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CALL Me … Maybe: A Framework for Integrating the Internet into ELT

Imagine your students practicing their English by playing the role of film critic on movie-review websites like Rotten Tomatoes (rottentomatoes.com) … or product reviewer on online shopping sites like Amazon (amazon.com) … or reporter on digital storytelling sites like Storify (storify.com).

On the Internet, students of English have an authentic context in which to share their lives through expressive narrative and eye-catching imagery on social media organizers like Pinterest (pinterest.com). Students can, for instance, compare and contrast global perspectives on current events or public figures using web analytics tools like Google Trends (google.com/trends), survey "friends" with a polling application on social networking sites like Facebook (facebook.com), and report their findings on multimedia presentation sites such as Prezi (prezi.com) or YouTube (youtube.com). Engaging practices of this sort are entirely feasible—as long as students—and their teachers—have some degree of access to the Internet.

But what if you and your students have only limited access to the Internet—or none at all? The aim of this article is to present an alternative framework for Internet integration in English language teaching (ELT), including ideas for incorporating Internet concepts even in schools that have little or no access to it at all … yet.

The article begins with a consideration of reasons for integrating the Internet into ELT. It continues with a presentation of the framework, complete with practical examples, applications, and alternatives. And it concludes with a discussion of reasons to reconsider Internet integration.

Reasons to use the Internet in ELT

At the time of this writing, it is believed that less than 35 percent of the world's population is able to get online (Miniwatts Marketing Group 2013). Although the reasons for this

gap can be attributed to a variety of social, economic, and political factors, more widespread access to the Internet in the future is all but certain, predominantly in the developing world (Broadband Commission 2012). As access spreads, so will the temptation to integrate the Internet into ELT and expand its range of possible uses. In other words, a greater number of your colleagues around the world, as well as their students, will be using the Internet, and all of you will find significantly more applications than the wide array that already exists.

Such applications are typically aligned to what has been referred to as "the great shift" in computer-assisted language learning (CALL)—the point in the late 1990s when many language teachers recognized that the nature of this information and communications technology (ICT) "neatly paralleled two key concepts of language learning and teaching" (Dudeney and Hockly 2012, 536): namely, sharing information and fostering communication. A review of CALL-related articles in *English Teaching Forum* since 2000 reveals that for ELT purposes, the Internet has essentially been used in these ways:

- *The Internet as an Information Technology*: In the early part of the millennium, Ellinger et al. (2001) used content-based websites in English for Academic Purposes classes, Marco (2002) developed guided webquest activities for English for Specific Purposes students, and Kung's (2003) students utilized web resources to help develop and inform speeches.
- *The Internet as a Communication Technology*: Also early in the millennium, the emphasis was on webpages and synchronous computer-mediated communication (CMC). Kayser's (2002) students published web-based projects for a global audience, Warschauer discussed the importance of ICT literacy (Ancker 2002), and Chinnery (2005) offered techniques for using text-based chat to develop oral communication skills.
- *The Internet as a Social and Mobile Technology*: More recently, with the growth of social media and mobile technologies, the boundary between information and communication technology has become somewhat blurred. Tardy (2010) used Wikipedia to develop academic writing skills, Boas' (2011) students used blogs and Nings in process writing, and Sad (2008) and Reinders (2010) offered ways to integrate mobile web and other features of mobile phones into ELT.

If this summary is representative of usage trends, they indicate that fairly stable access to the Internet offers exposure to English, along with the opportunity to manipulate the language and interact in it. As such, the use of the Internet as a medium adheres to widely accepted beliefs about how languages are acquired.

The literature on the use of technologies, such as the Internet, in ELT and general education also suggests that they can effectively:

- increase learner motivation and reduce learner anxiety (LeLoup and Ponterio 2003)
- engage learners (Egbert et al. 2011; Felix 2008)
- promote learner autonomy (Gonzalez and St. Louis 2012)
- aid in retention (Mayer 2009; Paivio 2006), particularly where certain criteria—such as when imagery is perceived as strange, funny, or interesting—are met (Isola et al. 2011)

A framework

If you choose to integrate the Internet into your instruction, the next logical consideration is how exactly to do so. The answer depends in part on the level of Internet access available. This section presents a framework for organizing instructional Internet usage by level of access.

Unlimited access: The Internet as a medium of instruction

If you have stable and predictable access, the Internet provides a virtual goldmine of activities. Indeed, most Internet-based activities presented in the literature seem to have been developed under the assumption that teachers have infinite opportunity to use the Internet. The technologies employed in such activities have been traditionally dichoto-

mized as being either *tool* or *tutor* (Levy and Stockwell 2006).

The Internet as tutor

As a tutor, the Internet can be used to offer advice, facilitate analysis, or conduct activities.

For Advice. Numerous sites offer lessons on English language usage, such as grammar, vocabulary, and idioms. The Grammar Girl (grammar.quickanddirtytips.com) website and podcast, which provide short lessons on specific points (e.g., "Who Versus Whom") given by a lively and charismatic expert, are advice-giving resources that teachers and learners might exploit. Minimally, you or your students can use Grammar Girl's columns simply for reference. Alternatively, you might assign your students to present on a column of their choice to the class, submit a question or tip to Grammar Girl, or write their own column that they can develop into a broadcast-style show.

For Analysis. Web-based text and speech corpora and concordancers offer superb opportunities for language analysis. Corpora are collections of authentic language samples, typically limited to a particular type, such as academic speech (see the Michigan Corpus of American Spoken English at micase.elicorpora.info), pronunciation (see the Speech Accent Archive at accent.gmu.edu), and popular literature and media (see the Corpus of Contemporary American English at corpus.byu.edu/coca). Search engines themselves can even be used as corpora (see Robb 2003). Google, for instance, offers custom search engine capabilities, allowing for searches from within limited sites.

KWIC (key-word-in-context) concordance programs such as WebCorp Live (webcorp.org.uk/live) access corpora and organize the results in a way that can help raise learners' English language awareness of language form and meaning. When users enter a word or phrase in the search field, they are presented with a list of authentic examples of that word or phrase in context. A search for *school*, for example, might produce the following results:

primary **school** system
the **school** bus
my **school** teacher
secondary **school** students

You can refer your students to concordances or corpora to analyze their own errors or explore common language use such as collocations. You can also use these tools to model authentic examples of a particular language point.

For Activities. Traditional activities such as gap-fill, multiple-choice, and matching exercises have been a mainstay since the early days of using the Internet in ELT. The main difference with modern examples, such as Free Rice (freerice.com), is their increased level of sophistication. Free Rice's glossy synonym-matching and grammar exercises allow students to learn through practice and through trial and error. Questions are progressively difficult, but as added incentive, correct answers help support an international charity.

Other ELT activity websites can be easily identified through a web search for "ELT exercises." You can direct students to such websites for independent practice or team competition. You and your students might even develop your own web-based activities by using free software such as Hot Potatoes (hotpot.uvic.ca) or websites like LearnClick (learnclick.com).

The Internet as tool

As a tool, the Internet can be used for a deeper level of student engagement and interactivity by helping stimulate creativity; it can also foster communication and collaboration.

For Creativity. Even if learners lack advanced levels of proficiency, they can produce creatively in English on a number of sites. At Draw a Stickman (drawastickman.com), pairs of students can collaborate on a picture dictation activity, in which one orally paints a picture that the other attempts to reproduce. At Make Beliefs Comix (makebeliefscomix.com), students can create basic comic strips, with dialogue.

More advanced learners can use Dvolver (dvolver.com) or one of the features at Grapheine, such as Futebol TV (grapheine.com/futeboltv), to create amusing short films by directing or selecting video clips, then crafting subtitled or dubbed dialogue or narrative.

Sites such as these allow for project-based

works in progress, which can be shared via email—so that you or your students' peers can offer feedback—and saved for further development. You might assign pairs of students content from a particular lesson or allow them to select their own content. Your students might then co-direct a video, share and revise it based upon feedback they receive, present it in class, and even act it out. You could then use the student videos in dictation exercises or in information gaps, in which other students must guess the dialogue, or make up their own, while watching the muted video.

For Communication. Interactive chat tools—including standalone instant messenger and VoIP (voice over Internet protocol) clients, such as Skype (skype.com), and those embedded in other media, such as email and social networking sites—allow learners to communicate in English with native speakers or other learners. With these tools, students can interview guest native speakers and report their findings to the class. Or they can participate with several other students in the completion of a task, such as making a mutual group decision or developing a project such as a role play. Instant messengers typically allow chat transcripts to be printed, shared, or saved, allowing for feedback and revision.

Where live partners are not available, chatbots—artificial intelligence programs that simulate conversation—are. Commercial versions that produce oral communication do exist, but most chatbots, such as A.L.I.C.E. (alice.pandorabots.com), communicate through text. Many of these programs have limited language accuracy, so student activities are also somewhat limited. Learners might, however, practice asking questions in the form of an interview, then report their findings to the class or compare findings with their peers. As teacher, you can also ask them to check for and correct errors in the chatbot's responses. Advanced students can actually teach their own chatbots to communicate by programming responses.

For Collaboration. Various social media sites allow communication opportunities to develop into collaborative partnerships. Livemocha (livemocha.com), for instance, is a tandem-learning site that allows learners of different languages to teach one another their respective native tongues. For example, a native of Peru, Malaysia, or Ethiopia wishing to learn English could be partnered with a native speaker of English wishing to learn Spanish, Malay, or Amharic. Partners schedule mutually agreed-upon times to meet online and teach each other, regardless of their proximity or time zone. Although learners of English would likely use a program like this outside class, you could assign learning tasks to students, such as interviewing their partners about their home, job, or some other facet of their life, then reporting the results as a written journal entry or class presentation.

Opportunities for project-based work on social networking sites are also available. Students might work in small groups to plan a dream vacation, map the itinerary on a site like Google Maps (maps.google.com), tag each of their destinations with images and descriptors, and then present a virtual guided tour to the class. They might also give a tour of an exhibition in a downloadable virtual fantasy world like Second Life (secondlife.com).

Limited access: The Internet as a source of content

Limited access generally implies limits to the physical infrastructure necessary to use the Internet—the computer hardware, software, and networking—but also includes the lack of desire, ability, and opportunity to use it (van Dijk 2005). Moreover, access varies by time, space, quality, and ownership. Teachers and students might or might not have access at home, in the classroom, in a computer lab at school, or in an Internet cafe or library, and the connection might be low-speed narrowband or high-speed broadband.

But even if you or your students have limited access to the Internet and computers, you still have options to facilitate learning. Specifically, the Internet contains resources that in limited-access contexts can be retained, then exploited further. This section discusses types of content available and how to select, save, and use it.

Types of content

Clarke (1989) has called the use, supplementation, and adaptation of *authentic*

material—material not created specifically for language learning or teaching—a "moral imperative." Others recognize the need for and convenience of *semi-authentic* materials—those adapted for language-learning purposes—developed specifically for non-native speakers of English, where "practice is configured primarily in terms of pedagogical priorities" (Waters 2009, 140). Despite this debate, or perhaps as a result of it, both authentic and semi-authentic English language-learning materials are available in abundance online.

A prime example of a site offering semi-authentic content is Voice of America's Learning English (formerly VOA Special English; learningenglish.voanews.com), which covers current events updated daily. The text in VOA stories is restricted to approximately 1,500 words, the downloadable audio component is narrated at a reduced spoken pace, and VOA's proprietary activities are available.

Authentic content can turn English language learners into what journalist Thomas Friedman (2007) has referred to as their "own self-directed and self-empowered researcher, editor, and selector of entertainment, without having to go to the library or movie theater or through network television" (178–179). Some authentic sites are similar to VOA's Learning English in that they publish their own supportive activities, modifications, or enhancements.

Like VOA, National Public Radio (NPR; npr.org), a major news broadcaster in the United States, offers downloadable audio stories that are typically only a few minutes long and have transcriptions available. The DailyLit site (dailylit.com) emails successive snippets of authentic English language stories to readers—for controlled language input—on a daily basis, as the site's name suggests. And iTunes U (apple.com/education/itunes-u) offers access to free downloadable content-based lectures from world-renowned institutions of higher education such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Harvard University.

Selecting content

In addition to considering whether to use authentic or semi-authentic materials, you should begin your selection of materials by determining the content's suitability for or interest to learners, exploitability in terms of relevant language elements it contains, and appropriateness to the learners' level of proficiency (Chinnery 2008; Nutall 2005).

On an aesthetic level, you might also consider the format, design, and ease of use of the content. One suggestion is to peruse the Webby Awards (webbyawards.com) nominees and winners, which are selected based upon content, structure and navigation, visual design, functionality, interactivity, and overall experience. Among the interesting categories are Best Food and Drink Website and Best Use of Photography.

Another major factor is determining the materials' usability, as many are protected by copyright. If you have determined that material is protected by copyright, you can request written permission from the author—whose contact information will typically be available—and ensure "fair use" of the material. Checklists to determine fair use can be found by searching the Internet for "fair use checklist."

You can also search the Internet for materials identified as being in the public domain—those with expired intellectual property rights. Some materials, such as the text and audio eBooks collected at such websites as Project Gutenberg (gutenberg.org), have expired copyrights in the United States but may still be copyrighted in other countries.

A simpler approach is to identify materials created under Creative Commons licenses, which tend to have looser restrictions than copyrighted materials. You can search Creative Commons for photos, clip art, music, and videos using the organization's own search engine (search.creativecommons.org) or by filtering search results in photo-sharing sites like Flickr (flickr.com) and video-sharing sites like YouTube (youtube.com).

Saving content

Once you have identified appropriate, usable materials, you can reproduce or save them for use offline when there is limited or no Internet access.

Though you can print webpages onto paper, you can also save them onto a computer or an external drive from the browser's

menu bar. In addition, you can convert them into another file type such as PDF, or archive them either online or onto a computer by using a third-party storage service, app, or extension to a browser. Google Drive (drive.google.com), for example, allows for stored documents to be viewed offline.

You can also download audio and video materials from podcast managers such as iTunes (apple.com/itunes), directly from video-sharing websites, or by using conversion websites, browser extensions, and apps (mini applications) that can be identified through a web search. Podcast managers provide the simplest means of collecting, organizing, and playing saved audiovisual media.

