

ADALL project

Attending Diversity in Adult Language Learning

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Intellectual Output 01: A Guide to Diversity and Classroom
Activities to Help Overcome Learning Issues

Index

Foreword	3
Project Partnership	4
Part One	5
Why is the concept of attending diversity so important in adult language learning?	
1. Introduction	6
2. Outline	22
Part Two	27
Self-Assessment Activities	
Part Three	36
Practical Classroom Activities	
1. Reading Activities	36
2. Writing Activities	46
3. Listening Activities	60
4. Speaking Activities	70
5. Storytelling Activities	89
6. Multi-Skills Activities	109
7. Learning by Doing	122
Acknowledgements	131

Foreword

This Teachers' Guide is the result of co-operation between six educational establishments with very different profiles, a fact which in itself actually embodies this concept of diversity.

In our team there are language schools like *Escuela Oficial de Idiomas Alcalá de Guadaíra* in Spain, *Centro Europeu de Línguas* in Portugal and *English Unlimited* in Poland, teacher training centres like *MBM TD Center* in the UK, and NGOs like *Associazione Innovamentis* in Italy and *Jafnréttishús* in Iceland. However, we all share a common goal: teaching foreign languages to adults whose profiles are as different as the team that makes up this project. Our students can include people with a higher level of education who seek to improve their career opportunities, those who want to learn just for pleasure, and also immigrants and refugees with no previous formal education who need to make their way and start a new life in a new country.

We all share a strong vocation for teaching, and this has led us to share our knowledge and experience to, on the one hand, identify the key factors that influence language learning in adulthood (see the Outline on page 22) and, on the other hand, design tools that can help the teaching community and provide students with effective learning strategies (see Parts Two and Three).

This has been a very rewarding experience for us as teachers, sharing our different forms of experience, mainly because we have come to see that despite the world of difference that there can sometimes be among our students, the challenges they face are very much the same.

For our adult students, learning a language has been equally rewarding, in the sense that it has meant the creation of a new *persona* (see Part Two) and the beginning of a journey to self-discovery, which they have very much enjoyed. With the help of this Guide, we hope it will be the same for you and yours.

Project Partnership

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Part One

Why is the concept of attending diversity so important in adult language learning?



Introduction

Prepared by MBM TD Center, Liverpool, UK

In studying the challenges that learner diversity management in language training faces in six language training organizations in Spain, Italy, Portugal, Poland and the United Kingdom, this Guide seeks to offer a theoretical framework and some practical guidance regarding innovative adult education activities, at the same time fostering learner-centered foreign language training in Europe.

The “Attending Diversity in Adult Language Learning” Guide is specifically designed to support European language trainers and educators, who are engaged with delivering foreign language training in non-formal learning settings.

About the Guide

Teaching foreign languages to adult learners has always been affected by a number of diversity management challenges. Embracing diversity as a fundamental aspect of our European realities means not just to celebrate the linguistic and cultural diversity of Europe, but also to learn how to address the challenges that diversity poses during the everyday language training.

The impact of cultural diversity on language training has been widely recognised, as culture contributes not just to the development of personality, but also to the manner in which the individual, and indeed a given society, interprets reality. Language is the most overt expression of culture, and most of the learning process, both at school and at home, is carried out through language. The learner must relate and accommodate what has been learned at home to the language and culture of the school. For learners whose language and culture matches that of the school, this in itself can represent a challenge. For learners whose linguistic and cultural fabric is different from that represented at school, the task is monumental.

Adult students always bring a certain amount of what we might call “cultural, social, and personal learning style and learning experience, “baggage, to the classroom, which may have an important influence on the way they approach learning, and consequently on the problems teachers and trainers may encounter in providing linguistic education. This baggage may sometimes be quite heavy, due to specific cultural attitudes towards learning, or to specific languages as parts of specific cultures; it could reflect the social or economic status of the learners; their gender and the way they have been positioned in their micro-

On the other hand, previous, unpleasant or traumatising learning experiences, a lack of motivation, as well as special learning needs or different learning styles, could also affect the learning process.

There are various educational strategies that language trainers can adopt in each case, although the nature of each individual problem may sometimes need specialist advice, and this is exactly what this Guide will attempt to provide.

LEARNER DIVERSITY IN LANGUAGE TRAINING

Writing of ‘the tapestry of diversity in our classrooms’, Murray (1996) points to a facet of second language learning that is now at the forefront of our consciousness as teachers and researchers. The learners that language trainers meet can no longer be treated as a homogeneous body. Diversity is perhaps most apparent in classrooms where the learners come from varied socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

David Nunan (1988) and Phil Benson (2005) argue that even learners with similar backgrounds vary in terms of the psychological predisposition and learning experiences that they bring to the classroom. We recognise, they say, that learners are individuals and that their individuality may have significant consequences for their learning. Researchers acknowledge that it is only relatively recently that the reality of learner diversity has come to the attention of educators.

The Invisible Learner

Phil Benson (2005) argues that an interest in learner diversity presupposes an interest in learners. The history of second language training, he says, shows that for much of the twentieth century researchers were far more interested in problems of teaching than they were in problems of learning.

The linguists Henry Sweet (*The Practical Study of Languages* (1899) and Otto Jespersen (*How To Teach a Foreign Language* (1904) are considered to be among the ‘founding fathers’ of the field of second language learning research.

Guides to good language teaching are still popular in the twenty-first century and many of them incorporate the sound advice offered by Sweet and Jespersen, who differ in their approach to the genre from their modern counterparts in one crucial respect. They seldom mention the learners.

One explanation for the invisibility of the learner in early research lies in its more or less

exclusive concern with the application of linguistic theories that viewed language from the perspective of form and structure. These theories had considerable implications for the ways in which language learning material should be organised and presented to learners, for example, but said little about the ways in which languages were actually learned.

In the late 1950s, psychology also became influential, but initially only the form of theories that viewed language learning as a behavioural response to input stimuli. Again, behaviourism (see Watson, 2013) offered little scope for the exploration of the learner's role in the process of second language learning.

Our present-day interest in language learners is therefore both historically specific and relatively recent in origin. It arose, moreover, during a period in the second half of the twentieth century when diversity in the contexts and settings for second language teaching and learning was beginning to make learners far more visible than they had been in the past. According to Phil Benson (2005), although an interest in learner diversity presupposes an interest in learners, this interest in learners could only arise as a result of learner diversity itself.

1. Shift of Perspectives: From a language-centered to a learner-centered approach in language training

By the late 1970s, 'learner-centredness' had emerged as a key concept in second language teaching based on a now largely unquestioned understanding that learners' varied responses to teaching are as important a factor in language learning, if not more so, than the teaching itself. In this sense, the idea of learner-centredness was a humanistic reaction to behaviourist theories, which assigned little importance to the variability of learners' responses to input.

Wenden (2002) comments that the rise of learner-centredness 'grew out of the recognition that language learners are diverse'. Over the past 40 years or so, the expansion of institutionalised education systems, the rise in the number of individuals migrating or travelling overseas and the development of communication

technologies (aspects of the phenomenon we now call 'globalisation') have led to an exponential growth in the number of people studying second languages around the world.

As the 'client-base' for second language education has expanded, the contexts in which individuals learn second languages have naturally become more diverse. From this perspective, it might be argued that the 'recognition of diversity' to which Wenden refers was, in fact, the recognition of an essentially new reality within second language education as a global enterprise.

Benson (2005) suggested that the shift from language-focused to learner-focused research could perhaps be explained by the growing visibility of learner diversity as a factor in late-twentieth-century language education on the verge of a further shift in focus to the learner as an individual.

Drawing on the work of Giddens (1991) and other contemporary social theorists on 'individualisation' as a characteristic process of late modern society, Rustin (2000) argues that individual characteristics, including learning styles, are nowadays a stronger factor than the contextual variables discussed by some modernist theories of language training.

2. Individual Learning Styles

Research on learning styles began to expand in the early 1970s.

Accommodating diverse learning styles in language learning and teaching contexts significantly influences the way teaching and learning events are approached, facilitated and mediated. In fact, the learning style of different language learners has been one of the most important focuses of the ADALL project.

One essential thing to remember about adult language learners is that a difference does not mean a deficiency. Human beings are all different. People everywhere learn differently, process information in different ways and look for different external cues to help understand the world.

By understanding learning styles, educators can become more aware of how they teach. Moreover, being more reflective and aware of how people learn can improve learning and increase the teacher effectiveness for diverse learners.

In previous years, researchers paid considerable attention to the aspects of teaching and the teacher, such as teaching methodology, teaching materials, curriculum, etc., and there had been heated debate over the question "Which is the best teaching method?" In recent years the focus seems to have clearly shifted from teaching to learning.

Cook (2000), in explaining the students' contribution to learning, points out that "all successful teaching depends upon learning; there is no point in providing entertaining, lively, well-constructed language lessons if students do not learn. The proof of the teaching is in the learning." Oxford (2001) points out that "individual students' learning styles and strategies can work together with – or conflict with – a given instructional methodology". Ellis (2005) proposes the concept of learner- instruction matching. In his opinion, the optimal type of instruction will be that which matches the individual learner's preferred approach to learning. Whether from the perspective of learner-instruction matching or from that of the

relationship of learning style and learning strategy, it is therefore necessary to study learning style.

3. Learning Styles

3.1 Defining Learning Styles

With different educational and cultural backgrounds, different personalities and different learning experiences, people unsurprisingly differ in their ways of learning a foreign language, which leads to different degrees of success. These different ways of learning are usually referred to as “learning styles”.

The term “learning style” comes from general psychology. Ellis (2005) defines learning style as “the characteristic ways in which individuals orientate to problem- solving”. Ellis quotes Keefe’s (1979) definition of learning style: the characteristic cognitive, affective and physiological behaviors that serve as relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with and respond to the learning environment. Learning style is a consistent way of functioning, which reflects underlying causes of behaviour. Cornett (1983) defines learning style as the overall patterns that will give general direction to learning behaviour, while Dunn and Griggs (1988) define learning style as the biologically and developmentally imposed set of characteristics that make the same teaching method wonderful for some and terrible for others.

Experts do not see eye to eye with regard to what learning style is, but rather sum up some shared characteristics from the above definitions. These may include the following points:

- Learning style is concerned with individual learners;
- Learning style refers to ways of learning;
- Learning style is relatively consistent or stable for individual learners; learning style is the favoured or preferred way of learning for an individual learner.

3.2. Learning Style versus Learning Strategy

Learning style and learning strategy are easily confused concepts. To make learning style clear in meaning, we may distinguish it from learning strategy. The former is one of the individual learner differences:

- According to Ellis (2005), individual learner differences, including learning style, “together with situational factors determine the learners’ choice of learning strategies.”
- According to Oxford (2001), “language learning styles and strategies are among the main factors that help determine how and how well our students learn a second language”. He refers to learning style as the “general approach”, and defines learning strategies as “specific actions, behaviour, steps, or techniques”. And he further points out “when a learner consciously chooses strategies that fit his or her learning style (...) these strategies become a useful toolkit for active, conscious and purposeful self-regulation of learning.” (Oxford, 2001)

A learner’s learning style may predict his choice of learning strategy. And there is a problem of the match between learning strategy and learning style.

A good match of learning strategy with learning style can bring about positive results.

3.3. Learning Style Types And Models

Psychologists have identified a lot of learning styles. It is said that there are over seventy learning style models, and that each model is made up of at least two specific learning styles. Not all these models can be borrowed to explain the learning of a foreign language, as after all language learning has its own characteristics. That is to say, not all the learning style models are valid in explaining the phenomenon of learning a foreign language. The most frequently-quoted models in the field of foreign language learning include: “focuser” and “scanner”, “serialists” and “holists”, “impulsive” and “reflective”, “divergent” and “convergent” thinkers, “field dependence” and “field independence”, four perceptual learning modalities, global and analytic, etc.

We can categorise these learning styles into three broad types:

- perceptual learning styles,
- cognitive learning styles, and
- personality learning styles.

3.3.1. Perceptual Learning Styles

Perceptual learning style, also referred to as sensory learning style, concerns the involvement of the learner’s sense organs in the process of learning, such as eyes and ears. Learners employ their sense organs to process the stimuli from outside. There are five styles

which fall into this category: visual (learning by seeing), auditory (learning by hearing), reading/writing (learning by processing text), tactile learners (learning by touching), and kinesthetic learning/practical learning (learning by doing).

Visual learners prefer to learn by reading books, seeing words, or looking at some teaching tools. They prefer to look at the written words on the blackboard than to only listen to the teacher. Therefore, they like the teacher to write more than to talk more in classroom. The PPT presentation is well-suited for these learners because it presents words, and pictures or charts. This type of learner will feel comfortable when teachers use the grammar-translation teaching approach.

Auditory learners, also referred to as verbal learners, prefer to learn by listening. They may enjoy interaction with others by talking, but may dislike reading books. So, in formal instruction settings they would rather listen more than see more.

A variety of teaching approaches may suit them, such as the oral approach, the situational approach, the audio-lingual approach and the communicative approach.

Tactile learners and kinesthetic learners are similar. The former prefer to learn by feeling or touching something with their hands, while the latter prefer movement. Learners of these two kinds will feel comfortable when teacher uses the total physical response approach.

3.3.2. Cognitive Learning Styles

Cognitive learning styles include “focuser” and “scanner”, “serialists” and “holists”, “divergent” and “convergent” thinkers, “field dependence” (global learner) and “field independence” (analytic learner). Some of them overlap in meaning. Of these, the most important pair is field independence and field dependence, which has been the subject of broad research in relation to foreign language learning.

Field-independent learners, also known as analytic learners, can be described as the learners who would like to focus on the *details* of a foreign language and to break down a whole thing into parts or pieces.

- They may ignore the whole picture when concentrating on details.
- They are good analysts.
- They like to break down a reading passage or a sentence into parts, trying to get the exact meaning.

Field-dependent learners, on the other hand, are global learners.

- They like to focus on the *whole thing* of the learning material, whether a passage or a sentence.
- They are good at grasping the main points and the general structure.

Johnson (2003) points out that “the field-independent subjects seemed to be better learners” when mentioning the tests carried out by Naiman *et al* (1978). These tests involved personality and cognitive styles, among which only two are reported to give positive correlations with language-learning success. One of these is tolerance of ambiguity, and the other one is field-independence.

Ellis (2005) mentions two hypotheses. One hypothesis suggests that “field-dependent learners do better in formal language learning, while field-independent learners do better in informal language learning.” The other hypothesis suggests that “field- dependent learners will interact more and seek out more contact with other users of the foreign language”. However, these two hypotheses are very controversial. As Ellis himself points out, “the research into field dependence/field independence has shed little light on the relationship between cognitive style and foreign language learning.” (Ellis, 2005)

3.3.3. Personality Learning Styles

Researchers point out two types of learners in terms of personality:

- Reflective learners
- Impulsive learners

Reflective learners prefer accuracy to fluency. They would like to think more carefully and more thoroughly before they speak or write, or do any other production tasks. And they try to avoid making mistakes. They are careful learners.

On the other hand, impulsive learners, as the name suggests, they are bold in character and like to take risks. They prefer fluency to accuracy. They probably make more mistakes than reflective learners.

3.3.4 Learners of Compound Learning Styles

Learners of compound learning styles refer to those who have more than one strong learning style. It is possible that a learner may be a visual learner and an impulsive learner at the

same time. The research into this type of learner is limited, there are few possible combination models and they remain to be tested.

4. Implications of Learning Styles on Learning and Teaching

So far, there is no strong evidence to illustrate which learning style is better than another. According to Ellis (2005), learners manifest different learning styles but it is not yet clear whether some styles result in faster and more efficient learning than others. Even so, the models of learning style can still shed some light on the complex process of learning.

In our opinion, understanding learning style is important for students as well as for teachers. For students, if they learn what type of learner they are, they can have a clearer picture of the learning process, and more awareness of learning. With more awareness of learning style, they may understand why they feel comfortable in learning one aspect while uncomfortable in learning another. And they will know what they are good at and why they lag behind others in learning. Thus, they can adjust or modify their learning a little to the learning setting or teaching methods. Most importantly, they can decide their learning strategies on the basis of their learning style and analysis of their weaknesses and strengths. Learning strategies are more related to academic achievement than learning style. Besides, they can set practical learning goals which are more suitable for themselves. For example, visual learners may become good readers. Auditory learners may become good at speaking and communicating.

Learning style is more or less fixed and it is not easy to change one's learning style, just as one cannot easily change one's personality, habit, or cognitive style. In this sense, it is more important for teachers to understand the theories of learning style and to get to know the students' learning styles. As educators, we have to remember that our students' learning styles cannot be the same. It is the varied learning styles in a classroom that make the teaching difficult. On the basis of this, we have to adapt different teaching methods and find a balanced teaching approach. But first of all, we should conduct a survey to identify the learning styles of our students. Based on the results of the survey, we will then be able to determine what the most popular learning style in that particular class is, and what the least popular styles in this class are. We can grade them. Our teaching methods will cater to the differences of learning style. Alternatively, we can put students of the same or similar learning styles into one class, and this will make teaching more student-oriented and easier to handle.

Haynes (2010) lists the activities fit for students of different learning styles. For auditory learners, these activities include interviewing, debating, participating on a panel, giving oral reports, and participating in oral discussions of written material. For visual learners, the following activities are suggested: computer graphics, maps, graphs, charts, cartoons, posters, diagrams, texts with a lot of pictures. For tactile learners, some favorite activities include drawing, playing board games, and making models. For kinesthetic learners, playing games that involve the whole body, movement activities, making models, and setting up experiments. For global learners, choral reading, recorded books, story writing, computer programmes, games, group activities. For analytic learners, information presented in sequential steps, teacher- directed activities, clear goals and requirements.

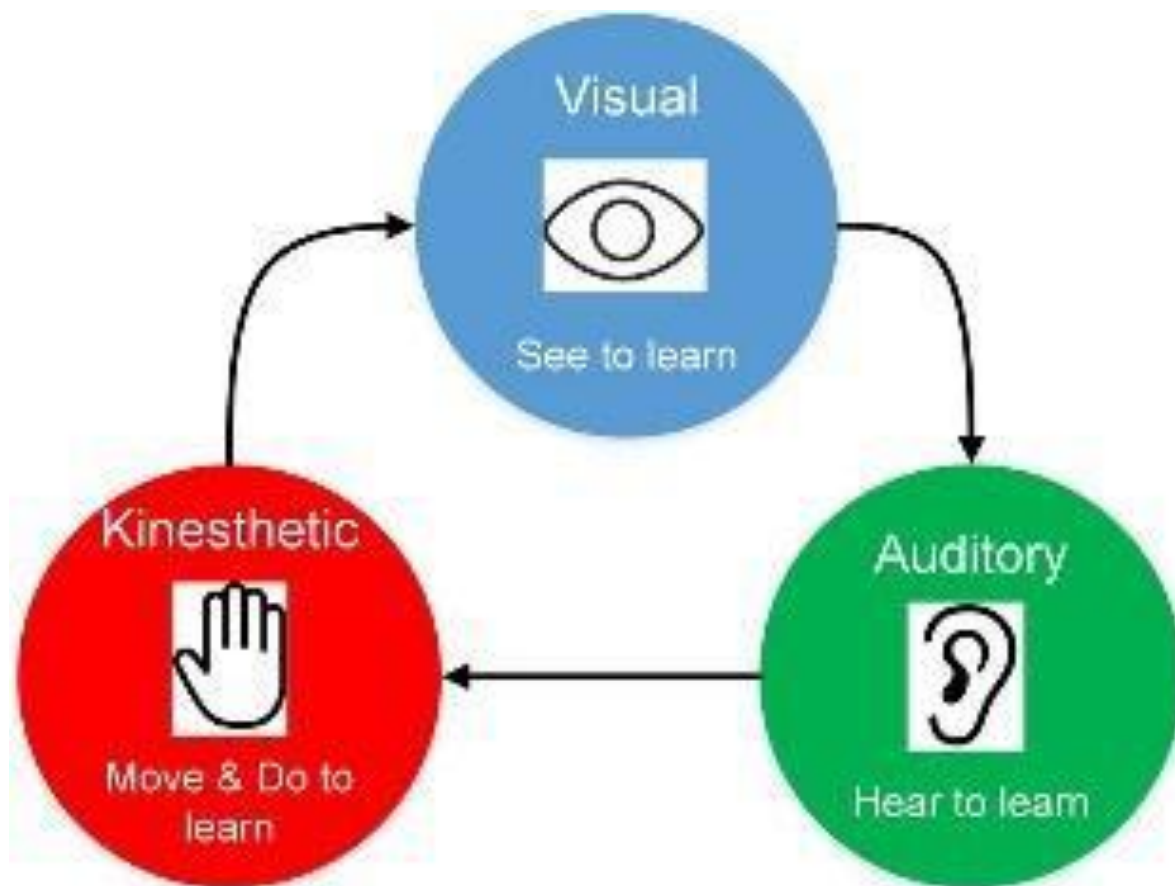
Another implication may be that one single teaching method or approach cannot possibly work for all the students in a class. The popular communicative approach may not be suitable for visual learners or analytic learners. A task-based teaching approach may be a good choice if the tasks are designed carefully and the tasks can attract different types of learners.

