

Parsnips in ELT: Stepping out of the comfort zone (Vol. 2)

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Check out the blog at <http://imagearies.com/wp-parsnips/>

Foreword to vol. 2

If you've already downloaded volume 1 of our series Parsnips in ELT, then you'll already have an idea of what this book is about. If you haven't, then shame on you! Get yourself over to Smashwords this instant!

The PARSNIP is, as many of you will know, a reference to all those topics that are commonly left out of the standard ELT coursebook: Politics, Alcohol, Religion, Sex, Narcotics, -Isms, Pork.

And it is easy to understand why these things are not included - in simple terms coursebooks are written for the largest possible market and therefore can only ever concentrate on the safest common denominator in terms of topics. You might be able to get away with a discussion on the differences between democratic governments and dictatorships in Portugal, but the chances are you might find it more difficult in Belarus. So if you want to sell a coursebook in both Portugal and Belarus, you have to make sure that the topics are not going to prove overly contentious or possibly lead to the arrest and deportation of the teacher and closing of the school.

The result though, is what Mario Rinvoluceri described as “the soft, fudgey, sub-journalistic, woman's magazine world of EFLese course materials” - endless worthy discussions about the environment, the role of technology in life and how to have a healthy lifestyle.

The Parsnips in ELT project is an attempt to provide resources and support for teachers who do want to engage their classes in more meaningful topics and discussions. Or at the very least to do something different! It is however, up to you and your own personal and professional judgment whether you choose to use these lesson plans in your context and with your classes, or even if you choose to read them at all! Inevitably, there will be some lessons that you will feel are inappropriate to use and some that you feel will really get the class engaged in the topic and the discussion.

Choose wisely.

And if in doubt, ask someone. Asking the students is usually a good bet. In fact, you could even turn that into a lesson: What are taboo topics in this country? What are things that you don't really discuss? How can I, as a foreigner (new to your country), avoid causing upset and offence to people?

There you go - eight lessons for the price of seven! We're nothing if not generous here....

So take a minute to look at the descriptions below, read through the lesson plans and materials, have a cup of tea or coffee (or something stronger), and have a think about how you could try

and use these lessons with your classes. You may need a little tweak here and there - go ahead.
We don't mind.

Have fun!

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The parsnipers

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Phil Wade is passionate about discussion-based lessons on challenging subjects. He enjoys real conversations and important issues that demand more cognitively and linguistically than the average English lesson. This interest is also clear in his other hobbies which include doing interviews for EFL Magazine and writing ebooks about which he blogs about at www.eltebooks.wordpress.com .

Noreen Lam (Spain) is always looking to expand her horizons within the ELT world, and is currently juggling university, in-company, YL teaching and whatever writing and editing opportunities come her way. She tries to encourage discussion and share resources with language learners at www.facebook.com/EnglishWithNoreen

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Adam Simpson (Turkey) has been teaching in Istanbul for 15 years. His interests include Dogme ELT and ‘descriptive’ rather than ‘prescriptive’ curriculum design. He often forces his opinions on others at conferences and shares occasional teaching ideas through his unfathomably popular blog: <http://www.teachthemenglish.com/> .

PARSNIPS - A sampler menu

Politics summary: The lesson looks at stereotypes that may be held as to a politician's physical appearance, and allows for lots of discussion of male and female differences in this job, particularly in terms of balancing it with their personal lives.

Alcohol summary: The lesson examines cause effect relationships pertaining to alcohol consumption in the United Kingdom. After identifying causes and effects, students are introduced to the language needed to express such relationships, and are guided through the process of using an application to create a video presentation.

Religion summary: This activity combines talking about Religion and using expressions to compare and contrast. All the materials are available for download and there is even a short warm-up film, which you may show at your discretion.

Sex summary: This lesson looks at the issue of prostitution from local and global perspectives. By analyzing such perspectives, students are invited to reflect upon problems sex workers face and give their opinion on various topics related to prostitution.

Narcotics summary: A lesson that starts off by discussing musicians and bands and then moves on to addressing the connection between drugs and rock n' roll. It raises numerous questions about drugs and music for students to talk about, provides useful vocabulary and ends by asking students to suggest ways to help addicts get clean.

