

PROFESSIONAL ELT MAGAZINE ONLINE

#15



Published by TESOL TÜRKİYE Promotion Council
July, 2025

TESOL
TÜRKİYE

TEACHING ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES



Dear Readers,

Welcome to the 15th issue of our Professional ELT Magazine Online, proudly presented by TESOL Türkiye! We are thrilled to bring you another diverse and inspiring collection of articles, reflecting the dynamism and passion of our community.

This issue features a remarkable group of contributors whose insights and expertise will undoubtedly enhance your professional journey. We are proud to showcase the work of Amber Moin Qureshi, B   ra Kavan Alkan, Deniz   zbeyli, Emrah Geni  , G  ls  m   ıvgın Ba  , Nouf Alahmad, Nujen Ayaz, Semiha Karak  se, Shannon Miyamoto, Siavash Bakhtshirin,   ilan Topdemir, Tu   e Kılı  , and Vulcan Demirkan Martin. We extend our heartfelt thanks to all our contributors for their invaluable efforts.

Finally, we would like to extend our sincere appreciation to our readers for their support and enthusiasm. We also encourage you, our valued readers, to actively participate in shaping the future of our magazine! Thank you for joining us on this journey of professional growth and discovery. Enjoy the 15th issue of our Professional ELT Magazine Online!

TESOL T  rkiye Promotion Council

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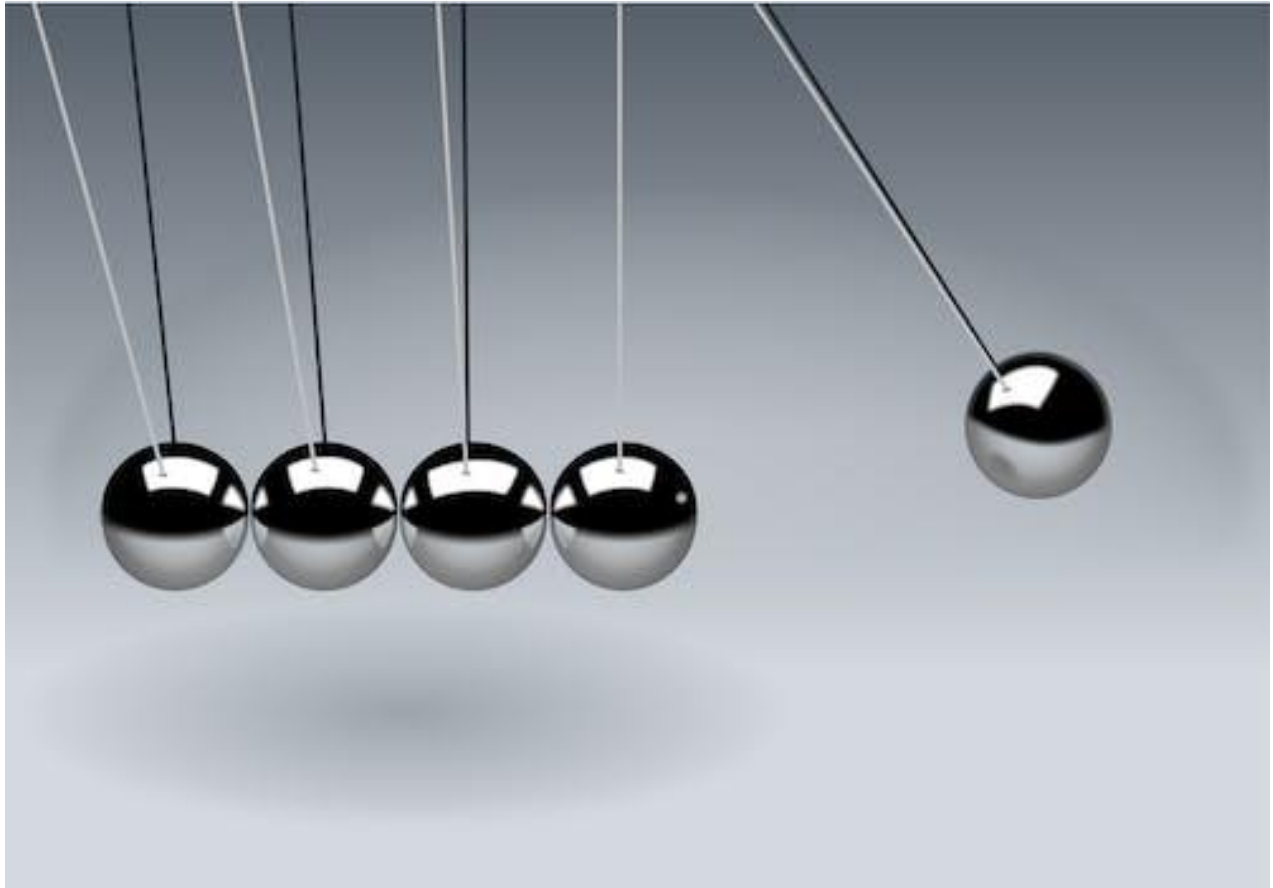
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*Please note that the language used, and opinions expressed in the articles published in this magazine are solely those of the respective authors and do not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of TESOL Türkiye.

1. REFLECTIONS



IMAGINE A CLASSROOM OF THE FUTURE WHERE STUDENTS DESIGN THEIR OWN LEARNING JOURNEY

Amber Moin Qureshi

Reimagining Language Learning through Personalization, Technology, and Learner Autonomy

As education pursues to transform in response to technological, social, and cultural shifts, a fresh perspective is taking shape: a classroom where students are not merely beneficiaries of information, but architects of their own learning. In this model, the dividing line of traditional instruction blurs, giving way to a student-centered environment where learners adapt their educational path to suit their goals, interests, and strengths.

Having spent over two decades as an English Language lecturer across the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates, I have observed a growing demand for autonomy in learning. The future classroom—dynamic, inclusive, and guided by technology—holds the potential to transform the TESOL landscape by empowering students to direct their own development.

Personalized Pathways in a Digital World

Central to this vision is the idea of personalization. Rather than adhering to a fixed syllabus, students would be given the tools and guidance to create individualized learning plans. These might include selecting language topics aligned with career aspirations, choosing assessment formats that reflect their learning style, or engaging in collaborative projects with international peers.

Technology plays a vital supporting role. Artificial intelligence could provide tailored feedback, virtual reality could immerse students in authentic language settings, and adaptive platforms might modify content based on progress. A learner studying business English, for instance, could participate in a simulated virtual meeting with avatars, practicing negotiation strategies in real time. Such experiences move language out of the textbook and into real-world contexts, enhancing relevance and retention.

The Educator's Role: Facilitator and Guide

In this learner-led environment, educators assume a different but no less vital role. No longer seen primarily as transmitters of knowledge, teachers become facilitators, mentors, and co-navigators. They guide students through the process of setting goals, selecting resources, and reflecting on outcomes. Their subject knowledge, cultural awareness, and pedagogical insight become crucial in ensuring that students' choices are meaningful and aligned with broader learning objectives.

Assessment methods would also evolve. Instead of relying solely on standardized tests, learners could compile digital portfolios showcasing writing samples, recorded oral tasks, project outcomes, and personal reflections. This approach encourages continuous evaluation and supports the development of metacognitive skills, which are essential for lifelong learning.

Creating Inclusive and Flexible Learning Spaces

A future-focused classroom must also be inclusive. Learner-designed pathways can accommodate various abilities, preferences, and contexts. For example, students with strong visual learning styles might opt for video-based assignments, while those with limited connectivity might choose downloadable resources or offline alternatives. This flexibility ensures that no learner is disadvantaged by one dominant mode of instruction.

