

# Lesson Planning and Classroom Survival



- Having a carefully constructed lesson plan in hand allows you to enter the classroom with considerably more confidence.
- Effective lesson planning, especially during your early days of teaching, rests heavily in good habits such as setting aside quality time for planning and putting the plan in writing.
- One key strategy for establishing rapport with students is expressing interest in them, their country, and their nation.
- Creating a warm, friendly class atmosphere makes teaching and learning easier for all concerned. Fun is a legitimate part of the language classroom.

One of my strongest memories from my early years of teaching has to do with the never-ending search for lessons (e.g., activities, games) that “worked.” For all but the most self-confident volunteer teachers (VTs), the overwhelming priority during the first few months of teaching is getting through as many class periods as possible without disasters such as exercises that take twice as long as planned, instructions that students completely misunderstand, and activities that students respond to with overwhelming apathy.

Another form of catastrophe—possibly the worst—is running out of activities when the class period is only half over. During my first year of teaching, my response when caught short was to have the class play Hangman, a harmless little spelling game that could easily dispatch half an hour of class time before everyone began to get restless. It didn’t teach much English, but it allowed me to survive a class period without running out of material. In many ways, Hangman serves as a symbol of my early teaching days because the primary object of my class planning was to prevent myself from winding up like the hanging man himself, dangling in front of a class to which my inexperience had been suddenly revealed. As long as my focus was primarily on my own lack of confidence and need to avoid embarrassing myself, it was difficult to see past my needs to those of the students.

Ultimately, of course, your goal in each day’s English lesson should be to provide a good learning experience for the students. However, until you have the confidence that you can get through a lesson with your dignity intact, it is difficult to focus on higher level issues such as how to use the class hour as effectively as possible. This chapter addresses the issue of planning for the class hour, with an eye to getting you past the survival stage as quickly as possible.

## Basic Lesson-Planning Habits

Ideally, much of a teacher’s planning should already be done even before he or she sits down to make up tomorrow’s lesson plan. First, the overall course goals help determine what kinds of activities are needed and why, so that teachers don’t need to start from scratch each day with the question *What will I do tomorrow?* Furthermore, having a clear sense of overall goals often helps teachers focus on a relatively limited and stable set of activities that they draw on more or less regularly for lessons, thus decreasing the amount of time that needs to be devoted to generating new ideas for the next day’s class. Of course, teachers will want to build in some variety and variation from day to day lest the course become overly monotonous, but they will not need to rely too much on novelty and variety to keep the course interesting because the overall sense of purpose and direction will provide much of the drive necessary to engage students’ interest and participation. In fact, as Stevick (1988, 7–8) notes, this very regularity even helps students relax in class because it gives them a sense that the teacher knows what he or she is doing. This sense of overall structure and direction also helps give teachers confidence that helps them weather days when students aren’t very responsive or when an activity doesn’t quite go as planned.

This description, of course, is the ideal, and it is worth working toward. However, the problem for beginning teachers is often precisely that the big picture is not yet entirely clear. While you have probably chosen tentative goals for your courses, and perhaps even a set of methods you plan to use regularly, you are also no doubt all too aware that quite a bit of trial and error lies ahead before you will be fully confident that your choices of goals and methods are good ones. At this point in your teaching life, overall course goals may be as much of a source of concern as they are of security, so for the moment your course goals have only limited value as a rock on which to anchor your sense of direction and confidence. Furthermore, your ability to predict how things will go in class—how students will respond to a given activity or how long it will take—is

also probably still somewhat shaky. During the early phases of your teaching life, the confidence with which you enter the classroom is often based less in your sense of long-term goals than in the efficacy of your day's lesson plan. So it seems appropriate to begin this chapter on lesson planning and classroom survival with a discussion of the most basic—and important—lesson-planning habits that can maximize the chances of a good day in class.

The most important of these habits is also the most obvious: you need to make a plan for each lesson. A few gifted individuals can regularly wing it in the classroom and get by reasonably well, but such people are the exception rather than the rule (and many members of this select minority are more skilled at entertaining than educating). Teaching well and establishing a good classroom atmosphere are hard enough even if you prepare properly; to skimp on preparation is to beg for a lousy day in class.

