

DIALOGUES FOR CONVERSATION

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The English Syllabus for Secondary Schools in Malaysia states that the purpose of learning English as a secondary language is "to create a society able to utilise the language for effective communication as the need arises, and as a key to wider experiences." What level of terminal competence can be expected of the student as far as oral skills are concerned? At the end of his primary education it is hoped that the Malaysian child is able to use simple English correctly in a variety of situations and when he leaves Form V he should be able to communicate effectively and be internationally intelligible in his speech.

Most children who learn English wish to speak it and learning to speak is the best way of mastering the fundamentals. They must be given the opportunity to practise speaking with such frequent repetition as to form habits of correct expression – much more important than the learning of descriptive grammar and vocabulary.

How fully aware we are of the failure of "the conversation or oral lesson" in class. Children are painfully shy to take part in impromptu conversations and those who make an attempt often have to be cued by the teacher. They falter in their frequently incorrect answers and lapse into periods of uneasy silence, during which time the rest of the class either titter or yawn.

We can make conversation lessons more rewarding if we plan a series of dialogues based on the syllabus or on graded verbal constructions which are the backbone of the language. The language should be free and idiomatic; the expressions included should be commonly met in everyday conversation; the situations should be within the experiences of the student and artificial language – the type of speech that is correct in theory but hardly ever heard in practice – should be avoided.

How do we use the dialogues?

1. The teacher creates a situation in the classroom in which the dialogue can occur naturally and meaningfully or the situations are illustrated by pictures.
2. The teacher provides a good model of pronunciation to ensure that the children recognise the correct sounds, rhythm and intonation.
3. The children then must practise the dialogues carefully repeating each sentence after hearing it spoken correctly until the sound of the dialogue is sufficiently familiar.
4. The class follows the teacher as a chorus.
5. The teacher takes the part of A and the class the part of B. The roles may be reversed.
6. The class is divided into pairs or groups and they repeat the conversation.
7. Each pair practises in its own time – softly.
8. The teacher goes round the class stopping to correct, give advice and re-establish the correct model.

When using these exercises every member of the class can speak a large number of times during a lesson. Every time he speaks he uses a structurally correct sentence and when he practises with his partner he feels he is communicating.

Below is an example of how some conversational exercises can be planned by the language teacher to give students practice in the use of the Simple Present Tense (to describe habitual actions and personal habits).

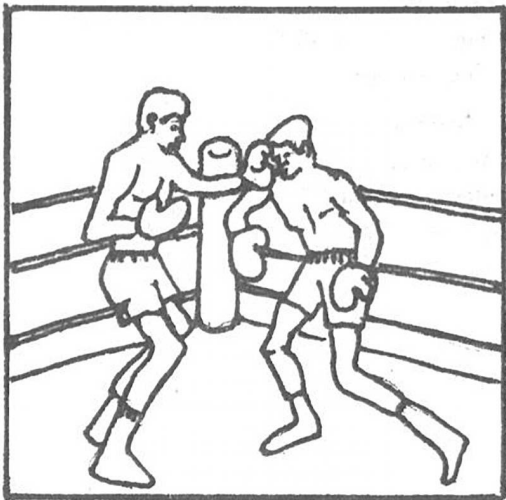
The teacher should note the following:—

1. Where a capital X or Y is used a proper name has to be supplied. This makes the conversation more personal to the student.
2. In a dialogue like this it is not always possible to have free substitutions and make good sense. All the substitutions must come from the same line.
3. The dialogue should be written on the blackboard/roll-up board or cyclostyled on paper.
4. Students should be encouraged to look up at their partners while speaking and not simply read the text.
5. They should be encouraged to memorise some of the dialogues or parts of the dialogues.
6. When children have mastered these dialogues they can move on to less controlled activities.

Simple Present Tense (describing habitual actions and personal habits)

Unit 2 of the English Syllabus for Forms I – III.

Examples with pictures



1. **Picture 1**
 - A. Ali likes boxing.
 - B. Really? Does he practise every evening?
 - A. Yes, he does.
 - B. Where?
 - A. At the school gymnasium.
2. **Picture 2**
 - A. Lily likes dancing.
 - B. Really? Does she dance every evening?
 - A. Yes, she does.
 - B. Where?
 - A. At the Youth Club.