Using content

Once you have retained online content in some way, the next step is to make it as usable as possible. One approach is to simplify the language itself—by reducing the number of words, changing complex sentences to simple forms using active voice, or using graphic organizers such as charts or diagrams—thereby creating the semi-authentic content previously described.

Another approach is to modify or enhance authentic content, which has been shown to be effective in increasing comprehensibility (Zhao 2003). Learners might use downloadable free software such as Audacity (audacity.sourceforge.net) to play, pause, and replay audio or content at either recorded or reduced speed; VLC (videolan.org/vlc) can provide the same options for videos. Content might also be supported through printed transcripts or the captions available on many videos.

You can also implement what are called wraparound or scaffolding activities. As a pre-listening or pre-reading task to activate schema, you might ask students to predict a story based upon its title or create a caption for a printed or saved digital image related to the text. More elaborately, students might use key vocabulary to create an original story or to complete a crossword puzzle that you have created on a site like Discovery Education's Puzzlemaker (discoveryeducation.com/free-puzzlemaker). Or students can create and share their own puzzles.

As a post-listening or post-reading activity, students can summarize or discuss the text, review and evaluate their own predictions about it, or answer guided questions. As an extension, they might collaborate on the creation of a graphic depiction or role play.

While wraparound activities can be useful, students can also benefit from lessons containing well-designed tasks to accompany the Internet content. Where there is limited Internet access at school, you can download podcasts and use them later without Internet access. In such a case, students might be asked to compare and contrast aspects—the content or form—of different podcasts such as those on NPR and VOA. Students could also take notes and summarize, compare their understanding with their peers', and give their reactions to what they heard.

Materials printed from websites can be used in a range of classroom tasks, just as traditional printed materials might be. Students can complete a jigsaw reading, where each is responsible for reading and reporting on a particular section of the text. They might participate in reading circles, where everyone reads the text but is assigned a different role and responsibility, such as summarizing, identifying new vocabulary, asking questions, or illustrating the text. Students might also be asked to react from the viewpoint of an assigned role related to an issue in the text, such as a decision maker or someone directly affected by a impending decision.

Where learners have some means of playing content at home or in a library or Internet cafe, you can give them—individually or in groups—assignments in the form of links to particular websites (if they have access), or with copyright-free content that is burned onto a rewritable CD or saved onto a flash drive or mobile device. Then students can practice their note-taking skills by listening to recorded academic lectures while attending to guided questions or graphic organizers freely available at websites such as Education Place (eduplace.com/graphicorganizer).

For students with Internet access outside class, TED Ed (ed.ted.com) goes one step further. Inspired by the Flipped (Reverse)

Classroom approach to teaching, in which students study video materials outside class to prepare for in-class practice or critical thinking activities, this site enables teachers to integrate videos and comprehension questions along with additional resources. To utilize it, you might send students home or to a third-party location, either alone or in groups, with copies of such videos.

No access: The Internet as subject matter

Lack of Internet access does not mean that English language educators cannot integrate the Internet in particular, and technology in general, into their instruction. Partly in anticipation of and preparation for future access, the next section focuses on discussions (or debates) and tasks emphasizing the Internet as a topic and how they can be conducted without the actual use of the Internet.

Discussions

The Internet has shaped the global lexicon with new words such as *blog*, *wiki*, and *podcast*, along with generic trademarks such as *google*. It has changed the way many people find and share information. At the same time, the Internet has been accused of "making us stupid" (Carr 2010), turning us into "informavores" (Schirrmacher, cited in Brockman 2009) who are more isolated (Turkle 2012) and less creative (Keen 2007) than we would be if we had no Internet.

Such controversies surrounding the growing usage of the Internet offer intriguing fodder for class discussion. With pre-teaching and background preparation from their teacher, advanced students could take sides in a debate pertaining to any of the above topics, arguing, for instance, whether or not the Internet makes people stupid, or discussing the pros and cons of having ready Internet access, what benefits they believe access might reap, and the impact it might have on their lives.

Tasks

A more systematic approach to shaping classroom exchanges would be to use this subject as the focus of task-based instruction (Pica, Kanagy, and Falodun 1993; Willis and Willis 2007). For students with lower levels of proficiency, you could use basic tasks such as a picture dictation of a computer. More advanced students could cooperate on tasks requiring higher-order thinking skills. One example is a jigsaw reading, in which each student receives a different piece of a single text—with content pertaining to the Internet—and they work together to understand or answer questions about the text. Students of teaching might work together on a decision-making task, in which they simulate receipt of a large sum of funding for the development of a (computer) learning lab and must come to agreement on how exactly to spend it, including debate on the pedagogical utility of Internet access.

Reasons not to use the Internet in ELT

For most English language learners of the world, there are limits to Internet access and therefore to its potential benefits, but for learners with Internet access, there might also be limits to the benefits. A recent analysis on the breadth of CMC research suggests that its benefits have been exaggerated (Kenning 2010). And a comprehensive analysis of the research on CALL in primary and secondary school English language education similarly concluded that "the evidence that technology has a direct beneficial impact on linguistic outcomes is slight and inconclusive" (Macaro, Handley, and Walter 2012, 1). Among the most studied areas of this analysis were CMC and the Internet. These findings correlate with the findings of previous meta-analyses examining the effectiveness of CALL in general (see Felix 2005; Hubbard 2003; Salaberry 2001).

Moreover, by the time you read this article, some of the websites cited may no longer be functional, and the technologies referenced could soon be obsolete. Indeed, while information on the Internet is believed to double roughly every two years (Zhang et al. 2008), the average lifespan of a website is only about 77 days (Internet Archive 2013).

Considering these limitations, as Egbert and Yang (2004) urge, "Rather than lamenting the fact that our tools are not the latest and greatest, we must pay attention to using the tools at hand to students' best advantage while we look for ways to obtain additional resources" (289).

Task Type	Mobile Phones	SMS and Emoticons
Remembering/ Brainstorming/ Matching	List all the different communication tools you know.	Match these emoticons with their corresponding feeling. A. ;-) happy B. :-) sad C. :-o amused D. :-(surprised (Answers: A. amused; B. happy; C. surprised; D. sad)
Understanding/ Ordering	Place the following tools where you think they belong on the line below. Written ⟷ Oral • Radio • Mobile phone • Pencil • Television • Hands	Categorize these SMS abbreviations and emoticons as negative, positive, or neutral. ROFL :-) L8R :-o Note: ROFL = Roll on the floor laughing; :-) = happy; L8R = "Later" or "See you later"; :-o = surprised
Applying	Discuss all the possible uses you can think of for a mobile phone.	Create a role play using emoticons as your main characters. You might consider using the following: >>>:-o 8-/ :-P Note: >>>:-o indicates surprise or yawning, depending on the context; 8-/ indicates skepticism or disbelief; :-P indicates playfulness
Analyzing/ Comparing	What are the possible side effects of mobile phone usage?	Compare this "Western" smiley with its "Eastern" counterpart. :-) (^_^)
Evaluating/ Opinion Exchange	Should everyone have a mobile phone? Explain your answer.	Why do people use SMS abbreviations and emoticons? Are they an effective communication medium?
Creating/ Decision Making	Your village has just received a donation of three mobile phones. With your group, decide which of the following citizens should receive them. 1. The one police officer 2. A mother of three small children, one of whom is chronically ill 3. The one school teacher 4. An entrepreneur who acquired the mobile phones and can help develop the local economy 5. The one doctor	With your group, create an original set of SMS abbreviations or emoticons. Be prepared to present and explain them. Or: Your group is a committee whose mission is to decide whether to permit SMS shorthand in schoolwork. You must agree on whether or not to permit it, and then develop an implementation plan and/or a set of guidelines accordingly.

Figure 1. A Bloom's Taxonomy guide to tasks based on mobile-phone topics, SMS shorthand, and emoticons

Mobile phones

Among the tools most likely available are mobile phones, which are presently much more accessible for many people than computers are. The vast majority of the world's population has mobile phone access (Internet Telecommunications Union 2013). Indeed, the number of mobile phones in the world may have surpassed the number of people already (Cisco 2013).

The use of mobile phones and other portable devices such as digital media players and ultraportable computers and tablets in language teaching and learning, popularly referred to as mobile-assisted language learning (MALL), is a branch of CALL supported by many English language teachers (see Chinnery 2006; Kukulska-Hulme and Shield 2008) and learners (Bibby 2011; Stockwell 2008) globally. Major MALL initiatives include American English (americanenglish.state.gov), which offers free mobile books and apps, and BBC Janala (www.bbcjanala.com), a public–private partnership with a major mobile component.

As with the Internet, you can use mobile phones as a source of content or subject matter, but the most common use would be as a medium of instruction. You could have your students use mobile phones to access apps such as Word Soup, a vocabulary game developed as a supplement to the Trace Effects video game available on American English. Apps must be downloaded and therefore minimally require limited Internet access. Mobile phones' use might revolve around the completion of pedagogical tasks (e.g., Short Message Service [SMS] note-taking) or simulated real-world tasks (e.g., scavenger hunts using a global positioning system [GPS]), taking advantage of their built-in features, such as video or still cameras, voice recorders, calculators, or digital music players (see Hockly 2013).

As a source of content, mobile phones can be used to access mobile versions of websites or to download authentic content-based apps. As subject matter, mobile phones offer plenty of opportunity for discussion or the completion of tasks. A starting point for any mobile activity could include a discussion of your students' comfort level with the use of their mobile phones for instructional purposes, how they typically use their phones, or the ways in which their phones have impacted their lives.

Tasks not actually requiring mobile phones, ranging from the development of literacy or numeracy skills to critical thinking skills, are similarly feasible. You might simply help students simulate texting with one another on paper, perhaps through guided activities such as a tapering dialogue, where each response warrants one less word than the last (Rinvolucri 2005).

You might alternately use the guidance of Bloom's Taxonomy, a hierarchical classification of learning objectives commonly used by educators to foster critical and creative thinking skills (Anderson et al. 2000; Bloom et al. 1956), which is easily adapted into questions or performance assessments. Figure 1 presents progressively challenging examples of pair or group activities following both Bloom's Taxonomy and common language-learning tasks on the topics of mobile phones, SMS, and emoticons or "smileys." The use of English toward the completion of these tasks and in their presentations is presumed.

Back to basics

Imagine your students honing their pronunciation through a voice recognition program, participating in a scavenger hunt with the use of a GPS, and even instantly translating their native speech into English—all through a wristwatch, a pair of glasses, or other gadget in the experimental field of cybernetics. Whether web-based computer, mobile phone, or even wearable device—unless we reach a period of integrated or device-agnostic CALL (see Bax 2003; Thorne and Payne 2005)—each will one day be superseded by another technology.

The framework described in this article (see Figure 2) reflects an analysis of the current applications of the Internet in ELT; teachers and administrators can use it as a guideline for determining how to use the Internet in their ELT contexts as the number of tools available continues to grow.

This framework also demonstrates how in limited- or no-access contexts, rather than—or perhaps while—pursuing other pedagogic deployment of the latest technology, you as English language teacher can face "bleeding edge challenges" (Fawzi 2010) without the

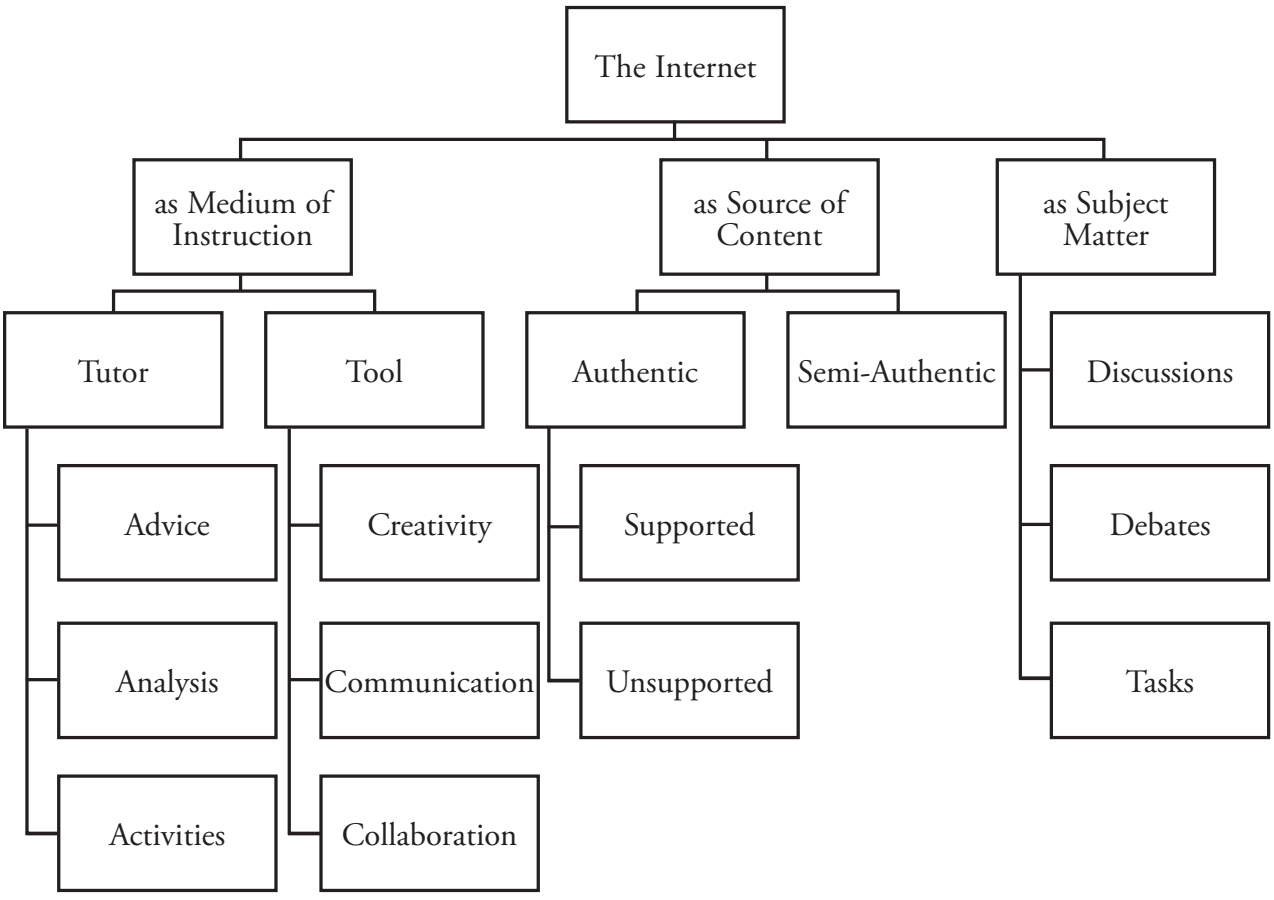

Figure 2. A framework for integrating the Internet into ELT

use of cutting-edge technologies, confront "restricted Internet access and censorship" (Ngeow 2010) with "a pedagogy of bare essentials" (Meddings and Thornbury 2009), and replace fretfulness over the lack of a good Internet connection with genuine concern for good teaching.

