Using Visual Literacy Skills to Encourage Communicative Language Practice

Katie Subra

Image source: http://wordclouds.com
Objectives

I will:

- Discuss benefits of using visuals in English language classrooms
- Explain activities that incorporate signs and infographics

You will:

- Discover activities and resources adaptable to your classroom
What kinds of visuals do you use?

Poll examples:
- Photographs
- Art
- Signs or Advertisements
- Charts or Diagrams
- Illustrations
- Posters
What other kinds of visuals do you use?

Poll examples:
- Photographs
- Art
- Signs
- Advertisements
- Charts
- Diagrams
- Illustrations
- Posters

New ideas:
- Maps
- Timelines
- Graphic novels
- Comics
- Flags
- Symbols
- Posters
- Brochures
- Flyers
- Film
What is literacy?

- Knowledge or ability that relates to a specific topic

Literacy examples:
- Digital
- Cultural
- Nutritional
- Mathematical
What is visual literacy?

Here is how I “see” it:

- Visual literacy is the ability to read and understand a variety of visuals in a given environment.

Example:
Simple Visual Literacy Skills
High Visual Literacy Skills

*Subway* by Lily Furedi – from the Smithsonian American Art Museum
The Benefits

- Using visual literacy skills in the language classroom:
  - Utilizes authentic and culturally relevant materials
  - Incorporates integrated skills
  - Develops content-based vocabulary
  - Motivates visual learners
  - Promotes critical thinking
  - Promotes communicative language practice
- These can contribute to higher learner engagement!
Visual Literacy Skills at Any Age, Any Level
Show-and-Tell Warm-up: Personal Photo

1. Student brings in a photo or an object that has special meaning

2. Student shows the item and talks about it in front of the class

3. Teacher can also prompt the audience to ask questions or ask the presenter to tell about the item by using a specific phrase or grammar feature

Difficulty level: low - medium
Skills used: all
Show-and-Tell Warm-up: Personal Photo

Katie’s vacation photo of The Grand Canyon:

Teacher’s prompt: Use past tense
Show-and-Tell: Artifacts

Difficulty level: medium - high
Skills used: all
Writing Assignment - “My Artifact”

- Why does this artifact represent you?

- Describe this artifact (color, size, shape, weight, texture).

- What uses could this artifact have for someone in the future?

- Re-write each answer in 2-3 full sentences using more detail.

- Use 3rd person (don’t use I, me, we).
Signs and Infographics

- Handicap sign
- No horse and no bicycle signs
- infographic titled "Let's Go Shopping!"
- Chart showing customer shopping habits:
  - Gender: Female vs. Male
  - Time of day: Morning, Afternoon, Evening
  - Number of shoppers who prefer the brand
- Bar chart showing how frequently they go shopping:
  - Every week, Once a month, Rarely
  - Series 1, Series 2, Series 3

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Signs and Infographics

Sample lesson: Environment
Visuals: Signs, Infographics

Steps:
1) Use visuals to introduce a new topic
2) Pre-teach vocabulary or brainstorm vocabulary
3) Ask students to find culturally relevant and authentic examples
4) Help students understand the topic better through data visuals or infographics (charts, diagrams, maps, tables, timelines)
Step One: Teacher Provides Visuals

Where could you find this type of sign? Where don’t you find it?
Step Two: Brainstorm Vocabulary

- Environmentally-friendly
- Ecology
- Eco-safe
- Recycling
- Composting
- All natural
- Organic
- Going green
Step Three: Students Provide Visuals to Discuss

1. Read the sign. What does it “say”?
2. Where was this sign found?
   ➢ Use descriptive vocabulary
3. What other locations would you expect to find it in?
   ➢ Make generalizations about types of settings
   ➢ Discuss the likelihood of finding this in other buildings, communities, countries
4. Who is the intended audience?
   ➢ Distinguish between who will see it vs. who should see it
   ➢ Use critical thinking skills to provide support for your ideas
5. Is it effective?
Sample Label

Let's try this activity together!
Resources for Signs/Labels

Search for sources online:

- Photos in these slides were taken with my own camera or taken from Open Educational Resources online:
  - https://pixabay.com
  - http://eng.letscc.net
  - http://www.photosforclass.com/
Resources for Signs/Labels

- Students can take photos of or make notes about signs:
  - Public spaces
  - Retail spaces
  - Labels from household products

Remind students: Pay attention to postings that discourage photography!
Student-Created Signs

1. Students look for areas that may need better directions, information, or perhaps a warning

2. Then students can create a sign using a combination of English and visuals
Defining Infographics

- **infographic** - *n.* a visual image such as a chart or diagram used to represent information or data

*Voice of America*
Thoughts on Infographics

“Our brain can digest the facts presented on an infographic three times faster than reading it in text since it’s an illustrated format.”