Pattern Practice

- A. X likes x
 B. Really? Does he/she y every evening?
 A. Yes, he/she does.
 B. Where?
 A. z

X

3. singing
4. reading
5. playing badminton
6. swimming
7. roller-skating
8. fishing
9. playing hockey
10. sewing

y

- sing
 read
 play
 swim
 skate
 fish
 play
 sew

z

- In the church
 In the library
 At the badminton association
 At the P.J. swimming pool
 At the P.J. skating rink
 At the pool in Taman Jaya
 at the school field
 At the club

Further Work

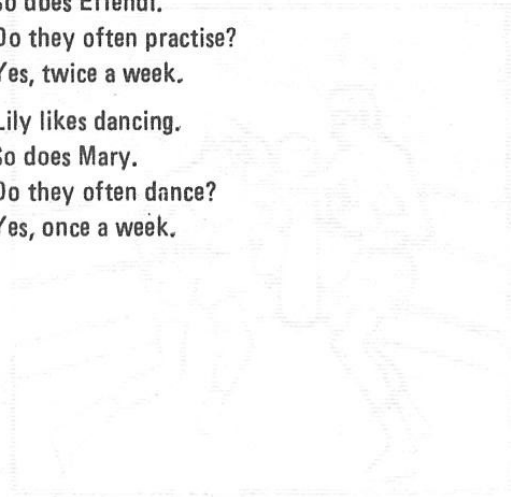
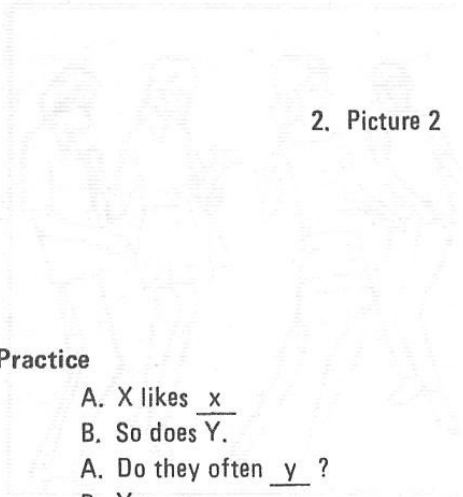
(A) Look at the pictures and practise these two dialogues.

1. Picture 1

- A. Ali likes boxing.
 B. So does Effendi.
 A. Do they often practise?
 B. Yes, twice a week.

2. Picture 2

- A. Lily likes dancing.
 B. So does Mary.
 A. Do they often dance?
 B. Yes, once a week.



Pattern Practice

- A. X likes x
 B. So does Y.
 A. Do they often y ?
 B. Yes, z

X

3. painting
4. flying
5. hiking
6. cycling
7. baking
8. hunting

y

- paint
 fly
 hike
 cycle
 bake
 hunt

z

- every day
 once a week
 every Saturday
 every weekend
 every afternoon
 once a fortnight.

(B) Here are some facts about two students,

Eng Hock and Samy. Working in pairs have conversations on this pattern.

They both are very strong.
A. Eng Hock is very strong.
B. So is Samy.

1. They both like boxing. (likes, does)
2. They both like dancing. (likes, does)
3. They both have motor-cycles (has, has)
4. They both are clever. (is, is)
5. They both eat too much. (eats, does)
6. They both have two sisters. (has, has)
7. They both speak French. (speaks, does)
8. They both live in Petaling Jaya. (lives, does).

(C) Working in pairs or groups practise this conversation.

- A. What do you do every evening?
B. I go dancing.
A. And how about your brother/sister?
B. Oh he/she usually comes too.

Pattern Practice

A. What do you do every evening?
B. I x
A. And how about your brother/sister?
B. Oh he/she usually y

- | x | y |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| 1. watch television | visit friends |
| 2. work in the garden | helps too |
| 3. sew | plays hockey |
| 4. go sailing | goes for a walk |
| 5. prepare dinner | has a nap |
| 6. go fishing | takes the dog out |
| 7. go for a walk | comes along too |
| 8. do my homework | paints. |