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A Forum for and by Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages

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CONTENTS

The Effect of Task-Based Instruction on the Acquisition of Content and Academic Language

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Introduction

Over the past few decades, the number of English language learners (ELLs) has risen tremendously. In the United States, it is reported that ELL enrollment "has increased nearly seven times the rate of total student enrollment" (Pompa & Hakuta, 2012, p.123). To meet the need of ELLs' learning in academic settings, a great deal of research has been done to analyze and interpret effective methods of English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction in the classroom. Among language pedagogy, curriculums that emphasize communication and experiential learning have proven effective and offered empirical insights into the process of language acquisition (Nunan, 1991; 2004). Within the breadth of communicative teaching, methods that integrate content and language offer students meaningful opportunities to develop their academic language proficiency.

Beginning in the 1980s, one increasingly popular method that incorporates both language and content, is a method called Task-Based Instruction (TBI) (Ellis, 2000; Nunan, 1991; Slimani-Rolls, 2005). TBI emphasizes communication in the target language through authentic texts, focuses on the learning process, capitalizes on the learner's personal experiences, and provides a link to real-world language situations (Ellis, 2009; Nunan, 1991, 2004; Willis, 1996). While abundant empirical data have been gathered to conclude the benefit of TBI on second language acquisition (SLA), there lacks data on research conducted to assess the implications of TBI on improving ELLs' subject-specific knowledge and understanding. Great emphasis on academic achievement for all students increases the need for studies to seek effective instructional strategies to facilitate ELLs' learning. Thus, this study aimed to explore how TBI promotes ELLs' academic language and content knowledge, specifically in Social Studies at the secondary school level.

Literature Review

Task Definition and Design

To facilitate content understanding in ELLs, many instructors adopt a learner-centered approach to language teaching that focuses on the integration of subject matter and language development, referred to as Content-Based Instruction (CBI). Drawing influence from the principles of communicative language teaching (CLT), CBI focuses on the meaning of language negotiated by students through communicative practice (Brown and Lee, 2015; Heo, 2006; Lightbown & Spada, 2013). However, within CBI, the primary objective is the development of content understanding through the use of language practice. This method lacks the emphasis on the development of subject-specific academic language that ELLs need to be successful in future academic courses (Omoto & Nyongesa, 2013). Alternatively, TBI tasks that are communicative and utilize meaningful input from subject content can be an effective method of instruction to aid ELLs in both academic language acquisition and subject comprehension.

TBI is a method built on the principles of CLT, when the theoretical paradigm began to shift away from traditional form-focused, grammar-based classroom approaches. TBI emphasizes authentic communication, meaningful input, and real-world context through which students are given opportunities to take part in a task to achieve a goal (Brown and Lee, 2015; Lightbown & Spada, 2013; Savignon, 1997). To closely analyze the effect of TBI on SLA, it is important to first distinguish what defines a "task." In the context of second language learning, a task is defined as an activity in which students are engaged in the process of language learning (Williams & Burden, 1997). While researchers and educators often argue differing views on the specifications of a task, a general consensus among scholars recognizes a task under the following criteria: 1) the meaning of a task is primary, 2) the task presents a specific goal which needs to be achieved, 3) the task activity is evaluated by outcome, and 4) the task has real-world context (Skehan, 1998; Nunan, 2004).

Rather than focusing on the development of linguistic skills needed to communicate effectively, TBI places significance on the communicative activity itself, accentuating the process through which linguistic skills are developed (Ellis, 2000). In addition, students are able to use various language forms to accomplish a task.

Thus, the role of TBI in a classroom greatly differs from traditional, form-focused grammar exercises used in ESL instruction (Willis & Willis, 2001). Since its inception, the scope of TBI has broadened from involving tasks strictly drawn from everyday life, to incorporating content-based tasks that enhance learners' proficiency in core academic subjects. TBI aims to provide activities in which the negotiation of meaning is primary and the task outcomes result in SLA (Salmani-Nodoushan, 2008).

Research on Task-Based Instruction

A body of research has been implemented to investigate the effectiveness of TBI (e.g., Cao, 2012; Marashi & Dadari, 2012; Miao, 2014; Wong & Conley, 2016; Zhang & Hung, 2013). Analysis of the research provides empirical support for the effectiveness of TBI in a variety of academic facets. Researchers have explored the role of TBI at the university level in both language-specific and content-based academic courses. A fundamental study conducted by Shih (1986) demonstrated that content-based writing tasks in academic subjects promoted both academic language development, as well as content understanding by strengthening ELLs' critical thinking, research, and rhetorical skills. From the study, it is clear that integrating content-based tasks into the subject classroom develops the skills necessary for ELLs to write effectively. Recent research has reinforced this conclusion, which demonstrates the benefits of TBI not only on ELLs' writing competence, but also reading skills which are crucial for them to reach academic subject proficiency at the university level (Seyedi & Farahani, 2014; Zhaochun, 2015).

Within the K-12 spectrum, studies have focused on the impact of TBI on academic skill development, such as vocabulary acquisition, grammar, and writing performance (Marashi & Dadari, 2012; Shintani, 2012; Wong & Conley, 2016). A study conducted by Shintani (2012) aimed to measure acquisition of vocabulary and grammar skills and focused on young learners with little, to no experience of language learning. From the study, the author concluded that TBI is an effective method to promote vocabulary and grammar acquisition in ELLs with lower levels of proficiency. However, it furthers the question of whether TBI benefits students of different age groups in the development of academic language. As content learning presents complex vocabulary that ELLs must acquire to adequately communicate about different subjects, vocabulary acquisition techniques are essential to

instruction. The research investigated by Marashi and Dadari (2012) focused on the effectiveness of group-based TBI on secondary level students' writing abilities. From the study outcomes, it can be concluded that writing tasks which derive input from individual experience and maintain a real-world application promote creativity and performance.

Nonetheless, while a great deal of research supports the effectiveness of TBI in academic settings, a recent research study conducted by Wong and Conley (2016) indicates that although TBI allows ELLs to explore the language and to think deeply about a content topic, relying on tasks alone does not promote academic language development significantly, especially for students with lower levels of language proficiency. It is suggested that both implicit knowledge and explicit instruction of the language are necessary in order to see substantial improvement in academic language (Ellis, 2005).

While there is research conducted within the K-12 level range, it is not sufficient to assess TBI in subject-specific classes. Utilizing group-based TBI in the secondary level classroom has also proven to be effective in building ELLs' writing proficiency. While the research findings are positive regarding the benefit of implementing TBI into ESL instruction, there is inadequate study into the utilization of TBI in secondary level core subject classrooms. Specifically, the impact of TBI on promoting ELLs' subject-specific academic language proficiency and content writing abilities has yet to be determined.

