

# **Enhancing Engagement of English Learners in Grade Level Classrooms**

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*TESOL 2012 Dream Day*

*Philadelphia*

# A story from Bratislava

# **Goals of the session:**

**To help you promote active language**

- to increase engagement & motivation**
- to focus learning time**
- to increase enjoyment and satisfaction in learning and teaching**
- to enhance English language learning**

**BACKGROUND**

# Brains and Learning Theory

- **Positive emotions** open the RAS (Reticular Activating System) to enable input to reach the PFC (prefrontal cortex) (Sousa 2010)
- **Dopamine**, known as a learning-friendly neurotransmitter because it **promotes focus, motivation and memory**, but only during pleasant feelings. (Zull 2002)
- **The state of “Flow”** for optimal learning can be encouraged by appropriate challenges. (Csikszentmihalyi 1990)

# How do we increase Engagement?

## Principles:

- Make learning part of everything, all the time, including classroom routines
- Start the class in ways that engage learners
- Use activities that require participation of all learners
- Incorporate movement into learning
- Make the content relevant and interesting
- Provide appropriate challenge
- Laugh!

**IT'S NOT HOW WE COVER THE  
CURRICULUM, BUT HOW WE UNCOVER THE  
CURRICULUM.**

# Regarding Questions

The only silly question is the one you didn't ask.



# Teach “Zero Noise and Full Attention” for instructions

## Expect

**(a) zero noise,**

**(b) complete attention, and**

**(c) five eyeballs on you**

the two on each learner’s  
face, two on the knees,  
and one from the heart

# **When You See the Signal:**

**1. Move to Zero Noise**

**2. If others around  
you haven't seen  
the signal, silently  
show it to them.**

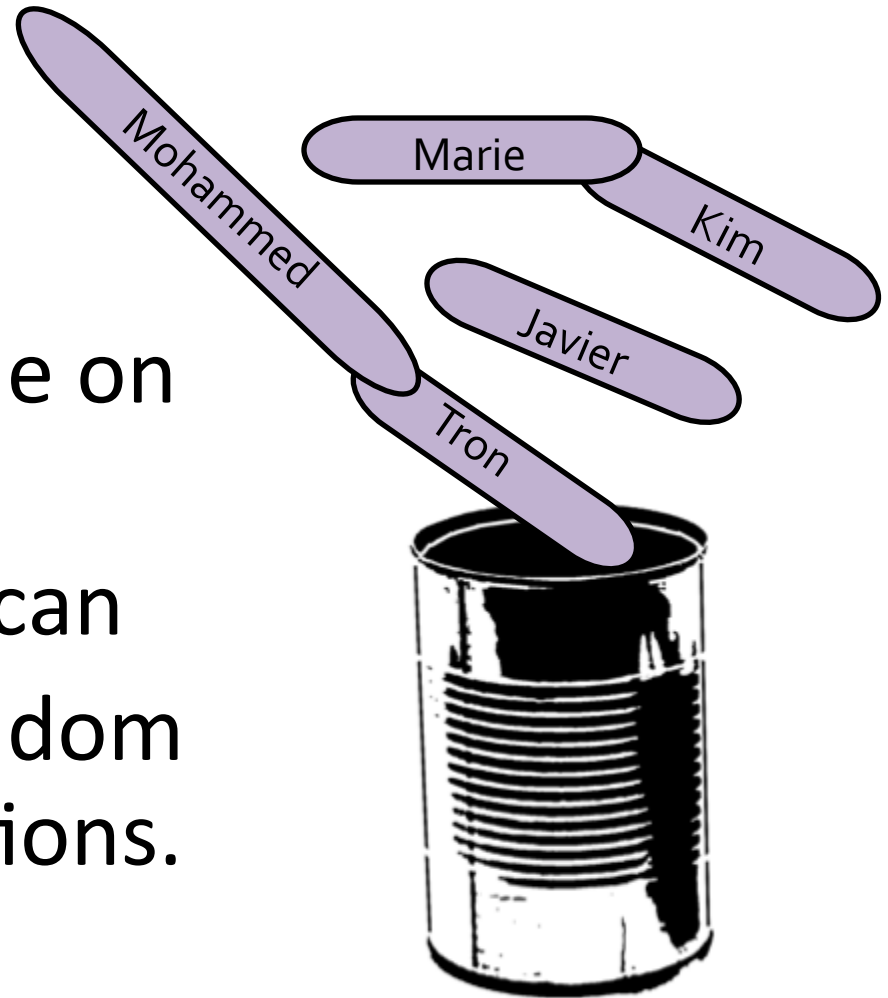
**Use strategies to  
keep  
everyone thinking  
and prepared**

## **Fairness Can**

Put everyone's name on  
a stick.

