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The Leading Practical Magazine For English Language Teachers Worldwide

A closer look at CLIL
Wayne Rimmer

I loved this book!
Siân Morgan

Lights, camera, action!
Michael Brewster

Start building
Andrea Storr



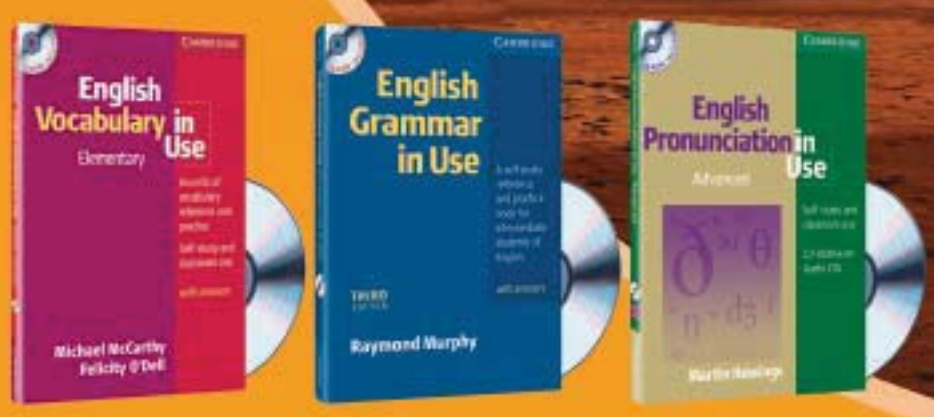
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Includes materials designed to photocopy

Editorial

In this issue we have a wealth of articles from people for whom visuals are important in teaching. Gary Collins describes how he and his students construct photo novellas which have a dual function: his students use language as they put them together and the results can then be used as a teaching resource with other groups and classes.

Michael Brewster goes one step further and has his students videoing themselves, whether for simple vocabulary and pronunciation practice or when they do simulated news broadcasts, celebrity interviews and commercials.

Andrea Storr finds that her business students respond to activities where they represent stages of their careers visually with building blocks. She encourages them to use the 'pictures' they build of their lives to structure their descriptions of themselves.

Ana Lía Passarotto includes ongoing student portfolios in her new course so that her students can actually see the progress they are making, and Gaye Koçer makes the most of flashcards and drawings in the games she plays with her young learners.

Russell Stannard is also well aware of the benefits of showing people something at the same time as explaining it. His short teacher training videos, which demonstrate how to use various aspects of technology, have proved very popular, and here he introduces the screen capture software which he employs to produce these and shows how it can be used to help students with their learning.



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C2	Level 3	ISE IV	–	–	–
Tier 4					
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B1	Entry 3	ISE I	Grade 5, Grade 6	Entry 3	Entry 3
B2	Level 1	ISE II	Grade 7, Grade 8, Grade 9	Level 1	Level 1
C1	Level 2	ISE III	Grade 10, Grade 11	Level 2	–
C2	Level 3	ISE IV	Grade 12	–	–

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A closer look at CLIL

Wayne Rimmer is cautiously critical.

One of the latest acronyms to hit the jargon-hungry field of ELT is CLIL: Content and Language Integrated Learning. Given the voracity with which CLIL has been received and endorsed (for example, it warranted a symposium slot in this year's IATEFL conference), it almost seems redundant to spell out the acronym, let alone explain the basic concept. I will do no more than outline the key features of CLIL before addressing the crucial question of whether it works or, rather, whether we *think* it works; for my chief concern with CLIL as a methodology is the fact that many, often outlandish, claims made for it are simply unsubstantiated. This article will help teachers engage more critically with the arguments made in favour of CLIL.

Definitions

It says much for the novelty factor of CLIL that it is not cited at all in the 2002 edition of the comprehensive *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching & Applied Linguistics*. It is mentioned, briefly, in the fourth (2007) edition of that other classic, *The Practice of English Language Teaching*, but not in the previous editions. A one-sentence definition is found on the (very helpful) CLIL compendium website *www.clilcompendium.com*:

'CLIL refers to any dual-focused educational context in which an additional language, thus not usually the first language of the learners involved, is used as a medium in the teaching and learning of non-language content.'

The key word is *dual-focused*: CLIL is about learning language and content together. Whereas language teachers' aims are usually purely linguistic – eg grammar points or skills work – CLIL incorporates a further focus on learning real-world information or skills, whether that be mathematical formulae, recipes or map-reading. Beyond this core concept of 'language plus subject knowledge', CLIL can actually be interpreted and applied in many ways. There are, correspondingly, a number of variables in the CLIL mix.

Variables

1 Degree of content

There is probably a cline from light to heavy CLIL, depending on how integral the content is to the lesson. For example, a reading skills lesson which incorporates a text about dinosaurs is probably not very dependent on how much of a new perspective into prehistoric life the learners get. In contrast, a science lesson where the learners need to read a circuit diagram and build a radio will not work unless they understand the logical system described.

2 Depth of content

Some subjects are more cognitively challenging than others. One would hardly teach primary school children about Brownian motion.

3 L1/L2 balance

CLIL definitely does not preclude the use of L1 and translation. Indeed, at lower levels of L2 and with younger age groups, L1 is encouraged, either to explain difficult content areas or to manage the tasks. If L1 allows the learners to take on more challenging concepts, it is an asset.

4 Involvement of subject specialists

Language teachers are trained to be just that, teachers of language. They are not fountains of all knowledge. When CLIL gets technically more demanding, typically at tertiary level, teachers will need to collaborate with subject specialists.

5 Curriculum fit

CLIL may determine the whole learning programme or it may just be part of a more varied diet, which includes traditional discrete language lessons.

Claims

There is obviously a lot to think about in CLIL, so teachers should not undertake it lightly. On a practical level, switching to CLIL could mean a great deal of extra preparation, especially in the early uncharted stages. Teachers need to be sure that CLIL gives their learners a significant advantage in the classroom. The following benefits of CLIL are often cited.

1 CLIL is intrinsically motivating.

Few learners are interested in language per se. Yes, there are people who drool over the past continuous and fantasise about phrasal verbs, but they are probably mainly confined to dusty corners of university libraries! Most learners want English in order to do something, for example understand a pop song or fill in an application form. CLIL gives a rationale for the language, which is based on function not form. In

this sense, the aim of a lesson is transparent because its outcome is directly observable in what the learners know or can do afterwards.

2 CLIL makes language more meaningful and memorable.

Content is a natural context for language. Context provides a framework for the learners to organise their thoughts and makes the linguistic analysis fuller. It is claimed that by operating on two levels, language and content, simultaneously, learners' cognitive skills are enhanced.

3 CLIL is better preparation for outside the classroom.

There are very few scenarios where language learning is purely an academic activity with no real-life applications. The learning of content makes language immediately relevant and puts the learners in a position where they can practise life skills in a low-risk environment.

4 CLIL develops autonomous learning.

The enhanced challenges posed by CLIL over a pure language approach compel learners to draw on their own resources. For example, a class geography project may involve assigning different roles to the learners and may encourage a degree of independent investigation.

This is an impressive, yet far from exhaustive, list. Certainly, CLIL has what testers call *face validity*, ie it makes all the right noises to the various stakeholders in the curriculum. Also, there is nothing like an acronym to give instant respectability. The chorus of approval for CLIL is reassuring and it is tempting to join in, but a note of caution should be sounded. In an age of increasing accountability, and let's not forget that there is a global economic crisis, teachers have to be extra careful that what they offer students is a good return on their time, and perhaps money. It is time to have a critical look at CLIL.

Much has been written about CLIL, but the evidence for its effectiveness in second language acquisition is meagre

Evidence

Does CLIL work? This is the million-dollar question. Given the very different environments in which teaching and learning take place, this is a very difficult matter to investigate, let alone prove. There are so many variables to consider – age group, level, learning styles, materials, to name just a few – that it is very problematic to isolate approaches or techniques which give an edge in the classroom. The enthusiasm with which CLIL has been adopted would thus make one assume that it draws upon an exceptionally large and meticulous research base, one that accounts for and explains the diversity of factors involved. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Much has been written about CLIL, but the evidence for its effectiveness in second language acquisition is meagre. What evidence there is amounts to little more than anecdotal *'it worked for me'*.

This is not to say that CLIL doesn't work. There are probably plenty of teachers who swear by CLIL, and individual language learners who have made great progress in CLIL classrooms. However, until somebody can explain *why* CLIL works and *how* it is better than other approaches, such testimonies are of little interest outside the immediate concerns of the teachers involved. The very fact of progress is not enough to justify CLIL. After all, throw a bunch of people into any classroom with any type of instruction and eventually, like the proverbial monkey writing Shakespeare on a typewriter, the result will be an increase in competence. Whether CLIL makes this process quicker, with a better end product, can only be hypothesised without a solid research base.

Despite this weak empirical foundation, several strong claims are made for CLIL. Do Coyle adds the following to the more general features cited earlier:

- *Developing thinking skills which link concept formation (abstract and concrete), understanding and language.*
- *Exposure to alternative perspectives and shared understandings, which deepen awareness of otherness and self.*
- *Introducing learners to the wider cultural context.*

Clearly, CLIL is seen as extending beyond language, and content, to larger socio-cognitive goals. As a purported bridge between pure language development and the wider skills necessary to function both as an individual and as a member of society, the impression is that CLIL kills many birds with the same stone, so to speak. However, the individual claims made are yet to be backed up. For example, with 'thinking skills', it is by no means clear what these consist of, whether/how they can be measured, and how exactly they are promoted by content-based instruction. Too much is being assumed. For example, there is a fierce debate in philosophy and linguistics over the independence of a language module from general cognitive faculties. Hence, the implication above that language operates separately from cognition conveniently smoothes over an issue which is actually very problematic. In short, the claims made do not reflect the depth or complexity of the issues concerned. Such lists of value-added features are common in the CLIL literature, but there is little to suggest they are more than assertions.

One suspects, and the verb cannot be stronger, that CLIL could succeed in the right context with the right people

To be fair, CLIL practitioners are realistic about the lack of hard evidence. For example, Sheelagh Deller and Christine Price's recent resource book of CLIL activities admits that *'there are a number of claims made for the advantages of CLIL, although it is difficult to substantiate them'*. On the other hand, there is nothing to disprove CLIL either. It could work. One *suspects*, and the verb cannot be stronger, that CLIL could succeed in the right context with the right people. Unfortunately, this weak conclusion does nothing to distinguish CLIL from virtually any other methodology.

Innovation

Part of the appeal of CLIL is that it is new. This novelty factor may make us more tolerant of the holes in the case for CLIL. For example, to counter the above section, CLIL probably needs a

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A closer look at CLIL

few more years to get going before it can accumulate some meaningful research; Rome wasn't built in a day and all that. Just as we are usually harsher on adults than children, so we can make allowances for fledgling methodologies. However, is CLIL really so original and cutting-edge? The basic concept of content plus language actually has a long history in ELT. For example, with children emigrating to English-speaking countries there have been two approaches with heavy content components. The first, 'sink or swim', was to put children in classrooms alongside native-speaking peers. There was no real provision for language; the focus was exclusively on curriculum subjects. The second was immersion programmes, whereby children similarly experience a full curriculum in English but with a (very variable) degree of language support and specialist teaching. In both programmes, and their many mutations, content is top of the agenda, with no suggestion that language is secondary. CLIL practitioners would respond that in CLIL the match between content and language is more systematic and controlled. This may be true compared to the sink and swim days, but it is much harder to distinguish between immersion programmes and CLIL, indeed most would see immersion as at the heavy end of the CLIL spectrum.

Turning to adults, the long interest in teaching and assessing English for Specific Purposes has made content very much part and parcel of ESP programmes. Dan Douglas provides many practical examples of how testers and subject specialists can work together to produce valid tests. It is a well-established principle of ESP that content and language complement each other, often with the line between them hard to draw. On a micro-level, it is difficult to see how a CLIL lesson would differ in design principles from an ESP lesson. Again, the onus is on CLIL to show the distinction.

As such, CLIL really has little new to offer other than the repackaging of familiar ideas and principles in a broader and slicker package. Indeed, there is something slightly patronising in the CLIL assumption that language teachers ignore the value and potential of content. On a very basic level, teachers often work with texts. These texts are about something. Their content can be talked about and exploited. It is hardly a great jump from this observation to CLIL. One of the reasons why skilled teachers take such care in choosing and exploiting materials is that they understand the tight relationship between good content and good language learning. Ironically perhaps, the basic message of CLIL is so attractive precisely because it is already commonplace.

While CLIL may not be the manna promised, the interest it has generated should have some valuable consequences

Acceptance

This article should not be seen as a dismissal of CLIL. For example, the lack of empirical evidence is not damning. I think most teachers of the communicative approach would shudder to realise how scanty the theoretical support is for even this very well-known and well-established methodology. The fact is that much of what we do in the classroom is driven by hunch or intuitive feeling. Even when hard data exists, our attitude to research is very ambivalent. We tend to ignore what we disagree with and seize on anything which confirms our previous behaviour. A classic case of this odd relationship between research and classroom practice is corpus linguistics. For all the furore of the corpus revolution, it is often pointed out (eg by Anne O'Keeffe and colleagues) that corpora have very little impact on what language we teach. That said, teachers must be wary of adopting methodologies, CLIL or others, that make promises on the flimsiest of data. Students are not guinea pigs and teachers have a professional responsibility to make informed choices about how their students are taught. Teachers should at least be aware that CLIL represents a leap in the dark rather than the giant step forward often envisaged for it.

Anything that makes teachers reflect on classroom practice is useful and CLIL should at the very least do this. While CLIL may not be the manna promised, the interest it has generated should have some valuable consequences. It may be that some of the relatively under-emphasised aspects of CLIL turn out to be the most rewarding. For instance, as Guy Cook points out, the recognition of the role of L1 in the classroom can be seen as part of a larger movement towards reinstating translation as a method in language teaching; the considerable demands of disentangling content and language in CLIL assessment may have backwash for establishing construct validity in ESP.

★ ★ ★

The CLIL story is set to run and run so I suggest teachers keep pace with the latest developments while following at a cautious distance. ETp

Cook, G 'An unmarked improvement: using translation in ELT' In Beaven, B (Ed) *IATEFL 2007 Conference Selections* IATEFL 2008

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'Now I know my reading texts are right for my students – *before* I use them! Thanks Oxford!'

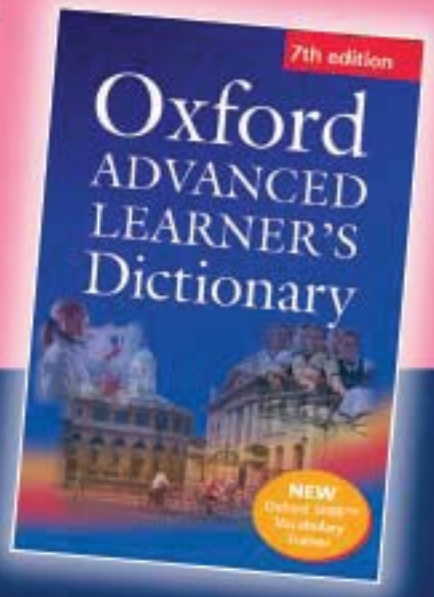


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I loved this book!

Siân Morgan recommends reading and writing short reviews.

One thing that puts teachers (and students!) off in-class writing activities is the time and effort required to produce a piece of written work. Finding an engaging topic, generating content, organising ideas and drafting these into a coherent whole can sometimes last several lessons. The activity described here, however, can be completed in a single lesson and gets students writing texts which are brief and, at the same time, personally engaging. In doing so, they develop awareness of the language of evaluation and the typical discourse features found in an increasingly popular genre: bookshop recommendations.

Sample recommendations

If you browse the shelves of bookshop chains in Britain you will notice small cards with mini book reviews of around 30–50 words. Some have been professionally printed for marketing or information purposes, but others are handwritten by sales assistants or customers who want to recommend a good read to fellow booklovers. I was sure that the students I teach would enjoy reading these and it would be very motivating for them to write one for themselves.

I made a collection of reviews from various branches of Waterstones between 2006 and 2008 by asking sales assistants for any spare copies or transcribing interesting examples on display. (You could also photograph them and transcribe them at home.) I included fiction and non-fiction, and new books and more familiar texts, which students might recognise from their school or private reading. I then made a collage of these cards and photocopied it onto A3 paper (see page 9).

These reviews – ranging from 14 to 44 words – are complete texts in discourse terms, in that they sum up the 'essence' of the book reviewed and make a recommendation to the audience to read it for themselves. They are also rich in collocation, chunks, evaluative language and intertextual references. Lower-level students will need help to identify these features, whereas higher-level students may enjoy spotting the reference to Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (no 8), memorable vocabulary items such as *harrowing* (no 4) and *underdogs* (no 9), or persuasive collocations such as *the coolest dude ever* (no 7) and *explosive combination* (no 10). Each teacher knows how much to adjust the amount of scaffolding for their particular class.

Sample lesson

(This lesson could begin with a brief class warm-up to discuss reading tastes.)

Phase 1: Focus on meaning

Distribute the collage. Ask the students to read the reviews and discuss in pairs the following questions

Do you know any of these books? If so, did you enjoy them? How much do you agree with the reviewer's comments? Are there any unfamiliar books here that you would be interested in reading? Why/why not?

Phase 2: Focus on language

Working with the whole class, get the students to identify the persuasive language in no 1: words or phrases where the writer comments on the book and persuades readers to read it themselves. Here there are two chunks: *[he] has gone right back to his horror roots*, and *Action right from the word go!* which occurs at the end of the text as a 'final flourish'. Ask the students to explore the other reviews and find other examples. End with a class feedback session.

Phase 3: Write a mini-review

Distribute some blank 'I loved this book' cards and ask the students to write their own short review of a book they have enjoyed. Set a word and time limit. Circulate to answer queries and monitor accuracy if necessary.

Phase 4: Share reviews

Circulate the reviews so that each one is read by each member of the class. A feedback session where the students ask questions about books which interest them or comment on those they have also enjoyed can be enormously valuable. In my experience this is the part that the students particularly like as they bond over favourite books.

There are some examples of my students' work on page 10, together with a blank 'I loved this book' card for you to photocopy.

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'I loved this book' works on several levels:

- First of all, a short writing task is accessible and works well with classes of different ages and levels, since younger or lower-level students can use the model reviews to help them produce a successful text.
- Secondly, giving students control over the choice of book to review increases their motivation, and they genuinely enjoy reading each other's reviews.
- Finally, writing a persuasive text like this can be a gentle introduction to discourse awareness, as students get a feel for language features that occur typically in different text types and genres.

Most importantly though, students are encouraged to share a love of reading which, in the long term, can only enhance their literacy skills. ETp



Siân Morgan teaches English at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia in Italy and is also a Cambridge ESOL oral examiner. She is particularly interested in second language writing and computer learner corpora analysis.

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I loved this book! • Personal recommendations

1 **_Cell_ by Stephen King**

I was doubtful about reading this book after King's *Dark Tower* series, but with *Cell*, he has gone right back to his horror roots. A pulse turns all mobile phone users into zombies, but zombies with a collective mind. Action right from the word go!

2 **Edgar Allan Poe: *Illustrated Tales of Mystery and Imagination***

If you thought Poe was scary before, wait till you see this gruesomely illustrated edition of his work. Warning: Not recommended for bedtime reading.

3 ***The Blade Itself*: Joe Abercrombie**

This is a stunning debut novel and Part One of Abercrombie's *The Blade Itself* series. With a style and a plot that really grip you and memorable characters that you actually care about, this book stands out from the crowd.

