

Making language memorable

Working memory allows for immediate processing of material that we are exposed to in the short term. At some point, however, we need more than this. We need something to happen to this material so that it gets stored in long-term memory for retrieval when required. We need to make language memorable. Where working memory is limited by both time and capacity, long-term memory is seemingly limitless. But we know from experience that everything in working memory does not automatically get stored in long-term memory: in fact, only a very small percentage of what we perceive through the senses is available for exact retrieval at a later stage. Neither is it certain that what has entered long-term memory will remain available indefinitely. There may be things that we remember for an entire lifetime, for a month, for a week or for just a day.

So what is it that determines whether something is going to get stored or not? Long-term memory is not an empty vessel that can have language simply poured into it. In fact, the existing contents of memory are an essential component in new memory storage. If we view our memories as a dynamic network of ideas, interacting with each other in multi-faceted formats, then the more ways in which new language can be linked to what is already there and included in the interactions, the more effective the storage will be. It is rather like a new student joining a class. The more quickly that person is able to interact with the other students and find things in common, the more quickly he or she will feel welcome and want to stay. Here are some of the factors that may be instrumental in making language 'feel welcome' in our long-term memories, and that are an integral feature of the activities which follow.

Repetition

This has been identified as the single most important factor in making language memorable. Research suggests that we may need to meet a language item up to 16 times before it is fixed in long-term memory. The more we encounter a language item, and the more often we are called upon to use it, the more readily it will become part of our repertoire. This process could occur naturally, because the word is high frequency, or artificially,

because learners are deliberately provided with activities that challenge them to understand or to use it. Of course, it is not just a matter of parroting the word over and over again. Repetition should also occur in ways that are varied and meaningful to the learners.

Personalization

If learners are able to link the new language to their own lives in some way, by using it to talk about themselves, their experiences, their future plans, or those of people they know, it is much more likely to stick. Not only is this more motivating for learners, but since this is a very common way in which language is used, it is also more likely that the language will get recycled in similar ways again.

Motivation

It is difficult to remember something that we do not see any need for. There is a strong link between motivation and personalization, but there are many other reasons why some language items may be more motivating than others. We may see some words or structures as being more important than others, for instance, perhaps because of an exam or the need to study language related to a particular field.

Chunking

Much of an advanced language user's mental lexicon is made up of the typical patterns of language: the company that words keep, rather than individual words. If we draw learners' attention to chunks of language, and encourage them to do so themselves, it is more likely that they will be stored as whole entities (perhaps with links to similar patterns) and retrieved as whole entities later as required.

Associations

As well as remembering language in patterns, we also remember words because of the links that exist with other words already in our mental lexicons. The more associations that a word has, the more likely we are to be able to retain it. These associations could be related to the meaning of the word (*cat – dog, milk, purr, etc.*) or form (*cat – sat, fat, rat, etc.*).

Contextualization

Vocabulary and grammar are more memorable if they are anchored in a particular context of use. Wherever possible, language should be presented and practised in texts, rather than at a purely word or sentence level, so that its pragmatic meaning (rather than simply its semantic meaning) is obvious. Exploring the typical intonation patterns of spoken language in such texts will also help with this process.

Affective factors

There are strong links between emotion and memory. If something makes us feel happy or upset, gives us the giggles or shocks us, the language that occurs around this situation tends to stick a bit more easily. Just think how comparatively easy it is to remember how to say ‘I love you,’ or a series of swear words in another language! Somewhat in contrast to the last category, we also sometimes find language more memorable when it is used in creative, unusual or even silly ways.

Physicality

Many actors find that they can remember their lines more easily if they can link them to a particular way of standing, or a movement across the stage. If learners can associate a particular area of language with a gesture or another movement that somehow illustrates the meaning, then this can also be a stimulus for the area of language to be remembered. It has also been shown that brief bouts of physical exercise can lead to better concentration and enhanced attention, both essential requirements for remembering new language.

Decision making

Every time we make a decision about a word, we are forging links with existing long-term memory knowledge. These decisions could be to do with language form (‘Think of some words which rhyme with this word’), or meaning (‘Write the word next to the person it applies to’). Encouraging learners to also talk about the decisions they have made will also help to reinforce the memorability of language items.

2.1 Memory strategies share

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Memory focus | Encouraging learners to reflect on the strategies they use for remembering new words in another language, and to share these strategies with others. |
| Level | Any (for lower levels, the discussion parts of this activity may take place in the mother tongue) |
| Time | Short periods of 2–10 minutes over the course of a lesson |
| Preparation | Prepare a word list of about 10 unrelated language items which will be new for the learners. Write the mother-tongue equivalent next to each word. See the possible example for an elementary group with Brazilian Portuguese translations in Box 2.1a. For multilingual classes, you will need to use pictures (e.g. the household tools on page 145) or a paraphrase for each word. |

Procedure

- 1 Give out the word list to each learner. Say each of the English words so that learners can hear the pronunciation. Now ask everyone to study it, and to try to remember each word in English and its meaning. Tell them that you will test them on the words later on in the class. Do not allow anyone to write anything down.
- 2 Now take the lists away from them and do something completely unrelated.
- 3 At a later point in the lesson, return to the words by writing on the board just the mother-tongue versions. Ask everyone to try to recall the English equivalent for each one. When everyone has had a chance to do this, give them back the word list so that they can check their answers.
- 4 Take the lists away again and continue with another unrelated activity.
- 5 Finally, ask everyone to work in small groups and, without any prompts, see how many of the English words they can recall now. Do the learners think they will also be able to remember the words tomorrow / in a week's time? Ask them to discuss and compare any strategies that they used to remember each word.

