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Using Google Workspace Apps in the Language Classroom

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As technology continues to transform education, particularly in language teaching, educators face the challenge of balancing innovative tools with traditional learning outcomes. Over the past three years, the authors have been part of an ongoing conversation about enhancing our English for communication curriculum through *The English Gym* textbook at Nagoya University of Arts (NUA). In our first article, we focused on developing a comprehensive curriculum (McGuire et al., 2022), and in our second article, we explored creating supplemental activities using AI tools like ChatGPT (McGuire et al., 2023). This year, given that Google Workspace apps are readily and freely accessible by teachers and students at NUA, we decided to focus on the degree to which we could incorporate Google Classroom, Docs, Sheets, Slides, and other applications into our classrooms and into our teaching.

The activities discussed in this article primarily supplement *The English Gym* textbook, which comprises 20 units with themes that resonate with Japanese college students. Each unit begins with a listening CLOZE task based on 10 questions asked in each unit in a recorded interview between a native and nonnative speaker, with the 10 missing words from these questions shown at the top of the section. The second page provides vocabulary in English with Japanese translations to aid comprehension and support students as they formulate their own answers to the 10 questions. This page also includes 10 sample answers with a word completion task (e.g., *I live in a small t*). The third page features a transcript with bilingual language support, and the fourth page includes expansion activities, such as a “find the error” task that addresses common

language mistakes, a discussion practice activity, a language-based game, or a link to crossword puzzles at the back of the book for pair work.

The contributors to this article bring a range of expertise and experience with Google Workspace and educational technology. There is some overlap since we are using the same apps—Google Classroom, Forms, Sheets, Slides, and other apps—for a collaborative curriculum. We hope this variety may reflect a similar range of experience with technology among the readers. These perspectives on everything from ways to make teacher tasks more efficient to ways to encourage student interaction and engagement should provide the reader with ways to approach teaching using these apps in their own classrooms.

Emanuele Itoh shares his path as a new user of technology in his classroom and finds that sometimes sticking with paper-based versions is a better use of a teacher's time, but he finds that technology can often be useful on the teacher side, such as through using *Google Forms* to create quizzes.

This is my first year teaching at this university, for which I am teaching four Communication English classes. My previous teaching context had a strong focus on communication and no access to technology, so the Google Workspace apps are new to me. *The English Gym* textbook matches my previous experience in its focus on getting students to communicate in English about interesting topics, and I want to approach the use of technology wisely, focusing on where it benefits rather than gets in the way. As stated in our introduction, technology should add and not detract from our focus on communication.

In my part. I will share my thoughts as I explore the benefits and disadvantages of adapting two paper-based activities to Google apps and also to adapting two teacher-based tasks: a) checking and registering student attendance, and b) testing and evaluation. My two criteria in evaluating this will be in which version do students have more practice time and more human interaction? For the teacher-related tasks I will examine whether using Google apps will make my work more efficient and time-saving than carrying out the tasks on paper. As with any new approach, there is a bit of a learning curve, and contributions in other parts of this article reflect this. Ultimately I decided to continue using my paper-based lesson while moving toward digital solutions for the administrative tasks.

My Classroom Examples: Considering Digitizing Paper-based Tasks

The two lessons I decided to focus on for digitization were a 10-questions activity based on the questions in each unit and practice using new vocabulary on the second page of each unit. I usually start my lessons with a practical oral review of the previous lesson using the 10 questions from the current unit. For this I originally made a worksheet with the 10 questions and a table for the answers similar to Chris Huang's Classmate Interview (see McGuire, et al., 2022). Students were asked to choose three classmates to interview and take notes of the answers. I encouraged them not to give answers that were too short (e.g., *Yes, I do.* or *No, I can't.*) and to ask follow-up questions. As it turned out, asking 10 questions takes a large part of class time, and students carried out the task at widely different rates. Some students simply rushed through in order to finish as quickly as possible without follow-up questions and often with short answers, while others carried out the task more carefully and much more thoroughly. This meant that there were some students who were still looking for a second interview partner while other students had mostly finished.

With this in mind, I changed my approach. I made question cards using the 10 questions from each unit with one question on each card. In order to have enough question cards for classes averaging 30 students, I made four sets. In class I gave each student one card. The students could freely choose a partner, ask each other their question, expand on their answers and ask follow-up questions, and then switch their cards, get a new partner to ask their next question, and so on. This had the benefit that the students were not working with the same partner for too long. There was also more diversity in interaction, and an element of surprise, since it was not clear beforehand which question they would be asked. Later on I also added some questions from previous units into the set of cards, not only the current unit. Using the physical cards offered a very easy way to revisit previous questions.

Using the question cards offers the benefit that the level of interaction for both the more and less-fluent students is not so widely different. Also, the students have to change partners many times, which is fun for some, and although some students originally found it more difficult to initiate conversations so many times with "strangers," they quickly got used to the interactions with experience and practice.

I considered many ways to duplicate this activity using a digital app. Although I could create sets of questions in different Google Docs and using Google Classroom I could share different documents with different variations with different subsets of students, the low tech option still seems easier to adapt, including reusing cards from previous lessons,

and having one card at a time focuses students' attention on the question on the current card. Also, if I chose to try the digital versions of the Classmate Interview (for example), that would necessitate that students initially download the software, which is always a challenge given students are using a variety of their own devices. Finally, while these skills might be of use to them later, it adds a level of complexity to what is still a simple and effective activity, and again, learning about the technology is not the focus of the course.

