Leaving Myself Behind: My Experience Teaching an ESL Class

An Honors Creative Project (HONRS 499)

by

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Abstract

These are the results of teaching an English as a second language class. Included are an essay about the experience, biweekly journal entries, sample lesson plans, class handouts and student evaluations.

Acknowledgments

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I. Overview

I became interested in the field of teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) through a class I took to complete a minor in linguistics. As the class proceeded, and I became more and more interested in TESOL, I began thinking of the possibilities of entering the field. Dr. Ely was the instructor and encouraged me to pursue some concrete experience. I tutored a few women in English under his supervision and towards the end of the year we discussed using the Honor’s Creative Project as an opportunity for me to teach an actual English as a Second Language (ESL) class. Soon after he agreed to advise me in the project.

II. Introduction

The English as a Second Language (ESL) class was taught to women in the Ball State and Muncie community twice a week from 10:45AM-12:00noon Mondays and Wednesdays. The classes were held in the Scheidler community room during the fall semester of 2002. The facility included a large main room and a good-sized kitchen. The location made it possible for almost the entire class to access it by foot or the Ball State shuttle service. Childcare was provided for those who wanted it. The class ranged in size from 2-9 people with an average attendance of 4 people per class. Almost all of the women who came were the wives of Ball State international students. Students included those from China, Ecuador, Guinea, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Korea and Pakistan. Language skill levels varied from beginning to intermediate, with the majority falling in the middle. Students found out about the class either because I knew them personally, or by word of mouth and mass e-mails.
It should also be noted that at the same time I began this project, I also began teaching a Spanish class to children in an after-school program. Although the experiences were quite different, the experiences in the Spanish class were often relevant to the ESL class and come up periodically throughout this project.

III. Goals and Strategies

As I started this class, my only experience teaching English was a year of tutoring I had done with Arab women. Therefore, I set out with the goal of having a beginner’s class for Arab women. I hoped this would create a comfortable learning environment for the students as well as keep the language skill levels somewhat even. There would also be the advantage of their having a similar language background and thus similar difficulties with the English language. I did as much recruiting as I could, talking with contacts I had made earlier with Arabs, and searching out groups with a high number of Arabic members, such as the local Islamic center. In spite of my efforts, there were only two or three Arab women interested. I knew that regular attendance would be an issue; they would not all come the entire time. As time came closer to start the class, I realized I was going to have to open the class to other people. Though they were not difficult to find, their skill levels were more varied than I would have liked.

Though I had a class in Teaching English to Speakers of other Languages (TESOL), I had very little actual teaching experience. My goal was to learn how to teach an ESL class and to put into practice what I had studied. To do that I knew I needed to find out each student’s language needs and to devise a plan to meet those to the best of my ability, with the help and supervision of Dr. Ely. My strategy was to have a friendly
environment. One way I encouraged that was by having refreshments at the beginning of class. If possible I was hoping that class time could revolve around food and cooking together. Even so, I knew there were a lot of teaching methods available to use, and because of my lack of experience I felt it was better to experiment with many of them and see which methods worked best for me. After the first meeting with the class I made the decision to plan one class at a time, evaluating each one afterwards and taking what knowledge was gained and applying it to the plan for the next class time. A large part of the evaluation was keeping a journal. After almost every class I would write down any thoughts that I had and anything I thought might be meaningful to me later as I evaluated the class as a whole.

IV. Class Content and Structure

The students usually arrived five to fifteen minutes late. For those who got there earlier we had tea, and often I would bring snacks or ask for a volunteer to bring something. As soon as everyone arrived, I started the class presenting what we would work on that day. The presentation part would last less than ten minutes. Then we did some sort of activity together or in groups. The last part of the class we either went over any last questions, or regrouped to share with everyone what each person or group had worked on.

As I mentioned earlier, my original idea for the class was to center it on food. I was unsure how it would go over, so I decided to try it for a while. During the second class we started to work with food and cooking. The students seemed to enjoy it very much. Cooking together helped the students to bond and feel comfortable in the class. The students were curious to find out how people from other cultures cooked, and were in
turn enthusiastic in sharing their own customs. There also was a lot of rich grammar to extract from such activities.

By the fourth day I felt like it was too limiting just to have the class revolve around food. I started focusing more on hypothetical situations and other kinds of verbal and written prompts. This worked well after the food unit because the students were already comfortable with each other and were willing to share about themselves. There were still some activities in the kitchen and dealing with food.

By the eighth day I started incorporating the textbook *Fundamentals of English Grammar* by Betty Schrampfer Azar. The students did grammar exercises and learned about several verb tenses. They were very eager to do grammar. I think it worked so well because they felt it was what they needed in order to improve. It was another added layer, as I still included some of the former activities.

On the thirteenth day I added some in-class readings to their activities. It was a refreshing change of pace to work on a different skill. It also was good because it allowed different topics to be discussed more in-depth. On the seventeenth day I started reviewing all that the women had gone over starting from the beginning of the semester. This was definitely the worst part of the class. I failed to come up with good activities to do.

In the last four classes there was a slight loss of momentum. The students did not come one day, and when they did come the next two classes they were more interested in chatting together than doing focused learning activities. The last class we talked about plans for meeting together the next semester and evaluated how the class had gone the fall semester.
V. Challenges and Solutions

Some of my biggest challenges included preparing activities and lessons that pertained to each of the various skill levels, class control, childcare, and creating a curriculum without any set guidelines.

It was frustrating to trying to communicate with students who only knew a few nouns and basic phrases, while trying to teach about the conditional (for example), to the rest of the class. I still do not know what I could have done to make it better. Because the group was small, I could not choose a group of students from the class who were at the same level, and tell the others they shouldn’t be there. But because of the small size of the group, I often was able to work one on one with those who understood the least, while the others were doing the day’s activity. If one or two students finished early I could talk about some things with them that were too advanced for the rest of the class. I managed to keep the interest of most of the students. In spite of the apparent division this created, the class was very unified. I did a good job making the students feel comfortable about being at the level they were. The personalities, especially towards the end of the semester worked beautifully together. The higher-level students often were patient and helpful when a classmate did not understand something. They became good friends, which manifested itself nicely in classroom activities, where they talked freely.

