sensitive Issues When Teaching ESL

DEPENDING ON WHERE YOU ARE TEACHING, IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT CERTAIN ISSUES MIGHT BE TABOO.

Of course, this is going to vary from culture to culture. A lot of teachers will find that they are going to be going abroad for work. Popular destinations at the moment include South Korea, Vietnam and China. China in particular is currently experiencing a boom. As a result, more English teachers are required than are actually available. Whether you are teaching as an online job, or are actually physically in the country, do a little bit of research before going over. Take a look at what the main culture finds acceptable, and what it doesn't. There have even been certain cases where people have been jailed due to certain perceived insults, although there was actually no harm intended by them! Usually, within a lot of Western countries, these won't be very big problems. It is still a good idea to take a look over how they differ from your own culture anyway. Germany, France and many other countries in Western Europe tend to have only a few cultural differences, due to a common history. This won't necessarily be the case if you are intending to go and teach somewhere like Saudi Arabia or Shanghai. Avoiding certain issues will therefore be something that every teacher needs to watch out for.

HOW TO AVOID SENSITIVE ISSUES

1 AVOIDING THE ISSUE

Sometimes students might want to discuss something which may not necessarily be appropriate for the class, and might even be offensive to certain members. If this happens, then it is a good idea to quickly direct the conversation away. Perhaps introduce a new part of the topic. Another good idea is probably to suggest that everyone play a game in order to practice their language skills. As the old saying goes, two things should never be discussed at the dinner table,

and those are politics and religion. In general, the same can be applied to a class. Of course, sometimes topics of religion come up so it is important to be aware of the students' reactions to it. Keep the debate civilized, and above all, try to avoid your own personal opinion. At the end of the day, you're trying to teach a language. A culture class is something else, therefore it is no sin to change the topic at hand.

2 BEING AWARE OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Another way of avoiding certain issues which might be deemed sensitive (such as women's status in Islamic countries, if you happen to be teaching there) is to be aware of the difference from the beginning. Depending on how strict a Muslim country is, if you are female you will probably have to cover up to a certain extent. Respecting a country's ways is key here.

3 MULTIPLE CULTURES

Even teaching abroad, you might find that you have a classroom filled with people from all over the world. This is particularly true in countries like Germany. A lot of the time, they will be businesspeople as this is probably the most in-demand form of English teaching available. The teacher must also keep in mind that just because students share a similar language, it does not mean they have a similar culture. For example, English speakers can be found all over the world. They come from many different backgrounds: South Africa, Britain, Ireland, the United States, etc.. Whilst there are similarities, Irish culture can be seen as being vastly different from American culture right down to the difference in slang. Likewise, those students who are Spanish speaking might not necessarily be from the same part of Spain, or even country. There are often huge differences between Spanish and Latin American culture. Within Spain, one can find people of Basque origin,

Galician, Catalanian and much more. Therefore one needs to keep these facts in mind when teaching the class to ensure that certain issues might be avoided. An example being that the Basque people have been aiming for independence from Spain. Keeping this out of the conversation will allow for a much more peaceful lesson.

IN COUNTRIES WHERE DISCUSSING CERTAIN TOPICS MIGHT BE A BIG RISQUÉ, IT IS IMPORTANT TO STICK TO RATHER NEUTRAL ISSUES SUCH AS HOUSING, COST OF LIVING ETC.

If there is an economic recession going on, be careful when discussing things like unemployment. Religion, for the most part, is a no-go area in countries such as China. If you have any doubts, then speak with the head of the school and see what is acceptable and what isn't. It is always best to be safe than sorry!

How to Teach Current Events to ESL Students

Natural disasters, catastrophes, and current events, in general, are great sources for speaking or reading tasks, and connect students with situations that are real, that may be affecting thousands of lives somewhere in the globe. Current events lessons also raise awareness of environmental issues, for example, or inform and educate students in a broader sense.

Needless to say, unless you're teaching highly-advanced students, you will not be able to simply cut out a newspaper article and read it to the class. **News stories must be adjusted and adapted** to your group's English reading or comprehension level. Still, taking the time to summarize a news article in fewer, easier words won't take you too long, plus you'll have the added benefit of using the vocabulary and structures you yourself have taught your students.

So, let's get started, and let's see how you should proceed once you have achieved a news piece that is suitable for your students' level.

HOW TO Teach Current Events

1 START WITH A WARM UP

You must **set the mood for the topic** - you can't just dive into the news piece, right? For example, if the news piece is about a natural disaster, such as a tsunami, earthquake, hurricane, or mud slide, introduce the topic and asks students to tell you what it is, where it takes place, what the consequences are, what causes it, etc...

You may also ask for predictions. Give them the headline and ask them to predict what the article is about. If the headline mentions the "*Benefits of a Healthy Diet*", ask them what they think these benefits are.

2 PRE-READING/LISTENING TASKS

Some great pre-reading or listening

tasks are:

- True or False – Students may not know what is true and what is false - ask them to guess!
- Synonym matching – Students guess and try to match the synonyms in two columns.
- Sentence matching – Provide sentences that have been cut in half. Students try to match the beginning to the end of the sentence.

3 READING/LISTENING TASKS

You may choose to either read the news piece out loud, or print copies for everyone to read. No matter what you choose, be sure to give them a task to complete. Some examples may be:

- Gap-filling (with options)
- Gap-filling (without options)
- Multiple-choice questions
- Sentence matching

And many others, but make sure tasks are more targeted towards reading/listening comprehension and not entirely open-ended.

4 POST-READING/LISTENING TASKS

Some great activities or tasks for post-reading or listening are:

- Open-ended questions: why, what, where, who, how, etc...
- Discussion questions
- Debate
- Arts or crafts project
- Games to practice vocabulary or grammar

Whereas during the reading students were tested on their reading comprehension skills, in the post-reading they must somehow **put everything they learned together**, and hopefully produce something out of what they learned.

Use these steps and create engaging lessons out of any current event you think your students might find interesting. But, if you're short on time, we've got great news for you! There are websites that provide news stories that have been tailored specifically to the needs of English learners.

- **BreakingNewsEnglish.com** provides news stories based on themes, in HTML format or PDF, which means they are ready to download and print. The website also provides MP3 audio for listening tasks, which you may easily download to your computer. Talk about taking the guesswork out of teaching current events!

- **BBC.co.uk** also has great news stories that have been adapted for adult learners, but most are a bit outdated. Still, there are plenty that may still be of use in the ESL classroom. They also come with audio and a file for download.

- **The New York Times' Learning Network** offers up-to-date news stories targeted towards children in grades 3 to 12, which means that most can be used for ESL students as well.

- **CBS Broadcasting** offers **LiteracyNet** with full, abridged, or outlined news stories.

SO, NOW YOU HAVE NO MORE EXCUSES. WE'VE PROVIDED YOU WITH EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KEEP YOUR STUDENTS IN THE LOOP AND INFORMED ON WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE WORLD THEY'RE LIVING IN.

And to remain informed on what's going on in the ESL world, be sure to check out BusyTeacher.org on a daily basis for your dose of teaching resources, tips, and advice.

HOWTO: 3 Easy Steps to Grading Student Essays

In a world where number two pencils and bubbles on an answer sheet often determine a student's grade, what criteria does the writing teacher use to evaluate the work of his or her students? After all, with essay writing you cannot simply mark some answers correct and others incorrect and figure out a percentage. The good news is that grading an essay can be just as easy and straightforward as grading multiple-choice tests with the use of a rubric!

WHAT IS A RUBRIC?

A rubric is a chart used in grading essays, special projects and other more items which can be more subjective. It lists each of the grading criteria separately and defines the different performance levels within those criteria. Standardized tests like the SAT's use rubrics to score writing samples, and designing one for your own use is easy if you take it step by step. Keep in mind that when you are using a rubric to grade essays, you can design one rubric for use throughout the semester or modify your rubric as the expectations you have for your students increase.

HOW TO GRADE STUDENT ESSAYS

1 WHAT SHOULD I INCLUDE?

When students write essays, ESL teachers generally look for some common elements. The essay should have good grammar and show the right level of vocabulary. It should be organized, and the content should be appropriate and effective. Teachers also look at the overall effectiveness of the piece. When evaluating specific writing samples, you may also want to include other criteria for the essay based on material you have covered in class. You may choose to grade on the type of essay they have written and whether your students have followed the specific direction you gave. You may want to evaluate their use of information and whether they correctly presented the content material you taught. When you write your own rubric, you can evaluate anything you think is important when it comes to your students' writing abilities. For our example, we will use grammar, organization and overall effect to create a rubric.

2 WHAT IS AN A?

Using the criteria we selected (grammar, organization and overall effect) we will write a rubric to evaluate students' essays. The most straightforward evaluation uses a four-point scale for each of the criteria. Taking the criteria one at a time, articulate what your expectations are for an A paper, a B paper and so on. Taking grammar as an example, an A paper would be free of most grammatical errors appropriate for the student's language learning level. A B paper would have some mistakes but use generally good grammar. A C paper would show frequent grammatical errors. A D paper would show that the student did not have the grammatical knowledge appropriate for his language learning level. Taking these definitions, we now put them into the rubric.

Grammar	Free of most grammatical errors	Some grammatical mistakes but generally shows successful grammar usage	Frequent grammatical errors	Appropriate grammatical knowledge not displayed for current language level
Organization				
Overall Effect				

The next step is to take each of the other criteria and define success for each of those, assigning a value to A, B, C and D papers. Those definitions then go into the rubric in the appropriate locations to complete the chart.

Grammar	Free of most grammatical errors	Some grammatical mistakes but generally shows successful grammar usage	Frequent grammatical errors	Appropriate grammatical knowledge not displayed for current language level
Organization	Essay shows clear organization with appropriate transitions	Essay shows good organization but may lack appropriate transitions	Essay lacks clear organization and appropriate transitions	Essay is disorganized and confusing
Overall Effect	A strong overall effect with clear communication and support	A good overall effect with some support and adequate clarity	Essay struggles overall and does not give a coherent message	Essay has a poor overall effect and does not fulfill assignment

Each of the criteria will score points for the essay. The descriptions in the first column are each worth 4 points, the second column 3 points, the third 2 points and the fourth 1 point.

3 WHAT IS THE GRADING PROCESS?

Now that your criteria are defined, grading the essay is easy. When grading a student essay with a rubric, it is best to read through the essay once before evaluating for grades. Then reading through the piece a second time, determine where on the scale the writing sample falls for each of the criteria. If the student shows excellent grammar, good organization and a good overall effect, he would score a total of ten points. Divide that by the total criteria, three in this case, and he finishes with a 3.33. which on a four-point scale is a B+. If you use five criteria to evaluate your essays, divide the total points scored by five to determine the student's grade.

ONCE YOU HAVE WRITTEN YOUR GRADING RUBRIC, YOU MAY DECIDE TO SHARE YOUR CRITERIA WITH YOUR STUDENTS. If you do, they will know exactly what your expectations are and what they need to accomplish to get the grade they desire. You may even choose to make a copy of the rubric for each paper and circle where the student lands for each criterion. That way, each person knows where he needs to focus his attention to improve his grade. The clearer your expectations are and the more feedback you give your students, the more successful your students will be. If you use a rubric in your essay grading, you can communicate those standards as well as make your grading more objective with more practical suggestions for your students. In addition, once you write your rubric you can use it for all future evaluations.

Giving and Receiving Advice

DID YOU EVER HAVE A PROBLEM THAT YOU NEEDED HELP SOLVING? DID YOU GET ANY USEFUL ADVICE? WHO DID YOU ASK FOR THAT ADVICE? DID YOU FOLLOW THE ADVICE THAT YOU GOT? WHAT HAPPENED?

If you want to give your students some practice giving and following advice as they learn to speak fluent English, try some of the following activities which exercise listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.

HOW TO TEACH GIVING AND RECEIVING ADVICE

1 DELVE INTO THE PROBLEM

Before you can give advice, you have to **know what the problem is**. In small groups or as a class, take some time to **brainstorm some problems that your students face**. They might be problems that they encounter every day, like how to get your homework done or how to wake up in the morning, but they can also be problems that are unusual like what to do after you have a house fire or how to get out of a bad relationship. Once you have compiled the list, you may want to keep it for the following activities.

Once your students have a list of some problems, ask them what they would do if they had any of those problems. Would they talk to a friend or family member? Would they ask a professional? **Make a second list with strategies for dealing with a problem**. They should not be specific solutions, like *get a tutor to help with homework*, but generalized solutions that could be applied to any problem like *talk to your parents*.

2 DO A GRAMMAR REVIEW

If your students are not familiar with the use of the modal verbs *should*, *would* and *could*, you will want to review them in more detail. For most students though, a quick review will be enough. Remind your students that these modals are used as helping verbs to communicate the certainty of the verb.

- Could suggests a possibility. *You could call a doctor or take any of many other actions.*
- Should serves as a recommendation and is therefore a stronger modal verb than could. *You should call a doctor. You could do other things as well, but calling a doctor will*

be the wisest decision.

- Would suggests a definite course of action. *I would call a doctor.*

When giving advice, *would* must be used with *I* rather than *you*: *If I were in your situation, my definite course of action would be to call the doctor.*

Encourage your students to use all three of these verbs when they give advice, and to choose the best one according to the certainty they have for each solution. If they are more experienced in a situation, they will probably use *should*. If they are uncertain, they would probably use *could* to give advice.