Learning style research seems outdated due to the lack of convincing testing results. But it is worth reviewing the basic ideas of learning style. Recognition of the diversity of learning style is important in our teaching practice. Language teachers should take the differences of learning style into account in the process of teaching. They should teach in a balanced way according to the range of students' learning style, certain in the knowledge that a single teaching approach cannot work for everyone in a class. On the contrary, different teaching approaches may be integrated and different tasks or activities may be used in classroom to please all the students and produce better teaching results.

Scholars have proposed that students use different perceptual strengths when learning. These strengths can be auditory (hearing), visual, or kinesthetic (active) in nature.

Today many models and various measures of learning styles exist. It is not clear whether one's learning style is flexible or fixed. However, many people are aware that they have preferences when it comes to the way they learn and study. This self- awareness of how one learns is related to the concept of metacognition.

VAK Learning Styles Model



The VAK Learning Styles Model was developed by psychologists in the 1920s to classify the most common ways that people learn. According to the model, most of us prefer to learn in one of three ways: visual, auditory or kinesthetic (although, in practice, we generally "mix and match" these three styles).

- **Visual:** a visually-dominant learner absorbs and retains information better when it is presented in, for example, pictures, diagrams and charts.
- **Auditory:** an auditory-dominant learner prefers listening to what is being presented. He or she responds best to voices, for example in a lecture or group discussion. Hearing her/his own voice repeating something back to a tutor or trainer is also helpful.
 1. **Kinesthetic:** a kinesthetic-dominant learner prefers a physical experience. S/he likes a "hands-on" approach and responds well to being able to touch or feel an object or learning prop.
- 1. **Reading/Writing:** a reading- or writing-dominant learner uses repetition of words and writing. Clearly, there is an overlap with visual and auditory styles, as words and writing can be both, but commonly a person who prefers to learn this way remembers or organises things best in her/his mind by taking down notes.



AUDITORY

Auditory learners make up **30%** of the population.

If you're an auditory learner information comes in best through your ears, from speeches, presentations or audio books. You have a knack for foreign languages and benefit from study groups.



VISUAL

Visual learners make up **65%** of the population.

They tend to be neat and tidy, excellent spellers and quick to read charts. Visual learners also tend to be the fastest talkers.



KINESTHETIC

Kinesthetic make up just **5%** of the population.

They are primarily male and love anything hands-on. These learners are often skilled athletes or musicians and are drawn to construction projects, science experiments and field trips.

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Outline

Prepared by English Unlimited, Gdansk, Poland

Teaching for confidence and better results in learning a foreign language

Learning beliefs, styles and strategies and the importance of learning-to-learn training

As mentioned in the introduction, adult students always bring a certain amount of “learning baggage” to the classroom which may have an important influence on the way they approach learning, and consequently the problems teachers may encounter. This baggage may be sometimes quite heavy due to previous negative learning experiences and a lack of motivation. There are things teachers can do something about in each case, although the nature of each individual problem may sometimes need specialist advice.

The success of making progress in learning a language, or a failure to achieve it, can be traced back to three levels of adult students’ learning persona:

- a. The level of student **beliefs and affectivity**
- b. The level of **learning styles and preferences**
- c. The level of **learning skills**

A. The level of student beliefs and affectivity

“Success depends less on materials, techniques, and linguistic analysis, and more on what goes on inside and between the people in the classroom” (Stevick, 1980).

Many learners who are under-achievers have been strongly affected by years of negative self-talk, often on a semi-conscious level, and these self-beliefs are strong affective and perceptual filters.

Many limiting beliefs – or learning blocks - are not about reality; a lot of them are drawn from “significant others” (teachers, parents, etc.)

The structure of self-fulfilling beliefs goes like this:

1. What teachers/ parents believe their students/children can do has got influence on what teachers/parents expect.
2. What teachers/parents expect influences their behaviour both verbal and non-verbal.
3. The way teachers/parents behave has got very strong impact on what students/children believe they can do.

Teacher beliefs> Teacher expectations> Teacher behaviour > non-verbal / verbal >

Student beliefs What can teachers do to reinforce positive beliefs:

- Create a “can-do” spirit in the classroom
- Teach for thinking
- Give learning opportunities to explore and construct
- Build an atmosphere of trust and rapport

B. The level of learning styles and preferences

Please refer back to the Introduction for detailed information on this issue.

C. The level of learning skills

In order to “unpack” the baggage of (negative) past learning experiences and habits, teachers may need to focus on systematic presentation and training of learning skills.

- It may be necessary to include, in the programme of learning a language for mature students who finished their education some time ago, a systematic approach of showing learning goals and discussing learning outputs. In other words, to help them become aware of how to learn a foreign language.
- Learner training does indeed require a teacher to adopt a systematic and conscious approach of involving learners to REFLECT. The following list is not exhaustive and there are overlaps, but it may include the following activities:
 - Discussing with learners, at the beginning of the course, what the programme and process of learning may be like for them and pointing out that the success of learning depends heavily on their attitude and conscious choices.
 - Giving a self-assessment test and discussing its results in order to point out that different attitudes may need different strategies
 - Explaining to students that they are responsible for WHAT they are learning and HOW
 - Encourage them to share their previous learning experiences - what worked for them and what didn't; try to show that we can add new effective strategies and learn with a positive attitude
 - Explain that the success of learning depends on the strategies and study skills we use. Promote the habit of learners reflecting on how they are learning. Introduce a useful habit of students keeping an individual record of their language learning; there could be, for instance, a diary where they can write down their comments and assess their own learning

strategies, e.g.

- What do I expect from the course / teacher/ myself?
- Why do I want / need to learn ?
- How do I organise my learning?
- What motivates me?
- What stops me from learning?
- What is difficult for me when learning ?
- Present some rules for organising learning a foreign language
 - Learning a foreign language requires the training of some skills, eg.:
 - Organising one's own learning by:
 - Using dictionaries
 - Keeping records of new vocabulary – in context!
 - Memorising in a meaningful way
 - Organising notes to remember things better
 - Revising efficiently
 - Using authentic resources (films, radio, newspapers, the Internet) self-reference online materials
 - Being aware of how personal strategies can help or hinder the learning
 - Learning vocabulary, e.g.
 - Using two-sided cards
 - Making word networks
 - Grouping words
 - Using word bags
 - Making associations and mental images
 - Finding collocations
 - Dealing with grammar, e.g.
 - Discussing personal strategies for learning grammar
 - Understanding the difference between Grammar Facts, Patterns and Choices
 - Discovering patterns or rules
 - Listening practice, e.g.
 - Listening for gist
 - Selecting and rejecting
 - Predicting
 - Speaking, e.g.
 - Developing communication strategies
 - Paraphrasing
 - Using fillers and gambits
 - Getting the meaning across
 - Speaking for fluency
 - Speaking for accuracy
 - Pronunciation, stress intonation – why and how they

matter

- Reading, e.g.
 - Reading speed
 - Reading strategies
 - Predicting
 - Guessing unknown words
- Writing, e.g.
 - Characteristics of written texts
 - Brainstorming ideas before writing
 - Following patterns in writing
 - Organising one's own ideas
 - Self- corrections and self-assessment
- Building up learners' confidence.

Useful sources:

Ellis. G. & Sinclair, B., (1989) ***Learning to Learn English; A course in learner training***, Cambridge University Press

Stevick, E. (1980) ***Teaching Languages: A Way and Ways***, Newbury Press.

Common Learning Difficulties experienced by adults when learning languages

Before finishing the first part of this manual, and included within its theoretical framework, we would like to introduce a list of the most common learning difficulties students have when learning a foreign language.

It is definitely not an exhaustive list, but it is the result of the discussion among the six teams which take part in this project, based on our teaching experience. It is from identifying these language difficulties and the aspects mentioned both in the introduction and the outline that we have elaborated the activities included in the parts two and three of this ADALL guide.

WRITTEN EXPRESSION

- a. Lack of creativity: not having ideas to put into writing (mainly due to anxiety and poor confidence)
- b. Lack of textual coherence and cohesion: not organizing thoughts in a logical way and into paragraphs, incorrect (or no) use of punctuation and/or linking expressions.
- c. Not using the right language / grammar for the task
- d. Poor and/or incorrect use of the language (for a given level)

LISTENING COMPREHENSION

- a. Anxiety/mental blocks (related to the points below)
- b. Unfamiliar content or vocabulary.
- c. Pronunciation.
- d. Tendency to find out the meaning of unknown words rather than inferring them from context.
- e. Students are left behind trying to work out what a previous word meant.
- f. Trying to listen word by word, getting lost and tired easily.
- g. As a consequence of the above, inability to understand the main idea of an oral text and/or to focus on specific questions (in the case of a listening comprehension test or exercise).

READING COMPREHENSION

- a. Not being able to identify/understand the main idea of a text (mostly due to a combination of many factors, like the ones below)
- b. Unfamiliar content or vocabulary.
- c. Problems with decoding and/or word recognition.
- d. Trying to understand every word (not inferring the meaning of a word from neighbouring ones)

SPEAKING

- a. Inhibition (worry about making mistakes, focus not on what they say but how they say it)
- b. Socio-cultural factors: environment they are in (especially in the cases when they are not immersion, that is, surrounded by the new language also outside the classroom), so mother tongue transfer is more likely.
- c. Poor pronunciation.
- d. Nothing to say (again connected to anxiety and mental blocking)

Part Two

Self-Assessment Activities

Activity 1

Prepared by EOI Alcalá de Guadaíra, Spain

SELF-ASSESSMENT: A JOURNEY TO SELF- DISCOVERY

“Language is the way people think as well as the way they talk, the summation of a point of view. Its use reveals unwitting attitudes. People who speak more than one language frequently find themselves having somewhat different patterns of thought and reaction as they shift. Learning another language is not learning different words for the same things, but learning another way to think about things.” (Lewis, 1981)

When you learn a new language, you have to create a new you in some way. That means that the “I” you already know in your native language will not be the same as your new “I” in the language you are learning.

It is very important for adult students, who already have a clear sense of themselves, to realise that their new self needs to start from the beginning, as little children do. This can be very liberating in some way and is key to building up the patience and the confidence necessary to deal with the feelings of insecurity and frustration that may come up for many reasons, among them:

- Not being able to understand people and express themselves as they want to in the new language.
- Unrealistic and/or rushed expectations (*)
- Feeling of getting lost and not having the total control they feel they have in their own language.

Identifying and setting language-learning and attitude goals is important to identify the areas to work on. It is also an opportunity for students to reflect and predict what course of action to take.

In self-assessment, learners should:

- a. Set personal goals for themselves
- b. Draw up action plans that suit their language level and preferences
- c. Reflect on and analyse their own work
- d. Become aware of their strengths and weaknesses
- e. Take responsibility for their learning process and assessing

their own work Individual counselling to learners must be given when possible.

MY GOALS

By the end of the course I want to be able to...

- _____
- _____

The skills that are more important for me to develop to reach my goals are: 1- highest priority 4- lowest priority

SKILL	PRIORITY RATING
Listening	
Reading	
Writing	
Speaking	

In order to do this, I will....

- _____
- _____

I can spend about _____ hours each week on self-study to achieve these goals.

*(*one good example of unrealistic goal often found in elementary group is that many students' goal at the end of the course was to understand their favourite series in English.)*

Objectives:

- To find out their reasons for learning the language.
- For a teacher to know what their priorities are and for students to know how to analyse their needs attending to their main goals.
- To elicit the learning strategies they may know from their academic past or those they can have learnt by themselves from experience, so that we can have a first impression of what learning a language means to them and a starting point to work on.
- To make students aware of their responsibility for their own learning process.

Variations:

After they have filled in the form, students get into groups of three and four and identify common goals that can finally be discussed with the whole group, which is something that can create a sense of belonging.

Later in the year, they can check and discuss achievements.

MY (ENGLISH) SELF

This activity can be done in two parts at different stages during the course.

The first part aims to get students to recognise and enjoy their (English, Icelandic, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, German, French...) self:

- Teacher introduces the idea of the (English, Icelandic, Italian, German...) self.
- Teacher points out that, as they are “reborn”, they have the freedom to be anyway they like: it is a new beginning. What can you be in the new language?
- Students are asked to write at least three positive qualities this new self is going to have, the personal characteristics they think can help them to learn/improve.
- Teacher asks students to discuss in pairs or small groups.
- Students can be asked to make posters in class including the ideas they have come up with: *My (English) self is...* / *My (English) self can...* and pin it on the wall. They can alternatively write them down individually on the first page of their class notebook to mark the beginning of a journey.

The second stage takes place at an academic level at the end of each unit (according to how the content is structured and divided during the course), or/and at the end of each term or course (depending on the length of courses) for students to reflect on their achievements and the improvement they have made. This improvement can be related to the personal goals they set, and also to the specific objectives of the course.

- Students are asked to write on their notebooks or a piece of paper, sentences starting *In (English) I can...* and finish them. Alternatively, the teacher provides a list of sentences completed with the main course goals (what the students are expected to be able to do), e.g.

<i>In English I can....</i>	<i>How well?</i> 1- very well 5- need improvement	<i>How can I improve?</i>
- Give personal information ✓ - Use the present simple to talk about my daily life ✓		

...and students have to tick the objectives they feel they have achieved and rate to what extent (1-very well, 5- it definitely needs improvement). If they think there is room for improvement, students write what they think they can do.

- Students discuss in small groups what they have achieved, how well they are doing, whether there is room for improvement and what they can do about it.
- Ideas are put together in class, as the basis for a discussion with the teacher of different options. Teacher can provide tips, but it is also important to encourage students to find their own way.
- Teacher may suggest a self-assessment diary students could use to organise their work

What I need to improve	How I'm going to do it	When? (time available)	Assessment (test results, class marks...)

Objectives:

- To promote self-confidence in students as a necessary first step for learning.
- To make them reflect on and take responsibility of their learning process.

Variations:

The discussions in class are intended to create a cohesive group, a bond among students that can facilitate learning in class, and to create an environment where learners can feel free to speak about themselves and experiment. Complementary to class discussion, and especially in the case of very numerous groups, the teacher can take the *I can* forms the students have filled in, check them carefully with more time and conclude a more specific feedback in the next class.

HOW DO I LEARN QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME _____

Choose the option that best represent what you do according to this scale:

A: always/very often B: sometimes C: hardly ever D: never

Language improvement

1	I try to make (English) a part of my routine by doing the things I enjoy (e.g. listening to music, watching TV, reading).	
2	I participate in class as much as I can.	
3	I like experimenting different ways to learn that serve me.	
4	When I read or listen to (English), I pay attention to new words or structures.	
5	I seek opportunities to speak the language outside class (e.g. looking for language exchanges, using mobile apps).	
6	When I hear people speak the language (e.g. when on holiday), I make an effort to see what I can understand.	
7	I revise what we have done in class and I test myself on my own (e.g. checking vocabulary, or doing grammar exercises).	
8	I hate it when I make mistakes.	

Written expression

1	Before I start writing, I first make a draft with the ideas I am going to include and how I am going to organise them (e.g. ideas divided into paragraphs, use of connectors).	
2	I pay attention to the grammar and vocabulary I use, making sure the structures are correct and appropriate for the ideas I want to express.	
3	When appropriate, I try to use vocabulary and grammar I have learnt recently.	
4	I prefer to use the vocabulary and grammar I am sure is correct to avoid making mistakes.	
5	I re-read what I have written from time to time before I go on writing.	

Reading comprehension

1	Before I start reading, I first look at what the text is about.	
2	I try to understand the text word by word.	
3	I rarely try to figure out the meaning of new words, I prefer to look them up in a dictionary.	
4	When I come across sentences or parts of a text that I don't understand, I ignore them and keep on reading.	

Listening comprehension

1	I try hard to understand every word I hear.	
2	I don't get stuck when I can't understand well, I try to make up the meaning with the information that I can get.	
3	When I take a listening test, I read through the questions first and try to predict what kind of information I need to listen out for.	
4	After reading the test questions, I listen trying to look for key words related to the questions.	

Spoken expression

1	I wish I had more time to think before I speak.	
2	Language correctness is very important for me, I pay careful attention to the grammar and vocabulary I use.	
3	If I get stuck in conversation, I try to say things in a different way.	
4	In conversation, I pay attention to body language and intonation.	
5	I learn and improve pronunciation by reading aloud and recording myself.	

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Activity 2

Prepared by English Unlimited, Gdansk, Poland

NAME _____

My language goals

1. Where I am now (insert a cross on a language level scale)

A1 Beginner	A1.2 Elementary	A2 Pre- intermediate	B1 Intermediate	B2 Upper Intermediate	C1 Advanced	C2 Proficiency
----------------	--------------------	----------------------------	--------------------	-----------------------------	----------------	-------------------

Moving from one level to the next usually takes at least 100-120 hours of learning.

2. Where I would like to be when I finish the course (insert a cross on a language level scale)

A1 Beginner	A1.2 Elementary	A2 Pre- intermediate	B1 Intermediate	B2 Upper Intermediate	C1 Advanced	C2 Proficiency
----------------	--------------------	----------------------------	--------------------	-----------------------------	----------------	-------------------

3. What do I need this foreign language for? I do

☐

not use it

☐

I use it for:

☐

work

☐

life (What for?)

☐

other specific purposes (What?)

I need the foreign language to:

☐

speak/listen

☐

write

☐

mails

☐

write

☐

reports

☐

travel

☐

make presentations at work

☐

read for pleasure

☐

read work related articles

do other things (What?)

Language course related details

4. Self-assessment of my own skills at present

1 – my language weakness, 6 – my language strength

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Reading	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Writing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Speaking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Listening	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Grammar	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vocabulary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. *Our language classes consist of many elements such as: speaking, listening, writing, reading and grammar. They take a different amount of time each lesson and appear in a variety of activities.*

In class I like best (5 – I like it a lot, 1 – I do not like it much):

- _____ checking exercises with the teacher
 _____ a lot of homework
 _____ systematic course book work
 _____ pair work
 _____ group discussions
 _____ listening activities
 _____ reading and learning new vocabulary
 _____ other activities

(What? _____
 _____)

6. Preferred ways of learning:

- ☐ a lot of individual work at home (I revise at home, in class we work faster, topics change quickly)
☐ I like revising in class, it makes me remember better
☐ I like when the teacher revises in class regularly, I will probably miss some classes and it would help me progress

7. I like it when:

- ☐ the teacher only speaks the foreign language I am learning.
☐ the teacher sometimes explains language points in my own language.
☐ the teacher explains grammar points in my own language.