The second important habit is to block out quality time in your weekly schedule for making lesson plans. Preparation can seem a rather ephemeral and undefined activity, at least when compared with classroom teaching or composition correcting, and it is therefore sometimes relegated to scraps of time left over from other activities. However, during your early days as a teacher, effective lesson planning probably places more demands on your concentration and creativity than paper grading or other activities do, so you should plan when your mind is freshest. Reserving prime time specifically for preparation ensures better lesson plans.

A third basic habit consists of writing down your lesson plans—in some detail—rather than keeping them in your head. A written lesson plan gives you something to which you can refer in class when you need to jog your memory and leaves you a written record to draw on if you want to use that particular lesson again. However, the most important advantage is that writing a plan down forces you to think it through more carefully. Class plans you dream up but do not write down have a tendency to seem more thorough than they in fact are, much in the way that a polluted river seen in dim moonlight may appear a lot nicer than it really is. Letting plans first see the light of day on paper is generally very helpful in ensuring that you have worked out the details.

The final habit is that of writing flexibility into your lesson plans. One of the hardest things for beginning teachers (and even more experienced ones) is to accurately predict how long any particular activity will take. Sometimes an activity you thought would only take a few minutes engages students for a whole class period; other times, an activity you thought would generate discussion for at least thirty minutes dies after only three. For this reason, it is wise to have contingency plans, and as you plan lessons, you should decide what parts of the lesson you can jettison if things start running overtime and what additional material you can throw into the breach if the original plan doesn't last as long as you thought. As you gain teaching experience, your ability to estimate how long activities will run (and the closely related issue of how enthusiastically students will respond to them) will gradually improve. However, the more important difference between the novice and the veteran is that the veteran has learned from hard experience that the unexpected will happen and that things rarely go entirely as planned, so it is wise to be prepared to make quick changes to the plan.

## Aspects of a Lesson Plan

### A BASIC LESSON PLAN FORMULA

There are as many ways to structure a lesson plan as there are different teaching situations, and no single plan can serve as a model for all situations. However, for planning many English classes, a basic initial formula would consist of the following parts:

1. **preview:** Giving students an overview of the day's lesson conveys a sense that there is a definite purpose and plan behind the day's activities. (This step may be done either before or after any warm-up activities.)
2. **warm-up:** Just as a concert often starts with a short lively piece to warm the audience up, a lesson often starts with a brief activity that is relatively lively. Its main function is to generate a good class atmosphere, but it can also be used for reviewing material from previous lessons or introducing new material in the day's lesson. Incidentally, the warm-up tends to set the tone for the lesson, and if it involves real communication, it will tend to reinforce the importance of genuine communication right from the beginning of the class period.
3. **main activities:** These are the main course of the day's menu, the more demanding activities to which most of the lesson will be devoted.
4. **optional activity:** This is an activity that you hope to use but are ready to omit if you are running out of time. (Normally, I simply designate one of my main activities as optional by marking it *If time allows* in my lesson plan.)
5. **reserve (or spare-tire) activity:** This is an activity that is not a key part of your lesson plan, but you have it available in case the other parts of the lesson go more quickly than planned, leaving you with unexpected time at the end of the class.

How might this formula be applied to a specific lesson? The following sample lesson plan is designed for a fifty-minute class period in an oral skills class for secondary school students.

## Sample Lesson Plan

### (PREVIEW) INTRODUCTION (5 MINUTES)

1. (Put the words *healthy, exercise, diet* on the board.)
2. "Today's lesson is about how to stay healthy." (Explain *healthy* if necessary.)
3. "One way to stay healthy is to get lots of exercise." (Explain . . . .)
4. "Another way is to have a good diet." (Explain . . . .)
5. "Today we will learn vocabulary for talking about health. We will also practice using the right part of speech (gerunds) for talking about kinds of exercise."
6. "Let's start with a warm-up exercise."

### (WARM-UP) SURVEY: WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE KIND OF EXERCISE? (10 MINUTES)

1. (Ask everyone) "What is one kind of exercise?" (As they answer me, I list two or three kinds on the board in gerund form—walking, playing basketball, swimming.)
2. Assign survey. "In a minute, please survey three or four classmates." (Explain/demonstrate survey if necessary.) Instructions:
  - Ask three or four classmates, "What is your favorite kind of exercise?" (Put the question on the board.)
  - Write down their answers—in the right form.
  - This is to practice speaking, so speak in English! If you don't know a word in English, ask me.

