



Do Strange Sentences in Language Apps Actually Help Students Learn?

S06E12 | For teachers to adapt to their learners

Teaching focus

An unusual sentence can become a useful starting point if learners can identify its pattern and adapt it for another situation. We can ask what the example means, which parts can change and whether the new version communicates something they need.

Our suggested routine

1. Gav and Em suggest: make the strange sentence useful Gav and Em suggest turning a strange sentence into language learners can use. Mini-lesson: use the fictional sentence The dragon keeps its pencils in the freezer. Notice the pattern: a subject + keeps + an object + a place. We can keep that relationship and change the details. Check: choose the verb: Our office keeps/keep its spare cables in a drawer. Answer: keeps. In this sentence, our office is singular. Practice: pairs replace the dragon, pencils and freezer with a person or group, an object and a sensible place. Keep the sentence meaningful and adjust the verb and possessive if the subject changes. Follow-up: ask where the items are kept and why. Close the original example and make one more sentence. The useful test is what learners can do with the pattern afterwards.

After the attempt

What could learners do? What needed another model or a smaller step? Choose one useful adjustment and try the task again.

Notes for our next lesson

Read the full teaching article and listen to the episode at howtoenglishpod.com