ENGLISH TEACHING professional

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The Leading Practical Magazine For English Language Teachers Worldwide

A riveting good read!
Peter Viney

Graphs and charts
Jocelyn Wright

Rub it out and start again
Stephanie Hirschman

Whiteboards, whiteboards everywhere
Alberto Fornasier



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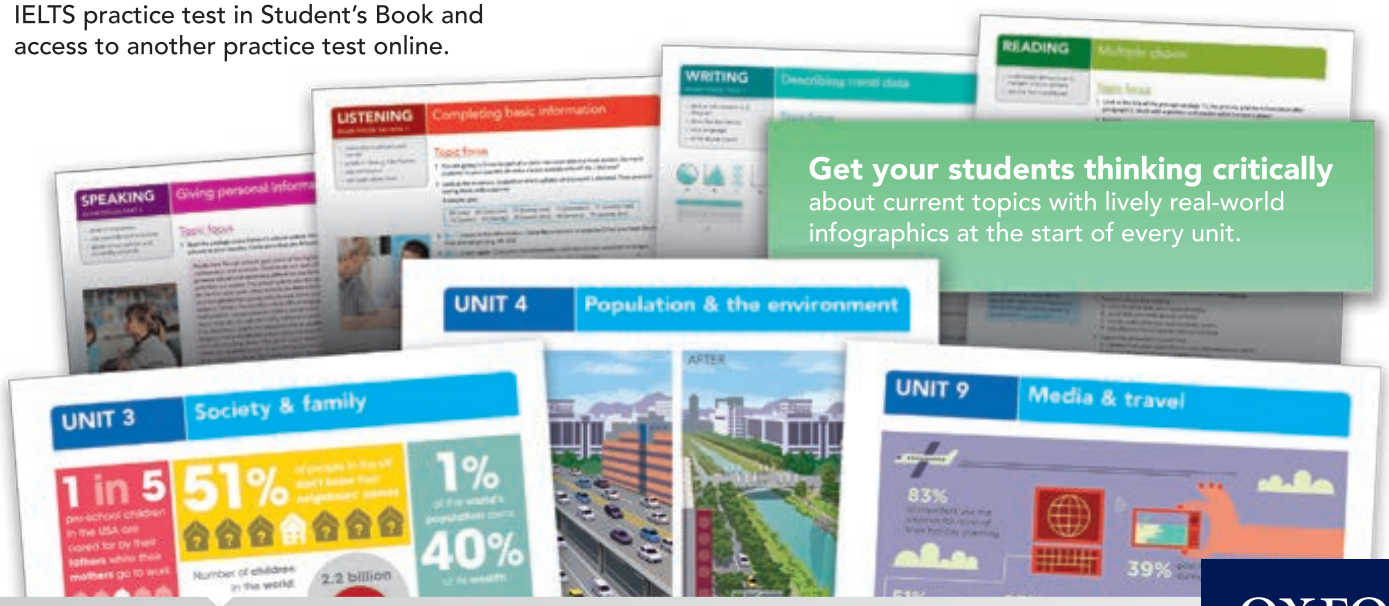
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Contents

MAIN FEATURE

A RIVETING GOOD READ! 4
Peter Viney applauds learner literature

FEATURES

MAKING A *GOOGLE* GUIDE 8
Pete Clements helps his colleagues take advantage of online resources

OK, *GOOGLE*! 13
Gleb Lantsman encourages the use of speech recognition tools

METAL GURU 16
Brian Coughlan was born to be wild

GRAPHS AND CHARTS 17
Jocelyn Wright recommends data organisers for language teaching

ONE MORE TIME! 22
Tien Minh Mai doesn't let his old worksheets go to waste

THINKING SKILLS 2 28
Louis Rogers and **Nick Thorner** propose speaking activities for IELTS students

RUB IT OUT AND START AGAIN 34
Stephanie Hirschman finds mini-whiteboards wonderful

OVER THE WALL 36
Alan Maley revels in the riches of language

WHITEBOARDS, WHITEBOARDS EVERYWHERE 40
Alberto Fornasier discovers that magic whiteboards are just the trick

GET THE PICTURE? 48
Paul Bress exploits the power of pictures

TEACHING YOUNG LEARNERS

WRITING HERE, WRITING THERE ... 24
Chris Roland suggests surprising surfaces to write on

TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

BRIDGING THE TECHNOPHOBE–TECHNOPHILE GAP 2 50
Daniel Monaghan and **Tessa Woodward** approach stimulus analysis for teachers with differing attitudes to technology

TECHNOLOGY

SHOWBIE YOUR WORK! 53
Martina Dorn succeeds in a school where paper is banned

TECH-TIME DIARY 56
Nasy Pfanner charts her students' use of technology

STARS OF *YOUTUBE* 58
Jamie Keddie sets some solo video tasks

FIVE THINGS YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT: THE 'ONE LAPTOP PER CHILD' INITIATIVE 61
Nicky Hockly evaluates a programme that promises technology for all

WEBWATCHER 63
Russell Stannard explores teaching via *Skype*

REGULAR FEATURES

IT WORKS IN PRACTICE 38

REVIEWS 42

SCRAPBOOK 44

PICTURE PUZZLE 64

Includes materials designed to photocopy

Editorial

When I was commissioning articles for this issue and explained that I was looking for contributions on the subject of resources, the response from one teacher was that surely anything and everything could be considered a resource. How true! And here our contributors explain how they use everything from 'magic' whiteboards to heavy metal music.

In our main feature, Peter Viney asserts that graded readers are one of the most effective resources we have available to us, and he celebrates their variety and versatility.

Jocelyn Wright recognises the potential of graphs and charts for language teaching – not just teaching students to interpret them for IELTS-style exam tasks, but also getting them to produce their own: in activities that involve integrated language skills work and the development of statistical literacy.

Stephanie Hirschman sees mini-whiteboards as today's answer to the traditional school slate, and she finds them just as versatile and useful as their 19th-century predecessors.

Whiteboards are also the subject of Alberto Fornasier's article. He has discovered portable, reusable sheets of 'magic whiteboard' that allow him to have as many boards as he wants in his classroom.

Of course, it's no use having a range of technological resources unless you know how to use them. Pete Clements explains how he set about writing lesson plans and guidance notes for his colleagues, to encourage them to use the various online *Google* tools with their students.

Martina Dorn describes coming to grips with a school that went paperless almost overnight, and tells how, after initial panic, she and her colleagues found the *Showbie* app and came to love the way it could help them manage their work electronically.

Paul Bress is concerned that we should exploit the resources we have to the maximum, rather then moving swiftly on to something else. He describes how to use a single picture to generate a host of language learning opportunities.

In a similar vein, Tien Minh Mai doesn't throw away worksheets that have already been used in class. He has his students turn them over and use the back of the paper for a variety of other activities.

Chris Roland's students don't just write on paper: they write on everything – from balloons to eggs to rubber gloves!

So whether you have a high-resource or low-resource classroom, you should find something here to inspire you.

Finally, a big thank you to all those people who completed our ET*p* survey. Your opinions will help us to plan future issues of the magazine. The first five people to send in their responses were Clare Fielder, Maggi Lussi Bell, Luigina Contarelli, Helga Frei and Helen Armstrong. We will send each of them a copy of *ETpedia* by John Hughes.



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BRITISH COUNCIL

A riveting good read!

Peter Viney shares his views and experiences of graded readers.

A confession: having spent my life teaching English, I was never very good at learning French. I was in the lower half of the class at age 14. Then a younger and more enlightened teacher issued us with a reader in French: a simplified *Maigret* story – the detective was popular on TV at the time. It was great. I could read it faster than my more competent classmates because I'm a good guesser, and I focused on the story … I did not stop to agonise over unfamiliar words, nor to note the mysteries of masculine and feminine with new items. We were told to read a chapter a night at home. In those far-off days, the comprehension questions next day were in English, and at last I could shine. Years later, on an internal flight in Italy, I took the offered free paper and started perusing the football reports. 'But you said you couldn't speak Italian …' said my Italian companion. I explained that if you've studied French and Latin, and know the words *Beckham*, *Manchester United* and *Aston Villa*, and guess from *arbitro* to *arbitrator* to *referee*, you can find out what you want to know. How did I guess that *guardalinea* meant *linesman*? Genius.

Amongst graded readers, you can find original fiction, adaptations of modern and classic fiction in English and a range of non-fiction titles

I'm not going to go into the virtues of extensive reading. Suffice it to say that it applies in every ELT situation, and every teacher should be enabling their students to access and benefit from readers.

Variety

In many situations, one reader will be issued to a class. Particularly in primary and secondary contexts, this enables teachers to monitor the students' progress and also to explore reading techniques. I would always want to use a single reader in tandem with a library, where students have choice. Amongst graded readers, you can find original fiction written for EFL/ESL students, adaptations of both modern and classic fiction in English and a range of non-fiction titles, both general interest and specific interest. The sensible teacher will not opt to equip the library entirely from one graded reading series (though some publishers offer 'library selections' of a complete series at a discount). I would choose books from several different schemes. Here, the Extensive Reading Foundation (ERF), an organisation dedicated to encouraging reading for pleasure amongst students of English, gives clear and helpful guidance. First, it provides a comparative chart of headword counts

in different schemes (at *www.robwaring.org/er/scale/ERF_levels.htm*) and, second, it runs the annual Language Learner Literature Awards (*http://erfoundation.org/wordpress/awards*). If you only get the winners and finalists from the years 2004 to 2015, you will already have a good initial selection of books. Remember that readers, especially fiction readers, do not go out of date. Those 2004 winners and finalists still work!

Student choice is important, too. You should have readers available at above and below the perceived class level. Some students may find it comforting to drop a level and have an easy read. Others may find that they can easily read up a level because they're fascinated by volcanoes, or food, or boy bands or whatever. The interest they bring will help them cope with a 'harder' book. Student choice in level as well as subject matter helps deal with mixed abilities in a class.

Grading

Readers are graded by headword count (400 words, 750 words, 1,000 words, etc) and here the ERF Graded Reader Scale helps place different schemes in relation to each other. Most schemes are also structurally graded. Structural grading is important. In the broadest terms 'Does it use past tense?' 'Does it use present perfect?' 'Does it use conditionals?' 'Does it use reported speech?' are level markers. Most schemes will also give a CEF (Common European Framework) level (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2), but frankly, I find these too broad to give more than a vague guide. Some schemes are 'intuitively graded', which means that in the view of the publisher a reader is 'A1' or 'B2'.

You will find that Publisher A's '1,000 headword level' may be harder than Publisher B's '1,000 headword level'. Structural grading is a major factor here, but so are the criteria for including additional words. Any reader needs story-specific words, in addition to its word count for the level. The major schemes are strict. They might allow (say) 20 extra words at level 1, 30 at levels 2 and 3, 40 at level 4, and so on. Most schemes have increased the number of additional words in recent years. However, the important thing is that the students should read for pleasure and shouldn't have to keep stopping at unfamiliar words. Forty extra words on 1,000 headwords is a good limit. I have seen readers which allow 200 extra words on 1,000, which to me is wildly excessive. It means that 20 percent of the words are outside the perceived level. That's too much for rapid reading for pleasure.

The important thing is that the students should read for pleasure and shouldn't have to keep stopping at unfamiliar words

In general, the international schemes from British and American publishers are stricter on additional words than readers from Continental European publishers. A German or Italian scheme can factor in the guessability (or common transfer into L1) of English words, and say 'Well, no German speaker will have problems with these words'. This also means that the international schemes travel better than country-specific ones. An obvious factor is that speakers of Romance, Germanic and Scandinavian languages have a far better guess rate than speakers of unrelated languages. In East Asia or the Middle East, a European '750 headword' reader will be harder for students than it would be in Europe or Latin America. Good advice is to drop down a level.

You can use the ERF chart, and consider the CEF level. When setting up a library system, what many teachers do – once they're familiar with the books – is to apply their own levels. In my school, we bought packs of coloured stickers and applied our own colour coding across different grading schemes: red was our level 1, yellow our level 2, and so on.

Word lists

One or two publishers helpfully list their wordlists for the levels and their structural grading at the back of the readers or in a teacher's guide. Most don't. I'm strongly in favour of giving access to the lists, but publishers are reluctant. I've been told that the carefully-researched and discussed lists might be borrowed by unscrupulous rival publishers. That's true. Teachers have said, 'It's easy. Why don't they just use frequency counts?' But it's not easy at all. The demands of graded readers are different. You need words like *said*, *told*, *whispered*, *shouted*, *screamed* as soon as the past tense is available. Words for dramatic events – *gun*, *fire*, *sword*, *murder* – might be more important than *salt* and *pepper*. Incidentally, research shows this is also true of newspaper language. We like to see words in neat sets: *knife*, *fork*, *spoon*. In graded readers, *knife* is easily the most useful, *spoon* next, and *fork* unlikely, though I once used it in a story which involved a garden fork. Words from defining vocabularies (lists of words used by lexicographers to write definitions) are important because readers have glossaries (see below) for the additional words. There's no point in doubling up words with the same meaning, even if both are frequent. The graded reader author won't need *chair*, *seat* and *armchair* at the lower levels. They won't need *fast*, *quickly* and *rapidly*. So having made decisions, publishers are jealous of their lists.

When setting up a library system, what many teachers do – once they're familiar with the books – is to apply their own levels

Having worked on three original schemes, each derived from earlier ones, I suspect there's another reason. My 1980s 1,000-word list had *cassette* in it, but not *computer*. When I did the most recent list, I looked back at readers by several different authors. This was fascinating. My 1990s list had *dog* and *cat* in it. Several authors had used *dog*. However, *cat* had been used just once, and that was to define *lion*. So the new list retained *dog* but eliminated *cat*. If a particular reader needs *cat* in future, it can be an additional word. I believe publishers keep their lists secret because it allows them to update, and to tweak and improve the core lists. While this is a good thing, it may mean the 750-word list used to write a reader in 1990 (which is still available) might not be identical

A riveting good read!

to the 750-word list used in 2015. To the student, this really won't matter.

Glossaries

It is normal to gloss additional words or, in intuitively graded readers, 'hard' words. I prefer to gloss at the end of the story, as do most international publishers. Some country-specific and a few international publishers prefer to gloss on the page in a footnote. I really don't like this because it breaks the reading flow, and also spoon-feeds the student by undermining their guessing ability. A rule in readers I wrote and edited was that new words should appear three times or more in a story, improving the student's chance of guessing from context. Guessing from context is what we want them to do. I loathe glosses on the page even more when they have a translation. I also dislike translation at the back of the book, even in a country-specific reader. That undermines reference skills. Students benefit from monolingual dictionaries, and glossaries in graded readers should operate in the same way.

Exercises

As a series editor, I get comments from authors ranging from 'Do they really, really need exercises?' to 'You know, exercises are in opposition to the process, I'd rather just have the story' to a straight 'I don't do exercises. If you want them, you do them'. The Language Learner Literature Awards focus on the story or non-fiction text, and do not assess exercises or audio versions.

The trouble is, as any publisher will tell you, readers with exercises sell more copies. At one time, I favoured putting the exercises in the middle of a staple-bound book so that teachers could remove them. Then we tried the back of the book. Then we tried photocopiables, though as a parent and grandparent I hate seeing children's work summed up in a pile of barely legible tattered old photocopies. Then we tried online. Now they're at the back of the book again. With classic adaptations, which are longer, with more complex plots, we decided to have three sets of 'The story so far …' self-check exercise pages interspersed.

You will find that some readers, especially country-specific ones, have more exercises. Some are really 'reading courses' rather than extensive readers, in that they have a lot of exercises, put them after every chapter, and include pairwork and grammar activities. That's not extensive reading. Reading is, after all, essentially a solitary activity. Readers should be a break from grammar work, too, working on deducing from context, guessing, reading for pleasure, building vocabulary. That is the reason for structural grading. We're working from within known grammar. An exercise-heavy reader works in secondary systems in individual countries as a reading course supported by other graded readers. There are some fine readers from various European publishers which have too many exercises in my opinion … but you don't have to *do* the exercises!

Audio

Some readers are bundled with CDRs. Others have readings which are free online. They are not essential. I would encourage the students to read the book first, then put it down and listen.

Readers should be a break from grammar work, too, working on deducing from context, guessing, reading for pleasure, building vocabulary

Money

One of the reasons a whole class gets the same reader is that those in charge of the budget (school administrators or parents) understand one kid = one copy of the chosen book. There are alternatives. In a class of 30, you could buy six sets of five readers, so that the students can swap them around. Next year, term or month, buy different ones. Or persuade the school to set up a library, say budgeting one per student. I would obtain more than one copy of each book. It's good if two people read the same book and can discuss it while it's fresh in the mind.

Access is important, whether it be the 'library trolley' at intervals, or constant availability, but this does mean that you will have to budget for replacement copies. After several years of running a library scheme, I'd factor in at least a ten percent attrition rate for '*I lost it / My dog ate it when it ate my homework / I left it on the bus / My dad saw it and said it was disgusting and threw it in the trash / I spilled my sticky soft drink on it / My baby brother threw up on it / Oh, Jane Smith left last week. She's moved away.*'

Some students may even love the stories so much they opt to keep them, overtly or clandestinely.

★ ★ ★

In the next issue of ET*p*, I will give advice to anyone thinking of adapting a classic work of fiction as a graded reader. ETp

Peter Viney has written many readers and has been series editor on four graded reading series: *Streamline Graded Readers*, *Storylines*, *Garnet Oracle Readers* and *Garnet Oracle Classics*. He is a member of the board of the Extensive Reading Foundation. The views expressed in the article are personal opinions, and should not be taken as the official view of the ERF.



Peter Viney is the co-author of *Streamline*, *Grapevine*, *Main Street*, *Handshake*, *Survival English*, *IN English*, *Fast Track to Reading* and many video courses, including *A Weekend Away / A Week By The Sea*. He is currently working on a heavily illustrated ebook on British and American English.

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BRITISH COUNCIL Clarity

Making a *Google* guide

Pete Clements

produces support materials to help teachers use online tools.

A recent British Council inspection at my school led to many improvements in ICT provision. However, although we now have many new tech-based resources, it seems few of our teachers are interested in using them. The inconvenience of setting up equipment, lack of classroom control, lack of knowledge and technophobia are just some of the reasons why our staffroom copy of *Language Learning with Technology* has been collecting dust.

As part of a DipTESOL research project, I thought I'd take it upon myself to drag our methods, kicking and screaming, into the 21st century. I thought our school would benefit from some in-house material with ideas for integrating ICT into our teaching practice. My broad aims were:

- to create an introductory handbook, with guidance notes and user-friendly lesson plans, on integrating *Google* products in the classroom;
- to get feedback from peers on the effectiveness and usefulness of this handbook, based on their evaluations of lessons delivered from it.

My colleagues evaluated the booklet (and lessons) using a questionnaire. Participants included both teachers and management at the school.

Where did the idea come from?

During a peer observation of a textbook-based IELTS lesson on describing graphs, I recalled a blog post (by Jeremy Kritt) about *Google Trends*. This is one of many lesser-appreciated *Google* tools, allowing the user to explore the popularity of different search engine items over time – displayed in the form of a line graph. During feedback, I tentatively suggested to my colleague that *Trends* could be used for some follow-up work. She wasn't too confident with exploring the tool, and suggested a few instructions might help her get to grips with it. My idea for a guidebook took off from there – I could really see how some integrated ICT could add a new dimension to our classes, but with a little necessary guidance. There is an example of a lesson plan I developed for use with *Goggle Trends* on page 11.

Why *Google*?

Trends is a really fun tool, and where there was one great *Google* product, there must surely be more. With a little research, I stumbled across a hidden haven of classroom-friendly platforms and applications, including *Art Project*, *Doodles*, *Maps*, *World Wonders* and *Historic Moments*.

Google Art Project is a platform allowing users to access images of artworks from world famous galleries through 'virtual collections'. It includes captions for many of the artworks, providing some useful language input, and lends itself to focused tasks on particular artists, styles and institutions. There is an example of some student material I developed for use with *Google Art Project* on page 12.

Google Historic Moments has stock photos of many famous events and people in world history. It is a useful way to restrict the images which appear in search results from a search engine. Its best features are its 'online exhibitions', which are fantastic for focused groupwork

and independent research. *Google World Wonders* is similar, and good for geography-based lessons. Both resources have material which could supplement certain modules in some textbooks.

Google Maps and *Google Doodles* serve specific purposes in the classroom, such as revising directions or dates/times, but are arguably less versatile than the other tools.

Audience considerations

An important consideration during the design of my materials was my audience. This was twofold – I needed engaging lessons for the *learners*, but also clear guidance to enable the *teachers* to utilise the new online tools. I wanted to provide the teachers with clear lesson ideas so they could spend their planning time learning how to use the *Google* products. However, I didn't want to create a rigid set of lessons which wouldn't allow them to adapt the materials.

The classes offered by our school greatly influenced the resource design. The purpose of our short-stay courses is to provide experience of interacting in an immersed English-speaking environment, and the focus is firmly on speaking and listening. This has a major impact on our set syllabus for younger learners; it is underpinned by a broadly communicative focus, and classes include as many speaking and listening tasks as relevant, but that is not to say that other skills are overlooked. Whilst purely grammar-focused classes for short-stay young learners are often avoided, grammar more frequently occurs in communicative function-based lessons.

Most learners come to the school as part of a group (often monolingual), and their studies are tied in with cultural excursions and free time around the town. Our programme aims to develop each learner's socio-cultural awareness, whilst many groups also request a CLIL approach, with specific subjects and skills integrated into the syllabus.

Planning considerations

The target audience for the lessons I devised was very specific – teenagers (up to age 18) at a short-stay language school. From experience of teaching teenage learners, I could make certain assumptions about computer literacy (ie general competence in using the internet), the general interests of the learners and suitable resources for this age range. There were also general planning considerations related to behaviour and classroom management. These included varying the task organisation (individuals, pairwork, groupwork, etc), adding a competitive element to activities when possible, keeping lesson stages short to maintain focus, and allowing for student-directed lesson content wherever possible.

After evaluating each product, I decided to create eight lesson plans – covering the pre-intermediate, intermediate and upper-intermediate levels. Most of the resources seemed more suited to higher-level learners – as authentic materials designed for native speakers, the language wasn't graded – but these texts would still be accessible to lower levels if preparatory tasks were undertaken. Although this was true of the product content, each web page used a fairly straightforward navigational format, making most resources easily accessible (perhaps with some pre-teaching). Where the product content was based around infographics, it was often easily adaptable across levels.

Goals and objectives

The objectives of each lesson focus on skills and language development, but the purpose of the guide was far better judged by the more general goals it addressed. It is important for teachers to remember that teenagers are still developing socio-cognitive skills which are shaping their thoughts, attitudes and perception of the world around them. Similarly, they are acquiring the broader study skills needed as they progress in education and life. Many tasks in the guide were designed with this in mind.

I attempted to include all skill types across the lessons (see below), but none of the resources allowed for listening activities. It was often the case when creating a lesson that, although certain skills provided the focus of the lesson, some activities incorporated multiple skills.

Piloting

As most lessons required the learners to use devices such as iPads or iPhones, I had to ensure that certain websites and applications could be accessed using various types of equipment. When I was piloting the lessons, a few problems occurred. The students could easily use each tool in their L1, so preventing this required monitoring. Off-task behaviour whilst online was sometimes hard to keep on top of, though sharing the learning outcome with the class certainly led to more focus.

It's important that the students be allowed to choose their own topics for the research-based tasks as this gives them ownership, but teachers need to make sure these are appropriate.

Although the teachers received some written guidance on how to use each product, a practical demonstration during lesson preparation time was often necessary.

Teacher evaluations

Many colleagues were unwilling to trial the resources. Their reasons included:

- lack of spare time
- apprehension about the resources
- willingness to teach, but not to evaluate
- perceived lack of relevance and language focus of the lessons

The school management suggested that teachers providing a workshop for other teachers based on the resources might create interest, but other commitments didn't allow for this.

The evaluation consisted of three pages about the booklet, and a one-page qualitative evaluation form for those teachers who trialled a lesson. In all, five teachers evaluated the booklet and trialled one lesson. One teacher adapted a lesson for adult learners.

