



La Asociación

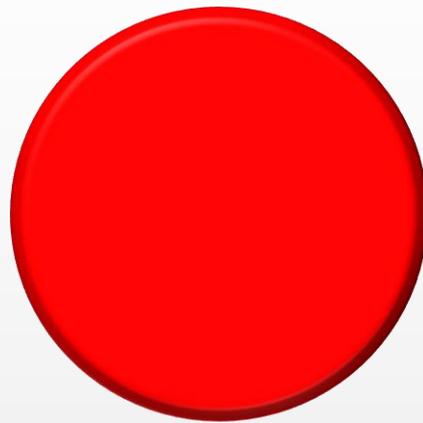
Ex Alumnos del Profesorado en Lenguas Vivas

“Juan R. Fernández”

National Exams, International Standards

Teachers' Centre

AEXALEVI *Forum*



Issue XXXVII / July 2022

www.aexalevi.org.ar

Autoridades

Directora General

Lic. Diana Ogando

Comisión Directiva

Presidente

Silvia López Thomas de Ripoll

Vicepresidente

Liliana Luna

Secretaria

Magdalena Barañao

Prosecretaria

Paula López Cano

Tesorera

Amalia Díaz

Protesorera

Gilberta Buckley |

1 ~~Vocal~~ Titular

Graciela ~~Morrow~~

2 ~~Vocal~~ Titular

María Alicia ~~Contal de Antuña~~

1 ~~Vocal~~ Suplente

Miriam ~~Bogossian~~

2 ~~Vocal~~ Suplente

Adriana ~~Bakrokar~~

3 ~~Vocal~~ Titular

Elena ~~Capellini de Camuyrano~~

4 ~~Vocal~~ Titular

Elida ~~Spinetto de Medone~~

3 ~~Vocal~~ Suplente

Graciela Gómez ~~Kukawca~~

4 ~~Vocal~~ Suplente

Silvia ~~Cuschnir de Fairman~~

ΑΕΧΑΙΕΒΙΕΓΟΥΝΤ

Founded by Marta Moura & Myrian Casamassima

April 2009

Original name by Marta Moura

Coordinator

Myrian Casamassima

Editor

Trad. Gustavo Sevilla

Contents

An interview with Marina Falasca and Cecilia Frontera	4
Following the publication of the book “Alfabetización y competencias transmedia. Propuestas didácticas para el Nivel Medio y Superior”, we talk to co-editors Marina Falasca and Cecilia Frontera.	
Stories from the Heart: It is not Greek to me!	8
Jorgelina Ferro writes about her project with Greek students.	
Playing with Words	10
Gustavo Sevilla reveals his passion for a game that works miracles for vocabulary building.	
FAQs about Exam Training	13
Myrian Casamassima answers some of the questions that teachers often ask about exam training.	
It Worked for Me	16
In this section, we suggest a few tips to help students learn vocabulary.	

An Interview with

Marina Falasca & Cecilia Frontera

Following the publication of the book “Alfabetización y competencias transmedia. Propuestas didácticas para el Nivel Medio y Superior”, we talk to co-editors Marina Falasca and Cecilia Frontera.



María Gabriela Galli, Marina Falasca, Marisa Conde, Cecilia Frontera and Carla Montoya at the Buenos Aires Book Fair.

AEXALEVI FORUM

How did the idea for the book come about?

Marina

I read the results of the Transliteracy Project (Scolari, 2018) early in January 2019. Soon afterwards, I got to discuss its findings at the *V Jornadas Internacionales de Tecnologías Aplicadas a la Enseñanza de Lenguas* which were held in Córdoba in March that year. A couple months later, I came across Cecilia's book on transmedia storytelling (Frontera, 2019). I wanted to

gather extra material to plan my first transmedia project with a group of student teachers at INSPT UTN and her book inspired me to do further research. Since then, I have put together three different projects on how to incorporate transmedia skills into the teaching of EFL at high school level. In the process, I had the chance to discuss my views with other colleagues who would often encourage me to continue doing research on the topic. But I didn't want to conduct a formal research study. I wanted my ideas to be accessible to teachers and student teachers alike. I also wanted to focus on other areas, not just the teaching of EFL. So I felt the best

way to go about it would be to plan a collaborative book that would cover a variety of disciplines and teaching contexts.



