

# TENTATIVE ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHING LANGUAGE SKILLS IN MODULE 1

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Throughout the history of human learning, interactive and game playing activities have always played a very important part in people's learning process. It is said that learning and playing embody each other - no one can really learn without playing and vice versa. In addition to our traditional language learning games such as crosswords, word dominoes, word-guessing gestures, role-play, our digital age with the computing system and multi-media has brought us a lot of interaction tools to facilitate our "edutainment". As teachers, we should by all means take advantage of those tools such as PowerPoint slides, video clips, the Internet, digital learning games, CDs, DVDs, together with songs and films to bring fun and interest to our classrooms to help our students feel as if they were travelling on a discovery journey with comfort and entertainment while learning English and practicing the language skills. Believing that one of the best ways to help our students get through the language lessons successfully is to make them feel relaxed and interested, we have tried to engage them in as many supporting activities as possible. This work was done to present activities that can be used in teaching three language skills: listening, speaking and reading in Module 1 for the students at the University of Economics, Ho Chi Minh city.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

It goes without saying that songs and games have been used as effective tools to motivate learners, promote communication skills and make the process of teaching and learning become more enjoyable. Ndiaga Sylla (2010) in his study on the impact of songs and games in ELT clearly states that:

*"We must discard the misconception which is that all learning should be serious and solemn in nature and that if one is having fun and there is hilarity and fun, it is not learning."*

He also believes that "... songs and games should not be regarded as activities filling odd moments when the teacher and the students have nothing better to do." Instead, they "... should be treated as central not peripheral to the Foreign Language Teaching."

(From: <http://www.memoireonline.com/09/10/3914/The-impact-of-songs-and-games-in-english-language-teaching.html>)

Wilgo M Rivers (1987) cited in Ndiaga Sylla (2010) points out that educational topics can be successfully presented by means of songs and games, and teachers can benefit from songs, especially appropriately chosen traditional folk ones, in teaching grammar since prosodic features of the language such as stress, rhythm, and intonation are presented through songs.

Games and problem-solving activities not only help to reduce the stress in the classroom as Krasen S.D. (1988) in Ndiaga Sylla (2010) suggests but also enhance the learners' interest in communicative learning as Hadfield J (1984) cited in Ndiaga Sylla (2010) puts because through well-planned games, learners can internalize vocabulary, grammar and structures extensively, and they are provided with authentic opportunities for language use and production. Macedonia (2005) in Ndiaga Sylla (2010) also states that games may be used as a means to encourage and support fluency as well as to provide practice for grammatical structures.

As Milton (2006) in Ndiaga Sylla (2010) suggests in a review, *Languages, technology and learning*, meaningful exposure to the foreign language required for learning cannot be provided by a couple of lessons a week. Therefore, it is difficult (and practically impossible) to expect learners to master both grammatical knowledge and fluency. However, games and simulations, as part of language learning for decades, have helped teachers make a shift from teaching discrete grammatical structures to promoting communicative ability.

It cannot be denied that songs and games have been part of language education, and have been playful and creative approaches to language learning, accepted in both formal and informal learning contexts.

### **III. TYPICAL ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHING SKILLS IN EACH UNIT**

The tentative activities used when teaching skills in each unit will be fully presented in the Appendix. Since there are similar activities for certain skills, in this section, only the typical activity for each single language skill will be described.

#### **Unit 2: WORK AND LEISURE**

*Activity type: Information exchange*

*Skill focused: Reading*

*Material needed: the reading passages in Unit 2, Market Leader – Elementary – New Edition and Third Edition*

*Time needed: 20 minutes*

*Preparation: copies of the two reading passages (two copies for each group of four)*

The students work in groups of four. In each group, two students read the reading passage in the Unit 2, Market Leader – Elementary - New Edition. The other two read the reading passage in Unit 2, Market Leader – Elementary - Third Edition. After 10 minutes, they exchange information about the two reading passages by summarizing the content of these passages.

The modification and / or the follow-up of the activity is that the students can make the comparison to find out the similarities and differences between the information about the two men in the passages. Another modification and / or the follow-up of the activity is that they can make questions about the content of the reading passages and their partners have to answer the questions without looking at the book or the material.