3 GET SOME ADVICE

One of the most popular sources for advice over the last fifty years has been **Dear Abby** (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dear_Abby). The popular column was syndicated in 1956 and continues today. Just one year earlier, the **Ask Ann Landers** (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ask_Ann_Landers) column was begun written by Abby's twin sister. This family had a lot to say then and has a lot to say now about lots of problems. Either of these columns is a great written resource for your students when you are talking about giving advice.

Give your students several examples from either of these columns or use a local advice column. Point out to your students **how the readers first explain their problems and then how the writer answers them**. Make sure they notice the grammar that is used in the response.

With the examples in front of them for a model, **ask your students to write their own letter requesting advice**. It could be on one of the problems you listed in the first activity, or it could be a problem that was not listed earlier. Your students should write about their problems using the form of a personal letter. Once the letter seeking advice is written, collect and redistribute the letters. Now **each student should write advice in response to the original letter**. These responses can be serious or silly. The only thing that really matters is that your students are using the correct grammar for giving advice.

4 LISTEN CLOSELY

After looking at the advice columns from one or more newspapers, ask your students if they have ever listened to a radio program that gives advice to its listeners. Discuss with your class whether that would be a good way to get advice for a problem. They will likely say it depends on what the program is as well as what the problem is. If you have difficulty locating an actual radio advice program, you can use portions from the movie *Sleepless in Seattle* and *The Truth About Cats and Dogs*. A great television source would be portions of episodes from *Frasier* in which Kelsey Grammar plays a radio psychiatrist on an advice program. Use portions of these movies and programs to exercise your students' listening skills. Play the audio and visual for them, and stop the scene after the caller explains his or her problem. Then ask your students what the problem is. Play that portion again now that they know what the speaker's problems is. **Before listening to the advice that the host gives, ask your students to volunteer advice to the caller**. What would they suggest the troubled person do? Then listen for the advice that the expert gives to the caller and determine if you would agree or disagree with it. You can then **set up your own radio advice show** by asking for a volunteer from the class. This person should sit in front of the class and act as the radio host. Then another student acts out the part of the troubled caller. The first student must then give advice for the problem. As a class, discuss whether the person gave good advice, and ask your students if they would follow the advice. Now the student with the problem becomes the expert advice giver and takes a call from another student.

THESE ACTIVITIES WILL HELP YOUR STUDENTS BECOME COMFORTABLE WITH THE IDEA OF GIVING ADVICE TO THEIR PEERS. IF YOU WANT TO TAKE IT A STEP FURTHER, ASK IF THERE ARE SITUATIONS IN WHICH IT IS NOT APPROPRIATE TO GIVE ADVICE TO A FRIEND WHO HAS A PROBLEM. YOU CAN ALSO DISCUSS WHAT YOUR STUDENTS CAN DO OR SAY WHEN THEY DO NOT HAVE ANY GOOD ADVICE FOR A FRIEND'S PROBLEM. If you ask us, advice is a great way to get your students speaking and even writing and improve their overall English skills. You should try it.

Putting Together a Class Newspaper is Easy, No Extra Work Required!

Having your class write a newspaper through combined effort is a great way for them to practice their language learning and work with a unit theme you are already teaching. It may even fulfill some objectives you might be struggling to meet. So call a staff meeting and get going. There are deadlines to meet, after all.

HOW TO PUT TOGETHER A CLASS NEWSPAPER

1 WHAT TO WRITE

Having your class write a newspaper is a great extension activity no matter what subject area you are currently teaching your ESL students. For example, if you are doing a unit on sports, have your students write a sports paper. If you are currently studying business, then a business paper it is. Your class paper can be focused on any theme that you are already studying from outer space to cultural holidays.

2 FOR EXAMPLE

When you introduce the newspaper project to your class, you will want to have a variety of newspapers available for them to examine. This way they can see what a typical layout might look like as well as get a feeling for the style of newspaper writing. It is worth taking some time to review the specific vocabulary used for the pieces of the paper and other newspaper-oriented vocabulary. You should include words like headline, by-line, feature (article), editorial, column, section (of the paper), caption (for a photo), layout and editor in your vocabulary review.

You can also use the example papers to fulfill your reading requirement for the day. A newspaper is a great source for reviewing the three types of reading with your students. Have them skim articles and share with the class the main points that the writer makes. Then practice scanning by looking for specific information like movie times or weather conditions that the paper reports. Finally, have them read for detail an article of your choice and answer comprehension questions.

3 BE SPECIFIC

After your students have read some examples of newspaper articles, point out the style that these writers use. Pieces

for print in this media are concise and focused. They answer the six question words (who, what, where, when, why, how) clearly without a lot of extra information or creative language. When your students practice their writing by creating their own articles, they should adopt this style. Encourage them to review what they have written to make sure it answers all the necessary questions and does not have a lot of extra wording or unnecessary examples. This style will likely be quite different from most things they have written, especially if they have primarily composed essays or creative writing.

4 ASSIGN AN EDITOR

You do not have to be the editor of your class paper. In fact, it will help your students even more if you assign someone in the class to be editor. As with any paper, each student will have to pitch an idea to the editor. This gives your students authority over the content of the paper and gives them speaking and listening practice in the process. Your class will already know the theme of the issue, so they should think of possible articles that relate to the theme. They will then need to pitch their idea to the editor. They should present the topic and how they will approach and support it. The editor then has the authority to accept or reject the idea. For this reason, it is important to select one of your top students to be editor of the class paper. He or she will have to be organized and make sure two students are not writing on the same topic. If you have a very large class, you may want to break the paper into sections (sports, entertainment, etc.) and select an editor for each section. You will then need to have an editor in chief in authority over all of the section editors. In addition to the feature articles, each editor should write an editorial piece. This should be opinion based rather than fact based. You may want to discuss the editorial with your editor or editors before they are written just to make sure they will be appropriate for the paper. Tell them to model their editorials after those they read in the example papers.

5 MEET THE DEADLINE

Once each student knows what he or she will write about, it is time to let him or her write. You can assign this as home-

work or give your students time in class. You will need class time later to work on the layout of the paper, so homework may be a better option for the actual writing of the article. Give your editors the authority to suggest revisions to the articles, and then give him or her the responsibility for the publication of the paper. A publishing program like Microsoft Publisher will be the easiest way to lay out your paper. These types of programs often have templates for newspapers, so your editor is not burdened with a lot of extra work once the articles start coming in. In fact, you may want to think about giving extra credit to your editor depending upon how much work he or she must do for the paper.

6 GO TO PUBLICATION

Once your students have submitted their articles and your editor has completed the publication of the paper, it is time to go to press. You should make as many copies as you will need for your students, other classes you may want to give the paper to, your records and an additional copy for a class book. If you keep a class book of all the papers you do with your class, either throughout the year or from one year to the next, it will be a helpful resource for your future classes when planning their papers.

YOUR CLASS PAPER IS FINISHED, AND IT IS SURELY A SUCCESS. YOUR STUDENTS HAVE GOTTEN PRACTICE WITH THE THEME YOU ARE TEACHING AS WELL AS DONE READING, WRITING, LISTENING AND SPEAKING ACTIVITIES. ALL YOU HAD TO DO WAS GIVE THEM A LITTLE CLASS TIME AND EXPLAIN SOME VOCABULARY. NOW THAT YOUR CLASS HAS COMPLETED ONE PAPER, YOU MAY WANT TO MAKE A PAPER THE GOAL OF EVERY UNIT YOU STUDY THROUGHOUT THE YEAR. You may decide to rotate editors or keep the same editor throughout the year, but a collection of papers at the end of the school year will be a nice resource for your students to study for their final as well as give them a sense of accomplishment for the year. If you do make a series of papers, make sure each class has a unique volume number for its papers and each issue contains an issue number. Your students will be proud of their accomplishments and you will have an impressive summary of what you studied this year come summer vacation.

Presenting Complex Topics for Advanced Learners

TEACHING ADVANCED LEARNERS CAN REALLY BE A LOT FUN AND A TERRIFIC LEARNING EXPERIENCE FOR THE STUDENTS AND THE TEACHER.

There is no better time in a student's career to expose them to complex topics that can be utilized in a number of different ways. Follow these tips to get students thinking about the bigger issues in life and a larger world.

HOW TO PRESENT COMPLEX TOPICS FOR ADVANCED LEARNERS

1 CHOOSING TOPICS

The biggest issue with approaching meaty topics in an ESL class is choosing what topics will offer your class the most mileage and learning possibilities. You have a lot of options, and a lot of your choices will be based on what will motivate your students. Think about what kinds of things will prompt them to get really passionate and involved. Here are some considerations to make with some of the various topical choices.

Social issues can be defined as problems or matters, which affect a group of people or the whole society in general, either directly or indirectly. Social issues also have a very wide scope. There are many different types of social issues, some of them very broad-based and others very specific. Social issues should pertain intimately to your class. So if you are overseas, you'll want to consider what localized social issues you can think of to bring into play that students will have knowledge and opinions about.

A good starting point may be to have a discussion with your students about social issues. Then you could do a brainstorming activity in which they come up with social issues that are relevant to them, and then categorize them.

Here are some examples:

- Homelessness, immigration, poverty: human rights.
- Global warming, pollution, recycling: environmental.
- Unemployment: economic

- Cancer cures: health
- Information age: technology
- Elections, scandals, terrorism, war: politics

This list will be long and you can ask students to add as much detail as you would like. Just having this discussion with them about the issues that are central to their lives, is a discussion about considerable issues. Ask the students to choose five topics from their long list that they, as a group, would like to discuss, learn more about and base projects upon.

2 ACTIVITIES

From there you can devise some activities based upon the issues your students have chosen. Some of what you can do will be determined by the topics they chose. If they chose many controversial issues that could easily be argued, you can set up debates or projects in which they research a particular viewpoint of an issue. Debates are a wonderful way to get students talking, but they do take a significant amount of prep work and lead up time if they are really going to be successful. If the students chose a political topic an elaborate way to incorporate that into the class, is to have an election situation or debate between candidates. This also takes some prep work ahead of time, and students will each need to have a very specific role. Divide the class into small groups and then assign the groups a political party—could be Democrats, Independents, Republicans, or whatever is relevant to their country. Have each group decide what their three main topics are going to be (jobs, healthcare, immigration, etc.) that they will discuss and target. You can then either have a debate or election where each party has to take questions from a mediator and/or the public. This is a great lesson if it happens to be an election year. You can adapt it to be as involved or as simplistic as you want. Students will need time to research and put together their talking points.

If they chose issues that aren't so heated, but that are better-suited to discussion, you can formulate discussion topics or questions. Then formulate different ways

to divide the class up and have days where you have three to four stations set up. At each station a different discussion is taking place, and students can join in and move around as they choose. This is a more light-hearted activity that could be done for parts of a class and then students come back together as a group and debrief about what they gained from the discussions.

3 READINGS

One last strategy for bringing complex topics to light is to bring in a reading. It could be an article, a story, or even a book of your choosing. If students have shown interest in certain types of readings before, include readings which have strong morals, interesting outcomes, and plenty of space for analyzing and dissecting. Students might be a little leery at first, so you may want to start small, especially if you are going to focus on a work of fiction. There are guided readers that are available for ESL learners that you can tap into, and often those have built in discussion questions and activities. You can always come up with your own ways of how you want to generate discussion of larger topics with readings. You can have students answer questions at home and then do small group discussion. You could also have students pick an excerpt that they particularly like or that resonated with them and use that as your discussion starting point. One other thing you might like to try is to have students do predictions at a certain point in the story, or even write their own alternate endings. When readings have an underlying social issue like the book *The Help*, your possibilities for discussion and dissection of text, meanings, and language is unlimited.

UTILIZING COMPLEX SOCIAL ISSUES AS LAUNCH PADS FOR DISCUSSION AND DIALOGUE IS A BENEFICIAL WAY FOR STUDENTS TO LEARN NEW WAYS OF EXPRESSING THEMSELVES.

Students will respond best when the subject matter hits home for them. By bringing in these topics, and allowing your students to voice opinions, argue, and challenge one another you are facilitating in a very constructive and meaningful way.

Every Teacher Should Know: Reaching Advanced Learners

TEACHING ADVANCED LANGUAGE LEARNERS IS VERY DIFFERENT FROM TEACHING ANY OTHER LEVEL.

Every teacher should have exposure to all different levels, but just like beginners, advanced students require a distinct kind of effort. We've devised some tips that every teacher should know about reaching (and keeping) advanced learners.

REACHING ADVANCED LEARNERS

1 TAP INTO WHAT THEY KNOW

Because students are approaching fluency in English, they have several years under their belts of studying the language. This is a great resource for the teacher because you can tap into what they already know and expand upon it. For example, higher level learners generally have a good grasp of difficult tenses and grammar points. You can tap into this by challenging their expertise. Offer them opportunities to show off their knowledge by involving them in activities that offer a well-rounded, all four skills approach. One way is to require them do interviews of people outside of the class on a particular topic and then present that to the class. Another idea is having each of them be the teacher for a day, and allowing them to choose what and how they would like to introduce or review. Also, don't be afraid to ask your class for ideas on how they would like to learn. Get their input and then run with your creativity. Think of ways that you can draw out skills they already have and then focus on strengthening the skill.

