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VALERIE SARTOR
Kazakhstan

Digital Age Pedagogy: Easily Enhance Your Teaching Practice with Technology

How many times a day do you look at your smartphone? Why do you do it? To find information? To entertain yourself? To communicate with others? Smartphone usage is ubiquitous, regardless of age, gender, economic status, and location. In my recent teaching, all of my students use their smartphones more than their laptops.

Today, more than ever before, English-language educators recognize the importance of using digital resources to teach students in a variety of modalities. Current circumstances have caused schools, universities, institutes, and colleges all over the world to rethink the way we teach and learn. Teaching with technology has suddenly evolved from a gradual shift toward incorporating digital tools into a roaring avalanche, which can overwhelm educators who have only face-to-face (f2f) teaching experience.

Although the digital divide is real, I do not address it here. This is because I have always had, during my teaching experiences in a variety of countries, affordable and widespread Internet access. Smartphones and phone applications (apps) were popular as pedagogical tools when I recently taught in Central Asia. I connected with and instructed my Kazakh students via WhatsApp, a popular free phone app that replaced the need for an expensive learning management system, although free platforms, such as Moodle, are available globally. I also used online digital software and apps that could be accessed by laptop or smartphone. The result: enthusiastic, focused students and a significant drop in paper consumption.

The need to master online teaching is becoming crucial. For decades, futurist Bryan Alexander has been tracking the use of technology for educational purposes. He predicts, given the current situation, that many universities and institutes will close due to economic losses; he also believes that to stay relevant, educators in all content areas must become fluent in using digital resources (Alexander 2020).

This article seeks to encourage teachers who are not yet tech savvy to start researching and using online software resources that link to smartphones (and laptops and tablets) in order to successfully teach English anywhere in the world, remotely or otherwise. It discusses resources in the form of websites, blogs, and digital tools to help teachers successfully transition and adapt their expertise to the current situation. These digital tools are flexible: they can be used for f2f, hybrid f2f/online, or 100 percent online teaching interactions, provided that teachers and students have access to the Internet.

The need to master online teaching is becoming crucial.

After an overview of the rise of instructional technology, the article offers advice for implementing educational technology and introduces various types of free digital tools, with explanations of what they do, why they are important, and how both teachers and students can use them. I conclude with a short list of free and relevant pedagogical websites.

OVERVIEW

Ideas for using technology for language instruction started developing in the late 1960s, when a few researchers and teachers realized that computers and technology were significant pedagogical tools (Heift, Mackey, and Smith 2019). Over ten years ago, Lord and Lomicka (2008) found that social-media chats create a positive sense of classroom community. Today, it is clear that appropriate pedagogies, technology training, and teacher attitudes toward technology positively impact L2 learners (Otto 2017).

Generation Z learners—true digital natives and the current generation entering college worldwide—are especially interested and influenced by technology and social media (Turner 2015). "Gen Z" students are constantly using technology and often expect their instructors to offer learning experiences using social media and apps they can access on their phones. The question arises: how can we, as language teachers working around the world, enhance our smartphone tech usage?

In the case of Kazakhstan, after the country gained independence, many educational initiatives were implemented, ranging from a trilingual educational policy (Fierman 2006) to the use of technology in language classrooms (Egorov, Jantassova, and Churchill 2007; Suleimen 2019). But Kazakhstan is not unique in supporting instructional technology in the language classroom. If you have access to the Internet, you, too, can employ numerous digital tools and websites to enhance your teaching practice.

WHERE TO BEGIN

If you are unsure about using technology tools in the classroom, you are not alone. As an educator working long before the age of the Internet, I, too, felt anxiety about adjusting my teaching to accommodate students in this digital age. Based on my experience, I offer the following six points of advice:

1. **Assign tech tools to your students in small teams so that they teach the class (and you) how to use each tool.** Give students a clear rubric, which advises them to repeat instructions, be patient, and monitor their peers. The rubric should guide students to break down instructions into simple, step-by-step points. Via a template, you can help them by scaffolding instructions with sentence frames in a checklist form, such as these:

- First, click on ___________. (e.g., New Project)
- Second, go to the upper-right corner of the screen and click on ___________. (Choose Background)
- Third, preview the ___________. (Background Options)

Assign tech tools to your students in small teams so that they teach the class (and you) how to use each tool.

Experiment with the tool. Take your time.

You may choose to support these instructions by visiting iorad.com, a free tool that walks users through a digital process by taking screenshots.

Another option is to pre-teach the requisite vocabulary and functional language so that student presenters can successfully offer clear instructions. Ask students to engage in brainstorming, using creative and critical thinking about the best ways to create instructional sentence frames for their particular tech tool.

You should not be surprised by the excitement and patience your students will display. After all, a core concept for motivating students is to offer them relevant activities. Additionally, using the discovery method gives your students the agency and motivation to perform well. If some students are hesitant, pair them up with the more confident ones, or create groups and assign roles that allow each participant to engage and contribute: the presenter, the scribe, the fact checker, the timekeeper, and so on.

2. **Start with tools that interest you personally.** This will motivate you to learn the tools and put them to use. Two caveats: first, there are an overwhelming number of teaching tools available, with the majority of them offering free (as opposed to premium) versions. Take the time to find preferred tools by trying them out or asking colleagues which tools they prefer. In any case, consider first what your learning objective is, and then make sure you align it with the tool correctly; using technology just "for fun" is wasting your time and your students' time. Be aware that if you consider a tool to be potentially useful, you may have to invest time in mastering it yourself.

   The second caveat is that many of these innovative tools have numerous facsimiles. For example, some whiteboards are equally powerful (Miller 2020c), while others are not. For instance, Google's free interactive whiteboard, jamboard.google.com, has fewer bells and whistles than others, but it does offer service in 42 languages.

3. **Do not expect to fully understand everything about the tool right away.** Experiment with the tool. Take your time. Gradually, you will gain understanding about how you can best employ it. I am still learning new ways to integrate two tools I regularly use, Flipgrid and H5P, into my courses; despite being intuitive, these tools have many uses, and the creators are constantly adding options and resources. In general, high-quality tech tools offer free videos, newsletters, and a service team that responds promptly and politely, no matter where the user may be located. Support-service teams do not care whether you are using free or paid versions. In fact, they often send free training and advice so that users will get the most out of the tool and tell others about it. Many have online handbooks, and some of these come in various languages. And don't forget to search for and watch free tutorials on YouTube; experienced *techies*—experts in technology—post excellent resources on how to use these tools.

4. **Participate in webinars that support the use of instructional technology in the classroom.** FutureLearn (2020) lists several free online courses to help English teachers apply their skills in an online environment (there are often fee-based options for extended courses and/or a formal certificate). The U.S. Department of State offers webinars and

other resources at americanenglish.state.gov. Another free resource for learning to teach online is Remote Learning 101 (Miller 2020b), which offers tips applicable to English teaching at any level of instruction. Miller (2020a) also hosts a free digital summit every year, including free certificates, podcasts, and videos on YouTube. The videos and courses are subtitled, with the playback speed easily adjusted for those who use English as a second or other language.

5. **Read about instructional technology trends.** I particularly like the helpful digital advice from Ridgeway and Ridgeway (2019). If you prefer video to text, Dotto (2020) provides a video resource with clear instructions on using Zoom as well as other tech tools.

6. **Create your own support group or "techie meet-up" within your school or university—or find techies on Twitter or other social media.** A few years ago, as a faculty member in the United States, I was lucky enough to regularly consult with our university's information technology design and development team. Sometimes, just meeting with them and expressing my frustration at being stuck trying to learn was enough to motivate me to keep practicing and discovering how to use a specific tech tool. I received emotional as well as technological support from the team, along with tips about other tools I might want to incorporate into my repertoire.

VERSATILE, EASY-TO-USE, AND FREE SOFTWARE RESOURCES

As I write this, Zoom is the most popular online meeting room in the world. Teachers are using it to present their lessons remotely. This article does not go into detail regarding Zoom usage, but I recommend that you review the resources and support links at Zoom.com (you can choose from multiple languages at the bottom of the homepage).

Following are eight of my favorite versatile, easy-to-use, and free software resources:

1. Padlet.com

Padlet, a flexible, colorful online whiteboard with infinite space, is one of the easier tools to use and understand. You create an account, and with the free version you have access to up to nine boards (if you need more, you can pay a subscription fee or delete older boards). You have many choices for the board background and how information is presented and can post information in the form of text, video, and images. As moderator, you control who posts and whether the posts are public or confined to class members only. If you wish, you can allow students to comment and add ratings or emojis to the posts. Padlet easily runs on any smartphone.

I use Padlet in a variety of ways. During class, in f2f or remote interactions, I may ask a question to check comprehension, and students respond on Padlet. This reinforces writing skills and lets me know that everyone has participated. I also employ Padlet in f2f interactions or in chat rooms using Zoom or Skype to support students by using peer-editing and small-group work. If students are grouped to write on climate change, for example, their group posts links on Padlet; other groups must vet those links as reliable or not before the group can move on to drafting an outline. I use Padlet the same way when students present me with writing samples; this also aids organization because everything students produce is preserved on Padlet.

My students also use Padlet to share group work with one another. When giving presentations, they set up padlets and then ask pop questions to make sure their audience pays attention. This helps me as well because students are given participation points for listening and asking questions, and I can easily keep track. It also keeps students engaged and off their phones when their peers present.

Thus, as a resource, Padlet is versatile. It can be used for summative assessment, gathering information and brainstorming, monitoring engagement, peer editing, and other tasks and assignments.

2. Flipgrid.com

Flipgrid is a free video platform that can be used in many ways and is well liked by my students. It can be loaded onto a smartphone, desktop computer, or laptop, as long as a camera feature is present. You decide whether to have your grid public or private, and you can determine the length of time for videos—from 30 seconds to five minutes. A major benefit of using Flipgrid is that all videos are stored along a single grid and are easily edited and commented upon, with privacy protected.

I often use Flipgrid for introductions at the beginning of a course to have students tell me something about themselves and what they want from the course. I also use Flipgrid to ask students to check in, practice pronunciation exercises by reciting poems and tongue twisters, and complete prewriting assignments before they create a first draft. Students often use Flipgrid at the end of presentations, asking their audience to give oral assessments using a rubric I provide.

The company has created a remote learning guide in various languages, ready-to-use activities and assessments, and a blog addressed to global educators (Flipgrid 2020).

3. H5P.org

Using H5P, one of my favorite tools, anyone can edit a video by creating pop-ups and inserting images and video links. This tool differentiates the classroom and creates an even playing field. For example, if students watch a video and do not recognize a word or image, they can click on a link or pop-up, stop the video, and/or replay the video. This gives students at all levels, and those who learn in different ways and at different speeds, a chance to independently practice comprehension skills.

I task my students to use H5P this way:

> Make a video on your phone or laptop and post it on YouTube. Next, import the video into H5P. Then, using H5P, create a series of questions: true/false, multiple-choice, or short-answer.

This sounds complex, but it becomes less so if you listen to the H5P tutorial (H5P 2020b); see Johnson (2019) for instructions on uploading a video to YouTube. H5P also has a forum with a wide variety of informative posts from users. My students and I were able to comprehend the basics within one 50-minute class session. If you want to skip the initial activity of students creating their own videos, use the copyright-free videos posted on YouTube (search for "video library no copyright"). Most of my Kazakh students, however, were keen to create their own footage. You can view a sample online lesson I created for a seventh-grade teacher at Sartor (2020a).

The importance of using tools like H5P cannot be underemphasized. Today's students learn more via video than text; by offering them learning via video, you as a teacher can assess without standing in front of them and monitoring, and you can allow students to create and present content to their peers. Students may self-assess and learn at their own speed because they can watch the video repeatedly. And, as mentioned, there are other types of assessments that you can create with text by using H5P—fill-in-the-blanks, drag-and-drop matching exercises, and online flash cards (H5P 2020a).

4. Kahoot.com

Kahoot!, another free assessment tool, offers engaging ways for students to review materials and/or test their comprehension, either alone or in teams. You can create your own questions, polls, and puzzles, or access the platform's bank of content. Kahoot! gamifies learning by creating engaging quizzes that require responses in a limited time. This platform does not require f2f attendance in one location to play. Similar applications,

The resources [here] represent only the tip of the instructional-technology iceberg.

with free versions, include Quizlet.com and Peardeck.com. I have also found a free smartphone app to assess English learners at Cambridge Assessment (2020).

