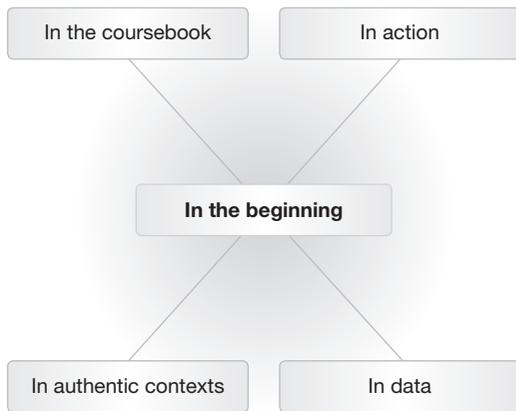




The Company Words Keep is at heart a practical book. We pointed out on page 6 how the first concordances of a corpus were based on the Bible in the thirteenth century. Contemporaneously, in 1230, the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Simon Langton, a practical man, invented the idea of dividing a book into chapters. Here are our five chapters of easily usable activities:

The chapters



1 In the beginning

Introducing learners to the basic ideas of chunking – activities for all levels. Start here before branching out in the direction of your choice.

2 In the coursebook

Adding more chunking – to an existing coursebook or exam course.

3 In action

Consolidating and practising the idea of chunking – for learners who are already familiar with the idea.

4 In authentic contexts

Exploiting chunks in real text – whether written, audio or visual.

5 In data

Working with Web resources – to help learners approach chunking directly themselves.

The activities

Purpose

A short description of the intended outcome for the learners.

Preparation

What you need to take to class and what resources you might need.

Procedure

A step-by-step explanation of how to conduct the activity.

Possibilities

How the activity could be varied, extended or adapted for different types of learners.

Connects to ...

In Part A, we opened *Pathways* to other parts of the book. In Part B, each activity connects to others that you might find suitable, relevant or simply attractive: for you and your learners.

Listening for chunks

When learners listen to authentic text, they can pick up bits of language even if they do not understand every single word. Songs are a good example.

This activity aims at making the learners aware of chunks of language when listening.

Level ■■■ Duration ●●●

Preparation

You will need a recording of a suitable song and one copy of the lyrics per learner.

Procedure

- Tell the learners they are going to listen to a song.
- Play the song and ask the learners to write down chunks, ie expressions or even whole sentences they hear.
 - They do not need to understand the song as a whole.
 - Their suggestions at this stage can be 'approximate' in terms of accuracy or spelling.
- Discuss with the whole class what chunks they have written down and write them up on the board.
- Play the song a second time.
 - The learners write down any more chunks they think they hear.
 - They notice the ones already up on the board.
- Play the song a third time. Tell the learners to write more chunks.
- Discuss what they have tried to write down, and clarify spelling and meaning.
- Now give out the lyrics. The learners look for their chunks and circle them.
- Discuss with the whole class what 'new' chunks they all think are worth remembering and using.

Possibilities

This activity encourages the learners to gradually become more aware of their ability to notice chunks, particularly when they are listening to songs. Songs often have 'knocked together' chunks like *omigod* or *woudja* which the learners like to clarify or else they mishear the lyrics as 'mondegreens'.

- ■ ■ Instead of a song, you can use a video extract of a dialogue, or a short documentary with some commentary. The one-minute news broadcast on the BBC website is ideal.

Connects to

Kiss the sky (78) ■ *From English to L1* (81)

Reading for chunks

This activity involves reading for chunks, and shows how prevalent chunks are. Learners are sometimes asked to notice or collect a few chunks from a text but, here, the point is made that almost everything is connected.

Level ■■■ Duration ●●●

Preparation

Have a copy of any short text for each learner – either a coursebook text or an authentic one is fine.

Procedure

- Give out copies of the text and ask the learners to read it, working alone.
- Tell them to find anything which is *not* a chunk.
- Give them a few minutes and then bring the class together.
- Ask for suggestions of what is not a chunk. The learners usually have a few suggestions.
- Throw it open to the class.
- Normally someone else in the class will notice how the word fits into a chunk:
 - On occasion, you might have to point it out.
 - Very, very occasionally, a word stands alone.
- Suggest that since almost all words have partnerships, learners should write only chunks in their notebooks.

Possibilities

■ ■ ■ You can repeat the activity with a different text but, this time, get the learners to check anything they are not sure is a chunk in a good corpus-based dictionary such as the *Macmillan English Dictionary*. (We learnt this activity from Michael Rundell who was its editor-in-chief.)

