Enhancing Oral and Written Interaction in an Online English Language Course

TLC Workshop, Jan.25/12

Presented by
Dr. Vera Dugartsyrenova
Phonetic exercises to the dialogues

Episode 2. Arnold Phones In

Arnold Phones In

Listening Comprehension
Repetition Arnold
Role Play Arnold
Repetition Peter
Role Play Peter
Exercises (Internet)

Grammar

Past Continuous / Past Simple

Murphy Units: 5-6
Online communication tools

- **email** *(written form / asynchronous)*;
- **discussion forum** *(written form / asynchronous)*;
- **voice-based chat** *(oral & written / real-time)*.
Forms of online interaction in the course

1) the instructor;
2) one partner from the group;
3) a small group;
4) whole class.

Students interact with:

Forms of online communication:
- written и aural;

Modes of communication:
- asynchronous/ real time.
Collaborative activities within the forum

- Offered around a broad theme under study.
- Open for 9 days.

- Include:
  1. Whole-group thematic discussions;
  2. Debate activities (with an assigned partner);
  3. Student-led sub-thread.
Main types of activities within a forum thread

- **Activity 1.** Exchange of opinions with regard to the detective stories;

- **Activity 2.** Free discussion of current problems within a general topic under study & creative assignments.
Activity 1: Examples of discussion questions

Here are the first discussion questions for you to work through together! Please, give your ideas and exchange opinions within your group! Remember that it is essential to not only state your personal position on the issues raised, but also show your reaction to other students' opinions! Be ready to express your agreement or disagreement with another student's view of the subject (there will definitely be different opinions, some of which may even seem to be extreme) based on what you know on the topic. Of course, it will be great if you attract additional information sources or refer to your own experience when defending your position!

Now come the questions! Make sure you’ve studied the first episode!

As you remember from episode 1, Sheila is very frustrated by her husband coming late from work. She sits at home virtually glued to the TV screen most of the time and appears to be bored to death. Moreover, she doesn’t get to see her children very often. She doesn’t even know where Andy is half the time.

Do you think Sheila is right when criticizing Peter for spending most of his time at work and doing little for the family?

Do you find that this situation is typical of many families both in Russia and abroad? What about your family?
Activity 2: Example of a creative task

Dear students!

Now that you have read Bonnie Hamre’s guide to Central Chile, we offer you to work out your own itinerary for the place that you would like to visit most of all. It can be any place on Earth. As an introduction, tell us why this place is special for you and why you find it worthy of visiting. Think whether you would recommend your friends to go there. Then go on to share your plans keeping in mind the following issues:

- the most suitable means of travel;
- the best type of accommodation at your dream place;
- the kind of clothes you will take with you according to the time of year;
- the estimated expenses for the trip;
- the top five things that you would like to see and do at your destination (explain reasons for your selection);
- the kind of memories that you would like to bring back (pictures, souvenirs etc.) etc.

If necessary, consult additional sources to get necessary information about the chosen destination.

I have created separate topic threads for each of you to post your planned itinerary as the initial post within your thread and discuss travel ideas with your groupmates. I hope that all of you will create interesting itineraries and will make others want to visit your dream place!

Good luck with your planning!
Debates with a peer from the group

Sample task:

Dear students!

😊 With your partner, have a debate around the following statement: “Early marriages without the parents’ consent are bound to fail”.

One of you (for example, Yasha) should speak in favor of the statement, the other – against it. Decide on the roles with your partner using the forum’s private messaging option or email. Think out all possible arguments to defend your position. There should be no fewer than 2 exchanges of viewpoints between you and your opponent flowing out of the arguments provided earlier by the opponent. Offer your arguments in this thread, which will be viewed only by me. This activity shouldn’t take longer than a week. It is recommended to consult additional information to provide valid arguments and convince your partner.

It is also important that you use helpful words and expressions to present your arguments, explain and defend your position. An example of how these are used is shown in the text that I will send you by email 😊. But, first, you need to put the arguments listed in the text in the correct order and send your answers to me using private message facility in this forum.

I will also send you a separate file which will contain general expressions for showing agreement/disagreement, making contrasts, concessions and comparisons, changing the topic of the conversation etc., which will definitely be of help to you 😊.

