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.
The main contributors for this issue

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<thead>
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<th>Jean Theuma</th>
<th>Matt Done</th>
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<td>Jean has been involved in EFL for over 20 years. She specialises in ESP, EAP and Young Learners. She is interested in technology and learner autonomy and motivating teachers to take ownership of their own development.</td>
<td>Matt has been involved in ELT for 16 years. He enjoys working with students, writing lesson materials, and learning more about language, teaching, and learning.</td>
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<td>Richard is a freelance teacher / teacher trainer with over 20 years experience. He currently lives and works in Turin, Italy having lived and worked in Malta for 8 years until 2013.</td>
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<td>Julia has been involved in ELT for over 30 years, working as a teacher, teacher trainer and DoS. She is MATEFL’s membership secretary and website manager.</td>
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<th>Larissa Jonk</th>
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<td>Larissa is an Assistant Lecturer with the Centre for English Language Proficiency at the University of Malta. She is currently reading for a PhD with University of Malta. Larissa’s main interest is in academic writing processes and strategies for coherence. Before joining the University, Larissa worked in the field of ELT and has extensive experience in teaching, training, examining and academic management.</td>
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Dear teachers,
Welcome to the summer issue of our newsletter!
First of all, I hope you are enjoying a wonderful Maltese summer and are healthy and well.
So what can you look forward to in this issue?
Jean Theuma will tell us how we can use music and lyrics effectively in lessons.
In the next article, Matt Done gives us tips on how to help our students improve their listening skills.
Richard Twigg inspires us to use the latest technology, including virtual reality.
If you have never heard of EPALE (Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe), Natasha Fabri tells us more about this interesting project.
As a last article we offer you interesting tips from Larissa Jonk, who will give you advice on how to improve and effectively use writing skills in the class.

As always, at the end of the newsletter we will offer you regular features *From the MATEFL archives, wordsearch and NSO statistics.

I wish you all inspiring reading and a great rest of the summer!

Bob

The Committee
Jean Theuma (President)
Alan Marsh (Honorary President)
Larissa Jonk (Secretary)
Caroline Campbell (Treasurer)
Julia Pearson (Website Manager/ Membership Secretary)
Ian Scerri (Facebook Page Manager)
Natasha Fabri (IATEFL Representative)
Bob Bejdak (Newsletter Editor)

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For many EFL teachers, using popular music in class involves finding a song with a repetitive grammar point or consistent vocabulary theme, taking those words out of the lyric sheet, and then asking the students to listen to the song and write the words in the gaps. And while this is an excellent way of using pop songs to introduce or study language points, it is not the only way! There are many benefits to incorporating music and song into the language classroom in creative and worthwhile ways, so it makes sense to not just be tied down to one task type.

Music is beneficial as a means of learning for both the student and the teacher. The student will benefit from the music being:

- Memorable with catchy rhymes and rhythms and relatable themes.
- Having engaging exercises and tasks which often appeal to all three types of engagement: cognitive, behavioural, and emotional.
- Motivating as it allows the student to express self-identity and, indeed, sub-culture expressed in the way the person talks and dresses, and in their attitudes which may be also related to the music they like.

The teacher may find that songs are useful because they are:

- Readily available on the internet for free or for the inconvenience of listening to an advert or two! Or easily downloaded onto a smart phone in case of internet issues at school.
- An authentic use of language as most students, even low-level ones, appreciate using language which is closer to the way language is used outside the classroom.
- Repetitive which is very important for memorising language. Pop songs, which by their nature frequently have repetitive features like choruses, are an effortless way of encouraging the student to repeatedly interact with the language point. It is also helpful that the learner can go back and listen to the same song at any time they want after the lesson has ended.
- Adaptable to different levels because the same song can be used with different learning levels by adjusting or choosing tasks with varying support levels. For example, lower levels can work on gist understanding with simple or no language tasks or use the song as an introduction to the theme for production work. Meanwhile, higher levels can do more detailed language work, looking for specific language points in the lyric or producing creative responses which interact directly with the song.

Lessons using songs work well both in a physical class or an online session, such as Zoom. It is, however, important that the sound quality is good wherever the song is played. In the classroom, the teacher should ensure that the sound is loud enough (but not too loud), clear and lacking distortion, and that there is no interference from outside noise. When using an online platform, it is crucial that the settings are set to optimise the sharing of computer sound which, in Zoom and Teams, is a checkbox which will need to be ticked when sharing the screen.