Information from teacher feedback questionnaires showed the following:

	Skills included across lessons							
Level	Grammar / functions	Vocabulary	Reading	Writing	Listening	Speaking	Critical thinking	Study skills
Lower	X	X		X				X
Middle	X		X			X	X	X
Higher	X	X	X	X		X	X	X

Making a *Google* guide

All participants agreed that:

- there was adequate information and instructions provided for each product
- the teacher instructions were clear, concise and relevant
- the student handouts were clear, organised and relevant
- the lesson objectives were clear, concise and relevant
- there was a very good range of activities in the booklet
- the lessons were easy to adapt
- the lessons were graded for level correctly

Selected quotes from feedback:

'An extremely thorough resource with ready-to-go lessons. Very easy to follow and on a topic which is new and exciting to me.'

'Some people may like the addition of having an exercise demonstrated to them as part of a training session.'

Lesson evaluations

Clear positives in each lesson were evident through the language used by the teachers in the evaluation, where students were described as *interested*, *engaged*, *eager* and *genuinely communicating*. One participant referred specifically to the progress made during the lesson, whilst there were positive appraisals of the lesson resources in all classes involving teenagers. In particular, the interactive nature of the products and problem-solving tasks relating to them were cited.

The most interesting feedback was that in three of the lessons (two teenage and one adult general English class) the participants mentioned that a range of new vocabulary arose during the tasks. This might be the case in any lesson, and it doesn't mean that the vocabulary itself was all related to the topic. However, it does show that a language/vocabulary focus can emerge as a result of the tasks, although this process relies on the teacher's ability to exploit the task effectively.

Learners accessing the *Google* products in their L1 was noted as an issue by two participants. Some lessons required the use of certain keyboard functions to complete activities (eg 'print-screen') which proved difficult for some teachers and learners, showing I had perhaps overestimated their prior knowledge. I might consider producing a short section on how to explain these tasks to the students, as they are transferable to other domains. However, if too much pre-teaching of other ICT tasks is needed, the *Google* products lessons may be best avoided.

It is interesting that the teacher of the adult class felt that the *Google Trends* lesson might be better suited to IELTS students. The IELTS teachers at the school were reluctant to trial the lessons, although they perhaps might reconsider given this feedback from their peers.

The most common areas for improvement for the lesson plans mentioned in the feedback included:

- allowing more time for tasks, and perhaps reconsidering stage timings in general;
- monitoring students to ensure use of the products in English;
- ensuring appropriacy for all users (some of the art exhibitions included nudity).

★ ★ ★

Overall, the guide was a success. The evaluations show that carefully-planned lessons based on *Google* products were engaging and interesting for the learners, and the teachers found them both comprehensive and adaptable.

Despite these positives, many staff at my school were still unwilling to explore the resources available. A workshop may have helped familiarise them with using the products. However, it may have increased the inhibitions of those teachers less confident with ICT, who will naturally judge their ability against peers during a development session.

It could be that the main reason for some teachers' reluctance to use the booklet was the lack of grammar and vocabulary focus in some lessons. Developing research skills may seem a rather loose aim to some, whilst an emphasis on emergent language may also give a lesson too much unpredictability. Furthermore, the task-based approach used in many lessons may not be everyone's chosen method. For my next in-house material, I will consider incorporating a broader range of methodologies in the model lessons. ETp

If you're thinking of making your own ICT-based resources, here are a few things I've learnt:

1. Remember, your audience isn't just the learners. How much do the teachers know about using ICT, and how confident are they with it? A bit of research into the ICT capability of your colleagues is a good starting point.
2. Start off simple. The *Google* products I used can do quite a lot, but the more technical your tasks, the more teacher-centred things tend to become. Keep demos to a minimum, design simple tasks which give the learners more independence
3. Check all your equipment first. One resource may work fine on a laptop, but is slower on another format like an iPhone. Never assume!
4. Don't be afraid to learn from the students. Think about the apps or the sites *they* use. If they are appropriate and easily accessible, you might have a ready-made resource at your disposal!
5. Evaluate. Get fellow teachers to evaluate. Get informal feedback from the learners. Sometimes, things might seem more interesting than they actually are.

Stanley, G *Language Learning with Technology* CUP 2013



Pete Clements has taught in South Korea, Spain, Vietnam, Thailand and the UK. He has recently completed the Trinity DipTESOL. His interests include data-based teacher development, supporting new teachers and using authentic listening materials in class. Visit his blog at *https://eltplanning.com*.

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Example activity 1: *Google Trends*

This activity is a short research task using *Google Trends* (*www.google.com/trends/explore#cmpt=q*).

The tool allows a comparison of the popularity of different search terms on the *Google* search engine, giving the results in the form of a line graph. A filter bar at the top allows the user to change the date, location, category and search type. Up to five search items can be compared at once.

***Google Trends* could be used as a supplementary resource for IELTS Writimg Task 1 – describing graphs.**

Here are the lesson plan notes for this activity.

Level:
Upper-intermediate

Time:
60 minutes

Focus:
Research skills; presenting information

Aims:
- to practise analysing and presenting information displayed in line graphs;
- to practise searching for specific information online using the basic functions of *Google Trends*.

Materials:
- a device to access the internet – at least one per pair of students;
- classroom computer/projector to present information and explain tasks;
- activity handout.

Anticipated problems:
- Ensure a strong internet connection, as the lesson is predominantly tech-based.
- The students can access *Google Trends* in their L1. Ensure they are using it in English!

Access *Google Trends* through *www.google.co.uk/trends/explore#cmpt=q*

or

- Type 'trends' into the *Google* search engine.
- Follow the first link: the *Google Trends* home page should appear.
- Add search terms where instructed.
- Use the filter bar above the search terms to filter your search by date, location, category (eg shopping) or search type.



1 Choose a topic you think will prompt discussion among your students. For my class aged 14–16, I normally choose celebrities or pop culture. Give the students a question to discuss in pairs, eg

Who was more popular in Google searches in the UK last year: Robert Pattinson or Daniel Radcliffe?

Elicit responses and discuss ideas as a class.

2 Explain that the students can find the answer using *Google Trends* (you might need to quickly concept check *trending*). Show them how to access *Trends*, using your computer/IWB. Use the 'search terms' boxes and filter bar to create a graph showing search trends for Robert Pattinson versus Daniel Radcliffe.

The students discuss whether their predictions were correct. The graph can be explored a little more – elicit why each search term may be more popular at certain times of the year (eg a new movie being released, gossip in the newspapers, etc).

3 Ask another question about popular culture, eg

Last week, were there more Google Image searches for a) Miley Cyrus b) Beyoncé or c) Paul McCartney?

After a brief discussion, have the students use their own devices to access *Google Trends* and find the answer. They may need direction in filtering the information, for example by date or chosen information (image searches only).

4 Give the students a practice activity to familiarise them with *Google Trends* as a research tool. You can instruct them to predict the answers first, to create more interest.

Example activity:

Predict the answers to these questions:

1 In 2013, what was a more popular search term: 'Gangnam Style' or 'Harlem Shake'?

2 What was the most searched for travel destination by UK internet users last year?

3 Who is more popular in *Google* searches right now: Gareth Bale or Cristian Bale?

4 What is more popular on *Google Shopping* now: 'shoes' or 'laptops'?

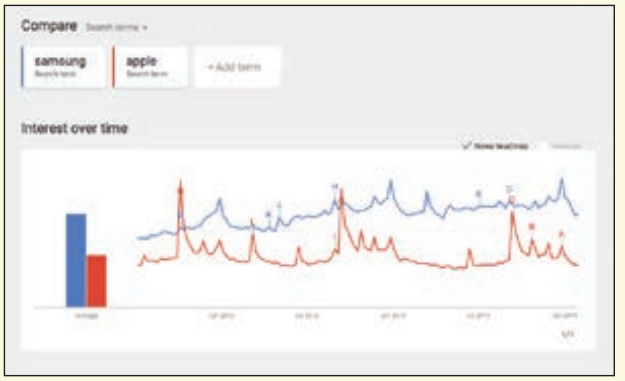
5 Was Wayne Rooney more popular in *Google* searches in 2010 or 2011?

6 Which is a more popular *Google* search term in England: 'Fish and chips' or 'Curry'?

Now use information on *Google Trends* to see if you're right!

Example activity 1: *Google Trends*

5 Use *Google Trends* to display a graph comparing Apple and Samsung since 2011 (it might be good idea to have this ready in a window at the start of the lesson). Example:



(Note: selecting 'News headlines' shows important stories relating to these search terms (marked A–I on the graph). You can find the content of the story by moving the cursor over each letter.)

Use this data to elicit/teach vocabulary for describing line graphs. You may want to make your own resource to introduce these words and phrases.

Example target language:

Introductory expressions	Language for graphs
The graph shows / indicates / depicts / illustrates … As can be seen from the graph … As is shown / illustrated by the graph …	remain, unchanged, stable, constant, increase (-ed, -ed) fall (fell, fallen), decrease (-ed, -ed), drop (dropped, dropped), slight (slightly), steady (steadily), gradual (gradually), gentle (gently), downward trend

6 Put the students in pairs. They choose two or three search terms which they are interested in comparing. Make sure their choices are comparable: 'Arsenal' versus 'Manchester United' is probably worth comparing, but 'Bognor Regis Town FC' versus 'Liverpool' is unlikely to produce comparable data to analyse!

Get the students to compare these items using *Google Trends*. They can then prepare a brief presentation on the graph produced, using the target language where relevant/possible. When presenting their information, they can use the class computer to access the graph so that the other students have a point of reference.

Example activity 2: *Google Art Project*

This activity is a webquest, designed to be used with *Google Art Project* (*www.google.com/culturalinstitute/home*). The students can use a search bar at the top of the home page to find the answers to all the questions. *Art Project* is a great way to introduce learners to art as a subject, and to encourage independent research.

Art

Go to *www.google.com/culturalinstitute/home* and find the answers to these questions. You have 15 minutes!

Search for 'William Hogarth'. View all the items. Find 'Southwark Fair'.

1 What year was it painted?
2 Where is Southwark? (Hint: search in 'Details')
3 Find the man smoking. What colour is his jacket?
4 Which animal is a) hanging from a post? b) on a sign under the big red flag?

Find information on the National Gallery, London.

5 When did it move to Trafalgar Square?
6 How many paintings of Bacchus and Ariadne are on the National Gallery page?
7 Who were the artists?

Search for 'Banksy'.

8 What type of art does he create?
9 What is unusual about the title of his works?
10 In one of his images, what are the policemen doing?

Search for 'Damien Hirst'.

11 True or false? Damien Hirst spent six weeks creating a sculpture of a hairdryer and a ping-pong ball.

Search for 'Whistler's Mother'.

12 This is the nickname of a very famous painting. Who painted it and what is it actually called?
13 Where is the painting displayed?

Search for 'Vincent Van Gogh'.

14 Van Gogh painted a picture of his friend Paul Gauguin's chair. What can you see on the chair?
15 In his painting from 1885, how many people are around the table, and what are they doing?

Search for 'Queen Victoria'.

16 How old was she in her portrait by Denning?

Answers **1)** 1733 **2)** London (south of the Thames) **3)** blue (centre of the painting) **4** a) monkey, b) horse **5)** 1831 **6)** two **7)** Titian, Ricci **8)** street art **9)** They're all called 'Mural by Banksy'. **10)** kissing **11)** true **12)** James Abbott McNeil Whistler, 'Portrait of the Artist's Mother' **13)** the Musée D'Orsay in Paris **14)** a candlestick and some books **15)** five; eating potatoes **16)** four years old

OK, Google!

Gleb Lantsman makes good use of automatic speech recognition.

It is more than safe to assume that all English teachers have been faced with the problem of how to use information and communication technology (ICT) efficiently in the classroom at least once in their careers. Although teaching with technology has been 'trendy' for the last 30 years or so, there is no single solution to the problem. Some experienced consultants (such as Nicky Hockly) even advise against unthinking use of some ICT tools, eg interactive whiteboards, in the ELT classroom – which is more than understandable, given that not every teacher can make good use of such devices in order to facilitate language acquisition. Overly complicated electronic tools are certainly hard to master, but what if *everybody* had a widespread tool with a wide range of benefits that was easy to use?

ASR encourages future learner autonomy and shows that English can be applied in real life, which may positively affect the student's motivation

Automatic speech recognition (ASR) has been around for several decades and is widely used in commercial software for language learning (one of the most famous examples is probably *Rosetta Stone*). It has never been more accessible than now, however, with the introduction of a pre-installed ASR extension to *Google Chrome*. This allows the user to say the simple phrase *OK, Google* to activate the voice search function. According to *StatCounter*, a major internet statistics website, as of May 2015 around 52 percent of users prefer *Google Chrome* as their web browser, which means that there is a good chance that at least one out of two English language teachers does not have to install anything in order to use ASR. But what exactly can we do with it in the field of ELT?

Using ASR

The list of main ASR applications includes, but is not limited to, the following:

1 It can help the teacher to make meaningful and interactive use of ICT. The laptop or computer in the classroom is very often used in a way that is far from interactive: still images, audio files and e-books in class do not provide the learner with feedback, to say the least. Once voice search is introduced, however, learners can get a sense of accomplishment from their very first steps in English. Saying something in English that the teacher can understand is important, but getting some tangible real-world results from ASR is even more so, because it brings interactivity into the classroom. In addition to that, it encourages future learner autonomy and shows that English can be applied in real life, which may positively affect the student's motivation.

2 It can ensure that real-life content is used by both the teacher and the learner. The popular question-based Direct Method (described by Richards and Rodgers) and its clones rely on simple questions, such as *Is India in Asia?* or *What is the most popular drink in Russia?* Going beyond these questions will usually result in hesitation on the learner's part. In such situations, voice search can give the learner real-life data upon which to build answers, and can enable the teacher to ask a wider range of questions, which develops interest in the subject. For example, in a lesson on *there is/are*, we could hear the following classroom dialogue:

OK, *Google*!

Teacher: *How many people are there in New York?*

Student: *Uh, New York … I don't know!*

Teacher: *Ask Google then!*

Student: *OK, Google … how many people are there in New York?*

Google Voice Search: *8.406 million.* [2013]

Student: *There are eight-point-four-oh-six million people in New York.*

Teacher: *Right. And in Moscow?*

Student: *OK, Google … how many people are there in Moscow?*

Such an approach can also be used to answer the learner's questions about the origin of a word (*Google* now has a built-in dictionary with information on etymology).

The important thing here is to remember that one of the main objectives of this activity is to practise the English language, not voice search in itself. Voice search is an important life skill in the modern world, but by no means a learning objective. Therefore, overusing it can lead to misunderstanding because learners may start to think you are wasting their time and money. Another important pitfall to be avoided is that almost every attempt to use voice search can hamper fluency.

3 *Google Voice Search* is also a good tool for improving a student's pronunciation. When learners need to search for something in English, their success depends largely on the clarity of their speech and, to some extent, its fluency. These two factors are responsible for what *Google* understands – if it understands them at all. For better results, I recommend showing *Google Voice Search* along with an online dictionary, because the students may need to use the latter as a reference source for pronunciation. For instance, native speakers of Russian usually mispronounce the word *crisis* because there is a similar word in Russian. So, another typical example, where the teacher has written the word *crisis* on the board, could be like this:

Teacher: *What is a 'crisis'* ['kraɪsɪs]*?*

Student: *I don't know … OK, Google … what is a 'crisis'* ['krɪzɪs]*?*

Google Voice Search: *What is colitas? The word 'colitas' means literally 'little tails', thus use of the slang 'colitas' (as referenced in the song), meaning the burning of little marijuana tails/buds.*

Student: *What does it mean?*

Teacher: *Well … maybe there was a pronunciation problem? Let's check the pronunciation of the word 'crisis' …*

(The teacher then writes the phonemic transcription on the board, refers the student to an online dictionary or pronounces it again.)

The same approach can be used for teaching word order, eg in questions. However, as the *Google* ASR engine has been designed to understand wrong word order and still reply correctly, this usage is not as impressive as the previous one (the answer will sometimes be 'spot on' even if the word order in the question is wrong).

4 Although *Google Voice Search* is an impressive tool on its own, there are developers who have taken it to the next level, and we, as teachers, can capitalise on this. The *Dictation App* (*https://dictation.io*) employs the built-in automatic speech recognition engine of *Google Chrome* and can be used for a wide variety of tasks in the ELT classroom. For instance, have you ever thought of how to make your IELTS speaking classes even more productive? In the majority of my IELTS speaking classes, I switch on the *Dictation App* in the second part of the Speaking paper (the 'long turn'). While a student is doing the speaking task, the program recognises their speech and writes everything down in a form on the website. My goal here is just to count the number of long pauses, attempts to self-correct, etc. Once the student has finished speaking, with the help of almost any text processor I can have these words counted, thus acquiring the 'footprint' of a student: the numerical indices describing his/her speaking. Comparing these footprints over time, I have more data to make judgements about each student's progress in speaking. It is almost certain that there is a correlation between the parameters of a footprint and the final IELTS Speaking score, although this issue is still being researched. In order to balance the pressure on the student, it is important to let them know that they are going to be recorded at some point during the class, but it is a good idea not to say *when* exactly.

5 During my studies at the University of Southampton, UK, I noticed how our tutors gave feedback. They wrote down the most glaring errors (usually up to five of them), but because there were a lot of students in the classroom, many mistakes were ignored completely. Although it is a matter of debate whether or not a learner should be told about all the mistakes they make during a class, the teacher has to be able to decide what to do with this information. Without the *Dictation App*, I would have to write everything down by hand and then give the student a feedback card with some or all of the mistakes they made. Now I don't need to do this, and it saves a great deal of my time and effort. Of course, the ASR engine is not perfect yet, and I still need to correct the final version of recognised text, but doing so is much simpler. Further actions with the corrected mistakes may include saving the file, emailing it to the student for future reference or even creating a 'bigger footprint', eg a *Google* spreadsheet with all the mistakes the student has ever made. This would obviously be very helpful in designing curricula and for lesson planning.

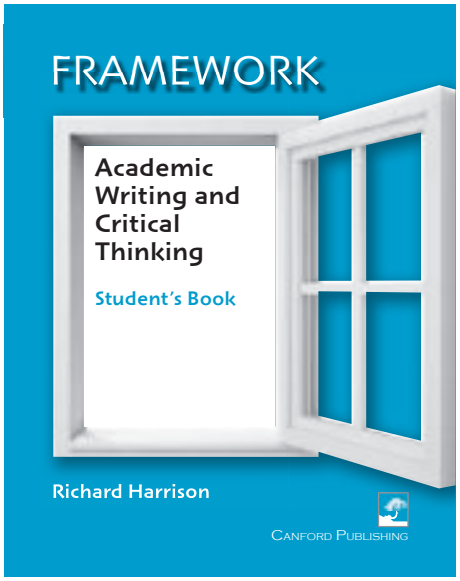
★ ★ ★

There is certainly room for further improvement of the ASR engine embedded in *Google Chrome*, and more suggestions as to how to use it are welcome. With this accessible, omnipresent and powerful tool, however, it is not difficult to make learning more engaging, meaningful and modern. I might even mention that the article you have just read was initially dictated by me using the *Dictation App* based on the *Google Voice Search* ASR engine. ETp



Gleb Lantsman is currently an IELTS and general English teacher at the Royal English Language Center, Tomsk, Russia. He has taught English since 2011, and is particularly interested in teaching English with ICT, and learner motivation.

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Pavilion

Metal guru

Brian Coughlan lightens his classes with some 'heavy' music.

When thinking of songs for use in the English language classroom, one is probably more likely to think of artists like Robbie Williams rather than the frenetic thunder of 3 Inches of Blood. If you have never heard of the latter, you are definitely not alone. Heavy metal is not only arguably one of the most under-represented genres of music used in English language classes, but also one that is full of potential for creative and useful exploitation. This article will focus on power metal and heavy metal that was written during the 1980s, of which the New Wave of British Heavy Metal was a part. For the latter, I will use the term 'old school metal'.

Reasons for use

From its roots in blues, with influences from classical music, heavy metal has morphed into a huge range of genres, including death metal, doom metal, black metal, thrash and many more. Among them, power metal and old school metal stand out as particularly suitable for the English classroom. Firstly, the bands generally employ relatively clear vocalisation techniques, as opposed to the guttural grind vocals of death metal and other sub-genres. More importantly, many of the bands in the power and old school genres tell stories in their songs, often with a clear chronological and narrative structure. Iced Earth's 'Red Baron/Blue Max' (2006) is a short biography of the famed pilot Manfred von Richthofen and serves to illustrate the chronological nature of storytelling in much of heavy metal. Sonata Arctica's 'Flag in the Ground' (2009) employs two distinct vocal qualities to simulate letters written by a young man seeking new land in the early United States and his wife, left behind in England. These genres are also rich fields to explore because of their wide ranging sources of inspiration. 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner' (1984) by Iron Maiden draws on English poetry and is a rendition of the poem of the same name by Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

Considerations for use

While there are many reasons to choose heavy metal songs for a class, there are a few considerations to keep in mind which, while true of any song selection, have particular relevance to the metal genre. Most obviously, the question of vocal clarity is paramount, along with the speed of delivery. Metal music may have been recorded at a volume that obscures some or much of the vocals. Furthermore, metal vocalists will use various vocal techniques to add variety, such as wailing vowel sounds in order to extend word length. In addition, the length of songs often makes choices difficult for teachers, as power metal and old school metal songs tend to be relatively long. Nightwish take over 13 minutes to complete 'Song of Myself' (2011). A final thought should be given to the students' abilities. I have found that while students at B1 level on the CEFR scale can cope with some heavy metal, those at B2 and above fare much better and get more from the music than cognitive overload. However, teachers best know the capabilities of their students with respect to the demands of specific songs.

Language use

Exploitation of metal songs offers a range of choices that can lead to the students' productive use of language. Iced Earth explore the possible mental state and domestic situation of the infamous serial killer Jack the Ripper in 'Jack' (2001). I used this song with B2-level students, with heavily graded comprehension tasks (such as lyric re-ordering) and vocabulary pre-teaching. By focusing on the perspective of Jack the Ripper, a debate was set up in class regarding whether he was actually guilty or not and, if he was, whether there were any mitigating circumstances. I encouraged spoken production through roleplays, including an interview with Jack as he is portrayed in the song. If the perspective were shifted to Jack's mother, students might explore her situation and its causes, along with the implications for her of Jack's murders. Such a perspective might provide more advanced students with a rich opportunity for creative writing or discursive essays.

Although I have not yet personally used the song 'Highwayman' (2014) by Iced Earth, I can see its potential with students. It tells the tale of a single person who is reincarnated through four rebirths. This particular song could be paused after the first verse and chorus, with the students asked to speculate on the possible fate of the deceased individual. The students could write their ideas down and then listen, to check them against the information given in the remainder of the song. This focus on comprehension for general meaning could then lead into a more detailed comprehension task. The students might create a *Facebook* profile for the character in the song, discussing how he would fill in the various fields on a *Facebook* page.

★ ★ ★

Students may find the use of heavy metal in class something of a surprise, especially if the introduction contains strong chords and rapid rhythms. However, they may also enjoy the chance to explore music that they would not normally delve into to any depth, if at all. I am well aware that heavy metal does not suit every musical taste! On the other hand, the occasional use of the genre in class does give the opportunity to explore narratives that have coherence, and use music to tell stories in the more traditional sense of beginnings, middles and endings. ETp

'Red Baron/Blue Max' by Iced Earth:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=nOkGYTM6PwU

'Flag in the Ground' by Sonata Arctica:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=kObI4XuTR2o

'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' by Iron Maiden:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=t7zk4as9kzA

'Song of Myself' by Nightwish:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=-VErFODMZ7o

'Jack' by Iced Earth:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=pwu4Eybj9Ko

'Highwayman' by Iced Earth:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zz6UAAhJBe8



Brian Coughlan has been in ELT for over 15 years, both teaching and learning, inspired by colleagues and students alike. Based in New Zealand, he teaches both online and for local clients and institutions, as well as studying linguistics.

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Graphs and charts

Jocelyn Wright

draws our attention to the advantages of graph-making.

New ideas often come to us when we look outside our discipline. In this case, reaching beyond the familiar bounds of applied linguistics and English education, I found inspiration in mathematics – and graphing, in particular. Language teachers may naturally think to make use of tables, schedules, calendars, maps, word clouds, Venn diagrams, timelines, flow charts and other graphic organisers for language teaching or learning. These kinds of materials are often found in coursebooks as well. However, *quantitative* graphs and charts seem to be underused.

