

I was very fortunate to be able to complete my student teaching experience abroad. This also meant that I would have to be much more aware of the language of the content, however. The majority of the students that I worked with during my student teaching experience did not speak English as a first language, for some of them it wasn't even their second, but their third or fourth. So as I began looking through the material we would be covering on permutations, combinations, and counting, I realized that the vocabulary and amount of English we'd be working with was going to be a challenge.

As I began covering the material, I tried my best to model for the class how to reason their way through these types of problems, keywords they should look for to identify was a question is really asking, and how reason through the text of a problem. I included explicit examples of things the questions involved as well. I tried to use mostly things that students here would be familiar with, but a deck of cards is such a classic example, and such an easy go-to, that I taught them all what a deck of cards was and what kinds of cards were included in a standard deck.

This was all very conversationally heavy, so about midway through I spoke with one of my more gifted students and asked what I could be doing differently to make it easier for her and her classmates to understand. Because she had a solid understanding of the material she was able to more clearly use specific examples of what I could change or what I should be careful about doing.

For example, in this chapter, most of our problems are word problems. She told me that even just changing the way a question is being asked-- even if ultimately it's asking the same question-- just rearranging the sentence structure will make it a whole new question for them. I realized at this point I may have pushed a little too hard, too fast. I setup my next lesson as a review session, going over all the important concepts from the first few sections of the chapter, and allowing students more time to work with the material.