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Analysing Learner Needs and Allowing this to Inform your Teaching

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Introducing today's speaker

Charles Stewart

Professional Learning and Development Specialist

- Charles has been working in the ELT field since 2011, teaching ESL, speaking at various ELT conferences around Central and Eastern Europe and writing workshops and delivering Freelance teacher training for Cambridge and other companies in several countries around the world.
- Charles began a new role at Cambridge University Press and Assessment in September 2024.
- Charles is doing an M.A. in Professional Development for Language Teachers.

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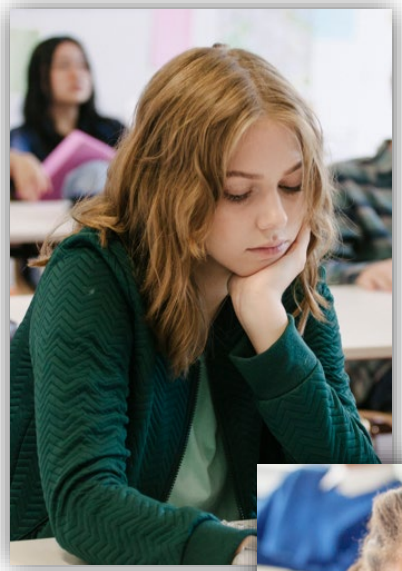
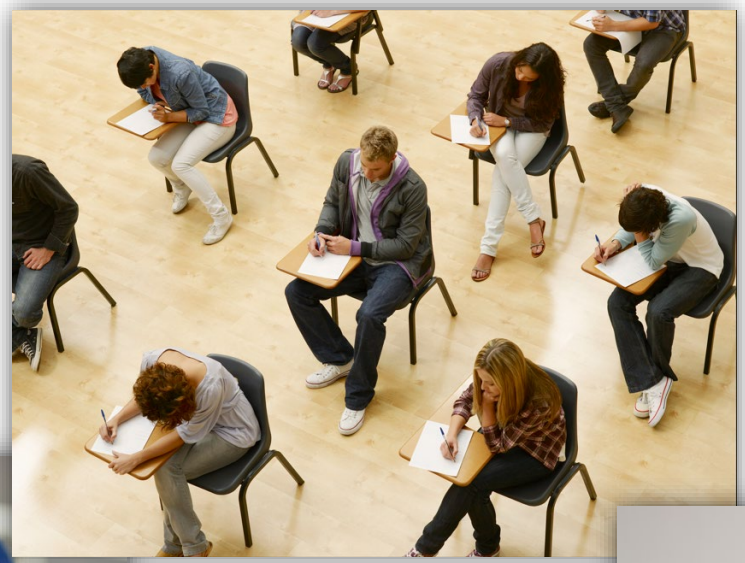
Agenda

- Consider **learner needs** and how they can be supported
- Discuss **learner motivation** and the factors affecting it
- Analyse **learner preferences** and how to incorporate them into planning

What makes learners different?





Possible learner differences:

- Fast worker
- Quickly gets bored
- Gives up easily
- Makes many mistakes
- Good at grammar
- Confident speaker
- Disruptive
- Hard worker
- Enjoys working in groups
- Shy

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Why do learners have different levels?

Factors include:

- aptitude (natural ability)
- motivation
- input suiting some learning preference over others
- exposure to / contact with English
- amount of self-study outside class

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“There are important differences in people’s learning styles … The point is that learning is not a fixed process, unvarying in all learners.”