However, autonomy must be scaffolded. Teachers need to ensure that learners are not overwhelmed by choice. Structured guidance, curated resource libraries, and regular check-ins would be essential to support students in making informed decisions about their learning.

Real-World Application and Intercultural Competence

One of the most promising aspects of a student-designed learning journey is its emphasis on real-world application. Language becomes a tool for achieving authentic goals—whether that’s creating a podcast, running a campaign, writing a business proposal, or participating in a cultural exchange. Learners are more likely to remain motivated and engaged when their work is meaningful beyond the classroom.

This approach also nurtures key 21st-century skills: digital literacy, communication, problem-solving, and intercultural competence. In TESOL, where language is both the medium and the message, these skills are inseparable from the learning process. Students not only learn about the language, but learn through using it in relevant and impactful ways.

Challenges and Institutional Considerations

Naturally, this vision is not without its challenges. Transitioning to a learner-designed model requires a significant shift in institutional culture. Teachers need training in mentoring and digital tools, curricula must be restructured to allow for flexibility, and systems must be developed for personalized assessment.

Equity remains a concern. Without careful planning, the integration of advanced technologies could widen the gap between those with and without access. Ensuring that all students have the digital tools and support they need must be a foundational element of any future-ready classroom.

Conclusion: Towards a More Human-Centered Future

Imagining a classroom where learners design their own journey is more than a pedagogical exercise—it is a call to action. In a rapidly changing world, students must become adaptable, autonomous, and engaged. By embracing personalization, technology, and a redefined educator role, we can create TESOL classrooms that are not only more effective but more human-centered. This is not a distant future—it is already emerging. As educators, we have both the opportunity and the responsibility to nurture it.



She is a seasoned English Language Educator with over 20 years of experience in ESOL, EFL, EAL, ESL, EAP, ESP, English Functional Skills, and Business English, and is a registered Cambridge KET/PET Speaking Examiner. She is committed to inclusive teaching and learner progression, bringing international experience and holding a Master's degree in TESOL. She actively contributes to global ELT conferences and professional development initiatives.

OUTPUT MATTERS

Emrah Geniş

Second language acquisition is a mutual process which “requires meaningful interaction in the target language” (Krashen, 1982, p. 1). Second language learning, on the other hand, includes focus on “error correction and the presentation of explicit rules” (Krashen, 1982, p. 2). This is the focus that interferes with the natural flow of the interaction to prioritize accuracy over fluency. Consider, for instance, an intermediate-level learner of English composing an essay. It is likely that the learner pauses several times and makes changes and revises their own product by focusing on his “learned knowledge” as an “editing mechanism”. Some might consider these pauses as time traps or barriers for the learning process; however, it represents the key moments when the actual learning occurs – intertwining power of metacognitive learning strategies and self-reflection. Most importantly, the student in this scenario does not merely recall what has been taught but produces in the target language as well: from comprehension to production.

In this context, it is apparent that output plays a pivotal role in second language learning. Merrill Swain (1985) highlighted three functions of output in language learning: the noticing function, the hypothesis testing function, and the metalinguistic function.

The first function, “noticing”, refers to the time when a student realizes a gap in their linguistic knowledge while attempting to produce in the target language. When the learner becomes aware of what they lack to complete the task,

they may have more control over his own learning process. Instructors play a critical role by facilitating this noticing process—for example, by tolerating periods of silence during class, which may serve as valuable time for reflection and self-discovery. Instead of overwhelming the student with many other follow-up questions, it might be better to let them think individually and independently to explore whether they have the “learned knowledge” to complete the task. Another strategy to promote noticing is to implement the idea of “backwards planning” to the classroom – share the lesson objective(s) with the learners at the very beginning of the class; maybe accompanied with some objective-related questions for students to produce in the target language so that students can figure out what they will need to be able to answer these questions better and more accurately. Do they need to focus on any grammatical structures? Do they need to review some lexical items?

The second function, “hypothesis testing”, is directly related to the learner’s active production stage. As Swain puts it “output may sometimes be, from the learner’s perspective, a ‘trial run’.” Once the student utters anything in the target language, that might lead to feedback from the instructor – if his utterance is accurate or not. That “trial run” turns into an opportunity for the learner to fix his hypothesis. The more output means the more opportunities for the students (and for the instructors) to test the learning and

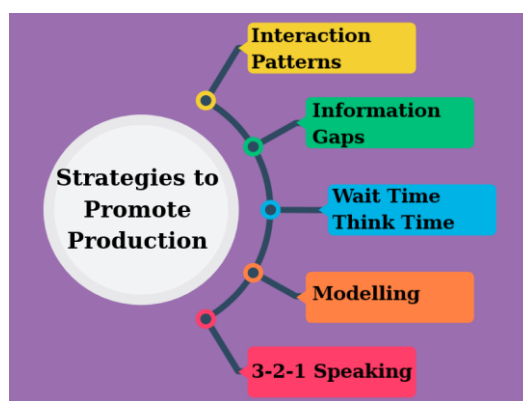
to timely address any problems in the learning process.

Merril Swain highlights the importance of the “metalinguistic function” as the third function of Output Hypothesis. She states that “under certain task conditions, learners will not only reveal their hypothesis, but reflect on them, using language to do so” (Swain, 2000, p. 135). While learners analyze their own language use, they self-edit and gain a deeper understanding of the context, which promotes more independent and autonomous learner.

These functions are consistent with the four stages of competence: Unconscious Competence, Conscious Incompetence, Conscious Competence, and Unconscious Competence. The main advantage of increasing student output and participation will definitely support language learners to realize what they don’t know and create opportunities for them to realize gaps in their knowledge.

Output in language learning is a dynamic process through which learners notice gaps, test their understanding, and reflect on their learning meta-linguistically. By fostering meaningful opportunities for output, instructors can support learners in becoming more autonomous, self-directed, metacognitively aware, and ultimately more competent users of the target language.

The following visual shows some practical strategies that can be implemented in the classroom to enhance student output and language production.



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Emrah Genis is an Instructor of English and Teacher Trainer at İzmir University of Economics. He holds a BA and an MA in American Culture and Literature, as well as a TESOL Certificate from Arizona State University. He completed the “From Teacher to Trainer” course offered by NILE. Since 2010, he has been actively engaged in English language teaching across a wide range of educational contexts.

BEING A PRE-SERVICE TEACHER IN MULTILINGUAL CLASSROOMS

Nujen Ayaz

During my teaching practicum, the students I met taught me more than I had anticipated. I learned that being a teacher means not only delivering knowledge but also building meaningful connections with students from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and integrating these identities respectfully into the classroom environment. This experience helped me understand that teaching in a multilingual and multicultural setting requires awareness, sensitivity, and a learner-centered approach.

At the school where I did my teaching practicum, students came from not only different age groups and proficiency levels but also a variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Turkish, Kurdish, Zaza, Syrian, and Afghan students shared the same classroom. Although this diversity seemed challenging at first, I gradually began to view it as an enriching resource that added depth to the teaching and learning processes. Each student carried their own story, language, and voice. Sometimes these voices overlapped, but more often, they coexisted peacefully.

Two students particularly drew my attention. One of them was an Afghan girl in the 5th grade. She was highly motivated in class, participated actively, got along well with her classmates, and scored above average in quizzes. Her Turkish was quite fluent, which helped her engage more confidently in English lessons as well. The other was an Afghan boy in the 8th grade. Although he also spoke Turkish fluently, he was more reserved

in class, tended to avoid interaction with peers, and stayed in the background. These two examples clearly showed me that multilingual learners need not only linguistic but also social and emotional support to thrive.

