



ASSOCIAÇÃO PORTUGUESA  
DE PROFESSORES DE INGLÊS

# eJournal

Spring/Summer Edition 2022





**Dear Colleagues,**

It is our pleasure to send you the 2022 Spring/Summer eJournal Edition.

Thank you to all the collaborators of this Edition.

As usual, we have the contribution of our writer-in-residence, Carlos Lindade, who regularly highlights the benefits of sundry apps, and this time he presents the resources to be used in the blended classroom.

Last year the topic of the 34th APPI Annual Conference was Learner Agency, which proved to be of high value to change several classroom practices and give students more autonomy and so Nicolas Hurst suggests 25 ways of promoting it.

So as to learn a language, the four skills are required and James Riley enhances writing, explaining how to create a narrative, developing characters, using description, dialogue, and consequent reaction, while Márcia Silva makes use of storytelling to develop writing in a multicultural world.

Oftentimes engaging students in project works brings out students' learning and ICT skills. Therefore, Mónica Santos followed "Aprendizagens Essenciais" as well as "Perfil do Aluno à Saída da Escolaridade Obrigatória".

Memes in the classroom by João Rodrigues can be a useful tool to lead students to develop and consolidate the use of the English language in a fun way, which has always proved of good value, mainly nowadays in times of so much uncertainty and therefore worries.

Another way of engaging students can be carried out by boosting their self-esteem, which sometimes teenagers lack; hence, Ana Amaro suggests some ideas to help teachers deal with such situations.

According to Matthew Reeves, CEO of Together, April 22, 2021, "The purpose of mentoring is to grow by tapping into the knowledge and experience of someone further along than yourself. It's the best way to accelerate your development."; ergo, Ana Loureiro, Carla Marinho, Cláudia Videira, Constância Silva, Judite Valverde, and Rita

Gonçalves decided to give our readers a few hints to help both teachers and students to achieve a better performance.

"The ability to be in the present moment is a major component of mental wellness.", Maslow; and Tiago Carvalho advocates that it would be a good idea for teachers and students to have that in mind in order that they may feel well focusing on the present as to accomplish the maximum of each and every situation.

Finally, On the Bookshelf, you can find the review of two books that are worth reading and exploring to make the most of your classes.

There is an array of topics we hope are relevant to your practice. We would much appreciate it if you could share an article for a future edition. Please, get in touch at **[ejournal.appi@gmail.com](mailto:ejournal.appi@gmail.com)**

The editors,

Judite Fiúza & Neil Mason

*The views expressed in the APPI e-Journal are the contributors' own, and not necessarily those of the Editors or the Publisher.*



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# 3 Educational resources (still) worth using in the Blended classroom

Carlos Lindade

"Anything worth doing is worth doing well."  
— Hunter S. Thompson

In my previous articles, I have encouraged teachers to consider using social media such as WhatsApp, TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter as mediums to engage students and augment learning scenarios in and out of the classroom. This article will look at more conventional educational resources that are worth using to involve learners, monitor their progress formatively, and help you run a blended classroom, while further promoting digital literacies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century classroom.

## Introduction

Blended learning just might be next big thing in education. Not that it is new, but it is undoubtedly one of the things that got a leg up through the COVID-19 pandemic. In simplistic terms, b-learning is all about using current strategies, such as the use of digital media, and combining it with conventional methods/approaches of teaching. While technological advancements, particularly the internet, have made tremendous contributions to almost every field, in the education sector, teachers are now using teleconferencing technologies to attend webinars, conferences, seminars, from anywhere in the globe and contact learners that have been confined due to COVID related infections or run staff meetings in busy school clusters. Blended learning statistics show engagement is higher when we use the techniques and methods that keep up with the students' interests instead of the slow-paced traditional lecture-based approach.

According to Mark in Style:

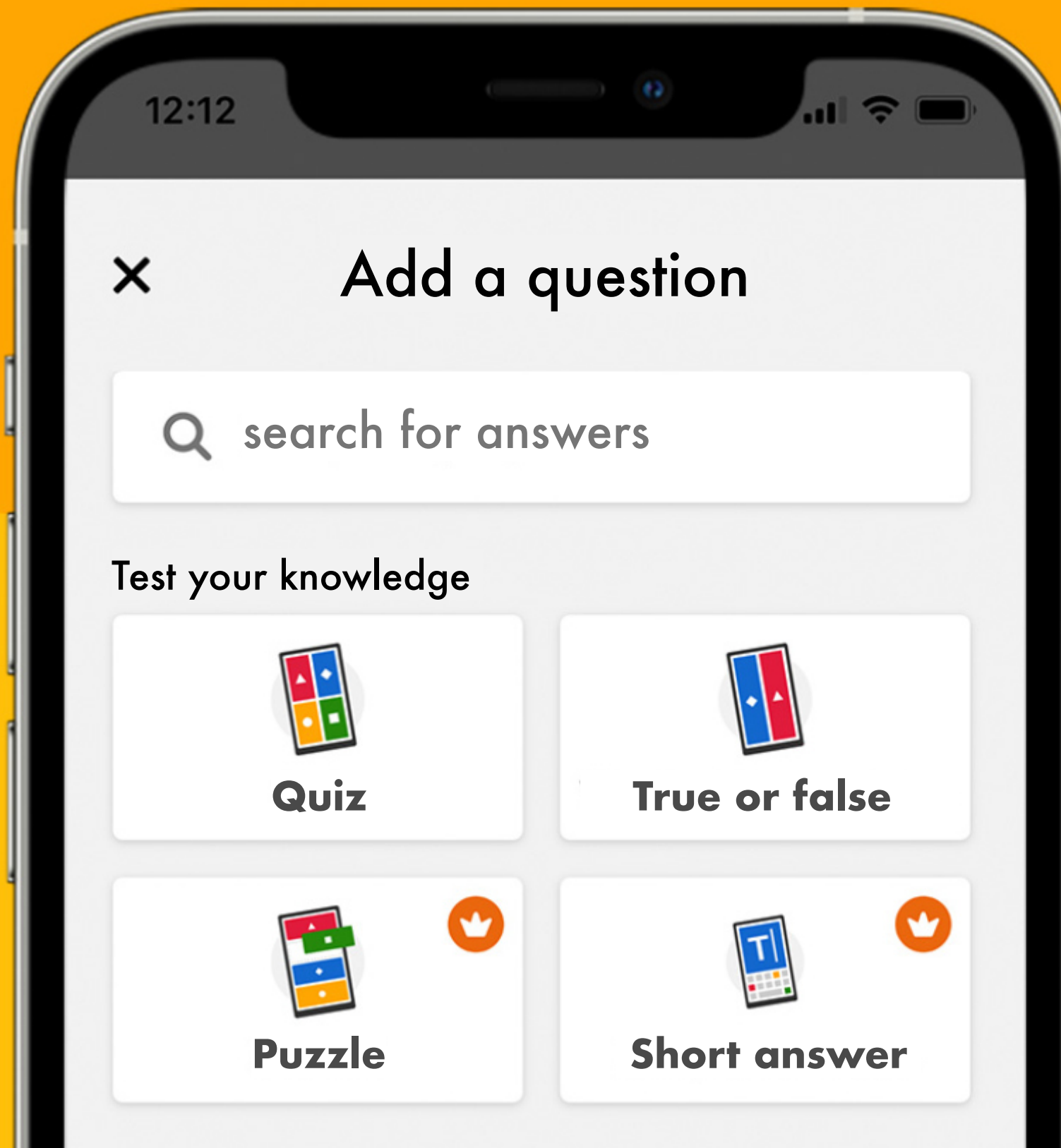
- 73% of teachers say blended learning increases engagement.
- 60% of teachers notice blended learning improves academic ability.
- 59% of students are more motivated when using blended learning models.

While there is no specific data regarding the Portuguese context, teachers and students are now closer than ever. Following the ordinary face-to-face lesson, student and teacher interactions and assignments can be sent and revised online through various platforms such as Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams, Padlet, or Wakelet, which increase the opportunities for formative assessment and allow the teacher to further provide personalised feedback, something we are not always able to do in the physical classroom.

The following resources are not new to the 21<sup>st</sup> century teacher, but I have found that they keep on providing an important source of motivation with younger and older learners alike and can easily be used to flip the classroom as in having the students design the game-like material to be presented to the class. In fact, given the current context, running a blended classroom is not only a possibility, but somewhat of a necessity.





