Keep Talking

Communicative fluency activities for language teaching

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occasionally be difficult. You could ask the students to hand
round an object (e.g. a knotted scarf or a paper weight) and
agree on the rule that whoever is holding the object has to
contribute something to the discussion. It is not to be
expected that each student will be able to think of something
new to say, but in order to be able to say things like ‘I agree
with...’ or ‘I don’t agree with... because’, he has to listen
carefully throughout the discussion. Other ways of
organising discussions are mentioned in the general
introduction (see pp. 9–10).

As regards their language learning aims, the discussion
games in this section differ quite substantially from one
another. However, a common feature is that students have to
give reasons for their views. Some discussion games can only
be played by advanced learners who have a good command
of the foreign language (e.g. No. 60 Secret topic).

You can also use discussion games to improve the
atmosphere in your class and help students cooperate better
with each other. Sometimes certain people subconsciously
adopt particular roles in discussion. If you feel that is the
case, ask a few students to observe some of the others during
the next discussion and to note down who takes which role.
Possible roles are:

- initiator (starts the discussion, makes suggestions and tries
to move the discussion along by asking questions)
- summariser (sums up in between; explains the points where
there is agreement or disagreement in the group)
- grumbler (criticises both content and procedure of the
discussion)
- rambler (rambles on about trivial side-issues; can hardly be
stopped)
- silent member (does not talk at all except possibly to his
neighbours; sometimes these people show quite clearly by
their facial expressions what they think about the
contributions of others)
- clown (makes fun of everything; tells jokes)
- mediator (tries to find compromises between different
factions; stresses the common ground)
- hesitator (cannot find a clear view of his own; hesitates
when talking)

You can probably think of more types yourself. When the
observers have noted some of the typical roles present in
discussions in your class the next step is to make the students
realise that they are adopting certain roles. This can be done
either by making use of a tape or a video tape recording of the
next discussion or by keeping detailed minutes. Then a role
play can be acted out where each participant in the discussion
has to play a role which the others do not know about. After
the role play these roles are guessed.

Many of the discussion games may lead to oral or written
follow-up activities: after doing No. 65 Futures, an essay on
one’s hopes or fears for the future could be set; in connection
with No. 58 What is being advertised?, the students could
make up their own advertisements; No. 73 Awards could be
followed by a panel discussion.

Quite a number of the problem-solving activities, ranking
exercises and values clarification techniques serve as stimuli
for discussion as long as they generate controversial opinions
amongst the students. For example, activity No. 38 Getting
it together presents the participants with an experience (i.e.
an attempt at working without communication) which is
worth discussing afterwards. Further suggestions are to be
found in Learning for Change 1977 and Stanford and
Stanford 1969.

58 What is being advertised?

Aims
Skills – speaking, writing
Language – making conjectures, expressing probability,
giving reasons
Other – making notes, discovering some advertising
techniques

Level Intermediate

Organisation Pairs

Preparation A number of different advertisements (cut out from
magazines) from which all names and pictures of the
products advertised have been removed, half as many
advertisements as there are students. (Don’t throw away the
bits that have been cut out.)

Time 15–20 minutes

Procedure Step 1: Each pair of students receives one advertisement. The
partners discuss what product the advertisement could be for
and why they think so. One of each pair makes some notes.
After about five minutes the advertisements are exchanged

75
and each pair of students discusses another advertisement in the same way.

_Step 2:_ Taking turns, each pair of students show their second advertisement to the rest of the class and report their ideas on the product being advertised. The two students who discussed this particular advertisement in the first round say where they agree or disagree and give reasons. When all the advertisements have been discussed the teacher gives the solutions (by presenting the cut-out parts of each advertisement).

**Remarks**
When the students are making suggestions about the type of product being advertised by, for example, idyllic scenes in the country, their attention can be drawn to the associations which certain pictures give us (e.g. waterfall - clean air, health - cigarettes).

59 Mad discussion

**Aims**
- Skills - speaking
- Language - giving reasons, describing advantages and disadvantages, contradicting
- Other - imagination, fun

**Level**
Intermediate

**Organisation**
Teams

**Preparation**
Pieces of paper with one word written on them (see below)

**Time**
20-30 minutes

**Procedure**
_Step 1:_ The class is divided into teams. One student from each team comes forward. Each chooses a piece of paper with a topic on it. He then has three minutes to argue with the student from the other team about which is more important for mankind, e.g. alsatians or pizzas. Possible topics: flowers, New York, operas, ships, plastic spoons, birthday cards, passports, watches, modern art, detective novels, schools, bakers, socks, zips, paper, the wheel, etc.

