

## Reading Homework due Week 4

### Task:

Read the attached text and complete the table and questions below with **ideas from the text or your own ideas**. Write your answers on this paper and bring to class for discussion.

Technique	Issues to consider (positive and negative)	Ideas to modify and adapt (your ideas or from the text)
Dictation		
Stories		
TPR		
Dialogs		
Puppets and animals		

1. Should the children only speak in English?

2. Should the teacher only speak in English?

# Listening and speaking

*The children are listening to and speaking English throughout our lessons, so issues related to these skills are discussed throughout this book. However, there are some aspects of teaching listening and speaking that require independent attention, such as how we ensure the children get enough active listening practice and how we integrate functional and grammatical patterns.*

## LISTENING

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*We should encourage children to listen to English as often as possible, and encourage parents to give the children many chances to do this.*

### **The value of listening**

It is important for children to listen to as much English of an appropriate level as possible. The level should either be easy for them, at their present level, or just beyond the level they can already understand. If the level is too difficult, the children may lose confidence and positivity.

If the children have a number of English lessons a week, it can be very helpful to do regular listening exercises from a tape, or with us providing the input. These exercises should be spread out as evenly as possible between lessons rather than done all at once in special lessons. If they only have one or two lessons a week, we should not expect the children's listening ability to improve much from special listening exercises in class. It is much more important to give them listening practice to do between lessons on a regular basis. We can encourage the children and their parents to play tapes in the car or at home, or encourage the children to watch videos or use English computer software.

What is possible will partly depend on the financial and social condition of a child's family, and on how much time she can devote to English, but at least we can stress to a child and to her parents that she will benefit greatly from listening to a lot of English. This does not mean we should avoid using tapes in class. It is just that we should not expect listening to tapes once or twice a week to improve the children's listening ability very much. Tapes are still very useful for providing the voices of characters in a course, for varying the way the children encounter target language, for model pronunciation, and to help introduce and practice songs.

### ■ Listening first?

Some teachers say that children should first hear a new language target for a while before speaking it, and for quite some time before reading or writing it. One of the arguments often made in support of this approach is that babies hear new items of their native language first, say them next, and read and write them some time later. Another argument in favor of learning listening first is that listening does not demand very much of children or put pressure on them. If we expect children to speak before they feel ready to do so, they may lose motivation.

This all depends on the age of the learners. In fact, native speakers who are of elementary school age do not always come across new language items by hearing them first. They may read them first, and when they do hear them first, they may say them very soon afterwards.

It is not so different with the approach suggested in this book. The children very often do first hear new language targets when we introduce them by using them in a natural context. The children listen, notice the patterns, and then try to use these patterns to express themselves either soon after hearing them or some time after. But, on some occasions, the children first read new words or sentences that are phonically regular, sound them out, and may not hear them until afterwards. At other times, we help the children say what they are trying to say, so we speak with them as they discover new English words and patterns for the first time.

### ■ Teachers or tapes first

When the children first come across new words and patterns from listening to us, we can interact with them while we speak, and present the new words and patterns as puzzles. For example, we can ask individual children questions like, *What sport do you like?* with a smile, knowing the children do not understand, but presenting the question as a puzzle to solve. We can then encourage the children to ask us the same question, and understand from our answer. If we answer using sports they are familiar with, and smile broadly when we speak to show that we like the sports, they can guess the meaning of the pattern from the context, and start to ask and answer the question among themselves. In this way, they learn through sensing whole chunks of language, and through thinking and guessing.

When the children listen to a tape first, they tend to guess and interact less, so it is usually best to have some kind of practice before listening. This can include using some of the language on the tape interactively, playing a game that includes some of the new words or patterns on the tape, or asking the children to do a puzzle while listening to the tape. For example, the children can have a series of pictures that illustrate what is on the tape. These pictures are mixed up, and the children put them in the correct order when they listen. In this kind of activity, they are thinking and solving a puzzle, not just listening to the tape passively.

## ■ Comprehension and communication

At any point in their learning of English, children can comprehend more than they can use communicatively. There is a comprehension zone beyond their current communication level that contains words, patterns, and chunks of language that they understand, but have not yet internalized deeply enough to be able to produce actively and flexibly. If this zone contains a rich supply of language items that they will soon be able to link into their mental models of English, their ability to communicate is likely to improve more quickly.