When teachers, especially business English teachers or those teaching ESP (eg science or engineering), *do* incorporate statistical data and graphs into their lessons, many simply get the students to read and discuss them. But why stop at graph comprehension? Why not incorporate an applied element of learning and have the students make their own graphs, particularly when, as Susan Friel, Frances Curcio and George Bright point out, they need to seek out the data necessary to do this and make sense of them?

In this article, I will first discuss rationales for making graphs and charts (in general, as well as for language learning) and clarify some key terms. I will then look at three types of graphs (pie, bar and line), variations, procedures and uses. Next, I will suggest some easy applications for student learning. At the end, I will recommend some free online resources. Of course, the possibilities for graph-making are vast, and this article only grazes the surface.

A final introductory note: although greater familiarity with graphing would enable more effective facilitation of learning, language teachers who claim they are not good at mathematics can still have students do graph-making activities!

Rationales

As English language teachers in this era of unprecedented globalisation, we are well aware of the importance of language learning for our students and, we hope, its usefulness in developing them as global citizens. In addition, we are increasingly mindful that we should also be helping our students develop 21st-century skills.

One essential skill that contributes to informed citizenship is statistical literacy. Being able to do research, including collecting, analysing, interpreting and representing data, is necessary in our rapidly-changing 'knowledge and action' society, and it is a skill that all students can benefit from practising.

Effective visual representations of quantitative data often take the form of well-designed graphs and charts. It is important that our students should be able to read these. However, a superior aim from a constructivist perspective would be the goal of developing 'graph sense'. Unlike graph comprehension, which Friel and her colleagues say *'involves being able to read and make*

Graphs and charts

sense of already constructed graphs', this is a way of thinking that *'develops gradually as a result of one's creating graphs and using already designed graphs in a variety of problem contexts that require making sense of data'*.

From a language learner's perspective, making graphs and charts can also be motivational. One reason is that integrating even simple versions into classes can appeal to students with diverse learning styles, who have strengths in different areas (eg spatial and/or logical-mathematical, according to Howard Gardner's multiple intelligences classification). Another is that it can transform common communicative exercises into interdisciplinary, task-based learning opportunities, following the guidelines provided by Dave and Jane Willis. That is, setting graph-making as the goal of a task can help engage the learners, can allow for focus on meaning, can offer obtainable outcomes for the students to achieve, and is, at the same time, reflective of real-world activity.

Definitions

Talking about graphs and charts can get confusing. A *chart* is an umbrella term, typically used to describe a visual or graphical display of data. As Friel and her colleagues point out, a *graph* uses *'spatial characteristics … to represent quantity'*. While the word *graph* and its derivatives feel more appropriate here, the terms are often used interchangeably. To reduce repetition, I will use both.

You probably remember bar graphs, column charts, scatter plots, box plots, pie charts, line charts, area graphs, histograms, maybe even waterfall charts, radar charts, bubble charts or candlestick charts from your school days or more recent experiences. Despite the vast number of names, according to James Poulakos and Pam Ellen there are essentially only three types of graphs: the pie chart, the bar graph and the line graph, and the other 'types' are really only stylistic variations of these. As such, understanding the basic uses of these three should allow for a number of applications, multiplied creatively by their variations.

The three graph types

This section describes each main type of graph and explains how they can be used for English language practice. The first graph is well-known for its circular shape.

1 Pie charts

Pie charts are most effectively used to show composition, or how parts relate to a whole. They offer an overview by showing the relative frequency (in percentages) of results concerning either clearly defined nominal or ordinal categories. Poulakos and Ellen make the point that, because people are not generally good at *'estimating slices of pie'*, these charts are best used when only a few categories are involved and the ratios or percentages are easy to calculate. When time comparisons are desired, students should prepare displays with side-by-side graphs (eg 'before' and 'now').

Every kind of graph and chart has its own characteristics which need to be taken into account in graph-making. A simple procedure for making pie charts could involve the following basic steps:

1 Determine the purpose of the research and the questions to ask.

2 Collect data.

3 Calculate percentages.

4 Draw the graph.

5 Add a title, data labels and a legend.

Pie charts work well for simple polling activities, especially with closed (*yes*/*no*) questions or simple ranking. For instance, students can ask each other about specific habits, routines or activities and the frequency (eg *always*, *usually*, *sometimes*, *rarely*, *never*) with which they do them. They can find out about each other's possessions (eg pets or models of cars). Pie charts can also easily show the percentage of likes and dislikes or of agreement and disagreement within a group. Strength of opinion may be expressed, using a plethora of Likert-scale value questions.

More content-focused ideas, which could require outside research, might include a pie chart showing population facts (eg declared gender, race or religious affiliation within nation states) or land use (eg how much land is dedicated to national parks, used for agriculture or inhabited by city dwellers). Students could also research commercial services in their neighbourhood (eg genres of films showing at a cinema or types of meals served at a restaurant) or financial matters (eg how a charity spends the money it raises, or the budget for a research project).

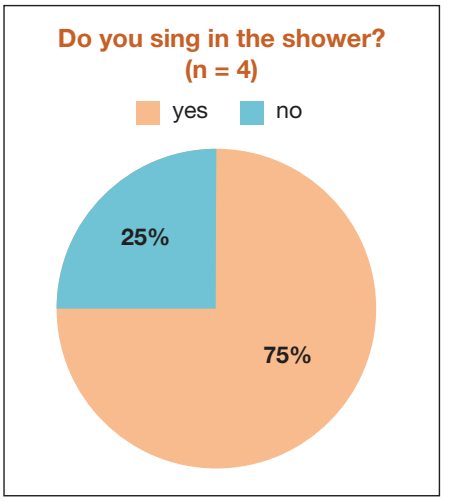


Figure 1 A standard pie chart

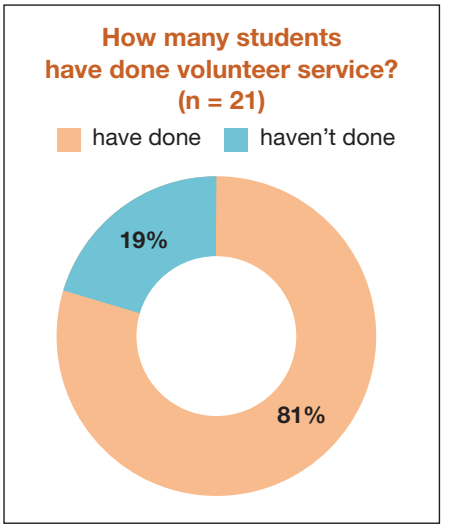


Figure 2 A doughnut chart (variation of a pie chart)

If students have difficulty drawing pie charts by hand, they could use technology, if they have access to it (see 'Digital resources' below).

2 Bar graphs

Bar graphs can be horizontal or vertical (columnar), depending on the desired message. Because they tend to be easy to read and make, they are probably the most common type of graph. They have two main uses. Like pie charts, they can compare items, frequency distributions or values, but bar graphs may be better than pie charts if many categories are being compared. They can also show changes over time.

Here is a possible procedure for making a bar graph:

1 Determine the purpose of the research and the questions to ask.

2 Collect data.

3 Find the range in values.

4 Determine the scale.

5 Draw the graph, being sure to label the axes.

6 Draw the bars.

7 Add a title, data labels and a legend.

Bar graphs are great when you want to show favourites or preferences for several things (eg snacks or toys) or top genres (eg books, films or TV series). You can rank participation in common activities, such as hobbies or sports, or use of services (eg mobile phone companies or public transport), by asking questions to establish, for instance, which are the most to least popular. You can show range distributions (eg for ages, sexes or time periods) quite clearly with bar graphs.

Students can also look up information for teacher-graded assignments or to share with their peers. For example, they may want to compare enrolment in certain study programmes, or rates of employment or unemployment in particular fields. They could document comparative costs of products or services or the values of imports to – or exports from – a country, relative populations of countries within a specific region or continent, or even the relative amounts of different rock types in a sample.

Because of their flexibility, bar graphs have a number of variations. More complex bar graphs include those that are grouped side by side (as in Figure 4)

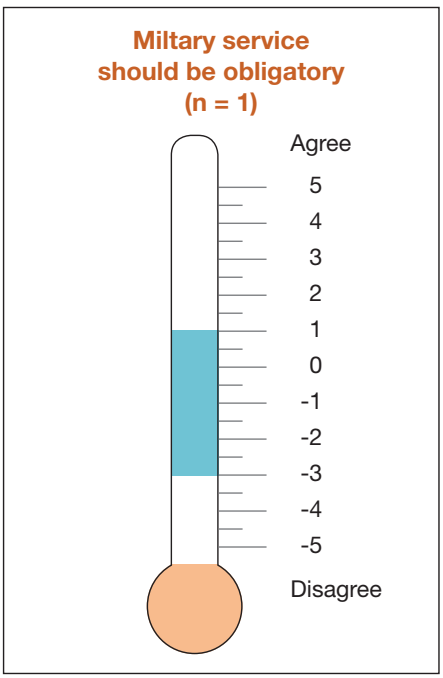


Figure 5 A thermometer graph

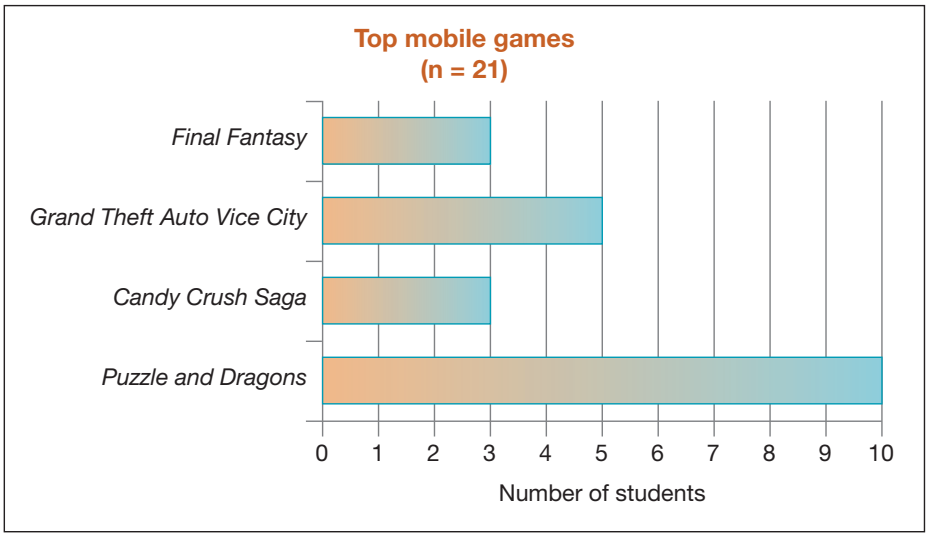


Figure 3 A horizontal bar graph

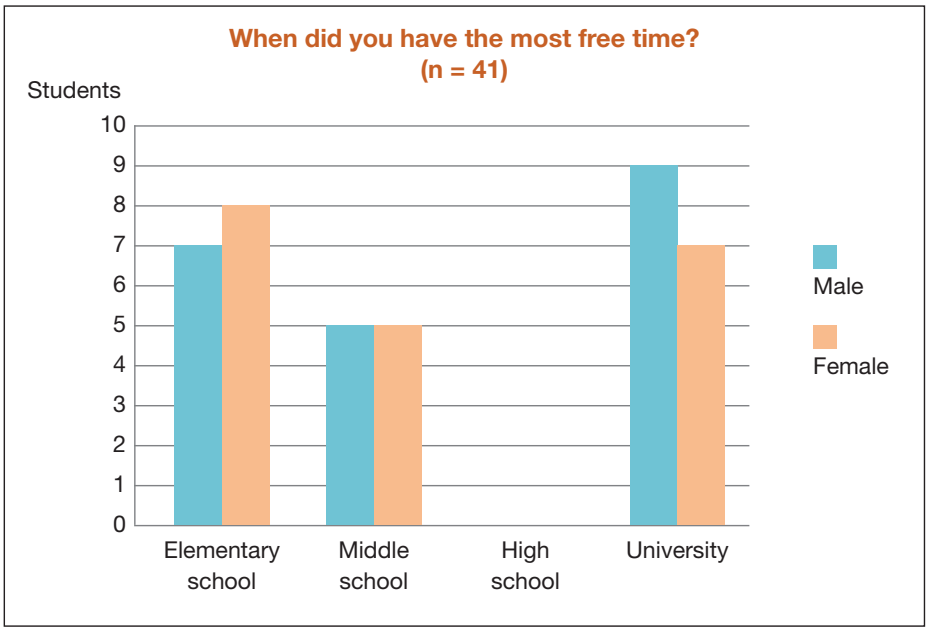


Figure 4 A vertical bar graph (grouped)

or stacked (ie combined in one bar). When working with young learners, pictographs – where they draw pictures or attach stickers – can be fun and very effective. Different shapes (eg a gauge or a thermometer, as shown in Figure 5) can be used instead of traditional grids.

3 Line graphs

Line graphs are similar to bar graphs and are used to track changes (ie increases, decreases and fluctuations) or stability in items or sets over time. They are very effective at showing trends (see Figures 6 and 7 on page 20). One thing to keep in mind with line graphs when comparing sets is that preparing multiple single-line graphs may be more effective than using many lines on one graph.

Here is a possible procedure for making line graphs:

1 Determine the purpose of the research and the questions to ask.

2 Collect data.

3 Find the range in values.

4 Determine the scale.

5 Draw the graph, being sure to label the axes.

6 Plot the points, and connect them.

7 Add a title, data labels and a legend.

Line graphs can show trends in a number of configurations (eg by time, day, week, month, season or year). They can be used to show how students' tastes (eg in music or fashion), habits (eg expenditure) or time spent doing activities (eg waiting for buses, studying, exercising, using technology) have changed over time.

Graphs and charts

Students may also research and compare weather and climatic conditions in different places. In addition, they can use line graphs to show population data (eg growth or waves of immigration) or business details related to sales, prices or consumption.

When more than one, but not too many, series are compared, area graphs can serve as substitutes. These are basically line graphs where the areas under the lines have been coloured in.

Ten considerations

This final section looks at ways graphs and charts can be used for student learning, including who they can be used with, appropriate moments for use, how data are collected, language and skills development and task design considerations. I finish by commenting on a couple of further uses and recommending some resources.

1 Learner configurations

Graphs can be made to communicate individual, pair and group experience. That is, students can complete graphs about their own lives or, alternatively, a number of students could be surveyed and the results tabulated. However the task is set up, the students should be required to participate actively and discuss or compare their graphs with others.

2 Task sequencing

Graphs and charts can be used at different stages in a lesson (pre-, during- or post-activity). If time is a concern, they can also be prepared outside class for use in the lesson.

3 Data collection

Students can collect data from other students in the classroom (or people outside) through personal interviews, questionnaires and observation. Alternatively, data may be found in newspapers, encyclopaedias, reports, documentaries and other electronic or print media. Which sources are consulted depends on the research questions, but this phase offers many opportunities for sharing and authentic learning.

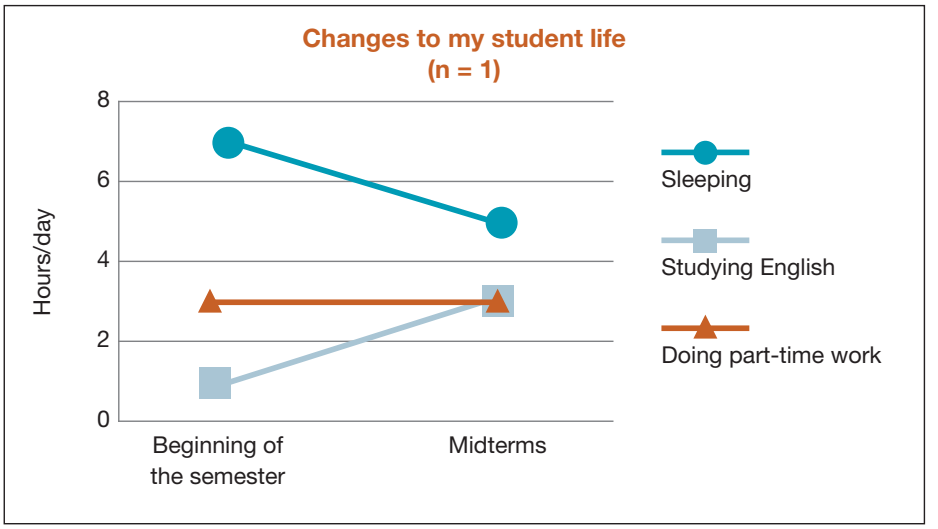


Figure 6 A line graph

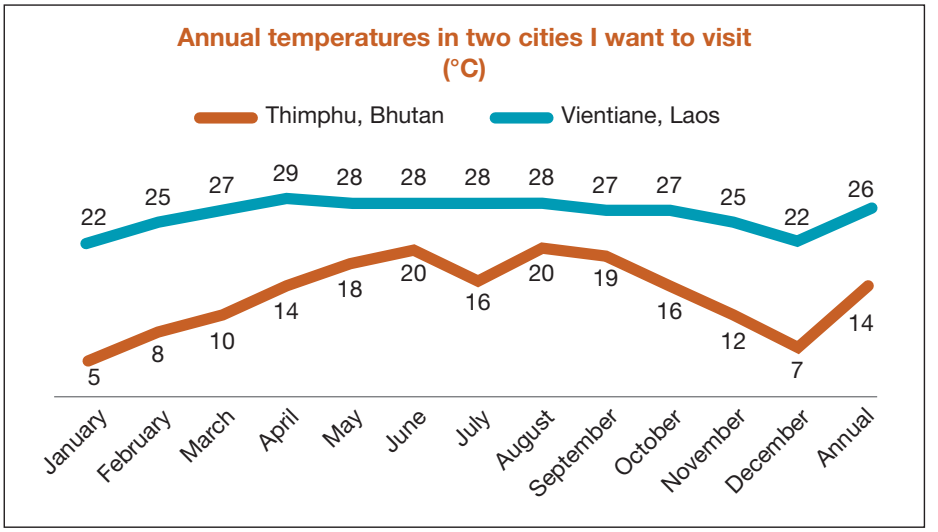


Figure 7 A line graph

4 Focus on meaning

Producing a graph is an authentic real-world task. When the aim of a task is to produce a graph or chart, the students may focus on this end, using their available language resources as tools to accomplish their goal.

5 Focus on form

The language required to complete each graph-making task can vary considerably, depending on the topic. Thus, graphs and charts naturally lend themselves to the practice of a rich variety of language forms.

When describing graphs, verbs of movement (to describe fluctuations) and stability, nouns, prepositions, adverbs, intensifiers, comparative and superlative adjectives, etc are commonly used. Depending on learner abilities, statistical terminology, such as *axis/axes*, *data*, *scale*, *percent*, *percentage of*, *frequency*, *correlation*, *dispersion*, *distribution*, *sampling effect*, etc, may be integrated into the discussion. If students work in small groups or obtain surprising results (eg if after doing a whole-class polling activity that includes their own response, they arrive at dissimilar findings), they may also learn valuable lessons about validity and reliability.

6 Skills development

Graph-making offers opportunities to integrate the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) into a lesson. Before or during the process of data collection, the students might read documents, listen to reports, create a survey or interview others. To record data or make sense of them, they might need to have or make a tally sheet or table, which Friel *et al* consider *'an intermediate step to creating graphical representations'*. These do not have to be complex. After obtaining their data, the students might prepare a report, article, poster, blog entry,

podcast, video or slideshow, which they could also present along with their graphs.

Allowing time for reporting is especially valuable. Presentations by students of their graphs and charts to the rest of the class can provide meaningful opportunities to share the results of their research. As Curcio points out, depending on their level and ability, they may be called upon to read the data literally, 'read between the data' (comparison), or 'read beyond the data' (extension, prediction or inference). There are also benefits for the audience, whether listeners or readers. These include exposure to different ways of displaying information and fresh interpretations.

7 Task design

In designing a graph-making task, the teacher must consider the mathematical and data complexity, as well as David Nunan's 'essential dimensions of task': learner, procedure, language and learning process.

Usually, the types of graphs and charts discussed in this article are introduced in elementary and middle school curricula. Therefore, they may be adapted for use with a fairly wide range of ages, although younger learners will probably need simpler, more highly structured graphing tasks. For example, they might be asked to complete a ready-made graph, rather than design one from scratch. As with any task, the cognitive demands need to be balanced with the time available, and the topics and linguistic complexity need to be chosen with age- and level-appropriateness in mind. Depending on the class, I sometimes give my students full freedom to create their own questions. At other times, I give them sets of prepared or semi-prepared questions (or a mix). The challenge has to be weighed against available support, so that the students can complete a graph-making task successfully.

8 Further uses

So far, I have discussed how students can practise a range of language and skills through communicative graph-making tasks, while, at the same time, learning more about each other and/or about new topics. The teacher will most likely also learn along with them. However, graphs and charts are great for self-reflection as well, and they can be used for diagnostic purposes and ongoing evaluation. For example, students can use graphs to show their current status or level in English (eg relative strengths in the four skills or time spent studying). They can also track their progress over time (eg number of words learnt, pages read or scores on successive tasks) or use graphs to visualise how much time they spend on certain tasks or skills compared to others. Finally, graphs may be used for class management (eg to keep track of desirable behaviours, such as how many questions a student asked or answered in each lesson, how many times they self-corrected or helped a classmate).

9 Graph paper and templates

If it is the students' first time doing graph-making activities for language learning, it could be helpful to give them blank templates to work with. Some websites offer grid paper (*www.math-aids.com/Graph_Paper* and *http://mathbits.com/MathBits/StudentResources/GraphPaper/GraphPaper.htm*) or ready-made templates (*www.mathwire.com/templates/templatelibrary.html*) at no cost. Of course, it is also quite easy to create your own task-specific templates.

10 Digital resources

While paper and pen work very well, especially for in-class interaction, teachers may in some cases want to encourage their students to develop computer skills. *Google Forms* (see *www.google.com/forms/about*) allows you to create surveys that automatically generate basic graphs and charts. One great advantage of these is that they can easily be filled in using mobile devices.

An online option that involves manually collecting data, and which is designed for younger learners, is called 'Create a Graph' (*http://nces.ed.gov/nceskids/createagraph*). This interactive graph generator was designed by the US Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences National Center for Education Statistics. Similar websites that older students can also use freely to create graphs online are *ChartGo.com* and *Onlinecharttool.com*, although the latter requires importing data already entered in a spreadsheet. Offline, if context-appropriate, *Excel* or an equivalent spreadsheet program, could be used as well. These may offer more graphing options.

★ ★ ★

In this short article, I have tried to show the usefulness of having students make three types of graphs for English language learning. As graphs are versatile, they provide ample opportunities to use different language forms and skills communicatively, while simultaneously improving the students' statistical literacy. Graph-making can literally get students thinking about English in new dimensions.

In the 'knowledge and action' age, it is important to promote different types of literacies so that our students can become what Duarte Morais and Anthony Ogden term *'socially responsible, globally competent and civically engaged individuals'*. I hope that teachers and materials developers alike will consider integrating graph-making tasks into their curricula, as they have the potential to contribute to the development of a more informed global citizenry. Graphing activities need not be reserved only for business English and ESP courses, and they do not need to stop at mere comprehension. ETp

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One more time!

Tien Minh Mai outlines some creative activities with old worksheets.

More often than not, teachers (and learners) throw one-sided photocopiable worksheets into the bin once an activity has finished, especially in a secondary school context, where the students are frequently overwhelmed by worksheets and handouts. However, if we ever stopped to think about how to use the *other* (blank) side of pieces of used A4 paper, we would realise that they offer a great starting point for even more motivating activities in future lessons. In this article I will describe ten successful ideas that can be used with classes of young learners. Of course, these activities could also be done with fresh sheets of paper, but using old worksheets doesn't detract from the activity and is more environmentally friendly.

1 Paper skirt

This is a team competition involving sentence correction.

- Prepare a piece of paper with sentences containing mistakes that the students have written or said.
- Put one sentence on each line and space them so that the paper can be cut into strips which remain joined at the top, to form a skirt. Photocopy this onto the backs of some old worksheets, using a paper cutter to cut the sentences into dangling strips.
- Put the students in teams and give each team a 'skirt'. The students take turns to tear a strip away, correct the sentence and present it to the teacher. The team that finishes first wins.

2 Facebook wall

This activity gives a meaningful context for writing, and also taps into the students' enthusiasm for social networking sites.

