

Language for ...

learning languages

Age: Adult

Level: Pre-intermediate

Time: 45–60 minutes

Language focus: key vocabulary in checking in techniques for learning a language

Skills: listening, speaking

Materials: video; one copy of the worksheet per student

Aims: to provide students with the language needed to discuss language learning and give advice to others



Teaching Tip: Encourage students to spell items of vocabulary aloud in class. This practises both spelling and the somewhat tricky pronunciation of the letters of the alphabet in English, especially the confusion between the pronunciation of a, e, i and r.

What are red words?

Ninety per cent of the time, speakers of English use just 7,500 words in speech and writing. These words appear in the Macmillan Dictionary in red, and are graded with stars. One-star words are frequent, two-star words are more frequent and three-star words are the most frequent. 'Language for' lessons are based on red words and encourage students to improve their English through communicative tasks using collocation and commonly used phrases.


- 1 Before class, make sure you are set up to play the video to your class. Make a copy of the worksheet for each student.
- 2 Start the lesson by asking students to tell you all the words they know connected with learning a language. Give them a few minutes to think about the words and discuss them in pairs or small groups. Then elicit examples from the class and write them on the board. Divide the words into different word classes (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs). Next, ask students to work in pairs and ask and answer the three questions in the warmer. Then get them to report their partner's answers to the whole class.
- 3 Remind students that the words for languages have several types of ending in English, e.g. *Spanish*, *Italian*, *Arabic*. Ask students to work individually and complete the second part of Exercise 1. Have them compare their answers in pairs and then check the answers with the whole class.
- 4 Tell students that they're going to watch some interviews with four people about the languages they speak and how they learn languages. Ask them to read the questions in exercise 2a carefully and check that they understand they need to write three languages in question 1, five in question 2 and four in question 3. Play the first part of the video once – perhaps pausing after each speaker to give students time to write. After the first playing, check progress and, if necessary, play the video again. Ask them to compare their answers in pairs. Check briefly with the whole class that they all have all the correct answers.
- 5 Before they begin exercise 2b, ask students to work in pairs and predict what vocabulary items might go in the gaps. Listen to their ideas as a class but do not correct them at this stage. Then play the remainder of the video so that they can check their answers.
- 6 Ask students to carefully read the sentences in exercise 3a and then work in pairs to complete the

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exercise. Encourage them to first complete any answers they immediately know so that they can be eliminated. Check the answers as a class.

- 7** Exercise 3b uses words first encountered in the previous exercises and in the video. Ask students to work individually to complete the exercise and then compare their answers in pairs. Check answers with the whole class.
- 8** Exercise 3c focuses on some common phrases related to language learning. This exercise can be done individually. Check answers with the whole class.
- 9** Divide students into pairs for exercise 4. Tell them to read the instructions carefully first and then to note down some ideas for the email. Remind them to look back at the words and phrases featured in earlier exercises. Ask each pair to produce one email written on a sheet of paper that they show to others.

 **Teaching Tip:** You can ask students to display their writing by fixing it using adhesive tape or Blu-Tac to a suitable surface such as the whiteboard or the classroom wall. Students can then circulate and read their colleagues' ideas. It also gives you an opportunity to correct any serious errors.

- 10** Ask students to read the questions in exercise 5 and discuss them in pairs or small groups. They should report any interesting answers to the class.

Answer key:

- 1**
1. Chinese
 2. Japanese
 3. French
 4. Polish
 5. Portuguese
 6. Turkish
- 2a**
1. English, Russian, Spanish
 2. French, Czech, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese
 3. Turkish, Chinese, Polish, German
- 2b**
1. widely
 2. techniques
 3. repetition
 4. context
 5. record; memorise
 6. visual
 7. expression; sense
 8. flashcards
 9. revises
 10. translation; long-term
- 3a**
1. d 2. g 3. a 4. e 5. c 6. i
7. h 8. b 9. j 10. f
- 3b**
1. record
 2. memorise
 3. context
 4. sense
 5. visual
 6. flashcards
 7. repetition
 8. revise
- 3c**
1. c 2. e 3. a 4. f 5. b 6. d
- 4, 5** students' own answers

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Q1: How many languages can you speak? Which ones?

Dan: I can speak three languages: German, French and Turkish.

Liz: I speak English and Russian reasonably well. I also speak little bits of French, Czech, Italian and Japanese.

Michael: Languages that I can speak well, English, Spanish. Languages that I can speak not so well, Chinese, German and a bit of French.

Wiktor: I speak Polish, English, German, a little bit of French and a tiny bit of Portuguese, so that's five.

Q2: Which languages do you think are the most useful to learn?

Liz: I mean, languages that are more widely spoken are always gonna be very useful but really I think all language is useful. You know, you can learn a word in one language that will help you learn something in another and it's, again learning any language and building up those techniques is always gonna help you in another way.

Michael: The future and the most widely spoken languages, perhaps languages like Chinese, Spanish...

Q3: What strategies do you use for remembering new words?

Dan: Repetition. Lots and lots of repetition. I think also being able to see the word in an authentic context is really useful cos it helps you understand exactly how the word is used.

