

# ENGAGING ASSESSMENTS FOR SPEAKING AND LISTENING

By Catherine Ousselin

This past year, I had the privilege of presenting my technology workshop, “Thinking About Syncing?” at four state World Language conferences and several district professional development in-services. As I met teachers from around the country, common threads appeared in each region: teachers who want to use more authentic listening, speaking, and reading resources that they have curated from the Internet, who have more digital devices to access these resources, but who lack training or information on synthesizing the resources and digital tools into easy-to-produce and pedagogically-meaningful activities. While my presentations have been geared toward the middle and high school levels, this does not preclude them from the early learners. With a few modifications for beginning readers and technology users, the same tools can be used to generate thoughtful experiences and assessments at any level. The digital tools presented in this article may be accessed by iOS devices, Chromebooks, laptops, or desktops. Even if you have only one mobile device in your classroom, you can create and evaluate engaging assessments for listening and speaking.

## WEB-BASED TOOLS

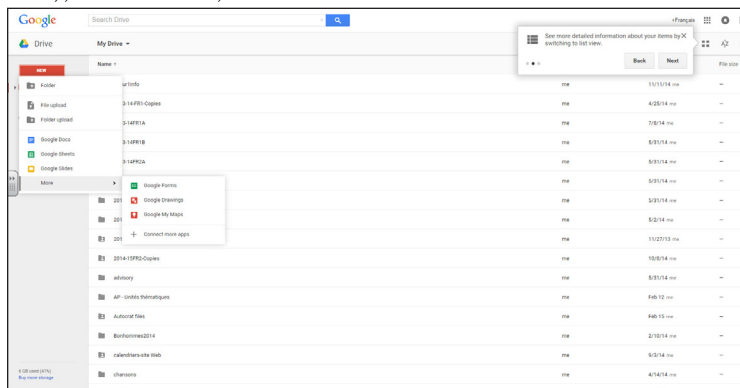
**Tool:** Google forms with embedded videos and images

**Theme:** Food and school lunches around the world

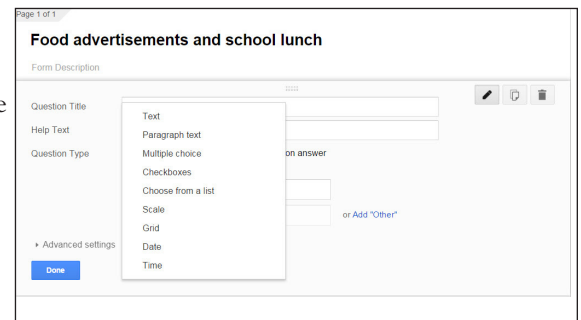
**Outcomes:** Students will demonstrate listening comprehension of food advertisements and will demonstrate reading comprehension of an authentic school lunch menu.

Using Google forms to create listening activities has become one of the first tech projects I recommend for new users. They are easy to produce, evaluate, and share with parents and administration. For this activity, students will watch a variety of television advertisements for food products and interpret a school lunch menu. I recommend choosing the resources before beginning the Google Form. Videos at this level should be no longer than one minute. When searching YouTube, conduct the search in the target language and use specific product names. For a search in French I use, “publicité Bonne Maman.” The same parameters should be used when searching for school lunch menus. Try using [google.fr/.mx/.it](http://google.fr/.mx/.it) and use the correct vocabulary for “school lunch menu.”

To begin a new Google Form, go to your Drive ([drive.google.com](http://drive.google.com)), choose “New,” and “Form.”



