

EAL IN PRACTICE

SCAFFOLDING VOCABULARY

A practical PPP toolkit for multilingual classrooms

PRESENT

PRACTICE

PRODUCE

Vocabulary sticks when learners meet it clearly, retrieve it repeatedly, and then use it successfully.

Designed for:
EAL / MLL learners across subjects

Use it as:
a planning bank, CPD handout or classroom toolkit

Three stages. One clear progression.

The original resource organises vocabulary support around Present, Practice and Produce. This redesign keeps that structure while making the activities easier to scan, choose and use.

PRESENT	Introducing vocabulary Learners have little or no knowledge of the target language.	Make meaning visible. Build the first word-picture-sound connections.
PRACTICE	Reviewing and consolidating Learners have met the vocabulary but recall is still fragile.	Retrieve, discriminate, match and recycle until the words become easier to access.
PRODUCE	Using vocabulary Learners know the words but need support to use them in responses.	Give enough structure for successful use, then gradually remove the scaffold.

A useful rule of thumb

These activities are not locked to one stage. A task that presents vocabulary to one class might be practice for another. Choose the level of scaffold according to the learners, the language load and the challenge of the topic.

STAGE 01

PRESENT

Introduce the vocabulary for the first time. Make meaning, sound and spelling visible enough for students to get an early win.

Ask: What will help students form the first reliable connection with this word?

Jigsaw Vocabulary

PRESENT

WHY IT WORKS

Builds a direct visual connection between a word and its meaning, while the unique cut gives students a self-checking scaffold.

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Create cards with a target word and a matching picture.
2. Cut each card so the word and picture separate like a jigsaw.
3. Students match the pieces, say the word aloud, then check the fit.

VARIATIONS

- Split the word itself into two chunks so students rebuild the spelling.
- Place the picture behind the word pieces so students match image and sound pattern at the same time.

Teacher note: Useful when students have little or no prior knowledge of the target vocabulary.

Vocabulary Networks

PRESENT

WHY IT WORKS

Makes relationships between words visible and helps students connect new English vocabulary to existing knowledge.

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Put a simple mind map on the board or slide. Add one picture in each branch and the first letter of each English word.
2. Give students a blank version.
3. Students first add the word in their home language, then use matching or teacher clues to identify the English word.

VARIATIONS

- Use a prepared picture sheet and clues or hangman.
- Works especially well for categories, superordinates and hyponyms.

Flashcard Games

PRESENT

WHY IT WORKS

Provides fast, repeatable exposure to word-picture links and supports independent review.

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Create a small flashcard set with target words and clear images.
2. Run a matching round: word to picture, picture to word, then timed recall.
3. Recycle the set later as a quick starter or homework review.

VARIATIONS

- Use pictures only for greater recall demand.
- Use other digital flashcard modes for self-study.

Teacher note: Keep sets small enough for success - around 8 to 12 words.

Match the Word

PRESENT

WHY IT WORKS

Sharpens listening and phonological awareness by contrasting target words with near-sounding alternatives.

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Prepare picture cards for the target vocabulary.
2. Add several word cards that look or sound similar, for example sheep / ship / shape.
3. Students sound out the choices and match the correct word to the picture.

VARIATIONS

- Reverse the task: show one word and offer several pictures.

Vocabulary Lists

PRESENT

WHY IT WORKS

Creates a deliberate information gap so students must use meaning, image and spelling clues together.

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Use no more than 10 words on one page.
2. Create three columns: word, picture and meaning. Leave a different gap in each row.
3. Students use the available clues to complete the missing information.

VARIATIONS

- Provide the first letter or number of letters.
- Use a simple English definition or the student's home language as the meaning clue.

Pelmanism

PRESENT

WHY IT WORKS

Turns recall into a low-stakes memory game while repeatedly pairing spoken words with images.

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Prepare 20 cards for 10 words. Each word appears twice, ideally with a visual cue.
2. Place cards face down. Students turn two cards and say the words aloud.
3. If they match, the student keeps the pair. If not, the cards are turned back.

VARIATIONS

- Use one word card and one picture card for each pair.
- Use two different pictures of the same item so students focus on the English word.

Odd Word Out

PRESENT

WHY IT WORKS

Builds precision within a lexical set and encourages students to explain why a word does not belong.

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Prepare five word cards around one lexical set.
2. Add one distractor - ideally a similar-sounding word where appropriate.
3. Students identify the odd item and explain the reason.

VARIATIONS

- Mix in one random card for every four target cards.
- Ask pairs to create their own sets for another group.

Kim's Game

PRESENT

WHY IT WORKS

Develops rapid recall after a short period of focused exposure.

