

EXTENSION

The learners write the scenario for the mime-story they liked the most.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I first learnt this type of exercise from Eve Ogonowski, but I believe the idea and the title come from *Into the Life of Things: An Exploration of Language through Verbal Dynamics* (Burniston 1972).

5.9

LEVEL

Elementary to intermediate

TIME

15 minutes as a warm-up or filler; longer if main activity.

EXTRAS

A pack of playing cards or slips of paper with words written on them

LANGUAGE

FOCUS

Practice revision of vocabulary

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PREPARATION

Collect vocabulary items that your class have met recently. You can get your class to help you with this by asking them, the day before, to make short lists of items they'd like to learn but are afraid they won't or of items particular people in the class ought to learn but probably won't. (It can be fun if learners note down the person who ought to learn each word. This information can be shared after the poker game.)

Allot each player an equal number of poker chips, matches, or play money. These may be given out free, or someone (probably you) takes on the role of banker by selling the chips (or whatever) or making change.

Organise the class into groups of players, with no more than six per group. Each group sits at a separate table. First, however, you will need to demonstrate the rules by playing with one small group while the rest of the class stands around.

Procedure

- 1 Each player puts an agreed sum of tokens, or money, into the centre of the table. This is the 'ante'.
- 2 The dealer deals each player three cards.
- 3 The players look at their cards and silently try to produce one of the following:
 - a One sentence using all three of the vocabulary items involved.
 - b Two sentences, with two of the items in one sentence and the other in the second sentence.
- 4 Players who decide that they cannot complete this task, may ante again and take one additional card, so can players who can use all their words in one or two sentences but who think that they could also do the more ambitious task in step 5. Anyone who thinks they have a terrible set of words and does not want to risk more money may give up, that is, they may 'stack' or 'fold' their cards.

- 5 When all players who wish to have drawn a fourth card, ask them to form, silently, one of the following:
- a One sentence using all four items.
 - b Two sentences, which use up all four of the items.
- 6 Again, players decide whether to stack or stay in the game with the cards that they have (i.e. to 'hold') or to buy an additional card, that is, to try for a better hand (i.e. set of cards) by risking more tokens or money.
- 7 Now, some players may have five cards (the maximum) while others have four or even only three, depending on whether and how often they held. Others may be out of the hand (i.e. this game). It is time for the players to begin betting. (Set a limit on the amount of money or tokens per bet.)
- 8 The player to the dealer's left has the first opportunity to bet. If they decline to bet (i.e. if they 'check'), the turn passes clockwise. If someone bets, that is, puts a sum of money or of tokens that they wish to risk into the middle of the table, then every player following them must either bet the same amount (i.e. 'call') or stack or 'raise'. If they raise, they bet more than the amount of the previous bet. This new, additional sum must be put into the middle of the table by everyone who has already bet. Anyone who hasn't already bet must put in the sum of the original bet plus the sum of the raise. (Set a limit on the number of raises, say two or three.)
- Learners bet according to how good they think their sentence/s is/are. Or, if they think they can frighten other players out of the game, they may 'bluff', that is, bet as though they have a good hand even though they haven't.
- 9 When everyone has either called all the bets or has stacked, the players still in the game read out their sentences. The best ones take the 'pot' (i.e. the tokens or money in the middle of the table). If there is a draw, the money stays in the 'kitty' (i.e. the middle of the table) for the next hand, which all players may join again. The order of precedence of hands, from best to worst is:

- 5 items in one sentence
- 4 items in one sentence plus 1 in another
- 4 items in one sentence
- 3 items in one sentence plus 2 in another
- 3 items in one sentence plus 1 in another
- 3 items in one sentence
- 2 items in one sentence and 2 in another
- 2 items in one sentence and 1 in another