

Developing Lessons: Questions to Consider

1. What have I done to find out what my students are interested in or concerned about? How have I built on those interests and concerns?
2. What have I done to find out what my students already know – their knowledge and experience - and to create opportunities for students to share these?
3. What new information or new perspectives have I introduced for my students to consider?
4. What new language skills and knowledge am I teaching during this lesson?
5. How am I helping my students build the knowledge and skills they need to survive in the culture as it is, but also envision the changes they would like to see and build the sense of agency needed to get there?

Some other things to consider

Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.

- Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

1. **Help students consider context – Why this? Why here? Why now?**

There is always a social and historical context for issues that arise. Learning about this context can help students make sense of what's happening. In class, you might do a "problem tree" analysis of what's causing a problem, compare a situation to what's happened in the past or in other countries, consider who benefits or doesn't.

2. **Focus on information, not just opinions**

It's tempting to measure the success of a class by the level of enthusiasm and energy that students bring to a discussion. While engagement is certainly valuable, it's also important that we help people reflect on their opinions, question their own assumptions, and come to informed opinions and conclusions. Encourage people to state the reasons for their beliefs and to check their information.

3. **Teach about where the power is and how to access it**

Talk about, "How do decisions about this issue get made?" and "How can we affect these decisions?" This is one way for students to think about their relationship to those with authority and to develop their sense of agency.

4. **Build community in the classroom**

Help students form relationships and build a sense of community by inviting them to get to know one another as whole people. Do language-learning activities that create connections (such as the icebreaker "Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow": have each student interview a partner to find out one thing about their past, one thing they are doing now, and one thing they hope they can do in the future).