2 CHALLENGE THEM IN NEW WAYS

Advanced learners know their grammar and often are hungry for a deeper understanding of the nuances of the language. There are lots of ways that you can challenge your advanced classes. One area where advanced

learners need to be challenged is in developing their vocabulary and more natural ways of speaking. This is where learning a lot of phrasal verbs and expressions comes into play, and can be quite advantageous. You'll want to find new ways of incorporating new vocabulary and seeing language in action. Notable ways to do this are by reading or watching movies. You can find lots of great resources, and may even want to consider giving them some good young adult fiction to read and decipher or have them watch animated kids' movies. Debates and in-depth guided classroom discussions can also be wonderfully adventurous and challenging.

3 APPROACH HIGH-LEVEL GRAMMAR

You can dive into more in-depth grammar and tense practice, and induce a truly interested and heartened response. As the teacher, you need to have an extremely firm grasp of anything that you review or introduce, because the students will have very complex questions. Reviewing or introducing topics like passive voice, reported speech, or higher level tenses can sometimes be intimidating to native speakers. Be sure that you are secure in your grammar knowledge when you go into an advanced level class. They will come up with amazing questions, and though it may not sound like fun, you may find yourself in some fascinating discussions about language usage and origin. Engaging advanced learners on that kind of level is really important to keep up their interest level and motivation. It is also a perfect time to dissect the language they have been so intimately involved with for so long. Take them on those grammatical rides, and dig in deep.

4 TEACH TO THEIR INTERESTS AND NEEDS

This philosophy applies to each and every class that you teach. You have to teach to the students' interests as well as to their needs. Advanced level

learners have very distinct priorities and many of them may have sizable goals they are working toward with their language skills. This takes getting to know your students by creating ways for them to share their interests and goals through classroom activities and interactions. Advanced students may be studying for any number of tests like the TOEFL or Citizenship tests. They may also have aims like getting into a college program or getting a better job. These are abundant topics that you can incorporate into your lessons. Their personal interests will vary, but it is a must to keep those at the center of your mind when creating activities and generating ideas. It will garner greater involvement and motivation from the students.

5 AVOID THE PLATEAU

The language learning plateau can happen at different stages and levels for students, but it is very common among advanced learners. It is a stretch of time where they feel their language acquisition has come to a standstill and that there is little progression being made. By challenging learners, maintaining an open dialogue and constantly engaging them with fresh practice you will aid learners in avoiding the plateau. Some ways to do this are encouraging them to take risks, creating ways for them to get out of their safety zone and showing them that there is always more they can learn and improve.

TEACHING ADVANCED LEARNERS IS AN ADVENTUROUS LEARNING EXPERIENCE FOR ALL TEACHERS.

Every teacher can employ these tactics to hook advanced learners and keep them coming back for more! Taking part in influencing advanced learners' fluency is definitely an amazing and enriching experience.

Expert Sharing: Making the Most of Your Students' Knowledge

EVERYONE IS AN EXPERT ON SOMETHING.

For some people, expertise comes with a particular job. It could be a computer-programming expert, a teaching expert or a driving expert. For others, expertise comes from a passion. A person could be a self-proclaimed ice-cream expert, a Justin Beiber expert or a skateboarding expert. You can use the expertise each of your students has to offer to help them practice their English in real and effective ways.

HOW TO Make the Most of Your Students' Knowledge

1 GET THE DISCUSSION MOVING

Start your expert unit with a class discussion. Ask your students what it means to be an expert. Help them understand that **an expert is someone who is very skilled at something or who holds a great deal of knowledge about a particular thing.** Take some time at this point to review vocabulary words associated with being an expert: *advice, experience, expertise, familiar, knowledge, wisdom.* They should understand that a person can be an expert on anything, and that people become experts in different ways. He may have read a lot of information on a topic. She may have handled the same situation many times to become an expert. He may have taken lessons to become an expert. She may have learned to be an expert by having a job or other responsibility. Anything with which they have extensive experience is their area of expertise. Pair students and have them discuss with each other what their area of expertise might be. You can give them some discussion questions to help:

*What are your hobbies?
What do you do in your spare time?
Do you have a job or chores that you do often?
What are you good at?
What do you know that other people don't?
What do you like to read about?
What kind of television shows do you watch?*

Once your students have determined

their areas of expertise, they can begin to share what they know with the rest of the class.

2 COMPILE THE INFORMATION

Now that your students have determined their areas of expertise, tell them that they will be **sharing their expertise with their classmates.** You can **choose either a written or an oral project** though doing both would be ideal. Give your students some class time to think about their area of expertise and make some notes to themselves. They can think about the questions they discussed with their partners, but they can also make a list of what someone else should know about that area of expertise.

Is there a certain process someone might have to follow when baking the perfect muffin?

Are there particular qualities a person should look for when making the perfect match?

Is there essential information a person needs to know if her car breaks down?

Students should then focus on the information they will share by **listing bullet points for four different areas of their expertise:**

- what they are an expert on,
- how they became an expert on the topic,
- how they have used their expertise,
- what others need to know about it.

From this point, **students can begin writing a rough draft of either a paper or a presentation** answering these questions with one paragraph focusing on each question.

3 SHARE YOUR WISDOM

After students have compiled their ideas and written a rough draft, now it is time for them to share their expertise with the class. First, students should write a final draft of their four paragraphs. Then, have each student plan to **give a presentation** to the class on his or her area of expertise. This may mean that they *play an instrument* in front of the class, that they *demonstrate how to cook a particular item*, or that they *give a power point presentation*

on the subject of dinosaurs. Encourage your students to be creative and make the presentation interesting. You may want to give them an assigned amount of time for the presentation.

The second way students can share their expertise with the class is through **nuggets of wisdom.** A nugget of wisdom can be like a piece of gold under the right circumstances. Ask your students how expert knowledge might be very valuable in a particular situation. Can they think of any times they needed specific knowledge? Then allow your students to share their nuggets of wisdom with the class through this activity. If you can get a **burlap** sack, use that. If you cannot simply draw one on a large piece of paper and post it on a bulletin board. Label it "Golden Nuggets" and give each student three or four small pieces of yellow paper. Students should then tear the edged of the paper unevenly so each piece is shaped like a gold nugget. On each paper, your students should share one piece of important knowledge from their area of expertise. Make sure you do this, too: your students want to know about you as well. Then post the nuggets on or around the sack you already put up on the wall. Give students time to read each other's bits of wisdom.

Finally, allow some time for **question and answer** to round out the sharing experience. Ideally, each student should have some time in front of the class to answer questions from his classmates. Make sure each student has at least one question to answer by asking it yourself if necessary. Also, make sure your students know it is okay to say they do not know the answer to a question. Most likely, though, they will be able to answer the questions that their peers ask.

EVERYONE HAS VALUABLE KNOWLEDGE TO SHARE, AND THE TEACHER DOES NOT HAVE TO BE THE ONLY ONE WHO PRESENTS IT TO THE CLASS. Take advantage of all your students have to offer by giving them an opportunity to share their expertise. Not only does it inform your other students, it builds each child's sense of self-esteem and self worth. Try it and you may become an expert, too.

What Will Your Students Say about the Media's Message

Not many people enjoy controversies or the tension that comes along with them, but controversies can be the ESL teacher's best friend for a very significant reason. They get students talking. When you introduce your students to an issue that brings out their emotions, they will be motivated to speak. Not only that, but because they are invested in their own opinions, your students will have more natural language production. For anyone who gets emotional when he speaks, his natural accent, grammar and vocabulary come out stronger and are easier to observe. When your students are talking this way, you, their teacher, can get a good read on how much English they have really acquired. Following is a unit that examines how the media communicates a message about beauty that is sure to get your students talking.

WHAT WILL YOUR STUDENTS SAY ABOUT THE MEDIA'S MESSAGE

1 TODAY'S ISSUE

The media has an enormous amount of influence on young people today, and those who look can find plenty of hot topics to discuss in the classroom. One of the issues that may not come to mind as quickly as others is the idea of what it means to be beautiful. Young people are inundated with images that speak to physical beauty – through television, advertisements and celebrity culture. This constant message plays into each of our self images. However, most of the time we accept the message the media supplies and fail to question the truth of that message. Getting your students to think about what defines beauty will have benefits on multiple levels. They will get talking about a personal and important topic, they will gain perspective on the message the media is sending their way, and they may end up having a better body image when they take a critical look at the media and themselves.

2 MAGAZINE SEARCH

Give your students some time to look through magazines and online for advertisements that speak to or of personal beauty. They may point out men and women, young people and old being

portrayed as beautiful or not beautiful. Challenge your students to also notice phrases and words the advertisers use to communicate the idea of beauty. Let small groups of students work together to compile a list of what they find, and challenge each group to write their own definition of beauty as it is represented in the media images.

3 IS IT TRUE?

Is the way magazines portray beauty an accurate representation of true beauty? For women? For men? Answers may fall anywhere on a wide spectrum, but encourage your students to share their own opinions with their small discussion groups. If you like, have each person write a reaction which answers the same questions. Make sure your students know as they discuss that disagreements are bound to come out. The key is continuing to be respectful to the others in the group, listening, offering contrary opinions in a normal tone of voice, and agreeing to disagree when necessary. Then take the discussion a step further by asking your students how much of this message ties into the financial benefits for product designers and advertisers. Should it? How can everyday people take measures to improve the media's message as well as their own reception of that message?

4 BEAUTY IN A WORD

In English, some adjectives describing beauty are traditionally reserved for solely men or solely women. Fewer may be used to describe both genders. Such words include attractive or cute. Men specific adjectives include handsome and dapper. Women have their own, too, including pretty and voluptuous. Challenge your class to see how many words used to describe beauty they can list. Start with one general list and then challenge pairs or groups of students to determine which are reserved primarily for describing men, which for women and which can be used for either. Allow your students to use a thesaurus and offer some suggestions of your own. Once everyone has classified the adjectives, take some time to share your classification with the class and see if everyone agrees.

5 GETTING PERSONAL

Depending on the ages and personalities of your students, you may or may not want to break your class into two groups, male and female. (This is particularly beneficial for adolescents, but younger children may do best to skip this activity.) Once you have your male and female groups and a moderator of the same gender for each, ask your students if they ever feel unhappy with the way their bodies look. Allow any willing student to share, and make sure individuals do not feel pressured to share if they are not comfortable doing so. For those who do share, ask if they can explain why they feel the way that they do. Challenge your students to think about how their self assessments could lead to negative behavior.

6 DOING THINGS WRITE

Your students may be feeling a lot of different emotions at this point in the discussion on beauty. Some may feel an improvement in their self esteem. Some may feel frustrated at how the media has such an influence in their lives. Give your students a chance to send the right message by creating their own advertisement which communicates a healthy body message. Ask each student to choose an ad you used in the first activity and create an original advertisement for the same product or service. Because not everyone will have advanced artistic abilities, allow your students to formulate their advertisement as a collage or original piece of art work, tracing and stick figures accepted. When the ads are finished, post them on a bulletin board next to the original advertisement. Extend the activity and ask your students to choose a pair of advertisements and write a compare/contrast composition about them.

WHEN IT COMES TO BEAUTY, YOUR STUDENTS MAY HAVE MORE TO SAY THAN EVEN THEY KNOW.

Open up the channels of communication in your classroom and get your students talking about this issue on which they might not agree. As long as everyone is using the language they know to express their ideas, everyone in your class will have one.

Pro et Contra: 20 Stages of Teaching Controversial Topics

DISCUSSING, DEBATING, AND WRITING ABOUT CONTROVERSIAL TOPICS HAS MANY BENEFITS FOR ESL STUDENTS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPEAKING, CRITICAL THINKING, AND WRITING SKILLS. IT IS ALSO AN ACADEMIC EXPECTATION THAT STUDENTS SHOULD BE ABLE TO ANALYZE A CONTROVERSIAL TOPIC AND TAKE A POSITION ON IT.

Teaching controversial topics helps students in this task of analyzing a topic like same-sex marriage and the various perspectives on it and taking a position. However, teaching controversial topics can be difficult and should be handled with care. Following are some activities that move students from beginning discussion on issues to more advanced debate and are designed to take place over at least several class sessions.

Not all activities need be completed, and the instructor may choose to end the unit before progressing to the ending big debate, depending on the students' level, interest, and time constraints.

BEGINNING THE DISCUSSION

1 Begin by presenting some everyday ethical issues and dilemmas, such as a list of "What Should You Do If--?" (a stranger drops his wallet on the bus, etc). Have students discuss their responses in groups.

2 Teach some of the language related to ethical dilemmas, such as the use of the second conditional: "If I were you, I would—" or "If it were up to me—."

3 Also teach some formulas related to stating opinions: "As far as I'm concerned—" and "In my opinion—"

4 Discuss ground rules for discussion of ethical/controversial topics, such as listening and not interrupting. Teach the language of polite disagreeing: "I understand what you're saying, but I think—"

5 To further the understanding of expectations for participation in discussion, the teacher can develop a rubric that rates students by how much they participated and the quality of that participation. Go over the rubric with students so that the expectation is clear and frequently update them on their progress.

EXTENDING THE CONVERSATION

6 After this basic introduction to discussing issues, the teacher is now ready to introduce more controversial topics. Start by explaining what a controversial topic is: a topic that reasonable people may disagree on, such as whether the government should provide health care to its people. There are a number of different perspectives on this issue: economic, human rights, etc. However, whether the people should have clean drinking water is not a controversial topic as no reasonable person would disagree with the position.