Here are some of ways to use a pop song in class that do not involve gap-fill tasks:

- Talk about singers, songs, lyrics and song videos. An example of this activity might be to let the students hear 20 second snippets of the type of songs you listen to throughout your day in an activity called The Soundtrack to your Life. This list would comprise the songs you might listen to as a wake-up alarm, on your way to work, while studying, while doing housework, etc.... Students could then compile their own list and play them to each other. They might ask their partner to guess when they listen to each song, or simply discuss their song choice. This would, of course, mean that many of the songs would be in the student’s own language and that is perfectly fine as the focus of this task is on the speaking.

- Compose songs, write articles about songs, write an email to the singer. This might be to fill in the framework presented by the song with their own ideas and create their own song in this way. So, the lyric “And now the end is near, and so I face the final curtain” from My Way (by Frank Sinatra) becomes “And now the bus has come and so I start my daily journey” in a student version. This activity focusses the student on parts of speech and syllables.

- Write dialogues using or inspired by the lyric of the song. Songs in which the singer sounds as if they are singing to a particular person are good for this activity. The students can write a dialogue imagining what the sentiment in the song would sound like if it were a conversation with the
person. In the song The Man Who can’t be Moved (by The Script), the singer explains that he is going to camp on the street corner where he first met his (now ex-) girlfriend just in case she decides to come back to him. He describes how the police are trying to move him on; how people think he is a beggar and are trying to give him money; and how he hopes the media will see him and put him on the news so his girlfriend will see him – lots of opportunities there to write dialogues with all these different characters.

- Practice selective listening comprehension. Idiomatic phrases are sometimes used in pop songs which can be worked into the lesson. For instance, write some of the phrases on the board and divide the class into teams. Each team is given a board eraser and, standing in a line in front of the board a member of the team must run forward and rub out the phrase when they hear it in the song. This can also be done by sticking (with blue tack) the phrases on cut-up pieces of paper to the board and having the teams try to snatch the strip from the board...the team with the most correct strips at the end are the ‘winners’. It can be made more difficult by including some red herring phrases which are not in the song but sound like they could be. A song which is particularly good for this is Wide Awake by Katy Perry.

- Translate songs. An interesting activity is for students to translate small parts of well-known songs into their own language or from their language into English. However, the trick here is to ask them to write it in such a way that it can still be sung to the original tune. This is a complex task and they should not be asked to try to translate an entire song. For an example of this, search in YouTube for “Let it go – Behind the mic multi-language version” or go to https://youtu.be/BS0T8Cd4UhA. This can be shown to students to inspire them before they attempt the task.

- Use the song as a dictation or dicto-glass task. A twist on the idea of dictation is ask the students to do a “shouting dictation”. In this activity, the class is divided into 2 and send to opposite sides of a large area (which can also be outside). Each side is given alternate lines of a song and they must shout out the lines in unison for the other side to write down. Invariably, the groups will need to shout out the text a few times for the other side to be able to hear it clearly enough to write it down, creating an opportunity for a choral drill for the connected speech features of the lines. My favourite song for this activity is Imagine by John Lennon, and I often do not tell the students that it is a song that they are dictating to each other. It is lovely to see their faces when I play the song at the end for them to “check their answers”.

- Use the video as visual stimulus. In some cases, the videos of pop songs have a storyline that can be used for prediction tasks, such as the video for It’s a Little too Late by Toby Keith. After pre-teaching phrases of prediction or giving opinion, this video can be stopped at several occasions and students can be asked to guess what will happen next. This video is particularly nice as it has a surprising twist at the end that the students might not have predicted. Some videos also have written prompts or instructions which may not have anything to do with the song, but which the students can read and interact with. A Bryan Adams song – On a Day like Today - involves a cute trick where, if the students follow the on-screen instructions, it seems as if the video “read their mind”.

These are just some ways that music can be used in the classroom, apart from simply background music to aid concentration during long tasks or to energise the class after the lunch break. I hope this has been an inspiration and you will incorporate some of these ideas into your classes, along with the tried and trusted gap-fill tasks that you already use!

