

2.1.3 Words without vowels

Outline	Students reconstruct words they've learnt from words written only with consonants.
Focus	The spelling (and meaning) of recently learnt words
Age	Any
Level	Any
Time	Five–ten minutes

Procedure

- Write up on the board a set of words you want to review, without their vowels; for example:
 s_st_r f_m_ly for sister, family.
- Students write down what the full word should be.
- Invite students to come to the board, two or three at a time, to fill in the missing vowels.
- Check that all the meanings are understood.

Variations

- Write up a whole sentence contextualizing the word (the word itself written without vowels).
- More difficult: write the words without vowels, but without leaving any obvious gaps; for example:
 sstr fmly.

Note

Students are unlikely to be able to fill in the vowels unless they know the word, including its meaning. So the filling-in is likely in most cases to function also as a review of meaning, reinforced by step 4 of the *Procedure* above.

Vocabulary Activities

2.1.4 Single-word dictation

Outline	Students write down from dictation words they have learnt, and check answers.
Focus	The spelling and pronunciation of single items
Age	Any
Level	Any
Time	Five minutes

Procedure

- 1 Dictate a set of ten or so recently learnt words for students to write down. Make sure these are ones you've reviewed recently and that students are likely to get right.
- 2 Write up the correct words on the board for students to self-check.
- 3 Check all the meanings are understood.
- 4 Ask how well they did: congratulate those who got all or most of them right.

Variations

- 1 To make dictation easier, provide students with the first letter of each word; or with consonants only (as in the previous activity) so they only have to fill in vowels, or with vowels so they only have to fill in the consonants.
- 2 To make it more difficult, choose items to dictate which consist of a multi-word expression rather than a single word: you may provide students with one of the components in advance, so they just have to fill in the others.

Notes

- 1 The fact that you are making sure in advance that the students are likely to do this successfully and that you provide immediate feedback and reinforcement make this into a review activity rather than a test. See 4.1.5 *Dictation-based tests* for the 'test' version of this.
- 2 For variations on the basic dictation technique, see 2.1.5 *Translation dictation* and 2.2.7 *Gapfill dictations* here. See also Morgan, J., & Rinvulcri, M. (1988) *Dictation: New methods, new possibilities*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.



Teaching tip

I've found that simply reviewing the form (spelling or pronunciation) of items, without overtly focusing on meaning, does, for some reason, also help students to remember meanings. But of course it's always good to add a quick reminder, or elicitation, of meanings after, or during, the spelling check!

2.1.5 Translation dictation

Outline	Students write down the L1 translation of single items dictated by the teacher. This activity is appropriate for classes whose members share the same mother tongue, which is known to the teacher.
Focus	The pronunciation and meaning of items
Age	Pre-adolescent–Adult
Level	Beginner–Intermediate
Time	Five–ten minutes

Procedure

- 1 Dictate about ten English words or expressions you want to review that have fairly clear-cut L1 equivalents.
- 2 Students write down only the translation in their L1.
- 3 Check and write up the translations on the board.
- 4 Finally, go through the translations you have on the board, and get students to say what the original English word was for each.

Variations

- 1 Ask students to write down the original English word as well as the translation each time, then check spelling.
- 2 You can of course do this the other way round: give the L1 equivalents and get students to write down the English. This is a more challenging variation, demanding productive written knowledge of the items.
- 3 With higher-level classes you might, where there are alternative translations, discuss these and use the discussion to deepen students' awareness of the range, or limitations, of the meanings of the target item.

Vocabulary Activities

2.1.6 Guessing

Outline	Students guess items that have been recently learnt.
Focus	The meanings of single items
Age	Young–Adolescent
Level	Any
Time	Ten minutes

Procedure

- 1 Tell each student to look through the words and expressions they have learnt over the last few weeks (using the coursebook or their own notebooks), and choose one.
- 2 One student comes to the front of the class.
- 3 The other students try to guess the item chosen by that student. They ask ‘yes/no’ questions in order to clarify what sort of a thing it is, and finally (hopefully!) guess it.
- 4 They are allowed only three ‘direct’ questions (*Is it a bottle?*). If they don’t guess rightly after three direct questions, the student whose word it was has ‘won’.

Teaching tip

When doing a guessing activity, make sure that one student isn’t doing all the work. If all the class knows the answer and one student doesn’t, it’s not a good idea to make the guesser ask a number of *yes/no* questions, so that all the rest of class has to do is say *yes* or *no*: far too much work for the guesser, too little for the rest. It needs to be the other way round: if the guessing is based on questioning, then one student needs to know the answer and the rest ask questions. If on the other hand the guessing is based on the provision of hints, as in 2.2.6 *Cuckoo* or 2.1.8 *Guess them fast!*, then the majority of the class need to be hinting and only one or two students guessing.

2.1.7 Draw a word

Outline	Students express the meanings of words in drawings.
Focus	The meanings of single items
Age	Young–Adolescent
Level	Any
Time	15–20 minutes

Procedure

- 1 Tell students to leaf through their notebooks or coursebooks and each choose one item that the class has recently learnt.
- 2 Tell students to think about how they might represent their item in a drawing. If the word or expression is abstract, or not something with a clear, tangible representation in the real world, then the drawing will have to be something which represents the student's perception of the concept. For example, a circle might represent *perfection*, a wavering line might represent *uncertain*, an exclamation mark might represent *surprise*.
- 3 Start off yourself by drawing a word you've chosen. Challenge the class to guess what it is. If they can't guess after a minute or so, tell them what it is and why the drawing represents it.
- 4 Students take turns drawing their item, eliciting guesses and explaining if necessary.
- 5 If it's a big class, don't try to get through all the students' drawings in one lesson. This can become tedious: save some for following lessons.

