

melta news

Munich English Language Teachers Association

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Spring 2025 | no. 113



Multimodality

in
practice

Voices

from
Gaza

Back

to
basics



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Message from the Chair

Melta is changing. In the months to come, we want to:

1. Upgrade our channels of communication – both digital and non-digital – to expand our reach
2. Intensify our collaboration with schools, universities and other local, German and international educational associations to regularly exchange ideas with English teachers all around the globe
3. Diversify the topics addressed at our events and in our publications to promote, among other things, environmental awareness, diversity and integration in and through the language classroom.

Why? So that we can continue to effectively serve the needs of both the English-teaching community in Central Europe and our partners worldwide in the tumultuous times in which we live. It's a tall order. But I'm convinced that – with your continued support – we'll succeed.

Thanks to all the contributors to this issue of Melta News. You're an inspiration to all of us. I hope everyone has a very enjoyable and productive summer and I'll see you all at another Melta event – online or in person – real soon.

All the best,

Randy



Randy Perry

CORRECTION

The storytelling session "First map, then retell", described on page 21 of the winter 2024 issue of Melta News, was led by Manuela Kelly Calzini, not by Alida Gersie as reported.

Melta News Editing Team

Olga Barlow, Steve Barlow, Nicki Denise, Elie Hazeem, Saskia Kölliker, Juliana Oosten, Mareike Sedlmeier, Joan Walsh



weelcome

**We'd like to welcome
our new members!**

Alona Borysova, Aron Haydon
Ford, Thomas Graef, Hannah
Hodges, Kane Skimming,
Paula Merkle, Luis Pardo de la
Puente, John Reilly,
Michael Tanzer

UPCOMING EVENTS



MELTA

In-person workshop

Let's Talk Business Impact!

Presenter: Anna Wilby

When: May 10, 2025, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon

Where: MVHS Rosenkavalierplatz 16

Due to its popularity in 2024, we'll hold another **Show-and-Tell Workshop** this summer. As usual, this will be an in-person event with coffee, cake, fun and games. Another big turnout will make the workshop really exciting, stimulating and inspiring.

The **Melta Beer Garden Social** will be held in July, as is customary.

Also in the pipeline: a series of workshops and webinars on **hands-on classroom activities** with, among others, **Simon Marshall**.

The exact times and dates of these and all other upcoming events will be posted on the Melta website as soon as possible. You'll also receive e-mail notification well in advance.

MUNICH VOLKSHOCHSCHULE

Conversation Classes – more than just talking

Presenter: Julia Flyng

Volkshochschule Orleansstr. 34

Friday, May 23, 2025, 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Teaching English for the International World

Presenter: Nikola Granchev

Online

Friday, June 27, 2025, 4:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

For further details and registration, please contact Monika Schulze, Tel. (089) 48006-6259, email: monika.schulze@mvhs.de. All Volkshochschule workshops are free of charge for MVHS teachers. Teachers at other VHSs pay €12 and non-VHS teachers €24.

Melta podcast update

There are now three new podcasts on the Melta YouTube channel

In the **first**, Philip Moore – founder and head of Munich's Cambridge Institut – talks to Mike Clarkson about the school's origins in post-war Munich, about the ways Munich and Germany have changed over the years and about what the Cambridge Institut does today.

In the **second**, Elie Hazeem interviews Jason Chan, Assistant Professor of English Language and Business Communication at the Management Center Innsbruck, about ways to exploit diverse cultural backgrounds in the classroom and about the educational impact of AI on English-language teaching.

And in the **third** podcast, Elie quizzes Melta member Miles Parker about his shift from full-time airport employee to English teacher and about his experiences teaching English at the University of the German Armed Forces in Munich.

The Melta podcast comes out every four weeks or so and can be accessed at <https://www.youtube.com/@MeltaPodcast/videos>. It aims to provide interesting and informative interviews, discussions and workshops for Melta members and supporters. Please subscribe if you enjoy it and spread the word. We'd also love it if you left a comment at <http://www.youtube.com/@Melta-Podcast>

If you have any ideas, suggestions or reviews, please don't hesitate to contact Mike Clarkson (mikec.melta-pod@gmail.com) or Elie Hazeem (syigma@gmail.com).

The Melta podcasters:



Mike
Clarkson



Elie
Hazeem



Michael
Saunders

E-BOOKS, E-AUDIOS AND EVENTS IN ENGLISH AT MUNICH PUBLIC LIBRARY

Anyone who enjoys reading books in English can access a wide range of English-language online resources via the Munich Public Library. The digital platform Overdrive offers a constantly growing range of e-books and e-audios for adults, young people and children to download and stream at:

<https://muenchen.overdrive.com/>

There are currently 8,300 e-books and 2,700 e-audios on offer. Any current web browser can be used for reading and listening, while the **intuitive Libby app** is available for mobile use. Libby is free and can be found in your usual app stores.

To get started with Libby, go to:

<https://help.libbyapp.com/en-us/6103.htm>

To borrow, all you need is a valid library card with a password from the Munich Public Library. To get yours, go to: <https://www.muenchner-stadtbibliothek.de/register-borrow>. There are no borrowing fees, only the fee for the library card.



What's more, the Munich Public Library now hosts **four series of regular events for English speakers of all ages**: Information on the dates, times and places is available via the following links:

1. Bookclub "Book and Breakfast":

https://www.muenchner-stadtbibliothek.de/veranstaltungen?tx_msbevents_eventlist%5Baction%5D=list&tx_msbevents_eventlist%5Bcontroller%5D=Event&tx_msbevents_eventlist%5Bsword%5D=Books%20and%20Breakfast%20&cHash=5b963a27b20e0acb3f32be-d003a2cdc1

2. Language Café English:

https://www.muenchner-stadtbibliothek.de/veranstaltungen?tx_msbevents_eventlist%5Baction%5D=list&tx_msbevents_eventlist%5Bcontroller%5D=Event&tx_msbevents_eventlist%5Bsword%5D=Sprachcaf%C3%A9%20Englisch&cHash=070330ef3c39c63201a2b11a4f061e15

3. Discover New Board Games:

https://www.muenchner-stadtbibliothek.de/veranstaltungen?tx_msbevents_eventlist%5Baction%5D=list&tx_msbevents_eventlist%5Bcontroller%5D=Event&tx_msbevents_eventlist%5Bsword%5D=Discover%20new%20board%20games&cHash=17cca95bfedd7f432b91bcd-7c77a0c1

4. Weltkinder English:

Reading aloud to children in English:

https://www.muenchner-stadtbibliothek.de/veranstaltungen?tx_msbevents_eventlist%5Baction%5D=list&tx_msbevents_eventlist%5Bcontroller%5D=Event&tx_msbevents_eventlist%5Bsword%5D=Weltkinder%20Englisch&cHash=5a4965ea18055b805694a4c90bc-c4e35

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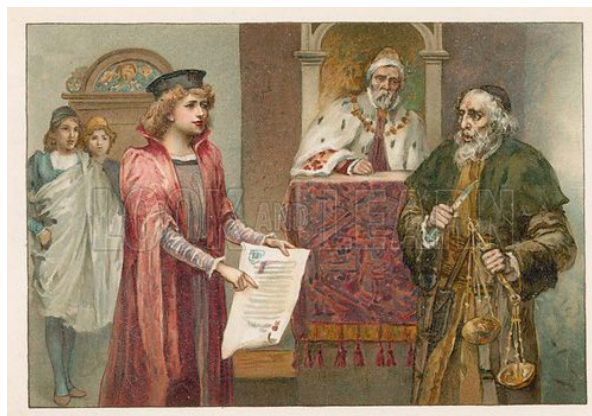
Prices shown are for year: 1 September 2023 to 31 August 2024



WE DO PRAY FOR MERCY, AND THAT SAME PRAYER DOETH TEACH US ALL TO RENDER THE DEEDS OF MERCY.

Now celebrating its eleventh year of free open-air Shakespeare, Entity Theatre will be performing *The Merchant of Venice* in West-park Theatron this summer. Directed by Melta member Conny Loder and John Yates, shows will start at 7:00 p.m. on **July 4-6, 11-13 and 18-20, 2025**.

For further information, please contact Conny at conny.loder@entitytheatre.org



MELTA Five-a-Day – Rinse and repeat

Jackie Adams keeps the energy high in her kindergarten classroom with these simple but fun drills

Hi, everyone! Bethan's still on maternity leave, so I'm back with more kindergarten ideas for this issue's Five-a-Day column. This time, I'm going to focus on five activities that I do every week with my kindergarten group because, as many of you know, little kids love repetition.

1. Hello Song

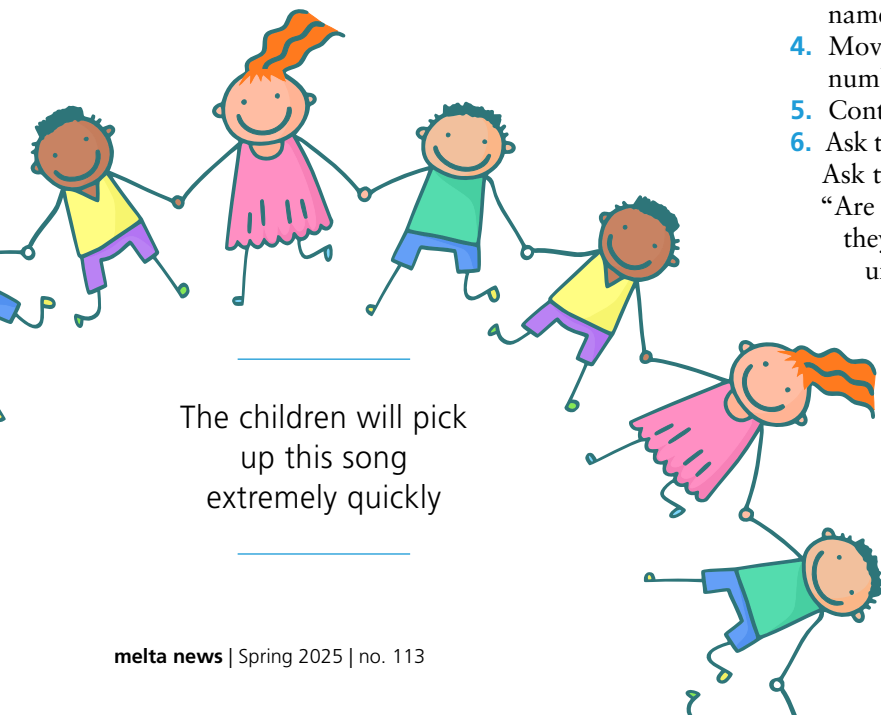
 **Material:** None!

