

Teacher's Corner: Motivation for Language Learning

Motivation is an important element in the classroom environment. In an ideal world, teachers and learners would always be motivated. Instructors would be excited to share every lesson, and students would be eager to participate and put forth their best effort. In reality, there are many factors that can positively or negatively affect motivation, such as amount of sleep, knowledge or skill levels, personal preferences and interests, having eaten, and events in one's personal life.

With all of these factors at play, creating an inspiring classroom environment can seem like a lot of work! This month's Teacher's Corner will explore three simple strategies with thought-provoking questions to help you motivate yourself and your students.

Consider Content Comfort Level

For teachers: *How comfortable are you with the content that you are teaching? Are there certain areas of your subject where you could improve your knowledge and teaching practice?* Attending professional development in the areas where you feel least effective can help you increase your own confidence and motivation to teach these topics.

For students: *Which concepts are easy for students and which ones are challenging? As you plan a lesson, think about the skills students need to already have in order to succeed in the lesson. Are activities presented so that students have a chance to feel successful?* Consider structuring lessons according to the [Gradual Release of Responsibility](#) model. In this model, students are able to observe and participate in guided practice before being asked to apply skills independently.

Increase Interest

For teachers: *Do you feel that your teaching methods are stale or out-of-date? Do you wish you had creative ideas about how to present new material?* To get ideas about new strategies, consider observing a colleague or planning a lesson collaboratively with a teacher you admire. If you aren't sure about who to turn to in your school, try the free resources [Shaping the Way We](#)

[Teach English](#) or [Voice of America's Let's Learn English](#) for videos and reflective tools to help you feel inspired.

For students: *What topics (entertainment, current events, sports, etc.) do learners find interesting?* Incorporate your students' interests into lessons whenever possible. Allow learners to choose things they want to learn about and the type of assignments they would like to complete. For instance, rather than requiring everyone to complete the same task, give students the options of writing an essay, giving a speech, or creating a piece of art with a presentation. Providing options will give students a chance to take ownership of their work—and stay motivated as they complete it.

Set Goals

For teachers: *What goals can you set for yourself to help you develop your teaching practice?* Perhaps you want to improve how you teach certain parts of your curriculum or try new strategies with your students. *What actions can you take to bring these ideas to life in your classroom?* Here are a few example goals:

- Attend at least two professional development sessions on _____ during the current school year. Try at least two new activities or teaching strategies from each one.
- Observe a colleague teaching _____ three times during the school year. Schedule a meeting after each observation to reflect and ask questions of my colleague. Note any advice my colleague shares so that I can take steps to improve my own teaching of _____.
- Reflect on my teaching practice more often by keeping a journal. At least three times per week, jot down a few positive and negative events or experiences from my classes. Set aside time each month to look back at the entire journal and take note of any recurring strengths and opportunities for improvement.

For students: Have learners set goals at the beginning of your course. Help them keep goals realistic by making sure they are attainable based on the content and structure of your class. Ask students how they will determine when their goal has been met. What indicators will they look for at the completion of the course? How will they keep track of their progress throughout the course? Suggestions include reflecting by keeping a journal, tracking performance on assignments, and logging time spent goal-related tasks.

A bit of self-reflection and sharing can have a strong positive effect on motivation for teachers and students. The questions and suggestions above can help you get started. Additionally, a useful exercise for determining students' interests and goals can be found in [Fostering Student Motivation: Goal-Setting and Student Interest Questionnaires](#). Ideas for how teachers can network and support each other's professional development can be found in [Empowering Teachers through Professional Development](#) and [Teachers Helping Teachers: Peer Observation for Professional Development](#).

Next Steps

Please join us as we explore this topic in more detail on the [American English for Educators Facebook page](#) and in the [American English Teacher's Corner Facebook group](#). Each Monday we will post something new for you to explore.