



TI-AIE

The learning environment

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What this unit is about

The focus in this unit is on environmental print and the print-rich environment of your classroom.

Students take their first steps towards literacy when they become aware that the print they see around them carries meaning. 'Environmental print' at home and in the community is often the first writing that students learn to read. This is the writing that is part of everyday life – writing we see all around us on signs, tickets, newspapers, packets and posters. When students come to school, they see new forms of environmental print: charts, lists, schedules, labels and all kinds of reading material. Teachers can make good use of these community and school resources to teach English.

The activities in this unit give you opportunities to improve the print environment of your classroom – whatever your starting point may be – and to improve and practise your English with students. Adapt the activities based on your professional needs and the needs of your students.

What you can learn in this unit

- To use local print resources for English literacy.
- To plan print-based activities in English lessons.
- To make interactive English literacy resources.

1 What is environmental print?

Start by looking at the term 'environmental print', its meaning and how it can support students' learning.

Environmental print is often the first writing that students learn to read with enjoyment and enthusiasm. For instance, many students will know that the words in Figure 1, on a blue background, and this shape, mean a nice treat of ice cream. Can you think of other signs like this?



Figure 1 Mother Dairy logo

Most students start school with some knowledge about print and also some knowledge about English. In school they are exposed to new, different forms of writing: charts, lists, names, schedules, labels and all kinds of reading material.

At little or no cost, you can make a lively, visual classroom where students are exposed to a range of print. The walls and spaces of your classroom can be a creative communicational environment where you display and teach with a variety of school, community and home writing.

Activity 1: From signs and symbols to reading

Have you ever been in a foreign country, or to a different state in your own country, where you could not read the local language? How did you figure out where to go, what to do or what the shop signs and street posters meant? Did you sometimes get it wrong? Were you pleased when you worked it out? Did you use your home language knowledge to work out the new language?

Your students who cannot yet read are in this 'foreign country'. They see letters and words written on different things in different places: boxes in the market, labels on clothing, billboards and traffic signs on the road, books or pamphlets in the home, announcements in the temple or the mosque, and text on mobile phones. They know that these marks and symbols carry information. They begin to 'read' the information using clues that surround the words: pictures, symbols, colours, shapes, where the writing is located and what people do with the writing.

Look at Figure 2. Think about how the words and images work together, and the colours you also might see with the words and shapes. If you could not read any written language, how would you know what these signs say?



Figure 2 Three signs.