How to play:

1. Get all of the children to form a big circle.
2. Sing the following song together (Jingle Bells melody) and perform the actions.

Clap your hands.
Stomp your feet.
Turn yourself around.
Reach your hands up really high.
Now let's touch the ground.
Touch your nose.
Shake your head.
Let's pretend to climb.
Sit down.
Stand up.
Jump around.
Now it's English time.

You can make each action/verse last for as long as you want. The kids love it, for example, when "Sit down. Stand up" gets repeated over and over again. And they will pick up this song extremely quickly.



The children will pick up this song extremely quickly



As many of you know,
little kids love repetition

2. How many children are here?

 **Material:** None!


How to play:

1. The children should still be standing in a circle from the Hello Song.
2. Tell everyone you are going to count how many children are here today.
3. Stand behind the child to your left and say, "[insert name] is number one."
4. Move on to the next child and say, "[insert name] is number two."
5. Continue until all of the children have been counted.
6. Ask the children how many children are not here today. Ask them where the children are. "Are they sleeping?" "Are they playing basketball?" "Are they sick?" "Are they on vacation?" Use actions to help the children understand your questions.

As soon as the children are able to count in English, let them say the numbers all the time. When the children still need help, repeat the earlier numbers before saying each child's number. So, if you are at child number eight, count the previous children from one to seven again before saying, "[insert name] is number eight."



3. Kindergarten Symbols

 **Material:** Laminated copies of children's symbols (banana, etc.)

How to play:

1. Get the children to sit in a small circle or at a table.
2. Show one of the kindergarten symbols and ask the children, "Whose symbol is this?" If they cannot answer, pick a child whose it isn't and say, "Is it [insert name's]?" At this point they will either nod or shake their heads and yell, "No!"
3. Once you know whose it is, ask the children what the symbol is. If they do not answer, say "Is it a banana?" They will all understand and shake their heads, laugh, and yell, "No!" Unless of course it is a banana. After someone says what the symbol is in German, tell them what the English word is.
4. Repeat steps 2 and 3 with the rest of the symbols.

Within a couple of visits, most of the kids will know the English word for their symbols. So, you can ask the children to tell you what symbols they have. You can either find their symbol right away or pull the wrong one a few times on purpose and get yelled at.

4. How's the weather today?

 **Material:** A weather wheel

What to do:


1. Ask the children, "How's the weather today?" and show them the weather wheel.
2. The weather wheel can include rainy, snowy, sunny, cloudy, windy and stormy segments, for example.
3. Point to an obviously wrong segment and say "Is it [insert wrong weather] today?"

You'll be able to see their progress, and the kids will feel super proud of themselves

4. The children will shake their heads and scream, "No!"
5. After a few "mistakes", point at the correct segment and say, "Is it [insert correct weather] today?" The children will nod and scream, "Yes!"

Eventually, you won't need to point to the correct segment after making a few mistakes. The children will yell, "It's sunny!" or "It's rainy!"

5. Goodbye Song

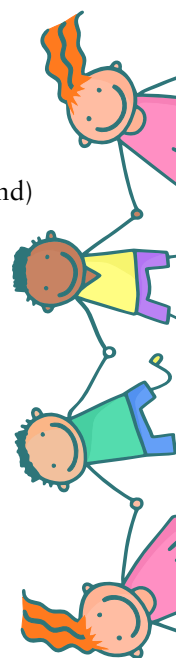
 **Material:** None!

How to play:

1. Get all of the children to form a big circle.
2. Sing the Hello Song again (with a twist at the end) and perform the actions.

Clap your hands.
Stomp your feet.
Turn yourself around.
Reach your hands up really high.
Now let's touch the ground.
Touch your nose.
Shake your head.
Let's pretend to climb.
Sit down.
Stand up.
Jump around.
Now it's goodbye time.

And there you have it. Five activities you can do every single week with your kindergarten group. You'll be able to see their progress, the kids will feel super proud of themselves, and you'll still be able to mix things up a bit by adding a couple of other activities to round out the English lesson. Enjoy!



Jackie Adams is originally from Canada and has lived in Munich since 2005. She teaches English at the University of the German Armed Forces in Munich.

One-Quarter English – Round three

In this new episode of **Jackie Adams'** AI-generated podcast, hosts Mark and Jenna take listeners on another 15-minute journey designed for advanced English learners



Accessible via the Melta website (<https://melta.de/one-quarter-english>), the episode covers fictional news headlines, including a daring bank robbery in London, a controversial climate protest in Rome, and a groundbreaking Nobel Prize-winning discovery in cancer research.

If you're looking for listening material for advanced learners, give it a try

The discussion segment dives into the risks and rewards of **extreme sports**, exploring whether they build resilience or promote reckless behavior. Listeners will also learn about a key difference between **American and British English** – the use of **have vs. have got**. The grammar segment clarifies when to use **who, which and that**, ensuring a better grasp of relative pronouns.

Continuing the suspense, the episode includes the **third installment of "The Speckled Band"**, as Sherlock Holmes unravels more clues behind the mysterious death of Helen Stoner's sister. To wrap things up on a light-hearted note, Mark and Jenna share **knock-knock jokes** with a fun language twist.

At the end of the webpage, you'll find the **full audio transcription** along with **exercises** that teachers can use in their classrooms to reinforce learning. To give you an idea of what it's all about, here's an excerpt from Mark and Jenna's discussion of **have vs. have got**:

Mark: "Hey Jenna, I noticed something interesting about how British English speakers use 'have got' instead of just 'have' when talking about possession. Like, you'd say, 'I've got a car,' but in the U.S., we just say, 'I have a car.'"

Jenna: "Oh yes, that's definitely a difference between British and American English. In the UK, 'have got' is really common when we're talking about possession or relationships or characteristics. So, 'I've got a car' or 'She's got a brother' or 'He's got brown eyes' sounds completely natural to us. But we'd use 'have' when it's something more general, like 'I have breakfast at 8.'"

Mark: "Yeah, we pretty much just stick with 'have' for everything – possession, relationships, all that. Like, 'I have a car,' or 'She has a brother.' It sounds more straightforward to us, I guess. 'Have got' is almost too wordy."

Jenna: "That's interesting! To us, 'have got' is actually more conversational. 'I have a car' feels a bit more formal or stiff in everyday speech. It's not wrong by any means, but you'd probably hear 'I've got' more often in casual conversation. And we tend to contract it – 'I've got,' rather than 'I have got.' It's kind of funny, though, because in the past tense, we don't use 'got.' We'd just say 'I had a car,' same as you, right?"

Mark: "Exactly. The past tense is just 'had' for us too."

And here's a student worksheet to go with the discussion:

FILL IN THE GAPS WITH HAVE/HAS, HAVE/HAS GOT, OR HAD:

The city's infrastructure _____ serious issues until the end of last year. While the local government still _____ numerous outstanding complaints about outdated transport systems and failing utilities, the situation has improved considerably. Currently city officials _____ an ambitious redevelopment plan, but skepticism remains. Some residents argue that they _____ plenty of opportunities in the past to address these problems but failed to take decisive action.

The entire audio podcast, a full transcription and an accompanying student worksheet (with solutions) are available via the Melta website at <https://melta.de/one-quarter-english>



Monks' chant

Margaret McKee updates a highly effective, time-tested learning strategy

- ★ **Level:** A1 to C2
- 🕒 **Time:** As long as you want
- 🧩 **Aim:** To practice lexis and/or pronunciation
- 📄 **Materials:** A list of lexical items
- ✍️ **Prep:** None

Procedure:

1. Stand in the classroom with your arms folded and your head slightly bowed.
2. Have the students line up behind you and imitate your stance.
3. Walk slowly, weaving your way through the classroom, while chanting – like an abbot – in a slow, rhythmical Gregorian tone a set of lexical items you'd like the students to practice.
4. Have the students follow you – like monks – repeating each item after you in exactly the same tone.
5. If you notice some students are having trouble repeating an item correctly, keep chanting it until they have it right.
6. To show your satisfaction with the final result, conclude the activity with a loud “AMEN”.

Note: Chanting while walking is an excellent way to practice everything from collocations, fixed expressions and irregular verbs to complex grammatical structures and pronunciation. Medieval monks did it to memorize entire books of the Bible. It'll work for your students, too.



It worked for medieval monks, and
it'll work for your students, too



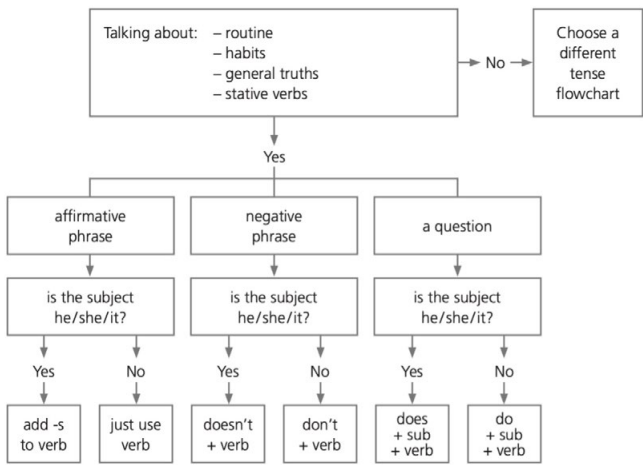
Margaret McKee is enjoying “retirement” from English teaching – gone is the stress of travel, preparation, paperwork and assessments. Now, with a group of over “eighties”, it's story reading, tea drinking and chatting!

Using flowcharts to revise tenses

Looking for new ways to revise verb tenses? **Rachael Harris** knows a simple trick that's not only effective but also popular with students

When I ask my students at the end of the year what they liked and what could be improved, one thing that comes up is how much they gain from something being explained in several different ways. If the students don't understand something, just repeating the same explanation over and over again doesn't make it any clearer. So, something needs to change.

