

15

Teaching vocabulary

In 13.2, we saw some of the many ways we can explain meaning, and when teaching vocabulary, this is a major part of the teacher's craft. We can show pictures to make meaning clear (see Example 1 below), and we can make sure that students experience new words in context (in various types of text) so that they can understand how they are used. Perhaps the best way of introducing new words is to get the students to read texts or listen to audio tracks so that they see or hear those words in action.

A major reason for reading texts in class (in contrast to extensive reading – see 18.3) is to give the students new language input. And whenever we ask our students to read or listen, we will want them to notice how words are used. That is why when students read a text, we will often ask them to do exercises such as matching words from the text with their definitions. If they read the text about the woman who caught a falling baby on page 326, we may ask them to find, for example, a word in the text that means 'an area of a town or city' (*neighbourhood*). We may ask them to say what a word means, or ask them which word in the text is the opposite of a given word. Sometimes, we will draw their attention specifically to chunks of language such as *a little confused, in order, it's obvious, never forget, anywhere else*, etc. in the audio story on page 350. We can ask our students to choose their 'desert island words' (see Example 8 on page 268) from a reading text because we think that the act of choosing words they like makes those words more memorable.

However, at other times we will set out to introduce or practise a specific area of vocabulary, and the example activities in this chapter show various ways in which this can be done. We will also look at activities designed to get the students to research words for themselves using dictionaries.

15.1 Introducing vocabulary

In this section, we will look at ways of introducing new vocabulary, rather than practising it. However, even practice activities, such as those described in 15.2, may sometimes involve language presentation; the activities described in Examples 6 and 13 below may involve the students meeting words for the first time, even if they are ostensibly practice (Example 6) and research (Example 13) activities.


Example 1

On the farm

Aim: the students will learn how to say (and remember) words related to farms

Activity: listen, point, repeat and chant

Age: young learners (aged 3–5)

Level: beginner [CEFR A1]  GSE 22–29

When teaching young learners, we want them to associate words and phrases with pictures and sounds. In the following sequence, a simple 'point and say' activity (from *Big Fun 2* by Mario Herrera and Barbara Hojel, published by Pearson Education) can be enhanced by using a simple *jazz chant* procedure (see 19.6).

- Hold up the book (see Figure 1). Say the words (*cow, rabbit, chicken, sheep*) as you point to them. Have the children repeat them.



Figure 1 From *Big Fun 2* by Mario Herrera and Barbara Hojel (Pearson Education)

- Now say the words again. Get individual children to point to the animals in the big picture.
- Ask individual children to say a word and point to the correct animal in the picture.
- Now start a jazz chant with a simple 4/4 beat and have the children chant:

Cow, rabbit, chicken, sheep
Cow, rabbit, chicken, sheep
Cow, rabbit, chicken, sheep
They're all on the farm.

- Start a new chant:

Where is the cow? It's on the farm.
Where is the rabbit? It's on the farm.
Where is the chicken? It's on the farm.

Where is the sheep? It's on the farm.

Where are the animals? They're all on the farm.

- If you want, half the children can chant the question and the other half can chant the answer.

Example 2

Natural features

Aim: the students will learn words to describe natural (geographical) features

Activity: identifying and categorising words

Age: young adult and above

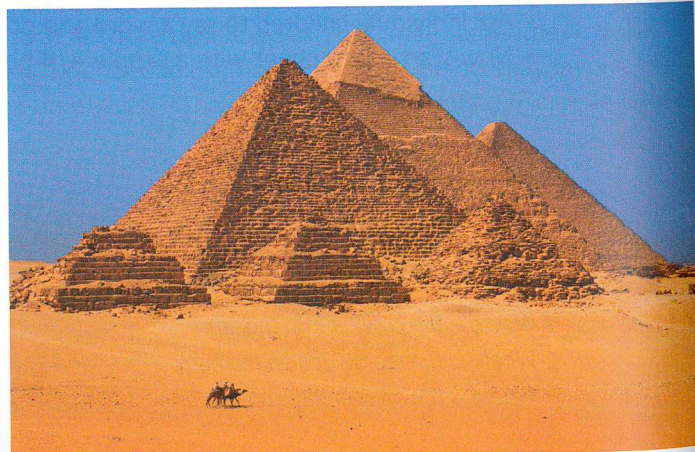
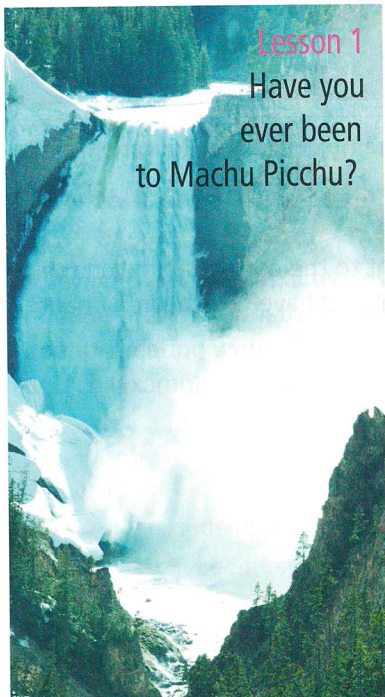
Level: elementary [CEFR A1/2]  GSE 30–35

In the following sequence, based on *Jetstream Elementary* by Jane Revell and Mary Tomalin (published by Helbling Languages), the students will learn words for natural features so that they can describe their favourite places or the places they want to visit.

- Tell the students to look at the following words.

beach cliff desert forest hill island mountain park
pyramid reef river sea square waterfall wood

- Say the words or play a recording of the words being said. Have the students repeat the words correctly in chorus and individually. It does not matter much at this stage if the students do not understand the words. The important thing is that they should be familiar with the look and sound of the words.
- Ask the students to tick the words that they can see in the following photos.