4 ***The Beach:* Alex Garland**

When a trip to paradise goes wrong, boy does it go wrong!
Garland's beautiful and harrowing tale of a group of travellers who live on a secluded island is full of psychosis, murder and betrayal.

5 ***Ghosts of Spain* by Giles Tremlett**

Make the most of your Spanish holiday with this fascinating history and journey around one of Europe's most interesting and complex countries. Highly recommended.

6 ***The House of the Spirits* by Isabel Allende**

A magical-realist masterpiece, which spans four generations of one South American family. It touches on all subjects and has a vast cast of eccentric characters.
One of my all-time favourite reads!

7 ***The Great Gatsby* by F Scott Fitzgerald**

Great is an understatement. Gatsby is a god, a legend – in short, the coolest dude ever. He has it all – looks and wealth – but his mission is to win the one thing missing from his decadent life: Daisy. The jazz age has never been so divine.

8 ***The Name of the Rose*: Umberto Eco**

A book by any other name would smell as sweet, but would it be as full of Eco's excellent prose style? Better than the film.

9 **Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte**

A story of hardship and enduring love through the classes. One for the underdogs.

10 ***The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne**

A powerful tale of love and passion, which explores how the condemnation of society can break hearts and minds. An illegitimate birth and 17th-century Puritanism make an explosive combination.

We loved these books! • Student reviews

1 **Title:** ***Harry Potter and the Deadly Hallows***
Author: **J K Rowling**
Review: Awesome! Enter the wizarding world and discover J K Rowling's amazing style. Tons of great adventures and magical challenges are waiting for you in the last episode of this fantastic saga. Don't miss it!

2 **Title:** ***GRIMM'S FAIRY TALES***
Author: **Brothers Grimm**
Review: In bringing to life a host of unforgettable characters such as Tom Thumb, the Frog-Prince and Cinderella, the Brothers Grimm created a feast of stories to stimulate the mind and the emotions of readers of all ages. As popular today as they were when they were first published, these stories should find a place on the bookshelf of every home. They represent part of our heritage and culture and are an essential part of every child's imaginative upbringing.

3 **Title:** ***Il Cacciatore di Aquiloni***
Author: **Khaled Hosseini**
Review: The greatest fault of this novel is that, no sooner have you started reading, you'll have already finished it. A magnificent portrait of the last 30 years of history in Afghanistan, told through the eyes of a child growing up. A book that stirs strong emotions and allows us to imagine stunning backgrounds and settings. Unforgettable …

4 **Title:** ***Alice in Wonderland***
Author: **Lewis Carroll**
Review: If you're curious ... if you love laughing ... if you're grown-up but not too much and you're still able to be led by imagination ... and if the idea of being catapulted into a nonsense world doesn't worry you, then you can't miss this opportunity!

5 **Title:** ***The Alchemist***
Author: **Paulo Coehlo**
Review: An astonishing beautiful magic tale about a shepherd who leaves everything to follow his dreams. For people who need to dream again.

6 **Title:** ***The Picture of Dorian Gray***
Author: **Oscar Wilde**
Review: At times dark, this tale reveals the weakness of human beauty and what lies beyond it. A great read for a dark winter night.

7 **Title:** ***Not Waking Up Dead***
Author: **Viniccio Capossela**
Review: A book that opens your mind towards aspects of life that you have never thought about. Even better if you read it against the musical background of Capossela's songs.

8 **Title:** ***WUTHERING HEIGHTS***
Author: **EMILY BRONTË**
Review: A wonderful book about the strength of true love, which survives and overcomes any kind of obstacles. The dialogue between Catherine and her housekeeper, Nelly, makes it worth buying the book simply because of the touching words she uses to describe her love for Heathcliff. A novel full of contrasting emotions: love, passion, revenge and hate, which will surely touch you.

9 **Title:** ***Two of two***
Author: **Andrea de Carlo**
Review: Two friends, two choices, two adventures. The difficulty of living in the contemporary world and the search for new values. A story of a wonderful friendship written by the brilliant pen of Andrea de Carlo.

10 **Title:** ***Stranger than Fiction***
Author: **Chuck Palahniuk**
Review: From the author of the famous *Fight Club*, a powerful collection of tales about the strangest aspects of America's society. Palahniuk, with his rude and often brutal style, makes a critical analysis of the 'American way' through articles straight to the point. America's society has never been so naked before.

I loved this book!

Title:

Author:

Review:



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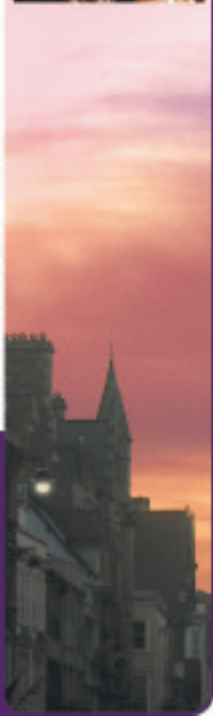
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Quality English

They talk more, you talk less

Susan Doran tackles too much teacher talking time.

In the majority of ELT classrooms, the skill of speaking is often the most coveted, yet it can be a challenge to get your students actually speaking to one another for any length of time. Many factors will influence their willingness to speak, including their cultural background, previous learning experiences and the material which forms the main body of the study you do together in class.

Although some of these ideas may not be new to you, I hope that many of the suggestions below may inspire you to promote speaking in your own skills-based classes. I have divided the topics into sections for each major skill to be practised.

Good luck maximising student talking time (STT) and minimising your own teacher talking time (TTT), especially if you are relatively new to teaching in this field.

Speaking skills

1 Always start a lesson with a chatty warmer

Example: Get the students, working in pairs or threes, to plan a lunchbox. They should decide on the main food, drink, snack and sweet items and include something healthy.

Relevance: If you get all the students engaged in a chatty, personalised activity during the first five minutes, it breaks the ice and establishes in their minds that you are a teacher who wants them to talk. Keep class feedback to a minimum after such an activity otherwise the pace might drop.

2 Use 'signal prompts' for discussions

Example: Ask the students to work in groups of three or four and to discuss a topic or series of questions on the board. Each student takes a set of signal prompts, which they must use and then throw into a central pile whenever they want to contribute to the discussion. To prepare for this, make and laminate sets of prompts along the lines of those listed below. If you make identical sets in different colours, it is easy for the students to collect their own group's prompts again at the end of the topic before starting a new topic.

Prompts:

- *Can I say something here?*
- *I disagree because ...*
- *How about you, [name]?*
- *Actually, what I think is ...*
- *What about ...?*
- *I think ...*
- *In my opinion ...*
- *What do you think, [name]?*
- *According to ...*

Relevance: This technique prevents one student dominating and encourages quieter ones to contribute to the discussion at some point; it gives everyone a launch pad into the forum.

3 Recycle recent vocabulary by voicing it

Example: Divide your class into two teams and invite them up to the board with a scribe in each team. Divide the board in half and tell the teams to get the scribe to write as many new words from the last two or three lessons as they can. All team members make suggestions. The first team to reach ten words wins; alternatively, see how many they can get in five minutes. Then after they have sat down again, encourage them to use each word in a sentence with a partner. If they like, they can elicit a definition from their partner by asking *What does … mean?* You may like to divide the board up into six numbered sections. The students can roll dice to select a section to choose a word from.

Relevance: This is a good warmer or filler activity. The more the students use the vocabulary, the more they remember. This activity gets passive vocabulary into active usage and aids longer-term memory of each item, too.

Top speaking tips: **Always use prompts written on cards or on the board to keep discussions flowing. Play some background music during speaking activities. This needs to be relatively non-intrusive, and suitable for creating an atmosphere which makes speaking out loud feel less vulnerable and threatening for the students.**

Listening skills

4 Pre-teach vocabulary actively

Example: Put the students into pairs. Student A has a list of target words with stress/phonemic pronunciation marked. Student B is told a word and runs to find the correct definition from a set previously pinned up around the room. B then runs back, and dictates the definition to A. Student A can then dictate both the word and definition to their partner so that both of them have a copy.

Relevance: TTT can dominate when pre-teaching vocabulary, especially if it's largely unknown language which would be difficult to elicit anyway.

5 Anticipate, share and speculate

Example: Always lead in to a listening text with visuals or a brainstorm, having the students talk about the topic in pairs or small groups if possible. For gap fills, always read through the whole text first and discuss together the possible type of word or actual word for the gap. Always share and compare answers between two playings of a recording.

Relevance: It's highly likely you do this already, so this may just be a reminder to anyone who skips ahead without allowing peer feedback.

6 Encourage the students to become interested in listening to others

Example: Get the students into the habit of asking follow-up questions. This can be initially set up with prompts and dice. Write the numbers 1–6 (as dice cubes) on the board, with *Who*, *What*, *When*, *Where*, *How* or *Why* next to each number.

When the students ask a partner questions, eg from a coursebook, they must throw the dice after they have heard the answer and make a further question beginning with the corresponding prompt word on the board. Alternatively, you could have the question words on laminated cards in an envelope for the students to pick at random in order to ask their follow-up questions.

Relevance: Students seem content to be minimal in the way they answer questions, but this encourages interest and responding to open-ended questions. It's a good way of extending coursebook material.

Top listening tip: **When students are going to encounter an unusual name or a place in a listening text, be sure to familiarise them with it first. An accompanying visual such as a photo or map can also aid comprehension at lower levels.**

Reading skills

7 Make vocabulary pre-teaching student-centred

Example: After a brief lead-in to the topic, let the students scan an article or text quickly and each choose four words they want to know the meaning of. Then put them into groups of three or four (not pairs) and ask them to see if the other students can define the words they want to know. Monitor here for ill-defined words. Then ask them to swap groups and see if others can define words they still don't know. Finally, write any remaining unknown words on the board and explain their meaning to the class.

Relevance: This works best at intermediate levels and above; it gives the students a greater sense of responsibility and keeps TTT suitably low.

8 Sometimes use a mutual dictation

Example: Change all or part of your text into a mutual dictation (see the example below). You may wish to do this with just the first paragraph as it is quite time-consuming to prepare. Then put the students in pairs to do the dictation. Be very careful with your instructions since it's not that easy to grasp at first. Stress that each person follows the pattern speak–write–speak–write, etc. After doing the dictation part, the students can chat in their pairs to predict the rest of the text before you supply it for them to read on.

Relevance: A mutual dictation is often highly motivating and gets the students practising all four skills at once. It is also good for spelling and pronunciation practice.

Student A

A mutual dictation .... text which is shared .... They take it in .... and speak.

Student B

.... is a piece of .... between two students. .... turns to write ....

9 Do a running dictation

Example: If you have no time to prepare a mutual dictation, pin up part of the text, clear away any obstacles, and put the students in pairs: a runner, who has to memorise parts of the text, and a scribe, who writes down what the runner dictates. Alternatively, if the text you are going to read is long, give them the text itself but get them running for the comprehension questions they need to answer on it, which are clearly numbered and pinned up around the room.

They talk more, you talk less

Relevance: Reading can be a very quiet part of the lesson; this brings some action into it.

Top reading tip: **Always let pairs compare answers and chat together after a quiet time of reading alone to find their own answers. Then conduct a brief class feedback session.**

Writing skills

10 Do a class chronology

Example: How you organise this activity* depends on your class size. You could split up a large class into groups of up to ten people. Choose as many years as there are students in the class, eg for ten students, use the last ten years. Get them to note down quickly an event or activity which happened in their own life in each year. Then designate a year per student. They interview all the others in their group and make notes on each life. Finally, on coloured paper, they write up the class history for that year and pin their accounts up around the room. Give everyone time to read these; they will then have more launching points to ask each other further questions about interesting incidents.

Relevance: This activity takes quite a time, but is a form of process writing and can be very motivating if you display the results. It's also very personalised. (Note: it probably won't work with young children.)

11 Use picture prompts for a group composition

Example: Put the students in groups of three or four with one shared notepad and a designated scribe. Using a series of picture prompts – for example, cut-out pictures from a magazine or downloads from the internet – each student suggests a sentence in turn to create a story and the scribe writes a paragraph. Then another person becomes the scribe and the story continues.

Relevance: This can help to balance over-dominant and rather shy students so that they contribute reasonably equally.

12 Reformulate a text in a different genre

Example: Get the students to do some analytical work about the format, register and likely content of a piece of text, eg a newspaper article or a letter to a friend. Then give them a short text and ask them to reformulate it in a different genre, such as changing an article into a chatty letter or a film review into a news report. The students can add extra information for creative interest – the main point is to try to stay true to the new genre.

Relevance: This is useful at higher levels for appropriacy awareness and may be of interest to students doing the Cambridge ESOL FCE, CAE or Proficiency exams.

Top writing tip: **Display the students' texts in the classroom and invite everyone to read them and pencil in any peer correction before you take in the work and check it. This puts responsibility on the students and encourages peer cooperation and speaking as they discuss whether or not correction is really needed.**

* I am indebted to Alan Harry Hall and Ben McDonald for this particular idea.

★ ★ ★

Many of the suggestions described here require little preparation and few materials. A small number need slightly more careful preparation. However, all are designed to get the focus and responsibility off you, the teacher, as soon as possible, going straight into maximum STT. Your role, once the students are up and running, is to sit quietly, perhaps with some notepaper and a pen, and listen out for examples of excellent language and a few mistakes. You can then spend a few moments of class time doing a 'praise and correction' slot after the activity to round things up. ETp



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HELBLING LANGUAGES

One classroom, many worlds 2

Alicia Artusi and **Gregory J Manin** explore the use of real-world resources.

In the first part of this article, in Issue 63 of ET*p*, we outlined the four worlds that can be brought into the classroom to broaden the students' language learning experience. These were *the world around* (the students' immediate environment), *the world inside* (the inner world of emotions, past experiences, needs and interests that make up the individual), *the world outside* (the wider world, including other countries, knowledge areas such as science, mathematics, history and literature, and the realms of philosophy, belief and speculation) and *the classroom world* (the world of the teacher). It is these last two that are the main focus of this article.

1 The world outside

Students are already very aware of the importance of learning English. Amongst other things, they use the internet, play computer games, interact in virtual worlds, listen to and sing songs in English, buy trendy portable gadgets with instructions in English and watch English movies. Most of them feel attracted to English-language culture and many would like to study in an English-speaking country. They may play sports of American or British origin and wear clothes with slogans or logos in English. In recent research, teenage students in Brazil claimed that they were most interested in learning about different places in the world, their customs and other cultural aspects. So, why do students appear to 'switch off' in English classes when there are plenty of reasons to suggest that they should be highly interested and motivated?

Challenge

The 'real' world is outside the classroom.

It takes some extra time to bring the world outside into the classroom because it needs research and presentation of new vocabulary. However, if we can make students realise the power of mastering English for understanding the world outside, they will clearly see the importance of learning the language.

Suggestions

- Link the coursebook unit topic to other subjects. Get in contact with teachers of other subjects like geography, biology, literature or history. There's always someone you have empathy with in the staffroom and who will be willing to share a cross-curricular project or discussion with your students.
- Invite a guest to the classroom. An outside specialist who demonstrates an occupation or craft or shares their work experience can add a new dimension to the 'flat' world of language learning.
- Ask your students to bring personal things from home, such as CDs, magazines, photos, movies, books, pins, iPods, etc to class. They are easy to carry and represent the students' lives and interests. Incorporate these into a lesson whenever possible. For example, have the students explain what they like or don't like about their particular mobile phone, what model they would like to have and why, when they should and shouldn't use a mobile phone, how to operate a particular device, and so on.
- Teach reading and listening comprehension, writing and speaking skills in a way that will help your students deal with the outside world on their own. Deal with simple learning strategies, such as classifying information, using key words, imitating, taking notes, summarising, using previous linguistic knowledge and knowledge of the world, etc. Ask the students to notice in their daily lives when they would use certain English structures, then have them report to the class.

2 The classroom world

Bringing other worlds to the classroom means educating the students by cultivating their intelligences and helping them in their personal growth. English can be the key to entering multiple worlds. The teacher's role is far more important than just covering the syllabus. Teachers are educators, filters to absorb the worlds outside and guides to help the students to decode these worlds.

Challenge 1

I have no time.

The only drawback to bringing different worlds to the classroom which is worth mentioning might be time constraints. However, if you feel this is an approach to teaching the language that you believe in, you need to give it space in

your curriculum. Careful planning and a good balance of the target language points and the topics that may arise will help with time management.

Suggestions

- Plan carefully what to include in the curriculum. Covering more language points can mean that you do them in less depth and take a more superficial approach. While forward-planning is important, it is also vital to be flexible. If you see that your students have an easy grasp of a language point or topic, don't belabour the point, but take it as an opportunity to move outside the syllabus and bring new worlds in.

- Realise that you don't need to enlarge, discuss or add music to every unit or topic. Go through the material and see which parts of your material will benefit from adding some other elements or starting with another approach. Be ready to shorten or simplify parts which, in spite of being a mandatory element of the course, are less relevant or interesting to your students.

- Show your syllabus to a colleague or coordinator in order to share views. This doesn't take much time, and it is very useful to listen to an outsider's point of view. In our experience, teachers who teamwork with their colleagues never want to work on their own again. Sharing ideas and approaches, swapping material, CDs, and so on, is one of the keys to bringing different worlds into the classroom.

Challenge 2

I have a large chaotic class.

Some teachers might be sceptical about how effective breaking down the walls could be, especially in large chaotic classrooms. However, in our experience, discipline is not an issue if you are patient enough to wait for the students to realise your class is meaningful and relevant.

Suggestions

- Train your students to change seats and partners. Students tend to be reluctant to change seats and work with other students in the class. They also usually make a lot of noise and waste time while rearranging their seats. Challenge them to change seats fast. Set a time limit in which everyone should be ready and holding their material. Explain the importance of working with different people. Soon, this routine will become a habit.

- Encourage cooperative work. Students can be very competitive, but also very cooperative. Give them the chance to share their strengths and work on their weaknesses by working in cooperative groups of four or six students. You can assign different roles (reader, materials handler, recorder, time keeper, illustrator, presenter, etc) within the group or you can allow them to do so themselves, profiting from the fact that they know each other very well.

- Foster autonomy. Encourage the use of the vocabulary lists and grammar charts in the students' coursebooks. Train them to use dictionaries in class and at home. Teach them the language of instructions so they can do assignments when you are not there to help. Train them in strategies so they can understand difficult material globally without calling for help. Time spent covering the basics of coursebook instructions and teaching students to use the tools and resources available to them will pay off by giving them confidence and the ability to follow their own language-learning path.

Challenge 3

I have no resources.

Simple elements can bring the world outside into the class: a map, a photo, a CD, a magazine, an article from the internet, a book, etc. If learning English becomes an important subject at school, you will soon get a better budget or help from parents and authorities. Also, students will be more than willing to bring in materials to share with the class when they realise that their contributions are made use of and appreciated.

Suggestions

- Bring a box to the class and label it 'Resource box'. You and your students will soon collect plenty of useful and relevant material to be used in the class: brochures, photos, articles, paintings, comics, songs, etc.

- Exploit your school's facilities. The computing lab, the gym, the music room, the garden, etc can all be good resources for teaching. By changing their environment, you can give your students opportunities to change the kind of activities they do, ask for the meaning of new words, and 'break down' the classroom walls by using resources which are already there.

