

Death in Riyadh: A cautionary tale for expat language teachers in the Middle East

Copyright©2015ADAMSIMPSON

Published by Adam Simpson at Smashwords

#### Smashwords Edition License Notes

This ebook is licensed for your personal enjoyment only. This ebook may not be sold. If you want to share it, please ask the person to download it from Smashwords.

Thank you for respecting the hard work of this author and look out for more ebooks in the future.

Cover image 'Riyadh' courtesy of Stephen Downes:

[https://www.flickr.com/photos/stephen\\_downes/16703122095/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/stephen_downes/16703122095/)

Used under the terms of Attribution-NonCommercial 2.0 Generic (CC BY-NC 2.0). License details:

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/2.0/>

‘It is a mistake to expect good work from expatriates for it is not what they do that matters but what they are not doing.’

Cyril Connolly

My intention here is not to condone, nor is it to condemn. Merely consider it a cautionary tale for all those of us who reside in countries with radically different cultures and laws.

## Chapter 1

March is hot in Saudi Arabia. Temperatures might not reach the barmy heights of mid-summer, when thermometers can on occasion tip 50 degrees Celsius, but averages for this month are still around 35°C. Wherever you are in the world, extreme heat and alcohol binges are never a good mix, but they can prove to be deadly in the peculiar world of Middle East English language teaching, as was the case in early March, 2011.

The facts of the case in question are ostensibly straightforward. On 1st March, 2011, an illegal drinking session got under way on an expatriate residential compound in the Saudi capital, Riyadh. Andrew Cannon, 41, from Basingstoke, and Robert Colman, 57 from Newcastle, were among the English teachers living in bachelor accommodation in the same building on the private compound. The pair were both said to have ‘had a tendency to become violent with alcohol’ and fell out at some point during the drinking session. The falling out would in turn lead to an exchange of physical blows. Cannon claims that Colman struck first, using not only his fists but also an ashtray to attack him. Cannon then says that he fought back, hitting his friend on the head with a chair.

At some point after this, the men retired to their beds, inebriated. When Cannon was unable to wake Colman the next morning, he panicked and fled the up-market complex where they both lived near the King Khaled International Airport, taking a plane to Bahrain where he was arrested on 3rd March while attempting to board a flight to Britain.

In the immediate aftermath of Cannon’s capture the British national was handed over to Saudi authorities and was placed in detention in Riyadh. On March 4th a spokeswoman for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office confirmed the death of Colman and provided consular assistance to his family. The South East Northumberland coroner’s office also confirmed that it had been made aware of the death.

With your knowledge - or at least your preconceptions - of Saudi Arabia, what would you expect to happen next? What images spring immediately to mind when you think of Saudi justice? What has ensued probably goes against what many stereotypically assume happens in such situations in the Middle East, highlighting

one of the key issues of expatriate life as an English teacher: to what extent are we to be – or do we assume we should be - treated like the citizens of the nation in which we find ourselves living and working?

Despite what we might assume, Cannon was not immediately dragged out to Chop-Chop square - the less than affectionate nickname given to Deera Square in central Riyadh where executions occur - and publicly beheaded. Rather, a murder investigation was undertaken. Indeed, in no way could Cannon have been formally charged with murder until police had completed their investigations when the post mortem report had been received. A police source in Saudi Arabia at the time is quoted as saying: “The autopsy would reveal the cause of death and also give more clues in helping police determine who the killer was.” The police also questioned friends of Colman in a bid to help establish how he died. While this was undoubtedly a harrowing time for the relatives and friends of the victim, it was also unquestionably a terrifying time for Cannon, the perpetrator of this tragic event. Nevertheless, any notions of a swift and bloody retribution are, in this case at least, way off the mark.

## Chapter 2

How exactly did Cannon find himself acting so recklessly by running from the scene of the incident in the way he did? How would he have reacted had the same chain of events occurred in the United Kingdom, his country of origin? How would you or I react if we discovered the lifeless body of a colleague whom we'd fought with the night before? Hypothetically speaking, if I found myself in such a situation in Saudi Arabia, the chances that I would attempt to do a runner are far greater than if the same situation played out in the UK. So, why? Is there really a case for saying that expatriate English teachers have a different relationship with the law in their adopted country than they ever do at home?

