

NOTES FOR TEFL TEACHERS

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YOUR FIRST LESSON

This is the second in a series of documents on ELT teaching. Hope you find it useful.

I would love to hear feedback (and be informed of any typos): adrian.wallwork@gmail.com

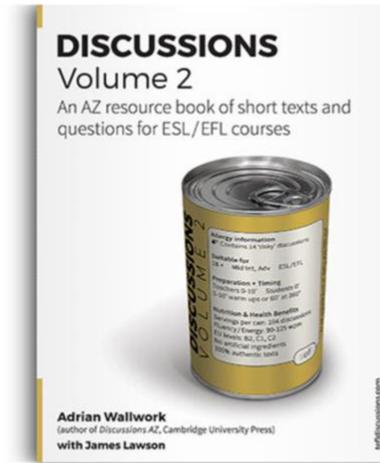
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1 Should I give my students my email address?

All my students have my email address. But I have also given them certain guidelines.

At the beginning of the year I send an email to everyone in the same group. The subject line of this email is: *Group n XYZ* - where *n* stands for the group number, and *XYZ* for the place (I teach in many different places). Whenever students from that group want to contact me, they have to use reply to that email rather than starting a new chain. This means that:

- I know immediately which group the student is in
- I can keep all the emails of that group in the same chain

You may also decide that students can only email you under specific circumstances, for example:

- send written work to you to correct
- let you know that they are not coming to the lesson or will be late

You can tell them the type of emails that you do NOT wish to be sent and which you will not reply to, for example:

- questions about your private life
- invitations

Some teachers open a special email account for their teaching work, thus ensuring that they don't get their personal email account bombarded with unwanted emails.

2 Why do people learn English? Do I need to do a needs analysis?

When they enrol in a course, the director of studies or you will probably have asked the student why they want to do the course and whether they have any specific needs.

Ultimately, most people learn English to help them get a job or, if they already have a job, to help them do their job better. Getting a job may also entail having to pass an exam in English. Younger students may need English to be able to study abroad or to access textbooks written in English.

This is very important to bear in mind. The majority of your students will not be learning English just for the hell of it or for travelling.

However, most students in answer to the question: *What are your main reasons for doing this course?* Will reply with something like: *I need to improve my English level.*

This answer gives you absolutely no info at all. The problem is that they may see it as one big generic problem - their English is not as good as they would like it to be. There is no harm in asking such questions, but if they are generic, you will certainly get generic answers.

So you have two distinct areas you need to investigate with them:

1. What is their ultimate goal for learning English?

2. What specific needs do they have now in order to reach that goal?

The second question is easier for people who are working, as they will have clear needs e.g. writing emails, using Skype, giving a presentation - but in any case most will have the same needs and you are likely to have already met these needs before in previous classes.

The first question is more problematic. The issue is that the students may actually not be aware of what their needs are. So it might actually be more useful to let them do a few lessons and then tell them what you think their needs are. Then see if they agree.

The majority of students in a monolingual class will have the same problems. So it is your job to try and cater for this majority, but also pay some attention to any specific needs. In a multilingual class they are still likely to have similar problems. You would be surprised how common the grammatical mistakes are that people from all language backgrounds make in English, what tends to be different is pronunciation where each nationality tends to have its own tongue-tied stumbling blocks.

However, whether you really need to do a needs analysis or not, it does give the student an idea that you are a professional, that your school has a system, and it is also an opportunity for them to think about why they really are learning English.

This is all the more important if you are working for yourself. With private students it helps if together you can set down some clear and achievable aims for you to work towards, otherwise you risk the lessons fizzling out quite quickly as no clear progress seems to be being made. For more on a needs analysis for one-to-one lessons, see [Discussions One-to-One](#).

While researching into the question *How does it feel to be a student?* I enrolled on a series of language courses, one of which was Spanish. Before the first lesson started and before the teacher had come in the class, I quickly asked the other five participants why there were interested in learning Spanish - we were all beginners. One needed to do the course simply to get credits for her university degree course. The others were basically interested in being able to shop and chat on planned trips to Barcelona.

