**5 Ways to Effectively Use Images with Lower Level Students**

It’s an old saying that an image is worth a thousand words. In English language teaching we can take that saying and adapt it: ‘Every image can help students speak a thousand words.’ Images can be our greatest allies; instead of worrying about trying to form grammatically correct sentences in a course book activity, students always react positively when asked to discuss an image instead.

Images are great language learning tools for so many reasons. Firstly, images**are open to varying interpretations.** This inherent ambiguity enables your students to be creative and invent all manner of sentences based on what they see. Secondly, an image provides a natural talking point. Shy and introvert students often feel less anxiety about discussing an image than they do when doing a course book speaking activity. Furthermore, images help to practice sub-skills like prediction, telling stories and recognizing main ideas. Finally, images can be just a bit more fun to work with!

The following simple activities can be quick to set up in class, require minimal preparation, and will help you take advantage of all that images have to offer.

1. **Find the Differences**

Everyone has played this game at some time or another, so it’s easy to set up and get students playing. This is a great activity for practicing *there is / there are* and *there isn’t / there aren’t.*

* Students work in pairs.
* Find two images with any number of differences between them.
* In this version of the game, each student has an image, but they don’t show their partner the image.
* They have to find the differences by talking to each other. They describe their image and listen to their partner’s response.

**Extending the Activity**

* Partners can report their differences to the rest of the class. Also, if you give some of the other partners the same images (but not everyone) they can try to guess if theirs are the same.

### ****Choosing the Best Image****

This is useful for practicing superlative adjectives and using ‘*because*’. You’ll need a few images that are connected to a listening or reading you’re doing in class.

* Students read a text or listen to a recording and imagine they’re image editors.
* Give them a choice of several images.
* They have to choose the best image to illustrate the story and justify their choice.

**Extending the Activity**

* Students might also justify their reasons for rejecting the other images.

### Observation Test

This activity enables students to practice recalling language quickly under pressure.

* In pairs, students have a short time to look at an image.
* Student A is given the image and asks questions to see what student B remembers.
* Repeat with a different image, with students reversing their roles.

**Extending the Activity**

* Make this a team game. Each team is shown an image and then given a time limit to recall as many details as possible. The winning team is the one that recalls the most information.

### Image Stories

This is great for practicing simple past as a narrative tense. You’ll need a set of images which tells a story from start to finish.

* Put students in groups. Each member has an image and describes it without showing it.
* When everyone has described their image, they negotiate the correct order of the story and put the images together.
* They retell the story to the class.

**Extending the Activity**

* Students can write a paragraph describing their whole story.

### Dictate the Image

This variation on a regular dictation works well with lessons on prepositions of place.

* Rather than reading a text, describe an image that the students can’t see. For example, ‘*draw a table in the middle of the room. There is a cat under the table*.’
* Students draw the things you describe.
* After checking their image with a partner, they compare their versions with your original.

**Extending the Activity**

* Put students in pairs: one describes while the other draws. The students then switch roles.
* Alternatively, split the class into two teams. Describe an image and a member of each team draws a detail on the board, handing the pen to the next member.

**Advice**

Space in course books is very limited, so images aren’t always a priority on the printed page. Consequently, it’s a good idea to start building your own collection of images. Consider how you can store them physically, i.e. putting them on cardboard or laminating them for future use, or develop an effective way of storing them digitally.