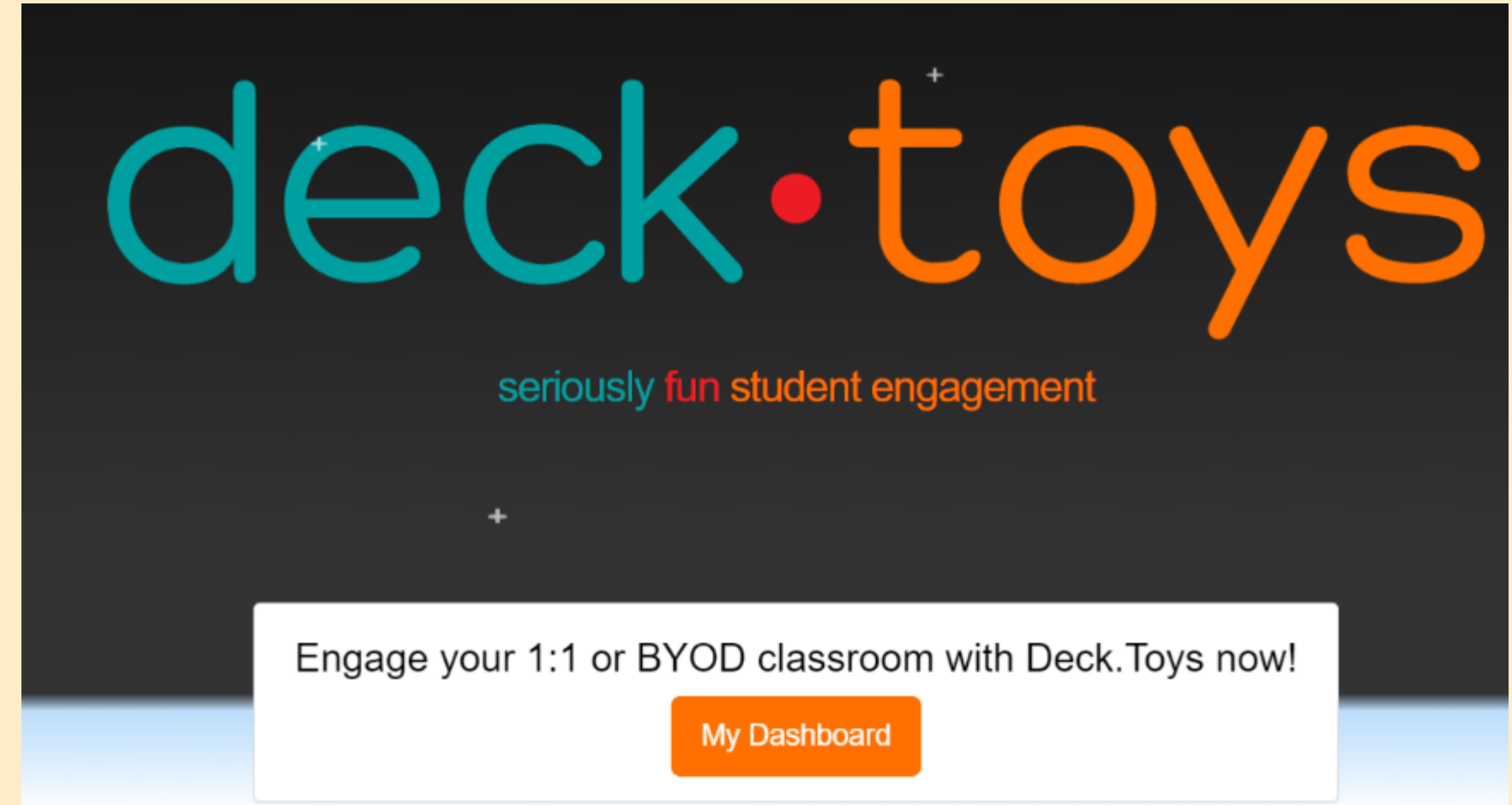


**Let's consider 3 essential apps for the blended classroom:**

### **Kahoot**

Kahoot is a well-known game-based learning platform that allows the instructor to create learning games such as trivia quizzes in a matter of minutes. Each quiz presents up to four multiple-choice answers. In a physical classroom, a teacher can project the quiz and have learners reply using their own devices. For each correct answer, learners gain points. Nevertheless, the app can be used remotely as it was done in countless classrooms during the COVID-19 pandemic. It could be used, for instance, to test learners' knowledge on vocabulary or grammar or quiz them on more specific issues that require additional attention. Kahoot reports can be used for formative assessment or even to introduce new topics. Learners can also be challenged to create their own Kahoot and share it with the class. It presents a vast library of ready-made quizzes, which is valuable especially when teaching multiple levels. This particular tool has attracted much research in recent years, such as Alamanda's (2019) *Kahoot!: A Game-Based Learning Tool as an Effective Medium to Improve Students' Achievement in Rural Areas*, which concludes that Kahoot positively impacts student academic achievement as measured by student motivation, enjoyment, engagement, and concentration or Atherton's (2018) contribution regarding *Kahoot and Formative Assessment*, which explores links between educational technologies and learning.





## Deck Toys

Deck Toys is an online classroom platform that allows the user to teach and engage learners interactively. By gamifying the learning experience, the lesson path is presented to students as a lesson adventure. The teacher can drag and drop materials already designed for a given topic, taking advantage of the time already invested in material design. Student progress is recorded in real-time and allows the instructor to identify the strengths and potential areas of improvement for each learner and by the

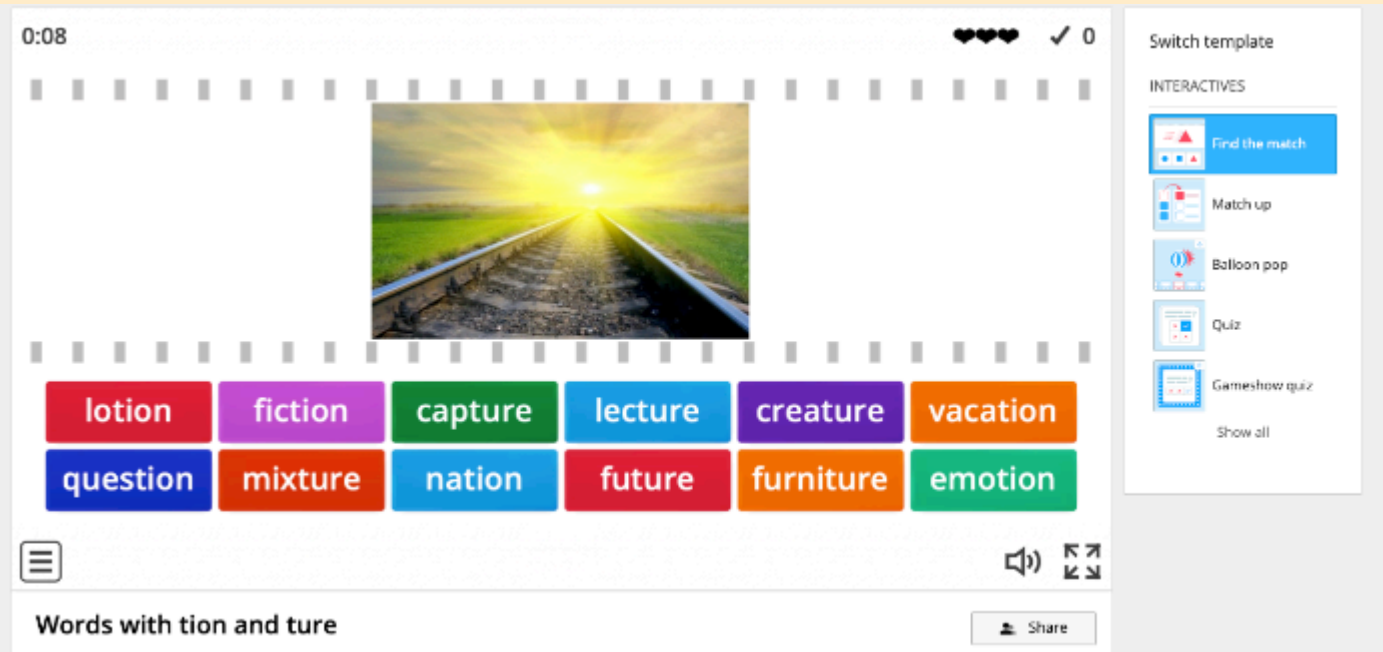
end of the activity, the teacher may download a class report that summarises the completed activities and answers submitted by learners providing a valuable source of information and a viable form to conduct formative assessment. Unfortunately, Deck Toys runs on a freemium business model, so if you use the free version, you cannot keep your decks private, which might be problematic if you're not willing to share your materials.



## Wordwall

Wordwall is a very useful web tool that allows the user to create both interactive and printable activities. The interactive activities are compatible with the majority of web-enabled devices which are suitable for in-class work as well as homework assignments. It provides numerous templates to facilitate the design of activities, such as *match up*, *quiz*, *random wheel*, *group sort*, *find and match*, *missing word*, *unjumble*, *wordsearch*, *labelled diagram*, *matching pairs*, *open the box*, *whack-a-mole*, *anagram*, *random cards*, *gameshow quiz*, *true or false*, *maze chase* and *flip tiles*. Overall, Wordwall is very useful when designing remedial activities on a given topic.

deck•toys



## Final thoughts

While you have probably used these 3 resources in your lessons, I have found that they still bring a sense of engagement and wonder to the classroom. If you are still trying to figure out how to navigate the blended classroom, allow me to share a suggestion: regardless of the app and the task you want your learners to complete be sure to keep it simple, keep it action orientated and keep it connected! (Vázquez Cano, Marín-Monje and Castrillo, 2016) Following these three tips will surely help you deliver great lessons, grade your learners fairly and release you from the limitations of running a coursebook centred classroom.

Remember: engaged students pay attention!

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35 Exciting Blended Learning Statistics [the 2021 view] <https://markinstyle.co.uk/blended-learning-statistics> (accessed May 2nd 2022).

Amid coronavirus, students flock to Kahoot! and Duolingo. Is it the end of language teachers? <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/news/education/2020/04/07/coronavirus-online-learning-language-app-kahoot-duolingo-classroom-rosetta-stone/5114864002/> (accessed May 2nd, 2022).

Vázquez-Cano, E., Martín-Monje, E., & Castrillo, M.ª D. 2016. Analysis of PLE´s implementation under OER design as a productive teaching-learning strategy in Higher Education. A case study at Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia. *Digital Education Review*, 29, 62–85.

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Atherton, P. 2018. More than just a quiz - how kahoot! can help trainee teachers understand the learning process? *TEAN Journal*, 10 (2): 29–39.



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# From autonomy to agency ... into action.

Nicolas Hurst



Nicolas Hurst, APPI member B-1415, is an Assistant Professor of English Studies at FLUP. Teacher of English, ELT methodology and materials design. Numerous articles published in Portugal and abroad. Regular speaker at local and international conferences. ELT coursebook consultant. PhD in Anglo-American Studies.

As we know, English language teachers need to be proactive and creative. We must help our students overcome all kinds of obstacles on their paths to achievement. But we can't do it alone. Our students should be encouraged to develop their sense of agency, to take responsibility for their own thoughts, actions and success.

## A. Introduction

In recent years, we ELT professionals have embraced a range of concepts that shape the way we approach our jobs as teachers. Our role in the classroom has shifted away from being at the centre of the teaching-learning process, transmitting our knowledge of how English functions as a language system, to a much more diverse set of roles focussing on helping our students construct their own knowledge of how English functions as a social instrument. The foundation of this shift has been a desire to motivate our students and to put them at the centre of a dynamic learning process.

We have also shifted our teaching focus away from the traditional emphasis on the four skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening and embraced notions within the construct known as '21st century skills' (see Hurst et al, 2018). We seek to provide learning materials and activities which focus on communication, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking, the so-called 'Four Cs'.

These changes have reframed our approach to providing our students with opportunities: this, in fact, could be a present day definition of what teaching means. The essential conditions so learning can take place are that the teacher should make sure that enough INPUT is available, that there are sufficient opportunities for student INTERACTION and that the students' INVOLVEMENT is guaranteed throughout the process. The linguistic aspect, the social aspect and the psycho-emotional aspect all have to be taken into account when planning our English lessons.

