

# English Connects

## Professional development for teachers

### Unit 4: Giving instructions

Participant  
Handbook

# Learning outcomes

The aim of this module is to provide teachers with strategies and techniques to ensure that the instructions they give in class are effective and easily understood by students.

This module covers the professional practices: Giving instructions in class and Differentiation

By the end of this module the participants will be able to:

- Understand the reasons behind giving students simple, clear effective instructions to complete class tasks and activities.
- Identify strategies and techniques they can use to make their instructions simple clear and effectively understood by students
- Explain the strategies and techniques used by teachers in the video footage to make their instructions simple, clear, and effectively understood by students
- Reflect on how the strategies and techniques shown, could be used in the classroom.

This unit complements the professional practice of 'Managing the lesson' from the CPD Framework for teachers <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/professional-development/teachers/managing-lesson>

## 1 Lead-in

### 1.1



Work in groups and discuss the question:

- How can you help students understand the instructions you give in class? Think of as many ways a possible.
- After you have a long list, look at each answer again. Now grade your answers from 1 to 5, with 5 = the most effective, and 1 = the least effective.

1. Least effective	2. Slightly effective	3. Effective	4. More effective	5. Most effective

## 1.2



Watch the video of teachers talking about strategies they use to help students understand instructions.

Did you have the same ideas? Did you have other ideas that you could add?

Notes:

## 2 Non-verbal signs

### 2.1



Match the body parts with the correct instructions.

Body parts	Instructions
a. hands	1. two minutes
b. arms	2. stand up
c. fingers	3. in groups

Compare your answers with another pair. Now watch the video to check your answers.

## 2.2



Challenge yourself or another pair:

Think of four instructions and four body parts you can use to make instructions clearer. Complete the table yourself or give to another pair to complete.

Body parts	Instructions
a.	1.
b.	2.
c.	3.
d.	4.

Exchange your answers.

## 2.3



Think about your next class. What tasks do you want your students to do? What non-verbal signals could you use to help them to understand your instructions?

Notes:

## 3 Instruction checking questions

### 3.1



Work in small groups and answer the following questions:

1. Which is better: Asking students “Do you understand?” or finding out if they understand?
2. Why do you need to check students can understand your instructions?
3. How can you find out if students understand your instructions?
4. What are instruction checking questions?

Notes

### 3.2



Work in small groups and do the following exercise.

- You want students to work in pairs, so you say, “in pairs”.
- What instruction checking questions could you ask to check your students know what working “in pairs” means? Think of as many answers as possible.
- What would you do after you ask each question?

Now watch the next part of the video and compare your answers.

### 3.3



Challenge yourself or another pair.

- The teacher used language in his questions that looked at other ways of doing the task.
- For “in pairs” he thought of individually/alone or how many persons to check understanding of “in pairs”.
- Challenge yourself or another pair to write 2 instruction checking questions each for:
  - “work in groups”
  - “work alone”

Notes

### 3.4



Work in small groups to make instruction checking questions for the following task. Before you start, think and underline what parts of the instructions you want to check students understand.

#### **Instructions:**

- *You look at the first picture for 30 seconds, then I'll show you another picture.*
- *You'll look at that picture for another 30 seconds.*
- *And after, I'll give you two minutes to discuss in groups what the pictures are about.*

Write instruction checking questions for each part you underlined

Notes:

Watch the video and compare your answers.

### 3.5



Work alone or in pairs and match the part of the instructions with the instruction checking question

Part of instructions	Instruction checking questions
1. <i>Answer all the questions.</i>	a. Do you look at the picture?
2. <i>Talk about the picture in pairs.</i>	b. When I ask a question can everyone in the group answer?
3. <i>Appoint a secretary for the group who will give the group's answers when I ask a question.</i>	c. Are you looking at page 12 of the book?
4. <i>Move around the class and ask 4 people the question.</i>	d. Do you answer some of the questions?
5. <i>Look at page 10 of the book.</i>	e. Do you sit down during this activity?

### 3.6



Challenge yourself or another pair to write 4 instructions and 3 instruction checking questions for each instruction

Notes



## 4 Repeating instructions to give students in mixed ability classes time to understand

### 4.1



Work in groups and answer the following questions:

- Is mixed language ability the same as mixed ability?
- What other meanings can mixed ability have?
- How can you help all mixed ability students in your class understand your instructions?

Notes

### 4.2



Discuss the following scenario:

- You have 70 students in your class.
- Your students have to write numbers on a piece of paper. What two things can you do so that all students can complete the task?

Now watch the video to check your ideas.

### 4.3



Change the teacher's language level so students of a lower language level can understand. See if you can use 13 words or less!!

Teacher: I would like you to tell me about this man. Who is this person? What is he doing? Can you talk about his physical appearance?

You: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- Change the language level of this question. See if you can use 7 words or less!

Teacher: Can you describe the features?

You: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Watch the video and check your ideas.

