

THE MONSTER BOOK



of Language Teaching Activities

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of Language Teaching Activities

*A Teacher's Resource Book of Fun Template Activities
for Use in the English Language Classroom*

THIRD EDITION 2019

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Introduction

This third edition of *The Monster Book of Language Teaching Activities* is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0, which makes it an even more flexible resource for language educators. I am very grateful to all the contributors for agreeing to share their work in this way in order for more educators to have access to this collection.

The Monster Book remains a collection of over 150 activities intended to liven up the language classroom, engage students in learning, and give instructors straightforward, active options for practicing the four skills and tapping into other elements of language such as grammar, vocabulary, critical thinking, and culture. Many of these activities have been used in the field for several years and are compiled here with simple, clear instructions and variations to fit a wide range of classroom contexts.

The activities are organized into 16 sections as a starting point for exploring the ideas rather than hard and fast divisions. The Table of Contents includes descriptive icons to further illustrate the scope and flexibility of each activity.

Each entry should be looked at as a template activity for instructors to use. Instructors should insert their own content as appropriate, tweak the activity using any of the variations listed, or bring their own ideas to the activity to suit their context and the performance objectives of the lesson. For example, for the Dialogue Line activity on page 56, there is endless “content” that can be inserted that will allow learners to get speaking practice, whether it be for a particular structure, topic, or function. Possibilities include low-level students introducing themselves to a partner, intermediate-level students describing their home or talking about their family, and more advanced students giving their opinion on a controversial topic such as gender quality or how to improve education or reduce corruption. Each time students change partners in the Dialogue Line and repeat the task, they are getting authentic practice with the language structure, helping increase their fluency and building their confidence in the language. Most activities allow for great variation.

The impetus to create *The Monster Book* came from the programs of English Language Specialist David Malatesta in Turkey and Brazil between 2006–2010. From these workshops, it was evident that teachers appreciated experiencing interactive classroom activities in order to better understand how these could help support learning in the classroom. Experiencing them in the workshops helped the teachers gain confidence to try them in their classroom. With David’s permission, I formatted the activities he introduced to teachers, solicited additional ideas from colleagues around the world, and organized them into the sections you see in this book.

Care has been taken to ensure credit was given to those who contributed the ideas and sources are cited whenever known. Any lack of proper acknowledgement in this collection is unintentional. Deep appreciation goes out to all the educators who have contributed ideas in order to create this resource. Feedback and any additional ideas are always welcome for future editions. Please send them to TheMonsterBookOLTA@gmail.com.

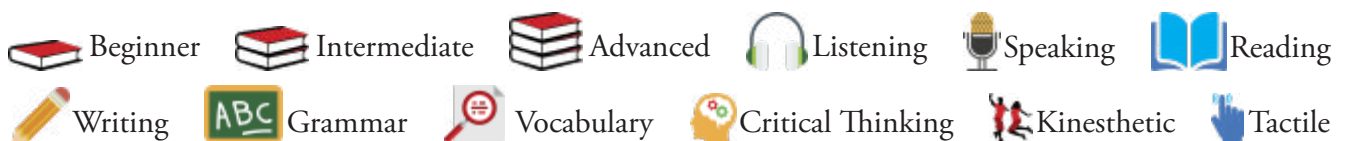
Acknowledgements for contributions:




























































































































































English Language Fellows in Brazil (Elizabeth Crockett Hixon, Julie Holaway, Jenny Otting, Anna Grigoryan, Scott Chiverton, Melanie Brooks, Monica Wiesmann-Hirchert), **Brazilian Train the Trainer Participants** (Adeli Muniz, Alessandra Oliveira Quirino, Alexandre dos Santos Oliveira, Ana Beatriz Pereira Franco, Ariella de Jesus Alves, Daise Lilian Fonseca Dias, Dulce Pazinato Casarin, Erika Suellem Castro da Silva, Isabela de Freitas Villas Boas, Josélia Batista Santos, Jussara Perin, Lilianne de Souza Oliveira, Márcia Maria dos Santos, Maria Cristina Damianovic, Samara Camilo Tomé Costa, Roberta Freitas), **Fulbright ETAs in Brazil 2010** (Lauren Koepke, Caitlin Lynch, Candice Dagnino, Dunja Zdero, Kaley Walsh, Christopher Ellison, Aaron Nilson, Avio Tai, Carolyn Wright, Caroline Strelitz, Christina Pope, Oak Rankin, Gabriela Baca, Allison Maranuk, Drew Firmender, Amalia Zeidman, Carolina Escalera, Cara Snyder, Sarah Nicholas); **Additional gratitude to:** Aycan Yaman Esen (U.S. Embassy Ankara), Helmara F. Real de Moraes (U.S. Embassy Brasília), Thais Hernandez, Nicholas Daly, Katelyn Omans, Lauren Hobby, Trevor Fay, Alexander Werner, Gabriel Friedman, Chris Cote, Claudia Seixas, Kristen Dunlap, Lindsay Bowman, Reuben Clark, Rael Silva, Christine Canning-Wilson.

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





















































































Table of Contents




























































































































































Page	Activity Name	Level			Skill				Practice				
		B	I	A	L	S	R	W	G	V	C T	K	T
1	1. LEAD-INS												
4	Corner Name Tents												
5	Roll Call/Attendance												
6	Entrance/Exit Activity												
7	Bell Activity												
8	Find Someone Who												
10	In Common (and Not)												
12	Scavenger Hunt												
14	Discussion Starter												
15	I Know English												
16	This That												
17	Class Poll												
18	I've Never												
19	2. LISTENING												
22	Tense Statements												
24	True/False												
25	Supermarket Ads												
26	Fast-Food Placemats												
27	Listen On Your Feet												
























































































































































































































































































































































Page	Activity Name	Level			Skill				Practice				
		B	I	A	L	S	R	W	G	V	C T	K	T
28	Movers and Shakers												
29	Speed Mimes												
30	TPRS												
32	Jump to the Right/Left												
33	The Line												
34	Cross Out												
35	3. MUSIC												
39	Disappearing Song												
40	Question Quest												
41	Song Bingo												
42	Express Your Feelings												
43	Antonyms												
44	Correcting You're Your Grammar												
45	Mixed-Up Lyrics												
46	Music Moves												
47	Song Groups												
48	One, Several, Many												
49	Drawing to Instrumental Music												
51	4. SPEAKING												
54	Four Corners												
56	Dialogue Line												
57	Go Fishing												
58	Tiny Bubbles in the Air!												
59	Interrupt My Story!												





































































Page	Activity Name	Level			Skill				Practice				
		B	I	A	L	S	R	W	G	V	C T	K	T
60	In/Out Reporting												
61	Expert Panel												
62	Prove It!												
63	Hot and Cold												
64	Me Too!												
65	Clap Snap												
66	Comparisons												
67	Two Truths and a Lie												
68	Guest Speaker												
69	Talk Time												
71	5. STORYTELLING												
74	Teacher Tell; Student Retell												
75	Object-Based Storytelling												
76	Vocabulary Stories												
77	Drawings from a Story												
78	2.0 Stories												
79	Readers' Theater												
80	Historical Fiction Stories												
	See also: Story Improv (p. 92) Story Strips (p. 107) Story Starters (p. 141) Picture Chain Story (p. 202)												
81	6. DRAMA												
85	Drama Box												
86	Soundscapes												

Page	Activity Name	Level			Skill				Practice				
		B	I	A	L	S	R	W	G	V	C T	K	T
87	Move as If								   				
88	Conversation Letters									 			
89	Dubbing												
90	Dialogue Aside												
91	Alphabet Conversation Drama									 			
92	Story Improv									  			
93	Emotional Choral Reading												
94	Twisted Fairy Tale												
95	Replacement Role Play								    				
97	7. READING												
101	One-Minute Reading									 			
102	Scan for It									 			
104	KNEFL Chart												
105	Reading Warm-Up								 				
106	Pre-Reading Quiz							 					
107	Story Strips												
108	Jigsaw 1												
109	Jigsaw 2												
110	Jigsaw Memory												
111	Group Reading Diary												
112	Emotional Intelligence Scripting												
113	Group Mind Map								 				
114	Scaffolded Questioning								  				
	See also Culture Paragraphs (pp. 230–243)												

Page	Activity Name	Level			Skill				Practice				
		B	I	A	L	S	R	W	G	V	C T	K	T
117	8. VOCABULARY												
120	What Is This?												
121	List It												
122	Fly Swatter Game												
123	Dominoes												
124	Color Idioms												
125	Word Wall												
126	Buzz Ban Cards												
127	Letter Link												
128	Word Ladder												
129	Letter Loans												
130	Marshmallow Spelling												
131	9. WRITING												
134	Brainstorming												
136	Sentence Shuffle												
137	Cloze												
138	Dictation												
140	Dictogloss												
141	Story Starters												
142	Textual Intervention												
143	Free Writing												
144	Dialogue Journals												
147	Journal Writing												
148	Peer Revisions – Modeling and Practicing												

Page	Activity Name	Level			Skill				Practice				
		B	I	A	L	S	R	W	G	V	C T	K	T
151	10. CRITICAL THINKING												
154	Which One Doesn't Belong?												
155	What Is It?												
156	Climb the Mountain												
157	Figure Me Out												
158	Statues												
159	Suspects and Detectives												
160	Tennis Debate												
161	Building Arguments												
162	Adbusting												
163	11. GAMES												
167	Two-Minute Competition												
168	Pass the Banana												
169	Human Tic-Tac-Toe												
170	Conjugation Race												
171	What Do You Know?												
172	Flashcards Competition												
173	Storm												
174	Class vs. Teacher												
175	Board Game												
179	Hot Potato												
180	Password												
183	12. INTERACTIVE ACTIVITIES												
186	It's Snowing												

Page	Activity Name	Level			Skill				Practice				
		B	I	A	L	S	R	W	G	V	C T	K	T
187	Swap If												
188	Describe It!												
189	What Are You Doing?												
190	Guesstures												
191	Learning Stations												
192	Let's Go Out!												
193	It Could Be You												
194	Line Up												
195	Talking Ball												
197	13. PICTURES												
200	Picture Dictation												
201	Mystery Picture												
202	Picture Chain Story												
203	Biographies												
204	Captions												
205	Twenty Questions												
206	Categories												
207	Personality Profile												
208	Cell Phone Photos												
209	14. LARGE CLASSES												
212	Test Yourself Dictation												
213	Songs in the Key of Life												
214	Write Down, Then Speak Up												
215	Beginning and Ending												
216	Do You Know What I Know?												

Page	Activity Name	Level			Skill				Practice				
		B	I	A	L	S	R	W	G	V	C T	K	T
217	Practice Makes Perfect 4-2-1												
218	Bottle Cap Classroom Management												
219	World Traveler												
220	Group Comprehension Check												
222	Code Breaker												
223	Self–Peer Assessment Checklist												
225	15. CULTURE												
228	Tangerine												
229	Venn-berg												
CULTURE PARAGRAPHS		Author Origin						U.S. Location					
230	Bring Your Bike Along	Brazil						Eugene, Oregon					
231	Cafés – More Than Caffeine	Brazil						Eugene, Oregon					
232	English Beyond Books	Brazil						Eugene, Oregon					
233	Taxi Etiquette	Democratic Republic of the Congo						Portland, Oregon					
234	Names	Brazil						Alabama					
235	Public Transit Honor System	Brazil						Dallas, Texas					
236	Litter Free	South Africa						Portland, Oregon					
237	Project-Based Education	India						Austin, Texas					
238	Personal Space Management	Morocco						Baltimore, Maryland					
239	Changing Weather	Republic of the Congo						Boston, Massachusetts					
240	Punctuality	Zimbabwe						Washington, D.C.					
241	Preserving Culture	Zimbabwe						Oklahoma					

Page	Activity Name			
CULTURE PARAGRAPHS		Author Origin		U.S. Location
242	Pedestrian Crossing	Mozambique		Charlottesville, Virginia
243	Refills	South Africa		Charlotte, North Carolina
245	16. SCAFFOLDING			
Scaffolding Sample Lessons		Understand	Apply/Analyze	Create
249	There Is/There Are	Two-Minute Competition	Fly Swatter Game	Picture Dictation
250	To Be	Sentence Shuffle	Dialogue Line	Two Truths and a Lie
251	Present Continuous	Conjugation Race	What Are You Doing?	Story Starters
252	Past Tense	Password	Teacher Tell; Student Retell	Interrupt My Story!
253	Present Perfect	Tense Statements	Find Someone Who	Dialogue Aside
254	Going To	True/False	Picture Chain Story	Climb the Mountain
255	APPENDIX			
256	Observation Sheet for Talk Time			
257	Jigsaw Memory Sample Statements			
258	Color Idioms			
260	Buzz Ban Cards			
264	Class vs. Teacher Collage			
265	Biographies			
270	Categories			
271	Personality Profile			

LEAD-INS



Lead-ins

*By Elisa Borges
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil*

There is an indisputable belief that language classes should begin with a lead-in. Any teacher, experienced or novice, will also agree that lead-ins are supposed to be short activities that aim at preparing learners for the class. If, on the one hand, the basic lead-in concept is quite well known, on the other hand, it is often not implemented correctly. Lead-ins are many times taken for granted during planning and treated as a quasi-independent component of the lesson. A well-planned lead-in may be the first step towards a successful lesson. But, in order for that to happen, we must see it as a fundamental part of the whole lesson and keep in mind these basic characteristics.

Lead-ins are brief. We want learners to feel motivated and eager to start learning. A lead-in that drags will have the opposite effect. Remember this is just the first step towards reaching our learning goal for the lesson. If we take too long, our plan will suffer the consequences. Stop the activity while learners are still engaged and producing, and they will be motivated and ready for the next step.

Lead-ins have a pedagogical purpose. Whether using them to break the ice or set the context to what is coming next, we should always know what we want to accomplish with the proposed activity. One of the most frequent misconceptions concerning lead-ins is that they must necessarily involve games or fun. Fun is obviously a plus, but it is not enough. The idea is to arouse learners' interest and engage them in a task that will help activate their schemata and prepare them to learn. It is crucial, then, to keep the learning goal in mind and make sure the lead-in will help us move in that direction.

Lead-ins are student-centered. We should never do for our learners what they can do for themselves, and that obviously applies to lead-in activities as well. We must plan lead-ins that are relevant to our learners, encourage them to use language in meaningful, productive ways, and foster student-student interaction. Then, all we have to do is let learners do the work on their own.

A successful lead-in activity will have a positive impact on student learning. That is certainly a good enough reason to dedicate some extra time to it when planning our lessons.

This chapter of *The Monster Book* brings a number of fun, student-centered activities that may be easily adapted for use with groups of various ages and levels. When choosing the one you want to use, keep your learning goal in mind and make sure you understand how the activity you pick will help you reach it. By doing this, you will make the most of the lead-in and your class will be off to a great start.

Corner Name Tents

This activity involves students preparing a name tent with additional details on it (one item in each corner) to prompt conversation for a get-to-know-you/warm-up activity. The goal is for participants to get to know one another, practice asking and answering questions, and warm up for the session ahead. The additional information that is requested for the name tent is flexible and therefore can be tailored for the focus of the session.

Preparation

Facilitators can prepare the name tents ahead of the session or do them along with the participants. Distribute the papers (8.5" x 11" or A4 will work) and markers (do not distribute hard-to-read colors — red, orange, yellow, etc.). NB: The name should be in large letters for all to read from a distance. The goal is to learn one another's names, and having large letters is helpful.

Procedure

1. Distribute the papers and markers.
2. Explain to participants that they will make name tents with several items of information. They should wait for full instructions before beginning.
3. Explain what should go on the name tent. Give an overview of all items before they start to write/draw. Then go through each item one by one, giving clear instructions.
4. Allow time for participants to complete each corner.
5. When participants are finished, they should turn to the person sitting closest and ask and answer questions about the pictures/words on the name tent. Give them five to seven minutes to swap information.
6. Have participants introduce their partners to the group and say something about one of the corners on the name tent.

Variations

1. If participants are from only a few locations (cities/institutions), mix them up by not allowing participants from the same institutions/cities sit next to each other during step #5 above.
2. As the facilitator, you can participate in the pair work portion and model the introduction.
3. Depending on the length of the training, you can mix participants up later and have them swap name-tent information with someone else.
4. You can add to the name tents other items throughout the training and turn them into a type of evaluation of the workshop. E.g., Draw/write the activity you are most likely to use as a result of the training; the activity that you won't use and why; whether you achieved the purpose of this training; etc.
5. Be sure to revisit the corner that relates to the goals of the training near the end of the event to see if the goal was reached. This can be part of the evaluation at the end.

When to Use It

- To build rapport
- To get participants familiar with one another in a class or training
- To help the facilitator learn names of participants
- To informally assess level of learners/ participants

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Paper for name tents, markers, tape

Preparation Time

5–10 minutes

Activity Time

15–30 minutes, depending on interaction among participants during mingling portion

Other

Corner name tents can be folded and put in front of a participant if he/she is seated at a table or taped onto the front of the desk. They can be saved for use in subsequent sessions until names are known.

Roll Call/Attendance

Roll call does not always have to be a tedious activity in which precious classroom time is spent on administrative issues. Use it to enhance the teaching point that day or to review something that was discussed or learned previously.

Making instructional use of the roll call makes every student accountable for giving input. It can also prompt students to become more actively involved in the classroom.

Preparation

Select type and manner of feedback desired (vocabulary, content, language point, etc.).

Procedure

1. Instruct students on feedback required and call roll requesting that feedback.
2. If used as a Bell Activity (see page 7), write directions for the feedback on the board or have them ready on PowerPoint or a projector so students will see them upon entering.

Variations

Student Responsibility for Attendance:

Use laminated name cards/magnets/clothespins with students' names on them. Have an in/out area for these cards/magnets/clothespins. Students are to be responsible for moving their name from the "out" side to the "in" side, indicating their attendance.

The instructor can also use cards/magnets/clothespins to ensure s/he hears from each student during a class, moving the marker as s/he has an interaction with each student (answering a question/asking an appropriate question, etc.).

When to Use It

- To take attendance and get feedback from students
- To help learners become more responsible/accountable for learning
- To keep track of participation in class

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Type of "markers" for attendance (cards, clothespins, magnets)

Preparation Time

5 minutes

Activity Time

Throughout class time 5–15 minutes;
e.g., feedback request

Beginning level:

Give a command with a familiar verb; students act it out. "Stand," "Sit," "Open your book," etc.

High beginning level:

Each student must say a vocabulary word related to a specific category (food, colors, clothing, nationalities, etc.)

Low intermediate level:

Give a verb; the student gives the past participle (or mix up with different subject pronouns, etc.)

Intermediate level:

Act out a verb; students guess the word in the target language

Entrance/Exit Activity

The Entrance/Exit Activity can double as a way to get information/feedback from students and to take roll.

Preparation

Prepare the question you will use for the Entrance/Exit Activity ahead of time. This should be based on the feedback or the topic you'd like the students to respond to, e.g., Write the activity you liked best today and explain why; Write a question about today's topic that you'd like to learn more about; Write one thing you learned today that you didn't know before class; Write five past participles; etc.

Procedure

1. Hand out slips of paper if necessary.
2. Give the instructions for the feedback requested for that day.
3. Students write their name and feedback on the paper.
4. Students hand the slip of paper in as they leave the classroom.

Variations

Use laminated name cards/magnets/clothespins (as described in Roll Call/Attendance on page 5) with students' names on them. Students can put their feedback in their clothespin and drop it into a basket or slip it under their name magnet.

The feedback can also be collected verbally before students leave the room.

When to Use It

- To take attendance
- To get feedback from students
- To check on understanding of a concept for the day's class (before or after)

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Slips of paper, magnets, clothespins, name cards (see Roll Call/Attendance activity on page 5)

Preparation Time

5 minutes

Activity Time

5 minutes

Other

This is also good to use during multiple-day training sessions to get feedback from participants about what activities are going well and how things in the training might be altered, etc.

Bell Activity

This activity should be ready so that students can begin working as soon as they enter the classroom. It should be a light activity to get students thinking and interacting in English. It can be a puzzle, a riddle, a word game, etc.; e.g., copies of the same puzzle placed around the classroom before the class begins (could be at group tables, one for pairs, projected, on the board, or taped on the walls around the room). Instructions should be on a screen or the board, encouraging students to get started on the puzzle as soon as they enter the room.

Preparation

The instructor prepares whatever the activity is ahead of time (selects the riddle, prepares copies of the puzzle, etc.). If necessary, the answer key should also be prepared to show to the class. Instructions should be displayed on the board.

Sample instructions on board:

- Work alone or in groups to complete the activity (puzzle, word game, etc.).
- When you have completed the task, the individual or all group members should raise their hands.
- The first group to complete the activity correctly will win a prize. (The prize could be a star/a point for completing it first, or a round of applause! It need not be a concrete prize.)

Procedure

1. Before the students enter and the class begins, pre-position the puzzles for the groupings/pairs. Put them on the desk with some colorful highlight so it stands out.
2. Have the instructions up on the board or on the screen for students to view upon entering (see sample above).
3. Try to keep quiet about the instructions on the board; students should notice the instructions on their own and start working.
4. As groups begin working, walk around to provide any needed encouragement/support.
5. When the first group completes the puzzle and indicates this with raised hands, bring the class together and go over the answers.
6. Distribute the prize if applicable.

Variations

1. Depending on the number of students in class, the puzzle could be combined with the Four Corners activity (page 54) by having one puzzle in each corner (taped on the wall or available on a table). Students could be pre-divided (by color/number) to go to a designated corner to work on the puzzle with others.
2. The activity could be as easy as a one-line riddle or puzzle on the board that students could do at their desk. It need not be something as formal as a long, involved group activity.

When to Use It

- To transition students into English
- To warm up a class
- To set the schema of the students
- To focus students after a break

Level



Skills

Depends on activity



Practice



Materials

Depends on activity: copies of puzzle, selected riddle

Preparation Time

5 minutes

Activity Time

5–15 minutes

Other

See puzzles from *The Lighter Side of TEFL*
<https://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/lighter-side-tefl>

Find Someone Who

This is an oral activity that gets students out of their seats and talking to each other. The goal is to find someone in the class who can answer a given survey question affirmatively. It is commonly used as an icebreaker, but is also a good way to practice particular grammar forms and, of course, to practice speaking.

Preparation

A list of ten to twenty questions (teacher- or student-generated) is needed to start. These questions should be related to the characteristics and experiences of the particular class (e.g., Do you speak more than two languages? or Have you ever traveled by plane?). All students are given the handout with these questions on it. It may be useful to go over the questions with the students to prepare them with pronunciation or vocabulary. There could be some sort of prize for whoever finishes first.

Procedure

1. Students are instructed to walk around the room and find one classmate to respond positively to each question on the list.
2. Students ask any of the questions to a classmate. The questions need not be asked in any particular order.
3. Students are allowed to ask only one or two questions of the same person.
4. Students must actually ask the question and not just point to the question on the handout.
5. If the student being asked can answer in the affirmative, the interviewer writes the interviewee's name next to that question. If the interviewee answers negatively, then nothing is written down, and the interviewer will need to look for someone else who might be able to answer affirmatively.
6. More advanced students can be instructed to ask follow-up questions.

Variations

1. The questions can be put into a Bingo grid. (See the Song Bingo activity on page 41 for more information.) If this option is chosen, it is recommended that the questions be placed in different squares on each Bingo card so that students don't all call "Bingo!" at once.
2. The questions can be written out for the students exactly as they should ask them, or they can be given simple sentence stems or vocabulary items so that they construct their own question practicing a particular grammar point.
e.g., Present tense/habit question exercise every day ➡ Do you exercise every day?
Simple past question speak English ➡ Did you speak English yesterday?
Present perfect question eat apple pie ➡ Have you ever eaten apple pie?
3. Have pairs of students create the questions using information prompted by the teacher (past tense, daily routines, etc.). Give a time limit instead of a question limit. Collect the papers and redistribute them for pairs to use.
4. Have students report/write what they found out about their peers.

When to Use It

- To serve as an icebreaker
- To practice asking and responding to questions
- To practice a particular grammar point (verb tenses, etc.)

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Handouts

Preparation Time

5–15 minutes

Activity Time

10–20 minutes

Text

Questions

Example

Find Someone Who...

Circulate around the room and find someone who can answer "yes" to each of the following questions. If the answer is yes, have him/her sign your sheet. Try to get as many signatures as you can. Change the verb to the past participle where necessary.

Have you ever...

1. _____ (to live) overseas for more than one year?
2. _____ (to sing) karaoke?
3. _____ (to be) without a shower for more than two weeks?
4. _____ (to ride) a horse?
5. _____ (to eat) frogs' legs?
6. _____ (to be) vegetarian?
7. _____ (to swim) in three or more different oceans?
8. _____ (to fly) an airplane?
9. _____ (to break) a bone?
10. _____ (to do) volunteer work?
11. _____ (to climb) a tree more than 20 feet vertically?
12. _____ (to have) a close relative who lived to over 100?
13. _____ (to cook) a meal by yourself for more than 20 people?
14. _____ (to keep) a hamster as a pet?
15. _____ (to jump) out of a plane?
16. _____ (to see) a polar bear in the wild?
17. _____ (make your own question!)

In Common (and Not)

As this activity focuses on similarities and differences, it is useful in introducing, consolidating, or reviewing the use of certain key words and expressions such as both, and, but, and however. It is also useful in getting students to know each other better and build class rapport.

Preparation

There is virtually no preparation needed for this activity if the grammar has already been introduced. To exploit the practice of *but* and *however*, students should be prompted to use them in contrasting.

Procedure

1. Put students in pairs.
 2. Pairs work together to determine five things they have in common and five things that are different between them.
 3. Students write the ten items down and later report to the class or a larger group.
- NB: Students should be prepared to report the similarities using *both*, *and*, *but*, and *however*.

We both like...

She likes... , but I like...

We are both wearing...

He lives in... , but I live in...

We both have (math)... with...

We both saw (movie)...

Variations

1. This activity gives students great practice in asking questions. It works best if the question format and topics are brainstormed ahead of time. Students work with partners initially and then report to a larger group or the whole class.
2. With more advanced students, you can play this as “Uncommon Commonalities,” where easy subjects (such as travel or food you both like) are off-limits. An uncommon commonality might be a food that both of you have never tried or the sum of the ages of your parents.
3. Have students find commonalities using a Venn diagram. Students read the list of activities and take turns asking about the items on the list. If neither of the students does the activity, they write that activity outside the circle. After they go through the list, the activity can become a mixer. Pairs of students stay together and interact with other pairs of students trying to find others who do an activity that they have listed at the bottom. When they find others who **do** that activity, they write the names next to the activity.

When to Use It

- To find out more about classmates
- To practice comparing and contrasting using real data

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

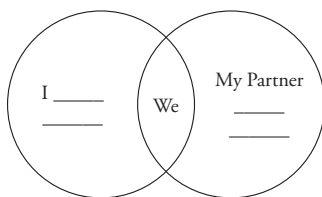
None

Preparation Time

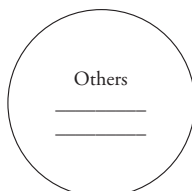
None

Activity Time

20+ minutes



"I..." "We..." "My partner..."



"We do not..., but these people do."

We do not...

My partner...

I...

We...

But these people do...

I walk for exercise.	I want to learn how to speak a language besides English.
I go swimming in the summer.	I exercise almost every day.
I play soccer.	I often ask my parents for advice.
I go to see professional soccer games.	I play video games.
I help my parents do the housework.	I like to watch the Olympics.
I know how to play badminton.	I know how to ice skate.
My favorite sport is tennis.	I use a cell phone often.
I watch English TV programs.	
I watch golf on TV.	

Scavenger Hunt

This activity focuses on getting students to find information using reading or speaking skills. It is useful for introducing a variety of topics or themes from something “big,” such as a neighborhood, to something more particular, such as rules and regulations of a class or institution, or even getting to know a textbook. Scavenger Hunt is typically played in teams, so it is also useful as a team-building exercise.

Preparation

The instructor prepares the list of questions on a worksheet based on the theme of the scavenger hunt. Room should be left for the answers. For a sample of a scavenger hunt based on this book, see page 13.

Procedure

1. Put students in groups (by counting off, those wearing similar color of clothing, etc.).
2. Groups work together to find the answers to the questions on the worksheet. To facilitate working together, groups should share one worksheet.
3. The first group to complete the worksheet with the correct answers wins.

Variations

This activity can be made with very straightforward questions or turned into a puzzle to make it more challenging and tap into critical thinking. For the latter, an answer can be the next clue to the following answer.

Straightforward: What is the number of the classroom? (e.g., 415)

More difficult: What is the sum of the digits of the classroom? (10)

Even more difficult: The number ten is the sum of this location number. (415)

Answer becomes another clue: What is the title of the page that equals the sum of the classroom?

When to Use It

- To give an overview of something to the students (location, institution, class, textbook)
- To build teams
- To provide critical thinking practice

Level

Depending on questions chosen



Skills



Practice



Materials

Worksheet for each group

Preparation Time

10–20 minutes

Activity Time

15–30 minutes

SAMPLE SCAVENGER HUNT

1. How many chapters are in this book?
2. In what chapter can you find ideas about using songs in the classroom?
3. In what year was the second edition of the book published?
4. What is written on the spine?
5. How many pages are in the book?
6. Who is David Malatesta?
7. Who is the artist of all the drawings in the book?
8. Who is the intended audience of the book?
9. What page is the Table of Contents on?
10. Where is the Appendix?

ANSWERS:

1. 16 2. 3 3. 2017 4. The Monster Book of Language Teaching Activities
5. 288 6. One of the contributors 7. Ricardo Anderson
8. teachers of English 9. v 10. 255

Discussion Starter

This activity is a good controlled speaking activity, which uses a worksheet that can be tailored for the students in the class.

Preparation

Make the student worksheet. Depending on the size of your class, you will have one or more even-numbered groups (at least six per group works best). Write enough questions for all but one group member. (So, if you have groups of six, you will need five different questions.) These can be getting-to-know-you questions or questions related to a specific topic or language point. On the left side of the worksheet, number one through six (or the number of students per group) followed by a blank line. On the right side, write the five questions (for example, if there are six group members) starting across from number two. See sample below.

Procedure

1. Divide the class into groups with equal numbers in each group.
2. Give each student a worksheet that has been folded down the middle (so the students can only see the numbers and the blank lines, not the questions).
3. Each student should write his/her name on line number one, then pass the sheet to his/her left to a group member. That person will write his/her name on line number two. Continue as such until each student receives his/her paper back. (*Note: You can play some upbeat music during this paper-passing, as it keeps the flow of the activity.*)
4. Students open their papers and mingle in their groups, asking each question to the student whose name is to the left of the question on their sheet.
5. After the students have had a chance to “make the rounds,” ask them to return to their seats for a whole-group discussion, depending on the intent of the exercise. What did you find interesting? What did you learn? What did you want to talk more about?, etc.

Variations

During the question phase, you can choose to leave the responses oral or have students take notes on the answers to report back. With larger groups, especially, it may be helpful to take notes.

e.g., Unit on Food

- | | |
|----------|---|
| 1. _____ | -----XX----- |
| 2. _____ | What are your three most favorite foods? |
| 3. _____ | Do you know how to cook? If so, what? |
| 4. _____ | What's your favorite restaurant? |
| 5. _____ | Who's the best cook in your family? What does this person like to make? |
| 6. _____ | What food or dish would you recommend to a foreigner? Why? |

When to Use It

- To break the ice
- To begin a discussion of a particular topic
- To review material

Level



Depending on questions chosen

Skills



Practice

Materials

Worksheet for each student

Preparation Time

10–20 minutes

Activity Time

15–30 minutes

I Know English

This activity takes no preparation and is a good way to get students up, moving, and participating in an early class for the semester. Alternatively, the question can be changed slightly to provide practice during a course.

Preparation

This activity has no preparation and takes very few resources. It capitalizes on student participation.

Procedure

1. Start with a clean board or at least enough space on the board to make lists.
2. Set a time limit to challenge the students to race against the clock.
3. Give one of the students a piece of chalk or a marker to write on the board.
4. The student goes to the board and writes any word that s/he knows in English and then returns to give the marker to the next student.
5. When the time is up, count the words, erasing the ones that are repeated or wrong.
6. Show students that they already know a lot, but as a group they always know more. Make them talk about how they can learn from each other.

Variations

1. For more advanced groups, you can ask them to write words whose first letter is the last letter from the last written word, or limit it to a category such as food, furniture, fads, etc.
2. For large groups, you can divide the board into two parts and the class into two teams.
3. Do this activity in the beginning and at the end of the semester to see if they have learned more and if they are more comfortable with group work.

When to Use It

- To break the ice
- To begin a discussion of English
- To launch a class

Level



Look at Variations to mix it up

Skills



Practice



Materials

Board, marker or chalk

Preparation Time

None

Activity Time

5–15 minutes

This That

This activity helps bring young learners together — to stop what they are doing and focus on the teacher and get ready for the next activity. It's a playful, creative, participatory way to get learners' attention. The game is similar to "Simon Says" in that students should copy arm movements while the instructor is saying This but not copy the arm movement when the instructor says That.

Preparation

None

Procedure

1. Start saying *This* several times and make a different movement with your arm for each *This* said.
2. The children should copy the movements demonstrated.
3. After several arm movements with *This*, make a movement and say *That*. The children will follow your movement and you should point out that next time you say *That* they should *not* copy your movement. Once you have their attention, you can move on to the next activity.

Variations

1. Use alternative intensity and ways of body or voice use. For example, make smaller movements or use a finer or deeper tone of voice.
2. Have a learner conduct the game or even play it in small groups or in pairs.

When to Use It

- To warm up the class
- To practice vocabulary
- To get students' attention

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

None

Preparation Time

None

Activity Time

3 minutes

Class Poll

This is more of a technique than a full activity. The point of this activity is to get secret responses from students about a question — things like whether they did their homework or liked an activity, or if they understood the grammar point or want to change seats. It's an easy-to-use way to get secret answers from students.

Preparation

None

Procedure

1. Tell students you will ask a question, and they are to put up one finger for true and two for false.
2. Students are to keep their eyes closed during the activity. Checking that eyes are closed can be done in a fun, lighthearted way.
3. The first couple of questions can be “fake” questions, with the instructor asking things like “Is it Wednesday today?” Raise one finger if true; two fingers if false. “Is this English class?” etc.

Variations

1. If the class is small enough, you can have students line up in one row so that others cannot see their fingers up in the air while they are looking straight ahead.
2. Have students ask questions.

When to Use It

- To allow students to have a “secret” vote on something
- To get a sense of where the class stands on something
- To help students feel more at ease answering certain questions

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

None

Preparation Time

A few minutes — if need to line students up

Activity Time

5 minutes

I've Never

This activity comes from a game kids used to play. It is really great as a warm-up or get-to-know-you activity. The main aim is to get the participants to make statements using “I’ve never” in order to find out a little about others. It’s a great way to add a little bit of laughter and energy at the beginning of a class, and the participants learn a lot about how conservative or adventurous their peers or colleagues are.

Preparation

None

Procedure

1. Put students into groups of about five or six.
2. Students should hold their hands out with all their fingers up.
3. One student in each group begins by creating a truthful statement beginning with “*I’ve never...*” e.g., *I’ve never eaten sushi*; or *I’ve never climbed a mountain*.
4. Each group member who has done the activity in the statement must put a finger down. The next group member says his/her *I’ve never* statement.
5. The game continues until there is only one member with one or more fingers still up.
6. Remind the participants that the goal is to say things you think others have done.

Variations

1. Depending on the level, this can be used with the following structures:
 - a. Last week/month/year, I didn’t... (go to a restaurant, exercise, take a bus)
 - b. I like sushi, jazz, swimming in the ocean.
2. Information from the activity can be used to build personality profiles of peers, or surprising comments could be revealed during a report session.

When to Use It

- To get participants familiar with one another in a class or training
- To reinforce the use of the present perfect
- To build rapport among participants

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

None

Preparation Time

None

Activity Time

10 minutes

LISTENING



Listening

By Patrisius Istiarto Djiwandono
East Java, Indonesia

Listening comprehension has always been a challenging area for language teachers. The ephemeral nature of sounds and their concomitant cognitive processes in the mind of the listeners have rendered listening comprehension one of the most difficult skills to teach. Yet, people listen and most of them succeed in understanding the oral messages. This applies not only in their native language but also when they have learnt a foreign language for some length of time. Thus, there is obviously a set of processes through which learners eventually master listening comprehension skills. The main task of a language teacher is to dig deeper into the process and show the learners the way to engage in those processes in order for them to listen more effectively.

Teachers use a wide range of techniques in a listening comprehension lesson. Those with limited experience and minimum knowledge about listening will probably just have their students listen to a recorded material, throw some comprehension questions, and then conclude the session by checking the answers with the class. Another type of teacher comprises those who have armed themselves with considerable knowledge of listening comprehension and therefore can lead the students to a deeper processing of the oral messages. Still, another type of teacher is those who have come to a realization that listening comprehension skills can be developed through activities that engage the whole context of the teaching-learning activities. As education and teaching methods develop further, this latter type of instruction should be made more prominent and widespread.

By engaging, it is meant that listening activities should not only be limited to silent processing of individual students but also embrace many kinds of support in the context. One of the examples is cooperative listening, a technique by which the class members engage in a collaborative reconstruction of the oral messages. Learners share with each other what they can get from the messages, and even tell each other what particular strategies or tactics they use to catch the messages. In this way, the listening class is no longer an activity with individual students busily processing the messages on their own; rather, it is now a social event in which participants capitalize on the interaction among themselves to reconstruct the fleeting messages.

There are a lot more ideas of teaching approaches that can be thought of and planned. Engagement can translate into different kinds of activities that take into account the learners, the materials, the teachers, and the follow-up activities. The notion of engagement serves as a reminder for teachers and learners about myriads of activities that combine those four elements to generate effective and fun listening comprehension classes.

Novice teachers will find the idea of engagement beneficial for their listening class. It prompts them to think about alternative techniques that can be tried out in their classes. By thinking of many different, creative ideas for teaching listening, they will not get stuck in the old-fashioned idea that listening comprehension is all about having the students listen and then answer comprehension questions.

Tense Statements

This activity can serve as an icebreaker. The facilitator reads sentences about him/herself, and students identify the tense and guess whether the statement is true or false.

Preparation

Prepare the statements ahead of time. A sample list of statements is on the next page.

Procedure

1. Distribute the handout or have students create a sheet with the same categories as those on the next page.
2. Read the sentences aloud.
3. Students mark the verbs as past (completed action) or the present or progressive (action in progress). Remind them that there are two verbs in each sentence.
4. Students also mark the statements as true or false.

Variations

1. Use statements about a person or place that relates to the topic students are studying.
2. Have students design the statements about themselves and do the activity in pairs or groups.
3. Student-generated statements can be redistributed so that one student serves as a monitor of the answers.

When to Use It

- To review past/present/progressive verb tense
- To get to know the facilitator

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Handouts if the class is using them. Students can prepare the answers on a sheet of paper.

Preparation Time

5–10 minutes

Activity Time

10–15 minutes

Tense Statements

Sample handout for students (or they could prepare these statements at their desk):

1. I ride my bike to work every day, and one day, I rode my bike 110 miles.
2. I live in Chicago, but I have lived in Japan, France, and Spain.
3. I have two sisters, and one of them just had a baby last month.
4. I work in a high school with 2,500 students, but I taught university in the past.
5. I love pets, and I have several dogs, cats, and birds at home.
6. I play bass in a country band, and I play in a Latin band where I sometimes sing in Spanish.
7. I like to eat in fast-food restaurants, and I just ate at one before coming here.
8. I am a teacher, and I have been teaching since 1987.
9. I have flown to many cities, and usually I fly in economy class.

1. a) past or present b) past or present true or false	2. a) past or present b) past or present true or false	3. a) past or present b) past or present true or false
4. a) past or present b) past or present true or false	5. a) past or present b) past or present true or false	6. a) past or present b) past or present true or false
7. a) past or present b) past or present true or false	8. a) past or present b) past or present true or false	9. a) past or present b) past or present true or false

True/False

This listening activity gets students to participate simply by raising the appropriate card to indicate True or False.

Preparation

Prepare enough cards of each of two colors for the number of students in the class — one color for True and one for False.

Procedure

Give each student (or pair of students) two cards: TRUE and FALSE (each on different color cards). Students should have the TRUE cards in their right hands and FALSE cards in their left hands. Read a statement (on a theme), and students hold up one of the cards expressing if they think the statement is true or false.

Variations

1. Cards can be used and distributed per group so that team members can consult on the answer before raising the appropriate card. This helps reduce the pressure of the individual answer.
2. Instead of cards, have students move to different sides of the room to indicate their answers or line up and step to right for True and left for False.
3. Have students raise their hands for True and keep them down for False.
4. The facilitator can read the statements from the back of the room so the students cannot lip-read.
5. The teacher (or students) makes a set of cards for each student (or students can simply gesture up for affirmative and gesture down for negative, or whatever gesture would be appropriate). The teacher asks a series of close-ended questions (about a story students have read or heard, about grammar features they have been studying, about word meaning, etc.). Each time, the students raise their cards (or gesture) to indicate an affirmative or negative answer. Students can be asked to justify their answers if they have sufficient English.

When to Use It

- To answer comprehension questions on a text or listening activity
- To review a concept that the class has been working on
- To get to know the teacher (the teacher can say statements about him/herself); students/participants can answer
- To help students get to know their classmates. The class can be divided in half, and the statements can all start with “The majority of the students...”

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Colored cards (green = true; red = false);
2 (1 of each color) for each student

Preparation Time

15 minutes

Activity Time

10+ minutes

Contributors: Julie Holaway, Assessment Specialist and ESL Instructor, has taught in various learning institutions around the world and was an English Language Fellow in Brazil from 2009 to 2011; Cristiane Tinoco, English teacher, Belo Horizonte, Brazil; with additional ideas from Elizabeth Crockett Hixon, English Language Fellow, Brazil, 2011, Maria Snarski, Regional English Language Officer, and Brock Brady, Education Sector Specialist, U.S. Peace Corps, Washington, D.C.

Supermarket Ads

This activity makes use of supermarket ads. The ads do not need to be in English, and they are usually plentiful and easy to find.

Preparation

Prepare questions with superlatives or comparatives to use in advance in order for the activity to flow, e.g., What item is the most expensive? What is the least expensive? Include prices/numbers that relate to the ads.

Procedure

1. Distribute the supermarket ads.
2. Go over vocabulary with students using some “locate” questions, e.g., point to the watermelon, point to the milk, etc.
3. Ask the questions created prior to the activity.

Variations

1. Put students in pairs and have them quiz one another on any of the language items.
2. Have students write some questions at their desks individually or in pairs. Have students/pairs ask their questions to the class.

When to Use It

- To review vocabulary
- To practice: comparatives, superlatives, food vocabulary, numbers, and how to say prices

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Supermarket ads (one for each pair or one for each student)

Preparation Time

10 minutes to prepare questions

Activity Time

15+ minutes

Fast-Food Placemats

This activity makes use of fast-food placemats. The placemats do not need to be in English, and they are usually plentiful. They typically have a variety of images and lots of colors.

Preparation

Prepare questions/statements to use in advance in order for the activity to flow. The types of sentences or questions will be determined by the placemats. Questions could focus on the present continuous tense, vocabulary, location, prepositions, etc.

Procedure

1. Give each pair of students a placemat and ask questions or say statements related to the picture.
2. Students try to find the answers in the picture.

Variations

1. For lower levels, the teacher can focus on vocabulary only.
2. This could be played as a competition.
3. Students could quiz one another in pairs or groups.
4. Students can write sentences describing the picture.

When to Use It

- To review vocabulary or grammar items
- To introduce specific language (depending on the images on the placemat)
- To practice describing

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Fast-food placemats (one for each pair, group, or student)

Preparation Time

10 minutes to prepare statements and questions

Activity Time

15+ minutes

Listen On Your Feet

In this activity, students demonstrate listening skills by standing up and holding up the sign corresponding to the cues in the selection being listened to.

Preparation

Select an alternative text to be read or listened to. A sample text is provided below. Identify the focus words and prepare cue cards. If using the sample text, suggested focus words are *hospital*, *doctor(s)*, *nurse(s)*, *patient*, and *said*. Prepare multiple cue cards for the same words depending on class size and the number of words you wish to focus on.

Procedure

1. Distribute cue cards to students randomly.
2. Briefly brainstorm with students what they believe the listening is about based on the cue cards they were given.
3. Instruct students to stand up and hold up the sign and immediately sit down when they hear the word on the cue card being read.
4. Do a sample line to check instructions or model the activity.
5. Start reading at a normal pace.

Variations

1. Use picture flash cards instead of words.
2. Assign “reader roles” to some of the students in class as others listen and stand up.
3. Post a cue card on the wall; divide the class into groups and have them stand in the middle of the room. Students run/point to the words as the text is being read. If you choose to do this, you may need to change the number of focus words as well as your reading pace.
4. Instead of selecting words, have groups of students listen for words from themes; e.g., Group 1 stand up for words related to food; Group 2 stand up for words related to people; Group 3 stand up for words related to numbers.
5. Read the text again and hold a discussion based on the text. For the sample text, the discussion can focus on jobs commonly held by women and men in their countries. The discussion can be further extended with the use of video clips showing different jobs/tasks being performed by both men and women.
6. Ask students to write a paragraph or essay (depending on level) on the topic. For the sample text, the writing can focus on comparing and contrasting jobs held by men and women in their countries and in the United States.

Sample Text:

At the **hospital** near where I live, all the **doctors** are women, and all the **nurses** are men. Every time new **patients** arrive at the **hospital**, they always call the **doctors nurses** and the **nurses doctors**.

