

Assessment Literacy: Building a Base for Better Teaching and Learning

Are you assessment literate? What does that mean—to be assessment literate? Assessment is something that we as teachers must do all the time, but many of us feel unprepared or uncomfortable when it comes to testing our students. Teachers often reuse tests without analyzing or revising them and seldom use statistical procedures to see how a test—or a test item—is actually performing. Assessing students often means reaching for a test or quiz that is already prepared, whether it be a test included with a textbook, something another teacher prepared, or a standardized test produced by a major testing organization or our institution. These aren't necessarily bad choices (and sometimes it may not be our choice at all), but to make sure they are good choices, we must be knowledgeable about the principles and practices of assessment.

In order for assessment to be effective, classroom teachers need to be assessment literate—knowledge-

able about the key concepts of testing and how they can inform the design of assessments and decisions surrounding their usage. This article will start you on the path to being assessment literate. You will learn about the terms that make up the cornerstones of testing, how to plan your courses with assessments in mind, and how to make a test blueprint. Knowing more about assessment will not only help you to assess your students more effectively, but it will also provide you with a means of evaluating your own teaching and help you to produce tests that will actually motivate your students to learn. Let's begin by learning more about the words *testing* and *assessment*.

Testing vs. assessing

The word *test* can make people nervous. It has semantic qualities that make us think of being judged or measured by someone or something. Many people have an emotive reaction to testing and associate it with negative experiences that they may have had as

students. In an educational context, the terms *testing* and *assessment* are often used interchangeably to indicate the measurement of student learning. However, although a test is a type of assessment—usually thought of in the traditional sense of an exam or quiz—assessment is a more comprehensive term. It often indicates the collection of information about student learning that might include not only tests but also a variety of techniques such as performance tasks, portfolios, and observation.

While tests are thought of as a means to give grades to students, assessments offer diagnostic information for both students and teachers. The ultimate purpose of assessment is to improve student learning, as opposed to just being able to give a mark for the amount of course content a student has mastered. Today teachers tend to talk about assessing (rather than testing) their students because we see the ongoing evaluation of student learning as more than just testing knowledge and skills in a particular area at one point in time for grading purposes. Thus, throughout this article, references to tests will be made with the ultimate goal of using them as assessment tools and not purely as testing instruments.

Importance of assessment

As we all know, assessment plays an important role in teaching and learning. It affects decisions related to instruction, determines the extent to which instructional objectives are met, and provides information for administrative decisions. It has been estimated that teachers spend as much as 50 percent of their time in assessment-related activities (Stiggins 1991), and that when assessment is implemented effectively, student achievement is improved (Campbell and Collins 2007).

Yet many teachers feel assessment and testing are not relevant to their classroom practice and report that they feel unprepared to undertake assessment-related activities. Popham (2004) reports that most public school educators in the United States tend to think of assessment as “a complex, quantitative arena well beyond the comprehension of mere mortals” (82). Some of these feelings may come from the anxiety that teachers felt when they were students taking tests, especially if they didn’t understand how the tests were graded or if the objectives of the tests weren’t clear.

Teacher-education programs are also at fault for not making sure teachers are adequately trained before entering the classroom (Mertler 2004). As Taylor (2009) points out,

language education programs at graduate level typically devote little time or attention to assessment theory and practice, perhaps just a short (often optional) module; and although there is no shortage of books on language testing and assessment available today, many of these are perceived to be (and often are) highly technical or too specialized for language educators seeking to understand basic principles and practice in assessment. (23)

During our time in school and teacher-training courses, we take many tests, but how often are we actually given practice creating them, marking them, and interpreting the results? Developing these skills is part of becoming assessment literate.

Assessment literacy

An essential element of assessment literacy is the ability to connect student assessment to the learning and teaching process. Teachers can make this link by first matching test items to instructional objectives, then using the test results to provide feedback on both student performance and how well the instructional objectives were met. An assessment-literate teacher is able to interpret data generated from a test to make useful modifications to teaching and to use assessments as a tool to improve student learning. Assessment-literate teachers are also able to discuss assessments with others in terms of key concepts in testing. With this in mind, we can explore common terms associated with tests, along with their practical application.

Key concepts and considerations

Seven key concepts—usefulness, reliability, validity, practicality, washback, authenticity, and transparency—are cornerstones in testing that help to ensure that a test is solid (i.e., that it will consistently measure what you want it to measure in an efficient manner, and that both teacher and student will see it as a valuable source of information regarding learning). Understanding these concepts and being able to improve practices related to them are

important in developing assessment literacy. Each is discussed separately below, but as you will notice, they are connected to and support one another; together, they form the basis for building solid assessments.

Usefulness and purpose

According to Bachman and Palmer (1996), usefulness is the most important consideration when choosing or designing a test. Teachers must consider what the purpose of a particular assessment is and whether this purpose is congruent with the students they are testing and the course they are teaching. All language tests must be developed with a specific purpose, a particular group of test takers, and a specific language use in mind. Even tests with the general purpose of testing English language ability (proficiency) are designed with a specific group of test takers in mind. Take, for example, three standardized tests used globally for the purpose of measuring language ability: the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), and the Michigan English Test (MET). Each of these has been developed with very specific audiences and purposes (see Figure 1).

The examples in Figure 1 illustrate that tests are designed with very specific audiences and purposes in mind. This specificity is what allows them to effectively measure what they are designed to measure and makes them useful for a specific purpose. You must carefully consider the purpose of a test before

administering it. If you choose a pre-made test and it does not match your students' needs or your purpose, then it will not be an adequate assessment of your students and will not provide the information that you need in order to make informed decisions about the teaching and learning taking place in the classroom.

For example, if you wanted to measure the reading ability of your students to see if they would be able to order from a menu when visiting the United States on an exchange trip, you couldn't just use any reading test you find in a textbook or online. You would need to find one (or better yet, make one) that is specific to the skills taught in class, that meets the vocabulary needs of the situation the students would be immersed in, and that uses an appropriate text style that matches what you expect the students to encounter. Having them read a passage from a newspaper or a short story and then answer questions would not adequately measure their ability to read and order from a menu at a restaurant. So when you choose or design a test, consider the purpose of the test, the group of test takers it is designed for, and the specific language use you want to evaluate.

Reliability

Your assessments not only need to be useful for the intended purpose, they also need to be reliable. Reliability refers to the consistency of test scores. If you were to test a student more than once using the same test, the results should be the same, assuming that nothing

Test	Information about the Purpose
TOEFL	Measures the ability “to use and understand English at the university level,” and evaluates how well the test taker can “combine listening, reading, speaking and writing skills to perform academic tasks” (Educational Testing Service 2014).
IELTS	Has an academic and a general-training version. The academic version is for those who want to study in an English-speaking university; the general version focuses on basic “survival skills in broad social and workplace contexts” (IELTS 2013).
MET	“Intended for adults and adolescents at or above a secondary level of education who want to evaluate their general English language proficiency” in social, educational, and workplace contexts. It is “not an admissions test for students applying to universities and colleges in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom” (Modern Language Center 2010).

Figure 1. Examples of standardized proficiency tests and their purposes

else had changed. Reliability can be threatened by fluctuations in the learner, in scoring, or in test administration. Fluctuations in the learner are out of the testing administrator's control; we cannot control whether a student is sick, tired, or under emotional stress at the time of a test. But we as teachers can limit the fluctuations in scoring and test administration. The guidelines for how a test is administered, the length of time allotted to complete the test, and the conditions for testing should be established in advance and written in a test-specifications document. (See the Validity section for an example of test specifications.) As much as possible, there should be consistency in testing conditions and in how a test is administered each time it is given. Teachers can minimize fluctuations in score by preparing answer keys and scoring rubrics, and by holding norming sessions with those who will be scoring the test.

You can take steps to improve the reliability of your tests. You need to make sure that the test is long enough to sample the content that students are being tested on and that there is enough time for most of the students to finish taking the test. The items should not be too easy or too difficult, the questions should not be tricky or ambiguous, the directions should be clear, and the score range should be wide. Before you administer the test, you might want to have someone else take it to see whether he or she encounters problems with directions or content. Use that person's feedback to see where the test might need to be improved.

Validity

One thing to keep in mind is that a test may be highly reliable, but not valid. That is, it might produce similar scores consistently, but that does not mean it is measuring what you would like it to. A test has validity when it measures what you want it to measure. The most important aspect of validity is the appropriateness for the context and the audience of the test. Think about what is to be gained by administering a test and how the information will be used. Suppose your goal is to measure students' listening ability, and you give a test in which students answer questions in written format about a lecture they hear. In that case, you need to make sure that the vocabulary, sentence structure, and grammar usage in the

written questions are not beyond the level of the students. Otherwise, you will be testing them on more than just their listening comprehension skills and thus decreasing the validity of the test as a measure for listening ability.

A number of factors can have an adverse effect on validity, including the following:

- unclear directions
- test items that ask students to perform at a skill level that is not part of the course objectives
- test items that are poorly written
- test length that doesn't allow for adequate sampling or coverage of content
- complexity and subjectivity of scoring that may inaccurately rank some students

The best way to ensure validity and reliability is to create test specifications and exam blueprints. These will help ensure that tests created and used match what is intended for the course and the students. Figure 2 shows an example of general information for the test specifications of a final exam for a higher-education pre-academic English-language program course. For each of the subtests (listening, reading, and writing), specifications would also be written and would include the type of skills being assessed, level of vocabulary, grammar structure, and length of text to be used.

Practicality

Practicality refers to how "teacher friendly" a given test is. Practicality issues include the cost of test development and maintenance, time needed to administer and mark the test, ease of marking, availability of suitably trained markers, and administration logistics. If the test you want to give requires computers, and these are not available or connectivity is unreliable, there will obviously be a practicality issue with the delivery of the test. For many teachers, the amount of time required to mark a test is an important practicality issue. You can overcome this issue by weighing how important a particular assessment is in terms of overall course mark and determining how much time you want to spend marking it. For example, if a vocabulary quiz will not be worth much in the overall course mark, you might consider having students exchange papers and mark them instead of marking

General Test Information — Final Exam	
Purpose (Why are you testing?)	To test student mastery of listening, reading, and writing curricular objectives for Level 1
Intended population (Who are you testing?)	Students in university pre-academic intensive English program – Level 1
Intended decisions/stakes (How important is the test for the course grade?)	High stakes – weighted as 40% of the final grade
Response format (What type of questions will you use? How will the test taker show mastery of the objective?)	Listening: multiple choice, short answer, matching, gap fill, and information transfer
	Reading: multiple choice, short answer, matching, gap fill, and information transfer
	Writing: one-paragraph response to a prompt (input is a picture or personal knowledge)
Number of examiners (How many people are needed to administer the test? Are there any restrictions for test supervisors?)	One test supervisor per 20 students; two markers per exam (cannot be the class teacher)
Number and weighting of items/tasks (How many questions will there be on each part? How much will each part be worth for the overall grade of the test?)	Listening: approximately 20 items (33%) Reading: approximately 20 items (33%) Writing: 1 task (34 %)
Examination length (How much time will the assessment take overall? Is there a time length per section?)	Maximum of 2 hours Listening: 30 minutes Reading: 40 minutes Writing: 40 minutes
Order of tasks (In what order will the sections be tested?)	1. Listening 2. Reading 3. Writing
Rating scale type (Conditions necessary for marking the exam)	Reading and Listening: Answer key agreed to before the test; Writing: Two markers, analytical criteria, third marker if necessary
Reporting type (How will the score be reported? As a whole score, or per section? What is the passing grade?)	Single score (maximum 100%; pass mark 70%)

Figure 2. Example of general test specifications

each one yourself. This arrangement also allows students to review the materials at the same time. For marking writing, it might be more practical to have students review each other's work and peer edit the first draft than to have the teacher make comments on each initial draft.

Washback

Washback refers to the effects of testing on students, teachers, and the overall program. It can be positive or negative. Positive washback occurs most often when testing and curriculum design are based on clear course outcomes that are known to all students and teachers. On

the other hand, exams that require extensive preparation can have negative washback and be harmful to the teaching and learning process; if instruction solely focuses on helping students pass the test, other learning activities may be neglected. To make sure washback is positive, teachers should link teaching and testing to instructional objectives. Tests should reflect the goals and objectives of the course along with the types of activities used to teach the content. That underscores the importance of planning assessments at the same time you plan the course.

Another way to bring about positive washback is through feedback. Providing feedback in a timely manner is important if you want students to learn and benefit from the assessment process. In the above example of practicality, having students mark their classmates' papers provides timely feedback to the students and helps them understand where they might need further practice or review. Using short quizzes that are graded immediately by the students throughout the course may let students know where they need to study more; it may also redirect teacher energy toward the areas that need more instruction time.

Involving students in the marking process is one way to create positive washback from testing. Other ways are to use authentic testing materials and to make the assessment procedures transparent—the topics of the next two sections.

Authenticity

Tasks that reflect real-world situations and contexts in which the language will be used provide motivation for learners to perform well. Assessment tasks should be relevant to real-life contexts in which the language will be used. For example, if a course is designed for students who will be answering phones in English in a call center, an oral exam that mimics a telephone-call format would be more authentic than a test in which students listen to an academic lecture and respond to questions related to the lecture, or one where the students write the correct forms of verbs in sentence blanks. The assessments should relate to the purpose of the course, which in turn relates to course objectives, which are then tested on the assessments.

Transparency

Transparency refers to the availability of information to students. Students should be

aware of the skills, vocabulary, and grammar that they will be expected to learn, and they should receive a clear explanation of how these will be assessed. Transparency makes students part of the testing process by ensuring that they understand what the course objectives are and what will be tested, as well as the format of tests and how they will be used and graded. Students should have the chance beforehand to practice question types that will be used in a test. Using a new test format, one that students are unfamiliar with, could affect the test's reliability. When students do not perform well on a test, it should be because they have not learned the material, not because they didn't understand the directions to complete a task.

Increasing transparency will also reduce students' test anxiety and allow them the chance to perform better. To increase transparency, many schools and educational institutions publish their test specifications. For example, the Oregon Department of Education publishes test specifications for the English Language Proficiency Assessments by grade level on its website (Oregon Department of Education 2014). These documents list not only content to be tested, but also in what ratio, along with appropriate test-item types.

Planning your assessments

Now that you are familiar with the seven cornerstones of assessment, let's examine how you would go about planning an assessment that is useful, valid, reliable, practical, authentic, and transparent, and that has positive washback.

Planning your assessments goes hand in hand with developing your course learning objectives and should start when you begin planning the course. How you will assess student learning will affect how you present materials and teach the course. There are several phases in the assessment process. One of the most important is the initial planning stage. When you plan an exam, begin by describing your assessment context. Think about what the purpose of the course is, which resources you have available, and how the instructional setting and larger educational context influence the course. This is the information that you will put in the test specifications, discussed above in the Validity section, in the categories for purpose and intended population.

The next step is to identify students' needs and develop course learning objectives. Learning objectives are determined by what you want your students to know—and may be mandated by institutional or national priorities for education within your context. You should specify what you want your students to learn or be able to do after taking the course. This will guide you in developing not only lessons and curriculum, but also in deciding how you will assess whether students have learned what you want them to. Identifying course learning objectives will give you and the students goals to work toward during the course. Each of these objectives can then be divided into the skills needed to accomplish the objectives, whether they relate to vocabulary, structure, or fluency skills. With these learning objectives in hand, you will be able to design a test and check that the test you hope to use will accurately measure these objectives.

