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This section presents three stand-alone language-learning activities related to the theme of fish. Each activity is designed for students at the proficiency level indicated.

Aquarium

Level: Beginner and up

Time required: 5–10 minutes

Goal: To have students form groups by practicing pronunciation and listening, and (at upper levels) by using imagination and critical-thinking skills

Materials: Small pieces of paper (one for each student)

Background: This is a grouping activity, inspired by fish in the sea or large aquariums swimming together in groups with other fish of the same kind.

Procedures:

1. Decide how many groups you want students to form. Then choose the same number of words (e.g., vocabulary items) as groups; for example, if you want students to form five groups, choose five words. If your class has been studying fish, you can choose the names of five fish: goldfish, tuna, salmon, shark, trout (or other kinds of fish common to your teaching context).

2. Write one word (in this case, the kind of fish) on each small piece of paper. If possible, you should have an equal number of pieces of paper for each word; that is, if you have 40 students and want to form five groups, you should have eight pieces of paper with the word *goldfish*, eight with *salmon*, eight with *tuna*, eight with *shark*, and eight with *trout*. Mix up the pieces of paper.

3. Tell students you are going to give each person a piece of paper with a word on it, and that when they get the paper, they should read the word silently to themselves. They should not tell the word to anyone else yet, and they should not look at anyone else's paper.

4. Hand out the pieces of paper so that each student has one. After each student has read the word on the paper silently, tell students to remember the word and fold the paper so that no one else can see it.

5. Tell students that they are going to get into groups and that they will do so by finding all the classmates who have the same kind of fish written on their paper. Tell students that when you say "Go," they should walk around the room saying the name of their fish to their classmates. When they find someone with the same fish, they should stay together to form a group. If they meet someone with a different kind of fish, they should not stay with that person. Tell students that they must find everyone in the class with the same kind of fish that they have.

Remind students that they cannot show their paper to anyone. And, to prevent shouting, tell students that they must speak quietly.

6. Have students stand up; then say, "Go!"

7. Students should mingle, saying their words. Students will form pairs and then groups as they find classmates with the same kind of fish.

8. When students have formed their groups, you can ask them to try to name, within their group, the names of all the other fish they heard while they mingled. You can then point to each group, one by one, and ask other groups if they know the name of that group's fish.

9. Following this activity, students are in groups, and you can go ahead and continue class with students working together in these groups.

Variation for Beginners

You can do the same activity with vocabulary that is not related to fish. For example, students might have different letters, numbers, colors, days of the week, months, kinds of fruit, adjectives, emotions, and so on. Or they might have words that have similarities in the way they are pronounced: *leg*, *lake*, *look*, *like*, *luck*.

Variation for Upper Beginners

The procedure is the same as it is for beginners, but the level of difficulty is raised slightly. Prepare different sets of words that go together; students will mingle to find other students who belong to the same "category." For example, there might be a "fish" group, a "colors" group (e.g., red, blue, yellow, green, purple), an "emotions" group (e.g., happy, sad, surprised, excited, bored)—or a "countries" group, a "months" group, a "vehicles" group, a "fruit" group, a "careers" group, a "shapes" group, and so on.

A student with the word *salmon* would mingle with classmates, saying his or her word and listening to other students' words. As classmates meet, they must decide whether their words naturally belong to the same category or not. If so, they should stay together and look for other students with words that fit in their category. If the student saying "salmon" meets a student saying "shark," they might realize that they both belong in the "fish" group and should stay together to look for other members of their group. But if they then meet a student saying "blue," they should realize that the color doesn't seem to fit in their category and that the student saying "blue" is not a member of their group.

You can decide whether to tell students beforehand the number of groups or the number of students in each group. But it is best not to tell students beforehand the names of the categories; let students determine the category to which they belong.

A quick follow-up activity for the whole class is to have all members of a particular group say aloud the word they were given and have other groups identify the category that that group belongs to. Then do the same with other groups.

Variations for Intermediate Learners

1. You can make the categories more challenging (e.g., the categories might include different parts of speech), or you can add a level of difficulty: students are not allowed to say the word on their slip of paper; instead, students ask questions to find classmates in the same group. For example, if group selection is based on colors, a student with the word *blue* might ask another student, "Do you have the color of the sky?" By answering a question or two, students should be able to determine whether they are in the same group. After everyone in the class has found a group, group members can tell one another the word on their paper and check to see if they have found the right group.

2. Add a level of critical thinking to the activity: words are distributed to students, and they can choose their own group members—*but* they must explain how all the words in their group go together. For example, a student with *salmon* and a student with *blue* might say that salmon live in blue water or that some salmon have blue eyes. (The important thing is not necessarily to be factually correct; the goals are for students to make connections, use their imaginations, and enjoy using English.) Note that creating these connections among all group members becomes more difficult as the groups get larger, so you might want to limit the number of students in each group to three.