Social Studies and English Language Learners

One academic subject that has proven to be a particular challenge for ELLs comprehension and performance is secondary Social Studies (Choi, 2013; Short, 1994; Szpara & Ahmad, 2006; Vaughn, Martinez, Reutebuch, Carlson, Thompson & Franci, 2010). Educators have determined that the subject of Social Studies poses unique difficulties in that the content covers history, politics, geography, and economics, and whereas each facet contains specialized language, complex vocabulary, and abstract concepts (Egbert & Ernst-Slavit, 2010). Within the scope of complex language, Social Studies texts often contain rarely encountered terms which can overwhelm ELLs and lead to misinterpretation of the passage (Egbert & Ernst-Slavit, 2010). Therefore, it is clear that a vital aspect of Social

Studies instruction is the development of specialized academic language proficiency to fully comprehend content and adequately discuss historical topics.

Social Studies texts also present unfamiliar grammatical structures, such as passive voice and multiple clause sentences, which students are sometimes unable to decipher (Egbert & Ernst-Slavit, 2010). Writing tasks often access students' prior background knowledge on historical events or social phenomena, as well as require critical thinking skills, such as analyzing and summarizing data (Short, 1994). Unfortunately, many ELLs do not possess the literacy skills or content understanding to complete these assessments independently, which places the population at risk for failure in content area classes (Francis, Rivera, Lesaux, Kieffer, & Rivera, 2006). Educators must seek methods of instruction that explicitly develop critical academic skills while furthering student comprehension of content.

While studies have been conducted to capture the effectiveness of TBI on writing at the secondary level age group, the research is limited to generic, academic writing and does not indicate the effects of TBI on core subject writing. Therefore, the purpose of the study was to examine whether TBI is effective in developing ELLs' academic language proficiency and subject understanding. In particular, the study aimed to look at whether implementing TBI facilitates ELLs' writing performance within the Social Studies classroom.

Research Questions

The following questions guided the present study:

1) Is Task-Based Instruction effective in promoting English Language Learners' content knowledge and academic language in Social Studies?

2) In what ways does Task-Based Instruction facilitate the development of English Language Learners' academic language in Social Studies?

Method

This is a qualitative case study. To examine whether and how TBI facilitates content knowledge and academic language development of ELLs, we used the qualitative paradigm (Preissle, 2006) because it provides an in-depth understanding of how the method benefits the learning of ELLs. Additionally, a case study design was chosen because we were interested in how the method could help a particular group of ELLs learn academic language and content (Stake, 2005).

Among a variety of TBI designs, we selected Willis' (1996) Task-Based Instruction (TBI) framework that consists of pre-task cycle, task cycle, and language focus. The framework emphasizes both fluency and accuracy within the task.

Setting and Participants

The study took place at a high school on the East Coast of the United States. It was implemented in a 10th grade ESL Social Studies class with a focus on the U.S. History. There were 15 ELLs in the class. All of the students were included in the study. Of the 15 students, there were six students from Brazil, three from Mexico, three from Ecuador, one from Portugal, and one from Haiti.

In describing the participants' language proficiency, WIDA (2012)'s English language proficiency standards were used. Aspiring to advance language development and academic achievement for ELLs, WIDA is a multi-state collaborative organization which offers resources, conducts research, and provides education for professionals working with language learners. To further the goal of academic achievement, WIDA has adopted a "Can Do" philosophy, focusing on student proficiencies at various levels of language abilities, rather than deficiencies. More specifically, WIDA offers various Can Do Descriptors which outline six levels of English Language proficiency, from "Entering" the language to "Reaching" the optimal use of English. Within each level, students Can Do various skills related to the four domains of language: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. For instance within the listening domain, a Level 1 ELL at the "Entering" phase can "match everyday oral information to pictures, diagrams, or photographs", whereas a Level 5 ELL can "make inferences from oral discourse containing satire, sarcasm, or humor" (WIDA, 2012). As a student progresses through each ability level, the skill complexity increases as well. Thus, WIDA provides an accessible tool for educators to measure student language development in accordance to level of proficiency.

Thus, based on WIDA (2012), three of the participants were at level one, one was at level two, nine were at level three, and two were at level four.

Design

The topic that was chosen for this study was "Compare and Contrast the Views of Anti-Federalists and Federalists", which was part of the curriculum of the school

district. The participants had learned about the topic prior to the study, but the teacher reported that the participants' knowledge on the topic was not sufficient enough for them to write an essay on it. Therefore, before implementing the task, the teacher first provided a summary of the topic accompanied by a T-Chart as a review. A T-Chart is a graphic organizer which allows students to create a visual representation of the comparisons and contrasts of two ideas, figures, topics, etc. (See Appendix A).

After the review, the participants were asked to write a compare and contrast essay on the chosen topic as a pre-test. Upon completion of the entire task, they composed another piece of compare and contrast writing on the same topic as a post-test.

During the pre-task cycle, the teacher explained to the participants what comparison writing was. The teacher also instructed the class on specific language, vocabulary, and phrases needed for compare and contrast writing. Sample essays were also provided for the participants. After that, the class was introduced to the role-play activity that they were to perform during the task cycle. In the task cycle, the participants were divided into teams. Each team assigned roles to the group members and crafted a script for the role-play to compare and contrast two sides of the chosen topic. They also had to discuss how they would present their script to the class. According to the participants' performance on the pre-test, the teacher selected simple past tense as the grammar feature for the language focus phase. The teacher explained what past tense was and provided examples of the grammar feature. The participants were then instructed to examine their writing and edit any incorrect use of the grammar that they could find. In the following class period, the students were asked to write a comparison of the same topic as a post-test.

Data and Data Analysis

Data consisted of the participants' pre and post-test writing samples. The data were analyzed to examine how TBI benefited the participants' development of academic writing in Social Studies. Adopting the Performance Definitions for writing and the Features of Academic Language in WIDA's standards (WIDA, 2012) as well as the Writing Assessment Scoring Model by North Carolina Department of Public Instruction Test Development Section (2003), the researchers created a writing rubric to assess the participants' writing samples. These two instruments were

selected because, together, they addressed the components of academic language as well as specific content knowledge and language for the chosen topic for the study. The researchers analyzed and compared the participants' pre- and post-task writing samples in terms of their content knowledge, vocabulary usage, and grammar through ongoing and recursive analysis methods (Merriam, 1998).