The best way to do this is to create a blueprint of the assessment, matching course objectives to the test questions. By using the course learning objectives to guide the content and the purpose of your exam, you can make sure that your assessments serve both as a tool for providing information about student

learning and as a means of assessing the course materials and instructional practices.

Creating an exam blueprint

Having an exam blueprint increases the likelihood that you will actually test what you set out to test (i.e., the test will have validity). Test blueprints help you avoid overemphasizing one area or completely missing another area that needs to be tested. A blueprint is a tool to determine what is important for the students to know and the relative weight of each area in relation to other areas or skills being tested; at the same time, a blueprint ensures that the content being taught is properly represented on the test. The blueprint can also help a teacher see that the method used for assessing matches the cognitive demand that is intended.

Begin creating a blueprint by listing the learning objectives you want to measure, the way they will be tested, and how much of the total exam will cover each area. There may be several items on the exam related to each objective, but by first mapping out what you hope to test, you can be sure to include questions that assess all your objectives. An example of a simplified blueprint is given in Figure 3. It lists the skill area (in this case, the skills to be tested are reading, listening, writ-

Skill	Learning Objective	How Objective(s) Will Be Tested	Total
Reading	• Can scan to find specific information • Can recognize main idea of a paragraph • Can understand pronoun references	Read a paragraph and answer questions related to a reading passage using multiple-choice, short-answer, matching, gap-fill, and information-transfer items	30%
Listening	• Can recognize main idea of a section • Can listen for specific information • Can listen for numbers	Listen and answer questions using multiple-choice, short-answer, matching, gap-fill, and information-transfer items	30%
Writing	Can use pronouns to show cohesion between sentences	Write sentences related to a personal topic	15%
Grammar	• Present simple • Adjectives • Subject/object pronouns	Multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blank items	25%
Total			100%

Figure 3. Simplified exam blueprint

ing, and grammar), the learning objective, the item/question type, and overall percentage of importance in the context of this assessment.

You can also select a test that is already made and map it backward to see if it will fit your purposes or if items need to be added, adjusted, or replaced. To map backward, you would list each question, what it tests, and the number of points it is worth. At the end of this exercise, you should be able to see

what content is being tested and whether it is tested in the correct proportion to what you hope the students are learning. Figure 4 shows sample questions that might be on a reading test (in this case, the topic of the passage was dogs); the questions have been analyzed to determine the objectives being assessed and the mix of item types being used.

One way to develop items for a test is to write them on notecards (or if you have a

Item	Learning Objective	Item Type
What is the main idea of the reading? A. How to care for a dog B. The many different breeds of dogs C. The many ways that dogs are important to people	Reading: Can understand main idea	Multiple-choice question
In Paragraph 1, what does <i>they</i> refer to? A. veterinarians B. dog trainers C. dogs	Reading: Can understand pronoun references	Multiple-choice question
What is the meaning of the word <i>flush</i> in Paragraph 3? A. raise B. remove C. even with	Reading: Can understand vocabulary in context	Multiple-choice question
What is the main idea of Paragraph 3? A. Dog showing is a popular sport. B. There are several hundred breeds of dogs. C. Obedience training for dogs is important.	Reading: Can recognize main idea of a paragraph	Multiple-choice question
According to the reading, which is considered a sporting dog? A. collie B. fox terrier C. pointer	Reading: Can scan to find specific information	Multiple-choice question
Match the type of dog with its description, according to the information in the reading. basset hound _____ poodle _____ Chihuahua _____ terrier _____ A. is trained to pull sleds B. has long ears C. is the smallest pure-bred dog D. sheds very little hair E. is used to herd animals	Reading: Can scan to find specific information	Matching

Figure 4. Analysis of exam questions relative to learning objectives

computer, add them to a spreadsheet) so that you can then sort them according to skill, question type, or objective covered. This system will let you know whether you have too many questions of the same type or need to add more in a certain category. Writing questions at the end of each lesson you teach is also an effective way to reflect on what you taught during the lesson and how you could assess that content in a manner the students will be familiar with. Working with a group of teachers to make new test items, or even working with your students, is a way to add variety to your item bank (your collection of possible test questions) and to get other opinions on what might be appropriate.

Having students become part of the assessment process can increase transparency, help them recognize what is important to know from the content being taught, and motivate them to review and study together. If students have a clear understanding of what they are being tested on and how they will be tested, positive washback is promoted. If you are working at an institution that uses very high-stakes testing and standardized exams for all students, you might consider having the students create assessments for review or quizzes. For example, you could ask each student to write questions for a particular grammar item or vocabulary list. This method will also help you informally assess student knowledge of the topics being taught as you review students' questions and answers to decide whether they are suitable for a small-scale assessment.

After questions are written, label each with the learning objective that it covers and the item type. You can then look at the questions, make selections, and put them together for the quiz. You can look at item cards yourself or with other teachers to determine the strength of each question for testing a given objective. Looking at questions with others is a useful practice that can also generate more items or improve the ones you have. You can make stacks of questions relating to the same curriculum objective and determine how many of each you will need for the appropriate weighting on the test or quiz. Once the assessment has been administered, you will also want to add information to each question about how it performed (see Basic Statistics for Testing, below). These testing or item statistics will be useful in determining whether

to use the questions again and which learning objectives might need to be reviewed or taught in a different manner in future lessons. In this way, an assessment can provide both teacher and student feedback.

Providing feedback

An important process in assessment development and revision is feedback. By providing feedback on an actual test after administering it, teachers ensure constant improvement with regard to the reliability and validity of all assessments administered within a program. Information gathered from the test can be useful to determine final marks of an exam and to decide whether any questions should not be counted in the grading process. All information that is generated through testing should be kept with that test and reviewed before the test is administered again. Teachers who use an assessment should be asked to complete a feedback form. Sample questions and the areas you might consider for feedback are given in the following section.

Creating an exam file

Reflecting on the exam is an important part of the test development process. After you administer each test that might be reused, create an exam file. The file should contain information about the actual tasks in the test, its administration, and its level of difficulty. You could create a feedback form that has questions related to these topics, then fill it out when developing and reviewing the test, and reflect on it after the administration. Questions that might be useful in gathering feedback on an exam are listed below.

Setting: Task and Administration

- Is it clear how the student is expected to respond to each item?
- Does the exam test the curriculum content?
- Does the exam contain formats familiar to the students?
- Are the exam tasks authentic and meaningful?
- Is there more than one logical option/answer possible for any blank/question?
- Is the layout user-friendly? Does the formatting match specifications?
- Are there any typos, misprints, or other errors in the production of the test?

- Are the listening and reading texts at an appropriate level?
- Are the texts clear in their organization and content?
- Is the quality (e.g., pace, sound clarity, voice quality) of the recording good?
- Is the time allotment appropriate for the length of the exam?

Demands: Task

- Do the test tasks adequately sample the skills and strategies needed for [listening/reading/writing]?
- Are any questions answerable by students who haven't heard the lecture or read the text?
- Do the task types reflect student classroom experience?
- Are the task types adequate for measuring the course objectives?
- Is this test an accurate measuring tool for progress for this course?

Along with the feedback form, an exam file would also include the test-specifications document indicating the purpose and general audience for the test, the test blueprint indicating how each question matches a learning objective, and basic statistics. Changes to an exam or scoring process should be based on the analyses and feedback. Making notes about the test immediately after grading it offers an opportunity to update an exam while it is fresh in your mind. You might even think about having your students answer a few questions about the test as well. These could include how difficult they thought it was, whether there were questions they found confusing, and whether the content covered was what they expected would be on the test. Valuable information about your assessment can also be gathered through basic statistical analysis.

Basic statistics for testing

After you administer an assessment, basic statistics give you an idea of how your students are performing and information about the test in general. Two useful statistics to measure are the mean score and the pass/fail rate. The mean is the mathematical average of all the test takers' scores; you can compute the mean by adding all the test takers' scores and dividing the total by the number of students

who took the test. You can compute a mean score for the whole test and for each section. The mean score provides information about the reliability of a test over time, especially if the delivery of the course remains the same. If a test is reliable, you would expect a similar result among students at different times or between groups of similar students. If you have a test in which various skills are tested, such as the one in the example of the test specifications with a listening, reading, and writing section (Figure 2), computing the mean for each section would give you an idea of which skill areas the students have more difficulty with, as indicated by a lower mean score.

To determine the pass/fail rate, meanwhile, you must first decide what a passing score is on the exam. I have been in places where 60 percent is passing at the university level for some courses, depending on their difficulty, and other places where 75 percent or even higher represents the passing score. It depends on the level at which students are expected to master the course objectives, and on whether the purpose of testing is just to measure learning objectives or to move only the top performers on to the next course or level of study. Once you have determined a passing score, add the number of students who reached the passing score or higher and divide by the total number of test takers. This number represents the pass rate. The same can be done for the fail rate, counting instead the number of students who did not receive at least the passing mark and dividing by the total number of test takers.

The pass/fail rate can be calculated for the test as a whole, for each section or skill area, and even for individual questions. Looking at individual-item pass rates gives you an idea of the difficulty of each question and can help you find items that may need to be rewritten or areas that will need further instruction or review. If you add this information to the questions that you created on notecards or a computer spreadsheet, in the future you can also put together tests with questions that have a variety of difficulty levels. This information will also tell you which skills you might not need to spend so much time reviewing in the future and which ones may need more instruction time.

Practice makes perfect

Just as learning a language takes practice, so does developing assessment skills. By thinking about the assessment process and analyzing the tests we use, we can all become better teachers and test developers. Teachers often report that assessment literacy is not something that they acquired by taking a course, but instead is something they learned on the job through the ongoing experience of working with and developing assessments. When I asked teachers how they had gained the knowledge that they have about assessment, almost all mentioned post-formal-education experience (“through discussion of the effectiveness of assessments with colleagues,” “trial and error,” “being part of a group making tests,” “on-the-job experience”). Teachers seem to feel that assessment literacy is not something you are taught in a course, though you can get the fundamentals and theories there; it is basically something that must be developed through ongoing experience and practice. Assessment literacy is a skill that you have to learn by doing, not just by reading about it. Real-life teaching in the classroom provides the perfect opportunity to apply assessment fundamentals and to develop assessments that will motivate your students to learn—and that will motivate you to develop lessons that will facilitate learning.

A lot of research has focused on what information about assessment should be taught in education courses, but maybe instead we should be looking at the opportunities for development that present themselves throughout our teaching careers. As Boyles (2006) suggests, teachers can use the information from assessment to adjust teaching practices, to provide evidence of student performance, and to guide the curriculum-review process. The information we gather from assessments should provide feedback to students, but it should also be used as a means for teachers and program administrators to review instructional practices and curricular objectives. Brookhart (2001) notes that in order for teachers to “own the goal of high-quality assessment, they must be convinced that assessment is just as important to student learning as ... effective classroom management or lesson design.” Research indicates

that “teacher professional development is more effective when it is school embedded, cooperative and sustained over time ... organized within and/or across schools and focuses on improving practice over time through the sharing of knowledge, experience and expertise” (O’Leary 2008, 112).

So, with that in mind, make sure to share with your colleagues what you have learned from this article (or share this article with them), talk about your assessments, work together to improve them, and remember that assessment plays an important role in the teaching and learning processes. By reflecting on the tests used in your classroom, how they are developed, and the results obtained from them, you will become more assessment literate and a better teacher. Testing will not seem so complex or beyond comprehension, as many teachers feel it is. You, in turn, will provide students with a better experience, empowering them as learners instead of instilling fear of tests. With assessment literacy comes the understanding of the valuable role assessment plays in the classroom for both teachers and students.

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Meeting EFL Learners Halfway by Using Locally Relevant Authentic Materials

After teaching a university conversation class of future English teachers in Chile, in which I used picture postcards depicting works by famous nineteenth-century European artists, I asked the students to comment on the materials and the activity. The students complained about their complete lack of familiarity with these paintings, and one of them indignantly declared, “This is not our reality!” From that moment forward, I became acutely aware of the critical need to consider my students’ interests and realities when developing materials.

In another class, I used materials based on the poems of Pablo Neruda, a Chilean poet and Nobel laureate. I used English translations of his poems, audio recordings of English-speaking celebrities reading the poems, and topics related to the poems’ meanings. Once again, at the end of class, I asked my future English teachers to comment on the materials and activities. The students enthu-

siastically confirmed that they had been captivated and confessed their amazement that Neruda’s poems were appreciated beyond Chile’s borders. The surprising success of this class encouraged me to continue seeking, selecting, and using authentic materials that have local relevance.

With these experiences as background, I believe that teachers can benefit from using authentic materials in English as a foreign language (EFL) classrooms. In this article, I define and describe authentic materials, and I outline benefits and challenges associated with using them. In addition, I review Krashen’s Input Hypothesis and Ellis’s Output Principle to explain why locally relevant authentic materials are an ideal source of comprehensible input for stimulating output from EFL learners. Then, I offer suggestions for selecting and finding locally relevant authentic materials, and for planning activities appropriate for use with these materials.

Defining and describing authentic materials

What are authentic materials? The scholarly literature on this subject contains a variety of explanations. Swaffar (1985) says that “an authentic text, oral or written, is one whose primary intent is to communicate meaning” (17). The author emphasizes that authentic texts must possess “an authentic communicative objective,” as opposed to the purpose of foreign language textbooks, which is to “teach language *per se* rather than to communicate information” (17).

According to Little, Devitt, and Singleton, an authentic text is “created to fulfil some social purpose in the language community in which it was produced” (as cited in Guariento and Morley 2001, 347). For Tomlinson (2012), “an authentic text is one which is produced in order to communicate rather than to teach. . . . The text does not have to be produced by a native speaker and it might be a version of an original which has been simplified to facilitate communication” (162).

We can safely conclude that authentic materials are produced for real communication and that the purpose of authentic materials is to communicate meaning and information rather than to teach language. The key to understanding what makes materials authentic is to think of them as texts that were not intentionally produced for language classrooms or learners. In this context, the most significant synonyms are *genuine* and *natural*; on the other hand, the most significant antonyms are *artificial* and *unnatural*. Finally, I would like to emphasize that it is acceptable to adapt an authentic text, if necessary, to suit the proficiency level of your students.

Two examples of the types of authentic materials that create engaging EFL classroom activities are cooking recipes and restaurant menus. These texts are authentic because they were created to communicate useful information in the real world rather than to teach language. The ongoing evolution of web content and web applications ensures that the possible sources and formats of authentic materials are ever expanding and diversifying.

Benefits of authentic materials

Tomlinson (2012) reports that several researchers “argue that authentic materials

can provide meaningful exposure to language as it is actually used, motivate learners and help them develop a range of communicative competencies and enhance positive attitudes towards the learning of a language” (161). Gilmore (2007) states that “authentic materials, particularly audio-visual ones, offer a much richer source of input for learners and have the potential to be exploited in different ways and on different levels to develop learners’ communicative competence” (103). Spelleri (2002) notes that “authentic materials offer real language that is contextually rich and culturally pertinent” (16). Peacock (1997) empirically investigated the use of authentic materials in the classroom and concluded that motivation and on-task behavior increased significantly when learners used authentic materials.