Please, make your postings in the form of replies to this topic.
Debates as a closed-group activity

Distance Education Forum Index

Group Information

Group name: Group B: Liza and Yasha
Group description:
Group membership: You are the group moderator
Group type:  
- Open group
- Closed group
- Hidden group

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Remove Selected
The use of sub-threads

- **Sub-threads** as student-led discussions on topics of interest (give SS their own voice, enhance learner autonomy and creativity)
- The authors of each sub-thread assigned special rights within the forum and moderate the discussion **based on tutor’s guidelines** (e.g. make an intro and invite other peers to join in the discussion within their thread)
Examples of sub-threads within different discussion threads

- **My ideal family** (Galya; discussion theme: «Family Issues»)
- **An ideal husband/ wife?** (Katya; discussion theme: «Family Issues»)
- **What do you think of snobs and bullies?** (Dasha; discussion theme: «The World of Youth»)
- **Youth sub-cultures** (Yasha; discussion theme: «The World of Youth»)
- **Music in your life** (Sasha; discussion theme: «The World of Youth»)
- **Discussing our future jobs** (Katya; discussion theme: «Job Issues»).
Hi, dear friends! 😊

I’d like to discuss an **ideal family** with you. When the words “ideal family” are pronounced, what do you imagine? 😊 I don’t mean the family you live in (your mother, father and so on), but the family you’d like to have in your future. Would you like to have it patriarchal, matriarchal or democratic? Nuclear or extended? What is an ideal way of bringing children up in your opinion?

I am going to tell about the ideal family as I see it. 😊

At first, I’d like it to be nuclear, because I’m quite sure, that it’s better for parents and already grown-up children to live separately. A house can’t have two hostesses. On the other hand, children should stay in touch with their parents and maintain close bonds with them. One should never let his parents feel lonely and abandoned! 😊

My strongest conviction is that a family is made for love and bringing children up. For me a family without children couldn’t be really full-fledged. So, though it can surprise you, my dream is to have many children – not less than 4! 😊 As the proverb says “He that has no children knows not what is love”. But how to bring them up? There are a plenty of various ways of children’s upbringing. Many different authors have written a great deal of books on this subject. Some of them suppose the best way to act in an authoritarian way, some of them think that parents must be their children’s friends. As for me, I agree with the words from the well-known film “the main thing is to be understood”. It’s the write phrase. 😊 Parents should not only say: “that is good”, or “that is bad”, but try to understand why their child acts in a “bad” way. 😊

My dear dream is both to teach my future children what is good and bad and not to be obtrusive. I can’t judge about all the families, but I’m going to build my family on strong religious backgrounds. By saying “religion” I mean the Orthodoxy. But the matter is that it is very difficult not to break that subtle distinction between soft, kind teaching and making children believe in spite of their will.

To sum it all, my **ideal family** is a nuclear family with many children, the family based on strong religious backgrounds. All the members of my ideal family love each other greatly and have strong ties and obligations to each other.

Yes, I’ve overdone it, I’ve written too much. 😊 Excuse my verbosity! Now it’s your turn! What is the “ideal family” in your opinion? Let’s discuss it! 😊
The tutor’s role in facilitating forum discussions

1. sending reminders of an upcoming discussion in the forum;
2. feeding in new questions if the discussion goes off topic or is not very lively;
3. encouraging participation by assigning students special status and giving praise to those most active -> “topic guru,” “sage,” “subject expert,” “active participant”;
4. discussing some of Ss’ ideas expressed in forum during Skype sessions;
5. asking Ss to make a summary of the discussion and post it online.
Encouraging participation: special status

Galina  
Topic guru  
Joined: 30 Sep 2007  
Posts: 44  
Location: Russia, Belgorod

Posted: Tue Oct 09, 2007 10:16 pm  Post subject: My image of the "ideal family"

Hi, dear friends! 😊

I’d like to discuss an ideal family with you. When the words “ideal family” are pronounced, what do you imagine? 🤔 I don’t mean the family you live in (your mother, father and so on), but the family you’d like to have in your future. Would you like to have it patriarchal, matriarchal or democratic? Nuclear or extended? What is an ideal way of bringing children up in your opinion?

Elizabeth  
Active participant  
Joined: 04 Oct 2007  
Posts: 31  
Location: Roslavl, Russia

Posted: Fri Oct 12, 2007 9:45 pm  Post subject: To Kate, Galina and Yasha

Hello, everyone! Let me join to your discussion. I agree with each of your, but I don`t want 4 children and I think, that the best age to go to marry is 30. Maybe, I see the world in pink color, but I want to live in harmony with my husband and children and without any problems. In my opinion to live in harmony it is to have a good financial base, first of all. Then you can afford normal house, car or even nurse for your children. I think if you have such base, you have less conflicts with your husband(or wife). Why 30? Because when you are 30 years old, you almost definitely will have education, work and car( your finansional base). But if you 20 or 23 you will be depend on of your parents( already not young) or your husband.
Please, read the text given below and think over the questions following the text. The text was borrowed from a famous website (www.teenadviceonline.org—TAO) devoted to the concerns of teenagers who write in to share their feelings and life views and elicit peer opinions.

THE LETTER

"All the World's a Stage, But This Is My Life"

by Ollie Madison

Sitting here, waiting for the afternoon to draw to a close, surrounded by a sea of beige carpet, with the sunlight coming through the window and playing across the floor at my feet, I feel... sick. Possibly because I have not eaten all day, possibly because I am allergic, possibly because I only got three hours of sleep last night after rehearsal, possibly because I am rigid with stress, and the list goes on...

