

## Didactic Scenarios 2 - November

Answer the following questions, being as specific and detailed as possible. Also exemplify wherever possible. You may want/need to refer back to the written topics.

1. Spot the mistake in the following sentence. Why do you think the students make it? What would you do to prevent/solve it?

*Rarely have they dinner out.*

2. What cultural contents should find a place in your language classroom? Justify your answer.
3. To what extent is punctuation important? Justify your answer and suggest ways to teach it.
4. Prepositions and phrasal verbs are two areas of potential problems for our students. Suggest ways to facilitate their learning
5. Do you agree with the following statement: "Good readers always make for good writers"? Justify your answer.
6. Suggest tips you would give your students to organise and enrich their vocabulary, and state why they are effective.

**NOTE:** We shall go over questions 1, 2 and 3 on the lesson on 12th November; we will revise questions 4, 5, and 6 on the 26th November. Thank you.

### SUGGESTED ANSWERS

1. **Spot the mistake in the following sentence. Why do you think the students make it? What would you do to prevent/solve it?**

*Rarely have they dinner out.*

The correct sentence would be *rarely do they have dinner out*. The problem with the example is that the student omits the auxiliary verb, thinking that *have* acts as auxiliary as in the structure *have got*.

This structure tends to pose many problems for students, and we see instances such as: *I hadn't (got) time* instead of *I didn't have time*, paralleling the structure *I haven't got time* in the present, which is indeed correct.

In essence, the structure *have got* can be reduced to the expression of possession in the present. Sentences such as *I haven't coffee in the morning* are equally incorrect, since the meaning of *have* is certainly not that of possession.

To avoid this problem, we could altogether eliminate the structure *have got* and present *have* as a "normal" lexical verb such as *drink, live* or *go*. At the end of the day, that is the case in AmE, and it is gradually becoming the common norm in BrE due to the influence of the transatlantic variety.

**NOTE:** You may also suggest that this mistake is based on problems with question formation: the students form the question without the auxiliary verb. That is somewhat debatable due to the fact that the structure of "inversion" is introduced in Advanced Level 2, a level at which the formation of questions must be mastered. At any rate, as long as you justify your position with sound and solid arguments, the answer should be valid.

2. **What cultural contents should find a place in your language classroom? Justify your answer.**

In traditional ELT, cultural contents were entirely based on Inner Circle countries, most likely Britain and the USA. The status of English today urgently calls for a far wider approach to culture, an approach where the international nature of English serves as the guiding principle. We need to enable our students to become culturally sensitive to the diversity of contexts in which English is used.

A highly effective and feasible way to cover this issue would be to bring a variety of cultures to our classroom and work on cross-cultural awareness-raising activities in which learners become 'intercultural speakers'.

Gaining insights into how it is that other people use language and conceptualise the world also provides us with hints about our own culture ('cultural otherness'). At this point, it is important to note that the purpose of English today is not only to learn from others, but also to provide information about one's own community and culture, thus establishing an equal, mutually respectful relationship with others. For many students, English is learnt as an additional language to communicate information about themselves and their culture in a global community.

In this sense, the students' own culture should also form part of our curriculum, offering our students the language and ability needed to explain their culture to outsiders. McKay (2003) convincingly argues and defends that time and attention should be devoted in class to the learners' own culture as a means of empowering them and providing them with the opportunity to share their own culture with other speakers of English. Indeed, in a variety of countries in the Expanding Circle the inclusion of source culture materials is acquiring growing recognition. Chile, for instance, has developed a series of textbooks entitled *Go For Chile*, including a good deal of source culture content.

In the most forward-thinking classrooms learners are already being encouraged to develop their intercultural competence by acquiring knowledge of other cultures at the same time as they gain insights into the norms of their own<sup>1</sup>. This, in fact, seems to be the most valid approach, since it will enable speakers to accommodate themselves to the various cultures they will surely encounter when establishing contact with EIL.