One striking observation was the students' enthusiasm for sharing their native languages and learning about others'. They respected each other's backgrounds and often exchanged ideas rooted in their linguistic and cultural identities. I realized that they were seeking reflections of their languages and cultures in the classroom. They didn't only want to learn a language — they wanted to bring their identities into the learning space. As a future language teacher, I recognized the importance of embracing rather than ignoring these identities and using them as a foundation for inclusive teaching.

Language teaching is not limited to grammar rules or vocabulary acquisition. Especially in multilingual classrooms, a pedagogical approach that acknowledges students' linguistic histories and identities is crucial. Such an approach strengthens their sense of belonging and enhances their motivation to learn a second language. If you are a language teacher, you must remain open to diverse perspectives and strive to be globally and interculturally competent.

My practicum taught me that linguistic diversity in classrooms should not be seen as a barrier but as a valuable resource. Incorporating this diversity into classroom activities helps students

connect, learn from each other, and express themselves more freely. For instance, something as simple as learning how to say “hello” or “thank you” in each student’s native language can serve as a powerful, inclusive gesture.

In addition, the use of visual materials in the classroom proved to be especially meaningful in multicultural contexts. A single image may evoke different associations depending on a student’s cultural background. For example, while one student may not understand the Turkish explanation of a visual, they might recognize the image and relate it to their native language. This internal connection then facilitates learning by allowing the student to transfer meaning into

English, their L2. Therefore, using culturally responsive visual aids increases both understanding and participation. It helps bridge the gap between students’ lived experiences and the target language.

In conclusion, multilingualism and multiculturalism are not just aspects to be considered in educational settings—they are core elements that can enrich teaching and learning processes. As future educators, it is our responsibility to recognize, accept, and reflect this diversity in our classrooms. Every student’s voice matters, and truly hearing them is not only the hallmark of a good teacher, but of a compassionate human being.



Nujen Ayaz is a successful senior ELT student at Firat University. She aims to pursue a master’s degree and further academic development in Turkey and Europe. Her main interests lie in sociolinguistics, particularly multilingualism, migration, and identity, with a strong commitment to inclusive, culturally responsive language education, practice and research.

FROM PROMPT TO PURPOSE: FOSTERING STUDENT AGENCY THROUGH INTELLIGENT TOOLS IN ELT

Siavash Bakhtshirin

With the world changing at such a rapid pace and technology permeating every aspect of life, it is more crucial than ever to support student agency. Beyond formal instruction, lifelong learning depends on students' initiative and accountability. A learner's development depends on their capacity for independent study, initiative, and well-informed decision-making. In the current digital era, where students have greater freedom than ever to choose how and what they study, teachers' duties are shifting from teaching to fostering students' growth.

Our university's English preparatory department has started utilizing GPT-based AI tools in the classroom in response to this shift. Tools like these encourage students to think about language in more profound and introspective ways while simultaneously helping them complete their assignments. Using GPTs, a wide variety of instructional tasks are carried out. Helping students with terminology, creating speaking prompts, simulating real-life interactions to help them become better speakers, and giving them quick, individualized feedback on their writing both inside and outside of the classroom are some ways these tools are utilized.

Instead of automating the learning process, our goal is to provide students with tools that allow discovery, learning from mistakes, and personal

growth. After receiving feedback on their work generated by artificial intelligence, students should consider the suggestions, choose the most relevant ones, and justify their choices. At this introspective stage, real learning takes place; it fosters pride, improves analytical skills, and boosts self-assurance.

Enhancing communication regarding departmental policies and academic program requirements is another positive application of GPTs. We provide students with AI-powered interfaces in place of lengthy emails or documents. Students can ask questions and receive clear, accessible responses with these tools. As a result, students can more easily communicate with the department, learn how to retrieve information on their own, and take greater responsibility for their own education.

These innovations are implemented while adhering to strict ethical standards. Through discussions on issues like academic honesty, data privacy, and over-reliance, we teach students how to responsibly use AI tools. Instead of just exposing them to technology, we want to help them become digital citizens by teaching them to question, evaluate, and create their own meaning from the data they collect. By doing so, we help students lay the groundwork for meaningful and long-lasting digital learning.

Our curriculum incorporates project-based learning, technology use, and activities that require students to interact with others in a real-world context. Students collaborate on writing projects, select their own subjects, establish due dates, and offer feedback to one another. These activities help them become more independent and responsible. Their role is to help students understand English as a tool for expressing oneself, forming relationships, and excelling in both educational and personal life, rather than just a topic.

The path to student agency is fraught with obstacles. Some students struggle in the beginning because they are either confused about their educational path or overwhelmed by the abundance of options available to them. Through opportunities for guided self-reflection, progressively challenging assignments, and collaboration with peer mentors who support them along the way, we hope to assist them in becoming more self-reliant. In order for students to create objectives for themselves and take pride in their progress, we urge them to consider their areas of strength and improvement.

Our experience demonstrates that students exhibit initiative, responsibility, and originality when given the opportunity and resources to direct their own education. They begin to take ownership of their learning, set meaningful goals, and engage more deeply with the content. This transformation is especially evident when students are trusted to make choices and reflect on their progress. When the emphasis is shifted from the teacher to the students, the classroom can become a place that supports not only academic success but also personal development and confidence.

We are constantly searching for fresh ways that thoughtful pedagogy and digital tools may complement one another to give students greater agency over their education. We are doing more than simply giving students access to information in order to promote a mindset that values learning throughout one's life. It is crucial that students acquire knowledge and cultivate the ability to think critically, ethically, and independently about that knowledge as we approach an era defined by artificial intelligence.



Siavash Bakhtshirin is the Academic Coordinator at Foreign Languages Department of İstanbul Nişantaşı University. Specializing in CEFR-aligned curriculum and the application of AI in English language teaching, he fosters innovation and reflective practice in language education.

FROM INQUIRY TO IMPACT: MY DOCTORAL PATH TO SOCIAL JUSTICE IN ELT

Tuğçe Kılıç

As a doctoral researcher exploring the intersections of language teaching and social justice, my dissertation path was far more than an academic work; it has been a very personal, transformational experience. My study was based on the concept that education can and should be used to promote equality and change. It focused on in-service English language teachers' knowledge and application of social justice pedagogies in Turkey.

When I first considered the issue, I was motivated by a simple yet strong question: What does it mean to teach English through a social justice lens in a system that does not openly support it? I quickly discovered that the solutions were neither simple nor universal. They were subtle, contextual, and frequently concealed beneath the surface of day-to-day classroom experiences. Designing and facilitating a six-week professional development workshop for high school English teachers was at the heart of my study. Each week, we explored topics such as identity, equity, literature, multimodality, and activism. What I had envisioned as a knowledge-sharing platform turned into a dialogic community of practice, bringing together tales, resistance, and optimism. Teachers spoke candidly about the difficulties of confronting and managing inequity in packed classrooms, the emotional work of coping with marginalization, and the conflict between curricular expectations and social responsibilities.

One of the most significant lessons from this experience was the value of listening. As researchers, we frequently seek patterns, themes, and codes; nevertheless, in this study, I discovered that taking the time to actually listen to teachers' perspectives was activism in and of itself. It included making room for their truths, disappointments, and goals—without judgment or agenda.

I also dealt with methodological and ethical issues. Conducting narrative inquiry in my own professional field required critical reflexivity. I have to keep asking myself, "Whose voice am I amplifying?" What power dynamics are in play? Am I telling their tales accurately, or am I merely dissecting them? These questions led my data collection and analysis and continue to influence how I perceive the researcher's job today. Therefore, I worked closely with the participating instructors throughout the study process to convey their views as accurately and responsibly as possible. This included co-creating meaning during our interviews, asking them to examine and reflect on the transcriptions and translations, and ensuring that their tales were more than just data points, but lived experiences worthy of respect and care. I considered them as co-authors of knowledge whose thoughts impacted both the content and the direction of the study. This collaborative approach allowed me to remain accountable to their tales while acknowledging their faith in me as a researcher.