Findings and Discussion

In terms of determining whether TBI is effective in developing content understanding, there was no noticeable change in students' pre-task and post-task writing. Rather, much of the content seemed to be copied from the first writing activity to the next, with changes mainly in the language feature usage. As the participants lacked prior-knowledge on the chosen topic, the teacher first reviewed a summary accompanied by a T-Chart to supplement student understanding. However, after analyzing student pre- and post-task writing, the phraseology was strikingly similar across various students' writings, regardless of language level. The repeated phrases indicate a heavy reliance on the summary to complete the pre- and post-task writing prompt. As identified by Short (1994), writing tasks in the subject of Social Studies often require students to access background knowledge on historical events and social phenomena. Thus, as the participants did not possess adequate understanding of the topic, a review of the topic was certainly required for completion of the task. However, student dependence on the summary and T-Chart skewed the pre-task results with an artificially deeper measurement of content knowledge than in actuality. However, in accordance to greater language capacity, the participants with higher levels of proficiency demonstrated more successful incorporation of academic vocabulary, as well as use of compare and contrast language features in post-task writing, which reveals a higher mastery level of the topic derived from the summary and T-Chart. It can be concluded that the students' lack of language ability and topic awareness hindered the composition of the writing prompts, resulting in fewer subject-specific vocabulary terms and language features integrated.

Drawing from these conclusions, it is essential that future studies on TBI employ methods that are better able to support content comprehension for all students. To ensure understanding for all level language learners, instructional strategies could be implemented that allow for scaffolding of challenging material. For in-

stance, an adapted version of the text could be provided for students with lower levels of proficiency to promote understanding and alleviate the language burden (Echevarría, Vogt, & Short, 2017). Having a deeper knowledge of the topic can help students incorporate additional language features, as well as expand upon individual ideas. Alternatively, utilization of heterogeneous collaborative student groupings to complete the summary and T-Chart activity could be arranged to foster scaffolding off of students with higher level language proficiencies. Collaborative student groupings both promote comprehension and allow for communicative opportunities (Gibbons, 2015).

In concordance with a demonstrating a greater content understanding, the pre- and post-task writing results also reveal that the participants of levels three and four presented growth in language feature integration and use of academic vocabulary from the task completion. In the post-task writing samples, key academic phrases were included. For instance,

> *"By the same token, the powers of the national government are separated and balanced among the three branches."*

> *"In comparison, the Federalists believed that the Bill of Rights was unnecessary."*

The participants not only were able to improve use of vocabulary in the post-test, but they were able to utilize compare and contrast language features to expand upon their ideas:

> *"Regardless, I like the Anti-Federalists because they want for all people."*

In the excerpt above, the participant presented the ability to summarize a main facet of the Anti-Federalists, as well as express personal opinion and identify a preference. As ELLs often lack essential literacy skills to achieve in content-specific classes, building academic proficiencies, such as analyzing content through comparing and contrasting differing political movements, improves chances for success in all core subjects (Francis, Rivera, Lesaux, Kieffer, & Rivera, 2006). Therefore, the students' improvement in utilizing compare and contrast language features confirms the effectiveness of TBI in strengthening students' ability to develop academic language, as concluded in prior studies (Marashi & Dadari, 2012; Seyedi & Farahani, 2014; Shih, 1986; Shintani, 2012; Zhaochun, 2015).

However, in contrast to findings in previous studies conducted on TBI, the participants' grammar usage presented no significant improvement across pre- and post-task writing tasks. Specifically, the participants struggled with writing in the past tense, which was the grammar feature selected for the language-focus phase. In the post-task results, present tense verbs were commonly found erroneously where past tense should have been utilized:

"The anti-federalists believe that people should have their rights…"

In the above excerpt, past tense "believed" should have been used because the participant was referring to events that happened in American history. Additionally, in both the pre- and post-task writing assessments, there were numerous and repeated errors in using subject-verb agreement and consistent verb tense. For example,

"And they was fighting for the quality unlike the federalist."

"The anti-federalists is a large republic where the government was organized on the basis of checks and balance."

The participants seemed to replicate mistakes from the pre- to post-task activities. One possible explanation for the lack of improvement in grammar may stem from the design of one of the learning tasks. Unfortunately, the communicative skit allowed the use of present tense in the dialogue. Thus, the participants might have been unintentionally switching between past and present tense in the pre-task, task, and post-task cycle.

Previous research (e.g., Wong, Armento, & Staggard, 2015) indicates that being able to use consistent verb tenses tends to be one of the challenges among ELLs. To remediate the grammatical confusion for students, teachers should select one distinct, consistent grammar tense for the entirety of the TBI cycle. Therefore, as a teacher identifies, for example, past tense as the language focus, the communicative tasks should be composed accordingly to ensure uniformity across the lesson. Moreover, grammar acquisition is enhanced through meaningful input with real world connection to students' lives (Brown & Lee, 2015; Lee & VanPatten, 2003). Therefore, the language focus portion of the task-cycle should provide language learners with opportunities to practice grammatical forms through meaningful activities. Relying on their personal experiences and individual perspectives

can increase language learners' awareness of the grammar feature (Cullen, 2012; Thornbury; 1999).

To adequately assess the effectiveness of TBI, it is also imperative to analyze whether the participants were successful in completing the task itself. Analyzing the writing samples, it becomes apparent that the participants, especially those at level one, did not quite understand the goals set forth in the task. Rather than drawing comparisons and contrasts through crafted dialogue, the participants tended to focus on summary of the ideologies of the Federalists and Anti-federalists. The inability to expand upon ideas through the communicative dialogue could derive from various causes, either the students did not fully comprehend compare and contrast, or, the content topic was too abstract and difficult to understand without sufficient background knowledge. This suggests a certain proficiency threshold for certain task types. This finding also reflects the necessity of maintaining critical task criteria, namely, that the task presents a specific goal which needs to be achieved (Nunan, 2004; Skehan, 1998). Without a clear instruction in task objective, the participants were not able to fully benefit from the completion of the task cycle. Therefore, to ensure that future students are able to maximize learning potential in task implementation, teachers must create level-appropriate tasts, and delineate clear, specific goals which students can work to accomplish.

Pedagogical Implications

Drawing from the study results and discussion points above, the learning task itself could be altered for improvement. For instance, the teacher noted that the participants were distracted during the role-play presentations, as they were nervous preparing for their own demonstration of compare and contrast dialogue. Therefore, the participants were not able to benefit from watching and listening to the academic language and content presented in their peers' skit dialogues.

Moving forward in TBI implementation, students should be provided with a specific activity or comprehensive directions as to what output should be produced with the oral and visual language input (Lee and VanPatten, 2003; VanPatten, 2003)). Categorizing, noting, or recording input would help students better digest the content, in addition to fostering the academic language acquisition. Careful scaffolding is crucial.

