

# EXPLORING SPACE

## *Speaking Classes for Intermediate and Advanced Classes* by Lindsay Clandfield

The following activities are all connected to the theme of space and space travel. They are suitable for all learners from Intermediate level to Advanced level. Each activity is outlined below, with possible language aims. You can choose to do one, two or all three of the activities. Should you wish to do all three, it is recommended that you do them in the order they occur below.

### **Warmer (all activities)**

Write on the board the following words: Soyuz, Challenger, Columbia, Shenzhou. Ask learners 'What do they all have in common?' Answer: they are all names of space ships (Soyuz is the name of a Russian rocket, Challenger and Columbia are the names of American space shuttles and Shenzhou is the name of the first manned Chinese rocket that was sent into space in October 2003). Ask learners to work in pairs and write as many words connected to space and space travel as they can. Who can write the most words in two minutes? Ask the pair that writes the most words to come up to the board and write them up.

### **Exploring Space Speaking Activity #1: Guessing Game**

Preparation: For this activity, you need a copy of the pictures worksheet. Make copies of the pictures. There should be one picture for every two learners (i.e. if you have twelve learners in your class, you will need two copies of the worksheet). Cut the pictures out, then cut each picture in half diagonally.

Give each learner one half of the picture. Explain that they must find the other half of their picture. They must follow these rules:

1. Do not show your picture to anyone.
2. Describe your picture to different people as specifically as possible and try to find the other half.
3. Use only English.

Note that this activity requires learners to be quite specific in their descriptions, as there are two different photos of each thing (2 photos of rockets from different distances, 2 photos of space shuttles from different distances, 2 photos of astronauts).

Language points: language for describing and speculating (*it looks like... it could be... it can't be ...*)

### **Exploring Space Speaking Activity #2: First National Astronaut**

Ask learners if they can tell you what three countries have sent people into space (answer: Russia, United States and China). In October 2003, China sent its first astronaut into space. It was a great honour for the country, and the

astronaut is now considered a national hero. Explain that the learners are going to decide who will be the next person to be sent into space for their country. Outline the following situation:

*Your country has decided to send its first manned rocket into space. The National Space Committee is looking for the ideal candidate for the post of first National Astronaut. It can be a man or a woman. The Committee is looking for the person with the best qualifications and background to have the honour of this job.*

Now divide the class into groups of three or four. One group is the National Space Committee. Every other group is made up of a candidate for the post of first National Astronaut and his (or her) supporters. Tell the groups they have ten to fifteen minutes. The National Space committee must decide what kind of candidate they are looking for and what kind of questions they are going to ask. The candidates and their supporters must plan their backgrounds with as much detail as possible. After the time is up, have the committee members split up and interview each of the candidates in turn. At the end of the interviews, the committee has three minutes to decide who will receive the job. They must then make their official announcement to the rest of the class.

Language points: language for convincing (*you should choose... candidate x is the best because...*) education lexis (*degree in... doctoral studies in... experience with...*)

### **Exploring Space Speaking Activity #3: Discussion Questions**

Copy the following questions onto individual strips of paper. Make sure you have enough copies of the questions so that there is one set for every three or four learners. Divide the class into groups of three or four and give each group a set of questions. They should put the questions all face down on the table. They then take turns. One learner picks up a question and asks the others to answer.

#### **Discussion questions**

- Did you want to be an astronaut when you were a child?
- Do you think that there is life on other planets?
- If you had the chance to go into space, would you take it?
- Imagine you are going on a voyage into space. This voyage will be for several months. You are allowed to take three personal items with you. What items would you take?
- Do you think that one day a human being will walk on Mars?
- Do you think it is a waste of money to explore space?
- Do you or anyone in your family remember the Moon landing?
- Some people say that the Moon landing was a hoax. What do you think?
- Do you think that Earth has been visited by extraterrestrials?

Language point: A lot of different language could come up here, but you could pre-teach/review the second conditional which occurs in a couple of the questions.

Did you want to be an astronaut when you were a child?

Do you think that there is life on other planets?

If you had the chance to go into space, would you take it?

Imagine you are going on a voyage into space. This voyage will be for several months. You are allowed to take three personal items with you. What items would you take?

Do you think that one day a human being will walk on Mars?

Do you think it is a waste of money to explore space?

Do you or anyone in your family remember the Moon landing?

Some people say that the Moon landing was a hoax. What do you think?

Do you think that Earth has been visited by extraterrestrials?