

## ESL Chanting for Classroom Management

Teaching ESL can be a rich and rewarding experience for anyone who loves a challenge. You only need a degree in any field, and a TESOL or TEFL certificate to get started, after that, it's simply a matter of choosing the right school in the country in which you wish to live and teach. This can be done by surfing a few ESL sites and applying for a job online, waiting for a reply from some of the schools you've contacted, and then choosing the most appropriate position for you. You'll usually be able to pick and choose because you hold the trump card. So you've stitched up a great teaching job in Asia, well done! Maybe they have agreed to pay your airfare after a qualifying period, and help you with your visa and work permit. Hay! You've even got free accommodation. You're really excited, and so you should be! You're about to go to another planet and encounter all kinds of alien cultures and traditions, but remember, YOU are the alien, or commonly know as "the westerner", or "the foreigner". You enter your first class of 10 year olds. You expect everything to be the way it was explained in the TESOL/TEFL course you took. You have a super wiz bang lesson plan and the children don't even seem to care that you're in the room! You raise your voice (over the din) to get their attention, and that works, so you get into the lesson and find that many of the activities and strategies you thought would be a hit, fall flat. You have some success with some activities, and manage to finish the lesson in reasonable style. Good work! Now you realize that it will require some creative strategies for managing the situation, so you plan to come better prepared next time. This continues for several weeks, but you're getting worn down, and falling into routines of doing the same things that work best, more often in every class. You get so angry sometimes, with some of the kids that just cause trouble and don't give a dam about your precious lessons. So much so that you've even resorted to slamming books, hitting the blackboard, yelling, screaming, and other boisterous techniques for maintaining "control". Time to re-assess the situation, for the benefit of your sanity, and that of your students, you need a new game plan. Here are some ideas that have worked for me and MIGHT work for you also. First and most importantly, you need to get into the room with style while establishing your authority as the owner of the room, in a professional and positive manner which will impress everyone and give you the respect you deserve. TO GET RESPECT YOU MUST FIRST GIVE IT. I include details on how to get into a classroom this way, and increase student talk time, in another article entitled: "ESL, Teaching the Silent Way, 99%STT."

Now, assuming you can get into the classroom and gain the attention of most of your students for a few seconds this might work. Establish a set of expectations, draft them using target vocabulary and structures, and drill them as a pronunciation exercise at the beginning of each and every lesson. Your students are familiar with this technique because that's how they've learnt everything since day one. You will get their respect and attention the first time you do it, and every time you do it. Also whenever you start to lose their attention during the lesson, you can quickly and easily regain it, while simultaneously having your students practice pronunciation and use target vocabulary/structures (without them realizing it). Exactly what, and how, to do it (don't be put off by the audio linguistic nature of what follows. Audio linguistics saved lives during the war, it works!)  
Introductory lesson Step one &nbsp;  Consider your class's overall level of receptive English language ability, (what most of them will be able to comprehend after an initial introductory lesson). Then, draft up 3-5 sentences, pertaining to your expectations, in the target language for this group. Remember this is for the beginning of each lesson, (after you're in the room), as well as intermittently throughout the lesson. Be sure to keep the rules positive, say "I will remember", instead of "I must not forget". You may like to use my "ESL class directed expectations technique" for this, which is covered in another article by me with the same title. Step two &nbsp;  Write the rules/expectations/requirements/ or anything you want to call them, on the board. It's best not to say anything while you do this, just let them guess and talk amongst themselves while you're writing, this is great for helping to gain your students attention, while encouraging analytical thinking, and the more advanced students will help the others who are having difficulty. Maybe someone will say "copy", you can just nod, this signal will soon get around the room, so that before you know it, all your students are writing your expectations in their note books. (The silent approach) Sample set of rules: (present simple),

I listen carefully to teacher Bill I bring all my books to every lesson I speak English to my friends (this is a positive way to encourage no first language use) I am ready for every lesson &nbsp;  Change the tenses easily like this: I will (future) I am listening (continuous) I have brought all my books to this lesson (Present perfect) Step three Drill the rules! Do this any way you like, but I've found the best way for me is as follows: Say "rule number one", then give an example of the correct pronunciation while encouraging full participation through your body language, and do the same for each consecutive rule, gradually begin to prompt by saying the rule number, "rule number.....". Tap the board for rhythm as you present each word (do this two or three times), then circulate the room to ensure all students are participating. Encourage by using your body language and facial expressions. You may have a rule which requires such things as, "no books on your desk", or "a pencil, a ruler, and a rubber, must be on my desk", while you circulate, check to make sure that all students are meeting the requirements of the expectations. Then return to the board and keep the chant going! While the class is chanting, you erase two or three words from each sentence until you have a blank board and all the students are reciting each rule by rote. It helps to tap the place where the words were, each time they recite one of the sentences, so that a subliminal memory jogger is created (students love the challenge, and it really works! I've had students who can't remember the words until I tap the places where they were, and then they remember them). Step four Repeat the drill of the rules several times during the first lesson, using the tapping technique on the places where you had written them at first (for memory jogging) and allow students to refer to their note books if they need to. (This establishes the understanding of the reason for taking notes.) After a few days they won't need to refer to their notes, so there is never any need to "control this" remember all students learn differently, so allow for it! Implementation Start every class by saying, "rule number one" etc. The whole class will start reciting to your prompts; you have their attention so launch your lesson.

Whenever you lose the attention of the whole class, say in a normal voice "rule number one", your class should respond by reciting rule number one. The first few lessons you should go through all of the rules in order. Later you can start to mix them up etc. If they don't respond to your normal voice, DON'T RAISE IT! Simply make eye contact with an attentive confident student and say it again. This will get things started. Have patience, it will soon catch on. When you lose the attention of a particular student, say "rule number one", the whole class will get his/her attention. If a student is ignoring/forgetting an expectation/rule, say "rule number..." Where the number is the number of the rule he/she is ignoring/forgetting. Summary Be sure to change the expectations periodically to match needs. Use this as a simple classroom management strategy that can complement any ESL program/syllabus/curriculum. For more rewarding and speech productive implementations incorporate the principals which are outline in my article entitled, "ESL the Silent Way 99%STT", for everything described above.

## About the Author

Bill Boyd offers you this excellent ESL website, see you there: [eslpa1](#) | [Submit ESL articles](#). It's great to be an esl pal.

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