5. GooseChase.com

GooseChase helps teachers create scavenger hunts, which are a great idea because students use their smartphones and organize into interactive, cooperative groups for a friendly, competitive hunt. This tool gets students out of their seats and moving around. The game requires students to take pictures of their group with each object they find and place each photo on GooseChase. You can monitor the activity and choose the objects and sites to ensure safety and a reasonable end time. I have created hunts that required students to ask other people for objects, which is an excellent way for them to practice using functional language. This activity can be used to reinforce pre-taught vocabulary and demonstrate the value of learning specific lexical items. The recreational version is free and adequate for most teachers, but you are limited to three teams and one live game at a time. For a sample made by a Spanish teacher, see Slusarek (2016).

6. Visuwords.com

Visuwords is a free site that helps students learn vocabulary. This tool is a massive mind map of words and roots that can be clicked to help students make morphological and semantic connections concerning vocabulary. I use it as an online reference tool for high-intermediate and advanced learners; the sheer number of lexical items can overwhelm beginners. Visuwords classifies specific lexicon and offers different versions, according to parts of speech, as well as derivatives and semantic connections. In effect, it serves as a colorful interactive dictionary.

7. Vocabulary.com

Vocabulary.com is another free tool for learning vocabulary or reviewing words. The site has a gamified format that looks like flash cards, but it recognizes the users' success and progressively challenges their abilities, helping students remain engaged. The site has other advanced learning resources for those passionate about morphology and semantics.

8. ExplainEverything.com

One more tool that I can no longer live without is Explain Everything (EE). This software can be used on a smartphone. Basically, EE is an interactive whiteboard, but it is more sophisticated than Padlet. You create interactive presentations using templates, which can then be stored on the program's cloud as a video or processed via YouTube into videos. I use this tool to offer students short video lectures that they can watch during an online class or independently via a link—see Sartor (2020b) for an example.

My teachers-in-training create short EE video presentations to demonstrate how they use a specific method or strategy when teaching English. The free basic package allows you to create three projects at any given time (if you need more, you can pay a subscription fee or save and then delete older projects). The support services for this company go above and beyond helping everyone using the tool. A handbook is available for download at Explain Everything (2020).

FREE EDUCATIONAL WEBSITES

The resources above represent only the tip of the instructional-technology iceberg. If you are interested in learning about other available tools, I would recommend that you follow certain websites and blogs. My favorites that I

Over time, those who are skilled at integrating and applying technology will likely find more opportunities.

mention here are free (although some promote their books and provide trainings for a fee).

- Not only does Jennifer Gonzalez's Cult of Pedagogy offer a diverse range of information regarding teaching and technology, but she also makes her information accessible via podcasts, which you can download and listen to while you are doing chores. She has also created YouTube videos with adjustable playback speeds. Everything is available at Gonzalez (2020).
- The Feedspot blog lists and updates content from innovative bloggers who post about numerous fields, including educational technology (Feedspot 2020). If the text is dense, I recommend using Google Translate to scan this site in order to choose a blog best for you.
- Another helpful website is Stannard (2020); Russell Stannard is one of the first British educators to recognize the power of technology as a language-teaching tool. He has won many awards and is a clear thinker and writer.

There are many more free websites and free video trainings on the Internet. An excellent way to find a website or blog that best suits your needs is to search for online seminars and conferences, such as Miller (2020a). Browse around these sites to find useful information and the names of people who will support your learning.

CONCLUSION

This overview is only a glimpse at the tools you can access to enhance and improve your teaching practice. Each year, new blogs and websites, as well as video tutorials and video channels, come into existence to help everyone develop innovative ideas for teaching. Choose a few tools that interest you personally, experiment with them, and critically reflect on their potential uses.

It is not likely that technology will replace language teachers in their classrooms, but an increased focus on online teaching and remote learning is taking place and will likely become a lasting trend. The demonstration of language competence is clearly moving from pencil and paper towards digital platforms. Alexander (2020) speculates that teaching and learning will eventually become a "toggle" system, whereby faculty and students will meet remotely or f2f, depending upon human safety and economic potential.

Over time, those who are skilled at integrating and applying technology will likely find more opportunities. We as language teachers must stay current with new tech tools and trends and continue to identify useful software and smartphone apps so that we can align them with our desired pedagogical outcomes.

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United States

L1 and L2 Writing Differences: From Understanding to Practice

English-language instructors often seek resources, such as instructional materials, digital media, and mentor support, to help capture first-language (L1) and second-language (L2) differences in accessible ways and better support their students. These resources are especially useful for novice instructors who may be learning about such differences and developing their professional practices at the same time.

When it comes to L1 and L2 differences in second-language writing, some researchers are not fully convinced that there is a fundamental difference. However, when comparing L1 and L2 writing, many would agree that macro- and micro-level writing characteristics exist and overlap (Eckstein and Ferris 2018). Identified here are some of the consistent differences between L1 and L2 writing in English. This article identifies differences through a review of existing literature and practical observations from consultants at the Vanderbilt University English Language Center who provide one-to-one writing support for L2 university students at the U.S.-based institution.

The L1 and L2 writing differences are presented in three categories: word-level, sentence-level, and global-level. Frequent tendencies and common errors of L2 writers are featured within the categories. Although the features highlight general trends of L2 writers related to word- and sentence-level tendencies and errors, in reality, these types of errors do not represent all writing differences, despite often receiving the bulk of attention from researchers and practitioners. For this reason, we also include differences in tendencies of language use and composition of L2 writers at the global level.

Being familiar with different L1 and L2 tendencies and errors at the word, sentence, and global levels provides instructors with additional background knowledge of their learners and can help guide instruction. To support the transfer of such information into practice, we also include tips and sample activities for each of the three categories of L1 and L2 writing differences. Finally, while much of the information presented here could be transferred across L1 and L2 learning contexts, the tips and activities that follow have been selected for intermediate to advanced L2 learners in secondary or tertiary academic settings. Our main goal is to provide an accessible resource for English-language instructors who are seeking to better understand L1 and L2 writing differences to improve their teaching practice.

WORD-LEVEL TENDENCIES AND ERRORS: TABLES, TIPS, AND TASKS

The word- and sentence-levels are common focal points for novice instructors when considering L1 and L2 differences and planning instruction, as teacher-preparation courses and related introductory literature often highlight those areas. For this reason,

the L1 and L2 writing differences presented here also feature these levels, beginning with word-level tendencies.

Word-level tendencies and errors of L2 writers are often categorized according to basic parts of speech. Table 1 identifies word choice as a consistent theme across these same categories. Additionally, while Table 2 shows that verbs, nouns, articles, and prepositions continue to be a challenge for L2 writers, particularly in the areas of selection and construction, issues also exist within style and tone. Such issues include students' use of nonacademic language in academic writing contexts. Due to the challenge of style and tone in word choice, instructors might consider using resources that provide L2 students with opportunities to compare their word choices to those of L1 writers or analyze L1 usage.

The tables provide additional details on word-level tendencies (Table 1) and errors (Table 2), including examples, and are followed by word-level tips and sample activities for writing instruction.

Word-level tips and activities for L2 writing instruction

- New vocabulary requires comprehensive instruction to ensure that learning takes place. Help students develop strategies, such as reading context clues and using a learner English dictionary, to further their L2 vocabulary acquisition.
- Define and explain brand-name vocabulary, as it may be unfamiliar to your students (e.g., "Kleenex" = "tissues" and "YouTube" = "video-sharing platform").
- Provide a variety of activities and, if appropriate to your context, include cooperative learning opportunities even when addressing word-level issues.
- Scaffold activities to become less structured as the lesson progresses—for example:
    - o Activity 1: Write the correct preposition in the blank.
    - o Activity 2: Create sentences using the provided prepositions.
    - o Activity 3: Analyze the use of prepositions in an authentic text.
    - o Activity 4: Have a dialogue about [a selected topic] using different prepositions.
- Help advanced learners become familiar with academic wordlists or digital tools, such as a corpus, that support language development at the word level.

Category	Word-Level Tendencies of L2 Writers
Verbs	• fewer motion verbs (*enter, leave*) (Crossley and McNamara 2009) • fewer causal verbs (*let, make*) (Crossley and McNamara 2009) • more use of *be* as main verb (especially *be verb + adjective*) (Hinkel 2003b)
Nouns	• more locational nouns (*home, Spain, highway*) to show spatiality (Crossley and McNamara 2009) • more pronouns (first-person *I*) (Crossley and McNamara 2009) • more vague nouns (*people, thing, way*) (Hinkel 2003b)
Adverbs (Hinkel 2003a)	• more manner adverbs to describe how an event occurred (*accurately*, *quickly*, *loudly*) • more amplifiers (*completely*, *undoubtedly*) • more emphatic adverbs to further support a claim (*absolutely*, *definitely*)
Other	• fewer abstract words (*success, freedom, -isms*) (Crossley and McNamara 2009) • fewer words with multiple meanings (*backbone, position, draft*) (Crossley and McNamara 2009) • more use of context-dependent words (*amount, fill*) than high-meaningfulness words (*music, art, movies*) (Crossley and McNamara 2009) • more general words (*do, come, make*) (Crossley and McNamara 2011)

Table 1. Word-level tendencies of L2 writers as compared to those of L1 writers

Activity 1: Stranded!

Language practice: Practicing modal selection

Level: Intermediate

Reference: Table 2. Word-level errors, verbs

Procedure: Place students in small groups. Explain that the groups will be traveling to a desert island where they will need to survive for a number of weeks. To prepare, each group needs to agree on three items to take with them from the following: matches, a solar-powered computer, a toothbrush, a knife, a compass, a sewing kit, antiseptic ointment, a rope, a magnifying glass, and chocolate. A review of the vocabulary may be necessary. Also, demonstrate the expected structure for the group discussion, emphasizing the use of modals:

Student A: We should bring a _________ because _________.

Student B: Actually, we might consider bringing a _________ instead because _________.

Student C: I agree. We must bring a _________, so we can _________.

After each group selects three items through the structure discussions, students pair up with another group and compare and explain their selections. Lastly, each student writes out a dialogue between two or three people, demonstrating their group's item-selection process and highlighting their modal use. Here is a student sample:

Error Category	Description	Example L1 Usage	Example L2 Usage
Verbs (Ferris and Hedgcock 2005)	Tense formation	The bird sang.	The bird singed.
	Passive constructions	The game is played.	The game is play.
	Modal constructions	We should run.	We should running.
	Modal selection (Hinkel 1995)	You should study.	You must study.
	Subject-verb agreement	She flies.	They flies.
	Intransitive vs. transitive	I go with her.	I go her.
Nouns (Ferris and Hedgcock 2005)	Plural forms	men	mans
	Possessive endings	Pablo's	Pablos
	Determiners	I saw that bird.	I saw those bird.
	Countability	lots of information	lots of informations
Articles (Vanderbilt University English Language Center, interviews)	General usage	I want the computer.	I want computer.
Prepositions (Vanderbilt University English Language Center, interviews)	Use with verbs	Think about a topic.	Think in a topic.
	Use with nouns	Are you at home?	Are you in home?
Style and Tone (Hinkel 2015)	Nonacademic (conversational)	Many studies ________.	A lot of studies ___________.

Table 2. Word-level errors of L2 writers as compared to usage by L1 writers

Student A: We should bring matches because we will need to start fires for cooking and heat.

Student B: Actually, we might consider bringing a magnifying glass instead because we could run out of matches or they may get wet.

Student C: I agree. We must bring a magnifying glass, so we can have more fires.

If time allows, students can present their dialogues explaining their modal selections.

Activity 2: Hedge It

Language practice: Considering the use of hedging markers

Level: Advanced

Reference: Table 1. Word-level tendencies, adverbs

Procedure: Explain to students that in academic writing, it is important to back up claims and that amplifiers and emphatic adverbs, often used to boost claims, need to be used cautiously. Provide students with language tools (modals, verb choice, and other adverbs) that can soften claims and help to ensure a defensible analysis, a practice called *hedging*.