Isms summary: This lesson introduces the notion of discrimination, generally considered unacceptable, and raises a context where it is necessary. Despite the consideration of flight safety, taking proper account of passenger size and weight raises problematic issues that require learners to use complex language structures and cultural sensitivity to discuss.

Pork summary: This lesson introduces students to food and drink items that are banned around the world, invites them to discuss why and whether this is a good thing or not. Finally it asks students to consider the balance between protection of the public good and the limitations of individual liberty.

Politics

Aims:

- 1) To discuss the role of males and females in politics
- 2) To discuss the image of politicians and factors which influence voters' choice
- 3) To analyze family vs work life of politicians and compatibility

Level: B1+

Procedure:

- 1) Give students some paper, and tell them to visualize an image of politician. They shouldn't think about a specific person that they know, but the concept in general. Tell them to draw their politician, paying attention to their facial features, expression, clothes, and accessories. Are they carrying anything? Are they standing/sitting?
- 2) Pairs/small groups compare the drawings and see if there are similarities. Ss peer teach vocabulary and as a class, deal with any that may be unfamiliar to various ss. Have a class discussion of what everyone considers a "typical politician". Do they agree on a certain look (clothes, features)? Do they agree on what they normally have with them? Prompt with ideas such as wearing a tie/glasses, carrying briefcase, old with moustache etc if necessary.
- 3) Now, discuss an "atypical" politician. Elicit any examples that students may know of, and why this person is atypical. Does this person project a positive or negative image to citizens? Compare this to the drawings and discuss which has a better effect on voters and why.
- 4) Get the students to stand up and have a physical vote. They have to move to the side that they believe is represented by a majority of politicians:
 - handsome/beautiful vs. unattractive
 - fat vs thin
 - old vs young
 - men vs women

Hold class discussions after each move with students on one side explaining their opinions to the other side.

5) Pairs or small groups of students search on Google and look at infographics which show the representation of male and female politicians in different countries. You can assign countries or allow ss to choose from what they find. Groups explain their findings to the class.

6) Discuss the problems that politicians of both sexes may have. Direct the discussion towards parenthood and hopefully students will come up with the issue of parental leave.

7) Give small groups these problems to debate:

~You are a newly elected mayor/president and you/your wife has just had a child. Should you be entitled to the same amount of parental leave as other parents in your country? Consider the effect that your absence would have on your family, and on your citizens.

~You are a new mother who holds the position of MP in the local government. Your baby is very young and requires breastfeeding various times of day. Should you be allowed to bring him/her to work and breastfeed at work?

~You and your partner are ministers and work late hours, especially during parliamentary sittings. Your children are still very young and there is no one available to take care of them, so you are forced to find childcare. Should this be paid/subsidized?

Optional follow-up:

Get half the pairs/groups to research Italian MP Licia Ronzulli, online, and the other half to research Simon Burns, English MP in the of House of Commons. (They should find out that LR's daughter has accompanied her at work since she was born and SB has recently spoken out against allowing women MPs to breastfeed in the House of Commons.) Discuss their actions/statements and debate the situation.

Notes

For the drawing activity, a time limit is suggested so ss complete their sketches and begin the discussion. If you prefer, you can also get them to visualize their politician and make notes on their facial features, clothes, gestures etc rather than draw them.

In step 2 as students are discussing their pictures, you can show some well-known political figures that ss know. Choose specific ones from the students' countries, or international figures.

Similarly, in step 3, show an atypical politician and elicit ss' impressions. Depending on the group, you may choose to show images of certain politicians who: have a ponytail, wear track suits, are very short etc. If the ss do not know these individuals, it would be a good opportunity to discuss first impressions.

If ss have trouble finding examples, here are some suggestions for infographics in step 5:

- http://static.independent.co.uk/s3fs-public/styles/story_medium/public/thumbnails/image/2014/07/14/16/women-politics-un-map.jpg (UN women in politics 2014)--can be downloaded
- <http://arabiangazette.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/arab-women-representation.jpg> (Women's representation in Middle East parliaments)
- <http://www.cepal.org/en/infographics/womens-participation-politics> (Women's participation in politics in Latin American and Caribbean countries)
- http://assets.feministing.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/ladies_represent21.png (Women in office world map)

Target language

- Parental/maternity/paternity leave
- Equality, rights
- Member of Parliament, House of Commons, ministers etc (vocabulary may differ depending on the country being discussed)

Alcohol

Aims:

- 1) To discuss the role of alcohol in different cultures.
- 2) To identify the causes of increased alcohol consumption in the UK and its associated effects in a written text.
- 3) To prepare a presentation using appropriate cause / effect language.

