

## Using Teaching Aids

**B**ESIDES THE TEXTBOOK and associated workbooks, there are a wide variety of teaching aids available to the language teacher. You should consider employing a range of these in your own teaching. One of the most commonly used teaching aids is the blackboard or white board. Besides this, you will find visual aids such as flash cards, postcards, and magazine photos very useful. Finally, many recent methods of teaching have focused on the use of *authentic material*.

While the blackboard is probably the most commonly used visual aid and most teachers would find teaching without one to be a challenge, it is also the case that teachers frequently do not adequately consider how to present material on the board. It is generally considered a good practice to list the lesson's objectives on the board and leave them up throughout the session, for the students to refer to. It is also helpful to leave a running list of vocabulary on one part of the board. The central part of the board can be used for examples, charts,

drawings, etc., which will generally only be left up for one part of the lesson (Hubbard, P. et. Al., 1983).

Also consider the range of *visual aids* that might help you with your teaching. Photos from magazines, postcards, books, etc can be very useful for teaching if chosen carefully. Many teachers find it useful to collect a file of these materials for easy access. These can be used for discussion, illustrating grammar points, description, for the basis of role-plays, etc (see Wright, 1989 for a book-length discussion of a range of possible visual aids that might be used in the language classroom).

Various types of *flash cards* are also useful for teaching activities. Flash cards generally have words, pictures, or a combination of the two. There are commercially available cards, cards that can be made by cutting pictures from magazines, etc., or the teacher can make them him/herself with drawings and writing. They can be used for a wide variety of activities, from drills to matching activities, to different communicative activities.

As discussed in previous chapters, many modern methods of teaching have emphasized communicative competency, the ability to communicate in the target language. *Authentic materials* are very useful for this purpose. What makes a piece of material “authentic” is the fact that it is designed to be used by a native speaker, not by a language learner seeking to learn a second language. Any document that is intended for a native speaker can be used authentically in a language-learning lesson. Some common items include newspapers, job application forms, envelopes, medicine labels, etc. These materials are sometimes also known as “realia” and, according to Berwald (1987, p 3):

*Realia refers to real objects, not copies, models, or representations—from a particular culture [and]...are designed for use in real-life situations, not for use as instructional tools...Although not designed for instructional use, realia and other authentic materials... provide a wide range of printed and spoken messages that can be used as primary or secondary material in a...language classroom.*

No matter what the source, the important thing is that they be actual items used by native speakers in a real context. The advantage of using these items is that they present language realistically, as it is used, and help the learners develop the actual skills that they need to function in a real environment.

For example, when teaching a unit on how to find a job, you might use the classified section of a newspaper. Once you have taught the learners key vocabulary, you might have the learners work in small groups to find an appropriate job for one of the students in the group using the classified listings. After that, you might have the learners report to the class on which job they chose for each learner and why they feel the student’s skills, experiences, and talents suit them for that job.

Holt (1995) provides the following “basic kit” of teaching aids, including objects, games, and materials.

1. **Realia:** clocks, food items, calendars, plastic fruits and vegetables, maps, household objects, real and play money, food containers, abacus, manual for learning to drive, and classroom objects;
2. **Flash cards:** pictures, words, and signs;
3. **Pictures or photographs:** personal, magazine, and others;
4. **Tape recorder** and cassette tapes, including music for imagery and relaxation;
5. **Overhead projector,** transparencies, and pens; video player and videos;
6. **Pocket chart** for numbers, letters, and pictures;
7. **Alphabet sets;**

8. **Camera** for language experience stories to create biographies and autobiographies;

9. **Games** such as bingo and concentration: commercial or teacher-made;

10. **Colored index cards** to teach word order in sentences, to show when speakers change in dialogue, to illustrate question/answer format, and to use as cues for a concentration game;

11. **Cuisenaire rods** to teach word order in sentences, to use as manipulatives in dyad activities, and to teach adjectives;

12. **Colored chalk** to teach word order, to differentiate between speakers in a dialogue, and to illustrate question and answer format;

When working with adult learners, even if you use a textbook, you should consider a range of teaching aids to supplement the work from the text. This range will help you to address the varying learning styles and modalities of the learners and also, especially in the case of authentic material, help prepare them for communication in the real world.

## FURTHER READING

### Online

**Arlington Education and Employment Program (2003).** *REEP Adult ESL Curriculum ESL techniques page.* Available from: <http://www.apsva.us/15401081182015517/lib/15401081182015517/reeppcurriculum/esltechniques.html>

**Berwald, J.P. (1987).** *“Teaching foreign languages with realia and other authentic materials.* ERIC Q & A.” Washington, DC: ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 289 367) Available from: <http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=ED289367>

**Domke, D. (1991).** *“Creative Activities for Teaching English as a Foreign Language.* ERIC Digest 333713”. Washington, DC: ERIC Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education. Available from: <http://www.ericdigests.org/pre-9220/english.htm>

**Holt, G. M. (1995).** *“Teaching Low-Level Adult ESL Learners”.* California: California Department of Education. Available from: [http://www.cal.org/caela/esl\\_resources/digests/HOLT.html](http://www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/digests/HOLT.html)

### Print

**Hubbard, P. et. Al. (1983).** *A Training Course for TEFL.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**McKay, H. & Tom, A. (1999).** *Teaching Adult Second Language Learners.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

**Virginia Adult Education and Literacy Centers. (1998).** *The ESL Starter Kit.* Richmond: Virginia Commonwealth University. An electronic version of this document can be downloaded from: <http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=ED431339>

**Wright, A. (1989).** *Pictures for Language Learning.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.