I define class control as being able to get the students to do what I want them to. It found that clear and precise instructions, monitoring activities, managing time, and discipline (more applicable to the children learning Spanish) were important in accomplishing this. This was the thing I felt least prepared in doing. None of my previous activities, like tutoring, helped give any experience with classroom control.
There were several times that I failed in keeping control of the class, but keeping a journal helped me evaluate those times and learn from them. I started to speak more deliberately in class, to communicate about time expectations and to check up on groups while they were working, even if they did not ask for help. Disciplining children is something that became easier as well. However, when an adult acts inappropriately or intentionally does not follow directions it is much harder to correct than when a child does. The adult must be motivated by something other than fear of authority. Every time I assigned something for the women to do in class, they would come to class the next time with either having forgot to do it or having it only halfway done. If only one person was not cooperating, it might be self-corrected out of peer pressure or not being able to participate. However, since it was almost all of them, it stayed the same. I evaluated the assignments and do not think they were too long, and they were given plenty of time to work on them, but I never found a good solution for motivating them to complete the tasks.

Child care did not work out at all because there was not a separate room for the children to go to, and they disrupted class so much that the mother's stopped coming to class. I did not enjoy seeing them leave, but it was a relief to be undisturbed. I wish I could have done something more, but I do not see any plausible solutions.

For a first time teaching experience I believe it would be beneficial for the teacher to have a clear guideline or curriculum to follow. In this case I know it was not possible, since it was not an official university class. Now I have come to really enjoy the freedom that I have in choosing the content of the class, but last semester it frustrated me. I would often sit in front of the computer or at my desk looking at books for many hours. It was
almost too much for me to handle. I did not have trouble coming up with good activities, but trying to choose what concepts my students needed to learn was difficult. I spent a long time looking for a good textbook to use but because of the differences in skill levels, the only possibility was to use a grammar text. Now that I have some experience behind me, I feel like it would not be such a problem to not have a set curriculum if I was to do something similar again. It did help me in the end, but it cost me a lot in the process.

VI. Conclusion

This project was a rewarding on many levels. I was able to be introduced to some of the issues in TESOL, learn about myself and help others. It has been one of the most beneficial experiences of my undergraduate college career.

Not only did this project allow me to put into action much of what I have learned about language over the past three years, it also prepared me for further study in TESOL and linguistics. The richest growth from teaching the ESL class came from being faced with challenges and having to problem solve. Now, I have personal experience to guide me in thinking about and forming ideas in regards to how to effectively teach English to speakers of other languages.

Before starting the ESL class, and throughout the experience, I doubted my teaching abilities. Two or three years ago considering a career in teaching never would have crossed my mind. I simply did not know that I could be an effective teacher. This project pushed me to find out more about myself including my potential and my weaknesses. I have been able to identify areas that need improvement as well as some gifting that I did not know I had.
I found that one of the most basic principles of teaching is focusing on the students and not on oneself. My personality has always leaned towards self-consciousness. As I was in the classroom, at one point I understood that being self-consciousness is nothing more than being self-absorbed, and an effective teacher must not focus on herself but rather on the students. In the classroom I do not matter; only the students matter. I did become more comfortable in the classroom, but the times that I was most successful as a teacher was when I was not worried about myself at all. Teaching is helping others, and should be focused on the students. It was a privilege to be able to focus on the students who attended the class. They were a wonderful group of women. They were my biggest motivation and I believe they did benefit from this project.
The students’ and their children’s names have been changed.

Day 1 September 16, 2002

Five students- Jen, Juana, Mona, Rachel, Leila

My plan today was to make sure all the students felt comfortable with each other and me. I also hoped to learn more about their needs and desires for the class. I knew it would be hard to really plan a lesson and go through it until I found out more information about my students. So I set out to create a good atmosphere. I was hoping to make the Muslim women comfortable enough to take their scarves off, because I knew the other women would feel a little bit uncomfortable. They did seem to be very comfortable, but they never took their scarves off even after I assured the entire class that the door was locked and nobody could get in. Jen, a woman from Korea, seemed ok but I felt bad for her because she got frustrated because of her problems with pronunciation. The other students had a really hard time understanding her. Juana, a woman from Ecuador felt bad because she has just arrived in America and has almost no knowledge of English. I talked to her after class, trying to affirm that she would do well in the class. I think it helped but I plan on confirming it with her again the next class.

At the beginning it took me too long to make tea and there was a lot of awkward silence. Then hardly anybody liked it, maybe because I didn’t bring sugar. I also made cookies and everyone was shy to eat them. It took a while to get going and I didn’t do very well. I finally got them to talk a little bit about themselves and write some things down on note cards. They felt much more comfortable writing than talking, so it worked well to break the ice. It allowed them time to think and process their answers. Then we got into groups of two and asked each other questions about what they had written on
their cards. After they were done they presented their partner to the whole class. It didn’t work too well because they just read off their partner’s cards. I let them do it because I thought I should have given them a warning that they were going to be presenting to the group. I didn’t want them to feel intimidated especially on the first day. People did start to loosen up. At the end of the time people were asking each other extra questions. They all participated.

Mona, from Jordan, spoke to the other Arabs in Arabic a few times. I did my best to discourage it in a relaxed manner. I had to speak Spanish to Juana a few times because she is so far behind all of the other women. I didn’t know whether I should do it but sometimes it just seemed ridiculous to not help her when she and I both knew I could. I talked to Dr. Ely about it and he told me it was fine as long as I wait until she feels some frustration and everyone else senses it too, that way it doesn’t look like I have a favorite student. For some reason I feel bad for Jen. She seemed overwhelmed in class with all the people especially the Arabs when they spoke together in Arabic. After the class she asked me if she could bring a friend. I want to talk to her and make sure she feels good about being in the class. I also got the feeling that she didn’t understand some things and was afraid to ask questions. I’m sure some cultural differences play a major roll in the situation.

