



Ministerio  
de **Educación**

# **NATIONAL CURRICULUM SPECIFICATIONS**

**ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE  
LEVEL A2**

**EIGHTH–NINTH–TENTH YEAR  
EDUCACIÓN GENERAL BÁSICA (EGB)**

**FIRST–SECOND–THIRD YEAR  
BACHILLERATO**

**PRESIDENTE DE LA REPÚBLICA**

Rafael Correa Delgado

**MINISTRO DE EDUCACIÓN**

Augusto X. Espinosa A.

**Viceministro de Educación**

Freddy Peñafiel Larrea

**Viceministro de Gestión Educativa**

Jaime Roca Gutiérrez

**Subsecretaria de Fundamentos Educativos**

Tannya Lozada Montero

**Autora del documento**

Jenny Villalba Zambrano

**Revisión y actualización pedagógica**

Dirección Nacional de Currículo

**Diseño y diagramación**

Álex Yáñez Jácome  
José Antonio Valencia Pérez

© Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador (MinEduc)  
Av. Amazonas N34-451 y Atahualpa  
Quito, Ecuador

**Publicación digital:** Septiembre del 2013

Actualizado en agosto 2014

[www.educacion.gob.ec](http://www.educacion.gob.ec)

La reproducción parcial o total de este documento, en cualquier forma o a través de cualquier medio electrónico o mecánico, no autorizado por el MinEduc, viola los derechos reservados.

Se permite reproducir el material de esta publicación con la condición de citar la fuente.

DISTRIBUCIÓN GRATUITA - PROHIBIDA SU VENTA

**MATERIAL PARA USO EXCLUSIVO DE LOS DOCENTES  
DE INGLÉS DE LAS INSTITUCIONES FISCALES,  
FISCOMISIONALES Y MUNICIPALES DEL PAÍS.**



Ministerio  
de **Educación**

**LEVEL A2.1**

## CONTENTS

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2. Curriculum Specifications for English: Level A2.1</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1 Educational Overall Objectives	6
2.2 Teaching and Learning Specifications	6
2.2.1 Specifications for Choosing Text Types	6
2.2.2 Specifications for Listening	15
2.2.2.1 Assessment Indicators	17
2.2.3 Specifications for Speaking	17
2.2.3.1 Assessment Indicators	19
2.2.4 Specifications for Reading	20
2.2.4.1 Assessment Indicators	23
2.2.5 Specifications for Writing	23
2.2.5.1 Assessment Indicators	25
2.2.6 Specifications for Reflecting on English Linguistic Elements	25
<b>References</b>	<b>28</b>

# 1. Introduction

The present specifications are a practical reference of minimum core content (i.e. functions, grammar, and vocabulary) to be studied in order to allow (1) to broaden the information given in the National Curriculum Guidelines and (2) to make the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) standards more tangible in Ecuadorian English classrooms.

The aim of these curriculum guidelines is to also support and guide the English teaching and learning processes by providing a set of methodological suggestions to apply the Communicative Language Teaching method and its techniques—both in and outside the classroom—so learners can gradually develop their B1 communicative language competence benchmark.

These specifications, however, do not attempt to tell teachers prescriptively what to teach because they do not replace a needs analysis or survey of students' interests. Rather, educators can judiciously select the text types and activities they consider most appropriate to meet the needs of their specific groups of learners.

Since the levels of proficiency proposed in the curriculum adjustment carried out by the Ministry of Education since 2012 (A1.1, A1.2, A2.1, A2.2, B1.1 and B1.2) have been gradually implemented, users of this document should carefully consider the information in the table below, which summarizes and facilitates an understanding of the aforementioned projected implementation process in the public educational system in Ecuador.

CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION PROJECTION							
Régimen Sierra (Highlands and the Amazon)							
Area	School Year	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
English as a Foreign Language	Eighth year EGB	Level A1.1	Level A1.1	Level A1.1	Level A1.1	Level A1.1	Level A1.1
	Ninth year EGB		Level A1.2	Level A1.2	Level A1.2	Level A1.2	Level A1.2
	Tenth year EGB			Level A2.1	Level A2.1	Level A2.1	Level A2.1
	First year EGB	Level A1.2	Level A2.1	Level A2.1	Level A2.2	Level A2.2	Level A2.2
	Second year EGB					Level A2.2	Level B1.1
	Third year EGB		Level A2.1	Level A2.2	Level B1.1	Level B1.2	
Régimen Costa (Coast and the Galápagos Islands)							
Area	School Year	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
English as a Foreign Language	Eighth year EGB	Level A1.1	Level A1.1	Level A1.1	Level A1.1	Level A1.1	Level A1.1
	Ninth year EGB		Level A1.2	Level A1.2	Level A1.2	Level A1.2	Level A1.2
	Tenth year EGB			Level A2.1	Level A2.1	Level A2.1	Level A2.1
	First year EGB	Level A1.2	Level A2.1	Level A2.1	Level A2.2	Level A2.2	Level A2.2
	Second year EGB					Level A2.2	Level B1.1
	Third year EGB		Level A2.1	Level A2.2	Level B1.1	Level B1.2	

## 2. Curriculum Specifications for English: Level A2.1

---

### 2.1 Educational overall objectives

---

By the end of the school year, students level A2.1 will be able to:

#### Linguistically:

- Have a limited repertoire of short memorized phrases covering predictable survival situations at the personal and educational level; frequent breakdowns and misunderstandings occur in non-routine situations.
- Produce brief, everyday expressions in order to satisfy simple needs of concrete types: personal and educational details, daily routines, wants and needs, and requests for information at home or school.

#### Sociolinguistically:

- Perform and respond to simple language functions, such as exchanging information and requests.

#### Pragmatically:

- Adapt well-rehearsed simple, memorized phrases to particular circumstances through limited lexical substitution.

### 2.2 Teaching and learning specifications

---

The type of texts that A2.1 level learners will work on— as basic users of the English language —will next be specified so that two main goals may be achieved: (1) their purpose and features are understood and (2) they are used as tools to achieve communicative goals within the classroom.

#### 2.2.1 Specifications for choosing text types

---

Level A2.1 will be acquainted with three kinds of genres: transactional and expository texts— which show more complexity this time and learners are already somewhat familiar with— as well as short, simple **narratives**<sup>1</sup>.

From the transactional genre, specifically, teachers will address three types of texts: (1) notices, (2) short interview questionnaires, and (3) formal emails; from the expository genre, on the other hand, students will be able to study (1) short descriptions, (2) real or imaginary biographies and (3) media articles.

Additionally and from the narrative genre, teachers could include the text types known as adventure stories and realistic fiction; each of the genres as well as suggestions on how to use them for enhancing the teaching-learning process will be described next.

##### **Transactional texts**

According to the Department of Basic Education from the Republic of South Africa (n.d.), “Transactional written texts are either a response or an initiation of a response” (p.9); this means, for example, that if one writes a formal email or letter of appreciation, both text samples will yield a response in much the same way a cheering or yelling audience responds to a speech.

Therefore, for the purposes to be achieved with level A2.1 students, transactional texts will be grouped into two sets: short texts (e.g. notices and interview questionnaires), and long texts (e.g. formal emails).

---

<sup>1</sup> **Narrative:** the written or oral account of a real or fictional story (Richards and Schmidt, 2012, p.384).

## **Short texts**

### **Notices**

Ranjan (2011) has said that not only individuals but also groups, organizations and bodies may write notices to reach either of the following goals: (1) draw readers' attention to a certain issue that needs immediate attention or (2) encourage active participation. For instance, when notices are written at school, they are often used to inform people or pupils about an activity or event (e.g. a competition, exhibition or inauguration taking place in the near future) or special school activities like an excursion, a meeting or a show.

Therefore, Pranavi (2010) has stated that "a good notice is always to the point and leaves no scope for future inquiries without compromising on the word limit of 50 words" (p.1); what this implies is the fact that for writing down notices in the English classroom, all the required information should be given in a simple, concise, attractive manner so that people can notice them.

On the other hand and although notices may be shorter than the word limit above stated (a sentence or two, for example), according to Pranavi (2010), notices should be featured by the following: (a) a generally formal language style, and (b) a clearly stated purpose. Teachers should consider, however, that the features characterizing notices also depend on the people they address and the objective they attempt to reach.

### **Some shorter and longer examples**

Examples of short notices are: "NO SMOKING – PLEASE DON'T SMOKE" or "REMEMBER TO BRING TO CLASS EVERYTHING YOU NEED!"; on the other hand, longer notices— of up to 50 words— often contain all the following details:

1. Name of the issuing agency (school, etc.)
2. Subject and date of issue/release of the notice
3. Event (what?)
4. Date/time/duration (when?)
5. Place/Venue (where?)
6. Authorized signatory: **Name** and **signature**

### **Topics which notices may address**

Ranjan (2011) has said that notices not only convey information "in advance" but also in a comprehensive manner, and they usually address the following issues:

- A happening
- General instructions
- An inauguration
- A program
- Something lost or found
- An entertainment or cultural events

Consequently, teachers can take advantage of the bulletin boards many schools have to encourage students to write notices and put them up there.

