

3. Practicing asking and answering questions

Question and Answer Procedures

ESL students need to practice asking and answering questions. These are fundamental communication skills.

When working with beginning level students, you must teach the answer before you teach the question. Questions are abstract and can only be understood in context. If the student knows the answer, he will learn the question in context.

The sentences that the students practiced earlier will be the answers to the questions that you ask in this section. There are two parts involved in question and answer drills. In Part 1, the teacher asks the question and students answer. In Part 2, the students ask the question and the teacher answers.

Tip: Draw a question mark (?) on a 5x8 card or piece of construction paper to help students comprehend that they are now practicing question/answer patterns. On the opposite side of the card draw a period (.) to prompt the answers to the questions. You will use this card to help you demonstrate when asking and answering a question. You could also place the punctuation marks on separate cards. Laminating the card will preserve it.

Part 1 Question/Answer Procedure: Teacher Asks/Students Answer

Step 1—Set the Pattern

Purpose: helps students grasp they will now practice asking questions and answering with statements already practiced. It also helps them see that the same question applies to several of the statements learned.

Procedure:

Use gestures and voice intonation along with the ? and . prompt card throughout this drill to help students understand you are asking and answering questions.

Teacher: (holds ? card and one picture) asks question

Teacher: (flips to . side of card, using same picture) answers question

Students: listen

(Repeat this process with at least three different vocabulary words before going to Step 2.)

Note: Anytime there is more than one question/answer pattern in a lesson, you will have to set the pattern for each one before the students practice that pattern.

Example for Note:

Set the Pattern 1:

What's wrong? I have a cold. (Practice this pattern with all the vocabulary words that fit.)

Set the Pattern 2:

What do you need? I need cold medicine. (Practice this pattern with all the vocabulary words that fit.)

Purpose: Steps 2-4 allow students to practice hearing the question and answering using statements they have already practiced.

Step 2

Procedure:

Teacher: (gestures to self) asks question

Teacher: (gestures to students) answers question

Students: listen

(Repeat Step 2 with a different word/picture.)

Step 3

Procedure:

Teacher: *Ready?*

Step 4

Procedure:

Teacher: (points to self) asks question

Teacher: (gestures to students to answer question)

Students: answer question

(Repeat Step 4 with all the words (picture cards). Switch the picture each time the teacher asks the question. This is the natural way we speak.)

Example

Teacher: (holds ? card and one picture) *What's this?*

Teacher: (flips to . side of card, using same picture) *It's a sweater.*

Teacher: (holds ? card and a different picture) *What's this?*

Teacher: (flips to . side of card, using same picture) *It's a shirt.*

Teacher: (holds ? card and a different picture) *What's this?*

Teacher: (flips to . side of card, using same picture) *It's a coat.*

Students: (Listen)

Teacher: (holds ? card and one picture, gestures to self) *What's this?*

Teacher: (flips to . side of card, using same picture, gestures to students) *It's a sweater.*

Teacher: (holds ? card and different picture, gestures to self) *What's this?*

Teacher: (flips to . side of card, using same picture, gestures to students) *It's a shirt.*

Teacher: (holds ? card and a different picture, gestures to self) *What's this?*

Teacher: (flips to . side of card, using same picture, gestures to students) *It's a coat.*

Students: listen

Teacher: *Ready?*

Teacher: (gestures to self) *What's this?*

Teacher: (gestures to students)

Students: *It's a sweater.*

(Repeat asking the question, using pictures to prompt the students' answers. Switch the picture each time the teacher asks the question.)

Part 2 Question/Answer Procedure: Students Ask/Teacher Answers

Purpose: Steps 1-3 allow students to practice asking the question and receiving an answer.

Procedure:

Step 1

Teacher: (holds ? card and one picture; gestures to students.) asks question

Teacher: (holds . card and same picture; gestures to self) answers question

Students: listen

(Repeat Step 1 with a different word/picture.)

Step 2

Teacher: *Ready?*

Step 3

Teacher: (gestures for Ss. to respond)

Students: ask question

Teacher: (gestures to self) answers question

(Repeat Step 3 using all the pictures, prompting the students to ask the question while the teacher answers. Change the picture each time the students ask the question.)

Note: If the students struggle with asking the question, stop and do a repetition drill with the question itself.

Example

Teacher: (holds ? card and one picture; gestures to students.) *What's this?*

Teacher: (holds . card and same picture; gestures to self) *It's a sweater.*

Teacher: (holds ? card and a different picture; gestures to students.) *What's this?*

Teacher: (holds . card and same picture; gestures to self) *It's a coat.*

Students: listen

Teacher: *Ready?*

Teacher: (gestures for Ss. to respond)

Students: *What's this?*

Teacher: (gestures to self) *It's a sweater.*

(Repeat prompting the students to ask the question while the teacher answers using each of the different words/pictures.)

4. Chain drill Procedure

The chain drill is a variation of the question and answer drill. One student is prompted to ask the question, and another student is prompted to answer. The question goes from one student to another, much like a chain, until all students have both asked and answered.

Purpose: Having students ask and answer each other allows the teacher to determine how well each student has mastered the material.

Procedure:

Teacher: (holding a picture) prompts Student 1 to ask question

Student 1: asks question

Teacher: prompts S2 to answer

Student 2: answers question (according to picture shown)

(Move the chain)

Teacher: (holding a different picture) prompts S2 to ask question

Student 2: asks question

Teacher: prompts S3 to answer