7 As a class, brainstorm some controversial topics and put them on the board. Students may have a hard time coming up with suggestions, so the teacher should have some topics prepared: same-sex marriage, capital punishment, and mandatory school uniforms are all popular topics.

8 Choose one sample controver-

sial topic and together come up with the various perspectives on it: a religious perspective, an economic perspective, etc. What would people from these various perspectives likely think about the topic?

9 Divide students into groups of about three or four students. Have students discuss the list of topics on the board that they came up and their various perspectives. Have them choose one topic for their group to discuss.

10 On the board, write the terms:

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Have students explain in their groups which position they take on the topic and why.

MOVING INTO THE DEBATE

11 Come together again as a class. Review the groups' discussions. Select one topic as a class.

12 Tell students they are going to debate the issue. Go over the format of a debate, or modified debate—with each side taking a position on the issue, supporting it, and countering the other side's claims. Also discuss types of support and reliable sources for support.

13 Explain the terms "Pro" and "Con." Work together to list reasons "pro" and "con" for a sample topic, not the topic students have chosen.

14

Teach the etiquette of debate—waiting your turn to speak, waiting to be recognized, listening to the other side and taking notes, and politely disagreeing.

PLANNING AND PERHAPS TAKING A LITTLE DIFFICULTY TO SET UP, TEACHING, ANALYZING, DISCUSSING, AND DEBATING CONTROVERSIAL TOPICS REAP HUGE BENEFITS IN DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS, WRITING SKILLS, AND DISCUSSION SKILLS FOR ESL STUDENTS.

15

Also teach some of the specialized language related to the particular topic: if the debate is on same-sex marriage, then “civil union,” for example, is likely to come up.

16

First do a mini-debate. Have the students divide into pairs, and each member within a pair select a side, pro or con, and proceed to debate with their partner for two minutes on the issue.

17

For the larger debate, have the class divide into two sides to prepare. Students may want to adopt roles within their group as researcher, leader, etc. They may wish to do outside research on their topic to support their position.

18

On the day of the debate, the two sides, pro and con, should face each other. The teams should take turns introducing themselves, their position, and their major support. Then each side can provide a major counterargument. Finally, each side provides some additional comments, summarizes, and closes.

19

The teacher may wish to follow up with an essay after the debate. Students are now prepared to write a persuasive paper, which is much like the written form of the debate, in that it involves taking a position on a topic and supporting it.

20

The remaining topics that were not used in the debate can be listed on index cards to be pulled out for future discussion or debate.

ALTHOUGH REQUIRING SOME

All Americans are Fat and Lazy: Teaching the Fallacy

AT SOME POINT MID-SEMESTER, IN MY INTERMEDIATE AND ADVANCED CLASSES IN ESL WRITING, IT OCCURS TO ME THAT STUDENTS REALLY NEED TO BE TAUGHT THE LOGICAL FALLACY AND HOW TO AVOID IT.

This is after listening to them in discussion making statements like “Women are weaker than men,” with other students often accepting that without further questioning: “Weaker how? All women? Which men?” Or they will write something about The Occupy Movement and how it must be valid because “so many people are involved in it.” Clearly, some introduction to the logical fallacy is warranted. Not only will students learn about these basic errors in thinking, but they also will develop analytical and critical thinking skills and improve discussion and writing skills.

WHAT IS A FALLACY AND WHICH FALLACIES SHOULD WE TEACH?

A fallacy is a logical error: something went wrong, or is missing from, a chain of reasoning. It’s important for student to learn these to recognize these in one’s own and other’s arguments. To be able to write and debate effectively, students need to know what a fallacy is. Critical thinking skills are also improved in the ability to take apart an argument and look for the fallacies.

I like to begin by introducing the concept and then using examples drawn from student experience if possible.

COMMON FALLACIES

1 THE STEREOTYPE / OVERGENERALIZATION

Both of these involve applying to the individual the traits of the whole group: a stereotype applies specifically to people, an overgeneralization to things. I like to use stereotypes about my own group, “All Americans are fat and lazy,” which usually gets a

laugh from students - apparently they have been exposed to that particular stereotype, and I avoid potentially offending a student. I point out because of its sweeping nature, a stereotype can be defeated by pointing out one exception: I’m American and neither fat nor lazy, - therefore, the stereotype does not hold. I also offer students a “cure” for fallacies: in this case of stereotypes, modifying language to be less all-inclusive: e.g., it is fair, less fallacious to say “Many Americans struggle with weight control due to mostly cultural factors, like lack of exercise and fast food.”

2 AD HOMINEM ATTACK

“Ad Hominem” literally means “to the person,” when the argument focuses not on the opponent but on the opponent’s personal life or appearance. I might offer an example from student life: e.g., “Professor Johnson is such a bad teacher. He’s so fat and sloppy, and his shoes are unpolished,” is an ad hominem attack because it focuses mostly on the poor guy’s physical appearance. It would be more fair and valid to discuss his ability to lecture or his grading policies, which go to the argument on his abilities as a professor being discussed.

3 CONFUSING TIMING WITH CAUSE

This can be a difficult one to approach because even skilled critical thinkers make the rather easy mistake of thinking that because two things occurred together that they must be causally related. An example I offer from campus life is “I stayed up all night, drinking coffee while I studied, and I got an ‘A’ on my test. Therefore, caffeine improves grades.” I work with students to examine this by asking “What else might be going on here? Can we really say it was coffee that caused the good grade? Maybe it was the studying, and coffee had nothing to do with it? Or the causation was the other way, perhaps: the studying

all night caused the need for coffee?” This also models questioning claims based on poor reasoning.

4 BANDWAGON

The bandwagon fallacy is the “everyone’s doing it, - therefore it must be good” falsehood. An example the teacher could offer is that at one time not very long ago almost “everyone” in the U.S. smoked — a majority of adults, that is. “Everyone” could be wrong. This could be applied to student life today in the Occupy movement: if students choose to do it, fine — they should, however, know why beyond “everyone” doing it.

5 SLIPPERY SLOPE

This fallacy predicts far-reaching, disastrous results from one event: e.g., “If the professor doesn’t give us extra time for studying for the exam, we’ll fail the test and then fail out of school. We won’t get jobs, and we’ll wind up homeless. And the terrorists will have won!” This usually gets laughs from students because of its obvious extremeness—it would be more reasonable to simply say “The teacher should give us extra time to study so that we have a chance to do well on the exam.”

6 NON SEQUITUR

A favorite example I offer for this is drawn from my own life: on receiving a parking citation from the local university campus police in the mail, I responded in writing with two claims:

“This is not my car, and I wasn’t on campus on the day in question.” I forgot about it, considering the matter resolved, until receiving a return letter from the campus police: “Parking laws are enforced every day at Cal State.” This leaves students either laughing or scratching their heads because it’s a classic non sequitur, “it doesn’t follow”, - in this case, the campus police’s rebuttal about the laws being enforced everyday did not follow or address the claims I made about

not being on campus and not owning that car but seemed rather to address some claim I didn't make, like "It was only a Sunday." It is likely the campus police didn't even read my letter but was offering a standard response. In discussing this event, I am also able to review some key vocabulary for arguments, like "claim" and "rebuttal."

HOW TO TEACH THE FALLACY?

1

First introduce an academic argument (as opposed to the everyday use of the term): a claim that is supported.

2

Introduce the concept of "fallacy" and draw on examples from campus life, as above. Often students are eager to share fallacies they've encountered.

3

Start with an example of poor reasoning and fallacies. Just looking through the newspaper's section of letters to the editor will reveal fallacies from ad hominem to non sequitur.

4

It's a campaign year in the U.S.: plenty in the papers, in support of a candidate or against one. "She's a good businesswoman, - therefore she'd make a good governor" was a fallacy in a recent California election. Or ad hominem attacks (to the person): "Obama has suspected Muslim background, - therefore, he wouldn't make a good president." Often a candidate's personal life comes under examination: "Former New York Mayor Giuliani went through a divorce. He can't handle his marriage, how he can be a good president?" These kind of ad hominem attacks are rampant in the public dialogue. Have students question these fallacies by asking critical questions that go to the premises that the fallacies are based on through modeling questioning such as the following: "Do you then believe Obama is lying about his religious faith? A lot of evidence, such as long-term church membership and his own testimony, suggests he is Christian, not Muslim. Even if Obama

is lying about his religious faith, what of it? What would suggest a Muslim cannot be President?" or "Do success in marriage and in political leadership really draw on the same skills? Aren't being successful in marriage and in politics really different things? If I have a successful marriage, does that mean I can lead the country? If we limit our presidency to only those who have successful marriages, are we really limiting our base of candidates?" From this dialogue, students will be more informed and thoughtful than much of the American public, and they will learn the habit of questioning the statements that often rest on unfounded assumptions that really permeate the public dialogue. The teacher should, of course, in this exercise remain focused on the exercise of critical analysis of the candidates and beliefs of them—for example, in this exercise, Giuliani and Obama are of opposing parties, and I am only of one of them—but I did not, I hope, favor one over the other in analysis of the criticism leveled at them, - they were equally unfair attacks.

5

It's time for students to examine fallacies in their own writing. Have students write a paragraph arguing from a particular perspective—for or against gun control, for example, and give reasons for their position. They should then examine their writing for fallacies, then trade with a peer and do the same.

IT TAKES TIME TO TEACH THE FALLACY, TIME OUT OF THE REGULAR CURRICULUM, PERHAPS, AND TIME TO PREPARE EXAMPLES.

However, the results in helping students improve critical thinking skills and the habit of critical examination of arguments are invaluable and will serve students the rest of their college careers and beyond.

How Do We Know He Killed His Wife? Teaching Inference

THERE IS A GENERAL BELIEF IN OUR CULTURE THAT ASSUMPTIONS ARE BAD, THAT WE SHOULD ASSUME NOTHING, AND MANY PEOPLE, INCLUDING STUDENTS, PRIDE THEMSELVES ON ASSUMING NOTHING.

However, in reality, much of every day life is made up of shared assumptions. When I stop at a traffic light, I am assuming other drivers will also obey the rules — I would not venture out on the streets otherwise. Rarely are my assumptions violated in this case, and it is notable when they are, with lawsuits and trips to the emergency room ensuing.

Assumptions, and cultural assumptions, hit home with me recently when, at the end of a story, a student asked me, “How do we know he killed his wife?” I answered that we didn’t, exactly. Still, he was heard threatening her, he bought a large insurance policy on her life, and he was found standing over her body with a loaded gun — I’m going with the inference he killed her. The student was persistent in that we should assume nothing, and, if I were on the character’s jury for murder, there would be some validity to this, to assume nothing. But I am merely a reader and need only go with the best evidence available.

IMPORTANT POINTS OF TEACHING INFERENCE

1

Best evidence. Go with what all the signs suggest. This is especially true in higher level reading, when readers are expected to make those connections because the writing is so information-dense the author can’t make all of them for you. When doing a reading, pause frequently to ask students why they think a character did a certain thing or why they believe something happened.

2

Context Counts. I once asked a student, who was hobbling into class on crutches: “Sports injury?” This was a fair inference in the context of a university and young students, and in fact, I turned out to be right. It would not be such a fair inference with an older man coming out of Denny’s restaurant on crutches. As another example, a man doing some landscaping work on a neighbor’s house one afternoon called out to me, “Do you know where a subway is?” I couldn’t fathom why he would be asking about a subway in a suburban California neighborhood, a place notorious for its dearth of public transportation, until I realized he meant Subway — a sandwich chain. In midtown Manhattan, a subway is a train, while in California, it’s probably a restaurant.

3

Inference is often based on the assumption of shared knowledge. I gave students the example of a movie I had recently seen in which an FBI informant on the Mafia, on returning to his office and opening his desk, found a dead rat. His reaction was one of extreme fear — he took this as a threat on his life, based on his cultural understanding of “rat” as one who goes to the authorities. Someone from another culture or situation wouldn’t have the same reaction: someone from China, for example, who didn’t have that cultural understanding of “rat,” or who is not involved with organized crime, as in my case—I do understand the idioms “rat” and “rat someone out,” but since I have never informed on the Mafia, to me a dead rat in my desk would just be a dead rat, and I would not draw the same inferences the man in the film did. This seems to go with the “Best Guess” element—what is the best guess on the meaning of “rat,” given the situation?

4

Inferences aren’t infallible. An

inference is a best guess, based on the situation and what is known at the time. The man knows he has snitched on the mob, and he jumps to certain conclusions about a dead rat left in his desk. But he could be wrong—it may be just a rat. My student coming in on crutches could have simply fallen down the stairs at her home. Getting students to accept this - that they don’t always have to be right in their inferences, and probably won’t be - can take many hours of class time and practice.

5

Inference has a lot to do with the assumed audience and how much the reader can expect that audience to understand. I will assume a lot less from an American vs. non-American audience, for example, in discussing my family’s celebration of American Thanksgiving. “Yeah, the turkey was dry, and the game was boring,” might be the way I dismiss this year’s Thanksgiving to another American. I’m not going to go on at length about the history and common practices of the holiday and risk boring him—he knows, probably, what I mean about dry turkey and “the game.” However, I understand I’ll probably have to explain a little more at length to someone new to the culture.

METHODS FOR TEACHING INFERENCE

1

Real life concepts. Begin by pointing out things in the room or around campus: “Tom’s jacket and hair are wet. What can we infer?” He’s just come from across campus, it’s started raining since I came to class, and so on. Continue with applying the inference to ourselves: “I’m probably going to want to put on my jacket before going out,” and so on, to show that we actually do use inferences every day.