6 Ask each group to share their best strategies with the rest of the class.

Some areas to focus on might include:

- repeating the word to yourself
- trying to create an image to remember the word by
- linking the word to its meaning, or another word in the mother tongue
- trying to put the word into context somehow
- challenging yourself to recall the word in a test
- personalizing the word in some way.

Box 2.1a: Memory strategies share

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| yawn (verb) | <i>bocejar</i> |
| worm (noun) | <i>verme</i> |
| untidy (adjective) | <i>desorganizado, desordenado</i> |
| knowledge (noun) | <i>conhecimento</i> |
| ruin (verb) | <i>arruinar, destruir</i> |
| hail (noun) | <i>chuva de pedregulhos de gelo, granizo</i> |
| suddenly (adverb) | <i>de repente</i> |
| retired (adjective) | <i>aposentado</i> |
| burp (noun) | <i>arroto</i> |
| polish (verb) | <i>polir / tornar lúcido</i> |

Variation

The strategies in Box 2.1b were suggested by Year 10 pupils (aged 14–15) at All Saints RC School, York. Give the sheet out to the learners for them to read. Ask everyone to go through it and underline everything that they think is a good idea. They then share and discuss in small groups what they have underlined.



Box 2.1b: Memory strategies share

How do I remember new words in French?

The way I remember French vocabulary is by listening to a recording of the words while I read them on a sheet in front of me. This way I can link the sound of the word with the written form. (*Dom*)

If I want to remember a few sentences in French, I read them through a few times, then I cover them up and try to say them to myself and write them down without looking at the originals. Finally I uncover the sentences and see if what I wrote is correct. I keep doing this until I definitely know the sentences. (*Melissa*)

I think of words that sound like the French word and then imagine a picture linking the two things. Here's an example:



Car c'est génial (Because it's great). (*Felix*)

I go over the words before I go to bed and then try to remember them again first thing in the morning when I wake up. (*Danl*)

To memorize new words, I usually draw pictures of the things I have to learn. I also write the words out over and over again and say them to myself. I think I remember words better if I hear myself saying them. (*Ruby*)

I only try to learn about five words at a time. Little and often works better for me. (*Chloe*)

I have to sit in a very quiet place and then I ask my mum to test me on what I've been learning. (*Callum*)

The best thing to do is go on the internet and play a few games which use the words. This really helps to get the words into my head. (*Selina*)

I have to put the words into a sentence and then say them over and over again. (*Scarlett*)

If I can think of a word that rhymes with the word, it really helps me to remember it. (*Eden*)

(Strategies supplied by Year 10 pupils at All Saints RC School, York)

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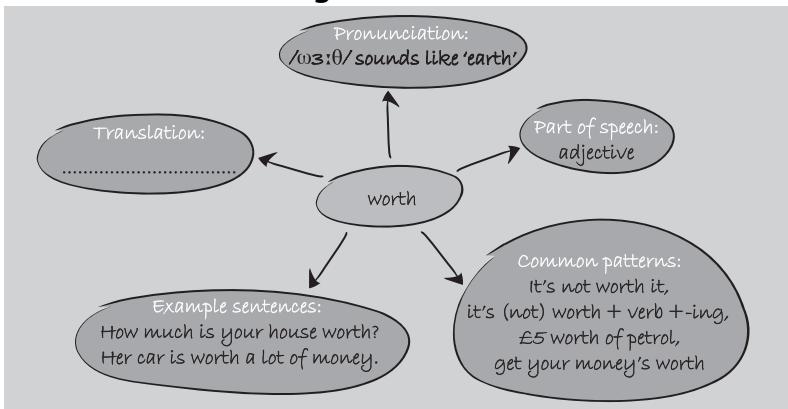
2.2 Word knowledge

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Memory focus | Making language memorable by encouraging learners to store as much information as necessary about it. Sharing ideas about what information to store. |
| Level | Intermediate and above |
| Time | 20 minutes plus |
| Preparation | None |

Procedure

- 1 Write the word *worth* on the board and next to it write the translation into the mother tongue of the class. If working in a multilingual context, write a translation into a language that you know.
- 2 Establish that having a translation of the word is unlikely to be enough to enable students to use the word successfully if they did not know the word before. Elicit what else they would need to know about it, focusing on the issues below and presenting them as a spidergram (see Box 2.2).

