



## Effective Ways of Teaching English to Young Pupils

*Nurniyazov Nursultan Jalgasovich*

*Student, Nukus State Pedagogical Institute Named After Ajiniyaz*

**Annotation:** This article explains how to use the most active methods of teaching English to students.

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Remember Names. When teaching any learners for the first time, it is vital to develop rapport with these students. The same can be said for young learners. One way to develop rapport is to remember the names of your students. This could be achieved by getting students to make name cards which could then be propped up at their desk or you could draw the classroom layout and write down the names of the students on this. When nominating students to answer a question, call them by their name. This will make the young learners feel that their teacher cares about them and is working with them.

### Get To Know You (GTKY) Activities

Once you have got students to make a poster or create their own name cards, what do you do next? Well the most suitable thing to do next is to tell students a little more about yourself. There are many different GTKY activities which you could incorporate in class but here are some of my tasks.

### What's The Question?

Write up ten answers about yourself on the whiteboard, such as things related to where you are from, your hobbies, family, age (if you wish), musical instruments you can play, any languages you can speak and anything else. Put the students into small groups of three or four students. The group of students then have to think of questions which will give the answers written on the whiteboard. For example, if I have written up —Tenor saxophone! the students will have to ask the question —What musical instrument can you play?! Should they ask the correct question, then you can tick it on the whiteboard. This activity lasts around 20-30 minutes. If students don't know each other, you could personalise the activity and get the students to do the same thing with their group. Students could then share anything that they found interesting in their group and share with the rest of the class.

### Two Truths and One Lie

Write three sentences about yourself on the whiteboard with one of the sentences being false and the other two being true. You could write up:

I have lived in 6 countries I can read and write Korean I am 40 years old I usually write (as I have written here) my age as false (I will not be telling anyone my real age as it's far too embarrassing) and the students have to guess which is true or false. It gives students a lot to talk about and share before deciding. Students could then ask follow up questions and feel free to personalise it for the students and they can do it in their groups or in pairs should they not know each other.

### This Is Me

Before class, get some pictures to show to your class about your hometown, family, friends and hobbies. You could use this to tell them about yourself and then the students then retell each other using the pictures as prompts. Give them a worksheet with comprehension questions to answer and see if they can remember anything. Work together as a class to figure out the answers. The students could then do a similar activity by bringing in photos (or showing them on their smartphones) and telling others about themselves.

### **Important Object**

Bring in an object to the first class which you consider to be important to you. It doesn't need to be anything large or clumsy. You could bring in a favourite CD or a toy you have had since you were very young. Before showing the object to the class, get the students to guess what is in the bag or box. Board up some ideas and review some functional language —I guess it might be ...!, —It could be ...!, etc. Once you have some ideas up on the whiteboard, show students the object and tell them why it is important to you. As with the other ideas, you could ask students to bring in an object next lesson which they consider to be important for themselves.

### **Rules for the Classroom**

Once you know the names of your students, generated some rapport and feel comfortable with the learners, you could then progress towards classroom rules with students. This will lay the foundation for positive and appropriate behaviour in class and will reinforce what is acceptable and unacceptable in class. It is vital that teachers make students aware of what is expected. One way to do this is by developing classroom rules.

### **Students Created Rules**

You could put students into small groups or pairs to work together and developing a poster based on classroom rules. Review some of the rules as a class and establish a final classroom poster based upon the input from all students. Put it up in one corner of the room and refer to it when reminding students of acceptable behaviour and whether they have broken a rule. You could ask students what would happen if a rule is broken while creating the final version of the rules poster.

### **Class Contract**

This is quite a popular idea for creatively developing rules for the class. Instead of creating a list of rules to be displayed in the classroom, you work with the students to create a contract for the class: one for the Student Class Contract and another for Teacher Class Contract. Here is an example contract for both student and teacher below.

The students will ... arrive to class on time. Speak English during the lesson. Refrain from using their smartphones in class. Put their hand up when asking a

### **Question.**

The teacher will ... start and finish class on time. Give homework on Wednesday and Thursday. Give students feedback on speaking activities. Have a game at the end of the class.

