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PRACTICAL TECHNIQUES

For Language Teaching

MICHAEL LEWIS
JIMMIE HILL

Contents

1. Basic Principles 1 — Student and Teacher

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1. Learning is more important than teaching.
2. Teach the students, not the book.
3. Involve students in the learning process.
4. Don't tell students what they can tell you.
5. Show your reactions to what students say.
6. Students need practice, not you.
7. Don't emphasise difficulties.
8. Vary what you do, and how you do it.
9. Select!
10. Activities and relationships in the classroom change.
11. Students need to learn how to learn.
12. Useful and fun is better than either alone.
13. We all learn best when we are relaxed.
14. Students can be silent but still involved

2. Basic Principles 2 — Language and Language Learning 21

1. Language teaching is teaching language.
2. Languages are different.
3. Language is what, how and why.
4. 'Level' is a complex idea.
5. Knowing the language is not enough.
6. Natural language has a place in all courses.
7. Most language skills can be divided into sub-skills.
8. Hear, speak, read, write is a good sequence.
9. Language learning is cyclical.
10. Language is used for different purposes in the classroom.
11. Do not be afraid of the students' mother tongue.
12. Motor skills need practice.
13. Distinguish clearly between accuracy and fluency practices.
14. Interesting communicative tasks increase motivation.
15. You learn to speak by listening.

3. Classroom Management and General Tips

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1. Arrange the seating to help.
2. Stand up when you're directing activity.
3. Look at the students.
4. Use your hands to encourage and direct students.
5. Use the back of your hand to point.
6. Use pauses to punctuate what you say.
7. Vary your voice.
8. Keep your language to a minimum when students are doing something.
9. Don't commentate.
10. Don't be afraid of silence.
11. Don't be afraid of noise.
12. Use pair work to increase student talking time even if it seems chaos.
13. Use group work to increase student talking time.
14. Be explicit.
15. Don't ask "Do you understand".
16. Don't go 'round the class' if individuals can prepare particular examples.
17. Admit your ignorance.
18. Consult colleagues.
19. Consult students.
20. Demonstrate, rather than explain, new activities.
21. Exploit real events.

22. Divide the blackboard.
23. Use the overhead projector to control what students see.
24. Machinery will not solve all your problems.
25. Expand, don't clutter.

4. Preparation

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1. Prepare yourself.
2. Courses and lessons need an overall structure.
3. Don't let the book dictate.
4. Do not prepare too much or too rigidly.
5. Preparation must be concrete.
6. Aids are only aids if they help.
7. Never ignore the practical difficulties.
8. A good lesson has a beginning, a middle and an end.

5. Techniques — Listening

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1. Listening can be divided into sub-skills.
2. Direct students' listening, particularly if it is taped.
3. Listening to a tape is difficult.
4. Let students hear "the real thing" from early in their course.
5. Make sure students can hear the difference between similar sounds.
6. Use a variety of 'listen and respond' activities.

6. Techniques — Speechwork

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1. Do not distort when giving a model.
2. The model must remain the same.
3. Use choral pronunciation.
4. Conduct choral pronunciation decisively.
5. Move around the room when doing choral pronunciation.
6. Keep your language to a minimum in pronunciation practices.
7. Vary your criterion of "good" in pronunciation practice.
8. Articulation is an important first step in practice.
9. It is helpful to do articulation practices more than once.
10. Bring variety to 'say after me'.
11. Something which is not a real word sometimes helps.
12. There is no such thing as the 'c-h sound'.
13. The main criteria for pronunciation are consistency and intelligibility.
14. Teach intonation by back-chaining.
15. Don't explain intonation, demonstrate.
16. Show stress, pitch and intonation visually.
17. Refer to stress and intonation even when not specifically teaching it.

7. Techniques — Structure

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1. Encourage students to see patterns.
2. Good rules can help students.
3. Understanding involves example, explanation, and practice.
4. Terminology can help or hinder.
5. Filling in a fill-in exercise is not enough.
6. Students need to practise form as well as use.
7. There is a place for oral and written practices.
8. Use 'gimmicks' to combat popular mistakes.
9. Use beehives with large classes.
10. Most language games are structure practices.
11. Free situations are important.
12. Grammar can be fun.
13. Grammar is a receptive skill, too.
14. Teach word grammar as well as sentence grammar.

8. Techniques — Correction

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1. Mistakes are a natural part of the learning process.

2. Give students the chance to correct themselves.
3. Involve the class.
4. Isolate the problem.
5. The student must use the correct language.
6. There are many kinds of mistakes.
7. Correcting register and appropriacy needs tact.
8. Correct promptly for accuracy, afterwards for fluency.
9. Don't over-correct.
10. Reformulation is often better than correction.
11. Use a code to correct written work.
12. Use class discussion as a basic method of correcting written work.

9. Techniques — Vocabulary

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1. A 'vocabulary' item can be more than one word.
2. Do not discuss the structure of lexical items.
3. There is a difference between active and passive vocabulary.
4. Explain difference of meaning, not meaning.
5. Words are often best taught in groups.
6. Vary the way you explain.
7. Words can link grammatically as well as thematically.
8. Record words together which occur together.

10. Techniques — Texts

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1. Different texts have different uses.
2. Too many new words make a text impossible.
3. Nothing is 'interesting' if you can't do it.
4. Use pre-activities to focus students' attention.
5. Distinguish between intensive and extensive reading.
6. Do not ask students to read aloud unseen.
7. Vary the method of reading.
8. Use short questions during intensive reading.
9. Don't ask "What does ... mean?", use definition questions.
10. Students cannot use what they cannot say.
11. 'Difficult' words are not the same as long words.
12. 'Correction questions' prompt student language.
13. Not all comprehension questions check understanding.
14. Use comprehension and conversation questions together.
15. If you read a dialogue, distinguish the two speakers clearly.

11. Techniques — Conversation

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1. Exploit opportunities for short spontaneous conversations.
2. Don't flog a dead horse.
3. Encourage contributions without interfering.
4. Conversation does not need to be about serious issues.
5. Provocative statements are often better than questions.
6. Problem solving is often an excellent basis for 'conversation'.
7. Encourage active listening.

12. Some misunderstood language points

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1. Some/any
2. 'The Future'
3. Continuous forms
4. Go-went-gone
5. Countable and uncountable nouns
6. Can/could
7. Must/have to
8. Tags
9. Auxiliaries
10. (do) as the dummy auxiliary