Level: B1+

Procedure:

- 1) Arrange your learners in groups. Ask them to discuss:
 - the role of alcohol in their culture and in other cultures
 - those cultures in which alcohol plays a big role
 - cultures in which they feel alcohol consumption is a problem

Learners share their ideas with the other groups.

- 2) On a piece of paper, get learners to draw a 'rough' graph. Read out statistics from the text 'Why do the British drink so much?', specifically the part of the text about 'peak booze in 2004' (<http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20151102-why-do-the-british-drink-so-much>). Don't mention the fact that this is the UK, just start with 3.9L in 1950 and describe consumption up to 9.5L in 2004. Have learners compare their graphs and then ask which nation they think these figures are describing.

- 3) Explain that this data relates to the UK. In pairs / groups, encourage learners to speculate possible causes for this increase. Learners present their thoughts to the class. Ask learners to justify their speculations ('I think this because...').

- 4) Give learners a copy of the text 'Why do the British drink so much?'; either print the text or share the link so they can read it on their mobile devices. Put learners into groups, preferably

according to the headings below. Assign each group a part of the text and ask them to investigate as follows:

- The role of advertising in the promotion of lager
- The role of wine in the changing habits of drinking at home
- The role of rave culture and the development of new products
- The effects of alcohol consumption on the 'peak booze' generation, subsequent changes in drinking habits (post-2004) and possible reasons for these changes

Each group makes notes about i) the time frame of the change, ii) what changes took place, iii) what factors brought about the change, and iv) the effects these changes had. Monitor and guide as appropriate.

5) Each group prepares a presentation based on the information they have noted down. Possible free applications they can use are:

- Prezi <https://prezi.com/> - a 'how to' tutorial is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ArGh6FurR0Q>
- Powtoon <http://powtoon.com/> - a 'how to' tutorial is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AFv8L0z-72c>

Alternatively, learners can do this with pen and paper. While each group will have different content, they should all try to organize their presentation in a logical way, i.e. sticking to the information from their notes (a graph indicating the changes in alcohol consumption, the time frame of the change, what changes took place, what factors brought about the change, and the effects these changes had).

6) Each group delivers their presentation to the class. Learners are encouraged to ask questions about each other's presentations.

7) Give feedback to each group on their performance, according to a rubric (an example rubric for group presentations is available here: http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/printouts/30700_rubric.pdf)

Notes:

- This lesson may work well in an IELTS oriented setting.
- There are several opportunities to focus on language, depending on the needs / level of your learners (not noted in the procedure above). Your input will vary according to your class, but here are suggestions:

- a. Stage 2 - review graph language: Did they understand your description? Are they familiar with the language to describe changes on a graph? Can they produce such language?
 - b. Stage 2 - review past modals of speculation: Can they verbalize their deductions about possible past causes?
 - c. Stages 4 and 5 - review cause/effect language: As above, what can they do? Do they understand the way these relationships are explained in the text? Can they reword these explanations using other verbs/ grammatical structures?
- The suggested headings in stage 4 aren't actually given in the text; they merely summarize the information given in various parts of the reading. You might want to include this as a skimming exercise: 'Which parts of the text do these relate to?'
 - Allow variation in the way learners prepare their presentation, but make sure that they receive input on how to use the application if they haven't use it before.

Target language:

- Cause effect language - suggested resource:
http://www.eluprogram.com/The_Language_of_Cause_and_Effect.pdf
- Language for describing graphs - suggested resource:
<http://www.vocabulary.cl/ielts/academic-writing-task-1-describing-trends.htm>
- Past modals of speculation - suggested resource:
<http://www.slideshare.net/carlavick20/modals-of-speculation-about-the-past>

Religion

Aims:

- 1) To examine how many religions are similar
- 2) To practice language to compare and contrast.
- 3) To express opinions about the faith, rules and rites.
- 4) To discuss the roots of religion and how they have been modified.

