

# It's Not Just Talking!

How to have impactful conversation lessons

With Jen Hill

# WARMUP ACTIVITY

In groups of three, take six minutes to discuss the object with you at the table. Try to share your time equally. Focus on this prompt:

Share a personal experience, ideally from your youth or childhood, with this object.



# WHAT WE'RE DOING TODAY



1. Deconstructing the Conversation Lesson (*How on earth does this all work?*)
2. Providing Value to each Learner (*Why the hell are they paying you for lessons?*)
3. Action Plan (*What the <bleep> am I supposed to do next?*)

# WHAT'S YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH CONVERSATION?

In your groups, please have a short discussion about your current experience with conversation-style lessons.

Focus on these prompts:

- What worked well for the learner and for you?
- What could be improved upon?
- What value did you bring to the lesson?



INTRODUCING...

•THE•  
**Plant**  
•METHOD•

**LET'S EAT**

(metaphorically, that is)

**MMMM...**  
**PLANT-BASED**  
**BURGER...**



# START WITH BUNS. THAT WHICH HOLDS THE VEGAN MEAT.



Create and hold a space for learning

1. Listen to the learner (STT to TTT should be 70:30)
2. Accept the learner just as they are. No expectations. No shame. No homework? No problem!
3. Ask relevant and insightful questions. Follow where the learner takes you!



# ABOVE ALL: LET THERE BE SILENCE



Even if that silence is hella awkward...

# NOW FOR SOME SKILLZ:

Mix in your best, freshest skills:

- Error correction (immediate and delayed), peer correction, modelling, CCQs
- Improvise on-the-spot 'bites' of grammar
- Take a "time out" to focus on target language, using CCQs or immediate Google searches

FOR EXAMPLE...



Common word is?



# THE SECRET SAUCE

What makes my PLANT-based lessons unique?

The secret sauce:

- Taking LOTS of excellent notes, using full and complete sentences (this becomes the learner's textbook!)
- Providing a picture-based review every lesson
- Assigning brilliant and creative **pre-emptive** homework



# WHAT'S THAT METHOD, AGAIN?

I have devised a natural and organic way to teach language through conversation lessons. Here it is in a nutshell:

1. Learners have autonomy in the lessons aka *they are self-directed learners*
2. Teachers provide error correction, take notes, and provide necessary 'scaffolding' (teaching grammar and vocab that builds slightly on what they already know, also see Stephen Krashen's + 1 idea)
3. Teacher prep is **minimal**, but essential: revision (through pictures), and assigning amazeballs homework

# Personalised Lessons through Acceptance, Nurturing, and Trust



# BURN THE TEXTBOOKS! *(WHAT DOES THIS REALLY LOOK LIKE?)*

1. Teacher asks a question
2. Learner answers, makes a mistake
3. Teacher asks follow up question
4. Learner answers at length, struggles with grammar
5. Teacher improvises grammar instruction, taking lots of notes
6. Learner runs out of things to say
7. Teacher introduces 'backup' topic
8. Learner kicks ass, uses correct grammar
9. Teacher claps (form of praise)
10. Learner HAS LEARNED SOMETHING







# PLAYTIME!

Let's practice improvisational grammar!

In your groups, discuss the **warmup activity** and decide what grammar points could be made from it, and **how you would do it.**

*(aka*

*what notes you would take*

*For the learners to look at later...)*





## JUST GO WITH IT

If your learner is stuck and doesn't know what to do next, just bring out your backup topic!

What are some amazing backup topics?

Discuss in your groups, and make a list!

# Homework - Cycles of CONSUME and CREATE

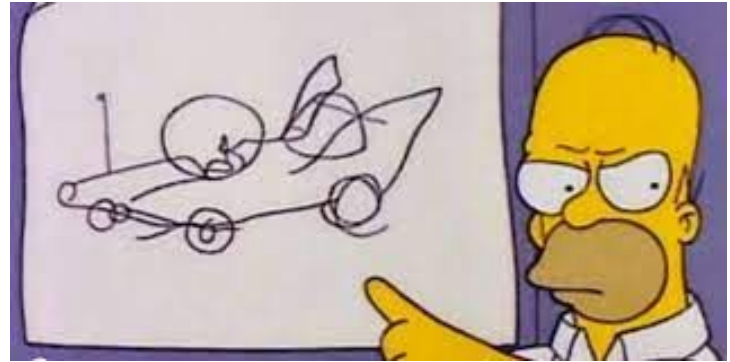
Examples of 'CONSUME' homework:

