Malta Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language

MATEFL is an organisation run on a volunteer basis by teachers for teachers of English as a foreign language. It is dedicated to the professional development of its members by facilitating the sharing and exchanging of ideas and keeping abreast of new developments in the EFL world.

July 2020

A changing of the guards
Natasha Fabri

Teacher 2.0: Collaborative tools
Natasha Fabri

IATEFL 2020 Jean Theuma

From the MATEFL archives
Julia Pearson

Vox Pop: Teaching online during a pandemic Natasha Fabri

Why not try...’the top 5 list’?
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Hello TEFLers,

Welcome to the first completely virtual issue of our Newsletter! If you have been following our news, you'll already know that we decided to forgo the printed issue due to Covid19 restrictions. We will revisit the matter of printing when we come up to the next issue at the end of the year.

2020 has, so far, brought a lot of changes not only to our daily lives but also to our committee—Jean Theuma has taken over as President after Alan Marsh’s extraordinary tenure of 21 years. Read all about it in our double-interview feature.

Earlier this month, we also had another historic event—our first multi-speaker webinars for our members. A full recap of all three sessions can be found in this issue.

We have more great articles and features lined up for you, including a new regular feature from none other than Julia Pearson, curator of our archives. Natasha will be talking about collaborative tools in Teacher 2.0. Matt will focus on recycling language in “Why not try...?”

We hope you enjoy this month's newsletter. MATEFL wishes you and your loved ones a safe summer!

Tash & Matt

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As most of you will by now be aware, Alan Marsh has passed on the baton to Jean Theuma as President of the committee, after a fruitful tenure spanning over two decades. For this issue, I sat down with both Alan (A) and Jean (J), virtually of course, to discuss their views and experiences with MATEFL.

**How did MATEFL start, Alan?**

A: The first group of Malta Celta trainees (in 1994) decided to meet six months later to see where they were, so to speak, and to exchange experiences, over a lovely dinner. And it was there that the idea was mooted of setting up a Teachers’ Association. The following year, MATEFL was officially formed.

**Jean, how did you get involved on the committee?**

J: My former DOS, Bev Harrison, was a member of the committee for many years. Bev was a keen member of MATEFL and, as a Director of Studies, liked to ensure that many of the teachers under her watch were enrolled as members of MATEFL. So, I attended several events and found great support in being around like-minded people who are enthusiastic about the industry. When Bev returned to England, her space on the committee was left vacant. So, I decided that it was time that I paid back some of the time and energy that the committee had so generously given to me as a new teacher.

I stood for election in 2009 and have been on the committee ever since. The committee that I joined was made up of: Alan Marsh, Larissa Jonk, Richard Twigg, Julia Pearson, Ian Scerri, Angi Conti, Daniel Mangani and me!
How do you see MATEFL's role in the Maltese ELT industry, and how has it changed over the years?

J: As with any other industry, EFL has its ups and downs, its good-old-days, and its bad-old days. But one constant that has been part of the industry for over 20 years has been MATEFL. MATEFL has remained an unbiased, non-political arena for teachers from all schools to come together and focus on what they really care about - teaching! I feel that this is the most valuable aspect of MATEFL. It is dedicated to supporting, encouraging and developing the skills of all EFL teachers around Malta whichever school the person is part of, whatever level of teaching they have mastered, whenever they started on their teaching journey.

I cannot comment on changes in MATEFL from its inception as I was not part of that; however, from the time that I have been part of MATEFL, it is its permanency, steadfastness and constancy that have been remarkable rather than its ability to change.

That is not to say that MATEFL has not adapted to the times. As can be seen in recent times, MATEFL has taken to online meetings and events like a duck to water. The current pandemic resulted in the cancellation of the AGM and the much awaited Summer Multi-speaker Event. At short notice, these events were replaced with online versions which have proved to be very successful.

A few years ago, the regulations in Malta required EFL teachers to have a number of ‘CPD hours’ per year to qualify for their teacher’s permit. This resulted in a sudden and swift rise in membership numbers as teachers took the opportunity to attend MATEFL training events. MATEFL adapted to the unexpected swell in event attendance by introducing pre-event registration to avoid long waits and chaos during session choices. The registration system has also allowed us to monitor numbers and attendance better to ensure a smoother running of the events.

A: I don’t think its essential nature has changed. It’s
still an association for teachers and run by teachers, with its main aim being to share professional expertise and experiences. I think it’s also always tried to encourage teachers to share their ideas, activities and experiences with other teachers, so encouraging teachers to give a presentation - perhaps for the very first time - is another important strand that has got stronger over the years. The only other thing I’d add is the development of the Newsletter, which looks really professional now and continues to be packed with great, practical ideas.

What are your favourite memories from being on the committee?
J: I don’t have a favourite memory (mainly because I am extremely forgetful!). But my favourite thing about being on the committee is the sense of friendship and camaraderie that exists among the Committee members. The Committee members work hard and volunteer their time and energy freely and with great focus. I am happy to be part of such a dedicated team of people and I am proud to call them my friends!
A: Being part of a supportive, encouraging group of dedicated teachers who want the very best for our profession here in Malta. And I particularly enjoy our meetings over a pizza! Also, after everybody has worked so hard to organise a seminar (or, nowadays, webinar) event, it’s so rewarding to see tens and tens of teachers arriving on the day and leaving satisfied and inspired. It makes it all worthwhile.

