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Kinesthetic Grammar Activities



INTRODUCTION

The body knows things about which the mind is ignorant.

- Jacques Lecoq

OUR MINDS and bodies are in constant communication with each other and the world. Think of the butterflies you feel before public speaking, or how you can recognize confidence in your friend's posture. Often you can tell when someone is about to give you bad news simply by the sound of their voice or the look in their eyes. These are physical signs of a mental state. Even drawing can get us in touch with a part of the brain that constructs meaning.

Now imagine students sitting in rows in the classroom, their bodies still, their hands only moving pencils across the desk. How many opportunities are they missing to embody language in their voice, hands, ears, and eyes? Language is so much more than words, and that is what this book is about.

When we stand up, form a circle, get in a line according to height, frown, smile, draw a picture, use our voice to express alarm, or pretend to break an egg into a bowl, we are connecting language in our head to our arms and legs, eyes and ears. When we ask students to perform these actions, we spark curiosity, create community, and often elicit laughter. Students return to their desks energized and perhaps glad they came to class.

The activities in this book are kinesthetic insofar as they all involve some sort of physical experience which might variously be a grammar game, a role-play, a mimed scene, or even a vocal exercise. We have also included suggestions for setting up the activities with a quick review or drill, as well as variations to adjust for students at different proficiency levels. Finally, there are ex-

pansions for further practice of skills through writing and speaking activities.

Best of all, we are proud to say that the vast majority of these activities are easy to use and ready-to-go. The grammar structures are in alphabetical order for conveniently locating them when you need something on the fly, and most require little to zero prep—yes, we are working teachers! For many activities, we've included word banks and lists of cues to help get things started. Most will work in a standard classroom. Some require extra room, so don't be afraid to come up with alternative versions that take up less space.

Ultimately, we've tried to create a book that we would want to have while lesson planning, and we very much hope you enjoy using it with your students.

— Alice & Colin

Article Island



(Optional) You can also have other students do a choral response, “You saw tiny elephants?” And the originals can say, “Yes, we saw tiny elephants!”

5. Have the odd one out collect all the slips and redistribute for the next round.

2. *A/an/some* for first mention *and the* for second mention.

THE GRAMMAR: One feature of *a/an* is to show that there is one of something and it is being introduced to the conversation for the first time. *The* is then used to refer to the item the second time.

- I brought some sunscreen. I put the sunscreen on my nose.
- I found a coconut. I cracked open the coconut and drank the water inside.
- I discovered a cave. I went inside the cave. The air was cooler than outside.

Aim: Students use *a/n* and *some* to introduce items and *the* to refer to them later

Level: High-beginner (A2)

Preparation: None. Or you can create “islands” by bunching three desks or chairs together in different parts of the room, creating “an ocean” around the room.

Time: 20-30 minutes

Activity

1. Review the patterns for articles. Give some examples such as, “I have a really good knife. I use *the* knife to cut open coconuts.” Use the examples to point out or remind learners that *the* is used for second mention of something.
2. Tell students they are going to sea on a ship. Then elicit or

provide a word bank of nouns on the board that can be found on a ship and an island (see below). Make sure you have examples of singular, plural, and noncount vocabulary (see below).

nouns on a ship	nouns on an island
rope	a cave
string	coconuts
wire	monkeys
blankets	a stream
a hammer	a shelter
nails	a beach
a lifeboat	rocks
matches	sand
a basket	fish

3. Tell students their ship is sinking. (You can use a picture for clarity and to get everyone “on board” with the imaginary setting.)
4. Tell them they only have time to grab five items from their ship before they fall in the water. (These can come from the word bank on the board or their own ideas.) Have them write their items on slips of paper or cards.
5. Have students stand up with their list and flounder around the room. Mime this by having them wave their arms and pretend to swim. When you clap, they should swim to an “island” formed by desks or tables.
6. On the “island,” have groups share their five things with each other and discuss how they will use the items they have brought. e.g., “We’ll use the rope to climb a tree.” “We’ll use the tools to build a shelter.”
7. Give them paper to draw their island and show how they will survive.
8. Have them share their survival techniques with another group or the class, introducing the items and how they will use them to survive.

Variation

Have each group mime some of their sentences together. Have the other teams write one sentence to describe what they think it's about. When they finish, they can share their sentence. See which team was correct about the situation and note their use of articles.

Expansion

Have students write sentences about how they will use six of the items. To help students, write the frames below on the board for them to use:

- We used the ... to ... e.g. *We used the matches to start a fire.*
- We used the ... to ... e.g. *We climbed the coconut trees with the rope.*

Grace-
fully
Yours



6. Adverbs of manner

THE GRAMMAR: Adverbs of manner show how people do something and typically end in *-ly*. They generally go before or after a verb. They can also go at the beginning or end of a sentence.

