

TEACHING ENGLISH LITERATURE COMMUNICATIVELY. ACTIVITIES WITH POEMS, PROSE AND DRAMA

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Abstract

The main goal in teaching/learning a foreign language is to use it in the actual communication. That is why the approaches which have appeared in the teaching methodology are not a fashion but a necessity.

Communicative language teaching acknowledges error as being as natural in the process of learning and especially because the stress is on fluency and not on accuracy, the text providing the meaning. As a result the activities should be contextualized and the material should be authentic. Finally the activities must not be boring but highly motivating and why not full of fun.

Some of these activities are pure 'inventions', others have been adapted to our purpose. Behind the activities lie a number of generative procedures such as reconstruction, expansion, reduction, replacement, matching, selection, comparison and ordering or ranking. These procedures allow further opportunities for reflection and exploration because we are confident that the possibilities of approaching communicatively a literary text have not been exhausted.

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The communicative approach in language teaching starts from the theory of **language as communication**, the goal being to develop **communicative competence**. The communicative approach to the literary text aims to use these texts as a resource for stimulating learning activities and then getting into the finer meanings of the texts. In doing so we are interested in engaging the students interactively with the text, with the fellow students and with the teacher in the performance of tasks involving literary texts. The students are thus compelled to pay careful attention to the text itself and to generate language in the process of completing the task. The literary insight which students may acquire from this approach must be seen as a deep understanding of the text. The student is no longer a passive recipient as in the traditional teaching/learning methods but an **active agent**.

The activities trigger a genuine interaction between the reader and the text, between readers themselves, or readers and the teacher.

The activities should offer many opportunities for the students to contribute and share their own experiences and opinions because literary texts are open to worlds of personal experiences which every student carries within. The text should suggest the type of activity. Many activities are without questions yet the task cannot be completed unless the text has been understood. The texts can be presented in a variety of ways: using the text entirely until the end of the activity, cutting it up, using fragments, using the text in a fresh context by juxtaposition etc. The text is the key element in a set of linked activities which may include, preliminary discussion, interactive work involving the text, a follow-up in writing.

The literary quality of the text labelled **good** or **bad** is not a condition for the selection of the texts because sometimes **bad writing** proves to be more successful, useful and stimulating than **good writing**.

WHY THE LITERARY TEXT

This question may find its answer in the linguistic, methodological and motivational qualities of the literary text. Literary texts, in terms of language, offer genuine samples of a wide range of styles, registers and text types at many levels of difficulty. Any literary text is open to multiple interpretations, so one can hardly find two readers who would understand and react in the same way while or after reading the same text. Hence, literary texts offer a ready-made opinion gap between the interpretation of

a reader and another's. The opinion gap can be bridged over by interpretation. In general all literary texts are non-trivial in the way that they deal with matters which concern the writer enough as not to trivialize experience. The literary text is a powerful motivator because it touches upon themes to which learners can bring their own personal response out of their own experience. Learners/readers often, while reading a literary text, identify themselves with the characters or at least find some common features.

COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITIES

These activities must be considered in connection with the type of literature we want to deal with in the class, that is, poetry, prose or drama. Sometimes the same activity might be used with two or maybe all three literary genres, but it is also true that some activities are proper only to one genre.

ACTIVITIES WITH POEMS

Opening Lines

Select the opening lines of five works of non-fiction and five poems. They may be either projected on a screen or distributed to students on handouts. The class works as one large group. Ask the students to discuss and decide which lines they think are openings of poems. At this stage do not tell them how many lines are drawn from poems. After five minutes ask the students to call out the lines which they think are not openings of poems. Number them and write them down on the board.

Reveal that only five of the lines are taken from poems. Ask the students to decide which ones these might be, then reveal the sources.

The aim of this activity is to show that the literary text is not a language apart. Even poetry, if we do not know it is poetry can be mistaken for plain prose, and plain prose may have its own poetry. It may be also a starting point for poetry discussion. As a follow-up bring in class one of the poems from which the lines were used for the activity.

Poetry or Prose

Select two or three short passages of prose which are in some way striking because of their rhythm, use of language, imagery etc. Write these passages out in the form of poems. Then copy two or three short poems without making any changes to the text.