Give each student a slip of paper stating a different claim that could be softened, such as "Education results in a better life," "Technology undermines human connections," and "It is obvious that smoking should be banned." Students take turns reading their claims to the class (or group) and allow other students to offer suggestions and rationale for softening the claim (hedging it). Here is a student sample:

Student A: Cars are clearly responsible for air pollution. (original claim)

Student B: Cars are likely responsible for air pollution. (different adverb choice)

Student C: Cars may be responsible for air pollution. (modal)

Student D: Cars contribute to air pollution. (verb choice)

This process continues until students work through different ways to soften each of the original claims. An extension activity is to have students analyze an academic article from their discipline, identifying examples of hedging in the text.

Activity 3: Count, Noncount, and Run!

Language practice: Sorting and applying count and noncount nouns

Levels: Intermediate to Advanced

Reference: Table 2. Word-level errors, nouns

Procedure: Label index cards or similar-sized pieces of paper with count nouns, noncount nouns, and nouns that can be both count and noncount, writing one noun on each card. The nouns may be based on a current unit theme and can vary by class level. For example, for an intermediate-level class in an academic setting, the selected nouns may be as follows:

- Count nouns: *solution*, *cause*, *process*, *theory*, and *analysis*
- Noncount nouns: *research*, *homework*, *information*, *vocabulary*, and *equipment*
- Both: *paper*, *religion*, *life*, *time*, and *experience*

Provide small groups with mixed-up sets of the labeled index cards and ask groups to sort the cards by noun type: count, noncount, and both.

After the cards are sorted and checked as a class, give each group a list of determiners—written on the board, in a handout, or on another set of index cards. Examples of determiners are *a*, *each*, *my*, *several*, *less*, *this*, *many*, *few*, *plenty of*, *neither*, and *the*. The groups discuss which type of noun can be used with each determiner provided, and then the groups practice creating sentences joining the determiners with the sorted nouns, such as "Smaller universities may do less research than larger universities." The groups may have

to change the noun form to fit a determiner (e.g., with *several* and *solution*, the plural form of the noun needs to be used). After some practice, the groups can challenge one another. The instructor announces one of the determiners, and a representative from each group hurries to the board to see who can use the selected determiner and one of the sorted nouns appropriately in a sentence. The first representative to complete the task successfully receives a point for their group. The process continues until all of the determiners have been practiced by the students. Here is a sample:

> Instructor: "Each!" (A representative from each group hurries to the board.)
>
> Group A representative writes: The paper discusses <u>each theory</u>.
>
> Group B representative writes: The student is reading <u>each information</u>.
>
> Group C representative writes: The teacher shared <u>each solution</u>.

The instructor asks which group was the first to use *each* and one of the nouns correctly in a sentence. The class reviews the groups' responses on the board, and a point is awarded to the group that used the targeted language correctly first. (In the example above, the sentences by Groups A and C are correct, but Group C received the point for completing the task first.)

If time allows, students practice writing sentences with the provided determiners and sorted noun cards, individually or in small groups, either in preparation for the board-race activity or as a review. An extension is to have students write sentences using the provided determiners but selecting other nouns, either in another round of the activity or at their seats.

SENTENCE-LEVEL TENDENCIES AND ERRORS: TABLES, TIPS, AND TASKS

Research on sentence-level tendencies demonstrates an overall preference among L2 writers for more-simplified grammatical structures but also an inclination toward specific formulaic language functions (see Table 3). Interestingly, similar to the sentence-level tendencies, sentence-level errors often experienced by L2 writers, namely word order and verb tense (see Table 4), may also be based on propensities stemming from L1 rules and patterns as well as previous L2 exposure.

The tables provide additional details on sentence-level tendencies (Table 3) and errors (Table 4), including examples, and are followed by sentence-level tips and sample activities for writing instruction.

Sentence-level tips and activities for L2 writing instruction

- Build on the sentence-level structures that students already know.

Category	Sentence-Level Tendencies of L2 Writers
Clauses (Silva 1993)	• more clauses per sentence • shorter average clause length
Conjunctions (Silva 1993)	• more coordination (*and*, *but*, *of*) • less subordination (*after*, *because*, *even though*)
Syntax (Hinkel 2002)	• less variety and complexity of word organization (*subject + verb + object*) • more simple sentences (*Students read Chomsky*) than complex sentences (*The instructor made students read Chomsky*)
Lexical Bundles (groups of words often found together) (Pérez-Llantada 2014)	• more identification-focused bundles (*an important role in*; *of the most important*; *taken into account*) • more inferential bundles (*due to the fact*; *as a consequence of*; *on the basis of*) and fewer stance bundles for hedging (*it is important to note*; *it is likely/possible that*)

Table 3. Sentence-level tendencies of L2 writers as compared to those of L1 writers

Error Category	Description	Example L1 Usage	Example L2 Usage
Word Order	subject and object placement	I threw the ball.	The ball I threw.
	misplaced modifiers	the large cake	the cake large
Tense	tense agreement	As the principal talked, she looked around.	As the principal talked, she looks around.

Table 4. Sentence-level errors of L2 writers as compared to usage by L1 writers
(Vanderbilt University English Language Center, interviews)

- Use examples of sentence patterns from authentic texts that are of interest to the students.

- Refer to corpora to guide instruction and materials development and to allow students to validate linguistic features and examine language use.

- Limit feedback to specific errors focusing on targeted language skills, such as those being practiced. Note: Students may become overwhelmed when instructors point out all identifiable errors, including errors that the students have not yet received focused instruction on.

Activity 1: Four Corners

Language practice: Using subordinate conjunctions to transition between two ideas in a sentence

Level: Intermediate

Reference: Table 3. Sentence-level tendencies, conjunctions

Procedure: Create four signs labeled in large print with each of the following: *Strongly Agree*, *Agree*, *Disagree*, and *Strongly Disagree*. Post one of the signs in each of the four corners of the room and place several sheets of large sticky easel paper (butcher paper or note paper will also work) and a large dark marker in each corner. On the board (or equivalent), post a list of ten to 12 subordinate conjunctions previously reviewed in class (e.g., *even though*, *since*, *after*, *because*, *so*, *once*, *whenever*, *due to*, *unless*). Ask students to stand in the center of the room while you read a controversial statement that they can connect with, such as, "Cell phone use among children should be illegal." After you read it, students move to the corner of the room that most identifies their position on the statement. For example, those who strongly disagree with the statement will move to the corner labeled *Strongly Disagree*. Give the four self-sorted groups five minutes to come up with arguments defending their position on the statement and to record those ideas on the paper provided. Students should use subordinate conjunctions from the list provided or other subordinate conjunctions they know to structure their arguments (e.g., "Due to possible health risks, cell phone use among children should be illegal").

After five minutes, each group presents its supporting arguments. Upon hearing the groups' arguments, students may decide to move to a different corner if they have been swayed by another group's argument(s). Students who shift their position on an issue may be asked to explain their reason for doing so (ideally, using a subordinate conjunction in the explanation). Continue to read out controversial statements, with the students moving to the corner that best supports their position on the statement. For each statement, students work together to develop their arguments, using subordinate conjunctions.

Note that this activity has been adapted to focus on subordinate conjunctions and that similar adaptations could be made to focus on other practice areas. An extension activity is to require each student to select one of the statements presented and write a response paragraph, based on the arguments shared. Keeping the arguments posted around the room will allow students to easily refer back to the points made during the discussions and

be able to see examples of the subordinate-conjunction structure expected of them.

Activity 2: Verb-Tense Baseball

Language practice: Reviewing verb-tense agreement

Levels: Intermediate to Advanced

Reference: Table 4. Sentence-level errors, tense

Background: Depending on the background of your students, you might begin by explaining the basics of baseball. Videos and handouts that provide an orientation to baseball are available online; a simple explanation based on your own understanding would work, too.

Procedure: Divide the class into two teams. Explain the following rules to the students: One team will be in the field, and the other team will be up to bat. The team that is in the field will consist of the pitcher (to read the questions), the infielders and outfielders (to decide whether the batters' answers are correct), and the scorekeeper. These roles can rotate between innings (rounds). The umpire (teacher) will also help manage the game. The team "at bat" will take turns coming to the batter's box at home plate. (Bases can be made from paper and posted.) At home plate, the batter receives a teacher-prepared question, related to verb tense, from the pitcher. The question could require the batter to provide a grammar rule, rule explanation, or correct verb formation based on a prompt. Examples are level-dependent but might be similar to the following:

- In academic writing, what tense is generally preferred? (1 base)
- What tense is used after the time markers *since* and *for*? (1 base)
  (If correct) Give a sentence using this construction. (Steal another base for a total of 2.)
- Provide the correct verb tense: Research __________ (to show) that healthy eating promotes productivity. (2 bases)
  (If correct) Provide the rule that supports your choice. (Steal a base for a total of 3.)
- Different tenses can occur in the same sentence or paragraph due to a clear shift. Give one reason for such a shift. (3 bases)

If the batter answers the question correctly, he or she moves around the baseball diamond (classroom) according to the number of bases indicated on the pitcher's card. The batter stays on base until being bumped ahead by another batter and making it home (earning a point). If the batter answers the question incorrectly, the team gets an out (three outs and the team returns to the field). If desirable to further extend students' knowledge of baseball, add in cards that indicate aspects of the game, such as a strike or ball (three strikes = an out; four balls = a base). Once a team has three outs, the teams switch places (at bat and in the field). The number of innings (rounds) played can vary, based on teacher and student needs, but each team should have the same number of opportunities at bat. This activity could be adapted to a more localized sport that students are familiar with, especially if the cultural aspect of understanding baseball is not a lesson objective.

An extension activity is to provide students with the game questions to answer on their own before reviewing the questions as a class. Additionally, once students become familiar with the game, each team could create questions for the other team.

GLOBAL-LEVEL TENDENCIES: TABLE, TIPS, AND TASKS

Global-level tendencies describe the style and cohesion of written texts, with features such as genre conformity, organizational styles, and academic styles. These features are often informed by culture and marked by individual approaches, generally precluding such use from being viewed as errors. Despite this, helping L2 writers establish a framework for analyzing and adhering to context-specific, global-level expectations in academic writing is important, as writers are customarily expected to adapt to the global-level features upheld by their

audience. However, a global-level instructional focus may be less familiar to L2 writers due to the more consistent prioritizing of linguistic deficiencies, such as grammar, in traditional writing instruction. We have presented the global-level tendencies due to the relative lack of focus in the literature; also, our analysis found the relationship between tendencies and errors to seem like two sides of the same coin and more challenging to delineate.

Table 5 provides details on global-level tendencies of L2 writers and is followed by related tips and sample activities for this level of writing instruction.

Global-level tips and activities for L2 writing instruction

- Remind students regularly that rhetorical traditions can vary across disciplines and cultures, so it is important to understand what is expected of them in the context they are writing in.

- Review model papers in class to demonstrate the format, citation style, and organizational framework expected of students.

- Help students develop outlining skills to encourage an intentional consideration of audience and genre. Through reverse outline activities, students develop an outline of an existing model text. Such activities provide additional outlining practice while also furthering students' genre-analysis skills.

- Consider focusing on the following global-level writing areas as part of a student-needs analysis: paraphrasing and summarizing; citation rules and conventions; and analyzing, synthesizing, and organizing argumentation and author positioning.

Activity 1: In the News

Language practice: Analyzing and applying discourse organization

Level: Intermediate

Reference: Table 5. Global-level tendencies, rhetorical conventions

Procedure: Cut up several copies of a newspaper headline into separate words. Organize groups of students to work together, putting the words of the headline in the correct order. Then, students share out the headlines they created. The teacher shares the actual headline with students, who then predict what the news story is about and the order in which the information is revealed in the article. Next, students read the actual news article, labeling the type of information that appears in each paragraph as (1) lead paragraph, (2) body of supporting details, and (3) additional information. As a class, discuss the organization of the news article and potential reasons for such a layout.

After this warm-up, provide each group with another headline (or a different headline per group) that is again divided into separate

Category	Global-Level Tendencies of L2 Writers
Logical Cohesion (logical structure of text)	fewer cause–effect relationships (Crossley and McNamara 2009)
Lexical Cohesion (how meanings of words relate to each other in text)	fewer words within abstract hierarchical relationships (*car*, *sedan*) (Crossley and McNamara 2009)
Referential Cohesion (how text and words refer to each other and outside texts)	more provision of new information; less lexical overlap or repetition for cohesiveness (Crossley and McNamara 2009)
Rhetorical Conventions	more prioritizing of linguistic deficiencies (e.g., grammar) than discourse organization and style related to genre (Grav and Cayley 2015)

Table 5. Global-level tendencies of L2 writers as compared to those of L1 writers

words. Each group creates a headline based on the words provided. (It is not necessary to supply the correct headline here.) Then, the groups create news stories based on the headlines they created and the structure discussed from the original article. Finally, the groups share their news stories with the class, highlighting both the content and organization but also the importance of the structure in the story development. (Note that the headline-creation steps are included to help engage the students and make them feel invested in the activity. These steps could be eliminated if time is an issue, as the activity is engaging regardless.)

