**Classroom activities aimed at the development of oral speech at the lessons of English**

Language is a tool to speech interaction. Effective ESL speaking activities are an essential part of a language course as they enable students to practice oral speech interaction in real-life situations. Some students may hesitate to speak in front of others or may be intimidated by dominant students but an ESL teacher will know how to implement solutions to speaking activity problems in the ESL class and how to set up successful speaking activities.

Combining the approaches, varying the cognitive styles, mixing and matching various methods and tools – e.g. songs, games, chants, rhymes, dialogues, etc. – provide the students with maximum variety and (in turn) offers them plenty of opportunities to play an active part in communicative situations, ranging from simple imitation to conscious exchange and internalization of certain vocabulary items / pronunciation styles / grammatical points / communicative techniques, at the same time building strategies that will help them later on when their knowledge of English has advanced and moved to a higher level.

*Good manners.*

This activity is all about manners and etiquette. This can be an interesting topic to discuss with your students, especially if there are cultural differences regarding norms of behaviour between the country.

Preparation  
Write up two columns with headings on the board:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Good Manners | Bad Manners |
|  |  |

Procedure

This is a simple introductory activity to get across the idea of manners, both good and bad.

Draw the table on the board and give students a few ideas to get them going.

Then they should fill their table with as many examples of good and bad manners as they can think of.

Ask students to read the statements about manners in the UK. There are three that are FALSE. See if they can find them. ( The three false ones are: 3, 4 and 6.)

In the UK...

1. ... do stand in a queue when you wait for a bus or to pay for something in a shop.  
2. ... don't spit on the street.  
3. ... do burp loudly after a meal.  
4. ... don't apologize if you bump into somebody on the street.  
5. ... do say ‘please' and ‘thank you' at every opportunity.  
6. ... don't cover your mouth when you yawn or sneeze.   
7. ... don't greet people with two kisses.  
8. ... don't pick your nose in public.

Once the students have finished, ask them to decide on a list of do's and don'ts for good manners in their country.

*A shopping.*

This activity gives learners at an intermediate level and above the opportunity to use interactional language in a role-play situation - the task of going shopping along a typical British high street. Half the class have shopping lists and the other half own a shop.

There are five shops:

a computer shop

a newsagent's

a fruit shop

a small supermarket

a language bookshop.

  The cards are structured so that some discussion and negotiation is necessary to find most of the things on the learners' shopping lists. In addition, each list also has a short task typical of normal interaction in the street, for example asking the time or directions to a bank. At higher levels learners can be encouraged to elaborate on the conversations and make them more complex.

Preparation

Before the class, copy and cut up the cards on worksheets A and B, so that there are an equal number of shoppers (worksheet A) and shop owners (B). The ideal number is five of each, you can duplicate the cards if your class is larger than 10. If you have less than 10, your learners won't be able to find everything on their lists, so warn them.

Procedure

If you are practising language, review useful structures with the class first, e.g. *'I'm looking for a…', 'I wonder if you can help me, I…', 'How much is that?'*, etc.

Hand out the cards to the students making sure there is an equal number of shopping lists and shops.

Give the learners time to read their cards and ask you about any problem language. They also need to think about what they are going to say, and what language they will need. You can group the shoppers together and shop owners together to do this.

Point out to the shop owners that they may need to decide how much their products cost before starting.

Set up your classroom to represent a street, with each table being a shop if possible. Ask the learners who own a shop to prepare a card (folded piece of paper) saying what shop they own.

Start the role-play. The shoppers need to find everything on their lists and complete their short task also.

Monitor the activity for interesting language or for problems, which you can feedback afterwards. Try not to intervene too much at this stage.

Keep the role-play going until enough shoppers have completed their tasks.

Put the class into groups and ask them to explain how the shopping (and selling) went, and what problems they had.

Feedback open class on any interesting language points.

  These cards can be exploited in any way, e.g. as practice after looking at interactional language or common vocabulary, as a spontaneous speaking exercise, or as a diagnostic for you to see what your learners know. You can review the language needed for the task before or after the role-play, depending on your aims.

