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Enhancing Listening Comprehension Skills Through Exposure to Authentic Conversation

Michael McClure

University of San Francisco, mmclure4@gmail.com

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University of San Francisco

**Enhancing Listening Comprehension Skills Through
Exposure to Authentic Conversation**

A Field Project Presented to
The Faculty of the School of Education
International and Multicultural Education Department

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

By
Michael McClure
May 2017

**Enhancing Listening Comprehension Skills Through
Exposure to Authentic Conversation**

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

in

TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

By
Michael McClure
May 2017

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members, this field project has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

Approved:

Instructor/Chairperson

Date

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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Purpose of the Project

Theoretical Framework

Significance of the Project

Limitations of the Project

Definition of Terms

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The ability to comprehend native English speech is an essential skill for any adult immigrant in the United States. In order to meet this skill, immigrants enroll in English as a Second Language (ESL) courses in adult education centers and community colleges, where they make up the majority of the student body (Ellis, 1999). They invest time and resources into ESL courses in order to improve their employment prospects, as well as perform practical tasks such as shopping, renting an apartment or communicating with healthcare workers (Blumenthal, 2002).

However, the listening comprehension curriculum which is used in these courses does not adequately prepare students to comprehend spoken language outside of the classroom. This disconnect between spoken language inside the classroom, and spoken language outside of the classroom, exists for several reasons. To begin with, as Huang (2009) notes, the pre-recorded dialogues used in listening comprehension lessons usually feature formal, unnatural and grammatically correct English. In contrast, language outside of the classroom is spoken rapidly, features different accents and contains slang or ungrammatical features (Ghaderpanahi, 2012). Disfluency is also a hallmark of authentic conversation. Approximately 6 in every 100 words contains a repetition, correction, or hesitation such as *um* or *er* (Fox Tree, 1995). Furthermore, in actual conversations, “native-speakers speak over each other, at different volumes and speeds and often with frequent interruptions” (Ghaderpanahi, 2012, p. 146).

The consequences of the disconnect between language inside of the class and language outside of the class can be significant for ESL students. While they may feel comfortable understanding formal speech during lessons, they are actually unprepared for understanding English outside of the classroom in their daily lives. An inability to understand English in real-life situations, which after all is one of the main reasons newcomers take ESL courses, will inevitably lead to a lack of confidence and an unwillingness to practice and engage in authentic conversations.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project will be to develop a curriculum that familiarizes students with authentic spoken English in a variety of contexts. The intended audience will be immigrant students at community colleges or adult education centers in the United States who are taking courses in order to improve their communicative competence in their daily lives, and who are enrolled in high-intermediate to advanced courses. While it would be impossible to expose students to every way in which English is spoken, this project will instead focus on increasing students' confidence in understanding authentic communication and will feature the accents or dialects which students are most likely to encounter. This curriculum is not intended to replace existing listening comprehension materials that are important and useful. Instead, it is designed to supplement those existing materials and to provide examples of actual authentic communication.

The curriculum will consist of a five lesson series where the focal point of each lesson is a recorded conversation from the Storycorps website. Storycorps is an

independent organization which has been recording conversations between ordinary Americans since 2003 (“About Storycorps,” 2016). Since their inception, they have recorded and archived 65,000 conversations (“Storycorps Archive,” 2016). Most of the recordings are 3-4 minutes long, and they are often played on National Public Radio. In addition, they are genuine examples of authentic American spoken English. The five dialogues will be chosen based on their complexity of speech, type of speaker, and topic. Exercises, activities and vocabulary will be included with each dialogue and they will be designed to maximize the learning potential of the recordings. The goal is not for students to learn to speak through these dialogues, but instead to increase their listening comprehension abilities through exposure to authentic speech. While it is understood that informal speech can be intensely challenging for students learning English, research has shown that listening comprehension skills for EFL students improve when they are exposed to examples of authentic speech (Ghaderpanahi, 2012).

Theoretical Framework

The curriculum in this field project is based on two major second language acquisition theories: The Communicative Competence Theory, and Krashen’s Input Hypothesis.

The Communicative Competence Theory

The Communicative Competence Theory was developed in the mid 1960s by Dell Hymes. This theory emphasizes the sociocultural aspects of language. Essentially, the theory states that social knowledge of how and when to use the language is as important as grammatical knowledge. Hymes (1972) writes, “The engagement of language in social

life has a positive, productive aspect. There are rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless” (p. 278). This theory significantly influenced the Communicative Language Teaching Approach (CLT) which encouraged meaningful authentic communication, as opposed to rote memorization of rules.

This theory was expanded by Michael Canale and Merrill Swain (1980) who noted that:

We understand communication to be based in sociocultural, interpersonal interaction, to involve unpredictability and creativity, to take place in a discourse and sociocultural context, to be purposive behavior, to be carried out under performance constraints, to involve the use of authentic (as opposed to textbook contrived) language, and to be judged successful or not on the basis of behavioral outcomes. (p. 29).

Canale and Swain (1980) went further and divided communicative competence into four separate components. The first of these was grammatical competence, which Hymes had earlier named linguistic competence. This competence encompasses the morphological, syntactic, semantic, and phonological rules of language. In other words, a speaker of a language must understand the grammatical rules of that language in order to be understood. This was followed by discourse competence which concerns the ability to connect a number of sentences into coherent meaning. Where grammatical competence is concerned with the rules of language within a sentence, discourse competence is concerned with the intersentential rules of language (Brown, 2000). A speaker must be able to connect a series of sentences logically into a greater whole unit of meaning.

Next was sociolinguistic competence, or the sociocultural rules of language and discourse. This competence requires that the speaker have a knowledge of the social context, roles of participants, and the function of an interaction. In order to communicate, a speaker must not only know the grammatical rules of a language, but also the how and when to use that language. Finally, Canale and Swain (1980) created a fourth category: strategic competence. This category was the most complex. However, essentially it stated that a speaker must have knowledge of how to negotiate breakdowns of language or any of the other inherent unpredictable problems that arise in communication. It includes the use of paraphrasing, repetition, nonverbal gestures, guessing, and shifts of style. As Brown (2000) states, "It is the competence underlying our ability to make repairs, to cope with imperfect knowledge, and to sustain communication" (p. 247).

The goal of this curriculum is to promote students' communicative competence through exposure to meaningful authentic communication. Through using authentic recordings, students will learn not just the rules of English, they will also develop their sociolinguistic competence. The recordings that will be used are situated in common cultural contexts and therefore they will be valuable tools for introducing students to the cultural component of the English language. In addition, the authenticity of these recordings will develop the students' strategic competence. Unlike the unnatural and sterile language of many recorded language materials, authentic recordings include many examples of speakers negotiating meaning through strategic means. Students will be exposed to repetitions, guesses, paraphrasing, non-verbal sounds, hesitations, and other

examples of speakers negotiating breakdowns. Exposure to these pieces of language will bolster students' strategic competence.

Input Hypothesis

The main principle of Krashen's input hypothesis is that for adult language learners, there is a difference between the acquisition of a second language and the learning of a second language (Brown, 2000). While the second involves a conscious effort to learn the rules and systems of a language, the first is a more subtle and subconscious "picking up" of a language. According to Krashen, fluency in a second language is more acquired than learned, and thus adults should focus more on acquiring language as opposed to struggling with innumerable rules. Higgs (1985) notes that, "only language acquisition accounts for the spontaneous use of the target language" and "encouraging language acquisition rather than language learning... must be the primary goal of instruction" (p. 197).

In acquiring a second language, the learner should be exposed to structures which are one small step beyond their current level. Krashen named this concept, "i + 1," where "i" represents the student's current level and "+1" represents the level above (Brown, 2000). In regards to listening comprehension, students should be challenged but also just barely able to understand the material. In this way, students progress by being provided with comprehensible input at just the right level.

In the context of this field project, the lessons are designed for high-intermediate to advanced students who have already demonstrated proficiency in traditional listening

comprehension activities at their level. For these students, the “+1” will be the authentic and complicated nature of natural spoken English.

Significance of the Project

This project will be designed to specifically benefit ESL teachers at community colleges who are primarily teaching adult immigrant students. The recorded dialogues, along with the exercises and activities, will be organized in a convenient and practical way for teachers who are looking to incorporate authentic spoken language into their listening comprehension lessons. As mentioned before, these lessons are not designed to be the sole listening comprehension resources for an ESL course. Instead, their purpose is to supplement existing resources and provide teachers with quick, straightforward and well organized listening comprehension tasks where the focus is on authentic communication in real-world settings.

In addition to benefitting teachers, this project will also benefit ESL students who are currently not being challenged to comprehend authentic language in the classroom. Exposing students to authentic discourse through the materials in this project will prepare students to engage in conversations outside of the classroom. Furthermore, improving the quality of listening comprehension materials will increase their abilities and confidence in using English in their daily lives. It will also reinforce the benefits of studying English and attending community college.

Limitations

One of the limitations of this project is that the curriculum will be most effective for high intermediate to advanced level students. As noted earlier, listening

comprehension in a target language is already a complex and difficult task. When authentic materials are used, the complexity and degree of difficulty increases significantly. For this reason, the authentic recordings included in this curriculum will likely overwhelm beginning or low-intermediate students. Furthermore, it could potentially frustrate and discourage low level students from continuing their studies.

