

Module 1 - Student Motivation, Teacher's Roles and TEFL Methods

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I. English as a global language

This module will introduce to you some key TEFL concepts such as learner types, learner styles, learner motivation, teachers' roles and TEFL methods. You will also reflect on what qualities are essential for you as a teacher.

English is an extremely popular language these days. Over two-thirds of the world's scientists read in English, 75% of the world's mail is written in English, 150 million users of the Internet communicate in English and 80% of the world's electronically stored information is in English.

It is estimated that more than a billion people are in the process of learning English - the global language. English is the main language of books, newspapers, airports and air-traffic control, international business and academic conferences, science, technology, diplomacy, sport, international competitions, pop music and advertising. It is also the language of media and business - with more than 80% of international companies using it for communication worldwide.

The huge demand for English means there is a huge shortage of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) and ESL (English as a Second Language) teachers. This course is designed to equip you with the knowledge and skills to teach English from beginners to advanced students, children to adults.

II. The learner

1. Learner motivations

The reasons why people choose or need to learn English can be divided into two camps: extrinsic and intrinsic. Extrinsic learners are motivated by stimuli that occur outside the classroom (such as getting a better job). Learners with intrinsic motives are interested in integrating into the target language community. Most teachers believe that the successful language learners are the ones who are the most motivated.

2. Needs analysis

Teachers can use a Needs Analysis questionnaire to make sure that their lessons address their students' needs and learning styles. When you know about your students' motivation, their prior learning experiences, the situations they are likely to use English in and which skills/language items they need to work on, you can select and create appropriate learning materials and activities.

When creating a questionnaire, use open question forms such as What...? Why...? How...? rather than closed questions which are likely to result in "yes" and "no" answers. The more students express themselves, the easier it is for you to learn about their requirements. You may want to conduct both a written analysis and a verbal one, as the level of students' written English may not correspond to their spoken English.

These are the kinds of questions you might like to consider using.

- Why are you learning English?
- Where do you use English: at home, at work, on holiday, anywhere else?
- Are you more interested in learning how to read, write, speak or understand spoken English?
- What do you most need to learn: informal conversational English, business English, English grammar, good pronunciation, etc?'
- How long have you been learning English?
- Where have you studied English in the past?
- What do you like to do in your free time?

3. Types of learner: Ages and levels

According to their age, language learners are divided into young children (approximately until 12 years old), adolescents (approximately until 19) and adults. Course syllabi are usually designed with the age of learners in mind, and the content of course books for young children will be quite different from that of course books for adults.

Learners are also divided into the following six levels of proficiency, i.e. how developed their language skills are.

- beginners
- elementary
- pre-intermediate (also called lower intermediate)
- intermediate
- upper-intermediate
- advanced

Any syllabus or course book is designed for a particular level of learners.

4. Types of learner: Senses

According to the senses which the learners primarily use to receive information, they can be:

- Visual learners: These learn mainly through seeing (this constitutes around 70% of all learners).
- Auditory learners: These learn best through listening.
- Kinaesthetic learners: These learn through doing, seeing and touching.

5. Types of learner: Learning styles

According to their personal learning styles, learners can be subdivided into activists, reflectors, theorists and pragmatists.

Activists like to immerse themselves fully in new experiences, they learn the language by actively using it and not necessarily questioning how it works. They like to try out new words and phrases but they are not nearly as excited about grammar theory. They do not worry about making mistakes. They are generally enthusiastic, open-minded and flexible.

Reflectors are more cautious and they prefer to stand back and watch others experiment with the language while they collect and analyse information. Gradually they begin to understand how language works and finally are able to place a new grammatical structure in the context of all their prior knowledge. Only then are they ready to use the new language.

Theorists are somewhat similar to reflectors, however they are more focused on logic and they aim to fit things into rational order. They are quick to make assumptions, build theories and models. They are less flexible than activists and reflectors and find it hard to change their initial assumptions.

Pragmatists also make assumptions and logical conclusions, however they are keen to put their ideas and theories into practice. They like to search for new ideas and to experiment. In that way they are similar to activists, but less spontaneous and more likely to think before they say something.

6. Including all types of learners

Whichever type of learner you are yourself, as a teacher you may instinctively want to cater for learners of the same type more than for the other types.

For example, if you are a visual activist you will probably want to fill your classes with free practice activities where your students will experiment with language. You will expect them not to fear mistakes. You are also likely to use a lot of visual-based activities at the expense of listening practice.

Be aware, however, that some students in your class may well belong to the other types and it's important to take their needs into account as well. They may find your tasks quite challenging and may initially be reluctant to participate. That doesn't necessarily mean that they are poor students. They may simply need to watch others experiment with language first. Once they've made their conclusions and built their theories they will be perfectly happy to join the group and practise.

No matter what your students' motivations and learning styles are, it is down to you to keep them interested and help them learn the language. Aim to establish a good rapport with your students.

