

Useful classroom techniques

Designate something that signifies that you want their attention/quiet. This may be a little bell, teaching them a chant, (Teacher says 1, 2, 3, eyes on me children reply, 1, 2, eyes on you,) a special action such as a clapping rhythm, a song with actions that always starts the lesson. Create the expectation that the students must listen to you.

Keep on the move in the room. Do not just stand at the front of the room.

Use eye contact and praise – all children respond to praise. Simple smiley faces on the blackboard or on their worksheets can be as effective as stickers and other rewards.

Vary the activities during the lesson. Vary between energetic exercises that “stir” the children up and quieter exercises that settle them.

Ensure writing on charts, flash cards, black board etc are big enough to be read at the back of the room.

Use ‘real’ resources when ever possible.

Use activities that do not require students to always remain seated at their desk – though bear in mind that some classrooms are very cramped so do not necessarily much space for students to move around in. Even something where they get to stand up, sit down, move their arms and legs around (etc.) in their own desk space is better than sitting still. Note: one volunteer found that students did not respond well to being asked to sit with someone they do not normally sit with!

Use small groups for activities rather than always whole class. Divide class into rows, groups, halves, pairs.....

Set some time aside each week to review what was learned in the previous week, even if the previous week was taught by a different teacher.

Don't forget to give the children a break after (maximum) 40 minutes. They will get tired and lose concentration otherwise – and may be too shy to ask if they can go to the bathroom!

Activities that stimulate learning

Role plays in pairs or small groups.

Vocabulary Learning

Use flashcards for new and review vocab; use real objects when possible.

Wordsearch and crosswords to reinforce vocab – but bear in mind that most children will not have done a crossword before so you will have to teach them how to do it. E.g. use the classroom set up to teach them the words for across and down.

Matching vocab to pictures.

Sentence making. List of words (e.g. vocab covered in that lesson or last week's lesson). Students must use them in a sentence.

Twenty Questions: think of an object / person and ask them to find out what it is by asking questions about it. But you are only allowed to answer yes or no. The objective is to find out what the object is in no more than 20 questions. You can demo this by getting them to think of an object first. Once done a couple of runs, can ask them to do it in groups. For higher grades only.

Pictionary: one person draws something and the others have to shout out what it is – in English only. Can do it in groups – one from each group comes to teacher for the word they have to draw, then go back to their groups to draw it – competitive – can see which group gets it first.

Charades: similar but must act the word.

Hangman: Think of a word/phrase that you want the children to guess. Put the same number of letters in the word as dashes on the board ----- and then ask the students to start guessing letters. For each wrong guess, the hangman gets slowly drawn.

Who/What Am I?: Write/Give descriptive clues, eg; I have 4 legs. I can be found in a classroom. You can sit on me. I am a ?

Matching Pairs: Card Game can be played in groups of 2 – 5 people. Pictures and words for younger students. Words only for older grades

Number Learning

Phone numbers – call out number. Students write them down. This can be done effectively as a team game with one person from each team coming to the board to see who can write the number fastest.

Number bingo (or picture bingo)

Beetle – designate a number to the body part. When they throw (dice) that number can draw the body part.

Card Games – snap

Guess the number Ask questions that require higher/lower answer

General Games/Activities that can be adapted to other subject matter

1. Example: Animals.

List some characteristics of animals (e.g. size, habitat, dangerous?, number of legs, etc). You can ask students to give all the animals they know that are big then all the ones they know that are small. Then do the same for the other characteristics (incidentally you will get a lot of animals if you do this!).

Once you have the list of animals, and have reviewed it to make sure all the students are familiar with the words, you can wipe of the board and write up a matrix. In the left hand column you can put an animal and the other column contain all the characteristics. Students can then fill in each of the columns of the other animals. (e.g. Animal = Lion, What size is it? = big, Where does it live? = Jungle, Is it dangerous? Yes, How many legs? 4, etc. Do this for a few animals - maybe ten or so.

