

melta news

Munich English Language Teachers Association

Linking and developing teachers in the Munich area since 1989

Winter 25/26 | no. 115



Ideas

for
festive lessons

Inspiration

from
the frontlines

Focus

on
young learners

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Cover image thanks to Wassily Kandinsky

Message from the Chair

This autumn, we sent around a questionnaire asking for suggestions for future Melta events. The responses were quite diverse. Some people wanted more workshops on teaching adults, others more on teaching children, others more on using AI tools, others more on not using AI tools. Some people preferred Saturday mornings, others preferred Saturday afternoons, others wanted only weekdays.

The comments were also diverse. For example, one respondent asked why all the participants at Melta workshops seemed to be retired. In reply, I'd like to point out that a Melta member's having stooped shoulders, a shambling gait and gray hair – or indeed no hair at all – is not a sure sign that he or she is retired. On the contrary. As many of you can confirm, the idea that you could ever earn enough money teaching English in Munich to fund a comfortable retirement is – in all too many cases – a pipedream.

But I digress. Despite their diversity, the responses to the questionnaire were all very valuable:

- (1) They gave us a good idea of where we should focus our workshops and webinars in the months ahead – for example, on learning strategies, business English, working with authentic materials, vocabulary learning and humanizing language teaching.
- (2) They also confirmed that, even in the digital age, in-person events are an important forum for professional development.

I'd like to thank all of you for your support of Melta in 2025 and particularly those of you who took the time to reply to the questionnaire and to contribute to this issue of Melta News. I wish everyone a very happy holiday season and hope I'll see you again at another Melta event – online or in-person – real soon.

All the best,

Randy



Randy Perry

Melta News Editing Team

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



WEELCOME

We'd like to welcome our new members!

Alina Galeeva, Alexandra
Grigoryeva, Linda Hein, San-
dra Kotzor, Kseniia Lavrenova,
Kseniia Minina, Mohini Rai,
Soniya Sadozua



UPCOMING EVENTS

MUNICH VOLKSHOCHSCHULE

Why the first lesson matters

Presenter: Julia Flyng
Volkshochschule Orleansstr. 34
February 27, 2026, 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Language Awareness for Teachers: From Intuition to Insight

Presenter: Adrian Doff
Volkshochschule Orleansstr. 34
March 3, 2026, 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Lesson Planning with AI

Presenter: Amanda Momeni
Volkshochschule Einsteinstr. 28 B
May 9, 2026, 10 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

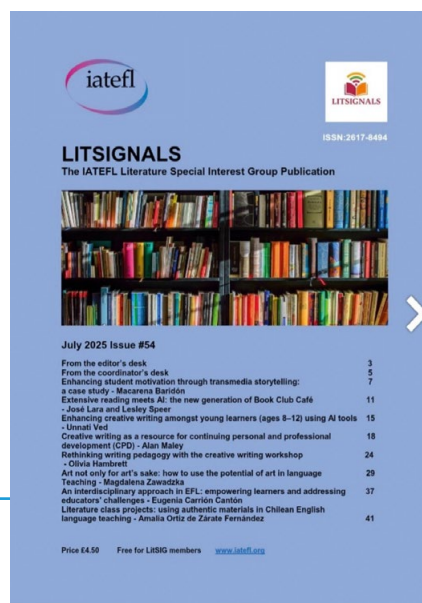
The Levels Behind the Labels: What CEFR Means for Your Classroom

Presenter: Amanda Momeni
Volkshochschule: Einsteinstr. 28 B
June 20, 2026, 10 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

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

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTORS!

Would you like to write an article for *LITSIGNALS*, the literature publication of the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL)? *LITSIGNALS* reaches hundreds of readers, and writing is an opportunity to share your amazing ideas about teaching, learning and literature. The deadline for the next issue is the end of December. More information is available at: <https://www.iateflitsig.org/publication/guidelines>



VOLUNTEERS URGENTLY NEEDED!

The **Münchner Flüchtlingsrat** is currently looking for volunteer tutors to support refugees who need help with German and other school / training course subjects. Tutorials are generally one-to-one. Levels vary. Times are flexible. The need is great. For more details, please contact Louena Hasani and Amjad Huwajj at aktiv@muenchner-fluechtlingsrat.de.

Any help you could give would be greatly appreciated.



PARTNERSHIP WITH TESOL- UKRAINE

With more than 1,000 members nationwide, TESOL-Ukraine sponsors conferences, workshops, mentorship programs and research initiatives. In the months ahead, Melta will be joining forces with TESOL-Ukraine to:

- organize webinars
- exchange teaching ideas and resources and
- encourage direct, cross-border dialogue.

The new partnership aims to foster shared learning opportunities and mutual support between our respective teaching communities. More information about TESOL-Ukraine and our joint activities (including a link to the latest issue of the TESOL-Ukraine newsletter) will soon be available on a dedicated page of the Melta website at www.melta.de. Stay tuned.

Melta podcast update

In the Melta YouTube channel, we continue to meet fellow teachers from all over the world, both online and face to face. In the last three months, we've produced three new podcasts.



In the **first**, teacher trainer and English teacher Irina Trofimova talks about her career, how she moved from Ukraine to England and the discrimination she faced because of her health issues. Sadly,

Irina passed away on November 13, after battling cancer for many years.



Our **second** podcast is with U.S. teacher and teacher trainer Chris Reese. Now based in Thailand, Chris describes his teaching experience and his work developing teaching tools. He also discusses

his last few weeks in Ukraine before the war and takes a moment at the end of the podcast to answer viewers' questions.



In our **third** podcast, Kseniia Minina, a fellow teacher from Ukraine who's been forced to relocate several times in order to find a safe refuge, shares her story of the horrors of the current war

and describes how she manages to survive and do her job even with very limited resources. She also talks about her experience teaching Ukrainian children who live in regions under Russian occupation.

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

We'd also love it if you could leave a comment at <http://www.youtube.com/@MeltaPodcast>

The Melta podcasters



**Mike
Clarkson**



**Elie
Hazeem**



**Michael
Saunders**

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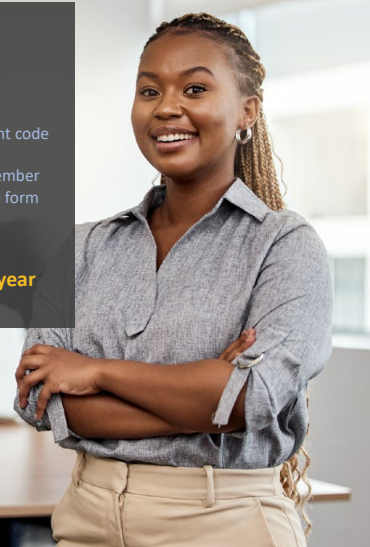
How do I join IATEFL through my teaching association?

1. Contact your teaching association
2. If you're a current member, they'll give you a specific discount code
3. Create a free account on the IATEFL website: www.iatefl.org
4. In your 'dashboard' choose to join IATEFL as an Associate member
5. Put in your discount code, and then complete the rest of the form
6. Make payment of the discounted membership fee

IATEFL Individual membership: £74 per year

IATEFL Associate Individual Membership: £27 per year

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



IN MEMORIAM

In November 2024, Melita lost a long-time member, Susan Byron.

I didn't know Susan very well, personally. I first met her at a Melita Biergarten event in 2018. I was new to Melita, having done CELTA in August 2017, and was in the process of getting to know the members, most of whom had been around for quite a few years.

Susan was her usual exuberant self, bouncing from one intriguing subject to another, most of which were unrelated, yet strung together by a common thought. She spoke rapidly and eloquently, and I sat quietly, mystified, yet fascinated. She was totally unlike any member I had met so far.

Yes, she was unique. A highly intelligent, well-connected, well-spoken woman, who moved at 78 rpm (or light-speed in today's world), when most of us were still taking the album out of the sleeve.

She was opinionated, yet in a mostly positive way. I'd run into her at Melita workshops (in the "good ol' days", when they were well attended by 30+ members), and occasionally in the city. We both attended the three-day Global Citizen Conference at the LMU in 2019, and I smile every time I remember going to lunch with her, when she adamantly (and loudly!) refused to pay €18 for an avocado toast (she was right). We ate elsewhere.

The last time I saw Susan was last summer, I think. There was a festival in the city, and bands were playing on the Prater Insel. There was Susan, under a tree, unabashedly swaying and dancing to the music, letting forth her Inner Child. She was just happy, enjoying the day. This is the still-shot that I'll always carry in my mind, and I find myself fortunate for that. RIP Susan, you are missed.

Betsy Hollweck

Pilgrims

The Pilgrims Teacher Trainer Journal is read by teacher educators and trainers worldwide and contains articles on a wide variety of topics of interest to the ELT profession. Recent contributions have been on applying AI positively in teacher education training, decentering ELT, mentoring across the world, approaches to equality, diversity and inclusion, assessment for learning, humanistic approaches to teaching and learning, CLIL and primary and secondary school teaching.

The latest issue is available free of charge at: <https://pilgrimsttj.com>

We encourage the voices of new and young teachers who may not be published in more academic journals, while continuing to promote the best of ELT expertise globally. We specifically focus on contributions from around the globe, showcasing the best of teaching and training in different contexts.

If you'd like to contribute, please contact the editor at: phil.dexter@pilgrimsttj.com

More information on Pilgrims is available at: <https://www.pilgrims.co.uk/teacher-training-courses>

Melta Five-a-Day – Discussion questions

The run-up to Christmas can be busy, and post-Christmas blues can sometimes hit hard. To help out during this busy period, **Bethan Stokes** shares five low-prep activities that focus on general discussion topics but spice up standard “Discuss questions 1-6 with a partner” activities. All five can be used for most topics. Have fun!

1 Easiest / hardest question

★ **Level:** B1+

🕒 **Time:** 15-20 minutes

🔧 **Aim:** To encourage students to engage more with their discussion questions so that they actively think about why questions are hard or easy to discuss and potentially consider tools for tackling “harder” questions

📄 **Materials:** Any discussion questions you have to hand! This website is a good starting point: <http://iteslj.org/questions/>

✏️ **Prep:** Get your discussion questions ready (at least six per group / pair). Optional: print and cut up the questions so students get them as individual strips.

Procedure:

1. Put students into pairs or groups.
2. Give each pair / group a set of discussion questions. You can choose to give each pair / group the same questions or different questions. I find when it comes to Step 4, giving different sets of questions makes this activity even more fun.
3. Tell students to discuss the questions. Monitor and make notes for any feedback. Depending on how many questions you give, allow students around 10 minutes for the actual discussion.
4. At an appropriate time, stop all groups / pairs. Ask students to look back at the questions they’ve discussed and decide (i) which question was the easiest to answer,

(ii) which question was the hardest to answer and (iii) why they were the easiest / hardest. This can lead to some lively discussions, so allow time for this part or give students a time limit – for example, 5 minutes.

5. Go round the class and ask each group to tell the other students what their easiest and hardest question was and why it was easy / hard to answer. Make a note of both the easiest and the hardest questions: save them for another day or keep them handy as a filler activity.

Extension: Tell students to pick one of the easiest or one of the hardest questions (you decide!) and write a short paragraph answering it.

Before answering, students actively think about why questions are hard or easy to discuss

2 Choose three

★ **Level:** A2+

🕒 **Time:** 15-20 minutes

🔧 **Aim:** To give students more autonomy in discussion activities so that they’re hopefully (more) motivated to speak English in class

📄 **Materials:** Any discussion questions you have to hand. This website is a good starting point: <http://iteslj.org/questions/>

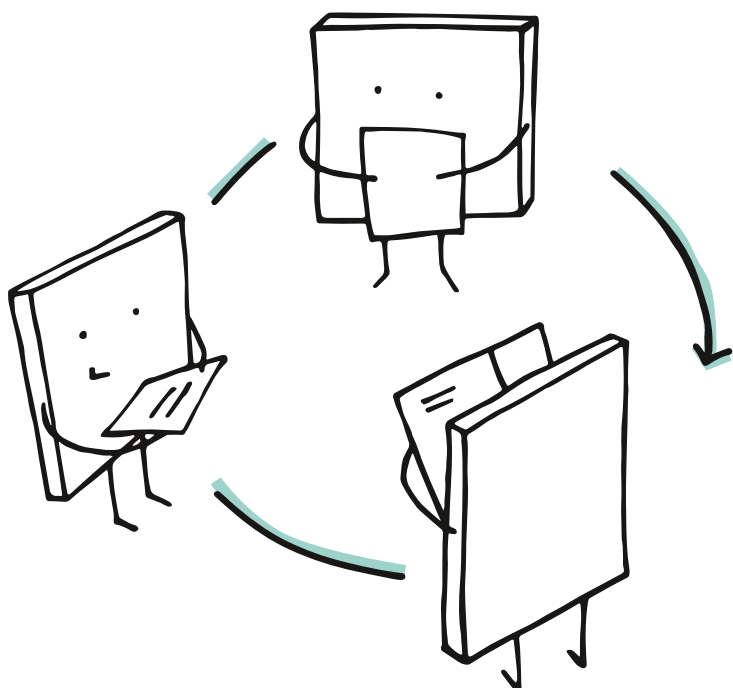
✏️ **Prep:** Get your discussion questions ready (at least six per group / pair). Optional: Print and cut up the questions so students get them as individual strips.

