



## Edo Forsythe & Paul Raine

In this column, we explore the issue of teachers and technology—not just as it relates to CALL solutions, but also to Internet, software, and hardware concerns that all teachers face. We invite readers to submit articles on their areas of interest. Please contact the editor before submitting.

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## The Digital Keyword Method

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Acquiring a large enough vocabulary to communicate is arguably the most challenging part of learning a second language, even more so in an EFL context where the majority of words will invariably be learnt from vocabulary lists. However, by combining a mnemonic technique called the Keyword Method (Atkinson, 1975) with the collaborative writing software Google Docs, an image-manipulation application like Pic Collage, and a social media platform such as Instagram, you can create an engaging way to encourage your students to use their imagination and digital savvy to remember vocabulary.

### The Keyword Method

The Keyword Method is a two-step process that creates a link between an L2 word and its L1 translation (see Figure 1). The first step, known as the acoustic link, is only concerned with the sound of the L2 word. It is a word (or words) in the L1 that sounds the same as (or very similar to) the L2 word. The second step of the method is to imagine the keyword interacting with the L1 translation. This is called the imagery link.

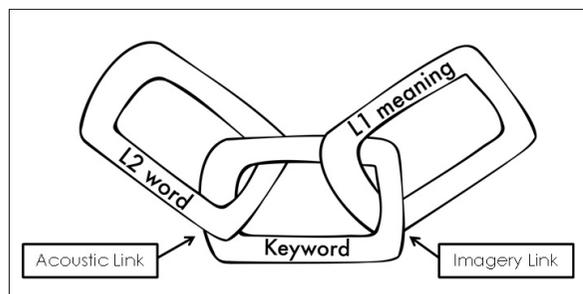


Figure 1. The Keyword Method.

A practical example from my Japanese-learning experience might help explain the process more clearly (see Figure 2). The Japanese word for “fatigue” is 疲労, written in *rōmaji* as *hirō*. The acoustic link is the English word, *hero*, and the imagery link is a fatigued superhero taking a rest on his sofa after a long day of saving the world.

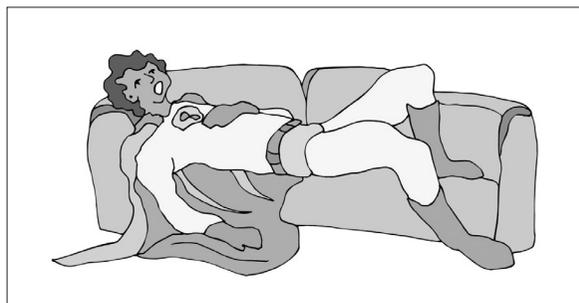


Figure 2. A fatigued superhero mnemonic for the Japanese target vocabulary 疲労 (*hirō*).

### Collaborative Creation of Keyword Sentences

To begin creating keyword sentences each week, I create a document in Google Docs that includes 12 English words taken from the TOEIC Service List (Browne & Culligan, 2016) along with their Japanese translations. This word list was chosen because my students need to score at least 650 on the TOEIC test to graduate, but other resources can be used depending on student needs and levels. At the start of each class, this document is shared with each student and they are given access to edit it.

To take advantage of the collaborative environment that Google Docs affords, I recommend breaking students into groups of three or four. Initially, each group is asked to write sentences using two of the vocabulary words. Groups that finish creating sentences quickly are then asked to use their creativity to make keyword sentences for any of the remaining words. A key part of the method is to ensure that the keyword contains all of the sounds of the L2 word with no breaks between the sounds. To reinforce this visually, I ask the students to change the text colour of the keyword. I also ask students to change the colour of the Japanese meaning, so a

completed keyword sentence should contain three colours (see Figure 3).

### From Written Text to a Still Image

The imagery step, where the keyword interacts with the L1 definition, should ensure that the sentences are inherently visual, and Google Images and Pic Collage can be used to make this visual element even more salient. After the first class, I create a PDF that combines the keyword sentences and email it to the students. In the next class, they are given time to make a still image that explains their favourite keyword sentence for one of the two words they were initially responsible for. It is unlikely that a Google Image search will yield a single image that perfectly fits the keyword sentence, but multiple images can be mixed together using Pic Collage, a free image manipulation app that is available on both iOS and Android devices.

Once saved on their device, images can be imported into Pic Collage and edited. It is possible to adjust the size, move, rotate, and even flip the images. In addition, if only part of the image is needed, that section can be cut out. When multiple images are used in a collage, they will be layered based on the order they were imported. By default, the most recently imported image will be on the top layer, but this can be changed. Tapping an image once will bring it to the top of the layers, whereas double tapping and choosing *back* sends it to the bottom.



Figure 3. An example of a completed keyword sentence image.

