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Psychology Games for Language Learning

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Abstract

Communicative tasks for language practice or fluency training play an important role in the language classroom but they often lead to “so what?”, or inconsequential outcomes. This paper will introduce some communicative tasks for foreign language learners of all ages and levels with surprising or amusing outcomes which purport to reveal something about our personalities and values. While there are clear risks involved in the psychological profiling of our students, I will show how these can be minimized through enactment of “denial strategies”. Training in these strategies provides a basis for further language practice and further active and personal learner involvement in classroom communication. I will also suggest how such tasks can be structured around a TBLL (task-based language learning) model of second language acquisition and lesson procedure.

Introduction

In real life, or outside the classroom, psychology tests are designed to act as gateways to the minds of individuals or the groups and communities they belong to. It is commonly thought that secrets about our personalities, our values, or our aspirations can be laid bare by these tests, and many of them can be adapted for use inside the classroom. However, “test” is not a

good choice of word because it means something else in language learning, inspiring fear, implying success or failure, and suggesting that results are concrete, accurate, and irrefutable. While psychology “game” is preferred to psychology test for the purposes of this paper, game is not a wholly appropriate term either because in the activities I will describe there is no element of competition with winners and losers, and there are no game-like rules. At least they should be fun to do, as with many games, and the results should not be taken seriously. However, note here that teachers have to be careful because we don’t have control over how students may react to the results of these games, but whatever the outcome, we should encourage scepticism and critical thinking in the classroom.

Over the years I have collected a good number of “psychology games” from textbooks, colleagues in staff rooms, and some from students too, although I hasten to add that I have never studied psychology. Indeed, it is not clear that any of the games I describe in this paper, or even any part of them, have any grounding in psychology at all. Nevertheless, my interest in the field originated with the discovery of a teacher’s resource book named *Speaking Personally* by Gillian Porter Ladousse (1983). The stated aim of this excellent textbook is to introduce language learning activities for the development of fluency, but with a strong focus on having fun and discovering what kind of people we are beneath the surface. For example, there are questionnaires to determine how honest we are (p.13) and to analyze the types of dreams (or nightmares) we have (p.53). The activities are anchored by “the conviction that people will learn more readily and efficiently if they are actively and personally involved in their language lessons” (p.1).

Unfortunately, this enthusiastic quest for the ultimate personal

response in the language learning classroom which we find embodied in the pages of *Speaking Personally* has not gained much traction in the mainstream of EFL publishing. Indeed, in more than three decades experience as a consumer of EFL textbooks, I have come across very few psychology games, or activities which seek to shed light on how well we know ourselves. One such activity called “Who’s Responsible?” appears in *Clockwise Upper Intermediate* (Naunton; 2000, p.78). The activity involves reading the story of Stephanie who is, depending on your interpretation, a victim of the selfishness, heartlessness or negligence of a succession of men who could have done more to help her including a former boyfriend, a husband, and a taxi driver before being murdered by an escaped madman. The process of deciding which of the characters is most responsible for her death is supposed to reveal our belief systems regarding money and traditional male values, for example. This game has similarities with Game #5 *Lucy’s Story* to be described later in this paper. A more recent psychology game entitled “Imagine you’re in a forest” can be found in *Four Corners 3* (Richards & Bohlke; 2011, p.71). Here again, this game is similar to Game #2 *A Little Walk* which is supposed to shed light on your personality and relationships.