## B. Autonomy in ELT

'Learner autonomy' has been on the ELT agenda for several years and was brought into focus perhaps most clearly by Phil Benson, a University professor working in Sydney (Australia), in his influential 2007 article (see references). His ideas have helped to establish a series of five principles for helping our students to become autonomous:

1. foster active student involvement in learning
2. provide options and varied resources
3. offer choices and decision-making opportunities
4. support learners [see also: Smith (2003) on 'supportive engagement']
5. encourage learner reflection

These principles mean that students are discouraged from relying on their teacher as their main source of knowledge; they are encouraged to develop their own capacity to learn for themselves, to make decisions about what they learn, to increase their awareness of their own ways of learning and to cultivate their own learning strategies. So, the teacher becomes less of an instructor and more of a facilitator, providing opportunities for students' active involvement in their own learning.

It is also important to stress that no student is an island; Lev Vygotsky taught us that all learning is situated in a specific social and cultural setting and this 'learning context' is more powerful than any individual. It is the context that gives rise to 'interdependent learning' and the existence of 'communities of practice' (see: Lave & Wenger, 1991 & 1998). This being so we can arrive at a definition of learner autonomy:

***"a capacity and willingness to act independently and in cooperation with others, as a social, responsible person." (Dam et al., 1990, p.102)***



### C. Learner agency in ELT today

Learner agency can be achieved when the students have a sense of control and ownership, when they are active authors of their own learning: agentive learners believe they can learn and they want to learn. Diane Larsen-Freeman, the famous American Applied Linguist and author of numerous articles and books, sees the central challenge for English language educators is to create practices that help students maximise their potential and give them the tools so that they can adapt and learn beyond their school years (Larsen-Freeman et al, 2021).

Learner agency required a multi-faceted response to our local heterogeneous ELT classrooms; our students occupy a shared learning space but they 'live' that space in multiple ways, each student may require different guidance from their teacher towards becoming more agentive:

“Learner agency can be compared to chess. While a chessboard provides a novice chess player exactly the same physical opportunities as it does a grandmaster, a novice will not initially perceive many of the possible game moves. However, over time, the novice’s awareness of possible moves will gradually improve.” (Driver, 2021, p.16)

Our students have to “actively engage in constructing the terms and conditions of their own learning” (Lantlolf & Pavlenko, 2002, p.145), it’s about willingness and action (behaviour) and having the belief that their own decisions/actions can make a difference to their own learning in their own setting (Mercer, 2011). Consequently, as was mentioned with reference to teachers in the ‘Abstract’ of this short article, our students also have to be proactive and creative concerning the personal, cognitive, affective and environmental factors that interact in determining their success at language learning.

### D. Concluding remarks

There can be no doubt that there are many constraints on how teachers carry out their classroom duties, from the physical resources available to the social and cultural norms of their educational contexts (see: Priestly et al, 2015). But, encouraging our students to become more agentive does not mean we give up all our responsibilities in the teaching-learning process.

A teacher’s actions in the classroom are always crucial. We still need to engage our students cognitively and emotionally, to manage classroom interactions and to maintain the focus on relevant aspects of the language (Larsen-Freeman et al., 2021). This along with other ELT issues related to materials development and assessment procedures, for example.

In order to be successful, our students need to be ‘free’ (emancipated? empowered?) “to create their own patterns with meanings and uses and to expand the meaning potential of a given language, not just to internalize a ready-made system.” (Larsen-Freeman, 2012, p.301).

We need to construct a communicative, collaborative and culturally responsive classroom environment, where we can facilitate transformative learning by letting our learners share their unique perspectives and insights about the world they face, while learning English (Sanczyk, 2020).

Take a few moments to look through the accompanying information sheet called “25 suggestions for developing learner agency” and see how you can implement some of them in your classroom tomorrow!

### E. Some references to check out

- i) Larsen-Freeman et al. (2021) The Oxford guide to learner agency: maximising learner potential. Available at: <https://elt.oup.com/feature/global/expert/learner-agency> (accessed on 29th April 2022)  
— *You need to register and provide an email address.*
- ii) Benson, P. (2007). Autonomy in language teaching and learning. *Language Teaching*, 40, pp. 21-40.
- iii) Mercer, S. (2011). Understanding learner agency as a complex dynamic system. *System*, 39, pp. 427-436.
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# Twenty-five suggestions for developing learner agency

Nicolas Hurst

## A. Learners as leaders

1. Invite learners to set personal, meaningful learning objectives (identify strengths, weaknesses, ways to improve, possible obstacles, etc.). Revise and support periodically.
2. Learners share their favourite songs/paintings/books: personally relevant content for the class to know about.
3. Learners find a relevant text/blog/picture using their phones/the Internet that connects to the unit theme and say why.
4. Learners record themselves telling their favourite story. The class can listen and reflect on content/language.
5. Learners share stories/accounts of having witnessed a problem arising between people because of a lack/misuse of language. Discuss the origins/consequences of such incidents.
6. Learners keep an online 'learning diary' (as part of a 'portfolio'?) where they comment on their English learning experience. Teacher can periodically give feedback.
7. Learners choose a topical issue from the international 'current affairs' agenda that can be the subject of small-scale debate, regularly.
8. Learners work on 'adapting' a text which is somehow controversial so that it conforms to their opinion/position. Compare their 'new' texts with their classmates'. Discuss differences.
9. Learners create comprehension questions on a text for other groups to read and then answer (and vice versa).
10. Learners work in pairs/groups to write definitions of lexical items that are from a text, for other groups to find the items.

11. Learners provide a 'language puzzle' for the class to work on. Peculiar pieces of language in use that they have discovered through reading/movies/gaming that deserve to be explained.
12. 'English in the street'. Learners bring examples of English from their local physical environment and explain why they like it (or not), why it's in English, etc.
13. Learners self-assess on regular basis (can do statements?) to create a notion of incremental progress. Combine with a focus on 'formative assessment'.
14. Learners do a 'one-minute essay' as a response to a question from the teacher about that day's class/learning activities (to finish the class?).
15. Learners conduct a lesson opening activity: a 'two-minute talk' on "What's important to me". Learners take it in turns to 'open' the lesson.

## B. Techniques and tasks

16. Have a quiz/activity before the start of new unit to find out what the learners already know (content/language); use the results as a guide for the selection/adaption/rejection of book-based activities/materials.
17. Provide a 'learning menu' or 'choice board' of different topics that the learners can choose to work on; which issue to be the subject of a debate, which grammar topic to revise before a test, a series of tasks for them to do: in any sequence they want, ... (could be digital?)
18. Provide more problem solving tasks which have multiple solutions; perhaps related to the unit's 'cultural content'. Encourage acceptance of more than one 'truth'.
19. Negotiate and establish 'rules' of behaviour which foster cooperation and collective learning. Make frequent use of jigsaw listening/reading tasks to make the value of cooperation more obvious.



20. Use 'chain' activities where learners combine to produce a text or different answers to a series of questions. Then learners take ownership of a final product/version.
21. Use role plays and dramatised episodes (moments from coursebook texts?) to provide an opportunity for learners to be creative, experiment with language and even adopt a new persona.
22. Encourage 'self-correction' and make frequent use of 'peer correction' and 'peer feedback' after an attempt at self-correction. Reduce 'instant' teacher corrections.
23. Provide choice of type/mode/focus of corrections to be provided by the teacher on a piece of their written work.
24. Look for opportunities to 'gamify' any activity/task using ICT (or not) to enhance the pleasure of learning.
25. Involve the learners in a real life project; plan a school event/trip; something which involves teamwork and research.

### C. Essential reading

- Benson, P. (2007). Autonomy in language teaching and learning. *Language Teaching*, 40, 21-40.
- Larsen-Freeman, D., Driver, P., Gao, X., & Mercer, S. (2021). Learner Agency: Maximizing Learner Potential [PDF]. [www.oup.com/elt/expert](http://www.oup.com/elt/expert) (accessed on 29th April 2022)
- Mercer, S. (2011). Understanding learner agency as a complex dynamic system. *System*, 39, 427-436.
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# Developing Characters in Narrative Writing Using Description, Dialogue, and Reaction

James Riley



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Narrative writing is an important part of the elementary, secondary, and tertiary writing curriculum. Character development plays an important role in allowing readers to connect with the text and helping the author to advance the plot of the story. Description, dialogue, and reaction are all strategies young authors may use to develop their characters in both personal and fictional narratives.



When our students are first introduced to narrative writing, they often begin with short, simple personal narratives. These are usually only several sentences and describe a real experience from the young author's life. As these young writers develop, they may begin to expand these narratives by identifying other characters, taking the audience through multiple settings, adding sequence words to move the plot along, and even structuring their text around a problem and a solution. These more mature narratives may be personal or fictional narratives, and usually span several paragraphs from beginning to middle to end. One especially powerful way for students to advance their narrative writing skills is to begin to develop the characters within these narratives.

Developing the characters in a personal or fictional narrative allows the reader to understand the characters' unique personalities and traits. The audience can begin to develop a relationship with the characters in the story. Just as we teach our young readers, the audience of these young writers can begin to anticipate and predict the events in a story by using the characters' traits as a guide. It keeps the audience engaged and sews the seeds of escalation – a more advanced narrative technique that students will explore as they continue to mature as writers. Three ways to develop characters in narrative writing are dialogue, description, and reaction.

One of the simplest strategies students can use to develop their characters is description. Description as a tool of character development is more than just labeling or reporting on a character's traits or appearance. It involves using precise words to aid the audience in visualizing a character's actions, appearance, mood, or demeanor. The audience can then make inferences about these characters based on this description. This involves teaching students to use strong verbs, descriptive adjectives, and figurative language (similes and metaphors). Teaching students to use description in their writing should be tied to their English language arts (or ESOL) instruction. Instruction in ELA/ESOL that develops lexicon needs to be paired with authentic language use – both spoken and written.

#### **USING DESCRIPTION TO DEVELOP OUR CHARACTERS IN NARRATIVE WRITING:**

Tom took an uncomfortably tight grip on his books as he entered his new classroom. He could feel his heart beating like a drum.

