

ESL Developmental Continuum P–10

Teaching strategy – Barrier games

Focuses on

Speaking Listening Reading Writing

Most useful for students at stages

A1 A2 BL B1 B2 B3 SL S1 S2 S3 S4

Purpose of this activity

In a language classroom it is very important that students have the opportunity to both ask questions as well as answer questions.

How this helps ESL students in particular

When all activities are teacher centred, students often only have the chance to answer questions. By setting up communication activities like barrier games, students have the opportunity to speak and listen in pairs, rather than risk making mistakes in front of the whole class.

Procedure

In a barrier game, students work in pairs to complete an information gap activity. Usually, one student has a complete map, drawing, table or graph, and the other has just the outline with some information filled in. The students have a piece of cardboard or a folder between them, so that the student with the incomplete map cannot see the completed example. The student with the complete map tells the other student where to place things on his or her map. The student with the incomplete map can ask questions to help place things as precisely as possible.

Acknowledgments/reference

Good examples of drawings suitable for this activity can be found in:

Walcyn-Jones Peter (1981). *Pair work: Activities for effective communication*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.