



Don't Yell! Effective Communication with English Learners

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About Me

- **ESL Adjunct Faculty at Mt. SAC since 2016**
- **Program Coordinator at the Language Learning Center since 2019**
- **10 years experience teaching and tutoring English language learners**
- **7 years experience training tutors and conversation partners**



Introduce Yourself

What's your
name?

What brought you
to this workshop?

What is your
experience with
learning other
languages?



Agenda

Five “Rules” for Communicating with Adult English Learners

- Respect
- Don’t Yell
- Leave Space
- Monitor your Language
- Be Ready to Teach

Q & A



Rule #1: Respect

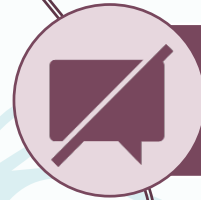
- English learner students often experience a mismatch between their age/mental development and their English language skills.
- Keep in mind that their thoughts are most likely more complex than they have the language to express.
- This means that in general, many people age learners down, unconsciously treating adult English learners like children, children like toddlers, etc.

Rule #2: Don't yell!

- As the title of this workshop implies, many people (again, usually unconsciously) resort to talking louder or unnaturally slowing down their speech in an attempt to be more intelligible.
- It doesn't work.



Rule #3: Leave Space



Silence



Listening



Chunking

Leave Space: Silence and Listening

- Silence is golden. Silence is processing time.
 - If you think you've waited too long in silence, wait some more. Count to 5, and then speak.
- Take time to listen also, and actively listen to infer meaning from the English learner's words.
- If you can't understand the words, ask them to write it out or show you a picture.



Leave Space: Chunking



How would you speak this sentence?

What do you want for dinner?

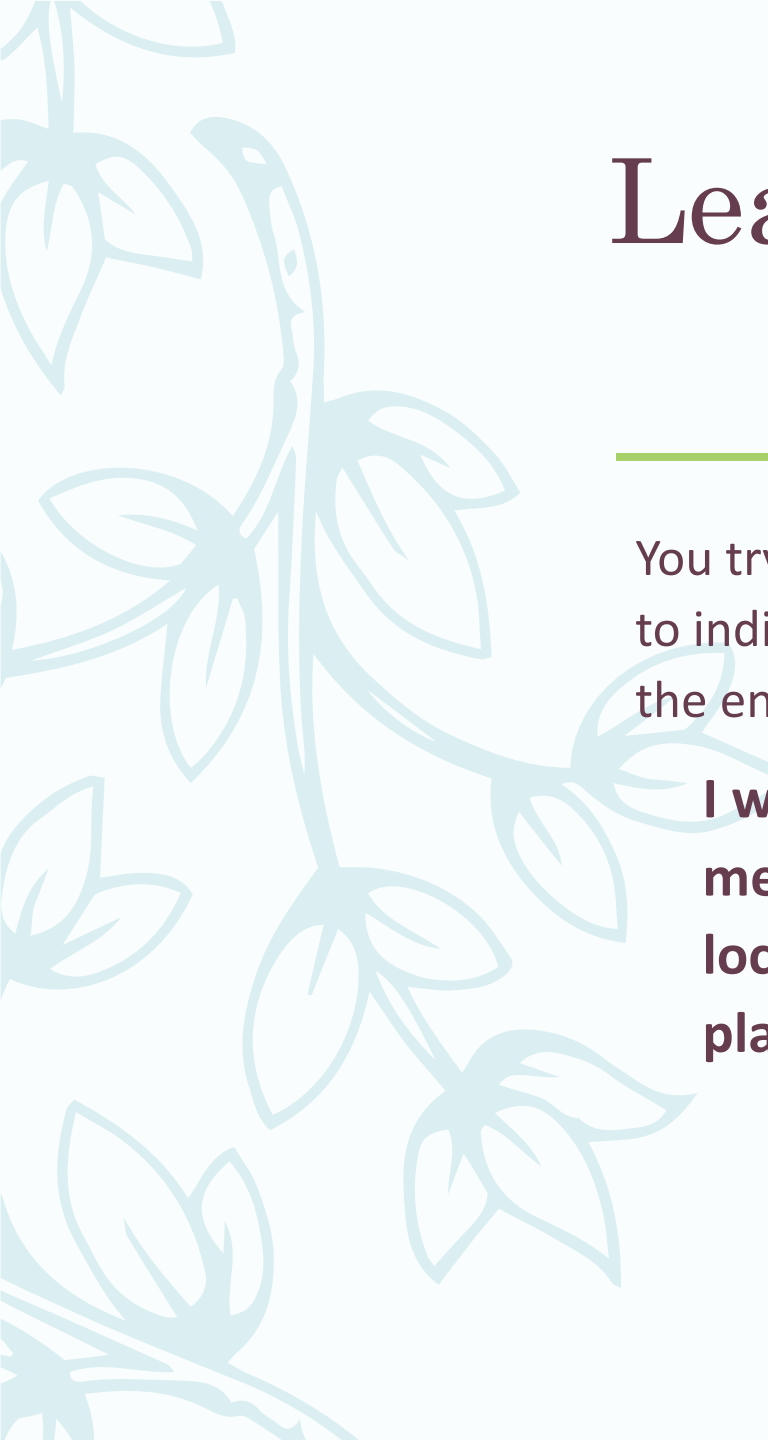
Waddyawanferdinner?

Let's look at a more complex example.

*I have a study group for my economics exam
in the library today at 3:00. The test is
tomorrow at noon.*

We can chunk this example as follows:

I have a study group / for my economics
exam / in the library / today at 3:00. // The
test / is tomorrow / at noon.



