

Lo-Tech Conversation Activities

(Note: Quite a few of these can easily become writing activities of their own)

Some examples (thought of by the good doctor!)

Activity 1: Speed Meeting!

Many of you may be familiar with the notion of Speed Dating, events where single folks go to meet multiple partners and possibly meet someone for an extended date. Today we're going to experiment a non-romantic version of that called "Speed Meeting".

Instructions

1. Half of you will sit on the outside side of the tables, the others will sit inside.
2. You have 1 minute to find a really unusual fact from one of your *compadres*. Seriously, think of something very unusual to ask!
3. Discuss what you learned from your *compadres* today.

Variations

1. Use this at the end of a beginning of a course as an ice-breaker activity (for first-level classes, I'd suggest at the end so that they have some baseline vocabulary to play with)

Activity 2: Telenovela!

Goals

1. To practice acting using the stereotypical characters of a soap opera or telenovela
2. To practice writing original dialog based on classic themes in soap operas

Introduction

Perhaps one of the most famous TV genres is that of the soap opera, or its Latin American counterpart, the telenovela. Soap operas (named as such in their origins because the first sponsors of these shows back in the day were SOAP companies) are characterized by the

Resources compiled or created by Raúl Alberto Mora, Ph.D.

dramatic tone of their dialogs, the emphasis on the love story, and the presence of a bevy of stereotypical characters.

Regarding the stereotypes, Daniel Chandler (n.d.) explained,

Jordan (in Dyer 1981) identifies several broad types used extensively in Coronation Street: Grandmother figures; marriageable characters (mature, sexy, women; spinsterly types; young women; mature, sexy, men; fearful, withdrawn men; conventional young men); married couples; rogues (including 'ne'er-do-wells' and confidence tricksters). Buckingham refers also refers to the use of the stereotypes of 'the gossip', 'the bastard' and 'the tart'. Anthony Easthope adds 'the good girl', and Peter Buckman cites 'the decent husband', 'the good woman', 'the villain' and 'the bitch' (in Geraghty 1991, p. 132). Geraghty herself adds 'the career woman' (ibid., p. 135ff).

Activity

1. You will work in groups of three and you will create 3-minute skits for a soap opera set in one of the following locations:
 - An elementary school
 - On campus
 - An average neighborhood in Medellín
2. Choose two of those three (but don't tell us... that's part of the game!) locations and prepare your skit. Make sure to feature some of the stereotypes that Chandler described in the blurb above (however many depends on you... oh yes, each of you can play multiple characters if so you wish). Prepare your dialog, and do not be afraid to get "in character" (a very important part of performing is picking up the tone and intonation that would best portray an individual). After all, part of this class is to be able to have a good time on a Friday night (within the academic boundaries of our institution, natch!). Each group will have 5 minutes to prepare and rehearse your dialogs.
3. Once you have rehearsed, we will act out our dialogs. Remember that you're not supposed to tell us where you are. You should act your dialog in front of the class, and let me remind you: You're acting, so have fun! The other students should be paying attention to the dialogs, trying to figure out where the scenes take place and what stereotypical characters you can detect. We will discuss your discoveries after each dialog.

Activity 3: Happily Ever After... Happily Ever After?

There is one thing that romantic fairy tales (e.g. Cinderella, Snow White, Sleeping Beauty) and most romantic comedies seem to have in common: They end when the couple seem to fall in love and get together, sometimes for the first time! There is no real sense of what happens later, there is an assumption that they may get married and be together “till death do them part”, but that is just implied. In this activity, you and your partner(s) will imagine what life for this seemingly happy couple would be like. The activity is improvisational in nature. You get to pick your characters, whether from a movie or a fairy tale. Then you will choose a situation to act. Here are some suggestions:

- Their first argument
- A dinner date gone wrong
- Their first trip out of town
- Going grocery shopping
- Choosing a Netflix show to watch or what movie to Torrent download tonight

You have 3 minutes to prepare, remember that this is mostly improvisation! After the three minutes... ACTION!

Activity 4: Refocalization – Fairy Tales from a Different Perspective

This activity is based on Henry Jenkins’ ideas to retell a story. He proposes 10, this example just focuses on refocalization, but you can use any of the other strategies instead.

[Click here to see the other examples.](#)

Choose a fairy tale and a secondary character to tell the story. (Bonus Demo: Dr. Berry will tell the story of “The Mirror” in Snow White). When you tell the story, say what story and the secondary character you picked.

Activity 5: Be like Walken, perform a song!

You will perform a song. No, we won’t do karaoke, if that’s what you’re thinking. You will perform a song in SPOKEN FORM. (if possible, show you the class samples from Lady

Gaga's "Poker Face" performed by [Christopher Walken](#) and [Jude Law](#) for inspiration). Pick a song to perform in class. Have some fun also, so make your performance inspiring!

Activity 6: Eduformercials (or English schools create even worse infomercials!)

Infomercials, the kind of promotional shows that one can watch at 3 am on most cable channels, are supposed to be a way to promote the latest and greatest in gadgetry. However, their low production qualities and sometimes horrendous dialogs make for unintentional comedy every time one watches them. Today, you will get to use your speaking and script-writing skills to create an educational infomercial, or an Eduformercial. You will work in groups of four to prepare a 5-minute skit about the "wonders" of a tool/method/course/textbook (the more outlandish or ludicrous, the better) that you can use to learn English (preferably in a very short period of time). Each of you will play one of three possible roles:

1. The host – you're supposed to introduce the product, ask questions, and make lots of comments to remind us of how awesome the product is!
2. The creator – you're coming to the show to present your product, describe it, and answer questions from the host to remind us of how awesome your creation is!
3. The testimonials – you're two very happy and satisfied users of the product; in the show, you will talk about the product and answer questions to remind us of how awesome the product is!

(In case the roles didn't make it clear, you really need to go out of your way to remind us of how awesome this product is!)

You will have 5 minutes to prepare, after all this is supposed to be improv ☺!!!

Some ideas found all over the interwebz...

The Crime Scene Activity – <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/crime-scene>

- Expansion: The Trial Scene

Conversation Stations – <http://longmanhomeusa.com/blog/back-to-the-future-low-tech-activities-for-a-high-tech-classroom/>

Conversation with a ball – <https://busyteacher.org/6824-what-you-can-do-with-a-ball-7-fun-esl-games.html>

Other examples for speaking (and writing) activities

- <https://globaldigitalcitizen.org/15-assessment-activities-fast-formative>
- <https://hiveofactivities.wordpress.com/2014/05/28/a-low-prep-low-tech-effective-game-for-revision/>
- <https://www.nwp.org/cs/public/print/resource/782>
- <https://www.britishcouncil.org/voices-magazine/tips-teaching-low-tech-classroom>
- <https://catechistsjourney.loyolapress.com/2017/10/low-tech-ideas-for-engaging-students/>