Divide the students into groups of four and give each group a complete set of the passages you have chosen. Tell them that certain passages were originally written in the form of prose and ask them to mark those passages which they think must be prose texts and those which they feel sure they are poems. The students discuss in groups and then the groups exchange opinions.

This activity aims to point out that we, readers, react to the text partly in relation with its shape; it also shows that prose can be mistaken for poetry because it may have balance, rhythm, an internal rhyme etc. More than that, in modern literature modern poetry makes use of everyday languages and sometimes lacks the elements which make a poem. As a follow-up activity analyse a poem which looks like a piece of prose, e.g. 'A Noiseless Patient Spider' by Walt Whitman.

Split Poem

This activity works very well with a poem which has a fairly regular form, that is a poem which has the lines roughly equal in length.

Split each line into two parts and place them into two separate columns. The first half goes under column A and the second half under column B. The half lines should not be arranged in the matching order. Read the poem out loud and then give the students, in groups of four, a copy of the split poem and ask them to reconstruct the poem by matching the half lines in the two columns. For a round up session the groups of students exchange opinions in order to reconstruct the poem line by line. After working with the students in this way they will be ready for further analysis.

With advanced students the activity may be more challenging by leaving out the reading of the poem and by asking the groups to work out the form of the split poem.

This approach to poetry allows the students to work gradually their way from the language

towards the meaning and understand the text. As a follow-up activity the teacher can ask the students to express their opinions about the poem.

Personal Choice

Select for this activity three/four short poems which the students will understand without much difficulty. Each student receives copies of the poems. Then prepare a questionnaire as follows:

1. if you had to translate one of these poems which one would it be? Which line(s) would you find the most difficult?
2. If you were to illustrate one of the poems with a photograph or a sketch, which one would you choose?
3. If somebody wanted to set one of the poems on music, which one would you suggest? Are there any lines which could be repeated as a refrain?
4. If you had the chance to talk to all four poets, which one would you most like to meet? Which line(s) would ask him/her to explain?

The students are allowed some minutes for silent reading, then they are asked to form groups of four. Each group receives a copy of the questionnaire. After ten minutes the groups compare their responses. This activity gives the students the possibility to comment and analyse the poems in a direct, down-to-earth way. It illustrates that literature, the literary text can be used for language practice just as we use any other material and in the process the students express their comments on the text.

Jumbled Lines

This activity works very well if the poem which is set on music.

Select a poem and make copies for each group of students. Cut the sheet of paper in thin slips on which only one line is written. Jumble the slips so as not to be in the right order. Read or play the poem once and ask the students to try to remember some lines or the general idea. Give each group the poem cut into slips and ask them to put the lines in the right order. After ten minutes ask the groups to compare and contrast

the order of the lines in the poem. Play or read the lines as the students progress with the poem.

The activity is useful for listening/reading comprehension and speaking. In their endeavour to order the lines the students try to understand the meaning and the message of the poem.

Variation

This activity may be used following the same steps with the stanzas of a poem. Both activities may be followed by a questionnaire dealing with the feelings expressed, attitude of the poet/speaker in the poem, presence/absence of conventional features of poetry – imagery, metaphors, rhyme etc.

Cloze Poem

Select a poem and delete a word whose meaning is supplied by the other words in each stanza. The words are written down in pairs without any connection between them. Underneath these words the cloze poem is copied.

The students work in groups; each group is given a handout with the cloze poem and the students have to fill in with words of their own. After ten minutes they are given the pairs of words and are asked to compare and put the right words into the right spaces. They discuss, exchange opinions, fit the words in the appropriate spaces. In the end they read out loud the poem and compare their findings.

The stress in this activity is on correct use of words, on their appropriate meanings in different contexts, close attention to the use of language.

As a round-up the students comment, analyse the poem.

Matching Texts

Find two short passages of poetry which could be compared or contrasted. The texts should have certain features in common, for instance, they might deal with different aspects of the same theme, be similar in style or form, have similar or identical titles, and so on. Copies of both texts are made for the whole class.

The students are asked to think back for a few minutes over their own lines and to recall any incident which left a deep impression on them

and from which they learnt a lesson. Then ask the students to form groups and to describe the incident they have in mind.

Read the two poems and ask the students to recall any words or lines they can remember.