Box 2.2: Word knowledge



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- 3 Now ask everyone individually to write down all five elements in order of importance for them. They then compare and discuss their lists in pairs or small groups.
- 4 Bring everyone together and encourage people to share opinions about which of the elements they feel are the most important in terms of helping them to remember and use new language. Where time is limited, which elements would they include in their vocabulary notebook?

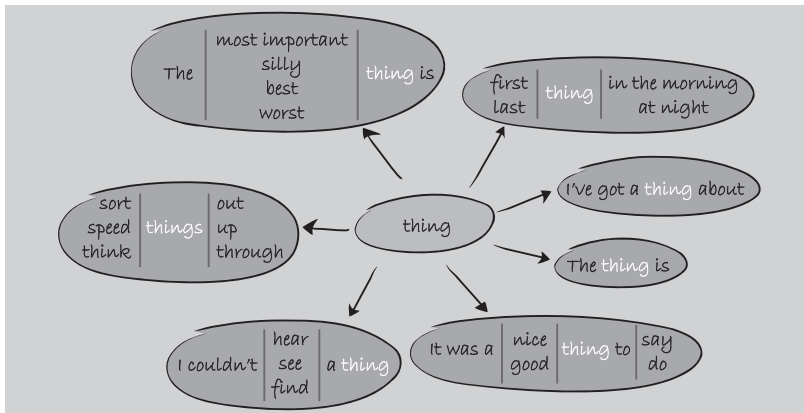
2.3 Word patterns share

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Memory focus | Helping to make some key word patterns memorable through independent research and peer teaching. |
| Level | Intermediate and above |
| Time | 30–45 minutes |
| Preparation | Make sure that some or all of the sources outlined in Step 2 are available. |

Procedure

- 1 Write the word *thing* on the board. Elicit from the class some common language patterns that use this word and write them around it as illustrated in Box 2.3. Check understanding of the patterns by establishing personalized examples for each one.

Box 2.3: Word patterns share



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- 2 Now give each pair of learners a key word and ask them to find patterns for it. Some examples could be *back, get, give, good, just, keep, mean, put, own, still, stop, take, then, want, work*. Ask them to find around eight useful patterns for their word and to write them out in a 'map' like your example on the board. Both members of the pair should create one. There are three main sources that they could use for doing this:
 - a monolingual or good bilingual dictionary (many of which will contain multiple entries for these words)
 - *Natural Grammar: The Keywords of English and How They Work* by Scott Thornbury, Oxford University Press, 2004, a book focusing on the common patterns of 100 key words of English
 - an online collocation site such as <http://forbetterenglish.com/>The learners need to understand the patterns that they are writing down and should be prepared to provide a personalized example for each one. Be available to deal with queries when they arise.
- 3 Now rearrange the class so that learners from different pairs are working together. Ask them to show their maps and to teach each other the patterns and personalized examples that they found.
- 4 Display their maps on the walls of the class so that everyone has a chance to see them all.

Follow-up

Encourage learners to keep their own notebooks where they record examples of the patterns they have identified, as well as the new ones they later encounter.

2.4 Associations

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Memory focus | Making language items memorable by forging links with other words in long-term memory. |
| Level | Any |
| Time | 5 minutes plus |
| Preparation | Prepare a list of unrelated language items to be reviewed. |

Procedure

- 1 Slowly read out the items you have planned to review. After each one, ask learners to write down, individually, the first word or phrase that comes into their heads that they associate with it. Emphasize that they should write down only this – not the word itself.

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- 2 Ask the learners, in pairs, to use what they have written down to recall the original words. The learners also discuss and compare the different associations they made between the words.

Follow-up

Learners go back to their lists in a later class and try to recall the words again.

Variations

- 1 Instead of writing down a word association, learners write down what they perceive to be the opposite of the language item. You may need to do a few examples with everyone first to establish that deciding on opposites is a subjective process. What is the opposite of *table*, for example? Is it *floor* or *in a mess* or *boat*?
- 2 Word associations can also be used as an activity for groups of learners standing in a circle. Each person takes it in turn to say a word that they associate with what the previous person said. At the end of the activity, they can often recall the complete list of language items used by going backwards round the circle.

2.5 Real or imagined?

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Memory focus | Making spoken utterances memorable by encouraging learners to visualize a personalized context in which they may be used. |
| Level | Pre-intermediate and above |
| Time | 10 minutes |
| Preparation | None |

Procedure

- 1 Write a list of spoken utterances on the board which it would be useful for the class to know. See the examples below.

You must be joking.

I need to talk to you.

It's not my fault.

I've had enough of this.

Wow! That's amazing!

Hurry up!

It's not good enough.

What have you done?

I can't believe it.

I'm so sorry.

That's very kind of you.

Can you do me a favour?

- 2 Check that everyone understands all the utterances by using translation and/or establishing a context in which each utterance might be made.
- 3 Ask everyone to choose three or four of the utterances and to remember a context in which either they said the utterance or it was said to them. The conversation could have taken place in English or in their mother tongue, but they should visualize it happening in English. If they cannot think of real contexts, ask them to imagine a few contexts in which some of the utterances could have been said.
- 4 Learners now share their contexts in small groups. Those who are listening try to guess which of the contexts are things that really happened.

