

IMPROVING SPEAKING THROUGH INTERESTING PICTURES

Speaker's Notes

BEREKET ELT ARCHIVE

Working seminar principle: *The picture starts the conversation; the teacher's questions help it grow.*

Slide 1 — Improving Speaking through Interesting Pictures

IMPROVING SPEAKING THROUGH INTERESTING PICTURES

Halis Bereket

Speaker's notes

- Introduce the session as a practical speaking approach built around authentic and unusual photographs.
- Explain the central sequence: SEE → THINK → GUESS → DISCUSS → DISCOVER THE REAL STORY.
- Emphasise that the aim is not simply to describe pictures. The aim is to move from observation to interpretation, prediction, opinion, justification and imagination.
- Tell participants that many of the photographs come from real experiences, so the final reveal can give the discussion an authentic ending.

Slide 2 — The Dog with Sunglasses

What catches your eye first?

Speaker's notes

- Show the picture without explanation for a few seconds.
- Start safely: What can you see? Where might this be? What season or time of day could it be?
- Move to the unusual detail: Why do you think the dog is wearing sunglasses? What kind of character does this give the dog?
- Extend: What can you infer about the people in the background? What might they be doing there?
- Personalise: Do you like dogs or other pets? What is your favourite animal? Why?
- Teaching focus: description → inference → personal response. There is no need for a long factual reveal; the visual itself is the stimulus.

Slide 3 — The Milk Seller

What is unusual about these bottles?

Speaker's notes

- Ask learners to identify the setting, weather and season from the snowy scene.
- Ask: What do you think the woman is selling? How do people in your area buy milk?
- Draw attention to the reused soft-drink bottles. Ask why someone might use them.
- Then focus on the black strings around the bottle necks: What could they be for?
- Reveal the real story: I bought milk from this woman for several years. She told me that the black string was her simple way of marking the bottles as hers — almost like a personal brand.
- Extend to preferences: What do you usually drink? Where do you buy milk or other fresh food?
- Teaching focus: observation → hypothesis → authentic reveal → everyday-life comparison.

Slide 4 — The Veteran Champion

What has just happened?

Speaker's notes

- Do not begin by giving the man's age or achievement. Ask participants to read the body language and the scoreboard.
- Ask: Who seems to have won? What makes you think so? How does the man feel?
- Ask learners to guess his age and the level of competition.
- Reveal: He was my neighbour. In 2009 he became a world veteran champion in the 60-year-old category. This photograph was from the final; when time ended and he had won on points, he raised his arms in victory.
- Extend: What sports do you enjoy? Is age a barrier to achievement? What qualities are needed to keep competing at this level?

- Teaching focus: visual evidence, prediction, stereotypes about age, perseverance and sport.

Slide 5 — The Teacher and the Donkeys

What is this man doing — and why?

Speaker's notes

- Ask participants to describe the man, the animals, the road, clothing, weather and countryside.
- Ask: What might his job be? Where could he be going? Why are there two donkeys?
- Invite imaginative questions: Could you ride one of these animals? What might be inside the sacks?
- Reveal the known story carefully: A teacher friend gave me this photograph before 2000 after seeing that I used interesting pictures. It was taken while he was teaching in a village school.
- Extend to rural life, transport and the differences between city and village environments.
- Teaching focus: description → occupation guessing → setting → story building.

Slide 6 — Father and Child on the Trail

What does this picture tell you about them?

Speaker's notes

- Let the photograph speak first. Ask: Who are the people? What relationship might they have? Where are they going?
- Ask: What equipment can you see? Why is the child being carried this way? What might the weather be like?
- Invite prediction: What do you think happened before this moment? What might happen next?
- Reveal only after discussion: I met this man while travelling. He was alone with his child, he was not Turkish, and we spoke in English. The smiling man on the right was my friend.
- Extend to travelling with children, hiking, family responsibility and meeting people from other countries.
- Teaching focus: relationship inference, travel vocabulary, prediction and intercultural communication.

Slide 7 — Eating with the Hands

What do you notice about the way the meal is being eaten?

Speaker's notes

- Ask participants to describe the room, meal, people and seating arrangement before focusing on eating style.
- Ask: Is eating with the hands common where you live? In which foods or cultures might it be normal?
- Invite respectful speculation rather than judgement: Why might someone prefer to eat this way?
- Reveal: The woman was a doctor and the mother of one of our students. She gave a very good explanation of why she ate the rice with her hands.
- Extend to eating customs, table manners, cultural differences and professions.
- Teaching focus: culturally sensitive discussion, explaining reasons, comparing customs.

Slide 8 — Acrobatics on Horseback

How difficult do you think this is?

Speaker's notes

- Ask: What exactly is the rider doing? Which details show balance, speed or risk?
- Ask learners to predict what the rider may do next and what training might be necessary.
- Use the image to elicit vocabulary related to horses, riding, balance, performance and danger.
- Reveal: During a visit connected with horses, we watched riders perform many acrobatic movements on horseback.
- Extend: Would you try this? Why or why not? What other unusual sports or performances do you know?
- Teaching focus: action description, degrees of difficulty, risk, ability and personal opinion.

Slide 9 — A Nature Trip: Looking Closely

What is worth noticing when we slow down?

Speaker's notes

- This slide contains several photographs from a nature trip. Let participants scan the collage and choose one image that interests them most.
- Ask them to name what they can see: insects, flowers, plants, colours, shapes and textures.
- Ask: Why is the man kneeling so close to the ground? What is he trying to photograph?
- Invite comparison: Which picture would make the best speaking prompt for children? Which would make the best science-language link?