One day at the **hospital**, a **doctor** was talking to a **patient**, a man, and the **patient said**, “Excuse me, **nurse**, when can I see the **doctor**?”

“Listen,” **said the doctor**. “I’m not a **nurse**; I’m a **doctor**. And the man you think is a **doctor** is a **nurse**.”

“Oh...sorry,” **said the patient**. “I thought the **doctor**, I mean the **nurse**, I thought the **nurse said** you were a **nurse**.”

“Well, I’m not,” **said the doctor**. “I’m a **doctor**, not a **nurse**.”

“Well, once again, sorry about that,” **said the patient**. “By the way, what’s your name?”

“**Nurse**,” **said the doctor**. “**Doctor Nurse**.”

When to Use It

- To review vocabulary
- To check listening
- To energize a class
- To prompt discussion
- To add a kinesthetic component to an activity

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Short text to be read or selected listening to be played; cue cards

Preparation Time

5–10 minutes

Activity Time

5–10 minutes

Possible Resources

Songs, podcasts, video or movie segments

Audio books: *The Autobiography of Mark Twain*

<https://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/autobiography-mark-twain-or>

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

<https://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/adventures-huckleberry-finn>

Movers and Shakers

This activity is easy, takes very little preparation, requires no materials, and gets students up and moving. It's great for kinesthetic learners and for an energy break to wake students up.

Preparation

Prepare some questions related to the topic (e.g., personal information) or grammar point (present perfect). E.g., Are you 16? Do you have a brother? Does your last name have the letter "a" in it? Have you been to X city? Have you ridden on a motorcycle? Have you made a cake?

Procedure

1. Tell the students that you are going to ask them some questions or read some statements.
2. If their answer to the question is "yes," they should stand up. If the answer to the question is "no," they should sit down. If using statements, students should stand for a true statement and sit down for a false one.

Variations

1. Read statements aloud. If the students agree with each statement, they stand up. If they disagree, they sit down.
2. Another variation is to say, "If you're wearing jeans, move to another chair. If you have blonde hair, move to another chair..." The students who meet your description need to stand up and trade places with the other people who meet the description and have stood up.

When to Use It

- To review vocabulary
- To check listening comprehension
- To energize a class
- To add a kinesthetic component

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

None

Preparation Time

5 minutes; enough time to prepare questions/statements or look around the room to tailor statements to students in the room

Activity Time

5–10 minutes

Speed Mimes

This activity is easy, takes very little preparation, requires no materials, and gets students up and moving. It's great for kinesthetic learners and for an energy break to wake students up.

Preparation

Preselect vocabulary words that relate to recent work in class.

Procedure

1. Have all students stand up.
2. Teach them a mime (an action) for each word you want them to practice.
3. Once the students have learned the mime for each word, call out the words one at a time and have the students act out the mimes.
4. Continue doing this but start calling out the words faster and faster until the students are laughing and can no longer follow you.

Variations

Have students identify words and mimes. They can also take turns being the “caller.”

NB: Be careful of certain gestures and their meanings in other cultures. Some gestures can be offensive in other cultures.

When to Use It

- To review vocabulary
- To check listening
- To energize a class
- To add a kinesthetic component

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

None

Preparation Time

5 minutes; enough time to prepare the words and relevant mimes

Activity Time

10–15 minutes

TPRS (Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling)

TPRS is used to teach vocabulary, both abstract and concrete. The TPRS method was developed as an outgrowth of TPR by a high school Spanish teacher named Blaine Ray in the 1990s. This method begins with a small story created by the teacher, and the story is constructed around the repetition of three new abstract phrases. A more descriptive name for the process would be “story-asking,” since the teacher is constantly asking the story into existence. It shifts students from answering the lower-level questions of TPR (yes and no, choices, wh- words) to answering questions that require higher-level thinking skills involving fantasy creation and personalization of the original story. The teacher has a structure of questioning that must be followed, yet at the same time, he or she must be able to take this line of questioning into whatever direction the students take the story. TPRS should be preceded by TPR until students have a vocabulary base of about 100–150 words, which can be achieved after about one to two weeks of foreign language classes at the high school level and two to four weeks of college (since there are typically fewer college sessions per week). The following steps require a good 90 minutes; shorter classes can take up where they left off the preceding day.

When to Use It

- To practice listening
- To involve kinesthetic learning
- To provide extended speaking

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

None

Preparation Time

5 minutes

Activity Time

10–90 minutes, depending on follow-up

Preparation

Select a story appropriate for the class and unit or theme. Identify objects or actions in the story where gestures can be used to illustrate the story. The number of gestures can vary.

Procedure

1. Demonstrate gestures that represent each of the expressions. Teach three gestures at a time. Gesture for one minute until students can do the gestures with eyes closed when hearing the expressions.
2. Tell the story, doing the gestures along with the students the first time.
3. Repeat the story, checking on students' understanding through their gestures.
4. Pair off students (or group them) to have them tell and gesture the story to one another.

Variations

1. Retell the story with mistakes that students correct.
2. As students read through the story that was just acted out, the instructor points out a few points of grammar, focusing initially on meaning; this is known as pop-up grammar questioning. For example, we say, “What is the verb ending for *they* and *he*?” not “What are the third person plural and singular verb endings?” Answer any other questions from the students.
3. Distribute an extended reading that uses the new structures and that is much longer than the original story. Pose comprehension questions in the target language.
4. Students complete a timed writing of the original story; give five minutes to write as much of the story as they can recall in the target language.

5. Using a list of guide words (verbs), students retell the original story in pairs with one student telling and the other gesturing, and then a volunteer can retell the story to the class.
6. Have students draw pictures for the story in graphic novel form.
7. Improvise the story, with the class eliciting the key items of a story, for example, a person, place, food, action, etc. Selecting gestures and creating the story can also be done in groups after the key elements are selected. Compare the different stories created.

The instructor should do no more than three expressions per day. Words must be repeated in varied contexts at least 50 to 100 times before students are able to internalize them. By starting with approximately a dozen words in three expressions, students are ultimately able to read an extended story of 300 words because of the surrounding contextual clues.

Dealing with Grammar

To deal with grammar in TPR and TPRS, we spend about five to ten minutes at a time analyzing the grammar in the daily assessments, which occur after the lesson. We find students are actually very curious about grammar (form) and how it functions once they've had a realistic, meaningful experience (content) with the language.

Jump to the Right/Left

This activity combines identifying mistakes in sentences with kinesthetic activity. It takes little preparation and gets students up and about in class.

Preparation

Decide what vocabulary (or grammatical structure) you want to use. Prepare grammatically correct and incorrect sentences that focus on the particular vocabulary or grammatical structure. E.g., (present perfect) I haven't ever been there. I haven't ever made a cake. (present tense questions) Do you like apples? Do you read often?

Procedure

1. Ask the students to stand in a line, one behind the other.
2. Stand on a chair — or somewhere you can be seen and heard — in front of the students. Make sure that you have control over the class.
3. Tell the students that you are going to read sentences or questions that may or may not have mistakes in them. They must jump to the right if they think the sentence is correct, and to the left if the sentence is incorrect.
4. If student(s) jump to the left, have one give the corrected version.
5. Keep repeating this activity over the course of the lesson, but note down the mistakes they make and use the sentences again.

Variations

1. This activity can be used with any kind of common language mistake: lexical, grammatical, syntactical, or pragmatic.
2. Students can write the sentences.
3. Have students clap if the sentence is correct; do nothing if it's incorrect.

When to Use It

- To raise awareness of common errors among students
- To review content
- To get the whole class involved at once

Level

Depending on material



Skills



Practice



Materials

A list of sentences to be read

Preparation Time

Varies

Activity Time

5–10 minutes

The Line

This is a simple kinesthetic activity that takes no resources and very little preparation. It's also very versatile in that many structures and themes can be inserted into the activity. Students respond to statements or questions by moving forward one step if the statement is true for them. It's a great visual for all.

Preparation

Instructor selects the statements to be used in the activity. They could be ones to practice the past tense, future tense, special vocabulary, etc. (e.g., You ate pasta last night. You watched a movie in the last week. You will go to sleep after midnight tonight. You will cook dinner this week. You are wearing a sweatshirt. You have brown shoes on.).

Procedure

1. Line up as many students as you can from the class (or start with a sample). It's possible to have various lines on different sides of the room.
2. Tell students you will read various statements. If the statement is true for them, they should step forward one step. Start with a few obvious ones first, such as: Today is (fill in the day). We are in (fill in the city).

Variations

1. Use statements with grammar mistakes in them. Have students step forward if they can spot the mistake. After they step forward, they should be able to correct the error if you call on them.
2. Have students create the statements. This can be done on the spot or as an assignment.
3. Concentrate on one area that you have gone over recently in class (grammar, theme, etc.).
4. Use true/false statements that relate to a reading from the class.
5. Use with comparisons — Step forward if X is bigger than Y. Step forward if A is heavier than B, etc.
6. If space is limited or if it's easier, have students stand up at their desks to indicate their answer. Another option is to have students stand to indicate they believe a statement is incorrect or false.

When to Use It

- To have students express understanding of statements/concepts
- To distinguish correct/incorrect grammar
- To provide kinesthetic learning opportunities

Level



Any, depending on statements used

Skills



Practice



Materials

Statements

Preparation Time

5 minutes

Activity Time

10–15 minutes

Cross Out

Cross Out is a simple game that takes very little material and gets students involved. Students make the game board in pairs and then play using the board they created. The goal is simply to cross out the word or drawing that the teacher defines, spells, or describes. The student in the pair who crosses out the most wins.

Preparation

Select the words to be reviewed (colors, verbs, clothing, animals, food, professions, etc.).

Procedure

1. Put students in pairs and have them share one sheet of paper.
2. Call out the words to review and instruct students to write them on their game board. They can write the words anywhere they'd like on the board (sideways, upside down, etc.).
3. After all words are dictated and written down, start play by focusing on one word at a time. Students are to compete to find the word first and cross it out.
4. Mix up the game by varying the following:
 - a. Saying the word
 - b. Spelling the word
 - c. Defining the word
 - d. Spelling the word backwards
 - e. Giving the translation

Variations

1. Have each student design a game board and then switch cards during game time.
2. Invite students to give the clues.

When to Use It

- To review vocabulary
- To add a tactile element to learning
- To add competition and time pressure
- To recognize words

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Paper

Preparation Time

A few minutes to go over rules

Activity Time

5–10 minutes

MUSIC



Music

By Kristin Lems, Ed.D.

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Music, like language, can be considered a foundational, human-defining feature. Our participation in music-making is not only universal, occurring in all societies across time and space, but even predates *Homo sapiens*! Flutes have been found around the campfire in Neanderthal cave sites, in artifacts that date back 53,000 years (Leutwyler 2001).

We hear our mother's voice crooning a lullaby, participate in music through religious ritual in nearly all the world's religions, and use music to accompany our important rites of passage. Moreover, in this age of globalization and internet, music is more easily accessible to listen to than ever. It accompanies everyday activities, from the music piped into shopping malls and restaurants all the way to our own musical devices found in cars, homes, and earbuds. Young adults listen to musical playlists full of English-language pop music, and that playlist forms an important part of their identities.

It's no wonder music is so universally pleasurable and important. After all, it lights up many areas of the brain. Due to powerful new neuroimaging technology, such as PET scans, fMRI, and MEG, researchers are now able to see what parts of the brain are activated by different kinds of human activity. Making music "lights up" more areas of the brain than other activities: playing and listening to music activate not only the auditory processing areas, but also Broca's area (connected to pattern finding for both music and language), the visual cortex ("the mind's eye"), and the limbic system, which processes emotion (Moreno 2009). A laboratory director from Harvard Medical School, Gottfried Schlaug, puts it best: "I would challenge everybody to come up with another activity that engages as much real estate in the brain as music-making does" (Cole 2011).

Music enhances certain brain functions, including those which create and process language. What is it about song in particular that makes it so central to the language enterprise? Researcher Diana Deutsch explains, "The boundary between speech and song can be very fragile" (Deutsch 2010, 37), since there is melody in speech, and there is speech in song.

Those of us who teach English as a second language (ESL) already know all of this to be true. Songs and music work magic in the ESL/EFL classroom, for learners of all ages and at all stages! There's almost no item in English language education — whether it be vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, listening skills, cultural studies, writing prompts, discussion topics, or practicing for a performance — that songs cannot support. In-class music-based activities can lower the affective filter and let the language enter in ways that other modes cannot achieve. What could look like a pronunciation drill instead becomes a "thrill," as learners practice lyrics to sing a new song expressively. A mystery hidden in a song, such as "Ode to Billie Joe," can provoke passionate discussions or writing responses. English-language pop music is unusually accessible to the English learner due to its repetition, simple lexicon, and use of the second person (Murphy 1992). Adult immigrants studying ESL can also derive many benefits from the gateway of music, in learning English and in sharing information about their heritage cultures (Lems 2001).

This chapter contains many creative and flexible lesson plans into which you can plug a song of your choice. The simplicity of the lesson plans belies the profound effect they can have on your classroom. With music, you've got a tiger by the tale — just get on and ride!

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Disappearing Song

Students often want to know the lyrics of songs, and this activity can be used with many different genres to suit many tastes, but is better for those with clearer lyrics and appropriate topics. Depending on the song chosen, this activity can lead into extended discussion about a related theme or even prompt a grammar or vocabulary lesson.

Preparation

Choose a song. Before the activity, write the lyrics on the board.

Procedure

1. Go over the lyrics line by line with the students.
2. Play the song or practice singing the song with the students, line by line.
3. Erase approximately 10% of the words.
4. Draw a blank space under each erased word.
5. Practice singing the song with the students again. Make sure that they can remember and sing the missing words.
6. Erase another 10% of the words and follow the procedure in Step 2.
7. Now erase an additional 20 to 30%, so that you only have about 50% of the words remaining. Practice singing the song again.
8. Finally, erase an additional 20 to 30% so that you have about 20% of the words remaining. Sing the song one final time.

Variation

Put up some of the lyrics first. Ask students to memorize the lyrics in 60 seconds. Cover up the last part of the sentence for each line. Check students on what they remember. Replay the song. Continue with other parts of the lyrics.

Note to Teacher

The number of words that you choose to erase and the pace at which you remove them will depend on the length of the song, the difficulty of the lyrics, and the level of your students. You do not need to erase a high percentage of words. Also be careful about singing the song too many times. You do not want it to become boring.

When to Use It

- To practice reduced forms (typically found in songs)
- To work on pronunciation and intonation
- To prepare for a discussion

Level



Skills



Practice

Materials

Song as audio file in appropriate format for technology, lyrics

Preparation Time

Lyrics should be known and written on the board ahead of time. Any grammar, vocabulary, or follow-on discussion should be thought out ahead of time.

Activity Time

20–30 minutes

Possible Resources

Sing Out Loud: Traditional Songs

<https://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/sing-out-loud-traditional-songs>

Sing Out Loud: Children's Songs

<https://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/sing-out-loud-childrens-songs>

Question Quest

In this activity, students discuss in pairs/groups to create questions to match the answers they are given. Students share the possible questions with the class.

Preparation

Prepare the answers to be distributed to students as well as how you plan to distribute them — e.g., slips of paper to pairs/groups, slide to project to group, etc.

Procedure

1. Select a song with questions in the lyrics.
2. Prepare possible answers to the questions in the song.
3. Distribute the answers to students on either slips of paper or slides.
4. Put students into pairs/groups.
5. Instruct students to create possible questions to match the answers they were given. Set up a time for the task to be completed.
6. After the designated time, have students share the possible questions with the class.
7. Go over the questions with the group.
8. Play the song with the original questions.
9. Compare the questions in the song with the ones provided by students.
10. Discuss the song and its message/meaning.

Variations

1. Students could match questions/possible answers on slips of papers to form pairs; then, they could discuss possible scenarios and/or where the questions came from prior to the teacher playing the song.
2. The questions could also come from recorded interviews, podcasts, etc.
3. If interviews or podcasts are used, students could be given the task of identifying who the interviewee is, where or when the interview took place, etc.

When to Use It

- To review question formation
- To promote pair/group work
- To energize a class
- To prompt discussion
- To activate students' background knowledge about a particular topic

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Answers to preselected questions, songs or other selected audio segment

Preparation Time

15–20 minutes

Activity Time

15–30 minutes

Possible Resources

Talk show interviews
Podcasts
Video or movie segment
Songs, e.g., “Are You Lonesome Tonight?”

Song Bingo

This is a slight twist on traditional Bingo. Students draw the grid — either a 5x5 or 3x3 — and fill in the grid from a list of words. The words are preselected from the song by the instructor.

Preparation

The facilitator should select enough words for the Bingo game card — at least 24 for the 5x5 and eight for 3x3. It's appropriate to select more than eight for the 3x3, as students select the words, and the likelihood of different selections is encouraged. The facilitator should also know in what order the words appear in the song/text. That way, s/he will know whether the Bingo winner heard all the words on the game card.

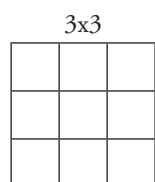
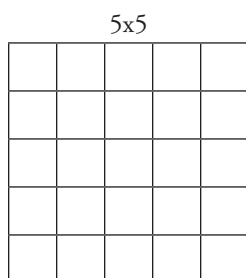
Procedure

1. Instruct students to draw the grid that will be used (3x3 or 5x5).
2. Give the vocabulary words selection (write them on the board or provide them on a screen). Alphabetical is suggested.
3. Tell students they will listen to a song. These words are from the song, and they are to cross out any words as they hear them. The first student to get them all vertically, horizontally, or diagonally will have Bingo and win.
4. When a student has Bingo, check the words s/he has heard with the word list in order. A student may have Bingo before the song is finished.

Variations

1. Give the words already printed on a 5x5 grid.
2. Have students select their "game board" by drawing a circle around the words they would like to select.

Sample Bingo Boards



When to Use It

- To raise students' interest in a topic
- To activate students' background knowledge about a particular topic
- To energize a class
- To practice discrete listening

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Words preselected from the song, paper for grid

Preparation Time

15–20 minutes

Activity Time

10–20 minutes

Possible Resources

Sing Out Loud: Traditional Songs

<https://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/sing-out-loud-traditional-songs>

Sing Out Loud: Children's Songs

<https://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/sing-out-loud-childrens-songs>

Express Your Feelings

This activity focuses on emotions and music and the relationship between them. Students can have different interpretations of music than the lyrics suggest, and this can be a wonderful point of departure.

Preparation

The facilitator selects a song that students will likely have some feelings about — regardless of whether they are already familiar with the lyrics.

Procedure

1. Play the song without any pre-vocabulary teaching or warm-up.
2. Have students write down (or draw or make a collage based on) how the music made them feel and give supporting statements (they can use lyrics they hear or describe the music).
3. Have them share what they think the song is about with a partner.
4. Hand out the lyrics and play the song again. Ask if anyone can explain the meaning of the song. Add any information the students did not express.
5. Then ask them how their interpretations of the song's music compared to the actual lyrics.

Variations

1. Students rewrite the song in groups using vocabulary learned in class and/or a discussion.
2. Lead a discussion highlighting how music can affect our emotions or how emotions influence music choice.

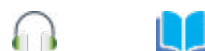
When to Use It

- To raise students' interest/awareness in emotions expressed in music
- To practice discrete listening

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Lyrics

Preparation Time

5–20 minutes (depending on whether you need to type the lyrics)

Activity Time

10–20 minutes

Possible Resources

Sing Out Loud: Traditional Songs

<https://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/sing-out-loud-traditional-songs>

Sing Out Loud: Children's Songs

<https://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/sing-out-loud-childrens-songs>

Antonyms

This activity challenges students to find antonyms in song lyrics. The level that it's appropriate for depends on the words available and the words students choose from the lyrics.

Preparation

The facilitator selects a song in which the lyrics lend themselves to antonyms. These could be simple words, such as *black/white* and *short/tall*, or could be more advanced, such as *share/hoard* and *play/fight*, etc.

Procedure

1. Write the antonyms that have been preselected on the board.
2. Elicit the opposites of each of the words in the list on the board.
3. Play the song and have students raise their hands when they identify words that are the opposite of those from the board.

Variations

1. Provide word cards for students to hold up as they hear the opposites in the song.
2. Provide students with a full list of the lyrics and have them follow along while identifying the words that are the opposites.
3. Have students rewrite the lyrics to match the new opposite lyrics.

When to Use It

- To develop vocabulary
- To practice discrete listening
- To provide a creative writing exercise

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Lyrics or cards

Preparation Time

10–20 minutes

Activity Time

10–45 minutes — if students are going to rewrite the lyrics

Possible Resources

Sing Out Loud: Traditional Songs

<https://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/sing-out-loud-traditional-songs>

Sing Out Loud: Children's Songs

<https://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/sing-out-loud-childrens-songs>

Correcting You're Your Grammar

This activity focuses on grammatically incorrect use of English in lyrics and raises awareness of the use of these forms in music.

Preparation

Select a song in which the lyrics include slang, reduced forms (*gonna, wanna, gotta*), or incorrect usage (*He don't love me*) of English.

Procedure

1. Have students listen to the song and note the examples of slang, reduced forms, or incorrect usage of English. Be sure to only include those items that are included in the lyrics.
2. Play the song a few times for students.
3. Have students compare their lists of items.
4. Have students convert the English items into standard English.

Variations

Have students change the lyrics of songs to include slang, reduced forms, or incorrect usage. Students can also try to sing the new versions.

When to Use It

- To recognize common usage of English in music
- To practice discrete listening

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Lyrics

Preparation Time

10–20 minutes (depending on whether you need to type the lyrics)

Activity Time

10–45 minutes — if students are going to rewrite the lyrics

Possible Resources

Sing Out Loud: Traditional Songs

<https://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/sing-out-loud-traditional-songs>

Sing Out Loud: Children's Songs

<https://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/sing-out-loud-childrens-songs>

Mixed-Up Lyrics

In this activity, students predict the sequence of lyrics. The task might be easier in terms of prediction if the lyrics tell a story or have sequence words.

Preparation

Prepare the lyrics of a song to be cut into strips. It would be best if the lyrics were retyped or spaced in a way that didn't make it obvious how they were originally ordered. For the standard procedure, you will need one set of strips for every three students in the class. For Variation 1, you will need one strip of paper for every student in the class.

Procedure

1. Divide students into groups with three students per group.
2. Explain that you are going to give them a set of the lyrics of the song. They should read through the lyrics and put them into the order they think is correct. Give them about five minutes to do this. Clarify any vocabulary that they may not know.
3. Tell them that as you play the song, they should check their work and put the strips in the correct order.
4. Play the song two or three times so that the majority of the students have the order correct, then check their answers.
5. Go over any expressions, vocabulary, or grammar that may be relevant to their classroom work.

Variations

1. Count how many lines there are in the song. Divide the class into groups with this number of students in each group. For example, if the song has 15 lines, then each group should have 15 students. Give each student one line of the song. Ask the students to stand up. Tell them that as they listen to the song, they need to stand in the correct order according to their sentence and what they hear.
2. For lower level classes, you may just want to divide the song into four or five sections.

When to Use It

- To listen for discrete words and phrases
- To help students make print and sound connections

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Lyrics cut up

Preparation Time

10–20 minutes (if you need to type the lyrics)

Activity Time

10–25 minutes

Possible Resources

Sing Out Loud: Traditional Songs

<https://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/sing-out-loud-traditional-songs>

Sing Out Loud: Children's Songs

<https://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/sing-out-loud-childrens-songs>

Music Moves

By having students create gestures that reflect the meaning of new vocabulary from the lyrics of popular songs, they conjure up an emotional reaction resulting in increased motivation and longer retention. As students listen for the words in a song and respond with creative movement, their skill development comes more effortlessly from joyful activity rather than from nose to the grindstone determination.

Preparation

Choose a song to play for the class. Select a set of 10–15 key words from the song that can be mimed easily.

Procedure

1. Make sure students have a copy of the lyrics. You can write them on the board or display them with a projector. Circle the key words that you have selected.
2. Elicit possible motions that could be associated with each key word. For example, the word *tall* could be represented by students reaching their hands up straight towards the sky, or it could be represented by holding one hand up with the palm facing the floor. When the students have suggested a number of different mimes for the key word, ask the class to choose the one mime they like the best.
3. Practice that mime and then go onto the next key word until you have one mime for each key word. Practice them all so that students can remember them.
4. Play the song and have the students sing along and do all of the correct mimes when they hear the words.

Variations

1. The class can be divided into groups, and the different groups can be responsible for particular movements.
2. The class can be divided into groups, and the groups can compete to see which group can do the mimes correctly.
3. If using equipment with speakers is not feasible, help students who are willing to learn the song and perform for the others.
4. In addition to writing single words on the cards, include phrases, collocations, etc. The gestures would then become more elaborate.

When to Use It

- To allow students to learn vocabulary from an authentic source
- To help students develop listening skills in a highly motivating activity
- To help students make print and sound connections
- To relieve stress among students
- To energize and motivate students

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Lyrics as a handout or to be projected

Preparation Time

10–20 minutes (if you need to type the lyrics)

Activity Time

20–30 minutes

Possible Resources

Sing Out Loud: Traditional Songs

<https://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/sing-out-loud-traditional-songs>

Sing Out Loud: Children's Songs

“Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes” is a great song for this.

<https://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/sing-out-loud-childrens-songs>

Song Groups

This activity is a longer-term activity and can be given to students as group project work.

Preparation

Give the group one week to prepare. Students may require materials such as colored pens/markers, glue, and paper for making posters.

Procedure

1. Divide the class into small groups with five or six students per group.
2. Whenever you want to use a song in class, select one group to prepare the presentation to make to the whole class. A different group can do the next song.
3. Assign a different role/task to each member of the group. Their roles are described as follows:

The Leader introduces and moderates the presentation. The leader should design a listening task for the students to do when listening to the song. This could be answering particular questions, writing down certain words, or doing certain actions.

The Verse Choosers choose a favorite or interesting line(s) from the song, explain the message of the line(s), give examples to illustrate the meaning of the line(s), and discuss why they chose those lines.

The Culture Explorer finds out about the song's role in American culture in the past and present, and tells the class what s/he has learned.

The Performers sing the song (or lip-sync) for the class in their choice of singing style. They can then explain why they chose that particular style.

4. On the day of the activity, allow the group to lead the presentation: introducing the song, explaining the verses and culture, giving the performance, and listening to the song.

Variations

1. Have students find a song that is similar in their own culture and discuss the similarities.
2. Vary song genres in order to expose students to different types of music (rock, country, blues, jazz, etc.).

When to Use It

- To lower students' inhibitions about using language before an audience by giving presentations and singing
- To improve research skills
- To develop teamwork

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Lyrics and copy of the song for the group (or a link to find it on YouTube), colored pens/markers, glue, and paper

Preparation Time

10–20 minutes for instructor (if you need to type the lyrics); a week or longer for student groups

Activity Time

30–45 minutes

Possible Resources

Sing Out Loud: Traditional Songs

<https://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/sing-out-loud-traditional-songs>

Sing Out Loud: Children's Songs

<https://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/sing-out-loud-childrens-songs>

One, Several, Many

This activity is good for pre-listening. Students predict the possible content of a song and also possible additional lyrics.

Preparation

Choose a song to play for the class. Select five key content words from the song so that, when written on the board or presented to the class, students will be able to make educated guesses about the content of the song.

Procedure

1. Write the title of the song on the board. Elicit the meanings of the words, explaining any of the words in the title that students may not know.
2. Explain that this is the title of a song they are going to listen to. Ask the students to guess what the song will be about.
3. Nominate individual students or have students call out their ideas about what the song may be about. Write up their ideas on the board.
4. If students make predictions in their L1 because they do not have the vocabulary to express themselves, then you may wish to teach them some key words. However, limit the number of new words to approximately five to eight.
5. Write on the board five key content words from the song. Ask the students if they want to change their predictions. Write any of their new ideas on the board.
6. When doing the first listening, ask students to check and see if their predictions were correct or not.

Variations

1. Divide students into small groups of four or five. Ask them to discuss and write down their predictions in groups. Then ask each group for their ideas. The group with the most accurate predictions can be acknowledged with applause or a small reward.
2. Before the students make their predictions, write on the board: Who?, Where?, What?, and Why? Ask students to make predictions for each question. For example, Who will be the main character in the song: a man, a woman, a mother, a cowboy?; Where will the song take place?; What will happen in the song?; Why will this happen?

When to Use It

- To help students to predict the possible content of the song
- To raise students' interest level in the song
- To introduce vocabulary related to the song

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Lyrics

Preparation Time

5 minutes

Activity Time

10–15 minutes

Possible Resources

Sing Out Loud: Traditional Songs

<https://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/sing-out-loud-traditional-songs>

Sing Out Loud: Children's Songs

<https://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/sing-out-loud-childrens-songs>

Drawing to Instrumental Music

In this activity, students have an opportunity to respond to instrumental music, which has no lyrics. Simple art supplies are offered, such as colored pencils, crayons, or markers, and a plain sheet of paper for each student. As the piece plays, students are invited to scribble, draw, doodle, write, or simply listen as they see fit. After the piece has been played, students share the drawing or words and describe how the piece of music made them feel. If the class is relatively small, each student shares his/her drawing with the whole class; if it's larger, students share their drawing in a group of 4–6. This activity has no right or wrong, and allows students at all proficiency levels to experience the music on a non-verbal plane and then share their art with others. They may have very few words about their art, because the art, not the words, is the statement.

Preparation

Make sure each student has a flat surface to draw on.

Procedure

1. Tell students that you are going to be drawing to music together, and then talking about your drawings. Tell them the name and composer of the music, and let them know how long the piece of music is going to be so that they can pace themselves (5–6 minutes is ideal). Let them know that during the piece, they can choose to draw, doodle, write words, or simply sit and enjoy the music with their eyes closed.
2. Distribute the paper and drawing supplies, making sure each student has several colors to work with. Make sure each student has a flat surface to draw on.
3. After the piece is finished, allow students to put finishing touches on their art. Then have them share their art with the others in the class, talking about how the music made them feel. The teacher may want to go first, or not go at all.
4. Students will respond to each other's drawings and the stories about them. Often, surprising stories and feelings will emerge from the experience, and the class will feel closer because of the experience.

Variations

1. If students are so inclined, you can put the drawings up on a wall, or collect them into a folder.
2. You could choose music that has words, but in a language with which nobody is familiar. For example, many “world music” pieces are in languages that are not known to most of their fans, such as the music of the Tuareg group from Mali, Tinariwen.
3. You could give a theme to consider prior to the music and see what items of that theme they may end up incorporating into the drawing.

When to Use It

- After students have had a stressful semester, or the last day of the week
- As an introductory activity when students are nervous about a new class

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

- a clean piece of unlined paper for each student
- a bunch of drawing materials with enough for each student to have several colors. You may put a bunch of pencils at each table of four rather than giving them to each student individually.
- something to play the music — a CD player, a smartphone, or streaming from online

Preparation Time

The time spent choosing the piece and bringing the art supplies

Activity Time

Approximately 30 minutes

Sample Music

Cirque du Soleil, Yanni, New Age music, film music

SPEAKING



Speaking

*By David Malatesta
Illinois, United States*

*You learn to speak by speaking, to study by studying, to run by running, to work by working;
in just the same way, you learn to love by loving.*

Anatole France

Of all the four modes of communication, teaching speaking tends to be the most complicating. Why is this so? For starters, reading is a solitary activity — you can read a book, a magazine, or an internet article on the train or before you fall asleep at night. Listening can be practiced alone through a variety of internet sites or radio broadcasts or television shows. Writing can be practiced through journaling, writing emails, or the now less frequent letter writing, where the response comes two weeks later. As an educator, I often marvel at my students' ability to practice on their own and guide their own learning. You can practice these three modes just about anywhere, anytime, in any manner.

Practicing speaking is inherently different.

When it comes to learning another language, if you practice speaking alone, people will consider you eccentric or, worse yet, absolutely insane. Imagine the looks you would get while traveling home from work on the bus while practicing a dialogue or rehearsing some grammatical feature! On a good day, a fellow language learner might join in with you and help you practice and improve your oral proficiency! You might even make a new friend or even find your soul mate. Imagine the stories you would have to tell your grandchildren! A more nefarious outcome could be that you spend the evening in your local mental institution. The more likely scenario would be that you would have to negotiate a few awkward stares, and possibly deal with some minor social isolation.

So what are we left with as teachers? We have to help our students practice speaking in the context of the classroom. In other words, WE model, THEY speak, WE listen. Since we teachers are a group of tremendous talkers, listening while our students speak can be a challenge for some of us. Ahem, am I talking about myself here? Do pardon any introspection and self-examination on my part.

Imagine for a moment a violin teacher who shows a student how to play scales but doesn't pass the instrument to the student and allow him or her to try. Imagine a tennis coach who demonstrates proper serve technique but never allows his or her pupil to try it out. Imagine for a moment an English teacher who stands in front of the classroom lecturing for 50 minutes without ever listening to the students negotiate meaning amongst themselves.

We hope the speaking activities included in this volume help you be a more effective speaking teacher; feel free to use them and adapt them as you see fit for your particular situation. I'll conclude with a simple question. If the English language classroom is filled more with your voice than that of your students', how crazy is that?

Four Corners

In this activity, the corners of the room are labeled. Students respond to a question prompt or statement and go to the corner that corresponds to their answer. Students in each group discuss why they responded the way they did. Possible corner labels: A, B, C, D; 1, 2, 3, 4; Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree.

Preparation

Prepare the labels for the four corners and the way they will be subdivided. E.g., For controversial statements, prepare the statements; for numbers or letters, prepare the categories; etc.

Procedure

1. Put the labels up in the four corners.
2. Write the statement or question prompt on the board.
3. Instruct students to identify which category they are in based on their opinion or experience.
4. Have students move to the relevant corners.
5. Provide additional questions for students to discuss in their groups while in the corners.
6. After the designated time, have a group member in each corner summarize the discussion.

Variations

1. Students could discuss their opinions in groups, collect arguments if they're based on a controversial statement, and write an essay on the topic using the arguments in the discussion.
2. The four corners could be regrouped into two for agree vs. disagree, and the groups could prepare arguments for a debate.
3. The instructor could change the question prompt or statement to have students move around as their opinions change based on the question/statement presented. If the statements are related to the same theme, it could provide additional discussion to show how opinions about one portion of a theme are different for different individuals.
4. Ask their opinion on a somewhat controversial topic, e.g., Do you consider helping someone on a test friendship or cheating? The students line up along a continuum with *clearly cheating* on one end and *just being friendly* on the other end of the continuum. If the class is very large or you want to make more of a distinction among answers, use corners as the end points and students can *wrap* themselves around the room to illustrate their responses on the continuum. Have them discuss their answer to a nearby student and/or have students explain why they placed themselves along the continuum as they did.

When to Use It

- To raise students' interest in a topic
- To activate students' background knowledge about a particular topic
- To energize a class
- To divide the class into groups
- To get a sense of how much students know about a topic

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Statement or instructions for the four divisions

Preparation Time

5 minutes

Activity Time

10–30 minutes

Possible Corners to Use

Strongly Agree — Strongly Disagree Corners:
Prepare controversial statements for students to agree/disagree with related to the theme of the class (song, text, movie, etc.)

Numbers:

Prepare the range of numbers and categories

Number of siblings: 0, 1–2, 3–4, 5+

Number of years studying English:

<1, 1–2, 3–4, 5+

Favorites:

Music: hip-hop, pop rock, classical, jazz

Seasons: summer, fall, winter, spring

Movies: drama, scary, comedy, documentary

Emotions: love, like, dislike, hate

Sample Questions for Four Corners

<p>1. In what month is your birthday?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) January – March b) April – June c) July – September d) October – December 	<p>2. How many years have you been a teacher?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Less than 2 years b) 2–5 years c) 6–10 years d) More than 10 years
<p>3. How many siblings do you have?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) 0 b) 1 c) 2 d) 3 or more 	<p>4. My favorite activity or hobby is...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Athletic b) Musical c) Intellectual d) Artistic
<p>5. How many grandparents do you still have living?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) 0 b) 1 c) 2 d) 3 or 4 	<p>6. Have you ever traveled to the U.S.?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Yes b) No c) Almost d) No, but I've traveled to another English-speaking country.
<p>7. What kind of students do you generally teach?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Beginning students b) Low intermediate students c) High intermediate students d) Advanced students 	<p>8. What kind of pet do you have?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Cat or dog b) Bird or fish c) Another kind of pet d) I don't have a pet
<p>9. What is your favorite season?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Spring b) Summer c) Fall d) Winter 	<p>10. How do you like to spend your vacations?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Traveling b) Relaxing c) Doing activities I don't normally do d) Visiting with family
<p>11. How many hours of TV do you watch a week?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) 1–5 b) 6–10 c) More than 10 d) I don't generally watch TV 	<p>12. If you could choose to have any power, which power would you choose?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Invisibility b) Flying c) Reading people's minds d) Seeing the future

Dialogue Line

This activity is good for short conversations, either patterned expressions or free discussion (see Variations for the latter).

Preparation

Select the conversation for practice. Write the stems on the board. Have students move desks if necessary to leave a big space in the front or center of the room.

Procedure

1. Divide the class in half.
2. Students form two equal circles, one inside the other. The inner circle faces out and the outer circle faces in (so the students are facing one another).
3. Students exchange a patterned conversation (generally one question and one answer each) before rotating to their left to a new partner and repeating the exchange.

Variations

This activity can be used for free discussion with just topics or questions written on a piece of paper and put in between the students. When students rotate, the paper stays on the floor for the next pair. Students can provide the topics or questions on pieces of paper to be distributed for use in the activity.

When to Use It

- To consolidate expressions
- To practice conversations
- To get students up and moving

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Slips of paper

Preparation Time

5 minutes

Activity Time

10–15 minutes



Go Fishing

In this activity, students are prompted to include functions and vocabulary in a discussion/conversation.

Preparation

Select a topic for discussion, preferably a current event or a subject familiar to the students. Prepare slips of paper with the functions and/or vocabulary to be practiced. Identify the best cue to prompt students to “fish” for functions to include in their discussion. The cue could be a hand signal, whistle, turning off the lights, or the pausing of background music.

Procedure

1. Place slips of paper with selected functions in a small fishbowl or container.
2. Depending on class size, split students into two/three discussion groups. If multiple groups take part in the activity, prepare the same set of functions and place them in different containers for each additional group. Each group should have their own set.
3. Write the statement or conversation prompt on the board.
4. Instruct students to take one item each from the fishbowl and explain that those functions and/or vocabulary items must be included in their discussion.
5. Tell students that they need to “go fishing” for new functions and vocabulary when you give them the selected signal.
6. Teacher (or students) can assign monitor roles to members of the groups to make sure everyone “goes fishing” and that items “fished out” are included in the discussion.

Variations

1. The instructor could prompt the discussion by showing a brief news segment or video on the topic to be discussed.
2. After the activity, students could be grouped based on their views of the issue being discussed and have a debate.
3. Students could write a paragraph or essay (depending on their level) as a follow-up to the in-class discussion.
4. Students could conduct and record interviews with their classmates as a follow-up activity.

When to Use It

- To review vocabulary and functions
- To practice fluency
- To energize a class

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

List of vocabulary items and functions; bowl or other container

Preparation Time

10 minutes

Activity Time

10–15 minutes

Possible Functions/Vocabulary

I couldn't agree more.

I agree with...

In my opinion...

I believe that...

I feel that...

I think...

That may be true, but...

You might be right, but...

I'm afraid I have to disagree with you.

How do you feel about...?

Where do you stand on...(issue)?

What are your views on...?

Tiny Bubbles in the Air!

This activity is good for helping students recall vocabulary words and can be used as a fun competition.

Preparation

Identify categories of vocabulary for review (nouns, verbs, adjectives, or vocabulary related to food, clothing, etc.). Prepare a bubble mixture (plastic container with bubble solution and wand). If doing this activity with groups, prepare one bubble mixture per group.

Procedure

1. Divide the class into teams.
2. Distribute the bubble solution. Choose a team to blow bubbles first.
3. The teacher (or another student) calls out a category of nouns, adjectives, or verbs as a student begins to blow bubbles.
4. A member of the bubble-blowing team tries to say as many words as s/he can that pertain to that category before all the bubbles disappear.
5. The team that is able to say the most words receives a point.

Variations

The categories need not be limited to lists of words; this activity can be used with sentences to describe a class member, a famous person, or an image: He's tall, He's blond, He's a politician. It could also be played with different verb conjugations, reported speech, etc.

When to Use It

- To review language points
- To create a lively learning experience
- To practice speaking

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Bubble jars with wands (one for each group)

Preparation Time

5 minutes

Activity Time

10+ minutes

Interrupt My Story!

This activity helps students with fluency and asking questions. Students try to interrupt the speaker's story by asking for more information about the details of the speaker's statements.

Preparation

Plan a simple story that you want to tell the students. It can be factual or made up.

Procedure

1. Tell the students that you are going to tell them a story. Their goal is to interrupt you as much as possible to ask you questions about what you said, and to get more information.
2. Begin telling the story. The first time around, you may have to prompt them to ask questions or demonstrate with just one student.
3. Students will interrupt you frequently and ask questions about the details in the story. Continue until you reach a good stopping place, usually after five or so minutes.

Variations

1. Divide students into teams. The students who ask you the most questions win. (Note: The questions must be logical and relating to what you just said, not silly or random questions.)
2. Students can work in pairs or small groups. One student tells the story while the partner or teammates ask questions.
3. Instead of asking questions, have a student contribute an object verbally, so that the storyteller must incorporate the object into his/her story.

Example

Teacher: Yesterday,

Student: What time was it?

Teacher: 8:00. Yesterday, at 8:00, I was riding the subway to work when

Student: Which subway line?

Teacher: The red line. I was riding the red line to work when the train suddenly stopped and everyone crashed into each other.

Student: Did anyone get hurt?

When to Use It

- To warm the students up
- To review some lexical content at the end of the day
- To practice speaking
- To practice question formation

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

None

Preparation Time

5 minutes

Activity Time

5–8 minutes

In/Out Reporting

In this activity, students listen to a news report or watch a short video segment to report to other students.

Preparation

Select two short podcasts or video segments on current events or a topic of interest to your students.

Procedure

1. Divide the students into two groups.
2. Instruct one of the groups to leave the classroom and compile a list of general *wh-* questions to ask the students who will remain in class about the listening selection.
3. Play the listening selection to the students in class.
4. The IN-group should take notes while listening to facilitate the reporting.
5. Bring the OUT-group back into the classroom and pair them up with the ones who remained.
6. The OUT-group asks the list of *wh-* questions; the IN-group reports on what they listened to/watched.
7. Play the segment again so students can compare the report they were given with the actual piece of news.
8. Switch groups and play the second listening/video segment.

Variations

1. Students create questions to ask for additional information and further clarification, to be submitted to a news site.
2. Students write paragraphs on the issue to submit to a newspaper or blog.
3. Students research and provide a follow-up report on the story/news report.
4. Students compare/contrast the issue being reported to previous events or similar events in other countries.

When to Use It

- To practice reported speech
- To review question/answer format
- To prompt conversation/discussion
- To introduce current events
- To listen for general ideas as well as detailed information

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Current news video segment, podcast, or recorded radio segment

Preparation Time

15 minutes

Activity Time

15–35 minutes

Possible Resources

Voice of America (VOA)

www.voanews.com

National Public Radio (NPR)

www.npr.org

News broadcasts

Expert Panel

This activity involves five to eight volunteers who speak on a predefined subject, but they can only create their statements with each participant contributing one word. It's challenging and good practice in word order and grammar, plus the statements often end up quite entertaining.

Preparation

Select a topic. (Alternately, you can ask the students for one.)

Procedure

1. Ask for five to eight volunteers, depending on the size of your class. The volunteers form a line at the front of the room, facing the rest of the class.
2. Tell these volunteers that they are the members of the expert panel invited to present at the 29th Annual Conference on (whatever your topic is).
3. The rest of the class is the audience. They will formulate and ask questions of the panelists.
4. The panelists, however, will each answer with just one word, one after the other, going down and back up the line. They must make sentences in order to answer the audience members' questions, but speaking only one panelist at a time and only one word at a time.
5. While you explain the above rules in detail to the panelists, ask the audience to write (or just formulate in their minds) questions for the panelists on the chosen topic.
6. After a few minutes, begin the panel discussion. Students in the audience take turns asking questions and the panelists respond.

Variations

1. This activity is a challenge for the panelists the first few times. If they are struggling to remember what their fellow panelists said, or if they are forgetting to say just one word, you can write the words in boxes (one word per box) as they say them on a nearby whiteboard or chalkboard.
2. Audience members can also participate in the same manner, by forming the questions word by word.

When to Use It

- To practice and build oral fluency
- To practice/review lexical items
- To practice discrete listening

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

A chalkboard or whiteboard could be helpful

Preparation Time

None

Activity Time

10–20 minutes

Prove It!

This activity gets students to mingle and ask one another questions using the “Can you...” structure.

Preparation

Very little preparation is necessary. The facilitator could prepare a list of physical tasks that could be performed in the classroom.

Procedure

1. Write on the board a list of physical tasks that are difficult to do (i.e., cross your eyes, roll your tongue, kiss your elbow, touch your toes, say hello in four languages, etc.).
2. Number the list.
3. Tell the class that they need to find out whether their classmates can do these things.
4. On a piece of paper, they will number the lines (if there are ten actions on the board, they will number ten lines on their paper).
5. They must then go around the room and ask each other, “Can you...?”
6. If the person says “yes,” they must ask him/her to “prove it.”
7. If the person proves he/she can do it, the student will write that person’s name next to the number on his/her paper that corresponds to the action.
8. A student wins when he/she fills every line with a name.

Variation

A different list can be drawn up if the class is outside (dunk a basketball, kick a goal, do a cartwheel, stand on your head, etc.).