Guy R. Lefrançois

Theories of Human Learning

Learner Needs
Learner Motivations
Learner Preferences

Learner Needs

Learner Motivations

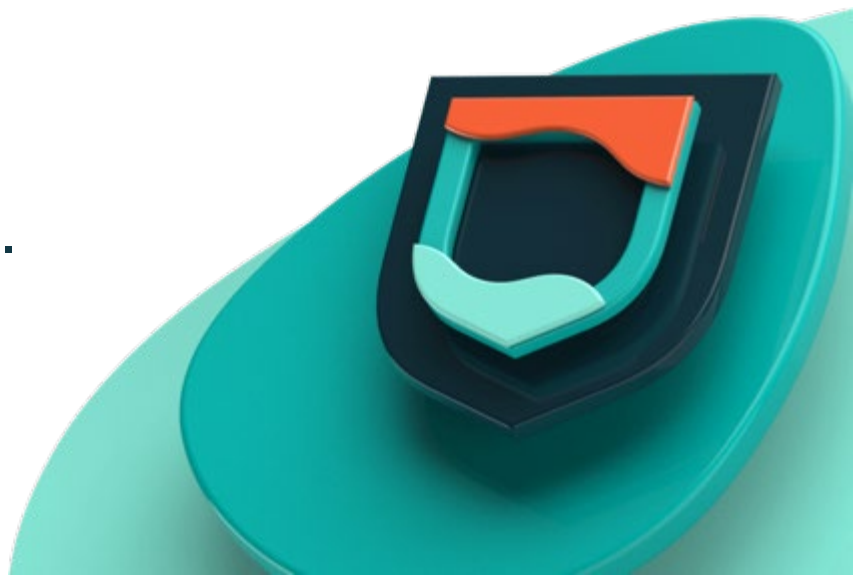
Learner Preferences

Brainstorm:

Why are your students learning English?

Possible reasons:

- They are interested in the cultures associated with English-speaking countries.
- They want to study at an English-medium university.
- They will need it for their future jobs.
- They want to travel the world.
- They have to. It is part of their school curriculum.



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Brainstorm:

What are you learners' needs as a result of their reasons for learning?

Possible needs:

- learn lots of vocabulary
- do lots of grammar practice because accuracy is important
- speak fluently and be able to communicate their ideas
- speak very accurately, without making too many mistakes
- listen to lots of speakers and understand different accents
- be able to read texts very accurately, understanding most words
- be able to read long texts quickly
- be able to write sentences accurately
- be able to write extended texts

How do learner needs inform our teaching?

Personal Needs	Educational Needs	Professional (Future) Needs

How do learner needs inform our teaching?

Personal Needs	Educational Needs	Professional (Future) Needs
Security *Challenge* Support *Praise* Goals *Learning expectations*	Specific ways of learning *Specific target language* specific sub-skills *exam strategies* learner autonomy *working at a suitable level*	specific subskills *specific vocabulary and grammar* specific functions *specific text types*

What can teachers do to respond to learners' needs?

- Do a [ ] and/or find out about your learners' personal needs, learning needs and current/future professional needs.

What can teachers do to respond to learners' needs?

- Do a 'needs analysis' and/or find out about your learners' personal needs, learning needs and current/future professional needs.
- Select topics, material and subjects for lessons that fit with their interests and needs. Decide on pace, interaction patterns and how to give learners feedback.
- Choose activities that fit with their learning styles and are suitable for their needs and interests. Adopt approaches for teaching language that respond to their needs, interests and learning styles.
- Think about the balance of skills (reading, listening, speaking, writing) in relation to their needs.

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Idea 1

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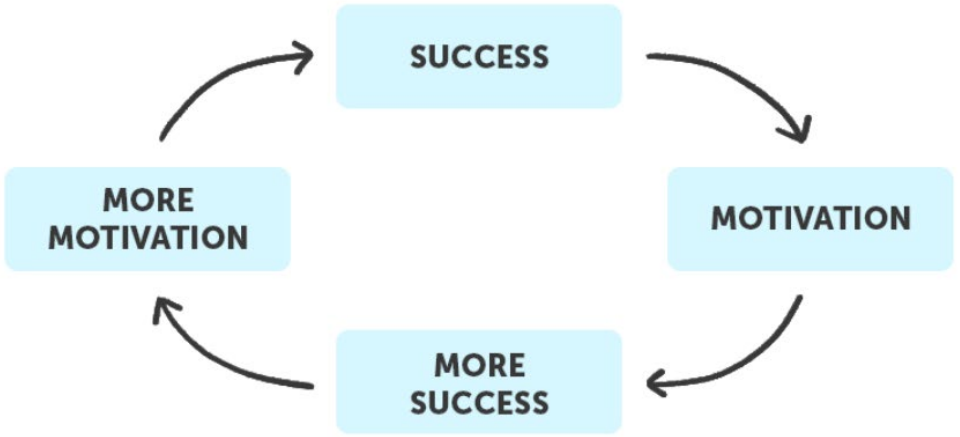
Idea 1
Set them up for success

- Provide clear and succinct success criteria or lesson aims
- Remember that as much of our work centres on language development, getting ‘everything correct’ is an unreasonable objective
- Allow for negotiation of lesson success criteria where possible



Learner Needs

Learner Motivations

Learner Preferences

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Honza

- Comes to school happy and interested in class
- Asks for homework, and is happy to study more than is necessary
- Actively engages in classroom activities
- Understands the rationale for learning and is aware of his own goals
- Is able to identify his weaknesses and is open to constructive feedback

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Martin

- Feels forced to come to classes
- Rarely does any homework and NEVER studies!
- Struggles to engage actively in class
- Doesn’t really care about the content of the class, even though he knows WHY he is there
- Is not really interested in improving

What about your students?

