

HOW TO BE A COOL TEACHER

Adriana GEANTĂ*,
Ancuța IONESCU**

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Abstract

Being a "cool teacher" goes beyond popularity; it entails fostering an environment where students feel respected, inspired, and engaged. This paper explores the characteristics and teaching strategies that define a cool teacher, focusing on student-centered pedagogy, emotional intelligence, effective communication, and the integration of technology in modern education. Drawing from educational psychology and pedagogical research, this essay presents actionable insights for educators who wish to build stronger connections with their students while maintaining academic rigor. Every educator wishes to be the cool teacher all students love, but many fail to understand what exactly students love about such teachers. In our opinion, attributes that students highly appreciate include fair, unbiased behavior, creating a positive atmosphere in the classroom, being approachable and kind, enthusiastic personality, engaging and encouraging creative thinking.

Keywords: cool teacher, strategies, technology, modern education

Rezumat

A fi un „profesor cool” depășește limita popularității; implică promovarea unui mediu în care elevii se simt respectați, inspirați și implicați. Această lucrare explorează caracteristicile și strategiile de predare care definesc un profesor cool, concentrându-se pe pedagogia centrată pe elev, inteligența emoțională, comunicarea eficientă și integrarea tehnologiei în educația modernă. Pornind de la psihologia educațională și cercetarea pedagogică, acest eseu prezintă perspective practice pentru educatorii care doresc să construiască legături mai puternice cu elevii lor, menținând în același timp rigoarea academică. Fiecare educator își dorește să fie profesorul cool pe care toți elevii îl iubesc, dar mulți nu reușesc să înțeleagă ce anume iubesc elevii la astfel de profesori. În opinia noastră, atributele pe care elevii le apreciază foarte mult includ comportamentul corect și imparțial,

* Senior lecturer, Faculty of Education Sciences, Social Sciences and Psychology National University of Science and Technology POLITEHNICA Bucharest, Pitesti University Centre

** Senior lecturer, Faculty of Education Sciences, Social Sciences and Psychology National University of Science and Technology POLITEHNICA Bucharest, Pitesti University Centre



crearea unei atmosfere pozitive în sala de clasă, abordabilitatea și amabilitatea, personalitatea entuziastă, implicarea și încurajarea gândirii creative.

Cuvinte cheie: profesor cool, strategii, tehnologie, educație modernă

Introduction

Teaching is not merely about delivering content; it is about shaping minds, influencing lives, and fostering a love for learning. The perception of a "cool teacher" varies among students, but certain universal traits make an educator engaging and effective. A cool teacher balances discipline with approachability, academic rigor with creative instruction, and authority with relatability. *Cool teachers never ignore their students, not do they discourage them.* (<https://www.keyboardingonline.com/bein-g-the-cool-teacher-in-the-eyes-of-your-students/>) So, you have to make sure you satisfy each student's query every time and don't leave anyone unattended. Here are some tips to make classes enjoyable and effective:

1. Use Pop Culture & Media

- Bring in music, movies, memes, and social media trends to make lessons more relatable.

- Use YouTube channels, podcasts, or TikToks featuring native speakers to show real-life language use.

The students may create both video and voice recorder for practicing communication with others. Moreover students will be independent and free to explore their speaking competence based on their own conditions and situations. (Ovani et al., 2022, p. 25)

2. Gamify the Learning Experience

- Use Kahoot!, Quizizz, or Duolingo-style challenges for vocabulary and grammar.

- Organize "Romanian Word of the Day" competitions or classroom bingo with new words.

- Try escape room activities where students must solve puzzles to "escape."

A quizz is a joyful, formative, multiplayer, free assessment instrument functioning on the computer, tablet, and smartphone. (Suharsono, 2020, p. 335) *The use of Kahoot! enables the child to collaborate and to compete interactively, thereby can be the facility of social interaction.* (Suharsono, 2020, p. 335)

Duolingo is an open language learning application in Play store, whose users are able to learn languages for free while simultaneously translating web. The apps are very simple to use, the procedures and steps are easy to understand.

3. Teach Through Stories & Role-Playing



- Use fairy tales, legends, and short stories to introduce new vocabulary and grammar.