Procedure:

1. Put students into pairs / groups.
2. Give each pair/group a set of at least eight discussion questions (either all the same questions or different sets for different pairs / groups.) Alternatively, project the questions onto the (virtual) whiteboard.
3. Before starting the discussion, tell students to read all their questions. Then, as a pair / group, they choose **THREE** questions they don’t want to answer. After they’ve chosen their three, they begin discussing the remaining questions. It’s that simple!

Early finishers: Students discuss the three questions they didn’t want to discuss at the beginning (this might encourage them not to race through their discussion questions quite so quickly!).

Extension: At the end of the activity, ask pairs / groups which three questions they chose not to discuss and why.





3 Rewrite the question

★ **Level:** B2+

🕒 **Time:** 15-20 minutes

🧩 **Aim:** To give students more autonomy during speaking activities so that they're (more) motivated to speak in English

📄 **Materials:** Any discussion questions you have to hand. This website is a good starting point: <http://iteslj.org/questions/>

✍️ **Prep:** Get your discussion questions ready (at least six per group / pair). Optional: Print and cut up the questions so students get them as individual strips.

Giving students more autonomy
in discussion activities increases their
motivation to speak

Procedure:

1. Give each student a set of at least six discussion questions.
2. Tell them they have 5 minutes to rewrite three (or more, you choose) of the questions. You can model this with the whole class beforehand, for example:
 - Original discussion question: what is your opinion on local referendums for mass events – for example, the Olympics?
 - Rewritten question: would you vote in a local referendum for mass events – for example, the Olympics? Why / why not?
3. Quickly check the rewritten questions for spelling / grammar mistakes and to make sure they make sense!
4. Put students into pairs / groups and ask them to discuss their rewritten questions.
5. Afterwards, students decide which is better: the original or the rewritten question.

4 Extension questions

★ **Level:** A2+

🕒 **Time:** 15-20 minutes

🧩 **Aim:** To write questions so that students practice question formation and thinking beyond the given topic

📄 **Materials:** Six discussion questions

✍️ **Prep:** Prepare a PowerPoint slide or a document with six discussion questions to project onto the (virtual) whiteboard. It's useful if you can then edit this document in class.

Procedure:

1. Project six discussion questions onto the (virtual) whiteboard.
2. Give students 10 minutes to write one other question related to each question. For bigger classes: put students into groups and give them specific questions – for example, Questions 1 and 2. The first time you do this activity, it's useful to show students how it's done. For example:

Discussion question:

1 At what age do you think children should get a smartphone and why?

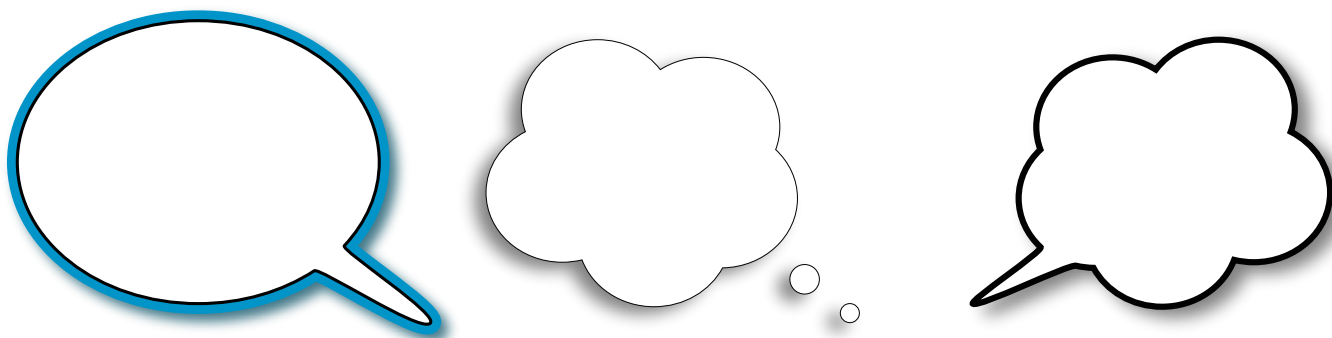
Extension question:

1 a) Should parents check what their children are doing on their smartphones? Why / why not?

(Optional: Revise question formation before beginning this activity. You could also revise vocabulary related to the discussion topic / questions.)

3. Monitor to check grammar and vocabulary.
4. Tell students to show their “extension questions” to their partner. Encourage peer correction here.
5. Ask students to tell the whole class their extension questions. For bigger groups, ask each student to share just one of their extension questions. If possible, add the extension questions to your document or ask students to send you their questions / collect them.

By going beyond the original question,
students create more for you to work with



6. Voilà! You now have plenty of discussion questions. There are lots of things you could do here: choose the easiest / hardest extension question, choose three questions you don't want to answer and discuss the rest, vote for the best extension question, answer the discussion questions in groups / pairs / as a class or save them for another day. The point is, the students have gone beyond the original question you've given them and created more for you to use as you wish (or to negotiate with them how their questions will be used in upcoming classes.)

Students don't just discuss,
they also practice question formation and
thinking beyond a given topic

5 Walk and talk

I have to give the credit to Miles Parker for this genius idea.

- ★ **Level:** B1+
- 🕒 **Time:** 30-45 minutes
- 👥 **Aim:** To get students moving round the classroom while asking questions so that they get a variety of input on the same topic from their peers
- 📄 **Materials:** Discussion questions (enough for one per student) and a worksheet with a table for students to record answers
- ✏️ **Prep:** Create a (digital) worksheet for students to write down their peers' answers. A simple table like this will do:

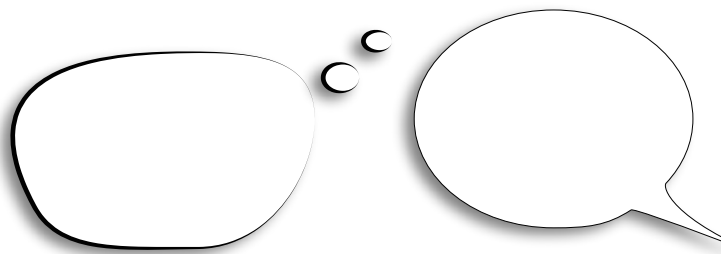
NAME	INSERT DISCUSSION QUESTION HERE
Name of student asked: Kristina.	Students write down Kristina's answer here.

Procedure:

1. Give each student one discussion question / worksheet. Alternatively, you can leave the "discussion question box" empty and have students come up with their own discussion question. Or use one of the "easiest / hardest" discussion questions from the first activity.
2. Tell students to read their question and ask for help if there's anything they don't understand.
3. Explain to students that they'll now be walking around the classroom with their worksheet, asking each class member their question. They have to write down the students' names in the "name column" and make notes on their answers in the "discussion question column". If there's an odd number of students, volunteer yourself to be asked (if feasible). Some classroom management is required here but students tend to work it out OK if nudged.
4. Set a specific timeframe for the task – for example, 15 minutes. Then, tell all the students to get up and to speak to someone. They cannot start with the person sitting next to, in front of or behind them.
Option: Interrupt the activity every 5 minutes or so to give feedback to the class on errors you've heard. This minimises the risk of students making the same mistakes again and again.
5. Once the time is up or students have got an answer from every other student, tell them to sit back down. Ask them to quickly read through their notes.
6. Go round the class and ask each student to read out their question. Then, ask them to tell the class what their favourite answer was and why.



Bethan Stokes is originally from the UK and has lived in Munich since September 2015. She started teaching EFL in Madrid, went on to an MA in TESOL at UCL Institute of Education and has been teaching English at the University of the German Armed Forces since 2016. She enjoys writing teaching materials, encouraging students to think about their learning and simply getting students talking.



Kindergarten English – The magic of puppets


To energize her young learners, **Jackie Adams** brings a new member to class



When I taught English at my kids' kindergarten, I spent a week making a furry, red puppet (Sesame Street-style), complete with eyes made from plastic spoons, an enormous mouth and long, gangly arms. The children christened him Tommy, and he became my silent sidekick (ventriloquism is not one of my specialties). He retired after almost losing an arm and was enjoying the quiet life with my kids' stuffed animals until I decided to enlist his help again. After some minor surgery and fur-care, he was ready to entertain another group of three- to six-year-olds – this time at the kindergarten on the university campus. The kids love him. In fact, I suspect they like him better than me.

So how can a puppet help kids practice their English? Keep reading and find out!

Activity: Do you like ...? Puppet style

 **Materials:** A hand puppet with a giant mouth and cards with pictures of common kindergarten snack-time food

What to do:

1. Place all the food cards on a table or on the floor in front of you.
2. Pick up one card (for example, a picture of a container of cream cheese) and ask the puppet: "Do you like cream cheese?"
3. Move the card closer to the puppet's mouth and make a sniffing sound as if the puppet is smelling the food. A few kids will start giggling at this point.
4. Option 1: Grab the card with the puppet's mouth and have the puppet pretend to eat it.



Get the puppet to steal children's hats every once in a while. The kids will shriek in delight

After some minor surgery and fur-care, Tommy was ready to entertain another group of three- to six-year-olds

Option 2: Vehemently shake the puppet's head, signalling that it doesn't like the food.

Option 3: Tentatively take the card with the puppet's mouth and then spit it out, signalling that it doesn't like the food. This option will result in lots of hysterical laughter.

5. Now it's time for the kids to feed the puppet. Each of them can take a turn picking up a card and saying "Do you like ...?" You decide which food cards the puppet likes and doesn't.

Extra: Add a bit more fun to the activity by getting the puppet to steal children's hats every once in a while. The kids will shriek in delight. Just make sure you always admonish the puppet before returning any stolen hats.

Extensions: Instead of doing common snack-time food, you can limit yourself and focus on one food group at a time. One week you can do fruits, another week you can work on vegetables, and a different time you can practice sweet items.

More Extensions: Another idea is to get pictures of common sandwich ingredients and have the kids make sandwiches for the puppet. "Do you like cheese and lettuce sandwiches?" will soon become "Do you like salami and banana and Nutella sandwiches?"

It doesn't matter whether you buy a puppet or make one yourself – the kids will love your new sidekick either way.

Happy puppeteering!



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

Christmas lessons for young learners – And the young at heart

Amanda Huber is excited to share some fun, creative and festive lesson ideas that work for learners aged 4 to 99, across levels A1 to C2.

Activity 1: Elfie, Where Are You?

This lesson is based on the Super Simple Songs video *Santa, Where Are You?* Young learners practice prepositions of place by hiding the Christmas elf, Elfie. Using large visuals, the children take turns hiding Elfie in places such as in the stocking, under the Christmas tree, and behind the presents. A memory game, a song, and a guided colouring activity add variety and reinforce the target language. To finish, learners play a hiding game that they created themselves in pairs.

For older students, have them match sentence cards to pictures of Elfie's hiding places. Include a short gap-fill writing exercise for extra practice, then finish with a "Find the Elf" game – one student hides the elf, and classmates ask questions to discover where it is.



For flashcards, memory game and craft templates, please don't hesitate to contact me at huber.ah.amanda@gmail.com.

Activity 2: The Elf on the Shelf

The Elf on the Shelf has become a well-known North American tradition and a perfect inspiration for learners B1 or higher. Here's a good video that explains the tradition: https://youtu.be/HXpzSg7BO-8?si=tOIhF6XGzxr__2hT

After introducing the concept and showing examples of mischievous elf pranks, ask students to plan their own elf adventure and present it to the class. You can turn it into a competition: groups make a video of their elf's adventures, present them, and the class votes for the most creative elf escapade.

Activity 3: Crack the Code

Even the least motivated students will want to unlock this one! Ideal for B1 and higher, but possible for strong A2 students. This lesson sequence keeps learners engaged with a simple goal: earn clues to crack a secret code and win a class prize.

Example tasks:

- Research and present a Christmas tradition from an English-speaking country. After each presentation, give classmates a short quiz; those who reach the target score earn a clue for the code.
- Create a gap-fill exercise using Christmas vocabulary and a chosen grammar point. Other groups complete them to gain more clues.

After all clues are collected, provide a riddle to help students order the letters or numbers – for example, if the code spells "SANTA," write a clue describing him. The first team to crack it "unlocks" the class prize, which could be cookies, a no-homework pass, or supplies for a craft. The secret to success? Build the suspense – even a small prize feels big when presented dramatically!

Activity 4: Twelve Days of Christmas

Who really wants a partridge in a pear tree? Let your learners personalise *The Twelve Days of Christmas*. Young learners can replace "my true love" with a family member and rewrite the song using their wish lists. Teach relevant toys and games vocabulary, and have them create illustrated mini-books.

Older learners can label their pictures, and parents will love it when their children read the book proudly at home.

Older or more advanced students can rewrite the lyrics to fit the tune, a more complex but rewarding challenge. Have groups perform their versions or sing one each day in the countdown to Christmas. You can even turn it into a mini talent show, encouraging students to act out the scenes from their version of the song.

