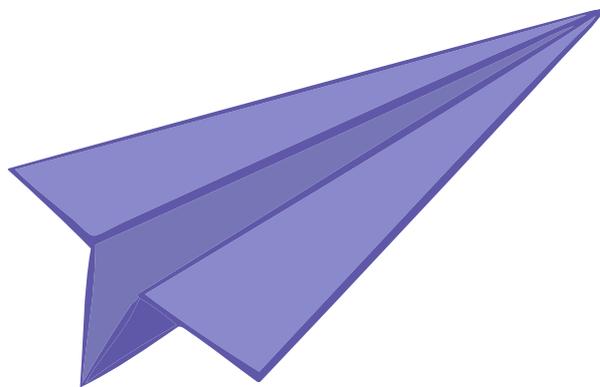


Training Package Vol 3



CREATIVE THINKING IN LITERACY & LANGUAGE SKILLS

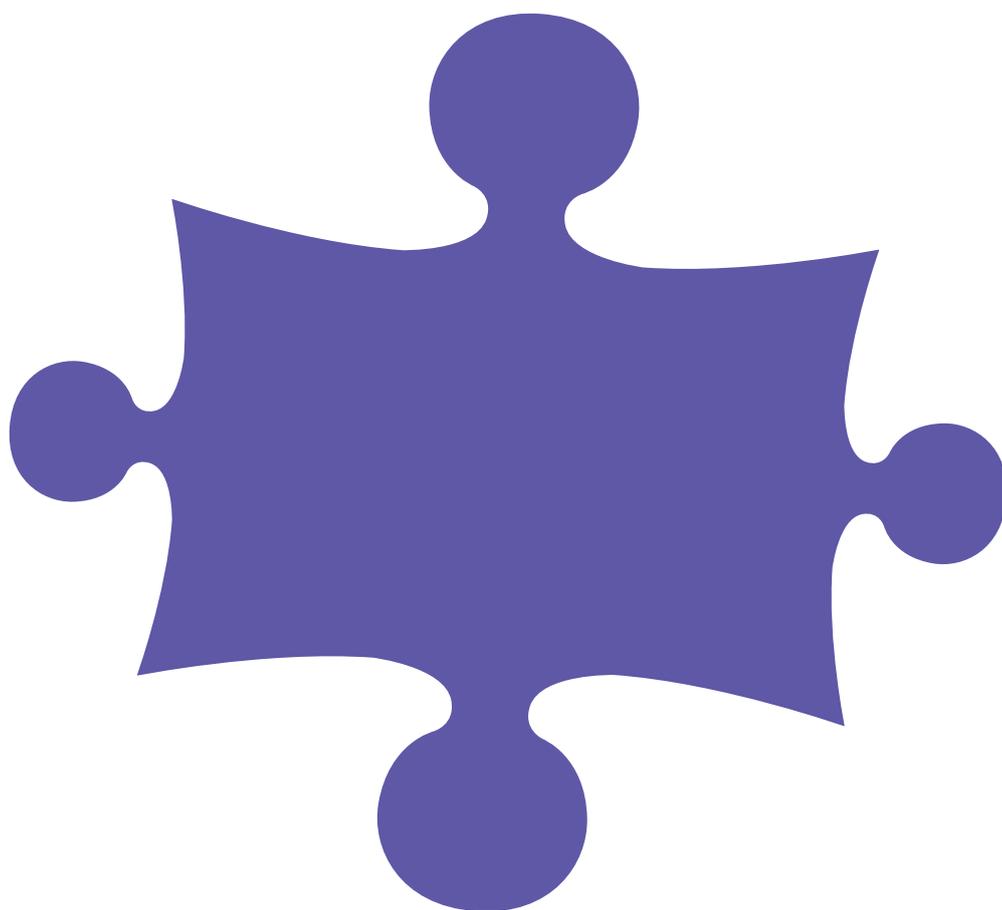
Narrative



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About this Training Package

'Learning by doing' is a principle of effective learning that is as true in the learning of creative thinking as it is in any other subject.

While we may read the innumerable articles and web pages dedicated to the practice of creative thinking, it is not until we have sat down and confronted a problem, equipped with our various creative thinking tools, that we will actually learn how to apply the various techniques to generate creative outputs.

The accompanying Training Guidelines provide step-by-step instructions to enable learners to understand the basics for themselves OR for trainers / teachers to facilitate training sessions with the same objective.

The Training Guidelines are recommended as a starting point, as they provide a high degree of contextual information in support of the various creative thinking methods. However, for those who wish to either extend the teaching of the Training Guidelines through a series of semi-prescriptive activities, or for those who wish to start their creative thinking learning journey at the coal face (where the real work happens), this Training Package provides the support and tools required to do so.

Thematic topics

The training guidelines have been developed within four thematic topic areas.

- **Art & Design (Volume 1)**
- **Media (Volume 2)**
- **Narrative (Volume 3)**
- **Responsive learning (Volume 4)**

These topic areas are deemed to be appropriate to a wide range of foreign language and literacy learning situations, with readily available resources and extensive opportunities for on going development.

Each thematic topic activity set is contained in its own volume.

Activities

The training package contains a total of forty ready-to-use activities; ten activities per topic area.

Each activity has a title and activity number, and includes information relating to the primary creative thinking method exploited by the activity, as well as the various aspects of language and literacy learning that it addresses.

In addition to the main creative thinking inspired activity, there is often guidance on developing extended activities for learners. In most cases these activities demand higher levels of competency / understanding or require greater learner autonomy. They should be considered as starting points from which you are encouraged to develop your own context-relevant activities.

Background information is often included in the form of guidelines, to ensure that all trainers / teachers are able to deliver each activity with confidence.

Creative Thinking methods

The primary creative thinking method employed in each activity is described with sufficient detail to facilitate that activity.

While couched within a specific activity, you should note each underlying methodology for use within your own resources, keeping in mind that the various creative thinking methods are designed to be flexible and interchangeable. Re-combining methods to achieve effective creative thinking 'routines' can be very rewarding, as it demonstrates a developed working understanding of the field.

For further explanations of any creative thinking method you are advised to make reference to the accompanying Training Guidelines.

Film clip narration

Thematic topic	Narrative
Creative thinking method	Generation of alternatives
Primary skills addressed	Writing, speaking
Secondary skills addressed	Listening, reading
Resources required	Film clip and video projection

Overview:

In this activity the students will be asked to narrate a film scene. The teacher may choose to select a scene from a film that is relevant to current study, or alternatively a non-related scene. If an internet connection is available, online services such as YouTube or Vimeo may be used to obtain an appropriate source clip.

Background information:

Writing for narration

To support this activity, you may wish to follow a few guidelines to support a more descriptive narration for each film clip.

