
Roll Call Warm-up

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learn, intended profession, favorite food, or person you admire most.

Favorable Results

When I started taking attendance this way students responded favorably. We could make the activity as long or as short as we wanted. Sometimes spontaneous conversation would occur, as when two students realized that they shared the same favorite author. I would often comment on their preferences, joking, for example, that Salifou, who liked to eat, ought to get together with Mariama, who liked to cook.

Soon students were coming to me with suggestions of categories for roll call. Sometimes, in oral presentations, students would refer to information that had surfaced during these sessions. And always, students would ask me to state my response for the category of the day, so there was a two-way exchange between teacher and students.

In addition we got to know one another better and had a good time in doing so, without losing a lot of class time.

(Thanks to John Fanselow, who inspired this article and has written about variations like this in *Breaking Rules*, Longman, 1987.)

Roll Call as Warm-Up

Susan Rosenfeld,
American Cultural Center, Niamey, Niger

Teacher-trainers almost always urge new teachers to begin each class with a warm-up activity, to get the students in an English 'mind-set.' Indeed, several teacher resource books offer lists of topics suitable for warm-up conversations and suggestions of activities that only take 3-5 minutes.

At the same time, school administrators often require teachers to take attendance each class period. Usually this is a passive, boring activity, which does nothing to increase the students' knowledge of English or of each other (they can all see that Moussa Ibrahima is sitting in class).

Here follows a suggestion to combine attendance taking and warm-ups, or, more

accurately, to use attendance-taking as a warm-up.

Procedure

When the teacher calls the roll, what do the students usually say? Here? Present? Yes? Why limit their response to these few words? Why not choose a category each day and let the students respond with information about themselves in that category?

To start the teacher might say, "Today, when I call your name, do not say 'here; do not say 'present.' Instead, tell me your favorite color." Another day the subject might be favorite author, place you'd most like to visit, language you'd most like to

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Box 1830
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