

## Ideas for Recycling Vocabulary

Paul Nation suggests that it takes from 5 to 16 exposures to a word or chunk for uptake to occur. Therefore, it is important that we create opportunities for repeated exposure to occur. This can be exposure to language in spoken and written texts, as well as the environment outside of the classroom if this is in an English-Speaking country. Activities which necessitate recall and use of vocabulary that has been met in previous lessons also make a valuable contribution to this accumulation of exposures to lexis that learners need.

In these materials, there are a number of tasks in which learners have the opportunity to increase the complexity of the language through public repetition of the task, following a period of preparation in which they may source new words from a teacher or any other available resources. However, for the new language to become part of the learners repertoire, it is important for this language to be recycled. It is recommended that when learners ask you for language, or search for it using a different resource, you make a note of this language so that you can help them to recycle it in future lessons.

Here are a few ideas for recycling vocabulary that can easily be used in the classroom at the beginning or end of a lesson, or for a change of pace part way through:

### Activity 1: What do you remember?

**Preparation:** One list of 8-10 words collected from a previous lesson per group of four learners.

**Time:** 5-10 minutes

#### Procedure:

- Put learners in groups of four.
- Ask learners what words they can remember from the previous lesson. Give them two minutes to brainstorm a list.
- Ask them how many of the words were new to them in that lesson.
- Ask learners how many of the words they already knew.
- Give each group one of the word lists.
- Ask them to check if they have any of those words on their brainstorm list.
- Ask learners to take it in turns to define any of the remaining words on the list. The rest of their group should identify which word from the list they are defining.

### Activity 2: Hot Seat

**Preparation:** Decide which vocabulary you want the learners to revisit; make a list of it for you to refer to during the activity.

**Time:** 10 minutes

#### Procedure:

- Put learners into two teams.
- One member of each team should come up to the board and stand next to each other, facing the rest of the class.
- You write a word or chunk on the board.
- The rest of the class must try to make their team mate guess what the word or chunk is before the other team's player guesses. They can do this by defining the word, giving synonyms or antonyms, describing what you can do with it or what contexts it might be used in etc
- Of course, they are not allowed to use the word being guessed in any of their clues.
- The first player at the board to guess the word or chunk scores a point for their team.
- Continue until you have used up your list of words or until you think it's time to stop!

### Activity 3: Word box

**Preparation:** Find two boxes and a set of index cards. If you have no index cards, cut up pieces of A4 card into quarters.

**Time:** 10 minutes

#### Procedure:

- Show learners how to complete a word/chunk card, containing different information about the lexis. A definition, an example sentence, some collocations, the phonemic spelling (if learners are familiar with this), a drawing (if appropriate) can all be included. Discuss with them what information is useful to know about a word/chunk and why.
- At the end of a lesson, ask learners to complete a card for a piece of new vocabulary that they have met in that lesson.
- Collect all the cards and put them in one of the boxes, organised alphabetically.
- Ask learners to move the cards to the other box when they believe that they really know the word in question.
- You can then use either box as a resource for other recycling activities, to complement the words that you have collected during lessons and believe the learners need to know.

### Activity 4: Blockbusters

**Preparation:** Decide which vocabulary you want the learners to revisit. Make a 5x5 grid on the whiteboard. Give each row a number and each column a letter. Fill in the blank boxes using the first letter from each word, one per square.

**Time:** 15 minutes

#### Procedure:

- Put the learners into two or three teams and give each team a symbol. (*The more teams, the longer the game takes...*)
- Each team takes it in turns to select a square from the grid, using the row numbers and column letters to identify it e.g. A4.
- You provide a clue for the word whose letter is picked and learners try to guess what the word is. A correct guess enables that team to place their symbol in the word's box. An incorrect guess enables the other team to have a chance to guess the word and place their own symbol if correct.
- The first team to get a full line of boxes marked with their symbol wins the game.

### Activity 5: Vocabulary notebooks

**Preparation:** Ask the learners to bring in a notebook especially to use for vocabulary, or if the school can fund this, buy a set of notebooks for the learners.

