

Dramatic Dialogues

that can be used in the classroom.

By Lindsay Clandfield

Many of the speaking activities that have appeared in this section have focused on fluency practise. This month's activity is a speaking activity which is a lot more restricted. Reading dialogues are frequently used in class, especially at lower levels. Dialogues are often used to introduce learners to a new structure or function (e.g. complaining in a restaurant). Students hear a dialogue, usually on a cassette or video, and copy it with a partner. The following dialogues can be used in a variety of ways, and are suitable for all levels except total beginners.

TWO AIMS for these DIALOGUES

1. They can serve as **pronunciation practice**, more specifically **intonation practice**. Intonation refers to the rise and fall of the pitch in our voice when speaking. A flat intonation in learners of English can often be interpreted as boredom or sullenness. By asking learners to role play different situations, with the language already there for them, more work can be done with sentence stress and intonation.
2. They can also be used to start off a speaking activity. They are all slightly ambiguous, which means that there are many different possible contexts each one could have. Once you have provided different contexts for them to be read aloud, ask learners to speculate and make a list of other possible contexts. Another obvious follow up would be to tell them to extend the dialogue by another four or six lines. Or simply continue ad-libbing the dialogue after it has finished.

HOW TO USE these DIALOGUES

Give out the dialogue(s) and ask students to read it (one) together. It is unlikely that students will vary their intonation at this stage.

Under each dialogue there are a list of possible contexts or emotions. Ask learners to read out the dialogue again, but putting in the context or emotion. They must still stick to the script of the dialogue and not add or subtract any words. There are different ways you can do this in class.

1. Ask students to do it in pairs. Ask a pair to come up and perform the scene for the rest of the class.
2. After the initial practice of the dialogue, ask a pair to come up and perform it in front of the class. Give them the context (which the rest of the group doesn't hear). The rest of the class has to guess the context.
3. Same as (2) above but give the context to everyone except ONE of the learners performing the dialogue (he or she could leave the room while you do this). When he or she comes back, the pair performs the dialogue and the learner has to guess what was happening.

DRAMATIC DIALOGUES

WHAT'S YOUR NAME

- A What's your name?
B Jon Wood.
A Where are you from?
B New Zealand.
A What do you do?
B I'm a medical student.

Possible contexts: You are in a disco, one is trying to pick the other one up; You are at airport customs and have something illegal in your bag; You are a prisoner of war.

YOU'RE FIRED

- A (knocks on the door)
B Come in.
A Hello. You wanted to see me?
B Yes. Do you know why I've called you?
A No.
B Can you explain this? (shows a piece of paper)
A But I thought you said it wasn't important.
B You're fired.
A Fine, I hated this stupid job anyway.

Possible emotions and/or contexts: You're nervous, happy, sad, afraid of the other; you are a bit deaf.

Further speculation could be done on what the job was, what the person had done wrong etc.

I'M GOING TO HAVE A BABY

- A I have something I need to tell you.
B What is it?
A I'm going to have a baby.
B No.

Possible contexts: You are a couple who has been trying to have a baby for three years; you are a 16 year old girl confessing to your mother; you are a very old couple; you are the secretary confronting your boss; you are a man telling your doctor!

SAY SOMETHING

- A Well, are you going to say something?
B What do you want me to say?
A I don't know, anything.
B I have nothing to say.
A Nothing?
B That's right.

Possible contexts/emotions: You are in love, afraid, angry; you are two criminals trapped in prison; you are in a courtroom; you are talking to your boss on the phone.

SHE'S HERE.

- A She's here.
B Already?
A Yes. What do you want me to do?
B Tell her to come in.

Possible contexts: You are afraid/excited/furious; you are at work and "she" is the president of the company; you are the President of the United States waiting to meet the Queen of England.

Further speculation could be done on who "she" is.