



Teacher to Teacher

Our Major Concern

In one of the issues of our school magazine, *The Horizon*, we considered teaching English language as a big challenge that needed persistent effort and follow up. This challenge, in fact, has created a positive attitude towards holding this big responsibility and achieving our hopes and ambitions in the field of teaching English. Year after year, we are proving that English language is not a solid course or subject that learners usually avoid learning or accepting. Following a well-organized methodology and teaching techniques, we are moving forward aiming at attaining better achievements.

We still follow an integrated approach to all four language skills (reading, listening,

speaking and writing) in a carefully graded and well-organized syllabus combining functions, structures, vocabulary, pronunciation and communication skills. Vocabulary and grammar are systematically categorized and presented helping teachers to manage and organize their time efficiently. Communicative language teaching is viewed as a practical activity rather than a theoretical notion.

We strongly believe that our choice of the book or materials helps us develop our learners' levels and improve their fluency in using English as a communicative language in the school. For

this, our books in all cycles have been carefully selected to motivate learners and stimulate learning.

Our mission is not that easy, but it is not impossible to achieve progress and great results. The difficulty of this challenge and the burdens imposed on us won't let us give up. We will always look for better teaching styles and ways that help us in our teaching process taking into consideration our learners' needs and the new teaching strategies.

Our motto is still "Where there is a will, there is way."

Nizar Lutfi

Characteristics of Good English Teachers

English teachers are the key figures in the English learning process. Their influence is fundamental to their students' progress. To achieve the desired result in teaching English, teachers have to be aware of certain key points and possess specific qualities and skills:

- They must be familiar with a variety of teaching techniques in addition to having an adequate knowledge of the language.
- A positive attitude is essential. Teachers need to be confident that their students are capable of learning another language.
- English teachers need to educate and train themselves on how to design a lesson plan that is to suit the needs and abilities of their students.
- English teachers need to learn to be flexible. This is due to the fact that maintaining a flexible teaching method allows them to get used to the various learning styles in the English classroom.
- Teachers of English need to be aware of classroom management. Therefore, being able to handle and organize the classroom means a greater chance of success in implementing teaching plans.
- Another crucial characteristic is tolerance. Students need to feel that the classroom is a place where mistakes are tolerated. Students should not be upset by mistakes they make.
- Teachers of English should make it clear that each individual member of the class deserves attention regardless of his or her level of achievement. Students should be equal in the eyes of the teacher and receive an equal opportunity to participate and receive adequate feedback on their performance.

Noha Borhoot

Children with Learning Disabilities

Children with learning disabilities are easily gone unnoticed in our society. Parents that have a child with a learning disability aren't always aware of the problem or don't want to admit that their child has a problem. Often, they think that their child is either unintelligent or that the school is not doing its job properly. Having students with learning disabilities in a regular classroom can be very challenging for both the student and the teacher. The student feels like an outcast in the class environment because his classmates work

at a normal pace and level while he can't keep up. This student can usually function well on oral tasks, but when given a written task, especially if it is to be carried out independently, he will find difficulties.

Students with learning disabilities need to be worked with using a special curriculum that highlights their strengths and addresses their weaknesses. Most children with disabilities go on to finish in vocational institutes where there is less emphasis on written exams to com-

plete the course.

I believe that these children's disabilities should be diagnosed and then put in the correct learning environment. If our schools had the correct facilities and trained professionals, then we wouldn't face these problems in a normal classroom and the children with learning disabilities would be getting the proper education they deserve and need to be functional members in their lives and society.

Hajar Abou Zheenni

A Valuable Art

Listening involves paying attention to what we hear and making sense of it. Sometimes we think that we are listening carefully, but in fact, we usually grasp fifty percent of what we hear. After two days we can remember only half of what we heard. Students go through this process too. That's why listening has been called a lost art.

Educational systems consider listening as a vital skill because there is a strong correlation between listening and academic success. Students with high marks are usually with the highest listening skills. The reverse is also true.

As a result, our duty as teachers is not to force students to listen but to attract them through impressive ways in order to listen and to devise listening activities for them very carefully, a practice that is often neglected in many schools. It's our job to give value to this art. This is the reason why employers and employees, parents and children, wives and husbands, doctors and patients, students and teachers all depend on the apparently simple skill of listening.

Fatima Kaddoura

English Language Activities



Crafting Your Test

As teachers we are continuously assessing our students in a way or another. But, are we really fair with them? Not all teachers are aware of the right way to craft their assessment tool while there are those teachers who are truly competent in doing so. My purpose here is to shed some light onto some points teachers misunderstand or are not aware of in making their tests.

In designing our achievement tests, we should take into consideration that the test assesses what students have already learned showing consistent results. That gives validity to our tests.

Validity refers to the degree to which a test measures what it is supposed to measure in a specific area of knowledge. For example, a reading comprehension and vocabulary test is valid if it measures students' comprehension skills and not some other abilities.

According to the content, the test should emphasize what we have already

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taught. The test should be designed to cover the most possible amount of lessons required taking into consideration what has been highlighted in class. We are not in a position to challenge our students with new knowledge.