A possible explanation for this is that most of us who go to the bother of obtaining legal employment in another country, with all the official documentation and red tape that it involves, are not usually the type to then indulge in a life of crime. It's possible to be aware that the laws of one country may be dramatically different to what we're used to while said laws remain little more than an abstract thought. Did Cannon realize that people who kill others in Saudi Arabia are punishable by law? Almost certainly. Did the fact that murderers are beheaded for their crimes exist only as an abstract notion in his mind up until the realities of the situation brought it to the forefront and urged him to flee? Possibly. This in no way excuses his actions in attempting to escape punishment, but it does indicate why he decided to run.

To clarify, I don't know Andrew Cannon and have never met him. I do, however, have friends who knew him and worked with him during his time teaching English here in Turkey. They express dismay that he has found himself in this predicament, while recognizing the fact that he must now face the consequences. Not atypically, Cannon followed the ELT rite of passage of working in fairly low paying conditions here before experience and qualifications enabled him to make the move to the Arabian Gulf. I've known many teachers down the years who have followed a similar course of action, financial security being the prime motivator in every case. One such former colleague, Damian, who unfortunately lost a long battle against cancer back in 2011, managed a two-year stint in Saudi Arabia before returning to Turkey, regarding the whole experience as having been utterly dispiriting. Days would consist of 'going through the motions' teaching followed

by golf, frequent illicit alcohol consumption and then sleep. There was, Damian remarked, very little reason to ever leave the residential compound, even less reason to mix with the locals. Scott Zimmermann, another English teacher with experience of working in Saudi Arabia, reiterates, describing such compounds as, 'small islands of Western culture' which 'offer social and recreational activities; however, they can become cultural prisons because their residents have little incentive to socialize with the local community.' For all intent and purpose, working in this environment is like agreeing to be paid to serve time in a minimal security prison complex. This is the world, far removed from the realities of everyday life in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in which Andrew Cannon and Robert Colman found themselves.

## Chapter 3

How would things pan out? The story created something of a furor on ELT discussion boards and in news comments sections when it broke at the end of March last year (last year being 2011 at the time of writing). During his time in Turkey, Cannon had married and converted to Islam. The idea was floated that a degree of lenience might be forthcoming in the light of his religious conversion, a suggestion – again based more on what people stereotypically believe to be true of Saudi Arabia - which was then carried from one online publication to the next without any particular regard for the realities of Saudi law. This particular line of thinking was quickly shot down by many who felt the need to comment. A poster identifying himself as ‘Lazycomputerkids’, commenting on an ELT discussion forum, suggested, ‘I don't believe his being Muslim, if convicted of intentional murder, lessens the likelihood of capital punishment just because the victim was an un-converted westerner. Being a Muslim helps in civil and traffic matters, [although] Muslims being tried for a criminal act in a Muslim court is no game of Monopoly. There's no 'Get Out of Jail Free'.’ Others reaffirmed the fact that his having converted to Islam wouldn't work in his favour. An individual using the name ‘Goose’, commenting on a newspaper article discussing the issue, raised the point, ‘being a Muslim, he shouldn't be drinking anyway.’ Any benefit of being of a particular religion to one aspect of this case would be undone in another.

How did others view the incident? A certain ‘UMPath’ wasn't alone in suggesting that Cannon should suffer the full consequences of his actions: ‘[Beheading] sounds like a fair punishment if he is guilty.’ Others, while in agreement, were able to quantify their feeling without necessarily sharing this baying for blood. ‘Nanuk of the North’, for instance, put forward the notion that ‘if you are a foreigner and live there, then you abide by their rules.’ Abiding by the rules would ultimately mean execution. Although people commenting in the immediate of the incident being announced came from all over the world, reactions ran the gamut from wishing the death sentence on him to wishing to get him out of Saudi Arabia and letting him deal with being punished in his home country. While there was consensus that he must deal with the consequences of killing another human being - whether accidentally or on purpose - quite how he should go about dealing with it was open to conjecture. On first hearing about this case, my first thoughts were that this was a tragic case of a barroom altercation that had spiraled horribly out of