- Check the students' answers. (They should have ticked *beach, desert, island, mountain, pyramid, reef, river, sea* and *waterfall*.) Notice that this is a form of elicitation (see 13.1.3). We want to know which of the words the students know.
- Go through the words. Explain the meaning of those that are not in the photos (*cliff, forest, hill, park, square* and *wood*). You can do this by using pictures, by drawing on the board (a few trees for wood, a square, a round hill versus a tall mountain, etc.), by explaining (a wood is around 100 to 1,000 trees; a forest is 10,000 to 100,000 trees).
- Get the students to look back at the word list. They should underline the words that have a connection with water and circle those that are often high.
- Now ask them if they know what and where the places in the picture are (the Niagara Falls – Canada/US, the Great Barrier Reef – Australia, Machu Picchu – Peru and the Pyramids – Egypt). The class vote on their favourite place.
- Now ask the students to describe their favourite place from the pictures, saying what it is, where it is, etc. and using the words we have introduced.
- Ask the students to describe their favourite places in reality (or places they want to go to).

This kind of straightforward presentation of words has included clear visual clues for meaning and, by asking students to categorise words (water words, high words) helps them to think about what they are learning, even at this level. Such categorisation is useful when students first meet new words.

Example 3

Walking, running, jumping

Aim: students will be able to describe movements using the correct verbs, prepositions and nouns

Activity: gap-fill, writing, describing

Age: any

Level: beginner [CEFR A1]  GSE 30–35

The following sequence leads the students through a presentation of verbs and prepositions so that they can then use them in their own 'production' activity.

- Show, draw or mime the actions in Figure 2.
- If necessary, model the words and conduct a rapid cue–response drill: point to a picture (or mime the action) and then nominate a student to say *walk, climb*, etc.

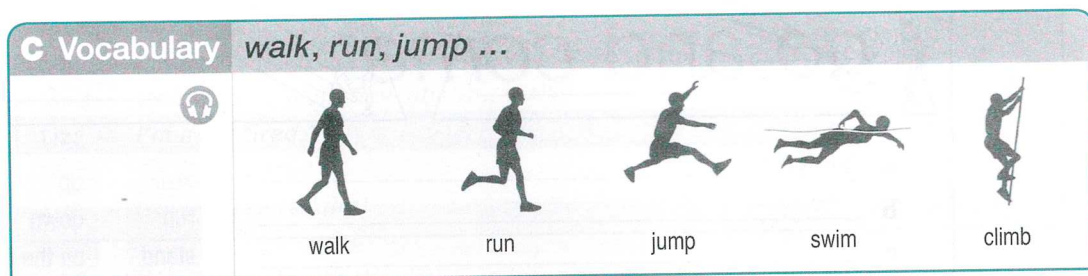
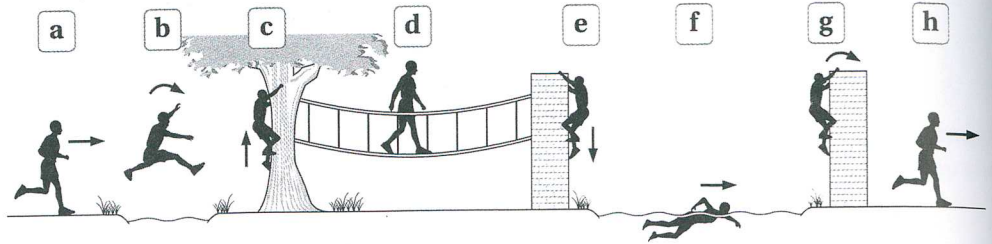


Figure 2 From *Language Links* by A Doff and C Jones (Cambridge University Press)

- Ask the students to put the correct verbs in the sentences in Figure 3. The sentences (and their pictures) can be projected or written on the board. This can be done with the whole class or the students can work in pairs.
- Go through the answers, making sure that the students pronounce the words correctly. They can then (depending on their age) do a quick round of 'Class robot', where one student is a robot and the others give instructions, such as *Run to the window*, *Swim to the door*, etc. and the robot has to mime these activities.

4 Complete the sentences.

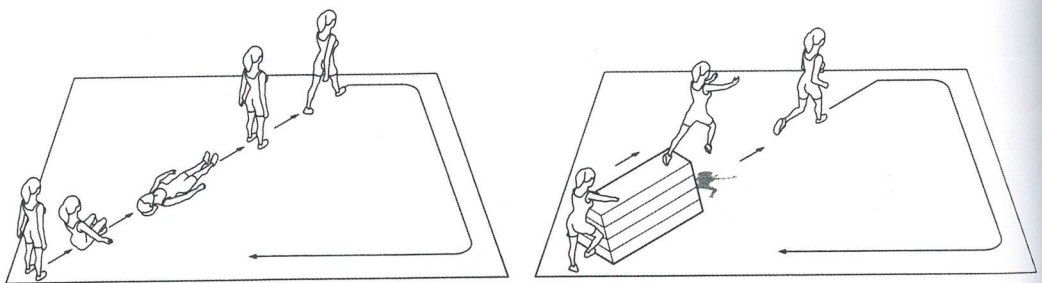


- | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| a You <u>run</u> along a road. | e Then you _____ down a wall. |
| b Then you _____ across a stream. | f Then you _____ across a river. |
| c Then you _____ up a tree. | g Then you _____ over a wall. |
| d Then you _____ across a bridge. | h Then you _____ along a road. |

Figure 3 Practising *walk, run, jump*, etc.

- Ask the students to write new instructions using the new words, as in Figure 4 – or they can invent their own fitness exercise or design their own activity sequence, like the one in Figure 3. Whichever they choose, they can write (and draw) their own instructions.

5 Write instructions for this fitness exercise. Use words from the boxes.



- a Sit down. _____
- b _____
- c _____
- d _____
- e _____
- f _____
- g _____

- | | |
|-------|----------------|
| walk | up |
| run | down |
| stand | on the box |
| sit | off the box |
| lie | round the room |
| climb | |
| jump | |

Figure 4 Using *walk, run, jump*, etc.

This kind of procedure, which we might call PPP (presentation–production–practice) or ‘Straight arrows’ (see 4.7), is a very effective way of teaching small numbers of individual words at beginner level.


