

# *TESOL Chile 2006*

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## *'Activities for Tired Teachers'*

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## *Picture Dictation*

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*Focus:* Grammar, Listening, Vocabulary

*Materials:* Paper for students

*Level:* elementary to upper intermediate

*Preparation:* Prepare a picture in advance e.g. the floor plan of your house/bedroom.  
Prepare a list of words in advance to dictate to students e.g.

a double bed	a bedside table	a Turkish rug
a wardrobe with mirrored doors	a bedside lamp	a study desk
curtains	a ceiling fan	a chest of drawers
a picture	book shelves	

- 1 Dictate the list of words to the students. Check the answers, spelling etc.
- 2 Draw an outline of your bedroom (or house, landscape etc) on the whiteboard (W/B) and ask students to copy it onto some paper or their notebooks.
- 3 Describe your picture and get students to draw the different items on the plan/outline and label the vocabulary items on the plan.
- 4 When you have finished your description, students compare their drawings to your original.
- 5 Pair the students. Student A draws an outline of a room in her house and describes it to Student B. The students compare pictures at the end of the description. Next, the students swap their drawing/describing roles. The teacher moves around the classroom helping and noting errors in vocabulary and/or grammar.

*Variations:* Picture dictations can be used to describe anything that can be drawn e.g. landscapes, people (physical descriptions), interiors of rooms etc. Vary the vocabulary according to the level of the students, making it more or less challenging.

## Mystery Sentences

*Focus:* Grammar revision/consolidation

*Materials:* Whiteboard (W/B)

*Level:* elementary to upper intermediate

*Preparation:* Prepare some sentences which focus on a grammatical structure you have been working on.

- 1 Divide the W/B into different columns (usually 3-5 columns depending on the grammar point). Write up sentence components on the W/B, about 4-6 items in each column. Make sure that all the grammar and vocabulary is known to the students. The W/B should look something like this:

	A	B	C
There	is isn't a are aren't any	a bookshelf reading lamps a TV floor rugs a mirror paintings a computer a round table and chairs	in my bedroom on the walls of the living room in the dining room in the living room in the corner of my bedroom in the corner of the dining room

- 2 Tell students they are to find out about your house by guessing the mystery sentences. Think of a mystery sentence (true for your house) by selecting one item from each column, but don't tell the students. Individual students, or small groups/teams, take turns trying to guess the mystery sentences.

e.g. Teacher thinks of a Mystery Sentence: [**There isn't a mirror in my bedroom**]

**Group 1** 'There is a bookshelf in your bedroom'

**Teacher:** 'You've got 1 correct' ('bedroom' is the only component that is the same as the mystery sentence)

**Group 2** 'There isn't a bookshelf in your bedroom'

**Teacher:** 'Well done – 2 correct' (isn't a + bedroom)

**Group 3** 'There isn't a computer in your bedroom'

**Teacher:** 'No, still only 2 correct' (isn't a + bedroom)

**Group 4** 'There isn't a mirror in your bedroom'

**Teacher:** 'Well done, that's exactly right'

The group which guesses the Mystery Sentence correctly gets 3 points.

If a student (or group) doesn't make a grammatically correct sentence, the teacher replies:

'I'm afraid I can't answer that'.

The group can have another turn to make the sentence with correct grammar. If the grammar is still not correct on the 2<sup>nd</sup> chance, the next student/group has an opportunity to make the same sentence with correct grammar. The group which corrects the grammar in the sentence gets 1 point, even if they do not guess the mystery sentence.

e.g. Mystery sentence [**There aren't any paintings on the walls of my living room**]

**Group 1:** 'There is paintings on the walls of your living room'

**Teacher:** 'I'm afraid I can't answer that' (grammatically incorrect)

**Group 1:** 'There is a paintings on the walls of your living room'

**Teacher:** 'I'm afraid I still can't answer that. Group 2?'

**Group 2:** 'There are paintings on the walls of your living room'

**Teacher:** 'I can answer that (Group 2 gets 1 point for a grammatically correct sentence) and you've got 2 components correct' (paintings + living room)

③ Students continue taking turns to guess the Mystery Sentences and the teacher keeps a record of the scores. The teacher can also write the sentences the students have guessed correctly on the W/B.

