The Use of the Flash-card in the Teaching of Reading

J. YUGARAJ

Sekolah Menengah Jenis Kebangsaan Inggeris, Kepong

The best device with which to begin reading is the **flash-card**. A.V.P. Elliot in his article on "The Reading Lesson" *(English Language Teaching,* Volume 17, 1962-63) describes the flash-card as follows:

This is a long, wide strip of white cardboard on which is written or printed a short sentence of three of four words. (Some teachers prefer cards with single words on them, in which case the dimensions will be smaller.)

The sentence on the card will be familiar to the pupil from his oral work.

It is, of course, not strictly necessary to stand fast to the suggestion of three or four words on the flash-card. It may well be necessary to have five or six words but not too many as to defeat the purpose.

Armed with flash-cards the teacher should put into operation the implications of **association** and **recognition** which are two of the four key watchwords in Reading according to A.V.P. Elliot. The other two are **speed** and **understanding** which follow close behind the last two and may well be regarded as the other side of the same coin.

The teacher may use his ingenuity to create flash-cards for use in a variety of ways because different structures lend themselves to different treatment with flash-cards. Here are some examples:

WORD FLASH-CARDS — based on unit 79, stage II of the Syllabus for Primary Schools and Remove Forms — Indefinite Pronouns 'something', 'someone', 'anybody', 'anything', etc. Single-word flash-cards may be prepared for each of the Indefinite Pronouns. The teacher may hold up a card before the class to read it; or in language work when the card has been flashed before the class, one pupil is called upon to ask a question or make a sentence using that pronoun.

SENTENCE FLASH-CARD — based on the same unit as above. These may be question cards or question and answer cards, or question cards for the teacher and individual answer cards for pupils.

Question flash-card | Is there anything behind the cupboard?

Answer flash-card | Yes, there is something behind the cupboard.

The pupils read the question and supply the answer. As they give the answer they may hold up their individual answer cards. The teacher may hold up his answer card after the class has given the answer. This process provides exercise in Association and Recognition.

As a further elaboration of this exercise there can be two or more sets of smaller individual question and answer flash-cards for a kind of game:

Pupil A lays down a question card. Pupil B responds by placing beside it the correct answer card. Pupil B now lays down a question card and pupil A responds by laying down the answer card. Then pupil A lays down a question card and so the process goes on. A point is awarded for each correct response. The game is continued until all the cards are exhausted. The pupil who collects the most number of points is the winner. The game may be played among three or four pupils depending on how many sets of such cards are available. With three pupils the game proceeds thus:

Question card from pupil A — answer card from pupil B. Question card from pupil B — answer card from pupil C. Question card from pupil C — answer card from pupil A; and so it continues in this cycle. With four pupils the game is played in the same way following the same cyclical pattern.

SENTENCE-RESPONSE FLASH-CARDS — based on unit 4. stage 1 of the Syllabus for Primary Schools and Remove Forms — Possessive Adjective 'my', 'your', 'his', 'her' with verbs-to-be and common nouns.

Teacher's flash-card | Show me your nose.

Which is my table?

The pupils read the teacher's card either silently or aloud and respond with the answers. As they answer they hold up their individual flash-cards:—

Pupil's flash-card | This is my nose.

That is your table.

The space for the noun can be left blank so that a single-word card for the relevant noun can be placed over the space as the card is flashed. In this way different nouns may be used with the same structure.

SUBSTITUTION DRILL-CARDS. This is a further elaboration of the process above. Here the sentence is broken up into its component words — a single flash-card for every word:

Teacher's flash-card | Show | me | your | nose.

Which | is | my | table | ?

Pupil's flash-card | This | is | my | nose.

That | is | your | table.

The teacher has to have flash-card holders to mount his cards on. The pupils may set out their cards on their desks.

This kind of drill is highly effective and can be done for most of the structures in the syllabus. It provides exercise in all four of the watchwords — Association, Recognition, Speed and Understanding.

That is Ahmad.

Ali

Ahmad

This is Halima.

