

# 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.

## Tenses snakes & ladders

You will need to make a 'snakes and ladders board' (the one Lila sent us was five squares by eight). In each square of the board appears a verb. The 'snakes' and 'ladders' can be drawn to start and finish on squares of the teacher's choice. Players move around the board in *boustrophedon* mode. The board can be used in a variety of forms to practice tenses. Here's one suggestion for practicing the contrast between the present perfect and the past simple tenses.

1. Student 1 throws the dice and moves to a square with the verb 'spend'.
2. Student 2 asks a perfect tense question with that verb, e.g. "Have you ever spent £100 on a dress?"
3. If the answer is "No, I haven't" the next student throws. If the answer is "Yes, I have" Student 2 then makes a follow up question, e.g. "When did you spend £100 on a dress?"
4. If students land on the bottom of a ladder they climb up to the higher square. If they land on a square with the head of a snake they slide down to the square where the tail is.
5. The game is played around the class with student 3 asking student 2, student 4 asking student 3, etc., until the first one reaches the FINISH square.

The sample board Lila sent is too large to reproduce here but has the following verbs: **START**, HAVE, SEE, EAT, GO, SPEND, TAKE, SEND, DRINK, BE, LOSE, SPEAK, DRIVE, WEAR, BREAK, GIVE, VISIT, WRITE, PLAY, MEET, EAT, DRINK, MAKE, FALL, BUY, FLY, SING, BITE, SLEEP, THROW, WAKE UP, FIND, TAKE, GO, TEACH, FORGET, STEAL, DRIVE, LOSE, **FINISH**. Of course you can use your own verbs and repeat some if you want extra practice

Contributed by Lila Yañez, Shane English School, London

## Hints on teaching pronunciation

*In his recent lectures at AACI Jack Windsor Lewis shared some of his views on the teaching of pronunciation. These included the following points, recorded by Mercedes Capurro.*

1. Pronunciation classes should include extensive listening, plenty of imitation exercises and guided conversation.
2. Listening activities should be given as homework because the use of tape recorders in class is a waste of time. (The question here, however, to what extent is the English pronunciation of a Spanish speaking teacher a hundred per cent accurate? To what extent is it fair on students to deprive them of the best model? MC)
3. Imitation should be one of the main activities together with ear-training. The ability to identify and produce a sound properly is the basis for correcting the pronunciation of a language. If the student fails to imitate correctly after two or three times, mimicking the student's pronunciation can be a good alternative because by doing this, the teacher shows him/her what he is not doing well, as well as appealing to the student's self-esteem. (If the teacher can produce what I say, then I should be able to produce what he says).
4. Guided conversation is crucial because students are forced to be one hundred per cent productive, thus having a good opportunity to put into practice what they have practised with the teacher.
5. Students with a strong American accent should not be condemned. There are no good or bad accents; as long as the student's accent is comprehensible and comes naturally, it should not matter. Many English children have a mixed accent because they have an English mother and an American father, for instance. Therefore, if this happens among native speakers, why can't it happen among Latin American speakers of English. A good accent is that which comes naturally, effortlessly without drawing too much attention to itself.

**Food for thought, whether you agree or not!**

## Keep Listening

Simon Greenall

Pop songs are an important source of motivation for many learners of English. For some teenagers it may be that the only reason they want to learn English is in order to understand the words of British or American songs. However, the disadvantage of using pop songs in the class is that sometimes the words are banal, obscene or hard to hear. This activity allows the teacher to focus only on the words which he or she thinks suitable for language teaching purposes. It concentrates more on word recognition than on the meaning of the song.

1. Choose an English or American pop song. Write ten or fifteen of the words on the board. You can choose words which need an explanation of their meaning, or you can deliberately leave them out and choose only words which the learner is likely to understand easily.

2. Ask the learners to look at the words and make some predictions about the song. Here are some ideas for questions.

What's the song going to be about?

Is it going to be a sad or a happy song?

Is it going to be a fast or a slow song?

Is the singer going to be a man or a woman?

Encourage the learners to be as inventive as they like, but don't reveal anything about the song before you play it.

3. Explain that you are going to play the song. Ask them to tick or number the words as they hear them.

OR Ask the learners to choose five of the words on the board. Each learner will choose different words. Explain that you are going to play the song. When they hear their first word, they should stand up. When they hear their second word, they sit down. When they hear their third word, they stand up again, and fourth word, they sit down. Because the learners have all chosen different words, they will be standing up and sitting down at different moments. When they hear the last word, they stand up. At the end of song, everyone should be standing up. Anyone who isn't has not been paying attention!

The alternative suggestion in stage 3 uses a physical response to demonstrate the completion of a task, and is particularly useful if you want to introduce some movement into the class.

*This activity is taken from Flying Colours 1 Teacher's Book, by Simon Greenall and Judy Carton-Sprenger, by Heinemann International.*