

melta news

Munich English Language Teachers Association
Linking and developing teachers in the Munich area since 1989

Spring 26 | no. 116



Helping

people
express themselves

Building

human-to-human
relationships

Connecting

people
to the world

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2026 Melta Committee

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Message from the Chair

“What is the price of experience? Do men buy it for a song? Or wisdom for a dance in the street? No...wisdom is sold in the desolate market where none come to buy and in the withered field where the farmer ploughs for bread in vain,” wrote an English poet, painter and visionary at a time of massive technological disruption. He forgot to add that it’s also not acquired solely through the application of digital tools or the manipulation of AI-generated algorithms. Wisdom – and, by extension, the knowledge needed to effectively teach foreign languages – is acquired, if at all, only by real people communicating with one another to solve real problems in real time.

Against this backdrop, Melta members approved three initiatives at the March AGM:

- The first will increase the number and variety of in-person Melta workshops and events in the year ahead.
- The second will provide travel grants to members attending in-person conferences in and outside Germany.
- And the third will expand Melta’s activities to include not only professional development but also English-language programs in general.

The aim of the first two initiatives is to enhance person-to-person relationships inside Melta and beyond and to help us keep pace with the changes currently taking place in language education worldwide. The aim of the third is to enable Melta to support language-learning projects at other organizations.

The AGM also elected a new committee. With one exception, it looks a lot like the old one. Elie Hazeem, Michael Hoffmann, Ruth Stegmann, Mike Saunders, Joan Walsh and I were reelected to our current positions. Betsy Hollweck was elected to succeed Cathy Pilgram as a member at large. Thank you, Cathy, for all the work you’ve done over the last few years as membership secretary. All of us at Melta, owe you a huge debt of gratitude.

I’d also like to thank all of you for your continued support of Melta and particularly those who’ve taken the time to contribute to this issue of Melta News. I wish everyone a pleasant and enjoyable summer, and I hope to see you again at another Melta event – online or in person – real soon.

All the best,

Randy



Randy Perry



William Blake

Melta News Editing Team

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



WELCOME

We’d like to welcome
our new members!

Mey Ayber, Skye Baxter-Kohlen, Lauren Drain, Saskia Kersten, Nadezda Pilitsyna, Harper Staples, Brandon Startz



UPCOMING EVENTS

MUNICH VOLKSHOCHSCHULE

How AI can help with lesson planning and what to avoid

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

The levels behind the labels: What CEFR means for your classroom

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

For further details and registration, please contact Maria Kahofer, Tel. (089) 48006-6259, email: maria.hahofer@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. More information is available at: <https://www.iateflitsig.org/publication/guidelinesw>



The Language Anxiety Initiative (LAI) is a pioneering platform rooted in academic research conducted by the English Didactics Department of the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt and is dedicated to understanding and addressing the challenges of

(foreign) language anxiety. Our mission is to bridge the gap between language educational neuroscience and practical classroom applications, fostering a more inclusive and effective language learning environment.

To bring unique language learning opportunities to the language classroom, we aim to collaborate with local schools to offer students and teachers unique learning opportunities and to incorporate their experiences and feedback into our quality circle to develop cutting-edge, anxiety-free teaching methods. If you'd like to find out more about LAI, visit <https://www.laiinfo.com/>. We'd love for you to join us in our efforts to empower every language learner to reach their full potential. Please don't hesitate to contact us at LAIinfo@ku.de.



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 podcast update

To make the Melta podcasts more teacher-centered, we've invited educators from conflict zones to talk about how they're continuing to do their jobs despite the dangers and hardships around them. After a month's holiday, we're back with two podcasts.



In the **first**, Hugh Dellar, an English teacher and teacher trainer from England, talks about the lexical approach and what he does to help teachers and students alike understand it. He also talks about his support for Ukraine and what it's like on the ground helping those defending the whole of Europe.



The **second** podcast is with my university friend in Syria, Batoul Alkhalil, in which we talk about our university days and the obstacles that she and many other teachers in the country are currently facing. The podcast has a different style because of the lack of electricity and stable internet connections in Syria – which is one of the main reasons for having the podcasts: to put teachers' concerns under the spotlight.

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



**Elie
Hazeem**



**Michael
Saunders**



Travel grants for Melta representatives at in-person events

Melta would like to encourage more members to represent it at in-person educational events like the BESIG conference, the IATEFL conference and the many conferences organized by regional teacher associations around Europe.

The duties: networking with members of the other organizations, finding contributors to the Melta News and speakers for Melta workshops, and reporting on your experiences in the Melta News and/or at Melta events.

The benefit: a grant to cover at least part of your travel expenses.

If you think you might be interested, please don't hesitate to contact the Melta Committee at info@melta.de for more details.

Special Offer!

As your teaching association is an IATEFL Associate, you can benefit from discounted membership of IATEFL too!



As an IATEFL Associate Individual Member you can...

- Keep up to date with all that's new in your profession internationally
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- Attend regular webinars on a wide range of topics
- Search our archive of recorded webinars, articles and publications
- Get discounted prices on a range of publications and resources
- Join one or more of the 16 Special Interest Groups (SIGs) and shape your membership to your specific areas of professional interest (SIGs are not automatically included in Associate Individual Membership, but can be added for £23.50 each).
- Receive e-Bulletins, our bi-monthly Magazine and our annual publication 'Conference Selections'
- Benefit from member prices to attend the annual IATEFL International Conference and Exhibition
- Apply for a range of IATEFL scholarships only available to members
- Submit a proposal to speak at conference, or have your first article published with our support

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



VOLUNTEERS URGENTLY NEEDED!



The **Münchener 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.

Rhyming



Corner

Trite but true?

The world is in a sorry state
 Yet phrases such as these
 Could possibly lighten the weight
 And not bring you to your knees

Some you are sure to like
 At some you may just grin
 Others a chord will strike
 With a few you'll need a gin

Here we go:

Silver lining

Sun is shining

Hang in there

Do not despair

On the right track

We're bouncing back

One day at a time

Tyranny is a crime

Blessing in disguise

Believe the truth not lies

Keep your chin up

There's enough in your cup

Stiff upper lip

Let's dance and let's skip

Where there's a will, there's a way

Wow! **That's made my day**

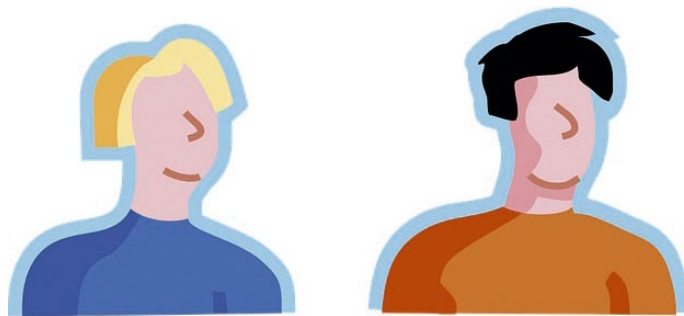
Juliana Oosten

Note: The phrases in green are recognized idioms or parts thereof.



Melta Five-a-day – Poetry

Looking for activities to spur your learners' imaginations? **Bethan Stokes** suggests giving poetry a try



The aim of teaching, much like poetry, can also simply be about having fun with words and language. So here are five activities you can do with students which are all related to poetry. Don't panic, you don't need to be a poetry buff to do them! The focus is on getting students to work with poems and potentially even write their own. I hope you enjoy trying these out! If you do and have any feedback on how it went (good and bad!), I'd love to hear it. Send me an email: bethantefl@gmail.com.

Here are two examples of texts that will work well with the activities. (You can find lots more on the poetry websites in the info box on page 9.)

EXAMPLE 1

I Am Still Walking... by Marc Kakkar

Through the noise, through the silence,
Through melodies soft and strong,
Life hums like an endless instrumental,
And I keep moving along.

Some notes bring sadness to the surface,
Some wrap me in gentle love,
Some fill my heart with courage,
Like strength sent from above.

There are rises that lift my spirit,
And lows that test my soul,
But every step, every stumble,
Still leads me toward my goal.

Music taught me how to feel.
Life taught me how to stand,
And even when the road feels heavy,
I still move, I still withstand.

No matter how slow the journey
No matter how far to go
With every beat that guides my heart
I'm stronger than I know.

For the song is not yet over,
And hope still calls my name
Through every high and every fall
I am still walking just the same.

Poem taken from
<https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/i-am-still-walking/>
11.03.26

EXAMPLE 2

No matter how slow the journey,
No matter how far to go,
With every beat that guides my heart,
I'm stronger than I _____.

1 Rhyme time!

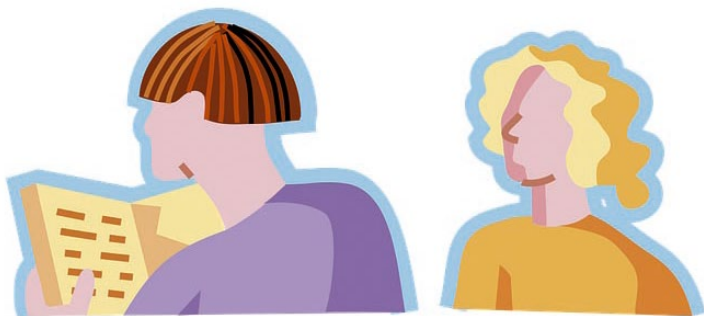
- ★ **Level:** B1+
- 🕒 **Time:** 30-45 minutes
- 🔧 **Aim:** To get students thinking about rhyming and using the vocab they know to create rhymes
- ✍️ **Prep:** Find a poem with a simple rhyming scheme – for example, 2nd and 4th lines of each verse (see example 1 above). In each verse, blank out ONE of the rhyming words and highlight which word it rhymes with (see example 2 above).

Procedure:

1. Pre-teach any vocabulary necessary.
2. Tell students you're going to read out a poem with some missing words which are also rhyming words. Read the poem aloud, making a 'beep' or 'mmm' sound when there's a missing word. Ask students to just listen. Optional: they also close their eyes (but not fall asleep!)

The focus is on getting students to work with poems and even write their own





3. Ask them what they think of the poem. For example, did they like it? Were any bits difficult to understand? Did they hear any new words?
4. Give each student a copy of the poem with the missing words. Tell them they have 8-10 minutes to write down words which might fill in the gaps. For stronger groups, you might not need to highlight which word it rhymes with (see example 2 above). Encourage students to think of a few different words for each gap.
5. Ask students to compare their work in pairs. Did they write down the same words in each gap? If not, which would fit better and why? Remind them to think about the sound / rhyme of the word and also the meaning – that is, does it fit the context?
6. Read the poem aloud again but when you get to a gap, students tell you which word they would put in.
7. Show the original poem without the missing words. Discuss as a class: did anyone guess the missing word correctly? Do any of the words students wrote down fit better than the original or change the meaning slightly? **Extension:** ask students to practice reading the poem aloud in pairs. Student A reads the whole poem except the “missing word”, student B says the “missing word”.

Language learning – like poetry –
can be about having fun with words

2 Jumbled verses

- ★ **Level:** B1+
- 🕒 **Time:** 15-20 minutes
- 🛠️ **Aim:** To have some fun putting a poem in the correct order
- ✏️ **Prep:** Find a poem with a few verses. The poem could be related to a topic you’ve recently been discussing in class, one you’ll cover soon or something completely random. (Websites like <https://textinspector.com/> can help you assess the level). Cut the verses up. If teaching online / working with digital documents, save each verse as a single document or each verse on a different page.

Procedure:

1. Tell students you’re going to read a poem to them but there’s a problem – it’s all in the wrong order!
2. Put students in pairs. Give each pair the whole poem cut / split up into verses.

If you give students time, space, maybe some
colouring pencils and the radio on in the
background, they get into it

3. Tell students they have to put the poem back in the right order. You could make this into a competition: when a pair thinks they’ve done this correctly, they shout ‘FINISHED’ and you check if they’re right. If they aren’t, the race continues!
4. After one group has put the poem back in the right order, read it out to the class. Discuss: Why does it make sense that the verses are in this order? What is the poem about? Do you like the poem and why / why not? **Extension:** have students write a different title to the poem or perhaps draw an illustration to go alongside it. (Some students might not be too keen on getting creative but I often find if you give them time, space, maybe some colouring pencils and the radio on in the background, they get into it.) They could then present their drawing or new title to a partner or the class.

