

## Maximizing Learner Engagement

LINCS Developing Oral Language Proficiency, Susan Finn Miller, susanfinn\_miller@iu13.org

Source: Parrish, B. (2004). *Teaching adult ESL: A practical introduction*. NY: McGraw-Hill.

Giving clear directions for activities and tasks can be a challenge in an ESL classroom. Betsy Parrish (p. 177) recommends that teachers “Just do it!” meaning that teachers should always **demonstrate** or **model** a task. Visual support is important for all teaching, but it is absolutely essential in ESL instruction. Parrish also notes that it is important to realize that “Less is more.” What she means is **using fewer words is better**. Break down a task into simple steps and demonstrate each step one at a time.

**Take a look at the two activities below and discuss the following questions with a partner. Which activity would generate the most conversation? Why?**

**Activity 1:** Talk about your hobbies and interests in small groups. You have 15 minutes.

**Activity 2:** How do you like to spend your time after work or on the weekend? Circle three things you like to do. Cross out three that you never or seldom do. Write three other things you like to do in your free time.

swim	visit family	listen to music	go to the library
garden	cook for friends and family	visit friends	read
sew	watch TV	take walks	exercise

Three other things you like to do: \_\_\_\_\_

- Now talk to the other students in class and find the person who has the most things in common with you. Ask that person the following questions:
  - What is your favorite leisure time activity?
  - How often do you do that activity?
  - What do you like about that activity?
  - What are some things you did in your country that you can't do in the U.S?

**Maximizing Learner Engagement (Part Two)** Adapted from Parrish (2004, pp. 176-177)

Read each of these excerpts from adult ESL lesson plans and discuss these questions at your table. You can jot notes if you would like to.

- *What are the roles of the students and teacher in each one?*
- *What does the teacher do that the students could be doing?*
- *How can the scenario be changed so the students take on more of a teaching role?*

**Scenario 1 Lesson focus: Review of sequence words and imperatives**

Teacher gives each student an ingredient for a recipe.

Teacher gives each step of the recipe: *First, put the butter in the bowl.*

Learners come to the front of the room and add an ingredient as their step is called out.

---

---

---

---

**Scenario 2 Lesson Focus: Correcting a listening activity on store announcements**

After completing a listening activity, the teacher displays a copy of the grid that the learners completed and elicits correct answers from the whole class to fill in the grid.

---

---

---

---

**Scenario 3 Lesson Focus: Practice of numeracy using grocery ads**

Teacher calls out the names of two items in a newspaper circular. Students scan to find the items.

Students tell the teacher which item is a better deal, taking into consideration the number of ounces, price per pound, etc.

---

---

---