Hand out copies of the two poems to all the students and ask them to work for a few minutes on their own and to mark:

- a) any words or lines that are difficult to understand.
- b) any words or images they find particularly striking.
- c) any thoughts or comments that are similar in the two poems.

Ask the students to work in groups of three/ four and compare and discuss the lines they have marked. The warm-up discussion about an important incident in their lives helps to put the students in the right frame of mind for working with the poems. It is an exercise in contrast and comparison which generates discussion.

ACTIVITIES WITH PROSE

Sources

Select five short passages from different sources, but at least two should be literary texts. Copies are given to all the students and are asked to read through the passages on their own and to mark those which they think are taken from literary sources.

After five minutes, the students form groups of four and compare ideas. Ask them to underline in the texts the words or expressions which helped them to make their decisions. Then write down the sources, giving the author's name, the title and eventually a brief description of the work. The students are asked to match each text with the titles.

In a round- up discussion reveal the original matching and ask the students to call out any features of the language which gave a clue to the source.

Variation

Give the students five texts and ten possible sources. This will lead to more discussion over which are the most likely matching. With more

advanced students, one of the texts could be a poem written down as prose.

This activity encourages close attention to what is actually said in the text. In looking for clues, and in marking the features of the language, the students are learning how to use the text itself in discussion.

Split Exchanges

Select twelve to fifteen short dialogue exchanges from short stories, novels or plays. Split each exchange in two parts: remark and response. Write out the remarks on one sheet, task sheet A, and the responses on another one, task sheet B. Number each remark and each response, but the numbers should not be in matching order.

The class works in groups of three; each group receives first a copy of the task sheet A. The students are asked to read through the remarks and to discuss the responses they would expect. Then give each group, task sheet B and ask them to try to match each a remark from A with a response from B. Several possibilities of combinations may be possible. Ask them to note them down. Afterwards the groups compare the decisions in class discussion. In the end, reveal which remarks from A match the response in B.

This activity has the advantage that the material is easily found and it can be graded to suit the student's level. These exchanges can be selected in order to illustrate particular aspects of language.

The activity combines constraint with freedom because the material is controlled but several combinations are possible. The teacher can even point to the fact that the aim is not to find the right answer but to look for possible and plausible combinations. They should be encouraged to speculate about the context in which the exchanges occur.

Variation

Using either task sheets or slips of paper this activity could be also achieved with remarks and responses taken from the same fragment. This variant helps you teach a fragment in a lesson in which the dialogue prevails.

Word Portraits

From a novel or short story, select a striking character sketch. Prepare for each character a short list of prompts. These should be words or expressions which might or might not apply to the character described. In making the list do not use the words which appear in the text.

Give each student a copy of the text you have chosen and allow five minutes for silent reading. While they are reading, write down the prompt words.

In groups of three/four the students discuss and decide which of the prompt words are most or least appropriate for the character. For each word they must find words or lines in the text to support their decision. In a discussion with the whole class run through the list of prompt words and ask the students to express their opinions. Mark each prompt word with a tick if the word is appropriate, with a minus if it is not and with a question mark if it is only partly appropriate. This activity is an inverted approach to the traditional “**Describe the character**” in your own words. It is easier for the students to tell something about a character starting from a general prompt. In this activity language could be monitored through the choice of the text and through the choice of prompt words. To complement the prompt words a set of pictures can be used. The students are shown several pictures and are asked which one comes closest to their impression of the character.

Author’s Comments

From novels or short stories, select a number of short passages of dialogue which also include comments by the author, or how the characters speak. Remove the author’s comments from the passages and list them on a separate sheet of paper, then write the passages leaving gaps for the missing comments. Number each gap.

The students are asked to work in groups of three/four; each group is given a copy of the text with the comments removed. Ask the students to suggest how they think the words were spoken in each case (hesitantly, mildly, rudely, softly, nervously etc.). The groups are changing opinions. Then hand out copies of the author’s comments, but not in matching order. The

students are asked to choose an appropriate comment for each gap. Sometimes several comments may seem suitable. Ask them to note them down. After a round-up discussion reveals the original matching.

This activity is a form of reading comprehension. In trying to find the kind of comments the author has made the students are looking for clues in the text. More than that, if they give different possible comments they have to back them up, looking for a remark which matches their suggestions.

