

## **MODULE 1: GOOD TEACHERS CREATE GOOD LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

Students who are studying anything, from literature and science to business, cooking, or carpentry, will learn more quickly and easily if they have a good teacher. If you think of the best teacher you ever had, in any subject, you will probably remember particular personal qualities as well as specific things the teacher did in the classroom. These qualities are crucial when the student speaks one language and is trying to learn another. But what exactly is a good language teacher, and what does he or she do in the classroom that we can learn from?

### **What are the qualities of a good language teacher?**

Good language teachers are highly familiar with the material but never allow the lesson to become rote or boring. They create lessons that are interesting, often fun, and hold the students' attention throughout the lesson. They move through the material at the proper pace for the class, adjusting it when necessary. They know what they want to accomplish but are always prepared to deal with questions, spend time on any problems that arise, or even change direction if a "teachable moment" arises.

### **A good language teacher...**

- knows the material.
- creates effective and entertaining lessons.
- creates lessons that are useful in daily life.
- is able to convey the material in a way the students can understand.
- is aware at all times of the students' needs, not just the lesson plan.
- listens to students' input.
- is able to correct students without embarrassing them.
- is genuinely interested in each student.
- is well organized.
- maintains a safe and friendly classroom environment.

### **Here are some qualities that ESL students feel are important. They say a good language teacher...**

- speaks clearly and conversationally.
- talks in an expressive way, stressing words or phrases as needed, even speaking dramatically at times.
- employs useful gestures and movements.
- is mindful of the students' language level, making sure the words and phrases used or asked for are neither too simple nor too difficult.
- makes sure the students understand before moving on to a new question or a different topic.
- makes sure that students feel comfortable asking questions or for help.

- does not talk the entire time but has the students do most of the talking—asking or answering questions or in dialogue with one another.

### **CONSIDER**

**Remember a teacher you really liked?** Describe the qualities that made that teacher so good.

**Have you studied a foreign language?** How would that experience help you to be a better teacher?

**Have you traveled in a country where you didn't know the language?** How did that experience teach you a different way or ways to communicate?

**Which skills are most important in an ESL teacher? On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being most important), how would you rate these skills?**

\_\_\_ Is a native speaker of English

\_\_\_ Knows the student population well

\_\_\_ Is a friend to the students

\_\_\_ Is an expert on language (word history and derivation, etc.)

\_\_\_ Has good communication skills

\_\_\_ Is very likeable

\_\_\_ Is willing to go beyond class time to teach

\_\_\_ Has street smarts

\_\_\_ Loves his or her job

\_\_\_ Keeps strong control of the class

**Imagine that you are the director of an English-language school. What kind of teachers would you hire?**

**A bright student may ask you, “Why are American English and British English so different?”** Do you have a good answer, with a clever example, for this student?

## **Top Ten Tips for Teaching**

1. Break the learning goal for that day/week/year into small tasks and teach them sequentially.
2. Review important information from the previous lesson before beginning the new one.
3. Go over key information and new vocabulary words at the beginning of the lesson. Build on the students' knowledge and individual experiences whenever possible.
4. Make all your directions brief, specific, and easily understood.
5. Provide practice opportunities, including repetition, whenever possible.
6. Present information in a variety of ways, in part to address different learning styles and speeds.
7. Provide immediate feedback. This keeps both interest and motivation high.
8. Provide study materials, and use prompts to highlight important points and key words and ideas.
9. Have students help keep track of their achievements on a progress chart.
10. Use peer tutors—fellow students from, perhaps, a higher-level class—when possible.

## **Grammar: The Basics**

Every teacher should have a grammar book that he or she particularly likes to use. *Understanding and Using English Grammar*, by Betty Schramper Azar and Stacy A. Hagen, is a very good grammar text. Many language schools like *Focus on Grammar*, by Marjorie Fuchs, Margaret Bonner, and Miriam Westheimer, which has become a popular textbook series in recent years. **Check out the recommended texts on our website.**

The teacher's edition of a grammar book is a worthwhile investment, especially for new teachers. Whichever book or books you choose, get to know them well, so that you can quickly find explanations or exercises, grammar points and practices, whenever you need them.