To help students learn the supplemental vocabulary on the second page of each unit, I practice the vocabulary with the whole class in a "repeat after me" format, and if necessary I add some explanations about the vocabulary. Next, I let the students study the vocabulary individually by themselves for a few minutes. Finally, I put them into pairs or groups of four to let them practice the Japanese-to-English and English-to-Japanese translation. Having them quiz their partners in pairs also helps them review the vocabulary themselves.

As with the question-practice activity, I could not see an easy way to use a Google app that would let the students practice asking and answering questions with lots of visual and aural feedback, nor to drill vocabulary in a more efficient way. A Google Sheet with a list of the vocabulary might work, but in this case the students all have the textbook and this activity does not require any additional prep on my part (although I grant that once created digitally, lessons are easy to reuse). It may also be that Gemini (see Steve's part below) might offer a useful way to practice. There are of course options outside of Google, such as Quizlet, but again, while those can be useful to help students practice and for teachers to get feedback on progress, the question of the ratio of teacher effort to student gains still applies.

Teacher-Related Examples: Digitizing Attendance and Seating Order

I did find that I had more success in terms of technolgy helping my work as a teacher. In the first semester I used paper-based methods to track student attendance and assign random seating. In order to check and register the students' attendance as this university requires, I use two tools. First, the students create a name card with their name and student number. This also provides me with the alphabetic version of their name. I keep these name cards for distribution later in this sequence. Second, I put them into groups of four or five students. At the beginning of each lesson I show them the sheet with their groups and where they should sit by showing the weekly attendance on the overhead. Once students have taken their seats I can easily see where someone is missing. Next, I

give them their name card. If the leftover name cards match the missing students of the seating plan, I register them as absent. I keep a record for myself on paper and after the lesson, I insert the data into UNIPA, the attendance system used at NUA.

I set up a Google Classroom for each class and register all the students. Then I add a Google Doc with the seating order, so the students can check in which group they are find and their seat by themselves. This may make checking their attendance a little bit smoother. There would also be the option to use Google Sheets for the attendance registration, but this seems to make the process rather more complicated, since in the end the data will have to be transferred into UNIPA, any way.

Test Generation and Evaluation using Google Forms

Google apps, specifically Google Forms seems to be the most useful for me as a teacher. In the first semester I used paper tests for four units of *The English Gym* textbook. Most questions were multiple choice; question-answer-matching from *The English Gym* dialogues; vocabulary-matching Japanese / English or matching a definition. The only questions that were not multiple choice were those based on the *What's wrong?* activity on page 4 of the textbook. Making and grading the tests took quite a lot of time.

In reading previous articles and in discussing our article this year, I chose to invest the time to learn more about using Google Forms to create tests. This may not be new to many, but it was something I now found useful to learn about now that the students and I have access to Google Forms. It can be used for both multiple choice questions and questions where students have to input specific answers. The question order as well as the order of the answers can be set to appear randomly. Different versions of the same test can be shared randomly with different students but still graded automatically using Google Classroom. This makes cheating more challenging. Furthermore, if the test is done online, Google Forms also evaluates and scores the test and provides a table with the results that can be used to help analyze students' performance. Moreover, the results can be easily shared with the students. There is also the option to let Google Forms add feedback to each question. Of course the teacher can choose to create the tests using Google Forms and then print the test sheets and use them for a paper-based test. Although the evaluation would then have to be done by the teacher, creating the tests using Forms might save some teacher time.

I was fortunate in that I was able to learn from my coteachers, and after a couple of study sessions with the other authors who helped walk me through my many questions I found I was able to use most of the basic features. There is also help online at

support.google.com which offers a searchable help database and offers training on all of the Google apps. In this case I felt that the benefit definitely merited the time invested.

Conclusion

The question teachers should ask ourselves is when it is worth the time it takes to teach students to carry out these tasks digitally. Even if the skills they learn are useful and applicable in other classes, is it a good use of *our* limited class time? Technology is useful, but it should facilitate and not impede interaction and communication among students as they imitate what they will experience in real life, something still not fully available using AI. Even now many English classes still seem to be based on the idea of memorizing as much information as possible and then reproducing it by answering out-of-context exam questions. I believe we need to be aware of the danger that technology in the classroom might be used in the same way, and that the time spent teaching technology skills may take time away from students acquiring the actual subject skills.

The examples I shared in this paper suggest that technology may be more useful for teachers to plan their lessons, curriculum, and for making administrative work more efficient, rather than to be used by students in the classroom for improving their practical English oral conversation skills. However, given the high pace of development in IT, it is just a question of time till more useful apps will be available.

Julian Honeycutt adds to Emanuele Itoh's use of Google Forms. Using Google Forms students upload a picture of their work in the textbook or with results from an online web activity, not just as an assignment mentioned by Jonathon Pollack below, but to a Google Form along with their name and ID. Results from a Google Form can be easily outputted to a Google Sheet to check attendance.

Google Forms: A Versatile Tool

Google Forms is a versatile app that integrates easily into the classroom as a powerful resource in the educational toolkit. Of all of Google's range of applications available, it is Google Forms that I use the most. While Google Forms is an excellent tool for creating and evaluating student quizzes and tests, as highlighted by my colleague Emanuele Itoh, it is also an extraordinarily useful tool for attendance tracking, collecting digital submissions, and verifying student participation in class. In this section, I will highlight Google Form's versatility and ease of use. I will detail how I utilize the app to track attendance and engagement and demonstrate why it has become my preferred app and an invaluable

resource in the classroom.