Level: B2+

Procedure:

(Optional warm-up as a segue into step 1)

Show the Family Guy film (downloadable here: <http://tinyurl.com/PARSNIPS2-Religion>) to the group and then ask and discuss the following questions:

- What do you think of Stewie's dilemma?
- What problems are there when people discuss religion?

- 1) Explain that this is a controversial issue and should be discussed in an open and positive manner. No hate speech or prejudice will be tolerated.
- 2) Present the target language (downloadable here: <http://tinyurl.com/PARSNIPS2-Religion>) and confirm students are aware of the usage of it.
- 3) Write some sample sentences using the target grammar on the board, leaving blanks, and elicit the missing words.
- 4) Pair off students and ask them to brainstorm some of their own sentences.

- 5) Make two to five groups and give each group a handout (downloadable from here: <http://tinyurl.com/PARSNIPS2-Religion>) on one religion to read and discuss the facts aloud within their group.
- 6) Bringing all the groups together, ask each group to summarize their chart aloud.
- 7) Add the facts to the board or show the master chart.
- 8) Have students compare and contrast the facts from the charts aloud as a group.
- 9) Elicit the target structures (5 or more depending on time) for students to practice.
- 10) In class, have students write down 10 differences between the religion they have and any of the others.
- 11) Have students go back to the original groups and compare the comparisons they made.
- 12) Classwork or homework: write an essay comparing or contrasting one aspect of what has been discussed.

Handouts and Video are downloadable at:

<http://tinyurl.com/PARSNIPS2-Religion>

- An optional 4-minute warm-up video from Family Guy.
- Two (2) handouts for target language (one for Intermediate Level and the other for Advanced Level students).
- Five (5) different printable handouts for the different religions (use as many as you can to form groups of at least 2).
- A master chart if you want to project on the whiteboard or tablets. You may also pick and choose the information as time allows.
- The Videos are of course optional, but the Family Guy will perk them up and start a discussion about differences in beliefs which should then segue into the task.

- The Business Insider video is an interesting close to provoke thought and future conversation.

Additional References (for further study or homework):

- <http://www.religionfacts.com/compare/religions>
- <http://topyaps.com/top-10-similarities-between-different-religions>
- http://www.religioustolerance.org/chr_jcpa1.htm
- TED ED - The 5 Major World Religions <http://ed.ted.com/lessons/the-five-major-world-religions-john-bellaimey>

Sex

Aims:

- 1) To help learners reflect on prostitution.
- 2) To develop reading skills in the context of campaigns.
- 3) To express agreement/disagreement.

Level: B1

Procedure:

- 1) Explain that in some countries, white represents purity. Ask the students for other colours and to explain what they represent or the connotations associated with them. If they don't mention red, ask about it. Elicit examples to the board e.g. danger, warnings, anger and the Red Light District. Explain that the one in Amsterdam is very famous and see if anyone knows of it and can explain it. If not, make a very simple definition. Something like 'a place where men or women go to pay to be with another person.' Ask if anyone knows the word to describe that person. Next, show the definition from a dictionary for prostitute <http://tinyurl.com/parsnips-sex>.
- 2) Pre-teach the words from both texts that you believe your students may have problems with depending on their level.
- 3) Put students into small groups (3-5) and ask them to talk about whether prostitution is legal or not where they are from and what they think about it.
- 4) Give students 3 minutes to read the texts <http://tinyurl.com/parsnips-amnesty> <http://tinyurl.com/parsnips-redlight> and decide which text focuses on prostitutes' rights and which aims at ending prostitution. Check answers.
- 5) Ask students to read the texts again and answer the following questions:
 - 1- Which text deals with prostitution locally?
 - 2- What's the best way to combat prostitution according to the Turn Off The Red Light campaign?
 - 3- According to the Turn Off The Red Light campaign, which countries have decriminalized sex workers?

4- Why does the Amnesty International believe that the criminalization of prostitution is not good?

5- What does the Amnesty International claim that sex workers regularly face?

6- What is more important than the moral aspect of sex work according the Amnesty International?

5- What do both campaigns have in common?