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Beyond the Gap Fill: Dynamic Activities for Song in the EFL Classroom

Many teachers like to use music and song in the English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom. Good motivational tools, music and song are fun and relaxing, and they provide a class with variety and a break from textbook study. Particularly with younger learners, songs and chants are often used to teach new vocabulary in a nonthreatening, naturalistic manner. Older students and advanced learners can analyze lyrics and explore a songwriter's language choice and usage, along with cultural elements such as social values, human relationships, spirituality, patriotism, and dissent (Murphey 1992). Despite the rich potential of songs as authentic and stimulating texts, when it comes to designing a listening activity for a song, teachers tend to rely upon the Gap Fill as the sole activity: "Listen and fill in the blanks … listen again … check and move on to the next activity" is almost a mantra. Yet songs can be utilized in more variable and stimulating ways to challenge students to learn and think about language, and songs can provide opportunities for integrated skills practice as well as cultural and intercultural analysis.

This article will describe how to make the most of the natural advantages that songs bring, extending and transcending the basic techniques to entice students and make them aware of and connected with the language as they engage in the inherently captivating activity that is song.

A basic framework for incorporating songs

The following activities for exploiting songs can certainly be employed in isolation; however, getting the most from songs as an authentic resource requires situating the listening activities within a coherent framework.

Following is a simple three-stage framework recommended for general listening activities, which is easily and effectively transferred to songs:

1. *The pre-listening stage*: Students engage in activities that activate

schema or background knowledge of a song's main theme. This step may consist of several warm-up questions to be discussed with a partner, the introduction of some key vocabulary items, or prediction activities.

2. *The while listening stage*: Students listen to the song and complete an assigned task.
3. *The post-listening stage*: Students analyze new vocabulary; they also discuss lyrics and the songwriter's intended meaning. They may engage in speaking or writing activities.

This article focuses upon activities for the *while listening stage*. Similar activities have been in circulation in EFL classrooms for a number of years, yet they remain new to teachers participating in workshops and training programs that I have facilitated. (Note: Although I use contemporary pop songs in my classes, for copyright reasons the examples in this article employ traditional songs in the public domain. For many of the songs mentioned in this article, you can find and download complete sets of lyrics and MP3s for free at the American English website: http://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/sing-out-loud-traditional-songs.)

The Double Gap Fill — Reenergizing the old standby

The classic EFL song activity remains the Gap Fill, where the teacher whites out a key word every line or so, the students listen once or twice and fill in the blanks with the words they hear, and answers are right or wrong. With lyrics readily available online, the activity is quick and easy to make and usually looks something like the exercise in Figure 1.

Although the activity helps students identify words and improve their micro-listening skills, it does not necessarily require them to think about language before they listen, and, as a result, students often transcribe incorrect forms of words—for example, a noun instead of an adjective—by trusting their ears more than their lexical or grammatical knowledge. At times learners may catch only part of a word because of pronunciation issues: elision, assimilation, interference, or chunking of formulaic phrases. While students may recognize the word error if given a number of sentences to correct without the context of a listening activity, when listening is the prime focus, transcribing a singer's pronunciation appears to take precedence over whether the word makes sense in the gap or not.

The modification: Double Gap Fill

I designed the Double Gap Fill to help students think about language before they listen. By thinking about the form the word must take before they hear it, students improve their chances of success and activate their underlying linguistic knowledge.

Procedures:

Step 1: Pre-listening. Students are put into pairs for a short discussion and to brainstorm vocabulary and expressions that are relevant to the topic of the song. For "Home on the Range," students are asked to brainstorm what they know about the American Old West—cowboys, horses, buffaloes, etc.—and what they imagine it would be like to live there. What is the weather like? Is it quiet and peaceful or fun and energetic? Hopefully this will generate vocabulary that they will be able to employ in Step 2.

Step 2: Pre-listening. Guided by "hint words" in parentheses, as in Figure 2, students fill in the blanks and complete the song with their predictions of what the missing words will be. (G)_____ is for the word they *guess* will fill the blank; (A)_____ is for the actual word or *answer* they hear when the song is played.

The teacher may elicit word guesses before the song is played, and students may vote on the more interesting choices. As students read out the lyrics when doing the activity or giving an answer, their ears get a "first listen" to

Instructions: Listen and fill in each blank with the missing word.

Oh, give me a home, where the buffalo _____,
where the deer and the _____ play,
where _____ is heard,
a discouraging _____,
and the skies are not _____ all day.

Figure 1. Gap Fill worksheet for "Home on the Range"

Instructions: Fill in each (G) guess blank with a word you think completes the sentence, using the words in parentheses as hints. Then listen to the song and write the correct word in the (A) answer blank.

Oh, give me a home, where the buffalo **(walk around)**
(G) _____ (A) _____,

where the deer and the **(animal with horns)**
(G) _____ (A) _____ play,

where **(not often)** (G) _____ (A) _____ is heard,

a discouraging **(something you put in sentences)**
(G) _____ (A) _____,

and the skies are not **(weather)** (G) _____
(A) _____ all day.

Figure 2. Double Gap Fill worksheet for "Home on the Range"

the words surrounding the blanks, improving their chances of success. (Answers are *roam, antelope, seldom, word,* and *cloudy*.)

Seven dynamic song activities

Activities 1–3 and 5–6 below were modified and expanded upon from suggestions in *Songs in Action* (Griffee 1992), an excellent resource that is, sadly, now out of print. There are a few variations of Activity 4 on the Internet, but I was unable to find the original source to credit here. The activities serve a variety of purposes: to introduce or reinforce vocabulary knowledge, to provide practice using prediction skills, to develop awareness of coherence, and to improve storytelling ability.

Activity 1: Song Pictures

At first glance, this activity may seem appropriate only for children. Song Pictures, however, is an effective way of drawing students' attention to the emphasis on *content words* (e.g., nouns, verbs, adjectives) over *function words* (e.g., pronouns, determiners, prepositions) in English prosody (stress patterns). The activity can thus also serve as an effective and lighthearted warm-up for teachers who wish to develop their students' note-taking skills prior to (or during) their commencement of academic studies in English. Simpler songs can be used with low-level students, while more complex songs can be employed with high-beginner and intermediate students. Songs with repetitive lyrics work well, as students are able to hear the words more than once. The activity also assists vocabulary retention: linking pictures to words helps students remember them, especially if the students are smiling and laughing over their partners' drawings.

Level: Low to Intermediate

Materials: Pencils (or pens or crayons) and paper

Warm-up: Have students discuss the song topic or brainstorm words they may hear that are related to the title. For "This Old Man," the teacher could write the numbers 1 through 10 on the board, put students in pairs, and ask them to think of words that rhyme with each number.

Procedure: Distribute the pencils and sheets of paper and tell students they are going to listen to a song and draw pictures. Tell them that as they listen, they are to draw the things or actions—nouns, verbs, adverbs, and adjectives—they hear mentioned in the song. For example, students may draw pictures of a man, thumb, dog, bone, shoe, rolling, home, hive, or sticks.

Post-listening: After the song has been played two or three times, students exchange papers and try to identify what their partner has drawn.

Extension: Go over the vocabulary from the song and have students draw a few more items so that each paper has at least 10 to 12 song-word pictures on it. Have students put their names on the sheets; then collect them for use at a later date. A few weeks later, as a warm-up, give students their sheets back, have them exchange with a partner, play the song, and have students listen and number the pictures in the order that they hear them. Play the song two or three times if necessary. Once they have finished, students check their work with their partner. Finally, check answers with the whole class.

Activity 2: Re-order It

As with Song Pictures, this activity can be used to direct students' attention to the prosody features of English that are essential for developing confidence in *gist listening*—catching the main ideas and key words without necessarily comprehending detail or becoming distracted by function words. For

lower-level students, this activity may also be used for simple vocabulary development.

Level: Low to Intermediate

Preparation: Select 8 to 14 words from the selected song. These may be words students already know or new words the teacher introduces and explains before beginning the activity. Arrange the words in a grid, alphabetically, as on the worksheet in Figure 3.

Procedure: Before students listen to the song, say the words out loud and have the students repeat them. This step prepares their ears for picking out the words in the song. Then play the song. Students number the words in the order in which they hear them. After the first listening, students compare with a partner; then the song is played again so that they may check their answers. You can then elicit the order from the class and provide the final answer.

Tip: For lower-level students, you may play the song once before the students do the activity.

Variation: Instead of eliciting the order after the second listening, distribute a Gap Fill where the words you have chosen have been removed. Have students work in pairs or groups to fill in the blanks. If they have numbered the words correctly, the activity will be fairly easy; if they have not caught all the words, then students can determine where a word best fits.

(Answers: *banjo* = 7, *captain* = 5, *early* = 4, *kitchen* = 6, *railroad* = 1, *time* = 2, *whistle* = 3)

Activity 3: Matching Meanings

This activity is used to both review and extend vocabulary, depending on the song or text selected. Additionally, the activity encourages students to actively engage with English–English learner dictionary definitions for guessing words—a useful scaffolding technique for learners who may be over-reliant on translating unknown vocabulary. Finally, Matching Meanings can be used as an introduction to circumlocution strategies (e.g., *corkscrew* = "the tool you use to open a bottle of wine"), an imperative for learners preparing for either writing or speaking exams, as well as an essential survival English strategy in everyday life.

Level: High Beginner to Advanced

Preparation: From the lyrics, select the vocabulary (8 to 15 words) you want to test or reinforce and write out definitions in the order the words are heard in the song. Note that the definitions must be written in the correct order; otherwise, the activity is substantially more difficult. I find that the template in Figure 4 works well.

Procedure: Divide the class into pairs or teams. Hand out the sheet with the definitions, or write the chart on the board. Have students guess each word from the definition and write their answers in the Guess column. Elicit guesses from the class and write them on the board. Play the song and have students write down the correct words in the Actual Word column as they hear them. Have students check with their partner or group. Play the song again. Distribute the lyrics and ask students to find any words they did not catch. Elicit answers. (Answers are *snow, slow, thief, rob, hug,* and *stars*.)

Instructions: Number the words in the order you hear them.

Word	1st Listening	2nd Listening	Answer
banjo			
captain			
early			
kitchen			
railroad			
time			
whistle			

Figure 3. Re-order It worksheet for "I've Been Working on the Railroad"

Instructions: Read the definitions and try to guess each word. Then listen to the song and write down the actual word used by the songwriter.

	Guess	Definition	Actual Word
1		frozen water from the sky	
2		opposite of *fast*	
3		a person who steals	
4		steal	
5		put your arms around someone	
6		lights in the sky at night	

Figure 4. Matching Meanings worksheet for "On Top of Old Smokey"

Activity 4: Changing the Text

This activity can be adapted to emphasize various aspects of language awareness or specific skills. Grammar can be emphasized by changing parts of speech (e.g., from "I have seen" to the incorrect "I have saw") or by eliminating articles, prepositions, etc. Likewise, both coherence and pronunciation awareness can be facilitated by changing content words (e.g., *day/way*).

Level: Low Intermediate to Intermediate

Preparation: Prepare a handout of the song lyrics where key words have been changed to similar-sounding words, as in Figure 5. Double space the lyrics so that students have room to write above each line.

Warm-up: Start by giving students the song title and in pairs have them guess what the song is about. Clementine is a woman's name. The singer is a man. What kind of song do you think this is? Why is the singer singing to her? Establishing context before students listen to the song makes it easier for them to guess which words have been changed and what the correct words might be.

Instructions: Read the lyrics. One word in each line (except the first two lines of the chorus) is incorrect. Underline the words you think are wrong. Then listen and write down the correct words.

In a tavern, in a canyon,
Excavating for a wine,
Lived a miner twenty-niner,
And his mother Clementine.
Chorus: Oh, my darlin', Oh my darlin',
Oh my darlin' Clementine.
You are cost and gone forever,
Helpful sorry Clementine.

Figure 5. Changing the Text worksheet for "Clementine"

Procedure: Once you have established context, put students in pairs and give them a handout of the lyrics (see Figure 5). Tell students that one word in each line is incorrect; it has been replaced with a word that rhymes with or sounds similar to the correct word. Have students look at an example: "Excavating for a wine." Then ask them to look at the key words: *excavating* and *wine*. Do these words go together? *Excavating* means "digging." The singer is a miner; where do miners work? Once *wine/mine* is elicited, ask students to read the remaining lyrics and underline the words they think are incorrect. This step allows them to go over the lyrics once with a partner and, before the listening, create a roadmap for themselves of words they will focus on and change.

Variation: To make this activity more challenging, ask students if they can guess the original word before they listen, using context or rhyming clues as a guide. (Answers are *tavern/cavern; wine/mine; twenty/forty; mother/daughter; cost/lost;* and *helpful/dreadful*.)

Activity 5: Song Strip Connections

Like Changing the Text, this activity can be used to raise awareness of coherence elements. Song Strip Connections is also useful (depending on the song or text used) for attending to complex sentence structures such as conditionals and relative clauses.

Level: Low Intermediate to Advanced

Materials: Paper or pens of two different colors or a highlighter

Preparation: Select a song and divide each line into two parts or clauses, as in Figure 6. Make cards using colored paper: the first half of each line will be on one type of colored

From this valley they say you are going,	I will miss your bright eyes and sweet smile
For they say you are taking the sunshine	that brightens our pathways awhile.
I've been thinking a long time, my darlin',	of the sweet words you never would say
Now, alas, all my fond hopes must vanish	for they say you are going away.

