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ART Gallery

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Mana. *Hitosume Kozo Rokurokubi (The One-Eyed Little Goblin Flying-Head Barbarian)*. 2023

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Hokusai Katasuchika. *A Group of Rokurokubi*. 1834

Inventing *Yokai* Stories

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Yokai, or mysteries, are ubiquitous in Japanese culture. The term originally meant unexplained phenomenon, but it has come to be understood to mean any of a variety of fantastic, horrific, terrible—but occasionally cute and cuddly—creatures in the modern age (Foster, 2023). The word *yokai* is sometimes translated as monsters, but they are also specters and ghosts, goblins and ghouls, and even vengeful umbrellas that have come to life after being neglected. All manner of colorful and creative yokai exist from ceiling-licking goblins to animate flying sheets of cotton. Because the term encompasses a broad range of creatures and is not easily translatable, it is best to simply say *yokai*.

Yokai are intertwined in Japanese literature and art and have been for more than a thousand years. For instance, *tengu*, a sword-wielding demon-faced warrior with wings, appears in classical Japanese texts, such as the *Nihon-Shoki* (as a celestial fox that burns across the sky with an ear-splitting bark), in The Tale of the Genji as a trickster (Kagawa, 2022) and a sage-like expert on *budo* (Chozanshi, 2006). Yokai have appeared in Japanese art and games from

antiquity to the Edo-era boom (Yumoto, 2019) and into current cutting-edge media fields. Many people outside of Japan first encountered *yokai* without even knowing it, when Mario wore a *tanuki* suit that enabled him to fly in Super Mario Bros. 3.

There is an immense and growing interest in *yokai* in the international community as the creatures move across national boundaries and into contemporary media forms, such as video games and anime that reach international audiences. Dedicated groups and pages on websites like Facebook, Deviant Art and Reddit (Foster, 2015), and traditional print books sold in a variety of languages testify to their continued rise in popularity.

In Japan, most (if not all) Japanese students will learn about *yokai* and other scary urban legends from a very young age through their classmates (Yoshioka, 2023). My 4-year-old daughter was not taught about the *Kuchisake-Onna* (Slit-Mouthed Woman) by anyone in our household, but she came home from school one day flapping her mouth about the terrifying specter, surprising me. Japanese students are intimately familiar with *yokai*, and international students living in Japan tend to have at least some exposure through popular media. For all these reasons, the invention of *yokai* is an enjoyable topic which is well-suited for both international and Japanese ESL/EFL students. In fact, some work has been done into university students inventing *yokai*, drawing their pictures, and telling their stories (Foster, 2015), but this article aims to give a lesson plan to be developed for language students in Japan.

Although they are marketed in popular media and written about in books, *yokai* stories, like all urban legends, are invented and spread by word of mouth. The *Kuchisake-Onna* is a recent example of this (Foster, 2009), where children know the basics of the legend, heard from a friend of a friend. According to the popular version of the legend, she asks if you think she is pretty. She is a beauty whose mutilated mouth is sliced open from ear to ear, and so the *Kuchisake-Onna* hides her face behind a mask. She offers to share her grisly grin with any passersby, by carving them up in the same way if you tell her she is pretty. However, she may kill you if you say she is not. This story spread from local newspapers in the 1970s and then was embraced and shared in schoolyards nationwide coinciding with the rise of "cram schools" in Japan (Yoshiyuki, 2019). A similar gruesome version of the legend is said to date to the Edo era (Meyer 2023). Traditionally one of the scarier *yokai*, this beguiling beauty saw a resurgence in popularity in the 2000s and starred in a series of bloody movies. Yet, in the version recently told to me by my daughter, *Kuchisake-Onna*'s slashed-open mouth had become a joke—a place to heave in heaps of *karaage* (fried chicken) and *onigiri* (rice balls), an example of how new

additions to the stories are created and spread in the schoolyard. This is evidence of the ever-changing versions of the folklore spread by word of mouth, and a phenomena that the language teacher can utilize in the classroom.

Toriyama Seiken. *Tenjoname (The Ceiling Licker)*. 1776

Artists also intentionally created new *yokai* stories, such as that of the ceiling-licking *tenjoname*. Invented in the 1700s by artist Toriyama Seiken (Davisson, 2013), the tale was based on an image from an earlier picture scroll dating from medieval Japan. Originally inhabiting dark ceilings in traditional homes, damp stains on paper-screen doors or wooden walls were attributed to its presence. The creative process of storytelling and invention around *yokai* is a long cultural tradition that occurs in both formal and informal spaces. One version of this exercise is for students to take an existing image and invent or add to the story, which is essentially what Seiken did, while drawing their own pictures of the *yokai*. When students add to an existing *yokai* legend, or invent new *yokai*, they are part of a centuries-old tradition. For that reason, harnessing this creative cultural instinct can be fun for all ages of ESL/EFL students in Japan.

Lesson Plan

This lesson combines the creation of original artwork with student-produced text. I start by giving a short history of some famous *yokai*, followed by a discussion wherein students are asked to list characteristics of *yokai* they might know and to think about what features make *yokai* special. Themes of environmentalism and local places are often important. Next, I show students an image I created of an original *yokai*. I tell them the name of my *yokai*, *Ashi-no-Me* (The Eye of the Foot), and the original story of its creation:

"I have an open sore on my foot that hurts when I walk. My wife says I am cursed with *Ashi-no-me* because I don't clean the floor well enough. She says little boys and girls will also develop *Ashi-no-me* from stepping on their Legos after not picking them up. To avoid the curse of *Ashi-no-me*, everyone must be sure to pick up their toys."

Students are given the task of creating an original work of art centered around the *yokai* theme. I prefer the assignment as homework, to allow students more time to be creative and

throw themselves into their work. However, the artwork and writing could also be done as an in-class assignment. The type of artwork is also left up the students. The submissions can be made with traditional methods such as pen, ink, watercolor, crayons, and markers or using Photoshop or any number of digital tools. Students in my classroom have created short comic strips, illustrations, even GIFs and songs. Along with the artwork, students are asked to submit an English language text of explanation. The parameters of the text are flexible, allowing them to be creative. In my class at a large art university, for example, students may choose to describe an existing *yokai* or create an original story around it, or invent an entirely new *yokai*. The genre of text is not specified, only a word count of approximately 250 words. The open-ended text requirement allows students to create descriptive, narrative, or expository texts. The text portion is also useful for a grammar lesson describing appearances (i.e., what does it look like) or introducing new vocabulary (i.e., horns, feathers, sharp, furry).

Ashi-no-Me (The Eye of the Foot) by the author

My students are asked to submit images and texts via an online platform such as Microsoft Teams or Google Classroom, and text formats such as .doc or .pdf allow teachers to easily give feedback on the writing and to post virtual notes to help students clarify and expand their ideas or provide grammar and/or spelling corrections. One example of a student submission via an online classroom was the *Doro-buse*. This was an original yokai created for the class. Like previous student-created *yokai* (Foster, 2015), this and several other works submitted in my classroom reflected a concern for difficulties of student life—the *yokai* causes the victim to fall asleep (sometimes even in class). While those are examples of new *yokai* created for the class, other students chose to illustrate original stories of existing *yokai*. One told a story of a *kappa* that traveled to the ocean from the pond (Fig 4). Below is a sample of writing by my student Tojo (2023):

Kadota Shusuke. *Doro-buse*. 2023

Tojo. *Kappa on a Trip*. 2023

"I chose Kappa because I came up [with the idea that] Kappa said, 'I'm tired of the pond, so I want to swim in the sea!' I knew that creatures that live in freshwater dry up when they enter seawater, so I made him a special suit filled with freshwater and went swimming with him in the sea. Kappa was amazed at the beauty of sea creatures. When he gave cucumbers to the sea creatures as a land souvenirs, they gave him beautiful shells. The fish said, 'This shell will be perfect for your new head plate!' After returning to the pond, Kappa tried wearing himself with his new shell plate. There was a slight smell of the sea, and the colorful seashells were sparkling. The kappa has become the number one fashionable kappa in the pond. (Tojo, 2023)"

Two students created short original manga (comics) about existing *yokai*. One student wrote about a *yokai* called the *Ittan-momen*. Essentially a large flying sheet of cotton, the student has written an original story where the *yokai* gets confused for a giant udon noodle and used by a chef. Both original stories demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of the folklore of the *yokai* they have chosen to illustrate and write about. Furthermore, both stories involve an unexpected reversal of roles for the yokai—the normally ugly *kappa* travels from his freshwater home and becomes beautiful while the pranking *ittan-momen* becomes

Nagasawa Aina. Ittan Momen and the Chef. 2023

the victim of a prank. This nuanced understanding of the folklore of Japan and the ability to improvise on the story in an amusing way—by reversing expectations—are indicative of thoughtful engagement in the lesson.

After all the work was turned in, we viewed all the artwork on a large screen in front of the class and students explained their submissions. This sharing was additional speaking practice, and I asked a question or made a comment on every student's work.

Masayoshi Kitao. Hitosume-kozo (The One-Eyed Monk). 1788

While I have implemented this lesson at the university level for intermediate to advanced ESL/EFL students, it can be tailored to all ages. Younger students may benefit from more structure, such as determining the specific art medium to be used. The word-count requirement could be reduced (or eliminated entirely) for students with only verbal skills, who have yet to master basic writing. For example, my daughter produced an image of, and told a story about, an original *yokai*: *Hitosume Kozo Rokurokubi (The One-Eyed Little Goblin Flying-Head Barbarian)*. [image on front and back covers of this issue] This was created when she combined two traditional *yokai*: *Rokurokubi* (Long Necked Woman) and the *Hitosume-kozo* (The One-Eyed Monk). At four years old, she can't write full sentences (but she can write letters and kana), so I wrote out the story she told me and asked her to write down a few keywords. This example shows that the lesson can be adapted for a verbal-only learner or a preschool level writer. The teacher asks, "Tell me about this *yokai* drawing you made" and then writes down what the children say. Parents also often enjoy hanging this type of student artwork and stories on their fridges at home, so the lesson gives teachers a good opportunity to help young students create stories they can share with their parents and practice English at home.

Children tend to have fewer barriers to creative thought than adults and be proud of their artworks and stories, and an assignment like this allows them to take full advantage of their creative natures. As we get older, more and more barriers are thrown up against our creativity. For example, at the art university where I teach, I surveyed my students and found that many do not draw on a daily basis. Respondents said the two largest barriers to creative work (drawing) were time constraints and criticism from others towards artistic work (i.e. "you should be doing work to make more money" or some criticism about skill-levels). However, 95% of students responded that they made art for personal, spiritual, or mental health reasons. By giving art assignments to students in a language class, we can allow our older students to

nurture their creative side when time constraints or societal pressures often are restrictive of such pursuits.

"That sounds like a good idea, but I can't draw."

Yes, if you attempt this lesson, you are likely to hear such a statement. You might even hear this in your own mind, doubting your artistic ability. However, I would argue the artistic level of students (and teachers!) is mostly a psychological barrier. To lessen the stress that may be associated with first attempts at creating art, teachers can show children's drawings or stick-figure style *yokai* drawings or images available on websites such as doodlelibrary.com. Furthermore, from the student works in this article, it is evident a wide variety of styles are valid, from refined computer illustration to simple pen on paper.

In conclusion, *yokai* are a suitable theme for all ages and levels of ESL/EFL students and a lesson revolving around the creation of original artwork and texts about *yokai* is especially suited for Japan. A teacher can give a short introduction to *yokai*, model their own original drawing and writing, and ask students to create their own artworks. This can be done with pencil and paper or using computer technology. With reasonable encouragement from the teacher, most normal hinderances to the creation of art can be overcome. A story and/or description in an accompanying text is a good exercise in language production.

Ten of the 19 students in my recent course enjoyed this lesson so much they chose to continue their investigations of the *yokai* project for their final assignments, either by revising their existing works or creating entirely new *yokai* illustrations, images, GIFs and stories.

This lesson would be very engaging for students during "spooky seasons," such as Halloween. In Japan, however, July and August are seen as the months ripe for ghost stories. During *Obon*, the summer festival of the dead, the spirits of the ancestors return to visit the living. The sweltering summers of Japan have been traditionally known as ghost-story season for the stories' uncanny ability to chill your bones (Hearn, 1971).