★ ★ ★

Finally, you have probably realised that by involving different worlds in your lessons, you are catering to the different language levels, intelligences, interests and personalities in the class. You are also encouraging cooperative work and learning about the world through English. In other words, you are incorporating a wide variety of methodologies and approaches that, in the abstract, seem complicated and daunting, but when put into practice are really useful, commonsense tools. Letting other worlds into your classroom will make your teaching as challenging, varied and, at the same time, controlled as you could have hoped, and the rewards will be visible in the engagement, dedication and gratitude of your students. ETp





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Making a photo novella

Gary Collins gets his camera out for a fun project.

Getting students to create their own teaching materials has several benefits. Not least, in these days of financial crisis, it makes sense from an economic point of view. However, I don't believe it is merely a way of saving teachers time and money. I regard it as a much greater investment: by doing the same tasks as my students – doing their exercises while they do mine – I provide humanistic support to them, and it means I am prepared for any questions they might have.

The project outlined below involves getting the students to write and put together their own photo novella (see page 19 for an example of one produced by my students). This involves quite a bit of planning and preparation (not least, putting together one of your own, to use as an example) but it has benefits in encouraging the students to work cooperatively and provides practice in all the key skills areas. Once one group of students has produced their story, you can use it with other classes to motivate them to do likewise or for reading and comprehension work.

Getting ready

To do this project, you will need a digital camera (I used a Canon Power Shot S50 with 7 mega pixels). You will also need to be proficient or semi-proficient with *Word 5* or later editions of the software. Finally, you will need a printer which can make colour prints and overhead projector (OHP) transparencies.

Getting the students interested

Go into the classroom announcing that you are going to read a photo novella together. (If you have students above the age of enjoying such things, tell them that you want to investigate why these stories are regarded as contrived and clichéd.) Then get all the students to sit around an overhead projector. Some may be reluctant; tell them they will learn some useful English which they can use 'out there' in the real world. Display the first part of a photo novella which you have prepared in advance (instructions below) on the OHP and ask the students to read it. Eventually, after all the sniggers have subsided, put them in pairs and ask one student in each pair to tell the other what they have understood in their own language. Do not emphasise any particular target language structure: the point is simply to get them motivated to speak. Ask several individuals to describe the plot in English: 'ostracised girl meets hero', or whatever, while you supply or highlight any words you want them to remember, or any facts you would like to emphasise. Then give them the rest of your story, telling them that, again, they will have to tell each other what they have understood. Note that weaker students can always refer back to the OHP for help.

Finally, tell the students that they are now going to make their own photo novella. If they are still sceptical about the genre, point out that they can make their story as ridiculous and corny as they like.

Starting the students off

- Put the students into groups of four or five and tell them to work together to invent the outline of a plot for a photo novella. Allow plenty of time for this and be prepared to go around the groups helping with vocabulary and ideas. Reassure them that it is not very difficult to do.
- Get each group to create a central character for their story. This person should be human and about their own age. When they have decided what their main character is like in terms of personality, looks, etc, ask them to create another character (again, human and around their age). Finally, get them to create a third character; this one could be human, a pet or an object but if it is an animal or an object, it must be something that can be brought to school. Even if the students lack creativity, establishing three basic characters usually works well for creating a coherent story.
- Ask the groups of students to work on a storyboard for their photo novella. This involves creating a quick sketch of each scene of the story with speech bubbles and captions on one or two pages and is a useful group writing and drawing exercise.
- Take in the stories and correct them, helping the students to create a final readable version.
- In the following lesson, read out all stories and get the class to vote on which is the best one – and the one that you will all work on to turn into a photo novella.
- Choose a scriptwriter (someone creative or someone you trust to be effective). Sit down with the scriptwriter and work out a script for your shots and the text for your balloons. As an experienced teacher, you will know that although you can't fill this time for the rest of the class with equally exciting work, you need to have something to keep them going and to set you free for the editing task: some exercises, an interesting text to read, an article on the latest comic or whatever. Choose students to play the characters in the story and

assign other roles (someone to be in charge of props and costumes, camera operator, director, etc).

Taking the photos

This is the most sensitive stage of the project and you must make sure that everything runs smoothly. Check that the battery of the camera is fully charged and that new batteries are on hand in case of failure. Make sure that there is sufficient room on the memory card to take a large number of photos. You will need to take several shots of each scene as even bad pictures may prove handy later on. Ensure that the students know where each photo will be taken. Remind them that they must bring any props that they need.

Assembling the novella

Your students may well have advanced computer skills which will enable them to assemble their photo novella themselves, or at least assist as you put it together. If not, you will have to get used to handling all kinds of graphics within a *Word* document yourself, but you will benefit greatly from this as it is a useful skill for any teacher to have! Follow this basic procedure:

- Up-load all the photos onto your computer and put them into a new folder.
- Open a *Word* document and insert your pictures by choosing *Picture* from the *Insert* menu. Move them around, positioning them in a logical order to tell the story
- Speech and thought bubbles are called 'Callouts' in *Word*. Find them on the *Drawing* toolbar under the *View* menu. Click on the shape you want and then drag your mouse near where you want it to appear on the photo. You can type inside the bubble and resize and reposition it as you wish. Add speech and thought bubbles where required, to complete the story. ETp



Gary Collins teaches English and history in Basel, Switzerland. He studied theology, English literature and history in Basel and has written stories for his students, which are so far unpublished.

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GRAMMAR

Phrasal verbs? They're easy! 3

John Ryan takes up the challenge of verbs that take *up*.

In Issue 63 of ETp, I used a single keyword (*contact*) to explain phrasal verbs with *on*. With those that take *up*, there are three possibilities:

1 The direction ↟
2 *Creation* or *death*
3 'The road to perfection'

Verbs that take *up* probably comprise the biggest group of phrasal verbs. For this reason, we will look at the first two potential meanings in this issue and then examine the third in Issue 65.

1 The direction ↟

Though they may not be phrasal verbs, learners encounter many verbs of movement with *up*. For example, *walk, swim, climb, come* and *go*. If the context suggests movement, eg *he walked up the hill*, *she ran up the stairs*, the meaning of the verb will be ↟. This is an ideal starting point for the learner, where they can translate literally.

More figurative meanings can also occur, however. In phrases like *She ran up a pair of curtains*, *something came up*, etc, *up* should be seen as something other than ↟ due to context.

When introducing the preposition, start with movement and then move down the figurative path towards phrasal verbs, always focusing on context.

2 *Creation* or *death*

With *creation*, the idea is that something is beginning; we are at the start of something. *Death* is the end; something stops. So, you can think of *up* as *creation* or *death* – or *starting* or *stopping*. It all depends on your viewpoint. For example:

*I **woke up** at seven o'clock.*
When you wake up, something is starting and something is stopping at the same time. Your sleep ends and your day begins. Therefore, the verb *wake up* can be seen as being both *creation* and *death*.

There are other verbs which can be seen in both ways:

*Last year, I **gave up** smoking.*
Starting or stopping? Again, both. The moment I give up smoking, the dirty habit ends and a new clean healthy life begins. Again, creation and death.

*I **broke up** with Mary.* Are you an optimist or a pessimist? It depends on your perspective. I can say that the moment I break up with her, the relationship ends. It's death to the relationship. Or my new single 'Mary-free' life begins!

*We **made up** after the fight.*
To *make up* with someone is all about rebuilding a relationship after a fight has ended. It's about starting again. It's about creation.

*He **turned up** late.* A little more difficult, this verb, but still both creation and death. It means to arrive. What happens just before you arrive? The journey. And when you arrive, the journey ends. Death. And when you arrive at the party or the meeting, it begins. Creation.

While the above verbs suggest both creation or death, starting or stopping, depending on your own perspective, the following verbs are more obviously one or the other.

When someone says *I **hung up** the phone*, I see this verb as being more the end of something. I see it as being death. However, if a learner says it is creation (ie the beginning of life off the phone), I will never disagree with them. They use the system only as a guide and they are never wrong!

*Coca-Cola was **set up** in 1886.* Coca-Cola was created in 1886.

*He **lit up** a cigarette.* He **began** smoking. Creation.

*I **took up** tennis in school.* Again creation; I began playing tennis.

What about the verb *throw up*? *I drank so much beer, I **threw up** in the car.* Creation or death? Well, obviously I could say it's creation: I've created something horrible on the floor of the car! Another way of looking at it is that the moment I throw up, the pain stops. It's the end of pain.

Sometimes we can use phrasal verbs formally:

*I'll **draw up** a contract for tomorrow.* Here, I'll write the contract. I'll create the contract. Creation.

Still on the subject of creation, a lot of things are created in the kitchen:

*She **cooked up** a feast last night.* (the *up* is not necessary in this sentence), or if you want to create something quickly:

*You relax and I'll **rustle up** something to eat.*

Earlier, I mentioned *making up* with someone. But the verb *make up* has several meanings, all creation.

*I **made up** an excuse.* I created an excuse.

*He's always **making up** stories and jokes.* He's always creating stories and jokes.

There is of course also the idea of ***make up***, the stuff that people put on their faces, but that is covered in part three, *the road to perfection*, which I will deal with in the next issue.

*I was talking to the boss the other day and your name **came up**.* Your name was mentioned. Creation. We began to talk about you.

*I can't go to the party as something has **come up**.* Here, you could see it as the beginning of something new, or as death. Something that stops me carrying out my original plan.

That's it. Time's up! More *up* in the next issue when I will look at verbs where the meaning of *up* suggests 'the road to perfection'. ETp



John Ryan is the Director of Studies at Delfin School of English, Dublin, Ireland, and believes that the English language is accessible to all learners as there is an underlying logic, which exists even in the most idiomatic of phrases. Bringing this logic to the learner is his goal in training.

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Playing with vocabulary

Gaye Koçer suggests some language learning games.

> *'The more students use their language skills for enjoyment, the more language ability they are likely to acquire.'*
> (Julian Edge)

My 14 years of teaching English were full of joy, excitement and interest – until I tried to teach a class of 25 six year olds for four hours of English every week. Our coursebook contained big colourful pictures of various objects and my main aim, and that of my fellow first-grade teachers, was to familiarise these young learners with English vocabulary and to promote the formation of a positive attitude to language learning in general. I soon realised that it was unrealistic simply to present the new words to the children in their colourful book and expect them to remember them all. I tried different ways of presenting the new vocabulary, such as using flashcards and bringing actual objects to class, which worked quite well. However, the following problems still arose:

1. The children forgot the new words very quickly.
2. They were not always able to use the new words.
3. They were reluctant to participate in the lessons and soon lost motivation.

As I was new to teaching such young learners, I decided that I needed to learn more about them. I started by learning about their likes, dislikes and characteristics.

Children's characteristics

Teachers of young learners need to know what children at the same level as their students are capable of doing. Wendy Scott points out:

'Learners of five to seven years old:

- ★ *can talk about what they are doing,*
- ★ *can tell you what they have done or heard,*
- ★ *can tell you what they think,*
- ★ *can use their vivid imagination,*
- ★ *can understand direct human interaction,*
- ★ *can understand situations more quickly than they understand the language used,*
- ★ *have difficulty in knowing what is fact and what is fiction,*
- ★ *cannot see things from someone else's point of view,*
- ★ *cannot decide for themselves what to learn,*
- ★ *have a very short attention and concentration span,*
- ★ *seldom admit that they do not know,*
- ★ *are enthusiastic and positive about learning when they are praised and constantly motivated.'*

As young learners are subject to rapid mood changes and often find it difficult to sit quietly, teachers need to be creative in finding a large variety of activities that will interest them.

Playing with vocabulary

Moreover, as children in the very early stages of primary school education may not be able to read and write, teaching needs to be based mainly on listening and speaking. Games seem to represent the most fertile area for activities that will work well with young children.

Children's games

When deciding on what games to use in my classroom, I was influenced by Piaget, who defines the stage that children in primary school are usually at as *'the concrete operational stage of cognitive development, meaning that they learn through hands-on experiences and through manipulation of objects in the environment'*. I also found support from Vygotsky's theory of the zone of proximal development. He asserts that *'children learn in social contexts, in groups where some group members know more than others. This principle suggests that children need not only hands-on or direct experiences, but also experiences where they are interacting and learning both from adults and other children'*.

The thing to be kept in mind is that the teacher needs to interact with the children in English as much as possible, making use of what Krashen calls 'comprehensible input' and using English that is related directly to the activities in which the children are engaged.

As Fawui points out, it is important to *'try to avoid the frustration that can result from [students] not being able to make appropriate responses a game may call for ... The teacher should work out beforehand what language items are likely to be needed in the course of the game so that it can be played with maximum success and enjoyment'*. Besides, enabling learners to communicate with each other, using teams and groups helps to reduce the individual pressures of competition, which can be discouraging for shy learners.

Note: When playing games, don't forget to use expressions like *please*, *thank you*, *very good*, *great*, etc, to show respect to the students, to encourage them more and to make them feel secure. Praising students for what they have done and accepting whatever they say and correcting it later will help to create a safe class atmosphere and give the children a sense of achievement.

1 Flashcard game

1 Put the students in groups of five and hand out flashcards with animal pictures at random. There should be several flashcards for each animal.

2 Tell the students that when you imitate the sound of an animal, eg a dog, those students who have pictures of dogs have to hold up their cards and call out the name of their animal. They then move seats so that all the dogs are sitting together.

3 After finding the other members of their group, the children with dog cards say loudly *We like dogs!*

4 Repeat with the other animals until all the children are sitting in the correct animal groups.

2 Memory game

1 This game is based on concentration and memory. You will need two identical sets of cards with pictures of animals. Mix up the sets and lay them face down on the floor or table.

2 Tell the children to take turns to turn over two cards. If the cards match, the child who turned them over must say the name of the animal and can then keep the cards. As it is not a competition, you will find that they will cooperate and some kids will shout *'No, no, that's the cat!'*.

3 Envelope game

1 For this game you will need a big envelope and some animal flashcards (or flashcards of some other topic you are teaching). Cut eight 'windows' in one side of the envelope with one edge still attached so they can be opened or closed. Write the numbers one to eight on the flaps of the windows. Put the flashcards in the envelope making sure that one part of each animal can be seen through each window.

2 Ask the students in turn to choose a number. Open the corresponding window and ask them to identify the animal from the small part that can be seen. (To make the game more enjoyable, use a puppet to ask the questions to the children and open the window.) If the answer is correct, say *'Very good [Ayse], thanks'* and encourage everybody to applaud. If not, say *'Sorry Ayse, maybe next time'*. Another child can then choose another window and see if they can identify the animal. Once an animal has been guessed, remove that flashcard from the envelope and start again with the next one.

4 Listen and match

This game is adapted from one described by Wendy Scott. It acts as a listening comprehension exercise where the children have to place the right food in front of the right animal while listening. It enables them to revise the topics of food and animals.

1 Give each student a sheet of paper with a picture of four animals sitting at a table and another sheet with food pictures on it. Ask them to cut out the different food pictures before they start to listen.

2 As they listen to the text, tell them to put the correct food pictures in front of the animals mentioned. The text should be read slowly and should be matched to the level of the learners.

Example text: *Rabbit Timmy is very very hungry. He wants carrots, milk and cake. The cat, Mrs Ginger, likes toast. She wants toast, butter and tea. Mr Hiss, the snake, is not hungry so he only wants an egg. Little bird Jim likes hamburgers very much. He wants two hamburgers and a coke.*

To make the task more enjoyable, the text can also be read by the class mascot or puppet as if it is talking about its friends.

5 Going fishing

This is a game recommended by Helena Curtain. We play it using the floor as the 'pond' so the children can all see whether their classmates are successful in catching and naming the fish. My students not only enjoy the fishing part, but also the excitement of getting more fish than the others when they know the correct answers.

1. Put numbers, colours or pictures of new vocabulary items (animals in our context) on small paper fish with paper clips attached to them.
2. Give each child in turn a fishing pole with a piece of string and a magnet attached to the end. They use this to 'catch' a fish. If the child can say the number, colour or the word represented by the picture, they can keep the fish; if not, the fish goes back into the 'pond'.

6 You decide!

Although in this game the language limits are decided by the pictures, the pupils still decide for themselves which colours and animals they are going to use. They also have the chance to revise the words for colours.

1. Put the students into pairs and give each student a sheet of paper with some black and white animal pictures on, ready for colouring. Tell them not to show their pictures to their partners and have them sit opposite each other with a book or a bag between them so that they can't see their partner's sheet accidentally.
2. Student A asks Student B *What colour is the dog?* Student B chooses a colour and answers, for example, *It's blue.* Then they colour the picture of the dog blue. It is then Student B's turn to ask about another animal.
3. The asking and answering goes on in turns until all the pictures are coloured. When the game is over, the students in each pair should end up with two identically coloured sheets. If they do not, then it highlights anything that is wrong with their colour or animal vocabulary.

7 Listen and draw

1. Give each student a sheet of paper with the same basic picture of a farm on it. This picture should not contain any animals as the children will draw and colour them according to your description.
2. Present the picture to the learners by pointing to the objects in it so that it is easier for them to comprehend. Encourage them to listen to what you say and to add colours and animals according to your description. For example:

   This is Uncle Sam. Uncle Sam is a farmer and he has got a farm. Today the weather is very nice and Uncle Sam is outside. The sky is blue. (Wait until the children have coloured the sky blue.) *There are two birds in the sky.* (The children draw the birds.) *His house is brown.* (The children colour it in.) *Uncle Sam has got a lot of interesting animals. On the farm there is one red cat.* (The children draw and colour the cat.) *The cat has three ears.* (The children adjust the number of ears.) *There is a big horse ...*
3. When you have finished, compare the pictures and praise the children for their work.

8 Concertina book

This activity can be used when the students are familiar with reading and writing. Preparing books about topics which the students like really keeps them motivated and active.

1. Give each student a long sheet of paper and show them how to fold it in a zig-zag to produce a number of 'pages'. Ask them to draw and colour simple pictures of the animal you describe (a blue cat, a red fish, etc), one on each page.
2. Tell them to write what you said below each picture. At the same time, write it on the board.
3. Show the students how to fold their books together. The books can be held together with a paper clip.

★ ★ ★

I did manage to motivate my classes and overcome the reluctance of the children to participate in my lessons. The following things helped me to achieve this:

- ★ Keeping the characteristics of young learners in mind;
- ★ Making sure that English was used in each game;
- ★ Providing maximum opportunities for the children to participate;
- ★ Adding elements of cooperation, suspense and a little competition;
- ★ Adapting games to my students' level;
- ★ Stopping the games at a point when the class still wanted more;
- ★ Not repeating the same games too many times.

In addition, I found that the students were able to remember and use the new words easily. ETp

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Page 26
Advertising

Over the wall ...



Alan Maley has some suggestions for reading about reading.

Given that this series of articles is about the kinds of reading teachers can do outside their professional interests, it seems appropriate to review a few titles which touch on the nature of reading itself. I will discuss five non-fiction books, one memoir and two novels, all of which have reading as a central theme.

Non-fiction

Alberto Manguel's monumental *A History of Reading* is a must for anyone interested in how reading evolved. He deploys an impressively encyclopaedic knowledge with elegant eloquence. Virtually all aspects of the history of reading are covered: how it moved from reading aloud to silent reading, from the elite to the masses, from orality to text, from scholastic to individual, from literal to allegorical/interpretative. *A History of Reading* ranges over the physical shapes of books, the places people have read in and how, the power of scribes, the role of libraries, censorship, the author as public reader, the translator as reader, and much more. The opening chapter, 'The Last Page', is a highly evocative account of the author's own reading history. Altogether, this is a wonderful book, packed with fascinating anecdotes and reflections – and beautifully illustrated.

