Speaking and Listening – Level 5

Group discussion: *Alike*

Note: Students have been numbered left to right from 1 to 7.

TEACHER Response to the film *Alike*. I’m going to start with a question about the title of the film. It was called *Alike*. Why do you think they called it that?

STUDENT 4 ’Cause everyone was the same but those two were different. So, they wanted it to be, like, opposite.

STUDENT 3 They’re not alike.

STUDENT 4 Yeah, not everyone’s alike.

TEACHER Okay. What were you going to say?

STUDENT 6 Just like they said, they wanted to be alike, like everyone else in the city.

TEACHER Okay. You were going to …

STUDENT 7 Well, they … what I heard by the title of the film, like, they were different colours to everyone else. Everyone was the same, everyone did the same thing, they did the same things as everyone else, but then, after they did that, they … they did something new. And the violin man was coloured and he did something different to everyone else. So, maybe, like, there’s … Everyone else just wants to be like everyone else and they’re just, like … just want to be themselves, you know?

TEACHER Okay, so are you saying that there were two groups of people who were alike?

STUDENT 7 Yeah.

TEACHER There were the grey, colourless people and they were all like each other.

STUDENT 7 Yep.

TEACHER And then there were the colourful people.

STUDENT 7 Mm-hm.

TEACHER And they were like each other.

STUDENT 3 I reckon …

STUDENT 7 Well …

STUDENT 3 They, like … so after they came from working, you’d have, like, for happiness and stuff … like, when they’re happy, they turn colourful. But, like, when they're sad, they’re, like, white or grey.

STUDENT 7 Well, yeah, with the coloured people, they … they weren’t the same. It’s just … and they weren’t the same colours. They … they did different things. And I think the film’s trying to show us, like, you don’t have to be the same as everyone else and you can be your own person.

TEACHER Okay. That's a really big concept, there, isn’t it? We might come back to that in a minute.

Um, we touched on the colour. So, what did you notice about the colours?

STUDENT 5 I noticed that when they were happy, they had their colour, but when they were all sad, or not just sad but when they were bored or something, they just turned grey.

TEACHER Okay. Yep. Do you want to add anything about the colour?

STUDENT 1 Uh, the grey people … hmm. They were all the same, but they looked different.

TEACHER Okay. The grey people … So, what do you mean they were all the same?

STUDENT 1 Like, they’d do the same things. But they didn’t look the same.

TEACHER Okay, so, their physical features are different but they were all doing the same thing and they were all grey.

 Okay. Why do you think the filmmaker was portraying all those people as grey?

STUDENT 6 Uh … I think that’s, like, a boring colour.

TEACHER It’s a boring colour? Yeah? What else?

STUDENT 3 Like, it’s boring or it just shows, like, you’re bored or something like that.

STUDENT 7 It’s like a tone. Tones are, like … They don’t bring life, you know? Like, that heater there doesn’t bring life. But … but my clothes bring life. Not these ones, but at home, you know? Like, you look happy if you wear something happy.

TEACHER Okay. So, you’re really associating colours with emotions there.

 Alright. Now, what about the intensity of the colour?

STUDENT 7 Uh, well, it depends. If it’s, like, really dark, it’s … you’re kind of just in the middle, but if it’s bright, colourful … like a smiley-face emoji, it’s yellow, it’s … it’s just … and its eyes are, like, really wide and that’s why, you know … That was just grey, black, you know?

TEACHER Yep. Mm.

STUDENT 3 And with the intensity of the colour, like, it was turning, uh, white or grey.

TEACHER Yeah, they kind of faded, didn’t they? At the start, they were quite bright …

STUDENT 3 You could see it fading. Yeah.

TEACHER … intense, more intense colours. And then they faded through the movie.

STUDENT 3 Yeah, into when, um, his dad did that and the colours got, like, more intense.

TEACHER Okay, so, at the end, when his dad did that nice thing for him, the colours popped back to an intense …

Why do you think they would gradually fade the colours through the film?

STUDENY 4 Um, they were, like … so they’ll get bored at work and stuff ’cause all they’re doing is typing or writing and stuff like that. And then, when they were together and having fun, they would go back to colours, instead of just being bored.

TEACHER Yep.

STUDENT 6 The colour reminded me of this movie I watched and I thought, ‘Oh, that’s good.’

TEACHER It was … the colour reminded you of a movie?

STUDENT 6 Yeah, it was this movie where there was no, like …

STUDENT 7 *Inside Out*?

STUDENT 6 No.

 There was, like … there was no colours in the movie and there was, like, no … trees and colours. But then this person planted colours and trees into the city.

TEACHER Oh. OK.

STUDENT 2 *The Lorax*?

STUDENT 6 Yeah, it was.

TEACHER Ah, yeah. Yep. Um, that’s got a pretty strong message too.

Uh, you touched on the idea of when they go to work or when they go to school, but that what they were doing was boring. What did you notice about the way the filmmaker portrayed work and school?

STUDENT 3 Um, like, they did, like, time.

TEACHER Yes.