This evening, which I was planning on spending happily curled up in my PJs with a book, has been once again borrowed by the stage. My friend suddenly decided he didn't want to do a performance tonight by himself, and he came to me last minute seeking my support. So I am going to be there, sick or no. That's just something you do for a dear friend.
3. Now, read the following article:

An American teenager made a little piece of music history yesterday when he downloaded the billionth song from the Apple iTunes music store. The unsuspecting 16-year-old spent 99 cents to purchase a digital version of Speed of Sound by British rockers Coldplay. The track’s title seems an appropriate reminder of the breathless pace at which innovations in the industry are moving. Apple’s online store has only been in operation for three years and to sell a billion songs in that time is nothing short of phenomenal. At the turn of the millennium, barely a soul would have known what an mp3 was and iPods were yet to make their ubiquitous mark on digital culture. By contrast, sales of more traditional formats such as CDs have halved in many parts of the world.

The teenager, Alex, from Michigan, scored a bag of digital goodies to mark the milestone. A representative from Apple phoned Alex in the wee hours of the morning to congratulate him and tell him he was soon to receive an iMac computer, 10 iPods and a $10,000 gift card for the iTunes store. Alex initially presumed it was a prankster and was about to give him a piece of his mind. Alex said: "I was really skeptical. I didn't even know there was a competition. But the guy knew the details of my mum's credit card." Apple CEO Steve Jobs was equally happy. He said the billionth download represented "a major force against music piracy and the future of music distribution as we move from CDs to the Internet".
Using the chat feature to introduce/check/reinforce vocabulary

- play a very important role in people's lives
- we can communicate conveniently
- suitable for your needs
- to spend money on something
- a dormitory
- using the mobile phone
- to take away something from someone
- rather than from adults
- to surf the Internet
- to begin to surf
- from the age of 9 years
Types of tasks at speaking sessions

- structured vocabulary and grammar tasks
- open-ended speaking tasks
Examples of speaking tasks

- read a text and prepare to discuss it;
- research and report on a topic of interest to both the tutor and the partner and answer their questions;
- voice a position on a given statement;
- give advice following a given stimulus;
- make up sentences with given words;
- build up associations with new vocabulary within a topic given a time limit;
- interview a famous personality;
- describe a past experience (e.g. travelling experience).
ACTIVITY 2

One of the main problems of family life is the relationship between young adults and parents. State your position on one of the following set of questions:

1. When do usually young people move out of their parents' home and start living in their own place. Is it different for sons and daughters? How and why?

2. What are the advantages of living with parents? What are the disadvantages? What kind of problems do young adults have when they live with their parents?

3. Should young adults live with their parents until they get married? Why or why not? When should they move out, in your opinion?

4. In many countries young married couples live with their in-laws after marriage. Is this good? Why or why not?
Example of an activity during an individual speaking session

Activity 4.
Giving advice

You are one of a group of social workers at a neighbourhood counseling centre. Every day several people of different backgrounds stop in to tell you their problems and seek your advice on personal matters. You are paid by the state government to do everything within your power to solve their problems; however, you rarely have to leave your office.

Today, some people with pressing problems have dropped in for advice.

Consider:

1. You must be extremely careful with your advice; statistics have shown that most people follow the counselor’s advice.

2. Be as clear and reasonable as possible.

The problems are described on the next page.
Activity 2

Imagine that your English pen pal decides to visit your hometown and can do it any time of the year. He asks you to give advice on the best ways to enjoy his trip and confesses that he knows very little about Russia and your town, in particular. Give your pen pal sound advice on the best ways to enjoy staying at your town. Think about the best season to come visiting, clothes to bring, types of accommodation available to foreign visitors, must-see attractions to recommend, any special local dishes to try, etc.

Each of you will have 5 minutes to think over your recommendations and then act out a conversation with each other.

Be ready to use the special phrases for giving advice or not advising to do smth, which you can see in the separate file that I have sent you today.
Activity 4: Alien abduction

Read this story and try to imagine what happened.

Three nights ago in the village of Huntingdugton telephoning the police, three villagers went out to investigate. They disappeared for three days. After a huge police search, one of them, Joe Cole was found unconscious in a field 20 km away. The other two are still missing. After spending three nights in hospital, Joe is now ready to tell his story. His memory of what happened that night has returned.

Take 3 minutes to think of what happened to you that night and retell your story in detail.
Use the following plan:

The night of the abduction (what you had been doing before it and how it happened).
The spaceship.
The aliens and what you think they wanted from you.
What happened to the other villagers.
How you left the ship.
What has happened since you came back to earth (do you feel different?).
Why you were chosen by them.
At least 3 other details.

Take 5-7 minutes to prepare your version of how everything happened!
Thank you for your time and attention!