

American English LIVE!

Digital Literacies:
Practical Approaches for the ELT Classroom
September 4th @ 8 am or 1 pm EDT



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Digital Literacies: Practical Approaches for the ELT Classroom

This session aims to clarify the multi-skill “digital literacies” construct and explores how and why these skills can be integrated into English language instruction.

This presentation will:

- explore models for thinking about digital literacies
- examine benefits and challenges associated with systematically addressing a selection of digital literacies in ELT settings
- review adaptable activities designed to help ELLs develop the 21st-century skills that will serve them in the classroom and beyond



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE



Heather Benucci



Heather is an EFL teacher educator and materials development specialist who has led virtual professional development programs for teachers from over 100 countries. She has been a U.S. Department of State English Language Specialist for projects in Russia and Brazil, and she has also worked with teachers and students in South Korea, England, and the United States.

Heather holds master's degrees in TESOL and in International Relations with an emphasis on Intercultural Communication. She serves as Co-Chair Elect of TESOL International Association's Computer-Assisted Language Learning Interest Section (CALL-IS) and is a Contributing Editor for *English Teaching Forum*.



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Digital Literacies: Practical Approaches for the ELT Classroom



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Agree or disagree?



1. Being digitally literate is knowing how to operate a computer, tablet, smart phone, or internet-connected device.
2. My students know how to use digital tools better than me, so there isn't much for me to teach them.
3. My syllabus is full with language content. I don't have time to teach digital literacy skills, too.

Today's learning path

1. What are digital literacies?
2. Why include digital literacies in the EFL classroom?
3. How can we incorporate digital literacy skills in ELT?
4. What activities can support digital literacy skills development?



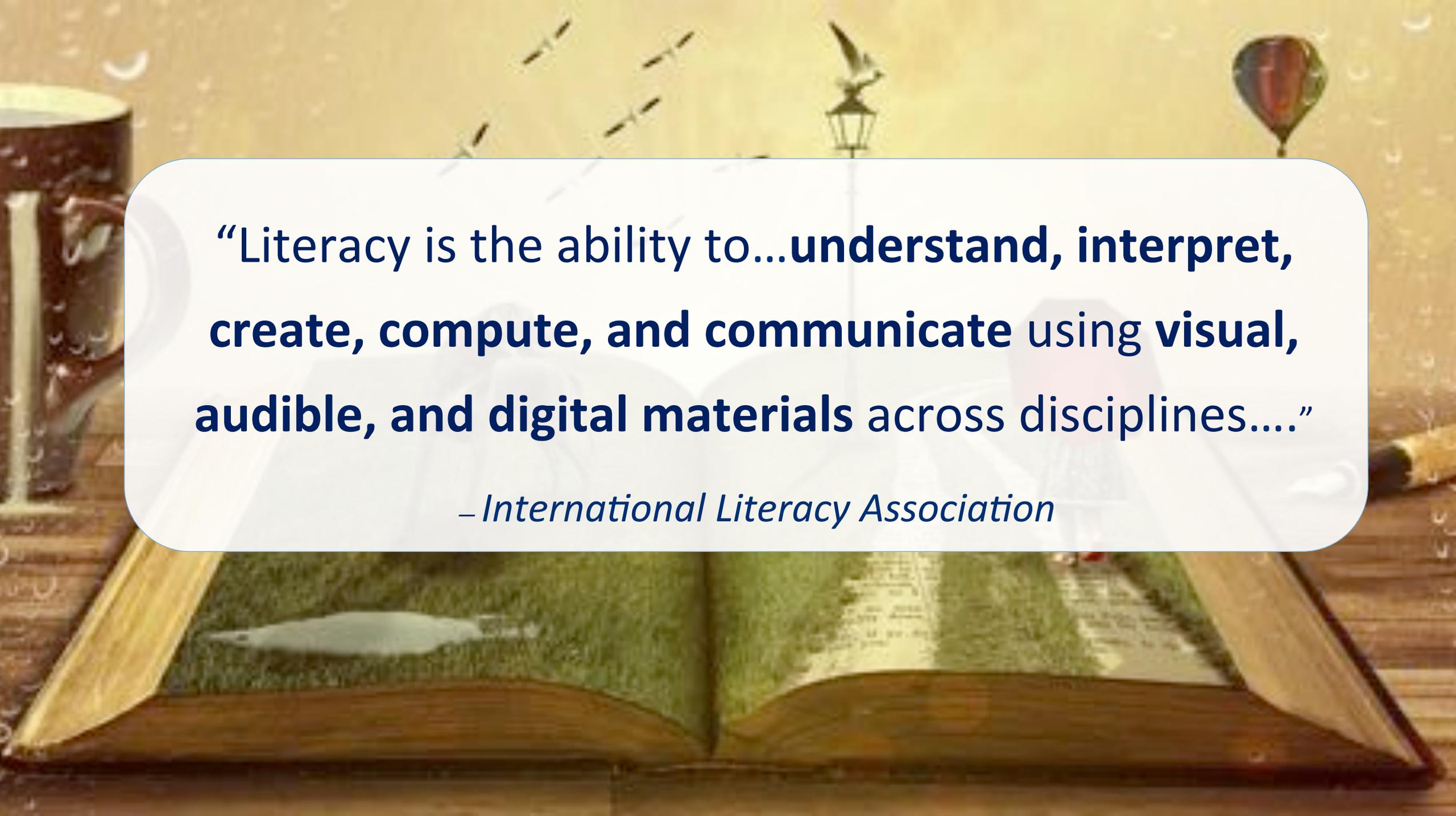
Before we begin...