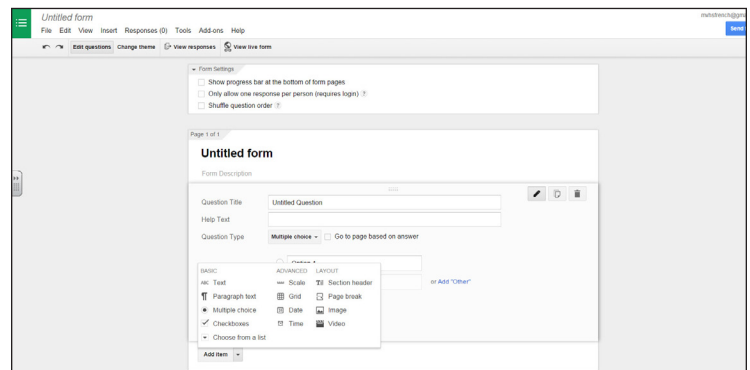
Title the project with a descriptive name and begin adding questions. You may choose from Text, Paragraph text, Multiple choice, and Checkboxes. There are more options, but these work best for assessment. I recommend making each question “Required” so students do not skip questions. This can become an issue if a student runs out of time because he cannot submit unless all of the questions have been answered. In this case, I tell the students write, “not finished” in the text boxes or to re-do the form on their own time. Be sure to include a “Text” question for student last name and one for first name for easier sorting in the answer spreadsheet.



To add a video, choose “Add item” and “Video” at the bottom of the question. The easiest way to add a video is by using the URL (address) of the video. You will find the best URL for a YouTube video in the “Share” option under the video. Copy and paste it in the URL section. For beginners, I suggest one question per video. However, if you want to use the same video for multiple questions, you may either add the video to each question or add more questions under the initial video. For younger learners, I would focus on one question: What food product is shown? What animal does this product come from? Who is eating this product?

Additionally, consider adding images that concentrate on reading comprehension. In this image, students identify cognates with a “Checkbox” question: What food products do you see on Monday? You may choose to provide the options in English (similar to an IPA assessment) or ask students to discriminate between days of the week. “Which day will the students eat beef?”

For beginners, three videos and one image will suffice for an engaging activity. Choose “View live form” to review your assessment. Text, video, and image sizes can be adjusted in the editing view.



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Create a QR code for easy access to your form at [goo.gl](http://goo.gl) or add a direct link from your website or blog.

Students will need headphones and time! As I learned with my French I group, this is a new assessment style and they will want to watch the videos multiple times. After using Google Forms a few times, they will have learned how to manage their time in order to complete the form. The form answers will be compiled in a spreadsheet. If you want to compile the results in a Google document, look into the Autocrat script or search my name and Autocrat to find my blog post on this topic. Google forms are one of the easiest and least time-consuming ways to integrate technology into listening and reading assessments.

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**TOOL: BLUBBR.TV**

**Themes:** Ecosystems and the environment or food names

**Outcomes:** Students will demonstrate comprehension of a short children’s video about endangered animals or identifying foods from children’s songs.

Blubbr.tv is a free site that allows users to choose YouTube videos and videos from other sites to create interactive listening comprehension activities. Importing a video using the URL (address) to the site is very similar to the Google Form process. What sets Blubbr apart from a Google Form is the limitation of one video per activity and the question types. Blubbr offers only multiple choice questions. Users choose where to insert the questions throughout the video which may range from absolute basics such as, “What color is the pineapple?” to more in-depth questions that require translation or cultural knowledge. The video will not progress until the question has been answered. There are three other tools that are similar to Blubbr: Zaption (paid subscription), EduCanon, and Adobe Voice. To view examples of these tools visit:

- EduCanon: <http://goo.gl/PfqBLf> – Filomena Gomez
- Blubbr – <http://goo.gl/dSv77p> – Catherine Ousselin
- Zaption – <http://goo.gl/DrDAoF> – Nicole Naditz

**TOOL: NARRABLE (LEARN.NARRABLE.COM)**

**Themes:** Food preferences / healthy choices

**Outcomes:** Students will describe their school lunches using audio and images with adjectives and descriptive vocabulary.