control. A 'Californiadesi' summed up pretty much my line of thinking: 'The fact that it took him several hours to realize what had happened to Coleman [sic] goes to show that he was drunk and that he did not know he had inflicted fatal blow to him. It appears to be a case of involuntary manslaughter and the penalty should not be beheading by any means.' 'Californiadesi' would, however, point to the one aspect of the case which was, on the face of it, particularly damning, an aspect reiterated by a 'Robertspet8': 'I do not agree with the death penalty, but I have very little sympathy for Andrew Cannon...he fled rather than stay to prove his innocence or face the consequences of his actions.' The running does seem to indicate the idea that Cannon was desperate to escape. Nevertheless, I maintain that, given the situation, Cannon was running not from the crime but rather from the sudden realization that he was faced with a 9:00m date with the executioner at Chop-Chop square. In other words, his actions only fully hit home when he suddenly became aware what the punishment in his adopted home would be.



## Chapter 4

For those of us who have grown up in Western Europe (the US continuation of capital punishment means I'm unable to say 'the English speaking world'), the idea of a public execution is not one that we can deal with comfortably. Only one European nation – Belarus - maintains the death penalty in both law and practice, still carrying out occasional executions. While this one-nation exception means that 2009 is the only year in recorded history when Europe was completely free of executions, the prevailing sentiment is firmly against such actions. Cannon is only a few years older than I am, meaning that we both grew up in an environment in which execution for crime was and remains almost unthinkable. Knowing that it happens is different to having to face the reality of the act. Ostensibly, the death penalty is mandatory for murder in Saudi Arabia, although history is thus far on Cannon's side: no Westerner has ever been executed. Nevertheless, execution remains a part of everyday life and is the most common outcome in a case such as Cannon's.

Saudi Arabia performs public executions and is essentially one of the last places on the planet where capital punishment is a routine public spectacle. Current laws allow the death penalty for numerous violent and nonviolent offenses, including murder; apostasy (the renouncing in word or deed of the Muslim religion); drug trafficking; rape and armed robbery drug offenses; witchcraft (a woman was indeed beheaded as recently 2007 for the crime of sorcery, the case built around the testimony of a man claiming the woman had caused him to become impotent); and sexual misconduct. The method most often used is beheading by a sword.

For a Westerner, witnessing the act can be a surreal experience. Adam St. Patrick, writing in 2009, described the immediate aftermath of a beheading thus: 'The executioner wipes his blade with a white cloth that he then tosses away. It flutters in small arcs as two men in blue jumpsuits descend from the yellow van, hoist the body, and lay it on a stretcher. One grabs the head by the cloth tube that covers it. A loudspeaker lists the decapitated man's crimes: rape, drug trafficking, and possession. The executioner sheathes his sword. A thickly bearded soldier claps his hands and wipes them against each other in the air — that's it. By 9:05 [executions take place at 9:00], the only other person in Chop-Chop Square is a janitor, hosing down the granite.' How else to describe it other than in cold unemotional terms?

How does one go about processing such an event? For the local resident, however, such killings are commonplace, even de rigeur.

Could this prove to be the ultimate fate of Andrew Cannon?

Although reliable information about execution is in short supply, Saudi Arabia is believed to have executed in the region of 1,750 convicted criminals between the years 1985 and 2008. In Riyadh, the 9 a.m. timeslot at Deera Square is reserved for executions. They can occur on any given day of the week, although there is no advance notice. For those who enjoy this kind of thing, you just have to turn up on the day and hope that someone has committed a sufficiently offensive crime. If Cannon were found guilty of murder, he could by law be added to the execution statistic. On the positive side – for those who are less enamored of a good beheading, at least – there is another way out. As a certain ‘007’ notes on an ELT discussion forum, ‘one exit from this is by paying ‘blood money’ to the family of the victim. This deal is allowable under Saudi Law.’ Could Cannon really pay his way out of trouble?