Figure 6. Song Strip Connections for "Red River Valley"

paper (white), and the second half will be on another (blue). If you do not have colored paper, use a highlighter to mark the cards that display the first half of each line. You could also use different colored inks—red for the first half of the line, blue or black for the second half works well. If you can laminate the cards, all the better; that will save you from having to redo the work in the future.

Procedure: Have students work in small groups. Distribute the first half of the lyric cards (white) only and have students spread them out on the table. Play the song and have the students arrange the cards in a column so that the lyrics are arranged in sequential order. Play the song again so that students can check their work. Distribute the blue cards to each group and have students complete each sentence with the correct ending. Once they have constructed the song this way, play and check. Then ask them to analyze the lyrics in groups and report to the class on what they think the song is about.

Activity 6: Song Cards—Take–sort–write

Like Song Pictures and Re-Order It, this activity can be used to explicitly draw attention to the prosody features of English (e.g., emphasis on key content words). It can also be used (depending on the song or text selected) to review or extend vocabulary.

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Preparation: Choose 12–20 vocabulary words or phrases and write each one on an individual card. Laminate them if you can; they will last longer.

Procedure for lower-level students: Arrange students in groups of four to six and spread the cards face-up on a table or desk before them. Have the students say the words out loud one by one. This step prepares their ears for catching the selected words during the first listening and allows them to become familiarized with the position of the words on the table. Then play the song. Students compete to grab and keep the word cards they hear. The student or team with the most cards by the end of the song wins. For a non-competitive game, provide several sets of cards for each group.

Variation and extension for higher-level students: Listen and Sort and Gap Fill

Step 1: Make sure that you have not selected words from the chorus or refrain. Begin as above by spreading the cards on the table and having the students say the words out loud. After students have taken all the cards, give each group a blank Listen and Sort grid similar to the one shown in Figure 7, with one column for each of the song's unique stanzas. During Step 2, students will place the words they hear in the appropriate column, sorting word cards by stanza.

Step 2: Announce "First stanza"; then play the song and pause it at the end of the stanza. As students listen, they put the words they hear in the first column. Once the first stanza has been played, ask students how many cards they have, then tell them the correct number, if necessary. Then play the second stanza and repeat the procedure until the song is completed.

Step 3: After the song has been played through and students have filled in the Listen and Sort grid, have students complete a Gap Fill like the one in Figure 8, using the grid as a guide. When the groups have finished, play the song so they can check their answers.

1st Stanza	2nd Stanza	3rd Stanza	4th Stanza	5th Stanza
Alabama	rained			
banjo	weather			
Louisiana	froze			
love	cry			

Figure 7. Listen and Sort grid for "Oh! Susanna"

Instructions: Fill in the blanks with the words from the grid.

Stanza 1

I come from _____

With a _____ on my knee

I'm going to _____

My true _____ for to see.

Stanza 2

It _____ all night the day I left

The _____ it was dry

The sun so hot, I _____ to death

Susanna, don't you _____.

Figure 8. Gap Fill worksheet for "Oh! Susanna"

Note that having students complete a Gap Fill using word cards spread haphazardly upon a table often proves to be too difficult. By organizing the words in a grid like the one in Figure 7, students have a better chance of successful task completion.

Activity 7: Pair Watching

This activity was passed on to me by colleagues many years ago, and I have subsequently modified it with the variation described here. To date, I have been unable to find the original published source, if one exists. The activity can be used to elicit and practice a range of discourse types—procedural, descriptive, narrative—and is an effective way of laying the foundations for a writing activity by providing content and establishing key vocabulary.

Level: High Beginner to Advanced

Preparation: Find a music video that tells a good visual story. Videos with a lot of interesting action work best. If you can't find a suitable music video, short video clips like *Mr. Bean* are also effective. Clips should be 2 to 5 minutes long.

Procedure:

- Divide students (A and B) into pairs.
- Seat students in two rows, facing each other; Partner A has his or her back to the screen.
- Have Partner B watch 15–20 seconds of the video.
- Press pause, and have Partner B describe what he or she saw to Partner A.
- Switch and repeat until the video is finished.

Follow-up activity: In pairs, students complete a Gap Fill using vocabulary from the clip they have seen and the verbs they should have used to tell the story.

Variation and extension: Before students watch the video, they are given a grid with 20 to 25 of the key words that describe the scenes in the video. Partner A watches the first scene and circles the words that correspond to what he or she sees. Then Partner A relates the story to Partner B, who circles the words he or she hears. Ask the students questions to recap and summarize the first scene that has been shown. Once the scene has been described, elicit from students the words they have circled. Tell the students to put a number 1 beside all their circled words. Then the partners switch seats, and the procedure is repeated with the second scene. This time, students put a number 2 beside the words they have cir-

imagine 3	hero 4	curtain 1	signs 1	mirror 2
ball gown 5	football game 4	bleachers 4	prom 5	flip 4
glasses 1	smile 2	tuxedo 5	hairbrush 2	touchdown 4
sports car 3	kiss 3, 5	bench 3	band 4	phone 1
cheerleader 4	outfits 2	argument 2	study 5	singing 2

Figure 9. Pair Watching grid for "You Belong with Me"

Paragraph 1	Paragraph 2	Paragraph 3	Paragraph 4	Paragraph 5
glasses curtain signs phone	mirror smile hairbrush outfits argument singing	imagine sports car kiss bench	hero football game bleachers flip touchdown band cheerleader	ball gown prom tuxedo kiss study

Figure 10. Pair Watching chart for "You Belong with Me"

cled. By the end of the video clip, the grid will contain words describing five scenes and look something like the sample grid in Figure 9 for "You Belong with Me."

Individually or in pairs, students can then use their grid as a road map for writing a summary of the entire video clip. Words marked "1" will be used in the first paragraph, words marked "2" will be used in the second paragraph, and so on. To make sure students use all the words, have them put an "X" by the word after they use it in a sentence. There will of course be overlap, as some of the key vocabulary words will appear in more than one scene. To organize the summary, students can sort words into columns before they write, as in the chart in Figure 10.

Play the clip again if need be. Usually if students are writing in pairs, I have each student write about the part he or she watched. If students are writing individually, I play the clip again so students can watch the full story from start to finish before they write.

Conclusion

There are many creative and dynamic ways to adapt music and song for the classroom, and these ideas barely scratch the surface. If you have lingering doubts about the educational validity of using songs with your students, consider this quote from Jeremy Harmer (2001):

> Music is a powerful stimulus for student engagement precisely because it speaks directly to our emotions while still allowing us to use our brains to analyze it and its effects if we so wish. A piece of music can change the atmosphere in a classroom or prepare students for a new activity. It can amuse and entertain, and it can make a satisfactory connection between the world of leisure and the world of learning. (242)

Teachers can strengthen that connection by using creative activities that make listening to songs both entertaining and educational for English language learners.

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United States

Digital Stories: A 21st-Century Communication Tool for the English Language Classroom

Swimming in a sea of electronic products and gadgets, today's students live what Swenson et al. (2006) might summarize as digital-media-saturated lives. Students' knowledge and application of technology are producing literacy skills for a 21st-century digital age. At a variety of educational institutions, digital media production functions as a mechanism for learning, expression, and building community and identity. From my perspective as a teacher, digital technology—when used appropriately and meaningfully—produces the successful learner outcomes identified by Sadik (2008), who writes about meaningful integration of technology and its impact on engaged student learning.

One example of digital media production is digital storytelling. The digital story is a short personal narrative involving images (stills, video, graphics), a narrated voiceover, and a recorded audio sound track (see Kajder 2004; Lambert 2010; McGeoch 2010; Ohler 2008; Robin 2008). Originating in 1994 at the Center for Digital Storytelling in Berkeley, California, digital storytelling evolved around co-founder Lambert's thoughts about telling stories and sharing feelings in conjunction with his seven steps of the digital story (2010). This article explores a digital media production experience with a class of English language students who created digital stories for final projects and offers practical suggestions for teachers who might be interested in testing the waters of digital storytelling.

Background

A few years ago, I attended a university conference that focused on the use of technology in education. Faculty from various departments spoke about the use of digital media production for end-of-semester projects. These digital media productions were presented in digital story format. Since today's millennium student relates best to a wired world,

I decided that these end-of-term projects would be a perfect mechanism to motivate and engage students, and to create a sense of community in the English language classroom. In addition, with scaffolding and guidance, the four-skill competencies could be accessed as component parts of the media production: reading, writing, and speaking for the narrative text voiceover; listening and speaking for the practice of pronunciation, intonation, and stress; and listening for grammatical accuracy.

A teacher task first

Before bringing the digital story project into the classroom, I needed to have a better understanding of the production process and the possible frustration that students might experience while working on this project. So I created my first media production, a digital story about a cultural experience in Korea (see Appendix 1, no. 2). The multimodalities of my media production consisted of three component layers: (1) a narrative voiceover, (2) still images (my photographs), and (3) an audio sound track. Once I selected the still photographs, I used storyboards to coordinate each photograph with its particular narrative text for the voiceover.

Following the storyboards helped me plan and organize the visual story, which clearly showed the interaction of images and script, and at the same time clarify order. I recorded the voiceover, fine-tuned the production, and then recorded the final layer of audio sound track. From beginning to end, my digital story took eight hours of production time. Recording the voiceover was the most frustrating aspect of the digital media production. For the first voiceover, I recorded on two different days and discovered that my voice sounded like two different people, so I had to record again and again on the same day for consistency of tone, intonation, and stress. However, I was able to take my frustration and turn it into advice for students to take the time necessary to produce a clear and consistent narrative voiceover.

When my digital story was completed, I shifted focus to creating a scheduled timeline (see Figure 1) to guide students through the production process; I also designed detailed assessment rubrics to evaluate the multimodalities of production. I created a variety of rubrics focused on academic skills, linguistic abilities, and technical creativity to assess student performance and effort. These rubrics proved to be overly ambitious, and there was not adequate time for this kind of detailed feedback, so I designed an abbreviated version (see Appendix 2) that worked well for the allotted class time. At this point, I was ready to take the digital story project into the classroom.

Into the classroom

The digital story project took flight with a class of 15 high-intermediate/low-advanced English language learners who were enrolled in a university-level, integrated skills, English for Academic Purposes program. Representing a diverse population of cultures, the majority of students came from Saudi Arabia, China, and Korea.

The purpose of the digital story project is four-fold: (1) to improve four-skill competencies; (2) to experience collaboration; (3) to expand computer literacy; and (4) to build self-confidence. Regarding topic selection, most students chose cultural themes—for example, a memorable experience, cultural heritage, or family. With regard to the project timeline in Figure 1, the digital story project as we conducted it encompassed a 12-week semester. During this time, I set individual deadlines for completion of the narrative text and the selection of images and sound track; otherwise, the students completed the tasks independently over the course of the semester. I recommend that teachers check every few weeks to see how the students are progressing, especially around task deadlines.

After the narrative text is completed, the writing process continues with the students participating in a series of peer edits that in our case consumed about two hours of class time. For the first and second drafts, paired students share their comments and suggestions for each other's narrative text, targeting language use and grammar correction. For the third draft, because I had a relatively small class, I was able to help with editing and revising the written text, and from this draft, the students prepared a fourth and final draft for the voiceover production, eliminating the need for the rubric category of language use

Preparation for the Digital Storytelling Project

Phase 1: Introduction to digital storytelling

- Teacher shares her digital story.
- Students experience storycenter.org.
- Students participate in a mini-digital-story project for experience with software.

Phase 2: Teacher presents digital storytelling project guidelines and requirements

- Handouts: Schedule/timeline; rubrics for assessment; storyboards
- Materials needed: Thumb drive (at least 2GB); university source for memory storage (student files), if available
- Explanations of the project

Phase 3: Production

Pre-Production

Week 1 – Present digital storytelling project idea
Week 2 – Introduce digital story background and show examples
Week 3 – Software demonstration and mini-digital-story task
Week 4 – Students begin writing narrative and selecting photos*
Week 5 – Students continue writing and selecting*
Week 6 – Students continue writing; peer editing*
Week 7 – Students complete storyboards; more peer editing*

Production

Week 8 – Students upload images and crop if necessary*
Weeks 9 and 10 – Students record narrative voiceovers*
Week 11 – Students fine-tune digital stories*
Week 12 – Students present digital stories

Post-Production

Week 12 – Wrap-up and class feedback

Note: Tasks marked with an asterisk (*) can be done outside class.

Figure 1. Digital storytelling project schedule and timeline

and grammar. Including revisions, students in my class probably spent about four to six hours outside class writing the narrative text.

Considering the 12-week term and the additional curriculum course load required for the semester, I had students keep the digital stories to about four minutes. Based on my own digital story experience, I limited the still photographs to a maximum of 17 images and the narrative voiceover text to about 600 words; the sound track was optional. For these three components, the time students spend outside class might be roughly estimated as follows: one to two hours selecting and preparing the images; one hour preparing the sound track; and two to three hours working on and recording the narrative voiceover. Certainly, the teacher has the option of allotting additional in-class time for any of the steps involved.

When the project is completed—again, the project typically takes a minimum of eight hours to produce—the digital story production can be stored on thumb drives (i.e., flash drives or memory sticks) and DVDs.

The end point of the project in our class was to embed the digital story into an end-of-semester oral presentation consisting of an introduction, a main body (during which the digital story was shown), a conclusion, and a question-and-answer segment.

The process begins

In our case, the process began with a 20-minute, how-to demonstration on Apple's iMovie software given by the manager of our technology department, who was excited about the project. While a demonstration is not necessary, students should familiarize themselves with the software program they are going to use. My own digital story was produced entirely on GarageBand software; however, Apple users have iMovie, and PC users have Windows Movie Maker and Photo Story. In addition, websites such as VoiceThread (multimedia productions), Audacity (audio), and Animoto can also be used. As a basic introduction to digital story production, Animoto, a web application, provides the user with a simple approach to producing videos with photographs, video clips, and music, supplied by the website.

Whether or not there is a software demonstration, students can watch digital stories as examples. After I shared my digital story on Korea, the students watched several digital stories from the *New York Times* online series titled "One in 8 Million," which documents the daily lives of some people who live in Manhattan (see Appendix 1, no. 1). These black-and-white vignettes combine still photography and a voiceover to create an artistic approach to telling stories. We looked at additional examples of digital stories from the Center for Digital Storytelling; other valuable Internet resources are available for further exploration (see Appendix 1). Even though students watch examples of digital stories and are given an extensive list of website resources to assist in the process, it is a good idea to spend time as a class discussing the examples—what students liked and disliked, techniques they noticed (relating to narrative, photography, sound, language use, etc.), techniques they are interested in trying themselves, questions they have, and so forth.

