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Recreational Linguistics:
The "Dot-to-Dot" Activity

A simple children's activity can be come a creative one in the language classrom

Dot-to-dot is a very simple and fun activity often found in children's books to teach or review numbers. There are practically no instruction: the child is to join the dots in chronological order from 1 to the last one given in the puzzle. Once all numbers are joined, the result will be a picture or a scene created by a series of straight lines. Often the artist will include some detail which cannot be drawn by straight lines.

It is not an activity which requires a great mental effort.

In an the language class, the "dot-to-dot" can become a very creative language activity.

While examples are given in English, the activity can be effectively used in all languages to stress the reading and listening comprehension skills.

Pedagogical Applications

Teachers should delete the numbers of the puzzle and insert their own. They should ensure that, in order to make the activity a challenging one, the numbers should not be placed in a chronological order.

1. If teachers wish to stress the reading skill, they may wish to write out the numbers. The solver has to read the written number and proceed to the Arabic one. (Figure 1). To quickly identify the beginning of the acvtivity, teachers may wish to bold the first number so that students can easily find it.

For example:

1. twenty
2. fifty-four
3. thirty
4. thirty-three
5. two
6. thirty-nine
7. fifteen
8. forty-one
9. thirty-four
10. fourteen
11. four
12. forty-six
13. thirty-eight
14. forty-nine
15. six
16. fifty-three
17. thirty-two
18. eleven
19. twenty-two
20. eight
21. twenty-six
22. forty
23. forty-four
24. thirty-six
25. nine
26. twenty-seven
27. eighteen
28. twenty-one
29. three
30. forty-two
31. fifty
32. ten
33. forty-eight
34. sixteen
35. twenty-nine
36. one
37. thirty-three
38. twenty-four
39. seventeen
40. thirty-seven
41. forty-three
42. five
43. twenty-eight
44. forty-seven
45. nineteen
46. fifty-two
47. thirty-five
48. seven
49. thirty-one
50. thirteen
51. forty-five
52. twenty-five
53. fifty-one
54. twelve

Figure 1

Teachers mnay wish to provide lists of numbers from 1 to 1000, depending on the knowledge of the learner.

2. If teachers want to involve students in a listening activity, then, the numbers may be dictated. It obvious that in this

activity, while the students have the puzzle with the Arabic numbers, only the teachers has the seuquential list of numbers to be dictated. A "correct" illustration, means that the students have correctly understood the numbers being dictated.

3. Teachers can encourage the students *to think in the language* by giving the students a series of arithmetical operations (additions, subtractions, multiplications, divisions), the answers of which will identify the number from whjich students will draw a line.

For example (Figure 2):

> What is...
> 1. twenty minus ten?
> 2. five times three?
> 3. ten times two?
> 4. thirty plus five?
> 5. two times two?
> 6. twenty-four divided by two?
> 7. seventeen and eight?
> 8. twenty-five minus eight?
> 9. three plus four?
> 10. eleven times two?
> 11. nine minus eight?
> 12. seven times four?
> 13. twenty-four minus ten?
> 14. three times three?
> 15. three times eleven?
> 16. ten times three?
> 17. thirteen times three?
> 18. twenty-four and eight?
> 19. fifteen minus two?
> 20. eighten plus six?
> 21. one and one?
> 22. twenty-seven plus ten?
> 23. thirteen plus six?
> 24. thirty minus four?
> 25. twenty-five minus eleven?
> 26. six times three?
> 27. twenty-seven plus four?
> 28. three times one?
> 29. nine times three?
> 30. thirty plus ten?
> 31. nineteen times two?
> 32. twenty-four divide by three?
> 33. thirty-two divided by two?
> 34. thirty-six minus thirteen?
> 35. twenty-five divided by five?
> 36. twenty-seven plus thirteen?
> 37. eight and three?

