

PRIMARY COMMUNICATION BOX

**Speaking and listening activities and games
for younger learners**

**Caroline Nixon
and Michael Tomlinson**



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4 Ages, levels and time

For each activity, we suggest the age range for which it is suitable. However, these ages are intended only as a guide, as children’s capacity to do any particular activity will depend largely on their first language, cultural background and the length of time they have been learning English. In all cases, teachers are the best judges of their pupils’ ability to carry out an activity successfully, irrespective of their age. The time it takes to do an activity will also vary with the age and ability of the pupils. The amount of time we recommend for each activity should be taken to be the most that a class at the younger age range would need.

Activity title	Language focus	Activity type	Time	Logistics
Level 1 : Starting off (age approximately 7–8)				
1.1 Tommy Thumb	Traditional rhyme, <i>Where / How are you?</i>	TPR, role play	50	Whole class / individual
1.2 Happy colour families	Numbers 1 –10, colours	TPR, colouring dictation, card game	50	Whole class / small group
1.3 Listen and colour	Colours, adjectives, animals	TPR, picture dictation	30	Whole class / pairs
1.4 Have you got ...?	<i>Have you got ...?, a/an</i>	Matching activity (mingle)	20	Whole class
1.5 Alphadots	Letters of the alphabet	‘Join the dots’ dictation	40	Pairs
1.6 Feely box	Simple nouns	Information transfer team game	40	Small group
1.7 Picture dictation	<i>Has got</i> , toys	Picture dictation, information transfer	15	Whole class / pairs
1.8 The donkey’s tail	Instructions, prepositions	TPR, ‘make and do’, listening game	40	Pairs
1.9 Listening dots	Simple nouns	‘Join the dots’ dictation	15	Pairs
1.10 Find the animals	<i>Is there ...?, animals</i>	TPR, picture puzzle	30	Whole class / pairs
1.11 Sonia’s house	<i>How many ...?, There are ..., numbers 1 –7</i>	Picture dictation, information transfer	30	Whole class / pairs
1.12 Mystery animals	<i>Be, can, has got</i> , animals	TPR, small group card game	30	Whole class / small group
1.13 Ask and match	Requests, <i>a/an</i>	Card game	20	Small group
1.14 Here is the ostrich	Traditional rhyme	TPR, picture sequencing	30	Whole class / individual
1.15 Look what we’ve got!	<i>Have/has got</i> , toys	Survey	40	Small group / whole class
1.16 You can ask me!	<i>Can/can’t</i>	Information gap, class survey	30	Pairs / individual / whole class
1.17 Good sports	Present continuous, sports	Picture dictation, information transfer	15	Pairs
1.18 Little monsters	<i>It’s got ..., parts of the body</i>	Information transfer	20	Pairs

Map of the book

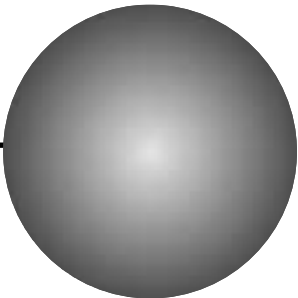


Activity title	Language focus	Activity type	Time	Logistics
Level 2: Moving on (age approximately 9–10)				
2.1 The troll file	Question forms, personal information	Information gap	20	Pairs
2.2 Shopping lists	<i>Have got</i> , fruit and vegetables	Information gap	20	Pairs
2.3 Can cards	<i>Can/can't</i> , activities	Matching activity (mingle)	20	Whole class
2.4 I'm going shopping	<i>a/an, some, going to</i> future, countable/uncountable nouns	Card game	30	Small group
2.5 In your classroom who ...? (1)	Present simple questions, <i>going to</i> future	Information gap, survey	30	Whole class
2.6 Beach scene	Present continuous	'Spot the difference', information gap	30	Pairs
2.7 In the bedroom	<i>Where shall I put ...?</i> prepositions, bedroom furniture	'Make and do', information transfer	50	Individual / pairs
2.8 I draw, you draw	<i>There is/are ...</i> , prepositional phrases	Picture dictation	30	Pairs
2.9 Listen and correct	<i>To be, to have</i> , present simple	Error correction, dictation	30	Pairs
2.10 Lost in the toyshop	Asking for / giving directions	TPR, information transfer	30	Pairs
2.11 Snakes and ladders questions	Question forms	Board game	40	Small group
2.12 Do you have to ...?	<i>Have/has to</i> (obligation) questions	Information gap, class survey	30	Pairs / individual / whole class
2.13 Team whispers	Present tense sentences	Information transfer game	30	Small group
2.14 Simon's week	Present simple, days of the week	Information gap	15	Pairs
2.15 What's on?	Time, TV programmes	Information gap	20	Pairs
2.16 Which witch?	possessive 's, comparative adjectives	Information transfer	30	Pairs / small group
2.17 There was a princess	Traditional rhyme, simple past narrative	Picture sequencing, TPR, role play	50	Whole class

