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Module 29: Additional Teaching Tools

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29.1: Ice Breakers

In addition to Ice breakers being fun and playful, both for the students and the teachers- they are crucial for setting the tone and helping ease the process of talking in an English learning environment.

This first suggestion for an icebreaker game is suited for both large groups and small ones. The teacher can either decide to conduct it in one big group or divide students into smaller circles, in both cases the children and the teacher get to know one another better. So the game is called: **'Two truths and a lie'**, where each student writes three statements about himself (two true ones and a false one) and by going in turns each one reads out his/hers three, leaving the others to guess the two real ones and the lie.



Like the first suggestion, the next game can be played out with the whole class, or a smaller group of students, and it's sure to spark up some laughs and ignite classmate's imagination. This one is called **'Would you rather...?'**, and you guessed it- each one needs to complete his own variation of two intolerable



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situations to present to the group. For example, one might ask 'would you rather go bungee jumping or skydiving?'

Looking for two birds in one stone? This next one is great for incorporating some mathematical stimulation as well. It's called '**One Beep**', and even though the name is quite easy to remember the game suggests otherwise. You'll have the classmate's full undivided attention on this one, since each fourth number is replaced with a 'beep' instead. Getting it wrong requires starting over- You set the limit! So it goes 1..2..3..beep..5..6..7..beep and so on



How about a nice Ice breaker that gets the students moving around a bit?

This one is called '**Blobs and lines**'. Students will organize themselves in either a blob or a line depending on what the teacher says. If she asks them to line up in a chronological order of their birthdays, they should perform a line, if she asks them to line up based on their preference to winter or summer, the students should separate in to two groups. The idea is to get to know each other better and find common grounds.

29.2: Games



Games are a great way to revise vocabulary, practice conversing, memorize tenses, and learn from our mistakes in a relaxed and non-intimidating way. The possibilities are endless, here are just some of what you can do.

'**Board Race**' is one of the best games to go over vocabulary you have just taught or learnt in the past couple of lessons. It takes place as a relay race between two teams, ideally they would be equally divided and range between 6 and 10 players on each team. However, if there is a big class it's possible to divide in to 3 or 4 teams as well. After dividing them up (let's say in two lines-where they're consecutively one after the other), the teacher will write on the top of the board the general topic/category and draw a line for each team's column. Each student needs to



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come up with a word connected to the topic and write it in his team's column upon his turn. The teacher can set the limit up to how many words each team should come up with, and the first to reach that number wins! It should be noted that misspelled words don't count.

The next game targets a younger audience and can work either as a quick warm up or winding down just before dismissing the class. It's usually a favorite and it's extremely common-it's '**Simon Says**'. This one works on listening comprehension since students learn certain actions by hearing the teacher and imitating him/her. In this case, the teacher is playing the role of Simon and students have to imitate everything he does as long as before each action is done the phrase 'Simon says' is said. Whoever imitates the action regardless of the phrase, loses and has to take a seat until the last obedient student wins. It can get more challenging if the teacher speeds up the actions.

Now that we've covered the younger groups, it's time to move up and '**Charades**' is the right pick. The choices are usually between a book, a movie or a song however you can always add to the list a celebrity's name or a well-known phrase. The class can split up into groups or play as a unit, either way the play stays the same and one classmate pantomimes the selected category for the rest. He/she are tasked to execute the pantomime as best as they can in order for the others to guess what they mean in minimum amount of time.



29.3: Humor

Using humor as a method for learning and teaching is often overlooked even though it's one of the best ways to engage and inspire students. Humor offers us a positive climate where students can feel comfortable without all the stress and tension that's usually involved in a high stakes testing environment, in addition to humor improving retention of information and promoting creative thinking.





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Comedy shows could be a good starter, try watching an episode and outlining the episode's jokes. You can run down different vocabulary, including some everyday phrases or go over grammar and verbs. This is how associative learning can help with the memorizing process.



Another playful learning exercise that comedy shows can be useful for is playing out the joke scenes. You can divide the class in to teams and let them pick out their favorite scenes out of the show to play in front of the class. A different approach can be taken when the students come up with their own set of jokes and play it out for the rest.

One project that will ensure excitement and commitment to the learning process is a long term assignment. An example could be composing a booklet filled with jokes and familiar, funny situations that we can all relate to from day to day life. Ask the students to come up with jokes, pick the best ones, write them down and incorporate drawings as well to complete the book. This activity strengthens a sense of bond and a comradery, working towards a common goal while improving their language proficiency.



A surprising way for using humor can be in quizzes and tests, this way you can ease up the anxiety that sometimes may be attached to it and link a positive experience instead of an anxious one. So let's say for example that you have 'real-world' problems in one section of the test, which allows you to incorporate some humor. In this case you can alter some details, whether it be changing the names to names of students or changing the scenario to a humorous one.

