

Sample Activities for the Classroom

Activity 1: Elementary School Level

“Daily activities” is the focus of an L2 writing lesson with your elementary school students. You elicit from your students words that they know on the topic and ask them to write these on a large **graffiti board** in the classroom in the form of a large sheet of paper where students can write and draw (Flint, Dollar, & Stewart, 2018). Students then add drawings and related vocabulary items. The board becomes a focus for the ideas and language of daily activities, allowing students to become immersed in the subject-related language. The teacher models use of some of the words in sentences, such as:

- *I wake up at 7 AM.*
- *I have a shower before I go to bed.*

Students then construct a paragraph on the topic, writing about their daily activities. This topic-focused task helps students’ development of vocabulary knowledge associated with a specific topic.

Activity 2: High School Level

Drawing on Nation and Gu (2007) regarding use of a textbook task originally appearing in Yeoh et al. (2002), Activity 2 presents a writing task designed for science students. This curriculum-based task for L2 settings encourages learners to interact with each other and the teacher to help learners clarify meanings and use vocabulary around a task designed to teach them that “objects with mass occupy space.”

Steps

1. Students are given this information: “Matter is anything that has *mass* and *occupies space*. Water, air, and soil are examples of matter. They have mass and occupy space. Living things such as plants and animals are matter. They too have mass and occupy space.”

2. The teacher asks the students to reflect on these questions:
 - What is mass?
 - Do water, soil, and air have mass, and do they occupy space?
3. The teacher reviews the meanings of these words that will be used in the activity: *record*, *weigh*, *total*, *attach*, *balance*, *observe*, *happens*. The teacher shares with students the sample sentences:
 - *Weigh an empty beaker and record its mass in grams.*
 - *Record the total mass of the beaker and soil.*
 - *Attach the balloons to the ends of a straw.*
 - *Balance the balloons by attaching cellophane tape.*
 - *Observe what happens to the balloons.*
4. The students complete these tasks in small groups:
 - Weigh an empty measuring cylinder and record its mass.
 - Half fill the cylinder with water and record the total mass.
 - Weigh an empty beaker and record its mass.
 - Half fill the beaker with soil and record the total mass.
 - Blow up two balloons.
 - Attach the balloons to each end of a straw and hang from the middle with string. Balance the balloons evenly by attaching cellophane tape to balloons as needed.
 - Using a pin, prick one balloon to release the air and observe what happens.
5. The students report on their findings to others to encourage productive use of the target language. The teacher asks them to explain what they understand about *mass* and *occupying space*.
6. In a later class, the teacher instructs the students to devise another small experiment related to mass and occupying space and to collaboratively write this up as a procedure. They are to do this without looking at the experiment just completed to encourage retrieval of target vocabulary items.
7. The teacher encourages students to share their written experiments with others in the class.

Activity 3: High School Level

Drawing on Nation and Gu (2007) regarding use of a textbook task originally appearing in Ash, Lofts, and Evergreen (1998: 28), Activity 3 displays a group-work activity for Grade 12 science students in a dual-language science classroom concerning “physical and chemical properties.” Use of the L1 and L2 is encouraged to help activate prior knowledge with support from the bilingual teacher as required.

Steps

1. The teacher asks students working in small groups to discuss their answers to these questions:
 - What is meant by the term *physical property*?
 - What is meant by the term *chemical property*?
2. The teacher opens the discussion up at a class level to determine if students understand the terms well.
3. Working in small groups, students are asked to describe the physical properties of *ice, honey, gasoline, wool, and cement*.
4. The teacher then asks the students what chemical property is shared by *gasoline, wood, kerosene, and coal*.
5. The teacher asks the students to classify each of these properties as a physical or a chemical property in their small groups:
odor, color, explosiveness, ability to warm when in the sun, solubility, smoothness, corrosiveness, lightness compared to air, colorlessness, susceptibility to rust, shininess, ability to float on water, being square shaped, tarnishing in air, producing bubbles when placed in acid
6. Any unclear vocabulary items in this list of properties are discussed as a class.
7. Students report their classifications to other groups in the class and attempt to clarify any unclear classifications.
8. The teacher asks the students to write a paragraph, with examples provided, that provides a description of the terms *physical property* and *chemical property*.

Activity 4: University Level

The L2 writing teacher in a university writing class is encouraging development of academic vocabulary in writing. A student has submitted an essay with this paragraph:

COVID-19 was not the first world pandemic and will not be the last. In fact, some scientists are surprised that there have not been more world pandemics over the past 100 years, with gains in air travel. Our close world is weak to fast spread of infections, as we all have found out. In reality, humans will need to live with a variety of infections in the future, although attempts to make safe and workable vaccines will need to go on.

The teacher underlined words that could be substituted with words from the AWL and asked the student to consider alternative words that convey a more formal or scholarly tone in a subsequent draft. The student then submitted this revision and sought feedback on the revisions. This process shifts the student toward use of a more academic register:

COVID-19 was not the first global pandemic and will not be the last. In fact, some scientists are surprised that there have not been more global pandemics over the past 100 years, with improvements in air travel. Our interconnected world is prone to rapid spread of infections, as we all have discovered. In reality, humans will need to live with a range of infections in the future, although attempts to develop safe and effective vaccines will need to continue.

Tasks and Discussion Questions for Teachers

1. L2 students at a secondary school are facing difficulty understanding some of the technical language in science textbooks. This includes words such as *method*, *data*, *analyze*, *predict*, *hypothesis*, *measure*, which they are not familiar with from their previous language studies. Teachers have seen students writing L1 translations in their science textbooks as annotations, with some students spending most of the class time on this, meaning they are not spending adequate time on set tasks in class. What do you feel the teacher could do to assist these students?
2. In an advanced EAP program, you want students to use newly acquired academic words in writing tasks that reflect the types of writing they will undertake at university. You feel that the current syllabus focuses on text types (e.g., argumentative, compare/contrast) that might not fully reflect the way words are used in academic settings. How might you approach this issue?
3. You have been contracted to prepare and deliver a 12-week course for a group of 16 government officials from Peru and have been advised that they all have an intermediate proficiency in English and are from a range of government departments including foreign ministry, commerce, and social services. How might you approach the vocabulary component for this program? What considerations would inform this process?