Variation

The same can be done with mime: this is particularly suitable for younger classes.

Notes

- 1 It's quite possible, of course, that two students will choose the same word. But if it isn't an obvious concrete object they are unlikely to draw it the same way.
- 2 The discussion of a drawing and its relationship to the target item is likely to raise awareness of aspects of the item's meaning and connotation.

Vocabulary Activities

2.1.8 Guess them fast!

Outline	Students get other students to guess words by providing hints.
Focus	The meanings of single items
Age	Any
Level	Any
Time	20 minutes
Preparation	Sets of words, whose members all belong to the same category, to be guessed; you can use the ones shown in <i>Boxes 2.1.8a, b, and c</i> or ones you prepare yourself that include items you want to review

Procedure

- 1 Ask one student to come to the front of the class and face the class with their back to the board.
- 2 Write up five words on the board:
 a mango a banana an apple a lemon a pineapple
- 3 Tell the rest of the class they have one minute to get the student to guess all five items. They can say what the general category is (*fruit* in this case), and may give any hints they like, but only based on meanings (they may not say *it begins with B*, for example). They may start only when you say *Go*. The student may not ask questions.
- 4 Say *Go*. Time them, and stop them after a minute even if the student has not guessed everything.
- 5 If you're not sure they've got the idea, do this again, with another student and a different set of fruits:
 a pear a plum grapes an orange a coconut
- 6 Divide the class into two teams. The first team sends a representative to stand with their back to the board. You write up a set of items, and the team tries to get their representative to guess what they are within the set time. Then the process is repeated with the other team, using the next set of items (see *Boxes 2.1.8a, b, and c* for some suggestions for sets of items at different levels). Meanwhile, you make sure they keep to the allotted time limit, and write up the scores: the current team scores a point for every word successfully guessed in the time.

Vocabulary review

Variations

- 1 You may prefer to prepare ready-made sheets of paper with the names of the items to be guessed, so that you can just stick them on the board each time instead of writing them up. Or have them ready on a PowerPoint® presentation or on an interactive whiteboard if you have the necessary equipment.
- 2 It's quite fun to limit the way the sets of items can be defined: for younger classes guessing animals, for example, you might tell them they can only make their noises (see 1.2.16 *Woof! Woof!*). Some ideas for such limitations applied to different lists are shown in *Box 2.1.8*.



Teaching tip

The added 'time limit' component is an important one: it makes for challenge and fun and can often transform even a routine academic exercise into a game-like and enjoyable activity. It also speeds up the interaction, so you get through a lot more material in the time.

Vocabulary Activities

Box 2.1.8a: Guess them fast!

Beginner

1. Colours (what things are this colour?)		2. Animals (what are its habits?)	
Team 1 green yellow black brown grey	Team 2 red blue white orange purple	Team 1 cat mouse snake lion giraffe	Team 2 dog horse elephant bear zebra
3. Actions (mime)		4. Adjectives (mime)	
Team 1 walk drink look speak read	Team 2 run eat listen write think	Team 1 big short young fat angry	Team 2 happy old tired long quiet
5. People (what do they do?)		6. Things (what do we do with them?)	
Team 1 teacher nurse driver father baby	Team 2 singer mother doctor student teenager	Team 1 pencil clock table chair box	Team 2 bottle glasses paper book house

Box 2.1.8b: Guess them fast!**Intermediate**

1. Professions (what kinds of things do they do?)		2. Places (what do people do there?)	
Team 1	Team 2	Team 1	Team 2
soldier	gardener	hospital	market
chemist	detective	factory	beach
social worker	pilot	petrol station	bus stop
journalist	actor	shopping mall	kitchen
firefighter	secretary	university	bank
3. Feelings (why/when might you feel this?)		4. Homes (who might live there?)	
Team 1	Team 2	Team 1	Team 2
disappointment	hope	castle	cave
fear	relief	caravan	the sea
joy	pity	tent	ship
anger	regret	hole in the ground	hotel
jealousy	excitement	nest	children's home
5. Subjects of study (what might you learn?)		6. Equipment (what would you use it for?)	
Team 1	Team 2	Team 1	Team 2
philosophy	chemistry	laptop	telescope
geography	literature	cellphone/ mobile phone	bicycle
mathematics	engineering	headset	skewer
history	zoology	flashlight/torch	crutches
botany	art	GPS/satnav	satellite dish

Vocabulary Activities

Box 2.1.8c: Guess them fast!

Advanced

1. Tools (what do we do with these?)		2. Belief systems (what do they believe?)	
Team 1 screwdriver hammer scalpel needle ladle	Team 2 hoe sword lasso nailfile forceps	Team 1 socialism democracy fascism atheism post-modernism	Team 2 idealism relativism anarchism despotism agnosticism
3. Company departments/ functions (what do they do?)		4. Verbs (what do they mean?)	
Team 1 personnel marketing research and development production security	Team 2 accounts investment board of directors reception IT	Team 1 demonstrate broadcast neutralize specify enforce	Team 2 investigate implement optimize monitor facilitate
5. Nouns (what do they mean?)		6. Research article terminology (what do they mean?)	
Team 1 perspective equivalent authority role structure	Team 2 element tradition strategy migration technology	Team 1 methodology acknowledge-ments correlation conclusions probability	Team 2 abstract mean (average) citation footnote appendix