3 Write a verse

- ★ **Level:** B1+
- 🕒 **Time:** 30-45 minutes
- 🛠️ **Aim:** To get students writing a few lines in English
- ⊕ **Optional:** You can get students to use something you’ve been working on in class – for example, verbs which take the gerund. Or you can make it a writing practice with no particular language focus.
- ✏️ **Prep:** Find a poem with a few verses. The poem could be related to a topic you’ve recently been doing in class, one you’ll cover soon or something completely random. (Websites like <https://textinspector.com/> can help assess the level.)

Procedure:

1. Tell the class the topic or title of the poem you’re going to focus on.
2. Give them 5 minutes to think of any words or phrases related to that topic. Encourage students to share and compare their list with their partner when time is up. Ask the whole class to tell you some words they wrote down and write them on the (virtual) whiteboard.
3. Read the poem aloud. You can give the students the poem before or after you read.
4. Ask students to briefly discuss what the poem is about and if they liked it.
5. Tell students to practice reading the poem aloud to a partner. Ask them to listen for any rhyme or patterns

in the language as they read and think about how the poem makes them feel as / after they read.

Optional: you might prefer to tell them about the rhyming, patterns or any other poetic devices explicitly.

- Tell students they're now going to write another verse to the poem. It could be a new first or last verse or one in the middle. Give students a set time to complete the

Students are often proud they can write
a poem in a foreign language

task. Monitor and provide corrective feedback during the process.

- When time is up, get students to share their work with a partner. You could have them read their verse to each other or simply read what their partner has written. You could also tell them to not say where they would put the verse and their partner has to guess.
- Collect all the new verses and check / correct the writing. You could perhaps put all the verses together to make a new class poem!



4 Poetry by heart

- ★ **Level:** B1+
- 🕒 **Time:** 15-20 minutes
- 🎯 **Aim:** To spark the joy of reading poetry aloud
- 📄 **Info:** Visit the website <https://poetrybyheart.org.uk/> and take a look around. The whole concept of “poetry by heart” is to choose a poem, learn it by heart and perform it out loud.
- 📱 **Prep:** Tell students to bring their phones / tablets / laptops and headphones to class. Select poems (one for each student) from <https://poetrybyheart.org.uk/>. If you're doing step 4 below, make sure the poems you choose have a video of someone performing them at the bottom of the page.

Procedure:

- Assign a poem to each student. Tell them to find their poem on the Poetry by Heart website: <https://poetrybyheart.org.uk/>.
 - Tell students to read their poem. Encourage them to ask their classmates or you about any words they don't know before they look them up in a dictionary.
 - Ask students to explore the page a bit more and read the “related themes”, “explore the poem” and “about the poet” section next to the poem.
 - Have students scroll to the bottom of the page and watch / listen to the video of someone performing the poem.
 - Put students into pairs / groups. Ask them to tell their partner / group about their poem – for example, the title, the themes, what it's about, how it sounds, the author, if they like it or not and why. This stage simply encourages students to share their poem and listen to other people talk about the poems they've read and watched.
 - Once students have shared their poem with their partner / group, tell them to now “perform” their poem. Encourage them to stand up while they do this or add their own twist – make it a performance! You could perform a poem yourself first to model. Don't force anyone to perform their poem if they don't want to. If no student wants to perform a poem, watch the videos of people performing the poems together and discuss the performance as a class or in small groups.
- Optional homework:** tell students to learn their poem by heart and see how much they can remember / recite in the next class.



5 Haiku or acrostic

★ **Level:** B1+

🕒 **Time:** 30-45 minutes

🎯 **Aim:** To get students to write their own poem (haiku or acrostic) so that they see that they can be poets, too!

📌 **Info:** Haiku = 3 lines long. The first and last lines have five syllables, the middle line has seven syllables. Acrostic = the first letter of each line spells a word. That word is the subject of the poem. See an example of both below.

Example of a haiku by Bethan Stokes

The English language
can be tricky to learn so
here I am to help!

Example of an acrostic by Bethan Stokes

There's something
enchanting
about a job which
cheers people on for overcoming
hurdles
in another language. It's a joy to
notice mini wins when students (finally)
get something write right.

✍️ **Prep:** Choose whether you want to do haikus or acrostic poems with your students. Decide if you want the poems to be related to a particular topic you've recently covered.

Encourage students to share their poems
with the whole class

Procedure:

1. Tell students they're going to write a poem! Be prepared for moans or looks of slight terror on their faces.
2. Explain the type of poem you're going to ask your students to write (haiku or acrostic). Show them a number of examples of these poems (you can find them online or on the websites listed in the column on the right).
3. If you're focusing on a specific topic, tell students what the topic is. In pairs / groups, ask them to think of any words related to this topic and get feedback from the whole class. If you're not focusing on a specific topic, tell students they have the freedom to choose what their

poem will be about. Give them a few minutes to think of different topics they could focus on. Encourage them to not dismiss any ideas that come into their heads. Ask each student to tell you one topic they've thought of.

4. Give students at least fifteen minutes to write their own haiku or acrostic (I find this works best when students do their drafts with a pen and paper). Monitor and give feedback / support when needed. Perhaps put some music or the radio on in the background.
5. Put students into pairs / groups. Tell them to swap poems or read their poem aloud to their partner / group. **Extension:** tell students not to give their poem a title. Once everyone has shared his or her poem, get students to think of a title for each poem together. **Optional:** encourage students to perform their poem to the whole class.
6. Collect all the poems to provide feedback at a later date. You could also type them up and create a class poetry pamphlet.
7. Feedback session: either at the end of this activity or at the start of the next class, ask students what they thought of this task. How did they feel after writing a poem in English? Did they feel proud they could write a poem in another language? Did they find it easy or hard and why?

Useful poetry websites:

Poem Hunter: <https://www.poemhunter.com/>

Poetry by Heart: <https://poetrybyheart.org.uk/>

Poetry Society: <https://poetrysociety.org.uk/poems/>

Basic introduction to poetry*:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zwvcgf82>



Bethan Stokes has 10+ years teaching English as a foreign language. 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, creating new activities, encouraging students to think about their learning and simply getting students talking.

Spring up your lessons this spring!

Looking for activities to reenergize your classrooms – inside or outside, in-person or online?

Amanda Huber has five spring-themed suggestions

Spring is my favourite season. Everything seems to burst into life – the air feels lighter, the colours brighter, and the days stretch out like a warm welcome. Watching my garden change from day to day, smelling the freshness of the soil and hearing birds chirping feels like a true feast for the senses.

While doing some spring cleaning, a few lesson ideas sprang to mind. I couldn't resist sharing them in case they help you breathe a little fresh air into your classroom this spring!

Activity 1: I like the flowers

Bring spring into your classroom by introducing seasonal vocabulary. A cheerful way to do this is through a class rendition of the traditional song “*I Like the Flowers*”.

★ **Level:** A1 and above

🛠️ **Aim:** To strengthen pronunciation, rhythm and collaboration

📄 **Materials:** Colourful pictures of various spring landscapes, a recording of “*I Like the Flowers*”

✍️ **Prep:** Prepare a gapped text of the song's text omitting all the nouns.



Procedure:

1. Using the pictures of spring landscapes, collect vocabulary and discuss what your students like about spring.
2. Turn the song into a fun listening activity by having your learners fill in the missing nouns to familiarise themselves with the rhythm and melody.
3. Have students in groups spring into action by creating their own verses and performing them to the tune.

This creative task is guaranteed to leave everyone walking on sunshine!

Activity 2: Come to your senses

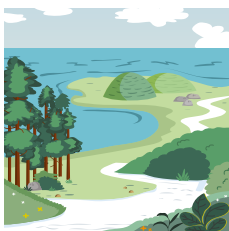
By the end of winter, many of us feel a bit under the weather. What better way to reawaken the senses than a spring-themed *scavenger hunt*? This activity will have your learners buzzing with excitement!

★ **Level:** A1 and above

🛠️ **Aim:** To spark vocabulary use and give students a chance to practise asking for help, giving directions and describing experiences

📄 **Materials:** The great outdoors

✍️ **Prep:** Prepare a list of sensory items that can be seen, smelt, heard touched or even tasted outdoors.



Some ready-to-use lists are available at:

- CBC Kids Printable Spring Scavenger Hunt (<https://www.cbc.ca/kids/articles/printable-spring-scavenger-hunt>)
- Spring Nature Walk Worksheet (<https://de.scribd.com/doc/51778400/Spring-Nature-Walk-Worksheet>)

Pre-teach key vocabulary and head outdoors

Procedure:

1. Pre-teach key vocabulary in class and head outdoors to a nearby park or botanical garden.
2. Once students are familiar with the language, send them off in pairs or small groups to tick sensory items off their list.
3. Encourage them to take notes and then share their discoveries with the group.

Come rain or shine, this activity is about experiencing, not winning.

Activity 3: How's the weather?

In Munich – and just about everywhere – weather is a topic that springs eternal! With spring's unpredictable weather mix, it's the perfect time to explore weather idioms.

★ **Level:** A1 and above

🛠️ **Aim:** To learn and practice weather idioms

📄 **Materials:** A list of weather idioms like those available on IELTS Jacky's Weather Idioms blog post (<https://www.ieltsjacky.com/weather-idioms.html>)

✍️ **Prep:** Prepare a bingo sheet with weather idioms.



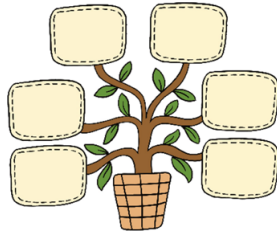
Procedure:

1. Pre-teach weather idioms.
2. Have the learners use the expressions in dialogues about weather conditions.
3. As partners present their conversations, the class can check idioms off on the bingo sheet.
4. **Optional:** For extra fun, play *Pictionary* or *Charades* with the idioms.

By the end, your students will be on cloud nine – and their fluency forecast will look bright and sunny!

Activity 4: Spring to attention

You'd be surprised how often the word spring pops up in English collocations – spring into action, spring to mind, spring fever, spring break... The list is endless!



★ **Level:** A2 and above

🔗 **Aim:** Learn and practice targeted lexis

📄 **Materials:** Slips of paper

🔪 **Prep:** Prepare a list of spring-related expressions.

Procedure:

1. Challenge higher-level learners to brainstorm as many spring collocations as they can.
2. Provide additional examples on slips of paper.
3. Have learners in pairs research meanings and usage before presenting to the group.
4. As homework, ask each student to test the waters by using two or three collocations in real conversations and share how it went.

These exercises really help springboard their language into natural use.

Spring's the perfect time
to explore weather idioms

Activity 5: Would you rather...?

Spring awakening can make us eager to get moving – to dust off routines, declutter, and start anew. Tap into that energy while revising modal verbs (for example: must, can, should and mustn't) and modal substitutes (for example: have to, are able to, ought to and aren't allowed to).

★ **Level:** A2 and above

🔗 **Aim:** To practice modal verbs

📄 **Materials:** Slips of paper

🔪 **Prep:** Sketch a diagram on the board like the one shown here:



Spring into action, spring to mind, spring fever,
spring break – the list is endless

Procedure:

1. Start by brainstorming typical spring activities – planting gardens, cleaning garages or enjoying long walks.
2. Have students write sentences on slips of paper using can, could, may, must, mustn't, needn't, and should (for example: "I must clean the balcony before the first barbecue!").
3. Split the class into two teams and play a grammar football game. Each correct modal substitute (is able to, has to, isn't allowed to and so on) moves the team one step closer to the goalpost shown on the diagram at the bottom of the left-hand column on this page.
4. For a lively follow-up, play *Would You Rather?* using the same slips (for example: "Would you rather clean out the garage or go for a mountain hike?")

This activity gets everyone talking – a great way to shake off the last of the winter blues.

A fresh start

Here's hoping these activities inspire you to throw caution to the wind and let your lessons blossom. Whether you're testing new games or revisiting old favourites, may you and your learners find yourselves walking on air this spring.

Wishing you a spring in your step and the wind in your sails as your classroom comes into full bloom!



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!

All those adverbs!!!

Breda Howe-Helmecke explains a fun way to practice a key feature of English grammar



I love adverbs and think sometimes we teachers neglect their importance. Here's an activity to reinforce their correct usage.

★ **Level:** A1 and above

🧩 **Aim:** Review adverbs

📄 **Materials:** Dice, cards, pen and paper, counters (preferably in different colours)

✏️ **Prep:** Create a board game with twenty squares and write a verb on each square. Include a "start and finish" square. Write adverbs on cards and arrange them in two stacks. **Optional:** before starting, revise / brainstorm adverbs.

Procedure:

1. Divide learners into two teams.
2. Give each team a dice and each learner a counter.
3. Learners take turns rolling the dice and moving along the board according to the numbers displayed on the dice.
4. Learners call out the action written on the squares they land on (for example: "open the window") and take an adverb card from the stack.



