

## **Assignment: Workforce Literacy Institute II: ESL for Work**

Because my teaching focuses primarily on speaking and listening, I am presenting three different activities for three different levels. All of the activities I chose involved both speaking and listening. The academic focus of most of the activities involves medical concerns. This is not specific to the workforce literacy institute, but I felt that it was very relevant in the sense that the lesson focus was to express a medical problem to a classmate/coworker and then to have that person respond by expressing sympathy in return. I feel this type of communication scenario is pertinent to any workplace atmosphere.

### **Planning the Lesson:**

#### **Activity 1: Role Plays                      Intermediate Level**

The objectives for this intermediate class were to

- 1) state a type of non-severe medical condition
- 2) express sympathy to others
- 3) communicate in 3<sup>rd</sup> person about others with a medical condition

To adapt to the needs of the class, two class days were used to build the vocabulary and give them opportunities to practice the dialogs. I first focused on pronunciation of the terms, then on pronunciation of the sentences used in the dialog. Then, I modeled the conversations with the student in a whole group activity. Then they paired up and practiced at their tables. After the small group interaction, they presented their dialogs to the class while I videotaped them. The camera made them uncomfortable and may have had an impact on them.

#### **Activity 2: Conversation Cards      Advanced Level**

The objectives for this activity were to

- 1) express ideas and communicate effectively
- 2) listen actively in order to ask or answer questions

Because this activity was done on the anniversary of September 11, the conversation topic was "Where were you and what were you doing when you found out about what was happening on September 11, 2001?" I started the class by asking questions about Sept. 11. I made sure the students were listening by asking questions to the audience. This part of the activity was interesting because we were able to listen to the students' perspectives about this event.

After the warm up discussion, I gave the students the conversation topic and modeled for them by telling them my own recollection of where I was at that time. Before they started, I reassigned students to a different table by having them count off to six. They went to their new table to talk with different members of the class. I periodically do this to encourage more interaction between students. In addition, it is a very effective way to build class unity. As the students converse with each other, I move from table to table to listen and encourage the students to ask questions of the classmates as they speak.

### **Activity 3: Line Up**

### **Beginning Level**

I normally use "Line Up" to have students recall the events of a story we have read. I wanted to use this line up activity with the beginning level group but I had to modify it because this does not involve a reading activity and because I feel beginning students need more repetition and less material. Everything we do is very simple and very repetitive.

The objective for this particular activity was for them to:

- 1) express concern: What's the matter? Or What's wrong?
- 2) express a medical problem: I have ... (a headache, toothache, etc)
- 3) use 3<sup>rd</sup> person to express an illness: She has a ...

On the day of this activity, we practiced and rehearsed the first and second objectives, which were covered over three days. So in many ways this was the culmination of the week's work, plus I introduced a new twist: to speak in third person. I videotaped the students as they did the practice exercise and then again as they incorporated the new element of speaking in third person. The camera did not have too much of an impact on them and it turned out very well.

### **Reflecting on the Lesson:**

As a whole, I feel the activities went very well. The dialog role play with the second level did not go as well as I would have liked. In retrospect, maybe I gave them too many variables to include in the conversation. I encouraged them to ask questions like, "Did you take medicine? Or, Have you seen a doctor?" I know we practiced sufficiently, but we should have kept in a bit simpler? Some students were very successful. I also videotaped them and perhaps this had a negative impact on them. I plan to videotape more often so they can adjust to the

experience of being videotaped. They watched the tape the next day and I feel that after watching it they are motivated to improve their performance.

If there is one thing I would recommend to any teacher is to always model the activity with the students before you turn them loose and on their own. This will be so helpful in eliminating confusion and will give them the opportunity to practice correctly with a classmate. The second thing is to not overwhelm lower level students with too much vocabulary or material. The brain can only remember a few chunks of information, and the lesson will be more effective if they focus all of their effort and energy on a small piece of material. Last of all, I really recommend the use of videotape. They will eventually become accustomed to having it as a permanent part of the classroom experience.