Furthermore, providing an organizational template for input, such as a graphic organizer, would allow for scaffolding of the challenging content material and more effectively accommodating students with various language levels of proficiency (Gallavan & Kotler, 2007).

The significant improvement on the use academic vocabulary and phrases for compare and contrast writing shows that while teaching content and language communicatively is vital, explicit instruction on academic language, such as content area vocabulary and sentence structures is beneficial to ELLs (Goldenberg, 2008; Short & Echevarría, 2016).

Conclusion

Through this study, we examined the effectiveness of using TBI to facilitate high school ELLs' learning of content knowledge and academic language, particularly in Social Studies. The study offers insights into how teachers can make good use of TBI to improve ELLs' writing performance in various content areas. In the study, the participants with a stronger understanding of English were better able to incorporate language features associated with compare and contrast, as well as further develop upon the content material, whereas the lower level students seemed to merely copy key phrases from their topic summary notes, without expansion of ideas or use of language features. Primarily, through analysis, contrasts developed between growth measured in pre- and post-task writing samples from the participants with lower levels of proficiency. This finding illustrates a profound challenge that many secondary level, subject-specific teachers face when attempting to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of a variety of language levels and academic abilities. Our future work will continue to explore how TBI could be applied to teach different content subjects to ELLs at various grade levels.

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About the Authors

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APPENDIX A

T-Chart

Federalists	Antifederalists

Teaching English through Humor: The Use of Dialog Jokes as a Technique in English Language Classes

Sasan Baleghizadeh, Shahid Beheshti University (G.C.), Tehran, Iran
Amin Raeisi, Shahid Beheshti University (G.C.), Tehran, Iran

Abstract

This paper discusses the role of humor in the language classroom and more specifically, provides a seven-step-technique adopting interactional or dialog jokes in EFL language classrooms. At the outset of the paper, some theoretical backgrounds have been provided to account for the rationale behind the use of the (interactional) jokes in language learning classes. Their potentiality of lowering the affective filter, the possibility of incorporating them as meaning-based activities, and their authenticity are but some of the benefits of the use of humor in classrooms. The possibility of using them in role plays, adopting them as measures of comprehension and providing scaffolding when teaching with them could be mentioned as well. Then, having established the theoretical background, seven potential steps for implementing the dialog jokes as a technique in language classrooms will be proffered. For the sake of clarification, one dialog joke has been given and worked on practically as a sample.

Key words: Affective filter, authenticity, scaffolding, role-play, humor

Introduction and Theoretical Background

It goes without saying that humor is a prevalent feature of interaction in every language or dialect. This "specifying characteristic of humanity" (Nash, 1985, p.1) is present throughout social conventions and *cultural* artifacts, and its use is of high value in interactions between individuals (Ritchie, 2004). Teasing, banter, badinage, irony and sarcasm frequently surface in our quotidian talk, and interlocutors often get themselves engaged in amusing story telling if not outright joke-telling (Norrick, 2009). Grasping the meaning of the jokes is a part and parcel of the process of the first language acquisition; furthermore, jokes are part of the flavor that belongs to any language. Learning to understand jokes in a new language

is deemed to be both a cause, and also a consequence, of proficiency in a language (Cook, 2000).

Jokes are deemed to be a boon for learners in having them feel more comfortable and stress-free in their new language milieu (Waring, 2013). A shared minute of wittiness could decrease the affective filter—that covert hurdle or mental block that makes learners feel awkward and ill at ease (Lems, 2012) and hinders their efforts to use the input to internalize language (Chastain, 1988). Krashen (1982) theorized that a low affective filter is one of the key principles of successfully managing to pick up a new language by ameliorating the tension caused by the context. When classmates laugh *en masse*, the likelihood of learning better and more effectively might be augmented as well (Waring, 2013). Jokes which are based upon wordplay and assimilation have the additional benefit of constituting meta-linguistic awareness, or conscious awareness of the forms and elements of language which eventually, results in learning more language (Ely& McCabe 1994; Zipke, 2008; Lems, 2011). In a nutshell, jokes or on broader terms, language play can stretch one's sociolinguistic competence and destabilize the interlanguage system (Waring, 2013).

Having adopted jokes in the classes, as a meaningful or unfocused task, learners' attention can be principally focused "on the meaning rather than form" (Nunan, 1989, p.10). This might be due to the fact that they are rather hooked to get the punch line; though it is possible to have them notice some linguistic features as a focused task in jokes, too. This is in line with the top down process of language learning in which learners try to work out the meaning of a text by resort to their background knowledge and use of higher level, non-sensory information to predict or interpret lower level information present in the data (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). Performing in role play or telling a joke generally follows the pattern for story-telling; the major difference, however, lies in the expectation of laughter or being funny at the end. Jokes can be adopted as understanding tests, since not everyone necessarily gets every joke, and getting jokes involves background knowledge and rational processing (Norrick, 2009).

Jokes can be adopted as tests of comprehension, since not everyone necessarily gets every joke, and getting jokes involves background knowledge and rational processing (Norrick, 2009). That said, learning different genres pertaining to humor can go a long way in making native speakers in general, and second language learners in particular, well versed in grappling with different elements of the jokes for

better understanding of humor (e.g. sarcasm, irony, understatement, satire, banter, etc.). In this regard, different websites geared towards EFL learners can also provide a wealth of information on the topic (see for instance, http://www.ef.com/blog/language/beginners-guide-to-understanding-british-humor/, and https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/sense-humour/). Furthermore, in the field of language teaching, books such as "*What's so Funny?*" penned by Claire (1984) offers key insights into American humor genres and provides plenty of examples for each genre or category

Possessing an up-to-date repertoire of linguistic information and background knowledge is a prerequisite factor to understand a joke, even for native speakers of a language (Aarons, 2012). Jokes that are based upon wordplay in another language may be challenging to grasp because they need be processed as quickly as possible. No one wants to be the last to laugh. In a social situation where everyone is standing around interacting, comprehending a joke can seem like a high-stakes test. Not being capable of getting a joke in this situation can make someone feel like a fish out of water and create a sense of isolation (Lems, 2013). In this regard, an important part of learning a new language is learning to enjoy its humor and it would be a bonus to be able to retell jokes in other contexts.

Another important feature about jokes is their authenticity. Richards and Schmidt (2002) defined authentic materials as materials that are not originally developed for pedagogical purposes. Another commonly accepted definition of authentic materials is materials that have been produced to "fulfill some social purpose in the language community" (Little, Davit & Singleton, 1989, p. 25) – i.e., "materials not produced for second language learners" (Peacock, 1997, p. 146). Based upon the latter definition, jokes have that quality in the sense that they "fulfill some social purpose". Widdowson's (1990) defines authentic material as something designed for native speakers of English and used in the classroom in a way similar to the one it was designed for. Indeed, jokes can be deemed authentic material and can be used in classrooms as a kind of target task with learners. This is so because of the fact that they are an intrinsic part of a first language and their use is not confined just to the classroom.