**3. To what extent is punctuation important? Justify your answer and suggest ways to teach it.**

Punctuation is important for the following reasons:

- It is one of the most important aspects of written English, and yet it is one that is taken the most lightly.
- It helps us organise the message.
- It can lead to different meanings if not adequately used: an error in punctuation can convey a completely different meaning to the one that is intended:

*A woman, without her man, is nothing.*

*A woman: without her, man is nothing.*

- It contributes to the internal organisation of the text (cohesion & coherence).
- It marks the pauses that would occur in speech.
- It makes for easy reading: it divides texts into phrases and sentences and makes meaning clear.
- Let us not forget English syntax itself entails some cases of required punctuation, as it is the case for 'obligatory commas' in conditional structures for instance, or when the natural word order within a sentence is somehow altered (inverted clauses, figures of speech, and the like).
- Choosing punctuation well means communicating meaning precisely. What speaking communicates with prosodic features, writing conveys it with punctuation.
- Punctuation allows certain words, phrases and clauses to be emphasized.
- Punctuation shows the grammatical structure of written language.
- Punctuation fills our writing with silent intonation. We pause, stop, emphasize, or question using a comma, a period, an exclamation point or a question mark.

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<sup>1</sup> Seminal work on this field has been carried by Byram, among others (Byram *et al.*, 2002).

Correct punctuation adds clarity and precision to writing; it allows the writer to stop, pause, or give emphasis to certain parts of the sentence.

- Punctuation is the tool that allows us to organize our thoughts and make it easier to review and share our ideas. The standard English punctuation is as follows: period, comma, apostrophe, quotation, question, exclamation, brackets, braces, parenthesis, dash, hyphen, ellipsis, colon, semicolon.

#### How can we teach it?

- Present the students with the punctuation marks, their meanings and when to use them.
- Present the contexts in which a particular punctuation mark is used.
- Provide students with texts or sentences to correct.
- Ask them to use different punctuation marks in the same sentence to convey different meanings.
- Give students the same sentence with two different punctuations; they have to paraphrase and explain the difference in meaning.
- Show them common mistakes.
- Give them some of the existent straight-forward rules, *e.g.* commas after conjuncts (*moreover, besides, furthermore, on the contrary, however*), punctuation in conditional sentences, in enumerations, with conjunctions (*although*), etc.
- Self-assessment and peer-review for punctuation in their writings
- Provide them with a text without specific punctuation marks (commas, semicolon, dash, etc. depending on the level) so that they can insert them. They might write the text themselves and exchange it with a peer.
- Provide them with a text in which punctuation is misused and they must delete what is not correct.
- Include a revision-of-punctuation stage in the learning process of writing or a revision-of-punctuation item in the self-assessment checklist for their writings.
- Make them read aloud similar sentences written with different punctuation, in order to reinforce the importance of its usage as a way to overcome the lack of supralinguistic features in the written language, and to train and see how it influences intonation.
- Show examples of ambiguity due to misuse or absence of punctuation and ask them to explain them. This way, they will be able to explore the impact of punctuation on meaning.
- Dictations: the teacher reads a text out loud and students copy it on their notebooks by considering the pauses and intonation that the teacher uses. When they have finished, they will read their texts to check if they used punctuation correctly (they can also swap them with their partners or check them in pairs). Finally, the original texts will be projected or handed in to them.