#### **Unit 3: PROBLEMS**

*Activity 1: Business phone calls*

*Activity type: Jigsaw puzzle*

*Business function practiced: Telephone skills*

*Lexical area: Standard telephone English*

*Material needed: game sheet: “Who’s calling, please?”*

*Time needed: 20 minutes*

*Preparation: Copies of the puzzles cut into pieces (One complete puzzle can be put together by a group of one to four students).*

The students are asked to fit the pieces together by matching up the functional task with the appropriate sentence. To make the task more challenging, the students are not told in advance that the pieces will form a telephone. The objective of the game is to assemble the puzzle correctly. Then these standard telephone phrases will be reviewed to ensure they have all been understood.

Activity 2: I've got a solution

*Activity type: Guessing game*

*Skills focused: Listening + Speaking*

*Function practiced: Offering advice*

*Lexical area: Problems involving work situations*

*Material needed: games sheets: "I've got a solution"*

*Extras: Transparent adhesive tape*

*Time needed: 20 minutes*

*Preparation: Copies of the Game sheets, (depending on the number of students - one problem per student)), cutting the problems out and taping one on the back of each student with adhesive tape.*

The objective of the game is for students to guess as exactly as possible what their problem is. To do this, the students are asked to stand up, walk around and find a partner. Student A reads student B's problem and volunteers one solution. Now student B reads A's problem and likewise gives one piece of advice. The student hearing the possible solution is not allowed to ask any questions, only to listen. After hearing each other's advice, the students should move on to new partners, tell them what they know about their problems so far, and ask for new advice. For example,

*'I'm thinking of taking a course in communication skills. What else can I do?'*

*'You could try to meet more Americans!'*

After hearing several pieces of advice, students should be able to guess their problems. After that, they can continue to go around, giving their good advice to others who are still guessing.

Unit 4: TRAVEL

*Activity type: Gap filling*

*Skill focused: Listening + consolidation: Grammar*

*Material needed: the video clip "To the rescue" and the script with gaps*

*Time needed: 20 minutes*

*Preparation: copies with the script with gaps*

The grammatical point in unit 4 is *There is/are* and *can/can't*. The students are asked to complete the dialogue and use the phrases given. After that, they watch the video clip to check with the answers and learn how these phrases are used in authentic context. The follow-up activity is that some questions can be raised to check the students' understanding about the content of the video clip.

The following is the script with gaps:

There's (There is)/ There are .....	Is/ Are there ...?
I/ You can/ can't	I/ You could/ couldn't
Can/ Could you/ I .....	?

*Jane: ..... see it?*

*Matt: No, sorry*

*Jane: ..... anything on the table?*

*Matt: ..... some plates .....*

..... Helen's mug but no purse.

Jane: How about on the work surfaces?

Matt: ..... see it. .... only the newspaper.

Jane: ..... look under it?

Matt: OK. Got it!

Jane: Oh thanks, Matt. I was really worried ..... put it on the kitchen table?

..... pick it up later.

This is the keys for this listening task:

Jane: **Can you** see it?

Matt: No, sorry

Jane: **Is there** anything on the table?

Matt: **There are** some plates.....

**There is** Helen's mug but no purse.

Jane: How about on the work surfaces?

Matt: **I can't** see it. **There is** only the newspaper.

Jane: **Could you** look under it?

Matt: OK. Got it!

Jane: Oh thanks, Matt. I was really worried. **Can you** put it on the kitchen table?

**I can** pick it up later.

### UNIT 6: SALES

*Activity type: Gap filling*

*Skill focused: Listening + consolidation: Grammar*

*Material needed: the recording and the lyrics of the songs with gaps*

*Time needed: 20 - 30 minutes*

*Preparation: copies with the script with gaps*

The grammatical point in unit 6 is simple past tense. The students are asked to listen to the song "Don't Cry, Joni" and fill in the gaps with words which mostly are the past forms of irregular verbs. The recording will be played three times. The first time, the students listen to the whole song to catch the main idea; the second time (with pauses), the students listen and fill in the gaps; the third time, the students listen to the whole song again and check with the answers.

The following is the song lyric with gaps:

### **DON'T CRY JONI**

Conway Twitty

"Jimmy, please ..... you'll ..... me.

I'll grow up ..... you'll .....

Saving all .....

Shine with ..... forever true".

