



# Teaching English as a Foreign Language:

Employing three distinctive types  
of active vocabulary



# Activity

With your group, try to understand as many questions as you can:

- 1) Quelles sportives du Canada ont gagné le plus de médailles aux Jeux olympiques d'hiver et d'été confondus?
- 2) Contre quel système politique le leader sud-africain Nelson Mandela luttait-il?
- 3) Quelle province a été la première à donner le droit de vote aux femmes au Canada?
- 4) Que désigne  $c$  dans la célèbre formule :  $E= mc^2$ ?
- 5) Quel pays est le deuxième exportateur de pétrole après l'Arabie saoudite?

# Answers

- 1) Quelles sportives du Canada ont gagné le plus de médailles aux Jeux olympiques d'hiver et d'été confondus? **Clara Hughes et Cindy Klassen (6)**
- 2) Contre quel système politique le leader sud-africain Nelson Mandela luttait-il? **Apartheid**
- 3) Quelle province a été la première à donner le droit de vote aux femmes au Canada? **Manitoba (1918)**
- 4) Que désigne c dans la célèbre formule :  $E=mc^2$ ? **vitesse de la lumière (speed of light)**
- 5) Quel pays est le deuxième exportateur de pétrole après l'Arabie saoudite? **Russie**

# Introduction

Lets debrief quickly how this activity made you feel

- Was it hard? Why?
- How did it make you feel?
- What strategies did you use to understand the questions?
- What are some things that would have made the activity easier?

# Overview

“There is one class where each and every student speaks out loud every day; one class where every student is expected to use correct grammar in speech; one class where the learner is given words and uses them; one class where pronunciation, enunciation, and inflection are requisite: This class is foreign language. When students learn a new language, they get the best type of literacy instruction “  
pg. 19

After primary school, teachers expect students to have a basic vocabulary. However, in elementary school there are still word banks on the walls, and students work on pronunciation, spelling, reading, learning how to link their vocabulary to what they are learning. In secondary school, these tools may disappear as a range of vocabulary is often expected of the students.

# High frequency words

- Words that are commonly seen in assessment-based assignments or examinations
- Primary and foreign language teachers have these words displayed in word banks
- Students do not use these words often in their daily speech (ex. determine, compare, synthesize etc.)
- So they struggle when they have not been discussed in detail

“The key strategy here is for teachers to ask students to keep a set of student-developed and personal translations for high-frequency words—words that they encounter in class, on the blackboard, on charts, and so on—in their notebooks.” Pg 29

# Specialized terminology



- Provided to students so that they may contextualize the lesson or unit terms, key concepts and ideas
- Discipline specific references
- Specialized terms can connect to different meanings than vernacular definitions, or are not within the vernacular vocabulary. I.E. in theatre production terms such as *snot tape*, *raked stage*, *soft goods*, *DMX*, *silencers*, *wings*, etc, do not allude to the everyday concepts associated with most of these words.
- Students are asked to demonstrate their knowledge through the application of the concepts in an **analogy**, **word clusters**, **word bank**, **paraphrasing** or by **providing examples**.



# Embellishments

“These words are simply vivid, precise, engaging words that embellish and give power to thinking in print and in speech.” p.33

- If teachers provide enhancing descriptives in a word bank, students have more language tools to use interactively as well as within their coursework.
- A suggested exercise is for the teacher to obligate students to appropriately use and place a certain number these words within their work through active exercises.
- Embellishments inject “power and life” into student work. Examples of such words are “ooze”, “eviscerate”, “proliferate”, “propagate”, “engender”, “catalyst”, “catharsis”

Entranced by the denotative power of words to define, to order, to *represent* the things around us, we've overlooked the songful dimension of language so obvious to our oral [storytelling] ancestors. We've lost our ear for the music of language -- for the rhythmic, melodic layer of speech by which earthly things overhear us.”

— David Abram, Becoming Animal: An Earthly Cosmology



# Discussion

In your table groups discuss these questions, we will regroup in 5 minutes to have a group discussion:

- How can we as educators support students using these strategies for active vocabulary?
- Can you give a specific example from your teachable?
- How can these be difficult to include in our teaching?
- Where do you think we would find push back from students who are not ELL?

# If there is time....

Create an interdisciplinary lesson focus. Like building a sailboat, or a robot, or making a film about a subject area...

High Frequency Words	Specialized Terminology	Embellishments