Do you have any ‘Honza’s or ‘Martin’s? With a partner, talk about these students and identify:

- Their motivations for learning English
- Why they might ‘feel’ the way they do about English
- How you deal with these students’ motivational needs

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Intrinsic Motivation vs Extrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic Motivation

Learner Feelings
Learner Expectations

Extrinsic Motivation

Environmental Influence
Teacher Influence
Peer Influence

Which of these factors can we control?

Intrinsic (I) or Extrinsic (E) ?

- Enjoyment of learning languages I
- Feeling in control of the learning process I
- Teacher's attitude E
- Size of the class E
- Attitude to language learning expressed by parents, friends, etc. E
- Relevance of an activity E I
- Comfort of the classroom E
- Confidence I
- Atmosphere of the classroom E
- Reward for excellence E I

From Extrinsic to Intrinsic Motivation

Extrinsic motivation can develop into intrinsic motivation.

The four different levels of extrinsic motivation:

External Regulation
Least autonomous, depends on rewards and punishment, no learner internalisation

Identified Regulation
More autonomous, learners identify with a personal importance of an activity.

Introjected Regulation
Partially learner controlled, accepts the value of an activity, but does not endorse it.

Integrated Regulation
Most autonomous, learner identifies with the value of an activity for their personal goals.

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Idea 2

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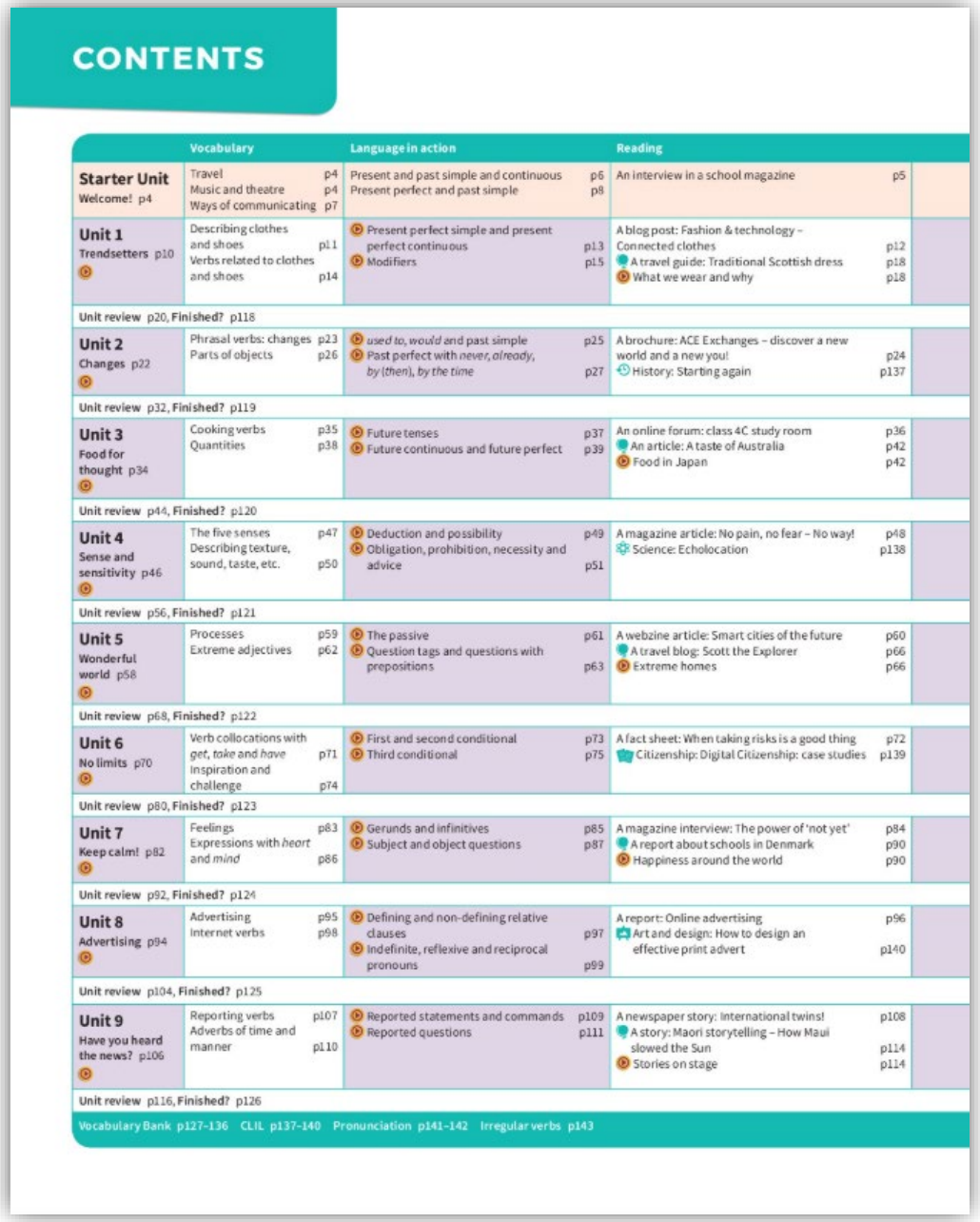
How might we use the course book contents pages at the start of the academic year?