Another limitation of this project concerns the selection of recordings from the Storycorps archive. Many of these recordings feature senior citizens who use outdated language. For this reason, not all recordings will be useful.

Definition of Terms

Authentic Conversation - According to Peterson in Celce-Murcia's *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language* (2001), authenticity in speech includes, "reduced forms, fast speech features, false starts, hesitations, errors, some nonstandard dialects, and a variety of different voices" (p. 95).

Authentic Materials - Porter and Roberts (1981) define authentic texts as samples of language which were not intended for the purpose of teaching language. These materials have also been defined by Rogers and Medley (1988) as language samples where there is a natural form, as well as appropriate situational and cultural contexts which would be familiar and normal to native speakers of the language.

Communicative Competence - According to Freeman and Anderson (2011) in *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching*, communicative competence is the ability of "knowing when and how to say what to whom." (p. 115). This broad definition

emphasizes the social function of language, as opposed to its linguistic and structural components.

Comprehensible Input - Freeman and Anderson (2011) simply define comprehensible input as “meaningful exposure to the target language” (p. 103). The complexity of the input is in relation to the level of the students, and often the teacher will use expression, physical movement, and pictures to create meaning for the students.

Disfluency - Fox Tree (1995) writes that disfluencies include any phenomena which interrupt the flow of speech and that don’t add meaning. These could include long pauses, restarted sentences, filler words such as *uh* and *like*, and repeated words or phrases.

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) - In *Principles of Language Teaching and Learning* (2000), Brown defines EFL as learning English within a culture where English is not the primary language.

English as a Second Language (ESL) - According to Brown (2000), ESL is the study of English in a culture where English is spoken natively, for example in The United States or The United Kingdom.

English Language Learners (ELLs) - Bigelow and Schwarz (2010) define ELLs as anyone who is learning English when it is not their first language.

CHAPTER II REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Use of Authentic Materials for Second Language Acquisition

Strategies for Teaching Listening Comprehension

Intercultural Communicative Competence

Summary

CHAPTER II REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Adult immigrant students currently make up the majority of the student population in ESL courses at community colleges in the United States (Ellis, 1999). They enroll in these courses to help them adapt to their new English speaking environments, as well as to improve their employment opportunities (Blumenthal, 2002). A primary need for these students is improving their listening comprehension skills. However, often the materials used for these lessons are inadequate. In fact, many of the dialogues used in ESL courses feature formal, grammatically correct, and unnatural English (Huang, 2009). These types of recordings are not adequate for preparing students for listening comprehension outside of the classroom. What is needed is a listening comprehension curriculum that exposes students to authentic speech within a variety of cultural contexts.

The two second language acquisition theories that this curriculum is based on are: The Communicative Competence Theory, and The Input Hypothesis. This review of literature will examine these theories' role in improving listening comprehension for ESL students. First, it will cover the use of authentic materials for second language acquisition. Second, this review will examine strategies for teaching listening comprehension. The last category will explore intercultural communicative competence.

Use of Authentic Materials for Second Language Acquisition

Gilmore (2011) examined how the inclusion of authentic materials increased students' levels of communicative competence over ten months. In the study, sixty-two university students in Japan were assigned to two groups: one control group that used

primarily textbook input and one experimental group that used authentic input. The authentic materials included the form of films, documentaries, TV shows, newspaper articles, and home produced videos of native speakers. Teachers selected materials that highlighted different aspects of communicative competence. Students were given a pre- and post-test that involved eight assessments to measure their communicative competence: a listening test, a pronunciation test, a C-test, a grammar test, a vocabulary test, a discourse completion task, an oral interview, and a student-student role play. At the end of the ten month period, the experimental group outperformed the control group in five out of the eight tests. Gilmore (2011) states,

The results of this study strongly suggest that the authentic materials used with the experimental group in the investigation were better able to develop a range of communicative competencies in the learners than the two EFL textbooks used with the control group. (p. 810).

These findings were attributed to the fact that the authentic materials provided richer material which exposed students to a wider variety of linguistic, pragmatic, strategic and discourse features. The richer quality of the authentic materials also allowed teachers to call attention to these features and help students incorporate them into their own language (Gilmore, 2011).

Ghaderpanahi (2012) conducted an in-depth study on the effects of incorporating authentic aural materials on the listening comprehension abilities of thirty undergraduate students studying English in Iran. In her research, Ghaderpanahi outlined the challenges students encounter with listening comprehension: layers of sound, varying intonations,

and different accents. While at first students were challenged and frustrated by the speed and complexity of authentic speech, by the end of the study, interviews conducted with the students indicated that students felt more comfortable comprehending authentic materials. In addition, they were able to recognize the difference between English used in the classroom and English that they watched or listened to in the real world.

In the study, the authentic materials were paired with structured listening comprehension lessons as well as communicative exercises. At the conclusion of the study Ghaderpanahi (2012) stated that, “The analysis of data revealed that the students’ listening comprehension appeared to have improved after being exposed to authentic aural materials in the classroom.” (p. 149). She also emphasized that if the goal of an EFL course is to prepare students for real life situations outside of the classroom, authentic materials must be incorporated into listening comprehension lessons (Ghaderpanahi, 2012).

Similar to the two studies above, Al Qasim and Al Fadda (2013) found that exposing students to authentic speech increased their listening comprehension abilities. In this study, 46 female students in Saudi Arabia were divided into a control and an experimental group. The latter was given access to a number of podcasts on their mobile devices. Students in this group also created their own podcasts based on material in the course, and these podcasts were then shared with the rest of the class. At the conclusion of the study, the researchers found that the listening comprehension abilities of the experimental group improved more than the control group. In addition, podcasts provided the students with attractive opportunities for exposure to authentic speech and

encouraged vocabulary acquisition for higher students. Students also responded that they found the podcasts enjoyable, and that they gained confidence in their ability to comprehend spoken English (Al Qasim & Al Fadda, 2013).

The studies above are rooted in Krashen's Input Hypothesis, which is the theory that fluency in a second language is acquired through exposure at a comprehensible level (Brown, 2000). In all three of these studies, students were exposed to spoken English which was just beyond their current level. As mentioned earlier, Krashen named this process "i+1". For the purpose of this project, these studies clearly show the proven benefits of exposing ESL students to comprehensible input in the form of authentic materials.

Strategies for Teaching Listening Comprehension

Huang (2009) begins his article, *How to Teach Aural English More Effectively*, by asserting that listening comprehension has never received the same amount of attention as the other three modalities in the ESL classroom. In response, he argues that, "It is of vital importance to teach aural English more effectively." (p. 213). First, he highlights the main problems with listening comprehension lessons: monotonous pattern of teaching, ineffectiveness of teachers' roles, and student passivity. He then suggests a variety of changes that can help overcome these difficulties. To begin with, the listening environment should be more authentic. Speakers should be visible, either in person or on video, students should have to respond while listening (verbally or nonverbally), environmental clues such as background noise and descriptions of settings should be incorporated, and finally the materials should include real-life language features (Huang,

2009). The author asserts that the inclusion of these elements will greatly improve the quality and effectiveness of listening comprehension lessons.

The teaching of reduced forms is another strategy that has been shown to be effective in the context of listening comprehension. Reduced forms include: contractions such as “don’t” or “I’m,” omissions, such as the last “t” in “last night,” and pronunciation changes due to speed, such as “gonna” and “woulda.” Khaghaninezhad and Jafarzadeh (2013) conducted a study with 50 intermediate level Iranian students to ascertain whether the explicit teaching of reduced forms improved their listening comprehension abilities. In the study, the experimental group which received that extra instruction significantly outperformed the control group which only received standard listening comprehension instruction. The study also showed that the experimental group participants not only increased their awareness of reduced forms, but they were also able to produce more reduced forms in their own speech (Khaghaninezhad & Jafarzadeh, 2013).

In her article, *A Cognitive Perspective on Language Learners’ Listening Comprehension Problems*, Goh (2000) outlines the major cognitive difficulties that ESL students face when comprehending spoken English. The research is based on self-reports done by a group of Chinese EFL students at various levels. Goh (2000) analysed the data and organized it into the ten most cited problems. Of these, the three most common were: not recognizing words they hear, quickly forgetting what is heard, and understanding words but not the overall message. These problems were equally present for both high level and low level students (Goh, 2000).

At the conclusion of the article, Goh (2000) advocates for providing students with cognitive, metacognitive, and social affective strategies for improving their listening comprehension. For each category she gives 8-12 examples of activities and practices that can be incorporated into listening comprehension lessons. In addition, she feels that teachers should encourage learners to reflect on their difficulties. This process of increasing their metacognitive awareness would hopefully allow students to confront their listening comprehension struggles more openly and to be more effective in overcoming them.

The benefits of teaching students both cognitive and metacognitive strategies is also the subject of Guan's study, *The Effects of Explicit Listening Strategy Instruction on the Listening Comprehension of English as a Second Language Community College Students* (2014). Guan instructed select groups of community college students in the Bay Area on different listening techniques to see if they helped improve students' abilities. First, she interviewed students and found that the three most common problems were: small vocabulary size, underdeveloped listening vocabulary, and fast speech rate. In response, she developed vocabulary pre-listening activities, instructed the students on metacognitive practices such as directed attention, and also taught more complex cognitive techniques such as note-taking. She used both qualitative and quantitative methods to ascertain the efficacy of the different strategies. Guan (2014) found, "Both qualitative and quantitative analysis indicated that students' listening comprehension abilities had improved as a result of the explicit strategy instruction." (p. 117).

