

How to acquire and activate new vocabulary and still have fun?

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Cofinanciado por el
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POLSKIE STOWARZYSZENIE - EUROPA JĘZYKÓW I KULTUR



Teaching young adults at the university level:

- young adults, at the level of B2 / C1
- language teaching / learning divided into skills at the advanced level
- vocabulary expansion is massive
- enlarging vocabulary repertoire –through lexical exercises
- a demanding quality level - sets of formal verbs, sets of idiomatic expressions and of phrasal verbs
- Acquiring new vocabulary is not a side effect of the general communicative approach, it is an aim in itself

Problems:

- learning new vocabulary becomes a chore
- it is superficial, does not affect the deep memory structures
- learning without a context
- learning without a pragmatic purpose
- handbook exercises are predictable, boring, provide not enough practice
- learning is deprived of fun element
- no speaking component apart from completing gapped dialogues

How do students cope?

1. How much vocabulary in the Comprehension class is new to you on average?

10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90 %	100%
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DURING CLASSES

2. How much new vocabulary do you learn during class activities?

10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90 %	100%
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3. When coming across a new vocabulary item in the class activities do you:

	Yes	No
try to remember it without writing it down		
note down/ highlight the word		
write its definition in English		
write only its Polish translation		
draw a picture when possible		
make a vocabulary list and work on it at home		

4. Which strategies do you find effective during class ?

	I love it!	It's just ok	It doesn't work for me	It's a waste of time
• new vocabulary discussed in the context, examples of situations, jokes, stories				
• English dictionary definitions				
• new vocabulary used in sentences				
• Polish translations				
• new vocabulary matched with illustrations				
• new vocabulary in crosswords				
• new vocabulary in follow-up speaking tasks				
• new vocabulary in listening tasks				

HOW DO YOU LEARN NEW VOCABULARY?

1. How much vocabulary in the Comprehension class is new to you on average?

10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90 %	100%
		6	2	3	12	5	3	2	

DURING CLASSES

2. How much new vocabulary do you learn during class activities?

10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90 %	100%
	2	7	6	3	3	6	2		

3. When coming across a new vocabulary item in the class activities do you:

	Yes	No
try to remember it without writing it down	7	13
note down/ highlight the word	19	1
write its definition in English	12	8
write only its Polish translation	7	13
draw a picture when possible	8	12
make a vocabulary list and work on it at home	15	3

4. Which strategies do you find effective during class ?

	I love it!	It's just ok	It doesn't work for me	It's a waste of time
• new vocabulary discussed in the context, examples of situations, jokes, stories	10	5		
• English dictionary definitions	1	8	9	
• new vocabulary used in sentences	6	12	2	
• Polish translations	11	5	2	
• new vocabulary matched with illustrations	10	8		
• new vocabulary in crosswords	4	6	3	6
• new vocabulary in follow-up speaking tasks	4	4	7	4
• new vocabulary in listening tasks	4	6	4	4
• new vocabulary in card games	4	9	7	1

AT HOME

5. How much time do you spend weekly on learning new vocabulary outside the class ?

1h - 2 h	3h - 4h	5h - 6h	more
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6. Which strategies do you use at home to learn and revise new vocabulary? Do you:

	Yes	No	Sometimes
• read your notes made during classes			
• extend your notes with English dictionary definitions			
• use a new word in a sentence			
• write a Polish translation only			
• make your own flashcards (English word – Polish word)			
• rewrite a new word several times			
• use other personal strategies (ex: Post-it notes around the house) example:			

AT HOME

5. How much time do you spend weekly on learning new vocabulary outside the class ?

1h - 2 h	3h - 4h -21	5h - 6h -10	more
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6. Which strategies do you use at home to learn and revise new vocabulary? Do you:

	Yes	No	Sometimes
• read your notes made during classes	9	2	5
• extend your notes with English dictionary definitions	7	5	5
• use a new word in a sentence	6	5	6
• write a Polish translation only	5	7	5
• make your own flashcards (English word – Polish word)	9	3	3
• rewrite a new word several times	6	5	2
• use other personal strategies (ex: Post-it notes around the house) example:	2	9	4

