

**18 (+32)
speaking
activities**

with principles

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The principles:

**Meaning-based
interaction**

**Time-efficient
language generation**

**Repetition
with change**

Student Buy-in

- change of language
- change of activity
(including task recycling)
- leads to success
- elements: • challenge, • rapport,
• preparation (homework & *Think Time*)

The activities: These are organized around the unit structure of *English Firsthand*, but can be used with most coursebooks. They each fit with at least one of the principles. Many include more than one. Most importantly, they don't violate any of the principles listed above.

Codes: Ss = Students S1 = students work alone
 Ss2 = Students work in pairs. Ss3-4 = Students work in groups of 3 or 4.

Preview (vocabulary)

• Big paper and markers-compare. Ss2-3. Each group gets several sheets of large (A3) paper and a magic marker. Call out the vocabulary categories (usually indicated on the *Preview* page). For each topic, allow about 1 minute. Ss write as many words from the

category as they know. After each item, have 3 or 4 groups compare. To do as a competitive game, they get one point for each word and one bonus point for each word they listed that no other teams listed.

- **Slap** Ss3-4. Make large (A3) copies of the *Preview* page. Ss take turns giving hints about the words. The first person to guess the word and to touch it on the copy gets a point. That Ss gives the next hint. Note: the reason to touch the word is so they can see who is actually first. Also, it adds a physical dimension to the activity.
- **Add more words.** If you are using *Active Teach*, project the *Preview page* onto the board. (for a green board, you may need to put the screen in the middle and have Ss write on the board next to the screen). Divide Ss into teams. Have as many teams as people who can work on your board at the same time. Give them colored chalk or whiteboard markers. Ss write as many additional, related words as they can. They draw lines from their word to the stimulus word to show the connection. If there are several people on each team, put a chair a certain distance (3-4 meters) from the board. They line up behind the chair. One person sits in it. That person runs to the board, adds a word, comes back. They continue. If you don't have *Active Teach*, just divide the board into sections for each team and call out the categories.
- **Memory game** Ss2-3. Ss have 1-2 minutes to study the words on the *Preview page*. Then they close their books and see how many they can remember. 1 point given for each remembered word and 1 extra point for each new, related word.
- **Accent -- stand up.** Ss1. Choose about 10 multi-syllable words from the vocabulary. Say each one. Ss repeat, quickly standing up on the accented syllable. Note this is actually a haptic (kinesthetic) pronunciation activity more than a vocabulary activity.

Listening (This handout is about speaking activities, so we are only including a couple speaking activities here that directly relate to listening tasks.)

- **Pair share.** Ss2. If a listening task is challenging, have them do it in pairs. Stop after each section. Have the Ss share what they DID understand with a partner.
- **About you follow-up (accuracy awareness).** Ss2. After doing the *About You* or any listening task where Ss answer about themselves, have them work in pairs. They look at their answers and try to remember/write the questions. Then they double-check for grammar/spelling, etc. Finally, give the answers or have Ss write them on the board.

Conversation/Dialogs

- **Drama coach/ real-time shadowing.** Ss2. Use the Drama Coach videos on the *Active Teach* disc or the www.efcafe.com website. Ss practice the dialog. Then play it again. Challenge them to shadow (repeat the words) with the same speed and intonation as the recording. You may want to precede this with shadowing practice where you stop the recording and have the repeat each sentence, again matching voice and intonation.
- **Dialog variation cards.** Ss2. Go to www.HelgesenHandouts.weebly.com. Go to the "Speaking tasks (dialogs)" page. Download the voice and physical variation cards. Each time they practice, give Ss a voice or physical variation.
- **Off-the-wall conversation.** Ss2 Project the dialog on a screen or write it on the board. Ss stand and practice. Their books are closed. They can look at the dialog on the screen as many times as they want but they have to make eye contact with their partner when they speak. This exercises working memory.
- **Disappearing dialogue.** Ss2. Project the dialog on a screen or write it on the board. As Ss practice, mute the projector or erase bits of the dialog. They have to try to continue based on what they remember.
- **Walk and talk.** Ss2. Have them stand up and stroll around the room with their partners as they practice. If you have a way to project the dialog on a screen, do that. They don't use their books. They look at the screen for the dialog if not previously memorized.
- **One step back.** Ss2. Stand and face each other. They each take one large step backwards so they are standing about 2 meters from their partner. Then they practice the dialog. When they finish, they take another step backwards. This continues. Each time, they have to speak a little louder. There will be "cross talk" (pairs intersecting other pairs' practice area). This activity



