

2018 Iowa Culture and Language Conference Proposal

Title:

Equipping adult learners to use English outside the classroom

Abstract

Many adult English learners find themselves surrounded by those who share their L1 at work, at home, and in social settings. Although they may be motivated to speak English, opportunities to practice outside of class are often lacking. How can we as teachers equip our students to take the English they're learning in class and apply it in their daily lives? This session provides practical strategies for encouraging students to proactively seek opportunities to use their English outside of class. Some of the tools presented include a Weekly English Challenge assignment, an 8-week Real Life English lesson plan, and a worksheet to help students set their own goals for English use outside of class.

Bio:

Bethany Anderson has been teaching ESL to adult immigrants and refugees in community college and nonprofit settings in Iowa and Illinois for over 13 years. Her interest areas include teaching beginning proficiency levels, listening/speaking skill instruction, and the affective domain. She recently launched Anderson Language Center which provides online English instruction services for adult Spanish-speaking ELLs, and is currently pursuing her Master's in TESOL from Azusa Pacific University. Bethany lives in West Liberty, Iowa with her husband Ethan and their three children, where she enjoys the opportunity to practice her Spanish and eat fresh-baked Mexican sweet bread on a regular basis.

Presentation Outline

Set-up

- Put email list signup, basket, pens, cards, and sign on back table
- Set business cards and chocolates around at each chair

Start: 10:45

Opening (5 min)

Name of Session: Equipping adult learners to use English outside the classroom

The focus of this session is on the **adult ESL context**. Feel free to stay if you work in K-12 but be aware that the content may not be entirely relevant to your teaching context.

Giveaway: game

Who has been teaching ESL the longest? (Three more giveaways coming up if you stick around!) Check to make sure everyone has entered drawing.

Objectives of this session: on projector screen (2 min)

At the end of this workshop, my goal is that you will. . .

- Understand your learners' practical needs for English use in their daily lives
- Identify your role in helping students to be proactive in using English outside of class
- Add several tools to your "teaching toolbox" to help students increase daily English use

Introduction (3 min)

- Family
- Live in West Liberty (my favorite places in town)
 - Big Imprint
 - School
 - Bakery
- ESL Background
 - Majored in TESOL at UNI
 - Taught ESL to adults for MCC (credit, mostly noncredit adult ed) and World Relief total of 13 years
 - Currently in last year of TESOL Master's program through Azusa Pacific University
 - In beginning stages of starting an English language program, Anderson Language Center, to help native Spanish speakers put English into practice in their daily lives
 - The majority of my experience has been with beginning to low intermediate level students, and that's really my "happy place" so you will see that reflected in the resources I share with you today, although they can all be easily adapted for higher levels.

Getting to know the audience (2 min)

- How many are currently teaching ESL?
- How many in an administration position?
- How many students?
- How many teaching adults?
- How many in noncredit community college programs?
- How many teach credit ESL at a community college?
- Any others?

If anything is unclear during this presentation, please interrupt and ask questions! If you have questions that can wait until the end, write them down so you don't forget, and I will save time at the end for Q & A.

Video

Brainstorm Session (5 min)

With the person next to you (2-3 people), write down a list of ways your students need to use English outside the classroom. Be as specific as possible and think of as many ways as you can! An idea to get you started: *going to the doctor*

- Call on each pair and ask them to list two speaking contexts that haven't already been mentioned
- Write on white board or project on screen

That nice teamwork deserves a little reward, I think! Giveaway: journal & chocolate bar

The Problem (5 min)

Let's talk for a minute about the obstacles that prevent our students from using their English outside the classroom. Here's what is NOT a problem: motivation (our students are highly motivated because they know they need to learn English, and they genuinely want to!) So if motivation is not the issue, why do so many of our students tell us that they're not practicing English outside of the classroom as much as they need to (if they don't tell us, we can tell because of their lack of progress or very slow progress).

In my experience, the reason our learners are not using English outside the classroom as much as they need to in order to progress, tends to fall into one or more of three main categories. A skill deficit (they haven't learned the necessary vocabulary and forms), affective factors (they are shy, self-conscious, nervous or fearful about speaking English), and lack of opportunity.

Opportunity is perhaps the most surprising of these three factors because since we are teaching in an ESL, our students are seemingly surrounded by opportunity everywhere they look! (reference the list participants just made) But looks can be deceptive. Think about your students who are part of a large community that speaks their home language. For most of our students here in Iowa we're talking about Spanish, but there are other groups in some communities, for example Chin Burmese. . . what others?