Besides the focus on fun and self-knowledge promoted by Porter-Ladousse, I also have a number of other good reasons for using psychology games. From my perspective as a teacher, these games are different from most language learning activities I have come across because I never get tired of using them in my lessons. Although I once taught a short course for a class of psychology majors who exhausted my full repertoire of psychology games, these activities are best used as “warmers”, at the beginning of a class, or “fillers”, at the end of class. They can also be thought of as refreshing alternatives to a textbook which has become chore-like and

boring or has simply come to dominate a course through overuse with negative consequences. The games can also be used following tests to lift classroom mood with the advantage that they can be pulled from the teacher's sleeve with no requirement for printed materials or any advanced preparation. All you need is an opportunity, a window of time, a whiteboard, and willing, forgiving students with pens and paper. They are what some teachers call "lessons from nothing". An additional advantage is that the games can be viewed as "teacher listening" activities, where students practice their listening skills through listening to their teacher rather than by listening to recordings. Here, the content of the game, or the teacher's explanation of what to do, can be pitched to the level of language proficiency of the students with regard to speed of delivery and level of difficulty of vocabulary and grammar. Similarly, motivation can be orchestrated through changes in pace of delivery. Finally, the games can be adapted to a theoretically appealing sequence of learning activities and based upon a TBLL (task-based language learning) model of second language acquisition and lesson procedure. Details of procedures shall be provided later.

Despite this potential for entertainment and the enticing promise of an attractive alternative to text-book oriented teaching, teachers may need to think carefully about whether it is safe to conduct a psychology game with their learners, and bear the following points in mind. First, ideally, you should know your learners well enough to guess whether or not they might take offence at the type of psychological profiling you are engaging in. This is regardless of whether or not the psychological analysis is sound, or whether or not the analysis has any scientific grounding. Second, as will be explained in the description of game procedure which follows, if you do decide to do a psychology game, it is probably better not to announce that

this is what you are doing until after the game has been completed. It is instead advisable to state that your purpose of doing the game is to improve learner listening and speaking fluency and to enjoy communication. Finally, teachers should, if possible, remember and keep a record of their results when they play the games to share with their students. Note that readers can do this while reading this paper, since interpretations of outcomes always appear after the game instructions. This sharing allows teachers opportunities (i) to build in an additional step into the lesson procedure, (ii) to provide more oral input for your learners, and, most importantly (iii) to cast themselves in the role of psychology profilee as well as profiler. In this way, if learners experience (hopefully only slight) embarrassment, a level playing field can be established if teachers share their examples of similar potentially embarrassing game results with the class.

Lesson Procedure and Game #1: Safari

In this section I will describe a lesson procedure that can be adapted to any of the psychology games in this paper. I do so in tandem with a description of the first game hereafter referred to as *Safari* (Game #1). There are a total of 10 steps but 6 of these are optional (and listed as such) so the procedure can be shortened to only 4 key steps (steps 1, 3, 5, and 6)

Step 1. Explain the situation to your students with or without the use of a whiteboard.

In *Safari*, you are going on a four day (three night) safari on foot across wild country. You are accompanied by four animals: a cow, a horse, a lion, a monkey. Each night you camp, and the next day you leave one animal behind and continue your journey. Which animal did you leave behind after

the first night (#1), the second night (#2), and the third night (#3)? Which animal remained with you at the goal (#4)? Write down your decisions. Ask your partner about his or her choice, and write it down.

Simple language learning strategies or expressions can be taught at this stage of the lesson to assist the learners with asking and answering questions here. For example, one could write on the board the following phrases:

What animal did you leave behind after the first (second, third) night?

I left the _____ (name of animal behind)

Also, if you do not know this game, do not forget to write down your choice for the above so that you can share it with your students later.

Step 2. [Optional step]. Listen to a recording of a native, or highly proficient, speaker of English complete the same task. Since these recordings do not exist in published form, obviously they must be home-made by the teacher with the use of a simple recording device and with the help of a colleague. Note that the best option for teachers here would be to go a step further from the advice given in *Step 1* above, and to make a recording of yourself answering the questions, or doing the games, after supplying a copy of this paper to a colleague. The recording could then be used to provide extra listening input for learners. These authentic, unscripted recordings can be useful for learners since they are highly likely to include features of authentic speech. As pointed out by Taylor (1991), these include: “false starts, back-tracking, ..., softeners, fillers and overlapping turns ...” which “... represent a uniquely appropriate source of listening material”. While such listening texts can often turn out to be unsuitable for classroom use because of the speed of delivery, the fact that learners have completed the same task prior to being exposed to the recording means that they are uniquely primed to listen effectively to, and comprehend the listening text.

