

VISUALS FOR CHILDREN AND JUNIORS

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Do you want to make your class more lively, interesting, thrilling etc? Then, use visual material such as wall charts, flashcards, cut outs and even blackboard drawings.

It takes time to produce the material or to think what it is going to be like but the results are very rewarding. You will find out that your students whether they are adults, juniors or children enjoy the class more and you yourself too.

The main ingredients to take into consideration when producing material are: to make it nice to look at, interesting, imaginative and challenging but not so difficult that students cannot cope with it.

If the material has these characteristics it will surprise you to see that it might be used by all students regardless of their age. I have taken some wall charts I first produced for children to an adults' class and the result was great. The students were very happy.

The only very important point here is the structure and the level of the class.

You can't take material which is very easy into a class with a good level of English even if that is the structure you want to practise. Always bear in mind that you have to produce material which is challenging and fits the needs of the students.

I started working with young children. I gave my classes in a traditional way, that is, presenting the structure first, then practising it both in the written form and orally. The students were to be quiet and standing up was strictly prohibited.

I always remembered the things I had learnt about children

such as: 'children have a short attention span, change activity about every ten minutes etc.' so the classes were good but a bit tiring for the children, because they were not allowed to stand up, speak out, move about etc.

Young children love doing all this plus shouting, singing, dancing, acting. I soon realized that this was what my students liked the best but I was terrified of allowing them a bit of freedom because the class was surely to become a mess where I would be an observer without the power to control it.

Then last year I took a course for juniors and children and I learnt how to exploit what children like to do when learning English.

I decided that the object of my class was that the students learnt English and that they enjoyed the class. You achieve this by doing what they like most. In this way they will not even notice that they are working and learning. The children behave well, they do not talk, they participate and if they shout it is because they are excited with the class, because they are having fun.

All the visual material I now produce, I would say, follows the motto: "play and learn".

To create material you do not have to be an artist. It is not important to draw and colour beautifully but that its content is interesting.

You can photocopy from magazines or cut out from them, buy some stamps, use books etc.

Just try to make your material visually attractive because students like it this way better.

Think about what people do to have fun: guess, find out things, draw, listen, act, put things together etc. Now combine them with the structure you want to teach and you are ready to

go to class.

These are some examples of material you can produce.

1. Make cut outs of different objects: a fork, a cake, a house, a car etc. Cut each object in several pieces to make jigsaw puzzles.

When in class stick a piece on the blackboard and ask or elicit with the question "What is it?" The students have to guess it. If a student guesses correctly he or she comes to the blackboard and puts the puzzle together but if no one guesses what it is then they ask you - "Is it a _____?" and you answer "Yes, it is" or "No, it isn't". Then you stick another piece on the blackboard and then you elicit the question again and follow the same procedure as before.

You can also make enough puzzles to have students work with them in pairs or groups.

This material can be used for the presentation of the question "What is it?" "Is it a _____?" "Yes, it is" - "No, it isn't." Or as a further practice or as a game.

2. Make a wall chart of a room, a living room, for instance. Draw a sofa, an armchair, a table, a TV set, a bookcase. Draw many objects in different parts of the room: in the bookcase, under the table, behind the sofa, etc. Perhaps you will find a poster and then you will not have to worry about having to draw it.

Make small cards on which you draw a question mark to cover all the objects on the wall picture. On other cards draw the object and a question mark and on some others the same objects showing where they are. This material can be used for the presentation of "Where is _____?" "It's in/on/under/behind _____" and to practise prepositions or naturally as a further practice. Tell the students there is an X number of objects in the living room. They are covered with the cards with the

question marks. Hand out the cards with the question mark and the object to some students and the rest of the cards to others. Choose a student who has a card with the question mark. The object is to ask "Where is _____ (name of the object)? The student who has the card with the object mentioned answers. Another student goes to the blackboard and takes the card which is covering the object in the picture.

You can also use this material for a game. You divide the class into two teams. You hand out the cards. Both teams have to ask and answer questions so be careful to give one team half of the cards with the question mark and the object and half of the cards showing where the objects are (but of course not the answers to the cards with the question mark they have got) and the rest to the other team. Cover the objects on the wall picture.

The first team who asks "Is the _____ in/on/under/behind/ _____" get a point when they get an affirmative answer. The students can take notes so they will not forget when the answer was negative. then it is the other team's turn to ask. Uncover the objects if the answer is affirmative.

3. Make a wall-chart of a room. Make cut outs of different objects and stick them on the picture. You can also use a poster and stamps or cut outs from magazines in this case.

Tell the students that it is Mr. and Mrs. Rich's house. Have them look at the picture for two minutes. Turn it round and take off the cut outs. Tell them than a burglar was in the house and that he stole everything. Mr. and Mrs. Rich called the police and told them what there was in that room. The students play the part of Mr. and Mrs. Rich. They say - There was... There were... You can use this material for the presentation of this structure or as a further practice.

After having practised the structure the students can stick the cut outs on the correct places and then practise There is ... There are ...

You can also invent a dialogue between the police and a desperate Mrs. Rich or Mr. Rich. The students can act it out.

4. Make masks of different characters. You can draw them or cut them out from magazines. Every character has to be related to another one, for example: you can draw Charles and Diana or Morticia and Homero, or one that is physically alike to another one. Write the names of the characters on the masks. Hand out the masks to the students and ask them to put them on and find their partner. Then elicit or present Diana is Charle's wife.

Teach or practise names of relatives such as husband, wife, brother, etc. You can do it as a game. The first to find his or her partner wins.

I have used all this material in my children classes and my students liked it a lot. It gives them a chance to be themselves. They are relaxed and participate a lot because they are playing and learning at the same time but the best of all is that they are under control. I have also worked with this material with adults. They were a bit stiff at first but once they got used to it they cooperated and started enjoying the class.

If you don't have time to sit down and produce this material you can also use these ideas with blackboard drawings. Don't be scared, start using them or you will never get better at them.

. . . and try out using this material or inventing new ones and have fun in your classes!