



TEACHING ENGLISH TO DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS

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Teaching strategies are the techniques and methods that a teacher applies to support student learning. At the present stage of the development of modern methodical thought, the basic structural unit of the educational process in a foreign language is that the lesson is seen as a complex act of communication, the main purpose and content of which is practice in solving problems of interaction between subjects of the pedagogical process, and the main way to achieve the goal and master the content serve motivated communicative tasks of varying degrees of complexity. When teaching different age groups, you'll realize the importance of being able to relate to what is going on in your students' worlds. You begin to look back at when you were their age and wonder what appealed to you, and if it will still resonate with them today. This article will look at how best to relate to the age group you are teaching by keeping your lessons relevant and exciting.

KINDERGARTENERS (3-6 years)

Anyone who has taught kindergarten knows how much energy the students have. It is a full lesson of go, go, go. As cute as the kids are, if your lesson is not jam-packed with active, high-energy games, you're going to lose them. In order to keep the students active and entertained as well as get the target language across, you will need to be innovative

- Be clear and direct in how you speak. Use simple 1 or 2 word commands and be prepared to apply a firmer tone to your voice when need be.
- Be animated and lively. Not everyone will be comfortable with jumping around, singing and dancing for an hour but it will certainly make you more likable if you are able to act silly in class.

Use TPR activities whenever possible: Kindergartens tend to respond extremely well to TPR (Total Physical Response) based activities whereby they produce the language through physical actions. If you are teaching animals, have the students doing the actions and noises, when teaching them feelings; have them performing the emotion etc.

Short, sharp games and activities: The best way to keep your kids' attention and save time dealing with bored students is to keep things moving all the time. When planning your lessons, start off by introducing your grammar point or vocabulary then run through a series of 5-10 minute games and ALWAYS have back up plans. When you see students losing focus, move onto the next activity.

Change the environment: mix up your classroom setting often to steer them away from boredom. Get them on their feet, swap the seating plan and sit them in a circle on the



floor.

Don't be afraid to use your teaching assistant: younger learners will struggle more than anyone to grasp your meaning in English. To save time and tears of despair, have your TA translate the commands and tasks to them before you start playing.

- Use gimmicks: any small change or new object that you bring into class will feel like a completely new adventure to your young students. Surprise them by bringing in a simple gimmick to use in your activities such as a ball, a dice, a puppet or some pictures.

Reward them: sweets/candy obviously gives young children an incentive to learn but without this kind of luxury you can easily keep them eager by giving them other kinds of rewards. A high-five or pat on the back after a successful activity and at the end of class will make them feel like they have achieved something, as will the opportunity to do some drawing or coloring activities during the lesson.

JUNIORS (7-12 years)

Junior classes vary significantly depending on your students' maturity, personalities and ability. You will find though that when you have developed a good overall structure to your lessons and a decent repertoire of activities you will be able to apply a fairly similar approach to all of your lessons. Teaching this age group will be demanding in different ways than teaching kindergartens.

To make your lessons engaging and in order to maintain a good learning environment you should aim to:

- Have a clear structure to your lessons: try to follow the 4 Ps structure to your lessons. Get administrative procedures and miscellaneous tasks done first then introduce your topic, grammar, vocabulary and focus the remainder of the lesson on practicing and drilling the new language.

- Expose them to different cultures: at this age your students are more intellectually capable than kindergartens and more eager to learn about the world than many of the teenagers you will encounter.

- Classroom management: put good systems in place for dealing with badly behaved students and rewarding good learning. Juniors will generally respond well to some form of team points system whereby you put the students into teams at the start of the lesson and give out/take away points accordingly. This way they will largely discipline themselves.

- Cater for different learning styles: at this age your students' brains are unknowingly adapting and developing towards a particular style of learning. Generally speaking, the major learning styles are thought to be auditory, visual and kinesthetic.

- Take an interest in your students' lives beyond the classroom: taking a few seconds to ask a student about an aspect of their life outside the classroom will make a big difference. If they think you care about them they will generally be more inclined to care about what you have to say in the lessons.

- Be a positive role model: try to set a good example in how you interact with people and



approach your work. Show them that successful learning can happen through having a good work ethic, being respectful to others and having some fun with your tasks.

- Motivation: it is likely that some of your students will have already had a day of school before they come to your evening class to practice their English. At this age they are becoming harder to motivate. Through positive re-enforcement and giving them something every lesson to show for their time you can keep them enthused. Praise is very important.

TEENAGERS

(13-19)

- Keep the dry content quiet: if your aim for the lesson is to teach something complicated like Past Perfect tense, don't write this on the board or make them aware of what you are trying to feed them. Start your lesson by giving them situations and explaining that in these cases we use a particular piece of language then get stuck into some activities to practice it.

- Be a team leader: rather than going into class and seeing yourself as an authority figure, try to imagine yourself as a team leader or mentor amongst a group of colleagues. Show some empathy, take an interest in their lives outside the class but at the same time guide them through the tasks.

- Be a role-model: don't let them see you as the same kind of old, boring and robotic authority figures that they most probably see their parents and school teachers as. Try to make them think you are different, cool/interesting and that you actually care about how they feel. If they admire you as a person they will be more willing to follow your instructions and will listen to you when they get out of hand.

- Make yourself the object of humor: taking yourself too seriously when teaching teenagers decreases your chances of creating a good learning environment. Sensibly make fun of yourself when the opportunity arises. Instead of having the students use their new language to insult each other, have them write crazy stories about you in mildly uncomplimentary ways.

- Use grown up gimmicks: whilst having teams and giving out points may work for younger teenagers, it will certainly not be as effective as fake money! Photocopy some foreign currency or raid the school's Monopoly set and take some fake cash into your class. If a student gets a correct answer or goes the extra yard to try and improve their English, give out the money.

- Research their interests: If the key to impressing juniors is caring about their interests, with teenagers you should go a step further and learn about their interests. Take some time before class to find about the country's popular singers, movie stars, national laughing stocks.

- Get them moving around whenever possible. An English class at this level won't involve much jumping around and making animal noises. However, when you're faced with this potentially lazy age group, it is vital that you don't let them sink too far into their chairs during the lesson and spend too long daydreaming about happenings outside school.



The education process is positive and encouraging:

- For most adults, stepping back into the classroom can be intimidating, which is understandable if they haven't taken a class in years. Students may be apprehensive about what the course will be like and how well they'll do.

- As an instructor of adult students, it's important to exude positivity, encouragement, and patience. Establishing motivation in the classroom can facilitate effective learning for students. Give your students time to respond when you ask a question. They may need a few moments to consider their answer. Recognize the contributions they make, even when small.

In conclusion, it should be noted that all methods and techniques develop communicative skills, help establish emotional contacts between students, teach them to work in a team, listen to their comrades' opinion, and establish more close contact between students and the teacher.

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