Example 4

Rowing

Aim: the students will learn (and revise) how to make and respond to invitations

Activity: completing sentences; categorising phrases; making conversations

Age: young adult and adult

Level: pre-intermediate [CEFR A2+]  GSE 36–42

The following sequence is an example of how we can use dialogues to introduce and practise vocabulary. The sequence helps students to be able to make invitations and to accept or refuse them. Like many lessons focusing on functional language, it concentrates on lexical phrases or chunks (see 2.5.3).

In order to use this particular dialogue, the students need to see a picture of a lake where people are rowing; in the foreground is a woman talking to a man with a broken arm. If we don't have a suitable picture, we can either draw the lake, or describe the situation by using mime to explain *lake*, *rowing*, *broken arm*, etc. We will also have an audio recording of the complete dialogue, or we will be prepared to speak the dialogue ourselves.

- Show the students the picture described above (or draw it or use mime).
- Tell them to read the following dialogue and see if they can guess the word or words that are missing for each of the blanks. They can do this in pairs.

Matt: *Hi, Liz.*

Liz: *Hi, Matt.*

Matt: *Would you like to a _____ rowing?*

Liz: *Rowing?*

Matt: *Yeah. Rowing. You know. In b _____.*

Liz: *c _____ it's 'in a boat'. It's just that, well, you have a d _____.*

Matt: *You're right! e _____ I thought you could f _____ the actual rowing.*

Liz: *Oh no.*

Matt: *No? g _____?*

Liz: *I'm not h _____ rowing, actually. I'm not i _____ at it.*

Matt: *Oh ... right. Well, how about a walk?*

Liz: *I'm a bit tired.*

Matt: *Or ... a coffee?*

Liz: *Now you're talking!*

- Play the audio track with the dialogue (or speak it/act it out yourself).
- Give the students time to check if their predictions were right. If necessary, play the audio track again.
- Go through the answers with the class (*go, a boat, Of course, broken arm, That's why, do, Why not, crazy about, very good*).

- Have the students practise speaking the dialogue. If you want, you can use the disappearing dialogue technique (see Example 3 on page 395) to get them to learn it.
- Show the students the following invitation sentences stems, and ask them if they should be followed by *go rowing* or *going rowing*.

Do you fancy ...

Do you want to ...

How about ...

Would you like to ...

- Get the students to repeat the different phrases, both chorally (if appropriate) and individually.
- Have the students look at the following list of sentences in order to decide whether they mean that the speaker is saying *yes*, is not sure or is saying *no*.

Copy and complete the chart with the sentences.

I'd love to. I'd love to but ... I'd rather not. I'm not really sure.
 No, thanks. Perhaps. That would be great. What a fantastic idea!
 Why not? Yes, OK. Yes, please. Now you're talking!

Saying yes	Not sure	Saying no

- Once again, have the students say the sentences correctly, paying special attention to the intonation they use. Help them to think of ways of completing the phrase *I'd love to but ...* (*I'm working this evening*).
- Get the students to practise simple invitation–reply exchanges by cueing them with words like *dinner* (*How about coming to dinner? That would be great*).
- Put the students in pairs to write longer dialogues. While they are doing this, go round the class monitoring their progress and helping where necessary.
- The students can now read out (or act out) their dialogues. Give them feedback (see 21.4.1).

It is worth noticing that the level of the original dialogue is somewhat higher than the language the students are being asked to produce. That is because we think students can cope with more language when they read and listen than they can when they have to come out with it themselves.

When we teach functional language like this, we almost always end up getting the students to use phrases (rather than individual words), precisely because certain common exchanges (like inviting) tend to use these pre-fabricated chunks (*I'd love to, I'd rather not, Would you like to ...*) as a matter of course.

15.2 Practising vocabulary


In the following lesson sequences, the aim of the activity is either to have the students use words that they more or less know – but which they need to be prompted into using – or to get them to think about word meaning, especially in context.

Example 5**Word circle**

Aim: the students will be able to make compound words with *book* and *TV* – and will understand more about compound words in general

Activity: matching words to make compounds

Age: young adult plus

Level: intermediate [CEFR A2+]  GSE 36–42

English has a lot of compound words (see 2.5.3). Students need to be exposed to them in exercises to remind them of the ones they know and to introduce them to ones that are new. In this activity, the students look at a wheel of words (see Figure 5) and try to say which words combine with *book* and *TV* to make compound words.

- Show the students the wheel, and then make sure that they realise that *book* + *case* can make *bookcase*, but that *TV* + *case* doesn't work in the same way.
- Put the students into pairs or groups and tell them to come up with the correct combinations as quickly as possible. They should do this without using dictionaries.
- Go through the answers with the class. Put some of them up on the board and ask the students to check with their dictionaries to see if they are right.
- Ask the students to use these compound words in sentences – some of the words could be put in noughts and crosses squares (see 16.6.1) so that the students have to make sentences using them to win a square. Alternatively, tell the students that they can choose any three of the words and write a questionnaire to find out about people's attitudes or habits concerning books or TV.

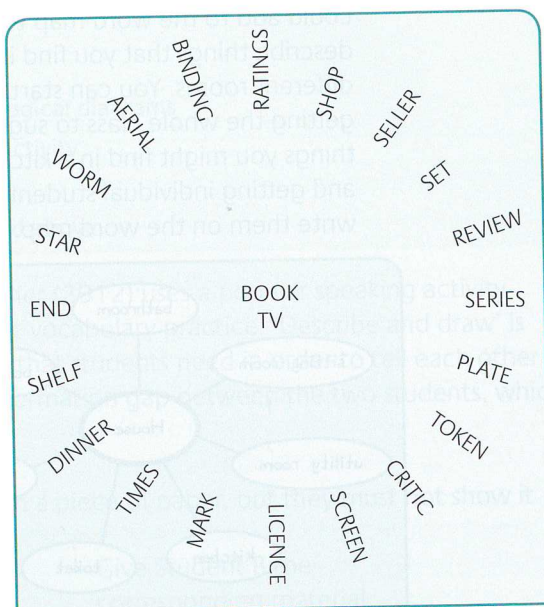



Figure 5 Word circle from *Have Fun with Vocabulary* by A Barnes, J Thines and J Welden (Penguin Books)

Example 6**Word map**

Aim: the students will recall and categorise words

Activity: categorising words to make a word map

Age: any

Level: elementary and above [CEFR A2]  GSE 30–35

Word maps are an extremely engaging way of encouraging students to retrieve and use the words they know. By asking them to categorise words, we make them think more deeply about them, and this process helps them to commit the words to memory. Of course, some students in a class will know some words that the others don't. In this activity, it will be their

job to teach those words to their colleagues. The activity serves, therefore, both as a practice activity and also, for some, as a way of meeting new words.