I got the class to talk a little about cooking and found they had lots to say. Mona worked hard to understand what Jen was trying to say about kimchi. Jen was a little frustrated, and I’m not sure she ever communicated what she wanted to say. All of the women had a lot of complaining to do about food in the USA. Complaining seems to be a good motivator for communicating
A couple notes for next time:

I did ask them about their goals for the class, but I must not have done it in a good way because I don’t feel like I’ve really found out.

I need to have them bring dictionaries to use in class.

I doubt myself a little. I wonder if I should have waited for all Arabs. I just got a call from another Arab woman. She is too advanced for the class, but she would have done well if it Juana and Jen were not in there.
Day 2

Leila, Juana, Jen, Sarah

Today I didn’t have a clear enough goal for what I wanted the students to learn. We made Spanish tortilla and talked about meaning of our names, but the conversation was not focused enough to encourage everyone to participate. I had a hard time preparing for the class and coming up with activities. I wanted to go over count and non-count nouns. My presenting skills were rocky and I didn’t figure out how to incorporate student practice into the lesson very well. What did work well was using cooking to give the students something important to talk about. All the women had their own ideas on how to cook, and they were not willing to sit back and let other women take over without stating their opinion.

The tortilla turned out good, so they must have at least understood the basics of the recipe. They had a fun time and enjoyed the food. It helped the students feel comfortable with each other.

There was a new student in the class: Sarah from Korea. She was very shy and talked with Jen more than with everyone else. Jen was a lot more comfortable with her friend there. Both the Koreans were very helpful in cleaning up after class. Juana seemed in good spirits afterwards and really started to understand more of what was being said. I saw the lights go on for her. Leila got really bored and visually impatient at one point while Jen was talking.

I gave a homework assignment that I am optimistic about. It is to make a list of all the items in their pantry. I want to use it to go over count and non-count nouns again
by having everyone switch lists and explain to the class what they would make with the
other persons pantry. For example they might say, “I would make a desert with a few
apples, some flour, and a little sugar.”

There were some really good things that happened today. I just need to learn how
to prepare them for what they do, and emphasize one or two facets of grammar. Next
time I would provide them with more instruction on how to form a command, (wait!) be
polite (would you, could you), and make suggestions (let’s).

I got there right on time, and I really wanted to get there early. So I decided to
make the class from 10:45-12:00 instead to give myself so breathing room.
Day 3

Jen, Juana, Mona, Rachel, Leila, Sarah

Well, everyone came. That encouraged me. The combination of people worked well together. My only concern is that there is still some talking in Korean and Arabic. The two Korean students didn’t do the homework I assigned. I don’t know if they didn’t understand when I explained it or if they forgot about it. They are still afraid to ask questions and they feel awkward when they don’t understand something. While I talked to the rest of the class about the assignment and what we were going to do next, they wrote some things down that they could remember off the top of their heads from their pantry.

Today I had a clear goal, but not enough structure in time management. I need to learn how to judge and give a time limit. I realized this while they were categorizing their food. It was taking too long and I didn’t know what to do for a while but finally I said “two minutes” then “one minute” then “30 seconds”. This helped them to move faster, and for everyone to finish at about the same time.

I am realizing that I don’t know what I am doing at all. I wish I could be doing more for them. My consolation is that if I don’t help these women like I want to, I will be better prepared to help other women in the future.

I don’t know if they learned what I had hoped about count and non count nouns. I had a hard time getting the concept of a noun across to the Arabs. They got partners and chose a food from each category and decided if you could count it, or if it needed to be measured by something outside itself. They worked in groups and asked questions like “how can you measure meat?” We had some good conversations about pieces and
pounds and whole chickens etc., and how to measure curry powder. Judging from their
questions they comprehended the idea. Next time I would stress more how to know in
general if you can count something (i.e. the ideas of specific vs. non-specific and small
vs. large). I would also have like to somehow bring everyone together at the end of the
class to share with each other what they discussed with their partner.

I’m learning something that I didn’t expect I would need to learn: how to control
an adult class. I thought it was only a problem when working with the children I just
starting teaching Spanish to, but in fact it’s with Adults as well. Control is about how to
get the class to really do what I want. Adults are more willing, but I still need to know
how to present things in a way that is efficient and structured enough for them to follow.
Since this is such an intimate group I think it would be inappropriate to tend towards a
rigid atmosphere, but I think they would do better if I were more specific.

Mona and Leila came at the old time so apparently I am still having some
problems communicating.
Day 4

Leila, Jen, Sarah, Mona, Juana, Rachel

I am definitely getting more comfortable in the classroom. I still am not thoroughly satisfied with the way things are going, but I don’t know if I ever will be. Today we worked on the conditional. I had a worksheet that showed a few examples in the form of question and answer. I explained that the verb that follows “if” is in past tense. I thought it went ok. Not everybody understood the verb part. I find it almost useless to refer to parts of speech or grammar. Not many understand or know what words like “verb” “noun” “past tense” etc. mean.

I had two hypothetical situations written out with the question “what would you do if…?”, but they took a really long time to finish everything. Rachel got done long before anyone else. I talked quietly with her so she wouldn’t get bored, but I felt a little awkward about doing so. I think she is a little too far advanced for the class, but she doesn’t care. She is really patient, especially when talking to the other students. She doesn’t mind working with them to figure out what they are trying to say.