Jean Theuma
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Small steps to better listening
by Matt Done

After an IELTS class once, a student asked me a question. ‘I’ve been practicing my listening for a long time, but my listening score isn’t improving. Why can’t I improve?’ I didn’t really know what to say, so my rather unhelpful answer was ‘Don’t worry – just keep practicing. The more you listen, the better you’ll get at listening.’

Perhaps you’ve also been asked similar questions before and struggled to come up with a useful answer. And perhaps, like me, you’ve come to realise that the materials we use don’t do much to actually teach listening – they simply test whether students have listened correctly. But what can we do when students haven’t listened correctly in class?

This article doesn’t contain a magic formula to better listening skills – sorry! However, there are things we can do which I feel are an upgrade on the ‘just listen more’ advice I gave my IELTS student.

Teach more language (and its pronunciation!)

One of the best ways we can help students with their listening – and, indeed, with all their skills – is to teach a lot of new language. A student might not understand something in speech and believe it’s a listening issue, when in actual fact they simply don’t know the word(s)/phrase being used. The more language we teach, the greater access our students will have to spoken English (and written, too!).

When teaching new language - vocabulary for instance - it’s also standard practice to present its pronunciation. However, it might be better not just to present the pronunciation of the word in isolation and in its neat and tidy ‘citation’ form, but to model/drill the word as part of a full phrase, so that students can get a sense of how it sounds when it’s surrounded by other words. We can also give the students an idea of how the word might sound when the phrase is spoken quickly. So, the first time we model the phrase, we might do so slowly and clearly. The second time, we can speed it up slightly, and the third time, we can give students the full-speed, messy, ‘real-life’ version. We might then take a second to analyse what happens to the word in this quickly-spoken phrase, and how things change from the slow and clear to the fast and messy.

Does the word ‘join’ to other words? Do any parts of the word end up sounding different by coming into contact with surrounding words? Do any parts of the word get squashed up and become less clear? By doing this frequently, we might better prepare our students to hear the words we teach when they encounter them in real speech.

Try to understand the cause of the listening issue

Another useful idea might be to identify a specific instance of ‘incorrect listening’, (e.g., a wrong answer in a listening activity), and then try to understand why the students had problems. It’s important to be specific here, and to select a precise (and ideally short) piece of problematic speech/audio. So rather than say ‘the students struggled with this listening passage’, it might be better to say ‘none of the students got number 3 right, and the answer to number 3 is found from 46 to 50 seconds in the audio.’ This gives us a valuable segment of speech that we can analyse in class.

Here are some possible reasons why students might have had a listening issue in a particular segment of speech, or got an answer wrong in a listening activity:

- The vocabulary or language being used was new/unknown to them.
- The speaker spoke too quickly, unclearly, or had a strong and/or unfamiliar accent.
- The students might have mistaken a word for a similar sounding one (e.g., cinema – seminar)
- The wording of the question might have been confusing (if the problem arose from a listening exercise in a book)
- The students’ interpretation of the information in the audio didn’t match the ‘official’ one in the teacher’s book.
- Something else (e.g., the students weren’t paying attention, they were distracted by reading the questions, etc.)
What’s interesting is that only three of these are actual listening problems, so you might be able to reassure students on some occasions that their listening skills were not at fault.

Of course, not all the students might have got the answer wrong. And, for the ones who did, they might have got it wrong for different reasons. This certainly makes things trickier for us – the teacher! Nonetheless, it can be very helpful to get your students to think about why had problems and report this back to you. It might help to give students the above list of possible reasons as a way of prompting them. If you do manage to determine what some of the issues were, this can give you valuable insight into students’ difficulties and give you a starting point in trying to help them.

Once you understand the cause(s) of the listening issue(s), target it/them

Once you have an idea of the reason(s) for students’ listening problems, you can try to target them. So for instance, if students didn’t understand something because the language was new, we can use it as an opportunity to teach that language, along with its pronunciation in natural speech.

If the students knew all the words being used, but failed to understand something because it was spoken too quickly or not very clearly, we can hone in on that specific segment of speech, and try to show them what ‘happened’ to it and why it was hard to ‘catch’. What happened to the words they knew when they were spoken quickly? How did they change, and why?