### **Interview questionnaires**

A simple way to use short interview questionnaires in an EFL classroom is in warm-up activities like the one called "Getting to know you". In this game, teachers ask learners to work in pairs and give them an index card to write their partner's name on it. Teachers also ask students to come up with five to six questions within their repertoire (i.e. to recall what they were able to learn in the prior level) to ask each other (e.g. What's your favorite color? Where were you born? etc.).

Students would next be asked to write the answers to those questions on their cards and once they have finished interviewing each other, teachers would invite them to stand up in front of the class and tell everyone what they learned about their partner.

According to eHow.com, “This will help students develop communication skills by getting them comfortable with speaking English in public”.

### **Long texts**

#### *Formal letters*

Even though the practice of writing letters in Ecuador may be quite different from what is done in different English speaking countries, it is important for language learners to get acquainted with the use of formal letters in English as part of students’ sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence in the language.

The **Reading Rockets**<sup>2</sup> webpage states, for example, that letter writing is an essential skill for native speakers of English in spite of the prevalence of emails and text messages; the reason is that everyone—at least in English speaking countries—has to write letters at some point: “letters of complaint, job applications, thank you letters, letters requesting changes or making suggestions—the list goes on and on” (My Child Magazine in Reading rockets: <http://www.readingrockets.org/article/22319/>).

Therefore, the intention of encouraging foreign language learners to write letters in English from an early level—as what happens with kids—will be to (1) help them improve their communication, (2) foster their social and handwriting skills, (3) teach them what they need to know about writing and structuring letters as well as the use of letters in English speaking countries and, (4) compare and contrast letter writing cross-culturally.

To reach such goals the following set of activities which have been adapted from “An Introduction to Letter Writing” by My Child Magazine (<http://www.readingrockets.org/article/22319/#intro>) can be tried out so that students are able to find out the differences between formal and informal letters by themselves:

- a. Collect a supply of different types of letters—both formal and informal.
- b. Ask learners to sort them out into two groups by asking the following questions:
  - Which ones seem to be written for friends?
  - Which ones are not written for friends (but someone else: a school director, a bank/business manager, for example)?
  - Which features distinguish formal from informal?
- c. Discuss the different types of letters by drawing up a chart for each group covering the following points:
  - Address—business or private?
  - Greeting—formal or informal?
  - Style of letter—friendly or business?
  - What is the message of the letter?
  - How does the letter end?
- d. As a follow-up, discuss the type of letters children, their family or someone they may know have had the chance to write and occasions of which they can think would deserve a letter to be written.
- e. Display/write down on the board the following list and ask students to decide what type of letter (i.e. formal or informal) would be most appropriate in each case.
- f. Draw up a chart for each group.

<sup>2</sup> **Reading Rockets** (<http://www.readingrockets.org/article/22319/>) is an American multimedia literacy initiative offering information and resources on how young kids learn to read, why so many struggle, and how caring adults can help. Its website address has been listed number 5 (as “Colorín Colorado”, which is its name in Spanish) in the compilation of web resources for English teachers that the English Project—ADVANCE prepared (Look for the whole list of web sites under the “Fortalecimiento del inglés” section in the Ministry’s website: [www.educacion.gob.ec](http://www.educacion.gob.ec)).



As for writing a formal letters, on the other hand, teachers should keep in mind students have to be aware of the following issues summarized in Activity 2b: Formal letters by “My Child Magazine”:

- Formal letters are sometimes known as business letters.
- They are written in a strictly formal style.
- They can be folded three times.
- The layout is always the same:
  - The senders address is put at the top right hand side
  - Include telephone number and email if available
  - The address of the person receiving the letter goes on the left hand side below the sender's address
  - The date
  - Greeting — Dear Sir or Madam. You can use the titles Miss, Mrs. or Mr. if you know the name of the person to whom you are writing
  - The message
  - Complimentary close — Yours faithfully or Yours sincerely
  - Signature
  - Write name in block letters (this is to ensure that the person receiving the letter knows exactly who has sent it. Signatures may not be very clear).

A formal letter sample may be found at <http://www.readingrockets.org/article/22319/>.

### **Formal e-mails**

Pillemer (1997 cited by Nagel, 1999) has made the following observation regarding the use of emails as a teaching tool: they excite, motivate and encourage writing; indeed, there is a strong motivational appeal to emails because of their personal nature and there can be little doubt nowadays that e-mails form an integral part of many people's communication via the internet.

Since the internet has spawned technologies and this fact has had far- reaching effects on the way in which we think, conduct business and even teach, it is important for educators to plan on activities that allow their students to get involved in email activity as well as to monitor and guide conversational threads to ensure that learning is taking place according to the class goals they have set up.

According to the guidelines for teaching transactional texts from the Department of Basic Education of the Republic of South Africa (2011), teachers should ensure learners get at least acquainted with the following components, which often characterize formal emails:

- The recipient's address (i.e. often the recipient's name and the country where the server point is based). For example: jennyhouston (name) @gmail (server).ec (country).
- CC: often the recipients to whom the email is copied. These recipients could not be expected to do anything but note that some form of communication took place. For example, “a manager may CC (copy) the coordinator an emailed invitation to a meeting. This copy could come in as a handy reference later.
- Subject: or a summary of the content of the email (e.g. Friday's report).
- Message.
- Sender's name.
- Signature: the sender's contact details at the end (when the sender wants to provide them).

This could be done by presenting students with samples of emails either on paper (by using a handout or their textbooks, for example) or having students use a computer to actually work on one.

### **Expository texts**

#### *Short descriptions*

Short writing assignments designed for low level classes give students an opportunity to write about a number of basic subjects including: studies, hobbies, travel, likes and dislikes, etc.

Examples of short description exercises teachers can use with their students include assignments in which educators provide a model of a short description, have learners read it and finally ask them to produce a piece of writing.

For instance, the following short descriptive exercises have been adapted from [esl.about.com](http://esl.about.com):

- Here is part of a description of a friend. Read it and respond to the question.

#### **My friend**

*Javier likes listening to rock music, but he doesn't like heavy metal. He also enjoys painting and speaks three languages: Quichua, Spanish, and English and often visits Australia in the summer. He is single and has two sisters.*

**Now, write a short description of a friend (about 50 words).**

- Here is part of a description of a person's hobby. Read it and do as the instruction below says.

#### **My hobbies**

*I like travelling because I visit many interesting places. I also like trying different kinds of food and drinking the local beverages. I think it is really important to learn a few words of the country's language. I also love making new friends when I travel.*

**Now, write a short description of your hobbies (about 50 words).**

### **Imaginary biographies**

Biographies of imaginary people who have achieved fame may contain the following information:

- An introduction (stating the name of the person and the reason why s/he is famous).
- A first brief paragraph describing that person's date of birth, early years and family.
- A second brief paragraph describing the steps that led to this individual's career.
- A third paragraph that describes the individual's achievements.
- A conclusion which talks about the character's future prospects

Additionally, as suggested by [esl.about.com](http://esl.about.com), teachers may employ an imaginary biography to review specific grammatical items (e.g. get students to ask questions and speak about actions that have continued up to the present by using the present perfect tense and or past activities).

Teachers could for instance, make a point of discussing both the past tense and present perfect tense with common verbs such as like, play, drive, live, etc, and afterwards ask students to read the life chart of María Rosero, which has been adapted from [esl.about.com](http://esl.about.com):

0: born 1957  
6: started school  
12: started magazine delivery service  
13: started playing tennis  
17: sold magazine delivery service for \$20,000  
17: went to Business School in Quito.  
21: graduated with honors from Business School.  
25: married first husband Pedro  
26: first son born, Daniel  
28: won her first tennis tournament.  
32: got divorced and met second husband Juan.

Next, teachers can ask learners to pair up and ask questions using the past simple and present perfect by following the cues provided in the initial explanation. Finally, to check if students are doing the activity correctly, teachers can ask learners to write down the questions they have asked once they finish.

### **Media articles**

Cooper (2002) has said that the media (i.e. newspapers, magazines, TV programs, movies, radio programs, etc.) provides an excellent starting point for a wide range of activities that allow to build English language learners' skills.

In fact, never in human history has information been so easily accessible and this is thanks to cable television, satellite networks and video streaming on the web. Therefore, there are benefits deriving from media which English teachers can take advantage of such as the availability of a wealth of resources—at our fingertips basically—and the possibility to make the information from media available and understandable to foreign learners, too.

Activities which teachers can do with level A2.1 English language learners include the use of newspaper articles (as it was done in levels A1.1 and A1.2) and magazine texts as well as looking at simple print or TV ads to distinguish between “fact” and “opinion”.

Even though newspaper texts are thought to be among the most difficult EFL/ESL learners may encounter (Daly, 2004)—due to their grammar complexity, conventions and the cultural knowledge readers often need to have in order to understand them—there are several solid reasons to expose learners to them.