Joni was the girl who .....  
 I've known her, I guess ..... or more  
 Joni..... a note .....  
 And this is what she .....  
 Repeat: Jimmy ...  
 Slowly I ..... her note .....  
 Then I ..... to the house next door  
 Her teardrops ..... that day  
 When I ..... Joni what I.....  
 "Joni, Joni, please don't cry  
 You'll ..... ,  
 You're just ..... and I'm ..... - .....  
 And Joni I just ..... you".  
 Soon I ..... our little hometown,  
 ..... me a ..... and try to settle down.  
 But these words ..... on in ..... ,  
 The words that Joni ..... to me.  
 Repeat: Jimmy ...  
 I ..... my clothes and I ..... a .....  
 And I ..... to see Joni, I ..... to .....  
 How my ..... was filled with her .....  
 And ..... my Joni if she'd ..... me.  
 I ..... on the way to the house next door  
 But things weren't like .....  
 My teardrops ..... that day  
 When I ..... what Joni had to say  
 "Jimmy, Jimmy, please don't cry.  
 You'll forget me by and by.  
 It's been ..... since you've been gone.  
 Jimmy, I've ..... your ..... John".

This is the keys for this listening task:

### **DON'T CRY JONI**

Conway Twitty

<p> <i>Jimmy, please <b>say</b> you'll <b>wait for</b> me.          I'll grow up <b>some day</b> you'll <b>see</b>.          Saving all <b>my kisses just for you</b>.</i> </p>	<p>         Soon I <b>left</b> our little home town,  <b>Got</b> me a <b>job</b> and try to settle down.          But these words <b>kept</b> on in <b>my memory</b>,       </p>
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<p><i>Shine with <b>love</b> for ever true.</i></p> <p>Joni was the girl who <b>lived next door</b>. I've known her, I guess <b>ten years</b> or more Joni <b>wrote me</b> a note <b>one day</b> And this is what she <b>had to say</b> <i>Repeat: Jimmy ...</i></p> <p>Slowly I <b>read</b> her note <b>once more</b> Then I <b>went over</b> to the house next door Her teardrops <b>fell like rain</b> that day When I <b>told</b> Joni what I <b>had to say</b>.</p> <p>Joni, Joni, please don't cry You'll <b>forget me by and by</b>, You're just <b>fifteen</b> and I'm <b>twenty-two</b> And Joni I just <b>can't wait for you</b>.</p>	<p>The words that Joni <b>said</b> to me. <i>Repeat: Jimmy ...</i></p> <p>I <b>packed</b> my clothes and I <b>caught a plane</b> And I <b>had</b> to see Joni, I <b>had</b> to <b>explain</b> How my <b>heart</b> was filled with her <b>memory</b> And <b>ask</b> my Joni if she'd <b>marry</b> me.</p> <p>I <b>ran</b> on the way to the house next door But things weren't like <b>they were before</b>. My teardrops <b>fell like rain</b> that day When I <b>heard</b> what Joni had to say</p> <p>Jimmy, Jimmy, please don't cry. You'll forget me by and by. It's been <b>five years</b> since you've been gone. Jimmy, I've <b>married</b> your <b>best friend</b> John.</p>
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#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

Having applied the above mentioned activities to our classes, we have found that the results have to a great extent accounted for the good effects of the activities emphasized in the Vietnamese saying “Hoc ma choi, choi ma hoc” (Learning through playing, playing through learning). These integrated activities facilitate the teaching and learning process by creating a more authentic and relaxing learning environment. Moreover, it has been proved that such activities stimulate and develop learners' brains, interest them, make them work more energetically, and at the same time improve their problem-solving skills, decision making and organizational skills which are essential for learners' future career. Therefore, we - language teachers - can hardly find any reasons not to take advantage of those compelling learning-playing activities to benefit our students in their long but joyful language learning process.