I told the students in advance to select several personal photographs and write a few sentences about the pictures, and after watching the digital stories, they were given time to produce a mini–digital story. This task can be done with the assistance of a technical staff person, the teacher, or students in the class who are already familiar with the software. By the end of class, all students will have created a mini–digital story while using the software technology on their own or with assistance; moreover, this class assignment provides the teacher with an opportunity to observe the extent of each student's computer literacy.

Figure 2 provides criteria that can be used as assessment or for guidance. It is suggested that students receive these criteria when the project is assigned.

Collaboration

If you would like to encourage collaboration in your class, one option is to place students in collaborative pairs—the idea being that a student with technology experience would be paired with a student who lacks it—with the hope that the resulting social interaction will be what Warschauer (1997, 471) calls "an environment to learn language, learn about language, and learn 'through' language." It is possible, though, that in some pairs, social and cultural norms might clash, causing conflict that can erode the collaborative ideal. Another option, and what we did in our class, is for each student to produce his or her own digital story and in that way move at his or her own pace. Nonetheless, successful collaboration did occur when tech-savvy students willingly assisted others with various aspects of production and when students peer-edited their narrative texts in preparation for the voiceover recording.

Decisions, frustrations, and rewards

Most of the students made decisions on topic selection and still images by the third week of the production period. However, a few students struggled with indecision or wrong choices, so it took them more time to decide, delaying the production process. Overall, frustrations were mostly in reaction to unfamiliarity with the technology, and consequently student collaboration became a powerful solution. In the end, upon completion of the final presentations, which included the digital stories, students clearly showed a sense of pride, reaping the rewards of a job well done.

In particular, a very shy and reserved student from Korea, who had to be called on to participate in class, produced a digital story

Storyboard/Planning
Writing Process – There is evidence that a lot of time and effort was devoted to drafting, reviewing, and editing.
Written Narrative – Content is in the student's own words and is grammatically accurate.
Vocabulary – There is a sophisticated variety of vocabulary.
Coordination of Narrative and Images – The storyboard reflects outstanding planning and pairing of the written content and visual images.
Citing Resources – All sources are properly cited.

Narrative Voiceover and Additional Audio
Narrative Pacing – The pace (rhythm and voice punctuation) fits the story line and totally engages the audience.
Pronunciation – All words are pronounced correctly, with the stress placed on the appropriate syllable.
Intonation – The voice stirs an emotional response that matches the story line.
Audio Layer/Sound Track – The sound track and additional audio successfully link the narrative and visual images.

Presentation of the Story
Oral Presentation – The presentation is well rehearsed, and there is a smooth delivery that holds the audience's attention.
Depth of Content – There is clear evidence that higher critical-thinking skills are used.
Organization – The content has a clear logical structure and flow.
Duration – The story lasts between 3 and 5 minutes.

Overall Multimedia Project Assessment
Collaboration – The student has met and discussed with others regularly, and has contributed his or her fair share of the work.
Concept – The presentation reflects a clear idea of what the student is trying to achieve.
Creativity – The story contains creative details and description with a lot of imagination.
Use of Equipment – Multimedia resources (recording equipment, computer software, etc.) are used to communicate the story successfully.
Technical – The project runs smoothly with no avoidable technical problems.

Figure 2. Suggested criteria for assessment and guidance

focusing on her one-year cultural experience in the United States: friends, events, dining out, shopping, studying, and teaching English at her church. She had no difficulty selecting her topic and still images; however, she had never created a digital story and consequently was intimidated by the software. A student from Taiwan, who had experience with technology, was willing to collaborate, and as a result their shared efforts, all spoken in English, helped her produce a beautifully executed digital media production. While captivating her classmates with her final presentation, she was cognizant that her digital story was the catalyst for her achievement. Culminating in the improvement of skill competencies, expansion of computer literacy, development of self-confidence, and enlightenment from collaboration, this one student's achievement justified the time and effort invested in the project.

Feedback and assessment

After each final presentation, classmates asked questions to complete missing information, generated more ideas for discussion, and questioned particular elements involved in the creative process. I requested that each presenter address what he or she learned from the digital story experience. Then, the

students and I completed assessment forms for student feedback (see Appendix 2). For a more detailed assessment, teachers can also use the criteria presented in Figure 2.

Issues and challenges

The first challenge was time. Creating digital stories can be time-consuming, especially for those teachers and students who have never before used digital production software. Limiting the length of the stories—again, we set the limit at about four minutes—alleviates this concern. The second challenge was the copyright issue and the need to respect intellectual property rights. In reference to these challenges, the students were required to cite sources for graphics, photographs, music, and any text that was not of their own making; as a result, the rigors of citation wound up serving as a catalyst for students to create their own content.

An additional issue concerned those students who were intimidated by new technology and might have preferred a more traditional approach to English language teaching. Technology should not overwhelm the process of language learning and teaching, but it should function as a springboard for language production and a pathway for engagement and developing community. For these students, the project could have started with a simplified effort, consisting of one or two photographs with minimal narrative text for voiceover and no audio sound track; subsequently, students could have gradually built up their competency with technology to a more involved project, one step at a time.

Finally, for those teaching situations with limited resources, some of the digital story production can be done in the classroom. Not all students have to be in the computer lab at the same time; students can move on to computers when they are ready for that step in the process. If students do not own or have access to a digital camera, images and clip art can be obtained from the Internet. If obtaining images from the Internet is not possible, students can use photographs and illustrations from various print sources as their still images and coordinate them with a simple voiceover recording, using a website such as www.vocaroo.com (see Appendix 1).

Benefits

The production of digital stories capitalizes on the creative talents of students, and consequently they take great pride in the finished product and in seeing their efforts projected on a screen in front of their peers, while engaging the entire class. In addition, student collaboration of digital production or peer editing of narrative text reveals moments of engagement, leadership, and students taking control. Furthermore, digital media production provides a meaningful vehicle for assessment.

Overall, digital storytelling is a beneficial and valuable mechanism for improving the four-skill areas of English language competency. Moreover, with regard to technology use in today's classroom, Brown, Bryan, and Brown (2005) state that a strong foundation of different types of literacies affects student learning: digital, global, visual, information, and most notably, technology.

Conclusion

Having been through the process, I strongly believe that the digital story is a perfect mechanism for all skill areas of language production with higher-level English language learners—it is also engaging, motivating, and creative. The benefits of digital media production outweigh the issues and challenges. Teachers should consider that in today's classroom, the integration of technology, pedagogy, and content leads to "a deeper understanding of the different and more powerful roles that digital media can play in both teaching and learning" (Robin 2008, 227). Research and my class's experience show that computer-assisted instruction and 21st-century communicative tools do play such roles and have a positive effect on student learning outcomes.

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Appendix 1 Online Digital Storytelling Projects and Resources

Digital Stories: A 21st-Century Communication Tool for the English Language Classroom • **Kathy Brenner**

Resources for Digital Storytelling Projects

1. *New York Times*, "One in 8 Million": www.nytimes.com/packages/html/nyregion/1-in-8-million/index.html?scp=1-spot&sq=one%20in%208%20million&st=cse

2. Kathy Brenner's 2009 digital story: http://blip.tv/celopboston-university/korean-buddhist-temples-by-kathy-brenner-3437457

3. Center for Digital Storytelling: www.storycenter.org

4. University of Houston's College of Education's website on digital storytelling: http://digitalstorytelling.coe.uh.edu

5. Tech and Learning: Ideas and Tools for Ed Tech Leaders: www.techlearning.com/Default.aspx?tabid=67&entryid=5129

6. Audacity program for recording and editing sounds: http://audacity.sourceforge.net

7. Art, Storytelling, Technology and Education: Resources for Educators, Parents, Innovators: www.jasonohler.com/storytelling/index.cfm

8. VoiceThread: Share and discuss documents, presentations, images, audio files, and videos: www.voicethread.com

9. Vocaroo: Online Voice Recorder: www.vocaroo.com

10. Using Google Apps for Digital Storytelling Projects: www.youtube.com/watch?v=uXCmk4aib3E

Appendix 2 End-of-Semester Digital Storytelling Project: Final Presentation Feedback

Digital Story Evaluation Sheet

Use these ratings and rubrics to evaluate a digital storytelling project.

E = Excellent, VG = Very Good, G = Good, F = Fair

Digital Media Components		**E**	**VG**	**G**	**F**
Narrative	Depth of content				
Still photographs	Image coordination				
Audio sound track	Appropriateness				
Voiceover	Pronunciation and clarity				

Digital Media Production		**E**	**VG**	**G**	**F**
Creativity	Design				
Flow of narrative	Coordination of stills and narrative				
Organization	Continuity				
Technical success and use of equipment and software	Level of professionalism				

Final Presentation		**E**	**VG**	**G**	**F**
Presence	Style				
Preparation	Organization				
Eye contact	Body language				

Digital Story Presentation Feedback Sheet

Grade your peers on their presentation skills: Assign a number from 1 to 10, with 10 being the best score.

Eye contact	
Body language	
Voice projection (volume)	

Quality of topic	
Preparation	
Organization	
Use of notes	

Digital Story (Main body)

Slides/visuals	
Voiceover/pronunciation	
Technical skills	
Overall creativity	

Presentation Segments

Introduction	
Conclusion	
Handling of Q & A	

Additional Comments:

Yun Zhang and Cun Gao
China

Back Translating: An Integrated Approach to Focus Learners' Attention on Their L2 Knowledge Gaps

Reading is an important channel for students to receive second language (L2) input, but unmindful or distracted reading offers little to L2 acquisition, which helps to explain why learners often complain about their minimal progress after taking extensive reading courses. It is generally believed that L2 acquisition is impossible without focused attention on target language forms, since "people learn about the things that they pay attention to and do not learn much about the things they do not attend to" (Schmidt 2010, 721). Thus, strategies to help learners consciously notice target language forms are of high importance in L2 reading instruction. Importantly, this noticing strategy also applies to the other skills; for instance, properly designed writing activities help learners notice what meanings they cannot accurately convey in English, and this negative feedback prompts them to return to the original reading material to find the related forms in context, thereby paving the way for L2 acquisition.

Because of the notable shortcomings of teaching listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills separately, English as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL) researchers and practitioners regularly explore techniques to integrate the four skills into lesson plans. For example, Zhang (2009) discusses four activities that integrate the teaching of reading and speaking, focusing on how reading enhances learners' speaking ability.

In this article, we will continue to discuss the integration of language skills in classroom teaching by focusing on *back translating*—translating an English text into the student's first language (L1) and then back into English. After discussing theoretical rationale, we will suggest ways to incorporate back-translating writing

exercises into reading classes as a beneficial method to focus learners' attention on the gaps in their English competence.

Input: The importance of attention and negotiation for meaning

According to Krashen's (1985) Input Hypothesis, an essential factor for language acquisition is input that is comprehensible but that also contains language structures beyond the learner's current proficiency level; in addition, he claims that "the input hypothesis has been successfully applied in the area of reading" (Krashen 2003). However, there is some debate about whether comprehensible input alone will necessarily trigger the process of L2 acquisition; as pointed out by Saville-Troike (2006, 74), input "is not available for processing unless learners actually notice it: i.e. pay attention to it."

Schmidt (2001, 3) sees attention as a vital means to comprehend L2 acquisition, including "the ways in which interaction, negotiation for meaning, and all forms of instruction contribute to language learning." Indeed, it is possible to claim that there is no L2 acquisition without attention. In explaining the Interaction Hypothesis, Long (1996) states that "selective attention and the learner's developing L2 processing capacity" are "brought together most usefully, although not exclusively, during negotiation for meaning" (414). In other words, when interlocutors or readers make efforts to overcome communication barriers by negotiating meaning, they receive both additional input and valuable feedback that they pay attention to. The result is *intake*—new language structures that become integrated into the learner's developing language system.

According to Johnson (2004, 54), this "negotiation for meaning provides the opportunity for negative feedback," which "draws the learner's attention to the target language's linguistic structures" and "may lead the learner to noticing the gap in his or her linguistic competence and to converting the incoming input into intake." In Johnson's model, negotiation for meaning plays the role of an independent mediator between the learner's external and internal environments and makes it possible for learners to realize their internal needs and then look for solutions in their external environments.

To more clearly demonstrate the role of negotiation for meaning, we designed a model to illustrate the prominent role played by attention to new language forms. (See Figure 1.)

As the dotted line indicates, new language forms from the input do not interact directly with the learner's present L2 capacity. That is to say, new language forms do not directly enter a learner's L2 inventory and then enhance his or her present L2 capacity. Learners notice these new forms only when negotiation-for-meaning activities make them a focus of conscious or subconscious attention.

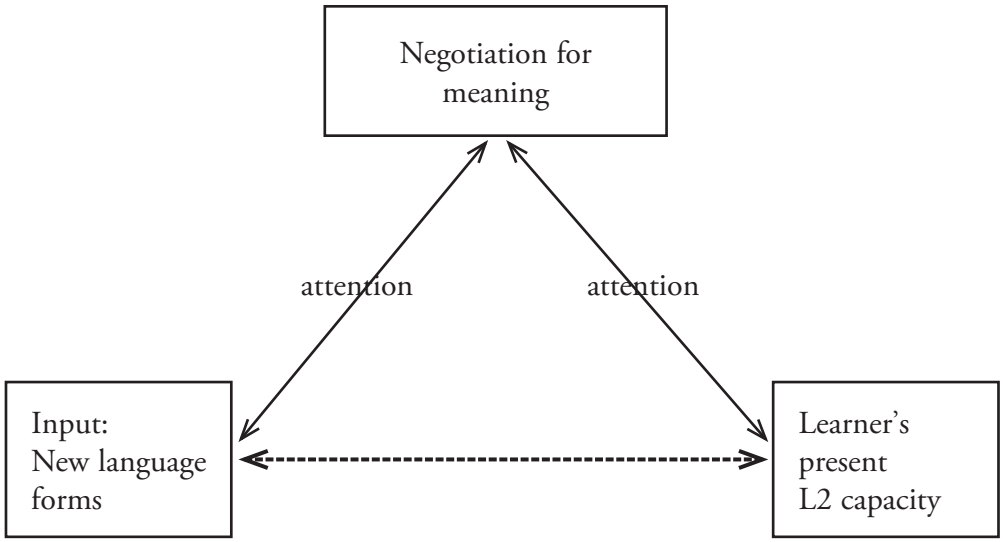

Figure 1. Negotiation for meaning as an attention-raising device

Learners perform these activities *subconsciously* when they try to figure out the meaning of a word, a phrase, or a sentence. They negotiate for meaning *consciously* when they are involved in output activities such as speaking and writing that provide them with both positive feedback, which builds their confidence, and negative feedback, which directs their attention to specific forms, thus making their learning more clearly targeted.