To summarize, we can say that authentic materials are beneficial because they:

- expose learners to language that serves a useful purpose;
- provide a refreshing change from the textbook;
- focus more closely on learners’ interests and needs;
- provide information about a variety of topics;
- increase learners’ motivation; and
- connect the classroom with the outside world.

Challenges of using authentic materials

According to Gilmore (2007), “authenticity doesn’t necessarily mean *good*, just as contrivance doesn’t necessarily mean *bad*” (98). Gilmore cautions that it is difficult to “accurately measure learners’ motivation in classroom-based studies” (107). Gilmore also warns that “rating a text’s difficulty is not an exact science and is, to some extent, dependent on the learning context in which it is used” (108) and recommends “careful planning, selection and sequencing of materials and tasks” (112) to overcome the challenges you may face when using authentic materials.

The list below summarizes challenges associated with using authentic materials (Gilmore 2007; Peacock 1997; Spelleri 2002; Tomlinson 2012):

- The cultural content may seem too unfamiliar.

- The content may become obsolete too quickly.
- The language may be too difficult.
- The vocabulary may be too specialized.
- The grammar structures may be too complex.
- The preparation may require too much time.

How can you overcome these challenges? First, you can decide to select locally relevant authentic materials in order to avoid materials with unfamiliar cultural content. Next, you can adapt authentic texts in order to match your students' proficiency. In addition, you can develop an efficient organizational system that will allow you to gradually create a portfolio of reusable materials. Also, with practice, you will become faster at finding and preparing authentic materials for classroom use. Finally, you may discover exciting ways to empower your students to do more of the work for you—and ultimately, for themselves.

Regardless of the challenges, classroom use of carefully selected authentic materials can significantly enrich EFL teaching and learning. In order to explain this statement, I review Krashen's Input Hypothesis and Ellis's Output Principle.

The Input Hypothesis and the Output Principle

The Input Hypothesis offers support for the use of locally relevant authentic materials. For example, Krashen and Terrell (1983) state that acquisition occurs when learners are able to comprehend challenging input and that comprehension is aided by clues related to the situation and context, among other factors. Their notions have implications for the EFL classroom: you need to make the input comprehensible but challenging, and the input should also be engaging, interesting, and relevant. In addition, you need to facilitate activities that promote a constant flow of comprehensible input and meaningful communication.

Reviewing the advice of Krashen and Terrell (1983) for how to aid your students' comprehension of challenging input, you may wonder what the authors mean by clues related to the situation and context. Along with your facial expressions, physical gestures, and body language, you may be able to

depend on a variety of audiovisual materials. In addition, I suggest that you focus on the arts, customs, food, holidays, places, situations, and traditions that are relevant to your local context. And to ensure that the input is engaging, interesting, and relevant, and that the communication is meaningful, you should develop classroom activities based on authentic materials.

Ellis (2008) argues that “most researchers now acknowledge that learner output also plays a part in second language acquisition” and that “successful instructed language learning also requires opportunities for output” (4). According to Ellis's Output Principle, output is beneficial because it helps learners notice grammar and automate and internalize existing knowledge, gives learners more control over topics, provides learners with auto-input (their own language production), and generates more relevant input (when the input is offered in response to learners' output).

Clearly, both input and output play significant roles in EFL classrooms, and these roles are enhanced by the use of locally relevant authentic materials. When you select authentic materials, try to match subjects, topics, and themes to your students' realities. Content that is authentic, familiar, and engaging can meet Krashen's prescription for input that is comprehensible but challenging. When planning lessons, develop several activities for any given authentic text; classroom activities that are designed to take full advantage of appropriate input offer opportunities for the beneficial output prescribed by Ellis.

Selecting and using locally relevant authentic materials

Every local context is different, and what works in one classroom may not work in another; in general, however, any topic related to food is potentially fun and engaging. For example, in Chilean university classrooms, I used authentic materials related to a Chilean restaurant, which happened to be in New York City. Although the restaurant was located outside the local context, the materials were locally relevant because the restaurant served Chilean cuisine and was owned by Chileans. In addition to the restaurant's menu and profile, I used informal restaurant reviews that had been written by its customers.

When you select locally relevant authentic materials, concentrate on *surface* culture topics such as the arts, customs, food, holidays, places, situations, and traditions that are relevant to your local context; in addition, give your students opportunities to engage in critical thinking and cross-cultural nuance by adding *deep* culture topics such as attitudes, perceptions, and values. Meanwhile, avoid any possible risk of offending your students. For example, does your local context include a recent painful chapter in its history, such as a civil war, a military coup, a disputed election, or the competing forces of secular versus religious influences on public affairs? If so, steer clear of these subjects or approach them with extreme caution. In especially precarious local contexts, focus exclusively on the *surface* culture topics listed above.

Following are five categories of locally relevant authentic materials and practical suggestions for using them effectively in the classroom.

Category 1: Restaurants

Select a restaurant that is relevant to your local context and located in an international English-speaking city like New York. Search the web for the following authentic materials: the restaurant's menu, a profile of the restaurant (outlining its cuisine, location, hours, policies, etc.), and reviews written by customers. Practical suggestions for using these materials include the following:

- Form pairs to discuss one or two ice-breaker questions such as: What is your favorite food? How often do you eat in restaurants? What is your favorite restaurant? Why?
- Distribute the restaurant's menu, profile, or reviews. Play Vocabulary Bingo with the vocabulary in any of these texts (see Appendix A).
- Distribute the restaurant's profile. Form pairs to answer questions based on the profile: What is the restaurant's address? What is its phone number? When is it open for lunch? When is it open for dinner? What is its website address? What is its email address? What is its Facebook address? Ask the pairs to create at least three additional questions based on the profile.
- Distribute the restaurant's profile or menu. Play Classroom Jeopardy based on facts found in the text (see Appendix B).
- Distribute cards containing the names of menu items and other cards containing images or brief descriptions of these menu items. Form pairs to match the cards.
- Distribute copies of the restaurant's menu. Form pairs to answer questions based on the menu: What is the cheapest food item? What is the cheapest beverage? What is the most expensive food item? What is the most expensive beverage? How much does [a specific item] cost? Ask the pairs to create at least three additional questions based on the menu.
- Again using the restaurant's menu, form groups to create and perform role plays based on the menu. Distribute cards with different roles to each group member. Here are examples of the roles your students can play:
 - You are a server, and several of the menu items are not available.
 - You are a server who is in a very bad mood.
 - You are a hungry customer who is a strict vegetarian.
 - You are a hungry customer who has a lot of questions about the menu.
 - You are a hungry customer who can spend only 10 dollars.
- Again using the menu, form pairs to imagine three things:
 - You are going to this restaurant for lunch.
 - You have lots of money.
 - You are very hungry.

Then have the pairs decide what they would order for lunch, including a dessert and a beverage.

- Distribute the restaurant reviews on separate strips of paper. Form pairs to read and rank the reviews from most favorable to least favorable.
- Form pairs to reflect on students' restaurant experiences (good or bad) and to choose one experience. Then, have students describe what happened at

the restaurant and write a review of the restaurant.

- Form pairs to discuss these questions: If you visit [international English-speaking city] someday, will you eat at [the restaurant on which this lesson is based]? Why (or why not)?

Category 2: Recipes

Select a recipe for a dish that is popular in your local context. Recipes contain useful language related to ingredients, quantities or measures, instructions (usually in imperative form), actions (e.g., *cook, cut, peel*), amounts of time (e.g., *10 minutes, 1 hour*), and descriptions (e.g., *chopped, dried, fresh, ripe*). Therefore, one recipe can be used as the foundation for a variety of activities. Here are practical suggestions for how to use recipes in your classroom:

- Form pairs to discuss ice-breaker questions such as: Do you like to cook? Why (or why not)? What is your favorite dish? What did you eat for breakfast? What do you want to eat for lunch?
- Distribute the recipe. Play Vocabulary Bingo with its vocabulary (see Appendix A).
- Distribute cards containing the names of the recipe's ingredients and other cards containing images or adjectives describing these ingredients. Form pairs to match the cards.
- Distribute cards containing vocabulary from the recipe. Each card should have only one word: a noun (e.g., *potato*), a verb (e.g., *stir*), an adjective (e.g., *fresh*), or a quantity or measure (e.g., *cup*). Form pairs to sort the cards into these four categories and alphabetize the cards within each category.
- Distribute the recipe. Form pairs to answer questions based on facts found in the recipe: How long does it take to prepare [the dish on which this lesson is based]? How many people does the recipe serve? How much [non-count noun] do we need? How many [count noun] do we need? Ask the pairs to create at least three additional questions based on the recipe.
- Distribute the recipe. Play Classroom Jeopardy based on the recipe (see Appendix B).

- Form pairs to reflect on students' favorite dishes, select one, and write a recipe for that dish that answers the following questions: What ingredients do we need? How do we prepare this dish? How long does the preparation take? How many people does this recipe serve?

Category 3: Blog, magazine, newspaper, and tourism articles

Select articles related to topics such as current events, food, people, recreation, and tourism in your students' local context. Often, locally relevant articles are published by international media outlets and in blogs maintained by English-speaking expatriates who live in your students' home country. Also, many countries have at least one locally published English-language newspaper. Although the suggestions below were developed for a sample news article on the topic of bullying, similar suggestions are appropriate for any blog, magazine, newspaper, or tourism article:

- Show your students some colorful cartoons or clip art of children menacing other children. Form pairs to describe everything that students see in the pictures.
- Form pairs to discuss ice-breaker questions such as: What is bullying? Do you think bullying is a problem here? Why (or why not)?
- Distribute the article as a fill-in-the-blank exercise with at least 10 blanks. Read the story aloud while your students listen carefully enough to fill in the blanks.
- Distribute the article. Ask your students to read it aloud.
- Play Vocabulary Bingo with vocabulary in the article (see Appendix A).
- Form pairs to answer questions based on the article. Then ask the pairs to create at least three additional questions based on the article.
- Play Classroom Jeopardy using facts from the article (see Appendix B).
- Form pairs to brainstorm ideas about how to solve the problem of bullying.

Category 4: Movies

Movies that depict events or places related to your local context provide a rich source of

authentic materials. The most obvious example of movie-related materials might be video clips. However, another productive way to approach a movie is to think about the text(s) on which it is based (e.g., a novel or stage play) and the movie's screenplay, as well as the various texts that have been derived from the movie (e.g., catchy taglines for marketing the movie, plot summaries, critical reviews, and biographical profiles of the movie's actors and director). Search the web to gather as many of these texts as possible. Also, think about possible conversation and writing topics related to the movie's characters and plot. After you have collected your texts and topics, you will realize that most of the suggestions given above for how to use restaurants, recipes, and articles in your classroom are also appropriate for movies. To increase the appeal of your textual materials, use your video clips to add an engaging audiovisual dimension to your materials and activities.

Category 5: Literature, performing arts, and visual arts

You can develop an array of materials and many hours of classroom activities based on locally created works of art such as paintings, photographs, and literature. Of course, locally created texts such as poems, short stories, and song lyrics need to have received such a high level of international recognition that they have been translated into English. In these cases, you can also use related authentic texts containing descriptive information, biographical profiles, and critical reviews related to these internationally recognized works of art. Most of the suggestions given above for how to use restaurants, recipes, and articles are appropriate for these materials as well.

Raising students' self-esteem

When you use locally relevant authentic materials like the ones described above, you let your students know that their local culture exists far beyond their local context. This realization motivates students by raising their levels of cultural pride and therefore their self-esteem. I have witnessed expressions of pure delight when my Chilean students realized that poems written by a Chilean poet and food served by a Chilean restaurant located in New York City were appreciated by English speakers living outside Chile.

Playing games: Bingo, Jeopardy, and manipulatives

When you use a carefully selected authentic text, there is no reason to limit the number of activities to only one or two per text. After you spend time looking for locally relevant authentic texts, expect to be rewarded with substantial returns on your investment of time and effort. Also, students need extra time to process, digest, and enjoy authentic texts, which may be more challenging—and more stimulating—than texts found in their textbooks.

Below are three game activities that are especially effective with locally relevant authentic materials because they offer students opportunities to have fun. Also, they can be adapted to almost any authentic text.

1. *Vocabulary Bingo*. Vocabulary Bingo promotes learner engagement because students choose the vocabulary words, supply the definitions, create their own unique Bingo cards, and invent the game clues using synonyms, antonyms, and fill-in-the-blank sentences. (See Appendix A for instructions.)

2. *Classroom Jeopardy*. *Jeopardy!* is a TV game show watched by millions of people. Two synonyms for the word *jeopardy* are *risk* and *difficulty*. In *Jeopardy!*, the host provides the answer first, and then the players respond with an appropriate question. You can adapt the *Jeopardy!* game for the classroom by using any authentic text that contains at least four obvious categories. For example, a cooking recipe could have the following categories: Preparation Instructions, Amount of Time, Type of Ingredient, and Quantity of Ingredient. (See Appendix B for instructions.)

3. *Manipulative tools*. According to Corrales (2008), "Manipulatives are defined as objects that can be touched or moved by students to reinforce a concept" (61). Cards or pieces of paper that students need to touch and move for sorting, ordering, and matching tasks are perfect for warm-up activities. For example, students can be asked to do the following:

- Sort vocabulary items into categories (e.g., recipe ingredients, actions, quantities).
- Listen to an audio recording of a poem or song while putting text strips into order.

- Match the names of menu items with images or brief descriptions of the items.

Many other possibilities exist, and the appropriateness of any given option will depend on the nature and content of a given piece of locally relevant authentic material and your students' proficiency level.

Finding locally relevant authentic materials

The Internet is a powerful source of authentic materials. Use it to find materials relevant to your own EFL context such as those listed below.

Blogs. Blogs and other web content maintained by English-speaking expatriates who are residing in your local context offer lively sources of locally relevant authentic materials. Blog postings are usually short texts, which are often accompanied by an image or a short video. Use Google's Advanced Search interface (www.google.com/advanced_search) to search for blogs and blog postings. First, input the name of a student's country, city, or region, and then input terms like *blog* and *expat*. If necessary, narrow your results by language, region, last update, and other factors.

Magazines. The following websites offer content about current events that is similar to content in print magazines. These websites feature true stories related to many countries in the world. The articles are often accompanied by maps, photos, illustrations, and audio and video recordings. Input the name of a student's country in the Search box.

- National Public Radio (www.npr.org). Themes: News, Art & Design, Books, Business, Food, Health, Movies, Music, Opinion, Performing Arts, Politics, Pop Culture, Science, Sports, Technology
- Voice of America (www.voanews.com). Themes: News, Arts & Entertainment, Business & Economy, Health, Science & Technology

Newspapers. Many countries have at least one locally published English-language newspaper. Use the ABYZ News Links website (www.abyznewslinks.com) to search for newspapers in a student's country, city, or region. The code ENG in the far right column of your search results list indicates that a given newspaper is published in English.

