

TEACHING COMMUNICATION THROUGH FORMULAIC LANGUAGE



iCOM
Improving Communicative
Competence in Foreign
Languages from a Distance



A GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

How to unlock your students'
potential for communicative
competence in a foreign
language



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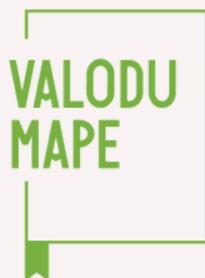
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WHY TEACH FORMULAIC LANGUAGE?

Formulaic language refers to the strings of words that people tend to recycle over and over in certain situations, and many different aspects of language fall into this category. Idioms (*that's a piece of cake!*), phrasal verbs (*go on, get up, etc.*), collocations (*strong coffee, grand opening*), and other highly useful, multi-word units (*by the way, out of line*) are considered formulaic. Learning formulaic language in a second language (L2) helps the learner in countless ways; [better knowledge of grammar](#), [new vocabulary](#), and [an understanding of the language in various social and cultural contexts](#) are just a few. Moreover, many phrases are linked to an area's culture, such as *it's not my cup of tea* being a reflection of the UK's famous adoration for tea as well as a communicatively useful phrase to express one's disinterest in something.

The concept of formulaic sequences is difficult to define as the literature on the topic uses such varying terminology, such as *lexical phrases, chunks, sentence strings, pre-fabricated chunks, idiomatic expressions*, and so on; however, Wray's (2002) definition of an FS seems to be the most encompassing of all that is involved in formulaic language:

a sequence, continuous or discontinuous, of words or other elements, which is, or appears to be, prefabricated: that is, stored and retrieved whole from memory at the time of use, rather than being subject to generation or analysis by the language grammar. (pp. 9)



[But why is teaching formulaic language so important?](#) For starters, by the time many people have the opportunity to study or live abroad, they have already been studying the target language for more than a decade; however, despite the amount of time and energy spent studying it at school, it is a very common occurrence that [they still struggle to communicate when trying to use their L2](#). A lack of communicative ability in a foreign language can also cause the learner to be perceived negatively by the community, which would then hinder that person's level of integration (Foster, 2009). Additionally, many jobs that require foreign language skills also require excellent communication skills far beyond the ability to structure sentences.





WHY TEACH FORMULAIC LANGUAGE?



For example, to keep customers satisfied in the hospitality industry, one needs to be able to speak to people in a way that is friendly and reassuring, which is quite a nuanced way of speaking. Likewise, in an office setting that requires working in a team, one must be able to speak in a way that is firm yet non-offensive while maintaining an air of openness, another difficult and highly nuanced task for a non-native speaker. Because of the nature of formulaic language being closely tied to socio-cultural contexts, [learning it is a highly useful method of developing communication skills in an L2 that go beyond the basic ability to construct sentences](#); it teaches learners to recognise the way native speakers of a language communicate, the nuanced (and sometimes culturally-significant) meanings of phrases, and in turn, how to come across as more native-like and thus become more socially accepted among the target language community themselves.

This handbook was created as part of the Erasmus+ project “Improving Communicative Competence in Foreign Languages at a Distance,” the goal of which is to make up for the lack of formulaic language-based teaching materials that currently exist and thus make it more feasible for foreign language learners to acquire communicative ability in their language of choice. The handbook is intended for use by foreign language teachers so that they may be able to implement more formulaic language-based lessons into their daily teaching practices to encourage the development of their learners’ communicative competence.

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CHAPTER 1: THE BENEFITS OF LEARNING FORMULAIC LANGUAGE

Formulaic language is an essential skill to learn in any second language since it offers a wide range of benefits. In this section these benefits are going to be further explored and connected with receptive and productive skills (listening, reading, speaking, and writing). Overall, the learning of formulaic language has been associated with increases in grammatical knowledge, fluency, pragmatics, native-like selection, and even cultural awareness, each of which will be detailed in this chapter.

There is a wide range of formulaic expressions, but learners will usually start learning utterances like How are you? Where are you from? to initiate a simple conversation. They can learn and accurately use these without even knowing basic grammar. At the beginning of the learning process, students are usually thrilled about the new knowledge and the possibilities of future communication scenarios in which they will use their new knowledge. In other words, students can benefit from the formulaic language right from the start since they are likely to absorb it, setting the basis from which the rest of the language will be built.

Communicative competence

One important feature of formulaic sequences is that they are stored in the brain as whole units rather than individual parts. In

fact, oftentimes formulaic expressions cannot be analysed by their individual words. The phrase *by the way* means nothing when analysed individually, but has meaning when used as a whole unit. Because of the nature of formulaic language being rather opaque and not easily analysed by its parts, it poses a great challenge to foreign language learners.

FORMULAIC LANGUAGE: QUICK FACTS

Formulaic language encompasses a very wide range of language and makes up more than half of speech, with some researchers estimating that **up to 80% of speech is formulaic**. According to Michael Lewis, the author behind *The Lexical Approach* (1993), the categories of formulaic language include:

- collocations (*wrong way, give way, the way forward*)
- fixed expressions (*by the way, in the way*)
- formulaic utterances (*I'm on my way; no way!*)
- sentence starters (*I like the way...*)
- verb patterns (*to make/fight/elbow one's way...*)
- idioms and catchphrases (*the third way; way to go!*)



On the bright side, learners who have a good command of formulaic language are able to produce longer runs of words with grammatical accuracy and fluency than those who do not. They also have the benefit of sounding more native-like, meaning they are more easily understood than learners who use grammatical, yet non-native-like speech.

Another benefit of learning formulaic language is that right from the beginning of the language learning journey, students have the opportunity for genuine communication. By building their knowledge of the target language through phrases rather than individual words, complete beginners can have a basic conversation even on day one of learning without understanding a single grammatical rule. This way of teaching provides students with frames upon which to build their knowledge of their L2 in a way that is not only grammatically accurate, but also sounds natural to the native ear.

Formulaic language is incredibly useful for the L2 learner, even up to the most advanced stages of learning. In fact, [studies show that advanced learners of foreign languages without a good command of formulaic language tend to perform worse on standardised tests and are perceived less positively by native speakers](#), regardless of their high proficiency in other aspects such as grammar and pronunciation. A shift away from teaching language in a decontextualised manner could ultimately lead to a society with more prepared and qualified citizens who can more readily integrate and communicate within the target language community.

Confidence and motivation

Additionally, formulaic language has been shown to improve learners' confidence in speaking and motivation to continue learning. When learners feel comfortable relying on phrases that they know are accurate and sound natural, they hesitate less and feel more confident knowing that the structures they are using are accurate. This can lead to a knock-on effect of feeling more motivated as a result. Demotivation in foreign language learners is all too common, especially when they experience the frustration of not being able to communicate with native speakers of a language they have studied for months or maybe even years.

As we will discuss later on in this handbook, formulaic language helps students to learn about language in the appropriate context in which it is used in real life, thus providing the learner with a clearer expectation of language in use and more confidence when communicating outside of the classroom. This is especially important for those who are seeking to relocate to another country for work; coherent communication is an invaluable skill that can put any applicant at the top of a list of candidates.

A shift in teaching methodologies

Nowadays, teaching methods rely greatly on the development of the four basic skills: reading, listening, writing, and speaking. Teachers boost learners' performance by using real-life situations to display vocabulary acquisition, grammar structures, etc.