The results of these studies clearly show that an essential component of any listening comprehension curriculum involves the explicit instruction of listening techniques. The curriculum in this field project will incorporate the instruction of reduced forms, a variety of effective communicative activities, and the explicit teaching of cognitive and metacognitive strategies.

Intercultural Communicative Competence

In the introduction to the book, *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence* (1997), Byram explains the complex relationship between the teaching of language and culture. He writes that the importance of the cultural context of communication cannot be understated, as it greatly informs how information will be sent or received. For example, “(it) often involves the indirectness of politeness rather than the direct and efficient choice of language full of information.” (Byram, 1997, p. 3). However, in this case, what is polite in one culture may not be polite in another. Thus, successful communication cannot occur without cultural knowledge. Foreign language teachers must keep this at the forefront of their mind when teaching and designing curriculum.

One benefit of incorporating authentic materials into curriculum is that by their very nature, these materials have culture embedded within them. This was most certainly the case in a study by Gomez (2012) on the inclusion of authentic texts in a Colombian EFL classroom. Gomez (2012) writes that, “Teachers might reflect that, instead of giving importance to the learning of grammar rules through the use of non-authentic language, learners need to develop language knowledge and cultural awareness through more

authentic materials.” (p. 50). In his study, students read a short story by Steinbeck instead of a traditional text from a textbook. So while there was a linguistic component to the text, there was also a strong cultural component. The students learned about and discussed the causes and consequences of the Great Depression, the geographical location of the Salinas Valley, and the prevailing gender norms in 1930s America. “With this in mind, learners developed intercultural communicative competence as they constructed knowledge of language in context and acquired significant intercultural information.” (Gomez, 2012, p. 59).

While the curriculum in this field project will not be using authentic written texts like short stories from iconic American authors, it will be using authentic aural materials created by everyday Americans. The authenticity of these materials, and the universal themes they cover (romance, war, family, etc.), will provide students with an invaluable source of intercultural information which has been shown to be a necessary component of second language acquisition.

Summary

The first section of this review of literature showed clear benefits of incorporating authentic materials into ESL curriculum. Three studies, one in Japan, one in Iran, and one in Saudi Arabia, illustrated how a variety of authentic materials can increase student motivation, expose students to wide variety of language features, and increase student confidence in their listening comprehension abilities. Exposure to authentic materials has also been shown to increase students’ overall level of communicative competence.

The second section of this review concerned the teaching of listening comprehension in EFL/ESL classes. It began by outlining the inherent complexity and difficulties of spoken English, such as the rate of speech, prevalence of ungrammatical features, and disfluency. However, it also covered techniques and strategies that have been shown to be effective in overcoming these challenges. These included: explicit instruction of cognitive and metacognitive strategies, the teaching of reduced forms, and communicative activities that can be incorporated into lessons.

The final section covered the importance of intercultural competence in second language acquisition. Language and culture have always been intertwined, and it is impossible to truly acquire a second language without cultural knowledge of that language. Authentic materials are an extremely effective way of embedding cultural information into curriculum.

This field project will take the findings of these previous studies, and combine them into a focused, practical, and useful listening comprehension curriculum using Storycorps recordings. Currently, a listening comprehension curriculum based on authentic recordings, embedded with intercultural information, and designed for high-intermediate immigrant students, does not exist. This project will meet that need and increase the level of communicative competence for its students.

CHAPTER III
THE PROJECT AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

Description of the Project

Development of the Project

The Project

CHAPTER III THE PROJECT AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

The Description of the Project

This field project is a listening comprehension curriculum for high intermediate to advanced adult students who are taking courses at community colleges or adult education centers. The project includes five Storycorps dialogues which feature authentic speakers of American English. Each chapter of the curriculum is centered on one of these recordings. Within each chapter there are a variety of pre-, during, and post-listening activities and exercises, which are designed in accordance to the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). The tasks and materials included in the curriculum are designed to maximize the benefit of the recordings.

The pre-listening portion of the lessons focuses on introducing new vocabulary, activating prior knowledge, building cultural schemata, and previewing the audio with focus questions. To convey the meaning of new vocabulary, visual representations, definitions, synonyms, and examples are used. In regards to activating prior knowledge and building cultural schemata, anticipation guides and KWL charts are incorporated.

The curriculum includes instructions for teachers on how to play the recordings during the listening portion of the lesson. In addition, suggestions for during listening activities are provided such as jotting down specific numbers, noting facts or names, listening for keywords, or completing cloze exercises.

The post-listening portion of the lessons contains several sections. The first section covers comprehension and contains true and false questions, multiple choice questions, short answer questions, and exercises where students must chronologically

re-assemble the story. The second section covers vocabulary exercises such as matching, fill in the blank, and using the word in context. The third section includes extension activities for each dialogue. These could take the form of discussion questions, role plays where the students continue the story, student created dialogues on similar scenarios, or other group projects based on the same topic.

The recordings chosen for the project cover a range of topics, many of which are related to immigrant adult ESL students. The first dialogue, *Making It*, features a young man speaking with his former high school teacher about growing up poor in Chicago, and what he had to do in order to survive. The second recording, *Always a Family*, features a mother recalling the phone call she received from her divorced husband as he was trapped in one of the Twin Towers on 9/11. The third dialogue, *Crossing the Border*, involves a mother and her daughter recollecting on the difficulties they encountered as new immigrants to the United States. The fourth dialogue, *Knifepoint*, details one man's unique approach to dealing with a mugger in New York City. The final recording, *The Nature of War*, features a veteran of the Iraq War, recalling the friendship he made with two Iraqi children, and the tragedy they encountered.

The Development of the Project

This idea for this field project was influenced by the personal language learning experiences of the author. Over the last fifteen years the author studied Spanish, Chinese, Russian and French in high school classrooms, at universities, and overseas in intensive language programs. Over this range of experiences, he began to notice commonalities in the process of language learning. He also began noticing common areas of struggle and

of these, one routinely appeared. While despite having a strong foundation in grammar, vocabulary and conversation within the class, he was completely unable to engage in actual conversations outside of the classroom. When conversing with a native speaker, the author was generally able to express what he wanted to say, but he was unable to comprehend their speech. It was simply too fast, too fluid and contained too many unrecognizable words. Over time, his listening comprehension improved but only with hours and hours of struggling through conversations. The author was routinely struck by the disconnect between his confidence in the classroom and his inabilities outside of the classroom. After working as an EFL instructor in Ukraine and Burundi, and an ESL instructor in the United States, he discovered that this was a universal problem. Regardless the country or context, students would inevitably lament that while they understood everything in the classroom, they felt unable to keep up in authentic conversations outside of class. These experiences convinced the author that a better listening comprehension curriculum, centered around authentic speech, was a necessary yet missing component of many language courses.

The Project

Please see the appendix for the project.

CHAPTER IV
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Recommendations

CHAPTER IV CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

In many ESL courses there is a large disconnect between the language students hear in traditional listening comprehension materials, and the language they hear spoken outside of class in their daily lives. As covered extensively above, multiple features of authentic speech make it incredibly complex and difficult for language learners to comprehend. However, ESL courses are doing their students a disservice by not adequately preparing them to comprehend and engage in authentic discussions outside of the classroom.

In response, the purpose of this project was to create a listening comprehension curriculum which exposes and familiarizes students with some of the many ways in which English is naturally spoken. The curriculum used conversations between real Americans which were recorded and produced by the StoryCorps foundation. Not only do these conversations feature authentic speakers of English, they also cover a wide variety of topics which will be of interest to adult, immigrant, ESL students. The topics, along with the exercises, activities and discussions which accompany them, will also strengthen students' intercultural communicative competence.

Recommendations

While this curriculum is designed to meet the needs and interests of a large group of English learners, it is not suitable for every ESL or EFL student. When implementing this curriculum, it is important to ensure that the students already possess the necessary level of English for them to successfully learn from the materials. Beginning and low

intermediate students could easily become confused, frustrated, and discouraged from the difficulty of trying to comprehend authentic English speech. For this reason, it is recommended that this curriculum is used with high intermediate and advanced students.

In addition, these lessons are not intended to become the sole source of listening comprehension materials in an ESL classroom. They should be used in conjunction with existing and more traditional listening comprehension materials. When they are used, the instructor should emphasize that the goal for these lessons is to expose and familiarize students to authentic speech, in order to better prepare them for authentic communication in the real world.

While this curriculum could be used in a variety of ESL settings, it was designed with a specific student population in mind: adult, immigrant, ESL students studying at community colleges or adult education centers in the United States. Because this student population is adjusting to not only a new language, but also a new environment and culture, these lessons emphasize intercultural communicative competence. The goal of this curriculum is to not only familiarize students to authentic speech, but also to help them culturally adjust to life in the United States, and introduce them to several of the innumerable cultural mores, attitudes, and norms of American life. For this reason, the topics and subjects of these lessons are encouraged to be examined, discussed, and debated in as many ways as possible. Instructors should do everything they can to promote meaningful and thoughtful discussions around these topics. These lessons are not merely a set of grammar exercises. Instead, they are a launch pad for stimulating, thought provoking, and intellectually complex discussions.