Attendance Using Google Forms

Taking attendance at the start of class can be a time-consuming and sometimes challenging task that delays the beginning of lessons, particularly in larger classes. This is where using Google Forms with a simple QR code streamlines the process, making it easy for students to sign in and easy for teachers to verify their attendance. Before the class starts, I create a Google Form along with a QR code for students to sign into for attendance. In the form, I include two required prompts for students to enter their names and also student ID numbers for easier identification. Additionally, I add an optional prompt labeled *"Message to the Teacher."* This nonrequired prompt is used by many students who want to ask a question, convey information, or just simply say hello.

I use Google Forms alongside a randomized seating chart based on playing cards handed out to students. Before distributing the cards I first count the number of students in class. Because Google Forms provides real-time data on the number of respondents, it's easy to verify if the number of students matches the number of responses in the form. When not enough students have signed in, I announce to the class that a student has forgotten to sign in and urge that person to please sign in. Conversely, while it is rare, if *more* students are signed in than are present, I know that a student has signed in for a friend. While this situation is uncommon, it does happen, and in those cases, I take attendance manually by calling out names from the Google Form until we identify the signed-in but *absent* student. Once all students have been accounted for, I close the form. This close feature in Google Forms is particularly useful, as it prevents any further sign-ins and ensures that students cannot sign in at a later time.

Another benefit of using Google Forms for attendance is the ability to link the form to a Google Sheet. This allows me to input information about a student at any time during class, which I find particularly useful for making notes about engagement and progress. I use color coding to indicate when a student forgets their textbook, chooses not to participate, or demonstrates strong engagement in class. Additionally, linking the form to a Google Sheet consolidates all attendance and performance data into a single spreadsheet. This organization helps me track students and identify patterns, which helps determine final assessments and grades at the end of the term.

Google Forms to Track Student Engagement

Another use of Google Forms is tracking student participation in various assignments throughout the class. For many classes, it can be logistically challenging for teachers to verify the quality of paper-based student work, especially when assignments are completed in textbooks. A solution I've found is the *File Upload* prompt in Google Forms. When students complete a paper-based activity, such as the *Communication Crossword* in the *TEG* textbook, they simply write their name on their work, take a photo of it, and upload it via a QR code linked to the Google Form. This automatically organizes all submissions into a designated folder for the teacher. I can then easily evaluate the quality of the work and assign grades accordingly. Additionally, by using the Google Sheet linked to the Form, I can sort submissions by student ID number, quickly compare them with the attendance list, and identify any student who did not turn in the assignment.

In addition to being useful for uploading photographs, Google Forms is also an effective verification tool when using outside applications like those from the educational website *Flippity*. Many of the games on *Flippity*'s app display a completion message once a task is finished. These completion messages can be customized and edited by the teacher. A method I have found useful is to use a Google Form link as the completion message. Once a student has completed the task the Google Form link is displayed. Students can then simply copy and paste the link into a new browser window, and open the Google Form. Since Google Forms records the exact submission time, I can easily track when a student finishes down to the second.

Conclusion

Google Forms has proven to be an invaluable resource in my classroom toolkit. As emphasized by Emanuele, it is a valuable tool that alleviates much of the burden of paper-based student assessments. Providing immediate feedback, along with automating and organizing grading, is a win for both student and teacher. However, the versatility of Google Forms extends beyond its function as a test-taking platform. From tracking attendance to assessing daily engagement, Google Forms offers me more effective options and sharper tools for classroom management. As I continue to use and explore the features of Google Forms, I'm confident that I'll discover additional applications and uses and I encourage other teachers to use and explore this versatile app and discover their own uses for this valuable and flexible tool.

Chris Huang shares ways to use Google Classroom for grading by teaching us how to use weighted categories to automatically generate a final grade, including for the digital workbook accompanying *The English Gym*. Finally, he reminds us that similar to the digital workbook, other sites also allow integration with Google Classroom and share how he uses Live Worksheets shared to Google Classroom to support interactive vocabulary practice, reduce paperwork, and enhance student engagement.

Optimizing Grading Efficiency with Google Classroom's Weighted Categories

It is no surprise that several of the contributors to this article have discussed grading, including with Google Classroom, but I would like to add about a capability that has recently been added, the ability for teachers to assign assignments, quizzes, and tests to weighted categories, enhancing grading efficiency and customization without the need for manual spreadsheets.

For instance, when assigning quizzes and the final exam, the teacher can assign these to a weighted category which might collectively account for 30% of the final grade, and whenever homework is assigned using Google Classroom, each assignment can be marked in a homework category that may contribute 25% as shown in Huang Figure 1 below. The platform automatically calculates the overall grade based on these weightings, streamlining the grading process and ensuring accurate final grade submissions. In this discussion, I plan to explore the weighted categories feature in Google Classroom. Additionally I will highlight how the online digital workbook assignments offered by *The English Gym* can be integrated with GC and can be set to one of the weighted categories. Therefore, when I assign *The English Gym* digital workbook assignments through Google Classroom, they are automatically graded, allowing google classroom to calculate these grades into the overall grade seamlessly. This integration not only saves time but also enhances grading accuracy, enabling me to focus more on teaching and less on administrative tasks.

Streamlining Grading with The English Gym Digital Workbook Integration in Google Classroom

As the reader might be aware, *The English Gym Digital Workbook* (TEG DW) can now be fully integrated with Google Classroom, thus requiring students to log onto a separate system to carry out the tasks and the teacher having to log on to export the grades and incorporate them with Google Classroom . The tasks are now visible within Google Classroom and grades can be automatically assigned to the desired weighted

category. This integration has transformed the grading process, especially for homework and quizzes, by automating much of the work. Now, assignments and quizzes are automatically graded, scores are calculated, and feedback is provided to students in real time based on the preset weightings.