In this sequence, the students are going to work on aspects of houses and the things in them.

- Put the beginning of a word map (see Figure 6) on the board.
- Ask individual students to come to the board and add some more rooms to the word map (see Figure 7).
- Ask the students what words they could add to the word map to describe things that you find in different rooms. You can start by getting the whole class to suggest things you might find in a kitchen, and getting individual students to write them on the word map.

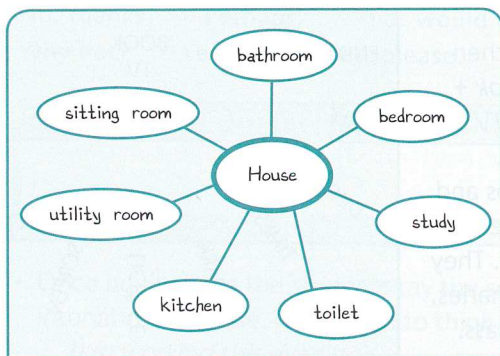


Figure 7 Word map stage 2

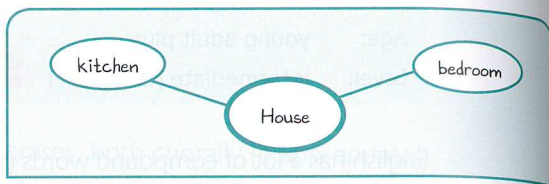


Figure 6 The word map begins

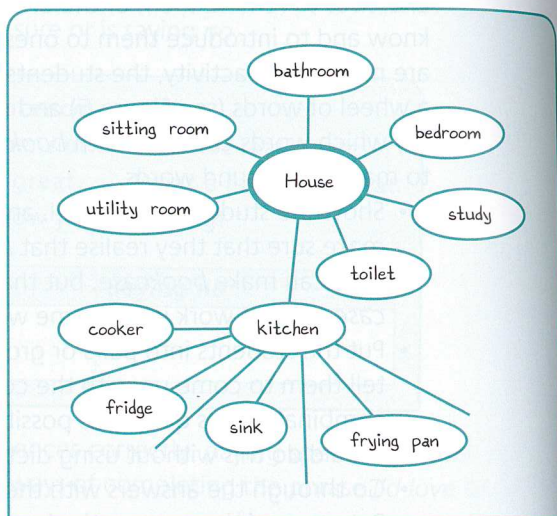


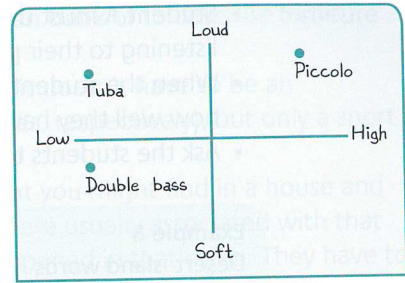
Figure 8 The word map takes shape

- Put the students in groups, and allocate one room (apart from the kitchen) to each group.
- Give them marker pens and tell them to add as many words as they can to the word map for their room. If you want, you can set this activity up as a competition between the groups to see who can find the most words.
- Tell the students in the groups that they should help each other by offering words they know but which, perhaps, other members of the group have forgotten. They can look for words in dictionaries as well.
- Go round the groups monitoring their progress. Answer their questions where appropriate (depending on how competitive the activity has become).
- Once the word map is complete (or as full as it is likely to be), make sure the students can say the words correctly, before going on to ask them to describe their favourite room at home or have a discussion about why people don't put televisions in the bathroom (usually) or fridges in the bedroom. You can give the students a picture or plan of an empty room and ask them to decide what to put in it.

Some teachers like to use word maps as a preview activity before their students start a new coursebook unit. It is a way of not only finding out what vocabulary the students know, but also of activating their schematic knowledge about the topic of the unit.

Word maps are not the only kind of charts that we can use to help our students practise (and categorise) words. We can, for example, ask the students to place musical instruments in a quadrant (see Figure 9), or we can ask them to group them depending on whether they are stringed instruments, wind instruments, brass instruments or percussion instruments.

Figure 9 Musical instruments


**Example 7**

Microbes, bacteria and viruses

Aim: the students will make and name biological diagrams

Activity: 'describe and draw' information-gap activity

Age: older children and above

Level: beginner [CEFR A2]  GSE 30–35 and above

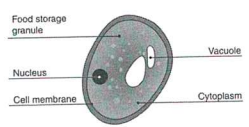
The following CLIL activity from Dale and Tanner (2012) uses a popular speaking activity ('Describe and draw') in the service of content vocabulary practice. 'Describe and draw' is always effective for practising the vocabulary that students need in order to tell each other what to draw. It works because there is an information gap between the two students, which they can only 'fill' by sharing information.

- Tell the students to sit in pairs: A and B.
- Tell them you are going to give them each a piece of paper, but they must not show it to their partner.
- Give the following paper to Student A in each pair.

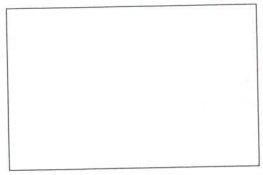
Box 4.4: Information gaps
Biology: cells
Describe and draw: Learner A

Microbes


a) Fungi



b) Bacteria



c) Viruses




- Give Student B the corresponding material.

