Language Practice Activities for a task-based lesson

a. Repetition

Repetition of useful phrases or dialogue readings can be done by individuals, pairs or as a whole class. It's fun to begin slowly and build up speed, to see how fast they can do it.

b. Listen and Complete

Teams or pairs write a list of useful phrases or sentences. Then swapping pairs, or working with another team, one side says half (or a little more) of each item, and the other must complete it.

Or you can play a recording and press pause button mid-phrase – which team or pair can continue? Don't give the answer yourself but, after several attempts, play the recording and let the class identify who was correct.

c. Gapped Examples

Learners (individually or in pairs) write out a list of 5 or 10 useful phrases or sentences from the text or transcript, omitting one word or phrase from each. They swap lists with another, who has to complete them. Or they can read them to the whole class for completion.

d. Progressive Deletion

After an analysis activity when you have sentences on the board. Number the sentences. Call out the numbers (not in order) and ask individuals to read the sentence(s). As they read, delete a word (or whole phrase) from that sentence. Continue to call out numbers and ask individuals to read them out, even when there are hardly any words left. Students must read out the complete sentence (mostly from memory at this stage!). By the end you will have only numbers left on the board, but you can still ask the students to 'read' out what was there. This activity is good fun!

e. Unpacking a Sentence

Choose a long sentence from a familiar written text (one from a newspaper article usually works well). Ask students to write the same information in as many short, simple sentences as they can, without repeating any facts.

Or allow them to repeat the same information, but ask them to write it in different ways. Set a time limit of, say, 5 minutes and see how many different (correct) sentences each pair can build in that time.

f.   *Repacking a Sentence*

After completing the unpacking activity above, ask students to close their books. They have to work in pairs to pack all the information from the short sentences back into one long sentence without looking at the original. It doesn't have to be the exact same as the original sentence but it must be grammatical.

Then ask pairs to write their sentences on the board for the rest of the class to spot the grammatical differences. Explore as a class whether these contain any shift in meaning or emphasis.

g.   *Memory Challenge*

Take a set of similar types of word from a text. Mix them up. Can the students write the complete phrase or sentence containing each item? If you are using verbs, can students remember who or what was the subject of each and what followed it?

h.   *Concordances for Common Words*

Divide about 10 familiar texts and/or transcripts among learners, so they each have one or two to investigate. Select one or two very common words from the top 40 or so most common words in written English (see www.world-english.org). As learners go through their texts they should write neat concordance lines for the chosen word, including the six words before and after it. These can then be assembled to form the basis of a classifying activity. They can also be used for an odd-word-out activity or a cloze test.

i.   **Dictionary Exercises**

Use a good learners' dictionary. Activities might include:

- Matching words to definitions: students choose three words from a text or transcript to look up, and find which dictionary definition best fits each word in its context. They then explain them, to each other.
- Exploring collocations: give students two familiar collocations from a text or transcript, and ask them to use a dictionary to find other useful ones based on the same verb or noun.
- Generating your own examples: students look up words that they are not sure how to use. They then read the examples and grammatical information in the dictionary and write two sentences with each word