- She slowly raised her glass.
- He danced gracefully across the room.
- Nervously, I turned the key.
- They picked up the shovels reluctantly.

Aim: Students expand their adverb vocabulary through actions

Level: High-beginner to Intermediate (A2-B1)

Preparation: A list of adverbs and possible actions (see below)

Time: 15 minutes +

Activity

1. Review adverbs with a little game: Write a few adverbs of manner on the board, such as *slowly*, *nervously*, *courageously*. Ask students to try to figure out what kind of words these are and, if they can, add to the list. As students write new adverbs on the board, give them feedback about whether those fit the category (of adverbs) and remove or cross out those that are not adverbs. Continue adding to the list until you have 15 – 20 adverbs that can be demonstrated through miming.

angrily	forgetfully	proudly
awkwardly	gracefully	quickly
cheerfully	happily	reluctantly
courageously	hopefully	romantically
distractedly	maliciously	sorrowfully
dramatically	nervously	suspiciously
energetically	optimistically	timidly

2. Check to see that students understand the meanings. Consider demonstrating some of the adverbs through your own acting skills or those of a stronger student. Remember that students are likely to feel more comfortable dramatizing the action after they see you do it.
3. Tell students that the objective of the game is to act out the adverb silently so another person can guess it. Introduce some possible actions to get them started. Use the ones below or create your own.

walk across the room	make an omelet	drive a car
change a lightbulb	butter a piece of toast	cross a busy street
clean your glasses	peel an apple or banana	gesture to x to follow you out the door.
brush something off your pants or shirt	greet a relative	scratch your head
tie your shoes	pack a suitcase	dance
wade across a river	pick up a pen and give it to x	sweep the floor
	pet a dog	

4. Send one student (Student A) out of the room. After they leave, choose one of the adverbs to act out.
5. Invite Student A back in. Tell that student to direct a classmate to do an action. Set a timer for 2 minutes.
6. As the nominated student performs the action, A tries to guess the adverb. If they can't guess, have them nominate a second or third student to join the action/perform the action according to the adverb (alongside the first student). This continues with new students joining in and acting until the person guesses or the timer buzzes.
7. Once Student A has guessed, have a new student leave the room and repeat with a new adverb. Continue until you've reached your time limit or goal.

Variation

For a bigger class, play the game in teams. Divide the class in two. Have each side write adverbs on slips of paper to create two piles. Prepare a list of actions on the board. When it is side A's turn, the first team member comes to the front and takes a slip written by the B side. A silently acts out the adverb for their team to guess within a time limit of two minutes. If they succeed, the A team gets a point. During this time, the B side stays silent. Next, the B side takes a turn with a B student taking a slip from the A side and acting out the adverb for the B team to guess. The game continues until the slips are gone and there is a winner.

7. BE verbs in present simple

THE GRAMMAR: We often follow *BE* verbs (*am, is are*) with adjectives and nouns to describe who people are. In questions, the *BE* verb comes before the subject, and we use a rising intonation. In short answers, we use only the subject and the verb *BE*.

- Are you a student? → Yes, I am. / No, I'm not.
- Is he Canadian? → Yes, he is. / No, he isn't.
- Is she a lawyer? → Yes, she is. / No, she isn't.

Aim: Students ask and answer yes/no questions with the verb *BE* to guess famous people

Level: Beginner (A1)

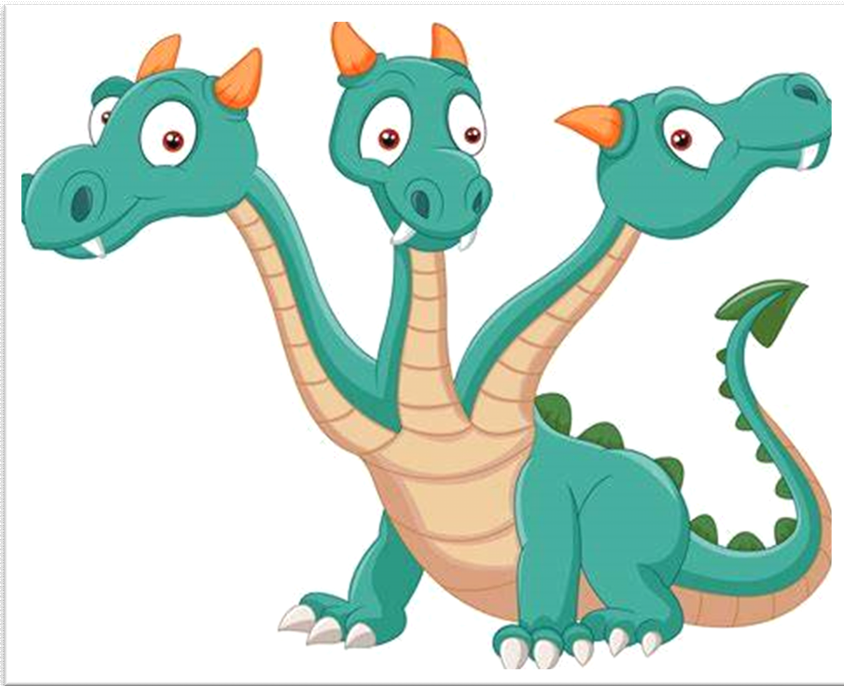
Preparation: Notecards, tape, and a list of famous celebrities and historical figures