- You only have five minutes!
  - Get up and start!
3. Debrief.
    - Have students volunteer answers—put them on the board—use gerund form.
    - Go over the words on the board (especially any new ones)—using sentence My favorite exercise is . . . .
    - Encourage students to write new words in their notebooks.

### **(MAIN ACTIVITY) SMALL-GROUP TASK: A HEALTHY MENU (20–30 MINUTES)**

1. Tell students I am new in China and want to have a healthy diet here.
2. In groups, have students make up the best possible menu for me for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, and be ready to explain their choices to me.
3. Remind students that the purpose is to practice speaking English.
4. Debrief. Have first group give me the breakfast menu, and explain why they chose the foods they did. Then have one or two other groups report on breakfast. Then repeat for lunch, dinner.
5. Follow up by describing a healthy daily diet in the United States.
6. Close by reviewing any new words.

### **(MAIN ACTIVITY—IF TIME ALLOWS) DICTATION (10–15 MINUTES)**

1. Dictate the following short passage to students for listening/writing practice. (Use procedure for Dictation from chapter 7.)
 

(1) My favorite kind of exercise is walking. (2) Running makes my knees hurt, and it makes me too hot in the summer. (3) Swimming is nice, but I can't find a swimming pool. (4) I like walking because I can always find a place to walk, (5) and because it doesn't make me too hot.
2. Have students compare their dictations in pairs and help each other.
3. Debrief by having the students say each sentence aloud (in chorus) while I write it on the board.
4. Afterward, they check, and I walk around to see how they did.
5. Close with brief comments on their writing (e.g., capitalization, punctuation).

### **(RESERVE ACTIVITY) HEALTH PROVERBS**

1. Put the following health-related proverbs on the board:
 

An apple a day keeps the doctor away.  
An ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure.  
Early to bed, early to rise, makes one healthy, wealthy, and wise.
2. Then have students guess what they think the proverb's meaning is and whether they agree with the wisdom contained in the proverb.
3. In pairs or groups, have students think of similar health sayings in their language and translate these into English.
4. Have groups report. Different groups will probably have translated the same sayings, so compare the translations.
5. Close by choosing the translation that seems closest to idiomatic English.

The emphasis in this course is mainly on practicing speaking and listening skills, but secondary goals include helping students build their vocabulary knowledge and their ability to use grammar structures in conversation. (The activities for this lesson are drawn from appendix B, Culture Topic Activity Ideas for Oral Skills Classes.)

## OTHER NOTES ON LESSON PLANS

1. **timing:** Note that the lesson plan includes an estimated time for each activity. Initially, you may have trouble accurately estimating how much time any given activity will take. However, planning an approximate time for activities, and even writing the time into your lesson plan, is still a good idea. Doing so allows you to see how your actual chronological progress through the lesson period is matching up with what you had planned, so that you are more quickly alerted to the need to begin taking remedial measures, such as speeding the activity up, slowing things down, or preparing plan B.
2. **closure:** Note that a specifically designated closing step is written into most of the activities in the Sample Lesson Plan. Students generally feel better about ending an activity if it is somehow wrapped up and concluded rather than simply stopped, so the closing should be part of the plan. The closure step need not be very long; for example, having students quickly report what happened during their practice is a quick, light way to give a sense of closure to the activities in the plan. A teacher comment or suggestion could also provide closure.
3. **variety:** Note that while the lesson plan emphasizes oral skills practice, a dictation activity is also included to provide a break from the heavy diet of speaking practice. Students generally stay more alert if activities vary during a class period.

## Managing the Classroom

All teachers have to find a classroom style that they are comfortable with, and experience is the only tried-and-true way to do this. Meanwhile, here are a few practical pointers that may make managing a classroom a little easier.