However, there is still a tendency to rely on the memorisation of lists when learning new words, while formulaic language does not receive the same focus as it should.

Undoubtedly, these multi-word expressions are essential in the learner's journey, so it is the responsibility of educators to raise learners' awareness of the prevalence and importance of such expressions in daily communication.

Usually, learners tend to concentrate more on the memorisation of single words than fixed expressions, and such a shift from individual words to ready-made sentences can increasingly be shown in levels such as B1 (classified as independent learner) - a common minimum level requirement for different fields of work and education.



Grammar

Speaking a language with any degree of fluency and accuracy requires a knowledge of fixed expressions, idioms, slang, multi-word verbs, and other common speech formulas. Unfortunately for foreign language learners, learning the grammar and vocabulary of a language is simply not enough to become fluent and demonstrate accuracy when communicating. Grammar is notoriously difficult for learners to learn and teachers to teach, but thankfully, using formulaic language as a tool can help students learn more about the grammatical structures of their L2.

It could be helpful to think of formulaic language as the frames upon which learners can build their knowledge of grammar; at first, they may learn the phrase *How are you?* without understanding that *are* is the second person conjugated form of the verb *to be*, but later on as they learn about verbs, they will come to understand that they have already acquired an entire sentence that accurately uses the verb *to be*. *Because a learner does not need to understand the grammar of a formulaic expression in order to use it properly, it can be argued that these expressions can thus become the building blocks of a learner's understanding of the L2's grammatical structures.*

Zones of safety

A traditional view of these formulas sees these phrases as bits and pieces of fossilized language, yet idiomatic/proverbial phrases are not mere linguistic ornaments, intended to dress up a person's speech style, but are an integral part of the language that eases social interaction, enhances textual coherence, and, quite importantly, reflect

fundamental patterns of human thought.

*When learners build up a repertoire of phrases that they know they can rely upon, they become aware that these phrases are 'safe' to use. With some variation applied to such phrases, the learner knows they can safely insert different words (depending on the phrase) and thus comes to understand how to apply a grammatical rule. For example, the phrase *would + S + mind + V-ing* has many variations the learner can adapt to their needs and comfortably know their grammar is sound. This particular example can take many different forms, such as *Would you mind passing me the bread? Would John mind changing the time of his appointment? Would you mind quickly giving this a read?**

Producing grammatically-accurate sentences thus relies on the proper use of a vast range of formulaic sequences. Ready-made chunks or preferred sequences of words play a significant part in language acquisition and production. These formulaic language units include fixed phrases such as *on the other hand, all in all, or hold your horses* and longer phrases, clauses, and sentence-building frames of words such as *the bigger the better* or *if X, then Y*. For example, in this simple dialogue there are four possible formulaic expressions:

- Did you stay long at the party?
- No, I got out of there as soon as they ran out of food.

Learners who are not necessarily at the level of understanding the grammar of certain structures can thus still use grammatically-correct phrases with accuracy as they are stored and retrieved as whole units in the brain. There is little room for error in this way.



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Once a learner has gained enough grammatical knowledge, their awareness can be raised using the pre-fabricated repertoire of phrases already acquired. A slightly more advanced example could be the sentence frame *(S) + never would have (past participle + noun phrase) if (S) had known that (noun phrase)*, as in the sentence *I never would have taken that class if I had known that it required so much work.*

The learner may have not explicitly touched upon conditional statements or know the complicated rules of how to structure them, yet given this sentence frame and some practice with it, they would be able to use this form without even knowing why its grammar is correctly used.



Fluency

Fluency has been studied and defined by many researchers in different ways. In the dictionary, fluency is generally defined as *the ability to express oneself readily and effortlessly*. Many studies refer to fluency as effectiveness, lack of hesitation, speed and smoothness of oral delivery. However, not all teachers of foreign languages know that fluency, according to research literature, can be measured quantitatively: speed, pause and hesitation, and length of runs.

Processing speed

Studies have found that **formulaic sequences are processed more quickly than non-formulaic constructions and with fewer errors by both native and non-native speakers of a language**. For example, in one study conducted with speakers of English, it was found that the phrase *take the bull by the horns* was processed more quickly when the context established it as idiomatic (*attack a problem*) than when it was seen literally (*wrestle an animal*). They also showed that formulaic sequences such as *hit the nail on the head* were processed more quickly than similar but non-formulaic control phrases (*hit his head on the nail*).

David Wood, one of the most important contemporary researchers on the relation between formulaic language and acquisition of speech fluency, states that speech fluency has always been associated with notions such as smoothness or continuity of speech, naturalness of flow, or speed of oral performance. With formulaic sequences being processed in the brain faster than non-formulaic language, the use of these

expressions makes listening and speaking less effortful. In short, the more formulaic sequences that are acquired, the easier it becomes to understand and be understood by native speakers.

Regarding pause and hesitation, studies show that L1 speakers tend to pause at clauses' boundaries, while L2 speakers tend to pause within clauses. This is because native speakers rely on their repertoire of formulaic sequences to communicate. **Formulaic sequences are said to make up as much as 80% of spoken language**, so naturally, understanding some of the most common formulaic structures would make processing time faster and thus make producing those structures less effortful than if they were stored as individual pieces in the brain. As a result, speakers with many phrases stored as wholes hesitate less and produce fewer pauses.

Additionally, they tend to produce longer 'runs,' that is, series of words without pausing. Wood actually asserts that one of the hallmarks of fluent speech production is the production of multi-word clauses and phrases. When the mind is not busy attending to each individual word's meaning and structuring them properly into a sentence, it is free to focus on other elements of language production, such as pronunciation, thereby producing more fluent-sounding speech.

Teaching fluency using formulaic language

Teaching formulaic language may not be easy and language learners can be slow to develop knowledge and use of formulaic language despite the associated fluency benefits. Nevertheless, many researchers state that



multi word expressions are attractive for teaching because they provide bridges between lexicon and grammar, even for beginners in L2 language learning.

One method of increasing fluency through the use of formulaic language is something that will be discussed further in section two of this booklet, a process simply called *noticing*. If the student is able to 'notice' formulaic sequences, their brain automatically begins to recognise patterns and eventually, they become engrained in the long-term memory with enough exposure and practice.

A teacher can thus engage their students in awareness-raising activities by drawing their attention to the forms they would like to teach. This can be done by highlighting them in a text, explaining them orally, and having the students identify the target structure in a text or speech until finally they are able to produce it on their own. Research shows that great gains in fluency have been made with awareness-raising activities such as shadowing and dictogloss.



Pragmatics

The term *pragmatics* refers to an area of language study that looks at the relationship between language, meaning, and context. This includes register (formal versus informal), understanding what a speaker says versus what they *mean*, and the nature of interaction between speakers. Formulaic expressions are strongly linked to pragmatics in that certain expressions serve certain functions. For example, the phrase *If I were you, I would...* serves the function of giving advice while not coming across as too pushy. The phrase *just another day in paradise* serves the function of sarcastically expressing one's discontent with their current situation.

These nuances in language are incredibly difficult for a non-native speaker to pick up on, but [with the study of formulaic language, it is possible for them to learn a lot about the pragmatic functions of language structures](#). Functions such as apologies can take on completely different meanings based on the formula used; for example, the phrase *I'm sorry* carries a lot less weight than the expression *I'm terribly sorry, I sincerely apologise*. By understanding the dimensions of the socio-cultural situation, the learner can understand and use the formulas in the appropriate context.

