

## WARMERS AT THE LESSON OF ENGLISH

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The beginning of the lesson is one of its most important stages which is vital for the good procession and success of the lesson. As the Englishmen say: “*A good beginning makes a good ending*”. The purpose of the teacher at this stage is to introduce the learners into the atmosphere of the language, substituting the formal organizational moment of the class by an active didactic means namely *warmers*.

This is what we could simply call the warm-up to distinguish it from the lesson introduction. The very step that immediately follows the warm-up is the introduction. Therefore, the warm-up, pedagogically speaking, comes first and it is more than just a review so as to bridge the gap between the previous and the current lesson or to set the tone for what will follow.

Warm-up and introduction are to be intermingled in one phase to tile the way for a smooth presentation stage. This opening activity is not only indispensable to English-mind-set the pupils but also is a powerful component to bring the kids closer to the ambiance of the English lesson and setting them to get involved.

Activities at the start of the lesson deserve more attention than they usually receive. Thus, the initial activities that start the class are very important for the following reasons:

- Warm ups set the tone of the lesson. For example, an activity that students find too difficult or confusing can prove discouraging. The students need to be settled in a relaxing not challenging atmosphere. The teacher has to build up an ambiance of confidence and mutual trust. The teacher also

has to focus and bring up energy to each class in the first ten or fifteen minutes or to break the ice with a new class of students [8].

- Warm ups get students to begin thinking and focusing on English. It may have been a few days, a week, or even longer since they last used English. A little time here will improve receptivity later.

- Warm ups allow the teacher important opportunities to assess character and ability. After all, some students work well together, and others don't. Some students have good days, and others bad. During the initial activity, the teacher can determine who will form the best groups for subsequent activities.

- Warm ups provide a transition into the topic. An activity at the start of the lesson activates pre-existing knowledge on a subject, and may even get students to use (or consider) some of the ideas, vocabulary, or even grammar important to the lesson, specially applied to advanced students [10].

- Warm ups are also useful to fill a small block of time when a lesson runs shorter than a teacher planned or to replace the lesson that the students can't grasp or are bored with.

Further we present ideas on the use of warmers at the practical lessons of the English language. All of them are divided into phonetic, lexical and grammatical aspects.

### **Phonetic warmers.**

The importance of correct pronunciation cannot be overestimated. The way we sound when we speak a foreign language has a strong influence on the assumptions other people make about us and the judgments they make about the sort of people we are. A learner who consistently mispronounces a range of phonemes can be extremely difficult to understand. This can be very frustrating for the learner who may have a good command of grammar and lexis but have difficulty in understanding and being understood by a native speaker [4].

The practice shows that many students, especially those having Russian as mother tongue have difficulties in pronunciation of the sounds [w] and [v]. They often mispronounce *very* as *wery* or *will* as *vill*. In order to eliminate this misspelling the teacher can practice the pronunciation of [w] by learning the following poem:

*Why do you cry Willy?  
Why do you cry?  
Why Willy? Why Willy?  
Why, Willy, why?*

Tongue twisters are a very good example of a phonetic warmer. Some teachers avoid them, however, these can be amusing and effective in helping learners to produce problematic sounds or distinguish between closely related sounds. Tongue twisters should be started slowly, and then build up speed to make it more challenging. This type of activity can be given to be practiced at home or to be done in class. Some examples might be:

- *It's the fourth door on the forty-fourth floor.*
- *Thirty-four workmen walked through the door.*
- *I walk to work because I can't park my car.*
- *Pat Black has a red setter that gets on his lap.*

The interplay between [s] and [sh] is vividly shown in the following tongue-twister.

*She sells sea shells at the seashore.  
The shells she sells are surely sea shells.  
So if she sells shells on the seashore,  
I'm sure she sells seashore shells.*

In the activity **Odd one out** the students have to distinguish which word in a series of four is different from the other three. Using words with a minimal difference, four words are read aloud, only one of which has a different sound. Students have to say which word in the sequence is different. For example:

Teacher: *Pet, pet, pat, pet.*

Students: *number three.*

### **Lexical warmers.**

All teachers of English know very well how important vocabulary is. They know students must learn thousands of words that speakers of English use. Fortunately, the need for vocabulary is one point on which teachers and students agree. Here are some of the warming activities which can be used to improve the students' vocabulary.