Michael: Okay, to actually memorize stuff? Keep a vocabulary record. Keep keeping a record. Don't get lazy with it is a key thing. And I think there's various visual strategies you can take so if you've got a visual memory you remember things by looking at them, for example you could draw a picture with a particular word.

Wiktor: The first strategy I use is try to use a word or expression in a sentence that makes sense to me. So make a sentence that works in my context and is important for what I do. The second one is flashcards. I use flashcards a lot and whenever I've got five minutes, ten minutes, I just open my app and just go through my flashcards so that makes sure that I remember things and I revise things whenever the flashcard app tells me to which is also important.

Q4: Do you use translation to help you?

Liz: If I'm out and about I would. If I'm abroad and there's something that I need to know like 'What is the price of...,' 'What is this thing I'm buying?' or 'How do I say this to someone?'; I would use it then, but I wouldn't use it if I was studying, say, for exams because I don't think it really helps you remember things long-term. I think it's a kind of quick fix when you really need to know something then, but it's not actually going to do anything.

Dan: To learn a language, no, I don't use translation, mainly because I tend to forget the word as soon as it's translated so I prefer to learn it again in its context.

Wiktor: I use translation for many projects. I don't necessarily use it to help me with my language. I think when I learn from scratch, when I'm beginner in language, translation does not help me because I want confidence in speaking this language alone without, you know, using another language to help me. But when I'm more confident in a language then translation is great because it helps you understand how this language works as opposed to how another language works.

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1 Warmer

Ask and answer the following questions with a partner.

- How many languages can you speak? Which ones?
- Which languages do you think are the most useful to learn?
- Which is the easiest language to learn and the most difficult?

Complete the table.

Country	Language
1 China	_____
2 Japan	_____
3 France	_____
4 Poland	_____
5 Portugal	_____
6 Turkey	_____



2 Video

a. Watch question 1 in the video and write down:

1. Three languages they say they can speak well or reasonably well.

- _____
- _____
- _____

2. Five languages they can speak little bits of, a bit of or a tiny bit of.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

3. Four other languages that are mentioned.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

b. Watch questions 2 to 4 in the video and fill in the missing information.

1. Liz believes that languages which are _____ spoken are always very useful.
2. She also thinks it is very helpful to build up _____.
3. Dan says that lots and lots of _____ is one way to remember words.
4. He also believes it is useful to see words in an authentic _____.
5. Michael states that keeping a vocabulary _____ can help you to _____ words.
6. He also says that if you have a _____ memory, you can remember things by looking at them.

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7. Wiktor thinks it is also helpful to use a word or _____ in a sentence that makes _____.
8. He says that when he has a few minutes, he opens his app and goes through his vocabulary _____.
9. He _____ things whenever the app tells him to and this is also important.
10. Liz wouldn't use _____ if she was studying for exams because she doesn't think it helps you remember things _____.

3 Language in use

a. Read the sentences. Look at the words in bold and match them with their meanings a-j.

1. English, Spanish, Chinese and French are **widely** spoken.
2. For some people **repetition** is important for remembering new words.
3. Others like to see new words in an authentic **context**.
4. Keeping a vocabulary record can help you to **memorise** words.
5. Some people find it helpful to keep a vocabulary **record**.
6. If you have a **visual** memory, you remember things by looking at them.
7. It is useful to try to use an **expression** in a sentence that makes sense.
8. You can also use **flashcards** to help you remember words.
9. It is important to **revise** vocabulary regularly.
10. There are many different **techniques** for learning and remembering vocabulary.
 - a. the words surrounding a particular word that help to give it its meaning
 - b. a small card printed with words or pictures that helps you learn something
 - c. information that you keep (usually by writing it down or storing it on a device)
 - d. by a lot of people or in a lot of places
 - e. to learn something so that you remember it perfectly
 - f. a method of doing something using a skill that you have developed
 - g. saying or writing something again and again
 - h. a word or phrase
 - i. relating to things that you can see
 - j. to read again and try to learn something that you have studied before

b. Complete the advice for language learners using the words in the box.

visual **repetition** **record** **memorise** flashcards **context** **revise** **sense**

1. Keep a vocabulary _____ (1) as this may help you to _____ (2) new words.
2. It is a good idea to see words in an authentic _____ (3) and to try to use them in a sentence that makes _____ (4).
3. If you have a _____ (5) memory, you remember things by looking at them.
4. If you have a vocabulary app on your mobile phone, go through your _____ (6) regularly when you have a few minutes time.

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5. A lot of _____ (7) can help you remember new words.
6. Don't forget to _____ (8) new words and expressions regularly.

c. Match the words in the left-hand column with those in the right-hand column to make two-word phrases from the text.

- | | |
|---------------|------------|
| 1. reasonably | a. memory |
| 2. widely | b. record |
| 3. visual | c. well |
| 4. authentic | d. sense |
| 5. vocabulary | e. spoken |
| 6. make | f. context |

4 Communicate

A friend is planning to learn a new language. She asks for your advice. Write an email giving her at least five tips for learning and remembering new words and expressions. You can use ideas from the lesson as well as your own ideas.



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Dear ...

5 Discussion

- What have you learnt from the 4 exercises above that will help with your language learning in the future?
- Are there any other tips that you would add that you think could help people learn languages?

Red Words

Words highlighted in red in this worksheet are Red Words in the Macmillan Dictionary.