At this stage, you might be thinking that this is all well and good, but how will helping students with just one tricky segment of speech help them in the long run? What happens when they encounter another, different bit of tricky speech? Firstly, doing this frequently might gradually sensitise students to the messy reality of spoken English, and they might slowly get a sense of what English sounds like when spoken quickly. Also, we might still be able to teach some ‘rules of thumb’ that can be applied to other listening situations. For instance, if your students struggled to understand the words ‘I’ve already’ (perhaps because it was pronounced as /vɔː:rediː/), this might be useful to focus on because it’s a formulaic chunk, meaning students will likely hear it again and again. Teaching students that ‘I’ve already’ sometimes sounds like /vɔː:redi/ might help them hear it better the next time they encounter it. Other similar formulaic chunks that are commonly used but might be hard to ‘catch’ when spoken quickly are ‘If I were you’, ‘Would you like’, ‘You should have’, ‘It must have been’, and ‘There isn’t any’.

Use the tape script!

A final idea is to use the tape script when one is available. This is a fantastic resource, although it’s probably better to hold off giving this to the students until they’ve done all the regular listening work (e.g., gist and detail tasks), as otherwise they might be doing more reading than listening. After the traditional listening tasks, you could simply ask the students to listen again with the text to hand. This alone can be very beneficial, as it helps the students match what they’re hearing to the language on paper. Students might be surprised to see words that they know in the tape script, but didn’t recognise in the audio. You could also take this one step further, and give students a ‘marking code’ to use as they listen and read. For instance, you could get students to put a circle around words that they ‘know’, but didn’t ‘catch’ when they listened without the text. You could also get students to underline words/phrases that are new and that they’d like to ask about. With more advanced learners, you could even get them to try and identify features of connected speech, such as weak forms and elision (the dropping of sounds).

Final thoughts

There’s nothing wrong with asking students to do more listening, but there are other things we can do that might gradually help them listen better. This article has only offered a few simple ideas, but there are some great resources out there with plenty more. The most useful ones that I know of are ‘Listening in the Language Classroom’, by John Field, and ‘Phonology for Listening’, by Richard Cauldwell. So, the next time your students have a listening issue, why not try some of the ideas in this article?

Matt Done
You might have come across the word “Metaverse”. You might even have wondered why Facebook renamed itself to Meta. Then again you might know the answers to both these questions. However, allow me to take you on a short journey of real discovery about the new virtual world.

In 2013 the talk was about making use of mobile devices in the classroom – just 5 years after the first iPhone had hit the market. In 2014, Facebook bought Oculus for a cool 2 billion dollars and by 2022 the name had been changed to Meta, inline with the renaming of Facebook to Meta. Meta means beyond and Zuckerberg said Facebook was renamed to “reflect who we are and what we hope to build”. He was referring to the company’s plans to focus on the “Metaverse”

They say that in the next 5 years, the Metaverse will be what the Internet is today. We all know what we can do with the Internet and how attached we have all become to it, both old and young alike. Our teenagers are known as screenagers as they are always glued to their screens, either TV, laptop, smartphone and its all connected to the Internet. I have seen small kids “swiping” the TV to change the picture (I can do it on mummy’s phone and tablet - why doesn’t it work here too!).

What exactly is the Metaverse and how does it work? Well, computers give us a two-dimensional view of things, we can see and experience things as a “viewer”, “watcher”, “observer” you chose the word. We are able to interact but we are not there. In Virtual Reality we are fully immersed in the world, we can see it, feel it, touch it and even smell it. We can see things from all angles, talk to people, fully interact with the environment – we can even fly – seeing things from above. We do all this as avatars not as real people. Some platforms have full body avatars others just the top part (minus the legs). With time avatars are becoming more real – you can upload a photo and they make your avatar look more like your real self.

The Metaverse is a virtual world where you can create your own space (Mozilla Hubs and AltSpaceVR) for free, buy property, attend meetings, have discussions, attend social events, attend a language lesson, take part in a role play, swop bodies, shoot hoops with your homies (in simple language throw a basketball through the hoop). You can even see and feel what it’s like to experience things from someone else’s point of view https://bodyswaps.co/, or explore the solar system and get to see inside the planets, visit the temples at Petra (dressed in traditional clothing), learn to give CPR or even go to the cinema.