Put the sticks in a can

Pull the sticks at random  
when you ask questions.



# Entrance/Exit Ticket

- Learners answer a question or complete a short task related to the lesson in order to be able to enter/leave the room at the beginning/end of class

## *Examples*

- *Which direction is your home from here?*
- *Name the state bird of Pennsylvania.*
- *What is the plural of deer?*
- *What is an example of a polite form for asking a question in class?*

# Use “warm-ups”

## Engage learners at the beginning of class

- **Handshake interview** ([video](#)): Teacher shakes hands with each student as they enter the room. Then he/she asks them a question about what they’re studying. If the student answers the question correctly, they enter the room. If not, they get back in line.
- **Find the Errors** Learners work in teams to find the errors, then report on what they found.

**What direction did you travel from your home to Philadelphia?**

# Find the Errors

Have you ever plunked yourself down on a staff meeting where some of your colleagues were, for lack of a better phrase, not paying attention? Grading homework? Having private conversations? Texting?

As we know all too well, kids aren't a whole lot different than adults: If they aren't absorbed by what's going on, they'll find something else that interests them

Getting all your students focused, eager, and on task at the beginning of class is challenging enough. Equally problematic, once you have them lock in to the lesson, is watching them zone out. There's nothing unusual about that. After all, anyone who has to sit through a long routine -- including a teacher's presentation -- are bound to drift off at some point.

Still, unless you manage to capture and keep student's focus, whether at the beginning of or midway through class the engine of student learning that you are trying to drive simply is even in gear.

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[Tristan de Frondeville](#)



# Teach SSLANT Expectations

- **Smile,**
- **Sit up**
- **Listen**
- **Ask**
- **Nod when you understand**
- **Track the spea**

# TPR First Day Rap *M. L. McCloskey*

Show me a pencil.  
Show me a pen.  
Show me some paper  
Show me your friend.

Open the window.  
Shut the door.  
Hands on the table.  
Feet on the floor.

Point to the ceiling.  
Point to the ground  
Stand up. Sit down.  
Look around.

Show me a chalkboard.  
Show me a book.  
Show me a chair.  
Give me a look.

Point to your teacher.  
Point to yourself.  
Point to the trash can.  
Point to the shelf.

Raise you hand high.  
Take it down.  
Give me a smile.  
Never a frown.

# **Make slates for individuals/ groups to use to show responses:**

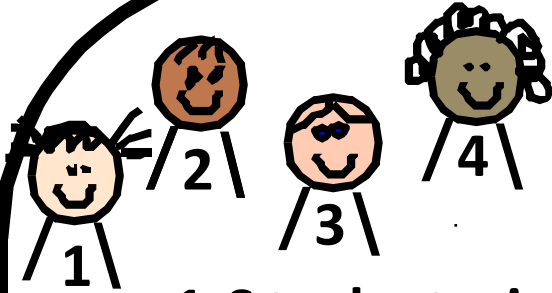
Using Slates /  
Mini-  
Whiteboards

- Put plain paper in page protectors
- Provide whiteboard marker and cloth for erasing
- Have learners (or groups) write responses on the slates.
- Learners all wait to show slates at a signal, e.g., “slates up!”

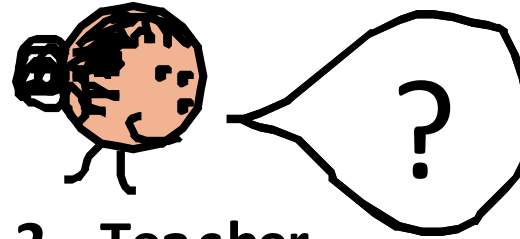
# Advantages of Using Slates

- Active learning
- Instant and continuous feedback
- Facilitates collaboration
- Flexible and fun

# Collaborative Learning: Heads Together



1 Students in groups number off



2. Teacher poses problem or question

3. Group members confir.



4. Teacher chooses a number to give group's answer.



# Questions for Heads Together

- What are the names of the people in your group?
- What dances can your group teach us?
- What have you learned from answering the first two questions?
- How does “heads together” relate to the principles described above?