Think of an animal and ask students to discover the animal by asking questions (Where does it live? Is it dangerous?, etc. You can then get some students to think of the animal and answer questions.

Wipe of the board so students can no longer see the matrix and continue with the existing 10 animals.

Expand the exercise to include any animal

This exercise is great because it gets students to move from characteristics to animals and then back in the other direction. It incorporates question asking and answering in a meaningful and fun context. It generates lots of linkages between words (names of animals to different characteristics, etc) and so makes learning of vocabulary more effective. It also helps students to think analytically about asking for information for others. Better still the kids love it and it can be adapted to almost any subject matter.

2. Building a picture

Set a simple scene on the blackboard (e.g., sun, waves, boat on sea). Select a child and indicate that they can draw something else on the picture. Show them a sign for their picture to show you've understood what it is. Get other children to come up one by one to add other items to picture.

When you have enough pictures, stop and teach the children a sign for each of the pictures. Point to the pictures and get them to repeat the signs. Then tell them what each item is called and get them to repeat the word. Do a drill on the words. (Using a simple rhythm will help them remember). Drill line by line, or boys and girls, etc. Get them to associate the word with both the picture and the sign for the picture.

Get them to play the game in pairs, one does the sign, the other says the word.

Finally, get them to practice a sentence that they already know (e.g. "do you like X?") with the new vocabulary they have learnt.

Music

Songs: Children enjoy singing and remember vocabulary quickly when learnt through songs.

If there is some background to the song, try to engage the students in that. For example, we did "Singing in the Rain" in our last class on weather. After going through the song a couple of times and making sure people understand the lyrics, you can ask questions: Why is this guy singing in the rain? Does he like rain? Is he mad? Happy? If it is because he is happy, why might he be happy? This gives a bit more depth to the song and maybe works as an empathetic exercise.

Action Songs: reinforces vocabulary and understanding and are fun.

Raps (for those who aren't comfortable with singing!): Make these up to suit the topic



For all-around ESL resources:

<http://www.daveseslcafe.com/>

<http://www.eslteachersboard.com>

For Games:

<http://games.englishclub.com/>

<http://www.manythings.org/>

<http://www.teflgames.com/games.html>

<http://members.aol.com/Jakajk/ESLLessons.html>

<http://www.quia.com/dir/esl/>

<http://iteslj.org/links/ESL/Games/>

<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Delphi/1979/games.html>

<http://www.freeenglish.com/>

<http://www.genkienglish.net/gamemenu.htm>

<http://www.rong-chang.com/game.htm>

<http://www.onestopenglish.com/Games/>

K-12 Games:

<http://www.stoughton.k12.wi.us/Schools/ESL/>

<http://www.childrenonlyesl-efl.com/>

For Adult ESL:

<http://www.csun.edu/~hcedu013/eslplans.html>

ESL lessons:

<http://iteslj.org/Lessons/>

<http://www.lingolex.com/jstefl.htm>

<http://patsula.com/esltown/>
<http://www.esl-lounge.com/>
<http://www.everythingsl.net/lessons/>
<http://eslus.com/eslcenter.htm>
<http://www.english-to-go.com/>
<http://www.tefl.net/lessonplans/>
<http://esl.about.com/bllessonplans.htm>
<http://www.efl4u.com/>
<http://www.ohiou.edu/esl/teacher/plans.html>
<http://depts.gallaudet.edu/ESL/>
<http://www.englishpage.com/>
<http://home.earthlink.net/~eslstudent/online.html>
<http://www.eslflow.com/>
http://www.teachersdesk.com/lessons/lessons_esl.htm
<http://www.ling.lancs.ac.uk/staff/visitors/kenji/teacher.htm>
<http://www.csun.edu/~hcedu013/eslplans.html>
<http://members.aol.com/Jakajk/ESLlessons.html>

ESL pictures:

<http://www.esl-images.com/>
<http://www.clipart.com/en/index>

General reference information:

<http://www.wikipedia.org/>
<http://www.dictionary.com>
<http://www.google.com>