I wish you a merry and creative Christmas season with your learners! Happy Hoho!

For mini-book templates and writing frames, please don't hesitate to contact me at huber.ah.amanda@gmail.com.

On the seventh day of Christmas,
my family gave to me...





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

Words of Kindness – Stories for a kinder world

Simona Stambazzi invites you and your learners to join teachers and students worldwide in telling and listening to stories that foster the holiday spirit

24 storytellers – 24 days – 24 stories

In this article, I'd like to share with you the reasons behind the “Words of Kindness – Storytelling Advent Calendar” project and some ideas for using these stories with your students.

The project

I've always loved the run-up to Christmas. The lights, trees, decorations, the Advent Calendar, presents and cards, spending time with family and friends... but in particular, the atmosphere at Christmastime is what I've always loved, when it feels as if the world finally gets kinder, happier, more peaceful. In this part of the world the days around Christmas are dark and cold, so maybe we try to find light and warmth in our hearts...

I've always known that I wanted to do something good with my work – spreading good values and positivity, teaching about kindness, humanity, compassion, generosity. I believe that these values can be found in people, and what better way to nurture them than through the power of stories?

This is why, in 2023, I came up with the idea of organising a Storytelling Advent Calendar: every day, for 24 days, I would share a story told by a different storyteller, stories focussing on themes such as kindness, peace, compassion, generosity... values to make listeners reflect and learn. So, I asked 23 storytelling friends from around the world to lend me a hand, and through our common effort, the first edition of Words of Kindness was born. The reaction to the project was so positive that I decided to do it again the following year – and again in 2025.

Making the most of the project

48 stories have already been told as part of the project, and this year 24 more will be added – taking the total to 72 stories told by storytellers from all over the world, in English, all freely available online, and about themes that I am sure many of us would like to talk about with our students, particularly at a time like Christmas... so, why not make the most out of it?

There are many ways in which we can use the project, either in its entirety or just selecting some stories. In this article, I'd like to provide an example with two stories from the project and show how we can use them with our students.

What better way to nurture feelings of humanity and compassion than through the power of stories?

In 2023, I came up with the idea of organising a Storytelling Advent Calendar



Activity 1: The Two Soldiers

“The Two Soldiers” is a story about peace, understanding, finding humanity in the other – and all of this through the power of telling stories. It's the story of two soldiers fighting for enemy armies who, at the end of a day of battle, find themselves to be the only two survivors. It's late, so they decide to take a break and fight in the morning. However, they start talking and getting to know each other, telling each other stories; the following morning, they decide that they don't want to fight anymore, that there's no reason to fight because “Once you know someone's story, they can never be your enemy”.



★ **Level:** B1 and above (teenagers / adults)

🕒 **Time:** As long as you want

🧩 **Aim:** Practice listening and speaking skills, foster students' imaginations

📄 **Materials:** Pencil or pen, paper, video of “The Two Soldiers” at: <https://youtu.be/w8LGkqr4Puk?si=PnKZcjGfMqDxkZVm>

🔗 **Prep:** Watch the video of “The Two Soldiers”

Procedure:

1. Introduce the topic of the story with a discussion. Here are some questions you can use to guide your students:
 - a. Why are there wars and battles? Why do soldiers fight in them?
 - b. Why do soldiers follow orders? Is it always correct to follow them?
 - c. When do you fight for your life and who do you fight against?
 - d. How do you make peace?
2. To create expectations about the story, give students one to two minutes to ask questions about it. (The only question they cannot ask is: “What happens in the story?”)



A total of 72 stories
told by storytellers from all over the world
are freely available online

- ★ **Level:** Pre-A1 and A1 (9-10 year-olds)
- 🕒 **Time:** As long as you want
- 👥 **Aim:** Practice listening and speaking skills, foster students' imaginations
- 📄 **Materials:** None
- 🔗 **Prep:** Learn the "The Bridge" from the video at <https://youtu.be/1yOM2T-VcRA?si=NgqXOWDGVeRJ4Gn3or>, in a simplified version, at <https://youtu.be/hVQX-AW4W1s4?si=qF3qT9rTDI4sugdc>

Procedure:

1. Introduce key vocabulary: shepherd, sheep, lamb, field, river, builder, wall, bridge.
2. Tell the story combined with mime.
3. Tell the story again and have the students mime it with you.
4. Mime the story again without words.
5. Have the students in pairs mime and retell the story, using language as much as they can, but filling in the gaps with mimes.

Follow-up 1: Elicit ideas from students on "How to be a good friend" and make posters on the five to ten best rules and practices for being a good friend.

Follow-up 2: Retell the story with mistakes and ask the students to correct you. For example: "The shepherds had lots of cows in their field." "No! Not cows, sheep." "Ah, right, they had lots of sheep." Young learners love this!

I hope I've given you some ideas and inspiration to work with the stories from "Words of Kindness". I'm always happy to hear about how teachers use the project and keep it alive. Drop me an email at simonasstories@gmail.com to let me know!

3. Have students in small groups try to imagine what will happen on the basis of your answers.
4. Tell or play the video of "The Two Soldiers".
5. Ask students to compare their versions with the version they've heard.
6. Have students listen to the video again and, while listening, create a simple timeline of the events using keywords, short sentences or doodles.
7. Have students in pairs retell the story on the basis of their timelines.

Follow-up 1: Ask students to role play the story.

Follow-up 2: Ask students singly / in pairs to respond to the story and its closing line – "Once you know someone's story, they can never be your enemy" – by writing a poem, drawing a picture or even creating a song about it.



The Bridge

"The Bridge" is the story of two shepherds who have an argument and stop being friends. One of them asks a builder to build a wall to separate their neighbouring fields, but the builder builds a bridge instead, connecting the two friends and helping them to make peace.

When working with children, I think it's always best if you tell the story yourself. This way you can grade the language, adapt the story to the students' level and involve them in the telling. This is a simple story for kids to understand if told using the voice together with mimes and gestures to illustrate its various elements.





Simona Stambazzi is a language teacher, storyteller, podcaster and workshop leader. She fell in love with stories at a very young age and she's been playing with her imagination ever since – creating stories, writing, telling, reading, and now... sharing her passion and connecting it to the world of language teaching. You can find her online at "Simona's Stories".

Revisiting connectors

Dervilla Fastner shares a lesson on using connectors, especially in business communication. The activities can also be used as standalone exercises. The example activities here are suitable for B1 level but can be easily adapted to other levels

A: To-do lists

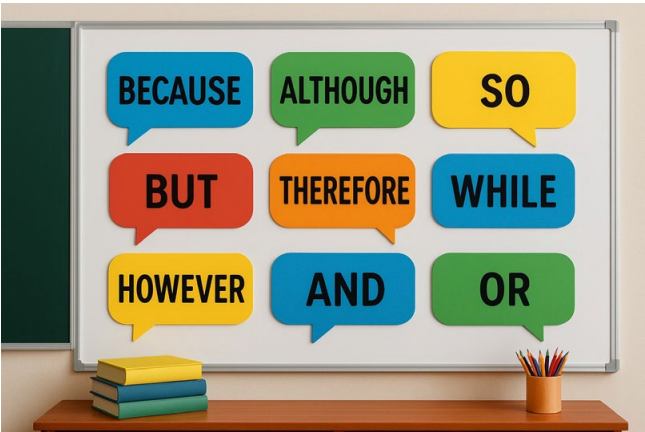
-  **Aim:** To review connectors in a business context, and practise them in speaking
-  **Prep:** Teacher's to-do list for the day

Procedure:



Teacher shares his / her to-do list with the students on the board or screen. Working in pairs, students turn it into a flowing text by adding connectors.

My day	My day (with connectors)
Meeting a new group at 11 a.m. for an English lesson Meeting my colleague for a business lunch at 1 p.m. We want to discuss how we can incorporate AI in our English lessons Teaching a conversation class at our local VHS at 3 p.m. Take the train home at 5 p.m.	I have a busy day today. First , I will be meeting my new group at 11 a.m. for an English lesson. Afterwards , I'm meeting my colleague for a business lunch at 1 p.m. as we want to discuss how we can incorporate AI into our English lessons. Then , at 3 p.m., I'll be teaching a conversation class at our local VHS. Finally , I'll take the train home at 5 p.m.

As an extension activity, the teacher asks the students to write 3–4 sentences about their work-related to-dos for today. They should include at least three connectors, such as *first, next, then, afterwards, and, additionally, or finally*.



B: Sorting activity

-  **Aim:** To reinforce the meaning and usage of connectors, and learn additional linking structures
-  **Prep:** Prepare a worksheet with columns for different types of connectors (see below). Create a set of paper strips with a connector written on each strip.

Procedure:

Each pair of students receives a set of mixed connector strips. They need to sort them into the correct categories. They can check answers using the table below. As a higher-level activity, the students can think of one extra connector to add to each category.

Adding informa- tion	Compare and contrast	Cause and effect
and also in addition additionally moreover furthermore besides	but however although even though on the other hand whereas nevertheless	because since as due to so therefore as a result consequently
Sequence	Examples and emphasis	Conclusion or summary
first then next after that subsequently finally at the same time	for example for instance such as like especially in particular	in conclusion to sum up in summary overall finally all in all

The activities can be used as standalone exercises, and are easily adaptable to other levels

C: Listening

Aim: To practise identifying connectors in a spoken text

Prep: Use an AI tool to create a text which will interest your learners (see example below). Prompt AI to use lots of connectors. Create a separate list with all the connectors used in the text. Then use a text-to-speech tool, such as [luvvoice.com](https://www.luvvoice.com), to turn your text into a spoken narrative.

Procedure:

Students read and listen at the same time. Referring to the list of connectors, they fill in the gaps in the text.

Check the answers and discuss the usage of the connectors in each case.

Saving costs

in conclusion, additionally, unlike, therefore, furthermore, while, moreover, but also

As part of our company's new strategy, we are looking for ways to reduce costs without affecting employee satisfaction. _____, we are reviewing all HR processes to identify areas for improvement. _____, we are considering digital tools to manage payroll and attendance, which can reduce administrative expenses. _____, we are promoting internal hiring to save on recruitment costs and onboarding time. _____ previous years, when we relied heavily on external agencies, we now aim to use our internal talent pool more effectively. This change will help us cut third-party fees and strengthen our workforce from within. _____, we are offering flexible work arrangements, which not only support work-life balance _____ lower office-related expenses such as electricity and supplies. _____, we believe these changes will bring positive results through careful planning and cooperation across departments. HR plays a key role in this process by aligning people strategies with business goals, ensuring cost-efficiency _____ maintaining employee engagement.

Follow-up activity: In pairs, students give an oral summary using at least three connectors. As a further extension activity, they can talk, using connectors, about other ways to save costs at work.

The importance of small talk

Technology in everyday life

AI (artificial intelligence)

My favourite place

My hobbies

My job

My last holiday

A successful meeting

A topic of your choice

A meal out in a restaurant

D: 90-Second Talk

Aim: To practice speaking using connectors to link ideas (on a specific topic)

Prep: Offer students a choice of topics that match their level and interests.

Procedure:

Students choose a topic (examples in the word cloud above). They take time to plan their 90-second talk. They must include 3–6 connectors. Students then speak within groups or in front of the class. This activity could also be given as written homework.



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

Christmas lesson – The pros and cons of giving Christmas presents

Tim Howe shares a Christmas-themed English lesson that can be delivered as a complete session or broken up into separate fun and standalone activities



- ★ **Level:** A2 (Part two may also be used as a warm-up or discussion activity for higher-level learners.)
- ✚ **Aim:** To practice Christmas-related vocabulary and express simple opinions both orally and in writing. The lesson also aims to foster creativity and encourage collaboration.
- ✂ **Materials:** Pen and paper

Part 1 – Matching exercise

- ✚ **Aim:** To review Christmas-related vocabulary
- ✂ **Prep:** None







Procedure:
Match the words with the correct definitions:

Word	Definition
1. Gift / Present	a) Something that costs a lot of money
2. Family	b) Something you give to show appreciation or love
3. Expensive	c) Using resources without purpose or care
4. Thoughtful	d) Carefully chosen to make someone happy
5. Waste	e) Unique or important, not ordinary
6. Surprise	f) Something unexpected that makes you happy
7. Special	g) People you live with or are related to

Part 2 – Pros and cons of giving Christmas presents

- ✚ **Aim:** To express simple opinions both orally and in writing
- ✂ **Prep:** Review expressions for giving opinions – for example: I think, in my opinion, etc.

Procedure:
Think about giving Christmas presents. Write at least three pros (reasons it's good) and three cons (reasons it could be bad).

The Pros of Giving Christmas Presents	The Cons of Giving Christmas Presents
 1. _____  2. _____ 3. _____ 	 1. _____  2. _____ 3. _____ 

Part 3 – Poster activity

- ✚ **Aim:** To include fun and creativity in the class while reinforcing language skills
- ✂ **Prep:** Make sure paper to create posters is available.
- ✂ **Materials:**
 - Thick paper or poster paper
 - Coloured pencils/markers
 - Festive stickers (optional)

Procedure:

1. Draw a poster with two columns: **Pros | Cons**.
2. Add words, short phrases, or drawings to support your points.
3. Prepare to present your poster to the class in English.
4. Optional: Add Christmas-themed decorations to make the poster festive.