AEXALEVI FORUM
Who is the book for?

Marina

It's mostly targeted at high school and university teachers but student teachers and teacher trainers will also find the book useful. Most of the ideas, techniques and strategies proposed can be adapted to suit a variety of teaching contexts.

AEXALEVI FORUM
What is the main contribution of the book?

Marina

The book presents concrete, practical applications of the topic in such areas as

literature, educational technology, films and foreign languages. Above all, we want to provide teachers with concrete examples that will hopefully allow them to incorporate transmedia literacy into their own classrooms (language institutes, private and state-run high schools and universities). We're very much aware of the constraints and challenges most educators have to face on a daily basis but Cecilia's first chapter should be proof enough that it's not impossible to help students develop their transmedia skills even in unfavourable circumstances. As you will see, her first chapter describes a successful transmedia experience with high school students in Moreno who participated in a TICMAS project and were awarded a prize for their exceptional work. In any case, we hope the book will inspire other teachers to follow similar paths. The rest of the chapters are all enlightening in their own way and describe successful transmedia projects aimed at different student populations.

AEXALEVI FORUM
What is transmedia literacy? Why is it important to incorporate it in our classes?

Cecilia

Transmedia literacy focuses on the new generations, what they are doing with media and how they learn to do the things they do. It does not just refer to the content they consume — it also refers to the content they produce when they collaborate online or participate in digital platforms. Above all, transmedia literacy seeks to develop the skills that will make teens and young adults

become critical digital citizens. It's important to clarify that transmedia literacy doesn't replace media literacy and/or other types of literacy; rather, it extends them to adapt to new forms of media and other forms of communication, including interactive media like Twitch or any other types of live streaming platforms.

Marina

To be more specific, transmedia literacy encompasses three basic practices: video game literacy, web and social media literacy, and participatory literacy, which shifts the focus of literacy from individual expression to community involvement. There are also specific transmedia skills that can promote this type of literacy: production, management, performance, media and technology, narrative and aesthetics, risk prevention, ideology and ethics, among others. As shown by Scolari (2018), most of these competencies or skills are developed by teens and young adults outside the classroom. Therefore, it's important to incorporate them in the context of the formal classroom to make learning more meaningful. If we manage to do so, we will hopefully be able to help students develop their own voices and productions while showing them how their final products can also be modified or expanded, based on their interaction with other students or members of the community. Needless to say, these skills are crucial for students to succeed in a rapidly changing, digital society.

AEXALEVI FORUM

What can we do to foster the development of transmedia literacy in the classroom?

Cecilia

Transmedia literacy is consistent with dialogic pedagogies, which promote metacognition and critical thinking. It can also be fostered through active methodologies, which favour activities based on the interests, concerns and needs of the students. Teamwork and gamification can also enhance the development of transmedia skills.

The implementation of playful elements in the formal educational context is believed to promote high motivation among students while allowing them to learn by playing, discovering, and doing things by themselves. In turn, transmedia storytelling also favours the deployment of imagination and creativity, reflection and transmedia skills.

Marina

Many of the strategies and activities mentioned by Cecilia are addressed in the different chapters of the book. For example, in the first one Cecilia describes a successful transmedia experience involving high school students in Moreno who used a specific TICMAS platform to improve their reading and academic skills through transmedia storytelling. In turn, Galli and Conde summarize a variety of projects developed with teens who were encouraged to expand and recreate the transmedia world of different literary works, films, audiovisuals and video games. Chapter 3 by Ferrareli and Pose explores the peculiarities that transmedia narratives have acquired in the educational field, focusing on some transmedia projects and interventions in secondary schools like *Ciudades*

Visibles and #Orson80, among others. In chapter 4, I include a sample didactic kit developed by student teachers based on a specific sequence format that I believe can help enhance the development of transmedia skills in the formal context of the EFL high school class. Finally, Montoya's last chapter describes an innovative experience with university students who were asked to investigate, evaluate and create their own content across multiple platforms, using different languages and showing a responsible and sensitive attitude towards their own jobs.

