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# Cell Phones for Low-Resource Environments

**Welcome to the twenty-first century! Movie buffs will remember that October 21, 2015, was the date that Marty McFly from the movie *Back to the Future* arrived in the "future." On that day, many news programs pointed out that we are not flying around on hoverboards or eating rehydrated pizzas, but many did refer to our high-tech world, including big flat-screen TVs and the capabilities of videophones. Those of us in North America, Europe, many parts of Central and South America, and eastern Asia live in a digital world, and there has been ongoing debate about technology and learning. In other parts of the world, such as the African continent and much of central and south central Asia, there is evidence of a digital invasion, but it is still not complete.**

However, one part of twenty-first-century technology that has infiltrated nearly every corner of the world is the cell phone. There are currently 4.3 billion cell phones in use worldwide among a global population of more than seven billion—compared to about one billion personal computers in use. That is a ratio of more than one cell phone to every two people. We know that many people have more than one cell phone, but the numbers are impressive, and they are growing. That makes the cell phone a truly global tool, and it has led me to write this article about what role the cell phone has to play in English language education. After discussing the use of cell phones as an efficient and low-cost tool in business and educational contexts, the article will illustrate several cell phone activities that supplement and enhance English language learning in the classroom.

## CELL PHONES REACH REMOTE AREAS

The cell phone has taken "learning to individuals, communities, and countries that were previously too remote or sparse, economically, socially, or geographically, for other educational interventions and initiatives to reach" (Traxler 2013, 3). The relative quickness of countries adopting the cell phone and the portability of the device have enabled this learning to spread rapidly to areas that traditionally have not had much support. Traxler (2013) highlights the ability of cell phones to link learners in deep rural areas to deliver language instruction. Irina (2011) explains that cell phones are "more effective than computers in the new Web 2.0 context of creating, sharing and distributing knowledge" (18). She rightly claims that cell phones are readily available throughout the world, and their great advantage is that they "penetrate all economies and reach the bottom of the economic pyramid" (Irina 2011, 18). The ubiquity of the cell phone makes it a preferred technology for students to communicate, and when used for education it increases the relevance of an assignment to students' lives and potentially intensifies their motivation for learning.

This is evident in simple projects in the health, banking, and agricultural sectors that use simple cell-phone technology. One example is the Wired Mothers project in Zanzibar, Tanzania, which uses cell phones "to combat maternal and neonatal morbidity and mortality, by distributing information to mothers and health care workers assisting in child delivery" (Isaacs 2012, 13). Another is the M-Pesa project in Kenya, which "allows individuals to deposit, send and withdraw funds using their mobile phones," helping "the banking industry to reach previously inaccessible communities in rural areas" (Isaacs 2012, 13). Isaacs (2012) also describes how the Ghana cocoa industry uses cell phones to share new information with farmers "about new farming practices, farm safety, crop disease prevention, post-harvest production and crop marketing" (Isaacs 2012, 13). The use of cell phone technology to enhance the delivery of services across numerous areas of society is a phenomenon that also has potential for educational initiatives (Isaacs 2012). This includes using several cell phone features to improve communication and collaboration in language-learning situations. Following are examples of successful projects with English language learning and cell phones.

## SUCCESSFUL CELL PHONE PROJECTS IN EDUCATION

There have been a number of successful projects with cell phones in the less developed areas of the world, but none has been as successful as the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Janala ("window" in Bangla) project in Bangladesh (BBC 2017). BBC Janala turned the cell phone into a cost-effective tool for language education, allowing the most basic cell phone to receive hundreds of brief audio lessons and SMS quizzes, enabling individuals to study and learn English "as a tool to improve people's livelihoods" (BBC 2017).

One example covered a simple dialogue titled, "What clothes are you wearing?" The audio, approximately three minutes long, had explanations in Bangla and allowed the listener to practice when the lines were spoken. In addition to the material delivered by phone, the audio scripts and lessons were published four times a week in a local Bangla newspaper.

In another mobile learning pilot called BridgeIT, the International Youth Foundation in Tanzania partnered with the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training and other external entities to increase academic achievement and educational quality "among students at primary school level in mathematics, science and life skills through the innovative use of cell phones and digital technology" (Enge 2011, 2). According to Enge (2011), test scores in math and science from students who received BridgeIT lessons showed "significant gains during the 2010 academic year in comparison to test scores of students in the control schools who did not benefit from BridgeIT" (3). One lesson included a video projected from a mobile phone onto a TV illustrating how to accomplish a math task, after which the teacher explained the task and allowed students to respond to questions and engage in associated activities. This example shows how a low-cost technology can be used creatively by teachers to enhance learning in school environments and communities that are traditionally underserved (Maghembe 2009).