How to Share TEG DW Assignments From Zengengo on Google Classroom

After importing the TEG DW course into their Zengeno account, teachers should create and sync a new folder with their class on Google Classroom. Naming the folders after each class is a helpful way to stay organized.

To move assignments from the TEG DW course to the class folder, simply select the assignments and click the duplicate icon above the assignment list. It's often best to transfer all the assignments at the start of the semester, so everything is ready in the class folder for easy access.

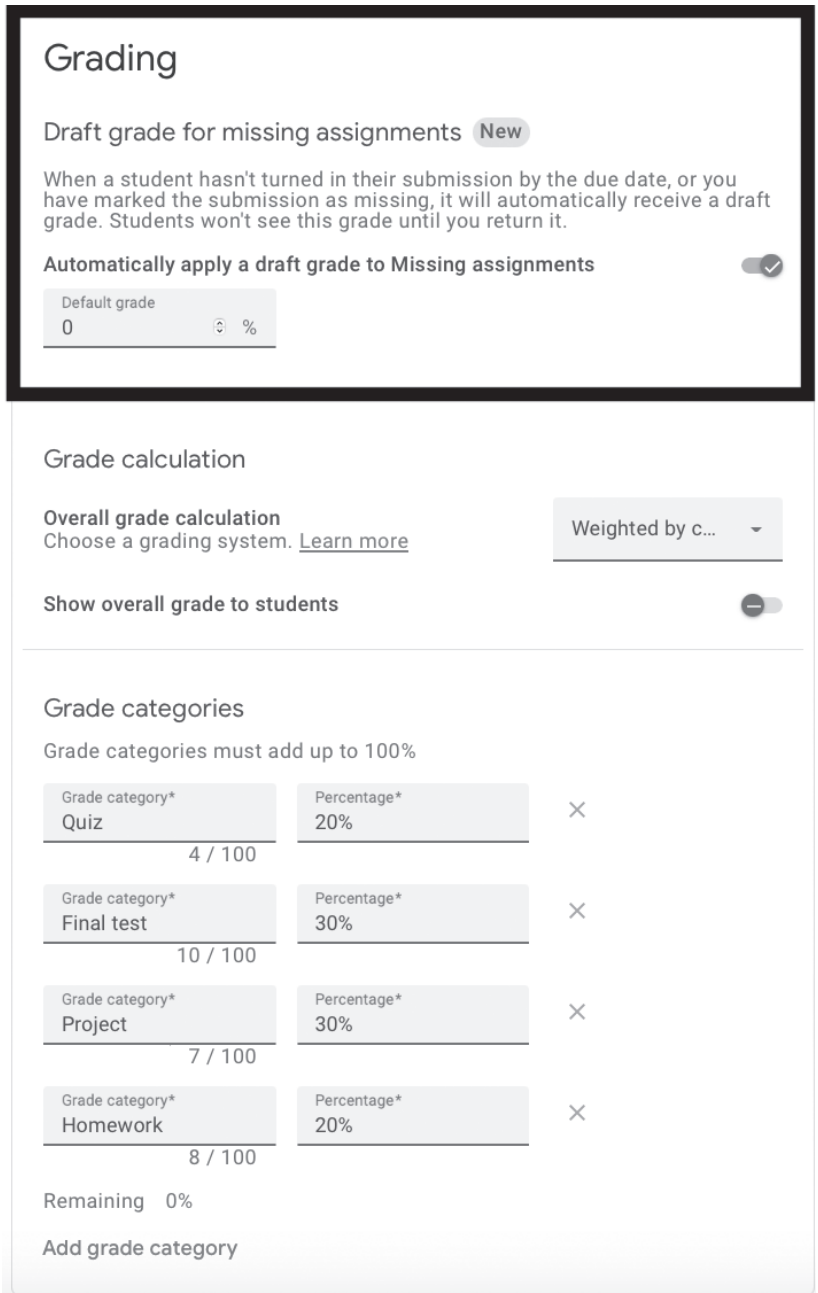
Once the assignments are in the class folder, teachers can share them to Google Classroom by selecting an assignment and clicking the Google Classroom icon. This will automatically post the assignment to the synced class.

Google Classroom's New Feature: Draft Grading for Missing Assignments

Another new feature offered in GC is the ability to set missing grades to zero rather than having to change them manually. Previously, a major challenge was GC did not calculate missing grades into the total, instead an average was just calculated for submitted assignments. This meant that a student who submitted 5 assignments for a score of 5 each would get the same score as a student who submitted one assignment for a score of 5. To avoid this the teacher had to go in and manually assign the 0 grades, or output to a spreadsheet and perhaps use a formula to count total points. This was often a time-consuming and tedious process, adding unnecessary complexity to the grading workflow. The new system, however, not only simplifies grading but also makes managing missing assignments much easier, greatly improving efficiency. Additionally, a particularly valuable addition is the "draft grade for missing assignments" feature, which automatically assigns a zero to any incomplete or missing work after the due date. This feature holds students accountable for submitting future assignments on time. When students are alerted and receive a zero for missing assignments in Google Classroom, it creates a sense of urgency. Knowing they can accumulate more zeros if they miss additional assignments, they become more motivated to stay on track and submit their work promptly, reducing the chances of falling behind. Figure 1 illustrates the new draft grading function and details how I've set up the weighted categories for assessments.