*Telephone role plays.*

Speaking English on the telephone is difficult for learners for many reasons and even high-level students often feel uncomfortable with the unpredictability of telephone conversations. These role cards present a series of simple situations for pre-intermediate and intermediate-level learners, working in pairs. They could also be used for higher levels, who should be encouraged to elaborate on the conversations and make them more natural.

These cards can be exploited as practice after looking at telephone language, as a spontaneous speaking exercise, or as a diagnostic for you to see what your learners know.

Preparation  
If you are using these cards as practice, you will need to have prepared your students with some common telephone expressions.

Before the class, prepare enough photocopies of the role cards for each pair of learners to try each role-play situation - there are 10 in all.   
Role cards

Procedure

Put the learners into pairs.

If you can, organise pairs of chairs back to back. If not, ask learners to stand back to back. This means they cannot see their partners' faces or gestures.

Hand out pairs of role cards, e.g. 1a and 1b, to each pair. Demonstrate one situation with two volunteers if you wish.

Ask your learners to role-play each situation. As they finish one situation, take the cards back and give them another. Don't worry if some pairs finish quickly - some situations are shorter than others.

Keep this rolling role-play going as long as you wish. Monitor and note mistakes or interesting language for discussion afterwards if you can.

*Family life*

*Task 1*

Who does the cleaning in your family?

Who does the cooking?

Who looks after the money?

Complete the table below.

Activity *~* Person responsibleshopping for food

cooking cleaning gardening repairs decorating

looking after money looking after children packing for holidays

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Activity | Person responsible |
| shopping for food |  |
| Cooking |  |
| Cleaning |  |
| Gardening |  |
| Repairs |  |
| Decorating |  |
| looking after money |  |

Now find out how the other students answered the same questions. You have a maximum of five minutes to find the names of learners who have similar family responsibilities to you.

*Task 2*

Work with a partner. You want to find out about someone's family. Write down as many questions as you can think of to ask. When you have finished decide which questions can go in each column.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Questions you can ask a stranger you have just met | Questions you can ask someone you know well |
|  |  |

*Task 3*

In groups of four exchange information about your family. Talk about:

the size of your family (include uncles, aunts, cousins, etc. )

where most of your family live - in the same house/town/in different parts of the country

how often they meet - where? when?

Remember to encourage people when they are speaking. Listen, show interest and ask them questions. Try to complete the chart while people are talking.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| FAMILY | | | |
|  | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** |
| Size |  |  |  |  |
| Do they live in the same house/town? |  |  |  |  |
| When they meet? |  |  |  |  |
| Where they meet? |  |  |  |  |
| Other interesting information |  |  |  |  |

What are the main similarities and differences between your group's families' Choose someone to report your observations to the whole class.

Make statements like:

*Most of the people in our group have a large family. Most people's families don't live in the same town.*

When you have heard all the reports, decide on one of these statements as a summary of your discussion.

Family life is very similar wherever you are.

Family life varies great

*Stories for our time*

*Task 1*

Read this story.

Discuss anything you find difficult in the story with a partner.

Do not look in a dictionary or ask your teacher for help until you have read the story at least two or three times.

*Task 2*

Work in groups of three or four. Does anyone know the traditional story on which this story is based? What is it called?

Can you tell the traditional version of the story? Help each other to do so.

Now listen to extract on the cassette. You will hear someone telling the traditional version of the same story. Listen carefully and see how well you did.

Is there a similar story in your country? How does it differ from the one you have just heard?

*Task 3*

Look at the illustrations of some traditional stories. Do you know what the stories are? Do they remind you of any stories in your own country? Tell your partner about them.

*Task 4*

*The Little Girl and the Wolf* was written by an American novelist called James Thurber. In 1940 he published a collection called *Fables for our Time.* Thurber's idea was to use stories which were very similar to traditional ones to comment on American society.

In groups of four make up a modern version of a traditional story. Start by trying to find a story that you are all familiar with. Ask your teacher for help if necessary.

