English pronunciation and language in the ESL classroom

For many students learning a new language is a rather daunting task. What with all the new vocabulary, grammar sentence construction, tenses etc. Then on top of all of that there is the dreaded pronunciation! Yes, if all of the previous wasn't enough you've still got to get your tongue around it!

Imagine you are the student in the class, or maybe you've already had experience of being a foreign language learner or maybe you've completed some adult education course. You'll almost certainly know how frustrating it is when you just can't voice those sounds, or even catch them with your own ear.

The poor students sometimes feel embarrassed to even open their mouths and produce a simple utterance. Why? Because of the fear of losing face in front of their peers and looking really dumb.

The more people who feel like this, then the quieter your class will be. You really don't want to be the only one who is talking in your class now do you? It should be all about the students. The students should be the ones who are producing the vast majority of the language. The teachers job is to help facilitate this and to give any essential prompts and extra help that may be needed.

When a student makes an error whether it be with pronunciation or anything else related to language learning, it's important not to jump straight in and be critical! Imagine yourself in their situation. You've just plucked up enough courage to stand up and speak. You then proceed to utter your sentence and all of a sudden are jumped upon from a great height by some foreign teacher saying... NO..NO..NO..YOU ARE WRONG!

Your confidence could well take a bashing especially if it keeps happening. At the end of the day you might even start to think, what the hell I'm not interested anymore. Remember when you first started to learn your own language, you made all kinds of mistakes. You'll have no doubt been reminded of these bloopers by your parents or other siblings in a jovial way whilst they recollected your childhood with you.

So try this approach...

Okay, little Somchai is rather a brave character he decides to take it upon himself to answer your questions.

Example:

Teacher: What did you do at the weekend Somchai?

Somchai: I went to shopping

Teacher: Really, I went shopping

Teacher: So where did you go at the weekend Somchai?

Somchai: I went shopping

Teacher: Very good somchai

Correcting language errors this way is more beneficial and allows the learner to
realize their mistakes and make corrections themselves.

Getting back to the main topic of our article, pronunciation. We can learn pronunciation through tongue twisters, and believe me there are plenty of resources out there on the net for you.

Tongue twisters are fun, especially if the teacher goes first and makes a mistake. You'll certainly get a chuckle or two out of it and the students won't feel too anxious about speaking up and getting involved.

You could even make it into a two teams game or something like that, and award points for the best pronunciation.

Here are a few tongue twisters to be going on with...

She sells sea shells on the sea shore.

How many yaks could a yak pack pack if a yak pack could pack yaks.

Whether the weather be fine or whether the weather be bad

Blakes back brake bracket block broke

Have fun!

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