Sample List

Touch your toes
Say “How are you?” in five different languages
Do five push-ups (on your toes)
Cross your eyes
Imitate an animal
Curl your tongue
Snap your fingers on both hands
Whistle
Write your name in cursive with your non-dominant hand
Text “The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog” in less than 60 seconds

When to Use It

- To practice oral fluency
- To promote class rapport
- To energize the class

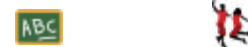
Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

None

Preparation Time

5 minutes

Activity Time

10–15 minutes

Hot and Cold

This is an old favorite activity that gets students out of their seats and changes up the dynamics of the classroom. One student is trying to find the answer and the remaining students become the “teacher.”

Preparation

This activity requires virtually no preparation. However, if there are particular concepts that are to be reviewed, the teacher could use photos of concepts and post them around the room for more guessing options.

Procedure

1. Select one student to go out of the room (or turn his/her back to the class).
2. The rest of the class identifies an object in the class for the student to “find” (the object is in the open and could be anywhere within the room).
3. Have the student return and walk around the room trying to identify the object by name. The other students give clues as to whether s/he is “hot,” “warm/er,” “cool/er,” or “cold” in relation to the selected object.
4. When the object is correctly identified, s/he must use it in a sentence.

Variations

1. Students can give cryptic clues so more vocabulary is used in the activity. E.g., If the object is a clock: *It has a face. It has two hands.*
2. The activity could be run as a Twenty Questions game, with the selected student asking only yes/no questions of the others. Is it on the wall? Is it red?; etc. The selected student must identify the object within 20 questions or s/he loses.
3. In more advanced classes, students could be required to say what they would do if they had the object using the conditional tense. (If I had a bus, I would give my friends a ride to school.)
4. A variation of hot/cold is to use clapping signals to indicate how close the student is to the object. The closer s/he gets, the louder the clapping becomes, and the farther away s/he moves, the quieter the clapping becomes.

When to Use It

- To review vocabulary
- To review yes/no questions if used in combination with Twenty Questions

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Photos/images if class is using them

Preparation Time

None

Activity Time

5–10 minutes

Me Too!

This activity is a quick and easy speaking game that requires little preparation and can be used to emphasize simple verb structures (I can/can't; I like/don't like; I have/don't have; etc.).

Procedure

1. Have students stand in a circle.
2. Start the activity by having a student say something about him/herself (e.g., I can swim).
3. If the next student in the circle can swim, s/he repeats the sentence.
4. The sentence will continue to be repeated and will travel around the circle until someone says the opposite (I can't swim).
5. When that happens, the student who "broke" the chain will say a new sentence (e.g., I like chocolate), and the sentence will travel back in the other direction until someone says the opposite (I don't like chocolate).
6. The goal is to find something that everyone has in common and that can travel all the way around the classroom.

Variations

1. For big classes, have the students stand up and let the sentence travel row by row.
2. For very big classes, the class can be divided into smaller groups.

When to Use It

- To reinforce simple verb structures
- To provide fluency practice of simple verb structures
- To build class rapport

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

None

Preparation Time

None

Activity Time

10+ minutes

Clap Snap

Clap Snap has been around for many years and has been used with native speakers as a multi-tasking, think-fast game for kids in school yards and at camp. Students clap and snap out a rhythm that goes in this order:

clap hands

slap left thigh with left hand

slap right thigh with right hand

snap with left hand

snap with right hand

repeat

Preparation

Select appropriate categories to review (names, colors, verbs, clothing, cities, etc.).

Procedure

1. Demonstrate the rhythm and have students imitate.
2. Instruct students on the rules: All students do the rhythm. Someone calls out the category and the playing begins. As the game starts, one student calls out an appropriate word (depending on the category or sequence chosen) during the snaps when it's his/her turn. The next student needs to select another appropriate word during the next snap part. To change the difficulty level, the pattern rate can be slowed down or increased.
3. Play a round. A round consists of everyone calling out an appropriate word during the snap portion of the pattern when it's their turn.

Variations

1. Change up the speed as new rounds are started, or change the category after one round is completed.
2. Allow students to change the pattern or add to it.

When to Use It

- To review vocabulary
- To add a kinesthetic element to learning
- To add competition and time pressure

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

None

Preparation Time

A few minutes to go over rules

Activity Time

5–10 minutes

Comparisons

This activity encourages students to be creative in responding to cues that invite a wide range of feelings, opinions, thoughts, and ideas. Students often get so involved in expressing themselves that they forget they are practicing a grammatical structure.

Preparation

Write the names of students and famous people and/or characters on cards large enough for the entire class to see. Example:

Beyoncé
Brad Pitt
Snow White
Spider-Man
My teacher
Student's name
Etc.

Procedure

1. Shuffle the cards face down. Before asking students to do the task, provide an example first by closing your eyes (for drama) and picking two cards. Make at least three statements. For example:

My teacher	Snow White
------------	------------

- Both my teacher and Snow White are very kind.
- However, my teacher is much more intelligent.
- My teacher doesn't eat poisonous apples whereas Snow White does.

2. Now ask individual students to follow your model by selecting two cards and making three comparative/contrast statements.

Variation

This activity could also be a writing task. Students create the cards and put them into a bag and mix them up. Then each student pulls cards out of the bag and writes sentences accordingly.

When to Use It

- To practice comparative/contrast structures and expressions
- To promote creative communication
- To promote listening to classmates' responses
- To determine whether or not students have mastered using a grammatical structure

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Large cards and a marker

Preparation Time

10 minutes

Activity Time

10–15 minutes

Two Truths and a Lie

Two Truths and a Lie is a great icebreaker activity in which students use interviewing, presentation, listening, and critical reasoning skills to determine if what a classmate is saying is true. Students work in pairs, interviewing each other about personal details, and then present three “facts” to the class about their partners. The catch is that one of the facts is untrue, and it is the other students’ job to determine which statement is false.

Note that due to cultural or religious background, some students may not be comfortable with lying. In that case, consider omitting it entirely or adapting it (see Variation 3).

Preparation

None

Procedure

1. Model the activity by telling the class three “facts” about yourself, letting students know that only two of these facts are true. Ask the students to vote on or guess which of the statements is untrue.
2. Explain to students that they will do the same thing, but they will present three “facts” about their partner; however, only two of these facts will be true. Their job is to try to fool the class with the false fact. Let them know how long they will have to present.
3. Group students into pairs and give them six minutes (total) to interview each other. Ring the bell or let them know when three minutes have elapsed so they can trade roles of interviewer/interviewee.
4. Give students a specific amount of time to present the three “facts” about their partners. Usually 30–45 seconds per person is sufficient. After each presentation, let the class vote by a show of hands on which of the three facts was not true.

Variations

1. If you are working on a certain verb tense/mode, require that the students use only that one to present facts about their partner.
2. If you have students who are beginners, consider skipping the interview portion and have them present about themselves instead. Additionally, you can have beginners write the statements first, coaching them with grammar and pronunciation before they present to the class.
3. If there is cultural sensitivity to a game that involves lying, consider omitting this activity entirely, or possibly changing the name to Exaggeration Game, where students need to exaggerate one fact about their partners (rather than lie).
4. This activity can be used after a holiday or break to have students give two truths and a lie about what they did during their time away.

Example (Student Presentation)

Student (Heber): This is my classmate, Adriana. Adriana has run five kilometers without stopping. She has never eaten sushi. Adriana has cooked dinner for more than 15 people.

Teacher: Thank you, Heber. Now let’s vote on which statement your classmates believe to be false. Okay everybody, what was the first statement?

Class: Adriana has run five kilometers without stopping.

Teacher: That is correct. If you don’t believe that is true, raise your hand.

When to Use It

- As an icebreaker for students to get to know one another
- As a warm-up after a holiday

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

None

Preparation Time

None

Activity Time

2 minutes per student plus 10 minutes for introduction and interviewing

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Guest Speaker

This activity is meant to make the most of the visit of an English speaker to the classroom and to go beyond the “Ask our visitor some questions” approach. The timeline activity gives focus to the visit and helps students direct their questions appropriately.

Preparation

Before the guest speaker’s visit:

- Announce the guest speaker’s visit in advance. Give students some information about him/her and ask groups to think of five questions they would like to ask him/her in order to compile a timeline. Have them focus on his/her job, hobbies, and travel experiences rather than on personal questions, such as marital status, etc.
- Encourage self-/peer-correction as you move about the classroom in case there is any mistake on question formation.

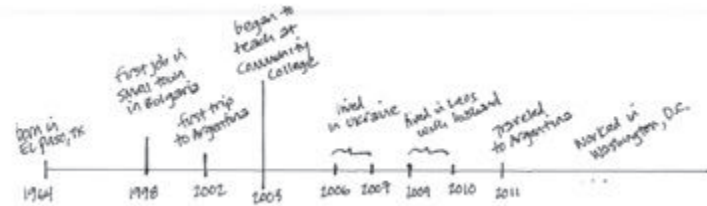
Procedure

During the visit:

1. Tell students that they will need to take notes as they listen to the speaker.
2. Have group speakers take turns asking questions to the speaker.
3. Time the activity so as to keep the pace going.
4. Record the interview if possible.

After the visit:

- As homework, students compile a timeline. Here is a sample of my students’ production:
Create timelines online link: <http://www.read-writethink.org/files/resources/interactives/timeline/>
- In class, students read their timelines and compare them in groups. They might double-check information, add details, change dates, etc. Encourage discussion as you walk around the classroom. Every group appoints a secretary who will be in charge of compiling the final draft.
- Secretaries submit the final versions on the following class or by email.
- Put up the final production on the bulletin board for everyone to share their work.



When to Use It

- To coincide with a guest speaker’s visit
- To practice asking questions
- To flesh out a timeline

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Timeline description

Preparation Time

15 minutes

Activity Time

10–15 minutes in class

20 minutes to write the timeline

Variations

1. Turn the visit into an opportunity to have students write narratives or interviews rather than a timeline.
2. As you listen to your students engage in conversation with the guest speaker, jot down their mistakes or phrases that need some kind of editing or fine-tuning. After the guest speaker’s visit, write them on the board for students to identify the errors.
3. Choose one excerpt from the recorded interview that may have proved to be challenging for your students and prepare a cloze activity or true/false statements.
4. If your guest speaker is well-traveled, use a world map to take students on an imaginary trip by locating all the cities and places that are mentioned during the interview.
5. Ask students to make oral presentations expanding on any topic that was addressed during the interview.
6. Choose one particular item from the interview and ask students to think of further questions for a second visit (if possible).
7. Prepare a trivia question on one of the many exotic places brought up during the interview.

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Talk Time

This is a reflective activity to help teachers get a sense of the percentage of teacher talk vs. student talk in the classroom. If the objective in the language class is to get students speaking the language, this is a good activity to judge how much time is actually dedicated to that objective.

Preparation

This is not an activity that is easy to undertake on one's own. It's much more effective if an observer comes in to note the timing of teacher talk vs. student talk. The distinction is not so easy to define — it is not one or the other, since many other activities could be taking place.

Procedure

1. The observer should be available for the full class period and use the observation sheet below. It's better if the observer has a watch with a timer on it and is clear on how to use it.
2. The observer should pay close attention to logging the timing of activities in the class and not get sidetracked by other possible foci.

The sample observation sheet provided below is just one way to collect information about who is doing the talking in the classroom. It is laid out with each row representing one minute of class time. A longer sheet with 45 minutes is available for photocopying in the Appendix. The sheet is meant to be filled out each minute to identify who is speaking and for what purpose. Possible purposes include: taking attendance, giving instructions, disciplining, pair work activity, group work, presenting, responding, etc. Talking should be considered more than one-word answers. (See Appendix, page 256.)

TIME	PURPOSE	Teacher Talk			Student Talk		
		To All	To Group	To One	To All	To Group	To One
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							
9							
10							
11							
12							
13							
14							
15							

When to Use It

- To determine balance of classroom activities, especially if the performance objectives state speaking as one of the objectives
- To give teachers feedback on classroom activities
- To get a sense of the classroom atmosphere of a program

Level



Skills



Practice

Materials

Timer, observation sheet

Preparation Time

5 minutes — enough time to get familiar with observation sheet

Activity Time

Full class period — whatever it might be

STORYTELLING



Storytelling

*By Dr. Myrtis Mixon
California, United States*

All learners, from babies to grandmothers, learn better with stories. Stories are energizers. When someone says, “Let me tell you a story,” listeners perk up their ears and smile. Even hard truths can be taught easily through story. Stories told and read at home and school both educate and entertain. Using stories in the classroom is fun, but the activity should not be considered trivial or frivolous. Indeed, there is strong support for storytelling in pedagogical theory.

Stories — whether they are fairy tales, folktales, legends, fables, or others based on real-life incidents experienced by students themselves — can help learners appreciate and respect the culture and the values of various groups. Stories can also lead to harmony, understanding, and peaceful resolution of conflict. Stories from around the world are excellent to use in the classroom, but teachers also need to use stories from the students’ own culture and heritage. Using local or national stories ensures that the students know the background culture and may already know the story. This familiarity lowers the learners’ stress and reduces anxiety.

The themes of folk stories and myths are universal; people everywhere appreciate tales. But students are especially pleased — and their self-esteem is likely to be enhanced — when they learn that a story comes from their own part of the world. So it is a bonus when teachers use stories from the students’ own culture.

In traditional societies, oral literature has been both a form of entertainment and a way of passing on knowledge, traditions, and customs of the community from generation to generation. Unfortunately, radio, television, and the internet are fast replacing the oral tradition around the world. Today, parents, children, and grandchildren listening to the radio or watching television are absorbing material divorced from their ancient culture, and little of their heritage is being transmitted. Unless teachers make an effort to continue the tradition of storytelling, today’s young people will have little of their culture and heritage to pass on to the next generation.

Stories can be helpful if resources are limited, and especially in large classes. In many countries, a shortage of teaching/learning resources is a major constraint. Even in the absence of books, storytelling or reading can enable teachers to manage large classes, such as the 60- to 100-pupil classes common around the world. Using stories is a magical way to teach, is effective at any age, and can be used to learn serious and important things, too.

Teacher Tell; Student Retell

This activity is pretty straightforward: the teacher reads or tells a story to the learners and the learners then retell the story from memory either as a full class back in plenary or to partners or in a small group. Telling stories has certain advantages over reading in that the teacher-teller can hold the attention of the learners with the power of eye contact, while at the same time permitting the teacher to observe how well the students are following the story. Telling allows one to use the body and gestures more than reading. After reading a story a few times, it will probably be possible to “tell” the story.

Preparation

Choose a story to tell. The story should probably be no more than five minutes long as learners will need to remember the story and retell it. Of course it would be best to have the story relate to the theme of the class or use several examples of the structure to be practiced.

Procedure

1. Set the tone for telling the story. If possible, use a routine to get students prepared for listening. One idea for practice is to gather all students in one corner of the room and have them sit down. Another is to have students bring their seats closer to the teacher in the front of the room.
2. Tell the story in an appropriately animated style looking from student to student so the gestures, intonation, and voice help illustrate the tone of the story.
3. For the first time this activity is done in class, it might be best to have learners retell the story to the full class. Choose one student to start telling the story and continue calling on others to continue the story until it is complete. Help redirect students if they miss important events.
4. For subsequent use of the activity, have students retell the story in pairs or small groups.

Variations

1. Add small objects or images to help prompt events of the story. They can be used in the initial telling, and also small copies of the images can be distributed to the groups to prompt, sequence, and hold up while retelling.
2. Hold up the images or objects to prompt the retelling of the story either as a whole class or as a prompt to partners or groups to tell the next section of the story.
3. After telling the story, have students retell the story, but they have to change the story based on a significant change in the tale (summer instead of winter, rainy instead of dry, set in the past/future instead of the present).

When to Use It

- To have learners engage in listening for the full text, not just words
- To give learners an opportunity to use extended language

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Small objects or images if using them

Preparation Time

10 minutes

Activity Time

10–15 minutes or longer, depending on variation

Object-Based Storytelling

This storytelling activity uses small, commonly found objects to trigger stories and get creative language use integrating the objects spontaneously.

Preparation

Collect approximately as many small objects as you have students in your class and place them in a box or a bag. Items such as a toy car, doll, game pieces, spoon, comb, ring, button, bobby pin, piece of candy, bell, eraser, etc., will work well.

Procedure

1. For the first time, model the activity by choosing five objects from the box of objects (e.g., a car, a spoon, a doll, a banana, a monkey). Then tell the learners an impromptu story, which might go like this: *“A long time ago, a doll was walking along a road carrying a spoon and a banana. A fast car passed by. She was scared. She dropped the banana and spoon and ran into the trees. When she came back, she saw the monkey eating the banana with the spoon. She laughed at the monkey and took him home.”* A story this simple will give the students confidence that they can tell a story, too.
2. Divide learners into groups of three to five.
3. Distribute four or five objects to each group (or have them reach in the bag to select).
4. Have each group make up a story that includes all of their objects.
5. After the groups create stories, have each group tell its story to another group or to the whole class.

Variations

1. Have learners collect small objects to donate to the class over time. They do not need to know what they will be used for, but when there are enough and it is appropriate, use the activity.
2. Have each learner write down a noun on a small piece of paper. Collect the pieces of paper, mix them up, and use them for the activity instead of objects.
3. Have groups tell their story without using the name of the object, but they need to weave the description of the object into the story. The other students guess what the four or five objects are in the story.
4. Give students a theme or location under which their story should take place so it is not so wide open.

When to Use It

- To have students use language freely and creatively
- To have students collaborate on a writing or speaking product

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Small objects, paper

Preparation Time

None, if objects are already collected

Activity Time

20–30 minutes

Vocabulary Stories

An old technique to get learners to better understand and remember their vocabulary is to write sentences with their new words. One potential problem with this is one sentence may not be enough context for the word to stick or for learners to practice the word. In this activity, learners use a variety of the vocabulary they have been introduced to in order to create a story.

Preparation

Compile the vocabulary in lessons over time. Organize the words into their parts of speech (noun, adjective, adverb, verb) in envelopes; one word per slip of paper. Add envelopes for setting, mood, or even characteristics/moral. For easier sorting to put back, assign a different color to each category of word.

Procedure

1. Put students in pairs or small groups.
2. Distribute one word per envelope to each group.
3. The pairs or groups work together to draft a story.
4. Groups can share their stories by swapping, by regrouping to tell the stories to another group, or by telling the stories in front of the class.

Variation

Students write the story, but leave blanks where their vocabulary words go. The class guesses which words go in which blanks based on vocabulary words they have studied.

When to Use It

- To review vocabulary in a contextual manner
- To have students collaborate on a product
- To have students use language freely and creatively

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Pre-identified vocabulary words, envelopes, and slips of paper

Preparation Time

20 minutes

Activity Time

20–30 minutes

Drawings from a Story

Drawings from a Story gives learners a chance to illustrate their understanding of a story. Images can be as simple as line drawings and stick figures, and stories can be chosen or written deliberately to match recent vocabulary.

Preparation

Select or write a story that uses vocabulary students have been introduced to previously. Be sure that the story is long enough to be illustrated in several frames. Look for line drawings online or draw your own to demonstrate to learners how the drawings will fit in with the activity.

Procedure

1. Prepare students for drawing a story by selecting about five simple line drawings and telling a story to match. Students can identify the five images that go with the story from several as you tell the story or as a summary exercise after the story is finished. Inform students they will draw similar simple drawings to illustrate a new story you will tell them.
2. Tell the new story, going slow enough so learners can jot down ideas for their images.
3. Have learners focus on illustrating the main points or events of the story in five images.

Variations

1. Learners can put each illustration on a separate paper, and different students can sequence the images as they understand them.
2. Learners use key words in the story and incorporate them into the imagery.

When to Use It

- To give some practice for those with a visual learning style
- To have students summarize a story focusing on the imagery created by words

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Paper

Preparation Time

20 minutes for the sample story

Activity Time

30 minutes

2.0 Stories

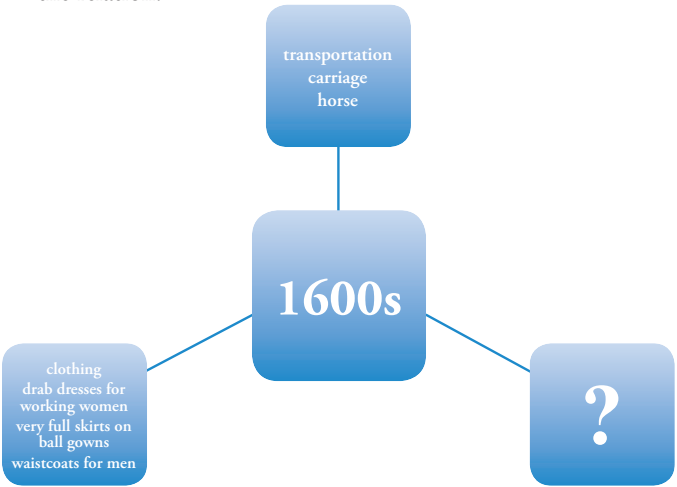
2.0 Stories has students use their creativity and knowledge to update existing stories to the present day (or beyond). Folktales, fables, classics, movies, or even newspaper clippings can be used in this storytelling activity.

Preparation

Select a well-known story (well known to your learners) that is set in a time in the distant past (20, 30, to 100 years and beyond). For example, Cinderella is a classic tale dating back as far as the 1600s. Focus on the story’s time setting (clothing, furniture, expressions), and have students retell and update the story to reflect the present day.

Procedure

1. Elicit well-known folktales, fables, and other stories from the class.
2. Decide on one as a group to model the activity.
3. Elicit the time frame of the setting from the class — write it in the middle of the mind map and relate the various items offered by the students that illustrate the time frame around it to show the relation.



4. When at least three big time-setting categories are identified, have students work in pairs or small groups to give updated versions of the items listed (e.g., convertible for carriage, classmates’ clothing to replace that in the story, etc.).
5. Students then rewrite the story, changing it to reflect the updated items.

Variations

1. Change other elements of the story:
 - a. location (instead of taking place in a jungle, the story takes place in the Arctic)
 - b. characters (people are animals, or animals are people)
 - c. technology (add in technology or remove it)
2. Weave elements of a couple of classic stories into one.

When to Use It

- To have students bring their own creativity and imagination to a well-known story frame
- To practice critical thinking — updating items should lead to other changes in the story
- To encourage collaboration amongst students

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Paper

Preparation Time

20 minutes for the sample story

Activity Time

30 minutes

Contributors: Dr. Myrtis Mixon, an expert on using stories in the classroom, has authored 14 language textbooks, focused on historical or folk stories, often integrating stories written by language students; Maria Snarski, Regional English Language Officer

Readers’ Theater

Readers’ Theater is simply a way to bring a story to life via one’s voice. Students use their voice to convey the meaning through use of emotion and intonation and as well as use of gestures, but do not need to memorize lines or use props.

Preparation

Select a story that includes a lot of dialogue. The story could also include functions, structures, or vocabulary that you want the learners to practice.

Procedure

1. Read the story with students assigned as the different characters. One person should be the narrator (or that can be the instructor’s role). The first reading can be “bland” to emphasize the point of the exercise.
2. Elicit additional information from students to make the story more realistic and dramatic. E.g., Is a character sharing exciting news? Did the student sound excited when s/he read the line? Was a character in the dialogue upset about something? Did the student reading the line sound suitably upset?
3. Reread part of the story, giving more emotion to the reading and gestures where suitable to model Readers’ Theater to the rest of the class. Even the narrator should adopt a suitable tone. Encourage students to add emotion and gestures.
4. Have students practice reading the story in groups relevant to the number of characters in the story.

Variations

1. Have students “perform” the story in front of the class. One group can start and another group can take over to continue depending on the length of the story.
2. Assign new emotions to the story/characters as students read the story a subsequent time.
3. If the story only has two characters, this activity could be done in a Dialogue Line (see page 56), with the teacher or another student being the narrator for the line.

When to Use It

- To have students practice intonation and fluency
- To practice critical thinking — if swapping out emotions
- To practice a dialogue multiple times without it appearing to be a drill

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Copies of the dialogue

Preparation Time

5 minutes for the sample story

Activity Time

10–20 minutes

Contributor: Dr. Myrtis Mixon, an expert on using stories in the classroom, has authored 14 language textbooks, focused on historical or folk stories, often integrating stories written by language students.

Historical Fiction Stories

This activity combines creative writing with a touch of research. Students weave various human interest stories (marriage, graduation, promotion, move, overcoming a challenge, random act of kindness) into a historic event, innovation, etc.

Preparation

Select a historic event or innovation that students are familiar with. If it is an event, it can be more localized rather than worldwide.

Procedure

1. Elicit from class what they know about the selected event (election of a leader, new innovation, disaster, big sporting event win, etc.).
2. Have students do quick research to learn more about the event (or read a selected article) and mind map the major points related to the event as a class.
3. Let students select a human interest theme to weave into the historic event to create a story set during that event.

Variation

Work with another teacher to make an across-the-curriculum project.

When to Use It

- To have students weave research into creative writing
- To practice critical thinking

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Copies of the dialogue

Preparation Time

5 minutes for the sample story

Activity Time

10–20 minutes

DRAMA



Drama

By Andrea Billíková

Nitra, Slovakia

With drama techniques, we imitate authenticity and bring it to the classroom through a variety of communicative situations with real-life characters and their problems. Language practice is based on solving these problems and providing creative solutions in the target language. Such tasks stimulate learners' imagination, creativity, thinking, and decision-making and motivate them to participate actively. There is always some reason to speak and to listen to each other. Authentic communication is usually not planned in advance; it is spontaneous and unpredictable. Some drama techniques offer such experience to learners — to act without preparation. As to foreign language practice, drama provides the opportunity to solve language difficulties in a foreign language — to say *something somehow* even with limited knowledge of a target language. They can fill these gaps by using facial expressions, body language, gestures, and different “communication tricks” (paraphrasing, repetition, hesitation, fillers, and others) that we all use subconsciously and naturally even when communicating in our mother tongue. Drama techniques provide the context to practice conversation strategies (opening, leading, ending, changing the topic) and the whole scale of language functions (describing, asking, refusing, accepting, explaining, etc.). Through drama techniques, we teach our learners to become more aware of themselves (the way they move, speak, behave, and feel), to identify with others (to understand how they feel, react, speak, move, and behave), and to respect the environment we live in (the animals, plants, and objects around us, their purpose of existence, how they affect us). Learning happens in a stress-free environment without fear, tension, or threat. So it is not only the language we aim to teach but also cooperation, thinking, acceptance, and awareness.

The potential of drama techniques in a foreign language class is enormous. That is why drama techniques are used there in order to:

- improve communicative competence and performance of language learners;
- express naturally and spontaneously via verbal and non-verbal means (such as mimes, gestures, posture);
- experiment in (with) a foreign language and take risks in communication;
- use voice potential to its maximum in a foreign language;
- vary intonation and rhythm of speech according to different moods;
- be aware of the setting where the language is used;
- be empathetic and tolerant;
- acquire new language subconsciously, without too much conscious effort;
- create a friendly and cooperative atmosphere;
- change the roles of learners and teachers;
- lead learners to responsibility and independence when learning a foreign language via reflection on the learning process, and self-reflection;
- see the reason behind learning a foreign language;
- practice all skills (speaking, listening, reading, writing);
- involve learners with different learning styles, different personalities, and multiple intelligences;
- motivate both learners and teachers;
- lead all participants to creativity and convergent thinking;

- create better rapport between a teacher and his or her learners;
- make the learning and teaching process joyful;
- implement interdisciplinary knowledge;
- develop the whole personality of learners.

Drama techniques are just a learning and teaching tool, not a goal. Therefore we remind teachers to teach a foreign language via drama instead of teaching drama through a foreign language.

Drama Box

Drama Box isn't so much an activity as it is a resource for the classroom. A Drama Box is an important aid in drama-based lessons. It is simply a box containing potential props for various characters. Old hats, caps, scarves, ribbons, ties, aprons, wigs, glasses, etc., will certainly be enjoyed by all age groups of learners. On one hand, props help learners create more authentic characters. On the other hand, using objects stimulates the memory of all types of learners — kinesthetic, tactile, auditory, and visual learners.

Preparation

A sturdy moving box or a plastic bin will work for a Drama Box. Collect inexpensive items that are no longer needed, but that could be useful as props for classroom activities.

Procedure

None

Variations

1. Have learners use whatever is in the room or in their bag as a prop, as appropriate.
2. Use pictures of items if you are unable to carry or stock a box.

When to Use It

- To liven up any skit, dramatic reading
- To promote creativity in learners

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Hats, trophy, scarf, mug, stuffed animal, bell
Box or plastic bin

Preparation Time

Collect over time

Activity Time

See particular activity referenced in section

Soundscapes

Soundscapes is a drama technique in which sounds are made by voices, body, and objects in the classroom. The sounds usually accompany some action and complete an image of a place or its atmosphere (e.g., street sounds, breaking glass, squeaking door, etc.). Initially, teachers and learners might find these techniques strange. Later, they will see how stimulating they are especially when creating setting.

Preparation

Prepare or select a story to tell that references many sounds or insert them into a simple story. See below for an example for rain forest.

Procedure

1. Select a soundscape. Choose one based on the link to a future activity, scene, or dialogue, or have the students vote on one. E.g., train station, rain forest, zoo, intersection, bus, etc.
2. Brainstorm sounds from the location; write them on the board.
3. As the brainstorming activity proceeds, have students create sounds for each of the items on the board (doing this in smaller groups might help learners be more comfortable trying out their sounds).
4. Assign student(s) to particular sounds (or allow them to choose based on what sound they can make) so they pay attention to their cue to start the sound.

Variations

1. Elicit sound effects from students that they can make (duck, cat, train, telephone, thunder, rain, bird singing, knock on door, applause, etc.). List the sound effects on the board. Students work in groups to produce a story that uses all (or a preselected number) of the sound effects listed. The story should be written down so someone can narrate. As the story is read, students create the sound effects as appropriate.
2. Improv: Students are selected to start dialogue on a particular topic or start one from the textbook or story. A set of students are preselected to insert sound effects during the dialogue. The students performing/reading the dialogue are to adapt their dialogue based on the sound effect inserted. This can be done in smaller groups, and groups can present their improvised dialogues.
3. Allow use of the Drama Box to enhance the activity.

Example (Story to read aloud)

In the Amazon rain forest, there live many birds (tweet tweet). Today, like many days, the sky is overcast and it looks like it will rain (gentle rain sound by tapping fingertips on desk). Yes, it has begun to rain (tapping fingers get faster). The birds no longer sing and the rain gets heavier (tapping fingers). The wind is starting to pick up (tapping fingers and wind sound) and blow the trees. The wind gets stronger and it starts to whistle (whistle sound mixed in with wind). Suddenly, a bolt of lightening lights up the sky accompanied by a loud thunder clap (thunder) and the rain just slows to a few drops (occasional taps). The birds come out again (tweet tweet). Another day in the Amazon.

When to Use It

- To enliven a dialogue
- To be more inclusive in a dialogue reading

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Paper

Preparation Time

5 minutes

Activity Time

30–60 minutes

Move as If

This activity includes a lot of Total Physical Response (TPR). The students do not need to speak, but rather move in a way that the instructor (or another student) suggests. It is a great way to get students out of their seats, engaged in the language, and yet taking a break from deskwork.

Preparation

None

Procedure

1. Instruct students to walk around the room silently and freely. Tell them that they will change their gait to reflect the instructions/situation you give.
2. Clap your hands or give some signal to indicate they will be changing their gait based on your instructions.
3. Clap, clap in between each scenario. Give learners enough time to get into the role before switching. Possibilities:
 - a. *Move as if you were an old person who needs a walking stick or cane.*
 - b. *Move as if you were walking a dog on a leash and the dog keeps pulling you all the time.*
 - c. *Move as if you were late for your bus, but don't want to run because of an injury.*
 - d. *Move as if you were walking on very slippery ice.*
 - e. *Move as if you were a robot.*
 - f. *Move as if you were tiptoeing.*
 - g. *Move as if you were in high-heeled shoes.*

Variations

1. Have a student call out the different gaits.
2. Have a student do any walk and the others guess which one s/he is doing.
3. Create a full story that includes the different gaits and do something similar to Soundscapes Variation 1.
4. Allow use of the Drama Box to enhance the acting as appropriate.

When to Use It

- To check students' comprehension in a light-hearted way on very specific vocabulary
- To give all learners some kinesthetic activity
- To provide an energy break

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

None

Preparation Time

None

Activity Time

5+ minutes, depending on how you use it

Conversation Letters

This activity allows learners to get into roles and act using intonation, volume, and emotion without memorizing or speaking any words.

Preparation

Have some situation cards ready (*police officer giving someone a ticket for speeding; two old friends meeting on the street who are happy to see one another; a parent scolding a young child for spilling milk; etc.*).

Procedure

1. Put students in pairs or small groups. Give them a situation card. Students can also make up situations.
2. Pairs/groups decide on the basics of the scene (*the person who was speeding wants to sweet-talk the police officer in hopes of getting a reduced fine, a warning, or no ticket at all, etc.*).
3. They create a dialogue that only consists of the letters of the alphabet; no words.
4. Pairs/groups present their scenario to the class and the other students guess the situation based on intonation and body language.

Variations

1. Only allow learners to use one letter during their “lines.” Other students monitor usage.
2. One learner can only use consonants; the other only vowels.
3. Have learners imitate a textbook dialogue using only letters.
4. Add in the use of numbers.
5. Allow use of the Drama Box to enhance the dialogue.

When to Use It

- To give students practice in expressing intonation, emotions, and body language in situations without focusing on vocabulary/pronunciation, grammar, etc.
- To give less talkative learners a chance to practice with a lowered affective filter

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Situation cards

Preparation Time

10–15 minutes

Activity Time

15–35 minutes, depending on groups presenting

Dubbing

This activity encourages cooperation between pairs/groups and allows for creative dramatic interpretation of simple dialogues, turning even the most basic textbook dialogues into fun, engaging, and memorable activities.

Preparation

None necessary. See Variations for expanded ideas.

Procedure

1. Have students work in groups with double the number of speakers in a dialogue (select dialogue from the textbook, a story that's being read in class, or other).
2. Pairs/groups practice miming/dubbing the dialogue. Half the students mouth (move their mouths as if they were speaking, but no sound comes out) the dialogue; the other half speaks the dialogue to match the other students' silenced conversation.

Variations

1. Make it more challenging by having those mouthing the words add emotion/gestures so those dubbing the dialogue need to match the emotion in their voice.
2. Have pairs/groups select a topic (or the instructor can give a situation/context) and create their own dialogue to present in front of the class.
3. Separate mouthers from dubbers, with mouthers making up their own situation and dubbers challenged to dub for them spontaneously.
4. Allow use of the Drama Box to enhance the dialogue.

When to Use It

- To practice spontaneous, creative use of language
- To give less talkative learners a chance to practice with a lowered affective filter
- To promote oral fluency

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Situation cards optional

Preparation Time

None

Activity Time

15–35 minutes, depending on groups presenting

Dialogue Aside

In this activity, one learner is a character and the other learner plays the character's thoughts. The technique aims to provide a commentary of inner speech, deepen understanding of characters' real feelings, and distinguish the text and its subtext.

Preparation

Prepare situation cards.

Procedure

1. Give a situation to the groups (e.g., *A job interview. The interviewee is lying about his experience, etc.*).
2. Half the learners are the people in the situation. The other half play the thoughts for one of the characters in the situation. For example, Learner A is the person interviewing; Learner B will speak his/her thoughts. Learner C is the person being interviewed, and Learner D is Learner C's thoughts.
3. Learners practice their dialogue and then perform them for the rest of the class.

Examples of situations:

- *On the bus. There is an old woman sitting and reading on the bus and suddenly a smelly, old, drunk man sits next to her.*
- *Someone you dislike sits next to you on the bus, in class, etc.*
- *A parent is asking his/her daughter/son why s/he arrived home after curfew.*
- *At school. A teacher is testing a student who is not prepared.*
- *Life situation. A young man asks his girlfriend to marry him.*
- *Excuses. A driver is trying to explain to a police officer why he was speeding.*

Variations

1. Mix up who speaks first (thoughts of characters or characters themselves).
2. Use only the thoughts of the person and have the rest of the class guess the situation.
3. Use a textbook dialogue.
4. Allow use of the Drama Box to enhance the dialogue.

When to Use It

- To practice spontaneous, creative use of language
- To expand a textbook dialogue
- To promote oral fluency

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Situation cards optional

Preparation Time

15–20 minutes if using situation cards

Activity Time

15–35 minutes, depending on groups presenting

Alphabet Conversation Drama

This activity allows for creative, spontaneous dialogue construction for learners, but includes a constraint so learners really need to think before responding to their partner.

Preparation

None necessary

Procedure

1. Put learners in pairs and give them a situation for which to create a dialogue on the spot.
2. The first sentence of their scene must start with the letter A, the next line with letter B, the following with letter C, and this continues up to the letter Z until they finish the dialogue.

Examples of situations:

- *On the bus. There is an old woman sitting and reading on the bus and suddenly a smelly, old man sits next to her.*
- *Someone you dislike sits next to you at work, in class, etc.*
- *A parent is asking his/her daughter/son why s/he arrived home after curfew.*
- *At school. A teacher is testing a student who is not prepared.*
- *Life situation. A young man asks his girlfriend to marry him.*
- *Excuses. A driver is trying to explain to a police officer why he was speeding.*

Variations

1. Learners in pairs decide on the situation. They act out the dialogue with little to no preparation.
2. Have learners do this in pairs without the pressure of being in front of the class and performing.
3. Start the conversation with Z and have learners move through the alphabet backwards.
4. Put the letters of the alphabet in a hat and learners select the letter with which they need to start their response in the dialogue.
5. Allow use of the Drama Box to enhance the dialogue.

When to Use It

- To practice spontaneous, creative use of language
- To expand a textbook dialogue
- To promote oral fluency

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Situation cards optional

Preparation Time

None

Activity Time

15–35 minutes, depending on groups presenting

Story Improv

Story Improv mixes spontaneity and challenge with fun and good humor. This combines unstructured storytelling with responsive acting.

Preparation

None necessary. See Variations for expanded ideas.

Procedure

1. Choose one learner who will be the narrator of the story.
2. Place a chair on one side of the stage facing the audience.
3. The narrator makes up a story without any preparation or does one based loosely on a theme.
4. The other learners act out the story as the narrator tells it. The “actors” become objects, people, or animals, depending on what the story is about. They can make sound effects, too.
5. The narrator tells the story and makes a pause so that “actors” can act it out.
6. They freeze and return the focus on the narrator to continue with the story. Nothing is planned in advance.
7. Learners can join the scene whenever they feel the opportunity to do so.

Examples of situations for stories:

- *A wo(man) drops some money on the street after paying for a newspaper. People passing by notice it.*
- *A wo(man) has too many bags, packages to open a door alone.*
- *Two dog owners are walking their dogs, when the leashes get tangled.*
- *A small child is throwing a tantrum because the parent won't allow her/him to have candy.*
- *A couple is at a restaurant for dinner.*
- *A wo(man) is trying to take a selfie, but doesn't quite know how.*

Variations

1. Add objects from the Drama Box to the story as the learner is narrating to switch it up.
2. Add select vocabulary to the narration to practice recent words.
3. Have learners do this in smaller groups simultaneously to reduce any pressure and to lower affective filters.
4. Allow use of the Drama Box to enhance the dialogue.

When to Use It

- To practice spontaneous, creative use of language
- To practice particular vocabulary in context in a fun, dynamic way
- To promote oral fluency

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Situation cards optional

Preparation Time

None

Activity Time

15–35 minutes, depending on groups presenting

Emotional Choral Reading

Emotional Choral Reading takes a typical language learning activity such as reading a dialogue as a group and gives it a nice twist to enliven it by adding emotion.

Preparation

None necessary

Procedure

1. Select a dialogue from the textbook or a reading, or write one.
2. Have learners practice reading as a group as is.
3. Have learners reread the dialogue as you cue different emotions, so learners change their voice to match as they are reading.

Variations

1. Give different emotions to different characters in the dialogue.
2. Have some learners read the dialogue as one emotion (or mixed) and the others guess the emotion.
3. Have learners do the dialogue in smaller groups to reduce affective filter and allow all to practice at the same time.

Example Emotions

Anger	Annoyance	Disgust	Irritation
Doubt	Envy	Frustration	Guilt
Shame	Anxiety	Embarrassment	Fear
Worry	Bored	Hurt	Sadness
Shock	Delight	Joy	Courage
Calm	Relief	Interest	Surprise

When to Use It

- To make a routine dialogue or sentence drill more engaging
- To provide alternate ways of practicing speaking

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Emotion cards optional

Preparation Time

None

Activity Time

15–35 minutes, depending on groups presenting

Twisted Fairy Tale

In this activity, students work with fairy tales they are familiar with and then give them a twist. This could be done as a writing exercise or as a drama exercise or both!

Preparation

Have simple fairy tales for students to read first, but it may be better if they indicate which ones they are familiar with.

Procedure

1. Put learners in small groups.
2. Have them choose a fairy tale they are the most familiar with.
3. Groups storyboard for the original fairy tale.
4. Below the original storyboard, they storyboard a twisted version.
5. Encourage them to be creative. (For example: The main protagonists would look differently and would do the opposite of what they are expected to do.)
6. Have the groups prepare a short performance of the twisted version of their fairy tale.

Variations

1. Provide the twist for the fairy tale: it's set in the 21st century; it's in the city (as opposed to the country); all characters are animals; etc.
2. Have groups display their storyboards on the wall in the classroom and allow for peer comments and possible suggestions on how to improve the fairy tale or how to make it more twisted.

When to Use It

- To make a routine dialogue or sentence drill more engaging
- To provide alternate ways of practicing speaking

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Fairy tales as reference

Preparation Time

None

Activity Time

15–35 minutes, depending on groups presenting

Replacement Role Play

In a Replacement Role Play, students are naturally engaged. Students view a scene — acted out by persons in the classroom or on a videotape — that will naturally spark a reaction about how they might respond differently as one of the characters. In Replacement Role Play, students get a chance to do just that — respond as the character by joining the scene and performing.

Preparation

Choose a real-life situation that requires a decision to be made or an opinion to be expressed. It should be something with which students are familiar or can easily imagine. The situation should involve two to four characters and could involve more depending on the scene and the nature of the topic. Situations will differ depending on the context in which English is being taught, but some possibilities are:

- a student asking to cheat off of a classmate during an exam
- an adult not having enough money to take a bus or subway home
- a parent having to break up an argument between siblings
- someone cutting into line at a bus stop, grocery store, airport, etc.
- a driver hitting another car, but only a young child saw the accident
- a person throwing trash from food on the sidewalk while he or she is walking
- a taxi driver finding an envelope of money after dropping off a passenger

Procedure

1. Divide the class in groups and have one group write a dialogue for the situation; the other groups should discuss or write what they would do in the situation (but no need to write a dialogue).
2. Have the group that wrote the dialogue read or perform their dialogue in front of the others.
3. When the dialogue is finished, ask the class if they would do or say something differently from what happened in the scene.
4. Instead of having the student talk about what he or she would do differently, have him or her come up and *replace* the character they want to speak for. The original characters should remain and start the dialogue over as it was written, changing their lines as appropriate to the replacement character.
5. Continue replacing characters as students are interested in expressing what they would do or say.

Variations

1. Instead of setting this activity up so one pair or group is performing or reading for the whole class, have a couple pairs or smaller groups write dialogues on a situation (with the remaining students writing or discussing what they would do). Then run the same activity, but with the class divided in half or thirds depending on size so there are more students engaged at once and not as much pressure to perform in front of the instructor.
2. Invite students to come up with the situations.
3. Assign pairs or groups to create a dialogue as homework, during which they can incorporate research on current issues of interest, practice pragmatics, and get whole language development training. Pairs or groups can perform for a Replacement Role Play day.
4. Use a video clip as a point of departure for this activity. Students can either perform from the clip or write new dialogues in pairs/groups.
5. Take a dialogue from the textbook and instead of merely reading it aloud, add a new location or twist to the scene and have learners perform it in groups or in front of the class showing how they would change the lines.