Daly (2004), for instance, summarizes various reasons authors give as follows: (1) newspaper texts are authentic, so their focus is on meaning rather than form; (2) they are compelling (i.e. they are likely to contain topics of interest to learners) and, therefore, heighten motivation; (3) they are readily available—even over the internet nowadays; and finally, since research suggests that reading in general is important to general language competence, so (5) the ability to read and understand newspapers can be seen to support successful foreign/second language acquisition as well.

According to Harmer (1991), on the other hand, some learners are attracted to the culture of English-speaking countries and “they learn the language because they want to know more about the people who speak it, the places where it is spoken and (in some cases) the writings which it has produced” (p.2); therefore, and like newspapers, magazine articles constitute one of the best sources of information about other cultures and societies (Grundy, 1993).

Furthermore and in agreement with Wolfson (1989), it is important for teachers to keep in mind that “the more we know about other cultures, the more we are able to recognize that being different is not a question of being better or worse—it is merely a question of being different” (p.14). In other words, if through a certain amount of exposure through the media (i.e. newspapers and magazines), students learn more about the culture of English, the advantage is that learners will receive a little of the socio-cultural information they need in order to become communicatively competent in the target language.

Teachers should, however, have the necessary information at their command as well as the sensibility and sensitivity to guide learners and help them understand the values and patterns characterizing the culture of English; teachers may get the information they need by either reading the background notes (i.e. socio-cultural notes) provided in the textbooks they use and/ or by doing some research on socio-cultural information themselves.

The aim of doing it so is NOT to change our learners’ value system or to enforce Anglosaxon standards of behavior, but rather to avoid our students’ judging other people’s behavior according to their own value system and aiding them in getting a better understanding of the socio-cultural differences that characterize each culture.

Finally, the ultimate consequence of adopting such approach is to “reduce the negative results of the sorts of misunderstanding which are bound to arise when people interact across cultures” (Wolfson, 1989, p.15).

### ***Narrative texts***

Puchta (2007) has said that the choice of the right content to teach is crucial over the success or failure in the teaching of adolescents, and emphasized the fact that educators may quite often observe teenagers’ reluctance to talk about themselves; that happens, he has added, because of their need for psychological security (Puchta, 2007, p.6).

He has suggested, therefore, that such psychological security is achieved when the content of teaching is further away from the students’ own world, and has also explained that this fact goes hand in hand with teenagers’ fascination with extremes and realistic details.

In other words, and in agreement with Egan (1990)—who wrote an excellent analysis of teenage development and consequences for teaching in general— it is possible to claim that when teaching adolescent classrooms, teachers can start with something far from learners’ experience but also connected to it by some quality with which they can associate (Puchta, 2007).

Furthermore, Puchta (2007) has explained that “students love identifying with heroes and heroines because these idols are perceived to embody the qualities needed in order to survive in a threatening world: courage, genius, creativity and love” (p.6).

As a result of considering these suggestions and with a better understanding of teenage preferences in the foreign language class (i.e. heroes and heroine stories), teachers are strongly advised to expose level A2.1 learners to two specific text types within the narrative genre: short adventure stories and realistic fiction.

### ***Adventure***

Narratives are defined as texts that tell a story or entertain, and Erkaya (2005) has claimed that short stories—adventures included—are said to help students learn the four skills more effectively because of the motivational benefit embedded in them.

According to Pardede (2012), short stories seem to be one of the most suitable literary genres to use in public schools—which are characterized by either overcrowded rooms, overloaded syllabi or limited time—due to the following traits: (1) their length, i.e. they can be covered entirely in one or two class sessions, (2) they are not complicated for students to work with on their own, i.e. they can finish reading them by sitting from one-half hour to two hours, (3) they have a variety of choice for different interests and tastes and finally, (4) they can be used with all levels, all ages and all classes (Pardede, 2012).

Therefore, and since with the present adjustment of the National Curriculum guidelines a higher number of hours has been assigned to complete true levels, it is expected that teachers will cover not only the class contents stated in these specifications but also use supplementary materials that include this type of text (i.e. adventures)

because their characteristics seem to lend themselves to reach two goals: (1) make it easier for students to become interested in the topic and (2) enable the teacher to finally relate stories to the student's world.

### Characteristics

Adventure stories, like other genres, are characterized by a number of key features, which teachers can help learners get familiar with—yet briefly— through extensive reading. Those features may be summarized as follows:

- **The Hero/ine:** who according to **Turner**<sup>3</sup> (2012) is the central character and someone who “is complete, and ideal in all aspects”. In fact, heroes in this type of story are usually strong, quick thinking, chivalrous, attractive and trustworthy and these characteristics allow them to gain the loyalty and love of their followers.

Additionally, Turner (2012) says that heroes/ines can be seen to follow a code that preaches loyalty, honor, duty, selflessness and spirituality, and therefore, “justifies their actions and separates them from the villain” (Turner, 2012, w/p).

- **The Villain:** who is usually characterized by features that oppose those of the hero/ine: disloyalty, selfishness, and greed; additionally the villain “creates suffering by causing war” (Turner, 2012, w/p).
- **History:** which is prevalent in the adventure genre; characters use this history to shape or save the future.
- **Action:** is vital in adventure stories because the hero/ine has a series of challenges to overcome, which is what gives the genre its epic nature (Turner, 2012).
- **The Quest:** adventure is usually motivated by something or someone in danger, and this often includes a quest or perilous journey to a distant land. Both the hero/ine and villain may share the same quest and that adds a sense of competition and rivalry (Turner, 2012).

Besides knowing about the features shaping adventure stories, teachers need to select those stories based on criteria that allow them to exploit the material for enhancing students' language skills. Those criteria are summarized below:

- Choose a story that is short enough to be covered within class hours preferably.
- Consider the needs and abilities of the learners.
- Consider the amount of background information required for a true appreciation of the material (Pardede, 2012).

Once considering such criteria, teachers are perfectly able to choose material that suits their target groups and resort to different sources to get the stories they find most appropriate. One example of an online source where teachers can get the audio and text for short adventure stories is the website called **Books should be free**<sup>4</sup>, which has been listed under the web sources teachers can resort to from the menu “Web sources” in the section called “Fortalecimiento de inglés” on the Ministry of Education's website; also directly through any web browser (e.g. Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox) by typing the link provided on the footnote on this page in the address bar.

For some other stories that belong to different genres—which one may also find useful—it is possible to resort to <http://www.magickeys.com/books/>; this page offers story scripts and audio for free.

### Realistic fiction

According to **Kim's Corner for Teacher Talk**<sup>5</sup>, realistic fiction is characterized by the following features:

- It is a form of fiction (i.e. it is not true).
- It accurately reflects life as it could be lived today.
- Everything in the story could happen to real people in our natural physical world.
- The characters have normal human powers.
- The story may be set in real places, but it is NOT based on history, nor does it contain elements of science fiction (i.e. it talks about science and technology of the future, partially involves true fiction laws or theories of science, or its setting is in space, a different world or dimension).

<sup>3</sup> Professional journalist since 2008 and contributor for ehow ([http://www.ewhow.com/list\\_6820162\\_characteristics-adventure-fiction.html](http://www.ewhow.com/list_6820162_characteristics-adventure-fiction.html)), a free online library that offers articles and videos as well as experts' advice for professionals in every field.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.booksshouldbefree.com/genre/Adventure>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.kimskorner4teachertalk.com>

Indeed, other websites like **ThinkQuest**<sup>6</sup>, agree on claiming that realistic fiction is derived from actual circumstances, with realistic settings, and characters who face problems and possibilities that are within the range of what is possible in real life.

Additionally, the events portrayed in realistic fiction raise moral questions that a reader might face in real life, and its characters usually have certain characteristics: “they resemble real people, live in a place that could be real, participate in a probable series of events, presented with a dilemma that is of interest and discover a realistic solution” ([http://library.thinkquest.org/TQ0311790/realistic\\_fiction.htm](http://library.thinkquest.org/TQ0311790/realistic_fiction.htm)).

Therefore, by selecting short stories— through first considering similar or the same criteria afore described for choosing adventure stories— teachers can resort to realistic fiction to develop an array of activities that enhance learners’ skills for reading, writing, listening or speaking. Thus, it is important to choose short stories properly so that the vocabulary and sentence structure of whatever learners read is suitable to their level of proficiency.

Pardede (2012) claims, for example, that students below the intermediate level (i.e. level A2.1) will get bored and not read stories with very long sentences, slang, or having sentences that imitate the speech of a particular locality because they will find them difficult to understand and, therefore, teachers should decide on the **readability**<sup>7</sup> of the text.

Finally, the most practical way to suit the texts with the level of the students, according to Pardede (2012), is to use graded or simplified stories because these would avoid the frustrating and counter- productive effects of longer texts.

#### **Other characteristics to consider**

According to the **“Genre Study” website**<sup>8</sup>, other features characterizing short realistic fiction stories include the following:

- a. Their pages are covered with drawings and text (it can be a single-page story, though).
- b. Their graphics have great details in describing the story.
- c. They seem to mostly appear in magazines articles.
- d. Some stories include games and riddles at the end.