Time: 20+ minutes

Activity

1. On the board, write the names of the following categories: *Musicians / Actors / Fictional Characters / Inventors / Athletes*.

Three-Headed Clause Monster



9. Compound Sentences with *and*, *but* & *so*

THE GRAMMAR: Coordinating conjunctions include *and*, *but*, *so*, *or*, *yet*, *for*, & *nor*, but the most frequently occurring are *and*, *but*, & *so*. Coordinating conjunctions are used to combine two independent clauses (S+V), and together they make a compound sentence. Commas are used between the two independent clauses.

- I saw my friend, and she saw me.
- She saw me, but she didn't wave.
- I was confused, so I texted her.

Aim: Students work as a three-headed creature to create meaningful sentences with *and*, *but* & *so*

Level: High-beginner to Low-intermediate (A2-B1)

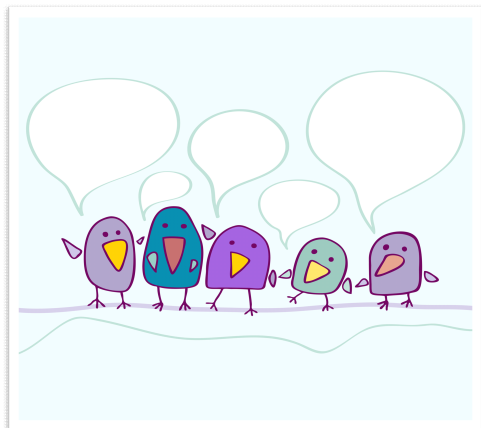
Preparation: None

Time: 10-20 minutes

Activity

1. Review the elements of an independent clause, and the role and meaning of the conjunctions so students understand that *and* shows an additional relationship, *but* shows contrast, and *so* shows a result. (The context of a rich boy wanting to marry a poor girl works well as a context that illustrates meaning in a broad way.)
2. Ask for three volunteers to become a "three-headed monster." When they come to the front, give them a topic such as animals or food. Then tell A to say a complete clause, tell B to say *and*, *but* or *so*, and tell C to come up with a new clause that shows the correct relationship of addition, contrast or result. Tell them how you plan to deal with errors. You can:
 - a. Stop the activity and let them try again/give hints.
 - b. Stop the activity and invite others to help.
 - c. Slay the monster by replacing the person who makes the error.
3. Have the first three-headed creature create a compound sentence and give feedback on the relationships between the clauses as necessary.
4. Rotate the roles and rotate in new students so that everyone gets a turn.

Conditional Chain



11. The 1st conditional

THE GRAMMAR: The first conditional is used to show an expected result if a condition is met. It is formed with *if* + present tense, future tense. (You can also use *may*, *might*, *can*, or *could*.) The two clauses can also be reversed, with the future clause followed by *if* + present tense.

- If she asks me directly, I'll tell her the truth.
- You'll need help if you want to finish on-time.
- If you walk to school, you'll have more energy.

Aim: Students are challenged to speed up their fluency with the first conditional by making a chain story

Level: High-beginner (A2)

Preparation: A set of prompts to start a first conditional chain story

Time: 20 minutes +

Activity

1. Review the first conditional with a traditional chain story. Have
32 students stand and get in a circle. Then start with a conditional

sentence, e.g., *If I live with my parents, I can save money.* Direct the next student to turn the main clause into an if-clause and add an element, e.g., *If I save money, I can go on a trip.*

2. Next, tell them they are going to have a competition to see which group can come up with the most correct *if* clauses.
3. Have your class stand up and form circles of 5 or 6. (You can do one big circle if you have a smaller class.) They should repeat the activity with a new prompt, e.g. "If I join the gym..." However, there are two new features. Tell them that at any point, someone can call out, "Reverse!" and the chain immediately goes the other way, or they can call out "Fire" and everyone has to leave the circle and move to a new spot. Here are some additional prompts:

- If I move to New York, . . .
- If I go out to eat tonight, . . .
- If I need money, . . .
- If I lose my phone . . .
- If I marry an actor . . .