Huang Figure 1

Draft Grades for Missing Assignments



All of this weighted grade data is computed automatically using the Grades in Google Classroom. The teacher can also output the data as a spreadsheet in order to add grades from other activities. Overall, this integration of automated grading, flexible weighting, and

clear communication through Google Classroom has significantly streamlined the grading process, enabling teachers to prioritize meaningful instruction over administrative tasks.

Enhancing Learning with Digital Worksheets in Google Classroom

The integration of digital worksheets through Google Classroom has greatly boosted students' motivation for independent learning while minimizing the need for printed materials. Live Worksheets is a website that enables teachers to convert traditional worksheets (PDFs, images, etc.) into interactive, self-correcting exercises. It offers a range of engaging features, including drag-and-drop activities, audio, video, multiple-choice questions, and even speaking exercises via microphone. This makes it ideal for remote learning, as students can complete the tasks on their devices and submit their answers online, streamlining the process for both teachers and students. To share a worksheet from Live Worksheets to Google Classroom, teachers can click the Google Classroom icon at the top of the worksheet, which instantly links it to the platform. Alternatively, they can copy the worksheet link and paste it into a Google Classroom assignment.

I have actively integrated online worksheets from Live Worksheets at *liveworksheets.com* into my teaching, allowing my students to complete assignments seamlessly in Google Classroom. This shift has significantly reduced my printing needs to just one page per week. The worksheets are particularly effective for vocabulary exercises that reinforce the units we cover in TEG. For instance, last semester, during the Jobs unit in TEG, I discovered that someone had converted the job riddles worksheet that I had previously printed from a PDF to a digital version on Live Worksheets. Instead of printing the PDF, I shared the activity directly on Google Classroom, enabling students to conveniently access it on their smartphones.

Typically, these worksheets include matching activities that challenge students to pair vocabulary with corresponding images or riddles. Upon completion, the system automatically checks their answers and displays their scores. I encourage students to redo the activity until they achieve at least 80%. To streamline the process, I assign the activity as a formal assignment on Google Classroom. This allows me to easily manage and track student submissions, requiring them to submit screenshots of their results for completion marks. By utilizing Google Classroom, I not only save time but make it convenient for students to engage with the material.

Previously, I relied on black-and-white printed worksheets, which were difficult for students to see clearly. Switching to digital worksheets on the Live Worksheets platform has made a significant impact. The vibrant, colorful images greatly improve visibility and

capture student attention. Additionally, the automatic grading feature eliminates the need for manual corrections, allowing students to practice repeatedly and self-correct. This approach helps deepen their understanding of vocabulary and encourages independent learning.

Students initially found the digital "Job Riddles Activity" (available at https://www.liveworksheets.com/w/en/english-second-language-esl/218315) challenging due to the reading demands. However, after several attempts, they began to find the correct answers through learning via repetition. The ability to retry without pressure motivates them to keep practicing until they succeed, boosting their confidence and reinforcing their learning experience.

Jonathon Pollack has student submit pictures of their in-class work as Julian Honeycutt mentions above, but adds ways he uses topics in Google Classroom to organize his syllabus to help both him and his students track their progess. Jonathan also shows how he has students use Google Slides as the foundational platform for his presentation projects based on unified themes from *The English Gym*.

As a university teacher, Google Workspace has transformed my workload a lot, much of which has been covered already above. Therefore, in this section of the paper, I will discuss how I utilize Google Classroom to collect classwork and video projects. Additionally, I will explain how I use Google Slides as the platform for these projects. While these concepts aren't necessarily a game-changer by any means, I hope my experience and insights can inspire other teachers in similar situations to use Google Classroom in new ways.

Using Cell Phones to Collect In-Class Work

As mentioned in the introduction, the teachers participating in this article are required to use the same textbook, *The English Gym* (TEG), which consists of 20 conversational chapters; 10 for each semester. By simply taking the normal approach of moving through the pages described above and concluding with an activity based on Chris Huang's Classmate Interview activity, this process unfortunately generates a lot of paperwork to collect and grade.

The issue with collecting classwork by hand is twofold: it's heavy to lug around such massive stacks of paper, and once you return the students' work back to them, you lose all copies of their work. While many teachers might not care about the latter

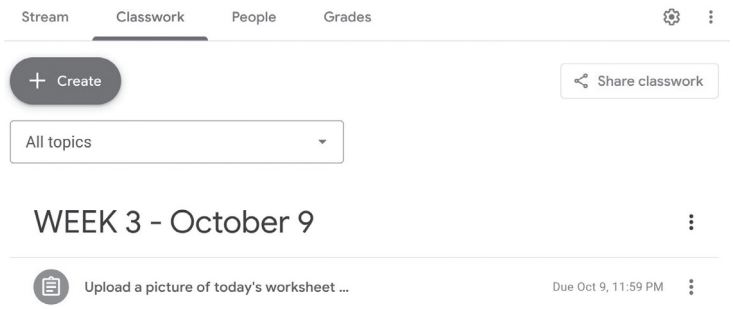
issue, I find it essential to retain a copy of my students' assignments for various reasons, including monitoring progress, identifying habitual mistakes, and for considering final grade adjustments. This becomes even more of an issue with large classes of 30 or more students, where it can be difficult to keep track of individual names and performances.

To address these issues, I have digitized the entire process. I now have students submit pictures of their classwork directly into assignments in Google Classroom. This not only spares my back from having to carry multiple classes of paperwork around with me, but it also serves as a way to keep track of what was turned in. Furthermore, it allows me to retain a copy of their work after I grade and return it.