As I searched for yet another way to explain the present simple tense, I came up with an idea of using a flowchart:



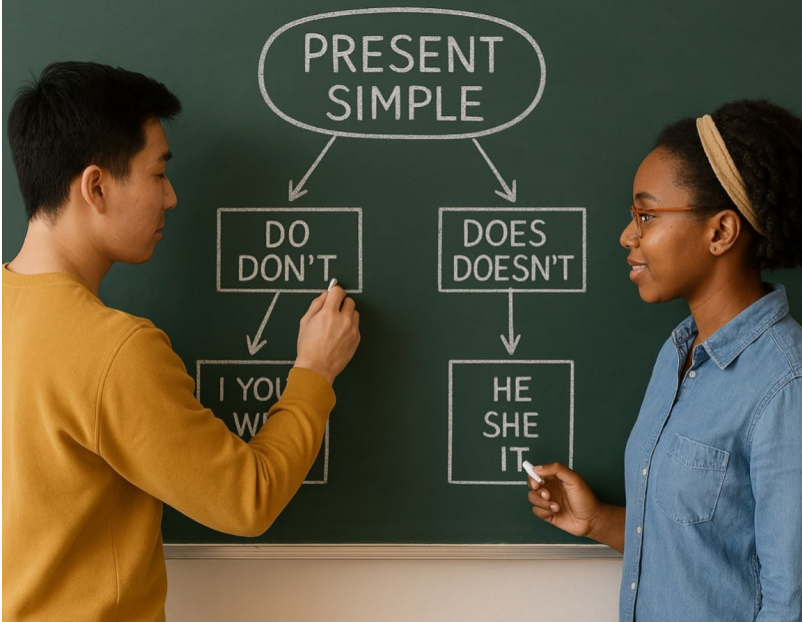
This obviously clicked with my students, because I saw doodled copies of it on the corners of their test sheets a few lessons later.

Just repeating the same explanation over and over again doesn't make things any clearer

While **learning styles** (audio, visual, kinesthetic, etc.) have been well and truly debunked,¹ there's something to be said for using multi-sensory channels to support learning. What's the difference between the two theories?

The idea behind **learning styles** is that some learn best through being presented information visually, while others prefer auditory input, etc. On the other hand, if someone likes taking notes, it doesn't mean they'll necessarily learn better that way – especially if the task involves pronunciation or recognizing a piece of music. A **multi-sensory** approach uses different channels to support learning, such

1 Yfanti A, Doukakis S. Debunking the Neuromyth of Learning Style. Adv Exp Med Biol. (2021), 1338:145-153.



These flowcharts found a sweet spot in my learners' search for understanding

as reading a new word, listening to it in a song, using scrabble bricks to spell it, etc.

These flowcharts found a sweet spot in my learners' search for understanding by presenting the basics of various tenses in a simple, visual way. I wouldn't use them to teach a new tense; grammar is much too nuanced to be broken down in this way, but they're a great way to revise or refresh tense formation. Giving students a blank flowchart or encouraging them to make their own in groups works well, especially when comparing two or more tenses.

To conclude, my students have found flowcharts an effective way to understand tense formation, and I hope yours do too!

They're a great way to revise or refresh tenses



Rachael Harris is a qualified special educational needs (SEN) coordinator. She's taught ELT, literature and media studies for over twenty years. She was joint coordinator for IATEFL Inclusive Practices & SEN SIG and is passionate about discovering how learners learn best. Rachael has published various materials and articles in these fields, including *Activities for Developing Learning Strategies* (Delta publishing). Her latest book *50 Ways to Include Learners with Dyslexia* will be published in the spring of 2025.

Milestones game

Jo Westcombe shares an easy way to personalize past-tense practice

★ Level: B1+

🧩 Aim: Students practise dates and past simple forms while getting to know each other better

📄 Materials: Small index cards – enough for three or four per student

✏️ Preparation: None

This small-group activity practises talking about the past, using your students' own memorable dates. I think I might have learned it from Mario Rinvolucri. It always works well, especially early on in a course.

Procedure:

Step 1:

Put your class into groups of three to five, ideally containing a mix of abilities and students who don't know each other that well. Make sure each student has a pen.

Step 2:

Write on the board a significant date from your life in the format "15 September 2015". Write "What happened on this date?" and add a few cues, such as "Where did you...?", "What did you...?", "Why did you...?" Remind students that they need to use "did" in past simple questions. Get a student to ask you a question about your date. Model an interesting answer and encourage follow-up questions from others.

Step 3:

Hand out three or four index cards to each student. Tell them to think of some "milestones" from their own lives, and to write each date – just the date and nothing else – on a separate card. These should be dates that they should be happy/able to say something about. The date of one's own birth isn't necessarily very interesting; starting a new job or moving home are likely to be more generative. The exact date is not important.

Step 4:

When all the students have written three or four dates on their cards, have them collect, shuffle (and optionally put into chronological order) and place them face down in a pile. It really doesn't matter how the activity is set up. The cards can also be laid down on the table separately or put in a line and chosen by a throw of a dice. It's nice to have moved everything else off the table or to meet somewhere else, such as in a corner of the room or outside.



Step 5:

Explain the game. One member of the group takes a card. If it's their own, they put it back and take another. The student reads out the date and says, "Whose card is this?" Put this question on the board if you like, as a reminder. Having established who wrote the card, members of the group can then ask, "What happened on (date)?" The owner of the card gives a response, and the other students ask more questions.

Although the questions might need a little reinforcing at the beginning, in my experience the students really enjoy and appreciate this activity, often learning things about each other's lives that bring them closer together as a group. You can go around and make sure that you can hear enough "did you's?" and irregular past forms, but it's also quite respectful to just keep out of the way for 15 or 20 minutes.



Jo Westcombe was a modern languages teacher in England before moving to Munich at the end of the last century. She did her DELTA at International House, Hastings. She was the Language Editor for *Spotlight* magazine for several years, teaches one-to-one and groups in-company and is a *Lektorin* at the University of Eichstätt. Dog-walking, gardening, singing and yoga all help.

Let them talk – Low-prep speaking (and writing) activities for any level

These activities from **Birgitta Berger** not only get learners talking; they also help them build their active vocabularies

Everyone agrees that speaking skills are vitally important to learning a language, and every student wants to improve them. The following activities can be used at almost any level. Another plus – besides the low prep factor – is that all these activities can also be completed in writing!

Activity 1: Word ping-pong

This is a great warmer or time-filler.

★ **Level:** All

🕒 **Time:** 2 minutes

🎯 **Aim:** To energize, loosen the tongues and give confidence to weak learners and to bring together both weak and strong learners

📋 **Materials:** A pencil or pen, a piece of paper, a timer

Procedure:

1. Set the timer for two minutes.
2. Learners take turns saying single, randomly chosen words.
3. To track their progress, learners tally on the piece of paper the number of words they've managed to say before the time ends.

Note: Just like a ping-pong ball, the words seem to fly back and forth. Keeping count of the words learners say encourages them to say more the next time around.

Variations: As soon as learners are familiar with the activity, they can do word ping-pong for

- a certain topic (for example: sports, office equipment, breakfast food)

Just like a ping-pong ball,
the words seem to fly back and forth



- a specific part of speech (nouns, verbs, adjectives, prepositions, etc.)
 - words beginning with a certain letter (for example: words beginning with the letter “n”)
 - words whose last and first letters or sounds correspond.
- Learners can also create word snakes (for example, dog – garden – no – octopus) – something that works well (and look good!) when done in writing.
- Another fun variation: All teams begin with the same word and then compare their final word after two minutes of ping-ponging.



<https://www.squawkpoint.com/2012/08/tally-chart/>

Activity 2: Emojis

★ **Level:** All

🕒 **Time:** 10 to 20 minutes

🎯 **Aim:** Foster oral fluency, activate and expand vocabulary

📋 **Materials:** A bunch of emojis from <https://getemoji.com/> or <https://emojikopieren.de/>

✂️ **Prep:** Print out the emojis, enlarge them if you want and spread them out on a table near the classroom door

Procedure:

Variant 1:

1. Invite learners to choose one emoji that shows how they feel as they come into class.
2. Ask them to explain to their neighbour or a partner why they chose that emoji. (This can also be done as a walking and talking activity.)

Variant 2:

1. In pairs, learners decide on adjectives and typical situations to accompany the emojis they've chosen. (For example, this emoji 😊 might prompt a response such as “Super happy – when I hear that we’re having pizza for lunch.”)
2. Learners do as many emojis as they like in a certain time period and share their emojis and responses with other pairs or groups.

Simple speaking games and activities can easily be adapted to any setting or learner level

Note: To introduce work with a thesaurus, you may insist that no adjective (or qualifying adverb) be used more than once.



Activity 3: Name 5

This is a great warmer or finisher and can be played in teams or with individual players.

★ **Level:** All

🕒 **Time:** 10 to 15 minutes

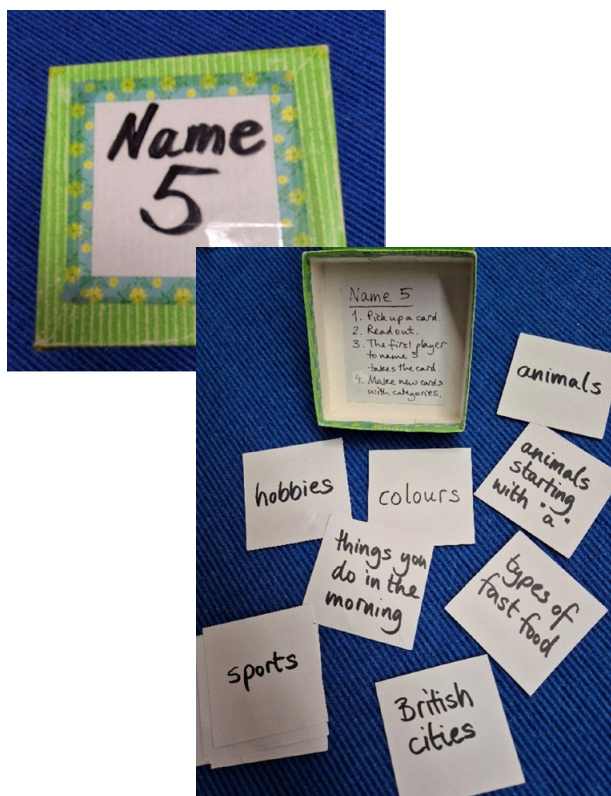
🧩 **Aim:** To orally review and group vocabulary items

📁 **Materials:** A collection of categories written on cards (by yourself and/or your learners), a small box or envelope, a timer, a scorecard

Procedure:

1. Learners take a card from the box or envelope.
2. They take turns trying to name five items in the category written on the card within 30 seconds.
3. Individuals or teams are awarded a point on the scoreboard each time they succeed.