■ ■ ■ We have noticed that the vocabulary lists at the end of a unit or coursebook usually focus on and list single words – not chunks. This gives us the opportunity to get the learners to look through their coursebook for chunks and have a 'coursebook corpus' of chunks – a 'lexical chunk approach' to the coursebook.

■ ■ ■ Repeat the activity, but check anything the learners can't chunk against the British National Corpus on their laptops or phones. If you have a connection to the internet, this can be done with the whole class. See Chapter Five for more on using Web resources.

Connects to

Chunks in the news (74)

Reduction

This activity raises awareness of the importance of lexical chunks rather than full grammatical sentences in spoken English. It shows how key chunks can convey the intention of the speaker and demonstrates the importance of intonation.

Level Duration

Preparation

Select a text which aims to practise spoken English from the coursebook; or a new text or one you want to review. Often, coursebook dialogues which claim to be 'spoken English' are too formal and more characteristic of written grammar – choose one of those. Prepare one copy per pair of learners.

Procedure

- Show the learners the dialogue you have selected, and copy the first line onto the board. For example:
So what are your plans for today?
- Ask the learners to cross out the words that can be removed. Emphasise that the message has to remain the same. For example:
Plans for today? or So ... today?
- The learners do the same with the rest of the dialogue. They can't change or add words, only remove. The more the better – but they have to keep the original meaning.
- When they have finished, ask them to work in pairs and compare their new versions of the dialogue.
- Each pair writes up a version of the dialogue that they agree upon.
- Bring the class together, and selected pairs or volunteers present their dialogues to practise intonation.

Possibilities

- This activity works really well when the dialogue is put into Word format and is projected onto a screen. Individual learners come up to the keyboard, propose changes and the class have to decide whether to accept the changes – or not. (You can do this on a whiteboard too – but it is less elegant.)
- Each pair can work with a *different* coursebook dialogue which has already been done in class. When the reduced versions are ready, they are circulated. Other pairs have to identify what the original dialogue was, and try to reconstruct the original 'full' version.

Connects to

Top 20 words (86) • Howzaboutit? (76)

Expansion

Coursebook dialogues are often stilted because their main aim is to practise grammar rather than show features of spoken English. This activity asks the learner to add chunks (*heads* and *tails* – see below) to a dialogue to look after their listener, listen actively or 'hedge' – all important features of spoken grammar.

Level Duration

Preparation

Select a suitable coursebook dialogue – either one that is new to the learners or one that needs reviewing.

Procedure

- Show the learners the dialogue you have selected and copy the first line onto the board. For example:
It's a beautiful day. How about going for a walk?
- Ask the learners to expand the line by adding chunks.
- Emphasise that the message has to remain more or less the same. For example:
It's a beautiful day, isn't it? A bit of exercise? How about going for a walk, you and me?
- Get the learners to note that chunks can be added *before* or *after* as a 'head' or a 'tail'.
- The learners work in pairs on the rest of the dialogue, writing it down as they go.
- When they have finished, ask them to display their versions of the dialogue on the walls.
- The pairs mingle and read their different versions of the dialogue aloud to each other to practise their intonation.

Possibilities

The activity works especially well when the dialogue is in Word format and is projected onto a screen. Individual learners come up to the keyboard and propose changes so the class can decide whether to accept them.

Connects to

Chunks in novels (76) • Creative chunks (60)

Rapid repairs

This activity prepares the learners to be more confident about hesitating and 'repairing' as an aid to keep going when trying to find the appropriate chunk. In essence, they are being encouraged to sort and retrieve – rather than stopping dead when they think they have made a 'mistake'.

Level Duration

Procedure

- Pair the learners and ask each pair to decide who is the speaker and who is the writer.
- Dictate the following stems at speed:
 - I live on ...*
 - I live in ...*
 - I live at ...*
- The speaker is to complete the stems as quickly as possible. The writer has to note down *exactly* what the speaker said, including hesitations and reformulations.
- They might get, for example:
 - I live on ... er ... Westerplatte Street.*
 - I live in a top floor flat.*
 - I live at ... Westerplatte St ... at 36 Westerplatte Street in Sopot.*
- Pause and get them to check for slips and note the reformulations. They can check with you if they are not quite sure.
- Emphasise that when you speak, nobody knows exactly what you intended to say – so you can change your intention while speaking.
- Repeat with:
 - I got there on ...*
 - I got there in ...*
 - I got there at ...*
 - I work on ...*
 - I work in ...*
 - I work at ...*

Possibilities

While the learners are involved in *any* speaking activity, you can collect examples of sentences that lend themselves to this activity. When you have a few, dictate the beginnings and get the learners to complete – using *their* utterances to improve their repair techniques through activating different chunks.