Work to produce a modern version of the story and then practice telling it. Listen to extract 3 on the cassette again if you want to and try to copy some of the intonation and phrases useful for story­telling. If possible get one member of your group to record the story.

*Holidays*

*Task 1*

Look at the photographs. Which ones show what you like on holiday?

Choose one photograph from each group. Do not tell anyone which ones you have chosen.

*Task 2*

Go around the class and, by asking questions, try to find someone who has chosen exactly the same three pictures as you.

When you have found someone, tell each other your reasons for choosing the pictures.

Now plan a holiday together. Agree on:

where you will go

when you will go

where you will stay

how you will travel

what you would like to do when you get there.

*Task 3*

When you have decided on your holiday, go round the class again and see, if by asking questions, you can find another pair who have planned a similar holiday.

*PROJECT 1: Planning a social event for the class*

*Aim:* to organize a meal or party for all the members of the class.

*Task:* You are going to take part in a meeting. During the meeting you must decide on the following:

a time for the party or meal

a place where it can be held

how much to spend.

Decide who will do each of the following jobs to prepare for the party or meal:

collect the money and keep a record of what is spent

prepare a menu

shop for the food

shop for the drinks

make sure there are enough knives, forks, glasses, plates, etc.

prepare and decorate the room

give people a lift to and from the party

lay the table

organize the music

organize the lighting

clear up afterwards

do the washing up.

You may be able to think of other jobs.

*PROJECT 2: Raising money for charity*

*Aim:* to raise a sum of money for a charity or charities you have decided upon.

*Task:*You are going to take part in a meeting. During the meeting you must decide on the following:

a charity or charities that you want the money you raise to be sent to

a plan for raising the money

the approximate amount of money you would like to raise.

The only rule is that you should use as much English as possible.

*Preparation for the meeting*

Find examples of charities that you would like to support. Look in the newspaper, go to the library or ask your teacher for help if necessary.

Try to find out what the words below mean. They are all ways of raising money, which you might find useful.

a lottery

a raffle "

a sponsored walk/swim, etc.

a collection

a fund-raising event (e.g. a jumble sale)

Think of others. The meeting

Decide on a chairperson and secretary as for Project 1. The meeting should take 45 minutes and at the end everyone should know how, where and when you are going to raise the money and which charity it will go to. Each person should also know exactly what he/she will do to help.

Good luck!

*Shop service role-play.*

A role-play in which your students practice making complaints and dealing with people in a shop.

Description  
 This is a lively role-play in which one student is a customer returning goods to a shop and the other student is a shop assistant. Each student has a role card with the information they need to give or find out from their partner, and the answers that they will give their partner. There are two versions of the customer role card so that the role-play can be repeated using different information.

The customer has two items to return (one broken and the other the wrong size or colour). The receipt on their role card provides the information they will need to give to the shop assistant. The customer wants his or her money back . . . but the shop assistant knows their manager doesn't like returning money! The students need to resolve the situation.

Procedure

Set the context for the role-play. You can do this in many ways; for example, by describing the situation, by telling an anecdote, by showing a picture or by posing some discussion questions.

Once you have established the context, you could ask your students to talk about the times they have taken things back to a shop, the reasons why they did and what happened.

Variation  
 In small groups or as a whole class, I ask the students to brainstorm the language that we would use in these situations, for example:

"Can I help you?"

"I would like to return this . . ."

"There is a problem with this . . ."

"It is a very nice shirt/T-shirt but the colour/size is not quite right."

"I'm very sorry but . . ."

"I'm afraid that . . ."

Don't forget to get your students thinking about 'register' - the degree of politeness they use in the role-play; for example, which of the following do you think would get a better response?

"This shirt is the wrong colour. Give me my money back."

"I would like to return this shirt because . . . "

This section is extended by getting students to work on pronunciation, focusing on sentence stress and intonation.

Put the students in pairs. Explain the role cards. Do a quick demonstration with one or two stronger students. Give out the cards.