builds focus, voice strength, and confidence. Variation: Have them shadow the key or final words their partner says so they really have to listen.

- **Read, look up and say.** Ss2. Ss hold the book in one hand. They can look at the page as many times as they want but when they speak, they put the book behind their back. They have to look up and make eye contact whenever they speak. Putting the book behind their backs emphasizes this. It is easier when Ss are standing.

- **Human recorder.** Ss3. They practice the 2-person dialog. The 3rd person is the “recorder/ CD player”. Only s/he has the book open. That person whispers the lines to the other speakers who says it to the other person in a normal voice. S/he can repeat the as many times as necessary.

- **Balloons.** Ss2. Give one balloon to each pair. They blow it up. They throw it to their partner as they practice. Notice that the slow movement of the balloon automatically gives them “Think Time”. Variation: They can’t use their hands. Any other body part is OK.

- **Rhythm machine.** Ss2. Find a “drum machine” on the web. Ss try practicing the dialog as if it was a hip-hop song, saying it in rhythm. (Even though the rhythm won’t work perfectly, this still gets them thinking about/ working with rhythm.) One simple drum machine is at <http://www.onemotion.com/flash/drum-machine/>

- **Metronome.** Ss2. Like “rhythm machine” (above), but use a metronome. You can find a cheap one for about 1000 yen at amazon.co.jp.

- **Innervoice.** Ss2. Ss read the conversation. In the margins, they write with they think each character’s “innervoice.” is saying (i.e., what they are really thinking.” Then they practice in Ss4. A & B, A’s innervoice (IV) and B’s IV.” Example: EF1, unit 1: (man and woman meeting at a party). Man: Great music, isn’t it. (Man’s IV: Who’s this? And is she with anyone?” Woman: Yes it is. By the way, I’m (name). Woman’s IV: *Hmm, who’s this? Is he hitting on me? Do I want to have this conversation?*

- **Dictogloss.** Ss2. Ss listen to and practice the conversation in pairs a few times. Then they close their books. They try to remember conversation and write it. When they finish, they merge into groups of 4 or 6. They compare their versions. When there are differences, they try to decide which are correct. You might want to do this in the 2nd class that Ss are working on a unit. We learned “dictogloss” from Ruth Wajnryb.

Conversation page: Time efficient practice and performance. Ss2 paired randomly. Ss stand and practice their dialogue based on the conversation page. When they can smoothly do the conversation without looking at the book they sit down with their partner (usually takes between 8 to 10 minutes). T chooses 3 pairs randomly to perform their conversation. Finally all the other pairs stand and perform their conversation together.

- **3-minute. speaking task.** Ss2. We’ve added this to *Firsthand* but if you are using a different book, follow up any dialog with this challenge: Close your book. Have a similar (not the same) conversation. 3-minutes. 100% English.

Pairwork and Groupwork – General issues

- **Challenge/choice.** Notice that the *Challenge* task at the bottom of the page always give the Ss something extra to go on to. This keeps them on task so other Ss have time to finish the main task. We suggest not telling them to go on to it during every class. Do so the first few classes. After that, just write “Finished? Go on the *Challenge* at the bottom of the page.” on the board As Ss do the pairwork, circulate. When some have finished, just point to the instruction on the board. The *Challenge* tasks are explained simply on the page. You don’t need to explain the activity.

