

World Englishes in *OED Online*

Teaching Activity Pack



Introduction

This pack contains three lessons which teachers can use to introduce their students to the richness provided by the world's many languages and varieties of English. It is our hope that by using these lessons, teachers will be able to contribute to a more positive understanding of the legitimacy and rich history of the multiple varieties of English co-existing today.

The activities draw on *OED Online's* World Englishes content in order to help students to:

- understand that English is a living, constantly evolving language;
- appreciate the validity of Englishes other than British and American;
- explore how English is a global lingua franca which is enhanced by diversity.

Each lesson includes a Student's Worksheet and Teacher's Notes. The activities are simple, and can be used flexibly by teachers in different countries and in a range of settings including upper primary, secondary and adult ESL. They can also be adapted for use in teacher development and higher education contexts.

Lesson 1 **Words in different varieties of English**

Lesson 2 **Different words, same concept**

Lesson 3 **Borrowed words**

Lesson 1: Words in different varieties of English



Student worksheet

1. Work in pairs. Your teacher will give you a word to investigate. Use *OED Online* and complete the table below:

Our word:	
1. In which variety of English is this word used?	
2. What is the meaning of the word?	
3. How frequently is the word used?	
4. Where does the word come from?	
5. Our own example sentence	

2. Share your example sentence **(5)** with another pair. See if they can guess the meaning. Then share the rest of your findings.

3. Work in groups where everyone has learned about a different word. Create a role play using everyone's words.

4. Perform the role play for the class. Ask your classmates to pick out the 'new' words and guess the meaning.

Lesson 1: Words in different varieties of English



Teacher notes

Main aims: To raise awareness of frequently used words in regional varieties of English; to enable the exchange of knowledge about words used by people of different backgrounds; to enhance awareness, respect, and interest in other languages and cultures.

Language aims: To build students' vocabulary; to practise guessing meaning from context; to develop oral fluency

Time: 45–60 mins

Preparation

Before the class, use *OED Online* to select a number of words (or phrases) from any variety of English that your students are unfamiliar with (one word for each pair / group).

To do this, you will need to use 'Region' in the *Categories* page of *OED Online* (click [here](#) for instructions).

Select useful expressions that would be very familiar to someone who speaks that variety but likely completely new to anyone else; for example, from the region of South East Asia, this could include words such as *blur*, *kilig*, and *lepak*.

NB: *If your class includes speakers of some of the varieties you are drawing on, simply be careful when grouping and allocating words, that the assigned word isn't from their own variety.*

Procedure

1. Ask students what information they expect to find in a dictionary entry. Write ideas on the board.
2. Open *OED Online* (demonstrate how to log in and look up a word), and briefly compare the students' ideas with the OED content (headword, part of speech, pronunciation, frequency in current use, etymology, regional label, definition, and quotation paragraph).
3. With the students' help, fill in the Student Worksheet 1 table for your demonstration word. This ensures the students know how to do this later.
4. Create pairs (or small groups) and allocate your selected words. Hand out copies of Student Worksheet 1 and ask them to write their word in the first box of the table.
5. Students then log in to *OED Online* to do their research and complete their table.

NB: *The examples of usage in the OED are extracted from published sources, but may not be suitable / easily understandable by students. Therefore, encourage them to make their own simple, clear example when they reach part (e), and assist as needed.*

6. Create new pairs, or combine existing pairs into groups of four. Ask the students to share their example sentences (e) and see if the others can guess the meaning. They can then share and discuss the rest of their findings.

NB: *You may want to give them another blank table to fill in, to scaffold their sharing.*

7. Create small groups, where everyone has learned about a different word. Set a time limit to create a role play using all the words. Monitor actively to support.
8. Invite each group to perform their role play for the class. Before they begin, remind the 'audience' to take note of the new expressions and think about what they mean, so you can discuss it after each roleplay (write this focus task on the board). Facilitate feedback, encouraging the performers to take the lead in confirming and clarifying the new vocabulary. If you have a student who is familiar with one of the words due to their own language background, invite them to share their expertise, correct pronunciation, and further examples. Record the new language on the board, including the alternative expressions or paraphrases that would be useful to learners.

Lesson 2: Different words, same concept

Student Worksheet



Complete the quiz as quickly as you can! You will need to log in to *OED Online* to find some answers!