Follow-up

Each group chooses one or two of the contexts to present as role plays to the others.

2.6 Well ... this is my granddad

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Memory focus | Making vocabulary memorable through personalization and visualization. |
| Level | Elementary and above |
| Time | 20 minutes plus |
| Preparation | The teacher needs to plan a list of words and expressions to be focused on. This activity is an ideal way of activating and personalizing language for describing people but can also be used for likes and dislikes, activities or any other vocabulary area that can be linked to a person. See Box 2.6 for some examples for different levels. |

Procedure

- 1 Quickly draw a picture of an important person in your life on the board. This person may be living or dead. Around the drawing add a few pictures of what that person is/was interested in or involved with. The quality of drawing does not matter. In fact, for the purposes of this exercise it is probably better if the drawing is not a work of art!
- 2 Tell the group about your person in as much detail as appropriate, using the pictures as a point of reference.

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- 3 Ask the learners to do a quick drawing of an important person in their lives and to include drawings of things that that person is interested in.
- 4 Now ask them to talk about their people in pairs, referring to their pictures.
- 5 Dictate the words and expressions to be focused on to the class (see Box 2.6). With a small group, where you have been able to monitor Step 4, you may wish to adapt this focus slightly to suit specific needs. If the learners think that the word dictated applies to their person, they should write it close to their drawing of him or her. If it does not apply (or if they do not know what it means), they write it a long way away from the picture. As you dictate, write the words up yourself in the appropriate place on the board, thinking about the person you originally drew.
- 6 Talk about your person again, this time using the words that were dictated and trying to include examples in his or her speech to remind the learners of meanings. For example: *A good laugh? No I wouldn't say he was a good laugh. He's quite a serious person, actually. He doesn't really make many jokes.*
- 7 Ask the learners to do the same thing in pairs, preferably with a different partner from the previous exercise.

Variations

- 1 Instead of solely dictating the words yourself, invite suggestions from the class for words or chunks that could be used.
- 2 Ask the learners to draw pictures of two different people. They write the words closest to the person they most apply to.
- 3 Instead of a person, learners can draw a place they know really well, or an event that they have witnessed or experienced.

Box 2.6: Well ... this is my granddad

| Elementary | Intermediate | Advanced |
|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| strong | cheeky | a good laugh |
| cleaning the house | untidy | a bit of a gossip |
| kind | a good listener | quite witty |
| the garden | sensitive | the outdoor type |
| shy | quite sensible | the life and soul of the party |
| a morning person | DIY | pretty ambitious |
| quiet | stubborn | an addictive personality |



2.7 Pictorial links

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Memory focus | Encouraging learners to store new language by creating strong links with visual images. |
| Level | Elementary and above |
| Time | 10 minutes plus |
| Preparation | Make one double-sided copy of the picture in Box 2.7 for each learner. |

Procedure

- 1 Ask learners to write a list of new language items from a text they have read, or from the audioscript in the back of their coursebooks. This could be either for homework or in class.
- 2 Give out copies of the picture. Ask everyone to think of some ways in which they could link one of the language items to something in the picture. For example, for the word *concentrate*, you could say *The cow was concentrating hard on drinking from the river.*
- 3 Now ask everyone to find their own links between each of the words and something in the picture, and then write the word next to it.
- 4 Everyone now compares pictures with the person next to them and explains the links they made.
- 5 At a later stage in the lesson (or on a different day), ask everyone to turn over their pieces of paper (where there is a clean copy of the picture) and to try to recall the language items that go with each part of the image. Can they also do this without looking at the image?

Follow-up

Learners bring in their own photographs or pictures to create links with other language items.

Note

I learnt this technique from Celal Yilmaz, a teacher of English for tourism in Turkey.

Box 2.7: Pictorial links



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2.8 A silly love story

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Memory focus | Creating a silly and memorable context in which to reactivate areas of language from the coursebook. |
| Level | Pre-intermediate and above |
| Time | 15 minutes |
| Preparation | A plastic bag and 23 small slips of paper. If there are more than 23 learners in the class, then provide enough slips for one per learner. |

Procedure

- 1 Share out the slips of paper among the learners, making sure that everyone has at least one.
- 2 Ask them to copy out a sentence from the unit of the coursebook that you have just been using. This could be something chosen entirely at random. They should remember exactly what they have written.
- 3 Collect in the slips and mix them around in the plastic bag.
- 4 Four volunteers are needed to take on the roles of Juliet, Romeo, Juliet's father and Romeo's mother. Juliet and her father should stand at the front right, facing the rest of the class, while Romeo and his mother should stand at the front left. Juliet picks 9 slips of paper randomly from the bag, Romeo picks 6, Juliet's father 5, and Romeo's mother 3.
- 5 The teacher begins to tell the story (see Box 2.8). The characters should move around as the events unfold. Whenever their character has to speak, they read out what is written on one of their slips of paper. When the wedding guests speak, towards the end of the story, the learners who are not acting in the story say what they originally wrote on their slips of paper. They do this all at once so that it sounds like a noisy crowd.