Register

It is also important to mention the existence of many different aspects that could affect a cultural situation. For instance, register is something that changes depending on the formulaic language used. The speaker's formality level can increase or decrease based on the expressions used. It is inappropriate to use the same register with

one's boss as the register used with friends. Making a request, for example, should in theory take a more formal tone in the workplace. *Would you mind at all if I took a day off next week?* carries a more formal and work-appropriate register than *Can I take a day off next week?* For non-native speakers, it tends to be challenging to understand when to use different phrases to achieve different functions by changing register.

Teaching pragmatics

Although some textbooks cover linguistic functions such as apologies, offers, invitations, and requests, they tend to be decontextualised. This can lead students to produce phrases that are grammatical, but not formulaic, and thus may not have the tone that they wish to convey. For example, a non-native speaker might say *I do not want that* rather than the fixed expression *no thank you*, the former of which has a rude tone to native speakers. The non-native speaker would not intend to come across as rude, but might be perceived that way without knowing the correct expression to use in that context.

[Therefore, it is highly important for teachers who wish to teach genuine communication that they raise their students' awareness about the existence and function of pragmatic phrases](#). One way this can be done is through roleplay activities. A teacher can provide the students with a list of formulaic expressions based on pragmatic category; for instance, a list of phrases that can be used to refuse an offer, ranging from most to least polite. The students can then create dialogues and perform them for the class, attempting to use the appropriate phrase in context. The rest of the class can then judge the appropriateness of the formulaic phrases used



in each dialogue and discuss why or why not they were appropriate. Roleplays can thus link the language used with its socio-cultural context, making it easier to transfer this knowledge from the classroom to real life.

Another useful activity for students is to compare formulaic expressions with equivalent expressions in their native language; this can help them understand the nuances and differences between what they may think is appropriate in their L2 compared to their L1. Some languages are known to be more 'direct' than others, with requests being more like commands, which can be misinterpreted as rude by a native speaker if translated directly. Something that may be perfectly polite in a student's native language may not be polite at all in their L2, so this is something that a teacher in a homogenous context (for example, teaching Spanish to a group of British students) can implement in class. Students can analyse and discuss these slight differences in nuance and make sure they do not make any transgressions in terms of pragmatics.

In VET

Pragmatics should especially be included when teaching Vocational Education Training (VET) courses, as **linguistic functions are absolutely essential to get right in the workplace or a person may be at risk of losing their job due to poor communication skills.**

VET learners might need precise formulaic language depending on their field (this could include common technical words and expressions and extremely specific multi-word expressions used only in some areas such as biology or economics) and, as mentioned

above, depending on other factors such as the linguistic characteristics and socio-cultural norms of the country where they intend to carry out their tasks. It is thus recommended that foreign language teachers working in the VET sector pay special attention and enforce the importance of pragmatics in the classroom and implement activities that attempt to emulate real-life situations that may arise in the workplace. The use of authentic materials is of particular value as well.



Native-like Selection

It is often the case that people who have been studying a language for many years in their home country experience great difficulty communicating when they arrive in the target language community. This experience can be incredibly frustrating and invalidating to someone who has spent countless hours studying the grammar and vocabulary of a language, only to discover that they cannot easily understand native speakers, and native speakers cannot easily understand them.

One explanation for why this happens is that classroom learners are taught 'classroom language,' that is, language which does not reflect the way people speak in real life. [This skill that many foreign language students seem to lack is called native-like selection](#), a term originally coined by Pawley and Syder in 1983.

Native-like selection is defined as *the ability of the native speaker to routinely convey their meaning by expressions that are not only grammatical, but also native-like*. For example, a non-native speaker might say something like *you may pass in front of me* to indicate that someone else can move before them in a queue. To the native ear, this sentence sounds grammatically correct, but situationally inappropriate, since native speakers would use the much more common phrase *go ahead*.

Over the years, linguistic research has demonstrated that learning formulaic language is an effective means of improving one's native-like selection ability. Further research into which learning methods serve to accomplish this goal reveal that [large](#)

[amounts of native or native-like input holds the key to developing native-like selection.](#)

Effects of poor native-like selection skills

This can have a number of effects on the listener, one being that they may undervalue the speaker's language level. Naturally, native speakers of a language tend to hear grammatical mistakes or 'unnatural' ways of expressing a thought and generate judgments as a result.

One effect of this bias can be lower scores on standardised tests than the learner deserves; it has been found that students who lack native-like selection skills score lower on standardised tests than those with a good command of it, regardless of their true level of proficiency. In other words, poor native-like selection can 'trick' the listener into thinking the speaker's proficiency is lower than it actually is.

Another effect that grammatical yet unfamiliar utterances can have on the listener is the possible violation of social norms. Since native speakers tend to recycle the same patterns of words in different situations, each bringing their own nuanced meanings to the conversation, it can be difficult for non-native speakers to grasp when to use them appropriately.

For example, they may mistakenly use phrases in professional situations that have a very casual tone to them, thus potentially making them sound unprofessional to their co-workers or superiors. Or, in a casual outing, a non-native speaker may use phrases that sound exceedingly formal, which may be off-putting to the others.



Simply put, those who sound more native-like tend to have an easier time integrating into a host society. Learning the expressions that native speakers use in various situations can help the learner to understand the nuances of language as well as more accurately express themselves when communicating. Especially for those who intend to use their foreign language skills to work, knowing the appropriate language to use depending on the situation can make or break a person's success in a job; communication is a soft skill that is becoming more and more recognised for its value in the workplace.

Although full immersion in the target language community is the ideal way to improve, thankfully there are supplementary activities that can be adopted into the foreign language classroom or practised individually for those who do not have the opportunity for immersion. For example, studies have shown that learners who do a lot of reading and listening in the target language in their free time tend to have better native-like selection ability.

Challenges for the learner

However useful this skill may be, it is not without its obstacles for the learner. One challenge is the amount of exposure to the target language that is required for a learner to acquire native-like selection skills.



Cultural Awareness

Formulaic language cannot be studied outside its socio-cultural context. After all, formulaic expressions are not only linguistically, but also largely socio-culturally-based. While an L2 learner should not be able to directly translate every formulaic expression they encounter, understanding the context surrounding them provides a broader understanding of the native L2 community and enables cultural awareness. Formulaic language can contribute to clarity of expression and ease of comprehension, both essential for effective communication, which is a prerequisite for cultural understanding.

Formulaic language, for example, idioms, can often reflect the culture of the target language community. As mentioned previously, the idiom *it's not my cup of tea* reflects the famous British adoration for tea while also conveying a communicatively-useful message. On the other hand, in China the phrase *chī le ma* (*have you eaten?*) is commonly used as a greeting to ask whether the other person is well, thus reflecting the Chinese culture placing high importance on cuisine.

