

## 9a COPING WITH LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES

However much or however little of a language we know, our ability to make fluent use of it depends on whether or not we feel confident of our ability to cope with the difficulties which will, inevitably, arise. In order to experience this confidence, pupils need a learning environment in which they:

- have adequate opportunity to hear language items in use before having to use them themselves;
- have sources of reference visible so that, when memory fails, they can quickly and unobtrusively seek help;
- feel able to experiment with language without risk of ridicule or interruptive correction.

It will also be of great help if pupils know and can use a range of strategies for solving their language difficulties as they occur. The ability to explain a problem and seek help, all in the foreign language, should be viewed as a skill in its own right. It also provides an excellent way of showing pupils how the language can be used for real purposes.

The topic is dealt with here, for convenience, as a discrete unit. However, it would be advisable for teachers to make themselves familiar with this chapter and to introduce the strategies to their class as the need for them arises, right from the start.

### CORE LANGUAGE [9a/i]

#### explaining the problem

- |  |                                      |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| 1. je parle anglais                      | I speak English                      |
| 2. je parle français un petit peu        | I can speak a little bit of French   |
| 3. comment?                              | pardon? / what?                      |
| je ne comprends pas                      | I don't understand                   |
| pardon Mademoiselle, je n'ai pas compris | sorry Miss, I didn't understand that |
| 4. j'ai oublié                           | I've forgotten                       |
| 5. je ne sais pas                        | I don't know                         |
| 6. je n'ai pas entendu                   | I didn't hear                        |
| je n'écoutais pas                        | I wasn't listening                   |
| 7. c'est trop vite                       | it's too quick                       |

#### asking for help

- |   |                                     |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| 8. parle plus lentement, s'il te plaît              | speak more slowly, please           |
| voulez-vous parler plus lentement, s'il vous plaît? | would you speak more slowly, please |
| 9. répète s'il te plaît / répétez s'il vous plaît   | please repeat that                  |
| voulez-vous répéter, s'il vous plaît?               | please would you repeat that?       |
| 10. c'est quoi en anglais?                          | what is it in English?              |
| comment ça se dit en anglais?                       | how do you say that in English?     |
| 11. c'est quoi en français?                         | what is it in French?               |
| comment ça s'appelle en français?                   | what's this called in French?       |
| 12. comment ça s'écrit?                             | how do you spell that?              |

### ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE

#### holding strategies

- |              |                            |
|--------------|----------------------------|
| euh ...      | er...                      |
| attendez ... | wait a minute... / hang on |
| voyons ...   | let's see now ...          |
| eh bien ...  | well ...                   |
| bon ...      | right, then ...            |
| alors ...    | well, then ...             |

*continued ...*

## ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE FOR THE TEACHER

### checking

tu comprends?  
vous comprenez?  
tu as compris?  
vous avez compris?  
OK?

do you understand?

did you understand (that)?  
OK?

### reassuring / encouraging

bien  
oui, c'est ça  
continue ...  
tu y arrives ...  
ça y est!

good  
yes, that's right  
go on ...  
you're getting there ...  
you've got it!

### explaining, giving clues

en français, ça se dit .....  
en anglais, ça se dit .....  
ça commence par C...

in French, that's .....  
in English, that's .....  
it begins with C...

### instructing

répète / répétez après moi  
réponds / répondez en français

repeat after me  
answer in French

### reverting to English

je peux parler anglais?  
maintenant je vais parler anglais, d'accord?

may I speak English?  
now I'm going to speak English, OK?

## TEACHING NOTES

Discuss with the class, in English, the language problems they are likely to encounter. With the aid of the visuals, introduce them to the strategies which they can use when they get stuck. Make it clear that there is no shame in getting stuck – it is to be expected –; that the skill lies in being able to explain the problem and/or ask for help, and then continue with the conversation; and that pupils who are able to solve their own linguistic problems in this way are to be praised.

The lists include alternative phrases, some of which are easier than others for pupils to cope with and remember. Select the form you think your pupils will cope with best. If you choose an easy form to begin with, you can teach a more sophisticated form later.

You may wish to make individual flash cards or acetates of the visuals and introduce them one at a time, as the need for them arises. Make sure that the class gets plenty of practice.

Display the visual and its associated phrase in a prominent position in the classroom as a constant reminder and so that pupils can quickly check, next time they *really* have a problem, what it was they learned to say.

### Consolidation

At the practice stage, photocopies of the sheets of visuals can be used as prompts, suggesting a series of situations for which the pupils must provide the appropriate utterances. By using dice or spinners, the situations can be randomised and point-scoring can be introduced.

### Using the language in real contexts

Move as soon as possible to the stage where pupils automatically ask for help, using the appropriate French phrase.

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### 9a Coping with language difficulties