Therefore, and in agreement with Spack (1985)—who suggests to consider the aspects of interest and visual support for choosing stories—it is important for teachers to choose realistic fiction stories that would be characterized by the following features: (1) they interest learners, (2) teachers most like to read and teach them, (3) they are accompanied by pictures or (4) they have been made into a film to provide visual interpretation.

For instance, a good sample of realistic fiction in Spanish was a local magazine called **“Contra Viento y Marea”**<sup>9</sup>; its 2012 edition titled “Valeria’s dream” depicted the life of a famous imaginary Quitenian singer who felt really sad and heartbroken; the reason was that she daily saw the reality of lots of little boys and girls working on the streets.

This story was full of pictures which neatly aided in understanding Valeria’s feelings as she talked about her own childhood, and the magazines’ goal was to increase people’s awareness on the need to prevent and stop children’s labor.

It is important to understand, therefore, that realistic fiction may portray the real world in all its dimensions; in other words, this genre not only shows the sensitive, thoughtful, humorous and joyful side of life but also its insensitive, careless and unhappy facet.

Some free downloadable samples of short realistic fiction articles— which have been tailored for kids who are native speakers but which can be readily used by basic users of the language who are non-native speakers—are available through the following link: <http://www.cricketmag.com/free-articles-and-stories-for-children>.

<sup>6</sup> It is an online library in English available since 2003. This site is all about books: it has information on the different parts of a book, the history of books, how to publish a book and much more ([http://www.thinkquest.org/pls/html/think.site?p\\_site\\_id=TQ0311790](http://www.thinkquest.org/pls/html/think.site?p_site_id=TQ0311790))

<sup>7</sup> **Readability**: how easy or difficult the text teachers choose is or will be.

<sup>8</sup> <http://genrestudy.wetpaint.com/>

<sup>9</sup> A magazine published in July 2012 and which was distributed for free when buying the afternoon tabloid called “Últimas Noticias”. Among others, the magazine was sponsored by the Ministry of Education.

There is also an interactive magazine sampler with really nice stories, jokes and articles (such as one about children's games around the world) which teachers can access through the link: <http://viewer.zmags.com/publication/cde7eaf8#/cde7eaf8/32>. Furthermore, in order to move along the pages of online magazines, the only thing teachers have to do is to click either on the right arrow on the side of the article (to move forwards) or the left arrow of the article (to move backwards).

Additionally, since in its very nature realistic fiction stories deal with a vast range of sensitive topics in today's world, teachers need to look for books that contain developmentally appropriate topics, language, events and themes that are in keeping with the community's standards. In other words, individual parents and communities are the ones that usually set the standards for what they believe is suitable for their children to read, so teachers need to be both sensitive to those standards and protective of students' rights to read books that stimulate, inform and delight.

Consequently, a few ways in which teachers can choose stories properly include: (1) considering the literary quality of such books (i.e. evaluating their setting, character, plot, theme and style, and (2) thinking well about how they are planning to use the books (i.e. some may be good candidates for a reading aloud experience, others may be more suitable as individual, independent reading, and some might work in small group setting (Wadsworthmedia).

A couple examples of realistic fiction stories in video are available for free in the following websites:

- When Sophie gets angry, really really angry by Molly Bang:
  - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tymJlcw0Py0> (read-out-loud version)
- Night Owl by Jane Yolen:
  - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KllfX5PprU> (read out-loud version by Jane Yolen)

Moreover, teachers could not only use the video version for the second story (i.e. "Night Owl") but also the text version—which is available at the link below— so that students can both listen to the story and read along to correct possible mistakes in the transcript.

- <http://www.ltps.org/webpages/mmutinsky/block2.cfm?subpage=1235443> (text version)

Tuffelmire (2012), furthermore, has suggested some ideas to make students aware of the characteristics of realistic fiction and to take advantage of these stories for writing. She has suggested the following ideas:

- Reading the book aloud— as in the videos from the links provided
- Pointing out the characters, the setting, the plot's conflict/solution (if any) or the beginning, middle and end.
- Highlighting the elements of realistic fiction (which are visible in the story).
- Creating a story map with the class by using a marker and a large paper chart ( this can include the beginning, middle and end of the story, a character profile or any other element the teacher wants to focus on (Tuffelmire, 2012).
- Finally, having students write their own realistic fiction stories by giving them specific details about what to include.

## 2.2.2 Specifications for listening

---

Ur (2012) has said that real-life listening—which takes place in face-to-face-interactive situations (i.e. conversations, lessons, shopping, etc.)— is characterized by speech that is colloquial, improvised and we rarely need to understand everything from what is said because we are mostly required to listen for the **gist**<sup>10</sup> or **details**<sup>11</sup>.

However, Ur (2012) has added that up to this date, most classroom listening activities students are exposed to are characterized by the following: (1) audio- recordings with language that is formal, and carefully enunciated,

<sup>10</sup> "Gist listening means listening in order to get the main ideas of a listening passage" ( Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p.246) or "listening in order to understand the general meaning of a text without paying attention to specific details" ( Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p.345)

<sup>11</sup> Listening for details is done in order to understand the specific information contained in a text (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p.344)

(2) written texts that are read out loud, (3) written comprehension questions that have to be answered, (4) tasks that provide no background information about the text or listening purpose and (5) the demand that students understand everything in the text.

In fact, teachers may agree that the majority of listening materials that textbooks provide “still consists of a relatively long stretch of pre-written discourse, without a visible speaker, accompanied or followed by comprehension questions” (Ur, 2012, p. 102).

Therefore, and since teachers should help students to gain abilities to eventually be able to handle natural listening situations they encounter in real life (Ur, 2012), there are several things educators are suggested to do in order to (1) use texts and tasks that are modeled on real-life interactional situations and (2) facilitate speech samples of spontaneous talk or at least samples that approximate more to speech that has not been written beforehand to be read out loud.

The following is a summary of suggestions given by Ur (2012):

- Use audio recordings for providing a variety of speakers and accents but also short videos from the internet as a basis for listening because they provide visible speakers and situational contexts.
- Take time to tell students stories, instruct them to do things, describe and explain to provide listening comprehension texts through your own talk.
- Occasionally, read aloud stories from picture books—as recommended above with realistic fiction stories like “When Sophie gets angry, really, really angry” and “Night Owl”; remember to read slowly, maintain occasional eye contact with students and allow yourself to simplify or occasionally translate bits of the text.
- Include a varied sample of listening texts: there is a wide range of recorded texts in English on the internet, both audio and video, some of which are accompanied by listening comprehension tasks (p. 106).

Additionally, level A2.1 students are expected to (1) perceive, memorize, and note down words and expressions not previously encountered in the personal, educational, and public domains as well as note their situational context and functional value; and (2) make use of clues such as stress and intonation to identify and understand relevant information in orally produced texts within the personal and educational domains.

Therefore, the following are examples of activities that may be found useful for learners at this level:

- If working with a story like “When Sophie is angry, really, really angry”, Bang (2009) suggests to proceed like this:
  - Tell students that everyone gets angry sometimes and that people have different ways to handle anger.
  - Then proceed to tell them that s/he is going to read a story about a girl named Sophie and what she does when she gets really, really angry. Teachers themselves can then read the story to learners (and while doing it stress words that are important— e.g. the ones that indicate Sophie’s reactions when her toy is taken away from her—as well as change intonation to understand her changes in mood and afterwards ask them questions like (1) “What makes you really, really angry?”, (2) How do you know when you are angry? How does your body feel? Or (3) What do you do when you get really, really angry?.
  - After listening to students’ responses, teachers can go over the various stages in Sophie’s anger: (1) screaming and roaring, (2) shaking, (3) stomping and kicking, (4) wanting to smash the world to smithereens, (5) running until she was worn out, (6) crying, (7) climbing a tree and (8) letting the “world comfort her”.
  - Finally, ask learners if they consider what Sophie did was helpful in getting rid of her anger, and what they might do instead or what they think they should do to express anger without causing harm to others (Bang, 2009).

Since the use of authentic listening materials has been suggested—but does not imply the avoidance of conventional pre-written recorded texts in formal English at all—teachers level A2.1 are also recommended to use “news reports”, which are now relatively easy to find in the Internet. For instance, teachers can resort to the **BBC Learning English website**<sup>12</sup> for ideas and suggestions on how to use news stories in class in the section called “.

<sup>12</sup> Its link is listed in the Ministry’s website within the “Fortalecimiento del inglés” section and under the web resources tag.



There are archives with hundreds of stories, as well as teaching ideas and lesson plans, so teachers can always find a piece of news report that fits their students' interests. The news pages available at the site also provide short video stories (2 to 10 minutes) on interesting past and current issues as well as their transcript, and vocabulary exercises which teachers can readily use for guessing the meaning, for example. The audio and text can be downloaded for free as well and there are activities and answer keys for the exercises (both of them can be easily printed, too).