The teacher then came in, introduced herself and spent the first 45 minutes going through the Spanish alphabet, and pronouncing all the sounds for us (without us trying them out for ourselves). She then spent the next 30 minutes writing some sentences on the board for us to read aloud that were designed to practice the sounds (around 40!) that she had just taught us. These included useful and memorable sentences such as: *The umbrella holder is made of bronze* and *The child's wailing is unbearable*.

Then, between constant glances at the time on her mobile phone, she taught us how to form the plurals of random nouns that she wrote on the board, and when she realised that she still hadn't got through the allocated time (two hours), she wrote the present tense of the reflexive verb *to call oneself* (e.g. *I am called Adrian*) - again without us opening our mouths.

There was a massive sense of frustration at the end of the lesson. Not only had we not participated actively, but we had learned nothing of any use to us. The girl wanting credits had just got extremely bored (like me) and the others seemed quite angry that they had barely opened their mouths.

Had the teacher asked us our reasons for being in the class, she would have realised that there was absolutely no need to launch into the alphabet. She would have known that basically all we wanted was to learn some basic phrases to enable us to communicate with Spanish people. I never went back after the first lesson, and I suspect that the others may also have followed suit.

3 What do I need to know about their previous English learning experiences?

Some students will tell you that they learned English for ten years at school, and yet when they open their mouth it sounds like it can only have been ten months or weeks even. This is because at high school they may have only studied grammar and English literature, and been taught by someone whose command of English was very poor.

On the other hand, through the widespread use of the Internet the general level of English of non-natives has improved considerably. Many kids today grow up watching YouTube videos, not just of music and TV series, but also Vlogs. This means they listen to much more English than past students did and they listen to what they want to listen to rather than inane EFL dialogues between people with whom they have nothing in common. This has bridged a massive gap - previously students often tended to talk much better than listen, now the listening aspect has caught up a bit.

So learning how many years your students previously studied English is no real indicator of their level, it very much depends on what they did and who taught them.

Here are two examples from my student survey on past learning experiences. Notice how these experiences affect their attitude not only towards the English language, but the people too.

Usually Korean teachers are forceful with tests in almost every class. They want us to memorize everything. I know that we have to memorize. But it is very boring and stressful. Therefore, I was fearful of my English class, also of English people. (Semi, Korean student)

As a non-native speaking English student, I set a high value on pronouncing and repeating the words the precise way as natives do. Maybe I am a little bit vain but I would like to prevent getting embarrassed in front of native English speakers. Ali Hedayat, Iranian student

In a multinational class, discussing previous English learning experiences makes a very interesting discussion exercise, even in the first lesson.

4 Does everyone have an equal capacity to learn English?

You have to work on the basis that everyone who turns up in your class for their first lesson has an equal chance of learning English well.

Clearly, you know this not to be the case.

But if you decide, after sizing up a student for a few seconds, that he or she has no chance, your pre-judgement is going to have the kiss of death on that student's performance.

If you have taught before, your tendency will be to compare certain behaviours of students in this new class with those of students you have met before. If you have never taught, you will undergo the same process but this time simply with people you have met before. In both cases you are projecting other people's personalities onto the students you now have in front of you. You may well be right. But even if you are right this is not going to help the student.

Your challenge in the case of those students who immediately match your snap judgement as being highly likely to be hopeless at English is to work hard on them so that they free themselves from being characters in the chronicle of an English death foretold. You do this by encouraging the no hope students, by giving them positive feedback, and you will find that against all odds they will perform better and give you massive satisfaction.

5 How can I get over my nerves?

You are bound to be nervous in your first lesson with a new group. Even highly experienced teachers still get a little nervous at the beginning of a new term.

The secret is to have a good first lesson (see Exercises at the end of this chapter). There are also various methods used by actors and presenters for calming their nerves, which you can easily search for on Google.

If you can, meet the students before they come into the class, i.e. when they arrive in the waiting room. This means that when the class is in stony silence waiting for you to begin, rather than seeing them as one uniform block of new people, you will notice some of the individuals and some of their faces will be smiling at you (and in some way encouraging you). You will learn that individually they are lovely people and collectively they are just the same people. Just because being part of a big class doesn't change them.

