

Teaching Tips for the London Tests of English – Speaking 2

In the middle part of the LTE Speaking Test, candidates have to describe or refer to things they see in some pictures that they have never seen before. There are certain expressions which are worth learning, such as

At the top / bottom
To the left / right
In the top / bottom left / right corner
In the foreground / background / distance
Behind / In front of / Above
... there is ... / ... there are ... / ... I can see

It is also important to make appropriate use of the present continuous and the present simple, e.g. 'A man is walking among some trees. He looks happy...'

The following activities encourage students to practise such language.

The imaginary picture

Mount some varied pictures and some blank sheets of paper on card. Do not let your students see the pictures. Pick one picture and one blank sheet, and hold them up so that only you can see which is which.

Tell your students that you are going to describe two pictures: one which is on one of the pieces of card you are holding and one which *you are imagining* is on the other. The students have to listen carefully and decide which picture is real and which is just in your head. Give a brief description of the real and the imaginary picture and encourage your students to ask questions to help them decide which the real picture is. Students can, for example, ask for more and more detail and see when you struggle to answer or ask the same question more than once to see if you supply different answers.

Having modelled the activity in this way, get half your students to take pictures and blank sheets. They must now describe their real and imaginary pictures to their partners who must ask questions to work out which is which.

Picture memory test

Find a detailed picture. Tell your class to look at it for one minute, after which you are going to test their memory. Next, when you have concealed the picture, your students listen as you describe it. In the description you should include a number of mistakes. The students' task is to make a note of all the

mistakes they hear. When you have finished describing the picture, show it to the students again and discuss what mistakes they have spotted to see how well they remembered it. Now that you have modelled the activity, the students can take turns to find and describe pictures to test their classmates' memory.

Question and answer practice

To help them anticipate the kinds of questions they might encounter, it is a good idea to get students themselves to look at pictures and to think about the kinds of questions that they could be asked about them. Give them some pictures and draw up a list of question words (*Why? What? How?* etc) to help them think of questions to ask each other. Emphasise that at least some of their questions should draw on people's imagination. For example, the answer to 'What is she doing?' is likely to be obvious and to require little imagination; 'Why is she doing that?' or 'What is she thinking about?' are probably more challenging and more interesting.

Depending on your classroom situation you can perhaps get your students to look out of the window and to ask each other questions about passers by ('Where are they going?' 'Why is she running?' 'Who is he going to meet?'). Of course, the students will often not know the answers to these questions. They have to use their imaginations. This is a good opportunity to practise the language of speculation ('Maybe they're going to the beach' 'She could be late for an appointment' etc.).