Note: I keep the categories we've already used and new additions in a small box or envelope to use again another time. There's also an online version of Name 5 available here: <https://www.eslkidsgames.com/name-5>



Conclusion

The advantage of simple speaking games and activities is that they can easily be adapted to any setting or learner level. You can also combine them with any topic from a course book or curriculum, changing and adapting the rules as you see fit.

In addition, you can combine the activities with some kind of evaluation such as:

How enjoyable was this activity/game?

0 10

How activating did you find this activity/game?

0 10

How much new language did you learn from this activity/game?

0 10

These 1 to 10 scales can be given to students for their individual evaluation. To get an overview of a larger group, you can put the questions and scales on the board and ask students to mark their individual responses.

References:

Berger, B.; Dam, L. and Winter, C. (2023): *Autonomes Sprachenlernen – Wie Lernende Verantwortung übernehmen und Lehrkräfte dies effektiv begleiten*. Berlin, Cornelsen.



Birgitta Berger has been teaching at Montessori schools in the Munich area since 2000, working with all age groups from kindergarten to exam preparation in Years 9 and 10. She provides inservice training for Montessori language teachers through the Montessori Bildungssakademie/MoBil and the Akademie Biberkor.

Memory training for seniors

Here's how **Margaret McKee** uses verses and quotations as brain stimulus for elderly students

- ★ **Level:** All levels
- 🕒 **Time:** 5-10 minutes
- 🧩 **Aim:** Train students' memories
- 📄 **Materials:** Cards with one half of a quotation or verse from a poem or play that the group has discussed before
- ✍️ **Prep:** Choose verses or quotations from the poem or play and print half of each one on a separate card

Procedure:

1. Divide participants into pairs
2. Give each participant a card with half of the verse or quotation on it
3. Have participants sit facing one other
4. Have participant A read his or her half of the verse or quotation to participant B, and have B read his or hers to A
5. Have participants repeat this step until they've memorized the entire verse or quotation
6. Have participants change partners multiple times and repeat the whole verse / quotation they have learnt, but each time in a different way – for example, whispering, laughing or pleading – or with a different emotion: anger, sadness, happiness or exasperation

It's interesting to see how well participants have learnt the whole verse or quotation – I don't check it the following week!

We don't stop playing because
we grow old. We grow old
because we stop playing
(George Bernard Shaw)



Adding different emotions
to the verses makes it easier
to memorize them



The kindness of strangers – What's the nicest thing a stranger has ever done for you?

Joan Walsh shares an activity that combines reading with personal storytelling

- ★ **Level:** B2+
- 🕒 **Time:** 30 minutes for each of the activity's four parts
- 🧩 **Aim:** Practice fluency, develop reading skills
- 📄 **Materials:** A copy of the image on this page, a copy of the newspaper article "The kindness of strangers" available at <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2025/mar/17/the-kindness-of-strangers-i-thought-id-lost-my-flute-for-ever-then-a-chance-to-play-green-sleeves-returned-it-to-me>

Procedure:

Part 1: Show the image on this page to the group and have participants react by telling their own personal anecdotes about helping or being helped by strangers.

Part 2: Distribute, read and discuss the first part of the newspaper article "The kindness of strangers".

Part 3: For homework or during the next lesson, have participants individually or in small groups write a possible ending – 50 to 60 words – to the story in the newspaper article.

Part 4: Have participants present their stories. Then distribute, read and discuss the second part of the newspaper article.

This activity has generated lots of interesting stories in my intermediate and advanced conversation classes. Perhaps your students will enjoy it, too.



Joan Walsh is from Ireland and works as an English trainer in companies. She enjoys attending workshops and seminars to stay abreast of the most up-to-date trends in language teaching and technology. On holidays, she likes to travel and learn about everything connected with people, culture and language.



In the open air

Oksana Matsnieva presents some of her key takeaways from last summer's storytelling course on the shores of Lake Balaton



In July 2024, I was among 48 fortunate educators from Ukraine and Hungary to participate in the summer course *Storytelling with a Purpose*. Held in the picturesque Hungarian town of Siófok, the course was co-hosted by TESOL Hungary and TESOL Ukraine and sponsored by the Regional English Language Office of the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv. Session titles included *Storytelling from the Soul*, *Body Semiotics*, *Professional Stories*, *Identity Wheels*, the *Healing Power of Storytelling*, *Silent Books* and *Storyboarding*.

My takeaways focused on activities for developing the narrative skills of my learners – all pre-service EFL teachers – something that's become rather challenging in the era of high-tech and AI. Most of these activities work best if they're conducted in a picturesque location and/or in the open air, allowing students to commune with nature while composing their stories.

Activity 1: Free writing

★ Level: B1+

🕒 Time: 30 – 45 minutes

📁 Materials: A short chapter or part of a chapter from a book

Procedure:

Variant 1:

1. In pairs or small groups, learners read a short text from a book.
2. They write a solution to one of the difficulties described in the text and then present it to the class.

Variant 2:

1. Learners are given a personal question such as “What is the most important lesson you’ve ever learnt” or “What is your greatest strength?”
2. In pairs or small groups, they write answers to these questions and present them to the class.

(To illustrate this activity, one of the course trainers, Lori Edwards from the University of Alabama, read us a chapter from *If You Only Knew* by Emily Francis, in which a teacher

writes letters to her students, addressing and commenting on their difficulties, asking them questions, reflecting on their experiences and sharing her own stories.)

Activity 2: Sound postcards

★ Level: A2+

🕒 Time: 30 – 45 minutes

📁 Materials: None

Procedure:

1. In the open group, learners and the teacher discuss all the sounds they can hear in their present location (for example: a clock striking, the sound of waves on the shore, birds singing, a fountain splashing).
2. In groups of 3 to 4, learners discuss the sounds they associate with a specific city, town or place.
3. In their groups, learners decide on the best way to present these sounds (for example, by whistling the sound of a ship or train and imitating the sound of waves).
4. Each group arranges the sounds in a particular order and presents the resulting “sound postcard” to the class.
5. The other members of the class try to guess what city, town or place the postcard is from and discuss how they were able to recognize it.

Activity 3: Silent stories

★ Level: B1+

🕒 Time: 30-45 minutes

📁 Materials: None

Procedure:

1. In pairs or small groups, learners practice recognizing feelings and emotions by studying and imitating each other's facial expressions.
2. The teacher shows them a number of everyday objects – for example, a pencil, an orange and a pair of earrings.
3. Each group chooses one of the objects, creates a silent story with that object – using only movements, gestures and facial expressions –

and acts the story out in front of the class.

4. The other learners retell the story verbally.

Activity 4: Scavenger hunts

★ Level: A2+

🕒 Time: 45 minutes – 1 hour

📁 Materials: Local maps and smartphones

Procedure:

1. Learners are divided into groups of 6 to 8 and provided with a map on which the position of a variety of nearby landmarks (for example: specific buildings, street signs, gateways and natural objects) have been previously marked by the teacher.
2. Each group takes a photo of itself in front of each landmark.
3. The groups compose stories including all the landmarks they've located and present them to the class.

Wrap-up

The purpose of all these activities is the same: to enable learners to develop their creativity and practice collaboration while fostering their linguistic abilities and narrative skills. Conducted best in the open air, they're ideal for the spring and summer.



Oksana Matsnieva is Associate Professor in the Department of Foreign Philology and Educational Technologies at the National University of Chernihiv, Ukraine.

Why oh why??

Juliana Oosten suggests a way to help learners sort out yet another conundrum in English pronunciation



Juliana Oosten is originally from New Zealand and has been living in Munich since 1986. After doing a TEFL course in London, she began teaching English in a small language school and later focussed on general, business and technical English in companies. Juliana now mainly teaches online.

The letter “Y” is not only difficult to say as a letter – that is, like **why** – it can also be pronounced in different ways.

Firstly, we have words starting with **y** as in **yes**, **yellow**, **you**. Here the **y** is pronounced /j/.

Secondly, we have /eye/ as in **reply**.

Thirdly, we have /ee/ as in **biology**.

Finally, there's /ih/ as in **myth**.

Now decide which pronunciation is correct for the following words. Put them in the right box.

Do you also know what they mean? Can you use them in sentences?

apply	apology	dairy	syringe	gynaecologist
hydrogen	oxygen	diary	yacht	hypocrite
hypothetical	yolk	likely	rhyme	rhythm
yell	awry	gym	system	geology
hygiene	supply	loyalty	mystery	yield
yesterday	idyllic	frailty	typo	

/j/ yes	/eye/ reply	/ee/ biology	/ih/ myth

Tell our stories to the world – Fighting oblivion in Gaza

People worldwide share children's stories on the internet in **David Heathfield's** and **Haneen Jadallah's** project "Tell a Child in Gaza's Tale"

In 2020 during lockdown, I launched a weekly Tuesday event together with John Row at the World Storytelling Café. It was called "Young International Storytellers". At the time, I had connections with teachers from Gaza, who invited their students to take part in the format. One of these students was Farah, then a 14-year-old girl.

Getting back in touch

In September 2024, Farah got back in touch with me for the first time in four years. After a wonderful short conversation between Farah, now 18, her younger sister Hala, my wife Tammy and me on Messenger, Farah decided to record herself telling the old Danish folktale *The Boy Who Sold the Butter*. She said "I'm so happy because I came back to telling stories. I want to thank all the supporters."

We could sense how healing this experience was for Farah in the midst of the most unimaginable loss and horror which she and her sister are living through. I'm not going to share those details here. Here's the link to Farah's delightful video: https://youtu.be/sXK-BalJS6s?si=DYlb_eyJHDPVG-zOW, beautifully edited by her younger sister, Hala, another wonderful Young International Storyteller. A full transcription of the video is available on the facing page.

The next project

I'm sharing this as part of "Tell a Child in Gaza's Tale", a project I organised together with Haneen Khaled Jadallah. Starting on 10 November 2023, shortly after the current critical situation in Gaza began, I shared a link on my Facebook page every day to a video recording of a child from Gaza telling a story to the camera.

