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Five Warm Ups for English-as-a-Second-Language Lessons

Beginning-of-class warm up is a great way to start class. Students need the teacher to catch their attention from the first moment he or she enters in the classroom. It should be an easy exercise that all students can participate in. Participation of all students is important because this creates a fun focus on English in the classroom and gets the ESL students ready to listen to their teacher.

It sets the atmosphere and expectations for the lesson and also gives you important assessment opportunities, which will later determine the type of activities, who will partner with whom, and the scope of the lesson. Therefore, warm ups should be part of your everyday lesson plan.

I will now explain in detail five examples of warm up activities I have used in my classes of ESL successfully.

1. Surprise!

The teacher brings a hat, sunglasses and a suitcase to class in order to introduce students to a new topic about travelling. First, they have to guess why their teacher decided to bring all these things to class, and then, they have to ask him or her questions to guess the place she or he is going to visit.

2. Brainstorms.

The teacher writes some keywords on the board and students have to guess the connection between them, i.e. they have to guess the topic which all of them have in common.

Another type of brainstorm, for example to introduce Halloween, could be writing "Halloween" on the board and having the students come up and draw related pictures. This activity is very successful with low levels.

3. Writing.

The teacher tells students one, or more than one, of the following:

- Write all the words you know about ...
- Write a sentence with...
- Write all you can remember from last lesson.
- Write about something you did yesterday or that you are going to do after school. What are your plans for next Saturday?
- Write a correct/incorrect sentence with...
- Write a word related to... (on the board or in their notebooks)

4. Pretend.

This warm up activity is very amusing and easy. The teacher walks in, stands everyone up and says: "pretend you are a table!" giving a little demonstration. Then walk around giving praise for the most impressive tables. A few seconds later, the teacher continues: "pretend you are a pencil!" The teacher does the same, inspecting, giving praise, pointing out exceptional pencils. Then, follow with a few more. This activity is great because it gets them out of their seats,

burning off a little energy, concentrates them on the teacher and requires thinking

in English.

5. Guess the secret message!

Students have to write a word from the vocabulary they are studying on their partner's back with their finger. This activity can take over five minutes, it is very funny and students work on spelling. Afterward, they come to the board and write those words they have guessed. It is an interesting way of revising vocabulary from

a previous lesson.

Conclusion

I hope to have provided other teachers with some ideas for their classes. The warm ups mentioned can be played at any level, from Primary to Secondary School.