An extension activity is to ask students to look at other texts they are familiar with—recipes, manuals, brochures, and textbooks—and analyze the discourse organization presented in those texts.

Activity 2: Connect the Thoughts

Language practice: Incorporating cohesive strategies within a text

Levels: Intermediate to Advanced

Reference: Table 5. Global-level tendencies, rhetorical conventions

Procedure: Take a level-appropriate text (generally eight to ten sentences long) and cut it into strips of sentences. The text will ideally have limited cohesion and be on a subject not closely familiar to the students. Instructors may need to alter an existing text, such as part of a research article, news story, previous course paper, or other informational text, by removing cohesive devices like repeated key terms, generic transitions, and dovetailing. Provide sets of the sentence strips, out of order, to student pairs. The pairs attempt to put the sentences in order, building a paragraph, and then share their sentence-ordering strategies with the class as well as describing what made the activity challenging. A lack of cohesion will likely be discussed as a challenge (if not, the teacher can present the notion); the teacher then talks with students about strategies for connecting ideas in a text. After discussing such strategies, pairs set out to incorporate cohesive devices into their ordered sentence strips (now a paragraph) to better connect the ideas and enhance flow. If resources allow, students might add the cohesive devices to their paragraphs by using different-colored sticky notes or other ways to color-code, such as yellow for repeating key terms, green for generic transitions, and blue for dovetailing. Color-coding helps reinforce the idea that using a variety of cohesive devices typically makes for better-crafted writing. In the end, each pair reads the revised (and newly cohesive) paragraph to the class. Highlight the different strategies that the groups successfully employed; for example: "Class, notice how Stefan and Raul used [cohesive strategy] to connect the ideas of *x* and *y*. Stefan and Raul, could you please read that part again?"

An extension activity is to have students analyze a text from their discipline, perhaps even a piece of their own writing or that of a peer, identifying examples of cohesive devices used by the writer(s).

CONCLUSION

This article has provided a compilation of L1 and L2 writing tendencies and errors while also offering tips and activities related to the word-, sentence-, and global-levels of L2 writing instruction. While the word-, sentence-, and global-level features highlighted in this article are helpful for understanding and teaching L2 writers, additional differences may exist in your specific context. Note that the fact that these features may also appear in the writing of L1 writers and proficient L2 writers does not necessarily indicate that these writers are any less holistically proficient. Differences in writing ability and tendencies lie more within the two groups than across or between them. Reasons for these differences include proficiency in the L1 and educational experience with various forms of writing. Following is a final list of tips that can be applied across the three levels:

General tips for L2 writing instruction

- Make instructions and expectations explicit, especially with writing assignments. Providing instructions both in writing and orally aids understanding.
- Present key terms and ideas on the board, a screen, or poster paper so that students can follow more easily and take notes that they can review later.
- If you ask students to write about or respond to a lecture or written content, realize that their listening and reading language skills may impair their ability to write on the topic.
- Consider the extent to which cultural knowledge is necessary to meet task expectations.
- Provide contextualized learning opportunities to make instruction more effective. To do so, practice lesson objectives within the students' own work, teacher writing samples, or other authentic texts.
- If relevant, explain and demonstrate discipline-specific writing expectations, styles, and skills, as such expectations can vary greatly from one discipline to another.
- Help students learn how to examine their own work critically, finding errors and making changes that strengthen their own writing. Providing students with a checklist to review alongside their work can assist with this process (e.g., "Did I include topic sentences?").
- Incorporating a peer-review process can help reinforce learning. Providing a rubric or checklist for peer reviews ensures that students are using the same framework and language to give their feedback.
- Make feedback as meaningful as possible by explaining abbreviations and what you mean by comments such as "awkward" or "unclear."
- Allow time for students to revise their work, based on feedback, to solidify learning. If time allows, discuss revisions individually with students before they begin the revision process.

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Inquiry Notebooks for Twenty-First-Century Skill Development

***Creativity and imagination. Critical thinking. Problem solving. Flexibility and adaptability. Global and cultural awareness. Information literacy. Written communication skills.* These concepts reflect some of the key skills twenty-first-century learners should possess. While the definition of twenty-first-century skills is not universally agreed upon, many educational entities include several types of information literacy, learning and innovation, media technology, and life and career skills (P21 Partnership for 21st Century Learning 2019). These skill sets go beyond traditional subject areas and emphasize the need to communicate in English outside the classroom in social and professional situations (Ananiadou and Claro 2009; Göksün and Kurt 2017; Barrot 2014).**

With the emphasis on building twenty-first-century skills in learners, English language teachers are challenged to find activities that will build English language proficiency while promoting higher-order thinking in the target language. One reason is that an individual learner's zone of proximal development (ZPD) for language proficiency and for critical thinking may be different. ZPD—the difference between the learner's ability to solve problems independently in relationship to his or her ability to solve problems with guidance (Vygotsky 1978)—is an important concept to consider when developing twenty-first-century skills. Learners may have more advanced critical-thinking skills developed in their primary language than in English. As a result, they may need more support to express themselves critically in the target language. Understanding where and when learners need assistance helps the teacher provide appropriate scaffolding. Inquiry-based learning takes ZPD into consideration by using scaffolding to guide the learner through the process of posing questions, thinking critically about issues, and solving problems (Chu et al. 2017). This social constructivist approach "emphasizes personally relevant questions that inspire students to learn more and create unique ways of sharing what they have learned" (Kuhlthau, Maniotes, and Caspari 2015, 4). Through an intentional, student-centered approach, learning becomes deep, motivating, and interconnected. Under the guidance of the teacher, learners apply knowledge to new contexts as they confirm results, develop explanations, and aim to solve problems (Dostál 2015).

One method to incorporate inquiry-based learning into a language classroom—and help students process their experience, develop

Inquiry notebooks are different from journals in that they are modeled after research-based practices.

language proficiency, and build twenty-first-century skills—is through inquiry notebooks. The transition from high school to college can be difficult socially and academically, and many learners do not have a formal outlet to share their experiences. This led me to use inquiry notebooks with first-year university students to get them to think critically about their college experience, both in and out of the classroom. I have since used inquiry notebooks with learners across proficiency levels, of varying ages, and at different points in their academic pursuits. This article will explain the rationale and describe the procedures to implement inquiry notebooks as an instruction tool to put twenty-first-century skills in reach for English learners.

WHAT IS AN INQUIRY NOTEBOOK?

An inquiry notebook is a collection of student work showcasing the progressive development of higher-order thinking skills over a period of time. Using the target language, learners are asked to think deeply by responding to a prompt provided by the instructor. This prompt is an essential aspect of the inquiry notebook and relates to students' relevant learning experiences. The notebook can be organized around central themes or units of a course and builds upon activities in and out of class.

Inquiry notebooks are different from journals in that they are modeled after research-based practices. Qualitative and action researchers learn in the field by collecting data, interpreting field notes, looking for patterns, and establishing findings. Through reflection, researchers (1) draw conclusions based on lived experiences, observations, and understanding; (2) use data to support their claims; (3) reflect on the significance of the experience; and (4) offer direction for future studies.

In an inquiry notebook, students do similar tasks. The classroom is their field and is rich with data. Class activities provide opportunities to check understanding and get feedback. Learners can use metacognitive skills to reflect on activities by thinking deeply about content, how they are learning, and how they use the target language; they show understanding by applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating in the entries they write.

Inquiry notebooks are a practical way for students to build communicative competency, as learners show their understanding of the prompt in a way that is comprehensible to the reader. Sutarsyah and Yufrizal (2018) found that writing improved when learners were given the chance to process content and get feedback. Inquiry notebooks emphasize freewriting without the stress of choosing the perfect vocabulary term or writing an impressive sentence that is both complex and grammatically sound. Entries can be supplemented with drawings, photographs, and quotes to appeal to a variety of learning styles.

MATERIALS FOR THE INQUIRY NOTEBOOK

An inquiry notebook can take many shapes and forms: a basic notebook, a journal-style book, or an electronic format. At the start of the semester, I pass around a large stack of multicolored paper and ask students to take eight sheets. Folded in half, the papers form a notebook, with each student's book reflecting his or her personality in the colors chosen. This provides adequate space for a cover page and a weekly reflection. The number of pieces of paper can be adjusted, based on the number of entries.

Electronic versions of inquiry notebooks, such as blogs, are a viable option. Knowing that an

Regardless of type, the inquiry notebook should be dedicated to this task and not integrated with class notes or other subjects.

audience will read their work can motivate learners to share personal insights. On the other hand, blogs are inherently public and shift the focus from the teacher as the primary audience to a potentially broader audience, and that may not be feasible for writing in class. Paper versions of inquiry notebooks, especially when combined with the option of visual responses, provide a space for students to think without the burden of spellcheck and grammar check. Freewriting in this way can offer insight into the personality of the learner that may be edited out when word-processed. Technical proficiency, Internet access, and word-processing availability in the location where students will write play a role in determining whether this format is appropriate.

Instructors should take class size and student population into consideration when determining the format of the notebooks. If you have a large class, you want to make sure the notebook is portable so that you can manage transporting the notebooks when providing feedback and grading. Pieces of paper are not as durable as standard notebooks or journals, but they are lighter and more cost effective. However, passing out paper and sending around a stapler to a large class can be logistically challenging, and instructors in large classes may wish to use preassembled notebooks. Regardless of type, the inquiry notebook should be dedicated to this task and not integrated with class notes or other subjects.

INTRODUCING THE INQUIRY NOTEBOOK

I introduce the inquiry notebook during the first week of the semester. My syllabus includes a description of the project and its role in the course. We establish ground rules for the entries, so expectations are clear. I include the following statement in my syllabus or on an assignment sheet:

> Inquiry Notebook (20%): The inquiry notebook is a space to wonder and think critically. Prompts will be provided weekly. See the course schedule for collection dates.

Instructors might modify this statement by suggesting a particular theme. The first statement might be written as, "Think critically about how you learn English" or "Think critically about sustainability." I ask students to date each entry and record the prompt that was given in class to help identify the response when providing feedback and grading. The instructor also needs to keep track of topics for his or her own use and to provide students who are absent an opportunity to make up the assignment, if feasible.

The first task is to create a cover. Students can draw, select a quote, or find a picture to use as their cover page and represent the theme of the inquiry notebook. This task tailors the notebook to the student and encourages individual expression. If your class emphasizes a content area, then learners could draw something to show what the content area means to them. Learners could also be asked to draw themselves learning or as a superhero, create a self-portrait, draw a scene from their favorite book, or illustrate a favorite memory. Such prompts show learners that they can think critically in different ways. Practically, the cover page makes it easier to connect the notebook to the student for grading and distribution purposes.

I provide prompts weekly for multiple purposes. First of all, weekly writing turns a task into a habit. Secondly, topics can

A writing prompt developed by the teacher in response to or in preparation for class is a fundamental element of the inquiry notebook.

complement class activities or reflect current events. While I grade inquiry notebooks quarterly, I maintain accountability by tying topics to specific activities. It is much harder to think critically about a specific experience several weeks after it occurred. Lastly, entries are a means to scaffold knowledge. Prompts at the beginning of the week can introduce new concepts, while prompts at the end of the week help bring the ideas of the week to a close and transition into the next topic. Occasionally I provide a prompt following a particularly meaningful class period in addition to our regular weekly entry.

DEVELOPING AND SEQUENCING PROMPTS

A writing prompt developed by the teacher in response to or in preparation for class is a fundamental element of the inquiry notebook. Prompts should build on content, language, and behaviors developed in the classroom. I begin with low-stakes topics that introduce students to the concept of critical thinking within areas that are familiar to them. With first-year students, I often focus on the transition to college and their college experience. Other themes might include experiences learning English; align with units in the curriculum; or emphasize topics of particular interest to learners such as culture, globalization, and current events.

