



Key Concepts for Teaching

The purpose of this list is to clarify and reinforce some of the concepts presented in the *Teacher Orientation Video* & the *Teacher's Guide*.

Speak Spanish AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE in non-threatening situations.

Non-threatening situations are when the students can figure out what you mean by context and when they don't need to completely understand what you are talking about in order to do a task. For example, you can talk about a CD of music in Spanish that you like and want to recommend to the students. If you write the name on the board or bring in a copy of the CD, they will know what you are talking about. It won't matter if they don't understand every word, because it's not required information. You can even talk to yourself in Spanish if you want to, just so they get to hear the language.

Tell the students on the first day that you are going to use Spanish as much as possible in "non-critical" situations, and that they should play along. The material that they will be responsible for will be explained in English, so they don't need to worry about missing something. If they don't understand everything you say in Spanish, that's okay. They should just relax and try to guess what you're saying. This is practice for real life.

Reinforce the words they have learned AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE by using the words in meaningful interactions with the students.

Once the students have learned a word or expression, it is helpful if you consciously use the same terminology when you speak in class. For example, in Lesson 7 they learn the word *necesito*. If you need to collect your flashcards after they do the mini-dialogues, you can hold up a set of the cards so the class can see them and say, *Necesito sus tarjetas*. If you train yourself to use some of the simplified grammar expressions, such as *Favor de abrir* instead of *Abran*, the students will be able to understand you better and will feel more empowered. You may have to be creative!

Use English to QUICKLY explain grammar that students will need to do a task, in order to alleviate student anxiety and to give more time for speaking practice.

However, don't use English when it doesn't really matter if they understand you, or when Spanish will get the job done.

Actively teach pronunciation.

Show them the sounds in English that are the closest approximation to Spanish. Coach the students (in a non-threatening way) so they can have the best pronunciation possible.

Actively teach the students how to learn new words.

Show students the steps to learning vocabulary and how they can use memory tricks to learn new words. Allow for vocabulary practice during class time. Emphasize that they must *overlearn* the material in order to develop fluency.

Keep it simple.

Teach grammar through example, rather than by rule. Encourage students to make simple responses when speaking, perhaps just one or two words to start. Quality, not quantity.

Have them *practice, practice, practice.*

The mini-dialogues let students practice speaking on their own. Follow guidelines for interaction outlined in the student text, and be there to monitor the students and give support. Have them practice at home.

Trust the process.

Don't worry if they don't get it all right away. True learning has its own schedule. And don't expect it to be perfect, just expect it to improve with time. It may seem easy to you, but is probably challenging for them. Speaking ability doesn't always develop on a "learning curve." Some students may struggle, and then one day have a breakthrough. Have faith.

Believe that the students can do it.

Give them support, but don't buy into their "helplessness." If they say "I can't do it," they may just be saying "I'm afraid I won't be able to do it." Don't buy into their fear. They WILL be able to do it, given enough time and practice.

Be sensitive, but firm.

Use your intuition about when to push students, and when to give them the time and space to process new information. Remember: you want the experience to be enjoyable, but they still have to work.

Use good teaching strategies.

Make your lesson like the 5-paragraph essay that they teach in high school English class. Have an introduction (grabs your attention and tells what you're going to talk about), a main body (has clearly defined & well-developed points), and a conclusion (sums up what you said and leaves them with something to think about). Watch the time and stay focused on the lesson, so you can accomplish the goals for that day. Make connections with your students' prior learning, and with your students' lives.

Be prepared.

Read through the lesson before you teach it. Anticipate questions or areas where you think the students might have trouble, and be mentally prepared for them. Have a checklist for the materials you will need for that day.

Know that you are not alone.

Sometimes teaching can be a challenge. Your organization and The Learning Light are there to support you. If a difficult situation arises, ask for help.

Have fun with it!

Create a positive environment, one that you and the students can enjoy. Be respectful and patient, and remember to keep a sense of humor. Bring activities into the class that work for you. Get the students to trust you and they'll be more willing to take risks. Know that what you are doing is empowering others.