Include fun and creativity
while reinforcing language skills

Part 4 – Reflection writing

Aim: To express opinions in writing and supporting them with reasons

Procedure:

Write a short paragraph (5–7 sentences) about your opinion:

“In my opinion, giving Christmas presents is ... because ...”

You can include:

- A personal experience
- A story about a gift you gave or received
- Your thoughts on whether gifts are necessary or meaningful

These activities can be combined
in one lesson
or used separately



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

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/tim-howe-4708117/>

What do you do?

Want to get your new business course off to a great start?

Joan Walsh knows a simple, no-prep activity that never fails to generate lots of discussion

★ **Level:** B1+ and upwards

✚ **Aim:** Practice question formation, develop class rapport and generate discussion

📄 **Materials:** Pen and paper

✂ **Prep:** None

Procedure:

1. Students write their names and job titles on a piece of paper and pass the paper to the student on their left.
2. This student writes a question about the job on the paper -- for example, “Where did you train for your job?” “How long have you been doing it?” “What qualifications does your job require?” – and passes the paper to the student on his or her left.
3. Students keep writing questions and passing the papers on until each student has his or her own paper back.
4. Students give a presentation to the class about their jobs, answering the questions on their papers.

Outcome: Students get to know each other better, and you get an insight into their level and why they're learning English.

Note: If you participate, too, you'll often get some amazing questions.

Thanks to Dana Jelinkova for this activity!



Join in! They'll want to know all
about your job too

Getting set for the Yuletide season

Joan Walsh shares two tried and tested speaking activities for the pre-holiday classroom

Activity 1: Imaginary presents

The Christmas season is fast approaching and what better way to prepare than practicing expressions for giving and receiving?

★ **Level:** A2 and above

🧩 **Aim:** Practice polite expressions and increase oral fluency

🕒 **Time:** 10 to 20 minutes

📄 **Materials:** None

✍️ **Prep:** Pre-teach and/or review polite expressions for accepting presents.

Procedure:

1. Have students stand in a large circle.
2. Give Student A ("Margaret") an imaginary present and say something like this: "I thought this would be the ideal present for you, Margaret, with all your talents. Here it is."
3. "Margaret" imagines a present and says something like this: "Oh, thank you! This keyboard is exactly what I needed for my music lessons Thank you so much."
4. "Margaret" demonstrates the present – plays the imaginary keyboard – for the rest of the class and gives another imaginary present to another student.
5. Repeat the process until everyone in the class has given and received an imaginary present.

It's amazing what presents students will sometimes come up with. Imagination truly has no limits.

Here's a way to use those old cards you couldn't bear to throw away



Imagination truly has no limits

Activity 2: Dictate a Christmas card

Here's a good way to reuse those old cards you couldn't bear to throw away.

★ **Level:** A2 to C2

🧩 **Aim:** Practice descriptive vocabulary

🕒 **Time:** 20 to 30 minutes

📄 **Materials:** A batch of old Christmas cards, paper and coloured pencils

✍️ **Prep:** Pre-teach and/or review words needed to describe items depicted on Christmas cards (including expressions like "at the top", "in the bottom right-hand corner", "on the left", "next to" and "in the middle")

Procedure:

1. Describe (without showing) the picture on a Christmas card.
2. Ask the students to draw the picture you describe.
3. Have the students show and compare the results.
4. Give each student a different Christmas card. Tell them it's a secret card and they cannot show it to anyone else.
5. Ask the students in pairs to dictate the pictures on their cards to one another.

Follow-up: Ask the students to turn their pictures over and write a Christmas card to another student on the back.



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

From the Melta kitchen

Looking for some new realia for your upcoming discussion class? **Betsy Hollweck** has a culinary suggestion

Basic Cranberry Sauce

Whether to accompany the Holiday Bird or to spread on next-day sandwiches, this recipe's a winner. Voted the most popular recipe three years in a row by my annual VHS Thanksgiving course, it also pairs well with ham, cheese and egg dishes.

Level: A1 and above

Aim: Stimulate classroom discussion and debate

Ingredients:

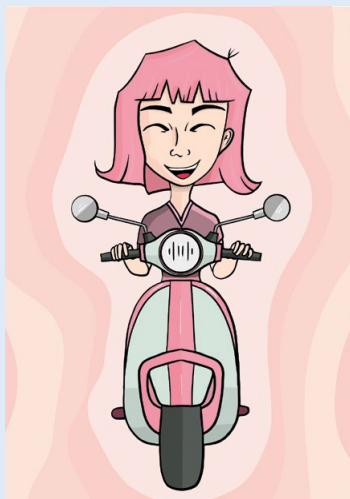
330 g fresh cranberries
150 g sugar
1 orange

Procedure:

1. Zest and juice the orange.
2. Place everything in a small saucepan.
3. Cook over medium-high heat until the berries begin to burst, 4-6 minutes.
4. Cook 2-3 minutes more.
5. Turn off the heat, cover and allow to cool.
6. Chill until ready to serve.
7. Distribute samples to class and discuss.



Betsy Hollweck has been teaching English in and around Munich since 2018.



Rückseite

Margaret McKee reports on L1 interference outside the classroom

Going way back forty something years, there was a lady who came to my class on a Moped and a man who came on a Vespa. Rivalry was rife. One day after class, the woman said to the man, "I'll be home in thirty minutes," to which he replied: "You'll only be home in thirty minutes if the wind comes from your backside."



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

Words ending in the letter combination “-et”

Juliana Oosten takes a closer look at another peculiarity of English pronunciation – this time one with an etymological twist

As you know, English has taken / stolen many words from other languages. In some cases, the pronunciation has also been changed, for better or for worse.

Here’s a variety of words with French and/or Germanic roots all with the ending **-et**. This ending can be pronounced as /it/ or as /ay/ (as in **day**).

Activity: Decide how to say the words written in bold in the following sentences.

1. He started taking **ballet** lessons at the age of six.
2. A **wicket** is one of the three upright sticks used in cricket.
3. She cut the fish into **fillets**.
4. **Filet** mignon is a tender and lean cut of beef.
5. They always enjoy the hotel breakfast **buffet** when they’re on holiday.
6. Are you staying in a **chalet** in the mountains?
7. A **skillet** is a type of frying pan.
8. She’s a real **gourmet** when it comes to Mediterranean cuisine.
9. The **duvets** on hotel beds are often too warm.
10. Did you knit or **crochet** that scarf?
11. The aspirins are in the medicine **cabinet**.
12. The **bullet ricocheted** off the wall.
13. They have a white **picket** fence around their garden.
14. I prefer **carpet** to **parquet** flooring.
15. **Croquet** is a game played with a ball, a mallet and hoops (in the US often called **wickets**).
16. She bought him a wonderful **bouquet** of flowers.
17. A **beret** is a flat hat without a brim.
18. Are you a fan of **cabarets**?



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

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Moon tell me truth – **The Hands Up Project**

A poetry activity tried and tested by **Mechthild Lier**

Have you heard of The Hands Up Project (HUP)? It's a charity that connects young people from Palestine to the world, thus creating amazing learning opportunities, full of fun and creativity. Through linkups, poetry, stories and drama, learners in Palestine improve not only their English, but also their creative thinking and intercultural understanding. Watching their remote theatre performances and listening to HUP storytelling became one of my highlights during the pandemic.

But in October 2023, everything changed. My phone's notification didn't lead me to an enjoyable HUP theatre play or story. Instead, I heard founder Nick Billbrough relating the devastating news of the killing of HUP student Fatema Saidam and her whole family in an Israeli airstrike. He told us about the poetry competition that Fatema had contributed to earlier in 2023, collected in *Moon tell me truth*. Then he read her beautiful peace poem – written on a crumpled piece of paper by a nine-year-old girl who was deprived of the chance to grow up.

Nick also invited us to do the following activity with our own students:

Activity: Moon tell me truth

★ **Level:** A1 and up

🕒 **Time:** As long as you want

🧩 **Aim:** Expand creative thinking and intercultural understanding by writing and illustrating a poem

📄 **Materials:** A pen or pencil, coloured pencils and/or crayons, paper and copies of the two paintings by Palestine artists shown on this page

✍️ **Prep:** Prepare copies of the paintings and of Fatema's illustrated poem.

The Hands Up Project
connects young people from
Palestine to the world

1. Distribute or display copies of the two paintings by Palestinian artists.
2. Ask students singly / in pairs / in groups to write and decorate poems of up to 50 words based on one of the pictures.
3. Ask students to present and explain their illustrated poems to the class.
4. Distribute copies of Fatema's illustrated poem and have students discuss its similarities to / differences from those they've created.



The Waiting | Malak Mattar | Palestine



Purple Beam | Layla Mohammad Ibraheem Al Haj Abed | Palestine

I wanted my students to learn about Fatema, her beautiful poem, her creativity and also her death

I followed Nick's suggestion the next day. My more advanced learners wrote impressive pieces, my beginners felt more comfortable talking about the paintings and some of the poems of the young HUP writers. The wonderful book *Moon tell me truth* is also available as a download and can thus be projected on a classroom wall. In the end, most of my learners were deeply touched and at the end of the lesson there was a standing ovation.

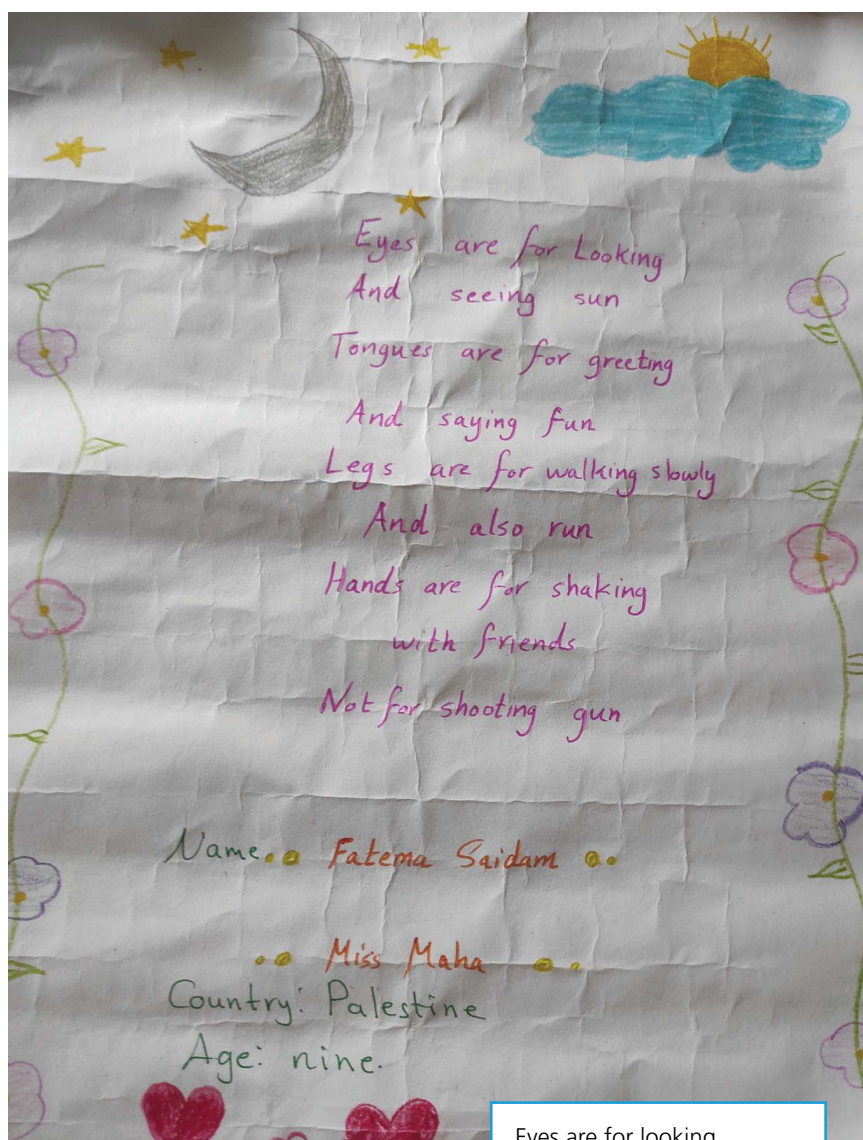
To be honest, I was a bit anxious whether the lesson would work out, but I wanted my students to learn about Fatema, her beautiful poem, her creativity and also her death at the of age of nine. Since then, I've repeated the task in other courses, and I almost always have some copies of Fatema's poem with me and distribute them freely.

The activity can be adapted to all levels and ages – school kids reciting the poem with movement, teenagers writing responses or adults doing creative writing or analysis. I invite you to try it out in one of your lessons!