**4.4**



Challenge yourself or another pair to change the classroom language level of these teachers and add in non-verbal signs to help students understand the instructions

Change the language level from this:	To this:	Non-verbal sign or signs
<p><i>In order to answer the questions on the page I'm going to ask you to work together in groups to see if you can answer the questions.</i></p>		
<p><i>I'm going to show you some pictures and I want you look at the pictures and see if you can think of three things to describe the person.</i></p>		
<p><i>I want you to get into groups of 6 and discuss a few ideas about the picture.</i></p>		
<p><i>When you look at this picture, what do you notice? Tell me, if you can about the picture and give me maybe 3 colours that you can see in the picture.</i></p>		

# 5 Reflection

## 5.1



Reread the learning outcomes for this module.

## 5.2 Action plan



Look back at 1.1 where you graded your answers about how to make your instructions in class effective

- Think of new ways you can help students understand the instructions you give in class?
- Using the materials from this Unit, grade your answers from 1 to 5, with 5 = most effective and 1 = least effective.




1. Least effective	2. Slightly effective	3. Effective	4. More effective	5. Most effective






## 6 Explore










In this video you saw the teachers demonstrate a variety of techniques to make instructions to tasks **clearer for their students**: using **non-verbal signals**, **instruction checking questions**, making instructions **short and clear**, **good positioning**, and **repetition**.

In this section you can follow up on the video by accessing a number of articles, activities, videos, podcasts and webinars on the BBC and British Council's TeachingEnglish website. These should provide you with further ideas, knowledge, skills and techniques to ensure that your instructions are easy for your students to follow.

Sub-topic:	Title:	Link:	Type of Resource:	Summary:
Positioning and Non-verbal Signals	Teacher Positioning in the Classroom	<a href="https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/teacher-positioning-classroom">https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/teacher-positioning-classroom</a>	Article Barney Griffiths 	In this article a teacher trainer gives insights into how we can best position ourselves in the classroom according to the aim of the activity or stage.
	“Non-verbal Communication”	<a href="https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/non-verbal-communication">https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/non-verbal-communication</a>	Article Dilek Eryilmaz and Steve Darn 	In the video you saw that using gestures and non-verbal signals is important to demonstrate meaning when giving instructions. So should we also teach our students to use non-verbal communication when learning English?
Giving Instructions	“Setting up in the Young Learner classroom”	<a href="https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/setting-young-learner-classroom">https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/setting-young-learner-classroom</a>	Article Claire Steele 	Setting up clear tasks with young learners can be difficult. In this article a teacher trainer gives a number of very practical tips about how to do it well.

	<b>“Teaching Speaking: Techniques”</b>	<a href="https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/teaching-speaking-unit-5-techniques">https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/teaching-speaking-unit-5-techniques</a>	<b>Video</b> <b>John Kay</b> 	In this video teacher trainer John Kay and a number of Thai English teachers highlight some useful techniques for giving good instructions in class.
	<b>“Classroom Management Problems, Reasons and Solutions”</b>	<a href="https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/blogs/soniam/some-classroom-management-problems-their-reasons-solutions">https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/blogs/soniam/some-classroom-management-problems-their-reasons-solutions</a>	<b>Article</b> <b>Soniam</b> 	Do you have problems with your classroom instructions ? This article suggests both reasons for this, and some solutions.
	<b>“Teacher Reflection: Asking yourself, “Did I..?”</b>	<a href="https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/blogs/markoliver/teacher-reflection-asking-yourself-did-i">https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/blogs/markoliver/teacher-reflection-asking-yourself-did-i</a>	<b>Article</b> <b>Mark Oliver</b> 	Do you ever reflect on how well (or badly!) you give instructions? This article suggests an easy way of doing this.
<b>Classroom Language</b>	<b>“Own Language Use in ELT”</b>	<a href="https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/own-language-use-elt">https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/own-language-use-elt</a> Report: <a href="https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teaching/files/C448%20Own%20Language%20use%20in%20ELT_A4_FINAL_WEB%20ONLY_0.pdf">https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teaching/files/C448%20Own%20Language%20use%20in%20ELT_A4_FINAL_WEB%20ONLY_0.pdf</a>	<b>Article and Report</b> <b>Guy Cook and Graham Hall</b>  	Two experts in ELT report the results of a global survey into teacher attitudes towards using the learners’ L1 (native language) in the classroom.