- Known context: these photographs were taken during a nature trip.
- Teaching focus: noticing details, choosing, comparing, describing and linking language to the natural world.

Slide 10 — From Tree to Tea: Linden

Can you recognise this tree — and this drink?

Speaker's notes

- Begin with the four images as a puzzle. Ask participants to work out the connection among the tree, leaves/flowers and cups of tea.
- Ask: What plant is this? Which part is collected? How might it be prepared?
- Reveal: There were many linden trees in parks, but many local people did not know that the flowers were used for tea. I collected some and gave them to students while introducing the plant through these slides.
- Add the authentic incident if useful: while I was collecting flowers in a park, a police officer questioned why I was picking them. I explained that they were used for tea, and he let the matter go that time.
- Extend: What plants or foods are common in your country but unfamiliar elsewhere? What herbal drinks do you know?
- Teaching focus: sequencing, real-world knowledge, explaining a process and intercultural discovery.

Slide 11 — The Mehter Band

What can you hear — even from a still picture?

Speaker's notes

- Ask participants to describe clothing, instruments, formation, audience and setting.
- Ask: What type of music do you imagine they are playing? Fast or slow? Loud or soft? Ceremonial or informal?
- Invite learners to identify instruments they know and compare this group with other traditional or military bands.
- Known context: this is a Mehter band.
- Extend to favourite music, traditional music, public performances and the relationship between music and cultural identity.
- Teaching focus: descriptive language, prediction from visual clues, music vocabulary and cultural comparison.

Slide 12 — Teamwork and Balance

How are they managing to do this?

Speaker's notes

- The original note deliberately left the interpretation open, so keep this slide open-ended.
- Ask participants to describe positions and relationships: Who is supporting whom? Who carries the greatest weight?
- Ask: What skills are needed — strength, balance, trust, communication, planning?
- Predict: What might happen one second later? What could go wrong? How could they make the formation safer?
- Transfer: What makes a successful team in a classroom or workplace?
- Teaching focus: modals of ability, cause and effect, teamwork vocabulary, prediction and metaphorical transfer.

Slide 13 — The Simit Seller

What can one picture tell us about work?

Speaker's notes

- Start with description: What is he carrying? How is he carrying it? Where might he be going?
- Ask learners to estimate how many simits there may be and why sellers carry them this way.
- Move beyond description: What difficulties might a street seller face during a normal day?
- Known context: the young seller was trying to earn a living and support himself or his family.
- Use a balanced discussion prompt: Are street foods convenient? What questions might we ask about hygiene, regulation and safety?
- Teaching focus: occupations, quantity, daily routine, social perspective and reasoned opinion.

Slide 14 — Indoor Döner: An Improvised Solution

What has been improvised here?

Speaker's notes

- Give participants time to work out what each object is doing in the setup.

- Ask: What is being cooked? What is providing the heat? What normally holds or supports food like this?
- Ask learners to explain the arrangement step by step using process language.
- Reveal: A friend prepared döner for us indoors. An electric heater cooked and browned the meat, while a clothes-drying rack was used to support the improvised setup. It was rather like an indoor picnic.
- Invite judgement with reasons: Clever, risky, practical, funny — which word would you choose and why?
- Teaching focus: explaining a process, problem solving, functional vocabulary and justified opinion.
- Safety note: discuss the photograph as an example of improvisation; do not present the arrangement as a recommended cooking method.

Slide 15 — The Swimming-Pool Moment

What happened one second before this photograph?

Speaker's notes

- Ask participants to freeze the action mentally and describe the different body positions.
- Ask: How many people are in the air? Are they jumping together or at different moments? Which person will enter the water first?
- Use prediction: What will the next photograph look like? What sounds would you hear?
- Known context: the photographs were taken at the swimming pool of a summer hotel.
- Extend to swimming, holidays, water activities and memorable photographs.
- Teaching focus: present continuous, sequencing, prediction, spatial language and action verbs.

Slide 16 — Pigeons at the Mosque

How many different stories can you find in this picture?

Speaker's notes

- This is a rich final picture. Ask participants to scan from foreground to background and identify as many separate actions as possible.
- Ask: Who is selling or giving out the grain? What are the pigeons doing? What are the children doing? What are the adults doing?
- Known context: outside a mosque in Istanbul, people buy wheat and feed the pigeons. In the scene, a child is disturbing or chasing the pigeons.
- Invite perspectives: How might the child, the sellers, the pigeons and a visitor each describe this moment differently?
- Finish creatively: Choose one person in the picture and create a two-line inner monologue or short dialogue.
- Teaching focus: multiple viewpoints, action description, perspective taking and creative speaking.

General Delivery Notes

- Do not ask every question on every slide. Select questions according to the learners' age, level, interest and available time.
- Move from easier observation questions to more demanding interpretation, prediction and justification.
- Where a real story is available, reveal it only after participants have had time to speculate.
- Accept more than one reasonable interpretation when the picture supports it. The aim is meaningful speaking, not guessing the teacher's answer.
- Use pair or small-group discussion before whole-class reporting when you want to increase participation.
- A useful recurring sequence is: OBSERVE → DESCRIBE → INTERPRET → PREDICT → GIVE AN OPINION → JUSTIFY → IMAGINE / CREATE.
- For public versions, identifiable children or students should be anonymised where necessary. Distinguish clearly between what is visible in the photograph and what learners are inferring or imagining.