This talk does not pretend to put forward evolutionary theories or new previously unthought of ideas. The objective is merely to share practical activities (invented, borrowed or developed) which have worked for me in the classroom. Should you go away with two or three ideas which you can use constructively with your students and then pass on to another language teacher, the talk, as far as I'm concerned, has been worthwhile.

Why are questionnaires and surveys useful?

The question form is arguably one of the most difficult aspects of English grammar to produce correctly. Questionnaires, by their very definition, provide an excellent means of giving students controlled practice of a variety of structures as well as serving as an interesting spring board for discussion and debate. The golden rule is never get students to ask questions which they are neither interested in asking nor answering.

"Have you got a cat?" is generally a dull question. "Have you got a boyfriend/girlfriend?" or "Have you got hairy legs?" grabs attention.

Questionnaires and surveys provide a fun way of asking personal and revealing questions which awaken students' curiosity and therefore stimulate interest.

2. **Blackboard Questionnaires**

The dictionary definition of a questionnaire is nothing more than "a set of questions for obtaining statistically useful or personal information from individuals". Questionnaires do not necessarily have to be previously prepared forms to be filled in - they can be set up quickly and simply on the blackboard with little preparation.

**Icebreakers**

On the first day of a new course, it is always important to establish a good class atmosphere and student rapport. You should get to know the students, they should get to know you, and students should get to know each other. A simple way of introducing yourself, while at the same time teaching or revising structures, is by writing prompts on the blackboard and eliciting the
Questions.

Blackboard model:
? David
? 32
? Teacher at CLM
? Single
? Albaicín
? London
? March 1962

Students suggest questions and the teacher answers only when the questions are asked appropriately and correctly. Once you have introduced yourself, the students ask the same questions in pairs and groups, thereby "breaking the ice". The activity can be extended by getting students to change seats and introduce each other in the third person, ("This is Pepe, he’s 21, etc.") or simply reporting back to the whole class.

This activity can be adapted to all levels by changing the prompts. It is an excellent means of augmenting levels and establishing students’ real grammatical knowledge.

Should students already know each other, prompts can simply be moulded to student interest, and relationships - summer holidays, future plans, exam results...

Structures

Using the same blackboard technique, controlled practice of any structure or tense can be achieved meaningfully and effectively. Questions should be designed to excite conversation. For example, when practising the Present Perfect, the classical textbook questions such as "Have you ever been to France?" begs a "Yes/no" answer, with generally little scope for follow-up questions, and as stimulating as watching paint dry. However, if students ask each other "Have you ever met a famous person?" or "Have you ever seen a blue movie?", the conversation will not usually stop at "Yes" or "No". Natural curiosity (a teacher’s most useful weapon) will be aroused and follow-up questions are inevitable - "when? why? how? what was he/she/it like? etc. Stimulating a wide range of language.

Blackboard model for Present Perfect

Simply write infinitives on the blackboard and students must interview or "confess to" each other.

meet a famous person?
see a blue movie?
steal anything?
fell in love at first sight?
be unfaithful to your boy/girlfriend?
lie to your parents?
eat brains?
hit anyone?
get so drunk you can't remember?
Follow up activities are numerous. Reporting, guessing other students' answers, class surveys and analyses as writing exercises. This is adaptable to all levels and structures.

Personalisation and revelation are important ways of stimulating students. Clearly, the teacher must use judgement and be careful not to offend student sensibilities. However, Spanish adult students, surrounded as they are by media reality shows, are on the whole not easily shocked.

3. **Personal and Personality Questionnaires**

A great source of authentic material for classroom questionnaires can be found in women's magazines such as "Cosmopolitan" and "Marie Claire"- "How fit are you?", "Are you a good friend?", "Are you faithful?", "How sensual are you?". These questionnaires are like horoscopes - no one believes them but everyone reads them. People want to be classified even though they might disagree with the "hole" they are "pigeoned" in.

From a teaching point of view, this is perfect material, since curiosity and interest is stimulated although they might dismiss it as nonsense (disagreement stimulates more language than agreement). It is important to introduce a points scoring system which "defines" their character since this provides material for argument and discussion afterwards.

The "How honest are you?" questionnaire has been adapted from an exercise from "Speaking Personally" by Gillian Porter Ladousse (C.U.P.). It is particularly designed to stimulate discussion using the conditional tense.

**HOW HONEST ARE YOU?**

Say what you would do in the following situations. Remember, you won't be caught. Answer: No (N), Maybe (M) or Yes (Y). Be honest!

1. In a big department store you buy a T-shirt for 1500 ptas. You pay with a 2000 pta note, but are given 3500 ptas change. Would you leave without saying anything?

2. You find 20,000 ptas in a wallet with an identity card. Would you keep the money?

3. Your car is about to be towed away because it was parked illegally. One of the policemen seems to suggest that if you offered him a bribe of 5,000 ptas he would forget the whole
thing. Would you?
You love the colour of the towel in your hotel room. Would you put it in your suitcase before leaving the hotel?
You agree to sell your car to a man for 250,000 ptas. He leaves you a deposit. The next day someone else offers you 300,000 ptas. Would you sell to the second buyer (and send back the first man's deposit)?
You lose your wedding ring. Your insurance doesn’t cover this kind of loss but if you make a false claim that it was stolen, you could be reimbursed. Would you?
You sell your house to someone for 10m ptas, and the buyer pays half the price in cash. If you tell the tax authorities the actual price you will have to pay a lot of money in tax. Do you put the cash under your mattress and say nothing?
By pressing a key on a computer, 1 million ptas will automatically transfer from a rich Saudi businessman’s account to yours. He has so much money he won’t miss it and it is impossible for you to be caught. Would you press the key?

For every "no", score 2, for every "maybe" score 1, for every "yes", score 0

Points. You are a saint! 12-15 points. You are a scrupulous individual. 9-11 points. You are honest, but fall into temptation. 4-7 points. People should be careful of their ticks when they are around! 0-3 points. You are an amoraliminal!

4. Discussion Questionnaires
Discussions and debates often fail because one or more of the following reasons:
1) Students reach agreement too easily.
2) They have discussed the topic so often before they are bored of it.
3) Certain students might have no strong opinions about the given topic.

To avoid this "Oh no, not bullfighting again!" syndrome, I have found a list of topics can prove more effective.

Discussion Model

OPINIONS AND ATTITUDES
Before completing this questionnaire, look at the key and then circle the number closest to your opinion. Then compare your answers with your partner.

KEY
1 - Agree entirely  2 - Agree on the whole
3 - Can’t decide  4 - Disagree on the whole
5 - Disagree entirely

1. Bull-fighting is cruel and should be banned.  
2. Men and women can never be equal.
5. Conclusion

For those teachers who already use surveys and questionnaires in the classroom, I am presumably preaching to the converted. For those who haven’t yet, all I can say is that they have worked for me—they are an excellent means of teaching and generating new language and, above all, students like them. As far as I am concerned, this is justification enough, since sustaining student interest is half the battle in language teaching.

References:
Pairwork, Peter Watcyn Jones (Penguin)
Themes, Alan Mathews and Carol Read (Collins)
Speaking personally, Gillian Porter Ladousse (C.U.P.)
Partners, Michael Lewis (L.T.P.)
Working with Words, Ruth Gairns and Stuart Redman (C.U.P.)
Games for Language Learning, Andrew Wright, David Betteridge and Michael Buckby (C.U.P.)