<b>Classroom Language</b>	<b>“A Golden Question: How much L1 should our learners use in class?”</b>	<a href="https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/blogs/sulaiman-jenkins/a-golden-question-how-much-l1-should-our-learners-use-class">https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/blogs/sulaiman-jenkins/a-golden-question-how-much-l1-should-our-learners-use-class</a>	<b>Article</b> <b>Sulaiman Jenkins</b> 	This article discusses when it might be appropriate for your students (and you!) to use L1 in class.
	<b>“Diversity: How should learners’ own languages be used in the classroom?”</b>	<a href="https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/diversity-how-should-learners-own-languages-be-used-classroom">https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/diversity-how-should-learners-own-languages-be-used-classroom</a>	<b>Video</b> <b>Janak</b> 	In this short video Janak presents the views of a group of fellow teachers about when exactly students should use English in class.
	<b>“From Mother Tongue to Other Tongue”</b>	<a href="https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/mother-tongue-other-tongue">https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/mother-tongue-other-tongue</a>	<b>Article</b> <b>Luke Prodromou</b> 	Many teachers are in favour of using the students’ mother tongue at certain times in the classroom (e.g., when giving difficult instructions). But what do the students think about this?!
<b>Teaching Large Classes</b>	<b>“Maximising Learning in Large Classes”</b>	<a href="https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teachingenglish/files/pub_ELT-16-screen-Maximising.pdf">https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teachingenglish/files/pub_ELT-16-screen-Maximising.pdf</a>	<b>Booklet</b> <b>The British Council Ethiopia</b>  	This booklet was put together by experienced teachers and trainers familiar with large classes in the African context. It provides both strategies and activities for involving, managing and assessing students in a large class setting.
	<b>“Teaching English in Large Classes – a sociocultural approach</b>	<a href="https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/teaching-english-large-classes-%E2%80%93-a-sociocultural-approach">https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/teaching-english-large-classes-%E2%80%93-a-sociocultural-approach</a>	<b>Webinar</b> <b>Jason Anderson</b> 	In this very clear and informative webinar, a teacher educator outlines the challenges of large classes and encourages teachers to find individualised and shared solutions. He also puts forward one possible approach, one strategy and an activity to try out in your context!

	<b>“Working with a Big Class”</b>	<a href="https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/programme-1-working-a-big-class">https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/programme-1-working-a-big-class</a>	<b>Podcast</b> <b>Teaching English Radio</b> <b>British Council</b> 	<p>In this podcast you will get advice from teachers from around the world about how to plan, manage and engage large classes. There’s a useful teacher’s support worksheet and summary to help you too.</p>
	<b>“Large and Mixed Group Management”</b>	<a href="https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/blogs/manga/large-mixed-group-management">https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/blogs/manga/large-mixed-group-management</a>	<b>Article</b> <b>Asian College of Teachers</b> 	<p>This article gives some simple tips about how to manage a large class with mixed ability students.</p>



## Answers

**2.1:** a.2., b.3., c.1.

**3.1: Suggested answers:**

1. It is much better to find out if students understand instructions. Many students do not want to feel uncomfortable and say they don't understand
2. Students need to understand your instructions because if they don't, they cannot participate fully in the activity and waste time trying to work out what to do.
3. Watch and see if students are doing the activity or ask them simple questions to check they understand what to do.
4. Instruction checking questions are simple questions that focus on different part of the instructions to focus students' attention on what to do. They usually have opposite ingredients: E.g. for " Work in groups ". Do you work in pairs? Do you work alone?

**3.4:** 1.d., 2.a., 3.b., 4.e., 5.c.

**4.1:**

**Q:** Is mixed language ability the same as mixed ability?

**Suggested answer:** Mixed language ability can be the same as mixed ability as some students may have difficulties learning and using language.

**Q:** What other meanings can mixed ability have?

**Suggested answer:** Other meanings of mixed ability can mean students could have a learning problem or it can be due to the way students learn and keep information or it can be due to students' confidence and fear of making mistakes. Some students might not be able to see or hear as well as others.

**Q:** How can you help all mixed ability students in your class understand your instructions?

**Suggested answer:**

- Some students can remember very well while others might need more practice speaking and practising the language before they can remember it.
- Using signs, instruction checking questions and simple language can help all students understand what to do and most importantly feel included in the class.
- Remember, learning a language is a skill, like swimming, or driving a car. You can't learn to swim, drive, or learn a language in a classroom. You can learn the theory, but without practise and opportunities to make mistakes, you will never learn how to use the skill.

**4.4: Suggested answers:**

Change the language level from this:

To this:

Non-verbal sign or signs

<p><i>In order to answer the questions on the page I'm going to ask you to work together in groups to see if you can answer the questions.</i></p>	<p><b>Work in groups and answer the questions</b></p>	<p><b>Use arms to show where groups start and finish.</b></p>
<p><i>I'm going to show you some pictures and I want you look at the pictures and see if you can think of three things to describe the person.</i></p>	<p><b>Look at the pictures and say three things about the person</b></p>	<p><b>Point to eyes for 'look at'. Point to mouth for 'say'. Hold up 3 fingers for 'three'. Point with finger to whole picture of person for 'person'. Hold up the picture and show it to the right, left, middle and back of the classroom, so all students can see what you are doing.</b></p>
<p><i>I want you to get into groups of 6 and discuss a few ideas about the picture.</i></p>	<p><b>Groups of 6. Talk about the picture</b></p>	<p><b>Arms for 'groups' Fingers for 'six' Fingers to show 'talk /discuss'. Finger to point to picture</b></p>
<p><i>When you look at this picture, what do you notice? Tell me, if you can about the picture and give me maybe 3 colours that you can see in the picture.</i></p>	<p><b>Tell me three colours in the picture</b></p>	<p><b>It might be useful to point to different colours in the room and ask, 'What colour is this?' before moving to the picture. This checks they understand the word, 'colour'. Point to eyes for 'look'. Use three fingers for 'three' Use finger to point to picture. Point to your ears for 'tell me'</b></p>

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CODE for module

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