

ESPERANZA CENTER

CATHOLIC CHARITIES IN ACTION

Tips for New Teachers of ESL

Prepared by
UMBC Students

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USEFUL TIPS FOR TEACHING ESL

- **Get to know the student first**—It doesn't have to just be his/her level of education or experience, but getting some insight on his/her personality will help you see how they learn.
- **Don't be afraid of the basics**—If a student is struggling, it might be best to review simple and beginning concepts again like the alphabet, phonetics and numbers. These are the building blocks of English and will help his/her speaking.
- **Listen to what they want**—Some students may not be interested in a particular lesson, so that's a good time to ask them what is it they want out of the ESL experience. Sometimes the time can be used to practice conversation.
- **Reading and Writing practice**—Some students might not have any or limited experience with reading and writing, even in his/her own language and this is usually a good area for improvement.
- **When in doubt; consult the dictionary**—If you're having problems understanding your student or vice versa, it might be a good idea to consult a dictionary and see if you can find the words you're looking for in there.
- **Learn a little bit of their language**—Even just a few words may go along way and it's great to build a connection with your student when you have a little knowledge of his/her language and culture.
- **ESL is a process**—Your student may not understand right away and you may not be very confident with teaching at first. The important thing is to put in effort and engage the student and things will get better over time as you become more comfortable and efficient.

USEFUL TIPS FOR TEACHING ESL

- **Remember the level of English will vary**—You might not be able to talk to one student as fast as another or as you would with a native English speaker. Slow down and be concise and even use smaller words to maximize understanding.
- **You're not teaching children**—Many of the students are around 18 or older. Treat them as such. While children's books and word games might be helpful, you also have to respect that your student may feel patronized or uncomfortable with the materials.
- **Mix things up**—Doing the same thing for two hours or never leaving the book can be boring for both you and your student. Keep the activities varied and re-view what you've gone over and don't be afraid to take small breaks to refresh yourselves throughout the lesson.
- **Don't correct every little mistake**—The point of ESL is to delve into the language and mistakes will happen. Look for patterns in your students' grammar and pronunciation mistakes and address them as a whole so it doesn't feel like you're attacking every other word he/she says.
- **Attitudes are contagious**—It's your job as the teacher to help promote the positive environment of the classroom. If you're being negative, that may rub off on your student and lower his/her motivation and enthusiasm. Remembering you're here to do a job and they're here to learn, so try to leave personal problems at the door and stay positive.

TEACHING PRONUNCIATION

Pronunciation

How:

1. Say the word in a normal way to students; Then get the student to repeat it after you until they are able to at least have somewhat of a clear pronunciation of the word.
2. After going over pronunciation the word with the student, repeat the word and have them try pronouncing the words by themselves .
3. If the student still has trouble with pronunciation, you may write words using the phonetic alphabet .

Why:

1. It is important that the student become more understandable and comfortable when speaking, especially with words that are new to them.
2. Working with pronunciation can help fill time in a lesson, especially when your limited or run out of material.

Recommendation (by TEFL.net)

If you're planning to do some syllable work or stress placement or use the phonetic alphabet it's a good idea to write the words, syllables, stress and phonetic spelling down before the lesson because, I don't know about you, but I find it hard to do it spontaneously during the lesson! For some reason I get muddled and write the stress on the wrong syllable etc.

If you want to do some stress placement work but you don't know which syllable is stressed, look in a dictionary, especially one for students - it will have the stress indicated, usually by an apostrophe thingy. The syllable after the apostrophe thingy is the stressed one, usually.

For example: be'fore 'after com'puter after'noon

AVOID TRANSLATING

Avoid Translating

How to avoid translating

1. Refuse to give translations for new vocabulary or words the student may be unfamiliar with on the first read.
2. Act as if you don't speak the students language
3. Encourage the students to take a guess at the meanings of words they do not know or are unfamiliar with. — Make use of diction tools such as the dictionary.

Why you should avoid Translating:

1. You want to get a clear understanding that the student understands the word (s) that have been translated. If student's translate words and you are not fluent in / or speak their language you would not understand if they have translated the word (s) correctly.
2. Sometimes, there are words/phrases that may only have an "equivalent" for , or in some cases there may not even be a direct translation for a word or phrase. - Translating modal verbs are easier to help comprehend words and or phrases . (can/could, may/might, must, will/would, should etc.) Remember that some words may not an exact equivalent, especially words that are traditional and specific in certain countries
3. An example used by (Teflnet 1998): Translating some things word for word doesn't help. For example: My mother -in-law once told me that my husband is a "pezzo di pane" which translates as "a piece of bread". I was none the wiser for having translated this. Did it mean he was soft, I asked myself? Or stale? (It actually means he's a good sort, apparently.) -
4. Taking time trying to translate words as such slows students down, running the risk of getting bogged down in pursuit of a word which is not English.

ENCOURAGE ATTEMPTS

Encourage taking educated guesses when working with exercises that may require a direct answer

How:

1. In cases where there is a list of possible answers, encourage students to guess the answers (this can be done by eliminating options to choose from, usually breaking it down to an “either or” option—this gives the student an option a chance of being right)
2. Encourage the student to guess the meaning of a word from the context/subject/theme.

Example used by (Teflnet 1998): It rained yesterday when I was out but I hadn't got an _____ with me so I got wet.

In this example the context tells us that the missing word is probably going to be "**umbrella**".

3. Whether or not the student's answers correct or incorrectly, it is advised that you still give further explanation on why the answer or choice—Gives student further explanation and clearer understanding.

Why:

1. Sometimes a student can know the answer or have an understanding of what the answer is—they may have seen a word or phrase but not remember so sometimes encouraging a guess may also help you judge how the student comprehends the material.
2. Outside the classroom, students may be in situations where they may have to make educated guess.

INTERNET RESOURCES

For more tips and insight, check out these web-sources!

- <http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Andrews-Beginners.html>
- <http://busyteacher.org/6064-keep-your-cool-tips-handling-difficult-students.html>
- <http://busyteacher.org/6943-teachers-top-10-ways-to-motivate-students.html>
- <http://www.teachersfirst.com/content/esl/eslhintintro.cfm>
- <http://www.edutopia.org/blog/esl-ell-tips-ferlazzo-sypnieski>
- <http://www.edutopia.org/blog/getting-the-ESL-student-talking-marc-anderson>
- http://www.tefl.net/teaching/teaching-tip_12.htm