Think time



- We added *Think Time* to all the *Pairwork* and *Groupwork* pages. If other books don’t have it, just add about two minutes after the Ss know the task. They ask, *What do I want to say? How will I say it?*

- Use background music (It helps to get YOU to be quiet). Note that the last 3 tracks on the *English Firsthand* CDs have BGM for this purpose.

- Consider having Ss do some tasks before class (*Listening, Language check, Real stories*). This frees up class time for communication tasks. In our experience, most Ss will do homework assignments, especially if doing it on

time is part of the grade.

- **New partners for rapport building.** Change partners regularly so that everyone gets to know everyone else. Here are some simple ways:
 - Number off
 - Find someone wearing the same color as you.
 - Distribute playing cards. Same number and suit color matches (e.g., Queen of Spades matches Queen of Clubs [for pairs]). Find someone whose name has the same number of letters as you.
 - Find someone who you haven't talked to today.
- **Silent line-up for finding partners and rapport building.** Ss8-12. Call out the categories. Ss line up in order without talking. They can gesture, etc. Once they have lined up, they check by saying their answers. When they are in line, you can easily divide them into pairs or groups of a given number. Ways to line up:
 - Height (this is a good one to teach the game with),
 - Birthday (Jan. – Dec)
 - How many strokes in their name,
 - Hand size.
 - How long it takes them to get to school.
 - What time they got up today.
 - What time they get up on Sundays.

Pairwork

Pronunciation with the language model box. (All of these except lipreading and jigsaw dictation are S1)

- **Plug your ears.** We've all noticed how different our voices are when we are recorded. Here's a way to experience something similar. Read the sentences in the pronunciation box. Ss repeat, but they cover their ears with their hands as they do. This amplifies their voice in their heads and it is a rather unusual sensation but does help them pay attention to the sounds.  It is a rather unusual sensation but does help them pay attention to the sounds.
- **Rubber band rhythm.** Get thick rubber bands (#16 – 7 mm.), available at most stationery stores and Daiso 100 yen shops. Ss put one over both thumbs. They repeat the sentences, stretching on the accented words. (Note that the accented syllables are in bold in *English Firsthand*.)
- **Listen and repeat silently.** Ss repeat after you with no sound – their lips, etc. are moving... just no sound. Have them focus on the pronunciation in their minds. Most are able to notice the “mechanics of pronunciation” much more than when they repeat aloud.
- **Pattycake** Ss2. Ss slap hands in rhythm like the kid's game patty cake (clap/slap/ clap/slap). They read the target sentences, keeping in rhythm. Variation: alternate left and right hand slaps. If you don't know patty cake, search for it on youtube.com
- **Lipreading** Ss2. After working with the sentences in the pronunciation box, Ss take turns. They choose one sentence and say it with no sound. The partner watches the “speakers” lips and guesses the sentence.
- **Jigsaw dictation with the pronunciation box.** Full group. Use this when the pronunciation box has 8 sentences/phrases (including both the right side and the left side response). Copy the pronunciation box. Cut all the sentences into strips. Each student gets one strip. Tell the Ss how many sentences there are in total. Ss stand and circulate. They dictate their sentences to each other. When they get all the sentences, they work with a partner. They try to put the sentences in order. Then they check using their books. Of course, sometimes the questions and responses are not guessable, but most of the time they are.
- **Jigsaw dictation with the pronunciation box – challenge version.** Like above but Ss exchange responsibility for each sentence with each new partner and they don't write them until towards the end of the task. For example (*EF1, unit 7 Pairwork*), Ss#1 sentence is “*Can she speak another language?*” Ss#1 says it. Ss#2 repeats it. Ss#1 checks that Ss#2 is saying it perfectly. Then Ss#2 says her sentence and checks Ss#1's repetition. Now the first sentence “*Can she speak another language?*” is Ss#2 sentence. Ss#2 change partners and dictates it to another student. They continue until everyone has heard and repeated all of the sentences. Then they work in pairs, write the sentences and put them in order. Challenging, but engaging.