CONTENTS

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Unit 1 Trendsetters p10	Describing clothes and shoes p11 Verbs related to clothes and shoes p14	Present perfect simple and present perfect continuous p13 Modifiers p15	A blog post: Fashion & technology – Connected clothes p12 A travel guide: Traditional Scottish dress p18 What we wear and why p18
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Used from: Own It! Level 4

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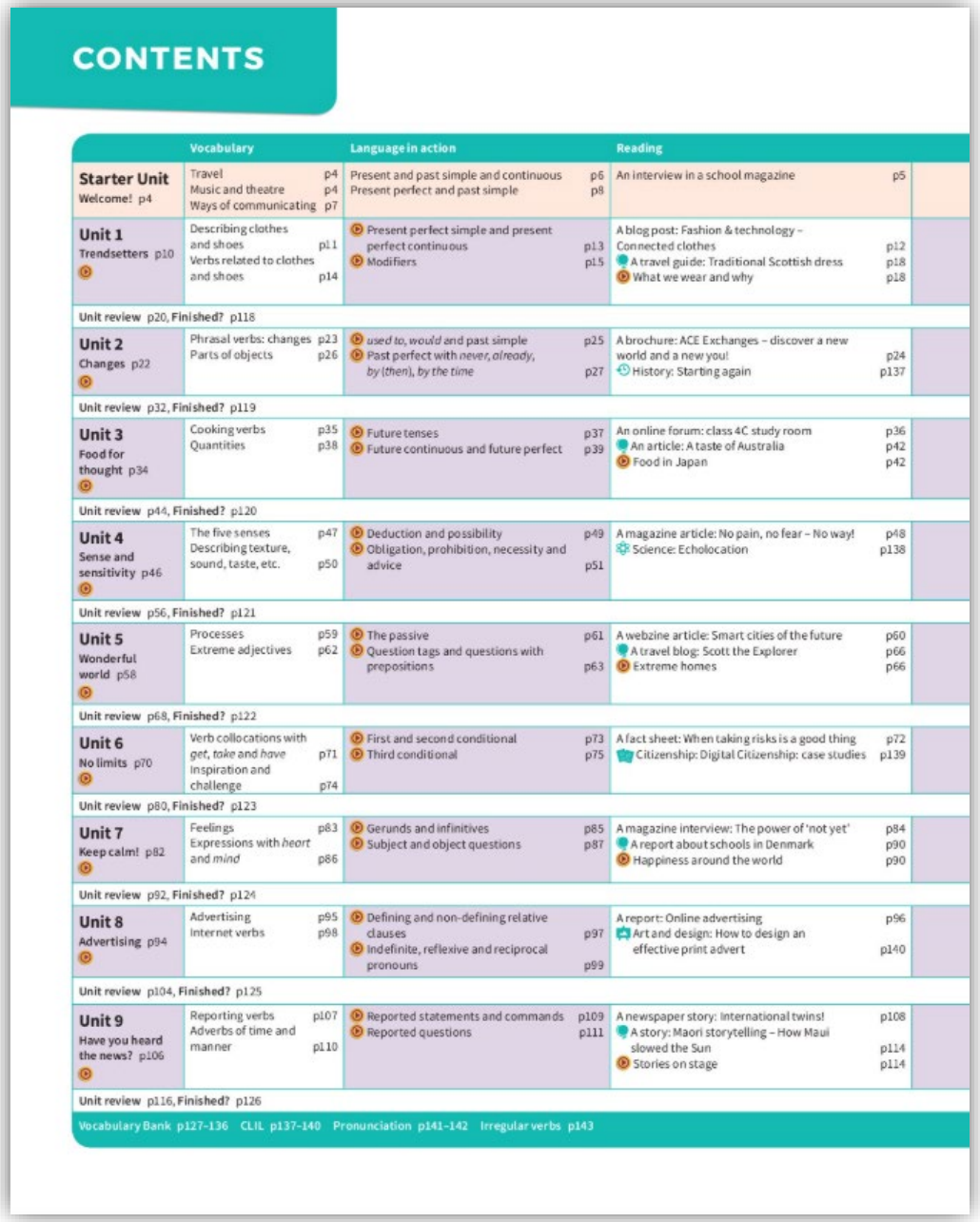
Idea 2
Get their input from the start

