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Teaching Large Classes

As an ESL/EFL teacher at a school or university, there are times when you will have to teach large classes. Many teachers think that because the class size is so big, they are limited in what they can do. By following the advice below, you will find your large classes a lot more enjoyable and manageable.

Advantages

There are many advantages to teaching large ESL/EFL classes. For example, when you teach a large class time goes a lot quicker. Activities take a longer time to set up and run. Rarely will you find yourself using all the activities you have planned. This means you can use them in the next class, which saves time on preparation. In a large class, you will constantly have a variety of personalities to contend with. There will always be students keen to ask and respond to questions. There will be students who are funny and bring laughter to the class, so large classes are never dull.

Teams and Groups

An excellent way to manage a large class is to break the class down into small teams or groups. Putting students into small groups has many advantages. Make a list of the groups and the names of the students in each group. Use a first name or nickname and group number when addressing a student. This way, you will remember your students' names a lot faster.

Rather than just checking the register by calling out each name. Tell the students you will check attendance and participation by asking each student a question or by getting them to speak English. Make sure you tell the students you will do this in a random order. So as you teach the class, the students are always paying attention, because they don't know whose name is going to be called next. It really keeps the students on their toes. By speaking to every student in the class, you will soon remember their names. Asking each student to contribute is easy, as within a lesson you have things like book exercises, activities, eliciting, modelling, concept checking, role-plays, readings, etc.

When a class is split up into teams or groups encouraging competition is easy. This creates a fun atmosphere within the class. For younger students, you can assign team points or small rewards throughout the lesson. You'll find that the students' motivation increases dramatically.

Another important reason for having teams or groups in a large class is that the students can help each other learn. Stronger students and weaker students can work together. The students can build friendships and help each other understand what they are learning.

General Advice

Here is some more general advice for teaching large ESL/EFL classes:

Make sure you have something to drink handy. You will find even with a microphone that you naturally speak louder, which takes a toll on your throat.

Always have a backup activity in case the class doesn't go as planned.

Try to learn something about your students and get your students to know about you. Especially [on the first day](#), so they feel relaxed and confident to communicate with you. Walk round the classroom regularly and talk to your students. This can help you monitor their progress and check if the students are following your instruction.

Think about how you will assess the students. Remember you don't want to mark pages of homework each week. If you do mark papers, don't correct everything, just leave a comment or general feedback on how they can improve or the errors that they made. You can do a lot of assessing in the classroom through [monitoring](#), activities and presentations.

Tell the students of a certain time when they can come and see you for any extra help or to ask questions. Remember in large ESL/EFL classes students are often too shy to ask questions. If you don't have an office, give them a contact email address. You could also create an online group using a chat application, such as LINE. In this way, if students need to ask you something or you them, contact is made easy. Students can also use the online group to practice their English.

Stick to your rules! If you have rules about lateness or behaviour, enforce them. This is very important in the first few weeks of class. Show the students you are strict about your rules, and they will conform. Once the students know what they can and cannot get away with, the class runs a lot smoother.