

The LANGUAGE TEACHING TOOLKIT

150+ Activities for Getting Languages to Stick



Dr Andy Goldhawk

Praise for *The Language Teaching Toolkit*

This book provides a comprehensive collection of versatile and thoughtfully curated activities designed for language educators across all languages whether they are working with beginners or advanced learners. A wide range of activities accommodates varying preparation times, with quick, ready-to-use activities for the time-pressed teacher and more in-depth exercises for those with more flexibility. The tasks are easily adaptable to different languages and learner abilities, which ensures broad classroom applicability. The activities included are not only useful but proven crowd pleasers and create a balance between educational value and learner engagement. They are also designed to actively involve learners, encouraging individual, pair, and group participation, allowing for deeper linguistic exploration whilst building learner confidence and curiosity.

No matter the language that you are teaching this resource offers a set of flexible and engaging ideas to support your language instruction.

*Jo Biddle, Senior Lecturer in Initial Teacher Education, Tutor for
MFL at University of the West of England*

A fantastically easy-to-use toolkit, full of creative and fun ideas to bring language teaching to life. A comprehensive toolkit, which equips every language teacher with an abundance of engaging and effective activities. A must-have book to ensure language teaching is no longer dull.

*Veronika Chidemo, Assistant Principal – Senior Mental Health
Lead and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead,
Grace Garden School*

Andy's book adds to the 'buffet of languages' strategies that established and confident teachers can intersperse within a lesson or as a homework activity to engage and reinforce prior and/or new learning. This collection of 150+ activities for getting languages to stick are part of creating multiple cross-modality opportunities for learners to really show you what they know, what they can do, and how they can be creative with language. These activities could form part of your classroom (or departmental) formative assessment approach too, which creates opportunities for learners to really show you what has stuck, and what needs revisiting. As with any good classroom activity,

they can be easily adapted to support the learners in front of you and could be used as an individual, a pair, or group task. Some activities do require some prior thought and preparation; I do think that the authentic resources in your classrooms and departments can be dusted off and used in relation to many of these activities. Whether you are an EAL/ESL or English teacher or international language teacher, there are activities in here that you will know and more activities you'll want to get to know and that you'll love! As a departmental head, you can absolutely work collaboratively on elements of these across classrooms and teams, developing skills, classroom activities, and practice as a department whilst also building resources and maximising time. One thing is for sure, your learners will become increasingly more active, more engaged, and increasingly confident in the language they are learning, so get ready to sprinkle these across your lessons and out-of-hours learning.

*Crista Hazell, SLE for MFL, international education consultant,
and author of Independent Thinking on MFL*

This is a practical and highly useful toolkit for language teachers. Andy's concise explanations make this accessible to novice teachers aiming to plan lessons quickly, but it is equally useful for experienced colleagues looking to expand their repertoire.

I signpost teachers almost weekly to Andy's previous two books, *The Super Quick Guides*. I expect this toolkit will also frequently be pulled from my shelf to show to colleagues.

Andy packs this toolkit with time savers including links to resource websites and guidance on how to use generative AI to produce effective learning resources.

This toolkit also seems useful for teachers beyond language disciplines. Many activities can easily be used or adapted for icebreakers, to build rapport among learners, or to support learners in exploring the foundational concepts of various disciplines.

*Dr Shaun Mudd, Head of Teaching Expertise Development,
Bath Spa University*

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Contents

Acknowledgements iii

Introduction 1

Start of the lesson 3

Warm-up activities 5

Ice breakers 6

Entry tickets 7

Joke of the day 8

Comedy clips 9

Mystery object 10

End of the lesson/homework 11

Exit tickets 13

3-2-1 14

(Mini) award ceremony 15

The rubbish word game! 16

Homework activities 16

Writing 19

Letter to future self 21

Police report 22

Newspaper article 23

Story chains 24

Time capsule 24

Five-minute stories 25

Story/songwriter 25

Emoji stories 26

Scriptwriter 26

Social media posts 27

Journalist 27

Brain dump 28

Holiday plans 29

Picture descriptions 30

Silly sentences! 30

Finish the sentences 31

Finish the story	31
Make your own sentences	32
Describe the world	32
Story extensions	33
(Any) text analysis	33
Weather forecast	34
Create a Wikipedia page	34

Reading 35

Jumbled story	37
Write your own questions	37
Book blurbs	38
Find the synonyms	38
Go find	39
Read a comic	40
Character interviews	40
Book reviews	41
Book sampling	41

Speaking 43

Show and tell	45
Buzz groups	45
Storytelling	46
Mini drama	46
Mingle	47
Newsreaders	48
Would you rather ...?	49
Debates	50
Shipwrecked!	52
Dice discussions	53
Two truths and a wish	54
Life in 2050	54
Soap box	55
Improvisation	55
Tongue twisters	56
Sounds brainstorming	56
IPA bingo	56