While visual information will be presented, it is without any sound, ambient or otherwise, so the narrator has an opportunity to evoke many elements of the scene through 'vivid' description. To achieve a vivid description each group may choose to answer the following questions:

- What can be smelt?
- What can be tasted (if anything)? (this may include tastes 'in the air')
- What can be seen, both on screen and off screen?
- What can be heard?
- What can be felt, such as heat, wind, vibration... even a mood or tension

Concrete V abstract language

Abstract language is often used in speech, though it can remain ambiguous or lack the necessary detail to evoke strong responses or thoughts within people.

Compare the following:

- It was a nice day (abstract, as nice can mean many things and remains vague)
- The sun was shining, I felt the breeze cooling the beads of sweat dripping down the back of my neck.

In the first sentence the statement does very little to motivate or direct the reader's interpretation, whereas the second statement creates a far more directed meaning. When creating narration for the film clip, think about using concrete language to direct interpretation, even if this challenges what is seen on screen. Narration can be used in this way to make the viewer think beyond the images presented.

Activity:

Pre-select a film scene for the class. It would be helpful to select a scene which includes only two or three characters, as more characters can make the activity confusing. Show the scene without sound; it may be necessary to show the scene more than once.

The students may work in pairs or small groups and they should begin by using the creative thinking methodology 'generation of alternatives', which enables the students to create a thorough list of possible solutions before settling completely on one idea. After viewing the clip once or twice, the students should write down 5 different scenarios for the scene, which they have just watched. At this point you may ask your students to share their plot ideas with the wider group.

After this initial brainstorming session, each group should write one of the narration ideas from their list of five options. This should include an introduction to the scene and improvised dialogue. Before the class comes to an end or during the next session, each of the groups may present their dialogue along with the film clip. This activity will involve reading along to the film clip, perhaps with an element of expressive acting for the dialogue elements.

After the students have presented their scripts you may wish to play the original clip with sound. This may then be followed by a compare and contrast discussion of the original audio and the scripts of the students.

Extended activities:

In the extended activity you can make use of an additional creative thinking tool 'what-iffing', which is the introduction of questions that begin with 'what if?'. This type of question is stimulating and requires students to look at things from another angle.

The teacher may suggest some what-if questions in order to promote even more creative solutions. They may try questions such as:

- What if the scene is from a horror/comedy/thriller/drama?
- What if the actors were lovers/enemies?
- What if this was last/beginning scene of a movie?

The questions can be posed using the same clip and the students may want to recreate their scripts accordingly. You may choose to pose a different what-if question to each group or the same question to all of the groups.



Eulogy

Thematic topic	Narrative
Creative thinking method	Changing perspective
Primary skills addressed	Writing
Secondary skills addressed	Speaking, listening
Resources required	Eulogy examples

Overview:

A Eulogy is a piece of prose, normally delivered orally, that reflects back on the life of someone and summarises everything. The author of a eulogy should attempt to be eloquent, unique and interesting. Thus, this is the aim of the exercise for learners to create a meaningful piece of text.

Background information:

Writing a eulogy

A eulogy is usually an oral recollection at a funeral or memorial service of someone who has died. The person who gives the eulogy does not need to be a poet or author; this is something anyone can do. To start with the author of the eulogy should reflect on the life of the person that has died. They should then write down the more meaningful moments and events, attempting to be specific and concise. The outcome should be genuine and can include a hint of comedy, if this is felt appropriate.

In order to carry out the eulogy writing exercise the following guidelines are provided to support your learners. (Continued in next column)

1) Decide on what style and/or mood the piece should communicate. Should the piece be serious or should it be light-hearted?

2) Think about the audience for the eulogy. It is important to select your words carefully. You want to be sure that you will not offend family with particular comments, also ensure references do not embarrass or upset other attendees. If you wish to include more extreme or unusual stories about the person, ensure they will not shock anyone.

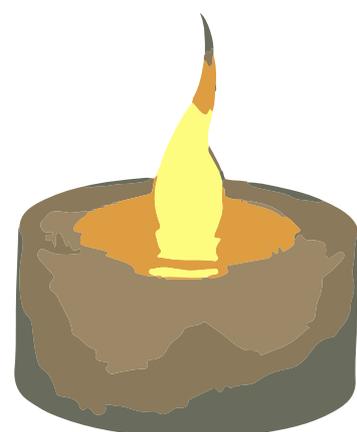
3) To start the speech, it is important to identify who you are and what kind of relationship you had with the person who has died; provide a context for your perspective.

4) Describe the general information about the person. This does not need to touch on each aspect of their life, but the major highlights and accomplishments. Do not forget to also praise other persons who had a major impact on that person's life.

5) Try to reminisce on specific events which highlight the traits of the deceased person. You could reflect on a specific time when they were very generous or when they had a theatrical performance.

6) Be quick and organized when speaking. Spend time beforehand organizing the details and like any good story include a beginning (introduction), middle and end. Choose language that is easy to understand and avoid speaking for more than 5 minutes.

7) Don't forget to practise before hand in order make sure you are well rehearsed. Obtain a second (or third) opinion, as others may detect errors that an author may overlook.



Activity:

While this activity is to write a eulogy, it will not be a conventional one. Your learners will not write a eulogy for a person who has died, but rather for an inanimate object, e.g. candle-stick, key-ring, pen, notepad, paper-clip, bowl, broom, a pair of glasses etc. the eulogy can be quirky, serious, loving, horrific etc. It could be for an object that was once owned (and cherished) by the author, but now it ceases to exist, or was lost or broken.

The creative thinking approach employed in this activity is 'changing perspectives', which forces someone to look at the familiar from an unfamiliar perspective, thus generating new insights.

Before beginning the activity, you are encouraged to share the eulogy writing guidelines with your learners, along with a small number of examples. There are many examples of eulogies available online.

To begin the activity, the learners should spend around five minutes deciding on the object to eulogise. This should happen as part of a formal brainstorming activity that has a quota of at least five objects for each participant. It is important to generate a range of options before a decision is made to select one object for use.

At the end of the brainstorming session each person should declare their final choice of object, offering a very brief explanation of why this object was chosen, without giving away the content of the eulogy.

There is a twist in the activity, in that the objects selected by each learner should be re-assigned to a different learner. The recipient of each assigned object will only have the short explanation of the chooser to base their eulogy; this will require a large degree of imaginative writing.

You may push the creativity level of the students by stopping them after five or ten minutes and asking the students "What if the Eulogy is not about writing the positive things, but rather to point out the faults of the object's life?" The students should go back to eulogy and adapt it accordingly.

Once the writing is completed the learners may pair up and practise reading aloud to each other, which may lead to some adaptation / revision of the eulogy.

Example:

Here is a positive reflection on an inanimate object.

Eulogy of tea-light candle

When I first laid eyes on you, I knew I had to have you.

Your bright, flirty colour fitted my bedroom decoration perfectly.

I took one whiff of you and now you would fill my room with the sweet smell of cotton candy.

You filled my room with light for two long evenings.

I knew we wouldn't have forever, but I am thankful for every second of happiness I shared with you.

As I saw the wick burn down, your flirty colour faded, it was evident your time was coming.