Interaction between formulaic language and culture

The role of formulaic language in the context of language socialisation is significant. It is often crucial for novices to be aware of dimensions such as politeness, hierarchy, social identities (including social roles and statuses) and relationships. [Formulaic language thus becomes not only an end of socialisation, as a means of engaging with others in daily life, but also a resource for](#)

[welcoming and integrating newcomers to the culture \(with its norms, values, identities and views\) of the target language community.](#)

It has been found that formulaic language is used to signal 'in-group' and 'out-group' status, playing a role in one's group identity. Put simply, this means that the use of certain phrases can either bond or estrange a speaker from a certain group. In our native language, for example, we use formulaic expressions to signify to our peers that we are 'one of them.' Adolescents are especially well-known for this phenomenon by creating and using slang that is known among themselves, but perhaps not older adults. It is also common for certain countries and regions to use phrases that other countries/regions do not use, thereby signalling to inhabitants of that area that they are from there. For example, in England, a common casual greeting is *you alright?* whereas that would sound incredibly odd in the United States where *what's up?* is a casual greeting. A person's cultural background can be inferred by their use of formulaic language.

What this means for non-native speakers is that [the appropriate use of formulaic language can actually increase their acceptance and integration among the target language community, and likewise, a lack of formulaic language can signal that the speaker is not 'one of them' and can thus make them be perceived negatively by native speakers.](#) A non-native speaker who learns to use the regional expressions where they live is more likely to successfully integrate into that society due to this in-group/out-group bias. To use the expected formulaic sequences based on socio-cultural context is to respect the norms of the target language community.



In the classroom

Formulaic language is also used in language play, which involves the use of language to construct and engage in playful activities, such as games or less formalised activities like narratives and joking. The language can be either manipulated itself for play or be used to engage in play, making it a rich source of language teaching activities. Language play may also function as a way of building up formulaic sequences through experimentation.

Moreover, the learning of formulaic expressions contributes to normalisation, while play can contribute to the forces of change due to its creative nature. Play related to the learning of formulaic language also acts as a memory aid, resulting in greater efficiency. A combination of formulaic language learning and language play boosts both creativity and fluency while at the same time encouraging cultural understanding and integration, thus proving to be a very useful resource.

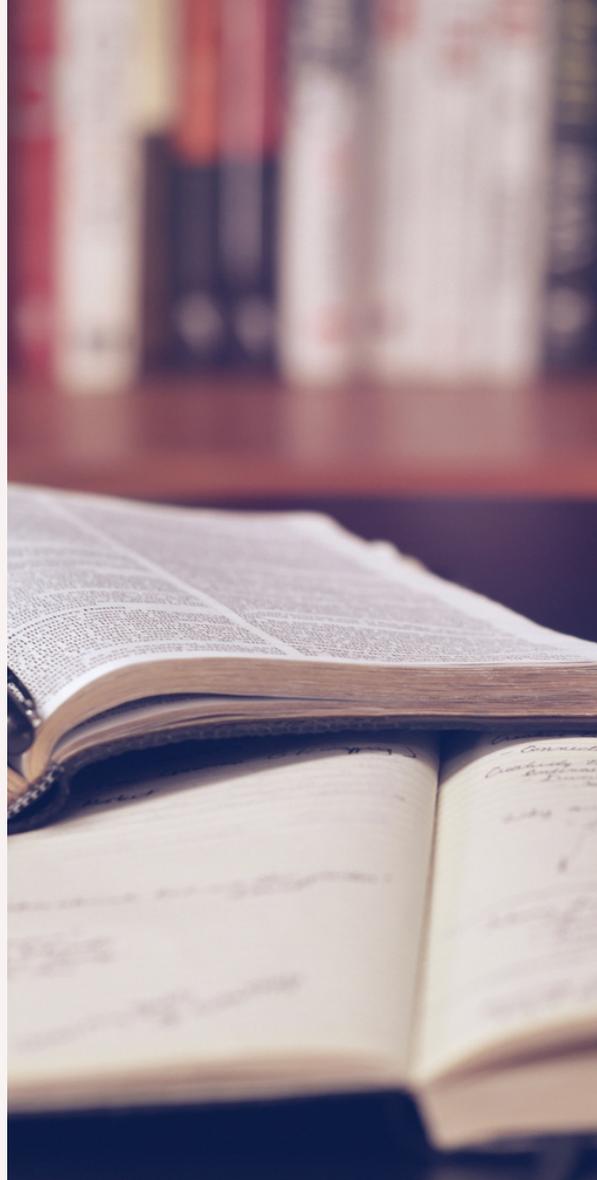


CHAPTER 2: HOW FORMULAIC LANGUAGE IS LEARNED

Noticing

There are three major processes when teaching formulaic sequences which are noticing, retrieval and generation. This section of the handbook focuses on *noticing* which is the first major process that encourages the learning of lexical items. It directs language learners' attention towards a formulaic sequence and makes them aware of its advantages and use. It may be accomplished by a teacher informing students of the fundamental role formulaic sequences play in language and how they can help them demonstrate a good command of the language.

As the lexicon is far too vast to 'teach,' the Lexical Approach mentioned earlier puts emphasis on getting students to notice 'lexical chunks' during their exposure when learning a language. The teacher's role is to help students to develop their 'noticing' skills, or in other words, to turn *input* (language exposure) into *intake* (language acquisition).



Noticing is considered to be essential for converting input into intake during second language acquisition. Noticing has a sort of enhancing influence on recognising form/meaning distinction, internalising the given input by registering features in the input (noticing), and identifying the differences between the given input and the learner's own generated output (noticing the gap). Noticing at the level of awareness is necessary for input to become intake. Basically, the combination of input and noticing is what causes the sequences to become internalised.

Second language learners might not naturally retrieve formulaic language from the long-term memory as natives would due to the fact that these formulaic expressions may not be fully



internalised as wholes yet. One of the reasons could be that there have not been enough instances of an expression for learners to notice it, and by extension, internalise it.

NOTICING: METHODOLOGY

Noticing skills can be honed by introducing students to reading materials that include formulaic sequences and are made salient for students to notice. Teaching a list of expressions can be done using the following pedagogical approach:

1. Explain that native speakers do not only use single words when speaking or writing. In fact, to demonstrate a good command of a language, one must include these expressions as much as possible, both in spoken and written communication. It is important to remember not to overuse some of these expressions, but instead use a variety of them.
2. Use authentic sources to find real-life examples of formulaic expressions. Get students to identify the ones they recognise, and discuss the ones they don't.
3. Implement activities where students will have plenty of opportunities to retrieve the formulaic expressions they have learned. Ensure that they are using them in the right context (refer back to the section on pragmatics in chapter 1 of this handbook for more information on how to do this).

Promoting noticing in the classroom

It is claimed that in the completion of tasks through interaction, learners will pay attention to the input. If it is comprehensible, they will potentially be conscious of some linguistic items they had not noticed before and this will therefore lead to them noticing linguistic gaps that they might have in their knowledge. Therefore, attention plays an important role in the learning process. Attention is an "essential prerequisite" for noticing.

In the classroom, noticing is promoted through activities and procedures whereby targeted features of the input are highlighted in order to facilitate the process of becoming intake. In order for students to develop noticing skills, there are numerous activities teachers can implement in class. See the figure to the left for some research-based suggestions. Additionally, noticing can also be promoted through corrective feedback, which will be explained further in the following section.

