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Intensive reading

Language focus The meaning of separate sentences, contrasted with the meaning of the passage from which they come. Assimilation of new grammar and vocabulary from the coursebook.

Proposed MI focus Logical–mathematical

Level Post-beginner to advanced

Time 20–30 minutes

Preparation Choose six to eight sentences from the next passage in the coursebook.

in class

- 1 Tell the students you will be dictating some sentences, and that they should leave gaps down the page between the sentences. Then dictate the six to eight sentences in random order, and not in the order they occur in the coursebook passage.
Allow the students time to ask vocabulary and comprehension questions.
- 2 Ask the students to fold and tear the page they have been writing on into slips, with a separate sentence on each slip.
Tell them to work individually or in pairs, and to arrange the sentences into categories. There must be more than one category, and there must be fewer categories than the total number of sentences. Their categories can be of any sort: semantic, emotional, grammatical, arithmetical (e.g. six-word sentences) or anything else that occurs to them. Try not to give them more than one example of what you mean by “category”, because examples hem them in. In a post-beginner class, your explanations will be in the mother tongue.
Tell them to give each category a written heading. In a low-level class you will need to give plenty of help with vocabulary.
- 3 Ask different people around the room to give you their headings, which you put on the board, and then ask them to read out the sentences under those headings. If the class is post-beginner, there will be natural recourse to mother tongue in explaining the categories.
- 4 Now ask the class to read the passage in the coursebook from which the sentences were taken. Allow time for students to comment on the whole exercise.

Acknowledgement

This way of thinking stems directly from Dr Caleb Gattegno’s mathematical approach to language teaching.