

**Session A Key Input: Lecture 2**  
**Creating Engagement**

*Lecture Transcript Presented by Dr Sal Consoli*

Hello. In this presentation, I'm going to talk about the practical dimensions of engagement. In particular, I'm going to look into a number of principles that teachers may want to follow to create the conditions for learner engagement in the language classroom.

Now, this means that teachers need to think about what to do practically to get the students active, curious and emotionally involved in the classroom. For each principle that I'm going to share with you, I'm going to also offer a number of questions that you may use as reflective questions for your own practice. And I would also include a few suggestions of strategies that you may use, if you like, in your own context with your own students.

So for principle one, design for the students in front of you. The questions that you need to ask yourselves as teachers are how much do you know about your students? What are their current abilities and what do they like to do? What do you know about the students lives outside the classroom? Now, this is because when we design our learning activities, our teaching activities with the specific students in front of us in mind, that means that we can really engage them at a personal level. Possible actions that teachers can take in this respect include asking the students to write an introductory statement about themselves at the beginning of the program. I would encourage, for example, asking the students to write about their own preferences for learning and their own background in learning, for example, academic English. And that will give you not only an insight into their writing skills, but also important insights into the students lives and their own stories as learners. That means that you can then engage them, as I said, at a personal level. This can also be done among the students themselves by, for example, introducing interview tasks or guessing tasks where the students have to interview each other on a particular topic that you choose. And that way you'll give the students an opportunity to talk about their own understandings of certain topics and give them an opportunity to learn about one another and also for the teachers to learn about the individual students themselves.

The following principle concerns getting the students emotionally invested in learning. So questions that you may want to ask yourselves include how do students feel in your classroom? How do they enjoy working in groups or working alone or working in pairs? How pleasant or unpleasant do you think tasks look to your students? In order to address these questions, you may want to look into building a 'wow' factor in your planning and your designing of your activities. It's important that you try to surprise your learners from time to time with unusual topics, unusual classroom setups, and also unusual teacher student roles. You might someday ask the students to play the role of the teacher and you play the role of the learner and you give them the support resources to do that, but that switch in role will captivate them in an emotional, personal level that will hopefully engage them emotionally because they feel, more or less, interested. And therefore you minimize, if you like, the chances of them feeling bored or uninterested.

The next principle concerns curiosity. Questions that you may want to ask yourselves are how much variety is there in your planning activities? Do you use the same kind of tasks all the time? Do you ever break routines in your classroom? So things that you can do to captivate your students mind and therefore arouse their curiosity include asking learners to

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predict, for example, the question that they think a text they're going to read will answer, or show them something unusual, dramatic, like a picture, a poster, and then ask them to speculate on what will happen next. Or you could play a recording and then ask the students to predict what is going to happen next. So getting them to really engage with something that they need to resolve or fill in a gap and therefore become curious about.

Finally, you need to make sure that your students are active in the classroom. So you may want to ask yourselves, how much do students say in my lessons? Do students take the initiative to talk? Is the teacher the one who always asks the questions? So it's important to promote critical thinking and deep learning. And how do we do that? Asking questions in response to what the students say, such as what do you think? Or why do you think so? Pushing the students to tell you more about their answers or their opinions. Sometimes they choose the easy option just because they think that the words they're speaking are good words, good phrases in English, but they don't quite engage with the content of what they are saying. Therefore, asking questions like what is the consequence of what you are saying? Or how does your argument affect someone else? These kind of questions will push the students to become critically engaged with what they do and what they think and say in your classroom.



Teaching English & Teaching IN English  
(EMI and EAP Teacher Development)