5. They mime the action in the way indicated on the card.
6. Both teams try to guess the adverb, but points are only awarded if the teams say the whole sentence (for example: "Thomas is closing the window noisily.").
7. If no team guesses the correct adverb, the card is put at the bottom of the stack, and the game continues.
8. The first team to reach the finish is the winner.

Oh, and don't forget to give the winning team a prize!



Breda Howe-Helmecke

I come from Ireland and have been living in Munich since 1989. My teaching career as a freelance teacher started in 2004. I teach in-company courses as well as at the MVHS.

When I'm not teaching I like to spend my time playing golf, singing in my newly formed singing group, cooking international food and in particular trying out new recipes.

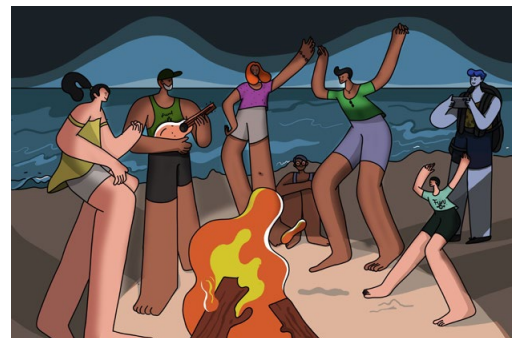
NICE PARTY EVENING! – A CAUTIONARY TALE

Joan Walsh illustrates the perils of jumping to linguistic conclusions and the virtues of questions in language acquisition

When H el ene, one of my students, first moved to Munich from Paris, she got a job working in an office. At the end of each day, her colleagues always exclaimed: "sch onen Feierabend!" Being new to Germany and the language, H el ene understood this common end-of-the-day phrase – which really means something like "So long, see you tomorrow" – as: "Have a nice (sch onen) party (Feier) evening (abend)!"

As a result, she was always amazed when she stumbled tiredly to her desk the next day to find her colleagues already at work, fresh as daisies. So, one Friday, she asked a colleague: "How can you party every evening and come to work next morning without any after-affects?"

And then, she told us, the linguistic light finally dawned! German people do try to be upbeat, even if they don't party every evening!



Back to the drawing board

Tenley van den Berg shares a hands-on activity to improve your students' communication strategies

- ★ **Level:** B1+
- ✚ **Aim:** To practise giving and following spoken instructions using descriptive language and clarification techniques
- 🕒 **Time:** 30 minutes
- 📁 **Materials:** A few simple drawings, tape, pens, paper and/or a board

Procedure:

1. Activate useful language: brainstorm and post useful words or phrases such as prepositions (*next to, above, below, in the corner*), numbers, adjectives, and any target vocabulary. If needed, model a few example instruction sentences such as: "Draw a small circle in the top right corner."
2. Demonstrate: tape a drawing to your back so you can't see it.
3. Students describe the picture while you draw it on the board. Ask for clarification and check understanding (for example: "Do you mean *next to* or *under*?" or "So, is the *triangle inside* the *square*?")
4. Pair work: tape one drawing to Student A's back.
5. Student B describes the picture while Student A draws it on a piece of paper or on the board. (Students should speak in full sentences. Encourage dialogue: Student A should ask clarification questions when necessary.)
6. Reflect: the pairs look at and compare the drawing with the original picture. They discuss how successful their communication was and what helped or caused problems.

Describe, listen, clarify, reflect



Which strategies helped? Which didn't?
Students decide

Follow-up:

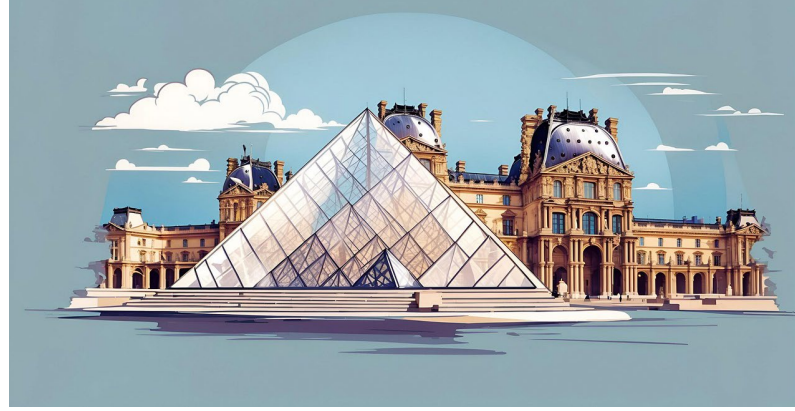
1. Students identify two instructions that worked well and two that were unclear. They rewrite unclear instructions using more precise language.
2. Partners change roles and repeat the activity with a new picture.
3. As a class, discuss which strategies helped most. For example: asking for clarification, repeating information, giving step-by-step instructions and checking understanding.



Tenley van den Berg teaches English in the English Studies department at LMU. Prior to this, she worked briefly at *Business Spotlight* magazine. A U.S. native, she has also worked at international schools both in Munich and abroad.

A day at the museum

Julia Flyng shares a multi-task activity that invites advanced learners to explore the ethical, cultural and political debates surrounding foreign antiquities held in European museums



Overview

After a short warmer on famous European museums, students work through a series of five tasks – discussion questions, case-study debates and role plays – to examine issues such as cultural ownership, repatriation, historical power dynamics and the responsibilities of modern museums.

Activity

★ **Level:** C1 / C2

🕒 **Time:** 90 minutes +

🎯 **Aims:** To practice expressing nuanced opinions, evaluating competing arguments and engaging diplomatically with differing viewpoints and to encourage critical thinking, intercultural awareness and collaborative problem-solving while using evaluative and ethical-reasoning language

📄 **Materials:** Photocopiable worksheets for tasks 1 to 4 and an additional list of useful language (see pages 17 to 20)

Procedure:

Lead-in

Discuss in plenary: “Have you been to any museums recently?”

Task 1: European museums quiz

1. Put students into pairs or small groups.
2. Students answer the questions on **Worksheet 1** and compare their answers in plenary.

Follow-up: Discuss: “Which of these museums have you visited?” “Do you have a favourite or one you would really like to go back to?”

Optional language input: Depending on the class, you might want to focus on useful language for evaluating and ethical reasoning in a debate on cultural and ethical issues.

Task 2: Discussion questions

1. In pairs or small groups students discuss the questions on **Worksheet 2** and then summarise their ideas for a plenary presentation.
2. Give plenary feedback on content and language.

Task 3: Mini case studies for group debate

1. In pairs or small groups students discuss the questions on **Worksheet 3** and then summarise their ideas for a plenary presentation.
2. Give plenary feedback.

Task 4: Put yourself in the position of...

1. In small groups students choose one of the perspectives on **Worksheet 4**, think about their case study again and then present their arguments to the whole class.
2. Teacher gives plenary feedback.

Task 5: Problem-solution

1. Give students this scenario: *A museum discovers that a star exhibit was acquired under questionable circumstances.*
2. Students propose:
 - a. Possible responses
 - b. Communication strategies
 - c. Longterm policy changes.
3. Groups report in the plenary.
4. Give feedback on the content of the task and the language used.

Follow-up reading

Find a current article on the topic as a takeaway or to read as follow-up homework and report on in the next lesson.

Optional materials: Language focus: useful expressions for a debate on cultural and ethical issues

1. Softening your opinions

- It could be argued that...
- To some extent...
- It seems reasonable to suggest that...
- There's a possibility that...
- I'm not entirely convinced that...

2. Evaluating evidence & principles

- From an ethical standpoint...
- If we consider the historical context...
- The key issue here is whether...
- One could question the legitimacy of...
- There's a strong case for...

3. Disagreeing diplomatically

- I see your point, although...
- I agree up to a point, but...
- I'm not sure that fully addresses...
- Another way of looking at this might be...
- I take a slightly different view on...

4. Adding nuance and balance to your argument

- On the one hand..., yet on the other...
- While that's true, it's also important to consider...
- This depends heavily on how we define...
- The situation becomes more complex when...



Julia Flyng is from Bristol in the UK. She has been teaching English since moving to Munich in 1992. As well as teaching at her local VHS in Ottobrunn, she teaches company courses often to lawyers and economists. Julia is a member of the Celta team at the MVHS, where she also gives teaching workshops.



Worksheet for Task 1: European museums quiz

- Which Paris museum is home to Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa?
 - Musée Rodin
 - Louvre
 - Musée d'Orsay
 - Centre Pompidou
- Which London museum is famous for the Rosetta Stone?
 - Tate Modern
 - National Gallery
 - British Museum
 - Victoria and Albert Museum
- Which Amsterdam museum is dedicated to the life of a young diarist?
 - Stedelijk Museum
 - Van Gogh Museum
 - Rijksmuseum
 - Anne Frank House
- Which Madrid museum houses masterpieces by Velázquez and Goya?
 - CaixaForum
 - Prado Museum
 - Reina Sofía
 - Thyssen-Bornemisza
- Which Florence museum displays Michelangelo's David?
 - Uffizi Gallery
 - Galleria dell'Accademia
 - Bargello Museum
 - Palazzo Pitti
- Which Paris museum is located in a former railway station?
 - Centre Pompidou
 - Musée d'Orsay
 - Musée du Quai Branly
 - Musée de l'Orangerie
- Which Berlin museum is part of the UNESCO-listed Museum Island?
 - Hamburger Bahnhof
 - Gemäldegalerie
 - Alte Nationalgalerie
 - Pergamon Museum
- Which Vienna museum is paired architecturally with the Kunsthistorisches Museum?
 - Leopold Museum
 - Naturhistorisches Museum
 - Belvedere
 - Albertina
- Which St. Petersburg museum is partly housed in the Winter Palace?
 - Russian Museum
 - Hermitage Museum
 - Erarta Museum
 - Fabergé Museum
- Which European museum houses the prehistoric Venus of Willendorf figurine?
 - Louvre (Paris)
 - Naturhistorisches Museum (Vienna)
 - National Archaeological Museum (Athens)
 - British Museum (London)

Answer key – European museums quiz

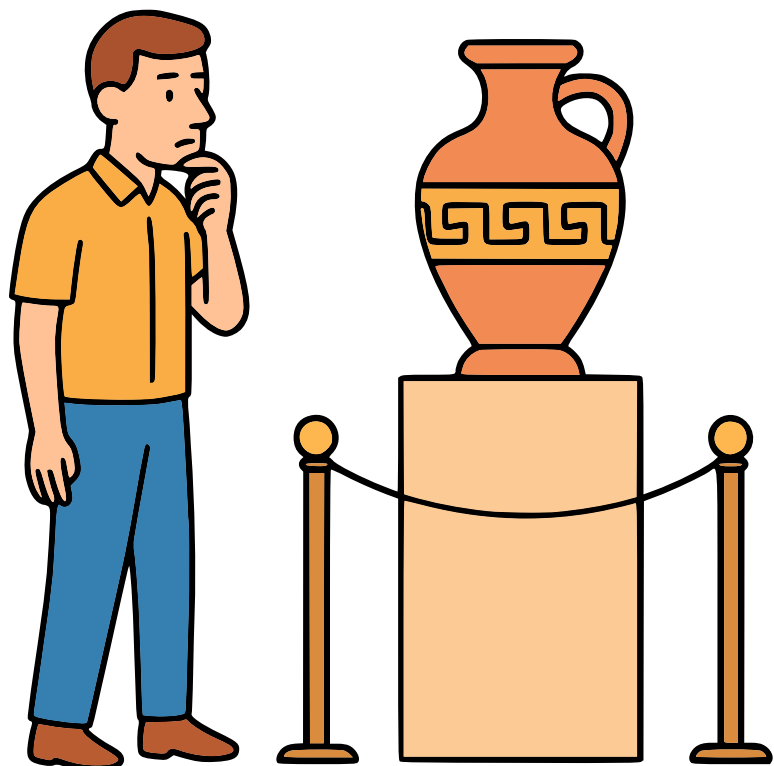
- B. Louvre
- C. British Museum
- D. Anne Frank House
- B. Prado Museum
- B. Galleria dell'Accademia
- B. Musée d'Orsay
- D. Pergamon Museum
- B. Naturhistorisches Museum
- B. Hermitage Museum
- B. Naturhistorisches Museum (Vienna)



Worksheet for Task 2: Foreign antiquities in European museums

Discuss the following questions in pairs or small groups.
Be ready to summarise your group's ideas.