What were/are the biggest challenges?
J: Accepting the role of President of MATEFL is the biggest challenge I have ever taken on! MATEFL is the success it is today directly through the hard-work and perseverance of Alan Marsh. Alan is such an integral part of MATEFL and it was difficult to conceive of a time when he wasn’t going to be President. Yet here we are! Both Alan’s great professionalism and also his generous and large personality have drawn members into the association. And most people stay members of MATEFL because of Alan’s amazing training sessions, informative and thought-provoking speeches and exuberant friendliness. I am humbled to have been voted in as the new President. Alan’s are very large footsteps to follow and I am sure that there will be times when I stumble and fall. However, with Alan’s mentoring and guidance and with the Committee’s support and patience, I will endeavour to do the best I can.
A: Biggest challenges? Well, at the beginning it was a bit of a challenge to convince people that we weren’t a union but an association of teachers who wanted to share their professional practice. But that soon became clear, I think. And another challenge has always been to find a speaker from outside Malta who would be interesting and relevant for our members. Likewise, I know that the editors of our Newsletter have always found it difficult to find teachers to contribute to the Newsletter. And now of course, the implications of the Coronavirus are a massive challenge for us all.

Where do you see MATEFL going from here?
J: As I mentioned before, I believe that MATEFL plays an important role in the Maltese EFL scene. I feel that it is important that MATEFL remains disconnected from school ownership and politically unaffiliated. Its core value of development and support ‘by teachers for teachers’ must remain untouched.
However, on a superficial level, I would like to see MATEFL ‘dragged kicking and screaming into the Century of the Fruit Bat’ (Terry Pratchett reference, any-
one?). There are many digital routes that MATEFL can take to make systems and services more easily accessible to its members. I would also like to see membership increase as we reach more and more teachers across the islands. I would also like to see a rise in involvement in the Special Interest Groups (SIGs) which would offer more targeted training and discussion groups for teachers who have specialist interests.

A: I think that embracing the use of technology is a road we’ve already started out on and I think a lot of members would like to learn how to use specific digital tools with the materials they’re teaching from. I also think it’s very important that MATEFL stays focused on being relevant to members i.e. dealing with ideas, techniques, approaches and methods that have clear practical implications in the classroom. That doesn’t mean that there’s no place for theorising - far from it. But theory needs to be grounded in practical classroom experience. Research is important, especially academic, theoretical research, but there are arenas and contexts that are better equipped to develop that particular strand of ELT.

Having said that, I feel that there might be more space for discussion and debate about things we do in the classroom (or in our online classes). Perhaps that kind of event could be incorporated into future MATEFL events e.g. Should we teach grammar explicitly: the case for and against; Just how relevant is teaching pronunciation? Is there still a place for Communicative Language Teaching? Online, Blended or Face-to-Face? Etc., etc.

Alan, what advice would you give Jean?

A: To continue being inclusive and to maintain her enthusiasm. And to find her own way of helping MATEFL and its members to move forward.
Every year thousands of teachers, educators, administrators, school owners and publishers gather in one of England’s big cities to attend the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL) annual conference. This year was different!

Due to the pandemic that the world is experiencing, IATEFL was unable to host its annual conference, which this year should have been in Harrogate. Weeks before the scheduled event, borders and airports were closed, crowds of people were no longer allowed to gather, and the conference was cancelled.

However, the EFL community is renowned for its ingenuity, innovative approaches and ability to think quickly on its feet. So, The IATEFL Global Get Together was born; an online extravaganza of talks and workshops from around the world! As an online event, the participants would no longer need to meet in person and so the informative and interesting sessions could go ahead. The conference was created by giving speakers 45 minutes one after the other to talk, discuss and explore their themes with an audience from every part of the globe.

The IATEFL Global Get Together was held over 2 days: Saturday, 18th April 2020 & Sunday, 19th April 2020. The theme of the event was the changing times we are living in at the moment and the Coronavirus pandemic, environmental crises and social injustice all found their way into many of the talks.

Here are some of the highlights of the event as there were too many to describe in detail:

Saturday started with a talk by the great David Crystal who is the Patron of IATEFL. He spoke of the changes to the English language over the last 15 years, in particular those developing around the internet and social media.

The rest of the morning was spent in the company of speakers who talked about teacher well-being and the need to avoid stress in these challenging times. Other sessions examined the need for educators to band together and support each other and that IATEFL and local teacher associations is one way that teachers may find the support they need.

The early afternoon saw a panel discussion about including and incorporating diversity into ELT materials. The speakers were all representatives of different SIGs (Special Interest Groups) that fall within IATEFL: material writers; young learner teachers; literature specialists; special education needs educators; and those raising global issues. In speaking about the ‘principles for design, selection and use’, the panel hoped to raise the awareness that it is the responsibility of all EFL educators to be inclusive.