The benefits of this pre-listening priming are based on schema theory where it is thought that the experience of having engaged in the same task provides the ideal mental structure for learners to extract meaning from text, or listening text in this situation. In the words of Anderson & Lynch (1988) it establishes optimal conditions “to incorporate what we learn into what we know” (p.14). This schema theory, or schemata activation, underpins the approach to the teaching of listening in TBLL courses. For example, this model was employed in Willis and Willis’ Cobuild English Course (1988), where learners, having completed a task, “observe how native speakers do the same thing” (p.iv). An additional benefit to this approach is that it is not even necessary to give instructions for the listening task other than to say that the recording is of a native, or a highly proficient non-native, speaker completing the same task. Simply ask, for example: Did the speaker make the same choice as you? It also allows for a focus on language form in a second listening, or a repeat “listening for detail” activity. Having focused on the choices made by the speaker in the first “global” or “gist” listening, the recording can be played again with the task for the learners being to check which language structures the speakers use. For example, did the speaker say: “I think I will leave the cow” or “I would leave the cow”? Transcripts of the recordings can also be useful for teaching, especially when words or phrases are removed for a “bottom-up” listening focus involving gap-filling.

Step 3. Inform the students that it is a psychology game. Explain that a psychology game is a game where participants make choices which have hidden, or unexpected meanings

With *Safari*, you can announce that each animal symbolizes something important in life.

Step 4. [Optional step]. Invite suggestions from the learners as to what the game means. Note that after providing one example (the symbolic meaning of one of the four animals) from the list below, suggestions, in my experience, are more likely to flow from the class, particularly in combination with providing the first letter as a hint.

Step 5. Explain the meaning of the game.

In *Safari*, each animal represents something we often value, as follows:

Cow=family, horse=work (or study), lion=pride, and monkey = friends.

The order you select is supposed to represent how you view the relative importance of each in your life. For example, if you arrive at the goal with the horse, then for you, work (or study) is the most important of the four. Conversely, the animal you abandon after the first night symbolizes your least important priority in life.

Step 6. Invite students to discuss with their partners or with the whole class what the implications of their own responses are and if they believe they are a true reflection of their priorities in life. It may also be fruitful for the students to discuss whether or not the animals are suitable symbols for the values they represent. Here again, useful phrases can be introduced to assist the learners in the expression of their ideas. It is also absolutely vital to suggest to the learners that they are entitled to reject the outcome by introducing denial strategies. For example, "I do not agree with this game (or analysis) because my family is more important to me than my friends". Notice also that this activity allows opportunities for the teaching of, or evaluating the extent of learner control of, comparative structures.

Step 7. [Optional step]. Listen to a recording of a native, or highly proficient, speaker of English discussing the implications of their own responses. As in

Step 2, recordings can be useful at this stage of the lesson for practicing listening skills both globally and for highlighting target language structures. For example, the task can be to circle the words in bold that the speaker uses: “I do not **think/believe** this game represents my priorities in life”.

Step 8. [Optional step]. Share your own experience of what happened when you took test.

Step 9. [Optional step]. Repeat *Step 6* with a new partner.

Step 10. [Optional step]. Homework. As an independent study task, learners can write about their responses, and their partners’ responses to the game. They can also do the game with a friend outside the class and write about it, or report the outcomes and reactions to the class. This allows both for the practice of writing skills and for further reflection and critical thinking.

In my experience, *Safari* works well as a substitute for a “warmer” activity in the course book *Touchstone 3* (McCarthy, McCarten, & Sandiford, 2008). This task is as follows:

What are your priorities in life? Rank these things in order from 1 (most important) to 6 (least important):

___ your health, ___your career, ___wealth, ___your family, ___relationships, ___ looking good.

What other things matter to you?

Game #2: The Little Walk

Step 1. Explain the situation to your students with or without the use of a

whiteboard.