A study by Zhang, Song, and Burston (2011) in China looked at whether the learning and retention of vocabulary could be increased through the use of cell phones. One group of students received five vocabulary words per day via a free messaging application. A second group received 130 words on paper, and those students determined their own study schedules. One conclusion of the study is "that short-term spaced vocabulary learning via mobile phones can be more effective than massed vocabulary learning through the paper medium" (Zhang, Song, and Burston 2011, 208). The researchers also found that students who received the words on their cell phones

**With cell phones, students take pictures of "English all around us," creating a visual activity.**

along with short reminders to study were more motivated to learn the words released that day (Zhang, Song, and Burston 2011). Though this is just another way to deliver vocabulary, it supports the argument that small chunks of learning are more easily processed and retained than larger chunks and that cell phones can play a role in delivering the content.

## PHONES COME IN MANY SHAPES AND FORMS

There are smartphones with Internet capability, which have many functions similar to a computer's, and then there are feature phones that have basic features such as video, still cameras, and sound-recording technology. These basic features are helpful to not only strengthen students' language skills, but also create content that connects the language to the outside world, thus giving more purpose to what students are doing. When students see such a purpose, they become more active and feel empowered in the learning process (Sad 2008; Reinders 2010). Following are several activities using cell phones that will empower learners and develop their confidence in learning and practicing English.

## CELL PHONE ACTIVITIES USING PHOTOS

### 1. Describing Places

Have students take a photo of buildings or of specific places in the city. They can use prepositions to describe the location of each building or place and adjectives to describe the building or place. For beginners, provide prompts similar to these:

- This is a _____.
- It's beside/near _____.
- They sell/make _____.

Advanced students can create short narratives about the place and what happens there. There are many ways to use photos for description. Figure 1 provides a simple procedure for using photos from cell phones.

### 2. English All around Us

In many settings where English as a foreign language is taught, you can find signs, advertisements, and menus with English words. With cell phones, students take pictures of "English all around us," creating a visual activity. Challenge students to go out and find as many English words and phrases as they can in the local environment. When my students do this, they often return with lists of oddly translated sentences or menu items that sound unappetizing, and we work together to come up with improved translations. The exercise becomes even more engaging because the pictures give contextual clues as to what the intended meaning might have been. Work together as English detectives to come up with alternatives to what students find. The example below is from an elevator sign:

> **Warning Notice to Passagers: Before boarding the elevator make sure that it is parked at this floor.**

Here you notice that *passengers* is spelled incorrectly. We can also discuss the use of the word *parked*, which we would not normally use for an elevator. What words could we use that have a similar meaning? We might use *stopped, located,* or even *positioned*. The activity shows that there are various alternatives.

If a teacher does not want to send students out to look for English phrases or words, he or she can share pictures with the class to help students find an alternative or spot something odd with a certain phrase or word. This activity is motivating and gets everyone

### PROCEDURE FOR USING CELL PHONE PHOTOS

- Pair or group students. Students take out their phones and choose a picture of a friend, family member, food, place, etc. Or teachers can send pictures.
- Students discuss in pairs or groups.

  **Beginner**: Tell when, where, and why you took the picture, and why you like it (time, locations, opinion statements). For example: *This is my sister. I took the picture on Saturday.We were at the park. I like the picture because the park is my favorite place in town.*

  **Intermediate**: Explain who or what is in the picture (family, descriptions, adjectives, vocabulary development). For example: *My sister and I went to the park last Saturday. I was standing by a large tree when I took the picture, and she didn't know that I had taken it. The picture reminds me of fun afternoons my family and I have spent in that park.*

  **Advanced**: Write short stories about the picture using recently learned vocabulary or structures (creative thinking, idea development). For example: *The city park is the most interesting place in the city because you can see a variety of people there. Everyone comes for a different reason. Some come for picnics; others come to play sports; many people come to just walk and enjoy nature.*
- Other activities include having students write a description of a friend's picture or describe a picture and have a partner guess where it is or what is happening.

**Figure 1. Procedure for using cell phone photos**

### ENGLISH ALL AROUND US ACTIVITY

**Beginner**

- Using the English phrases and words collected, students work to simply understand the language.
- Students use bilingual dictionaries to try to find a better word or phrase (having the pictures in context helps).