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Henning Larson Architects. *The Wave*. 2018 (photo credit: designboom)

Apartment Architects Activity

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I will introduce a three-part activity called "Apartment Architects" that uses visual materials and includes a creative drawing task. The activity was implemented at an art university in a beginning-level conversation class; however, it can be adapted and used with other levels in any communication-focused class. Among the many strategies for keeping students motivated put forth by motivation expert Zoltán Dörnyei are to vary the "channel of communication" (visual, auditory, and tactile), to personalize language tasks, and to use content which appeals to students' interests (Dörnyei 2001). The activity introduced here incorporates visual, auditory, and tactile aspects, personalizes the tasks, and uses content of interest to the students (art and design). It consists of the first phase "Speaking with Cards: Cool Apartments," the second phase "Create Your Original Apartment," and the third phase "Sharing with Classmates." It can easily be completed within one university class period.

Preparation

Santiago Calatrava. *Turning Torso*. 2005. (photo credit: Lynsey Barr)

I collected photographs of famous apartment buildings from all over the world and made laminated cards. The buildings were created by famous architects, and were unique in various ways: a building shaped like a wave, one that looked like a treehouse, one that was twisted. I used apartment buildings for this activity; however, you can use any series of pictures that have a single theme, look fun, have unique or unusual variations, and are of interest to the students. Examples could include custom cars, castles, robots, unusual fashions, and nearly anything you can think of. The cards I made were A-5 size (approximately 15 x 21 cm), with the picture taking up most of the space and a small amount of information included about each building. Cards can be bigger or smaller, and can have more or less information on them. I made enough for each student to have one card, with several extras. No two cards were the same. I also prepared a worksheet with space to draw a picture, lines for describing it verbally, and several boxes on the reverse side for notes about their classmates' creations.

Speaking with Cards: Cool Apartments

First, I show the cards one by one, briefly commenting on some of the pictures, and place them randomly face-up on a table. Next, the students come up to the table and choose one card each. Then in pairs, they ask each other a series of questions which I have written on the blackboard about the cards: "What is the name of this building?" "Where is it located?" "What are its features?" "Would you like to live here? Why or why not?" and so on. The first two questions are intentionally easy to help the students get started. As soon as a pair finishes the set of questions, they return their cards to the table, take new cards, and

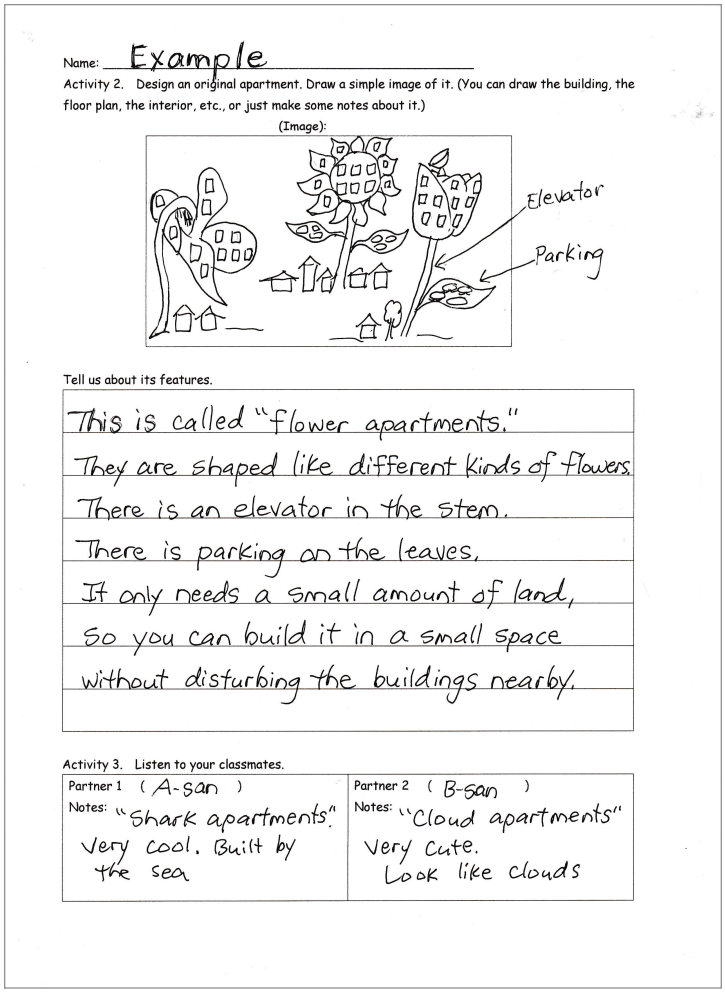
Fujimoto, Laisne, Roussel & OXO Architects. *L'Arbre Blanc*. 2019

repeat the process. The pairs will finish at different times, of course, and will finish a different number of cards in total, but I try to make sure that all pairs have finished at least three rounds of cards. I walk around the room to listen and help with any English questions.

Create Your Original Apartment

Now that they have seen at least six examples (three rounds of cards, two cards per pair) of unusual apartment buildings, they have some ideas in their minds about what can be done with an apartment. I give them the worksheet and ask them to design a unique apartment or their ideal apartment.

There is a space on the worksheet to draw a sketch of their idea and lines to write about it. They can draw either the interior or exterior of the building or even a blueprint-style layout of the room. I tell them that they don't have to make a "beautiful" drawing, and that they will only use it to explain their idea. I make it clear that their sketch will not be evaluated, and let them know that if they prefer not to draw, they can instead write notes, list dimensions, etc. about their building. I give them enough time to formulate their ideas and write at least a paragraph about their building. I allow them to use dictionaries (including online ones) and to discuss anything with their classmates as they work. I also tell them that they don't have to worry about gravity, physics, or anything like that. For example, the building can be in the shape of a giraffe, made of gingerbread, or even floating in the sky.


Name: Example

Activity 2. Design an original apartment. Draw a simple image of it. (You can draw the building, the floor plan, the interior, etc., or just make some notes about it.)

(Image):

Tell us about its features.

This is called "flower apartments."
They are shaped like different kinds of flowers.
There is an elevator in the stem.
There is parking on the leaves.
It only needs a small amount of land,
so you can build it in a small space
without disturbing the buildings nearby.

Activity 3. Listen to your classmates.

Partner 1 (A-san)	Partner 2 (B-san)
Notes: "Shark apartments" Very cool. Built by the sea	Notes: "Cloud apartments" Very cute. Look like clouds

Example of what a completed worksheet might look like

Sharing with Classmates

For this last phase, I have students read their explanations and show their apartment sketch to their partner. I tell them that when it's their turn to listen to make sure they give reactions such as, "Oh, cool!" "Nice!" and so on instead of listening in silence, and to ask at least one follow-up question. After listening, they write a few notes about their partner's apartment in the box provided on their worksheets. Then they change partners and do it again with a new partner, and if time permits, they can change one more time. There is a final box on the worksheet where they choose which classmate's design was the most interesting and explain why.

Student Reaction

I observed that students seem to enjoy this activity, are actively engaged, and often produce amazing work! The first point I noticed is that they seem to enjoy choosing the cards. They walk around the table, consider several, then pick one up. This gives them individual choice and autonomy and keeps them moving around the classroom. The second point they seem to enjoy is speaking with their partners. This also keeps them engaged by the simple physical nature of speaking, but more importantly it allows them to express their own opinions about the buildings, which makes it personal to them. The third point they seem to enjoy is the creative process of designing their original buildings. Moreover, when they have finished their building designs, they seem quite eager to share them and to hear what their classmates have designed, often asking follow-up questions without prompting.

Conclusion

This activity was well-received in my classes, and I recommend this or other versions of it for any conversation class. The difficulty level can be adjusted by changing the questions and the amount of descriptive writing required of students, and the content can be adapted to nearly any topic in any course book or syllabus. I believe that students will enjoy putting their imaginations into gear and creating ideal, unique, personalized versions of whatever series you provide on the cards and that they will be eager to share their creations with their classmates.

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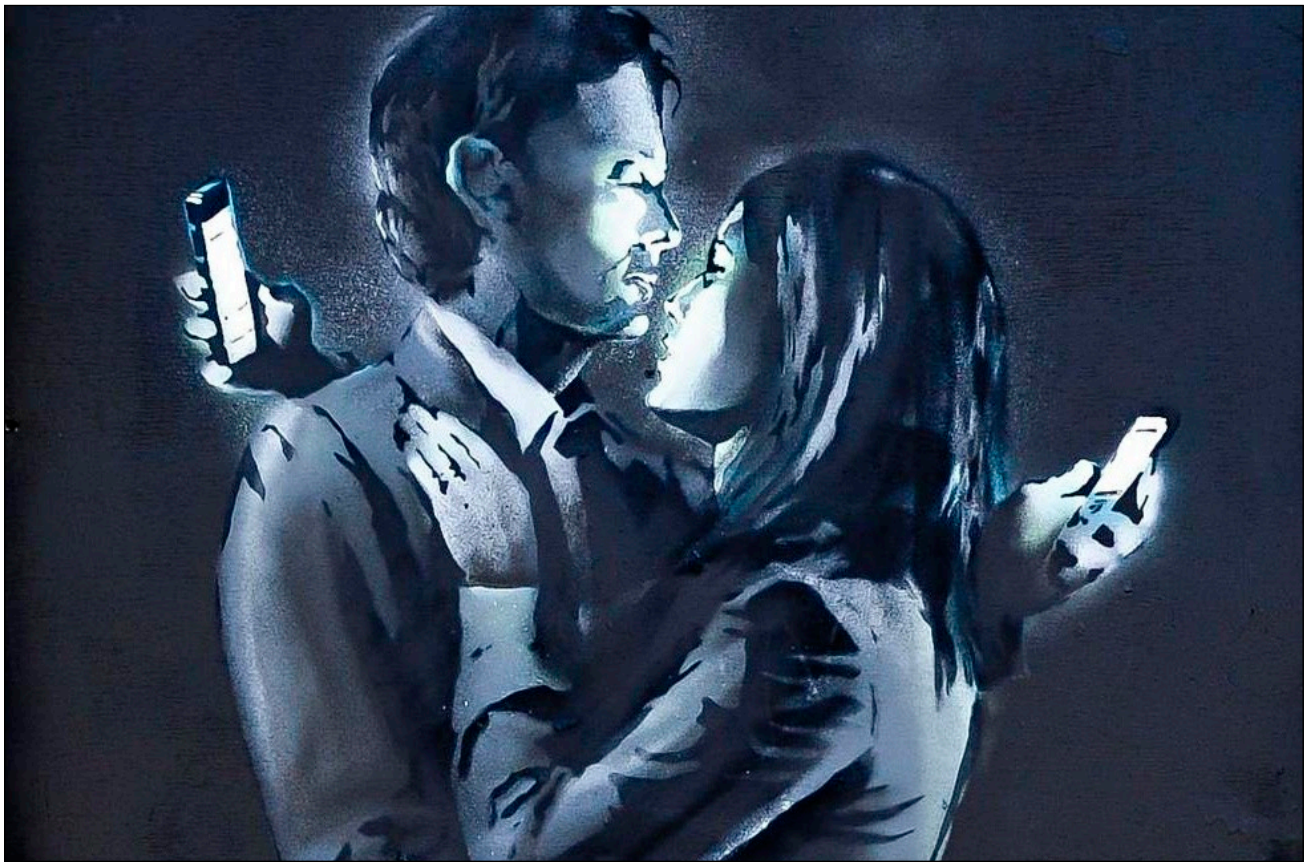

Banksy. *Mobile Lovers*. 2014 (Photo credit: Ben Birchall)

Banksy's Street Art in the EFL Classroom

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The creation of art experiences in the classroom can be challenging and has led to a range of strategies, including Housen & Yenawine's Visual Thinking Strategies (2013) and Giardina's Pyramid of Inquiry (2018). These methods are effective approaches, yet there is another part to the challenge of creating an art-rich environment: the selection of artwork. Finding suitable yet accessible artworks can be a problem for language teachers with an interest in art -- myself included – but one work has repeatedly shown its value as a first foray into art discussion with Japanese university students: Mobile Lovers by the infamous street artist Banksy.

This relatively simple painting appeared in a youth club doorway one April night in 2014 in Bristol, UK. It depicts an embracing couple seemingly distracted by their mobile phones. The work of Banksy has occasionally been criticised for its' superficiality, with Plizga (2020) categorising the artist's work as "easy satire," merely pointing out and making fun of issues in society, but never really addresses them. However, it is hard to deny the global popularity of Banksy as an artist, and for many this "easy satire" serves to make the work more accessible.

This combination of accessibility, simplicity, and fame makes the work ideal for a language classroom where students have little to no experience discussing and interpreting works of art.