**Time:** 15 minutes

#### Procedure:

- Tell the learners that it is a good idea to record newly learnt vocabulary for future reference.
- Discuss different ways of recording vocabulary. You may want to elicit the type of information that learners should record when they note down new vocabulary. (See Vocabulary box for details of this)
- Give the learners time at the end of an activity to write any new vocabulary into their notebooks.
- At the beginning of a class, you might want to ask the learners to get their notebooks out to review vocabulary. Put the learners in pairs and get them to take it in turns to tell each other about the language they have recorded and where/when/with whom they could use it.

### Activity 6. Encourage extensive reading

It is widely agreed that extensive reading can provide learners with important repeated exposures to a wide variety of language.

You could set up a class library: Bring in an empty box and tell the learners this is their class library. Ask each learner to bring in a piece of English reading material to contribute. Give the learners a bit of time in class once a week or so to discuss what they have (or haven't!) been reading. Best avoid book reports etc to encourage learners to associate reading with pleasure.

You could also encourage learners to read more of the book, *Teacher Man*, by Frank McCourt, from which the Reading section extract is taken. You could put them in groups and give each learner in a group a different part to read for homework and then in the next lesson put learners from different groups who have read the same sections into groups and give them a chance to discuss what they have read. Once they have done this, regroup learners into their original groups and let them share the different sections that they have read.

## Getting the most out of the learners: Demand High

### Background:

“Demand High” is a meme, not a method. That is to say, rather than a prescription, it is a way of teaching that can be incorporated into what you already do, in order to get that little bit more out of the students. It was, and continues to be, developed by well-known methodology writers Jim Scrivener and Adrian Underhill. To find out more and take part in discussions about it, you may like to visit Jim and Adrian’s blog, which you can find at: <http://demandhighelt.wordpress.com/>. Meanwhile, here are a few techniques you could try:

#### 1. Avoid rubber-stamping

By rubber-stamping, we mean the immediate response to a learner’s answer - “good”; “wonderful”; “excellent” - that is usually followed by swiftly moving on. ‘But what’s wrong with a bit of praise?’ we hear you say. Well, the problem with “rubber-stamping” is that by placing the teacher seal of approval on any given answer, you are closing it down. Whereas, if you withhold that stamp, you create space for some more learning to take place. Instead of rubber-stamping, you may like to:

- acknowledge the answer neutrally, “e.g. ok, thank you” and then ask another learner what he or she thinks. Collect a few answers in this way. There are bound to be a few disagreements. Encourage the learners to then reconsider their answers, in the light of the other answers that have been volunteered. Ask them to justify their answers. If they are unable to agree, you could prod them in the right direction with a guiding question.
- acknowledge the answer neutrally, as above, and then ask the first learner to justify their answer straight away. Then ask other learners if they agree with the response and justification.
- play “devils advocate”: when a learner responds, say “Oh really? Why isn’t the answer <insert answer here>?” and encourage the learner and the rest of the class to argue against you and justify their answers.

The amount of time you spend doing this is entirely flexible so you can fit it into your lesson as you wish - even doing it for one or two answers creates a beneficial extra challenge. Of course, the trickier questions are likely to yield the most discussion.

#### 2. Introduce an element of role-play

By this, we mean rather than elicit a response and move on, stay with that response. Ask learners to think about different ways they might say that sentence. This might depend on who they are saying it to and the relationship they have with that person.

- ask learners to think about the facial expressions and body language they might use to support that sentence and encourage them to experiment with different ones.
- ask learners to experiment with different tones of voice that they think could fit the mood of the sentence and combine this with the different facial expressions as above.
- ask learners to try tones of voice and facial expressions that *don't* fit with the sentence.

These are very effective ways of making language more memorable by emphasising the physicality of language and how facial expression, body language and tone can affect meaning, and is particularly good for kinaesthetic learners.

#### 3. Play with the grammar and lexis!

This is a way of getting the learners to really think about the language they are producing. So, when they give a response, you could challenge them to:

- change the verb to a different one without changing the meaning of the sentence.
- drop a word (and then another...)without changing the meaning of the sentence.
- change the formality of the utterance, the context in which it’s spoken or change the relationship between the speakers. This encourages creativity and added depth of processing.