For example, I developed a high-school writing class around the theme of environmental sustainability. Students completed readings and written assignments outside of class and engaged in small-group activities during class. I used prompts in a variety of ways: as an in-class writing task to prepare learners for the class activity, as an individual activity in preparation for group discussion, and as an opportunity to reflect on the activities of the class period. Teachers can begin by stating the prompt out loud to build listening comprehension and finish by writing the prompt on the board to help learners check for understanding.

Table 1 shows how prompts related to students' college experience might be sequenced over a semester.

Note that the prompts do not explicitly ask students to think critically, create, or problem solve. In the first three entries, students typically summarize or explain their experience. Mere summarizing, though, does not lead to the development of more-advanced skills; therefore, at the end of the third week, notebooks are collected for feedback purposes to guide learners as they transition from lower-level to higher-level thinking skills.

Thinking critically in the target language is challenging, as it increases cognitive load (Shehab and Nussbaum 2015). Over the course of the semester, prompts change (in either content or language) and become progressively more difficult. Prior to writing an inquiry-notebook entry, learners should process the content to ensure comprehension. Comprehension questions paired with small-group work and other activities help learners move from understanding-based responses to higher-order responses. In early

Over the course of the semester, prompts change (in either content or language) and become progressively more difficult.

Week	Prompt Topic
1	Why college?
2	What are your goals for this semester?
3	What are you really good at? How did you get really good at that?
Inquiry notebook (entries 1–3) due for feedback	
4	Reflect on the first month of your semester.
5	Getting involved on campus is as important to your long-term success as your grades are. Attend a campus activity, club meeting, etc. and write about the experience.
6	Give yourself a midterm class-participation grade. Use the rubric as a guide. Cite specific examples to show why you think you have earned this grade.
Inquiry notebook (entries 1–6) due for midterm grading	
7	Review your midterm grades. Were they what you expected? What will you do to maintain or raise your grades through the final weeks?
8	Schedule an appointment to talk with one of your professors. Write about your visit.
9	During Week 2, you set some goals for the fall semester. Write about your progress toward your goals.
10	What do students need to be successful at this school?
Inquiry notebook (entries 7–10) due for feedback	
11	Thinking about your strengths and goals can help you maintain motivation in the final weeks of the semester. Describe something you have done in the past that you are proud of, something you are currently doing well, and something you are excited about in the future.
12	Complete one of the statements below based on the reading we did this week. • What strikes me about the reading is … • To better understand the reading, I would like to know … • The idea I most take issue with is … • The part that makes the most sense to me is …
13	Go back to the goals you set at the beginning of the semester. Describe your progress toward the goals you set. What goals do you have going into next semester?
14	Reflect on your first semester and address the prompt, "If I knew then what I know now … "
Inquiry notebook (entries 7–14) due for final grading	

Table 1. Example of weekly prompts and sequencing

entries, I often see responses that showcase understanding. Learners compare, give descriptions, or state main ideas. As they receive feedback from teachers or peers and gain experience with higher-order skills, learners apply knowledge, make inferences, find evidence to support generalizations, present and defend opinions, and propose alternatives. Learners build twenty-first-century skills and transfer them to different situations while engaging with the course content (Roux, Mora, and Tamez 2012; Laqaei and Mall-Amiri 2015).

The inquiry notebook, which offers alternative formats to express knowledge, gives all students the opportunity to show what they know about the topic, even if they cannot contribute to the class discussion. The entries also give me an opportunity to get to know a student on a personal level.

Prompts for different language levels and contexts

Prompts can be modified for context, content, and proficiency. Instructors should pay attention to the language level of the prompts and consider offering variations for multilevel classes. New vocabulary should be scaffolded into instruction well in advance of the prompt, as the primary objective of the lesson is to develop critical-inquiry skills. Table 2 shows how prompts can be modified to accommodate language-level variation among students.

Additionally, consider the context of the situation. For the inquiry notebook to be effective, students need to feel safe writing about the topics you provide. As the instructor, I need to think carefully about my response to possibly sensitive material.

Finally, inquiry notebooks are not limited to university classrooms. Inquiry-based learning can be applied to primary- and secondary-school learners as well as adults. Educators can vary prompts and expectations based on the target audience. Developing twenty-first-century skills is an ongoing process. The earlier learners begin to develop these skills, the stronger their skill set will be in the future.

Prompts for special purposes

Prompts can be tied to readings, listening activities, guest speakers, and current events; they can also hold students accountable for completing preparatory work or serve as a comprehension check. A grammatically themed inquiry notebook might include prompts that scaffold more-complex sentence structures. Your prompts might include key vocabulary and concepts reflected throughout a unit. Instructors could use a written format for a think-aloud protocol reflecting on L2 learning experiences.

Original Prompt	Possible Prompt Modifications
Why college?	• Why did you decide to go to college? • Why is college important to you?
Reflect on the first month of your semester.	• How did your first month go? • Why do you think that is? • What would you do differently next time?
What strikes me about the reading is …	• What do you find interesting about the reading? • What do you find memorable about the reading?
If I knew then what I know now …	• What is something you have learned that you would like others to know? • If you could go back in time, what would you do differently?
How do you learn English?	• What is the best way for you to learn vocabulary? • How do you know your technique works? • What other study strategies could you use? • What would you do if your method stopped working?

Table 2. Examples of prompt modifications for different language levels

Special Purpose	Prompt
Introducing the inquiry notebook	• An inquiry notebook is a place to wonder, explore, and think critically. What ideas would you like to investigate? • What does it mean to think critically? How might you use this skill in learning? • If you could learn more about anything, what would it be? • What goals do you have for this semester? • How do you learn?
Understanding language learning	• How do you learn English? What strategies do you use? • What makes learning English challenging? • Why did you decide to study English? • How might you use an inquiry notebook to improve your English? • In what situations would you use [*insert grammatical structure or language concept*]? • As you look back at the semester, how has your use of English changed?
To access prior knowledge	• How have you experienced [X]? • What does [X] look like in your home or community? • When you think about [X], what comes to mind? • What do you know about [X]? • What can we do to solve or improve [X]?
In response to a class activity, video, or text	• What do you find interesting about [X]? • "I would like to know more about … " • In five years, how might [X] change? • What question would you like to ask the author/character? Why? • What does the author want you to know? • What is the most important message from today? • How is this relevant to you? • How does [X] connect to [Y]?
To build an inquiry: questions to ask yourself	• What do I already know about [X]? What do I want to know? How would I find out? What is a possible answer? • Where can I learn about this? How do I know if the author/source is credible? What are the next steps? • What do I want others to know? How would I explain this differently to different people? What is important? What is unclear? What else do we need to find out? • Why would someone agree/disagree with me? • What might the consequences be? What would happen if [X]?
Inquiry notebook wrap-up	• Reflect on your semester. What went well for you? What would you do differently? • What would you like to learn more about? • How do you think you will use [X] from the class in the future?

Table 3. Prompts for special purposes

Table 3 highlights prompts for different purposes. (Note that the [X] and [Y] variables give educators the opportunity to modify questions based on topics introduced in their individual classroom.)

For novice learners, the inquiry notebook may take more of a visual format or be adapted to use lists rather than sentences. For example, learners may show how a topic is personally relevant by drawing something they have done or by finding a photograph that relates a similar experience. Illustrations can be accompanied by brief descriptions that connect the visual image to the prompt to build language skills.

FEEDBACK AND ASSESSMENT

I find most students require clear directions, feedback, and examples to learn how to

Most students require clear directions, feedback, and examples to learn how to transition from informative, summary-based responses to entries that highlight higher-order thinking skills.

transition from informative, summary-based responses to entries that highlight higher-order thinking skills. In a typical semester, there are four collection points where I provide feedback and assess work (see the schedule in Table 1). This helps students learn accountability for completing entries on their own time at their own pace. Twice I collect notebooks for compliance, typically covering entries 1–3 and 7–10. Twice I collect entries for quality—generally following entries 4–6 and 11–14. At the compliance stage, my goal is for learners to apply feedback when they write future entries. At the quality stage, I am looking to see if learners transferred feedback from previous entries into subsequent work. Grading at the compliance stage is based on whether the entries are complete, not how well they are completed, using the three categories in Table 4.

At the compliance stage, learners have the opportunity to modify entries before they are graded for quality. They can add information at the bottom of the page, continue the response on the next open page, or rewrite the entry. I ask learners not to erase prior responses, although they may cross out items they wish to delete, so I can see what changed. In my experience, few students take advantage of the opportunity to revise their entries, so I have not been concerned that revising will significantly increase my workload as a teacher. Most learners focus on writing future entries.

Feedback is provided to help students develop their critical-thinking skills. I pose questions that cause students to probe more deeply into the experience. I may ask students to give an example, explain the significance of their response, or share what they learned. I also probe to find out why their response is important to them as an individual, to their experience, and to the experience of others. We discuss how they can incorporate this level of thinking as they move forward. Learners may receive feedback on individual entries or cumulative feedback at the end of the series of responses. I use cumulative feedback when development is needed across entries. If, for example, one entry is strong, I may comment, "You do a great job providing examples and explaining the significance of your response in entry 2. Use this entry as an example as you revise entries 1 and 3." Depending on the complexity of the feedback, written comments can be complemented with individual conferences or class sessions where students are prompted to provide deeper responses through a series of questions like, "Why did you say that?" and "Where is this idea coming from?"

At midterm and finals, I grade notebooks for quality, using the rubric in Table 5. Because I want to assess twenty-first-century skills, my rubric uses the cognitive-skill hierarchy in Bloom's Taxonomy (Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation) as a guide. In order to provide timely assessment, I do not give

Not Compliant	Partially Compliant	Compliant
Not submitted	Submitted late and/or incomplete	All entries are completed and submitted on time.

Table 4. Rubric for formative feedback at the compliance stage

formative written feedback at midterm or final grading. I identify where the work fits on the rubric and assign the appropriate score. Learners then have the option to meet with me for personalized feedback.

In Table 5, note that the "Does not meet expectations" grade indicates that the notebook entries focus only on the recollection of facts, provide basic knowledge, or explain ideas or concepts. Entries that meet expectations add a level of support by providing examples and applying topics to learners' experience. "Experience" can be defined as a class experience, an individual experience, or an experience that extends to a broader audience. Application to personal experience is a good way to introduce critical-thinking concepts to learners. Stronger entries add an explanation of significance, which could be phrased as, "Why is this important?" The difference between exceeding and far exceeding expectations is consistency.

Since this project is designed to develop twenty-first-century skills, I do not correct spelling or grammar, but I will ask questions to clarify meaning. I comment on language only if it interferes with my comprehension of the idea. An alternative to providing grammatical feedback is to develop lessons in preparation for the writing students will do in the inquiry notebook and/or in response to the errors produced in the entries. If a number of students create similar errors, then the entire class would benefit from review. While it is more labor intensive to produce lessons from authentic language production, learners are more likely to transfer the skill to their own work (ACTFL 2019).

CONCLUSION

Teachers who use inquiry notebooks will see how twenty-first-century skills progress over a period of time:

- Creativity and imagination develop through prompts that ask learners to propose alternatives and predict results.
- Critical thinking increases when learners apply what they learn to different situations, analyze content, and evaluate outcomes.
- Information literacy develops when tying prompts to course content.
- Learners take initiative by applying what they learned to different situations.
- The process of writing weekly entries strengthens learners' written communication skills.
- Scaffolding and formative feedback give learners the opportunity to close the development gap between their language proficiency and their ability to express themselves critically in the target language.

In the twenty-first-century classroom, the aim is to build language proficiency and higher-order thinking skills through activities that

Does Not Meet Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations	Far Exceeds Expectations
Focuses on remembering or understanding (i.e., only summarizes what was done).	In most entries ... Applies what was learned to experiences. Provides examples to support application of information.	In most entries ... Applies what was learned to experiences. Provides examples to support application of information. Explains significance.	In all entries ... Applies what was learned to experiences. Provides examples to support application of information. Explains significance.

Table 5. Midterm and final grading rubric for summative feedback

In the twenty-first-century classroom, the aim is to build language proficiency and higher-order thinking skills through activities that integrate both skill sets.

integrate both skill sets. This is a challenging task for all parties. An inquiry notebook is one way to integrate language development with critical-thinking skills to develop a successful twenty-first-century English learner.