If you want, you can then extend the activity. After students in a group have come up with ideas for how their words can be connected, ask each group to stand up, and have each group member say the word he or she was given. The group members should not yet explain the connections they have come up with. Instead, ask the rest of the class to suggest ways that the words in the group might go together. Encourage them to use their imaginations! Then have the group members who are standing explain the connections that they thought of. Continue with other groups.

Living in a Fishbowl

Level: Intermediate

Time required: 40 minutes

Goal: To practice descriptive writing

Procedures:

1. Write the word *fishbowl* on the board. Ask students if they know what a fishbowl is. (A fishbowl can refer to a large, clear bowl where one or more fish live and that people can see into and watch the fish. See page 38 for a picture of a fishbowl.)

2. Now write the phrase *living in a fishbowl* on the board. Ask students to discuss with a partner what they think the phrase might mean.

3. After a minute or two, ask for volunteers to suggest possible meanings. You are not necessarily looking for the "right" answer here, so encourage participation and effort. You might want to write students' suggestions on the board.

4. Praise the imagination and thoughtfulness reflected in the students' suggestions; then explain that someone living in a fishbowl has little or no privacy. That is, other people will see or know about nearly everything the person does.

5. Ask the class to suggest people who seem to be living in a fishbowl. Students might mention careers (e.g., actors, athletes, musicians, politicians), they might give the names of people, and they might suggest situations (e.g., people who live in crowded houses or towns, people who live in small villages where everyone lives close together). You might also ask students whether they think they would like to live in a fishbowl.

6. Divide the class into pairs or groups of three.

7. Tell students to imagine that their home is the fishbowl and that someone has come to visit for the first time. In their pairs or groups, have students orally describe to each other things that the visitor would notice.

- What is going on?
- What would that person see?
- What sounds would the person hear?
- What are different members of the family doing?

If students are having trouble getting started, you can suggest that they choose a specific time of day, perhaps in the morning before school, in the evening after school, or at night before everyone has gone to bed. Let students talk for about 5 minutes, or a little more if they have a lot to say.

8. Now tell students that they will have 15 minutes to write a description of what someone might observe when visiting their homes. Students can choose the style and content. Some might write in a general way; others might write about specific details or incidents. Some might focus on a particular moment; others might write about a series of things that happen. That's fine; students experience and interpret things in different ways.

9. After students have written their descriptions, have them compare and contrast their descriptions in groups.

- What similarities do they notice?
- What differences?
- What are the reasons for those similarities and differences?

10. As a class, ask students how they felt while they were describing the activity taking place in their homes.

- How would they feel if they were observed in that way?
- Are there some things they would be happy to have someone observe?
- Are there some things they would not be happy to have someone observe?
- What might it be like to live in a fishbowl?

Extension

Tell students to imagine that the fishbowl is their classroom. Have them write descriptions of what takes place in the classroom and collect the descriptions in a "group journal" where they take turns writing entries. The entries could be posted in a blog, on poster paper on a wall, or in a notebook that is shared among classmates. Each day, one person is assigned to write the day's entry and takes notes about what happens; at the end of the day or for homework, the student writes his or her observations on the day. The next day, the student reads the entry to the class, and the assignment (and the notebook, if that's what you're using) is passed to the next person. Other students are able to add details that they noticed, particularly if the entries are posted on a blog.

The length of each entry depends on the ability level of the student writing it and on what takes place in the class. The content is up to the student—some might want to summarize the day in general; some might want to pick a particular event and describe it in detail. Students might review the lesson(s) studied that day, tell about something amusing that happened or that someone said, or describe something surprising or a break in the routine.

Fish and Wishes

Level: Intermediate and up

Time required: 30–40 minutes

Goals: To practice making wishes; to listen to and comprehend a story

Background: This activity can be used to supplement a lesson involving wishes—and the grammar we use when we make them. Briefly, we wish for things we want that may not seem possible at the time; we *wish something would/could happen*, and we *wish that something were true*. The following examples illustrate the meaning and grammar:

- "I wish I could see you tomorrow" suggests that it will be impossible for these two people to meet, even though the speaker wants to.
- "I wish Nat were here today" suggests that Nat isn't here.

Procedures:

1. Ask students if they have ever wished for anything. If students are willing to share what they've wished for, you might want to write their responses on the board. Make sure students understand that we wish for things we really want, or really want to happen, even though those things might not seem possible when we wish for them.