Movies. If your local context is somehow related to a commercially produced movie, you will find the Internet Movie Database (IMDb; www.imdb.com) website useful. IMDb calls itself "the world's most popular and authoritative source for movie, TV and celebrity content." IMDb contains "more than 100 million data items including more than 2 million movies, TV and entertainment programs and more than 4 million cast and crew members."

Recipes. EFL students really enjoy learning about how their country's traditional dishes are described in English. Use Google's Advanced Search interface to search for recipes. First, input the name of a student's country, city, or region and the word *recipe*. If you are looking for a recipe for a specific dish, input the name of the dish, using the name by which it is known in the local context. If necessary, narrow your search results by language, region, last update, and other factors.

Restaurants. The following websites offer the ability to search for menus, profiles, and reviews related to restaurants in major cities of the United States:

- All Menus (www.allmenus.com)
- Menu Pages (www.menupages.com)
- Open Table (www.opentable.com)

Tourism. Websites offering English-language travel guides are also interesting sources of locally relevant authentic materials. Use Google's Advanced Search interface to search for information aimed at English-speaking tourists who want to visit your local context. First, input the name of a country, city, or region and then input terms like *travel* and *tourism*. If necessary, narrow your results by language, region, last update, and other factors.

Depending on your local context, you probably already know about many other sources of locally relevant authentic materials. If you cannot find what you want, use Google's Advanced Search interface for more control over your search results.

Using locally relevant pictures and realia

Local newspapers often publish color photos and illustrations. You can simply cut out these pictures, bring them to class, and ask students to choose pictures for use with a variety of communicative activities. You can also bring *realia*—everyday objects or artifacts that

can be used as teaching aids, such as clothing, coins, food, handicrafts, utensils, and tools.

In addition, you can invite your students to bring their own pictures and realia for use with Show and Tell activities. The goal of such activities is to help students develop cultural awareness and encourage students to develop intercultural communication skills. Krieger (2005) suggests that EFL teachers can facilitate this process by helping students to “reflect on their own culture and consider alternate views from other cultures” (15). First, develop clear guidelines for selecting and presenting pictures or realia. Then invite your students to give brief oral presentations about their pictures or realia. At the end of each presentation, the presenter’s classmates can be encouraged to ask questions.

Strategies for success

When you select authentic materials, keep your focus on local relevance and help your students stay connected to their reality: the local context in which they live outside the EFL classroom. Also, consider your students’ personal interests and keep your authentic materials engaging, short, and appropriate to their proficiency levels. Finally, invite your students to contribute their own examples of authentic materials.

Facilitate opportunities to work with the same text in various ways—for example, with speaking, listening, reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary activities. Vary the classroom practice structures by asking students to work as individuals, in pairs, in small groups, or with the whole class. Innovative uses of repetition, recycling, and variety will help keep your students motivated.

Meeting learners halfway?

Finally, I would like to explain the “meeting learners halfway” concept in this article’s title. When I think about this concept, I imagine a continuum: a continuous progression of features, values, or elements that gradually change in degree or character. Every continuum has two ends representing two extremes of one coherent whole—for example, Slow–Fast or Hot–Cold. When thinking about EFL, I imagine a continuum with the following extremes:

Familiar Content & Language ←————→ Unfamiliar Content & Language

For my imagined continuum, *familiar* means well-known, commonly seen or heard, and easily recognized; *content* refers to classroom materials; and *language* refers to English. In the EFL context, of course, much of the language may be relatively unfamiliar to learners. However, you can vary your content along the Familiar–Unfamiliar continuum. One of the best ways to guarantee the familiarity of your content is to seek classroom materials with local relevance. By doing this, you will be meeting learners at the midpoint of the Familiar–Unfamiliar continuum; in other words, you will be meeting learners halfway.

Try to meet your students halfway by considering their realities whenever you select authentic materials. Content that is authentic, familiar, and engaging can meet Krashen’s prescription for input that is comprehensible but challenging, while a diverse menu of activities that is designed to take full advantage of appropriate input can offer many opportunities for the beneficial output prescribed by Ellis. Authentic materials enrich EFL teaching and learning when the materials are selected with sensitivity to the local context, and when they are used to communicate meaning and information.

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Appendix A Steps for Vocabulary Bingo

Meeting EFL Learners Halfway by Using Locally Relevant Authentic Materials • Catherine Thomas

1. Distribute an authentic text (e.g., blog posting, cooking recipe, restaurant menu, or song lyrics) to the students. If possible, distribute copies of the text in advance so that it can be read as homework.
2. Ask students to choose words from the text that they think are new, interesting, or difficult.
3. Write the selected words on the board and make sure the students know the meaning of each word by asking them to supply definitions, or, if necessary, by supplying definitions yourself. When you have 16 words on the board, the game can begin.
4. Ask students to make their own Vocabulary Bingo cards with 16 empty cells (4 columns and 4 rows) and to write the words in the cells, in any order the students wish. Thus, each card will be unique.
5. Ask students to take turns choosing a word from the list on the board without telling which word they have chosen. Instead of saying the word, the student gives a clue: a synonym, an antonym, or a fill-in-the-blank sentence. When someone identifies the correct word from the list, everyone crosses out that word on his or her card.
6. The first person whose card has four crossed-out words across, down, or diagonally is the winner.

Appendix B Steps for Classroom Jeopardy

Meeting EFL Learners Halfway by Using Locally Relevant Authentic Materials • Catherine Thomas

1. Before class, select an authentic text that contains at least four obvious categories. If possible, distribute copies of the text in advance so that it can be read as homework. (The instructions below are based on a recipe but can be adapted for other kinds of authentic texts.)
2. Before class, decide on the categories and prepare 16 game answers (4 answers for each of 4 categories).
3. In class, distribute copies of the recipe to the students if you haven't done so beforehand.
4. Introduce the categories and corresponding questions, as in these examples:
Category 1: Preparation Instructions. How do we prepare the _____?
Example: How do we prepare the tomatoes?
Category 2: Amount of Time. How long do we _____ the _____?
Example: How long do we cook the onions?
Category 3: Type of Ingredient. What type of _____ do we need?
Example: What type of tomatoes do we need?
Category 4: Quantity of Ingredient. How many/much _____ do we need?
Example 1: How many tomatoes do we need?
Example 2: How much chicken do we need?
5. Draw a Classroom Jeopardy game chart on the board with 20 empty cells (4 columns and 5 rows). In the top row, write the categories. In the other rows, write various monetary values. Here is an example:

Sample Classroom Jeopardy Game Chart for a Cooking Recipe

<i>Preparation</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Quantity</i>
\$100	\$100	\$100	\$100
\$200	\$200	\$200	\$200
\$300	\$300	\$300	\$300
\$400	\$400	\$400	\$400

6. Ask the class to form teams of three or four students each. Now, the game can begin.
7. Team #1 selects a category and a monetary value (higher monetary values should require more difficult questions).
8. The teacher gives the corresponding answer, for example, “8 minutes” for an answer in the Time category.
9. Team #1 studies the recipe and responds in the form of a question, for example, “How long do we cook the onions?”
10. The teacher writes the score for Team #1 on the board (see the scoring options below).
11. Continue to the next team and repeat steps 7–10 above.
12. Make sure to give each team an equal number of opportunities.
13. The team that earns the highest monetary value is the winner.

Scoring Options for Classroom Jeopardy

- Response is correct in terms of content and grammar: Team earns the selected monetary value.
- Response is correct in terms of content or grammar: Team earns half of the selected monetary value.
- Response is not correct in terms of both content and grammar: Team subtracts the selected monetary value from its total.

A Paragraph-First Approach to the Teaching of Academic Writing

During my career as a teacher of English as a foreign language (EFL), I have often found that the teaching and learning of academic writing leads to considerable anxiety among both instructors and students. I suspect that this anxiety is caused in part by the fact that the relationship between accuracy and fluency is often much more one-sided, or unbalanced, in academic writing than it is in other skill areas. For example, in spoken English, communicative teaching strategies allow students and teachers to focus initially on fluency while gradually developing greater accuracy in their speech. Unfortunately, this “breathing space” is not readily available with writing in the academic context because accuracy is required from the very beginning. A university admissions writing sample has to be “correct,” and most standardized writing tests penalize mistakes, rewarding form more than content. Once enrolled in the university, most students will have to take mandatory composition classes where a major part of their grade will be determined

by their English language accuracy. Clearly, as more students seek to study abroad (or in their own country) at English-language academic institutions, it is justifiable to evaluate how academic writing is taught in English as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL) contexts. I would like to offer such an evaluation in this article—and a possible way forward in academic writing instruction as well.

Sentence-level mastery: A focus on grammar

The teaching of writing, and the teaching of developmental and ESL/EFL writing in particular, has historically given priority to the sentence, often in theory and almost always in practice. In other words, the sentence is viewed as the *de facto* unit of written discourse, the basic element of written communication. It naturally follows then that the sentence should be taught first (Page 2006; Hinkel 2012; Mayville 2012). The idea is that a certain degree of sentence-level mastery must be attained before the teacher, student, and class move on to the next, secondary unit of written

discourse, the paragraph. However, in such an approach, what becomes the third, tertiary unit of written discourse, the essay itself, can be taught, if it is taught at all, only after first sentence-level and then paragraph-level mastery is achieved. The result is a stage-by-stage, sequential, essentially horizontal teaching and learning process that parallels traditional approaches to ESL/EFL grammar instruction (Thornbury 1999; Azar and Hagen 2009; Hewings 2013).

It is true that such a sentence-based strategy can eventually produce effective writing. In addition, as the traditional approach to writing instruction in many EFL schools and language programs, it is often required by school administrators and thus the curriculum, and it is expected by the students, who will also view it as safer, less threatening, and more comforting. However, this sentence-based strategy will almost inevitably, automatically, create a “grammar-first” teaching approach, an approach that in turn leads to a “grammar is writing” and “writing is grammar” teaching philosophy.

One problem with this philosophy is that if students (whether native or non-native speakers of English) do not master English grammar quickly, or ultimately, then they will not be able to proceed successfully to paragraph or essay writing. Another problem is that defining such mastery is often difficult to do. Most programs will do their best to place students into courses based on their English language proficiency, but even if a mutually agreed-upon definition of grammatical mastery is reached, multilevel classes are a reality of English language teaching, so it is unlikely that the students in any given class will all be at the same level of grammatical control. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, such a philosophy requires EFL teachers themselves to be experts in English grammar, or at least to have access to excellent, up-to-date English grammar resources, either in print or online. In many parts of the world, this grammatical expertise and resource availability may not yet be widespread.

Alternative: A paragraph-based approach

I suggest that a shift in perspective might help teachers and students address these challenges. Borrowing from scholars such as Faw-

cett (2013) and Kirsznner and Mandell (2011), I argue that it might be more productive to view not the sentence or the essay but rather the paragraph as the basic unit of discourse, the basic element of communication in English academic writing. Such a viewpoint has the distinct advantage of allowing the teacher to proceed recursively (back and forth) instead of sequentially, as such recursiveness more accurately reflects the writing process itself. Instead of first mastering the grammar of the sentence, then the paragraph, and only then the essay, the student (at whatever level) could start with the paragraph and then move back to the sentence and forward to the essay as appropriate. After all, any paragraph is a structured collection of sentences that follows organizational principles of unity and coherence, and any essay is a structured collection of paragraphs following those same principles. To put it another way, a paragraph-based approach allows a more vertical integration of grammatical instruction as opposed to the standard horizontal integration. A paragraph-based approach is also based on an understanding that organizational control typically occurs much faster than grammatical control. In fact, it recognizes that students can still produce acceptable (readable, reasonably accurate) academic writing in English without completely mastering English grammar.

A paragraph-based approach thus assumes an organization-before-grammar philosophy. It argues that logical relationships and organizational structure can be referred to as the “grammar” of the paragraph, which should be taught before the “grammar” of the sentence. Such an approach also argues that grammatical control at the sentence level is difficult, if not impossible, unless students first gain control of the grammar of the paragraph. Either way, there are two key points to remember: (1) a well-organized paragraph (or essay) can still be understood by the reader, even if the sentence-level grammar is not mistake-free, while (2) an improperly or poorly organized paragraph (or essay) can be quite difficult for the reader to understand, even if the sentence-level grammar is nearly perfect. The teaching of sentence-level grammar is not unimportant, and is almost always necessary, but in the context of an ESL/EFL academic English writing course, it should be seen as secondary.

A more proper and useful definition of writing accuracy would focus on paragraph and essay organization.

An example: My classes

At the University of Guam, Fundamentals of English is an integrated course designed to develop all areas of English language ability. The course is taught concurrently with a complementary course that involves a further two hours of classroom instruction with a different teacher as well as at least two hours a week of independent study in the Developmental Learning Lab. Students are originally enrolled in the courses based on their scores on the university's placement exam. In practice, although students are working on all skill areas, both course and lab tend to directly emphasize academic writing, since successful completion of each is the prerequisite for entry into the university's first-year composition program.

In the Fundamentals of English classes, I still follow a fairly conventional presentation–practice–production (PPP) format with my “grammar of the paragraph” approach, first presenting or modeling the target mode of organization for the students, then practicing and analyzing its basic structure or pattern with them, and finally having them produce it with a variety of topics (Nassaji and Fotos 2011). Therefore, the first half of the semester, approximately eight weeks, emphasizes paragraph writing almost exclusively, focusing on seven modes: narration, description, exemplification (illustration), process, comparison and contrast, cause-and-effect, and persuasion. Great attention is given to the fundamentals of paragraph design and paragraph structure (topic sentences, supporting sentences, concluding sentences, unity, and coherence), with the students in particular discussing and concentrating on the logical relationships encoded in these seven modes and the transition markers used to signal those logical relationships to the reader.

For example, when we cover cause-and-effect paragraphs, we begin by reading two topic sentences, one on the extinction of the dinosaurs and the other on the lack of suitable role models for many young people in the world today, discussing how the first would lead to a paragraph focusing on causes while

the second would lead to a paragraph focusing on effects. We also review useful synonyms for *causes*, like *reasons* and *factors*, and words such as *results* and *consequences*, which can be substituted for *effects*. We then examine the full paragraphs, writing a reverse or “mirror” outline (an outline written after the text, not before) to illustrate how the developmental sentences all serve to support the initial topic sentence and thus establish paragraph unity. Since a cause-and-effect paragraph usually follows some kind of logical ordering (not chronological or spatial), we also use the outline to illustrate how both paragraphs employ the least to most important pattern typical of academic writing to provide paragraph coherence.

We then study the concluding sentence of each paragraph, noting that, as is often the case, the body of each paragraph presents short-term causes or effects, while the conclusion moves to a more long-term cause or effect. Throughout this process, we identify important transitional expressions such as *yet another factor*, *because of*, and *results from* to show cause, and *one important effect*, *another result*, and *a final outcome* to show effect. To include an intermediate step before actually writing, we also do whole-class brainstorming of possible topics to ensure that students are on the right track as well as to provide topic ideas to students who might otherwise not know what to write about. Finally, the students write both kinds of paragraphs, using their chosen topics. As I remind them on several occasions, their paragraphs are primarily evaluated on structure and organization, not grammar, though I do correct, or have the students correct, major grammatical errors like comma splices, run-ons, fragments, agreement problems, and tense jumping—the random switching between past and present tense.