2

Go through a few lines of your latest reading and ask students what they understand about the piece: “How do you know it’s his own house he woke up in and not someone else’s? How do you know he lives in a city? How do you know it’s an American city? Can you tell what part of the country?” to show we infer all the time.

ALTHOUGH WE DO IT EVERY DAY, DRAWING INFERENCE DOES NOT ALWAYS TRANSFER DIRECTLY TO ACADEMIC SKILLS.

With planned instruction, the teacher can show students how to use this skill for college reading and writing.

3

Show the difference between a reasonable and unreasonable inference, perhaps drawing on a past example. For me to infer my student on crutches had a sports injury was a reasonable inference. It would be less reasonable to think she had fallen from her dorm roof—though this could conceivably be true. It just wouldn’t be a reasonable/best evidence inference.

4

Academic texts for college students assume a lot—perhaps wrongly—about students’ knowledge base. Going through a difficult reading and discussing what the reader seems to assume students know can be insightful—highlighting what they believe the author thinks they know (and what they probably don’t).

5

Students are also notorious for writing writer-based prose: that is, writing that is more “writer” than “reader” friendly in that it relies too much on inference and supposed shared assumptions, as if the reader in some way were an extension of the writer: for example, writing about a family celebration and its own specific, individualistic traditions and then assuming the reader will understand that. Audience awareness can be taught with inference: in giving the assignment, ask the students to think about the possible audience and how much can be expected for about readers to know about the topic and how much needs to be explained. Tell students to imagine themselves in dialogue with that imagined audience and think about how they would modify their language and how much they would explain. This develops in writers a sense of audience.

My Brother is Very Success: Teaching Morphology

Sometime during the semester, having read too many sentences in ESL student compositions like “My brother is very success,” it occurs to the ESL instructor that banging her head against the wall over issues of verb tense and sentence structure may be of limited value compared to other writing problems. ESL writing, particularly at lower levels, tends to be permeated with errors of word form (or parts of speech or morphology). This is something unique to ESL writing: native speaker writers, even weak ones, generally don’t write sentences like “My brother is very success” because their native speaker “intuition” “hears” the wrongness of that sentence. So if word form is such a big issue, why then do we spend so little time on it? The problem is multifaceted. One concern is tradition: in a grammar class, we focus on verb tense and sentence structure and articles. Another issue is that the kinds of word form errors and their causes are multi-faceted and difficult to address: for example, dropping off the ending, and using the noun instead of the adjective, as in “My brother is very success,” is just one type of problem in word form, while verb tense errors tend to be much more uniform and easily identifiable. A final part of the problem is there is no real established methodology for teaching word forms, as there is with teaching correct verb tense. So what are some things that teachers can teach with word forms?

1 Introduce the concept. Teach parts of speech and places in a sentence: nouns function as subjects and objects, verbs generally follow subjects in statements, adjectives typically precede nouns.

2 Teach common word endings and relationship to parts of speech: for example, words that end in “-ment” are generally nouns, “-ly” adverbs, “-ful” or “-full” adjectives.

3 Also teach the common beginnings of words: learning prefixes like “pre-,” “un-,” and “non-,” for example, helps students expand their vocabulary.

4 Teach when to use the gerund (e.g. writing stories) and the infinitive (to write stories). Discuss when to use each—for example, the gerund is used as the subject of a sentence: “Writing stories is my hobby.” This gets students focused on the issue of word form. In the same way, you can teach when to use the present and past participles: “Her stories are interesting, I am interested in them.”

5 For more advanced learners, do some further study of morphology and typical root words as well as prefixes and suffixes and their meaning in English. For example, just taking the word “morphology” and understanding that “morph” means “form” and “ology” is “study of” helps expand vocabulary and to learn words like “metamorphosis” (change form) and “psychology” (study of the mind).

THE METHODS FOR TEACHING WORD FORMS

1 It’s a good start for many students to learn there is such a thing as word form and that they can’t take a familiar word like “freedom” and use it wholesale anywhere in a sentence, as the many ESL teachers who have read the sentence “America is a freedom country” thousands of times over the years can testify.

2 Introduce words with various forms. After students have some understanding of the concept, take a word with a number of permeations such as “succeed” and show how it can change form according to function in the sentence: “My brother succeeds at most at what he does”, “I have a successful brother”, “I think my brother’s efforts at his new job will be a success.” When introducing new vocabulary, introduce other forms of the word.

3 Edit a piece with mistakes in word

form. Once students have had some exposure to the concept and some examples, it’s time for them to practice on their own. Give out a paragraph you wrote yourself, or take a paragraph from a well-known work, and create errors in word form—the ones you see most in your students’ papers: “success” for “successful,” “freedom” for “free.”

4 Practice the habit of reading aloud. Do native speakers of English think about the parts of speech of the words they choose as they are writing? Of course not—they wouldn’t be able to write fluently if they did. They have “native speaker intuition” of what “sounds right.” Students can draw on what they have of this already and further develop it by reading aloud.

5 Introduce common parts of words and their meanings: prefixes such as “trans-” (between), suffixes, such as “-able” for adjectives and “-ed” for past tense verbs, and roots, “-port-” (to carry). See if students can then determine the meaning of words from these parts: e.g., “transported” carried between (in the past). Finally have students see how many other words they can come up with, using the word parts: portable, transferred, etc.

6 At this point, students are ready to apply word forms and write their own paragraphs on such topics such as favorite hobbies, - this is likely to call on a variety of word forms of the same base word: reading, to read, have read, etc. Have them read their papers aloud to check the word forms. Trade papers with a peer. and edit each other’s work, focusing on the word forms.

WORD FORM/PARTS OF SPEECH IS OFTEN NEGLECTED BECAUSE IT’S AN AREA OF LANGUAGE LEARNING THAT IS DIFFICULT TO DEFINE AND TEACH. It is, however, an area where students often make the most mistakes. Teaching word parts can help develop students’ fluency, editing skills, as well as expand vocabulary.

Teaching Devices for Coherence and Cohesion

SOMETIMES WHEN READING A STACK OF STUDENT COMPOSITIONS, I'LL RUN ACROSS A SECTION OF WRITING THAT GOES SOMETHING LIKE "MY FIRST CAR WAS UNRELIABLE. A CAR WAS UGLY, TOO." I'LL FEEL MY ATTENTION START TO DRIFT, MY EYES CLOSE...

I confess I have been known to put my head on my desk and drift off, only to be waken hours later by a family member. Not that the writing was so bad, but the lack of idea organization, coherence, and connection between those ideas, cohesion, is very tiring on the reader, who has to work to make sense of the passage. And the reader, after all, should be doing minimal work: it is the writer's job to work to make the connections as clear as possible.

Some attention is paid to coherence and cohesion in student composition textbooks, which typically give lists of words and phrases like "however" and "in addition to" and their functions. However, the problem with coherence and cohesion in student writing usually goes beyond the lack of these simple words and phrases which are relatively easy to teach and learn—it is not very difficult, that is, to remember to put such a connecting device at the beginning of each paragraph, which is usually how composition textbooks address them. However, it is not the lack of these terms that wears on the reader. No, the lack of connections is deeper and more intrinsic to the writing.

PROBLEMS WITH COHERENCE AND COHESION IN STUDENT WRITING

1 LACK OF CONNECTIONS: JUMPING FROM TOPIC TO TOPIC

In the paragraph quoted from above, the writer jumps from the car's unreliability to its ugliness from one sentence to the next. Later in the para-

graph, the writer picks up both topics again, again jumping from topic to topic. There should be some internal organization of the paragraph, with all the sentences on the car's unreliability grouped together and then its ugliness, perhaps also ordering the ideas by importance, addressing the appearance first then building to the more important unreliability.

2 LACK OF LINKING WORDS

Linking words, or transitions, do have their place, in this case signaling the reader when moving from point to point and the importance of those points: "First, the car was ugly...The most important problem, however, was the car's unreliability." Providing such linking words guides the reader through the paragraph, signaling when the topic or subtopic is changing and in what direction it is going.

3 LACK OF SYNONYMS

Another "tiring" element in the sample paragraph beginning is the repetition of "car... car..." instead of varying with the vocabulary with "car... automobile... vehicle... Ford." Using different terms like this actually creates more connections in the text because it emphasizes the theme, the main point, of the car, and tying sentences together in a way that continual repetition of the word "car" doesn't. Suggest students use their word processing program's thesaurus to check for synonyms, and this will expand their vocabularies as well create more cohesion to their writing.

4 MISUSE OF PRONOUNS

Pronouns can be misused or not used enough even by professional, experienced writers, who might make the mistake of writing something like "Joe stopped the car. Joe got out and popped the hood. Joe saw steam coming out. Joe closed the hood..." etc. This reads as choppy and disconnected. Much more fluid is "Joe stopped the car. He got out and popped the hood. Then he saw steam..." and so

forth. Instead of constantly repeating Joe's name but rather varying it with pronouns, a sense of connection across sentences is created.

5 MISUSE OF ARTICLES

In "My first car was unreliable: a car was ugly, too," the article "a" was misused - the article should be "the," because this is the second mention of the car, and the reader is left wondering if this is a different car the writer is introducing. Misusing articles this way is typical of ESL students as articles do not exist in a number of languages. Teaching students the correct use of articles, especially the use of "the" for the second mention of something, will help them create cohesion in their writing.

So these are some elements to create coherence and cohesion in student work: **organization, linking words, synonyms, pronouns, and articles.** What are some methods to teach these devices? They follow:

METHODS TO ADDRESS LACK OF COHERENCE AND COHESION

1 LOOK AT SAMPLE ESSAYS

Look at the writing of someone like William F. Buckley in the classic essay "Why Don't We Complain?" and note the progression from a hot train coach, where no one complained, to a movie theater and bad projector where no one complained, to complaining in general. The reader sees the connections and is not confused. Discuss how the effect was achieved.

2 REVISE A PARAGRAPH

Read aloud a paragraph with coherence/cohesion problems, perhaps one you created. With students note its lack of organization, of transitions, of synonyms and so forth. Have students revise it for better cohesion and coherence.

3 REVISE A PEER'S WORK

Have students read each other's work, perhaps aloud. When it is not your own work, it is much easier to note the lack of connections as it won't make sense to you: you will have to work to understand. This is not the case with your own writing, of course, which you are very familiar with, and you can "see" the connections between the ideas even when they're not actually on the paper.

4 REVISE OWN WORK

After having revised sample paragraphs and peers' work, students can now go back to their own papers and see them more critically, looking for the elements they have noted in their classmates' work: have they grouped ideas? Used transitions and synonyms? Proofread their pronouns and articles? Give students a checklist of items they should look for in revising for coherence and cohesion.

COHERENCE AND COHESION ARE OFTEN DEALT WITH SUPERFICIALLY IN WRITING MATERIALS, OFTEN CONFINED TO USE OF LINKING WORDS.

However, when readers compliment writing, they often say "It flows well," by which they probably mean it has good coherence and cohesion. Teaching our students the elements of coherence and cohesion will help them connect their ideas better and make it "flow."

Practical Suggestions for Scaffolding in the Content Classroom

Students cannot learn what they cannot understand. For ESL students, there is a greater challenge when content material is the target knowledge. For native speakers, learning the content itself may be a challenge, but ESL students also have their language ability factoring into what they learn. Even if a student is capable of understanding the content his or her teacher is presenting, if that student cannot understand the language in which the content is presented, she cannot learn the content. One approach to assisting your students in this situation is to use scaffolding in the ESL classroom. Scaffolding, when done correctly, can bridge the gap between the language a student may struggle with and the content he is more than capable of learning.

SCAFFOLDING IN THE CONTENT CLASSROOM

1 WHAT IS SCAFFOLDING?

In construction terms, scaffolding is the additional structure built onto another to make some improvement or repair possible. Imagine the planks and pipes attached to a house that is being repainted. Without the scaffolding, the painters would not be able to perform the necessary work on the building.

In learning, scaffolding serves a similar purpose. Scaffolding is additional information or assistance that aids the learner in internalizing information, and like physical scaffolding, that assistance is removed once the learner has acquired the target material. With ESL students, scaffolding is of great use since the language barrier can hinder learning content material that the student might easily learn in his first language. If you are teaching ESL students, there is no need to be intimidated by the term. You can still assist your students through the learning process with these suggestions.

2 PREVIOUS KNOWLEDGE

One of the easiest ways to use scaffolding in a content area is to get your students thinking about what they already know about a given topic. When a student has previous knowledge in mind, it is easier for him or her to build on that knowledge. Simply asking some

questions about the topic on which you will teach can be enough to get your students' minds in the right place. By giving your students some discussion questions about your topic, you not only activate their prior knowledge about the subject (also known as schemata) but you also give them an opportunity to practice their listening and speaking skills. Discussion questions take minimal preparation and are a perfect warm up activity for your ESL students!

3 COMMUNICATING GOALS

For some students, you can help them in content learning situations by stating the goals prior to the lesson. Even better, write the goals of the activity on the board. When students know the objectives of the lesson, they are able to focus on the most important elements of the material. For example, if the ultimate purpose is to compare and contrast two types of cars, tell your students that they will be doing that activity before you give them the information on either of the cars. If you want your students to remember the main plot points of a story, tell them before they read the piece. By informing your students of the goal before starting the activity, they will be able to focus on the important information and filter out the less important points in the material.