Listening 57

- Listen and draw 59
- Circle process 59
- Reporter 60
- Mystery interview 60
- Listening quizmaster 60
- Follow the leader 61
- Guest speaker 62

Various skills 63

- Dictation activities 65
- The intriguing photo activity 66
- Charades 66
- Agony aunt 67
- 20 questions 68
- Escape room 69
- Idioms activities 69

Grammar and punctuation 71

- Story editors 73
- Punctuation dice 73
- Sentence generator 74
- Be the teacher 74
- Grammar bingo 75
- Advertising managers 76

Verb tenses 77

- Lottery winner 79
- Horoscopes 80
- Crystal ball 80
- Film or book predictions 81
- Interview with a time traveller 81

Vocabulary 83

- Pictionary 85
- Phrasal verb hunt 85
- Word graffiti 86
- The washing line 86
- Crosswords 87

Call my bluff 87

List 10 88

Slang activities 88

Using songs 89

Online 91

Online activities (for ESOL) 93

Online debate 94

Pen pals 94

Blogging 94

Video activities 95

Teaser clip 97

Predictions 97

Video quizmaster 97

The analyst 98

Ask the stars 98

What happens next? 98

Lie detector 99

Voiceover 99

Role play 99

What's it called? 100

Assessment 101

Formative assessment 103

Introduction

This book outlines over 150 learning activities for language teachers, that can be adapted for different levels and target languages. It's a collection of active and flexible learning ideas designed to spark students' curiosity and engagement.

Active learning is more than passively listening to the teacher: it means students actively engaging in learning activities to acquire knowledge and rehearse skills. This could involve students discussing ideas, reflecting, asking questions, or problem solving (Bonwell and Eison, 1991). Active learning enables students to have agency in their own learning, facilitates knowledge retention, and helps students apply critical thinking.

Active learning derives from constructivism: a theory of learning which considers knowledge to be constructed in the mind through experiences, interactions, and building on existing knowledge, rather than a process of passively receiving information (Goldhawk, 2023).

Some activities in this book are illustrated using English as the target language; you will need to use your expertise in the target language(s) you teach to determine whether you need to adapt activities according to lexical and/or grammatical differences in those languages.

Some activities will require preparation before you use them the first time, but once you've found that perfect audio clip, or made and laminated your exit tickets, for example, you'll have them to use again and again in the future. I've also suggested some places where AI tools can facilitate preparation.

For most activities I've noted language levels and timings for each activity, but these are indicative only. Many of the activities can be adapted for any level, and the timings will be informed by (among other aspects) the level and size of groups, their needs, and the time available in sessions. So experiment with timings and with the activities themselves – they are certainly not set in stone!

P. S. My Instagram handle is:
@learning.theories.shared (through which I'd welcome your feedback!).

Bonwell, C. C., and Eison, J. A. (1991). *Active Learning: Creating Excitement in the Classroom*. ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report, Washington, DC: School of Education and Human Development, George Washington University.

Goldhawk, A. (2023). *The Super Quick Guide to Learning Theories and Teaching Approaches*. London: SAGE.



Start of the lesson

Warm-up activities

Name three _____: students take turns to quickly name three items from a specified category, such as fruits, animals, or countries.

Letter strings: students are given ten sentences, each with all the words squashed together in one string of letters. Students need to separate the letters into the correct sequence of words and add punctuation. For example, 'whatdidyouwatchontvlastnight'.

Word association: students take turns saying a word that relates to the previous one in the sequence. No word may be repeated. The first student to speak chooses the initial word. This could take place in pairs, small groups, or as a whole class.

Pass the object: the group passes an object around, with each student in turn saying something different about its characteristics – such as its colour, size, purpose, or type.

The A-to-Z game: in small groups, students try to think of a list of topic words, each starting with the next letter of the alphabet. For example, for the topic of food: apples, bananas, chocolate, doughnuts, and so on.

Ice breakers

Pick a superpower: as students mingle and introduce themselves, they share which superpower they would have if they could choose any, and why!

Emoji intros: students mingle and show others three emoji image cards that they most relate to, and explain why. They could alternatively choose and speak about three emojis from a full range displayed on the class board.

This or that: the teacher gives two options about something – for example, pizza or pasta – and students stand on one side of the room or the other, depending on their preference each time. Students then discuss why they chose their answer. This could also be used as a warm-up activity.

Famous lunch: students mingle and ask each other which famous person (living or dead) they would have lunch with and why.

Bucket list: in groups or pairs, students discuss what they would like to do or achieve in the next three years. This might include travelling somewhere, learning something, or trying a new sport, for example.

