

MR/PAP/8

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Dear Philip,

This article is maybe a bit long but I thought it was necessary to include two complete, ready-to-use questionnaires so that interested readers can go away and try the ideas out right away after reading the article.

Hope it's OK.

Mario.

## Six ways of using questionnaires with your students

By Mario Rinvoluceri, Pilgrims Language Courses

There's a good chance some questionnaires are included in your current textbook but very few authors squeeze the full pedagogical juice out of them. This article looks at six different ways the questionnaire idea can be exploited for different language learning purposes at different levels.

### 1. For listening comprehension at lower intermediate level

In Learning to Listen CUP, 1981 Maley and Moulding give the students a multiple choice questionnaire on sleeping habits. The students answer the questionnaire and discuss their answers in small groups. They are then invited to listen to the tape on which 2 native speakers discuss their answers to the same questions.

Doing the questionnaire has aroused and involved the students' own egotism, talking about their answers to their classmates has broadened their thinking about sleep habits. All this is a subtle prediction exercise that leads up to the listening to the native speaking dialogue.

To create this kind of exercise yourself all you need to do is to:

- a) choose a topic area of interest to your particular students

- b) write a short (six-eight item) multiple choice questionnaire
- c) invite a couple of native or good second language speakers to answer the questionnaire; you tape their subsequent discussion.

2. For Listening comprehension at upper intermediate level

In Know your own Personality by H.J. Eysenck and G. Wilson, Pelican Books, 1976 and in Know your Personality by Jane Deverson, Futura Publications, 1980 you will find a wide variety of questionnaires with keys. The key allows a person who answers the questionnaire to place him/herself on a scale between such poles as extraversion - introversion or toughmindedness - tendermindedness.

For an upper intermediate class I have recorded a given questionnaire onto tape, leaving a seven second pause on the tape after each question for the students to write down the number of the question and their answer: yes or no. I have had the key photocopied. In class I pre-teach a few of the words I reckon they will find hard - then I play the tape thru to the end without let-up. Finally the students dive into reading the key so they can evaluate their answers. This is a listening exercise focussed on the students' interest in self and they are

willing to battle with the listening task for a much longer period than with any other listening technique I know of. This is also an I-then listening exercise, in which the tape is speaking directly to the student, rather than the student doing third person, eavesdropping listening with the people on the tape speaking to each other.

To give you a taste of the kind of questions asked, here are five from Eysenck's questionnaire on Adjustment v Emotional Instability:

1. Do you think you are able to do things as well as most other people? YES/NO
2. Do you seem to have more than your share of bad luck? YES/NO
3. Do you usually feel strong and well? YES/NO
4. Are you often acutely aware of the ticking of clocks? YES/NO
5. Do you often wish you were someone else? YES/NO

3. To trigger discussion at intermediate level

While the Eysenck and Deverson questionnaires mentioned above are seriously made tools for probing reality there is also a case for using hopelessly biased questionnaires with rubbishy keys to provoke students into discussion of the ideas that lie behind the questions. An example of a provocative questionnaire is the one below,

taken from Lifeline, by Ainscough et al.

Folksuniversitet Förlag, Stockholm, 1974. Here are the first of the 20 questions:

- A. Why do you choose the clothes you buy?
- a) because they are practical
  - b) to look like your friends and work-mates
  - c) because they suit you
  - d) to draw attention to yourself
- B. If you accidentally catch sight of yourself in a mirror, do you
- a) admire yourself?
  - b) ignore yourself?
  - c) take a quick glance and look away?
  - d) straighten your hair?
- C. Before entering a crowded room do you
- a) take a deep breath and straighten yourself?
  - b) light a cigarette?
  - c) wait for someone else to go in with you?
  - d) check your appearance?

The key, that usually provokes strong reactions in students, tells you that if your answers are mainly a you are super-male

- " b you are an organisation man
- " c you are a woman but able to act as an equal to males
- " d you are super-feminine

All the teacher has to do is to invite students to convert their disbelief and anger into a discussion of the sex role attitudes that informed the writing of the questionnaire.

4. A questionnaire that focuses the student on the difference between the past and the present - elementary level

Pair your students and ask A to put all the questions below to B and then vice-versa:

- How many grandparents have you got alive today?
- How old are they? / How old were they when they died?
- How many children do they/did they have?
- How old were they when they got married?
- Do they/did they live alone?
- What do/did your grandparents do all day?
- Where do/did your grandparents go on holiday?
- How often do you/did you see your grandparents?
- Which of your grandparents do you/did you feel closest to?
- How do you imagine yourself as a grandparent?

A good second stage to this exercise is to explain to the students that since the writer of the questionnaire did not know their grandparents he was unable to devise really suitable questions. Ask them to write a short questionnaire that would make more sense in terms of their grandparents.

Tell both students in each pair to write the questions they devise down. Finally ask the pairs to re-pair so that the writers can try out their new questionnaires on classmates. In writing their own questionnaires they will find they have to actually use the do/does/did system that they have worked on more passively in the first stage of the exercise.

5. Role-reversed questionnaires to produce lively paired discussion - elementary to advanced

You can use any sort of person-centred questionnaire with this technique, making sure that the language involved is appropriate to the students' level.

Pair the students off and give a copy of the questionnaire to each of them. Tell them they must not talk to their partner. Insist that this part of the exercise is done without communication with the partner.

Invite the students to compare notes with their partners, explaining their answers. The previously enforced silence gives way to high energy level talking - you should go round checking that people do not relapse into the mother tongue.

6. Multi-person questionnaire to practise 2nd conditionals - intermediate level

Give out the questionnaire below and tell the students the questionnaire is about them and two other members of their family. Tell them to each choose which two members they wish to work around and to fill in these relations (e.g. 'my elder brother', 'my uncle Jack') in the gaps in the questionnaire they have been handed. Pair the students and ask them to put the questions to each other.

Multi-person Questionnaire

- A If you saw something on fire in the house, what would you do?
- B If your..... saw something on fire in the house, what'd s/he do?
- C If you ..... saw something on fire in the house, what'd s/he do?



A If your boss asked you to work at the week-end, what'd you do?

B If his/her boss asked him/her to work at the week-end, what'd your ..... do?

C If his/her boss asked him/her to work at the week-end, what'd your ..... do?

A If you were walking at night and suddenly heard a cry, what'd you do?

B What would your ..... do in a similar situation?

C What would your ..... do in a similar situation?

A If you lost your job, what would you do?

B If your ..... lost his/her job, what would s/he do?

C If your ..... lost his/her job, what would s/he do?

A If you were alone and feeling bad, what would you do?

B In the same situation, what would your ..... do?

C In the same situation, what'd your ..... do?

A Suppose someone offered you drugs, what'd you do?

B What would your ..... do?

C What would your ..... do?

A If you could be more successful abroad than in your own country, would you emigrate?

B Would your ..... emigrate in this situation?

C Would your ..... emigrate in this situation?

A If an unknown person invited you to their house, what would you do?

B What would your ..... do?

C What would your ..... do?

The six techniques suggested above are a few of the many ways of using questionnaires in the language class. If you want to try out more ways have a look at these two books:

A Guidebook for teaching English as a Second

Language, by B.S. Wattenmaker and W. Wilson,

Allyn and Bacon, Boston 1980 ISBN 0-205-06976-2

Awareness Activities, by C. Frank and M. Rinvoluceri,

E.J. Arnold-Pergamon, Spring 1983.