1. Today's focus = general digital literacies concepts, not how to use tech tools
2. Tech access varies—don't let that stop you!
Think about how to adapt now or use in the future



What does it mean to be “literate”?



The background is a detailed illustration of a study desk. In the foreground, an open book with a green cover and yellow pages is visible. To the left, a wooden desk lamp with a white shade is partially shown. In the background, there are several flying birds, a street lamp with a bird perched on top, and a red balloon. The overall scene is set against a warm, yellowish-gold background with faint, repeating patterns of a globe and a pencil.

“Literacy is the ability to...understand, interpret, create, compute, and communicate using visual, audible, and digital materials across disciplines....”

– International Literacy Association



**What does it mean
to be “digitally literate”?**

What skills might be involved?



Learning how to

CULTURAL

... behave in different digital contexts

COGNITIVE

... think about digital spaces and patterns

CONSTRUCTIVE

... responsibly use and build upon the work of others

COMMUNICATIVE

... to communicate for a purpose

THE 8 ELEMENTS OF DIGITAL LITERACIES

CONFIDENT

... solve problems and manage learning

CREATIVE

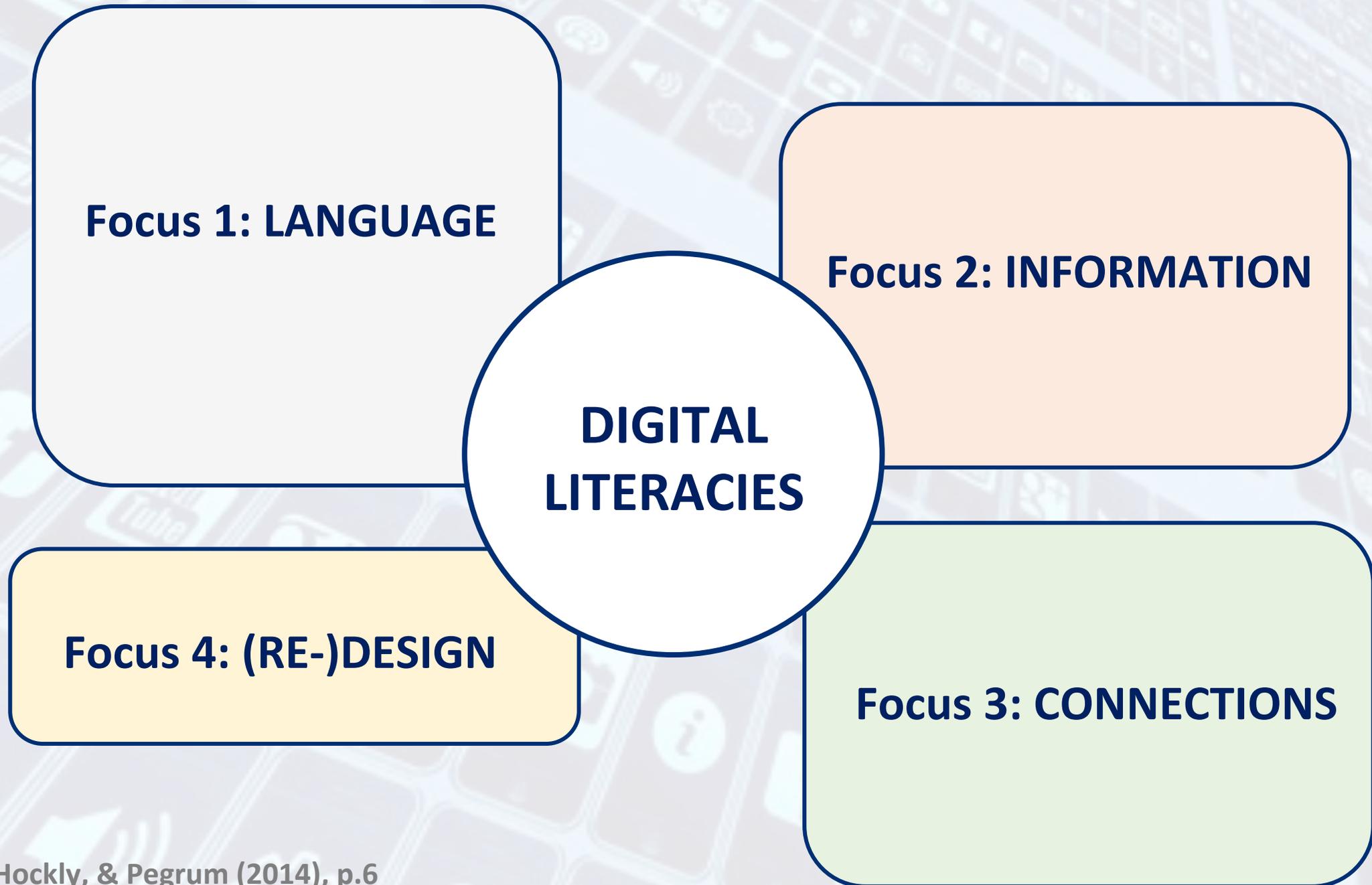
... make things and add value

CRITICAL

... evaluate and analyze

CIVIC

... participate, engage, and act



Focus 1: LANGUAGE

Focus 2: INFORMATION

**DIGITAL
LITERACIES**