1. What responsibilities do museums have when displaying objects taken from other cultures?
2. Should antiquities always be returned to their countries of origin, or are there cases where they should remain where they are?
3. How does the location of an artefact influence the story it tells?
4. Who should decide whether an object was "looted"?
5. Should museums prioritise universal access or cultural ownership?
6. How do historical power imbalances shape debates about repatriation?
7. What role should international organisations (for example, UNESCO) play in these decisions?
8. Can repatriation meaningfully address past injustices or is it mainly symbolic?





Worksheet for Task 3: Mini case studies for group debate

Choose a case/s which interests you. Read the prompt and prepare arguments for and against repatriation. Be ready to present your position to the class.

Case A: The Parthenon Marbles (Greece–UK)

Should the sculptures be reunited with the Acropolis collection, or does the British Museum serve a broader global audience?



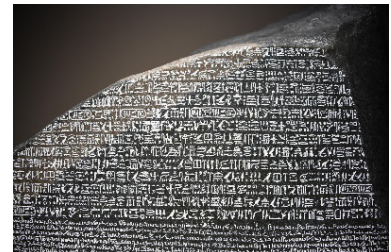
Case B: The Benin Bronzes (Nigeria–various European museums)

Many institutions have begun returning them. What precedent does this set for other contested objects?



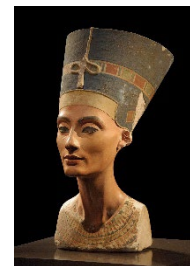
Case C: The Rosetta Stone (Egypt–UK)

Does its global significance justify its current location, or should it be returned to Egypt?



Case D: The Bust of Nefertiti (Egypt–Germany)

Berlin argues it is too fragile to move. Is this a legitimate reason to keep it?



Case E: The Venus of Willendorf (Austria)

Should prehistoric objects be considered universal human heritage rather than national heritage?





Worksheet for Task 4: Put yourself in the position of...

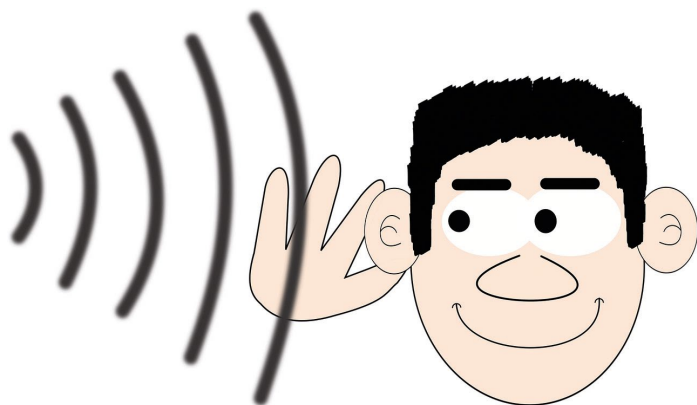
Try to put yourselves in the position of one of the following people:




1. Director of a European museum:
You want to preserve your collection, maintain visitor numbers and protect the museum's reputation.
2. Representative of the country of origin:
You argue that the artefact is part of your cultural identity and should be returned.
3. UNESCO Cultural Heritage advisor:
You aim for a fair, internationally acceptable solution and long-term cooperation.
4. Journalist:
You ask challenging questions and highlight inconsistencies or ethical concerns.
5. Visitor from the diaspora community:
You speak from personal and cultural experience about the significance of the object.



Learning to listen

Ursula Stolberg describes an interactive activity to boost language learners' ability to listen and concentrate for longer periods of time



-  **Time:** Five minutes
-  **Aim:** To teach learners to listen attentively
-  **Materials:** Cards with pictures of ears and mouths

Procedure:

1. Divide the class into groups of two.
2. Give one learner in each pair a card showing an ear (E) and the other a card showing a mouth (M).
3. The learners with the M cards speak for one minute on a topic of their choosing.
4. The learners with the E cards listen without asking questions or interrupting.
5. When the minute is up, the learners with the E cards repeat what they've heard, while the learners with the M cards also listen carefully and then supplement or correct as necessary.
6. The learners exchange cards and roles and repeat steps 3 to 5.

The more often you do it,
the more effective it is

The challenge

The ability to concentrate and listen carefully for longer periods of time is an ability that schoolchildren increasingly lack. That's why activities like this one are 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 in the Munich area resolve conflicts peacefully by teaching them to perceive and express their feelings and to interact respectfully with one another.

But it's not just schoolchildren who need to improve their ability to concentrate and listen carefully. In the digital age, language learners of all ages may need to improve it too.

Careful listening is vital
for language learning

Komm! Wir finden eine Lösung

Der KinderschutzBund Ortsverband München e.V.
Hermann-Schmid-Str. 10, 80336 München
Phone (089) 500 289 29
komm@dksb-muc.de
www.kinderschutzbund-muenchen.de

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.

KOMM! Wir finden
eine Lösung



Der Kinderschutzbund
Ortsverband München



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*.

Focusing on meaning – Reflective listening one to one

Simon Marshall shows how to cooperate with learners to develop authentic, mutually relevant listening activities



- ★ **Level:** A2 upwards
- 👤 **Aim:** To hone teacher listening skills, to engage learners in a meaningful dictation task and for them to respond to it authentically. To subsequently work on language produced by the learner
- ✍️ **Preparation:** Ensure you're focused and in a resourceful state when listening to the learner.
- 📁 **Materials:** Spoken learner output and an audio file

Procedure:

This activity is most successful when a learner is speaking about a topic of personal interest. I've applied the sequence below only online, but it could also be applied to in-person lessons.

1. Simply allow the learner to speak freely and listen carefully to the *content* rather than the *form* of what they say. Avoid interruption and don't be tempted by error correction. Take discreet notes if it helps you.
2. Ask them any follow-up questions you have for the sake of clarification.
3. Tell them you'll send them a voice file with a summary of the key points they tried to express.
4. Record 4 or 5 sentences that summarise the key points you understood and send the audio file to the learner.
5. As homework, ask the learner to listen and transcribe the sentences you've dictated and return them to you.
6. On receiving them, check them for accuracy and amend as necessary so that they're identical to the originals.
7. Now return the sentences and ask the learner whether they're an accurate reflection of what they said and to amend or add anything they need to.
8. They should then return the sentences to you again.
9. You can then a) respond to the content of the amendments and additions and b) focus on aspects

of the learner's language that can be usefully upgraded.

Rationale:

Reflecting back speaker content without conscious amendment or judgement is a central practice in humanistic psychotherapy as this process pays due respect to the speaker's words and message.

As language teachers, we're sometimes excessively focused on *how* learners speak in terms of linguistic *form* rather than on *what* they want to say in terms of *meaning*. This activity encourages teachers to utilize their own authentic listening comprehension to engage with the learner's *expressive voice*.

The sentences dictated are the result of previous learner-teacher interaction

The sentences dictated have relevance to both the teacher and the learner as they're the result of previous interaction. The learner also plays the ultimate role in determining whether the teacher has "heard" them correctly and also has the opportunity to amend and supplement where necessary. The language work carried out during the final stage is based on "used language" so again is likely to be more meaningful than any accessed from third-party sources.

An example

Here are five content-related statements I sent a learner after she'd spoken about work-life balance:

- 1) It's a struggle for me to find the right work-life balance.
- 2) I like my work, but I feel that I don't have enough time for myself.
- 3) I find myself torn between work and family commitments.

Clever, effective, pleasant and non-stressful

- 4) I would like to find more time to pursue my own interests.
- 5) I find it difficult to say "no" to people.

A learner reponds

Finally, here's some feedback on the above task from the learner herself: *"I've found this exercise beneficial. For me it began before the dictation, when I tried – in a confused manner, with my too poor English full of grammatical errors and empty of words – to tell you something of my job related to the rest of my life. In this way I've had the opportunity to exercise all the main expressive faculties, in a natural way.*

The dictation has been a surprise for me: to do it you must pay a different attention to the sound of the single words. And this helps in a peculiar way the process of understanding another linguistic universe. Clever, effective, pleasant and non-stressful."



Simon Marshall has worked as an ELT teacher, trainer, and academic manager for more than 40 years for various organisations, including York St. John University, Pilgrims, International House and the British Council. He is particularly interested in the principled application of Humanistic Approaches to language teaching and teacher development. He is also a keen etymologist and reader of philosophy and psychology.

PARSNIP

What does this tasty root vegetable have to do with breaking classroom taboos?

Joan Walsh explains

PARSNIP is an acronym for the topics that publishers have traditionally omitted from teaching materials: politics, alcohol, religion, sex, narcotics, isms and pork. The reason seems to be that these topics are controversial and that their inclusion in textbooks might offend some teachers and learners and thus negatively impact sales.

But times are changing. Today, people no longer come to English classes just to improve their language skills. They also want to have meaningful discussions about real-world problems. As a result, discussing PARSNIP topics in the classroom can not only enlarge learners' lexis; it can also increase their engagement, strengthen their ability to think critically and broaden their interpersonal understanding.

Today, people no longer come to English classes just to improve their language skills

Nonetheless, you can't just jump right in. Before introducing a PARSNIP topic for discussion, you also have to take into consideration:

1. Your students' backgrounds: How diverse are they and what topics could particularly interest or offend them?
2. The general classroom atmosphere: Most importantly, are your students able to listen to one another with respect, unafraid to express their opinions and able to cope with disagreement?
3. Boundaries: What are the red lines that discussions can't be allowed to cross?

With all this in mind, I've experimented with the following four-step approach:

1. Early on in a course, I discuss PARSNIP with my class – what it



What are the red lines that discussions can't be allowed to cross?

stands for and what other topics it might include (for example, **n** for nature, **p** for private matters and **i** for immigration and isms like racism, colonialism and sexism).

2. To practice, we begin with some relatively non-controversial topics like cultural norms in different countries and/or historical events and social movements in my students' home countries.
3. We establish a signal that the students can give if they want the



discussion to stop for any reason and set time limits on individual contributions to keep one student from dominating.

4. The rest is up to them: the contemporary topics they want to discuss and the format – in the open group, in small groups, in a debate, after a student presentation or in connection with a written text.

This approach may not work with every class or in every detail. But if you think it might, give it a try. Isn't it fun to break taboos sometimes? That's certainly what my students and I think.

Special thanks to Rose Aylett and Ann Shapiro for encouraging me at recent IATEFL conferences to break the PARSNIP barrier.



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 a tasty topic to spice up your conversation classes? **Betsy Hollweck** has a culinary suggestion that will keep them coming back for more

Flammkuchen

Often called “German Pizza”, Flammkuchen originates in Alsace, from the time when villages baked once a week in a communal oven. The flatbread was used as an indicator of oven temperature: when the oven reached peak temperature, the bread would cook in 1-2 minutes.

The original version has only Schmand / sour cream, thinly sliced onions and pork lardons, but today can be found with other toppings such as mushrooms and Gruyère cheese. There are even dessert versions with apples, cinnamon and Calvados. This is an Austrian version of the original.

Ingredients:

2 onions, thinly sliced; placed in hot water for 1 minute, then drained
 100 g bacon, diced
 200 g sour cream mixed with 100 ml heavy cream
 Salt / pepper to taste, snipped chives to garnish
 2 Tbsp. vegetable oil
 125 ml water
 250 g all-purpose (550) flour
 A pinch of salt

Procedure:

1. Preheat the oven to 250° C.
2. Quickly knead the oil, water, flour and salt into a smooth dough.
3. Roll the dough out very thinly and place it on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper.
4. Season the sour cream / heavy cream mixture with salt and pepper, then spread a thin layer over the dough.
5. Top with the bacon and onions.
6. Bake for about 15 minutes.
7. Remove from the oven and sprinkle with chives.
8. Slice, serve and discuss.



Betsy Hollweck holds a BA in Language from Fordham University and is CELTA certified. She has taught EFL to both adults and children at the local VHS- and Bavarian Grund / Mittelschulen, as well as privately. She also teaches both adult and children's cooking classes at the local VHS.



It's not as easy as it looks

Juliana Oosten shares a seemingly simple odd-one-out exercise to test and expand students' pronunciation skills



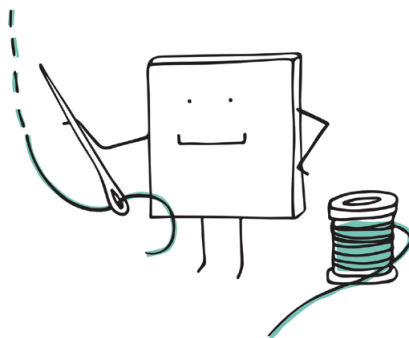
Activity

Decide which of the words doesn't fit. Can you also explain all the words?

Once again, don't look for logic when it comes to English spelling and pronunciation.



