

Thematic Unit

Learners' Lives as Curriculum©

Learning About English

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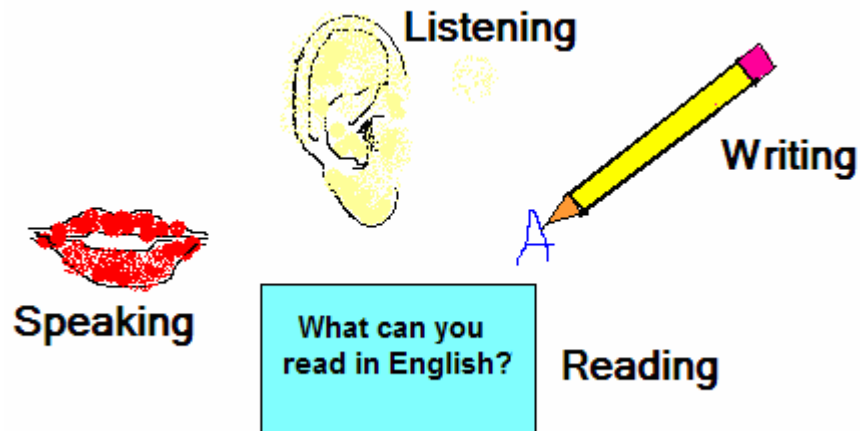
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Table of Contents

Page 2	Opening Story – Learning About English
3	Playing with Language
4	Talking about English; Language practice.
5	Let’s Compare English; Let’s Talk
6	Read some more stories; Journal Writing
7	Group Think
8	Old and new; Speaking Survey
9	Vocabulary to talk about English; Building Projects
10	Learning about each other
11	Compare and contrast
12	Playing with Language
13	Listen up; Listen again
14	Language practice
15	Putting It to Use: A Language Project
16	Checklist for Learning
17	Looking Back

In this unit you will learn:

- Language functions
- Some ways to talk and think about English
- Words to talk about language
- The English alphabet
- Question words
- Finding syllables
- Finding vowels
- Alphabetizing



*Do you understand English?
Do you speak English?
Do you read English?
Do you write in English?*

Learning About English

1. Opening Story

“I learned my English listening to people I work with, people I was around. I learned some English listening to my girlfriend. I learned all my English here, not in Mexico. I never went to school. I only speak English with people at work. My problem is with reading and writing. The alphabet with different letters is confusing. Somebody at my work showed me how to read the scale on a blueprint. I ask my boss what something said. I try to remember things in my head. When I work, we do it everyday and that helps me remember things. When I fill out forms I have to get someone to help me.”

Jenaro Q. from Mexico

2. Playing with language

Listen to Jenaro's Story

Write in the missing words.

learned	head	English	read
listening	boss	school	forms
speak	writing	remember	alphabet

I _____ my English listening to people I work with, people I was around. I learned some English _____ to my girlfriend. I learned all my _____ here, not in Mexico. I never went to _____. I only _____ English with people at work. My problem is with reading and _____. The _____ with different letters is confusing. Somebody at my work showed me how to _____ the scale on a blueprint. I ask my _____ what something said. I try to remember things in my _____. When I work, we do it everyday and that helps me _____ things. When I fill out _____ I have to get someone to help me.”

Share your answers with a classmate. Do you have the same answers?

Can you understand Jenaro's story?

Circle: Yes No

3. Language practice.

How much English do you know?

Put an X in the box.

		(Listen) Understand	(Speak) Say	Read	Write
Everything	100%				
Most things	90%				
A lot of things	75%				
Some things	50%				
A little	25%				
A tiny bit	10%				
Nothing	0%				

Use the words from the chart.

- I can understand _____ I hear in English.
- I can say _____ in English.
- I can read _____ in English.
- I can write _____ in English.

4. Let's compare English

Who knows **the most** English in our class?

_____ understands the most English.

How did he learn to understand so much English?

_____ speaks English the best.

How did he learn to speak so much English?

_____ reads the most English.

How did he learn to read so much English?

_____ writes English the best?

How did he learn to write English so well?

Who knows **the least** English in our class?

How can we help each other learn **more** English?