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Lay out up to 12 picture-and-word cards. Review pronunciation together.
2. Students close their eyes while one card is removed.
3. Students reopen their eyes and identify the missing item.

VARIATIONS

- Use pictures only.
- Remove three cards at once.
- Give the first letters of removed words as an extra scaffold.

Pictionary

PRESENT

WHY IT WORKS

Links vocabulary to visual meaning and gives repeated retrieval without feeling like a test.

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Draw a target item. Students guess the word.
2. Keep a visible word bank at first. Remove each word as it is guessed.
3. Repeat later with the word bank reduced or removed.

VARIATIONS

- Students draw for one another in pairs or teams.

Guess the Words

PRESENT

WHY IT WORKS

Uses the student's first language strategically to foreground the English vocabulary being learned.

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Prepare a short text in the student's first language and replace around 10 key words with English.
2. Students infer the meaning of the English words from context.
3. Reverse the pattern in an English text by replacing the same key items with first-language words; students restore the English vocabulary.

Teacher note: Keep the text short so the vocabulary remains the main cognitive focus.

Student-Generated Jumbled Words

PRESENT

WHY IT WORKS

Moves students from matching to creating a challenge for someone else, increasing ownership and attention to spelling.

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Use a labelled picture or diagram. Put the missing target words on the board in random order.
2. Students match each word to the picture, then jumble the letters.
3. They exchange their version with a partner, who unscrambles and matches the words.

VARIATIONS

- Run it as a supported pair task, pairing a multilingual learner with a confident English speaker.

Label My Picture

PRESENT

WHY IT WORKS

Encourages students to notice how much vocabulary they can attach to one meaningful context.

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Show a rich scene linked to the topic.
2. Students label as many items as possible.
3. Review together and add new words to the shared class bank.

VARIATIONS

- Add adjectives: a big, white fridge.
- Add jumbled spellings beside objects, keeping the first letter capitalised as a clue.

Venn Diagrams

PRESENT

WHY IT WORKS

Helps students organise similarities and differences across lexical sets, rather than learning words as isolated items.

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Choose two related concepts.
2. Students place words or pictures in the left, right or overlapping section.
3. Ask students to explain one similarity and one difference using the vocabulary.

VARIATIONS

- Use images as well as words for lower proficiency levels.

PRACTICE

Consolidate vocabulary through retrieval, matching, categorising and repeated noticing.

Ask: How can students meet this word again without simply copying it?

Match the Adjective

PRACTICE

WHY IT WORKS

Builds richer collocations and helps students move beyond single-word vocabulary.

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Prepare adjective cards with simple visual cues.
2. Prepare noun cards.
3. Students make as many sensible adjective-noun combinations as possible and record strong combinations on a mind map or planner.

VARIATIONS

- Limit the task to one adjective per noun for more support.
- Extend to multiple adjectives and then full sentences.

Draw and Replace

PRACTICE

WHY IT WORKS

Cycles students through meaning, spelling and visualisation using the same vocabulary set.

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Draw a scene containing the target vocabulary, taking suggestions from students.
2. Erase one item at a time and ask students to spell the word that would replace it.
3. Continue until the board contains mainly words, then ask students to redraw the original scene from the word prompts.

VARIATIONS

- Start with only the words and ask students to create the scene.
- Show the picture and have students write the corresponding words independently.

Board Games

PRACTICE

WHY IT WORKS

Adds repeated retrieval and quick switching between word and image.

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Create a simple board with a mix of words and pictures.
2. Students roll a die and move.
3. Landing on a picture means write the word; landing on a word means draw the picture. Incorrect answers move back.

Teacher note: The value comes from repetition, not complicated rules.

Ten Things That...

PRACTICE

WHY IT WORKS

Builds a semantic network around one central idea and encourages students to make connections between words.

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Write one central keyword.
2. Students generate ten linked ideas around it using a mind map.
3. Review the links and use selected words in short spoken or written combinations.

VARIATIONS

- At higher levels, require a mix of nouns, verbs and adjectives.

Alphabet Lists

PRACTICE

WHY IT WORKS

Turns category recall into a fast vocabulary challenge and stretches the breadth of a lexical set.

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Choose a topic, for example animals.
2. List A-Z and ask students to contribute a word for as many letters as possible.
3. Students can point to an image and add a word linked to it.

VARIATIONS

- Use only nouns, adjectives or verbs.
- Write the words into labelled image boxes to strengthen associations.
- Make it a standing competition; remove difficult letters such as Q, X, Y and Z if needed.

Odd Word Out - Review

PRACTICE

WHY IT WORKS

Promotes discrimination and explanation after students have already met the vocabulary.

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Create several short lists of words.
2. Students identify the odd one out.
3. They explain the relationship between the remaining words.