Groupwork (for fluency)

- **Guess the missing words in the language box** Ss2-4. *English Firsthand* has this built in. If your book doesn't, photocopy the language targets and “white out” a few words (or write it on the board). Ss try to fill them in. Then read the box. They listen to check. Hint: have a few blanks that could correctly be filled in more than one way. Example: I want to buy a new s _____. The answer could be shirt, scarf, skirt, squid(?).

A Task recycling. Ss repeat a task, but with a new partner. Here are some ways:

- Mixer: They stand and move around the room. It is kind of like a cocktail party.
- Line up: They do the task with one person, then one person in each pair stands up, moves to a new partner and continues. Note they don't actually have to move in straight lines. They just have a series of partners.

- 4-3-2: (Also called *fluency workshop* and *Carousel*). Ss2 speak to their partner for 4 minutes. This can either be a monolog or a conversation. Then the other partner speaks for 4 minutes. Then change partners. This time they only have 3 minutes to try to say the same thing. The final round is only two minutes. In many cases, by the last round Ss aren't "thinking about language" much. They are starting to "think in English." Depending on the level, you may need to adjust the time but the general ratio seems to work. At lower levels, try 120 seconds/90 seconds /75 seconds.

DIY FSW(Do-It-Yourself Find Someone Who) *Find someone who* is a classic. Here are some way to do a similar activity, in ways the will feel different.

- **About me.** Ss cut/tear a piece of paper into 4 squares. They write four true sentences about themselves, one on each piece. Ss give them to you. Redistribute the sentences. They stand, walk about and ask questions to find someone who can say yes to their question. Note: it doesn't have to be the writer. If the sentence was, "I went shopping last weekend", there are probably many people who can say "yes". Note that is easy to focus the language function or grammar by they way you set the topic.

Variation 1: require 1-2 follow-up questions.

Variation 2: to frame the grammar/function, dictate the first part of each sentence (e.g. *Last summer, I.... [ed]*).

Variation 3: instead of dictating, provide the first part of the sentences in writing. Ss finish the sentences. This saves time.

- **Snowball fight.** Ss8-10. Like "About me" (above) but Ss crunch their sentences into small balls (snowballs). Groups stand/sit in a circle. The have a "snowball fight" for about 30 seconds, throwing and re-throwing all the snowballs. Then they pick some up, read them and try to find the writer. The "snowball fight" is just a way to redistribute the sentences. (We learned this activity from Barbara Hoskins Sakamoto's *TeachingVillage.org* blog, one we recommend).

- **That's true/ that's a lie** Ss write 4 sentences about themselves. 3 are true. 1 is a lie. They stand and circulate, reading their sentences. The partner must guess the lie. Then they change partners and continue. Note that you can easily specific the grammar or function. Variation: The partner writes the lie, changing it to "*I don't believe (name),*"

- **Who wrote this #1?** Ss4-6. Start with 4 sentences as in "About me" (above). In their groups, Ss mix together all the sentences. 1 person draws one and reads it out. S/he guesses the writer. If correct, that Ss asks one follow-up question. If wrong, anyone else can guess the writer and ask the follow-up question. The person who guesses correctly reads out the next one.

- **Who wrote this #2?** Take a short piece of student writing (like the "My story" step of *Real stories*.) They don't write their names on the paper. Redistribute the stories. Ss walk around and ask questions based on the story to find the writer. When they do, they ask two more follow-up questions.



Shadowing (types of) Shadowing means repeating what it heard. It is more than simply mechanical practice. It is a way to hold language in working (short-term) memory long enough to process it. Many Ss know shadowing, but only know of shadowing the teacher or a recording. We find peer-shadowing to more useful in the classroom. There are many types. We teach our Ss the range.

- Full. Ss repeat full sentences. Usually the speaker pauses to all time for this. (Note- this is a great classroom activity, but outside of the classroom, it is really annoying.)

- Slash. The speaker stops/ after each phrase / for the partner/ to shadow.
- Silent. Just what it sounds like. This is a great way for Ss to help themselves pay attention if a class is boring (not your class, of course).

- Keyword/end word. The shadower only says the key or final words. (*The last words?*).

