Speaking Game To Enhance Memory

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Topic related: New Technologies
Level: upper-intermediate
Time: 50 minutes – 1 hour
Speaking Focus: paraphrasing ideas, making comparisons

JUSTIFICATION

Memory is remarkably relevant to educators, not only for us individually as we age and worry about declining, but most important, for the function that memory retention plays in the teaching-learning process. Memory, as a notion, is often relegated to an insignificant role. However, it goes beyond this one-dimensional aspect of learning and, rather focuses on attending, learning, linking, remembering and using the knowledge and skills we face constantly. For teachers, memory is the only evidence that something or anything has been learnt. In a matter of fact, educators must guarantee that students attend to learning, attach new knowledge to previous learning, actively engage in learning, construct meaning and demonstrate that it has been assimilated correctly. Stimuli from mass media are bombarding our senses constantly and, unfortunately, people can attend to only a small amount of information at one time. Working memory is the element of memory where new information is held while it is mentally processed because information in working memory is fragile and easily lost, it must be kept activated to be retained. That’s why this game might be very useful to keep in mind new vocabulary while students are having fun. Personally, I’ve chosen the topic of new technologies and progress in order to introduce sciences-related words in the collaboration with the Sciences Department in a CLIL (Content Language Integrated Learning) project. Those terms are the following: (defined according to the Cambridge Dictionary)

- **artificial**: made by people, often as a copy of something natural
- **atom**: the smallest unit of any chemical element, consisting of a positive nucleussurrounded by negative electrons. Atoms can combine to form a molecule
- **automatic**: device that is able to operate independently of human contro
- **bacteria**: a very large group of microorganisms comprising one of the three domains of living organisms
- **cancer**: any type of malignant growth or tumour, caused by abnormal and uncontrolled cell division: it may spread through the lymphatic system or blood stream to other parts of the body
- **earphones**: a piece of electronic equipment that you put over or in your ears so that you can listen privately to radio, recorded music, etc.
- **exotic**: unusual and often exciting because of coming from far away, especially a tropical country
- **expand**: to increase in size, number, or importance, or to make something increase in this way
goggles: special glasses that fit close to the face to protect the eyes from chemicals, wind, water, etc.

interactive: describes a system or computer program that is designed to involve the user in the exchange of information

manufacture: to produce goods in large numbers, usually in a factory using machines

packaging: the materials in which objects are wrapped before being sold

phobia: an extreme fear or dislike of a particular thing or situation, especially one that cannot be reasonably explained

poisonous: very harmful and able to cause illness or death

pollution: damage caused to water, air, etc. by harmful substances or waste

pressure: the force you produce when you strain something

virus: an extremely small piece of organic material that causes disease in humans, animals, and plants

WARM-UP

1. Ask students what new technologies have been developed in the last hundred years.

2. Make groups of four students and tell them they must decide the ten best inventions of the century and why.

3. Ask for opinions and invite comments to debate.

PROCEDURE

1. Tell your students that they will pick a fold piece of paper and they will find one of the aforementioned term written inside. Remind them to write their name at the back in order to ease the teacher’s task of assessing who are the two winners.

2. Learners look at their words individually without showing them to their partners. Give them five minutes to make sure what they mean.

3. While hiding their words, they must mingle around the class with the others and tell to anyone the definition, paraphrasing, giving examples or synonyms without using the term itself or any other with the same lexical root. They must insist until their partner guesses the word. When it’s finally guessed, they have to remember the name of the person who told them that word. It’s forbidden to use any support to write down words or codes. Furthermore, the interaction should be one-to-one or one-to-two, maximum.

4. When everybody has interacted and introduced to each other, they sit down and write down all the words they’ve retained and the name of the classmate related to this word. Fifteen minutes is enough time to transcribe the whole thing.

5. The one who will remember the highest amount of words and names correctly related wins. But, in fact, there will be two winners: the person who defined the most retained word will be rewarded too. This is a good
source of motivation to interact in a more efficient way, it’s not only about memorising but also to help other to memorise better.

6. Go around the class telling students they are number one, two or three in turn. Put them in groups of at least three with each group being all the same number. One group with all numbers one, another group with number two, another with all number three.

7. Give out the sheets (number one, two or three). Tell them to read their text and help their group with anything they do not understand.

   a) The first text is about virtual reality and it contains the words “goggles”, “earphones”, “virtual”, “phobia” and “exotic”

   b) The second text is about artificial intelligence and it contains the words “automatic”, “packaging”, “poisonous”, “artificial” and “manufacture”

   c) The third text is about nanotechnology and it contains the words “pressure”, “pollution”, “interaction”, “atomic” and “virus”

8. Put students into groups of at least three so that each group has a person who has read each text. Explain that learners should tell each other about the text without using the same words. They must work from their notes and turn their text face down so they cannot read aloud from it.

9. Ask for their opinions about the matter and invite comments.

POSSIBLE FOLLOW-UP

In their groups, students are encouraged to choose ten brilliant inventions for the new century.

ASSESSMENT

If this activity type is new to your students, ensure adequate time is given in explaining and demonstrating the activity before the student begin. As students are doing the activity, be sure to monitor carefully and be available to offer advice and to feed in new language as and when required. Remind students that the process is just as important as the end and that you are watching throughout the whole task to see who is really making a real effort. Effort in speaking English, collaborating with classmates and using initiative should be praised and rewarded throughout the whole game. In general, once classmates have begun speaking, the best strategy is to manage without interfering too much. Stopping the activity in order to give feedback to students is best avoided unless an error is so serious that it makes it impossible for the others to understand or complete the task. Making minor corrections without halting the flow, or joining in briefly, using the correct forms as a reminder, are more successful as this allows the activity to continue naturally. Collecting anonymous sample sentences for class correction later provides useful feedback while avoiding interruption and embarrassment.

CONCLUSION

As students carry out the activities they revise specific lexical sets. They also extend their vocabulary as they explore new topic areas. The new vocabulary they learn during the activities is useful and relevant to what they
are doing and therefore will be memorable. As well as expanding learners’ vocabulary, this activity has been designed to give students the opportunity to express their opinions and feelings towards an issue within a topic, they often respond very well to the opportunity to express their views and to explore their ideas on issues that interest and affect them. This task is the perfect opportunity for us, teachers to get to know our students better and for them to get to know each other. Students often have the chance to work in pairs and small groups. In most cases I recommend mixing up the groupings regularly so that students work with a variety of different people. However, you decide to group your students, this should be taken into account at the planning stage. You may decide to put students into friendship groups for some of the activities or you may like to pair up weak and strong students or learners of similar levels for this activity.

Bibliografía

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Spratt, M; Pulverness, A. & Williams, M. 2011. The TKT (Teaching Knowledge Test) Course. Cambridge: CUP