8. How much time can I spend taking part in this course? I can take part

- ☐ in more than 80% of classes
- ☐ I can take part in around 60-80% of classes I
- ☐ will attend around 40-60% of classes
- ☐ I am very busy, I will probably be take part in 40% of classes or less

9. How much time can I spend learning between the classes (homework, writing, revising etc.)?

- ☐ over 2 hours a week
- ☐ around 2 hours a week
- ☐ 1 hour a week
- ☐ 0,5 to 1 hour a week
- ☐ less than 0,5 hour a week

Please write anything else that is important for the course...

Part Three

Practical Classroom Activities

Reading Activities

Activities prepared by EOI Alcalá de Guadaira
(Spain) and Jaffnrettishus (Iceland)



Activity 1

Movie Scripts

SKILL(S): Reading

AIM(S):

- To motivate students to read, starting with short texts.
- To gauge students' comprehension.

LEVEL: All levels

TIMING: 15-20 minutes

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Individual/Pair work/Group work

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: a script excerpt with a length and difficulty that will work for the classroom. Generally, a monologue or dialogue from a movie that takes two to five minutes to read is a good place to start.

PROCEDURE:

1. Teacher passes the script out for everyone to read, and students circle unfamiliar words trying to infer what their meaning can be from context when possible. Otherwise, use of the dictionary is encouraged.
2. Teacher elicits possible answers and checks them as a group class.
3. When questions have been clarified, students read the text again and summarise it in their own words.
4. In pairs, they try to guess what the movie scene is going to be about, who the character(s) speaking can be, and what the story of the film can be.
5. Students watch the film excerpt and check answers.

RATIONALE

Even students who enjoy reading in their native language can be intimidated, overwhelmed or simply bored by long texts in a foreign language. It can be near impossible to inspire a love of reading in these students by handing them a book in the target language and saying: Finish this by next week. Movie scripts can be useful for teaching foreign language. Even if they don't know the movie, just knowing they're looking at a movie script can spark students to visualize what they're reading— therefore engaging them with the text—even if they're unfamiliar with the movie.

VARIATIONS

Although the reading is done individually, it can also be a collaborative task by working in pairs or in small groups, so that stronger students can lend a hand to other class partners, taking special attention here to the relationship that exists among them (who works well with who)

Also, in the case of individual reading, the teacher can provide those students who read faster extra text to read and learn, while the others finish their text.

Activity 2

What is the song about?

SKILL(S): Reading

AIM(S):

- To link vocabulary to song lyrics
- To motivate students to read and learn new vocabulary

LEVEL: All levels

TIMING: approx. 20 minutes

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Individual/Pair work/Group work

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: Pop song lyrics (length and difficulty according to the classroom level)

PROCEDURE:

1. Students are given the text to read on their own and they must circle the unfamiliar words, trying to infer what the meaning can be. Of course, the choice of songs will be adapted to the level, so the vocabulary should not be too difficult to guess.
2. Teacher asks students broad questions about what they're reading, e.g., what kind of person is singing and what/who are they singing about? What has happened in the singer's past and what do they want to happen in the future? etc.
Students can discuss their opinion in pairs and then share with the teacher and the rest of the class.
3. Students listen to the song.

RATIONALE:

Even more so than movie scripts, pop songs have a good chance of being familiar and relatable to students. And because of their structure and length, they're especially useful for beginner students. For students who aren't ready to dive into a lengthy poem or narrative, a handful of short pop songs can draw them into the process of reading. Pop songs' repetition and rhyming provide anchors for students as they read, making them less likely to end up lost, frustrated and wanting to abandon the assignment. It bolsters their confidence as foreign language readers and adds some energy to the lesson.

VARIATIONS

Instead of working individually, students can do the activity as group work by working in pairs or small groups among classmates who get on well and work well together. We are hoping here that weaker students feel comfortable enough to make their contribution. Also, as a pre-reading activity, students can be given pictures that tell the story in the song (either jumbled or in order, depending on the level) so that they can manage a more meaningful reading when they are given the lyrics.

Activity 3

What's on the news?

SKILL(S): Reading

AIM(S): Language comprehension by open up to the culture of the target language

LEVEL: Intermediate (B1) onwards

TIMING: 15-20 minutes

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Individual

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: Newspaper articles

PROCEDURE:

1. Teacher writes the articles' headlines on the board and elicits from students what the story behind the articles may be.
2. Students discuss in pairs before putting answers in common as a group class.
3. Students check answers by reading the text.
4. After they read the article, teacher asks them questions to gauge their comprehension, e.g. what news does the article tell us about? what are the events described? who are the key players and what subsequent events do you expect to happen?

RATIONALE:

Reading the news is a tried and true method of foreign language learning that works for nearly every target language. With direct, straightforward writing, predictable structures and essential vocabulary, news articles are an efficient way to teach language basics and help students gauge exactly where their comprehension levels stand. It is not just a matter of language comprehension. By bringing current events into the classroom, students can open up to the culture of the target language, and introduced them to conversation topics they might share with a native speaker.

VARIATIONS

For (upper) intermediate/advanced students, the teacher can assign them long-term projects based on the news, such as having them follow an issue for several weeks and present it or write their own articles.

Activity 4

Read and Retell

SKILL(S): Reading & Speaking

AIM(S):

- To read a text and summarize it using one's own words.
- To use the skimming reading technique to focus on the text's main idea.

LEVEL: All levels

TIMING: 15 minutes (may vary depending on the level)

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Pair work

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: two short texts telling a story that leads to an unexpected ending (difficulty depending on level).

PROCEDURE:

1. Pairs are divided into Students A and B. Teacher gives a text to each of them.
2. Students read their text stopping just before the end. They are asked to read through focusing on the main events and not paying too much attention to details, as they will have to summarise the text to their partners.
3. Students tell each other about the story they have read and ask their partners to guess how the story can end.
4. Students exchange their texts and read the whole story checking the information previously given by their partners and the real end of them.

RATIONALE:

To be able to explain something in your own words involves knowing what you're talking about. In this case, explaining the story involves having understood the main events in the text, which is good to practise skimming.

Summarising key concepts and exposing them orally and/or in written form are highly beneficial techniques for auditory and kinesthetic students.

VARIATIONS:

This activity can be introductory to a written assignment. Instead of guessing orally what the end of the story can be, they can write it down.

Activity 5

Run, Read, Write!

SKILL(S): Reading comprehension

AIM(S):

- To find the answers to a set of questions using the skimming and scanning technique.
- To practise reading comprehension in an interactive fun way.

LEVEL: All levels

TIMING: + 20 minutes (it may vary depending on the difficulty of the text)

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Group work

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: A text divided into different parts (difficulty depending on the level) and posted on the wall in different parts of the classroom (or different parts of the school)

PROCEDURE:

1. Teacher divides the class into groups of three in which there will be a reader, a runner, and a writer (ideally, the roles rotate so that everyone in the groups can play the three roles).
2. The writer is handed a copy of the questions related to the reading. The writer reads the question out loud to the runner. The runner runs to the reader and repeats the same question.
3. The reader has to look through the reading to answer the question. Once he finds the answer, he reads it to the runner. The runner runs to the writer and repeats the answer. The writer writes the answer down.
4. The process is repeated with each question. The group who finishes all the answers first is the winner.
5. The answers are checked with the teacher as group class. The group who finishes with all the answers right is the winner. (This is the main goal of the activity, not being the first to finish. Finishing before anyone else can turn out to have a negative effect on those students who don't feel they can read as fast as others).

RATIONALE:

This activity adds fun to the reading experience and especially kinesthetic students will derive great benefit from it.

VARIATIONS:

Apart from asking questions, the activity has endless variations, e.g. they can use headings that summarise each part of the text, they can make a summary of the whole text, they can find words for given definitions, etc.

Activity 6

Matching

SKILL(S): Reading

AIM(S):

- To promote fluency by learning to focus on relevant information.
- To use skimming technique to identify the main information in a text

LEVEL: All levels

TIMING: + 15 minutes approx., but it will depend on the length and difficulty of the text

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Pair work

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION:

Reading passage, printed out and cut into multiple sections and comprehension questions, each printed out on its own sheet of paper.

Before class starts, post the printed sections of the reading passage on the wall around the room in random places. Depending on how big the group and how long the passage is, multiple copies of the same section can be printed.

PROCEDURE:

1. Teacher gives each pair a slip of paper with a different comprehension question on it.
2. Have each pair go around the room, reading the different sections of the passage to figure out which section answers their question. When they have the correct answer, they should take the passage cut out, sit down at their desks, and write the correct answer together. NOTE: If one pair chooses incorrectly, another group will be unable to find the correct answer. Walk around the room while pairs are working together and guide them if they need help.
3. The text is finally read aloud in class in turns to clarify unknown words and check pronunciation.

RATIONALE

This is a way to practise reading for the gist in a dynamic fun way that can benefit all types of learning styles.

VARIATIONS

Competitive games like this can be a lot of fun for most students, however, for those with a different pace, who need their time to read, they can be very stressful and have a negative effect. So instead of giving a different set of questions to each member of the pair, there's also the possibility to give them the same questions so that they can co-operate and help each other in finding the answer, especially pairing stronger students with those who normally find more difficulty.

Activity 7

Comprehension Check

SKILL(S): Reading, Speaking

AIM(S): MEDIATION

- Understanding an excerpt from a current news article
- Reading for gist
- Summarising the content of a text orally

LEVEL: Intermediate plus, upper-intermediate, advanced

TIMING: 20-25 min

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Group work (4 or 5 Students)

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: select a text from the current news which can be relevant or appealing to students. Divide it into small sections (6 or 7 lines each) and cut them out. Arrange groups of 4 or 5 students and hand out one section to each of them. Make sure students can't see each other's worksheets.

PPROCEDURE:

1. Give students their worksheets and allow them 5-10 minutes to read the text. Mention that they don't need to understand all the words.
2. Students can take notes of ideas or words they'd like to use, but not full sentences. Appoint a "secretary" to note down what everyone says.
3. When all the students are ready, they must utter the content of the news to the other members of the group.
4. When everyone has finished, the group put together all the sections and compare the resulting text with their notes. If necessary, the teacher now explains any difficulty as regards vocabulary or general understanding.

This task can be considered successful when the final product of each group is a faithful summary of the content of the original article.

RATIONALE: This activity can be useful to practice mediation.

VARIATIONS:

This can also be done orally. Divide the class into two big groups. The first group goes out of the classroom while the second listens to a short oral extract from the current news. When the first group gets back in, the group who listened to the extract in pairs tell their partners a summary of what they understood.

Activity 8

KWL Chart

SKILL(S): Reading

AIM(S):

- To make reading a meaningful experience by activating students' previous knowledge.
- To facilitate reading comprehension by setting a context.

LEVEL: All levels (though ideally from pre-intermediate onwards)

TIMING: 25-30 minutes

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Individual/ Group class

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: post-its of different colours or coloured pens. A text on a given topic (important current events or about something that maybe interesting for students).

PROCEDURE:

1. Teacher writes a heading summarizing the topic of the text at the top of the board and the KWL chart drawing three columns under the headings **Know/ Want to know/ Learnt (KWL)**. Then, s/he gives each student the post-its and a coloured pen.
2. Teacher tells students to write on the post-its what they already know about the topic. Students should read their ideas aloud to the class, walk to the board and stick their post-its on the *Know* column.
3. Once each student has finished, teacher tells them to write doubts or questions they may have about that topic on a separate post-it using a different colour and stick it on the *Want to know* column.
4. Teacher gives students the text to read (while reading students can underline unknown words to be discussed later as a group class).
5. After reading, students are asked to write about what they have learnt using another post-it and a different colour and stick it on the *Learnt* column. In case something they have learnt answers one of the questions they asked previously, they should place the post-it next to that question.

RATIONALE:

This is an entertaining way to practise reading, especially for those students who get easily bored or don't enjoy reading.

It is great for visual students because, by looking at the board, they can have an outline of the text, which helps comprehension. Also, moving in class and using their hands can benefit kinesthetic students.

VARIATIONS:

Alternatively, (and also in the case of numerous groups) teacher can sort out students with different abilities and levels into groups of 3 or 4, where they would share questions that could be answered by the other classmates, while reading they could ask each other questions, this way using group work and helping each other as a way to improve.

Source: <https://busyteacher.org/12229-reading-lesson-9-fun-post-it-activities.html>

Activity 9

Words with a story to tell...

SKILL(S): Reading/Speaking

AIM(S):

- To predict content in order to facilitate reading comprehension
- To activate previous knowledge for meaningful reading
- To find ways to predict the meaning of unknown words

LEVEL: Low Intermediate onwards

TIMING: 20 minutes approx.

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Pairs/ small groups

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: a text adapted to the course level on a given topic. A collection of post-its.

PROCEDURE:

1. Teacher writes new vocabulary on the board and arranges students into pairs or small groups of 3 or 4, which would be a better option for big groups.
2. Students are asked to copy each word on a post-it and sort them out in a way that makes sense to them. Although the words selected are new, they must be attainable enough for students to guess what they could mean without too much difficulty. To give them a list of totally unknown words out of context would be pointless. For example, in an (low-) intermediate text about shopping, the meaning of words like *bargain-hunter*, *window shopping* or *shopaholic* can be more easily predicted, allowing students to make use of previous knowledge on word formation.
4. Each pair or group takes turns to explain to the rest of the class the order they have decided, the meaning they think they have and the story they believe they tell.
5. Students read the text and guess what the words mean from context, checking them as a group class.

RATIONALE:

Activating students' previous knowledge is a very powerful tool and very empowering to students, as they can feel more self-confident and independent by making use of what they know to learn new things, thus fostering responsibility for their own learning.

VARIATIONS:

This can be more fun by making a competition among groups. Those whose guessing gets closer to the real story and/or words' meaning get a prize (a pen, a notebook, or a chocolate bar 😊).

Writing Activities

Activities prepared by EOI Alcalá de Guadaira (Spain)



Activity 1

Clues Story

SKILL: Writing

AIM: To promote creativity and elicit vocabulary.

LEVEL: B1-C2

TIMING: 20 minutes

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Small groups

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: Diverse material: photos, flaschards, pieces of news, videos, etc. about topics seen in class, so that students can use vocabulary they have learnt.

This activity is to be done as a warm-up before a writing activity in class (e.g. a short story)

PROCEDURE:

1. Students are given prompts such as photos or pieces of news related to the topic they are going to write about.
2. In their groups, they have 10 minutes to brainstorm the ideas or words that these prompts suggest to them.
3. Each group shares their ideas with the rest of the class. The teacher writes those ideas on the board.

RATIONALE:

This brainstorming activity can work very well with students who find it difficult to have ideas to write about, attenuating their block or lack of creativity. Also, those very shy and quiet students who can find expressing their ideas in front of the class a bit challenging or intimidating, can benefit from work in small groups, as a first step towards getting involved in the task.

VARIATIONS:

For auditory learning style students, videos, podcasts, songs, sounds or music can also be used to elicit new ideas or vocabulary. (Example: using mysterious music to elicit vocabulary to write a murder story, or listening to a short debate to elicit arguments for or against a particular topic).

Visual learners can benefit from the use of visual prompts, and it can also be helpful to improve creativity in the case of physical learning style students by providing, for example, a set of pictures for them to organise the way they like and develop a story.

Activity 2

The Obedient Student

SKILL(S): Writing

AIM OF ACTIVITY: Pair work.

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: Blank pieces of paper

PROCEDURE:

1. The teacher provides students with blank pieces of paper and asks them to write sentences explaining actions for their partner to perform, e.g. Stand on one foot, and shake hands with two people in the classroom, sing a song to somebody, etc.
2. Once each student has written their instructions, they swap papers with their partners.
3. They have to read (and understand) the sentences in order to perform the instructions.
4. When they finish, we all put together impressions and feedback

RATIONALE:

Writing instructions can help to organise thoughts better. Besides, introducing actions and a bit of sense of humour helps to gain confidence and see the importance of structuring your written production properly for others to be able to understand it.

VARIATIONS:

Grouping is flexible, it could be done in small groups or class group.

Activity 3

Who's who?

SKILL(S): Writing and Speaking

AIM: To write descriptions using the right vocabulary and correct sentence structure.

LEVEL: A2-B1

TIMING: 20-30 minutes

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Groups (5-6)

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION:

None.

PROCEDURE:

1. Students sit in groups and are told to look at each other carefully.
2. Then, the teacher tells them that they need to choose one person in the group.
3. They are told to write a description of the chosen person's physical appearance as accurately as possible.
4. Once they have finished, they take turns to read out loud their descriptions and the other students in the group have to guess who the mystery person is.

RATIONALE:

It's a practical activity (and it can also be fun) to start writing in a clear, functional way.

VARIATIONS:

They can either describe classmates or they can also think about a famous person they think everybody will know.

Activity 4

Organise your text

SKILL(S): Reading and Writing

AIMS:

- To identify different parts in the structure of a text.
- To organise textual structure and content prior to a writing task

LEVEL: B1-C2

TIMING: 60 minutes (30 minutes reading/30 minutes planning of a writing task)

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Pair work/Group work

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: Reading text (difficulty according to the level), photocopies of an outline template containing three main headings: Content (ideas included), Structure (the paragraphs in which a text is divided), Useful language (vocabulary, expressions, connectors, etc. used in that type of text).

This is an activity in preparation for the writing task they have to do for homework. It can work for students of low-intermediate level onwards, who are starting to write longer texts.

PROCEDURE:

1. Students are given a text to read similar to the one they have to produce for homework. The text shouldn't be too long or too difficult, because the objective in this case is just to identify what the text is about and how the ideas in it are organised.
2. Once they have finished, the teacher hands in the template for them to identify the main idea and the three different aspects already mentioned in the text.
3. Students work in pairs and complete the template.
4. Then, they share their ideas as a group class and the teacher writes a final outline on the board.
5. Then, the teacher writes a title on the board - it could also be (a) picture(s)- and asks them to write the story for homework.
6. Working in groups, students share ideas and try to come up with answers for each of the given aspects (Content- Structure- Useful language). Once they have finished (a time limit must be set), students circulate around the class and give feedback on the preparation done by other groups. This feedback is later put in common as whole group class and they can also add new ideas.
7. Students then return to their own plans and do the writing task individually as homework.

RATIONALE:

Students tend to struggle with textual coherence and cohesion, not organising ideas in paragraphs that can follow a logical sequence. Therefore, it is a way to help especially those who are often unable to organise their ideas when writing, and thus lose focus very easily. Also, the brainstorming of ideas can help those students who tend to be less creative or imaginative.

VARIATIONS:

This activity can also be split into two 30- minute parts (reading and then writing plan), so that it could be done in two classes instead of one.

Activity 5

Tidy up your text

SKILL(S): Reading and Writing

AIMS:

- To understand the main idea of a text.
- To organise ideas into paragraphs following a logical/linear sequence.

LEVEL: A2-C2

TIMING: 15-20 minutes (elementary), 30-45 minutes (intermediate and above). It will also depend on the length of the text.

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Small groups

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: Reading text not divided into paragraphs.

PROCEDURE:

1. The teacher provides students with the texts.
2. Students first work on their reading comprehension, trying to find the main idea of the text.
3. Then, in pairs, they divide the text into paragraphs, giving it the most appropriate and logical structure.
4. The exercise is checked as a group class, students reading the text aloud in turns.
5. Once the order of paragraphs has been corrected, then we move into the writing part: students in their pairs will try to summarise those paragraphs in just a sentence.
6. Answers will be put in common as a group activity.

RATIONALE:

Students tend to struggle when organising ideas in paragraphs and having to follow a logical sequence. With this activity we hope students can improve the way they plan and structure their texts.

VARIATIONS:

Students can also use highlighters with different colours, one colour to divide the paragraphs, and another to circle where the main idea in the paragraphs is. This would help visual learners to see things more clearly.

