

BOOK & ARTICLE REVIEWS

101 EFL Activities for Teaching University Students

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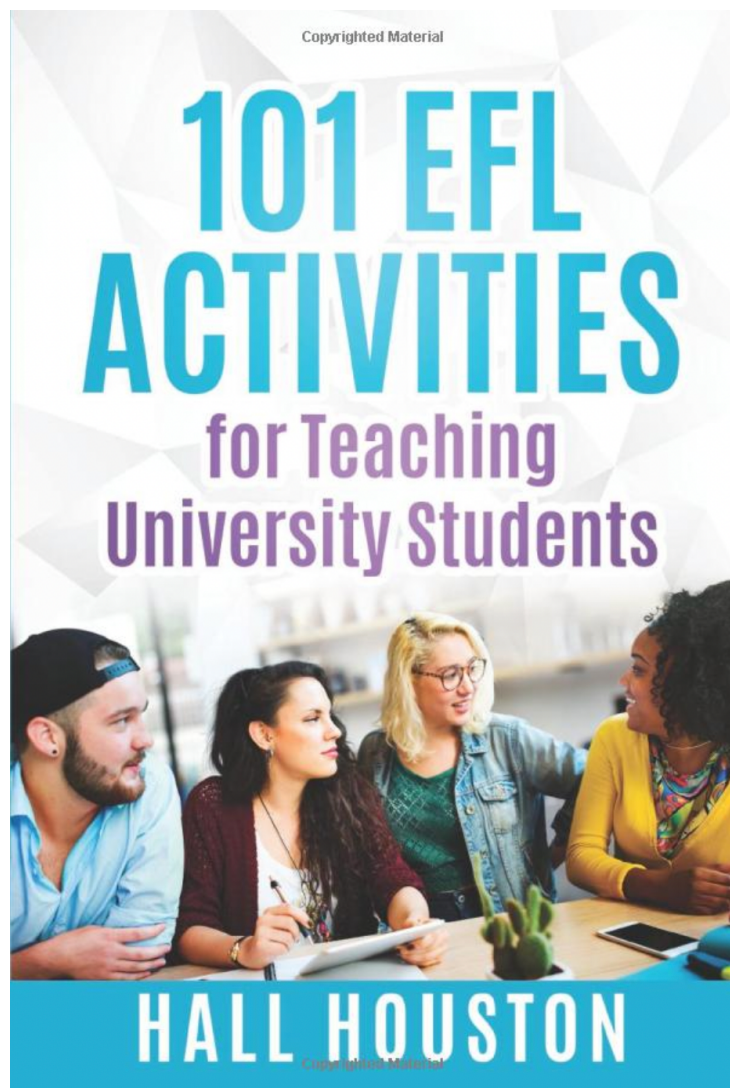
101 EFL Activities for Teaching University Students is an excellent fit for any novice university ELT teachers or indeed old hands who need to mix things up a bit. For anyone outside of that description, many of the activities are still useful for secondary school students or adult ESL learners.

This book is easy to just pick up and start using, but don't expect any detailed lesson plans, rather you'll find clearly written descriptions of activities. The upside to this is you can get just the right idea for a communicative activity to boost a listless post-lunch time pre-intermediate class without spending too long on preparation.

Now on to how the book is organized and the activities themselves. You choose from three sections, "Getting Off to a Good Start", "Maintaining Motivation and Interest" and "Ending the Semester Gracefully," all of which serve to guide you to the correct ballpark. At this point I could criticize the layout for being so broad-based, but actually once you choose which part of the course you're in, then you can use the next "level" of headings to refine your search, with headings like "Learn about the teacher" or "Listening and reading activities"; it's actually pretty user-friendly.

I can't say that the activities themselves are all highly original or ground-breaking, but you know what, they work and are easy to set up, which is exactly what I for one want from a book like this. Half the time I found myself reading the blurb that is found at the beginning of every activity, having a light bulb moment ("Oh yes, I remember that one"), and then I was off to the next. I could be churlish and say that some of the activities, such as the one that tells you how to do a jigsaw reading, are a bit basic, but I go back to my comment at the top of this review that this book is also useful for novice teachers, and because the activities come so thick and fast there's always something on the next page that is less "obvious."

To give a taste of what I mean, how about "Write a new song for....". In this activity students use a word cloud (or create their own, I guess) from a popular singer and then using those words write a new song in combination with vocabulary that they have been studying in class. This ticks all the boxes for me. It encourages co-construction



of meaning in groups, has students using their own linguistic resources, follows sound procedures for recycling lexis, and has a clear aim.

Other activities didn't work as well for me because of my own particular teaching context, but again I could see a place for them. One example of this is "New discoveries on campus," an activity that leverages the real world (in this case the university campus), and recreates something that new students do quite naturally: recommending parts of the campus to each other.

None of the activities are onerous or unnecessarily detailed, the materials are usually easily available (although I'd say some of the PowerPoints could be cut, but that's a personal preference) and most importantly, they feel road-tested. There's nothing worse than a 101 activities book in which half of the activities are like trying to figure out the rules for bridge (which of course I never did) and the other half have more moving parts than a Swiss watch. Happily, *101 EFL Activities* is easy to use, easy to adapt, and has sound underlying principles. I think I'll be picking this one up again in the near future.

Write a new song for...

Many song activities ask students to listen to a song and fill in the blanks on a worksheet. In this activity, students write a song for a well-known singer, using vocabulary from the coursebook, and words from the singer's most popular songs.

Time: 20–30 minutes

Skills: Reading, writing, vocabulary

Preparation: Choose a pop singer who sings songs in English and is currently very popular with students in the country where you teach. Find lyrics to three of the most popular songs by this singer and create a word cloud using all the lyrics (go to wordclouds.com). Save the word cloud to display in class, and find an image of the singer. Also, select 10 to 12 words and phrases that you want students to remember from previous lessons.

Procedure: Show the students a picture of the pop singer. Ask the students a few questions about the singer. Next, display the word cloud, and explain that the word cloud contains lyrics from three of the singer's biggest hits. The bigger the word is, the more often it appears in the singer's lyrics.

Work together with the class to produce a list of words and phrases from the last few weeks' lessons. Encourage students to raise their hands and contribute words. You can also write words and phrases from your list.

Students work in groups of four. They write lyrics for a new song, using vocabulary from the word cloud and the word list on the board. Explain that they do not need to write a melody. Give groups enough time to write a good chorus, some verses, and a bridge.

After that, groups hand you their lyrics, and you will redistribute them to the other groups, so that each group has another group's lyrics. Now, groups must come up with a melody that goes well with the lyrics. Give them several minutes to prepare. Finally, groups perform the new hit song for the class.



JONATHAN TURNER is an ELT professional with 26 years experience in a variety of roles. He has taught English in universities, industry, and language schools in Spain, Ecuador, the UK, Equatorial Guinea, and the UAE. He has worked in publishing and teacher training in South America, China, and currently in Switzerland. As well as a wide breadth of professional experience, Jonathan has an MSc in TESOL, an MA in Online and Distance Education and is a Cambridge tutor for the CELTA and Delta courses. You may contact him at jturner2000@icloud.com.

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