Another advantage of using the free resources available on this site is that the video stories are adapted to the needs of English learners and, therefore, vocabulary is pre-viewed before the actual story is displayed; thus, teachers can also adapt the exercises for identifying the topic and main points of the stories presented there.

Furthermore, teachers can use short interviews to do listening activities with their A2.1 learners and the BBC English also offers a wide variety of recordings whose audio and text can be easily downloaded from the section called **6-minute English**<sup>13</sup>.

As may be guessed from its name, moreover, this site has an archive of 6-minute recordings of interview-like conversations on varied topics that go from "Shopping" to "Driving on Mars", and there are also vocabulary prompts and downloadable handouts and audio (the text handout has a transcript of the recording with a vocabulary list and its definitions as well as links to read more about the story online).

Finally, there is a short summary of the topic that is discussed in the recording and a question that is stated in the program for the audience to answer.

### 2.2.2.1 Assessment indicators

---

- Identify words and expressions used in a slower, yet natural colloquial style, by native speakers and non-native speakers within the personal and educational domain.
- Understand phrases and expressions related to areas of most immediate priority within the personal and educational domains (e.g. daily life, free time, school, etc.), provided speech is clearly and slowly articulated.
- Within the personal and educational domain, deduce the meanings of unfamiliar phrases and words from a context containing familiar elements.
- In their own speech, recognize some of the principal meaningful contrasts in utterances carried by stress placement and intonation.
- Catch the main idea in short, clear, more complex texts within the personal and educational domain (e.g. weather forecast, school timetables, etc.).
- Understand and identify the main discussion topic within the personal and educational domain provided that they are conducted slowly and clearly.
- Identify the main idea of recorded news and interviews reporting on seasonal festivals, environmental issues, food and international customs, climate, weather, etc.
- Identify the main points of television news reporting seasonal festivals, environmental issues, climate, weather, etc., where the visuals support the commentary—provided technological resources are available.

### 2.2.3 Specifications for speaking

---

Ur (2012) has suggested a number of principles that teachers should consider for the design of speaking activities; they go from the use of group or pair work to the need of making students aware of the speaking activities' aim as well as how to successfully carry out tasks in their English lessons.

She says, for example, that even though there are certain disadvantages to consider when using group or pair work to promote fluent communication (e.g. lack of error correction or students' occasional slips into their native language), the strengths of this **interactional pattern**<sup>14</sup> outweigh its weaknesses due to many pedagogically sound arguments. Among those, the following two can be highlighted: (1) an increased quantity

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/general/sixminute/index.shtml>

<sup>14</sup> Interaction patterns: "in teaching, the ways in which students work together in class, such as whole class, pair work, group work, and individual work" (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 291).

of language practice opportunities, (Long and Porter, 1985; Ur, 2012), and (2) a lower level of students' inhibition to speak in front of the whole class (Ur, 2012, p. 118).

In other words, although the teacher may not be able to supervise all the speech produced by students during group or pair work, "the amount of time devoted to talking in English by individual members of the class is still likely to be far more than it would be in a whole-class discussion" (Ur, 2012, p.119).

A second principle Ur (2012) suggests is to base whichever speaking activity teachers choose to do with their students on easy language. This means that the vocabulary and grammar needed should be easy to remember and produce so that students can progressively develop fluency; furthermore, it is advisable to review vocabulary before starting any speaking activity or even teach new items "which students can refer to, if necessary, during the activity" (Ur, 2012, p.119).

Moreover, two more principles teachers should consider for preparing speaking activities include a judicious choice of topic and task to stimulate learners' engagement as well as clearly stating the activity's purpose and how to do it successfully (Ur, 2012).

Therefore, teachers should carefully select topics and activities that fit their learners' interests as well as use strategies that require students themselves to take responsibility for their own talking and for monitoring their interaction.

Some of the strategies teachers can make use of include: appointing a team member as the discussion leader (so that s/he makes sure everyone gets a chance to participate), using pair work— where feasible— to maximize talk, the avoidance of corrective feedback during fluency activities to allow students express themselves freely, and resorting to correction at the end of those activities or when students need a confirmation of the correct form.

Finally, according to Ur (2012), if students want to share the results of their discussions, teachers can only hear a selection or ask groups to write them on a classroom noticeboard. Examples of activities teachers can do with their students include, but are not limited to, the following ones:

### **Interviews**

Murphy (1995) has said that language learners feel more encouraged to talk when they discuss topics that are important or salient to them and that actually "one of the most salient topics that an individual can relate to is his/her own feelings" (p. 88); in other words, exercises teachers choose to motivate students to speak should attempt to take advantage of personal relevance.

Personal assessment interviews, therefore, are among a number of verbal exchange exercises that teachers may use to draw upon the learners' inner feelings and their desire to share these with others. In this type of interviews which are one- way and open, "the person interviewed is the only one who has the information needed" (p.94).

The procedure for carrying out a personal assessment interview is really simple; students are arranged in pairs and one learner in the pair asks the other questions from a list. Then the other person asks his or her partner the same questions and when the entire questionnaire has been answered, "each student gives a brief summary to the class of what s/he has learned about the person interviewed" (Murphy, 1995).

Consequently, and since level A2.1 learners are expected to (1) use a series of phrases and sentences linked into a list to communicate in simple and routine tasks within the personal and educational domains, and (2) handle very short social exchanges within the personal and educational domains—even though they can usually understand enough to keep the conversation going themselves, they can resort to a really useful and large group of conversation questions that has been provided by **the Internet TESL Journal**<sup>15</sup>, which is called "Conversation Questions for the ESL/EFL classroom" and available at <http://iteslj.org/questions/>.

<sup>15</sup> "The *Internet TESL Journal* (ITESLJ) is a combination of monthly online publications and information from the TESL/TEFL teaching materials site. It has been online since 1995 and it has accumulated a growing archive of research articles, position papers, teaching tips and activities, quizzes, and a large collection of links to TESL/TEFL sites. It constantly presents new material in its monthly journal, is open to all contributors and contains a refreshingly wide variety of materials from teachers around the world, ranging from statistic-filled research papers to short grammar and vocabulary quizzes" (<http://iteslj.org/>)

The questions offered by this online journal cover a wide range of topics alphabetically organized from “Accidents at home” and “Family” issues to “Wishes” and “World Peace”.

The website also offers a teacher’s guide with some suggestions on ways to use the questions in a classroom and what to do before using the questions.

An example is shown next:

**Interview 1**

1. How big is your family?
2. Do you live with your parents?
3. Do you have any brothers or sisters? If so, how old are they?
4. Do you live with any of your grandparents?
5. How many aunts and uncles do you have?
6. How old are your parents/grandparents?
7. What does your father/mother do? What’s his/her job?
8. Where do your grandparents live?
9. Do you look more like your mother or your father?
10. Do you often visit your grandparents?
11. Do you often argue with your mother or father? What about?
12. What do you like the most about your family?

(Adapted from Conversation Questions for the ESL/EFL classroom)

### **2.2.3.1 Assessment indicators**

---

#### ***Production***

- Use new words and expressions which occur in conversations in the personal and educational domains, and make use of such terms and expressions whenever appropriate and necessary.
- Use simple descriptive language to compare and make brief statements about objects and possessions.
- Give short, basic descriptions of everyday events and activities within the personal and educational domains (e.g. their family, living conditions, and educational background).
- Describe plans and arrangements, habits and routines, past activities, and experiences within the personal and educational domains.
- Give a short, rehearsed presentation on a topic pertinent to their everyday life within the corresponding domains.
- Understand clear, standard speech on familiar matters within the personal and educational domains, provided they can ask for repetition or reformulation from time to time.

### **Interaction**

- Deal with practical everyday demands within the personal and educational domains without undue effort:
  - Meeting people (and if strangers, making their acquaintance).
  - Asking and answering questions about habits, routines, hobbies and past activities, and experiences at home or at school.
  - Exchanging information, feelings, wishes, and concerning matters of common interest, particularly those relating to personal life, living conditions, leisure, educational activities and interests, etc.).
  - Proposing plans/arranging a course of action and briefly giving reasons and explanations (e.g. what to do, where to go, when to meet, etc.).
  - Extending invitations and reacting to being invited.
- Interact with reasonable ease in structured situations (e.g. an interview) and short conversations within the corresponding domains, provided they are addressed clearly, slowly, and directly.
- Answer straightforward follow-up questions within the personal and educational domains provided they can ask for clarification occasionally and are given some help to express what they want.
- When addressed directly in a formal meeting, say what they think about issues within the personal and educational domains, provided they can ask for repetition of key points if necessary.
- Follow changes of topic in formal discussion, within the corresponding domains
- Speech is clear enough to be understood despite a noticeable foreign accent, but conversational partners will need to ask for repetition from time to time.

### **2.2.4 Specifications for Reading**

---

Level A2.1 students are expected to:

- Understand and identify longer, more complex and texts (e.g. notices, biographies, etc.) than those presented in 9<sup>th</sup> year EGB.