The same task can be done by cutting the text into pieces so that students can order them. This would be ideal for more active, physical students.

Activity 6

Create your story

SKILL(S): Writing and Speaking

AIMS: To write a narrative text

LEVEL: A2-C2

TIMING: 20-30 minutes

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Small groups

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: A sheet of paper with the first sentence that begins the text. It will later be used as a framework to produce a narrative text.

PROCEDURE:

1. The teacher gives students a photocopy of that paper. The initial sentence should attract the students' attention; it could be something like *"Mary's car broke down in the middle of a lonely road"*. (it will depend on the level)
2. Following the given sentence, they need to start writing their own story. They take turns to write their sentences (or short paragraphs for higher level students) trying to keep the coherence with what their partners have previously written.
3. Once they have finished, each group has to read out loud their story to the rest of the class.

RATIONALE:

With this type of activity we encourage students to create their own production, promoting their creativity and improving their writing skills.

VARIATIONS:

For beginner students, we can try to structure the text giving them connectors to help them follow and create the story, e.g.

Mary and her brother went to
the cinema. They bought...

Then, they.... After that,

Finally,...

Activity 7

A Matter of Perspective

SKILL(S): Writing and Speaking

AIMS: To produce pieces of writing with appropriate coherence and use of grammar and vocabulary, focusing on the use of adjectives.

LEVEL: B1-C2

TIMING: 30-45 minutes

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Pair work/Small groups

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: A piece of paper where a situation is presented, e.g. "You've received a letter from your cousin who lives in Boston...."

PROCEDURE:

1. The teacher gives students the paper and asks them to write a story following the situation given from two different perspectives: an optimistic and a pessimistic one.
2. Each student in each pairs takes one of the positions, one of them has to be the optimist and the other the pessimist.
3. The teacher insists on the need to make it as accurate and vivid as possible by making use of adjectives and linking the events with appropriate linking expressions.
4. Once they have finished, they read aloud their story to the rest of the class.

RATIONALE:

With this type of activity we encourage students to create their own production, promoting their creativity and improving their writing skills.

VARIATIONS:

The activity can also be done in groups (e.g. of four people), each pair will take a different perspective and can negotiate the story together. Students with different abilities are paired together so that students who encounter more difficulties can benefit from the co-operative work with their partners.

Activity 8

Watch the colour!!!!

SKILL(S): Reading and Writing

AIM(S): To develop cohesion and coherence in discourse organization in written production

LEVEL: A2-B2

TIMING: Correction and revision (45 min)

TYPE OF ACTIVITY:

Individual/Groupwork.

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: a short text on a topic being dealt with in class, flashcards with different connectors and linkers in different colours according to the type of relationship they express (consequence, reason, contrast, etc.)

On the board/screen, a model text is presented where connectors and linkers are shown in different colours depending on the type of relation they express. The ideas on the text are highlighted following the same colour code (e.g., an idea which offers a contrast with a previous one is shown in the same colour as the linker which introduces it.)

PROCEDURE:

1. The model text is presented in class, checking the cohesion and coherence of the structured text, also clarifying the meaning of the linking words used and their relation to previous and latter ideas.
2. In class, students are handed out sets of flashcards and a gap-filling text where the linkers have been taken out, and they must complete it using the linkers in the flashcards. Some of the sentences have been colour-coded according to the type of idea they express (consequence, reason, contrast, etc.,) so that they can identify what type of linker they are required to use.

RATIONALE:

Students tend to struggle with textual coherence and cohesion, not organizing thoughts in a logical way and into paragraphs and/or making an incoherent use of linking expressions which makes re-reading necessary to understand what they mean to say. Therefore, it is a way to help especially those who are often unable to organise their ideas when writing and lose focus very easily.

VARIATIONS:

For a variation, students (working in pairs) are handed out a colour-coded scrambled text which they must put together using logical/temporal sequencing and linking. When finished, the “correct” text is shown on the board/screen – some wild associations of ideas may arise which don’t have to be necessarily considered incorrect, but can be used as an example of how linkers can radically change the meaning.

Activity 9

Breaking News

SKILL(S): Reading and Writing

AIM(S): To develop cohesion and coherence in discourse organization in written production

LEVEL: B2-C2

TIMING: 30-45 min

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Individual/Pair work/Group work

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: Press article on a given topic seen in class.

As a homework assignment, students are required to read a written news article (adapted to the level) in which some logical connectors and time expressions are missing. These are given but in a disorganised manner, even though the discourse structure remains intact (introduction, first part, second part, conclusion). Their task is to fill in the gaps with the right word or expression. In order to be able to fulfill the task, students must analyse the way the writer of the sample task has organised it.

PROCEDURE:

1. The exercise is corrected in class, checking the cohesion and coherence of the text, also clarifying the meaning of the linking words and expressions used.
2. Orally, students summarise the ideas suggested in each paragraph in pairs or small groups and then share them with the class to be discussed as a whole group, so as to write down an outline of the main ideas and their textual organisation on the board.
3. Then, students are required to write an assignment for homework (number of words depending on the level) giving their opinion on the topic:

First, the teacher groups the students considering their different abilities/skills.

Second, students decide in pairs the ideas they are going to write about and note them down. Teacher monitors the process.

Third, they write a topic sentence for each idea and they expand their ideas as homework.

RATIONALE:

Students tend to struggle with textual coherence and cohesion, not organising thoughts in a logical way into paragraphs and/or making incoherent use of linking expressions, which makes re-reading necessary to understand what they mean to say. This is more common in students from intermediate level onwards, already able to write longer texts. Therefore, it is a way to help especially those who are often unable to organise their ideas when writing and lose focus very easily.

VARIATIONS:

- For visual learners, the article can be projected onto a screen so that all students can see it, highlighting connectors and time expressions in different colours.
- Once each pair has their own ideas for the text they should write for homework, they could share them as a group class, this way providing more ideas to the rest of the group.

Activity 10

Self-assessment

SKILL(S): Writing

AIM: To improve writing quality by making students reflect on their own performance.

LEVEL: B1-C2

TIMING: Variable (depending on the length of the written assignment).

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Individual.

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: photocopy of an assessment plan.

PROCEDURE:

1. Students do the assignment as homework, or in class with a set time limit (it will depend on the level and the number of words they have to write).
2. Once they have finished the draft, or while doing it, they reflect on their own production by checking if they have covered all the aspects included in the assessment plan.
3. They hand in the text they have written together with the assessment plan to the teacher, who will give both documents back to students in the next class, including feedback.
4. Apart from the feedback given to students individually, the teacher can write on the board recurrent or common mistakes students have made.

RATIONALE:

Along with poor textual cohesion and coherence, the lack of lexical and grammatical richness and correction included in their writing is one of the most common causes of unsuccessful results.

There is a tendency on the part of students, once they have reached a certain level when they can make themselves understood, to always express themselves in the same way, no matter how much new vocabulary or grammar they learn. This is especially true for students at intermediate level and above, who tend to finish too fast without doing a conscious re-reading. This helps them to do that, taking responsibility for their own learning process by assessing themselves, having a guide for them to check their own work before handing in the assignment.

Annex

Student:

Draft: organising my ideas	Assessment criteria	
	Style	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Have I respected the register (formal or informal)?	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Have I respected that throughout the entire text?	
	Cohesion & coherence	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Are my ideas clearly organised in paragraphs?	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Are they linked in a coherent way?	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Is word order correct? (S - V, adj. + noun, etc.)	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Is there agreement? (S-V agreement, person agreement, number agreement)	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Have I checked the use of punctuation and capitalization?	
	Language use: In this text, I should show that I can use the grammar and vocabulary we have already learnt.	
Feedback (teacher's notes)		
		Grade:

Activity 11

Linking Languages

SKILL(S): Writing

AIM: To develop a meaning-based technique negotiating the meaning between L1 and L2

LEVEL: B1-C2

TIMING: 20-30 minutes

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Small groups.

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: L1 and L2 versions of the same text

PROCEDURE:

1. Students work in groups of four. Each pair of students in each group is given a text (or a few sentences in the case of basic levels). One pair will get the L2 version and the other will get it in the mother tongue. The text (or the sentences) will include examples of grammar, syntax or vocabulary already seen in class that are normally confusing for students. They must read the texts and translate them (those who have the text written in L1 must translate them into L2 and vice versa). In order to do so, they have to identify what is the idea, the communicative function expressed in words and write the correct structure in the corresponding language.
2. Once each pair has finished, the four of them compare their versions and check results, which are also checked later between the teacher and students as a group class.
3. The teacher will write on the board the contrastive structures of the two languages to express the same idea as the results are checked as a whole class.

RATIONALE:

When students make autonomous use of the target language, they tend to literally translate from their L1, often resulting in distorted ungrammatical expressions, thus focusing on form, not on meaning. So the teacher, when explaining a given grammar point, makes students aware of the fact that that grammatical structure serves a communicative intention/function, e.g. we use the present perfect in English to express how long a situation has existed: "I have worked in this company for ten years". Students must know communicative intentions are universal, however, the way they are expressed changes from one language to another. So the key is translating the ideas they have in their mind, not the L1 structures that first (and naturally) come up when they want to express that idea in the target language. For example, in Spanish the ongoing duration of an existing situation is expressed with the present simple, so students tend to say "I work in this company for ten years". This way, through contrastive grammar, they learn the L2 equivalent to express the same idea.

VARIATIONS:

In the case of multilingual classrooms, with students from different nationalities or when teacher and students do not share the same mother tongue, this same process can be done using videos or pictures that show the function a given grammar point serves, that is, when and what we use it for.

Activity 12

Watch your language!

SKILL(S): Writing

AIM: Error Analysis. Detect basic mistakes and influence from L1

LEVEL: A2-C2

TIMING: 20-30 minutes

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Pair work.

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: Previously written texts.

The teacher will provide the students with extracts (a few lines, no more than 50 words) from previous written tasks. The texts to analyse must have been written by students from a different class, and therefore references to the author should be removed.

PROCEDURE:

1. The teacher hands out the extracts for students to read and scan for mistakes. The teacher must make it clear that the focus is on basic mistakes and L1 influence only, so as not to extend the task for too long.
2. Students are given 15 minutes to complete the task, and then the whole class group must agree on the corrections to the mistakes.
3. Once final agreements on the corrections to the mistakes have been reached, the teacher should write them down on the board (or use a projector on a digital board) and say them aloud. This will help especially visual and auditory students to clearly understand what the correct option is and they also should explain why; that is, they have to explain where the mistakes were in those extracts, how they spotted them and how they came up with the right option.

RATIONALE:

When students make an autonomous use of the target language, they tend to literally translate from their L1, often resulting in distorted ungrammatical productions, thus focusing on form, not on meaning.

VARIATIONS:

The same task can be done with oral texts from class recordings.

Listening Activities

Activities prepared by Innovamentis (Italy)



Activity 1

Guess what

SKILL(S): Listening

AIM(S):

- To listen for gist
- To learn to identify key/content words that can help understand “the whole picture”

LEVEL: A2-C2

TIMING: 15-20 minutes

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Pair work/Whole class

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: short video (specific length and difficulty will depend on the level) with subtitles (in the target language) on a topic that interests students.

The teacher explains that, when listening, it is possible to get the main idea/whole picture of what somebody is saying, but information comes in a sequence. And in that sequence of information, there are content words that can help to get that main idea. That is, if we listen to words like *cake, presents, or party*, they tell you that they are probably talking about a birthday party.

PPROCEDURE:

1. Teacher uses the title of the video as a way to ask students to predict what the video is going to be about.
2. Students try to predict in pairs and then share their answers as a group class.
3. Then, the video is played a second time and students have to listen out for the content words.
4. Teacher checks the answers their answers and writes them on the board.
5. Then, students listen again, this time with the subtitles. How much did they understand in the previous step? Answers are checked and teachers note them down on the board.

RATIONALE

Motivating students by working with material they find interesting is key to help them adopt a more positive attitude towards listening, which can be a very challenging skill.

Also, setting the context as a pre-listening task is very important to facilitate comprehension and build confidence, making the activity more real, as in normal life we normally know the situation/context we are in when listening or speaking to people.

VARIATIONS

There may be new words that students don't know, so the activity can follow showing students how to make Mind Maps, grouping together words used in similar context, also adding to others they already know.

This same activity can be done without the subtitles in the case of advanced level students (C1-C2).

Activity 2

Bingo!

SKILL(S): Listening

AIM(S):

- To listen for detail
- To understand specific words in context

LEVEL: A2-C2

TIMING: 20-30 minutes

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Individual

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: 4x4 bingo grid cards, and an oral text about a topic that has been covered in class and contains vocabulary they must know. E.g., if the audio-track is about family, there have to be words they have learnt about family relationships: mother, cousin, nephew, son, daughter, etc. Difficulty and speech speed may vary depending on the level.

PROCEDURE:

1. The teacher writes on the board 18 words that are going to appear in the listening track.
2. The teacher asks students to choose 16 words from the board to write in the boxes (one word in each box), in any order.
3. Students have to listen carefully and put an X on the words they have when they hear them. The track will be played twice or three times (depending on the difficulty).
4. When they have four words in a row, they have to shout BINGO!

RATIONALE:

This activity can be fun and makes listening attractive to students. This might help to relieve the stress and anxiety that is normally connected to listening exercises. Besides, they are revising vocabulary in a way that can make it easier for them to remember what they have learnt.

As a follow-up activity, students can explain what was said about the words in context: what they were talking about in the recording when they were mentioned, what they said about them, etc.

Another version of the activity that can be entertaining and will especially benefit kinesthetic students is to write the words on strips of paper and tape each strip to the board, placing them randomly all over the place. Divide the class into two teams, and ask them to stand a few feet away from the board, each team on a different side of the room. Tell them that when they hear a phrase, they must rush to grab the strip of paper, and return to their team. At the end of the listening, the team with the most strips of paper is the winner.

Activity 3

Without looking!

SKILL(S): Listening

AIM(S): To practise inferring meaning.

LEVEL: A2-C2

TIMING: 20 minutes

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Pairwork/ Group class

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: YouTube clip of a very popular show/series (or at least popular in the country the students are living in).

PROCEDURE:

1. The teacher plays the video, but students don't watch it, just listen to the dialogue. (Depending on the level it may be played once or twice).
2. The teacher asks them to infer from the conversation general aspects, like what the conversation is about, who is who in the scene and what their relationship is.
3. They guess in pairs and then share their answers as a group class.
4. Then, the teacher plays the video again, but this time students can watch and check if their conclusions were correct.

RATIONALE:

As they can infer meaning using clues and knowledge they can have about a situation to work out the meaning of what they hear, students can also use that technique to infer what the relationship between people is, without having to ask or find out directly.

After the listening activity, students can practise speaking by playing role plays given to them by the teacher. They can have 10-15 minutes to prepare the dialogue in pairs and represent them in front of the class. The rest of the students in the group have to guess what the situation and the relationship between the participants are.

Activity 4

Look up the words!

SKILL(S): Listening and Reading

AIM(S): To understand specific words in context, learning how to understand sentence-level pronunciation issues (weak forms, intonation patterns, linking)

LEVEL: A2-C2

TIMING: This exercise can be tiresome and stressful, as it may require intense focusing on the task, so short dictations - 3 to 4 minutes - are advisable.

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Individual

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: Oral text and transcript. Choose level-appropriate words to take out from the text, one every 15-20 seconds to give students some time "to breathe" between gaps and catch up.

PROCEDURE:

1. Previously, allow a few minutes for students to read the gap-filling text and try to anticipate the word(s) to add (part of speech, a word/number, etc.) Here their reading comprehension will also be tested, as they have to understand the text to predict which words are missing.
2. Play the audio track twice. Students fill in the gaps.
3. Play it again with the solutions for students to check them out, and ask them to look at the text markers which might help them solve the task.

RATIONALE

Even though the level of accomplishment of the task is measured through the students' ability to fill in the gaps with the correct words, being able to read along the text while listening to the audio track brings about a really positive side effect, as this will enable them to better recognise sentence-level pronunciation issues. This type of exercise will make it easier for students to understand oral texts in every day communication, where linking, assimilation of sounds or weak forms play a crucial role. As compared to only "reading along" without a gap-filling exercise, this type of exercise requires intense focusing, which can be useful for the above mentioned aims.

Activity 5

Crossword puzzle

SKILL(S): Listening

AIM(S): Learning and vocabulary

fixation LEVEL: A2

TIMING: 30 minutes - are advisable.

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Individual

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: The necessary resources are Pop Song Lyrics - The teacher lets students listen to some Italian songs. We underline the importance of many pop songs that revolve around emotions and personal relationships. For each song there is an introductory phase of motivation to listen (starting from the music, from the title, from the first room, from the refrain, from some words or phrases, etc.). After listening to the song, the students analyse the vocabulary related to the topic.

PROCEDURE:

We try to calibrate the different activity moments in order to keep the students' attention and curiosity alive, alternating phases of reflection and control and others of free production.

1. After the brainstorming related to the topic of the song, we proceed to listen to the chosen song with a cloze-test to complete.
2. We will then proceed with the completion of a crossword puzzle facilitated by transcoding from the image to the word.
3. In conclusion, as a test, we propose a facilitated completion exercise (for example, 5 words already inserted out of a total of 13) on the lexical group being studied.

RATIONALE

This activity can be fun for students. Listening to songs is the most effective way to help the student to learn the language, especially in difficult situations.

VARIATIONS:

Music is very appropriate for auditory and fast learning students. To test the learning, it is advisable to listen to the song twice and stop the music on some words and invite the students to repeat the missing words without music. In particular, for students who are unsure about themselves, music relaxes people and promotes socialisation.

Activity 6

Talk to me!

SKILL(S): Listening

AIM(S): Learning and vocabulary fixation, comprehension of a real

conversation LEVEL: A2

TIMING: 20 minutes - are advisable.

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Individual

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: Oral Dialogues about a topic - We know that authentic materials and in particular dialogues test the students with a type of communication that can be found in everyday life, but can generate demotivation and anxiety in less confident students simply because of the level, cultural references or unknown idiomatic expressions which may be included.

Warming-up as a group class to create a mind-map: students brainstorm vocabulary related to the topic.

PROCEDURE:

1. After the brainstorming and the distribution of the transcription of the dialogue we proceed with the listening (twice) of the dialogue and then with a cloze-test to complete the missing words.
2. Then the dialogue will be heard and the words missing on the blackboard will be put in order to help the students with more difficulty. Then the correct answers will be checked.

RATIONALE

The use of material provided by the teacher after careful reflection and preparation, material that in this way becomes an effective means of guiding students to understanding, is most effective and advantageous. Authentic material puts the student in contact with the aspects that distinguish the real foreign language, namely speed, intonation, pronunciation, different registers and sociolinguistic varieties. Authentic material also presents the foreign language in a precise context, and this contextualisation increases the comprehension of the message and therefore increases motivation, illustrates different models of oral and written language and different sociolinguistic variations according to the medium used, the register, the social class and the geographical origin of the interlocutors.

VARIATIONS:

For those students who may require a bit more time to understand, the initial listening of the dialogue may be played twice, and in the third and last part of the teaching unit, the list of terms to be inserted will be provided in addition to the images.

For auditory students, the authentic situation and talking and listening to their partners favour the memorisation of the vocabulary.

Activity 7

Watch a movie now?

SKILL(S): Listening

AIM(S): Learning and vocabulary fixation, comprehension of a real conversation

LEVEL: A2

TIMING: 30 minutes - are advisable.

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Individual

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: Films and Short Films - Before viewing, the main information is written on the blackboard: the title, the year, the director, the main characters, etc. We briefly describe the plot but without revealing much, so that the level of attention and understanding of the students can be verified.