Daniel Pennac's *The Rights of the Reader*, in a seamless translation from French and wittily illustrated by Quentin Blake, is a humorous yet serious attack on the negative effects of institutional (mis)education, which condemns kids to a hatred for books. It is a passionate plea for restoring pleasure to reading without the paraphernalia of set texts, questions, tests, mandatory discussion, etc, and is a celebration of the love of books which good teachers can offer their students. Pennac sets out ten 'reader's rights': the right not to read, to skip, not to finish a book, to read it again, to read anything, to mistake a book for real life, to read anywhere, to dip in, to read out loud and to be quiet.

It is full of quotable quotes and relentless common sense: an iconoclastic delight.

The Power of Reading by Stephen Krashen describes the research which unequivocally supports the central role for Free Voluntary Reading (FVR) in L1 and L2 language acquisition. It goes on to suggest ways in which this can be done: through better access at home and in libraries, reading aloud, strong reading experiences ('home-run' books!), through offering models, time and encouragement. In the final chapter, he deals with the reading–writing connection, and dismisses the fear that TV will eradicate reading.

On a more autobiographical note, and echoing some of the concerns of Pennac, Nancie Atwell describes how she gets seventh and eighth graders in Maine hooked on reading. *The Reading Zone* is a wise and compassionate book, full of unpretentious, practical advice on how to engage kids with books. As she says, *'The processes of story reading are so subtle, so fantastic, so quicksilver and simultaneous, that we can't account for them, measure them, test them, or teach them. We can only give kids great books and time to get lost in them, then be grateful … .'*

The most recent of these books, Maryanne Wolf's *Proust and the Squid*, opens with the words *'We were never born to read'*. It is divided into three parts. In the first, she investigates the history of writing systems as ways of encoding phonetic, graphic and semantic information, along with the ways existing brain functions had to adapt to the complexity of the interconnected processes involved in reading by creating new neural pathways. In the second, she takes us through the stages a child goes through in learning to read, the 'natural history' of reading, from the emerging pre-reader, to the novice reader, to the de-coding reader, to the fluent comprehending reader and finally to the expert reader. This is both an informative and a deeply moving account, bringing

Over the wall ...



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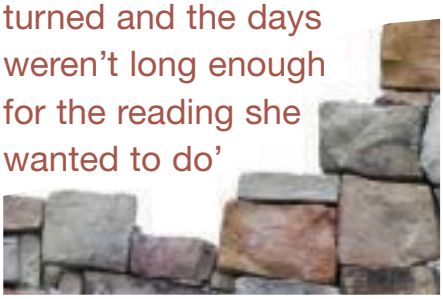
together detailed explanations of neural connections in the brain with sensitive quotations from literature which express something of the mysterious and wonder-full nature of the reading process. In the third part, she explores what is happening when the brain does not learn to read. Her detailed analysis of the multiple sources of dyslexia is both compassionate and clear.

One of Wolf's preoccupations is the effect of internet culture on reading: *'What is being lost and what is being gained for so many young people who have largely replaced books with the multidimensional "continuous partial attention" culture of the internet? What are the implications of seemingly limitless information for the evolution of the reading brain and for us as a species? Does the rapid, almost instantaneous presentation of expansive information threaten the more time-demanding formation of in-depth knowledge?'* She quotes Edward Tenner: *'it would be a shame if brilliant technology were to end up threatening the kind of intellect that produced it'*. This is not to say that she is hostile to the internet but her questions, like those of Socrates when he condemned the transfer from oral to written culture, are of great significance. This is a truly marvellous book, combining the 'how' of science with the 'wow' of wonder and delight of an aesthetic appreciation of the miracle of reading.

Memoir

In *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, Azar Nafisi recounts her experiences in the Tehran of 1995–97. She has resigned her post at the university in protest against the enforcement of the strict Islamic dress code. For those two years, seven of her students meet in her flat every Thursday to discuss English literature and the way it intersects with their lives under a totalitarian, fundamentalist theocracy. They discuss *Lolita*, *The Great Gatsby*, *Daisy Miller* and *The Ambassadors*, and Jane Austen, and in doing so form a confederacy of readers who find in books consolation from the humiliations they suffer, courage to resist and subvert the pressures they are under, and hope in the face of the despair that surrounds them. Nafisi's comments on women's rights, politics and education are an inspiration. *'A good novel is one that shows the complexity of individuals, and creates enough space for all those characters to have a voice: in this way a novel is called democratic – not that it advocates democracy but that by nature it is so.'*

'... one book led to another, doors kept opening wherever she turned and the days weren't long enough for the reading she wanted to do'



Fiction

The Reader by Bernard Schlink is perhaps better known in its Oscar-winning film version, but the book is, if anything, even more powerful. The love affair between the 15-year-old Michael and the 30-ish Hanna includes the ritual of him reading aloud to her before their love-making. It is only years later, when he sees Hanna on trial for Nazi atrocities, that Michael realises she is illiterate. Rather than admit this, she takes responsibility for the war crimes and goes to prison. There can be few more telling cases for the power of literacy, or its lack, than this book.

Alan Bennett's *The Uncommon Reader* is a whimsical fantasy in which the Queen of England accidentally discovers the joys of reading. Bennett uses the Queen to scatter some pearls of wisdom about reading. For example:

'What she was finding was how one book led to another, doors kept opening wherever she turned and the days weren't long enough for the reading she wanted to do.'

'... but briefing is not reading. Briefing is terse, factual and to the point. Reading is untidy, discursive and perceptually inviting. Briefing closes down a subject, reading opens it up.'

'Pass the time?' said the Queen. 'Books are not about passing the time. They're about other lives. Other worlds. Far from wanting time to pass ... one just wishes one had more of it.'

'A book is a device to ignite the imagination.'

Bennett's writing is gently satirical and sometimes wildly funny. I wonder if the Queen found it as entertaining as I did! There is a delicious sting in the tail, which I will not reveal, as the Queen decides to progress from being a reader to becoming a writer ...

'I wonder ... whether as professor of creative writing you would agree that if reading softens one up, writing does the reverse. To write you have to be tough, do you not?'

★ ★ ★

Just to round off, if you want to share your reading with others, try *www.bookcrossing.com*, a way of passing on books you have enjoyed to other people. Also relevant is *www.erfoundation.org* for information on Extensive Reading. Enjoy your book!

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Start building

Andrea Storr joins the construction business.

I first came across the idea of using building blocks when I was teaching at an international residential language school near Ambleside in the English Lake District. I saw another teacher preparing her first lesson with a group of 12 high-profile corporate students from Sweden and Poland, and asked if I could observe her class. The only material she was going to use was a large box full of very simple, thin, wooden building blocks, no bigger than about 15 x 3cm. Not only was that lesson one of the most inspiring I'd ever seen, but it also made me think very carefully about my own approach to the teaching of business English.

All work and no play?

Business English, compared to general English, is still widely associated with more serious learning. Students often join business English classes with unrealistically high expectations, due to pressure they put on themselves or pressure from their company, superiors and colleagues. Yet, the difference between general and business English is much smaller than most students believe. The particular and contextual needs of business students are different but, fundamentally, all students share the same aim – to develop their ability to communicate successfully. Once they have mastered the basics and reached a certain level of fluency, they usually also have the confidence to adapt their skills to more specific situations and purposes. Teachers need to provide business students with what they need, but they are equally responsible for creating a classroom environment in which students are able to relax and be productive. Job-related reasons for learning English are serious, but who says that the learning itself can't be a little more light-hearted and fun?



> *The particular and contextual needs of business students are different but, fundamentally, all students share the same aim*

Why building blocks?

Not many students are aware of how stress affects their learning, some aren't aware of their stress at all, and those who are tend to want to work even harder. Most students need some form of support to approach their learning with a more relaxed attitude. Introducing something as simple and unexpected as a set of building blocks can be surprisingly successful when challenging a group of tense business students to take their English lessons less seriously. It encourages them to analyse their own expectations and re-consider their goals, shifting the focus from what they *think* they want to what they actually *need*.

The element of play involved in the use of building blocks goes beyond that of games or roleplays. There is something so elemental about putting a set of blocks together that most students associate the activity with some long-forgotten childhood experience. The basic skill of using them puts all students on an equal par. That, in turn, helps break down barriers within a

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Start building

class, be they based on age, nationality, profession or status within a company. Many students thrive on the novelty factor, and the element of surprise soon diverts their attention from their own thoughts or worries to the task at hand. Also, building blocks are visual and tangible; they can be physically moved and re-moved. This adds a non-verbal means of communication to any activity using them, which lower-level students in particular often find reassuring when trying to express themselves.

How do they work?

The following lesson plan is based on activities I frequently use with my business students, often with new classes. They have worked well with a variety of students of different levels and nationalities, and are not dependent on either job or position.

This is my life ...

You will need about 10–15 building blocks (wooden or plastic) for each student in your class. Their size doesn't really matter, though bigger ones are easier to handle and more visually effective. I also always have a supply of good monolingual dictionaries.

Stage 1

Put the students into pairs and explain that they're going to take turns to tell each other about their respective job histories – from the time they left school, to their present job and future career ambitions. Encourage them to take their time and to ask each other plenty of questions. With younger students who have had little or no work experience, focus on school and education as well as their ambitions/dreams for the future. If your students have neither had much experience nor appear to have any ambitions, encourage them to talk about their present job, their responsibilities, daily routine, colleagues, etc.

Your role at this stage depends on the level of your class and your lesson aims. With lower levels, I usually monitor from a distance and allow the students to speak freely. I listen in quietly and help out when they need help with new words or get stuck on grammar. The activity includes the past, present and future, and might be an opportunity to assess your students' understanding of grammar, either as a tense review or, with a new class, as a needs analysis. With higher levels, I often circle around and pay attention to individual students, challenging the strong ones and supporting the weaker ones. I also take notes, with the aim of spending some time on new vocabulary and whole-class error correction at the end of the lesson.



Stage 2

When a pair has finished, give them a set of about 30 building blocks. Explain that they're going to use these blocks to re-create their partner's career path. In other words, they're going to lay out blocks to represent visually how they see their partner's job history. How they want to do it is up to them, but they need to take it in turns and they have to supply a commentary while they're doing it (to illustrate their moves and to show their partner they've understood all information correctly). Some students are naturally imaginative and launch straight into it, others need a demonstration first. In that case, try to remember parts of that pair's conversation (but don't worry if you don't – have a good guess instead and let your amused students supply the rest!) and show them how it's done:

'So, this is Karl (put down a block) ... when you left school in 1989, you didn't know whether to take a year off or go to university (attach two blocks to the first, facing in opposite directions) ... you decided to go to university in Stockholm (put a block next to or on top of the one representing the option of university) ... then you ...', and so on.

Make sure there's plenty of table and/or floor space for each pair's creative output.

I don't usually get involved at this stage, but observe quietly, taking mental or written notes of the students' performances:

- How well did they listen or how much did they understand?
- How fluent is their speaking, how good their knowledge of appropriate vocabulary?
- What kind of mistakes do they make?
- How often do they correct themselves?
- How good are their conversation/social skills?
- How do they take turns or interrupt each other?
- Do they show interest in what their partner says?
- Are they aware of rules of politeness?

Stage 3

When the students have finished, put each pair together with another pair (in the order they finish, so as not to rush students who need more time). Ask them to look at each other's building block 'pictures'. What information can be gleaned from them? Encourage each pair to piece together information on the job histories of the other pair, from the way the blocks are arranged and from asking questions. The aim is to open up the information exchange and to use the students' 'art work' (of which many students are very proud!) as a stimulus for extended communication. Particularly with higher levels, the pictures tend to act as springboards to more natural conversation, with students sharing experiences or discussing job-related topics.

Depending on time and the enthusiasm of your students, either re-arrange the pairs and repeat the activity, or allow the students to mingle freely amongst each other and the pictures, joining and re-joining in conversations.

Stage 4

Try to leave at least 10–15 minutes at the end to round up the lesson. I usually give the class a handout with new theme-related language that I noted down during the lesson and then photocopied.

iStockphoto.com / © Bonita Hein

I might also do some whole-class error correction on the board, and/or briefly address issues such as interrupting politely or voicing opinions, useful topics for follow-up lessons. You'll probably find that your students naturally comment on the activities. Encourage their feedback, positive and negative. Give them the opportunity to analyse expectations (their own and yours) and help them redefine their goals. This lesson is most likely to 'set the scene' for how you conduct, and want your students to approach, further lessons.

What if my students are sceptical?

'I haven't come here to play childish games!'

'What has this got to do with business?'

'This doesn't improve my English, can't we just talk?'

Some students are quick to voice their scepticism for a number of reasons. They might feel exposed, because they've been taken out of their comfort zone (the expected) and thrown into the deep end of 'creative freedom' (the unexpected). They're at a slight loss and become unsure of themselves. Others consider such trivial activities an insult to their intelligence. Interestingly, it's often the most sceptical students who are also the most insecure and those who put themselves under the most pressure. That's why they have to be dealt with sensitively. Respect their doubts and criticism, because there are reasons for it that we, as teachers, have no right to question. It's easy to get annoyed with such students, as their behaviour clearly demonstrates a lack of confidence in you as their teacher. Yet, all they see are the building blocks, not your pedagogical motives, and as far as they are concerned, they didn't ask for this.



Usually there are two types of sceptical students. There are those who raise an eyebrow at the beginning of the activity, but are still willing to participate. All they need is a little time to adjust and come round to the idea. Once they've started, they often surprise themselves and relax into it. Give them a big, encouraging smile and ask their more willing-looking partners to start first, in the hope that their enthusiasm rubs off. Then there are those – of a very rare type – who flatly refuse to have a go, either straight away or half way through. At this stage, don't argue your case. Be positive and respect their wishes. If they refuse as a pair, offer them alternatives. Would they prefer to draw their career paths as a chart, for example? Or would they like to present each other's job histories as a mini-presentation to the rest of the class?

> *Working with building blocks offers a refreshing change, not only to students but also to teachers*

If only one student is difficult, organise for their partner to join another pair to form a group of three, and take the student to one side. Find out exactly what the objections are, but do so gently. Don't challenge the student any further or enter into an argument. Instead, reassure them that the method is pedagogically sound, and explain how you feel it can help improve their English. If they change their mind, let them join a pair. Allow the pair to continue with what they're doing. The student can either get involved or simply watch. Explain that when the pair has finished, they are going to interview the third student and lay out their career path. If the student doesn't change their mind, ask them to prepare a mini-presentation to give to the rest of the class, to be done as part of that lesson or, if preferred, at a later stage.

Still, why building blocks?

Working with building blocks offers a refreshing change, not only to students but also to teachers. It introduces new dynamics to a lesson, as students themselves supply most of the material. The lesson is based and builds on the students' own personal worlds of work, not on those of other people taken from, for example, coursebooks, videos or articles. Students are 'forced' to take an active role, which, in turn, allows them to develop their skills within a meaningful context and at an individual level.

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Building blocks are versatile, and their use is limited only by the creativity of the teacher. Over the years, I have included building blocks in lessons on:

- presenting a company (ie laying out a company's organisation, explaining the roles of departments or a student's role within the company)
- company processes (ie illustrating the movement of goods/materials through the production process)
- preparing and simulating a factory tour
- practising turn-taking and interrupting politely during meetings and/or negotiations (ie signalling one's intention to speak)

With a little imagination, building blocks can be whatever you or your students want them to be – people, buildings, departments, countries, products, machines, food, options, decisions, signals, telephones. There might be sides to your business students you have yet to discover.

So why not have a go and start building? ETp

Special thanks to Liz Cooper and Tim Melling at Nab Cottage – English Language in the Lakes in Ambleside – for the inspiration to start building.



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Advertising

Practise what you preach

Jeremy D Slagoski describes the experience of adapting his teaching to his ideals.

Before coming back to the United States to teach English for Academic Purposes, I worked as a teacher trainer for English as a Foreign Language in Japan, Russia and Korea. My field was EFL methodology with emphasis on improving learners' speaking and listening proficiency. With that background, I thought I was well equipped to teach at an intensive language programme at university level. I looked forward to this new path in my career for several reasons. Most importantly, I wanted to put my favoured theories, which I had taught and demonstrated, into practice. I also felt a need to rediscover the language learning classroom firsthand – as opposed to being a non-participating observer – and to reacquaint myself with English language learners, especially those at the lower end of language proficiency. Lastly, this opportunity would be the first for me to observe the differences between teaching EFL and teaching ESL. I believed that this experience would make me a better educator for language learners as well as language teachers, especially if I could practise what I preached.

I wanted to put my favoured theories, which I had taught and demonstrated, into practice

Preaching to practice

The two language teaching approaches that I have the most experience and belief in are content-based instruction and task-based instruction. These two approaches fall in line with my personal philosophy of education, which most resembles experiential learning. After teacher training for four years, I gained a lot of confidence through research, classroom observation and simulated trials of these approaches.

Content-based instruction

Whilst in Korea, the approach I was most familiar with was content-based instruction, which I was required to implement in my training courses: training teachers to use content-based instruction themselves, while simultaneously using it myself to improve their language skills. In Russia, I travelled around the Volga region giving demonstrations of content-based instruction to English teachers.

According to Donna Brinton, the principles for content-based instruction are:

1. *Base instructional decisions on content rather than language criteria.*
2. *Integrate skills.*
3. *Involve students actively in all phases of the learning process.*
4. *Choose content for its relevance to students' lives, interests, and/or academic goals.*
5. *Select authentic texts and tasks.*
6. *Draw overt attention to language features.*

It is difficult for me to stray from these principles as they enabled me to deliver

successful lessons in both Korea and Russia. I found added strength in my teaching ability when I combined content-based with task-based instruction.

Task-based instruction

Where content-based instruction helped me make decisions on what to teach, task-based instruction helped me make decisions on how to deliver that content. In my first full-time teaching job in Japan, the central task was the roleplay. In Korea, the central tasks were summarising and personalising the content. In Russia, task-based instruction was my most popular teaching demonstration because my trainees could instantly see the results. This teaching approach strongly appealed because the organisation of the approach, as expounded by Jane Willis, was simple. She divides tasks into six types, as follows:

1 *Listing*
2 *Ordering and sorting*
3 *Comparing*
4 *Problem solving*
5 *Sharing personal experience*
6 *Creative tasks.*

By organising tasks in this way, from simple to complex, I can vary each class. With students at lower proficiency levels, the majority of my classroom tasks are at the lower end, whereas with higher-level students, the majority of classroom tasks are at the higher end. I also like these types of tasks because using a wide variety of them keeps the students interested and motivated.

Experiential learning

Experiential learning ties in content-based and task-based instruction. I will briefly clarify this while going through David A Kolb's list of its characteristics.

1 ***'Learning is best conceived as a process, not in terms of outcomes.'*** This coincides with task-based learning. Using the language to perform the task is often more important than the end result of that task.

2 ***'Learning is a continuous process grounded in experience.'*** This relates to the fourth principle of content-based instruction listed above.

3 ***'Learning is a holistic process of adaptation to the world.'*** This principle coincides with integrating the skills (holistic process) while using authentic texts and tasks (adaptation). The authentic text and task, for me, is where content-based instruction and task-based instruction intersect.

4 ***'Learning involves transactions between the person and the environment.'*** The roleplay simulation, which is one of my favourite activities, is a good example of this principle as it involves spontaneous discourse in a simulated environment with the objective of stimulating students to use that same language outside the classroom.

5 ***'Learning is the process of creating knowledge.'*** I see this principle echoing the importance of learner autonomy. I always encourage my students to find their own meaning and to reduce their dependence on the teacher's thoughts and ideas.