They really liked it when I asked them “what would you do if you found out you were pregnant with triplets?”. We went around and talked a little bit about it. Jen was about where the lesson hit the best. Sarah didn’t get it very well. Rachel got it too well and Juana used just the structures I had on the worksheet because that was her only crutch –since she is at such a basic level the phrases “what would you do if” and “I would” were her only tools. She filled in the blanks. It’s difficult to find a target level because the way they communicate is very different. Overall, the class encompasses much too large of a language skill level.
I wish I had more supervision. It is hard for me to only have self-evaluation. Teaching is much different than being a student. If I get carried away, I could be spending all of my time trying to create a flawless lesson plan and even then it would still fall short. It's hard to find the right balance with going overboard and being adequately prepared. I know my true goal is to teach the women, but I don't know how to evaluate that for myself.

Good: The conditional was definitely introduced, and they understand a little about how to use it. The got the chance to practice it one the spot when we first went over it and then with a worksheet that they took time to think about and fill out. They were interested to know each other's answers, and even if it wasn't always clear, they shared their answers with the class. The comfort level increases every time with the students.

Bad: too much time in silence writing. I really need to figure out how to use homework assignments to take that away. I should have given the second sheet for them to take home and do it next time.
Day 5
Sarah, Juana, Leila, Mona, Rachel

While preparing for today, I was struggling tremendously. I wish that I had a set curriculum down on paper. I think it would be easier to come up with activities if I only had to think about how to get an idea across, and not what the idea should be too. I find myself going back and forth between deriving a lesson from an activity I want to do or deriving an activity from a lesson. We ended up talking about commands and suggestions. It went ok.

It was really difficult today because two people came at 11:00 instead of 10:45. So we only had an hour. Mona must have just been having a bad day because we saw her pull in at 11:00 but it took her ten minutes to really get to the class. Since she is the one with the kids it made it even harder because we knew it was going to be a distraction when she came in. Amanda, her daughter, was cranky and didn’t want to be left with Marie and everyone was extremely distracted. Because of that, we lost momentum and the students lost some of their courage. Sarah and Juana were very quiet today.

I also didn’t do a great job explaining different ways to command and suggest until I set an example and had people connect with what I was saying. So I mentioned in a restaurant you don’t say “give me a glass of water” you say “could you give me a glass of water, please”. That helped draw them in. I’ve been thinking a lot about the use of a “lead in” to draw in the students and give them something easy to talk about. Once we finally got through the explanation, I went through an easy example: “what would you say to your neighbor if they had their music loud at 2 AM?” They responded a little. Then we did an example I had seen in one of my classes about a mother-in-law wanting
to live with her Latin-American son and her American daughter-in-law. They responded well to that.
Day 7

Well the big surprise today was that 9 people showed up. The dynamics felt so much different. We had to get out another table and more chairs. I felt positive about the way the class went, but I enjoyed the atmosphere of only 6. It was just nice to know everyone. I didn’t feel uncomfortable. I just missed that personal touch. I used to know when someone didn’t understand, but now I can’t ask everyone. It was loud today too, because there were three children. In some ways it is exciting to have a larger class. It is a good lesson in teaching to be flexible. I just feel overwhelmed because I want to make a difference in these women’s lives both on a personal level (making them feel welcome) and really helping them become better communicators in English.

In the end they did understand the difference between present progressive and present. The present progressive seemed to be a new idea to them. They had a tendency to say things like “she make carrots” instead of “she is chopping the carrots”. I would correct them mostly if they used simple present instead of present progressive.
Day 8
Lilly, Norine, Juana

Well, I was prepared for ten people to come and only three people did. So another day I was thrown off by the unexpected. I couldn’t find a sitter so Lilly had to tend to her daughter. It was extremely distracting. I guess I can’t do anything about it now. We went over a little bit the past and past progressive. I wonder if I should have done more with present and present progressive. We did a worksheet on page 40 of Azar. I did it to give them more confidence and to get things going. I think it worked well for those reasons, but the content was not perfect for the class. Lilly caught on too quickly. Norine barely caught on and Juana did well but it was slow.

I might need to tell Lilly not to come back. It would be really hard for me to do. I don’t know if I can do it or not. Sometimes I think she is ok. I like the fact that she has a baby because it makes it less awkward for those who come help with the kids...Mona many times prefers to keep her daughter with her if there are no other children (up to Mona there has not been). Then I feel bad that people are volunteering their time and then don’t do anything. I guess I’ll take it one day at a time for now.

After the exercise I had slips of paper to draw from a cup. They said things like “tell about the first day you came to America/Muncie” or “Tell about the day you found out you were pregnant.” It went ok, but I thought that it would last longer because there would be more people. As it was, everyone went twice.
Day 9

Sarah, Rachel, Lilly, Norine, Juana

Today we reviewed the simple present and present progressive. We did a worksheet page (decide if the verb is a habit or happening right now). Then we played 3 truths and lie. It took Norine a long time to understand the instructions and in the end she wrote three lies and a truth. When we realized what she had done we all laughed including her. We broke into partners and then guessed which was our lie. Then we told the class about our partner’s sentences saying “she” instead of the “I” that each one had wrote down. I think they enjoyed the activity, but I’m not sure they understood the link that it had to the grammar we were learning. I guess it is fine that way, but sometimes they don’t think about trying to say it correctly, instead they just want to get their point across. Today I started to get used to Lilly. I realized that she is not as good as I thought, that she just has a lot of confidence that the others lack when they are speaking. So I think she is fine for the class.

The last thing we did was conjugate verbs in a story in the present. Their homework was to finish up the present tense story and then conjugate it in the past tense, as provided in the book. The homework is due next Monday because we weren’t able to have class this Wednesday.

My spirits were up today. I am getting in the groove of things. I think I had a good balance of activities and teaching. Everyone seemed to catch on pretty well, and I have some clear direction for next time. At one point I thought Rachel was getting frustrated with Norine, but she persevered with her in explaining the three truths and a lie game. I almost didn’t put them together for the last activity, but I did because they were
sitting next to each other, and she was very patient and made sure that Norine understood everything.
Day 10

Norine, Sarah, Juana, Rachel, Lilly

People showed up late again. At least there is a core group of students that keeps returning, although the group has changed. It was a little hard to get started today. I sensed that Rachel was upset with me. I tried to lighten things up a little bit—it was tense in the class. We started by going over the homework I assigned for past progressive and present progressive. Then I gave them a story that I had written up and they conjugated some verbs in that. They are improving steadily.