Also, invite the participants to take a blank sheet of paper and write numbers 1-10 down the left margin. Imagine you are walking along a path in open country. As you walk, you will be asked to describe what you see and make some decisions in 10 different scenarios, or stages. Participants should write down what they see in their minds' eye and ask their partner what their decisions were and make a note of these also.

Note, for the following, it is better to draw simple images on the board, number them 1-10, and add some notes to illustrate meaning and assist students in comprehension and memory. This board work will be particularly useful in Step 5 when it comes to reviewing the task and explaining the meaning. Also, especially for large classes, it is recommended to have students ask and respond to each of the 10 scenarios or stages individually before progressing to the next one. This allows the teacher to orchestrate some excitement, a change of pace, and hopefully motivation by asking the students to hurry up and complete each stage due to a pressing need to move on to the next scenario. The 10 stages or scenarios are as follows:

1. You come to a fork in the path. Turn left and the path winds through a forest, turn right and the path is wide and straight. Which path do you take?
2. You find a stick on the path in front of you. What do you do with it?
3. You come to a river. Is it a wide river, a medium river, or a stream? How do you cross the river?

4. After crossing the river, an animal begins to follow you. What is it? What do you do?
5. Next, you find an animal in front of you. What is it? What do you do?
6. Next, you come to a home. Describe it.
How many people are living there? 0, 1, 2, 3 or more?
7. You go into the home and enter the kitchen where you find a glass on the table. Is it (a) full of water, (b) half full, or (c) empty?
8. You go into the bedroom. Do you see any candles on the bedside cabinet?
If so, how many of each of the following kinds? Used, burning, new? Your answer should be a combination of numbers such as 2-1-5, 0-1-0, or 0-0-0.
9. Behind the home, can you see a wall? If you can, is it high, medium height or low?
10. What lies beyond the wall?

Steps 2-4. As in Safari.

Step 5. Explain the meaning of the game.

1. The winding road is for deep thinkers, or people who think too much. The straight road is for simple thinkers, or people who do not think much. On several occasions, I have come across students who are really not sure if the analysis is correct, and have requested more time to think about whether it is true or not that they are simple thinkers or deep thinkers.

2. The stick represents opportunity. What you do with the stick is supposed to reveal how you respond to opportunities you have in your life. For example, if you pick up the stick and use it as a walking stick, it suggests that you are the kind of person who will seize opportunities and benefit from them in your life. If you leave the stick untouched, or pick it up and throw it away or break it, this is supposed to mean that you are the kind of person who misses important opportunities in life.

3. The river is supposed to represent life and the way you cross it is supposed to represent how you live life and how difficult it is. For example, wide rivers may represent difficult lives, or lives seen as major events, and streams may represent easy lives, or minor events. This depends on the method of crossing, with walking or jumping across streams suggesting a person who finds life comparatively easy. The opposite would be swimming across a wide river, suggesting someone who finds life to be a struggle. Participants commonly report crossing in boats, and with large classes it can be interesting to request a show of hands from those who made this choice to determine what kind of boat they held in their mind's eye. Crossing a wide river in a speed boat could mean that life is not really difficult, but grand and comfortable. Rowing boats are fascinating because they suggest a journey, or voyage through life undertaken while looking backwards. This could be taken to mean a tendency to reminisce constantly, or a tendency to look back on the past and treasure memories all the time at the expense of focusing on the present or future. Crossing the river on a bridge is another frequent response. While this is certainly a safe, easy option, as with leaping across a stream, it could be suggested that, by not entering the water at all, this is missing the experience of life altogether.

