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Educator Monthly

EF'S NEWSLETTER FOR TEACHERS



Issue 4

Applied classroom ideas are the theme of this month's EF Educator Monthly. From ideas for using the phonemic chart on a regular basis to a more practical return to the subject of collocations, we hope you'll find something in this month's newsletter that you can put into immediate use. The EF Educator Monthly is designed by and for teachers; if you have any suggestions for content or themes for future newsletters, contact the editor chris.flint@ef.com.

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Using your phonemic chart in the classroom

We all know we should deal with pronunciation regularly in our classes. It is an area with which even advanced students ask for help, but despite this, and the presence of the phonemic chart on the wall behind us, it can often be neglected. Teaching and learning pronunciation can be a fun physical activity and one which is quite liberating in a supportive classroom environment.

This month we have provided some practical ideas for using the phonemic wall chart to provide variety and heighten students' awareness of key sounds.

Familiarisation techniques

Get your class used to sound-gym exercises in which they make sounds as you point to them on the chart. This can help to highlight the relationship between sounds; for example by gliding from wide-mouth vowels like /i:/ to narrower vowels like /u:/ – keep the pointer on the chart for an unbroken transition between the sounds. Doing this as a choral drill is a good way to relax the class; more individual drills can come later within pairs when it is less unsettling to make errors.

Try to focus on one key sound over a week. Look at your classroom materials for that week to find a sound that recurs in key vocabulary; highlight the symbol on the chart and gesture to it each time the sound occurs.

For vowel sounds, celebrity magazine pictures are a great resource. Students can guess the sound a celeb is making by the shape of his or her mouth. Is she pleased? /ɑ:/; amazed? /u:/; or dismayed? /ə/.



/ɑ:/



/u:/



/ə/

Correction techniques

A simple listening gesture such as holding the ear is a good way to indicate that what a student has said does not sound right. Using the chart, it is possible to clarify the sound in several ways and help the student to self-correct.

1. When you hear a word containing a clearly incorrect sound point to the key correct sound on the chart.
2. Alternatively, phonemically spell the word on the chart in the correct way. This can be done silently or sounding as you go.
3. Say the word and get the student to point to the sound that you have said differently.

i: see	I try	U two	u: two	ɪə here	eɪ day		
e bed	ə about, the	ɜ: bird	ɔ: boy	ʊə sure	ɔɪ boy	əʊ now	
æ bad	ʌ cut	ɑ: bath	ɒ hot	eə there	aɪ day	aʊ now	
p pen	b bat	t tea	d dog	tʃ church	dʒ jazz	k cat	g go
f fish	v very	θ this	ð this	s see	z zero	ʃ fish	ʒ jazz
m man	n no	ŋ ring	h hat	l leaf	r see	w see	j see

EF Teacher Zone resources

If you don't have a phonemic wall chart in your classroom you can order a chart free at the EF Teacher Zone website at www.ef.com/teacher along with plenty of other materials.

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Teaching Grammar and Vocabulary with Collocations, Part 2 – Classroom Implementation

Last month, I wrote about the methodological debate initiated in the language teaching world by the publication of Michael Lewis' *The Lexical Approach* in 1993. In revisiting the topic, I would like to look at the practical ideas for classroom implementation which evolved in the years that followed.

Noticing

Central to the idea of teaching collocations is the idea of *noticing* or awareness-raising of collocations. You should encourage your students to do this whenever they meet new vocabulary. The simplest way to do this is using the collocation *green cross code*. When students meet new words in a text, they should look left and then look right and notice any words or phrases which are connected to it in the immediate text.

Another way to notice collocations is to use a language corpus. These are huge volumes of language, amassed by linguists, which can be electronically searched to reveal the frequency of various lexical coincidences within different contexts (e.g. speech, news, academic texts). Major English language corpora include the British National Corpus [www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/], the Bank of English [www.collins.co.uk/Corpus/CorpusSearch.aspx] and VIEW [view.byu.edu/].

act that we have no **word** to designate that body of stu
use the awkward and inadequate **word** "Art-history" fo
w of no better **word** to express the idea I have in mind.
I in the highest sense of the **word**, is based on the pure
promoting definite artistic programmes. A **word** of cauti
sassertion of identity, the Dutch **word** for style implying ti
of which one in Austria adopted the **word** as a title, Sez
Wolfe's book *The Painted **Word*** is a witty example of th
ble". No, the **word** was crucial. In short: frankly, these

Recording and recycling

Once collocations have been noticed, we need to train students to record and recycle them.

There are many books available with practical exercise ideas. Michael Lewis, in *Implementing the Lexical Approach*, gives examples of thirty different exercise types including one which suggested this month's Teacher's Tidbit, Reinforcing collocations with dominoes (see right-hand panel).

Sorting words into groups that collocate with a key word is an exercise which encourages students to note collocations in a systematic way. The



completed activity provides an excellent paradigm for recording collocations.

Practice activities are easy to construct using words that have been recently studied. A good example is an odd-one-out exercise in which students find the one word (in a group) that does, or does not, collocate with a key word.

Grammar

At lower levels, complex grammatical structures can be taught lexically – as chunks or phrases. An example of this is the phrase 'I've _____ finished.' in which the gap can be filled with a variety of adverbs (*just, almost, already*) depending on what the learner really wants to say. These are concepts that low-level learners may often want to express but for which there is no need to be able to identify the tense as present perfect, or to understand the other uses of the tense, to be able to use the phrase effectively.

Items such as gerunds, infinitives and dependent prepositions can also be taught lexically and will gradually allow a more natural usage to enter into your student's use of language.

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Sources:

Lewis, Michael *The Lexical Approach* (Hove, LTP, 1993)
Lewis, Michael *Implementing the Lexical Approach* (Hove, LTP, 1996)
McCarthy, Michael and O'Dell, Felicity *English Collocations in Use* (Cambridge, CUP, 2005)

Teacher Tidbits

Reinforcing collocations with dominoes

Getting students to absorb collocations without wearing them down with a continual review of the same passage requires exercise variety. Try this matching exercise with domino tiles.

Create a template of 16 or so domino tiles and, using recent reading or listening passages, write the first word of a two-word collocation in the right-hand box of your first tile and the second word in the left-hand box of the next.

Continue until you have completed all the boxes, matching the last right hand box with the left hand box of the first.

	photo
opportunity	gesture
politics	open

Make enough photocopies for each pair and cut them into the individual tiles. Students complete the chain in their pairs and then produce sentences using the collocations. You can follow this with a whole class discussion about the suitability of the sentences produced and the usefulness of the collocations.

From an idea in Michael Lewis' *Implementing the Lexical Approach* (Hove, LTP, 1996)