Another point that reflects validity is the integration and use of several thinking skills. The test should cover most of the levels of thinking according to Bloom's Taxonomy or Marzano's Instructional Strategies. Knowledge, comprehension application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and creation are all levels of

thinking that should be taught and modeled in class first, then assessed. It's also important that students exercise the type of thinking expected by the teacher. Teachers can ask students to model the way of thinking in assessing a question. In fact, making students aware of their thinking process helps them achieve better.

The test should be objectively graded depending on a clear answer key with a fair division of marks. It is not fair to neglect the entire question only because the final answer is not true.

Another sign of the presence of validity is being fair to different types of students starting from the way the test is crafted to accommodate all students' learning styles to the bias-free questions taking in consideration the cultures and backgrounds of students. I'll tell you of an experience I went through when I presumed that all students had background knowledge about caves. I asked them to write in their journals about a cave they had visited. I had answers like, "I have never visited one." So I had been unjust to some students.

Relating now to the efficiency of the assessment, the test should be easy to conduct and administrate. Students should be given enough time to answer all questions taking into consideration time needed for the students to accommodate with the new atmosphere. We are responsible for offering the adequate conditions for test-taking.

Finally, the test should be combined with other assessment results: projects, quizzes, and class work because it is unfair to judge the students' abilities and acquisition on a one

-shot test.

As a conclusion, teachers should be more aware of the crafting process while preparing their assessment tools. In fact, being aware of the students' needs and all the circumstances surrounding them is what helps teachers to assess the students with more validity and reliability.

Magda Saleh

Can a Kindergartener Speak English?

How can a 4 year-old understand and speak English? This was a question I asked myself and others often when I first began teaching. At first, I faced difficulties in communicating with children in a language that is totally foreign to them, but day after day, I discovered the amazing world of kids; I discovered that every child has the ability to learn a new language even though it is not an easy task. Using gestures is a successful way to help your student analyze what you are saying. For example, when you want to ask one to open the door, he'll find it hard unless you point to the door or you yourself open the door while verbally saying, "Open the door." Moreover, you have to make a motto for you as a teacher and for your class: Use only your English in English class.

Now, I have found the answer for my question. The best way to teach a student English is by modeling English in use.

Fatima Shahadi

Teacher to Teacher online

<http://www.geocities.com/amalatrifeed/teachertoteacher2.htm>

Visit the following blogs for discussions of educational issues and links to useful classroom activities :

<http://www.dianawl.blogspot.com/>

<http://amalenglish.blogspot.com/>

Teaching English as a Second Foreign Language

Teaching English as a second foreign language has been a challenging and rewarding experience for me. It was overwhelming and difficult at the beginning having to deal with students who have had no experience with the English language and to find the most appropriate methods to reach each one of them. The students coming from different educational and cultural backgrounds and going through variety of emotional states due to their relocation needed a great deal of understanding and support. This was most attainable through working in groups. So, the most successful adopted teaching strategies included cooperative learning activities which were performed with great student satisfaction.

Different group activities were adopted in class such as "Jigsaw", "Think-Pair-Share", or "Round Robin Brainstorming". Also group activities assigned to students and then acted out in class proved to be very successful like duet singing, debates, and acting out scenes from their stories.

Other activities could be explored and adopted in order to add interest to the learning process in which students as well as teachers would enjoy their work and achieve success.

Rajaa Ghotme

Speaking: An Efficient Way to Start Class

Throughout my teaching experience, I was mostly interested by one of the warm up activities- the speaking activity. I've found it able to stimulate the students' attention and get the whole class together and ready to go.

A speaking activity should be addressed to various students' thinking capabilities. A teacher should encourage students to speak freely without any barriers. The presence of barriers (such as the language barrier) and freedom make students less excited and more reluctant to participate.

Giving each student the freedom to choose a topic to talk about, automatically implies communication among students of the same age and same thought processes. That allows students to be aware of the shared and unshared feelings between him/ her and other classmates.

Seeing students stirring up conversations among each other is enough to create a feeling of connection, which will lead on during the whole class period.

Hind Hammoudi

Bringing Real Life into Classroom

I'm a big advocate of bringing real life experiences of students to the classroom. I got the idea from a student when we were discussing writing about "the advantages and disadvantages of the internet", and some students started criticizing several websites and encouraging others. I got the students to work as a group and start a campaign in which they pinpoint the drawbacks of several "misused" websites and highlight their consequences on the younger generation.

Bringing real life to the classroom has a good benefit in that it makes students get more involved in assignments by encouraging them to take their skills and enthusiasm out to the wider community. Students are encouraged to present materials such as brochures, survey results, observations reports, research outcomes through which they mingle with a variety of thinking minds.

Such, as well as other projects are necessary for several reasons:

- They benefit the students in proving the value of reading and applying it to the writing skill.
- They provide the students a chance to engage in the process of developing the community they live in.
- They enable students not only to be integrated into the wider community, but also to interact more with students from other social backgrounds.
- The students will interact with each other using the target language which is English.

Bringing real life experiences to the classroom adjusts well with other subjects besides English like math, science, or social studies. Students can make projects, act on stage, carry out researches and questionnaires, read to older people, and perform campaigns and presentations through group work and all this using the English language. Students will be encouraged to create and simulate situations of real life experiences inside their classrooms and transport their experiences to the community at large. This helps them prepare for the work world.

Randa Hatoum