Note

Instead of using sentences from the coursebook, ask learners to write well-formed sentences using a particular tense or other area of grammar. Alternatively, they could produce sentences that are related to a particular topic (e.g. food). The idea for this activity comes from the work of Andrew Wright.



Box 2.8: A silly love story

Once upon a time there was a girl called Juliet who was very, very bored. Every day and every night she sat in her room staring out of the window. Her father was worried about her. He brought her nice food and said things to try to cheer her up: '...' But she was still bored and she just said '...'

One evening the moon was shining exceptionally brightly through her curtains. She went over to the window, opened it and stared out. She said sadly to herself '...' as she looked up at the moon. Suddenly she saw a boy standing in the street. He was really good-looking. His name was Romeo. She said to herself '...'

Romeo heard what she said. He looked up and saw her. Their eyes met and it was love at first sight. He walked up to her window and called up to her romantically '...' Juliet replied romantically '...' Romeo started to climb up the drainpipe. He said '...' passionately. Juliet was worried he might fall. She called out '...'

Suddenly Juliet's father came into the room. He shouted angrily '...' Romeo fell from the drainpipe. As he hit the ground, he said '...' and ran home as fast as he could. Juliet was angry with her father for scaring Romeo away. She shouted at him '...' Juliet's father was sorry for scaring away Romeo. He said '...'

Juliet went to sleep. She started dreaming about Romeo. She started talking in her sleep. '...' she said. Juliet's father was worried about her. He said '...' Meanwhile Romeo was dreaming about Juliet as well. He started talking in his sleep too. '...' he said. Romeo's mother was worried about him. She said '...'

Suddenly Romeo got up and started sleepwalking. He went out of his bedroom, out of his house and started walking slowly back to Juliet's house. His mother was following him. She was very worried. She said '...' to try to wake him. But Romeo just carried on sleeping and walking. Finally he got to Juliet's house. He woke up and called up to her window '...' Juliet woke up and answered back '...'

They decided to get married. They invited all their friends to come and celebrate with them. Juliet's father made a very proud speech at the wedding '...' All the guests said to each other '...' Romeo's mother announced to all the guests '...' All the guests cheered '...'

Romeo looked into Juliet's eyes and said '...' Juliet looked into Romeo's eyes and said '...' And all the guests cheered loudly '...' And they all lived happily ever after.

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2.9 Emotional chants

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Memory focus | Making vocabulary memorable through exploring its emotional value. |
| Level | Beginner–elementary |
| Time | 15 minutes |
| Preparation | None |

Procedure

- 1 Ask the learners to stand up where they have space to move around a little.
- 2 Tell them that together you are going to chant the days of the week. For each of the days they should show their exaggerated feelings about it, through tone of voice, body language and gestures. Student reactions to the different days of the week may vary, but Monday to Friday could be said miserably, looking down at the ground, and Saturday and Sunday could be cheered in a very enthusiastic way, and with appropriate gestures. Go through the sequence a few times with everyone, walking around the class in a circular motion if possible.
- 3 Now assign a vocabulary area to each group of up to eight learners. Depending on the level and interests of the learners, these could include food and drink, activities in the home, the weather, sports, pop groups, football teams, school subjects, films, etc.
- 4 Their task now is to produce an emotional chant for this area of vocabulary. They need to first agree on which items to include and then decide how each of the items will be said. They then practise the chant in their groups before performing it for the rest of the class.

2.10 Celebrity rhyming poems

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Memory focus | Making the pronunciation of language items memorable through encouraging learners to create links between words with similar sounds. |
| Level | Pre-intermediate and above |
| Time | 10 minutes plus |
| Preparation | Choose some names of celebrities and words that rhyme with them which are appropriate for your learners. The examples in Box 2.10a cover many of the common vowel sounds in English. For more examples, consult an online rhyming dictionary such as http://www.rhymezone.com/ |

Procedure

- 1 Depending on the level of the group, dictate one or both of the two verses or write it up on the board. Check that everyone understands the meaning and recognizes the rhyme between the last words of each line.
He's Barack Obama He's Barack Obama
He doesn't like drama He's a bit of a charmer
He works as a farmer He wears special armour
He's wearing pyjamas It makes him feel calmer
He's Barack Obama He's Barack Obama
- 2 Give each learner or small group the name of a different celebrity plus a list of words which rhyme with the surname. (See Box 2.10a for some examples.)
- 3 Ask them to produce short poems, which follow the same structure as the example, using the name and some of the rhyming words that they have been given. Emphasize that the poems do not need to be true and can be as silly as they like.
- 4 Ask learners to display the poems around the room or read them out for the rest of the class to enjoy. Here's one created by two learners in an intermediate class.

When I see Tom Cruise
I get a bit confused
But I bought new shoes
So he can't refuse
I'm the girl he'll choose!
(By Camille Chardon and Vera Sevastyanova)

Note

The context in which you work will determine the most appropriate choice of celebrity names to use. It is of course also possible to simply give the learners a list of rhyming words and ask them to compose a poem with them.