You can find the HUP publications as well as videos, photos and further ideas at

<https://www.handsupproject.org/>

Poem and paintings from:
Moon tell me truth: Poems from Palestine and beyond. Nik Billbrough and Sarah Wood (eds.).
The Hands Up Project, 2023.
www.handsupproject.org
Photos © by The Hands Up Project, used with their kind permission.



Eyes are for looking
And seeing sun
Tongues are for greeting
And saying fun
Legs are for walking slowly
And also run
Hands are for shaking
with friends
Not for shooting gun

Fatema Saidam
9 years old
Palestine



Mechthild Lier studied German, English and American literature. Now she teaches German and English, mostly to adults, both at a private institution and VHS Lippstadt. In her free time, she enjoys linkups with learners in Palestine, brought to life by The Hands up Project. She is passionate about family, friends, cats, lifelong learning and Palestine.

At the end of my lesson,
there was a standing ovation

Creating positive memories

Oksana Trygub reports on a special summer camp with an English language component



About 50 children (more than we expected) attended the seven-day cultural and educational camp we held this summer in the village of Pivni, near Kyiv. Some of the children came from military families, others from large and/or low-income families. But despite their diverse backgrounds, they all shared one reality: growing up in the shadow of war. The camp gave them an opportunity to set aside their worries, smile again and simply be children.

Daily life at the camp

Mornings began with warm-up exercises. Then came arts and crafts workshops, games, swimming, trampoline jumping and water competitions. Meals were simple and shared in a family-like atmosphere. In the evenings, there were discos and parties with ice-cream for everyone.

But the camp was not only about entertainment. It was also a place where children could overcome the stress and anxiety caused by war. Although we occasionally heard explosions in the distance, the children felt secure in the camp's supportive environment.

English in practice

We were privileged this summer to host members of Ukrainian Patriot – an association of volunteers from Canada, Germany, the U.S. and Australia – who spent two days with us, participating in workshops and painting, sculpting, cooking and playing games with the children.

It was a real-life learning experience that taught the children valuable skills and increased their self-esteem

Although most of the children had had little practice speaking English, they quickly overcame their shyness and discovered they could communicate with the foreigners surprisingly well. They understood basic instructions and requests, proving that a natural, relaxed environment favours communication. It was a real-life learning experience that taught the children

valuable skills and increased their self-esteem.

An evening of music

Another highlight was a visit from the popular Ukrainian band Anna Maria. The singers spent an unforgettable evening with the children, sharing a meal, giving a mini-concert and, most touchingly, listening as the children opened their hearts and shared their dreams. One girl surprised everyone by reading her own poems to the artists, which inspired other children to sing as well. The kids were absolutely over the moon that such well-known entertainers had come especially to perform for them.

I realized that I must keep moving forward and never give up

In the great outdoors

For three days, we moved the camp to a beautiful canyon hidden in the woods about 60 kilometres from Pivni. The weather was perfect, and the children swam, slept in tents, cooked over





Even small acts – a game,
a song, a warm word –
become powerful tools
for psychosocial support
and healing

open fires and explored their natural surroundings. For many, it was their first real outdoor camping experience. One night we heard shahedz drones passing overhead. But we managed to calm the children. And the next day was filled with new activities that helped them to relax and regain their feeling of joy.

Instructed by members of a local orienteering club, the children also learned map-reading and navigation skills. Many proudly mastered beginner-level orienteering courses, building not only practical abilities but also confidence, resilience and trust in themselves and others.

Voices from the team

When it was all over, one of our camp leaders, a young student, described her experience this way: “Thank you for an amazing seven days, for the chance to talk with foreigners, and for the meaningful and joyful time spent with the children. And thank you for inspiring us. Let’s keep moving forward, improving ourselves and our projects!”

Another leader, a mother of three whose husband has gone missing at the front, shared these moving words after the camp: “Thank you so much



for the invitation – it was incredible! These days gave me so much motivation. The emotions were simply wonderful. I realized that I must keep moving forward and never give up.”

The impact

Even small acts – a game, a song, a warm word – become powerful tools for psychosocial support and healing. Time is passing quickly, and the children’s memories will forever be strongly marked by the experience of war. But we wanted to give them the opportunity to create positive memories as well. And we wanted to show them that even people far away are thinking of them and are willing to help – and we hope this awareness will help them to grow up kind, caring and ready to help other people in need in the future.

Already, the children are asking us when the next camp will be.



Oksana Tryhub is a senior lecturer in the English Department at Kyiv Mohyla Academy, Kyiv University, specializing in courses in general English, English for professional purposes and practical grammar with over 20 years of experience. She’s also founder and director of Zolotoust, a cultural and spiritual development center offering free courses for children in rural areas, and coordinator for the Sunday School Network in the Fastiv district near Kyiv.

Coaching for resilience – Supporting adult English learners in times of war

Inna Cherevko offers motivational strategies to develop students' English skills through language coaching inside a country at war



This year, I had the honour of being the only representative from Ukraine – someone who still lives and works in the country – to speak at an international language coaching conference in Málaga, Spain. My presentation focused on a topic that is deeply personal to me: using language coaching to support adults learning English during the war.

Language coaching vs teaching

Language coaching, unlike traditional teaching, goes beyond grammar drills and vocabulary lists. I asked in my talk, “Have you ever taught someone who didn’t need more grammar or vocabulary – but needed more hope, help and support?” This question lies at the heart of my approach. In Ukraine today, many adult learners are not just seeking to improve their English; they are searching for stability, purpose and a sense of control in a world that feels unpredictable.

In my work, I see how resilience is not simply a personal trait – it’s something that can be nurtured through intentional, supportive coaching. I

define resilience in this context as the combination of *language, identity and purpose*. Language gives people the tools they need to connect and express themselves. Identity allows them to see who they are beyond the crisis. Purpose motivates them to move forward despite the challenges.

Drawing on positive psychology, language coaching helps shift learners’ focus:

- from the negative to the positive
- from problems to solutions
- from dwelling on the past to focusing on the present and future.

This shift strengthens learners from the inside out. They develop flexible thinking, make better decisions, recognize and use their personal strengths,

In Ukraine today, many adult learners aren’t just seeking to improve their English; they’re searching for stability, purpose and a sense of control

Language coaching helps learners develop flexible thinking, make better decisions, recognize their own strengths and regain a sense of direction

lower their stress and anxiety and regain a sense of direction.

Teacher as a confidence-building partner

Some of the key tools I use include the GROW model, strengths-spotting and future-visioning. For example, when working with a learner who’s lost their job due to the war, we don’t just focus on “fixing” their English mistakes. Instead, we work together to set realistic language and life goals and envision a future where their language skills can open new opportunities – whether abroad or at home.

One of my students, a professional who had been forced to relocate due to shelling, told me, “Coaching helped me stand back up – not just for myself, but for everyone who looks to me.” For me, this sentence captures the transformative power of resilience coaching in language learning.

In times of crisis, adult learners need more than just a teacher. They need a partner who’ll listen, challenge them to think differently, and help them see their own strength. Language coaching provides exactly that – a space where learning English becomes not just a skill-building activity, but a pathway to rebuilding confidence and hope.

For educators worldwide, especially those working in difficult contexts, I believe this approach offers both inspiration and a practical framework. It reminds us that while we teach language, we’re also helping people reclaim their voice and their future.



GROW model activities for speaking / coaching conversations

Activity 1: Set a goal

Aim: Help learners define personal and meaningful English goals

Interaction: Pairs or small groups

Procedure:

In pairs, take turns asking and answering:

1. What do you want to be able to do in English in the next three months?
2. Why is this goal important for you personally or professionally?
3. How will your life change when you achieve it?
4. What will show you that you've reached your goal?
5. What is the first small step you can take this week?

Variation: Students write their goal as a SMART statement (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound).

Activity 2: Explore the reality

Aim: Raise self-awareness and reflect on current progress

Interaction: Pair discussion or journaling

Prompts:

1. What is your current English level and what are you most confident about?
2. What difficulties or obstacles do you face when studying English?
3. What habits or external factors affect your progress (for example: time, motivation, environment)?
4. Who supports you in your learning journey?
5. What have you already achieved that you're proud of?

Follow-up task: Each student shares one strength they discovered during reflection.

Activity 3:

Brainstorm the options

Aim: Develop creative and flexible thinking about possible actions

Interaction: Pair work / group brainstorming

Prompts:

1. What are three different ways you could improve your speaking outside the classroom?
2. Which free or local resources could you use?
3. What could you do if you had only ten minutes a day to practise English?
4. Who could help you stay on track?
5. Which of your personal strengths can support your learning process?

Extension: Create a class "Idea Wall" where learners write their best tips for staying motivated.

Activity 4:

Plan the way forward

Aim: Encourage accountability and concrete planning

Interaction: Pair or individual planning

Prompts:

1. Which option are you going to choose first?
2. When exactly will you start?
3. How will you keep yourself motivated?
4. What could stop you — and how will you deal with that?
5. Who will you share your progress with?

Optional follow-up: Learners make a short "Commitment Statement" and share it in class: "This week I will... because it will help me..."

Conclusion: Coaching tools for meaningful learning

In challenging times, teaching English is no longer only about language – it's about helping people rebuild con-

Coaching helped me stand back up – not just for myself, but for everyone who looks to me

fidence, purpose and hope through communication. The GROW model activities presented here offer teachers practical ways to bring coaching principles into everyday lessons. These tasks encourage self-awareness, goal-setting, reflection and meaningful conversations – all essential elements for adult learners who face uncertainty and change.

For English teachers, such exercises are more than just speaking practice. They transform the classroom into a supportive, empowering space where learners connect language with life. By guiding students to explore their goals and take small, intentional steps forward, teachers help them not only develop fluency but also strengthen their inner resilience.

Ultimately, coaching-oriented teaching reminds us that every English lesson can be a space for growth – not just linguistic, but personal and emotional as well.



Inna Cherevko is the owner of a private language school in Chernihiv, a Ukrainian city located just 70 km from the Russian border. Despite the ongoing war, frequent power outages and shelling, her school continues to thrive thanks to an incredible team of dedicated professionals who believe deeply in the power of education. Together, they serve not only as teachers but also as motivators and a source of support for both children and adults. Inna is also a certified ILCA language coach, passionate about helping learners build resilience and confidence through language.

Join us – We'll find a solution!

Ursula Stolberg describes a project to help students in Munich elementary schools learn to resolve conflicts peacefully

KOMM! Wir finden eine Lösung



Der Kinderschutzbund
Ortsverband München



The project is designed to strengthen a sense of community within school classes and reinforce children's social competencies

The background

Elementary school children in Munich normally come from a wide variety of backgrounds and cultures. They often have very different skills and intellectual abilities and are often at very different levels of emotional and social development. Deprived in many cases of sufficient support from their families, they increasingly have to cope with their problems and frustrations on their own.

As a result, an enormous amount of the energy they need for successful emotional development and cognitive learning is frequently absorbed by personal crises and the attempt to deal with sometimes intense feelings of insecurity, helplessness and loneliness – a situation that often manifests itself in behavioral challenges for their teachers and classmates, who are confronted at school by a broad range of unfulfilled needs and unmet expectations.

Learning to listen

The ability to concentrate and listen carefully for longer periods of time is one of the most important skills necessary for successful learning as well as a basic requirement for successful interaction with others. But it's also an ability that children in Munich schools increasingly lack. That's why an activity to enhance their listening skills is a key component of the *Komm, wir finden eine Lösung* project. Launched in 1999, the project aims to help children in elementary and special needs schools resolve conflicts peacefully by teaching them to interact respectfully with one another.

On a "wishing tree", students post their desires for a positive classroom climate

Each project team comprises one female and one male trainer and usually works with a single class for five sessions. While the team leads the projects' various activities, the students' teachers and parents as well as social workers and other specialists at the schools are involved as much as possible.

The project's aims and approach are explained to teachers and interested parents at a meeting one evening before the project begins. There are follow-up discussions with teachers while the project is underway. At the end, parents are invited to come to the school to experience what their children have learned during the project and to hear what they themselves can do to support their children's positive further development. Participating schools are also provided with a set of digital tools they can use to reinforce and enhance the impact of the project's activities in the future.

Implementation

The project consists of five units that build on one another. The first unit begins with a group role play followed by games and exercises to practice basic skills for successful communication.

Another unit focuses on emotions and feelings and on how students can recognize, express and differentiate them. On a "wishing tree" posted in the classroom (see image on this page), students write their desires for a positive classroom climate and what

A systematic approach involving educators and parents

Using solutions-oriented methods and games, the project is designed to strengthen a sense of community within school classes, reinforce students' social and emotional competencies and teach them to resolve conflicts and disagreements fairly and without resorting to verbal abuse or physical violence.





Schoolchildren increasingly lack the ability to concentrate and listen carefully for longer periods of time

Using so-called “peace stairs”, children apply the skills they’ve learned in order to resolve concrete conflicts

they think they can do to help fulfill those desires. Using so-called “peace stairs” (see image above), they apply the skills they’ve learned in order to resolve concrete conflicts.

Yet another unit focuses on communication skills such as listening, looking attentively at the speaker and speaking clearly and in a friendly manner to avoid misunderstanding.