- Get each student to join two used worksheets together vertically to create a physical '*Facebook*' wall.
- Ask them to bring a photo to class, 'upload' it to their own 'wall' (by gluing it to the top of the paper) and then display it on the classroom wall.
- Encourage the students to walk around the gallery of photos and to 'post' comments (write responses) under their friends' photos.

3 Self-esteem fan

As Carol Read points out, it is important for students to be aware of their own positive attributes. They can be asked to fold a used worksheet into a fan and write a positive attribute in each blank section of the fan. They then share their fans with their classmates.

4 Secret strips

Used worksheets are useful for a fun random matching activity which often produces hilarious results.

- Divide the class into two (A and B) and hand out used worksheets cut into strips.
- Ask the A students to write questions and the B students to write sentences.
- Mix up all the strips from the A students in one box and the strips from the B students in another.
- Ask volunteers to come to the front, pick a question and an 'answer' and read them out to the class.
- This can also be done – and it works particularly well – with conditional sentences. The A students write the *If* clause, and the B students the result.



5 Me-shirt

This is a useful getting-to-know-each-other activity for a new class.

- Ask the students to draw the outline of a T-shirt on the back of a used worksheet.
- Get them to colour it and write in it words that represent their identity (eg their family, interests, etc).
- They then cut out their T-shirts and peg them on a washing line, or display them on the classroom noticeboard.
- Give them time to walk around, read and admire their classmates' shirts.

6 Classroom contract

Many teachers find that discussing and agreeing standards of behaviour, rules, rewards and sanctions with their students ensures greater compliance.

- Get each student to write down the agreed rules on the back of an old worksheet in the form of a contract.
- Both teacher and student can then sign the contract.

7 Hitmen's blacklist

This is a good activity for vocabulary practice.

- Put the class into two teams and ask each team to divide into 'guessers' and 'hitmen'.
- Select a topic, such as *food*.
- Tell the hitmen to write a given number of words relating to food on the back of an old worksheet (without showing these to the guessers), and to put the name of any member of the opposing team next to each. The number of words you ask for will determine the length of the game.
- A hitman from one team then explains, demonstrates or mimes one word for their own team's guessers to guess.
- If the guessers are correct, the person from the opposing team whose name is next to the word is out of the game.
- Then a hitman from the other team has a go.
- The game continues, with the hitmen taking turns until the words are used up. The winning team is the one with most surviving members.

8 Building materials

This is a useful team-building activity.

- Divide the class into teams and give each team the same number of used paper worksheets.
- Tell them that they have to use these (in any way they want) in order to build the highest and strongest structure that they can.
- Award prizes for the highest, strongest, most artistic, etc.

9 Airwall

Use old worksheets to help the students visualise voiceless sounds in pronunciation lessons. The students put the worksheet in front of their mouths when they practise pronouncing voiceless sounds. If the paper flaps, they know that they have produced the sound correctly.

10 Wallpaper

Of course, you may want to keep some of your old worksheets to help the students with revision. Simply display important ones on the wall for future reference and for the students to look at when they are revising for tests. ETp

Read, C 'Seven pillars of creativity in primary ELT' In Maley, A and Peachey, N (Eds) *Creativity in the English Language Classroom* British Council 2015 *http://englishagenda.britishcouncil.org/books-resource-packs/creativity-english-language-classroom*



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Writing here, writing there ...

Chris Roland shows that his students can more or less write anywhere.





A class of six year olds practise writing numbers

Text is the very stuff of teaching. It is right there at the core of what we do. Written text is something we can move onto a wide range of surfaces and objects to increase entertainment and engagement for our young learner – and even teenage – students. I refer to this as *text shift* and mentioned the idea in my article 'Cooking up fun' in ET*p* Issue 84. Here, I would like to show you some examples.

Balloons

Writing on balloons is a squeaky undertaking! It has a sense of impermanence, but it makes the writer alert. If the words that go on the balloons are copied from the board or are the students' responses to exercises in a coursebook, what is – on the surface – a 'wacky' activity will still help you cover your language syllabus.

Eggs

Writing on blown-out eggs presents the students with a different but similar puzzle, which will increase mindfulness and encourage them to take care. Hollow eggs are fragile and need to be held gently. They also roll about, so they need holding onto well. Supporting language can be put on the board for the writing itself, whatever the theme, as can transactional language to enable the students to ask for the egg and a permanent marker pen in the first place.



Concentration levels shoot up for this egg-writing activity



Here, the text will read: 'My birthday is on ...'

Bricks

A brick, on the other hand, is very different from an egg or a balloon. It is flat and cold. The bumpy texture does not help, even after students have applied a coat of whitewash. Again, though, the finished product represents invested attention. Part of the challenge with the bricks, especially for younger writers, is managing to fit their text into the space available. To help, their drafts can be written on brick-sized templates.



Teenage students each whitewash their brick in a previous lesson





These students drafted out a text about education, then put it onto the brick



Ana Paula's teen class wrote on pebbles

Stones

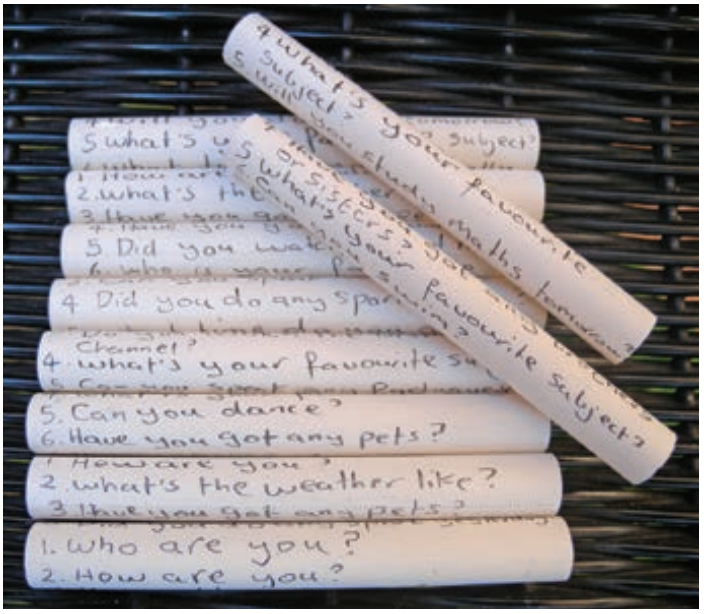
Activities like these contain an element of what I refer to as 'soft' rule breaking because they run contrary to the norms forged by daily routine in the collective imagination of us teachers and our students. I have been lucky enough to have had the chance to share these and other activities in a series of teacher training sessions entitled 'Teacher who breaks the rules' in Spain and Portugal. One teacher attending, Ana Paula Freitas at the Academia de Línguas da Madeira, came up with her own blend of text shift. Her students collected pebbles from the beaches in and around Funchal and used correction fluid to cover them with their favourite maxims and mottos which they found online.

Chalk

One discovery that I made while working with traditional blackboards is that you can actually write on chalk with a soft pencil. So I prepared a whole box of chalk sticks, each one with six questions written on it.



Towards the end of the year, these students graffitied summaries of their year at ELI Seville onto bricks



A 2B or a 4B pencil is ideal for writing mini-prompts on chalk sticks

Writing here, writing there ...

Having been designated their own strip of board space, the students used their sticks of chalk to answer the questions written on that chalk.



Students attending extra-curricular classes with Active Language at San Felipe Neri school in Cádiz answer the questions that were on their chalk

Tablets

The Romans used wax tablets as portable, reusable notepads. They etched letters into the wax using a stylus. We can do the same with plastic plates and plasticine, with the teacher dictating words or even situations that involve a pictorial demonstration of student understanding.



A reusable 'wax' tablet

Students can also prepare their own plates/tablets. How good their smearing and smoothing skills are will determine exactly how much plasticine is needed.

A plastic plate dictation gives the students' boardwork more of a 3D feel. If the topic is food, it fits thematically too – almost as if they are preparing these meals. The plates can be cleaned and reused.

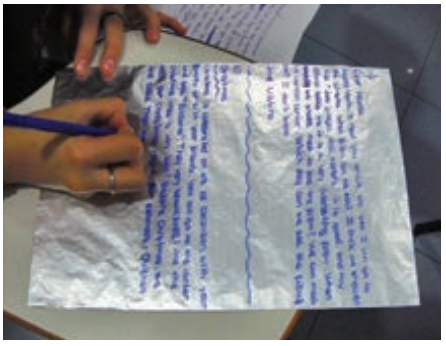




If the students do both the labelling and the pictures on the plates themselves, you are not limited to using just the board area

Foil

Writing on foil-covered sheets of A4 paper can make rewrites of exam compositions just a little less painful.



Stuck on the wall, these silver squares will also make your classroom look like the outside of the Guggenheim museum!

Each other

Writing on each other takes things a step further. One class of teens each put on a rubber glove and wrote on a partner's hand about their partner's Christmas. There was a handout with question prompts for a mini-interview beforehand where they found out the information they needed, so the writing was the product of real communication.



In this rubber glove writing activity, students also had the opportunity to read me their finished pieces

★ ★ ★

Amidst all this novelty, if a student comes to me and says that they do not want to write on a brick, that is fine. I am not going to put myself in the ridiculous position of forcing a child to write on a balloon, brick or anything else. However, the language task is always serious, even if the imported surface is fun, so I do ask them to do the writing on paper, at least. This get-out option is often enough for the students to decide that the task, as originally proposed, might not be so bad after all.

Why bother? Your classes can be perfectly complete without needing to write on plastic, stone, foil or eggs. But it can be fun and, if presented as part of a structured task where the emphasis is still on language content, the opportunity to experience textures and manipulate objects beyond the notebook page can help bring writing to life. ETp

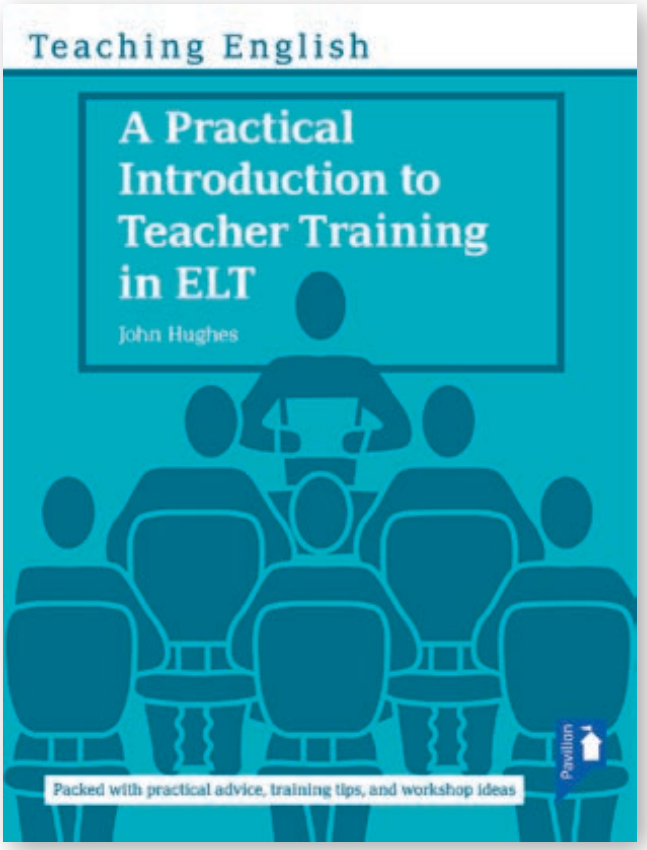


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Thinking skills 2

The activity in this issue, which uses the photocopiable materials on pages 29 to 31, is part of a series that aims to develop the thinking skills of IELTS candidates. It was prepared by Louis Rogers and Nick Thorner, and focuses on the opinion-based questions in the Speaking paper.

The challenge

While students are seldom concerned about Part 1 of the IELTS Speaking test, for which they have to talk about their own lives, many worry about Part 2 and Part 3, where they have to discuss broader issues, of the kind that crop up in the media. They are concerned that they will be asked to speak about or give their opinions on subjects they have rarely thought about, perhaps topics they won't even have considered in their own language, let alone a foreign language under exam conditions.

In Part 3, the candidates have to respond to questions connected to a monologue they were asked to deliver in Part 2, and these often ask them to take a view on a related issue. It is important for them not only to be able to offer an opinion, but to provide support for it. Some students will hesitate and struggle to provide reasons under pressure and, as a result, their answers may be limited to *Yes, I do* or *No, I don't*. Others may start to form an opinion, but may not have the language to explain their views. They will, therefore, fall into the trap of hesitation or repetition.

Fortunately, there are things we can do to prepare our students and help them to support their opinions.

Aims

The aim of the activity outlined here is to give students training in responding to opinion-based questions confidently and fluently by:

- giving them practice in supporting opinions, so that they become accustomed to providing reasons.
- training them to think from different perspectives, eg encouraging them to think about a topic from the position of a businessperson, an environmental campaigner or a parent. This may prompt them to think of a variety of responses.
- providing a range of phrases that express different stances, such as *definitely*, *to a certain extent*, *not really* and *it depends*.

Procedure

You will need a copy of the game board (page 29), one set of question cards (page 30), cut up into individual cards, and one dice for each group of students, plus a set of topic cards (page 31), again cut up, for each pair.

1 Write the following question on the board and ask the students to discuss it with a partner:

Do you think TV can help young people to learn?

2 Elicit some responses, and then write the following people/groups on the board:

Parents
Teachers
The government
Media companies
Children

Ask the students to discuss the opinions they think these groups of people might have.

3 While the students are discussing this, write the following phrases on the board:

Not really, *Definitely*, *It depends*, *To some extent*, *Possibly*, *Without doubt*

When eliciting feedback from the students, tell them they must start their response with one of these phrases.

4 Put the students in groups, and give each group a copy of the game board, a set of question cards and a dice. Tell them to place the question cards face down in a pile. The first player turns over the top question card and checks they understand it. Then they throw the dice. When they land on a square, they have to reply to the question, using the words on the square and giving a supporting reason for their opinion without hesitating. If they hesitate, they have to go back to the previous square. Encourage the students to take the role of one of the people in the pictures as they play.

5 Once the students have finished the game, put them into pairs and give each pair a set of topic cards. They should put these face down in a pile. The students then take turns to be the candidate and the examiner. The examiner turns over a card and asks the three questions to the candidate.

6 Finally, ask one or two pairs to ask and answer the question cards in front of the class.



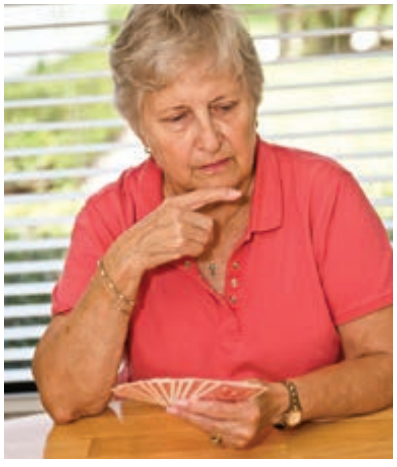
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START →	Yes, I do.	Not really.	Definitely.	It depends.	No, I don't.	To some extent.	I think so.
I think so.							Possibly.
Yes, definitely.							Yes, definitely.
Up to a point yes, but ...							Up to a point yes, but ...
Definitely not.							Definitely not.
Without doubt.							Without doubt.
Certainly.							Certainly.
Clearly not.							Clearly not.
I don't know.	Not really.	To some extent.	Oh yes.	No, I don't.	Definitely.	I think not.	Absolutely not.

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Thinking skills 2 • Question cards

Do you think we'll all travel more in the future?	Do you think trucks should be banned from city centres?	Do you think governments should provide green energy?
Do you think newspapers should be completely free to write anything?	Do you think the internet will replace traditional television?	Do you think maths and science subjects should be compulsory for all?
Do you think teachers are the main reason why students succeed or fail?	Do you think children under 12 shouldn't have tests in school?	Do you think young people and older people shop for the same reasons?
Do you think shopping makes people happier?	Do you think cars should be banned?	Do you think young people should wear uniforms in school?
Do you think children should walk to school if possible?	Do you think people should only buy local products?	Do you think good health makes people happier than money?
Do you think smoking should be banned?	Do you think governments should provide free sports facilities?	Do you think there should be a maximum number of hours people can work?
Do you think too much free time makes people lazy?	Do you think free time is important for people's health?	Do you think the number of flights people take should be limited?
Do you think it's better to take holidays in your own country than to travel abroad?	Do you think travel can make you a better person?	Do you think it's good to buy lots of presents for children?

Thinking skills 2 • Topic cards

Tourism

Do you think the growth of international tourism is a good thing?

Do you think a society can benefit if its members have experience of travelling to other countries?

Do you think people should speak the language of a country they visit?

Free time and work

Do you think people have enough free time?

Do you think that people are happier if they have money?

Do you think people should have a three-day weekend?

Health and exercise

Do you think children should be taught about healthy diets and cooking at school?

Do you think the types of sport that are popular will change in the future?

Do you think people in your country are less healthy than they used to be?

Shopping

Do you think shopping habits are likely to change in the future?

Do you think that cars have affected general shopping habits?

Do you think internet shopping is a positive development?

Education

Do you think the education system in your country influences young people's behaviour?

Do you think schools should teach subjects like art, music and dance?

Do you think exams results are an accurate way to show a student's ability?

Media

Do you think state or private television companies are better?

Do you think reading a magazine or a newspaper can help you learn a language?

Do you think the media should be allowed to publish stories about the private lives of famous people?

Environment

Do you think everyone will have clean water in the future?

Do you think we should use chemicals when we grow food?

Do you think fossil fuels should be banned?

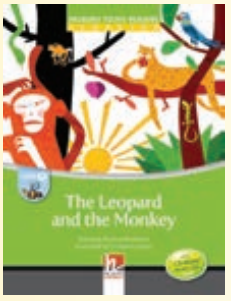
Language Learner Literature Awards 2015

The LLL Awards are given by the Extensive Reading Foundation (ERF), a not-for-profit organisation that supports and promotes extensive reading in language education. The winning book in each of five categories is chosen by an international jury, taking into account the internet votes and comments of students and teachers around the world.

Congratulations from ENGLISH TEACHING professional to all the winners and finalists.

Very young learner

★ Winner ★ *The Leopard and the Monkey*



retold by Richard Northcott
Illustrated by Cristiano Lissoni
Published by Helbling Languages
ISBN: 978-3-85272-781-3

Judges' comment: *The book presents an African folktale with a simple yet compelling narrative without over-selling humour or morals. It has a simple cast of characters which will be easy for young children to follow.*

Finalist
Granny Fixit and the Monkey by Jane Cadwallader (ELI)

Young learner

★ Winner ★ *Backstage Pass*



by Lesley Ito
Illustrated by Alice Carroll
Published by Atama-ii Books
ISBN: 978-1-94114-034-5

Judges' comment: *This book brings the popular choose-your-own-adventure style to graded readers. The story focuses on a young music fan and an adventure that takes place when their favorite band comes to town.*

Finalists
A Land of New Hope by Jocelyn Potter and Andy Hopkins (Pearson); *Life in the Desert / The Stubborn Ship* by Paul Mason (Macmillan)

Adolescent and Adult: Beginner

★ Winner ★ *Merlin*



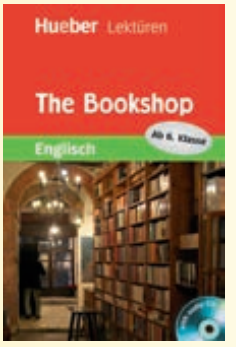
by Janet Hardy-Gould
Illustrated by Ollie Cuthbertson
Published by OUP
ISBN: 978-0-19424-974-4

Judges' comment: *This is a story of magic and students seem to be very interested in this type of genre. The story characters are introduced at the beginning, and the drawings are eye-catching.*

Finalist
The Canterbury Tales retold by Michael Lacey Freeman (ELI)

Adolescent and Adult: Elementary

★ Winner ★ *The Bookshop*



by Denise Kirby
Illustrated by Paul Fisher Johnson
Published by Hueber ILTS
ISBN: 978-3-19102-994-4

Judges' comments: *The writing is simply wonderful: one of the judges actually had to read it twice because the first time she was just taken by the story, and couldn't be a judge, just a reader.*

Finalists
Hunter in the Darkness by Ramy Habeeb (Atama-ii Books); *Sharks* by Izabella Hearn with Alex Hearn (Pearson)

Adolescent and Adult: Intermediate

★ Winner ★ *Kilimanjaro*



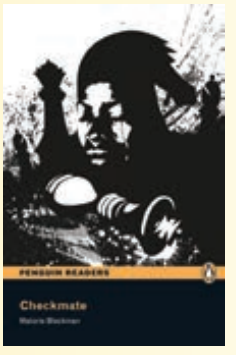
by Margaret Johnson
Illustrated by Redbean Design Pte Ltd
Published by National Geographic Learning/ CENGAGE Learning
ISBN: 978-1-42404-875-3

Judges' comments: *Good storyline and characterisation. People are set against each other, the elements and their own personal challenges as they struggle to reach the top.*

Finalists
Amelia Earhart by Janet Hardy-Gould (OUP); *Mystery in New Orleans* by Gina D B Clemen (Black Cat)

Adolescent and Adult: Upper-intermediate and Advanced

★ Winner ★ *Checkmate*



by Malorie Blackman, retold by Karen Holmes
Published by Pearson
ISBN: 978-1-447-93060-0

Judges' comments: *Realistic dialogue reveals the complexity of these modern characters, caught in a tension-filled conflict between their own histories and the political realities of living in a society where people are often judged unfairly.*

Finalists
The Confession by John Grisham, retold by Fiona Beddall (Pearson); *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë, retold by Peter Viney (Garnet Education)

2016 Awards

Have you enjoyed a reader that was published in 2015? The nomination and voting procedures for the 2016 Language Learner Literature Awards will be posted on the ERF website (*www.erfoundation.org*).

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Rub it out and start again

Stephanie Hirschman

extols the virtues of mini-whiteboards.

When I was seven years old, my family moved to France for a year. French school was completely different to my American elementary school, and it was 'stationery heaven'. We needed many different kinds of pens and pencils, and we had special notebooks for every subject. We also had something which I had only read about in stories written in the 19th century: a slate to do maths on. This was a real black stone slate with a special chalk pencil to write on it and a small sponge to clean it with. It was obvious to me that we were using a slate because there was something about maths that meant we'd need to do a bit of working out and erasing before we arrived at a correct answer. In other words, our work was formative; it wasn't worth making a permanent record of every attempt we made at a problem.

And now the slate is back – in the form of the modest but invaluable mini-whiteboard! It is white and plastic, and you use a felt-tip board pen to write on it, but basically it's the same piece of kit and it's useful for the same reasons – even if you're in a language classroom.

The most obvious feature of mini-whiteboards (M-WBs) is that they are erasable. This means they can be used in a huge variety of ways and, best of all, mistakes are unproblematic. In fact, students enjoy erasing errors and seeing them disappear! Additionally, because M-WBs are the property of the school, they are public in a way that students' notebooks aren't. They allow a teacher to see inside each student's mind, so that monitoring becomes more effective, and they allow the students to engage more productively and fearlessly with tasks. In addition, using them saves paper. M-WBs have transformed the way my colleagues and I teach. Here are some of the ways we've been using them.

Getting started

At the beginning of a lesson, when the tables and chairs are set up, M-WBs can be placed ready for a student or pair of students to use. If you write your students' names on them, you have a seating plan in place. You can even write personalised warmer tasks for the students to work on in the first few minutes as everyone comes in, finds their seats and gets settled, and while the register is taken.

Mini-whiteboards allow a teacher to see inside each student's mind, so that monitoring becomes more effective

I often start a lesson with a 'Can you remember?' warmer, but I have found that some students feel that remembering our last lesson is too much of a challenge, and they try to look at their books or notes instead of exercising their brains. Using M-WBs makes it easier to ban books and notes from an activity like this, as it provides a blank place to write answers while possible prompts clearly remain in

bags or closed on the desk. I have also found that some students want to make notes *after* a 'Can you remember?' activity, even though the material was covered in a previous session and they have already recorded this information in their notebooks. Using M-WBs reinforces the idea that this initial activity is transitory; it discourages the making of redundant notes and saves time for new input in the lesson.

Each individual has to work harder, and even 'off-the-wall' predictions, which students might have felt shy about making in a plenary setting, are recorded

What comes next?