This means we should interact with the children in English, encourage the children to listen to tapes at home, and have background songs in the lessons, always making sure the children are encountering graded language that is within each child's comprehension zone. This applies to reading as well as listening. The children can read new words that are within their comprehension zone by sounding them out phonically.

We can grade our interaction with the children when we use classroom language, have natural exchanges, or when playing games with them. For example, when we are throwing a ball around the room and making sentences, we may say something like, *I like playing tennis*, while the children are saying, *I like tennis*, or, *I like soccer*. We do not "teach" the pattern. We use it naturally when we think the children will understand, and just get on with the game. The children may or may not use the pattern themselves at that time, but later when we introduce, *I like ... ing* as a target, the children will be able to internalize it more quickly and deeply.

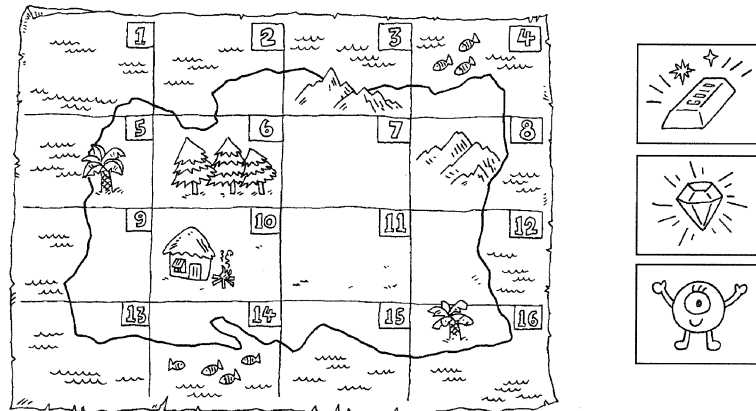
## ■ Dictation

Dictation exercises are very important, particularly for developing the children's awareness of phonic sounds, and contrary to the popular view of dictation, it can be a lot of fun. We can dictate sounds for the children to write in pictures, bingo grids and treasure maps, and the children can choose which squares to write the sounds in and get points if they choose certain squares.

The children can also have worksheets with sounds or words on them, and do activities such as listening to dictated sounds or words, choosing the correct ones on their worksheets, and joining them together to make pictures or travel through mazes. They can also do activities in the Games bank such as **Bingo**, **Chopstick Spelling**, and **Treasure Hunt Challenge**.

Treasure maps are a fun way to practice dictation and can also be used for a variety of reading, writing, and listening activities. We can dictate letters or letter combinations for the children to write down, or give them maps with letters already written down. Before the activity, we secretly place or write *gold*, *monster*, and *treasure* tiles on our own map, and when the children say or write the letter combinations that correspond to the squares in our map, they get plus or minus points. For example, *gold* is worth 10 points, *diamonds* 5 points, and *monsters* minus 3 points.

An example treasure map



## ■ Stories

If the children have more than one or two lessons a week, stories can be a wonderful way to supplement a course, particularly if the language in the stories can be integrated into the course. When stories are used for listening practice, we can memorize a story and tell it to them, read it to the children, or play it on a tape. It is easiest to interact with the children if we tell them a story we have memorized, but we can also interact to some extent if we read it. The drawback of this kind of activity is that however much we may try to make the story itself the focus of the activity, it usually ends up being too teacher-centered.

However, if we are careful to involve the children as much as possible, we can enrich their experience of English, provide a wider context for the language they are learning in other activities, and help the children explore the world of English for themselves, especially if we make the story into a kind of puzzle, and do not give explanations.

One way to do this is for the children to have puppets that represent the characters in the story, and for them to try and mime the story with the puppets as we read or tell it. Another way is for us to use a lot of mime and gesture the first time we read or tell the story, and then just do the mimes and see if the children can tell the story, or read or tell it again with the children doing the mimes and gestures as well. We help as much as is necessary, but step back when the children do not need help.

Having said this, getting the children to listen to stories on tapes or CDs does have certain important advantages. The children can hear a wider variety of voices, they can have a permanent record to listen to again between classes, and we can easily go back over the same thing again in exactly the same way. They can also listen to the stories again at home. Here are some activities we can do with stories:

- The children draw characters or scenes from the story.
- We tell the story with puppets using direct speech. The children then retell the story with their own puppets.
- We have pictures for some of the scenes in the story. The children put the pictures in the correct order, and touch or jump on the correct pictures as we tell the story. Also, before the story the children can put the pictures in the order they think they will be in.
- Each child has word cards. When one of her words is mentioned in the story she has to do something like put up her hand or make a funny noise.
- If the children know the story in their native language, we can ask them what English words they think may appear in the story. The children are also more likely to make guesses about English words they hear in the story if we use familiar stories translated into English from the children's native language.
- We can stop the story sometimes and ask the children what they think is going to happen next.