During the second half of the semester, the emphasis shifts to five-paragraph essay writing, with the students eventually writing a narrative, a process, and a cause-and-effect essay. Again using the PPP technique, we focus on basic essay structure and organization, with a special emphasis on thesis statements, topic sentences, transition markers, and the relevant logical relationships. Grammar instruction occurs throughout but

is based on the students' own writing, using decontextualized grammar activities or lessons only rarely, as reinforcement. There is typically not enough class time to cover all the modes, which are really just different ways of organizing content, in this essay stage of the course. But I personally prefer using narrative, process, and cause-and-effect modes because doing so also lets me introduce to the students the point-of-view distinctions between the first-person "I" writing of most narratives, the second-person "you" writing of most how-to process paragraphs and essays, and the third-person expository writing associated with a mode like cause-and-effect. An added teaching benefit is that unlike the ordering by importance in the cause-and-effect mode, the narrative and process modes are almost always ordered chronologically, a distinction that provides a useful point of comparison for the students and gives them writing experience with both ordering patterns.

In all Fundamentals of English courses, the final exit essay is always some kind of persuasive essay, which is a timed essay written in class and graded by two other course teachers, not the class instructor. These readers/graders use a standardized rubric with 11 descriptors or criteria, two of the most important being organization and logical transitions. This same rubric is used to score the initial, pre-course English placement test, so the final essay can be a valuable way of tracking and assessing student progress. Given that I focus so much on organization and transitions/logical relationships, it is perhaps unsurprising, though still gratifying, that my students almost invariably show improvement (in many cases, substantial improvement) in those two areas. However, it is both interesting and illuminating that their grammar scores tend to increase as well, despite the near absence of explicit sentence-level grammatical instruction for much of the course. The paragraph-first philosophy, specifically targeting the structure and organization of the paragraph, first in isolation, and then as part of a larger essay, can pay significant dividends.

A series of writing activities: From my class to yours

What works for one teacher in one classroom may not work for other teachers in

other classrooms, but to further illustrate my point I now offer a series of writing activities that I believe could be used effectively in a variety of ESL/EFL classes. These activities should also serve to demonstrate the flexibility of a paragraph-first approach. Consider the following topic sentences, all related in some way to the topic of cell phones:

1. Yesterday I went out with a friend to buy a new cell phone.
2. Cell phones come in many colors, sizes, and types.
3. I use my cell phone in a variety of ways.
4. If you want to buy an inexpensive, quality cell phone, just follow these steps.
5. The new XXX cell phones are superior to the latest YYY cell phones.
6. The Xb cell phone is really not that much different than the previous Xa cell phone.
7. There are three main reasons why cell phones have become so popular.
8. Although cell phones have benefits, overusing them can have negative consequences.
9. It should be illegal for people to drive while using their cell phones.

First of all, after suitable review, ask the students to identify what mode (method of organization) each topic sentence is likely to generate or even require. Conversely, you could ask the same question before any review whatsoever, although in that case I would list the possible answers on the board, scrambling their order so as not to match up exactly with the order I have given here. Of course, topic sentences can often trigger more than one mode, but in these examples, Sentence 1 seems to begin some kind of story, so that would be a narrative paragraph. Sentence 2 is a basic description of current cell phones, so that would be a descriptive paragraph. Sentence 3 invites specific examples of the many ways the writer uses his or her cell phone, so that would be an exemplification (illustration) paragraph. Because of the "follow these steps" phrase and especially the pronoun "you," Sentence 4 is a topic sentence for a how-to process paragraph. In other words, after reading the subsequent paragraph, the reader should indeed be able to go out and buy a good cell phone at a decent price. Sentence 5 suggests a comparison

between two brands, but the phrase “superior to” indicates a focus on differences, so that would be a contrastive paragraph (contrastive paragraphs emphasize differences, while comparative paragraphs emphasize similarities). Sentence 6 also suggests a comparison, this time between two models of the same brand, but the phrase “not that much different than” points to a focus on similarities, so that would be a comparative paragraph. Sentence 7 is a cause-and-effect topic sentence, but the phrase “three main reasons” signals that the paragraph will discuss those reasons, or causes, with the effect, which is the widespread popularity of cell phones. Sentence 8 is a cause-and-effect topic sentence as well, but the phrase “negative consequences” signals that the paragraph will examine those consequences, or effects. Finally, although any mode can be used to make an argument (as opposed to just providing information), Sentence 9 will clearly start a persuasive paragraph, since any reader could possibly argue against the stated position that people should not be using their cell phones while driving.

The above activity has the added benefit of illustrating to students a key characteristic of what might be called academic reading—the fact that such reading is based on expectation. Each of these topic sentences will create an expectation in the reader that what will follow is the appropriate mode. If what follows Sentence 5, for example, is not some kind of contrastive paragraph, then that particular written communication will break down. That is why, as Rossen-Knill (2013) points out, teaching students the importance of reader expectation is crucial in an academic writing classroom. Violating such expectations is at times acceptable, but only if the writer is aware of what he or she is doing and why he or she is doing it. At any rate, these violations are much more typical of creative writing, and it is usually necessary to constantly remind students that academic writing is not creative writing. The two genres have much different purposes and audiences.

Composing the paragraphs

The next step is to write the paragraphs. I typically begin with narrative because most students find it somewhat easier and less intimidating than the expository modes. Starting with Sentence 1, have the students either complete the cell phone story or practice the

narrative mode with a different narrative topic sentence related to shopping—or any other activity your students might have experiences with. Again, this is a good time to talk about first-person “I” writing, chronological (time) ordering, and verb tense consistency since almost all academic narrative is written in the past tense—the events in the story are, after all, already finished. However, for more advanced classes, I ask the students to write a past-tense narrative paragraph and then rewrite it in the present tense. We then discuss the different rhetorical effects of the two versions, the past tense creating a sense of distance between the reader and the story and the present tense creating more immediacy, which is why present-tense narratives are more typical of creative writing. Likewise, have the students complete the description from Sentence 2, using their own cell phone if possible, or perhaps exchanging cell phones and describing a friend’s. Again, this presents a nice opportunity for discussing the spatial ordering of the descriptive mode. For instance, students could begin with the physical characteristics and then describe the features.

Finally, for Sentences 3 through 9, have the students write the appropriate paragraph. Now the students are moving into classic third-person expository writing, ordered either least to most important or most to least important (having them write both versions is also helpful). The one exception is the process paragraph from Sentence 4, which is ordered chronologically and is the only academic mode that accepts the pronoun *you*. To develop all these paragraphs, I normally work with the number three, as in three examples, three differences, three effects, and so on. A contrastive paragraph could be developed around just one difference, but the convention is to use at least three, and using more than three can get unmanageable, particularly for inexperienced writers. Please note that except perhaps for beginning English writers, each of the three differences should be developed over more than one sentence. Otherwise, the paragraphs will be too short. And, of course, as mentioned with the narrative paragraph, the paragraphs can be based on something other than a cell phone.

At this point, it is time to write essays (again, the topic can be changed as teach-

ers see fit). For brevity's sake, I will not go through all nine possibilities, but the principle is the same, and it provides another reason why I like to work with the number three when teaching expository writing. The narrative paragraph, based on Sentence 1, and the descriptive paragraph, based on Sentence 2, can both be expanded into five-paragraph essays, but as mentioned earlier I usually require a narrative essay, which lends itself more easily to such an expansion, especially for less proficient writers. Looking then at Sentence 5, "The new XXX cell phones are superior to the latest YYY cell phones," the students should now produce a contrastive paragraph with three explicit differences between the two brands, those differences demonstrating why XXX cell phones are better than YYY cell phones. A thesis statement is essentially a topic sentence for an entire essay, so Sentence 5 becomes a thesis statement for a five-paragraph essay. First, have the students write a short introductory paragraph ending with that thesis statement. Then turn the three differences between the two brands into three new topic sentences, which will be the initial sentences in the essay's three body paragraphs. For example, if the brands differ in terms of price, style, and available features, the essay's body will focus on price, style, and features, ordered from least important difference to most important difference.

Finally, have the students write a concluding paragraph that perhaps restates the thesis and leads the reader out of the essay. Since this essay is contrastive, emphasizing differences, either the introduction or conclusion can be a good place to discuss any similarities between the two brands. In my experience, this sort of paragraph-to-essay expansion, combined with any necessary sentence-level grammar instruction and vocabulary-building activities, can be applied to any of the expository topic sentences listed above.

Conclusion

The writing approach modeled here simply argues that the paragraph should be given primacy of place in ESL/EFL academic writing instruction. But no methodology is perfect, and with its emphasis on traditional forms, modes, structures, and organization, this approach does to some extent mini-

mize content and student self-expression. Although ultimately "what you want to say" and "how you want to say it" are pretty much identical, for teaching purposes a distinction between the two can sometimes be useful. My goal at the developmental level is to get students thinking slightly less about content while focusing slightly more on form—an accuracy-over-fluency model that I believe reflects the realities of most academic and professional writing. But clearly, as students advance in their academic writing, the focus can be reversed. Once they have the vessel, so to speak, they can start thinking more about what to fill it with.

It is worth mentioning that other scholars and teachers advocate different approaches to the teaching of academic writing. Current constructivist strategies emphasize fluency and content, favoring process and student self-expression in the writing classroom over form and grammar. These strategies assume that students will write towards their own form and that grammar will be learned later, that process is more important than product (Burdick 2011). A second, related criticism of my suggested approach has been made by those writing teachers who specifically reject what they see as the formulaic, simplistic nature of the five-paragraph essay. In this view, articulated recently by Punyaratabandhu et al. (2013), the five-paragraph essay (including its embrace of transitions and logical relationships) is the classic "pre-fabricated form." Dombek and Herndon (2004) agree, arguing that starting with the formal properties of the paragraph and then moving to the five-paragraph essay and the logical relationships it incorporates can result only in recipe-writing. For Dombek and Herndon (2004), the recipes produced do not correspond to authentic writing, because in their view writers use instead what they call a periodic style, writing toward their main point and not from it.

To their credit, Dombek and Herndon (2004) are ultimately concerned with finding an alternative to the whole form/content dichotomy, a dichotomy that in its extreme version forces teachers to choose one end of the spectrum or the other, pledging their allegiance to the power of content or the resonance of form. The result is a classic either-or logical fallacy that oversimplifies teaching and

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(See Appendix, next page)

A Paragraph-First Approach...

(Continued from page 29)

learning, minimizes the complexity of effective writing instruction, and leaves students underprepared for the kinds of written communication that will be expected of them in the academic and professional worlds. Ideally, multiple pedagogies would be used in any writing classroom, though time limitations often mean that instructors must choose which pedagogy they will rely on most heavily for a given class. Still, the paragraph-based approach outlined in this article, an approach that relies on a conventional paragraph and essay structure, and that is intimately involved with the strategic implementation of the logical relationships appropriate to a particular mode of organization, has definite advantages in the ESL/EFL academic writing classroom. The challenge of this approach for the teacher is to ensure that students' ideas and content are not lost in an obsessive pursuit of the correct form. After all, the purpose of a recipe is not just to produce food, but to produce food worth eating.

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Entrepreneurship and Student Motivation

In our English as a second language (ESL) Communications class, small teams of students speak enthusiastically to their peers about the companies, products, and services they created. When it comes time for students to continue to the next group, they are so focused on presenting the results of their projects that nobody moves. Later, the students fill out surveys that describe their total engagement, and their responses illustrate why the unit was a success. Almost every student liked the topic of entrepreneurship and envisioned using the information in the future. Every student stated that his or her English skills improved as a result of working on the three-week project that inspired them to think and communicate like businesspeople.

As we planned the unit on entrepreneurship and discussed the class objectives, we kept a focus on student involvement. The discussion evolved and eventually centered on a major question: “How can we meet our department’s curricular objectives through an engaging project-based

learning experience connected to our course’s textbook?” That question inspired the development of this unit and led to the positive results at the end. To describe how those results were achieved, this article outlines the entrepreneurship unit in detail.

Motivation through authentic materials and project-based learning

Instructors in all disciplines understand the importance of student engagement and motivation to academic success. The idea of a classroom full of unmotivated (and therefore often unenthusiastic) students strikes fear into the heart of the best instructor. Motivation is a key element in language learning, as has been well established in the literature (Fidaoui, Bahous, and Bacha 2010; Gilmore 2011). Researchers distinguish between *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* motivation, the former stemming from a learner’s internal desire to learn a language for its own sake, and the latter indicating a desire to learn in order to reach an external goal (e.g., a better job). Learners of English as a

second or foreign language (ESL/EFL) who demonstrate both types of motivation have a higher likelihood of continuing language study and accomplishing long-term goals (Rubinfeld, Sinclair, and Clément 2007; Wang 2008).

Research shows that the use of authentic materials and content encourages motivation in language learning (Dooly and Masats 2011; Fidaoui, Bahous, and Bacha 2010; Gilmore 2011; Rubinfeld, Sinclair, and Clément 2007; Wang 2008). As access to these types of materials is increasingly available via the Internet, instructors are able to more easily incorporate them into lesson plans to supplement and enhance textbook units and topics. Gilmore's (2011) study suggests that using authentic materials allows students to better develop communicative competencies through "rich input" and "drawing learners' attention to useful features through careful task design and follow-up practice activities" (810). If instructors work to ensure that the materials fit well into the language objectives of the course, merging language and authentic content can greatly enhance students' learning and motivation (Dooly and Masats 2011).

It is also important that students' motives are congruent with their goals (Rubinfeld, Sinclair, and Clément 2007), which helps ensure interest and success. Project-based learning (PBL) entails students working together over an extended period to research and report on complex tasks, and it teaches real-world skills and language that will be used in the workplace and other authentic environments (Tsai 2012). PBL uses authentic materials to allow for this merging of content and language. By integrating language, technology, and media education through PBL, instructors encourage students to reflect on their own learning and focus on language that will help them reach their goals (Dooly and Masats 2011). To this end, instructors reach their productive goals when they use the tools of PBL and incorporate authentic materials into their courses.

Background of unit on entrepreneurship

We teach adults in the Academic English Studies (AES) program at a college in the United States, and the Intensive English Program consists of approximately 100 intermediate- to advanced-level students. We

both taught a course called High-Intermediate Communications, and each of us had approximately 15 students from Japan, Korea, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia.

Both classes used the same textbook by Folse and Lockwood (2010), and all the tasks related to Unit 3, "Business: The World of Entrepreneurship," which includes three parts: (1) the characteristics of an entrepreneur, (2) developing a company, and (3) analyzing a new business. Some of the project's tasks came directly from the text, while others were innovative and supplemental.

Through working on Unit 3, students made progress reaching the objectives outlined on the course's syllabus, which were to:

- use communication skills to give formal and informal presentations on academic topics;
- take notes and summarize lectures on academic topics;
- practice and improve note-taking strategies;
- practice and improve discussion and interview skills with classmates and native speakers; and
- use clear and comprehensible pronunciation.