M-WBs can also be used for prediction activities. For example, when I introduce a listening, I ask my students to predict some information, vocabulary or structure that they will hear in the recording. Before I had M-WBs, I would do this as a whole-class activity and record some of the information on the main board. The disadvantage was that not every student could make a contribution, and space/time limitations meant that the predictions were often incomplete. When students work on this task with M-WBs, each individual has to work harder, and even 'off-the-wall' predictions, which students might have felt shy about making in a plenary setting, are recorded. It is important to instruct the students *not* to clean the boards until the stage in the lesson when the predictions are verified. When this stage comes, you can ask them to tick their own correct predictions and also ask them to say why some predictions were not successful. This can lead to reflection on language which is individually meaningful for each student.

Sharing ideas

In a similar way, brainstorming ideas using M-WBs increases the level of individual engagement and challenge. It also allows the students to generate information that they can share with each other easily, either by displaying their boards to the class from their seats, or by walking around the room holding up their boards so that the other students can read them. As there's no need to go through answers laboriously with the whole class, feedback from this activity can go straight to higher-order questions, such as *Which three ideas are the most common?* or *What is the most unusual idea that people have come up with?* or *Why did you/a classmate write xxx?*

Work in progress

After a language point has been presented, and the students have done some controlled practice, M-WBs provide a safe space for freer practice to take place. Whatever the stimulus is, having the students produce the target language on M-WBs allows the teacher to monitor individual understanding and check for mistakes. Students really enjoy using the sponges to rub out errors, and they can easily make corrections to their work – much more easily than if they write in a notebook. Differentiation can also be provided here, for example by correcting lower-level students on the target language only, while correcting every error in a higher-level student's work.

M-WBs are also useful for games. Working in pairs or groups, the students can race to complete a task, and hold up their board when they're ready for the teacher to check. The task can be extended by asking early finishers to think of more examples.

How was it for you?

M-WBs do double duty to check how well individuals are following the lesson. If you haven't got a class set of traffic lights with which the students can display a green/amber/red colour to signal their comprehension of a point, a board with a happy/neutral/sad face that the students draw will work just as well. Students can also use the boards to pose questions for each other or for the teacher, perhaps with prompts like, *I am wondering …*, *I need to hear more about …* or *I can use this language when … .*

★ ★ ★

M-WBs certainly increase the level of student engagement for both individuals and pairs. However, in pair- or groupwork, the students may need to be prompted to take turns with the pen, so that everyone stays engaged. Another tip is that M-WBs don't need to be out on the desks all the time. I plan when and how I am going to use them and then I put them away before and afterwards. This keeps them feeling like something special and also means they aren't available for unsanctioned activities.

However, unplanned interactions with the M-WBs can be really positive. For example, many of my European students enjoy seeing how Japanese, Chinese and Korean classmates write the characters of their languages, and the boards allow for mutual impromptu language teaching, leading to an awareness of other students' needs in lessons. They're also great for 'drawing dictation' pairwork, for example to support the Cambridge FCE exam picture description speaking tasks.

In short, M-WBs are a modest yet highly worthwhile investment. ETp



Stephanie Hirschman is a Curriculum Leader in the International Dept at Sussex Downs College in Lewes, UK. She teaches teenagers and adults, co-ordinates the summer school and works in the languages self-access centre. She has also worked as a Development Advisor, providing teaching support to colleagues across a range of subjects.

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PICTURE PUZZLE
Answers

Theme: Grammatical terms
passive, clause, present simple, case, negative, phrase

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Over the wall …



Alan Maley
celebrates language.

I have long been struck by a strange paradox in our profession. Applied linguists and language teaching writers depend on language for their livelihoods. Yet, judging from the way they write, there are precious few who seem to love language itself – to relish its richness and celebrate its variety and expressivity. The academic genre seems dedicated to the 'desertification' of English, on the grounds of conformity to self-imposed conventions, and materials writing all too often produces an emasculated, lacklustre variety, on the assumption that learners must be sheltered from the genuine article. It seems we are content to subsist on the thin gruel of academic or instructional English, rather than experiencing the delight which comes from an encounter with the full vitality and diversity of the language.

I decided, therefore, to review a few books by mainly non-specialists which illuminate the language we use, and which do it in a way that bears witness to their own enthusiasm for it. These are people who delight in language and have a genuine wish to share their pleasure.



Landmarks

Robert Macfarlane continues to surprise with the freshness of his themes and the poetic quality of his language. His latest book, *Landmarks*, is a celebration of the vast vocabulary we have for describing the natural world – the landscapes, weather conditions, moods of water and sky, the changing of seasons and the states of growing plants and trees. Sadly, much of this vocabulary is being lost to a new lifestyle and a culture which has forgotten how to really look at the environment it lives in: *'…the outdoor and the natural being displaced by the indoor and the virtual – are a … symptom of the simulated life we increasingly live.'* Macfarlane's aim is to reassemble *'… some of this fine-grained and fabulously diverse vocabulary, and release its poetry back into imaginative circulation'*. In the writer Henry Porter's words these are *'... words which do not simply label an object or action but in some mysterious and beautiful way become part of it'*. The act of naming these natural particularities confers new significance on them: by naming in this way, we understand better what surrounds us and notice things we had overlooked before. Macfarlane claims that *'… language does not just register experience, it produces it'*. Without this rich vocabulary, the landscape becomes 'a blandscape', and we are all the poorer for it.

The first chapter explains how the author became interested in the particularity of words related to landscape, when learning that a local inhabitant of the Isle of Lewis had compiled a 'peat glossary' of terms for describing all aspects of the bleak peat landscapes of that island. In the rest of the book, Macfarlane interleaves nine glossaries relating to specific landscapes with chapters about these landscapes.

The glossaries cover: flatlands, uplands, waterlands, coastlands, underlands, northlands, edgelands, earthlands and woodlands. They have some wonderfully expressive words. A few examples must suffice: *rafty* – of weather, misty, damply cold (Essex), *fizmer* – a rustling noise produced in grass by petty agitations of the wind (East Anglia), *dibble* – to rain slowly in drops (Shropshire), *fret* – a mist or fog coming in off the sea (south and eastern England), *glimro* – phosphorescence on the sea (Orkney) and *water-burn*, the same phenomenon in Kent. The glossaries alone are a word-hoard which repays extended browsing.

In the chapters, the author shares not only his own anecdotal relationship with all these various landscapes but also the work of others who have written memorably about them. For example, in Chapter 3, *The Living Mountain*, he reminds us of Nan Shepherd's eponymous masterpiece of landscape writing. In Chapter 4, *The Woods and the Water*, he introduces us to the precision in the writings of his great friend Roger Deakin. So, in each chapter, we have a double pleasure: reading Macfarlane's exhilarating prose describing his own experiences, and sharing in the writings of others on the same landscapes. But his overall message, that we risk losing an invaluable legacy if we continue to plunge into 'environmental illiteracy', is one we should heed – not to speak of the loss to the language itself. I am reminded of a line from R S Merwin's wonderful poem *Losing a Language: '… the noun for standing in mist by a haunted tree.'*

Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable
A Word in Your Shell-like

Dictionaries are good for the more systematic storage of language, but they cope less well with all the quirky and illogical features enshrined in popular phraseology and the connotations of proper names. For this, we need to go to idiosyncratic compendiums like *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*. The 17th edition was revised by John Ayto, whose relish for the unexpected and otherwise unfathomable uses of words shines through on virtually every page. Opening at random to pages 162–3, I find entries on *Greenham Common*, *Greenwich Village*, *Grendel*, *Gretna Green marriages*, *Greyfriars* … and much else. Pages 886–7 offer *Mau Mau*, *Max Factor*, *Maxim gun*, *Maxwell's Demon*, *Mayfair mercenary* … and so on. Pretty well anything which informed speakers know about, because it is part of their cultural heritage and the networks of generally accepted knowledge, is there. And these are precisely the elements which make it difficult to penetrate to the heart of a language.

And if Brewer is not enough, there is Nigel Rees's *A Word in Your Shell-like*, subtitled *6,000 curious and everyday phrases explained*. As an example, pages 180–1 offer: *don't be vague – ask for Haig*; *don't call us, we'll call you*; *don't do anything I wouldn't do*; *don't fire until you see the whites of their eyes*; *don't forget the diver* … and much more. Taken together, these volumes provide both a precious reference resource and a delightful romp through the by-ways and back alleys of the language.

Mother Tongue
A Mouthful of Air

Finally, two books written with verve and relish about most aspects of English. Bill Bryson's *Mother Tongue* offers a breezy and engaging account of many aspects of the English language. He covers not only the areas one would anticipate, such as the origins and historical development of English, pronunciation and spelling, but also the role of dictionaries in codifying the language, and fascinating chapters on names, swearing and wordplay. The book is refreshing, informative and full of humour.

Anthony Burgess was, of course, a celebrated novelist, so we would expect him to write well. What is less well-known is that he was both a polymath (he composed music as well as writing, for example), and an accomplished linguist with polyglot tastes. So it is a pleasure to travel with him in his exploration of language and of English. In Part I of *A Mouthful of Air*, he covers not just English, but language as a human phenomenon in general and the way other languages behave. Part 2 focuses on English alone. There is a wealth of topics here, including Shakespeare's language and a whole chapter on literature, showing especially the way poetry has been transformed. His chapter on *Low-life Language* is especially spicy. Throughout, he is outspoken, irreverent and disrespectful of authority. There is only space here for one quote, which gives something of the flavour: *'… RP is no longer ... an adjunct or signal of social advance. Barrow-boys who punch computers in the money market represent the new prosperity, dressed in Cockney vowels and the glottal stop.'* He is clearly fascinated by language, and shares his erudition in wise and witty observations throughout. Anyone who can make phonemes sound entertaining deserves our attention! The book dates from 1993 but has lost none of its impact.

★ ★ ★

There are, of course, exceptions to my assertions in the introduction above: David Crystal still seems able to muster enthusiasm for the language in all its variety; John Ayto continues to give pleasure in his exploration of new words; Jean Aitchison is one of the few applied linguists able to make investigating language look like a pleasurable pursuit; Deborah Tannen can find poetry in conversation, and Michael Hoey can still infect readers with his exuberant enthusiasm for the extraordinary ways in which language behaves. But they are in the minority.

And if we want to find a true zest and appetite for language, we all too often have to look outside our profession – *over the wall*. Even if we cannot teach all this to our students, it is surely part of our professional duty to remain as fully in touch with the language we teach as possible, and even demonstrate a genuine affection for it. ETp



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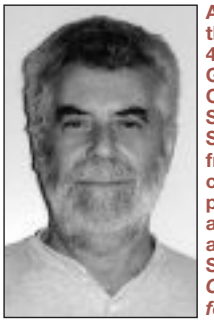
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Tannen, D *Talking Voices* CUP 1989



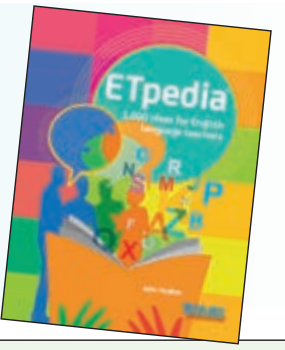
Alan Maley has worked in the area of ELT for over 40 years in Yugoslavia, Ghana, Italy, France, China, India, the UK, Singapore and Thailand. Since 2003 he has been a freelance writer and consultant. He has published over 30 books and numerous articles, and was, until recently, Series Editor of the *Oxford Resource Books for Teachers*.

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IT WORKS IN PRACTICE

More tested lessons, suggestions, tips and techniques which have all worked for ET*p* readers. Try them out for yourself – and then send us your own contribution. Don't forget to include your postal address.

All the contributors to It Works in Practice in this issue of ET*p* will receive a copy of *ETpedia: 1,000 ideas for English language teachers*, by John Hughes, published by Pavilion.



Grammar poker

This is a way to check understanding of language points you have covered. It encourages student collaboration/communication and supports weaker learners.

You will need to prepare a set of sentences, some of which contain deliberate grammar errors. I usually prepare around 15 sentences, depending on the language we've been studying. Put the sentences on individual cards – one set per group of three students. These sets should all be in the same order. You will also need a set of Monopoly or other play money.

1 Put the students in groups of three – grouping them strategically, to support those of weaker ability.

2 Give each group £1,500 of play money in various denominations. Keep enough money back for you to give out as the game proceeds.

3 Give each group a set of sentence cards. Tell them not to change the order of these, but to place them face down on the table.

4 Ask the students to turn over the first card. Tell them to decide if the sentence is correct and, if so, to bet some of their money, the amount depending on how confident they are that it is correct. Set a time limit for them to place their bet.

5 If the sentence is correct, double the cash of each group that bet on it from the remaining money. If it is incorrect, any groups that placed a bet lose their stake.

6 Groups win or lose money as the exercise progresses. The group with the most money at the end is the winner.

You can add excitement by asking the students to double their bets at any time, or by suggesting minimum/maximum bets.

Gemma Harding
Chichester, UK

Engaging with social media

For years, we've had some success in engaging our students with educational software, websites, some cloud-based solutions (eg *Google Drive*), and the assorted tools bundled with our Learning Management Systems (eg *Blackboard*, *D2L*). But why not also tap into what the students are *really* excited about?

Mobile devices are ubiquitous; the usage statistics are undeniable; the integration into every domain of our lives is more and more pervasive. By tapping into the throbbing energy of social media, we can go a long way toward really engaging our students.

Here are some strategies that will work with most of today's popular social networks to enhance pedagogical tasks (in bold):

- Take photos of your students' work samples, post them and praise them, using the 'comment' or 'reply' feature; bring this back to the classroom for **brainstorming** and **reflection** (*Which ideas would you like to explore further? What are your strengths? What are your top three next steps?*).
- 'Like' or 'favourite' your students' posts of their interests, hobbies and discoveries; use these items for **icebreakers** and **lesson transitions**.
- Find and post photos, brief videos or articles representing your students' interests; use these as a hub for **written discussion**, using the 'comment' or 'reply' feature, or as springboards for **oral presentations**.
- Find and post photos of mystery objects, and have your students guess what they are (or elaborate with detailed fibs about them!); they can even do so briefly via **informal written or spoken comments** directly in the social networking app.
- Create a classroom hashtag, and use it with your students to **find and share high-interest reading and listening materials** that enrich and extend classroom learning: trivia, surveys, brief videos, infographics, quotes ... the list goes on.

So get your feet wet with some popular social media if you haven't already done so. Experiment with the features, search for interesting people and content – and have fun. Give it a few weeks: the benefits are not always immediately apparent. You'll find entertainment, the latest news, useful information, humour, some distracting advertising – and quite a bit of material that you'll find uninteresting or even offensive. Nonetheless, you'll soon realise that there is no other e-learning space that is as vibrant and engaging for your students as the world of social media.

Kosta Dimeropoulos
Toronto, Canada

Express yourself!

Drama activities and games help young learners to understand and express how they are feeling, and to recognise emotions in others. They can also absorb useful vocabulary through naming and describing feelings in English.

'Feeling' mimes

Choose some feelings that you would like to teach your class to name and express, such as *happy*, *sad*, *angry*, *excited*, *tired*, *frightened*. Make an appropriate facial expression for each feeling, and encourage your students to copy you. You could also use other parts of the body to make the meanings clearer, such as stamping your foot to show that you are angry or wrapping your arms around your body when you are frightened.

Make each expression in turn, naming each one clearly before you mime it. Ask the students to repeat the word and then copy the expression. Repeat the facial expressions, in different orders, several times each, until the students are confident. Then play a game in which you call out feelings and they must make expressions to fit the words. Gradually increase the speed of the game, so that they must think and change more quickly.

Divide the class into small groups, and ask each group to choose an expression that they will make for the other groups to guess and copy. Allow them to play this game as individuals, if they are confident enough.

How do you feel?

Work with an adult colleague to demonstrate talking about feelings to the class. Make a happy face and say *I am happy. Are you happy?* Your colleague could say *Yes, I am happy* or *No, I am sad/angry/worried*, and mime the appropriate expression. Ask the students to work in pairs, taking turns to make an expression, name it and ask whether their partner feels the same, or to make an appropriate reply.

Sit in a circle and shake hands with each student in turn, asking *How do you feel?* Each student should reply *I feel happy/excited/tired/surprised* and make an appropriate expression to illustrate. Emphasise to the students that they are acting and can choose and name any expression they like: they don't have to say how they are really feeling.

Are you happy too?

Introduce some grammar alongside the new vocabulary. Begin by demonstrating with a colleague how to say *I am happy. Are you happy?* Your colleague should reply *I am happy too*. You can then hold hands and say together *We are happy*. Put the students in pairs and support them as they practise this dialogue and try it with each of the other words and facial expressions they have learnt, taking turns to ask the question and make the response.

Ask the students to stand in separate spaces and to secretly choose a feeling for themselves. When you give them a signal to begin, they should walk around the space asking the other students at random *I am sad/excited/surprised. Are you sad/excited/surprised?* When they find a person who answers *Yes, I am sad/excited/surprised*, they should hold hands and continue to walk around together, using *We are …* and asking their question. Eventually, a group should have formed to represent each feeling. Each group in turn may then show their facial expression to the other groups, and everybody can guess how they are feeling.

Add a song

Sing the well-known song: *If You're Happy And You Know It* with the class. Include each feeling in turn and add suitable actions for each verse. For example: clap hands for *happy*, stamp feet for *angry*, pretend to go to sleep for *tired*, hide your face for *frightened*, etc.

Encourage the students to think of other verses and supply appropriate names, descriptive words, mimes and actions for any other feelings and expressions that they would like to portray.

Develop language skills

Ask the students to think about what makes them feel happy. Offer ideas, such as a favourite toy, food, person, game, or a special occasion, such as a birthday. They could also think about what makes them feel sad, such as not being able to have or do something; what makes them feel tired, such as taking part in a sport; or what makes them feel frightened, such as a scary story or a loud noise.

Encourage them to take turns to speak to the rest of the class or to a small group, saying *I feel happy when I eat chocolate* or *I feel frightened when I hear thunder*. Join in with the game, to set an example of speaking in longer sentences. For example: *I feel sad when the holidays end, because I've had fun with my family, but then I feel happy that I can come back to school to see all of you again*.

Picture it!

Provide opportunities for the students to draw pictures of all the different expressions that they can think of and write the English words to describe them beside the faces. If they are ready, they may write down further descriptions or the sentences they created while playing the games.

They could make their pictures and writing into books to keep in the classroom or posters to display on the walls, to help them to remember the vocabulary and the concepts they have learnt and portrayed.

Debbie Chalmers
Cambridge, UK

Whiteboards, whiteboards everywhere

Alberto Fornasier

finds magic in having multiple boards.

Have you ever wanted a second whiteboard? And not just placed close to the main one, but on another wall? Some time ago, I happened to teach in a classroom like this, with two whiteboards: the main one placed on the long side of the room, and a second one placed on one of the short sides. I had never considered using a second whiteboard before, maybe just because I had never *had* a second one – and sometimes not even one!

Mix

The class I was teaching was quite mixed-level, so the gap between the weaker and stronger students was quite significant. I like engaging students in delayed correction, so I usually put some mistakes and some examples of good use of language on the board and ask the students to discuss these in pairs, decide which sentences are wrong and try to correct them. During one free-speaking activity, while I was jotting down some mistakes for the usual delayed correction, I noticed how different the mistakes were in terms of level. It seemed a shame to ask the strong students to look at mistakes which were quite easy for them and the weaker students to look at ones which were far beyond their level. It was then that I thought about using the second whiteboard.

Before the activity had finished, I wrote some sentences for the weaker students on the main board and others for the stronger students on the other board. I split the class, by dividing the weak students and the strong students into two different groups. Then I asked each of them to turn to their whiteboard.

When I was sure that everybody had the correct answers, I mixed up the two groups, so that the students could teach each other. In this way, having two whiteboards helped me not only tackle a problem with a mixed-ability class, it also encouraged peer teaching.

That was it, but it made me think of how sometimes it would be great to have a second whiteboard. I then realised I knew how to achieve this.

Magic

Last autumn, I started teaching English with an organisation which takes care of refugees and asylum seekers in Bristol, UK. There were no rooms specifically designed for English teaching, and I taught in rooms which were usually used for other purposes; as a result, there were no whiteboards. Instead, we used 'magic' whiteboards (obtainable from *www.magicwhiteboard.co.uk*). These are sheets of white film which can be placed on any hard flat vertical surface. As the sheets use static to stick to the wall, they don't leave any marks. You can use your

usual dry marker to write on them and then wipe it off, even with just a tissue. A pack of these contains a roll of 15 sheets (60 x 80cm). The manufacturers claim that their sheets will stick to the wall for a very long time (even years!), but if you take one down and reapply it, it won't last as long.

These sheets are of great value if you have no whiteboard *at all* or only a small one, perhaps when teaching in-company, with private students or in off-site lessons. They are easy to carry, light and don't take up much space.

In addition, there are a number of teaching situations where having this resource available in *addition* to the main whiteboard would be very useful. I will describe here some activities which I have found give better results with these whiteboard sheets than with just one whiteboard.

Large classes

First of all, magic whiteboards can be very useful for activities with large classes. They enable the class to be divided into smaller groups, so that more students are engaged than if the activity is done in open class. For instance, brainstorming or mind-mapping to activate relevant schemata for a lead-in can be done first on separate magic whiteboards by different groups and then displayed side by side in open class.

Racing games

Many activities which involve the students racing to the whiteboard could work better using multiple whiteboards, especially in situations where there is little space on the main whiteboard for writing and little room in the classroom for running around. This would also be a way of tackling potential safety problems, particularly with young learners.

Drawing activities

Many activities which involve drawing, such as the well-known game *Pictionary*, could be improved using magic whiteboards. For such activities, teachers usually divide the class into two teams, A and B, and the students take turns going to the board and drawing something (a noun, action, idiom, etc) provided by the teacher for the rest of their team to guess. The main downside to this procedure is that sometimes Team A are able to guess the answer thanks to a picture drawn by a member of Team B. However, if the class is divided into small groups (of, say, three students) and each of them is given a separate whiteboard sheet which is placed at a distance from the others, the students are likely to be more engaged and to focus only on their teammate's picture.

In another drawing activity, which is a fun and totally learner-based way to practise spatial prepositions, the class is divided into pairs (A and B). Student A gives Student B instructions about what to draw and where (eg *Draw a car in the bottom left corner*) on their whiteboard. After some minutes, the roles are swapped and Student B instructs Student A about what to add to the same picture. When they have finished, each pair writes six sentences about their picture: three of these are true and three are false (eg *There is a car in the upper left corner*). The pairs of students rotate clockwise and look at another pair's whiteboard. They decide which sentences are false and write the correct version (eg *There is a car in the bottom left corner*) in their notebooks. (I learnt the core idea of this activity from Colin Campbell and Hanna Kryszewska.

Collaborative writing

Magic whiteboards are particularly good for writing collaboratively. The key factor is that, as the writing is done on a whiteboard, it can be wiped off and written again. Because of this, the students are less afraid of making mistakes. Writing in groups or pairs takes the pressure off individual students and can boost student participation. As students usually write bigger on a whiteboard than they do on a piece of paper, this resource can facilitate sharing each group's efforts.

You can use it with the classic running dictation activity, with the students writing the text on a sheet of whiteboard, instead of a piece of paper. If each pair's text is a different paragraph of a bigger text, eventually all the magic whiteboards can be placed side by side and the students can try to put them in order.

Additionally, you can use multiple whiteboards for activities in which a text is written by the whole class (eg by taking turns to go to the board and add one word to the beginning or the end of a sentence written by the teacher). If multiple whiteboards are used instead of just one, each pair or group of three/four can be given one, and greater individual student participation is likely to be achieved.

The product of a writing activity done in this way can then be easily recycled to achieve other teaching aims. For instance, after each group has finished a text, it can be displayed for the rest of the class to read, and exploited for reading skills practice.

Teacher training

In a teacher training context, you can ask the trainees how *they* would like to be taught a set of words in a foreign language and to write down a detailed lesson plan. This could be done in pairs or groups on the whiteboard sheets. By using the sheets, the trainees are more likely to wipe off their work and have another try if they are not satisfied, and this will lead to more communicative interaction. Once the plans have been finalised, pairs could swap sheets and discuss the differences in the various procedures. Afterwards, in whole-class feedback, the trainer could write down a procedure that everybody agrees with on the main board. The trainer could then teach the lexis, using the procedure chosen by the trainees, and a discussion could follow later about how well it worked. (I first learnt about this activity from Tessa Woodward.)

