

Dr. Gail Verdi, Assistant Prof. Elementary Ed. and Bilingual Ed. Kean University
Email: gverdi@kean.edu Phone: 908-737-3908
Erica Holan, Assistant Director Kean University National Writing Project
Email: eholan@kean.edu Phone: 908-737-0410

Making Pictures: Using Imagery, Storytelling and Story Structure to Develop Fluency

Language Level: Beginning
Grade Level: Elementary Pre-K to 4th Grade
Language: ESL and Native Speakers
Focus LLS: Imagery (LLS = Language Learning Strategy)

Content Objective: Analyze student and teacher responsibilities and relationships
Language Objective: Listen to and recall the story in preparation to retell it
Strategy Objective: Use imagery to understand and recall the story

Strategy Rationale: Forming mental images or drawing pictures helps one remember the information or story plot. Linking pictures to events is a natural and fun way to learn. Even as early as Elementary school, students can use and discuss the strategy of imagery.

Materials: A story, paper, pens, crayons.

Thaler, M. (1989). *The teacher from the black lagoon*. New York: Scholastic Books
Watch Video: http://www.ovguide.com/movies_tv/the_teacher_from_the_black_lagoon.htm

Connect to other activities using *The teacher from the black lagoon* and check reading levels for various reading programs:
<http://www.teachervision.fen.com/fantasy-fiction/lesson-plan/18134.html>

Preparation:

1. Gather students in a circle and introduce the story you are going to tell. Make sure to tap into students' background knowledge, and encourage predictions about the story. Before you begin, ask students what they will do to remember the story. Write ideas on the board, and comment positively about them.

Presentation 1:

2. As you begin to tell the story (or listen to the story on tape), ask students to close their eyes and listen: Stop at an appropriate spot in the story, and ask students what they imagine the characters are doing in the scene:

- Does anyone see a picture of the scene?
- What do you think the characters look like?
- What do you see?

Ask students to volunteer. Tell students that they are using a learning strategy called imagery, or making pictures. Ask students to repeat the new words "imagery" and "making pictures."

Why did you do that? Write down comments and respond positively.

I also use the strategy of making pictures because it helps me remember things that I hear, read, or study. The clearer I make the image, the better I remember.

3. Demonstrate the strategy. As you continue the story, describe what you are seeing in your mind.

Practice 1:

4. As you continue the story encourage students to practice using the strategy.

"As I tell the story (as you listen to the story), I want you to practice the strategy of imagery. I will stop to ask you what pictures you have made in your head."

5. At an appropriate place in the story, stop and ask students for their images. Finish the story in this fashion, ask students for their images when the opportunity allows.

- What images do you have in your mind?
- Has anything changed from the first time?

Presentation 2:

6. After reading the story, draw a quick sketch of your mental image to demonstrate how drawing is also part of the strategy. "The pictures remind me of the most important things that happened in the story."

Practice 2:

7. Have students work in groups to draw pictures that will help them remember the story. Have students retell the story again, using their pictures.

Evaluation:

8. Ask students to retell the story. (Focus on the imagery, so students can report more detailed accounts.) Hold a discussion about the use of the strategy.

- Raise hands if making pictures helped you remember the story.
- Raise hands if you would use the strategy again.

Expansion:

9. Discuss other contexts in which the students can use the strategy. For example, when reading a text in their first language or in English. They can use the strategy when learning vocabulary.
10. Tell students they will try this with a reading at home and the next day they will share their stories in class.

NCTE/IRA NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

1.Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

2.Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.

3.Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound–letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

6.Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts.

11.Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA)

1. Integrates current educational trends in standards, content-based language instruction, learning strategies, and portfolio assessment.
2. Provides explicit instruction in learning strategies that will assist students in meeting national curriculum standards.
3. Accelerates academic achievement in English Language Learners (ELLs).
4. Modeled on social-cognitive learning model emphasizing the role of students' prior knowledge, collaborative learning,

and meta-cognitive awareness and self-reflection.

The Five Phases of CALLA Instructional Design Combining Content, Language and Strategies

The five phases are recursive, allowing lesson planning to be flexible:

1. **Preparation Phase:** Teacher finds out what prior knowledge students have about the content topic being taught, their level of language proficiency, and their ability to use learning strategies for a particular task.
2. **Presentation Phase:** Teacher uses a variety of techniques to make new information and skills accessible and comprehensible to students (demonstrations, modeling, and visual support).
3. **Practice Phase:** Students use the new information and skills (learning strategies) in activities that involve collaboration, problem solving, inquiry, and hands-on experiences.

4. **Evaluation Phase:** Students self-evaluate their understanding and proficiency with the content, language, and learning strategies they have practiced.
5. **Expansion Phase:** Students engage in activities to apply what they have learned to their own lives, including other classes, and cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Selecting Initial Strategies to Teach

- Start with the simplest strategies (imagery/visualizing) and build to more complex ones (summarizing/organizing and planning).
- Start with strategies that the students already use, and show them how the strategy can be expanded for more advanced uses or for different tasks.
- Start with strategies that have the widest applications in the class. Think of how to adapt the strategy for reading, listening, speaking, and writing and for learning content. Examine curricular goals and select strategies that will help students reach the most goals.

Critical Thinking and the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach

- Critical thinking can be described as the ability to question an author, text, point of view or experience. Many ESL students, as well as native speakers, need to learn how to use questioning as a literate practice. Linguists as well as educators often refer to this as critical pedagogy, social justice theory or coming to consciousness (Freire and Macedo, 1987; Christensen, 2000; Apple & Bean, 2007).
- Critical thinking can be described as the ability to use a variety of learning strategies such as prediction and organization to solve problems (tasks) and learn language and content (Chamot, 2009).
- Critical thinking is also the ability to recognize and discuss learning strategies. This is referred to as utilizing metacognitive skills. Students develop a sophisticated vocabulary while

learning content (history, science, math) and acquire the patterns of a second language (question formation, story formats) (See Chamot, 2009, Verdi & Polirstok, forthcoming).

The following questions elicit information about students' thought processes.

- What are you going to do?
- How did you come up with that?
- What makes you think so?
- What were you thinking about?
- How can you solve your problem?
- What led to that decision?

The following questions help build students' metacognitive awareness.

- Did that strategy help you?
- Why was that strategy helpful for this task?

- Is there another strategy that might work better?
- In what situations does this strategy work well for you? When does it not work so well?

References:

Apple, M. & Beane, J. (2007). *Democratic schools: Lessons in powerful education* (2nd ed.). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Chamot, A. (2009). *The CALLA Handbook: Implementing the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach* (2nd ed.). New York: Pearson.

Christensen, L. (2000). *Reading, writing and rising up: Teaching about social justice and the power of the written word*. New York: Rethinking Schools.

Freire, P. & Macedo, D. (1987). *Literacy: Reading the word and the world*. Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Publishing.

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