

Making Sense of Road Signs

Teacher's Notes

Subject: English

using informative discourse eg, giving instructions and directions;
using verbal and non-verbal cues;
grammar: modal verbs, if-conditional

Topic: Road signs

Cross-curricular links with other subjects: literacy, personal and social education, design and technology, geography (international vs. regional or country-specific road signs), geometrical shapes

Level: Lower-intermediate

Time (approx): Activity 1: 15-20 minutes
Activity 2: 15-20 minutes
Activity 3: 20 minutes
Activity 4: 20-30 minutes
Games and fun activities: as indicated below

Preparation:

- For *Activity 1 and Games*, print out 15-20 road signs of different shapes and colours on separate sheets of paper. Include a few warning signs with animals and worded signs. Stick them on cardboard. If using technology, use one of the suggested sites.
- For *Activity 1 and 2*, prepare hand-outs with the same 20 road signs for learners to choose. Cut them out to use them as examples (or tell students to visit the useful websites below).
- For *Activity 4*, prepare the names of continents written on slips of paper.

NB: A tasksheet with *Learner's Notes* accompanies the *Teacher's Notes*, if you want to use printed instructions for any of the activities to make sure learners understand what they have to do.

Useful websites:

<http://www.bris.ac.uk/>

<http://www.dft.gov.uk>

<http://wikipedia.org/>

<http://www.geocities.com/> (Search for 'road signs' and check the external links given for learners to explore more on this topic)

Useful illustrations/pictures:

<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/5to14/resources/illustrations/roadsigns/index.asp>

<http://www.fotosearch.com/>

Free posters: <http://p-rposters.com/>

or <http://www.print-a-poster.com/> or conduct a Google search for ‘traffic/road signs’, adding the name of the country if you want to look for specific information

Note: Most of the activities involve creativity and developing thinking skills. Depending on the age and level of your learners and availability of resources, you can choose to do only one activity or combine them to best suit your learners and lesson goals. You can also choose to either use existent printed materials or the available technology (computers/laptops and/or an interactive whiteboard (IWB)). When using technology, ask learners to copy and paste the corresponding signs from the suggested sites. Make sure they indicate the source.

Procedure:

Activity 1: Recognition

(Whole-class)

- a) Ask learners to choose the signs that they usually see on their way between school and their homes and stick them on the board.
- b) Ask them if they know what they represent – they should come to the board and write the corresponding words/phrases under each sign, eg, Stop!, Turn left, No U-turn, etc. (Don’t clean the board – you can use them later for Task 3).
- c) Ask learners to match signs to the corresponding words: use *Tasksheet 1*.

Note: If you use technology, tell learners to open MS files and do the tasks required in the following activities (eg, write categories, then copy and paste the corresponding signs in their files; write sentences, etc.)

Activity 2: Classification

(Group work: 3-5 learners)

- a) Ask learners to work in groups and find criteria to categorise/group the signs. They should consider shapes, colours, and specific pictograms, eg, for school areas, pedestrians, cyclists etc.
- b) Check and collate their answers. Some suggested categories could include general information, warnings, interdictions/restrictions.
- c) Give learners the hand-outs with the road signs on; tell them to draw or cut out and stick at least 3 signs in each category. They should then display their work in different places around the classroom. Walk around, check answers and make corrections if necessary.
- d) Ask students to read the principles and categorisation of European traffic sign standards on <http://wikipedia.org> and compare them to their answers.

NB: At each stage, monitor and help when necessary.

Activity 3: Grammar practice

(group work and/or plenary classroom)

- a) Use the signs and corresponding words/phrases from Task 1; learners have to use them in sentences to express advice, interdiction and obligation using modal verbs: *must/must not, should/should not*, etc. Check and collate sentences on the board.
- b) Discuss the consequences of disobeying or ignoring traffic signs.
- c) Sentence transformation: Ask learners to reformulate the sentences using the if-conditional instead of modal verbs and indicate what might happen:

Eg, 'You must stop when you see the sign.'