_Step 2:_ (optional) A jury decides who has put the best arguments and awards points for each team. Then the next two students continue with new topics.

**Remarks**
In this game it is important not only to put forward good arguments for one's own case but to try and contradict the opponent's point of view.

60 Secret topic

**Aims**
- Skills - speaking
- Language - all elements
- Other - talking without coming to the point, fun, imagination

**Level**
Advanced

**Organisation**
Pairs, class

**Preparation**
None

**Time**
10-20 minutes

**Procedure**
_Step 1:_ Two students agree on a topic they want to talk about without telling the others what it is.

_Step 2:_ The two students start discussing their topic without mentioning it. The others listen. Anyone in the rest of the group who thinks he knows what they are talking about, joins in their conversation. When about a third or half of the class have joined in, the game is stopped.

**Variations**
1: Students who think they know the secret topic have to write it on a piece of paper and show it to the two students before they are accepted.

2: The game can be played in teams and points awarded according to the number of people who find out the secret topic.

61 Word wizard

**Aims**
- Skills - speaking, writing
- Language - individual words
- Other - imagination, feeling for words, communicating with very few words

**Level**
Intermediate

**Organisation**
Individuals, pairs

**Preparation**
None

**Time**
10-15 minutes

**Procedure**
_Step 1:_ The teacher asks the class to imagine the following situation: 'A wizard has taken away all the words from the world. Everybody can keep just four words. Choose four words which you would like to keep and write them down.'

_Step 2:_ Each student finds a partner and tries to communicate using only his four words. The pairs share their words with each other so that now both have eight words they can use. Each student shares his eight words with
another student, so that both have 16, then twice more. In the
end everybody has 64 words.
Step 3: Either alone or with a partner the students write a
story or poem using only their words. These stories/poems
are read out or stuck up on the wall.
Remarks
(idea adapted from Brandes and Phillips 1979.)

62 Uses and abuses

Aims Skills – speaking
Language – declarative sentences, -ing form
Other – imagination
Level Intermediate
Organisation Teams
Preparation None
Time 10–15 minutes
Procedure Step 1: The teacher and the class prepare two lists (of about
20 items), which are written up by secretaries from the two
teams. List A contains people and animals, list B, objects.
Example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>teacher</td>
<td>book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mother</td>
<td>walking stick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shop-assistant</td>
<td>plaster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>baby</td>
<td>50p coin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>elephant</td>
<td>pen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crocodile</td>
<td>loaf of bread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>soldier</td>
<td>car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dustman</td>
<td>cactus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>farmer</td>
<td>apple pie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>old woman</td>
<td>glass of beer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nurse</td>
<td>safety pin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Step 2: The two teams sit facing each other. The secretary
from team 1 starts by inserting one word from list A and one
from list B into one of the two sentence patterns:
What can a/an A do with a/an B?
Why does a/an A need a/an B?
The students in team 2 must find three answers quickly. Then
their secretary makes up a new question for team 1. The
secretary crosses out the words that have been used. The
game is finished when all the words have been used up.

Variations 1: The sentence patterns can be extended by adding a place,
e.g.
Why does a/an A need a/an B in C?
2: A system of scoring can be introduced.
3: Students can pass each other a knotted scarf and play
the game according to the rules of volleyball or another sport.
(In volleyball, each of the two teams may only touch the ball
three times before it has to be played to the opposite team.)
Each team can have up to three answers before throwing the
‘ball’ to the other team.
Remarks Having a fixed sentence pattern may sometimes result in
slightly odd sentences.

63 Shrinking story

Aims Skills – speaking, listening comprehension
Language – all elements
Other – memory, insight into the process of communication
Level Intermediate
Organisation Class
Preparation Story (see Part 2) or picture
Time 20–30 minutes
Procedure Step 1: Five students are asked to leave the room. The rest
of the class is read the story (or played a recording). They listen
to the story twice and after the second reading agree on a few
important points which a summary of the story should
contain. These are written down by everyone.

Step 2: The first student is asked to come in and listens to
the story (once). The second student is called in and hears the
story from the first student while the class notes down which
of the important points have been mentioned. Student 2 then
tells the story to student 3, student 3 to student 4, and student
4 to the last one. Student 5 tells the story to the class.