As I rested my final rest with you, I never left your side.

You will forever be my sweet smelling tea-light.

Extended activities:

An additional activity would be to challenge the use of adjectives in the learner's work with a thesaurus, attempting to replace the adjectives with ones that are more specific to the feelings the students shared with the inanimate object.



Read all about it!

Thematic topic	Narrative
Creative thinking method	Word association
Primary skills addressed	Writing, speaking
Secondary skills addressed	Listening, reading
Resources required	News article and photographs

Overview:

Newspapers are a valuable source of media that can be used in language and literacy, offering an array of different activities. It can be helpful to use a news article to introduce a new theme or grammar structure, highlight current events or even to refresh vocabulary.

This activity makes use of a newspaper article along with a photo. It is best to select an article that is a report of a past event, and one that includes quotes. The photo will be used for an “associative thinking” task and the article will be elaborated with the creating thinking methodology “generation of alternatives” which will allow for the interpretation of the article’s story line.

Activity:

Begin the session by presenting the photo from the pre-selected article. This article should also include any caption (though not the story headline) that goes along with it. Ask the students to describe what they see in the picture, along with the information from the caption. Here the students will use ‘associative thinking’ in order to gather and come up with as much information as possible related to the photo and caption. This enables the learners to use learned vocabulary and even learn new words. When you think that the learners have collected adequate responses, they can begin the next step of the activity. The responses should demonstrate breadth, while still being associated with the media provided.

You should inform the students that the picture is taken from a newspaper. The students should now use the creative thinking methodology ‘generation of alternatives’ to try and come up with a title for the article. They may all already have ideas as to what the article is about, but now they have the challenge to think up a title. Each student should write down between 4 and 6 different titles for the article. For this task you should provide sufficient time, while creating a bit of pressure. With the task completed, write down the titles on the board to see which titles are more unique and which are more common.

To conclude the session you should reveal the actual title of the newspaper article and discuss to see which learners were closest to the original and which titles were far from being similar; answers that are unexpected are certainly not wrong in this context.

Before revealing any more information about the article, you may introduce the main elements of the newspaper; some of which have already been introduced, i.e. photo and caption and also the title. The key features which they should identify in this activity include the following main elements of a newspaper article, i.e.:

- headline – several words which should attract the attention of the readers
- sub-headline – a short statement which elaborates the main headline
- introduction – identifies key items in the article: who, what, when and where
- body – provides additional details about the events

Some articles also include:

- photograph with caption – which help to attract the attention of the readers and to support the content of the article
- quotes – from key actors in the article i.e. experts, eye-witnesses

The article should be presented to the learners to read. This activity it is also important to identify any new terminology and or phrases.

The final activity includes reviewing the article and rewriting it from a different point of view. For example, if the article is about a fire in an apartment building and an eye-witness commented on how he was saved from his balcony by a fire fighter, then the story may be re-written from the point of view of the eye-witness. This re-telling of the event would differ from that of the journalist, who simply re-told the story from an outsider's point of view. The article from the eye-witness may begin with when he first became aware of the fire, how he tried to leave the apartment, what he encountered and what he felt.

To conclude the students can present their rewritten articles to the class.

Extended activities:

As an additional activity the students should be asked to write a prelude to the article. They should think about what happened prior to the article. If the article was about an apartment fire, then the students may want to write about how the fire got started, e.g. a neighbour had a candle burning on a table and the cat accidentally knocked it over onto curtains which quickly started a fire that was uncontrollable.

The students will have to think about what kind of alternative actions could have preceded the event that took place in the article. Following a brainstorming process that sets a quota of alternatives before a final narrative is selected for the written article.

The activity can be presented to the class and together the students can decide which action is most realistic, most unusual etc.



Step-by-step

Thematic topic	Narrative
Creative thinking method	Associative thinking
Primary skills addressed	Writing, speaking
Secondary skills addressed	Listening, reading
Resources required	None

Overview:

We perform daily tasks which we no longer have to think too much about, we basically run on auto-pilot, e.g. brushing our teeth, making toast, tying our shoes, taking a shower etc. Since the majority of the people we associate with are also familiar with these activities, we never really need to provide a detailed account on how we complete such tasks.

Background information: Creating instructions

By following a small set of guidelines your learners will be better equipped to create usable step-by-step instructions to complete any task.

- Think like a 'user' – This means that you should consider what the user of the instructions may be thinking at any time, rather than assuming that because you know how to do something, that other people will also know.
- Use active voice – Using active voice will emphasise the user, ensuring that the subject and verb are clear in all sentences. For example, in the shower scenario you may say 'You will need to step inside the shower and turn the water on'.
- Know your objective – Ensure you are clear what it is that your guide will support, and if it is a multi-step process ensure that there is a definite start and end to the instruction set.
- Make it easy to understand – Use language that is as simple as it needs to be but no simpler. Use common vocabulary rather than technical terms, even if this means writing a little more.
- Test your instructions – While you may not be able to test all instructions in reality, you can ask others to read your instructions and to offer feedback on their clarity and logic.

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Activity:

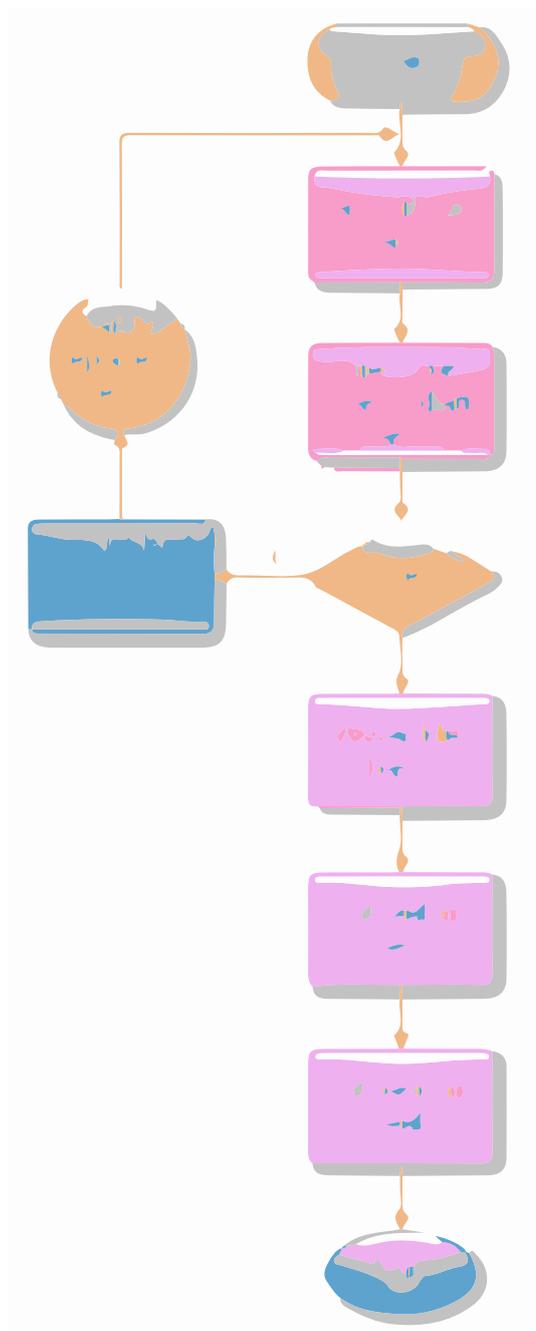
This activity begins with a 'word association' activity which requires learners to conceive words that are associated with the task selected by a teacher. Sometimes a word association game may be done aloud where the goal is to try to not repeat a word previously said and to come up with new creative word. As a short warm-up activity, the teacher may ask students to complete a round of word association with a word like 'summer'. A round of word association may follow the following sequence (or similar): warm, sun, beach, water, swimming, bathing suit etc.