The teacher may decide to place the clues
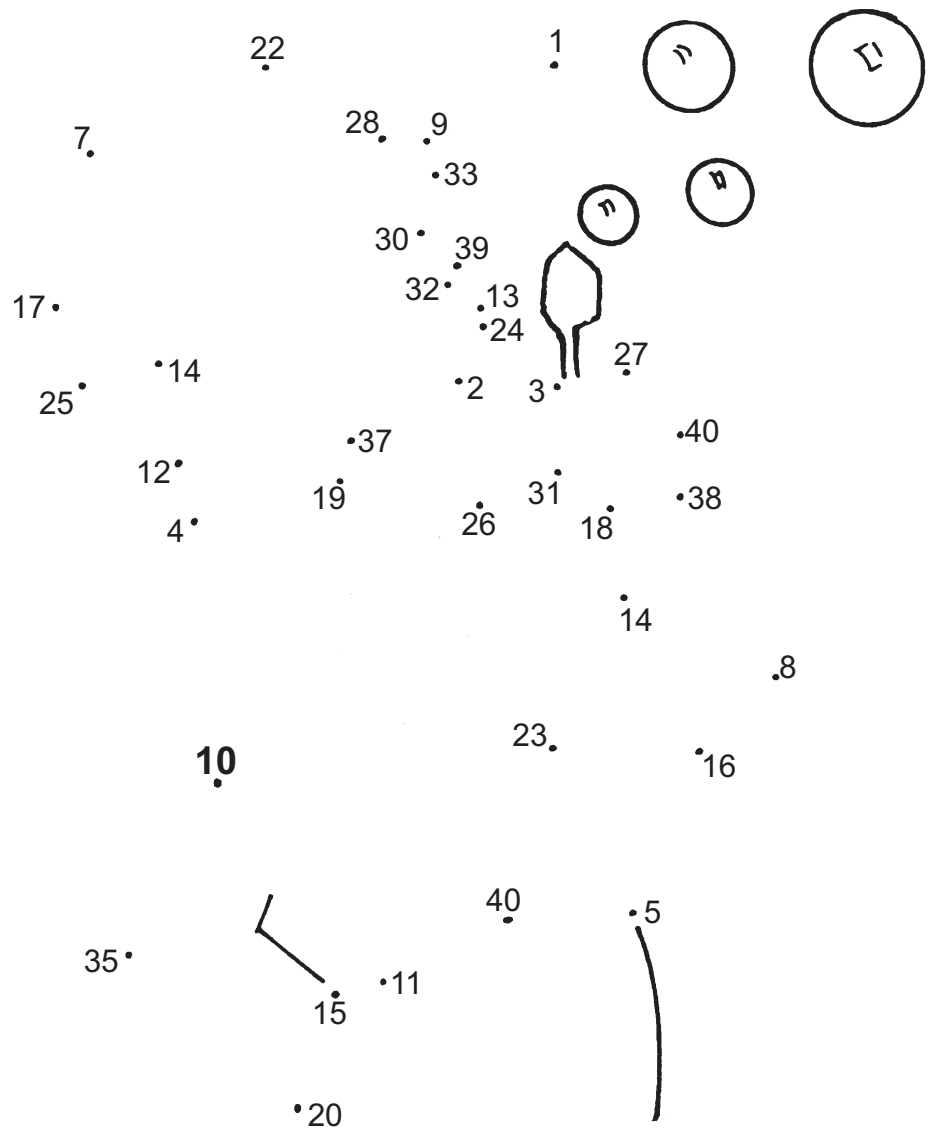
a) next to the puzzle (reading comprehension)

b) dictate them (listening comprehension)

The teacher may opt to select a combination of

a) dates of historical events; e.g.

> When did Columbus discover America?
> What is the year of teh French Revoution?
> etc.

b) numbers found in idiomatic expressions

> to have *second* thoughts
> to be in *seventh* heaven
> at the *eleventh* hour
> on *first* name terms
> the *third* degree

as clues to the puzzle.

Whaveter activity the teacher chooses, "dot-to-dot" actvities will provide motivating momnets in the language class.

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