



1



2

True or false?

The biggest predictor of a child's success in a first global interaction is the **size of their vocabulary** and how many words they have memorised.



3

False!

We often think of English proficiency as a vertical ladder—the more words you memorise, the higher you climb. But Canale and Swain showed us that proficiency is actually a backpack.

If your pack is stuffed only with heavy books (Grammar Rules and Vocabulary), you might feel prepared, but you'll struggle to move when the trail gets rough. Those books won't help you when you're lost or the weather changes. The Strategic tools aren't an optional extra you pack if you have space; it is the sturdy frame of the backpack itself. It's the skeleton that supports the weight of everything else you carry, turning a heavy load into a functional kit for a real-world explorer.



Gemini 3 Flash, (2026). The Communication Backpack-Strategy over stuff [AI-generated image]. Google AI

4

My experience at a national Spelling Bee



5

Jennifer Jenkins argues that we should be focusing on intelligible language over accuracy, meaning moving from native English to functional communicators.

We are training our students to be effective communicators, not spies trying to blend in as native speakers from other countries.



6

What tools to carry in their backpack?



- Repair Kit
- Universal Adapter
- Thread Weaver



7

The Repair Kit



To prevent the breakdown in communication we need to provide our students with tools like the anchor, backtrack and the compass. This allows students to control the timing of the conversation and continue to be present.

- Key chunks:
- "Wait a second."
 - "Can you say that again?"
 - "What does [word] mean?"



How to practice: Play a game of draw the monster where the teacher intentionally describes a monster rushed, and can only repeat, pause or clarify if students call out the target chunks

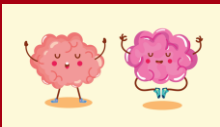
8

Brain break



Write in the chat one word your students always forget when expressing themselves.

For example, embarrassed



9

Universal adapter



Often our students freeze when they can't think of the specific word or have not come across it. Teach your students how to plug the holes in their vocabulary.

- Key chunks:
- "It's the thing for [action]..."
 - "It's the person who [job]..."
 - "It looks like a [known object]..."



How to practice: Create your own game of Taboo with your target vocabulary to strengthen both the skill to describe unknown words.



10

Cultural Thread Weaver



In the era of AI, it's vital our students communicate with empathy and demonstrate human centred social skills through their language. This is particularly important with cultural differences in regards to directness.

- "Like you said before..."
- "What if we..."
- "Speaking of [topic]..."
- "How about..."
- "I remember you like..."
- "Let's try..."
- "What do you think about..."
- "Okay, but next time..."

How to practice: Play a selection of negotiation, human based communication skills games that require the phrases such as conversation chain, solution squad and thoughtful gift giver.



11

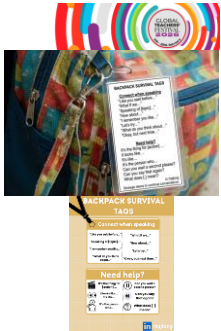
Differentiation tip



Providing cheat sheets to students allows them to build their agency over their communication and conversations. Allow students to freely access this resource by pointing, reading or expanding on the stems provided.

Additionally when paired 'stronger' students in class, it can be used between pairs and allows the more fluent student to grade their speech and provide access to others - another invaluable skill.

These can also be provided in three varieties:
Level I : Full sentences provided
Level II : Stem sentences
Level III : Icons to trigger usage



12

Assessment for learning



As we are encouraging functionality opposed to full accuracy, we focus on the successful uses of language and not the mistakes.

It can be a simple booklet or page in their notebook. When you hear a student use a Repair Strategy—like 'Wait, can you say that again?'—the aim is not to correct their grammar but instead give them a stamp in their 'passport'.

At the end of the week, it's not assessing their test scores but instead to look at their stamps. A student with a full passport is becoming a functional global communicator, even if their grammar isn't perfect.



Genzini J Flank. (2020). The Global Communication Passport [AI-generated image]. Google

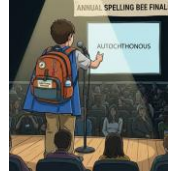
13



When I watched those brilliant spellers freeze at that competition, I realised something profound: we've been packing the wrong backpack.

The skills we looked at today aren't just phrases — they're superpowers. Let's not treat them as extras alongside our content, grammar and exam preparation. We need to integrate them.



Somewhere out there is a child who will represent your school, your country, your teaching in their first global conversation. What do you want in their backpack when that moment comes?



14


Some more freebies

Download your printable tags to use with your class immediately.




15

Thank you
Any questions?



16

Week 2

<p>Day 6 - Monday 16th February Agency</p> <p> The Global Communication Backpack: Functional English every child should carry Michelle Long</p> <p>Day 7 (Pre-record session 1) Tuesday 17th February Generation AI</p> <p> Agents, assistants and us - Who's actually doing the work? Hannah Taylor</p> <p>Day 8 - Wednesday 18th February Expression</p> <p> Learning Through Play: Adapting to young children natural preferences Helen McKeown</p> <p>Day 9 - Thursday 19th February Inclusion</p> <p> Universal Design for Learning: The Foundation of how to meet the needs of all learners Allison Peasey</p> <p>Day 10 - Friday 20th February Challenge</p> <p> Lowering The Affective Filter in Digital Learning Flair Caputo</p>	<p> From Choices to Decisions: Agency in the primary classroom Michelle Long</p> <p> The Human Edge: Safeguarding Teacher Agency in the AI Era Mark Willis</p> <p> Step into Character: Nurturing confident speakers in the EFL classroom Miranda Lago</p> <p> The UDL Guidelines Structure and Practical Classroom Applications Dr Byron Lopez</p> <p> Supporting The Quiet Learner Sarah</p>
--	--



17