Focus 4: (RE-)DESIGN

Focus 3: CONNECTIONS

Focus 1: LANGUAGE

Text Literacy

Hypertext Literacy

Multimedia Literacy

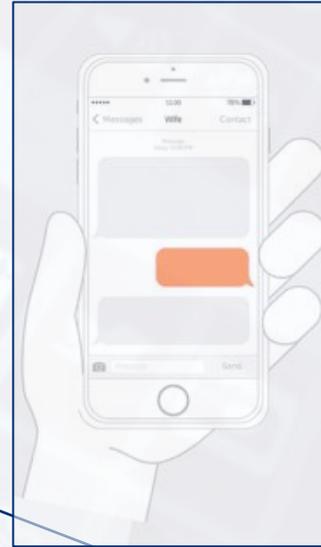


americanenglish.state.gov

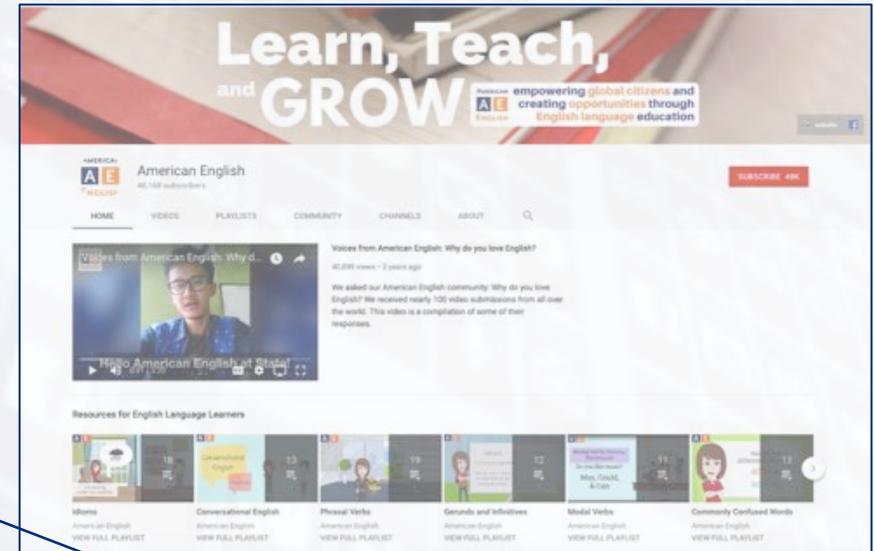
A screenshot of the American English YouTube channel page. The header features the text 'Learn, Teach, and GROW' and the American English logo with the tagline 'empowering global citizens and creating opportunities through English language education'. Below the header, the channel name 'American English' and subscriber count '40,168 subscribers' are displayed. A navigation menu includes 'HOME', 'VIDEOS', 'PLAYLISTS', 'COMMUNITY', 'CHANNELS', and 'ABOUT'. The main content area shows a video titled 'Voices from American English: Why do you love English?' with 40,899 views. Below this, there is a section titled 'Resources for English Language Learners' with a row of video thumbnails for 'Idioms', 'Conversational English', 'Phrasal Verbs', 'Gerunds and Infinitives', 'Modal Verbs', and 'Commonly Confused Words'. Each thumbnail includes a 'VIEW FULL PLAYLIST' link.

Focus 1: LANGUAGE

- Text Literacy
- Hypertext Literacy
- Multimedia Literacy
- Mobile Literacy
- Gaming Literacy
- Code Literacy



americanenglish.state.gov



Focus 2: INFORMATION

Tagging Literacy
Search Literacy
Filtering Literacy
Information Literacy



Search Resources Only

▼ **Resource Categories**

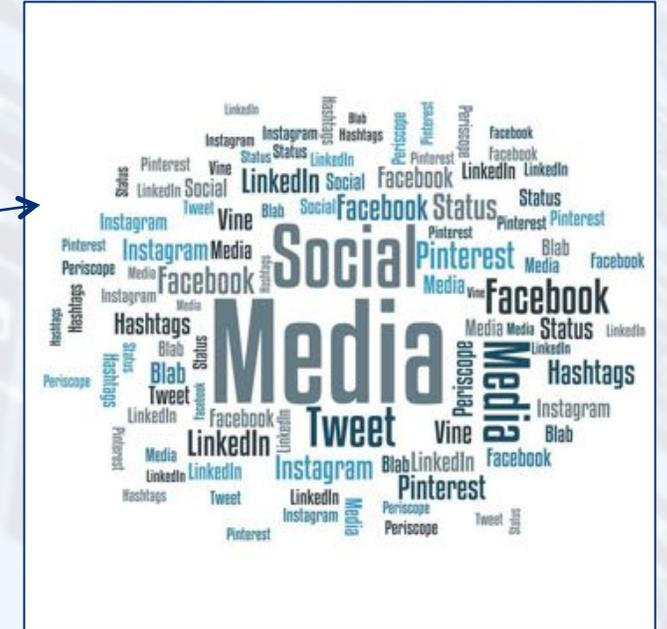
- American Culture
- Forum Journal
- Learn English
- Teach English