### SEATING

There are two primary considerations in seating. First, you want students sitting fairly close to each other when they are engaged in pair or small-group work. Physical proximity tends to make students more willing to talk to each other because it helps create a sense of group affinity and closeness; having students relatively close to each other also has the practical advantage of helping keep the general noise level down. The second main consideration is that you want to be able to get as close as you can to as many groups as possible so that you can see and hear what they are doing and interact with them easily and naturally.

In classes where desks are easily movable and space is ample, achieving the two goals above is not particularly difficult. For pair or small-group activities, students can simply move their seats closer together, and for all-class activities, you can have students move into a row or semicircle arrangement. (Many Western teachers take it virtually for granted that the best seating pattern is a circle. For example, it allows students to have more eye contact with each other and quite literally moves the focus of the class away from the teacher, at least to some degree. However, in classes with many students, circles often become so large that students are only close to the

classmates sitting to their immediate right and left, and the empty space in the middle becomes a forbidding no man's land that tends to dampen the conversational atmosphere. In contrast, traditional row seating arrangements have the advantage of placing more students close to each other. My personal solution to this dilemma is to use a semicircle or forum arrangement that allows for multiple rows, hence placing more students closer together.)

The greater challenge occurs in classrooms where the desks or chairs are lined up in rows and bolted to the floor, and problems are exacerbated if students scatter themselves as widely as possible throughout the classroom (though they often tend to avoid the front row). Such a situation, while challenging, is by no means the end of the world. For lectures or other teacher-focused activities, this seating situation does not pose serious problems, although you may want to gently but firmly require that students not all bunch toward the back of the room as far away as possible from you. (Suggestion: Officially designate a few rows toward the back of the classroom as off-limits.) For group work, the trick is to get students into groups of three or four, bunched in a square or triangle rather than spread out in a long line. (When you ask students to form their own groups, they often naturally form a group of people sitting in the same row, with the result that the group is seated in a long line and the people at the far ends often cannot hear what is going on in the center. It is better for each group to consist of students from two different rows, front and back, so that they are closer together.) Ideally, as many groups as possible should be immediately adjacent to an aisle so that you can more readily interact with them.

## EYE CONTACT

Good eye contact is one of the main ways to establish and maintain a sense of student involvement in the lesson, especially when speaking to the whole class. While you do not need to catch the eye of each individual student in the classroom, you should try not to always look at a few favored students or a favored spot in the middle of the classroom. Rather, make a conscious effort to look from time to time at the students toward the sides of the classroom and at those sitting far to the back and the front.

## YOUR SPEECH AND VOICE

One of the most helpful things you can do for students—and one of the most important ways to maintain a degree of control and order in the classroom—is simply to speak loudly and clearly enough for students to hear you easily. Conversely, one of the surest ways to lose students' attention and control of the classroom is to force them to strain too often and too hard to hear what you are saying. Granted, some teachers can effectively use a firm, quiet voice that motivates students to quiet down precisely so that they can hear what the teacher is saying, but this is a dangerous strategy for beginning teachers to adopt because it tends to work only when the teacher has already established a clear sense of presence and control. For most beginning teachers, the wiser strategy is speaking in a clear, reasonably loud voice that students have little trouble hearing.

A related issue is that of how quickly you should speak. When attempting to put a point across in class (e.g., giving instructions), you want to make sure that it is understood. You may therefore be tempted to make your speech as easy as possible to understand. Within bounds, this is not a bad thing, and VTs need to learn how to communicate as clearly and simply as possible. However, if your speech becomes simplified to the point that it is unnatural—for example, if all your contractions are ironed out into fully pronounced words—it loses some of its value as listening practice for students. Try to strike a balance, speaking slowly and clearly (though not unnaturally) when necessary, and a little more normally at other times in order to challenge students' ears.

Last but not least, speak with the expectation that students will listen to you. If you ask

questions and do not wait for an answer, give instructions but do not insist that they be followed, or simply keep talking without seeming to care whether students are listening or not, you send the signal to students that it is OK for them to tune you out, at least much of the time. Through your manner, try to convey the message that you want students to listen and respond—and that you are willing to wait or follow up as necessary so that they do.