Perhaps the most satisfying aspect of this journey has been seeing change—not in enormous, systemic ways, but in modest classroom adjustments. One instructor redesigns a reading assignment to highlight different views; another incorporates a documentary to inspire critical debates; and still another facilitates identity mapping with their students. These encounters reaffirmed my opinion that social justice in ELT did not necessitate a comprehensive revamp. It starts with intention, reflection, and the courage to ask the question, “What if?”

Now that I’ve finished this lengthy, arduous process, I’m carrying with me not just findings and conclusions, but also connections, realizations, and newfound purpose. The dissertation was not the finish, but rather the beginning—a basis for future work in advocacy-based teacher education.

My advice to anyone starting a similar line of inquiry is this: embrace the chaos, welcome the discomfort, and open yourself up to personal transformation via investigation. The most significant change may occur on the inside as a result of practicing what you believe.



Tuğçe Kılıç is a lecturer of English and assistant director of the School of Foreign Languages at Istanbul University-Cerrahpasa. She holds a PhD with a focus on social justice teacher education. Her research interests include teacher education, 21st-century skills, critical pedagogy, and social justice. She has contributed to book chapters on online education and curriculum design and recently published an article on social justice education in Türkiye on TESOL Journal.

REFLECTING ON MY CONFERENCE PRESENTATION: INTEGRATING SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING INTO LANGUAGE TEACHING

Vulcan Demirkan Martin

Tēnā koutou katoa – Greetings to you all.

Ko Vulcan tōku ingoa. – My name is Vulcan.

Nō Istanbul ōku tīpuna – My ancestors are from Istanbul.

Kei te noho au ki Tāmaki Makaurau – I live in Auckland.

Mihimihi—introductory speeches in te reo Māori—encourage us to share our whakapapa (genealogy). Mihimihi traditionally involve standing to introduce oneself. This was how I began my presentation at *Hui Taumata Rangahau 2024: Moving Forward Together*, hosted by Te Wānanga o Aotearoa in Te Whanganui-a-Tara (Wellington). I spoke on a topic close to my heart: integrating Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) into adult language education.

My interest in SEL derives from its practical, actionable, and collaborative nature—qualities we strive to cultivate in English language classrooms. SEL fosters self-awareness, social awareness, emotional regulation, and responsible decision-making—essential skills not only for learners and educators, but for all individuals. Through SEL practices, I co-create learning experiences with my students.

Though common in primary education, SEL remains underutilized in adult learning. When I began researching SEL, I found little literature on adult English learners. But aren't these skills relevant to us all? Can we assume adults already possess these skills—or that they require no further development?

In its current form, there are five competencies in SEL:

- **Identity and Agency** – strengths recognition, growth mindset, grit
- **Cognitive Regulation** – goal-setting, attention, metacognition
- **Social Skills** – empathy, communication, teamwork
- **Public Spirit** – ethical and civic responsibility, social justice
- **Emotional Regulation** – stress management, impulse control, coping strategies

I focus particularly on emotional regulation, both because of time constraints and because adult students often already possess a foundation in the other competencies. Emotionally regulated individuals communicate better, build stronger relationships, and adapt to change—skills we all need in life.

There are several ways to implement SEL. While young learners often receive SEL instruction through embedded curricula and school-wide policies, adult learners typically receive little structured SEL support. However, SEL competencies can also be taught as stand-alone, explicit lessons. Given my project, I explicitly teach SEL competencies.

SEL in Context: From Istanbul to Auckland

My engagement with SEL began during the COVID-19 pandemic in Türkiye, which was followed by a devastating earthquake. Extended online learning left many students and teachers anxious, disconnected, and traumatized.

When hybrid learning resumed, I introduced SEL practices to help students process their experiences and reconnect with learning. I also embraced these practices for my own development. Emotionally regulated teachers build stronger classrooms and positive relationships and model healthy coping strategies within a supportive learning environment.

In Aotearoa (New Zealand), I teach Academic and Business (Employment) English classes to adult learners—many of whom are new migrants or former refugees who have fled extreme hardship. Research consistently shows that so-called “soft skills” are among the most sought-after by employers. These include collaboration, a positive attitude, self-management, and effective communication. These workplace essentials are, in fact, SEL skills. Although my primary goal is not job placement, supporting students to develop these interpersonal skills is fundamental to their long-term success and well-being. People who can manage their emotions are better at resolving conflicts, staying calm under pressure, and adapting to change, which ultimately benefits the entire team.

Classroom Practice: Making SEL Visible

Each semester, I explain my research to students, gain their consent, and then integrate SEL into our English language work. I adapt SEL activities to suit four-skill instruction:

- A TED Talk on “How to Increase Your Happiness” becomes a listening task
- A mindfulness article opens space for reflection and discussion

- A reading on *tūhonotanga* (connection) introduces vocabulary and ideas about the Māori concept of belonging

Indigenous well-being frameworks, like *te ao Māori*, emphasize connection to land, *whānau*, culture, and spirit. These resonate deeply with my learners who have recently arrived in Aotearoa.

Other SEL activities have included:

- Non-violent communication
- Conflict resolution
- Pausing inner dialogue
- Mind-wandering and attention

As someone who only seems focused while teaching or on a steep treadmill, I empathize! Many students are unfamiliar with these concepts, and it’s valuable to introduce them early—ideally much earlier than I first encountered them.

Each SEL session concludes with a short reflective writing task. Prompts such as “Your first memory as a child” often lead to extended speaking and writing practice. One popular topic—cloud appreciation—offers a welcome pause in the lesson. Over time, students build personal journals of up to ten pages.

Outcomes and Reflections

Student response has been overwhelmingly positive. Many report writing more in English outside class and finding joy in the journaling process. They consistently show interest in my research and presentations. When I present for them, the session also models structure and slide design, further enriching their learning.

The final journal entry is always the same, for both my students and you, the reader:

What are you waiting for?



Vulcan Demirkan-Martin earned his PhD in Cultural Studies from Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha (University of Canterbury). His passion for exploring the art and science of teaching, alongside a commitment to enhancing student well-being through education, led him to teach EAP and ESL. He currently teaches at DynaSpeak/Te Wananga o Aotearoa.

2. TROUBLESHOOTING/ CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS



ADDRESSING GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS' NEEDS IN ENGLISH CLASSROOMS

Büşra Kavan Alkan

As an English teacher who is currently teaching gifted and talented students I find it both fulfilling and challenging. In this article, I reflect on my personal journey so far and the solutions that I have found in teaching English to gifted and talented students.

Giftedness are defined in many different ways in literature. However, almost all definitions share some common characteristics. Giftedness includes three main traits in general – these traits having higher abilities than peers, high levels of creativity and task commitment. Gifted and talented children show outstanding performance in different fields including academic areas such as mathematics, science, creativity, art and leadership (Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted, 1999, p. 18). According to the Ministry of National Education Science and Art Centers Directive; gifted and talented students are defined as individuals who learn faster than their peers. They are ahead in creativity, art, leadership capacity; have special academic talent; can understand abstract ideas; likes to act independently in their areas of interest; and show high-level performance.

Education of gifted and talented students in Türkiye has been provided by Science and Art Centers (BİLSEM), which have specific curricula designed for gifted students. Students go into different steps to be able to attend Science and Art Centers. In the first step, class teachers at students' regular schools recognize students with higher abilities with observation forms. These

entitled students take a screening test in one or two areas including general ability, music and art. The ones who pass the screening test take an intelligence scale test for the area of general intelligence, and performance test for music and visual art. Following the intelligence scale and performance tests, testers and specialists make the final decision on which children require special services for giftedness. Finally, students who are identified as gifted and talented start attending Science and Art Centers after they finish regular school hours. These centers are free for gifted children who receive full financial support from the government.

