

Signpost

Mark Thompson



Signpost is a unique visual approach to communicative English created to complement the "approved" texts and help decrease the students' dependence on the written word. In this text, language is introduced through illustrations and aural guidance, and the emphasis is placed on acquisition and learning before production. The material in the text and the supplemental material in the Teacher's Guide is designed to satisfy the needs of a class that meets up to three times per week.

Thanks for coming by.

I'd like to say a big thanks to all the teachers I saw at the recent ETJ conference in Tokyo in October. I got a great deal out of it and I hope you all did, too. I'll be back up your way in January for the Yokohama ETJ conference.

Paul Shimizu



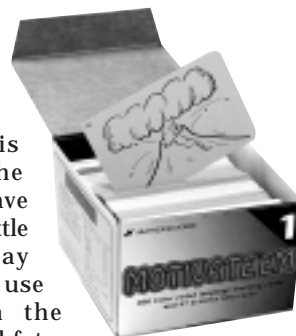
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The MOTIVATE'EM Corner

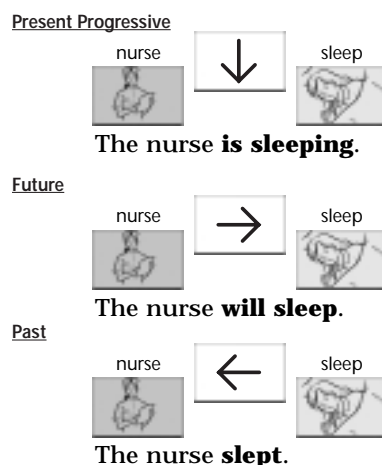
Changing Tenses

In all the years I have used the Motivate'em cards, I have never changed tenses. The sentences my students created were all of the form, "The nurse is sleeping in the train." So I have thought of a little idea which may enable you to use the cards in the simple past and future tenses, as well as the present progressive, by using a card or symbol which "signals" the tense of the sentence. "The nurse is sleeping," could become, "The nurse slept," or "The nurse will sleep." I am reluctant to use actual written words with my students, so on a blank white card, I draw an arrow pointing right to indicate the future tense, an arrow pointing left to indicate the simple past tense, and an arrow pointing down to indicate the present progressive tense.

I don't think you will be able to get student production right away unless your students are very good. So it may be beneficial to show your students the sentence. "The nurse is sleeping." With the card indicating this tense placed above the sentence. Then, in order to tune up your students' listening ability you could play a game where you say a sentence, "The nurse is sleeping," and your students have to make that sentence with their image cards and the correct tense card. You



could even make it a competition by putting your students in pairs or groups of up to 4 students, then calling out the sentence. The first group to make the sentence correctly is the winner. This game will require extra sets of cards, so if you only have one set you could have your students in pairs on one table and call out different sentences and tenses to different pairs. After you feel that your students are ready to produce the language, have them make sentences and tell you what they have made. Questions will naturally follow. "Is the nurse sleeping?" "Yes she is," or "No she isn't." "Was the nurse sleeping?" "Yes she was," or "No she wasn't." "Will the nurse sleep?" "Yes she will," or "No she won't." The sentences can also be extended. "The nurse is sleeping on the train," could become "The nurse slept on the train," or "The nurse will sleep on the train." Even longer sentences can be produced like, "The nurse is eating a pie on the train."



CLASS ACTS

THE NEWSLETTER FOR ENGLISH TEACHERS IN JAPAN

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Be positive!

For those of you who are in the nascent stage of your teaching career and who have not yet fallen into the, "I must have control!" trap and used anger to try to get that "control". There are a couple of issues. Firstly, real "control" of the kind which has students working and learning in a comfortable environment doesn't come from a set of hard and fast rules. This is not to say that the rule book should be thrown out of the window. Students using their mobiles in class, coming late or talking while you the teacher are trying to explain something is patently a non-runner. Real "control" usually comes from your attitude towards the students and the environment you create in the teaching area. Simple calmness and a friendly demeanour are infinitely more powerful than anger. Anger, sarcasm and generally negative responses to students' actions undoubtedly bring diminishing returns in the classroom. Furthermore once a teacher has embarked on these methods of "control" the very thing that a teacher may be aiming for becomes even more unattainable. Positivism usually begets positivism. I usually reward positive behaviour with a positive response. In addition I do not respond to negative behaviour with a negative reaction; I often even go so far as to do something positive. So be positive and enjoy your students.

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Paul Shimizu

Guided Visualisation in the EFL Classroom: Stimulating Learners to Tap into Their Latent Creative Potential

Much has been written about guided visualization (image streaming/sensory stories) and its applications in the holistic sciences and counselling. However, it can be adapted and re-modeled to be used in the classroom as an effective affective tool. For those unfamiliar with guided visualisation, theoretically speaking, it is a technique that promotes whole brain functioning by opening up the higher cortical areas of the brain.

