Talent Show Talk

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1 Introduction

One of the keys to motivating language learners is to build classwork around subjects which interest them, and to use those subjects as vehicles for exposing learners to the vocabulary, structures and topics we want them to learn. So, to follow Football Fever, Picture Pets, and Soapland, we introduce Talent Show Talk especially for those who are enthusiasts of the many popular and dramatic films and TV programmes that feature dancing, skating, cooking, or indeed, any 'talent or reality' programme.

Like soaps, these programmes have had huge audience ratings since the days of the clap-ometer and postal vote. The current crazes continue even now to grip the nation, with event TV (where people sit down to watch a primetime programme together all at the same time) continuing to boost ratings and provide the kind of excitement missing in solo web activities.

The larger-than-life personalities of the judges make them also stars of the competition, just as much as if they were the good, bad and middling contestants on the stage, dance floor, skating rink or in the kitchen. The introduction of the famous (and not so famous) celebrity contestant has piled on excitement; all experts in their own field, but having to learn new skills in front of the unforgiving camera - athletes perhaps surviving well, but hapless TV presenters providing much fun as millions of people watch them struggle and make fools of themselves. And those celebrities then rotate between different shows, trying to be something they are not, and in the process turning TV reality into soap opera.

What does Talent Show Talk have to offer language learners?

Using these resources, teachers can create situations in which learners become engaged with a situation and characters that already interest them. OK, so they have to speak French, German, or whatever, but they do have definite opinions to express and experiences to describe, and they do become sufficiently engaged with the context to forget their embarrassment for a while. They certainly don't think the subject of the conversation is boring, childish or stupid, because they discuss it voluntarily a good deal of the time. Many learners spend hours talking about the large number of TV reality/talent shows featuring amateurs, be they adults, children, or even pets, with or without talent, performing dancing, ice skating, singing, cooking or various other activities.

What does Talent Show Talk have to offer language teachers?

• The potential of visual and kinesthetic materials to motivate learners is well attested.
• The materials cover many language areas in 'beyond-the-textbook' contexts which already appeal to your learners.
• The resources provide your learners with opportunities to recycle familiar material in the new and engaging contexts of their favourite shows with their favourite contestants.
• The language of these TV programmes is repetitive, predictable, and clichéd, so that learners are led to practise vocabulary and structures often enough to become familiar with them and use them with confidence.
• Although these resources focus on the popular theme of dance competitions, they can easily be adapted for other talent and reality TV shows that often dominate schedules.

Linguascope has once again done the hard work for teachers; it has borrowed a subject which passionately interests a large number of their learners; it demonstrates how that subject, with all its intriguing ramifications, can serve the purposes and aims of modern language learning; and it provides all the necessary resources in an easily accessible format.

Using the resources

The Picture Resources

The picture resources contain visuals of common vocabulary associated with the theme. Both colour and black & white versions are provided. Individual images can be extracted and used for presentation, practice, diagnosis, assessment and revision, using PowerPoint or Interactive Whiteboard. They can be made into flashcards and playing cards, or incorporated into board games, worksheets, project work, posters, and mobiles.

Using the IWB

The IWB is useful for whole class work at various stages in the programme. It can be used for:
• reviewing vocabulary previously learned, in order to link it to new vocabulary;
• presenting new vocabulary;
• teacher-led practice of new vocabulary;
• assessing whether new vocabulary has been well-enough learned for the class to proceed to group work;
• playing games in which the whole class can join;
• demonstrating an activity or game which learners are about to carry out in groups;
• organising feedback about an activity;
• assessing the quality of learning which has taken place during group work;
• revising vocabulary at a later stage in the programme.

Presenting and practising core vocabulary

Select one or more images from the picture resources as appropriate. Introduce the visuals on your IWB. Incorporate them into Powerpoint activities, or into your standard range of games activities using your particular IWB software. See the section 'Activities and Games'.

Some suggestions for IWB activities

• Move picture items slowly into focus for learners to name.
• Reveal sections of picture items bit by bit for learners to name.

• Play simple games eg What's on the Card? Noughts and Crosses, Kim's Game, True or False, or Guessing Game.
• Play these and other games as appropriate to your IWB software.