**Intermediate**

- Look at spellings and word choice to suggest synonyms for the words used or phrases that improve the original.
- Afterward, students present their suggestions to the restaurants and businesses where they discovered the odd English translations.

**Advanced**

- Students discuss where they found these phrases. If there is a place that has a phrase or message in both English and the local language, students discuss the root of the unusual translation and why they think it was chosen.
- Students extend the discussion to word choice, context, and audience in relation to translation, or they discuss the advantages and disadvantages of translating word for word versus translating the meaning of a message.

**Figure 2. Ways to adapt English All around Us for students of different skill levels**

talking. Figure 2 suggests ways to adapt the activity for different levels.

## ACTIVITIES FOR LOW-RESOURCE ENVIRONMENTS

### 1. Take Out Your Cell Phone

This is a simple activity that you can use as a warm-up. Students take out their cell phones and, in groups of three, discuss the favorite features of their phones. It can be anything they use regularly or that they really like. They talk about why they like the feature and what they use it for. Students who do not have a phone can describe a feature that they would like to have on a phone. Take this opportunity to have students practice using descriptive language, giving support for opinions, or making comparisons of different phones and their features.

Alternatively, have students talk about the least useful feature or application on their phone. They could discuss why they dislike it, why they don't use it, and how they might change it if they could design a phone. Below is sample language students might use in this activity.

- My phone is _____. (size)
- It's _____. (color)
- My screen is _____. (brightness and size)
- I can listen to _____. (audio features)
- I do/don't like my phone's _____. (size, color, features)
- My phone is a _____. (brand)
- I can/can't (take pictures) with my phone. (capabilities)
- Your phone has a (camera), but mine doesn't. (comparisons)
- On my next phone, I would like _____. (desires)
- My favorite/least favorite feature of my phone is _____ because _____. (opinion of feature using "because")

### 2. Create Listening Material

In many contexts, teachers lack material for listening practice. Cell phones have the potential to change that. You may not have access to recordings of "native speakers," but you can create your own short listening clips for students. Here are a few ways to make the most out of the voice-recording feature on cell phones:

- Record a newspaper headline or a short poem on your phone. Send it out to students in a text or via Bluetooth, then have them listen to it and try to recreate it by recording into their phone. Alternatively, plug in a speaker in class, play the recording a few times, and have students attempt to imitate it and record into their phones.
- Create video dictionaries. Students use their phones to record a list of vocabulary words, showing a picture of each item and pronouncing the name of the item at the same time. The goal is to help retention of the word for future use.

### 3. Talk and Text Activities

A number of projects have encouraged reading on mobile phones. West and Chew (2014) describe reading activities on mobile devices in developing countries and suggest that cell phones can be used to increase literacy. In areas that lack resources, people typically

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own cell phones that are simple and have limited access to data, and they tend to use talk and text functions more than apps. Below are descriptions of two activities that take advantage of the most basic features of a phone.

*Vocabulary activity.* Send an SMS to students with five vocabulary words per week or per day and have them find the definitions and/or practice using the words in context.

*Dictation activity.* The following suggestions require the cell phone to have a recording function:

- Send a short recorded passage (60 seconds maximum) to students and have them listen to it and write out what they hear.

- For oral practice, have students record a passage (60 seconds maximum) and let others listen to it and write it down. Later, they can compare what they wrote with the original passage, and the teacher can focus on pronunciation, if needed.

**4. Cell Phone Stories**

This digital storytelling activity was adapted from Tools for Digital Storytelling, which instructs learners how to create videos using cameras and computer software (www.techsoup.org/community/events-webinars/tools-for-digital-storytelling-2011-01-20). Digital storytelling is a useful tool for language learning, and I wanted to do something similar without having to rely on using a computer to do the editing that a digital story needs. Using a cell phone allowed my students to record and view their work immediately and do the editing in real time. This real-time editing encourages natural repetition and revision, which includes students recording and then rerecording specific target-language structures or phrases and vocabulary they need to complete a task. Teachers can give the students a pronunciation or grammatical issue to focus on when listening to their recordings. This activity can be done with beginning to advanced students. Below I outline a six-step process to create a cell phone story in a 90-minute period.