'If you don't stop in an intersection, then you ...'

Activity 4: Geography

(group work: 3-5 learners)

- a) Each group should write the name of a continent on a slip of paper and then search the internet to find at least 3 international signs and at least 3 regional or country-specific signs (from a country they choose from that continent). (See websites: wikipedia.org, geocities.com or others of your own choice). Encourage students to find at least one sign of an animal, and one worded sign.
- b) Compare and discuss symbolic signs vs. worded signs – their impact on traffic and especially on drivers, tourists, etc.
- c) Ask students to compare the signs with animals: if they are country/region specific; what animal images are allowed or most often used and why, what is their general message (the Vienna convention allows any animal image to be shown on signs).

Homework suggestions

- a) Use the list of signs you have compiled in Task 1. On your way home check if you have missed any signs and add them to your list. Then write sentences explaining the meaning of those signs, using modal verbs.
- b) Choose a sign that you think should be installed on or removed from your street/neighbourhood. Give at least three reasons to justify your choice.
- c) Identify a sign that you think should be installed on or removed from your street/neighbourhood and write a letter to the police justifying your decision. Give at least three arguments to support your point of view that will persuade the police to consider your suggestions.

Ideas for games and fun activities

Idea 1 – For a safe and bullying-free classroom and school

Group work (20-30 minutes)

- a) Learners work first in groups and choose at least five road signs or create new signs they would like to use in the classroom and in their school.
- b) Then all the signs are displayed and they have to negotiate and select 5-6 signs that will be displayed in their classroom or in school.

Idea 2 – Making/designing an inspirational poster using signs and proverbs/words of wisdom

Group work (20-30 minutes)

See examples from sites with free posters:

<http://print-a-poster.p-rposters.com/display.php?design=0499>

0499 - If you don't know where you're going, you'll never get there. Dustin Peltier-Robson

<http://print-a-poster.p-rposters.com/display.php?design=0460>

0460 - Life is full of Stop Lights... but eventually they all change to Go! Mark J. Peltier-Robson

Idea 3 – Desert island signs

Group work (20-30 minutes)

- a) Learners imagine they are on a desert island and they need to use signs to ensure a safe life; they have to use some of the signs they already know and also create new signs (up to 10 signs).
- b) If they did Activity 4, you can also ask them to give the approximate coordinates of their imaginary island – giving estimates about the nearest continent or country, and encouraging them to use/adapt some of the region-specific signs.

Idea 4 – Grammar games

Pair or team work (10-15 minutes)

- a) Divide the class into two teams standing in a row. Use the printed signs, pile them face down, then show one at a time or display on the IWB one sign at a time. One student should be the umpire to keep a record of points and timing, when necessary.
- b) Practising modal verbs: in turns, each learner from the two teams has to formulate a sentence using modal verbs to render the message of the sign. Allow learners 5-10 seconds as thinking time.
- c) Practising conditionals: same rules as above.

Idea 5 – Miming

Pair work

- a) Tell students to imagine they are lost in a crowd.

Variant 1: Two learners stand at a distance from each other; one of them has five signs s/he can use in any order. S/he shows one at a time and the other has to move accordingly.

Variant 2: The learner who has the signs does not show them, but has to use them as cues and ‘translate’ the message into gestures and mimicry to make the other move in the desired direction.

b) Print out several areas from a map of the students’ own city/community. Mark two different points on the map: origin and destination. Mark the origin and destination in two different spots in your classroom.

Variant 1 – Two learners have to imagine they speak different languages; they cannot speak, but they can use road signs and body language to decide which way to go to reach their destination.

Variant 2 – Two learners stand facing each other. You can then use variants of the instructions listed at idea 5a.

NB: students should pay attention to directions, since right can be left for the other, when facing each other.