The best way to experience the Metaverse is through a VR headset. The best value for money device at the moment is the Meta Quest 2 (formerly Oculus Quest 2) which retails for €350.00. You don’t need a fancy gaming computer, just a standard PC and you can then share your Virtual World with others. By the way, if you do buy a headset let me know as we can both benefit from a €30 voucher to spend in the Oculus app store! When it comes to using VR in the classroom, there are some amazing but expensive platforms around, Immere being one of them but that involves all students wearing headsets (https://www.immerse.online/). You can use YouTube VR videos, visit museums or art galleries. Another VR app is VR4LL – Virtual Reality for Language Learners (https://vr4ll.com/) which has escape room type activities and only requires one headset per class and is to all users.

Whatever you decide, the Metaverse is the next big thing and it’s going to have a major impact on education. You might not embrace it in your own classroom, but knowing what it is and how it works will make you better placed to be able to have discussions and defend its inclusion or non-inclusion – knowledge is power. I hope that having read this short article you feel more powerful and knowledgeable and maybe even a little intrigued to find out more.

Richard Twigg
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What is EPALE?

Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE) is a European, multilingual, open membership community of adult learning professionals, including adult educators and trainers, guidance and support staff, researchers and academics, and policymakers.

EPALE is funded by the Erasmus+ programme. It is part of the European Union’s strategy to promote more and better learning opportunities for all adults as outlined in the European Pillar of Social Rights, which champions the right for all European Citizens to access to Adult Learning, regardless of their background.

EPALE does this by supporting and strengthening the adult learning professions. It enables members to connect with and learn from colleagues across Europe, through its blog posts, forums, the Partner Search tool, complemented with physical gatherings.

EPALE provides a wealth of high-quality, accurate information relevant for adult learning practitioners. Over time, more and more of this content should be provided by members themselves. Learn more about how to engage with the EPALE community. The platform has a strong editorial policy based on accuracy, tolerance, accessibility, and engagement. On a day-to-day basis, EPALE is managed by a Central Support Team (CSS) with the help of 37 National Support Teams (NSS) across Europe.

The Directorate for EPALE - Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe, Europe’s biggest adult learning community - Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability (DRLLE), within the Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation (MEYR) acts as the National Support Service for Malta (NSS Malta).

EPALE is committed to involving adult education professionals throughout the development of the platform to give them what they need to stay up-to-date with developments in adult learning across Europe.

EPALE is Europe’s biggest adult learning community!

What can I find on EPALE?

There are several ways to explore EPALE and how it can benefit you:
1. Explore themes, resources, discussions, good practices from other adult learning professionals around Europe.
2. You can showcase and share your and your organization’s work to contribute your work with the community.
3. You can connect with adult learning professionals in your field and have the opportunity to participate in projects and collaborations.
4. You can access OERs (open educational resources) and MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) and post as well as take part in courses offered in the Online Course Catalogue section.
EPALE NSS Malta 2022-2024 – Building from experience

The Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability (DRLLE) has been involved in EPALE since 2015 and has helped develop various iterations of the platform since then. Since the beginning, DRLLE has worked hard on promoting and developing Adult Learning in Malta, by engaging a wide range of stakeholders in the area of Adult Learning in Malta.

An integral part of this project is to set up a network of ambassadors and multipliers to encourage users to play a full part in EPALE discussions, ensuring moderation of communities of practice, and collaborative spaces.

EPALE ambassadors to promote and raise awareness about the EPALE platform and its initiatives; to participate actively on the EPALE platform itself; and contribute towards initiatives by the NSS Malta, throughout the project from May 2022, until the end of December 2024. EPALE NSS Malta also has a presence on social media platforms: Facebook – Adult Learning in Malta, Youtube and Linkedin – EPALE Malta

Thematic Focuses 2022

Young Adults
How can you shape a positive approach to learning, starting from a young age, as a first step toward lifelong learning? In the European Year of Youth 2022, EPALE dedicates a full thematic focus to young adults, with special attention to the age range 25-30. We will look at this group from specific points of view: intergenerational learning, building partnerships and social cohesion; civic skills as a prerequisite to becoming active participants in the society; low-skilled young adults and how to equip them with the necessary skills to grow. Young adults also represent a group where patterns of emerging new learning cultures and innovative practices can be more easily tracked and embraced by the whole adult learning community.