These objectives could have been met through topics other than business; however, specific reasons influenced our decision to develop this project-based unit on entrepreneurship. First, individual students have a great deal of interest in the topic. Students will study business in the future, and many others also want to learn about it; all are consumers, and some are relatives of business owners. Student interest in the topic is reflected in the fact that Economics is currently the most popular major for international students at our college. A second reason that guided our decision is that entrepreneurship is popular on our campus. During winter break, 20 undergraduates participated in a first-ever workshop called Understanding Innovation: Entrepreneurship and the Liberal Arts. Studying this topic connects our curriculum with the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) and contributes to the ongoing goal of greater integration between the CAS and our department. A third and major reason for our decision is that students benefit from the authentic experience of participating in this project-based unit. They complete the project

in teams, as do students in a business course or employees at a company. They may find themselves in a similar situation one day, designing a company or developing a product or service. Certainly everyone benefits from using persuasive skills in speaking and learning to work with diverse group members, no matter what future professional aspirations each person may have.

Implementing the unit on entrepreneurship

What follows is a description of the nine steps we took to complete this project, depicted in Figure 1. Some of the steps presented here are optional, and not all of them need to be followed exactly to successfully teach this unit. This allows for a great deal of adaptability to various teaching environments.

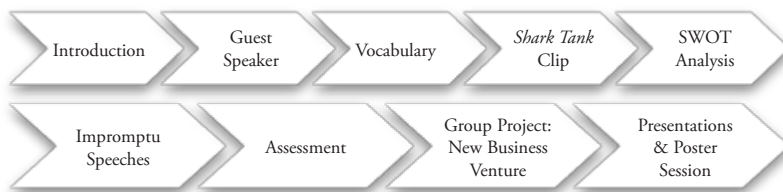


Figure 1. Steps to implement unit on entrepreneurship

Introduction

The instructors introduce the topic by asking students to define both *entrepreneurship* and *entrepreneur*. As individual students share their definitions, the instructor writes them on the board. The class compares these definitions with those found in the textbook: “Entrepreneurship is one aspect of business in which a person, or team, starts a new company or business rather than work for a more established organization” (Folse and Lockwood 2010, 79), and an entrepreneur is an individual who starts his or her own business. Each class discusses the topic and generates a list of examples and vocabulary related to starting a new business. Students then use Moodle, the Learning Management System at our college, to post questions that they want to ask the guest speaker in the following class session.

Guest speaker

In the next class session, an invited entrepreneur guest speaker talks with both classes about starting a new business. This activity provides students with a personal connection to the topic by allowing them to engage in

dialogue with an entrepreneur who discusses statistics about small businesses, how the entrepreneur started his or her own incubator-based start-up within an existing company, and the pros and cons of starting a business. The guest speaker also answers student questions.

In lieu of interacting with a guest speaker, students can access information online. For example, students could read an article, such as “Meet the Man Who Wants to Diversify Silicon Valley by 2040” on the National Public Radio website (Walker 2013), or watch a video conversation with an entrepreneur, such as “Elon Musk: The mind behind Tesla, SpaceX, Solar City...” on the TED Talks website (Musk 2013).

Vocabulary

In this step, students receive a vocabulary handout for the unit, including both topic-specific and academic vocabulary. The handout includes a pronunciation guide and definition for each word. Students write sentences using the words and share the examples in groups and with the whole class. Suggestions for the vocabulary list include the following:

entrepreneur
investor
competition
service
product
customer/client
mergel/merger
revenue
venture

We also include vocabulary related to listening and speaking strategies (e.g., *persuade/persuasion*, *concede/concession*, *counter/counter-argument*, and *gist*), as well as vocabulary that, while not necessarily related to business, is useful for students in business and in other academic settings. Examples of these terms include *template*, *attribute*, *perceive*, *subjective*, and *trait*.

Shark Tank clip

Students watch a short clip from the popular TV show *Shark Tank* in which an entrepreneur pitches his new business idea to the “sharks” (investors). This activity gives students the opportunity to see entrepreneurs pitch and discuss their ideas for products. Students analyze the entrepreneur’s business idea and persuasive strategies as well as the investors’

questions and negotiation tactics. Students also watch a short clip of an interview with Daymond John (Evans 2012), one of the investors on the show, who shares advice for entrepreneurs. After watching these clips, students can discuss them in groups or as a class; write personal reactions to the clips and relate them to their own interests and ideas; pose questions to classmates; and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the business pitch they watched.

SWOT analysis

Students complete activities in the textbook to prepare for the unit lecture (Folse and Lockwood 2010, 97–110) on what are called SWOT analyses. The SWOT analysis looks at a company's internal **S**trengths and **W**eaknesses and external **O**pportunities and **T**hreats that might help or hinder its success. For example, a start-up technology company may create a SWOT analysis similar to that in Figure 2.

This is a popular analytical tool used in business schools, in companies, and for personal evaluation. In our case, students listen to a lecture two or three times and take notes on the different components of a SWOT analysis before discussing and answering questions relating to the lecture. More information about SWOT analyses and a helpful template to use with students can be found at www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC_05.htm.

Impromptu speeches

Students give short (two-minute) impromptu speeches on the textbook topic, "My personality fits my career choice because ..." (Folse and Lockwood 2010, 115). In the speeches, students explain why they chose their current or planned future career and how their personality contributed to their decision. Students have approximately five minutes to prepare for their speeches, and instructors give informal feedback after each speech.

For more information about matching personality with career choice, see <http://jobsearch.about.com/od/careertests/a/careertests.htm>.

Assessment

In this step, students take a test relating to the topic of business and are assessed on listening and note-taking skills as well as knowledge of relevant vocabulary. They are also assessed on content relating to entrepreneurship and persuasive strategies for communication. Questions about entrepreneurship assess students' knowledge of the topic, as taught in the unit. For example, here is one question:

What is an advantage to starting a business?

- A. Entrepreneurs can do something they enjoy.
- B. Entrepreneurs always make a lot of money with their new business.
- C. Entrepreneurs are usually successful.

This could also be asked as an open-ended question, and an accompanying question could ask about the risks associated with starting a business. (The best answer to the given multiple-choice question is "A"; entrepreneurs sometimes make a lot of money, but not always, and entrepreneurs fail more often than they succeed—particularly first-time entrepreneurs.)

In the section about persuasive strategies for communication, questions based on an exercise from Folse and Lockwood (2010, 89) evaluate students' skills at identifying language as being used to persuade, counter, or concede. Here is one fill-in-the-blank example:

"I'll grant you that; however ... " is language used to _____.

- A. persuade
- B. counter
- C. concede

Strengths • Innovation and creativity • Recruitment of excellent employees	Weaknesses • Limited start-up funds • Lack of experience
Opportunities • Consumer demand for our product • Currently little competition	Threats • New competitors entering market • Economic recession

Figure 2. Sample SWOT analysis

Percentage of Grade	Section	Description
45%	Listening and Note-taking	- Take notes on a new lecture (not heard before) - Listen twice to the lecture
45%	Vocabulary	- Syllable stress - Fill-in-the-blank sentences - Use words in complete sentences
10%	Content	- Questions about entrepreneurship - Using persuasive language

Figure 3. Assessment of content and skills

Voting Form 1. Imagine that you are a very wealthy investor. In which company would you like to invest? 2. Imagine that you are a wealthy person. You have as much money as you want. Which product or service would you buy? 3. Which team has the best overall poster? 4. Which team gave the best overall presentation? 5. Which team completed the best SWOT analysis? 6. Which team should present its idea on the TV show <i>Shark Tank</i>? 7. Which team has the most interesting idea? 8. Which team uses the best English?

Figure 4. Student voting form for group business ventures, posters, and presentations

Self-Evaluation: Entrepreneurship Project Name: _____ 1. What were your strengths as a team member? 2. What were your weaknesses as a team member? Peer Evaluation (Note: This information will be kept confidential and will not be shared with your team members.) Provide an overall evaluation of each of your team members: a. Team member: b. Team member: c. Team member:

Figure 5. Student evaluation form

The overall purpose is to evaluate students' knowledge, make them aware of gaps that might exist in their understanding of relevant concepts, and reinforce their comprehension of key terms and ideas as they prepare for the group project. (The correct answer to this sample question is "B.")

Figure 3 displays the general sections of the test we used; they can be adapted as necessary to fit individual teaching situations.

Group project: New business venture

Students are next assigned to work in groups of three or four to create a new business venture. They receive a handout with project requirements to guide their work. (See the Appendix for a modified version of the handout.) Students brainstorm business and product/service ideas, then choose their favorite. Students complete a business proposal describing the business and product/service, and answer questions about competition and why an investor should invest in their venture.

They then complete a SWOT analysis of their business and create a large poster with information about their company, product/service, and the SWOT analysis. Each group presents the information to their classmates in a formal 10-minute presentation.

Presentations and poster session

The final component of the project is a joint poster session between the two classes. Each group has an opportunity to present its new business venture to the members of the other class and other instructors in the AES program for five minutes. Each group presents four times, with four to seven people listening each time. The students then use a variety of categories to vote for each other's posters and business ventures. (See Figure 4 for the voting form.)

Students also complete a self-evaluation and peer evaluation of their own work and their group members' work on the project; we take the evaluations into consideration for the final grading. (See Figure 5 for the evaluation form.) Students receive a group grade, unless peer evaluations indicate that an individual student's grade should be altered.

Reflections

As mentioned earlier, students completed anonymous surveys at the unit's conclusion,

allowing the instructors to obtain data about the students' experiences. Twenty-seven students completed the survey, including future undergraduate and graduate students pursuing varied degrees. Almost everyone liked studying entrepreneurship, and some students expressed that the unit increased their interest in business or would be helpful for their future plans. Students were asked to share any additional comments about what they liked and what they would change in the unit. One student would have liked to have selected her own group rather than having the instructor assign it. Some students suggested giving more time to complete the project. Obviously, teachers in other contexts may have different class schedules and could certainly adapt the timeframe of the project.

The remaining comments were very positive. Students appreciated the topic, the teaching style, the opportunity to work with a group, and the chance to improve both speaking and listening skills during the presentations. One student liked the topic because it combined education with entertainment. Overall, students' engagement and their motivation to learn more led to improved English language acquisition for our students as they examined entrepreneurship.

This project was based on a textbook unit, but it could easily be adapted in another course using a different text or no text. Materials regarding starting a business, SWOT analyses, and personality and career tests are available online, and instructors could present their own lecture as a listening exercise or search for a presentation on a site like Academic Earth (<http://academicearth.org>) or TED Talks (www.ted.com/talks). Local business professionals could be invited to give a short talk or lecture about their business ventures. Although this project was designed for a listening/speaking class, it could be modified to focus more on reading and writing skills. For example, instead of having students create a poster and presentation of their new business venture, they could write a more detailed business plan with a SWOT analysis as a key component.

Conclusion

We strongly feel that this project is adaptable and appropriate for large numbers of English-language learners around the world

who plan to use their English in an international business setting. The students who participated in this project were a diverse group, and the majority of them were able to apply the topic to their personal interests and goals. With a bit of effort, students can tailor the content of numerous types of business ventures they study to their interests and experiences. For students with less education or business experience, this project could be an excellent introduction to the language of business. Likewise, for those with more business experience, this project could help them review and become even more comfortable with business terminology that they use in their workplaces.

The topic of entrepreneurship is particularly beneficial for English-language instructors because it inspires students to be creative and pursue their personal interests while learning valuable vocabulary and common business skills. We therefore hope that this article provides ESL/EFL instructors with flexible tools to link teaching to students' practical plans with the goal of increasing their motivation and learning.

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(See Appendix, next page)

A Paragraph-First Approach...

(Continued from page 29)

learning, minimizes the complexity of effective writing instruction, and leaves students underprepared for the kinds of written communication that will be expected of them in the academic and professional worlds. Ideally, multiple pedagogies would be used in any writing classroom, though time limitations often mean that instructors must choose which pedagogy they will rely on most heavily for a given class. Still, the paragraph-based approach outlined in this article, an approach that relies on a conventional paragraph and essay structure, and that is intimately involved with the strategic implementation of the logical relationships appropriate to a particular mode of organization, has definite advantages in the ESL/EFL academic writing classroom. The challenge of this approach for the teacher is to ensure that students' ideas and content are not lost in an obsessive pursuit of the correct form. After all, the purpose of a recipe is not just to produce food, but to produce food worth eating.

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Appendix **Handout for New Business Venture Project**

Entrepreneurship and Student Motivation • Julie Vorholt and Erica Harris

Overview:

In groups of 3 or 4, you will propose a new company and describe its product or service. You will complete a SWOT analysis for your new business and prepare a poster explaining your business, its product or service, and your analysis. You will present your poster to the class and to students in the other Intermediate Communications class.

Requirements:

1. As a group, turn in a 1-page (typed, double-spaced) proposal describing your business and the product/service you will provide.
2. As a group, complete a SWOT analysis for your new business. This will be on your poster (see #3).
3. As a group, design a large poster that you will present. Your poster should include:
 - a. Your new company's name and logo
 - b. A detailed description of your company's product or the service that it provides
 - c. Facts about your company: number of employees, year established, location(s), type of customers, and yearly revenue
 - d. Your SWOT analysis for your company
4. As a group, give a 10-minute presentation to the class and the other Intermediate Communications class about the information on your poster.

Project Schedule (*indicates graded items):

First class meeting:	Complete the activities/questions on pp. 87 and 95 of the textbook (Folse and Lockwood 2010) as a group.
Second class meeting:	Business Proposal due* (see template below)
Third class meeting:	Complete your SWOT analysis as a group.
Fourth class meeting:	Poster due*/Presentations in class*
Fifth class meeting:	Joint poster session and presentations with the other class*

Business Proposal (Template)

Paragraph 1: Describe your new business.

- Explain why you want to start it.
- Describe your product or service and why it is special/unique.

Paragraph 2: Describe your goals for your company in its first two years.

- How will you achieve your goals?
- How will you communicate about your product/service to customers?

Paragraph 3: Imagine you are writing to a wealthy investor about why he or she should support your business.

- Describe your competition and how your business will be better than your competition.
- Describe why the investor should give you money.
- Think of two or three arguments the investor might pose and counter those arguments.



CANINE

Companions and Helpers

by Phyllis McIntosh

The enduring loyalty of dogs is the stuff of legend. Consider the case of Bobbie, a collie and English shepherd mix that got lost on a family trip in 1923. In just six months, Bobbie traveled at least 2,800 miles from Indiana to Oregon to find his way back home. Or imagine the steadfastness of Shep, a border collie so devoted to his owner that he followed the man's coffin to the train station in Fort Benton, Montana. For the next six years, Shep hung around the station yard, checking every train, apparently in hopes that his master would return.

While these examples may be extreme, dogs in general are prized for their faithfulness and their eagerness to please. These qualities, along with their playfulness, trainability, and downright lovability, have earned the dog the title of Man's Best Friend. In fact, no other bond between species is as widespread as that between people and dogs.

According to the latest National Pet Owners Survey, Americans own 83 million dogs. Over 46 percent of U.S. households have at least one dog. With some 400 breeds to choose from, there is a dog with the size, temperament, appearance, and hard-wired skills to suit almost any owner.

The traits that make dogs excellent pets also qualify them as valuable service animals for the disabled and "therapists" for hospital patients, autistic children, and traumatized veterans. While some dogs perform serious tasks, others excel at demonstrating their obedience, agility, and good looks at dog shows and competitions.

