Let's Teach English

Introduction

History of Development

Let's Teach English is based on the *Women Teaching Women English* materials (https://blogs.uoregon.edu/aeiprojects/oelc/wtwe/) produced in 2011 by the University of Oregon (http://uoregon.edu/) American English Institute (https://aei.uoregon.edu/) under U.S. Department of State Federal Assistance Award S-LE200-10-GR-050, issued by the U.S. Embassy Beirut.

Contributors

Dr. Leslie Opp-Beckman is on faculty at the University of Oregon American English Institute, a unit of the College of Arts and Sciences. As the Director of Innovative Programming, she was the Principal Investigator and lead author on the original *Women Teaching Women English* materials. With more than 20 years of experience in language teaching and learning, she has served as a teacher trainer in more than 40 countries worldwide and developed a wide range of online materials and programs globally.

Dr. Jill Robbins has taught language learners and teachers in the United States, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, and China. At Voice of America she helps to produce *Let's Learn English* and other learning materials. Her research explores language learning strategies and metacognition. She is the co-author of *Integrating EFL Standards into Chinese Classroom Settings*, *Impact Listening 2*, and *The Learning Strategies Handbook*.

Ms. Linda Wesley is on faculty at the University of Oregon American English Institute, a unit of the College of Arts and Sciences. She participated in the video production process and was the editor for the *Let's Teach English* textbook and teacher's manual. She currently teaches online teacher training courses and provides on-site teacher training for English language educators. In her nearly three decades of foreign language education, she has taught in K-12, junior college, and university environments.

Overview

The *Let's Teach English* video series offers free online preparation for English language educators worldwide. It is based on the *Women Teaching Women English* text for adult, beginning level learners. Voice of America and the University of Oregon are partners on this project.

Who is this course for? It's for teachers or teacher educators worldwide who want to teach English using current methods.

Before you begin watching the videos, look at the introduction and the 10 units in the student textbook and teacher's manual. The student textbook has 10 themes (one theme per unit):

1. Family
2. Food
3. Health and Beauty
4. Home and Community
5. Shopping
6. In a Restaurant
7. How Others See the World
8. Plans and Dreams
9. Women at Work
10. Paths to the Future

There is a five-minute video for the introduction and each of the 10 units. The videos show a small group of students working with the teacher. Although the videos show small groups, the activities are designed to work well with larger groups of students also. As you watch the videos, notice the classroom management techniques the teacher uses to divide students into groups and to call the students back to attention at the end of group work.

There are four kinds of online resources to go with the videos:

- a script for each video
- the student textbook that the teacher is using in the video
- audio files to listen to the stories in each unit
- a teacher's manual for the textbook

You can download the student textbook and teacher's manual as free PDF files.

Teaching Topics

Constructivism

Let's Teach English is built on the theory of constructivism. The Concept to Classroom Workshop website (http://www.thirteen.org/edonline/concept2class/constructivism/) defines constructivism as ". . . people construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world, through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences . . . we are active creators of our own knowledge. To do this, we must ask questions, explore, and assess what we know." In *Let's Teach English*, lessons start with what learners already know and build on that.

Communicative Language Teaching

Let's Teach English also uses the method of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). The goal of CLT is to develop learners who can share information by speaking or writing in another language. The focus is on using authentic or real communication in teaching, in other words, exchanging new information with others. For example, if your students need to be able to use English at a medical office, they should practice things like filling out medical forms and answering questions about their health in class. Or, maybe your students want to apply for a job. That is something they can role play so they can express themselves in a real-life situation.

Learner-Centered Teaching Practices

You will see that learners are the main focus in classroom activities and practices. The teacher tries to make sure most of the class time is taken up by the students using English. Much less time is taken by the teacher giving instructions or talking about English. One way to make sure that students spend more time talking is to create cooperative learning groups. Notice the different ways that these groups are created in these videos and how their work is shared with the class.

Students make choices in the learner-centered instruction. Activities have options that let students read or talk about things related to their own interests.

One of the practices you see in these videos is Learning Strategies Instruction. Learning strategies are thoughts or actions that students use to make learning easier or more effective. The teacher explains and models how to use these strategies, and then gives students an activity in which to apply them.

Another practice you will see is Active Learning. Whenever possible, students are involved in using their second language to speak or write, rather than watching others use it. So, instead of watching classmates act out a role play, students are doing the role play themselves in small groups. In one lesson, you see students reading the instructions for an activity rather than listening to the teacher reading them.

Teaching Lessons for Each Unit

Each unit and video has a main teaching topic. These are the teaching topics:

1. Learning Strategies
2. Listening Skills and Cooperative Learning
3. Speaking Skills
4. Reading Skills
5. Role Plays and Group Projects
6. Writing Skills
7. Critical Thinking Skills

8. Visual Literacy
9. English for Specific Purposes and Vocational Language
10. Collaboration Through Persona-Poems

Contact Information

We hope that you enjoy watching the videos in the *Let's Teach English* series. If you have questions about how you can include these learner-centered practices in your own teaching, please email us or add a comment on the VOA website.

VOA Learning English (https://learningenglish.voanews.com)
> Email: learningenglish@voanews.com

University of Oregon American English Institute (https://aei.uoregon.edu)
> Email: elearn@uoregon.edu

Resources

Constructivism

WNET Education. (2004). What is constructivism? *Concept to Classroom Workshop.*
> Retrieved from http://www.thirteen.org/edonline/concept2class/constructivism/

Communicative Language Teaching

Galloway, A. (1993). Communicative language teaching: An introduction and sample
> activities. *Center for Applied Linguistics, Briefs & Digests*. Retrieved from
> http://cal.org/resource-center/briefs-digests/digests

Learner-Centered Teaching Practices

Rosen, L. (n.d.). *Learner-centered teaching*. Retrieved from Academic Advancement
> Network (formerly Office of Faculty and Organizational Development), Michigan
> State University website: http://fod.msu.edu/oir/learner-centered-teaching