Preparing the printable sheets of resources

• They can be printed on to paper, for use as handouts or worksheets.
• They can be enlarged, for display or for making flashcards.
• They can be copied on to card, perhaps enlarged, and then cut to make individual cards for games and activities.
• Text can be added beneath pictures or on the backs of cards.
• For maximum durability, visuals can be printed on to paper, glued on to thick card and laminated.
• Once copied, visuals can be combined or grouped to make display materials, or used to compile a picture dictionary or topic reference book.
• Blank masters can be used to create new sets of visuals, to make matching text cards and new games.

Consolidating core vocabulary

Then give learners sets of cards or picture boards to play a series of games which ensure that they are familiar with the language. See the section 'Activities and Games'. (Provide one learner with checksheets of the selected language.)

Using dice and spinners

A unique feature of Linguascope resources is the emphasis on using unpredictable elements or 'randomisers' to improve motivation and achievement in the areas of language acquisition and retention. The three main randomisers are cards (which can be shuffled), dice and spinners. Spinning a coin is a well-known way of producing a random result, but offers only two possibilities; dice usually offer six possibilities. Spinners can be customised to produce as many or as few possibilities as you wish, using text, numbers or pictures. Sets of cards, of course, are infinitely variable. See the section 'Activities and Games'.

General notes on possible activities and games

These notes can be applied to all the resources - specific suggestions are included with each individual module.

Preparation for the activities:
Ask for volunteers to be competition monitors with responsibility for:
• keeping up to date
• keeping a record of events
• collecting copies of magazine articles about the competition
• recording movies, TV programmes and clips/excerpts for class viewing
• downloading useful material from the web

Contestant (or Character) cards
• Photocopy the Contestant (or Character) card template onto A4 card and cut up into playing cards.
• Learners can cut out photos of contestants and paste them onto the card.
• Or make sets of prompt cards with the names of personalities on them.
• Many simple games can be played using these sorts of resources.

Using the games and activities
Each game framework can be used to prompt words, phrases or sentences. For example, in response to a visual, learners can: name an item, describe an item or scene, suggest what someone may be thinking or saying, and so on. Before using a picture resource, you may like to scan the list of suggested games, and note those that particularly suit the resource in terms of activity type, and skill to be practised. E.g. Charades might be particularly suited to naming pictures depicting verbs, or Kim's Game to nouns. Bingo would be useful to practise listening skills on a range of items.
Lists of Suggested Language are provided with each set of visuals but these can, of course, be changed/modified to suit the requirements of the class.
The suggestions given cover:
• Whole class work using the IWB.
• Games and activities for groups of 2 - 6 players.

What's Shown on the Card? (Cards with text written on the back or checklist of vocabulary)

Picture Spread: Spread the cards picture up over the table. Take it in turns to choose an item and name it. If you are right, take the card. If you are wrong, put the card back. The player with the most cards at the end of

the game wins. (Offers free choice of seen cards.)
Pick a Card: Fan out some cards for another player to choose and name. If s/he is wrong, the card is put back into the pack. (Choice of unseen cards.)

Guess the Card: Place a small number of cards face down. Players in turn guess (or take bets on) which one is on the top. (Choice of unseen cards. Winning based more on luck than knowledge.)

Take that Card: Place the cards in the middle of the table. Take it in turns to name the item on the top card. If you are wrong, the card goes to the bottom of the pack. (No choice of card.)

Quick Flash: The quizmaster holds up a card for one second only. The first player to name the item shown wins the card. (No choice of card. Competitive. Time pressure.)

Line Solitaire: Lay out some cards in a line. Name the first item. Then check the answer. If you are right, you carry on. If you get one wrong, then you try and learn it. Then turn all the cards back over, and start again. The aim is to find your longest run without any mistakes. From time to time you can shuffle the cards. (You can also play this in pairs or teams.)

Beat the Clock/Countdown: Name as many items as possible within a time limit, e.g. items of clothing, or jobs.

I Spy...: Spread out some picture cards over the table. Call out the beginning letter of an item for the other players to find. The first person to give the name of the correct item keeps the card and becomes the next quizmaster.

Kim's Game: Spread out some cards over the table. One of you removes a card while the others turn away. They then look back at the cards. The first player to name the missing item wins a point.

Who Said What? Sort a list of phrases according to whether they might have been said by contestant, host, judge, fan, etc. Variation 1: Match some phrases to pictures of characters - what is each of them saying?