# Heads Together

**Question:**

**What activities have been introduced this morning?**

# **Incorporate movement into learning**

**Hand Clapping:** Develop hand clapping routines to teach sound patterns and syllables:

Stress on the first syllable: **o pen dou ble**

Stress on the second syllable: **re peat im ply**

Two stresses: **in-vis-i-ble de-fi-ant-ly**



Incorporate  
movement  
into learning

## **Use steps to teach language patterns:**

- Lions and tigers and bears, oh my!
- Buzzards, and polecats and crows, oh my!
- \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, oh my!

# **Incorporate movement into learning**

## **Lineups:**

Have learners line themselves up according to some criteria.

## **Examples:**

**Line up by birth date**

**Line up by distance**

**Demonstrate a sequence**

Lineups:  
Teach the language First

**On what month and day were you born?**

**I was born on (month) (ordinal number).**

# **Incorporate movement into learning**

**Phases of the moon**

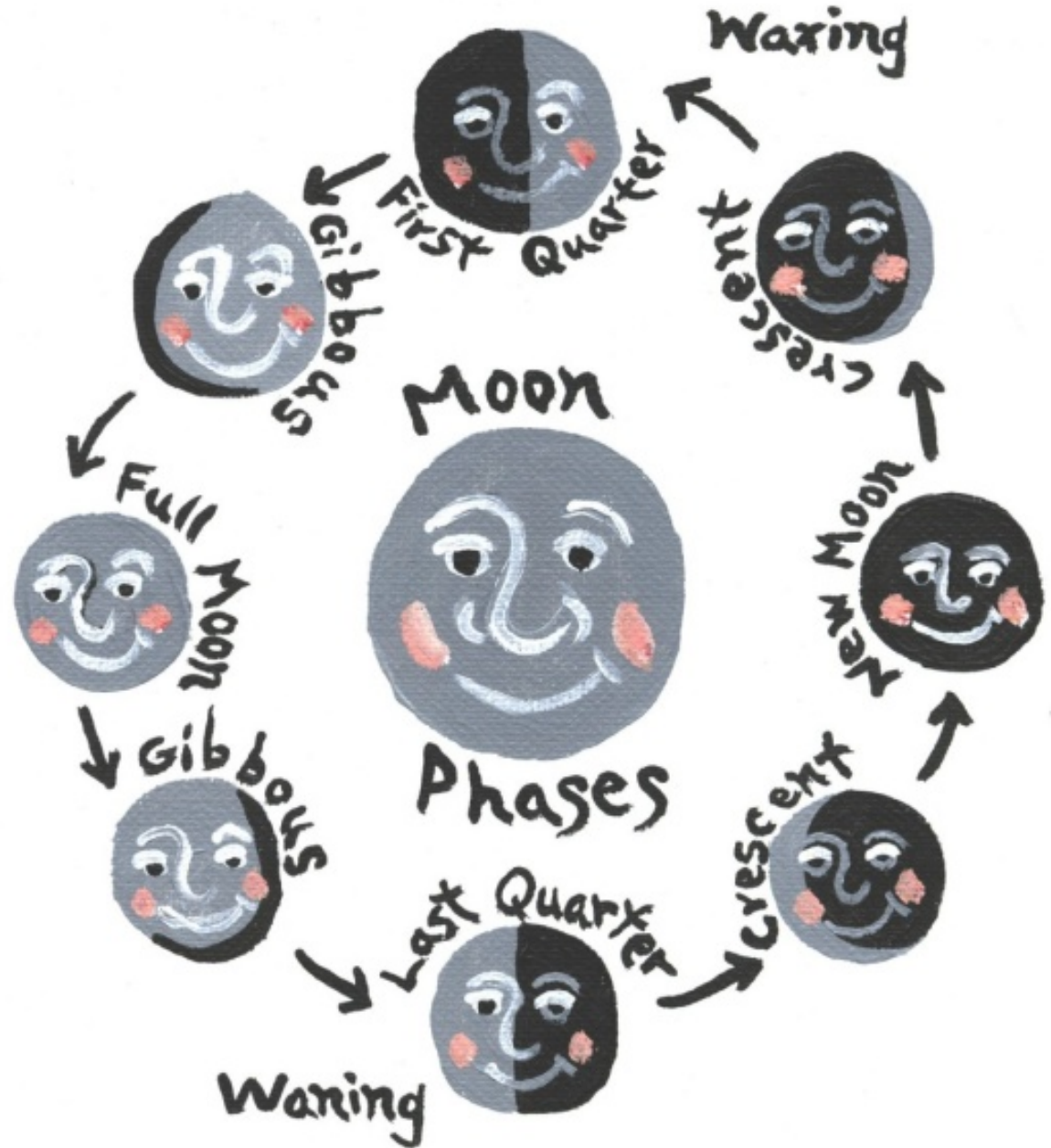
**Pre-assessment: Heads Together**

**What are the phases of the moon?**

**(Hint: there are 8)**

# Phases of the moon

Key terms:  
waxing  
waning  
crescent  
quarter  
gibbous  
new  
full



# Incorporate movement into learning

**Lineups:** Sample lineup with content vocabulary and concepts.

## **Example: Phases of the Moon**

- Pass out cards with labels, phases of the moon.
- Instruct participants to line up showing the phases of the moon in order, including in each phase, picture and term.
- Show an answer key and check answers.

**Use cooperative learning activities that provide both group and individual accountability.**

**Example: “Ask Three Before Me”**

If you have a question, ask three of your peers for the answer before you raise your hand to interrupt the teacher.

# Teach learners how to collaborate

Create a Cooperative groups rubric.  
How should we behave during a  
discussion?

- Write three rules on your slate



# Teach learners how to collaborate

Create a Cooperative groups rubric.

How should we behave during a discussion?

- Listen to one another
- Check our understanding
- Speak one at a time
- Connect what we say to the persons before
- Try to come to consensus, or explain our disagreements and understand the other side.