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READER'S GUIDE

This guide is designed to enrich your reading of the articles in this issue. You may choose to read them on your own, taking notes or jotting down answers to the discussion questions below. Or you may use the guide to explore the articles with colleagues.

For example, many teachers discuss *Forum* at regularly scheduled meetings with department colleagues and members of teachers' groups, or in teacher-training courses and workshops. Often, teachers choose an article for their group to read before the meeting or class, then discuss that article when they meet. Teachers have found it helpful to take notes on articles or write a response to an article and bring that response to share in a discussion group. Another idea is for teachers to try a selected activity or technique described in one of the articles, then report back to the group on their experiences and discuss positives, negatives, and possible adaptations for their teaching context.

Digital Age Pedagogy: Easily Enhance Your Teaching Practice with Technology (Pages 2–9)

Pre-Reading

1. How would you rate your skills at using technology to teach English? What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses?
2. In your teaching situation, what does "technology" include?
3. What are your favorite tools for teaching with technology?
4. How do you find out about new or updated tools and how to use them in teaching?

Post-Reading

1. Have you used any of the tools described in the article? Which have you found most useful?
2. Take the author's advice and experiment with a tool that you haven't previously used in your teaching. How comfortable do you feel using it? How can you and your students use it productively?
3. If possible, assign your students—working in groups—to teach a tool to the rest of the class (and to you). (See the first suggestion under Where to Begin.) Which tool(s) do the students like most? Which are most helpful in your context?
4. Keep a journal in which you track your use of technology in your teaching. Include steps you take, your attitude, and your confidence levels. Go back and read previous entries from time to time. What changes do you notice after a month? Three months? Six months? A year?

L1 and L2 Writing Differences: From Understanding to Practice (Pages 10–19)

Pre-Reading

1. What differences can you think of between L1 writing and L2 writing?
2. When you teach writing, do you consider the writing skills your students already have in their L1? How important do you think those skills are when it comes to developing L2 writing skills?
3. Think about your own writing experiences. How much do you think your L1 writing skills and background have influenced your L2 writing?

Post-Reading

1. The authors provide specific tendencies and errors of L2 writers. Do you notice the same tendencies and errors in your students' writing? What others have you noticed?

2a. Of word-, sentence-, and global-level challenges, which do you think are the most difficult for your students to overcome? Do you tend to teach skills on these three levels separately or together? Does reading this article make you consider changing your approach?

2b. In terms of effective writing, is one level more important than the others? Why or why not?

3. When you read the descriptions of the activities, do you feel that they would be effective in your context? If not, what makes you doubt an activity's potential? Is there a way to adapt the activity to make it a better fit? Which activity seems as though it would be the best fit for your context?
4. Try one of the authors' suggested activities (for word-, sentence-, or global-level tendencies and errors). How effective and beneficial is the experience for you and your students? Does that make you more or less interested in trying one of the other procedures that the authors suggest?
5. Reread the general tips at the end of the article. How many of these things do you already do? What tip(s) of your own could you add to the list?

Inquiry Notebooks for Twenty-First-Century Skill Development (Pages 20–29)

Pre-Reading

1. Have you used inquiry notebooks in your teaching? If so, how have you used them? If not, what do you think they are? How do you think they can be used?
2. What are twenty-first-century skills? How do you think they differ from (for example) twentieth-century skills?
3. How do you develop your own twenty-first-century skills?

Post-Reading

1. The author opens by giving examples of twenty-first-century skills. What other skills could you add to this list?
2. The article suggests several "shapes and forms" that an inquiry notebook can take. Which is the most appropriate for you and your students to use? Why?
3. Table 1 provides specific prompts that can be used with students transitioning to college and university. Are these prompts appropriate for your context? How might you adapt some of them to use with your students? What about the prompts in Table 3? Which ones would be most productive for your students?
4. How likely are you to use inquiry notebooks in your teaching? In which course(s) are you most likely to use them?
5. Brainstorm at least three other prompts that are especially appropriate for your students. Have your students respond to them. What are the results? How easy or difficult is it to create prompts that are of interest to students and that develop twenty-first-century skills?

TEACHING TECHNIQUES

Using Question Grids to Scaffold, Monitor, and Evaluate Communicative Practice

by RUTH GOODE

Teaching large classes of students who aren't familiar with communicative activities can be challenging. One of the biggest challenges is to ensure that all students participate actively, especially if the teacher isn't able to pay close attention to them. I used to find that when I asked large classes of students to practice in pairs, they would often work together for only about two minutes and then stop.

There are many reasons why this happens, but the main reasons probably relate to different understandings of how languages are learned and, therefore, what kinds of things students believe they should do in a language class. More on this later.

One useful and simple strategy to help students stay on task for longer when doing communicative activities is to use a grid like the one in Figure 1. I used this grid with a beginning-level class to help students practice asking and answering questions using recently introduced vocabulary about family members.

In preparation, I did the following:

1. Review related vocabulary, grammar, and phrases—in this case, *What's your name?* and *How do you spell that?*

2. Clarify meaning, pronunciation, and written form of the new vocabulary or grammar (e.g., the names of family members and the question, *What's your _________'s name?*).

3. Demonstrate the activity with one student.

   - Distribute the photocopied grid or draw the grid on the board. If on the board, students should copy the grid into their notebook before the next step.

   - Ask a student (e.g., Maya) the first question (*What's your husband's name?*) and then show the class that you are writing her answer in the correct place on the grid.

   - Continue demonstrating with more questions. (With this vocabulary set, you might need to demonstrate that not all questions are necessary. For example, students need to choose whether to ask *What's your husband's name?* or *What's your wife's name?*—or perhaps neither of those questions is relevant.) You don't need to demonstrate asking all the

What's your _________'s name?			
	Name:	**Name:**	**Name:**
husband			
wife			
mother			
father			
sister			
brother			
son			
daughter			

Figure 1. Grid template for "What's your _______'s name?"

questions, but make sure students understand that they should ask each partner all the relevant questions.

- Demonstrate that Maya should now ask you the questions and write down your answers on her grid.
- After both you and Maya have asked and answered questions, demonstrate finding a different partner and asking the questions again.

4. Ask students to begin the activity. It's nice if they can stand up and move around. Encourage students to continue until they have talked to at least two people.

5. Monitor closely, helping as appropriate. Some students may still be unsure about how to do the activity, some may need help with pronunciation or other issues, and some may need help finding another partner. If some students finish their exchanges with two students, ask them to find a third partner.

6. Ask students to stop the activity.

When students have finished, they will have a grid similar to the one in Figure 2, although not everyone will complete the grid. Faster students may talk to three people, while other students might still be talking to their first partner. Hopefully, though, all are actively engaged in practicing the target vocabulary and structure.

What's your _________'s name?			
	Name: David	**Name:** Lien	**Name:** Ai
husband	Feng	Zhang	
wife			Guang
mother	Chien	Baozhai	
father	Fen	Wang	
sister	Lien	Chen	Chunhua
brother	Hwang		Bingwen
son	Chang	Chao	
daughter	Ai		Fang

Figure 2. Filled-in grid for "What's your _______'s name?"

Students continue asking and answering the questions for much longer than in a traditional class and therefore get much more of the practice they need.

Using grids in this way, students continue asking and answering the questions for much longer than in a traditional class and therefore get much more of the practice they need. There are a number of reasons why grids are effective:

- Grids give students a clear task and a clear stopping point. Students know they should continue asking questions until they have talked to three partners or most of the grid is complete.
- Grids give students support. All the new vocabulary and the target question are on the grid or board, and less-confident students can refer to these if necessary.
- Grids build confidence. I encourage students to look at the grid if they need help remembering the question(s), but when demonstrating the activity, I show them that they should always look up when speaking. By the time students have asked the questions a few times, they are likely to have memorized the new vocabulary and structures and will no longer need to refer to the grid to remind themselves of the new language.
- Grids allow the teacher to see who is doing the activity and who is not, to observe how well each student is progressing, and to offer appropriate support.
- Grids encourage an atmosphere of cooperation—and competition. Students enjoy competing to complete their grid.

As noted above, students who are not familiar with communicative classrooms may have different understandings of how languages are learned and therefore different beliefs about what kinds of things are effective language-learning activities.

Many traditional language classrooms are teacher-centered, and they focus primarily on written rather than spoken language and on accuracy rather than fluency. Students are often used to interacting in English only with the teacher and to receiving immediate accuracy-focused feedback from the teacher, rather than feedback or responses from a peer.

As a result, students may believe that the goal of speaking-practice activities is to produce error-free speech that imitates the teacher's model; that only the teacher's feedback is useful or important; and that if the teacher isn't listening, they should remain silent.

Students who are not familiar with communicative classrooms are therefore likely to be uncomfortable with pair-work activities and view them as a waste of time, because the teacher isn't listening and because they don't believe their fellow students are effective monitors of correctness. Using grids is a strategy to help students transition from student practices based on traditional understandings of language learning to student practices based on a communicative language-teaching approach.

Teachers can use grids at all levels and for almost every area of grammar or vocabulary. At the beginning level, I use grids to practice areas such as these:

- Jobs: *Are you a teacher/student/cook/garment worker/construction worker*, etc.? And then, *Is your husband/wife/daughter a teacher/student/cook*, etc.?
- Personal characteristics: *Is your brother/sister/son*, etc., *tall/short/young/old/married/single*, etc.?

Teachers can use grids at all levels and for almost every area of grammar or vocabulary.

- Times and daily routines: *What time do you get up/go to work/eat lunch/go home/eat dinner*, etc.?
- Locations: *Where is the post office/bank/supermarket/hospital/school*, etc.? *It's next to _____/across from _____/on X Street*, etc. See the example grid in Figure 3.

I have also used grids to practice vocabulary such as the names of rooms (e.g., *Do you have a dining room?*), foods (*Do you like carrots?*), numbers (*What's your phone number?*), hobbies, colors, daily activities, clothes, household objects, school subjects, and many more. Grids are also useful for role-playing practical tasks that integrate a variety of vocabulary and grammar, such as the following:

- Making a hotel reservation: *How many nights? What kind of room would you like? Would you like smoking or non-smoking? How would you like to pay?*
- Checking in at a hospital or doctor's office: *What's your name? What's your address? What's your phone number? Have you been here before? What's your health insurance number?*

At the beginning levels, it is useful to teach other phrases or expressions that students might need. For example, to help students ask and answer questions about family members' names, you might teach or review the following:

- Can you say that again, please?
- I don't have any brothers.
- How do you say … ?

Because students use grids to record information about their partners, teachers can extend the practice by having students ask another partner questions about the students they have just interviewed. If they have just asked questions about family members' jobs (*What does your mother/father/brother/sister do?*), they could then ask questions such as, *What does David's father do?* Sometimes this involves a change in the form of the verb. For example, students might ask questions

Ask a student about his or her neighborhood. Where's the _________? It's next to/across from/on … .			
	Name:	**Name:**	**Name:**
Post office			
Bank			
Supermarket			
Hospital			
School			
Gym			
Movie theater			
Library			

Figure 3. Grid template for describing locations: "Where's the _______?"

You can also use grids as the starting point for a writing activity.

about possessions (e.g., *Do you have a TV/car/computer?*). When they have finished asking three students these questions, they can interview each other about the people they have just talked to: *Does David have a TV/car/computer?* Or if they were asking questions about what people were doing at times in the past (e.g., *Where were you last night at 6:00?*), they could later ask, *Where was David at 6:00 p.m.?*

When students are comfortable using grids, you can give them a blank grid and ask them to write their own questions. You can approach this as a writing exercise with drafting and collaborative reviewing and editing. When the grids are complete, students can ask three or more students their questions, or they can ask one student their questions and then exchange grids so that they ask their next partner the new set of questions.

	When did you ______?	Where did you ______?	Who did you ______ with?	Why did you ______?
Have you ever worked in a store?				
Have you ever climbed a mountain?				
Have you ever ridden a horse?				
Have you ever eaten eel?				
Have you ever visited the capital city?				
Have you ever seen a play at the theater?				
Have you ever cooked Indian food?				

Figure 4. Grid template for practicing present-perfect and simple-past tenses

Ask your partner what he or she will be doing at these times in the future. e.g., What will you be doing in January next year? (Write your own questions in the last three rows.)			
	Name:	Name:	Name:
at 5:30 a.m.?			
tomorrow?			
on July 19th?			
after class?			