**Six-Step Process for Creating a Cell Phone Story**

***Step 1: Decide on the story you want to tell***

Keep the story short and focused. Tell students they are going to create a story with a defined purpose and audience. The story should be between a minute and a half and two minutes.

The list below gives suggestions for story topics and potential audiences. Remember that defining a purpose and audience makes creating the stories more meaningful.

- Introducing a visitor to your school or home (to low-level groups)

- Relating a story about an important or funny event in your life (to a friend)

- Explaining a cultural tradition (to a tourist)

- Illustrating how to make a family recipe (to a famous chef)

- Creating an advertisement for your city (to attract tourists)

- Highlighting how to help a fellow student who is being bullied (to classmates/peers)

- Giving suggestions on how to give an effective presentation (to a first-time presenter at a conference)

- Explaining how a system or invention works (to engineering students)

- Making a public-service announcement for an action you want the city or community to take (to the city's or local community's board of directors)

***Step 2: Create a storyboard***

Storyboards are typically created after a script for a television show or film has been written. The storyboard tells an animated story

visually, panel by panel. It typically includes the characters, how they are moving, what they are saying, how much time has passed between frames, and where the camera is or what it is doing (moving or remaining stationary). Storyboards are used as planning tools. Generally, storyboards are created with a pencil, but students can choose to gather the materials they will need to make the story visual. They can use drawings, posters, and pictures or cutouts from magazines, or they can use still images they record directly from the phone during shooting.

For our purposes, a storyboard for cell phone stories will help students plan out a visual story on two levels:

- Time: What happens, and in what order?
- Interaction: How does the voiceover or dialogue work with images or acting?

Students should spend a few minutes creating each frame. If they choose to draw, they are generally just sketching and can use simple shapes and backgrounds and even stick figures, so there is no need for a student to worry about not being an excellent artist. Creating scenes on index cards allows students to rearrange the cards to edit their story. Storyboards can be organized in different ways, and I suggest starting with a small set of index cards or stacks of small paper. Students can put the images in the order they want to show them, with an index card below each image. On the cards, they write the main words they will say when that particular picture appears. Students should use no more than a dozen images for a story of about two minutes.

Below is a description of how to include images in a storyboard that will be a part of a story where a new classmate introduces himself or herself by talking about a summer holiday. Remember that you do not have to be an artist to create images. Figure 3 gives a description of what students might show in the boxes of a storyboard about a recent vacation.

***Step 3: Begin writing your script***

The advice you give to students could be something like this:

> "Write your ideas down. Talk about them with friends, teachers, or members of your family. You can even read and record what you've written and play it back to hear what it sounds like on your phone. Look at the images that you plan to use in your story and make sure you speak about what those images mean to you. How are they related to your or your character's life?"

**SAMPLE STORYBOARD ABOUT A RECENT VACATION**

**Box 1**: Use an image of yourself or yourselves (the author or authors of the story). This can be a picture or a simple drawing.

**Box 2**: Draw or use an image of the city, town, or country you come from.

**Box 3**: Use an image of the place or places you traveled to during the vacation you are describing.

**Boxes 4–7**: Use drawings, pictures, or magazine cutouts of activities that you participated in during the vacation. Show a bicycle for bike riding, a camera for taking photos, and pictures of sailing or volleyball to represent activities you enjoyed.

**Box 8**: Wrap up the story and perhaps show activities that you would have liked to do, but didn't.

**Box 9**: Leave it blank or add "The End" or "Thank you" or "Created by _____."

**Figure 3. Description of frames/boxes in a storyboard of a vacation**

**A digital story does not have to be long in order to be good.**

In general, the simpler the story is, the better it will be. The final cell phone story will be only about one or two minutes, so students should remember the term KISS: "Keep it short and simple." A digital story does not have to be long in order to be good. Some of the best stories are those with few words that complement the images.

After students have written the story, they read it aloud. Difficult words may make the story hard to follow, so students should use words they already know and are comfortable saying. Finally, they should consider the story arc; no matter how long or short, all stories need to have a beginning, middle, and end.

Figure 4 shows a sample script for the storyboard described in Figure 3, with content covering beginner-level introductions and activities, geography, and details about a summer vacation.

***Step 4: Rehearse your story***

I suggest two main approaches to rehearsing the story. The first is for students to act out their story and film it as illustrated in their storyboard. This approach encourages the students to get their lines correct and fosters natural repetition and self-correcting. I have witnessed groups filming five or six times just to make sure they deliver their lines correctly. Some groups differentiate scenes by blacking out the camera with their fingers as they move to the next frame. It is a simple but effective way to show a switch in scenes.

