

WHY NOT USE PUPPETS ?

Puppets are a much neglected tool in teaching and learning English at the elementary and intermediate levels. Not only can they offer a diversion to the normal, dull routine learning and teaching by injecting life and variety into the lesson, but they can also play a tremendous part in promoting class participation. Pupil participation is sadly lacking in most Malaysian classrooms where pupils are rarely given a chance to actively participate in a lesson beyond the occasional chorus drilling.

How then can the use of puppets promote class involvement? This can be done in two ways. First, the teacher can use puppets for a variety of teaching tasks such as the following:

- 1) reviewing vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation,
- 2) presenting new items such as colours, telling the time, prepositions, comparatives and superlatives,
- 3) dramatization of stories and dialogues,
- 4) teaching songs and games.

During the above activities the teacher can involve the pupils in the lesson in several ways. She can get pupils to repeat what she has said using her puppets. Alternatively, the teacher can get the pupils to repeat what 'it' says, as well as carry messages and to ask questions. The sample script at the end of this paper will illustrate one of the ways of involving the pupils in the lesson.

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The second, and probably the most usual type of pupil participation is where the pupils themselves stage a puppet production. It is their responsibility to create the puppets, clothe them, write a script, read the parts and manipulate the puppets, etc. Although such activities are productive from the point of view of creating an outlet for creative talents among pupils, for promoting co-operation between pupils and teacher, and for stimulating language usage among pupils, they are primarily for entertainment rather than language learning. Moreover, in the second language classroom it is unlikely that many pupils will have the necessary language skills to produce a puppet play without considerable guidance from the teacher. This does not mean that this activity should never be done. It is highly suitable as an end-of-year activity, for instance, but the teacher could concentrate more on her use of puppets for teaching while still harnessing the creative talents of pupils in the production of puppets.

Types of puppets for language teaching:

There are, of course, many types of puppets, but for English teaching purposes it is best to keep to puppets which are not too complex or too time-consuming for teachers (or pupils) to make. Stick puppets (a face or body shape cut from a magazine or drawn on cardboard and attached to a stick) are adequate for teaching purposes. Glove puppets are easy to make too and can be made in a great variety of ways. One method is to use a paper bag large enough to hold a pupil's hand. Faces can be drawn on and features added by using sticky paper, wool, etc. Alternatively, any round object such as a ball (with a small hole cut out for the neck) or a stuffed sock, can be used as a head. A rolled-up tube of cardboard will serve as a neck and to this can be added appropriate clothes. Glove puppets made from two basic body shapes cut from cloth and sewn together around the edges and then enhanced with facial characteristics, can provide the teacher with an admirable puppet for teaching English. There are dozens of books on the market dealing with making puppets and the interested teacher is advised to refer

to them.

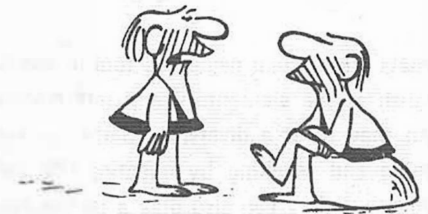
Tips for using puppets for language teaching:

- a) Give each of your puppets a name and, if necessary, a character. Is your puppet animal or human, male or female, sad or happy, high-voiced or low-voiced? When you have decided on its character, keep to it so that children will identify with that particular puppet.
- b) Be prepared, that is, work out what your puppet is going to say during the lesson. If necessary write out a script. Include in the script what each puppet is going to say, the tone and volume of his voice, etc. What actions will the puppet be doing? Make a note of this also. Leave pauses in the script for pupils' responses, if any, and for laughter.
- c) Practice before you enter the classroom. Make sure you know how to vary your voice if more than one puppet is being used. Also make sure that you can make the appropriate hand movements as you speak.
- d) Vary your voice. Don't be shy to show emotion with your voice. This is particularly important if you are using a stage (such as a sheet slung between two chairs) and the pupils cannot see your face. The puppet's face cannot change so your voice must show the differences between fear, anger, happiness, etc. You need to stress intonation also to assist pupils in understanding your utterances.
- e) Project your voice so that the pupils at the back of the class can hear. Inability to hear (and see) what the teacher is doing can destroy class discipline.
- f) Involve the pupils. At the presentation stage the teacher can manipulate the puppets but when the class understands the sentence patterns being taught, individual pupils can come forward and manipulate the puppets. The repetition of short dialogues is a particularly good way to involve two or more pupils.
- g) Listen for feedback. Don't be so involved in the presentation that you forget to notice the reaction of the class. This reaction will assist you in improving or modifying other lessons using puppets.
- h) Finally, an important fact to bear in mind when using puppets is: Don't Overuse. Use puppets occasionally and sparingly and in that way the pupils will look forward to their appearance and will be more receptive to what you are trying to teach.