Role play, adopted as a phase in the technique here (see below), is a very useful task to implement in the classrooms. According to Brown (2001), role plays involve (a) giving a role to one or more members of a group and (b) assigning an

objective or purpose that participants must accomplish. Drawing on Brown's statements, a role is given to each student in the class to act out or assimilate one character in the scenario. Nunan (2004) contends that "If learners are given some choice of what to say, and if there is a clear aim to be achieved by what they say in their role plays, they may participate more willingly and learn more thoroughly than when they are told to simply repeat a given dialogue in pairs" (p. 58). Therefore, the teachers might give the leeway to the students to somehow manipulate the language (of dialog jokes) for better learning.

The last point about the use of dialog jokes in class is the possibility of adopting scaffolding or "collaborative dialogue"(Swain, 2000). Ellis (2008) defines scaffolding as "an inter-psychological process through which learners internalize knowledge dialogically" (p. 235). Both the teacher and learners can provide "scaffolding" to clarify the meaning of the jokes and also to help other learners during the *role play* or assimilation stage in a "dialogic" manner, which, as a key principle governing the effectiveness of feedback, involves dynamic assessment of a learner's Zone of Proximal Development (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994).

Ellis (2008) cites an original study carried out by Tocalli-Beller and Swain (2007) involving a pre-test, treatment, post-test design in which these researchers investigated the extent to which ESL learners were able to *collaboratively* figure out the meaning of the jokes. They showed that learners could interpret the meaning of the jokes jointly (even when the meaning of the key lexical item in the joke was not known to the learners) and as an upshot of this *collaborative* activity they internalized the meanings of the items as demonstrated in the post-test.

Before wrapping up, providing a definition for dialog jokes would be useful. Dialog jokes (or in British English, interactional jokes) are jokes which involve two interlocutors (for instance, student vs. teacher). At least one of the interlocutor's replies sounds funny or humorous. This funniness usually boils down to the use of the elements of surprise, wittiness or unusualness in replying. Observe the following example here:

Student: "Teacher, is it fair to punish someone for something they didn't do?

Teacher: 'Of course not!"

Student: "That's good . . . because I didn't do my homework!"

It has been adequately established that jokes, particularly interactional jokes, could be a rich source of input which is authentic, or as Widdowson (1979) puts it, "genuine." In the following part of the article, we provide some possible steps for implementing interactional jokes in the classroom. For the sake of clarification, an example is given. Teachers may adopt their own procedures innovatively in class. An important point to be borne in mind about jokes is that "there is no accounting for taste." Hence, there is a high possibility that some students may understand a joke but not find it that funny (or not funny at all!).

Pedagogy

Step One

As a warm-up activity, the teacher might ask the students to tell an interesting joke that they might have recently heard or retell one that they had worked on in the previous session. (Alternatively, anything interesting that may have happened to students during the week that could be mentioned in the class.) Seeing that students may be incapable of conveying a joke in the new language with ease- for instance, not possessing the essential linguistic repertoire- the teacher may pitch in to help.

At this point, the teacher should provide students with some collocations and idiomatic expressions germane to the topic of joking (e.g. *to crack a joke, to get a joke, make jokes, take a joke, beyond joke,* etc.) and also introduce some expressions for stating their opinions on the quality of the jokes. For instance, after listening to a joke, students might say that it was "*totally/really/absolutely/pretty funny*," "*hilarious*," or "*boring*," "*dull as ditchwater*," "*offensive*" etc. They could learn and practice them when they are paraphrasing the jokes or are role-playing (if it is not performed verbatim). Furthermore, students may adopt "*hedges*" –certain kinds of expressions to show that they are sticking to the "Gricean maxims" while being cooperative participants (Yule, 2010). These include phrases or words like "*as far as I know*," "*correct me if I am wrong*," "*kind of*," and "*sort of*," etc.

Step Two

Before beginning to read the jokes, the teacher provides the students with the definitions of some words that students may have difficulty understanding and draw their attention to the meaning of the words and useful phrases, grammatical or phonological points as well. It could happen both before and after the joke. In

order to help students get the joke and not confuse them, however, the pre-teaching of the selected vocabulary items is preferred.   This is in line with the pre-task phase of TBLT in which students are prepared to perform the task in ways that will promote acquisition. It is also consistent with Skehan's (1996) suggestion that, in the pre-task stage, linguistic factors be emphasized.

Both first (L1) and second (L2) language educators and researchers concur that mastering vocabulary is of great importance in one's becoming a mature language user (Siyanova-Chanturia & Webb, 2016). It might be a good idea for English language learners to be taught key vocabulary, or brick words, prior to a lesson (in this case, prior to reading/hearing the joke), in order to assist them in their language development. For example, whatever concept we are teaching, it is recommended that those vocabulary items be included that will make the content more comprehensible to the learner. In the following scenario, words and expressions like "*exasperation*," "*demonstration*," "*pick up*," "*and to have lots of nerve*" ought to be taught *before* reading the joke. The less advanced the learners, the more elaboration is favored. Armed with the definitions of these words and expressions, the learners can probably be sufficiently prepared to grapple with the text.

> Little Ernie was having a problem with his homework . . .
> "Dad," he asked, "what is the difference between '*anger*' and '*exasperation*'?"
> "Well, son," said his father, "I'll give you a *practical demonstration*."
> His father *picked up* the phone and dialed a number.
> "Hello," said a voice at the other end.
> "Hello," said Ernie's father. "Is Melvin there?'
> "There is no one called Melvin here," the voice replied. "Why don't you look up numbers before you dial them?"
> "You see?" said Ernie's father, "That man was not at all happy with our call. But watch this!"
> He then dialed the number again, and said, "Hello, is Melvin there?"
> "Now look here!" the voice said angrily. "I told you there is no Melvin here! You *have got a lot of nerve* calling again!"
> "Did you hear that?" Ernie's father asked. "That was 'anger'" "Now, I will show you what "*exasperation*" is!"

He dialed once again, and on hearing the voice at the other end, Ernie's
father said, "Hello! This is Melvin. Have there been any calls for me?"

The teacher negotiates with the students the meaning of the unknown words
to make the meaning of the words as crystal clear as possible to students. They
can focus on the features like the pronunciation of the words (for instance, by re-
peating the word for the learners either as a model or playing a track of a native
speaker doing so) or providing synonymous words and idioms with close meanings
and examples of the use of the word in context.