Finally, the author would encourage instructors who find this curriculum useful to incorporate more authentic materials into the classroom. This curriculum uses five animated videos from Storycorps.gov. However, there are dozens more animated recordings easily accessible online, as well as more than 65,000 archived conversations between real people on the StoryCorps website. These recordings cover almost every aspect of the human experience, and instructors are encouraged to search and incorporate more of them into their listening comprehension lessons. Not only will they expose students to authentic American English, their authentic nature will inherently make the activities more meaningful and interesting for students.

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APPENDIX



Authentic Listening

with **StoryCorps[®]**

By Michael McClure

Authentic Listening with StoryCorps

By

Michael McClure



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Introduction

This listening comprehension curriculum is designed to introduce and familiarize ESL students with authentic American English. Listening comprehension is a crucial skill for ESL students; however, often the materials used for these lessons feature unnatural or overly simplified speech. As a result, students are not adequately prepared to comprehend authentic speech outside of the classroom.

In contrast, this curriculum uses recordings and videos of everyday Americans sharing powerful stories from their lives. These recordings were created and archived by the StoryCorps Organization. This organization has been providing Americans with the opportunity to make and save recordings since 2003. These recordings are then put online for the public to access, and especially moving conversations are frequently broadcast on public radio throughout the country. In addition, dozens of these recordings have been professionally animated, and these are available on youtube.

The intended audience for this curriculum is adult, intermediate - high intermediate students, studying at community colleges or adult education centers in the United States. The topics and recordings chosen for this curriculum strive to meet the needs, and interests of this population.

Note for Teachers

Purpose of this Curriculum:

The purpose of this curriculum is to expose ESL students to authentic American English. The lessons are not designed to completely replace existing listening comprehension curriculum. Instead, they are designed to supplement those materials, and to emphasize the authentic nature of the featured speech. The exercises and activities included with each lesson will allow students to maximize the benefits of each recording.

In addition, the topics of each lesson were chosen to promote lively and stimulating discussions within the class. Teachers should do everything they can to encourage and support these discussions. The lessons are meant to be engaging, relatable, and useful for adult immigrant ESL students.

How to Use this Curriculum:

Teachers should follow the lessons as written in the handbook, encouraging student participation. The recordings are available on the provided DVD, or they can be accessed online on either youtube or the StoryCorps website (storycorps.gov). The simplest way to find them online is to search the title of the episode + “storycorps.”

After the pre-listening portion of the lesson, teachers should play the recording once at normal speed. Next, teachers should return to the focus questions and answer them as a class. Then, teachers should play the recording again, and this time students will complete the *During Listening* exercise. After this second playing, students should complete the comprehension questions, vocabulary exercises, and extension activities. Teachers are also encouraged to present the videos at the completion of each lesson (suggestions for video activities are included at the end of the workbook)

Making It

Listen to Noe Rueda telling his former teacher what it was like to grow up poor in Chicago.

Pre-Listening

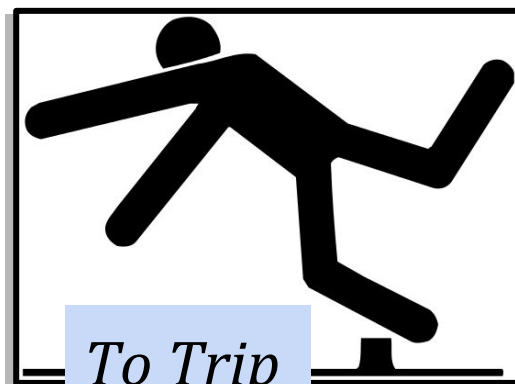
1. Vocabulary



Comic Books



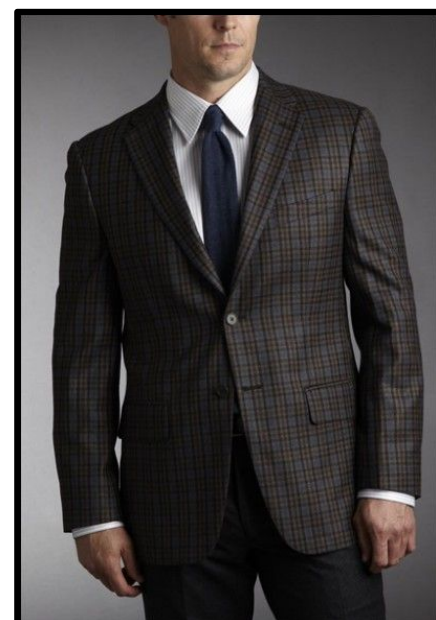
Millionaire



To Trip



Construction Site



Dressed Sharp

Word	Definition	Word in Context
<i>To Realize</i>	To understand or become aware of something	<i>The man realized that he forgot his wallet at home.</i>
<i>To Dedicate</i>	To commit to a goal	<i>He dedicated himself to helping others.</i>
<i>Motivation</i>	Giving someone a reason for doing something	<i>My motivation for studying is that I want to go to college.</i>
<i>Allowance</i>	Money that children receive from their parents	<i>The boy received a five dollar allowance every week.</i>
<i>Chore</i>	Tasks that children must do at home	<i>My least favorite chore is washing dishes.</i>



2. Activating Prior Knowledge

A. Answer the following questions with a partner.

1. Did you have chores when you were a child?
2. How did you help your family at home?
3. Did you receive an allowance?
4. In your home country, at what age do people start working?

B. What chores do you think are normal for a ten year old? Place the following chores in the column where you think they belong.

Making dinner	Cleaning the bathroom	Having a job
Walking the dog	Taking out the trash	Buying groceries

Not Normal	Possibly	Normal

3. Focus Questions

- A. How would you describe this family?
- B. How did Noe Rueda help his mom?
- C. What is Noe Rueda doing now?



■ During Listening

1. First Listen

In this recording, Noe Rueda tells his former teacher, Alex Fernandez, what it was like to grow up poor. Listen to the recording and try to find the answers to the focus questions.

2. Second Listen

Who is speaking? Listen to the recording again and circle the speaker.

A. My mother, she would actually make under 8,000 a year.	Noe Rueda	Alex Fernandez
B. I didn't make much. I made like twenty bucks a week.	Noe Rueda	Alex Fernandez
C. That's a lot of comic books and stuff.	Noe Rueda	Alex Fernandez
D. From that point on, I just dedicated on getting money for my family.	Noe Rueda	Alex Fernandez
E. How did you make that money?	Noe Rueda	Alex Fernandez
F. I did not sell drugs.	Noe Rueda	Alex Fernandez

■ Post-Listening

1. Comprehension Questions

A. True or False?

- | | | |
|---|------|-------|
| 1. His mom made more than \$8,000 a month. | True | False |
| 2. When he was 8 years old, he sold products in front of his house. | True | False |
| 3. The boy spent all his money on comic books. | True | False |
| 4. Working at construction sites hurt his body. | True | False |
| 5. The boy was teased for painting his shoes white. | True | False |



Alex Fernandez and Noe Rueda

B. Multiple Choice

1. What did he sell in front of his house?
 - a. Products
 - b. Fruits and vegetables
 - c. Comic books
2. Why did he paint his shoes white?
 - a. It was for his job
 - b. To make them look new
 - c. He was copying other children
3. Where did he work?
 - a. At a supermarket
 - b. At a restaurant
 - c. At a construction site
4. What is the boy doing now?
 - a. He is going to college
 - b. He is working construction
 - c. He is a teacher

C. Short Answer Questions

1. What did Noe Rueda dedicate himself to?

2. How was the boy different from other children?

3. Why did he not sell drugs?

4. What is his motivation for going to college?

2. Vocabulary Exercises

A. Matching

 D 1. Comic Books

A. To fall; stumble

 2. Millionaire

B. The reason for doing something

 3. Construction Site

C. To do something for someone

 4. Dressed Sharp

D. Short books with many pictures

 5. Motivation

E. To suddenly understand

 6. To Trip

F. Wearing nice clothes

 7. To Realize

G. A place where they build buildings

 8. To Dedicate

H. Someone who has a million dollars



B. Fill in the blanks

Comic Books

Millionaire

Construction Site

Dressed Sharp

Motivation

To Trip

To Dedicate

To Realize

1. On the way to school I _____ that I forgot my lunch.
2. It is important to be _____ for job interviews.
3. Children often save up money to buy _____.
4. I called up the radio station and _____ a song to my girlfriend.
5. In order to graduate college, you must have strong _____.
6. Be careful not to _____ and fall down the hill. They are many dangerous stones.
7. The homes are beautiful, but only a _____ could afford them.
8. Right now it is only a _____, but soon there will be a new hospital.



3. Extension Activities

A. Discussion

Should children have jobs? Work with a group of partners and come up with a list of reasons why children should work, and why children should not work. Then discuss your list with the class.

Children Should Work	Children Should Not Work



B. Create a Dialogue

Imagine you met with one of your old teachers. What would you tell them now? What questions do you think they would ask you? Create a dialogue similar to the one you just heard and practice it with a partner.

Always a Family

Listen to Monique Ferrer recalling when her ex-husband called her from the World Trade Center on 9/11.

