

Introductory note

The books in this series serve as 'manuals' discussing the most basic and fundamental issues relating to the topic area one is treating. They are meant to serve as quick references for teachers, offering them on-the-spot suggestions and solutions to questions they may have on specific subjects, as well as practical, easy-to-prepare activities and self-monitoring activities for teachers. For further study, more detailed discussion, and theory, teachers can refer to the bibliography in the back pages of each manual.

Our position is that we are constantly interested in empowering learners. However, we need to think of empowering teachers as well. Our suggestions and proposed strategies or techniques are not 'rabbits out of the hat,' but age-old concerns approached in a more informed and up-to-date way.

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1 The Learners

Our first concern is our learners; teaching is thoughtfulness and it is our learners who need to be foremost in our thoughts in order for our teaching to be effective. Being a teacher requires large doses of humility. One thought works well to make a teacher humble: "If it weren't for my learners, I wouldn't be a teacher."

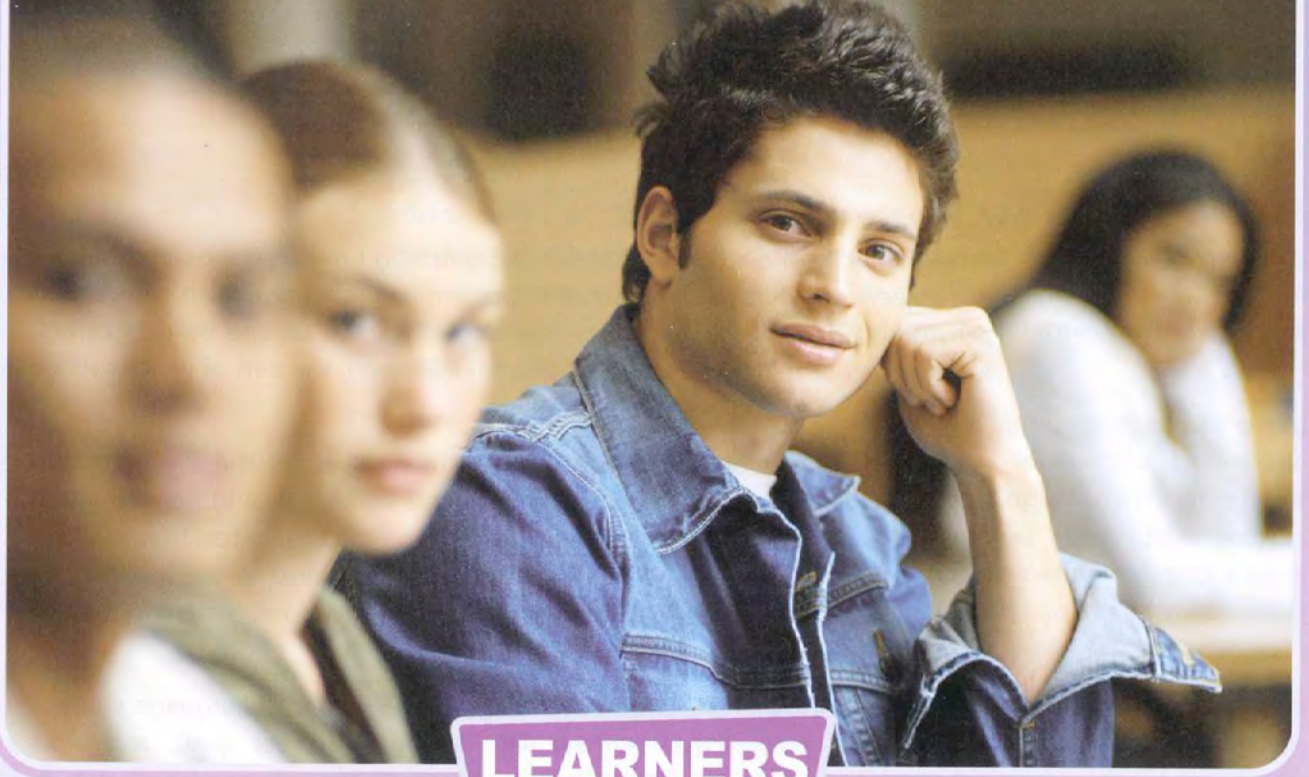
Before you begin teaching, find out WHO wants to learn, WHAT and WHY. The clearer your knowledge about who your learners are, which aspects of language they need to use and which are their personal reasons for learning a foreign language, the more effective your teaching will be.

- WHO are your learners? What are their ages, level, knowledge of the world, and social skills? What about their strengths and weaknesses? Are they shy about speaking? Quick at comprehending a written text? How about their willingness to take risks? To cooperate with their peers? What makes them 'tick'? What are they interested in?
- WHAT do they need English for? They may be young learners who have not yet decided on their professional pursuits, but once you know some of their interests and hobbies, you can help them recognise what needs they have or will have for communicating in their foreign language. The more specific their goals are, the more adequately you can design lessons for them.
- WHY are they learning English? Consider the individuals in your class. Certainly, many of your learners may share some reasons for learning a foreign language – to acquire a certification, to open up more job possibilities, to travel abroad – but make it a point to discover each learner's personal reason for wanting to communicate in English. (See Teacher's Activity 1: A. Keeping a file on your individual learners and B. Reason why motivated on p. 42.)

"Teach the learner, not the book." Whenever possible, replace examples and topics from your course material with those of interest to your learners. For example, a model sentence featuring a popular footballer from your learner's country can precede the coursebook's dialogue between Mary Doe from Brisbane, Australia and her aunt in Sydney to capture the learners' attention and to keep them focused on what it is we'll learn to say today.

Gather information about them to help you personalise the content of your lessons. For example, you may learn that John has a pet lizard named Dino, so you might use the name "Dino the Lizard" in one of the examples you write on the board. Learners are indirectly involved in the lesson and their interest increases when the teacher provides personalised examples in English.





LEARNERS

WHO

clear knowledge about:
who they are, i.e.

age, level

knowledge of
the world

interests,
social skills

WHAT

current and future uses,
i.e.

travel study

work possibilities

to become more
'international'

WHY

personal reasons, i.e.

admires the people who
know/use this language

needs to communicate
with people who do not
speak his/her language

wants to tell others
about self, country,
customs

Graphic 1