7. Do you use electronic applications/ tools designed for learning a foreign language? Which:

8. What do you like about it ?

- Quizlet, Duolingo, Anki, Memrise, online dictionaries

Survey outcomes:

- students use traditional ways of mastering vocabulary
- students appreciate most the visual stimulus
- students use electronic tools (which are interactive and are mobile)

In theory:

Allan Paivio – **DUAL CODING THEORY:**

Paivio, A. (1986). *Mental representations: A dual coding approach*. New York: Oxford University Press

- human beings code verbal and nonverbal messages in a parallel way
- the nonverbal and verbal codes, being functionally independent, can have additive effects on recall
- when we reinforce the verbal system by the nonverbal forms, the efficiency of remembering will increase

MNEMONIC TECHNIQUES

- **Multisensory synergy** stimulate new neuron connections. Stimuli can be auditory, visual, of movement, of touch and emotional.
- **Associations** help us to build multileveled visualisations
- **Imagination** – the more vivid visualisation the more effective is the process of remembering

Mechanisms used in mnemonic techniques in class:

- **PICTURING** we remember better things that we see rather than hear
- **ENSTRANGEMENT** we remember better pieces which are untypical and unconventional
- **MULTISENSORY SYNERGY** we remember better things which we act out or in which we employ more senses. (short clips can be enough for that)
- **POSITIVE EMOTIONS** we remember more effectively with a high level of motivation and in a positive environment

PICTURING

the Internet visual sources make the **handbook content more attractive:**

- Example 1:
- 1 an illustration for newly introduced content,
- 2 a source for a auditory quiz,
- 3 a source for a revision at home
- Mark Skipper Unit 44 Parts



SPOKES

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MULTISENSORY SYNERGY

the Internet sources **provide visual illustrations for abstract terms and idioms**

- the connections between the picture and the meaning is not straightforward and obvious,
- the moment spent on matching creates a multisensory link which helps associate an abstract expression
- Example 2
- Mark Skipper Unit 75 Noun combinations



a tight squeeze



a broad green

MULTISENSORY SYNERGY

- The internet sources provide audio materials which serve the purpose of audio illustration
- Example 2
- Mark Skipper Unit 43 Noises



*** Courtesy of Creative Commons**

ENSTRANGEMENT

- the Internet sources provide illustrations in order **to convey the mood** associated with the vocabulary item
- Example 3
- Mark Skipper Unit 69 The Weather
- Mark Skipper Unit 10 Decisions

HAIL



SLUSH

TO BE IN TWO MINDS

TO BE TORN BETWEEN

TO HAVE A CHANGE OF HEART



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POSITIVE EMOTIONS

We learn best when we are relaxed and having fun:

- the word follow-up games to activate the vocabulary;
- Example 4:
- Mark Skipper Unit 11 Colours
- cut out coloured tokens – the game is about matching colour idioms