Pre-Listening

1. Vocabulary



Expression	Meaning	Expression in Context
<i>The only thing on my mind</i>	To be thinking about only one thing; to obsess over something	<i>When I crashed my car, the only thing on my mind was how am I going to afford a new one.</i>
<i>Drives me crazy</i>	To get extremely annoyed or frustrated	<i>My little brother is six years old and he drives me crazy!</i>
<i>Breaks my heart</i>	To be hurt emotionally	<i>When my girlfriend told me she was leaving, it broke my heart.</i>

B. Activating Prior Knowledge

1. Complete the following chart about 9/11, and discuss it with the class.



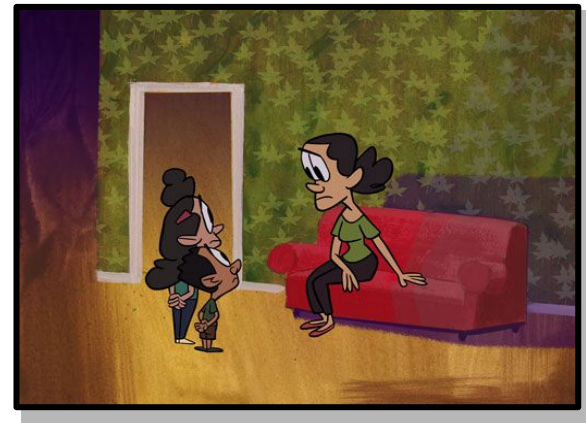
What do you already know about 9/11?	What do you want to learn about 9/11?	After the class discussion, what did you learn about 9/11?

A. Answer the following questions with a partner.

1. What do you think is the best age to get married?
2. In your home country, is divorce common?
3. Why do couples get divorced?
4. Is it possible to still love someone after you are divorced?

3. Focus Questions

- A. What happened to Monique's marriage?
- B. Who called her on 9/11?
- C. Where did he call from?



■ During Listening

1. First Listen

In this recording, Monique Ferrer recalls her marriage and her experience on 9/11. Listen to the recording and try to find the answers to the focus questions.



2. Second Listen

What numbers do you hear in this recording? As you listen, write down what numbers you hear. Then circle what type of number it is.

- | | | | | |
|------------------|-----|------|------|---------|
| A. <u> 14 </u> | Age | Date | Time | Floor # |
| B. _____ | Age | Date | Time | Floor # |
| C. _____ | Age | Date | Time | Floor # |
| D. _____ | Age | Date | Time | Floor # |
| E. _____ | Age | Date | Time | Floor # |

■ Post-Listening

1. Comprehension Questions

A. True or False?

- | | | |
|--|------|-------|
| 1. Monique was 14 when she was married to Michael. | True | False |
| 2. They had two children before they were divorced. | True | False |
| 3. Michael told the children that he still loved their mother. | True | False |
| 4. Monique's daughter was not at school because she was sick. | True | False |
| 5. Michael talked to his daughter on the phone. | True | False |

B. Multiple Choice

1. Michael and Monique were married when she was ____ years old.
 - a. 14
 - b. 19
 - c. 25
2. What did Michael confide in the children?
 - a. He still loved their mother.
 - b. He had a new family.
 - c. He was going to die.
3. Where was Michael on 9/11?
 - a. He was on one of the planes that hit the towers.
 - b. He was at home with Monique and her daughter.
 - c. He was on the 103 floor of the World Trade Center.
4. Why did Monique not put her daughter on the phone?
 - a. Her daughter was at school.
 - b. She did not know how Michael would react.
 - c. She was scared for her daughter.



Monique Ferrer

C. Short Answer

1. Why does Monique think they got divorced?

2. Why was Monique's daughter not at school that day?

3. Why did Michael call Monique on 9/11?

4. How do her children remind her of Michael?

5. Even though he *drove her crazy*, what does Monique think of Michael?

2. Vocabulary Exercises

A. Matching

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| _____ 1. Divorced | A. The Twin Towers in New York City |
| _____ 2. To Confide | B. To become overwhelmed with emotion |
| _____ 3. Hysterical | C. To end a marriage |
| _____ 4. To Joke | D. To make people laugh |
| _____ 5. The World Trade Center | E. To tell a secret |

B. Expressions

1. Match each expression with a picture.

<i>The only thing on my mind</i>	<i>Drives me crazy</i>
<i>Breaks my heart</i>	



2. Match each expression with a situation.



Drives me crazy

Your loyal, kind, and trustworthy dog dies after 15 years.

Breaks my heart

You are anxiously waiting to hear if you got a promotion. You are checking your email constantly and asking your co-workers if they heard anything.

The only thing on my mind

You have to spend the weekend with your mother-in-law, and she asks you over and over why you don't have kids yet.

C. Use each vocabulary word in sentence

1. *Divorced*

2. *To Confide*

3. *Hysterical*

4. *To Joke*

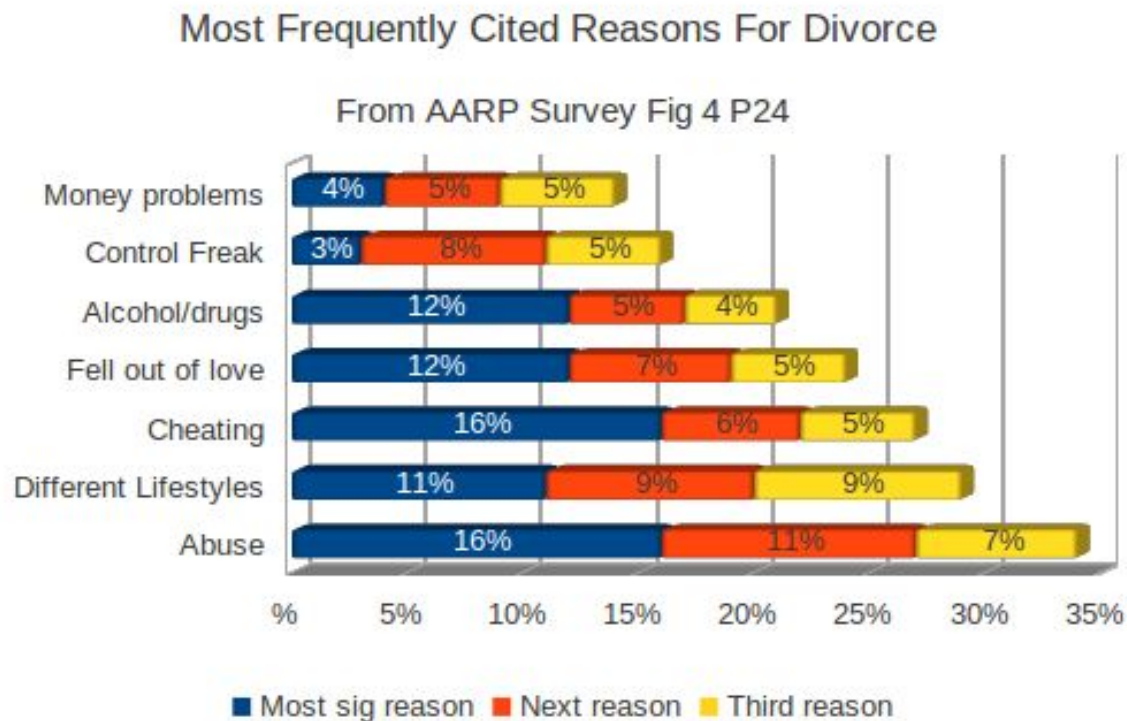
5. *The World Trade Center*

3. Extension Activities

A. Survey

In the United States, more than half of marriages end in divorce. Why do you think this is? Ask five students in your class these questions, and report your findings to the class.

1. Do you know anyone who is divorced?
2. What do you think is the most common reason people get divorced?
3. What do you think couples can do to avoid divorce?
4. Can people still be friends after they are divorced?



B. Dialogue

Imagine the phone conversation between Monique and her ex-husband. Re-enact the phone conversation with a partner. What do you think they actually said to each other?

The Icing on the Cake

Listen to Connie Alvarez interviewing her mother, Bianca Alvarez, about what it was like immigrating to the United States from Mexico.

Pre-Listening

1. Vocabulary

Babysitter



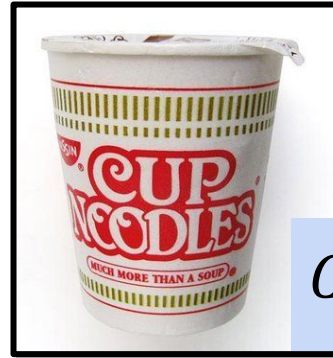
Pajamas



Couch



Cup of Noodles



Word	Definition	Word in Context
<i>To Neglect</i>	To forget about; to ignore	<i>I bought a beautiful plant, but because I neglected it, the plant died.</i>
<i>Inspiration</i>	A person, place, or experience that makes someone want to do something	<i>After the art museum, I was filled with inspiration to paint.</i>
<i>Night Shift</i>	Working hours at night	<i>My mom isn't home because she is working the night shift.</i>

Expression	Meaning	Expression in Context
<i>To make ends meet</i>	To be able pay bills; to be able to survive	<i>Many people must work two jobs to make ends meet.</i>
<i>Nothing can stand in my way</i>	Nothing can stop someone from achieving their dreams	<i>Now that I have my diploma, nothing can stand in my way!</i>
<i>The icing on the cake</i>	An additional benefit to something already good	<i>After we won the championship, the kiss from my girlfriend was the icing on the cake.</i>

2. Activating Prior Knowledge

B. What was your first job in the United States? Ask your classmates, and write their name on the chart below. See if you can complete the entire chart.