The afternoon continued with a fascinating talk by Carol Read who offered practical ways of incorporating the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals into primary education, thus increasing both the students’ language ability and their thinking skills. These activities are designed to improve the
students’ critical thinking and creativity no matter how young they may be.

Sunday started with a particularly relevant talk comparing synchronous to asynchronous online education by Catharine Walters. Synchronous teaching (where the students join the teacher in a ‘face-to-face’ classroom online) is becoming fraught with difficulty, with time differences for international students and connectivity issues for those in some areas. Walters discussed some of the advantages that an asynchronous classroom may have when students can access the material in their own time and cover the tasks at their own pace.

Amongst the many interesting talks on Day 2 of the online conference, Gareth Rees explored the visual aspect of learning by looking at multi-modality, visual literacy and communication. His talk focused on using video in more effective ways to deepen learning.

Many of the other talks on Day 2 investigated varied aspects of online teaching from offering practical guides for transitioning to online teaching; to gaining strategies and tips for the actual teaching and learning; to making sure that the techniques you use and habits you develop are sustainable.

The conference closed at 5:30pm local time with a speech by the Vice-President of IATEFL, Dr Gabriel Maggioli. In all, over 30,000 viewers attended the conference which was available on the IATEFL Adobe conference platform and was simultaneously live streamed on Facebook. A large number of the participants commented on social media what a success the conference had been with viewers from all 7 continents able to join together in professional development creating a global community of EFL practitioners. IATEFL members have access to all the recordings of the talks from the conference, although no certificates of attendance were issued this year. Next year’s IATEFL conference is planned to take place in person in Harrogate from 16th March 2021 to 19th March 2021. MATEFL also offers a scholarship for members who wish to attend the conference to help with flight and accommodation costs. More details can be found on the MATEFL website: http://matefl.org/iatefl-sponsorship.html.

See you in Harrogate in 2021!

Join IATEFL!

MATEFL is an Associate Member of IATEFL. Membership with IATEFL offers you:

· Contact with EFL teachers around the world · An annual conference and exhibition at membership rates · An opportunity to join any of the 15 Special Interest Groups (SIGS) · Discounted periodicals · IATEFL Voices newsletter 6 times a year.

Current MATEFL members can benefit from discounted IATEFL membership:

The basic membership is £22.00 instead of the usual £65.00 for non-MATEFL members. Memberships to SIGs are optional and are an additional £20.00 per SIG (both in Sterling). The fee can be paid directly to IATEFL by cheque, credit/debit card, bank draft, or bank transfer. The details for these payment methods are found on the application form. The application form must be submitted to MATEFL in order for the Associate discount to be used.

To ask for more information and an application form, please get in touch with Jean Theuma on: jean-theuma@hotmail.com.
As MATEFL’s newsletter editors, we realise that the last few months have been somewhat destabilizing for many teachers in the industry, both here in Malta and abroad. A big part of MATEFL’s mission is to support teachers’ development, so we couldn’t miss this opportunity to reach out. One way of doing so was to conduct a small survey among our members about their experiences from the last 4 months. We asked 6 questions and requested a further comment at the end. We sincerely thank Martin (M), Christine (C), June (J), Annamaria (A), Pauline (P), Gina (G), Anna (AN), Marlene (MA), Ruth (R), Simone (S), Elaine (EL), Marthese (MAR), and Josianne (JO) for their contributions. Here are the highlights:

1. What were the biggest hurdles you experienced when you had to switch to online teaching?
An initial lack of confidence with the technical side of things (M); I was unfamiliar with the technology at first, so there were some hitches at the beginning (J); Keeping students focused and motivated online (A); Finding work (P); Reducing teacher-talk-time (TTT) and getting the students to work together in groups in a similar way to what we did in class. (G); Getting used to so many tools and platforms (A); Technical limitations like limited Wi-Fi on the students’ side (S); Finding suitable material that is on-line friendly - most of the time it had to be created, and coming up with different ways of getting learners to interact together. (JO).

2. What were/are the perks of teaching online?
Not having to commute to work and getting stuck in traffic and I could give the lesson from the comfort of my own home. (Ma/C/A); Being able to manage my own time more effectively (P); You can mute students on Zoom! (J); Staying safe at home during lockdown (MA); Not needing to commute, going entirely paperless—not a single photocopy for months and having everything at the touch of a button! (G); No commuting and wasting time in traffic; brushing up my computer skills and becoming familiar with using different websites to communicate with the students like Padlet, Kahoot, Acdaly, Quizlet, etc. (A); It opened up a whole new world—without having to leave my home (R); At the moment I think it would be: First, the convenience, not having to take time to go to work and back. Secondly, a safer environment especially for those who have to take buses to work and those who are closer to the vulnerable age in light of Covid19. And finally, maybe being more up to date with the tech-generation making sure we always try to keep it learner centred. (MAR); Plenty - I’ve found it more flexible, and it also increased student engagement due to the new tools, more attractive material, and more up-to-date content. (JO)

3. Did your teaching style change? If yes, how so?
Definitely less board work (M); I assigned more pair/team-work than usual (J); Lots of communicative activities (MA); I found it very difficult to organise pair/group work and caught myself falling into the TTT trap! (S); I felt I couldn’t be as hands-on as I usually am in class. (EL); It was definitely more time-consuming because I had to send the material to my students before every class. (R); Not really, Not real-
ly. I have always advocated discovery learning and used technology in my F2F lessons. This could still be done in a virtual classroom, so I didn’t feel it was too different. (JO).

