

1. The first two stages of teaching spoken English are Presentation and Practice. Most teachers in fact stop at this point. Yet up to now our pupils have not had to use the language in any *real* sense. They have not had to communicate. They have simply been manipulating language forms.

2. Of course it is important to be able to manipulate new sentence constructions and vocabulary items. You have to know the grammar and the words of a language before you can speak it properly. But that is not the whole story. When you go to the country where that language is used you find you have to talk to other people about what you want. You have to express your ideas and feelings. By using the language for this purpose you discover what you *need* to say. You are more likely to remember the words, phrases and sentence constructions which you actually need. This type of practice, rather than repetition after the teacher, will help you to become fluent.

3. Yet many teachers ignore this stage of language learning. They do not realize that it is important. Or perhaps they have very large classes and despair of giving everybody the chance to express themselves.

4. This third stage of teaching spoken language is known as Production or Communicative Practice. The aim of it is to make use of the personal experience of each pupil. We have to try and get the pupils to talk about themselves.

5. There are some drills where pupils have to give truthful answers based on their own experience or likes and dislikes, for example:

S1: (Picks up the top card)
Did you have a bath this morning?

S2: (Answers truthfully), Yes, I did.
I always have a bath in the morning.

How many rooms are there in your house?
etc.

6. When we use the textbook, we must try to adapt some of the dialogues, drills, reading passages and exercises to the lives of our own pupils.

Here is an example of some communicative

practice based on a dialogue from a school textbook.

Johari : Mother, please may I have some fried prawns?
(Mother serves Johari)
You have given me too many, Mother.
I can't eat them all.

Mother : Eat what you can, dear.

Johari : May I have some more rice, please?

Mother : Here you are.

Johari : Oh, Mother, this is too much. I can't eat it all.

Mother : Eat slowly dear. Growing children must eat lots of food.

Father : Ha! Ha! But this is too much. Too much rice will make Johari sleepy.

New Primary English Course Book 5.

First of all, let us assume that you have completed your Presentation and Practice work on the dialogue. Now it's up to you to find ways of using the ideas in the dialogue and relating them to your pupils. Since this dialogue concerns food, we can get the pupils to ask each other questions like the ones that follow:

What kind of food | do you | like?
| don't |

Do you like | fried prawns?
| rice
| mutton
| chicken etc

Do you eat | a lot?
| a little
| about average

Who prepares the food in your house?

Do you ever help your mother?

On what days do you help her?

Do you eat | fast?
| slowly

If you want to be healthy, what must you eat?
If you eat too much, what happens?

Do you ever feel sleepy after a meal? What do you do?

What time do you have your | breakfast?
| lunch
| dinner

Where do you have your lunch?

Points to remember

- (a) You must prepare these questions before you go into the class. Most teachers would not be able to think up all these questions on the spot.
- (b) Any questions will do provided they deal with the topic suggested by the dialogue, text or exercise, and relate to the pupils' own lives.
- (c) We cannot ask every single pupil all these questions in turn. We could start off by asking a few pupils only, and perhaps run through all the questions at least once. The next stage is to divide up the pupils into groups. The questions can either be written up on the blackboard or on cards which you distribute to each group leader. With all the pupils working in groups everyone gets a chance to ask and answer questions. Point out to the pupils that they are expected to give truthful answers.
- (d) Often a pupil will not know how to say something in English. Encourage your pupils to ask you for the English words they need in order to express themselves. This kind of encouragement is very necessary for language learners, whether young or old, and is especially important with pupils who are shy.
- (e) If you are not very good at thinking up communicative-type questions based on your textbook, ask a colleague at your school to help you. It often helps to have two people working on something.

7. Here is another example from a primary school text book. This time it is part of a reading text. 'Quite a number of people work on rubber estates, oil palm estates and in pineapple factories. Rubber, oil palm and pineapples are exported to foreign countries such as England, Germany, the United States of America and Japan. Malaysia earns a lot of money through the export of these products.'

New Primary Readers Book 6, p. 35

Questions for communicative practice:

Have you got any relatives who work

on	a	rubber estate?
	an	oil palm estate
in	a	pineapple factory

Have you ever been to a rubber estate/etc.?

Where was it?

How did you get there?

What did you see there?

How is rubber tapped?

What happens to the rubber collected by the tappers?

What things are made from rubber?

Do rubber tappers earn much money?

In what parts of the country do you find rubber trees?

Describe a day in the life of a rubber tapper.

More points to remember.

- (a) If your pupils can add to the list of questions, let them say them in Bahasa Malaysia. You can then translate them into English for the benefit of the whole class.
- (b) If they don't know the words in English for "ladang". "kelapa sawit", "penoreh", etc, encourage your pupils to ask you. Most language students remember better the words they actually need.
- (c) Don't forget to use group work for this kind of practice after you have asked some of the pupils the questions on your list.
- (d) Find out what you can about the lives of your pupils so that you can more easily relate the themes and topics from the textbook to their personal experience.
- (e) Some teachers, because of their personality or experience, find it difficult to take a friendly interest in their pupils. However, if you really want your pupils to learn English you will have to give them some communicative practice.
- (f) With a topic like rubber you could embark on some kind of project work. You could ask your pupils to draw pictures or bring in things relevant to rubber tapping, organize a trip to a rubber estate, write to the Rubber Research Institute in Kuala Lumpur, etc.

All pupils should be given the chance to use the language communicatively. Getting them to talk about their own experience is one way.