Innovative Approaches to Skills Revolution
What are the new frontiers of adult learning? How can lifelong learning and employability be improved? A strong skill set opens up opportunities to individuals, provides a safety net in ever changing times, and promotes inclusion. The Commission’s initiative on individual learning accounts and on micro-credentials aims to ensure that everyone has access to relevant training opportunities that are tailored to their needs, throughout life. The learners, as unique individuals, are directly at the centre of skills development, allowing for dynamic upskilling and education across their entire lifelong learning journey. To ensure the recognition of each small learning experience, micro-credentials certify what knowledge, skill or competence they have acquired. Let us experience together the development of such innovative approaches that will transform adult learning!

Learning communities
Learning happens in communities, builds communities, and helps them grow. Starting from the premise that learning is beneficial both for the individual learners and for society as a whole, this thematic focus will investigate how inclusive learning communities can be created, across the European space. Particular attention will be given to the following topics: learning cities; third spaces and safe spaces; rural areas; family literacy programmes; learning communities at the workplace; new understanding of learning communities across the virtual, physical and blended learning spaces; volunteers and community development; initiatives addressed to vulnerable groups.

Creativity and culture
How can adult learning play a strategic role in imagining and building a future that is sustainable, inclusive and beautiful? The New European Bauhaus can be used as a compass to develop “places, practices, and experiences that are enriching, sustainable and inclusive” thus contributing to shaping more resilient communities. Encouraging a dialogue across cultures and supporting individual empowerment and democratic consciousness
in adult learners, cultural education is a major driver and enabler of social cohesion. What creative tools and methodologies for social cohesion are you experiencing? What is happening in multidisciplinary cultural spaces and emerging creative ecosystems? How is creativity in ALE connecting people to spread beauty and a sense of belonging? How can you effectively shape inclusive and human-centred societies through lifelong learning?

EPALE Initiatives in 2022

Community Stories

EPALE would like to hear from adult learning professionals on the platform to share their stories to make part of an archive of lived experiences from all over Europe. Submission of stories will remain open until the 30th October 2022.

18th -20th October 2022

The Community Conference this year will be held between 18th and the 20th October. It will focus entirely on debates and speeches from leading international experts on the 4 Thematic Focuses for 2022. It aims to be a hybrid event, with the online sessions organised by the CSS and events held by several NSSes at a national level.

As part of the plans for the new EPALE cycle from April 2022 to December 2024, NSS Malta is planning a variety of initiatives:
- Engaging more EPALE Ambassadors to cover more diverse topics and reach a wider audience in the Adult Learning community; a series of six ‘How to use EPALE’ webinars and three instructional videos about EPALE; National TV and social media campaigns; EPALE Awards in 2023; and contests to promote further participation on the EPALE Platform.

For more information about EPALE:
Please visit the EPALE platform here: [https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en](https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en)

Follow this link to see how to register the platform: [https://fb.watch/aXE2-hsfIW/](https://fb.watch/aXE2-hsfIW/)

You can also email us on [epale@gov.mt](mailto:epale@gov.mt)

Natasha Fabri
Project Officer
NSS Malta/ Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability (DRLLE), within the Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation (MEYR).
We need more long-turn writing in EFL classrooms

by Larissa Jonk

We have plenty of opportunities for short-turn writing in the EFL classroom. Course books include controlled practice tasks – such as gap-fill, identification, formulation, Q&A – that require students to write down the correct forms of the target structure or language for each lesson unit; reading and listening tasks often incorporate short-turn writing as part of a comprehension aim or language focus. Longer turns of writing are sometimes incorporated as extended writing tasks. However, these are not often covered in class because the perception is that they take up too much time away from speaking which is the focus of the EFL lesson. Nor are they set for homework because students do not want to spend their afternoons working away – they are also here to experience the island and socialize with their classmates, which is great practice for their speaking if they come from different countries and they are using English as the lingua franca. So long-turn writing is not really given much attention.

Why should there be longer turns of writing in class?