POSITIVE EMOTIONS

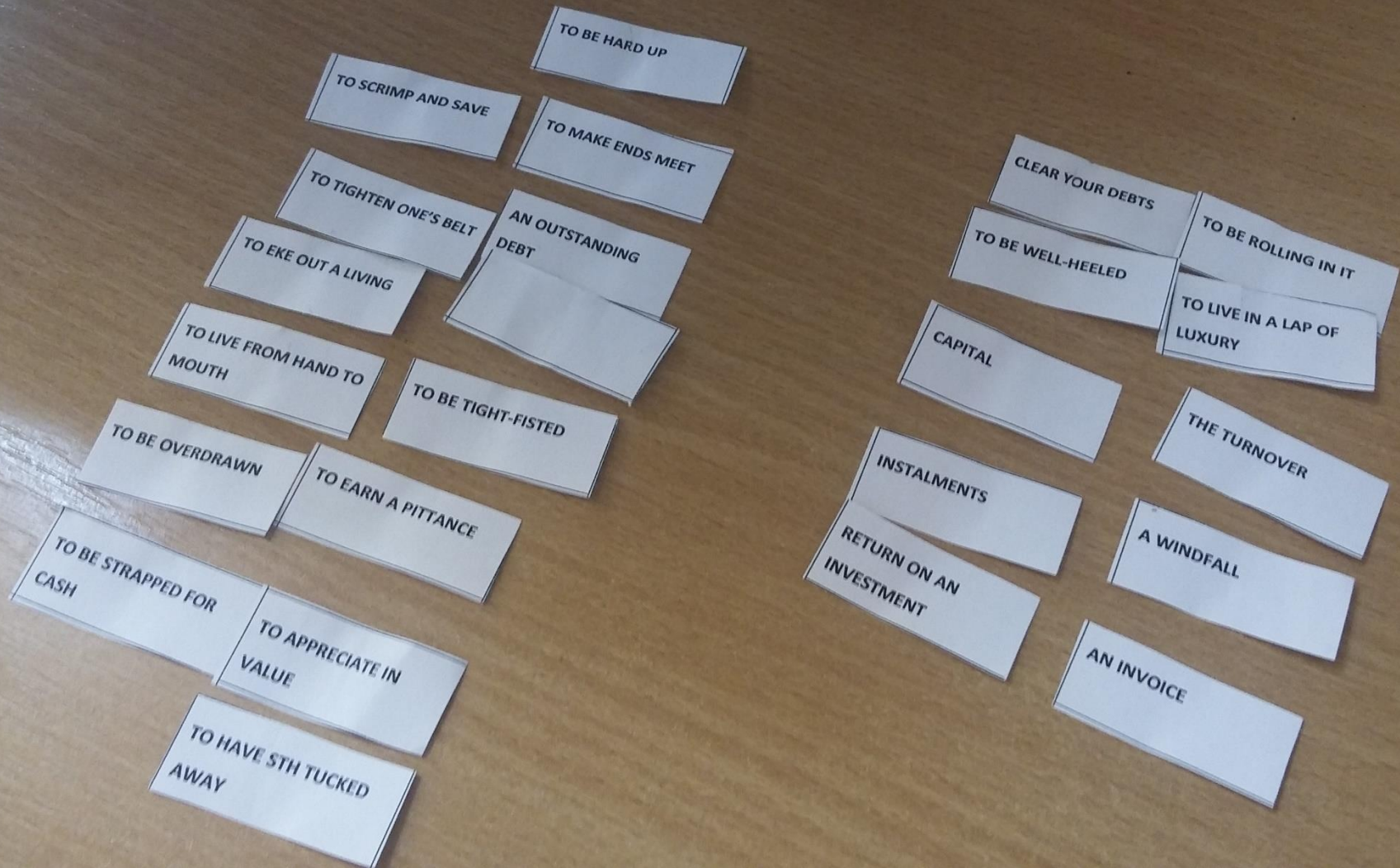
- Example 5

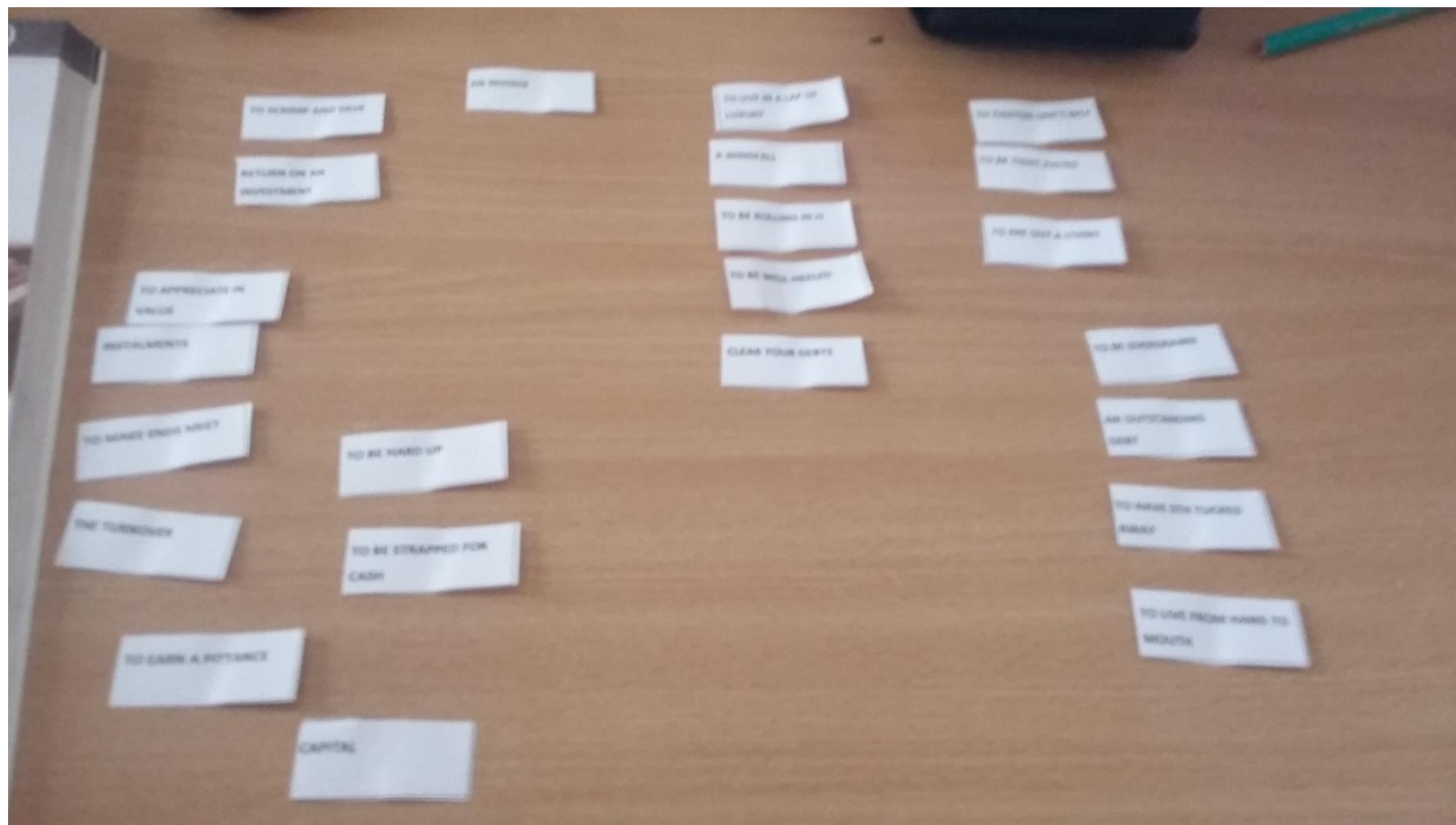
Mark Skipper Unit 40 Money

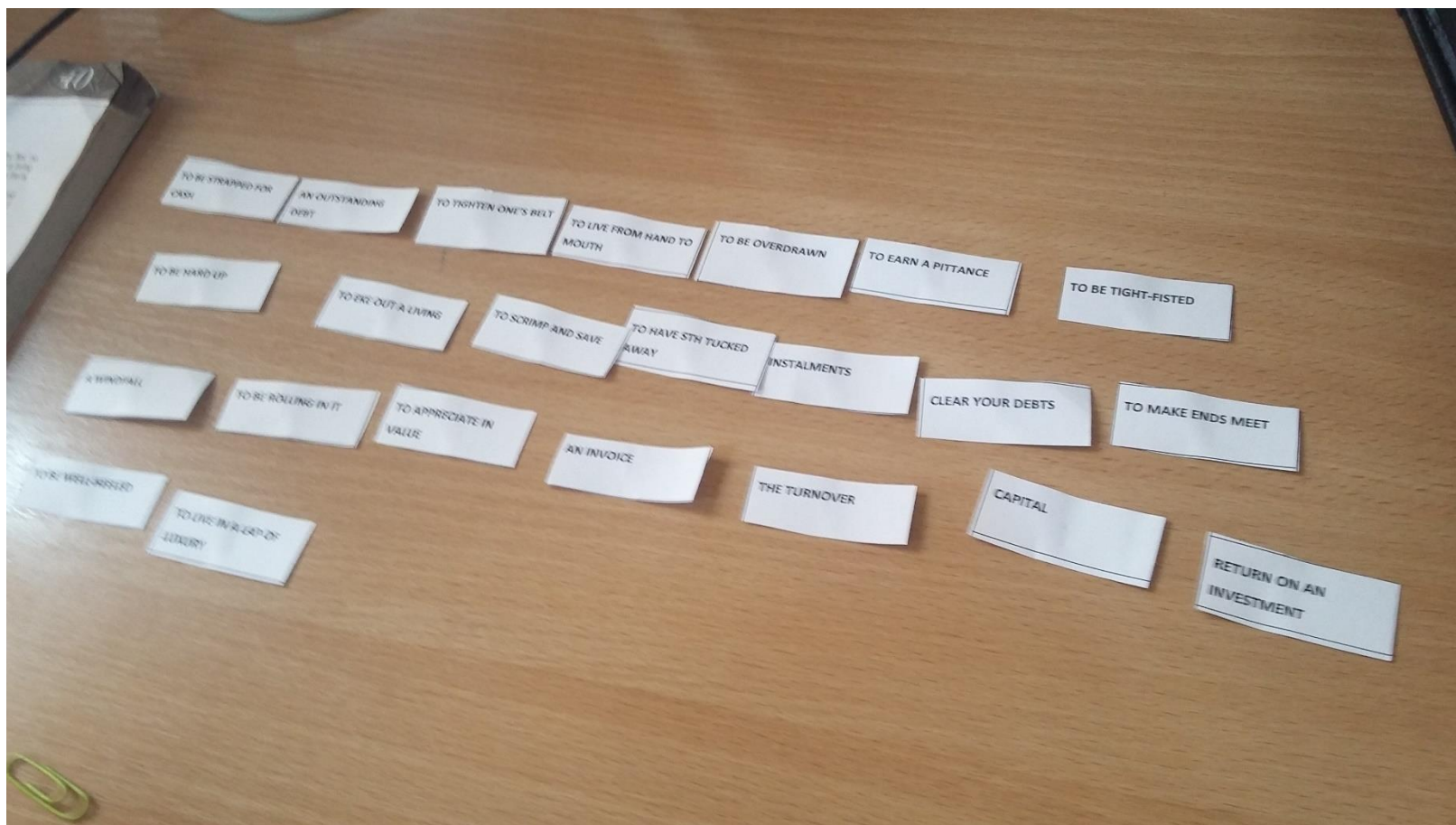
- a board game with cut-out expressions
- students have to create sets of lexical fields
- ..but they invent their own rules and play the narrative strips



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Example 6

Mark Skipper Unit 31 Informal language

Students play a board game activating and personalising new vocabulary items:

START	TO FLOG	TO CONK OUT	TATTY	TO CHUCK	GROSS
INFORMAL LANGUAGE UNIT 31					TO RIP SB OFF
AIRY-FAIRY	TACKY	CHOCK-A-BLOCK	TO SCOFF	MUCKY	LOUSY
TO SET SB BACK					
TO WIND SB UP	TO COUGH UP	DODGY	TO BUG	TO SLAG SB OFF	FINISH

Conclusions

- **Dual Coding** techniques help:
- to activate the new vocabulary content
- to turn passive knowledge into active one
- to teach real language, not words
- to provide the visual context
- and ...to provide the missing fun factor!!!

Bibliography

Handbook:

- Skipper, M.(2016). *Advanced Grammar and Vocabulary*. Newbury: Express Publishing

Theoretical background:

- Harmer, J.(2007). *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. Harlow:Pearson Education Limited
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Visual resources:

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