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- Classroom management
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Diana Bauducco
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Gemma Williams
Martin Bastkowski



Contents

Editorial

01 A note from the editor

Vocabulary MyCRD

- 04 Annual waypoints**
Daniel Costa looks at the 'word of the year' phenomenon.
- 06 Kickstart your lesson with vocabulary warmers**
Martin Bastkowski shows how to systematically activate and revise vocabulary in the classroom.
- 08 Teaching vocabulary**
Marjorie Rosenberg offers eight tried and tested vocabulary activities.
- 11 From exposure to access**
Aneta Naumoska describes how to improve vocabulary retrieval.
- 14 'With one bound, he was free!'**
Alastair Lane investigates word frequency in fiction.
- 16 What classroom activities really ask learners to do**
Mark Frohnsdorff considers why familiar activities can still fail.
- 19 What your students' brains actually want**
Joanna Patyk-Taous looks at the neuroscience of vocabulary learning.

It works in practice

21 Some ideas for you to take straight into the classroom

On reflection

22 Not all words were created equal
David Byrne and *Mark Heffernan* look at vocabulary.

Warmers

23 Instant engagement
Kasia Warszyńska describes some warmers your students will love from the get-go. MyCRD

Classroom management

- 26 NeuroBreaks in the language classroom**
Diana Bauducco gets learners to tune back in.
- 30 Subtitles in language learning**
Olga Kovtun considers whether they are a support or an obstacle.
- 33 How can I motivate my students?**
George Murdoch considers a question we often ask ourselves. MyCRD
- 38 The five 'C's of critical trauma-informed ESOL**
Alison Shepherd offers an approach to learners from forced migration backgrounds.

Materials

- 40 Lessons from Leo Jones: what vintage ELT materials can still teach us (Part 1)**
Charlie Ellis considers the influence of past materials on modern teaching in the first of two parts.
- 44 From choices to chosen**
Stephen Tarbuck offers some reflections on designing a checklist for choosing coursebooks. MyCRD

A quick guide to . . .

48 fostering holistic child development
Anna Machura MyCRD

Listening

50 Active listening
Jonathon Ryan and *Naheen Madarbakus-Ring* suggest an interactive and engaging approach. MyCRD

Career paths

52 Opportunities overseas
Nick Baguley looks at how going abroad to teach can be transformative.

Management

55 Being a people pleaser
Steve Tulk explains why academic managers need a strategic approach to equity.



23

Resources Online

Go to **pavilionelt.com/resources/** for your extra printable resources, ready for use in class.

Neurodivergence

57 Neurodivergence in the ELT classroom: think differently

Gemma Williams shares three ideas from neurodiversity research to help with language learning and communication.

Young learners

60 Once upon a time there was ...

James Heal offers advice on storytelling. **MyCRD**

62 Tears and tenderness

Chris Roland comments on the rapidly shifting sentiments in YL classrooms. **MyCRD**

ESP

65 Designing an ESP course

Simon Dunton looks at five key questions for course design.

Teacher training

68 From 'Good job!' to growth

Elena Kapshutar suggests ways of making feedback more constructive.

Reading

71 Reading between the lines

Anna Pereszlenyi suggests some ideas for developing confidence in reading. **MyCRD**

Reflection

73 AI-mediated cooperative development

Andrew Boon and *Yitzha Boon* look at a new way to set up reflective practice.