When to Use It

- To make a routine dialogue or sentence drill more engaging
- To provide alternate ways of practicing speaking
- To provide a more controlled way of speaking about provocative issues
- To encourage learners to express their opinions
- To practice pragmatics

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Situation cards, video clips

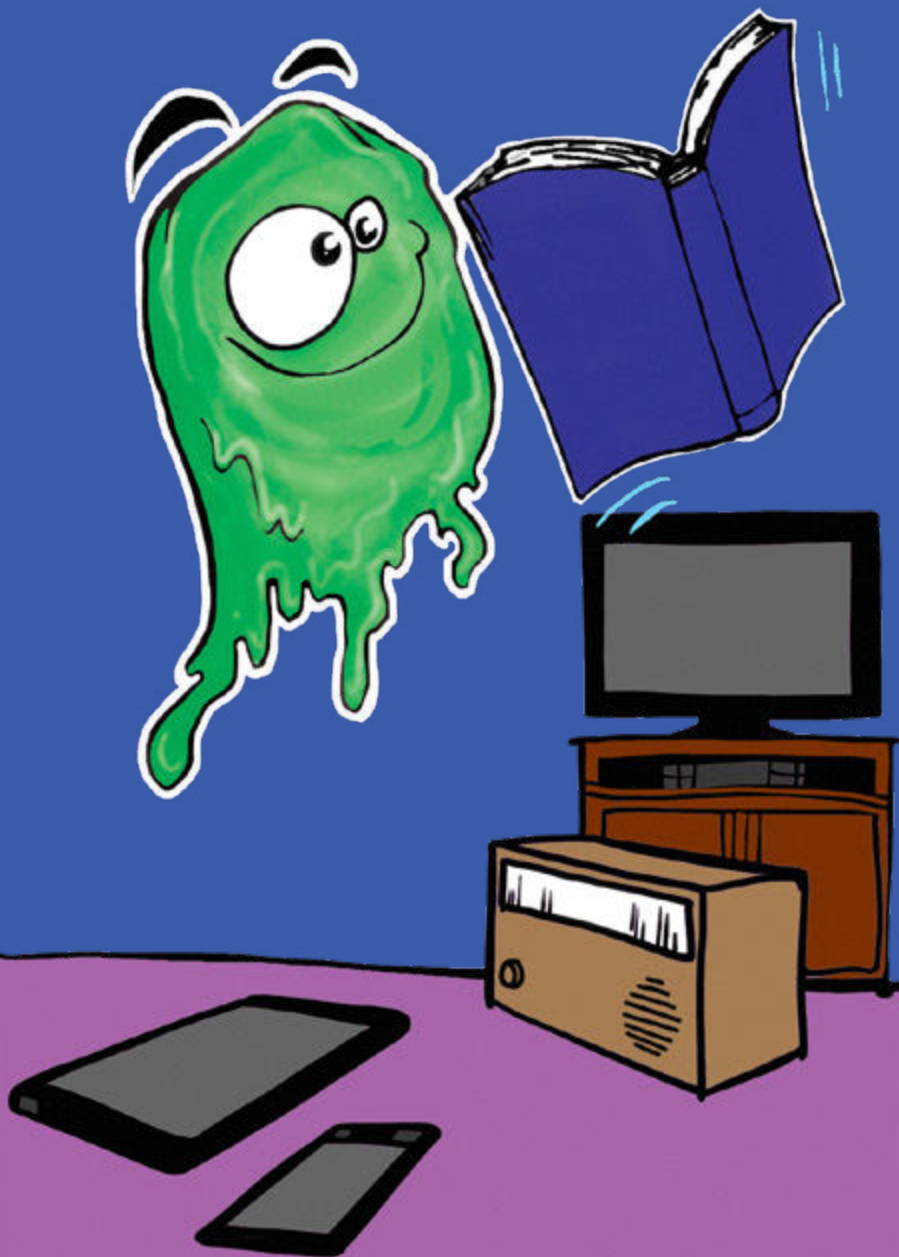
Preparation Time

5–20 minutes, depending on what the prompt is (situation cards or video clips)

Activity Time

15–35 minutes, depending on groups presenting

READING



Reading

*By Dr. Nanda Klapwijk
Pretoria, South Africa*

Read. Everything you can get your hands on. Read until words become your friends. Then when you need to find one, they will jump into your mind... and you can select whichever you like, just like a captain choosing a stickball team.

Karen Witemeyer

People sometimes still wonder why reading is important. There seems to be so much else you can do with your time. Reading is important for a wide variety of reasons. Let's look at a few:

- Reading enables you to function in society — and much like reading, being functional in society develops a good self-image and leads to self-improvement
- Reading develops the mind and improves your understanding of any one thing
- Reading exercises your brain and improves concentration
- Reading relaxes the body and calms the mind
- Reading is how you discover and are exposed to new things — books, magazines, the internet. By being exposed to new things, you learn to develop empathy
- Reading develops your imagination and creativity
- Reading helps you grow your vocabulary and improve your spelling
- Reading helps you to learn better
- And finally, reading improves your reading. Yes, this may sound strange, but it is true — the more you read, the better you become at it, and the more you are bound to enjoy it — and the greater the chances that you will enjoy learning more.

Ultimately reading is everything. Reading changes everything. In fact, educational researchers have found that there is a strong correlation between reading and academic success. In other words, a learner who is a good reader is more likely to do well in school and pass exams than a learner who is a weak reader. And what's more, reading is a great form of entertainment and can be done anywhere!

As children (start to) read at school, teachers can play an important role in helping to keep them interested in books. A very important part of building learners' reading interest is the teacher's own example — Do you show that you like reading? Do your learners see you read for pleasure? Do you discuss interesting books with your class? Do you promote reading in your class? Do you make reading fun in your teaching? Do you encourage informal reading in class?

It is also important that teachers understand the value of both intensive and extensive reading. Intensive reading is the type of reading you do in class, and would include focusing on a short, single text, looking at linguistic or semantic details, identifying key vocabulary, repeated reading of the same text, looking at main ideas versus details, making inferences, and so forth. In other words, it is the focused, intensive reading of a single, short text to develop specific reading skills and is usually a teacher-led activity. Extensive reading, on the other hand, is when learners read large amounts of self-selected high-interest books; the aim is to reach as much as possible. Extensive reading usually occurs outside the classroom, and the aim is to focus on meaning and to develop reading confidence and enjoyment. In fact, there's evidence to suggest that reading for pleasure is more likely to determine whether a child does well at school than their social or economic background.

As far as the teaching of reading goes, as a teacher it is your task to lead your learners from *learning to read* to *reading to learn*. This means that merely being able to identify words is not enough — it does not constitute reading. You must UNDERSTAND what you read. Therefore your teaching should include the active teaching of comprehension skills. Teaching comprehension could include teaching various *reading strategies*, such as determining the purpose for reading a particular text, activating prior knowledge, developing knowledge about text characteristics, making predictions, making inferences, visualization, asking pre-reading questions, using fix-it strategies while you read, summarization — as well as *metacognitive strategies*, such as monitoring your own comprehension. This type of teaching requires time and preparation, but it *will* ensure that your learners become academically literate — which they need to be to succeed in further studies and ultimately in the workplace.

Frank Serafini said, “There is no such thing as a child who hates to read; there are only children who have not found the right book.” You can become the teacher who helps your learners find their right book. We invite you to turn the page, *and in conjunction with the chapter on Vocabulary*, start your learners on a path to reading enjoyment and success.

One-Minute Reading

This activity helps students improve their reading rates. The gist of the activity is to read and reread the text a few times, trying to train students to read faster and further each time. The students are thereby rereading familiar material and extending beyond it with subsequent readings. The exercise does not really emphasize moving the eyes quickly; instead, the material should be processed and comprehended more efficiently. As students participate in this rate-building activity, they learn that indeed they can increase their reading rates.

Preparation

Identify a text that is at a suitable level for your students. The text should not include too many new words and grammar beyond their level. The text should also be at least 700 words in length.

Procedure

1. Distribute the text and tell students you will give them one minute to read. They should read for general comprehension, but try to read quickly.
2. At the one-minute mark, instruct students to stop, mark the place where they stopped, and think about what they read. No discussion is necessary; students can think about what they read individually.
3. Tell students they will have another 60 seconds to read the text again — from the beginning. They should try to read more material during the second 60-second period than the first.
4. Have students repeat this up to four times, instructing them to stop between each reading to reflect on the topic.
5. Have students reflect on their different stopping points to see the degree to which their reading rates increased.

Variations

1. Include comprehension questions.
2. Passages could be scaffolded so that the exercise starts with a simple text and the subsequent texts include additional details which might normally slow down the readers, but should help students distinguish between main ideas and details.

When to Use It

- To promote increased reading rates
- To encourage reading in chunks
- To help students focus on main ideas over details

Level

Depends on text chosen



Skills



Practice



Materials

Text

Preparation Time

10 minutes

Activity Time

10 minutes

Scan for It

This activity is meant to give participants a quick overview of something — a book, an article, a magazine, a teaching idea, etc. The activity is “quick” because the skills used are skimming and scanning, typically for discrete answers to a list of questions (approximately ten). Participants find the answers to a list of questions written specifically about the particular resource. This skimming and scanning can be done as individual work or in groups, with an element of competition or not. The questions should be tailored to the resource and the information you want participants to know about the resource. This is an excellent activity to use when introducing new content, but it is also useful for practicing reading skills.

Preparation

The teacher should prepare a list of questions related to the resource (see sample questions on the next page). Enough copies should be made for the method to be used (one for each individual, one for each group, etc.), or the teacher could write the questions on the board or a flip chart for all to use from there.

Procedure

1. Either distribute the handout to individuals or put students in groups and distribute one handout per group.
2. Be sure students have whatever resource the handout goes with.
3. Give participants an overview of the instructions. (Answer the list of questions as quickly and accurately as you can.)
4. Announce the time limit to the students.
5. Watch the time and go over answers as a class or provide answers for students to check.

Variations

1. Have students write the questions for various resources in groups or as individuals to exchange with other groups/individuals.
2. Have questions on a screen or overhead. Reveal one question at a time and give groups a limited amount of time to find and write the answer. When the time is up, you can hide that question and move on to the next. Groups will learn to strategize on writing the gist of the question down to ensure they have it before it disappears.
3. Read the questions to the students and give them a time limit. You can go through each question and see how much time passes before one group declares they have all the answers.

When to Use It

- To introduce a resource
- To practice skimming and scanning skills
- To give a sense of responsibility to participants

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Handouts with questions; resource

Preparation Time

30 minutes

Activity Time

15 minutes

Suggested Text

New book, website, handout, article, issue of *FORUM*

Sample Questions

Below is a generic list of questions that could be used for this exercise. It's best to tailor the questions to fit the resource and the purpose for introducing the resource. For example, the following aspects could be helpful to emphasize in the questions: a review section, summary section, answer key, charts, graphs, discussion questions, workbook problems, origin of material, website references, etc.

1. List the authors of the book.
2. What are their credentials for writing this book?
3. What year was the book published?
4. What edition is this?
5. How many chapters are there?
6. Name the standard sections in each chapter.
7. What is the first entry in the index?
8. Who is this book intended for?
9. Find the first image/picture. What does the image show?
10. What chapter appeals to you the most? Why?

KNEFL Chart

This activity is an expanded version of an old favorite, KWL — Know, Want to Know, and Learned. In this version, readers are expected to consider the text type they are reading as well as whether what they are reading is fact or fake.

Preparation

Very little preparation is needed for this activity. The teacher can draw the KNEFL chart on the board to elicit information from the students the first time.

K What I know about this subject	N What I need to learn about this subject	E What I expect this resource to include	F What 'facts' I need to research	L What I learned about the subject

Procedure

1. The teacher gives the topic of the day (for a reading, a unit, a project, etc.).
2. Instruct students to create a five-column chart on a paper, labeling the columns K, N, E, F, and L.
3. In the first column, students should write down bullet points of all the things they know related to the theme introduced.
4. In the second column, they should write down what they need to learn about the subject — either to dispel a myth they might have about the theme or expand on what they already know.
5. In the third column, students write down what they expect a particular resource to include about the subject. This can be done when they have a resource to reference (a particular newspaper article, TV or video clip, magazine story, etc.). The instructor should work with learners initially to help discuss the various sources and their biases.
6. For the fourth column, students should complete this while they are reading or watching the source. They should note down any statement or statistic that they believe needs to be checked for accuracy. This awareness may take some time, and it could be good for an instructor to train students using stories that they know include fake news.
7. After Step 6 is completed, students should revisit their KNEFL chart and write down what they learned about the subject.

Variations

1. Students can each be assigned different topics, create KNEFL charts, and then present their findings to the class orally or in a poster format as a final step of the project work.
2. The chart can be extended to allow for multiple resources, as illustrated below.

K What I know about this subject	N What I need to learn about this subject	E What I expect each resource to include	F What 'facts' I need to research from each resource	L What I learned about the subject
		1.	1.	
		2.	2.	
		3.	3.	

When to Use It

- To set the students' schema before a new topic is started
- To help demonstrate to students that they bring knowledge to class
- To encourage students to reflect on their coursework

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Paper for chart

Preparation Time

None

Activity Time

15–20 minutes for K, N, and E;

10–20 minutes for F and L

Reading Warm-Up

This activity helps prepare students for reading by getting them to predict details of the text through the title.

Preparation

Identify a text that is at a suitable level for your students. Make sure the text has a title.

Procedure

1. Write the title of the text on the board.
2. Have students write five questions they believe a text with this title should answer.
3. Instruct them to also write at least five vocabulary words they believe would be found in a text with this title. Clarify that the words should be beyond *the, a, and*, etc.
4. Distribute the text for students to read and check their predictions.
5. Go over students' predictions and discuss the results and the main idea of the text.

Variations

1. Selected questions and vocabulary words could be written on the board, and the predictions could be done as a plenary with the whole class prior to the reading.
2. Students could be grouped to foster collaboration.
3. If the title is a play on words, it could be a model for students to create titles for texts that are also a play on words.

When to Use It

- To promote predictions and schema setting
- To give students practice preparing to read

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Text

Preparation Time

5 minutes

Activity Time

15–20 minutes

Pre-Reading Quiz

Pre-reading activities are critical in helping learners to get the most out of a text. When a learner's prior knowledge is activated, his/her comprehension success is far greater. The pre-reading activity need not take as much time to result in better success with the text.

Preparation

Prepare 5–10 suitable statements (true or false) to use as predictions to the text topic.

Procedure

1. Distribute the statements either in a handout as below, project them on a wall, or write them on the board or a flip chart, etc.
2. Have students work alone (or in pairs or small groups) to give answers to the statements based on what they know about the topic. If this is done as pair or group work, let them discuss their answers and give justification as needed.
3. Have students read the text and check their answers to the statements as they read. They should be doing this activity during the reading.

Variations

1. Have learners/groups prepare statements on various readings suitable for true/false answers. Learners/groups swap their questions and readings. The readings could be different sources on one theme so it becomes an experience of comparing sources reporting on the same topic.
2. Intentionally use a fake news story to introduce the notion of reliable source for information to learners.

Example

T/F Prediction Response	Statement about Text	T/F Correct Answer

When to Use It

- To promote prediction and schema setting
- To get students practice in preparing to read

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Paper

Preparation Time

10 minutes

Activity Time

5 minutes for prediction + time for reading

Story Strips

In this activity, the sentences of a story are cut into separate strips of paper, which students need to put into correct order to reconstruct the story. This activity requires students to pay attention to discourse features such as transition words, use of articles and pronouns, and verb tense. It appeals to analytic, holistic, kinesthetic, and visual learners.

Preparation

The teacher will need to find a text with enough discourse markers to make the ordering of sentences as unambiguous as possible. The text should be retyped so that each sentence begins on a new line; the sentences are cut into strips and mixed up before being distributed to students. Enough copies need to be made so that every group can work on the story at the same time.

Procedure

1. Students are put into pairs or groups.
2. Each group is given a set of strips.
3. Groups are instructed to put the strips into order to create a complete story.
4. They may be instructed to pay attention to particular discourse markers, pronouns, or repeated references.
5. When students are finished, they can call the teacher to the group to check.
6. The teacher may need to guide the students to discover any sentences that need to be reordered.

Variations

1. Students can work individually.
2. Students can be given one particular strip and tasked with one of the options below:
 - a. They can be asked to jigsaw. In the first group, they work with other students who have the same strip to identify relevant discourse features and make predictions about what elements in the story likely precede and follow their particular sentence. They then break into new groups where each student has a different sentence.
 - b. Students can be asked to physically move into a line to present the correct order of the story. Students can read aloud their version of the story, with each student reading his/her particular sentence in turn.
3. Instead of sentences, students can be given drawings or comic strip frames with the words deleted. Students decide on a good order for the drawings and create a narrative to explain the story behind that order. This activity would not ensure that the target discourse markers would be used without direct instruction to do so. The final stories could be shared in writing, orally, or visually (displayed in the classroom).

When to Use It

- To practice sequencing
- To review transition words
- To encourage cooperative learning

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Story strips or handout with words blanked out for Variation 3

Preparation Time

10–45 minutes, depending on text selected

Activity Time

10–20 minutes

Text

A paragraph, or approximately 50–100 words

Jigsaw 1

This activity is called a jigsaw after the popular jigsaw puzzle, in which different pieces with a variety of shapes and colors are fitted together to make a complete picture. A jigsaw activity is a cooperative activity that involves authentic communication in groups for gathering and sharing information. In the first group, students find the answers to particular questions. Students then move to a new group where they teach the information or answers they already prepared and learn new information from other members. This is an excellent activity to use when introducing new content, but it has many other uses as well.

Preparation

The teacher must prepare two sets of materials (Sets #1 and #2). The first set is composed of two or more handouts, each with different content for each group. The second set is a chart, a set of questions, or a handout where students can take notes and compile the information from all of the groups into one place.

1. Set #1 can simply be different paragraphs in a reading. All students have the reading, but the teacher assigns a particular paragraph to each group. The group's task is to remember the content from their paragraph to compile with information from the other groups later. In this simple version, the teacher doesn't have to prepare anything special. In activities that require more preparation, the teacher can photocopy texts from different sources or prepare information sheets. Students can also bring in information that they have researched to create readings for Set #1.
2. Set #1 may also include prompts or questions for the students to answer as they discuss their texts. These questions may be in the textbook, or the teacher or students may create them.
3. Set #2 can include a chart or a compilation of the separate group questions. It is possible to create no materials and just ask the students to discuss the different information that each brings to the group with basic guiding instructions (e.g., "Find the main idea and most important details" or "Answer the six *wh*- questions").

Procedure

1. Determine *before class* how groups will be assigned:
For example, if there are 15 students in the class, they could be divided into three groups of five students each to read and discuss the materials in Set #1. (e.g., Set #1 materials could be three different paragraphs from a three-paragraph text.)
Set #1 reading:
(three groups of five students)
e.g., P1 P2 P3
2. After students are finished reading and discussing, take one student from each group to form new groups. In this example, there would be five groups of three students. Each new group would now have the complete three-paragraph text.
e.g., P1, P2, P3 P1, P2, P3 P1, P2, P3 P1, P2, P3 P1, P2, P3
3. All students in these new groups get the same Set #2 handout to help them compile the different information.

When to Use It

- To introduce new content
- To break up a complex task
- To encourage all students to participate in class discussions
- To minimize teacher talk time
- To promote critical thinking
- To introduce longer texts

Level



Skills



Content and information processing; critical thinking

Practice



Materials

Multiple handouts

Preparation Time

30 minutes

Activity Time

40–60 minutes: 20+ minutes for Set #1;
10+ minutes for Set #2

Suggested Text

Reading with 3+ paragraphs

Jigsaw 2

This is a pre-text activity. The aim of this activity is to prepare students for reading a text by activating their previous knowledge of the topic as well as language. It is also an enjoyable activity that will make the approach to the text more memorable and therefore will engage learners with the text more successfully. It is a useful kick-start to top-down reading.

Preparation

Make copies of the text you have selected for your lesson. This can be authentic or taken from the course book you are currently using with your class. Cut up each text any which way (similar to a jigsaw puzzle), making sure there is one piece of text for every member of each group.

Procedure

1. Divide learners into groups with the number of students to match the number of puzzle pieces. Each group will work with one text that is cut up.
2. Each group member reads his/her part of the text alone and brainstorms the type of text, purpose, source, content, etc.
3. Students in each group discuss what they think the text will be about based on their piece of the whole.
4. If all groups have the same text, they can report out to the whole class to compare ideas. The teacher or a student writes the suggestions on the board.
5. Members of each group put their bits of text together to recreate the whole text.
6. Students read the whole text in order to refute or confirm predictions they made in Step 2.
7. Students discuss the text and compare them to the predictions on the board.
8. Direct students to the relevant page in the course book or distribute the authentic text to begin with more detailed reading.

Variations

1. Dictate some sentences from the text in random order and ask students to try to sequence them and speculate on the content of the text.
2. Cut up the title of the text into separate words. Have groups sequence words in the title and predict the content.

When to Use It

- To activate students' schema before reading a text
- To work with others

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

One copy of text (authentic or from course book) per group of 4–6 students; scissors

Preparation Time

5 minutes

Activity Time

About 15 minutes (depends on number of students/groups in your class)

Jigsaw Memory

This is a time-pressured lead-in for a more extensive activity. Students are shown a list of statements (fact or fiction, depending on what the lead-in is) and have 30 seconds to memorize assigned portions of the list. After the time is up, they share their portions with others to put the whole together. The whole can be the beginning of the more extensive activity.

Preparation

Select the statements to be memorized and create a numbered list. Prepare an even number of statements and prepare to divide the class into groups containing half the number there are statements. E.g., If there are ten statements, tell students to get in groups of five and number off one through five. (See sample statements in the Appendix, page 257.)

Procedure

1. Have students get into groups (groups should contain the number of students equal to half the total number of statements).
E.g., Five students if there are ten statements
2. Have students number off in groups, e.g., one through five.
3. Instruct students that they will see ten numbered statements on the board. They will have 30 seconds to memorize their two statements.
 - a. 1s memorize statements 1 and 6;
 - b. 2s memorize 2 and 7;
 - c. 3s memorize 3 and 8;
 - d. 4s memorize 4 and 9;
 - e. 5s memorize 5 and 10.
4. Check the instructions with the students to see if they understand — “What are you to memorize?”; “How much time do you have?”; etc.
5. Project the statements on the screen. Time the activity.
6. When the time is up, have groups share their statements orally with each other to put the story together.
7. Move on to the extended activity — reading a longer text, determining if the statements are true/false, etc.

Variations

1. The statements could tell a short story; they could be out of order when projected and the students could try to reorder the story after memorizing.
2. The statements could include information about a text that the students will then read, and they could determine whether the statements are true or false according to the text.

When to Use It

- To set students’ schema
- To memorize short information to share with others
- To order information (if statements comprise a story out of order)

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Statements

Preparation Time

10 minutes

Activity Time

10–15 minutes

Group Reading Diary

This activity is a writing activity based on reading. Students share their comments on a text, but build off of previous comments.

Preparation

Identify a text that is at a suitable level for your students. While students could write comments based on just about any text, the teacher should be prepared if the text chosen is too controversial.

Procedure

1. Divide the class into working groups of four to seven. Appoint a leader.
2. All students within a group read the same text.
3. The leader of the group will write the first comment about the text on a piece of paper (or in a notebook or online).
4. The “diary” is passed on to a second member, who will respond to the comment above and the text as well.
5. The diary passes to each team member in turn for response.

Variations

1. Groups could select their own text under supervision and approval of the facilitator.
2. Individual entries could be fleshed out into longer essays.
3. The comments could be done as a Wiki/blog entry, with team members able to add comments in any order.
4. The comments could be done orally initially or after the diary has gone around the group in order to give extra practice.

When to Use It

- To promote interaction with a text
- To encourage students to communicate opinions
- To help students learn how to respond to opinions in writing
- To practice stating one’s opinion and supporting it with examples

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Text

Preparation Time

5 minutes

Activity Time

10 minutes each day or for homework; orally, the debate could last for 15–30 minutes

Emotional Intelligence Scripting

In this activity, students are invited to add dialogue to a story to change the outcome. It focuses on emotional intelligence and gives students a chance to imagine how a story line could go differently. The focus can be on what the others could have said or done to make a particular character feel better, and what the character could have said to the others to let them know how he or she was feeling.

Preparation

Identify a text that includes dialogues with bullying, arguing, etc. Texts can vary greatly, from stories for children to novel excerpts or even song lyrics.

Procedure

1. Distribute the text (if it is short and will be read in class).
2. Go through various key characters from the text.
3. Focus on the character(s) who are involved in the bullying or insulting, or one that is a witness to the incident.
4. Elicit the types of emotions for the character(s) being bullied or insulted and have students justify their answers.
5. Put the relevant dialogue on the board and elicit some ways in which the characters could change their reactions to the incident to be more positive or helpful.

Variations

1. Have students do the exercise in groups and compare their answers.
2. For more advanced students, news reports or transcripts could be used.
3. Students could act the situations out with the new scripts.

When to Use It

- To raise awareness of emotional intelligence
- To promote appropriate responses to sensitive situations
- To practice how to respond to negative comments

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Text

Preparation Time

10 minutes

Activity Time

20–40 minutes

Group Mind Map

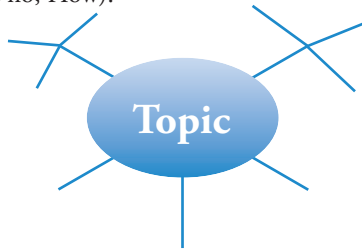
Creating a mind map prior to reading a text is another way to help learners consider what they already know about a topic and prepare for reading. A mind map is a graphic representation of information about a topic. In this activity, the mind map is used to help learners think about what information is already known or what one thinks they know about a topic, then referred to as one reads and checks what is addressed, what is different, and what is new. This activity could be done individually as well, but in pairs or groups, students will be able to start sharing knowledge on the topic.

Preparation

The instructor may wish to prepare a mind map on the reading to be used ahead of time to help walk students through and help guide them.

Procedure

1. The first time doing a mind map with students, guide them through the format and emphasize the different ways to approach making a mind map.
 - a. Brainstorming what is known about a topic
 - b. Predicting what a reading or talk will be about based on the title, abstract, or any other information
 - c. Taking notes on a talk or reading
2. Give students the title or topic of the reading to be used for the activity. Place the topic in the middle. Each branch can be any subheading about the topic. The easiest way to start might be to use a *wh-* word for each branch (What, When, Where, Why, Who, How).



3. Have students work in pairs or groups to brainstorm together what they know about a topic. They should create one mind map together.
4. Once students have been exposed to the concept of a mind map, they should be able to draw one on a blank page based on the topic or title with little prompting and name the branches appropriate to their thinking.
5. Learners should then refer to the mind map as they are reading to see what items on their mind map are in the reading, correct any inaccuracies, and add any new information.

Variations

1. Have learners make individual mind maps (on the same or different readings) and have them swap their mind maps with a partner. Each learner will look at the prediction mind map and see how it compares to the reading as they are reading.
2. Have students read different articles on the same topic and see how they can join the information in the two mind maps to reflect the points in both readings.

When to Use It

- To promote prediction and schema setting
- To give students practice in preparing to read
- To give students a chance to share information on a topic
- To appeal to visual learners
- To help learners see how information can be grouped to show relationship

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Paper

Preparation Time

10 minutes

Activity Time

5–10 minutes

Scaffolded Questioning

Most reading texts used for practice include questions for learners to check their comprehension, but often the questions fall short of challenging learners beyond the information found easily in the text. The information in this activity is to assist in scaffolding questions so learners get practice in checking their comprehension, going beyond the text, and developing their critical thinking by giving their opinions.

Preparation

1. Prepare two or three questions (or more) for each category for a text to be used in class (categories explained below). Each set of four types of questions should be on separate sheets of paper to be placed around the room.
2. The four question types should be delivered in order of difficulty (as listed below). Students should be made aware of the differences of the types of questions:
 - a. **IN THE TEXT**
 - i. **Right There:** For this type of question, the information should be easy to find by scanning. Students should be able to look back very quickly to find the answer if they didn't catch it while reading. In fact, for this type of question, the learners do not need to read the text closely, but could just scan the text quickly to find the answer. *E.g., What is Frank's last name in the Reading introduction?*
 - ii. **Think and Search:** For this question, students need to put information together from different sentences in the text to answer the question. Have students read the text and check their answers to the statements as they read. They should be doing this activity during the reading. *E.g., What is the difference between Learning to Read and Reading to Learn?*
 - b. **OUTSIDE THE TEXT**
 - iii. **Author and Me:** For this type of question, the reader uses the information in the text and thinks beyond what's there to relate the topic to him/herself or what he/she knows. This could be a prediction question about what will happen next (in a chapter book, for example). *E.g., What are some examples of intensive and extensive reading mentioned in the text that you've experienced recently?*
 - iv. **On My Own:** For these questions, it's not necessary to have read the text to answer the question. However, having read the text may prompt some schema and prior experience to better think through one's answer. *E.g., What kinds of texts do you enjoy reading in your spare time? Are there some that you shy away from? Why?*

Procedure

1. Place worksheets with questions (by type) in each corner of the room. Label the corners with the types of questions (1. *Right There*, 2. *Think and Search*, etc.).
2. Tell students, when they finish the reading, they should go to the first corner to get a worksheet, return to their desk, and answer the questions.
3. When they finish with the first set of questions, they go to the second corner and get a slip/sheet of paper with those questions to answer, etc.
4. When they are finished with all four corners, they can work with a partner to compare their answers.
5. When most or all students are finished, debrief on the reading and the questions.

When to Use It

- To promote prediction and schema setting
- To give students practice in reflecting on texts more deeply

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Paper

Preparation Time

10 minutes

Activity Time

15–20 minutes for first-time introduction of question types; 5–10 minutes thereafter

Variations

1. For future in-class readings and Scaffolded Questioning in corners, allow learners to choose what corner they want to go to first, which will allow them to choose their difficulty level.
2. Have learners prepare comprehension questions based on a text before learning about the question types. Introduce them to the various types and have them categorize the questions they drafted. This usually reveals that most questioning is focused on questions found In the Text.
3. Have learners/groups prepare questions based on the four categories as they read. As they get familiar with the question types, they will start to look at texts differently and begin to use Outside the Text questions more naturally. They can prepare the various types of questions for their classmates.
4. Have learners draft the questions on a reading and then swap with other learners. The readings can be different as well.

VOCABULARY



Vocabulary

*By Dr. Nanda Klapwijk
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Vocabulary is the key to learning a language and excelling in that language, even more so than grammar. In fact, with only a few useful words and expressions, you could manage to communicate without grammar (but probably not for complicated issues!). Essentially vocabulary is your **communication toolbox** — the more words you learn, the quicker you will learn a language, and the better your chances of finding the right word for every situation.

Here are some reasons why vocabulary is important:

- It **improves effective communication** — not only to understand but also to be understood. A rich vocabulary makes the skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing easier to perform.
- It helps you **understand what you read** — the more words you have, the easier it will be to link new words to existing ones. And the more words you have, the greater your chances of understanding most or all words in any text you read.
- The more words you know, **the more you will learn and the faster you will learn**.
- It helps you to **understand ideas and think more logically** — essentially it opens your mind because when you have sufficient vocabulary you are able to break out of old thinking patterns and are able to question what you read or hear.
- It helps you to **make a good impression** on others — in fact, Jason O'Connor showed through research on people from all walks of life that a person's vocabulary level is the best single predictor of occupational success. He further showed that vocabulary usually comes *before* achievement, and not as a consequence of it.

Vocabulary mostly consists of teaching single words, but it can also include word phrases or chunks which belong together and convey a specific meaning. Three aspects of vocabulary that teachers should be aware of are **form, meaning, and use**. The *form* of a word involves its pronunciation (spoken form), spelling (written form), and any word parts that make up that particular word (such as prefixes, root, and suffixes). The *meaning* of a word comprises the concept and what items it refers to, and the associations that come to mind when thinking about that word — in other words, meaning is the way that form and meaning work together. The *use* of a word involves its grammatical functions, collocations (other words) that normally go with it, and any constraints on its use.

Teachers should also be aware of the difference between **receptive** and **productive** vocabulary. Receptive vocabulary comprises those words that you understand when you hear or read them, whereas productive vocabulary are the words you can use to express yourself in speech and writing. Learners' receptive vocabulary tends to be larger than their productive vocabulary, but the teachers' goal should of course be to increase their productive vocabulary levels.

So how can I improve my learners' vocabulary? Vocabulary is built chiefly by two methods: a LOT of **reading** (both formally and informally) and intensive **vocabulary drill and practice** in class. And, of course, remembering to make it as fun as possible, especially in the primary school years.

Fun learning is what this chapter on Vocabulary is all about. So turn the page and get started!

What Is This?

This activity involves quick brainstorming (either individually, as a group, or as a whole class) to make a list of what an object could be if one used their imagination. E.g., Hold up a pen. It IS a pen, but one could imagine it to be: a laser pointer, a toothbrush, a comb, a lipstick, etc. The key guideline for brainstorming a list is to avoid judging the ideas as they come up. All ideas, no matter how silly or simple, should be noted. The purpose of this brainstorm is to get students active and stretch their vocabularies. Because the activity can and should be combined with motion and “acting,” the vocabularies will be better remembered. Also, when “debriefed” with just the motion, it becomes a good guessing game.

Preparation

For individuals/groups: Have students write down as many things as they can imagine the pen to be. Be sure to set a time limit. Have them count up the number of items. The one with the most reads the list or acts them out. For groups, have one person be the scribe.

For a learning station: Have the instructions clearly written out with a pen/pencil taped to the instructions (as a prompt!) and one piece of paper available for each group to brainstorm the list together. Set a time limit as in the instructions above.

For a whole-class activity without paper: No paper is needed; the teacher leads the activity with a spare pen that gets passed around as students imagine/act out/say a new object.

Procedure

1. Have a writing instrument: pen, pencil, chalk, or a marker.
2. Hold up the writing instrument and ask, “What is this?” The students may reply, “It’s a pen,” etc.
3. The instructor should say, “No, it’s not a pen, it’s a *insert imaginary item name such as ‘toothbrush’*” while gesturing with the pen as that item.

For Individuals/Groups:

Students take out a piece of a paper and brainstorm their lists either on their own or as a group with one scribe.

For Whole Class:

After demonstrating the first one, hand the pen to a student and ask, “What is this?” The student should pretend the pen is something else, gesture the new item, and say the word. Have the student pass the pen on to the next student and continue the game. Students should not repeat words.

Variations

Learning Stations: Have this activity as part of a learning station where the group has five minutes (timed!) to work together to make out a list. They should be prepared to act out the object in the debrief.

Group Competition: Divide the class into groups and have each group brainstorm a list at the same time. The group with the most items listed wins.

Consolidation: After the competition is over, have each student mime one of the uses of the pen and have the other students guess. This is a good way to share the various ideas across the classroom. Uses should not be repeated.

Review/Warm-Up: For a quick, effective review of vocabulary, have students mime the item the next day/week from the original activity. See what others can remember.

Use other objects (shaped differently) for variety and for more advanced levels: ball, hat, book (these seem more difficult).

When to Use It

- To introduce the concept of brainstorming
- To introduce or review vocabulary
- To energize a class
- To introduce an element of competition in the class
- As a learning station

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Pen; writing materials or blackboard

Preparation Time

5 minutes

Activity Time

10–15 minutes

List It

This is a group activity used to expand vocabulary, with a focus on receptive and productive skills. It also involves a cultural component.

Preparation

Select a photo related to the theme, content, or vocabulary focus for the day, e.g., a market scene for fruits/vegetables, a room for furniture, a street scene.

Procedure

1. Group students in groups of three to five.
2. Display the picture. Groups have two minutes to brainstorm a list of words found in the picture.
3. After two minutes, teams put down their pens/pencils and count up the number of words.
4. The group with the longest list reads the words. If the same word is shared by other groups, it is crossed out by all students (respond by saying, "Got it!").
5. Groups read individual word lists until no word is shared by any other group (students can contest words if they do not fit the picture).

Variations

1. Advanced students may look at cultural similarities/differences between their country and the United States.
2. Students could compose a story or essay involving the words on the lists.
3. Provide a list of items to find in a set of photos. Students check the ones that were in the images.
4. Instead of using an image as the prompt, give all students a category and they work in small groups to make a list of as many items under a category that begin with a certain letter. (For example, the category could be Food and the letter "c": cauliflower, cabbage, cheese, corn, chili, etc.) The group with the most correct words wins.

When to Use It

- To expand vocabulary
- To change up the energy level in class

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Scratch paper — one per person or group;
a large picture for which one could associate many vocabulary words

Preparation Time

Very little

Activity Time

15+ minutes

Possible Photo Resource

Picture US

Fly Swatter Game

This is a competitive kinesthetic vocabulary game; students identify terms/phrases using listening skills and powers of observation.

Preparation

Prepare terms, phrases, and/or vocabulary to use in advance. It's best to use a big picture or a projector with the image(s).

Procedure

1. Divide students into teams.
2. Place opposing students at an equal distance from the pictures (turned towards you so that students cannot review pictures in advance).
3. Choose a term, question, or phrase that describes something that is on the picture.
4. Students race to “swat” the corresponding picture and/or item within.
5. Whoever does so correctly wins. Keeping score is optional.

Variations

1. Provide an image for each pair of students. They can compete against each other, with the facilitator calling out words.
2. Use minimal pair words and use the words in a sentence so students can identify the correct word.
3. Use numbers that are difficult to distinguish — 16 vs. 60, 14 vs. 40; letters (*b* vs. *v*, *f* vs. *s*, etc.); or pronunciation stress.
4. See also Class vs. Teacher in Games on page 174.

When to Use It

- To review vocabulary
- To change up the energy level in class

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Fly swatters or rolled-up paper to “swat” at the photo; pictures/images to display

Preparation Time

10 minutes to select words; 10 minutes to select photo

Activity Time

15+ minutes

Possible Photo Resource

Picture US

Dominoes

This activity is based on classic dominoes, in which players need to match up domino pieces to earn points or get rid of their pieces. In this case, the domino pieces are not numbers, but they are collocations. A sample sheet of domino pieces is provided below, as a blank set to be copied, filled in, and cut.

Preparation

Decide on the lexical items that you want the students to review or that you want to assess (could be grammar as well). Prepare the game cards (the “dominoes”) and make sufficient copies for your class. Make at least twenty to thirty dominoes. Cut up the cards and put each set into a plastic bag.

Procedure

1. Students get into small groups with a playing surface between them. (Groups of two to four work best, depending on the level and space in the classroom.) Decide which student in each group will play first. Action will continue in the counterclockwise direction.
2. Pass out the bags — one to each group. Students shuffle the cards and divide them amongst the group members.
3. Player #1 puts a domino down. The next player puts down a domino that goes with one of the two items on the first domino. If this is not possible, play continues to the next player. The first player to get rid of all of his/her dominoes wins.

Variations

1. This game can be played with a variety of collocations, idiomatic expressions, subject/verb agreement, lexical items with pictures or definitions, etc.
2. Once the game has been played, the students can further practice the lexical items used through story-writing, skits, etc.

EXAMPLE:

Given a few household items (toilet paper, paper towels, microwave oven, frying pan), the cards would be arranged in the following manner.

paper	toilet	paper	paper
towels	microwave	oven	frying

When to Use It

- To review or assess lexical or grammatical items
- To check understanding of particular items in a unit

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Domino cards

Preparation Time

20 minutes

Activity Time

10–15 minutes

Color Idioms

In this activity, students practice idioms related to colors. The activity can be adapted for idioms related to other topics (food, money, friendship, etc.).

Preparation

Find colored paper to show to students. Use the idioms handout in the Appendix on page 258 or project to class.

Procedure

1. Show colored paper to students and ask/discuss color names in English with the class.
2. Give students written or printed idioms based on colors; have students work in groups to guess which colors fit in which blanks.
3. Define the words and histories behind the various idioms and how they are used in English.
4. Have each student write a four- to five-sentence paragraph story using colors as adjectives, with at least two idioms.
5. Have students self-correct and comment on their peers' work.

Variations

1. This activity can also be modified to serve as a review game. Students make cards on their own without a word bank.
2. A similar activity could be done with food. Students could draw the food item and match the idiom that goes with the food.
3. Add multimedia (preferably video) that shows an example of the definitions used.

When to Use It

- To review vocabulary
- To help students learn idiomatic expressions
- To change up the energy level in class

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Page 258 of this book; colored construction paper; markers of various colors; idiom books; multimedia (songs, stories, videos, etc.); definitions

Preparation Time

None if using prepared list; 15+ minutes if there is a need to create another list

Activity Time

15+ minutes

Possible Idiom Resources

In The Loop

<https://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/loop>

The Lighter Side of TEFL (p. 119)

<https://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/lighter-side-tefl>

Word Wall

This is an ongoing and long-term activity that works best in classrooms where items can be displayed in the room somewhat permanently. Selected words are displayed around the room over time in agreed-upon categories and used in subsequent activities.

Preparation

The teacher should think of the space of the room and plot out how the words can be displayed in terms of categories (nouns, verbs, adjectives, phrases), colors (for different categories or for levels), and media (written on paper and posted or written on a board).

Procedure

1. The procedure for this activity will be determined by the space of the room and the categories and media used.
2. After these decisions are made, time can be set aside to collect the vocabulary words for each lesson during certain activities and add them to the wall(s). The latter might be done only once per week or two weeks or so.

Aspects to consider

1. Words chosen should not be just any new word encountered, but rather a combination of the following three aspects: encountered in context, usable by students, and commonly in use by native speakers.
2. Word display should be considered — creative and relevant groupings work better than neat orderly rows.
3. Word movement should also be considered. There's a distinct possibility of collecting too many words for the space, and how they are moved, saved, and used should be thought about.

When to Use It

- To incorporate vocabulary-building into the class
- To review vocabulary
- To provide practical information on the walls of the classroom
- To tailor learning to the classroom

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Paper, markers, tape if that's the method of collecting and displaying

Preparation Time

None — except pre-planning positions and use

Activity Time

Ongoing

Buzz Ban Cards

In this activity, students describe selected vocabulary words to their teams, but they are prohibited from using any gestures and predetermined words listed on the vocabulary card to help in the description. Those words are banned. See sample card below.

Preparation

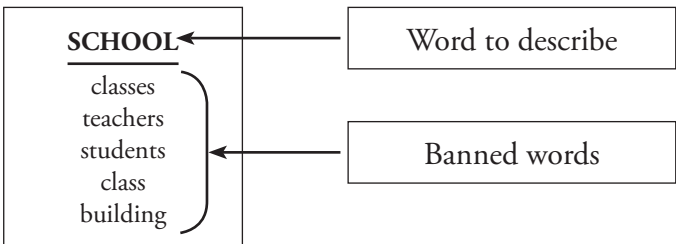
Prepare the cards ahead of time — one set for each group or one for the class if the class is divided into two teams. A sample set of cards is on page 260 in the Appendix.

Procedure

1. Teams take turns describing the words for their teammates to guess.
2. One member of the other team (Team B monitor) watches over the individual from the team (Team A clue-giver) giving the description to ensure s/he is not using any of the banned words.
3. If the Team A clue-giver does use a banned word during the description, the Team B monitor buzzes the clue-giver and the clue-giver from Team A moves to the next card.
4. The Team A clue-giver describes as many words as s/he can in the time allotted (time can be 1–2 minutes). S/he can pass on a word card if s/he feels the word is too difficult.
5. Play passes to a clue-giver from Team B; a member from Team A monitors play.
6. Points can be awarded as agreed upon. Some of the standard rules for earning/losing points follow (can be adjusted for difficulty of play):
 - a. Gain 1 point for every word guessed by the team
 - b. Lose 1 point each time the clue-giver gets buzzed for using a banned word
 - c. Lose 1 point each time the clue-giver passes on a word
 - d. Lose 1 point for using a gesture

Variations

1. Have students make cards over time.
2. Adjust the rules for gaining/losing points for difficulty.



When to Use It

- To practice defining vocabulary words using circumlocution
- To review vocabulary
- To add a competitive element to class

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Buzz Ban Cards on page 260

Preparation Time

10 minutes

Activity Time

10–15+ minutes

Contributors: Julie Holaway, Assessment Specialist and ESL Instructor, has taught in various learning institutions around the world and was an English Language Fellow in Brazil from 2009 to 2011; Cristiane Tinoco, English teacher, Belo Horizonte, Brazil; with additional ideas from Maria Snarski, Regional English Language Officer

Letter Link

In this activity, students search the game board for vocabulary words. The game is challenging and good for giving students a new way to think, as finding the words is not so straightforward, but takes creative, flexible thinking.

Preparation

Prepare grids ahead of time or be sure students have paper to make their own.

Procedure

1. Make a 3x3, 4x4, or 5x5 square of letters on the board (be sure to include a good mix of vowels and consonants).
2. Students work in teams to see how many words they can form with the letters in the square in a limited amount of time (three to five minutes, depending on level).
3. The letters must be touching each other to form a word.

Variations

1. To make it easier, tell students they can use a letter more than once. To make it more difficult, tell them they can use each letter only once.
2. Add a time limit to make it more competitive.
3. Walkable Words. Instead of using the grid, create a graphic like the one below, with letters in squares and lines connecting the squares like a spider web. Words can only be created with the letters that are connected by the lines, and the same letter cannot be used more than once in a row (e.g., penne), although they can be used more than once with another letter in between. Additional options with Walkable Words: Use the same squares and rules, but put words in the squares to create sentences or images to create stories.

When to Use It

- To practice spelling and finding vocabulary words
- To change up the energy level in class

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Grids premade or paper for students to make them

Preparation Time

10 minutes — to create the board
15 minutes if students make board

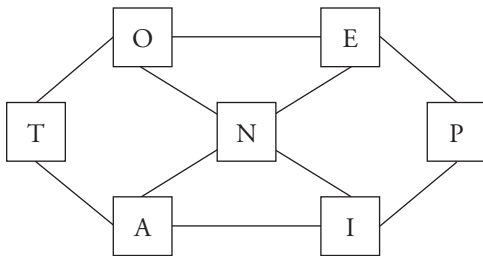
Activity Time

10–15+ minutes

Grid

S	R	A	T	L
K	I	N	H	E
Q	C	W	O	M
D	U	Y	B	F
A	S	P	R	Z

Web



Word Ladder

This activity gives learners practice spelling English words they are familiar with. The words used in the activity can be restricted to certain themes or ones that they explicitly studied, or they can be any the students are aware of.

Preparation

The teacher has nothing too complicated to prepare — just the rules and a space to demonstrate the activity.

Procedure

1. Begin with a word — any word.
2. Students continue adding words as if each word were the steps of a ladder.
3. They can add from the last letter onwards. When there is no more room, they return to the first letter of the first word or second letter of another word. Students may go back to the front if there is room to do so, as shown in the picture.
4. Words cannot run into one another.

		M	O	T	H	E	R												
		E					I												
		A					D												
T	E	N					D												
R							L												
Y	E	A	R				E	S	T	I	M	A	T	E					
			A										E						
			C										A						
			E	A	R	L	Y						C						
							A						H						
							R						E						
							N	E	X	T			R	I	S	K			
										I						E			
										M						Y			
										E	X	C	E	L		S	U	N	

Variations

1. Students can work in pairs with one sheet of paper and a time limit.
2. Limit the words to fall within a certain topic in order to recycle it (food, verbs, nature, animals, etc.).
3. The teacher can dictate predetermined words and students are to find a place in the ladder to put them.
4. The teacher can read sentences with missing words and students use the word that is missing from the sentence in their ladder. Note: These words can be different from group to group as long as they make sense.
5. Students can write a story using all the words in the ladder.
6. For more advanced classes, the ladder can be made up of words to form a sentence.