### **Set Up Routines**

It is important for any young learner class to develop routines for the benefit of the students. It will make the delivering of lessons easier and students will feel at ease. There are a couple of things which will help you keep control of the classroom if you incorporate them into your routines. Here are some ideas to include throughout the lesson as part of a routine.

Before letting students into class, they could line up quietly outside the class.

When you let them enter the class, you could say hello to the student and ask a question such as —What did you do last night?|| This will get students into English.

Once students enter the class, they must put their coat away and their bag under their chair, find their name on the desk and sit down quietly. This takes a bit of training but before you know it the students will be doing this automatically.

Start the lesson with a vocabulary review from the day before for five minutes. You could have a game or competitive activity (back to the board, picture and flashcard matching task, etc.).

Have a wind chime or whistle to indicate a change in activity or to get the attention of all learners. You could also get students' attention by saying —1, 2, and 3

[Teacher] eyes on me [all students]!—

Students sing a tidy up song or rhyme when clearing their desk and cleaning the classroom.

Before the students leave the classroom, stand by the door and say goodbye to each person and high five them.

### **Use Flashcards**

One recommendation for any young learner teacher is to make and use lots of flashcards in your classes. If I had been told about using flashcards in class before teaching children, it would have made my life a lot easier. There are some great games you could include in class with flashcards and I would urge any new teacher to do this. It does take some preparation to compile your own flashcards: you have to print them out, maybe colour them, and laminate them so you can reuse them. However, here are some games and activities which you could include with flashcards below.

### **Flashcard Pairs (Pelmanism)**

This is the first game many EFL teachers learn. You have two pairs of flashcards: usually one with a picture and another with a word. You place them all face down and students take two flashcards (one at a time) and if the picture and the word matches, then they score a point and keep the cards. The student with the most amount of flashcards is the winner.

### **Hit The Flashcard**

Stick up all the flashcards on the whiteboard and put the class into two teams. Each team line up in single file facing the whiteboard and the two young learners at the front of the class have a piece of A4 paper rolled up into a long narrow piece which can then be used to hit the whiteboard. You call out the word and the student has to hit the corresponding flashcard. The team with the most amount of correct hits is the winner. This game can become quite competitive with students becoming rather energetic.

For more ideas for lesson activities with flashcards, then have a look at a previous blog post I wrote.

### **Promote Positive Behaviour**

One of the more complicated issues surrounding young learners is classroom management and the promotion of positive behaviour. It is crucial for students to see that their positive behaviour is recognised and rewarded. You could reward students with a movie at the end of the week or with a game at the end of the class – when I was teaching in South Korea, one teacher rewarded the kids with sweets. Nowadays, there are some wonderful applications available now to monitor and encourage young learners.

### **Students Created Rules**

As mentioned before, you could put students into small groups or pairs to work together and developing a poster based on classroom rules. Review some of the rules as a class and establish a final classroom poster based upon the input from all students. Put it up in one corner of the room and refer to it when reminding students of acceptable behaviour and whether they have broken a rule. You could ask students what would happen if a rule is broken while creating the final version of the rules poster.

Behaviour Chart

Another idea to promote positive behaviour is to create a behaviour chart (see image on the left) which will encourage students to work towards a goal. The idea behind a behaviour chart is to remind students what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. All students have a named clothes peg and they are all attached to —Ready to Learn. If a student works well and uses English to ask something to a friend, their peg moves up. If a student doesn't complete the task set or reverts back to L1 during a speaking activity, then their peg moves down. You could set an objective and say —If 15 students end on 'Super Student' by the end of the class, then you will be able to play a game/watch a movie/etc. This will motivate students and encourage learners to participate and use English in class.

### **Marble Jar**

Another idea to promote positive behaviour is to use a jar and marbles. Select a small enough jar which will not take forever to fill with marbles but not too small. Each time a student completes a task, give that student a marble to place in the jar. You could remove marbles for inappropriate behaviour. Once the jar is full with marbles, the students could be rewarded.