# Teach learners how to collaborate

## Fishbowl

- While a group discusses, have other learners stand around the outside and take notes on their participation, using the rubric.
- Observe for positive examples of people following the rubric.
- [Video](#)

# Fishbowl

## Discussion topic

What are the biggest challenges to teaching learners of English in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

# Teach learners how to collaborate

## Fishbowl Debrief:

- Look at your rubric.
- What examples did you see of people behaving in those ways?
- Write one on your slate
- [Video](#)

**PLEASE PUT MARKER AND CLOTH IN  
YOUR SLATE POCKET.**

**PLEASE QUIETLY PASS YOUR SLATES TO  
THE CENTER AISLE.**

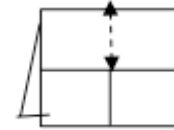
# Make a little book

## 8-Page Fold-It Book

1. Fold paper 3 times.



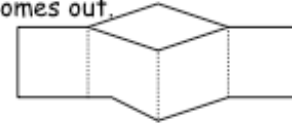
2. Open. Fold the fat way. Cut halfway in from the fold side.



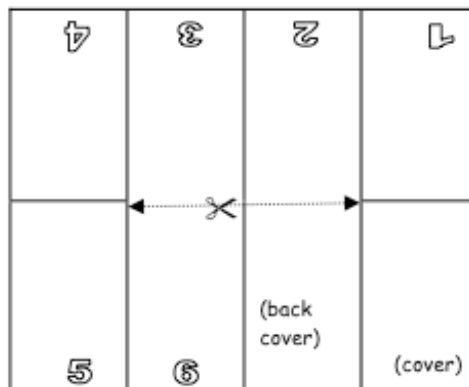
3. Open and re-fold the skinny way.



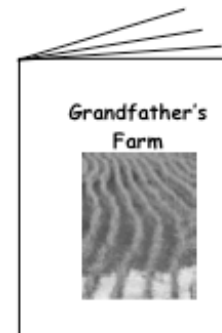
4. Push the ends together so the middle comes out.



5. Pages will look like this.



6. Write and draw in your book.



# Uses for your little book

- Story book
- Picture book
- Comic book
- Illustrate a Cycle (e.g., plant cycle)
- Poem
- Dictionary
- Thank-you note
- Valentine
- Outline of lecture
- Address book
- Recipe
- TPR Script
- TPR Storytelling

On page 1, write 5 favorite uses for  
your little book.



# Promote thought and reflection

## Quickwrites:

- Learners write short pieces in their journals in response to your questions.
- They can choose to share entries with the class.
- Have learners mark one piece each week that they want you to read.

## **QUICKWRITE:**

**On page 2 of your little book, write one way a quickwrite might be effective in your classroom and why.**

**On page 3 of your little book,  
make a list of the activities we  
used in this workshop to promote  
engagement.**

**QUICKWRITE:**

# Strategies and/or Activities

- Zero noise and full attention
- Numbered Heads Together
- Entrance/Exit Ticket
- Handshake Interview
- Find the Errors
- First Day Rap
- Fairness Can
- SSLANT

**It's not about how well we  
teach, but about how well  
our students learn.**

**Thank you!**

**Mary Lou McCloskey**

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