Step 3: Using their notes, the students who were listening
and observing report on the changes in the story. Then the
original is read (played) once again.

Variations 1: Instead of telling a story, a picture could be described and
drawn by the last student.
2: If a cassette recorder is available all the versions of the
story can be recorded and compared.
64 Which job?

**Aims**
Skills – speaking  
Language – conditional, discussing, giving reasons, names of jobs  
Other – getting to know each other, learning something about oneself

**Level**  
Intermediate

**Organisation**  
Groups of six students

**Preparation**  
None

**Time**  
15–20 minutes

**Procedure**
Step 1: The students work together in groups. Each group member writes down the ideal job for himself and for everybody else in the group.
   
Step 2: The job lists are read out and discussed in the groups. Students explain why they feel the ‘ideal jobs’ suggested for them would/would not be ideal.

65 Futures

**Aims**
Skills – writing, speaking  
Language – future tense, making comparisons  
Other – thinking about the world around us and how we are affected by what happens there

**Level**  
Intermediate

**Organisation**  
Individuals, groups

**Preparation**  
Two charts for each student (see Part 2)

**Time**  
20–30 minutes

**Procedure**
Step 1: Each student receives two copies of the chart. He is asked to fill in one with Good Things, the other with Bad Things by writing examples in each square.
   
Step 2: When students have finished, they form groups to share and discuss their hopes and fears for the future. Each group can focus on one time period and report the good and bad feelings of their group.
   
Instead of writing, the students can draw sketches.

**Variations**
It is important to see the connections between the various squares. What happens in the world now may well affect our children in twenty years’ time.

(Idea adapted from *Learning for Change* 1977.)

66 Comments

**Aims**
Skills – writing, speaking  
Language – all elements, expressing emotions  
Other – getting to know each other

**Level**  
Intermediate

**Organisation**  
Class

**Preparation**  
None

**Time**  
15–20 minutes

**Procedure**
Step 1: Every student writes his name at the top of a piece of paper. All the papers are collected, shuffled and redistributed.
   
Step 2: Now every student writes a comment (a compliment, a question, a statement) under the name of the person. The papers are again collected and redistributed, so that everyone can write a second comment. The teacher (or a student) now collects all the papers.
   
Step 3: The papers are read out one after the other and a discussion follows. How did the people concerned feel? Were the comments fair/superficial/critical/supportive?

**Variations**
Instead of having the discussion after all the comments have been read out, a short conversation can follow each comment.

**Remarks**
For this exercise there should be a supportive atmosphere within the class.

67 Magic shop

**Aims**
Skills – speaking  
Language – if-clauses, arguing, praising something  
Other – learning something about one’s own values

**Level**  
Intermediate/advanced

**Organisation**  
Individuals

**Preparation**
Slips of paper with positive human qualities written on them (see below), three times as many slips as there are students (qualities may occur more than once)

**Time**  
15–20 minutes

**Procedure**
Step 1: Each student receives three slips of paper, each with a positive human quality on it, e.g. honesty, intelligence, fairness, humour, health, beauty, stubbornness, curiosity, cheerfulness, gentleness, humility, optimism, perseverance, politeness, hospitality, helpfulness, thoughtfulness, wisdom, justice, friendliness, adaptability, charity.
72 People

Aims
Skills – writing
Language – past tense, present tense, describing someone
Other – imagination

Level
Intermediate

Organisation
Groups of three to four students

Preparation
Photos of different people (cut out from magazines or your own snapshots), one photo per group

Time
15–25 minutes

Procedure
Step 1: Each group receives a photo and is asked to write a curriculum vitae for the person in the picture. The students should mainly imagine the person’s present interests and lifestyle. When they have finished with the first picture, photos are exchanged between groups. Each group works with three pictures.
Step 2: The results of the group work are read out and discussed. Which lives were seen in a similar way by the three groups? Which pictures were interpreted differently?

Remarks
If the teacher uses photographs of people she knows, she could tell the students how far off the mark they are.