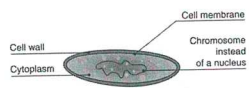
Box 4.4: Information gaps (cont.)
Describe and draw: Learner B

Microbes

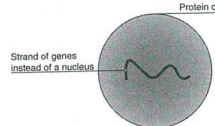
a) Fungi



b) Bacteria



c) Viruses



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PHOTOCOPIABLE

- Student A must draw bacteria and viruses; Student B must draw microbes. They do this by listening to their partner and asking questions about each other's diagrams.
- When the students have finished their drawings, they can compare their versions and see how well they have completed the task.
- Ask the students to come to the front and describe bacteria, microbes and viruses.

Example 8**Desert island words**

Aim: the students will remember words better because they have chosen them

Activity: looking at (and choosing) words

Age: older children and above

Level: any

It is not enough for students to meet new words and understand their meaning and how they function in sentences, collocations and lexical chunks; they also need to practise them and, if possible, commit them to memory. We can help with this by encouraging the students to like words and to somehow 'own' them. We can do this in a number of ways, especially when the students have a word list (say, at the end of a coursebook unit), or have just worked on a reading or listening text. In the following example, we will assume that the students have just finished a unit of work.

- Tell the students to look at the word list (or perhaps to make their own list of words they have been studying).
- Tell them that they are going to live on a desert island and that they can only take five words with them. They have to choose those five words from the list in front of them.
- When they have chosen their words, tell them to write sentences saying why they have chosen them. For example (if the word is *pavement*), *I have chosen pavement because I like the way it sounds and it's easy to walk on.*
- Listen to the students' sentences. The class can choose the one that they think is the most creative/funny/impressive.


Another way of doing the same thing (getting the students to choose their own words to remember) is 'Fridge, suitcase, dustbin'. In this activity, the students have to decide whether the words they have been studying should be put in the fridge (so that they can use them later), in the suitcase (because they can and will use them right now), or in the dustbin (because they don't think they need the words at all).

Example 9**Household haiku**

Aim: the students will use words and phrases they have studied to write creatively

Activity: writing poems

Age: older children and above

Level: pre-intermediate [CEFR A2]  GSE 30–35

In this activity, from Hadfield and Hadfield (2012a), the students write a short poem using words related to a certain topic. (This activity might well follow on from the word map activity – see Example 6 on page 265.) It is like a number of such writing activities – partway between a game and a practice exercise.

- Tell the students to write down as many words as they can think of to describe furniture and the things you might find in rooms in a house.
- Tell them that they are going to write a kind of *haiku*. This doesn't have to be an authentic *haiku* (three lines of five, seven and five syllables, respectively), but only a short line, a longer line and a shorter line.
- Put the students in pairs. Tell them to choose a room that you might find in a house and think of the words that they came up with earlier which are usually associated with that room. Now they should imagine that something has happened in that room. They have to write their *haiku* describing the room, but not the event. For example, they might write:

*By the fireplace
Two empty chairs, two glasses
Still half full.*

- The pairs take turns to read out their *haiku*. The rest of the class must guess what has happened.

We can get our students to write the same kind of *haiku* about, for example, animals in a zoo, trains (or other forms of transport), a landscape, a concert hall or theatre and a whole range of other situations.

Poetry writing is a wonderful way of getting students to write creatively (see Example 5 on page 375).

15.3 Vocabulary games

There are many games which are appropriate for use with collections of vocabulary items. Sometimes, games which are not designed especially for language students work equally well in our lessons. These include 'Pictionary' (where players have to draw words, which their team then have to guess), 'Call my bluff' (where Team A give three definitions for a word – two false and one true – and Team B have to guess what the correct definition is) and 'Charades' (where players have to act out the title of a book, a play or a film).

Only one of the three games described in this section involves the kind of guessing mentioned above. The other two use different approaches (such as rewarding skill or speed) to engage the students competitively.


Example 10

Got it!

Aim: the students will listen especially carefully for words that they have to choose; the students will enjoy working with words

Activity: choosing word cards competitively

Age: any

Level: elementary plus [CEFR A2]  GSE 27–33

This game is designed to engage the students with a list of vocabulary items that will be used in the lesson sequence which follows. It does not involve any guessing or complex mental processing. However, as a result of it, the students see, and listen intently to, a range of words – and have a good time doing it.

- Put the students into groups of four or five, all sitting round a table.
- Give each group a collection of 20–30 words, written on individual cards or pieces of paper (e.g. words associated with cooking, such as *slice, chop, cut, frying pan, saucepan, dish*).
- Tell the students to place the cards face up on the table in front of them so that all of them can be seen.
- Explain that you are going to read out the words, one by one, and the task of each individual in a group is to try to snatch the card with the word on it as soon as they hear it. When they succeed in doing this before the other members of their group, they have to hold the card up and shout *Got it!*
- Do a couple of 'dry runs' before the game starts properly. Explain the rules more fully, if necessary, while doing this.
- Read out the words, one by one.
- Each student keeps the cards they have managed to snatch. At the end of the game, there will be a winner in each group – and an overall winner who has collected the greatest number of cards.

Got it! is an entertaining way of getting a class going. If, for example, you have used the kinds of words mentioned above, they can now be used in a lesson about cooking, they can form the basis of a word map (see Example 6 on page 265), or the students can be asked to look them up in dictionaries or use them in conversations or writing.

There are many alternative ways of organising *Got it!* For example, instead of just calling out the words, we can give definitions and the students have to grab the matching words; for younger learners, we can use picture cards and then call out words for those pictures; we could also write the words in phonemic script.


Example 11

Backs to the board

Aim: the students will listen especially carefully for words that they have to choose; the students will enjoy working with words

Activity: choosing word cards competitively

Age: any

Level: elementary plus [CEFR B1]  GSE 50

In the following game, the students have to explain the meaning of a word or phrase to one of their team members so that he or she can guess what the word is.

- Put the students into small teams. In each team, one member sits with their back to the board.
- Explain that you will write a word or phrase on the board. Each team has to explain the word or phrase without using it, and the student with their back to the board has to guess what the word is.
- Write a word or phrase on the board. The teams explain to their colleagues what the words mean. The first person with their back to the board who guesses the word correctly gets a point for their team.
- Tell the teams that a new team member should now sit with their back to the board. Make this change for every new round.
- At the end of the game, the team with the most points is the winner.