So, when verbalising an experience that you are seeing in your mind with your eyes closed, you are in fact causing your brain to make new neural connections across both hemispheres. As a result, the language centres in the front part of the left hemisphere are cross-linked to the optical centres in the back part of the right hemisphere. In practical terms, this technique enables you to use your verbal language skills in tandem with your optical visualisation skills. In so doing, you are making it possible for new pathways of thought to be generated in the brain, which in turn help to unleash your creative potential.

The guided visualisation activity that I would like to share with you is one that I have been using for many years - it has been adapted from an unknown source (if anyone knows the origin, please let me know). I very much enjoy using this activity because it is always successful and works particularly well as a 'climate' builder (warm-up) at 9:00 in the morning when students are especially unsettled and have things on their minds other than studying. While engaging in this activity, each student naturally imagines something very different and unique and they then enjoy telling and sharing their stories with the other members of the class. After doing this, everyone seems to relax and this creates the perfect springboard to launch into the other activities planned for the class. This activity really does work. Feel free to adapt it further to suit your teaching context. Do give it a try!

Step 1

I turn the lights off and ask students to close their eyes. I then announce that I will be telling them a story and that as I read, I would like them to use their minds to 'see' the story.

Step 2

I read this story:
You are in bed. It is 3:00 am. You hear a sound coming from outside. You wake up. Now, look around your room. What do you see? Listen. What do you hear? Now, you get out of bed and walk towards the door. Look down at your clothes. What are you wearing? Now look at the door. See it. Touch it. Open the door. You now smell food. What do you see? Do something. What do you do? Where do you go? What do you do next?
OK. Now open your eyes!

Step 3

I now distribute a handout with the following questions and I ask the students to write their answers:

1. How big was the room?
2. What could you see in your room?
3. What did you hear?
4. What were you wearing? What colours?
5. How big was the door? What colour was it?
6. How did it feel? What kind of food did you smell?
7. What did you see?
8. How did you feel?
9. What did you do? Where did you go?
10. What did you do next?

Step 4

I now ask students either to get into pairs, groups, or to mill around the classroom sharing their wonderful stories. On some occasions I ask students to write-up their story for homework.

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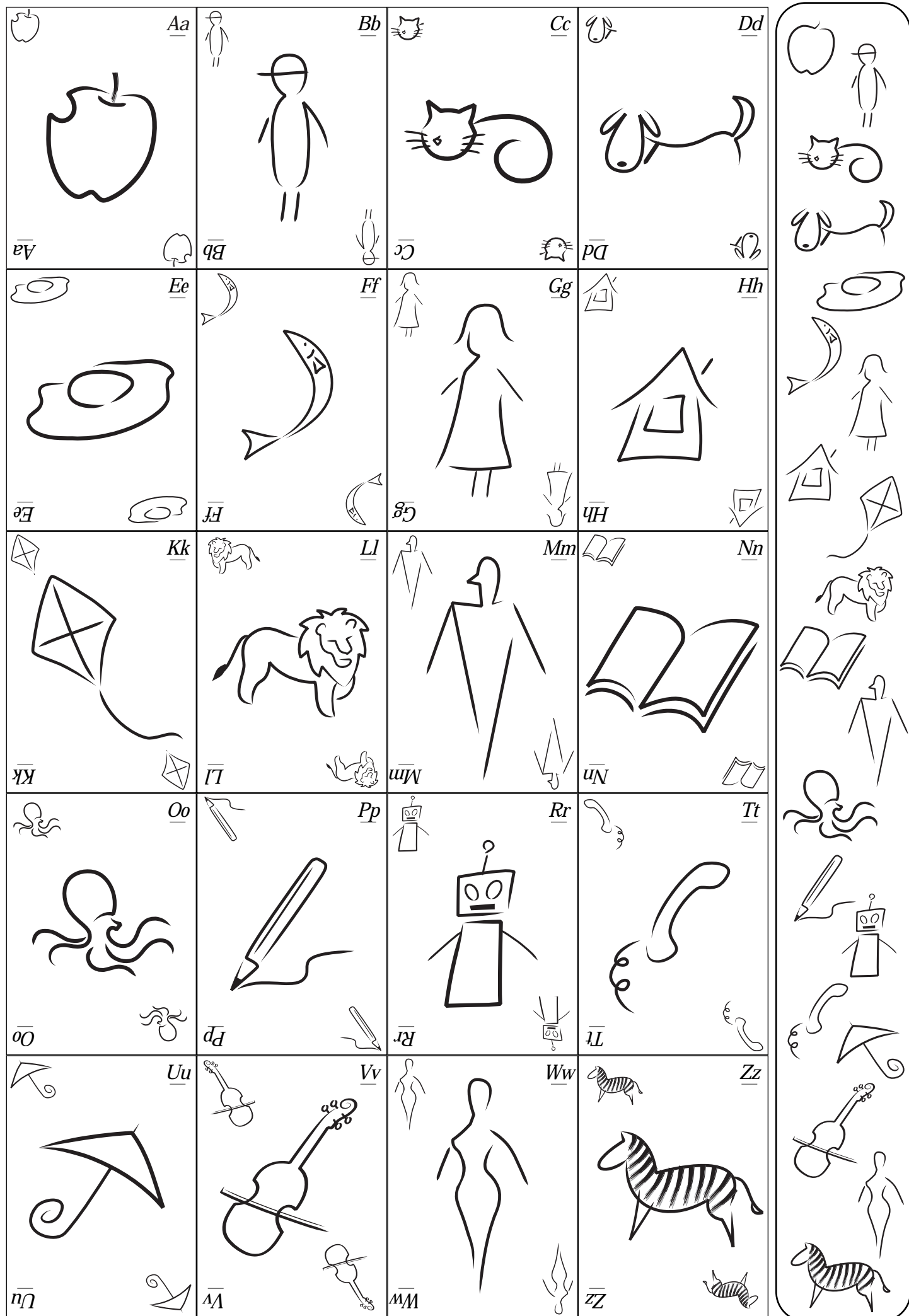
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Teacher's Forum Opened!