A listening activity

Here’s a simple activity we use for this purpose. It’s proven to be very effective. Give it a try. It may help your students become better listeners, too.

Time: Five minutes

Aim: To teach students to listen attentively to one another

Materials: Cards with pictures of ears and mouths

Procedure:

1. Divide the class into groups of two.
2. Give one student in each pair a card showing an ear (E) and the other a card showing a mouth (M).
3. The students with the M cards speak for one minute about a favorite game, a favorite animal and a favorite food, for example, and explain why they like them.
4. The students with the E cards listen without asking questions or interrupting.
5. When the minute is up, the students with the E cards repeat what they’ve heard, while the students with the M cards supplement or correct as necessary.
6. The students exchange cards and roles and repeat steps 3 to 5.

Note: To ensure its effectiveness, this activity should be repeated multiple times. It can also be easily expanded by giving the students different topics to talk about.

“If only someone would ever listen to me like that,” sighed one mother after she’d experienced this activity with her son.

Komm, wir finden eine Lösung

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Komm, wir finden eine Lösung is partially self-financed. Schools cover some of the costs. The City of Munich and the MAK foundation also provide support. The project team comprises two project managers and about 20 specialists from the areas of social pedagogy, psychology and education.

Activity: Build a ship!

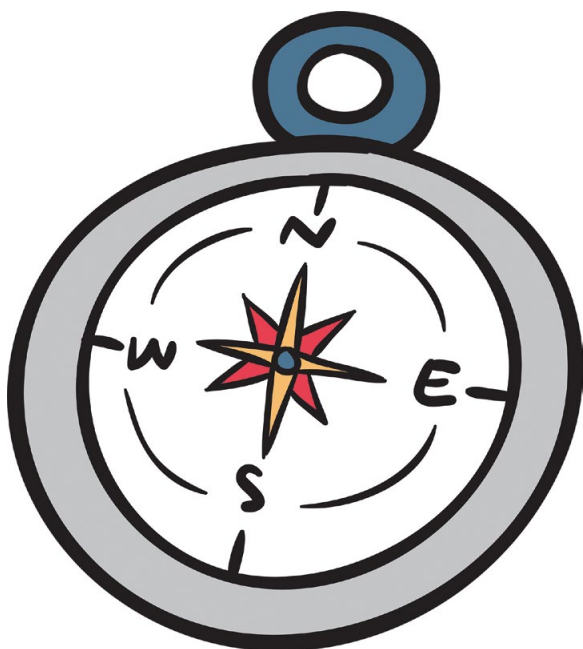
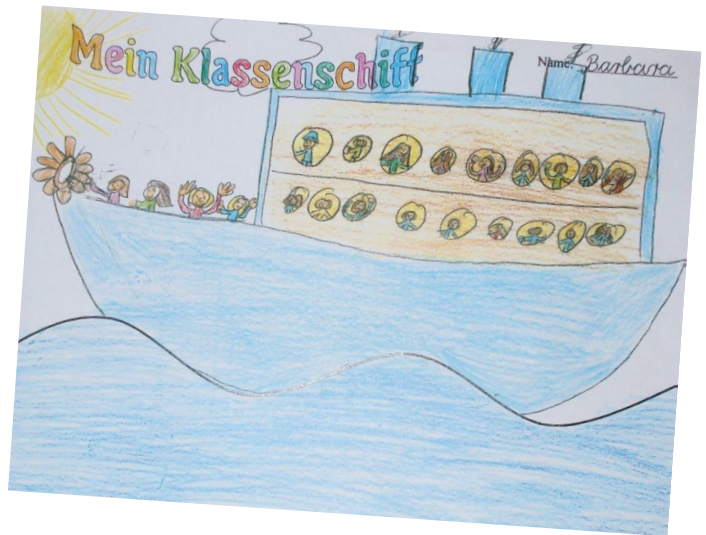
Created originally for schoolchildren, this task-based activity can also be easily adapted for adult language learners.

- 🕒 **Time:** As long as you want
- 👥 **Aim:** Learn and practice teamwork and experience self-efficacy
- 📁 **Materials:** Objects available in the classroom (including tables and chairs), a noise-maker (ideally, one that can imitate the sound of the wind)

Procedure:

1. Elicit from the students a list of typical jobs found on a ship – for example, captain, pilot, doctor, cook, waiter, musician, sailor, steward and so on – and write them on the board.
2. Tell the students they're going to be the crew on a ship and ask each of them to choose one of the jobs listed. (To help set the mood at this point, you can also play some nautical music and/or a recording of harbor sounds, of a fantasy voyage or of something else sea-related.)
3. Ask the students to decide where their ship is going.
4. Tell them they now have to construct the ship using objects they can find in the classroom and to organize themselves according to the jobs they've chosen. (You may have to designate some objects and areas of the classroom off limits. Also emphasize that the ship is a peaceful ship, not a pirate ship.)
5. Explain to the students that – when they hear the sound of the noise-maker – they are to freeze wherever they are.
6. After the students have worked for a short time, sound the noise-maker.
7. When the students have stopped in place, let them ask one another how they're feeling – for example, sunny, cloudy, rainy / stormy – why they're feeling that way and if they want to answer. (Here, you might want to have symbols from a weather map positioned around the classroom for the students to stand on or near.)
8. Ask the students what they think is already going well, what they think still has to happen to reach port safely and if they still have one or two wishes.
9. Ask which students are willing to fulfill those wishes.
10. Repeat steps (6) through (9). (Depending on the class, you may want to do this several times.)
11. **Optional:** Once the crew has been successfully organized and the ship has been completely built, demonstrate or act out an emergency – for example, a storm has arisen, a passenger has fallen overboard or the ship has hit an iceberg – and let the students react as they see fit.
12. When the ship has arrived safely in port, ask the students to discuss what they did well and to reflect again on their positive feelings. Also ask who would like to thank someone for what she or he has done on the voyage.
13. Give your own positive feedback.

Note: Experience has shown that students can be extremely creative shipbuilders. At every step, the focus should be on expressing and fulfilling needs and emphasizing positive results.



Ursula Stolberg worked as a certified psychologist and family therapist at a counseling center for school-related issues in Munich. Since her retirement, she's been a trainer in the project *Komm, wir finden eine Lösung*.

Free the Bee – Animated storytelling with young learners in Gaza

Luzan Matar explains how she uses animated stories to teach children English and respect for others in difficult times

At the beginning of my career, I decided to teach language through different kinds of art – through drawing, theatre activities and music, for example. So art is very important for me and for all my students. At the end of each school year, I collect all their work and invite their parents to school so they can see and feel proud of what their children have accomplished. I always tell my students they should never give up. Whatever happens they should try.

Animation makes stories
come alive

Creating animated stories

One of the techniques I use in my classes is animation, a type of multimedia storytelling that combines writing, drawing, painting, modelling in clay, speaking and photography to make stories come alive. I use it to teach my students not only to speak, read and write English but also to cooperate, respect one another and share ideas together. Here's how I do it:

- First, I provide my students with a good atmosphere – that is, an environment that can help them imagine. For example, I make the classroom as colourful as I can and cover the walls with pictures. All these things can help students remember and create stories.
- Second, I divide the students into small groups, taking into consideration not only their different levels of English but also their personal characteristics. For example, I may ask high achievers to help weaker students. I may also choose one student to serve as the group's speaker.
- Third, I ask the students to listen to a piece of music with their eyes closed and to think about something they like, a story they like, something that happened to them that they

like. This step is very important for students since it allows them to express their own opinions.

- Fourth, I give the students a pencil and paper and tell them to write out their story in English. I intervene when necessary, helping the students build up their stories and find the English words they need, so that they can retell the stories in their own words.



- Fifth, the students draw and paint the setting for their stories and model the stories' characters in clay.
- Sixth, we photograph each of the stories' episodes. Between each shot, the students move the clay characters a little bit with their hands.



- Seventh, we record the voices of the children telling their stories.
- Eighth, we connect the voices with the photographs to produce a video.

Animation in wartime

That's how we make animated stories with students in Gaza. Or at least, that's how we did it before the war. Now the situation has completely changed. The schools are closed. I

have lost touch with most of my students. We have a shortage of all the basic needs of life – things like food and water.

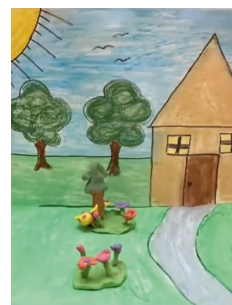
Nonetheless, I decided to make another animation with a small number of students. I believe the students deserve these activities because they like them and learn from them. The activities also help them to relax at this horrible time.

My nine-year-old daughter Menna began by writing a story. She called it "The Bee". Working with two other students – one ten years old and one five years old – we then animated it. Using the few materials we had, the children drew and painted the pictures for the setting.



They also made clay models of the characters. I photographed the story's main episodes with my mobile phone and recorded the children telling the story. The result was a simple animation. Here's the text with some of the accompanying images:

The Bee



"Once upon time, there was a bee. She loved to fly between the flowers. She loved the colors. She loved the smell. She loved the sun."



“One day, she was flying between the flowers in the garden. She didn’t see the angry man. ‘What a noisy bee. Come on!’”



“The angry man put a glass on the bee. And the bee cried: ‘Help! Help! Help me, please!’ But nobody cared. She didn’t have food. She didn’t have water. She was tired. She cried again. ‘Help! Help! Help me please! Help! Help! Help me please!’”



“The neighbors heard the bee. They knocked at the door. They knocked again and said, ‘Free, free, free the

bee! Free, free, free the bee! Free, free, free the bee!’”



“The neighbors opened the door. They broke the glass and the bee was flying again between the flowers. The End”.

I always tell my students
they should never give up.
Whatever happens they
should try

Try it out

Animated storytelling works for us in Gaza. I’m sure it will work for your students too – developing their language skills, unlocking their creative potential and teaching them respect for one another.

Note: This article is based on a video presentation and an interview with David Heathfield at the Storytelling in Education Global Conference on October 4, 2025.

David Heathfield adds: I was fortunate to get to know Luzan Matar when she astonished me with her creativity and enthusiasm as a participant on one of my Creative and Engaging Storytelling for Teachers (CrEST) courses in 2022.

Since Luzan and Menna created “The Bee” in the spring of 2024, it’s been retold many times in many contexts. Menna herself presented it at the World Storytelling Café in May 2025. I myself have told the story live

at many events and many schools and fundraisers over the last 18 months (see photo below). And many other people have told it, too. This simple and brilliant story has almost become an anthem of the project Tell a Child in Gaza’s Tale.

It’s a story which your students can join in with chorally as they chant “Help, help, help me please” and “Free, Free, Free the Bee”. Your students can also learn and retell the story in Menna’s name and in solidarity with the children of Gaza.

For example, they can make a shoebox theatre with paper puppets. See still images from Menna’s original version and the version made by Evi Karydi’s young learners at ilearn, Athens/Greece below.



Your young learners can also act out the story in costume (see the photo of Georgia Pieri’s students at Intelligent Kids in Cyprus above). Or they can make their own animation inspired by this article.

If you make a video, please consider sending it to me so I can share it as part of Tell a Child in Gaza’s Tale https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLj-mcWeMmSZw63V-5abQ4fw3JIITI_S_kS&si=oigZ-th07R7o8pwrT

I provide my students
with an environment that
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I believe the students deserve
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This story offers your young learners a chance to talk about what freedom means to them in their daily lives. Teenage and adult learners of English also appreciate the chance this story gives to open up discussion about the concept of freedom and to research the struggle for freedom of Palestinian people whose homeland is under occupation.

Some of the many videos of “The Bee” being told by Menna Srour and retold by other storytellers worldwide are here for you and your students:

The Bee - animation made by Luzan Matar with Menna aged 10, Tarik and Mira on 3 November 2025
https://youtube.com/shorts/X5U2he6_-BI?si=wG-nud9WNe0Y-m3kl

The Bee – the original story with paper puppets created by Menna aged 9 and first shared on 21 April 2024
https://youtu.be/vxeFQ7Wa7al?si=HpcSBZKmBR_wi4nw

The Bee – told live by Menna at the Young Storytellers event In Friendship with Palestine 18 October 2025 followed by beautiful words from Haneen Khaled Jadallah
https://youtu.be/iie8Q6TjyiQ?si=sc1Oghb_dmcCLqFx

The Bee – retold by storyteller and English teacher David Heathfield 29 May 2024
<https://youtu.be/vhYwEhjGcp-M?si=kU-PjAoN3IFhxNn0>

The Bee – retold with paper puppets by young learners of English in Greece 12 July 2024
<https://youtu.be/26k6rNi0ICg?si=8YzRy80upvNCKNqj>

The Bee – retold in Spanish by storyteller Rebeca Robles in Mexico 15 October 2024
<https://youtu.be/tL9kWG-bRcPQ?si=-Seq5nDwhtJSoy4T>

The Bee – retold by UK storyteller and English teacher Susan Piper 18 December 2024
<https://youtube.com/shorts/cwJrBsQXwUK?si=BAngSMmxjGyH7WPL>

The Bee – retold bilingually by Scottish Storyteller Jackie Ross in Doric (a dialect of Scots) and David Heathfield in English 18 April 2025
<https://youtu.be/eN-ftTP1Rp5E?si=aRaCYaUMHWSMvKxu>

The Bee – retold by UK storyteller Michael O’Leary 6 June 2025
<https://youtube.com/shorts/1UMdnW7T-MUY?si=hELP0Cxx1vITf8II>

The Bee – retold live by David Heathfield together with the audience at Concert for Gaza, Topsham, UK 7 September 2025
<https://youtu.be/iO0VEyEVcOg?si=gkb-DL0oK35xybTFO>

The Bee – retold by Evita Storyteller 10 November 2025
<https://youtu.be/z3FoyGHD8r0?si=stuSxgOBESzKqvq->

The Bee – retold by storyteller Veena Hasan in India 21 November 2025
<https://youtube.com/shorts/3BttmFRuD-7k?si=ei-NCCfAESfESBp->



Luzan Matar is a teacher, a translator and an artist from Gaza, Palestine. She holds a master’s degree in translation and is interested in studying art and culture which can bridge the gap between nations around the world. She hopes to pursue her PhD in children’s literature or education and is looking for sponsorship to help her carry on working with children to make animated stories.