5. Let's talk about learning English.

Where did you learn the English you know? Check the boxes.

- I learned English in my country.
- I learned English in the United States.
- I learned English in school.
- I learned English on the streets.
- Other _____

When did you learn the English you know?

- I learned English when I was in school.
- I learned when I was young.
- I learned when I was an adult.
- Other _____

6. Let's Talk

Name 6 places you can learn English.

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

5 _____

6 _____

7. Read some more stories.....

In Mexico, I remember learning to say, "What is your name? How are you? Teacher, can I go to the bathroom? Where are you?" We learned numbers. We had class 1 hour a day, 5 days a week for only 3 years. In the United States, I went to English class on Princess Street in York, but I quit the school. It was the same time as my work. [Juan B. from Mexico](#)

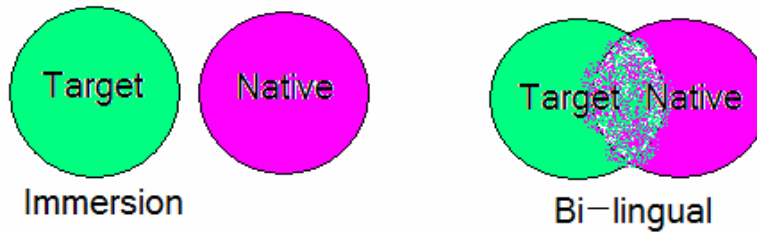
I had English classes in Puerto Rico. Half of my classes had English; half had Spanish. I had English 2 hours a day, 5 days a week for 12 years. I don't remember much English from school except for reading and writing. I read well in English, but I only can speak about 40% in English. I remember learning words like teacher, father, brother, table, and sister. I have been in the U.S. 2 years, I speak Spanish to people at work and at home with my family. [Frankie S. from Puerto Rico](#)

People speak English in my country, but I never went to school to learn to read and write. This is true of many of my countrymen. English school is very expensive. When I came to the U.S., I could speak English very well, but I could not read and write. [Aruna R. from Sierra Leona](#)

8. Journal Writing.

Did you learn any English in your native country? Do you remember what your first words in English were? Write or dictate a story about learning English and the first things you learned to say.

9. Group Think - Talking about our language community What's your native language? Look at the diagrams



Draw these circles on a large sheet of paper.
Label the circles.

Where do you use your native language?
Where do you use English?
Where do you want to use both?

Look at the cartoon.



Some teachers say a student should only hear English in class.
They say a student learns English faster. **What do you say?**

Other teachers say students understand English better when someone explains some things with their native language. **What do you say?**

What rules do we want in our classroom?

10. Old and New

Where do you hear English?
Where do you hear your native language?
Circle your answer or answers.

At home, I hear my native language English.

At work, I hear my native language English.

At my doctor's office, I hear my native language English.

At the store, I hear my native language English.

11. Speaking Survey

The English in Puerto Rico is first grade English here and not the kind that you need to communicate. I came to the U.S. when I was 16. When I was at the high school, I was in ESL class. It was good. Then I went to juvenile (detention); I got my GED (in Spanish) so I couldn't go back to school. After juvenile, I could understand, but I would think in Spanish. It was hard to speak in English. I had girlfriends who spoke English, so I had to get used to them. It took me 4 years to learn English. When it comes to writing, that's my problem. Now I write the shortest thing I know how to write in.

Larry S. from Puerto Rico

Who speaks what languages? Put a check mark in the box.

Who speaks What?	English	my language	Who speaks What?	English	my language
My wife speaks			My doctor speaks		
My children speak			My landlord speaks		
My boss speaks			My neighbors speak		
My co-workers			My auto mechanic speaks		
My friends speak			My lawyer speaks		
My grocery cashier speaks			I speak		

12. Vocabulary to talk about English

♪ → sound

b → letter (alphabet)

a e i o u (y) → vowel

b c d f g h j k l m n p q r s t v w x (y) z → consonant

ba by → syllable

[bā bē] → sounds (pronunciation)

baby → word

[ˈbā bē] → stress or accent

a very young child → phrase

He is a baby. → sentence

sentence + sentence + sentence → paragraph

13. Learning About Each Other

Today in my English class, Jenaro was reading the letters of the English alphabet. When he came to the letter “e” in English, he said “a”. When he came to the letter “i”, he said “e”. He was very confused when I told him that the letters had different name and sounds in English and Spanish. Yes, but they look the same! I told him that I get confused too when I try to learn Spanish.