- Course book tour
- Unit preferences? – Why not ‘move around’ the course book based on learners’ preferences?
- Capitalise on learners’ preferences
- Allows learners to identify why tasks, language, etc. they feel is important. Guidance can be provided here.



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Used from: Own It! Level 4

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Idea 3

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What might these words refer to?

Group identity

Social life

Rapport

Teams

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Idea 3
Ensure learners ‘know’ each other

- Create a group identity – an ‘us’ and ‘we’
- Allow for the creation of teams
- Rapport-building should be at the start of the year AND throughout the year
- Remember that teenagers are heavily focused on ‘social life’

Some activities to build rapport amongst learners

- Class
- Find
- Team competitions (e.g.,)
- Conversations focused on learners'
- Show

Can you think of any more?

Some activities to build rapport amongst learners

- Class escape rooms
- Find someone who
- Team competitions (e.g., spaghetti tower)
- Conversations focused on learners' real lives
- Show and tell

Can you think of any more?

Learner Needs

Learner Motivations

Learner Preferences

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What are your learners' preferences?

- Choose one group you teach.
- Individually, think about at least two activities that your learners enjoy and why you think that is.
- With your group, share the activities and discuss:
  1. Are the activities you chose similar to your colleagues'?
  2. Would all students in your classes like those activities?

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Idea 4

Why might we consider this question a ‘good’ question?

Idea 4
Provide directed choice

- Learner choice is extremely important as it leads to ‘buy-in’.
- Provide learners with choices that benefit the class and them individually.
- Choices allow students to be directly involved in their own learning.
- **Independence in Education** and **Learner Autonomy**

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Choice Boards

LEARN TO LEARN

LEARN TO … WORK OUT THE MEANING OF NEW WORDS

You can work out the meaning of new words and phrases by using clues from the rest of the text.

1 Read the text quickly, ignoring the words in **bold** if you don't understand them. Do you think space advertising is a good idea?

Space advertising

Imagine this. It's 2030 and you're **gazing** up at the night sky. The stars are **twinkling** and the moon is bright, but these days they're **no longer** alone. They've been joined by lots of huge signs in the **darkness**, like the **billboards** you see at the sides of a road, advertising everything from soft drinks to holidays. This might sound like science fiction, but space adverts will be with us **sooner or later**. In fact, a Russian company is already developing the technology to make it possible, and wants to send up its first ads in the next few years.

They will be created by special **satellites**, like the ones that send and receive TV and internet signals, only smaller. These satellites, **arranged** in groups to make the shapes of words or logos, will **reflect** light from the sun and will be **visible** at night from anywhere on Earth. For companies eager to advertise their products to buyers **around the globe**, this might seem like a dream come true. But ask yourself this: shouldn't we keep somewhere free from advertising? After all, ad blockers won't work in space.

