

EFFECTIVE TEACHING STRATEGIES

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Abstract — *We help our students understand engineering concepts and go beyond the knowledge level to higher levels of thinking. We help them to apply, analyze, and synthesize, to create new knowledge, and solve new problems. So, too, as teachers, we need to recognize our challenge to go beyond knowledge about effective teaching. We need to apply these strategies, analyze what works, and take action to modify or synthesize our learning to help our students learn in a way that works for us as individuals and teams of teachers.*

Helping students learn is our challenge as teachers. Identifying effective teaching strategies, therefore, is our challenge as we both assess the effectiveness of our current teaching style and consider innovative ways to improve our teaching to match our students' learning styles.

Much of a teacher's success in the classroom is hinged on their use of teaching strategies, or to put it another way, their approach to their teaching, how they implement instructions, how they teach, how they communicate, and how they deliver information, how they communicate data to students.

The different teaching strategies available to the teacher are too numerous to mention all of them here, and indeed, many strategies interlink and may even be used collaboratively within any given lesson.

Key Words— *applied language, authentic material, learning, method, teaching strategy.*

INTRODUCTION

Learning English is a challenging undertaking, and teaching English as a second language requires patience, cultural sensitivity and a sense of humor (in both the teacher and the students). The right teaching strategies can strengthen communication in the classroom and increase students' confidence and fluency, making our job as a teacher more rewarding.

Teaching strategies are the methods we use to allow learners to access the information we are teaching. For example, you could read the information to them; you could display it pictorially; you could allow them to research the information themselves; you could present it as a PowerPoint presentation.

People learn in 3 main ways - visually, auditory and kinesthetically.

Visual learners learn by looking at/seeing something.

Auditory learners learn by hearing it/being told it.

Kinesthetic learners learn by actually doing/experiencing it.

Our teaching strategies should aim to include all types of learner.

EFFECTIVE TEACHING STRATEGIES

Teaching strategies used in a classroom by teachers change over time. It can be defined as the way students learn. For instance, using the Internet within assignments was impossible decades ago. As technology and information evolves, the teaching strategies implemented do as well. Depending on the students, some methods work more effectively. It is the teacher's job to discover the key and use classroom teaching strategies to engage the students effectively. Teachers, instructors and professors all share the same duty; they must disseminate knowledge to their classes using the best strategy possible.

Many effective strategies for teaching English as a second language exist, but the overall effectiveness of a course lies in both the method used and the dedication of the teacher. Students learn best when they are in an encouraging environment that promotes talking, activity, laughter and motivation. To gain the target a teacher draws for himself he/she has to follow some very simple but at the same time very important steps or let call them rules. These rules are:

Lesson Planning: Before you even set foot in the classroom, do your lesson planning. You need both a

course outline and a daily plan. Start your year by having a loose idea of how you will accomplish your goals and adjust it based on your class. If you plan too far ahead, you may find yourself doing a lot of backtracking when you learn that the students' personalities don't fit with what you planned.

Prepare detailed weekly lesson plans that illustrate what you want students to learn, how you will teach it and how you can test that they understand the material. Make a note of all the materials that you need so that you don't come up short in the middle of a lesson.

Also have a list of activities that you can do in case you finish your lesson early. If you don't have a plan, you may lose control of your classroom.

Establishing Expectations: From the first day, establish expectations of how you expect students to act. Work together with the class to create the rules of the classroom and what happens when someone doesn't follow the rules. The student participation in this helps them to follow the rules.

Aim to have a positive attitude toward each student. Expect the best from all of your students, even if another teacher has given you a warning about a particular student. Usually the first year students tend to respond to our expectations. If you expect students to be good, they often will act good.

Teaching for Multiple Intelligences: Recent studies suggest that people learn through a variety of methods, often called "multiple intelligences." These intelligences are naturalist, musical, logical-mathematical, existential, interpersonal, bodily-kinesthetic, linguistic, intrapersonal and special. Traditional schooling focuses only on logical-mathematical and linguistic intelligences.