The role of output in L2 acquisition

Swain and Lapkin (1995) describe the importance of output to L2 acquisition, which is reiterated by Saville-Troike (2006), who states that meaningful interaction helps students notice "gaps in their own knowledge as they are forced to move from semantic to syntactic processing, which may lead learners to give more attention to relevant information" (75). Besides promoting fluency and collaborative problem solving, meaningful output contributes to language acquisition by arousing awareness of otherwise unnoticed L2 forms and makes the student "aware of something he or she needs to find out about L2 grammar" (Johnson 2004, 52).

These claims about output suggest that learners will pay attention to the language forms when they realize the mismatch between the intended meanings and the L2 forms available to them. Only when learners are aware that the forms needed are lacking from their L2 knowledge will they direct their attention to locating those forms, and only when those forms are noticed frequently enough will they be ingrained in learners' L2 inventory and acquired as explicit knowledge of the new language.

Schmidt (1990) feels that some features of noticing are crucial and require strategic intervention by teachers to be useful. Therefore, when planning a lesson, English teachers—as indispensable facilitators—should include output activities in their instructional strategies to help learners notice the gap in their English knowledge, thus making classroom teaching more effective for acquisition. Input and output of the target language, like two sides of the same coin, should not be separated from each other. Including writing (output) with reading (input) activities makes it more likely that the reading will leave a deeper impression on learners, thus enhancing long-term memory of the target language forms.

When teaching reading, instructors often use true-or-false statements, multiple-choice questions, or main-idea questions to check students' comprehension of the chosen materials; however, these assessments are typically only meaning-oriented and might not raise learners' attention to language forms. Therefore, these comprehension-checking activities should be accompanied by negotiating-for-meaning output activities that cause learners to consciously notice the gaps in their English knowledge. These negotiating-for-meaning activities should stick to one principle: focusing learners' attention on both meaning and form. In the following section, we will establish back translating as an activity where both input and output productively engage students in a task that highlights gaps in their knowledge of English.

Back translating

Back translating simply refers to the process of translating a translated text back to its original language. Back translating is beneficial for fostering learners' consciousness of the lexical, idiomatic, and syntactic differences between their native language and the target language. If properly used, this activity facilitates English acquisition. When used in reading classes, back translating can be broken down into the following three steps.

Step 1: Selecting an appropriate English text and preparing an L1 version

To begin, teachers should select the text with care, keeping in mind the length and the level of difficulty, as well as students' interest in the content. In ESL/EFL classes, learners are often at different proficiency levels, and their needs to make progress differ greatly. For this reason, it is important for instructors to know how to adapt reading tasks and exercises to make them accessible to various competence levels.

In our experience, the time allotted for the learners' back-translating process should be kept within 15 minutes; otherwise, there might be too much of a workload to maintain motivation. It is also acceptable to give learners a slightly longer piece to work on, even if some of them will not finish within 15 minutes. That will benefit the more

advanced learners and can make learning more self-adaptive.

Texts of varied contents or genres work well with this technique, but the selected texts should contain language forms relevant to students in their current situation or in some future English-use domains. Selecting a text purposefully is as simple as picking a text in the past tense if learners are studying the use of past tense. But if they are learning English for a specific purpose—say, business negotiation—dialogues containing potentially useful expressions such as, "I'm sorry to see that your price has risen," might be more relevant than, for example, an academic introduction to American business history.

Usable translated texts can be found in bilingual magazines that keep up with the times and contain interesting texts that match the learners' interest. Teachers can also select materials from classic literary works with available translated versions. If time permits, teachers can also be flexible and translate the texts themselves; this approach might be more convenient in providing effective teaching materials and at the same time has the advantage of allowing teachers to adequately familiarize themselves with those texts.

The length of the translated texts can range from one or two short sentences to longer paragraphs and should vary with reference to learners' English language level. For learners with low proficiency, simpler and shorter texts are preferable. Complex and longer texts should be used only with high-proficiency learners, and even then the length of the texts should be kept within a reasonable scope, for translating a long text can be intimidating and tiring and might make students lose interest.

Step 2: Translating the L1 text back into English

In class, the teacher asks learners to translate the L1 text back into English, in which it was originally written. Teachers may ask learners to do the translating in three ways: (1) independently, (2) with a partner, or (3) in groups. The choice depends on the time allocated to the activity, the learners' present English capacity, and the demands of the task. In general, the more learners who are involved in the task, the less demanding it is perceived to be, and the quicker it will be finished. We encourage collaborative work, since peer or group discussion offers the necessary scaffolds to move students to the next level of their English language ability by providing them with opportunities to pool their English-knowledge resources and work out solutions to problems that they could not solve independently. During the back-translating process, teachers ask learners to notice, or pay attention to, the particular meanings they could not convey in English, and later ask them to locate the corresponding forms in the original English text.

Step 3: Comparing the back-translated English text with the original

In this step, the teacher asks students to do a close comparison of their English back translation and the original English text. Before students do the comparison, teachers remind them that the goal of the back translation is to help them notice gaps in their English knowledge, not necessarily to come as close as possible to the original text. Teachers should also offer the following three explanations about the differences between the back translation and the original text: (1) the information learners get from the L1 translation is not 100 percent equivalent to that in the original English text; that is the nature of translation; (2) language is not like mathematics, in which there is most probably only one definite answer to a specific question; in language, there are usually different ways to express the same meaning, and it is likely that more than one expression is appropriate for a given situation; and (3) in back translating, learners may be restricted by their own English language ability and display a unique non-native style in their use of English.

The third explanation is important for learners to explore when doing the comparison of their back translation and the original. If learners clearly understand the goal of the activity—to notice the gaps in their English knowledge and the reasons that might be responsible for the difference between the original and the back translation—they will not be discouraged even if the original is very different from their own back translation, and they will become motivated to explore the causes of those differences.

When learners compare their back translation with the original, teachers give specific instructions to focus attention on the differ-

ences in students' L2 renditions by providing the following instructions:

- Study the difference in the choice of words or phrases between your back translation and the original, and discuss with a partner why those in the original constructions are more appropriate—or try to determine whether your wording is also appropriate and maybe just different.
- Study the syntactic difference between your back translation and the original, and discuss with your partner what leads to the difference and whether you were influenced by your L1 or the way of thinking that is specific to your native culture.
- Check whether there are any English culture-specific elements—such as figures of speech or references to cultural icons—that you need to become familiar with.

On the sentence level, back translation helps teachers and students notice a number of gaps related to grammar, vocabulary, collocations, and idioms. For example, the sentence "There was a middle-aged man walking up and down the street all last night" might be back-translated in a number of ways, but one gap might be revealed by a back translation that says, "There was a middle-aged man walked …," indicating a gap in the student's knowledge of the *there-be* structure. Other students might back-translate "last night" as "yesterday night," which for most English speakers is not idiomatic. Other gaps include difficulty back-translating "up and down the street" or "middle-aged." In each case, noticing the difference between the original and the back translation is a first step toward awareness of a gap and then filling in the gap. Gaps also arise with idiomatic expressions, such as when "strong as a horse" is back-translated as "strong as a cow," which draws attention to cultural differences and the ways similar concepts are expressed in different languages.

During the comparison process, teachers ask learners to pay attention to the difference between the way they and native speakers express meaning, and help them discover the source of the difference. Once the reason for the difference is noticed and understood, the English forms will leave a deeper impression on learners. Those learners, as active users of the target language, will have a more powerful meaning-conveying ability when they express similar meanings in the future. At first, and at lower levels, the instructor's guidance and feedback is necessary to help students develop their noticing skills, but with practice, learners can use the technique on their own.

This activity raises learners' consciousness about what to learn from the reading material (the original text). Since all the learners receive negative feedback unique to themselves, they will have different points of focus when listening to the teacher's explanation of the text or when doing their own analyses. Each of them will benefit from the classroom instruction in his or her own way.

Variations of the back-translating activity

Learners enjoy much freedom during the back-translating process and are not constrained by any translation principles, since the role of the translated text is only to provide them with meanings they are required to express in English. For learners who are at a lower level of English and not capable of covering the entire text, supplying the main idea in English is also acceptable, as this makes learning from back translating responsive to the students' needs. Writing only the main idea will not defeat the purpose of the activity, since it clearly reveals the forms that are necessary to express the intended meanings that are lacking in learners' English knowledge.

The back-translating activity can also be organized after an explanation or discussion of the reading material. Asking students to write out the story according to the translated text (or according to their memory) will leave them with a clear understanding of the language forms that they have already learned and those that are still lacking in their English inventory.

If time is short, this activity can also be done orally. In this case, teachers first supply the meaning of the original text in students' native language and then ask them to express the meaning in spoken English. We suggest that teachers present only one sentence at a time and if necessary ask learners to collaborate on the translation. If one learner can translate only part of a sentence, others may

be able to supply necessary language forms to complete the translation. Recasting or explicitly pointing out learners' gaps will also direct their attention to specific structures. This activity is flexible and can be adopted whenever and wherever teachers find there are language forms that need learners' special attention. It can also be used to uncover gaps that learners and teachers were previously unaware of.

Outside class, students can do back translating by themselves. As one exercise, teachers ask learners to read an article as an assignment and in the following week provide them with a translated version of the article for them to back-translate as another assignment. Teachers then ask them to compare their written work with the original text by referring to the three explanations in Step 3 above. To enhance the effectiveness of this after-class activity, teachers ask learners to hand in their back translations and briefly report to the whole class what they have learned regarding the gaps they noticed.

Conclusion

An instructional strategy that focuses attention on unknown language forms contributes to L2 acquisition. Without attention, new language forms are often passed over and do not become entrenched in the learner's L2 inventory. Reading is one of the most important ways to receive L2 input and is enhanced when integrated with output through writing, especially when both skills are employed in a back-translation activity requiring attention, noticing, and negotiating for meaning with the text to discover and acquire previously unknown language forms. Because back translating necessarily involves a detailed focus on students' English-knowledge gaps, it is well deserving of a place in the reading class.

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BIRDING—Fun and Science

by Phyllis McIntosh

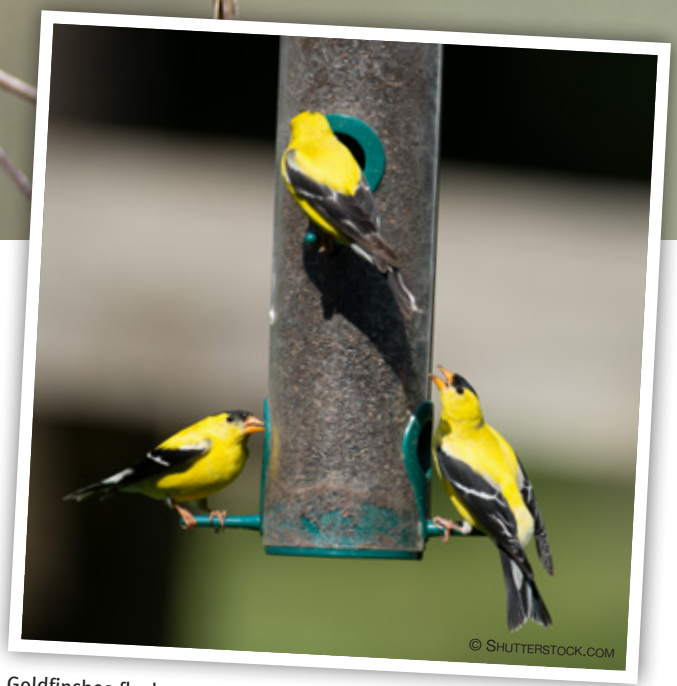
For passionate birdwatcher Sandy Komito of Fair Lawn, New Jersey, 1998 was a big year. In a tight competition with two fellow birders to see as many species as possible in a single year, Komito traveled 270,000 miles, crisscrossing North America and voyaging far out to sea to locate rare and elusive birds. In the end, he set a North American record of 748 species, topping his own previous record of 726, which had stood for 11 years.

Komito and his fellow competitors are not alone in their love of birds. According to a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service survey, about one in five Americans over age 16 say they actively observe and try to identify birds, although few go to the extremes Komito did. About 88 percent are content to enjoy bird watching in their own backyards or neighborhoods.

More avid participants plan vacations around their hobby and sometimes travel long distances to view a rare species and add it to their lifelong list of birds spotted. Many birdwatchers, both casual and serious, also function as citizen scientists, providing valuable data to help scientists monitor bird populations and create management guidelines to protect species in decline.

Birding Basics

The origins of bird watching in the United States date back to the late 1800s when conservationists became concerned about the hunting of birds to supply feathers for the fashion industry. It was better, they argued, to watch birds in the wild than to shoot them. The term *bird watching* is thought to have originated in 1901 with the publication of a book with that name. Today, *bird watching* and *birding* are used interchangeably; some people prefer *birding* because it encompasses listening to birds rather than just watching them.



Goldfinches flock around a feeder filled with nyger (thistle) seed.

(above) An eastern bluebird douses itself in a birdbath.

(right) This bird-friendly yard has several bird feeders as well as plants and trees that attract birds.

With improvements in binoculars following World War II and the publication of field guides with pictures and descriptions of bird species, interest in birding grew throughout the 20th century. In fact, those two tools—a decent pair of binoculars and a colored photo field guide—are all that one needs to enjoy watching birds.

Organizations such as the National Audubon Society, the American Birding Association, and the National Wildlife Federation offer information on how to attract birds to your backyard. Numerous stores, such as the Wild Birds Unlimited chain, stock a full range of supplies to aid the process.

