

Best of Bilash: Oral Production Activities

Witness/Témoins

1. Teacher prepares pictures/images in advance and mounts them on the wall or board. Each image should be covered by a blank sheet so that students will lift it up to see the image. Choose unusual images to engage students – magazine ads and scanned art work well. Simple images with few colours are suitable for beginners. The amount of detail in the image should increase with student's oral language ability.
2. The teacher sets up pictures on the board, two per pair of students, preferably one under the other.
3. The teacher directs the students as follows: Students work in pairs (A and B). They line up with A in front and B behind. All Bs turn to the back wall while As run to an image on the top row and observe it. After 3-7 seconds the teacher signals them to cover the image and return to their partners who can now turn around.
4. A describes the image to B. After 2-20 seconds (depending on the level of students and amount of detail in the images), the teacher signals 'stop'.
5. While students are talking the teacher removes the row of images being described, flips the cover sheet over and places them face up on a table that is a slight distance away from the group.
6. Students again line up in pairs with A facing the back wall and B in front.
7. All B's run to an image on the bottom row and observe it. Continue as above. NOTE: for purposes of differentiation one row of images could be simpler to describe than another.
8. While students are talking the teacher removes the final row of images being described, flips the cover sheet over and places them face up on the same table. Two to five additional images should also be placed on the table so that there are more images than students. Images are shuffled around on the table.
9. A's and B's now go to the table to find the image that their partner described. They take the image to their partner who confirms that they have selected the 'correct' image.

Variations:

- a. Images can be very closely related with only a few details differentiating them to increase the level of challenge.
- b. Trios can also do the activity by adding a writing component. In this case A looks at the picture (is the witness) and tells B. Then B tells C who writes down what is understood and then looks for the image.
- c. OR A looks at the picture (is the witness) and tells B who writes the description. Then C reads the description and must find the image.

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Spin a Yarn

1. The teacher prepares pieces of yarn, each of different lengths.
2. Students are placed in small groups with a starting leader.
3. From the leader's hand, each student takes a piece of yarn. Students should not be able to tell how long a piece is until they have randomly chosen theirs.
4. In their groups, students take turns saying as many words as they can in the target language while spinning/wrapping their piece of yarn around their index finger. Students should not be able to spin the yarn faster than they can speak. Speaking stops when there is no more yarn left to spin.

Variations:

- a. Students may also do a self-introduction while spinning the yarn.
- b. To increase the level of challenge, students may be instructed to tell a story while spinning the yarn.

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Choo-choo Train (self-introduction)

1. Students begin as pairs (A and B).
2. A introduces him/herself to B. ("Hi, my name is...")
3. B introduces him/herself to A.
4. The pair then plays "rock-paper-scissors". The winner gets in front of the other person and the two find another pair in the classroom.
5. The 2 pairs face each other and the first person (leader) in each pair introduces him/herself. The second person in each pair also introduces him/herself.
6. The leaders then play "rock-paper-scissors" to determine the winning group who will then stand in front of the other group (thus forming a line of four)
7. Play continues in this way until there are no more groups left in the class.

Variations:

- a. What the students say may be modified to increase the challenge. Some suggestions are:
 - Self-introduction and stating one thing you like ("Hi, my name is... and I like...")
 - After the first pair, instead of each person saying something about him/herself, students can introduce the person behind or in front of them. ("Hi my name is... and I like... This is ... and he/she likes...")

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Counting Concentration Game

1. Students sit or stand in a circle.
2. Each student is assigned a number (e.g. if there are ten students in the group, each student is given a number from 1-10).
3. The teacher establishes a rhythm to be followed. In the video, the rhythm is "tap, tap, clap, clap".
4. Following the rhythm, Number 1 starts by saying their number and then another student's number (the numbers are said during the "clap, clap" part of the beat).
5. The number that was called now repeats his/her number and calls out another student's number.

Example:

#1: [tap, tap] "1, 3"

#3: [tap, tap] "3, 9"

#9: [tap, tap] "9, 2"

... etc.

Variations

- a. The teacher may want use a different rhythm or alter the speed depending on the level of difficulty.
- b. Students can be given images of an object from a theme or category that they wear around their neck for full visibility. The game can then be played using the words for the images.

Example using body parts:

#1: [tap, tap] "eyes, ears"

#3: [tap, tap] "ears, shoulder"

#9: [tap, tap] "shoulder nose"

... etc.

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Days of the Week

1. Students sit or stand in a circle. (This can be done as a whole class or in groups as small as 5, thus enabling many groups to play simultaneously and the teacher to work with the students needing the most support.)
2. The teacher or a student begins by saying the first day of the week.
3. One at a time and in order, students say the rest of the days of the week in order.
4. The teacher or student leader may want to change the speed to increase the level of difficulty.
5. The order of students saying the days of the week may also be changed. For example, the teacher may point to individual students in a random order so that they do not know what day they will say until it is their turn.
6. If the number of students in the group is 7 (or a multiple of 7), the teacher may pick one student to say 2 days of the week on their turn so that students are not repeating the same word.