*Bit Rebels*

Infographics can range from very simple charts to complex images with multiple layers of data.
Simple Infographic: Histogram

After steep rise, recycling and composting rates flatten out

% of municipal solid waste that is ...

40%
30%
20%
10%
0%


Note: “Composted” includes composting of yard trimmings, food and other municipal solid waste organic material and does not include backyard composting.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER
Simple Infographic: Pie Chart

What gets recycled and composted

in 2013


PEW RESEARCH CENTER
Plants need humans and humans need plants. Because plants breathe out oxygen and we need oxygen. We breathe out carbon dioxide and plants need carbon dioxide.

Additional CO₂ causes an astonishing plant growth.

More CO₂ causes plants to need less water to produce the same amount of growth.

www.thegardencentral.com
LET'S GO SHOPPING!

WHAT ARE CUSTOMER'S HABITS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PREFER TO SHOP IN THE:</th>
<th>FEMALE</th>
<th>MALE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MORNING</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFTERNOON</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EVENING</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MALE 25%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

20% Female, 75% Male

SHOPPERS WHO PREFER OUR BRAND

HOW FREQUENTLY THEY GO SHOPPING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOW OFTEN THEY SHOP</th>
<th>EVERY WEEK</th>
<th>ONCE A MONTH</th>
<th>RARELY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

PLANT-A-TREE'S
Help Plant 2 Million Trees

Heres what they do

52,000,000 MI
Reversed CO2 output of a gas powered driving

520,000 LBS
of oxygen a year

200,000,000 GAL
of water into the air

HOW TO HELP PREVENT CLIMATE CHANGE
IN YOUR OWN LITTLE WAY

CONSERVE WATER
Watch your water usage by turning off faucets when not in use, taking shorter showers, and avoiding unnecessary water consumption.

REDUCE WASTE
Help reduce greenhouse emissions by practicing regular recycling, buying recycled goods and buying less or in bulk to lessen packaging waste.

SAVE ENERGY
Use less energy by turning off appliances when not in use, switching to energy saving bulbs, and investing in energy saving appliances/objects.

TRAVEL GREEN
1/5 of the world's gas emissions are because of vehicles, therefore, ditching your car and walking or riding public transport helps lessen them.

CLEAN ENERGY
Try using renewable energy from time to time by installing solar panels and generating green energy. Use of solar powered objects are good too.

START SMALL
The little things make a difference planting trees, and buying local produce helps lessen carbon footprints.

For more info, visit www.plantatree.com
Using Infographics

- Think about your classroom, school, or library. Perhaps you have already seen infographics posted on the walls there.

- Think about the advertisements, articles, textbooks, and other outside visuals that you see every day.

- Where do you see infographics?
Where to Find Infographics

- Graphs.net Infographics Album on Flickr
  http://bit.ly/2l07hDq
- Pew Research Center
  http://pewresearch.org
- Let’s cc – Search for Infographics + Topic
  http://eng.letsc.ccc.net

- Student-created infographics
How to Create Infographics

- Combine pictures with charts created by students using paper, magazines, or markers

- Use a free online resource, such as:
  - Canva – www.canva.com
  - Piktochart – https://piktochart.com
  - Venngage – https://venngage.com

- Other resources listed in pre-reading material from Voice of America
www.canva.com
My Example from canva.com

Choose a layout

Updated with my text and images

SIX WAYS I CAN HELP THE ENVIRONMENT EVERY DAY

CONSERVE WATER
I can turn off the faucet while brushing my teeth and take faster showers

REDUCE WASTE
I can recycle whenever possible and buy products in recyclable packaging

SAVE ENERGY
I can unplug electronics and turn off lights when I don't need them

TRAVEL GREEN
I can use public transit and my own two feet to get around the city

OPEN A WINDOW
I can use natural methods to adjust the indoor temperature

GET OUTSIDE
I can spend time outdoors exploring and appreciating nature
Planning the Content

1. Students choose a specific topic related to the theme or teacher assigns the topic

2. Students write about their role using imperative statements and “I can” statements

3. Students choose images to represent statements by taking pictures, finding open education resources, or drawing
Start Gradually

- Build a class collection of visuals related to each new theme that your class discusses.
- Having too many visuals won’t be a problem.
- Incorporate Show-and-Tell activities with simple visuals in the beginning and complex visuals later on.
Show-and-Tell

The Mississippi River seen from the shore of my home state – Minnesota
Do What Comes Naturally

- Variety and relevance are important

- Your students are already visually literate in their native language, so allow them to apply these skills in English as well
Reflections

- What new vocabulary will I want to teach for discussing visuals?
- Where can your students find visuals?
- Where will you find visuals?
- At what stage in a lesson should you introduce visuals?
References and Resources

- "Learning to Look" by the National Education Association, retrieved from www.nea.org, 2017.