Activity title	Language focus	Activity type	Time	Logistics
Level 3: Flying high (age approximately 11–12)				
3.1 What's my job?	Questions and short answers, jobs	Team game	30	Small group
3.2 Eating out	Restaurant conversations, <i>Can I have ...?</i>	Role play	20	Small group
3.3 Definitions	Relative pronouns <i>something, somebody, somewhere</i>	Information transfer	30	Pairs
3.4 Shop till you drop	Shop conversations	Role play	30	Small group
3.5 Was there or wasn't there?	<i>Was/Were there ...?</i>	Information gap	15	Pairs
3.6 A Star day	Present simple questions	Information transfer	30	Pairs
3.7 Detectives	Past simple	Information transfer, correction	30	Pairs
3.8 Chat about	Personal information	Free speech board game	30	Small group
3.9 Yesterday	Past simple questions	Information gap, individual writing, class survey	30	Pairs / individual / whole class
3.10 Give me a clue	Definitions, descriptions	Team game	30	Small group
3.11 Stella's studies	Past simple questions, school subjects, times	Information gap	15	Pairs
3.12 Gulls	Children's poem, past simple	Dictation	30	Pairs
3.13 If ...	First conditional	Matching activity (mingle)	15	Small group
3.14 Famous names	Asking for personal information	Information transfer (mingle)	20	Whole class
3.15 In your classroom who ...? (2)	Past simple, present perfect	Information gap, survey	30	Whole class
3.16 Where are you sitting?	Personal information, prepositional phrases	Cognitive puzzle, information transfer	30	Small group
3.17 The universal truth	Comparatives and superlatives, planets	Quiz	30	Pairs
Half crosswords				
1 In the classroom	Class vocabulary		20	Pairs
2 Your number's up!	Numbers 1–90		20	Pairs
3 Just the opposite	Adjectives		20	Pairs
4 A question of time	Units of time		20	Pairs
5 About the house	House objects, definitions		20	Pairs

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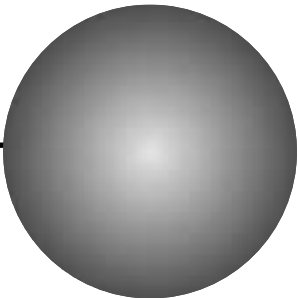
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Dedication
For Elaine and Teresa with love. We are family. – CN
For Isabel, Adolfo and their family for all their love and support. – MT
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PRIMARY COMMUNICATION BOX



Introduction

Why develop communication skills in younger learners?

In their formative years learners are much more receptive to participating in communication activities which include speaking and role play. The younger learner is usually less self-conscious and thus enjoys practising a second language orally and finds it highly motivating. Teaching experience also tells us that it is much easier to develop these skills at an early stage in the learner’s development than it is to initiate speaking tasks with adolescent pupils.

Apart from being more motivated, younger learners also have an innate ability to imitate sounds and rhythm. This means that the sooner children start learning to pronounce words in a second language the more likely they are to develop accurate speaking skills. Through reproducing real situations in the classroom pupils can better appreciate the usefulness of speaking a second language.

What is *Primary Communication Box*?

Primary Communication Box is a resource book of supplementary activities for practising communication with younger learners (age 7 –12 years approximately), containing photocopiable worksheets. By communication we mean that we are principally interested in the sharing or exchange of opinion or information. For younger learners this means creating a more controlled framework for speaking and listening through task-based activities such as information gap, role play and extended tasks, working either in pairs, small groups or as a whole class.

The book is appropriate for beginner and pre-intermediate level pupils and is based around the vocabulary and grammatical content found in courses of these levels and the Cambridge ESOL Young Learners Tests. Through gently paced communication activities, puzzles and games, younger learners will develop listening and speaking skills within a controlled context to give them confidence.