4. How did your learners adapt to the virtual classroom?
It was a seamless transition. They were quite open to this method and I had no problems whatsoever. (C/J/AN/MA/R); Many overslept and missed classes more frequently. I guess the lack of Wi-Fi connectivity they were used to at school affected their motivation. A few persisted and still did their best in spite of everything that was going on. (S); There were a couple of teething problems early on as most were forced to suddenly use mobile phones to connect. Learners built a good rapport both with each other and with myself as their teacher. They also enjoyed discovering new tools in class. (JO).

5. What tools have you been using? What’s been successful?
Our respondents mentioned the usual suspects—Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Skype. Some other responses: I’m using Zoom as my platform, I constantly use the breakout rooms, chat-boxes, screen sharing. I also like using Padlet and Spotify. (G); A variety of Google tools as well as card and quiz generators. However, I feel that success mostly depends on the type of task you set up more than the tool being used. (JO)

6. How will your classroom teaching change when we eventually go back to school? What skills/tools will you take back with you?
I will prepare my lesson digitally but will deliver it face to face so I will be using my laptop to deliver the lesson. (C); Technology-wise, I’ll use my laptop a lot more and I will want my students to continue using some of the tools to promote autonomy. They are quite easy to use once you get the hang of it, this might also help reduce face-to-face interactions and thus help us protect ourselves from possible infection. (A); I’ve developed my technical skills during this period, so I’m sure something will rub off onto my classroom teaching! (P); I will definitely exploit the interactive white board much more than I used to. I will continue to use Padlet because that’s worked really well so far. I would like to figure out Quizlet and some other tools (like making your own cartoons). However, I’m still working on the last two. (G); I think I’ll start getting into the habit of preparing grammar on a PowerPoint presentation and displaying it on the white board in class—it will look clearer and I can plan better. (R); I think I would encourage students to take more control of their own learning by including more online material. (MAR); Three respondents felt they would most likely revert to their ‘old’ way of classroom teaching once they go back to class.

Additional comments
Many of the respondents were positive about the support given to them in the form of free/subsidized CPD sessions, including those hosted by MATEFL, during this time.

However, some also expressed their deep concerns about their work situation/conditions after months of uncertainty in the tourism industry. Some are also unsure about their own personal safety as they return to their respective schools, now that restrictions are being lifted and foreign students can once again come to study in Malta.
In March, ELT teachers in Malta were faced with an unprecedented reality—schools had to close their doors in a matter of days, student numbers evaporated and we were all faced with the more-or-less welcome prospect of teaching exclusively online.

Teachers were thrown in at the deep end and needed to navigate a plethora of tools thrown at them by their schools in a very short time. However, it was such a pleasant surprise to see how many long self-professed technophobes I know have used this time to go all in. They trained, experimented, and now talk about online tools like pros. This is truly a wish fulfilled after years of writing this feature on the newsletter!

With this in mind, I’d like to focus on a specific aspect of our virtual classrooms:

1. How do we get the learners to work together, in an effort to get closer to what it used to feel like to be in the classroom?

2. How can we promote autonomy, student-centred learning and peer-teaching online?

3. How do we stop depending on the teacher screensharing everything, all the time—which might indirectly hamper efforts to reduce TTT and, if like me, you’ve seen how it makes your laptop age by about 10 dog-years?

For me, the answer lies in using collaborative tools. Yes, using chat stream on your group chat software is acceptable, but there has to be a better, more organised way to store and display all the material we cover in class! I will consider 3 options: Microsoft Teams Notebook, Padlet, and Google Docs.

**Microsoft Teams Class Notebook**

I’m starting here since this has been my bare-bones lesson-planner in the last few weeks. Teams goes hand-in-hand with all Office 365 apps, and its Class Notebook feature is specifically connected to OneNote which automatically stores all your entries in neat folders.

You have a Collaborative Space where learners can write together in real time. There’s also a Teacher’s Only section, where one can pre-plan and store pages and then simply move them to the public space when needed. There’s a Content Library, where you can store reference material, and even private individual notebooks for each student.

Now, let’s focus on the Collaborative section. I like to start a new, clearly labelled, page for every lesson so that students can find and review anything covered as easily as possible. Of course, the trusty Snipping Tool is vital to copy/paste material onto your page, but you can also drag/drop files, e.g. Word documents and audio files, you want to share directly. It also works wonderfully when you upload online videos as large thumbnails instead of cumbersome screensharing from a separate browser.