AEXALEVI FORUM

What opportunities and challenges does transmedia literacy pose in the classroom?

Cecilia

Transmedia literacy favours access to knowledge, promotes multi-literacy, and allows students to develop various skills (cognitive, social, personal and emotional). At the same time, it enhances critical thinking and student autonomy. As for the challenges, the digital divide is still a reality in many places, which results in lack of equity and the educational exclusion of thousands or even millions of students and educators who do not have

connectivity or the necessary technological devices to access transmedia literacy. In addition to this, many teachers still resist change and find it difficult to adapt to new educational paradigms, which does not favour educational praxis and often results in lack of cognitive flexibility.

AEXALEVI FORUM

Thank you very much, Marina and Cecilia. Congratulations! Congrats also to contributors María Gabriela Galli, Marisa Elena Conde, Mariana Ferrarelli, Monserrat Pose and Carla Montoya.

References

Falasca, M. & Frontera, C. (2022). *Alfabetización y competencias transmedia: Propuestas didácticas para el nivel Secundario y Superior*. Buenos Aires: Editorial SB.

Frontera, C. (2019). *La narrativa transmedia: Propuestas interactivas para trabajar en el aula*. Buenos Aires: Editorial SB.

Scolari, C. A. (Ed.). (2018). *Adolescentes, medios de comunicación y culturas colaborativas. Aprovechando las competencias transmedia de los jóvenes en el aula*. Barcelona: H2020 TRANSLITERACY Project.

Stories from the Heart

It is not Greek to me!

Prof. Jorgelina Ferro

In August last year, Susan Hillyard sent out an invitation to participate in an intercultural exchange. She entitled it: 'Give your students a voice'. After registering for that call, she paired me up with a colleague from Greece.



We started an exchange via email and a few days later we had a Zoom meeting. We got on really well from the very beginning. Not only were we ready and eager to work together, but we also shared the view that we wanted our students to be the centre of the experience.

The very first time her class and mine got together online I was really nervous. First of all, we know that technology can sometimes be unreliable. Besides, it was a completely new experience for me. After the first minutes, that nervousness

turned into happiness. I had never felt that before as a teacher. Seeing my students using the language for a real purpose was extraordinary. There was no need to try to engage them in the activity — they were already engaged. They wanted to learn things about Greece, and this interest went both ways as the Greek students wanted to hear about Argentina.

In our first class the students had the chance to get to know each other in groups, and then we introduced an activity I had seen in *Out of Eden* (Project Zero - Harvard University). For the following class, they had to bring one or more photos of their neighbourhoods and say why they had chosen them. Most of my students didn't like the activity at first. They said that they wouldn't be able to find the time to do it, or that there was nothing they liked about their neighbourhoods.

I had to use part of another class to engage them in this activity. In the end, they all came up with ideas of what to show at our zoom meeting with the Greek students. The class went on really well. We compared the countries through their pictures. The students worked in breakout rooms sharing their photos, and had to choose one picture and say why they had picked that one.

All that was in 2021. This year we had two sessions in which my colleague,

Déspina, wanted to share what she knows about storytelling. And so it was that the students had the chance to interact, know each other, and then engage in storytelling. Déspina and I agreed on the fact that listening with attention is an important skill nowadays. One of the stories was told without the ending, and the students had to think of one. The other story was on diversity through colours in a neighbourhood. Here, students had to reflect on the importance of diversity. They always had time to interact in groups, and then as a class, all together.

All in all, I must say that the name that Susan Hillyard had chosen for the call was so appropriate. I feel that through this Project I was able to give my students a voice.