The game can be made more formal in structure if the students with their backs to the board have to get their information by asking *yes/no* questions only, e.g. *Is it more than one word? Can you find it in the house?*

Backs to the board is especially effective if the teacher puts up words and phrases which the students have recently studied.

15.4 Using dictionaries

Dictionaries come in many shapes and sizes. Students can have them as apps on their mobile devices, they can access them online or have paper dictionaries in their classrooms or homes.

Good learner dictionaries, whether they are monolingual (MLDs) or bilingual (where words are listed in the L1 and translated into the L2, and vice versa) explain the different meanings of a word, how it is used and how it is pronounced, either using phonemic symbols or offering an audio clip of the word being spoken.

<p>re-search¹ /rɪ'sɜːtʃ, 'rɪsɜːtʃ \$ -ɜːr-/ ●●● S2 W1 AWL n [U] (also researches [plural] formal) 1 serious study of a subject, in order to discover new facts or test new ideas: [+into/on] <i>research into the causes of cancer</i> <i>Gould was helped in his researches by local naturalists.</i> 2 the activity of finding information about something that you are interested in or need to know about: <i>It's a good idea to do some research before you buy a house.</i> → investigation → MARKET RESEARCH</p>	<p>basic research (=the most important or most necessary area of research) <i>He wants to conduct basic research into the nature of human cells.</i> extensive research (=research that examines a lot of information and details) painstaking research (=very careful and thorough research) pioneering research (=research that produces completely new information)</p>
<p>COLLOCATIONS</p> <p>VERBS</p> <p>do/carry out research (also conduct research formal) <i>The research was carried out by a team of scientists at Edinburgh University.</i> undertake research formal (=start or do research) <i>They are planning to undertake research into the genetic causes of the disease.</i></p> <p>ADJECTIVES</p> <p>scientific research <i>Our conclusions are based on scientific research.</i> medical research <i>The charity raises money for medical research.</i> historical research <i>This is a fascinating piece of historical research.</i></p>	<p>research + NOUN</p> <p>a research project/programme <i>The research project will be funded by the Medical Research Council.</i> research findings (=what is discovered by a piece of research) <i>He will present his research findings at the conference.</i> research work a research team a research student a research grant (=money for doing research)</p> <p>PHRASES</p> <p>an area/field of research <i>This is a very exciting area of research.</i> a piece of research</p> <p>COMMON ERRORS</p> <p>⚠ Don't say 'make research'. Say do research or carry out research.</p>

Figure 10 Entry for *research* from the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*

However, as Figure 10 shows, they also offer a lot more than this:

- They offer British (unmarked) and American (labelled with the \$ symbol) pronunciations of the words.
- They say how frequent a word is (for example, 'S2' means that it is in the top 2,000 words in spoken English; 'W1' means that it is in the top 1,000 words of written English).
- They point out that the word occurs in the academic word list ('AWL').
- They say what part of speech a word is (uncountable noun).
- They show other uses (we can use the plural noun *researches* in formal English).
- They give examples.

Good dictionaries will also give collocation information such as verb collocations (*do/carry out/undertake research*), adjective collocations (*scientific research, medical research, historical research, etc.*), collocations with nouns (*research project, research findings, research team, research student, etc.*) and phrases (*field of research, a body of research, etc.*).

Sometimes, dictionaries like this also offer thesaurus information (that is, groups of words with similar meanings – see Figure 11). With so much useful information, it is a pity that some students don't use dictionaries as much as they might (although some do use them, but inappropriately – see below). One of our tasks, therefore, will be to show our students what modern dictionaries have to offer.

15.4.1 When students use dictionaries

Although, as we have said, some students are reluctant to use their dictionaries, others want to check the meaning of words all the time. This even happens when, for example, the teacher or some other student is in the middle of saying something and had hoped for everyone's full attention.

Students need to know when dictionary use is appropriate and acceptable and when it is less useful or even undesirable. It is a good idea to talk to them about how, for example, it is worth trying to read a text for gist (and guess the meaning of some unknown words) before later, perhaps, using dictionaries to check the meaning of words they do not know (see 18.1.1). They also need to understand that if they overuse dictionaries when they should be listening, they lose the benefit of hearing English spoken naturally – and the opportunity this gives them to practise their listening skills. However, we should also be sympathetic to the students' desire to understand every word, since most people speaking a foreign language often want to do this.

The best way to resolve this dilemma is to come to some kind of bargain with the students. This will involve the students agreeing when they will and won't use dictionaries. This, together with our use of dictionary activities like the ones mentioned in 15.4.2, will ensure successful and appropriate dictionary use in our lessons.

15.4.2 Dictionary activities

The following activities are designed both to train students in how to use dictionaries and also to get them to use dictionaries as part of normal classroom work. In order to do this, we will, of course, need to tell them how useful dictionaries can be for language improvement. But this will not be enough unless we also familiarise them with dictionary information, and then include dictionary use as one of our normal classroom activities.


Example 12

Listen

Aim: the students will understand what they can find out from dictionary entries

Activity: matching categories to dictionary entries

Age: young adult plus

Level: intermediate and above [CEFR B1]  GSE 43–50

THESAURUS

research *n* [U] careful detailed work that is done in order to find out more about a subject, especially as a part of a scientific or academic project: *Billions of dollars have been spent on research into the causes and treatment of cancer.* | *The University has for a long time been a leading centre for research in this field.*

work *n* [U] the studies that have been done on a particular subject: *Faraday is famous for his work on electricity.* | *A lot of work has been done on hydrogen-powered cars.* | *Their work had an enormous influence on the study of genetics.*

study *n* [C] a piece of work in which someone examines a particular subject in order to find out more about it, and writes about what they have found: *The study showed that 25 percent of adults do not eat breakfast at all, compared with 14 percent in 1961.* | *Recent studies suggest that our sense of smell is closely linked with the part of the brain that deals with memory.*

experiment *n* [C] a scientific test in order to find out what happens when you do something: *They carried out a series of experiments (=they did a series of experiments) in order to try to prove their theory.* | *Experiments have shown that there is an increased risk of some forms of cancer.*

Figure 11 Thesaurus entries for *research* from the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*

The main aim of dictionary training is to make sure that the students know what is in a dictionary and where to look for it. This is so that they will feel comfortable accessing dictionary information and will, therefore, use dictionaries more often.