It may help you to know that your students will be nervous too.

If you observe students waiting outside class, you will notice that many are actually even more nervous than you are. I once spent 20 minutes watching a new group of eight beginners arrive at a language school, every single one went to the bathroom and most had a worried expression on their faces. Why are they nervous? Doing a language course puts a student onto a stage where they have to perform. They don't want to make a fool of themselves regardless of whether the other people in class are friends or strangers.

Below are some typical thoughts of new students at a private language school as they wait outside the classroom for their first lesson to begin.

I wish I had opted to pay in installments. Supposing I don't like the course?

Looking at another student. Who is that guy? I wonder what he does and why he wants to learn English.

I hope the teacher is friendly. Not like my English teacher at high school.

My hands are sweating.

I need a pee. Where's the bathroom?

Students have expectations and unanswered questions whizzing around their heads. They have expectations about you as a teacher. These expectations (good and bad) may be highly conditioned by previous exposure to English teachers, either at state school or in other languages schools. They will need reassuring immediately that you fall into the friendly positive category of teacher.

They may also be concerned about the group dynamics: *What will the other students be like? Will the others be better or worse than me? Who will I sit next to? Who should I avoid sitting next to?*

Another concern is that they have just shelled out a fortune on their English course, and that they are now panicking that it may not be money well spent - either that the teacher will not deliver the goods or that they themselves may not be up to it.

So one of your first jobs in the first minute of the lesson is to make everyone feel comfortable, to create an environment where they will feel OK if they don't understand everything, where they can freely splutter out poorly constructed sentences, and where they can get tongue tied while trying to reproduce alien sounds.

6 How important is class atmosphere?

Class atmosphere is vital. Students anywhere appreciate being comfortable in the classroom and knowing that the teacher is on their side. You need to ensure that they leave the class at the end of the first day feeling good about it. If not, it's going to be difficult getting the class dynamics back on track. Establishing a rapport at the very beginning - smiling, making a joke, letting them know you want this to be a positive experience for them - is very important. If you get the classroom dynamics right and the students feel that you are committed to their interests then lesson will flow well.

Students make an almost immediate impression of their teacher. Nalini Ambad, a psychology professor at Stanford University, showed her students a 10-second video clip of a professor giving a lecture and discovered that her students' evaluation of that teacher was as accurate as the evaluations of students who had the professor for a whole semester.

But what was really incredible was the Ambad's students watched the clip with the sound off, and even when Ambad repeated the same experiment but with a 2-second clip, the results were still the same! (Source: Malcolm Gladwell's *Blink*)

However, this information should not worry you unduly. Making a good first impression in class is not that difficult: you just need to come across above all as approachable and sympathetic, someone with whom students feel safe to make mistakes. These factors will also give you an air of confidence and competence.

In addition, you need to plan a first lesson that is not going to put too much pressure on you (or your students), that is going to be easy to set up and carry out, and that will give participants a positive impression of you and the course you are holding with them.

7 What do I need to cover in the first couple of lessons?

In your first lesson with a new group you will need to cover most of the items below.

You need to

- introduce yourself with a few details, not just your name
- learn names and get others to learn each other's name
- reassure them that: you will not go too quickly, you will not try to cover too much in one lesson, that you will try to keep everyone with you, that it is ok to make mistakes
- understand why students are there
- create sense of cohesion in the group

You also need to inform them about

- if and when there will be a break
- when and how they can ask questions, and how much they are likely to talk
- how often they will use their book
- whether you will ever use their native language
- how you plan to correct them

You can spread the above points over two lessons, but remember that this is key information that students will want to know and are entitled to know.

It will also considerably the chances of the success of the course if you

- tell students (both children and adults) what you expect of them in terms of classroom behaviour
- discuss learning strategies
- clearly state that you as a teacher can only do so much - the success of the course depends as much on them as on you, and the more they do to create opportunities for learning outside the class the better

8 How important is my appearance?

How you appear to your students in their first lesson(s) is likely to condition the way they feel both about you and the class that they are in. It can be quite disappointing for students to see a teacher who slouches in, gives little eye contact, and immediately writes something on the board.