Nearly all these recordings are from World Storytelling Café archive recordings on YouTube and Facebook from 2020 to 2022. People around the world, many of them teachers of English who love oral storytelling, have followed and commented, expressing

admiration for and solidarity with the children and their teachers whose circumstances we can only imagine. This continued until 13 January when I shared the 65th daily story.

Now you tell a tale

Last autumn, I retold Farah's story *The Fox's Tail* to a group of schoolchildren in Hamburg. Here's a link to the video: <https://youtu.be/4nzNDHTfRGU?si=PHVQI-B2TrjpiGxX>. And now, Haneen and I invite you, your students and everybody you know to choose a tale, retell it and share it around the world to return the hospitality shown from their homes in Gaza by wonderful young storytellers since 2020. It means the world to Farah and all the Palestinian children and teachers. For more information about the project and about adding your video to the global public playlist, you can contact me at david@davidheathfield.co.uk.

Here are the stories:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1BKu-7JPxmONEB6y5cbeGIUW6zWi3Sm-RAP/view>

Here are storytellers from around the world retelling the Gaza children's stories:

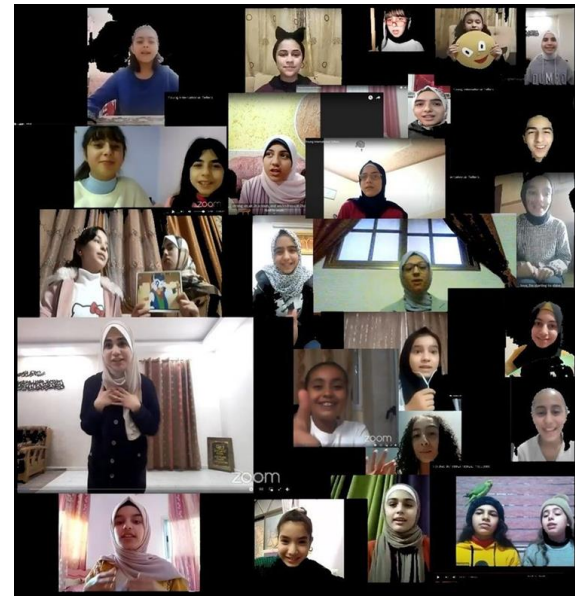
https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLj-mcWeMmSZw63V-5abQ4fw3JIITL_S_kS&si=du-47VczUOOkf3dQo

Farah tells *The Boy Who Sold the Butter*:

https://youtu.be/sXK-BalJS6s?si=DYlb_eyJHDPVG-zOW

Farah four years ago 23 December 2020 aged 14 tells *The Fox's Tail*: https://youtu.be/l8P5vktiHQY?si=_Yxrb_mIYPqriufb

David Heathfield retelling *The Fox's Tail* last autumn in Hamburg: <https://youtu.be/4nzNDHTfRGU?si=PHVQI-B2TrjpiGxX>.



Farah decided
to record herself telling
the Danish folktale
The Boy Who Sold the Butter



Haneen Khaled Jadallah is an English language teacher, teacher trainer and remote theatre specialist. A PhD student at the University of Warwick, she's passionate about connecting young people in Palestine with their peers worldwide through intercultural linkups and online theatre as exemplified in her current British Council project "Voices Across Worlds".

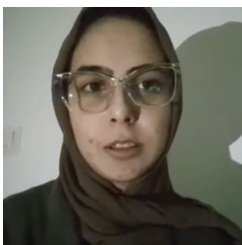
David Heathfield is a world storyteller, teacher trainer and writer from the UK. The author of two books – *Storytelling with our Students* and *Spontaneous Speaking* – as well as numerous articles and book chapters, he provides creative and engaging storytelling for teachers (CrEST) courses for participants worldwide via Zoom.

Retell it your way!

Challenge your learners to make Farah's story their own

The Boy Who Sold the Butter: Transcription

Hi everyone! I am Farah from Gaza and I'm 18 years old. Today I am going to tell you a new story. It is called "The Boy Who Sold the Butter", and actually I am so happy because I came back to telling stories. The last time I was told [a story] was in 2020 – that is, four years ago. So let's get started.



There was once a woman who had a foolish son. When he helped with the chores on the farm, he usually made a mess. So she found it easier to do all the work by herself. One morning she churned a big batch of sweet butter, and she planned to take it to town and sell it. And her son begged: "Mom, please, Mom – let me take the butter and sell it in town! Please, Mom! Please!"

"No!" said his mother. "You have never even been to town. It is so big that you will get lost. Stay home and keep the cow company, okay?"

"Please, Mom! Let me take it to sell it in town! Please!"

"I said no. I will not let you go. Stay home!"

But he pleaded with her for so long that she finally agreed: "Okay, you can go." She gave him some advice on how to sell the butter, and off he went.

He followed the road just as his mother had told him. After what seemed a very long time he came to an enormous rock. And he thought: "Hmmm... My mom told me the town is so big. This stone is certainly big. It must be the town!"

So he said to the rock: "Town, would you like to buy some of my mom's butter?" The rock, of course, did not answer. It was a rock. But this did not stop the boy. He went right on talking. He was a fool, after all.

When learners retell the story, they often add more details and change it a bit

Activity

★ Level: A2+

🕒 Time: 30 minutes

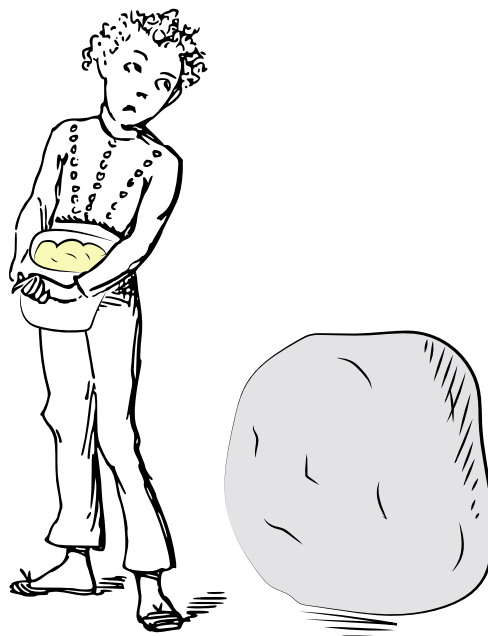
🧩 Aim: To practice listening, speaking and storytelling

📄 Materials: A pencil or pen, a piece of DIN A4 paper, the transcription of "The Boy Who Sold the Butter", the video of Farah telling the story available via this link: https://youtu.be/sXK-BaIJS6s?si=DYlb_eyJHD-PVGzOW

Procedure:

1. Read the above transcription of "The Boy Who Sold the Butter" aloud to the class.
2. Ask learners to draw a giant "S" on a piece of DIN A4 paper.
3. Demonstrate briefly how to draw small symbols along the curves of the "S".
4. Explain to learners that you'd like them to draw similar symbols to illustrate the key events / expressions in the story while you read it to them again.
5. Read the story aloud again.
6. Ask learners to retell the story to one another with the help of the symbols they've drawn.
7. Play the video of Farah telling the story.
8. Ask learners to tell the story to one another again.
9. Optional: Ask learners to add a new ending to the story / discuss its moral.

Note: Don't be surprised: The second time learners tell the story, they often add more details and perhaps even change it a bit.



Write a poem!

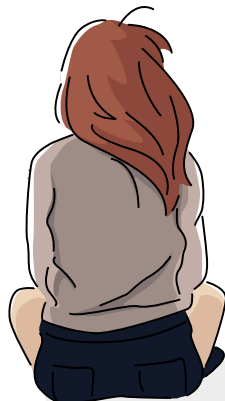
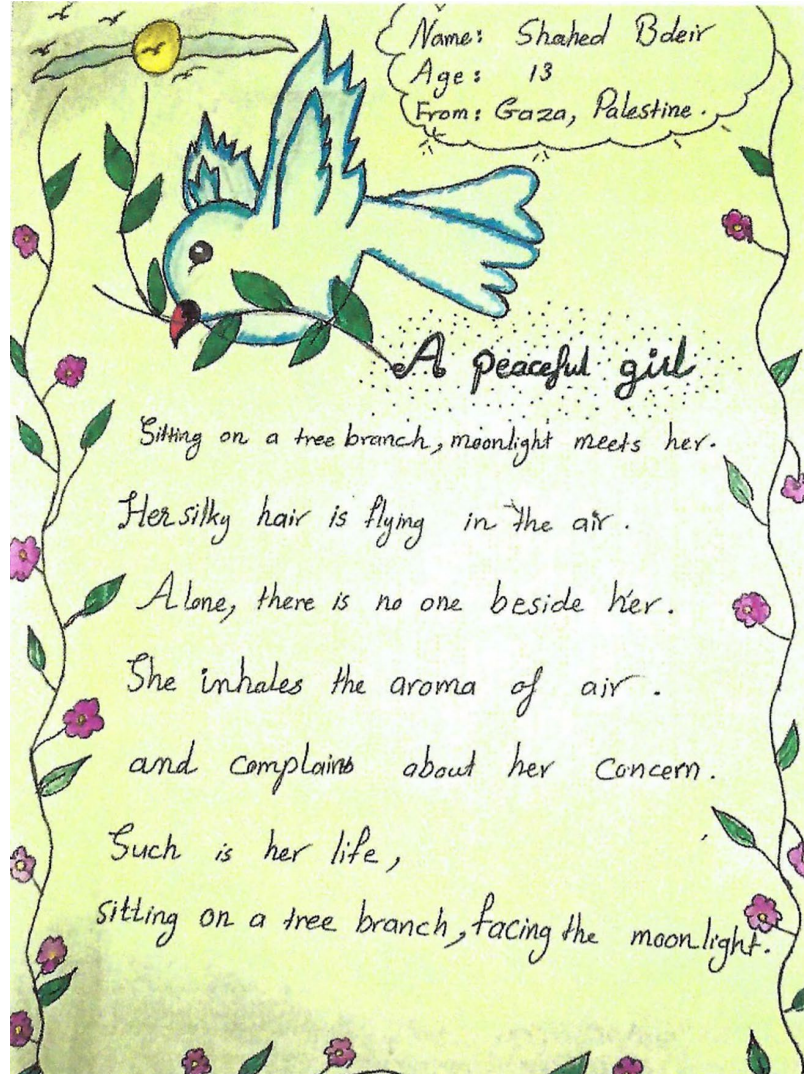
Use this short poem by **Shahed Bdeir** to spark your students' creativity

Poem and design courtesy of Shahed Bdeir and The Hands Up Project (www.handsupproject.org)

- ★ **Level:** A2+
- 🕒 **Time:** 20 – 30 minutes
- 📄 **Materials:** Printouts of the poem

Procedure:

1. Dictate the individual lines of the poem to the class in an order different from that in the original version.
2. Explain any new words or expressions.
3. Ask students in pairs or small groups to rearrange the lines in an order that makes sense to them.
4. Ask students to decide what feeling their poems convey.
5. Ask them to give their poems a title.
6. Ask them to illustrate their poems.
7. Ask all the pairs / groups to show and explain their work to the class and discuss any similarities or differences.
8. Distribute the original version of the poem to the class.
9. Ask students to discuss any ways it differs from the poems and illustrations they've produced and why.