- Tell the students to look at the following questions. Can they answer them without looking up any information? Tell them not to answer the question *How do you know?* in each case.

How do you pronounce *listen*? How do you know?

Is *listen* a noun, a verb, an adjective or an adverb? How do you know?

Is *listen* a common word in spoken and written English? How do you know?

What words usually come after *listen*? How do you know?

What is a common use for *listen* in speaking? How do you know?

- Now tell the students to look at a dictionary entry for *listen* (see Figure 12). This time, they should answer the question *How do you know?* by finding the relevant part of the dictionary entry. They can do this individually, in pairs with a book or a mobile device, or in groups sitting around a computer monitor.

lis-ten¹ /'lɪsən/ ●●● (S) (W) v [I]

1 to pay attention to what someone is saying or to a sound that you can hear: *Listen! There's a strange noise in the engine.* | [+to] *We sat around listening to music.* | **listen carefully/intently/hard etc** *The whole class was listening attentively.* | *Liz stood still and listened hard (=very carefully).* **THESAURUS** ▶ HEAR

2 *spoken* used to tell someone to pay attention to what you are going to say: *Listen, I want you to come with me.*
3 to consider what someone says and accept their advice: *I told him not to go, but he just wouldn't listen.* | [+to] *I wish I'd listened to Dad.* | *She refused to listen to reason* (=accept sensible advice).

GRAMMAR: Comparison

listen

- You **listen to** someone or something: *I love listening to classical music.* ✗ Don't say: *I love listening classical music.*
- You **listen to** someone or something **doing** something: *I listened to the rain falling on the roof.*

hear

- You **hear** someone or something: *I heard a sudden shout.*
- You **hear** someone or something **do** something: *I heard something fall into the water.*
- You **hear** someone or something **doing** something: *I heard someone shouting.*

listen for sth *phr v* to listen carefully so that you will notice a particular sound: *Listen for the moment when the music changes.*

listen in *phr v*

1 to listen to a broadcast on the radio: [+to] *I must remember to listen in to the news.* → **TUNE IN**
2 to listen to someone's conversation when they do not want you to: [+on] *It sounded like someone was listening in on us.*

listen out *phr v* *BrE informal* to listen carefully so that you will notice a particular sound: [+for] *Listen out for the baby in case she wakes up.*

listen up *phr v* *spoken* used to get people's attention so they can hear what you are going to say: *Hey everybody, listen up!*

Figure 12 Entry for *listen* from the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*

- Go through the answers with the class, perhaps projecting the dictionary entry onto a screen or whiteboard, so that you and the students can indicate clearly where all of the information can be found.

It is important to do training activities like this on a frequent basis – until we are sure that our students know exactly how to use dictionaries. We should make the activities short and, where possible, relate them to what is happening in the lesson.

We will want to be sure that the students understand all the riches that a dictionary has to offer. For example, we could get them to look at the dictionary entry for the verb *pick* and find out how many phrasal verbs you can make with it. We can ask them where the object goes in phrasal verbs with *pick*. In all cases like these, the important question (for training purposes) is *How do you know?*


Example 13

At home with *do*, *make* and *take*

Aim: the students will discover (or confirm their knowledge of) collocations with *do*, *make* and *take*

Activity: searching dictionaries to confirm language knowledge

Age: older children and above

Level: lower-intermediate and above [CEFR A2]  GSE 30–35

This activity is a combination of dictionary training and a language awareness exercise. It focuses on three verbs that collocate strongly with various noun phrases – but for which there are no easy rules as to why we use one verb rather than another.

- Put the students into pairs or small groups.
- Give each pair or group the following grid. Ask them to fill it in as best they can. They should make sure that they agree on the answers.

do	make	take	
	✓		a lot of noise
			always _____ their homework
			always _____ excuses
			breakfast
			family photographs
			friends easily
			nothing all the time
			sugar in their coffee
			supper
			the beds
			the cooking
			the dishes
			the ironing
			the laundry
			a lot of mistakes
			the housework

- Now tell the students to consult their dictionaries to check their answers. Tell them they should look at the nouns and phrases (*noise*, *ironing*, *a lot of mistakes*, etc.) and see which verbs they find in the definitions and examples.
- Go through the answers with the class.
- Get the students to tell each other who does what in their houses.

We could have the students do the same kind of exercise with sports, for example. With which sports do you use *do*, *go* and *play*?

The attractive feature of this activity is that it genuinely helps students to learn more about *do*, *make* and *take*, while at the same time ensuring that they become better dictionary users. So in a sense, this activity is a way of teaching vocabulary.

Dictionaries (as with other online reference tools, such as search engines and concordances) can, of course, be used to do a whole range of research activities (such as the one above). For example, we could get the students to use them to research words and phrases for films so that they can write film/movie reviews or discuss their favourite films. All we need to do is have them look up the entries for *film*, *movie* and *story* and find all the information the dictionary has to offer; soon they will come across words like *plot*, *direct a movie*, *gangster movie*, *documentary*, etc.

15.5 Keeping vocabulary notebooks and cards

Many teachers suggest that students should keep their own vocabulary notebooks, where they record the words they meet. We suggest that they should write down the words and phrases they think they want to remember. They should include definitions of the words, examples of the words in sentences – some of them taken from texts and dictionaries, and some that they have made up. They may also want to include other information, such as the part of speech (noun, verb, adverb, etc.), collocation information, other words in the same family (e.g. *decide*, *decision*, *decisive*) and perhaps a translation.

Joshua Cohen (2014) suggests that students should keep small cards (see Figure 13). On one side, they write the word in English. On the other side, they write a translation in the middle, a definition in the top left-hand corner, collocations, pronunciation and part of speech in the top right-hand corner, an example sentence in the bottom left-hand corner and, perhaps, in the bottom right-hand corner, they draw a picture to help them remember what it means.