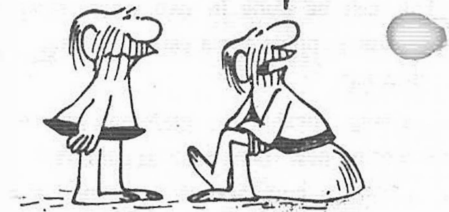
JUST SITTING AROUND?



WELL,...LET'S DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT!



OK,...LET'S SIT OVER THERE!



GET INTO ACTION.

Join
SELTA

Sample Script:

Learning Task: Present and Future time:—

— Going to + infinitive

Practice the recognition and reproduction of question and answer forms of be + going to.

Play background music for 30 seconds.

Enter Bobo the clown, laughing and waving happily.

Bobo : Hello, boys and girls, I'm Bobo, the circus clown. Are you going to wish me good morning?

Class : Good morning.

Teacher : (Nods in approval)

Bobo : I'm going to make you laugh. Would you like that? (Pauses for an answer) Good. Are you going to laugh at my funny tricks?

Class : (Listen again. Are you going to laugh at my funny tricks? Now ask me.)

Bobo : Are you going to laugh at my funny tricks?

Class : Yes, I am. I'm going to laugh at your funny tricks. (Laughs heartily). Are you?

Teacher : Listen again. Yes, I am. I'm going to laugh at your funny tricks. Are you? Now repeat and ask me.

Class : Yes, I am. I'm going to laugh at your funny tricks. Are you?

Bobo : Yes, I am. (Rolls in laughter)

Class : I'm going to dance across this table. Are you? (Dances clumsily across the table) (Pauses for laughter).

Teacher : Listen. Are you going to dance across this table? Now ask me.

Class : Are you going to dance across this table?

Bobo : Yes, I am. I'm going to dance across this table. Are you? Now repeat and ask me.

Class : Yes, I am. I'm going to dance across this table. Are you?

Bobo : Yes, I am (Floats lightly across the table)

The going to' pattern is repeated until the class gets used to it.

Bobo : Now I want everybody to answer and ask me a question without any help. Ready? O.K. I'm going to sing. (Do-Re-Mi-Fa-So-La-Ti-Do.) Are you going to sing?

Class : Yes, I am. I'm going to sing. Are you?

Bobo : Yes, I am. (Sings a higher note, off key). (Pauses for laughter).

Class : Are you going to cry? (Rubs eyes and cries, boo-hoo-hoo).

Class : Yes, I am. I'm going to cry. (Pupils rub eyes, pretend to cry). Are you?

Bobo : Yes, I am. (cries louder) (Pauses for laughter)

Class : Are you going to slip and fall?

Class : Yes, I am. I'm going to slip and fall. Are you?

Bobo : No, I'm not. Puppets don't have feet. Are you going to kiss your neighbour?

Class : No, I'm not. Are you?

Bobo : Yes, I am. (He kisses the teacher on both cheeks). (Laughter from class).

Readers are invited to submit, for publication, articles on any of the following:

Teaching methods, Suggestions on overcoming problem areas in English Language Teaching, Case studies with regard to the implementation of the English Syllabus in your School, Book reviews, Topics in Linguistics and lastly Letters to the Editor.

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