Noticing can and should be promoted in the classroom. The following are tips to encourage your students' noticing skills:

- Avoid distraction and ensure the students can focus solely on the formulaic sequence(s) being studied
- Use the term 'noticing' in your daily classroom speech and ask students to discuss features they notice by explicitly asking
- Ask students to recall the different contexts in which they have noticed a formulaic sequence after being introduced to it



- Teach them to quickly scan two slightly different texts and pick out the differences. Alternatively, ask them to pick out the difference between a written text and slightly different audio recording of it. This can also be done with a text that has been proofread; students can mark the differences they notice between an original and a proofread text.
- Ask students to identify instances of formulaic sequences they have been taught in authentic materials such as videos or written text



Situational Learning

The term *situational learning* refers to acquiring or building new knowledge in a specific social and cultural context. When it comes to language, the situation or context in which the acquisition of new lexical items takes place is extremely important. **In order to construct meaning from diverse speech acts and comprehend them, speakers must associate the situation with the appropriate language to be used.** It has been suggested by linguistic researchers that the choice of words in linguistic expressions is as important in constructing meaning as the situation in which they are used. Some formulaic expressions are also known as *situation-bound utterances*, meaning they are used in highly specific contexts and tied to the communicative situation in which they are used. For example, the idiom *break a leg* is only used in the context of wishing someone luck before a big performance, and is therefore bound to that situation.

What happens when people communicate is that they eventually associate the language used with the context in which it was used. Thus, speakers tend to choose their words carefully based on situation-bound utterances they have experienced in the past. **For non-native speakers, this requires a massive amount of exposure to the target language in as many different contexts as possible.** Foreign language teachers should always link the formulaic expressions they teach with the appropriate context for them to be used. Learners should eventually be able to create a 'database' of associations and be ready to use the appropriate formulaic expressions in their communication with other interlocutors.

Risks of learning out of context

Research on learning formulaic sequences in context has revealed that non-native speakers tend to process the literal before the metaphorical meaning of a formulaic expression because of the lack of native-like socio-cultural experiences. For example, a native speaker might say *we should get together soon* as a closer to a conversation, which a non-native speaker may take literally and attempt to make plans on the spot. Of course, native speakers of English know that *we should get together soon* is simply a polite way of saying *I've enjoyed this chat, but I have to go now* and not necessarily an invitation to make more plans.

Without much exposure to such a situation, it is incredibly difficult for a non-native speaker to grasp the meaning behind this sort of phrase. This lack of socio-cultural, situational knowledge can lead to some major misunderstandings that may be able to be avoided if learners are taught more formulaic sequences in association with their appropriate contexts. The non-native speaker is at risk of breaking social norms without this specific knowledge, which could impact them quite negatively as a result.

Teaching formulaic language in context

How can the teaching of formulaic language account for context when the classroom is so secluded from real life? Learners will benefit from conversations, debates, role plays and topic discussions as these activities can offer them a close-to-authentic context for effective language learning. Recommended activities are oriented towards situational language



learning in which teachers need to create or recreate the appropriate context and bring it as close to reality as possible.

It would be easy for teachers to hand out a list of formulaic expressions and try to explain in which situation each of them is used, but unfortunately this will not do much to create connections in their mind between the language and context. *Instead, teachers should opt for activities that attempt to simulate real life.* A rising trend nowadays is the use of augmented reality (AR) to simulate different situations, where a student can appear to be in a shop, an office, or any other situation the software can produce. If such advanced technology is not available, other virtual environments can be utilised such as online language learning communities where users exchange conversation about a given topic. Even without any type of technology, real-life situations can be emulated using activities such as roleplays and debates where students are presented with a topic and must produce language appropriate to the given context.

All things considered, situational learning can contribute to the effective learning of formulaic language as it involves the connection of formulaic sequences with the social and cultural context in which native speakers use them. *If the teaching of formulaic sequences becomes more situated and less abstract, learners will have more exposure to the target social and cultural environment and as a result gain valuable experience in lifelike situations.* This process will not only help them acquire new formulaic expressions but also enable them to retrieve and use them in the correct context.



Exposure to Native Speakers

In order to create a solid foundation for the learning of formulaic language, learners require a massive amount of exposure to native speakers. Interaction with native speakers will be discussed in the next section, but for now this section will discuss the importance of simply being exposed to the target language without necessarily interacting in it. Research has found that learners who consume large amounts of authentic materials (such as television series, films, books, online blogs, etc. directly from the target language community) gain a greater sense of how formulaic language works and are better able to recognise and produce phrases that sound fluent and native-like.

Use of authentic materials

Simply by being exposed to native speakers, learners can begin to recognise patterns in language and start to engrain them into their memory. Reading and watching television/films in the target language also helps them to learn in context; the formulaic sequences they encounter are likely to appear in recurring situations that are common to the context surrounding the story. For example, a television series about poor teenagers growing up in Northern Ireland will show a learner over and over again how speakers from that specific socio-cultural context greet each other, end a conversation, give advice, dispute, and much more. Research carried out on the accuracy of language in films versus real life shows that formulaic language in films has a high correlation with real-life speech,

meaning learners can safely rely on them to show how language is used in the real world.

One of the great benefits of exposure to the target language, especially using authentic materials, is that students will have the opportunity to encounter expressions that are commonly used in real life, but seldom taught in the classroom. As mentioned previously, it is a rather common experience for learners to study a language for years before finally attempting to communicate within the target language community, and consequently become disillusioned when they discover that the way people speak in real life is very dissimilar to how they speak in specifically-designed teaching materials. [Learners can therefore become more prepared to enter the target language community if they are aware of the everyday expressions that are used in different contexts.](#)

Nowadays there are many and varied resources online. For instance, many language learning apps, a myriad of audio-visual resources (including professionally-made and amateur material that can include subtitles, transcriptions and other kinds of assistance to the learning process), books, games and many more exist today. It is relevant to select and/or create adequate resources to reach the class aim based on the students' purpose for learning, whether that be for education, fun, immigration, or work.

Exposure for different levels

All learners require massive amounts of exposure to the target language to acquire formulaic language, but there is no 'one size fits all' approach for providing native or native-like input to your students. The



following are suggestions for exposing students at different levels to the target language.

Beginner levels (A1-A2): Students should be exposed to short, basic conversations to start, and repetition is key in this stage. This type of speech should be slow and targeted, meaning only a few expressions should be featured. The teacher can even act as both interlocutors in a conversation, simulating a basic conversation numerous times until the students are able to repeat it themselves.

Intermediate levels (B1-B2): When the student has reached an intermediate level, they could be exposed to audio-visual material with prepared expressions in specific situations. At this level, the student should be able to 'notice' the formulaic language, take note of it, and add it to their knowledge base with their teacher's assistance. At the upper-intermediate level, authentic materials are of particular importance, and exposing them to newspapers, blogs, television, films, etc. from the target language community in combination with awareness-raising activities as much as possible aids their learning of formulaic language greatly.

Advanced levels (C1-C2): At this point, the students should know how to use and interact with formulaic language. They should be able to find examples in diverse types of learning material and be able to produce appropriate and coherent speech in which they master formulaic language. Exposure should involve more challenging authentic materials such as classic literature or poetry whose content is not typically as easily understood as, for example, a news article.



Genuine Interaction in the Target Language

Interaction in a foreign language can happen between a teacher and a learner, learner-learner, learner-author of text, and learner-member(s) of the target language community. *The value of genuine interaction in the target language cannot be ignored and is one of the most effective ways of acquiring language.* In the process of interaction, the success of the communication depends on whether both speakers' messages are understood by the other. Interaction can break down because of elements like poor pronunciation, inaccurate grammar, incorrect use of a vocabulary item, or inappropriate use of formulaic expressions, so it is important for foreign language teachers to get their students to communicate as much as possible in class. The communicative approach is especially useful.