PROCEDURE:

1. After writing the main information on the blackboard and viewing the chosen film or short film, the viewing will be interrupted at least twice by the teacher, and by asking several questions we will ascertain if the students understand the scenes, and also underline lexical terms.
2. Subsequently, a questionnaire is submitted to the students to understand if they like the clip, which scene in particular they liked and a true or false exercise on the scenes seen.

RATIONALE

Films and short films are very useful for educational and cultural purposes because they capture the attention and stimulate the students' imagination. A vision with subtitles is preferable.

VARIATIONS:

For visual students, movies in general favour the memorisation of the vocabulary and help this type of student to organise her/his thoughts...

Activity 8

Advertisement!

SKILL(S): Reading

AIM(S): Text comprehension

LEVEL: A2

TIMING: 20 minutes - are advisable.

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Individual

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: Advertisement - Warming-up as a group class to create a mind-map: students brainstorm vocabulary related to the topic.

PROCEDURE:

1. The advertisements chosen by the teacher are distributed and the terms that the students will find inside the teaching material are written on the board.
2. Leave two minutes to let the students read the contents. Then each one reads aloud in turn, so that the pronunciation is also improved. Next, students are asked roughly what the publicity is talking about and what they have perceived, noting and repeating the words previously written on the board. At the end there is a true or false exercise.

RATIONALE

Authentic material such as advertising that can be found on the street or on the Internet is very useful for educational purposes, but above all for the autonomy of the student (we think about looking for a home or a job).

VARIATIONS

For visual students and those who may need a longer time, the repetition and the transcription of the new words on the board is very useful. For faster students, the activity allows you to repeat the pronunciation of new words.

Pictures in general also favour the memorisation of the vocabulary contained in advertisements.

Activity 9

True or False?

SKILL(S): Reading

AIM(S): Text comprehension

LEVEL: A2

TIMING: one hour

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Individual

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: Various stories. We introduce orally, very slowly, the story that will be read, providing a general framework of the story and a brief card with the characters and their relationships (name, nationality, age, relationship, job, etc) but without revealing the whole affair. He will ask himself if he is understood.

1. After the introduction of the plot, we can read aloud, helping to improve the pronunciation, and then we propose two or three written activities of coupling or True / False, or open answer questions, to make sure that students have to independently return to the text by reading it again in order to be able to carry out the activity. Activity correction.
2. Using the same text, the teacher will propose a dramatisation to the students (reading aloud with the right intensity for each passage). Two / four students will be involved with the other students, who will act as judges to decide on the best performer of the lesson.
3. At the end there will be some general questions to stimulate a brief concluding conversation and students will be asked to reproduce what was understood with the help of the teacher.

RATIONALE

Stories, as well as dialogues, lend themselves to educational exploitation for creative production: the teacher, for example, can ask students to explain orally or in writing how they imagine some characteristics of the characters or the places where the story takes place and then proceed with a comparison of different forms of production, or alternatively the class may be asked to imagine an ending for each story and for the characters.

VARIATIONS

For auditory students, to test the learning, it is advisable to read twice and stop the reading on particular words.

In particular, for auditory and independent students, music favours socialisation. The repetition of the vocabulary contained inside the texts favours the memorisation and oral production of the student. This activity is considered adequate because this type of student feels more comfortable with oral delivery within the class group.

Speaking Activities

Activities prepared by Centro Europeu de Línguas (Portugal)



Activity 1

Paper Tearing

SKILL(S): Speaking.

AIM(S): To help visual-dominant students manage an auditive-oriented activity. Language item: 'Going to' for future plans.

LEVEL: A1.2.

TIMING: approx. 15-20 minutes

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Individual/group work

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: sheet of blank A4 paper, pen. The students need to have a table to do this activity.

PROCEDURE:

- The teacher begins by asking the students how they are, if they are tired, etc. The teacher then says he/she is very tired and needs a holiday, which introduces the concept. He/she asks about holidays ("Have you planned your holidays yet?"), thus introducing the concept of the verb form (plans for the future).
- The teacher apparently changes the subject by saying we are going to start today's class with magic. Then, he/she asks students to take a blank piece of paper and hold it up. The teacher demonstrates (and students follow) all the following actions with the paper: "Fold it in half, crease it, then tear it in half. Put the two pieces of paper together, fold them in half, crease them, and tear them in half (should have 4 pieces of paper now). Put the four pieces of paper together, fold one end over and tear it off. Put these 4 small pieces of paper on one side. Take the remaining pieces of paper (the larger strips), and fold each end to the middle. Crease the folds (this gives you a triangle shape). Then fold the whole thing in half and crease it. This gives you a W shape (or an M shape). Tear all the creases: one, two, three. Now put the squares of paper onto the table in front of you. Together with the other 4 small pieces, you should now have 5 little piles of 4 small paper squares."

By this time, the teacher should have the full attention of the students, who will have no idea what is about to happen. By the way, the fact that the language of these instructions is way above the level of the students is immaterial. Put it down to comprehensible input. They will follow because of the demonstration.

- The teacher takes a pen and says: "On the first pile of little squares, I want you to write the name of a beautiful place to spend your holidays. The Maldives, for example. A different beautiful place on each paper. When you finish, put your papers face down. On the second pile of papers, I want you to write the name of a really attractive film star (a different one on each paper). When you finish, put your papers face down. On the third pile of papers, I want you to write the name of a place to stay (four different ones). When you finish, put your papers face down. On the fourth pile of papers, I want you to write the name of something you like doing at the weekend, e.g. read the newspapers, take the dog for a walk, etc. On the last pile of papers, I want you to write a period of time between one month and one

year. When you finish, put your papers face down.”

- The teacher chooses a confident student. You can make a joke out of this or not, depending on the level of confidence in the class. The teacher then says: “I understand you are going on a fantastic holiday! Where are you going?” The student turns over one of the papers from the first pile: “I’m going to Sicily.” The teacher says: “oh, wonderful! Who are you going with?” The student turns over one of the papers from the second pile: “I’m going with Angelina Jolie.” The teacher asks: “and where are you going to stay?” The student says “in a tent.” The teacher answers: “OK, I’m not sure if she will like that, but anyway. What are you going to do?” The student replies: “I’m going to watch a football match.” The teacher asks: “How long are you going to stay?” The student says: “I’m going to stay for 6 months.” The teacher then says: “OK, so Pedro is going to Sicily with Angelina Jolie, he’s going to stay in a tent and watch football, and he’s going to stay for 6 months! Wow!”
- Once done, the teacher repeats with another student. As quickly as possible, the teacher invites a confident student to ask the same questions to the teacher. Other students help. The teacher also helps with gestures when necessary.
- The teacher writes on the board “Where? Who? Where? What? How long?”
- Students work in pairs, and they ask and answer for as long as it is useful or continues to be funny.
- Students ask and answer about their real plans for holidays.

RATIONALE:

For visual learners, the visual prompts of the papers, the W/H question words on the WB, allusive pictures where necessary. For auditive students, constant repetition of the same questions helps the format to click in.

VARIATIONS:

This can be used with almost any basic verb form, e.g. past simple (‘Where did you go last night? Who did you go with? What did you eat? What did you drink? What time did you come home?’)

DISADVANTAGES:

you can only do this activity once with a group of students. They will be fascinated the first time they see this, and so concentration levels should be very high, but if you do it a second time they know what’s coming.

Activity 2

Dialogue Building

SKILL(S): Speaking.

AIM(S): To help visual-dominant students to retain dialogue. Language item: 'Have got' (possession of objects) affirmative, negative, question forms with both yes/no and W/H questions

LEVEL: A1.1.

TIMING: variable

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Group work

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: Whiteboard, whiteboard pen. The teacher should be able to draw – if not, you will also need pictures from a magazine to illustrate the items.

PROCEDURE:

1. The teacher draws a cartoon character wearing a cap and a uniform. The teacher draws a sign on the wall (UK Customs) and a clock (9:00). The teacher asks: "What's his name?" The students provide a name of their choice. The teacher asks: "What's his job?" Students will often say he is a policeman, so the teacher can point to the sign on the wall and explain the expression *Customs Officer*.
2. The teacher draws a cartoon character wearing a t-shirt and carrying a suitcase with a sticker (e.g. *I love Paris*) and asks "What's his name?" The students invent a name. The teacher asks: "Is he a customs officer?" The teacher then elicits the idea that he is a tourist.
3. The teacher draws speech bubble on the board, points to the clock, and says: "What does Bob say?" Students answer: "Good morning". The teacher asks: "What does Fred say?" The students say "Good morning".
4. The teacher draws a second speech bubble under Bob, the customs officer, and writes "Anything to declare?" The teacher then elicits "Have you got anything to declare?" He/she draws a second speech bubble under Fred, the tourist, and draws a tick inside it. The teacher elicits "Yes, I have".
5. The teacher chooses 2 students, one for each role, starting from the top.
6. On a third speech bubble (Bob), the teacher draws a bottle outline – the bottle says J&B. The teacher elicits "Have you got any whisky?" 3rd speech bubble (Fred) T draws a tick and elicits "Yes, I have."
7. 4th speech bubble (Bob): T draws several bottles and a question mark. He/she elicits "How many bottles have you got?" 4th speech bubble (Fred) the teacher draws number 4, and elicits "I've got 4 bottles of whisky".
8. The teacher chooses 2 different students, start again from the top.
9. This can continue for as long as you feel is necessary, e.g. with cigarettes (easy to draw), with bottles of perfume (draw a square bottle and put the Chanel symbol inside it). Each time the teacher creates a pair of speech bubbles, s/he chooses another pair of students and starts from the top again.
10. This can be followed up with a role play, in which the tourists have role cards telling them what they are carrying though customs. By the time this is done, just about everyone in the group will have had the chance to practice at least part of the dialogue from both sides. Leave the drawings on the (white) board while they do this.

RATIONALE:

This activity helps visual dominant students with a visual reminder of what to say next. It also helps auditive students who get the chance to repeat the same expressions several times. This kind of activity can also be used several times. Students quickly see how this really helps them to create basic conversations.

VARIATIONS:

Just about any basic verb form can be adapted to this, e.g. the *Going to* activity above.

Activity 3

Describe and Draw

SKILL(S): Speaking.

AIM(S): Help visual-dominant students to understand what they are listening to. Language item: lexical verbs for increases and decreases, adverbs of degree.

LEVEL: B1.1. and upwards.

TIMING: 15-20 minutes

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Individual/Pair work

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: a sheet of blank A4 paper, pen or pencil, whiteboard.

PROCEDURE:

1. The teacher presents/elicits lexical verbs in English which mean the same as *increase*, *decrease* and *stay the same*, and makes a list on the board.
2. The teacher presents/elicits adverbs of degree, e.g. by drawing a soft rise and a sharp rise to elicit *slightly* and *sharply*, among others.
3. The teacher asks students to draw 2 graphs on the sheet of A4 paper and to label the horizontal axis with the months of the year. It is important not to label the vertical axis, for reasons which will become apparent. The students then draw a curve of their own choice on the first graph and leave the second graph blank. The teacher should take care to mention that this part of the class is an individual task, so they should not allow other colleagues to see the curve they are drawing.
4. The teacher divides students into pairs. One student describes her/his curve to the other, without showing it, and the other student draws the curve. Students then swap roles. At the end, both students should have identical graphs.

RATIONALE:

Visual-dominant students benefit enormously from *seeing* what language items mean and how they work. This activity allows them to do just that, and also helps them link the visual aspect of the language with what they hear.

VARIATIONS:

This can be adjusted to several situations at several levels, such as telling the time at A1 level, for example. It can also be varied to *describe and do*, for example with imperatives at A1 level, e.g. *Stand up, please, open the window, please, ask Fred to bring me a cup of coffee, please*, etc.

Activity 4

Cut-up sentences

SKILL(S): Speaking.

AIM(S): To help visual-dominant students to visualise the way sentences are constructed.

LEVEL: A1.1. or A1.2.

TIMING: 10-15 minutes

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Pair work/Group work

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: stiff cardboard, scissors, board, pen. Students will need a table for this activity.

PROCEDURE:

1. The teacher writes down each word of the target sentence on a piece of cardboard, so that each piece has only one word of the sentence.
2. Students move the cards about until they are in the right order.
3. Repeat this with different variations of the same language item.
4. The teacher can introduce a variation when s/he is satisfied that the students have grasped the sentence structure, e.g. once the students have grasped the affirmative, try the negative, or try the question form. Remember to include “red herrings” at this stage. For example, when practising the past simple, “She went to the bank”, include the card with “went” when practising the negative form, together with “go”, to see if the students are able to choose the right alternative.

RATIONALE:

This activity gives a lot of confidence to visual-dominant students who have difficulty grasping the order of the words in the sentence simply based on what they hear, thereby avoiding that feeling of “I’m never going to get this”, which so many visual-dominant people have when learning languages. Rather like the previous activity, it therefore helps visual-dominant students to establish the crucial link between *seeing* language and *hearing* language, leading to increase in confidence at beginner or elementary level.

Activity 5

Storytelling

SKILL(S): Speaking.

AIM(S): To help particularly auditive-dominant students to make sense of the difference between the past simple and the past progressive.

LEVEL: A2.1/A2.2

TIMING: 15-20 minutes (it will also depend on the size of the group)

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Pair work/Group work

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: some pictures of the actions, depending on the ones you choose.

PROCEDURE:

1. The teacher deliberately hesitates before starting the class, looks tired and keeps yawning and rubbing her/his eyes. The trick is to wait until one of the students asks the teacher if she/he is OK.
2. The teacher says that she/he had a really bad day and keeps yawning. The trick is to wait for a student to ask "What happened?"
3. The teacher begins the story. In telling the story, the context illustrates the meaning of the two verb forms and the difference between them, i.e. that one action was in progress at the moment a second action happened, and that this second action *interrupted* the first one. At the same time, consecutive past simple verbs indicate consecutive actions, i.e. one thing happened after another.
4. The teacher can use episodes such as the following: "Well, it started first thing in the morning. I was having a wonderful dream when the alarm clock rang. Does that happen to you? It happens all the time to me..." The idea is to use scenarios which happen quite commonly to many people, so that students can easily identify. The teacher goes on: "So, anyway, I got up and went into the bathroom. I was having a shower when the phone rang. It always happens, right? You never know whether to answer it... So, well, I decided it had to be something important at that time of the morning, so I got out of the shower, and I was just picking up the receiver when the phone stopped. So irritating!"

At each stage, the teacher should encourage students to identify with the irritating event. Other possible examples are: "I was running for the bus when it started without me. I was walking across a park when a dog bit me. I was bringing my colleague a cup of coffee when I tripped over a wire and spilled the coffee all over myself (...) and finally, I was just falling asleep when the baby started crying..."

5. The teacher shows pictures to students (this part will help the visual-dominant students) and students attempt to recreate part of teacher's bad day. The teacher encourages students to provide variations based on real events which have happened to them.
6. Students work in pairs and tell each other stories of events which happened to them, and what was going on at the time. The teacher monitors and helps out with vocabulary.

RATIONALE:

The teacher encourages students to retain language (especially lexical verbs) from memory, which becomes easier because of association with the context in which the events happen, rather in the same way as lexical groups. Visual-dominant students have a chance to catch up later on by means of the picture prompts. Easy to personalise, easy to introduce realism.

Activity 6

The Box of Fruit

SKILL(S): Speaking.

AIM(S): To promote memory and grammar/vocabulary retention in ways which will simultaneously favour both auditive and visual-dominant students. Practise the use of *there is/are*.

LEVEL: A1.2.

TIMING: 10-15 minutes

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Group work

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: A box and different amounts of different kinds of fruit, e.g. a banana, two oranges, three tangerines, four apples, a lot of strawberries, etc.

PROCEDURE:

1. The teacher produces a box and puts it on the table in front of the students. S/he takes out each type of fruit in turn and says the following: "There is a banana. There is a lemon. There are two oranges. There are three tangerines. There are four apples. There are a lot of strawberries.

At each stage, the teacher puts the fruit back into the box after showing it to the students.

2. The teacher moves away from the students so that they cannot see into the box and takes one piece of each fruit out again, in turn, asking students if they can remember the name of the fruit. The correct answer then prompts the second teacher's question: "How many bananas are there in the box? How many apples are there in the box?", etc.

At each stage, irrespective of whether the student's answer is correct or not, the teacher invites the student who answers to go and check. The student stands up, goes over to the box and takes out the fruit in question to confirm whether her/his answer was correct. If it isn't, the student puts the fruit back into the box. If it is, the teacher tells the student s/he can keep the fruit. The activity continues until all the fruit has been given away.

RATIONALE:

The activity contains both an auditive and a visual component and so it is helpful for both. You could even introduce a kinesthetic component by keeping the box partially closed and getting them to *feel* how many there are.

VARIATIONS:

Any items could be used instead of fruit, depending on the activity and the needs.

Activity 7

Jazz Chants¹

SKILL(S): Speaking

AIM(S): To improve natural sentence pronunciation, especially rhythm and stress.

LEVEL: Any.

TIMING: variable

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Group work

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: None.

PROCEDURE:

1. The teacher gives a model of the whole jazz chant, such as the following:

*He never talks to me, he never talks to
me, He just sits around and watches TV
He just sits around, he just sits around,
He just sits around and watches TV
He never talks to me, he just sits around
He never talks to me, he just sits around
He just sits around and watches TV.*

2. The teacher encourages the students to chant along, line by line. When the whole group appears to be doing this comfortably, the teacher chooses soloists to do a line or two by themselves.

RATIONALE:

This activity encourages memorisation of entire sentences as well as more natural sentence pronunciation because of the rhythm. This is usually easy for auditive-dominant students, but it really helps visual-dominant students to associate words and sentences in groups.

VARIATIONS:

It is easily transferrable to just about any situation. It is also very useful for persuading students to use contracted forms, weak forms, and elision.

¹ The idea was created by Carolyn Graham, a teacher of English as a Foreign Language at the American Language Institute of New York University.

Activity 8

What if...

SKILL(S): Speaking.

AIM(S): To revise third conditional sentences.

LEVEL: B2.

TIMING: approx. 15 minutes

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: If you have a big group it is preferable to divide them into groups of 4-6 students. This activity tends to become frustrating if students have to wait too long for their turn.

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: A set of cards where you write down past events. Flashcards can be used to help visual-dominant students.

PROCEDURE:

- a. Prepare a set of cards where you write down different past events, e.g. *The train was crowded, I misplaced my mobile, There was a G7 summit*. These events could range from everyday events, such as a crowded train, a rainy day or a broken mobile phone, to world events such as an international summit, a major football match or a recent election.
- b. The teacher starts the class by revising the third conditional structure. The teacher writes on the board an event (similar to what the students will have on the cards), and tell them how you wished it had been different, e.g.: *The train today was crowded*. The teacher then says: "If it hadn't been crowded I would have been able to sit down".
- c. The teacher asks students to write down one past event of their own and explain what would have happened if things had been different.
- d. Once they have revised the third conditional structure, the teacher shuffles the cards, spreads them on the table and tells a student to pick a card, read the event out loud and then place the card face up so that everyone can see. They then say "what if it had been different?" and the teacher elicits responses. The teacher goes around the class until everyone has had a turn.
- e. If time, the teacher should encourage follow-up comments from other students. It is important to encourage students to be as creative in their responses as possible.

RATIONALE:

Linking vocabulary and structure with a plausible, realistic context in which such language is naturally used helps not only retention but also the association of the function of the structure with the notion. This can be very useful for auditive-dominant students, but by using flashcards to stimulate the concept of notion, visual-dominant students can also find this useful in linking what they see with what they hear and see.

VARIATIONS:

If you want to extend the activity you might take one of the events on the cards and turn it into a longer speaking activity. Again, taking the example of the train, you might then develop a conversation about the transport in your country/region, introducing the idea of "what if things had been different?", e.g. what if the train hadn't become so popular? What if governments had started sooner to limit the number of cars coming into the city every day?... The possibilities are endless.

Activity 9

Speak your mind

SKILL(S): Speaking

AIM(S): To help both visual and auditive-dominant students to practise their speaking skills and improve fluency.