Another strategy that pairs well with language arts or ESOL instruction is the use of dialogue. This can follow instruction in reported speech for English language learners. It is also something that young writers who are learning grammar and punctuation associated with the use of quotes can pair with their writing workshop lessons. Dialogue gives the reader insight into each character that a simple description cannot do. While

simple description asks the audience to accept as true the judgments that the narrator is making about a character, dialogue allows the audience to make these judgments about the character on their own. It allows the reader to see the relationship between characters, too. It is also an excellent way to advance action in the narrative and move the plot of the story along. In light of this, dialogue is a tool that can be employed by both younger and more mature writers.

#### **USING DIALOGUE TO DEVELOP OUR CHARACTERS IN NARRATIVE WRITING:**

I hesitated as I asked, "Jan, are you free for a minute?"

Jan sighed, "Oh gosh. What do you want now? Can't you see how busy I am here?"

Like dialogue, reaction is a strategy for developing characters that allows the audience to make their own assessments of a character's traits. It allows the audience to place themselves in the story and think about how they would respond in a given situation. We want our young authors to get their audience to connect with the story. Employing this strategy for character development does just that. While description and dialogue can be used with newer and more mature writers alike, reaction is a more sophisticated narrative technique that very young writers may need more support with.

#### **USING REACTION TO DEVELOP OUR CHARACTERS IN NARRATIVE WRITING:**

My teacher, Mr. Lee, threw my paper, full of red marks, onto my desk. I knew it was my best work, but I also knew he would never be satisfied. It was well past the time to stand up for myself. Still, I smiled and calmly thanked him for his feedback.

Getting readers to connect with the characters in a personal or fictional narrative is important. It draws the reader into the text and allows them to feel connected to the characters they are reading about. It also allows the author to move the plot along and escalate the action as the audience is moved toward the climax of the story.

Description, dialogue, and reaction are three excellent strategies for helping to develop young writers. Instruction in description and dialogue that takes place in language arts and ESOL classes can be easily transferred to the work that students do in the writing classroom. Deepening students' understanding of characters' feelings and reactions can aid them in using more advanced techniques of character development, such as reaction. Taken together, these three strategies provide an outstanding repertoire of skills for our young writers.



# Once upon a time in a multicultural classroom...

**Márcia Silva**

**On her 13<sup>th</sup> birthday, Pipa, a Portuguese girl from Braga, finds a mysterious gift box in her bedroom and ends up waking up in another country. This article presents a storytelling and collaborative learning lesson plan in a multicultural context, aimed at developing students' writing and intercultural skills.**

## **Introduction**

As we all know, the number of people living in a country other than the one in which they were born has been increasing over the last decades. As a result, schools have been welcoming students from all around the world, and classrooms are becoming increasingly multicultural.

Long an emigration country, Portugal has been receiving a high influx of migrants, mostly from the Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa, Brazil and Eastern Europe, and has now become the home of a growing number of people from a diversity of cultures.

Accordingly, the integration of a culturally diverse student population is one of the key issues at Agrupamento de Escolas D. Maria II (AEDMII), in Braga, and – “How can I integrate my students' cultural backgrounds into my lessons?” – is one of the questions I have been asking myself since I started working there.

Hence, this article presents my experience regarding storytelling and collaborative learning in a multicultural context. Bridging the communicative, intercultural, and strategic domains, this approach hopes to promote learning by bringing students together.

## **Writing**

Writing plays a prominent role in the context of learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Nevertheless, it is often perceived as a difficult skill and, as a result, most learners feel overwhelmed by it. Thus, teachers should make use of different approaches, strategies, methods, or techniques to improve students' writing skills, and collaborative learning is definitely a good starting point. Despite the pitfalls of group work, if carefully planned, facilitated, and monitored, collaborative writing eases anxiety, increases self-confidence, promotes motivation, fosters creativity and critical thinking, helps learners stay on task, and improves quality.

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She holds a degree in Teaching English and German (University of Minho) and a Master's degree in Anglo-American Studies (Faculty of Arts of the University of Porto). Throughout her career, she has held different teaching and administrative roles and she has been involved in many projects. She loves teaching and she is passionate about literature.





## Overview

This is an integrated skills lesson, aimed at developing the writing and intercultural skills of EFL students with an English level of A2 and above.

In this lesson students will collaborate in a creative writing task in which they will explore different cultures. Based on a writing process approach, this lesson is designed to guide students through the stages of collecting information, planning, and outlining their texts; drafting; revising; and editing.

This lesson plan is divided into 3 lessons of approximately 45-50 minutes each.

### Lesson #1

The first lesson starts with a warmer to introduce the topic. First, learners are guided to explore a “gift box” and comment on some prompt cards which show pictures of the flag of Portugal; the coat of arms of Braga; the Cathedral of Braga; the festivities of Saint John; and the Abbot of Priscos pudding. Next, students discuss the meaning of ‘culture’. This brainstorming activity involves the whole class.

Finally, the teacher reads a story (or part of one!) about a Portuguese young girl, who lives in Braga. On her 13<sup>th</sup> birthday, she finds a mysterious gift box in her bedroom and ends up waking up in another country. Learners are asked to comment on its open ending.

At this point, the teacher tells students that they are going to continue the story in one of their home countries and/or an English-speaking country in groups.

The lesson finishes with learners negotiating which country they will write about.

### Groups and Roles

According to research and my previous experience, when it comes to collaborative writing the smaller the group the better. Therefore, the class is divided into groups of three and/or four. Besides, the teacher assigns learners to groups so that they will be heterogeneous, including mixed abilities and nationalities. Students choose the role they will take on within the group: notetaker/timekeeper; monitor; reporter.

### Lesson #2

The lesson begins with students divided in groups. Each group receives a “gift box” with the story starter and a story map.

Learners outline and draft their stories.

### Lesson #3

In groups, students revise, edit and proofread their stories.

### Follow-up activities

Students create an illustrated eBook and dramatize their stories.

### Conclusion

Schools are shaped by the communities in which they exist, and, therefore, they cannot be indifferent to the cultural diversity of their students. However, whether classrooms are culturally heterogenous or not, it is essential to give learners the opportunity to look at their own culture from a new perspective, not as a model, but as one of the many cultures of the world. Moreover, learners should also be encouraged to learn about other cultures and explore multiple perspectives of this “global village” we live in, so that they can become intercultural communicators.

Storytelling and collaborative writing can, thus, foster an inclusive learning environment through a shared narrative and vision of the future.

At the end of this journey, one cannot but feel that this is just the beginning.

### STORY STARTER

Ding, Dong!, Ding, Dong! The bells of the cathedral, one of the oldest in the Iberian Peninsula and older than Portugal, chimed in the distance. Pipa jumped out of bed, opened the window, and looked outside. The sun was shining and the sky was blue. She was turning 13. ‘Perfect!’, she thought, ‘My birthday is going to be just perfect!’

As she was coming down the stairs for breakfast, she overheard her parents talking about something... a ‘journey’, maybe, but she couldn’t be sure. When they saw her, however, they quickly changed the subject and kissed her good morning.

‘Here’s your breakfast, honey!, mum said.

‘Are you ready for school?’, dad asked.

Pipa was speechless. ‘Have they forgotten about my birthday?’, she wondered. ‘No, I know what’s going on...’. The young girl was sure her parents were planning a surprise party for her and she decided to play along.



On the bus to school, she enjoyed looking at the street decorations and stalls, full of soft squeaky plastic hammers, 'alho pôro' (garlic flowers) and 'manjericos' (bush basil). School was almost over for the summer, and everybody was getting ready for the festivities in honour of Saint John, the patron of the city of Braga. 'Perfect, just perfect!', she murmured.

At school, though, no one wished her happy birthday. 'Hmmm...', she didn't know what to make of it, but it struck her that her friends were all part of the 'I forgot your birthday' plan and said nothing.

When school finished, Pipa rushed home as fast as she could. 'Yummy', she imagined all the delicacies and sweets that would be waiting for her, especially the Abbot of Priscos pudding, her favourite.

Standing outside her house, her heart was beating fast. She flung the door open... SILENCE! There was no one there. She ran to her room and threw herself onto her bed. 'What is going on?', she cried.

That's when she saw IT. The PRESENT. A small black box with a gold ribbon right in front of her, on her bedside table. Hesitating, she held it in her hands and... opened it. A bright light dazzled her eyes. The room started moving around her and she passed out.

When she woke up... she found herself in a different time and place. She was not in the present. She was not in her room. She was not in Braga, Portugal. 'Where am I?'



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# This I believe: Engaging students in projects is the key to success.

Mónica Santos

When students are engaged in what they are doing, they learn in a more effective way, they have better results and, above all, they show their true essence. The project that is described here – some podcast episodes – was only developed in English but I believe it works perfectly as an interdisciplinary one.

The last few years have been really challenging for everyone, especially teenagers. They have been prevented from hanging out with their friends in and out of school. They have been forced to stay at home, watching their lives happen through a screen. They have experienced fear and uncertainty about exams and career choices.

Due to that, we, teachers, had to be more sensitive than ever about their feelings and emotions. As a result, the school staff did their best to minimise the effects of Covid 19 in their lives and tried to lift their spirits.

At the time, I was working with secondary students from year 11. We were still working on the topic Media, according to the *Plano para a Recuperação e Consolidação das*

*Aprendizagens ao Longo do Ano Letivo de 2020/2021*. I was always trying to pass a positive message when the media, at that time, only referred to COVID and its negative impact. Then I came across what I believe to be a wonderful podcast by Josh Rittenberg: Tomorrow Will Be A Better Day (<https://radiopublic.com/this-i-believe-WRwQr6/s!df25d>).

As mentioned on their page, this podcast raises the question “What kind of world are we leaving younger generations?” and “Manhattan teenager Josh Rittenberg says all parents worry about their children’s futures”. But he believes he and his peers will see a better world.

This seemed perfect for project work, as it not only allowed us to keep track of “Aprendizagens Essenciais” but it also gave us the opportunity to work on most of the skills referred to in “Perfil do Aluno à Saída da Escolaridade Obrigatória”.

As for “Aprendizagens Essenciais”, with this project, we were able to develop the receptive and productive skills mentioned in “Competência Comunicativa”. We created



opportunities to listen, read, speak and write. We also had the chance to develop collaboration, ICT skills, critical thinking, creativity, and self and peer evaluation (*Competência Estratégica*) and, finally, we compared and contrasted two different cultural realities (the American and the Portuguese ones, as we referred to different times in history that were significant to both countries and we had the chance to discuss how similar and different teenagers from two different countries and both urban and rural areas can be (*Competência Intercultural*)).

How did we manage to do all this? In a very simple and engaging way!

