

# The greatest source of real communication in any language classroom is the day-to-day interaction between teacher and pupils.

The greatest source of real communication in any language classroom is the day-to-day interaction between teacher and pupils. That is why it is essential to develop the language chunks that you will be using for the next six years and beyond as soon as possible. Sonia Raposo Marzo has some practical ideas for building up the classroom language store.

*Author: Sonia Raposo Marzo*

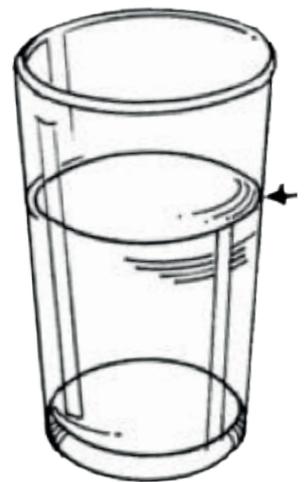
HAVE YOU ever felt frustrated because your pupils are unable to express the most simple sentences, even though you say them constantly? The secret is to introduce them in a way which is memorable and meaningful, then build on them and recycle them regularly. Here are some approaches which I came across while studying and have adapted to my own pupils' needs.

## • PREPARING MATERIALS

Firstly, when you have made a note of all the phrases you are going to need, find pictures that can express the word, sentence or question you wish to illustrate. Here are three examples showing how we might adapt our approaches to suit the different cycles.

### FIRST CYCLE

Open your books! (find a picture with an open book). You can also include the written words below the picture. Repeating this visual association of spoken words with their written form on a regular basis is also a very effective step towards reading and writing.



### SECOND CYCLE

Can I get a drink of water? (find a picture with a glass of water or a fountain). The written forms are even more important at this age. In fact, it is a good idea to make a display with all the words, sentences and questions you expect your pupils to learn throughout the year, but still associate them with the pictures to provide a visual stimulus.

### THIRD CYCLE

How do you say ... in English? At this level, the written words should suffice on their own, and pupils may well find the pictures a little childish. By now, the classroom language they have accumulated from the first two cycles should be quite familiar. After all, language learning is a question of continually building on previously laid foundations. As in second cycle, create a list including the words and sentences they already know from previous years and the new ones you want them to learn.

The pictures need to be large enough for everyone to see. If you are not very good at drawing, try typing the name of the object you wish to find plus 'clipart' into Google® images. Displaying the pictures and sentences around the classroom (especially the more difficult ones) can be helpful.

### • USING MATERIALS

#### FIRST CYCLE

At the beginning of each class, show the pictures, then drill the word or sentence with your pupils. Work on pronunciation to avoid bad habits which are very difficult to put right later on. Once you've practised them enough, sometime during the first



term, start the class by asking What's this? instead of drilling. This way, you'll get a clearer idea of which ones they remember and which need more practice. You can also play some games to reinforce the language and motivate your pupils at the beginning or end of some classes, eg Point to the correct picture, Chinese whispers or pelmanism (using the pictures and the written sentences).

#### SECOND CYCLE

You can follow the same process as in first cycle, although by now pupils should have the confidence to repeat and answer individually. You can also introduce a written element when you work with the list of words. Give the list to your pupils on the first day of class and get them to write the meaning of the words in their mother tongue by showing the pictures and letting them guess the meaning. They can then use this list as a reference whenever they need it. Again, games are an

excellent consolidation tool. With this age group, I sometimes even let one of the pupils be the teacher and ask the other pupils the meaning of the pictures or to point to specific ones.

### THIRD CYCLE

I would follow a very similar approach to second cycle. The language level will be more sophisticated and that will mark the change more than anything else.

### • ASSESSING AND REWARDING

It is very hard for our Primary pupils to sustain motivation levels if they do not feel rewarded for their efforts. I have found that a class 'speaking league' works wonders. Take a class list and give pupils a mark every time they say something in English. Have the list on your desk in order to do it quickly without interrupting the class constantly, then hang it on the wall at the end of each class. In first cycle, you can draw a happy face next to the pupil's name. As their language is more limited at this level, you may decide to award just one smiley face to any child who tries to produce some English. In second and third cycles, you can add a tick instead. To encourage them to speak more, you can give them a tick for each time they say something in English. In both cases it is important to encourage everyone in the class to speak, so ask direct questions to shyer or more reluctant pupils. It is a great way of keeping tabs on your pupils' speaking progress and provides a useful resource for when evaluation time comes.

After a time, these activities become routine and therefore second nature to pupils, and with regular encouragement the English-speaking atmosphere in the class should be a two-way process, although it needs constant work and recycling. It is the key to establishing an atmosphere of confidence and motivation, and the first step towards creating a truly English-speaking environment in classroom.

---

*Sonia Raposo Marzo teaches at CEIP Purificació Salas i Xandri, Sant Quirze del Vallés, Barcelona.*