The Ultimate Pets

All dogs are descended from wolves that were domesticated some 15,000 years ago. For thousands of years, dogs were bred for certain skills, such as flushing out and retrieving game for hunters or killing rodents. But in the late 1800s, people began breeding dogs primarily for appearance and, over a relatively few generations, developed completely new breeds. Thanks to human tinkering with canine DNA, dogs now exhibit the greatest variation in size and appearance of any animal. Breeds today range from the two-pound Chihuahua to the English mastiff, which can tip the scales at 350 pounds.



A Chihuahua sits on the head of a mastiff, accentuating the difference in the size of these two breeds.

Coats vary from none at all in the Mexican hairless to the long silky tresses of the Pekingese; faces range from the smashed-in look of the bulldog to the long, pointy snouts of collies and German shepherds.

For 21 years, the Labrador retriever has remained top dog in the United States, although the beagle, bulldog, and Rottweiler have moved up in popularity. While some small breeds, such as Yorkshire terriers and dachshunds, are perennial favorites, Americans generally prefer larger dogs. According to American Kennel Club registrations in 2013, the 10 most popular breeds were:

1. Labrador retriever
2. German shepherd
3. golden retriever
4. beagle
5. bulldog
6. Yorkshire terrier
7. boxer
8. poodle
9. Rottweiler
10. dachshund



(clockwise from top left) Labrador retriever; labradoodle; beagle; German shepherd

In addition to these standard breeds, designer dog breeds, or hybrid dogs, are a trend in the United States. New breed combinations such as labradoodles (Labrador retriever and poodle), cockapoos (cocker spaniel and poodle), and puggles (pug and beagle) are in high demand.

While such fancy dogs are usually purchased from breeders or pet shops, the majority of dog owners acquire theirs from family members or acquaintances. More than 20 percent of dogs are adopted from the 5,000 animal shelters that take in strays and pets given up by owners. Despite their humble beginnings, most shelter dogs make excellent pets and working dogs. Even some famous acting dogs, such as the star of the film *Benji* and several of the

pups that appeared as Marley in the movie *Marley and Me*, were adopted from animal shelters.

Regardless of where they come from, most American dogs are pampered. Even in recessionary times, Americans are spending more than ever on their pets—over \$50 million per year in the past three years. While the bulk of that goes for food and veterinary care, owners spend a tidy sum on grooming, boarding, treats, toys, and even dog clothes and perfumes.

The pet care business is booming, with many dog owners opting for doggie day care to keep their pooches amused while they are at work. Also thriving are gourmet bakeries that feature dog cookies made with healthy, human-grade ingredients; dog salons that offer grooming, facials, and birthday parties;



A woman takes her dog for a walk, a good form of exercise.

and pet travel agencies that direct people to dog-friendly cities, hotels, and restaurants.

Dogs Are Good for You

Coddled canines are not the only beneficiaries of pet ownership. A growing body of research indicates that having a dog nearby is good for people's health. Simply petting or playing with a dog lowers blood pressure, slows the heart rate, and releases hormones that promote feelings of pleasure and calm. Walking a dog provides beneficial exercise and opportunities for social contacts. Not surprisingly, pet owners are less anxious and less likely to become depressed than people who don't have pets.

The health benefits don't stop there. Studies show that pet owners have lower levels of cholesterol and triglycerides and make 30 percent fewer visits to the doctor than people without pets. Heart attack patients who have pets survive longer than those who don't. Children raised in homes with animals are less prone to allergies and asthma, suggesting that exposure to pets promotes a stronger immune system.

Dogs provide emotional benefits as well. People with animal companions tend to be less lonely and to have higher self-esteem. Some psychologists maintain that the benefits people gain from interactions with pets can be equal to those from friendship with another person.

The Dog-Human Bond at Work

With their superior sense of smell and hearing and their eagerness to please, dogs are well-suited to a variety of important tasks, such as sniffing out drugs, bombs, or land mines and locating victims of natural or man-made disasters. A group called Working Dogs for Conservation trains dogs to follow the scents of elusive wildlife, locate endangered species, and identify rare or invasive plants. In the area of medical research, dogs have shown an uncanny ability to detect prostate, lung, and breast cancer and the skin cancer melanoma simply by sniffing a patient's breath or body odor.

But it is their remarkable ability to bond with people that makes dogs especially valuable allies to those with special needs.

Service Dogs

Although so-called *seeing-eye dogs* trained to guide the visually impaired are the best-known service animals, dogs also provide various other kinds of assistance.

- **Hearing dogs** alert people who are deaf or hearing impaired to important sounds such as doorbells, smoke alarms, telephones, and alarm clocks.



The orange vest of this hearing dog identifies it as a service animal.



A man in a nursing home enjoys a visit from a therapy dog.

- ***Mobility assistance dogs*** aid the physically disabled by picking up objects, opening doors, and operating light switches. Large breeds can pull wheelchairs and steady people with Parkinson's disease and other movement disorders.
- ***Medical response dogs*** can carry life-support equipment, such as an oxygen tank, and warn people about certain medical situations before they occur. Some dogs, for example, can detect changes in blood sugar levels in diabetics or an imminent seizure in a person with epilepsy. Seizure dogs are specially trained to remove dangerous objects, rouse an unconscious victim, and summon help when their handler experiences a seizure.
- ***Autism service dogs*** can accompany autistic children to school, where they provide a calming influence and a focus for the child that promotes better interaction with classmates.
- ***Psychiatric service dogs*** aid people with conditions such as schizophrenia or post-traumatic stress disorder. The dog can guide a person who becomes disoriented, retrieve medication, interrupt repetitive obsessive behaviors, or

search a location to reassure someone experiencing paranoia or hallucinations.

All types of assistance dogs typically wear vests identifying them as service animals. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, service animals are allowed to go anywhere the public goes, including businesses, restaurants, theaters, and transit systems.

Therapy dogs

A growing trend is training dogs, often household pets, to provide comfort and companionship to people in a variety of trying circumstances. Currently, about 24,000 dogs are registered with Therapy Dogs International, an organization dedicated to testing and registering therapy dogs and their volunteer owners for visits wherever they are needed. Such places include:

- ***Medical settings.*** Visits from affectionate dogs help hospitalized children and adults cope with the pain and fear of serious illness. In waiting rooms, dogs calm patients who are about to see the doctor or undergo a medical procedure. In hospices, dogs provide comfort to dying patients and their families.
- Some dogs live where they work. At the Children's Inn of the National Institutes of Health, where families stay while their children undergo treatment for serious illnesses, a resident Labrador retriever named Vi (short for Viola) provides a warm welcome and helps create a homelike atmosphere.
- ***Homes of the elderly.*** Regular visits from dogs lift the spirits and ease loneliness of elderly people living in nursing homes or confined to their own homes. Touching and playing with a dog encourages physical movement, as well as more interaction with other people.
- ***Libraries and classrooms.*** Through programs such as Therapy Dogs International's Tail Waggin' Tutors, children overcome reading difficulties by practicing reading aloud to non-judgmental four-legged friends that sit quietly by their sides.

- **Disaster relief sites.** The opportunity to hug and pet a friendly dog has given comfort and emotional support to victims, refugees, and rescue workers at scenes of disasters such as Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans and recent tornadoes and wildfires in several U.S. states.

Increasingly, dogs are visiting courtrooms, where they help ease the anxiety of crime victims about to testify; college campuses, where they relieve the stress of students coping with final exams; and community shelters, where they comfort victims of abuse. A Virginia Commonwealth University study found that dogs in the workplace reduced stress and made the job more enjoyable, not just for the dog owners but also for their coworkers.



The “best in show” winner of the 2014 Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show—a wire fox terrier from California named Sky—poses with the silver trophy she won.

In some situations, dogs and people provide therapy for one another. Such is the case with Project POOCH (Positive Opportunities Obvious Change with Hounds) at a youth correctional facility in Oregon, where shelter dogs with behavioral problems are paired with young men convicted of serious crimes. These youths train and rehabilitate the dogs so that they can be adopted into permanent homes. During the training process, the youths gain the personal skills, responsibility, and compassion that will help them succeed when they are released from prison.

Show-Off Dogs

Some dogs and their owners enjoy showing off canine skills and versatility in dog shows and sporting competitions. Dog shows range from large televised events to charity fundraisers with prizes for fun categories like smallest dog, best costume, and dog-and-owner lookalikes. Some competitions test dogs’ traditional skills in sheepherding and hunting or their athletic ability in catching a Frisbee or leaping into a pool. Generally, though, dog shows fall into three broad categories.

- **Conformation shows** feature individual judging of purebred dogs to determine how well they conform to the breed standard. Large shows group competitors by type, such as sporting dogs, terriers, and hounds. Because appearance is critical, competing dogs, especially long-haired breeds, are carefully groomed and coiffed.

The largest and most prestigious of the conformation events is the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show, established in 1877 and held annually in New York City’s Madison Square Garden. The top winner among the more than 3,000 entries receives no prize money but is awarded a silver trophy and such honors as ringing the opening bell at the New York Stock Exchange.

- **Agility trials** are sporting events in which a handler uses a variety of voice and hand signals to direct the dog through an obstacle course,



An Irish setter entered in a conformation show is judged against the breed standard.



A Pembroke Welsh corgi jumps over a pole as it competes in an agility trial.

which may require the dog to jump over poles, run through tunnels, and weave around posts. The dog is judged on speed and accuracy in completing the course.

- **Obedience trials** test a dog's ability to reliably follow certain commands given by a handler. These include simple actions like *sit*, *stay*, *come*, and *heel*, as well as more advanced tasks such as performing jumps, retrieving items, and distinguishing the handler's scent on objects.

* * *

Whether they are aiding people in need, demonstrating their athletic prowess, showing off their good looks and good manners, or simply cuddling on an easy chair in front of the TV, dogs have endeared themselves to people like no other animal. One anonymous dog lover described the special relationship a human has with a dog this way: "He is your friend, your partner, your defender, your dog. You are his life, his love, his leader. He will be yours, faithful and true, to the last beat of his heart. You owe it to him to be worthy of such devotion."

Dog Talk

blaze – a white stripe running up the center of a dog's face

breed standard – a set of descriptions for a particular breed originally drawn up by a breed club and accepted officially by dog-show judges

brindle – coat coloring in which streaks of darker hair over a tawny or grayish base coat create a subtle tiger-striped pattern

canine – dog (n.); related to dogs (adj.)

crop – to cut or trim the external ear flap to encourage the ear to stand erect; routinely done on such breeds as the boxer, Doberman pinscher, Great Dane, and schnauzer

dock – to clip short or cut off the tail to maintain breed standard on about 50 breeds

mongrel (or mutt) – a dog of mixed or undetermined breed

muzzle – the nose and mouth of a dog

pedigree – the written record of a dog's genealogy for three generations or more

stray – a dog that is homeless or lost

whelp – to give birth to puppies

Websites of Interest

American Kennel Club

www.akc.org

Besides maintaining a registry of purebred dogs in the United States, the American Kennel Club sponsors dog shows, competitions, and clubs. This official website provides information on various breeds, dog health, and dog ownership.

ASPCA (American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals)

www.aspc.org

As one of the largest animal protection organizations in the United States, the ASPCA fights against irresponsible dog breeding and other abusive practices, promotes adoptions from animal shelters, and advocates spaying and neutering to prevent pet overpopulation. This official site offers tips, articles, and videos on how to adopt and care for dogs as well as other pets.

NOVA – Dogs and More Dogs

www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/dogs

Created in conjunction with a program on the Public Broadcasting Service's NOVA science series, this website explores the history and diversity of dogs, canine intelligence, and the various jobs performed by working dogs.

Therapy Dogs International

www.tdi-dog.org

Official website of an organization that evaluates and registers therapy dogs, this site explains the value of such work, how owners can volunteer their pets, and the various kinds of facilities and situations where therapy dogs provide comfort and support.

DOGS

in Popular Culture

Given the bond between dogs and people, especially children, it is not surprising that canine characters abound in books, movies, and cartoons. Among the favorite cartoon dogs are Disney's Pluto and Goofy, Scooby Doo, Huckleberry Hound, and the beloved Snoopy from the *Peanuts* comic strip. Dogs are the stars of a host of full-length movies, such as *Beethoven*, *Benji*, *Wishbone*, and Disney's *Lady and the Tramp* and *101 Dalmatians*.

Famous dogs in U.S. culture include:

- **Lassie.** The saga of this fictional collie began with the book and film *Lassie Come Home*, about a dog that travels hundreds of miles to reunite with her young owner.

The Lassie character went on to star in additional movies and a television series about the adventures of a boy and his dog. Although Lassie was portrayed as female, all of the film and TV Lassies were played by male dogs. Lassie remains a favorite name for American female dogs of many different breeds.

- **Rin Tin Tin.** Rescued from a World War I battlefield, this handsome German shepherd starred in more than 20 movies in the 1920s and 30s. His successors performed in later films, radio series, and a 1950s television series about an orphan boy and his dog living on a U.S. cavalry post in the early American West.

- **Toto.** A cairn terrier that accompanied Judy Garland's character, Dorothy, on her adventures in *The Wizard of Oz*, this canine character is immortalized in Dorothy's famous line on finding herself in the Land of Oz: "Toto, I've a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore."

- **Uggie.** This lovable Jack Russell terrier, rescued from a trip to the pound by an animal trainer, became a celebrity after appearing in *The Artist*, winner of the Academy Award for Best Picture in 2012. Attired in formal black tie, Uggie also stole the show that year at the Golden Globe Awards and the White House Correspondents' Dinner.



Uggie, the canine star of the film *The Artist*, shows off on the red carpet at the 2012 Golden Globe Awards ceremony.

This section presents three stand-alone language-learning activities related to the theme of dogs. Each activity is designed for students at the proficiency level indicated.

Bingo!

Level: Beginner and above

Time required: 15–30 minutes

Goal: To recognize and review vocabulary, grammar, or other language items within a game format

Materials: chalk and blackboard, or whiteboard and markers; paper and pencils or pens; blank cards or paper (to make Bingo cards); small objects to serve as game markers

Background:

Have you heard this children's song about a dog called Bingo?

*There was a farmer had a dog,
and Bingo was his name, o!
B – I – N – G – O! B – I – N – G – O!
B – I – N – G – O!
And Bingo was his name, o!*

(The “Bingo” song, lyrics, and illustrated posters are available at <http://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/sing-out-loud-childrens-songs/>.)

Bingo the dog shares his name with a game that offers options for students of any age or level to practice English. Use Bingo (the game) to review for quizzes or as a change of pace, reward, or closing activity.

Preparation:

1. Create a language-content list of items to be reviewed during the game. The list can contain any words or terms your students have recently studied. It might contain anywhere from 8 to 25 items.
2. Prepare and copy blank Bingo cards, or help

students draw their own cards on a piece of paper. The number of Bingo cards you will need depends on whether students play individually or in small groups.

A Bingo card is a grid containing an equal number of rows and columns. The grid's center square is usually a “free space” marked with a star and the word *free*. Cards should be big enough for students to be able to write a few words in each blank square in the grid.