The forum is open, and it's not only to discuss Intercom Press publications, but for all teachers to share ideas and activities and to ask questions about teaching English in Japan. Moderated by Chris Chase, co-author of *Natural Speaking*, the Idea Exchange has already presented a dilemma. Should it be the teacher's forum or the teachers' forum.

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Card Activities

The Cards on the facing page are only a part of the card set created for use with *Signpost*, a new conversation text for junior high school students, written by Mark Thompson.

Many of us use card activities already, and though some of these ideas may not be new, we would like to review some methods for using cards. If you have any further suggestions please send them in and we'll try to publish them. We would like each student to have a set of cards, so copy the facing page and give one sheet to each student. It is actually possible to copy the facing page onto thin card thus giving a more robust set of cards. If you can't copy them onto thin card you could have students paste the paper copy onto card instead. Then, before your students cut out the cards have them draw a pattern on the back with coloured felt tip pens. That way students have an attractive and easily identifiable set of cards.

Next, let's conduct a class using these cards. Remember, don't feel obliged to do what we say, use your imagination and knowledge to come up with other activities.

1. Introducing Vocabulary (Show Me)

There are numerous ways to introduce vocabulary, but as the set of cards we will be using is not entirely new to many students, we will introduce the language through a safe, guided yet challenging activity that requires a physical, but non-verbal response from the students.

Have students spread out the set of cards face up in front of them. It is not necessary to have them in any order. Next, call out the sentence, "Show me a (dog)." In the beginning, it may be necessary to give your students guidance, so pick up your own "dog" card while saying, "Show me a dog." Do so for all the cards until the students are comfortable with the vocabulary.

2. Card Bingo

In Card Bingo, have students select sixteen of their twenty cards. Set aside the unused cards. Instruct your students to arrange the cards face up in a 4 x 4 grid. Tell them to turn over each card as you call the word. Be sure to instruct the students that Bingo is any four cards in a row, and that they should call out "Bingo," when they get one. Now, use the image bank on the facing page or take the top card from your own set of cards, and call out the bingo game.

Don't forget to check the Bingo. Depending on the level of the students, they could call out only the item or a sentence you would like them to practice.

We will practice the language, "Do you have a (house)?" in this game, but you could easily practice any of the following as well. ie. There is a (). It is a (). Do you like ()? I bought a (). and many more.

3. Review (Show Me or Speed Up)

Here are two methods to review the vocabulary. The first is similar to our introduction activity, but it is unlikely the students will need the guidance this time.

The second method (Speed Up) is a more competitive activity, and depending on the number of students in your class may best be done in groups. I suggest groups of 3 or 4 students with one set of cards (face up). When you call, "Show me a (telephone)," students should compete to find the card and raise it up. Give a point or reward to the first to raise the proper card.

4. Group Bingo

Now, set the students up to play Bingo on their own. Have students get into groups of five. One student will be the caller and should stack his set of cards face down in front of him, while the other students choose 16 cards and create 4 x 4 bingo cards as they had done before. Instruct students to play bingo, by having the caller take the top card and ask, "Do you have a (zebra)?"

As students get Bingo, have them check their accuracy by saying the winning line. Perhaps, "I have a (), a (), a () and a ()." or "I have a (), I have a (), I have a () and I have a ()." or at the simplest level, just "A (), a (), a () and a ()."

Have students take turns being caller by moving the caller one place to the left after each game.

5. Go Fish

This activity requires three sets of identical cards (use about 16 cards per set, ie. 48 cards). Groups of three or four students is best. Tell students the idea of the game is to collect as many sets of three identical cards as they can. Deal out 5 cards per player and place the rest face down in the center of the table. To play, the first player should ask any other player the target language, ie. "Do you have a (kite)?" If the student being asked, does have a kite, she must give it to Player 1, saying "Yes, here you are." If she doesn't have the card, she should respond, "No, go fish." Player 1 selects one card from the center of the table and play moves to the player to the left of Player 1). When a student collects a set of three images, she should place them face down in front of her. The winner of the game is the student with the most sets of three images.