▼ **Audience**

- Adult Learners
- Advanced
- Beginner
- Intermediate
- Primary School
- Secondary School
- Teens
- University
- Young Learners

▼ **Skills**

- Critical Thinking
- Grammar
- Integrated Skills



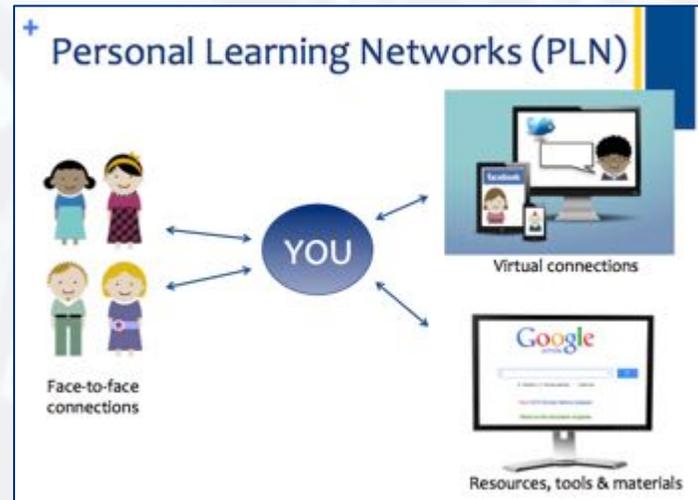
Focus 3: CONNECTIONS

Personal Literacy

Network Literacy

Participatory Literacy

Intercultural Literacy



NETIQUETTE



Focus 4: (RE-)DESIGN

Remix Literacy



Memes



Digital
Stories

Focus 1: LANGUAGE

Text Literacy
Hypertext Literacy
Multimedia Literacy
Mobile Literacy
Gaming Literacy
Code Literacy

Focus 2: INFORMATION

Tagging Literacy
Search Literacy
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DIGITAL LITERACIES

Focus 4: (RE-)DESIGN

Remix Literacy

Focus 3: CONNECTIONS

Personal Literacy
Network Literacy
Participatory Literacy
Intercultural Literacy

Digital literacies: summing up

- No simple definition; a collection of skills and mindsets

Technological + **Communicative** + **(Inter)cultural** + **Creative**

- Becoming digitally literate is a process, not an endpoint
 - Technologies change constantly
 - You can be a novice in one area and an expert in another
- Not just knowing how technology functions
 - Thinking about technology in our society
 - Using technology appropriately to achieve a goal

Today's learning path

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**Why incorporate
digital literacy skills
in the EFL classroom?**

What are the benefits?

Why incorporate digital literacy skills in the EFL classroom?

ELLs can....

- interact with English-language digital content
- express themselves for real audiences beyond teachers
- communicate digitally with all types of English users
- create a digital identity in English



Why incorporate digital literacy skills in the EFL classroom?

ELLs can....

- further develop and repurpose existing tech skills
- build 21st-century skills to support career and education goals
- experience increased motivation





**What are some challenges
to focusing on digital literacies
in the EFL classroom?**

Today's learning path

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Preparation

Things to learn at the start of a new class:

- Student interests and goals
- Tech access - in and out of class
- Digital literacies - students' and teacher's prior knowledge and skills

Digital literacies skills inventory

I can....

- write mobile phone text messages in my language(s) and in English
- recognize when it's appropriate to use mobile devices in class
- combine media (images, audio, and video) into a digital product

- find online images that I am free to use
- use a variety of online search engines for different types of searches
- filter online information to find what is useful to me

- deal with difficult people or situations online

- create a meme, mashup, or remix by combining or editing existing digital content

Planning

- Technology use needs context and purpose
- What do you want you and your students to gain from tech use?
 - Efficiency
 - Input
 - Communication
 - Problem-solving
 - Self-expression
 - Skills development

Planning

Add “digital literacies” sections to course outlines or lesson plans

- Identify places where you can adapt content to support digital literacies

Week	Topic	Language Focus	Vocabulary	Texts	Activities
3	Around my town	Simple present; descriptions <i>There is/there are...</i> <i>You can...</i> <i>Visitors can...</i>	Tourism words (<i>landmark, must-see, etc.</i>) Location names and adjectives <i>ancient monument</i>	Textbook reading: Visiting Washington, D.C. Textbook audio track: The Smithsonian Natural History Museum	Ss write a paragraph for tourists about visiting their city.