Next, I passed out six cards to each of them. The cards had a picture of people doing various actions. I told them to arrange the cards in any order they wanted and tell a story about it. I explained over and over to Norine, but she didn’t understand. I did an example for the whole class. I asked her if she understood the word “story” and she said yes. But I don’t think she did, because in the end, she just explained what was happening in each card. Juana did too. I didn’t want that to happen. I tried to go around and watch the notes that they were writing about it, but it didn’t work.

Even so, it wasn’t a useless exercise, but I was hoping to get their brains going. The ones who did understand, did well, and it was good for them. One weakness I need to work on is explaining things. I think by the end of the class they figure it out, by some of the activities that we do, but I have a hard time getting started when I jump right in to explaining. It is best for me to come up with an activity or something small to get things rolling at the beginning of class. Having tea and cookies helps but I still need something to make the transition from chit-chat to focused learning.
Overall, I feel pretty proud of my class. I am surprised at myself for surviving so well. I've got a ways to go, but I really enjoy teaching even now. I am learning to not focus on myself, and what I am doing, but rather the students and how they react. It feels really good to teach.
Day 12
Norine, Rachel, Lauren, Sarah

Today was really rough. Apart from the usual communication problems with Norine, Lauren came and doesn’t know but maybe 5-10 words in English. After everything was explained to the rest of the class, I tried to speak to her in French, but I’ve only had half a semester of French.

I couldn’t seem to figure out where to start with explaining the present perfect. I had too many diagrams and explanations and contrasts and worksheets. It was a mess. When I finally finished my feeble attempts, we came up with questions to ask each other about things we have done. So I gave a few examples. Everyone came up with 5 questions. Then we put all the questions in a pile. We took turns reading them and then choosing one person to ask the question.

Lauren participated a few times. She didn’t really understand what she was reading most of the time but she got the idea of the game. I don’t really know what else I could have done with her. I felt ok about that.

They seemed to enjoy the activity. I was able to introduce the short answer “yes I have” and “no I haven’t”. Some of Norine’s questions were not interesting to anyone…like “have you ever worn a red shirt”. Nonetheless, they were grammatically correct, and she understood the basic concepts. In general, I think I want to do something completely different next time working with the same structure.

Day 13
Rachel, Sarah, Jen, Juana
Well today went much better than last time. I decided to look up some information on president George W. Bush. I made a time line of his life. The students took turns reading it together in class and I made sure everyone understood everything. Then I had them write down the answer to the question “What experiences has President Bush had that has prepared him his responsibilities as president. They wrote down things like “he has been in the national guard, he has had an excellent education, he has been governor.” Although I was looking for some use of the present perfect, naturally some students said “he went to Harvard and Yale, he was governor.” I let them know that the answers were right as well. Then I asked them some oral questions. “How long had GWB and Laura been married when their daughters were born?” Whoever found the answer first would say it. It worked pretty well. I also took the opportunity to mix other verb tenses… “where was GWB living when his sister died?” ect. I felt really positive about the class as a whole. It was a nice change of pace from what we had been doing and it interested the students. Out of the activity came some natural discussion about American culture and about what personalities leaders in their countries have. Although it wasn’t something I feel we should do every single time it was definitely the right timing. It hit all the levels just right too.

Tonight I am going again to the CASA meeting to see if I can get money.

Day 14
Norine, Juana, Rachel, Sarah, Jen

Today I took the first chapter of The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe and condensed it down into one page single spaced. I thought it would be an appropriate
book because the level isn't too difficult, being a children's book, but it has potential to be of interest even to adults. I was more interested in helping them understand the story as a whole than having them understand the text. I read it aloud to the class, acting some of it out. About half of them understood by the end so I had the ones who understood come and act the whole story out with me. When I look back I think I should have just had everyone act it out with me so no one felt bad. But at the time I didn't sense any discomfort. I thought it was a really good exercise and challenging for those who needed the challenge and a simple enough story for those who are at a lower level. I tried to encourage them to not worry about understanding every word but instead understanding the idea. The end of the first chapter is a cliffhanger, so from that we talked together about what they thought would happen. I asked each person what do you think will happen next? What will happen if.... etc. So I thought that went well because I was trying to get them to speak more and not write everything down all the time. I do think that it would have been nice if I would have had something explaining a little bit about the future tense. Because of that we only used "will and not "going to". I corrected any mistakes they made with the future tense but I don't make too many corrections when they are speaking- unless I think the rest of the class doesn't understand.

Overall I really enjoyed today and I think everyone else did too. They found the story to be interesting, motivating and challenging. I thought it was good just for them to hear me read something and read along.

I should have began the class with a lead in about what their favorite book was. It would have been a good opener to get them talking a little bit. Then I could have then talked about how The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe is my favorite book etc. The
time afterwards could have been richer. I could have pulled more out of it by teaching
the future before asking the questions about what would happen. However, I didn’t want
to ruin the momentum. But by having something to look at would have made them aware
of what grammar they were using.

Day 16
Norine, Juana, Rachel, Sarah

I really didn’t feel like teaching today. The good thing for me I found is that
teaching demands perseverance. So I trudged ahead because there were four faces
looking at me waiting for me to start. I did a poor job explaining as usual- the future
tense. Once we went through the examples we did some exercises to go over the
differences between “be going to” and “will” things fell into place. Everyone caught on.
I asked an easy question to start... “is the speaker (from the worksheet) using ‘will’ or
“be going to”. Everyone knew the answer to that and would say it out loud. Then I
would ask “why are they using ‘be going to’ instead of ‘will’” or vice versa. It is strange
how much simply asking an obvious question helps them to vocalize throughout the rest
of the class. I would then call on people to make sure that everyone got a chance. Rachel
got it pretty quickly as she usually does, but the others didn’t get it until I called on them.
Juana answered wrong but when I said no and then called on someone else she put out
the right answer in unison with the other student. From then on she understood. It
worked similarly with Norine and Sarah.