LEVEL: B2 – C1

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: YouTube/TED talks

PROCEDURE:

1. The teacher chooses a YouTube video or a TED talk that they feel will interest the group in general and will make them want to express an opinion. Nothing longer than 10 minutes.
2. The teacher picks out from the talk any vocabulary or idiomatic expressions that may cause difficulty (for pre-teaching) and also prepares some follow up questions to ask at the end of the talk to check students understanding of the content and promote further discussion. Three or four questions should be enough. Try to keep questions short.
3. The teacher pre-teaches the vocabulary and/or idiomatic expressions, for example by making a worksheet with a matching exercise. In one column the words and/or idiomatic expressions are listed, and in the other a synonym or an explanation. Students need to match the two.
4. The teacher asks students to guess what the talk might be about from the vocabulary they have learnt and writes the students suggestions on the board.
5. Listen to the talk. Check if the students guesses about the subject were right.
6. Project the pre-prepared questions onto the screen (or whiteboard or wall). Encourage students to answer the questions with the aim of promoting further conversation by encouraging other students to comment and give their own opinions. Allow the conversation to run as smoothly as possible, keeping correction to an absolute minimum, as this exercise is meant to improve fluency, and if students keep being interrupted with corrections it defeats the purpose of the exercise. However, the teacher can of take note of any mistakes made and address these later on or in the following lesson.

RATIONALE:

This activity allows students to express opinions on current issues which the teacher knows will interest them, engage them and make them want to speak. It goes without saying that teachers must of course take care not to bring any controversial or socially sensitive issue into the classroom as this might lead to arguments, not discussions!

Activity 10

My way

SKILL(S):

Speaking

AIM(S): To teach students polite ways to change the conversation. For both visual and auditive – dominant students.

LEVEL: B2– C1

TIMING: variable

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Pair work/ Group work

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: Cards with different topics on them

PROCEDURE:

1. The teacher prepares a set of cards with at least three different topics on them. One for each student in the group.
2. Pre-teach transition phrases that allow you to interrupt and change the conversation, by writing these on the board (or projecting them onto a screen) and giving simple examples of how they are used. For example, *And what do you think of /speaking of which..../anyway.../ that reminds me.... /oh, I wanted to tell you... /funny you should mention that/by the way...*
3. Hand one card to each student.
4. First the students start speaking on the first subject on the card. After one student speaks for no longer than half a minute, another student politely tries to change the conversation and introduce his own first topic. This goes on until all students have had a chance to speak about their first topics, moving on to the second and then the third topic. The teacher should allow the conversation to flow freely. In the meantime, s/he takes note of the way these interruptions and topic switches are being carried out and at the end gives the students feedback on positive and negative points.
5. If time permits, the students can choose one of the topics and have a longer (more realistic) discussion on it.

This activity can be a little confusing at first for students, so the teacher must give clear instructions as to the objective of the activity and how it will be done, preferably by giving an example.

Here is one possible example, using four cards:

Football	Reading	Education	Security
Food	Watching TV	Environment	Travelling
Swimming	Jogging	Marketing	Pets

S¹ - This weekend Benfica played. I had the chance to go and watch. Wow what a game, you should have seen the crowd when they scored....

S² – Really. Sounds great. By the way I was reading an article the other day that said that exercise is becoming more and more popular. Most of my friends have taken up some sport. I myself love walking. Some people say it's not a real sport...

S³ – That reminds me, don't you think the education department should do more to introduce more sports into the curriculum? Children spend so much time in the classroom. My son seems to just sit in the classroom most of the day....

S⁴ – Speaking of which, security at the schools is also becoming an issue. We are always hearing on the news how teachers are losing control in the classroom...

S¹- Oh well, anyway. Have you been to the new restaurant that opened last month? I hear their sushi is great...

RATIONALE:

Once students understand it, it's really fun. It gives them good practice on picking the right moment to change the conversation, which brings the use of language in a classroom situation much closer to the use of language in the outside (real) world

Activity 11

Music

SKILL(S): Speaking

AIM(S): To improve speaking skills within a specific topic

LEVEL: B1 and upwards

TYPE OF ACTIVITY : Flexible - Individual, Pair work/Small groups/Whole class

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: Songs (YouTube, mp3, radio, cd and player: phone, cd player, stereo) cards with questions and 1 bag. Teacher may ask students the class before to bring a song with them to the next class. Check for internet access in class in case the students don't have the means to bring a song but wish to fulfil the task.

PROCEDURE:

- The teacher may choose to set the tone for class by playing his/ her song and explaining her/his choice and how it makes him/ her feel, and then students will follow the lead.
- After all songs are shared, the teacher will put the cards (example in the annex to this activity) in a bag, and have each student at a time randomly pick a card and answer the question on it. Other students may wish to interact and discuss the same topic, if not the card must go back inside the bag for another student to answer.

RATIONALE:

This is an activity more focused for students with a more Auditory learning style of any age group.

What's your favourite kind of music? Why?	Can you play a musical instrument? If so, which one? If not, which is your favourite one?	How often do you listen to music and where?
Have you ever been to a concert or a live show? Talk about it...	Have you ever sung karaoke? Did you like it? Talk about the experience...	Do you like to sing? Why (not)?
How many records (vinyl), CD's, music files do you have? Which are your favourite ones?	How do you prefer to get your music?	What do you think about downloading music from the internet?
Do you prefer music in English or in any other language? Why?	Which musician or band would you most like to meet? Why?	How do you like to listen to music? (Volume, format, atmosphere, moment of the day, etc...)
Do you like to dance? What is your favourite type?	Do you listen to music on the radio? What is your favourite radio station?	When you listen to a song, do you try to understand the words? Talk about a song and its words (lyrics)...
Would you like to be a famous singer? Why?	Who is your favourite singer/musician? Why?	What is your favourite band? Why?

Activity 12

Board game

SKILL(S): Speaking

AIM(S): Building confidence in the usage of different tenses.

LEVEL: any

TIMING: variable depending on the level.

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Flexible – Pair work/ Small groups/Whole class

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: Board game and 24 cards, dice or coin (heads – move 1 square, tails – move 2 squares) and game tokens to mark the position of each student in the game. Use the “board” and the questions shown in annexes 2 and 3, or alternatively use these examples as inspiration to create your own version. This may be a diagnosis tool for the teacher in student assessment or may be used as a break from class routine as a fun way to use tenses.

PROCEDURE:

1. Students will roll the dice or toss the coin and move as many squares as indicated on the result they get.
2. Then, student takes a card from the pile and speaks (as much as possible) about its content. Experience indicates that lower level students will have difficulty speaking for more than one minute about the theme, whereas with higher level students you may have to gently interrupt after a certain (reasonable) amount of time.

RATIONALE:

This activity can be used with different levels and age groups. The aim is simply to build confidence so that, by the end of the activity, the student feel more comfortable with the idea of talking for a short amount of time, and for this reasons it can work very well with shy or reticent students – the members of the group who seem to never want to participate.

Annex

1	2	3	4
			5
9	8	7	6
10			
11	12	13	14
			15
19	18	17	16
20			
21	22	23	

Annex

What did you like doing when you were young?	Your company/school/institution: -Degree of importance -People who work there - Changes taking place -Future developments	What were you doing at 4.30 last Friday?	What are your goals?
Share a story about... Something comical or embarrassing which happened to you	What are your plans for the future (personal or professional)?	Your company/school/institution: -Where is it based -Core business -What people like about	Where do you see yourself in 20 years?
What have people been talking about a lot these days?	Speak about 2 or 3 activities you are involved with: -How long? - Results so far? - Future action points?	Tell the class about something you used to do a lot.	Share a story about... A time when you were very late for something.
Talk about something you were doing when you suddenly got a surprise!	What are your retirement plans?	What are the key events for you next month?	Tell the class about something you forgot to do.
Share a story about... A time when you had car/computer problems.	Goals and plans you have had for the past year: - What have you achieved? When? - Which haven't you achieved? Why?	Tell the class about something that you have been putting off but would really like to do.	What are you going to do after class?
Share a story about... Something that happened in your town or city recently	What have you remembered to do this week?	Talk about something rewarding you have done	Describe a situation when you were doing something and then you were interrupted.

Storytelling

Activities prepared by English Unlimited, Poland



1. Introductory remarks

Storytelling is a very rewarding language learning approach as it allows to present the language in an integrated way by combining all four language skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing in a meaningful context. Storytelling often has a strong affective impact on learners and may result in establishing positive relations between the teacher and the group and between group members.

Traditional storytelling as such is an aural activity which involves the storyteller who tells the story and the audience who listen to it. However, in the context of foreign language learning it often takes the form of a more complex activity which operates on many levels of conscious and subliminal learning and involves a combination of language skills in the course of what is a sequence of language tasks resulting in the personalization of language content and effective, long-term learning.

Storytelling, as a language learning tool and process involves not only the development of language skills but it also helps to foster some key competences for lifelong learning such as learning to learn, interpersonal and intercultural competence as well as cultural awareness and expression.

To summarize, storytelling is a valuable teaching and learning tool because it is a holistic way of learning a language involving a number of key competences for lifelong learning

- provides meaningful context for learning
- helps in sharing personal experiences
- offers insight into cultures, values and beliefs
- stimulates curiosity and encourages personal learning
- combines learning with enjoyment

Using storytelling ideas with adult learners is an effective way of dealing with group diversity because it introduces to the group the climate of sharing individual responses, acknowledging personal input and open-endedness. One of the issues in teaching a class of adults with mixed language levels, and often varying levels of self-confidence and life experience, is that some students are left behind because of the speed of instruction, time allowed for each task and most importantly – the fear of not getting the language right, or in simple terms – the fear of making mistakes and appearing foolish. Storytelling for adult learners aims to counterbalance teaching techniques focused primarily on accuracy and repetition with tasks which involve imagination, personal associations and meanings and to which there are no wrong answers. Paradoxically, by starting with imagination rather than logical or analytical skills involved in internalizing language structures, storytelling is a powerful tool for memorizing language structures in context.

2. Principles of storytelling

Effective storytelling depends on creating the right atmosphere.

The atmosphere can awaken learners' interest and engage their attention more readily when it appeals to their senses. Every story needs "a key", or a lead-in technique which invites us to follow it. Multi-sensory approach of "getting into a story" involves using pictures, drawings, mimes, lexis, objects, sound effects and music.

The listeners are more likely to be involved if they are given a chance to relate beforehand to the storyline, characters and theme. Therefore, prediction (of what is going to happen, what a character is going to say, what a character could look like etc.) is a useful technique for motivating the listeners.

Storytelling always involves a personal reaction to the story. That is why every listener is entitled to their own interpretation of the story and every interpretation is equally valid.

Thanks to its open-ended nature, storytelling promotes creativity and imagination.

Creating the atmosphere of trust and acceptance is all important as storytelling often involves dealing with personal meanings and emotions.

It is helpful to combine the act of storytelling with a visual or musical anchor i.e. a gesture, object, tune or phrase which signals the beginning of time devoted to storytelling. Such anchors play an important role in bringing everybody's attention to the present moment and help to focus on the story.

3. How to use stories

Storytelling activities can be used with learners at all language levels and age groups and lend themselves to many different teaching contexts. Therefore, there are no cut and dried rules of how stories can be used in the classroom. There are, however, many examples of good practices which include the following ideas:

1. First and foremost, storytelling can, and indeed - should be used for enjoyment and the pleasure of listening to a story. People are - 'homo fabulens', innately conditioned by the need of the narrative - to tell stories and be heard.
2. Storytelling provides an ideal context for integrating all four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. The occasion of listening to a story, often followed by some discussion in groups may be an introduction to the reading of text or brainstorming ideas for a written assignment. In other words, storytelling can act as a trigger to a personalized, meaningful language learning activity which combines language practice on all four language skills.
3. Storytelling, as a technique, can be used to:
 - a. Introduce a theme, topic, language structures which are later on discussed in learning units

(as a pre-reading, pre-writing task)

- b. Explain a concept, idea or issue
- c. Develop further understanding
- d. Brainstorm ideas for further work with text of visual material
- e. Present new lexis or structures in a meaningful context
- f. Practice language

4. How to tell stories

All stories benefit from some time spent on rehearsing them. Although some teachers are natural storytellers, most of us need to prepare ourselves for the occasion of telling the story to a group. It may involve writing down the skeleton of the story we want to tell and saying it aloud a couple of times to see how it sounds. It's important to pace oneself and keep an eye contact with group. Other things to consider are; body posture, voice level and the physical surroundings.

... and what not to do ...

It's better to avoid telling story from notes or reading them aloud. It is also important not to tell stories one does not like or find interesting; doing it "the sake of students" will always sound false and patronizing. Likewise, "getting the language right" – a common concern among non-native teachers - is not the most important thing.

Stories are... everywhere. They are present in our private and social lives. They explain the past and describe the present. The stories told in the classroom, in the context of language learning, can come from written, published stories accessible to both teachers and learners, and also from personal stories existing in our memory

5. Storytelling as lead-ins

When people are comfortable with their surroundings and peers, they are more likely to grasp and accept new ideas. Frequently, people come to classes tense from a prior activity. Lead-ins can help to relieve such tension and negative feelings.

Lead-in activities can be used throughout the course but are especially useful at the beginning. Such activities have several important benefits:

- involve and relax people immediately
- open the lines of communication
- help foster a sense of trust
- promote content flow
- revive failing energy
- stimulate creativity

- encourage trainees to look at the world in new ways
- equalize differences among trainees

There are many types of lead-in activities. Match your objective for a particular segment of training with the relevant type of activity. The guidelines for using lead-ins and related activities are straightforward:

- keep them simple,
- explain clearly and make sure everyone understands,
- try to relate the activity to the competency or principle,
- be non-judgmental with responses.

The storytelling activities included in this handbook can be used as Lead ins designed to ease the transition into a next presentation topic as well as complete activities on their own and are divided into the following three categories:

1. musical lead-ins (where music is a stimulus)
2. lexical lead-ins (where vocabulary is a stimulus)
3. visual lead-ins (where a picture/set of pictures/an image are a stimuli).

In fact, many activities combine all three types and employ multi-sensory approach to foster creativity.

Activity 1

Story behind an image

SKILL(S): speaking skills, writing simple phrases.

AIM(S): to encourage Ss to talk about their learning habits and learning past in order to introduce a discussion on learning skills

TIMING: 20-30 min.

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Individual/Pairwork/Groupwork

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: Teacher to bring a travelling bag or a small suitcase to class; optionally, the suitcase may be drawn on the board (then magnets or bluetack are needed) colourful pieces of paper – one for each student

PROCEDURE:

1. The teacher shows the suitcase or draws it on the board and asks students to write, individually, a couple of associations that come to their minds in connection with it.
2. Students read aloud / or say the words. The teacher helps with vocabulary and pronunciation.
3. Teacher tells ss that whenever we go travelling, we need to pack and put various things into our suitcase. Together with the physical things, we also take our expectations, feelings, hopes and predictions. When we learn something new, and a new language, we are starting something like a journey. And we take some baggage with us - our memories of learning at school, our hopes and aims, stories of what helped or motivated them to learn etc.
2. Distribute the pieces of paper to students and ask them to draw a suitcase and write down 5-6 words describing their "learning history baggage" they have brought into the class. These words could include names of favourite subjects or teachers, forms of learning that they liked, fun stories etc.
3. Students work in pairs and tell / listen to their partners about their memories of learning baggage. Teacher mingles with the groups listening in and helping with the language.
4. When they have talked about their memories connected with learning in the past, the teacher presents the list of learning skills that can help students to learn a foreign language and explains why these skills are useful . Depending on the time and level of the students, this could be an introduction to a presentation of learning to learn a particular skill, e.g. reading or listening.
5. To wrap up, Teacher may ask each Ss to think what new learning skill they need to pack into their suitcase to help them travel faster 😊.

RATIONALE:

This visual stimulus may become a useful key in helping students see what learning strategies they have been using in the past and become aware of those, which need to be

modified, unlearned or learned differently. It is important for the Ss to be able to share parts of their learning memories and listen to other accounts. It is also very important for the Teacher to learn how Ss approach learning, what their preferences are, so as to be able to introduce a systematic approach to teaching learning skills on the course.

VARIATIONS:

You can proceed with this activity in two different manners: As an introduction to learning skills at the beginning of a course, or when focusing on particular language skills, e.g. reading comprehension.

Learning skills aside, this activity can be used to as a trigger to pairwork discussion on travelling, memories related to travel etc.

Activity 2

Objects tell stories

SKILL(S): speaking, writing

AIM(S): to give a personal dimension to sharing stories; talking about routines ("everyday I... /they...) in present simple ; asking questions (present tense).

TIMING: 20-30 min.

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Individual /pairwork/ groupwork/whole class

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION:

Either bring an opaque bag with small object (s) inside which cannot be seen – OR – think about an everyday object you would describe to your students

PROCEDURE:

1. If you have brought a small bag with everyday objects inside it, tell the students that you are reaching inside the bag and holding an object, the name of which they need to guess. If you do not have any real object with you at hand, tell your students that you are thinking about an object and they need to guess what it is.
2. Students are to ask questions (put examples of questions on the board as prompts: When do you use it?; how big is it? What is it used for?, etc.
3. When the name of the object has been identified, ask them to think about another object - part of their personal belongings - they often use and touch every day. Ask them to imagine that these objects could – like people – tell stories, keep diaries etc. If they could speak, what would they say about what is happening to them every day? How do they feel?, who handles them?, etc.
4. When all the students are ready with images of objects, ask them to complete – in writing - these items as if their mysterious object is speaking :
 - My owner uses/ touches me when...
 - I feel important because ...
 - Every day I ...
 - I feel happy when ...
 - My owner gets frustrated when I ...
5. In pairs, students read out the sentences to their partners and answer their questions about it. Both types of questions are allowed – Yes/No and What/Where/How Often/Why etc. They guess the names of objects being described
6. For homework, ask students to write a short account – A day in the life of - of what their object could say – “The Secret Diary of ...”

RATIONALE:

This is an example of a speaking activity which, in itself is good preparation for a writing task. Objects are very real and evocative – of stories, emotions, handling them physically - all senses are involved. The convention of making objects human (and personal) allows for a lot of personal expression which extends beyond the borders of the pragmatic and neutral. The so-called “weaker” and “slower” students can feel equal with the more successful ones when it comes to describing something personal.

Activity 3

Story behind a headline

In class: the teacher brings headlines from a newspaper and asks students in pairs to re-construct story they can predict on the basis of key words in the headline. As a follow-up, students may read the original piece of news.

SKILL(S): Speaking and reading (a possible writing follow up); learner training – prediction and guessing

AIM(S): To practise speaking and raise students' interest in reading

TIMING: 20-25 minutes

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Pair work/Group work

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: Find one article from a magazine, website or newspaper (not longer than 100-150 words or shorter depending on their level) that may interest your students and may expand or revise their vocabulary. Make sure it has a catchy title that may spark interest in its content.

PROCEDURE:

1. Explain to the students that they are going to take part in a speaking activity which would help them understand a new text better and practice fluency in speaking. Tell them that they are about to see the title of an article and reconstruct its content based on key words. Distribute the sheets of paper with the title or display/write it on the board.
2. Divide the class into groups of two or three.
3. Ask Ss to read the headline and check which words/phrases are clear to them and which need explanation.
4. Encourage Ss to guess what happened brainstorming it in their groups. They can note the key words to help if they want, but must not write the story down. They should all prepare to retell their story individually in other groups. It should be at least a few sentences long. The teacher must assist the students with the new words they need.
5. Once the stories have been created the students go to different groups and both retell their story and listen to the stories created by others. When the time finishes they go back to their seats.
6. Ask Ss to decide whose story is the most probable, fun, creative etc.
7. In class or as a home task, distribute the original article and ask Ss to read it to check.