A second approach is for students to use their storyboard as a type of animation and to record a voiceover for each frame. This style is useful for students who do not like to get up in front of the camera. It effectively reduces the affective filter, allowing students to talk in a way that will not make them self-conscious.

Once students have completed their storyboard, they can practice how they will record the story. However students decide to tell their story, practicing a few times before recording is a vital step that they should not skip.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Card 1**<br>Hi! My name is (author/presenter). | **Card 2**<br>I come from Kyoto, Japan. | **Card 3**<br>I visited the United States on my summer vacation. I traveled to Washington, D.C., and Florida. |
| **Card 4**<br>I rode a bicycle around the big city of Washington, D.C. | **Card 5**<br>I took many pictures. I can put them on my wall. | **Card 6**<br>I went to Florida and sailed on a sailboat in the Atlantic Ocean. |
| **Card 7**<br>I also played volleyball on the beach in Florida. | **Card 8**<br>There are many other outdoor activities to do. I walked in a big park in Florida, and I went to the zoo in Washington, D.C. | **Card 9**<br>Now you know a little about my summer vacation. Please tell me about yours. Bye! |

**Figure 4. Sample script for vacation storyboard**

**Nearly any innovation meets resistance at some point.**

***Step 5: Prepare the equipment, record, and edit***
This step consists of three main parts:

- Students either borrow a cell phone or use their own cell phone with camera and charged battery.
- After they have practiced, they can go ahead and record.
- Once they have recorded, they should watch the video. If they feel they need to rerecord, they should record again.

Recording can be done in one of two ways. The more traditional way has students taking videos of themselves acting out what they designed on the storyboard. This style of recording gives some of the group members an opportunity to act while others can split the duties of recording and arranging the scenes. The second way might be more suitable for students who do not want to act or have themselves recorded. In this storytelling method, students film the individual frames of the storyboard and narrate from behind the camera. It does not matter which method your classes use, but it is important to leave the choice to the students. No matter which recording style groups choose, this is the stage where they get a lot of practice because they really want to get their words right. They record, watch their acting, and listen to their voices on the phone. If they dislike the way they pronounced a word or do not like the action, they do it over. This promotes real language practice and natural repetition, and it is not uncommon for groups to record four or five times. With each rerecording, both pronunciation and intonation improve. For example, after listening to a recording, students realize that the line they used really needed to show a lot of emotion, but their voices were monotone and the scene was void of any type of feeling, so they record it again with a focus on including more emotion.

In my experience, the aspects of spoken English below are those that most students need to pay close attention to when recording:

- Pronunciation—Words with *–ed* endings or final plural *s* are especially challenging.
- Intonation—To avoid monotone recordings, have students listen for rising and falling intonation.
- Connected speech—Have students focus on these aspects of speaking:
    - Elision (*t* and *d* elision)
    - Linking (combining sounds to avoid pauses in fluid speech)
    - Informal contractions (e.g., going to ➟ *gonna*, want to ➟ *wanna*)
- Vowel sounds—Make sure students get long and short vowels correct.

***Step 6: Transfer and share the stories***
Once students have recorded their stories, they can transfer the files to the teacher's phone or computer. Bluetooth is the easiest and most convenient way to transfer the files, but you can also use a USB connector, and you can even use applications such as WhatsApp. After receiving all the stories, you can use a projector and share the stories with the class. If you do not have a projector, you can have students send their videos to their classmates using Bluetooth.

Sharing the videos is important because the students learn to appreciate one another's

creativity. They can see how well their friends understood what they were saying, and they get listening practice when watching the final products. If you want, you can have students rank videos using a rubric. You can create a rubric using categories for creativity, clarity, and story features (e.g., a beginning, middle, and end). Depending on the type of video students were expected to create, you can have them vote on which was the most effective. Obviously, there are a number of ways you can assess the work the students created.

A lot of information is available on storyboarding; one can find quite a bit from a simple Google search for "storyboard and storytelling." Those who do not draw well can get access to copyright-free images and music at, for example, www.pixabay.com (images) and www.opuzz.com (music clips).

## OBSTACLES TO USING CELL PHONES IN CLASS

Nearly any innovation meets resistance at some point. Below I examine arguments I have heard against the use of cell phones for teaching and learning English.