To set this up on Google Classroom, I first begin by creating a topic, which can be found in the *Classwork* tab at the top of the Google Classroom page and using the + *Create* button. Some teachers like to organize their topics according to projects, such as *Project 1*, *Project 2*, etc. and organize assignments under these headers, but because we teach one class per week over 15 weeks, I organize mine by weeks. For example, *Week 3 – October 9*. This topic not only acts as a location that students can find their assignments, but also doubles as a lesson-calendar to make it easier for them to keep track of their progress over the semester. Using the example above, under *Week 3 – October 9*, I would create an *assignment* titled *Upload a picture of* _____, instructing students to take a photo with their cell phones of the specified classwork and upload to the provided *assignment* link (see Pollack Figure 1). Once I have collected the students' photos of their classwork, Google Classroom allows me to view, grade, give feedback, return, and, most importantly, keep a copy of their assignments for future reference. The best part is, I didn't need to collect one single sheet of paper; it has all been digitized.

Pollack Figure 1

Sample Google Classroom Topic



Uploading Presentation-Video Projects via Google Classroom

Oftentimes throughout the semester, I will assign a project for students to showcase what they've learned. A presentation-video project, here on out referred to as the video project, is a slide presentation, where instead of presenting the slideshow live to the class, the student gives their presentation in private, recording it by whatever means they choose. This could be via a screen-recorder on their phone, setting up a tripod, or having their friend film it for them with a smartphone. Either way, all I require is that each student submit a video of themselves doing a presentation where I can hear their voice and see their presentations.

Similar to how I organize my classwork, I post an assignment link for the video project under the relevant topic, where the students can find all the project details and upload their videos. Once I receive the videos, I can view, grade, provide feedback on, and return them whilst retaining a copy for myself.

Using Google Slides as the Video Presentation Template

Google Slides is a fantastic platform for the video project projects for several reasons. First, it's free. Second, it's easy to access. Just search *Google Slides* in any web browser, click the link, log into Google, and you're ready to go. Third, it's easy to use. Virtually none of my students have had any trouble learning and navigating the platform, as the learning curve is minimal, and the user interface is intuitive.

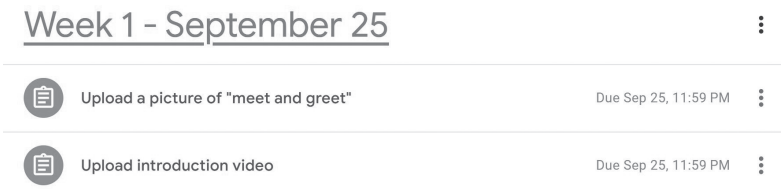
Despite the simplicity and commonsense nature of Google Slides, it would be irresponsible of me as a teacher to assume every student has experience with it or can navigate it on their own without help. Therefore, I give them a live demonstration on how to make a video slide presentation from scratch using Google Slides so that they can see the process, ensuring everyone is on the same page. At the end of the demonstration, I show them a finished product so they know what my expectations are, in terms of quality.

The First Day with Google Classroom

Because it is essential that my students are able to navigate Google Classroom, I have them practice using it on the first day of class. First, I ask them to submit a picture of whatever ice-breaker activity we complete in class that day. Second, I have them submit a 30-second self-introduction video to gain experience submitting a video as well (see Pollack Figure 2). If something goes wrong, I am able to help them identify and resolve the issue right away, paving the way for a seamless experience for the rest of the semester.

Pollack Figure 2

Video Project Assignment



Summary

Google Classroom is more than just a platform for organizing a class; it's a tool that can reduce the workload for the teacher, whether through collecting paperwork and projects, or using it to keep backup copies of student's work. By using nothing more than the students' smartphones, the entire process is streamlined, enabling teachers to focus more on classroom engagement and less on administrative tasks. The longer I use Google Classroom, the more aspects I discover that save me time. These experiences I've shared in this paper only strengthen my belief that utilizing technology in the classroom is the future of teaching, and Google Classroom is at the forefront of this innovative transformation.

Steve McGuire explores the potential of Google Gemini for image-based activities and shares a task using Google Sheets and Slides to help students activate their vocabulary for each unit in *The English Gym*. He concludes by sharing some success in using Gemini to replace the conversation Bot he discussed in our article on ChatGPT. (McGuire et al., 2023)

In my part, I explore the capabilities of Google's AI application, Gemini, for practicing unit questions in *The English Gym* centered on Unit 12, *Childhood Memories*, particularly using its image-generating function to activate students' background knowledge and share an expansion activity where students share ideas using Google Slides. I'll also evaluate Gemini's potential to replace tools, such as poe.com and ChatGPT, that charge for access beyond a minimum level of service.

The State of the Art of Gemini

A major limitation of Gemini is that in its current iteration at the time of this article, any prompts mentioning people, but especially children or any potentially questionable

topics, set off its filter. For example, the prompt *Please draw children in a Japanese elementary school classroom* leads to the following response, *I'm still learning how to generate certain kinds of images, so I might not be able to create exactly what you're looking for yet. Also, I can't help with photorealistic images of identifiable people, children, or other images that go against my guidelines.* The prompt *please draw a Japanese elementary school classroom* is fine, as is *draw a Japanese playground*.

To the degree Gemini does provide useful images and performs other useful tasks, a central question asked throughout this article and on the Internet is whether we should use AI simply because it is available. In my case, Gemini fulfills one of my goals to help students make connections between images and words in hopes that they will learn and retain vocabulary better. Gemini enables me to meet this goal even with the limitations and newer versions without limitations will just make it easer to carry out these language tasks.