For educators new to implementing technology tools, ease-of-use is an absolute necessity. Beginning tech users should not need to worry about codes, script, or any processes more complicated than a PowerPoint. Narrable is powerful, yet basic tool that combines pictures and narration to create simple digital stories. You will need a computer microphone or a boom headset. There are free and paid accounts available. Narrable stories can be populated with personal

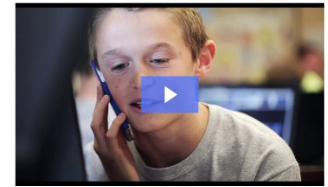
pictures or with Creative Commons pictures.

To create a Narrable story, sign up for a free (or paid) account, add pictures and audio. The stories can be shared by link. The paid accounts offer assignment builders and group conversations. But as a beginning option, the free account will suffice.

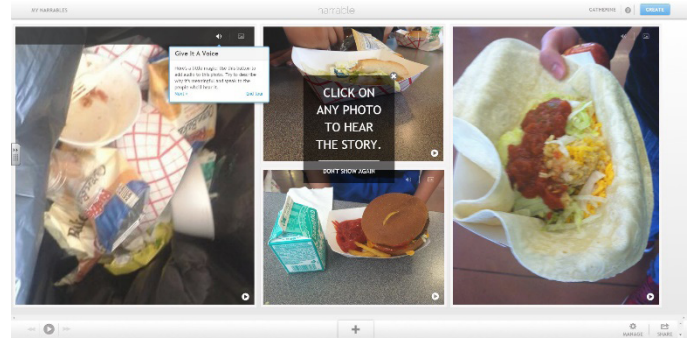
Narrable

THE STORY OF LEARNING

With Narrable, students use their voices to share what they learn in class and experience in life.



TRY NARRABLE FOR FREE



**IOS APPS FOR SPEAKING AND LISTENING**

Early language learners may not be at the concrete writing stage, but they are able to tell short narratives about themselves, their preferences, and their families. For this reason, apps that encourage verbal expression and creativity are excellent portals into technology integration. I have collected my students’ favorite apps on this web page: [catherine-ousselin.org/apps.html](http://catherine-ousselin.org/apps.html) under “Storytelling.” As students build confidence through short, memorized chunks, they are able to begin branching off into more sophisticated forays. Adding personal images to their stories provides ownership of the story and the language. The following are my top three suggestions for beginning digital stories.

1. **Sock Puppet** – Free. Sock puppet is a very basic app that records students’ voices in the format of sock puppets whose mouths move when the students talk. Their voices are converted to “chipmunk” quality that renders them different from their natural voices. I use this with French I and II students who are shy to hear themselves speak. The funny voices are still comprehensible, but hide the identity of the speakers. These videos can be shared by email and uploaded to YouTube.



2. **My School Avatar/Tellagami** – \$1.99/free (no ads!) Both of these apps mimic the well-known “Voki” avatar site that was popular in the early 2000’s. Users choose an avatar, its clothing, hair, body style, and accessories. This process needs a time limit as students tend to concentrate on the look of the avatar more than the language task. Users may upload your own picture for a



background. In French II, we took pictures of our campus and described where the picture was taken and what purpose it served at school. The voice recording is the natural voice of the student, so it is a step up from Sock Puppets.

3. **Puppet/Puppet Edu** – Free. On the spectrum of higher order thinking skills and technology skills, Puppet and its educational version, Puppet Edu, rank the highest of the three apps. Puppet incorporates multiple pictures, voice, and text (if desired) into a digital story in video format. Both French I and II used this app last year. French I described animals, their bodies, habitats, actions, and food intake. French II used the theme of food preferences with fruits and vegetables and adjectives that described texture, color, taste, and preference.

