

Identifying racism

No yakking

 Suggested time: 40 minutes

Preparation

Some staff members in colleges and schools have the mistaken belief that students using their first language in class restricts their learning of English as a second language.

Research into second language acquisition has revealed that the learning of English is promoted when students use English to accomplish learning tasks. However, language acquisition research has also revealed that when students use their first language to clarify instructions, vocabulary and concepts, confusion is reduced and they are more able to participate fully in the learning activities of the classroom.

No yakking highlights many of the myths and realities of students using their first language to support their learning in class and their learning of English.

If necessary, view or review the *No yakking* video and read the notes.

Copy the handout for each participant.

Whole group activity

Introduction (2 minutes)

- Use the Purpose and Overview from *No yakking* reproduced on page 3 to explain the purpose of this session.

Small group activity

Before the video (10 minutes)

Divide participants into small groups. Ask them to identify the languages in which they can:

- say 'good morning'
- help someone else to complete an income tax return.

Ask representatives of each group to read out their group's answers to (i) and (ii).

Lead a brief discussion on why being able to help someone to complete an income tax form is more difficult than saying 'good morning'?

Invite a representative of each group to outline the most discussed example in their group.

Preparation for watching the video (6 minutes)

- Tell participants that *No yakking* shows some students and their teacher confronting difficulties about the use of Chinese before and during class.
- Distribute copies of the discussion questions for *No yakking* and ask participants to collect information during the video to answer the questions.

View the segment, *No yakking* (31/2 minutes)

After viewing the video (20 minutes)

- Divide participants into small groups and ask them to discuss the three questions.
- Invite each group to provide a response to the second discussion question.

Conclusion (2 minutes)

Monitoring student talk in class to ensure that it is focused on learning tasks is an essential classroom management strategy used by teachers. This monitoring is as necessary when students are speaking English as it is when they are speaking another language.

No yakking highlights the benefits to students and teachers of allowing students to use their first language to clarify instructions, vocabulary and concepts in the classroom.

From *No yakking*

Purpose

The purpose of *No yakking* is to promote discussion about::

- students using their first language (L1) in class to support their learning and their learning of English
- common misconceptions about the use of L1 by students
- accommodating use of L1 in teaching and learning tasks.

Overview

In *No yakking* two students, Mei Ling and Martha face difficulties when they use their first language (L1), Chinese, before and during class.

Their teacher, Mr Fraser, initially objects to the students speaking Chinese in class. He changes his mind after the students demonstrate the effectiveness of L1 support in lessons and a colleague assists by pointing out the potential advantages of L1 support and giving Mr Fraser some ideas about how use of L1 can enhance the effectiveness of his teaching and learning program.

Before the video

Many staff members in schools and Colleges of TAFE have travelled overseas and developed some basic communication skills in languages other than English.

Common languages include:

French: Bonjour

Italian: Buongiorno

Indonesian: Selamat pagi

Greek: Kaliméra

German: Guten Morgen

To learn basic communication skills, most people listen, practice, check with a more proficient speaker and practice some more before trying out their new skills with native speakers.

Basic communication skills, however, are not enough to equip individuals to meet the higher demands of doing more complex things such as filling in an income tax form. To complete a complex task as a new learner we need more support, often first language support through an interpreter, at least the first time we attempt the task.

Handout discussion

Question 1: In the video, what are some of the reasons that Mei-Ling and Martha speak in Chinese?

- friendship
- familiarity with the language
- to 'relax' from the concentration of using a second language
- easier to say what they mean, talk about things with subtlety rather than within a restricted range of vocabulary currently known in English
- to speed up learning both of the language and the content of lessons.

Question 2: Initially Mr Fraser, the teacher, is concerned about Mei-Ling and Martha speaking Chinese in class. What common assumptions, misunderstandings or prejudices about the use of languages other than English in class could be highlighted by Mr Fraser's reactions?

Assumptions, misunderstandings or prejudices	Possible response for presenters if this point is discussed
Learning English is interrupted by use of a first language (L1). Learners of English as a second language should only use English in class to speed up their learning of English.'	Drawing on understandings already developed in L1 can speed up learning of a second language (L2), in this case English, because students have already learned the concept or action. When students have developed some proficiency in English it is important that they speak English to gain confidence in using it. However, demanding that students only use English before they have acquired sufficient fluency can inhibit their development. In a similar way, over-reliance on using the first language after they have acquired the skills to use English can also inhibit their development.
When they speak L1 I can't tell if they are talking about the lesson or other things.'	Monitoring student talk is an important classroom management strategy. It is relatively easy to determine whether students are on task even if we are not close enough to hear what they are saying in English or any other language.
Teachers are the only ones who should assist the learning of students.	Small group work and peer tutoring strategies have demonstrated that students can learn very effectively from other students. When a student cannot speak English, another student who speaks their language can facilitate their learning and assist classroom communication.
Frustration at the number of students who speak limited English in classes.	When students have limited skills in speaking English, formerly successful teaching and learning strategies may not achieve the same results. Staff should seek training and development support to assist them to cater for the language learning needs of students.
Discrimination or racism towards students who have limited skills in speaking English.	Racism and discrimination from staff against students is unlawful. The policies of the Department of Education and Training prohibit racism and discrimination in all forms.

Question 3: During the video, Mr Fraser appears to have a change of heart about students using their first language in class. What do you think prompted his change of heart?

- observing that student 'yakking' was focused on the learning task not on 'cheating'
- realising that the 'yakking' was not cheating but clarifying concepts and vocabulary used by the teacher in the lesson
- the student successfully completing her work after getting language support from her friend
- support from another teacher (ESL teacher) who is more experienced in catering for the language and learning of students
- gaining some practical ideas about how to help students in class
- discussing the issue and some possible solutions with the students.

No yakking discussion questions

Question 1: In the video, what are some of the reasons that Mei-Ling and Martha speak in Chinese?

Question 2: Initially Mr Fraser, the teacher, is concerned about Mei-Ling and Martha speaking Chinese in class. What common assumptions, misunderstandings or prejudices about the use of languages other than English in class are highlighted by Mr Fraser's reactions?

Question 3: During the video, Mr Fraser appears to have a change of heart about students using their first language in class. What do you think prompted his change of heart?