

Additional Ideas on Creative Use of Language Lab — “Beyond the Basics”

In Prince George’s County we have continually encouraged foreign language teachers to make maximum use of the language laboratory. Although the use of the lab is required in our program, we are aware that some teachers have become extremely adept and innovative in utilizing it. Of course it is the students who have profited immensely in those situations. We are also aware that the teacher’s attitude toward the lab is transmitted to the students.

Please be reminded that we recommend minimal use of the repetition mode in the lab. We do recommend the use of fill-in exercises; listening comprehension activities; reading and writing exercises. Also the possibilities for grouping in the lab should not be ignored.

The following suggestions are based on ideas submitted by John Enkiri, Suitland Senior. These are ideas for teachers who wish to go beyond the basic instruction to make the lab more interesting. Most of these require long-range planning with the students; however, they have the potential of providing enrichment and engendering enthusiasm. They can be adapted to different levels. Three recommendations:

- (1) These activities should be planned and executed by students under the teacher’s direction;
- (2) They should not be attempted with unruly classes;
- (3) They should include both class material, and at times other materials, especially in upper levels.

Though some of these activities can be carried out in the classroom, it is a fact that the contact with the language through the headset is much more effective and lasting.

1. A disc jockey who plays short excerpts of music in the foreign language, does commercials for products of interest to teen-agers. Class listens and is required to respond to “bonus” questions.
2. Interview with a “mystery” person - pre-recorded. Listeners are to guess who the mystery person is. (Each student would eventually have a chance at being the mystery person.)
3. A “game show” - class divides into teams; questions are heard over headphones; teams get a point for each member who knew the answer. (Students would have a paper on which they write the answer. Later they are collected and checked. This activity could be built around material in the text.)

4. Have students prepare a dialogue or composition for each day. They read it into their microphones while teacher "tunes in" on different students to help them with any errors.

Those students who were not "contacted" would hand in their compositions.

Students in booths would record theirs (Teacher might save a few of them and listen later.)

5. Students prepare and pre-record a "talk show," playing roles of well-known personalities. This activity may be related to career education. They also prepare a set of questions to be asked of the listeners. Questions can be on ditto before the students as they listen through their headsets. When they hear something which seems to be an answer to one of the questions on the sheet they hurriedly write it in the space provided for the questions. "Hidden" within the dialogue of the "talk show" might be a question directed at the listeners to either repeat something, give a piece of information, etc. As the teacher observes, he/she may determine who is not comprehending. (It is not expected that students would understand **everything** in such exercises. Students should be warned concerning this matter so that the frustration level may be avoided. Materials should try to incorporate known vocabulary and structure as much as possible.)
6. Lab buddy system. Students divided into pairs. One member of each pair wearing headset - one without headset. Midway through lesson students can reverse roles. Teacher - made (or made by advanced students for lower level.) tape directs student wearing headset to ask his/her partner questions based on material which is in text or has been presented in class. Tape supplies student wearing headset with correct answer so that he/shemay judge the partner's response. In a class with an odd number of students one group can be a **trio** - one student with headset, two without. The later take turns responding.

Ad Infinitum

These few examples are given to stimulate teachers' thinking in this vein. In the lab, all students can be engaged simultaneously. Mr. Enkiri and supervisory staff would appreciate hearing from teachers who are trying activities of this nature.

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