

SUCCESSFUL TEACHING TIPS

Glafira Espiritu Santo
C.E.L.E. U.N.A.M.

"Whoever dares to teach, should never cease to learn" are well known words that all teachers should always keep in mind, but I would add something else: he should never cease to look for new ways of carrying things out in the classroom, in order to have more interesting and creative classes which lead the students to active participation throughout the class. A motivated teacher motivates his students, and motivated students learn more. But, how to motivate our students? What to do to keep their attention and interest class without wasting our time in meaningless activities?

Nothing motivates the students more in a language class than to be able to say something in the target language. Remember that a silent student in the classroom is the one who has nothing to say or the one who doesn't know how to say what he wants to say. From the very beginning of the course we should teach our students "survival" phrases in English so they can ask for the name of different objects or they can request some information.

For example: How do you say "portafolio" in English?, Can you say that again?, What's the meaning of "board"? What does "boot" mean?, What's that?, What's this?, etc.

Another important element in motivating students is creating the appropriate atmosphere for the language class. It is essential to integrate the group from the first class through some group dynamics, that lead the students to learn each others names and something about each other, such as hobbies, likes and dislikes.

One of the main problems we have is the lack of time to give our students enough practice during the class. We must plan our classes carefully, in order to take the best advantage of our time in class. The moment we step into the classroom is the moment we should begin the class with an activity that helps the students to shift from their native language to the target language. Such activities are called "WARM-UPS".

A warm up then is an informal activity which comes at the beginning of the class and should be:

- brief (5 to 8 minutes)
- interesting
- integrative
- primarily an oral activity
- challenging
- based on familiar material

SUGGESTIONS FOR WARM-UPS

1. GUESS WHAT? (vocabulary items)

Level: Any level

Aids: a box or a paper bag and some objects.

2. GUESS WHO? (adjectives and vocabulary items)

Level: Any level

Aids: pictures of famous people (the teacher tells the students to make questions)

3. TELEPHONE NUMBERS (numbers, possessive adjectives and pronouns)

Level: beginners and intermediate.

Aids: a piece of paper with telephone numbers on it. (Students try to guess: Is it a key? Is it a pen? Is it a piece of candy?, etc.)

4. TIC TAC TOE (GATO). (Prepositions, frequency words, adjectives, verb tenses or any vocabulary items)

Level: Any level

Aids: blackboard and a piece of chalk. (The teacher draws the square, divides it into nine parts, and in each one he writes the words to be reviewed.)

5. WHAT DO YOU LIKE AND DISLIKE? (verbs and gerunds, and the use of but)

Level: Any level

Aids: Lists of nouns and gerunds on the board so the students can use them as cues for the exercise. (Teacher writes on the board: I like singing but I don't like dancing. Students give similar sentences).

6. THE SUPERMARKET (vocabulary items and the phrases to ask for things)

Level: beginners or intermediate.

Aids: cut-outs of the vocabulary items to be reviewed. (The teacher sticks the cut-outs on the board. One student sells them and the rest are customers).

7. WHERE IS THE LION/CAT/BIRD, ETC.? (prepositions of place)

Level: beginners.

Aids: a cage for any animal and the animal separatedly. (The teacher hides the cage and animal and asks: Where's the lion? Students try to guess: Is it in the cage? No, it isn't. It's behind the cage, look, etc.)

8. BUILDING UP A STORY (vocabulary items and structures in general according to the level of students)

Level: Any level

Aids: none.

9. WORD COMPLETION (vocabulary items)

Level: Any level

Aids: Two lists of incomplete words on the board.

Example: (clothing items)

S --- t
S --- t

S --- t
S --- t

(suit - belt)

(skirt - shirt)

10. I WISH I HAD (vocabulary items)

Level: Any level

Aids: lists of word-families on the board. (The teacher writes on the board -- I wish I had a yellow sweater. Students give their own sentences.)

11. DRAWING A PICTURE (vocabulary items)

Level: Any level

Aids: blackboard and a piece of chalk. (The teacher divides the group and board into two parts. Each team tells the other what is in the other team's picture. Students draw the objects (five) and then they tell a story using these objects. The best (story wins).

12. FAMOUS DATES (dates and past tense of the verbs)

Level: intermediate.

Aids: A list of dates and cue words for an important event or happening on the board. (The teacher writes on the board any famous date and the students give their own dates. Example: In 1968 Mexico was the site of the Olympic games, etc.)

13. THE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION (nationalities, countries and greetings)

Level: Any level

Aids: A list of countries and the corresponding nationalities on the board. (The teacher writes on the board Italy-Italian, Canada-Canadian, etc. Students say I am from Canada, I'm Canadian, etc.)

14. I WISH I COULD (vocabulary items) (memory span) (activities)

Level: Any level

Aids: A list of activities on the board. Teacher writes on the board: I wish I could dance well. Students give their own sentences.

15. THE INTERNATIONAL OPERATOR (numbers, and phrases like: Can I help you? Yes, please. I want to place a telephone call to New York. What's your phone number?)

Level: Any level

Aids: None. (Two students come to the front and they sit back to back. One is the international operator and the other wants to place a telephone call. Example: Ring... ring...ring...)

Operator: Can I help you?

Student: Yes, please. I want to place a telephone call to Mérida.

I want to place a person to person call to New York.

I want to place a collect call to Los Angeles.

Operator: What number do you want?

Student: 212-836-1725, etc.