Figure 5. Grid template for "What will you be doing ... ?"

[Grids] promote communicative interaction and are especially useful for students who are new to communicative classrooms.

You can also use grids as the starting point for a writing activity. Suppose students have been asking questions about their homes, such as, *Do you have a kitchen/yard/garage?* and *Is it big/small?* With grids, they can interview another student and write a paragraph about his or her house: *Maria lives in a house on Laguna Street. It has two large bedrooms. Her house has a small yard*. And so on.

Another benefit is that grids can support students in practicing the new language outside the classroom. If students use a grid in class, you can assign them to ask three other people the same questions outside the classroom. Although this is easier in places where English is widely spoken, it is usually also possible in universities, in intensive English programs, or even online.

At advanced levels, grids help students practice a variety of vocabulary and grammar areas such as the grid in Figure 4, which focuses on questions in the present perfect and simple past. You can allow students to extend the conversation beyond the grammar or vocabulary area that you want them to practice. Here, students ask their partner one question and then four follow-up questions before changing partners.

One approach to making a grid to help students practice a particular grammar or vocabulary area is to think of a natural question using the target language. If you want students to practice the future progressive with *will* (e.g., *I'll be watching TV*), then a possible question is, *What will you be doing at X:XX p.m.?* With that in mind, you could create a grid like the one in Figure 5. Note that this particular grid includes room for these more-advanced learners to write their own questions.

There are so many ways to use this simple technique. Grids are effective in a variety of contexts, at a variety of levels, and, as the examples in this article show, with a variety of target language. They promote communicative interaction and are especially useful for students who are new to communicative classrooms. Enjoy!

Ruth Goode is a Regional English Language Officer currently based in Washington, D.C. She has been teaching since 1983 and training teachers since 1996. Her primary interests are in intercultural pragmatics, teacher change, and teacher training in low-resource environments.

A Paraphrasing Game for Intermediate EFL Learners

by AIDA KOÇI McLEOD

How can a teacher get students to show true comprehension of a written text, rather than answer questions with mere repetition of words from the original? This is a difficulty for the teacher because many English as a foreign language (EFL) learners have little or no anglophone cultural background. They need three prerequisites in order to achieve and demonstrate real comprehension:

- sufficient vocabulary
- general world-context knowledge
- mental agility

It's possible that none of these have been acquired—especially by younger learners. How can learners be taught all three in a time-efficient way? English-language courses can vary in length and intensiveness, but no course can give EFL learners the years of immersion in anglophone language and cultural context that they have missed. One way to tackle the challenge is to focus systematically on paraphrasing itself, as a skill to be learned and practiced.

PARAPHRASING

Paraphrasing is a productive exercise for students at the intermediate level because it develops capability in both directions: the cognitive capability to comprehend and the linguistic capability to express ideas autonomously—that is, without needing to copy from the original or from a model. Along the way, students acquire knowledge of new lexical items, intensively, in a meaningful context.

However, for students at this level, paraphrasing is a difficult and high-level skill. How can we get them to acquire and practice using it?

There is no short path to the goal of building up the necessary cultural background knowledge and world-context perspective that nonnative-speaker learners lack. One effective method is to use quality resources carefully chosen to be relatable for the age group, in a cycle of patient and regular exposure (typically presentation by the teacher), discussion, and explanation.

To implement this idea, I developed an interactive paraphrasing game that I use for a portion of every lesson, usually as a warm-up activity. The game has three levels: single words, then single sentences, and finally paragraphs. It can be played orally or with written responses. The content focus and the difficulty level can be controlled by the teacher, according to the students' level of English and their moment on the timeline of their learning.

The game is adaptable, extensible, and scalable either up or down. It requires the teacher to prepare a model answer paraphrase for each item of target text, and this takes some time and effort. However, the game can be kept fairly short, around five to ten minutes for a single student's turn plus feedback at Level One, depending on how many items are used. This means the preparation should not prove too onerous—about 30 minutes of preparation time per game should be sufficient.

The items of target text can be reused with future classes, and eventually built up into a sizeable item-bank, which saves time. When the game is scaled up to fill a whole lesson, as

The game has three levels: single words, then single sentences, and finally paragraphs. It can be played orally or with written responses.

I have sometimes done, the preparation time will increase proportionally. However, with most learners it is probably not a good idea to play the game for 45 minutes or a whole hour, because it demands a lot of concentration, and they will become too tired to perform well by the end. Short, sharp stimulating bursts are the best.

The regular use of the game format provides an opportunity to model and practice comprehension, to build content-area knowledge, and to develop higher-level vocabulary and thinking skills.

Here is the game setup, in a nutshell. The text items that you use in the game can be taken from your course's content area, from the set text for your class at the time, from contemporary news stories, or from out-of-copyright children's literature. A useful source is the website of the Full Text Archive (www.fulltextarchive.com/), which has a large library of downloadable children's classics in PDF or e-book format. It is from there that I took the text of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* by L. Frank Baum, which I used for some of the examples in the tables below.

THE "WORD RITE" PARAPHRASING GAME

A note on the game name: it's an anagram of "Reword it," itself a paraphrase of the instruction "Paraphrase it." More-advanced students will appreciate the pun on *rite* (meaning a type of ritual) and *rite* as the colloquial misspelling of *right*.

Instructions for students

The game has three levels, of increasing difficulty. It starts with single words (Level One), progresses to single sentences (Level Two), and finally moves to short texts, but not longer than a paragraph (Level Three).

In groups of three, players identify themselves as Player A, Player B, and Player T (Timekeeper and Evaluator).

- Player A will read or speak a short text.
- Player B has to paraphrase Player A's prompt within a specified time. For Level One, the time limit is 30 seconds; for Level Two, it is one minute; and for Level Three, it is three minutes. In Level Three, Player B is allowed to make notes.
- Player T has the task, apart from calling "Halt" when time is up, of deciding how close Player B's paraphrase came to the meaning of the original and how much of it was *not* copied or repeated, but properly paraphrased. Player T awards full or partial points for Player B's performance.

Prompt from Player A	Valid response from Player B
disappear	vanish
ocean	a sea, only bigger
crooked	not straight
mountain	a high place in the landscape, higher than a hill

Table 1. Sample prompts and possible valid responses for Level One (words)

A note on the game name: it's an anagram of "Reword it," itself a paraphrase of the instruction "Paraphrase it."

- The teacher can keep score, or with larger classes, the students in each group keep track of their scores.

- Rotate the roles and repeat until all three players have played all three parts.

With some groups, especially with younger or less advanced learners, it is advisable for the teacher to play the part of the Timekeeper and Evaluator (Player T), which is a demanding task. I have found, however, that in many cases, students love taking a turn at being Player T; it shifts the centre of gravity away from the teacher as dominant authority and towards the student team as an autonomous collective entity. In any case, you need to have a prepared set of model answers ready, against which to measure the relative accuracy and completeness of Player B's paraphrases. Player T will be given a copy of the model answers to refer to. Of course, there may be other ways of paraphrasing that are also acceptable; as students become familiar with the game, they can become better at judging Player B's responses. This is where the game can develop mental agility, mentioned earlier in the article.

Tables 1, 2, and 3 show sample prompts and possible valid responses for Levels One, Two, and Three, respectively.

OUTCOMES

This is a fun game, and it is challenging, too, which is never a bad thing. Your students will enjoy playing the paraphrasing game, and you can expect them to plunge into it with enthusiasm. The individual performances may vary in fluency and accuracy, but with an overall rising trend in successful paraphrasing over time.

Achieving vocabulary expansion and improvement of world-context knowledge is a slow and necessarily incremental process. However, I have seen evidence from students' responses that they notched up a couple of increments with each round of the paraphrasing game. To consolidate the learning, I asked students to take notes on new lexical items after each round. A useful follow-up activity is to give them a quiz on the new vocabulary. Where necessary, you can interpolate mini-explanations of cultural-context and world-knowledge references.

This intensive and regular work on the complex skill of paraphrasing helped me enormously in my dual aim of (a) getting to know the specific gaps in my students' knowledge of English words, phrases, and usage and (b) helping them to go beyond mimetism and thus achieve greater relative autonomy as language users.

WORD RITE AS AN ONLINE ACTIVITY

For teachers who are working remotely, the Word Rite game works well as an online activity. As long as you and your students have computers and Internet access, you can establish a split-screen video conference, using just about any of the popular free conferencing apps, and play the game online. Moreover, if your school has a learning management system, you can put your teams of three players in separate virtual rooms

For teachers who are working remotely, the Word Rite game works well as an online activity.

Prompt from Player A	Valid response from Player B
Their house was small, for the lumber to build it had to be carried by wagon many miles.	Because the wood to build their house needed to be brought on a cart from a long distance away, the house was not large.
It was very dark, and the wind howled horribly around her, but Dorothy found she was riding quite easily.	Despite the pitch blackness and the terrible roaring of the wind, Dorothy felt comfortable as she flew along.
Dorothy wept bitterly at the passing of her hope to get home to Kansas again.	When she realized she had no hope of returning to Kansas, Dorothy was cruelly disappointed and burst into tears.

Table 2. Sample prompts and possible valid responses for Level Two (sentences)

Prompt from Player A	Valid response from Player B
Uncle Henry never laughed. He worked hard from morning till night and did not know what joy was. He was gray also, from his long beard to his rough boots, and he looked stern and solemn, and rarely spoke.	There was no pleasure or fun in life for Uncle Henry, an old gray man with a gray beard and clumsy gray boots who spent the whole day just working. He kept silent almost all the time and always looked serious.
When Aunt Em came there to live she was a young, pretty wife. The sun and wind had changed her, too. They had taken the sparkle from her eyes and left them a sober gray; they had taken the red from her cheeks and lips, and they were gray also. She was thin and gaunt, and never smiled now.	Aunt Em had been greatly changed by the harsh weather since arriving there as a new bride with bright eyes, rosy cheeks, and red lips. She had lost all her youthful beauty and aged into a skinny, gray, unsmiling figure.
I do not know where Kansas is, for I have never heard that country mentioned before. But tell me, is it a civilized country?	I've never heard of Kansas, so I have no idea where it is, but I'd like to know whether the people there are cultured and polite.

Table 3. Sample prompts and possible valid responses for Level Three (paragraphs)

(breakout rooms) so that any number of subgroups can play the game simultaneously. This is a great way to keep the whole class active, rather than having just three students playing at a time. Additionally, as students become more advanced, they can choose texts on their own; in fact, choosing items for their classmates to paraphrase can be a productive out-of-class assignment in preparation for the game.

Aida Koçi McLeod taught at the South East European University (Tetovë, Macedonia) for 14 years and moved to Australia a few years ago. She is an independent researcher and curriculum adviser.

MY CLASSROOM PARAGUAY

Graciela Chera is hesitant to talk about herself and her classroom. She claims that she is not doing anything special, yet she is clearly making a powerful impact on her students and the English-teaching community in Paraguay. A typical day for Ms. Chera starts by teaching English to preschool students at a private school and ends by teaching students of all ages at the Centro Cultural Paraguayo Americano (CCPA), a binational center that offers English classes to children and adults in the capital city of Asunción.

Graciela Chera takes a break between classes in the sunlit patio at the Centro Cultural Paraguayo Americano.

Photo by Yesenia Orué

Ms. Chera plays a learning game with English Access Microscholarship students.

Photo by Lourdes González

Time flies in Ms. Chera's classes because she manages to strike a rare balance of academic rigor and an atmosphere of fun team spirit. Her use of thematic instruction and group work teaches her students not only English vocabulary and grammar, but also cooperation and respect. While Ms. Chera is an exceptionally good teacher, her humble attitude and her long workweeks at multiple schools are the norm in Paraguay. Humility and hard work are highly valued in Paraguayan culture.

When she was 12, Ms. Chera took her first English class—at the CCPA. Her friends were taking classes there, and while her family lived humbly, they found the money to pay for that first course. Ms. Chera was the top student in every class she took, which earned her a scholarship from CCPA for subsequent studies—18 classes in total. At the time, after-school classes at the CCPA were one of the only options for students attending public school to learn English. These days, some public schools offer English, and many private schools—such as Santa Teresa de Jesus, where Ms. Chera teaches preschool—offer several hours per week of English instruction.