VARIATIONS

- Use text-to-speech or immersive reading support where available.
- Ask students to create a list designed to trick another pair.

Word Search / Word Snake

PRACTICE

WHY IT WORKS

Provides light-touch spelling review and visual recognition of word forms.

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Build a topic-based word search from the target vocabulary.
2. Students find and say each word, then use it in a quick phrase or sentence.

VARIATIONS

- Use a word snake where words run continuously through one long path of letters.

Teacher note: Use this as review, not as the first encounter with new vocabulary.

Bingo

PRACTICE

WHY IT WORKS

Creates repeated listening-and-recognition practice with strong student engagement.

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Teach the word set first.
2. Give students a blank bingo grid and have them write selected words in random positions.
3. Draw words or flashcards. Students mark the matching item; first complete line wins.

VARIATIONS

- Draw picture cards while students find the English word.
- Draw first-language cards while students locate the English equivalent.

Keyword Crossword

PRACTICE

WHY IT WORKS

Strengthens spelling while connecting separate items back to one central lexical theme.

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Choose a mystery keyword linked to the topic.
2. Build crossing words from the target lexical set so one letter from each contributes to the keyword.
3. Students solve the vocabulary first, then infer the hidden keyword.

VARIATIONS

- Let students design a mini version for a partner.

Cloze

PRACTICE

WHY IT WORKS

Checks whether students can select target vocabulary from context rather than recall it in isolation.

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Write short sentences that naturally use the target words.
2. Remove the target words to create gaps.
3. Students complete the sentences, then compare and justify their choices.

VARIATIONS

- Add a word bank for more support.
- Remove the word bank for stronger learners.

STAGE 03

PRODUCE

Help students use the vocabulary in speech or writing with a scaffold that makes success possible.

Ask: What support can I give now that I can remove later?

Online Scaffolding

PRODUCE

WHY IT WORKS

Uses a model as a live scaffold so students can focus on replacing key vocabulary rather than building every sentence from scratch.

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Prepare a short model text or framework.
2. Work through it with students, replacing selected keywords with their own ideas.
3. Use accessibility tools such as read-aloud, translation or immersive reading where appropriate.

VARIATIONS

- Gradually remove model words as confidence grows.

Build a Framework

PRODUCE

WHY IT WORKS

Reduces grammar load so students can concentrate on deploying the vocabulary they have learned.

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Create sentence frames with gaps for key lexical choices.
2. Match pre-taught vocabulary to the gaps using simple category cues if useful.
3. Students plan inside the framework, then write their own full version and add an illustration or diagram.

VARIATIONS

- Colour-code categories such as verbs, adjectives and nouns.

Shared Writing

PRODUCE

WHY IT WORKS

Uses peer language as an immediate model and creates a supported route into independent production.

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Pair a multilingual learner with a confident English speaker.
2. Provide a shared pattern, for example: My favourite animal is a ____.
3. The first student models and asks questions; the second adapts the pattern with their own vocabulary.
4. Pairs present the finished piece together.

VARIATIONS

- Swap roles so both students contribute language and ideas.

Teacher note: The aim is collaboration, not copying without understanding.

Simple Scaffold

PRODUCE

WHY IT WORKS

Gives just enough structure for successful production while still requiring students to recall the target words.

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Prepare a short framework with gaps.
2. Use pictures to signal the missing vocabulary.
3. Students recall and insert the words, then read the completed version aloud.

VARIATIONS

- Use translation support.
- Insert a picture directly into the gap.
- Provide the missing words on separate cards for matching.

Scramble Sentence

PRODUCE

WHY IT WORKS

Makes students reconstruct a complete model while noticing word order, punctuation and target vocabulary.

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Write a short model text.
2. Jumble the words in each sentence.
3. Students rebuild the sentences using capital letters and full stops as anchors.

VARIATIONS

- Start with one sentence at a time.
- Once reconstructed, students substitute one or two key vocabulary items with their own choices.

Picture Sequencing

PRODUCE

WHY IT WORKS

Transforms vocabulary into connected spoken or written language by putting items into a meaningful order.

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Prepare a sequence of pictures showing a process, event, story or recount.
2. Students order the pictures.
3. They annotate each image using the target vocabulary, then explain the sequence.

VARIATIONS

- Use speech bubbles for spoken language.
- For more complex tasks, add short notes under each picture.

PLAN YOUR OWN VOCABULARY SEQUENCE

From word list to successful use

Start with the lexical items you need students to use. Then choose only the activities that move them from first encounter to independent production.

LEXICAL ITEMS TO TEACH	ACTIVITIES	THINGS TO MAKE / PREPARE
PRESENT		
PRACTICE		
PRODUCE		

Keep it lean: a small number of carefully recycled words usually beats a long list that students meet once.