Planning

Add “digital literacies” sections to course outlines or lesson plans

- Identify places where you can adapt content to support digital literacies

Week	Topic	Language Focus	Vocabulary	Texts	Activities	Digital Literacies
3	Around my town	Simple present; descriptions <i>There is/there are...</i> <i>You can...</i> <i>Visitors can...</i>	Tourism words (<i>landmark, must-see, etc.</i>) Location names and adjectives <i>ancient monument</i>	A. <i>The Globetrotter</i> travel blog: “Washington, D.C.”	Hyperlink evaluation exercises	hypertext literacy multimedia literacy search, filtering, and information literacy
				B. Podcast: “Inside the Smithsonian” with Becky Dewitt	Ss write a travel blog article (with images & links) about a site in their city.	



**What are options for
overcoming limited access to
technology in class?**

Overcoming tech access challenges

- One networked computer + projector
 - Teacher demonstrates
 - Hardcopy student preparation
 - Connected computer = learning station
- No internet/computer access
 - Hardcopy examples
 - Discuss, draft, or plan in class
 - Practice/create out of class (if possible)
- Students BYOD; work in teams
- Technology as the content topic



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Classroom Activities

1. Mini-Debates

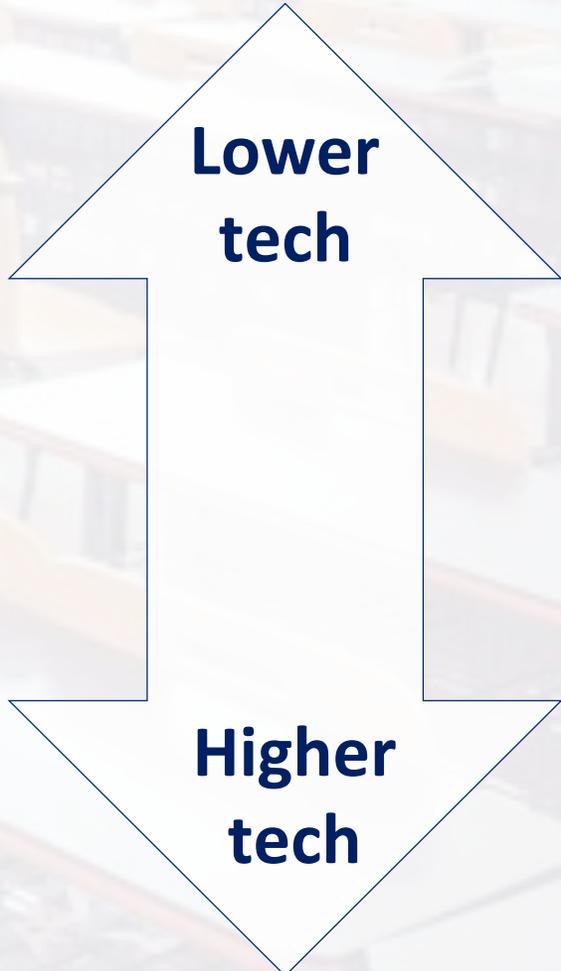
- Technology as the topic
- No online tech required

2. Advice Columns

- Technology as the topic
- Online creation with technology optional

3. About Me 2.0 Digital Posters

- Technology is the creative medium
- Considering technology use is part of the process
- Offline option available



**Lower
tech**

**Higher
tech**

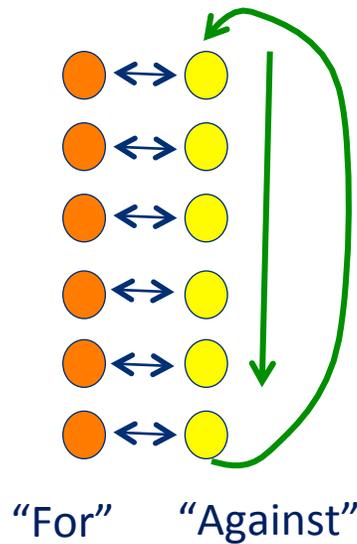
Mini debates

Sequence

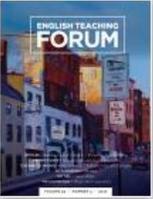
- Class selects two topics from a set
- Group debate preparation
- Debate lines
- Panel debates (optional)

Materials

- Writing tools + paper
- Board + pens/chalk
- Timer



(Benucci, 2017)



The Great Mini-Debate

LEVEL: Upper Intermediate or Advanced

TIME REQUIRED: 50 minutes

GOALS: To present an oral argument using evidence; to use functional language related to agreeing, disagreeing, and showing contrasting opinions

MATERIALS: Blackboard and chalk, or whiteboard and markers; paper and pencils or pens; a timing device

PREPARATION:

Choose a debate theme and create a set of debate topics related to the theme. Select topics that people are likely to have strong but differing opinions about. Each topic set should contain three to five related topics. A topic set for the theme of mobile technology is shown here:

Debate Theme: Mobile Technology
<p>Topic Set</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• It should not be illegal to talk on a handheld mobile device while driving motor vehicles.• Students should be able to use their mobile devices during English class.• It is better to read books, news, and magazines on mobile devices than on paper.• Constantly using mobile devices keeps people from interacting with people around them and experiencing day-to-day life.• Today it is essential that all teens have a mobile communications device.