### ■ Total Physical Response (TPR)

Another technique that is often used in one form or another in the EFL classroom is **Total Physical Response (TPR)**. An example of TPR is for teachers to give instructions in English first combined with actions, and then give the same instructions again without the actions. The children show understanding by following these instructions without needing to speak. Many teachers in the Asian EFL classroom quite understandably question the validity of TPR in its original form because it does not give children enough opportunities to speak, so they modify it or just use it for particular language targets.

A common modification of TPR in the Asian classroom is for the children to say whatever they are doing. If the teacher says, *Please stand up*, the children may stand up and say in chorus, *We are standing up!* Many TPR purists might be shocked by the extent to which this goes against the original philosophy behind TPR, but children in Asian classrooms need as many opportunities as possible to speak.

One problem is that these modifications tend to turn the English lesson into a teacher-driven ritual where the children are very active but where there are insufficient opportunities for children to think for themselves and develop as autonomous learners. The children are active, having fun, and jumping around, so it all appears child-centered. In fact, the "learning" is being driven by the energy of the teacher.

There is a way around this, particularly with patterns for which TPR is particularly suited, such as for introducing instructions like, *Stand up*, *Point to the door*, and, *Put your hand on the table*. The children can speak out while performing the actions, but we can make the activity more child-centered by surprising them with new instructions.

For example, we can say, *Point to the ceiling*, with an innocent smile, the children think, *Huh? What does that mean?* and we smile and glance up at the ceiling. This is more in tune with how TPR was originally intended to be used. It is still teacher-initiated and the children are dependent on us for the initial input of language and often for the input of energy, too. But when mixed in with a lot of other activities, TPR can be an alternative technique for introducing new words and instructions. It is very good for helping the class bond together and, most important of all, the children enjoy it a lot.

## SPEAKING

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*The children need to speak, speak, and speak.*

### ■ Time to speak

The children can listen to English at home, read English at home, and even write English at home, but most of them have few opportunities to speak English at home. If we want children to learn to speak English, each of them must have many opportunities to speak during our lessons. They need to practice, practice and practice. If a class is large, we need to divide it up into pairs and groups so that each individual child will be able to speak more, and in all classes the children need to play games where they speak English a lot.

Many teachers feel it is necessary to do a lot of choral drilling and mechanical pattern practice to give the children enough chances to speak, but this is not effective if we want the children to use English communicatively and spontaneously. They definitely need to repeat patterns many times, but they can do this in meaningful ways and with genuine emotions.

### ■ Preparing children to communicate

Being able to communicate means being able to use English patterns flexibly in novel situations to express genuine thoughts and feelings, and our highest priority should be to focus on the long-term building of the skills that will enable the children to do this. We need to concentrate on the following:

- Introducing and practicing patterns in ways that feel meaningful to the children, such as in games, in situations where the children genuinely want to express themselves, and through personalization.
- Practicing new patterns in combination with the other patterns the children have learned, so the children can internalize them more easily.
- Giving the children many opportunities to guess how to use patterns flexibly in novel situations.
- Giving the children confidence to speak out in front of others by talking independently with other individual children and the whole class.
- Building the children's inner strength to deal with confusing and novel situations, by presenting them with puzzles to overcome and solve, and making sure they are finally successful.
- Focusing on the question forms of new patterns, so the children can ask about the things they do not know. They can learn, *What is it?* before or at the same time as learning, *It's a cat*, and, *What's she doing?* before or at the same time as learning, *She's sleeping*.

### ■ How do we introduce question forms?

We can hide and slowly reveal an interesting object or picture, mime, hide something behind our back, half draw a picture, get one of the children who knows more English than the others to do these things, or arouse the children's curiosity in some other way. When the children want to ask a question like, *What is it? Where is it?* or, *What are you doing?* and are trying to express themselves, we give them the appropriate question. They can then use the question to ask about things around the room, pictures, things outside the window, things in games, and other puzzles we make sure they encounter.

