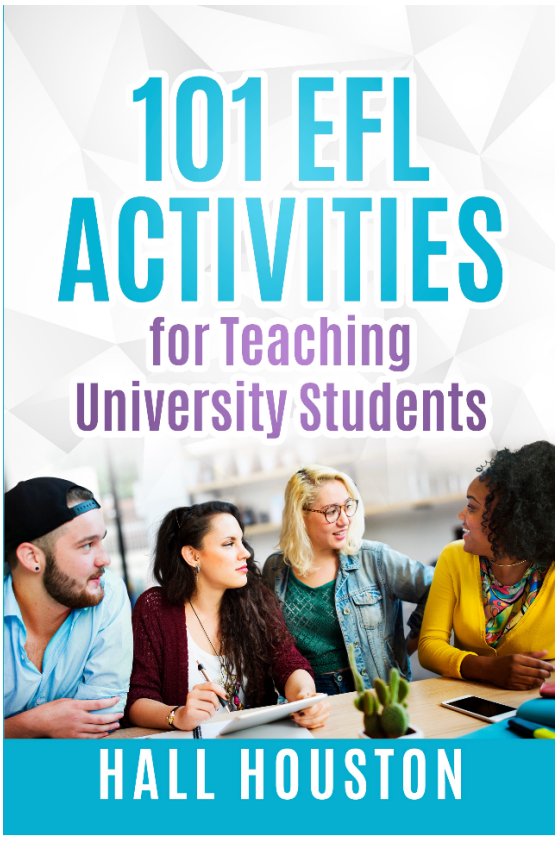
Book Review



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In the bustling world of academia, university EFL teachers often find themselves struggling with time constraints while striving to create engaging and effective learning experiences for their students. Addressing this challenge, *101 EFL Activities for Teaching University Students* by Hall Houston stands out as a book full of teacher-friendly tips for EFL teachers at university level. By laying out the nature of university context and all of its stakeholders, the author has truly captured all the important but easily overlooked details. Structured with the busy academic in mind, the book is neatly organized into three main sections, mirroring the flow of a typical university course: introduction, middle, and ending. Each activity is meticulously outlined, requiring minimal preparation while maximizing student engagement. The clear and concise instructions ensure accessibility for educators of all experience levels, from novice lecturers to seasoned professors. This organizational framework not only streamlines the integration of activities into existing curricula but also facilitates quick reference and adaptation to diverse teaching contexts.

Chapter 1 deals with the critical phase in the academic calendar—the opening weeks of a course. The author addresses this timing as *the honeymoon period*, presenting a golden opportunity for educators to lay the foundation for a vibrant classroom community. In this section of the book, teachers and students are encouraged to get to know each other, learn about each other, set out expectations, and interact with the syllabus. Through intentional efforts to foster meaningful connections and establish rapport, educators can nurture an environment wherein every voice is valued, and every individual feels a sense of belonging. For example, activity 36 *Experiences and Expectations* encourages students to reflect on their past experiences with learning English and express their expectations for the course. In this activity, students engage in writing, speaking, and discussion, promoting both language skills and meaningful interaction. The structure of the activity allows for individual expression followed by group discussion, fostering collaboration and shared experiences among students. Overall, this activity is effective for building rapport because it demonstrates to students that their opinions and experiences are valued. By acknowledging their past experiences and expectations, teachers can create a supportive learning environment where students feel heard and respected.

In Chapter 2, the author presents a diverse array of activities tailored to sustain engagement and enthusiasm as the semester progresses. Recognizing the challenge of maintaining momentum amidst the flow of the academic calendar, this chapter helps educators to make their courses become lively and relevant. At the heart of this chapter lies a multimedia approach to learning, encompassing a rich tapestry of listening, reading, video, and music activities. For instance, activity 47 introduces the use of a KWL (Know-Want to know-Learned) chart to enhance students' engagement and comprehension with informational texts or videos. It encourages students to activate their prior knowledge, formulate questions, and summarize information, promoting skills such as listening, speaking, writing, forming questions, and summarizing. By incorporating different tasks such as writing, speaking, watching a video, and group discussion, the activity provides variety in learning experiences. This helps to prevent monotony and keeps students engaged throughout the session. Students will also have chances to explore their own interests and questions about the topic, fostering a student-centered learning environment. This autonomy empowers students and increases their sense of responsibility for their learning.