4. After crossing the river, the animal which begins to follow you is the animal which you think you are. I no longer do this game with classes including obese members since an occasion when one such learner declared that she was being followed by an elephant and decided to kill it. Unfortunately, cases where participants report harming or running away from the animal which is supposed to represent what they feel they are are surprisingly common. In these cases, it may be suggested that the participant does not entertain a positive self-image. Nevertheless, if such participants agree that the analysis is correct, and as a consequence aim to rectify it, then there is something positive to be drawn.
5. The animal which you encounter on the path in front of you is supposed to represent your view of the opposite sex, or of a gender other than your own if you perceive a multi-gender society. Once again, grotesque, reviled or dangerous creatures are often reported here, as are evasive or aggressive reactions to the encounter. However, responses can be positive and inspiring. In *Step 10* described in the context of *Safari* where students write about their feelings towards the game one student wrote: "My answer was that I met a rabbit and took some pictures, so I will meet a nice man. It made me happy".
6. The home you imagine is your dream home, your ideal home, or the home that, ideally, you would like to live in. Castles and wood cabins are very commonly supplied responses. It is interesting to ask participants if they live in a home which resembles the supposedly ideal home they have described. I have never heard of a unit in a condominium, or a 3LDK, being reported here. The number of people living in the home is the number of people you would, ideally, like to live with. Those choosing the option of zero could be said to prefer to live alone, perhaps preferring to

remain single throughout their lives. A number such as “4” could mean a spouse and 2 children. This item could therefore lead interestingly into discussion of preferred future family situations.

7. Regarding the glass on the kitchen table, if it is full of water, it means you are an optimist. In contrast, an empty glass signifies a pessimist. The half full glass represents the realist who sees life as a jamboree bag of positive and negative experiences. It goes without saying that this item is designed to prompt discussion in the following step (*Step 6*, described in *Safari*) of whether or not you and your classmates are pessimists or optimists.
8. The candles on your bedside cabinet are supposed to reveal secrets about your love life. The burnt candles represent former lovers, burning candles represent current lovers, and new or unused candles represent future lovers. While 0-1-0 would be the most charming of responses, numbers higher than one for burning candles, or numbers other than zero for the unused candles represent a challenge for married participants.
9. Behind the home, the wall that participants are asked to imagine is death. A high wall suggests you feel that death is the end. In contrast, a low wall, or no wall, suggests transition from life to death is smooth or negligible, an unimportant event perhaps.
10. Whatever lies beyond the wall is what you feel to be life after death. Participants commonly report seeing fields with flowers, children, family members, animals, and birds singing. Post-task discussion inevitably results in the question of whether or not there is life after

death.

Step 6. Invite students to discuss with their partners or with the whole class what the implications of their own responses are and if they believe they are a true reflection of their views of life.

At this point, you could invite students to mark each stage (1-10) on their paper with “O” (agree) or X (disagree) according to whether they feel the game analysis in *Step 5* is appropriate, or true for them. Note that, in the interests of promoting communication, students should be doing this not only for themselves but also for their partners. This procedure results in a raw score out of 10 which reflects degree of scepticism in the participant, with low agreement scores indicating a high degree of scepticism.

Following this, it is recommended to follow *Steps 7-10* from *Safari*.

Game #3: Your phone.

Note that there is no situation or story in this game but it does involve a surprise (*Step 5*) and the same lesson procedure recommended for *Safari* and *The Little Walk* can be followed. Note also that this game can be played with a watch as a substitute for a phone if the student does not own a phone.

Step 1.

Ask participants to place their phones in front of them and to ask each other in pairs or small groups about their phones and compare them. This usually generates a large amount of animated discussion which I allow to continue for a few minutes before initiating an interview with questions 1-

15 below.

You and your phone, or your watch (if you don't have a phone).

Questions

1. How long have you had it?
2. Where did you get it?
3. How much did it cost?
4. What do you think of it?
5. How many phones have you had in your life?
6. If it is not your first one, how does it compare with your last one?
7. If there was something wrong with it, would you try to get it fixed, or would you just get another one?
8. Do you carry it with you every day?
9. Where do you keep it when you are sleeping?
10. Have you ever thought that your friend's phone is better than yours?
11. If someone said that your phone is not very nice, would you get another one?
12. Would you swap (exchange) your phone with a friend?
13. Do you like it as much now as when you first got it?
14. How would you feel if you lost it? Why?
15. Do you think you will get a new one soon?