Once learners are familiar with this game, they (or you) should think of a task which they perform daily or at least regularly, followed by a word association game to generate words that they associate with the task. For example, the task of taking a shower may generate words such as: scrub, soap, wet, hot, relaxing, water, tap, drying, shampoo etc. Once all learners have created their personal list of associated words, you should gather them in to determine which five words have been written with the greatest frequency. Ensuring all five of these words are using, each student should create a step-by-step guide of how to perform the task (taking a shower in this case). The guide, which is effectively a set of instructions, should be clear that someone who is unfamiliar with the task can understand it.

Extended activities:

As an additional and more demanding activity, re-set the step-by-step instruction tack, only for this second attempt your learners are not allowed to use the five key words used in the first exercise.

This will demand that learners either source alternative words as replacements, or they need to re-write instructions in different ways, maintaining the same objectives.



Story creation

Thematic topic	Narrative
Creative thinking method	Associative thinking
Primary skills addressed	Listening, speaking
Secondary skills addressed	Writing
Resources required	Selection of images

Overview:

In the traditional language classroom repetition is quite common and most students have their memorised responses and questions. “My name is Michael and I am 26 years old. What is your name?”

Quite often for students who prefer the traditional language classroom it can be quite scary to have to speak on the spot and have to create a question or answer without much thinking time, though this skill is necessary in order to succeed in acquiring a foreign language. In literacy terms learners may find that they lack confidence in using new vocabulary and grammar, tending instead to rely on familiar and stock phrases.

This activity takes the idea of spontaneous speaking in a narrative style, without being afforded too much thinking time. Students need to listen carefully and be prepared to adapt their responses accordingly. This should be a fun and relaxed story-creation lesson which is a great way to warm-up or wrap-up a lesson. Although the students will have to speak spontaneously, they will have a cue card with a picture which can be provided by the teacher. So even those students who say they “aren’t creative”, will have a cue to initiate their response.

While a picture is prescribed in this activity, it may be possible to use an object or objects, providing they evoke certain thoughts and/or responses.

Activity:

The activity makes use of the associative creative thinking methodology, which will enable learners to make an association between information or ideas contained within a picture, which they have, and an emerging storyline. You should distribute a different photo/image to each learner at random, as well as providing a theme for the story that the students are about to create, i.e. love, hope, adventure, fortune, loss etc. Selecting the theme can also be accomplished via a random or semi-random process, which you may or may not choose to involve your learners in.

Once each student has an image, the learners should think about what they see in the image and how this may fit into the story theme that has been assigned. In order to create a successful story, the learners who are unfamiliar with any of the vocabulary or characters featured in the image, should be given the chance to ask for clarification.

Now you can inform the learners that they are going to create a story and each of them will make a contribution, in turn. The first learner should start the story with “Once upon a time...” followed by a few original sentences about the photo which they have been given, relating these ideas to the specified theme.

You may want to take the photo and hold it up to show the other learners. This may help other learners to make connections with visual stimuli and the narrative theme.

When the first learner has provided their contribution, the next learner should continue the story from where the previous learner concluded, continuing the narrative. The student should be allowed a short period of time to think time before beginning the next sentence, though offering too much time may defeat the objective of developing spontaneous language Oman unfamiliar context. Keeping in mind that this is the learning objective, you may afford the learners a degree of latitude in their narrative structure / flow, as being too strict may inhibit responses.

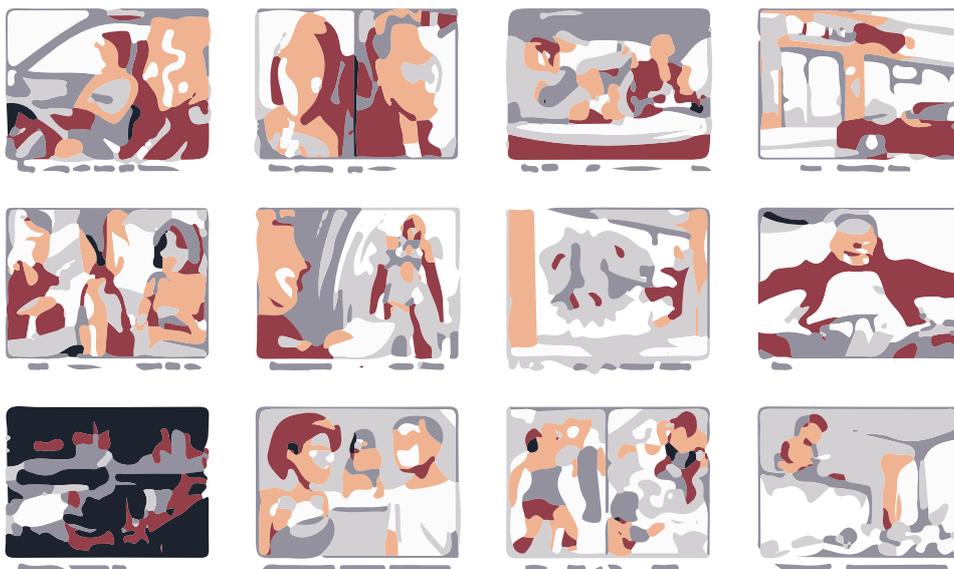
Learners can try to make the story more or less difficult for subsequent contributors, though it may take a number of attempts at the activity to become this strategic. It is important that all learners pay close attention to the sequence of contributors, since the last person will have to make sure to the end story.

An alternative option for this activity would be to use only one photo to begin the story and then each student should continue on with the story without the use of another photo. The teacher may want to begin the story or a student is selected to start. For this option the teacher may choose to use a photo out of a lesson book or a picture which is in the classroom. The students should be allowed 5 seconds to think up of a response.

Extended activities:

Closely connected with the narrative that has emerged, you may lead a discussion on the vocabulary and language structure that emerges, particularly elements that are new or are known to be problematic to the learner group. Learners should be encouraged to recall their own contributions, as well as the contributions from other learners. There is also an opportunity to develop the verbal narrative into a more formal piece, using it as a 'draft' plan or as a looser idea plan, in which a subsequent written piece 'borrows' from the narrative ideas rather than following it strictly.