- | | | | |
|-----|-------------|--------------|---------------|
| 1. | imply | apply | amply |
| 2. | pouch | touch | slouch |
| 3. | superfluous | superficial | superstitious |
| 4. | plumber | timber | climber |
| 5. | sew | few | new |
| 6. | cheetah | choice | Chicago |
| 7. | crush | blush | bush |
| 8. | wolf | half | gulf |
| 9. | pseudonym | psychiatrist | pyramid |
| 10. | aisle | pause | debris |
| 11. | argue | vague | Prague |
| 12. | subtitles | debt | subtle |



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.

Three days that brought light into the darkest winter

Oksana Tryhub reports on a special educational project with an English-language highlight



From January 5 to 7, 2026, our cultural center in Kyiv held its very first winter camp for children.

This winter has been, without exaggeration, one of the hardest our community has ever faced. Constant power outages, missile attacks, freezing temperatures and a growing sense of exhaustion and uncertainty have shaped our daily lives. Just shortly before the camp began, our district experienced heavy shelling. The children were frightened and anxious.

And yet – they kept asking for a camp.

One special highlight was English-language practice with a volunteer from Canada

A safe space

A charitable organization from Norway provided us with a generator and, despite our concerns, we decided to take the risk. We limited the camp to three days, unsure of how everything would unfold under such challenging conditions.

Eighteen children aged 5 to 14 joined us. We intentionally kept the group small, knowing that our resources were limited. But what happened over those three days exceeded all our expectations.

Energy and warmth

Each day began with morning exercises, bringing movement and laughter into the cold winter air. After breakfast, children engaged in creative workshops, team competitions and interactive games. There were winter outdoor activities, snow sculptures and contests that strengthened teamwork and confidence. We also held spiritual reflections and the traditional blessing of water. The atmosphere was deeply meaningful and warm – especially in contrast to the difficult reality outside.

One special highlight was English-language practice with a volunteer from Canada, who spent time communicating and playing with the children. These moments broadened horizons and reminded everyone that they were not alone.

Evenings were particularly memorable: shared dinners in a family-like circle, dancing, conversations and what the children called a “mandarin

This winter has been one of the hardest our community has ever faced

party” full of laughter and sweetness, despite the power outages.

More than a camp

This winter camp was only three days long. But it became something much greater: a space of safety, joy, resilience and hope. In a season marked by darkness and uncertainty, these children experienced warmth, belonging, and laughter. And that makes all the difference.



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.



Teaching English in difficult times – Values-based coaching

Inna Cherevko shares three classroom activities that boost learner motivation by linking language instruction to personal reflection



More than an English teacher

In Ukraine today, many adult learners are not just seeking to improve their English. They're searching for stability, purpose and a sense of control in a world that feels unpredictable. As a result, they need more than just a teacher. They need a partner who will listen, challenge them to think differently and help them see their own strengths.

Focus on values

Values-based coaching activities can do exactly that – provide a space where learning English becomes not just a skill-building activity, but a pathway to rebuilding confidence and hope. Drawing on positive psychology, values-based coaching can help 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.

For educators worldwide – not only those working in difficult contexts – I believe that activities like the three I describe below can help people reclaim their voice and their future.

Connect language learning
to personal meaning

Activity 1: Discover your core values

Aim: To help learners explore what truly matters to them – to connect language learning with personal meaning

Interaction: pair or small group discussion

Procedure:

Step 1: Give learners a list of possible values (for example, family, growth, freedom, learning, stability, health, adventure, creativity, honesty and security).

Step 2: Ask them to:

1. Choose their top five values.
2. Explain why each value is important.
3. Rank them from 1 to 5.

Step 3: In pairs, discuss:

- How does learning English help you live according to your values?
- Which value motivates you to keep learning even when it's difficult?

Activity 2: Values in action

Aim: To connect values with real-life goals

Interaction: individual or pair reflection

Procedure:

1. Choose one of your top values.
2. Think of one action you can take in English learning that reflects that value.

Example: If your value is “growth”, you could start speaking to new people online.

3. Share your idea with your partner and give each other feedback.

Follow-up: Create a “Values & Goals Map”. Write your value in the centre and link it to small, concrete actions.

Activity 3: Values-based decision-making

Aim: To practise decision-making in English and connect it to personal meaning

Interaction: Group discussion

Scenarios: Discuss which option fits your personal values best and explain why.

1. You can spend one hour watching a TV series or one hour reading an English article about your profession.
2. You're invited to join an English conversation club after work, but you're tired. What do you do?
3. You have time for only one goal this month: grammar improvement or speaking practice. Which do you choose and why?

Expansion: Reflection question: How does knowing your values help you make better choices in learning – and in life?

Conclusion: Coaching tools for meaningful learning

The values-based coaching activities presented here offer teachers practical ways to bring coaching principles into everyday lessons.

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.

Stories that travel – How voices from Gaza have transformed my classroom

Evi Karydi describes how retelling the tales of young Palestinians is empowering her students to think more deeply, collaborate more creatively and communicate more meaningfully

Tell a Child in Gaza's Tale

In my drama-based English classes in Greece, some of our most powerful learning moments begin in the homes of children living thousands of kilometres away, in Gaza.

Through the initiative *Tell a Child in Gaza's Tale* – led by David Heathfield and Haneen Khaled Jadallah – young Palestinian storytellers have shared traditional tales with the world, inviting us into their homes through the simple yet profound act of storytelling. Their invitation to listen, learn and retell has deeply shaped my work with students and transformed the way we experience stories in the classroom.

Stories that connect children across borders

Over the last two years, my students and I have explored many tales told by children from Gaza – for example: *Milk is for Milk and Water is for Water*, *The Monkey and the Crocodile*, *The Great Elephant*, *The Boy Who Sold the Butter*, *The Apple Tree*, *The Bee* and *Juha and the Grapes*.

These stories, chosen and shared by young storytellers of similar age to my own learners, have travelled across borders and cultures to find a new life in our classroom.



Labelling the outline (steps 2-3)

We don't simply read these stories, we bring them to life through drama-based activities. We create stick puppets and dioramas. We imagine "what if" scenarios, draw comic strips and retell the stories in our own words. Through this process, language learning becomes a human connection.

A powerful classroom ritual

After exploring a tale together, I play the video of the child from Gaza who originally told the story. This has become a ritual, something my students now expect.

They watch quietly. They listen carefully. They see a child like themselves, speaking, creating, sharing. What never fails to amaze my students is that these stories come from children their own age. In that moment, distance disappears. The classroom becomes a shared human space where voices meet.

Students learn to listen.
They learn to care

Learning empathy through stories

Many times, my students ask whether the child who told the story is still alive. I answer honestly that in some cases I don't know, and we talk together gently and thoughtfully about uncertainty, about hope and about the realities of children's lives in different parts of the world. These conversations nurture empathy in ways no textbook ever could.

The students begin to understand that storytelling is also a form of presence, a way of saying: *I am here. I have a voice. Listen to me.* They learn that stories can build bridges where politics and geography often create distance.



Language learning with purpose

From a teaching perspective, the impact has been remarkable. My students show greater engagement, deeper emotional investment and stronger motivation to communicate. But even more importantly, they begin to see themselves not only as language learners but as participants in a shared human story.

When my students retell the tales of the children of Gaza, when they watch the young storytellers who first shared them, when they ask questions and reflect on what they've seen, they participate in an act of solidarity. They help ensure that Gaza's children are not reduced to distant headlines but recognised as creators and human beings and that their stories continue to travel – from Gaza to Greece and beyond.

These conversations
nurture empathy in ways
no textbook ever could



The deeply human act of sharing stories changes how we see one another

4. Students post the result on the wall and discuss.
5. **Expansion:** One student steps into the role of the character and answers questions from the rest of the class.

Tell a Child in Gaza's Tale

Here are the tales told by young Palestinians:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1B-Ku7JPXmONEB6y5cbeGIUW-6zWi3SmRAP/view>

Here are storytellers from around the world retelling the Gaza children's stories:

https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLj-mcWeMmSZw63V-5abQ4fw3JITI_S_kS&si=du-47VczUOOKf3dQo

If you'd like to find out more about the *Tell a Child in Gaza's Tale* project, please feel free to get in touch at: davidheathfield@hotmail.co.uk



Preparing the class interview (step 5)

and discover the global storytelling community at the *World Storytelling Cafe*, where many of these young voices first shared their stories with the world (see links on the right).

Activity: Role on the wall

Here's a drama-based activity to help students move beyond simply understanding the events in a story.

- ★ **Level:** A2 and above
- 🧩 **Aim:** Promote critical thinking, empathy and collaboration
- 📄 **Materials:** Colored pens and markers, large sheets of paper, text of a story
- 🔪 **Prep:** Have students read and/or listen to a story.

Procedure:

1. Students work together to draw the outline of a character in the story on a large sheet of paper.
2. Inside the outline, they write the character's inner world (for example: feelings, wishes, fears, ideas, hopes and motivations).
3. Outside the outline, they add factual information about the character (for example: what the character says, does and experiences and what other characters know / think about him or her).

The transformative power of shared stories

The deeply human act of sharing stories has the power to change how we see one another. And every time we listen to a child from Gaza tell a story, we're reminded that voices – especially young voices – deserve to travel, to be heard and to endure.

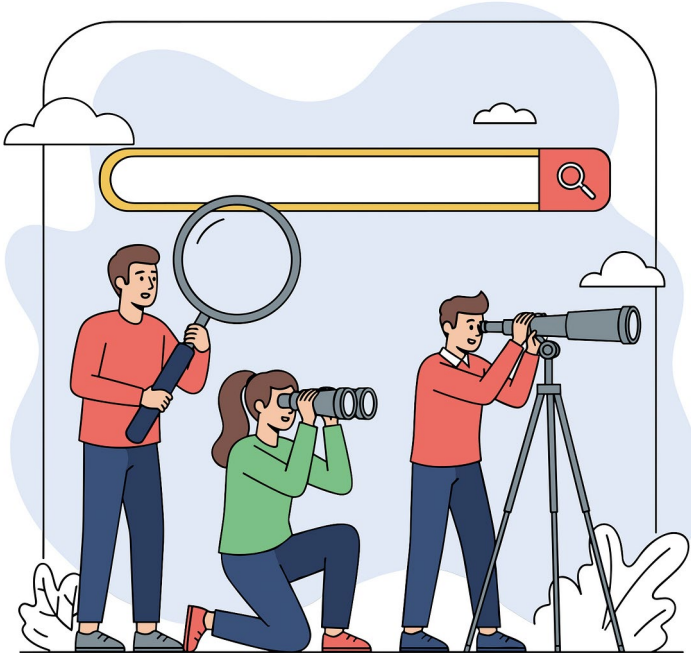
If you'd like to learn more about the project or join the initiative, you can explore *Tell a Child in Gaza's Tale*



Evi Karydi is Director of iLearn Language School in Greece and founder of DramActivate. She specialises in drama- and story-based language education and works with children, teachers and educators to create meaningful, creative and human-centred language learning experiences. Her work focuses on using storytelling, drama and play to build confidence, empathy and authentic communication in the EFL classroom.

Punctuation power – Use your comma sense*

In a bid to promote world peace, **Jackie Adams** turns her attention to a much-neglected aspect of English-language instruction



A monstrosity

As part of my job teaching English at the military university in Munich, I have to grade letters and essays for both in-class assignments and end-of-year language tests. Sometimes I get lucky and read an essay full of beautiful language – impeccable grammar, outstanding vocabulary, flawless expressions – and I am filled with joy and wonder at the brain’s ability to master two languages. But then something on the page rears its ugly head and makes me wish that I still had a copy of *Links to Forceful Writing* by Anne Obenchain. What monstrosity was written on the page?

A surprise

It was – prepare yourself – a comma. Do you feel let down? Don’t be. Commas are extremely important and incredibly powerful in writing, yet most people (not just language learners) don’t know how to use them. When I was in school, punctuation rules were never formally taught, so I haphazardly added commas (semi-colons did not exist at that time of my life) whenever a sentence seemed too long and required me to take a breath when reading my writing out loud.

A true story

I finally learned how to properly punctuate during a first-year university English course, for which I had to buy two workbooks: *Links to Forceful Writing Part One: Sentence Power* and *Part Two: Paragraph Power* by Anne Obenchain. At the time I found them boring and repetitive, and those Thursday evening classes quickly became

a form of torture for most of the students enrolled. By the end of the course, however, I could punctuate and use conjunctions like a pro; I even agreed to be the professor’s teaching assistant for the next two years. Those Thursday torture sessions helped me to write clear and effective essays for my other courses, and I’ve tried to pass on that knowledge to my own students over the years.