Additional topic sets are provided at the end of this activity. Use one of these topic sets or develop a set related to your curriculum or to your students' interests.

PROCEDURE:

1. Ask students if they have ever participated in a debate or if they have seen a debate in person or on television. Ask volunteers to share their opinions about what makes someone a good debater. (Answers may include "uses examples/evidence/facts to support an argument"; "is polite to debate opponents"; "listens to opponents and makes counterarguments"; "stays calm"; etc.) Write students' contributions on the board and elicit or suggest other qualities to include in the list.
2. Tell students that a debate participant's goal is to make a convincing yet respectful argument. Explain that debaters must be skillful at agreeing, disagreeing, and contrasting opinions. Draw a chart on the board and elicit examples of the language used in each of the three categories; the Functional Language Chart is an example of what a completed chart might look like.
3. Tell students they are going to complete an exercise to prepare for two debates and that everyone will participate in the debates. Divide the class in half to make Group 1 and Group 2. (If you have a class with more than 50 students, consider creating four groups instead of two, and then adapt the procedure accordingly.) Select a student—or ask for a volunteer—in each group to serve as the group leader.



Technology as the topic: mini-debates

- **Language skills:** speaking, listening, vocabulary, grammar
- **Language focus:** agreeing/disagreeing; using evidence to support opinions

Functional Language Chart

Agreeing	Disagreeing	Contrasting opinions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I (absolutely) agree.• I agree completely.• On the whole, I agree.• I see your point.• You have a point there.• I couldn't agree more.• I see what you mean.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I'm sorry, but I can't agree with that.• I'm afraid I disagree.• That's not how I see it (the situation).• I don't entirely agree.• The facts don't support that position.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Yes, but on the other hand ...• That may be; however ...• I see your point, but ...• You raise an interesting point; however, ...• I agree to an extent, but ...• Perhaps, but don't you think ... ?

Technology as the topic: mini-debates



Debate Theme: Digital Communication and Social Media

Topic Set

- Social media platforms are mostly used for trivial (unimportant) purposes.
- Texting is better than email or handwritten letters.
- The benefit of easily sharing information via social media outweighs the potential damage to personal privacy.
- Social media should be used in educational settings and can contribute to learning.
- Our reliance on texting has damaged our ability to have important face-to-face conversations (e.g., making apologies, congratulating someone, saying thank you).

- ❑ Would students find these topics relevant?
- ❑ Would they generate meaningful debate?
- ❑ Would they be developing digital literacy skills?

Debate Theme: Video Games

Topic Set

- People learn to solve real-world problems by playing video games.
- Playing video games makes young people more likely to commit violent acts.
- Playing video games causes people to be "loners" who don't interact well with others.
- Video games are a waste of time with no social or educational value.
- Playing video games can help students learn English.



Which digital literacies can this activity address?

Focus 1: LANGUAGE

Text Literacy
Hypertext Literacy
Multimedia Literacy

Mobile Literacy

Gaming Literacy
Code Literacy

Focus 2: INFORMATION

Tagging Literacy
Search Literacy
Information Literacy

Filtering Literacy

DIGITAL LITERACIES

Focus 4: (RE-)DESIGN

Remix Literacy

Focus 3: CONNECTIONS

Personal Literacy
Network Literacy
Participatory Literacy
Intercultural Literacy

Advice columns

- **Activity:** Groups respond to problems
- **Language skills:** reading and writing, grammar, vocabulary [listening + speaking]
- **Language focus:** giving advice with imperatives, modals, or conditionals
 - *Don't... Ask her...*
 - *You could... You shouldn't...*
 - *If I were you, I wouldn't....*