2. Tell students to make three wishes that they would like to come true and to write them down. Tell students the wishes could be for themselves or for friends, family, or the school or town where they live. They can make a wish for their country or for the world. Give them a few minutes to come up with their wishes—but let them know that they will be sharing the wishes with a classmate, so their wishes should not be too personal or "private."

Students' wishes might be anything from "I wish I were invisible" and "I wish that (the name of a movie star) would fall in love with me" to "I wish that everyone in our country had enough food to eat" and "I wish that the water in the pond were clean." But it's probably best not to give examples of wishes in this case because you want students to think freely, on their own.

3. As students come up with their wishes, circulate to answer questions and to check grammar. Students are going to be making wishes in this activity, and you want them to practice using the correct "making wishes" grammar.

4. Have students put their wishes aside for a few minutes. Tell them they are going to listen to a story called "Two Fish Wishes." Ask them to predict what they think the story will be about. Elicit

details for a minute or two, or as long as students continue to be interested in making predictions about the story.

5. Have each student choose one prediction and write it down. Tell students that, as they listen to the story, they should check to see whether the prediction they chose is correct.

6. Read "Two Fish Wishes" (see page 52) to the class—at least two times. Depending on how well your students comprehend the story, you might have to read it a third time.

7. Have each student meet with a partner to decide whether the predictions they made were correct. After a minute or two, have a few students share their predictions and let the class decide whether the predictions were correct—and why. (For example, "The prediction 'Two fish will make wishes' is not correct because in the story, two people make wishes, not two fish.")

8. As a class, continue to discuss the story for a few minutes. The type of discussion you have will depend on the level of your students' listening comprehension. You can check their basic understanding by asking about events in the story; you might ask some of these questions:

- What did the first girl wish for? Did her wish come true?
- What did the second girl wish for? Did her wish come true?
- What did the first girl do that the second girl didn't do?
- What did the second girl do that the first girl didn't do?
- How did each girl feel as she walked home?

You can also ask students what lesson each girl said she learned. And you can ask them the question at the end of the story: "Which girl was right?" (Answers may vary, and that is fine. Students might have differing opinions, and some might say that both girls are right: a wish is more likely to come true if you do something to try to make it come true.)

9. Now ask students to take out their list of three wishes and work with a partner. (It is also possible to continue the activity with students working in groups of three or four.)

10. Have one student (Student A) tell his or her first wish to the partner (Student B). Student B will listen and ask questions to make sure he or she understands the wish and to get more information about the wish from Student A. But Student B must ask at least these three questions:

- Why do you want to make that wish?
- What would you do if your wish came true?
- Is there anything you can do to make your wish come true?

11. Have Student A and Student B switch roles until they have discussed each student's three wishes. Together, the partners can brainstorm ways that they can make their wishes come true. What steps can they take to at least get started?

Extensions

1. Have students share one of their wishes with the class and tell why it's important to them. The class can discuss ways that the student can try to make the wish come true.

2. Assign students to select one of their wishes—or come up with another—and write about it. They should explain the wish in detail, tell why the wish is important to them, and then suggest steps they could take to make the wish come true.

Variation

Have the class make a collective wish (that is, one wish for the whole class, such as "We wish there were no more litter in the schoolyard" or "We wish everyone in our class treated one another well") and work toward making it come true.

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Two Fish Wishes

One morning not long ago, a girl who lived in a small village woke up and said to her parents, "I want to see if wishes come true." She walked to the pond near her village, carrying a bucket.

On that same morning, a girl who lived in a different small village woke up and said to her parents, "I want to see if wishes come true." She walked to the pond near her village. She was carrying a bucket, too.

The first girl held out her bucket, closed her eyes, and said, "I wish I had fish in my bucket!" She opened her eyes and looked in her bucket; it was still empty. Nothing had happened. She thought, "Maybe I'm being too greedy." So she tried again: "I wish I had one fish in my bucket!" Nothing happened. She tried shouting her wish, and she tried whispering her wish. She stood on one leg when she wished; she jumped in the air. Nothing happened. She stood beside the pond, disappointed. The first girl walked home carrying the empty bucket and feeling tired.

Meanwhile, the second girl held out her bucket, closed her eyes, and said, "I wish I had fish in my bucket!" Then she opened her eyes … and she reached into her bucket and took out the net she had brought with her from her home. She waded into the pond, threw the net into the water, and pulled it back. It was empty. So she threw it again. This time, it was full of fish. The second girl put the fish in her bucket, filled it with water, and walked home, happy to carry the heavy bucket.

The first girl went home to her parents and said, "Do you know what I learned today? I learned that wishes don't come true."

The second girl went home to her parents and said, "Do you know what I learned today? I learned that wishes come true."

Which girl was right?

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