1. What was your first job in the United States?

2. My first job was _____.

Gardener _____	Doctor _____	Painter _____	Waiter/Waitress _____
Teacher _____	Custodian _____	Driver _____	Nurse _____
Factory Worker _____	Nanny _____	Engineer _____	Cook _____

B. Interview your partner.

1. Why did you decide to immigrate to the United States?
2. What types of jobs have you done here?
3. What is difficult about living in the United States?
4. What is easier about living in the United States?

3. Focus Questions

- A. What jobs did Connie's mother have in the United States?
- B. How was their life when they first came to the United States?
- C. What inspired Connie to go to college?



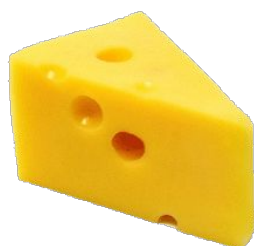
■ During Listening

1. First Listen

In this recording, Connie Alvarez interviews her mother about coming to the United States as an immigrant in 1972. Listen to the interview, and try to answer the focus questions

2. Second Listen

What foods do you hear in this recording? Circle any of the foods that Bianca or Connie mention.



Post-Listening

1. Comprehension Questions

A. True or False?

- | | | |
|---|------|-------|
| 1. Bianca Alvarez worked the night shift as a gardener. | True | False |
| 2. Connie Alvarez came to work and slept on couches. | True | False |
| 3. The bosses knew that Bianca was bringing her kids to work. | True | False |
| 4. Their family had hard times when Connie was young. | True | False |
| 5. Connie did not finish college because her mom didn't either. | True | False |

B. Multiple Choice

1. What was the first job Bianca had in the United States.
 - a. Cleaning offices
 - b. Cook
 - c. Gardener
2. Why did she bring her kids to work?
 - a. She worked the night shift, and they didn't have a babysitter.
 - b. The bosses liked her kids.
 - c. The kids helped her clean.
3. What did she buy her children?
 - a. Candy
 - b. Cup of Noodles
 - c. Bean tacos
4. How long did her father not have a job?
 - a. Two weeks
 - b. Six months
 - c. One year



C. Short Answer

1. Why did Bianca bring her children to work?

2. Why did they eat so many bean tacos?

3. What would Bianca do differently if she could raise Connie again?

4. What was Connie's biggest inspiration for finishing college?

5. What is the most important thing for Connie?

2. Vocabulary Exercises

A. Matching

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| _____ 1. Night Shift | A. To have a desire to do something |
| _____ 2. Couch | B. What you wear to sleep |
| _____ 3. Babysitter | C. A cheap snack |
| _____ 4. Pajamas | D. Working from 7pm to 7am |
| _____ 5. Cup of Noodle | E. A comfortable place to sit |
| _____ 6. Inspiration | F. To forget about; to ignore |
| _____ 7. To Neglect | G. Someone who watches children |

B. Fill in the blanks

<i>Night Shift</i>	<i>Babysitter</i>	<i>Pajamas</i>
<i>Cup of Noodle</i>	<i>To Neglect</i>	<i>Couch</i>
		<i>Inspiration</i>

- In Vietnam I don't wear _____ when I sleep because it is too hot.
- My friends love to come over and watch the basketball game on my _____.
- I'm starving because all I ate for lunch was a _____.
- The artist said that his _____ for his art was nature.
- I _____ to pay my bills and now I owe a penalty.
- My dad works the _____ so he sleeps during the day.
- One of the costs of having children is that you often must pay for a _____.

C. Match each expression with a situation

To make ends meet

Today I got a raise at work, and they gave me a new office with a view.

Nothing can stand in my way

I've prepared for this test for months. I know the material extremely well. I am completely ready to take this test.

The icing on the cake

I work 60 hours a week, but this city is still so expensive. Just getting by is very difficult!



Bianca and Connie Alvarez



3. Extension Activities

A. Dialogue

With a partner, create a dialogue where you interview each other about your experiences immigrating to the United States. Why did you come? What was difficult? What made life easier?

B. Class Discussion

Immigration is always a controversial issue in the United States. Use the table below to organize your thoughts, and then have a class discussion with the following questions.

Why do people immigrate to the U.S.	Who should be allowed to immigrate to the U.S. ?	Who should not be allowed to immigrate to the U.S.?

1. How does immigration help the United States?
2. What challenges does immigration bring?
3. What should be required of immigrants coming to the United States?



Knifepoint

On his way home from work, Julio Diaz was held up at knifepoint. Listen to how he reacted.

Pre-Listening

1. Vocabulary



Word	Definition	Word in Context
<i>To Risk</i>	The possibility or chance of loss, danger or injury	If you don't study, you are risking failing this course.
<i>To Behave</i>	To act in a certain manner	The children behaved well all morning, so they got an ice cream.
<i>(To be) Held Up</i>	To be stopped on the street and robbed	I got held up last week and the thief took my phone and wallet.

Expression	Meaning	Expression in Context
<i>I'll treat you to</i> —	To buy something for someone	<i>Let's go out. I'll treat you to dinner.</i>
<i>Treat people right</i>	To give people respect, and to act with compassion and courtesy	<i>My father was not rich or powerful, but he was respected because he always treated people right.</i>

2. Activating Prior Knowledge

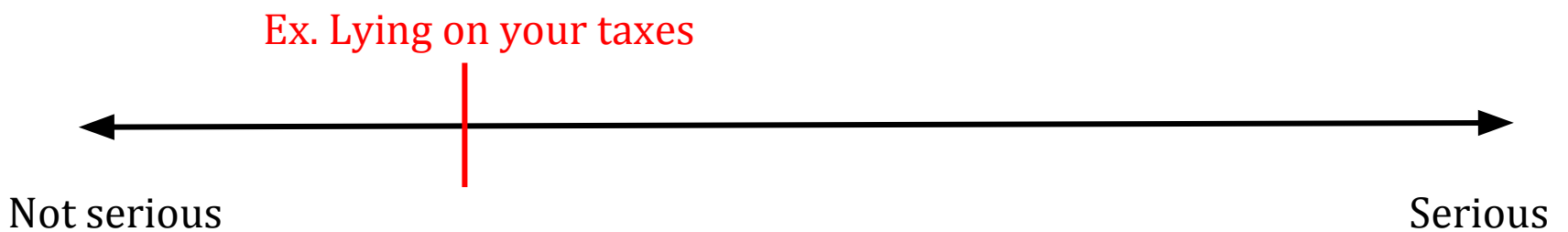
A. Answer the following questions with a partner.

1. Have you ever been robbed?
2. What was taken?
3. How do you feel after you have been robbed?
4. What did you do?



B. What crimes are more serious than others? Place the following crimes on the line below. Compare your work to your partner's work and discuss.

Robbing someone at gunpoint	Speeding	Driving drunk
Buying drugs	Underage drinking	Stealing groceries



3. Focus Questions

- A. What happened to Julio Diaz when he got off the train?
- B. How did he react?
- C. What did he exchange with the thief after their meal?



Julio Diaz

■ During Listening

1. First Listen

In this recording, Julio Diaz retells an experience he had in a New York City subway station. Listen to the recording, and try to answer the focus questions above.

2. Second Listen

Listen to the recording again, and fill in the missing words or phrases.

So I get off the _____. You know, I'm walking towards the stairs and this young _____, uh, pulls out a knife. He wants my money. So I just gave him my wallet and told him, 'Here you go.' He starts to leave and as he's walking away I'm like, 'Hey, wait a minute.

_____. If you're gonna be robbing people for the rest of the night, you might as well take my _____ to keep you warm.'

So, you know, he's looking at me like, 'What's going on here?' You know, and he asked me, 'Why are you doing this?' And I'm like, 'Well, I don't know, man, if you're willing to risk your _____ for a few dollars then I guess you must really need the _____. I mean, all I wanted to do was go get dinner and, uh, if you really want to join me, hey, you're more than welcome.'

■ Post-Listening

1. Comprehension Questions

A. True or False?

- | | | |
|--|------|-------|
| 1. Julio Diaz was robbed at gunpoint. | True | False |
| 2. The teenager asked for his wallet and his coat. | True | False |
| 3. Julio was worried about the teenager being cold. | True | False |
| 4. At the diner, Julio treated the teenager to dinner. | True | False |
| 5. The teenager gave his knife to Julio. | True | False |

B. Put the story in the correct order.

- _____ A teenager held him up at knifepoint.
- _____ Julio gave the teenager twenty dollars in exchange for his knife.
- _____ Julio invited the teenager to dinner.
- _____ The teenager gave Julio his wallet back.
- ___1___ Julio got off the train in a subway station in New York City.
- _____ Julio offered the teenager his coat.
- _____ The teenager was impressed by how Julio treated the diner staff.
-

C. Short Answer Questions

1. Where was Julio Diaz?

2. Why did the teenager stop him?

3. After he gave the teenager his wallet, what did Julio say?

4. Where did they go next?

5. What did Julio ask for when he gave the teenager twenty dollars?

2. Vocabulary Exercises

A. Matching



____ 1. Knifepoint

A. To have things taken from you violently

____ 2. Booth

B. A big, comfortable seat in a restaurant

____ 3. To Rob

C. To act in a certain way

____ 4. Wallet

D. The sharp point of a knife

____ 5. To Risk

E. To take a chance

____ 6. To Behave

F. To steal something

____ 7. (To Be) Held Up

G. A place to keep credit cards and money

B. Fill in the blanks

<i>Wallet</i>	<i>Booth</i>	<i>Knifepoint</i>	
<i>To Rob</i>	<i>To Risk</i>	<i>To Behave</i>	<i>To Be Held Up</i>

1. I don't want to skydive because I don't want to _____ my life.
2. Even if you are poor, it is not a good idea to _____ banks.
3. When the _____ is dull, it is hard to clean the fish.
4. Whenever we go to the diner we always ask the waitress for a _____.
5. I lost my _____ yesterday, and now I have to cancel my credit cards.
6. When my cousin was _____ he did not report it to the police.
7. If you _____, I will treat you to an ice cream cone.