We make first impressions spectacularly quickly, with estimates that range from 30 seconds down to 2 seconds! And once we've made an impression of someone, we tend only to look for things that confirm that first impression.

A PhD student of mine from Kenya told me:

The way a teacher dresses is very important because that gives the very first impression of what kind of person he or she is. A teacher needs to be simple in dressing but at the same time smart. The "look" is very important and could influence the understanding and liking of the subject being taught even the very hard subjects. We called one of our teachers evergreen because he wore every day a green shirt, though he taught well his subject his "look" let him down.

Clearly, a teacher's appearance should be very low on the list of qualities that make up a good teacher - but it may influence your students more than you think.

9 What should I do in the first ninety seconds with a new class?

Stand as close to your students as possible and look at the whole class. Although you may be feeling quite nervous, try to smile, or at least appear to be happy that you are there with them. Your students will want to like you, as this will help them considerably in their learning process. They know this to be true from their experience at school, where the subjects that they tended to do best in were probably those taught by their favourite teachers.

So stand upright and, if you like, adapt the script below to your situation:

Hi everyone, my name's Sam Wills. I will try and speak slowly and clearly. I am very happy to be here in this new class. I come from Manchester in the north of England. I arrived here last month. I love this town; it is so beautiful. And everyone has been great. And the food is delicious. At the moment I am doing a course to learn your language. So I understand what it is like to be a language learner. So that's me. Now let's ...

Whatever you decide to say, it is worth saying:

- your name
- that they will be able to understand you when you talk (in fact you should use short simple sentences, particularly with lower levels)
- that you are happy to be with them
- something positive about their town, country, food, culture

- that you understand their situation (you are or have been a learner too)

10 What about classroom management? Do I need to set up some ground rules for class behaviour?

Your first two lessons are crucial to setting the tone for the rest of the course. Apart from giving out the practical information outlined in the previous subsection, you also need to set ground rules for how you expect them to behave - and I am not talking about children's classes but adults.

What they tend not to teach you on the CELTA course is how to manage difficult students. The key issue is to anticipate what difficulties you are likely to have and then deal with them before they happen.

The most typical is having one or two students whose prime aim seems to be to monopolize the class, I call these people 'dominators'. The dominator is the one who takes over every conversation, who answers questions that you deliberately addressed to another student, who interrupts other students and you, who always wants to talk about himself or herself. The dominator is not an evil student, they don't deliberately try to hijack the lesson. They are simply the result that our society, apart from on reality TV (such as Big Brother) tends not to give social feedback. No one has told these guys to shut up - neither their mothers, their friends, their colleagues or their teachers. They in turn have failed to read the obvious signs of boredom / annoyance in their interlocutors' facial reactions.

If you want your lessons to succeed, you have to be prepared for the fact that you will have a dominator in your class. The solution is to announce the following before doing the first oral exercise:

Just a word about oral exercises. It is very important that everyone has an equal chance to speak. So in the space of a lesson, everyone should be allowed to speak for approximately the same amount of time. If you find you are talking too much or too little, then try to adjust for this. In any case, I will certainly tell people who are talking too much to talk less. So please don't be offended if I do so.

If you are working in a monolingual class, then I suggest you give this instruction in their language (whatever the level), as this will give them a clear indication of how serious you are about this. If you do not speak their language or if you are working in a multilingual class, then I suggest you write down this guideline in the simplest English possible and distribute copies of it to the whole class.

If you opt for written guidelines, then you could add a whole list of items that you think would facilitate class management e.g. expectations about homework, use of their own language in the lesson, pair work, respect for other cultures etc.

11 How can I learn their names? And what about the impossible-to-pronounce ones?

There are hundreds of warm up activities on the net suggesting games for name-learning, but these don't help much if you can't even pronounce the names!

Young Chinese often give themselves English nicknames, so one option in a multilingual class is for each person to adopt an English persona!

If you go for the authentic option, then you need to come up with your own phonetic system.

In a monolingual class you may have several students with the same first name (e.g. Mohammed or variations). The secret is to put a written description against each student to help you distinguish between them.