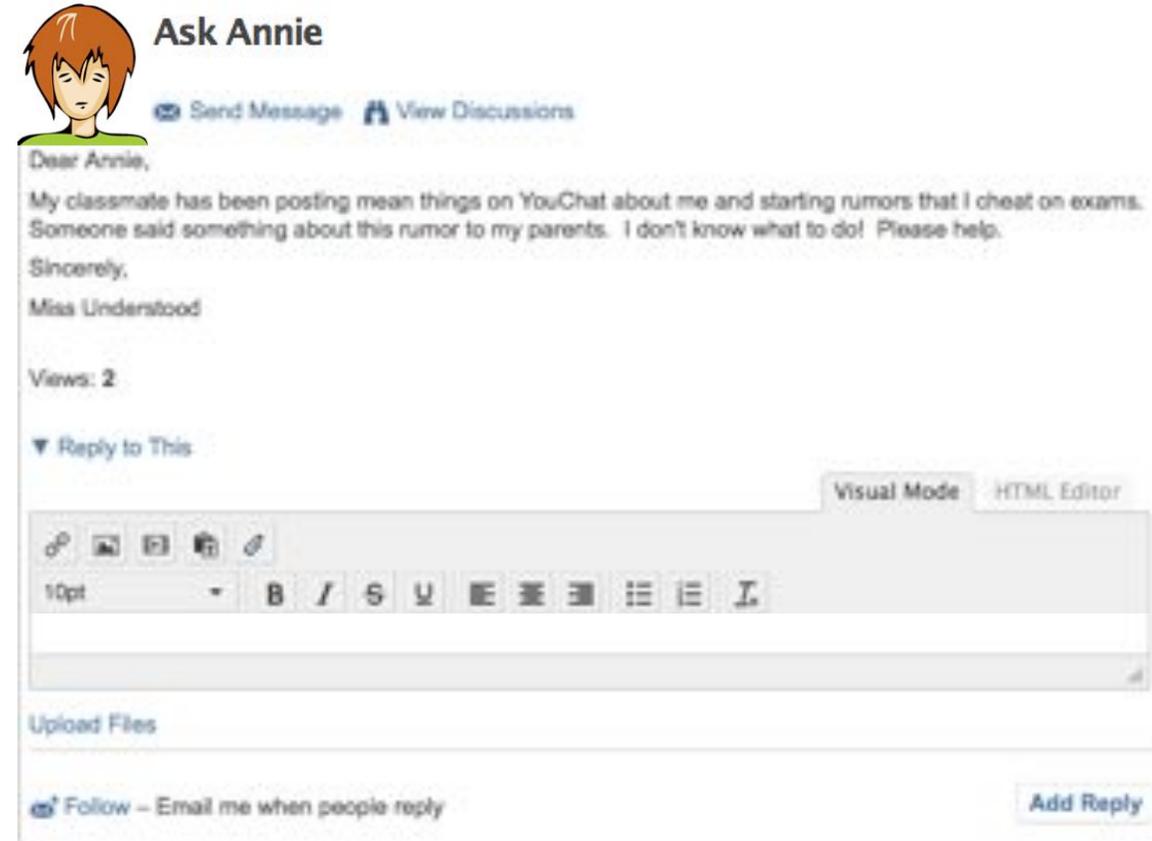
Technology as the topic: advice columns

- **Tech topics:** create problem prompts
 - Cyber bullying
 - Technology use + effects on relationships
 - Information overload
 - ... other ideas?

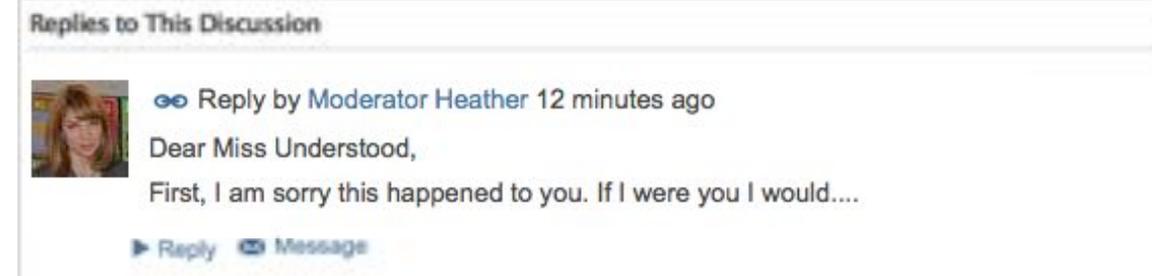


Technology as the topic: advice columns

- Technology-based variations
 - Digital discussion board
 - Blog + comments
 - Digital voice questions + voice or video responses
- Groups can comment on others' advice



The screenshot shows a web page for an advice column titled "Ask Annie". At the top left is a cartoon avatar of a girl with orange hair. To the right of the avatar is the text "Ask Annie" and two links: "Send Message" and "View Discussions". Below this is the text of a question: "Dear Annie, My classmate has been posting mean things on YouChat about me and starting rumors that I cheat on exams. Someone said something about this rumor to my parents. I don't know what to do! Please help. Sincerely, Miss Understood". Below the question, it says "Views: 2" and "Reply to This". There is a rich text editor with a toolbar containing icons for link, image, text color, background color, bold, italic, strikethrough, underline, bulleted list, numbered list, and link. Below the editor is an "Upload Files" section. At the bottom of the post area, there is a "Follow" button with the text "Email me when people reply" and an "Add Reply" button.



The screenshot shows a section titled "Replies to This Discussion". It features a profile picture of a woman with blonde hair. To the right of the profile picture is the text "Reply by Moderator Heather 12 minutes ago". Below this is the text of the reply: "Dear Miss Understood, First, I am sorry this happened to you. If I were you I would....". At the bottom of the reply, there are two buttons: "Reply" and "Message".

About me: 2.0

1. Share an example About Me e-poster.
2. Ask students to consider what they would include in their digital posters.
3. Discuss online audiences.
 - Ask students to identify different groups that might see their digital poster if it were online.
 - Would their content change depending on the audience?



The e-poster features a circular profile picture of Heather Benucci in front of a bookshelf. Below the photo, her name and title are listed. The bio is organized into four quadrants with icons: a location pin for where she lives, a star for her grammar interests, a book for her writing, and a speech bubble for her beliefs on tech use. A 'FUN FACTS' section follows, with circular icons and dates for each event: 2012 (American English logo), 2014 (Russia photo), and 2017 (TESOL logo). At the bottom, there are social media icons and a 'Follow her day to day at' prompt.