Additionally, and as an out-of-class extension to the activity, task learners with collecting a series of images, five would be a suitable number. From this personal sequence ask each learner to lay them out in a random order and to follow the same process by electing a theme, then using each image in the sequence to drive the narrative ideas. While this process is similar to the classroom activity, it will allow each learner to develop more consistency in the narrative style. This may be prescribed as preparation for more formal narrative development exercises, such as writing.



Travelogue

Thematic topic	Narrative
Creative thinking method	Oblique thinking
Primary skills addressed	Listening, speaking
Secondary skills addressed	Writing
Resources required	None

Overview:

This activity is ideal for reflecting on a past class excursion or for learners to recollect a trip which they have made in the past. It does not matter whether the trip was to a nearby concert or an overseas holiday. The learners will develop a short travelogue, which is their account of the travels or visit. It is possible that a specific trip or event is used specifically for this task. The activity is not purely about writing a travelogue, this is a starting point, rather the details of the travelogue will be used to develop a fictional narrative piece. As part of the translation from a travelogue piece to a fictional narrative, oblique thinking strategies will be employed to promote more creative ideas.

Background information:

Writing a travelogue

A travelogue is normally the account of a journey or a trip from the personal perspective of one person. Travelogues have been developed through history, with the travelogues of European explorer Marco Polo documenting his experience in China during the Mongol ascendancy, seen as excellent examples.

The writing of travelogues can be and often is very individualised, though it is important that subsequent readers are able to learn from the travelogue. The travelogue can include virtually anything encountered on a trip or visit, including what someone ate, saw, conversations they may have had, and perhaps more general observations such as aspects of local culture, architecture and general environment. Travelogues are typically written in the first person 'I'.

There is also a history of travelogues existing as fictional works (typically they are non-fiction), such as Jack Kerouac's 'On the road' and Robert Pirsig's 'Zen and the art of motorcycle maintenance'.

In addition to personal experiences, include information that will be useful to other travellers / visitors.

- Try to convey that the atmosphere of the places that you visit, which may include talking to the 'locals'. Include parts of your interviews if it will be of value to others.
- Provide historical and cultural information about each place.
- Don't be afraid to add humour to your travelogue, though be careful not to create a comedy manuscript (that's another genre).
- Proof read and edit your travelogue. Until you publish / distribute, view it as a work in progress, change as and when necessary.
- Avoid including yourself in pictures of environmental importance, such as architecture or natural elements such as waterfalls.
- Try to offer information / insights that is not already in the standard travel guides (these are different to travelogues).
- Try not to judge the customs / traditions of the people in the places you visit.
- Take notes and photographs while visiting and do not delay writing up your travelogue; the information can quickly leak from your memory.



Activity:

The learners will have to develop a short travelogue following a class excursion or class event. This may have occurred previously or as part of this activity. Failing this you may ask your learners to recall a previous trip, visit or holiday. Refer to the associated notes 'Writing a travelogues' as the basis for the initial exercise. Encourage your learners to think about things that they noticed when visiting the place, aromas, people and dress, how they felt before, during and after the trip etc. and why. If your learners have artefacts from a visit trip, encourage to make reference to these with photographs or drawings.

The travelogue should be 2-3 pages in terms of volume, which may include visual elements alongside written work. Learners should keep in mind that a travelogue should have a value to an external audience, despite it being written from a personal perspective. Before learners begin creating their travelogues you should ask them to create an outline of the trip. This should serve as a means to correct errors before they have been included in the piece and to provide an opportunity check and clarify problematic grammar and/or vocabulary.

Once the travelogue is complete, this is likely to have been in a discrete lesson or even over a number of lessons / homework, you can then introduce the creative thinking element.

Ask your learners to create a piece of fictional writing, a short story that is based on the information contained in their travelogue. However, rather than just assigning this task you should introduce a separate element, that of oblique thinking strategies. Oblique thinking strategies are in fact a type of random input, designed to stimulate alternative thinking that would not have occurred without this process, though unlike regular random input stimuli, oblique thinking strategies are a little more cryptic and open to varied interpretation – which is a good thing.

- A revelation that could change the world
- When all is said and done, there's no place like home
- Everyone just seemed so normal...to start with
- Celebrity lifestyle isn't that great
- Hope and expectation are the currency of the disappointed
- Absolute panic

As with all creative thinking activities, the briefing should be followed with formal brainstorming to develop multiple ideas for each scenario, before a final idea is selected. Try to avoid learners jumping on their first idea without considering at least 5 others.

Once learners have completed their stories they can read out in class or distributed amongst other learners, peer feedback at this stage is encouraged. As the facilitator of the class you may choose to compile all of the stories in a digital folio or single edition, perhaps introducing the works with a description of the creative process that was followed to arrive at the final works.

Extended activities:

As an extended activity the learners can take their travelogue and rewrite it from a different perspective. If the learners originally wrote the story from their point of view, then they may want to rewrite it from another character's in the story. For example, if the student wrote a story about a visit to a museum, then they may want to rewrite from the point of a security guard working in the museum or maybe even one of the statues in the museum.

For the activity the learners should think about how the events have changed or how the scenario would be different. Here the learners should focus only on the writing piece of the travelogue.



Thingamabob

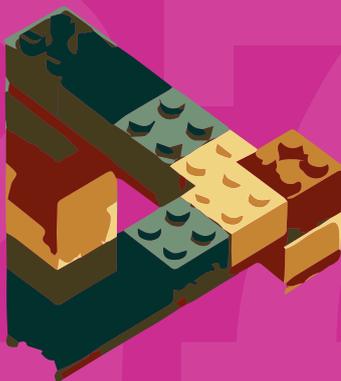
Thematic topic	Narrative
Creative thinking method	Generation of alternatives
Primary skills addressed	Writing, speaking
Secondary skills addressed	Listening, reading
Resources required	Lego blocks or similar

Overview:

Giving and receiving instructions is something that we all encounter, whatever language we are speaking and whatever level of language ability we possess. In its simplest form the giving or receiving of instructions is in oral form, someone speaks and someone listens. However, instructions also come in different forms such as written instructions, images such as maps, pictorial sequences to show an instruction, even instructions integrated into objects or places, 'slide out' or 'you are here'.

In this activity learners will be tasked with creating some kind of engineered model, a 'Thingamabob', actually constructed with Lego blocks (or similar), and then create a set of instructions so that classmates that have not seen the engineered model could reconstruct it.

The activity will rely on the creative thinking method the generation of alternatives, in which each problem must be approached with a multiple of possible solutions, before one is ultimately selected.



Background information: Writing instructions

While some of the following guidelines may be obvious, it is still worth having some guidance to refer to so that instructions are more efficient.