RATIONALE:

This is an example of a speaking activity which, will give the weaker students the safety of retelling the same story several times showing them their progress. They will also have some help when creating the story. The so-called "weaker" and "slower" students can feel equal with the more successful ones when it comes to telling a short, familiar story. It may also introduce reading an article in a more creative way.

VARIATIONS:

The teacher may ask them to vote for the best stories or write their story down as homework.

Activity 4

Musical invitations

SKILL(S): Speaking

AIM(S): To introduce vocabulary related to food and eating, promote creativity and self-expression, encourage mental imagery as a memory tool

TIMING: 30-40 minutes

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Individual and Group work

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION:

1. Find three pieces of instrumental music (around 1 minute each) in different moods and evoking associations with different parts of the world e.g. a gentle guitar piece, a piece of music from India, a classical piece (Mozart, Chopin, Vivaldi etc.), modern jazz etc. Record the pieces in one place on your computer to avoid looking for a particular fragment on different CDs during the lesson.
2. A story related to eating, food or cooking. It could be a reading text from the course book or something your students may find interesting.

PROCEDURE:

1. Ask your students to think about the last time they were invited to a meal or they invited somebody else; what kind of a meal was it? where did it take place? what food was served? did they enjoy it? etc. Ask them to write down some words which would help them describe that occasion and help them with vocabulary they need.
2. Ask Ss to work in pairs and share their memories with each other.
3. After Ss have exchanged their memories, tell them that you are going to invite all of them to a meal. However, instead of giving them an address, you are going to play three pieces of music; each piece is a musical invitation to a different place where different food is served. Their task is just to listen to these three pieces (invitations) and decide which invitation they are going to accept. While listening to the music they could imagine and visualize the following features of this meal :
 - a. smells
 - b. dishes
 - c. seating arrangement
 - d. colours
 - e. other features related to the meal and venue
4. Play the three pieces of music.
5. Ask Ss to say which invitation they are going to accept and sit in groups according to their choice of music and tell each other what images have come to their minds
6. Share your own images related to the music and which meal you'd like to join. Tell your students that you have one more invitation for them – this time on paper, and ask them to read the text related to the topic.

RATIONALE:

This activity can be 'a text opener' and shows how students can be prepared for a reading activity; the evocative power of music helps them to unlock their creativity and stimulates the right side of the brain. Students who struggle with analytical tasks such as reading comprehension may find it easier to get involved in reading once the topic has been introduced and discussed.

This activity which involves mental imagery is also an example of a different approach to students' involvement in speaking during classes – personal images are always memorable as there is no "right / wrong" label on them. Students tend to remember better the words and phrases which they encounter in a relaxing context, and music is a very good vehicle for it.

Last but not least, the affective quality of being in a creative state and – sharing it with others – may have a strong group bonding effect.

VARIATIONS:

Music can have strong influence on students creativity and help to unlock their writing potential. Therefore, you can ask them to describe an ideal meal they would like to eat when they have listened to the three musical invitations. One of the common problems with writing is that students say they lack ideas to write about. If encouraged to imagine and involve the right side of the brain, they will find it easier to write about it.

Activity 5

Musical picture drawing

SKILL(S): Speaking, listening

AIM(S): To practise listening and speaking in the process of describing a place; asking questions and for clarification

TIMING: 20-30 minutes

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Individual and Pairwork

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION:

1. Find a calm piece of instrumental music to play in the background
2. Bring pieces of A4 paper- one for each student – as well as crayons and colourful markers

PROCEDURE:

1. Tell the students that in a moment they are going to be “teleported” to their favourite place. Play the music (for around 2-3 minutes) and ask them to relax, close their eyes and think about a place which they love ; it could be somebody’s home or any other interior, a place in the nature, etc.
Tell the students to think about the colours, smells, shapes, textures, and feelings.
2. When the music stops, ask students to sit in pairs ‘back to back’, and give each student a sheet of paper, crayons and markers.
3. Ask students to tell each other (in pairs while sitting back to back) about their favourite place, and while one person is describing the place, the other one is drawing everything that is being described according to how they hear it; when drawing, they can ask additional questions to make the drawing better but they shouldn’t try to look at the picture . With lower levels, you can also prompt grammatical structures and put them up on the board.
4. When both Ss in each pair have finished, they exchange pictures to see what has been created just out of listening to each other’s stories or images.

RATIONALE:

This activity is excellent for developing students' communication skills; it demonstrates the importance of listening, and asking the right questions (inquiry skills). As the student tells their own story aloud to their partners, they describe mental images that the other student translates into the drawing. The musical background helps to evoke images and involves Ss on a personal, meaningful level. Shy students, who are usually reluctant to speak in front of the whole group and the teacher, can benefit from the intimacy of pairwork and are more likely to share personal images and stories. The “back to back” sitting arrangement helps to prompt questions and describe the place in detail. This activity helps to provide students with personal and meaningful ideas to speak and write about.

VARIATIONS:

This activity can be a valid introduction to a writing task. Following the stage of evoking the images, listening and then drawing, Ss are asked to write a description of their partner’s favourite place. They can also write the descriptions and deliberately change one or two things. In the following class, students receive descriptions of their places and have to spot the changes.

Activity 6

Shadow reading

SKILL(S): Reading aloud, work on intonation and pronunciation, speaking

AIM(S): To deconstruct the complexity and introduce the stages leading to reading aloud; to practice speech work (pronunciation, intonation): to introduce the idea of collocations and set phrases

TIMING: 20-30 min.

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Individual, Groupwork

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION:

1. Find a relatively **short** text (100-150 words) - a story or a poem - that may be interesting for students and is recorded on CD. The recording must not be too fast; the pace of reading has to be natural, and the melody of actor's voice pleasant and engaging.
2. Prepare enough copies of the text - one for each student
3. Bring a CD player or set up the audio recording of the text from a computer

PROCEDURE:

1. The teacher asks students if they use audiobooks or listen to radio plays and encourages them to say if they think reading a story aloud is an easy or difficult task for an actor. Teacher tell them they are going to find out for themselves in the coming exercise.
2. The teacher gives out the text and ask students to read it first for understanding; new words are put on the board and their meaning is explained so that all Ss understand the text very well.
3. The teacher asks students to look at the text again and say which expressions, phrases they would like to practise reading aloud; they are to find around 10 combinations of nouns and prepositions, idioms, phrasal verbs etc. All phrases are put up on the board.
4. The teacher explains that before reading aloud or playing a part, actors need to train their voices. S/he gives a model of how to read each phrase and students repeat. First in chorus, then groups of students, then individuals. The teacher may ask them to raise the volume of their voice or lower it. The activity should be light-hearted and fun, so shouting and whispering is encouraged.
5. When all phrases have been practised in many ways, the teacher asks students to listen to the recording with their eyes closed.
6. Next, the teacher asks them to listen again, this time following the text silently.
7. Students are asked to listen again, this time reading the text together with the recording in low voices.
8. Same as 7. But they are asked to raise the voice a bit.
9. Same as 7 and 8, and this time they are asked to follow the text in their normal voices and read together with the recording.
10. The teacher asks the students to read the text in pairs when each person reads a half of the text
11. Studetns are invited to say if reading aloud is an easy or difficult task again and what can make it easier

RATIONALE:

Reading aloud is a very complex and interactive process which is often taken for granted by teachers. When introduced gradually, it can be a very useful exercise for internalising vocabulary, whole phrases, sentence structures, as well as developing speech work (pronunciation, intonation) and , last but not least – reading comprehension. It is also a very important skill which helps to practise fluency and effective communication. Very often, lower level students or those with learning difficulties are reluctant to read aloud or show poor performance because they are asked to read aloud – “cold” – without step-by-step procedures, which could help them in performing better and enjoying it. Some form of controlled “rehearsal” is necessary in order to build up Ss confidence and show them that every difficult task can be made easier by breaking it into manageable units.

VARIATIONS:

A variation of this activity can take the form of rhythmical repetition of short phrases in order to master the melody of the English language. Songs are a good idea to follow, as well as chants. The publications on working with intonation of English include very lively and dynamic examples of Jazz Chants. To find out more and see examples of jazz chants in action, go to:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R_nPUuPryCs

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jazz_Chants

<http://www.onestopenglish.com/skills/listening/jazz-chants/mp3-files-and-recording-scripts/>

Activity 7

Story behind words

SKILL(S): Reading and speaking ;learner training – prediction and guessing (pre-reading)

AIM(S): To introduce new vocabulary and raise students' interest in reading

TIMING: 20-25 minutes

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Pair work/Group work

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION:

Find two stories, or pieces of text, (not longer than 150-200 words) that may interest your students and may expand their vocabulary. Go through both texts and write down the vocabulary items you think may be unfamiliar to your students. Choose between 10-15 words/phrases.

On a piece of paper type the words - **in a random order!** - mixing the words/phrases from both stories. Bring relevant amount (1 per pair) of copied vocabulary lists to the class.

PROCEDURE:

1. Explain to the students that they are going to take part in a vocabulary puzzle activity which would help them understand a new text better. Tell them that the lists they are about to see some words and expressions from two different stories. Distribute the sheets of paper with the vocabulary.
2. Divide the class into groups of two or three.
3. Ask students to go through the lists and check which words/phrases are clear to them and which need explanation. Encourage them to guess some meanings and explain that guessing is a very important skill when learning new vocabulary.
4. Either distribute dictionaries and ask them to check the words, or check them together as a whole class, where the teacher or other students explain the unfamiliar words.
5. Once the vocabulary has been explained, ask Ss to look at the words again, and, in pairs, try to divide the words into two groups as if they belonged to two stories. What words could go together? What could each story be about? What story could connect some vocabulary? Each pair will be expected to read aloud words which they think belong together.
6. Ask each pair for their categorisation and its justification.
7. Ask students to discuss in groups what the stories might be about.
8. Turn it into the whole-class discussion where Ss present their ideas and speculate about original stories
9. In class or as a homework task, distribute the original two stories and ask students to read them both and circle the context in which the words have appeared.

RATIONALE:

This activity can be treated as a lead-in to the proper story-based activity which may follow on the same class, or the next one. The whole activity including the stories themselves may then lead to comparing students' versions of the stories to the real ones.

This activity helps to train some very important reading skills, such as predicting, guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words and dealing with ambiguity, as well as using dictionaries. It is important for the teacher to encourage her/his students to guess and explain, that it helps to remember vocabulary better and for a longer period of time. So, when they are guessing, they are always right!

VARIATIONS:

The same activity can be used to activate and revise vocabulary. At lower levels, a teacher may use pictures instead of words. Additionally, students may be asked to prepare their Top Ten lists of phrases from the text which they would like to keep in their Vocabulary Box.

Activity 8

What happened before

SKILL(S): Speaking, writing

AIM(S): To elicit personal reaction to a visual stimulus, language of speculation (*they could be... , they may be.. etc.*), constructing a narrative, practising grammatical structures

TIMING: 15-30 min.

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Pairwork/Groupwork

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION:

Select a picture that is interesting, dramatic or ambiguous, and suggests a situation or a story leading up to the moment when the picture was taken. It is important to find a picture that lends itself to different interpretations. Decide if you want to show it (it has to at least be in A4 format) or project it from a laptop onto the screen/IWB.

PROCEDURE:

1. The teacher shows a picture of an interesting or a dramatic moment and makes sure that all students can see it well
2. The teacher asks them to think for a moment to “feel in the picture” and answer individually (write down) the following questions :
 - a. What is happening?
 - b. Who is involved?
 - c. How might the characters feel? What mood are they in?
 - d. What happened before? What has led to this moment?

Before Ss start, T puts up some useful sentence structures on the board.
3. The teacher asks individuals to compare their ideas in pairs and decide what story they want to present to the rest of the group. In the meantime, s/he listens to small groups and feeds in the correct language.
4. Each pair/ small group presents their interpretation of the picture.
5. In class or for homework students are to write a short paragraph with a title: What happened before?

RATIONALE:

A visual stimulus, such as a picture, can help to open up Ss creative side and be a useful trigger for practising speaking or writing skills. It is important to allow for different interpretations and encourage speculation, so that lower-level Ss can feel that there are no wrong answers and everybody is right.

VARIATIONS:

What happened later?

The teacher shows a picture of an interesting or a dramatic moment and elicits from students some information on what is happening, who is involved, how the characters are feeling etc.

Students discuss in groups or pairs what may happen next and what it may lead to. Each group presents their version of the story. Another possibility is to guess the identity of the person behind the camera and speculate on his/her role in the situation.

Activity 9

Story behind a photograph

SKILL(S): Speaking, writing

AIM(S): To develop communicative competence and speaking, asking questions, telling a story; group bonding

TIMING: 15-20 min.

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Pairwork/Groupwork

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION:

The teacher asks students to bring photographs which they have taken and which they are happy to share with the group. If some students are unable to bring such photographs, they can be asked to describe a picture they took and be ready to answer questions about it.

PROCEDURE:

1. The teacher introduces the activity by asking students if they know the word – “nosy”, “nosy parker” and explains the meaning of it. Next, he/she asks how people who are nosy behave.
2. The teacher invites them to become nosy parkers for a limited period of time; they will be able to ask questions about photographs which their group members are going to show. To get into the role, the class brainstorms different question structures.
3. Students are divided into pairs, and in each pair they take turns to ask 5-6 questions about the picture of their partner, the circumstances, the place and time and the context involved. If students feel that some questions are too personal, they can say “Pass”.
4. When they, in each group / pair, have asked and answered questions, they are to write a caption for their partner’s picture and mount it under the picture on the wall.
5. A group photogallery is set up for all Ss to walk around, look at the pictures and read the captions.

NB. In the era of smartphones, students can bring pictures on the phones, send them to each other, allow for question time and then write captions or comments about the pictures and send them back to the owners.

RATIONALE:

This activity can be a group bonding activity once people have got to know each other a little bit. Bringing photographs that have real context and meaning can help students to talk and share. The visual stimulus prompts describing details and telling the story behind the picture.

VARIATIONS:

Writing, reading aloud. Hand out copies of a photograph of two people or project it on the class wall. Ask students to speculate about the picture (see procedure above) on their own and **not share** their speculations with classmates. Ask them to identify with one of the two people in the photograph and write this person's inner monologue (up to 100 words). When they have finished, ask them to prepare for reading the texts aloud in the class. The preparation involves reading the text silently a couple of times; when reading aloud they need to pay attention to things such as the pace of reading (not too fast), speaking clearly and trying to make breaks and having eye contact with the listeners. Ask students to read aloud their parts; others listen and guess which of the people in the picture is speaking.

Activity 10

Strictly personal

SKILL(S): Speaking, writing

AIM(S): To practise questions, asking for information, getting to know the teacher

TIMING: 20-30 min

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Individual, Groupwork

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION:

The teacher selects 6-7 pictures showing him/her in different situations in different phases of life; quiet music to be played as background

PROCEDURE:

1. The teacher tells the class that he/she has brought some photographs from different stages of life and displays them. Students can walk around them, pick them up or stick them on the wall.
2. The teacher asks the group to think of questions they would like to ask, based on these photographs. Questions can be linked directly to the photographs or be more general.
3. The teacher plays the music and asks students to write down 5-7 questions they would like to ask. When they have done it, they need to imagine what the teacher's answers could be like – as if in an interview - and write them down.
4. The teacher invites students to read aloud their questions and answers and adds her/his own comments.

Activity based on Gerngross, G. and Puchta, H., (1992) *Pictures in Action*

RATIONALE:

Getting to know the teacher helps to establish trust in the group, and the culture of sharing personal information. The music in the background helps students to relax and get into the creative situation of an imaginary interview.

VARIATIONS:

This activity can be followed by a mirror idea, in which students bring their own photographs, and in pairs, at first, write down an imaginary interview with their partners, prompted by the pictures. Then, they read the interviews aloud to each other and finally discuss how, in reality, they would answer the questions themselves.

Multi-Skills Activities

Activities prepared by MDM TD Center, Liverpool, UK



Activity 1

Lingua Monopoly

SKILL(S): Logical-Mathematical

Logical-mathematical learners enjoy working with numbers. They can easily interpret data and analyse abstract patterns. They have a well-developed ability to reason and are good at chess and computer programming. They think in terms of cause and effect.

Recommended Language Learning Activities

- Playing mathematical linguistic games like mancala, language dominoes and Lingua Monopoly
- Searching for patterns in the classroom, school, outdoors, and home
- Conducting experiments to demonstrate linguistic and grammar concepts
- Using specialized mathematical linguistic software, which reinforces maths skills
- Designing alphabetical and numerical codes

AIM(S): To develop basic language skills among beginner level adult language learners using the methods of entertaining repetition and math skills.

TIMING: 45-60 min

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Group work

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: A classical Monopoly game set.

Prepare to remove a variety of the more complex rules -- for example, taking away the whole houses and hotels upgrading.

PROCEDURE:

Lingua Monopoly is a workable "social language learning game" vocabulary consisting of *yes/no*, basic pronouns, *good/bad*, *happy/no happy* and *like/no like* to very fluent use of sentences and phrases including:

- *Whose turn is it? / It's (not) your/my turn.*
- *Can you move my marker for me?*
- *Yes, I'd like to buy it / No, thanks.*
- *How much is it? / Do you have change?*
- *That's my property. Please pay the rent. It's _____ EUR.*
- *Do you have enough money?*
- *Here you are / No worries.*
- *Skip three turns / Skip two more turns / Skip one more turn.*
- *Cities, noteworthy locations, and states of your country.*

The process could be explained in four stages:

1. Play the game, with the teacher doing almost all of the talking, and learners just following along. As properties are purchased, there are brief digressions to show where on a map of your country the places are, and how to pronounce them properly.

2. Pause to introduce key phrases and expressions that embody most of the actions being undertaken (and up to this point being said mostly by the teacher), working through them on the whiteboard, with learners taking them down in their notebooks to study later at home as well.
3. Continue playing the game, and ask learners to try to use the expressions as the natural/required opportunities in the game come up, with reminders, help and modelling from the teacher.
4. Continue playing the game, with the teacher using something akin to the Silent Method -- simply nodding, shaking the head, pointing or using other forms of non-verbal language to help prompt the learners or confirm or question their use of language as the game progressed.
5. By this stage, the learners should be getting seriously good at using almost all of the language chunks listed above.

The teachers' role in the game is playing banker and finding entertaining ways to simplify and convey the curve ball situations thrown up by the *Chance* and *Community Chest* cards.

RATIONALE:

The activity provides abundant chances for meaningful, non-boring repetition, which is an essential part of language learning.

VARIATIONS:

1. As learners usually genuinely enjoy the challenge of the game, the trainers can use it for pretty much unlimited hours of classroom time.
2. It is important to consider that combining the activity with others, requiring a silent period, while still learning and involving participating in a social activity can bring an added value to the learning process.

Activity 2

Cards War

SKILL(S): Logical-Mathematical

AIM(S): To develop numerical language skills among beginner level adult language learners using the methods of counting and entertaining repetition.

TIMING: 45-60 min

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Pair work

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: Two decks of 52 cards for each pair of learners.

PROCEDURE:

1. The decks are divided evenly, with each player receiving 52 cards, dealt one at a time, face down. Anyone may deal first. Each player places his stack of cards face down, in front of him.
2. Learners should pair together, with each pair grabbing two decks of cards. Cards have the following values:
 - Ace — 1
 - Two to 10 — Face value
 - Jack — 11
 - Queen — 12
 - King — 13
3. Each player turns up two cards at the same time, says the number of each of them and then adds them together, announcing the sum.
4. The player with the higher hand (sum of two cards) takes all four cards and puts them, face down, on the bottom of his stack. If the cards are the same rank, it is a War. The goal is to be the first player to win all cards. The game ends when one player has won all the cards.
5. The role of the teacher is supervising, encouraging the players to pronounce the numbers of cards and the sums each two playing cards make, as well as to exchange short phrases, such as:
 - *What number is this?*
 - *How much does it make?*
 - *Is my sum bigger than yours?*
 - *That's correct./That's not correct.*
 - *Who wins?/I win! You win!*
 - *How many cards do you have?*
 - *I have more cards than you./ You have more cards than me.*

By the end of the activity, the learners should learn the short phrases above, as well as some new numbers.