## Chapter 5

This case definitely brings to light a great many feelings that are rooted in stereotypical images, not only of life in Saudi Arabia, but also of expatriate neo-colonialist behavior abroad. Judging the laws of one nation based on the practices you are used to will lead you to judge other cultures very poorly, as legal practices cannot always, if ever, be separated from other cultural values. Earlier on in this book I tried to challenge the idea that Saudi Arabia is this maniacal, hot-headed state where all crimes are immediately punished in the vilest way, and with excessive force. While certain ‘Western’ methods - a police investigation and the questioning of eye witnesses – are also common practice in Saudi Arabia, it would be wrong to identify Saudi law as being anything other than radically different to what we see in the West.

Firstly, there are no trials by jury in Saudi Arabia and courts rarely observe formalities. The country's first criminal procedure code was only introduced in 2001 and even this is considered to be woefully ineffective. In fact, a 2008 report from Human Rights Watch noted how Saudi judges were either ignorant of the criminal procedure code or were aware of it but routinely chose to completely ignore the code.

Secondly, Saudi Arabian criminal law is governed – as is the case in many other Islamic states - by Sharia law and is comprised of three distinct categories: ‘Hudud’ (fixed Quranic punishments for certain specified crimes), ‘Qisas’ (eye-for-an-eye retaliatory punishments), and ‘Tazir’, a multi-purpose category dealing with crimes not covered by the first two. Hudud crimes are considered the most serious in Saudi society and include theft, robbery, blasphemy, apostasy, adultery, sodomy and fornication. Amazingly, Andrew Cannon’s crime is not considered one of the worst offences in Saudi society. In spite of having taken another life, Qisas crimes, which include murder and any other crime that involves some kind of bodily harm, are actually considered lesser offences.

Nevertheless, Saudi courts enforce countless, stern physical punishments. The death penalty can be imposed for a wide range of offences including murder, rape, armed robbery, repeated drug use, apostasy, adultery, witchcraft and sorcery have all been traditionally administered via beheading by sword, stoning or firing squad.

All of the 345 reported executions between 2007 and 2010 were carried out by public beheading. Perhaps stoning is too tiring in these hectic modern times and it's just easier to get it over and done within one swoosh of an axe. Perhaps this is being recognized as the most humane method of execution. Things do appear to be improving, slowly. Not a single execution has resulted from a conviction for sorcery or witchcraft since 2007.

## Chapter 6

As I mentioned, Cannon's crime is not top of the Saudi list of worst offences. Nevertheless, the taking of another human life can result in a retaliatory punishment which, given that the victim died, would suggest that Cannon himself die as a result of his actions. Qisas, retaliatory punishments, are a common practice in Saudi justice system. Indeed, what most of us assume we know about Saudi law comes from the punishments metered out to Qisas crimes. The old favourite, the removal of a hand for stealing, is literally the cutting off of the hand that was used to take what didn't belong to the thief. These eye-for-an-eye retaliatory punishments can be more than mere metaphor: an eye can literally be surgically removed at the insistence of a victim who lost his own eye. This happened as recently as 2000. This idea of the family of the bereaved having a say in the ultimate punishment is key in this and other such cases. The family of somebody the unlawfully killed individual can choose between either demanding the death penalty or granting clemency in return for a payment of diyya, or blood money, by the perpetrator. This practice is not restricted to Saudi Arabia: it exists in some form or other in many nations; Turkey, where I live, has its version of this. Perhaps another sign of 21st Century progressiveness is the realization that this outcome is beneficial to both parties. The bereaved are getting wise: there has been a growing trend of exorbitant blood-money demands. A sum reportedly in the region of \$11 million was demanded in one recent incident. This is getting so bad, in fact, that Saudi officials and religious leaders are acknowledging that this is becoming a trend, suggesting that the practice of diyya has become corrupted. Nevertheless, this is a potential way out of a situation that could cause political uproar. What's more, there is a precedent for such action.