A typical mistake of new teachers is just to focus on learning the names of the students without getting the students to learn each other's names. A new group needs to feel relaxed in each other's presence, so it generally helps if they know each other's names.

12 How can I get everyone to learn each other's names?

A good first lesson in a multilingual class is to get students to discuss their names with each other by asking some or all of the questions below. This is a great way for students to get to know each other's names. Many teachers often think it is only important for the teacher to know the names of those in class, but you will get a much better and collaborative atmosphere in class if everyone knows each other.

Procedure: Put students in groups of three or four. Dictate the questions. Explain the terminology: given name = first name, family name = surname. Ask them to discuss the questions. Then rearrange the groups (the idea is that they need to learn as many of their names as possible) and repeat the procedure. Then get feedback on the most interesting story behind a name.

1. What is your full name?
2. Do women in your country take their father's surname or their mother's? Do they change surname when they get married?
3. How did your parents choose your given name?
4. What is the reason for the order of your names?
5. Do many parents in your country give their children English names?
6. Does your surname have an English translation? Does it actually mean something?
7. What have you noticed about English (and European) first names and family names?

For more similar questions, see Discussions One-to-One exercise 00.

13 How can I make sure my first lesson goes to plan? Can I do a presentation?

Especially if you are a novice, you will be wanting everything to go to plan and you will want to feel you are in full control of the class. A nice way to achieve this and to introduce yourself to the class at the same time, is to prepare a presentation on yourself and your country. Here are some slides you could include:

- an introductory slide telling them how long you are going to talk and when / if they can ask you questions
- photos of your family, partner etc.
- photos of your birthplace showing where it is geographically, and what it is famous for (or at least what goes on there and whether you like it or not)
- typical characteristics of people of your nationality
- your education
- your interests
- what people typically eat (and what you eat)
- what typical festivities there are

Don't just concentrate on stuff that students are already likely to know, but also quirky stuff they won't know. The slides should be simple, minimal text apart from perhaps a heading - just a series of images.

This approach has massive benefits:

- you can practise it in advance (test out how long it will take, think about the kinds of questions students may ask you and prepare your answers maybe through additional slides that you have kept separate)
- you can control the progress of the lesson
- you will be less nervous because there isn't much that go wrong (barring the fact that your laptop crashes - prepare for this by having printed cards of your slides)
- you can use it with any level and even with every class you teach on the first day of a new 'term'
- your students will appreciate learning something about you, your life, and your country

In future lessons, you could get students to do introductory presentations of themselves on the basis of your model.

14 I feel it is important that students get to know me so that we can establish a good relationship right from the start. How can I do this without the first lessons being all about me?

Below is a lesson plan created by Rosemary Bishop (English, aged 24 at the time of the lesson). This was her first ever lesson after doing a CELTA course. The course was in-house in an IT company in

Pisa (Italy) with small groups of 'students' (3-6 people, age: 25-45, predominantly male, predominantly Italian, mid-upper intermediate).

Lesson topic: Should we judge on appearances?

Stage 1 – Introduction to Rosie.

Description – Introduce myself. Explain to the group that they are going to predict things about me. Use the example of how long have I been in Pisa?

Give the students 5 minutes to discuss in pairs:

Where am I from? Where have I lived?

What was my profession before I came to Pisa?

Why did I decide to live in Pisa?

Have I got a degree? What is the degree in?

Do I have children? How many do I have?

What is my marital status?

How good is my Italian?

What type of school did I go to?

What are my hobbies and interests?

Why did I decide to live in Pisa?

Am I close to my family? Do I have brothers and sisters?

Do you have any other predictions about me?

Whilst they are discussing the above listen out for mistakes to correct later in the lesson.

After 5 minutes get the group to feedback some predictions and justify them. My physical appearance will probably be a factor.

Reveal my background and see how close their predictions were. Did they judge me well from first impressions?

Stage 2 - Should we judge people by their appearance, and first impressions? Why/ why not?

Discuss this point as a group. Encourage a wide range of people to share their views.

Show the class 4 pictures of people – Ask them who they would: be most likely to ask to watch their belongings? To let look after their children? Share a flat with? Would they avoid any of the individuals? Why?