- Watching a TED talk
- Reading an article
- Researching a topic



Examples of 'CREATE' homework:

- Shooting a video
- Preparing a short presentation
- Writing a film/book review



# What about all those notes, Jen?

(here's an example)

If you can't type with all ten fingers, maybe learn that, too)

- ▼ • Tue, Oct 4, 2022
  - The wood here needs to be cut and split before we can use it
  - big pieces of wood - logs of wood
  - We're still waiting for the rocket to \_\_\_\_\_. (leave the earth)
  - Is it ethical or moral to go to the moon and learn new things from our exploration?
  - X Really huge money are spent Y: A huge amount of money IS spent
  - Probably we want to use some \_\_\_\_\_ (sources) from the moon and other planets
  - X I'm afraid if we will consider our impact in space...
  - If something isn't economically feasible, we won't do it
  - X It could brings a lot of advantages and positive side effects to people
  - vynalez - inventions?
  - ... • X we can try 3D printing to build up houses on moon Y: to build houses on the moon
  - The soot inside a chimney can build up over time
  - Something in the distant future (x far future)
  - People are fascinated by THE moon.

- This is a WRIST



- This boy looks so CLEVER, SMART



Here's a lower-level example, with some of my review pictures

- Next week they will be in Most for a meeting with other departments
- Nobody knows who else has COVID
- to get/have COVID, to be ill
- Some people are interested in the fourth dose. Maybe she's interested, too.
- Are you cold at the cottage? Yes, I'm wearing Barбора's thick jumper.
- Maybe they will have a lower temperature at the office, 18 or 19 degrees.
- Heating is very expensive for the company (x warm)



# TAKING ACTION!

Activity:

In your groups, share what **three things** you are going to start trying immediately in your own lessons.

For bonus imaginary points, write them down on a piece of paper, or on your phone, or email them to yourself!



**OH  
BUT  
WAIT  
THERE'S  
MORE**

# The PLANT Method – Teacher Training Course

I am presenting the pilot of my three month (six online webinars) teacher training course with a special offer for all teachers at this conference:

**Five teachers will get the course for half-price, and *they can each invite a friend also for half-price***

(And if you really can't afford it, we can discuss scholarship opportunities, send me an email.)

LEARN MORE!







Simply sign up for my newsletter and put **AJS2022** as your referral and you're automatically entered! Deadline for entering the raffle is **Oct 23, 2022**.

Course starts on Nov 3, 2022 and finishes on Jan 18, 2023, so ACT NOW!

Find out all the details at [www.theplantmethod.com](http://www.theplantmethod.com)!

(or scan this handy QR code to be redirected to my homepage - newsletter signup at the bottom!

Share with other teachers not in this session!

Opt out later if you don't find it useful)

Thanks for joining me today!



# Some extra ideas for your reference...

For all those people who like to look at a presenter's slides after the conference...

# The Learner as a Gardener of their Language

What does this mean?

- The learner is responsible for their language, it is their resource
- Learners bring their life and experiences to the lesson as a way to produce language, and works with the teacher to co-create a lesson with target language
- The learner understands their role in the lesson - they are not passively being 'fed' grammar and vocabulary, they use what they already have and trust the teacher to provide what's next and necessary

# The Teacher as Sunshine and Rain - the Nurturer

What does this mean?

- The teacher provides support and correction. Most of the lesson is spent actively listening or asking relevant questions
- 'Learning' happens when the teacher provides error correction, supplies essential grammar, and reviews previous material
- When the learner isn't prepared to lead with a topic, have a backup

# Minimal Teacher Prep, Just Reviewing and Homework

How do I teach 21 courses a week? My method needs minimal prep!

- Always prepare a review, using pictures (to help activate memory)
- Pictures show the target word, and other ways the word may be used (movie spoilers and spoiled children, for example)
- HW is often pre-emptive, giving them a chance to have something to discuss during the lesson
- No homework, no problem! We never judge a learner for not doing homework.

# Other tips and tricks

## Group lessons:

- For the first few months, provide more guidance and more topics, until they are used to this style of teaching and learning
- Start assigning topics to other students and begin to rotate through all the group members
- 'Force' students to ask each other follow-up questions until it becomes second nature to them

# IF YOU GOT THIS FAR...

You get one free webinar, either for yourself or for one of your students.

Email me at [jen.hill@theplantmethod.com](mailto:jen.hill@theplantmethod.com) and use this code in the subject line: **imagardener!** Tell me what you learned at the workshop. This offer expires on Dec 31, 2022.

