Visual thinking tips, tools & techniques for the inclusive classroom

Webinar handout

by Emily Bryson

This webinar explored diverse learner needs and how to support them. It shared practical ways to overcome barriers to learning such as neurodiversity, mental health, literacy and academic skills. It demonstrated some effective visual thinking strategies, tips and tools which can be used to include all learners and their diverse needs.

What is Inclusive Learning?

Inclusive learning refers to making the educational experience suitable for everyone. Every learner has their own needs, pace, preferences, personality, beliefs and skills. For this reason, the English language classroom is wonderfully diverse. As teachers, we need to find ways to support, motivate and inspire every learner, and help them become autonomous learners.

What challenges are there?

Learners may have additional learning needs, such as:

- Neurodiversity (e.g. AD(H)D, autism)
- Specific Learning Differences (e.g. dyslexia, dyscalculia)
- Educational background (e.g. developing literacy, academic or digital skills)
- Disabilities (e.g. sensory impairment, mobility)
- Mental Health (e.g. depression, experience of trauma, unsettled home environment)

In the language classroom, these learning differences could be undiagnosed and even learners (and their parents) may be unaware of how they impact on their behaviours. However, there are some simple strategies teachers can use to support learners.

Top tips:

- Give clear instructions: one at a time; simple language; write, say & repeat; draw.
- Use visuals: images, doodles and icons aid memory and understanding.
- Ask the learner: find out what works for them (and interests them).
- Build confidence & create a welcoming environment

Visual Thinking Tools:

- Graphic organisers reduce processing load (less text, more visual cues).
- Self-Evaluation Tools: students assess & become more aware of their own learning.
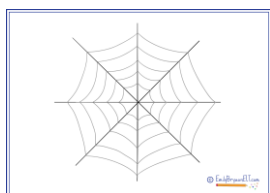
Spider Web: Draw on whiteboard or notebook (or print). Add categories (e.g. speaking, reading, writing) and have students assess their confidence/skill from '0' in the centre to '10' in the edge. This can be used to track progress throughout the course, or to colour in segments as students complete tasks.
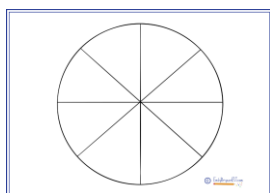
Cake: Draw on the whiteboard or notebook (or print). Add categories (e.g. life skills, personality traits, true/false statements) and have students assess their feelings towards them from the centre to the edge. This can be used in similar ways to the spider web and can have as many segments as required.

A recording of Emily Bryson's webinar can be watched here:
https://web.facebook.com/share/v/1As2HtMPt2/

You can find more about Emily at www.EmilyBrysonELT.com and follow her on socials @EmilyBrysonELT. She has lots of blog posts, videos and free resources on this topic.