The passages used must be long enough to give the students a clear picture of the speakers and of their relationship with one another.

Speculation 2

From a novel or a short story, select a passage of dialogue which is more or less free from comment by the author. On one sheet of paper copy the dialogue. On two other sheets, copy the paragraphs which come before and after the dialogue. The students are asked to work in groups, each group being given a copy of the dialogue. They have to deduce what they can about the situation:

- e.g.* – who is talking;
- about whom;
- where, why and when.

The groups are allowed to compare impressions, then give each group copies of the passage which comes before the dialogue and ask them to check their predictions. Before giving them the last passage write down on board some prompt words.

Give the students the copy of passage number three and ask them to which words from above they think are most or least appropriate for the character or characters in the dialogue.

This activity prepares a more extended one when we deal with longer texts.

Suggesting the Words

For this activity you need a passage of dialogue between two characters. The extract should not be difficult to understand. From the dialogue select a number of remarks, or fragments of remarks. Then write the dialogue omitting the selected expressions.

The students are given copies of the blanked dialogue and working individually are asked to read the dialogue through and to note down their suggestions for the missing words. After ten minutes they form groups of four and compare their notes. During the discussion the new ideas are noted down. Each group calls out its suggestions which are written on the blackboard. Tick the ones which are the most appropriate. Then reveal the original wording. In this activity the emphasis is on spoken language, that is why in selecting the material it is important to look for passages of dialogue which are close to every day speech.

The activity also gives you the possibility to focus on a certain language aspect, for example the contracted forms: I'll, I've, You'll, You're etc.

Storylines

Choose a short story or a chapter from a novel or a longer fragment from either. Select from each page of the story some key sentences, that is, the ones which are an indication for the storylines.

Write these sentences in order on a task sheet. In order to make the task easier the opening and ending paragraphs may be added. The students work in groups. Each group is given a copy of the task sheet. The students discuss what they think it happens in the story, and find a possible explanation for each of the sentences. After ten minutes discussion, the groups compare their different versions of the story. Then ask the students to call out those sentences from the story which they found most difficult to explain, and let them compare their suggestions. Finally reveal what actually happened in the story. This activity helps to overcome one of the difficulties of working with literary texts in the class, that is how to deal with longer texts. As a matter of fact the students are skimming through the text and later they may read it, their interest being aroused.

Completing the Picture

Select a passage from a novel or a short story. Read the passage through then divide it into roughly equal paragraphs. Make copies of these paragraphs. Give the class a brief outline of the

story of the novel up to the point you have chosen. Explain who the characters are and where they are. Ask the students to form groups of three and give each group a copy of one of the sections. Ask them to read it through and to note down any words or phrases which seem difficult to understand as well as any questions they would like to ask the other groups who have different sections. After ten minutes each group joins with any other and together they exchange questions, and where possible, answers.

The students call out any questions that are still unsolved and the other members of the class offer answers.

Such an activity works very well with an unfamiliar text, because if the story is known, part of the interest in the passage is lost.

Ask then the students, in groups of three to imagine that they are a "camera" and they are going to take photographs of their own town. Give them ten minutes for discussion and ask each group to exchange ideas with another.

This activity is challenging and motivating because the students feel confident that they have something to talk about they see every day. In describing their shots or what they see they make use of the language as precisely as possible. They make use of prepositions, adverbs, adjectives and so on. They can even use words, ideas from the selected passages.

What Happens Next - Suspense

Select from a novel or a short story a passage which leads up to a climax or resolution. Choose a point towards the end at which you will stop. Each group of students gets a copy. Explain the students that you are going to read/ play a recording of an episode from a literary text and that you will stop shortly before the end.

Read/ play the recording to the whole class and stop at the point you have chosen. Ask the students to form groups of three and to discuss how they think the episode ends. They should note down all details they think will be mentioned including any remarks they expect the characters to make. Allow ten minutes for discussion, then give each group a copy of the text with the missing part. They should look through the text to find any points which they predicted.

In a round-up discussion find out how close the various groups came to the original text in their prediction of the ending. Finally read/ play the end of the text.

This activity is a variant to reading comprehension. It is a listening activity followed by discussion. The advantage of this activity is that it allows you to work with fairly long texts without having to hurry the students on. The listening enables you to save time for the thorough and detailed reading.

