

Camera-ready

Peter Fullagar takes advantage of photo opportunities.

Imagine the scene; you're working hard, teaching narrative tenses or attempting to elicit the idiom *fill of beans* during a lesson on the topic of health. While you're busily dealing with errors or questions from the learners, you notice out of the corner of your eye that one or two of them are sneaking a look at their smartphones. Our learners clearly want to be able to use their amazing devices in class time, so why don't we just harness the power of this technological wizardry for our own advantage?

Here are some examples of activities which I have used with my classes:

Digital storyboard

This kind of activity allows kinaesthetic learners a chance to exercise their particular style of learning, while also allowing visual learners the opportunity to learn using their method. If you would like to see an example from my class, you can visit <http://londonstudentblog.wordpress.com/2012/03/01/peters-time-out-by-shuwa>.

1 Choose any topic you like and elicit ideas from the learners regarding lexis and structures they already know which might be useful for talking about this topic. Also get them to think about any particular problems that can occur within the topic area. With the topic of work, I asked my learners to think of work-related problems, such as an overbearing boss or insubordinate subordinates.

2 Once a lively discussion and feedback have ensued, instruct the learners to create a problematic topic-related situation in groups of three or four.

3 When the groups have decided on their situation, tell them they will now use their smartphones to take pictures and put them in the correct sequence to create a digital storyboard, a wordless story. This is where the learners will look at you in a strange way, as if to say *Really?* Little do they know, that their clever teacher has devised a way for them to practise incidental language – instructions, sequential language and suggestions, to name but a few – all the while practising the vocabulary and possible scenarios

that may occur within the topic area.

4 Allow the learners time to get organised. They will have fun trying to take the photos – they might even ask you to be in them! Keep a close eye on what they are up to, especially if they are outside the classroom.

5 The finished products are perfect for display on walls or school blogs as evidence of the learners' efforts. Once the wordless stories are complete, it's easy to flip this 'doing' activity into a written one, by asking the learners to write up the story underneath the photos – perfect for any level of learner.

Putting your foot in it

Here is another activity I use with smartphone technology, but using the video function instead of the stills camera. I did it with some upper-intermediate learners, basing it on the idiom *putting your foot in it*, which we were exploring in class by looking at different situations where you can say that people put their foot in it. The learners had such fantastic ideas that I felt sure they were bound to be able to create something special.

1 Ask the learners to think of a situation where a *faux pas* could occur and discuss possible scenarios.

2 Get them to formulate a conversation based on this situation – in essence, a script.

3 Ask them to use their phones to film their conversations – not only will they be practising the target structures and lexis, but also utilising incidental language, such as *stand there, move the camera lower* and *Action!*

4 If you (or they) want, the learners can edit their films at home before showing them at a 'film festival' in class.

My learners had a lot of fun with this. One situation involved a frustrated employee complaining about his boss and saying that she would never get married, which then cuts to a second scene outside where the employee is complaining to a different person, who turns out to be the boss's future husband. The much-anticipated screening premiere was fun to watch and instilled pride in the learners.

Directions

This is a fun activity for lower levels.

- 1** Study and practise the language and structures needed to give directions.
- 2** Put the learners in pairs and ask them to create a route to follow outside the school.
- 3** Send them out to take a photo of the destination at the end of their route.
- 4** Back in class, they write directions that will take other learners from the school gate to their destination, without naming the end-point or showing the photo. Check their directions and make sure they haven't said where the final destination is.
- 5** Get the learners to swap their directions with another pair, follow the directions they have received and take a photo at the end-point, aiming to take the same one that they think the original pair will have taken.
- 6** Back in class, they compare photos with the original pair.
- 7** You can follow this up by getting them to write descriptions of their photos.

Moods

This activity is suited to any level of learner, but I see it as more suited to advanced learners as it gets them to distinguish between the nuances of the English language. Studying lexis connected to moods and attitudes can be rather tricky if just seen as words on a page. Imagine what could be done if the learners posed for photographs to exemplify the moods and these were then displayed on an Interactive White Board for the rest of the group to guess. I would love to see what learners could come up with for *bewildered*.



There are endless possibilities for using smartphones in the classroom. Using their cherished phones provides learners with an interesting, creative activity that they can really get their teeth into. It caters for different learner styles and takes the language off the page and into an activity that they actually *do* instead of completing incessant coursebook practice exercises.

What are you waiting for? *Get smart and get snapping!*



After having taught in York, Tokyo and Moscow, Peter Fullagar currently works at Stafford House London. PGCE- and DELTA-qualified, with over ten years' experience, he has a keen interest in writing in the classroom and exam classes (and photography), and also works as a Cambridge and IELTS examiner.

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