Croydon Museum & Heritage Service Citizenship Materials for ESOL learners

Exploring objects and asking and answering questions

Suggested procedure:

Before class:

- The tutor selects and writes some of the following questions onto slips of paper.
- The tutor gathers objects (including everyday or unusual objects) with at least one for every 3-4 learners in their class.
- Alternatively, the tutor could ask each learner to bring in one object or more from home to contribute to this activity.

During class:

- The tutor divides the class into small groups.
- The tutor hands out several slips of paper to each of the small groups.
- The learners practice asking each other questions from the slips and answering them.
- The groups then rearrange so the learners tell a learner from a different group about the object they were exploring.
- Learners do not need to know the ‘right’ answer in order to explore an object.
- Learners can
  - state their opinions
  - give their reasons for their answers
  - make suggestions.

For example, learners can use the following structures:

In my opinion, a child used it because it is very small.

Or:

I do not know where it was made. Perhaps it was made in India.
Questions about Objects

Design and construction of an object:

- What is it made of?
- Why did the maker choose this/these materials?
- Is it attractive?
- When was it made?
- Where was it made?
- Was it made by hand or by machine?
- Who made it?
- Is it made of one piece or more than one piece?
- Can you take it apart?
- How do you put it together?
- How does the object work?
- Is it decorated or plain?
- Are there any marks/images on the object?
- Why are there marks or images on the object?

Physical characteristics of an object:

- What does it look like?
- What does it feel like?
- What does it smell like?
- What does it sound like?
- How big is it?
- What shape is it?
- What colour is it?
- How heavy is it?
- Does it have any marks on it?
- Do these marks tell us how it was made, used and cared for?
- What is it made of?
- Is it mass produced, rare or is it unique?
- Is it complete or is it a part of an object?
- Is it in good condition or is it worn/used?
- Has it been altered, adapted, repaired or changed?

Importance and value of an object:

- How did the object change people's lives? For example, did this object make washing clothes faster and easier?
- How important was the object to the people who made it?
- How important was the object to the people who used or owned it?
- How important is this object to people today?
- Is it mass produced, rare, or is it unique?
- Is the object valuable financially?
- Is the object valuable sentimentally to a person?
- Is the object valuable to a particular cultural group of people?
Function of an object:

• Why was it made?
• What is it?
• How was it used?
• Who used it?
• What skills did you need to use it?
• Was it easy to use?
• Was it difficult to use?
• Where was it used?
• Was it used with other objects?
• Has its use changed? Is it used for a different purpose now?