With this teaching philosophy backed by two tried and true language teaching approaches, I believed I could easily make the transition from teacher trainer to EAP instructor by putting it into practice. However, I encountered a few challenges to my beliefs and previous experience.

Preaching in practice

Before my first semester started, I received my teaching schedule, consisting of four courses: beginning reading, high-beginning speaking, intermediate reading and advanced writing. After looking at the courses I was to teach, I knew I would have to break one essential principle from content-based instruction that I have never broken before – integrate the skills.

After reflecting on how I could bend rather than break this principle, I realised that with my *speaking* and *writing* courses it would be quite easy. In order for my students to produce the spoken or written language, they would need to listen and read to experience a good model. That reduced my anxiety a little bit as it made course designing much easier.

Reading courses

A challenging start

My two *reading* courses were not as easy to adapt. At first, the solution seemed simple: require the students to write about their reading as well as share their ideas through speaking and listening tasks. I started planning my courses this way until I realised that I was putting more emphasis on speaking and writing than on reading. I had to redesign the courses so the students' speaking and writing would *reflect* their reading ability.

My second challenge (after integrating the skills) was to choose appropriate content. To be fair, my first day's activity involved students choosing texts they were interested in. I had hoped their choices would help me narrow down the content for the course. The most commonly selected texts included a range of diverse topics, such as world folktales, business, American history, literature and sports.

I always encourage my students to find their own meaning and to reduce their dependence on the teacher's thoughts and ideas

I decided to cover as many of these content areas as possible during the first half of the semester. Using the chosen texts, I could easily follow the remaining principles of content-based instruction. My personal goal was to give my students a taste of different reading assignments, which I believed to be excellent preparation for university courses.

About half of the students were ready to face this barrage of texts. The other half were shocked – this was not what their previous ESL reading courses had been like. One bold student protested in class: *'You are supposed to let us read for half the class and then we spend the other half of the class answering comprehension questions.'* However, as I pointed out to her, that is not how most university courses work

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Practise what you preach

because most reading is done outside the classroom.

I employed task-based instruction theory when it came to planning individual lessons. For each text, I would choose two authentic tasks. One task was to read the text and respond to critical thinking questions. The second was to come to class ready to engage in discussion of the text or to give an oral summary of it. This second task was more difficult because the majority of the students had preconceived ideas about reading classes being quiet classes.

> *The students were involved in authentic tasks, speaking in groups and writing individually, as if they were native speakers reading authentic texts*

When it turned out that half the students had a difficult time reading and discussing, I was critical of myself: I thought I had raised the bar too high. To test this out, I gave a few comprehension quizzes. Less than half the students were able to do the quizzes. I looked forward to switching gears in the second half of the semester.

A change of gear

During the second half of the semester, I got my students to read a novel, *The Golden Compass* by Philip Pullman. The class was transformed from 'ESL Reading' to 'Understanding *The Golden Compass*'. Instead of the English language, it was the theme and the characters of the story that dominated the class. In this way, it felt more like a content-based course.

Task-based instruction was utilised every day in that class. The primary task consisted of group discussion on certain elements of the chapters of the day. At the very end of each class, we summarised the key points and went over important vocabulary. Two quizzes were also given and they reflected the lower end of the tasks as opposed to the higher-end daily assignments.

In the second half of the semester, the students were much more relaxed and less confused as they understood the goal, which was to read the whole novel. It didn't really surprise me that a good two-thirds of the class were now passing the course. However, to my surprise, a few students who had been strong readers in the first half of the semester had got lost in *The Golden Compass*. One student later informed me that he never had to read a novel in which he had to follow a large number of characters.

The course ended on a high note when the students watched the film of the book. I gave them the option of writing a comparison-and-contrast essay about the novel and the film instead of taking the final exam, which was to be only about the book. Only a handful of students opted for the exam. Whether they took the exam or wrote the essay, many of the students demonstrated that they were well able to follow the plot and the characters and relate those elements to their own lives.

The most challenging class ended up being the most rewarding one. I had clear evidence that the students had read a text at or above their reading level. And many of them, in their evaluation forms, credited the second half of the semester in helping them develop better reading comprehension and vocabulary.

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To summarise my feeling of accomplishment, I will illustrate how my intermediate reading class matched the philosophy of Kolb's experiential learning:

1. ***'Learning is best conceived as a process, not in terms of outcomes.'*** My students enjoyed the process of reading *The Golden Compass* more than passing the exam.
2. ***'Learning is a continuous process grounded in experience.'*** It was a first experience for all the students to read a novel in English from start to finish.
3. ***'Learning is a holistic process of adaptation to the world.'*** The students were involved in authentic tasks, speaking in groups and writing individually, as if they were native speakers reading authentic texts from across the curriculum.
4. ***'Learning involves transactions between the person and the environment.'*** Although I didn't use roleplays in this specific course, the class often simulated a university classroom where knowledge and opinions of the material were meaningfully exchanged.
5. ***'Learning is the process of creating knowledge.'*** I found evidence of this when the students reacted to the film *The Golden Compass*, both while watching it and later in their assignments. They demonstrated their preferences strongly for the book, with each student giving different and personal examples.

The outcome was a pleasant surprise. I could practise what I preached. ETp

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After two years teaching at the ESL Institute at the University of Wisconsin at La Crosse, Jeremy D Slagoski is now a PhD student in ESL Education at the University of Iowa, USA. He is also a Senior English Language Fellow with five years' teacher training experience in Russia and South Korea.

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Activity corner

Jon Marks offers two photocopiable thematically-linked communication activities with an element of innovation.

Teaching academic writing

In Issue 62, I offered an activity for helping structure written compositions at Cambridge First Certificate level. This time I'm focusing on similar strategies for a higher level and a more academic style. In this area, the three factors which I've found to be the biggest obstacles are:

a) Cultural differences

The style required for successful academic writing in a native-English-speaking environment can be substantially different from the conventions of the student's home country. For example, in some cultures, it is permissible to write in an ornate style which can seem at odds with the crisp minimalism favoured in English-speaking academia. Above all, the structural and organisational conventions may be completely different. Although it would be wrong to suggest that one way is superior to another, students will often have to adopt English-speaking conventions in order to pass exams and gain entrance to English-speaking higher-education institutions.

b) Structuring an argument

The ability to assemble mentally a group of abstract concepts, some of which are contradictory, organise them into a linear argument and then present that argument in a cogent and compelling way is an entirely separate skill from being able to speak English. Yet if our students don't already possess that skill, and are approaching an exam such as IELTS or Cambridge Advanced/Proficiency, they may be looking to us for guidance in this respect.

c) Language tools

Important fixed expressions such as *It could be argued that …* and contrastive structures such as *[point A] Nevertheless, [point B]* may be fairly straightforward to teach individually, but there are a lot of them, and it can be difficult to present them in a digestible way.

The material which follows aims to tackle these three difficulties. (Alternatively, you could prepare a similar handout based on another piece of academic writing suitable for the focus of your class.)

1 Reverse engineering

Preparation: Make a copy of the handout on page 38 for each student in the class.

Method

1 Distribute copies of the handout, and read through the text at the top with the class – the precise method you choose is not important, as long as you avoid a lot of close language analysis at this stage.

2 Focus attention on the skeleton plan under the text and ask the students, in pairs, to 'reverse engineer' the text, aiming to produce a suitable plan for it. Feed back the results, and discuss any interesting points about planning that are raised. Here is a model plan:

Introduction: Agree that computers are being used more in education and give one or two examples.

Body paragraph 1: Learning with computers requires equipment which is not easily available in many parts of the world.

Body paragraph 2: Classroom interaction is better for learning than working alone on a computer.

Body paragraph 3: At school/college we don't just learn subjects, we also learn social and other skills.

Conclusion: Computers will become even more important in assisting learning, but will never replace teachers and classrooms.

3 Discuss the statement in part 2 in order to raise awareness of the cultural expectations involved in academic writing in an English-speaking environment.

4 Ask the students to look for the two types of language asked for and then to report back to the class.

KEY

Some fixed expressions:
it is becoming common for … to … / very far from / with little more than / The notion of / in the foreseeable future. / Another factor to consider is / It could be argued that / in hand / play an increasingly important role / become a thing of the past / it seems likely that / for many years to come

Linking structures:
However, / but … / Even in … / … although …

2 Linking words

Preparation: Copy page 39 and cut it up into individual cards.

Method A

Divide the cards into grey cards and white cards. You will need one set of each for each group of three to five students. Put the students into groups and give each group two piles of shuffled cards, one white and one grey. Tell them to place the grey cards face down in a pile on the table, and to deal out the white cards. The first student picks up one of the grey cards, and reads it out. Whoever has the matching half completes the sentence and 'wins' the grey card.

Method B

Give half your students a grey card, and the other half a white card. Everybody memorises their card, then puts it down. The white-card students remain seated (preferably in a large circle). The grey-card students circulate, stopping by each white-card student and saying his/her sentence half. The white-card student must reply with his/her sentence half. If the halves match, the students sit down together. When everybody has found their match, collect in the cards, redistribute them and repeat. Repeat again as required, aiming to keep things brisk, with each round lasting just a couple of minutes or so.

Method C

Perhaps as a follow-up to method A or B, put the class into pairs, and give each a pile of shuffled cards. The pairs spread out the cards on the desk. Their task is simply to match the corresponding cards to make complete sentences.



Jon Marks is an ELT writer and editor, based in the UK. Recent publications include the *Puzzle Time* series and IELTS Resource Pack (both DELTA Publishing) and three titles in A & C Black's *Check Your English Vocabulary* series. He is currently developing teenager courses for China, and also draws the Langwich Scool cartoon in ET*p*.

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Reverse engineering

***'As computers and Information Technology (IT) become increasingly important in education, teachers and classrooms will eventually become unnecessary.'* To what extent do you agree or disagree?**

I certainly agree that computers are becoming increasingly important in education. It is now possible to study a language online, and it is becoming common for university lecturers to communicate with their students using advanced forms of IT. However, I do not agree that teachers and classrooms will eventually become unnecessary.

In developed countries, computers and internet connections are almost universal, but the majority of the world's population lives in the developing world, where access to IT facilities is very far from universal. A teacher in a remote village without electricity can educate hundreds of children with little more than a box of chalk. The notion of replacing such a teacher with computer equipment seems very unlikely in the foreseeable future.

Even in locations where learning by IT is possible, sitting alone in front of a computer is less motivating and probably less effective than learning from a teacher. A teacher can change the pace of the lesson and give extra help when necessary, making sure that everybody has understood.

Another factor to consider is that at school and in higher education, students learn about more than just the subjects they are studying. In a classroom lesson, young people learn to cooperate and to exchange ideas. It could be argued that developing these skills is actually more important than the specific content of the lesson in hand.

I believe that computers will play an increasingly important role in assisting students and teachers. Students will use the internet for research even more than they already do, and the regular use of paper in education may become a thing of the past. However, although developments in IT will continue to change the way teachers teach and students learn, it seems likely that the traditional classroom lesson will remain a major part of education for many years to come.

(307 words)

1 Write a plan for this essay. Write around 10 to 20 words for each paragraph.

Introduction
Body paragraph 1
Body paragraph 2
Body paragraph 3
Conclusion

2 Discuss this statement.

'The style of this essay is exactly the same as the usual style of academic writing in my country.'

3 Look for these methods of writing in an academic style.

How many *fixed expressions* can you find?

How many uses of *linking words* to contrast two ideas can you find?

Linking words

Although dogs are nice, …	… I prefer cats.	**Even though** cats are nice, …	… I prefer dogs.
Despite the high cost of vets' bills, …	… it's not expensive to keep a pet.	Dogs are actually more intelligent than cats. ➧	➧ **However**, cats often seem more intelligent than dogs.
While cats may sometimes seem more intelligent than dogs, …	… dogs are **in fact** considerably more intelligent than cats.	Cats are easier to look after than dogs. ➧	➧ **On the other hand**, dogs are usually better company than cats.
Even when they're asleep, there seems to be something going on in dogs' minds. ➧	➧ Cats, **however**, seldom give that impression.	It's not expensive to keep a pet, …	… **in spite of** the high cost of vets' bills.
Dogs are nice, **but** cats ...	... are nicer.	Dogs **may be** better company than cats, …	… **but** cats are much easier to look after.
Cats and dogs are highly efficient killing machines. ➧	➧ **Nevertheless**, millions of people choose to keep pets in their homes.	**Apart from** cats and dogs, …	… there are very few animals suited to living in human homes.

PREPARING TO TEACH ...
Future time clauses

John Potts looks into his crystal ball.

A I'll give you the new contract **when I see** you at the meeting tomorrow.

B You'll meet your new colleagues **while I'm showing** you round the building.

C **As soon as you've received** your password, you'll be able to log into the intranet.

D You'll feel more at home **after you've been working** here for a while.

E We're a bit late. **By the time we get** there, the presentation will have started.

▲ MEANING

All these sentences refer to the future, even though the verb in the **subordinate clause** is in a **present** form.

A I'll see you tomorrow at the meeting + then I'll give you the new contract

B I'll show you round the building + during that time, you'll meet your new colleagues

C first you'll receive your password + then you will be able to log in

D first you'll work here for a while + then you'll feel at more home

E first the presentation will start + then we'll arrive

Note that any **present simple forms** in the subordinate clause **don't** have the meaning of *timetabled or scheduled future events* which is often associated with the present simple as future (eg *The new semester starts in September*).

▲ FORM

All the examples employ a **subordinating conjunction** – *when, after, while,* etc.

A main clause = *will* future; subordinate time clause = present simple

B main clause = *will* future; subordinate time clause = present continuous

C main clause = *will* future; subordinate time clause = present perfect

D main clause = *will* future; subordinate time clause = present perfect continuous

E main clause = future perfect; subordinate time clause = present simple

The time clause can come either before (**C** and **E**) or after (**A**, **B** and **D**) the main clause.

▲ PROBLEMS

In some languages, the subordinate future time clause uses an appropriate future form, generating incorrect sentences like *I'll tell her when I'll see her*.

Some learners may confuse the conjunctions *when* and *if*.

Learners may assume that the form in the subordinate clause must always be a present simple form.

Sentences using a **co-ordinating** conjunction (eg *and*) contain two **future** forms:

***I'll see** you at the meeting tomorrow **and I'll give** you the new contract then.*

▲ USE

Future time clauses are used widely in both spoken and written English. In informal spoken and written language, the contracted form of auxiliary verbs is normally used.

▲ FUNCTION

Future time clauses have a wide range of functional applications, including expressing promises, offers, reassurance, warnings, intentions, plans, expectations and predictions.

▲ TIME FRAMES

Some future time clauses operate in the same future frame: sentences **A** and **B**.

Others relate two different future frames: sentences **C**, **D** and **E**.

▲ PRONUNCIATION

Note the contractions *I'll*, *I'm* (etc) in spoken and informal written English. The verb forms are often quite weak. However, when the sentence functions as a warning or criticism, for example, the verbs may be stressed (eg sentence **E**).

PREPARING TO TEACH ... Future time clauses

▼ CONCEPT QUESTIONS

A ***I'll give you the new contract when I see you at the meeting tomorrow.***
When will I see you? (Tomorrow.)
When will I give you the new contract? (Tomorrow.)

C ***As soon as you've received your password, you'll be able to log into the intranet.***
Are you able to log in at the moment? (No.)
Why not? (Because you haven't received your password yet.)
Will you receive it at some point? (Yes.)
And then? (Then you'll be able to log in.)

E ***By the time we get there, the presentation will have started.***
Has the presentation already started? (No.)
Have we got there yet? (No.)
What will happen first? (The presentation will start.)
What will happen second? (We'll get there.)
So will we miss the start? (Yes.)

▼ SITUATIONS

Combinations Make a worksheet with two columns, each containing eight short sentences, all using a future form. First, ask the learners to make a pair with a sentence chosen from each column. Then, tell them to combine the two sentences into one, using a future time clause for one of the original sentences.

By the time we get there Make flashcards with key words and/or visuals (eg *cinema*, *theatre*, *restaurant*, *party*, *station*, *the sales*, *school*, *beach*, *airport*, etc). Show each card in turn and ask the learners to make a suitable sentence, eg *By the time we get to the station, the train will have left.*

Procrastinator Create some short situations where things need doing (eg *the laundry*, *the ironing*, *cleaning the oven*, *homework*, *making a reservation*, etc – you can revise the vocabulary of household chores). Put each on a card – use key words and/or visuals – and put the cards in a deck face down. Ask the students to work in pairs. Student A turns over the top card and asks, for example, *Have you done the laundry yet?* Student B replies *No, I haven't. I'll do it when/after/as soon as ...* etc. They then change roles.

Ask Anna Create some short letters to a newspaper/magazine advice column, each describing a problem situation. Get the learners to give appropriate advice. For example:

Dear Anna, I've just moved here from the UK, and I'm so lonely and homesick. I can't speak (Italian, Mandarin, etc*) and have no friends. What should I do? Yours, Tina*

Dear Tina, First of all, try to learn a little (Italian, Mandarin, etc*). When you can say a few words, you'll feel more self-confident ...* etc.



John Potts is a teacher and teacher trainer based in Zürich, Switzerland. He has written and co-written several adult coursebooks, and is a CELTA assessor. He is also a presenter for Cambridge ESOL Examinations.

johnpotts@swissonline.ch

COMPETITION RESULTS

15 S		1 V		15 S		25 U			11 B	25 U	2 M	21 P
6 E	18 X	26 I	15 S	7 T	6 E	14 N	13 C	6 E			26 I	
6 E		8 D		6 E		13 C		8 D	12 O	25 U	17 G	9 H
16 K		6 E		24 A	5 L	12 O	14 N	17 G			10 R	
	4 W	12 O	10 R	16 K		2 M		6 E	23 Q	25 U	24 A	5 L
	12 O		9 H			20 F			25 U		7 T	
6 E	14 N	13 C	22 Y	13 C	5 L	12 O	21 P	24 A	6 E	8 D	26 I	24 A
	8 D		2 M			10 R			25 U		12 O	
3 J	6 E	4 W	6 E	5 L		7 T		16 K	6 E	6 E	14 N	
	10 R			24 A	4 W	24 A	10 R	6 E		5 L		13 C
15 S	26 I	19 Z	6 E	15 S		11 B		6 E		11 B		10 R
	14 N			7 T	6 E	5 L	6 E	21 P	9 H	12 O	14 N	6 E
25 U	17 G	5 L	22 Y			6 E		15 S		4 W		4 W



Congratulations to all those readers who successfully completed our Prize Crossword 34. The winners, who will each receive a copy of the *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*, are:

Linda Balistreri, Gdansk, Poland

Vera Bremer, London, UK

Gerti Brindlmayer, Vienna, Austria

Marie Brunet, Coulaures, France

Rita Candotto, Santa Maria La Longa, Italy

Francesca Ferri, San Michele All'Adige, Italy

Marjorie Fish, Dundee, UK

Maria Elisabeth Kalchgruber, Elsbethen, Austria

Maria Messano, Laveno Mombello, Italy

Augoustinos Neophytou, Larnaca, Cyprus

1 V	2 M	3 J	4 W	5 L	6 E	7 T	8 D	9 H	10 R	11 B	12 O	13 C
14 N	15 S	16 K	17 G	18 X	19 Z	20 F	21 P	22 Y	23 Q	24 A	25 U	26 I

4 W	12 O	10 R	8 D	15 S		15 S	7 T	10 R	24 A	26 I	14 N	,		C
10 R	24 A	13 C	16 K		24 A	14 N	8 D		15 S	12 O	2 M	6 E	7 T	26 I
2 M	6 E	15 S		11 B	10 R	6 E	24 A	16 K	,		25 U	14 N	8 D	6 E
10 R		7 T	9 H	6 E		11 B	25 U	10 R	8 D	6 E	14 N	.		

