

ORAL PERFORMANCE

Useful Ideas – MATURITA

Talking about photos/pictures - describing a photo/picture

The aim of this supplement is to help students develop tools for **quick and easy picture "reading"**, not only because it is a skill "tested" in the oral part of the new Maturita examination, but also because it is a helpful method for teaching/learning "topics" and speaking in general.

Motivation: Teenage students can be very curious and inquisitive. Using photos can really help to spark their genuine interest and generate a lot of language. Grammar lessons which tend to be "boring" or demotivating can also, surprisingly, be supported with photos. To give a simple example, teaching 'used to' becomes much more memorable when sentences with a visual image can be formed. Of course there can be drawbacks...

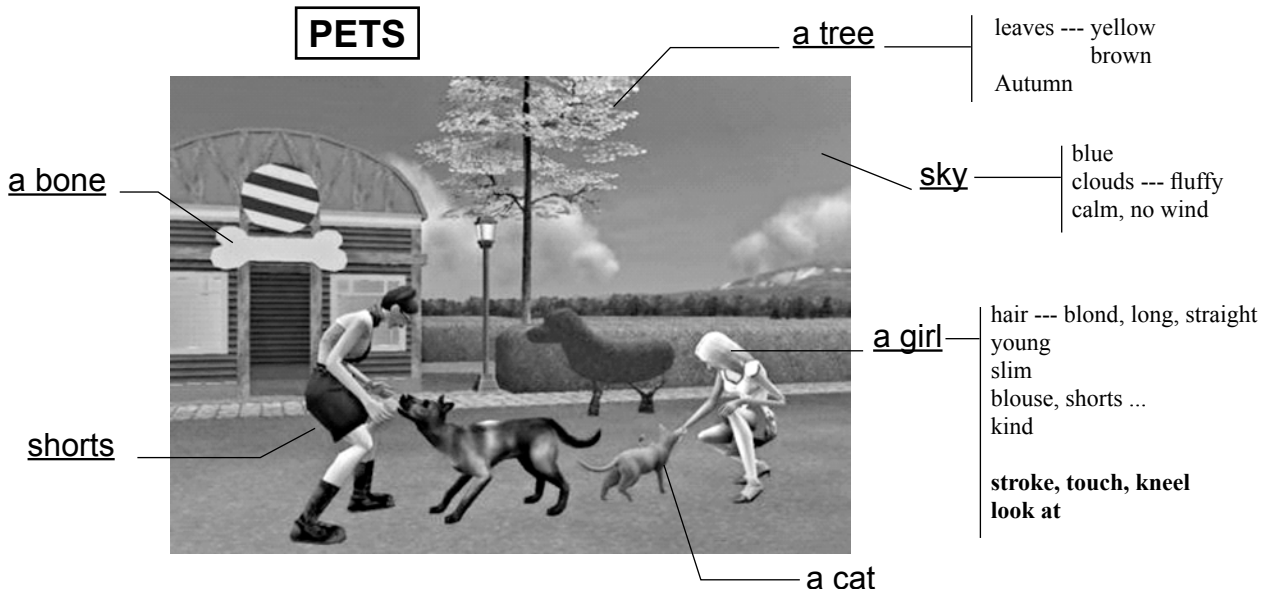
Demands: Picture/photo description can be a very cheap (no/few copies, chalk/flipchart marker), easy (planning a lesson) and modern (internet/overhead used in class) teaching method. You can, e.g.:

- ask students to bring their own pictures/photos and share them with their neighbours/classmates
- stick a big enough picture/photo on the blackboard with adhesive gum¹
- show students photos via PC (internet or personal photo bank)
- use various topic based illustrative pictures from your students' text books
- use suitable photos in BRIDGE magazine

Language levels: "Reading" pictures or photos is a suitable activity for any level of difficulty - the higher the level, the more sophisticated the description and vocabulary broadness.

Ideas for lower level students: Students could be working together on a **PROJECT**.

- A)** Give students a topic and ask them to find a suitable photo. Let them stick the picture in the middle of a piece of wrapping paper. Ask them to create a net round the picture/photo – the central theme. Ask students to build the vocabulary net or vocabulary groups starting from general to specific², from nouns to verbs, etc. Students may use dictionaries.



- B)** Do the same as in A but instead of asking the students to build a vocabulary net by themselves from the very beginning, give them a fixed framework, e.g. **Where? When? Who? What? Why?** Students may go as far as writing sentences next to the Question words using facts and imagination. Arrows leading to objects/people in the picture may be used to support their ideas. E.g. *She is stroking the soft fur of the cat.*

At the end of the activity, stick the wrapping papers on the walls and ask members of the project team to describe their "masterpiece" using the words/phrases written. Assess not only vocabulary, but also logical structure of the speech, creativity and, of course, fluency.