The interview can be set up by either (a) distributing a handout with the questions, or (b) dictating the questions to the students who are required to write them down. Students then interview each other and make a note of their answers.

Steps 2-4. As in Safari.

Step 5. Explain the meaning of the game.

Announce that the phone represents your boyfriend or girlfriend, and the way you answer the questions about your phone is the same as you would answer about the one you love, and your love life in general. For example, with question 5 (How many phones have you had in your life?) is asking how many lovers you have had in your life.

Following this, it is recommended to follow *Steps 6-10* from *Safari*.

Game #4: Draw a picture.

As with the previous game, *Your Phone*, there is no situation or story, but it does involve a surprise (*Step 5*) and the same lesson procedure recommended for *Safari* and *The Little Walk* can be followed.

Step 1.

Ask participants to draw a picture with the following: a house, the sun, a lake, a tree (or some trees), a path, and a fence.

Steps 2-4. As in *Safari*. Note that although there is no standard pair interview in this game, students should be encouraged to show each other their pictures and talk about them. Also, if a homemade recording is used, it can be usefully combined with a copy of the picture drawn by the speaker in the recording.

Step 5. Explain the meaning of the game. Each item in the picture means represents something important in your life, as follows:

house = yourself; sun = father; lake = mother; tree(s) = ambition(s); path = linkage, power, energy, direction; and fence = enclosure, defense,

separation.

Interpretation is as follows. The size, appearance, and position of the items in the picture and how they relate to each other in the drawing are said to reveal quite a lot about our personalities and relationships. For example, a comparatively large house, with many windows, in the centre of the picture is supposed to be indicative of a confident, outgoing personality. Similarly, with the sun and the lake, the size and position are said to reflect the strength of parent-child relationship or extent of their influence on the artist. A comparatively small sun, in the corner of the picture, perhaps partially, or completely obscured by cloud, is suggestive of a father with minimal influence and of a relationship which is not close. Regarding the mother, houses are sometimes depicted on islands in the middle of the lake, suggesting more than simply a close relationship. The path is also interesting in that it is sometimes found to join the house and the lake, as if to suggest an umbilical connection. However, with the mother, the strength of implied influence can be tempered by the position of the fence which can serve to separate the artist from not only his or her mother, but also from his ambitions. Similarly, a fence surrounding a house could indicate a defensive or reclusive personality. As could be inferred, a single large tree represents a single, strong ambition, whereas a number of trees suggest several ambitions. Once again, the location of the tree, or trees, and proximity to the house can also supposedly reveal the strength and importance of the ambition or ambitions. Proximity of the tree or trees to the sun and lake are also supposed to represent degree of parental approval of, or involvement in, the ambition or ambitions of the artist.

Once this analysis is complete, *Steps 6-10* from *Safari* can be followed.

Game #5: Lucy's story.

Step 1. Explain the situation to your students with or without the use of a whiteboard.

Ask the class to read this story which involves 4 characters. Alternatively you can divide the story into 3 or 4 texts and ask students to read it to each other in groups.

A further option is to deliver the text orally to the students and ask them to supply some dialogue from the narrative.

The story is as follows. Lucy was madly in love with Peter and she decided to cross the river to visit him. Unfortunately, there was no bridge so she walked along the river bank to Michael's house. Michael owned a boat so she asked him if he could take her across to Peter's house. Michael replied that he couldn't provide this service for free and suggested a round-trip fee of \$10. Lucy explained that she only had \$5 and pleaded with him to lower the price. Michael refused politely, but agreed to take her only one way.

Optional task: Act out the dialogue between Lucy and Michael.

Peter liked Lucy, but not nearly as much as she liked him. Nevertheless, he seemed quite pleased to see her and invited her in. She spent the night there. The next day, she had to get back home. She asked Peter to lend her some cash to pay Michael for the return journey. Peter was in no hurry to lend her the money and drove off, smiling to himself and knowing that she'd still be there in the evening. As he expected, he returned to find her still sitting in the house. This seemed to be a convenient situation which could be repeated the next day, and the day after too. To his great surprise, Lucy was not in the house on the evening of the third day. His captive had walked

along the river bank to Simon's house.

