

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 and welcome to another version of Teacher Talk. I hope you are all doing well and surviving the winter. It has been a bit chilly here in Honolulu, but nowhere near the cold temperatures on the mainland!

I have just started a new semester teaching ninth graders. It is definitely a challenge, but very rewarding. We have thirty students in a class, so I can understand more what lots of you experience while teaching larger classes (although I realize my classes are still smaller than many of yours). Although some of my students were born in Hawaii, many speak English as a Second Language. We often have to teach vocabulary words about the topics we discuss. This issue of Teacher Talk will revisit the topic of oral production of new vocabulary because it is something that is always important to language teachers.

Classroom Language

This section is for teachers who would like to practice their classroom English and possibly learn new phrases.

Encouraging Discussion: Using a picture or photo

Why does/do How come Why do you think In your opinion, why is/are Why might	this boy that woman these people	look(s) mad/excited/happy is/are doing that? do that?
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What	could might	have just happened? have been happening? happen next? happen now?	Why do you think that?
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Now,	with your neighbor with your partner in pairs in small groups	discuss make a story make a prediction	about the picture.
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To encourage students to express opinions

Look at these pictures of	clothes. vegetables. buildings. etc.	Which ones do you	like best? like least?	Explain why.
		Which ones would you	like to wear/eat/live in etc.?	

Which Which of these What kind of _____	would you	take with you use	to school/a party etc. every day/during the summer at home/school	Rank them in order of best to worst/ favorite to least favorite Discuss your choice with your partner. Give reasons.
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Teaching Tip

The following teaching tip can be done after the teacher presents the word and checks comprehension.

7 chairs

1. Have the students read a list of seven vocabulary words/look at pictures of vocabulary words and rank them.
2. Have seven chairs ready or seven sheets of paper hung around the room with numbers on them.
3. The teacher then stands behind one of the chairs/ next to one piece of paper and says the word.
4. After the teacher has said each word, the students stand by the chair/paper that represents the word they ranked first.
5. Have someone keep track on the board of the number of students who chose each word.
6. The activity can be extended by asking for second favorite, third favorite, etc.

Possible products:

1. Have students make a pie chart or bar graph that shows how many students chose each word
2. Have students find a partner who chose the same word and create a mini-poster that includes the word, a picture and two reasons why they chose this word.

Thoughts to consider:

The most recent edition of TESOL Matters (December/January/February 2003) gave some tips for fighting “teacher burnout”, the lack of energy or motivation teachers

sometimes experience when they work too hard. I think many teachers have experienced this and it can be very difficult to talk about and sometimes makes teachers leave teaching. However, I was relieved to find out that “almost every teacher experiences burnout, that it tends to come in cycles (on average every 5 years), that it passes, and that we have it in our power to reduce and even eliminate these from our lives.” The author, Laurel Pollard, offers a lot of useful advice for teachers. I think one of the most important suggestions was “Choose activities that will make your teaching more effective and your life easier”. For example, activities that require little of no teacher preparation can be very effective and reduce your stress. As I work with 90 students a day, I have realized the value of activities that build on each other and are longer. For example, in the activity above, I prepare one paper and allow the students to use it for an entire period. This type of activity also fits with another suggestion from the article: “Multiply your power by empowering your students to take charge of their own learning,” which allows “teachers to be onstage less because students, not the teacher, are doing the work.” For instance, when students make posters (like in the activity above) they spend more time interacting with the material and all I have to do is go from group to group and monitor. I feel that these are important considerations, especially for teachers with large classes.

Well, that’s all for this edition of teacher talk. I hope you all have enjoyable and productive classes. If you have a moment, please send us an e-mail with any suggestions or comments.

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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