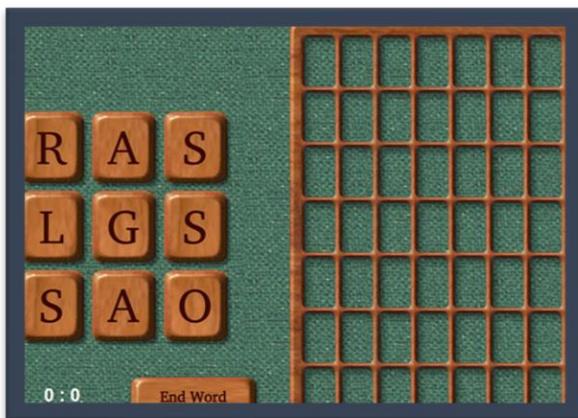


Playing with Words

Trad. Gustavo Sevilla

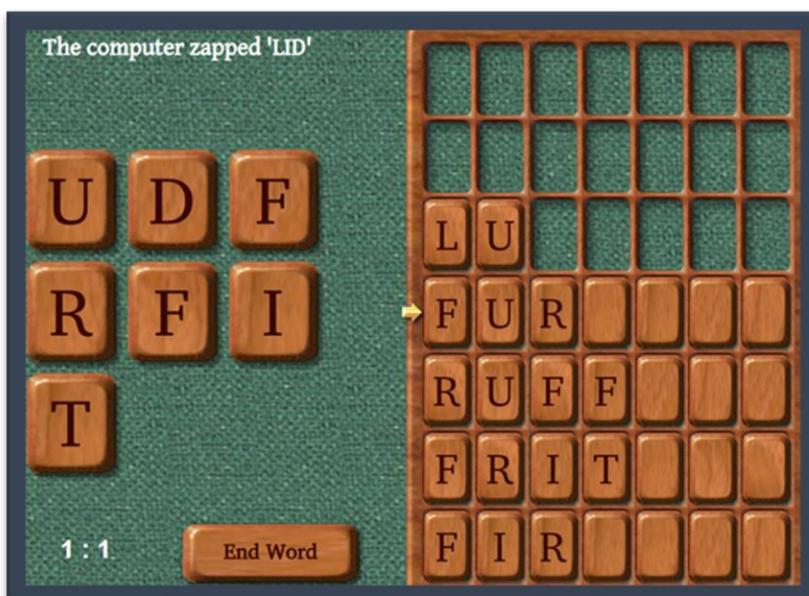


Good games never go out of fashion. Several examples can come to mind of games we used to play as children and which our own kids continue to play today. I remember that, many years ago, when the Internet was only starting and we used to buy or get PC games on diskettes and CDs, there was one game that I took up as my favourite – Wordzap, currently available online at <https://wordzap.com/>. I started to play it alone and then my own son, who at the time was quite good at English, became addicted to it.