Variation

Give each pair of learners one of the lexical chunks from Box 2.10b and ask them to write a rhyming poem with the chunk as the first and last line. Here is an example using 'By the way'.

By the way
 I want to say
 That from today
 I'm going to stay
 By the way



Box 2.10a: Celebrity rhyming poems

| | | |
|---------------------------|---------------|--|
| Dick Cheney | /eɪ/ and /i:/ | brainy/grainy/rainy/zany |
| Brad Pitt | /ɪ/ | bit/fit/grit/hit/kit/knit/lit/pit/sit/spilt/spit/wit |
| Ronnie Wood | /ʊ/ | could/good/hood/should/stood/would |
| Tom Cruise | /u:/ | blues/bruise/choose/confuse/excuse/lose/news/refuse/shoes/snooze/stews/use/views |
| George Best | /e/ | arrest/best/chest/depressed/detest/dressed/guessed/guest/nest/obsessed/pest/protest/request/rest/stressed/suggest/test |
| Christina Aguilera | /eə/ and /ə/ | can't bear her/carer/compare her/ fairer/dare her/prepare her/scare her/wearer |
| Damien Hirst | /ɜ:/ | burst/cursed/dispersed/first/nursed/rehearsed/reversed/thirst/worst |
| Jude Law | /ɔ:/ | adore/before/bore/chore/door/draw/drawer/explore/for/four/ignore/more/pour/rapport/roar/score/shore/snore/sore/war/wore/your |

continued

Box 2.10a: (cont.)

| | | |
|-----------------------|---------------|--|
| Johnny Cash | /æ/ | ash/bash/clash/crash/dash/rash/ smash/thrash |
| Tom Hanks | /æ/ | banks/planks/pranks/spanks/tanks/ thanks |
| Barack Obama | /ɑː/ and /ə/ | armour/calmer/charmer/drama/farmer/ karma/pyjamas |
| Courtney Cox | /ɒ/ | blocks/box/knocks/crocs/locks/rocks/ shocks/socks/stocks |
| Britney Spears | /ɪə/ | beers/cheers/ears/fears/hears/gears/ tears/years |
| Bill Gates | /eɪ/ | dates/greats/hates/mates/plates/rates/ states/weights |
| Michael Caine | /eɪ/ | again/brain/champagne/complain/drain/ entertain/explain/ insane/pain/plane/ rain/Spain/stain/train |
| Danny Boyle | /ɔɪ/ | aluminium foil/coil/loyal/oil/royal/soil/ spoil |
| Sharon Stone | /əʊ/ | alone/bone/blown/clone/flown/grown/ loan/moan/ phone/postpone/thrown/ zone |
| Mariah Carey | /eə/ and /iː/ | canary/contrary/dairy/fairy/hairy/scary |
| Stephen Fry | /aɪ/ | buy/cry/deny/die/dry/fly/ give it a try/ goodbye/guy/ high/July/reply/shy/sky/ spy/supply/why |
| Gordon Brown | /aʊ/ | around/clown/crown/down/drown/ frown/noun/town |

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Box 2.10b: Celebrity rhyming poems

| | | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| It's not worth it | It's up to you | Have a go | Just in time |
| By any chance | If you ask me | Just as well | All day long |
| Where've you been? | The last but one | By the way | Have a drink |
| I know what you mean | Come what may | Never mind | One by one |
| Whatever you want | If you like | From now on | Too bad |
| I couldn't care less | Neither do I | How's it going? | Good for you |
| I take your point | If I were you | I'm just looking | You never know |
| You may as well | Most of all | I need a hand | Guess what? |
| Someone or other | Even so | For a start | It's early days |
| The sooner the better | Now and then | Just the thing | I'll tell you what |
| Wish you were here | Who'd have thought? | On my own | At the end of the day |



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2.11 Body talk

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Memory focus | Making spoken utterances memorable by linking them to physical gestures. |
| Level | Pre-intermediate and above |
| Time | 15 minutes plus |
| Preparation | Choose a list of about 20 spoken utterances appropriate for your group or make copies of the list in Box 2.11. |

Procedure

- 1 Elicit possible contexts in which a few of the utterances in Box 2.11 might be said. Now ask the learners to go through the utterances in pairs, deciding on a brief context for each one. Which ones do they already feel able to use themselves in natural speech? Which ones would they like to be able to use more naturally?
- 2 Ask each learner to choose three of the utterances and to decide on a physical gesture to go with each one. They then practise repeating all three, with the appropriate gestures. It helps if the gestures are exaggerated as much as possible.
- 3 When you feel that they are ready, call out a number (1, 2 or 3). Simultaneously, the learners keep repeating the utterance with the gesture until another number is called. Change the number frequently so that learners are kept on their toes.
- 4 Ask everyone to stand up and find a partner. Choose one pair to work with to demonstrate the activity. Learner A in the pair says his or her first utterance, with the accompanying gesture, to Learner B. Learner B then replies with another utterance and gesture. They keep repeating their lines as if in a dialogue. Now ask all the pairs to do the same thing. Each pair needs to practise their exchange and make sure they make a mental note of the person they are working with before changing partners and repeating the process. They then do this again for their third utterances. Now when you call out a number, learners have to find the right partner and keep performing their dialogues (and the gestures that go with them) until you call out a different number.
- 5 Ask learners to come together in groups of three to five. Ask them to make a moving sculpture which incorporates each person's three utterances with accompanying gestures. When they have had a chance to decide on an order and to rehearse, these can then be presented to the rest of the class.