One consideration in selecting artworks for language students is the lexical skill required to interact with the work. In the case of Mobile Lovers, the image does not require a knowledge of advanced and obscure vocabulary, and it can be described using relatively simple grammatical structures. This allows students to focus more on the painting itself, which when considered in tandem with the general accessibility of the work, ensures that most students will be able to form their own opinions and successfully explain them. However, despite the simplicity of the language, there are multiple ways that the image can be interpreted, highlighting the almost limitless possibilities of art discussion, and demonstrating to students that all interpretations can be valid. It is this particular point that sets art discussions apart from many other topics – art provides a platform for students to freely interpret the work based on their own emotional reactions, knowledge, and experiences, and it is likely that each student will have an individual interpretation of the work. This is something that teachers should facilitate, encouraging all ideas equally and welcoming any new suggestions. It should be noted that encouraging multiple interpretations may lead to narratives not in line with the original intentions of the artist. In the case of Mobile Lovers, some students may interpret Banksy as making a positive portrayal of mobile phones in society.

To facilitate discussion of this and other works, the systematic approach outlined by Giardina (2018) in the Pyramid of Inquiry provides a simple yet effective framework for interactions with art. The Pyramid breaks the discussion into four sections, namely 'Observation', 'Inference', 'Information' and 'Interpretation', allowing the teacher to guide students towards generating their own interpretation of the work.

As outlined in The Pyramid, the first 'Observation' step is to encourage students to describe what they see. This includes drawing attention to the colors in the image, and details such as the clothes and body language. The simplicity of the image means that this step of the pyramid will not take much time but will provide students with the visual clues to interpret the image.

The following 'Inference' encourages students to make evidence-based inferences relating to the image. In this case, the critical question will be something along the lines of 'What are they looking at on their phones?' The work in question lends itself to multiple interpretations

simply by considering what mobile applications the couple may be looking at. For instance, the narrative of the painting is changed considerably based on whether the couple are looking at social media, work emails, dating applications, news, or any of the myriad apps available. This can be structured even further by asking students to list apps that they use, as a preliminary activity, then using this list to make inferences about the meaning of the work. The 'Information' section of the Pyramid can, in this context, be skipped as students do not need much additional information to fully interpret the image.

Finally, students should try to combine their observations into an interpretation of the image. Students can be encouraged to come up with multiple interpretations of the image based on their previous inferences, and then decide which one they prefer. Following the Pyramid, it is possible to create multiple (often contradictory) interpretations, demonstrating the validity of multiple interpretations and the subjective nature of art. These contradictions should be encouraged by the teacher, allowing students to take pride and ownership of their individual interpretations, and further encouraging them to voice their opinions in future discussions.
The most common interpretations will most likely assume the work is a comment on social media use, with people losing track of human connections due to the increasing societal focus on online interactions. However, some students have taken an alternative view, concluding that the painting represents boredom, and that it is not their addiction to social media but the lack of interest in their partner that leads to the situation in the painting. Another interpretation voiced by students assumes the couple are looking at emails, and the painting serves as a commentary on modern working habits – two people dressed in suits unable to find time for each other in a world where workers are contactable at any time of day or night.

One student even voiced the opinion that this painting shows the benefits of technology. This theory suggested that the couple, who based on their attire are separated due to work commitments, are dependent on technology to feel a sense of intimacy, and that the image shows a combination of their physical situation (staring into the screen of a phone) and their desired situation (engaged in an intimate embrace). This interpretation is further supported by the dream-like spectral quality of the image, implying an imagined scenario.

When concluding this classroom discussion, another benefit of selecting this artwork comes to light – the anonymity of the artist ensures that the true intention of the work will likely remain unclear, thus rendering all interpretations equally valid and 'correct'. This kind of experience, when followed with similar art-based discussions, encourages students to express

themselves and display learning (Ekoç, 2020; Tiley, 2022). The hardest step is often the first, but as first steps go, Mobile Lovers could be the perfect way to introduce artistic interpretation to students.

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Detail of a student's poster design

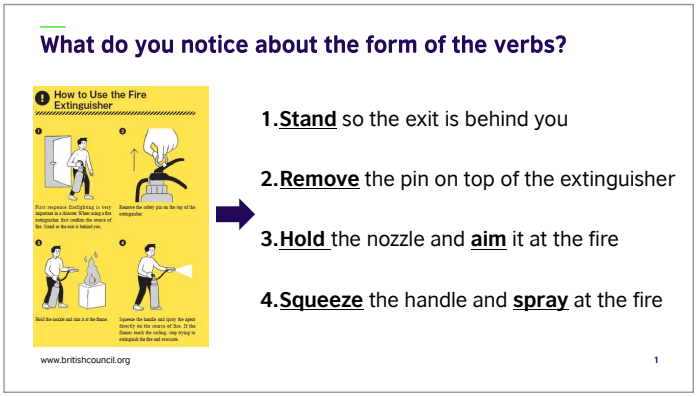
Poster Designs and Language Learning

Richard Thomas Ingham
The British Council, Japan

The benefits of images in the English language classroom are well-documented. Wright (1990) notes that student motivation and interest can be stimulated through the use of pictures. In addition, images also provide context, stimulate multisensory learning, and promote reactivation of the target language (Keddie, 2009). However, despite the broad agreement about the benefits of using images in English language teaching, the use of images tends to fall away in more advanced materials (Wright, 1990). Hill's (2013) analysis of intermediate-level course books has shown that many of the images are primarily for decoration, rather than to stimulate language learning. He feels, and I agree, that this represents a missed opportunity for publishers to create something truly stimulating for both learners and teachers.

In today's society, communication is becoming increasingly digital and multimodal (Apkon, 2013) with the information that students receive increasingly represented by a complex combination of text and image, for example, YouTube videos, social media posts and infographics. This complexity has impacted the nature of communication and literacy, with

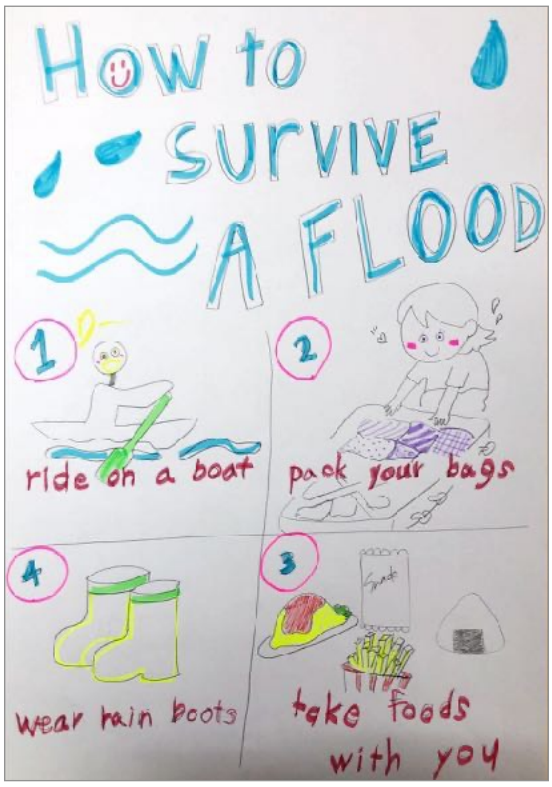
present day communication becoming more than just writing and speaking, and literacy meaning more than simply language (Lim & Tan-Chia, 2022). To become proficient communicators in today's multimodal world, leaners need more than the ability to simply read and write words and sentences. As Burmark (2008) notes, students today need to learn multimodal processing, by learning to read images and write visually rich communications.



Example of a disaster preparation guide with highlighted language

With the importance of contemporary multimodality in mind, I have often tried to supplement course-book materials by introducing creative activities that focus on a combination of images and text. An opportunity recently presented itself in a rather dry reading lesson that focused on climate change and natural disasters. A co-worker had received a disaster preparation guide through the mail and I decided to use this as a model to encourage students to write their own disaster guides.

The first step was to show the disaster guide and encourage students to notice the meaning, form, and use of the imperative form used to give instructions. At this stage, I also elicited key elements of the design: the simple, easy-to-read images and text. Next, I put the students into groups to brainstorm some different kinds of disasters or survival situations, and noted their ideas on the classroom whiteboard. Students came up with examples such as earthquakes, floods, volcanoes, coronavirus, and being stranded in the desert.



Example of student disaster guide

They then worked in pairs or small groups to design posters that gave instructions to follow should a disaster occur. The finished posters were placed around the room, with students reading their classmates' posters and grading them on quality of

How to survive without Starbucks

Don't Panic!

- There are lots of other ways to get coffee!
- And they are probably not as bad for the environment as Starbucks is!

Go to a convenience store nearby

- There should be one somewhere near where you are.

Buy Blendy Stick Coffee

- It's cheaper than Starbucks.
- And better for the environment!

Make it yourself

- It's so easy! You can do it!

Example of student "disaster" guide

illustrations, layout and design, and ease of reading.

Finally, as a homework task, the students were given the opportunity to let their imaginations run wild and create an additional "disaster guide" for anything that they chose. Students were given a digital template that allowed them to combine both digital images and text. Students came up with a whole host of imaginative disaster guides ranging from "What to do if you can't listen to K-POP!" to "How to survive without Starbucks". I felt this was a good way to recycle what had been learnt in class by employing a digital multimodal text. Students had great fun sharing these imaginative "disaster" guides at the beginning of the next class, as part of a review of the previous week's learning.

In conclusion, in order to communicate effectively in today's society, learners need to become adept at comprehending, responding to, and composing multimodal texts. By considering images not as supplementary tools, but rather as integral elements in the process of conveying ideas in a foreign language, I feel that we can encourage students to become more actively involved through creative expression. This fosters empowerment and nurtures the development of essential 21st-century skills that are critical for learners as they navigate their roles as responsible citizens, prospective professionals, and lifelong learners.

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Visual Thinking Strategies in the University Language Classroom

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Nagoya University of the Arts

Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) offers teachers a creative and interesting way to help learners use their language skills and expand their vocabulary. VTS was created by Abigail Housen and Philip Yenawine when they realized that visitors to the Museum of Modern Art in New York were not engaging with the artworks or the information provided for them (Yenawine, 2009). Together they adapted the VTS approach for school classrooms, where students can acquire art-appreciation and critical-thinking skills by discussing selected images.

To learn VTS pedagogy and methods, I attended practicums offered by the Visual Thinking Strategies organization in the United States. Guided by a facilitator, we answered three carefully researched and worded questions: 1) "What's going on in this picture?" 2) "What do you see that makes you say that?" and 3) "What more can we find?" The facilitator's role is to paraphrase students' answers to the questions regarding the images, ask questions to clarify

their ideas, and find common links between students' responses. Facilitators do not offer their own ideas and do not provide any feedback on students' responses—there are no "good" or "bad" ideas.

VTS appeals to me not only because it helps students learn to express their own opinions in interesting ways, but also because they naturally generate language as they search for the vocabulary to express their ideas. There is also a nice connection between the visual elements within an artwork and the words that students use. From the very beginning this seemed like an ideal way to deepen students' vocabulary and increase their fluency.

In this article I will share how I have adapted VTS during 20 years of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) at Nagoya University of the Arts, a small arts, design, and education college in Nagoya, Japan. After a brief discussion of images and their selection, I will share a typical VTS session in my class, which allows reticent students a chance to formulate their ideas and provides a structure for sharing those ideas with a partner and with groups. I will also explain how Google apps help students and me measure the degree to which they have shared their ideas.

Housen (1983) posits five developmental stages in acquiring a high level of art appreciation, which help inform us, as language teachers, about the kinds of images our students will be able to access and understand. Stage I, or accountive, viewers create narratives based on their own experiences and personal associations. Having students create their own stories seems especially useful for language learning. Stage II, or constructive, viewers use more of their own knowledge of the world to build a framework to help them interpret the artwork, and they expect the image to look realistic to fit into their worldview. If the artwork does not fit that framework, viewers are less likely to interact with the artwork.

Yenawine (2003) uses this knowledge of viewers' stages to offer some guidance in choosing artwork. Most important for those in Stages I and II, as my students are, is that artworks should offer the chance for viewers to create a narrative. Images should also be accessible and not require special knowledge to understand what is going on. Images should be captivating and have what Yenawine describes as "human interest." Finally, for use in language learning, images should offer a range of valid viewpoints.

Norman Rockwell. *Breaking Home Ties*. 1954

Most of the images I use in my classes are artworks that the VTS organization introduced to us in their practicums. The VTS organization now has a nonprofit organization called Watershed which offers even more images. I have supplemented those artworks with interesting images I have found over the years, especially artwork by Norman Rockwell. I have also started to use the weekly images offered by *The New York Times*, which asks students from around the world to submit online answers to the VTS questions.