Since as stated in the National curriculum guidelines, those texts should contain the highest frequency vocabulary and include a proportion of shared international vocabulary items (e.g. hamburger, restaurant, hospital, etc.), teachers will undoubtedly expose learners to texts whose vocabulary is mostly familiar to them. However, it is worth mentioning here that teachers should also prepare learners for their initial encounters with unfamiliar language.

Regarding this issue, Murphy (1997) has said that the first and fastest recommended way to unveil the meaning of unfamiliar words and expressions, especially for low proficiency level students, is “having the teacher give the meaning to the students...as a pre-reading activity to get the students started with a minimum of delay” (p. 4).

This is known as “Vocabulary Orientation” (Murphy, 1997) and what teachers can basically do is to select certain vocabulary items the students have not learned yet—from any text that is presented—and provide students with the meaning directly either by using a synonym, a picture, gestures, miming or any other method that proves efficient. The benefit of learning new words before confronting a text is that the reading process will speed up considerably for beginning students (Murphy, 1997).

Moreover, a second type of preparation for reading at a low level of proficiency is highlighting key words and phrases. This method is called “Optical Cueing” (Murphy, 1997), so teachers can enhance (i.e. underline, mark, bold, italicize, etc.) certain words, phrases, or clauses in the text as focal points for the eye to help accelerate reading. Below is an example of a short description followed by some other examples of pre-reading activities teachers can develop with their learners.

Viviana, Berenice and Jenny are three really good friends who have a lot in common and share various interests and hobbies. They first got to know each other at a university in the United States where they were roommates for two years and studied the same major: electrical engineering. Several years after graduation, Berenice and Jenny served as bridesmaids at Viviana's wedding with her Colombian life-long sweetheart: Camilo. The three friends enjoy jogging in the mornings and taking zumba lessons. They also like the same kind of music, although Viviana and Jenny often prefer salsa music to reggaeton. At least once every six months they and their husbands go to a fancy restaurant for dinner, followed by dancing at a nice club. Sometimes they also get together for a barbecue with their friends.

Another type of preparation for reading, furthermore, is called "Summation" (Murphy, 1997), in which teachers provide the learners with a quick summary of the passage; an example for the previous text may go as follows: "This is a text about three good friends who do many things together".

Finally, a fourth type of pre-reading activity that is valid for EFL readers not only at the beginning level but at all proficiency levels is called "Narrative Orientation" (Murphy, 1997); the goal of narrative orientation exercises is to activate what is known as learners' "schema", which is necessary for them to fully understand a given passage.

### **What is meant by learners' "schema"?**

From the perspective of the communicative approach to language learning and teaching, reading is viewed as an interaction between the reader and the writer, and this interaction may be explained through a theory known as the schema theory.

According to this theory, every reader's personal, social and educational background provides her/him with the prior knowledge which s/he brings to the understanding of a text and, therefore, "comprehension of the text depends upon whether or not the reader's schemata or knowledge coincides with that of the author" (Murphy, 1997, p.2).

In other words, if students, for instance, were unable to understand the description of a baseball game (which would include vocabulary related to innings, no-hitters and strikeouts), the reason would be that they lack the schema of a baseball game and as a result the description does not make much sense or makes really little sense for them.

Therefore, a pedagogical implication of the schema theory is that EFL readers should be provided with as much linguistic, structural, and contextual knowledge as possible before they are exposed to reading materials that are unfamiliar for them, and one way to do it is by using the Narrative Orientation activities previously mentioned.

Teachers can carry those activities out, for instance, by asking students questions related to the narrative of the text (Murphy, 1997) like "Who are your close friends?", "Have you ever had a roommate?" or "Do you like to go to the movies?", which will ensure "discussion that can provide background information that might be needed" (Murphy, 1997, p.20).

Once that is done, teachers should have students read the text they have presented (short description, narrative, etc.) silently and not out loud to avoid the human voice's interference with comprehension; additionally, they must be able to understand the language and description or narrative literally without resorting to inferences or speculation.

To assess if that has happened, some post-reading activities Murphy (1997) suggests may include the following:

- (1) Asking students for the meaning of the words teachers selected from the text: "the students should be able to guess at least the approximate meaning of vocabulary items in the passage from the context" (Murphy, 1997, p.24).
- (2) Asking students wh- questions (except WHY): the answers to which can be extracted directly from the text. For example: "What is Berenice and Jenny's relationship to Viviana?", "What did they do at Viviana's wedding?", "How long have the three friends known each other?" (Murphy, 1997, p.24).

Another interesting idea for reading comprehension with level A2.1 students has been shared by Joan Diez at **HotChalk's Lesson Plans Page.com**<sup>16</sup> (1996-2012); she suggests reading funny notices and proposes a set of activities for a lesson plan, which teachers may adapt for both reading and writing as follows:

- First, make sure students know what notices are by introducing them through a brief explanation and/or example; if necessary, tell the students that notices are mostly displayed in public places for a good reason, are often written in big colorful letters and may even include pictures besides the text (since the words “notices” and “news” are false friends in Spanish, students may not know what the first word really means).
- Next ask students to remember any notices they have seen and write a list as the one below on the whiteboard for your students to think of places where they could be found:
  - NO SMOKING
  - PLEASE DON'T SMOKE!
  - DANGER! HIGH VOLTAGE
  - (PLEASE) DO NOT DISTURB!
  - EXIT
  - NO PARKING
  - TO TRAINS
  - PUSH/PULL
  - FOR SALE
- Afterwards, draw the students' attention to the fact that many notices use the imperative, the imperative negative or the gerund; help them also notice that the word please is used in some of them.
- Later, tell students that sometimes we can come across notices that really catch our eye for the wrong reason (e.g. the spelling, the words, or the grammar are not correct) and show them the following examples:
  - Seen at a shop in a holiday resort: We reveal your pictures in 24 hours (“reveal” instead of “develop”).
  - Seen at a garden: Don't keep the grass (“don't keep” instead of “keep off”).
  - Seen in a Paris hotel elevator: Please leave your values at the front desk (“values” instead of “valuables”).
  - Seen in an advertisement by a Hong Kong dentist: Teeth extracted by the latest Methodists. (“Methodists” instead of “methods”).
  - Seen in a Tokyo bar: Special cocktails for the ladies with nuts (“ladies with nuts” instead of “cocktails with nuts”).
- Additionally, challenge your students to see how many such notices they can find either in their local community or through the internet under “Funny signs/ notices from around the world”.
- Finally, give your students the chance to write a few notices themselves (school's life and the students' attitudes and behavior are excellent topics).

### ***Reading media articles***

Media articles can be a great teaching resource in the EFL classroom if they are structured well and have a purpose, and teachers can make use of an array of EFL sites that prepare media materials so that their classes are more effective and challenging for learners. Through the following links, for example, teachers can take a look at the following:

- (1) a magazine sampler through <http://www.weeklyreader.com/>
- (2) reading comprehension teaching tips through <http://www.weeklyreader.com/article/top-tips-teaching-reading-comprehension/>
- (3) some digital sample issues through <http://classroommagazines.scholastic.com//issues/CSCH0912/book>

<sup>16</sup> HotChalk's *LessonPlansPage.com* is a collection of over 3,500 lesson plans from preschool through high school and beyond, which were developed by students and faculty at The University of Missouri, and more recently by the users of that website (<http://lessonplanspage.com/about/>)

Therefore, teachers can choose their own articles from newspapers or magazines, for example, but should bear in mind the following selection criteria and questions nicely summarized by Farmer (2008):

1. **Appropriateness:** Is the topic suitable for the class level and age group? Could it be upsetting to some students?
2. **Interest:** Will the students be interested in the topic?
3. **Length:** Long articles should be edited (200-300 words is a good length).
4. **Language:** Does the article have a useful set of words or useful grammar components? Are they consistent with what I am teaching? Is there too much unknown vocabulary?
5. **Generative potential:** Is it easy to think about activities that could follow the article? Does the article lend itself to discussions, debates, role-plays?

Once these criteria have been considered, teachers can do a search for materials and activities that meet their students' interests and needs. (Note: a link to another digital magazine: [http://classroommagazines.scholastic.com/issues/SN3\\_102212/book](http://classroommagazines.scholastic.com/issues/SN3_102212/book) and a set of printable articles and activities is facilitated here: <http://www.scholastic.com/scopemagazine/Issues/021113/Reproducibles.html>)

### 2.2.4.1 Assessment indicators

- Deduce the meaning of complex words composed of elements (bases and affixes) which are familiar to the learners in and texts.
- Correctly interpret the meanings of (e.g. DVD, phone, hotel, taxi, etc.) familiar from the learner's native language and whose equivalent meaning is fully transparent in the text types used for this level.
- Find specific predictable information in longer and material (e.g. formal letters, biographies, etc.) than those presented in the 9<sup>th</sup> year EGB.
- Make use of clues such as titles, illustrations, paragraphing, etc., to identify and understand relevant information in written texts types that correspond the level.
- Understand short descriptions and media articles when expressed in simple language.