#### **Riddles**

In order to make English funny and to get students thinking the following activity based on riddles can be used! The class is divided into teams. The teacher must specify that attention is essential. The teacher reads the clues to the riddles, team can guess what the answer is. If they are correct after one guess they score 6 points, after 2 guesses five points, etc... If a team gives the incorrect answer they cannot have another try. Here are some examples of riddles:

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| ***I'm usually made of paper,<br>but in Australia I'm plastic.<br>I come in lots of colours.<br>I have pictures and numbers on me.<br>You use me to buy things.<br>(bank-note) | ***I'm yellow and round.<br>I'm the same size as an apple.<br>You can't eat me.<br>You hit me with a racquet.<br>(tennis ball) | ***Every country has one.<br>I have different colours.<br>I need wind to fly.<br>The British one is red, white and blue.<br>(flag) |
|--|--|--|

### ***Silly dictation.***

As the statistics show students do not like dictation, either it is easy or difficult. However, this type of “boring” activity can be transformed into a funny one. It can be successfully used at the lessons of Writing as well as the means of acquiring general and specialized vocabulary on the basis of the studied text. This activity also encourages thinking skills and allows students to process the language. The teacher pretends to have a sore throat but he is still going to do a dictation. If the students don't hear words, they just have to guess/ or remember what the teacher said / or what was written in the homework text/. For example, at the Psychology department the following type can be used:

\*\*\*\**Some psychological ... / problems/ may appear during the ..../ teenage/ age.*

*The state of depression is very near to ... / suicide/*

*There are many ..../ reasons/ why people commit .../suicide/.*

An alternative to this warmer is “***Gapped examples***” activity. Students write out a list of five or ten useful phrases or short sentences from the studied text, omitting one word or phrase from each other. They exchange lists with a partner or another pair, who has to complete them from memory, or they can read them aloud to the whole class for completion [3].

“***Noughts and crosses***” tend to revise vocabulary from previous lessons in a fun, stress-free, game-like way. The teacher draws the grid above on the board. The class is divided into two teams. The teacher asks questions about vocabulary from the previous lesson(s). If the students get the answer right, the team's symbol goes into the square (usually X or O). If they get the answer wrong, the opposition team gets a chance to answer the

question for an extra turn. The first team to have a line of correct answers in any direction is the winner.

### ***What and Why?***

Another activity is meant to practice questions forms and a wide range of specialized and general vocabulary. The condition is that this activity does not have to be linked with any others. The teacher is going to read out something strange and the students have to work out what has happened. The activity can be done individually or in groups. The students can ask questions about the situation and you can only respond with a yes/no/maybe. The first student to guess what has happened is the winner. Examples of situations:

- A man is lying dead in a snowy field. There are no footprints to or from his body. The man has a pack on his back. How did he die? / Answer: He jumped out of a airplane with a parachute on his back that failed to open./
- Five pieces of coal, a carrot and a scarf are lying on the grass. Nobody put them on the grass but there is a perfectly logical reason why they should be there. What is it? /Answer: They were used by children who made a snowman. The snow has now melted.
- A woman had two sons who were born on the same hour of the same day of the same year. But they were not twins. How could this be so? / They were two of a set of triplets (or quadruplets etc.)/
- A man rode into town on Friday. He stayed for three nights and then left on Friday. How come? / Answer : The man's horse was called Friday./

### ***Sherlock Holmes***

The majority of students like mystery and detective stories. By the following activity students are given the possibility to become Sherlock Holmes himself. The activity can be practiced in a small groups. The teachers hands out strips of paper with directions like these: *How many students are wearing black shoes today? How many chairs are there in the classroom? How many students are holding pencils? How many posters are there on the classroom walls?* The students wander around the classroom finding the answer to their question. As soon as they have their answer, they run to the board, write the question and answer and their name. If there are a lot of students and access to the board is confined, students who have finished can sit down in their seats when they are finished and then read out their questions and answers in the order they finished at the end of the activity [7].

A very good warmer based on the revision of the vocabulary is ***My and your shoes***. Here the teacher prepares the questions like *Where were your shoes made? How did you get them? What colour/size/shape are they? Was there a special reason for getting them? Where have you been in those shoes?* The teacher asks the students to look at their shoes and think about their history for a minute in silence, and then asks them to take a pen and paper and find a partner. In pairs the students take it in turns to find out as much as possible about the other person's shoes (time limit is allowed). While they listen to each other's answers they can take notes. At the end of the activity each student takes turns to tell the class one interesting thing they found out about their partner's shoes and the partner himself!

### **Grammar warmers.**

Grammar acquisition is increasingly viewed as crucial to language acquisition. However, there is much disagreement as to the effectiveness of different approaches for presenting vocabulary items. Moreover, learning grammar is often perceived as a tedious and laborious process. There are numerous techniques concerned with grammar presentation. However, there are a few things that have to be remembered irrespective of the way new lexical items are presented. If teachers want students to remember new grammar it needs to be learnt in the context, practiced and then revised to prevent students from forgetting. Teachers must take sure of that students have understood the new words, which will be remembered better if introduced in a “memorable way”. Bearing all this in mind, teachers have to remember to employ a variety of techniques for new grammatical presentation and revision [2].

Further we examine some techniques and language games for grammar presentation and revision, in order to determine their successfulness in presenting and revising grammar.

#### ***Poetic article***

For some reasons it is very hard for students to understand the concept of why we use the indefinite article *a*, *an*, and the definite *the*. So, memorizing a poem can help them remember it by association:

*If you know the answer,  
you must use THE.  
But if you don't know,  
use An or A.*

#### **Phrasal Verb Lethal Chilli**

As with many kinds of activity, competition can spice up the most dreary of grammar. The students are divided into teams and given a list of 5-10 phrasal verbs from their course. They must define the phrasal verb without

using it. The other teams can guess the answer in rotation and a successful answer gets two points. If a team guesses incorrectly another team can claim one point. But if the definer defines incorrectly their team will lose two points.