HEATHER BENUCCI
ED TECH ENTHUSIAST, TEACHER EDUCATOR

 Lives in Alaska with her family and geriatric cat

 Is a proud grammar nerd and Oxford comma fan

 Writes and edits for English Teaching Forum, a journal for and by teachers

 Believes that tech-use in class should be driven by objectives and context

FUN FACTS

2012  Began hosting and producing ELT webinars for the U.S. Department of State...a journey that has lasted for over 160 broadcasts!

Spent a month in Russia working with teachers on developing academic writing and research skills...fell in love with synniki!  **2014**

2017  Webcast her first live CALL-IS session from the TESOL Convention in Seattle; now supports livestreaming over 14 academic sessions free to the public each year!

Follow her day to day at 

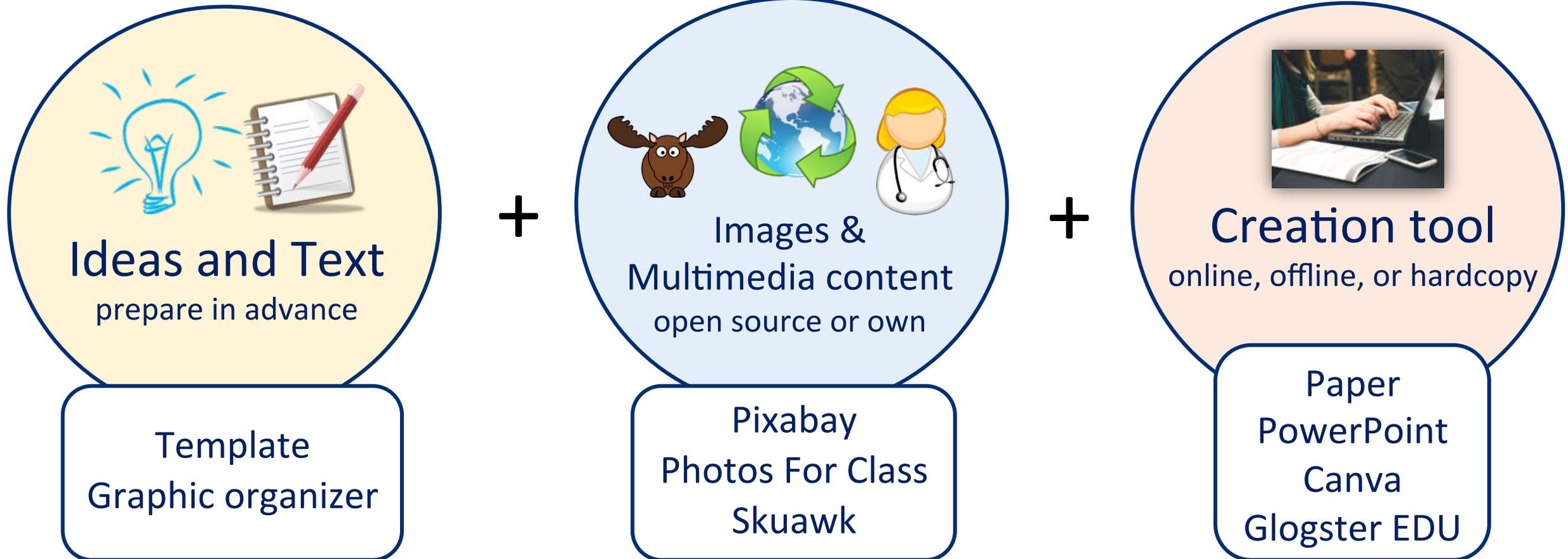
About me: 2.0

4. Complete audience grid; discuss with partner.

Audience	Personal Information	Photos	Links/Audio/Video (optional)
Family			
Friends			
English classmates + teacher			
School admissions officer			
Boss or future boss			
Whole world			

About me: 2.0

4. Students identify an audience and build posters using desired tools.



About me: 2.0

5. Display or digitally share posters.
6. Students give each other feedback about appropriateness of content included for the specified audience.

Extension: Discuss how this project relates to

- creating online profiles
- sharing content online
- managing privacy settings





Which digital literacies can this activity address?

Focus 1: LANGUAGE
Text Literacy
Hypertext Literacy
Multimedia Literacy
Mobile Literacy
Gaming Literacy
Code Literacy

Focus 2: INFORMATION
Tagging Literacy
Search Literacy
Information Literacy
Filtering Literacy

DIGITAL LITERACIES

Focus 4: (RE-)DESIGN
Remix Literacy (?)

Focus 3: CONNECTIONS
Personal Literacy
Network Literacy
Participatory Literacy
Intercultural Literacy

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References

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Reflection and Discussion Questions

1. Becoming digitally literate is a process. What are your digital literacy goals? What actions might you take to build your own digital literacy skills?
2. What are the benefits of incorporating digital literacies in your classroom?
3. What are potential challenges that you and your students might experience when incorporating digital literacies into instruction?
4. How might you adapt your lessons to incorporate elements of digital literacies into instruction?



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Thank you!

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