### ■ Dialogs

In the same way as when learning any aspect of English, it is important for children to practice dialogs in ways that are meaningful and stimulate genuine feelings. Many teachers think that teaching "communication" means getting the children to memorize dialogs. This may be appropriate if a child is going overseas next week or has an immediate need to use the patterns in the dialog, but most children in our classes are not in this situation.

However, practicing situational dialogs can be a lot of fun, and they can also be a good way to develop long-term communicative skills. It is important for the dialogs to contain patterns that the children can transfer to other situations, and instead of getting the children to memorize set dialogs, we can encourage them to make choices about what to say and to use the dialogs flexibly to express genuine thoughts and feelings.

Ideally, we can integrate functional dialog patterns with the more structural patterns the children may be learning step-by-step in the core syllabus. In this way, the children will build up an understanding of English that does not put grammar and functional dialogs into separate compartments, and come to see both these aspects of learning English as being interrelated. Consider the following example of how we can integrate structural and functional patterns. The new structure is *want*, and the functional patterns, *How about?* and *Here you are!*

### At the pet shop

1. Use a game to review a range of adjectives the children are likely to need to describe animals (e.g. *big, dangerous, cute, noisy, naughty*) or that are useful when shopping (e.g. *cheap, expensive*).
2. Place between ten and twenty animal flash cards or toy animals in a place where the children can see them. Include wild animals, insects, and even monsters.
3. Smile and say, *It's a pet shop*, or show the children a picture of a pet shop. Then bring one of the children to the front of the class. The other children can gather around to help her if necessary.
4. Gesture to the animals and ask, *What animal do you want?* If she cannot understand, gesture for her to choose an animal.
5. If she points at a rabbit, help her say, *I want a rabbit!* then say with appropriate gestures, *A rabbit? But rabbits are very naughty, they jump all over the place, and they are very expensive! How about a gorilla?* (Choose something you expect her not to want).
6. If she looks negative, encourage her to express her feeling and say something like, *No thank you! I don't want a gorilla! They are very big! And they're very dangerous!* She may need help from the other children or we may need to give prompts.
7. Suggest one or two other animals and encourage her to express her reaction with the help of the other children.
8. She may decide she still wants the rabbit or she may choose another animal. Finally, give it to her saying something like, *OK. Here you are. That's \$1,000* (say an expensive price in the local currency).
9. If she looks surprised at the price, encourage her to express her feeling by helping her say, *\$1,000! That's very expensive!* Then say something like, *OK. You're a good girl. How about \$900?* (Still expensive!)

10. We may need to help her say, *That's still very expensive!* and we can suggest other animals. She may end up still wanting the rabbit or may change her mind. Finally, we give her the animal she wants, saying, *Here you are*, and encourage her to answer, *Thank you very much*.
11. The dialog can continue a bit longer or can stop with her getting the rabbit. The children then try and make similar dialogs, in pairs, or take turns in front of the class if the class is small.

Notice that grammatical patterns and functional patterns are integrated. The children's understanding of how to use adjectives has been extended and they have encountered the new patterns when they are trying to express their feelings. Notice also that the children make choices during the dialog. After the dialog, the children should feel they said things they wanted to say, had fun, and learned new language items that fit comfortably with the English they already know. The more comfortably the new language fits, the more likely it is that they will use this new language actively to make guesses about the English they encounter in the future.

### ■ Puppets and animals

The children need to practice all kinds of practical dialogs. Some of these, such as telephoning or shopping, are not difficult to bring alive. For example, when practicing telephoning, the children can use toy telephones, and when practicing shopping, one or two desks or tables can be made into shops.

But the classroom does have limitations, and many practical situations can seem very far from the reality of the classroom, and tend to feel artificial and uninteresting. One effective way of addressing this problem is to use puppets or toy animals to role play these kinds of situations. The children can enjoy acting out scenes with the puppets and animals. Over time, some of their favorite ones may develop their own characters and voices, and the children can enjoy imagining how a particular puppet might behave in a certain situation.

Puppets or animals can be used to practice all kinds of patterns. The children might be practicing *can* or *like* and after making *I can ...* or *I like ...* sentences about themselves, the children can enjoy imagining what the puppets and animals can do or like doing. The puppets or animals can also join in the games. They can roll the dice and move their counters around a board, throw a ball and play card games with the children operating them. The puppets themselves can be soft toys that can be found in many toy shops or they can be finger puppets made out of paper which the children can enjoy making.