Box 2.11: Body talk

| | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Where've you been? | What would you like? | Is this yours? |
| Could you give me a hand? | Hurry up, please! | Watch out! |
| Could you say that again? | I don't feel very well. | Can I have one? |
| What happened to you? | I'd better be going. | Help yourself. |
| Would you like a bite? | Ugh, that's horrible! | You're joking! |
| Which one do you want? | That's fantastic news! | Are you alright? |
| I don't agree with you. | What can I get you? | I don't really get it. |
| That tastes really nice. | Make yourself at home. | Take it easy. |

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Note

On a plane journey, I once sat next to a teacher of Portuguese sign language who was himself deaf. It was amazing how much he was able to teach me in sign language, in a short space of time, and how much we were able to communicate through this. It would seem that gestures are far more easily remembered than words. In this and the following activity, I exploit this fact by making clear links between gestures and the language they represent. Before doing these activities, however, it is important to be mindful of the cultural sensitivities of the learners in your class; gestures are not universal but connote different things in different cultures. It is possible that learners may find some gestures offensive.

2.12 Skeleton stories

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Memory focus | Using physical activity to make the language of a story memorable. The examples used here focus particularly on the use of prepositions and past verb forms. |
| Level | Any (The example 'A walk in the forest' is for elementary level and above and the example 'The fisherman's nightmare' is for intermediate level and above.) |
| Time | 10 minutes plus |
| Preparation | Choose a story that can be mimed fairly easily (see Box 2.12a for two examples). If using the variation, prepare a skeleton text of the story like the examples in Box 2.12c. In this case, each learner will need a copy of the skeleton text (preferably enlarged). |

Procedure

- 1 Ask the class to stand up, in as much space as is possible.
- 2 Tell the learners that you are going to read out a short story to them and that they should act out each line as you read it.
- 3 Read out the story, pausing after each line to allow time for everyone to respond physically. It helps if they make their gestures as big as possible. Explain to the students that if they do not understand something, they should follow those who do. If no one understands a line, you will need to mime it yourself to make the meaning clear.
- 4 Repeat the story, but this time read at a faster pace.
- 5 Ask everyone to retell what they can remember of the story in pairs. While they do that, write the 'first letters only' version of the story on the board (see Box 2.12b). Now ask them to go through the story again, using the letters on the board as a memory aid. Finally, go through the complete story with everyone, by pointing to the letters on the board and asking the class to say the appropriate words.
- 6 One person in each pair now tells the story by looking at the board while the other learner performs it.

Variation

Instead of using first letters, learners can be given the complete text represented by a series of gaps (see Box 2.12c.). Tell them that each line represents one letter and the gaps represent the spaces between words. Working together in pairs or small groups, the learners fill in as much of the text as they can. If they get stuck, you can help by feeding in some of the words, or by reading the complete text again while they act it out. The task

can be made simpler by including more completed words in the skeleton text you give them, or by including the first letter of some or all of the words. This version is based on ‘Cheating with Mime’ in *Dictation: New Methods, New Possibilities* by Paul Davis and Mario Rinvoluceri, Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Note

While it is important not to frustrate learners by over-challenging them with the task, neither should things be made too easy! A lot of learning happens when learners try to recall how they moved in the story and when they discuss in pairs the different possibilities for each space.



Box 2.12a: Skeleton stories

A walk in the forest

I was walking in the forest.

I saw a box on the ground in front of me.

I picked it up.

I slowly opened the lid.

Aahh! A bird flew out and hit me in the face!

I looked inside.

Wow! It was full of treasure!

I filled up my pockets as quickly as I could.

Oh no! Someone was coming!

I turned around and ran.



continued

Box 2.12a: (cont.)

The fisherman's nightmare

I was walking along a beach.

Suddenly I stopped.

I looked down at the sand in front of me.

Wow! A piece of chocolate cake!

I bent down and picked it up.

I smelt it.

It smelt amazing!

I took a small bite.

It tasted fantastic.

I put the whole piece in my mouth.

Disaster!

I felt the hook in my mouth.

I was being pulled into the sea.

I held the line with both hands.

I pulled as hard as I could.

Then I remembered the knife in my pocket.

I took it out and cut the line.

I was free!

But I haven't been fishing since.

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Box 2.12b: Skeleton stories

A walk in the forest

iwwitf.

isabotgifom.

ipiu.

isotl.

Aahh! abfoahmitf!

ili.

Wow! iwfo!

ifumpaqaic.

Oh no! swc!

itaar!



continued

Box 2.12b: (cont.)

The fisherman's nightmare

iwwaab.

sis.

ildatsifom.

