

# The benefits of having a little quiet time

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By Staci-Anne Nogami, Japan

## Introduction

Class time and the interaction with other students is crucial to learning and developing in any second language. But more importantly, it is important to have the time to reflect and mentally digest information you are learning, your own personal thoughts, and feelings on any given topic, as well as being able to emotionally connect with material. For these reasons, I give my ESL students ample time to simply sit and collect their thoughts because I believe that having quiet moments in class is not only necessary but can be therapeutic for students and the teacher. This paper aims to illustrate the benefits of quiet time for ESL students and how teachers can implement this into their class.

## The course

Since I am an advocate for self-care and mental wellness, I designed a 15-week course for first year university students called *Action English* which aims at helping students understand the many facets of well-being, how it directly affects the self, and how it can enable us to help others in the community. Although topics such as stress, mental wellness, and emergency preparedness are covered in class, students are to present in small groups in the form of skits on sub-related topics that they are genuinely interested in and act out a scenario and possible solutions.

During this 15-week course, I am lecturing for 7 weeks, students are preparing for 4 weeks, and presenting their skits for 4 weeks out of the semester. I use 15-30 minutes out of each class for quiet time and self-reflection because it is in those quiet moments the best ideas may be born. During my years of experience teaching this class, it has always been a time of the most productivity for the students, and the fact that they are learning in a second language that quiet time helps them to filter the information.



## A little experiment

A few years ago, while teaching this course, I decided to conduct a little experiment with two of my classes. I gave *class A* more quiet time and gave no quiet time to *class B*. I assigned both classes' reflections each week to gauge their progress on group work and their skit presentations. As the semester progressed, I compared both *class A* and *class B* reflections and noted their feelings and thoughts. Some students from *class A* reported:

*"...feeling the class is a happy pace with my time;"*

*"I can understand more easy with quiet;"*

*"This class is fun to do my own time;"*

*"This class is relax very good."*

Whereas in *class B*, some students reported:

*"The class time is too short;"*

*"I cant get everything in the class time;"*

*"The class is good topic but my head needs time;"*

*"I feel the stress."*

## Conclusion for the students

After reading the students' reflections, and comparing and contrasting their feelings about the course, I concluded that quiet time in class helps the students to reassess the information they are receiving; it gives them time to understand, and it births new ideas, theories, and thoughts and feelings. Apart from the obvious, students reported feeling less stressed during *class A* because they had more quiet time; however, *class B* tended to have slightly more stress.

## The teacher during quiet time

As a teacher, I find myself sometimes scrambling to get everything done in a very short amount time. I am sure that many teachers feel this way and can relate with a story or two of their own. I noted my own feelings during these two classes and journaled in detail what I felt before, during, and after the classes. Some of my personal thoughts during *class A* were:



**Before:**

“Today I have class A, I feel energized despite it being mid-week! I am looking forward to seeing the students’ progress on their skits; they have been working hard on them. I feel like I’ve gotten so much done, and I actually have some free time to think about the final. The fact that I can do that at this point in the semester is amazing to me because I usually don’t have too much time.”

**During:**

“This class is pretty chill, the students are on task, and I can hear myself think. The students have no questions, even though I have asked and offered support to them; they seem to be processing more during the quiet time”.

**After:**

“That was a great class. I feel energized!”

**Class B:**

**Before:**

“Why do I feel like I have been running? I feel mentally exhausted going into the class.”

**During:**

“This class felt busy; there were a lot of questions. Despite their level, they needed a lot of direction. Such a different feeling from *class A*. I feel tired.”

**After:**

“That was mentally exhausting for me. My brain feels busy, so I can’t imagine how my students might feel.”

## Conclusion for myself

*Class A* felt very different for me in the sense that I felt more relaxed before the class started and that mood continued until I finished the class. However, there was more I had to do with *class B*. It felt busier. I was more mentally engaged during the class, and there was not a lot of time for me to stop and think. It was very clear to me that I needed that quiet time as well to reassess or restructure the class.

## Overall conclusion

The benefit of having quiet time in class is not an indication of a teacher who plans poorly or does not care about their students or a teacher who is lazy. Quiet time in class is deeply mentally, physically, and emotionally therapeutic for both the teacher and the student. Based on the reported reflections from both the teacher and the student in *class A* and *B*, quiet time is necessary to collect thoughts, feelings, and to understand concepts in class, but to also birth new ideas. Every class regardless of the age of the students, and levels of English, should have quiet time to aid in mental wellness.



### Author Bio

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Staci-Anne has a masters in TEFL/TESL and over 15 years teaching experienc. She has enjoyed working in Japan, Italy, Canada and the United Arab Emirates, while also leisurely traveling the world. She can communicate in conversational Spanish as well as Japanese, and is keen on learning more languages. She has taught in many universities and colleges around the world allowing her to fully embody a diverse perspective on education and the multilingual environments. As a writer at heart, she aims to build success in her classes by creating unique learning experiences by fostering concepts of mental wellness in a positive learning environment. She is a creatrix who thrives to utilize a variety of media to create and enhance interactive learning.

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