Set a time limit. As the students do the role-play, walk around and listen. If you want to do some specific language work, you note down some of the problems they have with language and use these for a correction slot afterwards.

When most of the students have finished end the activity. Give the customers a copy of the 'Customer Satisfaction Survey' and ask them to complete it individually. When they have finished, they can work in small groups to compare their experiences. Ask the 'shop assistants' to get into small groups to discuss a good policy for returned goods. One person in each group can complete the policy form.

If there is time, ask your students to swap roles (and partners, for more variety). The 'shop assistant' role card from the first role-play can be used again. Give the new customers the 'customer role card, version 2'. When the role-play is finished, group the students as you did after the first role-play. To finish, you could ask each group of shop assistants to describe their returned goods policy to the whole class. Invite the other students, as customers, to comment.

*Picture dictation.*

This is a low preparation fun activity that works well with large classes, especially with young learners and teens. All your students need is a blank piece of paper and all the teacher needs is a little bit of imagination.

Procedure

First of all explain to the students that they are going to do a picture dictation, that you are going to describe a picture to them and that all they have to do is simply listen and draw what they hear you describe.

You then describe a simple and easy-to-draw picture to them and they draw it. To help you with your first picture dictation you can use the picture on the accompanying worksheet and the description below it as a guide. It is a very simple picture for a low-level beginner's class but this kind of activity can be adapted to any level of student. Simply change the content of the picture accordingly.  
Picture Dictation *See appendix 4*

Example: This is just a skeleton description, you can make it more descriptive b adding lots of adjectives such as colours etc. or you can simplify it even more for lower-level students if necessary.

In the middle of the picture there is a big house

The house has a door and two windows

On the roof of the house there is a chimney

In the top right hand side of the picture there is a very big sun

Beside the house and under the sun there is a little hill

On top of the hill there is a big apple tree

In front of the hill there is a little girl and little boy skipping.

When you are describing the picture it is best to describe one object at a time slowly and to repeat each description two or three times.

Make sure you give students enough time to finish drawing one object before you move onto the next object and it is a good idea to walk around and look at the students' drawings as they are drawing them so that you can see how well they are understanding your descriptions and then you can adjust them accordingly and give them any support they need.

Tips for making the activity work well

Before starting the activity you may want to draw a square or rectangle to represent a piece of paper on the board and elicit vocabulary from the students that they will need to know for the activity, such as in the middle of the piece of paper, in the top/bottom/right-/left-hand corner of the piece of paper, in front of, behind, on top of etc.

For lower levels, you may even want to draw pictures of the things, the house, the hill, clouds, birds and children skipping etc. that will appear in the picture on the board before starting the activity to review vocabulary. How much pre-teaching of vocabulary and language you do will depend on the level of your students.

Variations

Get students to colour the pictures in afterwards like a colour dictation, for example, colour the roof of the house green, colour the door of the house red, or get students to label different objects by writing the name of the object underneath it, such as house, bird etc.

You can also get students to write a description of the picture afterwards.

Another good variation is to give students a list of objects and get them to draw their own pictures with all those objects in them.

The students then work in pairs. One student describes their picture to their partner and their partner draws what they hear.

They then swap roles and afterwards they compare the pictures they drew with their original drawings pointing out the differences and usually having a giggle.

*Murder Mystery Game-pair work*

This is a 15-minute group work fluency exercise. Each person is one character. Read the information about your character. Move around the class and talk to the other characters. Your objective is to find out who killed the English teacher.

Game Background

During a high school reunion, the guests heard a loud scream at 8.45 pm. Five minutes later, Miss Greenspoon, the school’s oldest English teacher was found dead. Someone had hit her on the head with a statue. Many items were found beside her body including a book, a handkerchief, a picture of another teacher.

Game Play

Your job is to talk to the other characters and ask:

- Who they are?

- What they remember about Miss Greenspoon?

- What they were doing when they heard Miss Greenspoon scream as she was killed collect clues and use your brain power to find out the name of the murder?

**List of the used literature**

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