

## Reading

The Reading activities have as a common aim the transfer of natural first language strategies to second language reading.

- Prediction activities will encourage students to anticipate possible meanings before reading in English, just as they do naturally in their native language.
- Reading for the gist (instead of word by word) and guessing meanings from the context as they read will both stimulate natural reading habits.
- Visualisation plays a big part in reading comprehension and will improve students' innate ability to make pictures in their head.
- Summarising introduces the students to the feel of text structure.

### 1. Pleasantries

**Level** Any

**Time** 15 minutes

**Materials** None

#### **Presentation**

Tell students that they are going to read a short story. Have them brainstorm possible storylines from the title: Her Letters. Leave the ideas on the board and instruct students to verify which guess comes closest to the real story by reading it. Tell students that reading is making pictures from words. Instruct them to picture the scenes in the story. Say that you'll be asking questions about their pictures after they have read it.

#### **Practice**

## Her letters

There was once a young boy who lived in a wood. He was very strong and good at wood-cutting, carpentry, growing plants, cookery and accounting but he couldn't read. School was very far from his home, so he never attended it. Both his father and his mother had learned to read and they wanted him to learn too. The young boy refused to learn, saying it was too difficult.

He liked to enjoy himself so every Saturday night he went to a dance in the local village. One Saturday, near Christmas, there was a special dance, so he got all dressed up in his best clothes and walked to the big dance hall in the village. Suddenly, as he was dancing, he saw a very pretty young woman who looked the same age as himself. He was surprised to see her come over to him and ask him to dance. The young man accepted. They danced and talked for the rest of the night. When they separated at the end of the evening she promised to write to him every week.

His promise made him nervous because he knew that he couldn't read her letters or reply to them but he could not admit this to his new friend. When the first letter arrived he was very excited and rushed to his mother asking her to read it for him. The letter was interesting but his mother asked too many questions about the young woman. He decided that the only solution was to learn to read his own letters. He sat with his mother for an hour every evening to learn to read. The young man put so much effort into his work that in one month he was already beginning to understand many of his girlfriend's letters.

After three month's work he was finally able to read the letters by himself and didn't have to answer any more of his mother's questions.

### **Debrief**

You may want to verify the accuracy of guesses. Get students to describe their visualisations of the story. You can ask questions about: the woodcutter, his home, his girlfriend, his mother reading the letters to him.

### **Celebration**

Tell students that visualisation is important because visualisation = comprehension.

## 2. Imagine

**Level** Pre-Intermediate

**Time** 30 mins

**Materials** Film music

**Focus** To introduce pupils to their powers of visualisation.

### **State**

Play some well-known film music as students are settling down. Ask some students to tell you the story of the latest film they've seen. Ask pertinent questions about the visuals(scenery, clothes, colours ... ), the sounds(soundtrack, voices ... ) and what they felt about the film(sadness? happiness? fear?).

### **Future Pacing**

Tell your students that they have just shown a natural ability to recreate pictures, sounds and feelings. Say that this activity will extend their ability.

### **Presentation**

Say: Read over the text and picture the scene.

Afterwards I will give you some questions on how you pictured it.

### **Practice**

#### Up to your neck in it

One stormy winter night a young farmer was trudging home from work. Suddenly he heard faint cries of help that he finally found were coming from the bottom of a deep well.

`Who's there?' he shouted down over the side of the well.

`It's me!' replied a teacher who had accidentally tumbled headfirst over the edge three hours before.

`Don't worry, I'll get you out,' called back the farmer cheerfully.

`Follow the rescue instructions on the board beside the well. Be quick about it because the water in here is rising,' bellowed up the teacher.

`I can't read,' moaned the farmer, `but don't fret I'll soon have you out.'

`For God's sake hurry up, the water is around my waist. But don't you dare try to get me out without following those instructions - to the letter! ' yelled the teacher irritably.

`Well, you'll have to teach me to read, won't you then,' responded the youth.

`I've been down here for three hours,' said the teacher, `I'm freezing and the water is now up to my neck. Just look at the words on board, spell out the letters to yourself one by one and do what they say. You'll soon get the hang of it. Hurry up now! '

Exchange the Reading for these questions. Students write replies.

Q1. What time of day was it?

Q2. What about the weather?

Q3. How old was the teacher? ... the farmer?

Q4. How was the teacher dressed? ... the farmer?

Q5. Can you describe the background area?

Q6. Describe any noises you heard.

Q7. Did you feel any emotions while reading?

Q8. Were there any smells in the story?

### **Debrief**

Get students to read out their (different) answers and discuss their visualisations.

(Note: there was no textual information about questions 3-8.)

The importance of visualisation:

` ... learning to "see content in their minds." This is the key to high school graduation and the ticket to "doing college." ' MICHAEL GRINDER.

Brian Tomlinson is a researcher who has conducted studies in Japan on reading skills and visualisation. He has found that people who created pictures in their head while they were reading a book recalled the story better. He also found that it was easy to boost recall in other students simply by reminding them to visualise while reading.

