

## Getting learners interested: Headlines and signs

*Texts of various kinds can be used to introduce both topical and functional lessons and can be selected to suit any level. Ideally, the texts will be relatively short, focused and suitable for an introductory speaking activity such as speculation, prediction, expressing opinions, sharing information and comparing experiences – all directed at activating ideas and language before the main part of lesson. These texts raise interest, have practical real-life value and can add an international feel if chosen from sources around the world. Here we look at very short texts.*

### Headlines and captions

These are easily sourced from newspapers, magazines and the internet. They can be used in prediction and speculation tasks to set up an article learners are about to read, followed by a quick read-through of the text to check their ideas. They can also introduce the theme of a lesson or precede a more complex speaking activity.

Here are some examples:

*New film is so bad it's good*

Elicit what 'so bad it's good' means. Find out if learners have a similar expression in their language(s). Get them to work in groups and make a short list of films they think fit this description, then compare choices and give reasons. Ask which film they think the headline is about (give a clue!).

*Man fleeing police jumps fence into women's prison*

In groups, learners discuss the meaning of the headline, then imagine a scenario where this might happen. They compare scenarios and as a class choose the funniest one, then the most logical one.



102-year-old student, Ma Xiuxian, shows what lifelong learning really means.

Captions like the one under the photo of Ma Xiuxian on the left can also be used.

Learners guess what 'lifelong learning' she might be involved in, how she feels about the experience and how the other students react to her. This could lead to a broader discussion about lifelong learning, people who do things at unconventional ages, or stereotyping by age, gender, etc.

# English Unlimited Teaching Tips

## Signs and notices

These expose learners to 'social sight' words, which are important for daily life. Common signs and notices found in banks, supermarkets, shopping malls, hotels, government offices and so forth can be used to set contexts and introduce topics.

For a lesson on transport or travel, for example, learners could read a selection of train station signs and notices like this:



Lower levels can match them with symbols or equivalent signs in their language(s). Stronger learners could discuss what each notice means and where it might be located in a train station (on a platform, on the concourse, near the ticket gates, at the station entrance). Higher levels could think of other signs they might find at a train station, and perhaps at an airport or bus station as well.

The signs can then be used in a gist task. Learners could listen to short conversations and identify where the speakers are or want to go, e.g. 'They're at the lost luggage desk' or 'He wants to find the trolley point.'