### 2.2.5 Specifications for Writing

Level A2.1 students are expected to produce longer, more detailed, complex and texts (e.g. formal emails, imaginary biographies, etc.) than those presented in the 9<sup>th</sup> year EGB with more variety in sentence structure and lexical range.

<b>TO:</b>	<i>Lin</i>
<b>FROM:</b>	<i>Carolina</i>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<i>Time play</i>
<p><i>Lin, there are two functions if we want to see "lion king" it's at 3 o'clock, and if we want to see "mama mia" it's at 4 o'clock. Please tell me which one you like to see. I wait for your answer. Bye, Cas.</i></p>	



<b>TO:</b>	<i>Carolina</i>
<b>FROM:</b>	<i>Lin</i>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<i>The time of play</i>
<p><i>Hi, Carolina! I'm fine. I like to attend your inviting but can you tell me the time of this play. I can arrange my schedule. Bye Lin</i></p>	

<b>TO:</b>	<i>Lin</i>
<b>FROM:</b>	<i>Carolina</i>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<i>Weekend plans</i>
<p><i>Hi, Lin! How are you? I hope good. I write you because me and my friends are going to London this Saturday to see a play, come with us if you want, answer me. See you then.</i>  <i>Carolina</i></p>	



<b>TO:</b>	<i>Carolina</i>
<b>FROM:</b>	<i>Lin</i>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<i>Where and when we meet</i>
<p><i>Carolina,</i>  <i>The time of "lion king" is suited for my schedule.</i>  <i>Where and when will we meet?</i>  <i>Lin</i></p>	

Source: John Hughes (2001 cited by Harmer, 2004)

Therefore, the following methodological suggestions can aid teachers to reach that goal; when teaching how to write down a formal email, for example, teachers should keep in mind students need to understand not only the similarities but also the following differences between the informal emails they produced in the prior level (A1.2) and the formal emails they will be producing in level A2.1:

- The word "Dear" should be used as the opening salutation rather than "Hi" or "Hello".
- Overly informal language should be avoided in the body of the email.
- Short, neutral closing salutations such as "Regards", "Best regards", "Best", "Best wishes" should be used instead of things like "Yours sincerely/faithfully", which are mostly used in formal letters.
- Include a signature that mentions corporate things such as contact details.

The reason to raise students' awareness on these features is that in general, formal e-mails seem to be overall less formal than traditional mail but relatively more formal than informal net mails (Coffey, 2011, <http://writers.stackexchange.com/questions/3191/how-do-you-write-a-formal-email>); an example of a formal email featured by most of the characteristics aforementioned is available in the following link: <http://jobsearch.about.com/od/sampleletters/ig/Sample-Letter-Formats/Email-Thank-You-Message.htm> (Activity 2b: Formal letters).

Thus, teachers can make use of this example for a first exposure of students to the layout of formal emails and also to make corrections after students have been introduced to the characteristics featuring this type of email. For instance, they could ask students to check if the email they have been presented has all the characteristics aforementioned; if not, they should correct the email to produce an appropriate version (e.g. change "Sincerely" by "Best regards").

If internet is not available, however, teachers can at least involve students in more informal writing activities such as writing notes or simulated e-mails to each other. Harmer (2004) has suggested, for example, that teachers can deliver messages from one student to another by having them write questions such as "Where are you from?" or "What do you find most difficult about learning English?" individually; the objective of this activity is to provoke not only students' engagement in writing but also genuine communication with a real purpose (Harmer, 2004).

Additionally, regarding simulated e-mail exchanges on paper, Harmer (2004) has suggested to use the same basic technique as the exchange of notes and the following form developed by the teacher John Hughes (2001 cited by Harmer, 2004):

As a suggestion then, teachers can— at the beginning of the school year— make use of this format for informal emails to remind students of the features characterizing them and then gradually introduce more formal emails to eventually have students produce them by using the same format but making the considerations aforementioned.

On the other hand, regarding biographies, teachers can make use of the following set of activities suggested by Harmer (2004) which will take students into a reading-writing sequence for short biographies of people who interest them and that seem to be flexible for imaginary biographies.



First, groups of three students should be organized and each member would read one of the three biography texts provided by the teacher (the biographies can describe the lives and accomplishments of someone famous or infamous and should be chosen by considering the language level students have). Second, students will fill in the table below about the person they read about.

Name	1	2	3
Date of birth			
Nationality			
What was or is special about her/him?			
Who (if anyone) was or is s/he associated with?			
What were or have been the main events in her/his life?			
Has her/his career ended, and if yes, how?			
Are they still alive, and if not, when did s/he die?			

Third, students can break out of their original teams and walk around the room to ask other classmates who have read about the other two people to complete the other columns as well. As a fourth step, teachers should lead feedback on the task by having students discuss about the information in their tables and “checking they have understood the texts they have read and what their fellow students have told them—” (Harmer, 2004, p.97).

Next, students are asked to produce a new (empty) version of the table and take it with them to a computer room where they can log onto a biography site on the Internet, for example: <http://www.glamourmagazine.co.uk/celebrity/biographies> (for the texts of biographies for English-speaking stars), or <http://www.biography.com> (where students can watch videos that present biographies of not only foreign famous people but also Latino celebrities).

As students type in the name of anyone they want to find out about (either living or dead) or just find it on a list, they should fill in their table about those people and teachers “can go from computer to computer helping students with vocabulary they do not understand” (Harmer, 2004).

Harmer (2004) has also suggested once students have finished filling in their tables, teachers can ask them to leave the computer screen to go back to the classroom; there they use their notes to write short biographies and produce as many drafts as teachers consider necessary and which teachers should also give feedback on.

It is worth mentioning, however, that this sequence of activities “can work just as well with more traditional reference tools such as encyclopedias” (Harmer, 2004).

### 2.2.5.1 Assessment indicators

---

- Write short words that are in their vocabulary with reasonable phonetic accuracy (but not necessarily full standard spelling).
- Write longer descriptions about their family, living conditions, and educational background.
- Write a series of follow-up questions for an interview with the aid of a dictionary.
- Write short definitions for people, things, places, etc. by indicating their features or use.
- Write short descriptions of events, past activities and personal experiences.
- Write short, simple formal letters and imaginary biographies.

### 2.2.6 Specifications for reflecting on English linguistic elements

---

		Exponents	
Type of discourse	Skill	Function	Vocabulary
			Structures
Spoken Written	Reading Speaking Listening Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talking about oneself and other people's personalities.</li> <li>Talking about possession.</li> <li>Describing one's ideal person and place.</li> </ul>	<p>Personality traits (positive and negative features) Classroom and home objects Clothing items Occupations Countries</p> <p>Simple present tense: be and other verbs (affirmative, negative statements, yes/no questions, information questions, long and short answers) Whose...? Too/ enough Possessive adjectives, possessive pronouns an possessive nouns (s)</p>
Spoken Written	Reading Speaking Listening Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Describing one's eating habits.</li> <li>Talking about food for various meals.</li> <li>Giving and following instructions.</li> <li>Asking about other people's opinions.</li> </ul>	<p>Breakfast, lunch and dinner food Snacks and desserts Food groups Cooking methods International dishes Health problems related to food</p> <p>Simple present: like, dislike, love, enjoy Count and non count nouns Imperatives (Affirmative and negative commands) Sequence words (first, next, etc.) Expressions of quantity: an, an, some, any</p>
Spoken Written	Reading Speaking Listening Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talking about chores and errands.</li> <li>Talking about grocery shopping places and their location.</li> <li>Describing quantities.</li> <li>Offering, accepting or refusing something.</li> <li>Describing international dishes and eating habits in other countries.</li> </ul>	<p>Household chores Common everyday errands Foods at the supermarket Places in a town Food groups International cuisine Measures (a gallon, a head, a pound, etc.)</p> <p>Present simple: need and other do verbs (affirmative, negative statements, yes/no and information questions, short and long answers). There was/ There were: affirmative, negative, yes/ no &amp; information questions and answers How many.../How much...? A, an, some any (affirmative, negative, questions) Quantifiers: a little, a few, a lot, not much, not many What kind of...?&lt;/p&gt; &lt;/td&gt; &lt;/tr&gt; &lt;tr&gt; &lt;td&gt;Spoken&lt;br&gt;Written&lt;/td&gt; &lt;td&gt;Reading&lt;br&gt;Speaking&lt;br&gt;Listening&lt;br&gt;Writing&lt;/td&gt; &lt;td&gt; &lt;ul&gt; &lt;li&gt;Talking about free-time sports and activities.&lt;/li&gt; &lt;li&gt;Expressing preferences.&lt;/li&gt; &lt;li&gt;Describing frequency.&lt;/li&gt; &lt;li&gt;Talking about abilities&lt;/li&gt; &lt;li&gt;Discussing traditionally male and female sports and activities.&lt;/li&gt; &lt;/ul&gt; &lt;/td&gt; &lt;td&gt; &lt;p&gt;Sports and activities&lt;br&gt;(indoors &amp; outdoors)&lt;br&gt;Cultural activities&lt;/p&gt; &lt;p&gt;Simple present tense: like, love, prefer, don't mind hate, enjoy, dislike.&lt;br&gt;Would rather&lt;br&gt;Adverbs of frequency&lt;br&gt;How often (short and long answers)&lt;br&gt;Gerunds&lt;br&gt;Modal verb: can (affirmative, negative statements, yes/no &amp; information questions, short &amp; long answers).&lt;/p&gt; &lt;/td&gt; &lt;/tr&gt; &lt;tr&gt; &lt;td&gt;Spoken&lt;br&gt;Written&lt;/td&gt; &lt;td&gt;Reading&lt;br&gt;Speaking&lt;br&gt;Listening&lt;br&gt;Writing&lt;/td&gt; &lt;td&gt; &lt;ul&gt; &lt;li&gt;Describing what people at school/home are doing.&lt;/li&gt; &lt;li&gt;Contrasting what people are doing with what they usually do.&lt;/li&gt; &lt;li&gt;Discussing about school, subjects and special interests.&lt;/li&gt; &lt;/ul&gt; &lt;/td&gt; &lt;td&gt; &lt;p&gt;Classroom activities&lt;br&gt;Household chores&lt;br&gt;School subjects&lt;br&gt;Familiar locations (at the mall, at the school cafeteria, at an amusement park, at the beach, etc).&lt;br&gt;Special interests (crafts, hobbies, a collection, a sport, a free-time activity).&lt;br&gt;Jobs&lt;/p&gt; &lt;p&gt;Present continuous (affirmative &amp; negative statements, yes/no &amp; information questions, short &amp; long answers).&lt;br&gt;Present Simple vs. Present continuous (affirmative &amp; negative statements, yes/no &amp; information questions, short and long answers).&lt;br&gt;Present continuous for future arrangements.&lt;br&gt;Time expressions: this evening, tomorrow, next week.&lt;/p&gt; &lt;/td&gt; &lt;/tr&gt; &lt;/tbody&gt; &lt;/table&gt; </p>