When to Use It

- To transition students into English
- To warm up a class
- To set the schema of students
- To focus students after a break
- To recycle areas of vocabulary

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Paper

Preparation Time

2 minutes

Activity Time

10–15 minutes (correction included)

Letter Loans

This activity is an easy warm-up or energizing activity that requires very little to no preparation. Students compete to see how many words they can make from letters included in their name, a quote, or something else.

Preparation

Decide what students will be getting letters from: their name, a quote, etc.

Procedure

1. Decide whether students will compete alone, in pairs, or in groups, and arrange the class accordingly.
2. Select the source of the game: name, quote, book title, or other.
3. Students are to create as many English words as they can using only the letters in the source. For each word, the limit of letters is what is in the source (i.e., if there is only one “s” in the source, students cannot write a word that is spelled with more than one “s”).
4. Set a time limit — three minutes is good for those just starting.
5. When the time is up, pens and pencils should be down and students should count up the number of words created.
6. If students are creating words from their names, they can share the total number of words created and various individuals can read their lists.
7. If students are all working off the same source, the student/pair/group with the highest number of words should read their complete list. As they read, if others have the same word on their list, that word is removed from the total number of points.
8. Other groups read words they had that the first group didn’t have, getting one point for each if no other group has it. This continues until all groups have read their lists.
9. Misspellings will not count in the final tally.

Example:

Name: Nora Natalia Lerena

are	tin	leer	tail	not	neat	note	teen
no	oar	near	tale	on	real	train	rail

Variations

1. All the words, or as many words as possible, should be used in a short narrative or in a story that can be drawn if the group happens to be artistic.
2. For a bigger challenge, the teacher could write only the letters from a quote on the board. Students could come up with words and then try to recreate the quotation.
3. For a low-level teacher, or if the teacher wants to wrap up the activity quickly, s/he can divide the words from the quotation into syllables. For example, “I have never let my schooling interfere with my education.” — Mark Twain
The quotation can be divided as follows: I/have/ne/ver/let/my/school/ing/in/ter/fer/e/with/my/e/du/ca/tion. The students will be given the pieces to complete the quotation and then the students can check whether any of their words was used in the quotation.

When to Use It

- To transition students into English
- To warm up a class
- To focus students after a break

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Paper

Preparation Time

5 minutes to select the source

Activity Time

3 minutes to play; 5–10 minutes to debrief

Marshmallow Spelling

Marshmallow Spelling is an activity aimed at expanding learners' vocabulary in a fun and exciting way. Learners are encouraged to continuously search for "good" words to use for the next marshmallow spelling day, which is usually unannounced. This activity works great in a spare ten minutes of class.

Preparation

Bring a bag of mini marshmallows and/or regular marshmallows to class (or other small reward).

Procedure

1. Students "collect" words for their vocabulary lists during the term to be used in the activity. Learners must research the correct pronunciation of the word as well as the correct meaning of the word.
2. The first student will consult his/her list and say his/her word and the meaning. If s/he pronounces the word correctly, s/he gets a mini marshmallow, and if s/he can give the correct meaning, s/he gets another marshmallow. Variation: You may only give the student a marshmallow if the other students are unable to spell the word. This motivates students to search for words they think the other learners will not be able to spell.
3. The other students will then get a turn to try to spell the word. If it is incorrect, a next student gets a turn. If s/he is correct, s/he receives a regular marshmallow and then has the opportunity to propose a word. I usually allow three students to try to spell the word, and if three cannot do it, the student whose word it was receives the regular marshmallow and then has a choice to either propose another word or assign someone else to propose a word.

Warning: Students can get quite excited in the process, so whether an extrinsic reward like marshmallows is used must be done with discretion. It is also good to explain some rules beforehand, like how students are selected to try to spell (there must be some sort of fairness to the process).

Variations

1. This game can be played in team context where one team proposes a word and the other team needs to deliberate before giving an answer. If they are wrong, the first team gets a point. If they are right, they get a point. This might limit the spontaneity of trying to spell a word even though it may turn out wrong because the stakes are higher. It may therefore limit the learning opportunity. For this variation, a predetermined list of words that students had to memorize at home may work better as a way to test them instead of a formal assessment.
2. You may try using your own (unseen) list of words with two teams, where the first one to press a buzzer or raise their hand and spell the word correctly earns a point/marshmallow for their team. Only one learner may participate at a time, and the students must rotate until everyone has had a turn.

When to Use It

- As a 10-minute energizer during class
- When there is a gap in class time
- As a planned activity learners have time to prepare for
- As a "spot-test" to test whether learners have learnt their vocabulary words

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Marshmallows or other candies

Preparation Time

None

Activity Time

10–30 minutes (depending on how many students are allowed to propose a word)

WRITING



Writing

*By Isabela de Freitas Villas Boas
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When we think of literacy development, we tend to focus primarily on the development of reading skills. It is true that enabling students to gain the meanings around written texts is of utmost importance, as both public and personal activities in the 21st century are highly influenced by written documents (Bazerman 2008). However, as Bazerman also states, “a world in which we read but do not write is a world in which we do not have primacy agency” (1). We need to write in order to gain direct agency and interact with others and express our interests and perspectives. While Bazerman does not address second language writing specifically, the same principle holds true for learning a second language. We are only able to exercise our agency in a second language if we are able to communicate with others by way of both spoken and written texts, hence the importance of second language writing.

However, many times teachers take writing as the expression of agency for granted in ESL/EFL classrooms and focus most of their activities on writing to practice something else, such as writing to display knowledge of grammar and vocabulary or to answer questions that demonstrate comprehension of a reading passage. In order to develop our students’ writing skills, we need to teach writing explicitly and not assume that students will necessarily transfer writing skills from their first to the second language. Teaching writing starts much before the teacher assigns a writing prompt. It is a process that should encompass the stages of generating ideas, planning, drafting, and revising, including self- and peer revisions. An effective writing assignment is also one that will lead students to take one step further in the development of coherence, cohesion, and fluency. Also, students need to be exposed to and produce different genres that will enable them to exercise their agency in social, professional, and academic settings.

This section of *The Monster Book* is thus highly relevant in that it focuses on micro and macro skills of writing and on writing as a process rather than merely a product. The activities suggested here address most, if not all, of the stages of the writing process mentioned above, from generating ideas to reflecting on the learning process by way of journals and providing feedback to peers. They also address how teachers can give feedback on students’ mistakes and help them enhance their vocabulary for writing. Creative writing is also duly addressed.

In sum, all the activities in this section are worth trying in any ESL/EFL classroom, regardless of learners’ age and proficiency level.

Reference

Bazerman, C. 2008. Introduction. In *Handbook of research on writing: History, society, school, individual, text*, ed. C. Bazerman. New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a technique to help students develop content ideas before they have to do a more complex task, such as writing an essay or giving a presentation. Brainstorming can also be used as a pre-reading activity for a longer text. The key guideline for brainstorming is to avoid judging the ideas as they come up. All ideas, no matter how silly or simple, should be noted. The purpose of brainstorming is to help students develop a better “answer.” Students usually speak or write with better, richer, and more sophisticated content if they have been able to find a topic they are interested in and if they consider the topic from a variety of angles. Brainstorming should be used in the planning stages of a larger project.

Preparation

- The teacher should have ideas about the topic to be able to prompt the students if necessary.
- Have paper or a blackboard to write ideas on.

Procedure

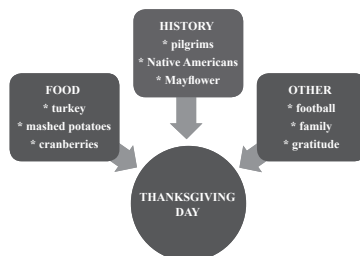
1. Brainstorming can be oral or written.
2. Brainstorming can be done as a whole class, in groups, in pairs, or individually.
 - a. Whole-class brainstorming works best when the teacher is demonstrating the technique for the first time or when time is short. The teacher or a student should write on the blackboard as the class calls out ideas. If students hesitate to call out, then the teacher can prompt them by asking leading questions or giving an example or two.
 - b. Pairs and groups can work cooperatively or in a sort of round robin. Each student can have a topic on a particular piece of paper; the student can then write down a contributory idea and then pass the paper to the next student.

Once the ideas are generated, students can be asked to choose one as the topic for further development, or students can look for relationships between the ideas and then organize them.

Variations

There are several brainstorming techniques.

1. Mapping — Have students note down ideas in single words or short phrases and ask them to draw the connections between the ideas with arrows, circles, and bubbles. This is a great technique for visual learners. Below is an example of this kind of map. Of course, more ideas related to the holiday could be included.



When to Use It

- To introduce a new topic or reading
- To activate background knowledge
- To come up with ideas to write or talk about
- To develop a topic

Level



Skills

Content and organization



Practice



Materials

Writing materials or blackboard

Preparation Time

5 minutes

Activity Time

10–20 minutes

Text

Any

2. Listing — Note down the ideas in single words or phrases in a simple list in the order in which they are brought up. This may be less intimidating than mapping, since the map suggests that the ideas need to be connected. Afterwards, students can group concepts by marking related terms with the same symbol, as in the list below:

THANKSGIVING

Turkey*

Football

Pilgrims +

Mashed potatoes*

Family

Gratitude

Native Americans +

Cranberries*

The Mayflower +

3. Free writing — Note down ideas in sentences. The instructions are to write as much as possible in a five- or ten-minute time period without once letting the pen or pencil stop. Students should write “mmmmm” or “I can’t think of anything to write” until they get a new idea to write about. Afterwards, they can share their main ideas with a partner and then with the whole class.

Sentence Shuffle (The Disagreement)

In this activity, students work with cards that have pre-selected words written on them and practice word order for statements (positive and negative) as well as questions. Each card is held by a student, and the students must arrange themselves in the correct order as directed by the instructor or their classmate. This activity provides a good visual for word order change in English and also helps tap into the kinesthetic learning style.

Preparation

Prepare the cards ahead of time. Four inches by seven inches (about ten centimeters by twenty centimeters) is a good size. Letters should be visible from the back of the classroom (red is not suggested as a color — it can be difficult to read from far away).

Set the scene of a disagreement between a couple or mixed-gender (girl and boy) friendship. E.g., Imagine two friends are having a disagreement about what to eat for lunch, what to watch on TV, or where to go on a Friday night. Elicit from the students something that the girl/woman would want and something that the boy/man would want. Fill in that card last, writing each of the things on opposite sides of the card so it will need to be flipped during the activity.

Write one word on each index card. There should be enough words to form an affirmative sentence, a negative sentence, and a yes/no question.

Procedure

1. Ask for volunteers to come to the front of the room.
2. Elicit the word that he/she likes from the students.
3. Each volunteer should hold one card.
4. Call out “affirmative,” “question,” and “negative” and have the group get in order to form the type of sentence you have called out.
5. Repeat this many times, faster and faster.
6. The rest of the class will have a nice visual of what changes need to be made to form each type of sentence.

Variation

Add other grammar items: adjectives (ordering of size, color, etc.); modals (could, should, would, etc.).

When to Use It

- To introduce and practice sentence formation
- To practice affirmative and negative sentence formation
- To provide activity for all learning styles

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Index cards: Does(n't), S(h)e, Like(s), Vacation
Markers

Preparation Time

15 minutes

Activity Time

15 minutes

Cloze

A cloze activity is designed to assess students' comprehension of a text and/or knowledge of grammar. Students demonstrate this by supplying appropriate words or language items in the blank space(s) in a longer text. In a pure cloze design, the blanks are created for every n^{th} word — often every 5th or 7th. Assessments can be designed to require that students provide only the exact word and form in the original text or appropriate variations depending on what is being assessed.

Preparation

A written text is prepared with every n^{th} word deleted and replaced with a blank. Copies are then made for each student.

Procedure

1. Distribute the handout.
2. Give students a set amount of time to read and fill in the blanks in the cloze activity.
3. Instruct them to select a word that makes sense but that also fits grammatically into the larger text.
4. If students worked individually, they can compare their answers in pairs or groups before going over the answers as a class.

Variations

1. Instead of deleting every n^{th} word, select particular words to delete. For example,
 - a. Delete the vocabulary or structures students have been learning.
 - b. Delete function words to check student grammar.
 - c. Delete several words in a row to check fluency and phrasing.
2. Create a modified dictation activity. Give students a script or song lyrics with some of the words replaced with blanks.

When to Use It

- To assess comprehension of a text and/or knowledge of grammar
- To practice discrete listening skills
- To allow students to self-assess their comprehension and grammar skills

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Handout with words blanked out

Preparation Time

10 minutes if a computer or a photocopier and whiteout are available;
45 minutes if a script or lyrics need to be written

Activity Time

10–20 minutes

Text

About a paragraph or 50–100 words in length

Dictation

This activity involves students listening several times to spoken language and writing down the words they hear. The goal is attention to form such as grammar and punctuation, vocabulary and spelling, or pronunciation. This activity can be done with each student working individually or with pairs comparing their work. This can be used as a test, as a pre-test, or as a short informal assessment to allow students to estimate their own progress.

Preparation

Choose an appropriate sentence or slightly longer text. An appropriate text 1) includes whichever grammatical or vocabulary features the class has been working on or which the teacher wants to introduce; 2) is at or below the students' language levels (aside from the target features); and 3) is interesting. The text may be something they have read or heard before or something new. All students should have paper and pens or pencils.

Procedure

1. Be sure students have writing materials.
2. Explain to the students how many times you will read the text (or listen if it is on tape). Three times is recommended.
3. For the first reading, the text should be read slowly but with no unnatural pausing. Instruct students to listen in order to comprehend the general idea, not focusing on details or specific words.
4. For the second reading, there should be a short pause after each phrasal unit so students have time to write down the words.
5. Students should be instructed to reread their own writing and try to fill in any gaps using their knowledge of grammar and syntax, and considering the context. Ask them to note what they might need to listen for during the third reading.
6. For the third reading, read at a natural pace. Students should have time only to make corrections and not time to write out the words.
7. Allow students time to reread and self-correct their own work.
8. Have students compare their work to the original text. They can be prompted in several ways:
 - a. Allow students to ask questions about gaps in their sentences. Offer clues about the grammar, syntax, vocabulary, etc., that will lead them to discover the missing words or phrases.
 - b. Students compare with each other and then teams write particular phrases on the board, which the teacher and/or classmates correct and help them complete.
 - c. Collect their work and correct it.

When to Use It

- To review/close a lesson
- To focus students' attention on the language feature of the lesson
- To give a quick, short assessment
- To transition to new content

Level



Skills



Spelling; punctuation; pronunciation; fluency in understanding phrase boundaries; both holistic and analytic skills

Practice



Materials

Writing materials; a handout if a cloze dictation is being done

Preparation Time

5–10 minutes

Activity Time

10–20 minutes

Suggested Text

Text about 10–20 words long, featuring relevant forms. If a longer text is used, make it a cloze dictation on a handout including the text with blanks where some phrases have been eliminated.

9. Dictation variations

- a. Cloze dictation: The teacher provides a handout in which some of the text is provided and some of the text has been replaced with blanks. The blanks are the cloze. These spaces can be for single words, but to utilize the advantages of dictation, it is better if the cloze spaces are for two- to five-word phrases. Cloze dictation makes the task less daunting to the students and allows more focus on target language because the blanks can replace words or phrases that illustrate the focus of the lesson (e.g., prepositional phrases, irregular past tense verbs, transition signals, etc.). (See the section on the Cloze activity for more information.)
- b. Dictocomp: The teacher reads a longer text of about a paragraph. Students take notes about the main ideas, details, and vocabulary. Working in groups, they then try to reconstruct the paragraph. Dictocomp is appropriate for more advanced students and is effective in developing paraphrasing and summarizing skills.

Variations

1. Students can give the dictation to each other, in which case a copy of the text for each student “teacher” should be prepared. The “teachers” may also need to be coached on the procedures. Help them make notations on where to pause.
 2. Students can choose the text to be used.
 3. Jigsaw variation: Divide the students into groups according to the number of phrases in the sentence. Each group will be given one phrase. Write the phrase out ahead of time on small pieces of paper. Designate one student in each group to dictate the phrase to his or her group members. After all students in the group have written the phrase, they should move around the room to create a new group so that all phrases are represented. They should then dictate their parts so that everyone has access to the entire text. The group should finally decide together how to reconstruct the text in the correct order.
 4. Running dictation: Divide students into groups. Tape the dictation text across the room from each group. One group member runs up to the text, memorizes the first sentence, and returns to his/her group and dictates it. If s/he forgets the sentence, s/he can run back as many times as necessary and return to the group to dictate. S/he may not remove the text or dictate the text from the wall. Once that sentence is completed, the next group member runs to the text and memorizes/dictates the second sentence, etc. The first group to finish the dictation correctly wins.
- NB: Be careful where the texts are posted so there are no obstacles that may cause injury to the runner.

Dictogloss

In a Dictogloss, students practice multiple skills, plus use grammar and vocabulary to reconstruct a text that is read to them.

Preparation

Select appropriate text.

Procedure

1. Introduce the topic and key vocabulary. Review grammar points, if necessary.
2. Read the chosen text once, allowing students to simply listen. Read it again and have students take notes. The point is not to get every word, but the main ideas, so don't read it as slowly as you would a dictation.
3. In pairs/small groups, have students work together to reconstruct the text, paying attention to punctuation, spelling, and the main ideas. The focus is on communication.
4. Have pairs/small groups share their versions with other pairs/small groups.
5. Compare students' texts with the original and discuss the differences between them (for more information, go to: www.carla.umn.edu/cobaltt/modules/strategies/Dictogloss.pdf).

When to Use It

- To build vocabulary and written fluency
- To introduce/highlight new lexical items or grammatical forms

Level



High beginning and above, depending on text chosen (choose one of interest to students, with the grammar or vocabulary on which you want to focus)

Skills



Practice



Materials

Writing paper

Preparation Time

10 minutes

Activity Time

15–45 minutes, depending on length of text

Story Starters

Story Starters is an activity that gives students free-flowing creative writing practice. It can be used as a means to practice a particular grammar structure or to link vocabulary. Story Starters is a good way to encourage students to write, as the beginning or writing prompt is already provided, which helps with the blank page syndrome!

Preparation

The teacher should prepare papers that have a different story starter on the top of each page. See www.creative-writing-now.com/story-ideas.html for possible story starters.

Procedure

1. Students read the story starter and write the next line.
2. Time the students (with music or other) or simply tell them to pass the papers to the right as determined by the teacher.
3. After the story has passed through all students, post the final story for all to see how it developed.

Variations

1. If the class is “wired,” the activity could be done via email. Teachers could determine length of writing required (sentence/paragraph, etc.); each student sends it on.
2. Students write comprehension questions for the story to turn it into a “reader” for the class.
3. After displaying the stories in the class (or on a website), students vote for the best story.
4. Divide the class into groups and act out the stories.
5. Use this activity as one option in a learning station.
6. Story Starters could have an academic writing focus: the prompt can be a thesis statement and have predetermined pro or con paragraphs that would need to be fleshed out (<http://academicenglishcafe.com/academic-writing-topics.html>).
7. Require students to include particular vocabulary items in their writing.
8. Give the same prompt to several/all students and have the stories be based on the prompt.
9. Have students work together to peer-correct for particular items: punctuation, use of vocabulary or function, etc.

When to Use It

- To practice writing, especially using transition words to achieve story flow
- To practice creative/free and even extensive writing
- To incorporate specific vocabulary or grammar
- To collaborate on writing — writing can vary from informal to academic, depending on story starter
- To consolidate a topic already studied in class

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Paper, “story starter”

Preparation Time

5 minutes

Activity Time

20–40 minutes

Textual Intervention

The intention of this activity is to use different strategies for textual intervention. The theoretical framework summarizes different alternatives efficiently and provides critical and creative alternatives to introduce literature into the classroom. The idea is to use a practical and simple approach with the purpose of changing the text and playing with it. The changing of a word or a punctuation mark is enough to recreate the text.

Let's think of a popular poem:

Roses are red

Violets are blue

Honey is sweet

And so are you!

The activity consists of choosing words from a list to produce a new rhyme. For example:

white blue red pink green black

kite shoe bed think team Jack

night you head link bean snack

right taboo thread drink jean pack

This is one possibility:

Roses are red

Beans are green

I can't wait

To play on your team!

Preparation

- Choose various well-known short poems or rhymes.
- Write a list of rhyming words.
- Write the instructions on the board.

Procedure

1. Divide the class into groups of four students.
2. Distribute the poem or rhyme; each group should receive a different one together with the list of words.
3. Set a time limit to create a new rhyme.

When to Use It

- To practice structured writing
- To practice vocabulary

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Poems

Preparation Time

15 minutes

Activity Time

10 minutes

Free Writing

Free Writing is an easy no-prep activity that may appear to be unproductive, but in fact, it's a great way to get students comfortable putting pen to paper or even fingers to keyboard without the stress of producing grammatically correct sentences and properly spelled words. Free writing helps students brainstorm on a topic broadly while at the same time using key words that strike them to branch off in their writing.

Preparation

As mentioned above, there really isn't any preparation for this activity, but the first time it's done with students it should be clear that students should write anything related to the topic at hand — what they know about it, their opinion about it, or a story related to it — and take the writing from there. They should be encouraged to keep pen to paper and keep writing for the whole time limit even if they get stuck and aren't sure what to write.

Procedure

1. Be sure students have writing materials.
2. Give them the topic (or if it's prewriting for an individual writing or project, they can use their own topic).
3. Instruct students that they are going to freewrite on the topic for five minutes (or three, seven, ten). They are not expected to write an essay, but jot down any ideas, opinions, stories, and information about the topic at hand.
4. Explain that they will not be graded on the writing, so grammar, spelling, and transitions need not be the focus.
5. When the time is up, have students stop writing and reread their writing, looking for ideas that they might be able to develop into longer pieces of writing or incorporate into their projects.

Variations

1. Free writing can be used in the middle of a topic to have students focus on the content and let related ideas flow. It can help consolidate the ideas to their own experiences and bring questions up to the surface.
2. This can also be used as the “K” and “N” of the KNEFL chart (on page 104), where students write what they know and need to learn about a topic.
3. The focus can be on a statement or questions instead of just a one-word topic.

When to Use It

- To give students practice in writing
- To help students brainstorm on a topic
- To promote consolidation of ideas
- To set the schema of students if used as an introductory activity

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Paper, pen/pencil

Preparation Time

5 minutes

Activity Time

10+ minutes

Dialogue Journals

Dialogue Journals are an easy, effective way to help students become more fluent and confident in using language as well as increase their vocabulary. For the teachers, it is a great way to learn more about the strengths and areas of improvement of the students.

Preparation

The preparation involves explaining the process to your students and then the time it takes to read and respond to their journals on a weekly or bimonthly basis. See the next two pages for 1) an explanation, written for students, of the journals and 2) a sample exchange between a student and a teacher.

Procedure

1. Explain to students the purpose behind and steps involved in dialogue journals.
2. Begin an exchange of journals. Students write a dated journal entry in a dedicated journal book (either stapled or bound). The teacher collects the journal and responds to the student.
3. The teacher response is not correction, but rather a comment, question, or observation in relation to what the student wrote. The goal is meaningful written conversation, not accuracy.

Variations

1. Dialogue journals can be collected once a week or once a month, depending on the class's ability and number of students. The minimum entry could be a sentence built from a sentence-starter that you provide (such as "Today I learned...").
2. For more advanced students, the topic could be open and the students could be encouraged to write several paragraphs. The journals could be done exclusively as homework or be done in class periodically.
3. For teachers with many groups of students or with large classes, the journals can be done just in one or two classes, or students can rotate due dates so the teacher is not obliged to read tens and tens of journals at the same time.

When to Use It

- To build vocabulary and written fluency (see next two pages for more explanation)

Level



High beginning and above, depending on form chosen

Skills



Practice



Materials

Writing paper or notebooks

Preparation Time

15 minutes (to explain process to students)

Activity Time

5–45 minutes/journal entry

Dialogue Journals — Sample Student Handout

One crucial way to develop your vocabulary is through writing. The desire to express our opinions, thoughts, and stories leads us to find new language and to use the language we already know. In order to help you practice writing, you and I will write to each other on a weekly basis in dialogue journals over the course of the semester. Think of these journals as written conversations between you and me.

What will I need? You will need a notebook or stapled set of blank writing paper. On the front cover, please write your name, your class name and time, and “Dialogue Journal.”

When is it due? Your journal is due every Monday at the beginning of class. Your first journal entry will be due on Monday, March 1st, 2010.

How does it work? Before Monday of each week, you will write a journal entry in your notebook or stapled sheets. Make sure you write the date at the top of each entry. You will give me the journal on Monday at the beginning of class. On Wednesday (the next class), I will return the journal to you with my written response to your writing. Then, you will write another journal entry, due the following Monday. Sometimes, I will give you class time to work on your journals. I will not directly correct your errors in these journals. However, you will notice over time that you will make fewer errors.

How much do I write? Try to write, at minimum, half a page. This will get easier over time and you will want to write more.

What can I write about? Unless I give you a specific topic, you can write about *anything*! You can ask questions or tell me about your daily life, your family, your hopes, and your dreams. You can share your opinions. You can make suggestions, describe your favorite meal, give me details on the best travel destination in Brazil, or tell me your feelings about learning English.

Dialogue Journal — Sample Excerpt

Student:

5/15/10

Hi!

São Paulo is the best place for me. I hope you will like.

Soccer is really so emotional. I don't go to the stadium, but I watch soccer games on tv or listen in the computer. When São Paulo makes a goal I go to the window and shout.

Ah! Karate class is perfect for me, it's the best part of my day. Now I do it only two times per week, but I wanna do everyday.

Bye!

Teacher:

5/18/10

Hello there!

I'm sure that I will enjoy São Paulo. I love big cities, the skyscrapers and the variety of people. I probably won't get to see the SPFC team play, though! Do they ever play in Salvador?

I will tell you all about São Paulo when I get back.

It would be fun to watch a soccer game with you and other people who love it and who know a lot about the sport. Maybe we could have a Vocabulary In Progress "class" during the winter break and watch the World Cup!?

I hope you did well on your math test last week. Glad you are back with karate! Enjoy!

Best, E.

Student:

5/23/10

Hi!

I would really love this "dream" VIP class. Here in Brazil a lot of people watch world cup games together. If you wanna see one game with my family, I can ask my mother (sometimes she is a good person).

São Paulo's game here in Salvador is in July 17th, probable (nothing is confirmed). My friend talked to the Barradão president to help me to see São Paulo soccer players. It is one of my big dreams (another is to meet Selton Mello).

What team will you root for win the world cup? I first root for Brazil, second I like England and my third selection is Spanish because I think Casillas — the goalkeeper — is the most pretty soccer player.

Have a nice week,

R.

Journal Writing

This activity aims at encouraging students to write journals in order to enhance their writing ability. In these journals, students are supposed to write about any topic they are interested in, and the teacher should not focus on grammar correction unless the student requests it or if the mistakes interfere with comprehension. The goal of journal writing is to make students confident about writing freely. The teacher should explain the DIE (Describe/Interpret/Evaluate) process. This technique is a tool for making meaning and gaining understanding of input — anything students see, hear, or experience.

Preparation

The instructor asks the students to separate a notebook for this activity. Then he/she explains the DIE process: the teacher asks the students to write about an experience they have had that surprised, interested, puzzled, or annoyed them, being as objective as possible. The first time, they are expected just to describe the experience. Then they will respond to what they experienced, describing how they interpreted and evaluated the experience. They are supposed to combine these two parts by writing about what they think about this experience and how they feel about it. The topic of the journals should be chosen by the students.

Procedure

1. Explain the DIE process and give an example to the students.
2. Have students think about a topic they are interested in.
3. Ask the students to take the notebook home and return it to you once a week.
4. Read the journals and give the students written feedback.

Variations

1. Depending on the level of the students, the instructor can give some suggestions on topics related to the lessons they are working on.
2. The instructor can change the format of the text, dealing with different genres.

When to Use It

- To give practice in extensive writing
- To provide a way to communicate directly with the instructor
- To encourage students to write freely

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Notebooks

Preparation Time

5–10 minutes

Activity Time

Depends on each student, but the deadline can be one week after the topic is assigned.

Peer Revisions – Modeling and Practicing

Students are used to receiving feedback from their teachers but not from their peers. Involving students in the feedback-giving process enables them to enhance their idea of what an effective text is and, from a Vygotskian perspective, ultimately develop their ability to revise their own texts, going from the social to the individual.

Peer-revision activities need to be guided in order to be effective. One way of doing this is to provide a peer review sheet and to model the peer review activity with the group. In the beginning, the peer review sheets should be more objective and focus on few aspects of the text, but as students become used to the activity, they can become more open-ended and detailed. The idea is to scaffold peer review from a very controlled to a free activity as time goes by.

This activity focuses on giving feedback on a paragraph in which the students practice writing a topic sentence, supporting details, and a conclusion. It is focused on initial peer revision, when students still need a very controlled task. However, it starts with a personal question so that students understand that writing is primarily for communication and our focus should first be on meaning. It also focuses mostly on giving feedback on content and organization, the first stages of feedback in the writing process.

Preparation

1. Make copies of the peer review sheet for each student. You may want to adapt the peer review sheet for your specific writing assignment.
2. Prepare a handout with an anonymous paragraph on the same topic students had to write about. Preferably, it should be from an anonymous student from another group or a previous term or semester.

Procedure

1. Give students the sample paragraph from an anonymous student. Have them read it.
2. Give students the peer review sheet and ask them to work in pairs or groups to complete the worksheet.
3. With the whole class, go over students' markings, asking for justifications. This is the calibration stage, in which you will lead students to analyze the piece of writing according to the established criteria and make sure the feedback is aligned.
4. Now ask students to exchange their paragraphs with a partner of their choice. Alternatively, you can collect all the paragraphs and redistribute them randomly. You can also opt for a blind peer review, in which case you will have to collect the paragraphs the previous class and produce copies without the authors' names.
5. Students analyze their peer's paragraph and fill out the peer review sheet.
6. Students exchange papers back and analyze their peer's feedback.

When to Use It

- After students have produced their first drafts of a paragraph
- To allow students to read a peer's piece of writing and provide constructive feedback
- To allow students to ultimately reflect on their own writing by revising the writing of a peer

Level



This specific activity is focused on the pre-intermediate or intermediate level and on paragraphs, but it can be adapted for beginners or for advanced learners writing essays.

Skills



Practice



Materials

Peer review sheet; students' writing

Preparation Time

10 minutes to adapt the peer review sheet;
10–15 minutes to prepare handout with sample paragraph

Activity Time

30–40 minutes

7. In this first stage, the teacher collects the paragraphs and the peers' feedback and complements the peers' feedback before asking students to rewrite their paragraphs. Students who are not familiar with peer revision need the teacher to validate their peers' comments in initial stages. If students are already used to peer revision, they can rewrite their paragraphs so as to include the missing elements or hand in their writing to the teacher, if no missing elements were identified.

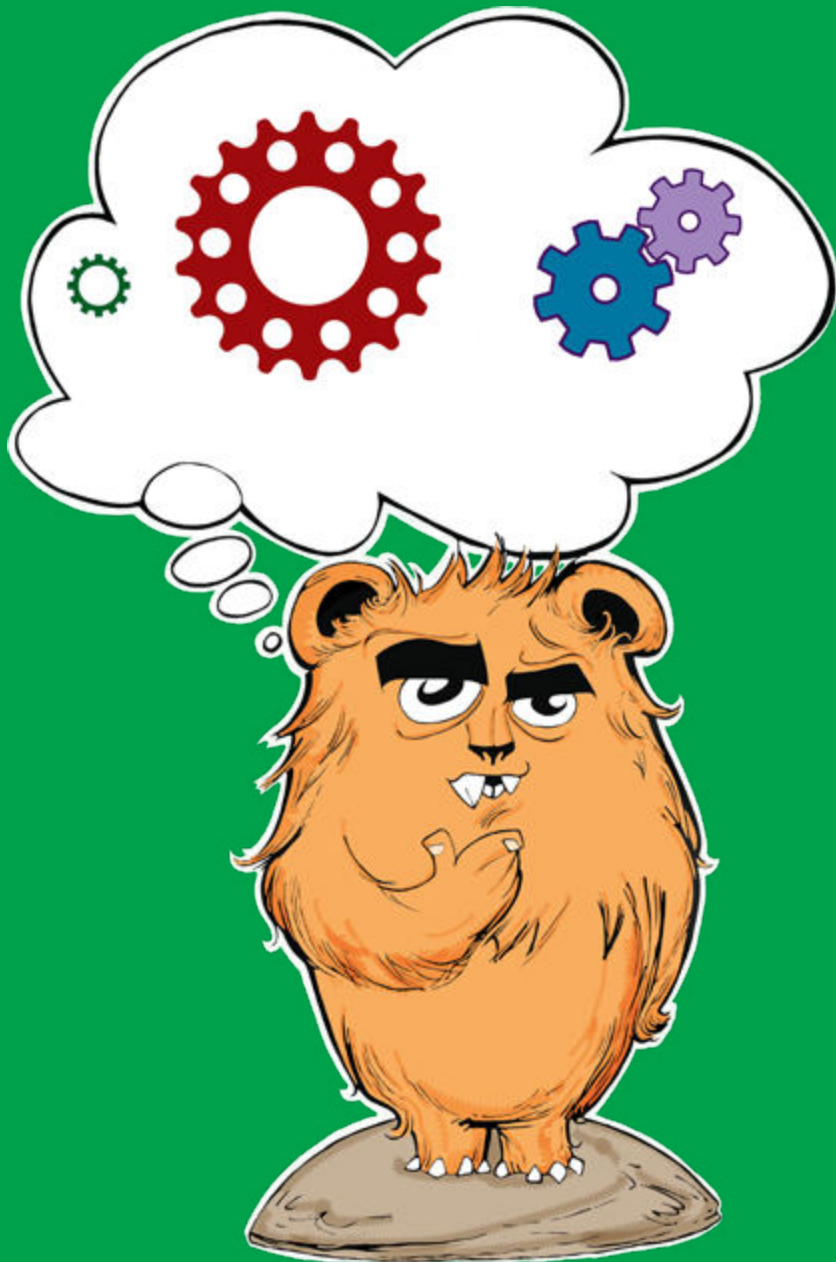
Peer Review Sheet – Paragraphs

1. What did you learn from reading your peer's paragraph?
2. Check (✓) the standards that you think the paragraph you analyzed meets.
 - () The paragraph contains a topic sentence that clearly states what it will be about.
 - () The topic sentence is neither too general nor too specific.
 - () The topic sentence is supported by at least three details.
 - () The supporting details are thoroughly explained by way of examples, data, stories, etc.
 - () The writer uses connectors to link ideas.
 - () There is a conclusion that restates the ideas in the topic sentence.
 - () There are no or very few language-use mistakes.
 - () There are no or very few spelling, punctuation, and capitalization mistakes.

Variations

This is one of an infinite number of types of peer review sheets that can be used. It should be adapted to the genre students are producing. For example, if they had to write a letter, it should address the parts of a letter. It can be adapted to essays, too. Depending on the cultural characteristics and maturity of the group, students can explain their markings to their peers. In some cultures this can be problematic at first, for students do not want to criticize their peer and lose face. That's why the peer review sheet is very objective and is not judgmental and students feel more comfortable filling it out than having to provide the feedback face-to-face.

CRITICAL THINKING



Critical Thinking

*By Dr. Evrim Üstünlüoğlu
İzmir, Turkey*

Children must be taught how to think, not what to think.
Margaret Mead

Why are we biased or prejudiced? Why is much of our thinking distorted, or partial? Do we question the quality of what we produce, what we make, or the quality of our thought? If it is difficult to answer these questions, the reason might be that most of your thinking takes little or no conscious effort; and you usually think without thinking. However, thinking is a challenging skill, and it requires effort and time.

Basically, thinking can be defined as an internal mental process, which includes lower and higher level thinking skills like integrating information, comprehending, evaluating, analyzing, and synthesizing. Critical Thinking (CT), one of the higher level thinking skills, can be defined as the art of applying knowledge, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information which is gathered from observations, experiences, and reflections. Thus, one can become an independent, fair and open-minded, active thinker, and be skeptical only when s/he uses CT as a skill. CT is much far beyond simply knowing, recalling, or understanding facts; and it requires effort, time, guidance, and practice. Language classes are one of the best settings to improve CT skill because of the richness of material and the interactive approaches used in classes. Material to be used in language classes is a key factor for promoting CT particularly since learners need to see complexities, associations, meaningfulness, and the relationship between the material being taught and the real world so that they can talk and write about it. Approaches, methods, and techniques on CT should also be highlighted in both designing and improving language curriculum. Language teachers should take a direct role to guide critical thinking, to encourage students to go beyond surface meaning and to discover the deeper meaning instead of merely using basic literacy skills. By doing so, teachers can help students be aware of their perceptions, assumptions, prejudices, and values; and also help them break old habits to construct a new point of view as they teach languages. Finally, this is expected to lead students to take charge of their own thinking, to expand their learning experience, and to raise their self-awareness.

This chapter covers sample activities in reading, listening, speaking, and writing skills for instilling the critical thinking approach in students in a meaningful and entertaining way.

Which One Doesn't Belong?

This activity gives students practice in classifying items and finding similarities and differences.

Preparation

Decide on what vocabulary (or grammar structure) you want to use.

Procedure

1. Present, either as a handout, on the board, or via projector, one or more examples for the students to figure out, either individually, in small groups, or as a class.
2. The examples can check student understanding of semantic categories, collocations, verb tenses, register, idioms, etc.

Variations

1. There should be no obvious items that do not belong. In groups, students must decide which item on the list does not belong and why. Then, the groups present to the whole class. The group with the most creative and unique reasons wins.
2. Students can be asked to make their own examples for other classmates.

When to Use It

- To give students practice or review of lexical items or grammatical structures
- To find similarities

Level

Depends on material



Skills



Practice



Materials

Handout, chalkboard, or digital video projector

Preparation Time

10 minutes

Activity Time

5–30 minutes

What Is It?

In this activity, students guess a word based on a series of clues. The clues can be vague in order to promote more active thinking.

Preparation

Prepare a few examples of a series of clues that describe a noun using its collocations. Here is one:

What is it?

- a. You can get it.
- b. You can have it.
- c. You can give it to someone else.
- d. You can catch it.
- e. You can fight it.

(Answer: a cold)

Procedure

1. Present, either as a handout, on the board, via projector, or orally, one or more examples for the students to figure out, either individually, in small groups, or as a class.
2. Individually or in small groups, ask students to come up with their own “What is it?” riddles. Then, they give the clues to another group/student to see if they/he/she can figure it out.

Variations

1. You can tell students to only choose objects in the room or only abstract nouns, etc., depending on the level of the students.
2. If you anticipate that the students will have trouble picking a noun to use, you can put a number of objects in a bag beforehand. Students secretly choose an object. They then write their clues for this object. At the end, show all students the objects.
3. The activity can be used as a warm-up for story-writing about a noun. After activating a number of lexical items that “go with” their noun, they can write a story about it. Example: Last week, my cat had a cold. I think she caught it from the dog.

When to Use It

- To give students practice or review of lexical items
- To generate language for a production activity
- To begin a discussion of collocations

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

If desired, a handout, chalkboard, or digital video projector

Preparation Time

5 minutes

Activity Time

10 minutes

Climb the Mountain

This is a “figure out the secret” vocabulary-building game (in this example for clothing).

Preparation

Prepare room for students to sit in a circle.

Procedure

1. Everyone sits in a circle.
2. Explain that every person must complete the sentence, “I will climb the mountain wearing...” and then choose some article of clothing.
3. Everyone takes turns completing the sentence around the circle.
4. After each individual finishes the sentence, the teacher tells the student if s/he made it to the top or not.
5. Students are to figure out which clothing they must use that will allow them to reach the top.

The mystery that they are trying to figure out is that they make it to the top if they mention an article of clothing that the person to their left is wearing. Keep playing and suggest answers/give hints as needed to keep them guessing and engaged. Try to get everyone to discover the secret even if they don’t make it to the top.

Variation/Expansion

This can be done with other vocabulary or using different tenses (I crossed over the mountain) — be creative! One caveat is to make sure that you are not calling out something that would make a student uncomfortable.

When to Use It

- To review vocabulary
- To practice particular sentences
- To engage learners in critical thinking

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

None

Preparation Time

None — except to prepare the class

Activity Time

15+ minutes

Figure Me Out

This activity makes use of modals of possibility to make guesses about people's professions.

Preparation

Select and cut out pictures of people from magazines. The images should be of people who could be used to illustrate some sort of profession.

Procedure

1. Take pictures of unknown people from magazines whose jobs can be guessed. Regional magazines are a good source, because they have unknown professionals.
2. Place the pictures on the floor or wall and ask students to guess their professions. E.g., She may be a teacher because... He could work in the medical field because...
3. Ask higher levels to support their answers.

Variations

1. Use PowerPoint and project the images as well.
2. Students can bring in their own photos to use.
3. This activity could be expanded to include writing a paragraph about the image and the profession and linking multiple images in writing.

When to Use It

- To practice/review modals in questions
- To introduce/practice/review professions

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Pictures from magazines

Preparation Time

Time to select photos

Activity Time

15+ minutes

Possible Resource

Use *Picture US*

Statues

This type of activity is also called Experiential Learning, Applied Learning, Hands-on Learning, and Creating Artificial Realities, to name a few.

Students create statues individually or in groups of two to six. Students are given anything from a single term to a concept or situation that they must represent and reproduce with their bodies or act out in a role-play situation. Their bodies can be still or in motion, depending on what it is that they are attempting to demonstrate. It can be a silent or spoken activity depending on what the students are to accomplish.

Preparation

Determine the terms or concepts that will be used in the activity.

Procedure

1. Divide class into two, three, or four groups.
2. Within the groups are groups of two or three students who will represent their group for any given round.
3. Demonstrations can proceed with groups taking turns.
4. The concept, idea, etc., that each individual or group is to demonstrate for the class can be given to the students as soon as their turn arrives, or even days before so as to give them time to plan or research what they will present.

Variations

1. This can be played as a competition of charades.
2. Groups could come up with a concept based on a particular theme.

Possible Categories

• Numbers	• Famous moments in history
• Thematic vocabulary	• Geographical forms
• Specific vocabulary	• Historical figures
• Illustrating a sentence	• The political system
• Structure of a sentence	• Internal conflicts of characters in a novel
• Story line	• The climax or resolution of a story
• Definitions of vocabulary	

When to Use It

- To get students thinking critically and creatively
- To recall concepts or introduce new ones
- To get students to work together

Level



High beginning to Intermediate + (depending on concept used)

Skills



Practice



Materials

Categories should be prepared ahead of time

Preparation Time

5 minutes to one or more days (if given as homework or a project)

Activity Time

10–15 minutes

Suspects and Detectives

This activity is a game of “whodunit” or guessing who the “criminal” is based on information supplied by the students. Students get a lot of practice asking and answering questions to find out who the guilty party is.

Preparation

This activity can be done with the detectives and criminals changing seats for interviews or moving around class. Think of your class setup.

Procedure

1. Tell half of the class that they are suspects and half of the class that they are detectives.
2. Have those students who are detectives remain facing the board; have the suspects turn their seats to face away from the board.
3. The suspects will write down what they were doing yesterday at four specific times.
4. Let them know that during one of those times they should write something they were doing alone.
5. They will also write down what they were wearing.
6. Then have the suspects close their eyes.
7. On the board, you will write what time the crime was committed and what the criminal was wearing. Only the detectives can see this information.
8. Then the detectives will interview some of the suspects and see if they can find anyone who was alone at the time of the crime and was wearing the same clothes as the criminal.

Variation

To make this more challenging, you can work with one student to be “It” and be vague about the time and clothing.

When to Use It

- To get students thinking critically and creatively
- To get students to work together
- To have students practice question formation in a communicative manner

Level



High beginning to Intermediate + (depending on concept used)

Skills



Practice



Preparation Time

1–5 minutes

Activity Time

7–15 minutes

Tennis Debate

This activity is good for building students' critical listening skills, which is one of the important skills for being a good debater. To execute this activity, you have to imagine a tennis match. It works the same way.

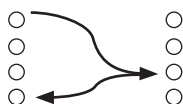
Preparation

Before you start class, the teacher should prepare some simple, fun topics that can be debated. (Some ideas are listed below.) For example: Dogs are better than cats.

Procedure

1. Divide your class into two teams (if the class is large, you might want to have four teams).
2. Teams shouldn't be larger than eight people in order to ensure everyone has an opportunity to speak.
3. Give the teams the topic.
4. Next, the teams draw what side they will defend (i.e., dogs or cats).
5. The teams then have ten minutes to work together to write down all the reasons they can think of that defends their position.
6. Tell the students that this is a brainstorming activity, so they should list as many ideas as they can think of.
7. Next, you are ready to begin the debate match.
8. Have the teams sit facing each other.
9. Flip a coin or draw to see which team gets to begin.
10. Give the winning team — we'll call them Team A — a ball or something to toss. The team that begins will choose their best reason (only one) and tell the other team, Team B, what it is.
11. After they state their reason, they toss the ball to someone on the other team.
12. The person who catches the ball has to respond to Team A's comment. If the person can't comment, then they can pass it to a team member who can.
13. They have 30 seconds to respond to the first team's reason.
14. Team B cannot give one of their own reasons; they must respond to Team A's reason. The idea must connect.
15. When Team B responds, they pass the ball back to Team A and then Team A must respond to Team B's argument.
16. The team that can't respond loses the round because they have "dropped the ball."
17. The team that wins the round chooses another reason from their list and a new match begins.