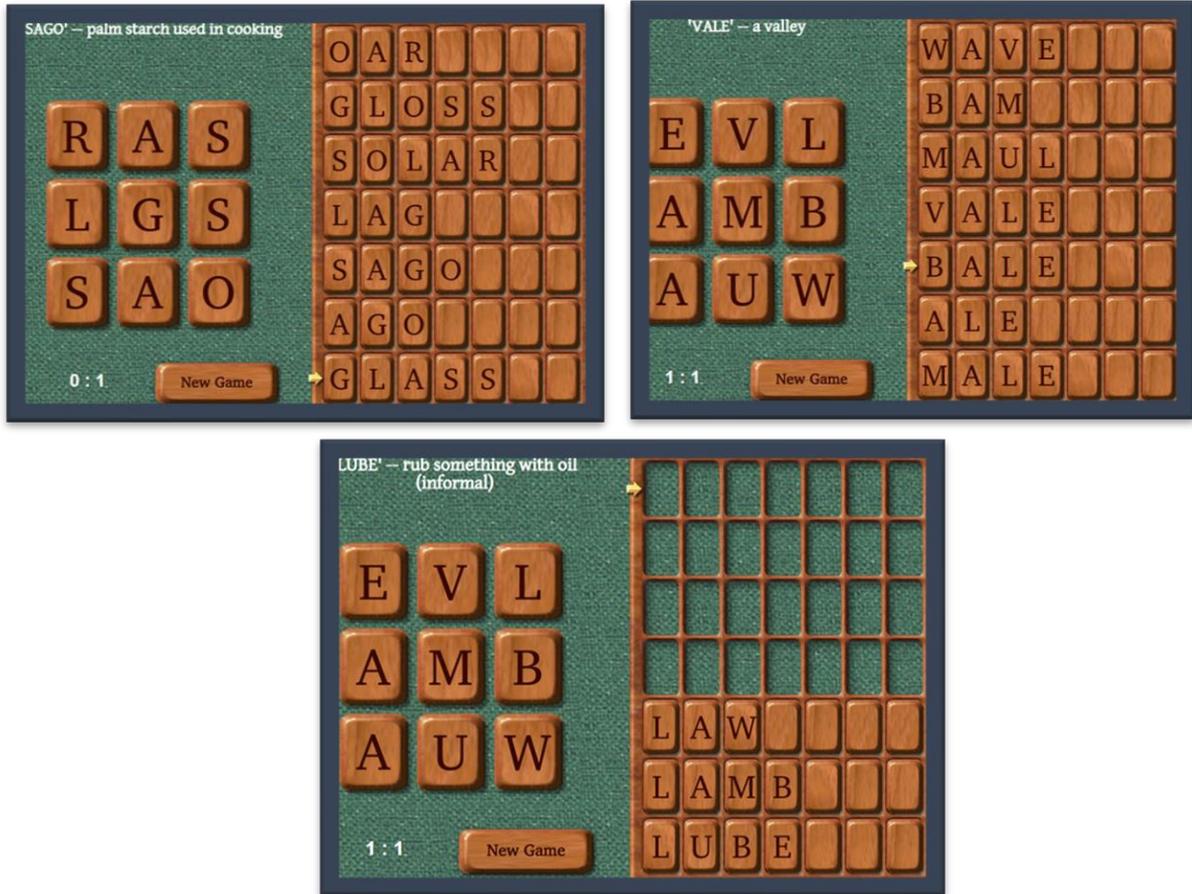


The game proposes nine letters which the player has to combine to come up with seven words at least three letters long. The excitement comes with the fact that the PC plays at the same time, so the player needs to rush to outrun the PC. The PC tends to look for longer, harder words, and thus gives its opponent a certain advantage. Both the human player and the PC have the capacity to “zap” each other’s words. If the human player finds a word the PC has already found (GOAL, in the example above), the word is zapped and the PC loses one word. An arrow shows us how the PC advances. In the example shown, the player has found two words, RAG and SAG, and the PC has found three and is working to find the fourth one.

The PC thinks out its own words and, if one of them turns out to coincide with one that the player has written, the word in question (for example, LID in the example below) is zapped by the computer and the player remains one step lower, that is, has to find yet another word to complete the list. Sometimes the letters are easy to combine but, other times, there are few vowels or difficult consonants that demand a lot of concentration to produce existing words.



At the end of each game, the player is shown the words the PC came up with. Both throughout the game and at the end (as we scroll up and down), definitions for difficult words – our own and those found by the computer – are provided so we can learn or go over their meaning.



Now, how can we use this to teach English? This language is particularly productive when it comes to forming and discovering short words by merely changing a vowel (TAN/TEN/TIN/TON, SANG/SING/SONG/SUNG, LACK/LICK/LOCK/LUCK, PAN/PEN/PIN/PUN, BAT/BET/BIT/BUT, and so on) or a consonant (BAG/LAG/RAG/SAG, DOLL/POLL/TOLL, BEG/LEG/PEG, etc.). This is particularly useful mostly with elementary level students, who will try all the possible combinations until the word – maybe one they didn’t even know – is accepted. With more advanced ones, we can make a point of finding longer words, assigning perhaps a higher score to four- to seven-letter words in case of a tie. We can also ask our students to form sentences so we can be sure they will learn the terms in context. Needless to say, writing good sentences can add extra points in a competition.