After we went through the exercises which seemed to be just enough, we looked
at how to form both “will” and “be going to”, positive, negative, and with probably.

When I first planned the lesson I was going to do it first but it worked naturally to do it
last. Once they understood when to use both structures, they learned how to. This worked only because the first exercise was just reading conversations and not making them do any conjugating. After going through the explanations I had a list of questions that they asked each other without writing anything down. I have been trying to wean them off of writing everything down before they talk in front of the class. It worked well at first to get the class rolling, but they are doing fine now just talking to each other. The questions were written down so it gave them a starting point. They aren’t as correct when they don’t write things down first, but I still feel that it is worth it. I teamed up the two more advanced speakers and the two lower level speakers this time. For some reason I used to try to have uneven partners but I think this works so much better. This way the lower level speakers don’t feel intimidated and the higher level speakers don’t feel bored. What was I thinking before?

Day 17

Jen, Sarah, Juana, Norine, Rachel

Today was a review day. We have gone over a lot of material so I wanted to stop and look back at everything we have done. I made some copies from the book that had them conjugating verbs and choosing the tense to conjugate them in. Going over the worksheet took the whole time which I wasn’t planning on. I didn’t try to move things more quickly because all of the questions that it brought up were too valid to dismiss. Also, they seemed to really enjoy the activity and it challenged them. It was what they wanted out of the class even if it wasn’t what they needed. I had a talk with Dr. Ely about it. We talked about giving the students a little of what they thought they needed,
and some of what we thought they needed. The students won’t have an open mind to the class if they think it won’t help them. So part of giving them the practice and know-how is doing it in a way they are open too.

The worksheet had some things on it that we didn’t cover. I should have looked over it better to anticipate some of the questions they might have. Also, I feel like, being a native speaker I can’t respond as quickly as I would like to...I have to think about why things are the way they are. I have to learn the rules for when to use one tense and when to use another.

Day 18
Rachel, Norine, Jen, Juana

I can’t say today was a failure but the activity I had planned definitely didn’t work. I was trying to go over some of the questions they had about present progressive as future tense. I made a worksheet to try to show the difference between present progressive, will, and be going to. They just didn’t ever get what I was asking because I didn’t really have any good questions to ask. I was hoping that it would provoke some questions and discussions from them but just didn’t work. Once I realized that it wasn’t going anywhere, I just went over a couple more sentences and then we planned out the party we are going to have after the semester is over. So I finished about ten minutes early and they went home. I don’t think they were too disappointed. They are really grateful for anything I do, and they are very easy on me. I still want to do my best for them, but it’s nice to have people who let you fail when need be.

Day 19
Juana, Rachel, Norine, Jen

This was the last day of review. I tried to make the class chatty to get people just talking free for a while. I think it went pretty well. Then we talked about our favorite movie or TV show. They asked each other about it in pairs and then told the class about it. I had a list of questions written out to get them to think and also to use some different tenses. It definitely worked to get the conversation going. I corrected as many mistakes as I could without completely disrupting the flow of conversation. I was a little bit disappointed that the things we went over and over didn’t always come out right, but I couldn’t get frustrated with them because I know I do the exact same thing in Spanish. Overall, I was glad to get people to talk but I really wanted today to be a little bit more guided and focused on accuracy. I think they were happy with the class, but I don’t want them to have the feeling that we aren’t doing anything ever.

Day 20
Norine, Rachel

Well, I definitely feel like I’ve lost momentum. I don’t know if I am going to be able to pick it back up again for the last two classes. Today I had planned to do the second chapter of the Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe. But when only two people came I didn’t know if it was worth it. We spent some time talking about all kinds of things. I handed out the papers with the story on it in the beginning of class. Then later I asked if we should get started. But they said they would rather talk. So, I said ok. I guess because I know that my students come only because they want to learn and not because it
is necessary for a degree or someone is making them come, I didn’t feel like I should
force something on them.

Day 21

Jen, Norine, Rachel, Juana

After talking to the students they decided they wanted to take the last two classes
and do some reading and writing. I typed up an introduction to an Arab cookbook. It
was about one page about the eating habits and food of Arabs. The students took turns
reading the paragraphs and I sat back amazed at how far they have come over the
semester. There were a handful of words they didn’t understand, but they helped each
other out with those. Everyone understood the idea and had a lot to say about the food
and lifestyles in their countries. I gave them the assignment to write a paper following a
similar pattern. We decided to continue to meet together next semester, so we will work
more on reading and writing then.
Lesson plan for day 7

Objective: to introduce and practice the present progressive in English and review the simple present and imperative.

Materials:

kitchen

recipe for a salad

ingredients to make the salad

cutting board, bowls, knives

Presentation: The students looked at page 4 of the Azar book. I gave them an introduction to the present progressive.

Activity:

The students broke up into three groups:

Group 1 follows a recipe and makes a salad in the kitchen, hidden from group 3.

Group 2 watches them and describes to the group 3 everything that is happening.

Group 3 listens to group 2 and reproduces the recipe that group 1 has.

The groups switch a third of the way through so that everyone has the opportunity to do each job. The people in group 2 must use the present progressive. For example they might say “They are chopping the carrots.” Groups 1 and 3 review the command forms by reading the recipe (group 1) and creating a recipe (group 3). Group three hears the present progressive and changes it to the imperative.

After the activity, the question is asked: “What do you do when you make salad?” The students use the simple progressive. This allows for the students to see the contrast between simple present and present progressive.
Lesson plan for day 10

Objective: to practice using simple past and past progressive and expand student’s vocabulary

Materials: Multi-story sequence cards

Preparation: Choose sets of five or six sequence cards that are related to each other.