Part of the teacher's art is to create types of situations in which interaction naturally blossoms. Through interaction, students can increase their language store as they listen to or read authentic linguistic material, or even the output of their fellow students in discussions or other activities. Students use everything they have intentionally studied or casually absorbed in order to be understood: in those real-life exchanges, expressing the intended meaning is the goal. They also gain experience by creating messages from what they hear, since comprehension is the basis of creation.

Wood (2002) highlights the link between genuine interaction in the target language

and formulaic language, stating that "it is only in spontaneous communication that the immediate and flexible selection of formulaic sequences becomes apparent." *Interaction seems to be the key to facilitating acquisition of formulaic sequences;* the latter plays an important part in enabling the participants to accomplish communicative goals together, assisting each other in finding the appropriate sequences to fit with particular needs.

Feedback and interaction

If a learner is not understood, they will receive feedback from the other interlocutor in one way or another to let them know their message was lost. This can be something basic, like receiving a response that does not fit with the question asked, or something known as a *recast* whereby an interlocutor correctly rephrases the other's incorrect sentence. Receiving feedback is an essential part of learning from interaction, otherwise the learner will not know when they have made a mistake or how to correct it.

Learners create discourse that conveys their intentions in communicative activities, but teachers should encourage this to be done in a way that is targeted and focuses on specific forms in order for the knowledge to move from the short-term to the long-term memory. Students can be asked, for example, to focus on only a set list of formulaic sequences when doing a communicative activity. This ensures they will stay focused and that both interlocutors are familiar with the phrases at hand, thus facilitating the process of giving feedback as well.

Interaction with native speakers is also a good way of gaining experience with formulaic language. It allows students not only to



experience and observe how formulas are combined naturally, but also to test their own phrases and receive feedback. Written communication (via exchanging emails or chatting, for example) is also proven to help learners acquire formulaic sentences. While oral interaction has great results, written sources should not be overlooked.

Interactive tasks

Interactive tasks facilitate flexibility with formulaic sequences. Through an analysis of learner language production in small-group communication, one study found that the learners worked together and encouraged each other to use formulas to move the conversations ahead efficiently. More specifically, tasks involving information gaps such as jigsaws, in which learners master information in small groups and then regroup to share it with members of other groups, encourage the type of interaction in which learners can help each other to use appropriate formulaic sequences.

One example of an interactive task can be something known as 'mingle jigsaw' where learners are given a text containing formulaic sequences they are familiar with. They must then try to recall the entire text, sharing the parts they remember with other students in the class and building the text up again using the collective knowledge from the class. It is suggested to do this activity orally first, then in writing when the text becomes clearer in the students' minds. A variation on this activity can be to give students different pieces of text to memorise, then share their memorised text orally with a partner until they are both able to remember each other's texts. This type of task involves genuine interaction and also a

good amount of repetition which is necessary for the formulaic sequences to become entrenched in the long-term memory.

The following are some interactive activities to try:

- listening to authentic materials (teacher-talk if it is a native speaker, audio clips) to use in some productive activities
- listening and speaking in reaction to pictures and objects, role playing, acting and discussion
- joint tasks
- analysis of film scenes with native speakers interacting with each other
- poetry reading and creation
- preparing dialogues and plays
- cross-cultural interaction: value sharing and exchange of views, recognition of target language community stereotypes, discussion with native speakers
- interaction between reader and text: interpretation, expansion, discussing alternative possibilities and solutions
- class newspaper or any material that will be read by someone else afterwards
- learning grammar not through rules, but through games
- interactive and proficiency-oriented testing, real-life situations.



Repetition

Repetition is a long-known method of language instruction and has had its fair share in the spotlight of studies in applied linguistics. Repetition has traditionally been associated with drills where the learner (sometimes mindlessly) repeats words or phrases over and over until they 'stick' in the long-term memory. Although this method does help the learner memorise words and phrases in the long-term, if not done in the right way, it can actually be a deterrent to their communication skills. This is because oftentimes when learners engage in repetitive drills, the context in which they do them is nothing like the context in which the words would be used in real life. [This leads to the learner being able to produce the sounds and words in the correct order, but not to apply their learning to the appropriate situation. They are essentially unable to associate what they learned with its communicative function.](#)

When we learn our native language as children, the more a string of words is repeated to us, the more the words become associated together in the brain as a whole unit, or 'chunk,' which eventually enters into the long-term memory. The brain is built to naturally recognise and memorise patterns and associate them with specific situations, thus this is basically how formulaic language is acquired in an L1. Not only the repeated exposure to formulaic expressions, but also the repeated opportunity to retrieve them and apply them in real life, both contribute to being able to instantaneously process them when communicating. As previously discussed, the process of acquiring formulaic language is much more challenging for the L2 learner, and thus they require many more of these

repeated opportunities to notice and retrieve these expressions.

The power of repetition in the classroom

To mitigate the issue of repetitive drills being so decontextualised, teachers can harness the effectiveness of repetition while engaging in communicative tasks. It is suggested that in order for the knowledge to be applied in a more spontaneous situation, [learners should engage in targeted communicative practice with specific formulaic expressions.](#) This should be a slow progression from receptive (reading and listening) to productive (writing and speaking) skills and start off with repeated exposure to authentic sources. Exposure to native speakers, as discussed in its dedicated section, holds the key to acquiring formulaic language; however, this is no easy task for L2 learners due to its sometimes 'opaque' nature.

It should be noted that more repetition is required depending on how far the target language is from the learner's native language. A native speaker of German would not need as much repeated exposure to acquire a word or phrase in English as a native speaker of Mandarin, for example, would.

Another effective means of harnessing the power of repetition in acquiring formulaic language is [using music as a teaching tool.](#) The use of music as a pedagogical instrument in the foreign language classroom has many benefits, but here it will be discussed within the scope of the topic of formulaic language. Most people have had the experience of getting a song 'stuck in their head' where a



song plays on repeat in the mind incessantly. Although this phenomenon can be bothersome in everyday life, it is certainly not unwelcome to the L2 learner when it comes to getting entire phrases entrenched in the long-term memory. *The repetitive nature of music and its tendency to stick in learners' minds makes it an incredibly useful tool for language learning.* Additionally, most music can be considered an authentic source as it comes directly from the target language community. It represents not only the way native speakers use the language, but also the culture of the target language community. Getting learners to listen to and analyse the lyrics of a song can not only teach them useful formulaic expressions, it could also teach them a bit about the source country's culture. Activities based on songs can thus be an incredibly rich source of linguistic and cultural learning opportunities.

Repetition and pragmatics

Repetition can also be used as a technique for learners to gain skills in pragmatics. There is a phenomenon known as *pragmatic repetition* which is the reiteration of the interlocutor's speech. One of the most basic examples is simply greeting someone using the same phrase they used to greet you; this is a common and natural occurrence in everyday speech and can serve to build rapport between the interlocutors. Typically, members of the same cultural and linguistic community have knowledge of when it is expected to use pragmatic repetition, and much of it is formulaic, thus many L2 learners tend to deviate from the expected patterns of conversation.