Variation: Ask your partner

For this variation you will have to split the class in two equal groups. Give one group A copies of the last page of the text and ask them to leave the class for their discussion. Group B remains in the classroom. Play them the end of the recording, but do not give them copies of the text. Then bring the two groups together. Each student from group A should find a partner from group B. They work in pairs. The students from group B try to reconstruct as much as they can to recall the episode from their listening. The students from group A compare their partners' oral summaries with the written text.

Memories

'From my window, the deep, solemn stree...t'

For this activity we need a text relating to childhood memories and experiences. In looking for the text, select one which touches upon themes and aspects of life which are parts of the common experience of children everywhere. The students are given part of a passage from a text. They read the fragment and after they elicit the meaning and understand it they are asked to make predictions about how the story ends based on their own experience. Ask them to write the ending as they imagine it. Reveal the last part of the text.

Observation

This activity asks for descriptive materials, passages which evoke a strong sense of the place. These may be descriptions of cities, streets, landscapes interiors and so on. They can be found in novels or short-stories. Select such a passage which you think would stimulate the

students' power of observation, for example: *From My Window*.

Write on the board the title *From My Window* and ask the students, working individually, to put down what they can see from their own windows at home. They are also to mention the people who regularly pass by or stand around in the street.

Read or play the passage you have chosen. Ask the students in their groups to discuss and compare their opinions about what they "saw" and wrote down and then compare them, and identify, for instance, images of childhood, dreams and fears, descriptions of home, family, friends and neighbours, memories of games, parties, formal occasions, or festivals and so on. Make copies of the text for the whole class. Ask the students to bring in class any objects or pictures associated with their childhood, ask the students to form groups of four and show each other the objects they have brought and in turn to describe any memories related to these objects.

In order to help the discussion the teacher can write on the board a number of stimulus questions:

Was there a particular time of the day you liked best/least?

What smells do you associate with home?

Who/ What were you most frightened of?

Did you have a favourite hiding place?

What kind of games did you play?

What food did you most like/hate?

Were there any words that you didn't understand or couldn't pronounce properly?

What special occasions did you enjoy or dislike?

Did you have any pet?

What clothes did you most/least like to wear?

Which person in your family/neighbourhood could you talk to most freely?

What task at home/school did you find most difficult to do?

Were you ever punished? What for?

What did most like about family routine?

What did you want to do when you grew up?

In their groups the students discuss the responses to the stimulus questions. Give each a copy of the text you have chosen and allow them

five minutes for silent reading. Ask them to write down any remarks, comments or descriptions that remind them of the comments they have made in their earlier discussion. In groups they compare their opinions, find details in the text which remind them of the things they have forgotten to mention.

In this type of activity the students speak freely without any fear of being wrong because they can choose what they like to mention and what they want to hold back. To make sure that they are using English and not the mother-tongue during their activity they may be asked to write down the responses to stimulus questions. The discussion about childhood memories may help introduce the students any literary texts in connection with or about childhood. Visual aids can also be used as stimulus.

ACTIVITIES WITH DRAMA

Stage Directions Out

Choose a fragment from a play and remove the stage directions. Prepare one set A of the copies of the fragment with and another set B without the stage directions. Give each student a copy of the set B. They do the silent reading of the text. Then play the recording of the dialogue, the students following it on their handouts. This helps them to understand how emotions are expressed, how intonation, stress and rhythm change according to the emotions expressed. Ask the students to re-write the dialogue adding the stage directions themselves. Then they read the dialogue in pairs, and comment on each others' performances.

The class working as a whole group compares the variants. Finally, they are given the copies of the set A and compare their achievements with the original ones. Again in class discussion they comment who are the closest to the original ones. Again in class discussion they comment who are the closest to the original stage directions. This activity besides reading comprehension and listening points out the importance of intonation and the stress in the use of the language, in the understanding of messages.

After listening the recorded fragments the students, in pairs, may act out the dialogue. The

acting out is repeated after they are given the original stage directions and then they realize whether or how accurate they were in their productions.

Variation

Give the class copies of a scene from which all the stage directions have been deleted. Tell them that they are a team of directors and have to decide how the scene should be played by the actors.