### Cell phones are prohibited by many schools

Anytime I bring up using cell phones, I see the reactions of the teachers who tell me that phones are prohibited in their school; students get punished if a teacher sees them carrying one. The use of phones in class is something that must be controlled and managed. As with any learning tool, there is a time and place to use the phone. First, if you are going to use phones in your classroom, you must get consent from the students, school administration, and parents to use phones for learning (Reinders 2010). In some situations, teachers may have to go to the head of their school and present their case.

For these situations, educators need to make connections to the syllabus and curriculum. Most of the activities described in this article are geared toward increasing speaking time. This is a skill that schools often want to focus on but rarely do. If the teacher can show how the use of cell phones will increase opportunities for speaking, the administrators of the school will be more likely to allow their use. As a general rule, you should have clear objectives for any activity and be able to clearly explain them before starting. Finally, the teacher and students should establish rules and guidelines for proper and improper use of phones during learning activities.

### Students do not have phones, or phones are too basic

There are situations where students either do not have a phone or have a phone with only talk and text features. Teachers can still use phones for class activities by creating group projects or tasks. You need only one phone with the capability to record to capture students' work. Having only one phone also helps groups focus on the task at hand, especially if they have a time limit or deadline to meet.

### Cell phone services cost too much

I have described activities that take advantage of the free features of a cell phone, mainly the camera and voice-recording features. However, a few applications require minutes or data, particularly Bluetooth and any SMS or multimedia message. Teachers should limit activities that require students to use data and minutes. Teachers can work together with local carriers to see if they would offer a special price or discount for educational material, as the companies involved in the Janala project did.

### Teachers are wary of the technology

Sometimes we shy away from technology because we are afraid to look like we do not know what we are doing, or our students may be more adept at using cell phones than we are. Look at this as an opportunity to learn and broaden your knowledge. Geoff Stead gave a talk at TEDx in London (www.youtube.com/watch?v=e_Pmnz7xuOs) and said we should remember three things about using technology in education:

**Creating learning activities that take advantage of basic video and voice-recording features is a way teachers can use cell phones to make tasks relevant to students.**

(1) "Technology is a tool. Use it to create and make"; (2) "Be agile. Keep improving"; and (3) "Let the learners help." This philosophy embodies the idea of giving up partial control of the classroom and making learning a two-way street between the teacher and students.

I understand that these obstacles are real issues that many teachers must contend with. However, all the activities mentioned in this article could be done on a phone outside class as homework or as part of a group project. In this case, students take pictures or make their recordings on their phones away from school and send them to the teacher via text or media message.

## CONCLUSION

Cell phones have become ubiquitous, and in a number of countries, the increased availability of choice in telecommunications companies is leading to an increase in cellular subscriptions. Not that everyone has one, but it is likely many people from all levels of society will, at least, have access to a cell phone. Of course arguments can be made both for and against the use of cell phones in class. Teachers may not be able to control how the students use them in class, and many schools have banned the devices altogether. However, some arguments *for* the use of cell phones are quite striking. Cell phones promote autonomous learning. They are great to use in environments that have intermittent electricity. Many of the activities described in this article help to reduce the affective filter, allowing students who shy away from speaking to the group an opportunity to practice English in a less threatening manner.

Because of my experiences in schools and environments that have limited resources, I have come to enjoy the learning possibilities one can create with cell phones. Many schools possess only the minimum materials for learning: desks, blackboards, chairs, and chalk. Often, teachers and administrators forget to see the tools right in front of them. As I have said, the cell phone is becoming omnipresent around the globe; it is one of the most important gadgets in the early twenty-first century. Creating learning activities that take advantage of basic video and voice-recording features is a way teachers can use cell phones to make tasks relevant to students. Projects like Cell Phone Stories and English All around Us engage learners by bringing a purpose to the learning, and recordings in particular create a sort of intrinsic motivation in students that make them want to perfect their project.

Cell phones should not be used in every class period, but a teacher can use them as they use other supplemental materials like books, videos, or pictures. Cell phones become even more valuable in regions of the world that struggle with basic services like electricity because they run on battery power. If a teacher comes with a charged phone and a listening activity recorded onto it, he or she can plug in speakers (also battery powered) and offer a simple listening task that would not be possible with a sound system that requires a functioning electrical socket—think of the opportunities for repetition when recording vocabulary words or phrases instead of using a traditional choral drill. Cell phones are cheap, portable, and handy devices that definitely have a place in the twenty-first-century English language classroom.

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