Wow!apoc!

ibdapiu.

isi.

isa!

itasb.

itf!

iptwpimm.

d!

ifthimm.

iwbpits.

ihlwbh.

ipahaic.

tirtkimp.

itioactl.

iwf!

bihbfs.

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Box 2.12c: Skeleton stories

A walk in the forest

Aahh! -----!

Wow! -----!

Oh, no! -----!

✂-----

continued

Box 2.12c: (cont.)

The fisherman's nightmare

Wow! -----!

-----!

-----!

-----!

-----!
-----,

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Follow-up

Learners prepare their own skeleton story texts for homework. These are handed in for checking and used with their classmates in another class.

2.13 Treasure hunt

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Memory focus | Making vocabulary memorable through movement, competition and linking it to a particular place. |
| Level | Any |
| Time | 10 minutes plus |
| Preparation | Write a list of about 20 words or chunks which belong to two distinct categories. (See Box 2.13 for examples for beginner and upper intermediate learners.) Now write each word on a small sticky label. Mix them up and stick them around the classroom in places where they will not easily be seen by the learners, e.g. on the underside of chairs or tables, behind pictures on the walls, under rugs or carpets on the floor, on the ceiling. Make sure that some are fairly easy to spot and others are much more difficult. If an outside space is available, there may be a more interesting range of hiding places to choose from. |

Procedure

- 1 Organize the class into pairs. Tell them what the two categories are. Each pair needs a sheet of paper with the two categories written on it. This sheet must remain at their desks. The pairs need to go around the room looking for words. When they find something, they should try to agree on which category it belongs to, go back to their desks and write it under the appropriate heading. The trick is to do all this without letting other pairs know where the words are.
- 2 When one pair has found all 20 words, or after a set amount of time, ask everyone to write their names on their sheets and swap with another pair. Go through the answers with the whole class, checking meanings as you go. They get a point for each word in the right category but lose a point for a word written in the wrong category. Each pair marks the sheet they have in front of them. The pair with the most points at the end wins.

Follow-up

Go through some of the locations and see if learners can remember which language item was located there. They can often do this surprisingly well. After a few examples, this can be turned into a pair-work activity.



Box 2.13: Treasure hunt

Beginners

Food and drink

cake, bread, fish, meat, apples, biscuits, coffee, potatoes, wine, butter, chips, peas

Clothes

hat, jumper, trousers, shoes, jacket, coat, socks, tie



Upper intermediate

let

... go of my arm, ... sleeping dogs lie, ... your hair down,
... off steam, ... the cat out of the bag, ... him off the hook,
... me into the bathroom, ... me see, ...'s face it

keep

... up the good work, ... away from me!, ... saying the same thing,
... off the grass, ... to the path, ... your fingers crossed,
... your eyes peeled, ... an eye on things, ... up with all the housework,
... still!, ... making the same mistakes

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2.14 Silly grammar

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Memory focus | Making tenses memorable by challenging learners to create silly examples. |
| Level | Elementary and above |
| Time | 20 minutes |
| Preparation | Choose the tense to be practised and plan a substitution table framework for it. See the example below for the past continuous tense. |

Procedure

- 1 If working with the past continuous tense, draw a table like the one below on the board.

| | | | | | | |
|---|-------------|---|---------------|---|--------------|------------|
| 1 | 2 frying | 3 | 4 umbrella | 5 | 6 teacher | 7 spoke |
|---|-------------|---|---------------|---|--------------|------------|

- 2 Now elicit from the class about 10 words which belong to the same word class as the examples in squares 2, 4, 6 and 7. Write the words in the appropriate square as they say them. Emphasize that there does not need to be any meaning relationship between the words, they should just fit into the grammatical categories. These categories are:

2 = transitive verb+*-ing*; 4 = object; 6 = animal or person; 7 = past form of intransitive verb (verb 2 form).

- 3 Now add the missing words from the other tables yourself so that you end up with something like this.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|--|--------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|--|--|
| 1 While I was | 2 frying ironing cutting inviting pushing following swallowing counting teaching washing | 3 a/an the my your | 4 umbrella telephone house pencil computer dustbin window brain door motorway | 5 a/an the my your | 6 teacher sister doctor brother rabbit tiger monkey cow uncle salmon | 7 spoke flew exploded cried laughed smiled died smoked cooked whistled |
|---------------------|--|--------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|--|--|

- 4 Ask learners to look at the table and to write down one or two of the silliest sentences they can come up with. Ask them to share these in small groups and then write some of them up on the board. Discuss with the class whether they think these kinds of examples make the grammar easier to remember than more standard ones (e.g. *While I was getting in the bath, the telephone rang; While I was watching television, the lights went out*, etc.).

Follow-up

Learners draw a picture of one of their sentences. These are then displayed around the room and other learners discuss which sentences they think they represent.

Note

Created examples of grammar, such as *The philosopher pulled the lower jaw of the hen*, recalled by Sweet (1899), have been criticized for being unnatural and unlike real English. Guy Cook (2000) has argued, however, that the very fact that such sentences are bizarre and unnatural may help to make the grammar embedded within them more memorable for learners.