C. Use each vocabulary word in sentence

1. *Wallet*

2. *To Rob*

3. *To Behave*

4. *To Risk*

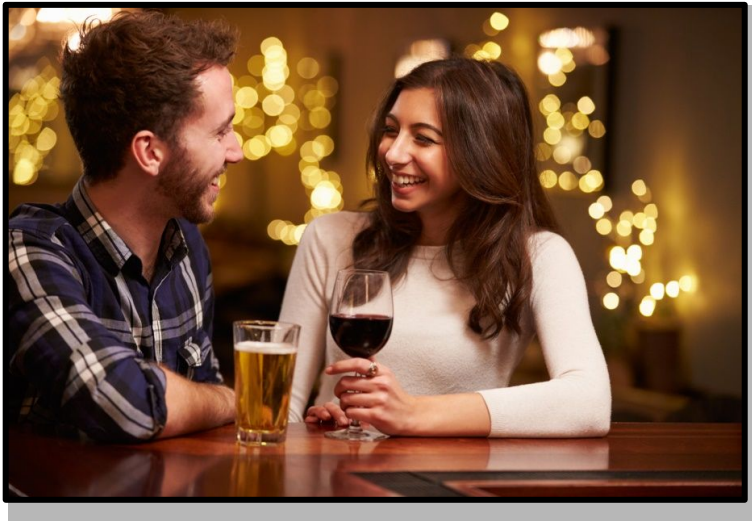
5. *To Be Held Up*



I **risked** missing my train because I stopped for the bathroom

D. Circle the nouns that complete the expression logically

I'm going to treat you to _____!



dinner

~~my homework~~

a movie

lunch

an argument

extra work

a new toy

my bill

3. Extension Activities

A. Discussion Questions

Answer the following questions as a class.

1. How would you describe Julio Diaz?
2. Do you think the teenager learned from this experience?
3. Could you do the same thing in his situation?

B. Dialogue

With a partner, act out the scene between Julio and the teenager.

Use the following pieces of dialogue in your scene.

Julio Diaz - If you're going to be robbing people for the rest of the night, you might as well take my coat.

Teenager - Man, you know everybody here. Do you own this place?

Julio Diaz - Haven't you been taught that you should be nice to everybody?

The Nature of War

In this conversation, Army veteran Justin Cliburn tells his wife about two boys he met while serving in Iraq.

Pre-Listening

1. Vocabulary

Humvee



Curb



Rock, Paper, Scissors



Camouflage



To Detonate



Word	Definition	Word in Context
<i>Compound</i>	A group of buildings surrounded by a fence or wall	The compound was safe, but outside the walls it was quite dangerous.
<i>To Encounter</i>	To meet; to come upon	The sailor encountered many storms on his way to Australia.
<i>Outgoing</i>	Friendly, talkative; not shy	Outgoing people are more likely to make friends.

Expression	Meaning	Expression in Context
<i>To open up</i>	To express one's emotions	<i>Some people say that men have more difficulty opening up, however I disagree.</i>
<i>Something to look forward to</i>	To be excited about something	<i>My vacation this month is something to look forward to.</i>

2. Activating Prior Knowledge

A. Complete the following chart about the Iraq War, and discuss it with the class.

What do you already know about the Iraq War?	What do you want to learn about the Iraq War?	After the class discussion, what did you learn about the Iraq War?

B. Answer the following questions with a partner.

1. Do you have any family members who are soldiers?
2. Where were you in 2006?
3. Do you remember hearing about the Iraq War?

3. Focus Questions

- A. How did Justin meet these boys?
- B. How did he feel about them?
- C. What happened to Ahmed?



■ During Listening

1. First Listen

In this recording, Justin Cliburn tells his wife about two Iraqi boys he met while he was working in Iraq as a soldier. Listen to the recording and try to answer the focus questions.



2. Second Listen

Listen to the recording again, and fill in the missing words or phrases.

He was very _____. And the second or third time that I met him, he brought his best friend, Ahmed. And Ahmed was much more _____. And so, Ali really opened up. And once I met these children, it made every day something I looked forward to. We would play _____. We would kick around a _____. We were about as close as people that don't speak the same language can be. I had never been really good with _____, and this was the first time I felt like I loved someone who wasn't my _____. But one day Ali showed up and I could tell something wasn't right.

Post-Listening

1. Comprehension Questions

A. True or False?

- | | | |
|--|------|-------|
| 1. Unlike the other children, Ahmed was shy. | True | False |
| 2. Ahmed, Ali, and Justin played basketball together. | True | False |
| 3. Ahmed told Justin that Ali had been injured by a bomb. | True | False |
| 4. The soldiers collected clothing for Ali and his mother. | True | False |
| 5. Ahmed told Justin that Ali had died. | True | False |



B. Put the story in the correct order.

- _____ Ahmed tells Justin that Ali has been injured in a bomb blast.
- _____ Justin, Ali, and Ahmed begin spending time together.
- _____ Justin watches news reports on Iraq and looks for Ahmed.
- _____ Ahmed tells Justin that Ali has died.
- 1_____ Justin sees a shy boy on the compound.
- _____ The soldiers collect money for Ali's family.
- _____ Ahmed introduces the shy boy to Justin.



Justin and Deanne Cliburn



Ali

C. Short Answer Questions

1. Who did Justin meet first?

2. What did Justin look forward to each day?

3. How did the soldiers react when they heard about Ali?

4. How did Ahmed tell Justin that Ali had died?

2. Vocabulary Exercises

A. Match the vocabulary word with the picture

Camouflage

Curb

To Detonate

Rock, Paper, Scissors

Humvee

Compound



B. Matching

_____ 1. Curb

A. Friendly; social

_____ 2. Rock, Paper, Scissors

B. To explode

_____ 3. Compound

C. A group of buildings within a wall

_____ 4. Humvee

D. The cement that borders a road

_____ 5. Camouflage

E. A pattern that resembles nature

_____ 6. To Detonate

F. A military car

_____ 7. Outgoing

G. A simple game involving fingers

C. Fill in the blanks

<i>Camouflage</i>	<i>Compound</i>	<i>Humvee</i>
<i>Curb</i>	<i>Rock, Paper, Scissors</i>	<i>Outgoing</i>

1. Children play _____ when they are bored.
2. My _____ can drive over almost any terrain.
3. When you are going hunting, it is important to wear _____.
4. In her first week at college, the _____ girl joined ten clubs.
5. My car hit the _____ and went spinning into the park.
6. The soldiers hiked back to their _____ for safety.

D. Use each vocabulary word in sentence

1. *To Detonate*

2. *To Encounter*

3. *To open up*

4. *Something to look forward to*



This woman **is opening up** with her old friend.

3. Extension Activities

A. Discussion Questions

Answer the following questions as a class.

1. Why do you think Justin looked forward to spending time with the boys?
2. How did this experience affect Justin?
3. What do you think Ahmed is doing now?

B. Describe the picture

The photographs below are all famous images of the Iraq War. With a partner, describe the images. See if your partner can correctly guess which image you are speaking about.

1.



3.



2.



4.



Appendix

Video Activities

Each of these recordings includes a video. These videos can be accessed either on the accompanying disc, or online via youtube or storycorps.org.

1. What is going on in this video?

Have students form partnerships and arrange them so that partners are facing each other. One partner should be facing the screen and the other should have their back to the screen. Play the video with the sound off, and have the partner facing the screen narrate what they see happening in the clip. After one round, have the partners switch roles.

2. What are they saying?

First play the video without any sound. Ask students to take guesses on the dialogue of each scene. Record their guesses on the board, and then watch the video with the sound. Compare students' guesses with the actual results.



3. Video Jigsaw

Put students in three groups: A, B, and C. Divide the video into three equal chunks and show one chunk to each group. Then form groups of three, with one student from each group (A,B, and C). Within the groups, each student retells what they saw in their chunk.

Resources For More Content

This curriculum contains five recordings featuring authentic American English. However, over the last 15 years StoryCorps.org has recorded and archived more than 65,000 interviews, and they are all located online for the public to access. In addition, more than 30 of these recordings have been professionally animated. These videos are located on youtube, as well as on the storycorps website.



Sundays at Rocco's



A More Perfect Union



1st Squad, 3rd Platoon



No More Questions!