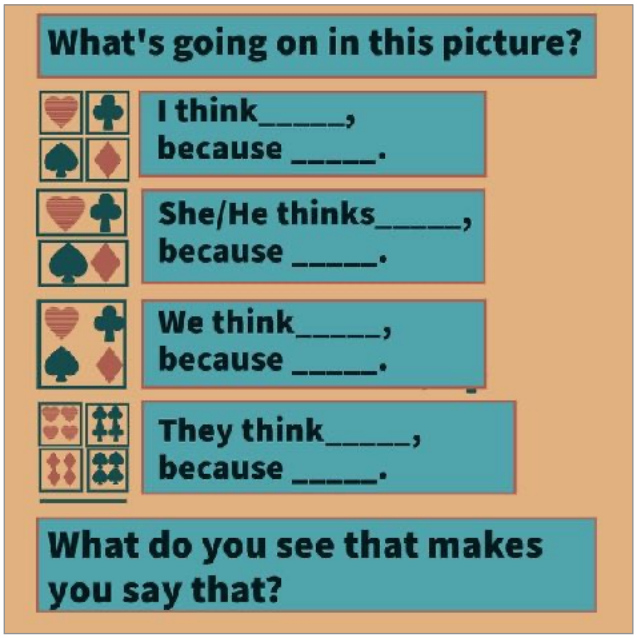
In my classes, a VTS session usually includes a warmup vocabulary activity using a Google Sheet, followed by a Google Form where students input three to five answers to the VTS questions. I suggest the format "I think_____, because _____" for my lower-level students. They then share their answers in structured groups of four or share their ideas in a Google Slide.

Step 1: Google Sheet

I use a Google Sheet as a first step to activate students' vocabulary. I always display the three VTS questions as reminder that their keywords should be in response to those questions. Students enter English words and get the Japanese translations, which confirms they have inputted the English word they intended. If they get a different word, then they know to check the word or the spelling. Because all the input is visible on the Sheet, students get inspiration from each other. I call the words they input 'keywords' because the words represent their ideas. The vocabulary can be copied into word lists for further study or used in word clouds for follow-up activities.

Step 2: Google Form

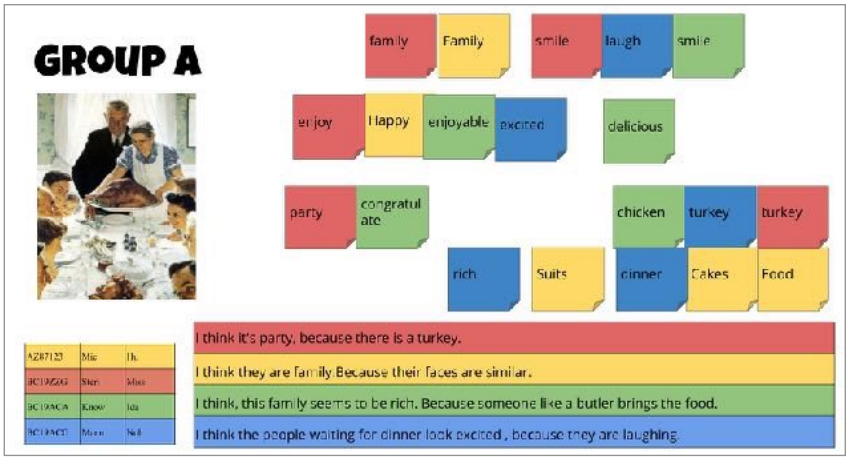
I ask students to type their keywords from the Google Sheet into a Google Form and then write at least three "I think_____, because_____" answers to the VTS questions. Outputting the data from the Google Form into a Google Sheet lets me check how well they can express ideas using their keywords. Students move from expressing their own opinions (I think_____, because_____) to sharing with a partner (She/he thinks____, because _____), and then reporting her/his partner's ideas to the other two members (We think____ , because _____). In a recent adaptation, I had students get together in groups of three or four with students from other groups (They think ____, because _____). At each step of the way students think of their own keywords for the ideas they hear and input them on the Google Form. They use only keywords for the ideas they hear, rather than complete , so they are required to build sentences when they relate the ideas they heard from their partners. The rule is that "I think, because" observations should always be complete sentences, and keywords should always be written down. My goal is for students to share as many of the words and their associated ideas as they can with many different partners. They enjoy having attentive listeners who then share those ideas with others, and having an available image aids comprehension.



Format for sharing in-class ideas

Step 3: Google Slide

The introductory page for each Google Slide activity has one group's responses. Students enter their IDs and names, and five notes (just colored text boxes) with their keywords from the vocabulary



Example of introductory page for Google Slide activity

activity above. I then ask them to arrange the notes by word, topic, or meaning, as a mini word cloud. I also add a space for them to type in one of their "I think, because" answers from the Google Form. Because the Slides are shared, students can view other groups' pages, but I also show each group's slides on the overhead projector, so students can see where their ideas overlap (food–chicken/turkey/etc., emotions–smile/laugh/etc.) and where they do not. I sometimes use this Google Slide activity in place of the Google form. Either way, I like summarizing the slides because it echoes the facilitator role in the traditional VTS approach.

Conclusion

In this article, I have shared how I adapted the VTS approach in my EFL classes at a Japanese university. The Google Sheet activity helps elicit ideas and vocabulary from students regarding the artwork. The Google Form activity then offers a structure in which students not only share their own ideas in writing, but also listen to and process their classmates' ideas, in order to verbally share them in the next stage. Students enjoy having their ideas listened to and reshared, which adds an additional layer of language processing. The Google Slide activity reinforces the vocabulary by making the words visually apparent, much like a word cloud, strengthening the connections between words, ideas, and images.

I continue to explore new ways to incorporate technology to better encourage student interaction with VTS images. I think my approach is a good way to introduce students to the skills required in carrying out VTS activities, but I am always seeking methods to help students provide feedback to each other regarding the second VTS question, "What do you see that makes you say that?" While my primary goal is not art appreciation, helping students to explain and support their observations about art could lead to deeper levels of critical thinking, language processing, and language learning.

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Two good sources for an overview to VTS are:

Jump Starting Visual Literacy: Thoughts on Image Selection (Yenawine, 2003)

Aesthetic Thought, Critical Thinking and Transfer (Housen, 2001-2002).

Websites:

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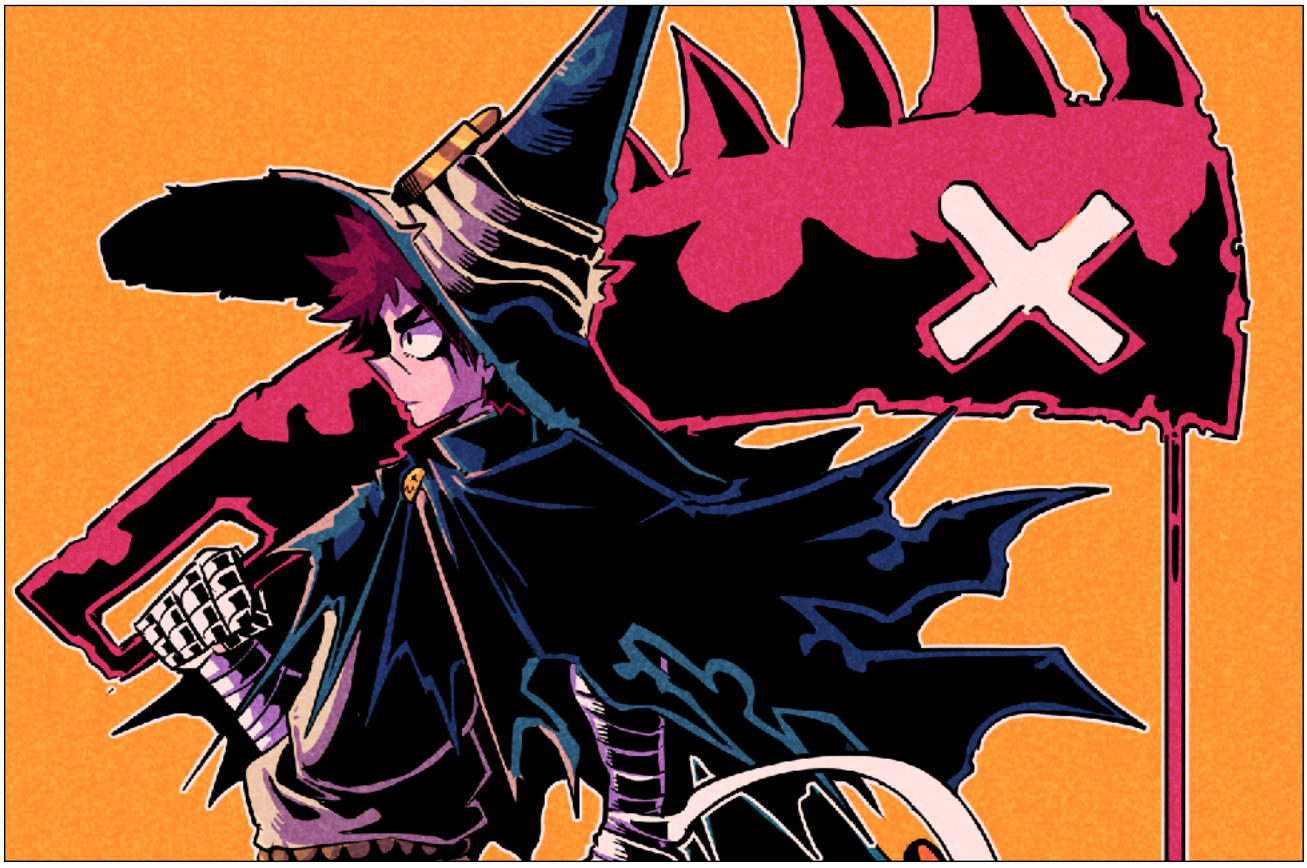
watershed-ed.org

vtshome.org

For more about the technical aspects of using Google apps, please see my TLT Wired! column in *The Language Teacher* (January 2024).



Vako. *Magus 13 (detail of promotion materials)*. 2021

Writing as an Art Form: Gesture Drawing and Free Writing

Derrick Apple
Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University

Is there any connection between learning art and learning language? To dive into this question a little deeper, I had a discussion with the popular comic artist Vako, to see if I could come up with a few art-inspired ideas that might help new language learners acquire writing skills. Vako has been an award-winning professional artist for over a decade and produces his own comic, Magus 13. Magus 13 is a fun and intriguing fantasy, filled with gods and wizards.

Vako is not only an artist but also taught a course at the Manga Academy in his home country of Bulgaria. His educational experiences lead him to value hands-on teaching with examples and personal instruction. One of his favorite activities for teaching art is gesture drawing.

For those who have not studied art, gesture drawing is the method by which an artist will look at a model striking a particular pose, either live or in a photo, and then quickly sketch the

outline of their body to capture the model's flow of form and line of motion. In gesture drawing, it is common for students to draw for one minute (but it can be anywhere from 30 seconds to 5 minutes) and end up with 10 to 20 sketches.

The artist practices gesture drawing to build up a skill that does not require deep thought each time it is implemented. It is instead an instinctual skill that relies on the artist's ability to perceive the flow of motion in a subject. After practicing for some time, the artist can reproduce those same flows naturally while working on a new art project.

"You have to say to yourself: 'I have a limited time'," Vako explains passionately. "I have a single minute. I have to capture the way this body moves. The way it bends. The way it twists and folds. It's very beautiful once you start to get into it. . .It's very liberating. . .not to have to worry about minor details and just focus on the broader picture."

The end result is a crude figure in comparison to the final drawing, but the lessons that gesture drawing imparts are invaluable. The rough sketches are filled with flowing and exaggerated movements that allow people to reproduce the motion of the human body with a very instinctive method, as opposed to taking long periods of time to capture every detail.

Gesture drawings in the author's sketchbook

Vako was kind enough to teach me this technique personally. Over the course of just a few days, I filled two sketchbooks with figure drawings using this gesture drawing method. I was reluctant at first, but it soon became addictive, and I could see myself improving in a stress-free situation. Now sketchbooks are stacking up on my desk. This firsthand experience made it apparent there were some parallels and overlap between gesture drawing and free writing

exercises, when students write a 150- to 250-word paragraph for a journal entry or short opinion paper.