4 VISUAL AIDS

A third way to use scaffolding effectively with ESL students is to provide pictures or visual assistance with the content you are teaching. For example, if you are reading a text in class, take a few minutes for your students to look at the pictures included with the article or story and try to predict what information may be included in the piece. If you are reading a longer piece like a novel, there is nothing wrong with watching the movie version before your students have read the book. The visual information will assist them as they read the novel increasing their comprehension. If you are presenting new information to your students, try to include a visual representation of that information. Can you use a bar graph, pie chart or other graphic display of the knowledge? Can you bring in photos or print pictures from

the internet that illustrate what you are describing? If you can, your students are sure to appreciate it. Try to write key words and new vocabulary on the board to give your students a visual connection with the words themselves.

5 PRODUCING INFORMATION

You can assist your students in their content as well as language learning by asking them to produce the information in different forms after the lesson. You may want to have students answer questions orally as an initial response. Then give each person some time to complete a graphic or chart with the information that they learned. When students are giving answers, you can provide a word bank or choices of answers to further assist them. Finally, ask your students to produce the information that they were given through written answers. In any case, allowing your students to work in groups will also decrease their anxiety and help the answers come more freely.

6 SIMPLIFY LANGUAGE

For anyone who has taught ESL for any length of time, simplifying your language with your students will come naturally. Speaking more slowly and articulating words, not allowing one word to blend into the next will help your students understand the material you are presenting. In addition, using simple tenses and refraining from difficult vocabulary or slang and idioms will also be a way of assisting your students as they learn content in their second language. After a time, you will learn what vocabulary your students do not understand or what is unfamiliar to them.

LEARNING A SECOND LANGUAGE IS NOT EASY, AND LEARNING CONTENT MATERIAL IN THAT SECOND LANGUAGE CAN BE EVEN MORE DIFFICULT.

The more you can do to help your students as they learn, they more success they will see throughout the process. Though the term 'scaffolding' may seem like something complicated or foreign, you are probably already using these techniques with your students. Keep doing what good teachers do and your students will certainly see success in both language and content learning!

Teacher, What's a Yankee? Contextualizing Language Learning

FOR A LONG TIME, AS A CHILD, I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT A "YANKEE" WAS.

Sometimes, as in the phrase "Damn Yankees!" it seemed to refer to the people from the Northern states during the American Civil War. Other times, as in "Yankee thrift" or "Yankee ingenuity," it seemed to refer to individuals from only New England states, and then still other times seemed to be directed at Americans in general. If I tried to ask an adult what "Yankee" meant, she would usually respond with another question, "Who said it?", which just further confused me, leaving me with the impression that "Yankee" was something pejorative, something one shouldn't say. But of course the adults were right in this case: who a "Yankee" is depends on who says it. If the speaker is from within the United States, she probably means someone from the north, probably New England, while outside of the United States, and he's probably referring to Americans in general. To further complicate matters, at one time in history "Yankee" was actually how the American soldiers referred to the British troops, as in the song, "Yankee Doodle Dandy," which mocked their effiteness. But the context of that particular cultural reference, the American Revolution, has long disappeared.

MUCH OF LANGUAGE IS CONTEXT SPECIFIC

The question "Where are you from?" also demonstrates the contextualized nature of language in that the answer to this depends on where I am now. If I'm on campus, I'll reply, "The ESL Department." If I'm in my hometown, I'll answer, "The Greenhaven neighborhood." If I'm in New York, I'll respond, "California," and if in Paris, I'll say, "The U.S." Mixing the answers up would seem strange, perhaps bizarre (Imagine responding to the copy clerk on campus that you're from the United States when he asks where you're from because he needs to know where to direct the copies.) Students should for this reason be taught the contextualized nature of language

and how it is based on situation.

WHAT MATERIAL SHOULD BE TAUGHT IN TEACHING LANGUAGE AND CONTEXT?

1 IMPORTANCE OF CONTEXT TO MEANING

Meaning shifts according to the setting and situation. For example, a number of years ago I passed a young woman sitting on quad of the university where I teach, talking on her cell phone. I heard the phrase "breaking up," and I thought at first she was ending a relationship with someone—the almost exclusive meaning of the term "break up" when I was in college. Then I realized she probably just meant she was having difficulty with her cell phone signal—a new meaning to the term "break up" in the electronic age.

2 MULTIPLE DEFINITIONS OF WORDS

As can be seen above, words generally have more than one meaning, sometimes multiple meanings. Even words we think of as being simple, concrete, and with one meaning, like "ball," for example, have actually multiple meanings: besides the toy that bounces, a ball is also a formal dance, or a good time in general, as in "have a ball!" It can also mean "aware" or "clever," as in "on the ball." I became aware of this fact when teaching my developmental reading class, and while reading a Mark Twain piece, a young man, a native speaker of English, asked me, "What's a lark?" Assuming he would know the literal meaning of "a kind of bird," I launched into the explanation of "In Twain's day, a 'lark' was a good time, on the spur of the moment, like 'they went to Paris on a lark.'" The student then asked, "So what does Twain mean when he says 'Get up with the lark?'" Many words have multiple definitions. That's why it's important to consider the context

of the word as well as teach students multiple meanings of a word when introducing or explaining it. Now I would never introduce the word "Yankee," for example, without discussing some of the different meanings nor offer an explanation of a word without knowing something about context.

METHODS TO TEACH CONTEXT AND LANGUAGE

1 EXPLICITLY TEACH THE MULTIPLE MEANINGS OF WORDS

Teach students that words have multiple meaning for different contexts.

One method to this is to write a single word like "green" on the board. The first definition students are likely to come up with is the color, of course. Then ask students what else it can mean. It can also mean young and inexperienced—as in "a little green for the job"—and environmentally aware, as in "go green", but it can also mean money, as in "I need some green." Discuss where each of these meanings, under what circumstances, might be used—a neighborhood improvement meeting, for example, is likely to use the meaning associated with the environment, not money. Write all of these meanings on the board.

Then give out cards with different simple, concrete words on them—"home," "hot," "dog"—and ask students to go through the same process, of coming up with as many meanings as possible, and share what they come up with their peers.

2 MATCH THE APPROPRIATE ANSWER TO THE QUESTION

Going back to the beginning of the article, start with the question "Where are you from?" and have students select from possible answers—China, Stockton, Grace Covell Hall. Add in

variable of the situation (you're at the airport, you're at the student union), and the answer changes, depending on the situation given them.

3 TEACH STUDENTS TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT AMBIGUOUS STATEMENTS

If asked politely, Americans almost never mind answering questions about their language, which we tend to be proud of, and will take time to explain a word or term to a nonnative speaker.

4 ROLE-PLAY

Give students their roles and situation, and give out a question: e.g., "You're at a student party, and Alberto, you ask Daniella where she is from." See if they can choose the correct response.

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE CAN BE AMBIGUOUS TO EVEN NATIVE SPEAKERS - THIS IS EVIDENT IN THAT WE'RE SOMETIMES REDUCED TO SPELLING WORDS OUT LOUD (E.G., "I MEANT THE R-E-D BOOK, NOT R-E-A-D BOOK!") IN ORDER TO CLARIFY.

So given that it is problematic to native speakers, it is almost expected that nonnative speakers should have questions. Teaching students to ask questions about our language, as well as teaching them the multiple meaning of words, will actually help them function more independently in the language.

Teaching U.S. Academic Values in the Classroom

In every institution of learning, there is the explicit, stated curriculum: it may even be part of the institution's mission statement of student handbook: for example, "to teach the English necessary to succeed in the workplace and institutions of higher learning." However, there is also what is sometimes called the "hidden curriculum": what gets taught without being included in the formal, written curriculum. Sometimes this curriculum is so "hidden" that instructors don't even think about it until a student questions it. It is hidden because it is implicit, assumed, and ultimately reflecting cultural values. For example, last semester I had in class two Israeli students whom I liked a lot but who nevertheless irritated me. In analyzing why, I realized it was because they would rush in and interrupt me while I was speaking—a violation of cultural norms in the U.S., where conversation is linear and sequential, with only one person allowed to speak at once. Indeed, in a formal situation, one must receive recognition to speak. In some cultures, it's perfectly acceptable for more than one person to talk at once, and "interrupting," seen as highly rude in the U.S., isn't considered that big a deal in other parts of the world. The matter is not "natural" and should be taught so students can avoid violating the unwritten rule and offending others.

SOME U.S. RULES AND VALUES STUDENTS SHOULD KNOW

1 CONVERSATION IS LINEAR

Structured, and reciprocal. We take turns. This may be more or less formal, depending on the situation. People are expected to wait for a pause in the conversation and then contribute a comment. While interrupting someone—taking his or her "turn" from him or her—is seen as rude, it's also rude not to say anything, to not take a turn. I've been in social situations with recent immigrants to the U.S. who sat at dinner and said nothing unless addressed directly and then only briefly. It was excruciating. You are expected to talk to people you've just met, even if you don't know them well. It is for this situation we have "small talk."

2 SMALL TALK

Small talk is discussion on unim-

portant or non personal topics, like the weather or sports. This kind of discussion is used with people you don't know well but must still, for politeness's sake, talk to. This applies to new classmates.

3 TIME IS IMPORTANT

As apparent by the omnipresence of clocks and watches in our society, time is highly important in the U.S. People lose jobs and relationships over repeated tardiness. It can also lower your course grade.

4 ACTUALLY COMING TO CLASS IS IMPORTANT

This is a surprise to some students, who come from societies that still place a lot of importance on the final exam, and whether students come to class or not is seen almost as a matter of personal choice or a private matter. In the United States, often poor test scores can be, if not cancelled out, at least mitigated by good attendance and participation.

5 PARTICIPATION IS IMPORTANT

The American writer, actor, and director Woody Allen said "Ninety percent of life is just showing up," but this is only partly correct. So while actually showing up for class is important, and the teacher does take attendance in most cases, it's not enough. Students are expected to participate by contributing (productively) to the conversation.

6 EGALITARIANISM AND INDIVIDUALITY ARE TWO IMPORTANT VALUES

It is for this reason that it's important to write your own papers and complete your own tests—this work should reflect your individual effort. It's also why it's important to give equal respect to everyone—that student in worn jeans and sandals might just be the CEO who interviews you someday!

TEACHING CULTURAL VALUES

So there are some important American values embedded in our educational system. How does the instructor teach them?

1 Some should go in the course syllabus, such as the value of doing one's own work and the attendance/tardiness policy. They can be explicitly taught by going over them and possibly giving a test on them.

2 Hold a discussion of "unwritten rules," those rules that are understood within a culture but not written down anywhere. Bob Greene wrote a well-known essay on this topic, "Unwritten Rules Circumscribe our Lives," in which he discusses some of these unwritten rules and assumptions of American life and how powerful they are: obey traffic signs, don't take tips left for wait staff, don't yell at others in public places, etc. Have students read the essay if possible and have a discussion about unwritten rules in their home country, the U.S., and their college.

3 Most values should be modeled. The teacher herself should model the values of attendance and promptness. If the teacher remains unfailing polite and respectful to every student—even if his or her own behavior hasn't earned it—that sends a powerful message to other students on how to act toward others.

4 Some values, such as small talk, are more gradually learned, with practice over the course of the semester. Again, the teacher can engage in this almost every class session, at the beginning, while students drift in a settle in. At first, students may rarely participate or respond to the teacher's comments on the weather, but by the end of the term, they may be getting into more heated discussions over their favorite sports teams!

CULTURAL VALUES ARE DEEPLY EMBEDDED IN OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM BECAUSE THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IS PART OF THE LARGER CULTURE.

These values can be difficult to discern because they are so deeply embedded. But with consciousness raising, discussion, modeling, and practice, students can learn the values of their new school system.

Integrating the Skills in an Integrated Skills Class

Many ESL classes for adults are designated “integrated skills”, - that is, students are to work on all four language skills in the class: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

A number of commercial textbooks, especially those designed in a series, are specifically written for this kind of class, often with each chapter based on a specific topic, like transportation, and with accompanying activities related to the four skills. The class often develops a scattered feeling, as students cycle through the various activities targeted at different skills each lesson, and the teacher runs around with supplementary handouts and makes sure students are transitioning from each activity and stay on task. So with all of this hyperkinetic activity, why do students so often complain of feeling bored in class? It seems paradoxical, but it is possible to be busy and bored at the same time! Both problems in this case stem from the lack of focus: students are jumping from activity to activity enough to keep busy, but they are not staying with any one activity long enough to really fully understand it in depth or develop an interest in it, hence the boredom. What can be done about this?

DEVELOP FOCUS IN AN INTEGRATED SKILLS CLASS?

1 LEARN YOUR STUDENTS

Plan to spend the first week of class getting to know your students. Give a diagnostic to determine their skills. I find dictating a short news story and having students write it in a paragraph taps into a number of skills: listening, writing, and grammar. I also, time allowing, have students complete a short interview so that I can get an idea of speaking/pronunciation.

As part of this interview, I ask students what they are interested in working on in class. In gathering this information, I am looking for ways to focus the class: are most of the students expressing concerns about their speaking and listening skills, for example? Do their diagnostics confirm that? Then this suggests a focus

of the class on speaking and listening.