Erica Runkles, ESL teacher

Think about learning new sounds and a new alphabet. Do you have your own story about learning a new alphabet? Write about it or tell someone who can write it down.

a b c ch d e f g h i j k ll m n ñ o p q r rr s t u v w x y z
а б в г д е ё ж з и й к л м н о п р с т у ф х ц ч ш щ ъ ы э ю я

14. Compare and Contrast

What language do you speak? _____

Say and write your native alphabet on the line below.

Is the English alphabet very different for you?

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z

↑ Circle the letters that are hard for you ↑

Count the letters

How many letters are in your native alphabet? _____

How many letters are in the English alphabet? _____

What other languages are spoken in your class room?

Where do you use the alphabets? Listen as your teacher explains. Put a check mark.

Alphabet	English alphabet	Native alphabet	Alphabet	English alphabet	Native alphabet
spelling aloud			telephone touch pad		
in the dictionary			ATM machine		
passwords			address book		
phone book			library		
book index			parking lot		
computer keyboard			lists		
Reading and writing			other		

15. Playing with Language

a. Find a computer key board and copy the letters below.

b. Ask 4 of your classmates to do this:

“Spell your first name. Spell your last name.”

Write their names on the lines.

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

c. Put these place words in alphabetical order and write them on the blanks below: ↓ American Red Cross, CVS Pharmacy, Adult Basic Education - ESL, Giant Food Store

d. Look in the telephone book and find the phone numbers for the alphabetized names

_____ - _____

_____ - _____

_____ - _____

_____ - _____

_____ - _____

(you pick a name)

16. Listen Up **ba** by → syllable

Listen as your teacher says these words. Listen for the **syllables** breaks in the words and recopy the words with the breaks like the sample. Count the **syllables**.

		How many?
syllable	syl-la-ble	_____
sound		_____
letter		_____
word		_____
phrase		_____
sentence		_____
paragraph		_____
stress		_____

vowel

consonant

17. Listen Up Again

Listen while your teacher reads this sentence slowly. Listen for the syllables. Tap or clap when you hear a syllable break.

a. Jenaro was reading the letters of the English alphabet.

b. Je-nar-o was read-ing the let-ters of the Eng-lish al-pha-bet.

Write or dictate your own sentence about learning the alphabet. Read aloud and listen for the syllables. Divide the words into syllables. Use the dictionary if you need help.

a. _____

b. _____

18. Language Practice. a e i o u (y) → vowel

Every syllable in English must have at least one vowel.

Je-nar-o was read-ing the let-ters of the Eng-lish al-pha-bet.

Read Aruna's sentences aloud. Draw a line between the syllables. Underline the vowels.

a. People speak English in my country.

b. I never went to school to learn to read and write.

Sometimes a "y" is a vowel. Sometimes "y" is a consonant.

try play sym-bol hap-py yawn
key yel-low gym yolk coun-try

19. Putting It To Use: A Language Project

Creating a Contact List

Work with other students in the class and make a list of important phone numbers and addresses of people, businesses or agencies to keep handy.

Use the local phone book and other reference books in the classroom and library to locate this information. Ask other people in our facility.

What resources are important for you to know?

When you have found them, list them below in alphabetical order.

Name	Phone Number	Address.
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Checklist for Learning

Check the vocabulary you know

- everything
- most things
- a lot of things
- some things
- a little
- a tiny bit
- nothing

- Who
- What
- When
- Where
- Why
- How much

- immersion
- target language
- native language
- alphabet
- sound
- syllable
- vowel
- consonant
- word
- phrase
- sentence
- paragraph

Check what you can do in English

- Talk about learning English
- Write and use the English alphabet
- Use language vocabulary to talk about English word structure
- Use question words in English
- Find vowels and syllables in English words

Looking Back

A. In this unit I learned: _____

B. I want to study more: _____

C. What I liked best was _____

_____ because _____

D. What I liked least was _____

_____ because _____
