Teaching English to Newcomers
Phase 2 – Building stories
Ideas for Advanced Beginners

Teaching English to Newcomers, Phase 2 – Building stories. Based on Phase 2 – Geschichten bauen, by Kathrin Pope, Wycliffe Switzerland and Silke Sauer, Wycliff Germany, 2016. Inspired by Greg Thomson's Phase 2 - The Next 150 Hours. Copyright of English Language Lessons for Newcomers 2021. SIL International. Licensed under Creative Commons BY-NC-SA 4.0 international. These materials can be downloaded and adapted with attribution given to www.sil.org/english-language-lessons. Greg Thomson’s original materials can be downloaded from growingparticipation.com.

During Phase 1 of the Growing Participator Approach, the learners have built up a vocabulary of about 800 words with the help of objects and actions from their direct environment. A large portion of these words may have only been mastered passively (words are understood, but are not yet used confidently when speaking). The learners have also become familiar with the most common sentence structures (statement, question, command, negation). They can communicate with individual sentences in everyday situations. In Phase 2, we build on this foundation and focus on “getting the learners’ tongues loose”, i.e. to further develop their ability to express themselves. To support learning in this phase, we mainly work with simple picture stories. Phase 2 is divided into three sections (Phase 2A-C), where the learners gradually speak more freely. The aim is for learners to acquire up to 1500 new words (some only passively), as well as simple subordinate clauses and the past tense.

Material

- Wordless picture stories
- Picture stories (picture books for children)
- Photos and drawings

Where can I find suitable picture stories?

- Under the following DROPBOX link: https://www.dropbox.com/sh/4apy0txx8r7n8ik/AABrLlyozSxRUL8i7WWnxRvR a?dl=0
- "Father and son" by E.O. Plauen: Collections of short humorous comic strips, black and white, several volumes, available in different editions, also as e-book. Inexpensive.
• Children’s picture books with little or no text.

Talking is the key learning outcome in this phase. For this reason, picture stories should have little or no text.

**Phase 2A (Overview)**

At this stage, it is useful to start each meeting with everyone telling something about themselves or their family that the others do not yet know. Additionally, learners can tell everyone about something they did since the last time they met together. This is good speaking practice while helping, at the same time, to get to know each other better.

For the main part of the meeting, we work with the learners using picture stories to help create simple statements based on the pictures. There is a sample picture with a suggested script of how to proceed after this brief overview of Phase 2A.

30 minutes: **First step:** The learners make simple statements about each picture and spend about five to ten minutes on each frame, one frame at a time.

Help the learners as needed and make a list of any new words elicited while describing pictures. This word list reminds you of the new words which need to be practiced later.

10 minutes: **Second step:** Describe each of the pictures in detail. Use the same vocabulary from the first 30 minutes. Make sure all the new words are used and avoid adding additional new vocabulary to the discussion. Record the description so learners can listen to it at home.

10 minutes: **Third step:** Listening and pointing: Lay out the picture pages on the table and ask questions like *Where are the worms, where is the fence* and so on. The learners show they have understood by pointing and gesturing at the right place in the picture.

Record part of step three, for the learners to review at home.

**The whole story:**

Once all the pictures of a story have been treated as described above (a longer story may take more than one session), move on to the following:

Re-tell the whole story, but now in past tense. To make it clear that the story has happened in the past, you might start by using a time expression such as *One day*.

Record this, then listen to the recording together with the learners and clarify as needed.

This recording (as an event that has already happened) is likely to bring up a few new words, and of course new verb forms. Irregular verb forms like *he went* need to be learned as if they were new words and need to be recorded as before. When telling the story, you may have the picture story in front of you to remember all the details. And on a different day you tell it freely. The free narrative usually flows better, but will contain fewer details. Both options are
useful exercises and should both be practiced. With each option, remember not to introduce too many new vocabulary items at this point.

**List of new words and starting to read**

The learners are now advanced beginners and have probably begun some literacy instruction to learn to read and write in English. This could be a good time to introduce simple reading activities into the sessions. It is also a good time to remember that the receptive skills (not needing to produce language) of listening and understanding develop ahead of the productive skill of speaking. GPA begins with this in mind. The same holds true of the receptive skill of reading which develops ahead of writing. However, the different skills naturally support one another.

At the end of each session you have a list of new words. We want to concentrate on the receptive skill of reading, so at the beginning of the next session you provide the new words for the learners to read, each word accompanied by a short simple sentence. It is often necessary to refer to the picture to point out the new words and sentences. The group reads the reading sheet together. You help as needed. You then read the words and sentences aloud, while recording the reading for the learners to listen to at home, along with the reading sheet. This supports extra reading practice of the new words and sentences.

See an example of a reading sheet at the end of this document.

Other reading activities may also be useful, but learners should only be given things to read that they can understand if they hear them. Reading builds on the listening comprehension skills.