★ ★ ★

These are just a few ideas to show you how magic whiteboards can be integrated in your day-to-day teaching, and I'm sure there are hundreds more. I have found this resource really flexible, and it can help improve the dynamics of a lesson. Hopefully, this article has inspired you to try using magic whiteboards in *your* classrooms, and if you find other ways to use them, I would love to hear from you. ETp

Campbell, C and Kryszewska, H *Learner-based Teaching* OUP 1993

Woodward, T *Ways of Training* Longman 1993



Alberto Fornasier is a teacher and teacher trainer. He has worked at International House Bristol, UK and at IH Moscow, both as a teacher and as an Assistant Director of Studies. During the summer he usually works at IH Milan. He is currently interested in the psychology of Second Language Acquisition.

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Reviews

The Literacy for Active Citizenship readers

Learning Unlimited 2014 and 2015

Lucky Lucky! by Dorothy Glynn
978-18729-7-223-7

The Dog's Dinner by Dorothy Glynn
978-18729-7-226-8

Paul's Coat by Dorothy Glynn
978-18729-7-207-7

Second-hand Clothes by Dorothy Glynn
978-18729-7-208-4

The Party by Ilham Sadi and Rose Ades
978-18729-7-213-8

Peanuts and Pollen! by Ilham Sadi and Rose Ades
978-18729-7-216-9

On the Bus by Foufou Savitzky
978-18729-7-217-6

Priority Seats by Foufou Savitzky
978-18729-7-218-3

Hampstead Heath by Dorothy Glynn
978-18729-7-205-3

Why Not Visit Hampstead Heath? by Dorothy Glynn
978-18729-7-206-0

Halima's First ESOL Class by Nazma Shaheen and Tinhinane Cheloul
978-18729-7-221-3

Sorry, I Don't Speak English by Nazma Shaheen and Tinhinane Cheloul
978-18729-7-222-0

No More Cake! by Lee Yoon Teng
978-18729-7-227-5

What's Wrong With Me? by Lee Yoon Teng
978-18729-7-228-2

Don't Worry, I'll Help You! by Nicola Pieterse
978-18729-7-236-7

She's Got the X Factor! by Nicola Pieterse 978-18729-7-237-4

Be Careful What You Say! by Enuma Madu
978-18729-7-229-9

Mind Your Language! by Enuma Madu
978-18729-7-231-2

Pink Pyjamas by Valona Renner-Thomas
978-18729-7-232-9

New School Clothes by Valona Renner-Thomas
978-18729-7-233-6



Although there are many readers available for learners of English, relatively few of these are suitable for 'genuine' beginners, and fewer still seem to address the issues and events which learners are likely to encounter in their daily lives. The *Literacy for Active Citizenship* series of readers seeks to remedy this by including 'stories about funny, personal and less typical aspects of everyday life in the UK'. The readers have come out of a two-year project (Active Citizenship and English) led by Learning Unlimited, which aimed to help non-EU women living in the UK take an active part in national life and also develop their English skills and confidence. There are now 20 books in the series: 12 published in 2014 and another eight released this summer. They are aimed primarily at learners at Entry Level 1 and Entry Level 2 (A1 and A2 on the CEFR), and they are differentiated so that there is a version of the same story (with a different title) at each level.

A distinctive feature of the series is that the stories have been written and illustrated by learners and volunteers involved in the project, and this gives them a very personal dimension. For example, in *Halima's First ESOL Class* (Entry 1), we hear about the feelings of excitement and worry a learner experiences on her first day at college, and the new friendship she makes. In the Entry 2 version (*Sorry, I Don't Speak English*), there is additional vocabulary and a wider range of grammatical structures to stretch more confident learners. The Entry 2 story *Peanuts and Pollen!* tells us about Clara's invitation to a party and includes references to peanut allergies and tongue twisters, as well as expressing the awkwardness felt by those new to the UK in social situations, at an appropriate level for the target audience. Other stories (*On the Bus* and *Priority Seats*) make reference to disability and the assumptions we make about people, while the new titles *No More Cake!* and *What's Wrong With Me?* introduce issues around health and employment in an honest but reassuring way. Although some of the topics may sound a little 'worthy', they contain lots of humour, which I am sure learners will be able to relate to their own experiences. Most of the books are hand-illustrated and this fits the style of the stories themselves, making them seem more personal.



Each book has a list of key words, plus some questions and activities at the back. In addition, there are further downloadable activities available online

which include tutor instructions. These extend the vocabulary from the books and give useful suggestions for additional activities. One aspect which I found especially positive was the focus on getting the reader to consider their own experiences and feelings. For example, for each text there are some straightforward comprehension questions, but also some which allow for personal responses, such as: *'How did you feel when you went to your first ESOL class? Were you worried?'* Other activities include extending the stories by working on roleplays and matching tasks with pictures at Entry 1 and longer sentences at Entry 2.

In many cases, readers tend to be used for independent learning, but the extra resources give the option to make them an integral part of lessons and to use them as a stimulus or even a scaffold for learners to describe their own experiences. The fact that many of the books have been written by learners themselves is an effective way to demonstrate to students that they, too, can become more fluent and confident with their own English. Higher-level learners might even be keen to use them as a stimulus for writing longer personal narratives.



As with any set of books, I found some that I enjoyed more than others, and I am sure that learners would find the same. However, as a whole, they are a very welcome addition to the limited reading resources available for beginner ESOL learners and I would certainly recommend them.

Diana Tremayne
Todmorden, UK

Subscribers can get a 12.5% discount on these books. Go to the ET*p* website and quote ETPQR0314 at the checkout.

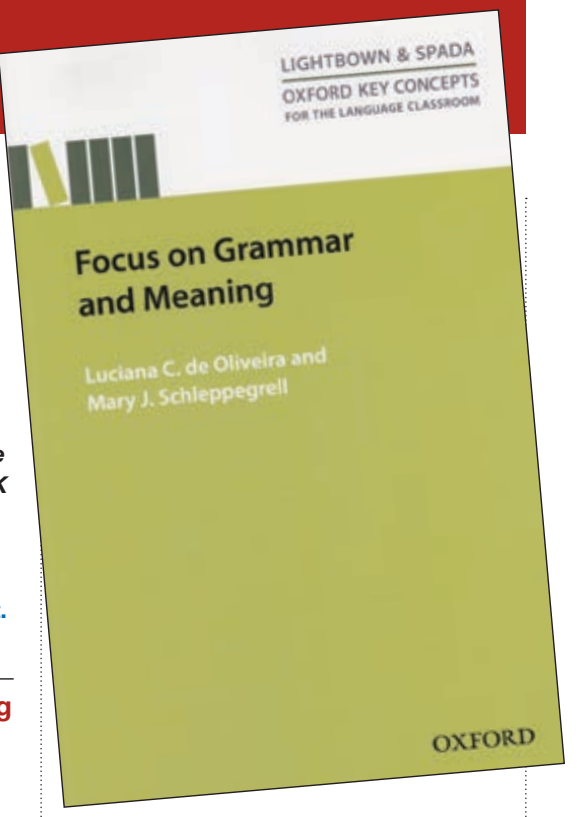
Focus on Grammar and Meaning

by Luciana C de Oliveira and Mary J Schleppegrell
OUP 2015
978-0-19-400085-7

This book is part of the *Oxford Key Concepts for the Language Classroom* series, which aims to make research findings accessible to language teachers (primarily of students aged five to 18) on topics that are likely to be important to them.

As the authors point out in the introduction, anyone who expects that this book will outline a system of prescriptive grammar rules or offer advice on how to teach particular grammar points will be disappointed. Instead, the book takes a more holistic standpoint. It anchors grammar teaching in the wider context of the learning goals that teachers have for their students, adopting a functional grammar approach that demonstrates the way in which language and meaning are linked, and which takes into account the growth of CLIL and the current emphasis on content-based learning in schools.

A series of 'Classroom Snapshots', essentially transcriptions of exchanges between students and teachers, are discussed and analysed to determine what the students are learning and how this is being achieved. In addition, there are various activities, some designed to encourage readers to reflect on what



they have read and apply it to their own contexts, and some which are essentially descriptions of classroom scenarios which exemplify the points being made. The first activity in Chapter 1 invites readers to respond to a series of statements about grammar teaching, saying whether they agree or disagree, and how strongly. One very nice aspect of the book is that all these statements are revisited in the final chapter and the authors give their own opinions, informed by the research and ideas presented in the rest of the book.

In keeping with the aims of the series, *Focus on Grammar and Meaning* covers theories of grammar instruction and presents insights gained from academic research. Two chapters are devoted to classroom-based research, one involving young learners and the other adolescents. Specific studies are described in 'Spotlight Study' sections, and these are sometimes linked to the 'Classroom Snapshots' so that the practical implications of the research may be seen in action.

This book covers many aspects of a complicated subject in a readable and accessible way, and I can recommend it to anyone tasked with the job of teaching grammar in primary and secondary schools.

Karen Faulkner
Taunton, UK

Subscribers can get a 12.5% discount on this book. Go to the ET*p* website and quote ETPQR0314 at the checkout.

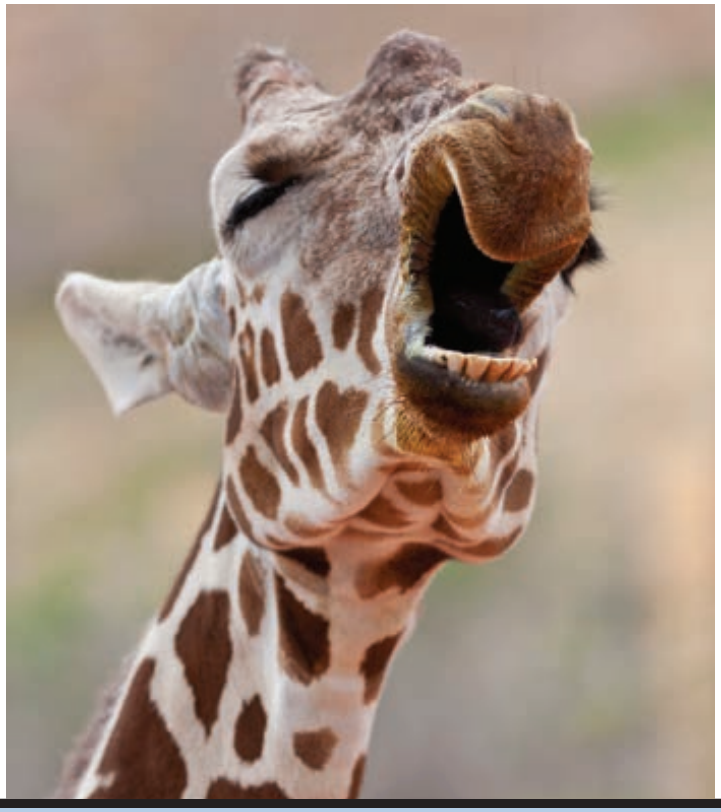
SCRAPBOOK

Sleep is something that the vast majority of us spend a considerable proportion of our lives engaged in. It is an activity in which most of us are more or less proficient, and its success is crucial to our wellbeing. Actually, its importance is not restricted to the human race – apparently even such simple animals as fruit flies appear to sleep, and systematic disturbance of their sleep leads to cognitive disabilities. According to researchers, there are several methods of measuring cognitive functions in fruit flies. The mind boggles – it must be hard to get a fruit fly to count up to ten or operate complex machinery, or even to measure their reaction to an alarm clock (which is how I would measure my own sleep-induced cognitive deficiencies).

To **sleep**, perchance to **cycle** ...

'The amount of sleep required by the average person is five minutes more.' (Wilson Mizner, American playwright)

In mammals, sleep seems to occur in repeating cycles, during which the body alternates between two highly distinct modes known as non-REM and REM sleep. REM stands for 'rapid eye movement', but involves many other physical aspects, including virtual paralysis of the body. These cycles continue throughout the night, moving between greater or lesser depths of sleep, which is why sometimes a period of sleep is less refreshing than we would like …



© iStockphoto.com / ABDESIGN

Our attitude to sleep itself also goes through cycles in our lives. We start life needing a great deal of it. We then go through a period of strong allergy to it (*'You will go to bed NOW!'*). This is followed by a period when we seem to need less of it (but this can be compensated for by unconsciousness induced by artificial means). We then reach a stage where we need more and more of it – although some people persistently resent the down-time that the body demands – before we finally reach old age, where again we seem to need less, with some elderly people surviving very well on only three or four hours a night.

Let **sleeping dogs** lie

The animal kingdom throws up many different patterns of sleep, compared with our own average of eight hours per day:

Horses – 2.9 hours

Elephants – 3+ hours

Cows – 4 hours

Rabbits – 8 hours

Dogs – 10.1 hours

Cats – 12.5 hours

Platypuses – 14 hours

Giant armadillos – 18.1 hours

Little brown bats – 19.9 hours

The animals with the shortest sleep patterns are often those on carnivores' wish lists; consequently, they need to be alert in case a hungry diner should select them from the menu …

Perhaps the most extreme example of this is the giraffe: as they are large, somewhat conspicuous and relatively slow, they are constantly vulnerable and cannot, therefore, sleep for long periods. In fact, they almost never sleep for longer than five minutes at a time.

In a similar boat are other 'prey' animals (menu items) such as horses and zebras. These are two examples of animals that can sleep standing up (this allows quick engagement of gears to escape a predator).

Horses can choose whether to sleep standing up or lying down. Dozing and light sleep while standing are made possible by a kind of locking mechanism in their legs which allows them to relax without collapsing. The depth of sleep they can achieve in this position is not the full REM type – the deepest sleep; to achieve REM sleep, they need to lie down. However, they only have to lie down for an hour or two every few days to meet their minimum REM sleep requirements.

Signs of sleep

We probably all know people with strange sleep patterns or sleep habits, but we humans are not alone:

Sea otters sometimes hold hands when they sleep, so they don't drift away from each otter, sorry, other. They often eat, rest and sleep together while floating in groups called 'rafts'. A raft may have a few otters, or hundreds holding hands to stay together!

In cockroaches, the rest period is characterised by the antennae being folded down – such a signal would certainly come in handy for some humans, enabling the rest of us to know whether they were genuinely asleep or merely faking it …

To **fly**, perchance to **sleep**

As someone who becomes somewhat fractious if I don't get my allotted sleep time, I am full of admiration for migrating birds. Some species can apparently fly for up to 200 days straight, raising the question of how they sleep.

A study of the Alpine swift in 2011 concluded that these birds may spend almost their entire lifetime in flight. They don't starve because they catch and eat insects in mid-air. The scientists observed that the swifts' activity levels appeared to rise and fall during flight, and they speculated that the birds might spend periods asleep, during which they were still able to control their flying.

Half asleep

I'm sure most of us know of people who seem to need virtually no sleep to survive, but what about species which need to be on the move the whole time, such as dolphins or whales? Being mammals, rather than fish, they need to surface regularly in order to breathe, so a deep sleep down in the depths might last rather longer than they hoped. It has been discovered that these creatures have the ability literally to split their personalities! They are able to sleep with one cerebral hemisphere at a time, while the other half of their brain is awake. When only one hemisphere is sleeping, only the opposite eye will be shut; that is, when the right hemisphere is asleep, the left eye will be shut, and vice versa. So if you see a whale or dolphin winking at you, it is probably just having a nap. (Could this be the origin of the expression *I didn't sleep a wink last night?*)

Sleep **quotations**

'Early to bed and early to rise
probably indicates unskilled labor.'
(John Ciardi, American poet)

'Laugh and the world laughs with you;
snore, and you sleep alone!'
(Anthony Burgess, English writer)

'People who say they sleep like a baby
usually don't have one.'
(Leo J Burke, American writer)

'People who snore always fall asleep first.'
(Anonymous)

'Some people talk in their sleep.
Lecturers talk while other people sleep.'
(Albert Camus, French writer and philosopher)

'Sleep that knits up the ravelled sleeve of care
The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath
Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,
Chief nourisher in life's feast.'
(William Shakespeare, Macbeth)

Sleep

There is a photocopiable worksheet on page 46 on the theme of sleep for you to use with your students. Check the answers to the first two activities with the class before you move on to the discussion questions. You may need to explain that *owl* and *lark* are types of bird. Owls are nocturnal, hunting their prey at night and sleeping during the day. Larks have a reputation for being very active early in the morning.

Sleep

A **Match the beginnings of the jokes (1–8) with the answers/punchlines (a–h).**

1 I have four legs but only one foot. What am I?

2 What animal always goes to sleep with its shoes on?

3 Why do people go to bed?

4 Why did the man take a pencil to bed?

5 What did Sir Lancelot wear to bed?

6 Why couldn't Dracula's wife get to sleep?

7 Doctor, doctor, I can't get to sleep at night.

8 Did you hear about the man who slept under an old tractor?

a) He wanted to wake up oily in the morning.

b) Because of his coffin.

c) A knightgown.

d) A bed.

e) To draw the curtains.

f) A horse.

g) Because the bed won't come to them.

h) Lie on the edge of the bed and you'll soon drop off.

B **Choose the best word to complete each sentence.**

1 It's hard to wake him up in the morning. He sleeps like a ..... .
a) dog
b) log
c) hog
d) jug

2 Connie has gone to Sally's house. They're having a sleep ..... .
a) down
b) up
c) through
d) over

3 I've got a terrible headache. I think I'll go to bed and try to sleep it ..... .
a) off
b) on
c) through
d) under

4 The storm last night was really loud. I don't know how you could sleep ..... it!
a) in
b) through
c) over
d) out

5 I don't want to make a decision now. I'll sleep ..... it and let you know tomorrow.
a) through
b) over
c) off
d) on

6 'I'm going to bed now, Mum.'
'OK, darling, sleep ..... .'
a) night
b) tight
c) sight
d) right

7 I don't work on Sundays, so I often sleep ..... .
a) out
b) still
c) in
d) away

8 I'm going to bed early for once. I need to catch ..... on my sleep.
a) over
b) up
c) in
d) out

C **Discuss these questions in pairs or small groups.**

1 How many hours do you sleep each night?

2 Do you ever suffer from insomnia (you can't get to sleep)? What do you do to try to make yourself sleep?

3 Are you an *owl* (someone who stays up late and is active in the evening) or a *lark* (someone who is at their best in the morning)?

Answers **A** 1 d 2 f 3 g 4 e 5 c (nightgown) 6 b (coughing) 7 h 8 a (early) **B** 1 b 2 d 3 a 4 b 5 d 6 b 7 c 8 b

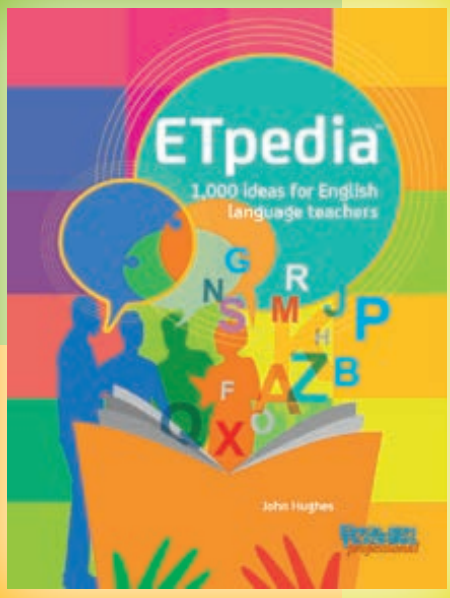
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Get the picture?

Paul Bress illustrates ways to exploit images to the maximum.

Language lessons are tending to become more and more resource-heavy. Some teachers are terrified that their students will be bored, so they go into their classrooms armed to the teeth with books, papers and weblinks. Many of these resources are not exploited as well as they could be, and some students might well want to focus on just one resource or task for much longer than is allowed.

Pictures of people

In this issue, I would like to consider how teachers can use pictures of people to review language previously learnt. The activity starts with a picture the teacher has brought in (or perhaps one from a coursebook). It moves on to involve the students in producing their own images, which they can then take ownership of.

Imagine you have a lower-intermediate class, and that you have just reviewed *Yes*/*No* and *Wh*- questions and descriptive discourse, taught in a previous lesson or lessons. You now hold up a picture of a person (or make copies and distribute them). Here is an example:



The classroom interaction might now go something like this:

Teacher: What's this man's name?

Student(s): Peter.

T: OK, what does he look like?

S: He's got black hair and green eyes.

T: Good. Is he happy or unhappy?

S: He's happy. He's smiling.

T: Good. Has he got a family?

S: Yes, he's married, and he's got two children.

T: What are their names?

S: His wife is Susan, and his children are John and Simon.

T: OK. What about his job? What does he do for a living?

S: He's a teacher. He teaches geography.

T: Oh, OK. And where do Peter and his family live?

S: They live in a flat in the High Street.

T: Good. And what does Peter do in his free time?

S: He plays football. He plays for Canterbury City.

T: OK, so I can see you know a lot about Peter. I'm now going to give you a sheet of paper and some coloured pens. Draw a face of someone from your imagination. (*The teacher gives the resources out.*)

* * *

T: Finished, everyone? OK, Johann, please come to the front of the class. Now, ask Johann some questions about the person he's drawn. (*The class proceed to ask questions, as above – and then each of the other students has a turn at answering questions about their person.*)

* * *

T: OK, for homework, I'd like you to write about the person you drew. Write about:

- What the person looks like
- Their family and friends
- Their job or studies
- Where they live
- Their hobbies

(*This list is written on the board.*)

★ ★ ★

In my experience, students of all ages and backgrounds enjoy participating in activities like this, and I think that this is because they have been asked to use their imagination to create something. Once something has been created, there's a sense of *ownership*. Students care much more about a picture they have drawn than an expertly-drawn picture or photo in an ELT coursebook.

The powerful combination of creativity and ownership can, of course, be applied in a wide variety of ways. For example:

- Designing a menu for a restaurant or café
- Setting house rules for a lodger or tenant
- Drawing a desert island

All these ideas (and many more) can be used to encourage freer use of language that has just been taught or has been taught earlier in the course. If you want to motivate your students, try to incorporate as many such activities as you can. ETp



Paul Bress lives in Herne Bay, UK, where he teaches English to overseas students, writes novels and paints. His novels are: *The Man Who Didn't Age*, *The Dysfunctional Family*, *For Adults Only*, *The Check-out Operator* and *Life Swap*, all published by Fast-Print and available on Kindle. His paintings can be viewed at *www.artfinder.com/paul-bress* and *http://paulbressgallery.blogspot.co.uk*.

paulbress@talktalk.net

ENGLISH TEACHING professional

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We are always looking for fresh ideas that will appeal to our readers. Whether you are an experienced writer or a practising teacher with something to say, we would like to hear from you. We cannot promise to publish your article, but we do promise to read it carefully!

General guidance

The best advice we can give is 'Read ETp'. If you are already a subscriber – and we hope you are – you will know that we publish a wide range of features and articles dealing with practical classroom issues, professional and personal development, methodology, pedagogy, technology, language and linguistics, teaching resources – and a lot more besides.

Our readership

ETp is read by teachers in more than 120 countries around the world. Some of them are native speakers of English. Many of them are not. We have readers in most sectors – from primary school to university – but the majority teach in upper and lower secondary schools and in language schools or similar institutions.

Reader friendly

We are looking for articles that are of direct relevance and immediate interest to teachers in the classroom.

Our aim is to be fresh and accessible. Teachers usually do not have time to read lengthy pieces or weighty prose. Please write clearly and simply, and avoid – or explain – technical terms or jargon. We are less likely to accept an article that says 'This is what we did' than one that says 'This is what we did and here's how you can do it too/adapt it to your situation, etc.' Please avoid long lists of references and bibliographies.

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We work with our authors to ensure that the articles we publish are as good as we can make them. We very seldom publish an article in exactly the form in which it was submitted. If you need help or support, we will be pleased to offer both. Our advice is to send us a draft or an outline in the first instance, so that we can help you to develop your ideas. Sending an outline is also a good idea because it enables us to warn you if we already have several articles on the same subject waiting to be published, and are unlikely to accept another one.

Starting point

You may wish to submit shorter pieces to begin with. We are very pleased to receive letters and suggestions for publication, and contributions to the TALKBACK! and IT WORKS IN PRACTICE sections of the magazine.Good, innovative photocopiable materials are particularly welcome.