Transcripts

Lesson 1 - Making It

Noe Rueda (NR) and Alex Fernandez (AF)

NR: I was eight years old – I think second grade. I would literally go outside my house, there was like a little bench, I'd put all my products there and sell them. I didn't make much. I made, what, 20 bucks a week? But for an eight-year-old, you're a millionaire with that kind of money.

AF: That's a lot of comic books and stuff, yeah.

NR: But the thing is, I wasn't like other kids. I didn't go buy Pokemon cards. (Laughs) The little money I made, I gave it to my mom. The first time, I remember she was cooking. And, uh, I came up to her and I told her, "Mom, I know you don't have money, so here's 15 bucks I made." She turned off the stove. She turned around, started crying and hugged me. From that point on I just dedicated on [sic] getting money for my family.

AF: How did you make that money?

NR: First of all, the one thing that comes to people's mind in a bad neighborhood is drugs. But I did not sell drugs. The reason for that is, first of all, I know it's wrong. Secondly, I picture my mom — how disappointed she'll be if she finds that out. So, I actually started helping on a construction site. And this was in fifth grade. It was bad on my bones. I like, I have bad shoulders, bad knees from all the stuff I was carrying.

AF: When you were younger, did you realize kind of like, hey, this isn't normal or this isn't what other people go through?

NR: Well, I always knew I was poor. But I remember one time, in particular. My shoes were all scraped up, so I got paint and I painted them white. Some kid fell and tripped in front of my shoes and noticed. And he pointed it out and, uh, laughed. And that's when it hit me really hard like, I'm actually poorer than I thought.

AF: How's your first semester of college been?

NR: Things are great. I just think about it, like, being the first one to go to college in my whole family of like fifty of us. That's my biggest motivation.

AF: I'm really proud of you that you went this far. And I just want to have you come back in like ten years, dressed really sharp. You know, in like, a suit.

NR: Nice shoes (laughs).

AF: Nice shoes, and finally have a pair that you haven't painted. You know, and I've had so many students where everything's stacked against them. What happens is they get almost there, and then they just quit. You know, I really want you to be the one that finished. To be the one that actually did it. And I want you to get everything you've ever wanted.

Lesson 2 - Always a Family

Monique Ferrer (MF)

MF: When I met Michael I was 14 years old, and I knew that he was gonna be my boyfriend. We got married when I was 19, and we were both kids. We really didn't know what next. You know, get married and now what. When we were divorced, I remember the kids telling me that their father confided in them with a secret, and they didn't want to tell me. And I'm like 'Well, what's the secret?' and they said, 'Well, Daddy still loves you.' He doesn't want us to tell you. And I said, 'Well I know, and I love him too, but Mommy and Daddy have gone their separate ways, but we'll always be a family and we'll always be your Mom and Dad.'

On 9/11, I remember getting up to take my daughter—she had a doctor's appointment, so my daughter was home. At 9:04, I got a phone call, and it was Michael, and he was calling from the 103rd floor. And the first thing that he said was, 'I'm calling to say goodbye.' And I said, 'Why, where are you going?' And he said, 'Well I'm in the building that was just hit by a plane.'

He just wanted to tell me how much he loved the children, and he says, 'You know I also wanna tell you that I always loved you.' And I said, 'I know, the kids told me.' And um, I'm remarried, so I asked my husband to get on the phone, and I thought maybe my husband could talk him into finding an exit. And when my husband got on the phone, he asked my husband if he would be my children's father. And my husband said, 'You're gonna be coming home, you're gonna be their Dad, and I'm—I'm their Dad, too.' And he's like, 'I don't think I'm gonna make it.' And uh, my daughter was there and she saw me becoming a little hysterical, and I didn't know whether to put her on because I didn't know how he would react.

He thought she was at school. It just really breaks my heart that he's not here for them. It's like the only thing on his mind was to tell the kids that he loved them. And I tell the kids this every day: 'Everything you do, just think about your Dad.' And the thing is is that my two children look just like him. And they talk like him. And they joke like him. So, it's like he's there. You know, I see him in them every day. And as much as he used to drive me crazy, he was my family and my best friend.

Lesson 3 - The Icing on the Cake

Blanca Alvarez (BA) and Connie Alvarez (CA)

CA: What kinds of jobs did you have since first arriving in the country?

BA: We were gardeners. And we were cleaning offices.

CA: I remember the offices.

BA: You remember that? We had the night shift cleaning that's why you know we had to take you and your brother. I didn't have a babysitter.

CA: I have memories of running into everyone's office and eating candy from their candy dishes. I remember being with my brother in our pajamas with the little plastic feet. And I also remember you would always buy us a cup-of-noodle from the vending machine, like a snack, and then put us to bed on people's office couches and then you'd carry us to the car when you guys were done cleaning the offices. I remember that. Did they ever know? Did your bosses ever know that you took your kids?

BA: No, I don't think so.

CA: Is there anything that you've never told me but want to tell me now?

BA: When we first came here we went through a lot of things like not eating...

CA: Oh...

BA: I guess for 6 months your father lost his job but we never told you that.

CA: I do remember a lot of beans. Bean tacos.

BA: But when you ask us why the same thing... remember?

CA: Yeah yeah.

BA: I didn't want to tell you why.

CA: If you could do everything again would you raise me differently?

BA: I would dedicate more time I guess. You know, I was so busy going to school too that I guess I neglected you a little bit.

CA: No. For me watching you go to school with two kids and trying to make ends meet that was the biggest inspiration for me to finish college. I thought there's nothing that could stand in my way that didn't stand in yours more. So. It's the most important thing for me having gone to college and I feel like anything I do from here on out is ok because I've already achieved my dream. Everything else is icing on the cake.

Lesson 4 - Knifepoint

Julio Diaz (JD)

JD: So I get off the train. You know, I'm walking towards the stairs and this young teenager, uh, pulls out a knife. He wants my money. So I just gave him my wallet and told him, 'Here you go.' He starts to leave and as he's walking away I'm like, 'Hey, wait a minute. You forgot something. If you're gonna be robbing people for the rest of the night, you might as well take my coat to keep you warm.' So, you know, he's looking at me like, 'What's going on here?' You know, and he asked me, 'Why are you doing this?' And I'm like, 'Well, I don't know, man, if you're willing to risk your freedom for a few dollars then I guess you must really need the money. I mean, all I wanted to do was go get dinner and, uh, if you really want to join me, hey, you're more than welcome.'

So I'm like, 'Look, you can follow me if you want.' You know, I just felt maybe he really needs help. So, you know, we go into the diner where I normally eat and we sit down in the booth and the manager comes by, the dishwashers come by, the waiters come by to say hi – you know so... The kid was like, 'Man but you know like everybody here. Do you own this place?' I'm like, 'No, I just eat here a lot.' He's like, 'But you're even nice to the dishwasher.' I'm like, 'Well, haven't you been taught you should be nice to everybody?' So he's like, 'Yeah, but I didn't think people actually behaved that way.'

So I just asked him in the end I'm like, 'What is it that you want out of life?' He just had almost a sad face. Either he couldn't answer me or he didn't want to. The bill came and I look at him and I'm like, 'Look, uh, I guess you're gonna have to pay for this bill 'cause you have my money and I can't pay for this so if you give me my wallet back I'll gladly treat you.' He didn't even think about it he's like, 'Yeah, okay, here you go.' So I got my wallet back and I gave, you know, I gave him twenty dollars for it.

You know, I figure, uh, maybe it'll help him – I don't know. And when I gave him the twenty dollars, I asked him to give me something in return – which was his knife – and he gave it to me.

You know, it's funny 'cause when I told my mom about what happened – not mom wants to hear this but – at first she was like, 'Well, you know, you're the kind of kid if someone asked you for the time you gave them your watch.' I don't know, I figure, you know, you treat people right, you can only hope that they treat you right. It's as simple as it gets in this complicated world.

Lesson 5 - The Nature of War

Justin Cliburn (JC) and Deanne Cliburn (DC)

JC: One day, we saw this child walking through the compound. His name was Ali, and he did not want to talk to us.

DC: As opposed to a lot of the other Iraqi kids that you encountered?

JC: Yes. He was very shy. And the second or third time that I met him, he brought his best friend, Ahmed. And Ahmed was much more outgoing. And so, Ali really opened up. And once I met these children, it made every day something I looked forward to. We would play rock, paper, scissors. We would kick around a soccer ball. We were about as close as people that don't speak the same language can be. I had never been really good with children, and this was the first time I felt like I loved someone who wasn't my family member. But one day Ali showed up and I could tell something wasn't right. He kept saying Ahmed, Ahmed, boom. We learned that Ahmed and his mother went to the gas station and a suicide bomber detonated. Ahmed's mother is dead. She died instantly, and Ahmed is in a hospital somewhere. And so other soldiers and I collected what cash we had and gave it to Ali and said go take this to Ahmed's father. But later, I saw Ali walking up very slow and he sat down on the curb next to my Humvee. He dug a hole in the ground with his fingers. He picked up a rock and put it in the hole and then he put the dirt back over it. And he just pointed to the ground and said Ahmed. And I knew that Ahmed was dead. And so I sat on the curb with him - me in desert camouflage, carrying an M-4 rifle and him, just a North Baghdad kid - just sat there and cried. I don't know what came of him. That's the nature of war I suppose. But whenever I see any footage from Baghdad, I'm always kind of looking around, wondering if he's in the frame.