Once your learners get the hang of it, encourage them to get creative with their ‘posts’ too. Especially when you have students logging in with their phones, it’s really important to plan how everything will be...
distributed on the page. Leave a reasonable amount of space for students to write under or around your prompts and tasks. While everyone is writing, some overlapping might occur and students might unwittingly write in a colleague’s box. When this happens, you’ll get a notification of existing conflicts which can be reviewed and fixed. To prevent this, write each students’ name (or simply a number) in textboxes spread out on the page, or you could even insert a table and assign a section to each student. If you have young learners, you can assign textboxes using cute animal stickers!

What I like best about Class Notebook is that—apart from getting a glimpse of HOW my students write in real time e.g. their thought process, their self-correction routines, and their writing speed—I can go into their textboxes directly to highlight or correct specific sections while giving them real-time, verbal feedback.

**Padlet**
Eagle-eyed readers might remember a feature on Padlet a few issues ago, so I won’t go into too much detail here. It is by far the most eye-catching of the three options. It’s got sleek graphics and a very user-friendly interface, so it’s easy to use on tablet and laptop but, I find, less wieldy on smaller screens. Lesson planning on Padlet and uploading material (links, files, videos, images) are a doddle.

I organise the space carefully depending on what I intend to do with the class—but I find the columns theme usually works best, whether they are stages of one stand-alone lesson, or sectioned off day-by-day to build up to Friday. I also like to have reference columns on the far left with my go-to tools e.g. dictionaries and resources students will need to have at hand in and out of class.

It’s best if students post on separate textboxes rather than comments on your posts. That way you can format their work as you’re correcting with tools like highlighting, strikethrough etc.. It’s also nice to encourage students to give each other feedback that way. I also like to assign groupwork (while using break-out rooms on Zoom/Teams etc), and that’s easily done by giving each team their own column to insert their contributions. This gives the teacher insight into how the teams work things out together in real time and usually results in them feeling a bit more competitive with the opposing teams!

**Google Docs**
A firm favourite since everyone and their uncle has a Gmail account—it’s quick to set up and having a bit of paid memory storage on Google Drive means you can store all your material in one place, ready to use for the next lesson.

Docs lends itself to lesson planning in a simple format that we are all used to — that of a simple, shared, Word document. Students can be given a link to start working right away. Progress is seen in real time in very much the same way as the other two tools.

If you make sure to organise and give clear instructions as to what and where you want students to write/amend the Doc, the results can be very impressive, with minimal effort on your part. And, of course your master copy is infinitely reusable!

*Comments or questions? Drop me a line on nfabri@gmail.com*
The aim of this new series is to revisit some of the material we published in the early years of the MATEFL newsletter, which younger and newer members might have otherwise missed. In this issue we have a piece about Games, submitted by Renaud in Autumn 1997.

Games have long been a source of amusement and relaxation as well as a valuable educational aid. This is no less true in the EFL classroom where the right game, chosen with the level, age and needs of the class in mind, can be a valid teaching aid.

Games are useful for practising a particular structure or as a warmer or to fill up that last 20 minutes when it is too late to start anything new. They can also help overcome a student’s lack of confidence by taking the attention off him. They are excellent for beginners with a limited vocabulary, and for advanced students as an often welcome relief.

However, the game should have an aim and offer an opportunity to note and correct errors; they should not be simply a means of passing the time no matter how much fun they might be. Here are some suggestions for games which I have found useful.

What’s my job?

This game is ideal for practising the present simple and question forms and can be adapted for most levels.

Method: Each student is given one question sheet and one job card each, and they have to go around the class asking the questions until they guess the jobs of the other students. For higher level students you could give them the words in italics only and they have to formulate the appropriate questions themselves.

Sample questions:

Do you earn a lot of money / a little / a salary / a wage?

Do you work office hours / days / nights / shifts / flexitime?

Do you work in a factory / in an office / in a special building / on the sea / in the air?

Do you handle animals / money / machinery / special tools / instruments?

Do you wear a uniform / smart / casual / protective clothes?

Do you perform a service / manufacture something?

Is your work easy / difficult / interesting / boring?

Do you need academic qualifications?

Alibi

This old favourite rarely fails and is therefore popular with many teachers but there are still some teachers out there who either don’t know it or who have never tried it. It’s perfect for those days when you haven’t got time to prepare a lesson, or you have suddenly been asked to fill in for a teacher at the last minute as it doesn’t need any materials. It practises past simple and continuous, questions forms and reported speech. So here’s how to set it up.

Tell the class that there has been a robbery and select 2 students as suspects. Ask these 2 students to
go into another room. Go with them and tell them to make up a story as if they had been together in a restaurant the night before. (Make sure they weren’t actually together the night before.) Tell them to include as many details as possible for example, where they met; what time; who arrived first; what they were wearing etc. Give them about 15 minutes to do this.

Meanwhile the remaining students (the police) formulate questions for their interrogation of the suspects. Here are some examples of the kind of question:

*What did you eat/drink?*
*Who served you?*
*Where did you sit?*
*Who paid? How did you pay, cash? Credit card?*
*What did you talk about? etc.*

The 2 suspects are then asked the same questions, while the police take notes. Ideally there should be one suspect and one group of police in each room. The 2 stories are then compared, and the discrepancies pointed out more than 2 major differences THEY ARE GUILTY.

