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EXPLOITING THE TEXTBOOK: A REPORT ON WORKSHOPS HELD AT ZAGREB REGIONAL SEMINAR, CRIKVENICA, 28. 8. 1988.–3. 9. 1988.

The ideas contained in this paper were put forward by participants at a teacher training seminar held in Crikvenica, Yugoslavia, in 1988. The participants worked on ideas for exploiting pages 22 and 23 of Brozović–Gerčan–Zorić (1986) *In English Please* and pages 10 and 11 of Vilke–Doolan–Mihaljević (1986) *Ways to English* (class VIII) by integrating “new ideas” with their own experience.

Maybe these ideas will inspire you to adapt your text-books to suit you and your students better. Remember the teacher and the students should be the MASTER not SLAVE of the text-book.

Two more truisms: “Variety is the spice of life” and “Beware the bored and therefore boring teacher”!

PART I In English Please (class VIII) pages 22 and 23

Step one “Bridge” to students

Suggestions

EITHER A “Brainstorm” with the whole group eliciting word associations with the term “pocket-money”. Then lead on to a discussion about where pocket-money comes from. You can also introduce the culturally new idea that in Britain children of 14+ often earn their own pocket-money by doing little jobs such as paper-rounds or baby sitting.

Follow this by pre-teaching essential vocabulary using a “word-rose”. By “essential” is meant vocabulary which important for understanding key ideas and which cannot easily be guessed from context. A “word-rose” is a technique which leads students to make up a story of their own from the words given.

This can be followed by an activity which involves asking students to “see how someone else uses those words”, which leads finally to the text. Alternatively, you can do categorisation, or anagrams or dictionary work etc.

OR B Bring realia, e. g. newspapers or magazines, to class and ask “where do you buy these?” Elicit or give the answer “At a newsagents’.” Give the students the information that in Britain newspapers and magazines are often delivered. You can introduce essential vocabulary by asking “What else is delivered?”, requiring answers such as “milk”, “letters”, “parcels”. Compare what happens in Yugoslavia with what happens in Britain. Ask “Who delivers?” to elicit “newsboy” etc.

Work on family trees, i. e. newsagents **sell** while newsboys **deliver**. Use these as starting points.

OR C With books closed, elicit word associations with the noun "newsboy". The students continue guessing and inferring, while the teacher provides and elicits essential points.

Next show the students a picture of a newsboy on a bike and ask them to give him a name — an English name because this is not a Yugoslav custom. Then provide a multiple-choice timetable/diary so that students can guess his daily routine. For example, on Monday at 7. 00 a. m. Joe a) goes to school b) delivers papers or c) has his breakfast. The students then check the text to see if they are right. Another thing you can do is provide a map of the district and then ask the students to outline Joe's paper round.

OR D You can mime being a newsboy and ask the students to guess what you are doing. You can provide or elicit the necessary vocabulary and tell the students that some children do this in Britain every day and are paid for this.

Step two Processing the Content

Suggestions

EITHER A Use the anti-text method. This involves changing the text slightly to make it true for Yugoslavia. The students can also make the text "true for them" by using the framework but making changes so that they can talk about their own, usually unpaid, duties outside school. Of course, in order to be able to do this, the students have to be able to understand the original text very well. This can lead to useful language work with students making statements such as the following:

Student A: "At 7 a. m. Tony delivers newspapers, but I help my Uncle."

Students B: "At 7 a. m. Tony delivers newspapers, Branca helps her uncle, but I leave home." etc.

OR B Do a jigsaw activity. To do this you photocopy pages of the book you are using and cut up the photocopied text into sections, removing the pictures. The students work in groups to reconstruct the text. You can then hand out the pictures which you previously removed and ask the students to decide which piece of text goes with which picture. You can also ask them to be ready to say which one sentence of text could act as a caption for each picture.

OR C Divide the students into groups and give each group a different section of the story. Ask them to look at the exercise which follows the text and find questions they can answer, and also be ready to ask other groups the questions they are unable to answer. Form new groups so that each group contains at least one member who has studied each section. The students ask and answer questions until each one has a clear idea of the story. They then check their understanding against the whole text.

OR D Ask the students close their books. Give pairs of students a slip of paper with a key sentences from the story. The class as a whole must reconstruct the story before checking with the text.

Step three Processing the Language

Suggestions

EITHER A Half/half technique. Working in pairs, half the class finds answers to half the prompts in the book. The other half find answers to the other half of the prompts. Then in two teams they take turns to ask the other team the questions to which they have found the answers. Give a one minute time limit! The teacher can check the accuracy and perhaps use a system of points penalties for inaccurate questions and answers.

