



5 Vocabulary Boosting Activities

for any classroom

**Practical Strategies to Engage
Multilingual Learners**



Vocabulary boosting activities

In today's diverse classrooms, developing strong language skills is essential for all students, especially those learning English as an additional language. Multilingual learners (MLs) require instructional strategies that support academic growth and grow language proficiency across all four domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

The instructional activities in this ebook are designed to do just that—help students build robust vocabulary, improve comprehension, and actively use language in meaningful ways. Though beneficial for all learners, these strategies are crucial for multilingual learners to develop the skills they need to succeed academically and communicate effectively.



EduSkills connects the dots between student data and student growth

✓ Focus on Vocabulary Development

Each activity in this ebook focuses on developing academic vocabulary. Vocabulary learning in context encourages students to make connections between words and concepts, reinforcing their understanding through application.

✓ Integrate the Four Language Domains

These activities integrate listening, speaking, reading, and writing, allowing students to practice all domains of language learning. This approach ensures that students are actively using language in ways that promote long-term retention and fluency.

✓ Address the Needs of Multilingual Learners

For multilingual learners, these strategies are not just helpful—they are necessary. Students need opportunities to interact with language through meaningful tasks that mirror real-life communication. These activities align with the language learning process, ensuring that students gradually build confidence in using English.

✓ Connect Instruction to Student Data

EduSkills is committed to ensuring that instructional practices are not only effective but also data-driven. EduSkills bridges the gap between innovative instructional strategies and meaningful student data, providing a roadmap for sustained student growth and language proficiency.

Interested in how EduSkills can connect your ML/EL student data to tailored activities for multilingual learners' success?
Want to have more classroom activities at your fingertips?

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Vocabulary Boosting activities

Class Mixer for Identifying Nouns and Adjectives

Objective

Students will identify and produce nouns and adjectives.
Students will speak and write complete sentences with nouns and adjectives.

Materials / Time

- ✓ Index cards or sticky notes (in 2 colors)
- ✓ Student notebooks
- ✓ 15-20 min

Preparation

- ✓ Prepare index cards or sticky notes for each student.
- ✓ Ensure each student has a notebook or worksheet for recording sentences.

Procedure

1. Distribute two cards (different colors) to each student.
2. Instruct students to write a **noun** on one card and an **adjective** on the other, encouraging creativity.
3. Students move around the room and pair up.
4. In pairs, they read their cards and choose one noun and one adjective to create a sentence.
5. Both students say the sentence to each other first, making sure it makes sense.
5. Both students write the sentence in their notebooks.
6. Once finished, students find new partners and repeat the process.
7. Continue until all students have worked with one another or until time is up.

Differentiation

Allow beginning learners to use a word bank of common nouns and adjectives.
For advanced learners, ask them to extend the sentence using conjunctions or additional adjectives.

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Create a Class Mural to Analyze a Text

Objective

Students will **analyze** a text with the support of visuals, word banks, and cooperative learning strategies.

Students will **co-create** a visual mural about a text with teacher and student support.

Materials / Time

- ✓ Long butcher paper (5-20 feet depending on class size)
- ✓ Print materials related to the topic (e.g., books, magazines, picture cards, dictionaries, websites)
- ✓ Markers, glue, scissors, and other crafting tools
- ✓ 1-2 class periods

Preparation

- ✓ Cut and hang/lay a large piece of butcher paper (or several pieces taped together) as the mural backdrop.
- ✓ Gather various print materials that relate to the topic (e.g., books, magazines, picture cards, dictionaries, websites)

Procedure

1. Begin with a class discussion to activate background knowledge on the topic.
2. Make a list of words during the discussion that relate to the topic as a visual to refer to throughout the process.
3. Give students time to explore the resources (books, magazines, websites) independently or with partners.
4. Have students synthesize the information by creating a landscape on the mural that includes pictures, words, and quotes.
5. Label all elements to encourage language visual and written connections.
6. Post the mural where it is visible and allow students to add to it throughout the unit.

Differentiation

For beginner learners, provide sentence starters or word banks to help them contribute to the mural.

Advanced learners can focus on more complex synthesis of information, incorporating longer quotes or multiple languages.

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Active Listening to Identify the Outlier

Objective

Students will **listen** to a list of items and **identify** the outlier in each set (using **categorization** strategies).
Students will **justify** their answer using a complete sentence with because.

