

# An Introduction to English Language Teaching

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Asst. Prof. Mahdi Alasadi

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**Week 3:**

**Lecture 5:**

- **Students' experiences brought to the classroom**
  - **Teachers' expected roles to play**
    - **Interaction problems**



## What experiences do students bring to the classroom?

EFL/ESL students bring different experiences into the language classroom. We can summarize them as follows:

1. **Language learning experiences:** Some students were taught English according to traditional teaching methods, while others were taught according to notional functional and communicative teaching methods.
2. **Multiple cultural backgrounds**
3. **Different personal interests:** Students do not share the same personal interests, some like kick boxing, others cooking. Some prefer science, others history or art or psychology.
4. **Different attitudes:** Some students are enthusiastic about having the chance to interact in English, others are shy and find it very difficult. Some have had teachers who have been responsive to their emotional needs. However, other students have experienced teachers who have unintentionally intimidated them, resulting in students being defensive and recoiling to half-in, half-out engagement.

## What experiences do students bring to the classroom?



**5. Different learning style preferences: Students' learning-style preferences can be quite different. Students' language learning channels can be grouped into four basic perceptual modalities:**

- Visual learning (reading, studying charts)
- Auditory learning (listening to lectures, audiotapes)
- Kinesthetic learning (total physical involvement with a learning situation)
- Tactile learning (hands-on learning, such as building models)

## Expected Roles of Teachers

As language teaching is often described as being multifaceted, EFL/ESL teachers are expected to take two sets of roles:

1. Use of English Language Abilities
  - Language authority
  - Cultural informant
  - Model English speaker
2. Use of Ability to Create Meaningful Interaction
  - Needs assessor
  - Classroom manager
  - Text adapter
  - Entertainer



# Roles Related to English Language Abilities

1. **Language Authority:** EFL/ESL teachers are expected to take on the role of a language authority. So, they are expected to explain:
  - Complex rules of English Grammar,
  - How emphatic stress changes meaning,
  - Rules of speaking,
  - What native speakers say and do during social situations,
  - Rules of reading and writing.
2. **Cultural Informant:** EFL/ESL teachers are expected to take on the role of a cultural informant. So, they are expected to answer students' questions about language behaviors, cultural values, beliefs, assumptions and socialization. They answer questions like:
  - What do you say when you greet someone for the first time?
  - How do you let a friend to know you are angry with him?
  - What is traditional about the United Kingdom?
  - What festivals do people celebrate in the USA?
  - What's dating like in Australia?



## Roles Related to English Language Abilities

3. **Model English Speaker:** EFL/ESL teachers are expected to take on the role of a model English speaker. He is expected to speak English with them and model how it is used to express meaning. For example they should satisfy the students' curiosity in relation to:
- The use of humor,
  - The use of satire and verbal irony,
  - Display nonverbal behaviors (gestures, facial expressions),
  - Pronounce words or sentences.



## Roles Related to Creating Meaningful Interaction

Educationalists encourage language teachers to exploit their abilities to create meaningful interaction. To do so, EFL/ESL teachers are advised to act as:

1. **Needs Assessors:** They should conduct needs analysis of their students:
  - language leaning history,
  - goals,
  - interests
  - study habits,
  - learning styles
2. **Text Adapters:** The teachers' main resources are the textbook and the teacher's manual, but the text does not necessarily provide enough ways to promote interaction in the classroom. To foster interaction, the teachers can go beyond the text by adapting materials and activities to the lesson in the text or introducing new activities unrelated to the text. They can add role plays, games, movies, TV shows, songs, news programs.....



## Roles Related to Creating Meaningful Interaction

3. **Classroom Managers:** The teacher can take on the role of a classroom manager. To be able to manage classrooms, teachers need to be able to:
  - Engineer the amount of classroom talk they do,
  - Manipulate their questioning behaviors,
  - Control the way they give instruction,
  - Orchestrate group and pair work,
  - Keep learners on task,
  - Make language comprehensible to students,
  - Handle affective variables of classroom life.
4. **Entertainer:** Teachers can take on the role of an entertainer to help lower the students' level of anxiety. Teachers can be entertainers through telling stories and jokes, singing and acting.





## Problems Faced by Teachers When Teaching English as Interaction

EFL/ESL teachers face some problems that block them from teaching English as interaction among people. These problems are:

1. **The Bandwagon Problem:** This problem refers to the teacher's tendency to adopt the most up-to-date teaching methods, techniques, and materials. Bandwagons provide confidence, the company of others who believe in the same thing, and useful techniques. However, it is only problematic if teachers:

- cannot see beyond the "in way" of teaching,
- cannot the fact that bandwagons are other people's prescriptions
- if they blindly follow a certain way of teaching because it is said to be the best

Bandwagons do not liberate teachers to be able to make their own informed teaching decisions.

2. **The "overly anxious" problem:** Anxiety is defined as a state of apprehension, a vague fear that is associated with feelings of uneasiness, self-doubt, apprehension or worry. Below are some factors that could raise the level of anxiety:

- Inability to pronounce strange sounds and words,
- Not knowing the meanings of words or sentences,
- Inability to understand and answer questions,

## Problems Faced by Teachers When Teaching English as Interaction

- Reputation of language class as a place for failure,
- Peer criticism,
- Not knowing or understanding course goals or requirements,
- Testing, especially oral testing,
- Previous unsuccessful language-learning attempts,
- Encountering different cultural values and behaviors.

High degrees of anxiety can weaken the students. However, there are things that can be done to reduce the students anxious feelings:

- Avoid criticism and show understanding. To do this, when a student expresses an idea, we can use an “understanding response” by really listening to the student and paraphrasing back to the student what he or she said. Such paraphrasing not only can provide a way to the student to reflect on his or her own language in a noncritical way but can also improve understanding.
- Have students write about their anxiety through the use of personal diaries.

## Problems Faced by Teachers When Teaching English as Interaction

3. **The Engagement Problem:** Promoting interaction in the classroom governs that the teacher abandon being the center of the class. To do so, the teacher is required to yield to the students so that they feel free to interact with the teacher and with each other. However, this is not easy for teachers who haven't experienced interactive classrooms, because they are afraid of that their classes will be chaotic and out of control. Students who come from a language learning background that does not encourage interaction will hesitate to interact, afraid that things will become out of control and embarrassing.

To avoid this the teachers are required to provide the kind of atmosphere that is conducive to interaction. Teachers need to show emotional maturity, sensitivity to the students' feelings, and perceptiveness and commitment that interaction in English is not only appropriate but also expected and necessary for the students if they want to learn to communicate in English.