David Lammy – Member of Parliament and the UK labour party. The image was taken as part of a campaign against prejudice faced by black men wearing hoodies. They are more likely to be stopped and searched by the British police.

Karla Holmoka – helped her husband abuse and murder several teenage girls including her sister.

Abdul Sattar Edhi – Pakistani philanthropist who developed the world's largest volunteer ambulance network, along with homeless shelters, animal shelter, rehab centres, and orphanages across Pakistan.

Reynhard Sinaga – UK if not world's most prolific known rapist. He was recently jailed for 136 rapes.

Reveal who the four individuals are.

Give statistics on judging by appearances? Does this surprise the group?

Our brains make a thousand computations during the first seven seconds we see someone.

55 percent of first impressions are made by what we see (visual).

38 percent is the way we hear your first words (vocal).

7 percent are the actual words you say (verbal).

Studies reveal that most of us had definite entrenched stereotypes about black people, women, and other social groups by the age of 5.

As children, we constantly judged our environment and formed conclusions about our world.

If we didn't see people from ethnic minority groups represented in cartoons we watched as a child, we might not see them as equal members of society.

If we didn't see women holding positions of power, we may have interpreted that to mean women were less important than men.

Stage 3 – Appearance and Italy?

Ask the group to discuss in small groups if they feel that appearances are considered important in Italy? Is there a particular way you are expected to dress? 4 minutes in pairs and then discuss as a group.

Show the group the front of my CV, what does it not include that a typical Italian's CV has? A photo of myself. State to the group that it would be odd to include a photo on a UK CV. Why do they think this is? Do you think it is better in theory to have a photo on the resume or not? Why?

Stage 4 Appearances and the workplace/ stereotype of the tech industry.

Are appearances considered important in your sector? If you were interviewing someone how important would first impressions be? 4 minutes to discuss in pairs before whole class feedback.

Do you think there are some sectors it may be advantageous to have an unusual appearance?

Show the group a clip from the IT crowd, explain that this is the stereotypical image that many people, including myself have when they think of people working in the tech sector.

Is this accurate? To what extent? Do you think it's changing? How do you feel about this stereotype?

Stage 5 – Error correction. Write up errors that were made during the session. Work through as a group correcting grammar and pronunciation.

15 I don't want to do a presentation on me, what other alternatives are there?

Here's a possible approach, as seen through Julia, a Canadian teaching a multi-lingual class in Vancouver (though the same approach could be used in a monolingual class).

Julia: Hi I'm Julia. I'm your teacher for the next two months. Very happy to meet you all. I have written you all a letter of introduction about myself.

While explaining, Julia distributes copies of the letter to the class.

Julia: This letter is divided into seven paragraphs. It tells you a few things about my family. How I feel about English (the language). What it's like to be Canadian. My teaching history. Where I have lived and how I felt about those places. My hobbies and interests. And finally what I hope to be able to teach you.

Julia gives class a few minutes to digest the contents of the letter.

Julia: What I'd like you to do is to choose four of the seven paragraphs, and write some questions that you would like to ask me to find out more about me. We are going to be spending many hours together in this room, so I think it's important to get to know each other well. OK. So you have four or five minutes to write your questions - if you want you can work in pairs.

Julia now has time to calm her nerves as she moves round the class looking at the questions her students are writing. Some students can't think what questions to ask, so she prompts them. When the five minutes are up, she turns to a student, Ahmed, who she knows has a question that she would be happy / comfortable to answer and which she feels the class might find interesting.

Ahmed: I see you have a twin sister, what's it like?

Julia answers Ahmed's question. She gives a brief answer so that she can involve more students by getting them to ask their questions. She sees a Chinese girl leaning forward and nods to her.

Shanshan: You've lived in many places, which was your favourite?

Again a short answer, and on to the next student.

Ilze: I am from Latvia, where we learn German and Russian as well as English. Do Canadians learn different languages?

Other questions are likely to be more direct:

Nakul: How old are you?

And some you may feel are inappropriate:

Huang: How much money do you earn? Are you married?