If students need English for reasons of work, relocation, study, or travel, it is possible they will need to write at some point in their future. Depending on their reasons for learning the language, the need to write will vary in terms of context, each possibly having a different set of text types with which students may need to become familiar. For example, job seekers may need to write letters of application. People already in employment might need to write emails of varying levels of formality depending on who they are writing to, colleagues or customers; they may need to write up reports on products or fairs they have attended, take minutes at a meeting. Students applying at a university might need to practice their skill at motivation letters as part of their application; they might also benefit from an introduction to academic writing conventions which may be quite different from those in their first language. Writing is very different from speaking and writing requires a different register depending on the context, which students might not be aware. Unless they have had such training or experience, they are unlikely to be familiar with writing conventions in English-speaking contexts. Students can benefit from such training depending on their needs. It might be of service to students if teachers explore the possibilities students might be exposed to in the future – this might help students see the value in the practice of long-turn writing in class.

How can we integrate long-turn writing and speaking?

Students might still feel that they are missing out on speaking practice if they are writing in isolation. Yet, they do not have to write in isolation. They can get involved in collaborative writing (Storch, 2019), where they work in pairs or small groups and produce one writing text per pair or group. They need to discuss the task at hand, a possible strategy, and negotiate language and turn of expression when writing up their task. This is one way of integrating writing and speaking. Pairs and groups can then swap tasks and give each other verbal feedback or have a poster exhibition displaying their texts around the room with writers giving explanation and answering questions; viewers can then discuss what they think works well and what they would take away from individual exhibits.

Writing as preparation for long-turn speaking

Moving away from formal writing and text types, another argument for long-writing in the classroom is that it gives students the possibility to prepare their communication: they can plan and write down exactly what they are going to say for a speaking task. In this way, writing can help students practice what they already know and can give them a chance to manage and craft the language items that they are learning into their expression. Incorporating new language concepts in speaking tasks is very challenging for students;
controlled practice in the form of short turns like gap fills certainly helps and is the first step in the learning process. Further to this, creating time for students to write down longer turns gives them an opportunity to rehearse longer instances of communication which might help towards better understanding of the target language concept. There is also evidence that writing their understanding of new concepts helps students better learn and subsequently better communicate about those concepts in formal written or verbal tasks (McGlynn & Kelly, 2019). This could help students towards achieving automaticity – to be able to use the target language more readily.

To give an example, if the focus is narrative tenses, the teacher could tell the students that they are going to talk about a past experience they have had (the topic will be based on the topic introduced in that lesson, like holiday experiences). To prepare for this talk, they should write down what they are going to say. The teacher can explain that this will help them develop what they want to say. Depending on the language level, teachers might want students to read out what they have written (A2) or make notes on what they have written and then tell their story from their notes (B1+). They might tell the story to the whole class, or they might tell the story to different people in the room, giving them multiple opportunities for practice (speed dating principle). So in this way, writing could be preparation and rehearsal for telling an anecdote, narrating a past experience.

Ten minutes of writing a day could help students practice their existing language knowledge and experiment with their range of expression, help them incorporate new language items into their range of communication, encouraging automaticity, and give them more confidence writing.

References:


The benefits of free-writing in class

In free-writing practice students choose their own topic and are free to write whatever comes to mind. These written texts are often neither corrected nor collected by the teacher. Studies have shown that free-writing practice can help students develop their general writing skills. In a study where students were regularly given some time in class, at the beginning or at the end of the lesson, to write on a topic of their choice over time, improved in terms of word count and words per minute; the findings also evidenced transferable skills to other text types, such as academic writing (Park, 2020). Furthermore, students felt that the practice allowed them to develop confidence to write and that they would more readily commit to the writing task than previously. Adapting this to an EFL context, teachers could allow ten minutes towards the end of the lesson to write about the target learning point or incorporate target language items introduced in the lesson into their writing on their own choice of topic. If students are insistent on correction or feedback, or if the teacher feels that feedback might be of value, the teacher can collect the texts at the end of the week or mid-week and give individual or general feedback on elements covered in the classroom.
The aim of this 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. This article is about some fun activity to get you out of a tricky spot when you are asked to cover a lesson last minute!

Into the Lions’ Den

by Alan Marsh

Totally unexpectedly, you are asked to join your class to another because a teacher has called in sick at the last moment. Recognise the situation? Well, here’s an activity that I often use to get me out of this tricky spot, and, an added bonus, the students usually like it too.