Presentation: do an exercise that reviews the differences between the past progressive and the simple past.

Activity:

Hand out the sequence card sets to each of the students, or have the students work in groups. Show the class your set of cards and give an example of how the cards might work together to illustrate a story. Be imaginative, and don’t focus on creating a likely or realistic story. Have each student or group create their own story by incorporating the cards that were given to them. Allow the students to write down a few notes, but encourage them to keep most of the story in their heads. Have each group or student share his or her story with the class. Correct any mistakes with the simple past and past perfect.

Follow up: Discuss how the simple past and past progressive are used to tell stories.
Lesson plan for day 14

Objective: to introduce the future tense, improve listening and reading skills

Materials: an interesting children’s book or simple short story such as *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe* by C.S. Lewis

Preparation: Read a section of the story. Find a stopping point with a cliffhanger (such as the first chapter of *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe*). Prepare a list of questions that ask about what will happen to the characters.

Presentation: Give an overview about how to form the future tense. Talk about the book or story you have chosen. Ask the students about their favorite books now or when they were children.

Activity:

Give the students a copy of the story to read along with you as you read out loud. Read the story slowly and act out any difficult parts. You may want to have some of the students help you. Make sure the students understand the story as you go. Have them summarize it in their own words. Stop when you get to the cliffhanger.

Once the chapter or section has been read ask the students what they think will happen in the next chapter or section. Talk about different variables. Make sure the students use the present tense correctly.
Commands

Use the simple form of the verb
Example:
  Stop.
  Close the door.
  Give me your book.

To make the command more polite add *can you, will you, would you and could you.*
This makes the sentence a question.
Example:
  *Could you* stop?
  *Would you* close the door?
  *Will you* give me your book?

*Please* can also be added in two different places.
Example:
  Could you *please* stop?  -or-  Could you stop *please*?
  Would you *please* close the door?  -or-  Would you close the door *please*?
  Will you *please* give me your book?  -or-  Will you give me your book *please*?

Suggestions

You can use also suggestions to ask people to do something.
To make a suggestion use *why don’t you.*  Note: This is not necessarily polite.
  *Why don’t you* stop?
  *Why don’t you* close the door.
  *Why don’t you* give me your book.

Suggestions usually are not a way to ask people to do something. Usually it they are used
to express your opinion, idea or wish.  You can do this by using *let’s, why don’t you/we, you/we could, I think it would be good if you/we, I think you should* etc.
  *Let’s* make peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.
  *No, why don’t we* make turkey sandwiches.
  *We could* eat soup.
  *I think it would be good if you* made cheese sandwiches and tomato soup.
  *I think you should* do that too.

Susan is an American married to a man named Pedro from Costa Rica. In Costa Rica it is
common for widowed parents to live with their children. In America it is not common.
Susan’s mother-in-law want to move in with her and Pedro. Susan feels uncomfortable
with this, but Pedro doesn’t understand. What advice would you give to Susan? Write
down a few of your thoughts and then discuss it with a partner. Then tell the class what you and your partner might say to Susan.
used to
*tells about past habits
*contrasts the past and the present
*emphasizes that the action happened in the past
*can be used to create nostalgia

form:
used to + (infinitive form of verb)
ex. used to + (go)= used to go

used to is often used with would
*tells about past habits
*emphasizes that the action happened in the past

form:
would + (infinitive form of the verb)
ex. would +(go)= would go
What is your favorite movie? How many times have you seen it? When was the last time you saw it? When is the next time you are going to see it? Who is in the movie? Describe the best scene in the movie. Who do you like watching the movie with? Why is it your favorite?
What was your favorite movie when you were a kid?

What is your favorite TV show? What is it about? Did you used to watch it in your country or do you watch it now? When does it come on? What is happening in the story right now? What do you want to happen? Do you think it will happen? What do you like about the show?
What used to be your favorite TV show when you were a kid? How often did you watch it?

What is your favorite movie? How many times have you seen it? When was the last time you saw it? When is the next time you are going to see it? Who is in the movie? Describe the best scene in the movie. Who do you like watching the movie with? Why is it your favorite?
What was your favorite movie when you were a kid?

What is your favorite TV show? What is it about? Did you used to watch it in your country or do you watch it now? When does it come on? What is happening in the story right now? What do you want to happen? Do you think it will happen? What do you like about the show?
What used to be your favorite TV show when you were a kid? How often did you watch it?
review of present perfect
* happened in an unspecified time in the past
  I have been to New York.
  (You don’t know if it was in 1981 or 2002.)
* began in the past and continues to the present
  (uses since, for or time frame)
  (only with verbs of habit)
  She has lived in Muncie since 1993.
  She has lived in Muncie for 9 years.
  She has lived in Muncie a long time.
  (She still lives in Muncie.)

present perfect progressive
* action verbs -began in the past and continue
  We have been running for 45 minutes.
  (We are still running)
* habitual verbs -began in past and continue
  You have been wearing glasses for two years. (You still wear glasses.)
  or (present perfect)
  We have worn glasses for two years.
  (You still wear glasses.)
Which happened first?

I looked for Sara, but she had left the building.
___Sara left the building
___I looked for Sara.

I laughed when I saw my son. He had poured a bowl of spaghetti over his head.
___I laughed
___My son poured a bowl of spaghetti over his head.

I handed my friend the newspaper, but she didn’t want it. She had read it in the morning.
___I handed my friend the newspaper.
___She read the newspaper.

My husband called his mom after he came home from work. He had promised to call her in the morning.
___He promised to call his mom.
___He called her.

What does each sentence mean?

I don’t want to go to the movie because I have seen it 2 times.
I didn’t want to go to the movie because I had seen it 2 times.

I had known Suha for 3 months when she had her baby.
I have known Suha for 3 months.

I was going to the library when I saw you.
I had been to the library when I saw you.