A project

Sadly, in a fit of madness that I have no recollection of, I must have thrown my workbooks away, not realizing that I’d need them one day far in the future. And now they’re out of print and impossible to find. If I ever manage to lay my hands on a copy of them, I will immediately digitalize them into some kind of online interactive wonderwork that will bring correct punctuation and effective linking words to people all over the world and most likely create world peace in the process.

In the meantime, I’ve decided to write a few articles for *Melta News* about the art of punctuation and how using commas and semi-colons with proper conjunctions can help English learners write more effectively and powerfully.

An analysis

Let’s start off with five different situations in which commas tend to get overused by German learners of English.

1. In German, every subordinate or relative clause must be preceded by a comma, which means that many German learners of English incorrectly apply this rule when writing in English. So “Ich weiß, dass Kommas wichtig sind” becomes “I know, that commas are important.” Wrong! It should of course be “I know that commas are important.”
2. German grammar requires a comma before all relative pronouns while English uses a comma only for non-restrictive relative clauses that add extra, non-essential information. So “Das Satzzeichen, das ich nutze, ist ein Komma” becomes “The punctuation mark, that I am using, is a comma.” Wrong! It should be “The punctuation mark that I am using is a comma.”
3. In German, a comma is often placed after verbs like “say” or “think” when they introduce a statement, even if “that” is omitted. So in German “Er sagte, Punkte sind am Ende” becomes “He said, periods go at the end.” Wrong! It should be “He said periods go at the end.”
4. In German, longer infinitive phrases are usually set off by commas. Learners often mistakenly add these into English. So “Ich schreibe, um Interpunktion zu üben” becomes “I am writing, to practice punctuation.” Wrong again! It should be “I am writing to practice punctuation.”



5. Finally, if two independent sentences follow each other in German and have no conjunction between them, they have to be separated by a comma. This means that “Satzzeichen sind in Deutsch sehr wichtig, Kommas trennen verschiedene Teilsätze voneinander” becomes “Punctuation marks are very important in German, commas separate different clauses from one another.” And when one of my students has a comma splice like that, it drives me nuts.

In English you have to write “Punctuation marks are very important in German; commas separate different clauses from one another.” Or get fancy: “Punctuation marks are very important in German; commas, for example, separate different clauses from one another.” If you’re not a fan of semi-colons, write it this way: “Punctuation marks are very important in German. Commas separate different clauses from one another.” Or add a linking word: “Punctuation marks are very important in German, and commas separate different clauses from one another.”

Four rules

I’ve explained when you shouldn’t use commas, but when should you use them? If only there were some little visual tricks to help you remember. Wait! There are – thanks to Anne Obenchain. She calls them visual punctuation rules, and there are lots of them. Right now I’m going to focus on the ones for coordinate conjunctions (cc).



There are seven of them: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, and so. Some people use the acronym FANBOYS to remember them. And they each have a different function: addition (and), contrast (but, yet), cause and result (for, so), and condition (or, nor). Depending on whether the clauses before and after the coordinate conjunction are independent sentences (S) or not (NS), you may or may not need to use a comma.

S, cc S.

Use a comma before a cc if the clauses before and after it are independent.

Commas separate independent clauses, and they make the sentence easier to read.

S **S**

NS cc S.

Do not use a comma before a cc if the clause before the cc is not independent.

Misplacing a comma or forgetting a period will change the meaning of your sentence.

NS **S**

S cc NS.

Do not use a comma before a cc if the clause following the cc is not independent.

Punctuation clarifies your message but can be tricky to master.

S **NS**

NS cc NS.

Do not use a comma before a cc if the clauses before and after it are not complete sentences.

Learning about commas and practicing conjunctions are essential for good writing.

NS **NS**

That’s it – for now. Four little visual rules to guide you through punctuating sentences that feature a coordinate conjunction. Ready to practice?

Oh. One more thing first: the Oxford Comma. If you have a list of three or more items, the final comma before the “and” is optional. Just remember to be consistent.

Your turn

Now it's practice time. Underline each clause, write the visual punctuation rule that applies, and punctuate the following sentences. The answer key is at the bottom, but don't peek!

1. _____ Correct punctuation clarifies your message and strong conjunctions link your ideas
2. _____ Using a comma incorrectly or failing to use a period changes your entire meaning
3. _____ Understanding conjunctions and mastering commas is essential for clear writing
4. _____ I used a comma before the conjunction but forgot the final period
5. _____ The writer added a semicolon and deleted the unnecessary comma
6. _____ A comma creates a small pause but a period marks a complete stop
7. _____ Conjunctions act as bridges between thoughts yet punctuation provides the road signs
8. _____ That you used a comma or skipped a semicolon explains why the sentence is confusing



Looking ahead

Pretty easy once you know the rules, right? Next time I'll review the visual punctuation rules for subordinate conjunctions. Not sure what they are? Look it up, or you'll have to wait until the next issue. And if anyone reading this knows the whereabouts of any, please let me know. World peace may depend on it!

**Sorry for the title. I'm not usually one for puns, but I couldn't resist this time.*

- Answer key**
1. S, cc S. Correct punctuation clarifies your message, and strong conjunctions link your ideas.
 2. NS cc S. Learning to place a comma or failing to use a period changes your entire meaning.
 3. NS cc S. Using conjunctions properly and mastering commas is essential for clear writing.
 4. S cc NS. I used a comma before the conjunction but forgot the final period.
 5. S cc NS. The writer added a semicolon and deleted the unnecessary comma.
 6. S, cc S. A comma creates a small pause, but a period marks a complete stop.
 7. S, cc S. Conjunctions act as bridges between thoughts, yet punctuation provides the road signs.
 8. NS cc NS. That you used a comma or skipped a semicolon explains why the sentence is confusing.



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.

When speaking English feels risky – Understanding and reducing learner anxiety in the classroom

Heiner Böttger describes two classroom-ready tools to help improve students’ oral competency by reducing speaking-related stress



Cold Calling

Source: Gemini

English Language Speaking Anxiety (ELSA)

Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) is the worry, tension and self-doubt that can arise when learners have to use a language they’re still acquiring. In many classrooms, the “hot spot” is speaking: students may know what they want to say, yet avoid participating, speak in fragments or freeze when the task becomes public.

English Language Speaking Anxiety (ELSA) is a speaking-focused form of FLA that can emerge *before*, *during* and *after* oral participation and can inhibit performance through emotional, cognitive, behavioral and physiological reactions. In its stronger form – as an illness or phobia – fear of speaking a foreign language has been described as xenoglossophobia.

ELSA is highly relevant for schools because speaking is not an optional add-on. It’s central to communicative competence and to the practice students need for growth. ELSA also reminds us that oral communication is more than just “talking”: students may fear not understanding, not being understood or both – especially in fast oral interaction.

A pilot study with foreign language learners illustrates this pattern:

- Nearly half the participants reported feeling uncomfortable speaking English in the classroom.
- About two-thirds feared saying something incorrect.
- Many admitted that they sometimes remained silent despite knowing the correct answer – simply because they feared being wrong.

For teachers, these results suggest that “quiet” can be a coping strategy rather than a lack of ability.

Where does ELSA come from?

Classic work on FLA points to three recurring drivers:

- Communication apprehension (anticipatory dread)
- Fear of negative evaluation (worry about judgment)
- Test-related anxiety.

Speaking anxiety is often cyclical:

- It builds in advance (“I’ll mess up”).
- It spikes in the moment (“My mind goes blank”).
- It continues afterward as rumination or shame (“Everyone noticed”).

These concerns then raise the stakes for the next speaking event. On the level of “what it looks like”, ELSA often combines:

- Cognitive noise (for example: worry, catastrophizing, negative self-talk)
- Physiological arousal (for example: fast heartbeat, sweating)
- Behavioral patterns (for example: avoidance, shortening answers, relying on memorized scripts).

What can teachers do?

They can provide:

- frequent, low-stakes opportunities to speak
- sufficient planning time
- extensive practice in a supportive environment.

This doesn’t mean “no correction”. It means correction that protects willingness to communicate: brief, respectful and oriented toward next steps.

Pronunciation and intelligibility work can also lower ELSA because



Source: Copilot

Oral communication is more than just “talking”

students feel more confident about being understood; the key is to teach pronunciation as skill-building, not as “accent policing”.

A practical plan

- Before speaking, increase control by making success criteria transparent (for example: “use two target phrases”), offering choices (topic / partner / format), and building predictable routines (for example: 60 seconds of silent planning at the start of every discussion).
- During speaking, reduce cognitive load through pair rehearsal before whole-class talk, sentence starters, vocabulary banks and normal wait time. Consider “warm calling” (students know in advance that they may share a rehearsed idea) instead of surprise cold calling.
- After speaking, prevent the shame spiral with short reflection that highlights progress (“One thing I did well...”) and one concrete next step.



Heiner Böttger is professor of English Didactics at the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, a psychologist, and an educational neuroscientist. In addition to the pre-service preparation of English teachers for all school levels and tracks, his primary research interest lies in neurodidactics, with a focus on language-related, evidence-based, and holistic teaching and learning processes during developmental phases that are especially sensitive to language acquisition. This also includes foreign language anxiety.



Source: Copilot

Two classroom-ready tools for teachers

These two tools can help us as teachers diagnose and intervene without turning lessons into therapy.

First, use a 5-minute anonymous “ELSA temperature check”.

Every month, have students rate (1–5):

- “Before speaking English, I worry about mistakes”
- “When I speak, my mind goes blank”
- “After speaking, I keep thinking about errors”
- “I notice physical signs (for example: fast heartbeat)”
- “I avoid speaking even when I have an idea.”

Add one open prompt:

- “One thing that helps me speak is...”
- Use class averages to adjust instruction (more planning time, more pair rehearsal and different feedback routines). This mirrors the idea that ELSA varies by phase and component and can therefore be addressed in targeted ways.

Second, co-construct “speaking safety norms”.

Through a short class discussion, ask:

- “What do supportive listeners do?”
- “What makes speaking harder here?”
- “How should we respond when someone searches for words?”

Turn answers into 4–6 concrete norms and teach a small set of “repair / support” phrases (for example: “Let me try again,” “Could you repeat that?”, “I think you mean...”).

Clear norms reduce fear of negative evaluation and help peers become part of the solution. If technology is available, a low-pressure bridge can

be “record and re-record”: students practice a 30-second message, submit the best version, and then reuse the same content in live pair work.

Looking ahead

Teachers who want to capture speaking anxiety patterns more systematically can follow our initiative page at: <https://www.ku.de/slf/anglistik-amerikanistik/didaktik-der-englischen-sprache-und-literatur/initiative>.

From April 2026 onward, a teacher-friendly diagnostic tool will be available on this page to support classroom-based surveys and data-informed intervention.

Further reading

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Who's to say?

Betsy Hollweck reflects on the ever-evolving gap between correctness and usage



"May I offer you a taste of our Tisane of the Week?" "No thanks, I only drink herbal teas."

A metaphysical question

I was reading a trade email the other day, when an article caught my eye: *Inside the Tea Industry with Sharyn Johnston: Should we call Herbals "Tea"?* The correct answer is: no. Anything not coming from the *camellia sinensis* plant is not tea.

Johnston poses a metaphysical question: "Does our current use of language really serve us?" She argues that it does not: in the tea world, to be a stickler for the correct word ("tisane") would alienate many customers, which is not a desirable business outcome.

"Herbal tea", she argues, has entered the mainstream vernacular. People are comfortable saying it, having been bombarded for years by packaging and menu-writers. Language evolves, and she thinks that we should too.

Does our current use of language really serve us?

"I'm thinking sushi."
"We're liking the blue sofa."

Prescription vs. description

Logically, we agree. Yet how do we teach? Prescriptively, following established rules or descriptively, considering current usage? Granted, if one is teaching a graded class, to teach prescriptively is in order. But for those of us who are not teaching for a grade or a degree?

When I was growing up, the running argument was about the word



Often people learn through osmosis

"ain't". "Ain't ain't in the dictionary because ain't ain't a word" was a commonly repeated saying. Now it seems that the present continuous / progressive form of stative verbs is in question. "Are you feeling it?" "I'm thinking sushi," "We're liking the blue sofa" are three examples I pulled from a film I saw recently.

Osmosis

In one of my VHS A2 classes, there's always the discussion over whether to use "must" or "have to", especially in the negative.

In my (not-for-a-grade) classes, I often tell people that they'll hear things said both ways – the "correct" way and the "incorrect" way, that they should learn to recognize both and judge which to use and when. It's difficult to learn (constant repetition is necessary), but often people learn through osmosis. I don't correct them if they've learned a different way ("I've not done my homework" vs. "I haven't done it"), but I think that if they hear something often enough from me that it'll sink in.