All my students had access to the internet and most of them listened to podcasts, even though they had never attempted to create one. This was an excellent opportunity to explore the world of possibilities and drift away from the haunting news reports.

I started asking them what they used to listen to those days and if they followed any podcast series. Then, I gave



them the title of the one by Rittenberg and asked them to predict its content as a pre-listening activity.

While they were listening to the podcast, they had to do the usual tasks: they listened for the first time to tick the topics Josh Rittenberg referred to and then they compared their choices. During the second listening, they completed the sentences according to what the author said, i.e., they had to look for something more specific and detailed.

After comparing and correcting answers, students were asked whether Josh had an optimistic or pessimistic view of the future and if, in their opinion, this was important and why. They were also asked to compare/contrast Josh's hopes and worries about the future with their own, as their home countries and cultural backgrounds were quite different. This discussion was led as a post-listening activity. And then, at this point, they were invited to create their own podcasts.

Since they had never produced podcasts before, scaffolding the activity was a must. Clear guidelines, which could be used as a checklist throughout the process, were handed out, as well as a possible model for students of a lower level. After reading and clarifying doubts, I presented the rubric for the activity and we analysed it together. It included content and organisation, vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, and fluency and pronunciation.

To start with, students were invited to interact with classmates sitting closer to them in order to ask the question "What do you believe in?". Then, they had to include these answers in their own texts.

While the writing activity was in progress, I monitored it and provided help with vocabulary, when necessary. After the time limit was over, some students reported their first draft of the text. A stage of self and peer evaluation took place at this time. This was not only intended to give students the opportunity to reflect and review but also to help those who were stuck in their writing.

When students felt their texts were ready, they sent them to be corrected and did research on the best tools to record their podcasts. The purpose was to share them with the class/school.

Unfortunately, at the time, many students were at home and did not have the necessary equipment to record it in the best way possible and ended up doing it with their mobile devices. Nevertheless, I must admit that I was really proud of my entire class. Not because they all had excellent grades, but because they all chose to write about very important issues, such as what we need to do to save the planet or protect animal species, the need to put an end to racism and segregation, the importance of self-acceptance and dreaming, LGBT rights, adoption, and sports, just to name a few.

At the end of the project, I was the one believing that tomorrow will be a better day thanks to the human beings we are helping to raise and the growing awareness they show about the world around them.



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# Mememes in the language classroom? Why not?

João Rodrigues

In a digital world dominated by social media, one can undoubtedly say that memes have become a part of most of our students' daily lives. Bearing this in mind, this article will focus on how to enhance the potential of memes in the context of the language classroom.

In a world dominated by the Internet and the power of social media, memes have become an integral part of everyday life. How often do we find ourselves checking our social media sites and laughing about memes, commenting on them, sharing them with our friends or even creating our own?

Bearing this in mind, as well as the significant role of technologies in our students' daily routine, this short article is aimed to highlight the potential of memes as a teaching/learning tool by: (i) clarifying the concept; (ii) exploring a few ideas on how to use memes in the classroom; and (iii) showing how easy it is to create memes of our own.

## What are memes?

Although until recently the word 'meme' was rarely used or unknown to most people, it is worth noting that the concept is not new. In fact, it was coined by Richard Dawkins, a British professor and evolutionary biologist, in his book "The Selfish Gene", first published in 1976. The term was based on the Greek word *mimema* (i.e., 'imitated'). By establishing a play on words with the term 'gene' (as well as with its sound), Dawkins used the word 'meme' to refer to a kind of 'new replicator', as 'a noun that conveys the idea of a unit of cultural transmission, or a unit of imitation.' Memes help us understand how cultural elements, such as rules, attitudes, trends, or types of behaviour spread

from individual to individual. In Dawkins's words, 'examples of memes are tunes, ideas, catch-phrases, clothes fashions, ways | of making pots or of building arches. Just as genes propagate themselves in the gene pool by leaping from body to body [...], so memes propagate themselves in the meme pool by leaping from brain to brain via a process which, in the broad sense, can be called imitation.' (Dawkins, 2006, p. 192; see also Rogers, 2021). This idea explains why the word has been retrieved to refer to, as it does now, 'an idea, image, video, etc. that is spread very quickly on the internet' (Cambridge English Dictionary).

But what exactly makes a meme? Memes can have various formats (pictures, emoticons, GIFs, videos, among others); nevertheless, the most common type of meme is based on an image macro, with text inserted at the top and/or at the bottom. The combination of text and image is marked by humour or sarcasm. As memes are easy to share, imitate or adapt, countless versions/variants of the same meme can often be found on the Web. The images used for the creation of memes are usually easily recognised by Internet users and are often removed from their original context and integrated in a completely new context. As regards content, memes may not only depict simple situations of everyday life with which most of us can relate in a funny way, but they can also address more serious topics and convey a specific social or political message (e.g., Kohlmaier, 2020).

The fact that memes are widely recognised as inherent in our students' daily browsing habits has drawn various researchers to focus on how memes can be valuable in the classroom. Although in this article there is no room for a thorough theoretical discussion on the topic, it is worth noting that

several authors have considered memes as a precious way of bridging the classroom and our students' habits/interests (Romero & Bobkina, 2017) as well as a valuable tool to help us bring positive emotions into the classroom (e.g., Baysac, 2017; Kayali & Altuntaş, 2021).

## How can we use memes in the classroom?

Mememes can be used in a wide variety of contexts in the language classroom, not only as a tool for teaching/learning specific items of the syllabus, but also to help consolidate classroom management practices or simply just to have a good laugh and help create a friendly learning atmosphere, as suggested by various teachers from different fields of study (e.g., Miller, 2017; Serano, 2021).

## Mememes as a tool for clarifying class rules

Why not ask students to create a meme for each classroom rule established at the beginning of the year and use that very meme as a reminder throughout the year every time a given rule is broken? Simply showing a visual reminder of a rule may in many cases be more effective than telling students off and ruining a pleasant learning atmosphere.





**Memes as a tool for setting learning goals**

Memes can be a useful tool when it comes to having students set their own learning goals for the term/year. Asking students to find or, even better, create a meme for each of their learning goals will not only help them ‘own’ their own goal, but also create a fun and simple way of reminding them of their own objectives throughout the year. Memes can be a fun way of giving group or individual goals a visual shape.

**Memes as a tool for error correction**

Memes can also be a simple way of helping students visualise corrections of mistakes that are repeatedly made by a learning group in class. Asking students to create a meme on an error they have become aware of and on its correction can also be useful to help students do follow-up work on feedback we as teachers have given them, be it the correction of a written assignment or feedback on an oral task.

**Memes as food for thought/project work**

Inviting students to create memes on topics dealt with in class can be an engaging way of getting learners to use vocabulary that has been studied and to share their perspectives on a specific theme, be it an elementary topic, such as talking about last weekend, or a more complex one, such as the environment.

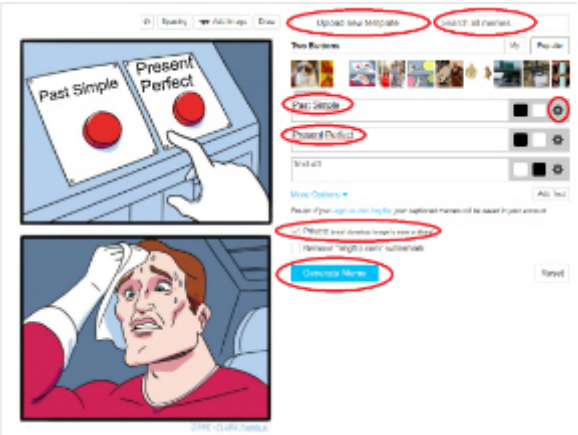
Source:  
<https://news.abs-cbn.com/focus/01/18/19/10yearchallenge-advocates-use-memes-to-show-alarming-environmental-changes>



**How can we create memes?**

Creating memes can be simple and fun. There are plenty of websites you can use and most of them offer similar functions in their free versions. A good example is the imgflip meme generator: <https://imgflip.com/memegenerator>

To create a meme, all you need to do is to go through the existing templates, select one and then insert text at the top and/or bottom of the image. To find a suitable picture, you can enter keywords as on a regular search engine. However, you are not limited to the pictures available on the platform, as you can upload your own pictures to create new memes, which gives you countless options. Formatting the text (namely, size, font, colour, etc.) is also possible. After clicking on “Private”, you will be able to download your meme and to save or share it, as you wish. And that is pretty much it!



<https://imgflip.com/memegenerator>

If you ask students to create their own memes, it may be important to establish clear rules and to remind them that no offensive language or pictures will be accepted. In addition, most platforms allow users to browse through hundreds of existing memes and not all of them may be suitable to younger learners; thus, it is recommended that you check platforms yourself in advance (Miller, 2017; Serano, 2021).

In conclusion, memes can be a useful tool in the language classroom as they are easy to prepare, help create a positive learning environment and make lessons and learning moments memorable by sparking students’ enthusiasm. So, ... why not give this a try?



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# Boosting self-esteem: Promoting self-esteem after two long years of Covid-19

Ana Amaro

**Promoting self-esteem after two long years of Covid-19 isn't a piece of cake. More than trying to recover the learning units that haven't been taught, it's important to boost the confidence of pupils, whose faces we have not seen during this long journey through the desert of emotions.**

It's commonly accepted that we learn better with people we can establish an emotional relationship with. During the last two years, we've learned to relegate emotions to the background of our teaching practice. We have become experts in technology platforms, online classes, high-tech gadgets and the best digital tools for language teachers. We've been so immersed in technology that, sometimes, we can lose track of the people behind the pupils. We are talking of teenagers who, suddenly, were asked to give up almost every kind of physical contact, and much of their social life. We are talking about a stage in their lives in which peer relationships constitute the backbone of their development. Isolation and detachment from other

people contributed to countless psychological problems, to demotivation, to worse achievements in academical terms and, subsequently, to lower self-esteem.

Having been teaching the 9th grade (14–15year-olds) this year, I came across the content “Looks” and thought this was a good moment to approach the way we perceive ourselves versus the way others perceive us. In an era in which bullying and cyber-bullying are increasingly part of our pupils' daily experience, it's of the utmost urgency to reverse the way we treat others and, as a consequence, we treat ourselves. It's about time we start to boost our confidence and give our pupils the proper tools to succeed in life. A confident teenager will become a confident adult and, therefore, much more likely to be a successful professional and a positive citizen. Bearing this in mind, I decided to dedicate two lessons to develop this idea.

