

TASK-BASED LESSONS

LESSON 1: STRICT PARENTS

If you are new to task-based teaching you may want to read through this lesson plan together with

LESSON 1 COMMENTARY: YOU HAVE THE SKILLS TO DO IT

This lesson is taken from our book, *Doing task-based teaching*, but it is described in more detail here. It is based on an idea which was given us for the book by Tim Marchand, Director of Smith's School, Kyoto, Japan. The lesson is built round a discussion. The question for discussion is:

Whose parents were the strictest?

1 Introduction.

You might lead into the discussion by telling students about your own childhood. Look at the student questionnaire below to give you some ideas as to what to include in this introduction.

2 Student questionnaire.

Here is a possible questionnaire to guide the student discussion. It is intended for discussion in groups of three or four. You may want to leave out some of the items. For example *c)* may be inappropriate in some settings. You may want to include other items, for example *Did you have to look after brothers and sisters?*

The questionnaire and the discussion were designed for an adult class who were asked to look back on their childhood. If you are teaching a high school class you may want to ask them questions relevant to their earlier childhood. Instead of *b)* for

example, you might ask *What time did you have to go to bed?* Instead of c) you might ask *Did they let you stay overnight with friends?*

When you were a child:

- a) *Do you think your parents were strict or easy-going?*
- b) *Did they allow you to stay out late at night?*
- c) *Did they let you go on holiday on your own?*
- d) *When you went out did you always have to tell them where you were going?*
- e) *Did you always have to do your homework before supper?*
- f) *Did your parents make you help about the house?*
- g) *Did you have to help in the garden?*
- h) *What jobs did they make you do?*

You can vary the demands you place upon the class. With an advanced class you could begin by going straight into the questionnaire without further introduction. With a weaker class or an intermediate class you might begin with a teacher led discussion of each question. Here are some options you might consider going from least to most teacher support:

1. Go straight into the questionnaire without any further introduction.
2. Show students the questionnaire, give them two minutes or so to read through it, then ask them if they understand everything.
3. Show students the questionnaire then read through it with them explaining any possible difficulties.
4. As 3. As you read each question tell them briefly about your own experience.
5. As 4. At each stage after relating your own experience ask a student to tell you what they think.
6. As 5. Finish by adding a summary of what has been said.

If you go for option 1 this means that students will have to rely almost entirely on their own resources, although the fact that they will be working in groups will mean that they can help one another. If you go for a lower option, number 5, for example, this will give you an opportunity to help with the kind of vocabulary they might need. You might want to make a list of new words down one side of the board.

You should not worry about grammar at this stage. Students will find their own ways of expressing the meanings they want. You may quickly rephrase some of the things they say to make them more comprehensible, but do not spend time correcting grammar and do not spend time at this stage on grammatical explanation or practice. That will come later (see 5 below)

3 Discussion

Put students into groups of about four and ask them to decide whose parents were the strictest. Tell them they can use the ideas in the questionnaire, but they may want to add to them. As they are involved in the discussion go round the groups listening to what they have to say. It is better not to correct students at this stage, but if they are having problems expressing themselves you might want to help out.

During the discussion you should appoint one student for each group as spokesperson. Their job is to report the findings of the group to the class as a whole after the discussion. You may want to allocate other roles as well. One possibility is to make one student the group secretary. Their job is to take notes to summarise the discussion for other group members.

4 Post-discussion.

After the discussion give the groups a few minutes to brief their spokesperson before that person reports back to the class. Choose one or two of the groups and ask them to report. Ask the other groups to listen carefully and compare with the strictest parents from their own group.

After the discussion you may want to summarise what the groups have told you and to ask the other groups for their comments.

5 Language Focus

- a. Give students a copy of the questionnaire. Ask them to underline all the expressions about what people were forced to do and what they were allowed to do.
- b. Tell them to turn over their copy of the questionnaire so that they cannot see it. Show the following on OHT or Powerpoint, or give it to them as a handout:

When you were a child:

1. *Do you think your parents were ----- or ---- - -----?*
2. *Did they ----- --- -- stay out late at night?*
3. *Did they --- --- go on holiday on your own?*
4. *When you went out did --- always --- -- tell them where you were going?*
5. *Did you always ---- -- do your homework before supper?*
6. *Did your parents ---- --- help about the house?*
7. *Did you ---- -- help in the garden?*
8. *What jobs did they ---- --- do?*

- c. Ask them to work in pairs to fill in the blanks.
- d. Tell students to put their worksheets away. Put numbers 1-8 on the board. Ask students to work in pairs to see how many of the 8 sentences they can recall. You may want to make this recall exercise easier. You can do this by leaving a few key words in:

1 Do you ----- ---- parents ---- ----- or -----?

Etc.

Or you can give them a version of each sentence with all the grammatical words and markers removed:

2. they/you/stay/late/night

3. they/you/go/holiday/own

Etc.

You can ask them to pause after five minutes and listen, without writing, while you read the sentences out to them. They can then go back to work.

Students usually enjoy the challenge of this kind of exercise.

6 Controlled practice

You may want to round off the lesson with some controlled practice. This will help to fix the forms in learners' minds, making it more likely that they will become a natural part of their productive repertoire. Here are two possible exercises practising *make* and *do*, and the verbs *force*, *allow* and *suppose* in the passive, which is how they are very frequently used:

Complete these to make true sentences:

*1 When I was a child my parents **made me***

*2 They **let me***

*3 I was **forced to***

*4 I was **allowed to***

*5 I was **supposed to***

Think about your schooldays...

1 List three things you had to do or were forced to do.

2 List three things you weren't allowed to do.

3 List three things you were supposed to do but didn't.

As students read out their sentences you may want to incorporate listen and repeat drills.

After students have composed their sentences you can ask one or two of them to read out one of their sentences, then, after four or five ask the rest of the class to see how many sentences they can recall. You can make this easier for them by writing clues up on the board:

*Miguel: Wear
uniform*

Juan:

Homework

Maria: High



heels

Students will then recall:

Miguel had to wear a uniform.

Juan was supposed to do his homework every night.

Maria wasn't allowed to wear high heels.

7 Follow-up

You should try to follow up in a subsequent lesson within a week. With a general class you could remind them of the discussion and ask them to recall their conclusions in a teacher led discussion. With an exam class you might follow this with a gap filling exercise or give a few multiple choice items which feature these grammatical items and reproduce the format of their exam.

Another possibility would be to have a skills lesson focusing on the same topic. Here are extracts from two interviews recorded by Tim Marchand, which you could use as the basis of a listening skills lesson:

- A:** My Dad is a quiet man really, so he didn't really make me do much at home. He sometimes asked me to wash his car or cut the grass, but I was never forced to do it, and I could usually get some pocket money for it as well. I think my Mum was also pretty easy-going; she let me stay out late with my friends. As long as she knew where I was, she wouldn't mind so much what I did.
- B:** My father was definitely stricter than my Mum. If I had been in trouble at school, it was always left up to him to tell me off. But I wouldn't say that my Mum was easy-going exactly. She would sit me down sometimes and make me do my homework in front of her, or force me to eat my greens, things like that. I guess I was just more scared of my father.