As a language teacher, I sometimes encourage students to free write and to get used to the idea of writing without worrying about strict grammar, vocabulary, and spelling. The idea is that students will absorb some core concepts, from examples I provided, by writing a short assignment in a limited amount of time. When students do this writing exercise, they often write very freely about what they are thinking, and more openly than they do in the more rigid and non-personal format of an academic paper. (Elbow, 2007) (Goldberg, 2018)

After the interview with Vako, I believe that we can think of a short writing assignment as having a form or a tone of its own. For example, the tone of an e-mail as opposed to the tone of a letter to your friend or the tone of a social media post. Each of these examples has its own forms of introduction and the content has a different feeling and purpose. It might be possible for students to absorb these tones and the form of writing by a series of quick and repetitive exercises, similar to an artist studying the form of a model with gesture drawing.

Having done this in my own classes, I can say that the activity was fun and effective. The activity can be done in a few simple but entertaining steps. I suggest taking a tone or a form of writing that you would like your students to experience and improve upon. Something short and something that can be quickly read. Perhaps only three to five sentences. Once you have this in order, get your students write a quick variation on the letter form, for example, by substituting a little bit of their own subject matter and a few words that might make the letter more exciting or closer to their own intentions or desires. This activities mimics gesture drawing so about five minutes should be given to complete this short task. While students are only expected to write a few sentences, writing is often cumbersome for students who have never learned how to type quickly and so the teacher should be patient with students who can't finish on time. Language learners should also receive encouragement and be made aware that they will get faster over time. The teacher can repeat this process with a few examples of writing all in the same tone and form, but it is not advisable to overwork them. A maximum of 30 minutes would be a good rule of thumb. In theory this should get students to subconsciously understand how to write an e-mail, letter to a friend, or social media post.

If you want to incorporate more art into your lesson, you can have them do the same exercises to describe a picture. Show them a picture with an accompanying caption that describes it,

and then show them another picture and have them free-write a caption using similar language. When doing this, don't forget to give them certain key phrases such as “In this picture we see...” This is also useful for assessments, as many tests incorporate description exercises.

The idea is that the form and style of writing will become instinctual, as opposed to requiring research and a dedicated cognitive process to achieve. Not only is this skill good for understanding the tone and form of a particular piece of writing, but it also helps students to improve their typing speed, which could result in higher grades in timed writing tests. For example, the writing section of the IELTS test can be very difficult for students who type slowly. Higher typing speeds can result in more time allotted for correcting errors and therefore lead to higher scores. Aside from grades, this could encourage students to enjoy the process of writing and realize that they can use these skills in their daily life to communicate with friends in real life and online.

Vako. *Magus 13 Cover* Art. 2021

Vako himself is continuing to work on his own writing for manga. “Even if it’s bad, I still need to do it,” he says. “Because I have to get good at it eventually.” Vako claims that drawing helped him overcome his fear of writing. “You have to get yourself out there. . .There’s no other way.” He insists the only way to improve is to just get started, make mistakes, and try again, and again, which is much like the way he learned his art skills. It’s like gesture drawing or free writing.

“You have to do it. You have to post, and you have to suck at it!”

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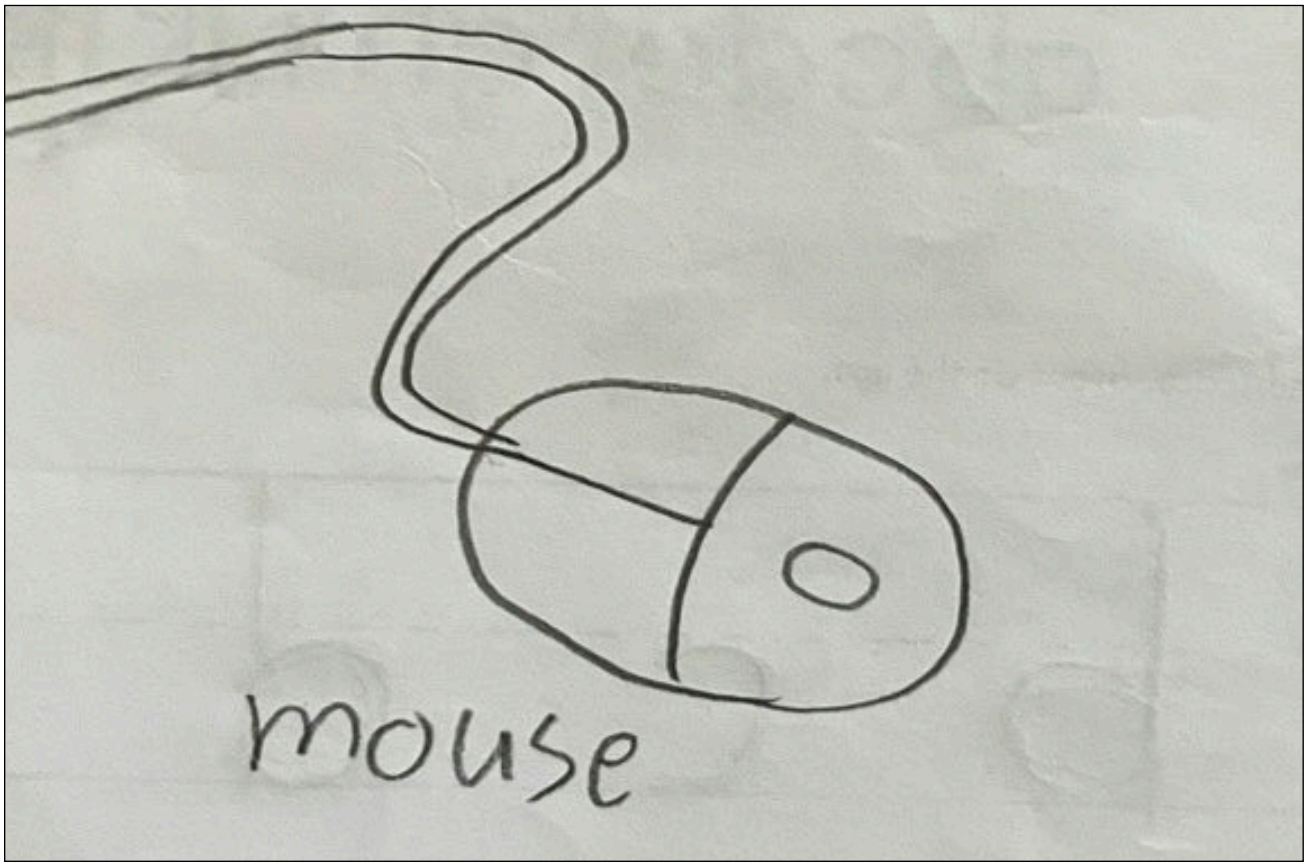
If you would like to keep up with Vako, you can find him under the username @vakodraws on X (Formerly known as Twitter) and Instagram; or read the comic Magus 13 on VoyceMe.com



Example of DIY flashcard

DIY Flashcards in language Learning

Erika Tavesa
Temple University Japan

Language learning is a complex process that often requires creativity and innovation to keep students motivated and engaged (Oxford & Shearin 1994). While traditional teaching methods have their merits, they may not always capture students' attention and enthusiasm. This essay explores the concept of Do-It-Yourself (DIY) flashcards, aiming to provide a more comprehensive understanding of this innovative approach to language learning. Specifically, this essay will illuminate the entire process that students undergo in crafting these unique learning tools and emphasize the distinctions that set DIY flashcards apart from the more traditional vocabulary aids. The discussion centers on the transformative potential of involving students in the creation of their own flashcards through drawing, a process that cultivates autonomy, promotes active class participation, and ultimately ignites motivation.

Foundations and Challenges of Interaction

The concept of interaction has been recognized as fundamental to language acquisition. Scholars like Gass, MacKey, and Pica (1998) have emphasized the importance of interaction in language learning. They highlight two key components: comprehensible input and meaningful interaction. Comprehensible input refers to language input that is slightly beyond learners' current proficiency level. This challenges them just enough to promote learning. Meaningful interaction, on the other hand, involves authentic communication and social interaction between learners and their interlocutors. This interaction provides opportunities to negotiate meaning, receive feedback, and practice the target language in real-life contexts.

However, Park and Choi (2014) points out challenges to achieving meaningful interaction in the classroom. Traditional classroom setups, with rows of desks facing the front, can hinder interaction. An instructor-centered approach, where the teacher is the primary source of information and students play passive roles, is also a barrier. Furthermore, some students may resist or feel uncomfortable with increased interaction and collaborative activities, particularly if they are accustomed to passive learning.

Roles of DIY Flashcards

Incorporating visual elements into learning has been recognized as beneficial for learner affect. DIY flashcards often include colorful illustrations or interactive designs that capture students' attention and interest. Visual representations on flashcards aid in comprehension, memory retention, and recall of language structures and vocabulary. When students create their own flashcards, they can add personalized images or drawings that resonate with their experiences, enhancing their engagement and ownership of the learning process.

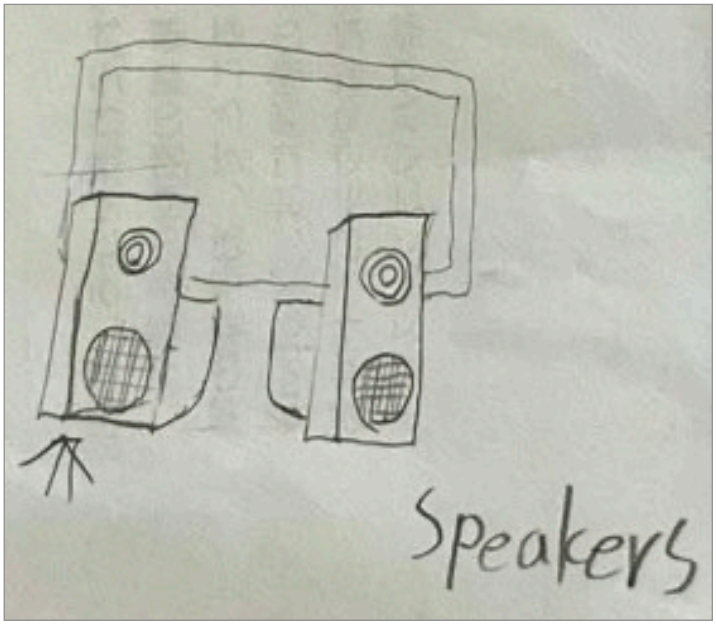
The relevance of DIY flashcards in language learning is supported by the work of Van Batenburg et al, (2019). They argue that it is best to promote interaction by providing students opportunities to actively engage with the language. This approach encourages students to take an active role in their learning, which is essential for motivation and engagement. DIY flashcards can be a solution to passive learning and can be used in various activities, such as pair or group activities where students take turns asking and answering questions, using the

flashcards as prompts. This interactive exchange enhances language production and stimulates meaningful communication among learners.

Furthermore, DIY flashcards support task variety in language learning. Students can create flashcards with different vocabulary words, idiomatic expressions, or commonly used phrases. These flashcards can then be used in role-plays, information gap activities, or as discussion prompts. This diversity of tasks requires students to use the language in various ways, promoting deeper language processing and increased learner engagement.

Techniques and Results

DIY flashcards serve as a versatile and potent tool for teaching grammar. Their unique blend of visual elements and interactive activities creates a multisensory learning experience. By crafting their own flashcards that illustrate grammar rules and sentence structures, students can grasp these concepts in a more engaging and memorable manner. Additionally, DIY flashcards seamlessly integrate into a task-based language learning approach, allowing students to utilize them for a variety of language tasks, including sentence construction, question answering, and role-play scenarios. For instance, when practicing sentence construction, students can create flashcards with individual words or phrases on one side and corresponding translations or definitions on the other. They can then use these flashcards to craft sentences, ensuring that they understand the meaning and context of each word or phrase. In the context of question answering, students can develop flashcards that present questions on one side and potential responses or solutions on the reverse.



Example of student-drawn flashcard

This approach encourages them to actively engage in question-and-answer sessions, improving both their comprehension and conversational skills. In role-play scenarios, DIY flashcards can serve as character prompts or situational cues. For example, students can craft flashcards with

different roles, such as "customer" or "salesperson," along with relevant dialogue prompts or scenarios. This enables them to immerse themselves in real-life language contexts, enhancing their ability to use the language effectively in practical situations.

These tasks provide valuable contexts for practical language skill application and foster active participation. Furthermore, involving children in the creation of flashcards through drawing not only nurtures their creativity but also cultivates a heightened sense of motivation and ownership over the learning materials. Drawing acts as a mnemonic device, aiding students in retaining language concepts associated with the visuals they themselves have crafted. Initially, students exhibited shyness; however, following the second topic, they eagerly anticipated another opportunity to engage in drawing activities. In fact, a few even arrived with color pencils in hand, demonstrating their preparedness and enthusiasm!