Bingo!				
		★ free		

Blank 5-by-5 Bingo card

Bingo!		
	★ free	

Blank 3-by-3 Bingo card

A 3-by-3 grid holds 8 language items, a 4-by-4 grid holds 15 items, and a 5-by-5 grid holds 24 items. When you create Bingo cards, choose a grid with a number of blank squares equal to or smaller than the number of items in the language-content list. For example, if your vocabulary list has 17 items, use a 4-by-4 grid (15 items) or a 3-by-3 grid (8 items).

Learner age and level can also influence the grid size you choose. Younger or less advanced learners may find smaller grids easier to use.

3. Collect small objects such as dried beans, buttons, or small stones for students to use to mark

Classroom Activities

squares on the cards during the game. Each 5-by-5 grid requires 25 of these game markers; smaller grids require fewer markers. You can collect markers from students at the end of play and reuse them.

Procedures:

1. Decide whether the class will play as individuals or in teams; team play may be more practical in large classes. If you use teams, create groups of up to five students to share a Bingo card. Team members will take turns placing markers on the card and help each other in case someone overlooks an item.

2. Ask volunteers to distribute game markers and a blank Bingo card to each student or team while you write the vocabulary list on the board. If students are making their own cards, provide instructions for how to draw the Bingo grid.

3. Tell students to write a different item from the vocabulary list in each square. Tell them to mix up the order of the words, which can be placed in any order. If the vocabulary list contains more items than the number of squares on the card, explain to the students that they don't have to use every item from the list. Tell students not to write in the free space.

4. Explain the Bingo game sequence to students:

- First, students place a marker on the free space.
- The teacher provides definitions for vocabulary items one at a time.
- If students see the item on their card that matches the teacher's definition, they put a marker on that item. Students should not say the word out loud.
- The goal is for students to "have Bingo" or "get Bingo" by marking 3, 4, or 5 (depending on the grid size) squares in a straight line on their card. The straight line can be horizontal, diagonal, or vertical and might include the free space, as shown in this Bingo card containing language content related to dogs:

Bingo!				
paw	sniff	bark	shaggy	guide dog
sheep dog	fetch	bone	wag	leash
pet	puppy	★ free	tail	coat
fur	spots	collar	breed	guard dog
kennel	sled dog	training	mutt	adopt

Ways to "get Bingo": A vertical, horizontal, or diagonal line of five squares

- A student who marks a line of words across the card should raise his or her hand and shout "Bingo!" (Students playing as a team can shout and raise their hands together.) The student(s) should then read the words aloud for the teacher to confirm.
- The first student or team that has Bingo is the winner. If the first "winner" has made an error, the game continues until another student or team has Bingo. *Note:* More than one student or team can have Bingo at the same time, resulting in two or more winners.

5. To begin play, select any word from the vocabulary list at random and give its definition. Don't say the word itself. For example, you might say "a dog's foot" for *paw*. Repeat the definition more than once if needed. You can mime, draw pictures on the board, or use gestures as part of the definitions you provide. Give students a moment to place their markers and then select the next word. Keep track of the words you define by checking them off on a list that students can't see.

6. When a student or team shouts "Bingo!" confirm that the items are on the list of words you have called. To reinforce understanding of vocabulary items, pause to review the definitions or ask the student or team to provide definitions for each

word in the Bingo line. Once Bingo is confirmed, you might consider offering winners a small prize, such as an extra-credit point on a vocabulary quiz, or including their names on a Bingo Champions list displayed in the classroom.

7. If you have time, tell students to remove their markers and exchange cards with a neighbor to start a new game.

Variations

Students will have to create a different bingo card for each language-content list described below.

Beginner: Create a language-content list of basic items such as letters, numbers, or introductory vocabulary items. Call out the exact items from the list. For example, if you're using numbers, say "seven" for students to mark 7 on their cards. This variation can improve students' listening and symbol-recognition skills.

Creating cards with pictures to match the list items is another option for this level. You can also prepare slips of paper with the items written or drawn on them, then have students take

turns selecting a slip of paper and calling out the vocabulary item to the class as the other students mark their cards.

Verb Forms: Fill the list with examples of a verb form your class is studying. If the target form is irregular past-tense verbs, the list might contain *went, sold, did, flew, swam*, etc. Prompt students with the base verb or a fill-in-the-blank sentence. For instance, prompt students to mark *went* by saying the base verb "go" or "Yesterday I _____ to the library."

Contractions: Create a list of contractions such as *he'd, they'll, and doesn't*, then prompt students by saying the full forms. For instance, prompt students to mark *he'd* by saying "he would." You can also reverse the content so that students' cards contain the full forms while you call out the contractions.

Synonyms/Antonyms: Create a list of items with clear synonyms or opposites. In Synonyms Bingo, you can call out "large" to prompt students to mark *big*. In Antonyms Bingo, call out "boring" to prompt students to mark *exciting*.

A Man's Best Friend

Level: Upper Beginner to Intermediate

Time required: 50 minutes

Goals: To practice vocabulary and listening skills related to dog and friendship themes; to write and present a personalized paragraph describing a friend (human or animal)

Materials: chalk and blackboard, or whiteboard and markers; paper and pencils or pens

Procedures:

1. Tell students they are going to listen to a story called "A Man's Best Friend." Write *best friend* on the board. If students don't know this term, explain that a *best friend* is a person's closest or most important friend. Tell students that the best friend in the story is a dog named Maggie. Ask

students if they are surprised that the best friend is a dog and, if so, to explain why.

2. Prepare students to listen by presenting the dog-related vocabulary from the story: *bark, pet* (verb), *play fetch, tail, and wag*. Tell students that a dog *barks* when it uses its voice. A person *pets* an animal by gently stroking or patting it. *Playing fetch* is a game in which a person throws a ball or another object, and a dog runs to pick it up and bring it back. The long, thin body part connected to a dog's back is its *tail*; dogs *wag* (move) their tails back and forth when they are happy or excited.

Support vocabulary explanations with gestures, drawings on the board, or sounds to suit your students' level and learning styles. Write each term on the board after you explain it.

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3. Read “A Man’s Best Friend” aloud, adjusting your reading speed to your students’ proficiency level.

A Man’s Best Friend

Sam lives on a farm with his family and many animals. Sam has a brown dog named Maggie. Maggie works on the farm with Sam every day. Maggie helps Sam move the sheep and goats to different places on the farm. She protects Sam’s family, too. Maggie barks loudly if she sees a stranger close to the farmhouse. She is very friendly to Sam’s children. They like to pet Maggie and play fetch with her.

Farm work is difficult, but Maggie is always glad to be with Sam. Every time Maggie sees Sam, she happily wags her tail. Sam says, “Maggie, come!” and the dog quickly runs to help. Maggie stays close to Sam at work and at home. Sam thinks Maggie is an important part of his life. He says, “A dog is a man’s best friend.”

4. Write “A dog is a man’s best friend” on the board. Explain that this saying is used to describe the relationship some people have with the helpful, friendly dogs that work and live with them. Even though dogs are not human, some people think of them as good friends.

5. Put students into pairs. Tell them that they are going to listen to the story again and that each pair should write a list of reasons why Maggie is like a friend to Sam.

6. Read the story again. Pause to allow the pairs to work together after the first paragraph, and give them time to finalize their lists after the second paragraph.

7. Ask several pairs to share reasons from their lists. Write the responses on the board. Prompt students with questions about the text if they need assistance. For example, you might ask, “What does Maggie do when she sees Sam? Why does she do that?”

8. Ask student pairs to discuss other qualities of good friends, either animal or human. Give an example, such as “a friend helps me with prob-

lems” or “a friend is a good listener,” to help students get started. After a few minutes, ask pairs to share their ideas with the class. Write student ideas on the board. If students have difficulty providing responses, ask prompting questions such as, “Can a friend make you laugh?” When students say “yes,” write *can make you laugh* or *funny* on the board. You may wish to present adjectives, such as *loyal* or *honest*, that are often used to describe best friends.

9. Tell the class you are pretending to be Sam from the story. Ask your students to help you write a paragraph about your friend Maggie. Prompt students to supply information from the story to help you create sentences similar to the example below. Write the paragraph on the board. For example, you might write the following:

My best friend is Maggie. She is a brown dog. Maggie is my friend because she keeps my family safe. She likes to work with me every day.

10. Tell students that they will write a paragraph about a friend, either a person or an animal. Ask students to spend a minute choosing a friend to write about and thinking silently about that friend. Then explain that students’ paragraphs should include the friend’s name, describe him or her, and give at least two reasons why the person or animal is their friend. If students need help providing reasons, refer them to the list of friend qualities that the class created in Steps 7 and 8. If students need additional support to develop a paragraph, write the following framework on the board. Ask students to fill in the missing information.

*My friend’s name is _____ (name).
She/He is _____ (describe your friend). _____ (friend’s name) is my friend because _____ (reason 1) and _____ (reason 2).*

11. Monitor and assist students as they write their paragraphs.

12. When students have finished writing, create groups of four or five students. Ask students to share their work by describing their friends to each other.

Variation

Instead of orally presenting paragraphs, group members can interview each other about their friends. Before the interviews begin, model or elicit the types of questions an interviewer might ask. Write a few example questions on the board if needed.

Then ask one volunteer in each group to be the first interviewer. The interviewer asks the person to his or her left questions such as:

- What is your friend's name?
- What does your friend look like?
- What do you like to do with your friend?
- Why is this person or animal your friend?

When the first interview is over, the interviewee becomes the interviewer of the next person to the left. Repeat this process until everyone in the group has been interviewed.

Getting Out of the Doghouse

Level: Intermediate and above

Time required: 30 minutes

Goals: To use creativity and problem-solving skills; to use a dog-related idiom appropriately in writing and orally

Materials: chalk and blackboard, or whiteboard and markers; paper and pencils or pens; blank cards

Preparation: Prepare blank cards or small pieces of paper. During the activity, each group of four students will need eight cards. On the cards, students will write situations that could cause someone *to be in the doghouse*, an idiom that means “to be in trouble or to have caused someone to become annoyed or upset with you.”

Procedures:

1. Write *to be in the doghouse* on the board and tell the class that this phrase is an idiom. Poll the class by asking those who think the idiom has a positive meaning to raise their hands; then ask those who think the meaning is negative to raise their hands. Ask a few students to explain their opinions about the idiom's connotation.
2. Write the following sentences on the board:

I'm in the doghouse because I've been late to class twice this week.

She'll be in the doghouse until she apologizes for yelling at her brother.

Tell students to read the example sentences and then turn to a neighbor to discuss what they think the idiom means.

3. Ask for volunteers to share their ideas about the idiom's meaning. To refine students' understanding, you might ask concept-checking questions such as:

- Did the people who are in the doghouse behave badly?
- Is somebody angry or upset with the people in the doghouse?
- Do you think the people in the doghouse are in trouble—are they being punished?

4. Explain that this idiom is based on the fact that in many places, people have dogs as pets that live both inside and outside the house. Some people build a small shelter or “doghouse” outside to protect their dogs from bad weather or strong sun. Pet dogs love to be close to their owners, so if a dog misbehaves, an owner might send the dog away to the doghouse for a short time as punishment. Explain that the idiom *to be in the doghouse* is used to describe situations when people have gotten into trouble by making someone upset or annoyed, or by doing something they shouldn't.

5. As a class, brainstorm a list of situations that cause people to get into this type of trouble. Write the ideas on the board. If needed, provide examples that are appropriate to the students' daily lives, such as *you forgot you were supposed to meet*

Classroom Activities

your friend after class, you didn't do your homework, or your cell phone rang during English class. Try to develop 8 to 10 ideas together; write situations using simple-past-tense verbs.

6. Put students into groups of four. Pass out eight blank cards to each group. Tell groups to write a different situation on each card. Ask the groups to pick six “getting into trouble” situations from the list on the board and then develop two more situations on their own. When groups have written eight situations on the cards, tell the groups to mix the cards up and put them face down on a desk or table.

7. Explain that when someone is in the doghouse, he or she usually wants to *get out of the doghouse* or *be out of the doghouse*. Tell the students they are going to have to use their problem-solving skills to figure out how to “get out of the doghouse” for each situation listed on their group’s cards.

8. To model the process, write an example on the board, such as, “You forgot to clean your room after you mother asked you to, and now you’re in the doghouse! What are you going to do?” Ask a volunteer to read the situation and question. Demonstrate an answer for the group, or pick a volunteer to demonstrate. An answer might be, “I want to get out of the doghouse! I’m going to clean my room as soon as I get home!” or “To get out of the doghouse, I am going to clean my room right away and apologize to my mom.” If necessary, write “To get out of the doghouse, I’m going to ... ” on the board to let students know that their responses can begin with this phrase.

9. Tell students to follow this pattern using their group’s situation cards. The groups of four should split into two pairs, each taking four situation cards. The first student in each pair picks a card and substitutes the underlined portion from the example on the board with the card’s situation (“You _____, and now you’re in the doghouse! What are you going to do?”). The partner will answer, pick a new card, and present the next situation. After finishing the first four cards, the pairs in each group should exchange situation cards. The activity can continue until groups complete all eight cards or a designated amount of time has passed.

10. To complete the activity, ask the pairs in each group to come back together to discuss their responses. The four group members can then select the funniest, most creative, or most effective “getting out of the doghouse” situation response to share with the whole class. If time allows, you might have groups select one of their own situations and ask a classmate to explain how he or she would get out of the doghouse in that situation.

Extension

Ask students to write a short story based on an event from their lives or on a fictional situation like one of those used in the activity. Ask students to include details about the troublesome situation that causes the main character to be in the doghouse. What does he or she do to try to get out of the doghouse, and how do others react? Does the person get out of the doghouse? Why or why not?

Variation: Chain Story

This variation requires a watch, clock, or timer. Put students in groups of three. Tell students that each group will work together for about 15 minutes to create three different stories about “being in the doghouse.” Explain that for five minutes, each student will each write a few sentences describing a situation in which someone ends up in the doghouse. When time is up, each student will pass the partial story to the group member on his or her left. For the next five minutes, students will continue writing the stories by describing what the main character does to try to get out of the doghouse. When time is up, students will pass their papers to the left again. For the final five minutes, each student will conclude the co-authored story by explaining whether or not the person gets out of the doghouse and why. When they are finished, group members should sit together and take turns reading aloud their three chain stories, which are often quite funny.

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Dog Tricks

People often teach their dogs to do a “trick” in response to a command. Fill in the spaces below with commands that someone might give to a dog (this one is named Fido). Use the letters in Fido’s food dish to spell the tricks; cross off the letters as you use them. The first command has been done for you.



1. Tell your dog to bark.
“Fido, S P E A K.”
2. Tell your dog to take a seat.
“Fido, ____.”
3. Tell your dog to put its paw in your hand; then move it up and down.
“Fido, ____.”
4. Tell your dog to move to a sleeping position on the floor.
“Fido, ____.”
5. Tell your dog to move from its stomach to its back while lying down.
“Fido, ____.”
6. Tell your dog to run after a ball, pick it up, and bring it back to you.
“Fido, ____.”
7. Tell your dog to lie down and pretend it is no longer living.
“Fido, ____.”
8. Give your dog a reward!
“Fido, good job! Here’s a ____!”



ANSWERS TO *THE LIGHTER SIDE*
DOG TRICKS

1. speak
2. sit
3. shake
4. lie down
5. roll over
6. fetch
7. play dead
8. treat