You will often find that the police become quite devious in their questioning and try and trick the suspects into making mistakes.

The next two activities have infinite possibilities. They are perfect for teaching lexical sets. They can be used to revise vocabulary and grammar such as irregular verbs, adjectives and phrasal verbs and can be adapted for all levels.

**Complete the series**

Example:

father/son mother/------
Hand/finger --------/toe
gone/done go/-----
happy/honest unhappy/---------
dress/put on undress/-------

**Which one is different? Why?**

plum cherry apricot lemon banana

Answer:

lemon (it’s citrus, all the others are sweet fruits)
or: Cherry (it’s red and all the others can be yellow)

**speak tell say talk**

Answer: talk (the others have irregular past forms)

**Look for look after look at look up look back**

Answer: look up because it’s the only one which can be split by the object).

The students might find different ‘odd ones out’.

**Double Talk**

This one is a lot of fun and as well as teaching or revising vocabulary it also makes the students aware of the fact that words in the English language often have many quite different meanings. Explain that some of these words will be spelt differently but pronounced the same.

Materials: Cards with 4 clues written on each, eg.

1. A sick bird
2. Against the law
3. A great bird, not 100% well
4. It’s a crime

Answer: ill eagle / illegal
Call my bluff 1

This one is ideal for teaching new vocabulary. Divide the class into 2 or 3 groups and give them 4 words and their definitions. Explain that they have to invent 3 more definitions for each word. Each group then writes out their words and the 4 definitions (1 true and 3 false) and passes it to the next group, who have to decide which definition is the correct one.

Call my bluff 2

A variation on the above is to ask three students, A B & C to go into another room and find out something
really interesting, strange or remarkable about one of them. Students A B & C then come back into the room and each one makes the same statement eg. “I spent a year in a kibbutz when I was younger”. The other students then interrogate all three students who must answer as if they are telling the truth. The other students then discuss and decide which one is telling the truth.

There are now many books on the market which contain ideas on games and activities which can be used in the EFL classroom.

Here are some which I have found particularly useful:

- **Vocabulary Games & Activities / Grammar Games & activities** by Peter Watcyn Jones
- **Keep Talking** by Frederike Klippel
- **Grammar Games** by Mario Rinvolucri
- **Challenge to Think** by Frank, Rinvolucri and Berer
- **The Communication Games and Activities** series by Jill Hadfield.

SO HAVE FUN!!!

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**From the web**

A quick activity to get your students’ attention. It would be great to use as Present tenses question practice, but we’re sure it would lend itself to other learning objectives. There are 12 deliberate errors in this picture. Tell your students to ask a partner questions to figure them out and possibly come up with funny answers!

For example:

*Why is the man reading the newspaper upside down?*

Taken from/answers here:

https://tinyurl.com/y79jvhk9
One widely accepted fact in language learning is that seeing a new grammatical structure or item of vocabulary just once is not enough. Repeated encounters with new language are crucial, which is why course books usually have review sections at the end of units, and why teachers have a repertoire of revision quizzes and games. In this article, I’ll present one more simple idea aimed at giving your students an opportunity to go over previously learned language, and hopefully make it a bit more memorable.

The procedure for this activity, called ‘the top 5 list’, is simple. On a Friday, ask your students to go through their notebooks and/or coursebooks, and to make a list of 5 things they learned during the week that they want to make a special effort to remember.

They might want to remember those things because they think they will be useful to them in their future work, study, or travels, or just because they like them. The position of the entries on the list should reflect their importance, so number one should be the most important thing they want to remember, number two should be the second most important thing, and so on. If possible, encourage the students to use specific words or chunks as their choices. So, rather than having ‘strong adjectives’ or ‘second conditional’, they could instead go for actual concrete examples that came up in class that they would like to remember or use.

Here’s a hypothetical example of what a top-five list might look like for a pre-intermediate student.

1. I’m absolutely exhausted, I had a really long day!
2. If I were you, I’d go to the doctor.
3. I’m really looking forward to my holidays this year.
4. My apartment is such a mess.
5. I’m starving, when are we eating?

After the students have made their lists, they can share them with a partner just for fun. You can then choose to simply listen to the students’ lists, or if you like, you can ask some of them why they chose to include certain items. It might also be worthwhile asking students to think of some real life situations in which they can imagine saying, writing, reading, or hearing the language in question.

I find that this activity is useful because it makes students go back and take a critical look at all the language they’ve learned that week. In order to decide whether a particular piece of language ‘makes the cut’, the student needs to remember what it means, as well as assess its real-life value.

A further advantage is that there’s no anxiety involved, as there’s no right or wrong answer, meaning even less confident students can complete the task. Finally, an activity like this is a fitting way to wrap up the week.

So, if you have twenty minutes left on a Friday afternoon, why not try and get your students to make a ‘top 5 list’?
Word Search

Find all 12 words related to online teaching below.
Words in this puzzle can appear horizontal, vertical, diagonal as well as backwards!