1. Know exactly what the task is – know how to begin the process and what the end result should be / look like
2. Plan how to write the various steps in order
3. Write instructions beginning with a verb
4. Write each step has a small simple step – avoid over complicating with long multi-step instructions
5. Write the steps in the most logical order, as your reader will expect you to do this
6. Include warnings if necessary, such as 'you must do x before y'
7. Review and edit your instructions
8. Try to express instructions in the positive, such as 'do this part...', rather than 'don't do ...'
9. Avoid expressing opinions, preferences or choices, as instructions are not about what might happen, or preferences, what someone could choose – be direct.

Activity:

Learners should be divided into small teams of 3 and 4 members, and able to work away from other groups, as classmates should not be able to see the various thingamabobs as they're being developed and constructed.

Each group should be given a theme as a starting point, which can be different for each group or the same for the entire class. The theme should be broad enough for interpretation, avoiding situations where the resulting thingamabob could be easily predicted. Themes such as playtime, shopping trip, industrial, medieval, would provide suitable themes to work with.

On receiving the assigned theme, each group should engage in a formal brainstorming session, aimed at generating a list of at least 10 objects, large or small, associated with the given theme.

Encourage groups to generate more than 10 responses if possible, as it will help with the subsequent selection stage.

Once a group has their 10 or more associated objects present them with Lego (or similar) building blocks. You may want to limit the number of blocks available to avoid the construction of over-complicated objects, as this may prove problematic later on. With the blocks the group should consider their list of associated objects and decide which object from the list they feel they can represent by constructing a Lego block model. This model is the thingamabob, and it can be literal or suggestive.

Once decided the group should construct the thingamabob, paying attention to the process of construction. At this point it is a good idea for one or two members of the group to take notes of the process.

Once the thingamabob has been constructed, which should be a small part of the lesson time allocation, the group responsible for this thingamabob should create a set of instructions for another group to reconstruct the same object. The instructions should be written though they contain graphic elements, as long as they are not images of the thingamabob.

In the instruction process groups are encouraged to generate multiple possibilities of explanation at the various stages, rather than just relying on the first suggestion. The process should be one of discussion and selection, until the instructions are complete.

When all groups have made their thingamabobs and instructions, ask them to deconstruct their models, placing the exact blocks in a box, along with the instructions.

The boxes should be re-assigned amongst the groups so that each group receives someone else's box. If you have assigned each group a different theme, the group receiving a box of blocks and instructions should be told what theme this thingamabob responds to, as a type of clue. Their task is then to follow the instructions to reconstruct the thingamabob.

Keep in mind that the instructions should be judged, rather than the building skills. These can normally be judged by how effectively a group reconstructs the exact thingamabob.

When the reconstruction exercise activity is over, and assuming all thingamabobs have been reconstructed accurately, ask each group to explain how they responded to the theme and to justify why their thingamabob is a valid response. You can also ask groups how they found the instructions that they were provided.

As a conclusion to the class activity you can reintroduce the generation of alternatives method to create names for each thingamabob. Taking each thingamabob in turn each group should generate a minimum of 5 names for each thingamabob, with the main criterion being that it would help someone to reconstruct it BUT it does not use the actual name. For example, if a castle has been constructed, a name may be a 'fortified home', and not the word 'castle'. Encourage your learners to be as cryptic as possible with their names

Extended activities:

As an out-of-class extension to this activity ask each learner to think of a process that they go through in their life, preferably one that has a series of steps. This could be making a drawing or painting, baking a cake, exercising or dancing, fixing something that is broken or maintaining something.

Once each learner has selected a personal activity, they should be tasked with creating a set of instructions that would help or enable someone else to do the same thing. The instructions should be written and then read out to the class. Though the instructions should avoid saying what the activity is.

Tall tale

Thematic topic	Narrative
Creative thinking method	Random input
Primary skills addressed	Writing, speaking
Secondary skills addressed	Listening, reading
Resources required	None

Overview:

This activity requires learners to create a tall tale which is an exaggerated made-up story. The conception of a tall tale will enable learners to create a funny story which includes a hero with super-hero abilities (the main character), a problem which is solved creatively and many exaggerated details. Tall tales became popular in the US in the 1800s, but in almost every European country you can find such tales in traditional literature. In background information section, you will find additional information about the popular tall tale, Paul Bunyan.

Background information: Writing tall tales

The essence of a tall tale is one that contains unbelievable elements, carried out by a rather unassuming character with (apparently) super-human capabilities), presented as if they were true and factual. In some cases, the tall tale contains exaggerations of actual events, though of course the 'real' event would be far less enthralling to readers.

One of the most popular tall tales from North America is that of a man with extraordinary strength. This may serve as an example of a tall tale for the creative thinking activity. Paul Bunyan, the gigantic lumber jack with an enormous amount of strength, speed and skill, is a tall tale which originated in Northern America in the 1800s. As a child he would eat 50 eggs and 10 containers of potatoes each day. Bunyan found a baby blue ox named Babe in the forest and decided to keep him. Like Bunyan, Babe continued to grow each day. Together they worked the forest and travelled from Maine across North America. Along the way Babe was thirsty so Bunyan created holes for water which turned into the Great Lakes as we know today. They are responsible for clearing entire forests and creating farmland. The tale includes many more exaggerated elements and has been re-created in print format by numerous authors.

Below are a few general pointers for creating a tall story:

- Start by choosing by your tall tale hero / heroine. Don't forget that you need to exaggerate the characteristics of your hero / heroine, make them bigger, stronger faster, more intelligent, resourceful etc.
- Choose an adventure setting for your character, and again take the opportunity to exaggerate. Why walk to town when your hero could walk across a continent?
- Keep in mind that the tale conveys something that couldn't possibly happen in 'real life'.

Activity:

You may want to introduce the topic 'tall tale' to the learners by beginning with an example of a tall tale, either that of Paul Bunyan or one which is specific to your learning context. The learners will have to create a tale, an exaggerated, larger-than-life story, which includes the following characteristics:

- Main character / hero with supernatural powers which is completely made up or may be based on someone who actually lived.
- A setting.
- A problem which can be solved by the main character in a humorous way.
- A villain and other characters.
- Exaggerated details about events in the story.
- Elements of realistic (believable) happenings.

For all of the categories above, ask your learners to work in small groups of between 2-4 learners, and to generate at least 5 options in each case. This will generate a total of at least 25 elements.

Once the elements have been created devise a way to randomly assign them, either to the same group or to a different group, to determine the specific elements that will exist in the tall tale. The writing activity can begin.

If less time is available you could ask each group to discuss their tall tale, relating this to the class verbally.

If learners create the tall tales individually or in small groups, as written pieces, the collection may be put together into a book to share with others.

Extended activities:

After creating the tall tale, the teacher may revisit the writing and use the 'What-if' creative thinking methodology. It starts off by posing questions which begin with 'What-if...' and requires learners to conceive one or a multiple of answers. Setting a quota for this activity will promote more creative (less obvious) responses.

The types of what if questions could be similar to:

- What if half-way through the story the main character lost his/her supernatural power?
- What if the story took place in a different era?
- What if the villain turned out to best friends with the main character?
- ...