So for these students who belong to a larger native language community, opportunity is much more elusive than for a student who for example is the only Russian speaker living in their community. The larger the community, the more the opportunity to speak English in their day-to-day lives evaporates. They go to work, they spend all day with coworkers who speak their native language. They go to the store, they can speak their L1 with the cashier and maybe even the owner. They go to the doctor, there is an interpreter on staff. Their child's school, same story. Their immediate and extended family speaks their L1 and so do all their close friends.

So it's actually much harder than we sometimes realize for adult English learners to use English in their daily lives. It requires moving outside their normal routine and comfort zone. It's easy to tell our students that they should actively seek these opportunities, but if we don't equip them with the ideas of exactly what to say and do, and tools to successfully carry out these interactions, it will simply be too big of a hurdle for many learners to overcome.

As I've struggled with this dilemma in my own classes, I've developed a few tools and ideas for building manageable stepping stones for learners to overcome these obstacles and gain confidence in

their interactions outside of class. In the next few minutes, I'm going to share some of these tools with you.

As we get started, I'm going to pass around a sign up sheet to receive the resources I mention here. I opted to deliver these to you as email attachments rather than paper handouts for a couple reasons: to save paper, and for your convenience. I know from my own experience that it's a real pain to get home from conferences and sort through and file or toss a giant pile of papers, so this way you can look over the resources and only print the tools you plan to use. I will also make these available on the ICLC Google drive you will all have access to following the conference, if you prefer to access the resources that way.

Tool #1: Self-Assessment and Goal Setting (3 min)

A great starting point is to have students identify how they're already using English and how they would like to be able to use it. [Handout 1]

You can use a questionnaire like the one I've used from *Authentic Second Language Assessment* (hold up) or create your own. (You're welcome to stay and look through this book after this session and see if it's something that would be useful for you. It's available on Amazon or from the publisher.)

Tool #2: "English Outside Class" Idea List (5 min)

This is a tool I created a few years ago for an ESL class I was teaching at the time. It ended up being one of the most successful techniques I used that year and my students loved it! My goal was to give learners a little push and provide ideas for using their English in daily life.

The idea was very simple: I wrote out a list of ways students could practice English outside the classroom and each weekend they were expected to do one of the things on the list. Sometimes I assigned what they did, but most of the time I let them choose. The next class session, everyone had to tell the class what they did. [Handout 2]

I noticed that this activity gave students a huge boost of self confidence because they were able to experience little successes as they challenged themselves to use English in settings they tended to normally avoid.

Here is the original list I created, and here is an updated version that I will attach to the email I send out after the conference.

Tool # 3: The Weekly English Challenge (5 min)

This idea grew out of the English Outside Class list. It is a weekly message with a short video lesson and a follow-up assignment for practicing what they learned in their daily lives. The message is sent via Facebook Messenger or WhatsApp and students opt in using an online form.

- All videos (and a short accompanying lesson) are archived on my website, andersonlanguage.com
- For Spanish-speakers, beginning to low intermediate ESL level
- **Hand out cards (bundles of 20)**

“Real Life English” Lesson Plans (5 min)

This is a series of 8 lesson plans I created based on some of my students’ priorities for English use. [Sample Lesson: Handout 3] I would love it if some of you would try it out in your class and give me your feedback! Feel free to adapt it to fit your context (for example, teach a condensed version in 4 weeks).

Here is one of the lessons—you will receive the entire 8-week lesson plan if you provide me with your email on the sign up sheet.

Sample lesson

Now that we’ve made it through the meat of the content, let’s have another giveaway! Giveaway: game

How to Adapt These Resources for Your Class (3 min)

- Use a student goal worksheet to identify priorities for your students: *talk to kids’ teachers, doctors, coworkers, supervisor, etc.*
- Write out a list of small tasks that are accessible for students and appropriate to their level of English:
 - *Write an email to your child’s teacher asking them a question or telling them something you want them to know about your child*
 - *Go to the library ask for help finding a certain book, magazine or video*
 - *Ask a coworker about their weekend*
 - *Etc.*
- Add these tasks to my “English Outside Class” list, and eliminate the tasks that are less suitable to your students (or create your own list from scratch)
- Write out the **simplest version** of the vocabulary and phrases your students will need to complete these tasks.
 - *Dear (Teacher’s name), I wanted to ask you a question about (child’s name). . .*
 - *Excuse me, could you help me find a (book, video) about _____?*
 - *Did you do anything fun this weekend?*
 - *Etc.*
- Each week (preferably the class before the weekend), give students an assignment from your list and spend a few minutes teaching and practicing the phrases they will need for the interaction.