### **Celebration**

If students have answers to questions 3-8 tell them they were filling in the picture for themselves. Congratulate them on their visualising powers!

### 3. Close up

**Level** Pre-intermediate

**Time** 1 Hour

**Materials** Music by Chopin

**Focus** Detailed visualising practice.

#### **State**

Play some romantic period music (eg Chopin's `nocturnes') to put students into a visualising frame of mind. This music can also be playing during **future pacing, practice** and **celebration**.

#### **Future pacing**

Remind students of their natural ability to visualise. Tell them that during this class we'll be using that innate talent to read English even better than before. Invite them to enjoy the images they will be creating during the class.

#### **Presentation**

Say, then Write, the following instructions:

-Read the text and imagine the scene.

-In pairs, without text, one partner asks the questions on the next page and notes down the answers.

-Swop roles and repeat questions.

Demonstrate the idea with one student.

#### **Practice**

##### Song

With this song that gives me a strange vision I can see a warm and green field with a river crossing it.

This song makes me think in beautiful things like : peace, love and harmony and a lot of things I can't describe with words.

This song makes me dream of fantastic things. I can sleep with it with a lot of calm in myself and without problems. The song's harmony is alright and there are no lyrics.

I can observe a field of wheat. It's yellow like the sun and a lot of sheep, black and white sheep.

I can appreciate a pair of frogs in the river. Both are greenish or brownish. I can't see them very well. The sky has some little clouds. There isn't any danger of rain because there is no wind. I'm under a tree, reading a book ... that's the end of the song.

(This text was written by a 14 year-old Catalan girl using instrumental music to visualise.)

Help your partner to describe the picture(s) that they have made by asking the following questions:

(Keep still during this exercise.)

-Bring your picture nearer.

What colours can you see?

What is in the background?

What is in the foreground?

Is the picture still or moving?

Is the image moving fast? Slowly?

Are you in the picture or a detached observer?

-What can you hear?

What noises in particular can you hear?

Turn up the sound.

Are the noises loud or soft?

Are they fast? Slow?

Which part of the picture are they coming from?

-Is it warm/cold in the picture?

Is it a stressful scene?

Have you any feelings about the picture?

### **Debrief**

Ask which section of questions got the longest answers. (Tell that that is probably the favourite representational system of the answerer). Ask if anyone found any section particularly difficult. (Tell that that is probably the least favourite representational system of the answerer).

Tell students that submodalities reflect the natural process of the brain. Scientific investigation has been able to show that the human brain receives Information through the eyes, ears and skin, not in a holistic way but in analytic form. For instance an image reaching the retina is broken down by the eye into different components such as outline, colours or textures. In the same way a sound reaches the brain in the form of frequency, intensity or direction. The brain regularly scans this Information and creates meaningful perception from it. Submodality analysis thus appears as a very appropriate way to help students control their own perceptions because it manages Information just as the brain does. It seems fit that students should learn to use their head by using their head. Can there be any more desirable outcome for education than that of learning to use your own head?

**Celebration** Play the **state** music again and read the text while pupils recall their personal visualisations.

## 4. Storytime

**Level** Any

**Time** One hour

**Materials** Class reader

**Focus** Ways to choose and present class readers for your students.

### **Choosing Readers**

Most students have enough visual, auditory and kinesthetic capacities to deal with readers but up to 20% of any class may only use one modality to read. It is helpful to recommend books that will make reading more attractive to these pupils.

The Visual reader appreciates detailed setting in books, so you include readers that are rich in descriptive features. Be aware that the other single modality readers will reject this type of book, so advertise its features clearly.

The Auditory Only reader loves dialogue because they can hear the sound of the characters' voices when they converse.

Kinesthetic readers want the plot to have external action with fewer words on the page so that they can stay active by turning pages more often.

To analyse a book just flip the pages forward and observe the indentation on the left side. The more indentations the more likely you will find dialogue. The longer the paragraphs the more visual the book.

### **Presentation**

To help students visualise with readers introduce the book in a right-brained fashion, that is, show students how to get an overview before starting to read the first words on page one.

- Ask if anyone has heard about the book and can give any Information.
  
- Have them look at the front page photo and describe it. They then guess what the book is about.
  
- Look at the title and translate it. Does it confirm/deny the first guess?
  
- Read the blurb on the back of the book. Is there any additional Information?
  
- Tell pupils that stories normally conform to the following pattern:
  - Introduction of people and places.
  - Presentation of conflicts between the characters.
  - The resolution of conflicts.

- Now look at the Contents page and go through the chapter headings making a stab at their meanings and fitting them into the above scheme. When finished, ask someone to speculate as to the full story. (It's advisable not to confirm or deny guesses, the idea is not to be right or wrong but to learn to speculate.)
- Students can now begin to read the book.
- Encourage them to picture the scenes of the story in their minds while reading.
- The importance of this is that comprehension questions about a text require readers to recall their pictures.