



ESL TEACHING AND ACTIVITIES SUGGESTIONS

A warmer

A 'warmer' is an informal activity done at the start of a session that helps both students and tutors to clear the mind of unrelated things and focus. For example, Davina got us to question other tutors about the places they had travelled to, and then report back to the group.

With the students, this could be a simple questioning activity about their school, sport, family, music or whatever interests them (allow them to question each other and you, too, and not just answer your questions). It could even be a song or a story that they like. The idea is that this will help establish a routine, get them 'thinking in English' and settle them down a little before the more 'structured' work begins.

Activities

Davina explained how groundwork for learning that was laid for most of us at kindergarten and in the early years at school has been missed by these students, many of who have grown up without any formal education. As such, the development of their gross and fine motor skills has suffered, and she recommended some activities that we can do with them in addition to their formal work (or as a part of it, even with the older ones) to help improve on this.

- * Puzzles quoits
- * lift-the-flap books building blocks
- * painting skipping
- * pasting stacking things
- * cutting out weaving
- * stringing beads mazes
- * screwing and unscrewing jar lids catch and throw
- * hopscotch buttons

Also - songs and games with actions are good - like Simon Says, Head Shoulders Knees and Toes, What's the time Mr Wolf, Open Shut Them, Incy Wincy Spider, Twinkle Twinkle.

It is also a good idea to use thick crayons or textas for writing, even for older students, as many find writing with a thin pencil difficult.

At the risk of sounding ridiculous, watching an episode of playschool can be a really good way of getting some ideas, particularly for songs!

Correction

Everyone agreed that it was hard to know how often to correct the students - do you correct every single mistake they make? Do you correct mistakes in their speech or just their written work? We discussed the fact that speaking a language relates so much to ego and confidence, as it affects how you present yourself and how you are seen by others, and we need to be careful not to damage the students confidence by pulling them up on every single mistake.

On the other hand, some corrections need to be made in order that they learn to speak English well. We agreed that a good way to correct the student's oral English is by 'modeling', demonstrating the correct version of what they say as a part of conversation, eg:

Student: *Yesterday, I goed to the park.*

Tutor: *Oh, you went to the park? What did you do there?*

A few people said that they tended to correct mistakes in the written English more than the spoken, and Davina agreed that this allowed them an opportunity to speak without hesitation, while they can still learn the correct grammar and syntax through the writing.

Praise

Davina stressed the idea that you CANNOT over praise these students in their learning, and suggested the idea that for every criticism you should give two compliments.

Pronunciation

Everyone has noticed that the students mix up their 'ch' and 'sh' sounds, as these letters are pronounced oppositely in their languages. Also, the vowel sounds are very difficult to master, which led to a long discussion on the various inconsistencies of English and how impossible it is to learn!

A few suggestions for helping them learn how to pronounce and spell words correctly included:

- * reading to them a lot,
- * getting them to read to you
- * making lists or sheets of words that share the same phonics eg. all these are 'ate' words - late, gate, hate.
- * lists of sounds, eg. all these letters can make the sound 'or' (as in you 'or' me) - or, aw, oa, our, ore.
- * Even lists or activities based around 'blends' of more than one consonant - like br, pl, dr, ck etc.

Student's behaviour

In terms of encouraging good behaviour, again, says Davina, we can't praise enough! We can also encourage them to take pride in their work by keep pencils sharp, their books neat, and getting them to help you pack up etc. Davina pointed out that the students are looking as to us what behaviour is or isn't acceptable. You need to set the limits so that the students know whether or not what they are doing is right or wrong.

Sudanese Australian Integrated Learning (SAIL) Program

Tutor Resources

SAIL # 10

To settle a student down, you might need to go for a walk for 5 minutes, or make sure you study away from another student they clash with. If a student is being particularly disruptive, you might need to agree on a list of rules between the two of you, or a reward system. For any serious trouble, grab a coordinator.

What is most important, she says, is that the students know that for an hour each week they have someone's full attention. This is a big deal given that family life is fairly chaotic, and even better that the attention you give them is in English!