Step Three

The teacher either reads or has one of the students read the joke out loud (and
clearly). Owing to the fact that students' locus of attention is on the meaning and
they are anxious to catch the punch line, this could be a meaningful activity. It
should be noticed that while reading the joke, pronunciation, stress pattern, and
intonation should be taken into account. Unless these matters are taken care of
thoroughly, the learners may not possibly get the meanings of the jokes as easily
as they should. The teacher should provide a model for the intonation pattern and
cadence and should zero in on the pitch and volume. For instance, in the given ex-
ample, considering the way Ernie's father talks and the manner with which the re-
cipient of the call speaks (most certainly not happy!) is of paramount importance,
and the person who is reading the joke out loud or students who are doing the role
play should constantly change their vocal pitch and tone to convey the meaning
as clearly as possible. Given the clarity of the context and *schemata* in this sce-
nario, they will get the joke; sometimes, nonetheless, the picture may not be en-
tirely successful and consequently some scaffolding may be required (particularly
if culture is involved). Additionally, in this scenario, they will come to understand
the distinction between "exaggeration" and "anger" (e.g. the former being more
extreme) in a meaningful context.

Step Four

Having completed articulating the joke, and having become certain that every-
body has got the meaning, the teacher asks the students why the joke was or was
not funny and tries to elicit students' opinion on the joke. She may also ask several
display questions (i.e. questions which their answers are already known to the

questioner (Ellis, 2003)). The teacher asks the students to air their opinion about the content of the jokes by adopting the collocations and idiomatic expressions provided as a model. Furthermore, they could go on defending why it was or was not funny. If in doubt, they could practice using *hedges* by uttering sentences like as far as I know, to my best of knowledge that part and etc.

This phase echoes Long's Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1981) which indicates that the best input for language interaction is the one which pops up when there is an opportunity accessible to learners to negotiate meaning in exchanges when communication problems (i.e. difficulty getting or understanding some parts of the joke) have arisen. He goes on to emphasize the role that negotiation of meaning of this kind plays for providing comprehensible input.

Step Five

At this point, the teacher may give the learners (in pairs or small groups) an opportunity to each tell the joke (with script in hand or on the board/screen). Then the teacher may call on a volunteer to retell the joke in a paraphrased form. Other students may help him/her in trying to retell the story; they have the *choice* to adopt the newly-learnt words in their rendition as well. The teacher could provide scaffolding and feedback at this phase to help students reach their full potential in completing the task. An interesting phenomenon involved here is that although, as Swain (1995) puts it, "learners… can fake it, so to speak, in comprehension, but they cannot do so in the same way in production" (p. 127). In production, learners are required to process syntactically and have to pay some attention to form (Ellis, 2004). This also concurs with the above-mentioned statement that jokes can be used as measures of comprehension.

Step Six

Having gone through the above mentioned steps, students may role play the joke in pairs. They should pay particular attention to the intonation and rhythm of the language; when to raise or lower their voice to convey the meaning of the joke as effectively as possible. This phase is a little bit difficult and sometimes challenging for both teachers and students alike. In the above example, one student could act out the role of the father and another student might take the son's role. Either the teacher herself or another student, can be the voice at the other end;

though in this scenario, a more proficient person is preferred, given the fact that he/she could play an "angry voice" more easily.

Step Seven

In the last phase, the students are given a cloze-test and practice the newly-learnt word, idioms and expressions. For instance, different collocations taught at the outset of the lesson can be worked on by giving one part (e.g. adverb) and having students match it with other parts (e.g. verbs), or giving the whole phrase and having students fill in the blanks. Alternatively, the students might be asked to give other examples of the use of that particular collocation. For instance, in this article we pre-taught some collocations and some words and expressions that students could have difficulty understanding or may not know at all. Drawing on these words and expressions, teachers can both practice and test as to whether students have learned the expressions or still need some practice. Look at the following sample adapted from the above example:

Complete this dialogue with words or expressions from the list below.

| *Take* | *told a dirty joke* | *told* | *cracking* | *joking* |
| *embarrassing* | *hilarious* | *not easy* | *no joke* | |

A: You must be ———! Tell me about it, what happened?

B: You know, he just ——- a dirty joke about my family and that really made me angry.

A: Is that it? Seriously dude, can't you ——- a joke? You were annoyed just because of that?

B: Somebody has got to tell him that ——— a *joke* like that about anyone's family is very rude.

Everybody should know that these matters are —— —— and make people reply in exasperation! Have you got any idea how infuriated I was?

It is —— —— trying to control oneself in situations like this, but I did my best!

A: For sure! Last night, he —— —— —— —— about me too, but I kept my cool. But I could take it no more and stormed out when his girlfriend said "that was ———!" and started laughing her head off.

Conclusion

Cracking jokes can be a very flexible component of language teaching classes in all levels of proficiency which introduces a particular challenge that brings about so many rewards. Jokes can create an invigoratingly comfortable milieu for English language learners in which they would be exposed to authentically enriched input provided by the exposure to a wealth of valuable vocabulary, idioms, and other language features imbedded in funny jokes, in this case dialog jokes. Once students grasp the rudimentary structure of the jokes and are engaged in telling and hearing jokes, the whole class will get the last laugh.

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Busuu–The Mobile App

Review by Musa Nushi & Homa Jenabzadeh,
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Introduction

Technological innovations are changing the second language teaching and learning landscape (Stanley, 2013; Walker & White, 2013; Wang & Winstead, 2016). It would not be far from the truth to say that nowadays every type of language teaching has had its own technologies to support it. Moreover, thanks to technology, language learners have a variety of creative resources and authentic materials at their disposal that can assist them with the process of acquiring a new language. Among the technological innovations, mobile and hand-held devices such as smartphones, tablet computers, laptops, MP3 and MP4 players, iPads, etc. are of particular interest to second learners because they offer learners the possibility to study anytime, anywhere and at their own pace (Geddes, 2004; Wang, & Heffernan, 2009). In fact, mobile assisted language learning (MALL), a subset of M(mobile)-learning, is a rapidly flourishing field of research with important implications for second language learning (Ballance, 2012; Chinnery, 2006; Kukulska-Hulme & Shield, 2008). There are many studies showing the positive effects of using mobile technology on second language (L2) learning outcome as well as L2 learners' perception and attitudes (see Burston, 2013 for a review). One remarkable implication is that MALL has blurred the traditional boundary between the classroom and the outside world, allowing language teachers and learners to exploit opportunities for language practice outside of the classroom. There are now many mobile language learning applications (e.g., *Busuu, Babbel, Duolingo, FluentU, Memrise…*) that offer learners the opportunity to learning a new language independently and in a personalized manner. These applications, however, have been developed by people outside of the field of second language pedagogy and their effectiveness cannot and should not be taken for granted. This paper focuses on one such mobile language learning application, *Busuu*, and explores the possibilities the application offers for learning a second language.