This occurrence can be harnessed by the L2 learner, as long as it is used an appropriate amount and not overdone. One way learners

EXAMPLE ACTIVITY: REPETITION FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES

1. If a teacher wanted their students to acquire some useful phrases for a particular setting like a business meeting or a manufacturing workshop, they should first explicitly identify the phrases they want to teach, ideally taken from some sort of authentic source such as a video or article. The phrases could be discussed beforehand and the students could take a guess at their meanings before reading or listening to them in context.
2. Then, after reading, watching, or listening to the authentic material at least twice, the students could further discuss possible meanings by making judgments based on the context in which they were used before the teacher reveals the actual meaning of the phrases. If the material is audial, they could also discuss and bring their attention to the speaker's tone and intonation.
3. Next, the students could take those phrases and create their own dialogue that attempts to use the phrases accurately, sharing with the class while the other students judge the accurateness and appropriateness of the phrase in the given context.

This activity on its own is an effective and engaging way to teach formulaic expressions and introduce the terms into the students' short-term memory, but in order for them to enter into the long-term memory and be considered truly 'acquired,' they will need to be repeatedly identified and used by the students over the course of at least a few weeks to months (depending on a number of factors).



can practice pragmatic repetition without the pressure of spontaneous communication is to use authentic audio or audio-visual sources, such as streaming an episode of a television series or listening to a podcast from the target language community, and identifying expressions that are used to accomplish communicative goals. Once identified, they can focus on repeating the phrase just as the speaker said it, paying attention to the pronunciation, intonation, and context in which it was used. With learners who are not at a very advanced level, they may need help identifying the phrases, thus the teacher can bring their attention to the phrases beforehand to prime them.

In fact, this process of imitation is similar to how a first language is learned as well; as we learn to speak, we imitate those around us and learn to associate certain strings of words with certain situations.



Conclusion

Overall, it can be concluded that teaching formulaic language is a highly beneficial practice in the foreign language classroom, especially when it comes to teaching for specific purposes such as VET with its varying and highly-specific fields such as corporate language, language for physicians, language for tourism, and so on. A professional that works as a technician in a factory will not encounter the same type of speech as someone who works at a clinical laboratory.

Teachers should thus take into consideration that in order for their students to transfer what they have learned in the classroom, they should utilise the power of formulaic language and ensure that everything they teach resembles its real-life usage in some way. This can be done by teaching expressions in context and implementing communication-based activities in class.

We will conclude this chapter with a few overarching recommendations based on linguistic research concerning the teaching of formulaic language:

- Try to avoid using direct translations as much as possible, and instead teach the student the equivalent meaning in their native language if necessary. Formulaic expressions are often unable to be directly translated, so it would be futile and frustrating for the student to try and translate them every time.

- Implement activities that are not only communicative, but also engaging and in varying contexts. For example, students could read a comic book, then rewrite parts of it using targeted formulaic expressions in a situation given by the teacher (*rewrite this love scene as a fight scene*, for example).
- Use as many authentic materials as possible to give exposure to and encourage noticing in the target language. Using audio-visual material with subtitles, enhanced for noticing purposes (with specific phrases highlighted and discussed), can be effective. Learners could spend time identifying instances of a phrase they were taught, discussing a character's use of a phrase in context, and filling the gaps of a written script as they watch a scene.
- Demonstrate a wide variety of language in use. For example, teaching at more advanced levels (B2, C1) should feature a range of accents and expressions from different regions/countries where the target language is spoken. Students should be prepared to encounter native speakers as they speak in real life, not only how they speak in textbooks.



CHAPTER 3: PRACTICAL ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHING FORMULAIC LANGUAGE

The following section is intended to provide foreign language teachers with practical materials and activities to use to encourage the development of formulaic language in the classroom.

The lessons are categorised by:

- **Method** - the type of activity; roleplay, dictation, awareness-raising, etc.
- **Language level** - ranging from A1 (beginner) to C1 (advanced) on the CEFR scale



- **Format** - whether the lesson is more fitting for face-to-face or an online context
- **Skills** - which of the four skills in language learning (reading, writing, speaking, listening) the lesson focuses on
- **Language focus** - which linguistic features are being practiced (idioms, pronunciation, collocations, salutations, etc.)

These lesson plans and materials are merely suggestions, thus you should feel free to adjust them in whichever way you feel is most fitting for your personal teaching context and your students' needs.



Method: Dictogloss

Language level: B1-B2

Materials: A projector and the following text

Format: online, face-to-face

Skills: listening, speaking, writing

Language focus: common formulaic expressions in casual speech

ACTIVITY 1

I've got something very important to tell you that I can't wait to share - I am no longer single! I met the man of my dreams recently at a café a couple of weeks ago. We met when the barista called my name and we both went to grab the same drink. It turns out that he has the same name as me, and we both got a kick out of that. I boldly asked what he thought about having our drinks together and he happily agreed. I couldn't believe I had the audacity to do that seeing as I often struggle with social anxiety, but I'm glad I did. We discovered that we have a lot in common; for instance, we both tend to be on the introverted side and had both gone through rough breakups recently. At the moment I am just seeing where things go, but I don't want to get my hopes up. All I can say is that so far, we are off to a good start and I'm excited to see what the future brings.

- 01 Explain to the students that they will be hearing a short text and that their job is to write down as much of it as possible. Tell them that the context of the text is a friend writing to another friend about an experience they had at a café.

- 02 Read the above text aloud to the class clearly and at a normal speed. Pause for about a minute afterwards, then reread the text. Repeat this process one more time if necessary.

- 03 Bring the students back together and read the text aloud once more to the class, then allow the small groups fill in more of the text.

- 04 In groups of 2 or 3, the learners will then have 20 minutes to reconstruct the text.

- 05 Combine the groups of 2-3 into groups of 4-6, then the larger groups work together to fill in the remaining bit of text. Do not reread the text at this point.

- 06 Ask the groups to read their final product aloud. If you wish, you could offer a 'reward' to the group who gets the closest to the original text.

- 07 Display the text so students can self-correct. Discuss the meaning of each underlined phrase and have the students underline the same phrases, taking note of meaning where necessary.

As a supplementary activity or homework, the students can then construct their own texts using some or all of the phrases they learned in the activity.



Method: Roleplay

Language level: B1-C1

Materials: A projector and the following text

Format: Face-to-face

Skills: Speaking and listening

Language focus: Idioms used at work

ACTIVITY 2

1. To call it a day – to stop working for the rest of the day
2. To burn the midnight oil – to work hard beyond your normal working hours
3. To think outside the box – to come up with creative solutions to problems
4. To be on the same page – to have a shared understanding with someone else
5. To raise the bar – to raise the usual standards of achievement
6. To cut to the chase – to directly say your point without any extra information
7. To get one's foot in the door – to make the first move to become part of an organisation
8. To have a lot on one's plate – to have many responsibilities
9. By the book – in line with laws and regulations
10. On the back burner – low priority

**Note – for lower levels, you may want to transfer each definition to a presentation slide along with a photo or example that shows the context the idioms are to be used in*

- 01 Ask the students if they are familiar with the concept of idioms. Tell them that idioms are groups of words used to convey a meaning that does not align with the individual meanings of each word. Give the example of “to kick the bucket” meaning to die, not to kick an actual bucket.

- 02 If they are familiar with idioms, ask them to give some examples of idioms that might be used at work.