Matching Pairs (2 sets of cards): Spread out the two sets of pictures face down on the table. Turn over two at a time to see if they match, naming the items as you do so. If they match, take the cards.
DIY Matching Pairs: Write words, phrases or sentences about each picture on slips of paper. The next group matches up the pictures and sentences.

Snap (4 sets of cards): Shuffle the cards and deal them out. You each in turn play a card. If one card played is the same as the previous one, the first person to call out the name of the item gets the cards.

Happy Families (4 sets of cards): Shuffle the cards and deal them out. The aim is to collect sets of items. If, for example, you already have two 'dresses' in your hand, you ask another player Have you got a dress? If s/he has, s/he gives you the card in return for one you wish to discard. The first player to collect complete sets of 4 wins.

3 in a Row (any picture board): Choose a picture square and name an item in it, or say something about the picture. If you are right, put a counter on the square. The first player to get three counters in a row wins. Variation: Using 2 x 6-sided dice. As above, but throw the dice first to pinpoint a square.

Bingo (any picture board): Choose 8 items from the 12 on a picture board and put a pencil cross in one corner of each of the 8 squares. The quizmaster calls out the 12 items in any order. If you have marked one of the items called out, you put a counter on the square. The first player to cover all their marked squares calls out an agreed word.

Charades (Selected cards): Take a picture card. Mime a job or verb for others to guess. Variation: Make up and use text cards as prompts instead of picture cards.

I Went to Market...: Spread some cards out over the table. One of you starts a sentence. Each player adds an item. Example: I went to the shop and bought a dress, a skirt... etc.

Guessing Game (make a picture board using photos of contestants): Describe one of the pictures. The other players guess which one it is. He's an athlete. She's a TV presenter.

True or False (Any picture board): The teacher or learner describes a picture. For example, in Picture No 6 she's wearing a red dress. If you are the first player to call out True or False correctly, you get a point. Variation: The teacher or learner reads out a list of statements. You jot down which are True and which are False. Check answers at the end.

The Colouring Game (pictures of the same b/w outfit, one per player): You colour in the picture of an outfit. You hide it behind a book and give instructions to one or more other players to colour in theirs in the same way as yours. (They hide their drawings and pencils from each other). You then compare and comment on the results.

20 Questions: Players have 20 questions to guess a contestant, e.g.: What nationality/country, what TV programme, what job, age, colour hair?

DIY Dominoes: Prepare sets of dominoes with pictures and/or text using one of the blank templates. Play in the usual way, matching words and pictures, or questions and answers.

Surveys: Each week a survey question could be put up on the wall, together with the results of the previous week's question.
Do you think X should win? yes/no; do you think Y should have been eliminated? yes (58%)/no (32%); vote for a favourite contestant, celebrity, professional, dancer, dance, outfit, song, meal or cake. Topical questions could be related to an event in a particular programme. Who watches these programmes? Learners carry out surveys amongst classmates and other groups, putting the results on a wallchart. Compare with statistics in the media, concerning which programmes had the highest viewing figures.

Web or TV homework
• select or take a vote on a talent or reality competition programme to watch.
• class members who are keen programme watchers can present to the rest of the class a simple outline of the competition so far.
• reshow a programme excerpt during lessons
• pause the programme from time to time for commentary and discussion - to comment on action, describe what contestants look like / are saying / are thinking / are wearing, or predict what is going to happen next. Fast forward if necessary.
Observation Game: Ask for details afterwards - What was the colour of the sofa? What did X make? What was Y wearing?
Keen pupils could put together useful compilations!

Video cameras: Make up and record your own mini-sketch.

Run your own talent competition: Organise a talent show, or dance competition.
• Post a message to your favourite contestant:
- come on X! you deserve it! you're a star! I voted for you 6 times!
• Use voting scores, telephone numbers and time when phone lines close to practise numbers and time.

Competition corner: Collect features and articles containing information about the programmes.
Keep a display of, for example, topical news items, or wall charts giving results of class surveys.

Surf the web: For information on the competitions.

Produce a Newsletter
• Use it as a reading exercise.
• Include Quiz Questions - see following examples.

Quiz Questions: Quiz questions of different grades of difficulty can be devised. Various formats can be used including Multiple Choice, True or False, or Odd One Out, which can also become self access reading and listening activities.
Examples:
Topical Questions: Who was eliminated last week? (these will date - learners can very easily devise their own topical questions, based on model formats). Dates and Past Tense: Who won in 2015?
Jobs: What does X do?
Nationality: What nationality is...?
Picture Questions: Who is it? I think it's... I'm sure it's... (Cover up faces of contestants on the IWB.)
Odd One Out: Who's not an athlete/sportsperson?
True or False: The programme starts at X hours.