Making Sense of Road Signs

Learner's Notes

Activity 1 (Whole-class)

Recognition

- a) Choose the road signs that you see on your way between school and your homes and stick them on the board.
- b) What do they tell you? Go to the board and write the corresponding words/phrases under each sign, e.g. Stop!, Turn left, etc.
- c) Do the matching exercise - see *Tasksheet 1*.

Note: If you use technology, open MS files and do the following tasks (eg, write the categories, then copy and paste the corresponding signs in their files, then write sentences.)

Activity 2 Work in groups (3-5 learners)

Classification

- a) Think of criteria to categorise/group the signs. Use a separate sheet to write down your categories.
- b) Use the hand-outs with the road signs on. Draw or cut out and stick on at least 3 signs in each category. Then display your work in different places around the classroom.
- c) Read the principles and the categorisation of European traffic sign standards on <http://.wikipedia.org> and compare the information to your signs.

Activity 3

Grammar practice

- a) Use the signs and corresponding words/phrases from Task 1 to make sentences in order to express advice, interdiction, obligation, etc. Use modal verbs such as *must/must not, should/should not*, etc.
- b) Discuss the consequences of disobeying or ignoring traffic signs, then do the next task.
- c) Sentence transformation: reformulate the sentences above using if-conditional instead of modal verbs to indicate what might happen if signs are disobeyed or ignored:
eg, 'You must stop when you see the sign.'
'If you don't stop in an intersection, then you ...'

Activity 4

Geography

a) Write the name of a continent on a slip of paper and then search on the internet to find out at least 3 international signs and at least 3 regional or country-specific signs (from a country/area you choose from that continent). Find at least one sign of an animal and one worded sign.

Sites: <http://wikipedia.org/>, <http://www.geocities.com/> or others of your own choice.

b) Compare and discuss symbolic signs vs. worded signs – their impact on the traffic and especially on drivers, tourists, etc.

c) Compare the signs with animals: discuss if they are country/region specific, what animal images are allowed or most often used and why and what is the general message.

Homework suggestions

a) Use the list of signs you have compiled in Task 1. On your way home check if you have missed any signs and add them to your list. Then write sentences explaining the meaning of those signs, using modal verbs.

b) Choose a sign that you think should be installed on or removed from your street/neighbourhood. Give at least three reasons to justify your choice.

c) Identify a sign that you think should be installed on or removed from your street/neighbourhood and write a letter to the police justifying your decision. Give at least three arguments to support your point of view that will persuade the police to consider your suggestions.

Fun activities

1 For a safe and bullying-free classroom and school

Group work (20-30 minutes)

a) Work in groups. Choose at least five road signs or create new signs you would like to use in the classroom and in your school.

b) Negotiate with your group and select 5-6 signs that you would like to use in your classroom or around the school.

2 Make an inspirational poster using signs and proverbs/ words of wisdom

Group work (20-30 minutes)

See examples from sites with free posters:

<http://print-a-poster.p-rposters.com/display.php?design=0499>

0499 - If you don't know where you're going, you'll never get there. Dustin Peltier-Robson

<http://print-a-poster.p-rposters.com/display.php?design=0460>

0460 - Life is full of Stop Lights... but eventually they all change to Go! Mark J. Peltier-Robson

3 Desert island signs

Group work (20-30 minutes)

a) Imagine you are on a desert island and need to use signs to ensure a safe life. Use some of the signs you have already studied and create new signs (you can make use of up to 10 signs).

b) Give the approximate coordinates of your imaginary island – give estimates about the nearest continent or country, and use/adapt some of the region-specific signs.

Useful websites:

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Tasksheet

Match the road signs to these messages.

GO STRAIGHT AHEAD!

DO NOT ENTER!

STOP THEN TURN LEFT!

NO SMOKING!

TURN RIGHT!

BUMPY ROAD AHEAD!

NO U-TURN!

YIELD!

NO ACCESS!

NO PARKING!

ASK FOR TOURIST INFORMATION!

BUS STOP STRAIGHT AHEAD!