- 03 Display the idioms above and discuss the meaning of each, asking for volunteers to describe a situation where each one might be used.

- 04 Break the students up into groups or pairs and let them know they will be writing a dialogue and engaging in a roleplay which should last at least 1 full minute. Assign each group a different idiom or idioms (depending on the class size) so that no two groups are performing the same one(s). Let them know that the context of the roleplays should be some type of workplace.

- 05 Give them 15-20 minutes to write a dialogue as you monitor the groups and answer questions.

- 06 Each group will then perform their roleplay. After each performance, the other groups are to judge the appropriateness of the idiom(s) used based on 1) grammar and 2) context. Give each group additional feedback if the student feedback was not sufficient.

As a supplementary activity or homework, the groups can rewrite any dialogues in which they received negative feedback. This activity can (and should) be repeated a few times so that each group gets a chance to use different idioms and hear them used in as many different contexts as possible. This activity can be done using any set of idioms you identify that could be relevant for your learners. Ideally they should follow a theme, as the above ones followed the theme of work.



ACTIVITY 3

Method: Shadowing

Language level: B1-B2

Materials: the first 45 seconds of this clip: Most Awkward Interview Ever - David Brent - The Office - BBC. And the following transcript, printed (for face-to-face) or on a document (online) for each student

Format: online, face-to-face

Skills: Listening, speaking

Language focus: Pronunciation and intonation

Yeah, the bosses are panicking. They're going, "ooh, cut back, lose staff, you know, that's the way forward. That'll save us money." Will it? Yeah? Who's to say that, you know, hiring staff won't save money in the long run? You know? Does a struggling salesman start turning up on a bicycle? No, he turns up in a newer car. Perception, yeah. They've got to trust me, I'm taking these guys into battle, yeah, and I'm doing me* own stapling, yeah. A Sergeant major spends all his time training killers, he doesn't polish his own boots. He probably, he probably does polish his own boots, but you know, it doesn't mean, it doesn't mean I have to do my own filing.

**Note - this clip features a colloquial use of the word 'me,' intended to mean 'my' in this context*

- 01 Tell the students they are going to practice a technique called "shadowing," where they do their best to speak along with an audio clip of a native speaker, getting as close to their pronunciation and intonation as possible. Tell them they will be watching a clip from the popular British TV series *The Office* to practice their speaking skills.

- 02 Play the clip *before* you give them the audio transcript. Let them comment on the speaker's pronunciation, tone, mood, and other suprasegmental aspects of his language.

- 03 Give the students the transcript and play the clip twice more as they follow along closely. You may choose to give them the transcript with or without the formulaic expressions underlined depending on how in-depth you want this lesson to go.

- 04 Play the clip a third time. This time, tell the students to read along with the speaker. Tell them to pay very close attention to pronunciation and intonation.

- 05 Repeat this process as many times as it takes for the students to get comfortable reading the transcript along with the speaker.

- 06 Put the students in groups and ask them to discuss which words are difficult to pronounce or are pronounced seemingly different in the clip than what they originally thought.

- 07 If you chose to give the students the version with the formulaic expressions underlined, at this point, the students can analyse and discuss the meanings and uses of these as well.

This activity can be done using any video or audio clip that is an appropriate level for your learners. Simply identify a clip you feel is fitting and transcribe it. Usually, a 30 to 45 second clip works the best.



Method: Awareness-raising, repetition
Language level: A1
Materials: A projector and the following script

Format: Face-to-face
Skills: Listening, speaking
Language focus: Salutations

Full dialogue

Person A: Hi there, how are you?
Person B: Hello, I'm fine thanks, and yourself?
A: Not too bad, thank you. What's your name?
B: I'm Sam, what about you?
A: I'm Ellen, nice to meet you. Where are you from?
B: I'm from Manchester, where are you from?
A: I'm from Birmingham, but I live in London now.
B: That's cool. Well, it was nice talking to you.
A: You too, have a nice day. See you soon.

Dialogue with blanks

Person A: ____ there, how are ____?
Person B: ____, I'm fine ____, and yourself?
A: Not too ____, thank you. What's your ____?
B: ____ Sam, what about ____?
A: ____ Ellen, nice to ____ you. Where are you ____?
B: ____ from Manchester, where are ____ from?
A: I'm ____ Birmingham, but I ____ in London ____.
B: That's cool. Well, it was nice ____ to ____.
A: You ____, have a nice _____. ____ you soon.

ACTIVITY 4

- 01 Assuming your learners only have a very basic knowledge of English, you do not need to prepare them much for this lesson. At first, do not display the dialogue on the board, but instead, start acting it out as if you are both Person A and Person B. Note that you should make it very obvious that this conversation is two people meeting for the first time; overexaggerate the intonation and use body language/hand gestures as you do this.
- 02 Repeat the conversation with yourself in front of the class two times, making sure to act it out the same way each time.
- 03 Display the full dialogue to students on a projector, then have them follow along as you act it out one more time. Repetition is key in early acquisition of formulaic expressions, so this repetitive input may seem strenuous, but it's important for them.
- 04 Check for understanding by asking a few students some of the questions featured in the dialogue. Ask the students to get into partners and practice the dialogue for a few minutes.
- 05 Remove the full dialogue from display and instead, display the one with blanks (you could also print and pass out the dialogue with blanks). Have the students work in partners to complete the missing words.
- 06 Have some pairs volunteer to read the completed dialogue aloud, correcting where necessary. Bring their attention to the intonation and practice asking and answering questions from the dialogue as a class.



Method: Awareness-raising

Language level: B2-C1

Materials: Printouts of the following text

Format: Face-to-face

Skills: Speaking, listening

Language focus: Collocations (adverb + verb)

ACTIVITY 5

Find someone who....

- _____ **desperately needs** some relaxation.
- _____ is **eagerly awaiting** the release of the next Marvel film.
- _____ is **highly motivated** to learn a language besides English.
- _____ finds doing maths equations **virtually impossible**.
- _____ has been **severely affected** by _____
- _____ can go on **interminably about** their love for dogs.
- _____ is often **sorely tempted** to skip class.
- _____ **distinctly remembers** where they were on 9/11.
- _____ **gazes longingly** at their favourite meal before eating it.
- _____ **apologises profusely**, even when something isn't their fault.
- _____ **passionately loves** animals.
- _____ found the directions to this activity **perfectly clear**.
- _____ **screams hysterically** when a bee buzzes near them.

01 If they are not already aware, let the students know what a collocation is and why it's important for advanced learners. Learning collocations can reduce the number of errors an advanced learner makes in speaking and writing and help them to sound more natural. This lesson is focused on adverb + verb collocations.

02 Pass out printouts of the above activity and explain the directions. Go through each item, bringing their attention to the collocated words and discussing their meaning.

03 Give the students 15 minutes to stand up, walk around the class, and ask their classmates the above items in question form. Tell them they can only write the same person's name down once (or twice if you have a smaller class). Bring their attention to the fact that the grammar will change depending on the verb tense in the sentence (for example, "**Do** you passionately love animals," "**Did** you find the directions to this activity perfectly clear," etc.)

04 Once they sit back down, go through each example and ask the students to read out the entire sentence, correcting pronunciation where necessary.

05 Finally, ask the students to get into partners and come up with a story that uses all of the collocations seen above. Then, students can share their examples with the class and receive feedback from you and their peers.



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