2 Three students are working out the meaning of the words in **bold**. Which ones are they talking about?

1 *OK, it's a noun. They must be a kind of advertising sign, because it says you see them at the sides of a road. What else? Well, I know 'board' from 'whiteboard'…*

2 *I think this phrase must be about when the ads will be sent up. I know 'soon' and 'late'. They're both about time and they're opposites …*

3 *It's a verb, something that stars do. I think it's connected to their light, because the sentence also says 'and the moon is bright'.*

3 What do you think the words mean?

1 _____
2 _____
3 _____

OWN IT!

4 Choose five of the other words or phrases in **bold**. Answer the questions to try to work out their meaning.

1 What is it? A verb, a noun, an adjective or a phrase?
2 What does the rest of the sentence tell you about it?
3 Do you understand part(s) of the word or phrase?
4 What do you think it means?

5 Check the meanings in a dictionary or with your teacher. Were you correct? Did the questions in Exercise 4 help you?

BACK TO SCHOOL!!

Used from: Own It! Level 4

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Choice Boards

Create three comprehension questions for another pair.	Write a short story about one of the space billboards.	Research 10 famous satellites and sort them by importance explaining why.
Prepare a vocabulary guide for at least five 'new' words from the text.	Create a space billboard and write a paragraph describing where it is in the sky and why it's "the best".	Prepare a short news report about a rocket crashing into one of the satellites.
Research famous advertising slogans and prepare a one-minute oral presentation.	Research another type of advertising and create a 10-question true-or-false 'test'.	Imagine you are an astronaut working on satellites. Write a diary of the 10-day mission to repair one of the satellites.

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BACK TO SCHOOL!!

UNIT 8 | ADVERTISING 105

Used from: Own It! Level 4

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Review and Reflection

Summary

Learner needs

Every learner has their own specific needs, and a teacher can make minor adjustments to help support learners.

Learner preference

Giving choice is great but we should also push our learners to develop areas of less confidence.

Motivation

Both intrinsic and extrinsic factors impact the learner, and teachers can influence learners' motivation in many ways.

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Reflect:

What is one take-away from this session that you will leave with?

- A memorable activity
- Something you learned
- Something you'd like to try in your classes