In the first lesson, I showed some videos from the Self-esteem Project by “Dove” and we discussed them thoroughly. We started with the video – Dove Self-esteem project – Our mission (<https://youtu.be/8BKsS8tPGdo>). First, we summarised the most important information in

this video and discussed the huge impact of low self-esteem in the daily life of girls and related its final message – Feel confident in your own skin – with Women's Day. Then, we watched the video Dove Change one thing (<https://youtu.be/c96SNJihPjQ>) and we analysed how girls are never satisfied with their bodies and always verbalised the negative aspects about them. Afterwards, we compared this video with another one – Dove real beauty sketches (<https://youtu.be/XpaOjMXyJGk>), to show that the others generally find us more beautiful than we usually do. The idea was to make pupils aware that they are more beautiful than they think they are. For many, this was an awakening call. Finally, they watched the video Dove selfie – redefining beauty – One photo at a time ([https://youtu.be/\\_3agBWqGfRo](https://youtu.be/_3agBWqGfRo)) to analyse the way parents might be too focused on a certain body image and don't realize that, many times, they are projecting their own insecurities upon their daughters. These teenagers have already been teased about the way they look by classmates and peers and struggle to accept themselves and develop a positive body image. We followed the project of a High School in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, USA, aimed to redefine beauty and decided to replicate it on a smaller scale.







In the second lesson, knowing that teenagers are very self-conscious about their body image and don't want to expose themselves too much, I decided to replicate the project shown in the latest video in the classroom. Every pupil brought a selfie without the mask and we stuck it on the classroom wall. Then I gave each pupil five stickers and asked them to write positive comments about five classmates or the teacher (I also brought a selfie to set the example). Afterwards, the pupils walked around the classroom and glued them to their classmates' photos anonymously. Two pupils then read them aloud, one by one, and the owners of the photos were asked to comment on them. We came to the conclusion that we are, in fact, prettier than we think! (Photos 1 and 2). As a follow-up activity, pupils were asked to create a poster about self-esteem using the online tool Canva. The poster must contain a suggestive picture, a catchy slogan, a positive subtitle, a QRCode with a link to an interactive material (video, song, film, presentation...), and be aesthetically pleasing. (Self-esteem Poster-poster created by one pupil)

The pupils loved these kinds of activities and could really



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view themselves through their classmates' eyes in a more positive way. At the end of the second lesson, I said that they could take their photos out of the wall if they felt uncomfortable to leave them there. Two-thirds of the pupils decided not to take them out. Our classroom became definitely prettier than before!

As a teacher, I consider that's my mission to give pupils the tools to use the English language efficiently but, above all, to give them also the tools to be assertive, potential future leaders and proactive citizens in an ever-changing world that shouldn't forget human values.





# How Mentoring in Educational Contexts is an Asset.

**Ana** Loureiro, **Carla** Marinho, **Cláudia** Videira,  
**Constância** Silva, **Judite** Valverde, **Rita** Gonçalves

**NOTE :** *I want to thank these 6 wonderful teachers who wholeheartedly joined in this experiment of group coaching where we explored mentoring in each school context. Each teacher was from a different school, and at different levels of experience with mentoring projects. Most had done the APPIforma course on mentoring, some were just beginning to implement projects at school. Some projects were aimed at teachers, others were peer-mentoring projects with students, each project with different objectives.*

*I think the beauty of this type of teacher collaboration is that it can be continued by the group itself. This collaboration and reflection is a huge encouragement to me. To see a group of teachers who didn't know each other before becoming a cohesive group who have been vulnerable and open with each other and created a very special bond. Amazing!*

*Thank you ladies for taking this trip together. You inspire me!*

*I want also thank LEIRILIVRO for offering to finance the sessions and in particular Sérgio Gomes for his constant interest and encouragement!*

**NEIL**

**A group of six teachers taking the first steps in the mentoring world were challenged by Neil Mason to meet online on a regular basis to share conceptions, fears, constraints and share mutual support.**

Regarding education as an opportunity to fight social inequalities, mentoring can definitely be a helpful tool. When we are willing to take a different look at the teacher's role, to improve ourselves and our surroundings, a positive difference can be made.

Teaching in very different school contexts, including a Portuguese school abroad, we find ourselves engaged in mentoring projects, even if at different stages, and a few of us have already taken some former training in "Mentoring in Educational Contexts".

We all have different educational experiences and backgrounds, from the North (Maia, Matosinhos) to the Centre (Leiria, Viseu) of Portugal and beyond national boundaries to Mozambique. Not only do we work in different educational contexts, but we also have different conceptions about the

teaching & learning processes. We all have teaching approach preferences, as we each bring a range of dispositions to how we see the world, too. Some of us have had teachers that left a lasting impression on us. Many of us may have left a lasting impression on former students and have helped them shape their future.

Having said this, we consider that each school must find its own path in developing mentoring programmes. From what we have been pondering, a well-planned, thoughtful and thriving mentoring programme requires a very careful preparation process.

We would say that first you have to be aware of what mentoring means and mindful of all the possibilities and uncertainties it involves. We also consider it to be utterly important for each school to be capable of setting up a mentoring plan that suits their context(s) and identified purposes.

The opportunity to meet virtually in order to discuss and cleanse our souls was a win-win situation, which made us embrace the challenge and embark on the adventure of spending some Saturday morning hours, discussing this issue so as to build a stronger and more aware educational community, capable of mobilising our School and Society towards a better education... "mobilizar a escola e a sociedade para uma melhor educação". (PASEO).

In the first meeting, the participants shared their personal experiences concerning their mentoring projects taking place in their schools. It was a relief to understand that the problems were somewhat similar and the group brainstorming looking for solutions was, to say the least, hopeful. On the other hand, two of the participants were newcomers to mentoring, which was a privilege and an enriching and refreshing approach to the debate.

In many schools, some projects that go beyond academic benefits and assessment results are always puzzling and teachers tend to underestimate their pedagogical value. Implementing change is a difficult task. A holistic approach is still in many ways a taboo or even an underdog. Nevertheless, it



was a relief to work with professionals who are willing to look at the overcoming of students' difficulties as a priority instead of thinking of schools as mere knowledge factories. If nothing more this group has assured us that we are not alone and that teaching is much more than conveying knowledge – for many it is a mission, a dream, and a daily challenge.

In our third and fourth meetings, we acknowledged that monitoring/assessing the projects was a requirement, nevertheless, too much bureaucracy should be avoided. The priority is to focus on the quality of the relationships between those involved as well as on empowering our students by reinforcing their abilities.

From our meetings, we strongly retain the necessity to bear in mind what mentoring involves and the benefits it brings to our students' development as citizens in a changing world. Different models use different terminology and diverge in emphasis regarding the role of a mentor and as we progress in our reading & thinking contradictory concepts and definitions of mentoring are to be found. Nonetheless, what starts to build up in our minds with some consistency, so to say, is the view that mentoring is in its essence a supportive learning relationship based on trust, genuine interest, collaboration, and strong communication.

We believe in education as an opportunity to fight social inequalities that have worsened with the pandemic. It is in this context that mentorships are a pathway towards a more inclusive and equitable education creating learning opportunities and new educational environments based on the idea of “togetherness”, a word that values all dimensions of cooperation, collaboration and work in common (Nóvoa, A.)

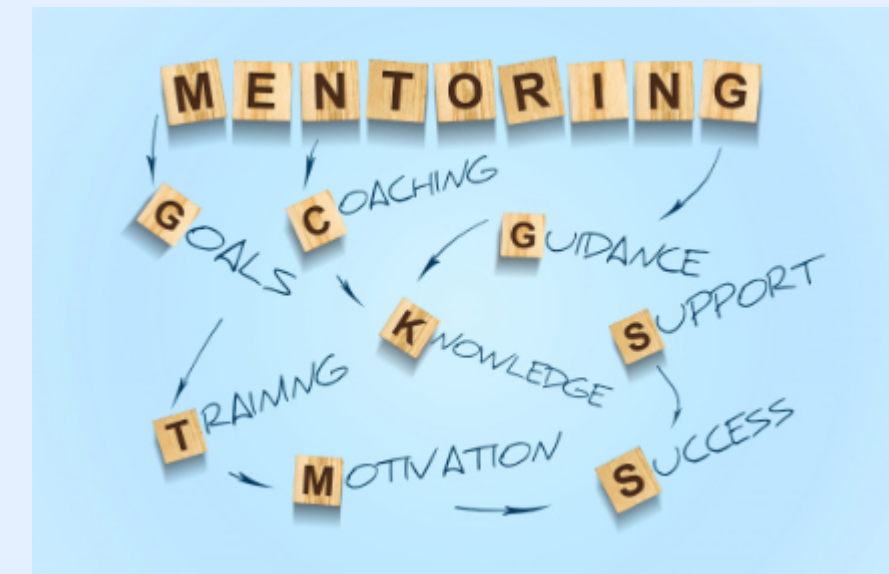
Evidently, we are still on our way to making sense of everything, but we believe we are getting there and we will succeed! And even if we still have doubts and we are still struggling with some concepts, it is fair to say that we could already manage to be an asset in the development of mentoring programmes in our schools.

So, in each one of our schools, we must think, reflect, discuss, outline possible paths, and then do it! If we don't get it right the first time, we'll try again!

## Final thoughts

Proving that “mentoring is a certain kind of learning relationship which can make a significant contribution to professional, academic and personal development and learning” (Garvey), the outcome of these “Group Coaching” sessions is undeniably positive. Work can be pleasurable when we surround ourselves with those who are willing to take a different look at the teacher's role, to improve themselves and their surroundings, those who wish to innovate and see past the hardships.

Thanks to a safe and non-judgemental environment, we listened and became vulnerable to each other and together we found common ground. All of us can surely recognise leaving the experience feeling more empowered to deal with challenges moving forward and to “do things better but also to do better things” (Garvey).



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APPI member B-8235 – Degree in English and German, Universidade de Aveiro (1990 - 1995), postgraduation in English Studies, Universidade de Aveiro (2008-2010) and a Master’s degree in “Gestão, avaliação e supervisão escolares” in Instituto Politécnico de Leiria (2016). From Porto, chose Leiria as home, English teacher for 28 years has also worked in teacher life learning courses “Flexibilidade curricular” and students’ assessment (MAIA).