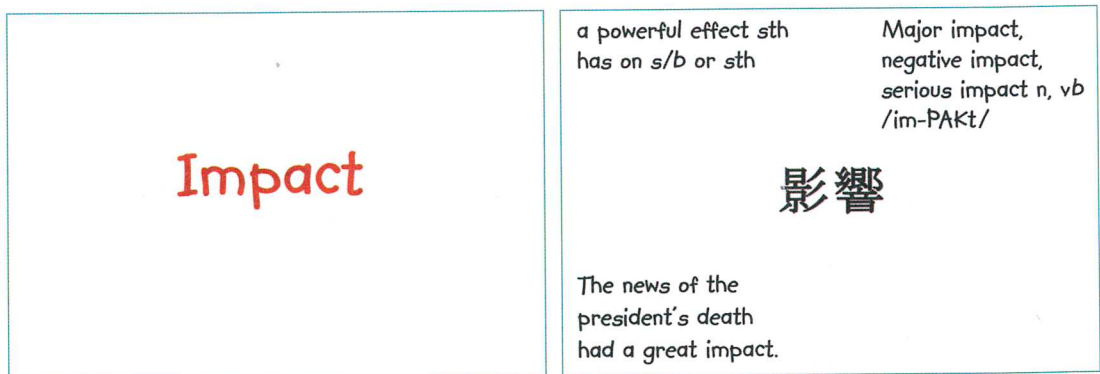


Figure 13 Word cards from Cohen (2014)

However, it may be that students need teacher intervention of some kind to help them decide what words to put in their notebooks and what kind of information to record. James McCrostie, for example, found that his students recorded words indiscriminately, some of which were not very useful for them, because 'in students' minds all unknown words are created equal' (2007: 254). To counter this tendency, it will help if we give our students some guidance on the words they may wish to record.

Chapter notes and further reading

Teaching vocabulary

Thornbury (2002) is still an important book on how to teach vocabulary. See also Nation (2008) on strategies and techniques for teaching vocabulary, and Boyd Zimmerman (2014).

Lloyd (2009) discusses the importance of lexical priming. Jones (2013) offers a cheerful 50 ways to teach vocabulary.

Barclay (2013) offers a chart explaining the most common affixes and their functions. Zheng and Nation (2013) use the word-part technique – where the same word part occurs in many different words (e.g. *describe*, *scribble*, *prescribe*, *scribe*, *transcribe*, *inscribe*).

Keegan (2014) shows how students go into words in detail. McNeff (2011) suggests students think of mnemonics and etymology to remember words. Woolard (2013b) ‘frames’ the message to build up vocabulary in lexical phrases.

Vocabulary activities

See Morgan and Rinvoluceri (2002). Capel, Flockhart and Robbins (2012) offer business grammar and vocabulary practice. Cambridge University Press has the series *English Vocabulary in Use* as well as practice books for different Cambridge exams. See also Schmitt, Schmitt and Mann (2011). Macmillan has a series called *Check your Vocabulary*.

Çetin and Flamand (2012) show how classroom vocabulary posters can promote learning with young learners.

Cards for vocabulary learning

See Keh (2013), File (2009) and Koçer (2009), who uses cards (and fishing!) with young learners.

Games

A video recording of the first two games described in 15.3 is included on the DVD which accompanies Harmer (2007). On games in language learning, see Wright, Betteridge and Buckby (2006), O’Dell and Head (2003) and the series *Vocabulary Games* by J and C Hadfield (Pearson Education). Gunn (2014) offers vocabulary games in McGraw Hill’s *Practice Makes Perfect* series.

Dictionaries

See the references to dictionaries on page 38 of this book. See also Leaney (2007) for a range of dictionary activities.

Video resource



Details of the video lessons and video documentaries on the DVD which accompanies this book can be found on pages vi–viii.

16

Teaching pronunciation

Almost all English language teachers get their students to study grammar and vocabulary, practise functional dialogues, take part in productive skills activities and try to become competent in listening and reading. Yet some of these same teachers are reluctant to teach pronunciation in any overt way, and only give attention to it in passing. It is possible that they are nervous of dealing with sounds and intonation; perhaps they feel they have too much to do already and pronunciation teaching will only make things worse. They may claim that even without a formal pronunciation syllabus, and without specific pronunciation teaching, many students do anyway seem to acquire serviceable pronunciation in the course of their studies.

However, the fact that some students are able to acquire reasonable pronunciation without a lot of overt pronunciation teaching should not blind us to the benefits of a focus on pronunciation in our lessons. Pronunciation teaching not only makes students aware of different sounds and sound features (and what these mean), but can also improve their speaking immeasurably. Concentrating on sounds, showing the students where they are made in the mouth, making them aware of where stress falls in words and phrases and how intonation works – all these things give extra information about spoken English and help the students achieve the goal of improved comprehension and intelligibility.

Helping students to be aware of pronunciation issues will be of immense benefit, not only to their own production, but also to their understanding of spoken English. Indeed, we might want to say that one of the goals of pronunciation teaching is to develop the students' listening 'brains' so that they pay attention (and thus understand) how things are, and should, be said. For some learners, this could well be a vital first step towards helping them say things in that way.

16.1 What is good pronunciation?

For some people, good pronunciation means being able to speak exactly like a native speaker and there are, indeed, some students who aspire to this. There is nothing wrong with such an aspiration, of course, but it does raise a number of issues.

In the first place, as we saw in 1.1.1, native speakers speak a wide range of different varieties of English. There is a basic difference between GA (general American), SSE (standard southern English from the UK), general Australian and New Zealand English – or any other country-based varieties. And within those countries themselves, there are, of course, many different pronunciations, often depending on geography.

Most coursebooks in use around the world take GA or SSE as their main model, and most coursebook audio material uses these varieties. However, the greatest influence on the students' own pronunciation is most likely to come from their teacher, whose pronunciation may not match these varieties. If we add into this mix the fact that most speakers of English are less likely to talk to native speakers than they are to other speakers of English as a second or additional language, then the question of what constitutes good pronunciation becomes quite complicated.