④ Once students have done the activity as a class, they can do something similar in small groups

*Variations:* This activity can be adapted to many different grammatical structures, e.g. conditionals, present continuous, present perfect simple and/or continuous etc.

Rather than the teacher saying 'that's correct' or 'you've got 2 components correct', teach the students what the following responses mean in the context of the activity;

0 correct components    Hmm, not bad

1 correct component    Hmm, that's OK

2 correct components    Oh, that's great!

3 correct components    Good on you! That's fantastic!

*Acknowledgement:* I learned this activity from Lalla Stewart who teaches on Perth (Australia). She said it was her students' favourite activity, while she was working as an assistant with Thai English teachers in primary and secondary schools in Thailand for 3 years. She said the students were always on 'the edges of their seats' and couldn't wait to have a turn at guessing the mystery sentences, even the less motivated ones.

## 3 Bi-lingual Vocabulary Activities

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*Focus:* Vocabulary revision/consolidation

*Materials:* index cards for making vocabulary cards

*Level:* elementary to upper intermediate

*Preparation:* Students can prepare vocabulary cards for testing their partner(s) or teachers can do it.

### Activity 1:

- ① Give each student 20 cards. Ask the students to work individually and look in their notebooks or coursebooks to find 20 words they've studied in class. Ask them to write 1 word on each card and to write the (Spanish) translation on the back.
- ② Pair the students and ask them to sit facing each other.
- ③ Student A puts a card on the desk, either way up, and Student B has to shout out the translation. If Student B is quick enough, and gives the correct translation, they add the vocabulary card to their pile. If Student B is too slow in giving the answer, or does not give the correct translation, Student A takes the card back.
- ④ Next Student B puts a card on the desk and Student A has to give the translation.

The aim of the activity is to get all the opponent's cards.

### Activity 2: This is a variation on Activity 1 using the same bi-lingual vocabulary cards.

- ① Give each student 20 cards. Ask the students to work individually and copy twenty words they've studied in class from their notebooks or coursebooks. Ask them to write 1 word on each card and to write the (Spanish) translation on the back.
- ② Pair the students and ask them to sit facing each other.
- ③ Student A calls out the words on the cards, either all Spanish or all English, and Student B has to give the translation. If Student B is too slow, or does not provide the correct translation, Student A puts the card on the table to the left. If Student B gives the correct translation, Student A puts the card on the right.
- ④ When Student A has called out all the words on her cards, both students count up how many words were translated correctly and discuss which words Student B got wrong or didn't know.

- 5 Next, Student B calls out the words on his set of cards for Student A to translate following the same procedure as before. When Student B has called out all the words on his cards, both students count up how many words were translated correctly and discuss the words Student A didn't know.
- 6 When both Student A and B have finished, Student A can begin the activity again following the same procedure, but this time using the language which was not used in the first game.

The aim of the activity is to translate the most words correctly.

### Activity 3: Pelmanism, or 'Go Fish' with bi-lingual vocabulary cards

- 1 Give each student 20 cards. Ask the students to work individually and copy 10 words they've studied in class from their notebooks or coursebooks. Ask them to write ONE word on each card and write on ONE side of the card only. On the remaining 10 cards, students should write the Spanish translation for each item.

a table	una mesa
a glass	un vaso

- 2 Ask the students to work in pairs, put their cards together and spread them out on a table face down.
- 3 Student A picks up one card and then picks up another card, in an effort to find the translation for the first card she picked up. If Student A finds the card with the correct translation, she may keep the card and have another turn. If it is not the correct translation, then both cards must be turned faced down again in their original places on the table. It is then Student B's turn.
- 4 Student B picks up 1 card and tries to find its equivalent translation. Student B follows the same procedure as Student A

The student who gets the most pairs at the end of the game is the winner.

*Variations:* The vocabulary cards can be saved and used again in subsequent lessons. The cards can also be added to after finishing further units from the coursebook.  
Any vocabulary the students have studied can be used for this activity.

*Acknowledgement:* Activity 1 comes from Mario Rinvoluceri's book *Humanising Your Coursebook* First Pearson Publishing (2002)  
Activity 2 has been adapted from an activity I did in my Maths class in Year 3, designed to memorise, practise and quickly recall the times table.