73 Awards

Aims
Skills – speaking
Language – describing someone, reporting someone’s activities, giving reasons, contradicting, stating preferences, agreeing and disagreeing
Other – thinking of praiseworthy qualities in ordinary people

Level
Intermediate

Organisation
Class, groups of four to six students

Preparation
None

Time
25–45 minutes

Procedure
Step 1: The students talk about the awards they can think of (awards for looks, such as ‘Miss World’, for bravery, etc.).
Step 2: Using brainstorming techniques (see No. 87 Brainstorming) the class try to think of many more possible awards (e.g. Smile Award, Help Award, Listening Award). All awards [they should be for positive qualities] are listed on the blackboard.
Step 3: Groups are formed and each group decides on two categories of award they would like to find candidates for.
Step 4: Now each group member describes one candidate for each award. (These should be people he knows personally.) Another group member takes down some notes. When everybody has finished, the qualities of all the people suggested for awards are discussed. The group members have to agree on who to give the awards to.

Step 5: Each group reports its results to the class. A short discussion of the reasons for choosing these people follows.

74 Discussion wheel

Aims
Skills – speaking
Language – discussing
Other – (dependent on the topics)

Level
Intermediate

Organisation
Groups of six students

Preparation
One handout for each group (see Part 2), three dice per group

Time
15–25 minutes

Procedure
Each group receives a copy of the handout and three dice. Each group member is given a number from 1 to 6. The dice are thrown; two dice indicate the students who start the discussion, the third die indicates the topic they have to talk about. After a short while the other group members can join the discussion. Every topic on the wheel should be discussed at least once. If the topic die shows the number 5, the two students choose their own discussion topic.

Variations
1: Instead of writing the discussion topics on the discussion wheel, they can be put on small cards and laid face down on the wheel.
2: More factual or more personal topics can be chosen.

75 Four corners

Aims
Skills – speaking
Language – giving reasons, agreeing and disagreeing
Other – getting to know each other

Level
Intermediate

Organisation
Class, groups

Preparation
Masking tape, 20 big pieces of paper with one word on each

(see below). The classroom should be cleared of tables and chairs.

Time
20–30 minutes

Procedure
Step 1: The teacher fixes a piece of paper to the wall in each of the four corners of the room. The words on each piece of paper should belong to the same category, e.g. colours: WHITE, RED, BROWN, PURPLE; or writers: GEORGE ORWELL, ARTHUR HAILEY, WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, LEONARD COHEN. Other possible categories for the signs are: types of music, articles of clothing, tools, cities, countries, drinks, numbers, animals, etc.

Step 2: The students are asked to read all four signs and stand in the corner which suits them best. All the students in one corner interview each other about why they chose this one. When the next four signs are hung up everyone chooses again.

Step 3: At the end a short discussion can follow on which students often chose the same corner, which students never met, etc.

Variations
Instead of single words, statements, quotations, proverbs or drawings can be used.
Pyramid

1. Choose the pyramid from Bright Idea #51 Blackline Master that is most appropriate to the level of your students. (The first one requires only one word per line; the second allows for several.)

2. Make enough copies so that each student, pair, or group of students can have one. (You may want to make extra copies for additional rounds of the game.)

3. Demonstrate the activity. Start by drawing a pyramid like the one at the top of Bright Idea #51 Blackline Master on the board and writing the letters S T A E T R above it.

4. Fill in the first line or two as shown in the sample below and invite volunteers to take turns coming to the board and filling in the rest.

5. Give each student, pair, or team a copy of a pyramid. Write the letters T R A I L E R S on the board and ask students to fill in all sections of the pyramid.

VARIATIONS
Invite advanced students to suggest their own master word from which all the other shorter words will be formed.

COMMENTS
This game is suitable for intermediate and advanced students.
Pyramid

Pyramid #1
one letter
two letters
three letters
four letters
five letters
six letters

Pyramid #2
one letter
two letters
three letters
four letters
five letters
six letters
Sandwich Stories

1. Explain that students will be given the first sentence and the last sentence of a story and that their job will be to fill in the middle.

2. Give each student a square of paper and ask them to write on it a sentence that might be used to start a story. For example, One day I found a stray dog on my way home from school or Last year my Aunt Wilma stayed with us for a week.

3. Collect these slips of paper and put them, face down, in a pile labeled “Beginnings.”

4. Hand out more squares of paper and ask students to write sentences that might be used to end a story. For example, So he decided to buy a Chevy 4 by 4 or I was so tired I slept for two days.

5. Collect these slips and put them, face down, in a pile labeled “Endings.”

6. Students choose a slip from each pile at random and write a short story that creates a logical connection between the beginning and ending they have chosen.

7. Invite volunteers to read their finished stories to the class.
What A Mouthful!

1. Write each of the twenty idiomatic expressions from the list below on a separate three-by-five card. (You can substitute some idioms of your own choosing if you wish.)