You can stop the activity here or go on to the next step.

4. Create a competition. Each group will take turns standing in a line in front of the class for their round. The rules are:
 - You have two minutes to say as many conditionals as you can in a chain story, going down the line and back to the first person.
 - You get one point for every correct example. You lose two points for an incorrect example.
5. Give each group a new prompt. Tell the other groups to make a note if they hear an error. Create a tally sheet so you can calculate correct and incorrect sentences. The winner is the group with the most correct if-clauses

Regrets, I've had a few....



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- Have students pick one of the prompts that they like and write about it. Note that they will tend to write sentences that are just one clause, e.g., *I would ask Kevin Kwan many questions about his childhood in Singapore.*

13. The 3rd conditional

THE GRAMMAR: We use *If* + past perfect, *would have* + past participle to imagine other realities in the past. This form is also used to show regret. Note that the order of the clauses can also be reversed.

- If Lola had set an alarm, she wouldn't have missed her first class.
- If we had had more time, we would have finished the project.
- I would have bought you a present if I had known it was your birthday.

Aim: Students use the third conditional to retell someone's story

Level: High-intermediate to Advanced (B2-C1)

Preparation: A set of prompts to start a third conditional dialogue (see below)

Time: 30 minutes +

Activity

1. Review the pattern of the third conditional and write it on the board: *If* + past perfect, *would have* + past participle. Invite volunteers to tell you what they did yesterday or this morning. Then ask what would have happened if they hadn't done it. Elicit example sentences, and write them on the board, e.g. "If I hadn't woken up on time, I would have been late to school." Correct any errors.
2. Put students into pairs. Assign each pair one of the situations below for a role-play between two friends in which someone

makes a mistake and is telling the other about it. Tell them to come up with a place and a few details about what happened.

- You forgot to turn off the stove and burned down your kitchen.
- You posted an embarrassing photo on Instagram.
- You dropped your phone in the toilet.
- You were texting and driving and hit a cat in the middle of the street.
- You picked up the wrong bag at the airport and brought it home.
- You were using your phone in class and got sent to the principal's office.

3. Give pairs 3-5 minutes to prepare their role-play. Student A will explain the situation s/he was in, and Student B will ask questions to keep the conversation going and get more details. For example:

A: You wouldn't believe what happened to me!

B: Oh yeah? What?

A: Well, I was in the kitchen. I was going to cook some eggs on the stove, so I heated up some oil in the pan. While I was waiting for the oil to heat up, I checked my email on my computer. But then, I completely forgot about the oil in the pan!

B: Oh no!

A: Yeah! Instead, I went upstairs to take a shower! I was getting out of the shower when I started to smell something strange, so I went downstairs. There was smoke everywhere, and the pan was on fire!

B: How scary! What did you do?

A: It was really hard to see, but luckily, I had a fire extinguisher in the closet, so I used it to put out the fire. The air was so smoky that I had to open all the windows and the front and back door.

B: So, what happened to your kitchen?

A: Well, everything turned black! The cabinets, the ceiling, even the chairs.

B: That's terrible!

A: Yeah, so I had to go get paint and I painted all the cabinets and the ceiling. And I washed all the chairs. It took forever to clean it all up, but now, I have a brand-new kitchen!

B: Well, I guess it wasn't all bad. I guess the lesson is not to check email while you're cooking eggs?

A: Ha-ha. Yeah, I won't ever do that again!

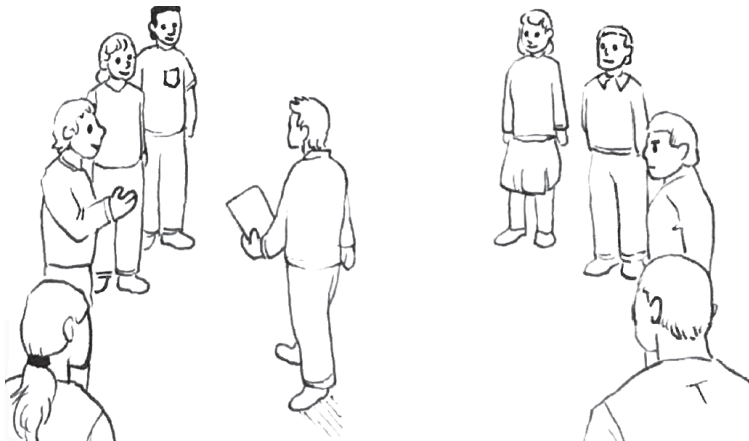


4. Tell the class they will be doing a tableau. Ask one of the pairs of students to come to the front of the class. Then divide the rest of the class in two teams, and have each team form a semicircle around the pair in the middle of the circle.
5. Tell the groups that they must listen to the story and prepare statements using the third conditional to make observations about what happened (referring to the pattern on the board), e.g. *If Susan hadn't checked her email, she wouldn't have*