Busuu: Basic Details

Publisher: Busuu Online S.L.

Product Type: Mobile Application Software

Language(s): Multilingual

Level: Any

Media Format: APK/IPA

Operating Systems: Android/iOS

Hardware Requirements: Smart Phone/Internet Connection

Supplementary Software: None

Price: Free

Busuu: A Detailed Description

To be able to use the *Busuu* phone application (there is also a web version of this app) users must download the application from Google Play/iTunes and install it on their Android or IOS devices. The first thing you see when you open this app is the logo of the app: *Busuu* – the language learning community. According to the *Busuu* website, the app has "60 million users worldwide". The word "Busuu," the website says, is the name of an exotic language: "Busuu takes its name from the language Busuu which, according to an ethnological study conducted in the 80's, is spoken by a small community of only eight people in the North of Cameroon" What the slogan of the app suggests is that it provides a real *community* of speakers and language learners. That is a big claim that not many language learning applications have lived up to.

Another promise that *Busuu* makes us is that its users will acquire the four language skills (i.e., reading, speaking, writing and listening) and the components that make up the skills (i.e., vocabulary and grammar) through the application. One might ask the question: Can students truly gain competence through a mobile app, particularly competence in speaking and writing skills? And to top off these concerns, the application uses L1 to promote L2. This can cause problems. We will see if *Busuu* can hold up to its claims.

Users have a choice to either create a new profile in the application, or to link their existing Facebook or Google accounts to the app and log in to get started (See Figure 1).

Figure 1: Busuu login page

After that, users are presented with a variety of languages that they can choose to practice; users can choose a course in the English, French, Spanish, German, Italian, Japanese, Russian, Chinese, Portuguese, Polish, Turkish or Arabic (See Figure 2). With twelve languages to choose from, the app is behind in the range of languages it supports from some other language learning apps; for example, *Duolingo*, which provides sixteen courses for English speakers, and many other courses specially designed for other language backgrounds. Now the general assumption is that people from these twelve language groups can learn an L2 through their L1. Learners of languages outside of these groups should either know an L2 to learn English through, or take a much more difficult but perhaps more rewarding road of learning the foreign language through itself; that is to learn the English language through English. While many teaching methods of today criticize the learning of an L2 through the L1, for beginners it might be a good way to start off.

Figure 2: Busuu language selection page

On the top of the lessons page there is the very interesting sentence of "22.5 hours of *Busuu* premium= 1 college semester of language study" under which there is a button that users can press to go to the premium membership option (See Figure 3). Premium members of *Busuu* have access to flashcards, writing exercises, corrections from native speakers, travel course, mobile apps with offline mode, quizzes and official certificates, grammar exercises, vocabulary trainer, change language, and basically, more lessons, more exposure. The free version of *Busuu*, according to its website, offers flashcards, writing exercises, and corrections from native speakers. This review will not address the premium features of the app.

Figure 3: *Busuu* lessons page

In the lessons page, we have a choice of moving through the lessons one by one as arranged by the app, or to manually choose which ones to work on and which to skip--a great feature of Busuu (See Figure 4). The lessons start from an A1 level (Breakthrough or Beginner), and continue on through four standard levels up to the B2 level (Upper Intermediate) with each level consisting of between twelve to twenty-eight lessons. It is fair to say the overall design and arrangement of the lessons page is inviting; with bright colors and well-made graphical pictures. Let's see how the lessons hold up to the standards placed in our minds by the apps claims and design.
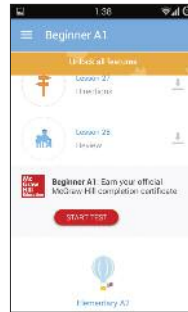
Figure 4: Busuu lessons page

Throughout the lessons, we are presented with colorful and meaningful flash-cards of vocabulary completed with voice recordings of the words, with their meanings written in L1 (See Figure 5). Grammar is also presented to users which could be considered as an advantage of *Busuu* in comparison with many other similar apps which do not attend to grammar (e.g. *Duolingo* or *Memrise*). By finishing each part of a lesson, we are presented by a very cute triumphant graphic that shows how well we have done, to add a touch of empathy towards new learners who probably feel like they have begun an up-hill journey; this image will probably act as a tourniquet later on.
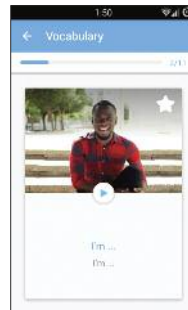

Figure 5: *Busuu* flashcards

We see true or false, fill-in-the-blank, arrange-the-sentence, record your voice, and grammar exercises throughout the lessons. The application uses soundtracks to enthuse users in the exercises. Correct answers to questions get a "Ding" of approval and wrong answers get a lower "wa-wa" sound. This feature gives the application a fun game-like air that could engage learners by its effects.

Perhaps one of the best features of *Busuu* is its writing exercises, in which users get to communicate through writing, and have other users of *Busuu* correct

their sentences (See Figures 6 & 7). It is in this feature which *Busuu's* claim of being a community could be met. Learners can help each other in the difficult process of learning a foreign language, and through correcting other users' mistakes, learn about their own faults as well. This kind of feature can definitely hook some users for they will be pushed to better their skills to be able to better help other learners, or have fewer mistakes.
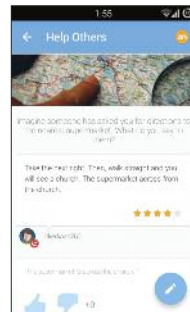

Figure 6: *Busuu* Help Others page

Figure 7: Busuu Help Others page

Conversation exercises matched with native voice recordings reading the lines to us, is also a huge advantage of *Busuu*. The native recordings are not robotic and void-of-life, as we see in some other language instruction apps (See Figure 8).

Figure 8: *Busuu* conversation models

Another fun feature of *Busuu* is that it uses a reminder system that invites users to review and complete their daily tasks. As a push for its users, *Busuu* uses statements such as: "Do you remember what wrong means?" This method both acts as a very brief but better-than-nothing review of what the user has learned so far, and as a nudge towards clicking on the app to keep going up the hill of foreign language learning.

A good revision tool that the app uses is the My Vocabulary panel (See Figure 9), in which learners can quickly reach and revise their vocabulary bank to catch up on lost time. In this panel learners can find the meaning of the vocabulary partnered with example sentences, and the audio of the pronunciation of the words.
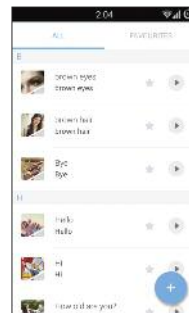

Figure 9: *Busuu* My Vocabulary panel

One extremely annoying aspect of the *Busuu* app is that it continuously flashes users with advertisements for its premium version. Surely, most users understand that the premium version is offers more. Shoving ads in users' faces every time they open the app or want to start a new lesson is definitely irritating.