T S Eliot, *Four Quartets*

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.

All the contributors to It Works in Practice in this issue of ET*p* will receive a copy of *Advanced Language Practice* by Michael Vince, published by Macmillan. Macmillan have kindly agreed to be sponsors of It Works in Practice for this year.



Party people

Give your students the text opposite and ask them to read it and work out how many people were at the office party. In order to do this, they will need to understand the following:

- The indefinite article (*a*, *an*, and *another*) denotes the first time someone is mentioned (eg *a woman from catering who's only been with the company for a few weeks*).
- The definite article *the* is used for subsequent mentions of the same person, although the description may be paraphrased (in this case, *the new woman*).
- However, where the person being introduced is unique, or known to both speaker and listener, *the* is used for the first as well as subsequent mentions, eg *the managing director, the head of sales, the man who is always with him*.

To work out how many people are at the party, therefore, students must understand the different ways in which the definite article is used and whether it represents the first or subsequent mention of a person each time. They need to be careful not to count the same person twice. Note that some people are mentioned by name only (*Carl*), or indefinite article + noun + name (*a woman, Sue her name was, ...*).



I went to the office party last night. There were lots of people there, including the managing director and his wife. She was talking to a man from accounts who told jokes all evening. The head of sales was there, and his PA. There was a very tall man I had never seen before. He was nearly two metres! He was talking to a young girl with blonde hair. The blonde was a friend of Mary from sales. Oh yes, the assistant manager was there, too. She was listening to the funny man all evening. In the corner a shy man sat all by himself. I felt sorry and went to talk to him. He was really interesting; he keeps snakes! But he was very quiet. Who else? A woman from catering, who's only been with the firm a few weeks. She has just moved from London, and another woman from advertising. The new woman was friendly, but the woman from advertising was a bit strange, I thought. Then there was Carl, who you remember, and the man who is always with him. He was trying to make a good impression on the managing director. Me? I spent most of the evening chatting to a woman, Sue her name was, you know, who writes the reports. Good party, it was.

Solution: There are 16 people including the speaker. The first mentions are underlined.

I went to the office party last night. There were lots of people there, including the managing director and his wife. She was talking to a man from accounts who told jokes all evening. The head of sales was there, and his PA. There was a very tall man I had never seen before. He was nearly two metres! He was talking to a young girl with blonde hair. The blonde was a friend of Mary from sales. Oh yes, the assistant manager was there, too. She was listening to the funny man all evening. In the corner a shy man sat all by himself. I felt sorry and went to talk to him. He was really interesting; he keeps snakes! But he was very quiet. Who else? A woman from catering, who's only been with the firm a few weeks. She has just moved from London, and another woman from advertising. The new woman was friendly, but the woman from advertising was a bit strange, I thought. Then there was Carl, who you remember, and the man who is always with him. He was trying to make a good impression on the managing director. Me? I spent most of the evening chatting to a woman, Sue her name was, you know, who writes the reports. Good party, it was.

Simon Mumford
Izmir, Turkey

iStockphoto.com / © Lise Gagne

Close your books, please!

This activity is a good way of recycling language which the students have learnt from their coursebooks, so it should preferably be done when the coursebook has been completed or towards the end of a course.

1. Put the students into groups and tell them to close their coursebooks.
2. Give each group a character (eg Jamie Oliver, Quentin Tarantino) or a topic (eg text messaging, family conflicts) that has been dealt with to some extent in the course and that the students enjoyed working on. (Alternatively, give all the groups the same character or topic, but in stage 4 tell each group to use a different form of presentation.)
3. Tell them to discuss and note down all the information they can remember about their person or topic.
4. Ask the students to prepare a presentation to give to the rest of the class using the information they have assembled. They can choose how they want to make their presentation. It could take one of the following forms:
   - a short speech
   - a conversation in which two friends are talking about the person/topic
   - a debate
   - a poster
   - a TV interview with an expert on the given topic
   - an article (for a newspaper, for Wikipedia)
5. Tell the students that it is not important that each detail is correct. You could even encourage them to invent details, for example a student could start a conversation about David Beckham saying 'You'll never guess who I met at Tom's party ...'.

Since the presentations can take some time, it might be a good idea to get, for example, two groups to present their work to each other. If the groups are large, it may be that not all the group members can be involved in the presentation; in this case you might want to choose the students who present.

This activity can be extended to make a mini-project and to give the students more time to research information.

Stefan Rathert
Kahramanmarafl, Turkey

Preparing to write

I use the following activity to review vocabulary of countries and nationalities and to prepare my students for writing formal letters using appropriate phrases. I find that it works well with teenagers at Cambridge FCE level.

Stage 1

I give the students the following letter about myself and tell them to work in pairs and to find the seven countries and/or nationalities that should go in the gaps. I tell them that I will give them hints (the first letter, one of the neighbouring countries, whether it is in Europe, etc), but they will have to 'pay' for these by suggesting any phrases that they know which are suitable for inclusion in a formal letter. The students discuss in their pairs what hints they would like and then pay for them with phrases, which I write on the board.

Lisbon, November 27th

Dear Madam/Sir,

I am writing in response to your recent letter requesting more information on my background.

I was born in [1]_____ , in a [2]_____ _____ family.

My former husband is [3]_____ , which explains my interest in [3]_____ literature and sausages.

I went to university in the [4]_____ _____ and that is also where I received my Masters degree.

Over the last few years, I have worked in [5]_____ , the [6]_____ _____ and [7]_____ .

On a personal note, I am keen on literature and sports and I enjoy travelling. It is, after all – one would argue – in my blood.

I hope this answers your questions, but do not hesitate to contact me should you require further details.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,
Andreea Pulpea

Stage 2

Once all the students have filled in the gaps, I get them to identify the one element which is not appropriate in the letter (my interest in sausages). We then brainstorm what types of information are not appropriate in a formal letter.

Stage 3

I ask the students to organise the information in my letter under the following headings: *Introduction, Personal information, Professional information, Conclusion.*

Stage 4

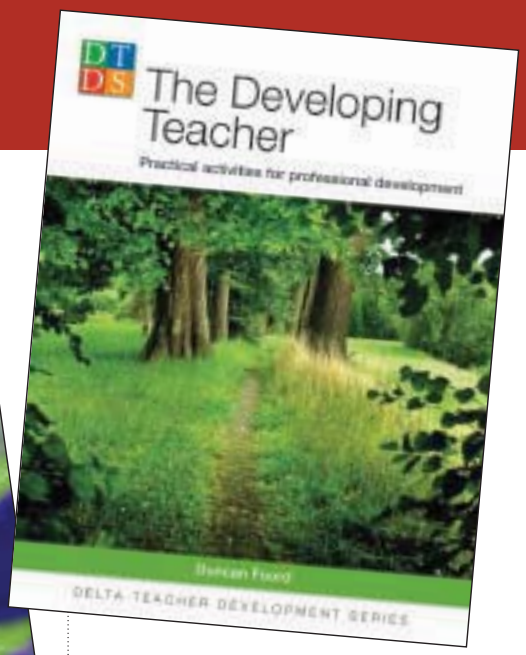
The students write their own letters using the same headings.

Key: **1** Romania **2** Russian Serbian **3** German **4** United Kingdom **5** Hungary **6** United States **7** Portugal

Andreea Pulpea
Lisbon, Portugal

Reviews





Listening in the Language Classroom

by John Field
CUP 2008
978-0-521-68570-2

John Field believes the time is due for a major re-think of how listening is treated by teachers. He begins with the observation that teachers do pay more attention to listening nowadays than they did 40 years ago. Listening first appeared in the Cambridge ESOL FCE exam in 1970, in the form of written texts read aloud, and welcome developments during the past few decades have included a focus on listening as a skill in its own right (rather than as a means of accessing samples of language), the use of authentic or simulated-authentic recordings and tasks which bear some relation to the real world, and the use of contextualisation and prediction in defining listening purpose and raising motivation.

But, the author continues, the current standard procedure for listening exercises – the 'comprehension approach' which was based closely, and ill-advisedly, on the already-existing approach to reading comprehension – still doesn't actually *teach* listening in a principled way, but only *tests* accomplishment. It give learners repeated opportunities to grapple with the problems of listening, assuming that more listening means better listening, but without diagnosing exactly what the problems are and trying to provide solutions to them.

This book, which combines theory and practical suggestions, firstly suggests ways of adapting the comprehension approach to make it more effective and more conducive to learner autonomy, by recommending more actual listening work by learners and correspondingly less intervention by the teacher, more interaction between learners in class, and the use of independent out-of-class listening. Most classroom listening takes the form of 'auditory scanning', and there is a plea for greater variety, with a better alignment of materials, tasks and the types of listening they require, including more interactive listening-and-speaking, but not neglecting intensive work involving re-playing of short recorded segments.

The book then goes on to offer alternatives to the comprehension approach, focusing less on product (getting the right answers) and more on the processes which expert listeners use. This involves a consideration of how listeners manage to identify words which reach their ears in forms very different from idealised citation forms, and how they construct interpretations of what they hear. If learners can learn to use the same processes and to make judicious use of compensatory strategies, they will acquire a transferable skill which will stand them in good stead after their course of study finishes.

Teachers need to diagnose how learners get right and wrong answers, and what problems they have with 'decoding' (translating the speech signal into sounds, words, clauses and literal meanings) and 'meaning building' (adding to literal meaning by relating it to context and co-text), in order to give focused, systematic help such as dictation exercises to practise recognition of half-audible weak forms. Current methdodology overestimates the ability of learner listeners to make use of contextual information, and underestimates the importance of being able to recognise words: to develop 'accurate and automatic decoding' so that more attention is available for processing meaning.

At the same time, the author emphasises the importance of helping learners from the early stages of learning to develop and use strategic guesswork to enable them to deal with the challenge of listening to the English they will hear outside the classroom.

As well as detailed descriptions of what skilled listeners do in decoding input and in actively constructing interpretations of what they hear, there are numerous examples of exercise types throughout the book and, by way of conclusion, a proposal for a multi-strand approach to L2 listening development. *Listening in the Language Classroom* is an accessible and persuasive blend of theory and practice, and deserves to be widely read.

Jonathan Marks
Leba, Poland

The Developing Teacher

by Duncan Foord
Delta Publishing 2009
978-1-905085-22-4

The Developing Teacher fills a niche that is greatly needed in the world of ELT. Basically, this book is a collection of practical activities aimed at teachers who want to develop professionally. While most books of activities are intended for teachers to use with their students, the activities here are for a teacher's own professional development, both individually and with others.

The Developing Teacher is the first volume in Delta Publishing's new *Teacher Development* series, which emphasises professional development in ELT. The book is divided into three parts: A, B, and C.

Part A is a brief introduction to the topic of professional development in ELT. It provides several definitions of professional development and gives some arguments for it. In addition, there is a list of four areas in which a teacher can develop (skills, knowledge, awareness and attitude), and several different models for development are described (including the

theory-philosophy model, the art-craft model, and reflective teaching). Part A is rounded out by a bibliography of titles for teachers who want to learn more.

Part B, the longest of the three sections, builds on the theories and concepts of Part A. It has over 70 activities for professional development, arranged into five categories, presented as five concentric circles. The first category, *Self*, shows ways a teacher can develop individually. It includes such topics as stress and time management, as well as a useful introduction to doing self-observations. The second category, *You and your students*, emphasises professional development in the context of interacting with students. The activities here touch on needs analysis, getting student feedback and experimenting with different ways of teaching. The third category, *You and your colleagues*, brings in the other teachers you deal with on a daily basis. Videotaping a lesson, team teaching, mentoring and being mentored are all mentioned here. The fourth category, *You and your school*, also deals with colleagues, but with an emphasis on management concerns. This section contains activities for improving meetings and communication with colleagues. The fifth category, *You and your profession*, deals with the profession at large, providing instructions for choosing and taking courses, leading workshops and writing articles for publication.

Part C, gives concrete suggestions for three long-term projects: a teacher diary, a teaching portfolio and a teacher development scheme.

A notable strength of this book is the author's presentation of a broad range of ways to develop (short-term, long-term, individually, with others). I liked the fact that Foord encourages teachers to find their own ways to develop, instead of insisting on one single way.

The book contains many clever ideas I hadn't thought of before. One activity I really enjoyed is called *A VAK experiment*. In this activity, the teacher introduces the students to three different learning styles (Visual, Auditory and Kinaesthetic). The students are given copies of a text, put into three groups (one for each learning style), then challenged to create an activity that would appeal to a student strong in one of the learning styles. The activity ends with each group presenting their materials to the class.

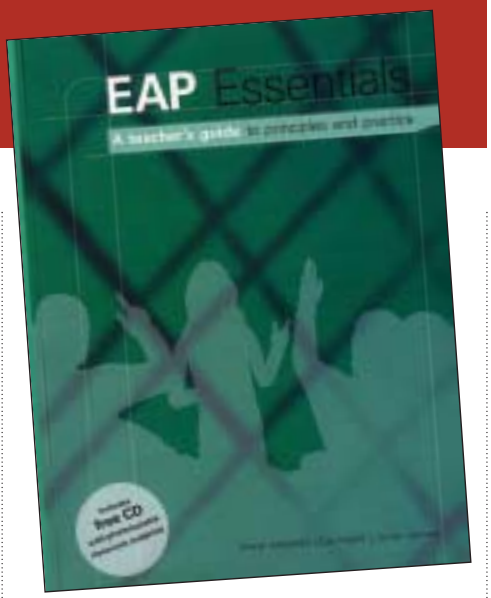
One small problem I had with the book is that I felt a few of the ideas could have been extended to give teachers more support. For example, the section on keeping a teacher diary could have been improved with some examples of actual teacher diaries. Also, I thought the activity on getting published could have included a list of some recommended publications or websites.

Overall, this is a very appealing book. Many teachers will find the activities here inspiring and helpful. I'm looking forward to trying out some of Foord's suggestions in the next few months.

Hall Houston
Luzhu, Taiwan

EAP Essentials: a teacher's guide to principles and practice

by Olwyn Alexander, Sue Argent and Jennifer Spencer
Garnet Publishing Ltd 2008
978-1-85964-419-5



EAP (English for Academic Purposes) is a field that has exploded in recent years: not only are overseas students flooding into universities in the English-speaking world, but many higher education courses are now being taught in English in countries where English is a second language for both teachers and students. For teachers who find themselves catapulted into devising and running such international courses, this book could be a godsend.

Not only have the three authors combed the relevant research literature, but since 2002 they have run EAP teacher development courses at Heriot-Watt University and have harvested valuable material from conversations with the participants. This has enabled them 'to bridge the gap between theory and classroom practice' – and to use the courses as a laboratory in which to test materials and find out what works. Their own experiences over many years have also allowed them to pinpoint situations where teaching and learning can go wrong.

The book presents major aspects of EAP, using well-chosen text extracts, questionnaires, discussions and case studies to stimulate reflection on and awareness of key issues. Chapter 1, 'The Context of EAP' (academic purposes and expectations), for instance, begins by differentiating ELT from EAP; probes the nature of teaching and learning at a university; continues with a fascinating discussion of the nature of the 'academic tribe' and how to join it ('the hidden curriculum'); suggests the most practical ways of handling the EAP learning process; delves into student and teacher expectations – and much more. Subsequent chapters cover text analysis, course design, reading, vocabulary, writing, listening and speaking, critical thinking, student autonomy and assessment.

Clearly, this book isn't just about language: it explores the strategies, thinking, skills and attitudes that underpin the academic project – and how to convey these to the student.

The accompanying CD, which contains photocopiable classroom materials, is a vital component in all this: it takes us from discussion to experience, with a wealth of tasks, exercises and tools to enable the student to master the language and thinking necessary for academic success.

One niggle: Clarity. *'Academic writing should be transparent, like a pane of glass, so that the ideas can be clearly seen without the language intruding.'* How true! Yet the authors rather reverently present nominalisation ('noun phrases'), pre-modification and the passive as essential components of academic writing. True – up to a point; but used to excess, these elements lead to obscurity. John Kirkman's *Good Style: Writing for Science and Technology* would be a useful corrective here.

All in all, though: indispensible.

Charles Rankin
Warnford, UK

Fire your enthusiasm

Paul Bress encourages teachers to adopt a positive attitude.

If someone isn't enthusiastic about something, then that lack of enthusiasm is generally evident to other people. For example, if you're not enthusiastic about your partner, surely it's going to show, isn't it? I think the same applies at work. If an employee displays lacklustre body language and intonation, then the employer will notice this, and probably won't be too impressed as a result.

Let's have a look at how enthusiastic *you* are in your role as an English language teacher. Below you'll see five tasks most English teachers do at some point. Next to each, please put a letter (A, B or C), signalling which describes you best:

A = *I feel very enthusiastic when I do this.*
B = *I don't have any strong feelings either way about this.*
C = *The very thought of this makes my heart sink.*

Five tasks

- Teaching the present continuous (for referring to the future) to a pre-intermediate class
- Marking a pile of essays on the environment
- Explaining the rules of a complex game
- Meeting a new class for the first time
- Attending a staff meting to discuss the progress of your classes
- Helping slow learners to make progress

How did you get on? If you scored largely As, this suggests that you are probably in the right profession (provided you have the skills to match your enthusiasm, of course). However, if you scored a mixture of Bs and Cs, it's worth having a critical look at your level of enthusiasm for ELT.

Fuelling the fire

Let's now look at five things you can do to ignite (or re-ignite) your enthusiasm for your profession.

1 Listen carefully to how each student responds to your teaching style.

English language teaching is a highly complex business. This is because language itself is complex and because human beings are complex, too. If you are not really interested in people or how they learn languages, then teaching is probably not for you. However, if you can endeavour to really focus on how *each* of your students is registering your way of teaching, then you are doing the most important thing to ignite interest. The wonderful thing is that no two students are ever identical. So make a real effort to tune into the different ways *all* your students react to the way you teach.

2 Evaluate how well you're teaching.

Without being hypercritical, you can start to evaluate just how effectively you are teaching. For example, do all your class really understand your explanation of a particular word? Do you perhaps need to explain it again? Do you need to consider, more systematically, the techniques you use to convey meaning? Such questions can be applied to every single aspect of English language teaching.

3 Experiment with different teaching styles/methodologies.

It is quite common for teachers to go about their work as if they are on autopilot. They may do very minimum preparation, enter the classroom, 'box clever' and, effectively, use the same approach time and time again. Of course, we can't have personality transplants. However, we *can* try to experiment in order to see what our limits are. We can keep pushing and pushing to test our own capabilities. We may end up feeling disappointed, but we may also end up surprised at our ability to teach in a new, more creative way.

4 Read ELT journals.

This will allow you to enter the broader ELT community. Of course, not every article is written exclusively for your consumption, but journals are very expertly edited these days, and they cater increasingly for the needs of a clearly identifiable section of the market. In such journals, professional people either relate their personal experiences or perhaps sum up some vital research they have just conducted. Speaking personally, whenever I read ET*p*, there are at least four or five articles that I read from start to finish because they are very well written and because they make me think more deeply about a thorny issue.