Basically, birds feel welcome wherever they find:

- ***Food.*** Feeders offering one or two kinds of food, such as sunflower seeds and nyger (thistle) seed, will quickly attract a variety of birds. Adding specialty items like a suet cake or sugar solution will invite woodpeckers and hummingbirds as well.
- ***Water.*** Birds need a ready supply of water for drinking and bathing. A standing birdbath or a ground-level pool in an old frying pan or trash can lid can serve the purpose.
- ***Natural habitat.*** Birds prefer a less-than-tidy yard, where a variety of native plants, brush piles, and dead logs provide plenty of food, cover, and places to nest. Leaving dead leaves, twigs, moss, and even yarn or string in the yard gives birds a choice of nesting materials.
- ***Protection.*** Bird lovers avoid using chemical pesticides and herbicides on their property, keep cats indoors, and minimize lighting that could lure migrating birds off course.

All year round, throughout the country, such measures—even just a backyard feeder—are almost guaranteed to attract common bird species, including the house sparrow, American robin, mourning dove, downy woodpecker, and the beautiful yellow American goldfinch.

A man uses binoculars to study a bird at a feeder in his backyard.

The Appeal of Birding

Birding has broad appeal for a number of reasons. For one, bird watching is enjoyable for all ages and abilities. It is a way to introduce children to nature and a means for the elderly or homebound to connect to the outdoor world. Birding is ideal both as a family activity and as a solitary pursuit for individuals who want to escape from the pressures of daily life.

As backyard birdwatchers become more familiar with visitors to their feeders, they may expand their interest by taking classes to learn more about birds or by joining a local club to go for walks with other birders. According to the website www.birdwatching.com, it's relatively easy to find at least 100 species of birds in any region of the United States.

As satisfying as bird watching is itself, it also goes well with other hobbies. Photography buffs like to capture images of birds. Gardeners often decide to cultivate plants that will attract birds. Woodworking enthusiasts may take pleasure in building birdhouses, nest boxes, and feeders. Hikers may enjoy trekking to out-of-the-way locales in search of birds of prey and other species that do not frequent backyards.

Watching and studying birds often develops into an interest in broader conservation issues, such as air and water quality and protection of forests and wetlands that provide habitat for birds and other wildlife. Many birders become active in local and national organizations working to protect the environment.

Serious Birding—Life Lists and Big Years

For some people, birding becomes a lifelong passion on which they are willing to lavish considerable time and money. Some birders plan vacations to take advantage of new bird watching opportunities or to attend some of the 200 birding festivals held each year in the United States and Canada. Convened at prime birding locations, festivals feature lectures, workshops, and visits to local birding hot spots. Some festivals focus on individual species, such as bald eagles, snow geese, and hummingbirds.

Thanks to birding websites, listservs, and organizations such as the North American Rare Bird Alert, a subscription reporting service sponsored by the Houston Audubon Society, news of rare bird sightings spreads quickly throughout the birding community. When a falcated duck normally seen only in Asia landed in California in January 2010, thousands of birders flocked to the Colusa National Wildlife Refuge near Fresno hoping to catch a glimpse.

Such sightings are opportunities for serious birders to add to their life lists—detailed compilations of all the bird species they have seen over the years. Some people take expensive trips to Antarctica or the Amazon in hopes of adding to their life lists. There is a 600 Club for birders who have sighted that many out of the more than 800 species found in North America. While some enthusiasts have spent their lives trying to see all 10,000 species of birds thought to inhabit the globe, only a handful have logged more than 8,000.

Serious birders also compete to determine who can identify the most species within a certain time or area. Competitions include "big day" events, in which teams have 24 hours to spot the most species, and "big sit" events, where birders identify birds within a prescribed circle, typically with a diameter of 17 feet.

The ultimate competition is the "big year," in which individuals travel widely to locate the most species. The first American to complete a North American Big Year was Guy Emerson, a New York

banker and National Audubon Society board member who in 1939 combined birding with business trips to log a total of 497 species.

Legendary among big year record holders is the late Ted Parker, who began his 1971 big year as an 18-year-old high school student in Pennsylvania and completed it as a freshman at the University of Arizona. His tally of 626 species remained unbroken for 15 years. Parker went on to become a renowned ornithologist and expert on tropical birds.

The reigning king of the big year is Sandy Komito, whose record-breaking competition against fellow birders Greg Miller and Al Levitan is chronicled in a book titled *The Big Year: A Tale of Man, Nature, and Fowl Obsession*. The story is featured in a 2011 movie, also called *The Big Year*, starring Jack Black, Steve Martin, and Owen Wilson.

In today's digital age, birders have more tools than ever to aid them in their quests. Digital cameras that can be used with binoculars or a spotting scope make it easier than ever to photograph birds in the wild. Advances in both audio and video technology make it possible to take large amounts of data, photos, and recordings of bird calls into the field in pocket-sized devices. The *Audubon Birds* field guide, for example, is available as an app for the iPhone, iPad, and Android smart phones. Perhaps the ultimate in gee-whiz tools are binoculars with built-in cameras that take both video and still shots with powerful zoom lenses. And some can record in both 2D and 3D.

Citizen Scientists

In addition to gaining enormous personal satisfaction from their hobby, birders at all levels make invaluable contributions to scientific knowledge about birds and their status in the wild. *BirdWatching* magazine lists more than 100 projects that rely on citizen observers, many of them focused on individual species and locales.

Organizations such as the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology actively recruit birders to help gather nationwide data on bird populations. The Cornell Lab notes that birdwatchers report tens of thousands of bird observations to the lab every day, and more than 200,000 people a year participate in its citizen science projects. Data contributed have been used in more than 60 scientific papers since 1997.

Popular citizen science projects include:

- ***Annual bird counts.*** Believed to be the longest-running wildlife census in the world, the National Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Count enlists more than 60,000 volunteers to count birds in locally specified areas during a three-week period in December and January. More than a century old, the count has provided data for key reports such as Audubon's *Birds and Climate Change* and *Common Birds in Decline*. In 1980, Christmas counts documented the decline in wintering populations of the American black duck, which led to restrictions on hunting that species.

  In 1997, Audubon and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology launched the Great Backyard Bird Count, which engages birdwatchers to count birds during four days in February and report their findings online. Anyone can visit the website www.birdcount.org to view real-time maps and charts that show what birdwatchers across the country are finding. The counts can provide the first sign that a species is increasing or declining or that its range is expanding or shrinking.

(above) Bird eggs in a nest

(right) A blue jay and a cardinal look for food at a snow-covered feeder.

- ***Project FeederWatch.*** Throughout the winter, some 15,000 people periodically count birds that visit feeders in their backyards, nature centers, and communities and relay the information to the Cornell Lab. The more than 15 million checklists submitted since 1987 have helped scientists study the impact of nonnative species on native birds and track unpredictable movements of winter bird populations.
- ***eBird.*** Another joint project of the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab, eBird is an online database where birders can keep track of their own sightings, share their observations with scientists, conservationists, and fellow birders, and access data about birds in their area and throughout the Western Hemisphere.
- ***NestWatch.*** Launched in 1997 by the Cornell Lab, NestWatch enlists volunteers to find and monitor bird nests and report on their locations, habitats, species, and numbers of eggs and young birds. More than 100,000 nesting records submitted so far have enabled scientists to track the breeding success of birds across North America.
- ***Celebrate Urban Birds.*** To encourage city kids and community groups to focus on birds in their environment, the Cornell Lab provides free kits with posters, flower seeds, and data forms. Participants are then asked to observe a small area for 10 minutes at a time and report on the presence or absence of 16 species of birds.

Many birdwatchers and bird experts alike would no doubt agree with Roger Tory Peterson, a noted American naturalist and ornithologist, who called birds "the most exciting and deserving of the vertebrates." They are, he said, "perhaps the best entrée into the study of natural history and a very good wedge into conservation awareness."

More than that, birds in their infinite variety touch a chord within us that makes us want to know them better. As Peterson went on to say, "The truth of the matter is, the birds could very well live without us, but many—perhaps all—of us would find life incomplete, indeed almost intolerable, without the birds."

Birder Words

dimorphism – difference between the sexes of the same species. For example, males may be smaller and brightly colored, while females may be larger and plainer.
flyway – route used by migratory birds to travel between wintering and breeding grounds
irruption – large influx of birds of the same species into an area outside their normal range, possibly caused by drought or other environmental changes
lifer – a bird that is first seen and identified by a birder and added to the birder's life list
little brown jobs (LBJs) – small, dull-colored, unremarkable birds that some birders don't want to bother with
mobbing – the banding together of a group of birds to chase away an intruder or predator
molting – process of a bird shedding worn feathers as new ones grow in to replace them
raptor – a carnivorous bird of prey, such as an eagle, vulture, falcon, or hawk
twitcher – a birder who travels great distances or goes to great effort to see a new bird species
vagrant – an individual bird present in an area where it is not normally found

This male (left) and female cardinal illustrate *dimorphism*.

Websites of Interest

American Birding Association
www.aba.org

In addition to news about publications, events, and other resources for recreational birders, this site features a special page and blog for young birders and a Birders Exchange, through which birders in the United States can donate binoculars and other equipment to researchers and conservationists in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Birdwatching Dot Com
www.birdwatching.com

Billing itself as "your lifetime ticket to the theater of nature," this site combines useful information such as birding tips for all seasons and reviews of binoculars and spotting scopes with an online store full of birding equipment, DVDs, software, and gifts for birders.

National Audubon Society
www.audubon.org

Official website of the premier U.S. organization associated with birds, this site provides a wealth of information about birds and about the Audubon Society's extensive conservation work. The education section features such topics as "Tips for Bringing Nature to the Classroom."

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology
www.birds.cornell.edu

This site describes the lab's research, educational, and conservation efforts on behalf of birds. It includes a detailed list of citizen science projects and an "All About Birds" section that explains the basics of birding, has an informative bird guide, and provides tips on attracting birds to your yard.

The Legacy of John James Audubon

Carolina chickadee, a bird named by John James Audubon

The one person most associated with birds in the United States is John James Audubon, even though he died more than 160 years ago. Born in Haiti in 1785, he grew up in France, where he developed a passion for collecting and drawing items from nature, especially birds' nests and eggs.

After coming to the United States as a young man, Audubon discovered that he much preferred drawing to managing his business interests. In 1820, he began to travel extensively, collecting specimens and creating life-size drawings of birds he found. The result, 18 years later, was *The Birds of America*, a book containing color sketches of 435 kinds of birds, virtually all the bird species then known in the United States. Audubon broke new ground with his use of dramatic poses and settings, picturing the birds as he thought they looked in the wild. Audubon later published a five-volume *Ornithological Biography* documenting what he had learned about birds during his travels.

The Audubon legacy officially began in 1886, when magazine editor George Bird Grinnell, appalled by the slaughter of birds for sport and to supply adornments for ladies' apparel, founded an organization devoted to protecting wild birds. Not surprisingly, he decided to call it the Audubon Society. Various state Audubon Societies sprang up over the next few years, and in 1905 the organization now known as the National Audubon Society was established.

Associated throughout its history with appreciation and conservation of birds, the organization now focuses on protecting and restoring natural ecosystems that provide valuable habitat for birds and other wildlife throughout the Western Hemisphere. Its 500 chapters organize birding activities and engage members in grassroots conservation action. Some 80 Audubon Society centers and sanctuaries across the United States educate and inspire more than a million visitors every year.

The Audubon Society counts among its successes protection of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska, the ongoing recovery of the imperiled California condor and brown pelican, and continuing restoration of the Everglades in Florida. The organization also assisted in bird rescue and wetlands recovery following the 2010 oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico and has designated 2,500 Important Bird Areas to help protect vital habitat, especially along migratory flyways.

An engraving of mourning doves by John James Audubon

Celebrating a National Symbol

Of conservation successes in the United States, probably none is more celebrated than the recovery of the majestic bald eagle, the symbol of the United States since 1782. As such, the bald eagle graces the Great Seal of the United States, the Seal of the President of the United States, and the seals of many government agencies.

Called "bald" because of its distinctive white head, the bird once thrived in every part of the country except Hawaii. When it was declared a national symbol, eagle populations may have topped 100,000 in what is now the continental United States, excluding Alaska.

By the mid-20th century, however, the eagle was in serious decline, the victim of legal and illegal hunting, habitat loss, and the pesticide DDT. Used widely after the mid-1940s, DDT caused eggshells to become so thin and brittle that they broke easily under the weight of a nesting adult eagle. By 1963, only about 400 nesting pairs remained in the lower 48 states.

Declared an endangered species in 1967 and protected by several other laws, the bald eagle began to rebound, especially after the United States banned DDT in 1972. In 1995, the bald eagle was removed from the endangered list, and in 2007, when populations had increased to 10,000 nesting pairs, it was declared no longer threatened. The national symbol soars once again.

(top) A bald eagle soars over the Grand Canyon.

(above) The bald eagle was named for its distinctive white head.

Kevin McCaughey

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

Wild Goose Chase

Level: Beginner and Intermediate

Time required: 15–30 minutes

Goals: To energize the class; to practice teamwork; to practice using prepositions of location

Background: A "wild goose chase" is usually a complicated search for something you don't find. In *this* Wild Goose Chase, students will be successful, but they might be a little wild. Students in groups are going to search for pictures of geese hidden around the classroom.

Preparation:

You will need to draw (at least) six simple pictures of geese. Draw them on small cards or scraps of paper, perhaps one-quarter the size of a full sheet of paper. The geese can look different from one another.

Once you have the pictures of geese, give them names. Write the names on the pictures. (They might be Dave, Hamlet, Lucy, Cleopatra, Scooter, and Goosinka.) Any names will do.

Before students get to class, hide the geese throughout the room. Use adhesive tape or sticky putty to attach the geese to walls, the door, a window, the backs of chairs, the side of a bookcase, behind the wastebasket, or other places around the room. Keep one rule in mind when hiding: students must be able to find the geese *with their eyes only*. They are not allowed to open cupboards or drawers or touch anything. (This instruction ensures an orderly activity.)

You might want to put one of the geese in a place that all students can see clearly; you can use that goose when you demonstrate the activity.