2 SLOW DOWN

In addition to need for a focus, the speed of most integrated skills is a concern. While it seems paradoxical, when students are complaining of boredom, to say “slow down,” most of the time the boredom is related to shallow treatment of the course content. So slow down and take the time to explore the material in depth, get a full understanding of it, and discuss its cultural implications. For example, my high intermediate integrated skills class just read about EQ, or Emotional Quotient, a concept made popular by Daniel Goleman, the notion that some of us have higher “EQ” than others, or the ability to understand our emotions and regulate them as well as relate to other’s. If I just skimmed over this topic, rushing the students through it, it probably would be “boring” because they wouldn’t fully understand it. Full understanding requires time.

3 LIMIT SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

Limiting supplementary material is related to slowing down. Because students have been complaining of boredom, often teachers respond by dragging in myriad supplementary materials: newspaper clippings, movies, and so forth. This, however, contributes to the feeling of being rushed as the instructor struggles to cover everything. Break the cycle by limiting the supplementary materials, focusing on the course content, and giving it the in-depth treatment it deserves.

4 GO FOR DEPTH

Again, go for depth, not breadth, of coverage. For example, my high intermediate integrated skills class which was just introduced to the topic of EQ was very interested in the topic, and the students spent quite a bit of time on the introductory reading and discussion activities, where the concept was introduced. I allowed this time, which extended the entire class period, rather than rushing through to the more advanced vocabulary, listening, speaking, and writing activities. The students seemed

satisfied with the lesson and left feeling they had understood the concept. And no one complained they were “bored,” as they might have, if we had rushed through activities on a topic they did not thoroughly understand in order to keep to an arbitrary schedule.

5 FOCUS ON SKILLS DEVELOPMENT, NOT ACTIVITY COMPLETION

There is often the belief that the class needs to complete so many activities per day or chapters per week. I’m as guilty of this as any teacher, and the result is a rushed and frantic class flying through the textbook. The focus should be however, not on how many activities or chapters are being covered but rather whether or not student skills are developing. If students have understood the main concept of the reading material, for example, then it’s fine to move ahead to a related listening activity. If not, then some additional time is well spent on analyzing the reading and its main points and supporting details.

6 FOCUS ON STUDENTS, NOT MATERIALS OR ACTIVITIES

Ultimately, the focus of any class should be the students, not the course materials. We often lose sight of this, however, with a rigidly standards-based syllabus, which often ignores the needs of the individual student. However, if administering a diagnostic and spending some time with your students, you determine your students have little problem with conversational English but need work on their writing and academic grammar skills, that is where the class time should be spent, and the conversational and discussion activities given less time.

IN AN INTEGRATED SKILLS CLASS, IT CAN BE HARD TO DETERMINE WHERE THE FOCUS SHOULD LIE: CONVERSATION ACTIVITIES? READING? AT A FAST OR SLOW PACE? However, as with education in general, an integrated skills class should be student-centered. By administering a diagnostic, a needs analysis, and observing students, the focus should become clear—with the students.

Why Tell a Story? The Academic Value of the Narrative Form

Often in staff meetings for composition classes I have taught, instructors will decri a possible composition topic as “too narrative”: that is, by its nature of asking students to tell about an event such as a formative early experience, it is likely to draw on grammar, vocabulary, and organizational structures that are personal and anecdotal and nonacademic.

However, there is a lot of value in the narrative form, and it can serve as a springboard to the academic essay. I am not advocating that all or even most of a class on academic writing should focus on a narrative essay. However, the narrative form can serve as a starting-off point for academic writing.

SO WHY TELL A STORY?

1 AUDIENCE AWARENESS

Why do we read stories? Their power to transport us. They develop in the writer audience awareness. If in proving the dangers of cigarette smoking, I tell you about my father’s struggle to beat the nicotine habit, I’m likely to hold your interest much more powerfully than I would in an essay about the case against tobacco that uses statistics and dry facts. Also in telling the story of my father’s battle, I as the writer begin weighing different elements and the impact on the reader: How much detail should I include? Should I go on at length about the different programs he was involved in, or just summarize? Which is more effective? When writing an academic essay, I’m likely to eyeball the page and think, “Okay, I’ve got three facts for support... I’m done,” without going through the critical evaluation I would with a story.

2 ALONG WITH AUDIENCE AWARENESS

Along with audience awareness, the writer has to develop a sense of structure, of how to open, to build momentum, and to wrap up. Often teachers struggle over these issues laboriously for weeks in a composition class because essays are largely an inauthentic, unfamiliar forms, existing in few places outside the writing classroom. However, in writing a story, students often know almost intuitively

how to open the story and get their audience’s attention—it’s what they’ve been doing most of their lives, after all. Storytelling exists in all cultures, and all parents and children tell each other stories, and therefore children develop the skill in doing it. These skills can then transfer to the academic essay.

3 AWARENESS OF VERB TENSE

When writing essays, students, native and nonnative speakers alike, struggle over which verb tense to use in the unfamiliar essay genre, often switching back and forth haphazardly. However, it’s much plainer why a story usually needs to be in the past time frame, for the majority of it, at any rate, perhaps opening in the present to introduce the story and switching back at the end, to reflect on the experience. Discussing why these tenses are used then serves as a foundation for later further verb tense practice.

4 AWARENESS OF ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Again, the academic essay is an unfamiliar genre, and students sometimes have to be drilled repeatedly in how to set up the introduction, the body, and the conclusion. However, a storyteller knows he has messed up when he has to say, “Oh, sorry, forgot to tell you, before this happened, I had been at the party where I...” because his listeners immediately begin to drift and check their watches and phones. Stories have to be told in chronological order or you lose your audience, so you have to organize and structure your material.

5 AWARENESS OF TRANSITIONS

Again, a speaker when telling a story almost intuitively knows she has to make connections for the listener with such terms as “last night” and “Then later that same evening...” Understanding this skill can transfer to the more varied academic transitions, such as “in the case of—” and “other the other hand.”

6 WORD CHOICE MATTERS

Anyone who has ever captivated an audience with just the right words, or

driven it to laughter or tears, knows how important the right set of words is. People don’t usually have the same kind of response to an essay.

7 OWNERSHIP

Students seem to care more about their stories, the characters and what happens to them, and how their stories are told, than they do their essays: there is more of a personal connection. This connection and sense of ownership is powerful. Students are more likely to pay attention to details, to labor over correct grammar and punctuation and general presentation, with something they feel attached to.

8 CONCLUDING

A storyteller knows the part of a story the audience is most likely to remember is the ending and will therefore put effort into the conclusion: to know where to end it, for example, and to end with some kind of message, image, or idea for the reader to take from the story.

9 A MESSAGE

Why did I tell you this story? Listeners are likely to be angered if they’ve sat through a story with no point. Similarly, all essays should have some point to it. While the main point, or thesis, does not have to be stated directly at the beginning, as is traditionally the case in the academic essay, and probably should not be, in a story, there should be some point to the story whether or not it’s directly stated.

ALTHOUGH IT IS OFTEN DERIDED AS NONACADEMIC AND THEREFORE NOT BELONGING IN A CLASSROOM OF HIGHER LEARNING, THE NARRATIVE FORM TEACHES A LOT PRECISELY BECAUSE IT IS A FAMILIAR BASE TO START FROM. It also has many of the same features, such as introductions, conclusions, and a specific organization, that teachers struggle, often unsuccessfully, to teach in academic essays. Stories and the narrative form, while in no way replacing the academic essay, can serve as a scaffolding device for more difficult, academic genres because of their shared features and learner familiarity with stories...

Cultural Practices Your Students Should Be Taught

ON A TUESDAY LAST OCTOBER, A YOUNG KUWAITI STUDENT IN MY MORNING WRITING CLASS EMAILED ME AND APOLOGIZED FOR MISSING CLASS ON MONDAY. SHE CLAIMED SHE HAD BEEN THERE, BUT THE CLASSROOM WAS EMPTY WHEN SHE CAME.

Since class had gone as usual on Monday, I thought this was a poor excuse for missing, and was about to send her an email saying that I had no idea why she had found an empty classroom as we had been there at the usual hour. Then I remembered resetting the clocks on Saturday night. I amended my email with “You may be unaware that on Sunday morning we went off daylight savings time, which means we set our clocks back one hour.” She wrote back, shocked and apologetic, and thankful that I had told her, as she had missed her second class of Monday for the same reason, and emphasizing that she had had no idea of this particular practice. I believed her as in her home country of Kuwait, a desert culture, there would probably be little reason for daylight savings time. I wrote back not to worry - but to remember we would go through this same business again in the spring, when the clocks went forward as we went back onto daylight savings time. This incident highlighted for me how some of our practices, which we take for granted (although may still be confused by as native Californians make similar mistakes with daylight savings time) can really confound the newcomer.

WHAT CULTURAL PRACTICES SHOULD STUDENTS BE TAUGHT?

There are many, but some that may be particularly troublesome, given their uniqueness to our culture, follow.

1 DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME

This seems like a universal practice to most Americans, of setting the clocks back in the fall and forward

in the spring. In fact, it isn't—some places even in the United States don't have it and remain on standard time all year round. Teaching this practice to students is one thing to help them cope in their new environment. Most electronic devices update automatically to the local time, so thankfully students are able to check their computers or phones for the correct time.

2 THE POTLUCK, THE OFFICE PARTY, AND OTHER “CASUAL” CELEBRATIONS

These type of casual celebrations, in which the attendees are typically expected to bring a dish to share, are in some ways uniquely American—the name “potluck,” for bringing a dish to share, is even a Native American word. These kinds of celebrations, especially the office party, can sometimes be fraught with difficulty even for Americans because although they are officially recreational and informal, they are often actually part of work and work protocol applies.

3 VISITING FRIENDS: CALL FIRST

Americans are capable of strong friendship bonds, but the portrayal of those bonds tend to be exaggerated on TV and the movies. Americans also value independence, and beyond college, constant calls and visits to friends might be considered intrusive. Calling first and respect of privacy and independence is expected.

4 AUTHORITY FIGURES AND HOW TO TREAT THEM

Who is an authority figure in our culture and how she should be treated is problematic even to many Americans, who historically have had an uneasy relationship with authority. For example, Americans are divided on whether teachers should be considered authority figures, or politicians, or even the police. This leads into questions about what makes an authority figure: power? Exemplary behavior? There

is no one agreed-upon answer. It is probably safest to error on the side of treating those in authority, particularly if they have power over you, too politely rather than not enough.

5 THE NEIGHBORS

Americans frequently move and therefore might not develop deep relationships with neighbors. It's not uncommon to live near someone for years and not develop anything beyond a superficial relationship, particularly since most of us don't live in traditional or cultural neighborhoods and often have little in common with the neighbors.

TEACHING CULTURE PRACTICE

1 THE LECTURE

Some of this information which is factual, such as daylight savings time, can be imparted in a brief lecture, handout, and demonstration of setting your watch back, for example. This is information that is not arguable, so prolonged discussion isn't necessary.

2 THE DISCUSSION

Some of this information makes for great discussion material—such as who an authority figure is, or the relationship people have with their neighbors and friends here and in students' home countries. Sometimes students have great insights, such as the American habit of telling a new neighbor, “Well, call if you need anything,” is not necessarily to be taken literally.

3 THE CASE STUDY

Showing students fictional characters in particular situations, such as a conflict with their boss or in an awkward interaction at the office gives students the opportunity to discuss what the character did right and wrong.

4 TV SHOWS

TV shows, like “The Office,” although exaggerated for comic effects, give students an opportunity to learn about and discuss some of the unique features of American life: work life, in this case, such as the episode where the office workers are more or less coerced into participating in a charity marathon to gain favor with their boss. This makes for a good discussion on the appropriate and inappropriate uses of power and what one should or shouldn’t do just because the boss tells you.

5 THE ROLEPLAY

Have a little “office party” or neighborhood potluck in class, have everyone bring a dish, and roleplay the kind of conversation that occurs at these events.

TEACHING CULTURAL PRACTICES CAN BE DIFFICULT BECAUSE THEY ARE SO MUCH A PART OF THE CULTURE THAT WE CONSIDER THEM ALMOST “NATURAL”—I DIDN’T EVEN REALLY THINK ABOUT THE MEANING OF POTLUCKS UNTIL A STUDENT ASKED ABOUT IT.

It is in these “natural” parts of the culture that students might need most help in.

The College Application Process and Your ESL Students

MOST INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS WHO TRAVEL OVERSEAS TO STUDY ENGLISH GENERALLY HAVE ONE OF TWO PURPOSES. They hope to use English in either their careers or to further their educations. Those who learn English for their academic futures often attend language programs or take pre-collegiate level English courses before applying to higher educational institutions. For that reason, using the college application process as content for your English classes just might be a natural fit: it gives your students practical experience with language and the application process as well. If you have students who may be applying to college in the near future, here are some ways you can get them ready to apply to school as they apply their English language skill in the classroom.

THE COLLEGE APPLICATION PROCESS AND YOUR ESL STUDENTS

1 CHOOSING A COLLEGE

Choosing a college or a few colleges is the first step in the college application process. If a student knows what she intends to study, she may be able to find an educational institution that fits well with her academic goals. Many students, though, do not know what they intend to study. For those students, other factors like size, location and price may be the deciding factor when choosing a university. Before your students choose one or more schools for their applications, have them work with a partner to determine what criteria they will use when choosing a school to attend. Explain that the word criteria refers to the items or issues a person considers when making a decision. Encourage each of your students to have five criteria for choosing the right college (size, location, courses of study, cost, etc.). Then, have them rank those criteria in order of importance. Remind your class that each person will have a unique set of criteria for choosing the right college based on her individual needs, and that criteria for colleges should be unique to each individual though there

may be some commonalities among your students.