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

Reading in the EFL classroom – What is reading?

Birgitta Berger examines ways to help English language learners boost their reading confidence

Reading is part of almost any English class. Even in a conversation class, there'll often be written prompts for students to read. Language teachers usually expect students to be able to read by bringing their first-language literacy skills into the foreign language classroom.

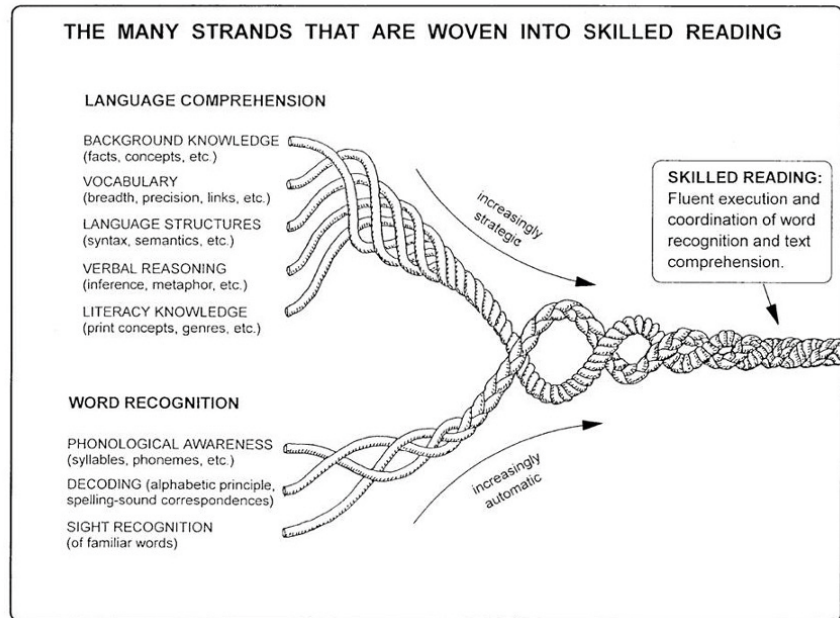
But success in reading in a foreign language shouldn't be taken for granted. And English isn't necessarily the easiest language to learn to read, having what is called an "atypical", deep orthography full of irregularities in grapheme-to-phoneme correspondences. Just think of *their / they're / there* or the eight (or more) different ways to pronounce *ough* ([ʌf] in *rough*, [aʊ] in *plough*, [u:] in *through*, [oʊ] in *though*, [ɔ:] in *thought*, [ə] in *thorough*, [ɒf] in *cough*, [əp] in *hiccough*).

Two skills

A few months ago, I had a discussion with a colleague about using phonics programmes for English language learners (ELLs). This inspired me to learn more about how ELLs actually learn to read English and how we can best support them. Of course, reading usually begins in the first language.

In developing their first language skills, children hear and speak before they connect sounds, words and meaning to written symbols. Once they've understood this connection, they can begin to learn to read.

Reading includes two major skills – decoding and making meaning. Decoding involves establishing the sounds represented by letters, followed by recognising words in order to piece together sentences and paragraphs. But it's equally necessary to recognise and understand the words as well as the context they create. The Reading Rope, a pedagogic metaphor created by educator Dr Hollis Scarborough in the 1990s, visualises these two main components of skilled reading and shows that there's more to reading than just sounding out and recognising words.



(Source: <https://meshguides.org/guides/node/1915>)

The hurdles

Learners reading in a foreign language need to decode and make sense of words and text in the same way. Depending on their age and educational background, they have varying levels of experience with reading in their first language. They usually know how reading "works". But that doesn't mean it's going to "work" for them in the foreign language because they'll recognise all the letters but

- may not know what a particular grapheme sounds like (for example, *ough* in *rough*)
- may not know the meaning of a particular word
- may not understand a sentence because of an unknown word
- may not understand a sentence, although they know the meaning of every word
- may understand individual sentences but not be able to make sense of the complete text.

Tips and tricks old and new

The first problem is probably the easiest to alleviate: we can read a text aloud to our students or class as they

read it silently. Choral reading, which is reading a text aloud as a group, will also support students in making the connection between what they see and what it sounds like.

Success in reading
in a foreign language
shouldn't be taken
for granted

Another possibility is to provide audio versions of texts in class or for use at home (many graded readers come with an audio CD or an online link to an audio recording). We can also record our own audio files on CDs (rather "old school", of course). Younger students find "talking pens" such as the PENpal Audio Recorder Pen, the BOOKii or the Tellimero recordable pens highly motivating. Some – like Bookii, Tiptoi and TING – come with English language reading resources.

For older students using smartphones in class or at home, we can enable access to audio recordings via QR codes or on a platform such as Padlet or Taskcards. Text-to-speech converters in apps such as Google Lens or Claro ScanPen are another useful tool for making texts audible. Some online newspapers provide articles that can be read aloud by an automated voice. And reading apps such as Readable provide factual and fictional texts that you can listen to while you read.

Reading includes
two major skills – decoding
and making meaning

Looking ahead

Getting “audio” support may be enough to boost many learners’ confidence and get them started with reading, especially if you provide texts they understand. It will definitely help with their pronunciation and fluency in reading aloud. However, some students may need more support than merely an audio model to “sound out” words and read independently. We’ll go into phonics and other reading approaches for young learners in the next issue of Melta News!

References

Shuttleworth, Jess (01.12.2020).
“Reading in Primary Schools.”
MESH Guides.
<https://meshguides.org/guides/node/1915>

Links for resources:

- **BOOKii** – Kreativer Lernspaß | Cornelsen
- **PENpal** Audio Recorder Pen | Talking Teaching Pen for Books
- **Tellimero** – der sprechende Stift von Betzold
- **TING** – Der Hörstift – TING Shop
- **Claro ScanPen** – Apps bei Google Play, Claro Scan-PenApp – App Store
- **Readable:** Read English Stories – Apps on Google Play



English isn’t necessarily
the easiest language
to learn to read



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

LINK to intercultural competence – Communication and autonomy

How can students effectively extend intercultural skills in the real world in real time without leaving their home countries? **Shweta Paropkari** and **Silke Riegler** have an answer

In an increasingly globalized world where virtual collaboration has become the norm, graduates must be prepared to communicate across cultural contexts and navigate diverse expectations in dispersed, multicultural teams.

A framework for cross-cultural learning

To address this reality, we launched a virtual exchange project connecting Indian and German university students – a practical intervention aimed at fostering communication across cultures. Following its implementation, we developed the **LINK** framework to capture and organise the key elements of the project. Designed as a tool for educators, the framework provides a structure for creating learning experiences that foster intercultural communication competencies.

The four elements of LINK

LINK stands for: **L**earner Autonomy, **I**ntercultural Competence, **N**egotiation and Collaboration, and **K**nowledge

Evaluation. But rather than treating these as separate soft skills, the framework integrates them through experiential tasks and guided reflection, helping students build the mindset and strategies needed to thrive in global workplaces.

The first element, **Learner Autonomy** highlights the importance of students taking responsibility for their own learning. In both virtual exchange projects, they organized meetings, divided tasks, and carried out independent research. In the second edition, we added SMART goal-setting at the start and a reflection task at the end to help them set goals and evaluate progress. While some struggled to set realistic goals, many found that the process improved their focus and accountability.

Intercultural Competence is central to the framework, as students have to navigate cultural differences in real time during communication, decision-making, and even silence. These differences became clear in practice: for example, German students often

favoured direct and precise communication, while Indian students tended to be more reserved. Reflecting on these contrasts helps students move beyond stereotypes and develop a more nuanced understanding of how culture shapes interaction.

Negotiation and Collaboration

developed across the two editions. In the first, students worked in teams to design a product or service for either the German or Indian market, which involved research, design choices, and presentation planning. In the second, we added the requirement to consider environmental and social impacts. Creating under these constraints revealed communication gaps, power dynamics, and cultural assumptions that students had to address together.

The fourth element, **Knowledge Evaluation** focuses on measuring growth in intercultural competence and communication. Rather than relying only on final presentations, both editions used self-assessment, peer feedback, and guided reflection. Students completed reflective forms and exchanged feedback during presentations, which also gave us, as





facilitators, clearer insights into their engagement and how their awareness developed over time.

Lessons learnt from the project

One key insight from both editions of the project was that student-led learning, while slightly more chaotic, often led to more meaningful engagement. Teams who took initiative – setting regular meetings, clarifying roles early, and managing misunderstandings with patience – displayed stronger outcomes and greater satisfaction. Conversely, teams that struggled to work together stalled. The addition of SMART goals in the second edition helped structure this autonomy, giving students a frame for managing their own growth.

Next steps

Looking ahead, we plan to refine the project structure further and document the LINK framework more fully for publication. Our aim is to support trainers and educators in designing intercultural communication experiences that go beyond awareness and into practice – where students are

required to negotiate meaning, adapt to differences, and reflect critically on their own choices.

The **LINK** framework is not a perfect model – nor is it meant to be. It is a living, evolving response to the complexities of communication in global settings. What it offers is a structure in which students can experience the messiness of intercultural interaction, with enough support to learn from it and enough autonomy to grow through it.

For more information about the **LINK** framework, please feel free to contact Shweta Paropkari (shweta@ngit.ac.in) and Silke Riegler (silke.riegler@haw-landshut.de).

Note: This article is based on the authors' presentation of the LINK framework at the 58th IATEFL International Conference and Exhibition 2025 in Edinburgh.

NOTES:

Indian and German university students collaborated online from their home countries to manage their own meetings, delegate tasks and conduct independent research.

In the first edition of the virtual project, the students were tasked with co-creating a product or service for launch in either the German or Indian market.

In the second edition, the task included an assessment of the environmental and social impact of the product or service created.



Silke Riegler is a senior lecturer for intercultural communication and business English at the University of Applied Sciences in Landshut/Germany. Her research interests include investigating the effectiveness of virtual exchange programs and cross-cultural teamwork in digital environments and examining how linguistic proficiency and cultural awareness shape business communication skills.



Shweta Paropkari is an Assistant Professor of English based in India. Specialising in instructional design for ELT and workplace communication, her work spans business communication, ESP, intercultural competence, and employability training. Her current focus area is the design of inclusive programs that integrate sustainability and 21st-century competencies into language education.

Global teachers for a sustainable future

Oksana Matsnieva reports on how she and her students participated in an exciting online international project



The project

This autumn, six students from our university department and I took part in the international project Global Teachers for a Sustainable Future. Co-funded by the EU, the project aimed to empower future educators for a sustainable world. Its objectives comprised equipping future teachers with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and tools they need to become global citizens and agents for change and to integrate sustainable development education and global citizenship into their teaching.

Nearly 300 representatives from higher education institutions in Ukraine, Malaysia, Spain, Türkiye, Germany and Romania took part in this transformative six-week virtual experience.

Nearly 300 representatives from Ukraine, Malaysia, Spain, Türkiye, Germany and Romania took part in this six-week virtual experience

The process

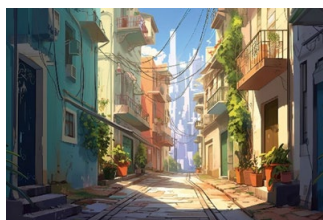
To achieve the project's objectives, the organizers used the strategies of Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL). Students were organized into virtual international teams of 6 to 7 members. In four live sessions and on a Moodle forum, they participated in interactive activities and real-world case studies that explored sustainability and education.

The program included three modules: 1) *Empowering Global Educators for Sustainable Development*, 2) *Thinking Globally: Connecting Local and Global Perspectives*, 3) *Empowering Change: The Action Taking Cycle*. The modules correlated with three graded activities.

At the end of Module One, the teams first chose a topic related to one of the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and generated a 45-minute lesson plan using multiple AI platforms. They then compared, analyzed and improved the AI-generated plans to produce a final, refined version. Lastly, they reflected as a team on how AI supported the process and how it related to SDG 4: Quality Education.