First of all clarify that the class are going to be engaged in a speaking activity in which they will be able to develop fluency. They will also be able to compare their speaking fluency level with that of another class.

Put the two classes together. Ask them to introduce themselves to each other – as a task objective ask them to try and memorise the names of everybody in the room. Let them mill about as they do this. Then conduct a round-up.

Next, organise the chairs in two concentric circles. The chairs in the inner circle should face outwards and the chairs in the outer circle should face inwards. Each chair in the inner circle should be facing a chair in the outer circle.

Ask students from class A to sit in the inner circle facing somebody from class B sitting on one of the chairs in the outer circle. Modify this according to the numbers in the respective classes. Now write a topic on the board and the students interview their opposite partner about this topic. A suggested list of topics can be found and the end of this piece.

At a pre-arranged signal from you (e.g. raise your hand, play a note on a musical instrument, play some music on a tape), the students in the outer circle all stand up and move one seat to their left. They sit down, say hello to their new partner, and begin to chat about the second topic on the board. They continue until they hear/notice the stop signal again. The students in the outer circle get up again, and again move one seat to their left, where they meet a new partner and discuss another topic.

Go on with the activity for as long as you feel the students are getting a buzz out of it. You might like to follow it up by writing up on the board some useful expressions students have used and which the whole class might like to share. This can then be followed by writing up on the board some examples of inaccurate language that have been used, and inviting students to sit with somebody who is not in their class and to work on correcting these mistakes collaboratively. Finally, you might like to ask for feedback regarding what students thought of the activity and this may lead into a discussion about the need to seek opportunities to develop speaking fluency outside the classroom. I remember one group of four students who met regularly after classes every day to go on with the activity (they chose their own topics) and would come to class each morning with a list of questions that sprang out of their ‘chat group’ e.g. ‘How can I say ... in English?’ or ‘Is this right in English?’.

By the way, the activity can generate quite a hubbub, so just check with teachers in adjacent rooms that you won’t be disturbing their classes.
Here are some topics:

**Elementary upwards:**
- My best friend / My house / My town / Last weekend / What I like and don’t like about Malta / What I like and don’t like about my language school / Find out as much as you can about the person facing you, etc.

**Pre-intermediate upwards:**
- My first boyfriend/ girlfriend / A book/ film/ person that has really influenced me / A wonderful experience / A wonderful/ disastrous holiday / Three wishes for myself / Three regrets I have / The job I would really love to do / What’s wrong with the world / The three most urgent problems in the world / My country / What my country could teach Malta and what my country could learn from Malta / My favourite book/ film / TV programme/sports personality, etc.

I’m sure you can think up many more! Enjoy yourself!

Alan Marsh

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How many famous artists can you find? There are 14. Hope you will enjoy this wordsearch!

Good luck!
The below table from the NSO shows the popularity of different types of course in English language schools in Malta in 2021. The table also shows the nationalities of students who booked these courses.

By far the most popular type of language course in 2021 was general English, with a total of 17,747 students selecting this option. Of this number, the vast majority (over 3,800) were Italian, with French, Polish, and German students accounting for the other most common nationalities.

Intensive English was the next most popular course, with just under 6,000 students, while 2,670 students booked other English courses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of citizenship</th>
<th>General English: Standard</th>
<th>General English: Small</th>
<th>Intensive English</th>
<th>English specific purposes</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>3,850</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>583</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>4,913</td>
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<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>2,412</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>1,324</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>4,164</td>
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<td>Poland</td>
<td>2,104</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>580</td>
<td>3,396</td>
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<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1,546</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>1,005</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>3,096</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>1,413</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>34</td>
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<td>117</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>26</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>22</td>
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<td>Czech Republic</td>
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<td>200</td>
<td>38</td>
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<td>67</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>161</td>
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<td>Other countries*4</td>
<td>1,008</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>1,703</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>17,747</strong></td>
<td><strong>449</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,982</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,065</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,870</strong></td>
<td>27,353</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Some courses were held remotely in 2021.
2. Includes business English.
3. Includes exam preparation courses, one-to-one lessons, combination of courses, and other courses.
4. Includes unspecified country of citizenship.