- Have students act out dialogues in real-life situations (e.g., ordering food, asking for directions).

- Encourage them to create their own short stories and share them with the class.

4. Make Grammar Fun & Visual

- Use memes and funny mnemonics to explain difficult grammar concepts.

- Create color-coded charts for verb conjugations and noun cases.

- Instead of drilling rules, play “Grammar Jeopardy” or storytelling games where students must use specific grammatical structures.

5. Encourage Interactive Speaking

- Organize “speed dating” conversation rounds where students practice dialogues with different classmates.

- Host debates or discussions on fun topics like “Which Romanian dish is the best?”

- Use voice recordings and AI chatbots to let students practice pronunciation outside of class.

6. Incorporate Technology & AI

- Use Google Translate creatively—have students critique and improve automatic translations.

- Explore AI language tools like ChatGPT to help students practice writing and phrasing.

- Let students create their own learning TikToks or Instagram posts.

ChatGPT offers a realistic environment for practicing conversations in a foreign language, utilizing extensive language materials.(Velescu, 2024, p. 100)

The perceived benefits of rapid feedback provided by AI may enhance individuals' receptiveness to AI technology in educational settings, as it offers the potential for personalized and efficient learning experiences. (Velescu, 2024, p. 174)

The future of ChatGPT in education remains uncertain and will depend on how these tools are integrated into educational practices and the extent to which they can effectively enhance student learning outcomes. (Dumitru Tăbăcaru, 2025, p. 108)

7. Make It Personal & Culturally Relevantă

- Ask students to relate lessons to their own experiences (e.g., “How would you describe your family in a foreign language”).

- Introduce traditions, holidays, and food—maybe even cook together in class!

- Have a “Pen Pal Project” with native speakers.



8. Create a Relaxed & Encouraging Atmosphere

- Avoid making mistakes seem like a big deal - laugh at funny errors together!

- Use informal language sometimes to make students comfortable.

- Build inside jokes with the class (e.g., a funny way to remember a tricky rule).

Next, we will explore some strategies that help educators become cool teachers while maintaining professionalism and effectiveness.

The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Teaching

Emotional intelligence (EI) is a critical component of effective teaching. Daniel Goleman (1995 online at <https://www.ihhp.com/meaning-of-emotional-intelligence/>) identified EI as the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's emotions while also being sensitive to others' emotions. In the classroom, teachers with high EI foster a positive environment, handle conflicts constructively, and create meaningful relationships with students. Studies have shown that emotionally intelligent teachers improve student engagement and reduce classroom stress (Brackett et al., 2011, p. 90).

A teacher who understands and applies the principles of emotional intelligence not only teaches academic lessons but also helps students grow emotionally and develop essential life skills. The "cool" teacher is one who knows how to put themselves in the students' shoes, understands when they are stressed or confused, and provides the support they need to overcome difficult moments. A "cool" teacher understands that students are not just "little robots" who must learn lessons, but human beings with feelings and emotional needs. Emotional intelligence helps them read students' nonverbal cues and respond in an empathetic way. Instead of just telling students what they are doing wrong, we show them what they can do better and give them the confidence that they can get there, because every student has the potential to learn and grow.

Creating a Student-Centered Learning Environment

A cool teacher prioritizes students' needs and learning preferences. The student-centered approach, as advocated by John Dewey in 1938, emphasizes active learning, where students participate in discussions, problem-solving, and hands-on experiences. According to research, classrooms that incorporate project-based learning and cooperative strategies enhance student motivation and academic achievement (Hmelo-Silver, 2004, p. 239). Teachers who adapt their lessons to



diverse learning styles create an inclusive and dynamic educational experience. Such an environment not only makes lessons more interesting and accessible, but also allows students to feel motivated and respected. Every student learns in their own way, and a "cool" teacher will recognize this and adjust the materials and teaching methods to meet the needs of each student. This means offering multiple learning modalities (visual, auditory, kinesthetic) and adapting lessons based on the students' pace and interests.