**4. Prepositions and phrasal verbs are two areas of potential problems for our students. Suggest ways to facilitate their learning.**

- Make students aware they have to learn the phrasal verb as a whole, not as the sum of its parts.
- Learn them in context.
- When learning them, group them by particle rather than by verb. Learning the meanings a particle usually has, makes you guess the meaning of the phrasal. E.g.: *Out*: we use it when there is no more of something or when something stops existing, ends or disappears. *They sold out of bread/The power went out in the city due to the storm.*
- Group them by topic.
- Use them in a story.
- Memory games with cards, tic-tac-toe, noughts & crosses.
- Board games such as dominoes. Each card will have a word and a preposition in each half. They will have to take turns to match either the verb or the preposition with their matching parts to form the correct phrasal verb and make a sentence using it.
- We should let our students know that learning prepositions or phrasal verbs is not only a memory activity, rather they should aim at being constantly exposed to real language, with real examples, and using them frequently in order to master them.
- A distinction should be drawn between teaching prepositions and multi-word verbs since they behave differently.
- If a phrasal verb is attached to a significant thought, be it a memory, an imagined situation or an interesting idea, students would be able to recall them better. Thus, we, or our students, can use presentations involving different senses to explain the meaning of a verb or stories in which this particular phrasal verb was important.
- Some apps allow you to build your own vocabulary stock and go over it as many times as you want. This possibility, which is in their mobile phones, could help them do some drills in a more ludic way. Students should avoid long lists that will make them feel snowed under due to the huge amount of items.

**5. Do you agree with the following statement: “Good readers always make for good writers”? Justify your answer.**

- Generally, yes. Reading is a model of good writing, and it helps writing in the same measure as listening can help speaking. It means having contact with the written word and, as you have studied in Topics 4, 5 and 6, written and oral speech differ greatly.
- Even though they are two different language activities, good performance in one may result in good performance in the other. While reading, we are exposed to the written language which may serve as a model when carrying out a writing

task. However, to be a good writer, the practice of reading on its own is not enough. Writing involves a series of subskills which need developing.

- We should start by redefining our concept of reading. Nowadays we are reading for a good amount of time on our cellphones daily, although this probably was not what everyone pictured when thinking of reading. Be it an article, a brief message, an e-mail or an website, we read daily (probably many) texts of all sorts. However they don't necessarily match our students needs in terms of text types and positive models. For that reason, we need to guide them and help select appropriate content sources (digital or not), from which they will be able to choose whatever contents they prefer. Abundant input is generally good, but we must cater for its quality and appropriateness.
- They are very much related, as both deal with written language and communication, and it is true that reading regularly and, thus, developing good reading skills, makes one improve their writing skills as well in terms of boosting creativity, learning new vocabulary and improving communication skills. However, this statement does not always have to be true. Writing implies more than being a good reader. It is a difficult skill and needs to be learnt. Being a good writer means knowing how to use punctuation correctly, how to organise ideas into paragraphs and using accurate cohesive devices. We also need to bear in mind which type of audience we are addressing to use register, style and vocabulary accordingly.
- Reading helps to consolidate grammar, revise vocabulary, see words in context, learn organisational skills, connectors. Reading can also be a source of ideas and inspiration.

**6. Suggest tips you would give your students to organise and enrich their vocabulary, and state why they are effective.**

- Organise vocabulary according to thematic blocks/topics.
- Highlight all new vocabulary (textbook, handouts, etc.) visually, e.g. with a highlighter. At the end of the unit, the student copies all the highlighted words in his/her notebook. At the same time, s/he will continually see the word when s/he flips through the book.
- Use mind-maps to organise, e.g. phrasal verbs, verbs/nouns with prepositions, collocations.
- Write in columns words which are somewhat related (synonyms, antonyms, words with the same root -noun, verb, adjective-, etc.).
- Underline the words you find most difficult to learn/remember.
- Use dictionaries other than bilingual ones: monolingual dictionaries and, especially, thesaurus and collocations dictionaries.
- Organize visually the vocab related to semantic fields, or a thematic block, or a specific context/register.
- Make flashcards so that they can review the vocabulary and test themselves.
- Write a sentence using the new words. Looking at the word in context helps to remember the word.

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- Use a notebook in which students can write new words, along with a example that is meaningful for them. They can divide the notebook into categories according to topic or field.
- Encourage and provide opportunities for reading and watching videos or listening to podcasts where they can see or listen to words in real contexts.