III. The teacher

1. What makes a good teacher according to students?

When asked about the qualities of a 'good teacher', students' responses are fairly consistent. Here are some examples:

- "An interesting teacher is able to make a course interesting. They should also take an equal interest in all of us."
- "Their English should be very good. They should be able to explain things clearly and pronounce words properly."
- "A good teacher should certainly encourage their students to participate. But they must also be very patient - like a saint!"

2. What makes a good teacher according to teachers?

When teachers were asked "what makes a good teacher", the list was (unsurprisingly) longer. The most popular answers were as follows:

Show your personality

Being able to create a positive learning atmosphere and developing a good rapport with all students without showing favouritism. Having the ability to engage and involve students.

Be patient

For a variety of reasons: the student might learn more slowly than you expect; he/she may lack motivation (i.e. their employer or parents have sent them to your class); or you might have a 'needy' student - always asking you what you feel are irrelevant questions.

Be clear

Being able to answer questions in a clear and concise way.

Stay organised

Being on time, turning up with the right materials, and producing well-planned lessons with suitable material.

Keep your sense of humour

The ability to laugh at yourself helps you to stay sane (you don't have to be a clown, but a little humour seems to go a long way). Miming and body language play an important part in teaching. Don't be afraid if it sometimes makes you look a little stupid.

Adapt and make the most of your resources

On some occasions, you might find yourself without any books, tapes or boards. This can be especially true of developing countries that have limited resources.

Use your imagination

First of all in terms of creating and adapting teaching materials and secondly being able to empathise with your students (imagine yourself in their position and how they might feel) will help build rapport.

3. Teacher roles

In the classroom you will need to play many different roles. Here are some of them.

- **Controller:** The person in complete control of the class
- **Assessor:** Checking and deciding when and how to give feedback - especially when dealing with error correction
- **A resource:** You may be the only exposure to the language that the learner has. This is especially true of developing countries
- **Coach:** For encouraging students (especially the shy ones) to actively take part in classroom activities
- **Tutor:** For one-to-one teaching, giving individual attention, guidance and helping the student to learn more efficiently
- **Organiser:** Telling students exactly what they need to do, and how they should do it
- **Facilitator:** Encouraging students to communicate with each other
- **Counsellor:** Helping students solve any problems relating to language learning.

IV. The popular TEFL Methods

The exact process of language learning is still largely unknown, even after years of speculation and experimentation. Consequently, there is no optimum or 'best' way to teach.

At every stage in the lesson it's up to the teacher to determine the best way to do something. You can take on board the nuts and bolts of teaching so that you can generate your own style that works for you.

Although fashions in language learning change from time to time, there are several key methodologies which are accepted around the world.

Here are some widely accepted teaching methods. You can adapt them to suit your lessons and students. Make them your own!

Grammar Translation

This method concentrates on teaching the rules of the language. Emphasis is placed on written exercises, both in and out of the target language. This was (and in many places in the world, still is) the most common method of teaching languages.

Direct Method

During World War II there was a huge demand for language skills, and soldiers needed to learn languages very quickly. Linguists came up with the idea of 'total immersion' where only the target language is spoken. The target language is learned through repetition, drilling and demonstration. Grammar isn't studied and students practise the target language as much as possible.

Audio-Lingualism

With the advent of new technology such as the Language Laboratory, a new method was introduced. This was based on the work of the psychologist Skinner who believed that language learning is a series of habit-forming exercises, including continual repetition and drilling. Mistakes were criticised and progress was praised. This method is still popular today.

Communicative Approach

The emphasis is on communication in the spoken or written language. Classroom role-playing enables communication that mirrors real-life use of the language. This reinforces the idea that language learning is about communicating and not just rote-learning of huge lists of irregular verbs.

Presentation, Practice and Production

This approach follows a defined sequence:

1. The teacher presents a context and new vocabulary and explains the form of the language in a meaningful context.
2. The students practise this through controlled activities such as worksheets or question and answer activities.
3. This culminates in a production stage where they practise what they have learned in a communicative activity such as a role-play, questionnaire or communication game.

Task Based Learning

Students perform a task using specific target language and/or language that has been previously taught. They could expand their language awareness and carry out specific activities, appropriate role-plays, pair work and group work or researching topics on the internet. During the lesson, there is often no formal teaching such as explaining a grammar point, and the aim is to encourage them to use and experiment with familiar language.

The Lexical Approach

The lexical approach concentrates on developing learners' proficiency with words and word combinations. It is based on the idea that an important part of language acquisition is the ability to understand and produce lexical phrases as unanalysed 'chunks'. Instruction focuses on fixed expressions that occur frequently in spoken language, such as, 'What do you mean?', 'Thanks for your help', 'It's up to you' rather than on originally created sentences.

The Eclectic Approach

The teacher uses a variety of methods according to the aims, level, task, and different learning styles of the students.