6) Write on the board: *It's ok for men to pay for sex, but not for women.*

Ask the group if they agree, disagree or don't know. Give students a list with the sentences below. Learners decide if they are used for agreeing, disagreeing or for in between.

- That's for sure.
- That's not always the case.
- That's so true!
- Absolutely.
- I sort of agree/disagree, but...
- I don't agree.
- You have a point there.
- I don't know about that...
- Not necessarily.
- Tell me about it!

Elicit from learners which ones are more formal/ informal/ neutral.

7) Give students slips of paper with the sentences below on. Tell them in pairs, to tell their partners whether they agree or disagree with each and why. Encourage students to use the sentences from #6.

- Prostitution has nothing to do with human trafficking.

- Legalizing prostitution is the best way to guarantee rights to prostitutes.
- Prostitution is a job like any other.
- The abolition of prostitution is utopia.
- Prostitution is about sexual freedom.
- Prostitution brings women economic independence.
- Demand for prostitution will never disappear.
- Prostitution is a choice.
- Prostitution is the oldest profession in the world.
- Prostitution brings a lot of money.

8) Learners read the text 18 myths on prostitution (<http://tinyurl.com/myths-parsnips>) from the European Women's Lobby to check if they share the same views.

Notes:

Stage 5) You may divide the group into two and give each group an article, asking the groups to report the articles afterward. If you decide to do this, questions 1 and 5 may be used in a group discussion.

Stage 7) You may have students discuss fewer sentences if pressured for time.

Target language:

- That's for sure.
- That's not always the case.
- That's so true!
- Absolutely.
- I sort of agree/ disagree, but...

- I don't agree.
- You have a point there.
- I don't know about that...
- Not necessarily.
- Tell me about it!

Narcotics

Aims:

- 1) To discuss musicians and groups.
- 2) To talk about drug addicts.
- 3) To practise giving advice to potential drug users.
- 4) To learn and use related vocabulary.
- 5) To make suggestions to help drug addicts.
- 6) To read and reflect on a blog post.

Level: B1+

Procedure:

1) Make small groups and play a variation of hangman with these famous groups and singers. Draw a line on the board for every letter. Tell them you will add a letter every 5 seconds until some guesses the band name. They will earn 10 points for every gap remaining so the soon they guess correctly, the more points they will earn. For instance, guessing T _ e B _ _ _ _ _ s is 'The Beatles' will get them 60 points.

- Rolling Stones
- Lady Gaga
- One Direction
- Guns n' Roses
- Nirvana
- Kanye West

Announce the winner and elicit other famous groups and bands to the board and ask students to explain their styles and famous songs.

2) Tell students to huddle together in circles of 4/5s to talk about their favourite singers or groups. Elicit some topics to talk about to the board. Here are some examples:

- Albums
- Song topics
- No 1 songs/albums
- Inspiration
- Popularity
- Audience

Let them talk, monitor and listen for 1 good conversation for each of the boarded points, make a note of which group.

3) Elicit examples using your notes.

4) Ask the students for the missing word in this phrase by reading it out:

'Sex, _____ and rock n' roll.'

The missing word is 'drugs'.

5) Pair up students and tell them you want them to brainstorm opinions about each topic you give them. The objective is to talk and say whatever comes into their minds and they only have 1 minute per topic.

Select as many of these topics as you want. Read each out then give pairs 1 minute to talk about them.

- Why do some musicians use drugs?
- At what point do they become addicts?
- What is the effect of drug use on musician's music?
- How about their album and concert sales?
- How is our perception of musician drug addicts different to that of normal people's?
- What do people think of reformed drug addict musicians?

6) Stop the activity, elicit back each question and ask the students who get them right to write them on the board in various places. Then read each out and ask for 1 volunteer to answer the question and to write/summarise their answer on the board below the question. Make this part a bit fast and fun. Correct any grammar, spelling or vocabulary errors.

7) Describe a few famous musicians who have allegedly died from drug use. For instance, Jimmy Hendrix, Jim Morrison, Michael Jackson and Whitney Houston. Ask the students what advice they have for young people thinking of taking drugs. Make quick small groups and ask the students to share their advice.