The utilization of DIY flashcards in language learning has resulted in several notable advantages. First, it promotes personalization and ownership among students, instilling in them a profound sense of control over, and connection with, their learning materials. Through active involvement in the creation process, students' connection with the learning materials becomes more evident. This heightened involvement and autonomy contribute to a deeper investment in their studies, fostering a growing sense of pride throughout the learning journey. Second, the incorporation of visual elements, such as illustrations and drawings, engages students' focus. These visual elements significantly enhance the overall learning experience, making it more engaging and memorable. For instance, students have used DIY flashcards to construct personalized vocabulary sets, complete interactive sentence-building exercises, and even participate in role-playing scenarios—all of which have contributed to a dynamic and immersive learning environment that resonates with learners.

Conclusion

The use of DIY flashcards in language learning, particularly when students are involved in their creation through drawing, has been shown to enhance motivation and engagement. The ability to personalize and take ownership of learning materials, coupled with the visual engagement and active learning opportunities provided by flashcards, contribute to a more positive learning experience. As educators seek innovative ways to keep students motivated and engaged in language learning, DIY flashcards offer a promising avenue for achieving these goals.

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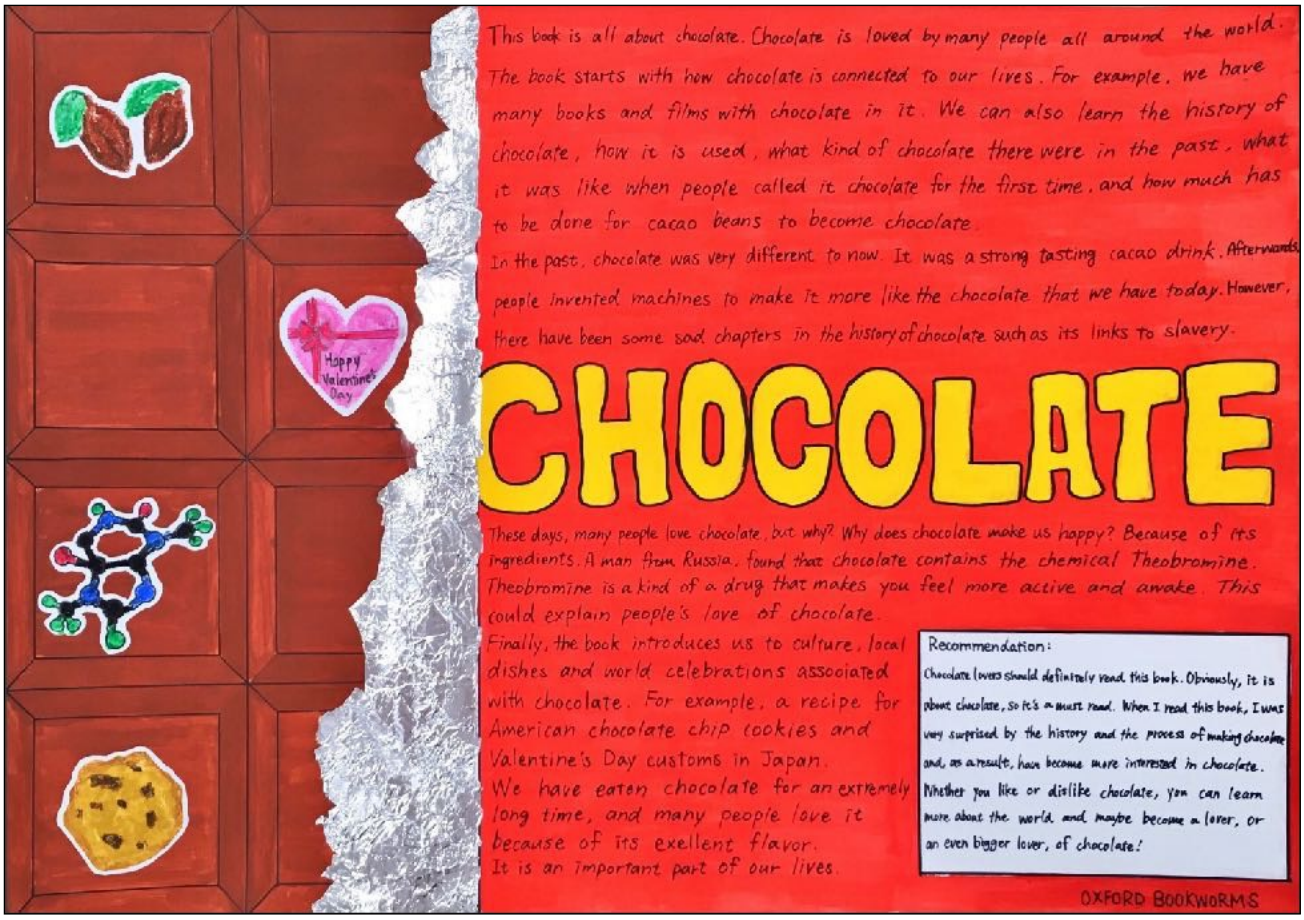


Towa Ito. *Chocolate.*

Illustrated Book-Report Posters Encourage Reluctant Readers

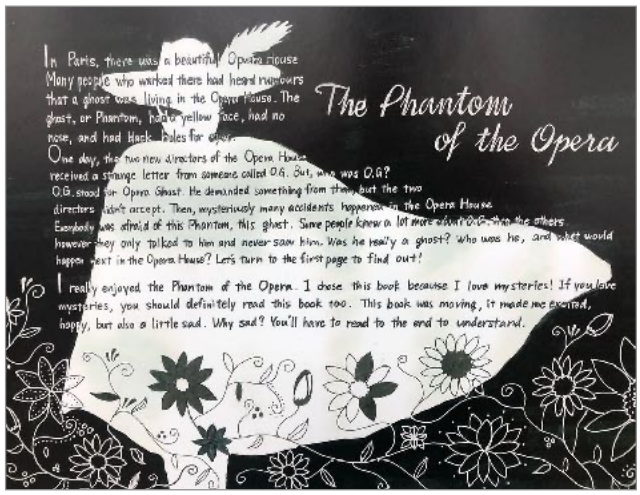
Thomas Entwistle
The British Council, Japan

To "get students excited about reading and writing in English" teachers at Nagoya University of Foreign Studies set up a book-report gallery. Initially, the gallery was created to showcase student entries in the Oxford University Press Big Read competition. Unfortunately, since 2021 the university category of the Big Read competition was discontinued, but we decided to continue giving artistically minded students, who want to develop their visual literacy, the option to create illustrated book reports and add them to the gallery.

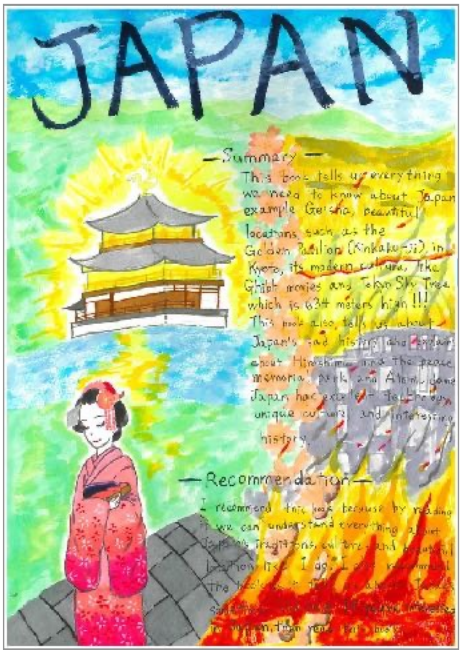
Students are required to finish a graded reader each week as part of an extensive reading (ER) component of their English course. To contribute to the illustrated gallery, students must include a short, written summary of their graded reader, explain why they recommend the book, and create a unique and original poster. Giving students the opportunity to contribute to the gallery provides them with valuable extra reading and writing practice and offers learners a supportive space to express themselves creatively, something that—in my experience

—is often lacking in higher education as more importance is put on vocabulary, grammar, and academic writing.

As the gallery has grown with more posters year on year, feedback from students has been positive. One learner told me that they did not usually like reading, but designing a poster for the gallery had motivated them to read more and change their perception that reading in English is difficult and boring. Student reflections on the ER homework showed that students understand the importance of ER, but do not always enjoy it. Providing the opportunity for creativity can help those who are reluctant readers and bridge the gap between student wants and needs.



Yukina Iwata. *The Phantom of the Opera*.



Mai Hirata. *Japan*.

The gallery also provides students with book recommendations for their weekly graded reader assignment. The posters pique the interest of students and encourage them to take out the featured titles. For instance, the year after the poster was displayed, students borrowed *Chocolate* (2011) from our ER library almost twice as often. It has been encouraging to see our small ER library turn into a lively communal area where students relax, study, and pick up books to read or take home.

Teachers might regard this book-report gallery as an extra workload, but helping students draft their summaries and recommendations is not as demanding as it may first appear. In my experience, proofreading drafts took only a minute or two. Art-making has a limited appeal to students who are less artistically inclined, but I believe teachers should still provide students the chance to create art, if they're interested in doing it, because the posters benefitted all students by providing book recommendations.

I believe that providing students with the opportunity to develop their visual literacy in this way can help bridge the creativity gap that is often lacking in higher education. Furthermore, encouraging creativity motivates students with their English studies (Dörnyei, 2001) as it not only encourages reluctant readers to read but also provides students with an outlet to express themselves artistically.

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Jeannie Baker. *Mirror (detail)*

Wordless Picture Books: Worth a Thousand Words

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Picture books come in many shapes, sizes, and formats. From board books to concept books to narrative nonfiction, there are styles for a variety of ages and contexts. However, one style of book is maybe less known but full of potential: the wordless picture book. Wordless picture books are, as their title suggests, stories made up of only images. Without text, these books are engaging for preliterate children and readers of any language background. They have also been shown to be effective tools for children with learning differences (Zambo, 2007).

Wordless picture books invite us to make our own interpretations of the story by "reading" the artwork, and for young learners this also means developing their ability to make connections between what they've seen and predictions about what's to come. When using picture books with children, keeping a dialogue open for questions and observations is key,

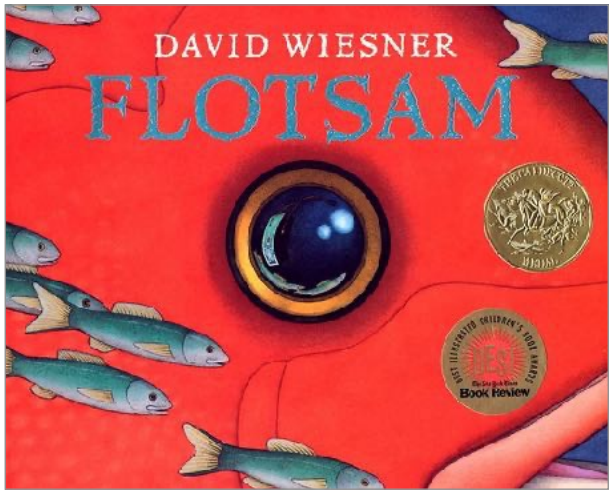
and wordless books are perfectly suited to this as often there are no specific details about what is really going on. Building confidence is another benefit of wordless books, as children can enjoy reading without assistance and feel a sense of ownership and independence as they make the story their own.

From an artistic point of view, these books let us focus on the illustrations, appreciating the skill of the artist to describe characters, settings, and plot through the clues in their artwork. As wordless picture book creator David Wiesner says, "It's a radical decision not to use words", but through this style "it's the parent, the child, and the images collaborating in the storytelling process" (Saxon, 2021). When reading a wordless picture book with learners, we can ask many of the same questions that we would when looking at images in an art gallery:

- What is happening in this picture? What do you think might happen next?
- Who is this character? How do you think they feel?
- What do you think this character wants to do? Do you think they can do it?
- Where is this story happening?
- What would you do if you were in this story?