Example: Team A Team B



Variations

1. Adjust the amount of time you give the students to prepare their lists or the time you allow them to respond. However, it is important to provide a time frame in which the students must respond so that it builds students' ability to think quickly.
2. Have students list possible topics in order to have those that are relevant to their daily lives and culture, to encourage a richer discussion.

When to Use It

- To get students thinking critically and creatively
- To promote appropriate responses to arguments
- To get students to work together
- To practice turn-taking

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

A ball or something to toss

A watch to keep time

A list of fun, simple debate topics:

Dogs are better than cats

Hip-hop music is better than rock music

Having a party on your fifteenth birthday is better than going to Disney World

Living in the city is better than living in the countryside

Preparation Time

5 minutes

Activity Time

10–15 minutes

Team A begins: Dogs are better than cats because they can be trained to guard your house and cats can never be used to guard houses.

Team B: You don't need a dog to guard a house because you can buy an alarm system to do that.

Team A: If there is an electrical outage or any technical problem, then the alarm system won't work. A dog doesn't require electricity or this type of maintenance.

Building Arguments

This is a simple mini-debate team activity that helps students build critical thinking, speaking, and listening skills.

Preparation

Choose a debate topic or have several on hand from which students can select.

Procedure

1. Divide the students into teams of four to six people per team. You want an even number of teams in the class.
2. Tell the students a simple, debatable topic they will discuss. For example: Being a vegetarian is better for your health and for society in general.
3. Then assign one team to defend this position and the other team to argue against this position.
4. Give the teams 20–30 minutes to write down all the reasons/evidence/ examples that support their position in the argument.
5. Encourage the students to use examples or ideas that they have heard or read about.
6. Next, the students will begin a simple debate on the topic.
7. The team who is defending the position (the affirmative) (Team A) will have five minutes to give their arguments. (The teacher can decide whether he/she wants each person on the team to speak or have the team select one or two people to speak.)
8. While Team A is speaking, Team B (the negative) should be taking notes on what reasons and examples Team A is giving.
9. After Team A has spoken for five minutes, it is Team B's turn and they have five minutes to present their arguments. Team A should take notes on what Team B is saying.
10. Next, the teams have two minutes to discuss their notes with each other and organize their thoughts in order to rebut or argue against what the other team said.
11. After two minutes, Team A has three minutes to argue against the ideas that Team B gave. Anyone on Team A can speak, but the team only has three minutes.
12. Then Team B has three minutes to speak and argue against what Team A said.

Variations

1. Vary speaking times.
2. Include a speaking time for a concluding statement from each team.
3. Have students not in the debate be judges and vote on which team did the best job.

Recommended Structure

Team A (Affirmative)	Team B (Negative)
20 minutes to prepare arguments	
5 minutes opening arguments	
	5 minutes opening arguments
1 to 2-minute break for team members to discuss their rebuttals	
3 minutes to rebut (argue against what the other team said)	
	3 minutes to rebut

When to Use It

- To get students thinking critically and creatively
- To promote appropriate responses to arguments
- To get students to work together
- To practice turn-taking

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

A watch

A list of fun, simple debate topics:

Dogs are better than cats

Hip-hop music is better than rock music

Having a party on your fifteenth birthday is better than going to Disney World

Living in the city is better than living in the countryside

Preparation Time

5 minutes

Activity Time

10–15 minutes

Adbusting

This activity has students evaluate commercial ads found in popular magazines, newspapers, billboards, etc. Students evaluate them in a step-by-step process that helps develop their critical thinking skills.

Preparation

Cut out ads from several different magazines and newspapers.

Procedure

1. Divide the students into groups of about four students.
2. Distribute a different ad to each group.
3. Each student freewrites for five to ten minutes about the ad (see page 143 for information on free writing).
4. Students share their free writing ideas in the group for no more than ten minutes total. They need not read the writing, but must provide an overview of some of the ideas.
5. Go over a deconstruction of a sample ad with the students to provide a model.

Deconstruction Sample:

e.g., possibly an ad for cigarettes with an outdoor scene

1. Besides the product, what is being “sold” in the ad?
Maybe freedom, nature, health as the people are outdoors in wide open space, doing some physical activity. They are smiling and laughing and having fun.
2. What are the assumptions of those who will purchase?
They too would have freedom, health, happy lifestyle if they smoked (linking the two).
3. What about the product isn’t shown in the ad?
 - * The ad falsely connects enjoying time with your friends to smoking.
 - * Showing attractive young people hides the fact that smoking causes the yellowing of teeth, poor skin health, and smoking-related diseases such as lung cancer and emphysema.
 - * The ad falsely connects smoking with personal and financial freedom — smoking cannot make you richer or more free.
 - * The ad does not show that because smoking cigarettes creates a physical addiction to nicotine, it actually makes you less free.
 - * The ad does not show that rather than leading to freedom and enjoyment of life, smoking can often lead to death.
6. Have students deconstruct their ads in their groups, thinking of these three questions above.
7. Groups create a counter-ad that includes information from the three questions.
8. Display counter-ads in the room and/or have students present them to the class.

Variations

1. Students write paragraphs on each of the questions for their ads based on their free writing and deconstruction activities.
2. Peer editing can be added to the writing process.
3. Students debate the ad, with one side forming the ad campaign and the other the deconstructionists.

When to Use It

- To get students thinking critically and creatively
- To promote awareness of media ads
- To get students to work together
- To practice descriptive and argumentative writing

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Suitable ads from magazines

Preparation Time

5 minutes

Activity Time

30–45 minutes

GAMES



Games

*By Prof. Dr. Aydan Ersöz
Ankara, Turkey*

As Fred Rogers stated, “Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning. But for children, play is serious learning. Play is really the work of childhood.” Games are invaluable tools to teach language because they provide opportunities for exploring meaningful and useful language in real contexts. They can be used to provide practice in all language skills and to present or practice language chunks. Young learners can get very excited, so be careful to incorporate games in the class at an appropriate time.

Wright, Betteridge, and Buckby (1984) stated, “Language learning is hard work ... Effort is required at every moment and must be maintained over a long period of time. Games help and encourage many learners to sustain their interest and work.” They also added that games are great tools to create contexts in which the language is useful and meaningful.

Games are invaluable means to teach language because

- 1) they are amusing and interesting.
- 2) they encourage and increase cooperation. They develop leadership and followership. If teachers use follow-the-leader-type activities in which the leader is constantly changing as a function of the game, learners will learn to value both leadership and followership.
- 3) they develop friendship and social relationship. They exchange ideas, negotiate, and take decisions together. Children will learn to act as a group, trust each other, share the same interests, and as a result develop positive group synergy, which is an excellent preparation for the future educational, business, and professional worlds.
- 4) they are a natural part of the children’s world.
- 5) they provide opportunities for exploring meaningful and useful language in real contexts. They can be used to provide practice in all language skills and to present or practice language chunks.
- 6) they broaden children’s awareness of themselves and the world. They help children find meaning in their “routine” through games and play.
- 7) they teach children to follow rules.
- 8) they are the only activity that children take seriously. Bruner (1975) stated that play is the business of childhood. It is through play that a child becomes an enquirer, an experimenter, and an explorer.

For very young learners, competitive games can be frustrating. Games should encourage cooperation and collaboration rather than competition. With older children, teachers can introduce competition to involve winning or losing. Gradually, children can learn how to react appropriately when they win or lose.

Ersöz (2000) asserts that games should be regarded as supplementary activities. The whole syllabus should not be based on games only — even for young learners. She adds that when choosing a game, the teacher should be careful to find an appropriate one for the class in terms of language and type of participation. A game which looks wonderful on paper may not work in the actual classroom setting. If it is tiring or boring in the actual classroom setting, it should be stopped.

References

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- Ersöz, A. 2000. Six games for the EFL/ESL classroom. <http://iteslj.org/Lessons/Ersoz-Games.html>
- Wright, A., D. Betteridge, and M. Buckby. 1984. *Games for language learning*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Two-Minute Competition

Two-minute Competition is a flexible activity to get learners focused, collaborating in pairs or small groups, and in friendly competition. The competition might be easiest when groups are collaborating to create a list. For example, create a list of all the vegetables you can think of, all the nouns that begin with “S,” items one can find in a kitchen, reasons to have a cat as a pet.

Preparation

Nothing more than having a timer and perhaps paper for the learners to write on — but they only need one paper per group/pair.

Procedure

1. Tell students there will be a short two-minute competition. Tell them they will work in pairs or groups and to identify one person as the recorder or writer.
2. Take a brief look around to make sure everyone is in a pair or group. Have the person who will write raise his/her hand. Often everyone is poised to write, so this is a good step to ensure they are planning to collaborate.
3. “Quiz” the learners by asking them how much time they will have in the competition (two minutes).
4. If need be, model what they should do the first time — to ensure they are making a bulleted list and not a paragraph or full sentences.
5. Set the timer, explain the topic for the two-minute competition, and start the clock!
6. Alert students to the 30-second remaining mark.
7. When the timer goes off, have them put their pencils down. They should count the number of items they have on their list and write it on their paper.
8. Get a sense of the different numbers groups were able to come up with.
9. Have the group who has the highest number read their list using the relevant grammar structure as appropriate. E.g., If the grammar structure is *there is/there are* and they are listing things in the room, they can report their list with *There is a projector in the room. There are chairs in the room.* If the structure is the verb *have*: *We have a pencil, She has a book*, etc.
10. As a competition debrief, have groups listen for the items that they have as well. For those items that are duplicated across groups, have all groups cross the items out from their list. The team with the fewest duplicates wins.

Variations

1. Run this activity as a pyramid collaboration: team members each write the answers alone for the initial two-minute time limit and then join together to consolidate their lists into a new team list in another two-minute time limit.
2. Add a twist by having team members collaborate during the competition, but without speaking as they brainstorm.

When to Use It

- As a way to set the schema of learners before introducing a new topic
- To review vocabulary or consolidate learning
- As a quick end-of-class review activity

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Timer, paper

Preparation Time

None

Activity Time

5–20 minutes (depending on debriefing)

Pass the Banana

This game is a fast-moving game that is good for practicing prepositions of direction. It can also be used in such a way that some students listen and have to determine where the object (banana) is.

Preparation

Get students into the formation needed (in a line in the front of the room facing the class or in a grid formation, depending on directions to be used, space in class, etc.).

Procedure

1. Choose a student to be “It.” “It” gives the banana to one student in the row and then is blindfolded.
2. Give instructions to the standing students to pass the banana as directed.
e.g., Give the banana to the person with (description should be something distinctive — glasses, braces, etc.).
3. Tell students to pass the banana three spaces to the right, and five spaces to the left, etc. Blindfolded “It” must listen closely and try to follow along with your quick commands, visualizing in his/her mind who has the banana. Then all students sitting in the row put their hands behind their backs. “It” takes off the blindfold and has three chances to guess who has the banana.

Variations

1. If you don’t have a banana, use something else that is easy to see and to pass without breaking.
2. To increase difficulty, add an apple. Pass the banana one direction while passing the apple in another, and mix up which fruit gets passed which way.
3. Arrange nine students in a three-by-three grid facing the class. Pass the banana around the grid: “In front, behind, to the right,” etc.
4. Instead of blindfolding a student, have the remaining students face away from the students in the front of the classroom. They should listen for the direction of the banana and guess where it is when the instructions stop. An aspect of competition can be added by dividing those students into teams.

When to Use It

- To review direction (to the right, to the left, etc.)
- To reinforce third person: *She has/He has*
- To energize the class

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Banana or other passable object
Blindfold

Preparation Time

5 minutes to rearrange the class or get students in order

Activity Time

10 minutes

Human Tic-Tac-Toe

This version of Tic-Tac-Toe focuses on teamwork to answer questions and uses students as the Xs and Os for the board.

Preparation

Students are seated at desks, but as they are called up they will move to stand in the grid to play.

Use tape to make a large tic-tac-toe grid (three boxes by three boxes) on the floor of your classroom. If you are putting the tape on carpeting, you should not leave it there for more than a week or the tape's adhesive may stain the carpet.

Procedure

1. Separate the students into two teams (they can stay at their seats). It can be a better visual to have females vs. males if there is enough of a mix in the class. No player should have a question as to which team s/he is on and who his/her teammates are. An option if there is not enough of a mix would be to use two different color cards that team members could hold up.
2. Ask comprehension/discussion questions, alternating between teams.
3. If a member of a team answers the question correctly, s/he gets out of his/her seat, chooses a box in the tic-tac-toe grid, and stands in it. Students must stand in a spot that will lead to their team making a tic-tac-toe.
4. If someone misses a question, the question is given to the other team. Continue in this manner until one team has a tic-tac-toe or until it is obvious that you will have a "cat" (tie) game.

Variations

1. This game can be used as a review for whatever has been the focus of previous lessons, in preparation for a test, etc.
2. If there isn't enough floor space for the human version, a grid can be drawn on the board.
3. If it is a big class, students can be divided into groups and play in their groups.
4. This could be used as one of the activities for Learning Stations (see page 191).

When to Use It

- To review any aspect of class in competition format
- To provide an opportunity for kinesthetic learning

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Tape or chalk depending on the flooring; 6'x 6' or 9'x9' space

Preparation Time

Time to prepare the competition questions (15+ minutes); in class, 5–7 minutes dividing up the class and going over the rules

Activity Time

15–60 minutes, depending on how long it's played

Conjugation Race

This reinforcement activity reviews verb conjugation and helps improve the speed of student's conjugating skills.

Preparation

Make enough grids for the number of teams. Each grid should be the size of a big poster so it can be viewed from the back of the room. Horizontally, list verbs to be conjugated in the top row (limit to five). Vertically, write subject pronouns (specify the tense to be used; this can be different for each subject pronoun).

Tense (Present, past, future, etc.)	Person	To be	To go	To lie	To fight	To fly
	I					
	You					
	S/he					
	We					
	You (pl)					
	They					

Procedure

1. Divide class into teams with equal numbers of students. Explain that each person gets one turn to either fill in one box or correct a previous box.
2. The first team to complete the chart sits down while the teacher checks the chart for accuracy.
3. The first team with a completed and correct chart wins.

Variations

1. Use proper nouns or change the pronouns in use.
2. Do a seated relay.

When to Use It

- To review verb tenses
- To provide opportunity for kinesthetic learning

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Flip chart paper for grids, but these could also be projected or drawn direct on the board

Preparation Time

10 minutes to create boards

Activity Time

15+ minutes

What Do You Know?

This activity is a competition that is suitable for classes that have worked together for some time. It focuses on how well students know one another as they compete to predict the answers of teammates.

Preparation

Pre-design up to 20 questions for this. The questions will differ depending on the level of the students and the local context.

E.g., What is student A's favorite football team?
Where does student B live?

Procedure

1. Put students in pairs. One student is A; the other student is B.
2. Give each student a few pieces of blank paper or index cards.
3. Tell them they will play a game to see how well they know their partners.
4. Start by asking a question about student A (i.e., What is student A's favorite color?). Student A will write down his/her answer on a sheet of paper, and student B will write down what he/she thinks student A's answer is on a sheet of paper (he/she will be guessing).
5. Go pair by pair and ask the students to reveal their answers on the count of three.
6. If they wrote down the same answer, they each get a point. If not, they don't. Repeat as many times as desired.

Variation

Students could adopt famous personalities, and questions could be devised based on those personalities, e.g., artist, musician.

Sample Questions:

1. What is your partner's first and last name?
2. How many siblings does s/he have?
3. Name a sport s/he likes to watch.
4. Name a sport s/he likes to play.
5. Where does your partner live?

When to Use It

- To review question formation
- To review various grammar points (superlative, comparative, other)
- To change up the energy level in class

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Copy paper, markers

Preparation Time

10 minutes to create questions

Activity Time

45+ minutes

Flashcards Competition

This is a lively game that can be used to review any number of language points. It uses flashcards, which need to be prepared in advance. If the cards are laminated, they can be used for different language points at different points in the course.

Preparation

Prepare a set of flashcards for use with each pair in the class. If desired, students could be grouped in threes so that one student could serve as a judge during the competition. (See pages 265–273 in the Appendix.)

Prepare the concepts that will be called out for the competition.

Procedure

1. Spread a set of picture flashcards between two students.
2. Have students wait with hands on heads or behind their backs.
3. The first to grab the card corresponding to the teacher's description keeps that card.
4. The winner is the one who has the greatest number of cards at end of the round.

Note: Students generally prefer to play best-of-three or best-of-five rounds.

Variation

This can also be played by marking an X on the corresponding concept in a composite drawing.

When to Use It

- To review language items
- To create a gaming environment

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

The Biographies, Categories, and Personality Profile images found in the Appendix (see pages 265–273) can be used for this activity. Alternatively, images from magazines, brochures, or newspapers can be used.

Preparation Time

5–60 minutes, depending on flashcard preparation

Activity Time

10–15 minutes

Storm

Storm is a game that involves students in answering questions and getting points, always trying not to get a storm card. The team that ends the game with more points is the winner.

Preparation

The teacher should prepare questions in advance and write/print them on the back of the numbered flashcards. Some storm pictures should be mixed with the questions. The flashcards should then be posted on the wall (with questions facing the wall).

Procedure

1. Divide students into small groups (three or four students).
2. Explain the rules of the game. Each group is supposed to choose a number on its turn and answer the question on the back. If students answer the question correctly, they get one point. If they don't answer the question correctly, they don't get any points. If they get a storm card, they lose all points they have.
3. The game goes on until there are no more flashcards on the wall. The winning team is the one with the most points.

Variations

1. Use the game to practice vocabulary — write riddles or definitions on the backs of the flashcards and have students discover the words.
2. Use the game to review students' previous knowledge at the beginning of the year.
3. You can have students prepare the questions before they play the game. The competition will be even harder, as students will try to make more difficult questions so that the others will not gain points.

When to Use It

- To review a previous lesson/unit
- To warm up participants
- To gauge speaking level of participants
- To introduce the element of competition in class

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Flashcards (numbers on one side, questions on the other), storm flashcards (numbers on one side, lightning bolt on the other), blue tack or tape to stick flashcards on the wall

Preparation Time

10 minutes

Activity Time

20–30 minutes

Class vs. Teacher

This activity focuses on review of vocabulary and is played quickly, with very little material.

Preparation

The teacher should prepare a collage of images to be reviewed. See the sample collage in the Appendix, page 264.

Procedure

1. Project or display pictures of different vocabulary items — as many as you can fit on one sheet or overhead.
2. Point to one picture and say the word and have the students repeat after you.
3. Keep pointing and saying words that correspond to the pictures, but, finally point to a picture and say the incorrect word.
4. If they still repeat you, you get a point. If no one repeats, they get a point.

Variations

1. Have a student take the role of the “teacher.”
2. Students can create their own collages from magazines — or contribute to a class collage.

When to Use It

- To review after a unit
- To review for a test
- To introduce the element of competition in class

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Collage of images with appropriate vocabulary items (see page 264)

Preparation Time

30+ minutes

Activity Time

15–20 minutes

Board Game

This activity involves students preparing a board game to be played in class. The goal is for participants to create questions for the game, analyzing what is important and relevant to be assessed in the game, and after that, play the game.

Preparation

The teacher should make copies of both the board game template and the category cards.

Procedure

Part One — Creating the Game

1. Show the students the board game. Explain that they will be responsible for creating the questions for the game.
2. Separate students into five groups, so that each group is responsible for one category of the game. They should come up with the questions, analyzing what parts of the unit(s) chosen are relevant and how they should be assessed in the game. Give the students some guidance for them to work upon.
 - Riddle — Ask students to come up with riddles to assess vocabulary. They should see which words/expressions they think are more important and how they should create the riddles.
 - Grammar — Students should decide what parts of the grammar learned are more relevant. They should also decide what kinds of questions they would like to use to assess grammar.
 - Opinion — Students have to come up with open-ended questions on the topic(s) that have been studied.
 - Role play — Students have to make use of the social language/conversation strategies studied to propose role plays.
 - Music — Students have to think of songs that can be used to address the topics studied. They should decide how they want to use songs in the game (continue the song, fill in the blanks, and so on). Remind students that they should use songs that everybody knows.
 - Surprise — Use common board game instructions, such as: “move ahead two spaces,” “go back one space,” “play again,” etc. You can either have a group of students work on this category or create the instructions yourself.
3. Give each group a number of cards from their category (see templates). They should write the questions/instructions on the backs of the cards.

Variation

If you do not have enough time for both the creation and playing of the game, you can plan the questions in advance and have students play the game only.

When to Use It

- To review after a unit
- To review for a test
- To introduce the element of competition in class
- To provide opportunities for kinesthetic and tactile learners

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Copies of board game template, copies of category cards, game markers (you can use coins or erasers, for example, if you do not have markers), dice

Preparation Time







5 minutes

Activity Time

30–60 minutes

Part Two — Playing the Game

In order to play the game, you can keep students in groups and each group will have one marker and play with the whole class together, or you can divide students into different groups and have students play individually in smaller groups. Students roll the dice and move the number of squares they get. When they stop, they are supposed to take a card from the category of the square on which they stopped. If they answer correctly or follow the instructions correctly, they can stay on the square; if not, they should go back to the square they were on before.

	Students should answer the riddle correctly.
	Students should answer the grammar question correctly.
	Students should talk about the topic or answer the question posed.
	In pairs/trios, students should perform the role play proposed.
	Students should complete the musical task proposed.
	Students should do what the instructions indicate.



RIDDLE



GRAMMAR



OPINION



ROLE PLAY



MUSIC



SURPRISE

				
	<div>FINISH</div>			
				
				
				
				
			<div>START</div>	

Hot Potato

This activity focuses on review of vocabulary and helps students learn to make word associations through categorizing.

Preparation

None

Procedure

1. Have students sit/stand in a large circle.
2. Give the students a category of vocabulary.
3. Toss the ball to a student. That student should say a word in that category in the target language.
4. The student then passes the ball to someone else, who gives another word in the same category.
5. Each student only has five seconds to give a new word.
6. Each time someone misses, s/he must stand up (or sit down) and s/he will receive one point. If s/he answers correctly the next time, s/he may sit down. This continues until the teacher changes the category. The student (or team if you wish to do it that way) with the fewest points at the end wins.

Variations

1. If the class is very big, more than one circle could be formed.
2. If permitted, the game could add an element of translation so that each word said would then need to be translated into the mother tongue before the player adds the next word in English.
3. The students could have to repeat all the words in the category before adding their word. This gets more challenging, but it is helpful for vocabulary building to have to repeat.

When to Use It

- To review vocabulary
- To give students practice categorizing words
- To introduce the element of competition in class

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Ball or other unbreakable object that can be passed around quickly

Preparation Time

None

Activity Time

10–15 minutes

Password

This activity focuses on review of vocabulary and helps students learn how to define words with circumlocution.

Preparation

Preselect the words to be used based on recent work in class.

Procedure

1. Pair up students (A and B). All pairs play the game simultaneously.
2. Student A faces the overhead screen/blackboard and can see one group of three words.
3. Student B has his/her back to the screen.
4. The student giving the clues (A) must sit on his/her hands during this time, so that s/he will not be tempted to use gestures to enhance clues.
5. Give the word to start (i.e., "Go!"). All Student As explain each word until their partners guess them.
6. Students A and B can switch roles for the next round; new words should be projected.

Variation

This could be played as two teams in the class with the clue-givers taking turns defining words for their team. The teacher would prepare a stack of cards with one vocabulary word on each card. The clue-giver would need to select the top card, define it until his/her team got the correct answer, and move on to the next card until the time was up (one to three minutes, depending on time restrictions). The team loses a point each time the clue-giver passes on a word (decides not to define it).

When to Use It

- To review vocabulary
- To give students practice in circumlocution
- To introduce the element of competition in class

Level



Depending on the vocabulary chosen

Skills



Practice



Materials

Cards for the words

Preparation Time

5 minutes

Activity Time

15–20 minutes

Sample Materials

I usually have a minimum of eight sets of three words, as the games move quickly and you want to have enough material for your students to play. Here is a sampling of the vocabulary my students saw at the beginning of a Level I class to review house and bedroom vocabulary.

door bed wall	pillow to eat to sleep	to clean tidy couch
desk rug to study	living room CD player poster	to watch TV garden to cook
to do housework clean to listen to music	alarm clock a tree window	

Sample Password

So for the word “door,” a beginning Level II student might say (in the target language), “it’s for entering, it’s big, it’s in the shape of a rectangle, there are three of them in this classroom and they’re blue,” etc. When his/her partner says “door” (in the target language), the clue-giver will go on to the next word. For the word “pillow,” a student might say, “it’s something under your head, it’s on a bed.” For “to clean,” a student might say, “you do this and then your room is no longer dirty.” Some pairs will finish faster than others, but this game moves very quickly. As soon as all or most have finished (you might even use a timer and allow 90 seconds for each set of three words), the partners switch seats so that the guesser from the last round becomes the clue-giver this time, for the next set of three words.

Although students think of this activity as “downtime,” it is, in fact, a wonderful way to give them stress-free and fun practice at developing the necessary linguistic skill of circumlocution.

INTERACTIVE ACTIVITIES



Interactive Activities

*By Bill Snyder
Tokyo, Japan*

I recently spent some weeks doing workshops with junior and senior high school teachers in Japan, advocating in all of them for the importance of using interactive activities in the classroom. I believe in the importance of interaction for a lot of reasons. Interactive activities promote learning and skill development by supporting engagement and providing more opportunities for learners to practice the language; help develop community in the classroom by giving learners opportunities to share with and support each other; and support autonomy development not least by freeing teachers from responsibility for all interactions in the classroom.

Learner engagement is the ultimate key to long-term success in language learning. Learners are engaged when tasks interest them and require commitment on their part to completing the task. Interactive tasks are often more interesting than teacher-led tasks because they give learners the chance to talk with each other. And when the tasks require all participants to contribute to their completion, they demand commitment from learners equally so that everyone has to participate.

Interactive tasks also give more learners more opportunities to practice using the language, across all skills — speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Instead of a single learner interacting with the teacher, in interactive tasks all the learners in the class can be practicing at once, recalling language they know or testing creative ideas about how to say something. And all of this helps the learners build their knowledge and abilities.

Of course, all of this interaction with one another lets learners get to know each other and can help build a sense of community in the classroom. When learners see each other as working together on the same problem, they begin to help each other, providing support with language and encouragement that can help support long-term engagement.

And while learners work with each other, teachers are freed to be more than just the provider of input. They can observe their learners' performances, noticing language issues outside the lesson to be taught later; see who is struggling with some point; and possibly, provide individual assistance at the point of need for some learners.

If all of this benefit comes from interactive activities, why don't teachers use them more? I think some of it may be habit, being used to being at the front of the room and talking all the time. But more often, I think many teachers think that interactive activities will involve much more time and work for them, and they feel under enough pressure to fulfill the syllabus already.

Looking at the activities presented in this section, I hope that teachers reading this will see how simple they are to carry out and that many of them do not demand a lot of time. I hope that teachers will try them out, think about what happens when they do, and figure out the best ways to use them in their context. Most of all, I hope that teachers will begin to feel confident in teaching with interactive activities and begin to expand their repertoires by finding more activities from other teachers and by creating their own. And once they have created an activity and tested it out, that they share it with other teachers in order to help them promote learning, build community, and work on other parts of being a teacher.

It's Snowing

This activity takes little preparation and few materials, and is a good way to mix up students in a class to create new pairs.

Preparation

Decide on a topic that is suitable for creating a pair (antonyms, synonyms, word/definition, etc.).

Procedure

1. Have students get into pairs. Distribute the pieces of paper — one to each student. Students work with a partner to think up two related words or phrases: infinitive and past participle (to go/ went), antonyms (black/white), collocations (bread and butter), category and example (drink and coffee), or other (bedroom and bed).
2. Have students write their pair of words on paper; each word of the pair should be on a separate piece of paper (no need for the word “and”), which is then crumpled into a ball.
3. Everyone stands in a circle. At the signal, all students gently toss their “snowballs” into the center of the circle.
4. Next, all students pick up any snowball. They then find partners by saying the word or phrase aloud in the target language and circulating around the room to find a match.
5. They should end up with different partners than when they started. Once they find their new partners, they should present their word pairs to the class (to confirm they are a pair). This activity is useful in pairing students in a creative way.

NB: If there isn't an even number of students, the teacher should participate as well.

Variation

The focus of the vocabulary could be restricted to a particular theme to serve as a warm-up to another activity.

When to Use It

- To pair up students for another activity
- To review collocations or related vocabulary

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Slips of paper

Preparation Time

10 minutes — to cut up the paper

Activity Time

10–15+ minutes, depending on how the resulting pairs are used and whether the words used to pair up are exploited

Swap If

This is a kinesthetic activity that can serve as an icebreaker. It gets everyone involved.

Preparation

Put chairs/desks aside to form a big central space.

Use masking tape or some way for students to mark spots on the floor where they will be standing.

Procedure

1. Everyone stands in a circle with the teacher in the middle.
2. Each person must mark his/her spot on the floor with a piece of tape.
3. The person in the middle says, “Move if...” and then completes the sentence with something that is true about him/herself. For example, “Move if you are female.” All girls have to run to open spots in the circle (including the person in the middle). Of course, one person will be left in the middle (like musical chairs) and that person must come up with the next condition: “Move if you are wearing brown shoes...,” etc.

Variations

1. Limit the conditions based on lessons taught and different themes.
2. Restrict grammar used (*Move if you will...*, *Move if you used to...*, etc.) This makes it more challenging for advanced groups.

When to Use It

- To review vocabulary
- To change up the energy level in class

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Masking tape

Preparation Time

None — except to prepare the class

Activity Time

15+ minutes

Describe It!

This activity is similar to Buzz Ban Cards, but takes no materials and little preparation.

Preparation

Have a list of words and expressions ready for review.

Procedure

1. Have students stand in pairs, facing each other. One person in each pair is facing the board and one person is facing away from the board.
2. Write a word on the board that only the people facing the board can see.
3. The students are to describe the word to their partners *without* gestures, translations, or word forms related to the word they are to describe (e.g., “skiing,” the sport practiced in snow with skis).

Variations

1. Let students select the vocabulary.
2. Put students in small groups and have more guessers and fewer clue-givers.

When to Use It

- To review vocabulary
- To give students practice in describing and defining

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

None

Preparation Time

None — except to prepare the class

Activity Time

15+ minutes

What Are You Doing?

This game is good for reviewing of verb tenses and involving kinesthetic learning.

Preparation

This activity requires little preparation, as the students are the ones in charge of giving the clues and keeping the activity going. Model an action to get the activity started.

Procedure

1. Call a pair of students to the center of the room.
Student #1 starts acting out an action (e.g., eating an ice cream cone).
Student #2 asks, "What are you doing?"
#1 says a different action than what he/she is doing ("I'm climbing a ladder").
#2 then begins miming this action (climbing a ladder).
#1 then asks, "What are you doing?" to *#2*.
#2 says a different action....
2. Let action continue until it dissolves into laughter or they get stumped. This works best after the class has been studying a good number of these verbs for a period of time.

Variations

1. This activity can be used with different verb tenses. E.g., What did you do last night?; What will you do on vacation?; etc.
2. Instead of two students performing for the class, students can be divided into even-numbered groups and pairs can take turns doing the activity within the groups.
3. This activity could be done similar to *charades*, where a learner mimes an action and the others guess the verb. Ideally, the students would guess using a complete sentence, e.g., *You are riding a bike. You are eating an ice cream cone.*

When to Use It

- To review verbs
- To build fluency

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

None

Preparation Time

None

Activity Time

10–15 minutes

Guesstures

This is a “review” game that includes movement to get students up and learning kinesthetically. You can review idioms, verbs, vocabulary, etc.

Preparation

1. Make a word bank of idioms (or whatever you are reviewing) with their definitions.
2. Write each one on a piece of paper to draw for the Guesstures game.

Alternative: You can have students review the list in pairs and create their own Guesstures list.

Procedure

1. Divide the class into teams: Team A and Team B.
2. Have one member of Team A pick a card from the stack and act it out (using motions and gestures) for his/her team.
3. Team A gets the first guess at what term the student is acting out. They should work together to decide on the guess. If they get it wrong, Team B gets to guess.
4. The guessing should alternate between Team A and Team B until someone gets it right. Alternatively, guesses could be limited to three per team.

Variations

1. Have students create the cards and review items.
2. Instead of class teams, do the game in pairs or small groups.

When to Use It

- To review vocabulary
- To provide kinesthetic learning

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Slips of papers

Preparation Time

5–10 minutes — to make the cards

Activity Time

15+ minutes

Learning Stations

This is a macro activity in which activities with self-access instructions are set up at different stations in the room for students to play or complete. Learning stations offer a change of pace and allow students to take responsibility to work together to complete activities.

Preparation

Decide which activities you will use for the stations (approximately four). Each activity should take approximately the same amount of time so that groups complete the activities at about the same time.

Some activities that can be adapted for use in learning stations are:

Picture Dictation

What Is This?

Story Starters

Scan for It

Prove It!

Buzz Ban Cards

Which One Doesn't Belong?

Categories

Set the room for the different stations and include materials and instructions for activities.

NB: Instructions should be very clear for each station/activity. Have enough stations to accommodate all students in the class.

Procedure

1. Divide class into groups.
2. Assign groups to the different learning stations.
3. Instruct students that in this class they will move from station to station as a group every 15 minutes (this should be timed to coincide with class length).
4. Have groups begin their activities and start the timer. Go around to the different groups to give assistance with instructions as needed.
5. When the timer is up, have groups switch stations. Groups should make sure the instructions and materials are back in order for the next group.

Variation

The learning stations could be open so that students choose what they want to do as the time is up. If this approach is taken, each activity should be previewed beforehand so they are aware of the different stations. Also there needs to be a way in which the number of students participating is limited to the space of the station. E.g., If all chairs are taken, extra students need to join a different station.

When to Use It

- To provide for group learning activities
- To promote team activities and responsible learning
- To provide a kinesthetic and tactile learning experience
- To review a wide variety of language elements

Level

Depends on activities chosen



Skills



Practice



Materials

Materials/instructions for each activity selected

Preparation Time

30 minutes

Activity Time

60–120 minutes

Let's Go Out!

This provides controlled practice at inviting and refusing/ regretting invitations.

Preparation

1. Draw up a list of activities to do in the area that can be used for the invitation portion of the practice.
2. Draw up a list of excuses that can be used by S2 for practice.

Procedure

1. Make two lists on the board with your students, one with ten leisure activities and the other with ten house or school chores.
2. Call two students to the front of the classroom: S1 and S2.
3. S1 is going to ask S2 out, using the ideas from the list.
4. The teacher will secretly tell S2 the only invitation he/she can accept. Until S1 invites S2 to that specific activity, S2 has to refuse by saying: Sorry, I can't. I have to + one of the chores/ excuses. The class counts how many times S1 got a NO for an answer.

Variations

1. Have students create the list of activities and excuses.
2. Instead of doing this as a whole class, do the activity in pairs or small groups.

When to Use It

- To practice inviting and refusing
- To provide speaking practice

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

None

Preparation Time

10 minutes — to draw up lists

Activity Time

10+ minutes

It Could Be You

This activity helps students get to know one another through descriptions students write about themselves.

Preparation

Very little preparation is needed. If the class is very large or you want to reduce the length of the activity, the class can be divided into smaller groups.

Procedure

1. Students write descriptions of themselves on file cards or slips of paper. The descriptions can include physical characteristics, personality traits, a description of the family and pets, things the person has done or likes to do, things the person does and doesn't like to eat, etc.
2. All the sentences are put face down in the middle, and each student picks one.
3. If someone picks his/her own, all are put back into the circle and everyone picks again (alternatively, the teacher can ask the students to close their eyes and make the appropriate switch).
4. Students read aloud the descriptions they have received and try to guess to whom they apply using *could be/might be/must be*.

Variations

1. Students could also assume the role of a character in a story and write from that person's point of view.
2. If you have a large class, this activity can be done within smaller groups.

When to Use It

- To break the ice
- To practice modals of possibility or modals of probability
- To practice supposition

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Pieces of paper

Preparation Time

5 minutes

Activity Time

15–20 minutes

Line Up

This is a quick activity that gets students moving with a purpose. Any vocabulary that can be ordered sequentially or chronologically (such as birthdays, times, and numbers) can be incorporated into this short, fun activity, which is good to use if your classes need a quick change of pace.

Preparation

None

Procedure

1. Have students stand up.
2. The class has 90 seconds to arrange itself in an ordered line according to the time at which students went to bed the night before. Students may only communicate in the target language. They may opt to call out the time of night, or may be required by the teacher to communicate by asking and answering in complete sentences.
3. After 90 or so seconds, stop the action and check to see if everyone is in his/her proper place. E.g., Ask, "What time did you go to bed last night?" Then have students quickly give their answers, either in short phrases or in complete sentences, from one end of the line to the other. The whole class should help to correctly place anyone who is out of order.

Possible categories to use:

1. amount of time you spent studying over the weekend;
2. height in inches (actual or with shoes you are wearing today);
3. the sum total of all the digits in your phone number;
4. birthday;
5. time you woke up this morning;
6. third letter of your last name; etc.

Variations

1. Have students do this silently using only gestures.
2. Students could write down their answers to a Line Up question and then have a selected student or volunteer try to order the students based on previous knowledge of classmates. This will likely take longer, but it could be a good critical thinking exercise. Use the pieces of paper to check the answers.
3. You can use the sequence of the Line Up as a way to organize students for a forthcoming activity.

When to Use It

- To get students to ask/answer questions to determine sequence
- To practice vocabulary
- To work as a team

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

None

Preparation Time

None

Activity Time

5–10 minutes

Talking Ball

In this activity, the focus is on having students speak, but only if they are in possession of the ball. The idea given in the activity below is for students to list items in a sequence (e.g., months of the year, numbers, etc.), but it could be used for giving opinions on topics, etc.

Preparation

Students may stand by the sides of their desks or they can sit on top of their desks, if permitted.

Procedure

1. Give one student the ball and have him or her start by saying the first item in a group of sequential items. (Example: “January”)
2. All students stand up. One person starts out the sequence. For this example we will use the months of the year. The first student says, “January,” and randomly throws the ball to the next person. That person has to say the next item in the sequence, “February,” and then throws the ball to the next person.
3. This game is called Talking Ball because no talking is allowed, unless of course you have the ball and it is your turn to fill in the next item in the sequence. A person is “out” when he/she talks (out of turn), misses the next sequential item, or drops the ball. That student then sits down. The object of the game is to be among the last students standing. “Out” students sit down at their desks or on the floor until the next round of Talking Ball begins. They can help identify if the responses are correct.

Variations

1. Students can be placed in a circle away from desks if space permits.
2. Add a critical thinking element by having a small group of students play with known rules for a special sequence in front of the remaining class. The remaining students need to guess the sequence secret. At least five items should be said in sequence before students start guessing.
E.g., Say a word that begins with A, the next says one with B, the next with C, etc.
Say a word that begins with the last letter of the previous word (paper, rock, knee, eggs, salt, etc.).
Say a number that is double the previous number: 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, etc.
3. Have students stand and form a circle. Use a paper ball as a prompt for students to give a response to a question. Toss the paper ball to a student for a response. After the student answers correctly, he/she can toss the paper ball to another student in the circle to also provide a response. The question could be as simple as introductions, sentence prompts, grammar, or opinions, students could state (or recall) the names of the person who caught the ball, etc.

When to Use It

- To practice/review sequential items, like numbers, months, days, etc.

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

One ball (hackysack, softball, wadded-up paper, or other)

Preparation Time

None

Activity Time

10–15 minutes

PICTURES



Pictures

By Efrain Diaz
Florida, United States

Click, click, click...selfies, wide shot, medium shot, close-ups, landscapes, actions, the I-was-there photo. Things you see and want to remember, photos of your food, unexpected events, street signs, street scenes, instances that occur anywhere, anytime — all captured in a split second. Everyone has a camera and everyone is taking photos. How can we use the wealth of images captured daily to enhance language? In today's world of Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and a myriad of other apps as well as social media pages, pictures tell stories and make their everlasting marks in people's lives.

They say a picture is worth a thousand words and I truly believe they are. Images are moments in time never to be taken again, and every single one has a story to tell. Just think for a moment. When you take a picture, it is a who, what, when, where, why, how moment. What better way to open up a conversation than to show a photo and explain it? It doesn't have to end there. Photographs can be used to have learners describe moments, elaborate on details, illustrate actions, stimulate discussions, prompt writings, encourage interest, dramatize a moment, and visualize a subject, point, issue, word, or concept.

How can we use pictures to enhance language in all four communication modes? Simply use a photo to ignite interest in a topic and stimulate background knowledge. Get students talking about something of interest and open a discussion on what they know about the subject. Students will be listening to one another, providing feedback, giving insights, and adding to what is being said. Next, have them break into teams, research the topic, extend their knowledge, write down discoveries, discuss these, and present to real-life audiences for comments, questions, and feedback.

A key component of memorizing vocabulary is to visualize it. A picture that represents happiness is pretty easy to take, but how about one that exemplifies tolerance, respect, or freedom. Here students must use their creativity. Assign students or teams tasks on photographing certain motifs and have them explain the reasons the picture represents that theme for feedback.

Pictures provide a catalyst for us to explore humanity and the world and use these images to generate all types of language. Remember *Show and Tell* in primary school? This is probably the easiest way to get beginners to speak in a new language: have them bring a photograph of their family, tell who they are, mention characteristics about them and what they do, and share familiar moments.

Get students excited about learning! Help them hone their language abilities in a meaningful and comprehensible way. In this chapter, we will provide some picture activities that will get you started, but don't be afraid to come up with your own ideas. Have fun, and happy clicking!

Picture Dictation

This activity involves students listening to a description of an image (photo, poster, drawing, clipping from a newspaper or magazine) and drawing what they hear. The goal is attention to description (nouns: people, inanimate objects, animals, etc.; adjectives: big, small, round, straight; and prepositions: on, behind, in front of, on top of, etc.). This activity can be done with each student working individually while listening to the description as a whole class, as a learning station, or in pairs. This can be used as a test, as a pre-test, or as a short informal assessment to allow students to estimate their own progress.

Preparation

Choose appropriate images from a magazine, newspaper, or other. An appropriate image should include whichever vocabulary features the class has been working on or which the teacher wants to introduce, be at or below the students' language level, and be interesting. The photo may be something they have seen before or something new. All students should have paper and pens or pencils.

Procedure

1. Check that students have appropriate materials.
2. Explain to the students that the image will be described once in its entirety to get an overall sense of the space needed for the drawing and that it will be described part by part in order for students to draw.
3. For the first description, the image should be described in broad terms (e.g., There is a tall building with some people in front of it. The perspective is from street level). Instruct students to listen in order to comprehend the general idea, not focusing on details or specific words.
4. For the second description, there should be a short pause after the portion described so students have time to draw what they hear.
5. For the third description, describe the image at a natural pace. Students should have time only to check and tweak and not time to start the drawing over.
6. Have students compare their work to the original image.

Variations

1. Students can give the dictation in pairs, in which case a copy of the image for each student "teacher" should be prepared. The "teachers" may also need to be coached on the procedures.
2. Cloze picture dictation: A student thinks of an item to add to the drawing and dictates it to the class; remaining class members draw what is dictated. Other additions are also dictated. Compare the drawings by holding them up or taping them up around the room for all to walk around and compare.
3. Reverse dictation: One student volunteers to be the artist at the board and the remaining class members take turns dictating the picture to the student at the board. If the student artist at the board draws it incorrectly, other students try to describe the correction needed. NB: The image should be big enough for most class members to see as it's being passed around.
4. Students can choose the image(s) to be used.
5. Story variation: Use a comic strip/graphic novel/illustrated story. Divide the students into groups according to the number of images in the story. Each group will be given one image to dictate, either with one artist or one dictator. Designate one student in each group to dictate the phrase to his or her group members. Students compare their images to the original afterwards and vote on the "best." Each group's image should go up on the board and students work together to put the illustrated story in order. Students can also write up a short story to demonstrate their understanding of the sequence of the story, then compare the original story with what the students devise.

When to Use It

- To warm up or cool down
- To serve as a learning station activity
- To give a quick, short assessment
- To transition to new content

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Paper and pencils/pens; colors optional

Preparation Time

5–10 minutes

Activity Time

10–20 minutes

Suggested Images

Picture US or English Teaching Forum; image with appropriate vocabulary and preposition use; can focus on shapes, patterns, and colors (colored pencils can be used or just labeled in image)

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Mystery Picture

This activity is a guessing game related to famous people.

Preparation

Select and cut out pictures of well-known people from magazines. Make sure the people are well-known to your students and not just famous in general.

Procedure

1. Hide the pictures under a piece of paper that has been cut into long strips, but still has a half-inch seam on the left-hand edge.
2. Students ask yes/no questions about the person, and for every question, uncover a part of the picture by pulling back a strip of paper.
3. Students try to guess the name of the person.

Variations

1. Use PowerPoint and project the images as well.
2. Students can bring in their own photos to use and make their own paper strips to hide the photo under.

When to Use It

- To practice/review yes/no question formation
- To review content/biographies if the class covered famous people
- To provide some competition in class

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Pictures from magazines/newspapers

Preparation Time

Time to select photos; the paper cut in strips can be prepared ahead and used again and again

Activity Time

15+ minutes

Picture Chain Story

In this activity, students create and tell a story prompted by preselected pictures and/or visual cues.

Preparation

Identify and separate several pictures depicting people, places, and things. Pictures/images with a cultural component are particularly useful. Possible resource: *Picture US* by the Office of English Language Programs.

