

Demand High for teachers and learners

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Jim Scrivener

1. Introduction / Do students know something that we've forgotten?
2. Is tangible learning really taking place? / A new proposal and a brief manifesto
3. It's OK to teach
4. Techniques to encourage more interaction from the whole classroom
5. The subordination of teaching to learning / Conclusion

Are you challenging your students enough to learn English? How do you know if tangible learning is taking place in your English language classroom? Jim Scrivener explores these questions in this stimulating talk and suggests a number of simple, practical extension activities to include in lessons that will demand more from students and stretch their learning to full potential.

About this training session

In this practical seminar, Jim Scrivener presents an overview of what he and Adrian Underhill call Demand High teaching. Their suggestion is that these days, within the communicative method of English language teaching, teachers tend to facilitate activities and tasks rather than actually teach the subject, which means the tasks have become an end in themselves. Scrivener and Underhill, two very well-known published teacher trainers, believe this position needs to be challenged.

In this talk, Jim Scrivener introduces the key concepts of Demand High and several teaching ideas that can be adapted to teachers' own experience, whatever their preferred methodology, or for whichever coursebook they are using. He invites teachers to start teaching in a way that ensures students learn more in the classroom. Jim Scrivener (and Adrian Underhill, who appears in a video clip) says that students need to be stretched to their full potential in order to ensure learning is taking place.

Who is this seminar for?

- All teachers, regardless of experience may be interested in knowing more about Demand High teaching
- Teacher trainers of INSETT (in-service training), certificate and diploma courses

About the speaker

Jim Scrivener is a well known expert trainer and author within the English language teaching (ELT) world. He is the author of 'Learning Teaching' and 'Classroom Management Techniques'.

Adrian Underhill is an independent trainer and consultant. Together they run the website: Demand High ELT.

Before you watch

Do you think there is a difference between being an English teacher versus being a facilitator of learning? Consider the link between these two terms before finding out what Jim Scrivener has to say on the matter.

Real life practice

Do you think there is a difference between being an English teacher versus being a facilitator of learning? Consider the link between these two terms before finding out what Jim Scrivener has to say on the matter.

- Imagine the scene in class - the students are working on a language exercise. You have reached the stage of the lesson where you are focusing on accuracy. The students are completing a grammar exercise in the coursebook and there are ten questions to answer. Typically, when they have finished the exercise, you ask the whole class or selected individuals for the answers to the questions.

- Now, rather than simply getting the answers to the questions and then moving on to the next activity, the objective is to explore additional ways to extend and consolidate the learning from this activity. Refrain from saying 'correct' or 'incorrect' straightaway. Aim to get more students involved in this feedback stage:

Ask students extensions questions

- Please read the whole sentence.
- Look at me, and tell me the whole sentence again (from memory, without reading).
- Please repeat after me (example word or sentence).

Other instructions you can give in this feedback stage

- Say the whole sentence (individual drill).
- Say the whole sentence (choral drill).
- Listen to me saying it and then you try again.
- Try saying it faster.

Concept checking

- Why is the sentence wrong?
- Do you agree with the answer?
- Give incorrect example (is this correct?)

Close your book, challenge the memory

- Think about pronunciation – e.g. which words within the sentence have the most stress?
- Offer other examples of the target grammar, some with incorrect grammar, and ask students if each example is right or wrong.
- Ask students for a different way to say the same thing.
- Ask students in pairs to recall orally as many of the answers in the exercise as possible, without looking at the book (speaking activity).
- Ask students to write down as many of the sentences they can recall without checking in the book.

Top tips

1. Ask yourself – are your students capable of learning more than they are currently learning? Challenge each student to reach their highest potential.
2. Maximise the learning that is possible from language exercises – expand the feedback stage with a variety of extension activities.
3. Remember that even beginner level students can say something to a high level of production.
4. Beware of teaching to the loudest or strongest four or five students in the class. Ensure that every student is engaged in oral feedback activities.
5. Don't be afraid to teach grammar. If you lack confidence in teaching grammar, make it a professional development objective to challenge yourself to be a better grammar expert.
6. While it is important to stretch learners to achieve their highest potential, challenging them to go further in front of classmates might be potentially embarrassing. Be mindful of this, but don't let it hold you back. Effective teaching and learning takes place when students are stretched and challenged in a fun way, in an anxiety-free environment.

Join the discussion!

Discuss these questions with your colleagues, if you can:

1. Jim Scrivener suggests that teachers need to challenge students more in order for them to learn English more effectively. Do you agree with this assertion?
2. What do you think the teacher's role is in helping students to be fully challenged?
3. How can you tell when this is happening?