**Rita Gonçalves**

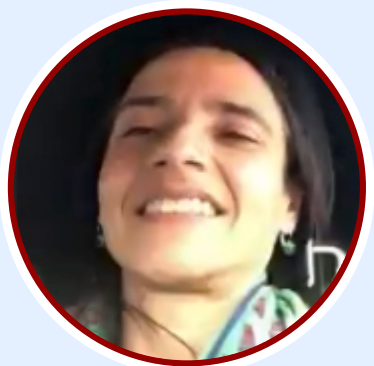
APPI member B-4496 – Degree in English and German; Master’s Degree in German Studies, Faculdade de Letras do Porto, teaches English for 24 years mainly in the North of Portugal, since 2008 in Maia; Formappa Director (2002-2006); Teacher at ISESP – Instituto Superior de Espinho (2010-2013); TORVC at Centro Qualifica AECMaia (2014-2017).



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**Rita Gonçalves**



**Ana Loureiro**



**Cláudia Videira**



**Constância Silva**



# BE WELL · Present Moment Awareness

Tiago Carvalho

In this article I focus on the teachers' mental health by addressing Present Moment Awareness, i.e., the ability to focus on the here and now, dismissing the faux pas of the past and the struggles of the future. I suggest three simple mental/physical exercises which will focus your thoughts and attention in the present, where you are, and what you are doing. Get ready to be grounded in the present moment!

Ooh, stop!!!

Ooh

With your feet on the air and your head on the ground

Try this trick and spin it, yeah

Your head will collapse

But there's nothing in it

And you'll ask yourself

Where is my mind?

If you recognize this, congratulations! You must be a fan of Pixies... or the film Trainspotting... or the film Fight Club... or... you know what? Let's move on!

## Where is my mind?

I'm sure this question comes to you for the most trivial reasons: the misplaced keys, the incomplete shopping list, or the drama of shopping centre car parking during X-mas rush. However, many times your thoughts betray you with something deeper... maybe even more serious... Where is my mind?

In the past? I did not learn how to do this properly so what do they want from me?

In the future? I will lose most of these students so why do I even bother?

Stop! (Pixies again!)

If your mind is living in the past or in the future, then this cruise you call "life" needs to drop its anchor. So, take a breath, re-access and become aware of the present moment! Present Moment Awareness is a core process in the 3rd wave of behavioural therapies which, through a series of exercises, trains you to become more acquainted with sensory experiences in the present moment, i.e., to anchor yourself in order to... well... you need to read future issues of the Journal (and since we are grounded in the present, let's focus!).

Remember when you teach the Future Present Perfect, and you draw that timeline with present, past, future? Really useful strategy, no? Well, it's the same thing here: being in the present moment means putting yourself in that timeline, in the present.



Being in the "present moment" enables you to enjoy and take in the beauty, emotions, company and environments that are around us at that point in time. When we act in the present moment, we can find ourselves expanding into a nice place to sit down, to wait peacefully, or to be in. There can be a sense of security, stability, space and maybe peace. But how to do this?

## Notice "X"

You can start by simply "noticing"!

This exercise is called "Notice X" and the key word will help you to connect with the present moment:

What can you notice right here, right now?

What can you notice in your body?

What can you smell or taste?

What can you hear right now?



By referring your sensory connections with where you are, you will notice what is surrounding you – and what possibilities there are for embracing the moment. Then, completely embrace where you are by putting your attention on an object, and notice all sensory aspects of that object, i.e., use your 5 senses (a piece of furniture normally works well, as they are complex enough to stimulate all 5 senses).

Note: This also works if you are having a meal – it is called Mindful Eating.

### Buying a car

The present moment is like buying a car. When you buy a car, you are looking for value. You pay attention to the ALL details. You look at the condition of the exterior and interior. It's amazing how much time and energy (and stress) you can expend in buying a car when you are looking for value in your deal – you may even ask others for their opinions. Hence, when you are examining that car, you are completely focused on the job, you don't want to miss anything.

Taking this in mind, try to do the same exercise when you, for example, go for a walk. Take in all that your senses give to you. Explore what surrounds you with the same detail as if you would explore the car. Notice (there it is again) the trees, sit on the benches, feel the temperature isolate all the sounds, smell the odors, and let your smelling activate **your taste buds when passing a *farturas* stand, or a park grill party. Remember: the present moment is about finding value in life as you are living it.**

### The body scan

Body scan is the practice of noticing your body, part by part, as you move from the top of your head to the tips of your toes. You can practise this, eyes open or closed: start by noticing the very top of your head, then more of your skull, then move down noticing your forehead, eyebrows, ears and so on – or starting from the toes and move upwards. You move slowly, body part by body part, noting sensations and feelings within those body parts. Take notice of one part at a time.

Give yourself ample time to shift your attention between body parts and the next area. Slow pace is important, as is the gentle movement of focus from one part or area to the next. Body scan and the “present moment” complement each other. They both look at the here and now, and separate our attention into segments, looking at detail rather than trying to take everything in at once.

Global suggestion: during any of these exercises you may start experiencing uncomfortable feelings. Accept them, ground yourself, and refocus. Remember that you are not doing this to feel comfortable or relaxed, but rather to train your present moment awareness – which is a skill that helps you anchor yourself when navigating hard waters. And remember: this is just the beginning!

**See you next time — Be Well :)**



**Tiago Carvalho** – PhD in Multimedia in Education from the University of Aveiro; teacher and researcher in the field of Cognition, Learning, Instruction and Communication at the University of Helsinki. At present, I am working with a team of Educational Psychologists to develop a pedagogical course designed to equip teachers with the skills to manage their own wellbeing, and to include the teaching of these skills in their daily praxis.





# On the Bookshelf

## 101 EFL ACTIVITIES for TEACHING UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Hall Houston

iTDI Publishing, 2022

159 pages

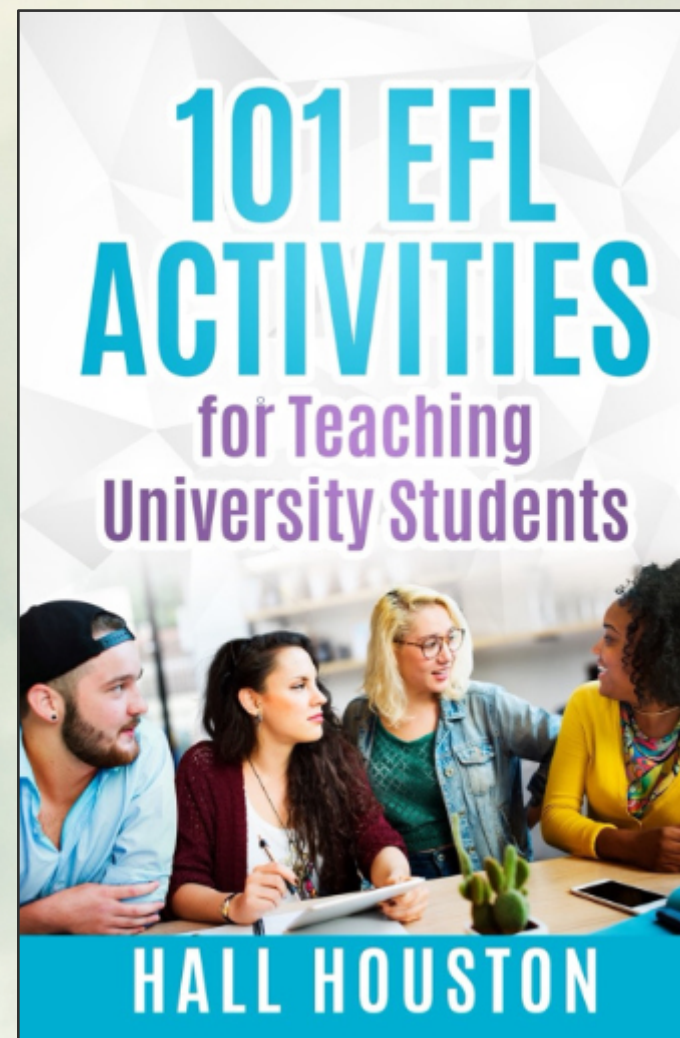
ISBN: 979-8419082793.

### 101 EFL ACTIVITIES for TEACHING UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

is divided into Contents: Acknowledgements, Introduction, Getting off to a Good start, Maintaining Motivation and Interest, Ending the Semester Gracefully; followed by *Recommended Books* and *Web Resources for University Teachers*, *Bibliography* and *About the Author*.

*Contents* includes 3 Parts. The 1st one *Getting off to a Good Start* consists of 6 Sections, each one divided into several parts, enhancing the value of parts of speech and a wide range of activities to make students deal with them in varied ways so as to improve communication through the four skills.

The 2nd one, *Maintaining Motivation and Interest*, is made up of 7 Sections followed by *Teacher Developments Tips*. All these Sections provide a huge amount of techniques to be dealt with and chosen by the teachers to follow or reformulate in their classrooms.



Judite Fiúza

Maintaining motivation is not as easy as one may think. Sometimes at the beginning of the school year, students feel quite interested; however, as time goes by, they somehow lose interest. Therefore, the teacher has to find out a way of making them willing to do better. So, lots of suggestions are present to boost students' motivation, not only through common tasks teachers and students have always experienced such as jigsaw reading, music, KWL chats for video, role-plays in context, miming, choosing topics to discuss, quizzes, and gamification, to mention just a few, but also by making the most of technology.

The 3rd part, *Ending the Semester Gracefully*, consists of 4 Sections, where you will find once again an array of diverse activities. From *Review activities* to *Getting Feedback*, and *Reflecting*, you will have the opportunity to choose what best suits you and your students.

All the sections present the activities with the same structure, *Time*, *Skills*, *Preparation*, and *Procedure*, which will be of great help to the teachers as they are not time-consuming.

The 3rd Section is followed by *Recommended Books* and *Web Resources for University Teachers*, *Bibliography* and *About the Author*.

*Summa summarum*, this book is a must not only for University teachers but also for 7 to 12 graders. You will be entitled to find and follow enthralling, motivating activities that you may use or adapt to your students and promote their autonomy, engaging them in critical thinking and learner agency.