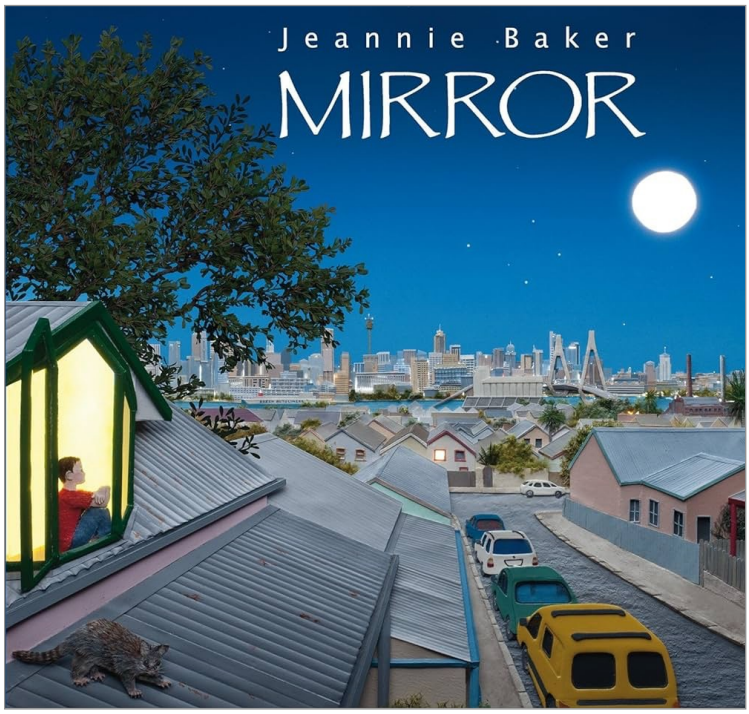
Wordless picture books may not have any words in them, but they can inspire a lot of important discussion between teachers and learners. Not limited by words or language, they can be a valuable resource for students of any age group, as effective for the preschool reading corner as for the university classroom.

Here are a few recommendations for books to share with your learners:

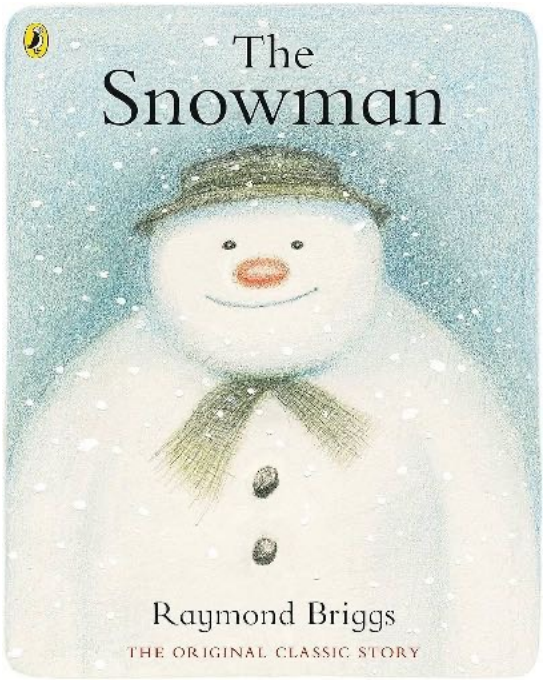


David Wiesner. *Flotsam*.

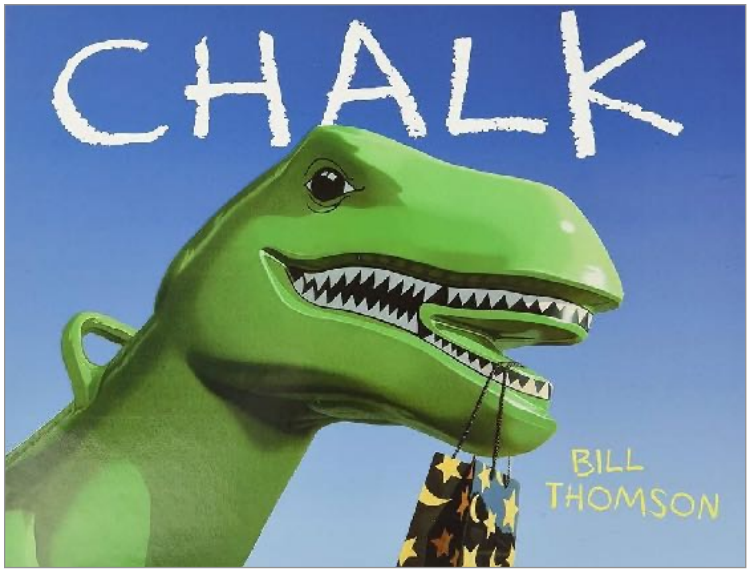
Shaun Tan. *The Arrival*.



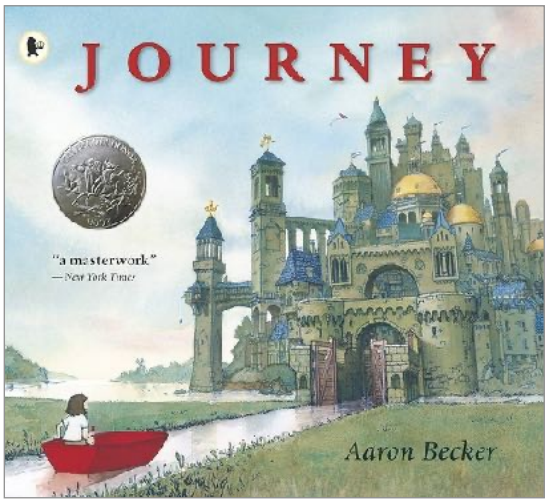
Jeannie Baker. *Mirror*.



Raymond Briggs. *The Snowman*.



Bill Thomson. *Chalk*.



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Queen Mother Pendant Mask: Iyoba. Circa 1500

Book Review:

The More We Look, The Deeper It Gets — Transforming the Curriculum Through Art

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The More We Look, The Deeper It Gets is a book aimed at demystifying and simplifying methods for including works of art in the classroom, but it is deliberately vague about the school subject for which it is intended, merely referring to 'educators' rather than specific subjects of study. Accordingly, this review will approach the book from the angle of second language education.

The author, Nicola Giardina, is an art educator based in New York, and her book details an approach to conducting art inquiry named the "Pyramid of Inquiry" (Giardina, 2018), which she describes as a "flexible framework for creating art inquiry discussions that foster higher order thinking skills" (p11). The book breaks down the pyramid into its key steps –

Observation, Evidence-based Inference, Information and Interpretation (p12) – as well as providing detailed examples based on transcriptions of student discussions.

While the book does not address concepts from a linguistic perspective, it has been employed in research projects in the language classroom (Ekoç, 2020; Tiley, 2022) as well as employed in cultural excursions for recent immigrants to the United States (Tauzel, 2020), suggesting that the ideas presented in the Pyramid of Inquiry may be of some use to language educators looking to incorporate art in their lesson plans.

The book can be loosely divided into three sections. Chapters One and Two serve as an introduction, exploring the benefits of art education generally before introducing the key concepts of the Pyramid of Inquiry. From a linguistic perspective, there are numerous points about the merits of art education that could also be beneficial in the language classroom. Specifically, Giardina mentions that art education can make learning relevant by 'linking the interests and life experiences of your students to your curriculum topics' (p2). This helps bring context to language education, as well as serving as an opportunity for cultural education.

Giardina dedicates the next section of the book to exploring the four 'layers' of the Pyramid in more detail. Chapters Three (Observation), Four (Evidence Based Inference), Five (Interpretation) and Six (The Role of Information) go into greater detail about how teachers can guide students through these various steps. Giardina comments, however, that in the Information section, 'brevity is the key to keeping information flowing' (p68), so the Information layer can be greatly reduced or skipped if students are successfully engaging with the artwork.

Within this section lies one of the strongest points of the book – the lists of practical classroom activities to help students work through each layer of the pyramid. For example, Chapter Three details a range of activities that can be used to help students observe a work of art in detail. This includes teacher-led observations of different aspects of the artwork, student centred games like 'Eye Spy' and written activities, all of which would transfer well to the language classroom.

Additionally, there are some aspects of this layer that can be of particular use to language teachers. The 'Observe' phase is, in the simplest of terms, a picture description exercise, which is also a common feature of standardized language tests. Additionally, the Inference and

Interpretation layers enable students to develop skills in synthesizing and processing information, a key skill employed in standardised tests such as TOEFL.

The final section of the book, consisting of Chapters Seven, Eight, and Nine, feels less focussed than the previous sections and covers encouraging individuality, planning art experiences, and resources for educators. Chapter Seven discusses encouraging students to choose artwork that appeals to them in a museum context. While of course this would be a desirable option for most, it is unlikely to be practical. One option is to temporarily transform the classroom into a gallery with printouts of famous works and allow students to engage with them. Pages 90-91 even briefly discusses special considerations for language educators, such as providing vocabulary lists and modelling phrases for contrasting and disagreement, marking the only part of the book that directly mentions the application of Giardinas' ideas in a language learning context.

One aspect of the book that will stand out to teachers both within and outside of the field of language education is the necessity for students to work in small groups with a high degree of teacher involvement which, while desirable, is unlikely to be practical in a larger classroom environment. Giardina does not comment on this issue, and although this can be partially achieved through classroom resources and group summaries, delivering a truly bespoke experience to each group of students as outlined in the book is unlikely to be practical in most situations.

The scope of the book may also raise questions from some teachers. It very succinctly covers a range of traditional artworks, and even extends to cultural artefacts such as a 16th Century pendant from the Kingdom of Benin (Queen Mother Pendant Mask: Iyoba, ca. 1500). However, the works cited in the book are generally representational images, with limited attention devoted to purely abstract work, other than

Mark Rothko. *No. 16 (Red, Brown, Black).* 1958

some exploration of Rothko's No. 16 (1960) in Chapter 5. This may be because representational art is more accessible for inexperienced students as it provides a clear narrative with recognisable features and emotions for students to work with, something that is also mentioned by Yenawine (2013) as part of Visual Thinking Strategies. This could also, however, be considered a missed opportunity to support teachers in a more challenging area of art education - Abstract work can be particularly difficult to approach for teachers and students alike, so the limited guidance in designing art experiences with abstract work means that some teachers may be left wanting more guidance in this specific area.

While this book is by no means intended as a guide for language teachers, it serves as a thorough and practical guide for including successful art discussions in all classrooms, language or otherwise. The detailed breakdown of classroom activities is an excellent tool for teachers who are unsure about how to incorporate art in their classes. The student/teacher ratio implicitly suggested by the book will be impractical for many, but with some careful consideration and adjustment, the ideas presented by Giardina can help make the language classroom a more colorful and creative place for both students and educators.

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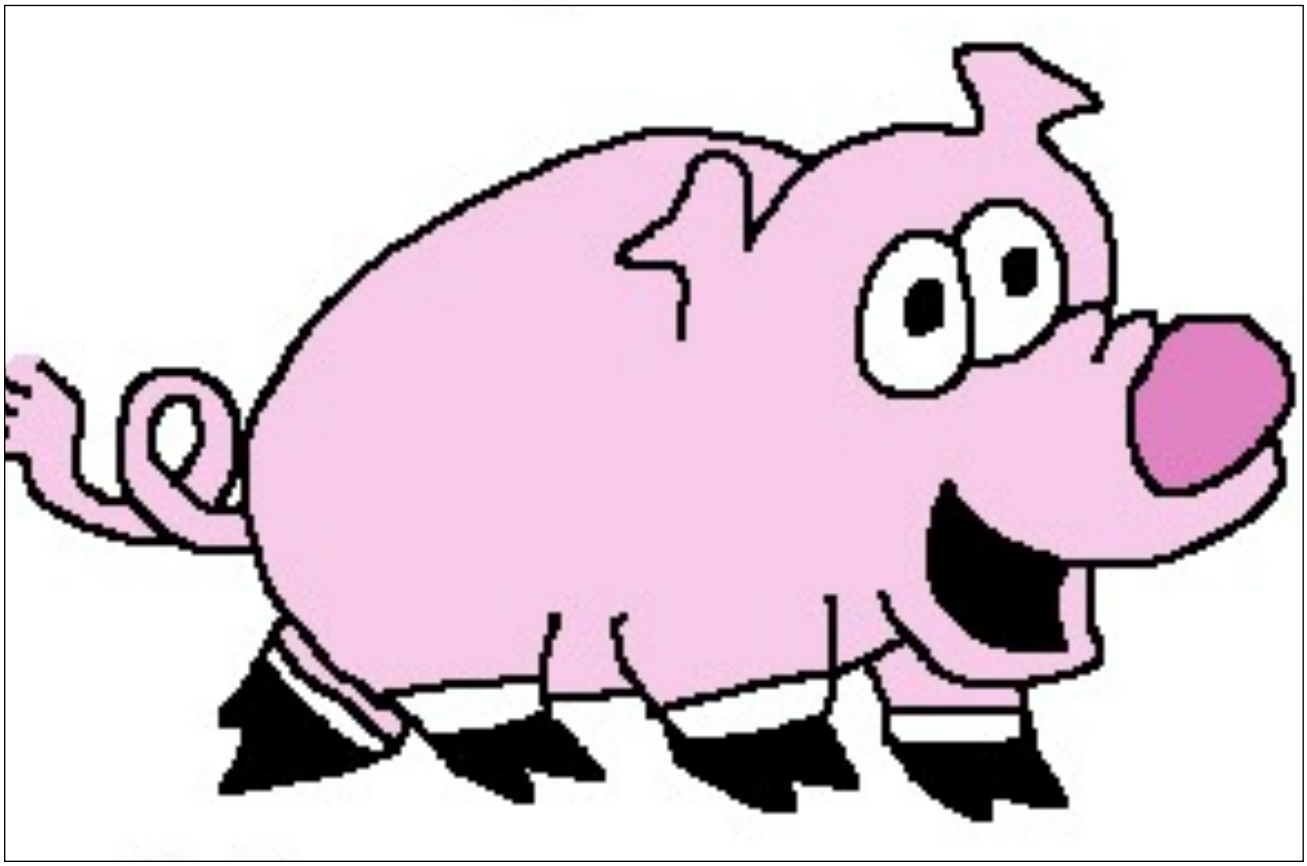


Digital drawing by author

Teaching Personalities: Let's Draw a Pig!