Based on the response that they liked best, ask them to re-imagine the story and offer feedback either verbally or in written form.



A day in the city

Thematic topic	Narrative
Creative thinking method	Generation of alternatives
Primary skills addressed	Writing, speaking
Secondary skills addressed	Listening, reading
Resources required	None

Overview:

This is a great opportunity to take advantage of the maps which you have collected while visiting cities throughout Europe or to learn more about major cities which you may be studying as a part of a topic.

This activity relies on a fundamental creative thinking method, the 'Generation of alternatives'.

While the generation of alternatives is one of the simpler creative thinking techniques available to us, this does not make it any less powerful, particularly as it is designed to force our thinking beyond the obvious and predictable. Coupled with the setting of quotas (fixing a set amount of responses in advance) this technique can be effective in encouraging learners to generate new and authentic language in both foreign language and literacy contexts. This method dictates that in any situation a multiple number of responses / ideas are generated in order to complete the task. The quota determines that number, and with confident and/or enthusiastic learners, a time limit can be introduced to deliberately add a little pressure that might encourage some very 'different thinking'.

Background information:

Writing letters

- Plan before you write, think about what you want to say in and put it down as a series of bullet points or create a mind map. (Continued in next column)

- Consider the information that the recipient of the letter will require before you get to the main section of the letter. If you are writing to someone you are familiar with, you will not need much except the date. If you are writing more formally, the recipient may not know who it is from, so it is important that you include all of your contact information at the top, in the right hand corner.

- You should start with a greeting which should begin on the left side of the page. The most widely used opening is "Dear" followed by the person's first name (if it is someone that you know) or Mr/ Mrs surname (if it is someone that you are not particularly familiar with) followed by a comma. If you are composing something very formal to someone that you don't know then "Dear Sirs," would be the correct greeting. For a more casual greeting, you might decide to use "Hello (name)", or "Hi (name)".

- The opening paragraph should be tailored depending on the recipient. If the format is personal, you might decide to begin with something informal such as, "How's it going?" or a simple "How are you?". If it is a more formal type, you should be direct in your opening paragraph and explain why you are writing. You should summarise the purpose and write in a clear manner so that the reader will be able to understand you.

- The body (main section) in most cases should be the most unique section. As a general rule most formal correspondence should be no more than two pages long, but personal messages can be as long or as short as you want them to be. The two most important features of the body are that you write in a clear and concise way and that you ensure that each paragraph is engaging.

- You should use the closing paragraph to indicate the type of response you are looking to obtain. If you would like a response, you may decide to include something like, "I look forward to your response" or, if you prefer a phone call/email, write "Please feel free to contact me via email/telephone".

- You should include an expression to say farewell for example "Thanks", "Cheers", or "Talk soon" selecting the correct farewell depending on the level of formality. You should sign your name underneath, then print your name under your signature.

Activity:

The activity begins with the students being divided into small groups or pairs. Each group should receive from the teacher, a map of the city which they will be 'visiting'. Based on the map they should plan a day trip to this city, even if they lack specific knowledge the city.

Before planning the visit to the city, the teacher should provide the students with a list of questions to be answered. The generation of alternatives method should be used to encourage very creative and/or unusual responses.

When posed with each question the group/pair should conceive at least 5 responses for that particular question, with all answers recorded. It is important that students consider options beyond the conventional or expected.

The questions selected for the students are listed below, though as a facilitator you have complete control over the questions and are free to change, adapt or add to this set. Set a time limit of 4-6 minutes per question and deliberately reveal the questions one at a time, for the students to generate alternative solutions to the following questions:

- How will you get to the city?
- How will you travel though out the day?
- Where will you stay while visiting the city?
- Where will you eat – breakfast, lunch and dinner?
- What monuments will you visit?
- What souvenirs will you purchase and for whom?

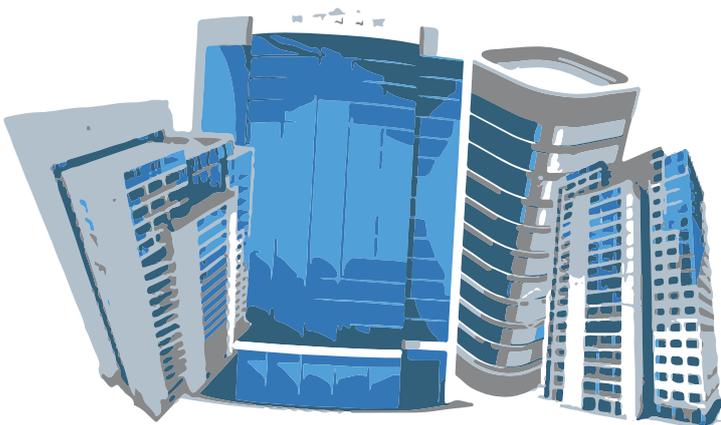
After generating at least 5 alternative solutions to each of the questions, the students should write a letter about their travels to the city they plan to visit. The letter is to a close friend who was unable to make/join the trip and therefore should be written in the past tense. An option for this exercise is to plan the trip and then write the letter in a future tense. Each group should produce one letter and at the end of the class they may read the letters aloud.

Extended activities:

For higher level courses or as a homework activity imagine the students' day trip to the big city has suddenly been affected by an unexpected event! After the students have created a text about their trip to the big city they should now adapt it according to the unexpected event, which the teacher has shared with the learners. The teachers may come up with some shocking news themselves or use one of the following:

- As the group was travelling to the city a stranger gave them 10,000 Euro, but now they must spend it before the day is over or have to return it all.
- After breakfast (on the day of the visit) they lose their purse/wallet and have no money for the rest of the day, but they still must go sight-seeing and collect souvenirs.

How would this event change their original plan for visiting the big city? As a group or individually the students should engage in a formal brainstorming session to generate a 'range' of new ideas. They may want to revert back to the original questions provided during the generation of alternative activities. The students should then adapt the original letter.



Comic strip

Thematic topic	Narrative
Creative thinking method	Associative thinking
Primary skills addressed	Writing, speaking
Secondary skills addressed	Listening, reading
Resources required	Comic strip examples

Overview:

This activity makes use of comic strips, which can be very useful on lower level language and literacy courses, where learners have limited vocabulary. Comic can be more appealing to lower level learners than books, since the amount of text which fits in the small bubble above a character's head or as a caption, is quite limited. Therefore, students do not need to worry about producing long passages of text. Short sentences or perhaps just a few expressions can be enough to communicate a story.

The creative thinking method 'associative thinking' will enable learners to consider a certain situation and think about vocabulary that is connected to the theme. You may select themes which are new in order to introduce vocabulary or you may select this activity to review vocabulary which the learners have already learned.

Associative thinking is a key element in a number of creative thinking methods. It is perhaps most significant during formal brainstorming activities and the slightly more focussed, oblique thinking activities. It relies on new ideas being formed in response to emerging stimuli, as the human brain naturally makes familiar associations with new information.

