

June 27th 2002

Dear Matthew,

Herewith the piece I mentioned.

Have a good summer.

Mario.

Biodata: Mario, a founder member of Pilgrims, edits **Humanising Language Teaching**, at <[www.hltmag.co.uk](http://www.hltmag.co.uk)>. His next book, with Sheelagh Deller, is **Using the Mother Tongue**, forthcoming with ETp Delta in December, 2002. His most recent book is **Humanising your Coursebook**, ETp Delta, Feb, 2002.

## **Do's and Don't's in 1- 2- 1 Business English Teaching**

Mario Rinvoluceri, Pilgrims, UK

In my view one-to-one teaching is the easiest form of teaching as you do not have to cope with huge complexity of group forming, group growth and group maturation. The one-to-one situation is a marvellous laboratory for developing yourself as a teacher, since you only have one complex universe to focus on. not 4 or 6 or 8. What follow are a few tips about how to manage, be useful in and enjoy the tete-a-tete situation.

### **Do's**

#### **1. Enter the situation with childlike wonder**

At the door of the classroom leave behind all preconceived notions about this type of executive, this nationality, this sort of profile ( if you have had access to written information about the student \* ) and prepare yourself to enter the other person's world just as it is, and to enjoy being there, because it will surely be so wondrously different from your own.

#### **2. Focus on noticing and on getting rapport**

Notice the student's self-presentation, observe their voice use, their posture and their eye movements \*\*.

Notice inwardly if you feel drawn to the person, in which case, fine. If you feel you are distancing yourself from them, then maybe you can work technically to get better

Support by matching lower body posture and pacing the student's voice speed and volume.

### **3. Write letters to your student**

Write letters to your student:

- to introduce yourself,
- to summarise and reformulate things they have told you,
- to introduce new language
- to revise language
- to provide relevant reading practice
- to launch oral interaction.

Ask the student to write letters to you, as well.

### **4. Think beyond the classroom**

Some students open up better outside the classroom setting.

Here are two exercises I have tried away from the school:

To get a Japanese student to abandon continual inner translating when listening to English and speaking it I asked him to take me for BLIND WALK round Canterbury. My eyes were firmly shut and he had to guide me and provide a running commentary on where we were. The potential danger and the physical contact got him working internally faster and began to wean him from constant translation.

With an Italian student I role-played a monolingual compatriot. He had to interpret for me in a local travel agents. We only spoke Italian together and he produced all the English to the sadly( but usefully!) monolingual girl behind the computer.

Both these exercises were sharply targeted on the student's precise language needs.

### **5. Use the web**

Find out about the student's part of their company via [www.google.com](http://www.google.com).

Look up other companies that come up in conversation and get the student to add to the information available on the web.

Use the web to get more involved yourself in the technical stuff that is second nature to your student.

**6. Build the course as you go along**, in precisely the same way as a doctor would proceed with a course of treatment for a patient. Work from both information and hunches and see what is effective both linguistically and psychologically. Be a sailing boat, sensitive to the student's currents, tides and winds, in so far as you understand them.

Motorboats tend to be ineffective one-to-one teachers.

### **Don't's**

If a highly auditorily-gifted student takes no notes at all during lessons, don't

**1. Don't take what colleagues say about a student as anything more than their own narrow, idiosyncratic mapping of the person.**

It is very natural to ask colleagues about a student who is new to you.

They will give you information. They will share their prejudices and snap judgements. They will tell you a huge amount about themselves.

Their reactions may turn out to have nothing to do with your reactions to this particular student.

**2 Don't object to a student's natural way of learning**

get upset. Their notes are on tape in their head. Enjoy the way a very visual student will ask you to replicate everything you say on paper or on the board. Go with the learner's flow- on a short course this will give better results than any attempt at process-imposition by you. .

**3. Don't waste time on the plethora of EFL business materials**

Use the students' knowledge, the relevant sections of newspapers, relevant TV material and the web. With actively minded and sometimes brilliant executive students, EFL pap is particularly gruel-like and unneeded.

**4. Please don't tell me you don't like 1-2-1's!**

- the word *student* is the inevitable one in the context of the *teacher-student* dyad. Occasionally I have heard executive students called *clients*, which is odd as a teacher is not a social worker, or a lawyer, or a therapist.
- \*\* When a person looks up left or right or defocuses into the distance they are normally in an inner world of pictures. When their eyes go down to the right, they are mostly in sensations and emotions. Down left usually goes with inner monologue or dialogue while eyes level across right or left goes with hearing sounds, music etc internally.