As the semester draws to a close, this chapter "Ending the Semester Gracefully" serves as a compass, guiding educators in orchestrating meaningful experiences that honor the journey traversed while setting the stage for future endeavors. This final chapter is more than a mere

compilation of activities—it is a testament to the transformative power of reflection, dialogue, and future planning. As teachers go through the resources and insights contained within this chapter, they embark on a journey of closure and renewal, guiding students towards a deeper understanding of themselves, their learning journey, and the boundless possibilities that lie ahead. My favorite example to illustrate the meaningful farewell of this book is activity 90 *Messages on the Last Day of Class*. The procedure involves writing a prompt on the board asking students to send brief messages to classmates about the semester, by using the prompts like compliments, complaints, questions, invitations, wishes, recommendations, regrets, and words of encouragement. Students communicate with three classmates in writing, exchanging messages and optionally responding to them. Upon completion, students share some of the messages they received with the class, enhancing interaction and reflection on the semester's experiences.

Indeed, *101 EFL Activities for University Students* appears to emphasize integrated skills, with a notable focus on speaking. While this approach is beneficial for developing communicative abilities, transitioning to academic genres, which require more specialized language and structure, could pose challenges without additional support or materials tailored to those needs. Moreover, in Asian EFL classes, where class sizes tend to be large, often exceeding 30 students, implementing activities from the book could prove challenging. Many of the activities may require smaller groups for effective participation and interaction, making it difficult to manage in crowded classrooms. This limitation could hinder the engagement and effectiveness of the activities, as individual students may struggle to fully participate or receive adequate attention and feedback from the instructor.

While the book offers diverse activities, some may accidentally ignore cultural nuances or preferences that could affect their effectiveness or appropriateness in certain Asian contexts. For instance, in some Asian cultures, it is uncommon for teachers to share personal information, and students might feel uncomfortable asking about their teacher's life. This cultural difference could affect how certain activities are perceived or engaged with in the classroom. Furthermore, activities that heavily rely on individualistic expression or assertiveness, such as debates or role-plays, may not align well with cultural norms that emphasize collective harmony and avoiding confrontation. Introducing competition between teachers and students may not be appropriate in such contexts, as it could go against cultural values of respect between teachers and students. Moreover, addressing mixed-ability classes poses another challenge. While the book may offer activities that cater to different proficiency levels, providing detailed guidance on how to modify tasks, scaffold learning, or differentiate

instruction would be beneficial. This could involve offering variations of activities with differing levels of complexity or implementing peer tutoring and cooperative learning strategies to facilitate peer support.

A remarkable feature of this book lies in its emphasis on teacher development tips. By integrating these tips into the conclusion of each chapter, the author demonstrates a commitment to nurturing educators' ongoing development and fostering a culture of continuous improvement within the teaching community. For instance, in the initial stages of the semester, the teacher development tip prompts educators to engage in the practice of making predictions, encouraging them to anticipate students' needs and tailor their approach accordingly. This proactive approach lays the groundwork for establishing a supportive learning environment rooted in trust and mutual understanding. As the semester progresses into its middle weeks, the focus shifts towards experimentation and innovation. In this context, the teacher development tip encourages educators to embrace novelty and try new ideas, fostering a spirit of creativity and adaptability in the classroom. By stepping outside their comfort zones and exploring alternative teaching methods, educators expand their repertoire of instructional strategies and cultivate a dynamic learning environment that captivates and inspires students. Furthermore, amidst the demands of teaching, the importance of self-care often goes overlooked. Recognizing this, the author dedicates a teacher development tip to the topic of personal well-being, reminding educators of the importance of nurturing their physical, emotional, and mental health. By prioritizing self-care practices such as mindfulness, exercise, and reflection, educators replenish their reserves of energy and resilience, ensuring they are better equipped to meet the needs of their students. Finally, as the semester draws to a close, the teacher development tip prompts educators to revisit their initial predictions and reflect on their progress. This reflective practice not only serves as a valuable tool for assessing the efficacy of teaching strategies but also fosters a culture of accountability and growth mindset among educators.

Authored by an experienced educator, this book presents a collection of teacher-friendly activities tailored specifically to EFL university classrooms. At the heart of this book lies a steadfast commitment to fostering rapport and meaningful interaction within the classroom. What truly sets *101 Active Learning Activities for University Classrooms* apart is its unwavering focus on practicality. By prioritizing the ease of implementation without compromising pedagogical integrity, the book empowers educators to seamlessly integrate active learning into their teaching practice. By nurturing the professional growth of educators,

the “Teacher Development” tips of the book not only enhance the quality of teaching but also foster a culture of continuous improvement within the academic community.

About the Reviewer

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