8) Wrap up the lesson by asking the students which new words they have learned and then presenting and explaining the following by explaining the process:

- Drug addict
- Junky
- Rehab
- Recovery
- Clean

9) Pair students up and ask them to decide the best way of helping drug addicts become clean. Encourage them to use the words. Give them 2 minutes then put pairs together to make groups to share their ideas.

10) Share your own and ask how effective it could be.

Optional homework:

11) Ask the students to read this article about a recently deceased rock star and then write about it for a minute. Tell them they should just write whatever they think or feel after reading it.

<http://tinyurl.com/jc2oqku>

12) In the next class, you could either ask students to read out their responses, distribute them randomly for others to read or read them then select quotes to project on the board for discussion. If you have a Moodle, blog or website, you could also share them there and do a homework online discussion which you can reflect on in the next lesson.

Sizeism

Aims:

- 1) To discuss the acceptability of discrimination.
- 2) To explore the issue of airline passenger weight.
- 3) To read and discuss articles.
- 4) To compare and contrast airline policies.

Level: B1+

Procedure:

1) Introduce the concept of discrimination. Ask each group/pair to brainstorm the various forms. After a short time elicit some examples of each, aiming to find an example of sizeism. Establish a general consensus that most discrimination is unacceptable. Elicit ideas about what situations sizeism might be necessary - i.e. in which situations might you really need to consider people's size and weight.

General Forms of Discrimination:

Age, Caste, Class, Color, Disability, Genotype, Height, Hair, Language, Looks, Mental type, Race / ethnicity / nationality, Rank, Religion, Sex / Gender, Sexuality, Size, Species

Wikipedia: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Discrimination>

2) Tell the students to read the SMH article (Text #1) on airline passenger weight regulations. Reading aims are simple (What has recently changed in the US? What is different in Australia?) Ask students to state (or speculate) what their own country's policies might be. Perhaps ask students to use their mobile devices to check baggage weight restrictions for various airlines.

3) Optionally for higher levels:

Ask the students to read the CASA Australia article (Civil Aviation Advisory Publication) and produce if-then sentences describing the passenger weight calculations for aircraft of various sizes. Learners with math backgrounds may be able to figure out and explain why the weight calculation errors are a problem for smaller aircraft.

- https://www.casa.gov.au/sites/g/files/net351/f/_assets/main/download/caaps/ops/235_1.pdf

Ask learners to read the Australian Aviation article on two serious incidents regarding passenger weight errors made by JetStar.

- <http://australianaviation.com.au/2015/12/jetstar-under-investigation-from-atsb-and-casa-over-serious-incidents/>

Put learners into groups to discuss the possible causes of these incidents.

4) Tell learners to read the CheapAir article (Text #2) on airline passenger weight policies.

5) Make pairs or small groups and ask them to analyse one airline's policy decoding the defining relative clause sentences into if-then sentences and, perhaps, create simple flow diagrams. Check correctness of the logic.

6) Put learners into new groups to discuss whether the discrimination based on passenger weight and size is justified, and also discuss possible policies for optimal fairness to both airlines and passengers as well as for safety.

Target language:

- Defining relative clauses paraphrased to conditionals

<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/grammar/british-grammar/relative-clauses-defining-and-non-defining>

- Text #1: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2003/05/13/1052591790259.html>
- Text #2: <https://www.cheapair.com/blog/travel-tips/airline-policies-for-overweight-passengers-traveling-this-summer/>

Pork

Aims:

1) To practice language related to speculation and giving opinion

- 2) To consider why foods and drinks are banned in different places
- 3) To discuss whether the choices of the individual should ever outweigh the laws of the state

Level: B2+

Procedure:

1) Divide the class into two teams. Teacher says a target word and teams nominate a member to write the word on the board. Teacher then says a different word and teams nominate a different student, and so on.

Target Language:

HAGGIS / SAMOSAS / FARMED SALMON / ABSINTHE / FOIE GRAS / KINDER SURPRISE EGGS / CHEWING GUM / BELUGA CAVIAR / KETCHUP

Feedback: teacher puts a tick (✓) or a cross (□) next to the answers as appropriate and elicits or provides the correct spelling as necessary.