Divide, then, the class into groups and let them work out the stage directions- how the lines should be said, and what movements and facial expressions should accompany the acting. It would be most useful to write a number of adverbs of manner on the board, but also encourage students to use dictionaries. The groups can, then, compare and contrast their different interpretations until the whole class agrees on a single set of stage directions.

The session can end with a dramatized play reading which could be recorded for feedback.

This activity works well with students at the intermediate and advanced levels. Since the main focus is the discussion of how the lines should be said, even those students who dislike reading aloud can become actively involved. They will also be encouraged to think critically of such factors as intonation, stress and rhythm when they try out different ways of saying the lines. In addition, it is rare for a group to agree unanimously on the interpretation and this ensures that the discussion is kept going. It is an opinion gap which can be bridged over through discussion and interpretation.

Split scene

Select a scene from a play and split it into three or four coherent sections. Give each section to a different group. They should also attempt to analyze the characters in the scene- how these characters behave to each other, how they are acting, talking and so on. You can write on the board a list of adverbs and adjectives which might stimulate discussion. They rehearse their sections in different corners of the classroom, each group having appointed a director. When they are ready, put the whole scene together in

its right sequence and let each group act out its own selected section.

Then, they discuss the different interpretations of the same characters, as different students have portrayed the same character. As a follow-up activity gather the students who have interpreted the same character in one group and let them write a personality profile of the character. The most important aspect of this activity is the actual text you select, especially if you are teaching large classes. It is also an issue dealing with long fragments with many characters who are not easy to analyze.

Read and Look-up

Choose a text with simple vocabulary and short utterances. Give each student a copy and read or play the fragment, ask them to call out any words or phrases which they find difficult to understand, then encourage them to speculate about the context of the scene: what preceded it and what it will follow. Then divide the class in groups according to the number of characters in the scene. They practice in groups reading aloud the lines using the *read and look-up method*.

They should look at their line briefly, and then look-up and utter them. As a follow-up activity they can be asked to improvise sequels of the scene. This activity works well on all levels of study, the students find the *read and look-up method* very challenging and often succeed in memorizing the lines by the end of the session. Difficulties with vocabulary and pronunciation are dealt with after the first reading by the teacher, and also during group work.

Variation

This activity becomes more challenging if you give students a fragment from a play and ask them to act it out. They are asked to learn the line by heart but also to improvise in case they forget any words. Allow them twenty minutes to rehearse the scene. The activity is more fun because the different members of the groups are likely to come up with different words or expressions instead of those forgotten. While acting out the students' imagination and creativity is completely free. They have the possibility to check on their vocabulary at short

notice. Each group may appoint a director and a sound effects man. The student enjoy the activity because most of it is accomplished on the spot generating fun and in the process of acting out they communicate.

Creating Situations from Dialogue

For this activity we need short passages of dialogue which are easy to speak and which are also open to interpretation. Suitable extracts can be found in the words of modern playwrights.

Copy out the dialogue and replace the characters' names with letters A, B etc. and leave out all stage directions. Make copies for each group of three students, give each group a copy of one of the texts you have chosen, or give each group the same text, give a time limit of fifteen minutes. Ask the students to expand the text by writing dialogues of their own to come before and after the passage (about six lines in each case). Tell the students to imagine that the dialogue is part of a play. They should therefore decide on their own answers to the following questions:

- *Who are the characters (A, B, C)?*
- *Where are they and why are they there?*
- *What is happening and going to happen?*
- *Is there another person present?*

When the students are ready, ask each group to perform its version of the dialogue for another group. The observing groups try to work out what is happening in the performance. The performance should not give immediately and explanation, but instead respond to the observers' questions. Allow time for each group to watch at least two different performances.

It is important that the chosen material should be easy to speak. Students are often asked to speak live which is difficult and leads to embarrassment which is one of the reasons why the acting out in a foreign language often falls flat.

In this activity the stress should not be on performance but on interpretation. If any of the students would rather prefer not to act out their dialogue but read it sitting down let them do so. As a follow up activity, in case students have worked on the same text they should be asked to work on the other text.