Now that your students know what they are looking for, it is time to start looking for schools. Using a web site like College Navigator (<http://1.usa.gov/qRO2D>) can be of great assistance in finding the right schools to look at. By answering a few simple questions, each person can generate a list of schools that meet some if not all of their criteria for the right school. Now your students will have to read for detail about each school to determine which, if any, meet all of their criteria. Simply click on one of the schools that came up in your search and read more about it. Encourage your students to narrow their list based on their criteria. Once each person has no more than three schools on her list, have her work with a partner to explain why she chose the schools that she did for her applications.

2 FILLING OUT THE APPLICATION

Now that your students know the schools to which they want to apply, it is time to look at the application itself. By the time they are applying for colleges, your students should have the basic literacy skills to fill out a form that asks for general information. Along with that information, though, most schools will require one or more essays. Many of these essays focus on topics such as why this school you want to attend or what you intend to do with your future. Have groups of around four or five students work together to list all the different topics on which their potential schools are asking for essays. Challenge groups to notice any topics that more than one school ask for. Then have the groups strategize how they might go about answering each of the essay questions. This may be a good time to review the different organizational strategies a writer can use in an academic essay. Ask each group to choose two of the questions and write a brief outline explaining how they would answer the questions. If you like, ask each student to write an essay that answers one of

the questions from a school she has chosen.

3 INTERVIEWING

Many students find that the college interview is the first interview they have experienced. For students who speak English as a second language, the interview can be even more intimidating than it is for a native speaker. Giving those students a chance to practice what they might say during an interview will help them feel more at ease so as not to hinder their fluency when it is time for the interview that counts. Pair students together and then give them this list of twelve questions (bit.ly/8lifU7) to be ready for on a college interview. Each question offers suggestions on what to say and what not to say, so encourage your students to think about how they might answer each question. Then have each pair role play a mock interview, one person selecting three or four of the questions and having the other person answer. Then switch roles for the second interview. If possible, you may want to have another student listen in on the interview and make notes about any grammatical or content issues for each speaker.

ONCE YOUR STUDENTS FEEL COMFORTABLE WITH THE SCHOOLS THEY HAVE CHOSEN, FILLING OUT THE APPLICATION, WRITING THE ESSAY, AND DOING THE INTERVIEW, THEY ARE READY TO TACKLE THE COLLEGE APPLICATION PROCESS IN EARNEST.

Encourage each person to choose at least three schools for their applications – a school that will definitely take them (a safe school), a school that will probably take them, and a school that may not take them (a reach school). Since many colleges no longer require application fees due to online applications, your students have nothing to lose by keeping their options open and applying to several schools. You can support your students by offering to read any essays and give feedback before they submit it to their schools. If you like, you can celebrate their accomplishments by watching one of the many college themed movies available today.

Don't Address the Teacher as "Yo, Dude": Teaching Register

Once on the first or second day of class, a young man—nice, polite, first-generation American—in trying to get my attention, called out, “Yo, Dude!” and then was confused when he was met with shocked laughter from the rest of the students. This highlights a problem with students like this one who have ESL background but are otherwise acculturated Americans and may very well consider English their primary language. These students are sometimes called “Generation 1.5,” because they are between cultures. They have fluency in spoken English but may be somewhat uncertain about the use of register, or situational variety of language. “Yo, Dude” is okay for the dorm, not okay for the classroom. Immigrant students might also have the problem of using too formal a register for the situation: “Pardon me, miss, may I introduce myself?” at a fraternity party, for example. A native speaker of English would realize the inappropriateness of this, but those more new to the language, or who did not speak it in their homes, may be more uncertain about which forms are appropriate in which situations. In extreme situations, this uncertainty can lead to conflict when the listener, seeing only that the speaker appears to be fluent in English, assumes he is being deliberately rude when he misuses register.

SO HOW CAN REGISTER BE TAUGHT?

1

First raise awareness on register. Define it as situationally appropriate language. Give examples of it: “Yo, Dude” is okay for the dorms, but how do we say this in an academic setting? How about “Excuse me, Professor?” Often students are resistant to this notion, that the words that come out of their mouths actually matter, that people judge them based on those words, and that varying your language according to the context is not being inauthentic or phony. Students should be gently reminded that what we say, and how we say it, actually counts and can affect us and others.

2

Often a reading on the topic of register is a good way to proceed. Amy Tan’s “My Mother’s English,” about her

Chinese-born mother’s learner English and how it affects both the mother and daughter is very powerful. For example, Tan recounts an incident she describes as typical in which she had to pretend to be her mother in a phone conversation with the mother’s stockbroker because Mrs. Tan, the mother, had learned through painful experience that her English, while strong enough to communicate meaning, was somehow not “good” enough for situations like talking with a stock broker, and people didn’t take her seriously. This raises awareness of the fact that register exists in language and does make a difference.

3

Continue identifying register over the semester. After engaging in a new reading, ask students if the writing is more conversational or academic. Why do they think so? Identify the features of academic language, such as longer, more complex sentences and multisyllabic words, often of Latin origin, conversational English tends to have shorter words Anglo-Saxon in origin.

4

Identify different varieties of registers and their use as they come up. For example, is there such a thing as a ‘business’ register? What are its features? When might it be useful? People often complain about not understanding their doctors: this is in part because, while speaking English, doctors often use a medical register that is challenging for people outside the field to understand. For example, patients might be described by doctors as “nonambulatory” rather than “can’t walk,” “noncompliant” rather than “won’t follow directions,” and “morbidly obese” instead of “fat to the point of possible death.” All of these terms from the medical register have Latin roots, as does much of the academic, nonconversational register in general because when Rome conquered England it left its language on most of the institutions of higher learning.

5

Have students practice using a different variety of English than the usually use, like writing a letter of complaint to a

company in their “usual” more conversational English and then in precise business English. Will the letters get different results? In what way? Which would they, as readers or recipients of the letters be more likely to respond to favorably and why?

6

Have students work on register in their own writing. Have them take a writing they’ve completed and examine it. Are there features of conversational English in it? A lot? How could they revise using more academic language?

7

Notice use of register out in the world. Notice the different registers people speak with. Read the letters to the editor in that day’s paper, listen to a radio broadcast, watch people in conversation at Starbucks. What register are they using? What features identify it as that register? Why do you think the speakers chose that register? Assign students to just notice register like this over a weekend and come in to discuss a couple of examples that struck them.

8

Role play. Have students practice asking for the same thing - money, for example—in different situations. How would the register vary if you were asking your mother? Your best friend? Your boss? A government agency?

9

Practice using different registers in social settings. Once students have noticed register in a number of situations and role played it in class, it’s time to try it out in the world. Encourage students to have short conversations in such settings as the park, a coffee shop, and an office. Have them come back and tell their class about it.

REGISTER CAN BE DIFFICULT TO DEFINE AND EXEMPLIFY, BUT IT DOES EXIST. All languages have register, the variety of language used in specific situations. Understanding how to use register appropriately can help students in their adjustment to a new culture.

Where To From Here? Teaching the Advanced ESL Student

CONGRATULATIONS! YOU'VE BEEN ASSIGNED YOUR FIRST ADVANCED CLASS, SOMETHING YOU'VE WANTED TO TRY FOR A LONG TIME. AND YOU'VE HAD YOUR FIRST CLASS SESSION. STUDENTS WERE BRIGHT, ENGAGING, AND PARTICIPATED ENTHUSIASTICALLY. THEIR ENGLISH IS STRONG AND CONFIDENT. SO WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

Well, their English is so good—fluent, correct, even precise—that you aren't quite sure what to teach them! You suspect that many of them know English as well as you. That might actually be true in some areas for some students—having formally studied English for many years, they might have a more precise understanding of grammar, for example, than the teacher, who relies more on native-speaker intuition—but there are still some things that most advanced students can learn in an ESL class.

HOWTO: TEACHING THE ADVANCED ESL STUDENT

1 PRONUNCIATION / ACCENT REDUCTION

Even fluent ESL students can usually use some work on their pronunciation. Have students do individual diagnostics by reading a passage while being taped. In this way, you can find common as well as individual concerns for the whole class. Focus on larger issues that might impede comprehensibility, such as faulty intonation patterns (such as failing to use rising intonation for questions) and stress (failing to reduce structure words and giving all words the same stress in a sentence). These are usually of more concern than relatively minor issues of individual speech sounds.

2 WRITING AND COMPOSITION SKILLS

Focus on writing beyond the college essay, which the students may have been studying for years. Instead find

out what careers students would like to hold after school, and focus on some of the writing they are likely to encounter in the workplace: memos, reports, analyses, and recommendations.

3 GRAMMAR, EDITING, AND PROOFREADING

As with pronunciation, even fluent ESL students will differ from native speakers in issues of grammar and editing. Have students start a portfolio, analyze their own writing in terms of the corrections you make, and from this they can create an inventory of their personal trouble spots, which may include word endings, such as “-s” and “-ed.” Have students then get into the habit of trading papers with a peer and proofing for these errors or make two or three passes looking for the problem areas in their papers before handing them in.

4 READING, INFERENCES, AND ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

Advanced ESL students often have good reading comprehension skills, especially at the surface level, but what they often lack, however, is understanding inferences or the underlying meanings. These underlying meanings are critical to comprehension as a whole.

For example, a story I like to teach for inferences is “Reunion,” by John Cheever, a story of no more than several pages in which a boy calls his estranged father and asks to meet him at Grand Central Station for lunch as he's heading home, to his mother's, for summer break. The father meets him at the station, proceeds to take him to several restaurants where he gets into arguments at each with the staff and gets kicked out - they return to the station so the boy can catch his train, the father now in tears. The boy vows never to see his father again as he boards the train. ESL students are invariably confused by the story

and why the father acts as he does, while adult native speakers are usually aware of a number of implications: the father is drunk, was drunk when he met his son, gets more so as the afternoon wears on, he is an alcoholic, in fact, and the story makes a powerful statement on how substance abuse can destroy families.

Giving students a reading like this and discussing it—why is the father acting this way? Why does he keep going from restaurant to restaurant? — can help students spot these unstated suppositions and develop their inferential reading skills.

5 ACADEMIC LISTENING AND NOTETAKING

Even native speakers can struggle with academic listening and notetaking skills and must be trained in them. There are textbooks that build exercises around lectures from places like NPR, National Public Radio, on topics such as the ethics of stem cell research. I don't advocate necessarily using such a text as the core text—few texts at this level can meet that role—but a chapter every week or two is a good supplement to the class. Or the instructor could also download a lecture from the web and develop her own exercises.

6 STUDY OF IDIOMATIC LANGUAGE

Even advanced ESL students can use some work on idiomatic language. This doesn't mean the relatively rare “colorful” language such as “raining cats and dogs,” but the way that words tend to combine: “process cultivated over time,” “ongoing awareness,” and “insightful change of behavior” all occurred in one paragraph of an academic text opened at random. The class can spend some time each session or each week going over the idiomatic language that occurs in course reading.

7 FINE TUNING OF CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

Often ESL students need to develop their understanding of the everyday life and behavior of their new culture, often having lived here a short time and learned English somewhere else. Again, by “culture,” I don’t necessarily mean the big celebrations, like Thanksgiving, which students generally do learn about, but the everyday patterns of behavior that are so “minor” that they can go unnoticed. A Chinese student once expressed surprise, for example, that Americans, when exiting a building, generally turn back to see if anyone is behind and will hold the door if so. Similarly, recently a German student told me how shocked her husband was when, at a working lunch, an American colleague rose, went to the buffet table, came back with a plate of food, and continued with the meeting while eating. These behaviors may seem “natural” to most Americans (indeed, I am typing this article in a cafe, with a plate of food), and not worth discussing, but because people from other cultures are surprised by the behaviors, they are not “natural” but cultural. It is for this reason that novel habits students notice in their new countries should be discussion and writing topics.

8 HISTORY OF THEIR NEW NATION

Americans are notorious for their lack of understanding of their own history—fitting for a people obsessed with youth. But anyone who lives here should understand, for example, the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, the Civil Rights Movement and their long-term effects. Even relatively recent history, such as the Vietnam War, was a watershed event, creating a permanent distrust in leadership, among other effects. Without understanding the Vietnam War, it may be hard to understand contemporary American life.

9 FILMS AND BOOKS

Both film and books are ways to simultaneously develop language and cultural understanding. The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald, for example, is a powerful novel on the American experience and generally recognized as one of the great American novels. And it is also manageably short, at fewer than 200 pages.

A new movie version is currently being made, so studying the book and then the film could be a core learning experience.

10 RESUME AND JOB INTERVIEW PREPARATION

Finally, advanced ESL class is a great opportunity to work on resume and job interview skills. Some students are unfamiliar with the job hunt process, having come from cultures where people don’t compete for jobs as they do in the U.S. but rather are placed in them according to skill and education. Explaining the process, showing model resumes, and practicing interviews can be a big help to ESL students.

SO DOES THE ADVANCED ESL STUDENT HAVE ANYTHING LEFT TO LEARN? ABSOLUTELY! THERE’S ALWAYS MORE TO LEARN.

The key is to be selective and choose those topics most helpful to students in transitioning into university classes or the workplace. By focusing on improving pronunciation, reading, and writing skills and teaching students job search skills needed to move into the workplace, class days will be filled in no time.