The book includes 52 photocopiable activities complete with teacher’s notes and extension tasks for further language practice. It is divided into four sections: three sections of activities grouped according to pupils’ levels and ages and a section of ‘half crosswords’. The activities are of different lengths, ranging from fifteen-minute activities through to ‘make and do’ activities that may occupy the greater part of the lesson.

The intention is to provide enjoyable task-based activities that will make both teaching and learning fun, while exploiting younger children’s innate capacity to assimilate new information. To this end, the book adopts a non-technical approach and aims to be accessible to native and non-native teachers of English. There is a selection of activities appropriate to different teaching and learning styles (visual, audio and bodily-kinaesthetic) which have been designed to encourage learners to develop communication skills confidently. Some activities for lower levels involve a degree of TPR* on the part of both pupils and teachers. Through working in pairs and in teams, the children learn autonomy, co-operation and social skills that are so important for their development.

Who is *Primary Communication Box* for?

Age range and level

The book has been divided into three levels within the 7–12 year age range. Within each level we have tried to bear in mind the specific needs of each age group. The needs of those seven-year-olds who cannot yet read or write confidently contrast sharply with those of eleven- to twelve-year-olds who need a more challenging type of activity. The three levels used in *Primary Communication Box* are intended as a guide to the language abilities pupils will need in order to do the activities.

* We have used the term TPR (Total Physical Response) to refer to those activities which are based upon physical involvement of the pupils. This can include actions to accompany a rhyme or drill and games which involve body movement.

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Introduction

Level	Section	Approximate age	Skills	Language focus
1	Starting off	7–8	Very controlled communication Limited reading and writing	<i>be, have, can, there is/are</i> , imperative, present continuous, determiners, pronouns, time
2	Moving on	9–10	Controlled communication Some reading and writing Emerging cognitive skills for language learning	present simple, <i>like, want</i> , daily routine, time prepositions, possessive pronouns, purpose clauses, simple past (<i>be, have</i>), parts of speech
3	Flying high	11–12	Controlled to free communication More competent reading and writing Developing cognitive skills for language learning	past simple (irregular verbs), past continuous, <i>going to</i> future, comparative and superlative adjectives, adverbs of frequency, auxiliaries, parts of speech and discourse

When to use *Primary Communication Box*

The activities can be used as extra material to back up a coursebook. We suggest they should be used for revision and reinforcement, rather than as an introductory presentation of new language. The activities are ideal for teachers who work without a coursebook. They can be used as a special treat or as a reward in the classroom, either for working well or on the day before a holiday, when it is not always a good idea to start a new topic. They are useful for teachers who have to stand in when the class teacher is absent.

Using *Primary Communication Box* – tips for teachers

The following suggestions are based on our own experience in the classroom. They are by no means definitive and aim simply to give a few teaching ideas to less experienced teachers.

Preparation

- The most important thing with any kind of task is to make sure that the pupils have been well prepared beforehand, that they know all the words they will need and that they understand the object of the exercise. Equipping your pupils properly with the necessary linguistic tools to enable them to carry out a task successfully will ensure that it is a challenging and enjoyable one for all. Without the necessary preparation, learners may have a negative learning experience, which will cause them to lose confidence and become frustrated with an activity that, quite simply, they have not got the capacity to do.
- Before starting any activity, demonstrate it first. For pairwork activities choose an individual pupil to help you. Do the first question of the pairwork task with the pupil for the class to get the idea.

- When you divide the class into pairs or groups, point to each pupil and say, A–B, A–B, A–B, so they are in no doubt as to what their role is. Try to give simple clear instructions in English. Say, for example, *As ask the questions and Bs answer the questions: A–B, A–B, A–B. Then Bs ask the questions and As answer the questions: B–A, B–A, B–A.*
- Where the pairwork activity is to be carried out in secret you can ask pupils to sit back to back so that they cannot copy from their partner’s worksheet.
- Always bring a few extra photocopies of the worksheet to avoid tears if any children do it wrong and want to start again.

