

My aims in an LK

Some years ago I was asked what my LK might be like, so I put a few thoughts together. I hope they help you to understand what my aims are.

However, you should also talk with as many people from my present Oberstufe courses as possible – always remembering that if you ask five people you may end up with six answers!

(The views below are personal and do not necessarily reflect the official view of ESS.)

<p>My role: I do not see this as being a teacher because no one can teach anything to someone who does not want to learn.</p>	⇒	I do see my role as helping you in your quest for learning. That means it is up to you to learn and up to me to help you learn more.
<p>Fun: I do not see it as my responsibility to provide <i>fun</i> lessons.</p>	⇒	Any enjoyment will come from working and learning; these are fun activities for intelligent young people.
<p>Being friendly: I am not here to be “friendly”, but to help you learn. My aim is to have a relationship characterised by <i>mutual respect</i>.</p>	⇒	If I am to help you learn, you will need criticism as well as praise. This may involve criticism which is hard to hear. Some people deflect this by saying I am “unfriendly”. (If you don't like the message, shoot the messenger!)
<p>Your role: I do not see this as being a pupil. Pupils rely on a teacher.</p>	⇒	I see your role as being that of a learner. Learners rely on themselves and use teachers as a resource.
<p>Work I want people who see their job as being here to learn; people who look for opportunities to do more work, not less.</p>	⇒	That means the lessons are merely a basis for you to work from; they are not the total amount of work you are expected to do. For example, when we are reading a book I expect you to take the initiative to read other works by the author, to read secondary literature about the author and book. That is your job.
<p>Interest: I want people who are more interested in intellectual discussion than in earning money with an afternoon job.</p>		
<p>Reading: If you do not enjoy reading – widely and a lot – then an English LK is definitely the wrong course for you.</p>		
<p>Work in class: I do not expect you to change your entire personality so that you can be the centre of attention every lesson, dancing on the table. However, nor do I expect you to shelter behind <i>Aber ich bin immer so ruhig</i> so that I cannot see what work you are doing.</p>	⇒	I do expect active participation in all lessons; participation which shows you are thinking and contributing to the group process. This includes work done at home, work in small groups, work in the large group. You should accept responsibility for your own active participation – that is the job you have chosen to do.
<p>Answers: I do not see my role as giving you the “correct” answers; partly because the notion of “correct” answers is very debatable. Nor do I expect you to agree with my answers.</p>	⇒	My role <i>is</i> to question your answers and the assumptions which have led you to those answers. The answers themselves are of little value; rather it is the intellectual process of examining various answers that contributes to your education.
<p>Essays: These are important to show not only that you have read the book, but that you are also a person who knows something of the world and can present that knowledge intelligently. If you can surprise me or make me smile in the process, so much the better.</p>	⇒	As above, I do not want essays I agree with, but essays which show you have a mind and are prepared to do the work to prove it. In short, I am not interested in what you think, but whether you can. See the Writing pages here: www.tellatale.eu/school_index.html
<p>American versus British English: Of the <i>many</i> absurd things I have been told about my lessons, that I am against American English is one of the most absurd.</p>	⇒	Good American English is just as good as good British English. Similarly, bad British English is just as bad as bad American English. I am in favour of <i>all</i> English which is <i>good</i> English.
<p>Students complain about: A regular complaint about my lessons is that they often do not follow a set topic which is finished and we then move on to the next topic.</p>	⇒	This is often true. My expectation is that students will meet a wide range of different topics and should be able to make sense of it all: a bit like a jigsaw puzzle.
<p>I do not use the blackboard very often. So if you are someone who expects all the information you need to know written on the blackboard, you may find my lessons hard to get used to.</p>	⇒	I expect you to listen with a pen in your hand. You are primarily responsible for taking notes on the language and content which you need. (You will find the world after school operates on this principle, too.)
<p>What I can offer you: Two thirds of your marks in tests and <i>Abitur</i> are for the quality of your language.</p>	⇒	If you wish to improve your language, my lessons offer a good opportunity to do so.