



Tips for Teachers

Realia: Real Motivation in the EFL Classes

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EFL teachers can use realia as one of the best ways to motivate students, arousing in them curiosity and concern about English speaking countries and their way of living. They can also be used in class as any ordinary text which students have to scan to find specific items of information, but if the teacher announces it as a contest involving answering questions, students will feel much more motivated and our EFL class will be “different” that day.

How to Proceed

- a. Collect as many realia as possible—tickets, labels, magazines, posters, brochures, invitations, etc.
- b. Prepare an envelope for every group you are going to have in class.
- c. Put about ten realia into each envelope and also a sheet of paper with questions about those realia.
- d. Make groups of four or five people, tell each group to choose one of the envelopes and finally give them a time limit to answer the questions.
- e. When they run out of time, swap the envelopes between the groups and give each group an answer sheet to correct the questionnaire they were given.
- f. Tell students to give one point to each right answer.
- g. Collect the marked sheets and write the score on the blackboard giving each group the opportunity to correct their own questionnaire again—thus students will realize which mistakes they made.
- h. The winning group is the one that gets the most points.

An Example

These are the realia questions and answers of one of the envelopes I prepared for my class.

Realia

1. American (questions 1-5): magazine, two posters and a map of the USA.
2. Australian (questions 6-10): surfing information and two brochures.
3. British (questions 11-15): ticket, cut-out from a magazine, brochure and recipe.

Questions

1. Name an American magazine for young people
2. Which is the thirteenth largest city in the USA?
3. What does CNN stand for?
4. When was Coca-Cola born?
5. Which is the state between Wyoming and New Mexico?
6. Name an Australian surfer.
7. When is it winter in Perth?
8. What's the maximum speed limit in Western Australia?
9. What is Cervantes for Australian people?
10. Name a non-government community organization working to conserve Australia's heritage.
11. What does LRT stand for?
12. Who is Zara Phillips?
13. Name one of the most striking Megalithic structures in the world.
14. Where can you see the famous Changing of the Guards?
15. When is "Oen Cymreig Melog?"

Answers

1. Seventeen.
2. Baltimore.
3. Cable News Network.
4. On May 8, 1996.
5. Colorado.
6. Mitch Thorson.
7. From June through August.
8. 110.

9. A crayfishing town.
10. The National Trust of Australia.
11. London Regional Transport.
12. Princess Anne's daughter.
13. Stonehenge.
14. At Buckingham Palace.
15. A Welsh recipe, it means "Honeyed Welsh Lamb."

After correcting this questionnaire my students were surprised that:

- Coca-Cola is so old,
- in Australia it is winter when in Spain it is summer,
- Cervantes, who is a famous Spanish writer, is also an Australian town,
- Welsh is such a "strange" language.

Some students asked me for a photocopy of the Welsh recipe, which was also written in English, and a groups of girls asked if they could borrow "Seventeen."

Conclusion

Using realia in the EFL class proves a positive and rewarding experience since it:

- makes lessons more interesting and enjoyable,
- is a link between language learning and sociocultural learning,
- brings EFL classes nearer to the English speaking countries,
- helps students to "discover" and process new input,
- is a good complement to the usual reading materials.

I do hope other readers of the *TESL Reporter* will benefit from this idea and start keeping some of the written stuff we throw away when visiting an English speaking country—it can be recycled with great benefit in the classroom!



Now Showing: Teaching English with Movie Posters

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American popular culture exerts a tremendous influence on teenage learners' lives in such a way that it seems a shame not to harness this energy as a motivator for the EFL classroom. However, many EFL teachers are at a loss for exactly how to turn student interest in the movies into productive classroom work. Of course, you could show more films or excerpts from films in class, but that is not always the solution.

Why not use movie posters instead? The following set of guidelines outlines a method for using Hollywood movie posters in the EFL classroom. In the *Now Showing* unit of work, after observing actual movie posters, students create movie posters of their own for an ideal movie featuring an ideal cast, an ideal plot and so on. The unit is appropriate for intermediate to upper-intermediate groups from about 14 years of age and up, and it takes about 10 hours of class time to complete.

Preparation

Gather about twenty-five posters and label them with a number. These do not have to be actual movie posters, but they may be advertisements in film fan magazines that are identical to the actual movie posters. You could also collect page-sized movie posters from the Internet by making printouts of movie web sites. Using authentic materials is one of the keys to success in this unit and in other classwork with texts. Comprehensible input leads to productive competence. Therefore, teachers should choose the texts carefully according to your group's level of maturity and English proficiency, and they should grade the tasks that students perform with these texts rather than grade the texts themselves.

Prepare tasks with past participles like *directed* and *produced*, present participles like *starring*, *presenting* and *introducing*, prepositions like *with*, *by* and *in*, and vocabulary like *coming*, *now showing*, *preview* and *debut*. In addition, plan to give students plenty of class time to work in groups.

Procedure

Make students aware of the unit they are about to take part in by giving them a handout with the unit title, *Now Showing*, and the following statement, which students will be able to say when they complete the unit of work: *I can make a poster for an ideal movie and display it for my classmates to see.*

Observe Authentic Movie Posters

While observing the authentic numbered movie posters, have students do an exercise such as this one:

Observe five movie posters and check (x) the information they contain: *movie slogan, director's name, producers name, scriptwriter, soundtrack, nominations, movie studio, actor/actresses, based on a novel or true story, recommendations*

Remind them to pay close attention to the style of language, layout and illustrations used in these authentic movie posters because of the posters for their ideal movies they are going to make later on.

Perform Tasks for Language Presentation and Practice

Work with verb forms, prepositions, and vocabulary using the tasks you have prepared above. After having observed the authentic movie posters above, the students should be able to contextualize these points according to what they will need for the ideal movie poster assignment which will come later.

Plan the Poster

Now the students must begin to plan for the ideal movie poster writing exercise. They must do an exercise such as this one, which is designed to have them focus on what they want their posters to contain:

In groups check (x) the five (or more) points from the ones above that you want to include in your ideal movie poster.

Make the Poster and Display

In their small groups, students will have chosen which elements from the ten listed above they want to include in their movie poster, and they should now go into details, discussing which actors/actresses, director, singer for the soundtrack, etc. they want to include. The groups may easily reach compromises by including a favorite actor/actress for each member of the group. The groups that have chosen to include a movie slogan or a recommendation should make sure to select their language in such a way that it is realistic, catchy and grammatically correct. At this stage, give them ample leeway for creativity in other aspects that make these posters and texts functional in their authentic contexts; for example, the illustrations and layout of the poster are key.

Follow-up Activities

Once the posters have been displayed on the walls of the classroom, have students walk around and choose a movie they would want to see. Also, in a looping exercise,

Have students complete the observation exercise from above using the movie posters produced by themselves.

Have students classify the ideal films into types, whether they are horror films, romantic films, dramas, animated films, suspense films, action films, science-fiction films, or comedies. Also, have them reflect on what else besides English they learned during this unit, for example, what they learned about the film industry. In addition, in groups have them write a positive comment about each one of the movie posters, and give them to the groups anonymously.

Try to open up any avenue possible for publication of the movie posters. This may be a hallway display, school magazines/newsletters, or even posting on the Internet, depending on the facilities at the disposal of each teacher.

Variations and Adaptations

For more mature or higher proficiency groups, you may want to add a research phase in which your students use reference materials or even the Internet to gather a rich data bank to draw from when writing the posters. Also, with these groups you could adapt this unit in such a way that students make posters for other types of artistic performances, such as plays, concerts, or orchestra performances.
