

Student self-correction and awareness building can't replace formal instruction about language elements, and neither can it replace more extended, purely meaning-based communicative practice. However, it builds an essential bridge between the two, and I would include such a strand in any intensive language class I teach in the future.

Additional Reading

These articles present a variety of related approaches to helping learners notice features of their own speech through recordings and transcription tasks.

- Basturkmen, H. (2002). Learner observation, and reflection on, spoken discourse: An approach for teaching academic speaking. *TESOL Journal*, 11(2), 26-30.
- Huang, S. (2008). Raising learner-initiated attention to formal aspects of their oral production through transcription and stimulated reflection. *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*, 46, 375-392.

- Lynch, T. (2001) Seeing what they meant: Transcribing as a route to noticing. *ELT Journal*, 55(2), 124-132.
- Lynch, T. (2007). Learning from the transcripts of an oral communication task. *ELT Journal*, 61(4), 311-320.
- Lynch, T. & Maclean, J. (2000). Exploring the benefits of task repetition and recycling for classroom language learning. *Language Teaching Research*, 4, 221-250.
- Mennim, P. (2003). Rehearsed oral output and reactive focus on form. *ELT Journal*, 57(2), 130-138.
- Stillwell, C., Curabba, B., Alexander, K., Kidd, A., Kim, E., Stone, P. & Wyle, C. (2009). Students transcribing tasks: Noticing fluency, accuracy, and complexity. *ELT Journal*, 64(4), 445-455.

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Helping Students Through Difficult Conversations ***Maiko Hata, University of Oregon***

Have you had students come to you crying, yelling, or completely depressed? As ESL teachers, we are often engaged in difficult conversations with our students. After making my transition from teacher to academic advisor, learning to navigate challenging conversations with international students has been demanding yet fascinating. Here are some techniques I have found helpful.

1. A smile and a friendly “How are you?” go a long way.

No matter what culture students might be from, this is always appreciated: After all, a smile is universal. I find this especially helpful when the student is being referred to us for “problematic” behaviors like excessive absences or cheating. The welcoming atmosphere usually diffuses such students’ “combat-ready” mentality: sometimes,

I can even see their bodies relax.

2. Listen carefully, because the issue is not often clearly expressed

Students come to us, demanding that we let them withdraw from the program or let them choose a level that they think is more appropriate. However, often it is not what they tell us initially that is really bothering them. When a crying student tells you she needs to drop out, what is really going on? Is she scared because she might not pass? Is her family going through financial difficulty? Did her boyfriend break up with her and she's feeling suicidal? Is the student who's rarely in class suffering from health issues? Could he be tired from observing Ramadan? Is Skyping late into night with his family back home keeping him awake till two every morning? After listening and asking appropriate questions, we can usually find more ways to help them. And of course, having someone who listens to them without judging helps them feel better.

3. Work on a realistic next step or goal.

When we know what is really going on, working on a next step or a goal helps students move on towards their futures, instead of looking at what went wrong. For the crying student mentioned above, our office probably would suggest that she discuss her progress and how to improve her skills with her teachers in a weekly conference. If the problem is more financial, we would direct her to information about on-campus jobs after checking her eligibility. Offering something, even when that is not what they originally asked for, is always appreciated.

4. Involve the students in the process.

Just like in the classroom, having students come up with their own plans helps them feel responsible. This seems to be especially important in discipline issues like ex-

cessive absences, cheating, or not submitting assignments on time. "What are your goals? Do you think this behavior is helping you achieve them? What would?" Simple questions like these can encourage them to look at their situations critically. I also try to make the goals S.M.A.R.T., as in Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound ("SMART criteria," 2011). It is a lot harder to stick to a goal if the goal is to "wake up early every day and never be late again." It is much easier with a S.M.A.R.T. goal in mind such as, "I'll finish Skyping with my family in China before 10:30 and go to bed by 11:30, so I can catch the 7:35 bus. I'll study for at least 1.5 hours every day at the library before going home to my chatty roommates. I'll also keep a schedule book and write down homework deadlines and test dates, so I can plan ahead to have at least a week for writing and editing drafts. This way, I'll be less tempted to cheat." And, remember to keep it realistic – some students get so excited about their plans that they tell us they will be going to bed at 9:30 and waking up at 5.

5. Know when and where to refer students.

It's always helpful to have an idea of useful resources for students. After all, we are not trained to deal with some of the issues that students have. As academic advisers, we often walk our students who sound depressed or suicidal over to our on-campus counseling center. On-campus legal services are very helpful too. For example, here at the University of Oregon, students can make an appointment with a lawyer for a free consultation about issues like tenant/landlord disputes. We also have a great office that works with students with disabilities. At all these places, we often stay with our students while they work on an intake questionnaire or while they talk with the counselor/lawyer. Many students seem to appreciate having a

familiar face, not to mention having someone who can work through complicated English jargon.

6. Last but not least, make sure they know you care.

Our students are in a foreign land with limited English, which can be very scary and humiliating. I still remember, vividly, how humiliating it was at times when I was an international student, and that was 15 years ago. Some students are amazed to learn that we do care. This also helps them open up to us, which in return makes helping them a lot easier. If you pay attention and give students the respect they deserve, they will feel a little, if not completely, better. Good luck!

Reference

SMART criteria. (n.d.) In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved October 6, 2011, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SMART_criteria

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Posing Questions and Calling on Students *Laura Holland, University of Oregon*

Here is the situation: we are standing in front of the class. We are posing questions to our students about a reading, grammar point, listening selection or other language skill we are covering that day. We pose the question in what I term a “call and response fashion,” meaning that we put the question out to the group, not calling on any individual student. The students call out their responses and then we give general feedback and pose the next question. There are several advantages to this method of posing questions: it feels lively, it doesn’t take a lot of our precious time and can keep the pace of the class moving along quickly. Students who are more verbally adept can shine and feel more engaged than in writing. No one is put on the spot so it can be face-saving for

students who are shy about answering individually.

There is nothing wrong with this manner of questioning if it is one of many methods of posing and answering questions we use. The problem arises when we use it exclusively.

I have been spending a lot of time observing other teachers’ classes over the last few years and have noted that we all use this technique *a lot*. I was surprised to note that despite our knowledge of other alternatives, it seems to be the “go-to” approach for posing questions, my own classes included. Again, there is nothing wrong with it as one of the many techniques we employ. There