29.4: Music

Music is usually subjective, which is why not all classical music listeners are heavy rock lovers but music's universal attribute is that it activates both the right and left parts of the brain which is beneficial for maximizing learning and improving the memory. In that spirit we can recommend implementation of music as part of our teaching methods for English learning.





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The first exercise suggested is similar to the last section, and it is of course learning the language through a song. You can start with a survey handed to the whole class in an attempt to define their musical taste. Once it's been established you can ask the students to give their estimate, based on their knowledge of the class which style was favored. Depending at their level it could either be a written assignment explaining why they think a certain style is likely to



be the chosen one, or ask them to talk about it without preparation in front of the other students. If it's a basic level class then the teacher could draw the musical categories on the board and each one will raise their hand for which one they think will be chosen. After that, a song or a couple of songs should be chosen (either by the teacher or the students) to learn from. It's possible to ask the students to write down everything they hear and what they understand from the song so you could all go over it during the class or hand them out a transcription of the song and ask them to mark what words they know. Both ways work for different type of education levels but guarantee full engagement and fun for the students.

Tunes are also a great way to incorporate more vocabulary while improving their listening skills and this is how you can do it. Play for them a recording of different musical instruments and have them guess which tune belongs to which instrumental tool.

The instruments can be displayed as pictures. Once you've established the connection between the sounds to its instrument you can teach them the name of



each one. But it's not just tools that you're bound to, there are various parts that people play in operas, orchestras, and bands of all kind to teach them as well.

Hearing a melody always stirs up emotions and feelings and this can be used in a classroom in order to help describing one's thoughts and emotional state. Try bringing them several melodies, each expressing a different vibe. One could be a melody suggesting restlessness, another could be cheerful, one that may be encouraging, some that are frightening or indicate bravery. Whichever you feel is right- it's your choice. Later, you can have the students talk it out,



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ask them how it makes them feel, what were the parts they liked, what comes to mind while listening to it, what do they think about the composer and so on.

29.5: Other Media

If you're looking to use other methods than the orthodox ones, learning English through social media platforms offers a unique and dynamic learning experience. Today these tools are far too familiar in our day to day lives and mostly ignored of their positive impact to teach English and connect with other people and communities.

The first and easiest of ways to use social media as a learning tool is to follow a person/group that regularly post grammatical insights, tips, and vocabulary to his/hers/their wall or page. 'Facebook' and 'Twitter' are both fit for it. In order to engage the whole class, you can dedicate a couple for a daily section of what's new on social media and let the students present a weekly summary or write one.



Some worthy pages to follow are: "GrammarGirl"/"Scribendi" either on Facebook or Twitter, "English Vocabulary" to follow on Facebook.

It's not just enough to learn how to write, which is why pronunciation is one of the most important factors that enable speaking and reading correctly. In order to learn that part, videos of other people talking is the most efficient way and what better place for videos than 'Youtube'! By using this social media platform you can tune in to long, short, funny, informational and whichever other videos you'd prefer. Three great channels are: "Rachel's English", Learn English with Steve Ford", and "Anglo-Link". The first one is especially fit for non-native English speakers, and the other two work on pronunciation and grammar while the third channel is organized by skill level.



If you feel like you should give your students a taste of English slang then 'Twitter' and 'Instagram' could be your path of choice. With limitations between 140 to 2,200 characters in a tweet the 'hashtags' are the most savvy techniques to learn abbreviations on social media. Although, it is



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advised to mention that this isn't the proper formal way to use English, and it might be more suitable for Intermediate and advanced learners.



You can even encourage your students to develop conversations and virtual friendships via social media platforms with students from abroad or a different region/district than they live in. But do so with great caution and try to supervise over who they communicate with and the nature of their conversations. Try to see if you are able to organize with other schools a modern virtual 'Pen-Pal' buddy for dual correspondence.



An aspirational long term project to take on can be the opening and maintenance of a Facebook page. Try finding a cause that the students are passionate about and open an online page that delivers news, reviews, pictures, and thoughts about it. You can split the class into groups and each will have a different task from setting it up to updating and keeping it running. The set up team will have to go over the steps of founding such a page and making sure all the students agree, another team can be responsible for the information and articles due to be published on the page, others can handle the content media regarding pictures and clips- might even film a couple of videos of students talking about the cause and why it's important for them and make



sure to upload them, and a different team can be responsible for the contact section, as in adding members to the groups and establishing a connection with them. Students can shift between groups, tasks may change and/or anything else that comes to mind is welcomed.

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