## Dictogloss

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*Focus:* Grammar, Listening, Vocabulary

*Materials:* Paper or student notebooks

*Level:* upper elementary to upper intermediate

*Preparation:* Select a text from your course book about 1 paragraph/50-60 words in length. Make sure the text is of moderate difficulty for the level of the students and that it contains some of the vocabulary/grammar the class has been working on.

- ① Tell the students that you are going to read them a short text twice only and at normal speed. While they listen, they should make notes of key words as they will have to try and reconstruct the text with their group. Make sure all the vocabulary is known to students (or teach unknown items first).
- ② Prior to reading out the text, write some comprehension questions on the whiteboard (W/B) to focus the students' attention on the text content and to check their comprehension of the text after the first listening.
- ③ Read the text at normal speed and remind students again to write down key words while you are speaking.
- ④ After the first listening, check students' comprehension of the text. Tell them to work in pairs/small groups to reconstruct the text from their notes. Students should try to make sure their sentences are grammatically accurate with correct spelling. It does not matter if the sentences are not exactly the same as the original sentences, so long as the meaning is the same and the sentences are accurate. Move around the room helping students with grammar, spelling and text reconstruction.
- ⑤ After some time, when students cannot write any more, read the text a second time. Students continue working in groups to reconstruct the text.
- ⑥ When the students have finished, tell them to check their answers with the original text in the course book.

*Variations:* One student can be a scribe and can write the group's answer on an overhead transparency (OHT). The OHTs can be projected onto a wall and the whole class can take part in an error correction exercise.

*Acknowledgement:* 'Dictogloss' has been widely used since the 1980's, especially in Australia. Ruth Wajnryb wrote a book on 'Dictogloss' called 'Grammar Dictation' (OUP 1990)

## *4 Ideas for Working with Texts (Listening and Reading)*

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*Focus:* Checking comprehension for listening and reading texts  
(possible focus on grammar)

*Materials:* Paper, whiteboard (W/B)

*Level:* upper elementary to upper intermediate

*Preparation:* Select a reading (or listening) text from your coursebook

### *Version A*

- ① Put up a picture, or write the text title or topic on the W/B and tell students that they are going to read (or listen to) a text on that topic.
- ② Dictate 4-6 comprehension questions to them before they read (or listen to) the text. Students write the questions in their notebooks. Before reading (or listening to) the text, check students understand the questions as well as the grammatical accuracy (and spelling) of the questions.
- ③ After students have read (or listened) to the text once, check the answers. You could dictate a further comprehension questions to them for a 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> reading (or listening), or students could write further questions for each other as in Version D.

### *Version B*

- ① Put up a picture, or write the text title/topic on the W/B and tell students that they are going to read (or listen to) a text on that topic.
- ② Ask the students to work in groups and brainstorm 8-10 questions they don't know but would like to know about the topic.
- ③ Elicit some questions from the groups onto the W/B – you may like to focus on grammar at this stage (question forms).

Students read (or listen to) the text and try to find the answers to their questions.

**Version C**

- ① Put up a picture, or write the text title/topic on the W/B and tell students that they are going to read (or listen to) a text on that topic.
- ② Group the students. Give each group a piece of paper and ask them to draw 3 columns on it. Before students read (or listen to) the text, ask them to work in small groups and brainstorm ideas on the topic under the following 3 headings;

What we know for sure about X (the topic)	What we're not sure about X	What we'd like to know about X

- ③ Elicit ideas from the groups onto the W/B.
- ④ Students read (or listen to) the text looking for the answers to their questions. Check the answers to the questions with the class.

**Version D (reading texts only)**

- ① Ask the students to read a text you have selected from the coursebook.
- ② Make groups of 4 and ask the groups to write 7 comprehension questions on a piece of paper for another group.
- ③ Combine 2 groups (so students are now working in groups of 8). Ask the groups to exchange comprehension questions so they are answering 14 questions.
- ④ Finish with a whole class session in which the questions no one could answer are given to the whole class.

**Variation on D:** Students write comprehension questions individually and for particular students. After writing the questions, students move around the room putting their questions to particular students.

**Acknowledgement:** Version D comes from Mario Rinvoluceri, *Humanising your Coursebook*, First Pearson Publishing (2002)

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