Science and Art Centers offer gifted and talented students opportunities for interdisciplinary and experiential learning. Teachers in these centers are responsible for designing lessons that not only address grade-level expectations but also extend beyond them to challenge and engage advanced learners. In planning instruction, it is essential that teachers consider each student's unique learning needs, strengths, interests, and abilities. Teachers need to be aware of the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of their students. A variety of effective, research-based teaching strategies are available to support educators in creating enriching and meaningful learning experiences for gifted students in teaching English. I will also mention about my own strategies derived from my own experiences with gifted and talented students.

First of all, gifted and talented students like other students need to be in a safe and supportive class environment. They need flexibility and understanding as part of the activities carried out in English classrooms. Gifted and talented students attend Science and Art Centers after they finish their regular school. As a wide variety of different student profiles gather around in one classroom setting, the levels of these students may vary a lot. This can be challenging for English language teachers. To tackle this issue, there are many different effective teaching methods and strategies to help teachers of gifted students in EFL classrooms. The following are some of the strategies that I have been applying in my classrooms:

- Pre-assess prior knowledge: At the beginning of the new education year, I apply some informal pre-assessments such as surveys, self-assessment rubrics prepared according to CEFR levels, exit cards and anticipation guides. I apply them within the first two weeks for each group. It helps me to understand what they know and what they need. I can make adjustments to the curriculum and activities.
- Explore student interests: I use students' surveys to determine the topics they are interested in. Themes can be selected with topics such as astronomy, science, environment, culture, travel, etc.
- Differentiate tasks and activities: I try to offer a variety of opportunities in one lesson such as doing research on the

theme, designing a product (short story, poem, poster, etc.), inquiry-based techniques

- Group work: I allow my gifted students to work together. Research has shown that gifted students benefit from and enjoy time spent learning with gifted peers. When given time to work with other gifted students, gifted individuals are challenged to develop and refine their ideas through feedback from the group.
- Classroom routines: Classroom routines are vital in building a safe and supportive classroom environment. I use some mindfulness activities as routines to create a peaceful classroom setting and get their attention as well.
- Avoid too much emphasis on correcting grammar or pronunciation: I try to avoid using too much correction during my lessons. For example, when my students create a product like a short story or poem, I do not correct grammatical mistakes if the meaning is clear. Too much correction makes them embarrassed or they recede immediately.

To sum up, what I have experienced from my gifted students is that they need space to be creative and use the English language. English language teachers should guide the gifted in a wide variety of activities and learning experiences. The strategies given above may be helpful for gifted students' teachers to deal with challenges in EFL classrooms.

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Büşra Kavan Alkan is an EFL teacher working for the Ministry of Education at İzmit Science and Art Centre. She is currently teaching gifted and talented learners. She graduated from Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, English Language and Literature Department in 2010. Now she is pursuing a master's degree in English Language Teaching. Her research areas are gifted and talented education, teacher education, motivation, soft skills, technology based teaching methods.

THE FUTURE RISES ON THE SHOULDERS OF AN INDEPENDENT, RESPONSIBLE, AND TRUSTWORTHY GENERATION EQUIPPED WITH DIGITAL AND LIFELONG LEARNING SKILLS

Deniz Özbeyli

Future learners will no longer be passive recipients of information. They themselves make choices, set goals, and take action to reach those goals. It involves independence and responsibility in learning, which might be defined as student agency. It is a digital world and becoming more and more digitalized. Therefore, future students will have access to more tools, information, and learning platforms than ever before. Practically, they will have the chance to:

- Choose what and how they want to learn
- Learn at their own pace
- Use digital tools to create and share ideas

Just like the independence and responsibility in the learning process, the term life-long learning put the word “learning” into the heart of all activities and processes carried out in the educational journey. The concept of lifelong learning has become more than a buzzword; it is the foundation of future-ready education. The term "lifelong learning" places the word "learning" at the core of all educational activities that span a lifetime. In a way, learning gets the priority and becomes more fundamental compared to teaching. Therefore, our priorities are reshaped: although both learning and teaching are essential, learning becomes more central, while teaching plays a facilitative role. So, it is clear that the profile of the learner of the future will be quite different.

Student agency leads to more motivation and engagement, better problem-solving and

thinking skills, stronger communication and collaboration. Student agency with all its components make students feel empowered, trusted, and engaged in the learning process. However, there might be some limitations which are exceeding beyond the students’ plans. As a matter of fact, being able to choose what and how you want to learn seems priceless but financial, social and technical constraints can impose boundaries on what is desired and planned. There is also the “how” part of the process. For certain jobs, diplomas or certificates, one has to follow pre-designed rules of educational processes. Nevertheless, despite some considerations and possible limitations, the shift to digital and independent learning is inevitable. This transformation not only enhances flexibility but also cultivates skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and self-regulation. Since these essential skills in a knowledge-based, innovation-driven economy are becoming more indispensable, so is the transformation.

Despite the above mentioned constraints, it is possible to design learning environments that nurture agency, promote independent learning, and prepare students for an unpredictable future. These classrooms are dynamic, inclusive, and deeply personalized. They use flexible layouts to support different learning styles, integrate technology meaningfully, and connect classroom experiences to real-world problems.

The Role of the Teacher in a Digitally Empowered Classroom

As student agency grows, the role of the teacher evolves. Teachers can support agency by offering choices in assignments, encouraging student-led projects, and integrating reflection and goal-setting practices into the curriculum. Teachers become facilitators, mentors, and learning designers. Rather than simply transmitting knowledge, they create learning environments that support exploration, inquiry, and personalized learning paths. They help students develop digital literacy, guide them in evaluating information, and foster a mindset of continuous improvement.

Obviously, the inevitable flow of the future learning process creates a dynamic, inclusive, and deeply personalized classroom. Such a learning environment empowers students to become lifelong learners, global citizens and independent thinkers.

A Cultural Insight: Learners as "Talebe"

The shift toward empowered learning is not just pedagogical; it is also cultural. In Turkish, there are two words for "student": "öğrenci," meaning a learner, and "talebe," which derives from the root "to demand." A "talebe" is not merely someone who receives knowledge but someone who actively seeks it, who demands to learn. This linguistic distinction offers a powerful metaphor for the future learner: one who is curious, motivated, and assertive in pursuing knowledge. Consequently, the future belongs to learners who are equipped not only with knowledge but with the skills and mindset to keep learning. As connoted with the cultural notion above, the learner of the future is not someone who waits for instructions but someone who takes the initiative, asks meaningful questions, and drives their own educational path. They are not just learning to pass exams; they are learning to grow, adapt, and thrive in a complex world. They do not simply wait to be taught, but demand to learn and they themselves take ownership of learning. They are the "talebes" of the digital age, and they are the foundation of a better, smarter, and more adaptable world. The future rises on their shoulders.