5 Do some research.

If you follow suggestions 1–4 above, you are probably well on your way to becoming a career professional – someone who cares deeply about the work they do, wants to do it to the very best of their ability, and wants to contribute something of great value to the profession. A natural extension of this is to do some more formal studies. This could either be in the form of an advanced diploma or an MA or even a PhD. You might simply undertake your own research and then put pen to paper for one of the many ELT journals that are in publication. This way, you'll really be making your mark on your profession.

★ ★ ★

As with every profession, ELT employs people who are very enthusiastic and others who are much less so. If you are one of the less enthusiastic ones, all is not lost. It's possible that you have just lost your way. It may be that your interest has temporarily waned for some reason. But if you are in this for the long haul, I think you owe it yourself to get fully involved. If you're not fully involved, your students will always be the first to notice. ETp



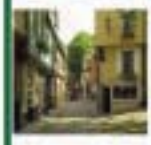
Paul Bress works both in the fields of personal growth and ELT and has published very widely in both areas. He is a life-long, non-stop learner – he learns more from everyday experience than from formal research. His life coaching website is www.bemycoach.co.uk.

paulbress@talktalk.net

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Advertising

Putting it together

Ana Lía Passarotto

creates a new portfolio-based course for her tertiary students.

My colleagues and I work at a teacher training college with would-be teachers of English whose native language is Spanish. We identified the need for a course that would enable our students to put together all the knowledge they had acquired in three very important subjects: language, grammar and phonology. This would be a subject in which they could practise both oral and written English as freely and naturally as possible within the constraints of the classroom and we opted to include portfolio assessment as one element.

The purpose of this article is to relate our experience of setting up our course. Although the uses and benefits of continuous assessment will not be discussed, some of its main characteristics will be mentioned.

Learning by doing

As this new course had to be organised from scratch, we had total freedom over how to design it. We decided that it would be a good idea to give a new lease of life to the well-proven rules and working methods of a traditional workshop technique, introduced by American educators in the 1940s. We agreed with one of its promoters, Ralph Tyler, when he described learning as taking place through the action of the student: *'It is what he does that he learns, not what the teacher does.'*

We also thought of revamping the workshop according to the tenets of the 'learning for understanding' methodology and Howard Gardner's multiple intelligences theory. As David Perkins asserts: *'In the long term, education must aim for active use of knowledge and skill. Students garner knowledge and skills in schools so that they can put them to work – in professional roles – scientist, engineer, designer, doctor, businessperson, writer artist, musician – and in lay roles – citizen, voter, parent – that require appreciation, understanding, and judgment.'*

Learning for understanding requires the students to work with information and content, using their own strategies and previous knowledge and developing the habit of reflecting upon their own progress. It engages them in projects in which, as Howard Gardner puts it, *'the whole classroom assumes the shape and characteristics of a traditional workshop, giving the students the possibility of working cooperatively and learning according to their own kinds of intelligences and learning styles'*.

This way of working is totally opposed to the somewhat passive learning style of our secondary schools, and at the very beginning the students were disconcerted. However, we were convinced that it was essential for students at tertiary level to be able to look for solutions to different problems, take complete responsibility for their own learning, monitor their own progress and prepare themselves for the routines of postgraduate study. As doing research would give them training in investigation, written work and oral presentations and

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Putting it together

help them develop techniques for speaking in public, thus developing their fluency and accuracy in both writing and speaking, we decided to focus on research. An additional advantage of this approach was that the trainee teachers would learn to evaluate and compare information from several sources and to organise it and use it according to their own judgement. At the same time, they would work cooperatively and try their hand at correcting their own and their peers' work, also making suggestions for individual improvement.

Creating the project

Having been put in charge of this new course, I was free to think about it in an innovative way, and decided to organise it around a novel by contemporary British writer David Lodge. *Changing Places* is one of his 'campus' novels and tells the story of an academic exchange in which two professors from fictional universities in England and the USA swap places for six months. I chose this book firstly because I really enjoyed reading it; it is enlightening, ironic and, at times, extremely funny. Secondly, I thought it would be an ideal vehicle for comparing and contrasting the British and American education systems, the two different cultures and the personality traits of the people in each country, subjects which the students had already been studying for three years. Besides, as our trainee teachers are, on average, quite young, it was the perfect means to show them where, how and why the world we are now living in has developed.

I used the sections in which the novel is divided (*Flying*, *Settling*, *Corresponding*, *Reading* and *Changing*) to structure the course. After the students had read the sections at home, we commented on them one by one. From each section I identified the issues that seemed most relevant to the period in which the action takes place (the late 1960s), and which helped shape our modern world. These included the educational system and university life in England and the USA (which we compared with Argentina); the main characteristics of the two peoples (stereotypes and all); the Vietnam War, the pop revolution and its main consequences: hippies, changes in music and fashion, sexual freedom, the generation gap, the widespread use of drugs, etc; the women's liberation movement; Ralph Nader; Martin Luther King; the student riots of the 1960s; and experiments in art and life on the west coast of the US.

SELF-ASSESSMENT FORM FOR WRITTEN WORK

Name: ..... **Date:** .....

Type of item (first draft, edited version, etc) .....

This piece of work shows that I can: (mark only the appropriate items)

- ☐ use the material I've researched and the information I've found.
- ☐ work collaboratively.
- ☐ support ideas with evidence or reasons.
- ☐ organise related ideas logically.
- ☐ use a wide range of grammatical structures.
- ☐ use specific vocabulary appropriately.
- ☐ spell difficult/new words correctly.
- ☐ self-edit my work.
- ☐ other: (please specify)

SETTING YOUR OWN IMPROVEMENT GOALS (Think about realistic goals.)

1 What does this sample show you can do well?

2 What do you think you need to improve?

3 What do you think you need to keep working on?

Covering the skills

The students were free to choose the topics that most interested them to talk about in pairs or groups. In order to make their choices, they were encouraged to consult the internet, encylopaedias and several other books available at the school library, as well as newspapers and magazines. They were then expected to give presentations to their peers on what they had learnt, but they were allowed to present the information in any way they wanted: using an overhead projector, videos, material downloaded from the internet, songs, recordings, PowerPoint, etc. Some of them even prepared activities for their classmates to do. From time to time, I also contributed my own material to round off a topic. (As I was a teenager in the sixties, I had had first-hand experience of things such as changes in music, fashion, parent-child relationships, teenage freedom, etc.)

After the selected topics from each section had been discussed, the students were assigned written work in which they had to use what they had learnt. The writing tasks, which were then placed in the students' portfolios, included reporting interviews, making summaries, producing magazine articles, writing reflective and argumentative essays, biographies, and a final book review.

Emphasis was placed upon the production of written texts and pieces of discourse and on the students' reflection upon their own performance. We started from the belief that discourse is a construct that must be tackled using knowledge drawn from several subjects and we always worked with authentic material.

I created a self-evaluation form (see above) in order to stretch their metacognitive skills. To produce this form, I used one from 'Successful writing' by Sencan Topaloglu in ET*p* Issue 8 and

another from 'In praise of the portfolio' by Yan Xiaoyun in ET*p* Issue 55, along with the 'Setting improvement goals' form which Yan Xiaoyun adapted from O'Malley and Pierce. I modified all these according to our actual needs and blended them into one.

Evaluating the progress

Using a system of continuous assessment (integrative or formative evaluation), the students were asked to re-write any work that was not satisfactory, following advice from their teacher (or their classmates' hints in the case of peer-correction). When marking their writing, I simply underlined their mistakes and marked them according to a code we had agreed upon: *G* for grammar mistakes, *L* for language mistakes, *Sp* for spelling errors, and so on. The students were then encouraged to produce a new version, correcting all the mistakes they had made. Some suggestions on style improvement were also provided. I

I never interrupted their speech flow unless some information was glaringly wrong, or some very serious mistake prevented proper understanding

insisted that they write the date on each piece of writing so that they would be able to monitor their own improvement. They were allowed to re-write all the pieces they wanted as many times as they thought fit, until they felt satisfied with the results. All their pieces of written work, the research work done for their presentations and the extra material provided by the teacher were included in their portfolios, which were checked and graded at the end of the year.

As for their oral work, I never interrupted their speech flow unless some information was glaringly wrong, or some very serious mistake prevented proper understanding. At the end of each presentation, we did some global error analysis with the whole class, and at the end of the semester, I gave each of the students a written appreciation of their work and their progress, and a note of the points they had to keep working at in order to improve their overall oral performance.

I have found that the combination of workshop methods and the use of portfolios fosters autonomy

But, and there is always a *but*, there were some school rules that had to be followed; namely a mid-term exam to be given, which in terms of continuous assessment and portfolio evaluation was totally out of context. So, after thinking about it for a while, I opted for a compromise solution: a debate held by the students on a polemic topic of their own choice. This was conducted in the usual way, with a panel arguing for and against the motion, a chairperson to conduct the proceedings, and members of the audience who had to ask questions and add comments. When everything had been said (or most likely the time was up) the chairperson closed the debate and everyone voted for or against the motion. I remember a very successful, lively and heated debate on the right of homosexuals to get married and adopt children. I took a back seat – as I did during all the oral presentations – and made notes on their strong and weak points in order to mark their performances.

The rules and procedures for the course were made explicit from the very first class. If the students complied with all the requirements, including doing a given number of presentations and writing assignments, passing the mid-term exam and receiving a successful evaluation of their final portfolio, they passed the course without taking a final exam. If they failed and did not reach the required grade, they could sit an exam at the end of the school year as they normally have to do for their other curriculum subjects.

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I have found that the combination of workshop methods and the use of portfolios fosters autonomy and helps put the students in charge of their own learning. It gives them the chance to reflect upon their errors and to develop their own self-monitoring system. It also trains them in the difficult task of evaluating other people's work and makes them work cooperatively (a highly valued skill these days).

Moreover, the scheduled oral presentations make them do conscientious research work, teach them to make critical use of the internet and help them improve their oral fluency and accuracy, while at the same time they learn new concepts and start relating different ideas and making sense of historical events.

This course has been working well for four years, and what seems to me the most important achievement is that the students learn at the same time as enjoying what they do. They like the way the course is designed and are delighted to find out what the world was like when their parents were young. In fact, the second year I taught the subject, at the end-of-the-year overall evaluation one of the students said: *'Next year teach the subject exactly the same way you did this year. All of us have really enjoyed the work and learnt a lot!'* What else could a teacher ask for? ETp

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Teaching through literature

Premakumari Dheram trains her trainees to be facilitators.

Language through literature is one of the optional courses in the first semester of our postgraduate diploma in the teaching of English. There are usually at least 20 trainees in the class and most have had no teaching experience.

This year, I spent several hours looking for poems to use on this course. My only criteria were the experience the text offered and the background knowledge it demanded of the students (high-school students who would have studied English for at least five years). I met my class of trainees for 20 one-hour sessions and we worked on poetry for the first two months. During this time they also received a detailed introduction to various theories of language teaching and learning in their other classes. I planned my course so that the trainees had hands-on experience of working on a few poems, considered the role of literature in the language classroom, designed a few interactive activities and tried them out on their peers. They were encouraged to play three roles.

- As students, they did the tasks on the text.
- As trainees, they reflected on their experience with those tasks.
- As critics, they commented on what I (their trainer) said, did and made them do.

My major aim was to make them feel comfortable with the 'facilitator' model.

Orientation

Our initial discussions focused on the following:

1 The purpose of English language teaching in India, and particularly in the trainees' contexts. They all agreed that students need to learn non-literary communication. Then, we made a list of the non-literary genres their students would be familiar with. This usually included advertisements, agony columns, drama, news reports, pamphlets, personal and official letters, and stories.

2 The purpose of literature in the curriculum. The trainees unanimously agreed on two purposes: encouraging reading for pleasure, and promoting understanding of the difference between literary and non-literary communication. Some identified a third purpose: encouraging thinking and language use in the classroom.

3 The role of the (literary) text. A few activities helped them to arrive at the understanding that the text is only a means to an end and not an end in itself. The class decided to adopt an interactive approach and explore the opportunities for language use the text offers.

4 The role of the teacher. Most trainees were familiar with the word facilitator. However, they admitted that they needed guidance and practice in order to develop into facilitators.

5 The role of the learner. We agreed that the learners must take an active part in the process of learning. They must be willing to take risks, accept that mistakes are natural and participate in every activity.

Experience

The trainees participated in a series of activities and then reflected on them. The following is based on working with Jim Daniels' poem *Dim*.

Stage 1

Activity

In Jim Daniels' poem *Dim*, a father talks about how he tries to comfort his son after an incident at school in which he is mocked by the other children for failing to do a computer maths game. The poem reminds us that children can be badly hurt by seemingly small things. You can read the poem at *www.americanlifeinpoetry.org/columns/034.html*.

I thought that the trainees would be able to think of a number of activities for initiating their students' interaction with the poem. But I was disappointed by their lack of response and surprised that the poem didn't have the same effect on them as it did on me. It seemed that there was a big difference in the purposes for which we read it. To me, it was reading for pleasure. To them, it was a classroom task.

My first objective, therefore, was to help them relate to the poem. After a brief class discussion of the theme, I suggested that they rewrite the poem with the boy as the narrator instead of the father. Some lines were easy to rewrite. For example, the beginning lines:

Today my son realized someone's smarter than him. Not me or his mom

were changed to:

Today I realized someone's smarter than me. Not my dad nor my mom

Initially, the class thought that all that they had to do was to change the pronouns. Soon, however, they got engrossed in the activity and realised that changing the voice involves changing much more than that. They found that they had to choose language that didn't change the character of the boy, the father or the situation. Although they were working in pairs, the whole class got involved in a discussion of the choice of language.

Reflections

The class all agreed that this activity would work with senior school children. They acknowledged that by doing it, they found their way into the poem with very little help from me.

The trainees observed that:

- the activity focused on meaning and not grammar.
- the discussions encouraged a lot of language use. They noticed how grammatical points came up for discussion within the groups and the class, and saw how a teacher-educator could play a navigator's role without sabotaging student talking time.
- they needed to read the poem closely and think of activities to direct the students' thinking about the text.

Stage 2

Activity

The second lesson began with an animated discussion on the feelings of the father and the son. Some trainees had young children of their own. More importantly, many of them had had similar childhood experiences and they shared these with the class. We discussed the 'therapeutic effect' of talking about an experience, and thus brought into focus the child's silence in the poem.

In groups, the trainees then had to think of a plan of action to deal with the situation, and report it to the whole class. We adopted the case-study approach, with different groups playing different roles in dealing with the situation. There were parents, older siblings, friends, teachers and heads of schools, all trying to address the child's hurt.

After the activity, I distributed a two-page handout with a few blogs on the poem and abstracts of journal and newspaper articles on peer rejection, and suggested that they read them quickly. The trainees found that the blogs contained a great deal of conceptual and linguistic support which would have helped them practise language if they had received them before they began the task.

Reflections

The trainees were surprised with the way the discussion highlighted different perspectives on the poem. Some of them confessed that it also made them consciously aware of the role of the students' self-esteem in learning.

They all thought that their students would definitely enjoy working in groups and participating in decision-making. More importantly, they realised that talking about a personal experience demands a great deal of language, especially topic-specific vocabulary.

They also observed that the weak students in their classes might need to be helped with their language, and the teacher may do it within a reasonable amount of teacher talking time.

The trainees' reflections may be summed up as follows:

1 They realised that 'facilitating' and 'scaffolding' may be interpreted as providing the students with cognitive (conceptual) and linguistic support to navigate their thinking and skills practice. Teachers may use authentic non-literary texts of different genres to help students practise language use and grow familiar with the appropriate formats for presenting information.

2 The activity and the subsequent reflections demonstrated the concepts of *teacher talking time* and *student talking time* in action, and encouraged the trainees to be conscious of the nature, timing and purpose of teacher support.

3 They began to see themselves in the role of navigators, responsible for guiding the students to think and work with the text so they can practise language. Teacher-facilitators need to ask the right questions, point the students in the direction of the texts available in their environment, and provide supportive reading material if possible.

Stage 3

Activity

The third activity was a follow-up of the group discussion, addressing the issues of peer rejection, bullying, student self-esteem, etc. Different groups had to write different texts, such as letters of complaint from parents, letters of encouragement from friends and the responses of a counsellor of a teenage agony column. They were given 15 minutes to write their first drafts, then each group presented its work to the others in two to three minutes. There was enough time left for a quick discussion of each text.

Reflections

The discussion highlighted the fact that although the trainees had the necessary ideas and the language, they needed some samples of writing to guide them. They volunteered to find samples on the internet and revise their drafts.

Facilitation

The trainees identified the following principles of facilitation and how they may be turned into learner-friendly classroom practices.

Create room for learner practice.

1 Place the text in a wide ESL context.
2 Examine the text in relation to the students' background knowledge.
3 Identify the opportunities it offers students for language use.

Upload cognitive and linguistic support.

The word *upload* was chosen because material from various locations may be brought to the classroom and it is a reminder of the relevance and usefulness of the internet.

1 Pick readings to guide the students' thinking about the text.
2 Develop simple tasks that hinge upon the text.
3 Initiate the students' interaction with the text.

Enable learning outside the classroom.

1 Practise reflecting on curricular goals, relating them to life outside the classroom.
2 Encourage and help students identify sources and strategies of learning.
3 Introduce the concept of personal development, and initiate the process in the class.

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That the trainees began to re-think their approach to the text was evident from the nature of their subsequent participation in the lessons. They now associate English language teaching with creative practices, not difficult theories. For their M Phil, two chose to work on authentic material, while two others began thinking about what they could do in the area of language through literature. ETp



Premakumari Dheram teaches at the English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad, India. She enjoys designing stress busters that create fruitful anxiety and promote independent learning. Her Masters (TEFL) is from Reading University, UK, and she has a PhD (Comparative literature) from Osmania University, Hyderabad.

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SCRAPBOOK

GEMS, TITBITS, PUZZLES, FOIBLES, QUIRKS, BITS & PIECES, QUOTATIONS, SNIPPETS, ODDS & ENDS, WHAT YOU WILL

Autumn leaves

Autumn is when we can look forward to falling leaves and rising fuel prices. We'll be raking it up while the oil companies are raking it in.

Autumn is the time to drag out your winter clothes and see what kind of summer fun the moths had.

Autumn is a season for big decisions – like whether or not it's too late to start spring cleaning.

Autumn leaves are a lot like kids. First they turn on you, and then they fly away. And the next thing you know, you look out of the window and they're back!

The music of autumn

Autumn seems to have provided the inspiration for many songwriters. Can you identify the artists who sang these popular songs?

1 ***September Morn***
- **A** Perry Como
- **B** Jack Jones
- **C** Frank Sinatra
- **D** Neil Diamond

2 ***September***
- **A** Earth, Wind and Fire
- **B** Kool and the Gang
- **C** Chicago
- **D** Shenandoah

3 ***See You in September***
- **A** The Ink Spots
- **B** The Beach Boys
- **C** The Chiffons
- **D** The Supremes

4 ***October***
- **A** The Beatles
- **B** The Monkees
- **C** T.Rex
- **D** U2

5 ***November Rain***
- **A** Guns N' Roses
- **B** Led Zeppelin
- **C** The Doors
- **D** Dean Martin

6 ***Autumn Leaves***
- **A** Henry Mancini
- **B** Doris Day
- **C** Mariah Carey
- **D** Frank Sinatra

7 ***Autumn of My Life***
- **A** Bobby Darin
- **B** Bobby Vinton
- **C** Bobby Goldsboro
- **D** Bobby Rydell

8 ***Autumn***
- **A** Edgar Winter
- **B** 98 Degrees
- **C** Tim McGraw
- **D** The Kinks

Answers 1 D 2 A 3 C 4 D 5 A 6 D 7 C 8 A

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Autumn facts

1 **Why do leaves fall off trees in the autumn?**
In autumn, there is less sunlight because the days are shorter. Because sunlight is a crucial ingredient in the leaf 'food factory', it is unable to sustain itself any longer. So the leaf becomes weak and floats to the ground.