In 1997, two British nurses, Deborah Parry and Lucille McLauchlan, were accused and then found guilty of murdering Australian nurse Yvonne Gilford at a Saudi Arabian hospital. While the Cannon case is not a carbon copy of this one – Cannon admitted to there having been a physical altercation, Parry and McLauchlan continually denied their innocence – there is at least a case history featuring non-Saudi citizens. A blood money solution was eventually arranged, with the money paid by British businesses that were trading with Saudi Arabia. The companies in question had no direct connection with the nurses, hinting that such a compromise had been made to avoid wider political repercussions. The amounts involved are

serious. While they didn't come close to the recently reported \$11 million demand, the compensation package did include payment of almost \$750,000 to build a day surgery center at Women's and Children's Hospital in Adelaide, which was to be named after Yvonne Gilford; a cash payment in excess of \$6,000 to Gilford's mother, and a sum of more than \$35,000 to Frank Gilford. The rest of the money would go to paying legal costs.

## Chapter 7

What happens to an expatriate who dies abroad? In this case, in which the body was the focal element of the evidence in a criminal case, an excruciating amount of time can pass before the victim's body is returned to loved ones. Robert Colman's family faced a wait of around four months to get his body home. Not until the middle of July did the victim's body arrive home and he was able to be finally laid to rest. In a death notice, his family simply and succinctly said: 'Rob will be sadly missed by all family and friends.'

What for Andrew Cannon? Strangely, Saudi law may actually work heavily in his favour. The way that the Koran is construed in Saudi Arabia discourages all forms of evidence other than confessions and eyewitness accounts in capital trials such as this. This is based on the theory that doing otherwise would leave too much discretion to the judge. Presumably, this would rule out any forensic evidence from the scene which could indicate, for instance, the force of the blow from the chair that hit Colman. It would also mean that the only witnesses would be the colleagues whom he had lived and worked with. The question must be asked as to how willing they would be to hurry a former colleague along a path to a beheading. 'Lazycomputerkids' drags us further away from the lazy notion of Saudi rough justice: 'Muslim courts do consider intent. I'll be surprised if some version of manslaughter isn't the verdict... which means a lifetime in a Saudi prison, unless extradition proves useful for some unrelated bargain. Beheading a westerner would be bad press for Saudi Arabia, and the crime having taken place on a compound might allow some reasoning or rationalization for Saudis to 'wash their hands' of it.' Could the Saudi justice system really behead a Westerner?

Washing their hands of it is something that seems to be the prevalent modus operandi when it comes to foreigner-on-foreigner crimes, if the Parry and McLauchlan case is anything to go by. In rare cases, often politically sensitive ones, King Abdullah is in a position to grant a pardon. While the outcome of this earlier case was couched delicately in terms of a royal pardon having been decreed, the fact was that allegations were consistently made that confessions had been roughed out of the two women. A situation in which the Saudi justice system could come out on top, while at the same time all parties essentially sticking to the confines of Sharia law, saw all parties emerge happy. If such a compromise could

be reached in this case, only one question would remain. As '007' perceptively noted on an ELT discussion forum: 'the question is: Who is prepared to pay the "blood money" for Andrew?'

Since July of last year (last year being 2011 at the time of writing) the case has run cold. I can find no further mention of Andrew Cannon, which I perceive to be a good thing. If he had been executed, surely it would have turned up as a major news item. None of my friends who are acquainted with Cannon can say with any certainty what has happened to him. The likelihood is that he is spending his days incarcerated in Saudi Arabia until a suitable financial compensation package can be provided.



## Epilogue

I must confess that part of my motivation in writing this book was the hope that someone would share more information on what has unfolded since last summer. If you know anything, I'd be grateful if you would share it in the comments section below my original blog article (the link is given below). While a craving to discover the outcome provided some of the impetus to write about this case, I also hoped that the process of writing would enable me to clarify how I feel about this incident. On the one hand, I – like many of you reading this – still consider myself a guest in a foreign land despite having spent more than a decade in Turkey. I regard myself as being a courteous guest who abides by the law of the land without having fully embraced the Turkish way of life. On the other hand, I still find it hard sometimes to reconcile the fact that I am no longer governed by the laws or constitutional rights that I grew up with. Given my tendency to be a law abiding citizen, I cannot fully comprehend what the result of me committing a crime would be, even though I have no problem living according to the laws of this land. Were I to find myself in a situation in which I had taken another's life, I would face up to the consequences. Would I nevertheless find it difficult to deal with a form of justice radically different from that which I embraced in my home country? I hope I will never have to answer that question.