1. 'A portable wireless telephone'

What do you call this device? _____

What is this device called in: Singapore and Malaysia _____

The United Kingdom _____

The United States _____

2. 'A toilet'

What do you call this place? _____

What is this place called in: Hong Kong _____

The Philippines _____

The United Kingdom _____

The United States _____

3. 'A street food stall'

What do you call this place? _____

What is this place called in: Hong Kong _____

India _____

Nigeria _____

The Philippines _____

Singapore and Malaysia _____

Lesson 2: Different words, same concept



Teacher notes

Main aims: To raise awareness of the different ways people from different places can express the same concepts; to raise awareness of some contributing factors to effective communication between interlocutors from different backgrounds; to increase intercultural awareness.

Language aims: To build students' vocabulary; to develop oral fluency

Time: 30–45 mins

Procedure

1. Ask students about some well-known differences between British English and American English, such as *lift* and *elevator*.
2. Set a time limit for students to answer the complete Student Worksheet 2. If they do not know the answers, encourage them to use an internet search engine or *OED Online* to find out. For example, searching for 'wireless telephone' in the *Advanced Search* section of the *OED* will bring up the Dictionary's entries for *cell* and *cell phone*, both labelled 'chiefly North American', as well as for *mobile phone*, labelled 'now chiefly British'. Searching for 'food stall' will bring up entries for *carinderia*, labelled 'Philippine English'; *dai pai dong*, labelled 'Hong Kong English'; and *dhaba*, described as being used in India and in Indian contexts.

NB: Click [here](#) for instructions on how to use OED's Advanced Search.

3. Conduct feedback, eliciting answers from the students where possible and recording these on the board. Discuss which words they use themselves, which are familiar, and which seem 'strange'. Discuss with the class whether variants can really be considered 'strange' or 'wrong', and identify times when any of the terms might cause confusion or misunderstanding. If English is in use locally, this is a rich opportunity to explore 'local' and 'international' differences and highlight that context of use and the backgrounds of the interlocutors is key.

Follow-up activities

- Encourage the students to use *OED Online* to investigate further into the meaning, history, pronunciation, and usage of the words presented in this activity.
- Ask students to find other examples of 'local' and 'international' lexical differences and report back in the next lesson or add to a shared document online.

Answer key

1. Singapore and Malaysia – hand phone
The United Kingdom – mobile, mobile phone
The United States – cell, cell phone, cellular phone
2. Hong Kong – washroom
The Philippines – comfort room, CR
The United Kingdom – bathroom, loo
The United States – bathroom, restroom
3. Hong Kong – dai pai dong
India – dhaba
Nigeria – buka, bukateria, mama put
The Philippines – carinderia
Singapore and Malaysia – hawker centre

Lesson 3: Borrowed words



Student worksheet

1. Work with a partner. Your teacher will assign you an *Origin* category to explore in the *Categories* section of *OED Online*.
2. List **five** words you recognise from this category.
 - What do they mean?
 - What language(s) do they come from?

Complete the table below.

	Word	Definition	Language of origin
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

3. Listen to the research done by your peers – take note of any new or interesting facts you learn.



4. Are there any words you know from other languages that you also use in English or that you think would be a useful addition in English?



Lesson 3: Borrowed words



Teacher notes

Main aims: To raise awareness of the many different languages from which English borrows words; to illustrate that English has always been and still is a constantly evolving language; to highlight the contribution other languages can make to the richness of English; to raise awareness of translinguaging / code-switching.

Language aims: To build students' vocabulary; to develop oral fluency

Time: 45–60 mins

Procedure

1. Dictate the following words to students, or do as word-unscramble race: *ninja, robot, alcohol, hamburger, shampoo*. Ask students what the words have in common. Answer: they are all borrowings from other languages.
2. Write up the origin languages in a jumbled order on the board and ask students to match them. The correct order is: Japanese, Czech, Arabic, German, Hindi.
3. Put students in pairs and allocate each pair a different 'Origin' (not English!) to explore under the *Categories* section of *OED Online* (click [here](#) for instructions on how to search the OED using *Categories*).
4. Hand out the Student Worksheet, and set a time limit for them to find and record five words that they recognise and have used. If this is difficult, they can sort the entries by **frequency of usage**, which should make it easier to find a word that they are familiar with. For example, choosing the origin 'African languages' will bring up 537 results; sorting these results by frequency will show such words as *chimpanzee, gorilla, safari, zombie, voodoo, and okra*.
5. Bring the students back together for whole class feedback. Each group can present their words, check meaning, and ask their classmates to guess the Origin language. Discuss if students were aware that these words had originated from other languages, and how long the word has been in usage in English. Could they imagine English without these familiar words?
6. If students speak other languages, you can ask them to suggest some words which they personally borrow into English (translinguaging) or which they think would be useful additions to English. This is a good opportunity for intercultural sharing and discussion.