Variations:

This activity can also be used for practicing:

- a. Months of the Year
- b. Numbers (e.g. counting from 1-10)

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Dominoes

1. Teacher prepares paper domino tiles. Each tile should have two pictures on it*, separated by a line in the middle. On one side of the line, there should be:
 - a. A picture of an item (e.g. apple, baseball, cake, etc.)
 - b. A picture of a face expressing "like" or "dislike". In this video, the face either has a bow (to indicate the pronoun "she") or a hat (to indicate the pronoun "he"). If there is no bow or hat, the pronoun is "I". A happy face and a sad face represent "like and dislike", respectively.

*A blank space may replace one of the two pictures to represent a "wildcard" (i.e. it can be used as anything).

2. Students work in small groups. The dominoes are placed facedown on the table and shuffled. Each student draws 5 tiles from the pile. One domino from the remaining tiles is drawn and placed face-up in the middle of the table.
3. The first student tries to match his/her tile to the one on the table. They may connect the two tiles on any side. For example, if the tile on the table has a picture of girl-face and an apple, and the tile in the student's hand has a picture of a boy-face and an apple, the apples can be connected.
4. As the student places his/her tile on the table, he/she must say a sentence describing their tile. Example:

"She likes apples." (If the tile has a picture of a girl-face expressing "like" and picture of an apple)
5. The next student does the same, looking at his/her tiles and those that are on the table. If the student has no tiles to play, they must pass and retrieve another tile from the extras pile on the table. Play ends when there are no more tiles in students' hands.
6. Words such as "pass" and "your turn" "Lucky you!" should also be used in the target language.

Variations:

- a. To increase the level of difficulty: on their turn, students can describe their own tile as well as those that are already on the table (creating a longer chain of sentences with each turn).

Example:

"She likes apples. He does not like apples. He does not like basketball. I like basketball."

- b. To increase friendly competition, students can aim to be the first to get rid of all the tiles in their hand.
- c. This activity can be adapted and modified to suit the vocabulary on which the unit focuses at the time.

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Information Gap: "I lost my..."

1. Teacher prepares information sheets: one page for a tourist who has lost an item and another page for a worker at the Lost and Found.

For the tourist: Information on this sheet should include places where the tourist has been, the item that was lost and a description of the item.

For the worker: Information on this sheet should include different items that are in the Lost and Found (and their descriptions) and places where the items have been found.

2. Tourist and Worker take turns speaking. The worker asks questions about the lost item and the tourist provides the information.

Example:

Worker: Hello.

Tourist: Hello, I lost my watch.

Worker: You lost your watch. What color is it?"

Tourist: It is gold.

Worker: And where did you lose it?

Tourist: I lost it on the train.

... etc.

3. The information sheets provided should guide the students to come to one of two conclusions: 1) the item has been found or 2) the item has not yet been found. There should only be one possibility.
4. The activity may be modified to increase the challenge by only allowing questions to which the answers are "yes" or "no" only.

Example: "Was your watch blue? Was it gold?"

Variations:

Scenarios can change. Some suggestions are:

- a. A travel agent and a customer trying to plan the best trip deal
- b. A receptionist at a doctor's office and a patient trying to find the best time for an appointment
- c. Two friends trying to find a time to meet for coffee
- d. A customer calling a technical support agents for computer/phone/cable problems

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Information Gap: Same-Different

1. Teacher prepares 2 almost identical pictures with about 15-25 differences in each. Pictures can range from containing simple to complex images, depending on the level of the students. Some content is identical while some items are also different. For example, both pictures could be an illustration of children playing in a park, but one picture could have birds in the sky whereas the other would not. The illustrations should be printed or drawn on a piece of paper thick enough so that the students cannot see each other's picture when holding it up.
2. Students work in pairs (A and B). Teacher instructs each pair to find 5 differences between their pictures by asking each other questions. Students may only ask questions that have "yes" or "no" as an answer.

Example:

A: Does your picture have a tree?

B: Yes. Are there apples on your tree?

A: No. Is there a swing under your tree?

B: Yes.

...etc.

3. After a pair of students has found five differences in their picture, they raise their hands. The teacher then instructs the pair to find five more differences. This is helpful for purposes of differentiation (some groups may be quicker to find their differences than other groups). With 15-25 differences there is enough time for pairs who quickly find differences to continue to work while other pairs make the base line of 'five'.

Variations:

- a. The amount of detail/differences in each picture may vary depending on the level of difficulty.