Combine visual prompts with Function Cards:
Imagine you are a viewer or a participant and make up sentences where you: pay a compliment; criticise something or someone; express thanks; make a complaint; make a prediction; express a hope; express a wish; express happiness; express sadness

While learners are becoming accustomed to activities using Function Cards, use prompts in their first language. Later on, instructions can be printed in the target language.

Adding dice or spinners

Language dice can be used in combination with the visual materials in these resources to add a further dimension to the learning experience. Spinners can be made as an alternative to dice. Pronoun, Question, Conjunction, Mood and Tenses dice and spinners are provided to make cardboard dice, together with blank spinners for teachers to create their own versions. It is also possible to use small cards as an alternative to dice or spinners.

How to prepare the spinners: Photocopy the spinners onto thin card, or photocopy onto paper and glue this onto thicker card. Make a hole in the middle, and push through a section of a thickish drinking straw, a long matchstick, or a cocktail stick. Secure with rubber bands or Blu Tack around the straw on both sides of the spinner.

Combining the dice with picture cards - suggested activities: One side of the dice can be placed upwards for repeated practice of the same item. Or more advanced learners can have a free throw.

Pictures combined with Question Dice: Place some picture cards in the middle of the table. Take a card, roll the dice, and make up a question. The next player answers it. One point each. Examples: What's this? - It's a tie. Who's wearing this dress? Variation: A card is taken from the pack. You each in turn roll the dice and ask a question about the card. Play continues until no more questions can be found.

Contestant/celebrity interview: You each write down on a piece of paper the name of a celebrity, fold the paper up, and put it in the middle of the table. The first player takes a paper and pretends to be that personality. The other players roll the dice and ask questions accordingly.

Pictures combined with Pronoun Dice (particularly useful with Verb Cards) Example: He's wearing trainers. They're singing. You're dancing. I'm happy.
Note: When Pronoun Dice are combined with picture prompts it can be agreed in advance that either: The player uses the prompts creatively, and assumes that numbers and genders will match OR
The player can have her or his turn ONLY if the number and gender match. If not, the turn goes to the next player.

Pictures combined with Colour Dice
Example: A green shirt. She's wearing a pink dress. (Good for adjectival agreements.)

Pictures combined with Opinions Dice
This dice can prompt feelings, opinions, likes and dislikes. Example: I love X. I don't like Y. I hate that dress.

Pictures combined with Tenses Dice (particularly useful with Verb Cards). These prompts are based on video controls.
Example: I'm going to vote. I cried. They're dancing

2 Picture resources, activities and games

My favourite contestant - 12 grid

The new contestants are introduced to the audience.

Suggested language: Select as appropriate to the group/learner - it is unlikely that all items will be used.

name:	• nom:
male/female:	• homme/femme:
nationality:	• nationalité:
lives in (town):	• habite à (ville):
date of birth:	• date de naissance/né(e):
birthday:	• anniversaire:
star sign:	• signe du zodiaque:
age (approx):	• âge (approximatif):
colour of hair:	• couleur des cheveux:
colour of eyes:	• couleur des yeux:
family:	• famille:
children:	• enfants:
pets:	• animaux:
occupation:	• profession:
career highs/ achievements:	• réussites professionelles:
favourite music:	• musique préférée:
favourite food:	• repas préféré:
favourite clothes:	• vêtements préférés:

Suggested Activities

• Selected activities from Unit 1.
• Talk about your favourite contestant/celebrity. Include the information suggested above, or anything else you'd like to say. Research extra information in magazines/newspapers or in the media. You can make up any details you do not know!

My favourite contestant - 12 grid

1	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	9
10	11	12

My favourite contestant - 12 grid

1	**2**	**3**
4	**5**	**6**
7	**8**	**9**
10	**11**	**12**

My favourite contestant - circles

Use the circle format to introduce or practise a smaller number of items.