Wrap-up (2 min)

- Giveaway: English/Spanish picture dictionary
- If you have any follow-up questions that don’t get answered today, please email me!
- If you use any of these resources I’ve shared with you, I would love to get your feedback on how they worked for you, and what improvements could be made

Q & A (5 min)

Handout 1

My English Goals

Name _____

What can you do in English?	I can do this now	I can't do this yet
Talk to a neighbor or friend		
Talk to a friend on the phone		
Understand when someone I don't know talks to me		
Read a text message someone sends me		
Send a text message		
Understand the cashier at the store when I am checking out		
Ask a question at the store if I need help finding something		
Send an email or note to my child's teacher		
Talk to my child's teacher in Parent/Teacher Conferences		
Help my child with their homework		
Schedule a doctor or dentist appointment on the phone		
Ask and answer questions at a doctor/dentist appointment		
Understand the bank teller when I go to the bank		
Explain what I need to the teller at the bank		
Talk to my landlord about a problem in the apartment		
Understand my supervisor/coworkers at work		
Talk to my supervisor/coworkers at work		
Understand TV shows and movies without subtitles		
Understand people talking on the radio or a podcast		

Write the 3 **most important** goals that you checked "I can't do this yet":

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Handout 2

English Outside Class Idea List

- Call the doctor/dentist office to schedule an appointment
- Go to a store you usually don't go to and ask for help to find something
- Talk to the cashier as you are checking out at the store
- Go to the library and ask for help finding a book or movie
- Send an email to your child's teacher
- Talk to another parent at a school event or school pickup/drop-off
- Talk to the teller at the bank
- Call or text your landlord about a problem in the house/apartment
- Talk to a coworker over your lunch break
- Ask your supervisor a question
- Call or text a friend or acquaintance
- Start a conversation with your neighbor
- Listen to an English radio station or podcast
- Watch an English TV show or movie without subtitles
- Watch the weather forecast on TV
- Listen to an English song while you read the lyrics

Other Ideas:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Handout 3

Real Life English Sample Lesson Plan

Lesson 2: Going to the Grocery Store

Materials Needed

- Picture dictionary with section on food/supermarket (*Word by Word Picture Dictionary* pp. 48-55)
- Fliers from grocery stores in your area
- Index cards

How Did it Go?

- Ask students to raise their hand if they completed the assignment from the previous class
- Ask how they felt right before they completed the task: Nervous? Excited? How did they feel after they completed the task? Proud? Happy? Successful? Disappointed? Embarrassed?
- Ask a few volunteers to share about their experience. What did they say? How did the person they were talking to respond?
- Have students fill out their Assignment Report for Lesson 1

Learning Objective: *Learn common phrases to request help at the grocery store.*

What You Already Know

- Ask students where they go to shop for groceries (note any grocery stores in your community that are not mentioned, as English language learners often gravitate to stores where first language support is available, and may shy away from unfamiliar stores)
- Have students work with a partner to make a list of things they might need to say or ask when they go to the grocery store
- Have pairs read their lists, correct mistakes as needed, and write phrases and vocabulary on the board

Vocabulary

- *Excuse me, I'm looking for the _____.*
- *I'll take __ pound(s) of _____, please. (meat counter)*
- Use a picture dictionary to go over useful food and grocery store vocabulary

Practice

- In pairs, have students take turns asking each other “Excuse me, I’m looking for the _____” with a food item they might look for in the grocery store. Partner plays the role of a store employee and answers, “It’s in aisle ____.” Students then switch roles. (If available, students can use picture dictionaries during this activity.)
- Repeat activity above to practice ordering at the meat counter: “I’ll take __ pounds of _____, please.”
- Using sticky notes, a piece of thick paper, or a notebook to cover the words on the grocery store page of a picture dictionary, have students work in pairs, quizzing each other on food vocabulary by pointing to a food item for their partner to identify.
- Cut out pictures of lesser-known food items from a grocery store flier and write the corresponding name of the food on an index card. Have students match each picture to the correct word.

Cultural Notes

- Make sure students understand the units of measure used in the U.S. and their corresponding abbreviations: pounds- lbs., ounces- oz.
- Show students how to check price labels on produce to see if the price is per pound (/lb) or individual item (ea.).

Assignment

- Plan a trip to a grocery store you don’t usually shop at.
- Either 1) order meat at the meat counter or 2) ask a store employee for help finding something.