forgotten about the pan. / If Susan hadn't left the pan on the stove, she wouldn't have set it on fire. / If Susan hadn't set her stove on fire, her cabinets wouldn't have turned black. / If Susan had been more careful, she wouldn't have had to repaint her kitchen.

6. Instruct the first pair to do their role-play. At the end, invite students from each group to make their observations using the third conditional. Give a point for each correct use of the conditional. If there is a mistake, the other group can challenge it and correct it for a point. Continue until the groups have run out of observations to make.
7. Continue Step 5 until all pairs have completed their role-plays. Add up the points for each team and declare a winner.

Advice Alley



21. Modals *should* & *shouldn't*

THE GRAMMAR: We use *should* and *shouldn't* + the base form of the verb to give advice. We also use it when we know something is a good idea, but we might or might not do it.

- You should call your mother.
- I shouldn't eat this cookie.
- He should ask for help.
- She shouldn't spend so much money on shoes!

Aim: Students practice using *should* to give advice when they have a dilemma

Level: High-beginner (A2)

Preparation: A set of dilemmas on slips of paper (see below)

Time: 15-20 minutes

Activity

1. Review the meaning and form of *should* + base form. You can start with a dilemma and ask for advice. "My spouse wants me to become a vegan. What should I do?" Elicit suggestions such as, "You should be a vegan because it's healthy," or "You shouldn't be a vegan because it's too hard."
2. Brainstorm a list of similar dilemmas. You can start with a few ideas, but it will be good if students think of their own. Write them in terms of requests that could elicit *should* and *shouldn't* suggestions. Use the ones below or create your own.
 - My friend wants to be my roommate.
 - My brother wants to borrow money.
 - My parents want me to study medicine.
 - My boss wants me to come in on Saturday.
 - My friends want me to take a trip this weekend.
 - My sister wants me to buy her car.
 - My neighbor wants to give me a kitten.
 - My boyfriend/girlfriend wants to get married this year.
3. Have students choose a dilemma and create details by asking and answering as many *who?* *when?* *where?* and *how?*

questions as they can. Circulate and help them develop a description of the problem.

4. Create an alley by having students stand in two lines face-to-face but leaving enough room for someone to walk through.
5. Model the activity by reviewing your problem and asking the people on the left to give you reasons to say no using *shouldn't* (Line A). Ask the people on the right to give you reasons to say yes using *should* (Line B). As you walk down the alley, listen to each person's advice and give corrections as necessary. At the end, turn and tell them what you have decided to do. Then join Line A.
6. Have the first student in Line A follow you. They describe their dilemma and then walk down the alley getting advice from both sides. At the end, they can say what they have decided and then take their place at the end of Line A. Then repeat with the first person from Line B going down the line, listening to advice, saying what they've decided and joining Line B. Repeat this process several times.

(Optional) About halfway through, have the lines switch roles, so Line A gives *should* advice, and Line B gives *shouldn't* advice. Continue until everyone has had a turn.

Variation

1. Engage students by asking them to pair-share the following question: *Is it better to live a long life or an adventurous one?* Give students time to generate ideas and then ask them for advice, eliciting examples on the board and dealing with errors.
2. Divide the class in half. Line A comes up with advice for enjoying life and living for the moment. Line B comes with advice for being healthy and preparing for the future.
3. Have the two sides face each other with enough space in the middle for someone to walk through. Then tell them you will

walk through and listen to each person give you advice. At the end, you will choose one row to join.

4. Walk slowly down the middle so that you can hear one piece of advice from each person. At the end, join the side that has convinced you.
5. Have the first student in Line A do the same and then join a side. Then the first student in Line B follows. Alternate sides until everyone has walked down the alley.
6. Reflect on which side has the most people. Discuss what that says about the class philosophy. Optional: Have them write a paragraph about the best way to live.

For more activities, check out <https://www.alphabetspublishingbooks.com/book/60-kinesthetic-grammar-activities/>