STUDENT 3 Like, it’s hard to explain. Like, they did, like, time. As he’s like confident, as he starts, but then he gets boreder, bored and it goes down.

STUDENT 7 The kid starts drawing pictures, you know, and then, gradually, through the film, he just starts writing boring letters, so …

TEACHER Yep. Yep.

STUDENT 5 I reckon he only started writing … like, how he went from direct pictures and then to doing letters, was only ’cause his dad let him go and see the man playing the …

STUDENT 4 Yeah, he wanted to go see the man playing.

TEACHER Yeah. Near the end there, where they go back, the dad takes him back to see the violinist, I was expecting the violinist to be there, and I was a bit shocked that he wasn’t, and I didn’t really know what to expect would happen next.

How did you feel when it got to that part of the movie?

STUDENT 2 Really, like, how I felt, just like how he felt. Like, the expression on his face when, um, he saw that he wasn’t there and then, compared to the expression on his face when his dad, like, started doing it.

TEACHER There’s no talking, no speech, but we still could understand all the emotions, we still felt them …

STUDENT 2 Like, how he’s feeling.

TEACHER Yeah. So, how did they do that?

STUDENT 2 Um, I guess, like, well, you could just tell by his eyes, like, the way his mouth was and, like, the way his body was drooping, and stuff like that.

STUDENT 7 I think it’s teaching us a lesson on … if you look at someone and if they’re like this – their head’s down – and their shoulders are slumped over, they might be sad. But if someone's joyful, shoulders up, their face is, like, beaming, you know, the smile comes along, you can tell. I think, like, expressions tell a lot more than maybe words, in a way.

TEACHER Yeah. Okay.

 I think there's one other device that the filmmaker used to help us understand the emotions.

STUDENT 1 Colour.

STUDENT 5 Sound.

TEACHER What about the sound?

STUDENT 5 Like, when you’d hear the violin at the background, that’s when the little kid got, like, a smile and that.

TEACHER Mm-hm.

STUDENT 5 And that’s when his dad put a frown on. And then … Yeah, ’cause then the bell ticked and then he, like, got all happy again.

TEACHER Yep.

STUDENT 2 So it’s like with the typewriter. You could hear, like, how, like, everyone was doing the same thing and how, like, they were so bored and just the same clicking noise going on.

TEACHER Yeah. And they were all in rhythm then, weren’t they, doing it at the same time?

STUDENT 3 And when the violinist, like, wasn’t there, I expected the dad to, like, pull out a violin out of his case.

TEACHER Yeah?

STUDENT 6 When, uh, the dad does pretend he had the violin, um, the … these, uh … some of the grey people looked over at him with a weird expression.

STUDENT 7 Yeah, that was a bit different. Like, they … Usually all of them would just keep walking, they wouldn’t look at the violin, and then some random person without a violin and they all kind of looked at him, like, ‘What’s this guy doing?’ Like, they were thinking, ‘He’s a little bit, like …’ And they probably didn’t notice that he was trying to cheer his kid up, you know?

TEACHER So, they were stopping to wonder what was going on?

 I also noticed that the backpack and the briefcase were quite heavy, and we talked about that while we were watching it. The kid kind of got used to that weight, didn’t he? What do you think the filmmaker was trying to tell us there?

STUDENT 7 That they’re getting used to everything. They’re … they’re kind of, now, like, blending in with them. So, at the start, when they were colourful, they did different things to everyone, and the bag was heavy. They’re kind of showing another, like, side to being, like, the same – alike – to everyone else. So, like, if you looked at another schoolkid, they would be wearing their backpack normally. If you looked at the grown-up with their briefcase, they’ll be walking normally. But at the start, they all looked different.

TEACHER Mm. Okay.

 What connection do you think the filmmaker wants us to make between the kids and the office workers?

STUDENT 7 Um, that they … that’s what happens when they grow up.

STUDENT 3 Yeah, they do the same thing.

STUDENT 7 So, they learn how to write and then … Yeah.

STUDENT 4 Trying to teach them the rhythm and stuff like that to how you do it and how you don’t do it.

STUDENT 2 Just getting used to things.

STUDENT 3 School and work aren’t that different.

TEACHER Yep.

STUDENT 5 Well, it seemed a lot boring and school ’cause, like, everyone was all dark. Even his dad was all dark, like, in the … They were all grey. But at school, everyone was grey except for that one little kid. He wasn’t one.

TEACHER Yep.

 Now, I don't want to finish on a negative tone, so what I want to say is, um, what made them colour up again?

STUDENT 3 Happiness.

STUDENT 1 Each other.

TEACHER Happiness. Each other.

STUDENT 4 Just having fun with each other.

STUDENT 7 Knowing that they were there for each other, that they wouldn’t let anyone stop them from being who they are. You know?

STUDENT 2 His dad didn’t really care, like …

TEACHER Yep.

STUDENT 2 His dad just, all of a sudden, didn’t care what he did. He just didn’t care if he was different from anyone else. He just liked having his son there.

TEACHER Yeah. Yep. Okay. Beautiful.