Effective communication and approachability are two fundamental traits of a "cool" teacher. These qualities not only make lessons more enjoyable and easier to understand, but also help students feel comfortable and encouraged to actively participate in the educational process. A cool teacher knows that to be effective in communication, they must be clear and concise. Clear explanations, free from complicated jargon, help students understand concepts quickly and easily. Additionally, the teacher can use real-life examples to make lessons more accessible and engaging.

Cool teachers excel in communication. Active listening, empathy, and clarity in instruction are vital for fostering an open and respectful learning atmosphere. Studies highlight that teachers who use humor, storytelling, and relatable examples in their lessons create a more engaging and memorable learning experience (Garner, 2006, p. 178). Encouraging student feedback and being open to discussions establish a culture of mutual respect and collaboration. Through active listening, clarity, flexibility, and fostering an open dialogue, a teacher can build strong relationships and stimulate the intellectual and emotional development of students.

Incorporating technology into teaching is essential in today's digital world. Cool teachers leverage educational tools like interactive presentations, online collaboration platforms, and gamification to enhance student engagement. Research suggests that technology-integrated classrooms improve student participation and comprehension (Kay, LeSage, 2009, p. 820). Platforms such as Kahoot!, Google Classroom, and flipped learning methods make lessons more interactive and personalized.

Some specific platforms and tools include:

- **Kahoot!:** A game-based learning platform that allows teachers to create quizzes and interactive activities to boost student engagement.
- **Google Classroom:** A learning management system that enables teachers to distribute assignments, communicate with students, and provide feedback efficiently.



- **Edmodo:** A collaborative learning network that helps teachers connect with students and parents while sharing resources and assignments.
- **Nearpod:** An interactive lesson platform where teachers can incorporate quizzes, videos, and virtual reality experiences into their teaching.
- **Flipgrid:** A video discussion platform that allows students to express their thoughts and engage in class discussions asynchronously.
- **Padlet:** A digital bulletin board where students and teachers can collaborate by posting notes, images, videos, and links in a visually organized manner.
- **Pear Deck:** A tool that integrates with Google Slides and Microsoft PowerPoint to create interactive presentations with real-time student engagement features.

By utilizing these platforms, teachers can create a dynamic and inclusive learning environment that caters to different learning styles. The strategic use of technology helps maintain students' interest, facilitates collaboration, and supports personalized learning experiences.

In today's digital age, technology can transform the way we teach and learn, making lessons more interactive, accessible, and interesting. A cool teacher not only understands the importance of technology but also integrates it creatively to support students' learning and spark their curiosity.

Maintaining Professionalism While Being Relatable

A cool teacher knows that professionalism also means setting clear expectations regarding behavior and communication. Even though they are friendly and approachable, they will uphold the rules and maintain authority in the classroom. It is important for students to understand that, while the teacher is open and friendly, there is a line that should not be crossed.

While building strong relationships with students is important, maintaining professional boundaries is equally crucial. A cool teacher balances friendliness with authority, ensuring respect and discipline in the classroom. Strategies such as setting clear expectations, modeling positive behavior, and maintaining consistency in discipline create a structured yet engaging learning environment (Marzano, 2003, p. 60).

It is important for students to know what is expected of them and to understand the purpose of the lessons, but also that they can come with questions or concerns in an open environment. This transparent communication helps maintain a balance between approachability and



authority. A cool teacher will address challenges and difficult situations with a calm and balanced attitude, avoiding impulsive reactions. Even when students make mistakes or face difficulties, the teacher will respond with patience and offer constructive solutions. This conveys a message of professionalism and respect for the students, even during the more difficult moments.

Encouraging Creativity and Critical Thinking

Cool teachers inspire creativity by allowing students to express themselves in diverse ways. Encouraging open-ended questions, promoting inquiry-based learning, and fostering a growth mindset contribute to intellectual curiosity (Dweck, 2006, p. 41). Providing students with opportunities to explore their interests through passion projects and interdisciplinary learning enhances their critical thinking skills.

Some effective strategies to encourage creativity and critical thinking include:

1. Socratic Questioning: Encouraging students to ask and answer questions that stimulate deep thinking and discussion. This is a teaching technique used to foster critical thinking and deep understanding by encouraging students to think through their ideas, assumptions, and conclusions. Named after the Greek philosopher Socrates, this method involves asking a series of open-ended questions that prompt students to reflect on their reasoning, clarify their thoughts, and explore concepts more thoroughly.

