

Reflecting on the new GCSE. What's working? What's not working? What are you going to do about it?

Key Take Aways from TTLH's 'new' GCSE CPD Event
Thursday 26th June 2025

Reassuring principles underpinning your 'new GCSE' teaching

1 You already know how to teach a 'good' languages lesson. Don't forget those principles.

2 Decide which tenses and structures you want students to master. Retrieve these at every opportunity.

3 Decide which 'complex structures' you want students to master. Show students how to use these structures in all 9 topics.

4 To support all students in a mixed ability classroom, you need to strategically plan how you will scaffold and challenge in every lesson.

5 Underpinning Principles



"Learning happens when people have to think hard."

Professor Robert Coe

All students in our classrooms, regardless of their target grade, need to 'think hard' during their lesson.



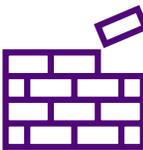
To support our learners to engage in 'healthy struggle' we can adjust the component parts of each task. Adam Boxer's article explains what this might look like in a science lesson.

$$\text{Challenge} = \frac{\text{task quantity} + \text{content demand}}{\text{prior knowledge} + \text{external supports}}$$



Adam Boxer

6 Scaffold: How could you scaffold a higher reading text so everyone in the class can access it?



Ideas shared during the session:

1. Flipped learning. Ask students to learn the new vocab prior to the lesson.
2. Reformat the passage to reduce cognitive load or to simplify the tenses if needed. AI can help with this.
3. Listen to the passage. Students highlight the words **they know**.
4. Use the passage for some read aloud practice.
5. Look for the 'star verbs' for this topic in this passage. Which tense are they in? How do students know? What do they mean?
6. Use the 'fishing game' to introduce more complex vocabulary. "Can you find the word for x?"
7. Provide a glossary for acronyms, names and references students might not understand.
8. Explore the reciprocal reader approach. Working collaboratively students predict what they think the passage is about, write a list of words they need to clarify, write a list of comprehension questions someone else could answer or summarise the text in their own words.
9. Teachers can write their own multiple choice comprehension questions if the suggested open response questions are too challenging.

7

How can we genuinely challenge our learners, rather than just giving them more things to do?



Often, whole school CPD sessions introduce Griffith and Burns' (2014) Thinking Harder' devices when encouraging teachers to increase the level of challenge in their lessons. However, when we look at these devices, it's not immediately obviously how we might incorporate the concepts into a language lesson.

Thinking Harder Devices

Thinking Harder Device Synonyms

Knowledge and Understanding



Analysis and Application



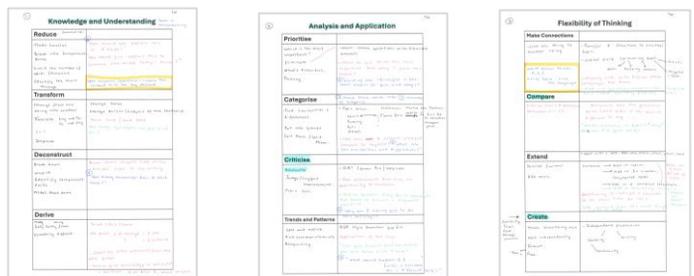
Flexibility of Thinking



Knowledge and Understanding		Analysis and Application		Flexibility of Thinking	
Reduce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summarise Identify the main message 	Prioritise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eliminate 	Make Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Link
Transform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Translate Improve Change 	Categorise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sort Group 	Compare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same or different
Deconstruct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Break Down Component Parts 	Criticise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate Judge 	Extend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop Add
Derive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make something from something else 	Trends and Patterns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notice Identify 	Create	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write / Speak Invent Be independent

During the CPD session, teachers were asked to find synonyms for each of 'thinking harder' devices. Having done this, it was easier to see how we could create tasks which would encourage this level of thinking in our lessons.

Download our collective ideas about how to use the thinking harder devices in your lessons on the [TTLH website](#).



8

Engaging our learners in spontaneous talk using genuine listening and responding activities will also make our learners think hard!

Steven Fawkes. Definitions of speaking

- saying = saying words, chorusing, reading aloud
- talking = listening and responding
- Speaking = engaging in GCSE / A-Level style tasks

Fawkes, S. "It's Good to Talk" p15. 2023

During the session, teachers reflected that their students were doing well with the read aloud and the describing a photo task. The unprepared elements of the speaking exam still needed work.



Purposeful

As long as there is immediate and pertinent feedback!

If we want students to be able to listen and respond spontaneously, we need to make sure they have adequate time to practise listening and responding in lessons and that they receive feedback which will help them to get better.

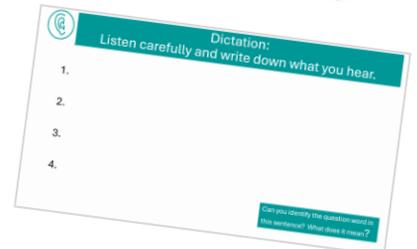
How do we build genuine listening and responding activities into our lessons? What are the steps we need to include in our lessons?

9



Understand the question

1. Listen to the question. Identify the question word. What does the question word mean?
2. Dictation. Listen to the question. Write down the question in the TL. Consider scaffold. (Fill in missing letters, give first letter of each word, fill in missing words etc)
3. Listen to the question. Translate the question into English.



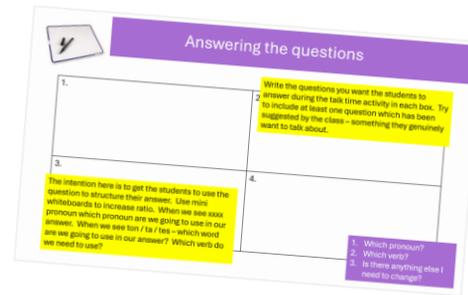
Answer the question accurately

1. Students see the question on the screen. Using mini whiteboards teacher checks for understanding. Which tense? Which pronoun do you need to use? Which verb could you use?
2. Students see the question on the screen. Write the sentence starter.
3. Students see the question on the screen. Turn and tell your partner your answer.



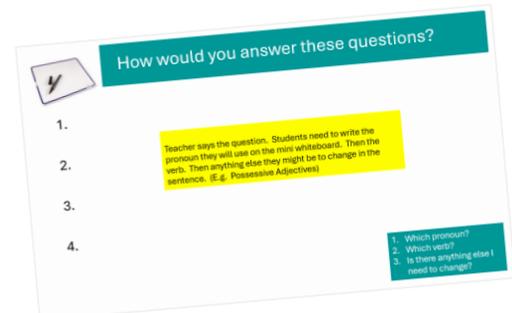
Listen and respond

1. Students listen to the question. Teacher repeats the previous sequence on mini whiteboards. Which tense? Which pronoun? Which verb?
2. Listen to the question. Say the sentence starter.
3. Listen to the question. Tell your partner the answer.



Conversation

1. Q and A with your partner using suggested questions on the screen. Try to include three clauses in answers.
2. Option to provide some support. Key verbs. Repair strategies.
3. Teacher circulates and identifies common mistakes. Then feedbacks to the class at the end of the conversation.



Embrace the unknown

1. Teacher and students dissect exemplar conversations. Explore how the questioning sequence progresses.
2. Students map out a question sequence in the TL. If I say this, what might the next logical question be? (Consider who, what, where, how, why)
3. During whole class speaking activities the teacher regularly adds in unprepared follow up questions. (Use who, what, where, how, why)