Two truths and a lie: students take turns to share three ‘facts’ about themselves. Their partner must then try to guess which is the lie.

Speed dating: students have two minutes to ask each other questions before a bell rings and students move on to a new partner. A list of ‘get to know you’ questions might be provided by the teacher to help lower-level students.

Would you rather: in groups, students ask classmates questions such as: would you rather live in a hot or cold country? Would you rather be able to fly or turn invisible?

Scavenger hunt: in small groups, students search for certain objects in a short period of time. This can be played in the classroom, a playground, or perhaps (for older students) the whole campus.

Find something in common: students have a short period of time, such as two minutes, to find other students with whom they have something in common – for example, both play the same instrument or have the same birth month. There could be one or more rounds of this activity.

Entry tickets

Entry tickets (sometimes referred to as entry slips) are given to students at the beginning of class, to help them reflect on their prior learning and/or consider their current understanding of a new topic. Here are some example questions for entry tickets:

- What three things do you already know about [topic]?
- What's your current understanding of [topic]?
- Describe one thing you would like to learn in the session today that relates to [current topic].
- What one language aspect that we have already studied would you like to practise more?
- What was the most important or interesting thing you learned about [topic] in the last lesson?
- What key idea did you take from the pre-reading for today's session?
- How could you apply what you learned in the last lesson to real life?
- What is one question you have remaining about [topic]?
- What is the most challenging aspect of [target language] spelling/pronouns/verb tenses/etc.?
- What do you enjoy most about learning [target language]?

Joke of the day

At the start or end of the lesson, show or tell the group a joke in the target language. It may be related to the current topic. The students could help each other to understand why it is funny, if needed! They may also work together to translate the joke into their own language(s).

Jokes with different structures could be discussed – for instance, knock-knock jokes, and jokes involving a play on words, or where the humour derives from the use of double entendres (words with two meanings).

Here are a couple of example jokes where students could discuss the double meanings:

Why did the tomato turn red? Because it saw the salad dressing!

Why did the chicken join the band? Because it already had some drumsticks!

Level: intermediate/advanced

Timing: 3 mins

Comedy clips

To gain attention and engagement at the start of a session, show a clip from a sitcom or funny movie related to the current topic. For example, for the topic of shopping, show a scene that takes place in a shop. This can be a fun way to stimulate discussions among the group about a new topic.

The sitcom *Friends* can be a useful source as many scenes take place in an apartment and a cafe. The comedy series *The Office* has lots of scenes in an office, of course!

For lower levels use scenes with less dialogue, or no dialogue at all. *Mr Bean* takes place in lots of different contexts, such as a hair salon, a supermarket, a restaurant, a car, a beach, and many other outside locations.

These examples all refer to programmes in English (unless they are dubbed versions); the programmes used in your context will of course need to be in the target language.

Level: any

Timing: 5 mins

Mystery object

To start the class, students are presented with an object which is somehow related to the current or new topic. In pairs, small groups, or as a whole class, students discuss how the object might link to the topic.

This activity can be easily adapted for different levels of difficulty. For example, an apple might straightforwardly be linked to the topics of shopping or food.

If the teacher wishes for a more nuanced link to the topic that could spark more sophisticated conversations among advanced level students, the object might have a more abstract connection, such as a chestnut, which might link to the topics of nature, growth, or the environment.

Level: any

Timing: 5 mins

Packed with more than 150 engaging activities, *The Language Teaching Toolkit* is a practical, time-saving resource that language teachers will return to again and again.

Covering all key language skills - reading, writing, speaking and listening - this accessible book brings together a wide range of techniques to boost language learning and retention. Each activity is clearly explained, with suggested timings and language levels, making them easy to integrate into lessons plans.

From ice breakers to plenaries, homework tasks to formative assessment ideas, this essential guide draws on a variety of approaches to help teachers explore new ideas, vary their pedagogical practices and meet their students' needs with ease. Whether you're planning a revision session, assessing students' progress, or looking for fresh inspiration, these activities will save you time and help you deliver dynamic, effective language lessons with confidence.

**Ideal for trainee and early career language teachers,
as well as more experienced language teachers.**

A must-have book to ensure language teaching is no longer dull.

**Veronika Chidemo, Assistant Principal – Senior Mental Health Lead
and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead, Grace Garden School**

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**Crista Hazell, SLE for MFL, international education consultant,
and author of *Independent Thinking on MFL***

Dr Andy Goldhawk teaches on various postgraduate programmes at the University of the West of England, Bristol, including the MA in Education Leadership (which he co-leads), the PG Cert (teaching and learning in higher education), and the Doctorate in Education. He was previously an adult ESOL lecturer for fifteen years. During that period, he was also programme lead and a teaching and learning coach.



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