Rhymes, poems and chants

- For the activities based on rhymes and poems it is not important for the learner to understand every word outside the key words to be practised. In these exercises we are more interested in pupils understanding the gist, and we are using the rhyme as a means with which to develop communication skills. The pictures which accompany each rhyme, and the actions included in some, should provide the learner with sufficient information to be able to understand the overall concept. It is important then, at this stage, not to spend precious time on lengthy and complicated explanations of specific words.
- Get children to stand up when saying the rhymes and poems as a class. It can make a tremendous difference to their performance and enjoyment.
- All of the rhymes and poems included here can be presented and practised in a variety of ways to make them more interesting and challenging. These techniques are especially useful if you want to go back to previously practised material for revision or further exploitation and you want to avoid your pupils’ reaction of, ‘We’ve already done this!’

Introduction

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- Whisper the rhyme or phrase while clicking your fingers. Repeat the rhyme, getting gradually louder each time, then reverse the process.
- Say the rhyme whilst clapping your hands and tapping your foot in time to the rhythm.
- Divide the class into groups and ask them to repeat the rhyme in rounds. To do this, the first group starts to say the rhyme and then at a suitable point, usually one or two lines into it, the second group starts to say the rhyme from the beginning.
- Ask your class if anybody wants to do a solo or a duet. The very fact that they are giving a public performance induces most pupils to surpass themselves. It also adds a bit of spice to the proceedings as it gets their adrenaline flowing. If children are reluctant to participate in this, however, they should not be forced to do so.
- With your class tape recorder, record the class saying the rhyme collectively and/or individually. Let your pupils listen to themselves. If they feel that they could improve on the second attempt, record them again. When pupils have sung or said their rhymes into the tape recorder be sure to give them a round of applause and encourage the rest of the class to do the same.
- If you have access to a video camera and the rhyme you are doing has actions, record your pupils carrying out the activity. As a reward or a treat for their hard work, they can watch themselves.

Recycling

- Certain activity types have been repeated throughout the different sections of the book. As teachers we have found it especially useful to repeat the same activity at a different level at a later date. This is because the more familiar pupils are with the mechanism of an activity, the freer they are to concentrate on language practice.

Classroom dynamics

- Try to move around the classroom while explaining or doing the activities, circulating among your pupils. In this way you project an air of confidence, of being in command and of being more accessible to pupils. Moving around the classroom also enables you more effectively to supervise and monitor pupils who may need more attention at times. Movement in the classroom tends to hold pupils' attention better and makes the class more lively and dynamic.
- In the same way that it is a good idea for teachers to move around, it is also advisable to move the pupils around occasionally. By periodically changing seating arrangements, you can help group dynamics and break up potentially disruptive groups. For example, weaker pupils could be put next to stronger ones, and more hard-working pupils next to disruptive ones. Pupils might benefit from working with children they may not usually associate with.

- When forming pairs or groups, we suggest that, whenever possible, pupils just move their chairs. For groupwork, they can bring their chairs around one or two tables, allowing them an easy environment for discussion and written production. For pairwork, they can position their two chairs to face each other. This allows a more realistic eye-to-eye communication situation. This change of seating prepares them for the oral work they are about to begin.
- When pairs need to work in secret, they can use their books or notebooks as a barrier. They can either put their books upright on the desk between them when they work side by side, or use them as a support for their worksheets when they sit facing each other. Alternatively, they can sit back to back.

Classroom posters

- A set of classroom posters is included on the following pages. These can be enlarged and put up around the classroom to remind pupils of standard formulae to complete communication tasks. We suggest you draw your pupils' attention to these and pre-teach or practise the necessary language before carrying out an activity.

Noise

- When children are excited they tend to be very noisy. Although it can be difficult to get used to at first, noise in the classroom is tolerable if it is related directly to the activity and is an expression of interest or enthusiasm for the task in hand. If children are sufficiently stimulated by an activity to want to talk about it, then this can only be interpreted as a positive response. You must ensure, however, that only English is used for the completion of specific communication tasks.

Teaching and learning

- Encourage pupils to use their own resources to try to solve a task. Try to guide pupils towards finding the right answers, rather than supplying them yourself, even if this means allowing them to make mistakes. Making mistakes is a vital part of the learning process, so when pupils are asked to invent their own sentences, stories, etc. we should not expect these to be perfect. Sometimes accuracy must be forfeited for the sake of creativity and enthusiastic participation.
- Many of the extension activities include ideas for fast finishers. These can be given to those pupils who need an extra task to keep them occupied while the rest of the class finish the main activity. In activities where it is necessary to prepare material, these pupils can be kept busy helping the teacher with cutting out, collecting in and cleaning up.
- Try to avoid the immediate repetition of an activity simply because it has worked well in class and your pupils have enjoyed it. If you do this, the novelty will quickly wear off and children will become bored. Save it for a later occasion and they will come back to it with fresh enthusiasm.