At least, I hope so. In the meantime, we're loving our classes.

Quotation by kind permission of Sharyn Johnston. For more on the tisane question, see her article *Should We Call Herbals "Tea"?* at: <https://www.worldteanews.com/best-practices/inside-tea-industry-sharyn-johnston-should-we-call-herbals-tea>.

REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE

Mareike Sedlmeier takes a close look at Laura Edwards' ideas for cutting prep time

The last Saturday in February was a real eye-opener for me. We all know the phrase “time is money” – but who actually pays us freelance teachers for all the prep time we invest in our lessons? Well, no-one does, so we'd better become as efficient as possible. This three-hour online workshop showed us how to tackle time-consuming “vampire tasks”.

REDUCE

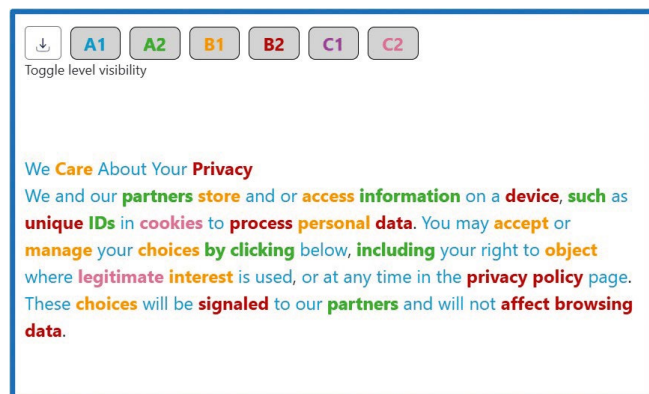
Laura showed us numerous gadgets and techniques to help us reduce distractions and focus on the actual task at hand. The most important thing is to activate the right mindset: Turn off your phone and establish focus triggers with little helpers such as www.imissmylibrary.com or www.lifeat.com that will hardwire your brain to focus mode if used regularly. Then set a time for your task and use the pomodoro technique to chop your time budget into manageable portions.

The second aspect we would want to reduce is the number of emails and communication platforms we use with our students. Choose one platform that suits you (examples would be www.linoit.com, www.craft.do or google sites) and stick to it. This will help you cut down on your email traffic significantly.

REUSE

The most efficient way to create an exercise is to use one that already exists. But do you know exactly where to find that great worksheet you made for your last B2 class ages ago? If not, you might consider reorganising your files and folders. According to the Johnny Decimal System, every file you need should not be more than two clicks away from your desktop.

Of course, there are plenty of other filing systems out there – but whichever one you choose, block one hour in your weekly calendar to sort and tidy up your files. You'll be glad you did!



Screenshot from vocabkitchen.com



The pomodoro timer

RECYCLE

The last part of the workshop focused on the cost per use (CPU) of the activities we create. As a rule of thumb, you should never create something from scratch if you can't use it at least three times. The more often, the better. One very simple way to adapt an activity for several classes is to adjust it to the learners' level. With www.vocabkitchen.com you can check a written text against the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) and replace words that are above or below the desired level.

Chop, chop!
Time is money!

Another trick is to turn any written text into an audio so you can use the same comprehension questions for two different activities. In addition to the voice recorder on your phone, www.vocaroo.com is an easy option that automatically generates a link and

QR code you can use to share the audio you've created.

I think everyone at the workshop will agree it was worth every minute and it'll help us save a lot of time in the future. Thank you so much for this inspiring Saturday morning, Laura!

Useful links

For saving time: www.imissmylibrary.com, www.lifeat.com

For reducing communication platforms:

www.linoit.com, www.craft.do

For adapting materials: www.vocabkitchen.com

For creating audio: www.vocaroo.com



Mareike Sedlmeier was born in Munich in 1988. After studying English and French, she worked as a translator for the Military History Museum (MHM) in Dresden and the CBRN Defence, Safety and Environmental Protection School in Sonthofen. But she soon felt that she was making more of a difference when helping her colleagues improve their own writing instead of translating their texts for them, and she decided it was time for a change. In 2020 she took the CELTA course in Munich and has been teaching for the VHS since then.

Peace building through digitalized language teaching

Oksana Matsnieva shares her key takeaways from an Erasmus project to promote peace building by helping schools and universities digitalize their language curricula

In January 2026, I participated in Phase 1 of the three-phase professional development programme, *Digital Methods in Language Teaching*. The programme is part of the DigiFLEd Erasmus+ CBHE project and coordinated by Tampere University, Finland (<https://digifled.eu/>).

Phase 1 focused on three main types of digital tools.

1. Tools for fostering speaking and listening skills

- **TTSMaker** (<https://ttsmaker.com/>) enables users to convert written text into natural-sounding audio in multiple languages, with options to adjust speech rate, pitch and voice type as well as to export audio and subtitles. This makes it effective for creating pronunciation models and listening activities.
- In contrast, **TurboScribe** (<https://turboscribe.ai/>) converts audio and video into written transcripts, supporting inclusive education by improving accessibility for learners with hearing impairments, dyslexia or temporary physical limitations. It also offers features such as speaker recognition and multi-language transcription.

The project focused on interactive tools for language learning

2. Tools for teaching lexis, grammar and spelling

- **Educaplay** (<https://www.educaplay.com/>) allows teachers to create interactive games such as quizzes, crosswords and matching activities, promoting engagement through gamification and seamless integration with learning management systems.
- **Flippity** (<https://www.flippity.net/>) makes it possible to transform simple Google Sheets into interactive exercises, including flashcards, quizzes and word games. It supports differentiated instruction by allowing teachers to tailor content to individual learners' levels and provides immediate feedback.

3. Tools for learners with special needs

- **GCompris** (<https://www.gcompris.net/index-en.html>) is particularly helpful for neurodivergent learners and children with special educational needs. It offers a multisensory, game-based environment that reduces anxiety and enhances accessibility, while allowing learners to progress at their own pace.



Wrap up

As a teacher trainer, I've found these tools particularly valuable not only for my own professional practice but also for preparing pre-service EFL teachers. The DigiFLEd project was designed primarily for Ukrainian teachers, who are now forced to teach largely online. But I'm convinced that all the tools can be used profitably by language teachers everywhere.

The tools are especially useful for designing learner-centred lessons



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

From disruption to direction – What is our future skill set?

What do *eierlegende Wollmilchsäue*, continuing professional development and creative destruction have in common? They were all among the central themes of Kerstin Waechter's thought-provoking webinar on Saturday, March 7, 2026. **Karen Galtress** reports



Do teachers have to be educators, technologists, marketers and digital innovators all at once?

Disruption

Against this backdrop, Kerstin guided participants through the twists and turns of our current professional landscape. During the three-hour session, we examined changing twenty-first-century workplace skills and the inevitable knock-on effects these developments have on language teaching and teacher training. Participants also discussed the challenges trainers currently face, including the increasing saturation of the training market and the growing competition within the profession.

Importantly, the webinar created space for participants to articulate that these so-called “challenges” are, in reality, significant disruptions that can generate considerable uncertainty for educators. The discussion implicitly reflected the idea of creative destruction, a concept introduced by the economist Joseph Schumpeter to describe how innovation simultaneously dismantles existing structures while creating new opportunities.

On a roller coaster

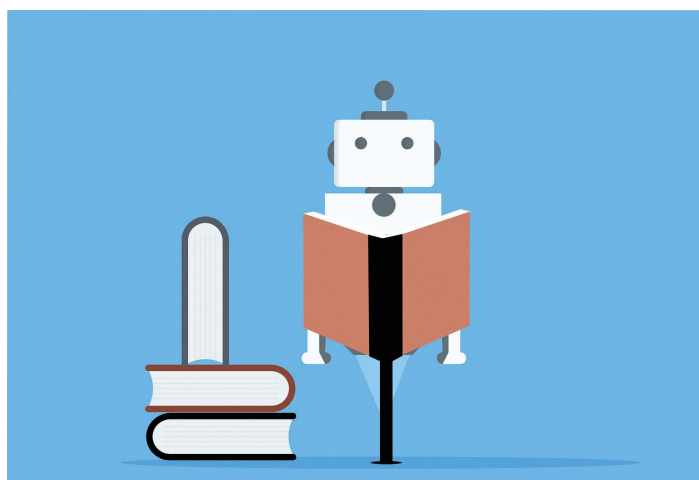
Kerstin's webinar was so well structured and logically developed that describing it as a roller coaster might seem unfair. Nevertheless, the metaphor feels appropriate when reflecting on the professional journey many of us have experienced in recent years.

For many teachers and trainers, things were progressing smoothly – until the pandemic suddenly forced us to abandon the safety of in-class teaching and plunge into the unknown waters of online instruction. This was the first dramatic loop. But the turbulence didn't stop there.

Just as many of us were beginning to feel more confident in the online environment and to take pride in the digital teaching skills we'd acquired through necessity and experimentation, a second disruption appeared: accessible artificial intelligence. With the public release of ChatGPT in November 2022, another new landscape emerged – one in which teachers began asking whether AI should be used in the classroom, resisted altogether or perhaps feared as a potential replacement.

The emotional responses varied. Some educators felt anxious. Others were enthusiastic about the possibilities. Many simply wished the roller coaster would slow down.

With the public release of ChatGPT, another new landscape emerged





Direction

In the second half of the webinar, the mood shifted from disruption toward direction. Participants were encouraged to examine what teachers themselves bring to the table – skills and qualities that remain essential even in an AI-enhanced environment. Rather than positioning AI as a master that dictates pedagogical practice, the discussion focused on how educators can retain agency and ensure that AI

Should AI be used in the classroom, resisted altogether or feared as a potential replacement?

remains a tool that supports rather than replaces professional expertise.

By the end of the session, many participants, myself included, felt motivated to explore digital literacy more systematically and to consider how large language models can support everyday teaching tasks. In this sense, the webinar functioned as a valuable form of continuing professional development (CPD), encouraging teachers to reflect on how their professional skill sets may need to evolve in response to technological change.

The challenge

And what about the *eierlegende Wollmilchsau* – the mythical “egg-laying wool-and-milk-producing pig”? In German, this humorous expression refers to an impossible creature that can do everything at once. The metaphor resonated strongly during the discussion.

In an era when teachers are expected to be educators, technologists, marketers and digital innovators simultaneously, it can sometimes feel as though this mythical creature represents the expectations placed upon us. Yet one reassuring conclusion from the webinar was that we do not need to become such an impossible hybrid. Instead, the challenge lies in identifying how we can continue to remain relevant while developing the skills that genuinely enhance our professional practice.

Looking ahead, it’s encouraging to see organisations such as MELTA addressing these issues through future training opportunities. Workshops focusing on digital literacy and the refinement of online teaching skills may help educators navigate the ongoing transformations of the profession with greater confidence.

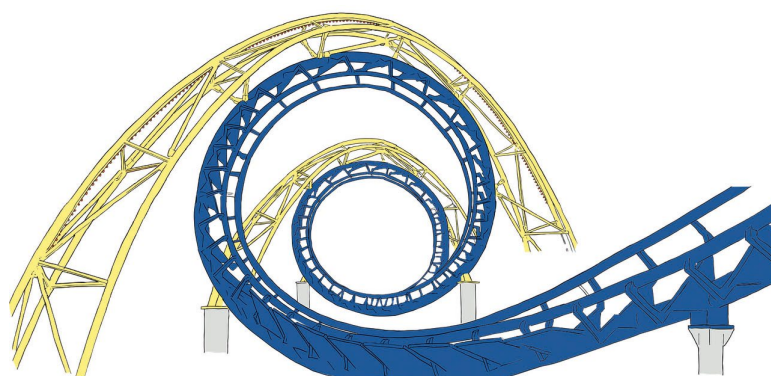
Karen Galtress is originally from England and teaches English at the Fremdspracheninstitut der Landeshauptstadt München.

Digital tools that can benefit us

- AI writing tools** for generating models, prompts and instant feedback
- Speech and pronunciation tools** for learner practice and assessment
- Learning analytics platforms** to track progress and personalize instruction
- Content creation skills** for slides, quizzes, simulations and video micro-lessons
- Digital collaboration tools** to manage hybrid or global classrooms effectively

What we can bring to the table

- Human insight and empathy** – understanding learner motivation, emotion and context
- Intercultural and business communication expertise** – linking language to real-world performance
- Facilitation and coaching skills** – helping learners apply English strategically in professional situations
- Ethical judgment and adaptability** – curating reliable content, guiding responsible AI use
- Personal connection and mentorship** – fostering learner confidence and accountability



Working humanistically – Seven practical activities

Tim Howe reports on Simon Marshall’s online MELTA workshop *Working humanistically: Seven practical activities* on 22nd November 2025.