During this Q & A session you should be constantly checking their body language to see whether they are actually interested in what you are saying. If some people are texting on their mobile or looking out of the window then it's time to change the focus of the activity.

Julia: OK, now it's your turn to ask each other questions. Sit next to someone you don't know and take turns to ask each other questions. I will listen to you and note down if you make any mistakes. We can then look at these mistakes later.

Note how Julia has introduced the question of mistakes. Students need to know that they are not just talking for the sake of it, but that there will be some value outcome as well.

Julia circulates round the class, notes down mistakes, discusses them and now the lesson is drawing to a close.

Julia: Well thank you. It's been a great first lesson. I have enjoyed meeting you. For homework, please write a similar letter to mine and bring it to the next lesson. If you don't have time, then just bring a copy of your CV or some photos that you can talk about. Next lesson you will work with a new partner and discuss your experiences like we did today.

Alternatively, you might decide that their letter should be for your eyes only. Students may be more likely to want to disclose their personal information to you.

The writing-a-letter approach has several advantages:

- Students won't be expecting it, so it is a way to get their immediate attention.
- It gives you a reasonably stress free beginning with a new class.
- The lesson has a clear structure, but the timing doesn't have to be perfect - you are not covering too many things so you don't have to stick to a rigorous time schedule.
- Students will learn something about you. This is crucial as your role is often likely to be somewhere between a mother and a therapist. They need to feel relaxed in your company, relaxed enough to open their mouths, make mistakes and not feel stupid.
- It gives you a chance to learn a few things about the student's backgrounds, their personality and possibly to anticipate what the group dynamics might be like.
- It nicely sets up your next lesson as you can repeat the experience, but this time in a more student-focused way.
- You can use the same lesson with any new group, thus saving you a lot of lesson-preparation time.

To see another example of a first lesson with a new group (Chapter Fears) where you are the focus of the lesson.

Regarding mistakes, if you are a novice teacher a better approach might be to note down their mistakes, but deal with them in the following lesson. Given that this is your first lesson and you want to make a good impression, you don't want to fluff your explanations of any grammar or vocabulary issues. So make it easy on yourself by announcing to the class that you will go over their mistakes

next lesson. Then in the meantime you can select a few of their mistakes, analyse where the mistake is (and possibly why it was made), and prepare a simple explanation.

If you find that the lesson goes quicker than you imagined, then you could still embark on some correcting. Here are a few of the typical grammar mistakes that students are likely to make are:

Are you born in Canada? (Rather than: Were you born ..)

Where you live? (Where do ...)

How are you old? (How old are you?)

Do you have any brothers? (... and sisters)

How long do you live in Vancouver ? (Have you lived ...)

By working out in advance what kind of mistakes your students are likely to make, you can prepare how you could deal with them / correct them.

16 I don't want to be the focus of attention in the first lesson. How can I get students talking to each other straight away in a multilingual group?

If you don't fancy being the subject of attention in your first contact with a new (multilingual) group, then try this.

The exercise consists of a survey on the students' experiences of the country where the lesson is taking place. In the survey below I am imagining you are teaching a multilingual group in London, England. So simply substitute 'England' with the country where you are located.

Give students the following instructions: Answer the questions in this survey. Then discuss your answers in pairs / groups.

1) Is/Was your initial impression of England and London in particular?

- positive, as expected
- surprisingly positive
- negative, as expected
- surprisingly negative

2) Has your initial impression changed?

- no
- yes (how and why did it change? did you explode any myths and stereotypes?)

3) What do you like least/most about:

- your school
- your accommodation
- your job (if you have one)
- weather

- food
- shops
- sport
- TV etc.

4) What qualities and defects do you think the English / Londoners have?

5) How involved in life here do you feel?

- very
- sufficiently
- not much
- not at all

6) How do the native speakers treat you?

- like one of them
- like a foreigner (explain)

7) Are there any special foods or basic necessities that you can't find here?

8) Do you miss your home country?

- more / less than you had expected
- what do you miss the most / least

9) How often do you phone / Skype home?

- every day
- one a week
- once a fortnight
- once a month

10) What is the most difficult thing you have had to cope with since your arrival? And what have you learned about yourself?