

## Clothes for the Naked Teacher

### MULTIMEDIA IN THE PRIMARY CLASSROOM

#### THE NAKED TEACHER

Jamie Oliver, in his TV series the *Naked Chef*, presented cooking without frills, without special equipment or ingredients. The *Naked Teacher* works without published textbooks, without flashcards, puppets, audio cassettes, video, and computer software. The Naked Teacher uses all her own resources, creates her own materials, or guides students to produce them.

#### CLOTHES FOR THE NAKED TEACHER

Many of us admire the Naked Teacher, but we feel that we don't have the time, creativity or resources to do without published materials. Perhaps we also believe that often published materials can give the learners more of what they need than we can create.

#### WHERE DO CHILDREN LEARN ENGLISH?

When selecting published materials we should not be blinded by the superficial attractiveness of the materials. We need to remember that children learn English *inside* their heads. Learning takes place *behind the eyes and between the ears*. Anything we present to the students' ears and eyes should stimulate the children to think, to process language, to imagine, to comprehend. It is the *mental activity* which is important.

TWO DIMENSIONAL MATERIALS – BOOKS, FLASHCARDS, PLAYING CARDS, POSTCARDS, POSTERS.

#### Pictures in textbooks

Fifty years ago, only primary school textbooks contained pictures. Books for older students contained a few maps or diagrams but only primary school books contained pictures. These were rather small, dull black and white pictures. The pictures provided visual information but did not 'create a setting', did not stimulate the imagination, did not reflect the personalities of different characters. They were, frankly, uninspiring.

Today we ask pictures in textbooks to create settings and personalities which cannot be created within the classroom. Pictures must still inform, but they should also inspire and motivate.

#### Flashcards

Flashcards are pictures on individual cards which may illustrate individual items, actions, qualities, or scenes from a story.

Flashcards are used in two ways. Flashcards are portable and can be placed in different locations. Children can move them, hold them up or hide them.

Flashcards can be revealed can be hidden and then revealed in a sequence (perhaps as prompts for retelling a story). Children presented with a series of hidden cards can try to predict the next card to be revealed.

Flashcards produced by publishers are usually clear, well designed and durable. They are often related directly to the lexical syllabus and illustration style of a textbook.

On the other hand, flashcards produced by children may have a greater immediacy and certainly the children feel a greater emotional connection with flashcards which they have produced.

#### Postcards

Postcards have similar contents to flashcards but a smaller. They are designed to be easier for children to hold and manipulate. Well designed postcards can be used in place of flashcards with smaller classes where the children are sitting closer to the teacher.

#### Playing cards

The original playing cards invented in the 15<sup>th</sup> century were used for educational purposes, fortune telling and for cards games.

Many of these games are based on collecting *sets* of similar cards or presenting cards in a pre-defined sequence. Many sets of playing cards for language students are used in similar ways and involve repeated use of similar language constructions.

#### Posters

Posters may be used for 'head up' presentation of scenes from the textbook. They may present words as labels in lexical or situational sets. Another form of poster can present sequences such as the alphabet or numbers. Posters of this kind provide decoration for the classroom and also reference for the children working in the class.

Other posters may be the outcome of work

done by the children illustrating stories, lexical sets such as seasons, months, days of the week. They may be the result of scientific experiments, projects or research which children have undertaken.

## THREE DIMENSIONAL MATERIALS.

### Glove puppets and finger puppets

Glove puppets and finger puppets may be designed for use by the teacher or by the children. Teachers may use puppets for presenting stories and dialogues. A puppet gives the teacher an extra (often non-threatening) personality.

Smaller glove puppets and finger puppets can be used by children in interactions and for acting out stories. Stick puppets can be used in the same way.

### Craft work

Many textbooks contain suggestions and materials for craft work to be done by children. Children cut, fold and stick paper and other materials to create models and toys. Often a lot of good communicative language can develop from the instructions given by the teacher to the children. The products of craft work may be used for further language work in class or taken home to show parents.

## AUDIO RECORDINGS

### Language

Audio recordings can bring a range of native speaker voices into the classroom. These recorded voices can be repeated endlessly without any change. The voices may be speaking scripted language or acting out a scene. This scene may be created by sound effects or appropriate music.

These recordings can be used as models for children to repeat. These may as an alternative to the teacher's voice. Like pictures, the recordings should inspire imagination, curiosity, emotion, humour and involvement.

Many teachers also make audio recordings of their students speaking English. Not only do the students love listening to themselves, the recording provide a record of the students' speaking ability.

Audio recordings are also used for listening comprehension activities. These may be carefully scripted, providing plenty of factual and linguistic repetition or they may be authentic recordings of

unscripted interviews with children and adults.

Good audio materials need to be accompanied by carefully prepared tasks which focus the children's listening. In principle, if the recording is linguistically difficult, the task should be simple. If the recording is easier, the task can be more challenging.

Audio recordings of graded reading materials can also be a source of valuable extensive listening materials. Children may listen to the recordings whilst looking at the pictures in a book or 'finger-reading' the text. If children are allowed to take the cassettes home, they can use the recordings as 'bedtime stories' before they go to sleep. This is a very good way to maximise the children's exposure to comprehensible spoken English.

### Music and songs

Music without words communicates emotion, rhythm, and in some case scenes and stories. Music can stimulate imagination, lift energy or calm students down. Music can provide a rhythm for language activities or physical movements including dances.

Music can be used as a stimulus for many creative activities including writing, drawing and speaking.

Music can be used as a timing device for children working within a time limit.

The music of songs without the words allows children to sing with full accompaniment in karaoke style.

Songs combine both text and music. They can be used for comprehension, vocabulary work, pronunciation and as an aid to memory.

Songs are often used to conclude a lesson and as a link from one lesson to another.

## VIDEO

### For language presentation and practice

Video combines moving images (either live action or animation) with language and or music. Video is an immensely powerful medium making complex language comprehensible through the additional visual information. Video has a remarkable power in imprinting language in children's memories.

Video can be used for basic comprehension, or by removing either the picture or the soundtrack,

as a stimulus for children to reconstruct the original – providing the language or describing the pictures. Children can attempt to accurately reproduce the language of the video or they may try to improvise their own language for the scene.

Video may also be used for karaoke providing the lyrics on screen and the music on the soundtrack.

### **Video for cultural input**

The broadening of cultural horizons is a major aim of many foreign language programmes. Video can provide stimulating and accessible input which allows children to visit other countries without leaving their classroom.

### SOFTWARE

#### **Language input and practice**

Software can combine live action or animated video, with still images spoken or written language, music and sound effects. Used creatively, software can provide programme language input and practice of both vocabulary and patterns. Computers can even simulate interaction. Many computer games have a natural inbuilt narrative structure.

Computers are good teachers because they are supremely patient and never get angry.

Computer programmes can be used for email contacts with other learners. Word processing programmes can be used for developing and printing texts. Drawing and painting programmes can produce illustrations and designs.

Project work can lead to presentations in the form of a web page as a modern alternative to the traditional scrapbook..

### CONCLUSIONS

Each new area of technology has potential for exploitation in the primary foreign language class. However we must always remember that our focus must always be on the mental activity inside our students heads and the effects in terms of language development.

*Nick Dawson Cambridge 2003*