Introduction

Competition

- An element of competition can make many children try harder. However, while a competition can be a good incentive for an otherwise lazy pupil, it can sometimes be demotivating for a less able but ordinarily hard-working one. Before playing a competitive game, it may be useful to explain to children that this is only a means of learning. Although they may not win the game, all pupils are winners if they know more English at the end than they knew at the beginning. Help pupils to see that when they play a game they can practise and learn more English, so they each win a prize, and that prize is knowledge. Nonetheless, it is always a good idea to balance competitions with other activities to be able to reward or praise individuals according to their needs and performances.
- Competitions can also lead to a lot of noise and over-enthusiasm in the classroom. Any discipline problems can, however, be curbed by keeping a running total of points on the board and deducting points for shouting out the answer or rowdiness.

Display

- Pupils find it extremely motivating to have their work displayed and will generally strive to produce work to the best of their ability if they know it is going to be seen by others. So try to display pupils' work around the classroom or school whenever possible.

Portfolios

- As parents and carers are taking a growing interest in their children's learning, making personal folders is the perfect way for pupils to take their work home so they can show off what they have learnt in their English lessons. The completed worksheets in *Primary Communication Box* are ideal for including in such a personalised portfolio, as are those from its sister titles *Primary Activity Box*, *Primary Grammar Box*, *Primary Pronunciation Box*, *Primary Reading Box* and *Primary Vocabulary Box*.