Article length

Most articles in ETp are between one and three pages in length, although we occasionally publish both shorter and longer articles. Approximate word counts are as follows:

- One page: around 850 words
- Two pages: around 1,400 words
- Three pages: around 2,200 words

If illustrations or diagrams are required, please reduce the word count to compensate.

Regular features

Please contact us before contributing to one of our regular features as these are generally commissioned by us and their content planned several issues in advance. Please write to us also if you have new ideas for regular features.

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Articles sent in to us are circulated to an editorial team and considered for publication. We try to let you know our decision as quickly as possible, but you may not receive an immediate response.

Please bear in mind that we receive many more articles than we can possibly publish. We only produce six issues a year and there is a limited amount of space in each issue. We also have to balance the content of each issue to ensure that there is something of interest to everyone. This means that even when we accept your article, you may have to wait some time before you see it in print. Please be patient. It is very unlikely to go into the next issue or even the issue after that, but if we have accepted an article, we will get it in as soon as possible.

If we do not accept your article, it may be simply because we have several others on a similar subject waiting to be published or we can see that it will be so long before we can fit your article in that you would be better seeking publication elsewhere.

If you want to be published quickly, it is often a good idea to submit an article to one of the following sections: teaching young learners, business English, teacher development and technology. We are often looking for articles to fill these sections, and we are particularly interested in photocopiable activities.

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Please remember to put your name and full contact details, including postal address and telephone number, within the body of your article. Emails and articles often ger separated and it is vital that your article is labelled clearly with your name and contact details.

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Bridging the technophobe–technophile gap 2

Daniel Monaghan and **Tessa Woodward**

apply their unifying framework to stimulus analysis.

This series of articles started from a puzzle: How do you, as a teacher trainer, work with a group of competent language teachers from all over the world who have very different attitudes towards using newer technology in their classes and on their training course? Indeed, how do teachers in a group such as this communicate effectively with each other about their work, given their differences?

A unifying framework

Our solution to this kind of situation, explained in Issue 100 of ET*p*, was to adopt a unifying framework called 'stimulus-based learning and teaching'. This framework runs like a spine down the centre of a course – and through professional discussions – allowing people to branch left or branch right from it, depending on whether they wish to teach using new technology or not. In other words, whether they wish to learn and teach plugged or unplugged! As we make our way through this series of articles, we will gradually explain the idea.

Stimulus-based learning and teaching: Analysis

A stimulus is anything that engages a student's attention and encourages language learning and use. It could be a group of new words, a text, tweet, picture, email, object, a listening, a chunk of language, a visitor, a song, a *YouTube* video or a map. Whatever stimulus is used, we will, at some point, want our students to analyse it. We will want them, for example, to break it down, identify and name its parts, define and describe it, see what it's made of, or discuss its contents and context, its uses, its past and present and future histories. By doing so, our students will thoroughly get to grips with the stimulus and understand how it works.

Let's imagine, then, that you are working with your students on *Wh*-questions, such as *Where did she go?* A tech-free way for a teacher to invite the students to analyse a piece of language like this is by holding up four fingers in front of her. Working from the teacher's right to left (and thus the students' left to right) the teacher can say the question word by word, encouraging the students to repeat the words after her, out loud, while she wiggles each finger in turn. Thus the students hear the question and 'see' the four separate words illustrated by the finger wiggles. Next, the teacher puts the two middle fingers together while pronouncing the 'did she' more naturally at speed as 'di-she'. Again, the students are encouraged to repeat after

> *We will want our students to break a stimulus down, identify and name its parts, define and describe it, see what it's made of ...*

the teacher and, at the same time, they 'see' the squashing together of the two sounds, illustrated by the fingers held together. They have seen the *Wh*-question broken down and put back together again. So far, no technology.

Let's go up a notch to work on a more advanced, written paragraph rather than a single elementary utterance. Let's also use some technology on our new stimulus, in this case the highlighting feature of word processing programs. Colours are a simple but effective way of reinforcing analysis of language patterns. For example, essays often have a relatively stable structure, involving a topic sentence and signposted arguments supported by examples. An example essay paragraph is given opposite. The topic sentence is highlighted in yellow, the signposts in turquoise, the main points in green, and the examples/support in pink.

The colour pattern quickly builds up in students' minds, and this visual pattern helps to reinforce the structure of the text. When correcting your students' work, you can highlight their texts in the same colours to show them if they are producing the relevant pattern. Going back to sentence-level work, you can use colours to reinforce patterns such as subject–verb–object, question formation or the creation of many tenses.

Teachers who use wiggling fingers and teachers who use flashy colours on an IWB, whatever stimulus they happen to be encouraging their students to get to grips with, can still talk to each other easily if they use the language of the central unifying framework and explain that they are analysing the stimulus.

Student analysis

It is not just *teachers* who have differing views of new technology, however. *Students* can have different preferences from each other and also from their teachers. We need a way of attempting to unite all sides so that we can all communicate, while still doing the important work of analysis.

Being able to use a word effectively implies being able to say it, spell it, understand it, know its connotations and collocations and know its register and grammar, eg if it is followed by a dependent preposition. If learners are to be independent, this means being able to use a dictionary effectively, so entries in learners' dictionaries can themselves become a stimulus to be analysed. Many students now use portable electronic dictionaries or apps on their mobile phones as reference tools. However, it is not always clear whether the students are using these resources effectively – and some apps are of low quality. The small size of phones and electronic dictionaries also makes it difficult for teachers to see exactly what the students are doing, so it is hard to evaluate the students' use of them.

There are several reasons why governments might want to discourage migration from the countryside. The first is that cities do not have the infrastructure to cope with large numbers of new inhabitants. For example, cities cannot build hospitals and schools quickly enough, and so the quality of healthcare and education decreases. A further reason is that the growth of cities may lead to a rise in pollution. This danger can be seen in fast-growing cities such as Mexico City, which now have much worse air quality than in the past. Finally, if everyone leaves the countryside, there may not be enough people left to grow food in rural areas.

Being able to use a word effectively implies being able to say it, spell it, understand it, know its connotations and collocations and know its register and grammar

Other students prefer to use paper dictionaries but, similarly, may not be that good at, say, alphabetising for search purposes or reading further down an entry in small type to find a particular use. Therefore, a useful exercise is to ask the students to research some vocabulary using their preferred dictionary for homework and then to test if they have acquired all the knowledge they need to use that vocabulary in a later lesson. Students can also be asked to compare their own dictionary to one of the main paper or online dictionaries (see the list at the end of this article). These activities encourage effective and reflective use of all kinds of dictionaries.

Out-of-class analysis

Modern technology can be used to analyse a stimulus for homework when a new language form has arisen in class. The students can be asked to use their mobile phones, digital cameras or iPads to take a photo of a real-life example of that language form. They then either send it or show it to the teacher. For example, students in an English-speaking

Bridging the technophobe–technophile gap 2

environment can be asked to find notices showing the present simple passive, such as *All our food is cooked to order* or *No more than two children are allowed in this shop at any one time.*

Here, the teacher is not required to use technology: the *student* is. To do this task, the students need to be able to analyse the form of the new language accurately enough to recognise it in other contexts. The task can be made more demanding by specifying the kind of text that the form needs to be found in (eg an online or paper newspaper, or in song lyrics). The students need to be ready to explain why that form of language was appropriate in that particular context.

Another way of using technology for language analysis is to ask the students to enter a specific piece of language into a search engine. Let's take the example of *If only I hadn't ...* . By putting double inverted commas around the words, only results containing that exact phrase will be shown. The students can then be asked to analyse if any grammar is associated with this expression, if it performs a particular function, or if it appears in a particular kind of text. This kind of activity often works better if it is limited to a particular website rather than the whole internet. Most search engines include this facility. For example, to search only the BBC website on *Google*, a student can enter *Site:bbc.co.uk "If only I hadn't"*. Again, it is the student who is using the technology.

★ ★ ★

In this article, we have looked at the business of analysing a stimulus. We have used short and slightly longer stretches of language as our stimuli, and have considered tech and no-tech ways to do the analysis. The reason for this move was to help the students to get to grips with the stimulus and understand better how it works. We have also considered combining the resources of teachers and students to reflect on the fact that different media used together can provide us with a pool of helpful information.

To enable those who love teaching and learning with newer technology, and those who don't, to understand each other and work together, trainers and teachers can use a unifying framework, as outlined above. In the next article in this series, we will consider the *personalising* of a stimulus by low- and high-tech means. ETp

Woodward, T *Planning Lessons and Courses* CUP 2001

Woodward, T 'Stimulus-based teaching' *English Teaching Professional* 25 2002

Colour coding for writing analysis has been suggested by many authors. An early example would be:

Swales, J M 'Developing materials for writing scholarly introductions' In Jordan, R R (Ed) *Case Studies in ELT* Collins ELT 1983

We first read about the idea of using the internet to research chunks of language in:

Thornbury, S *Grammar* OUP 2006

Some of the main online dictionaries are:

www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/

http://dictionary.cambridge.org/

www.ldoceonline.com/

www.macmillandictionary.com/

www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/englishcobuildlearners



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Showbie your work!

Martina Dorn

painlessly makes her classroom paperless.

Teaching in the digital era requires teachers to be inventive and adaptive, and it can be a daunting prospect when you are asked to create and work in a paperless environment, a situation I recently found myself in. However, using *Showbie* has made the process painless and relatively simple for me.

There are many institutions around the world that have whole-heartedly embraced the idea of using one-to-one computing, whereby each learner has an electronic device in order to access the internet, obtain digital course materials, carry out tasks and take part in assessment activities. In some places, schools or colleges issue each learner with either a laptop or an iPad. In others, where resources are more scarce, a policy of 'bring your own device' (BYOD) is adopted, or charities, such as One Laptop Per Child (OLPC), operate to ensure equal access for all.

Getting a shock

The organisation I worked for in 2012 prides itself on being forward-thinking and innovative; it likes to stay at the forefront of all educational developments. In addition, it has resources that would be the envy of many less well-off institutions. After returning from our summer holidays, my colleagues and I found boxes filled with shiny iPads on our desks. We were told that the whole curriculum was now to be delivered using this device. At the same time, the students were also being issued with iPads – and because such a substantial amount of money had been invested in digital coursebooks, all the campus printers and photocopying machines were removed and paper became a prohibited item. Everyone's world turned upside down in a matter of hours: whether we liked it or not, we were going to be truly digital and paperless.



Getting *Showbie*

After the initial bout of despair and self-pity, we pulled ourselves together and, desperate to fill our void of ignorance, we turned to the internet and searched for 'paperless classroom'. To our surprise and relief, several search results appeared, the top of which suggested going to the *Showbie* website. This we did and, happily, have never looked back. *Showbie* is an iPad, Android and web app that was created for teachers and students who use electronic devices and need to be able to manage their work flow electronically. It is an incredibly intuitive app, and to this day I am yet to find someone who does not pick it up with ease. Most of my colleagues use the free version of the app but some, including me, invested $10 a month and upgraded it to *Showbie Pro*. For institutions, there is also *Showbie Pro School Edition*.

Showbie your work!

Getting started

As with other apps, an account, either 'Student' or 'Teacher', needs to be created. This is a straightforward process that takes no time at all. Then, teachers must create 'Classes'. To do this, you simply click on the spanner/wrench icon, which will open a drop-down menu. Click on the '+' sign in the 'New class' box and name the class. You will then be given a code. The students are required to input this code to join your class. It is worth mentioning that there is a useful feature that allows teachers to view group members and their details. This is helpful if a student forgets their password, which will inevitably happen. The teacher simply resets the password, and classwork is not affected. One last comment regarding settings: teachers are notified of any modifications to students' accounts and files. This could be problematic when many changes are made and with large classes. You can save your inbox from being clogged up with notification emails by deselecting 'Notify me when a document is modified' via the web app (accessed through a device other than the iPad). If you don't do this, you may find yourself inundated with emails.

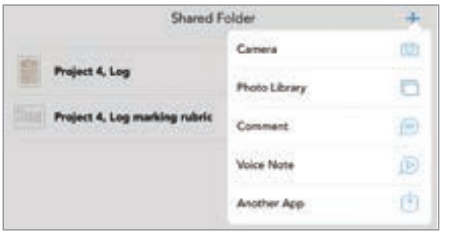
Getting to grips with *Showbie*

1 Setting tasks

Assignments can be set for each class by selecting the class name, clicking on the spanner/wrench icon and choosing the option 'New assignment +'. You need to name your assignment and set a deadline for its completion. I generally like to involve my students and get them to agree on the submission day and time. This process tends to focus them more, and gives me an opportunity to check that they fully understand what is required of them. It also forces them to consider the complexity of the task, and they mentally start to plan for it. The deadline can be changed later if necessary (using the same process as setting it).

2 Sharing course materials

Worksheets with task guidelines, marking criteria, pictures, videos or voice-recorded instructions can all be uploaded into shared class folders. Naturally, if a teacher wishes to provide additional materials or differentiated activities for specific students, they can do so discreetly by placing the files/pictures/notes in the students' own folders. The '+' sign is easy to spot (top right-hand corner) and the options for importing are clearly labelled.



Note that uploaded documents really need to be saved as pdf files. *Showbie* will upload *Word*, *Pages*, *Keynote* or *PowerPoint* files, but they are not always displayed clearly. Also, there are implications when it comes to completing or marking work (see 3 below).

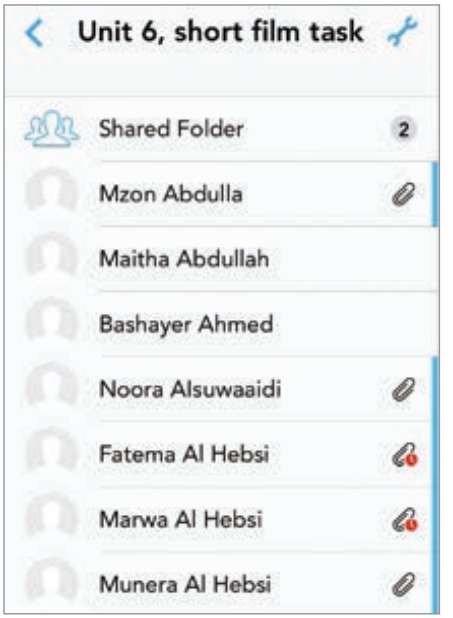
3 Completing work

When the students are ready to start an assignment, they download the relevant files. If the teacher has the paid-for version of the app and as long as the uploaded file is in pdf format, the students are able to use 'digital ink' in a range of colours to annotate their work (see below). Moreover, they can write small yellow notes that are collapsible and take a negligible amount of space on the page. Then learners simply click on 'Done' and the annotated document is submitted to the teacher/instructor for viewing. In the free version of the app, there is an extra step that needs to be taken before the students can begin editing. The students need to open the document in an app that facilitates editing pdf documents. A free app that I recommend to my students is *Adobe Reader* (downloadable from the App Store). Once the pdf document is open in *Adobe Reader*, they can use its editing tools (including typing text in boxes that can be moved around, highlighting, crossing out and using a freehand pen).

The final stage is to submit the completed assignment, which entails clicking on 'Done', 'Open in another app' and selecting 'Showbie' and the correct folder.

4 Marking students' submissions

If teachers turn off notifications, they do not immediately know which students have submitted an assignment. However, when they open *Showbie*, they may notice that the arrow next to the name of a class has turned blue. If they then enter the class, tasks with new entries will have blue arrows, and within tasks there will be blue lines next to the names of any students who have made changes to their files. It will also state the dates when the changes were carried out. Another useful feature is a red clock (see below), which appears if the students submit their work late.



I tend to be quite strict and deduct marks for late submissions, especially because my deadlines have been negotiated and agreed by the students. I never fail to be surprised to see what impact the little red clock has on the



students; almost without fail, they appear shocked and agitated that an app has 'caught them out'; it boldly points out their inability to meet a deadline and it appears to be far more effective than words from a teacher. I have found that these instances highlight the importance of planning. They also encourage the students to think harder about future tasks and the timeframe in which to finish them. The app, therefore, teaches them an important study skill.

Collecting and marking students' work in the paid-for app is effortless, using 'digital ink' and/or small yellow notes. Having just the basic free app requires the same additional step that the students have to take if they want to edit documents: the file needs to be opened in, for example, *Adobe Reader*, marked and then sent back to the students' *Showbie* folders.

5 Giving feedback

Teachers can be creative when it comes to commenting on how well their students have done in assigned tasks. Instead of using the more traditional ways (annotating the students' work, writing feedback on the copies of the documents or posting written notes in the students' folders), why not try recording feedback as voice notes or uploading videos (produced in *iMovie* or *Explain Everything*), which could guide them through their strengths and areas of improvement? It is probably fair to say that receiving feedback in a 'conventional' way does not provide much stimulation; with some students, having to read the teacher's comments can result in less engagement than is required. On the other hand, if comments are presented in a more visual or auditory way, not only can that appeal to learners with different learning styles, but it may also generate more interest amongst them and make a greater impact.

6 General house-keeping

One of the positive aspects of storing all the completed work and feedback in *Showbie* is that everything is kept together and the students can refer to it in the future. For this reason, I believe that it is important to give folders recognisable names and titles that the students can relate to, eg 'Week 1: Vocabulary' or 'Week 1: Writing Task'. All set assignments are stored for 12 months in the free version of the app and indefinitely in the paid-for version.

There is a tool to help teachers deal with situations when learners upload their work into 'wrong' folders.

Deleting files is also a simple operation: locate the file to be deleted; with your finger, swipe from right to left, and once the red rubbish bin icon appears, tap on it.

Finally, the 'owner' of the class can add one or multiple users, who then can become co-teachers. They are then fully able to access the work of the class.

★ ★ ★

I have found *Showbie* simple to use and have, with very little effort, made my teaching virtually paperless. It is a well-designed app that takes into account practical aspects of teachers' everyday needs. Ample support, such as instructional videos and direct contact with the *Showbie* team, is provided to its users, and teachers are encouraged to give feedback on how they find the experience of using the app. This information is then used to inform the improvements which are constantly being made to further enhance the users' experience.

My success in attaining a virtually paperless classroom can be solely attributed to this app. In my teaching life, I now barely handle paper, and my desk is beautifully uncluttered. However, I still ask my students to have paper available for two reasons. Firstly, as a safeguard – occasionally the internet fails and the whole idea of digital delivery falls on its face. Secondly, I want my students to develop fine motor skills and to be able to write freehand as they will all need to sit various English writing exams where word-processing and iPad skills are of no use. So, I will admit to my classrooms not being *completely* paperless, but I am satisfied with my achievement – especially when I think back to the day the challenge was first presented to me and my colleagues! ETp



Martina Dorn has worked as a teacher and Director of Studies in the UK and the United Arab Emirates. She has the CELTA, Delta and an MA in Education and is currently doing an MSc in Technology Management. She has a keen interest in the use of technology in teaching, in particular the iPad.

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Tech-time diary

Nasy Pfanner discovers the truth about teenagers and technology.

Every aspect of our lives is interwoven with modern technology: business, education, health care ... In fact, without technology life would be unthinkable – especially for teenagers. Tablets, iPhones, social networks, etc are almost part of their DNA!

Of course, technology is generally a good thing, with enormous benefits, yet it comes with unintended consequences. Unlimited usage can lead to health problems and decrease social activity. Researchers still don't know what the long-term effects will be on individuals and society. As the writer Aldous Huxley once said: *'Technological progress has merely provided us with more efficient means for going backwards.'* The genie is out of the bottle.

Teenagers and technology

Adolescence is a period of great physical, social and emotional changes, often accompanied with confusion and rebellion. As a result, when adults warn teenagers of some of the dangers of technology or try to restrict unsupervised usage, they are frequently dismissed as old-fashioned and paranoid. Efforts are made to educate and warn teenagers about the darker side of social networking, but many don't take the dangers seriously. The sad reality is that many teens have become addicted to technology. Their heads are glued to their computers; they send thousands of text messages; and they are inseparable from their mobile phones! Many psychologists, educators and parents have become alarmed and, in some areas, rehabilitation centres have even been established to de-tech these youngsters!

Time and technology

In one of my teenage classes, we use a coursebook which examines why people want to be famous, looks at reality TV shows and discusses technology usage amongst teenagers. It includes a study by an American research company which shows that in 2009, the average American teenager spent the following amounts of time per day on various activities: three hours and 20 minutes watching TV; 52 minutes using a computer; five minutes talking on a mobile phone; 17 minutes watching DVD; 23 minutes surfing the internet; 25 minutes playing video games.

Timing technology

We discussed the research results in class and I asked the students whether they thought this was an accurate estimate. They thought the numbers were realistic, but couldn't say whether they represented a 'typical' teenager in their own country in 2015. We decided that the only way to find out for sure was to do our own research by keeping a daily diary for a week, documenting the time spent on: watching TV; listening to music; talking or sending text messages on a mobile phone; playing video games; and surfing the internet.

Each student agreed to keep a diary for a week. They had to produce a chart, with each activity in a different colour so it would be easy to compare the time spent on each. In addition, the total time spent on each activity had to be added up for the entire week. The aim was to find out how much time the students spend on technology individually and as a class. One of my students' charts is shown on page 57.

The times

A week later, all the students brought their diaries to class, and I asked one student to write on the board the number of hours spent on each activity as the other students called them out. Another student then added them up. The results were as follows:

- **TV** – 171.19 hours per week (averaging 24.5 hours per day, and 1.5 hours per student)
- **Music** –76.98 hours per week (averaging 11 hours per day, and 40 minutes per student)
- **Mobile phone** (talking and messaging) – 337.56 hours per week (averaging 48.2 hours per day, and 3 hours per student)
- **Video games** –173 hours per week (averaging 24.7 hours per day, and 1.5 hours per student)
- **Internet** –104.65 hours per week (averaging 14.94 hours per day, and 56 minutes per student)

Interestingly, the girls hardly played video games at all. One alarming fact was that one boy played six hours of computer games in one sitting at the weekend – and this was acceptable to his parents. Most of the students didn't talk much on their mobile phones, preferring to send text messages.

Some of the categories overlapped, causing a bit of confusion as to where to put each activity. For example, some students watched a movie, but on a computer rather than on TV. We agreed to call this TV. The students found it difficult to keep an exact record of mobile phone calls and text messages because these occurred for short time periods and sporadically throughout the day, so they had to estimate as best they could. Consequently, the diaries may not have been exact down to the last minute, but for the most part they were accurate and provided a good starting point for discussion. We spent a whole lesson discussing the results, comparing them to those in the coursebook and talking about health and addiction.

★ ★ ★

This activity could be done by any class in any context. In addition, you could vary the length of time surveyed and include interviews with other teenagers. In other words, there are many possibilities for adapting it to suit your needs. I would suggest you be more exact than I was in listing the categories. For example, you could call one category 'Watching a movie', regardless of whether this is on TV, on a DVD, at the cinema, etc. You could also make it clear that 'Surfing the internet' includes surfing on any device or for any purpose. ETp



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nasypfanner@gmail.com

Technology diary

Wednesday		Thursday		Friday		Satutday		Sunday		Monday		Tuesday	
Time	Activity	Time	Activity	Time	Activity	Time	Activity	Time	Activity	Time	Activity	Time	Activity
7:12-7:42 am	music	7:12-8:10 am	music	7:12-7:47 am	music	11:16-11:30 am	computer mobile phone	8:45-9:02 am	music	7:10-7:46 am	music	7:09-7:46 am	music
11:35-11:45 am	texting	12:17-12:43 am	music texting	1:14-2:04 pm	music mobile phone	12:09 am-12:30 pm	mobile phone texting	9:20-10:40 am	TV Big Bang Theory-sitcom	12:24-12:47 am	music	12:35-12:58 am	Texting mobil phone
1:20-1:49 pm	mobile phone	7:20-7:50 pm	mobile phone	2:10-3:15 pm	Tv The Big Bang Theory-sitcom	2:30-2:36 pm	music	10:40-12:00 am	TV How I Met Your Mother-sitcom	2:00-3:15 pm	computer for school	2:48-3:10 pm	music
3:50-4:30 pm	music	8:15-9:45 pm	Tv Kripo Bosten–thriller	5:17-6:00 pm	Music texting	4:00-5:10 pm	mobil phone	1:05-1:30 pm	Music mobil phone	4:05-4:45 pm	texting mobile phone	4:28-5:29 pm	computer for school
4:30-4:40 pm	texting	9:45-10:00 pm	mobil phone	7:30-8:00 pm	TV Das Perfekte Dinner-cooking show	6:30-7:00 pm	texting	6:10-7:05 pm	TV Simpsons-animated sitcom	5:15-5:17 pm	phoning	7:30-8:00 pm	mobile phone
7:00-7:30 pm	computer			9:15-10:45 pm	DvD Der unaussprechliche Vulkanfilm -comedy	11:11-11:44 pm	mobile phone	7:03-7:10 pm	texting	6:00-7:05 pm	computer for school	8:15-9:05 pm	TV Chasing Life-drama
8:15-9:45 pm	TV Bergdoktor–drama series			11:11-12:15 pm	mobile phone texting					8:15-10:15 pm	TV The Forsters-drama	9:05-10:00 pm	TV Cedar Cove-drama

An original diary, produced by one of the students

Video cameras in ELT

2 Stars of *YouTube*

In the second article in this series, Jamie Keddie turns to *YouTube* as a source of inspiration for solo video tasks.