### ***Songs and grammar***

Songs have been part of the human experience for as long as we can remember. Songs have become an integral part of our language experience, and if used in coordination with a language lesson they can be of great value. Fortunately, with the expanding prevalence of the Internet and specifically the World Wide Web into both the classrooms and lives of students, access to music and lyrics has been made easier. D.K. Eken states that songs can be used: to present and practice a topic, a language point, lexis; to focus on common learner errors in a more direct way; to encourage extensive and intensive listening; to stimulate discussion of attitudes and feelings; to encourage creativity and use of imagination; to provide a relaxed classroom atmosphere etc [1,p.46]. Thus, songs seem to be an indispensable means of teaching very often being used both as a warmer and an independent exercise. Here are some examples of the use of songs as warmers /or fillers / at the lessons of English grammar, when doing classical grammar becomes a boredom.

### ***Song lyrics***

The teacher plays recordings of well known songs and deletes verbs in accompanying text. For example, The Beatles song, “All My Loving” is used to introduce Future with “will”:

*Close your eyes and I'll kiss you,  
Tomorrow I'll miss you;  
Remember I'll always be true.  
And then while I'm away,  
I'll write home ev'ry day,  
And I'll send all my loving to you.*

Students listen to the song without the text and the teacher can ask a question to focus attention on the tense used. Then they listen with the text and do the close exercise. Then they highlight the form of the verb tense and extend into a Controlled Practice.

Nowadays, WWW has a lot of sites where lyrics and the music of the teaching songs can be downloaded. For example, [www.songsforteaching.com](http://www.songsforteaching.com) has a large variety of grammar activities on special topics.

English verbs are recognized to be the most difficult part of speech for the learners. In order to ease the way the students comprehend verbs'

features, the teacher can perform / if he/she has vocal talent/, or make the students listen to the following / an excerpt of a *Verb Rap* is given/:

*Talking 'bout all the words that are verbs  
Don't you know they are action words?  
Without verbs no sentence is complete  
Learning verbs is as fun as this beat.*

*Don't care what you've heard now.*

*Verbs are action words now.*

*Use 'em when somebody's doing something  
Anything that happens needs a verb to begin  
Here're examples to show what I mean....*

### ***Present Continuous rap.***

The use of Present Continuous Tense and its difference from Present Simple may cause problems to the beginners. In this context, the following song can be much useful in explaining the rules of the tense / the performance may be accompanied by music/:

*The present continuous is what I'm saying  
Grammar is the game that I am playing  
The form of BE, the verb plus ING  
And if you want to use it just follow me!  
N-O-W, now!*

### ***Preposition rap***

Prepositions also seem to be a milestone in English grammar. Although it may seem strange, their correct use can be taught by the use of songs. Here there is an excerpt of the song to teach prepositions:

*The cat sleeps on the floor  
Jimmy walks in through the door  
You drive in a car, you sleep under a tree  
You're outside with your friends  
Mary stands in front of you  
Freddy stands beside you  
And Susan stands behind you.....*

Another way of plunging into the atmosphere of grammar in the English classroom is organizing a ***Press Conference***. Students adore celebrities and talk much about them. Combining both the students' interest in famous people and Reported Speech patters, while at the same time having some fun, a good result can be achieved. First the teacher and the students discuss the advantages and disadvantages of being famous. Then

one student is asked to impersonate someone rich and famous. The other students guess who s/he is and interview him/her. Meanwhile, one student pretends having hearing problems and asks his colleagues to report their questions and answers: A asks a question, B reports it, C reports the answer and so on. Here is a list of some characters it would be nice to interview, as well as some sample questions: Madonna (*Are you really a material girl?*); Claudia Schiffer (*Do you eat a lot of ice-cream?*)

Further we discuss the idea of introduction of politics at the lesson of English grammar. Politics is discussed everywhere and anytime. The lesson of English is not an exception. Organizing “*live political debates*” is a perfect possibility to teach the first conditional [5]. The class is divided into two teams. It’s the night before the general election, and it’s the last chance for the two main parties to convince voters to vote for them. To keep it fun, give the parties names such as the ‘Beer Party’ or the ‘Chocolate Party’. Students are given a few minutes to decide on their policies and how they will convince ‘the public’ to vote for them. Sometimes teachers need to give a couple of examples first, such as:

- *If you vote for us, we’ll give everyone a free bottle of beer on their birthday.*
- *If you choose their party, they will steal all your money.*

Thus, the teachers should remember that the warm up opens the class session, setting the atmosphere and expectations of the lesson, but it also allows important opportunities which will later determine the type of the activities and the scope of the lesson. Equal consideration should be always given to warm up as to the steps of the lesson. Despite the various forms the warm-up can take, it is an indispensable step to prepare and launch the tasks in the appropriate frame of utility.

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