

Choosing the right word

Introduction

In the following activities students are encouraged to be more precise in their speaking and writing by choosing specific instead of general words. For example, instead of using the word *change* they can use words such as *alter*, *adjust* or *modify*.

A useful feature of the *Macmillan English Dictionary* is that it gives information about how to be more specific in your choice of vocabulary. This information is shown in a box, under the heading *Other ways of saying ...*, at the end of the entry for the general word. This worksheet includes extracts from these sections of the dictionary, which will enable the students to do the activities.

Aims

To increase students' awareness of the importance of using specific rather than general words.

To increase students' understanding and use of the lexical sets for the adjectives **false** and **thin** and the verb **increase**.

Time and materials

Allow five minutes for the introduction and five minutes for each activity so a total of 25 minutes.

Each student needs a copy of the worksheet and a copy of the Second Edition of the *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*.

Procedures

Introductory activity

- 1 Write the verb *to change* on the board. Ask the students to think of any other verbs with the same or similar meaning. Some possible words are:

Other ways of saying **change**

alter a more formal word for 'change': *His election could alter the balance of power in the region.*

adjust to change something slightly so that it is exactly the way you want it: *You adjust the volume using the remote control.* ♦ *Can you adjust the height of the seat?*

adapt to change something to deal with a specific situation: *The recipes can be adapted for vegetarians.* ♦ *They need to adapt their military forces to the needs of the post-Cold War situation.*

convert to change something so that it can be used for a different purpose: *We're going to convert the spare room into a study.*

modify to make small changes, for example to a machine or system, in order to make something suitable for a different situation: *The exhaust system has to be modified to meet new emission standards.*

transform to change something completely so that it looks or works much better: *Putting in a larger kitchen has completely transformed the house.* ♦ *new discoveries that could transform the way we treat cancer*

vary to make continuous or repeated changes to something: *It's important to vary your diet.*

- 2 Discuss the information in the introduction with the students, explaining that their English will be clearer, more interesting and generally more 'advanced' if they use precise rather than the most simple, general words.
- 3 Point out to the students that the dictionary gives the contexts in which the synonyms occur, and gives examples for how the words are used.

► Activity 1

- 1 Ask your students to read the dictionary extract about different ways of saying *false*.
- 2 Ask them to underline the adjective that can be used with the noun.

Answers

a artificial **b** fake **c** imitation **d** bogus **e** counterfeit **f** forged **g** pirate

► Activity 2

Ask the students to study the words in the dictionary extract about different ways of saying *increase* and then replace the words in bold with a more specific word from the extract.

Answers

a mounting **b** push up **c** doubled **d** soared/rocketed **e** went up **f** rose

► Activity 3

- 1 Ask the students to study the words in the dictionary extract about different ways of saying *thin* and then complete the sentences that follow with a suitable word.

Answers

a skinny **b** trim **c** slimmer **d** slender **e** anorexic **f** emaciated **g** gaunt/bony

- 2 Before moving on to Activity 4, recap on the vocabulary in Activities 1 to 3 by asking questions such as:
How do we say things 'increase quickly and suddenly'? (*rocket/sky rocket*)
What's another way of saying 'thin in a graceful way'? (*slender*)
What's another way of saying 'false signature'? (*forged signature*)
- 3 Elicit the answers to a few of these questions as a class and then ask the students to test each other in pairs by asking similar questions.

For discussion

In this activity some of the new language is activated. Remind students that activating the language is essential to aid recall later. Ask them to ask and answer the questions. Encourage them to use the new words and to develop the conversations as much as possible.

Follow-up

- 1 Students could be encouraged to record these and future vocabulary sets in the form of spidergrams either for their vocabulary notebooks or for classroom posters.
- 2 Students can be asked to write a 'crazy story' which contains all the words in the set.