

Let's go shopping!

In this issue's *Teacher Talk*, Bob Jones shares his plan for a role play lesson.

Preparation Before the Lesson

You will need:

(i) Toy money. I was able to obtain several packages of toy U.S. money from a 100-yen shop. Each package contained a set of \$20, \$10, \$5 and \$1 bills as well as a large handful of 25c, 10c, 5c and 1c coins.

(ii) Cut-out pictures of shopping items pasted on card. These can be taken from old mail order catalogues and glossy magazines. On the back of the card, you should write the price of the goods or, better, get the children to suggest prices. In order to give the students practice in counting change, it is a good idea to avoid too many round numbers, such as \$5, and use more complex prices, such as \$4.99 or \$10.55.

(iii) It is also a good idea to have a few pocket calculators available for the actual shopping part of the lesson.

Preliminary Activities

(i) Practice in handling U.S.

money: For this activity, it is presumed that the children already know the numbers 1-99. To get the students used to U.S. prices, you can begin by writing a few prices on the board and asking the children to say them. There are various ways to say prices but the standard I usually use is "four dollars ninety-nine". (Be aware of children who might say "four ninety-nine dollars".)

For further consolidation you can make a bingo game or play white-board tic-tac-toe with a sticker ball. However, the real fun is when the children are given the chance to play with the coins. For this, I usually put the students into small groups, throw a handful of coins on their desks and ask them to count them out. After we've done this a couple of times, I call out, say, "69 cents" and the children quickly count out the coins. If some children are particularly fast, you can also invite them to call out the numbers, too. One thing to be aware of here: the U.S. 10¢ coin is actually smaller than the 5¢ coin. It took some of my children a while to get used to this.

(ii) Teaching "cheap" and "expensive": In order to keep this simple, I

work on the principle that \$1 = 100 yen (apologies to any shareholders reading this). I then take a few of the paper cut-outs and say the price, to which the children respond with "Oh, that's cheap! I'll take it" or "Oh, that's expensive!" I find that some children's notions of cheap and expensive are a little odd, but the resulting "Eeeeh!" can add to the fun.

(iii) Greeting the customer: I elicit from the children what Japanese sales assistants say ("*Irasshaimase!*") and then teach them "Good afternoon. Can I help you?". I want them to say this pleasantly, so sometimes I do a quick mime of a pleasant shop assistant and a less pleasant one. I then give the children practice in the greeting by, first, drawing a happy face and then a miserable face on the board. "OK. Let's say it in a nice way. Now let's say it in a not nice way. Let's say it in a nice way again." Then I hold a short contest to see who can say "Good afternoon. Can I help you?" most politely. (Note: I usually don't choose a winner, but am more likely to say something like "Wow! Everyone was so good, I don't really know who was the most polite. Let's call it a draw!").



Surveying the wares.



"Nine dollars fifty, please."

The Shopping Activity

First, I use gestures and the cut-outs to elicit a short dialogue, which may go something like this:

A: Good afternoon. Can I help you?

B: Yes, please. How much is this blue T-shirt?

A: It's twelve dollars ninety-nine?

B: Oh, that's expensive. How much is this red T-shirt?

A: It's nine dollars fifty.

B: Oh, that's cheap. I'll take it.

A: Thank you. Nine dollars fifty, please.

B: Here you are.

A: Thank you. Here's your change.

I also encourage them to add some interactional phrases such as "Thanks. Bye" and "Have a nice day". Depending on the language you feel your students can handle, you might

also want to include plural items (How much are these...?). I like to include jeans, shorts and sometimes items like binoculars whose plurality is less obvious.

The children are told that they're on vacation in the States and have to buy presents for all the family. I then divide them into shoppers and sales assistants. The shoppers are given \$60 each in \$20 bills, the rest of the money is divided among the sales assistants and the shopping begins. I usually stand by and interfere as little as possible while the shopping is going on, except when the children need to ask something like, "How do you say ___ in English?". At the end of the activity, each shopper tells us whom each present is for. A short, simple "This is for my father", "This is for my mother" etc. is sufficient. It always amuses me, by the way, how often "This is for me" comes up.

Further comments

I did a simplified version of this lesson several years ago when I was an ALT one-shotting around the local primary schools. The children had had very little English tuition, but they all knew numbers 1 to 10. By using yen prices rather than dollar prices, it was quite easy to teach one hundred, two hundred etc. Rather than using cut-outs, their regular teacher got them to draw the shopping items the previous day. I limited my language input to: "Good morning", "How much is this?", "No, too expensive", "OK", and "Thank you". We all had a lot of fun and even the school principal joined in.

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