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Multimodal literacy and digital storytelling in language education

How can multiple modes of communication be utilized effectively to foster language learning? **Larysa Andreiko** presents two tried and tested approaches



The focus on multimodality and multimodal literacy in language education reflects the changing communication environment.

What exactly is multimodality?

The term refers to the use of more than one mode of communication in a text to create meaning. Multimodal literacy, in turn, means the ability to both interpret and respond to multimodal texts (viewing) as well as to create them (representing). In today's digital age, students are constantly exposed to multimodal content – through social media, online learning platforms, advertising and multimedia entertainment.

Understanding this content requires critical thinking and interpretive skills beyond traditional literacy and highlights the need to teach learners how to interpret and produce multimodal texts effectively.

Multimodal literacy means the ability to respond to, interpret and create multimodal texts

Integrating “viewing” into classroom practice

Incorporating “viewing” into classroom practice is very similar to teaching listening. This process can be broken down into three stages:

- 1. Before viewing:** Activating prior knowledge, anticipating the message, making predictions, speculating, asking questions and setting a purpose for viewing
- 2. During viewing:** Making connections, confirming predictions, interpreting and summarizing, pausing and reviewing, and analyzing and evaluating
- 3. After viewing:** Responding personally, critically and reflectively to multimodal texts

Incorporating the interpretation of multimodal texts into classroom practice is very similar to teaching listening

Integrating “representing” into classroom practice

“Representing” can be incorporated into classroom activities by having learners create both paper-based texts – such as storyboards, comics and posters – and digital multimodal texts, including videos, fan fiction and digital stories.

Like “viewing”, “representing” is not an entirely new concept in the ELT classroom – teachers also use it when they teach reading and writing. For instance, consider a ten-step digital storytelling model and its alignment with the traditional writing process:

- Step 1. Come up with a topic or an idea** – Brainstorm through mind maps, written proposals or paragraph drafts
- Step 2. Research or learn about the topic** – Gather information to form the foundation of the story
- Step 3. Write a script** – Develop a clear and coherent script with a distinct point of view
- Step 4. Receive feedback on the script** – Share the script with classmates for constructive feedback
- Step 5. Revise the script** – Refine the script based on the feedback received
- Step 6. Creating a storyboard** – Design a visual and textual outline of the story's elements
- Step 7. Gather and create images, audio and video** – Collect or create images, audio and video, ensuring copyright-free materials
- Step 8. Put it all together** – Combine all elements into a cohesive digital narrative



Step 9. Share with others – Distribute the stories, such as through the school's Learning Management System (LMS)
Step 10. Reflect on the experience and give feedback – Encourage learners to reflect on their own work and provide constructive feedback to their peers

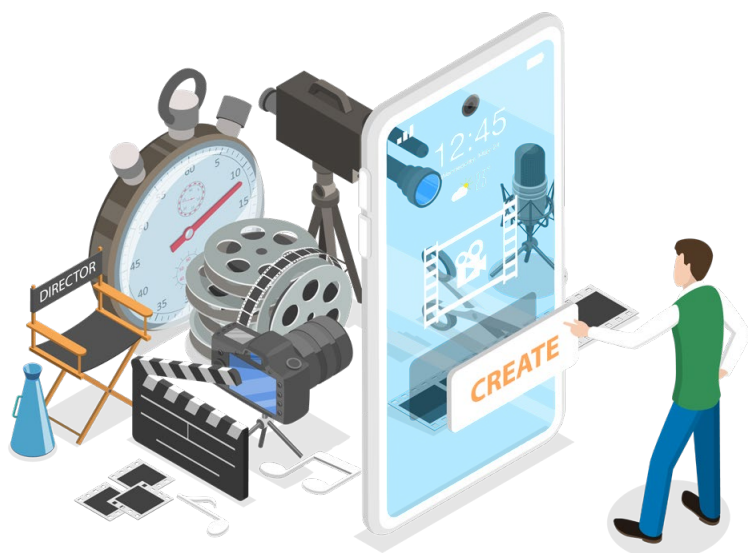
Digital stories serve as a bridge connecting traditional literacies, such as reading, writing, listening and speaking with essential 21st-century digital and multimodal skills. They can take many forms and be simple or complex, as these examples of multimodal projects produced by some of my students in “my former life” illustrate:

<https://www.storyjumper.com/book/read/116198042/DREAMS-COME-TRUE#>

<https://www.storyboardthat.com/storyboards/2d-09d1ca/cool-story--->

<https://videos.simpleshow.com/tw8aklpeiq>

The techniques for creating multimodal texts are similar to those used to teach reading and writing



Digital stories serve as a bridge connecting traditional literacies with 21st-century digital and multimodal skills

Here are some commonly used tools for creating digital stories:

Canva (Video/Presentation mode) – Allows students to create visually appealing presentations or short videos

Voki – Lets learners create speaking avatars, great for practicing pronunciation and storytelling

Simpleshow – Simplifies the creation of animated videos

Storyboard That – Supports story sequence development and language practice

Storyjumper, Book Creator, Storybird – Promotes creative writing through engaging visuals and supports digital storytelling

Padlet – Can be used as a collaborative wall where students post their digital stories

Reference

Donaghy, K. (author), Karastathi, S. (consultant), Peachey, N. (consultant), (2023). *Multimodality in ELT: Communication skills for today's generation [PDF]*. Oxford University Press. www.oup.com/elt/expert



Larysa Andreiko was previously Associate Professor in the Foreign Languages Department of Sumy State University in eastern Ukraine. She's taught for the British Council in Kyiv and worked as an online educational consultant in the U.S. education system.

Critical analysis of multimodal texts in language teaching

Tanya Romanovka shares a raft of ideas for exploiting students' media knowhow to enhance their critical abilities while increasing classroom interaction

Incorporating multimodal texts – such as videos, films and images – into language learning can help students develop linguistic, analytical and cultural competencies in an immersive way. Language teachers can use multimodal texts to:

1. Improve learners' abilities to **infer meaning** from context, tone, and visual cues
2. Develop discussion skills and critical thinking by **comparing multiple versions of the same story** (for example, a book and its film adaptation)
3. Foster creativity by **having students script and perform their own video dialogues**
4. Simulate real-life language situations by **analyzing interviews, advertisements, or vlogs** in the target language.

Here are four practical ways to help learners' reutilize their media competencies:

1. Tell me

This approach encourages learners to think critically about visual narratives by answering questions like these:

- What did the learners like or dislike, and why?
- What elements stood out as particularly unique or unexpected?
- What connections can they draw between this video and others?
- How does visual storytelling enhance or alter the message?

In practice, you can pause a film at key moments and ask students to predict what will happen next. You can also assign students different roles – such as scriptwriter, critic or director – to analyze different aspects of a video.

2. Media literacy – Five key questions

Learners should be encouraged to ask these five questions every time they encounter a multimodal text:

1. Who created this message?
2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
3. How might different people understand this message differently to me?
4. What values, lifestyles and point of view are represented in or left out of this message?
5. Why is this message being sent?

Incorporating multimodal texts into language learning can help students develop linguistic, analytical and cultural competencies



3. 3Ss and 3Cs

Learners focus their discussions and analyses of visual narratives on colours, characters and camera technique (3Cs) and the story, setting and sound (3Ss).

4. Step inside –

Perceive, know about, care about

1. Learners step inside the role of a character in a painting, photograph or video.
2. They speak or write what they perceive, know about and care about from that character's perspective.
3. In practice, you can assign learners different aspects of a film to analyze (for example, lighting, sound, dialogue) and then have them compare their findings.



EVALUATION

Enhancing critical viewing and creativity

To encourage active rather than merely passive consumption of multimodal texts, you can:

- Use films and videos as starting points for debates and discussions
- Teach learners to recognize the persuasive techniques used in advertisements and news media
- Encourage learners to create their own multimodal content – for example, rewriting a scene from a film, making a storyboard or dubbing a video in the target language.

In practice, learners can work in pairs or small groups to create alternative endings to a short film and present the results to the class, discussing why their version makes sense within the narrative.

In every case, the aim is the same: to use the English language classroom as an interactive platform for encouraging learners to think critically about the media content they encounter in their everyday lives.

Encourage active
rather than merely passive consumption
of multimodal texts

The language classroom can be a platform for encouraging learners to think critically about the media content they encounter in their everyday lives



Tetiana Romanovska is an English and Spanish teacher from Odesa, Ukraine, with over 10 years of experience. She holds a CELTA certificate and has completed DELE examiner training. She specializes in teaching adults and enjoys making lessons interactive and finding engaging games to capture her students' interest.

A rose by any other name isn't a Neep – *Sigh*

Betsy Hollweck examines a lexical question lurking within Burns Night traditions

In addition to adult English classes, I also teach cooking classes at my local VHS. Twice a year, I'm tasked with submitting my ideas for the upcoming semester.

I had sworn off offering Family Pizza Nights, popular with my Director, even before Covid turned everyone half Italian. Being born in the USA, my idea of pizza differs greatly from that of most Germans (even in the “best” Italian pizzerias here, I often feel the need to ask for a steak knife halfway through the pie, to cut through the crust). I tried focusing on seasonal ingredients (chestnut flour in the fall/winter, carrots in the spring...), but the response was rather blasé.

A few years ago, I started an annual Pumpkin Carving Class, in which attendees carved their own Jack-o'-Lanterns while baking Halloween-themed goodies. That's been a hit every year, along with the annual Thanksgiving dinner (complete with candied sweet potatoes and pumpkin pie). I needed something new, though.