2) Tell the students to get up and mingle and ask each other about any of the items from stage 1 that they are unsure of. (e.g. Student A: Do you know what a haggis is? Student B: “Yes it’s...”) At the end of the activity, the teacher can correct any misconceptions or provide answers to any items that none of the students are familiar with. (See information sheet below for detailed information on the items).

3) Ask the students if they have tried any of the items. If so, what do they think? Did they like them? Why? / Why not? Ask students to briefly discuss in pairs, what they think the items have in common. Monitor for language of speculation and note down any correct or incorrect phrases used. Content feedback: elicit possible connections from the class and then tell the students (if they haven’t already guessed) that all these items are banned somewhere in the world.

4) Tell students that they are going to discuss where and why the items might be banned. Ask students what kind of language they might need to use. Elicit the ideas of “speculation” and “opinion”. Elicit / provide useful exponents such as the following: It might be because / It could be because / It can’t be that it’s... / It’s probably / I think it’s because / I reckon / My view is that it’s... Expand this with any other ideas you or your students come up with and make a written record on the board.

5) Put the students into groups of four (or three). Ask students to agree on where and why the items are banned. Monitor the discussion and note down accurate and inaccurate uses of language (related to speculation and giving opinion).

Content feedback: Ask each group to present their thoughts on one or two of the items. Provide the correct information (see information sheet below) where necessary. Language feedback: write up examples of accurate and inaccurate language from your monitoring and ask the students to correct any mistakes they can find.

6) If you have time, either write on the board or dictate the following quotation from the late US comedian Bill Hicks:

“Here is my final point about drugs, about alcohol, about pornography. What business is it of yours what I do, read, buy, see or take into my body as long as I do not harm another human being on this planet? And for those of you who are having a little moral dilemma in your head about how to answer that question, I’ll answer it for you. NONE of your fucking business.”

(You may wish to omit the swearword) Ask students if they agree and why / why not.

Notes:

- The reasons why the food items are banned fall largely into these categories: protection of public health / religious & cultural reasons / the social good / animal welfare. In the last part of the lesson (the Bill Hicks quote) the issue becomes whether these reasons are good enough to limit individual liberty.
- Information Sheet - all information correct at time of publication!

HAGGIS: Originally from Scotland, the Haggis is a savoury dish containing the heart, liver, and lungs of a sheep minced and mixed with oatmeal, onion, and various spices. It is traditionally then encased in the stomach lining. It is banned in the USA due a public health law banning the use of sheep’s lungs for public consumption.

SAMOSAS: Found all over the world, but originating in India, Samosas are triangular pastries with a spicy, savoury filling. They are banned in Somalia because the shape resembles the “holy trinity”.

FARMED SALMON: Common in Scotland and Norway, but also elsewhere in the world, farmed salmon is banned in Australia and New Zealand because of a food colourant that is used

to make sure the salmon flesh is a pink colour. It is the colourant that is banned rather than the salmon itself.

ABSINTHE: possibly originally from France, Absinthe is partially made from wormwood, which contains a toxic chemical linked to epileptic-like convulsions and kidney failure. Absinthe is banned in the USA, Australia and New Zealand on the grounds of public health as it can cause hallucinations and extremely aggressive behaviour.

FOIE GRAS: Originally from France, Foie Gras is made from goose livers. The process involves force feeding the geese three times a day for about 17 days, until the livers of the geese become fatty and distended. The apparent cruelty of this process has led to bans in India, Brazil and parts of Europe, though most bans relate to the production, not consumption of Foie Gras and therefore are relatively pointless as it can still be imported from other countries.

KINDER SURPRISE EGGS: These can be found anywhere in the world and are a chocolate egg surrounding a plastic container, in which a small toy can be found. They are banned in the USA because of a law that states edible products may not contain non-edible components.

CHEWING GUM: Is famously banned in Singapore for reasons of urban hygiene.

BELUGA CAVIAR: Originating from the Caspian Sea region, numbers of the beluga sturgeon fish which makes the caviar have fallen so seriously that it is now protected by the 2006 Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, making it illegal to harvest the fish eggs that make the caviar.

KETCHUP: Also known as tomato sauce, it was banned in French primary schools because the taste of the ketchup was overpowering the flavours of traditional french cooking and part of the role of school lunches in France is to promote traditional french cooking and flavours.