2. Project-Based Learning (PBL): Assigning real-world problems that require students to research, analyze, and propose solutions, thereby fostering creativity and problem-solving skills. This is an instructional approach that organizes learning around projects or real-world problems. It emphasizes active learning and allows students to explore a topic or concept in-depth over an extended period of time, working collaboratively to create a final product or solution. Unlike traditional methods, where the teacher primarily delivers content through lectures, PBL encourages students to take responsibility for their learning, think critically, and engage with real-world challenges.

3. Brainstorming Sessions: Creating an open environment where students freely share ideas and think outside the box. The goal is to encourage creative thinking and explore a variety of perspectives without immediate judgment or criticism of ideas. Brainstorming can be an effective way to spark innovation, solve problems, or develop new strategies, especially in team settings.



4. Cross-Disciplinary Approaches: Integrating concepts from multiple subjects to show the interconnectedness of knowledge and encourage a holistic understanding. It refers to integrating multiple disciplines or subject areas to address complex questions or problems. This method encourages students to make connections across different fields of study and use knowledge and skills from a variety of areas to solve real-world issues. By connecting concepts from different disciplines, cross-disciplinary learning enriches students' understanding and broadens their perspectives.

5. Choice-Based Assignments: Allowing students to choose how they present their understanding, such as through essays, videos, art, or presentations. This approach encourages autonomy, creativity, and personal investment in the learning process. By offering students options, teachers can tap into their interests and strengths, making the learning experience more meaningful and engaging.

6. Gamification Techniques: Using educational games and simulations to challenge students in a fun and interactive way. By incorporating game-like features - such as rewards, challenges, and competition - teachers can make learning more interactive, fun, and motivating. The goal of gamification is to tap into students' natural desire for achievement, progression, and social interaction, making the learning process more dynamic and enjoyable.

7. Debates and Role-Playing: Encouraging students to take different perspectives on a topic, which fosters critical analysis and argumentation skills. They engage students by allowing them to actively participate in discussions or simulations of real-life situations. These strategies not only make learning more dynamic but also encourage students to explore diverse perspectives and deepen their understanding of complex topics.

Debates involve structured arguments where students take opposing positions on a given issue or topic. This technique helps students develop their analytical, public speaking, and persuasion skills. By engaging in debates, students learn how to construct logical arguments, support their opinions with evidence, and respond to counterarguments.

Role-playing involves students assuming specific roles and acting out scenarios related to the subject matter. It is an immersive and experiential technique that allows students to explore concepts, historical events, or complex situations by putting themselves in the shoes of others.

8. Reflective Writing and Journaling: Having students document their learning processes and thoughts to deepen their self-awareness



and reasoning abilities. These practices allow students to express their thoughts, feelings, and personal connections to the content, enhancing self-awareness and promoting critical thinking.

Reflective writing involves the process of writing about one's experiences, thoughts, and feelings in relation to a particular event, learning activity, or concept. It encourages students to critically analyze and make meaning of their experiences, helping them develop a deeper understanding of the material and their personal growth.

Journaling, like reflective writing, involves personal and informal writing, but it is typically more focused on regular, ongoing self-expression. Students use journals to document their thoughts, ideas, feelings, and experiences over time, often with a focus on learning, growth, and self-discovery.

By implementing these strategies, teachers not only cultivate a classroom culture that values curiosity and innovation but also empower students to develop independent and analytical thinking skills that will benefit them beyond their academic journey.

Conclusion

Becoming a cool teacher requires a combination of emotional intelligence, student-centered pedagogy, effective communication, and the strategic use of technology. Teachers who foster an engaging, respectful, and innovative learning environment empower students to reach their full potential. By continuously adapting to students' needs and embracing a growth mindset, educators can make a lasting impact while maintaining professionalism and educational excellence.

To be a cool teacher, it's important to be authentic, take care of interpersonal relationships, and be flexible in your teaching approach. The key is to create an environment where students feel encouraged to learn, make mistakes, and grow. A cool teacher is much more than just an educator, he is a mentor, a role model and a source of inspiration for students.

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