

**Teaching Tip:** based on talk at TESOL-SPAIN 41<sup>st</sup> Annual Convention in Madrid

As a teacher I have begun more and more to bring authentic materials into my higher level classes. My own aim is to help direct students to reputable websites and to raise their awareness of issues and topics that are rarely found in course books. Do my eyes and your eyes see things in the same way? It's all about perspective and I find it interesting to help students see things from a different perspective.

### **The blind photographer**

Pete Eckert is a professional photographer who was born sighted and then went blind in his early twenties. I found out about him when watching British TV and saw an advert that he had produced for a well-known car manufacturer. I then went online and found his website and a short video where he talks about how he went blind and how he approaches his photography (<https://vimeo.com/69540630>). I then developed this to use it in my classroom.

#### **Procedure:**

I ask students to discuss the following in pairs: Which of these jobs can a blind person do? Why/Why not? Piano Tuner, Barber, Social Worker, Photographer, Bicycle Repairer, Lawyer.

I get feedback on the most probable and the least probable, then tell them that all of these jobs are done by blind people.

I then tell them we are going to watch a video about a blind photographer. I often exploit the short description to the video ("*The blind photographer explains the improbability of his vocation and how the eye is not always the most important thing in taking a picture*") by getting them to predict what he will say. After getting feedback, I play the video to check their predictions (approx. 4 mins. long).

At this point you could get different pairs to google the different jobs done by blind people, for example, blind piano tuner, and then report back to the class what they find out.

**Teaching Tip:** I always find that with a listening task, students don't always catch everything so I tend to then replay sections where they miss things and build it up on the board as a gap fill.

For example at the beginning of the video clip, Pete says "I was a visual person for half my life. I'd intended to go to architect school, I'd already gone through graduate school ". On the board I show how many gaps there are in the first sentence: \_\_ \_\_ \_\_ \_\_ \_\_ \_\_ \_\_ \_\_ \_\_ and ask the students to copy this in their

notebooks. I then replay that sentence until they can complete the full phrase. This really helps them tune into the typical problems they have with listening to fast connected speech.

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