Another game that has become popular these days and that I recommend mainly for teachers is Wordle (<https://www.nytimes.com/games/wordle/index.html>). Unlike Wordzap, good luck is one of the main ingredients here and only one word per day – usually a difficult or unexpected one – needs to be unveiled.

Just like life, learning English can also be fun!

FAQs about Exam-training

Mgter. Myrian Casamassima



We train our students for exams every year and we have done so for as long as we can remember. Yet, we always aim at making changes for the better. This section is meant to address some FAQs and to give some tips that we hope may come in handy at the time of exam preparation. Here we go:

When is the best time of the year to start training our students for exams?

There is obviously no right or wrong answer here, but we wish to go for an all-year-round training experience. Exam training is not doing tons of mock tests all together at roughly the same time, nor is it to practise grammar endlessly. Instead, training for an exam is developing competences gradually throughout, and these competences include an awareness of where I am as a learner, where I want to be, and how much progress I am making. This is why we referred to “training experience”. Creating a variety of moments in class and sustaining them unit after unit may work well as a systematic learning

process for exams. And this starts right at the beginning of the year, in small doses of work and reflection towards the final target: the final exam.

How many mock exams must students do on average?

Although mock exams can be a valuable tool for students to get familiar with the specific exam format, we must remember that they represent the target exam. If we give our students mock tests in July for them to start getting ready for their exams at the end of the year, many competences will not have been developed yet because not all contents will have been explored by then. Therefore, it may be more useful to give the students bits of practice, that is to

say, exercises that prepare them for the target activity in the exam without it being necessarily that activity. Thus, a gap-fill can start by choosing between two options for a gap in a single sentence and then move little by little to further options and longer pieces of discourse, to finally get to the gap-fill with options at the top. These steps comprise part-skill practice in contrast with the mock tests that are based on total skill and, as a result, should come later in the year, when the students are ready for them.

How much should we correct?

It is frequent that we take home loads of compositions and exercises to correct, but our students do not appear to take stock of their mistakes and areas for improvement. Then, we should try doing something else. If the class size is manageable and the students are old enough to work independently, we could ask them to commit to their own action plan. This would imply engaging the students in assuming responsibility for what needs to be improved and for how they will do so by keeping a record of these goals and activities. It may be something very simple such as “irregular verbs” and “practice the verb list”. The important thing is that they should be able to join in and take their part. Otherwise, it only falls on the teacher’s shoulders when it is actually more

beneficial for the learners if they monitor, plan and evaluate their own learning. So, back to our FAQ, the amount of correction will depend on when we are working on accuracy (in which case correction will be more finely tuned), when we are working on fluency (in which case correction will be more flexible) and, above all, when the students are taking learning in their own hands.

What if the students never do their assignments?

This is particularly true when it comes to composition writing. If students do not complete their assignments at home, we could change the routine of assigning writing for homework and do some of it in class through different types of activities that can develop writing competences. This will often mean that the students write with us on the board or on the screen, and that they also write with their peers. It needn’t be the whole composition. It can be the initial paragraph or the description of a scene or a character. The important thing is that the students write and that they understand what it means to construct text. We can even time these activities so that, when the alarm goes off, they have to exchange paragraphs and write a question, for example, for their peers to think about and develop in the next paragraph. Adding game-like features and generating opportunities for

cooperation can make writing a more lively experience as the students interact with their peers and with different texts.

It may be useful as well to connect reader and writing. Thus, the students can read a section in their readers, and then they can continue the story, narrating, describing or generating dialogue. This can be done as a sort of predictive work, before the students actually read the text, by reading a section and stopping before a crucial moment, or as a summary of the story that they have read so far. The reader provides context, content and a purpose for writing, and all this can surely soften the burden that many students feel when they are faced with a blank page or when they simply do not feel like writing.