## TEACHER TALK

There is some debate as to how much the teacher should talk in a language classroom; some practitioners feel that teacher talk should be kept to a bare minimum while others point out that teacher talk provides one of students' main opportunities for listening practice. My own feeling is that in an EFL setting, particularly one in which students have few other opportunities to hear native English, you should not be overly concerned about talking often in class. However, as noted above, listening to you may be quite demanding for students, so you need to give them opportunities to speak because they need the practice and because they may need a break from the strain of trying to follow you.

## INSTRUCTIONS

One of the most common reasons discussion activities don't go well is that instructions are either too complicated or are not presented clearly. Basic tips for ensuring that instructions are understood include the following:

1. Keep instructions as short and simple as possible. Lower level students, especially those with poor listening comprehension, are easily thrown by complicated instructions.
2. Make instructions as specific and clear as possible. Vague instructions such as *Talk about . . .* don't give a clear direction. Discussion starts faster and moves with more purpose if you assign students a more specific task, such as making a list, making a decision, or designing a plan. (For more on tasks, see chapter 8.)
3. Repeat the instructions, using the same (or almost the same) wording.
4. Write down your instructions in your lesson plans, even verbatim. This permits you to repeat instructions more than once using the same words.
5. Speak more slowly and clearly than normal when giving instructions.
6. Check students' comprehension of instructions by having them repeat the instructions back to you. (Asking "Do you understand?" is generally of little use because the instinctive human response to this question is to nod your head whether or not you have any idea what the teacher is talking about.)
7. Check to see if students are actually doing the activity as you instructed. Often students appear to have understood the instructions, and they may well have thought they did, but when they begin the activity, it becomes clear that they either didn't understand all the instructions or misunderstood some of them.

## MOVEMENT

One way to establish better rapport with students, as well as to maintain better control of the classroom, is to step out from behind the podium (or teacher's desk, or whatever) and move closer to the students. Physical closeness tends to create a feeling of emotional closeness, and students will

tend to feel closer to you emotionally if you are near them during at least some of the lesson. I would suggest four rules of thumb for where you should be when:

1. When you need to write on the blackboard or use other things at the front of the class, stay near the front so that you don't have to constantly run back and forth.
2. When you are speaking to the whole class for extended periods, stay at the front of the classroom but as close as practicable to the front row of students. Using a semicircular seating arrangement helps in this situation because you are closer to more students.
3. When students are working on their own, or in pairs or groups, move around the classroom to check on them or simply to be nearer to them.
4. When a student is speaking to you in front of the whole class, and you want the other students to hear what is being said, move away from the student who is speaking. This may seem counterintuitive: if you are having difficulty hearing the student, your natural tendency is often to move closer. However, if you want the rest of the class to listen, move further away so that the student is forced to speak up.

## QUESTION AND ANSWER

You will greatly enhance the effectiveness of a question asked to the whole class if you pause before calling on someone to answer; this ensures that everyone has the time and the motivation to think through an answer.

## THE BLACKBOARD

In many classrooms around the world, the blackboard is still the teacher's primary medium for sending visual messages to students, so I conclude with a few suggestions on how to use the blackboard (or whiteboard, or other type of board).

1. Make sure your writing is large enough for people in the back to read.
2. Try not to waste a lot of time writing on the blackboard during class. If you need to write something relatively long, do so before class. (In poorer countries where students do not have access to textbooks, you may need to write the necessary material on the board so that students can copy it before or after class.)
3. Try not to talk to the blackboard. If you need to write something on the blackboard, pause for a moment and allow students a moment of respite from the sound of your voice.
4. Use the blackboard to entertain. The main attraction of many of my classes is the pathetic attempts at drawing with which I illustrate points. Students laugh at the drawings, I make my point, and the atmosphere in class is a little lighter. If you can draw well, so much the better.
5. When they are available, using devices such as overhead projectors or computers equipped with projectors has considerable advantages. However, remember that such equipment is somewhat more vulnerable to technological mishaps than blackboards are, so have a backup plan in case a bulb burns out or a virus suddenly lays your computer low.

## Establishing a Good Class Atmosphere

The success or failure of an English class should not be measured primarily on its popularity—it is, after all, a class rather than a variety show—but how students respond to your lessons is a real and important question, for pedagogical as well as emotional reasons. A class that both you and the students enjoy is not only much easier to face each day but also more likely to generate positive feelings toward learning English. Of course, student response to your class is not entirely within your power to control; some students no doubt disliked school or English class long before they ever met you, and you cannot always expect to see a complete reversal in their attitudes. However, by developing a good rapport with the students and by keeping your class as interesting as possible, you can often make a significant difference in students' attitudes and response.