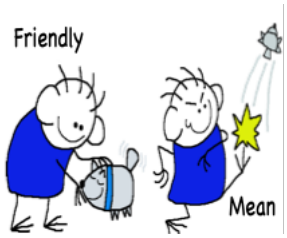
Robert Olson
Hokkaido University of Science

Are you looking for a fun and easy way to teach vocabulary to describe people's personalities? If the answer is yes, then try The Pig Test. I stumbled across this test on the Owlcation website (https://owlcation.com/social-sciences/Pig-Personality-Test). It is one of many activities that attempts to loosely describe a person's personality based on an illustration each participant draws. The "results" of the test are hardly conclusive and intended to be a discussion vehicle rather than a diagnostic tool. I have altered the test to suit my classrooms as needed and suggest you do the same. Like most lessons, The Pig Test begins by introducing the language that will be taught. Here it is:

Personality traits:
Optimistic/Pessimistic/Realistic
Traditional/Direct/Free-spirited
Confident/Nervous

Loud/Quiet
Shy/Outgoing
Satisfied/Unsatisfied
Friendly/Mean
Attentive/Aloof

I start by teaching the personality traits. Here are the illustrations I use:



I then introduce the "Analysis conversation model" by first explaining the difference between "I think" and "According to the test." After explaining the model, I ask several students which personality traits they believe best describe me by using the "I think you are (personality trait) pattern. Depending on the student's answer, I responded with either "I agree. I'm usually (a personality trait)" or "I disagree. I'm not (a personality trait). Actually, I'm (a different personality trait)."

<u>Analysis conversation model</u>

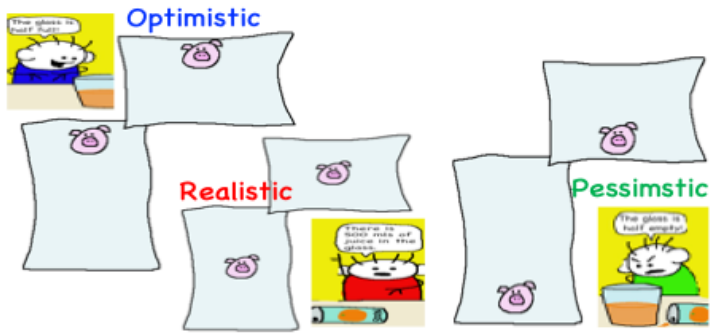
A: I think/According to the test, you are (personality trait).
B1: I agree. I'm usually (a personality trait).
B2: I disagree. I'm not (a personality trait). Actually, I'm (a different personality trait).
The following illustrations are examples of these exchanges:

After teaching and practicing both the personality traits and the conversation model, I give the students a sheet of scrap paper and say:

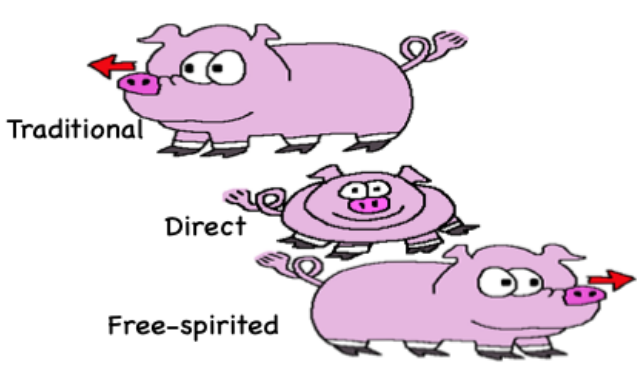
"Please draw a pig. You have 3 minutes."

I do not give any other instructions, and I simply shrug my shoulders and smile if asked questions such as, "How big should my pig be?" or "Do I start at the top of the paper or the bottom of the paper?" Again, you can alter the instructions to fit the age and ability of your students. After 3 minutes, I ask everyone to look at their pig, and I explain how to interpret the test while using the following illustrations:

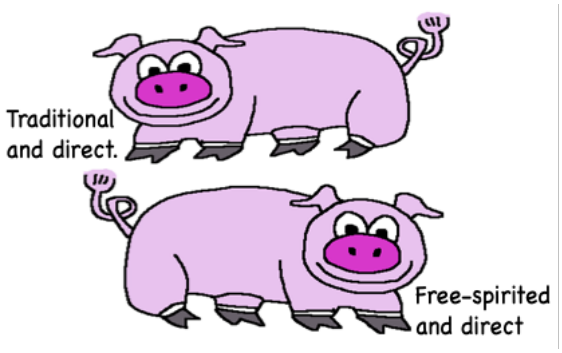
First, look at where the head of your pig is located. If your pig's head is at the top of the paper, then you are optimistic. If your pig's head is in the center of the paper, then you are realistic. If your pig's head is near the bottom of the paper, then you are pessimistic.



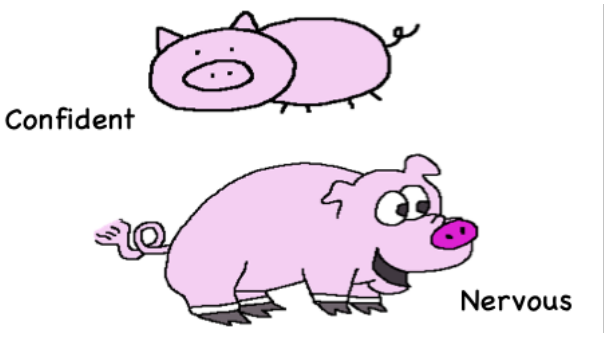
Now look at which direction your pig is facing. If your pig is facing to the left, then you are traditional. If your pig is facing you squarely, then you are direct. If your pig is facing to the right, then you are free-spirited.



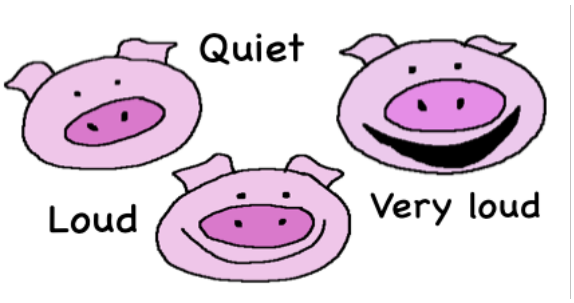
Now if your pig is turned to the left but looking directly at you, then you are both traditional and direct. If your pig is turned to the right but facing you directly, then you are both free-spirited and direct.



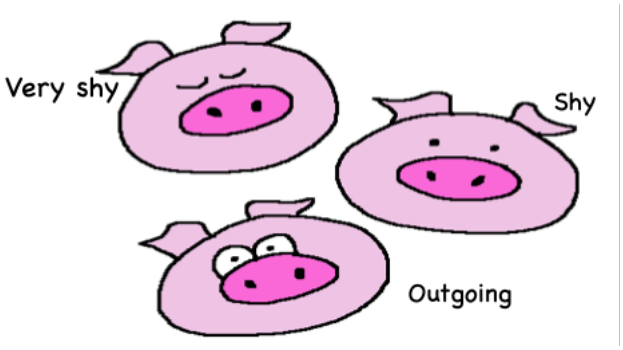
Now look at your pig. Did you draw a simple pig like the one in the top illustration? If so, then you are confident. On the other hand, if your pig is more complex and detailed, like the pig at the bottom of the illustration, then you are nervous.



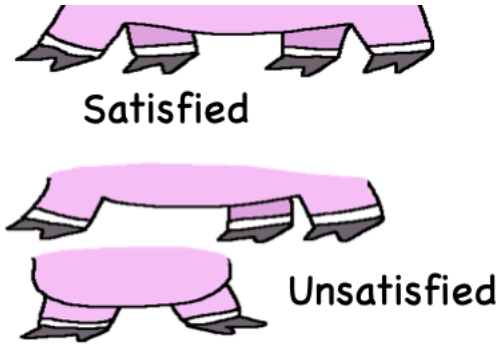
How loud are you? Look at your pig's mouth. If there is no mouth, then you are quiet. If your pig has a mouth, then you are loud, but if your pig's mouth is open in any way, then you are very loud.



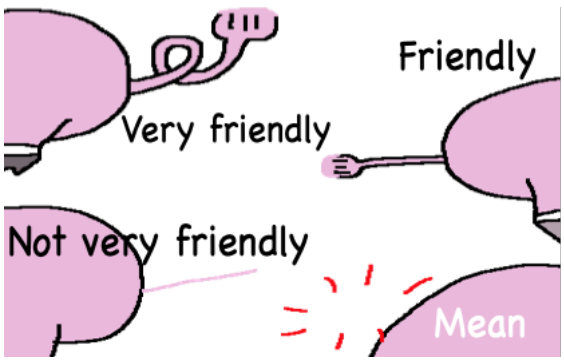
Are you shy or outgoing? Look at your pig's eyes. If the eyes are closed, then you are very shy. If your pig has two simple dots for eyes, then you are shy, but if your pig has open eyes with a background in a color other than black, then you are outgoing.



How happy are you with your current life? Look at your pig's legs. If your pig has four legs, then you are very satisfied with your life. But if your pig has three or two legs, then you are unsatisfied with your current situation.

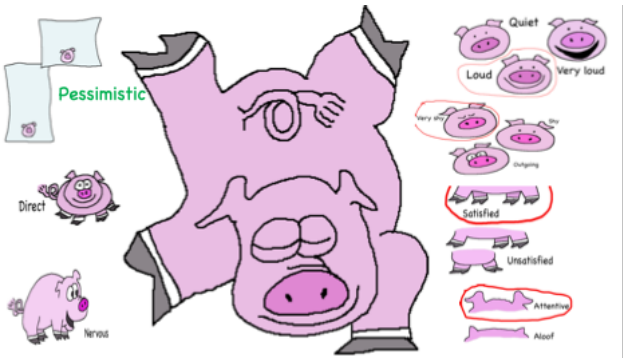


Are you a friendly person or a mean person? Look at your pig's tail. If your pig has a long tail that curls, you are a very friendly person. If your pig's tail is big and straight, then you are a friendly person. But if your pig's tail is short or thin then you are not very friendly. If your pig has no tail, then you are mean.



Finally, are you a good listener? If your pig's ears are big and have a detailed shape, then you are attentive. On the other hand, if your pig has ears that are small and simple, triangle-shaped ears then you are likely an aloof person.

After explaining how to interpret the pigs, I ask the students to interpret one of my pigs. Here is an example of how one class interpreted a pig that I illustrated.



The students and I then practice the analysis conversation model, using the "According to the test" pattern with each other.

Analysis conversation model

A: According to the test, you are (personality trait).

B1: I agree. I'm usually (a personality trait).

B2: I disagree. I'm not (a personality trait). Actually, I'm (a different personality trait).

I walk around the room and randomly select a student's pig to evaluate, and the student does the same to my pig. When the students appear to understand the task, I ask them to either work in pairs or groups of three, evaluate each other's pigs, and agree or disagree with the assessments.

This is a fun lesson that will likely help your students acquire vocabulary related to personalities. Again, the test is flexible as you can change both the animal and the personality traits if so desired.

One final note: I suggest telling the students that if you disagree with someone's assessment, you are disagreeing with the test's assessment and not the student. Pointing this out during the lesson can help avoid misunderstandings and hurt feelings.

Enjoy...and draw on!

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