

Giving instructions

A key time in a lesson is the transition period between one activity and another. The students usually move from group, pair or individual work to focusing individually on the teacher. Well-thought instructions in these periods are a must for smooth flow of the lesson.

*Give **clear** instructions*

- Prepare your activity well before you set it. Think through each stage carefully, how to organize it, and what instructions to give at what points.
- Think about the exact language you will use in your directions, considering the levels and needs of the students.
- Whenever appropriate, show them what to do instead of just telling them. Use another student to model the activity, provide an example of the end product, etc.
- Make sure all the students know what to do and how to do that. Sometimes asking a student to re-explain in his/her own words to the class is appropriate to confirm your directions were understood.
- Provide the time frame for the activity
- It is helpful to explain the end goal and the type of work expected.

*Introducing activities that classes are **not used to***

- Start from the experiences your students already have.
- To begin with, try a short, simple talk—one with a definite goal.
- Explain the purpose of each activity, and at the end, summarize language goals.
- Start practical.

*When to use **LI***

- With monolingual classes and lower level students
- When it is difficult and time-consuming to grapple with explanations in English

Age of Learners May Matter

- For younger classes it is not necessary to define what the linguistic objective is such as “The use of the modals of obligation”
- Describing general learning process is helpful such as “we’re going to practice some

words we've learned”

- For more mature learners it is better for them to know more precisely what you are going to practice with them.
- Feeling of a sharing responsibility for learning is important for successful language acquisition
- In more communicative and game-like activities, presenting the language learning purpose in the instruction is helpful. If it is not explained some mature students may feel they are wasting time, thinking “Why are we playing games instead of doing serious language work?”

Effective instructions might involve

- Good voice qualities
- Attending behavior: teacher's position, eye contact, movement
- Visual support
- Cueing to aid memory
- Modeling (showing)
- Questions about important concepts in the instructions

Possible paradigm for good instruction might follow the steps like

1. Give signal to engage class's attention
2. State briefly the overall nature of the activity
3. Organize seating/groups
4. Give instructions and model when appropriate.
5. Signal to start
6. Monitor understanding—repeat/re-phrase as necessary

References

- Wajnryb, R. (1992). Classroom observation tasks. Glasgow: Cambridge University Press.
- Willis, D., & Willis, J. (2007). Doing task-based teaching. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ur, P. (1988). Grammar practice activities. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.