Leave Space: Chunking

You try it! In breakout rooms, chunk these sentences with a partner. Use slashes (/) to indicate short pauses and double slashes (//) to indicate longer pauses, like at the end of a sentence.

I will never forget the first time I visited a client in jail. The heavy, metal door slammed behind me, and I heard the key turn in the lock. The only connection to the outside world was a small window placed too high to see.

From Robin Steinberg's TED Talk, "What if we ended the injustice of bail?" April 2018

Leave Space: Chunking

NOTE: There's more than one way to chunk language! The following is a suggestion.

I will never forget / the first time / I visited a client in jail. // The heavy, metal door / slammed behind me, / and I heard the key / turn in the lock. // The only connection / to the outside world / was a small window / placed too high to see.

From Robin Steinberg's TED Talk, "What if we ended the injustice of bail?" April 2018

Rule #4: Monitor your Language

A: I unfriended Vanessa on Facebook because she totally stabbed me in the back.

B: Vanessa? Is she your high school friend? The name doesn't ring a bell.

A: Yeah, she was my friend in Jr. ROTC. I think it's for the best, though. She brings a lot of chaos wherever she goes.

Though the ideas here are simple, this conversation would likely be really difficult for an English learner to follow. Can you see why?

Rule #4: Monitor your Language

*A: I **unfriended** Vanessa on Facebook because she totally **stabbed me in the back**.*

*B: Vanessa? Is she your high school friend? The name doesn't **ring a bell**.*

*A: Yeah, she was my friend in **Jr. ROTC**. I think it's **for the best**, though. She brings a lot of **chaos** wherever she goes.*

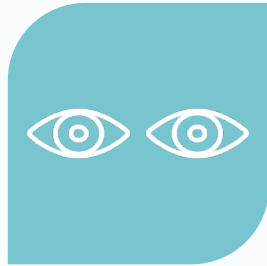
Try to imagine running your speech through Google translate. How would it work out?

Limit use of idioms, cultural references, acronyms, and slang, **and** be ready to teach the ones you do use.

Rule #5: Be Ready to Teach



KNOW YOUR
GRAMMAR
BASICS



USE VISUALS



CATEGORIZE
VOCABULARY



CONSULT A
LEARNER'S
DICTIONARY



Be Ready to Teach: Know your grammar basics

Do you understand the following terms?

- Noun person, place, thing, or abstract idea (e.g., love)
- Verb action and feeling words
- Adjective describes a noun
- Adverb describes a verb or adjective, or modifies a sentence
- Subject a noun that does the action of the verb
- Object a noun that receives the action of the verb

The English learners do—and you can help them a lot by explaining new words and phrases in terms they understand.

Be Ready to Teach: Use Visuals



Gestures and
Charades

Google Image
+ Screen
Share

Write/draw it
out: Ziteboard



Be Ready to Teach: Categorize Vocabulary

– What's *frisdrank*?

It's a noun.

It's something you drink.

It has a lot of sugar.

It fizzes.



Be Ready to Teach: Categorize Vocabulary

- You try! What's *hoverboard*?
- Let's make it a game! In your breakout rooms, take turns thinking of an object and describing it by putting it into categories, general to specific. Keep adding details until someone can guess the word you're thinking of.

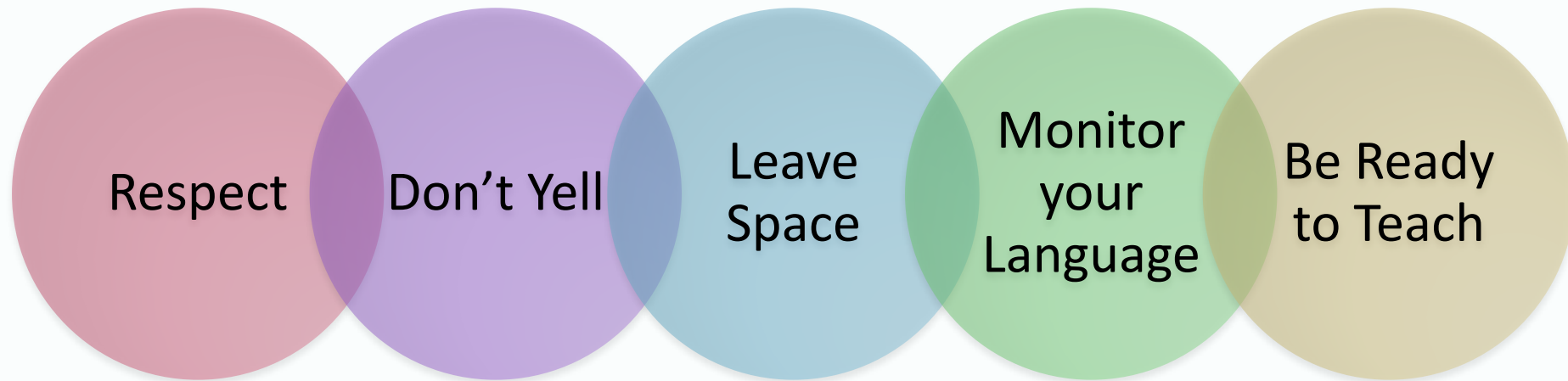
Be Ready to Teach: Consult a Learner's Dictionary

When in doubt about how to explain a new word, consult a learner's dictionary.

- Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (ldoceonline.com)
- Merriam-Webster's Learner's Dictionary (learnersdictionary.com)
- Oxford Learner's Dictionaries (oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/us/)



Review



Q & A

What do you want to know about
talking to English learners?

