Seven Points for Successful Language Teaching

By Sarah Supahan, 2008, Adapted from Leanne Hinton's "Ten Points for Successful Language Learning"
News From Native California, Winter 1994/95

1. **Leave English behind**
   Learn important vocabulary for running the class such as "Let's begin" or "Good job" or "Everyone listen" etc. If you lapse into English, just get right back into the language. Think of English as a habit you're trying to break.

2. **Make yourself understood with non-verbal communication**
   a. Use actions. Act out what you are talking about
   b. Use gestures and facial expressions
   c. Use pictures and objects

3. **Teach in full sentences.**
   The real lesson in vocabulary comes by embedding the words in sentences and conversations that are in the language. Example: If you are trying to teach the word for door, don't just say "door" and don't use English to translate the word or explain it. Instead, speaking always in your language, say things like, "This is a door." Say, "Now I am going to open the door. Now I'll close the door."

4. **Use repetition.**
   It is important for a student to hear a word or sentence many times before s/he learns to recognize it and then to say it. Through varied sentences, including commands, along with the physical activities elicited by the commands, the student hears a given word many times in different contexts and will be able to pick out that word in the future when s/he hears it, and will later be able to use it in his/her own speech.

5. **Remember that comprehension precedes production.**
   Your students will need to hear the language you are teaching them multiple times. Saying the words and sentences will naturally follow when they are ready.

6. **Focus as much as you can on listening and speaking, rather than writing and grammatical analysis.**
   Writing and grammar have important uses, but you don't need to focus on these to learn to speak a language. People almost never learn how to speak a language fluently when writing and grammar are the focus. Students can learn the grammar of the language unconsciously, simply by hearing it and using it. You don't have to know what a relative clause is to use one.

7. **Provide students a way to teach what they learn.**
   One way to increase their language use and confidence is to ask them to teach what they have learned to someone else.