###

This story originally appeared on my blog:

<http://www.teachthemenglish.com/2012/01/the-tragic-case-of-the-riyadh-bar-brawl/>

Numerous comments on the case have been made there, some by teachers living in the Middle East, others by people who know more about the case than I do. Please feel free to join in the discussion.

### **References and further reading**

[Daily Mail: British teacher faces beheading for friend's death in Saudi Arabia](#)

[Blyth Evening Chronicle: Blyth man found murdered in Saudi Arabia](#)

[The Journal: Body of Blyth teacher killed in Saudi Arabia still not back in UK](#)

[ELT World Discussion: British Teacher Faces Murder Charges](#)

[Basingstoke Gazette: Teacher from Basingstoke accused of murder](#)

[Walrus Magazine: Inside Saudi Arabia's brutal justice system](#)

[The Free Library: Teacher can finally be laid to rest](#)

[The Independent: Saudis try British nurses for murder](#)

[Wikipedia: Use of Capital Punishment by Country](#)

## **About the author**

Adam has been fortunate enough to spend the last fifteen years of his journey as a lifelong learner working with others in what some call the 'language classroom'. He is currently privileged to have the opportunity to help young adults meet their educational goals at Sabanci University in Istanbul. His professional interests include flexibility within the curriculum and the considered use of technology in the classroom. He occasionally finds time to blog about his life.

OFFICIAL WEBSITE: [myweb.sabanciuniv.edu/adams](http://myweb.sabanciuniv.edu/adams)

BLOG: [www.teachthemenglish.com](http://www.teachthemenglish.com)

FACEBOOK: [www.facebook.com/theadamsimpson](http://www.facebook.com/theadamsimpson)

TWITTER: [www.twitter.com/yearinthelifeof](http://www.twitter.com/yearinthelifeof)

Read on for sample chapters from some of my other free e-books...

## [Using Games in the Language Classroom](#)

### **Ten good reasons why we should use games in the language classroom**

Those of you who visit [my blog](#) regularly will know that I'm quite a fan of games and use them a lot in my classes. While I would never suggest turning all of your classes into one long 'gamesfest', I do always argue that a good game can be not only justified, but should be regarded as an important part of your teaching repertoire.

It therefore seems fitting to start this book with a chapter listing all the reasons why you should use games. In case you're still in doubt, here are ten of the best reasons to use games in your language classroom:

#### **1. Games create a context for meaningful communication**

Certain games do this more obviously than others, but all games do this to a certain extent. Even when the game revolves around discrete language items, such as we would see in a spelling game, meaningful communication occurs because learners need to process how to play the game, as well communicating about the game before, during, and after.

#### **2. This meaningful communication serves as a basis for comprehensible input**

The comprehensible input is, basically, what learners understand as they listen and read; it is interaction to enhance comprehensibility, such as asking for repetition or giving examples. It also leads to and comprehensible output, as learners are speaking and/or writing so that their peers can understand.

#### **3. Games add interest to what learners find boring**

Learning a language involves long-term effort and, as we all know from experience, maintaining interest can mean sustaining effort. This is difficult even for the most committed learner. Shaping a learning task in the form of a game often piques the interest of learners who see it as something different to what they normally do in class.

#### **4. Games can be used with all the language skills**

Games can be tailored so that there is a focus on listening, speaking, reading, or writing. Moreover, you will often find that a combination of skills is involved in the same game. They are therefore a great tool for appealing to different types of learners at the same time.

#### **5. Games offer a fun experience**

When we play games, we get excited; it's as simple as that. The emotions aroused when learners play games add variety to what is often a sterile, serious process of language learning. Sometimes the need to lighten the mood is justification enough to use a game.