AND/OR B Melee. The students move round the classroom at will in order to conduct a class survey on the lines of:

"Find someone who...

- works for a relative
- earns pocket money
- knows what is delivered in Britain

etc."

AND/OR C Pair-work. This is a way of finishing the dialogue in the book. First students decide what they feel about Tony, whether they like him or not. Then they read the dialogues and others guess whether they like Tony or not. This activity helps emphasise that in English, too, how or what you say depends to some extent on how you feel about the person you are talking to.

Step four Interpretation

Suggestions

EITHER A Exploit the pictures to focus on shop signs, road signs, school uniform and other evidence of cultural differences. Some interesting discussion and vocabulary extension might arise from asking students what other shop signs they might see in Britain etc.

AND/OR B Play a memory game with new or related vocabulary.

AND/OR C Do group-work with students taking turns to mime a different job while others try and guess what their job is, asking questions with do you/are you -ing? structures.

AND/OR D Turn the original text into a cloze test with grammar/vocabulary words blanked out.

AND/OR E Try a "20 questions" game on jobs.

Step five Response

Suggestions

EITHER A The students can write a letter to Tony telling him about their daily routine.

AND/OR B The students can write about a job they like.

AND/OR C Discuss with the class whether it is a good idea for children to work for money.

AND/OR D Role-play. This can be between Tony and the newsagent or Tony and his parents at breakfast the morning he was chased by a dog as he tried to deliver the paper.

AND/OR E Draw a chart showing what everyone in the class (and Tony) does at 7 a. m. every week-day.

PART II Ways to English pages 10 and 11

Possible areas for revision/attention are: comparative forms of adjectives; "I am 15" (not *"I have 15"); relative clauses; describing people; vocabulary revision/extension; nationalities; professions etc.; noun-formation awareness-raising.

Suggestions for Matching Exercises

EITHER A Photocopy the pictures and the table and divide the pictures into two. Divide class into two halves. Give a letter (A, B, C etc.) to each description in the table and distribute these to pairs of students, who must decide (without looking) which letter goes with which number, thereby practising picture descriptions. They must also decide why this is so, which allows work on cultural assumptions.

OR B Melee. The teacher brings in pictures cut from magazines. These are numbered and put round the room. A list of (lettered) descriptions is given to the students who then match pictures and descriptions.

OR C Use the pictures in the book, but cover the information beneath each picture. The students then guess some of this information. Then form the class into six groups and give each group a picture. Each group then adds to the description in the table to make a short paragraph. Other groups listen and comment (e. g. "I don't think she does like swimming, she looks unfit.")

Exercise B3

Suggestions

EITHER A Group-work. Write a short description of a popular person. Other groups then guess who the person is.

OR B Melee. Using paper they can stick or pin to the front of them, students write answers to 6-10 questions someone might want to ask on meeting them for the first time. The students then go round the room guessing the questions behind the answers. A variant is to have the students imagine they are a popular personality and write suitable answers in their new role. Others then guess questions and the identity of the personality.

OR C Melee. The teacher pins on the back of each person the name of a famous person. The students circulate asking yes/no questions in order to find out who they are. A rule of this game is that questions which are not asked in English will not be answered.

OR D The students write short descriptions of another member of the class. The teacher then collects these and reads (some of) them out, and the class guesses who is being described.

Exercise 4

Suggestions

EITHER A Brainstorm on professions in order to revise vocabulary. Students choose one profession and write – secretly – a list of increasingly clear definitions:

- e. g. Doctor = a person who studies hard before being it
- a person who works in an institution
- a person who needs special instruments etc.

Then in groups, each person reads his/her definitions one by one, until the group has guessed the profession. This can also be done as a team-game.

OR C Brainstorm occupations in a similar way. Then groups make categorisations in any agreed way: e. g. “nice”, “not nice”, “manual”, “intellectual”, “service”, “productive”, “in the family” etc. This can be followed by group-work. Each group has a pile of “profession” pictures from magazines and members take turns to take a picture and answer yes/no questions until the group have guessed.

OR D Quiz. Students can play “What’s my line?”. The teacher gives out unusual professions to “guest” students. These can be things like candle-maker, blacksmith etc.

Happy Teaching!

References

- Brozović, B., O. Gerčan & V. Zorić (1986) *In English Please*. Zagreb: Školska knjiga.
Vilke, M., M. Doolan & J. Mihaljević (1986) *Ways to English 1*. Zagreb: Školska knjiga.