After graduating from Kuleli Military High School, Dr. Deniz Özbeyli earned his B.A. in English Linguistics from Hacettepe University, an M.A. in ELT (2008) and a Ph.D. (2017) in History from Dokuz Eylül University, and an M.A. (1999) in Human Resources Management and Development from Marmara University. He completed the Advanced Language Proficiency Skills Course at the Defense Language Institute in Texas and studied Managerial Communications at Wayland University in the U.S.A. Özbeyli served as an English instructor, coordinator, and translator-interpreter in the army. His final post was teaching English at the Land Forces Language School, İstanbul, after which he retired as a Senior Colonel. He then worked as an English instructor at the School of Foreign Languages at Yaşar University and several private schools. His interests span a wide range of topics, from ELT workshops to juggling. He has authored numerous articles and delivered presentations on ELT, language, literature, travel, and culture. Additionally, he manages a YouTube channel and has published over 100 short stories, essays, and travel notes in literary and art magazines. Deniz Özbeyli is also the author of the short story collection book *Savaş, Cinayet ve İnsanlık Halleri*, published in 2022 after receiving an incentive award and grant from the Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

WHAT'S THE POINT? COUNTERACTING DEMOTIVATION IN EFL LEARNING IN THE AGE OF AI THROUGH COIL

Shannon Miyamoto

With the rise of AI-powered tools like ChatGPT, the need to manually complete many tasks on one's own has become all but obsolete. These tools can help students and professionals alike complete tasks faster and more efficiently than if they were to do them on their own. This has had a significant impact on the EFL classroom, as access to these tools has seemed to take away the value of students learning important language skills themselves. Why take the time to write an email in English – let alone a reflection paragraph or an academic essay, or answer discussion questions on a book you haven't even read yet – when a website will do it for you almost immediately?

What's the point?

In certain contexts, like those I have experienced teaching at universities in Japan, motivation and willingness to learn English as a foreign language are not very high. With limited access to use it outside of the classroom environment, English is largely perceived as a test subject to be learned in order to get into a good school or company – but with little relevance beyond that.

Now, students seem frustrated by having to complete even simple assignments that don't seem relevant anymore, since they can be done by tools online. As such, there has been a rise in “cheating” (to put it strongly) or the “outsourcing” of assignments (to put it diplomatically) to be completed by AI and translation programs instead of the learners

themselves. This further perpetuates the perception that English is not a valuable skill in its own right, since people can save time and energy, and complete tasks with sometimes greater accuracy, by using the internet.

What seems to be lacking is the connection to a real-world context where English can be used as a tool for communication and participation in different communities. However, opportunities to bridge these gaps like studying abroad are expensive, time consuming, and not easily accessible for the everyday student. One possible solution; therefore, can be found in COIL.

COIL, or Collaborative Online International Learning, is a type of virtual exchange where learners from different countries connect online and work together on projects or assignments. Originally developed by Jon Rubin (Rubin, 2017; 2022) at the State University of New York (SUNY), it has become a highly-implemented tool for promoting intercultural communication skills and foreign language learning in the EFL classroom (Cusen, 2025).

During COIL projects, learners draw on their own knowledge of English and interpersonal skills in real time to communicate with peers in another country. This operates both as a test of their own abilities and an opportunity for learners to see how they can interact with the international community by learning another language.

COIL projects require participants to apply a variety of 21st century skills, including digital

literacy and ICT skills through the use of different technologies, critical thinking skills, and intercultural communicative competence. During the preparation stages of COIL, students are asked to organize schedules, send emails, plan meetings and prepare presentations. During online meetings over Zoom, students give and listen to presentations, engage in critical thinking, and participate in discussions on a variety of topics. They also have to multitask managing their time and potential breakdowns in communication, as well as respond to any technological problems they may encounter, like unstable WiFi connections or delayed audio.

In the last two years, I have facilitated 3 COIL projects between my university students in Japan and students in Romania. While students tend to report feeling overwhelmed and intimidated by the project, they grow a lot in both their willingness to use English and in their awareness of language as a tool for accessing different ideas and communities.

After completing the COIL project, students have reported several self-perceived benefits, including feeling inspired to learn more about

different cultures and countries around the world, and learning the value of studying English as more than a test subject. They have noted that COIL is an interesting challenge to apply their knowledge and try to communicate with people that have different perspectives and experiences, which broadened their outlook of the world. They also have said they learned things they wouldn't have been able to find online, and feel more motivated to study English so they can interact with other people again in the future.

By recontextualizing English as a skill for engaging with the world through COIL, students are able to find greater value in language learning beyond passing tests at school. It offers practical and interesting challenges which increase learner engagement and motivation to use and study English. Even though the temptation to rely on AI-powered translation tools still exists, implementing COIL projects can be an effective and positive way to demonstrate the transformative power of becoming a proficient user of another language.

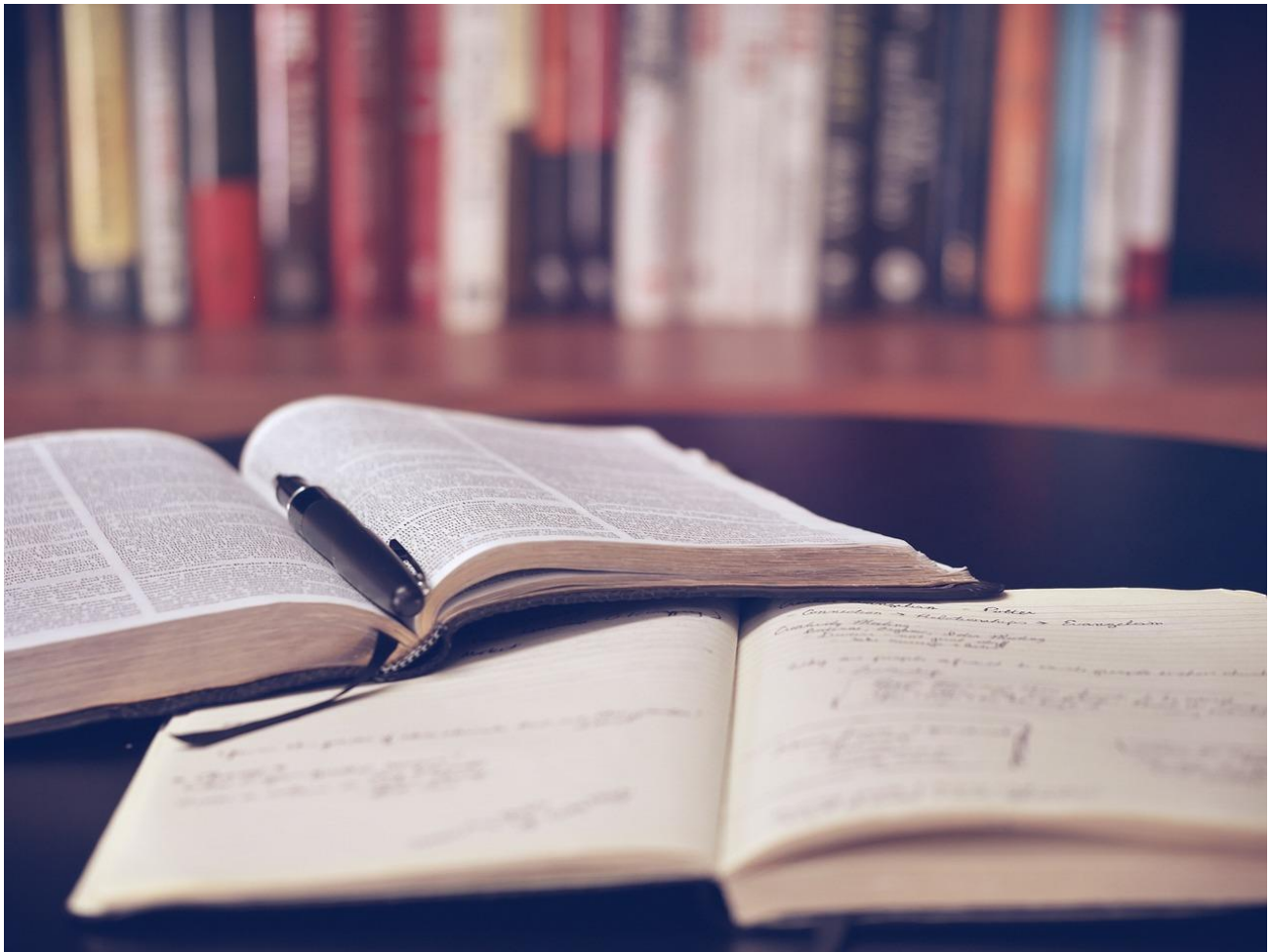
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Shannon Miyamoto is a lecturer of English as a foreign language at the Language Center of Kwansei Gakuin University in western Japan. Her areas of interest include intercultural communication competence, project-based learning, and academic and creative writing.