Common Theme

Choose four scenes with a common theme, for example relationships. Give these scenes to different groups or pairs depending on the number of characters in each scene. Let each group discuss its own scene - what it means, its context, the relationships between/among characters and how they think the scene should be interpreted. The teacher helps them where necessary with the vocabulary and pronunciation. When they have completed this stage, tell each group to choose a director within each group. They practice acting out the scene under the leadership of the director, when each group is ready they perform the scenes in front of the rest of the students. The presentation begins with a brief summary of the scene which is done by the director, afterwards the group acts out. The audience suggests way in which the scene could continue. This can be done either by a quick brainstorming session or in group discussions.

As a follow-up each group acts out the original scene followed by a sequel which can then be assessed and criticized by the other groups. They can also improvise stage directions for the sequel. It is an open-ended activity, here the students are creating, inventing without supervision. They enjoy to contribute with something of their own. The activity works very well with upper-intermediate and advanced students.

Stress and Pause

For this activity we need a recording of a dialogue, passage from a play. Select a section of a dialogue in which the speakers frequently pause or give special stress to certain words. Make copies of the text of the chosen extract for the students to listen in the class.

Each student should have his/her own copy. Play the dialogue which comes before the chosen passage for about five minutes. When we reach the passage, stop the cassette recorder. Tell the students that you are going to give them copies of the text which comes after the passage they have just heard.

Give the students copies of the texts and ask them to work on their own. They should look the dialogue through and underline any words they think will be stressed by the speakers or any

words which will be spoken in a special tone: softly, angrily, sarcastically, ironically etc. They should also mark with a V any places where they would expect the speakers to pause. After ten minutes ask the students to form groups of four and compare the pauses and the stresses they have marked on their text. Play the recording to the class and ask the students to compare their markings with the stress and pauses actually used by the speakers.

One of the main aims of this activity is to bring the printed page to life for the students, that is, through listening to point out important features of language such as stress and intonation, which may be lost in silent reading. The teacher must remind the students that in this activity there are no absolute right answers. The aim of asking the students to predict how the text will be spoken is to encourage them to listen more attentively to the way in which it is spoken.

Word recognition

Select a recorded passage of a dialogue from a play. The passage should contain words or expressions which the students may have difficulty in identifying them, for instance words which are similar in sound or meaning *e.g.*: guilt/gilded, worn/worm, thread/threat/tread, doom/dome, flaw/floor, bought/brought. Display the words you have chosen on the board or OHP, ask the students to copy out the list, play the recording of the passage you have chosen and ask the students to listen to the recording and mark with a tick any of the words on their lists that they hear. Ask the students to form groups and exchange opinions, then in class discussion find the right wording. Finally reveal the correct words.

Variation - Write Down What You Heard

The above mentioned activity could be made more challenging; stop the tape at certain chosen points and ask the students to write down what they have just heard. There should be about ten stopping point in the passage. When you have played the tape through to the end, play it once again, this time without pauses. Ask the students to form groups and to check their notes, exchange opinions, explain why they have chosen a certain

word, explain to the others and then, if necessary, correct them. Finally reveal the correct wording.

This activity, which is basically listening, also checks reading/pronunciation. There are students who find difficulty in the pronunciation of certain sounds and as a result it leads to mispronunciation or misunderstanding of the word by the listener. There are some words whose pronunciation is alike and only the context may be meaningful for the words.

e.g.: I lost my sheep/ship.

This type of activity brings about a difference of opinion among the members of the group(s) which leads to interaction and generates discussion.

Sequence of Pictures

This type of activity works very well both with a play and novel or a short-story. Find a series of pictures that are related to the subject of the fragment you want to teach. You don't need more than four, six images, but which should focus on the gist of the story. Prepare copies of the pictures for the whole class. Ask them to look at them and then to write an narrative. You can also ask them to write a dialogue between the characters. The series of pictures could have a general characteristic, that is, to allow students to use their imagination or it could lead only to one idea depending on the subject you want to teach. Allow them 10-15 minutes to write their own stories and ask

them to form groups and compare the stories. Read or play the recording you intend to teach, ask the students to compare their stories with the recording. In groups, they discuss the similarities and differences between their stories and the one which they have just heard. Finally, they agree to the one which the closest to the recorded version.

In this activity you must tell the students that it is not important which variant is the closest to the recorded fragment but to let their imagination create a story. It is an invitation for them to devise their stories from a few images. This activity gives each student the opportunity to use and check on his/her own vocabulary and creative potential. It is a lead-in activity so the fragment you want to teach may be a follow-up activity.

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