If you do not have a lot of good hiding places in your classroom, you might have to make the geese smaller. You could also move the Wild Goose Chase to an area with more hiding places such as the hallway, cafeteria, or the outdoors.

On the board, write whatever prepositions you want students to practice:

on, under, behind, near, next to, in back of, between, on top of, in front of, above, below, on the side of

Draw this chart on the board:

Find the goose	Where is it?
1. Dave	
2. Hamlet	
3. Lucy	
4. Cleopatra	
5. Scooter	
6. Goosinka	

Procedures:

1. Tell students that six geese are lost in the classroom. The geese are hidden around the room. Go over the names of the geese. Tell students that they will work in teams to find the lost geese.

2. Divide students into teams of 3 to 6. Keep them in their teams; do not let them move around the room yet.

3. Ask each team to make one copy of the chart above.

4. The first time the class plays Wild Goose Chase,

or a variation of it, you will want to provide an example that all teams can do together.

Ask the teams if they have seen any geese around the room. By this time, they certainly will have found one goose—because you put it in an obvious place where everyone could see it. For example, perhaps Dave the goose is taped to the wall beside the door.

Ask the class where the goose is. Ask for the name of the goose.

Tell students to write Dave's location on their chart.

Find the goose	Where is it?
1. Dave	on the wall beside the door

5. Tell students that in just a moment, they will get up and search the room for the remaining geese, but they have to wait until you give the "Start!" signal. And before the signal, teams will need to understand these important rules:

Rules

1. Stay in your desks until START is signaled.
2. Do not touch or move things in the classroom. Do not open desks or cupboards. All the geese are visible. Look up, look down, look above and behind, but don't touch!
3. Do not touch the lost geese when you find them.
4. Do not point or shout when you find a lost goose. That will reveal the location to other groups. Instead, pretend you see nothing for a moment and continue looking. Eventually make your way back to your group and write the location. (*Note*: It's a good idea to demonstrate how to look casual despite making a discovery; you can use the goose named Dave as an example and pretend to "discover" Dave while not showing any reaction.)
5. Do not remove the chart from your group's desk. (It's best to tape the chart to the desk. Keeping the chart on the desk ensures that all students in a group participate in the task; one student cannot take the chart and do all the work.) Team members can search the room on their own. After you find a goose, return to the chart and write down its location.
6. When you have written all locations of the lost geese, return to team headquarters and raise your hands.

6. Start the search: "Start!" It will take students 5 to 10 minutes at this stage, depending on how well your geese are hidden. Remember, when students find a goose, they tell no one, but instead write the goose's name and location in their group's chart.

7. It's not necessary to put too much emphasis on winning the competition, but you might want to write the order of team finishes on the board. (Students like competition!) But remind students you still have to review what they have written.

8. When all groups have finished, compare written answers, praising any groups that provided extra-detailed descriptions of the locations. You might also ask groups to get together to compare answers—where they found the geese and how they described the geese's locations.

Variations

There seem to be a lot of rules to this game! But activities that allow students to move freely need planning and clear instructions.

This activity is only complicated the first time you do it. Bring this activity back into the class and it will go more quickly and smoothly. The basic format of this activity can be adapted for other purposes:

More location information: Next time students play, ask them to be more specific. For instance, advanced groups might be required to use three prepositions in very precise descriptions: For instance, "Hamlet is (1) on top of the coat rack, (2) next to the teacher's desk, (3) in the southeast corner of the room."

Other hidden items, more items: You can hide other items: plastic animals, household items, vocabulary words printed on paper. Instead of 5 hidden items, you might try 10, 20, or more. If you are learning kitchen vocabulary, you could hide a real spoon, knife (blunt, and no touching!), fork, cup, plate, etc. If you are using a lot of items, make sure most are easy to find.

If you use different items, you can also add a variation to the way students "check" their answers. Have a group read its description of one of the hiding places, and have another group (or the whole class) name the animal or item that was hidden in that place.

Other charts for other information: Let's say you hide 10 plastic animals, but don't tell students what the animals are. Students must find them and provide information in the chart:

Animal	Location	Feature(s)	Colors
1. Rhino	beside the dictionary on the teacher's desk	It has a horn.	mostly gray
2.			

Other places: Hide things outside the classroom: in the corridor, outside the school building, etc. Make sure that each team's information chart remains inside the classroom. And remind students to be respectfully quiet outside the classroom.

A Bird Parable

Level: Upper Intermediate/Advanced

Time required: 30–40 minutes (longer if the Extension is used)

Goals: To practice critical and creative thinking skills; to explore the inter-relationships between animals, people, and the environment; to write a parable

Procedures:

1. Have students read "The King and the Birds." You can make copies and hand them out, or you can write the text on the board or on a large sheet of paper that you can tape to the wall. You might also read the story aloud or dictate the story.

The King and the Birds

There once was a king who did not like birds.

He disliked them most of all in spring when they made such noise with their singing, cooing, chirping, and cawing.

So the king sent people, carrying bags of gold, to nearby countries to buy cats, thousands and thousands of cats. And the people brought the cats back home. There, the cats hunted the birds. And hunted. And hunted. After a few weeks the trees and the sky were silent, and the king thought, "Ah, now it is peaceful."

But with the birds gone, new creatures arrived: flies, mosquitoes, and all those little buzzing things that birds like to eat and that fly around people's heads. The creatures came by the millions, and by the tens of millions. And with them came fleas, and the fleas jumped on the cats and bit them and made them yowl, often at night.

Now the king's country was noisier than it had ever been. "Where have the birds gone?" the king thought, his head aching from the noise. "Where are the birds?"

2. Explain to students that "The King and the Birds" is a kind of parable. A parable is a short story that illustrates a lesson or moral. Tell students that many parables include the moral as a final sentence. "The King and the Birds" does not; instead, students will decipher the moral (or morals) themselves.

3. Divide students into groups of 3 or 4. Ask them to discuss possible morals for the story and to write at least five morals. If students are having trouble coming up with morals or grasping the concept, you might give an example. For instance, in the story, the king noticed only the "bad" things that the birds did and ignored the "good" things they did. So a moral might be something like "Don't look so much at the bad parts of a thing that you forget about the good." Other morals might relate

to the king's plan, the results of humans trying to control nature, the behavior of the "new creatures," and so on.

4. Have groups share, compare, and contrast the morals they have come up with. You could also have groups share their morals with the entire class and perhaps explain them.

Extension: Write Your Own Parable

1. Tell students that since they now have a good idea of what a parable is and what a moral is, they are going to write their own parables. Explain that parables are often very short, which makes them fairly easy to write.

2. Help students start by working together as a class to brainstorm a list of "openers." As a writing frame—or pattern—you can use the first sentence of "The King and the Birds":

There once was a _____ who ... .

Some other first sentences might look like these:

There once was an owl who wanted to go to college.

There once was a king whose beard grew too fast.

There once were two mountains who fell in love.

You might notice that the second and third examples change the writing frame somewhat: "a king *whose* …" and "There once *were* … ." That's fine: frames exist to help and support our writing, and there is no reason we must follow them exactly.

3. After the class brainstorms openers, put students in small groups. Each group will choose one of the opening lines from those written on the board, or you can encourage them to write a new opener of their own.

4. Give students the following pattern to use for writing their own parable:

Paragraph 1: **The Opener**

Paragraph 2: **The Problem**

Paragraph 3: **First Action**

Paragraph 4: **Something Unexpected**

Paragraph 5: **The Big Result**

You might want to give an example of how the pattern can be applied to one of the sample openers. This story is called "The Owl Who Wanted to Go to College."

Paragraph 1: The Opener. Start the story; usually one sentence is enough.	*There once was an owl who wanted to go to college.*
Paragraph 2: The Problem. Explain what problem your main character has, or what he/she/it wants to change.	*Even though the owl was wise, he was still an owl, and owls were not allowed to go to college.*
Paragraph 3: First Action. Show what the main character did to solve the problem or to get what he/she/it wanted.	*For months the owl practiced walking, talking, and dressing like a person.*
Paragraph 4: Something Unexpected. Describe how the First Action led to an unexpected consequence.	*When the owl took his entrance exam, he acted and sounded so much like a person that no one noticed anything strange about him. But halfway through the test, a mouse ran across the room. The owl pounced on the mouse and ate it.*
Paragraph 5: The Big Result. Because of the unexpected consequence in Paragraph 4, there will be a long-term result.	*Now everyone in the hall was looking at him, and <u>not</u> as though he were a student, but as if he were an owl that had just killed a mouse. Then the people chased the owl out of the building.*

4. Now students can continue working in groups to write complete parables. Give groups time to complete their parables. Each parable should have a title, and each group should think of a moral for its story.

5. Have each group copy its parable neatly on a large piece of paper—or on several pieces of paper taped together. These papers can be attached to a wall, door, or window with tape or adhesive putty. Note that groups should *not* write the moral on the paper that will be displayed.

6. At this point, ask all groups to move around the room, reading each parable. Each group should also decide what they believe is the best moral for each story. In a notebook or on a sheet of paper, the group members should then write the title of the parable and the moral they have come up with for it.

7. Afterwards, you can convene as an entire class or have groups get together to compare morals. Did a visiting group have a moral similar to that of the writing group?

Variation

Ask groups to write their own parables but omit the Big Result at the end. Other groups can read the parables and come up with their own Big Result for each parable; afterwards, in a whole-class setting, groups can compare the Big Results they have written.

Birds Are People, Too

Level: Intermediate to Advanced

Time required: 30–45 minutes; you can reduce the time by doing fewer definitions.

Goals: To practice writing creative definitions; to collaborate; to learn bird/people vocabulary

Procedures:

1. Write the word *chicken* on the board. Ask students to share what they know about chickens.

2. Read the following passage:

> Have you ever watched chickens carefully? They are often active, walking here and there. They make different sounds—sometimes loud, sometimes soft. They peck at their food. They clean their feathers. They get scared easily and will run away from almost anything.
>
> In what ways are people like chickens?

3. Ask students to volunteer answers to the question at the end of the passage. (If students are not responding, you may have to reread the passage.)

4. Write on the board "A chicken is a person who _____." Tell students to complete the sentence. Encourage them to use their imaginations. Give students a few minutes to write.

5. After students have written their sentences, ask for volunteers to write theirs on the board. Students may offer several answers, such as these:

A. A chicken is a person who makes different sounds.

B. A chicken is a person who pecks at food.

C. A chicken is a person who cleans himself or herself.

D. A chicken is a person who gets scared easily.

E. A chicken is a person who is active.

What's the correct definition? In informal English, a "chicken" is a person who gets scared easily, so (D) is closest. However, if we focus only on the correct answer, we won't recognize other creative and clever definitions. Besides, there's a chance the class will not suggest the true definition.

6. Take a vote. Which definition do students *like the best*? Not "Which definition is correct?" but "Which definition do you like the best?" Ask the entire class. Count the votes for each definition.

Some student definitions will be thoughtful; some will be creative and fun. By allowing a vote, you will be recognizing all student efforts.

7. Have students work as teams (3 or 4 students per team) to create definitions for other bird words. They will use this simple model:

A(n) _____ *is a person who ...*
(bird word)

8. Make sure each team has at least one pencil or pen and a piece of paper. Then write these bird words on the board:

early bird

night owl

silly goose

9. Each team will discuss the three bird words and create a definition for each. It is fine if students do not know the true definitions. The idea is to guess or just invent a *possible* definition. Creative or funny definitions might earn more votes. (The actual definitions are provided at the end of this activity.)

Teams should not show their written definitions to other teams. Give students 10 to 15 minutes to create these definitions.

10. When teams have written their definitions, it is time to share. Start with *early bird*. Bring up a volunteer from each team to write definitions for *early bird* on the board, just as you did with the chicken examples. If you have six teams, you will have six definitions on the board.

11. As a class, vote on the definitions. Every person gets to vote once for the definition he or she likes best. Total the votes to see which definition is the most popular.

12. Reveal the real definition of *early bird*: a person who wakes up early in the morning. You might want to ask students if they are early birds and find out why. You could also ask students what they liked about the definition they voted for.

13. Ask a different volunteer from each team to write the definition for *night owl*. Follow the same procedure until you have voted on all three bird words.

Extension

For advanced classes, you might follow up at a different time with more difficult bird words:

culture vulture

dead duck

dove

rare bird

ugly duckling

Definitions

chicken – a person who is easily scared; a coward

early bird – a person who wakes up early in the morning

night owl – a person who works late at night

silly goose – a person who makes others laugh by doing something funny or silly, often in a childish way

culture vulture – a person who loves to attend cultural events, go to museums, etc.

dead duck – a person who is in a very dangerous position, or is certain to fail or be hurt

dove – a person who promotes peace

rare bird – a person who is odd or unusual

ugly duckling – a person who is unattractive or ugly but has potential to change and succeed

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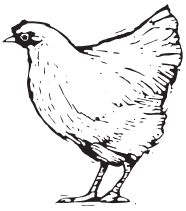
Bird Logic

Below are the names and pictures of ten birds from around the world. We have assigned each of these birds a secret number. We can tell you that the peacock is number 7; your job is to figure out the rest of the secret numbers.


chicken


eagle


kiwi


ostrich


owl


parrot


peacock


penguin


seagull


toucan

The "Bird Facts" column gives information about these birds—by their secret numbers, not by their names. Compare the Bird Facts to determine which number goes with which bird. Then write the name of the bird next to its number.

Bird Facts

- Birds 1, 3, and 8 can't fly.
- The names of birds 1, 4, and 9 have fewer than six letters.
- The names of birds 4 and 8 begin with the same letter.
- Birds 3, 5, and 9 will eat fish.
- The names of birds 2, 3, and 7 begin with "p."
- The names of birds 2 and 10 have the same number of letters.
- Birds 2, 7, and 10 are colorful.
- The names of birds 3, 6, and 10 end with "n."
- The names of birds 3, 5, and 9 contain a "g."
- Birds 1 and 4 are mostly nocturnal.
- The first letter in the name of bird 10 is the same as the last letter in the name of bird 2.
- The name of bird 9 begins and ends with the same letter.

	Name of Bird
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	peacock
8	
9	
10	

Answers on page 13

Answers to *The Lighter Side*

Bird Logic

1. kiwi
2. parrot
3. penguin
4. owl
5. seagull
6. chicken
7. peacock
8. ostrich
9. eagle
10. toucan