



## CLARIFYING THE PROBLEM

**Proficiency Level:** Intermediate

**Lesson Length:** 90 minutes

**Vocabulary and Expressions:** “What do you mean?” “Excuse me?” “Pardon?” “If I understand you correctly...” and other vocabulary related to clarification.

**Lesson Topic:** Asking for clarification

**Language/Culture Point:** What to do when someone repeats and you still don’t understand.

**Objective:** Students will be able to show a lack of understanding, ask for clarification, and check their understanding.

**Materials:** 1) index cards (work problem cards), 2) signal cards, 3) ball

**Supplemental Materials to be Created:** Chalk Talk story for step two

### STEP 1: ACTIVATE BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

Time Frame	Materials	Teaching Strategies
10 minutes	- Index cards	- Brainstorming

### TEACHING ACTIVITY

1. Ask students about the kinds of problems that happen at work. What goes wrong? If they have customers, what kinds of problems do they run into with customers?
2. Make a list of problems that occur at work on the board.
3. Give each student one index card and have them write one of the problems from the board on their card.



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### **STEP 2: MINI-PRESENTATION WITH PROMPT**

<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Materials</b>	<b>Teaching Strategies</b>
10 minutes	-	- Chalk talk

#### **TEACHING ACTIVITY**

1. Conduct a Chalk Talk in which you discuss a situation where you didn't understand what was going on. Include points in the Chalk Talk where you show a lack of understanding ("Excuse me?" or "Pardon?"), ask for clarification ("What does that mean?" or "What do you mean?"), and check your understanding by restating the problem ("If I understand you correctly...").
2. In addition to the images you draw for the Chalk Talk, write key vocabulary on the board.
3. Repeat the Chalk Talk at least twice.

### **STEP 3: COMPREHENSION CHECK**

<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Materials</b>	<b>Teaching Strategies</b>
10 minutes	- Signal cards	- True/False quiz, signal cards

#### **TEACHING ACTIVITY**

1. Make T/F statements about the Chalk Talk.
2. Students will use signal cards to indicate true/false/don't know.

### **STEP 4: HIGHLIGHT LESSON FOCUS AND MODEL TASK**

<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Materials</b>	<b>Teaching Strategies</b>
15 minutes	- Work problem cards	- Role play



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### **TEACHING ACTIVITY**

1. Tell the students, “We are going to practice clarifying problems at work. Sometimes we don’t understand, and we need to know how to get the information we need by asking questions.”
2. As an example, write the following problem on the board: A customer doesn’t like his food/drink and wants a new one. Explain that a customer might say to a worker (student), “Excuse me, this didn’t taste very good. Could I have another one?” A response to that could be, “Your food wasn’t what you expected? I’m so sorry. I will tell the cook and we will bring you something new right away.” Another response could be “The food wasn’t very good? I’m sorry about that. I will tell the cook and your food will arrive very soon.” It is helpful to repeat or rephrase what the customer is saying in order to make sure you understand correctly. By saying sorry, you are addressing the problem and calming the customer down. Make sure to include what you will do next.
3. Collect the work problem cards the students created in Step 1.
4. Draw a work problem card and read it to the class.
5. Direct students to the questions/phrases in their books for clarifying the problem. These should be the same as the questions/phrases in the Chalk Talk.
6. Using the card and the questions/phrases, create a short Role Play in which one person has a problem, and the other person needs to clarify the problem. Write the dialogue for the Role Play on the board.
7. Perform the Role Play for the class, playing both parts.

### **STEP 5: GUIDED PRACTICE**

<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Materials</b>	<b>Teaching Strategies</b>
5 minutes	- Work problem cards	- Role play

### **TEACHING ACTIVITY**

1. Have a higher-level student draw a complaint card and tell you the problem.
2. Work with the student to create a Role Play based on the problem and the language they need to use.
3. Perform the Role Play with the student, taking turns playing each part.



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### **STEP 6: SMALL GROUP WORK**

<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Materials</b>	<b>Teaching Strategies</b>
20 minutes	- Work problem cards	- Line dialogue, role play

### **TEACHING ACTIVITY**

1. Explain that students will work in small groups to practice clarifying a workplace problem.
2. Put students in groups of three to four and distribute the work problem cards so that each student has a card.
3. In groups, students will look at each work problem card and create dialogues that clarify the problem. Remind them that they should rephrase (or at least repeat) what the customer is saying, apologize, and tell the customer how they will fix the problem. Encourage students to work together to create responses and write them down.

### **STEP 7: HIGHLIGHT HOW ENGLISH WORKS**

<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Materials</b>	<b>Teaching Strategies</b>
10 minutes	-	-

### **TEACHING ACTIVITY**

1. Point out to students that sometimes we need to restate what someone said to make sure we understood them correctly.
2. Using one of the workplace problem cards, show the students how the problem is stated by one person and then restated by the other to check understanding. Write both the original phrase and the restatement on the board.
3. With the class, restate the rest of the problems on the workplace problem cards. Write the answers on the board.



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**STEP 8: QUICK CHECK AND REVIEW**

<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Materials</b>	<b>Teaching Strategies</b>
10 minutes	- Ball	- Ball toss

**TEACHING ACTIVITY**

1. Have the students stand in a circle.
2. Toss the ball to a student and give him or her a problem.
3. The student should respond with one of the phrases used in class to show lack of understanding, ask for clarification, or check understanding.
4. When he or she has responded correctly, the student will toss the ball to another student and give a problem.