A brainwave

Aha! I thought, I'll offer a Burns Night Dinner! Cock-a-Leekie Soup, Haggis, Neeps and Tatties, Caledonian Cream, Tipsy Laird. My Director was pleased



when I told him that I'd do a whiskey pairing with the food. The class filled up almost immediately.

Writing the recipes wasn't difficult, but then came the shopping. Haggis ordered, check. Potatoes, check. Ah, the Neeps.

To me, a turnip is a white root vegetable (*Brassica rapa*, subspecies: *rapa*). A Neep can, however, be an orange / yellow veggie (*Brassica napus*), also called a rutabaga (German: *Steckrüben*, *auf gut Bayerisch: Dotschen*). And so, I discovered the Great Neep Controversy or what people call “That Which is Eaten with the Haggis”.

What's in a name?

I found that even among the Scots and in Scotland itself there's a disagreement as to what to call that veggie. I read blogs, Facebook posts, recipes, travel guides and online cookbooks, and it seems that no one agrees either on which one to eat (white or orange) or on what to call the orange one.

“In Scotland and the north of England, what are elsewhere known as Swedes or rutabaga were certainly called “turnips” (or “neeps”) when I was growing up.”

“Scotland here and never called it a Swede in my life, our area call it a Turnip or a Neep.”

“Being Scottish and living in England, before I arrived south of the border, the only thing I ever called a Swede was a person from Sweden.”

What to do? I bought them both, the white ones and the orange ones. We cooked each one separately, and also made a layered gratin with both.

Détente.

The moral of the story

Last week one of my second-grade students asked me why I called a certain object a “garbage can” instead of a “bin”. I told him that it was really a matter of what you called something when you were growing up, like calling a *Semmel* a *Brötchen* – or the other way around.



When January 25 rolls around again, remember: a Neep by any other name will still be a Neep. No matter which color. And taste just as sweet.

***Note 1:** For those who aren't familiar with Haggis, here's a short YouTube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RFDKOebP-n8>

****Note 2:** Sadly, DHL lost my Haggis during transport, so I had to substitute with a beautiful roast beef. My faithful Wild Boar, complete with jaunty cap, bravely stood in for the reading of the “Ode to the Haggis”.



Betsy Hollweck graduated from Fordham University (NYC) with a B.A. focused on Linguistics. She completed her CELTA certification in Munich in August 2017 and now lives in Baldham, a leafy green suburb of Munich. In addition to translating menus, recipes and other things needing gastronomic edification, she teaches English privately and at the VHS Vaterstetten (where she teaches both children and adults cooking classes, in both German and English). Until recently, she also taught 7th - 10th graders in the Grund- und Mittelschule Vaterstetten, concentrating on the Brücken-Bauen program (teaching the English courses for the Ukrainian refugees).

What I learned from 7th-grade boot camp

Tim Howe reports on teamwork, conflict and lessons learned during three action-packed days in the Alps



The annual *Schullandheim* or school camp. Some teachers dread it – 18-hour days supervising tweens – while others embrace the chance to swap the classroom for nature. After years of sidestepping this “rite of passage” in the German school system, my turn finally came.

We’d barely formed a discussion circle when the first disagreement erupted

Kick-off

The camp focused on learning to resolve conflict – or, as I quickly discovered, experiencing conflict in real-time. We’d barely formed a discussion circle when the first disagreement erupted: a student in tears because she wasn’t with her best friend, others grumbling about team assignments.

Our trainer left the room, consulted a colleague and returned with a simple announcement: the orienteering activity was cancelled for now. Maybe tomorrow, when our 20-strong girl group were more open to working outside their immediate circles.

Activities

Here, then, are some tried-and-tested activities that turned chaos into teamwork:

• Get Lutzi!

Each group had to sneakily pass Lutzi, the rubber chicken, down the line without the trainer spotting the transfer. Attempt No. 1? A mess – every kid trying to snatch Lutzi at

Each student had to pass Lutzi, the rubber chicken, stealthily down the line

once. Attempt No. 2? Just as bad. Finally, they paused, strategized and worked together.

Lesson learned No. 1: *Encourage strategy discussions before jumping into group tasks. (Without a plan, teamwork turns into chaos – just ask Lutzi!)*

• Trust walk

One student blindfolded, one guide and a winding forest path. After initial giggles (and near collision – “I’ll never trust you again!”), students realized that clear, calm instructions mattered.

Lesson learned No. 2: *Effective communication = fewer misunderstandings.*

Sometimes, stepping back is the best strategy

• Pizza diplomacy

After an all-afternoon orienteering challenge, it was 7 p.m. before we fired up the outdoor oven for the first batch of pizzas. Teams had to negotiate toppings, divide tasks and bake together. The catch? Everyone’s preference had to be considered. Result? Some pizzas were, hmm, more edible than others. Teachers,

exhausted, ended up clearing up the mess of dough dust and slopped sauce long after lights out.

Lesson learned No. 3: *Always allow more time for longer activities (our fault for not starting to bake much earlier) and rope in kids to clean up afterwards.*

Takeaways for the classroom

- Sometimes, stepping back is the best strategy. An abandoned activity speaks louder than a lecture.
- Mix flexibility with structure. (*Let them pick one friend; you pick the rest of the team.*)
- Incorporate hands-on activities that promote trust and communication. (*And stop sending your classmate into a tree!*)

Wrap-up

Three days, countless small victories and a whole lot of pizza-fuelled bonding later, I left boot camp exhausted but convinced: conflict isn’t a roadblock – it’s an opportunity to build stronger teams.

Oh, and a brilliant excuse to order a rubber chicken (€3.99 online).



Tim Howe moved to Germany as a translator in the late ‘90s. These days he bounces between a private state school and the Department of Tourism faculty at Hochschule München.

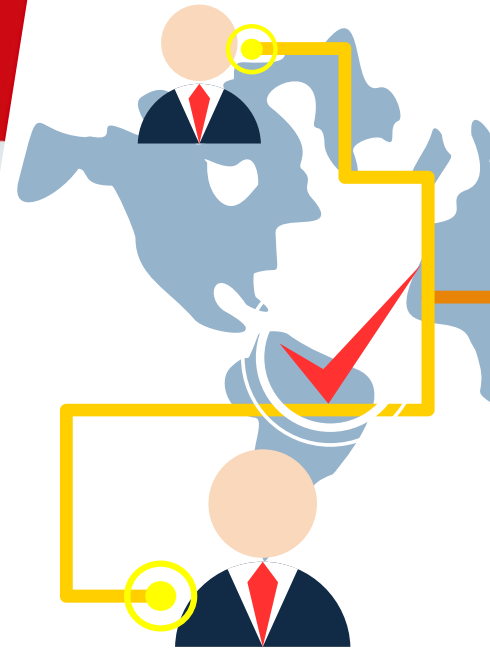
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TEAMWORK



Building trust in international teams – and in the classroom

Dervilla Fastner reviews *Trainingsbuch, Business English* by Bob Dignen and Ian McMaster



McMaster and Dignen's business English book serves as a reflective and hands-on guide for anyone working in an international environment, focusing on the essential skills of communicating and collaborating across cultures. It's designed as a self-study book for a wide range of professionals in international business, providing useful tips and strategies to navigate the challenges of global communication, especially in international teams.

With its clear structure, this book can be used in various ways. Learners can either work through it step by step, select topics as needed or focus on specific areas of interest.

The book is also an excellent tool for business English trainers and coaches, offering a framework to support the development of their learners' cross-cultural communication competencies.

In what follows, I'll discuss the book from the perspective of a business English trainer, offering a general overview and highlighting how I used the chapter *Building trust* as a framework in my English lessons.

In the introduction, learners are invited to complete a self-assessment to identify their strengths and areas for improvement in order to help guide their English language development.

The rest of the book is divided into three main sections.

Section one: Fundamentals of communication

This section covers the fundamentals of written and oral communication in international contexts. It consists of four chapters, each focusing on a key topic:

- Getting your message across
- *Listening effectively*
- *Dealing with different communication skills*
- *Managing your mindset*

Each of the four chapters begins with a thought-provoking quote and a set

that brings the subject to life. Learners are then invited to analyze the incident by responding to guided questions, such as identifying the core communication conflict.

Each chapter includes practical strategies, presenting communication techniques and practical advice. Every chapter concludes with a collection of useful language phrases and vocabulary exercises to reinforce learning.

The book is a hands-on guide for anyone working in an international environment

of reflective questions designed to encourage self-study users to engage with the topic before delving deeper. These questions are followed by a "critical incident" – a real-world workplace communication scenario

Section two: Essential skills for international teams

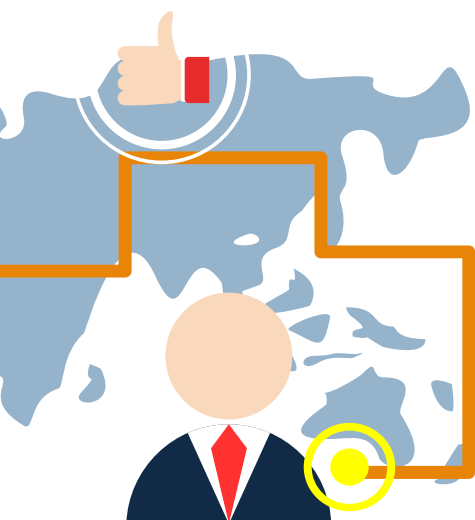
This section explores essential aspects of teamwork in international teams, divided into five core areas:

- *Forming relationships*
- *Building teams*
- *Leading people*
- *Improving collaboration*
- *Resolving challenges*

Each core area is further divided into chapters. For example, the section *Forming Relationships* includes chapters on topics like *Networking for success* and *Building trust*.

Each chapter includes a "critical incident" – a real-world workplace communication scenario that brings the subject to life





The follow-up questions ignited lively discussions about trust in the workplace

incident titled *Trust at work*. The follow-up questions in the book ignited lively discussions about trust in the workplace, with participants reflecting on how they would have dealt with the situation.

The next section of this chapter outlines the key factors for building trust, including:

- Being competent
- Being reliable
- Using similarities and diversity
- Caring about others
- Showing integrity
- Being open
- Trusting others

In my group lesson, I put students into breakout rooms, where they discussed each component and provided examples. This encouraged collaboration and helped deepen their understanding of different trust strategies.