3. RESOURCE CENTER



STORY TIME!

Gülsüm ŞIVGIN BAŞ

Storytelling has been with us since the dawn of humanity. We tell stories to share experiences, pass down knowledge, and connect emotionally with others. In the language classroom, storytelling is not just a pleasant extra—it's a powerful pedagogical tool. Stories belong in the ELT classroom because they have an incredible capacity to engage, teach, and inspire. They work on multiple levels—emotional, cognitive, and linguistic—making them one of the most effective tools in a language teacher's toolkit.

Unlike rote learning, stories activate multiple regions of the brain—language centers, emotional areas, and even sensory processing zones, and in doing so enhance memory and retention. This multi-modal stimulation helps learners better comprehend and retain new information. When students hear or read a compelling story, they are more likely to remember its vocabulary, grammar structures, and sequence of events.

Stories are not just intellectual exercises; they're emotional journeys. A story about a knight overcoming fear or a turtle outsmarting danger can capture a learner's heart and imagination. This emotional involvement boosts motivation and encourages a deeper investment in the learning process.

We as teachers, constantly complain that students can't learn grammar. Why teach the past tense by listing verbs when you can tell a story where events unfold chronologically? Stories offer a natural context for language. Learners absorb grammar rules, collocations, and

sentence patterns almost effortlessly when they encounter them in meaningful narratives.

Not all stories are created equal. To make storytelling effective in ELT, certain elements need to be in place:

Characters: Make them relatable. A forgetful boy named Leo, sent to buy ingredients for a surprise dinner, is more memorable than “a boy went to the store.”

Setting: Help students visualize with sensory language. “Raindrops tapped against the window as the wind howled through the narrow streets of the old town” paints a vivid scene that anchors vocabulary in a tangible world.

Plot: Keep it simple but structured. Begin with a situation, introduce a problem, and end with a resolution. Tension—like a lost passport or misunderstood directions—keeps learners engaged.

Conflict and Resolution: A bit of struggle fuels curiosity. Even basic issues like “the taxi driver wanted to ask for directions but forgot the words” create meaningful opportunities for language use and problem-solving.

Effective storytelling involves more than just reading a text aloud. Remember that we are not just teachers but actors and actresses who put on a show to teach, every time we enter the classroom.

Voice Modulation: A skilled storyteller uses tone, speed, and volume to reflect mood.

Facial Expressions and Gestures: Body language conveys meaning beyond words. Exaggerated expressions help younger or lower-level learners grasp vocabulary and emotion more easily.

Movement and Props: Using a scarf for a character or moving around the room can turn passive listening into an active, immersive experience.

In the 21st-century classroom, stories don't have to be confined to books. They can take the form of songs, games, or even visual narratives. Here are some creative integrations that I love using in my classroom:

Phonics Songs: Use tools like ChatGPT to generate lyrics and platforms like Suno to create engaging songs. For example, a song about a "Brave Knight" can help teach the "-ight" sound.

Character-Based Tales: Create a flipped story around "Turbo the Turtle" to teach the "-ur" sound. Use many words that have the same sound in the story so that the students are exposed. They can then map vocabulary and retell the story using their own drawings.

Storytelling Games: "10-Second Story" is an activity that requires no preparation at all. All you have to do is give 3 words or props or puppets to your students and give 10 seconds to tell a mini story about them. Sometimes limits and pressure

like a time limit can bring out the best stories. Other activities like "Draw a Character," or "Art Critic" encourage spontaneous creativity and language use. Puppets and pop-up books add a tactile, visual dimension that enhances comprehension and engagement.

Autobiographical Stories: Encourage students to write or tell short stories from their own lives. This not only practices grammar and vocabulary but also builds confidence and ownership of language as well as creating an opportunity for the students to ask what they don't know in English.

Storytelling is not an "extra" to sprinkle in when there's time—it's a central pillar of effective, engaging language instruction. Whether you're working with young learners or adults, beginners or advanced students, a well-told story can bridge gaps in understanding, foster empathy, and make language learning memorable.

As ELT educators, we don't just teach a language—we open the door to new ways of thinking and seeing the world. And stories are the key that unlocks that door.



Gülsüm Şıvgın Baş is an English teacher and freelance trainer with 17 years of experience. A Gazi University graduate, she works at Gelişim College in İzmir and has led workshops for INGED, the British Council, and many publishers. She's passionate about drama, creativity, and lifelong learning in education.

4. LEARNER VOICES



REDISCOVERING MY DREAM: A LEARNER'S JOURNEY THROUGH ADVERSITY

Nouf Alahamad

Three years ago, I was forced to pause my academic journey due to the devastating earthquake that struck my country. At the time, I had just begun studying in the English Language Department—a field I deeply loved. However, my university was located eight hours from my hometown, and in the aftermath of the disaster, I had no choice but to withdraw. Walking away from my biggest dream—becoming a professional translator—was heartbreaking.

Despite the hardship, I never gave up on that dream. I held on to the hope that one day I would return and pursue English translation, no matter how long it took. Eventually, I re-enrolled and began my studies again, starting with the preparatory class. Looking back now, I see that this class was not just an academic requirement—it was a turning point in my life. The preparatory year was a transformative experience. It allowed me to rebuild my academic foundation, especially in grammar and writing. Before this class, grammar felt like an overwhelming puzzle full of confusing rules. But the lessons were clear, the practice was consistent, and over time, grammar not only became easier—it became enjoyable.

My writing skills also improved significantly. In the beginning, I struggled to organize my thoughts and express myself in English. But with ongoing feedback, support, and practice, I gained confidence. I learned how to structure essays, use linking words effectively, and present my ideas more clearly. With every assignment, I saw my

progress—and that progress motivated me to keep pushing forward.

Beyond academics, the preparatory year helped me regain my confidence. After being away from education for so long, I feared I wouldn't be able to keep up. But the encouraging environment made all the difference. I began to believe in myself again.

A big part of this positive experience was thanks to my teacher, Miss Emine Yavuz, at GIBTU's School of Foreign Languages. Her dedication, passion, and support made a lasting impact on me. Miss Yavuz not only has deep knowledge of English, but also a true gift for teaching. She treats every student with respect and patience, offering help without judgment. In her class, I always felt seen, heard, and supported.

What truly sets her apart is the way she empowers her students. She believes in us—often before we believe in ourselves. Her encouragement has lifted me during difficult times, and her kind feedback has helped me grow. She created a classroom where we weren't afraid to make mistakes and where learning felt safe and meaningful.

Thanks to her, I now feel ready to continue my academic journey. I've reached the B2 level, and I'm excited to keep improving my English. One day, I hope to fulfill my dream of becoming a translator—using language to build bridges between cultures. The foundation I built during the preparatory year will always support me on this path.

In conclusion, this year was not just about learning English; it was about rediscovering my strength and passion for education. I'm deeply grateful to Miss Emine Yavuz for believing in me.

She didn't just teach me English—she taught me how to believe in myself again. I will always remember her as the teacher who gave me both the tools and the courage to move forward.



Nouf Alahmad strong passion for languages. After a three-year break due to the earthquake, she returned to pursue her dream of becoming a skilled translator. Currently, she is studying in the preparatory program and is determined to improve her English and translation skills.