Simon was certainly not a close friend, but the only one she had, apart from Peter, on that side of the river. Simon promised to lend her some money in the morning and invited her to spend the night there with him. She had no alternative. The following morning, Simon apologized for being unable to lend her the money. He claimed not to have as much money as he thought. Not wanting to sleep with Simon again, she tried to swim across the river back to her home. Half-way cross the river, she drowned.

The story presents an opportunity to teach the third conditional, and this is how to do it.

Elicit reasons why Lucy drowned and write them on the board, for example:

She couldn't swim.

There was no bridge.

She didn't have enough money.

She loved Peter.

Peter didn't love her.

Michael didn't give her a discount.

Peter and Simon didn't lend her any money.

Present the target pattern:

If Lucy had been able to swim, she wouldn't have died.

Then practice the same pattern with all the reasons she drowned. This leads into a discussion. Who do you think was responsible for Lucy's death?

Rank the characters 1-4 from 1 = Most responsible to 4 = Least responsible.

Steps 2-4. As in Safari.

Step 5 Explain the meaning of the game. Each character represents a value:

Lucy=Love, Michael=Money, Peter=Power, Simon=Sex.

If you reverse the order, this is supposed to reveal the values you respect most. For instance, if you put Michael as number 4 in terms of his responsibility, or believe that he is least responsible for Lucy's death, this means you defend Michael's values. In this case, you believe that Michael is within his rights to refuse to discount his services, even for a friend, because business is business. If you decide that Lucy is most responsible for her own death, then you don't value love as an excuse for irrational behaviour. Likewise, ranking Peter as least responsible suggests that you believe that a man having power over a woman, and using that power, is understandable and not wrong in any way. Similarly, ranking Simon as least responsible suggests that you support the idea that such casual relationships do not come with any strings attached. In other words, sleeping with someone does not imply any responsibility to protect or take care of him or her. All is fair in love and war.

Once this analysis is complete, *Steps 6-10* from *Safari* can be followed.

Conclusion

As mentioned in the introduction, it is perhaps worth repeating that great care should be taken when deciding whether or not to use a game with one's learners, particularly with the last game *Lucy's story*. Nevertheless, these games can add a useful dimension to a teacher's repertoire. To summarize their potential benefits once again: first, they are can be fun and surprising. As one student attests in the conclusion of his

written reflection on *The Little Walk*: “Finally, however, I like this kind of test. I think I am an optimist. Therefore I can ignore the bad results”. Second, despite the fun and excitement, they can be used to teach or reinforce grammar or language functions typically found in our course books. Third, they can be crafted into multi-stage lesson plans without need for printed materials creating a situation where a teacher can use a small quantity of input material to go a long way. This is preferable to the opposite situation where students are showered with bewildering quantities of handouts or are frog-marched through page after page of a boring textbook. Third, the games can be adapted to task-based language learning procedures. Fourth, by occasionally going through the gate and focusing on the values and personalities of our learners, we can provide more absorbing lesson content than is often on offer in more mainstream question prompt language personalization, such as “what is your favourite store?” Finally, the games offer opportunities for teachers to display or develop the critical thinking skills of their students. Especially, if we can encourage our students to deny or reject game results, or even dispute the premises of the games themselves, one could say that a kind of learning victory has been achieved. I conclude with two more examples from my students’ written reflection on *The Little Walk*. “Is this psychological test for western people? The way of thinking is based on the culture. Japanese people do not often build walls between their houses”. Another wrote: “In question 3, my partner chose a wide river, but I don’t think this shows that his life is difficult. I think his answer means that he is a challenger, and he will become a successful man”. In sum, I believe this kind of critical thinking skill where learners reject ideas which are placed in front of them could be usefully empowering, especially if transferred to all educational materials, academic lectures, and media.

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