

Language lessons: how we're different starts with one idea: classroom conditioning from traditional schooling often works against building real communicative ability. If the goal is to create confident speakers who can use a language outside the classroom, five common school rules need to be flipped. Below are practical explanations and classroom-ready alternatives to help learners actually speak, connect and enjoy the process.

1. Rule to break: Don't talk during class

Traditional classes value silence because it reduces chaos. For language learning, silence kills progress. People learn to speak by speaking. The majority of practice should happen in class through **communicative speaking activities** that replicate real interactions.

Try pair work, role plays, quick information gaps and structured conversations that force learners to use vocabulary and grammar in context. The aim is intelligibility and fluency, not perfectly error-free sentences on the first try.

2. Rule to break: Don't talk to strangers

We teach learners to communicate with the world, so we should prepare them to talk to people they do not know. That does not mean encouraging risky behaviour. It means building judgment, conversation strategies and the confidence to start and maintain encounters with unfamiliar speakers.

Practice simple opening lines, asking for clarification, and polite ways to end a conversation. Give learners scripts and then encourage improvisation so they can transfer those skills to real-life encounters.

3. Rule to break: Don't make mistakes

Fear of error is one of the biggest obstacles. Many intelligent, hardworking students avoid risk because they are uncomfortable making mistakes. Yet mistakes are the engine of learning. You will never reach proficiency without generating errors first.

“You will never ever ever be perfect at it and you will never ever ever be

able to get to that quote unquote perfection without making a lot of errors.”

Create a classroom culture where errors are expected and discussed constructively. Use mistakes as data: identify recurring patterns, practice targeted drills, then return to communicative tasks to apply corrected forms.

4. Rule to break: Stop playing

Games are often dismissed as fluff, but they are powerful learning tools. Playful activities sustain attention, lower affective filters and create repeatable, low-stakes opportunities to use language structures and vocabulary.

- Use short, timed games that require quick production.
- Design challenges that recycle target grammar items in new contexts.
- Keep activities varied so learners stay engaged and focused.

5. Rule to break: Take yourself very seriously

Dedication matters, but so does balance. Studying from textbooks page by page is necessary, yet insufficient. Real learning happens when study mixes with meaningful, enjoyable input: films, music, reading for pleasure and conversation with new people.

Encourage learners to integrate language into life. Small daily habits—listening to a song, reading a short article, chatting with a language partner—compound into real communicative ability.

Practical checklist for classroom change

1. Prioritise speaking time every lesson.
2. Introduce controlled risks: structured speaking with supportive feedback.
3. Make error analysis routine and friendly.
4. Include at least one playful activity per session.
5. Assign real-world, enjoyable tasks outside the book.

Language lessons: how we're different is about shifting priorities: more speaking, purposeful risk, playful practice and meaningful input. Break the old conditioning

and replace it with a classroom that produces confident communicators ready to interact with the world.

Language lessons: how we're different can transform both teaching and learning when these five principles guide lesson design. Try one change this week and notice how quickly engagement and competence grow.

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