# TEACHING IN CHALLENGING CIRCUMSTANCES

Chris Sowton

Cambridge University Press  
Better Learning, 2021  
222 pages  
ISBN: 978-1-108-81612-0

## TEACHING IN CHALLENGING CIRCUMSTANCES

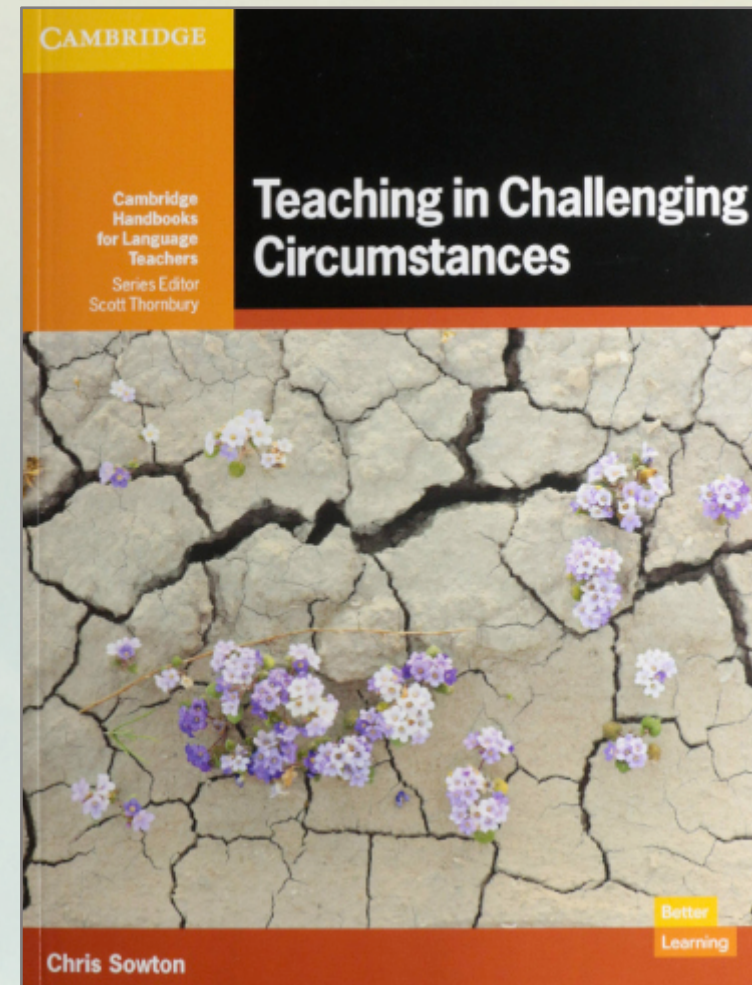
is constituted by *Thanks, Acknowledgements, Introduction, IX Chapters, Glossary, and Index.*

The IX Chapters have a similar structure as they are divided into several parts, presenting *The short version* (goals), *Introduction*, several questions or *Challenges* followed by *Reflection*.

**In Chapter I – *Creating a good environment*** for language learning – questions are asked to lead the reader to reflect and answers are given, highlighting the importance of making students feel safe, included, and at ease to have a voice. All this shows a myriad of strategies to be used by the teacher to create a relaxing atmosphere for students through a student-focused teaching approach.

**Chapter II – *Being effective in the classroom*** – enhances the importance of lesson planning through several stages so that students can learn better and easily understand what is required from them. However, there should be flexibility as a variety of situations may occur and so the teacher will always have a Plan B or C. Furthermore, the teacher plays different roles, at least four: the Knower, the Organizer, the Coach, and the Carer. Therefore, she/he has to know how to adapt her/his techniques to each and every student as well as ‘to manage relations well with the wider community (...)’.

**In Chapter III – *Teaching large classes*** – the author proposes a wide range of approaches from managing seating arrangements, mixed-ability classes, and ages to teaching outside the classroom, enhancing advantages and disadvantages so that the teacher may try and adapt them to their classes and get the best solutions for their target audience.



**Chapter IV – *Teaching language skills and systems*** – shows a manifold of activities to motivate learners to overcome their difficulties in using the 4 skills.

In **Chapter V – *Teaching language without textbooks*** – is a reality lived by many teachers and can constitute a challenge for teachers and students. However, with the cooperation of both, it can ‘empower students by asking them to bring in their own resources to class, (...)’ and make technology resources accessible, appropriate, and accurate.

**Chapter VI – *Teaching language with textbooks*** – Textbooks can be a tool for teachers; however, they can hold back creativity if they are not complemented with sundry materials in order to contextualise, simplify, manage the content, personalise and differentiate tasks as students do not learn and work at the same pace.

**Chapter VII – *Helping students achieve their potential*** – proves to be of high value for teachers to engage students to acquire the knowledge required to improve their English through a multitude of activities and attitudes.

**Chapter VIII – *Linking the school with the outside world*** – and vice-versa is a major goal every teacher wants to achieve with the help of students, parents, guardians, and the local community.

**In Chapter IX – *Supporting yourself and others*** – through ‘Dealing with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties’ embodies teachers and learners with some techniques to deal with the issues faced by both of them.

In the *Glossary*, you will find the explanation of several words used in the book that you need to know so as to get their fundamental meaning.

The *Index* presented by content finishes the book.

All in all, *TEACHING IN CHALLENGING CIRCUMSTANCES* constitutes an effective answer for all the teachers that face an array of demanding issues to be dealt with in the classroom, at school, and the local community.

**Judite Fiúza**, APPI member no. A-1327, holds a degree in Filologia Germânica (English/German) and Línguas e Literaturas Modernas (Portuguese/English) at FL da UL and the curricular part of a Masters in Anglo-Portuguese Studies at FCSH UNL; taught Portuguese for foreigners at UL and later at UNL and English for about 40 years in Secondary State Schools. She currently integrates the APPI executive board.





# APPI CONFERENCE BRAGA MAY 2022

Here are a few pictures of the wonderful time we all had at the conference this year. It's just a small collection for some of us to remember the wonderful days we had together; and to encourage everyone else to come next year! We'd love to see you there!







THANK YOU to our amazing dedicated team that pull off the most amazing conference!  
See you all in 2023 in Lisbon!







The APPI eJournal is made mostly with contributions written by APPI members — teachers of different levels and experiences who share their practice and ideas freely.

If you would like to contribute, you can click [here](#) for more information.

If you need help, please don't hesitate to contact us. We're happy to talk to you.

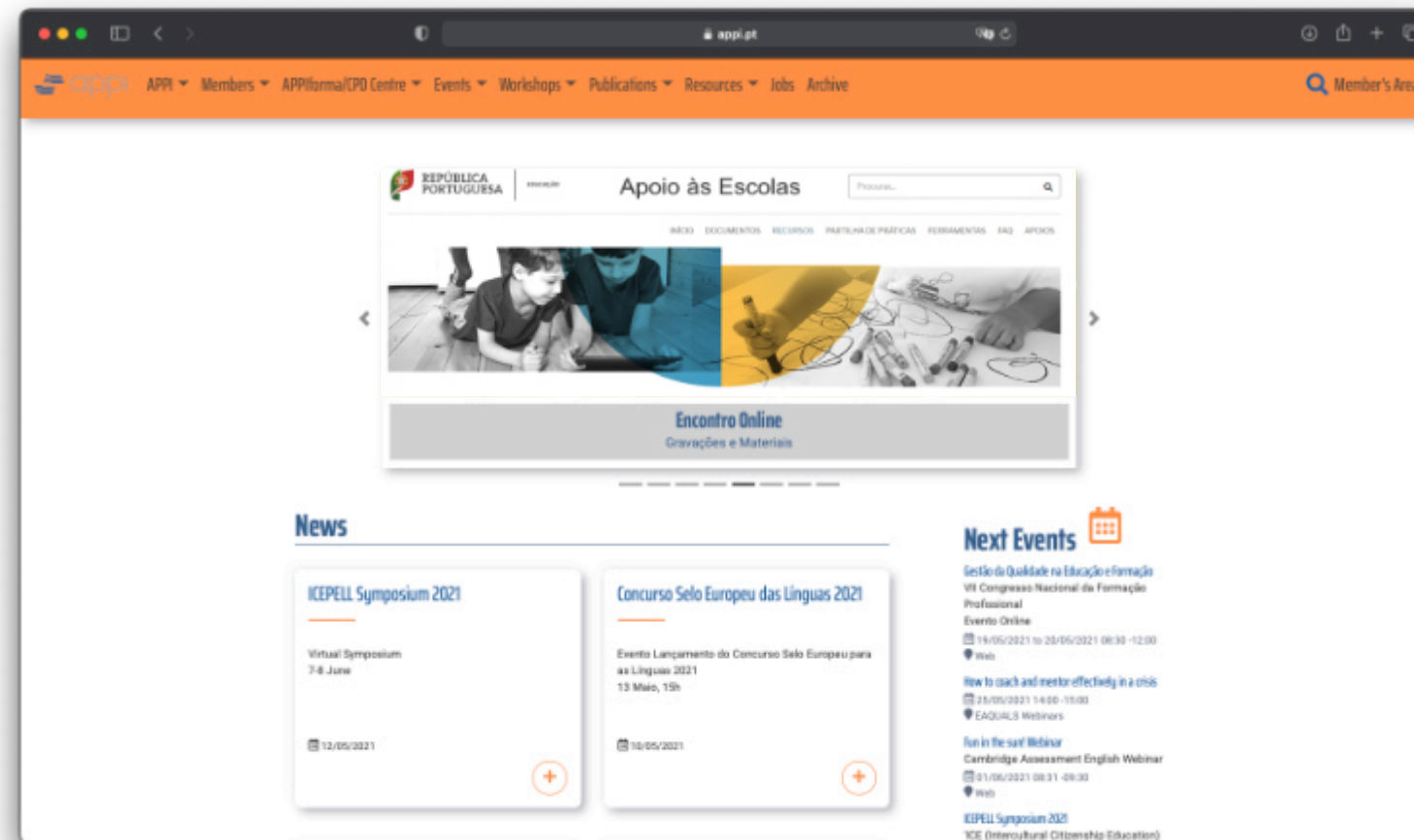
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**[www.appi.pt/publications/appi-ejournal](http://www.appi.pt/publications/appi-ejournal)**





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www.appi.pt



A top-down view of four feet in shallow, rippling water on a sandy beach. A small starfish is visible in the water between the feet. The image has a dark, semi-transparent overlay.

# HAVE AN AMAZING SUMMER!



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