

Making Lemonade

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there is an odd number of students, make two answers for one original. Students mill around, saying the sentence on their piece of paper. At the same time, they listen for the correct expansion/transformation/substitution. Their task is to find their matching partner, and the first pair to do so wins—or is handed other slips in order to continue.

Variation: Students write their own sentences and transformations. They keep their cues, hand in the responses, which the teacher then mixes up and distributes. The activity then proceeds as outlined above, with each student speaking the cue and listening for the appropriate response.

Scrambled Stimuli

This is another activity involving pairwork where one student has the cues, the other the responses. In this case, however, the cues and responses are listed on a sheet of paper. While A reads the cue, B scans the page for the correct response and gives it. Each pair is racing against the other pairs to see who can finish first. The teacher checks to make sure the answers are correct.

Example:

| | |
|-----------------------------|------------------|
| A: | B: |
| <i>I spend a lot of ...</i> | <i>candy</i> |
| <i>I buy a few ...</i> | <i>money</i> |
| <i>I eat a lot of ...</i> | <i>magazines</i> |

Variation: Instead of reading from the list, students doing part B respond with true statements about themselves.

Variation: Each pair has five cues and five responses. All students stand. The first pair to finish matching them all and sit down is the winner.

Example:

- a. *Tom ate the apple.*
- b. *Sue ate the apple.*
- c. *Tom and Sue ate the apple.*
- d. *You and I ate the apple.*
- e. *I ate the apple.*

1. *She ate it.*
2. *They ate it.*
3. *He ate it.*
4. *You ate it.*
5. *We ate it.*

Variation: Each student gets the same sheet for matching (as above, but expanded). Students work individually. The first to complete the matching correctly wins.

Diving for Responses

The teacher prepares slips as in "Is this a pen?"—several for cues and several for responses. However, she retains the cues while spreading the responses on the table or among several tables. (For large classes, the teacher would prepare one set of cues and responses so that each group of five students would have a set.) When the teacher (or appointed student) reads a cue, the students must find and remove the response from among those laid out on the table(s). The student who finds the most responses is the winner.

Drop a Response

The teacher writes responses to cues on slips of paper. She then distributes the slips equally among the students and then

reads a cue. Any student with an appropriate response drops that slip of paper on the desk. The winner is the first student to get rid of all the slips held.

Variation: Students write the responses as dictation.

Personalized Drills

Students write a true statement on a slip of paper. The slips are mixed and redistributed. Students question each other to find the writer of the slip. (ex.: *Did you use to live in California?*)

Circle Drills

The teacher starts by saying a sentence in the target structure. The first student reports the teacher's statement and adds hers. (*She likes to ski. I like to dance.*) The next student repeats all previous information and adds her own. No note-taking is allowed; it spoils the challenge.

Benefits

These activities put an element of competition and fun into what might otherwise be a boring and mechanical lesson. They thus give the students an immediate goal, something that is very

important in motivating students in the rather ethereal world of EFL.

References

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About the Author

Steve Brown is the director of the University of Pittsburgh English Language Institute Japan Program. He also trains teachers in the Columbia University Teachers College M.A. in TESOL Program in Tokyo. He is a co-author of English Firsthand Plus, Firsthand Access, and Firsthand Success (Longman/Lingual House).

Making Lemonade: Turning Drills into Games

Steve Brown,
University of Pittsburgh ELI, Japan Program

"If life hands you lemons,
make lemonade."

--Auntie Mame

Despite the advances made toward communicative language teaching in the last ten years, many teachers still have to deal with textbooks that provide for language learning practice at the mechanical level only:

What does a teacher do?

A teacher teaches.

What does a researcher do?

A researcher researches.

Of course, there is something to be said in favor of beginning a language lesson with a mechanical drill/controlled practice, followed by less controlled practice, and

free practice. (Paulston and Bruder, 1976, Harmer, 1983, Byrne, 1986). Students need a chance to become familiar with utterances in a new language before they get creative. These mechanical drills are often dry and boring, but they do not need to be. This article presents activities that put fun into mechanical drills.

Is this a pen?

Write several original sentences, or copy sentences from the textbook (ex.: I used to live in California.) on slips of paper. Write the appropriate expansions/transformations/substitutions (ex.: *I don't live in California any longer.*) on others. Give one slip of paper to each student. If

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