Ali

Halima
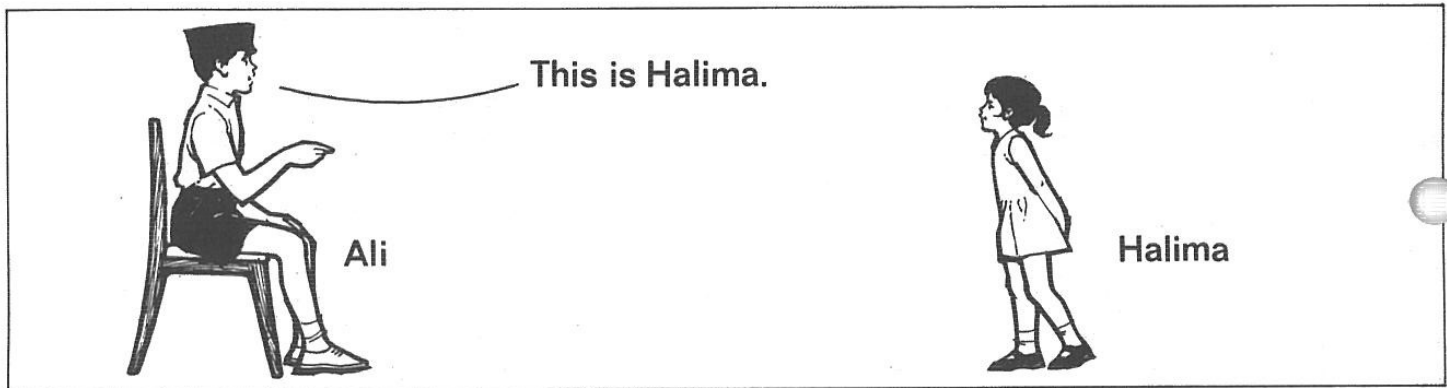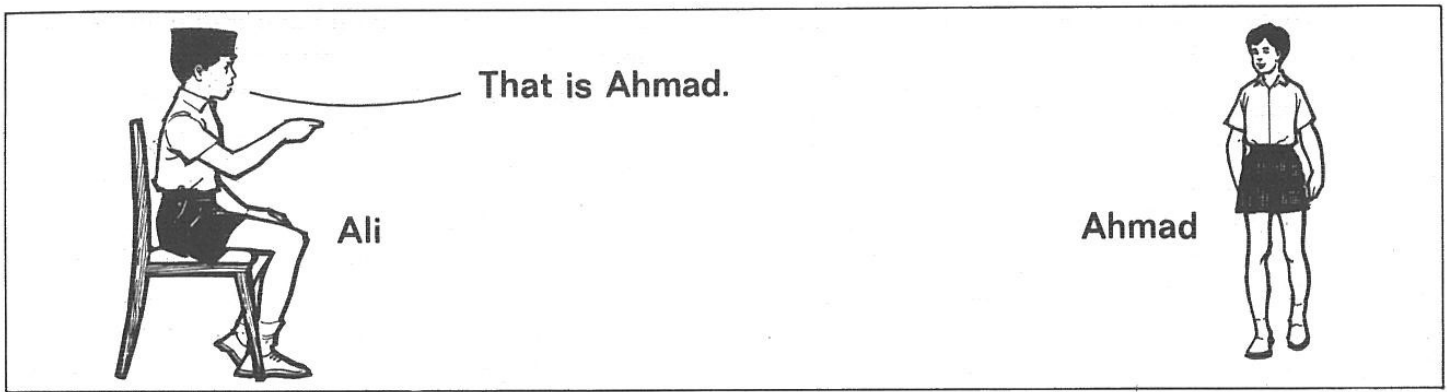
PICTURE AND SENTENCE FLASH-CARDS — based on unit 4, stage 1: Demonstrative Pronouns 'this', 'that' with verbs-to-be and names of persons.

The teacher flashes the relevant card indicating the use of either **that** or **this**. He then poses the question using the name of a pupil in the class: **Show me Yusof**. The pupils at once connect the relative position between Ali and Ahmad or Halima on the flash-card and Yusof and themselves in the classroom. Here in this exercise Association, Recognition, Speed and Understanding figure prominently.

The flash-cards may be pinned on the walls of the classroom so that the pupils are constantly exposed to them and thus the structures, the words and the sentences become entrenched in their minds.

Based on the words and structures used in the flash-cards the teacher can proceed to compile simple reading material. Here is an example related to unit 2, stage 1: Subject Pronouns 'I', 'You', 'he', 'she' with verbs-to-be and names of persons:

Aminah

Ali

Ahmad
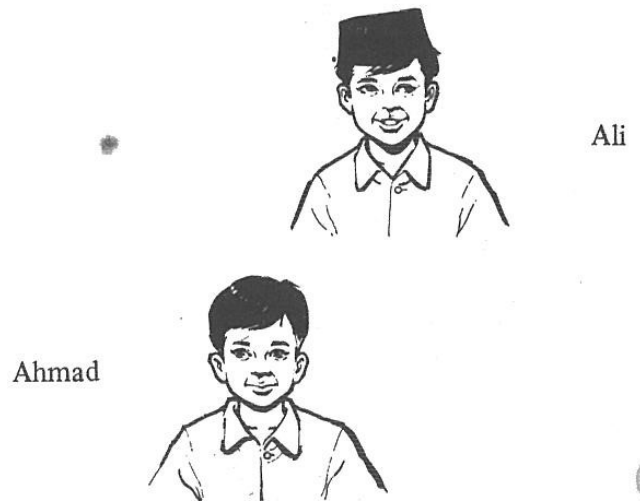
'I am Ali. I am in Remove Form. I am in a National Type Secondary School. You are in Remove Form too. I am in a National Type Secondary School and you are in a National Type Secondary School. Aminah is my sister. She is in Standard Four. She is in a Primary School. She is in a National Primary School. Ahmad is my brother. He is in Standard Six. He is in a National Primary School too. He is in the same school as my sister.'

In conclusion it must be said that the approach to reading must be a meaningful experience. Words and sentences are printed symbols and patterns which perform a function and the children must grow into a consciousness of this function. Only then will they show a lasting interest for reading.