Connects to

Answers to questions (28) • What was the question? (66)

Small change, big difference

This activity shows how a small change in the combination of words that make a chunk changes the meaning that the word partnership is 'primed' to convey.

Level Duration

Preparation

Prepare a sample text (see below).

Procedure

- Write the following quote (from Mae West, Hollywood actress and personality) on the board:
 - It's not the man in your life that's important, it's the life in your man.*
- Check the learners' understanding, then repeat with the following example taken from a sign outside a pub:
 - It's nice to be important but it's more important to be nice.*
- Now give out your sample text (these examples are at upper-intermediate):

<i>drinking problem</i>	<i>problem drinking</i>
<i>a cooking pot</i>	<i>a pot cooking</i>
<i>driving mad</i>	<i>mad driving</i>
<i>take over</i>	<i>overtake</i>
<i>a roof slate</i>	<i>a slate roof</i>
<i>open a letter</i>	<i>an open letter</i>
<i>reach out</i>	<i>outreach</i>
<i>up jumped</i>	<i>jumped up</i>
- In small groups, ask the learners to comment on the differences in meaning. Monitor and help as necessary.

Possibilities

- The following examples again ask the learners to distinguish the meaning of chunks – but with slightly different grammatical priming: the meaning is affected by the grammatical change ('deixis') rather than word order.

<i>a blue one and a white one</i>	<i>a blue and white one</i>
<i>Have you seen a dog?</i>	<i>Have you seen the dog?</i>
<i>Have you got an ashtray?</i>	<i>Have you got that ashtray?</i>
<i>on the way</i>	<i>in the way</i>
<i>make some toast</i>	<i>make a toast</i>

The examples below ask the learners to distinguish meaning where it is primed by a change in word order, part of speech and addition of an article.

<i>role play</i>	<i>play a role</i>	<i>cow herd</i>	<i>herd a cow</i>
<i>game plan</i>	<i>plan a game</i>	<i>bike wheel</i>	<i>wheel a bike</i>
<i>car park</i>	<i>park a car</i>	<i>bike ride</i>	<i>ride a bike</i>

Connects to

Opinion versus data (87) • Questions, queries and quibbles (97)

Songs in your head

We all carry in our heads many chunks from texts we are often exposed to. This activity helps us to bring this 'brain sludge' to the surface, talk about it and work on correctness (sometimes these phrases are remembered by learners in very 'approximate' versions).

Level Duration

Preparation

Prepare an English song that is well known to the learners. Divide each line into halves, making sure that where you divide the lines is the middle of a chunk. An example from the Beatles:

<i>Yesterday all my troubles seemed</i>	... so far away
<i>It looks as though</i>	... they're here to stay
<i>I believe in</i>	... yesterday
<i>Why she had to go</i>	... I don't know, she wouldn't say

Procedure

- Read out the first half of each line you have prepared – the learners complete it, shouting out the answers.
- Get the learners to think of the names of songs in English that they are crazy about, and for which they know at least some of the lyrics.
- They jot down as many phrases or bits of the lyrics that they can remember.
- In small groups or pairs, learners with similar tastes take it in turns to test each other, reading the first part of a phrase or line and seeing if their partners can continue it.
- Our learners came up with these:

<i>I'm a loser baby</i>	... so why don't you kill me? (<i>Loser</i> by Beck)
<i>I'm just a sucker</i>	... with no self esteem (<i>Self Esteem</i> by The Offspring)

Possibilities

- You can prepare a well-known song in the learners' native language, or chunks from various songs. If you do this variation first, the learners will become aware that they know the phenomenon very well and that it is universal – regardless of what language the chunks are in.
- Similar activities can be done with poems, adverts, quotations or book titles. Examples need to come from sources familiar to the learners and liked by them.

Connects to
Listening for chunks (33)

Song titles (and brackets)

Song titles, by their very nature, are at the juncture of written and spoken grammar. We have noticed that brackets are often used to show the boundaries that separate one chunk from another. This activity highlights how chunks fit together to form extended utterances.

Level Duration

Preparation

Look through your CDs or MP3 files (or on YouTube/ Myspace) and select a few song titles which have brackets (see the samples below), write them out and make copies. If they are songs by groups well known to the age group of your class, so much the better.