Another negative aspect of the free version is that users cannot use the app offline. Many learners may not at all times have access to the Internet connection but still want to use the application. Some language learning apps do provide users with an offline version that they can use whenever they feel the need to revise or progress in their learning journey.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that *Busuu* provides well-crafted learning tools such as flash-cards, conversation models, correction by native speakers, and grammar extracts for its users; it also creates a living community with its Help Others feature. All in all, the application does in fact exercise users' reading, writing, speaking and listening skills through its concentrated and well-formed exercises. However, the free version will help learners less in those aspects. In comparison with other free popular applications for language learning, the huge downside of *Busuu* (free version) is the small variety of exercises that it offers; simply stated, it gets boring after a while and learners may lose interest in continuing using the application. At the end of the day, the free version is just not appealing enough for most users to want to go premium. As much as the "community" *Busuu* provides is attractive on paper, it will not probably do for placing *Busuu* on the top of users' lists in deciding on a language learning application.

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TIPS FOR TEACHERS

Creating Listening Resources Using Cultural Experience Stories

Mary Garceau, Brigham Young University–Hawaii, USA

It can be difficult to find useful or authentic listening resources for a specific group of language learners. Commercial recordings are often too difficult for students to understand, unrelated to their needs and interests, or too expensive for programs to purchase. Freely available online materials are becoming easier to find, but they are seldom a good fit for a particular class because each group of learners is different, having unique needs. By recording their own listening resources, teachers can customize the content and manipulate the listening tasks to fit their students. To those who wish to record their own listening resources, I would suggest beginning with their own cross-cultural personal experience stories.

Several times in my teaching career, particularly in Paraguay, I have faced the need to choose between creating my own listening resources or having none. When first faced with the task of creating my own resources, I was overwhelmed and did not know where to begin. However, after pondering the matter for some time, I thought to record some of my personal cultural experience stories. These experiences were easy to recall and to share because I had lived them and often told them to others. They had been valuable learning experiences for me and became equally valuable (and entertaining) content for my students in lessons on travel, culture, communication, culture shock, and cross-cultural differences.

Everyone in the field of teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) probably has a myriad of similar cross-cultural experience stories to draw on. These experiences might come from an internship, a volunteer experience, a prior teaching position, or a previous job in the field. No matter where one teaches, culture is an integral part of the study of languages and interactions between people. By sharing cultural experiences with students, teachers show that they value culture and recognize that it plays a key role in learning to communicate with others. Sharing their own stories of culture shock, for example, makes it easier for students to recognize and begin telling their own.

Procedure

1. Recall a personal story from a past or recent cultural experience. List the key points in the story to help remember them as you speak, but do not write a complete script. This will help ensure that the recording sounds as authentic as possible.

2. Identify the discourse features that you want to showcase. For example, do you want to record a casual encounter on the street, an informal interview, or a guest lecturer speaking to students preparing to study abroad?

3. Install a program on your computer which allows you to record and edit audio files. For example, Audacity is a free, open source program easily downloaded to your computer from the Internet.

4. Record your story using your outline or key words. If you make a mistake or change your mind, just pause and then continue. There is no need to start over because *Audacity* makes it easy to edit the recording later. Try to keep your students in mind as you speak to make your recording as natural and authentic-like as possible.

5. (Optional) Record and insert additional segments such as an introduction, explanations of specialized terms, or clips of interviews with other speakers.

6. Edit your recording. Delete false starts and distracting outside noise, if you wish. For beginning level students, you may want to delete wordy passages or insert longer pauses between utterances. For intermediate and advanced students, you may elect to retain more of the authentic features of spontaneous speech.

7. Export your completed recording into an MP3 file for easy access in the classroom or to share with students via other means.

With the completed recording(s) you can create a variety of listening tasks, depending on the level of your students and your desired learning outcomes.

Pre-listening activities can include:

- Building suspense by telling students they will hear the voice of someone they know
- Discussing key concepts that relate to the content of the recording
- Activating current knowledge (schema) on the topic
- Asking for volunteers to tell personal anecdotes related to the topic
- Teaching a few new vocabulary items that students will hear

- Making predictions about the content based on the topic or the opening sentence from the recording
- Reading and discussing an article that relates to the content of the recording.

During listening tasks

Explain what students should do, think about, or write while they are listening to the recording so that they will be prepared for what follows. If you want them to listen for specific information as they might in a quiz or exam situation, encourage them to take notes or attend to details, or give them the quiz questions to answer as they listen. If you want them to ask for clarification, give them a signal to use when they want you to pause the recoding or tell them to write their questions for "the speaker" as they listen.

Post-listening activities

These can be as varied and extensive as you wish. A few examples are described below to highlight various linguistic and cognitive objectives.

- Listen for specific details. Have students compare their answers with a neighbor. Encourage them to ask for clarification or decide whether they need to hear the recording again. Give them the answers, or a key, to check their responses.
- Listen and React. Have students share their reaction to what they heard orally with a partner or individually on paper. Are they surprised by their teacher's story? Have they heard similar stories before? What advice would they give their teacher about the experience?
- Summarize or Retell. Have students work in pairs to summarize or retell the story using their own words orally or in writing. This task may lead students to ask for another replay of the recording.
- Give advice. Tell students about advice columns or blogs, and show them examples if possible. Then ask them to write a letter in response to your story. Ask them to answer questions such as Why did this happen? What would you do in that situation? What should I have done? Then circulate the letters so they read each other's responses.
- Synthesize information. Have students answer a question that requires synthesis of information from various sources, for example: We read an article about culture shock. From the information in that article and what

you heard in my story, what stage of culture shock am I in? Why do you say so?

- Tell Your Own Story. Use your story as a springboard for students to tell, write, record and/or share their own.

Conclusion

While it can be difficult for teachers to find useful or relevant listening resources for a particular class or purpose, it is no longer difficult to create their own. Today, teachers have power to custom design audio recordings and manipulate listening tasks to fit their unique needs. This tip describes an easy way to begin creating authentic-like audio recordings utilizing the teacher's own cross cultural experience stories. Such stories are easy to collect and share because we all have them. They can teach about cultural differences, and students delight in hearing them. When drawing on personal cultural experiences, the possibilities for developing valuable listening tasks are endless. No doubt those who do will soon be dabbling in the creation of video-based materials as well.

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Notes to Contributors

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