

Teaching Lower-Level Learners - Part 2: General Tips

Classroom Setup

- **Space** - Make the most of the space you are given. Try to make it comfortable for your students.
- Setup for the types of activities you will be doing
- Try to make the classroom comfortable for your students
- **Things to add:** lamps, wall art (bought, student-made or teacher-made), knickknacks
- **Referential materials** - alphabet, numbers, days of the week, months of the year, colours, general vocabulary and task vocabulary
- Ask if you have a budget for setting-up/decorating your classroom
- Reuse/repurpose things that your colleagues don't want or use
- **Get inspired** - Pinterest, Ikea, web search for ideas
- **Downsize** - get rid of excess or things you don't use
- **Be adaptable** - Students needs change as will your style of teaching and the content you will teach. Be willing to rethink, redo, rearrange your learning space to maximize its use and benefit to your learners.

Classroom Organization

- **Use visual aids** - Images, video, posters, drawings
- **Incorporate technology** - Use computers, smart phones, tablets, internet, social media and AI as tools for teaching, practice and assessment, i.e. Kahoot, Quizlet
- **(Create) Learner Profile** - include observations on their language ability, known background including reason and circumstances surrounding their immigration to Canada.
- **Parking Lot** - place to “park” questions or topics to be discussed/explored at another time.
- **Positive reinforcement** - stickers, certificates, stamps, smiles, thumbs up

Teaching & Assessment - Teaching

- **Cognitive Learning Processes** - focal and controlled according to McLaughlin's Attention Processing Model
- **Repetition** - Learners will need repetition of information and practice using it to make it permanent.
- **Teacher-centred** - Learners have little or no language skills to draw on. They are teacher-dependant for almost every aspect of their learning at this time.
- **Reduce teacher talk** - Allow your students more time to process and practice what they are learning by reducing the time you speak.
- **Authentic & Natural Language:**
 - Speak at regular volume level
 - Speak slower, not slowly - Slow down your normal rate of speech to enable your students to understand what you are saying.
 - Simplify language - phrases not sentences
- **Maximize student talk** - Provide as many opportunities as possible for your learners to speak.
- **L1 Native Language Use** - Decide if, when and how much of the L1 students and, if applicable, you will use in the classroom.
- **Use non-verbal communication** - Mime, gestures/AIM, facial expressions
- **Fluency & Accuracy:**
 - **Impromptu Speech** - Encourage learners to speak without scripting.
 - **Error Correction** - Choose when, what, when and how to correct errors. Group, individual, written, oral
 - **Enunciate words** - Learners model and mimic your pronunciation and enunciation. Be careful of your pronunciation and exaggerate your pronunciation so that your learners can see how to place their lips, teeth and tongue.

Teaching & Assessment - Teaching (cont.)

- **Listening and Speaking** - Activities should be meaningful and authentic not simply “display”. Learners will be challenged because they are missing vocabulary, grammar and therefore can not have lengthy speeches.
- **Grammar** - Nouns, pronouns, simple SV sentences with simple verb tenses would be the first things to cover. If your learners ask about something that is more complicated, you can either park it to be covered later or answer but in less detail.
- **Reading and Writing** - Brief tasks that are authentic, real-life material. Learners’ literacy level in their L1 is crucial to how they learn and develop their reading and writing skills in English.
- **Differentiation** - Teach to meet the needs of each of your learners, adapting your style, lesson and activity choices to provide each learner with what is needed to grow and develop their language skills.
- Check for understanding
- **Be adaptable** - Students needs change constantly. The ability to adapt your teaching and change your methods, techniques and even the order that you teach things is very important, read essential to successful language teaching.

Teaching & Assessment - Assessment

- **Prepare students for the test/assessment format** - The test or assessment format should not be a test in and of itself. Learners need to know what to do with the test/assessment. Prepare them by practicing with the different styles/formats that you plan to use. Tell them what personal information they should give for the test/assessment i.e. name (full name), class name, group or section name, etc.
- **Assessments adapted to learners' abilities** - The type of assessment should meet your needs and be adapted to the abilities of your learners. Oral, individual, take home, open book, paper-based, virtual/electronic.
- **Prepare students for assessment feedback** - Questions to consider when thinking about feedback: What feedback will you provide students for the answers they provide on the assessment? What does the feedback mean? Will you only mark incorrect answers or only mark the correct ones? Will you provide the correct answers for the incorrect ones?
- **Class Debrief** - Turn the assessment/test in to a learning opportunity with a debrief/review. Spend time explaining why an answer is not correct or incomplete. Make it visual so that the learners can take notes easily. This can be done individually, in small groups or as a class.

Learning Documentation

- Videos, Pictures, Audio recordings, Paper work, Observations, Interviews, Projects

Inclusion & Safety

- **Make connections** - Learn about students backgrounds, family, likes, struggles
- **Safe learning environment** - create a space where students can be comfortable, both in the design of the space but also in the way you treat them.

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