ANNOTATE
BREAKOUTROOM
GOOGLEDOC
LINK
MICROPHONE
MINIMIZE

MUTE
PASSWORD
SHARESCREEN
SKYPE
WEBCAM
ZOOM
In our first ever online multi-speaker event, held on the 1st of July 2020, we had three great sessions. The following is a synopsis directly from each of our speakers.

"How was that?! Giving effective feedback to learners online" by Justyna Rodgers

In this online webinar, Justyna Rogers looked at different techniques of delivering feedback with the focus on online techniques and tools. Due to the Covid19 pandemic the EFL industry was forced to change and move operations online. Teachers therefore, are facing a complete shift from face-to-face teaching to teaching solely online.

This session was requested by teachers who are part of the META Supply Teachers Bank, and a number of other teachers who are following META, MATEFL and other ELT related groups on social media.

Giving constructive feedback is a big part of the learning process and it forms a crucial part of improvement both in learning a language and in becoming a better teacher. Giving feedback is feared by teachers as it can be a sensitive matter, can become very personal and misunderstood by learners, especially online. Therefore, this session’s aim was to prove to the teachers the importance of positive feedback and provide them with easy and accessible tools to improve their feedback techniques.

The session started with an example of how students can use the chatbox to greet each other in a nice and positive way by messaging privately with a compliment – an example was provided by the chosen panellists. Then participants watched a short extract from a popular American sitcom ‘Modern Family’ where an example of “how NOT to give feedback” was provided. This was followed by open feedback and brainstorming session using Padlet in order to introduce the feedback giving techniques.

The next stage of this session was entirely focused on providing feedback to language learners, both on their oral and written work. There was be a brief explanation of the categorisation of feedback techniques, each followed by demonstrations of practical examples for teachers:

**ORAL:**

**immediate** – signals (e.g. different hand signals and sounds that can be associated with a specific mistake)

**during** – traffic lights (students choose their pen colour of the lesson: green, yellow or red, to decide their attitude to correction on a given day)

**delayed** – Correction Code (teacher only circles mistakes)

**WRITTEN:**

**immediate** – “Are you sure?” or “the pointer tool” (used by the teacher while monitoring students while they are writing on the board/Padlet)during – Peer-to-Peer (students read each other’s writings and/or comment/reply in Padlet)

**delayed** – Correction Code (teacher only circles mis-
takes and gives clues in order to give students a chance to self-correct another tool with a similar principle will be presented: https://writeandimprove.com/

It was an interactive webinar that contained many opportunities for the participants to express their opinions. Attendees were also given many opportunities to interact by using the chatbox function and/or opportunities for participants to respond in some way to what was being presented, including being able to ask questions during the session.

**Empowering learners by generating criteria for assessing “good writing” by Michael Beirne**

Writing is often seen by students as daunting and overwhelming, and teaching writing can seem tedious when compared to the development of other skills. Writing comes naturally to some students who are inclined toward self-expression, creativity and the humanities, while other students often shy away from it, believing that they have “nothing to say” or because they see no meaningful advantage to the written word over the spoken word. This latter belief is belied by the fact that many fluent speakers of a high level will struggle to compose texts of a quality that come close to matching their speaking level. I strongly believe that writing as a tool with which to develop one’s 2nd language skills is utterly invaluable, particularly for higher level students, and that all students of 2nd languages, regardless of their natural inclination toward expressing themselves and their opinions in written form can benefit hugely from developing the habit of putting thoughts into well-structured sentences and paragraphs.

The aim of my session was to show that analysing a brief model text can make writing seem like a kind of straightforward, schematic operation or de- and reconstruction of texts, an approach which appeals hugely to those students who think of themselves as “not creative.” I also wanted to show how students can, through judicious and selective use of online dictionaries and thesauruses, empower themselves as writers who are able to refine and finesse their language skills in the absence of outside feedback.

I began by giving a link to a twelve-sentence restaurant review (all relevant links can be found on the MATEFL site, or by emailing me: michaelbrn3@gmail.com) I then walked the participants through a series of slides which presented questions intended to break down each of the twelve sentences into “skeleton” or “scaffolding” sentences which could then form the basis of a structure for the students’ own review. This was followed by a link which contained the twelve-sentence “scaffold” or “skeleton” review template based on the answers to the previous questions, as well as a finished new restaurant review based on that template. Whereas the first review took 20-30 minutes to produce, the second review was produced in a half or third of the time. Also, because I and the student had first extrapolated an outline by interrogating the first review, the student had been able to focus on writing personalised, detailed sentences with expressive and ambitious language.

In the final link was a version of the 2nd review, but with errors in the selection of vocabulary. Words with inappropriate connotations or an unsuitable register were underlined. I then described how I di-
rect students to online resources which, when used strategically in conjunction with each other, allow students to recognize better vocabulary choices. I pointed out how the Oxford Collocation dictionary is a powerful, underused resource that helps avoid phrasing errors, but for determining specific connotations, I recommend example sentences from the Cambridge dictionary. For a thesaurus I prefer the advantages that Merriam Webster and Macmillan have over Oxford and Cambridge. Finally, to help avoid words that are too archaic or obscure, I recommend the word-frequency measurements favoured by the Oxford dictionary. I love writing! Email to find more of my self-made resources.

