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Making the most of your textbook: Interacting with pictures and photographs

A) Activities:

1) Matchbox:

In one minute write down as many objects as possible that are small enough to fit into a matchbox.

2) Inner visualisation

Think of a photograph with you in it, which you like a lot.

Without speaking out loud : describe the photo (where, when, who is with you in the picture, what you do, how you feel etc). Then describe the picture to your partner.

(Works also with pictures from a (text-) book.)

3) My view of you

Look at Magritte's painting *Les Valeurs Personnelles*. Write down 3-4 objects which you think your partner would enlarge. Compare your ideas. Tell one another what made you choose the objects.

(Works also with characters from a (text-) book.)

4) Mind the picture

In pairs study the picture carefully for 3-4 minutes. Student A tries to remember as many details as possible without writing anything down. Student B writes down three true-false statements or questions about the picture. The projector is switched off and then B makes the statements/asks the questions; A responds. Then both look at the picture to check. Afterwards the roles are switched and another picture is projected.

5) Being unique

Look at the picture and decide which activity/object probably only you in your class can do/has done/has etc.

Tell the others and see where you are right.

6) Common denominator

In pairs/a small group look at the picture. Name all the things all of you have in common with the picture. Which group has most things in common?

7) Flashlight

Look at the picture for 15 seconds. Then write down all the names of things that are red/blue/round/square...

Compare your list with that of your partner. Look at the picture again and check your results.

8) Anticipating

You are going to see a photograph of... Write down which objects/colours/shapes etc you expect to see in the photo.

Look at the photo and tick those that you have on your list. Who in the class anticipated most? List all those objects that are not in the picture.

9) Who's talking to me?/Who am I talking to?

In pairs look at the picture. Without telling your partner choose one person who is shown talking to somebody else. Think of one typical sentence/question that person might say/ask. Your partner guesses who it might be and points to clues in the picture that helped him decide.

10) Colouring (e.g. cartoons, panels in comics and graphic novels)

Look at the black and white picture. Decide which objects you would colour. Explain your choice.

11) Adding quality

Look at the painting for a while. What seems missing? Outline what you would add and how this would change the message of the painting.

12) Spoiling

Discuss what you would have to eliminate from the picture to ruin its impact.

B) Aims:

- Establish/Stimulate picture-word/word-picture relationships
- Individualize interaction with a picture/painting/photograph
- Allow for a change in perspective/Mental journeys
- Activate prior knowledge/prior experiences
- Help students anchor/remember words through visualizing what they denote
- Initiate synesthetic experiences
- Help students focus
- Get students interested in art

C) Further reading:

Arnold, J., Puchta, H. Rinvulcri, M: Imagine That! Mental imagery in the EFL classroom. Helbling, 2007

Pictures and Images: Praxis Englisch, Heft 5/2011

The state of the arts: Praxis Englisch, Heft 1-2018