When teaching a concept, approach it from several different angles. Don't rely on students to learn only through reading or listening to a lecture. Incorporate other senses by playing music or doing physical activities related to the idea.

Vocabulary Strategies: Building a strong, comprehensive vocabulary is important for new English speakers. Teaching vocabulary words in a specific context helps students remember the words and categorize their vocabulary in useful ways. Avoid handing students long lists of words that they'll need to look up when alone and memorize without context. Instead, ground vocabulary words in stories, readings and lesson plans that provide a social and cultural context, with key vocabulary words highlighted and defined beforehand.

Writing and Reading Strategies: Confident ESL students will be able to communicate in many media. Writing and reading work together cohesively, and writing exercises help students build their skills gradually as they draft and revise their writing samples. A good teacher must be patient and understand the frustrations of writing in a new language. If a student is struggling, allow her to write a first draft in her native language and translate the work into English. Encourage students to keep private journals in English, to practice writing skills in a stress-free situation.

Method: A method in language teaching refers to the course outline and textbooks used. A method usually revolves around an accredited textbook system that sets the pace of the class concerning new material learned and goal achievement. A strong method is the background for the teacher who then can add his own strategies and activities along with the learned material in the textbook. A good method is clear and welcoming to students and comes with an exercise workbook, CDs and DVDs for listening activities.

Multimedia: Aside from the multimedia that accompanies the textbook, additional multimedia in the classroom, such as film, cartoons, music and interactive computer games, helps to engage students better than textbook learning alone. If a student is interested in English, she will learn better. Show films with English subtitles to help connect listening to reading. After the film, students can discuss important concepts and if advanced enough, write a report. English music is a great translating activity that teachers can assign as homework, where students translate English songs into their native language.

Conversation: There is more to learning English as a second language aside from the academic aspects. What most students desire from English is the ability to communicate with native speakers fluently, naturally and comfortably. As such, conversation is a critical skill that students must first practice in the classroom. Every lesson should include a role play or open conversation concerning the topics discussed in class. Discussing current affairs topics is a great way to encourage students to watch English new broadcasts and read English newspapers. Encourage students to cut out and bring newspaper stories of interest to class to help start a free discussion.

Applied Language: Once students learn book language, they need to apply it to actual use. Projects and presentations are ideal for language classes as it allows the students to focus on something, such as a cultural topic, other than the language itself. The language is applied and used to communicate the project but is not the project itself. Slide show presentations, posters, skits, collages or homemade documentaries on a cultural aspect of English-speaking countries allow students to choose from a variety of topics that interest them the most. Other projects and activities include writing scripts or menus, participating in organized debate or

mock government and even performing and filming a television newscast and weather forecast.

Authentic Material: When incorporating additional material into the course, selecting authentic texts written by native speakers rather than textbook-written material is beneficial as it most likely more interesting and true in meaning. Short stories, poems, plays, magazines, movie scripts and even novels will not only interest the students but will make them feel like they are working on something genuine, something that native speakers might also study.

Enjoyment: One of the most effective teaching strategies is to incorporate laughter and fun into your lessons. If your students are not enjoying what they are learning, it is more difficult for them to retain learned subject material. The course should follow a guideline with specific goals, but it should also cater to students' individuality. Studies show that humor or jokes in the classroom help to facilitate a sense of ease and comfort to help make learning easier. Humor when learning English also helps students transition into colloquial conversation with native speakers more easily.

Utilize teaching strategies appropriate for adults when applicable. For example, case method and discussion are more prevalent. It requires background knowledge on the subject to properly engage each student. Case in point, you have a lecture about philosophy and students must review books that disprove a theory. Typically, a discussion follows the debate, which presents the pros and cons. Integrating technology can be introduced at any level as a teaching strategy.

Design a lesson plan that engages the students in more than one way. Teaching strategies in the classroom must be interesting, follow a sequential order and have a measurable learning outcome. Testing can be a teaching lesson plan strategy because there are different methods to complete it. For instance, essay exams require carefully organized thoughts, while multiple choice types highlight reasoning skills to select the best choice. Also, Internet-based testing and assignments could be part of the teaching strategy to ensure students understand how to use specific software.