### ESTABLISHING A GOOD RAPPORT

Perhaps the single most important step toward establishing a good rapport with the students is learning their names. In a foreign country where you have large classes and the names all seem strange to you, learning the names of all the students in a class can require a considerable investment of time and energy. However, the investment will pay significant dividends as the term goes on, and it is generally worth the effort (at least for those classes you see more often).

Gower and Walters (1983, 49) list a number of ways to learn student names, including the following:

1. At the beginning of a course, try to memorize students' names using the Name Game. Have student A say her name, have student B say his name and the name of student A, and continue until the last student has to recite the names of all the students in the class—just before you do the same. This game requires considerable concentration and tends to drag in classes with more than thirty students, but it is a good way for you to learn a lot of names quickly and to see that the students learn each other's names (if they don't know each other already). The Name Game is, incidentally, an excellent object lesson in the importance of repetition and concentration in memorizing vocabulary.
2. Have students make up name/biography cards (as suggested in chapter 2). If possible, have students attach a small photograph.
3. Keep an attendance list; this forces you to review names.
4. Especially during the first few lessons, consciously make a point of using students' names.
5. While students are doing pair or group work, spend time mentally reviewing their names.
6. Use the returning of homework assignments or papers as an opportunity to review names.

One reason learning students' names is effective in developing rapport is that it is convincing evidence of your interest in getting to know students as individuals. Another effective way to show your interest in students is simply by responding to what students say in language classes as much as—or more than—you respond to whether or not they say it correctly. This shows not only that you consider language use to be genuinely communicative but that you consider the students people whose ideas and feelings deserve to be treated with respect.

Another important approach to developing rapport with students grows out of your interest in the students' country and culture. Having students tell you about their nation and culture during class gives them valuable practice in explaining their culture in English and demonstrates your interest in learning more about them and the culture that shapes them.

## KEEPING CLASS INTERESTING

I have mentioned several of the most important ways to keep class interesting, but a quick review here may be helpful.

Ensuring that students have a clear sense of direction and progress will go a long way toward maintaining morale. As suggested, setting specific, narrow course goals allows students to more readily perceive progress, and regularly reminding students of why they are doing what they are doing is also helpful.

Regular use of communicative activities helps keep class more interesting. One of the perennial favorite pastimes of the human race is chatting; most people love to talk about themselves, their activities, other people, world events, and just about everything else, and there is no reason not to take advantage of this interest in the classroom. Language practice activities that allow students to say what they want to say are inherently more interesting than noncommunicative drills.

One of the newer buzzwords in English teaching is the term *information gap*. The idea is that you structure a communicative activity so that student A knows something that student B doesn't, thus ensuring that A has something to communicate. (This is in contrast to situations in which both partners already know what the other is going to say, a situation not uncommon in dialogue practice.) One of the best things about teaching English in a foreign country is that when you communicate with students, you do not need to create an artificial information gap because the difference between your culture and theirs provides an incredibly rich fund of interesting topics to communicate about. Students will generally be quite curious about your country and its ways and willing to initiate the greenhorn (you) into the mysteries of their own culture. Some of the most memorable compositions I have ever read were stories my students wrote about life in southern China during their childhoods; likewise, one of the speaking-class activities I always look forward to is having my Chinese students pick China's top ten heroes, listening to the rationales they present for their choices, and then responding with a few U.S. heroes of my own. Taking advantage of this information gap whenever possible allows you to raise the interest level of your class while teaching and learning about something that is important in its own right.

Another way to enhance interest levels is by giving language learning activities some of the appeal of games. You can do this with many kinds of activities by introducing an element of fun and lighthearted competition. Consider a few examples:

1. Conversation activities often seem more enjoyable if some kind of choice needs to be made. For example, a mock job interview becomes more interesting if you have the employers interview more than one prospective employee and then announce which candidate they decided to hire and why.
2. Content lessons can be livened up by introducing them with a short contest. For example, instead of just launching into a lecture on U.S. holidays, divide students into groups and give them a few minutes to list as many holidays and their dates as possible. Reward the group that compiles the best list with praise or whatever else you have in adequate supply. You can do the same with vocabulary (e.g., lists of colors, animals, feelings) or even grammar (e.g., lists of mass nouns, ways to describe things in the future).