**Homework:**

The learners listen to the recordings repeatedly so that new words and expressions can climb higher in their iceberg.
Example:

First step: Describing the picture (using present tense)

Nurturer: *What do we see in this picture?*
Learner 1: *There is a man.*
L2: *There is a chicken.*
L3: *The man has a hat on his head.*
N: *That’s right, he is wearing a hat on his head.*
L4: *The man has a ... uhhh... what is that?* (points to the can / tin).
N: *The man has a can / tin in his hand.* (Write down *can / tin* as a new word.)
L1: *In the can / tin are ... uhhh...*
N: *Worms.* (Write down *worm*)
L1: *There are worms in the can / tin.*
L2: I also see flowers and grass.
L3: The man has black shoes.
L4: The man is walking along the path.
L1: The chicken is also walking along the path.
N: That’s right, the chicken is following the man.
L1: What is following?
N: To follow somebody, to walk behind somebody, go to the same place (act it out, and write down follow.)
L2: The chicken sees the worms.
L3: The chicken is hungry.
L4: It wants to eat the worms.
L1: The man is wearing green trousers.
N: Yes, he is wearing overalls. (Write down overalls).
L2: He is carrying something on his shoulder. What is it?
N: It is a fishing rod. Why do you think he has got a fishing rod? (Write down fishing rod).
L3: He wants to have fish.
N: Yes, he is going fishing.
L4: In the back there is a ... uhhh (points to the fence).
N: This is a fence. (Write down fence).
L1: The man has a big nose.
L2: The man has a ... (points to the beard).
N: This is a small beard. (Write down beard)
L2: The man has a small beard.
N: That’s right, the man has a small beard.
L3: The man is happy.
L4: He likes fishing.
L1: He likes to eat fish.
Etc.

There are no limits to the imagination. Also predicting about what people are thinking, what they want or how they feel is allowed. Only go on to the next picture when no one can think of anything else to say. You can help elicit further statements by asking specific questions, in order to stimulate the imagination.
Second step: The nurturer describes the pictures

After about half an hour, maybe four pictures have been discussed in this way and you have a list of about ten new words.

Now describe in correct English the pictures that have just been discussed. Make sure to use all the words from the list of new words, and do not introduce any new words. Record this description.

Example: In the first picture there is a man and a chicken. They are walking beside a fence. The man is carrying a fishing rod on his shoulder. He has a beard and a big nose. He is wearing a green hat, green overalls and black shoes. In his right hand he is holding a can / tin full of worms. He is going fishing. He is happy because he likes eating fish.

In the second picture ...

Third step: Listening and pointing

Spread the four pictures out on the table. Say the new words again, in random order, each one several times. The learners point to the object or person in the pictures. (In this example: Where are the overalls, where is the beard, the fishing rod, the can / tin, the fence, the worms, the overalls, the worms, etc.)

Whole Story

Tell the whole story, using past tense.

Example: One day a farmer wanted to go fishing. So he put on his overalls, took his fishing rod and his worms and walked to the pond. One of his chickens followed him. It was hungry and saw the farmer’s can / tin with the worms. (And so on.)

Example for a Reading Sheet

Can / Tin – The farmer has a can / tin in his hand.
Worm – The chicken wants to eat the worms.
Overalls – The farmer is wearing green overalls.
Fishing rod – The farmer is carrying a fishing rod.
Fence – The man is walking on the path.
Beard – The man has a beard on his chin.

Phase 2B

Once the learners have worked through a number of picture stories as described above, they gradually begin to speak more freely. The focus can then move from the description of individual pictures to the story as a whole.

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10 minutes: Speak freely, describing one or more consecutive pages of a wordless picture story. Record your description.

30-70 minutes: Listen to the recording together and clarify what was not immediately understood. Write down any new words.

15 minutes: Make several sentences with each new word to help the new words move up the iceberg. You can take turns making sentences along with the learners.

5-10 minutes Listening and pointing to reinforce understanding of new words as in Phase 2A.

**Whole story**

Same as in phase 2A.

As a further step, the learners can tell the story to you. You could also encourage them to try to tell the story, with the pictures in front of them, to other people outside the learning group. Repeat a few weeks later.

**Homework**

As in phase 2A

**Phase 2C**

Here picture stories are no longer needed. We tell each other stories or events from our lives.

30-70 minutes A learner tells a story from his or her own life. They draw the story while they are telling it. You help as needed. Make a list of the new words.

10 minutes Tell the story (in past tense), using your own words. If the learner told the story in 1st person (I), retell it in 2nd person (you). The drawings serve as a memory aid. Make a recording.

15 minutes Make sentences to include new words used (as in phase 2B).

10 minutes Listening and pointing (or acting it out) to show they have understood (as in Phase 2B).

**Further ideas**

Take photos or find pictures of everyday situations, festivals, street scenes, landscapes, etc. Talk about the picture with the learning group, get everybody to contribute to the conversation.

Notes

Limit the number of new words. (Remember: irregular verb forms in past tense, such as *run/ran*, count as new words). About ten new words can be introduced and practiced per 60 minutes of learning. If there are significantly more new words in a lesson, choose those that are most relevant for everyday life.

Play the recording of the story to the learners again a few weeks later and ask the learners to retell it again. Using the recordings, review the new words.