I WANT TO LEARN NOT ON MY OWN BUT JUST WITH A HELP: SEEKING A PLACE TO STAND IN THE CLASSROOM AS AN INDEPENDENT LEARNER

Semiha Karaköse

Since the early days of the language learning, the place of the student has been a hot topic; some theorists say that students should be the listeners or takers of what is being given, some others put all the burden on the students. Yet now we know that the real place of the students is where they can get, work and produce; teachers are in the role of facilitators, they give students what they need to get, then create a safe and fruitful area to make them work and finally let them produce. In this paper, as a student and a teacher candidate, I will tell you my opinions about what makes us, the students, independent through the learning journey and what aspects of learning promotes student agency in the classroom.

Australian writer Peter Drucker says “We now accept the fact that learning is a lifelong process of keeping abreast of change. And the most pressing task is to teach people how to learn.”. I couldn't agree more with these words; indeed, these have a double meaning for me, one is from the side of the learner and the other is from the side of the teacher. For the perspective of a learner, I can say that I always want to know the essence of what I've been learning, because if I understand the concept and its components, then I can start to find my way with it, in other words, I can use it. In my own learning journey, the thing that I most in need of is a teacher who leads me to learn truly; navigates me when I am confused or lost and listens to me when I have questions. By this way, I believe, a learner finds

his own way in this long and compact learning journey.

When it comes to the perspective of a teacher, the phrase “keeping abreast of change” hits me hard. There is an old Greek saying “The only thing that does not change is change itself.”. In this sense, I ask this question to myself “What is a change?” And most importantly, what is a change in learning and teaching? Basically, change is the transformation of the condition. But what if change starts when the transformation ends? As a teacher candidate, I see myself as the first step in the change, or let's say, the transformation. The more I keep abreast of change, the better learning and teaching process becomes. Let's go back a decade, what was the ideal for an effective classroom? From what I remember, I can say that being a good listener was enough for the learners and finishing the course book was enough for the teachers. What has been changed since then? Not to mention artificial intelligence and other fancy things, I think that the roles of the teacher and students in the class are understood better. Teachers are eager to learn more about their students and how they learn, so that they can modify themselves to facilitate better. Students, on the other hand, know more about what learning is and how they can be active when it comes to it.

A perfect class for the teacher and the learner is, I believe, where both can be able to think critically and afterwards, where they can be able

to produce. To think critically, a learner needs safe and lucrative place where they can share their ideas, ask and answer what they have been searching for and most importantly, where they can be themselves. All of this can turn to reality with the touch of a prominent teacher, prominent in terms of being mindful throughout the process. “Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn.” says philosopher and scientist Benjamin Franklin. Once the teacher ensures that the classroom encourages critical thinking, it is high time to start producing. A good question arises here: What to produce? Yet the answer is simple: What has been learned! What we have learned is nothing if we don’t make use of it. For our major, the most

expected thing at the end of the process is to be able to speak in English. We tend to ask the question “what” before “how”. We have the answer of what to produce but what about how to produce? Again, the answer is simple: To think critically.

Teaching is hard, just the same as learning. But in this boundless sea, when we know our roles and moves, I believe that we can find our ways to teach and learn. Just like Nikos Kazantzakis says “True teachers are those who use themselves as bridges over which they invite their students to cross; then, having facilitated their crossing, joyfully collapse, encouraging them to create their own.”



Last grade student in Erciyes University, English Language Teaching department. Full time learner: Not only in school but anywhere she can find herself as well. Loves reading and reads a lot, maybe too much, that’s why she cannot leave her pen, so she loves writing too. From the very first times of her college years, she has participated in schools and courses as volunteer teacher. She also has attended many conferences related to her major. One of her biggest dreams is to inspire her students. One of her smallest dreams is having a cat.

BECOMING A RESEARCHER: LEARNING BEYOND THE CURRICULUM

Şilan Topdemir

As a student of English Language and Literature, taking various courses across multiple disciplines can often appear overwhelming. However, this process has added immense value to my personality and completely changed how I view the world. One course in particular, *Research Methods and Skills*, taught by Dr. İnci Yılmazlı Trout, stands out as a turning point in my academic life. Before taking this class, I was unfamiliar with the fundamental concepts of critical thinking and had a vague understanding of research. The course not only introduced me to research but also helped me shape a path for myself as an aspiring scholar, one that was greatly shaped by my instructor's guidance and the inspiration she provided.

What was once just a word, research, has now evolved into a life purpose for me. This course marked the beginning of my identity as a researcher. It taught me more than how to conduct academic research; it taught me to question everything. With my instructor's encouragement, I began not only to understand information but also to investigate the causes behind it and the potential outcomes it could lead to. This shift helped me transition from a passive learner to an engaged academic participant.

The classroom activities and examples of past research shared by our instructor caught my full attention. Her innovative methods drew me deeply into the subject. One impactful example was a study where she used the "Identity Box" as

a data collection tool, which led to creative and meaningful outcomes. This approach fascinated me and sparked my academic curiosity. My love for literature and art soon became interwoven with a growing passion for research. This fusion allowed me to explore the world through a more critical and multifaceted lens.

I began exploring topics I had long wondered about but had never actively researched. With this process, my journey to identify a research topic also began. I frequently consulted my instructor throughout the process, and she always responded with thoughtful, detailed guidance. Her supportive and kind mentorship became one of my strongest motivations.

Through this course, I not only learned about academic research but also practiced them firsthand through various assignments and activities. In many other courses, knowledge fades if not immediately applied, but in this course, the instructor's creative approach made learning both effective and permanent. As the course progressed, I found myself questioning and exploring topics I previously ignored. I identified a unique research focus and developed a research proposal at the end of the course, which was eventually accepted by TUBITAK, marking a major milestone in my academic development. The research process was challenging, but the foundational skills I gained in class, alongside the support of my project advisors Dr. Serap Atasever Belli and Dr. İnci

Yilmazlı Trout, made the journey both manageable and enjoyable.

As I continued working on my project, I also began gaining experience sharing research publicly. I presented the initial findings of my study at the 22nd INGED International ELT Conference in Bolu, which was my first time presenting at a conference. Presenting my own work in front of an academic audience was invaluable. It gave me insights into other research projects and provided a deeply enriching academic experience. Encouraged by this experience, I submitted abstracts to two more conferences and was accepted to both. I delivered a second presentation at the 9th PACES Conference in Denizli, and later I presented in the 21st International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry, held in the United States. Presenting in an international environment showed me that I could confidently express my academic voice on a global stage. The excitement I felt during these conferences deepened my commitment to an academic path.

For me, the classroom of the future is one where students are actively involved in the learning process, where they create their own plans, share ideas freely, and are guided rather than directed by their instructors. Moving beyond rigid curricula and creating flexible learning spaces that integrate critical thinking, the arts, science, philosophy, and technology could be immensely beneficial. In such an environment, students can explore their interests, collaborate across disciplines, and generate more meaningful and creative outcomes.

During my journey of discovering my identity as a researcher, I not only gained knowledge but also acquired a new way of thinking. This transformation began in the research course I took, but its impact continues to guide my academic path. If future learning environments are designed to be motivating, exploratory, and supportive, more students will recognize their true potential and begin to shape their own stories. Today, my voice may be small, but perhaps tomorrow, it will help shape someone else's story.



Şilan Topdemir is a third year student at Erzurum Technical University, Department of English Language and Literature. She has developed a project for the TUBITAK-2209A study. She is working on women's studies and underrepresented groups and has written some articles. She enjoys reading about strong women in literature such as Sylvia Plath, Virginia Woolf, Kate Chopin and their works.



TEACHING ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES



tesolinturkey@gmail.com



tesol_turkiye



Tesol Turkey



tesolturkey.net



@tesolinturkey



tesol-turkiye