3. Even subjects as drab as spelling or vocabulary can become a bit more interesting if you turn them into contests (spelling bees being a case in point). I, for example, liven up my Chinese vocabulary memorization by competing against myself. Each day as I look at my vocabulary list, I check to see if I can quickly and accurately pronounce the Chinese characters and state their meaning. If I can't, I have to review the word but leave it on the list. When I get one right, I allow myself the satisfaction of crossing it off my list.

Finally, part of the art of being a good teacher is knowing when to lighten the pressure a little by scheduling what I call *candy*: a game, song, or film for class. All of these can have educational as well as recreational value, but teachers would be kidding themselves if they didn't admit that they often use such activities more because students like them than because they offer the most efficient road to language proficiency. However, remember that one of the most important goals of any language program is to help students become more interested in studying the language, and a song that makes up for weakness in grammar teaching efficacy by kindling a student's desire to learn may affect the student long after a grammar point would be forgotten.

## For Thought, Discussion, and Action

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1. **lesson plans (task A):** Imagine that the following dialogue is from a textbook you will teach, and design an outline plan for a lesson that is based on use of this dialogue. Use the Sample Lesson Plan from this chapter as a model.

(Han, a teacher who is applying for a job as a translator, is being interviewed by Bob. Pay special attention to verb tenses.)

Bob: Please tell me about your education, Mr. Han.

Han: I graduated from Zhongshan Teachers College in 1965. I was an English major.

Bob: How about your work experience?

Han: I have been teaching in Hua Dong middle school for the past thirty years.

Bob: Have you ever been a translator?

Han: No. I have always been a teacher.

Bob: Why are you applying for this job?

Han: Because I don't like children very much.

2. **lesson plans (task B):** Choose a lesson or unit from a local English textbook (preferably one that is widely used), and make a lesson plan for a two-hour class period. If possible, discuss your plan with a teacher from your host country.
3. **information gap:** Imagine you are teaching the dialogue in number 1 above and you want students to use the dialogue as a model for practice conversations in pairs. However, you also want to ensure that there is an information gap in the exercise. List three ways you could modify the activity so that there is an information gap. Also write out the exact instructions that you would give students before the activity.
4. **tasks:** You want students to practice talking about different kinds of jobs, but you want to give them a more precise task than just saying "Talk about jobs." (1) Design one or more specific pair or small-group tasks that involve conversation about jobs. (2) Write

out the exact instructions you would give students before the activity. (After you finish, check the speaking activity tasks suggested in chapter 8 for reference.)

5. **student feedback:** In many cultures, students would be reluctant to give negative feedback to a foreign teacher. (1) List some alternative strategies for finding out how students are responding to your course, and (2) ask someone who has taught in the host country how realistic (appropriate, effective) your proposed strategies might be.
6. **What would you do?** List several classroom management problems you anticipate or are concerned about (e.g., students who persistently talk while you are talking, who never speak in class, or who repeatedly miss class without explanation). (1) List possible strategies for dealing with each. (2) Discuss your strategies with a friend, classmate, or someone with experience teaching in the host country. (Some potential problems are discussed in chapter 14.)
7. **games (task A):** Choose one or more language-based games you know (e.g., Hangman, Scrabble) and analyze their value for English teaching. List what language skills or knowledge they could be used to teach; also note the skills and knowledge that they would not teach.
8. **games (task B):** Imagine that you want students to memorize the dialogue in lesson plans (task A) in class, but you want to make this activity as much like a game as possible. (1) List several ways you could turn this activity into a game. (2) Pick the one that seems most promising (i.e., enjoyable or interesting) and write out the instructions you would give students for the activity.
9. **songs:** Pick an English song that you like, and consider how you might use it as a language teaching activity. (1) Analyze and list the language points you could use the song to teach. (2) Design a teaching activity using the song that would effectively teach useful language knowledge or skills. List the steps of the activity and the instructions you would give.