This article makes reference to a number of example videos. All these can be seen at *www.etprofessional.com/Jamie-Keddie-Stars-of-YouTube.aspx*

I have a friend who has a daughter called Emma, and Emma has an addiction, which is probably quite familiar to many eight-year-old schoolgirls. Emma is obsessed with a young *YouTuber* who calls himself 'CrazyRussianHacker' (real name unknown). CrazyRussianHacker is a likeable character who has over five million subscribers on his *YouTube* channel. His business is making videos in which he demonstrates 'life hacks'.

Life hack is a term that has come out of *YouTube* show-and-tell culture. In case you don't know what a life hack is, don't worry – I have asked Emma to explain. She tells me that a life hack is 'something that you do to solve problems and make boring things fun'.

CrazyRussianHacker does this with humour and a strong, but perfectly intelligible, Russian accent. His catch phrase is *'OK, check this out! What we gonna do is …'*

My favourite video is the one in which he introduces his dog, Luke. Luke is a husky, and CrazyRussianHacker informs us that huskies have very thick fur and get very hot in the summer. They go into the garden and CrazyRussianHacker breaks eight large bags of ice cubes into a plastic paddling pool (a mini garden swimming pool for children). Meanwhile, his ecstatic dog runs round and round the pool, desperate to get his ice bath treat.

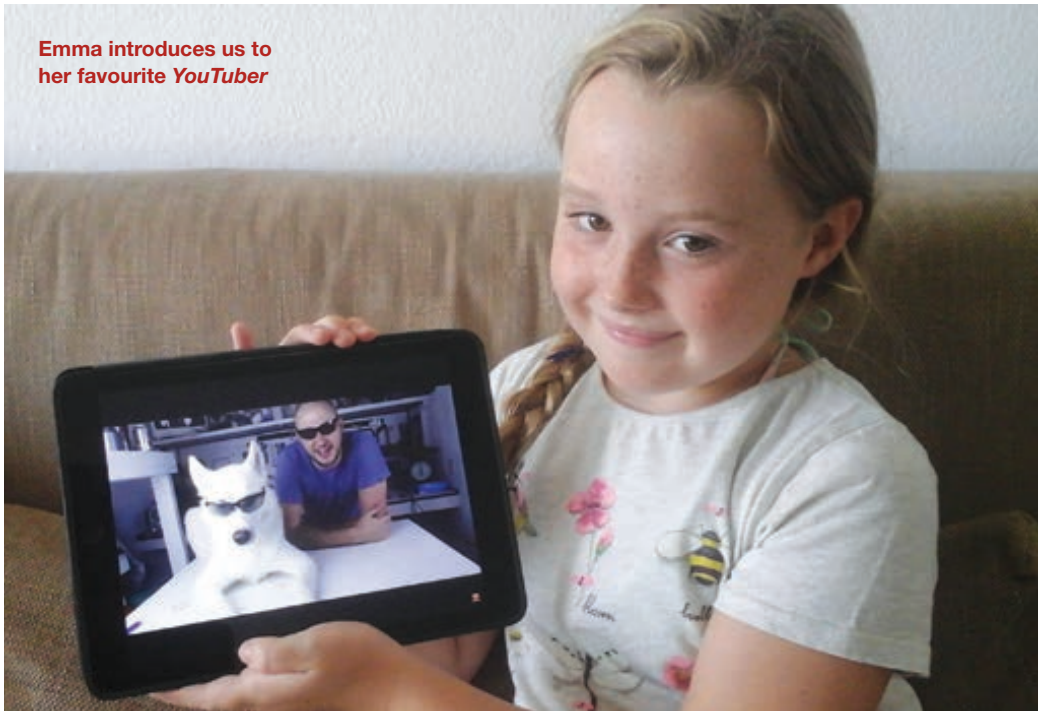
Although CrazyRussianHacker is Emma's favourite, she actually subscribes to a lot of *YouTube* channels, and they all belong to individuals who upload 'talking head' videos on a regular basis. On *YouTube*, the things that people talk about are as diverse as the things that people write about on blogs, in magazines, in journals, etc.

It strikes me that for youngsters like Emma, it can be less about the video and more about the people. Human beings have always been fascinated by other human beings. In that respect, some things never change. But there is no message without the medium, and the medium of online video culture finds its way into Emma's life in lots of other ways.

Emma's mum tells me that Emma finds imaginary video cameras and talks directly to them as if she were addressing an audience of *YouTube* subscribers to her superstar channel! But more often than not, the lens is real. Whenever she can, Emma likes to get hold of her mum's mobile phone and use the device to film her stories, her jokes, her opinions and her performances.

Online video

Of course, this culture is not associated exclusively with young people. Communicating ideas in front of cameras has become mainstream in many different areas and professions. I am sure that many readers of this magazine, as teachers, will have spoken in front of a video camera some time in the last few months or years. Personally, I do this quite a lot, but I had never done so before 2008.



Emma introduces us to her favourite *YouTuber*

Online video is the medium of the moment. It has been democratised, and the tools are now there for all of us. When the medium changes, educators and teachers have to take note.

In some ways, capturing spoken words on video can be regarded as an alternative to putting written words on paper. But competent use of the medium requires a number of different communicative and technical skills. Some of these are already familiar to language teachers (speaking, presenting and storytelling skills, an awareness of spoken registers, etc). But there are also skills which we have never had to deal with before (setting up a camera, addressing the lens, editing the video, etc).

Like language skills, video production skills *emerge*. If we are to embrace this new medium, we have to concede that things will probably not go smoothly to start with. But this is a time for us to make sense of it all. This is a time for teachers to ask questions, experiment with ideas and share experiences.

Ten solo video tasks

In this article, I would like to suggest some ideas for video tasks that students can do on their own. I am referring to homework assignments, for example, in which the students capture their spoken words on mobile devices in locations other than the classroom.

1 Life hacks and instructional videos

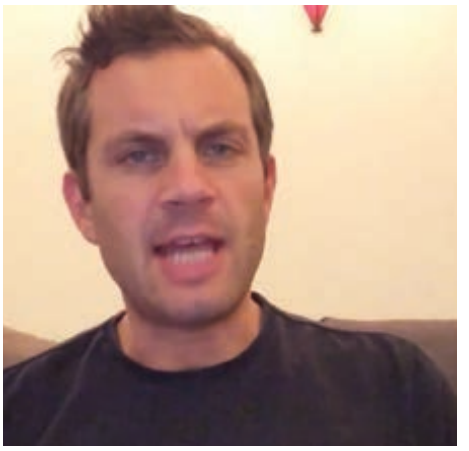
Video-sharing sites like *YouTube* are packed with videos in which enthusiastic individuals show and tell us how to sew on buttons, how to peel mangos, how to do press-ups the proper way, how to moonwalk like Michael Jackson, how to do well in job interviews, how not to chat up girls/boys, how to survive a zombie attack, etc.

Introduce your students to the idea that everyone is an expert at something, no matter how trivial that thing is. Show them two or three instructional videos online. Then ask them to make a video of their own, in which they demonstrate a skill or life hack.

Note that many instructional videos will lend themselves to a commentary-only format. In other words, the camera may focus on the individual's hands, which are doing the work. This may be beneficial for students who do not like to appear in videos.

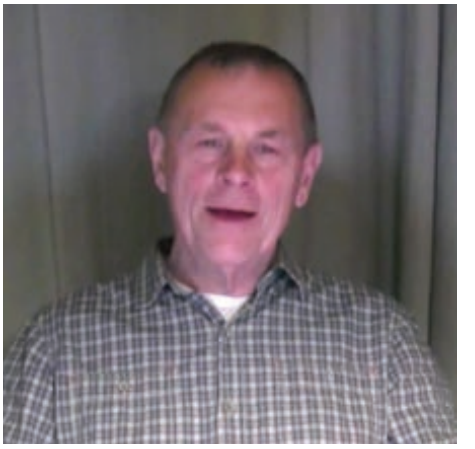












2 Pet videos

Ask your students to create a video in which they introduce a pet – either their own, or one belonging to a friend or neighbour. Again, this could take the form of a commentary-only video, as the student can point the camera at the pet and talk about any of the following:

- A day in the life of the pet (ie its daily routine)
- A story about the pet (eg the naughtiest thing it has ever done)
- The pet's likes and dislikes

Please see *www.etprofessional.com/Jamie-Keddie-Stars-of-YouTube.aspx* for an example video.

3 Review videos

Ask the students to create a video in which they review a book, a film, a new TV series, a local exhibition, a computer game, a restaurant or a new video from their favourite *YouTuber*.

4 'Show and tell'

There is an online culture in which young *YouTubers* (usually female) return home from a clothes shopping trip and create a video in which they introduce their purchases to the camera, one item at a time. Type the words 'haul video' into *YouTube* and you will see that there are thousands of videos of this type.

'Show and tell' doesn't have to be

Stars of *YouTube*

limited to clothes. Students could create videos in which they introduce personal possessions, photographs, a guided tour of their house or the view from their bedroom window.

5 A piece of art

Banksy is probably the most famous street artist in the world. An online image search of his name will result in thousands of photographs of his stencil graffiti and street installations, many of which use dark humour to comment on social and political issues.

Ask your students to go online and to choose a Banksy piece that they like. They should then create a talking-head video in which they do the following:

- Describe the image
- Interpret it / say why they like it
- Tell the story behind it (many Banksy pieces generate stories in their own right)

Please see *www.etprofessional.com/Jamie-Keddie-Stars-of-YouTube.aspx* for an example video.

Other possibilities include videos in which students talk about a piece of local street art or architecture.

6 Video lists

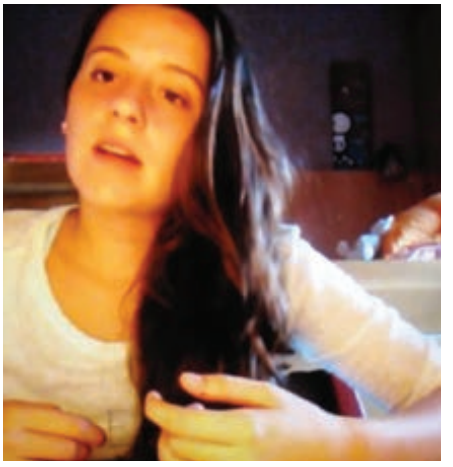
Another recent culture to come out of *YouTube* is the '50 things about me' video format. Young *YouTubers* talk to the camera and tell us about their fear of spiders, the time they broke a leg, their earliest memories, etc. They don't usually make for stimulating viewing, at least for anyone over the age of 18! But this is a flexible format that students can work with.

Other list videos could include: ten places I would like to visit and why; ten facts about my dog; ten things that parents say; ten things I hate about *Facebook*; ten things I like about weddings, etc.

Please see *www.etprofessional.com/Jamie-Keddie-Stars-of-YouTube.aspx* for an example video.

7 Videotelling

Videotelling is the everyday activity of putting video narratives into words. This is something that we do all the time. We







tell each other about funny adverts we have seen, music videos, sports clips, nature documentaries, news footage, viral videos, etc.

Ask the students to go online and find a TV advert that they like. They should then create a talking-head video in which they describe it to the camera from start to finish. Importantly, they should not say what the product being advertised is. Later, they can watch each other's videos and try to guess what the mystery products are.

Please see *www.etprofessional.com/Jamie-Keddie-Stars-of-YouTube.aspx* for an example video.

8 True or false

Ask the students to create a talking-head video in which they describe three interesting facts about themselves. However, one of these should be false. Later, the students can watch each other's videos and attempt to work out which are the true statements and which are the lies.

9 Your ten favourite English words of the week

Ask the students to make a video in which they talk about their ten favourite language items of the week. These could be words, phrases, idioms, collocations or grammar structures. Ask them to recall where they met the items and why they like them.

10 Introduce your breakfast

This could be another commentary-only video task. Ask the students to make a video in which they introduce their breakfast and talk about any of the following:

- Their breakfast habits (what they eat, where and what time they eat it, who they eat with, etc)
- Whether or not their breakfast habits change on different days of the week
- Whether their breakfast habits are similar to or different from standard local norms

Please see *www.etprofessional.com/Jamie-Keddie-Stars-of-YouTube.aspx* for an example video.

★ ★ ★

In the next article in this series, we will look at things from a social, practical and technological point of view. We will consider issues and areas such as giving feedback, providing technological support, video editing, video sharing and online privacy.



Jamie Keddie is the author of *Images* and *Bringing Online Video into the Classroom*, both published by OUP. He is also the founder of the recently-relaunched *lessonstream.org*. Jamie is a teenager in his early 40s and his dream is to be a *YouTuber*. You can visit his *YouTube* channel at *YouTube.com/jamiekeddie*.

hello@jamiekeddie.com

Five things you always wanted to know about the 'One laptop per child' initiative (but were too afraid to ask)

In this series, Nicky Hockly explains aspects of technology which some people may be embarrassed to confess that they don't really understand. In this article, she discusses the results of an innovative initiative.

1 What is 'One laptop per child'?

The 'One laptop per child' initiative (OLPC) aims to provide cheap laptops to children in the world's poorest countries. It was launched in 2005 by Nicholas Negroponte and, to date, about 2.5 million inexpensive, durable '$100 laptops' have been distributed in 60 countries. OLPC is based on the belief that by providing children with the necessary hardware (internet-connected laptops), they will learn more effectively. This, in theory, especially benefits children living in poverty – often in remote areas – who may have little, or even no, access to trained teachers.

2 It sounds like an excellent idea.

OLPC does, indeed, sound like a good idea in principle – who could criticise wanting to provide access to education to the most disadvantaged children on the planet? The programme's social justice agenda of providing access to education (via laptops) to the world's poorest children is laudable, and there is no doubt that the project is radical and innovative in many ways. Partly for these reasons, it was enthusiastically taken up by governments in the mid-2000s, particularly in developing countries – but with mixed results.

3 What are the main issues with OLPC?

OLPC has been criticised on several counts. Most common are accusations of 'techno-solutionism' or 'techno-determinism'. That is, the belief that simply by providing access to technology (in this case, specially designed 'XO' laptops), quality learning will follow. The belief that education can be solved through hardware has turned out to be misguided. For example, in many developing countries, OLPC has run into infrastructure problems, such as unreliable or non-existent internet access, or even no electricity with which to power the laptops. Also, although the laptops may be relatively cheap to buy, money is needed to maintain and repair them, as well as to build the necessary infrastructure. This is often unaffordable for governments in low-income countries.

4 Are there any other issues?

Other criticisms of OLPC have centred around educational issues, such as the lack of appropriate curricula or learning materials on the laptops, and a lack of teacher training. The 'one size fits all' approach of OLPC doesn't take into account local context or needs. This has led to accusations of educational colonialism in countries like Ethiopia and India, where Euro-centric English language learning materials have been preloaded on the XO laptops.

Overall, sustainability has been low on the agenda. Political rather than educational factors have frequently influenced the decision to implement an OLPC initiative. Large-scale rollouts have been the norm, instead of more sustainable approaches involving small-scale pilot studies, which are then evaluated, adapted and piloted again on a slightly larger scale. Mark Warschauer and Morgan Ames have suggested that countries *'would be better off building schools, training teachers, developing curricula, providing books and subsidizing attendance'* – all measures which research has shown to improve learning outcomes in the world's poorest countries.

5 Are there no success stories of OLPC?

There are. For example, Uruguay is one country where a degree of success with OLPC is being reported. But this is because all of the issues described above have been deliberately taken into account, so that the mistakes made in other OLPC programmes are avoided. The Uruguayan OLPC initiative is called Plan Ceibal. The English language part of the project is called Ceibal en Inglés (Ceibal in English), and it aims to bring English language learning to all primary school students in the country. With a severe shortage of trained and proficient English language teachers, the project uses videoconferencing to project trained English teachers digitally into classrooms around the country. The project has developed culturally appropriate English language learning materials for Uruguayan children, and is supported by strong online and face-to-face teacher training programmes. There has been a staged approach to nationwide rollout over a period of several years, with each stage being evaluated and adjustments and adaptations made to the programme based on these pilot phases. As Graham Stanley points out, initial impact evaluation studies of Ceibal en Inglés are encouraging, with children involved in the programme showing clear signs of progress in English language learning.

But overall, the jury is still out on OLPC. Unless the all-important contextual factors are taken into account, the initiative will not automatically succeed. OLPC is yet another cautionary tale that questions the belief that solutions to education lie in hardware. ETp

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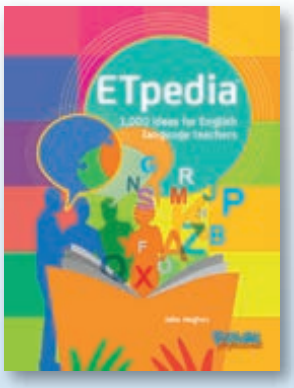


Nicky Hockly is Director of Pedagogy of The Consultants-E, an online teacher training and development consultancy. Her most recent books are *Digital Literacies* (Routledge), an e-book: *Webinars: A Cookbook for Educators (the-round.com)*, and *Going Mobile* (Delta Publishing), a book on mobile learning. She maintains a blog at *www.emoderationskills*.com.

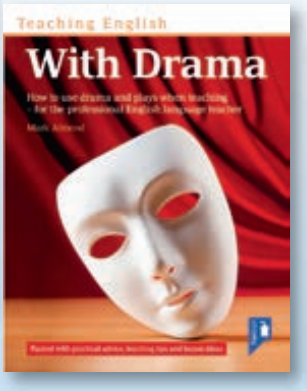
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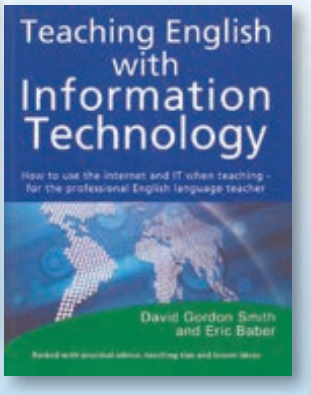
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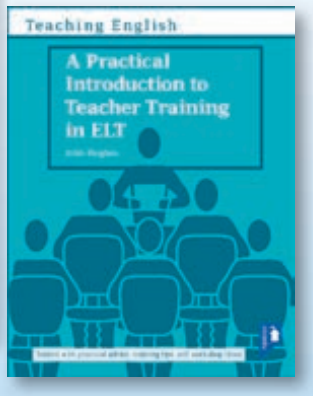
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Webwatcher

Russell Stannard evaluates online teaching using *Skype*.

More and more people are now delivering their classes online through *Skype*. A *Skype* call can replace the 'live' delivery part of a face-to-face lesson and can easily be complemented with tools such as *Blogger* and *Google docs*, which allow the teacher to assign writing tasks, create forms and questionnaires, set up collaborative group-based activities, etc. A combination of tools like these, which are all free, can be used to deliver a fully online learning experience, with *Skype* allowing for 'live' sessions with small groups of students.

Making contact

Before the lesson starts, make sure you and your students have all shared your *Skype* addresses. This will help things run more smoothly. Once you have opened *Skype*, click on 'Contacts', followed by 'Add Contact' and then 'Search Skype Directory'. Search for the name of a new contact you want to add, and then click on 'Add to Contacts'. A request message is sent automatically and, if the person accepts, they will be added to your list and become active.

Calling more than one person

Skype calls are not limited to one person. You can involve several people in the same call by clicking on the '+' button after you have called the first person. You will see the '+' button on the screen, along with other options like turning your camera on and off. Another way of contacting several people at once is to use the group function. If you watch one of my help videos (see below), you will see how this is done.

Sharing the screen

There are several useful *Skype* features that people are often unaware of. Without a doubt, the most powerful is the 'screen share'. This makes it possible to share the screen of your computer so that your students can see it. For example, you could show them a picture that you want them to describe, an exercise that you want them to complete orally or a diagram or graph to discuss. First choose 'Call' and then, in the drop-down menu, select 'Share Screens'. A new screen will appear, and all you need to do is click on 'Start'. Whatever you have on the screen of your computer will then be visible to your students. To stop the students seeing your screen, click on 'Stop sharing'.

Sharing material on your screen is a great way of generating discussion, and you can even play a video to your class, though you may find that the quality is not very good. Remember, however, that though the students will see the video, they will not be able to hear any sound from it. Sharing your screen only shares what is *visible* on your screen, not what *sounds* your computer is generating.

I have noticed during some of my recent *Skype* workshops that teachers often miss the potential of the screen share feature. So here is a taster of a few things you can do. And don't forget: you can get your students to share *their* screens too!

1. Display a picture on your screen, give the students a few seconds to see it, then take it off. Ask the students to tell you all the things they saw.
2. Put one picture onto the screen for five seconds, then show the students a second one. Ask them to identify all the differences.
3. Ask the students to share a picture of a place they like. Get the other students to ask them questions about it.
4. Ask the students to share their screens with you, and ask them to take you through their favourite website, describing all the things they like about it, how to navigate it, etc.
5. Ask the students to share a picture of a famous person they admire. The other students can ask questions and test how much the student knows about that person.

You don't have to use the screen share orally; sometimes it is a good idea to get the students to write their responses in the chat window (see below).

Using the chat window

Brainstorming vocabulary and ideas, and writing and responding to questions are all really useful tasks that you can do using the chat window. You can also use it to share links, and this is where the opportunity to combine *Skype* and *Google docs* works really well. You can create a *Google* document and share the link to it in the *Skype* chat window. When the students click on the link, the document will open and they will be able to write in it. This allows for collaborative writing activities. For example, you might create a table in *Google docs* for the students to fill in. In the example below, the students have to explore a website called *www.breakingnewsenglish.com* and complete the table. Each student then has to talk about their answers. So the activity involves skimming and scanning a website, completing a table with information and then talking about it over *Skype*.

	What activity did you like best?	What article did you read? Summarise in 15 words what it was about.	What games did you play? Describe one game you played.	What is your overall opinion of the website?
Student 1				
Student 2				
Student 3				

★ ★ ★

This is just a quick taste of some of the things that *Skype* can do, and how you can easily combine it with other tools. I have created some videos about using *Skype*, which you can see at *http://goo.gl/pj4CKJ*. In the next issue, we will look at some other useful features *Skype* has to offer. ETp



Russell Stannard is the founder of *www.teachertrainingvideos.com*, which won a British Council ELTons award for technology. He is a freelance teacher and writer and also a NILE Associate Trainer.

Keep sending your favourite sites to Russell: russellstannard@btinternet.com

PICTURE PUZZLE

Find the words hidden in the photos and identify the common theme.

Hint: photos that are joined together are part of the same word; complete words are separated by a space.

Can you puzzle it out?

The answers are on page 35.

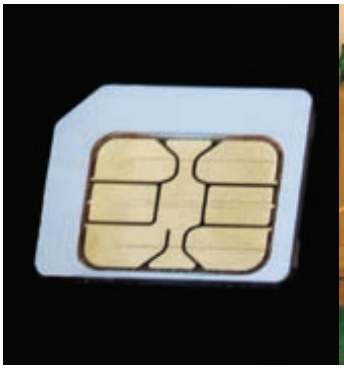
(This idea is taken from *The Independent* newspaper's 'Get the picture' column.)





















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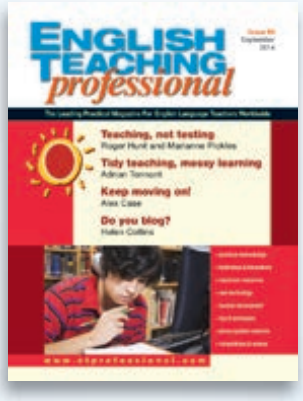
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