

Haiku: code conversions

Book: *A hundred poems*

Time: 15 minutes for the first activity and 20 minutes for the second one

Category: reading comprehension and writing skills in English as a foreign language.

Skills: cognitive skills, such as predicting and skimming skills in reading; writing short texts in English; switching linguistic and extra-linguistic codes for communication.

Target group: learners of any age with basic knowledge of English as a foreign language.

Learning activity: two types of code conversion with haiku poems – from written text to drawing and from illustrations to written text.

This method implies the conversion from one linguistic code – a written text or verbal – to a visual or kinetic code.

Learning objectives: to comprehend the global meaning of a haiku poem. To switch communicative codes – writing, drawing etc. – easily to express comprehension.

To write short texts in English, such as haiku poems.

Enhancement of self-expression in English.

Steps

1. Choose a haiku poem for the first type of code conversion before the lesson. Select an easily comprehensible poem with a well-known topic, such as nature. Learners can resort to their encyclopaedic knowledge to accomplish the task. Print the haiku poem out or display it in the classroom with a projector.

2. Explain clearly the steps of the learning activity. Tell, display or write on the board. Make sure everyone understands.

3. Hand out the papers with the selected haiku poem and ask learners to read it carefully, individually and silently.

Check their comprehension of the global meaning of the poem by asking simple questions about the content. Clarify any doubts and questions.

4. Give each learner a sheet of paper, pencils and markers. Tell them to draw anything that best represents the meaning of the poem in their opinion. Give them full freedom to express themselves.



Haiku code conversions: Activity by Eleonora Pannacci

5. After this activity, select two black-and-white illustrations from the Easy to Read book *A hundred poems*.

Choose evocative and inspiring illustrations that can be easily described in words. Print them out or display them with a projector.

6. Explain clearly to learners the phases of the second type of conversion. Tell, display or write on the board. Make sure everyone understands.

7. Ask each learner to write a haiku poem based on an illustration that they see. Give them total freedom to express themselves.

Variations

1. Transform the haiku poems of the book into role plays for acting. Learners write a story based on the poem as if it were a film. You can divide the class into small and heterogeneous groups, which will create different films.

Give each learner a specific subtask – writing dialogues, creating the whole plot of the story, recording etc.

2. Record reading of a haiku poem and let the learners listen to it in classroom. Ask them to draw anything which represents the poem.

3. Blot out the first or the last line of a haiku poem in the book and ask learners to rewrite it.

4. Write a haiku poem and let the learners draw a picture about it. This sets the teacher at the same level of the learners; the teacher becomes someone who wants to help them achieve their goals.

Tips

1. There is no correct or incorrect solution, only possible interpretations for this activity. Do not use such self-expression activities as tests for evaluation. Regard them as possibilities for learners to practice their writing skills, to boost their creativity and to motivate them to learn English.

2. You do not need to interfere during the learning activities. Leave learners the freedom to express themselves through various communicative codes.

Be a guide and an off-stage director. Give advice about how to carry out the activities only if they ask.