### Assembling the Final Mnemonic

Once the image is complete, the written text of the keyword sentence needs to be added. As mentioned earlier, a different colour should be used for the keyword, the L1 translation, and the rest of the sentence to create further visual cues. The L2 word, in yet another colour, should also be added to the image (see Figure 3). I created this video to teach my students how to use Pic Collage to make a keyword image: <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_M7vAjf6jOo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_M7vAjf6jOo)>

### Creating a Learning Community with Social Media

I instruct my students to use their university email address to create an Instagram account. It is not necessary to share any private information when creating the account, but it does need to be set to “Public” to ensure that the hashtag feature works. Hashtags are used to group similar images together, and they can be used to foster a learning community. Each image this year includes the hashtag #kwvocab18, which groups all of the year’s images together, as well as a second hashtag that allows students to search the vocabulary words by the week they were created. This second hashtag changes each week, such as #rkwkuis9. Time is given in the third class of each week for students to look at that week’s posts and then like and/or add positive comments to each post.

### Incorporating the Digital Keyword Method Into the Classroom

Incorporating the Digital Keyword Method into your classes will take approximately 45 minutes per week. Creating the keyword sentences as a class using Google Docs usually takes about 15 minutes. In the next class, students are given 15 minutes to turn the sentences into images using Google Images and Pic Collage, and then post them to Instagram with the two hashtags. Students who fail to complete this in the 15 minutes allotted in class need to complete it for homework. In the third class, students interact with the Instagram posts for five minutes. They are encouraged to take screen shots of their favourite images, which they can then save into a vocabulary folder in their Photos app in order to help them study for a quiz at the start of the next class.

### Conclusion

The Digital Keyword Method described in this article offers an alternative to the rote learning strate-

gies predominantly used by Japanese students. First, students collaborate in small groups and use Google Docs to make Japanese mnemonic sentences for English words taken from the TOEIC Service List. Visual representations of these sentences are then created using Google Images and an image editor such as Pic Collage. Finally, the images are posted to Instagram with unique hashtags, and time is given in class for students to view and interact with the posts. From informal classroom conversations and looking at the weekly quiz results of students who seem actively engaged in using this technique, it seems that the Digital Keyword Method is helping vocabulary acquisition, and this could be a topic for more detailed research in the future.

## References

- Atkinson, R. (1975). Mnemotechnics in second-language learning. *American American Psychologist*, 30(8), 821-826. doi: 10.1037/h0077029
- Browne, C., & Culligan, B. (2016). *The TOEIC Service List*. Retrieved from <http://www.newgeneralservicelist.org>

*Editor's Note: This month's tip will help your students improve their vocabulary and hopefully increase their scores on proficiency tests. Practical tech applications such as this will be shared by many at this year's PanSIG 2019 in May and at the JALTCALL2019 conference in early June. Be sure to check out the CALL-related sessions at these conferences—registration is open soon! You're sure to find interesting tips to help you make your lessons Wired! in the coming school year!*

## [JALT PRAXIS] YOUNGER LEARNERS



### Mari Nakamura & Marian Hara

*The Younger Learners column provides language teachers of children and teenagers with advice and guidance for making the most of their classes. Teachers with an interest in this field are also encouraged to submit articles and ideas to the editor at the address below. We also welcome questions about teaching, and will endeavour to answer them in this column.*

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## Using Video Interactively in Dialogue with Young Learners

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Some years ago, I read an article about monolingual English-speaking parents in the U.S. who, wanting their toddlers to learn Mandarin, sat them in front of Chinese-language videos for long periods of time, expecting them to absorb the language. Not surprisingly, the children did not learn Chinese. I am not sure what lesson the parents learned. It is possible they attributed their children's "failure" to learn Chinese to the materials rather than the process, but what was missing was the most important element—interaction. Sociocultural and social interactionist theories suggest that children acquire language by interacting with adults and (in particular) other children around them (Bruner, 1983; Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). No matter how well-produced or attractive audio-visual materials are, to toddlers the language remains background noise. However, when a parent, caregiver, or older child points to the

television or Youtube video and interacts with the toddler *about* the program or video, then the magic happens. Then we are on the road to language acquisition. The language acquisition process is social and interactive (Eun & Lim, 2009; Kuhl, 2004; Lytle & Kuhl, 2017; Ramirez-Esparza, Garcia-Sierra & Kuhl, 2017). In the language classroom, the same principles apply. Animation shorts and other videos can be effective tools in foreign language classrooms *if* we interact with them and each other.

### Why Video?

As a cinephile, I have long appreciated movies, but seamlessly integrating movies into my lesson plans has not always gone well—even after the invariable technical difficulties were worked out. Moreover, the use of movies and video clips has sometimes been seen, including by some supervisors, as "lazy"—as a way to entertain rather than teach. However, when it comes to young learners, is it necessary to draw a line between entertainment and learning? Ultimately, I believe whatever we can do to engage young learners and support them in developing and communicating their fantasies and ideas is valuable. Learners are all individuals and learning strategies can vary between and among