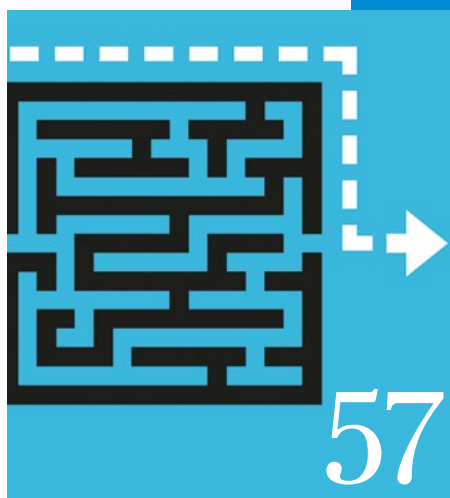
Reviews

78 Project-based Learning: Cultivating creativity in the language classroom

Clare Henderson

80 50 Ways to Include Learners Affected by Trauma

Stephen Farren



60

Resources online

Adaptable checklist for new coursebooks

	Yes	No
1. Does it have enough units for the semester?		
2. Are all four skills addressed in a unit?		
3. Are the units easy to access and reliable in various formats?		
4. Do they include what we need for example, do the units include reading and listening?		
5. Would it be a best per unit or combining units?		
6. What are the units in a unit?		
7. Is the listening material? Does it include a variety of accents?		
8. Does the listening include a variety of question types (not just TF or repeating an exact form)?		
9. What's for cognitive load with vocabulary? Vocabulary presented in context or as an isolated list or tool?		
10. Does it provide review and recycling of language?		
11. Is the grammar presented in context? Does the grammar include guided discovery? Is there sufficient controlled practice for each grammar point? - more than one page?		
12. Does the teacher's book offer extra photocopiable activities and other ideas for extensions to the student book material?		
13. Does the book include a workbook? How do the students access the material in it, for example, listening?		
14. Does the book include an extension of the Student Book by extending that the exercises are to be used in class with it, or can the pages be used for homework?		
15. What other materials are available? Project books, course book, and other materials are they?		
16. Does it include a balance of multi-modal input? eg. multi-modal videos, a classroom presentation book, flipped learning activities for fast learners, CL, multiple projects the project materials are available without high expense and applying digital doesn't cause copyright or privacy issues) and opportunities for self-assessment.		
17. Does it contain any topics that should be avoided based on current moral events or age of the students?		
18. Are the units printed in a format that means the book won't feel awkward? Or is it with those leading lines?		
19. Is the same series available in other levels from the same publisher?		
20. Does the publisher offer resources for having a certain number of their products?		
21. Is it possible to order enough for the predicted need?		

Checklist created by Stephen Farren

Adaptable checklist for new coursebooks

Accompanies *From choices to chosen* by Stephen Tarbuck, page 44
<https://pavilionelt.com/wp-content/uploads/MET-35.4-Online-Resources-Tarbuck-ChoicesToChosen.pdf>

CPD Essentials

MyCRD

Questions for reflection

Things to try

Things to share

CPD essentials

Bite-sized professional development using this issue of *MET*
<https://pavilionelt.com/wp-content/uploads/MET-35.4-Online-Resources-CPD-Essentials.pdf>



MyCRD

The articles marked with this symbol are also mentioned in CPD Essentials where they are suggested as texts for further reflection, practice or sharing. CPD Essentials can be found at <https://pavilionelt.com/wp-content/uploads/MET-35.4-Online-Resources-CPD-Essentials.pdf>

Many adult and university EFL learners can understand a wide range of texts and lectures, yet still describe a familiar frustration: ‘I know this word when I see it, but I can’t use it when I need it.’ This gap is not simply about the number of words learnt, but it is about access, control and depth (collocations, register, grammar patterns and constraints). At higher proficiency levels, vocabulary growth increasingly depends on academic and professional needs: choosing precise verbs (e.g. *undermine, facilitate, account for*), deploying discipline-relevant nouns (e.g. *assumption, variable, constraint*) and handling multiword units (e.g. *in light of, to a large extent, a growing body of research suggests*). These are not items learners can pick up once and keep forever. They require repeated, purposeful reactivation via two principles that make it effective. First, learners need frequent opportunities to retrieve vocabulary. Second, those retrieval opportunities need to be spaced across time so that remembering requires effort and therefore strengthens memory. Evidence from L2 research (Kim & Webb, 2022) supports the value of spacing, especially when learning is measured after a delay rather than immediately after instruction.

also translates these principles into a practical classroom toolkit that teachers can implement immediately.

Retrieval practice is the act of trying to recall information from memory. In vocabulary learning, retrieval means attempting to produce a word or phrase (or an aspect of its use) without looking it up first. Importantly, retrieval practice is not synonymous with high-stakes testing. In classrooms it is best understood as low-stakes, feedback-rich recall, used to build access and control.

naturally in argumentation. Retrieval tasks can therefore target different routes into word knowledge, such as:

- One more point matters for teacher decision-making. Retrieval often looks messy as students hesitate, partially recall or retrieve the wrong item. In advanced classes, this can feel inefficient compared with simply re-explaining, but those imperfect attempts are useful evidence about what is not yet stable, and they create the conditions for learning, provided there is timely feedback. In other words, the goal is not constant success, but rather the goal is frequent, supported effort, so that later performance (in writing, seminars, exams or workplace communication) becomes smoother.