There are other free and paid services that could generate useable images, but these would require separate logins and training, and as stated elsewhere, there are definite benefits to having Gemini so readily available. The quality of the images is not as important, since the focus is on the ideas and the connections, and the quality doesn't get in the way of that. Besides, if there were enough class time, many of the students at our art-focused university could likely create beautiful works of art themselves, but the sense of creation available with Gemini can make it quicker and easier.

Google Image Search and Creation

As mentioned above, Gemini is capable of creating nice images as long as there are no people. McGuire Figure 1 below shows two images generated using the prompts above, one of a Japanese elementary school classroom and the other of a Japanese neighborhood playground. Whether these look genuine enough or not, they can be useful as discussion topics.

McGuire Figure 1

Gemini-Generated Japanese Classroom and Playground

McGuire F

Gemini can also find images through a kind of Google search. McGuire Figure 2 shows a sample of the result from the prompts, *6 photos of sports day at an elementary school in Japan.*

McGuire Figure 2

Gemini-Generated Elementary School Sports Day

As always, by the time this article comes out there will likely be further paradigm shifts, but I hope this lesson will survive the test of time and benefit from whatever new abilities are available.

Unit 12 Childhood Memory Gemini Activity

In this set of activities students will first brainstorm vocabulary for the topic covered in Unit 12 of *TEG*, *Childhood Memory*. Students move from the vocabulary brainstorm activity using a Google Sheet, to an image search activity using Gemini, and then to an activity where groups upload their images to a group page using Google Slides. The advantage for the Sheets and Slides activity is that all of their ideas are visible to all the

other students and progress can be tracked by the teacher.

Step 1: Brainstorm and explore vocabulary regarding the unit topic, Childhood Memory

In this activity I want them to share their own ideas regarding childhood memories, first in the form of a brainstorm using the Google Sheet which mimics an activity they've been doing for a year.

Step 1: List vocabulary from your childhood (keywords)

McGuire Figure 3 below shows the Google Sheet used in this activity. Students type their ideas into a shared Google Sheet in English or Japanese and then get a confirmation translation into Japanese for English words or a translation into English for Japanese words (for example, using the formula *=googletranslate (D12, "en", "ja")* for translation from English to Japanese). They type in their IDs which are counted and displayed in a separate pivot table to show their level of participation. I askd Gemini to create the image at the top of the sheet in McGuire Figure 3 using the text I uploaded from the interview in TEG Unit 12.. I wrestled with the idea that because they are used to answering the Visual Thinking Questions, *What's going on in this picture?* and *What do you see that makes you say that?* and they might therefore focus too much on the sample image, but I decided that it can also activate the words they need for the activity. That is why I added a task where they listened to the interview and added any additional activities they heard.

McGuire Figure 3

Gemini W-1 SHEET F1 Childhood Memories (IDs anonymized)

	A	B	C	D	E
1	TEG Unit 12 Childhood Memories				
2					
3	**Student ID**	**English=> Japanese**		**日本語＝＞英語**	
4	24AA200	secret base	秘密基地	秘密基地	secret base
5	24AA200	Music	音楽	音楽	music
6	24AA201	driver	ドライバ	キーワード	keyword
7	24AA202	Hero	ヒーロー	ヒーロー	hero
8	24AA203	run	走る	走る	run

Although some students misunderstood and typed words into both the English → Japanese and 日本語 → columns, this task felt like a success. There were 211 words in the E → J column and 142 in the J → E column, meaning only 71 students

inputted only in English. A nice followup activity might be to show the words selected using a Word Cloud.

Finally, because the students have entered all their ideas, the teacher has access to their data and can use it in a variety of ways. McGuire Figure 4 shows a Word Cloud based on the activity represented in McGuire Figure 3.

McGuire Figure 4

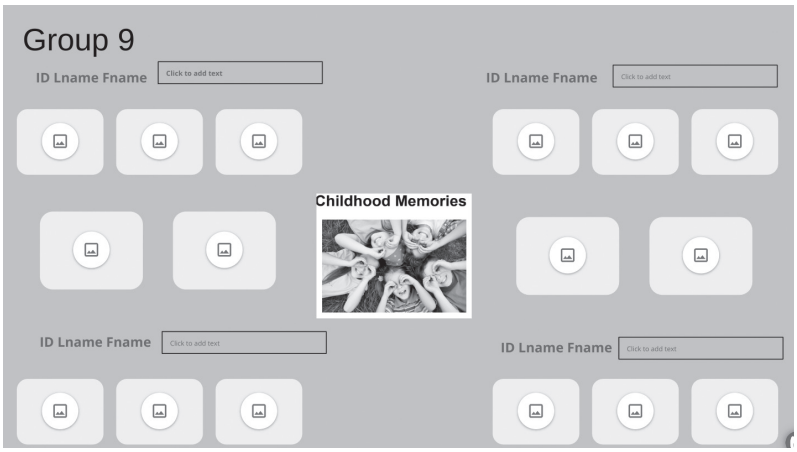
Word Cloud Based on Student Vocabulary in McGuire Figure 1

Step 2: Use Gemini and Google Search to find images

In the classroom trial, students used Gemini and Google Search to generate or find images to add to a Google Slide page assigned for their group. For the Google Slides activity I created a Google Slide with a theme I created for each page (under *Slide/edit theme* on the menu) and added image placeholders which students can click and upload images to (see McGuire Figure 5). It is a bit controlling to provide the formatting, but it also offers a sense of a minimum number of places to fill. Uploading their images offers a sense of audience and also a way to see what other students created. It also offers experience using Google Sheets and Google Slides, which might be of use in other contexts. McGuire Figure 6 shows an amalgamation of the student slides.

