

## **Mental Pictures Through Language**

Material Needed: Detailed Photograph

I ask for 5 volunteers. The first one stays inside the room and the other four step outside of the room. I then show the class and the first volunteer a rather detailed photograph. I ask the first volunteer to study it closely because (s)he will need to describe the photograph to the next volunteer. One-by-one, each volunteer enters the room and is given a description of the photograph. Each listens to the description and is then asked to pass it on to the next volunteer who enters the room until no more volunteers remain. The first volunteer, however, is the only one that is shown the photograph. The last volunteer is then asked to draw the picture on the board and to offer an explanation for what (s)he has drawn. At the end of the exercise, I show the photograph to the volunteers. As a class, we discuss how the image changed through the exercise and possible reasons for such transformations.

Generally, much of the detail is lost from the description but other details may be added or else transformed according to the visual perceptions of the participants. What remains, though, is instructive and offers insight into how we think visually.

The goal is to show students how cognitively mental pictures are created through language. Such mental pictures, though, are reliant on past experiences as students organize the information based on how they think such visual images should appear.