Procedure

1. Select the pictures for the activity. In addition to having one picture per student, you should have spare ones to serve as “wild cards” if you opt to use that variation.
2. Display the pictures around the room; you may have them on desks, on the walls, or on the floor.
3. Instruct students to go around the room and select a picture they could say a few things about in story-like style.
4. After students select their pictures, split them into groups depending on class size.
5. Tell students to link their pictures in order to create one cohesive story.
6. After the designated time, have students tell the story to the other groups.

Variations

1. When students are telling their stories, the teacher shows “wild card” pictures; students must then improvise and weave the picture into their ongoing storytelling.
2. Students write a different ending to their stories.
3. Students write the stories told by the other groups.
4. Students give the pictures they originally selected to the other groups to create a story.
5. Students perform a skit depicting the story they created.
6. Students write their stories in sections; one section per picture. Story sections and pictures are given to another group to put in the correct sequence. The story sections could be written with fewer obvious details to make the sequencing more difficult.

When to Use It

- To promote group work, collaborative learning
- To energize a class
- To encourage spontaneous use of language
- To practice connectives and transitions
- To review the steps in a story and/or writing

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Pictures depicting people, places, things
(*Picture US*)

Preparation Time

10 minutes

Activity Time

10–30 minutes

Possible Resources

Picture US
Magazines
Students' picture contributions
Students' drawings

Biographies

In this activity, students use their imaginations and create stories about people in photos.

Preparation

Select images that include a person or people in them. The most appropriate pictures might be those that focus on one person in action of some sort or with identifying information that could lead someone to create a biography. Long-range group shots are not advisable. See pages 265–269 of the Appendix for sample photos.

Procedure

1. Discuss the definition and elements of a biography (life history of someone written by someone other than the person).
2. Go over the biography of someone students are familiar with (name, date, place of birth, information about childhood, family, achievements of the person, why the person is famous/important).
3. Distribute photos to students. (Or display the photos and have students select the one that interests them.)
4. Have each student write a biography for the person in the picture. Each biography should mention age, family, occupation (work or school), interests and hobbies, etc.

Variation

Each student or group of students can work on creating biographies for different pictures that are displayed. Biographies could then be displayed and then matched to the pictures through a speaking, listening, or reading exercise.

When to Use It

- To practice writing descriptively
- To write a biographical paragraph
- To practice extensive writing

Level



Skills



Practice



Other

Past tenses

Materials

Photos, images

Preparation Time

5 minutes

Activity Time

15–30 minutes

Captions

In this activity, students work with captions for images. The activity can be set for matching existing captions to images or creating captions for photos.

Preparation

Select a variety of images that lend themselves to a variety of captions or, to make it more challenging, a set of images that are close enough in theme to use similar vocabulary in the caption. Prepare the captions on separate pieces of paper if using the matching version of the activity.

Procedure

Match Captions

1. Put images up on the wall around the room.
2. Distribute captions to students.
3. Have students read the captions and find the corresponding pictures. Students tape their captions next to the corresponding photos.
4. Have students walk around and see if they agree with the matching. If they do not, they can move incorrect captions to the right places.

Write Captions

1. Put images up on the wall around the room.
2. Number the images and assign each student to write a caption for a particular image.
3. Collect the captions and randomly match them to the images by taping them below the images.
4. Have students walk around and see if they agree with the matching. If they do not, they can move incorrect captions to the right places.

Variations

1. Instruct students to write a caption about any one of the images. Have students crumple up their captions and put them into a hat or container of some sort. After you have all captions in the hat, have students choose random captions from the hat/container. Students identify the photos described by the captions. They then tape the captions under them.
2. Have students read out their captions and have others identify the photos they go with.

When to Use It

- To practice writing captions and short descriptions
- To match descriptions to pictures
- To practice journalistic style

Level



Skills



Practice



Other

Critical thinking if the captions are vague

Materials

Photos, images, captions, tape

Preparation Time

5 minutes

Activity Time

15 minutes

Twenty Questions

In this activity, students play the age-old game Twenty Questions with a collection of photos. In Twenty Questions, students get twenty chances to ask yes/no questions to get to the answer. In this activity, students use the images as the basis for the twenty questions.

Preparation

Have a selection of images (up to about 20) with a variety of themes. These images should be appropriate in size for how they will be used: large for a whole class; a smaller format is okay for group work.

Procedure

1. Display all the images in front of the class.
2. Select one of the pictures (i.e., think of one of them) and have students ask yes/no questions to identify the picture you are thinking of.

Variation

This can be done in groups, too. Students take turns thinking of a picture and responding to the yes/no questions.

When to Use It

- To practice yes/no question formation
- To use critical thinking skills

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Images

Preparation Time

5 minutes (if you already have a bank of images)

Activity Time

5–10 minutes

Categories

In this activity, students work to categorize a collection of images. As the collection of images can be quite varied and of the instructor's making, the categories are not hard and fast, but rather categories that the students come up with as long as they can justify them using details in the photos.

Preparation

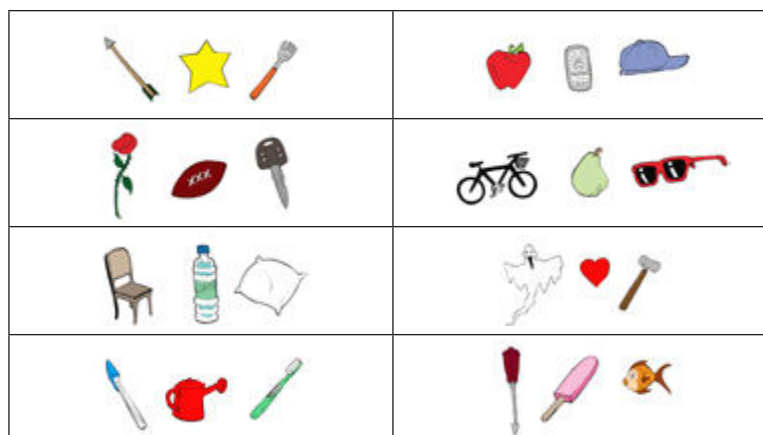
Select a variety of images (up to about 20) with a variety of themes. These do not need to be obvious categories; however, the instructor should be able to categorize the images him/herself to help the students should they get stumped at categorizing or in case students find another way of categorizing. (See page 270 in the Appendix.)

Procedure

1. Put images up on the wall around the room or on the floor among the students (if you use the smaller cards in the Appendix and make enough copies, you can hand out a package to each group so they can move them around to make the categories).
2. Students work alone or in pairs/groups to divide the images into a set number of categories. For 20 images, it could be four or five.
3. Have one group show the images together in one category. The other groups can guess what the "theme" of the category is.

Variations

1. The teacher can give some predetermined categories (from obvious to less obvious ones) for students to use to categorize the images, i.e., children, adults, animals, scenery, nature, urban, rural, architecture, etc.
2. In pairs and using the Categories pictures in the Appendix, students work together to identify a similarity for each of the three items. They should write down their similarities to compare with other groups. Students should be able to explain the relationship by using descriptive language and words or phrases such as *they all...* and *none....*



When to Use It

- To strengthen categorizing skills
- To practice justifying
- As a pre-activity to describing — orally or in writing

Level



Skills



Practice



Other

Critical thinking

Materials

Photos — for the whole group or for smaller groups

Preparation Time

5 minutes (if you already have a bank of images)

Activity Time

15–30 minutes, depending on justification time

Personality Profile

In this activity, students create a profile based on photos. Although the personality might be based on generalizations, the students need to justify the profiles they create. This can result in some interesting conversations.

Preparation

Instructor prepares a collection of images of one item (shoes, cars, suitcases, houses, meals, etc.) for projection or distribution. (See pages 271–273 in the Appendix.)

Procedure

1. Project the images, point to various items in the collection, and ask what kind of person owns this. Give students time to justify. It would be good to start with a sample such as a suitcase.
2. Project another set of items and have pairs/groups of students create a profile based on one of the images they select. They will either read out their description or pass it forward for display for others to guess which image it belongs to.

Variations

1. The instructor can read sample profiles for students to guess to which items in the collection these pertain.
2. Students can create their own collection of items for personality profiles.
3. The instructor can use real items belonging to celebrities for higher interest.

When to Use It

- To have students generalize and sketch a personality
- To have students defend personalities they create
- To have students match descriptions to images using critical thinking skills

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Image collections
(see Appendix, pages 271–273)

Preparation Time

5 minutes — if using collections provided

Activity Time

10–15 minutes

Cell Phone Photos

In this activity, teachers encourage their learners to take out their cell phones in class for language practice! Not every learner needs to have one in order to do the activity; it's possible to arrange smaller groups around one device. NOTE: If assigning learners particular homework in taking photos, be sure to give them some guidance on what is culturally appropriate or acceptable in taking photos of people.

Preparation

Depending on the level of the learners, this can be a review of particular structures or vocabulary.

Procedure

1. For homework, have students take one or more photos based on a theme for the class, e.g., *The Market*.
2. Put students in pairs or small groups depending on phone prevalence in class.
3. Have students describe their photo(s) using specific structures or vocabulary to their partner or group (e.g., easy: list the fruit and vegetables that are in the photo; intermediate: describe what the people at the market are doing; advanced: create a story based on the photo).

Variations

1. Instead of assigning homework in advance, have learners select a photo from their phone to describe or talk about. Note: The teacher may want to approve of the photo first.
2. Assign any type of task to take photos that are relevant to the lesson. Photos can be taken for review of vocabulary, grammar, or particular conversation topics.
3. Have students take photos of cultural representations to prompt discussion about various topics (celebrations, community items, food, sports attitudes, beliefs, etc.).
4. Have students capture English around them. If in an English-speaking country, they can concentrate on finding particular language usage for businesses, collocations, and language of persuasion or power. If in a non-English-speaking country, learners can be on the lookout for English in their community. There is often more than one expects to find!
5. Have students take a photo of part of something that gives some information about the item, but does not make the item obvious, and have others guess what the item is.
6. For any of these ideas, learners can also write about their photos.

When to Use It

- To personalize a lesson
- To add student creativity in the lesson
- To analyze language
- To use images from the community to prompt discussion

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Student cell phone

Preparation Time

None

Activity Time

5–45 minutes, depending on which variation

LARGE CLASSES



Large Classes

By Brock Brady

Washington, D.C., United States

What makes a class large depends on the class type. Writing classes become “large” quickly because of the need to give written feedback. Young students, with short attention spans, can make a class “larger” than older students. If your classroom is very small and desks don’t move, a few students can become a large class. However, most teachers feel that a large class has 40 or more students.

The most important principle of a successful large class is that when a class is large, you have to overbuild your classroom management structures. You can do almost everything in large classes that you do in smaller ones but you have to do it more explicitly and routinely.

Common Large-Class Problems

Classroom Management. When you talk to one group, another group is goofing off. Learning names is hard. It’s difficult to get students to pay attention. Cheating can be a problem when you can’t be everywhere at once. Everything takes more time. If you have 100 students, can you regularly make 100 handouts?

Assessment. Assignments and giving written feedback take more time. Grading can be more complicated. With oral activities, it may be hard to know who is succeeding in a large class because it may be hard to know which mistakes are being made by whom.

Four Strategies for Successful Large Classes

- 1 **Use structured groups consistently.** To learn languages, practice is essential. In large classes, teachers have to create ways for students to practice without continuous teacher monitoring — structured groups are the way to accomplish this. Even when desks can’t be moved, having the front students turn back and the back students turn forward can make pairs and quads.
- 2 **Routines rock.** For good learning, large class structures must be more explicit and consistent. Having predictable sequences for every class is essential such as starting each class by explaining the class agenda written in the board; establishing patterns for moving students in and out of groups; and having activities for students if a group should finish early.
- 3 **Increase student responsibility.** This leads to better learning and more class discipline. Because teachers do not have enough eyes to monitor every group of students, it is important to create routines where students monitor themselves and each other. Assigning regular team leaders who liaise with the teacher, and assigning other team members ongoing roles (such as timekeeper, organizer, notetaker, local language-use monitor), helps make everyone more accountable.
- 4 **Emphasize positive behaviors to improve classroom management.** By making it abundantly clear to students what good behaviors are, and by praising students who practice good behaviors, you create a class focused on good behavior.

Well-structured, large classes have the potential to become teachers’ most memorable classes. In requiring *transparency*, in showing *respect*, and in operating in *trust*, we create a state of balance between autonomy and collaboration where learning and community can flourish.

Test Yourself Dictation

In this activity, learners choose the level of difficulty they want to complete for a somewhat classic dictation activity. Differentiated levels are possible by the text that is provided to the learners: from a blank page to one with select blanks. Learners can challenge themselves through their selection.

Preparation

Various versions prepared of the dictation:

- Most Difficult: a blank page
- Difficult: large sections of the text missing
- Easier: short phrases missing (focus could be on grammatical structures, expressions, etc.)
- Easiest: just occasional words missing (focus could be on verbs, adjectives, particular vocabulary, etc.)

Procedure

1. Explain the varying levels of dictation available to the learners and have them select their challenge level.
2. Distribute papers.
3. Dictate the text being aware of the time needed for the various levels to write.

Variations

1. Have a student volunteer to dictate the text.
2. Do the activity as a running dictation with the different levels working together. For the levels with only phrases or words missing, be sure the “runner” or the one who dictates does not see the blanks so he/she does not focus on dictating those words.
3. Add comprehension questions like those found on page 114 so learners who have less to write can also focus on reading comprehension.

When to Use It

- To practice comprehension (listening and general)
- To allow students to select their challenge
- To provide a challenge in multi-level classrooms

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Leveled dictation handouts

Preparation Time

10–20 minutes

Activity Time

5–15+ minutes, depending on text length and difficulty

Songs in the Key of Life

Learners have a chance to bring their musical preference and knowledge into the classroom in this creative activity. It is also an opportunity to use students' knowledge as the input for the writing.

Preparation

None

Procedure

1. Have students brainstorm any song titles they can think of either as a whole class or in smaller groups. The titles do not need to be limited to the songs students like. The more titles, the better.
2. In groups, students draft short conversations (or stories) in which they use as many song titles intact in as natural a way as possible and not referencing these as titles, but rather as turns in a conversation. They can add language before or after the title to make a conversation or a story.
3. Groups read their stories or act out their dialogues.

Variations

1. Have small groups brainstorm the song titles and create the conversations or stories together without others listening in. As groups act out their conversations, remaining groups identify the song titles used. It could be done as a competition.
2. Use lyrics instead of song titles.
3. Use titles of movies or television shows in the same manner.

When to Use It

- To give students practice in writing in a creative way
- To encourage group work and collaboration
- To use students' knowledge as a point of departure

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

None

Preparation Time

None

Activity Time

15–30 minutes

Write Down, Then Speak Up

This writing activity gives students practice in writing from creative to academic, depending on how it is structured. The activity can be focused on students demonstrating their knowledge on a subject, showing their creativity about an obscure topic, or drafting an entertaining news story based on a headline.

Preparation

Select or write some “Why” questions or other prompts.

e.g., Why did the chicken cross the road?

Why is the sky blue?

Why are there so many languages in the world?

Why do identical twins have different fingerprints?

Procedure

1. Write a “Why” question on the board (or distribute to learners).
2. Give students a fixed amount of time to write as full an answer as possible. Announce the time limit and set the timer.
3. Have students share their answers in groups.
4. Each group votes for the best answer based on predetermined criteria (most logical, best written, funniest, depending on the “Why” question).
5. Groups (or students) then share out the answer with the highest score (or same score) to the whole class.

Variations

1. Have students write up the questions or topics and pick one out of a hat, envelope, etc.
2. Have students do this activity as a spontaneous speech activity with a few minutes to prepare and write notes.
3. Use images of obscure objects and have groups come up with an explanation of what it could be and what it is used for.
4. Have learners make up the story to go with odd headlines of news stories.

When to Use It

- To give students practice in writing in a creative way
- To have students practice persuasive writing
- To give students opportunities to do spontaneous speeches (variation)

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Questions or images, depending on variation; timer

Preparation Time

5+ minutes

Activity Time

15–30 minutes

Beginning and Ending

This is an easy-to-set-up activity in which students collaborate in groups to write a story based on the first and last sentences of a story provided.

Preparation

Prepare relevant beginning and ending sentences for stories. The sentences could be on a handout for each group or just slips of paper distributed.

Here are some examples that provide a bit more focus:

1. Beginning: *One day, a fox was walking through the forest when through the bushes she saw a fisherman fishing.*
Ending: *The fisherman gave the fox the biggest fish in his catch for having warned him about the bear.*
2. Beginning: *Things in my life really changed after my parents brought my baby sister home from the hospital.*
Ending: *I was proud to know that my sister could depend on me, too.*
3. Beginning: *The inspector opened the letter. The note inside contained only one sentence, "You will soon have a story to tell."*
Ending: *The inspector was again sitting at the café, thinking back to the events of the past days, the gypsy's warning, the gold, and the gangsters he had put behind bars. He now had, indeed, a story to tell.*

Procedure

1. Put students in small groups.
2. Distribute the beginning and ending sentences for the stories.
3. Give groups a time limit to write their in-between events.
4. Groups share their stories with the class or swap with another group to see how the story developed.
5. Class can vote on the most interesting, entertaining, surprising, etc., story.
6. During the debrief of the differences in the stories for each group, ask each group why they made the decisions they did. Doing so can encourage critical thinking.

Variations

1. Give each group the same beginning and ending and see how different the stories develop.
2. Use famous beginning and ending sentences from famous works without letting students know. Reveal the real titles after the activity is complete. Perhaps it will generate interest in reading. Be sure the ending sentence is not a spoiler to the story!
3. Add other sentences or elements to the beginning and ending that need to be incorporated into the story. Each member can be responsible for an element (characters, setting, mood, plot, conflict, resolution).

When to Use It

- To give students practice in writing in a creative way
- To promote collaboration amongst students

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Beginning and ending sentences handouts
Elements if using

Preparation Time

10+ minutes

Activity Time

30+ minutes

Do You Know What I Know?

This is a classic activity, which puts students in charge of setting questions for peers in order to review course material. Students get review practice setting the questions as well as answering questions set by peers.

Preparation

None

Procedure

1. Groups make up three to five short quiz questions (based on what they have learned in class). Each question should require only short answers (not more than four words).
2. Groups exchange quizzes, write down their answers, and return them to the original group.
3. Groups who made the questions score the other groups' answers then returns them.
4. Groups discuss the answers and the marks given.

Variations

1. Provide groups with coursework elements to create questions for. This may help ensure that all topics are covered.
2. Collect all questions from learners after the activity and incorporate the ones that are appropriate in the actual assessment.

When to Use It

- To give students some control in reviewing material
- To promote collaboration amongst students

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

None

Preparation Time

None

Activity Time

10–20 minutes, depending on content covered

Practice Makes Perfect 4-2-1

In this activity, students work in groups to make notes on a text and then they each use these notes to help give a summary of the text to other learners in the class. Students repeat the summary part of the exercise to several students to help sharpen their speaking and summarizing skills.

Preparation

Select as many texts as you will have groups of four students. Texts could be simple stories, news articles, or other. It would be better reinforcement for vocabulary if each text were on the same theme. If practical, give students in each group the same color paper to make notes on the text. Alternatively, the papers in one group can include a color marking on them to distinguish from other groups. This is to help identify which students work together at the beginning of the exercise and who is from what group when the members split off in smaller groups or pair work.

Procedure

1. Put students in small groups.
2. Give each group of four students a short reading appropriate to the level, unit theme, and time available for the activity.
3. As a group, they discuss the main points of the text and each member makes her/his own notes (outline, mind map, two-column notes, other).
4. Once groups are finished making their notes and ensuring they each have the main points, have pairs from one group regroup with a pair from another group.
5. These pairs take turns summarizing their text to the other pair in their new group.
6. As a final practice, have individuals from the pairs join up with a new partner to exchange information on their texts.
7. Bring students together afterward to summarize the main points of the topic.

Variations

1. Additional practice could be integrated by having the pairs work together up to three times with other pairs by having them summarize together with one pair; student A from the pair summarize with support from student B; and then student B summarize to a new pair with support from student A.
2. Select various texts on a theme so that students are practicing vocabulary.

When to Use It

- To give students some control in reviewing material
- To promote collaboration amongst students

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

None

Preparation Time

20 minutes

Activity Time

10–20 minutes, depending on content covered

Bottle Cap Classroom Management

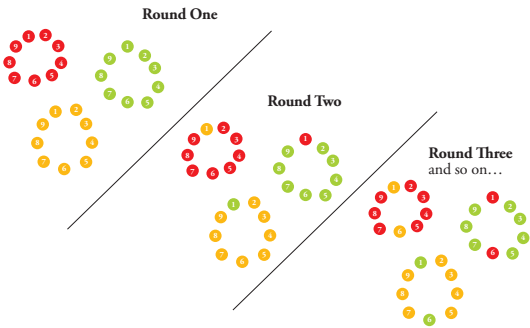
This is more of a strategy than an activity per se. However, the strategy greatly assists an instructor quickly organize activities that require or benefit from various student groupings. Using a variety of bottle caps organized by brand and numbered on the back, an instructor can guide learners to find their partners efficiently.

Preparation

1. Collect enough bottle caps for the number of students in the class; an equal number of different brands for groupings. It would be best to have at least four different groups and upwards of ten groups if class numbers are as high as 100.
 2. With a permanent marker, number the bottle caps on the back of the cap. Each group of caps of the same brand should have the same sequence: e.g., 1–4, 1–8, 1–5, etc.
 3. If you want to have students wear them during the class, puncture a hole above the logo with a hammer and nail and thread some twine through the hole.
- 40 students:
4 brands of 10 each = 4 groups of 10 students
8 brands of 5 each = 8 groups of 5 students
- 100 students:
5 brands of 20 each = 5 groups of 20 students
10 brands of 10 each = 10 groups of 10 students

Procedure

1. Distribute the bottle caps randomly to the students as they come into class.
2. Group students referencing the bottle caps suitable for the activity (expert groups → jigsaw groups, etc.). See sample below.



Variations

1. Call on students for certain responses by combining brand with number: Fanta #2, Coke #5, etc.
2. Keep students mixed in the class (they have the bottle caps as distributed at the beginning of class), but do not have them move into groups. If a competition, have students hand in their answer by number and/or brand to a particular location (box, pile, etc.).

When to Use It

- To facilitate using group work more efficiently and effectively
- To promote group work amongst students
- To give students opportunities to meet and work with others in a large class

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Bottle caps

Preparation Time

For materials, it can be weeks over time. For the day of the activity, it depends on what content is used, but little to none really for the bottle caps.

Activity Time

A few minutes to group and regroup

World Traveler

One of the motivations for using English is often to have a lingua franca for travel. Helping students make connections between countries they'd like to visit and what they might see there could be a very motivating and engaging activity.

Preparation

If you can show images on a projector or if you can at least show images on your laptop that students will be able to see, put together a group of images that either show major landmarks or represent well-known cultural attributes of the country. Try to guess the countries students would most likely want to visit. Ideally you might want to have three images of each country. If you don't have computer access, maybe you can pull images out of magazines or make drawings to represent landmarks or cultural practices to have at least one for each country.

Procedure

1. Ask students to brainstorm countries that they would like to visit. Write them on the board. Add any other countries you have images of, but they might not have mentioned.
2. Begin showing the images. For each image, ask each group, "What country is this in?" or "In what country would you see this?" If the chosen group member gets the right answer, her/his group gets a point. If s/he gets it wrong, the question is posed to the next group until all the images are correctly identified. At the end, the group (or groups) with the most points wins.

When to Use It

- As a change of pace or when discussing tourism

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Online images, magazine images, or drawings

Preparation Time

Probably 1–3 hours to find and assemble images

Activity Time

Depends on the number of images, but 20 minutes would be appropriate

Group Comprehension Check

A comprehension check is simply a standard classroom practice. Too often, once we set students to individual or group work activities, their first question is, “What were we supposed to do again?” A comprehension check prevents this waste of time. The simplest way to do a regular comprehension check is to simply ask a student what students are supposed to do (that is, say the directions) after you have given the directions. Typically too, if a student has clearly not understood the directions (or left a part of the directions out), the teacher will call on another student and possibly another until the teacher and students have recreated the complete instructions.

In large classes, failure to understand directions can happen much more easily. Whereas in a small class a misunderstanding is relatively easy to spot and correct, much time and confusion can develop in a large class if instructions were misunderstood.

Therefore in large classes teachers may want to use group comprehension checks in a competitive format that will encourage students to pay attention as comprehension of what they are supposed to do is reconstructed.

Preparation

It is recommended that for large classes the teacher assigns students to groups they work in regularly. This builds solidarity and allows each group member to take on a role (team leader, notetaker, time-keeper, activity manager, English-use monitor, lead presenter, etc.). It also means that at the beginning of every class every member is in her/his group and ready to work. For the Group Comprehension Check activity, the teacher does not have to waste time assigning groups.

Although no particular prep is required, it is important for the teacher to carefully review her/his instructions/directions of the activity that will be the subject of the comprehension check. This is a practice all teachers should engage in because sometimes the problem is that we haven't thought through all the steps and implications of the activity we want students to do. For the Group Comprehension Check activity, the teacher wants to be sure s/he has each activity step clearly in her/his head.

Procedure

The teacher asks the students to talk in their regular groups and recall everything that they are supposed to do in the activity. After everyone has had time to think and discuss, the teacher calls on one of the groups for a comprehension check. If they make a mistake or show confusion, they get no acknowledgement and another group is called. If that group gets part of the instructions right but leaves something out, they get one star on the board. If they get any part wrong, they get no stars, and another group is called, until some team gets all the instructions right. That group gets two stars. If the correct instructions were provided quickly, the teacher might ask one or two other groups to try to correctly repeat the instructions. If they don't get them right, they don't get any stars; they get a zero or a frowny face or whatever the teacher feels appropriate.

When to Use It

- Especially for your main (or most complicated) activity of the day. If you use it for every activity every day, comprehension check competitions can become quite time-intensive and you may begin to lose student engagement.
- To accompany a complicated activity
- To promote student collaborative learning

Level



Skills



Practice

Materials

None

Preparation Time

5–10 minutes to carefully review your instructions/directions for the activity

Activity Time

10–20 minutes, depending on student awareness and the complexity of the directions. Note: This is a routine and when it is regularly done, students will get on to it and anticipate it.

Sample Activity

Teacher: Hello students. Sometimes when the teacher gives students instructions to do something in class, she sometimes forgets to make the instructions as clear as possible and sometimes the students are not paying attention. For the teacher to make sure this doesn't happen, she can ask a student to give a comprehension check. A comprehension check is simply correctly repeating the instructions that the teacher gave. Okay?

So this morning I am going to have you play a Group Comprehension Check. Here are the instructions to play this activity.

I will tell you how to play the game, and you will play it by explaining how we play it.

Listen to my instructions carefully. When I finish the instructions, I will give you some time to talk in your group to remember ALL the instructions. When you have remembered the instructions, pick one person in your group to do the comprehension check (that is tell the instructions for the game). If I call on your group and your presenter gives me all the instructions correctly, your team gets two points. If you get most of the instructions right but you leave something out, you get one point. If you get something wrong or can't remember, you get no points. If you get something wrong or leave something out, I will call on another team. If they get it all right, they get two points. If they get it wrong, I will call on another team until some team gets it right. Do you understand? Any questions?

Student: So we do what you tell us to do?

Teacher: Yes, but I just told you what to do to play the Group Comprehension Check activity, didn't I? Okay, begin.

Groups who have understood will start discussing the directions. Those who haven't will be confused. If all (or most) are confused, stop them. Tell them you want to see all eyes on you and no pens or pencils in their hands. Write the directions on the board step-by-step. Then erase them carefully. Tell the students to do the Comprehension Check activity in their groups now. Give them a few minutes. For this first time, call first on a group that seems to have understood so that they can model for others. In the future, call more randomly to make sure no one is sleeping.

Code Breaker

This is simply a fun, competitive activity that allows students to think about language. Therefore the language the students work on should be English that people use in real communication and language that incorporates a teaching point from a recent lesson as a review.

Preparation

Figure out a simple code: 1, 2, 3 equals A, B, C, or the code letter is the letter of the alphabet that precedes the actual letter (that is, “h” is represented by “g,” “b” is represented by “a,” and “a” is represented by “z”).

Figure out your group structure. Even with large classes, groups larger than five or six are not very effective. Therefore you will want to have sets of groups competing against each other. For example, for a class of 40 you might want a set of four groups of five students competing against each other, but with a class of 100 you might want to have five sets of groups of five competing. For each set of groups you will need a different code message.

For example, the messages to be decoded might be:

I brush my teeth every day.
She is studying English right now.
Sometimes I watch television.
I’m playing football tomorrow afternoon.

Then code each of the messages and either:

- Make a copy of the coded message to give to each group in the set of groups competing; or
- Write all the coded messages on the board, labeling each Set 1, Set 2, Set 3, etc., but cover the messages with paper before the students enter.

Procedure

1. Ask if students know what a code is. If not, explain. Then divide the students into groups and sets. If it is feasible for students to move in the classroom, put the sets of groups together.
2. Show students an example of the code. For example, FNNC LNQMhMF = Good Morning.
3. Then tell them they will be given a coded message. They are to work in a group decoding it. As soon as the group has decoded the message, they will quietly stand up (to make it easier for the teacher with multiple sets of groups to figure out who was first). If that group correctly translates the message, they win. If they don’t, the second-fastest group is called on and makes an attempt at translation.

When to Use It

- As a warm-up or a change of pace if students are losing interest in the primary activity

Level



Any level as long as students have the proficiency to understand the language of the messages

Skills



Practice



Materials

A board, a chalk or marker, and a way to cover the coded messages, or strips with enough coded messages to have one copy of the same strip for each group of competitors

Preparation Time

15–30 minutes, depending on the complication of your code and the messages

Activity Time

20–25 minutes with explanation (depends in part on how many sets of groups are needed)

Self–Peer Assessment Checklist

Perhaps a strategy as much as an activity, self- and peer-assessment checklists can be used in any class, but they are invaluable in large classes where teacher monitoring is a challenge. Also, regularly engaging students in self- and peer-assessment means that teachers are typically able to grade a better product because the assignment has had two pairs of eyes on it before the teacher evaluates.

Preparation

1. Determine the activity or assignment that you wish students to self- and peer-assess.
2. Determine three to five criteria that will lead to a successful assignment.
3. Write out the criteria in language appropriate to students' proficiency and keep the criteria explicit and easy to evaluate. For example, "All sentences begin with a capital letter," not "To what extent is a thorough understanding of the assignment content demonstrated?"
4. Self- and Peer-Assessment Checklists must:
 - consist of simple tasks the students can easily carry out
 - limit evaluation to clear, explicit criteria that is easy to verify and requires simple judgments (for example, yes or no).

Procedure

1. Review both the Self- and the Peer-Assessment Checklists in class before students are asked to use them, and be sure to give examples when a checklist item is accomplished.
2. Homework can often be accompanied with the Self-Assessment Checklist, and then the Peer-Assessment Checklist can be a "Do Now" (or "Early Bird") activity at the beginning of the class when the assignment is due.

When to Use It

- To provide a way for students to catch obvious errors before they turn in an assignment
- To allow for self- and peer-assessment of classroom activities and assignments, especially in large classes where the amount of close monitoring a teacher may do is limited

Level



Any level as long as students have the proficiency to understand the language of the checklist. In fact, in classes where English proficiency may be initially an issue, checklists could be drafted in the students' home language.

Skills



All, but obviously self- and peer-assessment is more valuable when students are producing something, an oral presentation, a written assignment, or a visual assignment such as a poster, than they would be for a more closed-ended assignment such as multiple-choice tests.

Practice



Materials

Self- and Peer-Assessment Checklists can be:

- written on the board for students to refer to or copy
- provided on a handout to each group, and if a group has a Work Monitor, that student can make sure that all team members do both assessments

Preparation Time

Typically 30 minutes the first time you create the checklists. If you need more than 30 minutes, you're probably designing a checklist that demands higher levels of judgment than the student could reasonably and confidently engage in.

Activity Time

Typically 5–15 minutes, possibly longer if the assessment reveals the need to make corrections or adjustments

SAMPLE SELF-ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST FOR STUDENT ORAL PRESENTATIONS

Circle each step you have completed:

1. I will state the main idea of the reading/presentation.
2. I have provided my opinion of the reading.
3. When I share my reading, I am giving the main ideas, not just reading the words.
4. I have one question to ask my group members.

SAMPLE PEER-ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

Answer the following about your peer's presentation.

1. The presenter was loud enough. Y/N
2. The presenter spoke clearly. Y/N
3. The presentation was about _____.
4. One idea in the presentation was _____.
5. The presenter asked us a question. Y/N Question: _____
6. One of us could answer the question. Y/N

CULTURE



CULTURE

By Carol Clark
Cairo, Egypt

A Czech proverb states, “You live a new life for every new language you speak. If you know only one language, you live only once.”

Life, culture, and language are inextricably interwoven. They shape thought patterns, identity and perceptions, and the ways people express themselves. Like designing a lesson and then actually teaching it, the act of learning another language and then entering the culture where it is spoken is a very complex task. Both teaching and crossing cultures involve handling a variety of variables, some of which may be prepared for and some of which may come as a surprise.

The speaker of more than one language has not only the added challenge of mastering a new linguistic system and acquiring adequate vocabulary and skills for survival and self-expression, but also the added burden, in entering the community of the target language, of dealing with intangible constructs found in a different lifestyle and culture. The new culture may be close to the learner’s native culture in some ways and very different in others. Just knowing the language does not necessarily allow for knowledge of, or ability to navigate, the target-language culture successfully. Artifacts of popular culture, such as films, TV shows, magazines, news articles, and books, can be valuable in providing insights into a different culture and its people, but they can also be misleading and misrepresent the actual reality, as they may not accurately depict routine daily life as a foreigner might experience it.

Thus, there is a strangeness to navigating a new culture even when a learner knows the language. There may be a different perception of time and its importance; new transport systems to master; unfamiliar food, drink, and restaurant protocols to assimilate; formal vs. informal situations and the discourse register, body language, and personal space issues that apply; language patterns and vocabulary learned from textbooks vs. the real spoken language of the community; differing habits of sanitation and hygiene; differing educational practices; appropriate vs. inappropriate clothing; and many other tangible and intangible aspects of culture that the second language speaker encounters every day.

In an effort to prepare learners for entrance into an English language-speaking culture, a number of teachers and students have shared their experiences as second language speakers in the United States in the collection of short texts that follow. These texts provide springboards for classroom discussion about cultural issues and may stimulate further questions that can be investigated through research or dialogue with other returnees, citizens of the U.S., or those of other English-speaking cultures.

Although many of these issues can be anticipated and discussed while studying English, new cultural sojourners should be prepared to make mistakes and be attracted to, surprised, and sometimes even offended by various aspects of the new culture. At the same time they will learn to live a new life, the second life that both their second language and its culture offer them.

Tangerine

This activity helps provide an analogy to looking at big culture and little culture as layers on a human. Once you peel them away, most people, at their core, are very similar. Using tangerines or peanuts to help illustrate this is described below.

Preparation

Bring in enough tangerines or peanuts in their shell for each student (or enough to demo the activity), paper plates, and paper towels for each group.

Procedure

1. Divide students into groups of three or four.
2. Put tangerines on a tray and ask each group to select a tangerine.
3. Instruct each group to “get to know” its tangerine, examining it carefully for identifying qualities of the skin and stem such as color, shape, indentations, marks, etc., to identify it later.
4. Collect the tangerines again on a plate or tray, mix them up, and offer them to each group to identify and take back. Most groups will easily find their tangerines.
5. Tell the groups to peel its piece of fruit and the white parts of the rind left on the fruit. Once again, groups should study their tangerines in order to identify them again.
6. Collect the tangerines on the plate and mix them up. Offer them to the groups a second time.
7. Have students work in groups and then as a whole class to discuss the process, summarizing what they did in the activity and explaining which version of the fruit was easier to identify and why.
8. Apply the activity to culture, having students discuss how the tangerines (peeled and unpeeled) compare to people, culture, and identity. Similarities and differences on the surface and at deeper levels should be identified.
9. As a follow-up activity, students may be asked to write a paragraph comparing the tangerines with and without their peels to people and their culture.

When to Use It

- To introduce a film or reading about cultural differences
- To encourage a discussion after a field trip to a cultural exhibition or an exchange program
- To prompt discussion as part of a content-based unit on culture

Level



Skills



Practice



Materials

Enough tangerines and paper plates for groups of three or four in a class; paper towels or wet wipes for students to clean their hands after peeling the tangerines

Preparation Time

5 minutes

Activity Time

20–25 minutes

Venn-berg

The aim of this activity is for learners to examine the similarities and differences of two cultures using a graphic organizer based on the age-old cultural iceberg with a twist. The culture typically first understood is like the part of an iceberg that we can see — above the water (food, flags, festivities, fashion, holidays, music, performances, dances, games, arts and crafts, literature, and language). The culture that we cannot see outright is below the waterline and must be experienced or more deeply observed. (See chapter illustration.) See illustration below for a similar idea about notions of culture that are not obviously represented by those in the box.

Preparation

Explain or elicit the venn-berg concept from students.

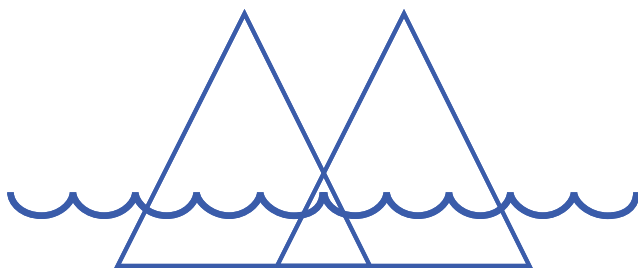
- Elicit the following from the students: iceberg and Venn diagram graphic organizer (one at a time).
- Elicit the concept of an iceberg as it relates to culture. Elicit the purpose of the graphic organizer of a Venn diagram.
- Lead a discussion of a venn-berg and how it can be used to compare two cultures.

Procedure

- Using a venn-berg, have learners compare two cultures based on a reading, a video, or their experience. Students do not need to address all elements, but just what they understand to be similarities and differences or a preselected list of items.
- This activity could be very narrow for two specific cultures or wide open to the ones the students are familiar. Their venn-bergs could be part of a research project leading to an oral presentation or a poster presentation.

Variation

Use with students who are studying in a new culture. Have them fill out the venn-berg based on what they know upon arrival and adjust/correct it during their stay.



When to Use It

- To provide an opportunity for learners to discuss cultural similarities and differences
- To debrief students' understanding of a reading/novel or video from a culture different from their own
- To use as a prediction exercise prior to reading or watching a video, film, or performance
- To use as a point of departure ahead of assumptions and unconscious bias

Level



Any level depending on items selected. Lower levels could concentrate on just the above-water elements.

Skills



Practice



Materials

Preprinted venn-bergs or blank paper
Reading or video if using

Preparation Time

5–10 minutes, depending on use

Activity Time

Depends on how it's applied, but could take a full hour or even more depending on the level of involvement, research, and reading/video

Culture Paragraphs

BRING YOUR BIKE ALONG



Taking the bus is really something I didn't like to do, but when I arrived in the United States, it became a necessity and to my surprise it became a pleasure, too. Someone told me the transportation system in Eugene, Oregon, was inspired by a city in Brazil — my country — so it was very interesting for me to realize how organized it can be and how we can connect things to help us in our daily life. There were 24 teachers from Brazil who took the bus every single day, and the experience was great. It was amazing when we found out the buses had a precise schedule to arrive in each bus stop. I was amazed with the idea that I didn't need to wait too long to take the bus. I knew the exact time I should be at the bus stop and the exact time I would be in my final destination. But that was not the most interesting thing; there was more: we could take our bike along. Of course I didn't have one, but we can't deny it is something very useful, especially for those who have a long commute to work and back home. During the time I lived there, I also realized how they connect transportation. The bus was not the unique means of transportation; they liked to continue their ways by bicycle or skateboard, and I really loved that. As the city mentions in their transportation ad: "The best way to connect."

Carla Castro – Brazilian in Eugene, Oregon

Draft your own questions for the text to match the types of questions below:

In the Text		Outside the Text	
Right there	Think and search	Author and me	On my own

Culture Paragraphs

CAFÉS – MORE THAN CAFFEINE



When I arrived in the United States, from the first airport I passed through, in Miami, it was possible to realize how Americans like to frequent Starbucks, the American global coffee company. You can see one in every corner. I had already heard about that popular place and even watched movies where it appeared, so curiosity took me there. Of course, it is easy to be fascinated with so many types of coffees, hot chocolates, and sweet food. But my question was: Where were the sandwiches and other savory items? It was difficult to think about drinking a cup of coffee or hot chocolate with only sweet cookies and breads. I knew I couldn't find *pão de queijo* (cheese bread – a Brazilian staple) there, for example, but it was really difficult for me, as I always had the idea that sweet food is related to desserts not with main meals. Besides, fruits were not the way I imagined either. Once, during a trip to Los Angeles, I had to have breakfast at a Starbucks and I ordered a drink with fruits. I thought it was a kind of vitamin, with milk, but in fact it was a frosty drink, a frozen juice, to my surprise and regret. Oh, no! From that day I really realized I had to get used to eating sweet food in my main meals or I would get hungry and that was never a good idea for me. So when I had to have a snack, my invitation was fast and assured: Let's go to Starbucks!

Carla Castro – Brazilian in Eugene, Oregon

Draft your own questions for the text to match the types of questions below:

In the Text		Outside the Text	
Right there	Think and search	Author and me	On my own

Culture Paragraphs

ENGLISH BEYOND BOOKS



My experience as a second language speaker in the United States was both amazing and frustrating. This paradox is due to the notion of speaking English for different purposes. I realized that it was quite interesting when I had to interact in academic situations, or even when a formal circumstance was required. This was because during my whole life as a student and teacher of English, I had been in contact with this style of language. It was easier to understand the register and I could easily assert myself in this context. On the other hand, when I had to interact in an informal situation, which required prior knowledge from me about the topic and also an immediate response, I found myself not as effective in my communication. I needed to figure out why they said such expressions through the situation I was immersed in. “How are you?” is a normal expression in English when you want to interact. It is very polite to greet people and ask how they are doing. The way you respond to this greeting is what makes the difference. I remember my first week in Eugene and the *is-that-a-thing* face people used to make when I responded “I’m fine, thanks.” It looked like I was saying something wrong! Till I realized how people usually greet each other on the streets and at stores, markets, supermarkets, and malls. I didn’t know a simple “good” or “OK” would make such a difference in establishing an interaction, and that my “fine, thanks” sounded too formal.

One day I went to a store and how the clerk answered all my yes/no questions with “You bet.” Although it was always the same response, the salesperson was really willing to help me and very kind. Even when I said “Thank you” — “You bet” was the response. Speaking of “thank you,” I couldn’t imagine how many different ways people in Eugene respond to it — “Sure”; “Yeah... no problem”; “OK”; “Yeah-yeah”; “uhm-hmm.” They were all really new for me. What happened to “You’re welcome”? I was told by some of my American friends that “You’re welcome” is somewhat formal.

Other curious linguistic differences were to hear “Have a good night” when it was still light outside, as the sun sets late in summer. Or “take it easy” as a way to say goodbye. I had learned that as a way to tell someone to cool down. How different things were to some of the English I studied in books!

Vagner Matias da Silva – Brazilian in Eugene, Oregon

Draft your own questions for the text to match the types of questions below:

In the Text		Outside the Text	
Right there	Think and search	Author and me	On my own

Culture Paragraphs

TAXI ETIQUETTE



My colleague and I left Kinshasa by the end of March 2014 to attend the TESOL Convention in Portland, Oregon. We left Kinshasa at night and landed in Portland in the middle of the night after several plane changes. We reached Portland at 3 a.m., knowing only the name of the hotel booked for us for the convention, which meant we had to rely on a taxi driver. After exiting the airport, we managed to secure a taxi driven by a young man who responded right away that he knew Marriott Hotel in the center of the old city. The driver engaged us in a friendly conversation, asking us about what country we were coming from and why we had come to Portland. He also told us he was from Somalia and elaborated on his American citizenship. We reached the hotel in the middle of this conversation, which went unfinished. He pulled the car by the hotel entrance and went in to check if we were at the right hotel, came back to the taxi, opened the trunk, and picked up our suitcases, and we all went in to check-in. Before departing, he gave us his phone number, asking us to give him a call if his services were needed on our return home. While in the hotel room, I kept wondering about this young driver's willingness to help and provision of services. I thought this experience was unique but was once again amazed another day when we took a taxi: The hotel doorman hailed a taxi for us; in two minutes it stopped by our side, the driver opened the doors of his yellow taxi, and we were seated in the back, which made me feel like being a "Prince in New York." Our departing day was again marked by the same courtesy we had experienced before. We left the hotel at 5:30 and had to board a bus. This time, the driver was an older man who acted exactly like the younger one on our day of arrival. He was first to greet us, carried our luggage to the trunk, and told us he had to make another stop at a neighboring hotel before departing to the airport. Upon our arrival at the airport, he stopped the car in front of the doors of the terminal, was first to get out, and picked up our suitcases to drop them at the right door while we were following him behind. He wished us goodbye and left. I left Portland, Oregon, with an unanswered question buzzing in my mind, "Do taxi/bus drivers here receive a training to act so efficiently?"

Kyungu Lwamba – Congolese (DRC) in Portland, Oregon

Draft your own questions for the text to match the types of questions below:

In the Text		Outside the Text	
Right there	Think and search	Author and me	On my own

Culture Paragraphs

NAMES



When I arrived in the United States as an exchange student in the 1980s, I was in a permanent state of amazement, surprise, and some confusion! It is difficult to choose one single thing that struck me the most, but if I have to pick one...Names! I am not referring to the pronunciation of names, nor am I referring to the shortened version of names that caused me a great deal of confusion — Candy (Is the spelling the same as the candy we eat?!), or Dick, Richie, Rick (Why so many versions of one single name?). I am actually referring to names that could be either male or female! Coming from a culture and language that pretty much established that names ending in “a” are female and “o” are male, one can imagine my predicament! To make matters worse, since “friend,” “cousin,” and “teacher” are gender neutral, I didn’t know if I was listening to a story about a female or male — Lindsey, Drew, Charlie, or Alex!