Spaced repetition: timing is a learning tool

Spaced repetition refers to distributing encounters with vocabulary over time rather than clustering them in a single lesson or study session. Most teachers and learners intuitively recognise that cramming produces short-term gains and rapid forgetting, while spacing helps retention. What is helpful to emphasise is that spacing is not simply 'review again later', but 'review again later in a way that requires effortful recall'.

In L2 research (Kim & Webb, 2022), a meta-analysis of spaced practice found that spacing generally benefits L2 learning, with meaningful advantages for delayed performance, which is precisely the outcome teachers care about when they want vocabulary to remain available weeks later. A complementary pedagogical review (Serrano, 2022) emphasises the classroom implication, i.e. distribution of practice is not a theoretical luxury, but it is a practical design principle for courses that aim for durable learning rather than short-lived coverage.

For adult and university learners, spacing addresses a specific problem: advanced courses often move quickly through complex texts and topics, meaning vocabulary appears in, for example, Week 3 and disappears by Week 4. Spacing counters this unit-by-unit forgetting by creating a spiral: previously taught items return in new tasks, new discussions and new genres of writing. Over time, that spiral also sends an important message about what counts as learning: not exposure, but accessibility.

The combined principle: spaced retrieval

Retrieval is powerful and spacing is powerful, so together they become especially effective. The combination can be described in everyday terms as: try to remember, then try again after some forgetting has begun. That slight struggle is not a sign of failure, but it is often the condition for learning. In L2 settings, one classroom-compatible way to operationalise spaced retrieval is cumulative quizzing, where each quiz contains both new and previously studied items. Over a semester, this creates

repeated retrieval opportunities that are naturally spaced. Evidence from *TESOL Quarterly* (Nakata *et al.*, 2021) suggests cumulative quizzes can produce stronger vocabulary gains than non-cumulative quizzes, with particularly noticeable benefits for productive knowledge. It is also worth noting that cumulative does not have to mean time-consuming. A few carefully designed items used consistently can shift learners' study habits and strengthen long-term access. Recent work (Maie *et al.*, 2025) continues to explore how cumulative testing interacts with factors such as proficiency and learners' preparation behaviours.

Pedagogical implications for higher-level EFL vocabulary

In advanced classrooms, vocabulary work can become marginalised in that teachers assume students should already know how to learn words, or class time is consumed by content and skills. Retrieval and spacing offer a way to make vocabulary learning more efficient without turning lessons into word-list drills.

First, advanced learners benefit when vocabulary targets include multiword units and collocations, not just single words. These units carry academic style and fluency, and they are precisely the items students struggle to retrieve during speaking and writing.

Second, review should deliberately include productive recall. Adult learners often read and understand far more than they can produce, so meaning and use are direct training for production:

meaning → form retrieval (producing *mitigate* from the definition 'reduce negative effects')

use → form retrieval (e.g. completing a gapfill: 'mitigate ____')

Third, feedback must accompany retrieval. Retrieval attempts will include errors; without feedback, mistakes may persist and learners may lose confidence. Feedback can be brief, but it must be consistent. In practice, feedback may simply mean a teacher-confirmed model collocation, a short reformulation or a class-built bank of accurate examples. What matters is that the retrieval

attempt is followed by a clearer representation of the target form and its most typical uses.

Practical part: a Monday-ready toolkit for spaced retrieval

What follows is a practical approach designed for adult and university classes, including those with limited contact hours. The aim is to create a sustainable routine: small, repeated and cumulative.

The five-minute recall start

Begin class with a short written recall activity: students close notes and write down as many target items as they can remember from the previous lesson or week. Since adult learners often value purpose and transparency, it helps to label the routine explicitly: 'This is retrieval practice; trying to remember is part of learning.' Students then compare in pairs and repair gaps collaboratively. The teacher briefly collects a selection on the board, correcting form and highlighting one strong collocation or academic pattern per item. Over time, this routine changes classroom culture: vocabulary is not simply covered, but it is, in fact, kept in play. To make this more academic in tone, anchor recall in genre: instead of 'write the words', ask for 'words and phrases you could use in an academic paragraph on last week's topic'. The genre constraint pushes learners toward academic collocations and bundles, which are central to higher-level performance.