Module Two ended with the following activity. The teams conducted an in-person or digital "community walk" to observe sustainability, community life and SDG-related issues in a local neighborhood.



Recording the process

Each member documented their findings, reflected on what they saw and shared key insights with the team. Together, the team created a digital visual summary (for example, a photo series, video, map or infographic) that highlighted the most important observations and connected them to sustainable development and education. Finally, each team provided feedback on the other teams' projects and wrote short reflections about the feedback received and how it would be used.

The action-taking activity that wrapped up Module Three was as follows. Students worked in teams to create a slogan supporting SDG 17 and

then posted it on the Padlet board. Each team member individually implemented a real, original action project in their own local community that reflected the team's agreed goal. They documented their actions through photos, videos or short interviews to show authentic engagement and local impact.

Reactions

After each live session, I asked my students to provide feedback on the COIL project. Among the benefits, they mentioned that it provided an interactive and engaging international learning environment. It also allowed the participants to collaborate with peers from different countries, improving intercultural communication and teamwork skills.

The project, which ended on November 27, offered practical, real-world tasks, such as AI-assisted lesson design and community research, which strengthen pedagogical knowledge and critical thinking. Participation helped broaden my students' perspectives and encouraged reflection on global and local challenges. Overall, the project fostered adaptability, active engagement and preparation for future teaching in diverse, multicultural contexts.

Information about how you and your students can also participate in the Global Teachers for a Sustainable Future Project is available at globalteachers.eu



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

A course book designed for a complex world

Michael Saunders shares his experience teaching from *National Geographic's* learning series

Far too many English course books are bland and formulaic. They typically have a standard stock photo at the beginning of a section, followed by a few fill-in-the-gap exercises and a generic speaking activity at the end. There's nothing especially controversial about the content, so that it works in a wide range of classroom settings. But it gets boring, especially when a group has been going through the same course book for a year or more.

Authentic materials

Life is a series of books from *National Geographic* that aims to be different. The structure of the individual chapters and sections is based on the tried-and-tested PPP (presentation, practice, production) approach, but uses authentic materials such as photos, articles, interviews and videos for the warmer and language presentation activities. *National Geographic* has a huge trove of such materials – especially powerful and thought-provoking photos – and many learners are familiar with the company already.

An example

Life Upper Intermediate has 12 sections, covering relationships, science, art, travel, knowledge, money and ambitions, among other topics. For instance, in the rela-

tionships section (part of which is shown in the image on this page) there's a photo from a Chinese household of a young girl looking exasperated while eating dinner with her parents. Students interpret the picture – finding reasons why the girl is frustrated – before reading an article about a “confused generation” in China. Then the book analyses some grammar forms, with a couple of controlled practice activities, before asking students to talk about differences between their own lives and those of their parents.

Pros and cons

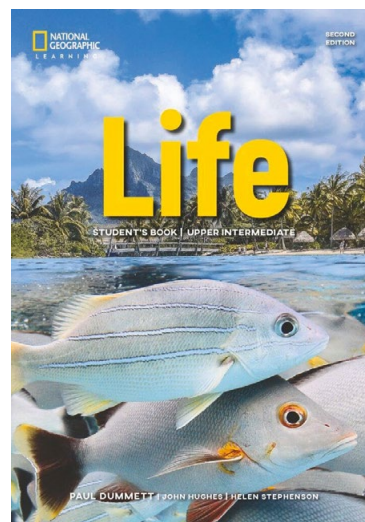
I've been teaching from this book for two semesters, and the students find it useful and stimulating. They appreciate the authentic, real-world materials and always have a lot to say. My only gripe is the structure of some of the exercises. There's often a lot of jumping around, matching sentences with corresponding entries in a grammar box and simultaneously finding examples in an article. I find myself breaking the exercises up into smaller steps, especially with older learners, as they find the explanations in the book overwhelming. But otherwise, I'm enjoying teaching with *Life Upper Intermediate* and have just started teaching another course with *Life Advanced*.

Note: The third, updated version of *National Geographic's* *Life* series is now available. For more information about the new version and what it has to offer, please go to: <https://www.eltngl.com/series/PRO0000009209>

Students appreciate the authentic, real-world materials



Michael Saunders teaches various courses at the MVHS and VHS Süd-Ost. He is originally from England and did his CELTA qualification in 2016.



reading changing attitudes in China • wordbuilding forming adjectives • grammar past simple and present perfect • pronunciation auxiliary verbs have and has • speaking differences between generations

1b A confused generation

Reading

- 1 Work in pairs. Look at the photo. Discuss the questions.
 - 1 What does the photo show?
 - 2 What do you think is the problem with the girl?
 - 3 Is this situation familiar to you?
- 2 Discuss what you know about modern-day China. Then read the article. Did you learn anything new?
- 3 Read the article again. Find examples of the way the new and the old China are different in each of these areas.
 - caring for the old
 - the relationship between parents and children
 - standard of living and shopping
 - experience and knowledge of the world
- 4 How difficult do you think the different generations (Bella's and her parents) find the changes you discussed in Exercise 3? Give reasons.

Wordbuilding forming adjectives

► **WORDBUILDING forming adjectives**

There are various endings in English which are commonly used to form adjectives: -ful, -ish, -ent, -ous, -ive, -act → active, study → studious

For further practice, see Workbook page 11.

5 Look at the wordbuilding box. Find adjectives in the article that come from these root words.

pain	self	duty	support	rebel
------	------	------	---------	-------

6 Form adjectives from these words by using the correct suffix and making any other necessary changes.

1 ambition	4 help
2 child	5 respect
3 decide	6 success

A few months ago, Bella's family put Bella's grandfather into a nursing home. It was a painful decision, because in China, caring for aged parents has always been a child's duty. But times are changing. Bella's ambition? 'I want one day to put my parents in the best nursing home – the best that money can buy, she means.

'When she told us that, Bella's father says, 'I thought – is it selfish to think she will be dutiful and look after us in our old age? We don't want to be a burden on her. This is something my daughter has been trying to teach us. Once parents taught children, but now we learn from them.' The family can buy many more things these days, and when they go shopping, Bella makes sure they select the 'right' western brands. (Pizza Hut is her favourite restaurant.) She also teaches her parents the latest slang.

Her parents want to be supportive, but they gave up helping with Bella's homework some time ago. Bella has been studying English for five years and in spoken English she has overtaken them. She has already, in her short life, learned more about the outside world than they have. 'Our advice is not wanted,' her mother says. 'When she was little, she agreed with all my opinions. Now she sits there and says nothing, but I know she doesn't agree with me.' In China there is no concept of the rebellious teenager. Bella glares, but says nothing. 'I suppose our child-raising has been a failure,' her mother adds sadly.

A confused generation

Change brings problems. Eleven-year-old Bella lives with her parents in a brand new apartment in Shanghai. Her real name is Zhou Jiaying – 'Bella' is the name that her English teacher has given her. Her parents are part of a confused generation in a confused time. In modern Chinese society different ideologies are fighting against each other. In the last twenty years, China's economic boom has brought enormous material benefits, but it has also had an impact on family life and values. Old values – the respect of family and older generations – compete with new values that make money the measure of success. But at the same time people are questioning these new values.

Have new possessions made our lives richer? Are we destroying Chinese culture? As in all changing societies, people are trying to find the right balance between the 'new' and 'old'.

Aunt Agony

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

Dear Aunt Agony,

This topic may have been dealt with in previous issues. Nevertheless, I desperately need your advice in this particular case.

I'm currently teaching an in-company online course in which all the participants are from the same department. The level is B2 to C1 more or less. The boss of the department also attends, but not regularly, and their English skills are not as good as the others. They tend to dominate and interrupt the others, inhibiting any smooth and natural conversation.

In my rather short teaching career, I have never experienced such behaviour before. What can I do?

Dumbfounded in Deisenhofen

Dear Dumbfounded,

Unfortunately, this does happen a lot. Clearly the boss should have one-to-one lessons whereby they can have a tailor-made course more suited to their needs in their management role. The fact that their level and availability are both different to those of the group add to the ammunition for you or your school manager to put this forward as a solution.

Not only does this suit their needs better, but it will also suit the other members of the group, who will feel much more at ease about participating in the course. This is by far the best option for all concerned. It might even bring you extra work!

Dear Aunt Agony,

I give English lessons to employees in a company. This autumn, two new participants were added to a group of two that I've had for some time. Now, the two "old" participants are about an A2 level. They work very hard and have made great progress.

However, the boss says every group must have a minimum of four participants and I need the work.

The problem is this: the two new people are practically beginners, and to add to the misery, they're not very motivated. They don't take it all very seriously and when they do do homework and, for example, write an e-mail, it's copied directly from DeepL or ChatGPT!!!

I'm horrified and so are the two "old" members of the group. What can I do?

Horrified in Holzkirchen

Dear Horrified,

It seems that if you want to keep the group you'll have to think fast on your feet! How about splitting the group in two parts? Have 45 minutes with each part and maybe both parties will have more opportunity to "unfold" their talents!

Alternatively, I would do a lesson involving a questionnaire / quiz about learning to learn and classroom behaviour, addressing how we progress in a language. The new participants need to reflect upon their motivation and attitude to learning. See how that goes and then follow it up with personal interviews with each member and try to find exactly why your new participants are not taking it all very seriously. Maybe there are psychological factors to bear in mind, such as a feeling of inferiority because of their lower level, which makes them act as they do. Good luck!

Dear Aunt Agony,

For some time now, a pupil in my Year 8 group has been proclaiming her undying affection for me – and doing so in front of everyone. At first, assuming it was all in jest and hoping it would blow over, I merely brushed it off with a casual, “yeah, yeah, okay.”

However, her classroom advances have recently become both more frequent and more earnest, and I must admit, it’s starting to make me rather uncomfortable.

Now, with the season of goodwill fast approaching, I find myself wondering if it’s also the season for drawing a few gentle boundaries. Should I meet her words with humour, politely but firmly ask her to stop, or simply ignore the whole episode and hope it fades with the tinsel?

I’m really not sure what’s best to do.

Yours festively,
Confused in Class

Dear Confused,

This is indeed an interesting and very delicate issue.

Whether the pupil, around 14 years of age I guess, is simply testing you or genuinely has a crush on you, my advice would be to deal with the situation head on. After all, it would be nice to start the New Year with fresh energy and without any nagging, leftover quandaries.

If, after taking her aside, the pupil is truly upset by your careful but straight talking, it could be time to get a school counsellor (Vertrauenslehrer*in) involved.

If, however, it was just a test or a kind of prank, then take it with humour, but make it clear that her behaviour has to stop as it’s disrupting the flow of the lessons.

Whatever the situation may be, I wish you all the very best and may 2026 get off to a carefree start.





Rhyming Corner

Christmas comes but once a year...

Christmas is a time of cheer
Of excitement and delight
Yet there are those who simply fear
And wish for some respite

Presents, trees and festive meals
Buy, wrap, cook and bake
Is it really worth the trouble
And all the time it takes

Plans are forged to go away
Leave all the worries behind
A mountain hut is where we'll stay
Out of sight and out of mind

All's forgotten come mid-December
The rush is in full swing
Oh why did we not remember
The plans we'd made in spring

Next year we will do better
We'll see it through to the end
And follow to the letter
The rules we will not bend

So book the hut real early
And stick to good intentions
No stress, no hurly burly
Just triumphant circumvention

Juliana Oosten

melta

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

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

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

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

The annual membership fee is €40 (€15 for full-time students, €100 for institutional membership), which includes the Melta newsletter and free entrance to Melta events.

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

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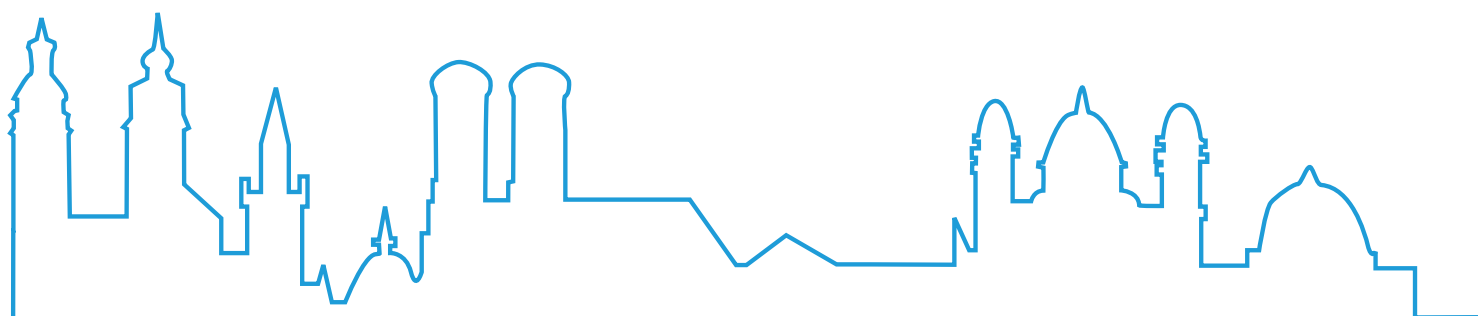
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