We had been married for 6 months when we had our first fight.
We have been married for 1½ years.

I go to Aldi every week.
I used to go to Aldi every Thursday with my mom.
I have been going to Aldi since I was a child.
I’ll go to Aldi with you.
I am going to Aldi with you, right?
I have to go to Aldi today.
I have been to Aldi 5 times.
I had been to Aldi 5 times when I finally realized they sell fish.
Conditional
Hypothetical situations

What would you do if.....  I would.....
you had a billion dollars?  buy 100,000 dogs.
you found out you were pregnant with triplets (three babies)?  be very happy.

What would your husband do if...  He would...
he had a billion dollars?  buy a sports car.
you found out you were pregnant with triplets?  be very nervous.
Write down your answers to these questions. Then, ask your partner what her answers are.

How would you feel if your mother-in-law came to eat with you tonight, without telling you beforehand? Why?

What would you make?

What ingredients would you use for each dish? (Ex. To make an apple pie, I would use some flour, sugar, apples, butter, and eggs.)

If you were able to add one item to your pantry, what would it be? Why?

Would your mother-in-law help you make the food? Why or why not?
How would you react if your husband said he invited 15 people over for dinner tonight?

What would you serve them?

What ingredients would you use?

Would your husband help you make the food? Why or why not?
Now you choose a question to ask your partner. Write down your question and her answer.

What would you do if...

____________________________

__________________?

She would...

____________________________

_______________________.
three truths and a lie.

Think of three things that are true right now. Think of one thing that isn’t true about right now. Tell all four sentences to a partner. Have her guess which one is the lie.

my examples:
I know the Arabic word for “water”.
I am learning to cook Spanish food.
I am taking a chemistry class this semester.
I am not pregnant.

I am not married.
I do not speak German.
I am teaching Spanish to children this year. (OR) I teach Spanish to children.
I am taking medicine for a kidney infection.
will- prediction about future/ statement where there is no choice
decision without a previous plan

be going to- prediction about future/ statement where there is no choice
prior plan

be (base)ing- prior plan
(present progressive)

Thanksgiving will be on Thursday this year.
I am going to travel to Spain.
She is going to do a great job.
She will be waiting for you at 6:30.
She is taking the bus to Indianapolis.
You are going to have fun today.
They won’t care. They will not care.
We are going to plan the party today.
I’m going shopping today.
I am going to look for a new watch.
Finals week is going to be here soon.
You guys are going to do great on the test.
When will the test be?
It will be hot and sunny tomorrow.
I am going ice skating this winter.
BE GOING TO + (BASE) and WILL + (BASE)

I am going to get an “A” in my class.
I will get an “A” in my class. or I’ll get an “A” in my class.

I am not going to get an “A” in my class.
I will not get an “A” in my class. or I won’t get an “A” in my class.

I (probably) am (probably) going to get an “A” in my class
I (probably) will (probably) get an “A” in my class.

I am probably not going to get an “A” in my class.
I (probably) will (probably) not get an “A” in my class. or
I probably won’t get an “A” in my class

What are you going to do when your husband graduates?

What will you do next month when there is no English class?

What are you going to do this weekend?

When will you get to see your family next?

What are you going to do over winter break?

Where are you going to live when you and your husband are finished with school?

What are you going to make for dinner tonight?

Who will you spend the most time with in the next 5 years?

What kinds of things will change in the world in 10 years?

What is your biggest dream? Will it happen? Why or why not?
What were some things that helped you the most in this class?

-Friendly atmosphere and frank discussion.

What kinds of problems did you have in the class? or
What did you dislike about the class?

The problems was that teacher had to deal with different level of student in the same class.

What do you think my strengths are as a teacher?

You are very friendly and helpful teacher.

What do you think my weaknesses are as a teacher?

None.

Do you have any other comments or suggestions?

There should be question answer sessions, books and reading material may be provided, some other recreational activities may be started.
What were some things that helped you the most in this class?
- The interaction with people that don't speak my language
- The learning materials
- The practical applications of learned subjects

What kinds of problems did you have in the class? or
What did you dislike about the class?
- I needed the corrections to the mistakes I did

What do you think my strengths are as a teacher?
- Patience
- Friendly
- Open minded
- Committed with our learning goals

What do you think my weaknesses are as a teacher?
- Lack of variety of class topics

Do you have any other comments or suggestions?
- Should be a more extensive use of the blackboard
  specially for correction to the homeworks
What were some things that helped you the most in this class?
This class helped me to learn more words and make my speaking better.
Also it helped me to find some new friends and fill my schedule.
Also it helped me to exercise my English.

What kinds of problems did you have in the class? or What did you dislike about the class?
Some times I cannot say my words in a proper way.
and also sometimes I have some difficulties to say my intentions.

What do you think my strengths are as a teacher?
You are a friendly and kind teacher, that helps me
to learn better.
also you work-hard for us. for proper sheets, invite us,....

What do you think my weaknesses are as a teacher?
Some times you speak very fast and also
some times your words are not clear for me to understand.

Do you have any other comments or suggestions?
I think it's better if you push us to speak more.
and also say my mistakes.
also we can do something like play with word or different play,.....
It help to learn better and we don't get bore.
What were some things that helped you the most in this class?

I made a new friend and I learned many good things through them. All my English is very poor, but I think we were understand about each other.

What kinds of problems did you have in the class? or What did you dislike about the class?

My English composition is very not good, so I want to try to something write in English.

Every time in the class, you had better make do your homework.

We will study English for do your homework.

What do you think my strengths are as a teacher?

I think you are very good teacher. You get a many thing's strengths as a teacher. First, you love all students. This is most important as a teacher.

What do you think my weaknesses are as a teacher?

I don't know about that.

Do you have any other comments or suggestions?

I want to learn many things from you. I want to speak English much more to so. I'd like to study English grammar and I want to get a time reading a newspaper together.
Bibliography