Monica Wiesmann-Hirchert – Brazilian in Alabama

Draft your own questions for the text to match the types of questions below:

In the Text		Outside the Text	
Right there	Think and search	Author and me	On my own

Culture Paragraphs

PUBLIC TRANSIT HONOR SYSTEM



I am not a great traveler, but when I am somewhere for the first time (and also every time I return to a place), I simply love to experience the way people live, how they move around, and what their routine looks like. When in Dallas for the 2013 TESOL Convention, I decided to try the public transportation, even though time was short and there was a lot of work ahead. Just behind the hotel, there was a “trolley stop.” DART — Dallas Area Rapid Transit — is what they call their public transportation in the city: buses, trolleys, and trains operate all day long. When at a stop, you are supposed to buy your “transit pass” at one of the machines (please always bring change with you — that’s very helpful!). There are different lines (red, blue, orange, and green) that pass by the same station, so you should pay attention to which one will take you to your destination (you will always find a map and someone around to help if you need assistance). Once you

have your ticket, you are ready to board! You should keep it handy in case there is an inspection on the trolley. For folks from out of town, this system may seem a little strange, as you do not have to insert your pass anywhere or show it to an employee of the company. You should simply have it with you! Although inspections are done randomly, passengers should always be ready and have a valid ticket to show — the company believes all passengers paid for their transportation. I have never witnessed anyone not having their ticket to present, but I don’t think the consequences will be very pleasant: being either a local or a foreigner — that may be even worse! Can you imagine being deported because of a train or bus ticket? I would never give it a try...

Helmara F. Real de Moraes – Brazilian in Dallas, Texas

Draft your own questions for the text to match the types of questions below:

In the Text		Outside the Text	
Right there	Think and search	Author and me	On my own

Culture Paragraphs

LITTER FREE



I am not much of a traveler and, honestly, I don't like traveling, but it was great to visit the United States on work commitments for two full weeks. I was really going to miss my family, and with less contact, it was going to make two weeks a real lifetime. Here I was in Portland, Oregon, my first trip to the U.S. Why did it have to be Portland? It was raining and very cold, but I was going to make the most of my working time here. It was a pleasant city despite the rain and cold; walking around the city freely felt so amazing and breathtaking. What caught my attention though was the beauty of the environment — the streets were clean and all the surroundings. There was no piece of trash on the road or sidewalks, the waiting area for the bus or train ride was clean, and for the first time, I did not mind sitting at a public space. One could feel the clean, clear air and see the healthy plants. The convention center was equally clean inside and

out, and thousands of people who were attending the conference made sure that they kept it that way, too. I just wonder why we cannot do the same in our own cities. It really opened my eyes and imagination that a clean environment is equal to healthy living and happy people. I am doing my part to make my city “the clean city,” and I am encouraging you to do the same.

Portia Tshivhase – South African in Portland, Oregon

Draft your own questions for the text to match the types of questions below:

In the Text		Outside the Text	
Right there	Think and search	Author and me	On my own

Culture Paragraphs

PROJECT-BASED EDUCATION



During my visit to the United States in December 2010 to participate in the esteemed Texas Intensive English Program (TIEP), I visited a premier educational center. I first observed a Social Studies class. Students of sixth grade were giving presentations on Asian countries. The teacher's role was mainly as an observer; he silently went on evaluating the presenter, at his desk, watching meticulously. A discussion by the teacher and other classmates ensued as soon as the particular student finished his presentation. Then the others aired their views or put their queries before him. It was evident that the pupils had prepared their demonstrations and researched well. The students were not passive listeners as they were scribbling down relevant points to be called up possibly, during the interactive session. The students used PowerPoint to aid their presentations, and also other props were in abundance, which they were at liberty to use whenever they felt it helpful. At another school I visited, I was amazed to find students devising video games on their own. Moreover, they were busy learning all by themselves using various software on their computers. They had to keep abreast of the latest developments in technology, which would be interesting to the audience. Each project was of three weeks duration. At the end, pupils gave presentations and welcomed feedback from the others. They even posted their homework on Google Groups, where everyone had the opportunity to review each other's work. Visiting the classes and observing the methodology, I found the kernel that teachers need to be inventive always to get the best out of their students, and lighting the spark is the only thing that the teachers need to do. Once the flame is ignited, students themselves will carry the torch and light up thousands of candles on their own! The hallmark of the teaching strategy is that teachers give plentiful leeway to children to explore and express on their own. There are no textbooks or course books as such, and the whole curriculum is based on projects and assignments. The aims, objectives, and expected outcomes of the projects are clearly outlined, which makes it an electrifying journey for them to embark upon. Teachers keep in touch and maintain individual contacts with every child through email.

Arindam Sengupta – Indian in Austin, Texas

Draft your own questions for the text to match the types of questions below:

In the Text		Outside the Text	
Right there	Think and search	Author and me	On my own

Culture Paragraphs

PERSONAL SPACE MANAGEMENT



I was one of the 26 elite E-Teacher Scholarship recipients selected upon recommendation of the UMBC-University of Oregon Consortium in 2012 to take part in a special three-week leadership program at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. This exchange program gave me the chance to meet with 25 English teaching professionals from all around the world plus TESOL specialists from the University of Maryland to discuss the best practices in TESOL. During this remarkable experience, I had the chance to explore some aspects of the American culture. The most notable aspect I observed is how people interact and manage personal space, namely, when they touch, how close they stand and sit, and how they behave with other people they encounter in the street, etc. I usually tried to test and break some of these rules to see how American people reacted, mainly during our cultural visits to Washington, New York, Baltimore, and Philadelphia. The look was always the same: BIZARRE. One of

the rules I noticed is when Americans are in a crowd, they tend to have some space, trying not to touch each other. If I accidentally touched someone, he/she mumbled an apology and smiled, saying “Sorry,” “Excuse me,” or “Pardon.” Another observation I had when I passed someone in the street and made eye contact is that he/she would smile and mutter a greeting, such as “Hi” or “Hello,” or just give a smile. I also remarked how American people stand in close spaces, such as elevators. When I used to take the elevator to get to the training room, in the UMBC campus, I noticed how students, professors, etc., face the elevator door, speak quietly, and try to avoid touching others. Sometimes when I find only one person in the elevator, he/she immediately tries to stand to the opposite side of the elevator. These cultural aspects of space management are only an example of how we might be different in interpreting space. Trying to understand them does not make us different. On the opposite, they show the human diversity of understanding and experience. Difference should “never be the source of hatred or conflict. The answer to difference is to respect it.”

Hicham Mahda – Moroccan in Baltimore, Maryland

Draft your own questions for the text to match the types of questions below:

In the Text		Outside the Text	
Right there	Think and search	Author and me	On my own

Culture Paragraphs

CHANGING WEATHER



For an African student who had lived all his life in the tropics, checking the weather wasn't a priority. Well... it turned out to be a nightmare when I was in the United States. It was one of those quiet mornings in Brookline, near Boston, Massachusetts (MA). I went out to the train station with just a shirt, a t-shirt underneath, and a pair of jeans on. It was chilly, and I thought I could bear it. When I got to the train station, an old woman told me: "You're not dressed properly, Sir!"

I jumped and replied, "It's okay."

"It's going to get a lot colder than this," she added.

Well... she was right. After a while, I couldn't take it anymore. Although I put my hands into the pockets of my jeans to keep them warm, my palms started hurting. I ran back as fast as Jesse Owens to my house. It was even worse halfway between the train station and my house. So I rushed into a Starbucks to get warm. One of the baristas welcomed me with a smile: "Hi! What can I do for you?" Wow... I had to drink a cup of hot chocolate I didn't plan to have. After I had the hot chocolate, I was on the run again like a crazy guy... all the way to my house.

My landlord saw me and she knew what was going on. She was like: "Naz, you're not dressed properly. In New England, you check the weather first and choose which clothes to put on, not the other way round." That was one of the first lessons I learned as a Fulbright student in MA.

Nazaire Massamba – Congolese (ROC) in Boston, Massachusetts

Draft your own questions for the text to match the types of questions below:

In the Text		Outside the Text	
Right there	Think and search	Author and me	On my own

Culture Paragraphs

PUNCTUALITY



Has anyone ever heard or came across the statement “there is no hurry in Africa”? Well, that is a trait that does not exist in my experience in the United States. I remember how the Americans were strict on time when I was in Washington, D.C. If they said we are meeting people at 8:00, then know that at exactly 8:00 the representatives would be ready and waiting for you. I thought jokingly to myself that may be the reason they are so strict when it comes to time and we are relaxed in Africa was because of the differences in time zones — I mean come to think of it, Washington, D.C., was exactly seven hours behind where I stay in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, so maybe the Americans are trying to catch up and redeem time. The truth of the matter is that Americans are time sensitive and very strict on schedules and appointments — something that took me time to adjust to especially compared to my flexible schedule in Africa. The time is even strict when it comes to less serious activities like leisure — they make sure you are on the dot and are always in line with timetables and schedules. This was a very hard and intriguing thing to learn at first, but it was very interesting to finally grasp and adjust to.

Brian Sibanda – Zimbabwean in Washington, D.C.

Draft your own questions for the text to match the types of questions below:

In the Text		Outside the Text	
Right there	Think and search	Author and me	On my own

Culture Paragraphs

PRESERVING CULTURE



“Trail of Tears.” These Indians have of course evolved and tried to merge their culture with that of the immigrant Americans. We had the privilege of touring the center, which comprised of a national museum, ancient village, and archives. I especially loved that the Cherokee are a matriarchal society where women lead and have the final say in all decisions made in the household. I learned the importance of preserving one’s culture and heritage, as it was evidenced in all the museums we visited. Americans have different social norms from Africans, and it was a most enlightening survey as well as experience.

Heather Damba – Zimbabwean in Oklahoma

Draft your own questions for the text to match the types of questions below:

In the Text		Outside the Text	
Right there	Think and search	Author and me	On my own

Culture Paragraphs

PEDESTRIAN CROSSING



restaurants, bars, bookstores, etc. As I was walking through it, I found myself confronted with surprising commuters, almost 80 percent of them were young and students. At first, I thought that was happening because it might be a special day and people were gathering to celebrate. But as it turned out, it was a normal day at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville. I found that one of the most important things that really impressed me was the respect of citizens for other citizens. This was clear even in pedestrian crosswalks. As you move one step into the pedestrian crosswalk, the drivers begin to reduce speed and allow everyone to cross the street. And things became clearer each day — there I was very convinced that I was far from home.

An unexpected journey begins when you are about to travel to a place that you only know from TV, magazines, movies, news, and people who have been there or are from there. I was almost convinced that I knew the U.S. in general and what I was expecting was to see these things in real dimension, but the surprise was just about to happen at the Dulles Airport in Washington, D.C. Upon my arrival, I saw people almost from all over the world — I mean from different countries, religions, and cultures. People all gathered and speaking the same common language — English. However, it was just the beginning of what I would experience later in Charlottesville. As the time zone is so different from where I was from, I just arrived in the city around 10:30 a.m. and I was very hungry. I walked to a popular meeting point for many locals; the place was called The Corner, with a lot of

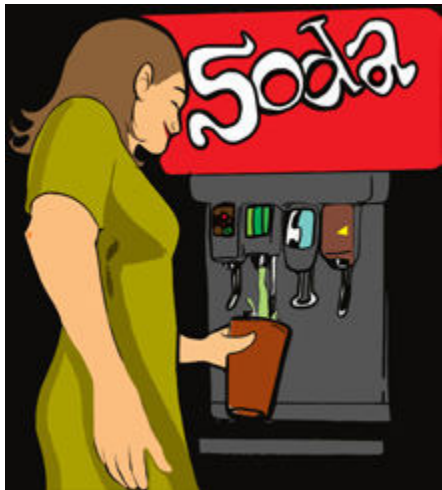
Augusto Castilho – Mozambican in Charlottesville, Virginia

Draft your own questions for the text to match the types of questions below:

In the Text		Outside the Text	
Right there	Think and search	Author and me	On my own

Culture Paragraphs

REFILLS



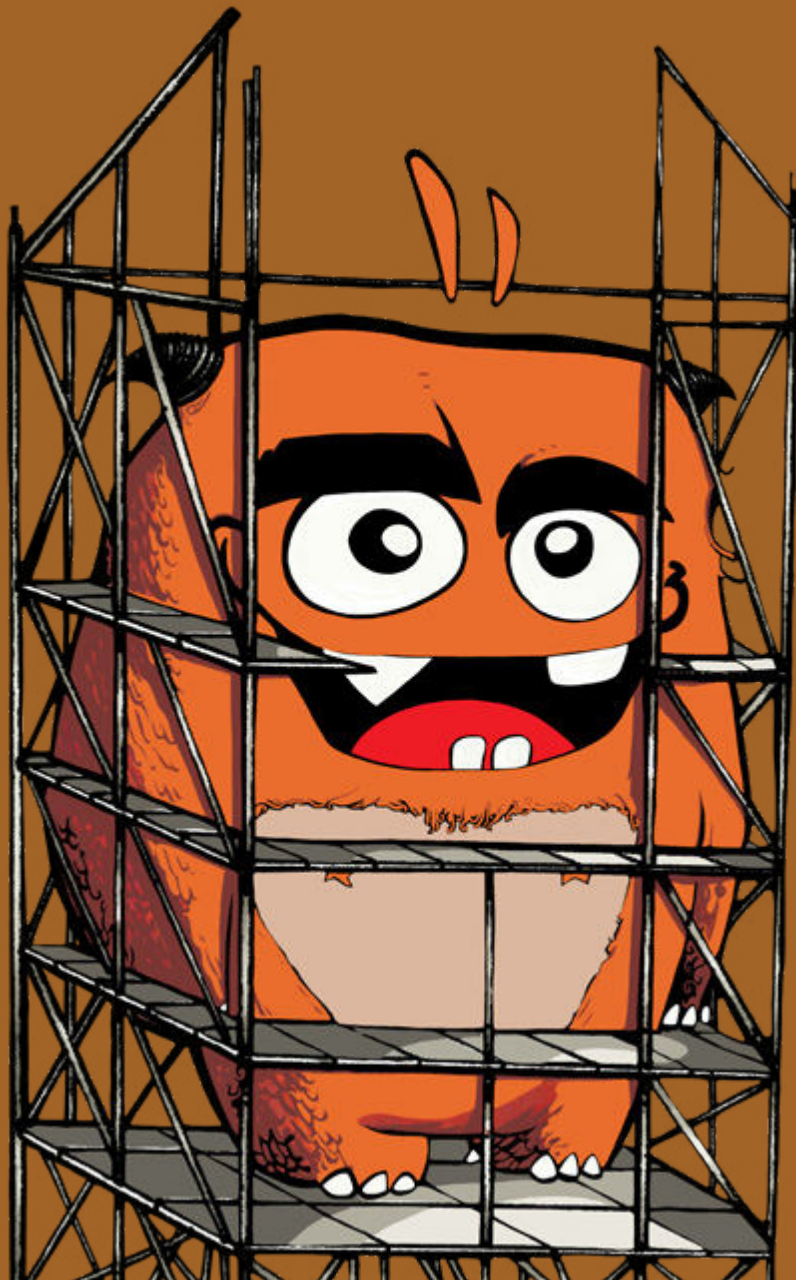
I was pleasantly surprised during lunch in Charlotte, North Carolina. I ordered a cold drink that would accompany my food, and I was sipping it slowly because I did not want to finish it before my food arrived. To my surprise I did not have to worry about that because just as the glass was half empty, the server came and filled it up. I was extremely perplexed and a little horrified because I thought that I would have to pay for the second glass. One of my American colleagues whispered to me that refills are free, so one pays once and “you can keep them coming.” My face lit up because in South Africa refills are never free and if they are it is a certain promotion that a specific restaurant is offering for a very limited time. I was excited about the free refills that when we went to a fast-food restaurant later that day, I drank a lot of glasses of soda because I could do so without having to worry about paying again. My stay in Charlotte was amazing, and it was because of the free refills, amongst other things.

Keamogetswe Naledi Seipato – South African in Charlotte, North Carolina

Draft your own questions for the text to match the types of questions below:

In the Text		Outside the Text	
Right there	Think and search	Author and me	On my own

SCAFFOLDING



Scaffolding

*By Maria Snarski
Islamabad, Pakistan*

*When one puts up a building one makes an elaborate scaffold to get everything into its proper place.
But when one takes the scaffold down, the building must stand by itself with no trace
of the means by which it was erected. That is how a musician should work.*

Andrés Segovia

The same comment can be made for learning and teaching. The cover of *The Monster Book* for the second edition was updated with a monster surrounded by scaffolding to reflect the notion that competence in using a language starts with putting smaller blocks of successful learning to use and building up over time. Once in place, the initial blocks of language help support the subsequent learning and so on. Educators should build on what students know or can use to support new language structures and functions. This is known as scaffolding in the classroom.

One of the most common challenges I hear from teachers during my work is that students do not develop a good command of speaking despite years of language study. These remarks prompted me to move away from introducing one-off activities in workshops and to demonstrating them as part of a scaffolded lesson to show how one could help achieve better outcomes with lesson success in general and speaking skills in particular. I incorporated a revised version of Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning Domains into the horizontal runners of the scaffolding structure to help emphasize two things:

1. using an array of activities in a classroom simply because they are fun or lively is not pedagogically sound
2. providing practice in the highest level of scaffolding (or the "create" level of Bloom's Taxonomy) with sufficient support will help learners experiment with the language in a meaningful way and increase their competence. I found the create level to be missing from the classroom practice or if it were included — it was inadequately supported. It is not enough for a learner to be exposed to a structure and complete some worksheets. The learner must have guided practice in more independent speaking.

Another way I like to encourage educators to achieve better results with their students' language skills is by stressing the use of SWBATs — an abbreviated way of referring to an objective. SWBAT stands for *Students Will Be Able To*, and it is the beginning sentence stem of what will typically result in a successful objective for a classroom and/or activity. I believe if educators focus on what students *will be able to do* by the end of an activity or lesson, they are likely to see the progress in their students' language ability.

However, the word immediately following the stem is key. Consider the following two lists of verbs:

Learn	Choose
Listen	Write
Understand	Say
Think about	Underline
Know	Circle
Decide	Explain
Read	Draw

What is the difference between the two lists and the type of verbs in them? Do you think one list would lead to better results in the classroom than the other? Why? I've posed this to many educators in various ways.

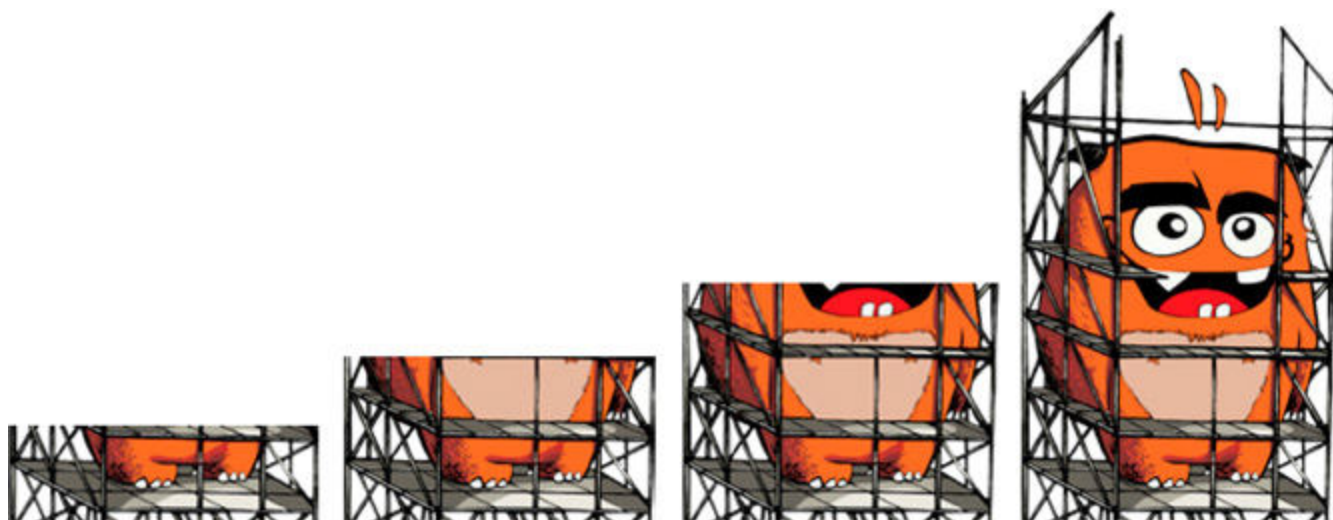
What becomes clear through discussion is that while the first list of verbs is commonly used as part of a basic objective (*Students will know, understand, learn, etc.*), there really is not any substance to the verbs. How can an educator be sure that a student knows, understands, or learns what s/he is teaching? This is revealed only when a student does something observable — answers a question, underlines a word, circles the matching picture, etc. In this way, teachers can be more sure of the students' understanding of a concept.

When an educator verbalizes (or writes!) an observable SWBAT for a classroom activity, s/he can better see the value of implementing the activity in the classroom. S/he can also see more clearly the difficulty levels of activities and how they can be sequenced to provide support for the learner as they go up the scaffolding.

Educators are encouraged to include a variety of activities in their classroom and to do so with an understanding of the demand the particular activity places on the learner. Providing practice in the building blocks necessary to complete an activity successfully is part of effective scaffolding and learning.

Workshops presented in this way seemed to be much more effective for the participants. Many workshop participants had studied Bloom's Taxonomy in their pre-service training, but hadn't revisited it in years nor had they always linked the idea of scaffolding to the domains of learning and how one cannot get to the highest level of create without support of the lower levels of remember, understand, apply, analyze, and evaluate. Participants expressed an eagerness and confidence to try the activities out in their classrooms as they felt more comfortable knowing how they fit into the bigger goal of their lessons.

See the next pages for a couple of sample scaffolded lessons focused on grammar structures.



There Is/There Are

Remember	Understand	Apply/Analyze	Create
	Two-Minute Competition	Fly Swatter Game	Picture Dictation

There Is/There Are

Overall SWBAT use *there is/there are* to describe an image or a scene.

Understand

Two-Minute Competition page 167

SWBAT use *there is/there are* to describe objects in the classroom.

Procedure for this SWBAT:

1. Instruct students to make a list of singular and plural objects in the room. Singular objects are those for which there is only one of that item in the room (e.g., light switch, projector, etc.).
2. In debriefing, have groups count the number of both lists.
3. Have the group who has the highest number read their list using *there is/there are*. E.g., There is a light switch in the room. There are chairs in the room.
4. As a competition debrief, have groups listen for the items that they have as well. For those items that are duplicated across groups, have all groups cross the items out from their list. The team with the fewest duplicates wins.

Apply/Analyze

Fly Swatter Game page 122

SWBAT use *there is/there are* to identify specific items in a picture.

Procedure for this SWBAT:

1. Use full sentences using *there is/there are* for objects.
e.g., There is an apple. There are flip-flops.
2. Describe an object.
e.g., This can be red or green. It grows on a tree. You can eat it. (apple)
These are commonly seen on the beach. Their name relates to the sound they make. (flip-flops)

Create

Picture Dictation page 200

SWBAT use *there is/there are* to describe an image or a scene to a partner.

Procedure for this SWBAT:

1. Model the first one with students. Use a picture that has items rather than people doing actions so in describing the image, it's more natural to use *there is/there are*, e.g., page 264.
2. Have students create their own pictures with various shapes and lines. Have students sit back-to-back and describe their picture for their partner to draw.

To Be

Remember	Understand	Apply/Analyze	Create
	Sentence Shuffle	Dialogue Line	Two Truths and a Lie

To Be

Overall SWBAT use the verb *to be* in introductions and give personal information.

Understand

Sentence Shuffle page 136

SWBAT put sentences in grammatical order.

Note on Procedure:

Base the cards on sentences using the verb *to be* and that will be helpful for the later activities.

e.g., My name is Julie, and I am an English teacher.

I am 18 years old, and I am from Pakistan.

What is your name?

What is her profession?

It is nice to meet you.

Apply/Analyze

Dialogue Line page 56

SWBAT use the verb *to be* in preselected sentence stems.

Procedure for this SWBAT:

Provide sentences and stems for students to use while doing the Dialogue Line. Go over them before starting the dialogue. Encourage students to use these during the activity to have a short conversation with their partner.

e.g., What is your name?

My name is _____.

I am _____

from (city, state).

a student at _____.

X years old.

It is nice to meet you.

It is nice to meet you, too.

Create

Two Truths and a Lie page 67

SWBAT use the verb *to be* in introductions and give personal information.

Procedure for this SWBAT:

1. The instructor plays Two Truths and a Lie with the class.

e.g., 1. My favorite color is orange.

2. I am X years old.

3. My sister is a movie star.

2. The instructor should have several Two Truths and a Lie sentences ready for famous people as well using the verb *to be*.

e.g., 1. Serena and Venus Williams are British.

2. They are sisters.

3. Serena is a better tennis player than Venus.

3. Model the first Two Truths and a Lie with the students. Have them guess which statement is the lie and give some justification for choosing that sentence.

4. Use a few others about famous people if they need more modeling.

5. Have students create their own sentences about themselves using the verb *to be*.

Present Continuous

Remember	Understand	Apply/Analyze	Create
	Conjugation Race	What Are You Doing?	Story Starters

Present Continuous

Overall SWBAT write a story describing events occurring in an image, video, or assigned topic.

Understand

Conjugation Race page 170

SWBAT write and recognize correct form of the present continuous for regular and irregular verbs.

Note on Procedure:

Prepare the grids for a mixture of regular and irregular verbs for the continuous tense that are appropriate for the images for the “Create” step. The present tenses can be included as review.

e.g.,

Tense	Person	To be	To go	To run	To chase
Present	I				
p. continuous	They				
p. continuous	You				
	He				
	We				
	She				

Make a different grid for each team so there is no chance to copy. Be sure to leave enough space for learners to write the answers.

Apply/Analyze

What Are You Doing? page 189

SWBAT use the present continuous tense to describe what someone is doing.

Note on Procedure:

Use any appropriate verbs you want students to review, and those will also be used for the stories in the Create step.

Create

Story Starters page 141

SWBAT write a story describing events occurring in an image, video, or assigned topic.

Procedure for this SWBAT:

In this version of Story Starters, learners should narrate a scene like someone reporting on the radio, which would make learners use a play-by-play description of events as they are happening and therefore allow greater use of the present continuous. Give each person a different story starter and/or photo as a point of departure for the story.

e.g., She is driving her car...

They are entering the restaurant...

Past Tense

Remember	Understand	Apply/Analyze	Create
	Password	Teacher Tell; Student Retell	Interrupt My Story!

Past Tense

Overall SWBAT use the past tense to talk about past events/experiences.

Understand

Password page 180

SWBAT say and recognize correct form of the past tense for regular and irregular verbs.

Note on Procedure:

Instead of clues, the cards can be any other form of the verb, and students compete to see who can say (or write!) the correct past tense form of the verb first.

Apply/Analyze

Teacher Tell; Student Retell page 74

SWBAT retell a story in the present tense into the simple past tense.

Note on Procedure:

The teacher tells a simple story in the present tense with a mixture of regular and irregular verbs for the students to then tell in the past tense. Also, the story generated here can be used as a model for the next activity.

e.g., David lives and teaches in Chicago, Illinois. He speaks English, French, and Spanish. When David is not in the classroom, he stays very busy as he has many interests. David plays the bass in a band, rides his bike almost everywhere, and likes to travel. He wants to visit every country in the world.

Create

Interrupt My Story! page 59

SWBAT use the past tense to talk about past events/experiences.

Note on Procedure:

1. Use the story generated from the previous activity as the model for this activity. To model this activity, have a learner read the story. The teacher should interrupt the story at nearly every sentence and ask for more information. When did it happen?; Where did it happen?; What color was X?; etc.
2. Have students generate their own past stories to tell. You can give them prompts or themes to give them an idea. Alternatively, you can give them basic pre-written stories and they need to read them aloud and make up answers to the questions they receive from their classmates.

Present Perfect

Remember	Understand	Apply/Analyze	Create
	Tense Statements	Find Someone Who	Dialogue Aside

Present Perfect

Overall SWBAT use the present perfect to talk about past events/experiences with relationship to the present day.

Understand

Tense Statements page 22

SWBAT identify correct form of the present perfect and past tense.

Note on Procedure:

Use vocabulary that will be helpful for later activities in this series.

Apply/Analyze

Find Someone Who page 8

SWBAT ask and answer questions using the present perfect.

Note on Procedure:

The list on page 9 can be used or other sentence stems can be added to complement the follow-on activity.

Create

Dialogue Aside page 90

SWBAT use the present perfect in conversation practice to talk about past events/experiences with relationship to the present day.

Note on Procedure:

1. Set the situation up so as to promote the use of present perfect. E.g.,
 - a. A young woman has just lost her wedding band.
 - b. A teenager has found a wallet full of money.
 - c. An older man has just lost his job.
2. Prompt learners to use as many statements and questions in the present perfect as they can. It can be set as a fun competition for teams to prep for this.

Going To

Remember	Understand	Apply/Analyze	Create
	True/False	Picture Chain Story	Climb the Mountain

Going To

Overall SWBAT use *to be going to* to talk about future plans/actions.

Understand

True/False page 24

SWBAT identify correct use of *going to* with the image displayed.

Note on Procedure:

In this use of True/False, display several images that promote the use of *going to* in a description.

Apply/Analyze

Picture Chain Story page 202

SWBAT produce sentences to describe images to create a story.

Note on Procedure:

The same images can be mixed in from the previous activity. This activity can be done to practice speaking or writing or both!

Create

Climb the Mountain page 156

SWBAT use *to be going to* in a game in order to solve a puzzle.

APPENDIX



Observation Sheet for Talk Time (page 69)

TIME	PURPOSE	Teacher Talk			Student Talk		
		To All	To Group	To One	To All	To Group	To One
1							
2							
3							
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45							

Jigsaw Memory Sample Statements (page 110)

Source: Office of English Language Programs. 2007. Martin Luther King Day. In *Celebrate! Holidays in the U.S.A.*, 2nd ed. ed. G. Brenner, M. Ford, and P. Sullivan, 7–10. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State.

1. At a young age Martin Luther King, Jr. showed strong promise, skipping the 9th and 12th grades and entering Morehouse College at the age of 15.
2. In late 1955, Martin Luther King, Jr. received his doctorate degree in theology, and moved to Montgomery, Alabama, with his wife, Coretta Scott King, to preach at a Baptist church.
3. On December 1, 1955, a courageous black passenger, Rosa Parks, was arrested and jailed for refusing to give up her seat to a white man.
4. In response to the arrest, black leaders organized a boycott of the public buses in the city of Montgomery.
5. In 1957, Dr. King and other ministers founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference to advance the non-violent struggle against racism.
6. On August 23, 1963, a crowd of more than 250,000 people gathered in Washington, D.C. to support the passing of laws that guaranteed equal civil rights to every American citizen.
7. In 1964, Dr. King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for leading nonviolent demonstrations.
8. Also in 1964, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed, calling for equal opportunity in employment and education.
9. On April 4, 1968, Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated while supporting a workers' strike in Memphis, Tennessee.
10. In 1986, President Ronald Reagan declared the third Monday in January a federal holiday in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Color Idioms (page 124)

_____ball	Exclude socially; vote against or reject a candidate
_____blood	Of noble family; aristocratic ancestry
_____carpet treatment	The kind of courtesy or deference shown to persons of high station
_____eye	A commercial airline flight between two distant points that departs late at night and arrives early in the morning
_____faced	Blushing or flushed with embarrassment or anger
_____heat	Intense temperature; a stage of intense activity, excitement, feeling, etc.
_____hot	In a state of white heat
_____lie	A minor, polite, or harmless falsehood
_____list	A file of persons under suspicion or disfavor
_____mail	Payment extorted by intimidation, such as threats of injurious revelations; extort money by the use of threats
_____market	The buying and selling of goods in violation of legal price controls; also, the place where such buying and selling is done
_____pencil	Alter, abridge, or cancel, as in editing a manuscript
_____ribbon	Of superior quality or prominence
_____sheep	A person who causes shame or embarrassment because of his/her deviation from the standards of the group
_____tie	Requiring that guests wear formal attire
_____tie	Requiring that guests wear semi-formal attire
_____wash	Anything, such as deceptive words or actions, used to cover up or gloss over faults, errors, or wrongdoings
Caught _____handed	Found in the very act of a crime, or in possession of self-incriminating evidence
In the _____	Operating at a loss or being in debt
Out of the _____	Suddenly and unexpectedly
Paint the town _____	Celebrate boisterously, especially by making a round of stops at bars and nightclubs
See _____	Become very angry
Talk a _____streak	Continuously, rapidly, or interminably
True _____	Unwaveringly loyal or faithful
Wave the _____flag	Give up; surrender; yield

Answers

Blacklist	A file of persons under suspicion or disfavor
Blackmail	Payment extorted by intimidation, such as threats of injurious revelations; extort money by the use of threats
Black-tie	Requiring that guests wear semi-formal attire
Black market	The buying and selling of goods in violation of legal price controls; also, the place where such buying and selling is done
Black sheep	A person who causes shame or embarrassment because of his/her deviation from the standards of the group
Blackball	Exclude socially; vote against or reject a candidate
Out of the blue	Suddenly and unexpectedly
Talk a blue streak	Continuously, rapidly, or interminably
Blue pencil	Alter, abridge, or cancel, as in editing a manuscript
True blue	Unwaveringly loyal or faithful
Blue blood	Of noble family; aristocratic ancestry
Blue ribbon	Of superior quality or prominence
Caught red-handed	Found in the very act of a crime, or in possession of self-incriminating evidence
Red-eye	A commercial airline flight between two distant points that departs late at night and arrives early in the morning
Red-faced	Blushing or flushed with embarrassment or anger
Red-carpet treatment	The kind of courtesy or deference shown to persons of high station
Paint the town red	Celebrate boisterously, especially by making a round of stops at bars and nightclubs
See red	Become very angry
In the red	Operating at a loss or being in debt
White heat	Intense temperature; a stage of intense activity, excitement, feeling, etc.
White hot	In a state of white heat
White lie	A minor, polite, or harmless falsehood
Wave the white flag	Give up; surrender; yield
White-tie	Requiring that guests wear formal attire
Whitewash	Anything, such as deceptive words or actions, used to cover up or gloss over faults, errors, or wrongdoings

Buzz Ban Cards (page 126)

WATCH look time wrist clock wears	HALLOWEEN pumpkin ghost candy costume scary	SCHOOL classes teachers students class building	LIBRARY book read study university shelf
OUT in doors exit leave go	CRACKER cheese biscuit food eat appetizer	GLUE stick adhesive unites together white	SOCCER BALL play kick black white match
NAILS fingers toes polish hammer hand	WEBSITE Google Yahoo internet computer .com	PARK picnic kids walk play playground	ERASER pencil end chalkboard rubber pink
KITTEN purr meow pet dog cat	TRUNK car elephant boot antique luggage	UNIVERSITY study classes lectures assignments college	THIS that word here pronoun what
FROG green legs hops slimy leap	PENCIL wood carbon write erase sharp	CHEETAH fast spots Ferrari animal yellow	PUSH shove pull press ram move

Buzz Ban Cards (page 126)

ROUGH tough hard difficult edge sandpaper	BLACKBERRY text PDA iPhone mobile keyboard	AIRLINE fly United expensive business class delay	OCEAN water fish shark bottom Atlantic
LIP smack balm kiss color mouth	TESTIFY attest validate back warrant justify	COLUMN line file rank row tier	FOG mist water cloud snow cold
DOCTOR sick white jacket prescription GP hospital	MILLIONAIRE money million wealthy rich billionaire	RADIO signal channel waves station music	MONEY buy cash bank loot salary
COMPUTER monitor disk CD-ROM internet email	CANDLE light scent fire wick dinner	YELLOW color canary pencil sub banana	DRIP trickle dribble drop weep leak
FETTUCINI Alfredo noodle pasta Italian sauce	ITEM subject product food numbers amount	BALLOONS birthday decoration float blow up pop	NEWS broadcast CNN anchor television headlines

Buzz Ban Cards (page 126)

WAIST middle belt bend measurements body	EMOTION happy sad angry excited cry	BRACELET wrist jewelry tennis ankle wear	DORMITORY roommate students university school live
LUNCHBOX meal sandwich food drink container	SUNBURN heat aloe vera red peeling skin	HOTDOG food baseball hamburger mustard grill	COOKIES Oreo chocolate chip desert milk peanut butter
PASSWORD username internet email register sign	LION cat king animal wild grrrrr	SHARK teeth ocean hammerhead blood jaws	GORILLA monkey big ape jungle King Kong
LEMONADE yellow pink drink cold ice	KING man crown leader divine royalty	UMPIRE baseball pitcher catcher judge referee	FARMER milk cow animals barn food
DOLPHINS Miami swim gray bottle-nosed mammals	IMMEDIATE instant fast prompt quick urgent	GRAPHICS diagrams illustrations drawing symbols pictures	SEQUENCE numbers order comma pattern math

Buzz Ban Cards (page 126)

TIP cab taxi waiter restaurant money	MIX blend together stir cook bake	PROFIT loss money respect trade income	WANDER stroll walk lost hippie meander
CARBONATED Coke soda pop drink water	WOLF canine pack cold husky howl	RIDICULOUS silly crazy nuts wacky funny	EXAM prepare paper check final test
NET butterfly string capture catch water	TEMPERATURE hot cold weather outside degrees	GREEN grass car environment tree recycle	CELL PHONE ring mobile iPhone portable SMS
FLAT house heels live shoes apartment	HORSE ride pony neigh bridle saddle	EARRING jewelry two gold silver wear	FRISBEE throw ultimate disc round golf
I Me H J alphabet first person	SEW thread needle cloth scissors machine	GALLON milk measure liquid water jug	

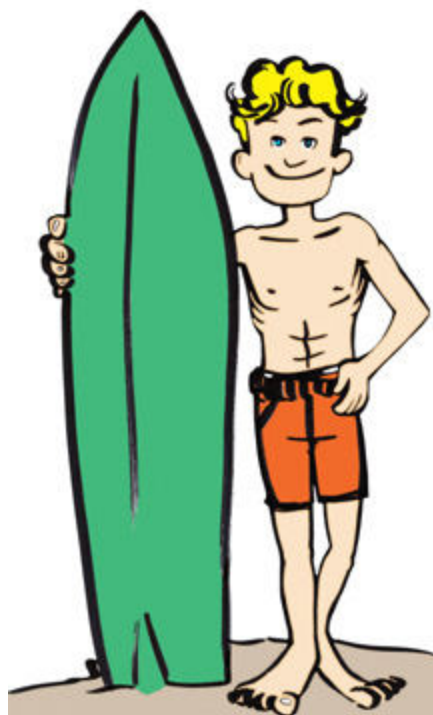
Class vs. Teacher Collage (page 174)



Biographies



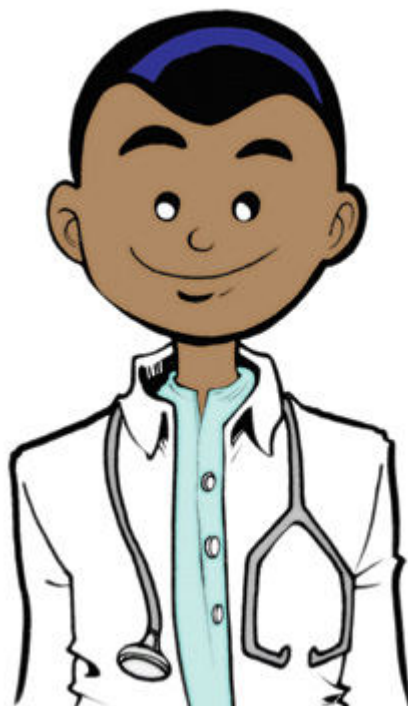
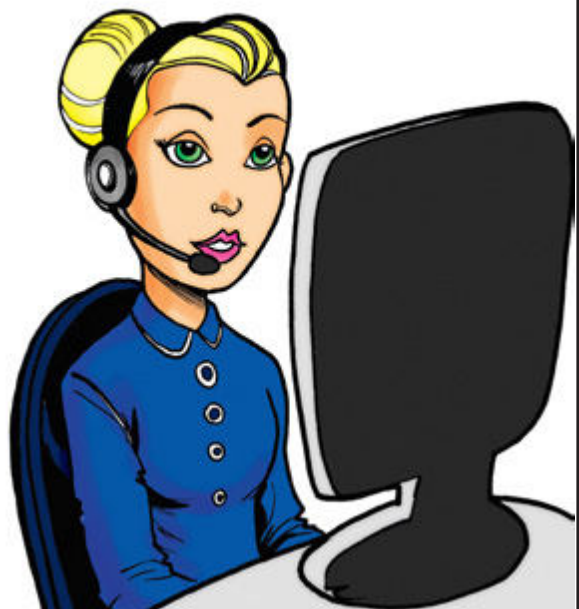
Biographies



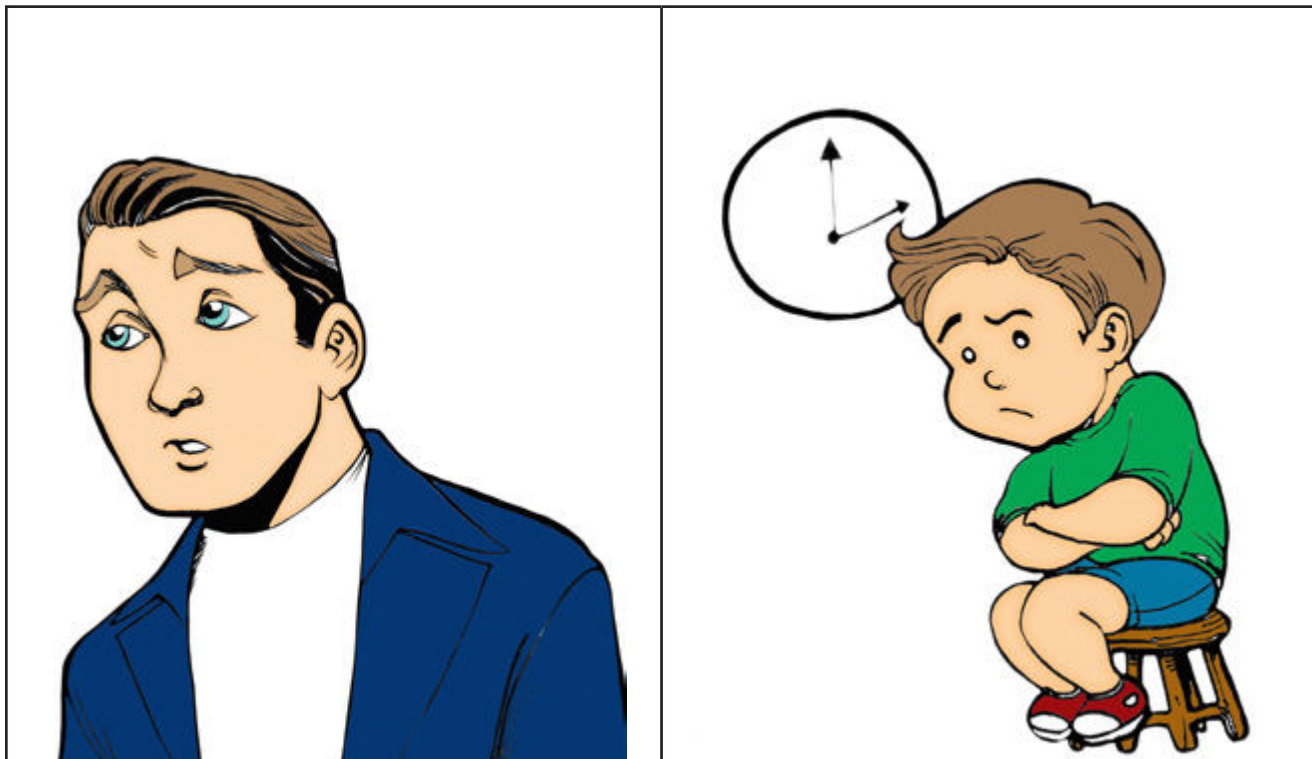
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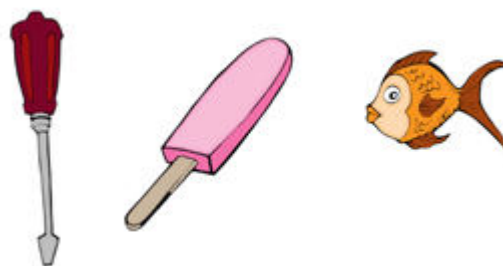
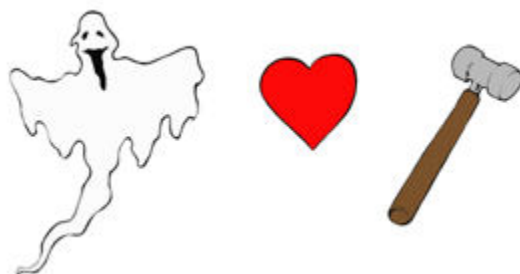
Biographies



Biographies



Categories



Personality Profile

Personality Profile



Personality Profile



...improve language skills in a fun way.
Jucimeire, Brazil

...a wonderful resource for teachers.
Neelam, Pakistan

*...the Monster Book will help us to make our classes
much more fruitful and colourful.*
Nüsabee, Azerbaijan



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