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A MULTI-MEDIA APPROACH
TO
TEACHING
NARRATIVE WRITING

Yvonne Lee Khoo

Very often in English Language classes teachers merely provide pupils with a composition title, and then leave them entirely on their own to think up a plot, in the case of narrative writing, and to write out the story within two teaching periods. Pupils get no stimulus other than a title like this one – “A Burglary”.

There are many ways by which pupils can be stimulated to produce a piece of writing. What is described below in the form of a lesson outline is one way of getting pupils to respond in writing to an ‘imagined’ situation.

OUTLINE OF AN INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN

Level Primary 4 or 5.
Subject English Language.
Topic Narrative Writing – “A Burglary”.
Instructional Objective To stimulate pupil interest in producing a piece of narrative writing.
Behavioural Objective Each pupil will write a narrative composition based on his interpretation of what he hears on the tape.
Media Materials

1 A tape recording of a series of sounds representing those of a burglary. Contents of the tape include:

- an alarm clock ringing, and someone yawning;
- someone brushing her teeth, gargling, and flushing the toilet;
- sounds of footsteps across the hallway, someone saying goodbye to the cat, and a door being shut and locked;
- a pause, and then a glass pane breaking;
- footsteps again; a cat "meowing";
- drawers opened and slammed;
- sounds of a door chime and running footsteps;

2 Visual support is also provided: a set of 9 OHP transparencies or charts depicting a sequence of 'actions' of the imaginary burglary.

Teaching Procedure

1 The teacher is to play the tape, and then to ask the pupils what they think the sounds were about.

2 The teacher may have to play the tape a second time, synchronizing the transparencies with the tape. For some classes, the transparencies may not be necessary. In any case, students should be allowed to change the composition title to suit their story.
3 The teacher should provide suitable words and phrases on the board as a guide.

Student Performance

Student performance is likely to vary. Those students of average ability will tend to produce stories with simple plots, while the better students can come up with plots that are more involved.

"The best thing for being sad," replied Merlin, beginning to puff and blow, "is to learn something. That is the only thing which never fails. You may grow old and trembling in your anatomies, you may lie awake at night listening to the disorder of your veins, you may miss your only love, you may see the world about you devastated by evil lunatics, or know your honor trampled in the sewers of baser minds. There is only one thing for it then – to learn. Learn why the world wags and what wags it. That is the only thing which the mind can never exhaust, never alienate, never be tortured by, never fear or distrust, and never dream of regretting. Learning is the thing for you."

T H White, *The Sword in the Stone*