- Plus question/comment. The shadower shadows (usually keyword/end word), then add a question or comment. (*The last words? I see. What's next?*)

- **Speak shadow summary.** Ss3. One Ss is the speaker, one is the shadower and one is the summarizer. The summarizer listens to the other 2 Ss then at the end summarizes the content using L2. (variation summarize in L1). Ss rotate roles and repeat. Again rotate roles and repeat.

Misc. Activities

- **More questions?** Take a short piece of student writing (like the “My story” step of *Real stories*.) They don't write their names on the paper. Put them on the board with tape or magnets. Put a large post-it memo on each one. Ss read each other's stories. On the post-it, they write follow-up questions. Eventually, everyone gets their story back. They work in SS2-3, reading their stories and answering the extra questions.

- **ABC drill** Ss2. The task will be to think of answers for everyone letter of the alphabet (except X). Choose a topic where a lot of possible single word answers exist. Example: (1st condition): ABC picnic: *If you bring the ____, I'll bring the ____.* [Apples, bananas, cookies, donuts, etc. .]; (Going to future) ABC trip around the world: *We're going to go to ____.* *Then were going to go to ____* (Alaska, Bangkok, Chiba, Denmark). (Basic nouns): *I have a ____.* *You have a ____.* (Apple, book, cake, dog). Ss stand facing each other. One says both sentences, filling the blanks with A- and B- words. They slap hands. The other student continues, repeating the B-word and adding a word that starts with C. They continue until they get to Z.

- **Circle drill (with memory element)** Ss work in groups of 8-10. Each group stands in a circle. Write a target sentence on the board that personalizes the grammar point/ language function, e.g. EF1, u.3 Frequency adverbs (always, often, etc.): *I (always, often, etc.) (verb/action) () (when).* *I always drink coffee in the morning.* The groups need something to throw. Stuff animals are good. Balled-up paper works, too. One person says a true sentence about him/herself. Everyone silently repeats the sentence. That Ss throws the object to someone else. S/he repeats the first sentence, then adds one more with a new action and throws the item. The person who catches it has to remember the first two sentences. They continue.

Ice breakers/ rapport builders

- **My name means...** Full group. Give each student a large (A3 or B4) piece of paper and a magic marker. They write their name in kanji (or hiragana if it isn't kanji). As they do, they think about answers to the questions: *What does each kanji mean in English? Why was I given this name? Who was I named after?* Ss then circulate, explaining their name and asking about others' names. Each Ss should have several partners.

- **5 pictures.** Full group. Ss look in their cell phones and find 5 pictures of themselves, important or interesting people or events in their lives, etc. If your classroom or Ss have computers, they can look on the internet (Facebook, for example) for the pictures, too. If they don't have pictures with them, they can draw simple pictures or imagine “invisible pictures”. They work in pairs, talking about their pictures. Variation #1: Use this after a school vacation to talk about what they've done. Variation #2. Ask the Ss to find/take 5 pictures of important or good things in their lives before the next class. They do the task with those pictures.

- **My numbers.** Write several numbers about yourself on the board. Don't say what they mean. Use some that are unusual. Possibilities: Your age (if you are OK with telling the Ss), what time you get up in the morning, your shoe size, how many years you've been a teacher, number of people in your family, How many countries you have visited, How many different jobs you have had, How many times you have moved house, The number of schools you have attended, How many pairs of shoes you own, How many years you have lived in Japan (or prefecture name). On the board, write: *Is ____ your ____ (number)?* Encourage Ss to guess what the numbers mean. Then they write similar numbers for themselves. The stand, circulate and guess each other's numbers.

- **3 things the same/different.** Ss2. Ss find 3 things related to the unit topic that are the same about them. They also find three things that are different.

- **Well-balanced students** Ss2. Stand facing each other. They hold on to their partner's wrists. They stand toe-to-toe and lean back so each pair forms a giant “V”. They really are balancing the weight of their partner. Give them a topic to discuss. They try to do so in this position. Once they get the idea, they can try other balancing position. This is based on “drama technique” trust-building games.