

# SWAPSHOP

Send in your teaching suggestions, ideas or anything you would like to share with your fellow teachers. However simple they may seem to you they could be new to someone else. We shall publish your ideas here.

First write a simple sentence on the board. It can be one you have invented yourself or taken from a course book or newspaper. It can also be a well-known saying or a line of poetry. It may be useful to choose a sentence which illustrates a structure which you have recently taught.

Now ask your students to copy the sentence, then copy it again but changing one word. They can also change the punctuation, but the new sentences must make sense and remain grammatically correct. Then they write the sentence again and again, changing one word each time. You can either ask the students to continue until they are satisfied with their sentence ladder, or give them a limit to the number of times they change the words.

e.g. *To be or not to be? That is the question.*

To teach or not to be? That is the question.

To teach or not? To learn? That is the question.

To teach or not? To learn? That is the answer.

To teach or not? To learn what is the answer.

You teach or not? To learn what is the answer.

You teach or not? We learn what is the answer.

You teach or learn. We learn what is the answer.

You teach. I learn. What is the answer?

You teach. I learn. We learn. What is the question?

To be or not to be? That is the question.

## Sentence Ladders

Here are some more sentences to try:

*I grow old... I grow old... I shall wear the bottom of my trousers rolled.* T. S. Eliot.

*You are what you eat.* German proverb.

*Mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the midday sun.* Noel Coward.

*The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there.* L P Hartley

*Scenery is fine but human nature is finer.* Keats.

*Men seldom make passes at girls who wear glasses.* Dorothy Parker

*Small is beautiful.* EF Schumacher

*If music be the food of love, play on.* Shakespeare.

*He who can, does. He who cannot, teaches.*

G B Shaw.

This activity is a good example of teacher control and learner creativity operating at the same time. It is controlled in its regular drilling of a structural pattern, but encourages the student's creativity by being the first step towards creative and autonomous writing. It's good fun as well!

Simon Greenall, Oxford

At last year's FAAPI conference Andy Hopkins suggested a very simple and entertaining exercise which is both structural and creative.

The teacher gives the students three very simple sentences, consisting of Subject + Verb (+ object) (+ prepositional phrase).

e.g. The man sat on the bench

He looked at the sea

He thought of his son.

The students have to think about the situation (it must be fairly poignant/suggestive, yet sufficiently ambiguous to allow freedom of imagination) and then flesh it out with various modifiers, adjectives, adverbials, etc., to convey what they have perceived as the situation.

Good at all levels, it provides good oral classwork, peer discussion, and leads naturally into writing practice.