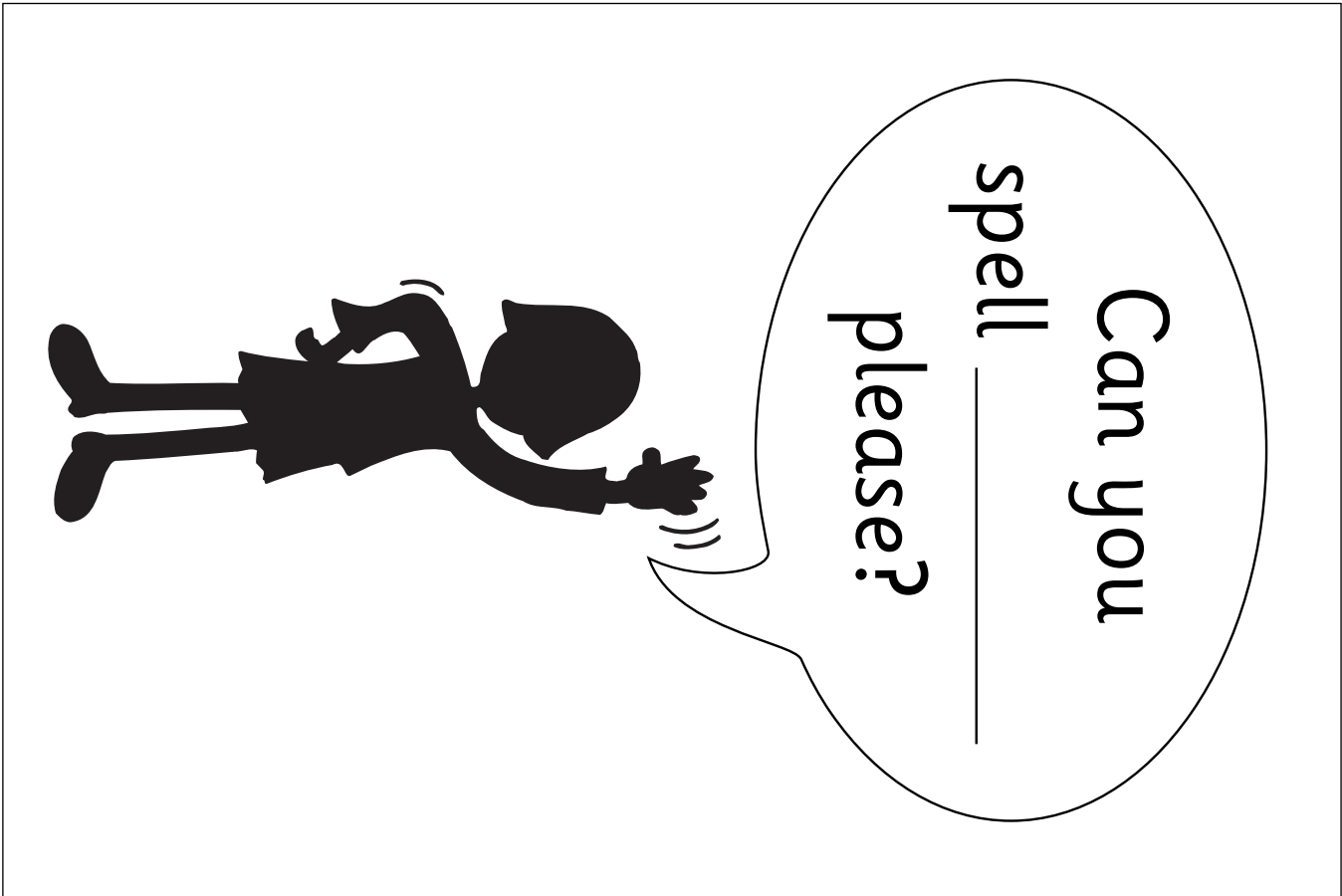
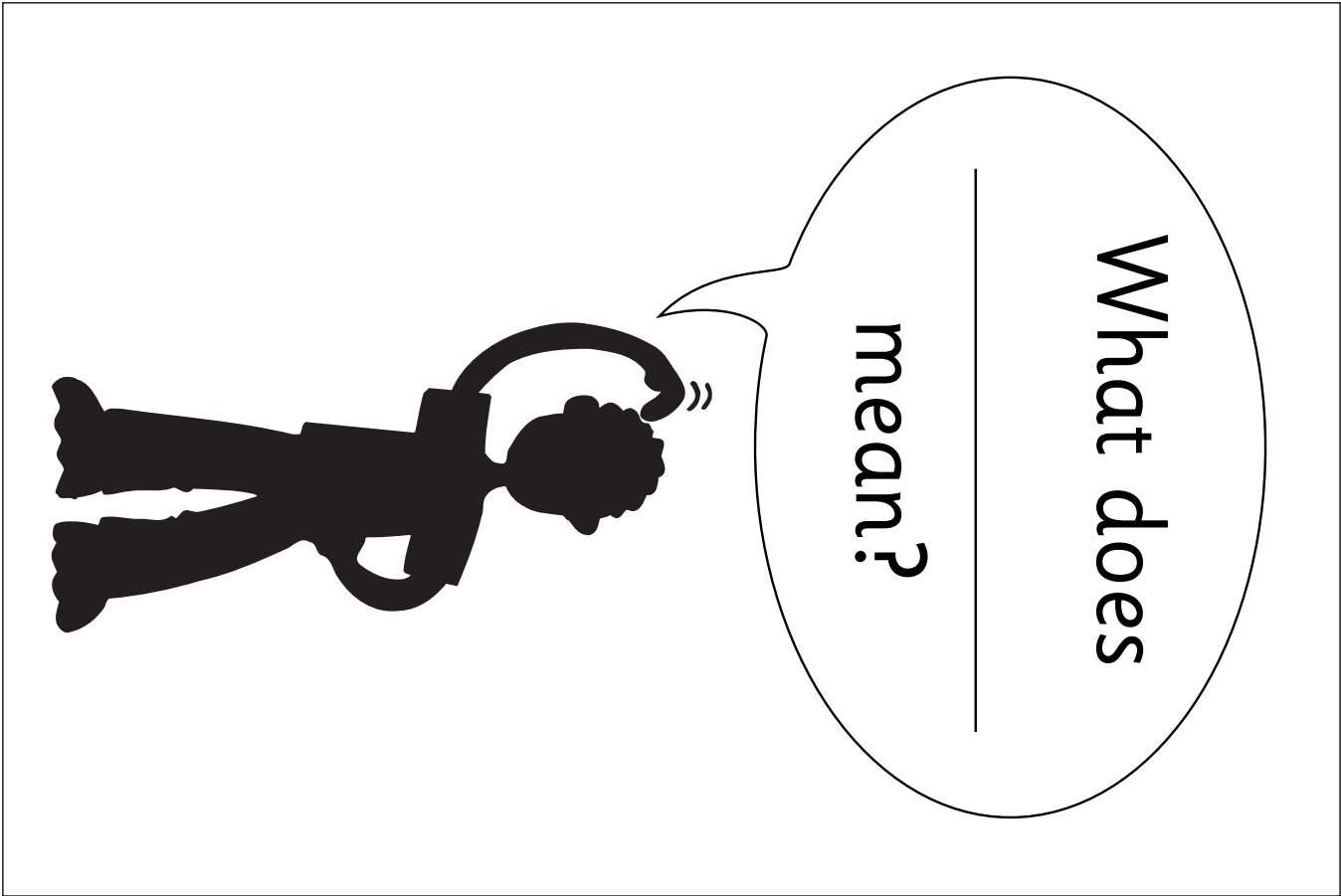
Storage of material