Spoken Written	Reading Speaking Listening Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talking about one's clothes and accessories.</li> <li>Describing what people are wearing/like to wear.</li> <li>Asking for, offering, accepting and refusing help.</li> <li>Identifying which object/thing you want or which belongs to one.</li> <li>Complimenting and accepting compliments.</li> <li>Expressing needs.</li> </ul>	Months of the year and seasons Clothing items and accessories Words and expression related to fashion (trends, industry, decades, etc). Adjectives related to shapes and sizes (baggy, small, tight, etc). Adjectives to describe hairstyle Expressions: Oh, you look... Replies to compliments	Too + adjective Not + adjective + enough Change of nouns into adjectives (suffixes -y, -ish, -able, -ous, -ful, -less)
Spoken Written	Reading Speaking Listening Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asking for and giving information about future actions and facts</li> <li>Talking about plans, arrangements and intentions.</li> <li>Making predictions</li> </ul>	Vacation spots Local activities (e.g. go to a club, take pictures) Travel and holiday vocabulary Plans (personal and professional) Changes: appearance, money, skills	Future with: affirmative, negative, yes/no & info questions, answers Why & Because How long (time)/ for Connectors: but, then Would you like...? Shall we...? Let's...
Spoken Written	Reading Speaking Listening Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talking about places to go and events.</li> <li>Talking about past experiences with family and friends.</li> <li>Comparing people and things in the classroom.</li> <li>Describing things using adjectives.</li> <li>Comparing past and present events.</li> </ul>	People, places to go and events (the theatre/a play, the cinema/ a film, a show, a concert, a football match, an art gallery, the zoo, a music festival, a theme park, a club/a disco, Internet café) Family members Comparison of adjectives with than	What's your favorite...? Do you ever...? Simple past tense be (affirmative & negative statements, yes/no & information questions, long and short answers) Time expressions: last night, yesterday, last week Adjectives and opposites
Spoken Written	Reading Speaking Listening Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talking about chores and errands.</li> <li>Talking about grocery shopping places and their location.</li> <li>Describing quantities.</li> <li>Offering, accepting or refusing something.</li> <li>Describing international dishes and eating habits in other countries.</li> </ul>	Household chores Common everyday errands Foods at the supermarket Places in a town Food groups International cuisine Measures (a gallon, a head, a pound, etc.)	Present simple: need and other do verbs (affirmative, negative statements, yes/no and information questions, short and long answers). There was/ There were: affirmative, negative, es/ no & information questions and answers How many.../How much...? A, an, some any (affirmative, negative, question) Quantifiers: a little, a few, a lot, not much, not many What kind of...?
Spoken Written	Reading Speaking Listening Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talking about free-time sports and activities.</li> <li>Expressing preferences.</li> <li>Describing frequency.</li> <li>Talking about abilities</li> <li>Discussing traditionally male and female sports and activities.</li> </ul>	Sports and activities (indoors & outdoors) Cultural activities	Simple present tense: like, love, prefer, don't mind hate, enjoy, dislike. Would rather Adverbs of frequency How often (short and long answers) Gerunds Modal verb: can (affirmative, negative statements, yes/no & information questions, short & long answers).

## References

- Bang, M. (2009). Questions and Activities for When Sophy gets Angry... Retrieved from: [http://www.mollybang.com/Pages/sohpie\\_act.html](http://www.mollybang.com/Pages/sohpie_act.html)
- Cooper, A. (2002). Teaching Media Literacy in the ESL classroom. Center for Media Literacy. Retrieved from: <http://www.medialit.org/reading-room/teaching-media-literacy-esl-classroom>
- Department of Basic Education from the Republic of South Africa (n.d.). Guidelines for Teaching and Writing Essays and Transactional Texts. Grades 10-12. Retrieved from: <http://www.education.gov.za/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=1xzaAz2Vkss%3D&...>
- Daly, B. (2004). Facilitating Discussions of Newspaper Articles in the ESL/EFL classroom. The Internet TESL Journal, Vol. X, No. 7. Retrieved from: <http://iteslj.org/Lessons/Daly-Newspaper.html>
- Egan, K. (1990). Romantic understanding. Routledge. New York.
- Farmer, J. (2008). How to Effectively Use News Articles in the EFL classroom. The Internet TESL Journal, Vol. XIV, No. 12. Retrieved from: <http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Farmer-News.html>
- Grundy, P. (1993). Newspapers. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Harmer, J. (1991). The Practice of English Language Teaching. England, UK: Longman Group Limited.
- Harmer, J. (2004). How to Teach Writing. England, UK: Pearson Longman.
- Murphy, R. (1995). From Practice to Performance: A Manual of Teacher Training Workshop Activities. Volume One. Washington, U.S.A: English Language Program Division. United States Information Agency.
- Murphy, R. (1997). From Practice to Performance: A Manual of Teacher Training Workshop Activities. Volume Two. Washington, U.S.A: English Language Program Division. United States Information Agency.
- Nagel, P. (1999). E-mail in the virtual ESL/EFL classroom. The Internet TESL Journal, Vol. V, No. 7. Retrieved from: [iteslj.org/Articles/Nagel-Email.html](http://iteslj.org/Articles/Nagel-Email.html)
- Ranjan, R. (2011). How to write notices [PowerPoint slides]. Retrieved from: <http://www.slideshare.net/rajeevelt/how-to-write-notice>
- Richards, J. & Schmidt, R. (2010). Dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics. Great Britain, UK: Longman.
- Tuffelmire, D. (2012). How to Use Picture Books to Teach Writing Realistic Fiction. Retrieved from: [http://www.ehow.com/how\\_7358568\\_use-teach-writing-realistic-fiction.html#ixzz253w680IE](http://www.ehow.com/how_7358568_use-teach-writing-realistic-fiction.html#ixzz253w680IE)
- Pardede, P. (2012). Using Short Stories to Teach Language Skills. Retrieved from: <http://parlindunganpardede.wordpress.com/articles/language-teaching/using-short-stories-to-teach-language-skills/>
- Pranavi, S. (2010). Writing a Notice—The CBSE Way. Retrieved from: <http://www.gyanguru.org/author/therisingindian/>
- Puchta, H., & Stranks, J. (2007). English in Mind Starter. Teacher's book. UK: Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.
- Spack, R. (1985). Literature, reading, writing, and ESL: Bridging the gaps. TESOL Quarterly, 19, 703-725
- Turner, J. (2012). Characteristics of Adventure Fiction. Retrieved from: [http://www.ehow.com/list\\_6820162\\_characteristics-adventure-fiction.html](http://www.ehow.com/list_6820162_characteristics-adventure-fiction.html)
- Ur, P. (2012). A Course in Language Teaching. England, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Wolfson, N. Perspectives: Sociolinguistics & TESOLs. Newbury House Publishers, Harper & Row, NY: 1989.





[www.educacion.gob.ec](http://www.educacion.gob.ec)