### **ClassDojo**

ClassDojo.com is an electronic version of the marble jar or the behaviour chart. You can organise classes with avatars with students, sync it with parents and also add points and recognise particular behaviour. You can also set a goal and arrange rewards much like the other ideas above. I would definitely recommend teachers to consider this and it would also engage those younger learners.

### **Use Games**

One tip for any teachers is to include games in the class. If you are teaching vocabulary, use games. If you are promoting speaking fluency, use games. Young learners respond positively to any competitive activity set in class and will engage learners immediately. It is always best to train learners the games that you will use in class and there are some favourites among teachers. Below are some of the best games to use, which young learners will know.

### **Twenty Questions**

This game is a really popular game, once young learners know what to do. You choose one student to sit at the front of the class and show them one vocabulary (preferably one for review) and the other students must ask the student at the front of the class closed questions (—Do you ...?! —Are you ...?! —Can you ...?!). The students have only 20 questions to ask the student and the only reply the student can say is —Yes or —No. Students must calculate the word that the person has. If students guess the correct word, then they get a point. If they don't know the word, then the person sitting gains a point. You could make this activity more competitive by putting students into teams. The team to guess the word correctly, gets a point.

### **Back to the Board**

Another popular activity is to put a student at the front of the class and write a word (preferably one that you are reviewing) on the whiteboard. The student selected to sit at the front of the class cannot see the word on the whiteboard but the other students in front of him must try to explain the word. If the student guesses the word correctly, then that student gets a point. As mentioned before, you could make the game more competitive by getting two students up to the front of the class and splitting the class into two teams. The team to guess the word correctly gets a point. The team with most points are the winners.

### **Chinese Whispers**

This is a really popular game to get students to think about spelling and is a great task for learners to focus on listening and pronunciation. You get the students into two teams and lined up to the whiteboard. Make sure you write one word on a slip of paper prior to starting the lesson and it is always a good idea to review vocabulary or phrases which have been taught in previous classes. Anyway, you get students lined up to the board in two teams and the two students nearest the board

each has a board marker. You show the word to students at the back of the classroom and then they have to whisper the word to the student in front of them. The final student has to write the word on the whiteboard. If the student has written the word correctly, then they get one point. The team with the most points at the end of the task are the winners.

### **Hangman**

This game is another popular vocabulary review activity. I don't necessarily need to explain the rule of this game as I am sure readers will know what to do. However, if you are still unsure, watch this video to see how to play this game. So here we have a few of the popular games which I am sure almost all teachers have used in class. There are many other games and it would be good if you could share them in the comments section below.

### **Compliment Learners**

This may not so obvious but learners, especially those who are younger, need constant encouragement and one way is to compliment the learners for anything: effort, participation, pronunciation, use of English, etc. If you are learning a language, if a teacher compliments you on one area, it will encourage you try harder. If you receive no recognition then it is likely to demotivate you. So I would highly recommend any teacher to compliment learners in class and do not just compliment one individual all the time as this will cause issues as well. Try to compliment all the students at the same time: —Juan, your speaking was really fluent this time and Jose your pronunciation was very good. Maria, I thought your accuracy was very very good.¶

### **Be Yourself**

It is easy for teachers to fulfil the role as a teacher in the class but then lose sight of being themselves in class. For example, teachers could easily fall into the role of an autocratic teacher, telling students to complete worksheets, setting up tasks and then before you know it, the students are just automatically following what is set in class with minimal engagement. I would recommend teachers to be natural and themselves in class. This does not mean that you lose authority in class or the students end up dictating what is happening in class but the students learn more about the real you and then they can also be themselves. There are obviously times when you need to control the classroom or act in a particular role during the lesson.

### **Enjoy Teaching Children**

Teachers could be doing everything right in class (games, routines, etc.) but still not really be connecting with the young learners. If you do not enjoy teaching children, then there is not a lot that can be done. There are some wonderful teachers who are very good at teaching adults but dislike children but then I have also met teachers who are wonderful with children and not very good teaching adults. If you enjoy teaching children, then you are already halfway there.

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