#### **REREFENCES**

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## UNIT 2: WORK AND LEISURE

<b>VOCABULARY</b>	<p>1. Word partnerships The teacher (T) says out loud a word, students (Ss) will say out loud the phrase with the word in it. Example: Level 1: Ss look at the words on the screen; T says: high; Ss say: salary / high salary. Level 2: the same activity but no slide on the screen. Level 3: the same activity and the Ss work in pairs.</p> <p>2. Word partnerships Divide the class into 2 or 3 groups. Each student in each group will have one number assigned by the teacher. Level 1: T says one word randomly, and then calls out any number. Ss having that number of each group reads word partnerships or write them on the board. Level 2: T reads a sentence with a gap. Ss having that number of each group choose the most appropriate word partnerships to complete the sentences) – The sentences can be taken in Practice File. To make the scoring more interesting, T can use the “Align the Star / Spin the Wheel” Level 3: T asks: What do you want from work? Group 1: Answer with one word partnership, for e.g. ‘What’s important for me is high salary’. Group 2 repeat group 1’s answer and add one more idea, for e.g. ‘What’s important for me is high salary and long holidays. The final group who can repeat all the previous ideas in the correct order is the winner.</p>
<b>READING</b>	+ Pair / Group: Information Exchange: Ss read and exchange the information from the two reading passages: 1 in ML, new edition & 1 in ML, 3rd edition. They can make the comparison to find out the similarities and differences between the information about the two men in the passages. Another modification and / or the follow-up of the activity is that they can make questions about the content of the reading passages and their partners have to answer the questions without looking at the book or the material.
<b>LISTENING</b>	+ Song: <i>The Rose</i> . Ss listen to the song and fill in the gaps with words which mostly are the affirmative forms of Simple Present Tense.
<b>GRAMMAR</b>	
<b>SPEAKING</b>	+ Video: <i>Free time Activities</i> . T plays the clip as the model so that the Ss practise giving a short talk in 45 seconds in groups or in front of the whole class.

## UNIT 3 PROBLEMS

<b>VOCAB</b>	+ 10-word Game: to review Unit 2. T shows the slides with numbers. Ss choose a number, then an explanation is shown, and Ss guess the word. The group who has more correct words is the winner. + The same games as in Unit 2
<b>READING</b>	+ The follow-up activity: Ss make questions about the content of the reading passages and their partners have to answer the questions without looking at the book or the material.
<b>LISTENING</b>	+ Movie: Apollo 13 – T summarizes the movie, Ss listen and retell in Vietnamese. The

	level of difficulty depends on the Ss' levels. + Song: <i>How Can I Tell Her</i>
<b>GRAMMAR</b>	+ Song: <i>How Can I Tell Her</i> . Ss listen to the song and fill in the gaps with words some of which are the negative forms of Simple Present Tense. + Game: Matching: 8 students receive 8 question cards, other 8 students receive 8 answer cards. Students walk around, read aloud the questions or answers they have and try to find their correct questions or answers.
<b>SPEAKING</b>	+ Game: 1. Telephoning Ss have to match the functional task with the appropriate language in order to form an object. It is used to practice some expressions in making a phone call. 2. Problem solving Ss are asked to ask their friends' advice for the problems taped on their back. After guessing what their problem is, they can be back to their seats.

#### UNIT 4 TRAVEL

<b>VOCAB</b>	+ Video: <i>Funny English Teacher</i> . This video can be used as a way to warm up or change the atmosphere. T can make some pauses to check that Ss can catch certain phrases in the video. + Game: T writes a letter on the board and asks Ss to find 3 words (nouns/ verbs/ adjs/ advs) that begin with that letter. After writing all the letters, ask Ss to rearrange them to form a word (the title of this unit: TRAVEL)
<b>READING</b>	+ The follow-up activity: Ss make questions about the content of the reading passages and their partners have to answer the questions without looking at the book or the material.
<b>LISTENING</b>	+ Song: <i>Baby Can I Hold You</i> . Ss listen to the song and fill in the gaps with words and phrases with the focusing on modal verb CAN. + Video: <i>Funny English Teacher</i> . T can make some pauses to check that Ss can catch certain phrases in the video.
<b>GRAMMAR</b>	+ Song: <i>Baby Can I Hold You</i> . Ss listen to the song and fill in the gaps with words and phrases with the focusing on modal verb CAN. + Video: <i>To the Rescue (There is / There are + Can / Can't)</i> Ss are asked to complete a dialogue and use 2 above grammatical points. After that, they watch the video clip to check the answers.

#### UNIT 6 SALES

<b>READING</b>	+ The follow-up activity: Ss make questions about the content of the reading passages and their partners have to answer the questions without looking at the book or the material.
<b>LISTENING</b>	+ Song: <i>Don't Cry, Joni</i> . Ss listen to the song and fill in the gaps with words which mostly are the past forms of irregular verbs.
<b>GRAMMAR</b>	
<b>SPEAKING</b>	+ Game: <b>The best salesperson of Class _ _</b> . Ss watch a short video clip to see how a sales representative presents a product. Then they work in groups, choosing a product to present in front of the class. 2 Ss work as sales representatives, taking turn to present. Ss in other groups put questions to the sales representatives. T and Ss in other groups score them to choose the best salesperson of the class.

