This lesson can be used as part of an ESL hybrid classroom, specifically geared towards virtual or hybrid teenage students in higher middle school or high school, or adults considered proficient (at an intermediate B1 – B1+ level) and motivated in studying English, as a complement to their regular classroom English lessons. The virtual classroom will be primarily focused on synchronous google hangout/voicethread discussions (once a week) and asynchronous discussion boards, as well as self-completing word puzzles (such as ad-libs or fill-in-the-blanks stories). Each week a new subtopic will be introduced, moving from the focus of interconnectivity between food and culture, through ways of producing food, and ending with the issue of sustainability. There will be a short introductory video to greet students and help them become acclimatized to operating in a virtual environment and show them how to interact in the discussion boards and use “game” wikis used to master critical vocabulary and containing various contests or surveys (used to categorize student generated questions). Students will also be pointed towards a wiki explaining the rules governing discussion boards and. A separate wiki will also remind and define for the students the type and form questions can take (For instance this wiki will define and give examples of open and closed questions, it will remind them of English questions tags what/where/why/when/who) as well as give them a simplified explanation of the QFT method used during the virtual class.

The broad unit they are studying is Food. In this case, students will explore foods in other cultures, discuss agriculture (ways of producing food) and issues of sustainability. Besides the ESL goals of increasing vocabulary and the ability to discuss and present topics in English, my longer term objectives are to get the students thinking about how culture influences food choices, gain curiosity about other cultures and how food is produced, as well as start to gain an awareness of environmental sustainability and how cultural behavior influences the environment. The unit will start by asking the students in the online class to collaborate in creating word webs exploring words associated with food, with students in online teams racing to create the most and biggest word webs centered on key terms related to food. Even before the students begin to engage with the topic, they will have access to a wiki dictionary and quick game quiz to familiarize themselves with the vocabulary terms such as agriculture, sustainability, taboo….. Prior to the 1st google hangout (, students will be directed to read an article about food, which will then be related to all subtopics throughout the unit. During this google hangout, the teacher will fully introduce the QFT process, relating it to the reading as necessary to generate student interest in the subject and help students start to generate the subtopics raised by the article, thereby giving students more control over the direction of their studies.

 The 1st google hangout will open with the teacher making the statement “insects are delicious food”. The teacher will then give students the first question (“where in the world do people eat insects?”) and ask them to complete some partial wh questions (why do people……?, how are ……?) and create their own questions. The teacher will follow up with a discussion about food taboos and ask students to thing about their own cultural views of foods (what makes good food? what can you eat? What can’t you eat?...) After the hangout, students will be asked to go to the wiki to answer a survey and rate their top 3 questions. Students in groups or individually will then be asked to research these questions and generate a short video or slideshow presentation to be uploaded into the class wiki and discussed in the next hangout. Further focus questions may include such statements as “There isn’t enough food in the world to feed people” (with the associated questions being for example how is food produced? what do you need to produce food? what types of food do people eat?…) or “Eating meat is very bad” (how are livestock raised? is meat healthy? what do you feed livestock?....) Depending on student interest and knowledge, students may even research genetically modified foods. Student generated questions will be used as the basis for generating subtopics and narrowing down avenues of research into these subtopics. During the culture subtopic, students may investigate the role of religion in food choices, research other cultures around the world and their views on food, or even investigate where food taboos in their own culture came from. Student generated questions may also point the way to generating new focus questions as well. As students research the answers to their questions and are taught peer evaluation (in the physical classroom) though the SLANT technique, they will prepare presentations for their peers which they can upload to a special presentation wiki (hybrid students may also prepare posters for their peers). These presentations will be periodically referenced in the google hangout sessions as well as via leaderboards, badges and video announcements. Students will be assessed on participation as well as through the presentations they will make for the benefit of their peers, via leaderboards and summarizing video announcements at the end of each week.