

Teacher's notes

Class dictionary

Summary

Language level	A1 and above
Age	Primary, Primary 9+
Length of lesson	Initial set-up: 30 minutes Adding content: 10–15 minutes Revision activities: 10–15 minutes
Language objectives	– to regularly revise vocabulary – to focus on spelling and pronunciation
Additional objectives	– to develop learner autonomy

Rationale

Effective use of digital tools can help manage time and tasks more efficiently, which can include making learning more efficient. With a computer and projector in your classroom, you can use different tools to help manage your vocabulary revision activities. If learners and parents can also access those tools at home, this can extend learning outside the classroom.

Materials

- Computer and projector
- Internet access
- Tool or service to manage the dictionary (see *Procedure: Set-up*)

Procedure

Set-up

1. Decide which digital tool to use for your dictionary. This will depend on several factors:
 - What information you want to record for each entry: just the word; an example sentence; an audio recording; a translation.
 - What your school facilities allow you to do: a reliable internet connection; audio recording options; ability to quickly upload audio files.
 - What you want to use the dictionary for: in class for revision activities; to create a dictionary to share outside the classroom so your learners can use it at home.
2. Once you decide what you want to do, choosing your tool should be easier. Here are some suggestions, but remember that there are lots of other options you can consider.

PowerPoint

If you just want text, this is a simple solution to quickly add, store and retrieve vocabulary. Add a word or phrase to each slide. You could also add a definition, translation or image, or a gapped sentence with the word missing. You don't need an internet connection for this. Just save the PowerPoint file on your computer and open it each lesson to add more vocabulary. By the end of the term, or year, you should have lots of items.

Evernote

If you want something more sophisticated, set up an [Evernote](#) account to create a notebook for your class. If you want, you could also create a notebook for a specific topic area. Every lesson, add words to the notebook by creating new notes. Type in the word as the title of the note, add an example, a definition, image or audio, and then save it. You can access your notebook on the class computer, as well as on your phone or tablet. You could also give access to your learners (see *Sharing for use at home*).

Quizlet

[Quizlet](#) is made specifically to support learning, and is an easy-to-use flashcard app. You need to set up an account and be online to add content, but it gives you a lot of options. It's also easy to share with learners (see *Sharing for use at home*). Create a set of cards for each term, year or topic, and then add a new card for each item of vocabulary.

Adding content

1. Tell your class that you're going to create a dictionary together. Ideally, start the dictionary at the beginning of a school year or term. Tell learners that each lesson you will decide together which words and phrases to add to the dictionary. How many you add depends on your class, but it could be as many as five or six each lesson. You need to make it a bit challenging for your learners, but not demotivating, so don't add too many words each time.
2. It's a good idea to make adding to the dictionary part of your lesson routine. Five or 10 minutes before the end of a lesson, ask the class to help decide which words or phrases to include. You might need to guide them a little to make sure the language they choose is relevant, but let them help with the decision.
3. At the beginning, you'll probably be adding content yourself. If you choose PowerPoint, that means adding a new slide for each word or phrase; for Evernote, a new text note; and for Quizlet, a new card. Practise adding content before you do it in class for the first time.
4. If you're not very confident, start small: just type the word or phrase, and perhaps a definition or a relevant example sentence. If you're more confident, you could also add audio for the word or phrase, or an image.
5. You can ask your learners to take it in turns to add content. This may be typing the word or making the recording. Recording the audio, for younger learners especially, can be a fun experience: it could be a reward for good work or behaviour.

Reviewing content in class

1. After a few weeks, you should have plenty of items in your dictionary and you can start using it as part of a regular review. As with adding content, try to make reviewing content a regular feature of classes. A good idea is to use it regularly as a warmer, at least once a week. You can also use it as a filler, if you have 5 minutes available in a lesson.
2. There are many different review activities you can use, depending on which tool you are working with, and what content you've added. Here are some ideas.

Backs to the board

Ask one learner from the class (or one learner in a pair) to sit with their back to the board. The other learners (or their partner) try to make them guess the word you show on the board, without using any of the words in its example sentence or definition.



Remember the sentence

Show the word or phrase without the definition or example sentence. Put learners in teams and ask them to write down, or say, the example sentence for each word or phrase you show.

Topic brainstorm

In teams, groups think of all the words or phrases for a topic. For example, after a few months, you could have a lot of words and phrases related to food and drink. Challenge them to try to remember and write down every single one. This works well with Evernote, where you can tag notes by topic.

Spelling test

Switch off the projector and say 10 words or phrases, or play the learners' own recording of them. Learners write down their answers. Switch the projector back on and get learners to check their answers.

Pronunciation test

Do this if you have audio recordings in your dictionary. It works especially well with younger learners. Show the word or phrase and ask learners to either record it (perhaps on a mobile phone) or say it. Then compare their pronunciation to the audio you have.

3. To start with, you'll probably lead these review activities yourself, but you can also let learners lead them. The spelling test, for instance, is easy for a learner to lead: with the projector switched off, they choose a word and play the audio.
4. If you want to add a competitive element to reviews, set up teams within a class and track their results so you have weekly, monthly and termly winners.

Sharing for use at home

1. Your sharing options depend on which tool you decide to use. With PowerPoint, those options are limited. Sharing content with apps like Evernote and Quizlet is much easier, especially on smartphones or tablets. However, check your school's guidelines for this. You will need to get parental permission before sharing anything with your learners.
2. It may be easier to share content directly with parents. You can even do this with a PowerPoint file. Sharing lets parents see the learning that's happened during a term or year. Parents may decide to use content you share from Evernote, Quizlet or whichever tool you use, with their children at home.