During her studies at CCPA, Ms. Chera began to see teaching English not only as a way to realize her dream of travelling to the United States, but also as a career that would support her family. She majored in English at the Instituto Superior de Educación; she also has a degree in English Education from the Instituto Superior de Lenguas that she earned after returning to Paraguay from Denver, Colorado, where she spent a year with the Au Pair program. This is a U.S. Department of State Exchange Visitor Program that sends participants to provide childcare to host families in the United States. Ms. Chera's eyes light up when she talks about the three children she helped to raise, and she was thrilled that her host family attended her wedding in Asunción in 2014.

On any given weekday, Ms. Chera starts her day teaching preschool at Santa Teresa de Jesus. After a full day of teaching the little ones, she goes to CCPA to teach after-school English classes to children or to teenagers in the English Access Microscholarship Program. Access classes meet on Tuesdays and Thursdays, while the classes for children meet on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. On Saturdays at CCPA, Ms. Chera teaches intensive English classes to adults. Teaching adults who work in different fields such as law and medicine challenges Ms. Chera to be aware of specialized English vocabulary that she might not otherwise know. She serves as a curriculum writer at both schools, and she loves to co-teach and collaborate on lesson planning with colleagues. Since becoming a mother three years ago, she also founded an organization called *Bebé Showers Solidarios* to support other new mothers by providing newborn essentials and parenting classes on the weekends.

Ms. Chera teaching adult students at the CCPA

Photo by Pushpa Panadam

If you peeked inside Ms. Chera's Access class, you would be likely to see 25 highly motivated high school students working in groups of five, cooperating to achieve a shared goal. Ms. Chera varies her student groupings by using pairs or trios, but she likes groups of five best because she can give each group member a specific role. The roles she uses are as follows:

> *Facilitator* – makes sure that everybody has a chance to participate
>
> *Recorder* – writes everybody's answers and comments
>
> *Reporter* – tells the class a summary of what the group discussed
>
> *Language Manager* – makes sure that everyone is speaking only English and that shy and extroverted students have equal opportunity to contribute
>
> *Motivator/Timekeeper* – keeps the group motivated, on task, and on time

Ms. Chera changes the students' roles within their groups to add variety during the three-hour class session. In a recent class, the instructional theme was climate change. In groups of five, students discussed the causes of the many problems the planet is facing. Four corners were presented, and groups had to decide which is the biggest problem: water pollution, air pollution, global warming, or deforestation. After exchanging thoughts with people who had the same opinion, students went back to their original groups, shared their thoughts, and came up with simple solutions to make a difference at home, at school, and in their communities. Finally, the groups reported their ideas to the class.

Meanwhile, if you peeked into Ms. Chera's preschool classroom, you would see 25 toddlers working in stations to learn English vocabulary as part of a thematic unit. For example, the students recently finished a unit on protecting bees. Ms. Chera collaborated with other teachers to set up four stations:

1. Planting seeds of plants that bees need
2. Listening to a book about bees during story time in the library
3. Creating bee posters to be exhibited in an "eco" gallery with the message, "Hug more trees, clean our seas, save the bees."
4. Learning the words and dancing to a song called "Here is the Beehive"

With students having this much fun in class, it's no surprise that Ms. Chera is inspiring the next generation of English teachers. She mentions that the teacher who facilitates the dance station is one of her former Access students, and it becomes clear that Ms. Chera's impact reaches beyond her classroom. Eight of her Access students have gone on to work toward undergraduate degrees in U.S.

universities, and some have become English teachers. Additionally, 11 of her students have completed the Youth Ambassadors Program, which aims to prepare high school students to become leaders in their communities.

In 2014, Ms. Chera participated in the three-week English Access Microscholarship Program for Teachers at Spring International Language Center at the University of Arkansas. The following year, she was chosen to attend a summer TEFL program at Pace University in New York City as one of six CCPA teachers who had achieved the highest scores after being observed by her coordinators. To continue her professional development in Paraguay, Ms. Chera attends CCPA workshops and conferences, which often focus on communicative methods. CCPA has been supporting teachers in the implementation of communicative group work for decades. It has thousands of students at branches throughout Paraguay and a reputation for building fluency through a consistent instructional model in which teachers serve as facilitators of engaging language tasks done in groups. Stephen Krashen has been the keynote speaker at CCPA's professional-development conferences several times in recent years. The center's innovative methodology has resulted in high levels of English proficiency for students, many of whom return as teachers.

Ms. Chera also likes to participate in American English webinars to learn about new strategies, especially when the topic relates to technology in the classroom. Whenever possible, she shares her teaching practices with colleagues by facilitating workshops and presenting at conferences. Her recent workshops include *Cooperative and Communicative Activities for Beginners* and *Technology in the 21st-Century Classroom*. Ms. Chera embodies the ideal of the lifelong learner, though she admits it can be hard to find the time and energy to do everything perfectly.

"The biggest challenge each day is to give the best of yourself in every class and also take care of yourself," she says. "I demand a lot from my students and from myself, and that is tiring. I have to find a balance because I also have a three-year-old daughter who is waiting for me and who needs me."

Through it all, Ms. Chera is motivated by a desire to help support her family and give them a better life. She continues to be energized by the transformative power of English and the doors it can open, and she instills this sense of possibility in her students. "We are giving them tools in order to succeed in life," she says. "They can get better jobs in the future, they can have opportunities outside the country, and the most important thing is that they can come back, and they can change the reality of Paraguay. Because that is what motivates me every day to wake up and go to work. Because I trust Paraguay. Everybody asks me, 'Why didn't you stay in the States?' and I say, 'Because there is a lot to do in Paraguay!'

"I want to give my daughter a better society. I want to give her a better country, and I think that only by working together we can change the reality of Paraguay."

By teaching students of all ages, Ms. Chera is having a positive impact on the English-teaching community in multiple ways every day. She is giving the littlest learners a joyful initial experience with English. She is modeling to older students how English can lead people to new countries and new professional opportunities. And she enjoys the challenge of learning with her adult students when they need to learn English for specific reasons, such as medical or legal purposes. From toddlers to teenagers to teaching colleagues, it is a pleasure to be in Ms. Chera's classroom.

This article was written by **Abigail Williamson**, who served as an English Language Fellow in Paraguay in 2012–2013. Abigail is currently an instructional coach, and she supports teachers in U.S. K–12 classrooms to make language learning more communicative.

TRY THIS

Word Salad: Vocabulary Reinforcement for Kinesthetic and Visual Learners

LEVEL: Upper Beginner through Advanced

TIME REQUIRED: 45–60 minutes

BACKGROUND: Teachers often do not have the time or the means to invest in creating an activity or preparing something elaborate for their classes. I found in several countries I've worked in, with adults and young learners alike, that Word Salad has captured my students' interest and reinforced vocabulary in a competitive and engaging manner. The activity requires minimal preparation and is adaptable for learners of most ages, group sizes, and language levels.

Word Salad reinforces vocabulary for visual, verbal, kinesthetic, and cognitive learners in three stages of progressing difficulty. It can be held indoors or outdoors, allowing for students in warmer climates or cramped classrooms to stretch their legs.

MATERIALS: Small slips of paper (two per student); a cup or other container large enough to hold the slips of paper; a timer; a way to keep score

PREPARATION: Prepare the materials listed above. You might have to prepare additional slips of paper with words of your own choice written on them (see the Variations section).

PROCEDURE:

1. Pass out the slips of paper to the class, two per student, and instruct students to write a noun on each piece of paper. *Tell them not to show anyone else what they are writing*. The nouns can be anything, as long as each is a person, place, or thing. Students tend to enjoy writing classmates' names or the names of local places.

2. When students are done writing, have them fold or crumple up the slips of paper and put them in the cup or container you pass around the room.

3. Divide the class into teams. It's simplest to have two to five teams for this activity; ideally, each team has between five and ten students. For larger classes, you will need more teams. For very small classes, you can provide additional words so there are enough to provide excitement.

4. Tell students that there are three rounds to this game and that the points from each round will be added together at the end for a final winner. Let them know that being the winner of a round does not mean they win the game. Remind students that they must pay attention in each round because the game becomes harder and harder. If they are paying

attention from the beginning, that will help them in later rounds.

5. Round 1 is similar to the game called Taboo. A student from Team 1 will stand at the front of the classroom, or in the center of the semicircle if the students are arranged that way. He or she will have 60 seconds to pull out pieces of paper from the container, one by one, explain verbally what the word on the paper is *without saying the word itself*, and have teammates guess the word. When his or her teammates guess one word correctly, the student pulls another word and explains it, again without saying the word itself. The more words the team guesses correctly in 60 seconds, the more points the team gets. The person standing and explaining must not use gestures, and other teams may not guess.

   It will be useful here to remind the other teams, as they are waiting for the 60 seconds to pass before their turn comes, that the more they pay attention, the more it will help them in the later rounds.

6. Team 2 then sends up a representative to have a turn, again for 60 seconds. Round 1 continues like this until all the pieces of paper in the container have run out.

7. Count up the points and announce each team's total for Round 1. Remind students that the cumulative total at the end of all three rounds will decide the ultimate winner, not the winners of one individual round.

8. Students return the slips of paper to the container to begin Round 2. If Team 3 was the last team to go in Round 1, then Team 4 begins next.

9. Round 2 is similar to charades. The students now know all the words in the container, and if they were paying attention in Round 1, they will have a much easier time guessing the words in Round 2. In this round, the student standing at the front of the room or in the center pulls a word from the container and must "act out" the word in order to get his or her teammates to guess it correctly. The student can use actions and gestures *but must not speak or make any sounds*. Each word the team guesses correctly is worth a point, each turn lasts 60 seconds again, and the teams take turns, as they did in Round 1. Again, the round is over when all the words in the container have been used. Announce the total points at the end.

10. Round 3 is the most difficult. Collect the papers from the students and put them in the container. Tell the class that for the final round, the student standing up can say *only one word* to give his or her teammates a hint as to what is on the paper. For example, if the word is *airplane*, the student may say "flight" or "transportation," but not "air" or "plane." There is no time limit for this round, and the team may take some time to collaborate and come up with one—and only one—guess.

    If the guess is correct, Team 1 gets one point, and Team 2 will continue. However, if the guess is incorrect, Team 2 can make one guess, and if it is right, Team 2 "steals" that point. If Team 2's guess is also incorrect, Team 3 has a chance to make one guess, and this continues until a team ultimately guesses correctly. The turns may even circle back to Team 1 again and continue lapping the whole class before a team guesses correctly. When the word is guessed correctly, Team 2 continues the round by sending up its representative, and the turns continue in order.

11. Round 3 continues until all the slips of paper have run out. Add up the points for all three rounds to find the ultimate winning team.

VARIATIONS

You may also submit pieces of paper for students to use in the game. You might try including words of a similar nature. For example, if the words *universe*, *star*, *galaxy*, *planet*, and *Earth* are in the mix, students discover that Rounds 2 and 3 become substantially harder—and often more humorous. Alternatively, you might write down and include key vocabulary that the students should review from recent lessons for reinforcement.

You may change the target lexical set from general nouns to any other category, depending on what your syllabus and lesson plans are. If the class is studying a unit on music, task students with choosing key vocabulary from that unit. With this approach, the activity can be reused later in the year, as the target vocabulary can easily be changed.

If your students are at a lower level, you can replace any of the rounds with Pictionary, where students must draw a sketch on a chalkboard or whiteboard for their teammates to guess the word(s), again with a time limit of 60 seconds per turn.

SUGGESTIONS

The first time you use this activity, particularly during Round 1, stand by the student in the center or at the front of the room to check the words that the students have written. Discard any that are too difficult, off topic, unclear, written in their native language, or repetitive.

If you have a large class, divide students into smaller groups and more teams. Assign a student to lead each subgroup, and you can monitor and circulate among the subgroups. The game will pass more quickly, and more students will be engaged at a time.

CONCLUSION

Word Salad is created by the students, inherently adapts to their level, requires minimal resources, and can be applied to any context. It is fun and engaging for students, and it provides an amusing context for remembering vocabulary that is reinforced in three distinct ways.

This activity was written by **Annie Chen**, who has been an English Language Fellow in Lomé, Togo, and has a master's degree in International Relations, Global Governance, and Cultural Diplomacy. She has taught English in Italy, Indonesia, Russia, Chile, India, and Uganda and has worked in experiential education in Costa Rica, Morocco, the Dominican Republic, and Ghana.

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