

CAPE Alumni Internet Connection: English Teacher Talk

CAPE Internet Talk was started as part of CAPE follow-up activities to continue ties with CAPE alumni and those who are interested in professional development in English teaching. It is hoped that this would increase our bond and aloha among former participants, and that the information in the TALK would help our alumni and friends/members review what they know and deepen their understanding of issues and interest in the ESL field.

Aloha from Hawaii. I hope you all are having a pleasant and productive New Year. Here at CAPE we are busy with the 30th International Program for English Teachers. We wish all of you were here with us.

Also, the University of Hawaii semester will start next week. The professors and language teachers there have been trying to enjoy the last rays of sunshine before retreating back to offices and classroom.

CLASSROOM SPEECH

Whole class discussions and wrap-ups can be hard for students and teachers alike, especially at the lower levels. Therefore, this section will discuss how to encourage students to speak.

Inviting students to give their opinions:

What/How about you (Me Keung)? What do you think?

Would you agree with that?

What's your opinion, (Aki)?

Would you go along with that?

How does that strike you?

How does that sound?

What do you think about what (Ming) said? Did you have the same impression?

TEACHING TIP

To practice intonation and pronunciation, you may use Jazz Chants. If you have not used them before, they are short poems that use rhythm to teach English. Many of them are structured around grammar or a conversational point. Usually, the teacher reads the chant and the students respond, however, sometimes I have the students listen and repeat. I also try to exaggerate the rhythm of the sentence so it is clear for students.

This is a Jazz Chant for children. It practices the negative be form. You might want to go over it several times, but it should be okay even for children who don't read or write in English. "T" is for "teacher" and "S" is for students.

SNOW IS HOT

T: Snow is hot.

S: No, it's not.

No, it's not.

T: Snow is hot.

Snow is hot.

S: No, it's not.

No, it's not.

Snow's not hot.

Snow's not hot.

T: Yes, it is.

S: No, it's not.

Snow's not hot.

As you can imagine, you could adapt this poem by using words like "ice" or "winter" in place of snow. You could also change it to the affirmative (e.g. "Tea's not hot." "Yes, it is.") although the rhythm would not be quite as good.

This is a chant for older children with a functional aim. The students repeat "I'd rather not say" to all the teachers questions. If they later encounter questions they don't want to answer in their own life they can use the phrase to avoid discomfort, yet still sound polite. In addition, the middle questions are examples of questions American English speakers often consider impolite, so you could discuss this with more mature language learners if you wanted to.

PERSONAL QUESTIONS:

T: Where were you born?

S: I'd rather not say.

T: Where are you from?

S: I'd rather not say.

T: How tall are you?

How old are you?

How much do you weigh?

S: I'd rather not say.

T: How much rent do you pay?

S: I'd rather not say.

T: How much do you make?

S: I'd rather not say.

T: Why aren't you married?

S: I'd rather not say.

T: Why don't you have children?

S: I'd rather not say.

T: Where were you last night?

Why weren't you home?

Did you stay out late?

Did you come home alone?

Did you have a good time?

Did you see a good play?

Did you go to a concert?

S: I'd rather not say.

You could adapt this poem by having the students read it in pairs or small groups with one person playing the teacher's role. You could also have the students make up their own uncomfortable questions and have group members answer with "I'd rather not say".

THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER

As it is the New Year, we customarily make New Year's resolutions, lists of goals and things we want to do differently in the New Year. It's a good time to think about what we want to achieve and how we can improve ourselves. We are in a profession that demands that we constantly develop our skills and remain flexible and open. Therefore, I try to make professional as well as personal goals. For example, in the coming year I hope to make my classes more student centered. This will include increased student participation in choosing content material for the class and more student evaluation. I also resolve to do my lesson planning more in advance so I'll have more free time (which I resolve to do every year. I have to admit I sometimes envy my fiancé who gets to leave his work at work and actually relax when he's at home.) How about you? What are your professional resolutions? What will you do (or are you doing) to achieve these goals?

Well, that's it for another edition of Teacher Talk. We here at CAPE wish you and your students all the best. As usual, we welcome your comments and suggestions. We are really happy with the number of people who write to us and enjoy the holiday cards. Mahalo!

Please take the time to give us the addresses of anyone else you think might be interested in receiving this newsletter of the CAPE Internet Connection: English Teacher Talk. And don't forget to write us with any comments you might have. Mahalo!

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