- C)** Ask the students to write a descriptive essay about the picture (HW or classwork) - *it's only going to take 15 minutes.*

Brainstorm some language before starting the activity.

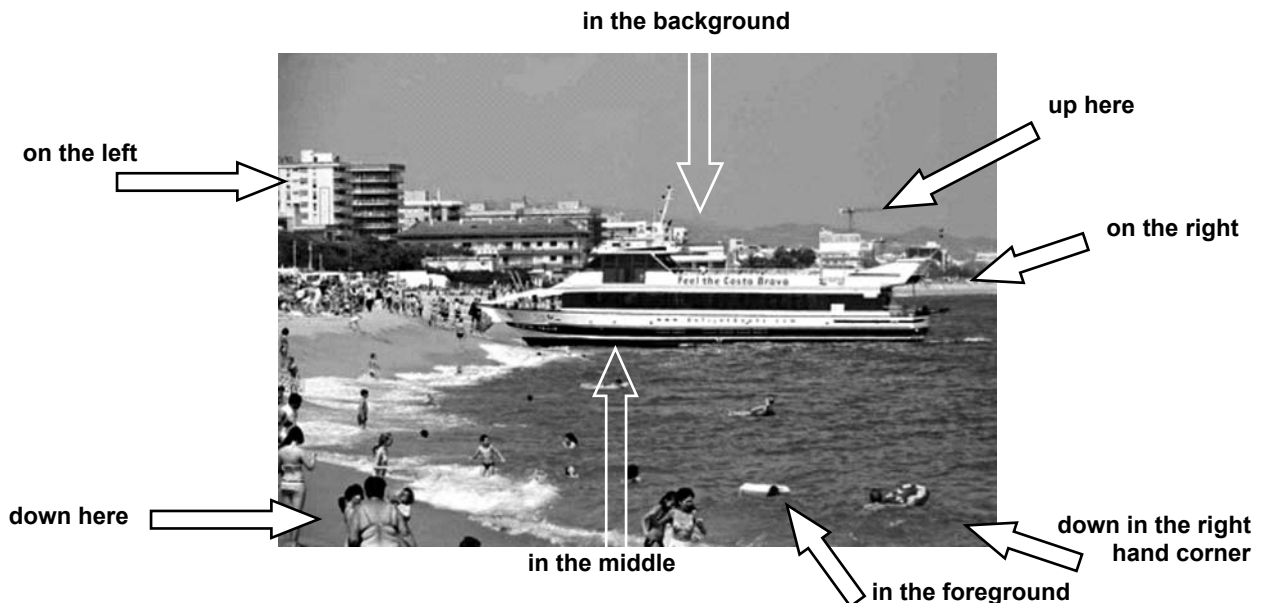
¹ Lepicí guma

² Viz metodický list – MIND MAPS.

IDEAS FOR STUDENTS THAT WORK

- **Go from general to specific.** A great help is a set structure to follow, e.g.:
 - Where? When? Who? What? Use? Why? Answers whenever possible!
 - Place, Time (season of the year, day time, etc.), People (Appearance, Activities, Clothes, etc.)
- **Use some kind of a graphic organizer** (e.g. a mind map, word map) that will help you organize information, build vocabulary and organize vocabulary groups.
- **Define positions** in the photo

The following expressions may help you describe where people, objects, etc. are located and where actions are taking place. Think of other expressions.



- **Say what you can see in the photos.** Describe what people in the photo(s) are doing, and say where they are. In your description, try to use:
 - The sentence structure **There is/are**, e.g. *In the background there are mountains/hills.*
 - The **Present Progressive** tense with the appropriate position phrase, e.g. *The woman in the foreground is running.*
- **Say how the people and things in the photo look.**
 - He/She/They/This look(s) adjective
 - seem(s) to be adjective/noun
 - look(s) like noun

He doesn't look like a professional photographer.
People sitting seem relaxed.
- If you are not sure what the picture is, **use your imagination** and say what you think it is. It doesn't matter if you are wrong. Examples of giving your opinion:
 - In my opinion, ...
 - For me, ...
 - I think that ...
- **Make guesses** about the photo. Say what people in the photo might be doing, try to guess the reason why they are doing it, what their relationship is, where the photo could have been taken and when.
 - He/She/It/They could/may/might be/seem(s) to being, e.g. *He could be taking a photo of his wife.*
 - look(s) as if pronoun + being, e.g. *It looks as if they are having a good time.*
- **Make some deductions** about the photo. Use can't or must:
 - This can't be in the Czech Republic because
 - This must be somewhere in Europe because
- If you can't see very well or you don't know, it is advisable to use one of these expressions:
 - It is hard to see. Perhaps...
 - I can't make out what he is doing. Maybe he is...
 - I've never seen anything like this before. It could be...
- **Say if you have ever been in a similar place or have experienced a similar activity. Speak about yourself!**