Cumulative micro-quizzing (low stakes, high frequency)

Once per week (or at the end of each class), run a very short cumulative quiz. The micro design matters: it should be brief enough that it never feels like an exam. A workable structure is three items: one from today, one from last week and one from two to four weeks ago. The format can rotate (e.g. definition → word, sentence gap, collocation completion or paraphrase using the target item) but the principle stays constant: earlier vocabulary returns repeatedly. This approach aligns with evidence (Nakata *et al.*, 2021) that cumulative, spaced retrieval can strengthen L2 vocabulary

learning over a semester. The teacher's role is to keep the routine predictable and feedback immediate. Students should leave the room knowing exactly which items were secure and which need another retrieval cycle.

Retrieval that builds depth: the ladder task

Advanced learners typically meet new vocabulary in texts. The mistake is to stop at noticing and explaining. A retrieval-based follow-up can be built into normal skills work by moving through increasingly demanding prompts across the same items. After reading an article, select a small set of high-value items (preferably academic collocations or lexical bundles). Learners first confirm meaning quickly. Next, they attempt meaning → form recall from definitions or paraphrases. Then they retrieve at least one typical collocation or grammatical frame for each item. Finally, they write a sentence that could plausibly appear in an academic text in their field. This last step is crucial for university students because it links vocabulary learning to disciplinary writing expectations and encourages precision rather than vague synonym use.

Spaced speaking

A common concern is that vocabulary review activities feel separate from communication. A simple solution is to embed retrieval requirements inside speaking tasks. Before a discussion, provide a small set of target items drawn from both the current unit and previous weeks. Students discuss the topic, but with a clear constraint: they must use a set number of the target items naturally. After the discussion, they briefly self-report which items they used and where they struggled. In advanced groups, this reflection can be surprisingly insightful: students often realise they avoid certain words – not because they do not know them, but because they are unsure about collocation, register or grammar pattern.

Spaced writing

If your learners write academic paragraphs, reports or short essays, revision is an ideal moment for spaced retrieval. A practical technique is to keep a short, course phrase bank (built cumulatively from previous

weeks) and require students to incorporate a small number of items into revised drafts, without copy-pasting from notes. This forces meaning → form and use → form retrieval in a context that matters to them, improving clarity and academic tone. Over time, students begin to view vocabulary not as extra study, but as part of crafting more precise arguments.

Technology as a spacing engine

Many adult learners already use digital tools, yet the issue is how they use them. Research indicates that technology-assisted L2 vocabulary learning is, on average, effective, and one meta-analysis (Yu & Trainin, 2022) reports a moderate overall effect. However, teachers should be cautious because many default flashcard behaviours train recognition more than production. A practical upgrade is to require two prompt types for each target item. One prompt should trigger meaning → form retrieval (definition or L1 gloss → target item). The second should trigger use → form retrieval (collocation gap or sentence stem). This design nudges learners toward productive access, which is the usual weakness at higher levels. The teacher does not need to manage every deck, rather the teacher's role is to model good prompts, demonstrate how spacing works and periodically recycle items from student decks into classroom micro-quizzes.

A realistic spacing rhythm for a university course

Teachers often ask for the best spacing schedule. In real teaching conditions, the most effective schedule is the one that is sustainable. A workable rhythm is immediate retrieval on the day vocabulary is introduced, a brief retrieval opportunity at the next meeting, a cumulative review one week later and a return again three to four weeks later through speaking or writing. This rhythm reflects the basic logic highlighted in L2 spacing research and pedagogical discussion (Kim & Webb, 2022; Serrano, 2022). To keep the system manageable, it is better to recycle fewer items more often than to introduce large weekly lists that disappear. That less-but-deeper approach suits advanced learners because academic vocabulary mastery depends heavily on collocation, register and patterning.

Making vocabulary durable without losing class time

For adult and university EFL learners, durable vocabulary knowledge is not built by exposure alone, even when exposure is rich. It is built when learners repeatedly retrieve language from memory and do so across time. Retrieval practice strengthens access and spaced repetition protects against forgetting, so together they create vocabulary that remains available for academic speaking and writing.

The practical message is simple: teachers do not need a new textbook unit or a complicated system. They need a small set of routines, such as brief recall openings, cumulative micro-quizzes, retrieval-based follow-ups to texts and spaced reuse in discussion and writing, that keep vocabulary circulating through the course. Implemented consistently, these routines change the learning trajectory from 'I recognised it once' to 'I can use it when it matters'.

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