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Resources

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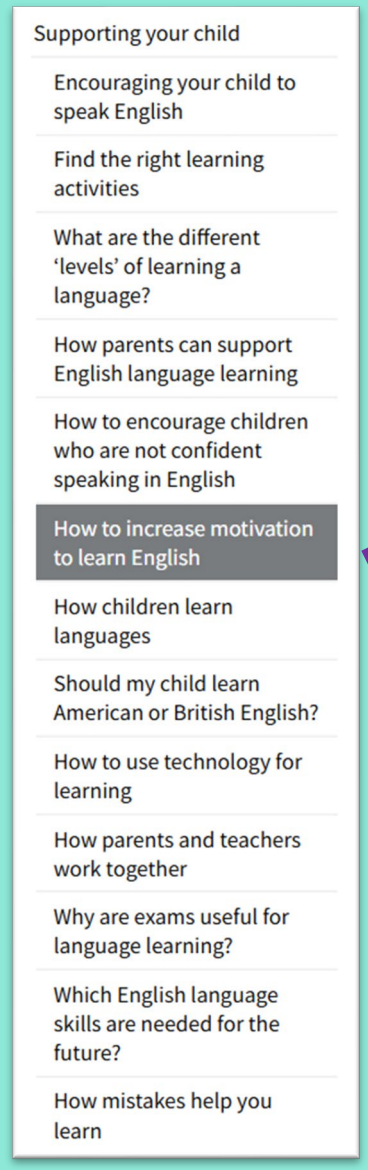
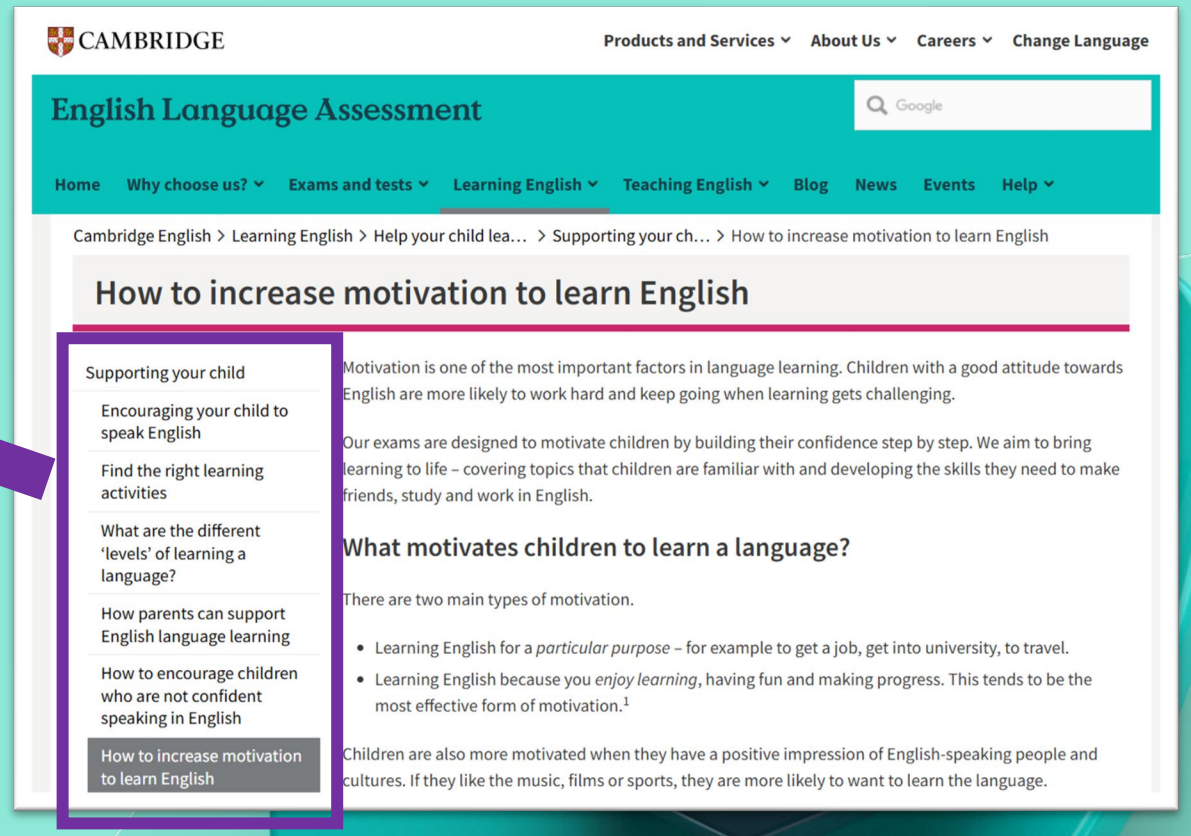
References and useful links

https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/learning-english/parents-and-children/how-to-support-your-child/





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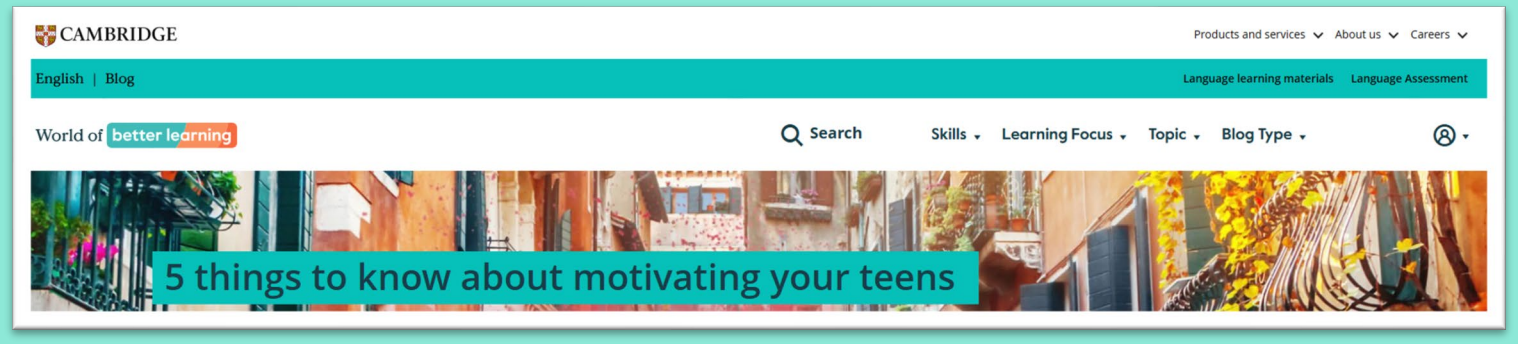

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References and useful links

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Thank you

Any questions?

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