Why do our students keep making mistakes about things they should know?

This point can turn out to be a real headache. Our students get a grammatical form right today, but wrong tomorrow. How come? Common-ground practice is based on the idea that first we present grammar and then we practise it. This arrangement gives us the feeling that we are making rapid progress and that, therefore, our students must know the grammar that they have practised. However, in language learning, things do not occur so linearly. There are many comings and goings in the learning

process and the grammar that the students are building up can be rather unstable, precisely because it is under construction. More practice will not necessarily mean more accuracy on the part of the students. Instead, we can include in our work frequent intervals of revision to ensure recycling of content and new chances to go over what has already been learnt and is now integrated as part of the same system, that is, language. So, instead of feeling concerned about our students' mistakes, we could focus on the types of mistakes they make: What do they show? How can we help them notice that they have made a mistake? How can we help them improve? We should be aware that mistakes will occur and that they are signals of a developing grammar.

We have addressed some FAQs and suggested courses of action. There are surely plenty of other issues concerning exam preparation that we wonder about and that we strive to address. It makes sense to consider the rationale: why certain things occur in a certain way in language learning. This will certainly help us decide what to do, how, when and what for as we move forward on our way towards the final exam.

It Worked for Me

Vocabulary learning poses a lot of challenges to our students. One of the greatest difficulties seems to be how to store and retrieve lexis. Teaching vocabulary implies several levels of word knowledge including different types of meaning, grammar, pronunciation, family words, etc. Here we present three practical tips that you can give your learners.

Tip # 1

When we say a word, we usually want to pronounce every letter. But letters are one thing and sounds, quite another. What letters do not sound in *could*? “o” and “l” do not sound. In our minds, the image of the word is shaped in the way it is written, and that is how we try to say it because that is the way it works in Spanish. We could try writing the word, saying it in order to notice which letters do not sound, and gliding our correction pen across those letters. Now, *c u d* looks different on the page and more manageable from the point of view of pronunciation. We have created a new image on our minds.



Tip # 2

Many phrases occur together in context and that is the best way to remember them. We suggest packing up *combos*: “Thank you” and “You’re welcome”; “Nice to meet you” and “Same here”; “How are you?” and “I’m fine, thanks”; “Coffee?” and “Yes, please” or “No, thanks”. Let us notice that these *combos* are short exchanges that occur very often and still many students do not know how to use them. If we show them that grouping vocabulary may be useful because this is the way in which it naturally occurs, our students will begin to notice patterns and, thus, extend vocabulary learning beyond individual words.

Tip # 3

Labelling objects is an effective strategy for vocabulary learning and a constant reminder of what you call something. Objects in the classroom can be labelled easily, but the interesting thing is to ask students to label objects at home. For instance, in a unit about house description, students can use sticky notes on shelves, desks, wardrobes and other pieces of furniture and objects in their own bedrooms.

Tip # 4

When we teach, we tend to focus on words in isolation. However, language is made up of lexical chunks. One of the ways in which we can help our learners become aware of how language works is by presenting the idea that words do not occur on their own, but in association with their neighbours. Therefore, a word and its neighbours can become the new focus of our teaching and one way to refer to collocations. This can be particularly useful to deal with vocabulary when we are doing reading comprehension. We should ask our students to look at the unknown words and at their neighbours: two or three words that come before and that come afterwards. We need to extend the scope of our student's attention from individual words into longer stretches of discourse.

Tip # 5

The class can play *vocabulary collectors*, which means that the students will start collecting lexis. The new words (and collocations as we saw in Tip # 4) must be recorded in a creative way: digital murals, posters, picture dictionaries, blogs, boxes, envelopes, bags, etc. We can even have *Special Interest Groups* in phrasal verbs, verb/noun and prepositions, semantic fields, etc. What matters is to record vocabulary and to keep it going systematically throughout, with instances of revision and recycling from time to time. Different types of collectors can design guessing games for the class to say the words, for instance, by showing a visual or by playing Hangman or any other game.