

A coursebook in the life of

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How to introduce this guest blogger when in fact he has saved me the job, and kindly added a short bio at the end of his article? Adam, who is based in Istanbul, is one of those people you meet on Twitter or Facebook (@yearinthelifeof) and you feel you just have to meet in real life too (and not only because Tweeddeck flatly refuses to let me see his avatar photo). Always a source of interesting references, blog posts and musical titbits, I have actually yet to meet him (so many reasons to go back to Istanbul one day.....), but am extremely pleased to be able to welcome Adam to *Take a photo and...* in the same month as the British Council 'TeachingEnglish' team has shortlisted him for the Blog of the Month 'accolade'. So, it's over to Adam.....

How do you work with your course book? Do you ever get your learners to look forward to coming units in anticipation, or do you take each unit – or even the coming page – as it comes? While books are organized in a certain way to promote their linear, chronological use, there are benefits to looking ahead to what's coming up. With this in mind, here's one easy activity that I've used to get your learners actively talking about their coursebook in a positive and engaging way.

First, I'm going to describe the procedure of the activity, and then I'll tell you why it's so beneficial.

What you need

Go to ELT Pics and have a look around. Now that there are more than 11,000 pictures available, you have a good chance of finding something that will fit your needs.

Choose a bunch of pictures based on the contents of your course book contents. Naturally, the number and content will depend on what comes up in your book.

How to proceed

I'll describe how I did this in the context of my own book.

- ♦ My course book is split into two books, each book containing five units. Each unit is split into four inputs, each focusing on either reading or listening.
- ♦ At the start of the semester I found four pictures for each unit, one for each input.

- ♦ I had sixteen learners in the class, so I put them into four groups of four.
- ♦ To get them into the activity, we all looked at the pictures I'd chosen for unit one.
- ♦ Each group got a copy of the set and had to:
 - Decide what each picture could represent
 - Decide what could possibly connect the four pictures
- ♦ After several minutes of discussion in groups, they shared their ideas among one another.

Here are the pictures I used:



So, what do *you* make of those four pictures? Can you guess what the theme of the unit is?

Well done! The subject of the unit is indeed education. Now, can you assign one of the photographs to each of these four headings?

1. Education today
2. Intelligence in seven steps
3. Restructuring education: Rationale and methods
4. The future of learning

There are no correct answers at this point; all learners need to do is to connect a picture to one of these headings and try to justify why they made that choice. The important thing here is making a connection between the image and the thing they will be studying at a later point.

Here's how I continue:

- ♦ I assign a set of pictures to each group, one set representing four images for one of the other course book units.
- ♦ They looked at the pictures and decided an overall theme for their unit.
- ♦ Each group received the headings of the reading and listening content of their unit and allocated one picture to each heading.

At this point, you can take the activity in a couple of different ways:

1. The groups intermingle and share their ideas with members of different groups. Each person should have their own copy if you do it this way, so they can show others what they are talking about and why they connected one particular image to a part of the book.
2. The groups present their 'findings' to the other groups. Each group takes it in turn and can have a Q and A before explaining their pictures if they wish.

Benefits of this activity

- ♦ This is a simple activity that could easily be used to get learners talking and listening to each other, in a meaningful way, around the contents of a given unit of work.
- ♦ This gives the learners the sense that you've planned ahead and are in control of the whole course, plus they get a sense of everything that is in store for them.
- ♦ You can do some pre-teaching of vocabulary that is pertinent to any given unit.
- ♦ You can pre-activate schemata for any given unit.
- ♦ You can generate a bit of excitement about the upcoming unit(s) of study, having already built up some anticipation of what is to come.

<http://takeaphotoand.wordpress.com/2013/02/18/a-coursebook-in-the-life-of/>

- You can give the learners a sense of ownership of the book, as you can return to this activity when you eventually arrive at a particular unit and hand over the class to your 'unit experts' to introduce the subjects that will be studied in the coming days/weeks.

A note of thanks

This activity is based on an idea for introducing the course book which I saw in a conference presentation by the ever excellent [Ken Wilson](#).

About Adam



Adam has been fortunate enough to spend the last twelve years of his journey as a life long learner working with others in what some call the 'language classroom'. He is currently privileged to have the opportunity to help young adults meet their educational goals at Sabanci University in Istanbul. His professional interests include flexibility within the curriculum and the considered use of technology in the classroom. He occasionally finds time to blog about his life: www.teachthemenglish.com.