Users choose personal pictures or pictures from the Web (Creative Commons and other approved sites), organized them, and narrate and caption the pictures. The app produces a short video that can be shared by link, email, or uploaded to YouTube. To view a compilation of the fruits and vegetables videos, visit: <http://youtu.be/-miOITio1NA>

Each of these apps are easy enough for younger language learners with teacher guidance and preparation. My suggestion is to create an example for the students and share it with them so they understand their final goals. While there are many more apps for beginners, it is recommended that you choose no more than three per year. Experiment and share your results with colleagues. There may be glitches in the process or the students may not enjoy one as much as the next. Variety is key. I do not use a storytelling app more than twice with students as they tend to become bored with the format or “newness” of the project. Share the stories with colleagues, administration, and families! One option is to narrate a well-known fairytale and share it with a local class or class in a different country. Digital stories are not meant to hang on the classroom wall, they are designed to travel the world.

### IOS APPS FOR LISTENING

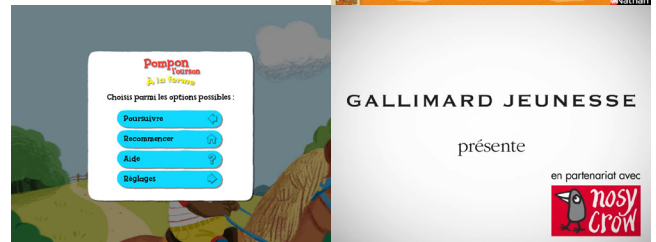
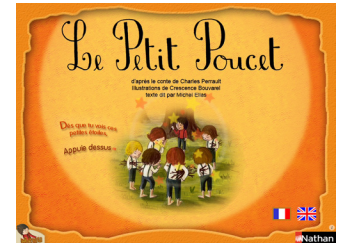
As a committed book nerd, the idea of transferring books into interactive apps should be appalling. However, I find that my students at all levels will watch and re-watch apps with children’s fairytales that have been animated and narrated. Many of the apps require viewers to interact with the characters or props to continue the story. These directions are given in the target language and that is a considerable bonus. The following list is concentrated on for speakers and learners of French, but there are app producers who create books in multiple languages. If your iOS device is set to Spanish, the apps will appear in Spanish. Several apps allow users to switch between languages. I suggest searching for interactive books on the iTunes store in the target language and asking for suggestions on Twitter or other social media outlets. There are more book suggestions on my language-specific iOS website, [catherine-ousselin.org/apps.html](http://catherine-ousselin.org/apps.html).

**StoryToys** – \$3.99 / story

This app was available free one day in the App Store. I down-

loaded six different stories and was excited to see the seven language options. The stories are Anglo-European, but they are familiar to young readers. The voices are human, not computer-generated, and the animation is high quality.

Other app producers include Nathan and Gallimard Jeunesse. These books offer French and English narrations and are \$3.99 per story.



The breadth of free and inexpensive technology tools for World Language educators and learners is exciting! While not every app was designed for language learners, many can be easily adapted if teachers follow a few tenants of language acquisition: authentic resources, authentic tasks, authentic audience, modify the task – not the resource. I have used “Crosswalk/Alignment of the National Standards for Learning Languages and Common Core Standards” document to create a graphic organizer of iOS apps that met CCSS/ELA and ACTFL standards. I invite you to explore the options for speaking, listening, presenting, and writing to help you choose other apps that will support your learners. <http://goo.gl/PcQN4B>.

Technology tools do not replace thoughtful, purposeful teaching and learning. The tools support our goals as language educators and our students

at all levels and in all modes. Expression of creativity and voice are hallmarks of quality tools that we strive to incorporate in our objectives. The tools that I have outlined are suggestions that have worked well with my students.

Please connect with me through Twitter or other social media outlets if you wish to discuss other options.

**Catherine Ousselin** is a French teacher and Digital Learning Coach at Mount Vernon High School in Mount Vernon, Wash., as well as a workshop provider and social media manager for the American Association of Teachers of French and the Washington Association for Foreign Language Teaching. She is the recipient of the ACTFL 2014 Excellence in Foreign Language Instruction Using Technology with IALLT (K-12) award. She is an active participant on Twitter through #langchat and other online Professional Learning Network chats. Her web site is [catherine-ousselin.org](http://catherine-ousselin.org).