Image source: Pixabay

Last year’s MELTA needs survey showed a clear desire for more hands-on workshops on using authentic materials and engaging students effectively. Who better, then, to respond to this call than ELT trainer Simon Marshall, whose teaching is widely recognised as practical, learner-centred and firmly rooted in real communication rather than theory alone?

No stranger to MELTA, Simon visited in November 2023 to deliver his workshop *Spicing Up Your Coursebook* and also appeared on the MELTA podcast: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UcQrddbIS6w>

Last November, he returned with his latest offering: a three-hour online workshop entitled *Working humanistically: Seven practical activities*. Lured by the promise of creativity over gimmickry, it felt like a timely opportunity to gather fresh ideas for engaging increasingly distracted teenage learners.

Writing this review, I was struck by how much learning – particularly in state schools – is weighted towards accuracy rather than the simpler goal of getting the message across. Recently, I witnessed a colleague berate a pupil for writing “I did my bed” instead of “I made my bed”. I hadn’t the heart to point out that the former is perfectly acceptable in colloquial use. Against this backdrop, Simon’s emphasis on meaning, engagement and communicative intent feels especially timely.

Simon’s seven activities

Simon presented a varied selection of activities designed to raise learners’ awareness of language while keeping engagement high:

- **Homonyms vs homophones:** exploring how words that sound the same but differ in meaning can affect clarity.
- **Naked and hinged sentences:** showing how simple sentences can be expanded or linked to improve writing and speaking.
- **Authentic language:** prioritising real-world English over textbook-only examples.
- **Strategies for good learning:** encouraging more effective and autonomous learning habits.
- **Malapropisms:** examining common (and often amusing) errors involving similar sounding words.

- **Often-confused words:** clarifying frequently mixed-up words and expressions.
- **Dictation:** using dictation to sharpen listening, spelling and language awareness.

My takeaways:

Hinged sentences: Linking form and memory

One particularly useful idea was the concept of hinged sentences as a way of supporting spelling and memory. In the examples Simon shared, the hinge word was often a homonym or homophone, allowing learners to see how the same word can function differently in two related sentences, for example:

- He was wearing a nice tie your laces or you’ll fall over!
- The way I was treated wasn’t fair increases can soon be expected on public transport.
- That’s a beautiful flower is used to make bread.
- As a child, I was taught it is wrong to lie down and relax for a while.
- Her new business was the first of its kind people are not always appreciated like they should be.

This struck me as a simple yet memorable technique with clear classroom potential. By anchoring new language to familiar forms, the activity supports accuracy while still encouraging learners to play with meaning and expression – an effective bridge between correctness and communication.

Allow students to experience communicative success before linguistic perfection

Student-generated questions: Encouraging curiosity

Another valuable takeaway was Simon’s emphasis on student-generated questions. Rather than providing learners with a fixed list of comprehension questions, he encouraged giving students the opportunity to ask the questions they themselves would like answered when reading a text.

Simon illustrated this point by referring to a book that had influenced him in his youth and inviting participants to suggest what they would want to ask him about it. This idea resonated strongly with me: as teachers, we can become so focused on producing the *right* questions that we sometimes forget how motivating it is for learners to formulate their own. In doing so, learners prioritise meaning and curiosity over formal accuracy, engaging

Image source: Gemini

HOMONYMS		HOMOPHONES	
bat		pair	pear
The Animal		Pair of Sneakers	
The Sport		Pear Fruit	

Collecting authentic language:
Eavesdropping in practice
Source: Copilot

Give students the opportunity to ask the questions they themselves would like answered

more naturally with texts as acts of communication rather than exercises to be completed.

**Malapropisms:
Learning through humour and error**

The section on malapropisms was particularly engaging. By highlighting humorous examples of incorrect word choice, Simon showed how errors can be used positively, rather than something to be avoided or corrected too quickly:

- My colleague insists that she only drinks decapitated coffee.
- We cannot let terrorists and rogue nations hold this nation hostile.
- We apologize for any incontinence this delay may have caused.
- Men and women prison intimates must be kept apart.
- Travel by train is often more comfortable than travel by plain.

What struck me was how meaning had still been communicated successfully, despite the lexical inaccuracy. In learning contexts that are often heavily weighted towards correctness, this felt like a useful reminder that communication frequently precedes precision.

This approach seemed especially relevant for teenage learners, who often respond well to humour and linguistic curiosity. Take, for example, a student proudly announcing: “*The prisoner who was held in bondage has been released!*” (no doubt they meant hostage). Moments like these spark laughter while reinforcing careful listening, attention to word choice, and – crucially – the idea that making oneself understood is a meaningful achievement in its own right.

**My leave-behind:
Collecting authentic language –
Eavesdropping in practice**

One aspect of the workshop that left me with some questions was the suggestion of eavesdropping as a way of collecting authentic language. Simon illustrated this by transcribing a conversation he’d overheard on a train. The dialogue highlighted features of spoken English not usually encountered in textbooks, such as the frequent use of *like* (referred to linguistically as “rhythmic redundancy”) or whatever (often used to signal indifference).



**Pedagogical implications:
Authenticity vs. clarity**

While this raised interesting points about the nature of authentic spoken language, I found myself wondering about the pedagogical implications. Encouraging us to work with expressions whose meanings are not always clear – even to us as teachers, such as *to be on top of one's blouse* – raises questions about selection and classroom relevance. How authentic is too authentic, and where should we draw the line between meaningful exposure and unnecessary confusion? Here, the balance between communicating real-world language and supporting learners' understanding felt less certain.

Telling the difference

Sustaining focus over a three-hour online workshop is challenging, even under ideal conditions. As we entered the third hour, my attention began to wane and my note-taking grew increasingly sketchy. Overall, however, *Working Humanistically* lived up to its promise, offering a range of adaptable ideas firmly grounded in real communication.

More broadly, the workshop served as a reminder that reflective teaching involves not only adopting new techniques but also examining the priorities that underpin them. While accuracy undoubtedly matters, many of Simon's activities highlighted the importance of allowing learners to experience communicative success before linguistic perfection. And even if not all of Simon's activities find their way into our lesson plans, we can at least come away better equipped to tell our homonyms from our homophones.



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.
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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

I have a one-to-one course in which I generally try to avoid the topic of politics.

However, recently a harmless discussion rapidly headed in that direction and became rather heated. That is to say, I noticed that I was becoming rather emotional.

At the end of the lesson, the participant actually thanked me for the discussion, so there were no hard feelings (despite my churning stomach).

My question is: should I have nipped things in the bud earlier?

Stressed-out in Straubing

Dear Stressed-out,

You poor thing! Sometimes it's unavoidable to mention politics, especially now, with the world order in disarray. I think you must take a step back and look at what your student needs their English lessons for.

If improving fluency via discussion is a high priority, then you certainly met their needs on this occasion! You need to hold on to the fact that they thanked you for the session and console yourself that it is a one-to-one lesson and didn't explode into something darker on a larger scale.

So now you know that this kind of discussion upsets you, so do avoid it in the future. Try to find a few strategies for diverting the student away from the subject if things start going in that direction again. Additionally, have some other discussion subjects up your sleeve that are controversial but which you are personally not so sensitive about.

Dear Aunt Agony,

My students' increasing use of ChatGPT saddens me to no end. They use it to write e-mails to me and to each other and to do any kind of written homework. To my mind, it's basically cheating. But even more importantly, I've noticed that using ChatGPT definitely impedes their language-learning and, in particular, their vocabulary acquisition and ability to speak English spontaneously.

They argue, of course, that ChatGPT saves them time. But if that's so, why do they bother taking an English course at all? Can you help?

Frustrated in Freising

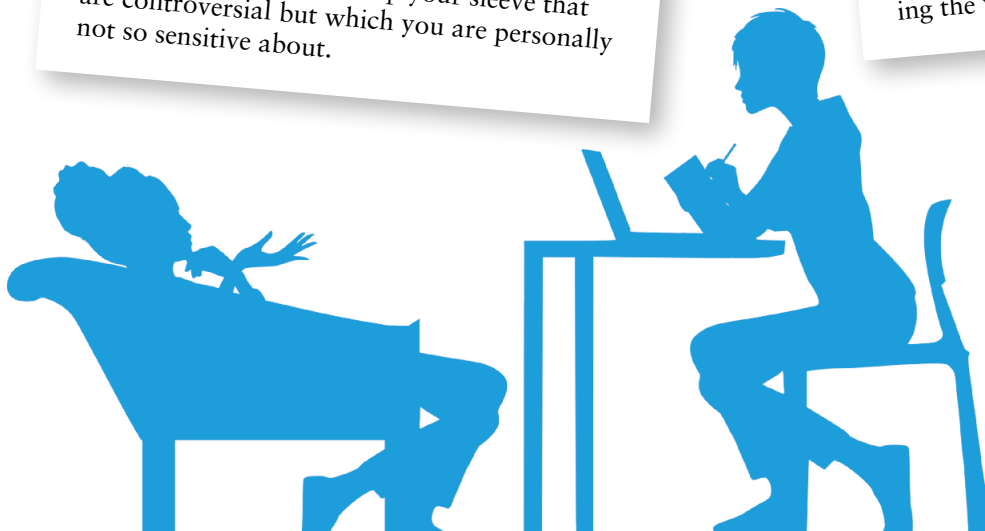
Dear Frustrated,

No doubt, this behaviour is very widespread now, and I agree, it is frustrating.

The best we as teachers can do is to point out the benefits of writing English without the help of AI. Just using it for individual words if necessary is acceptable in my opinion. DeepL is a useful tool here but needs to be treated with care when choosing the right translation for the respective context.

In your students' daily working lives, ChatGPT obviously saves time. However, that's not the point when it comes to doing homework. Maybe you could have a truth-or-lies session before checking their homework. For example, you could ask: Who only looked up a few words? Who wrote everything using ChatGPT? Make it a competition to see who can collect the most brownie points for not doing the latter!

On the other hand, it's great that your students, in fact, do their homework. I guess you should also emphasise oral work, though, and get them to present their homework orally, without having the written version in front of them.



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 c/o Randy Perry, Oberaudorferstr. 1, 81549 München

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

Impressum

Melta News is the newsletter of Munich English Language Teachers Association e.V. c/o R. Perry, Oberaudorferstr. 1, 81549 München, Germany

Graphic design

Polarstern Media
www.polarsternmedia.de

Layout

Saskia Kölliker Grafik
www.koelliker-grafik.de

Publishing dates and editorial deadlines

Melta News is published three times a year, in spring, summer and autumn. The editorial deadlines are March 31, June 30 and October 31 respectively.

Circulation

1,000 (approx.)

Advertising

For rates, see on page three. For more information on advertising, please contact Joan Walsh, Melta Advertising Coordinator, (0 89) 98 51 02, joaniwalsh@web.de

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Publishing date of this issue

May 2026

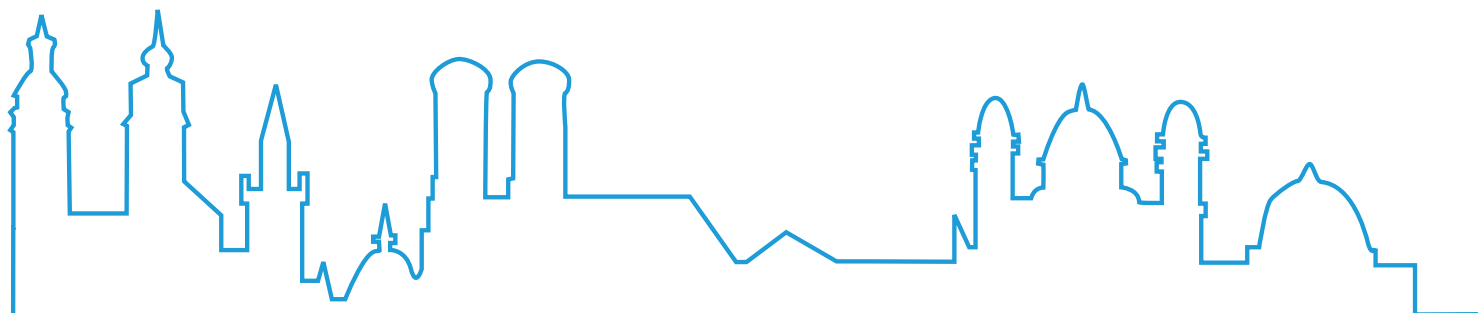
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