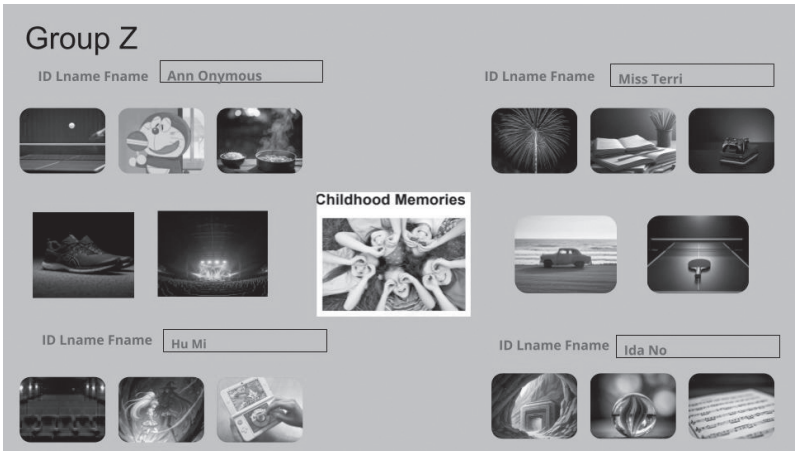
McGuire Figure 5

Group Page for the Google Slide Activity with Image Place Holders



McGuire Figure 6

Google Slide Template for Gemini W-1 SHEET F1 Childhood Memories



Gemini as a Replacement for ChatGPT or POE

Finally, I'd like to explore the degree to which Gemini can serve as a replacement for ChatGPT or Bots offered on poe.com that I discussed in our article on ChatGPT (McGuire et al., 2023). The ChatBots created for free on the poe.com website can help students practice the 10 questions in each unit, but with a brief time of tweaking, it worked relatively well using ChatGPT 3.5, with the user only occasionally having to ask ChatGPT to go on to the next question rather than repeating the followup questions. Since then, poe.com has added ChatGPT 4.0 and other AIs which work even better.

Gemini also offers interaction, and I spent a couple hours tweaking the prompts leading eventually to a relatively successful interaction with the prompt below. This is a rough first draft but it includes the role the AI should play (language tutor helping a student practice) and a set of steps. Often without these steps the AI does not proceed smoothly through the entire set of tasks. The problem with prompts is that sometimes when you make even a slight change in the wording of the prompt, the task stops working in the way you intended.

You are a language tutor. You are helping a student practice answering the following list of 10 questions. You will ask each of the 10 questions in the following sequence of steps: Start by saying "Hello, I am your language tutor. I'm going to help you practice the 10 questions from this unit of The English Gym. If I get stuck on a question, please type "Next" and I will move on to the next question. Here is the first question."

1. Ask question 1 from the list of 10 questions below.
2. Wait for the student's answer to the question.
3. Paraphrase the student's answer using simple CEFR A2 English in the format: "Language Tutor: Oh! [Paraphrased answer]" then ask one follow-up question based on the student's answer to the question using simple English at the CEFR A2 level.
4. Wait for the student's answer to the follow up question.
5. Using simple CEFR A2 English in the format: "Language Tutor: That's interesting! [Paraphrased answer]." Go back to Step #1 and ask the next question from the list of 10 questions.

List of 10 questions:

1. Who was your favorite superhero when you were little?
2. Was there a food that you didn't like to eat when you were a small child?
3. Who was your best friend in elementary school?
4. When you were little, what did you want to grow up to be?
5. Were you on any clubs or sports teams in junior high or high school?
6. Could you tell me about a favorite event or memory from your childhood?
7. Do you have any funny or embarrassing stories from your childhood?
8. Did you take special lessons, like swimming or piano, when you were younger?
9. Did you ever attend a cram school?

10. Which did you like better, elementary school, junior high school, or high school?

Generally the Gemini AI works well now. I should mention that this prompt above works absolutely perfectly with ChatGPT 4o without too many problems with too many follow-up questions and in fact ChatGPT works with fewer instructions. However, Gemini is free, available, and continuously being updated.

Conclusion

In summary, Gemini provides a unique opportunity to enhance vocabulary activities in *The English Gym* by connecting words with images, a key aspect of fostering language retention. Although Gemini has limitations, such as restrictions on creating images of people, it still serves as a rich resource for image generation that can be supplemented by online images searches. By using Google Sheets and Slides alongside Gemini, students can brainstorm, visualize, and share their ideas in a way that the teacher can observe and share. Even as it stands, Google Gemini and the apps included in Google Workspace offer a rich environment for these activities.

A Few Final Words

In conclusion, our exploration of Google Workspace apps in the language classroom has revealed a spectrum of possibilities for enhancing teaching practices and student engagement. While we found that traditional paper-based activities often remain the most effective for certain purposes, we also found that the free apps included in Google Workspace can successfully replace other applications, providing accessible solutions for educators and students alike. Notably, some tools, such as Google Gemini, are continuously improving in their capabilities, gradually enhancing their potential to replace other paid apps.

Finally, we have once again demonstrated the benefits of collaborating with fellow teachers on a communal project. We all learned new ideas and techniques from reading each other's contributions. Through our exploration of Google Workspace Apps specifically with our communal textbook, *The English Gym* we have perhaps improved both our knowledge of ways to apply these apps to our teaching and we hope we have improved our students' learning in the process, and we hope the readers have learned along with us as well.

References

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