Materials / Time

- ✓ Whiteboard or paper for each student to write responses.
- ✓ List of sets of items (3-5 items per set) with one item that does not belong in the group.
- ✓ 10-15 minutes

Preparation

Prepare several sets of information (3-5 items in each set), where all but one item fits a specific category.

Examples:

- ✓ Butterfly, ladybug, spider, mosquito (spider doesn't belong).
- ✓ Ganges, Rio Grande, Mediterranean, Nile (Mediterranean doesn't belong).
- ✓ Isosceles, scalene, perpendicular, obtuse (perpendicular doesn't belong).

Procedure

1. Read (orally) a set of related items (several times if necessary).
2. Students write down the item that does not belong in the set.
3. Immediate feedback is given after each set (show your whiteboard)
4. Students are asked to provide reasoning for their selection.

Example stem: ____ does not belong because _____.

Differentiation

- ✓ Allow beginning learners to use a word bank of common nouns and adjectives or circle/point to the outlier.
- ✓ For advanced learners, ask them to extend the sentence using conjunctions or additional adjectives.

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Back-to-Back Vocabulary Booster

Objective

Students will listen to a partner about content related academic vocabulary.
Students will speak complete sentences to a partner about content related academic vocabulary.

Materials / Time

- ✓ A set of prepared images that align with academic categories (e.g., mammals, text characters, types of triangles).
- ✓ Chairs for each pair of students to sit back-to-back.
- ✓ 10-15 minutes

Preparation

- ✓ Select and prepare a set of images related to the specific academic content categories.
- ✓ Ensure each image has enough detail that it can be explained without stating the actual word

Procedure

1. Pair students and sit them back-to-back.
2. Announce a category (e.g., mammals, text characters, types of triangles).
3. Show an image to the student facing the front.
4. This student must give descriptive clues about the image without naming it directly.
5. The student facing away must listen carefully and try to guess the image.
6. When the student correctly guesses the image, the pair gives a high-five or touches elbows and waits for the other pairs to finish.
7. After each round, students switch roles and repeat the process.

Differentiation

- ✓ For beginners, use simpler categories and provide more detailed hints or scaffolded clues.
- ✓ For advanced students, use more complex or abstract vocabulary and encourage nuanced descriptions.

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Semantic Mapping for Vocabulary Development

Objective

Students will **categorize** and **organize** words through a semantic mapping strategy.
Students will **speak** complete sentences **justifying** the categories they create.

Materials / Time

- ✓ A topic for focus
- ✓ Word list related to the topic
- ✓ "List-Group-Label" template (optional)
- ✓ 20-30 min

Preparation

- ✓ Choose a topic of study and prepare a list of words related to the topic.
- ✓ Familiarize students with the semantic mapping process by modeling it first (e.g. anchor chart for visual support throughout the process).

Procedure

1. Introduce a topic of focus (e.g., Solar System).
2. Brainstorm meaningful words associated with the topic (e.g., Saturn, Mars, asteroid, comet).
3. Invite students to group the words in ways that make sense to them. Encourage creativity—there are no wrong answers as long as they can justify their groupings.
4. After words are grouped, students will label each category (e.g., Planets: Mars, Saturn, Venus; Things that are man-made: Apollo, satellite).
5. Discuss and review the connections and labels as a class.
6. Have students complete the strategy in small groups before transitioning to independent use.
Example stem: _____ belongs because _____.

Differentiation

- ✓ For beginners, use simpler categories and provide more detailed hints or scaffolded clues.
- ✓ For advanced students, use more complex or abstract vocabulary and encourage nuanced descriptions.

About EduSkills

EduSkills makes English Learner and Multilingual student data manageable and meaningful for EL student success.

EduSkills is your partner in leveraging technology to empower educators with customized, proven solutions and transformative instructional strategies for EL/ML success.



EduSkills is not just a student data-management company.

We are passionate about empowering you and your students through technology-based solutions and support.

EduSkills came out of the vision to create a future where every student's learning journey is personalized, supported by data-driven insights, and empowered by technology to reach their fullest potential.

There will always be challenges to solve in education, and EduSkills is committed to solving as many as possible through innovative and impactful solutions. We are a company built on the mission of utilizing technology to foster success through personalized support for educators and multilingual communities.

**Learn more about how EduSkills can support
your mission to help ML/EL students reach their
full potential today!**

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