**Ain’t No Sunshine: Using songs by Jean Sciberras**

It was a challenge. It was my first ever online seminar but it just shows that we could all manage it if we tried. Naturally there are lots of things I could improve on but the main thing is that I accepted the challenge and so should you.

If you love teaching through songs, then continue to do that online. Time management is a factor we have to keep in mind but with breakout rooms and your own class, with students you know, everything would be much easier.

The main aim of my session was to encourage teachers of all ages to be creative, and use multimedia and authentic material as much as possible as this gives your learners a sense of achievement. Choose songs that are connected to the zeitgeist of the time, in my case, Bill Withers died recently and his song *Lean on me* was the Covid anthem in Boston.

The session started with some Bill Withers music just to get the students in the mood and to introduce the singer. I followed it up with a ‘Get to know the teach-
er better’ where students were asked to ask me questions in the past tense. Students were then asked to do the same things in pairs using photos on their mobile phone if they have any. This works well both face-to-face and online in break out rooms. Take some feedback. Show genuine interest not just in the students’ language but what they are saying. Then write down some incorrect questions they would have produced on the whiteboard. Invite the students themselves to correct them either face-to-face or in the chat box.

Before asking students to read the text on Bill Withers, 5 or 6 words were pre-taught. I don’t like to burden my students with too many words and like to encourage them to guess a word from its context. Text A and B were then presented. This was a text I adapted and shortened from Wikipedia. I removed different information from text A than I removed from Text B in such a way as to create an information gap. Learners again had to ask questions using the past simple to receive information they didn’t have in order to complete the task. Correct answers were then shown and highlighted on the board.

We then moved on to one of Bill Withers’ most known songs, *Ain’t no sunshine*. Students were given gapped lyrics and in pairs predicted the 6 words. The song was then played so students could check their answers or put in the correct ones.

The session finished off by using another authentic medium. This was a news item announcing Bill Withers’ death. Questions were given as a task before the video was played. As a final task, learners were asked to pick any five words in a second listening and together with a partner create a paragraph.

It may have started with a lesson based on a song but it included all the four skills, speaking, listening, reading and writing, interaction and creativity. I encourage you to create your own lessons, based on the ideas above and others of your own.

**In pairs, try and put a suitable word in the gap.**

*Ain’t no sunshine when she’s gone.*

It’s not (1)__________ when she’s away.

*Ain’t no sunshine when she’s gone*

And she’s always gone too (2)__________ anytime she goes away.

Wonder this time where she’s gone,

Wonder if she’s gone to (3)__________

*Ain’t no sunshine when she’s gone*

And this (4)__________ just ain’t no home anytime she goes away.

And I know, I know, I know, I know, I know, I know, I know, I know, I know, I know, I know, I know, I know, I know, I know, I know, I know, I know, I know, I know

Hey, I (5)__________ ___ leave the young thing alone,

But ain’t no sunshine when she’s gone,

*Ain’t no sunshine when she’s gone, only (6) _________ everyday.*

Ain’t no sunshine when she’s gone and this house just ain’t no home anytime she goes away.

Anytime she goes away.

Anytime she goes away.

Anytime she goes away.

Anytime she goes away.

Now listen and check your answers here**

The ELT Industry in Malta in a Nutshell (part 1)
Facts and figures about EFL students coming to Malta in 2019  By Matt Done

The table below shows statistics related to student numbers in local ELT schools in 2019. The total number of students was 83,610, which is 4% less than the total for 2018. In keeping with the tendencies of previous years, the majority of students came from Italy (18,335), Germany (9,764), and France (8,878). In fact, these three countries accounted for just over 44% of the total student arrivals during the year. Outside the EU, the majority of students came from Russia (5,396), Brazil (4,360), and Japan (3,508). In terms of gender, more than half the students who attended courses in Malta were female (50,237).

Table 1. Foreign students following courses in local licensed ELT schools by country of citizenship and sex: 2018-2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of citizenship</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
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<td>23,482</td>
<td>8,165</td>
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<td>9,991</td>
<td>4,126</td>
<td>5,638</td>
<td>9,764</td>
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<td>3,404</td>
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<td>4,501</td>
<td>1,545</td>
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<td>3,779</td>
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<td>Total EU</td>
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<td>62,957</td>
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<td>1,396</td>
<td>1,846</td>
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<td>Non-EU Total</td>
<td>9,016</td>
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<td>24,155</td>
<td>10,149</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>33,748</td>
<td>53,364</td>
<td>87,112</td>
<td>33,373</td>
<td>50,237</td>
<td>83,610</td>
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</table>

In relation to age, the majority of students (33.3%) were aged 15 or under, while the next most common age group (18-25) accounted for just over 18% of total arrivals. The least common age group was 50 and above, with 7.4% of students belonging to this demographic.