Establish the teaching tone (i.e., technique) as a strategy to cultivate the learning environment. It can be based on the subject, or the personality of the teaching instructor. Some teachers prefer fun, while others enjoy strict lectures. Each has their benefits--fun teachers ignite creativity, but strict instructors may produce disciplined learners.

1.1 How to Evaluate Teaching Strategies

Using a variety of methods to evaluate your teaching strategies will give you better feedback about how to improve your teaching and the course. In addition, students will appreciate the effort you take to include their ideas in the teaching process and to individualize your classroom approach to a particular group of students.

Instructions that follow are just a draft sketched by me as a result of my professional experience.

Preparing and Teaching

- Evaluate the goals you want to impart and the skills you want students to take away from a particular class session as you are developing your lesson plan.
- Write the goals for the class period on the board at the start of class. This will help you and the students know what to expect and may help you keep the timing of events under control.
- Check in with yourself every now and then during the class to see if a particular mode of imparting information is working. If it isn't, make a mental note. If you feel comfortable switching gears, try that. If not, make sure to write down your evaluation of the session after class.

Reflection

- Jot down some notes after class about what worked well or what could be improved about the class plan.
- Think about the class members and whether they are a talkative class, a quiet class or if the students seemed bored. Depending on your answers to those questions, you may have to adjust your teaching strategy to make sure it gels with the particular group of students.
- Adjust as necessary to compensate for anything you think is not working well in the class.
- Review a videotape or audiotape of your class once or twice a semester. That will help you more objectively evaluate your teaching.

Feedback from Colleagues

- Ask colleagues if you can sit in on their classes to get ideas about how to improve your own teaching effectiveness.

- Request that colleagues sit in on your class to get some feedback from them about things you're doing well or things that can be improved in class.
- Talk to your director or supervisor after she watches your class to learn more teaching strategies and to gain a better idea of your teaching effectiveness.

Feedback from Students

- Read student evaluations. Although all teachers dread them, reading student evaluations is very important. Often you can see some common themes in the evaluations that will help you improve your teaching for the next semester or year.
- Solicit student feedback at various points during the semester. You can do this by having students fill out questionnaires anonymously during the semester. You can ask students questions in the last class to find out what strategies worked for them and what didn't. You can also ask students in class after you've tried something for the first time what they thought of it.
- Use a discussion board for your class. Sometimes, particularly if students can post anonymously, you can receive some valuable information about whether students understood a particular point in class or were confused about a lesson.
- Make yourself accessible so that students feel like they can contact you to ask questions. This is vital to making students feel heard. If they are intimidated by you or feel you're not interested in hearing from them, they will not get in touch. As a result, you won't know if they are confused by material covered.

CONCLUSION

New and old teachers can both benefit from effective teaching strategies for the classroom. Our goal is to help students learn the material that we teach. Essential to this is proper classroom and behavior management. We can achieve this with teaching ideas that engage students, making them interested in learning. Our students' success largely depends on us, and we owe it to them to come to school prepared to teach every day. Good teaching skills will show through your results.

To develop a variety of strategies that will work for us and our students, I suggest that we monitor our progress. The following framework is one that we could use to document strategies we use and assess how they work. The framework follows the familiar "plan, do, check, act cycle" which is a continuous improvement process used in business, industry, government, and higher education.

Plan: Concept - The concept that you plan to teach

Strategy - The teaching strategy that you plan to use

Date - The day you plan to use the strategy

Materials Needed - The teaching materials that you will need

Time Needed - Plan your teaching activity so that you can accomplish all your goals

Feedback - Decide on a strategy to obtain student feedback. Consider fast feedback, written reports and observing students' reactions

Do: Execute your plan

Check: Review student evaluations

Act: Decide on what you would do next time. Stick with the strategy? Change?

Remember, you are a significant player in achieving "education excellence." Together, as students and teachers, we can build a learning community that will make a difference in society.

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