**Vocab-O-Gram**

Blachowicz (1986) developed a strategy called the vocab-O –Gram. It is used before beginning a new unit, text, or story. When using this strategy students “are going beyond the definition of the word to consider its application in text and are engaged in much higher thinking about words and their relationship to text”(as cited in Barr & Johson, 1997, p. 127-128). The teacher selects nine key words from the text that students will use to predict the plot of the story. Students must place each word in a box labelled: Setting, characters, problem, actions ∕ events and resolution. Students will place the words according to their knowledge of story structure and their familiarity with the words. After students have made their predictions the class will read the text to confirm or change predictions about the words.

 **K-W-L**

Similar to the vocab-O-Grams, the K-W-L chart is an acronym for know - want to know - what have I learned. The K-W-L chart is a great way to introduce new vocabulary to students, while increasing comprehension. It “emphasizes students prior knowledge, categorizes their ideas, encourages them to develop questions for reading, directs them to seek answer to their questions and determines sources to search for answers” (Barr & Johnson, 1997, p. 135). After introducing a new topic to the class, the teacher asks students what they know about the concept. For instance, if you were to begin a lesson on mammals, you may ask the students what they already know about mammals. The class would generate a comprehensive list of information pertaining to mammals. The teacher may elicit information by introducing words such as warm- blooded, or vertebrates.” After introducing the words students can begin to expand their knowledge of mammals while acquiring new vocabulary. Before reading, the class also fills in the section that asks; what do I want to know the students’ interest is raised and they begin to produce questions they want answered pertaining to mammals. After the lesson, and after the class has found the answers to their questions (w–want to know) the students fill in L-what I learned. Whereby they demonstrate new vocabulary, and a solid grasp on the new concept.

**Semantic mapping (webbing)**

Semantic mapping “is a device for organizing information graphically according to categories” (Gunning, 1996, p. 169). Lots of strategic activities are considered to be in the field of semantic mapping: graphic organizing, brainstorming, or webbing. In regards to the same goal they seek to accomplish. Rekrut (1996) says that they seek to represent an important concept and have students list as many related words as possible, putting them in broad categories (p. 68). Semantic webbing is sometimes used as a means to assess prior knowledge as well as to explore meanings of unknown words, concepts, and topics. Semantic webbing always starts with a central word (or concept) and allows students to build on that word by adding related concepts and words to the central word and connecting categories.

For example, the teacher might encircle the word plants on the board. The teacher directs the students to generate subcategories pertaining to plants such as how they grow, where they live, what they need in order to survive, and different kinds of plants. Each of these broad topics is a related form of the key word plants. Students then will brainstorm as many words as they can and place them in appropriate place. After reading more about plants, students continually add and revise the map to include new vocabulary and terminology related to plants. Research indicates that semantic mapping seemed to help students categorize words and focus on their similarities and differences, qualities that may serve as a structure which enhances recall.

# Mnemonic Devices

Mnemonic devices, found in the “Giving It” stage of B-SLIM, are part of HOW the teacher decides to teach. The amount of information students receive over the course of the language learning process can be staggering. For this reason, it is essential to find ways of helping students chunk and remember concepts; by creating mnemonic devices when possible, teachers will be helping their students remember information for longer and in the process will also be teaching students a particular type of learning strategy.

**What is a mnemonic device?**

The word mnemonic is derived from the Greek word *mnemonikos*, which means “of memory”. A mnemonic device is a memory aid that can greatly facilitate the learning of a second language. Mnemonics can take many forms, including acronyms, poems, etc.

**What is the difference between memory, memorize and remember?**

In B-SLIM, it is crucial to differentiate between memory, memorize and remember. You can memorize something and memorizing is part of remembering, but remembering is bigger and broader and means you have made some sort of personal connection.

**How can mnemonics be used in the classroom?**

A mnemonic device is 1.0 and 2.0. This means that the teacher wants to present things in a way that will help the students remember it (which relates back to the power of the first impression). With experience, the teacher should have learned pedagogic content knowledge, meaning the way to best present a concept, whether it is grammar, vocabulary or a cultural point. The goal is to determine how you can best present the concept so that the students will remember it the longest. As teachers, there are certain activities that we try and think will be successful, but then may realize that students are struggling or didn’t understand the concept as well as we had hoped. Seeing that the students are struggling in this ways causes the teacher to try and figure out a way to make that concept clearer next time. This means, therefore, that it is up to the teacher to try, through mnemonic devices that are very broad, to make it clearer. Simultaneously, students have the responsibility of trying to remember. Teachers and students NEED to differentiate, memorize and remember. Often we hear people say “I’ll memorize that,” and they mean remember, but their comment doesn’t have that nuance. We need to remember that there are things we need to memorize; this isn’t a bad thing, but we need to go beyond this and using our cognitive capacity to just memorize everything doesn’t serve us well. There is evidence that people who are excellent memorizes have difficulty applying what they have memorized.

We as teachers need to use mnemonic devices and need to draw them out of students to find out what they can do to help themselves remember; this process is part of helping students develop learning strategies.