2. Write the twenty expressions on the board. Ask volunteers to try using each one in a sentence that clearly demonstrates the meaning of the idiom. For example, the sentence He blew his stack this morning is not acceptable. However, the sentence He blew his stack when he saw his son's report card clearly illustrates the meaning of the idiom.

3. After reviewing all the idioms, divide the class into two teams. Have team members take turns choosing a card with an idiomatic expression written on it.

4. If the first person on Team 1 makes a correct sentence with the idiom chosen, that team gets a point. If he or she can't make an acceptable sentence, the first person on Team 2 gets a chance to earn the point.

5. Play alternates back and forth until one team makes a correct sentence. Whichever team gets the point chooses the next card. The team with the most points at the end wins.

Sample List of Idiomatic Expressions

1. To blow one's stack
2. To get a load of
3. To pull a fast one
4. To beat around the bush
5. To pull strings
6. To hit the ceiling
7. To be the last straw
8. To get out of hand
9. To fly off the handle
10. To be under the weather
11. To be nuts about
12. To be down in the dumps
13. To shoot the breeze
14. To be a pain in the neck
15. To have something up (your) sleeve
16. To take the bull by the horns
17. To rub it in
18. To pull a fast one
19. To sweat it out
20. To goof off
War of the Words

1. Give each student a copy of Bright Idea # 24 Blackline Master.

2. Write the word-length requirements on the board. For example: one six-letter word, one five-letter word, two four-letter words, and two three-letter words.

3. Have students form pairs, sitting so their partners can't see their papers.

4. Ask each student to write the required words somewhere on his or her grid. Draw a sample grid on the board and fill in some words on it as a guide.

5. Demonstrate how each player discovers his or her partner's words by guessing their location. For example, Player A says, M4. If Player B has no letter in that square, the response is Sorry. If Player B has a letter in the specified square, he or she tells what it is.

6. Each time a player finds a letter, he or she gets another turn. When a player chooses a blank square, the other persons gets a turn.

7. The first person to locate and identify all the other person's words wins.
War of the Words
Word Bingo

1. Make up a list of 25 vocabulary words you wish to review with the class.

2. Give each student a copy of Bright Idea # 29 Blackline Master.

3. Write the 25 words on the board and have students copy 16 of them into the squares on their papers in any order they wish. (If you wish, you can dictate the words and have students choose any 16 to write in, checking their spelling as you go along.)

4. Read your list aloud, having students cross out on their papers each item you mention. Place a small ✓ next to each item you read aloud.

5. The first student to cross out four words in a vertical, horizontal, or diagonal row is the winner. Continue play until first and second runners-up are found.

6. Ask each winner and runner-up to read aloud the items they crossed out so that you can check their items against those you read aloud from your list.
Sample Vocabulary Study Sheet:  
*The PAVE Procedure*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Association or Symbol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>divulge</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**I never divulge a secret that a friend has entrusted to me.**

**Predicted Definition**

One Good Sentence:

*The group began to divulge their feelings about life.*

**Verified Definition:**

*to reveal, to make public*

**Another Good Sentence:**

*Even through torture he never divulged the secret of the hideout.*

Concept Definition Mapping

What is it? (definition)

What is it like?

The Word

What are some examples?
# Frayer Model

## Definition
A mathematical shape that is a closed plane figure bounded by 3 or more line segments.

## Characteristics
- Closed
- Plane figure
- More than 2 straight sides
- 2-dimensional
- Made of line segments

## Examples
- Pentagon
- Hexagon
- Square
- Trapezoid
- Rhombus

## Non-examples
- Circle
- Cone
- Arrow
- Cylinder
Frayer Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition (in own words)</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples (from own life)</th>
<th>Non-examples (from own life)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Vocabulary Study Card: Example

front of card:

protest

(pro-test) (noun)

Related Words:
protester (noun)
protesting (verb)
protest (verb)

Translation:
protesta
protestacion

back of card:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter:</th>
<th>African Americans Struggle for Rights And Equality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section:</td>
<td>The Civil Rights Movement Advances</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Synonyms: boycott demonstration strike
riot rally sit-in

2. Book Sentence: This tactic was the sit-in. It is a protest in which people take a seat and refuse to leave.

3. Definition: The act of expressing strong or reasoned opposition

4. My Sentence: There is sure to be an angry protest if the senior class is not allowed to have a prom this year.