- To make flashcards more attractive and appealing to younger learners it is a good idea to enlarge them, colour them in and laminate them with protective adhesive plastic. In this way you will always have them ready for future use.
- In the same way, it is a good idea to photocopy different sets of the same game onto different coloured card and laminate them with adhesive plastic. These can then be stored for easy retrieval at short notice at a later date.

Caroline Nixon and Michael Tomlinson, Murcia 2005

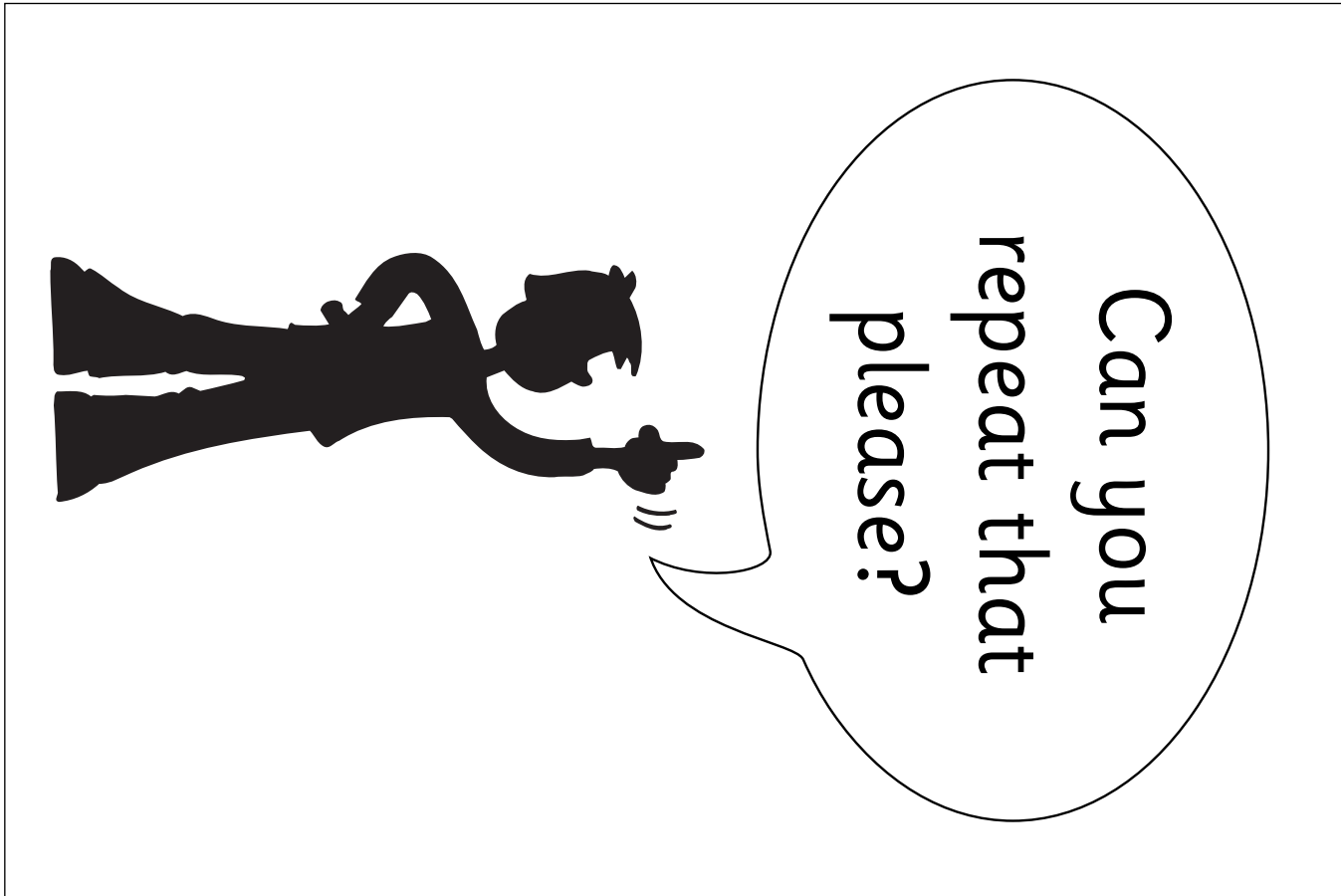
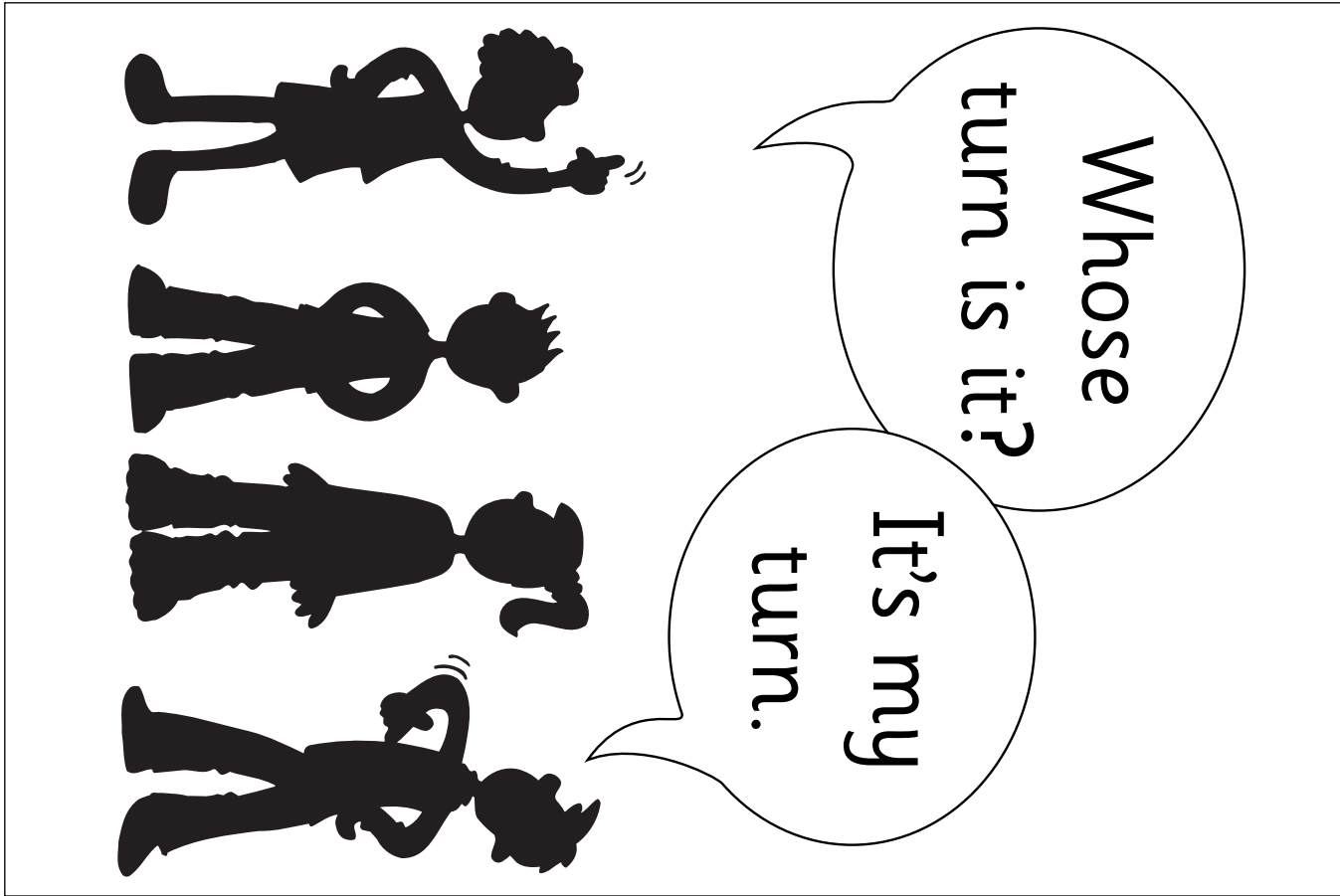
Class posters

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