RATIONALE:

The activity provides excellent opportunities for meaningful and playful repetition of phrases and numbers, which is – alongside with some fun maths – is an excellent way to learn a foreign language.

VARIATIONS:

Timeframe and level of mathematical operations can vary. If learners feel excited to play with more complicated mathematical operations, the teacher can give them the opportunity to choose from subtracting, multiplying or dividing, in addition to simple summing.

For slightly more advanced learners, further and more complicated phrases to be used in the game may be chosen by the teacher.

Activity 3

Rhyming Peg-Word Mnemonic¹

SKILL(S): Logical-Mathematical, Auditory and Visual

AIM(S): Using the logical, visual and auditory skills of the learners, the activity is based on a memory technique that increases learners' retention and retrieval of lexical (vocabulary) items. Using the rhyme as a powerful heuristic, the activity capitalises on it. The Rhyming Peg- Word mnemonic activity requires that deliberately relating the learners to the word to be learned, linking it with a previously learned word or piece of knowledge (linking the unfamiliar to the familiar), in order to make processing and retrieval easier. It uses mental imagery that requires the items the learner wishes to remember being 'pegged to', or associated with, certain images in a prearranged order.

TIMING: 35-45 min

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Group work

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: The teachers are encouraged to prepare relevant images that are as visual and vivid as possible.

PROCEDURE:

In the Rhyming Peg the numbers from one to ten are associated with rhymes, for example:

- one-bun,
- two-shoe,
- three-tree, and so on,

...and then associated with the target vocabulary.

For example: If the learner wants to remember three new words – “mischief”, “abolish”, and “sacred” - and that their corresponding peg-words are one-bun, two-shoe, and three-tree.

1. For the word *mischief* the learner might imagine a naughty boy trying to steal a fresh bun from the oven. He is up to mischief. (One-bun-mischief).
2. For the word *abolish* the learner might imagine someone throwing their smelly shoes into the trash. The shoes are being abolished. (Two-shoe-abolish).
3. For the word *sacred* the learner might imagine a sacred cow sitting in a tree. (Three- tree-sacred).

The peg-word system can be used with any peg-word, not just the common ones. For example instead of 1 – bun, 2 – shoe, three – tree, etc., teacher could suggest:

- 1 – fun
- 2 – crew
- 3 – pea

¹ Mnemonic techniques have been proven efficient in learning a foreign language. The more you can associate a familiar with the vocabulary word or better syntax, the better you develop the language of choice. All the pitfalls of translation will be eliminated in this way, since this stimulating and playful kind of learning develops your logical deduction, unlike systematic memorization.

VARIATIONS

The peg-word method is best suited to learners with more advanced language skills as they would need to be able to make connections using previous language knowledge. In relation to it, various options for improvisation are available to teachers that have previously worked with the relevant group of learners and had the opportunity to monitor their learning achievements.

Activity 4

Acronym Creation

SKILL(S): Logical-Mathematical and Visual

AIM(S): Acronyms can be used as mnemonics in language learning. Using the logical and visual skills of the learners, the activity is capitalising on the wide-spread usage of social media communication tools, such as acronyms, in order to boost foreign language learning in a fun and easy to learn manner. Creating a funny acronym strengthens the connection between the word and its meaning (which is another mnemonic method). This technique is especially effective when learners need to recall words that are hard to spell or create a set of new words to learn from a word they already know.

TIMING: 45-60 min

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Group work

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: The teachers need to prepare examples of acronym posters such as the ones below (for classes in English as a Foreign Language). This is only to boost the imagination of learners to create their own acronyms that will suit their own associative strategies.

PROCEDURE:

1. The teacher introduces the aims and objectives of the activity, preferably linking it with previous mnemonic activities and putting it into the context of logical associative thinking series of previously introduced exercises.

An example of an introduction could be *“You form acronyms by using each first letter from a group of words to form a new word. This is particularly useful when remembering words in a specified order. Acronyms are very common in ordinary language and in many fields. Here is how we can use acronyms in language learning: (...)”*

2. A set of 10 acronyms are presented: 5 for remembering complicated words, made up of simple words and 5 for using acronym words that learners already know in order to learn new words, starting with each of the letters of the acronym.

Group I

- a. B.O.Y.S. = Being Obnoxious Youthful Souls
- b. B.O.S.S. = Built On Self Success
- c. L.O.V.E. = Loss Of Valuable Energy
- d. S.M.I.L.E. = Showing Miracle In Little Effort
- e. S.I.N.G.L.E = Strong, Independent, Noticeable,

Generous, Loving, Enlightened Group II

- L.A.M.E. = Laughable And Mildly Entertaining
- S.P.A.M. = Seriously Poor Advertising Method!

- D.I.E.T. = Did I Eat That?
- D.E.N.I.A.L. = Don't Even Know I Am Lying
- D.I.A.R.Y. = Darling I Always Remember You

VARIATIONS:

Further to this activity, a wide range of acronym-like mnemonics could be used, such as:

- career – car and beer
- island – is land
- NYLON - New York & London

Activity 5

Keyword Mnemonics

SKILL(S): Logical-Mathematical, Auditory and Visual

AIM(S): A primary aim of keyword mnemonic instruction is to have learners adopt mnemonic strategies and use them independently in order to be able to boost their foreign language learning achievements.

TIMING: 60-90 min

TYPE OF ACTIVITY:

Group work

RESOURCES AND

PREPARATION:

- The teacher should prepare identifying the content (concepts, facts, vocabulary) learners have most difficulty remembering -- just a few at first.
- It's important that the teacher has already exercised brainstorming with someone for the keywords or other variations. Tip to teachers: *Be sure keywords familiar to you will also be familiar to your learners.*
- The teacher should prepare art, stick figures, cut-outs from magazines, help from an artistic learner or colleague, or clipart to create mnemonic pictures.

PROCEDURE:

The keyword method mnemonic is a very simple way to help you remember foreign language vocabulary. It goes like this:

1. You encounter a foreign language word that is difficult to remember.
2. You find a word or phrase in your language that has a similar sound.
3. You create a visual image for the keyword (the word or phrase in your language) and then connect the image with the foreign language meaning.

Practise each step carefully with the class, being sure they have learned the process. When learners reply with the keyword instead of an answer, (i.e. "rana" means "rain") say, "No, *rain* is the keyword to help us retrieve the answer. What was happening in the picture with the rain?"

To facilitate the transition from teacher-created to learner-created mnemonics, outline six steps:

1. Incorporate mnemonic strategies as much as possible in your teaching.
2. Apply attributions.
3. Induce creation of the strategies.

4. Help learners create strategies and use class brainstorming.
 - Identify important information or associations.
 - Create keywords or other relevant verbal elaborations.
 - Relate the keyword to the associated information.
 - Execute the steps to retrieve the information.
5. Have individual learners create strategies.
6. Monitor and evaluate independent creation of mnemonic strategies.

VARIATIONS:

A more independent and learner-led process is also possible, especially with advanced adult learners. However, the teacher should keep in mind – in case of time limitations– that this is always the more time -consuming option. Although creating mnemonics in groups is beneficial, experts point out that there are times when mnemonics of the teacher's design are more appropriate. Teachers must consider whether, at a given point in time, recall of important content or learning to use memory strategies has a higher priority.

Activity 6

Vocabulary Flash Cards

SKILL(S): Visual

AIM(S): vocabulary

TIMING: 60-90 min

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Group work






RESOURCES AND PREPARATION:

- The teacher should make sure each learner, or each pair of learners, has a dictionary.
- The teacher should prepare the learners by saying that they are going to practise looking up words in the dictionary and then they are going to make their own flash cards, containing a small amount of important information to help you learn something. The cards will be used to practise their vocabulary.
- The teacher should ensure the learners understand that this is an important skill, because in the future they may want to make flash cards to help them study for a test.

PROCEDURE:

1. Pick a word and show the learners how to use the guide words at the top of the dictionary pages. Explain that guide words are the terms at the top of the dictionary pages that help you figure out which words are on those pages. The entry word is the word or phrase that is at the beginning of a dictionary entry.
2. Once everyone has found the word, ask learners for the word's part of speech. Show them where to find that in the entry.
3. Next, ask them for the definition. If there is more than one, let them know that the first definition is the one used most commonly. Have them figure out how many definitions there are and discuss why there would be multiple meanings.
4. Repeat the process until you feel that the majority of learners can manage on their own.

Guided practice

-  Have learners return to their desks with their dictionaries.
-  Give each learner a piece of white paper or card stock.
-  Tell them to each fold the paper hot dog style, then hamburger style, then hamburger style again so they have eight squares when they open it.
-  Have them cut out their squares.
-  Have them pick a vocabulary word from the list you provided and write it on one side of their card.

- Have them write their name at the bottom of the card in case it falls off their desk.
- Tell them to look up the word in the dictionary.
- Show them on the board that on the back of their card they need to write the part of speech and the first definition given for their word (or the definition for the word as it is being used in the context of your lesson, as some definitions depend on pronunciation rather than spelling).
- Have them write the part of speech and definition on the back of the card.
- Walk around the room to make sure each learner has done this correctly.

Independent working time

- Have learners complete their flash cards with their partner or independently for the remainder of their cards.
- Allow them to decorate them if there's enough time.

Review and closing

- Give each learner a folder with his name on it to keep his cards in.
- Have learners explain how flash cards will help them in the future.

VARIATIONS:

- Have advanced learners write two definitions for each vocabulary word or complete more than the minimum number of flash cards.
- Have struggling learners work on the assignment as a group, with your guidance. You can also only have them complete four cards one day and four cards the next so they are not overwhelmed.

Learning by Doing

Activities prepared by Jaffnrettishús, Iceland



Activity 1

Language & Culture

SKILL(S): Reading and writing

AIM(S): To encourage the students to take part in society, trust themselves and take part in the election for the parliament as a way of integrating with using the targeted language.

TIMING: 45-60 minutes

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Group activity.

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: The aim is to get the students to take a part in society by using the target language. This type of activity is for students with some knowledge of the language. The main focus in this is discussion, and the students are required to use advanced words, in order for them to formalise and expand their vocabulary. Underlying all of this speaking and having a conversation can be the most successful way of learning a new language.

PROCEDURE:

1. Teacher hands out the same newspaper to every student. Together they must get the main idea of the front-page news.
2. Discussion about the topic is required afterwards. It is good for the teacher to explain to the students the story behind this news, since they are not only learning the language in this activity but also learning about society.
3. For homework, students must watch or listen to the news on the radio or television, and then in the next class everyone discusses their opinion in the matter.

RATIONALE:

Motivating the students to integrate into society, which can boost their self-confidence by being able to take a part in a conversation about the country of the target language.

VARIATIONS:

This task is for more advanced language learners, but with easier vocabulary and an easier topic this can be for everyone.

Activity 2

Physical Learning

SKILL(S): Listening and responding

TIMING: 45-60 minutes

AIM(S): To get the students to recognise the meaning of the words, learn the structure of the language being learned itself and develop oral fluency.

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Group and individual activities.

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: This teaching method involves a comprehension approach to the language learning. This emphasises the importance of listening to a language in order to learn and develop it into daily life. In this activity students are not required to speak. They just listen and see the physical movements the teacher is giving.

PROCEDURE:

1. Teacher stands up in front of the students and gives them commands in an imperative mood. (example: Please stand up and push your chairs under the table, walk to the front door and back to your seats., Now I am waving to you, wave back. Point to the window.)
2. The students are required to respond to these commands in a physical way.
3. After a little practice, the instructions become more complex, and students must now determine if the meaning of the phrase or words is correct.
4. The action of each student is observed and evaluated in this activity.

RATIONALE:

This teaching method is a way of teaching through physical actions, it emphasises mostly comprehension skills, so it is recommended that this activity is done at an early stage of the language course.

VARIATIONS:

Although this is recommended at an early stage of language learning, this activity can be done in a more complex form. This is a useful alternative teaching strategy for students that have difficulties in learning and following traditional classroom instructions, and certainly favourable for kinesthetic students.

Activity 3

Listening and Singing

SKILL(S): Listening

TIMING: 45 minutes

AIM(S): To make the students expand their vocabulary. Understand the language and improve pronunciation.

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: We usually spend 2 and a half lessons on this activity. Everyone listens to an Icelandic song, where the teacher explains to them what it is about, and then they sing it all together. The goal is to make them understand by themselves what it is about, and sing it by themselves.

PROCEDURE: This project was done for students who are in the first level of studying the Icelandic language.

- We wanted to make this lesson fun for the students, so we found the most famous Icelandic local music. They were given a paper with the lyrics of every song on it, in Icelandic but also with a translation into their native language.
- We then put the song on for them, asked them listen to it once and asked them if they understood anything without reading the text.
- We explained to them That it was about, now they could see the lyrics, so they should have understood what it was about.
- The next step was to sing it all together, a few times with three songs.
- They were then split in three groups where each group got to choose which one of the three songs they wanted to sing in front of the rest of the others.

RATIONALE:

Getting to know the music is like getting to know the culture and the language at the same time. It can also help you expand your vocabulary. This might seem like an easy and unusual leaning style but is successful. We wanted this to become a routine in our teaching.

VARIATIONS:

This activity can be done after or at the beginning of each lesson. For homework they should find an Icelandic song that they like and try to learn it and explain what it is about. This is ideal to make learning fun for the students.

Activity 4

Matching cards

SKILL(S): Speaking (pronunciation)

AIM(S): To build Vocabulary through

nouns TIMING: 40 minutes

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Group activity/Individual activity

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: Illustrations with objects, where students match the pictures to the translation. This is a form of visual learning and learning the pronunciation of words. Cards with illustrations are needed for this.

PROCEDURE:

1. Each student is given 20 cards, all placed in order on their desk. 10 cards have an illustration and the other ten have the matching nouns.
2. A teacher has a slide with all the nouns, and when one word appears the teacher should pronounce it in the correct way as a model for the students to learn.
3. The students must now match the illustration on the card with the noun placed on the slide and on their other card.
4. Then the teacher shows the matching illustration on the slide and students see if they were correct.

RATIONALE:

We can acquiesce that when visualising objects student find it easier to learn new vocabulary. This activity is enjoyable, not at all stressful for the student, and this results in them learning more effectively and motivates them to stay on track with their course.

VARIATIONS:

This activity is useful for the visual or spatial learner. For other kinds of student it can be demanding remembering the illustrations when actually using the target language.

Activity 5

Tell me your story

SKILL(S): Reading and writing

AIM(S): To make students expand their vocabulary, learn to read and write on their own.

TIMING: 45-60 min

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: Students must choose 5 adjectives and 5 nouns and make up a story from the chosen words. Then students read it out loud for the rest of the class.

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Individual work.

PROCEDURE:

1. We start with a list of adjectives and nouns, choosing examples which are easy for students to understand.
(examples: Happy, girl, blue, dog, tired).
2. Then a story is presented to them and the main theme explained, for those who do not understand.
3. The students are asked to choose five adjectives and five nouns for them to create and write a story on their own.
4. After they have written their story, with help of the teachers if needed, they read their story out loud for the rest of the class.

RATIONALE:

We have seen that students struggle with cohesion and coherence, which means that they are unable to make the text make sense to the reader, unable to link two words together in such a way as to create a correct sentence, and they sometimes find it hard for their imagination to flow so as to make up a story.

VARIATIONS:

For the students that tend to be timid, this can be a hard task, because they are required to read out loud something that they have created on their own. This may make them lose focus on the learning part of this activity. For variations, this can be done in smaller groups, or even presented only to the teachers, instead of the whole group.

Activity 6

Everyday occurrences

SKILL(S): Speaking and vocabulary

AIM(S): To encourage the students to speak the language, connect to the speaker and understand.

TIMING: 40 minutes

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: A field trip is required for this activity, in order to see the students use the target language in real life occurrences. For example, going to the supermarket or going to a restaurant.

PROCEDURE:

1. Students and teachers go to a supermarket together.
2. They split up in 5 groups, each with their own teacher and simply walk around the store saying out loud what the things that they see are.
3. The students are required to ask the teacher the vocabulary for the objects that they don't know, and then they should note the meaning and practice saying the words.

RATIONALE:

Speaking in a real context is a useful way of learning a language. Even though students may often not feel confident enough to speak, they should try expressing themselves in any way possible or simply ask how to say something. This is a simple exercise for the students to learn the words they need to use in their everyday lives.

VARIATIONS:

This task can be done anywhere at any time. Students can walk around with a dictionary where they check by themselves what an object is if they do not know the word yet. This is not expected to be just a class activity, but something the student should try to do every day, in stores or in any public area.

Activity 7

Let's go shopping!

SKILL(S): Reading and writing comprehension

AIM(S): To teach the alphabet to illiterate.

TIMING: 60 minutes

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Group activity

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: None

PROCEDURE:

We went to the supermarket together and we were helping them with the names of the items, which can be extremely useful.

1. We start for 15 minutes by letting the students tell us what they can buy using a word beginning with each letter.
2. During the next 15 minutes they compare their items together and observe if they have picked the same item for the same letter.
3. Then we ask each student to write the items on the board, to practise reading and writing some of the words. And we ask them to tell us some sentences about these items Where did you buy it? When did you buy it? Was it expensive?
Answering these questions gives our students the ability to make sentences.

RATIONALE:

It was very helpful for the students in the supermarket to show them the letters and help them to pick the items, but they were very active and trying a lot to know how to read and write the words like milk, bread, tomato, meat, chicken, which they use most in their daily life.

VARIATIONS:

This activity is very successful and we have done it almost once a month, because we feel that it is very important for our students to know these words which directly affect their lives. The result is that they said that they now have more self -confidence to ask at the shops: Do you have milk? Do you have bread? How much does this cost?

With our illiterate people we are using a “learning by doing” theory and using things which they use every day to help them learn and remember.

Activity 8

Vocabulary building

SKILL(S): Speaking, vocabulary building

AIM(S): To get students to build their vocabulary and get out of their comfort zone

TIMING: 60 minutes

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Group activity

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION: In this activity min. 3, max.10 students should stand in a circle around a table, where cards are placed, each with an illustration and a description under it. The cards represent either nouns or adjectives. Without noticing it, the students are also learning how to count.

PROCEDURE:

1. The teacher stands in front of the class. He teaches the students 20 words, each either a noun, an adjective or a verb. Example: (I fly, I drive, I jump, table, phone, chair)
2. The students should then gather around the table, where 20 cards have been placed with the 20 words the teacher has just taught them.
3. The teacher then says one of the words on the cards and the student should find it on the table. This is repeated with the 20 words/cards.
4. When all the cards from the table have been found the teacher counts each one of them out loud.
5. Then this activity is repeated with another group of 5 new words each time.
6. After some repetition, the teacher should get the students to count on their own how many cards they got and say the number out loud, so they also learn and practise how to count, without realising it.

RATIONALE:

This teaching method is a way to avoid the students feeling like they are just in a school, stuck in a classroom learning, but rather having fun while doing it. Having fun while learning will result in the students' remembering better what they have learned, simply because they won't forget an activity where they enjoyed themselves.

VARIATIONS:

For the less outgoing and rather timid students this can be a difficult task. Subconsciously, though, they will start to feel competitive when they see all the students gathering around cards when they have none, so they will automatically try harder and move Out of their comfort zone to get a card when the teacher calls it out. In the first round of this activity some students may still have the feeling that learning will be a tedious and a dull task, and so they don't participate, but in the second round they will have seen that this is an amusing activity and so will try to become more involved. In the third round everyone should be taking part.

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