



Five College Center for World Languages

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4B: Different Learning Paces

4B: Students Learning at Different Paces

Common Question: I have more than one student in the session. Even though all have prepared the same lesson, some students learn the material more quickly than others. What should I do to accommodate all the students?

Even if one person is advancing further along than another, it is important that you stick to the activities you have prepared and allow everyone equal time to participate and speak during the session. Think of ways to adapt activities that will let all members in the group participate regardless of how quick they are picking up the language. Here is an example below in which the Conversation Partner planned an activity to practice demonstrative pronouns (this, that, these, those):

Conversation Partner: What is that on the table?

Student 1: That is a book.

Conversation Partner: What color is this book and what color is that one?

Student 1: That book is red and this book is blue.

Conversation Partner: Which book is bigger?

Student 1 (pointing): That one.

Conversation Partner (pointing): What is that?

Student 2: a book.

Conversation Partner: This? (picking up a notebook)

Student 2: No, that is a book. (pointing to book).

Conversation Partner: Ok. What is this? (holding notebook).

Student 2: That is a notebook.

In the above examples the Conversation Partner is using the same activity but frames the question differently depending on what the student is able to communicate. In the first example, the conversation partner has asked a question that is a little more complicated (s/he included the use of a preposition and the location of the object). The question is lengthier. The student answers with the correct demonstrative pronoun and the conversation partner asks an even lengthier and challenging question that s/he knows the student is capable of answering.

In the second example the conversation partner asks a simpler question. The student does not respond with a demonstrative pronoun, thereby showing his/her difficulty with the concept. As a result, the conversation partner asks the student a question that requires an answer with a demonstrative pronoun. The goal here is to simply have the student use the structure whereas in the first example the conversation partner is giving the student the opportunity to use description and more complicated sentences.

Although the two students are learning at a different pace, they are still practicing speaking in the same conversation session and therefore practicing the same concept: demonstrative pronouns. The activity was not really changed, but rather the conversation partner simply adapted it through his/her question and knowing what the student is capable of doing.

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