



# Teachers, let's survive with limited time!

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How often have I heard of co-workers lamenting the limited time for language teaching. Indeed, I think nearly all teachers of English Language encounter the same problem. Here I would like to share a few piloting methods I have been using with my students in English teaching.

## An Individual Little 'Board'

Questioning is a teacher's primary diagnostic tool to check if the students understand what is taught. But time never allows us to ask all students in the class within a few seconds. I have thought of a time efficient strategy: I ask each student to prepare a white board marker of their own for each of my lessons. I myself will bring to class a pile of plastic files (the simplest ones with just one layer) with a white backing sheet

inside each. At the beginning of the lesson, the files are distributed to each student, and during the lesson, if I wish to ask a question to check the students' understanding, I just throw the question out and they will immediately write their own answer on the file served as a little white board (the answer can be easily erased with a little piece of tissue). Within seconds, I can easily check the feedback of the students. If a large number cannot get the right answer, I then have to explain the same topic again and clarify their doubt. Of course, this method is more suitable for the answers which require just a few words like correct tenses used or some vocabulary practice, but it is a helpful and effective tool and students are also enthusiastic in this activity. The benefit is that it is interactive, time-saving, and above all, even the passive learners may have

every chance to show the answers. At the same time, you may check the students' progress and understanding immediately; you may even give bonus points to the first student who puts up the file with the correct answer by asking them to write their class number at the corner of the file.

## Follow-up Encounter

Youngsters nowadays tend to show signs of memory lapse and weak recollection of recently learnt materials. Sometimes you feel frustrated at students' forgetful behaviour. I will use a follow-up strategy: when I find certain topic important and wish to make sure students remember, I will 'catch' them at recess or before school when they are in the school playground (of course, you need to get to know where they usually stay during this period), and have an ad hoc check on the materials taught. Sometimes I prepare pieces of paper with a question or exercise, but sometimes I simply ask them orally the target topic. Such practice will urge them to remember what they have learnt, and stimulate their interest in learning. Many of the students, especially the senior students, express that they do not feel like to answer questions in class voluntarily because they feel embarrassed if they make mistakes. But outside the classroom, they are more relieved without pressure. You know, many of them may voluntarily appear in front of you and welcome you to ask them questions in such an informal atmosphere rather than in the classroom!

## Group Chanting Practice

Many English teachers find that students are very limited in their vocabulary and they are also poor in spelling. The major reason is that students do not read much and seldom expose themselves in the language. To improve their volume of vocabulary and ensure their correct spelling, I have made economical use of time like during the exchange of periods. I will assign a few responsible students to be in charge of this practice. While students are waiting for the next teacher to come to class, instead of wasting time chatting among themselves or resting on their own desk, I will ask them to make good use of every single second. At each exchange of periods, the student in charge will remind their classmates a newly learnt vocabulary and ask the class to spell the word and recite its meaning together several times. This chanting will at least make some, if not all, students stick to their memory some new words and widen their scope of vocabulary.

We, teachers of English, are always eager to improve students' English standard and actually it is also our mission. Students, after all, are just students. They need guidance, stimulation and opportunities. The above is just some little sharing of mine, hoping to ignite a spark to all co-workers!

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