Procedure

- Write one or two examples on the board, with the song titles still containing their brackets. For example:
I Don't Want Nobody to Give Me Nothing (Open up the Door I'll Get it Myself)
James Brown
Inner City Blues (Make Me Want to Holler)
Marvin Gaye
- Now dictate your song titles one by one, without saying where the brackets are:
 - Using a flat voice will make this activity more difficult.
 - Alternatively, your intonation can be a helpful clue to make it easier.
- After you dictate each title, the learners have 30 seconds to consult with a neighbour where to insert the brackets.
- Give out the original copies and ask the learners to check if they have put the brackets in the same place. (They may have alternatives to the original which are also likely.)

Possibilities

- For homework, the learners can go through their own collections and find ten or so examples of song titles with brackets. They make a list with the brackets removed. In a second lesson, group the learners by their musical taste: they test each other, dictating the titles or showing them with the brackets removed and checking each other's answers. It can be worth telling them to avoid things like (*Live Version*) or (*Remix*)!

Connects to
Mischunking (49)

The tip of the iceberg

The learners become aware of how much information they can find in dictionaries, and they also get to use metalanguage.

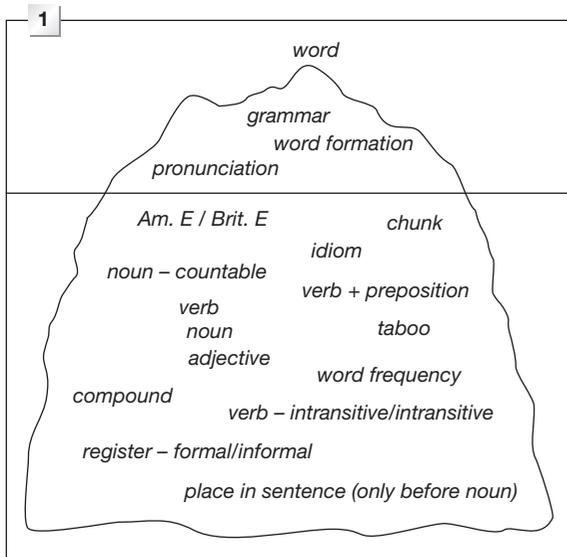
Level Duration ● ● ●

Preparation

You will need a set of monolingual corpus-based dictionaries or you can use the learners' own.

Procedure

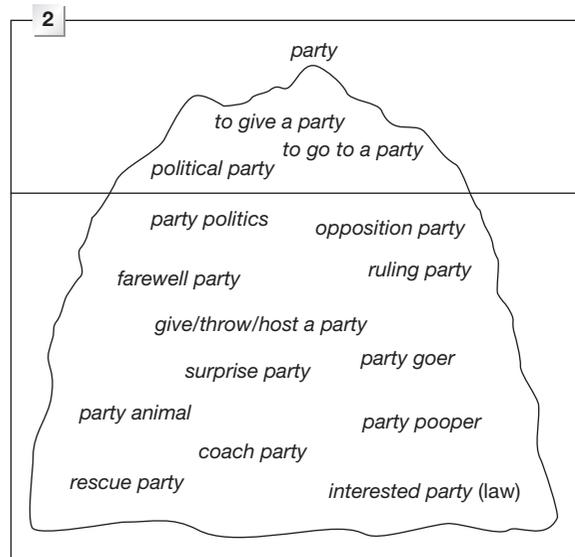
- Brainstorm what the learners know about icebergs:
 - If a learner gives the fact that only one ninth of the iceberg is above water, reinforce it.
 - If not, tell them.
- Draw a quick sketch of an iceberg on the board, making sure that the design is the right proportion – one part above water, eight parts underneath.
- Write *word* at the tip of the iceberg.
- Brainstorm what information the learners can find in a dictionary about a word. Encourage them to use the metalanguage they know – *part of speech, pronunciation, countable/uncountable, collocation, etc.*
- Write their suggestions on the iceberg, in the 'above the water level' section.
- Ask them to look through the dictionaries for more to add.



- Discuss with the whole class, and write the results of their findings *below* the water level. The final product may look like Box 1.
- Divide the learners into pairs and ask them to draw an iceberg. Make sure the proportions are right.
 - They choose an English word and write it at the tip.
 - You collect and redistribute the drawings.
- Each pair writes the chunks they know containing the key word above the water level. Further use of resources is *not allowed* at this stage.
- You collect and redistribute the drawings a second time.
- Now give out the dictionaries and *allow* access to resources. The learners research and write the new information they find below the water level. For a possible final outcome for the word *party*, see Box 2.
- Display the drawings and discuss the results. Point out how many chunks are 'below the water level'.

Possibilities

The learners can now use this technique to do ongoing research on their own.



Connects to
 Bilingual dictionaries online (41) ▪ Be a sport (38)