Suggested language:
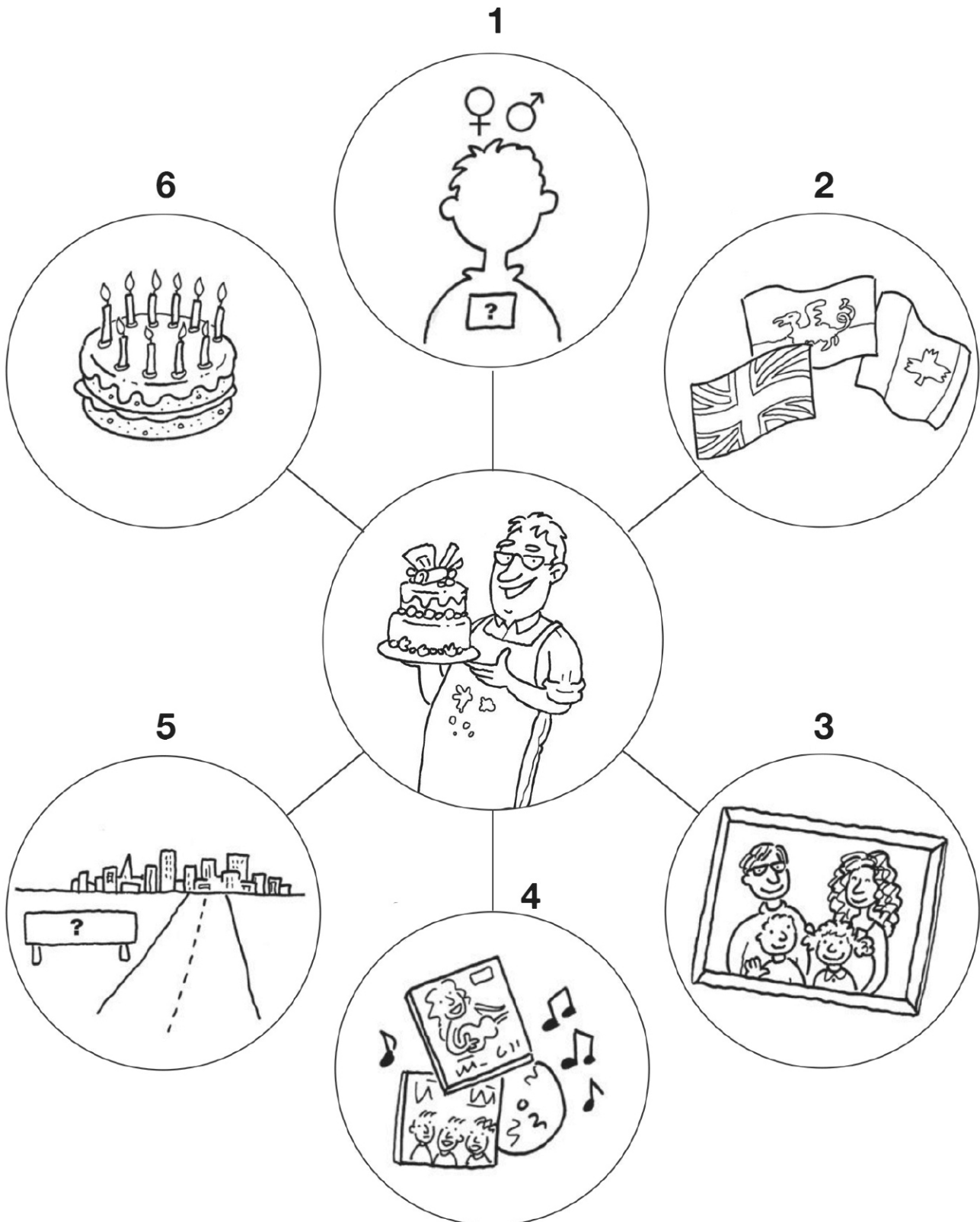See suggested language in the previous section - My favourite contestant - 12 grid.

Suggested activities:

• Selected activities from Unit 1
Additional activities:
• Use a six-sided dice to pinpoint a particular item. Make up a sentence about the item.
• Adding counters: players place a counter on the circle they are talking about. If players land on the same circle the counter is returned to the first player. The first player to end up with, e.g. 3 counters on the board wins the game.
• Adding a pronoun dice: Players can at first to play the game using the pronoun il/elle; later they can roll the pronoun dice to practise other pronouns.

Talent Show Talk

My favourite contestant - circles

1

6

2

5

3

4

My favourite contestant - circles

1

6

2

5

3

4