

Introducing the class system

First of all, I greet students, and tell them that they are going to watch a video that explains how this class will be run. I don't really go into a long self-introduction here, because over the term the students will be asking me all kinds of questions, and will get to know me well of their own accord.



After a brief introduction, I play the video. About ten minutes later the students have a good idea of what the *Immediate Method* is, what will be expected of them in class, and most importantly, how easy and fun it can be to have spontaneous conversations with your teacher in class.

Note to teachers : we can send you this DVD free of charge ; you can also watch it with the embedded youtube video on our web site (<http://www.almalang.com/video.html>).

After that, I want my students to experience all the basic elements of the IM during this first class, which will set the tone for the whole semester. To start things off, I give each student a Presence Sheet (or as some people call them, Progress Sheet).

What's the Presence Sheet?



It's a chart which show the students' attendance in class, participation in conversation tests, and a record of their marks.

I have a Word file that I can modify to suit my needs, for example, if a course has two classes a week.

Note to teachers : we can send you this Word file by e-mail; alternately a printed Presence Sheet, which works for most cases, is ready to be photocopied in the Teacher's book.

Then I write the date for every scheduled class of the semester on the white board, and students fill them in on their Sheet, along with personal information like name, department, year level, etc. To explain the information (column headings, etc) on the Presence Sheet, I use the phrase "YYY means ZZZ" and give explanations in Japanese, such as "*Presence Sheet* means *shusseki hyou*", "*Student number* means *gakusei bango*", etc. Or I drill the question "What's ___ in Japanese/English ? " and have students ask me words they don't understand.

I then tell them :

"You are responsible for this (extremely valuable) Sheet. I will not keep any record of your

attendance or marks- you are responsible for that. If you lose your sheet, your attendance and marks will be lost. "

Doesn't this shock the students?

Of course, the students are usually blown away by this. A teacher who doesn't keep attendance or marks? But at the same time, they realise that you are giving them some responsibility from the very start of the course, and to pass they need to follow some simple but important instructions.

I show them that the sheet is not such a big deal anyway, saying something like, "But there is no reason why you should lose it, because you can paste an envelope on the inside cover of your textbook and keep your sheet in there at all times, except during class when you receive your presence stamps and test marks. Every week, put it on your desk and I will give you one stamp for attendance, while you are practicing your conversations in pairs. "

How does the marking system work ?

I would then explain the marking system for attendance, which is different for different classes. I give my students 10 marks (out of a total 100) for simply showing up; most of their marks come from their conversation tests and other classwork. I don't deduct marks for non-attendance (as some IM teachers do), since I find that non-attendance in class means non-participation in the conversations, which is enough of a penalty.

I say something like *"If you attend every class this term, you will get the full 10 points. Easy money. Then, every second class, when your turn comes for the in-class conversation test, bring it with you to the test and I'll write your mark, along with some tips for better conversations, on the sheet. That way you can keep track of your progress. Pretty simple, huh?"*.

"If you are absent, you will miss out on a conversation test, and each one is worth about five marks towards your final grade. To get your final grade, I will simply add up your total attendance, all your bi-weekly conversation test scores, and the final test score. So please do not forget to hand this sheet to me at the end of the course".

How do you explain the conversation tests ?

I say, *"In this class you will be given short tests in both spoken and written form, but since it is conversation class, the emphasis will be on speaking. You will have regular short written tests (every week), to see how well you have memorized the important vocabulary and sentence patterns"*.

Note to teachers : Stephen is preparing short vocabulary tests for his CiC classes. They are

designed to have students memorize key vocabulary and phrases each week, and at the same time to be super-fast for the teacher to correct - one of our mottos is "As near as possible to zero work outside of class time". If you would like to receive these photocopiable tests by e-mail, please contact us.



"But the main part of evaluation are the short conversation tests. They are not difficult ; all you need to do to get a good grade is to speak for a few minutes with your partner and teacher. If you use the sentence patterns and vocabulary that you have practiced in class and follow the tips for better conversations in the textbook, it's a piece of cake".

And the students understand this all?

Yes, they generally grasp it all fairly quickly. Since they have seen the video, they know what a real conversation test looks and sounds like, but I outline the expected length and format. For example, in classes of 30 students I test two students at a time, 40 minutes of testing time gives us about 8 four-minute long tests per week. In actuality, with one minute of dead time between pairs, this works out as five minutes per pair, if things are well organized.

Note to teachers :

4 min. of test per pair

+ 1 min. of "dead time" between pairs

= 5 min. per pair

Half of the class every week = 16 students one week and 14 students the next

Week 1 : 16 students = 8 pairs

8 x 5 min. = 40 min.

Week 2 : 14 students = 7 pairs

7 x 5 min. = 35 min.

For students, just write on the white board : " Test = 2 people = 4 minutes".

"The final test of the course will be a longer conversation test of about 7-10 minutes per pair. The topic for this final conversation will be drawn randomly from the list of topics we cover in class over the term, so you should review what we cover in class every week. The whole of the last class will be used for the final test. "