## **6. Games encourage participation from all learners**

The game format, due to the variety and intensity that it may offer, can do wonders in lowering anxiety and encouraging quieter learners to participate, especially when games are played in small groups (see point nine).

## **7. Games are learner-centered activities**

Games are truly learner-centered in that learners are not only highly active when playing games, but also in that we can organize the working of games so that our learners adopt the role of leaders, with teachers as mere facilitators.

## **8. Games work outside of class**

We see game formats used everywhere. Therefore, it should be no surprise that many games can also be played outside of class. Therefore, they present a means for learners to use the language outside of class time.

## **9. Games promote cooperative learning**

Most game formats work well with small groups, thereby creating a setting for learners to develop their skills in working with others. Other benefits of group games include:

- The need for cooperation encourages the building of team spirit and can have a positive knock-on effect in classroom dynamics.
- Many games involve a degree of competition, although this is not always the case. Furthermore, this can be a healthy thing, as long as the stakes aren't too high.
- Many game formats encourage everyone to take a turn, rather than letting some learners do all the talking. Games therefore encourage egalitarian participation.

## **10. Games fit into multiple intelligence theory**

Game activities relate really well to a variety of intelligences. Here are a few examples: Game activities which contain a hands-on element, such as cards, spinners, or pieces engage with bodily / kinesthetic intelligence; group games always require discussion and therefore involve interpersonal intelligence; game tasks with visual input engage with visual/spatial intelligence.

Even though I've just laid out many good reasons for using games in your classes, we still need to be careful about when and how we use games. Guess what's coming up in the next chapter?

## [Investigating the Emotional and Physical Aspects of the Language Classroom](#)

### **Investigating the emotional side of the classroom: introducing classroom management**

In this chapter I'll briefly introduce and summarize some of the things I'll be discussing throughout the first half of the book. We'll start off with some of the key issues pertaining to the emotional management of your classes.

#### 1. The notion of teacher presence

When we are managing our classrooms, the kind and amount of presence we as teachers uphold are important in establishing - and understanding - the dynamics of the learning environment. So, what's best?

- Domineering teachers can ruin a learner's sense of autonomy, reinforcing the notion that they are not as important a part of the class as the teacher.

- On the other hand, being too free with students can result in a state of anarchy in which no learning can occur.

As teachers we must achieve some kind of equilibrium; we need a noticeable physical presence in the classroom, while still focusing on getting learners to self-impose positive norms. What we are aiming for is learners developing appropriate behavior through self-discipline, rather than the danger of punishment.

#### 2. The notion of assertive discipline

How we might best keep control in our learning environments is the central theme that many theories of classroom management attempt to address. As a teacher you might often feel the need to maintain strict discipline in your learning environment by threatening students with some form of punishment or other assertive techniques.

Such thinking is based heavily on the behaviorist notion that learning is a process of negative or positive reinforcement. While such an approach may be effective in certain situation (I will be looking at the good and the bad of behaviorism soon), a number of other techniques have shown to be more helpful in the long term.

#### 3. The notion of learner self control

Not all theories look at the notion of discipline, however. In the 'other camp' are those theories that focus on learner control; these suggest that it's better for learners to discover internal control, to learn how to take control of their behavior and take responsibility for the choices they make.

Is there a downside to this? Nurturing and facilitating self control takes considerably more time than adopting threatening behaviorist stance; nevertheless, it is unquestionably more valuable to learners in the long run.

#### 4. The notion of teacher organization

The more organized we are as teachers, the more effective we can be in our learning environment. As a general rule of thumb, all learners are likely to respond positively to a structured environment; this is especially the case for adult learners.

Put simply, learners are more receptive when the guidance given is more focused; they behave better because they have respect for teachers, rather than because they fear negative consequences.

#### Summing up and looking forward

A range of theories hint at the conditions in which learning best occurs; generally, this means structured environments, through demonstration, observation, and through classroom activities that focus on doing, rather than merely memorizing rules.

We will be exploring these, plus the points I've introduced today, in upcoming chapters. Let's get things underway in chapter two, where I'll be giving an overview of the theories of Behaviorism, Choice, Student-Directed Learning and Assertive Discipline.