### ■ Should the children only speak English?

When children enter our classroom, they should enter a world of English. It should not be a world where they do the required practice in English but carry

out genuine communication among themselves or with us in their native language. For most of the lesson, we definitely want the children to only speak English, especially when they are playing games where they are learning and practicing new language targets. The children may easily lapse into speaking their native language if the activities are not clear or too difficult, so we need to make sure that the activities we introduce are clear and within their capabilities.

There are also times when it is a good idea for children to use their own language, such as when a child wants to say, *What's ... in English?* If she does not know the question in English, and is not allowed to use her native language, she will never ask the question. If we want to encourage active learning, we definitely need to encourage curiosity of this kind. Of course, the children can then learn how to say, *What's ... in English?*

However, there are not so many occasions in a lesson when a child really needs to speak in her native language. There is a great danger that if we allow the children to use their native language, the amount of English they use in class may become less and less over time. In general, it is best to establish the rule that only English is allowed, and then relax the rule for special situations such as asking us questions. One of the most effective ways to enforce the rule is by dividing a class into teams and giving minus points when one of the team speaks in their native language.

If it really is too hard for the children to only use English, we can have short sections of the class when children can speak in their native language. One of the best times to do this is just after an activity, or we can have pauses during games where we encourage the children to ask for English words and patterns they want to use in the games.

### ■ Should we only speak English?

There are some occasions when we need to speak in a child's native language. A child may be hesitating to write a sentence and we may want to encourage her by saying, *Don't worry if you make a mistake*, or she may be upset and crying about something and we may need to encourage her in her native language.

There may also be times when we need to use the children's native language to help introduce activities, but if possible we should try to use English accompanied by mime and gesture. In any case, children do not respond best to having a game explained to them either in English or their native language. Ideally, they should be drawn into the activities. Some activities may need to be demonstrated to some extent, but it is rarely necessary to explain the game in their own language.

Some native speakers of English may not be able to speak the children's native language. In this case, it may be helpful to build up a list of a few useful expressions in the native language such as, *Don't worry*, and, *Practice in pairs*, but after some experience it is possible to get these messages across in English accompanied by mime and gestures.

■ **Classroom language**

We can use English for classroom instructions. The first few times we say things like, *Open your books*, or, *Please write*, we can mime opening a book or writing, but after a while we stop doing the mime and just give the instruction in English. The children may also use their own language to say things like, *Where are the dice? It's my turn*, or, *It's very hot!* Just after they say these kinds of things naturally, we can help the children say the same things in English. This can be a very good way for the children to pick up chunks of peripheral language, and connect English with their real feelings. Here are some examples of classroom language:

**Classroom language**

**Simple expressions**

- Good afternoon.*
- How are you today?*
- Thank you.*
- I'm sorry.*
- I don't know.*
- Goodbye.*
- See you next week.*
- May I open the window?*

**Between the children**

- Can I borrow your ..., please?*
- Sure.*
- Here you are.*
- It's my turn.*
- It's your turn.*
- May I have a ...?*

**Asking for help**

- Could you repeat that, please?*
- What's this in English?*
- What's that in English?*
- How do you spell ...?*
- I don't understand.*
- Please help me.*
- How do I say ...?*

**From the teacher**

- Guess.*
- Please stand up.*
- Please open your books.*
- Let's write/go home.*
- Let's play ....*
- What's the weather like today?*
- It's time to write/go home.*

## A PAUSE TO REFLECT

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### ■ Integrating listening and speaking

It is often best not to think of listening and speaking as skills to be focused on independently. When one child is speaking, another is listening. When we are going about our job of being teachers, we can use English naturally in all kinds of situations, and the children are listening. When the children are playing games, they can be speaking out a lot. Even when the children are reading and writing, they can be speaking and listening. Our lessons can provide a total environment where the children listen to and speak English as much as possible.

#### Some questions to reflect on or discuss:

- 1 How can we encourage the children to listen to English between lessons?
- 2 What stories do you think the children will know well in their native language that we can tell in English?
- 3 How can we minimize the use of the children's native language and maximize the amount of English the children use in our lessons?
- 4 How can we best help the children to speak out with confidence?
- 5 How can we best help the children to use English flexibly in novel situations?
- 6 Can you think of other useful expressions we can introduce as classroom language?