Activity

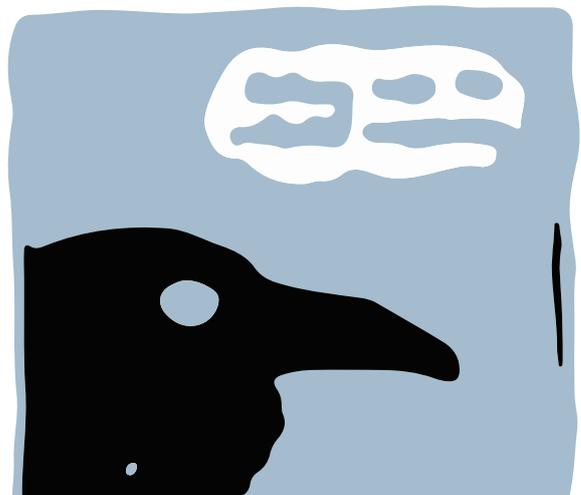
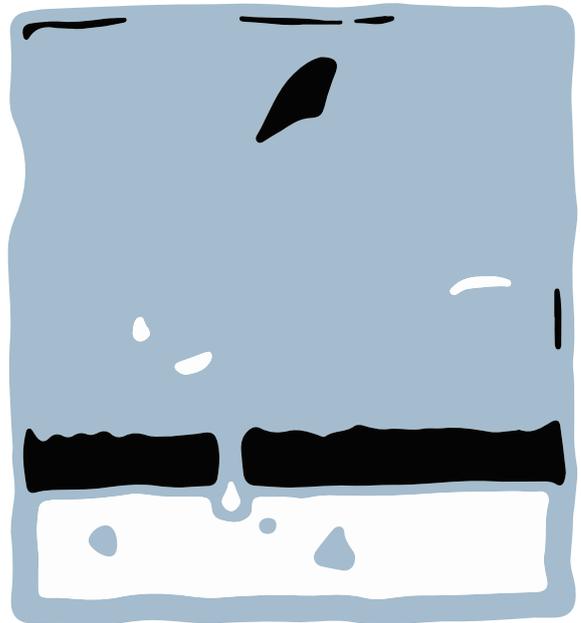
The first activity begins by presenting a comic strip to your learners. The teacher should highlight the characteristics of the comic strip, which include the short, expressive text in each of the speech bubbles or captions. Comic strips are generally a sequence of drawings either in colour or black and white, that relate to comic adventure, incident or mystery. The dialogue is printed in small bubbles or balloons above the characters' heads, with additional contextual information as captions. The pictures help to explain the story, which is typically short. A comic strip for this exercise should be presented.

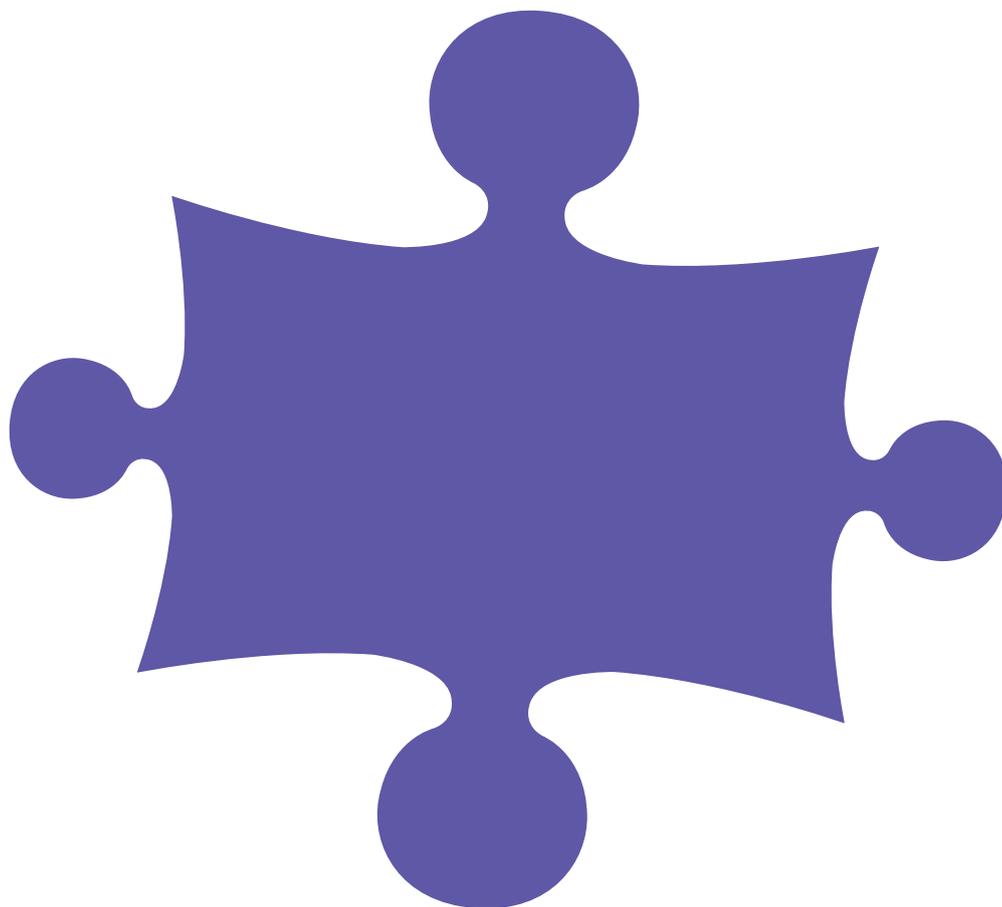
Once the students are familiar with the comic strip you should present the creative thinking task 'associative thinking' to the class. You may provide the same comic strip without any text to the students or the teacher may choose to use a new comic strip, but it is important that the speech bubbles are empty. Now the students have to create a text for the comic strip with a specific theme. For example, you may state that the comic strip subject has to do with Christmas, Halloween, a first date, a tragedy etc. Based on the theme, selected by you, the students will generate first words or expressions, which relate to the theme, and then create a text to fill in the bubbles of the comic strip. This will give the students an opportunity to refresh vocabulary and practice the proper usage of common expressions. If this is a new theme to the class, then the teacher may allow the students to come up with words and expressions they already know, which relate to the theme, but then go a step further and introduce new terms and phrases.

The students should then create their comic strips along with a short verbal summary of a short story, that goes along with the comic strip. Then they may take turns reading aloud their completed comic strips to the class along with a summary.

Extended activities:

After introducing comic strips to the students, you can ask your students to generate their own comic strip, either manually or using software available on the internet. The students can work in pairs or small groups, but you should give the students a theme for their comic strip. As in the original activity, the students should begin by thinking of words and expression which they associate with the specified theme, before creating the text for their comic strip. As a final activity the learners can put together the comic strips and create a book for the classroom.





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