I also provided phrases for each of the above components – partly from the book – and asked participants to match them accordingly.

Each trust-building strategy is clearly outlined, allowing English trainers to offer deeper insights and help participants better understand their application and importance.

The chapter on *Building trust* concludes with helpful language phrases, making it an excellent resource for self-study. In class, I adapted it into a gap-fill exercise, asking participants to complete the sentences using expressions from my vocabulary box. Participants found it very helpful underlining the value of acquiring standard business phrases.

All participants found the lesson interesting and beneficial with two people expressing interest in purchasing the book for self-study.

Section three: Phrases for key business situations

The final section of the book provides helpful phrases for five key business areas:

Professional socializing
Meetings
Presentations
Negotiations
Writing.

Section three is an excellent resource for self-study learners looking to enhance their business vocabulary for any situation, as well as for business English trainers to incorporate into their lessons.

As a business English trainer, I will definitely incorporate more topics and ideas from the book into future lessons and would highly recommend it to both fellow trainers and self-study learners.

One suggestion: The book's title is in both German and English, and the cover description is entirely in German. Since the book is aimed at professionals with a strong command of English, I believe having both the title and description fully in English would make it more appealing to its target audience.

Trainingsbuch Business English: Kommunikation und Zusammenarbeit by Bob Dignen and Ian McMaster is published by Haufe-Lexware GmbH & Co. KG (ISBN 978-3-648-16932-2)

All chapters follow a consistent structure – similar to Section One – making the content easy to follow for self-study learners or business English teachers looking to select specific sections to use in class,

Trying it out

Drawing on the framework from the chapter *Building trust*, I created an English lesson on trust, aiming to gather feedback on whether my learners found it beneficial to their professional development.

My selected chapter, *Building trust* begins with this quote from Ernest Hemingway: “The way to make people trustworthy is to trust them.” During a class discussion on Hemingway's words, one participant mentioned a provocative quote from Lenin: “Trust is good, but control is better.” Her comment sparked an interesting discussion, comparing both quotes.

Next, the *Ask yourself* section, presents three thought-provoking questions:

What exactly is trust?
Why should we trust each other?
What can we do to build trust?

In my test lessons, participants engaged thoughtfully with these questions, sharing their perspectives and sparking deeper discussions about trust, its significance in our lives and more importantly its role in a business context.

As a listening comprehension exercise, I then read out the critical



Dervilla Fastner is originally from Ireland and teaches English mainly in the corporate environment. She loves the challenges and adventure of teaching English online. She lives in Upper Bavaria where she spends most of her free time cycling in the woods and up and down hills.

I Am Susi Suitcase by Helen A. Stömmmer

Amanda Huber finds much to admire in a new book for fostering storytelling, cultural learning and creative writing

I Am Susi Suitcase by Melita member Helen A. Stömmmer is an enjoyable and imaginative book suitable for intermediate to advanced English learners. The book uses storytelling to personify different types of bags, giving each a unique voice and personality. This creative approach makes it an excellent resource for language classrooms, offering numerous benefits for both written and spoken language development.

Benefits in the language classroom

1. Engaging storytelling: Each chapter introduces a new “character”, such as Baldwin Backpack or Aatiq Attachécase. The stories are rich in descriptive language and cultural references, fostering vocabulary expansion and comprehension skills.
2. Cultural learning: The book incorporates cultural elements, such as the significance of the attaché cases or cultural heritage. These details provide opportunities for cross-cultural discussions, enriching students’ understanding of global contexts.
3. Creative writing inspiration: The book’s premise, imagining the stories of everyday objects, can inspire students to write their own narratives from the perspective of items they use daily, promoting creativity and improving writing skills.



Details provide opportunities for cross-cultural discussions, enriching students’ understanding of global contexts

Classroom activities

Use this book to design interactive activities that enhance both spoken and written English skills, such as:

- Role plays: Students act out scenes as one of the bag characters.
- Descriptive writing tasks: Students use descriptive adjectives in a short story about an object they own.
- Vocabulary building: Create word banks or quizzes around adjectives, verbs and idiomatic expressions.
- Discussion prompts: Debate or discuss travel or international relations using chapters like “Airport Security Checks” or “Diplomats and Attachés”.



The stories are rich in descriptive language, fostering vocabulary expansion and comprehension skills



I Am Susi Suitcase is a versatile tool for English teachers seeking to make language learning fun and interactive. Its blend of humour, cultural insight and storytelling makes it ideal for developing both written and spoken language skills while fostering creativity in the classroom.

I Am Susi Suitcase is published on Amazon via KDP and available via epubli as well.

Imagining the stories of everyday objects can inspire students to write their own narratives



Amanda Huber has been teaching English since 2014. After completing her Masters in Teaching English to Young Learners at the PH Freiburg, she joined the team at Gaby Holz English in Munich. In addition to teaching, she is responsible for recruitment, teacher training and programme planning. Her passion is teaching English in a holistic and fun way!

Aunt Agony

Your Aunt Agony advises you on those tricky teaching situations. Should you have a question or feedback for Aunt Agony, please send it to info@melta.de.

Dear Aunt Agony,

I have been teaching a course for several years now, and the lessons have been going very well.

Recently, I got the flu and needed another trainer to sub for me. When I returned, the group was full of praise for the substitute and suggested I do more activities like they did.

So now I'm in a quandary. Should I accommodate their wishes and change my teaching style? Should I give up the course in favour of the substitute? Alternatively, I could continue as before making only minor changes.

Can you help?

Perplexed in Passau

Dear Perplexed,

I quite understand. This situation could be quite humbling, so you need to turn it round. If indeed your classes seem to have been going well, maybe you could have become a tad complacent? A case like this shakes you out of your usual routine, and you can take it as an opportunity to add some new dynamism to your classes.

Why not check through your past editions of Melta News to find new ideas to add to your usual repertoire? Or have an ideas-swap evening with your fellow teachers? If the other teacher did activities that you really don't like doing, such as playing board games, you could explain this to your course participants and let them know that each time you have to be absent you will make sure the substitute teacher steps in with their magic tricks. This might be a good compromise.

Best of luck!

Dear Aunt Agony,

My efforts to get a conversation class off the ground at a local evening school have not been successful, unfortunately.

I need to have at least six participants to make it worthwhile for everyone, and the course would be aimed at people with at least a B1 level.

So could you possibly recommend some alternative channels to explore?

Lost in Lindau

Dear Lost,

Might I suggest going into the local café, book store and baker's to ask if you can put up an advertisement? What about the website "Nebenan", the local neighbourhood mutual help group? Also, as it's evening classes, it's more likely to attract people who work during the day, so do you have friends and family members who could put the word out at their place of work?

Social Media could do the trick, too. It depends on which channels you yourself use.

May you succeed after all.



Rhyming Corner

The pleasure of prepositions

English like many languages
Is full of prepositions
Do they really have a purpose
And what are their positions

After or before
Next to or between
Some can be put anywhere
And some are simply mean

We can put **off** the meeting
But we have to put it **off**
Phrasal verbs, oh no, not them
All I can do is scoff

Prepositions **have** a purpose
Such as movement, time and place
They make all the difference
I'll attempt to make my case

At the corner's not in the corner
I work **at** my desk and not **on**
At the Oktoberfest, but **on** the bench
Where you dance and sing along

But is it **in** time or **on** time
Is it **until** Friday or **by**
The pitfalls are endless
They make you want to cry

Is that you **in** the picture
I mean the picture **on** the wall
Yes, that's me **in** the middle
At the back I'd be too small

I was **in** New Zealand last year
I've never been **to** the Southern Alps
"Have been to" describes movement
Maybe this explanation helps

Under and over,
Around and about
Above and below
Through, with and without

The list carries on
For several more rows
Along with the problems
You think they often pose

Yet prepositions aren't there
To scare you to bits
They connect to make sense
So **please** don't lose your wits

Juliana Oosten

melta

JOIN ONLINE
<https://melta.de/register/>

Munich English Language Teachers Association e.V.
c/o Randy Perry, Oberaudorferstr. 1, 81549 München

Established in 1989, Melta is an association of English teachers in southern Germany and Central and Eastern Europe. It is affiliated with the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL) and has especially close ties to the other English teachers' associations in Germany.

Melta provides a forum for:

- Information and experience exchange
- Training and teaching development
- Social contact and support

Melta membership benefits include:

- Presentations by leading EFL/ESL guest speakers
- Practical workshops
- The newsletter Melta News three times a year
- Social events

On the Melta website at <https://melta.de>, you'll find:

- A program of upcoming events
- Job offers
- Profiles of Melta members
- Teaching resources
- Melta membership application forms

The annual subscription is €35 (€15 for full-time students, €100 for institutional membership), which includes the Melta newsletter and free entrance to Melta events.

For more information about Melta,
please contact Randy Perry (Chair) at chair@melta.de

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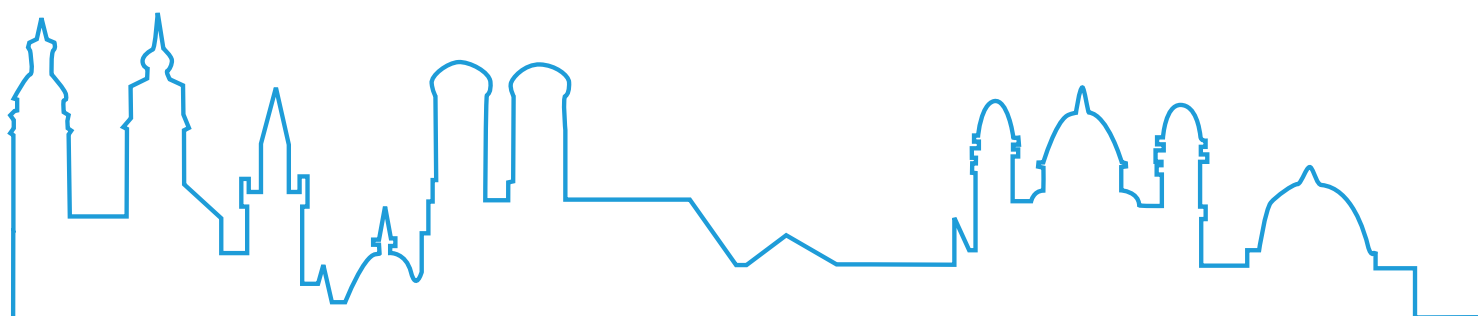
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