2 **Why are leaves different colours in autumn?**
Leaves are actually red, yellow, orange and brown all year long – we just can't see these colours because they are masked by the intense green pigment of chlorophyll. In the autumn, the red, yellow, orange and brown pigments in the leaves become visible and bright when the tree stops producing chlorophyll.

Leaf love

What did one autumn leaf say to another?

I'm falling for you.

Native **wisdom**

It was autumn, and the members of a Native American tribe asked their new chief if the coming winter was going to be cold or mild. Since he was a new chief in a modern society and had never been taught the ancient secrets of nature, he had no clue what to do. To play it safe, he looked up at the sky and then told his tribe that the winter would definitely be cold and that they should collect firewood early, just to be prepared. So, they started gathering wood.

Being a practical leader, he figured he should also use the resources available from the modern world. He went to a nearby town, found a phone booth and called the National Weather Service to ask if the winter would be cold.

'As of now, it looks like this winter is going to be quite cold,' he was told.

So the chief went back to his tribe and told them to collect even more wood. A week later he called the National Weather Service again and asked for an update.

'Yes,' the forecaster at National Weather Service again replied, 'based on incoming data, this winter is looking to be even colder than we expected.' The chief was surprised, but again went back to his tribe, told them that this might be a very cold winter indeed, and asked them to collect every scrap of wood they could find.

One week later, he called the National Weather Service yet again, hoping for a new answer. 'Are you absolutely sure that the winter is going to be very cold?' he asked.

'Positive,' the forecaster replied. 'In fact, it's going to be one of the coldest winters on record.'

'Really?' the shocked chief exclaimed. 'How can you be so sure?'

'Because,' the forecaster replied, 'the Indians are collecting firewood like crazy!'

Rake's **progress**

How to tell if you've hired the wrong teenager to rake up your leaves:

1. He charges you by the leaf.
2. He keeps asking where he should plug in the rake.
3. He picks up leaves one at a time, dips them in melted cheese and eats them.
4. He says, *'This won't take a minute'* and starts soaking your lawn with petrol.
5. He comes to your door and says, *'I've had a long talk with the leaves, and they've decided to stay.'*

Plenty more **fish** in the sea!

(Further fishy fun in Issue 63)

What game do fish like playing the most?
Name that tuna.

Why are fish boots the warmest ones to wear?
Because they have electric 'eels.

Why are dolphins cleverer than humans?
Within three hours they can train a man to stand at the side of a pool and feed them fish.

Who held the baby octopus to ransom?
Squidnappers.

What was the ruler of Russia's favourite fish?
Tsardines.

How do fish get to school?
By octobus.

Why is a fish easy to weigh?
Because it has its own scales.

What kind of fish is useful in freezing weather?
Skate.

What is the best way to communicate with a fish?
Drop it a line.

Where do you weigh whales?
At a whale weigh station.

What do you get if you cross a trout with an apartment?
A flat fish.

Autumn **superstitions**

It is said that if you catch a falling leaf before it hits the ground, you will have one month of good luck. If you can catch 12 leaves, the whole of the next year will be lucky for you. It is also said that the luckiest leaf of all is the last one to fall from the tree.

M-learning

For Majid Hayati, SMS can also mean 'Student Motivating System'.

The rapid advancement of technology has led to a parallel increase in the quantity of research into the application of mobile technologies to learning. In both popular and scholarly literature, terms such as *mobile*, *wireless*, *handheld* and *nomadic* are now widely used. Mobile learning, or m-learning, is a burgeoning subdivision of the e-learning movement, further evidenced by European initiatives such as the *MOBIlearn* project which explores the potential of mobile technologies to deliver informal, problem-based and workplace learning.

Common features of these devices now include internet access, voice-messaging, SMS text-messaging, cameras and even video-recording. As Lai, Yang, Chen, Ho and Chan point out, mobile technologies are quickly becoming indispensable – and they are readily available and typically less expensive than standard equipment.



The phenomenon of Short Message Service (SMS) or 'texting' is one that has been growing in many countries. Most people use SMS mainly for communicating with friends and family. But the almost ubiquitous presence and use of SMS in many urban and rural areas, and across different socioeconomic and gender lines, mean that there is great potential for this technology to be used in more productive ways.

Studies

Texting on mobile phones is particularly popular with young adults, and while it is considerably more difficult to enter text on a mobile phone than it is on a computer, mobile text messaging has begun to be used to support language learning. Thornton and Houser have developed several innovative projects using mobile phones to teach English at a Japanese university. One focused on providing vocabulary instruction by SMS. Three times a day, they texted short mini-lessons to their students, sending them in discrete chunks so they would be easily readable on their phones' tiny screens. These lessons defined five words per week, recycled previous vocabulary and used the words in various contexts, including episodic stories. The students were tested biweekly and compared to groups that received identical lessons via the web and on paper. The results indicated that the SMS students learnt over twice the number of vocabulary words as the web students, and that the SMS students improved their scores by nearly twice as much as those who had received their lessons on paper.

The use of SMS as an instructional content delivery and assessment tool for non-formal education would seem, therefore, to be practical. In fact, the Philippines Open University has recently offered an SMS-based distance

education programme and has developed modules on such topics as English grammar and personal health. However, more rigorous studies to determine the efficacy and feasibility of actually delivering educational content through SMS are still lacking.

One of the newest technologies with potential application in language learning is *moblogging*, an amalgam of *mobile* and *weblogging*. Gary Mielo defines moblogging as using a mobile phone or PDA 'in the field' to post words and/or pictures on a website. The use of blogs themselves is a recent trend in language teaching. They provide opportunities for language creation (eg writing journals) and a range of collaborative activities. Moblogs offer the potential to expand these benefits by removing time and place boundaries and adding up-to-the-minute authentic and personal visual content.

Through a combination of SMS and in-class feedback, the students can become familiar with different aspects of words

Skills

Markett, Sánchez, Weber and Tangney conducted research into the promotion of interaction via the use of SMS in class. Their students entered a message loop in real-time, in class, by sending SMS messages via their mobile phones. The lecturer, using a modem interfacing with customised software to produce SMS files, viewed the messages and verbally developed the interactive loop. The results indicated increased student participation in classroom discussions. However, apart from the cost of sending a text via SMS, the time required to type the messages was considered to be a negative aspect of the project. Many of the students reported that typing out SMS messages took a lot of time, distracted them from what was being said, and sometimes made them miss a point completely.

Mobile phones can be used to teach reading and writing skills; however, their usefulness for the teaching of listening and speaking is, in my opinion, outweighed by the disadvantages, such as the lack of body language, physical absence and voice distortion. Furthermore, the high cost of talking via mobile phones makes it practically impossible for the teaching of oral skills. As a result, teaching pronunciation, intonation patterns, stress patterns and communication strategies by mobile phone may not be viable.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary learning can be facilitated by the use of SMS as even short messages can provide the learners with authentic contexts in which the terms can be meaningfully practised. Depending on the students' level, the introduction of new words can be carried out through the use of pictures, translation, explanation, definition, and so on. With elementary students, new words, especially concrete nouns, can be introduced by means of pictures at the bottom of the text containing the new word. The L1 translation of the new vocabulary item can be an alternative to picture cues, especially with abstract words and concepts. With higher-level students, L2 definition or explanation can replace picture cues and L1 translation. Care must be taken to use each new word several times in the same text and recycle the vocabulary at regular intervals. Previously-taught items should then appear as known words in texts offering new vocabulary items.

Vocabulary can also be taught through code-mixing in an SMS text. To do this, the L1 lexis is inserted at the beginning of the text. In the next utterance, the L2 item appears in the same syntactic function as its L1 equivalent. This helps the learner recognise that the L2 and L1 items correspond. Later on, the L2 item can be used in different syntactic functions to introduce the other usages in the word family. The use of different syntactic forms of new vocabulary in further utterances helps learners internalise the new lexical items.

SMS can be used in two ways in the classroom to help vocabulary learning: pre-phase and post-phase. For example, suppose that you have a text (either for reading or listening) to teach in the lesson in a few days' time. There will, of course, be some unknown words in the text. Select the difficult words and provide short definitions and examples for them. Then send them by SMS to the whole class. This way the students can become familiar with the words in advance, and when they come to the lesson they may only have problem with their pronunciation.

Outside the class there are fewer time constraints and the informality of language that typifies the SMS message is more appropriate

The learning process does not stop here. Post-phase learning takes place outside the classroom and, again, SMS can play a role. After they have read or listened to a text in class, the students can be asked to make sentences with the words that were sent in the pre-phase. They then text their sentences to their teacher. The teacher takes note of any problems with the words and gives feedback in the next lesson. Furthermore, after the students have sent their sentences, the teacher can send back some multiple-choice questions on the words. The students can then check their answers quickly in the next lesson.

Through a combination of SMS and in-class feedback, the students can become familiar with different aspects of words: form, meaning, use and pronunciation. More importantly, they get multiple exposures to the written form of the words. This helps to stabilise the words in their memories, and it is a technique that can be used with all proficiency levels to improve learning.

Use

SMS is particularly good for further practice outside the classroom. Inside the classroom it has limitations and, in many circumstances, using a computer would be a much better option. Outside the class there are fewer time constraints and the informality of language that typifies the SMS message is more appropriate.

M-learning

Here are some suggestions and guidelines for using SMS outside the classroom:

- Make sure your learners understand the differences between formal and informal language. Learners, especially at lower levels, may be tempted to use the language used in SMS in formal situations. This may get them into bad habits, and could cause problems when they need to use formal language, particularly when a more formal written style is required.
- Due to the need for brevity, the spelling of words is usually changed in SMS. For example, *tomorrow* is often written as *tomoro* or even *2moro* in an SMS text. This can be dangerous for learners. Always remind them to learn the correct spelling of a word first before they use it in any other form.
- Riddles and jokes are two good ways of promoting language learning. Learners often send jokes and riddles to each other and they like them a lot, so using them to teach can be motivational and can provide good examples of authentic language use which are quick and easy to send by text.
- Short pieces of news, either those happening within a particular educational context or in the wider world, can also help learning. They have the advantage of being related to daily life and thus are likely to be of interest to the learners.
- Short language tests on a particular grammar point or selected items of vocabulary can be sent to the learners between lessons by SMS. The number of items should be restricted to one or two a day. These can keep the students interested in English outside of class and help them monitor their progress in the language.

★ ★ ★

The use of mobile phones and short messages to teach English is, of course, directly dependent on the course objectives, the classroom context, the expected degree of mastery of the language, the students' financial situation, their proficiency level and their willingness to participate in such activities. More importantly, using the technique too often takes away its novelty value and can make it boring.

In other words, SMS should not be considered solely as 'Short Message Service', nor should it be taken to mean 'Self-learning Mobile System', implying no control from the teacher as the head of the class. I think it is best regarded as a 'Student Motivating System', whose mission is to encourage the students to keep in permanent touch with the language, with the teacher and with their fellow students.

Despite the many benefits of mobile phones, they are, at the end of the day, only machines that can facilitate contact between people. They can neither think nor create. Therefore, a language class must not be entirely mobile-centred because this may reduce the role of the teacher, who should be the real provider of creativity and the authority and leader of the class. There will always be times when a piece of chalk can do better than a mobile phone. At other times, you may find that it provides just the right kind of student–teacher interaction that will enliven your class and motivate your students. ETp

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Lights, camera, action!

Michael Brewster

sets the scene for a productive video project.

Showing videos in the language classroom is widely recognised as a valuable tool to aid students, and the birth of the interactive whiteboard (IWB), which turns the class into a cinema, can make students even more enthusiastic about watching them. New technologies have continuously been adapted to classroom use, and I felt that the natural next step had to be to go beyond simply watching and to actually *produce* videos. Many of us have digital cameras, have experimented with the video option, and could without too much difficulty extend this to the classroom. After noticing some new dust-gathering digital video cameras at my school in London, I was keen to have a go ...

Scene 1: Why bother?

As I started the planning, it was evident that you could film any part of a lesson, which then posed the questions *What would actually be the benefits of filming it?* and *What would the students get from it, which they wouldn't get by doing the same activity in an ordinary lesson?* My initial aims were quite basic, but experimenting over time and with a variety of classes led me to discover other benefits that I had not anticipated.

Checklist

Digital video cameras are very similar to ordinary digital cameras, but it is always a good idea to do a test recording and playback before the lesson.

For filming

- **Video camera:** Familiarise yourself with the controls before the lesson, and remove the lens cover!
- **Battery:** Charge the battery before the lesson, and have a spare battery on charge during the lesson just in case.
- **Memory card:** Check that the available recording time on the memory card is sufficient.
- **Tripod:** If you need a tripod, make sure you know where it is.

For playback

- **Cables:** Check that you have the ones you need – Camera/TV or Camera/IWB.
- **Interactive whiteboards:** Check beforehand that any computer that will be used has appropriate software to play the videos back, particularly if you wish to play them on an IWB. Failing that, it may be possible to play directly from the camera to the IWB without connecting it to the computer.
- **TVs:** A digital camera can easily be connected to a TV, but it is worth practising the procedure and checking that you have the necessary cables. It would be a major disappointment for the students to go to all this effort and then be let down by the teacher not knowing how to play back their videos to the class.

Ten reasons to get out the clapper board:

1 Student interaction through the whole process generates a lot of practical language.

2 A variety of learning styles can be accommodated.

3 Videoing provides an effective means of assessing and determining the students' needs, which can aid planning for future lessons.

▶▶▶

Lights, camera, action!

4 It develops the students' awareness of their strengths and weaknesses, which can be enhanced through self-evaluation and peer evaluation.

5 Giving greater responsibility helps to encourage learner autonomy.

6 Videos created by students can provide an additional resource and can be used in teaching in a similar way to professional videos.

7 Students are encouraged to concentrate on whole-body involvement as well as speaking.

8 It promotes creativity and imagination, which are powerful aids to development.

9 Video activities are memorable and motivating and help students to firmly anchor the targets of the lesson.

10 It can be a powerful eye through which to view yourself, the teacher. After all, self-evaluation is one of the best methods that can be used to ensure that you continue to develop professionally.

Scene 2: Problems?

Undoubtedly, problems can arise with operating a video camera and filming the students but, as with any lesson, we can try to predict potential difficulties when preparing the lesson and think about how to overcome them. The following list is by no means exhaustive, but it addresses areas that I perceived to be problematic, and gives suggestions drawn from my experience of how to approach them.

Technical problems

- The best solution to potential problems is to familiarise yourself with the equipment through trial and error before the lesson.
- It is useful to have a checklist (see the box on page 59) that enables you to determine quickly whether you have all the necessary equipment.
- Failing all that, another approach that can be useful is to plead ignorance and have the students teach each other and you how to use the equipment, which can ultimately provide a direct or indirect tool that generates practical language.

Teaching problems

There is no simple answer to the question of how the students will respond, and their own preferences and learning styles are likely to result in a wide variety of reactions, which may include shyness, reluctance, over-acting, and too much or too little confidence; we must be sensitive to them all. However, there are a few tactics that can help you achieve the aims of the lesson:

- Explain the activity and allow the students to film *you* as part of the demonstration, as students may then be more willing to try it themselves.
- Allow the students to select roles: director, camera crew, actor/actress, to ensure that everyone is at ease and as a result is more likely to engage in the lesson. Those who are shy may even be prepared to step in front of the camera after watching others; I never sang at karaoke sessions in Japan until I had seen a few others get on the stage first!
- Video a variety of activities in the classroom across a period of time. Our abilities improve in all areas of study through practice.
- Stay out of the classroom (or completely out of the group activities) while the students are filming. This can be advantageous as it can result in a performance that is more natural or even more expressive than one given with you in earshot. When playing my students' work back, I have seen a creative side to them that I didn't see when monitoring during a normal lesson, and my predictions of how certain students would behave in front of the camera were also wrong. It is also worth noting that the location of the filming does not always have to be in the classroom.

Time problems

It is easy to be too ambitious in what you hope to achieve in the class, but one of the most pertinent lessons that I learnt was that if you wish students to be creative, then you have to allow time for creative thinking. Using video cameras does not have to be limited to a final-hour time slot, and can be spread across several lessons.

- Initially, it is easy to underestimate how long it will take from start to finish, which reinforces the benefits of using this type of activity on a number of occasions.
- It is wise, nevertheless, to give students clear time expectations and give ongoing encouragement and reminders.
- If there are not enough video cameras for each group, it is advantageous to have another stream of work in progress, instead of simply filming as a whole-class activity. It is more productive and avoids any concerns that watching back is unnecessary repetition.

Scene 3: Final thoughts before taking the plunge ...

With any new technology, material or methodology, we often have an opinion as to how productive and user-friendly it will be, and are sometimes reluctant even to give it a chance. I, for one, did not welcome the interactive whiteboard with open arms, but our love–hate relationship is now comparative to that of an old couple who no longer wish to argue and, for the most part, work well together with just the occasional tiff!

Whilst we all have a good idea of what works in *our* classroom, we should continuously be looking for new ideas that may work just as well, if not better, from the students' point of view. I am by no means saying that we must throw out the old and bring in the new, simply that greater variety in the classroom can lead to renewed motivation from the students as it will increase the likelihood of meeting all their needs. ETp

On pages 61 and 62 are some practical ideas for video activities.



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Practical ideas for video activities

Making videos has unlimited possibilities, but small-group activities which go on to use the videos the students produce as a resource can often be the best idea. They do not require the rest of the class to watch while filming is taking place, and those waiting to film can do other work until their turn comes. Furthermore, students are likely to be more engaged when watching the videos as they will be curious to see what their classmates have produced in order to compare it with their own efforts. They also need to pay greater attention if the videos are subsequently used as a teaching resource. Here are some of the more memorable activities that could easily be adapted for use in several classes.





1 Vocabulary acting/miming

Possible aims: To give the opportunity for the students to use their creativity to recycle vocabulary.

Level: Any

Before and during filming:

- Set the context (eg crime) and give a handout of the target language.
- Give the students the chance to brainstorm how the vocabulary can be portrayed through acting and/or miming, and be prepared to demonstrate.
- Split the students into two groups and give them ten minutes to decide roles (actor, camera crew, director, etc) and to brainstorm what they will do during filming.
- Give the groups ten minutes to film a series of separate short clips (preferably in another location) that illustrate as much of the vocabulary as possible and total no more than 3–5 minutes.

After filming:

- Watch the clips from each group with the whole class, and encourage the students to identify the vocabulary that their classmates are trying to illustrate.

2 Commercials

Possible aims: To stimulate the students' creativity by developing authentic commercials for a specific product.

Level: Intermediate +

Before and during filming:

- As an optional lead-in, show the students two or three commercials, using videos or the internet to prompt a response to the following questions:
  - *Do you have any favourite/least favourite commercials? What is it that you like/dislike about them?*
  - *Why do you think we remember certain commercials and forget others?*
  - *What things in a commercial make you want to buy a product?*





- Offer a limited selection of products (eg bottled water, a mobile phone, etc) that the students will be happy to make a commercial about. Agreeing to use the same product will enable the groups to compare and contrast their work at the end.
- Split the class into at least three groups and explain that they will each be making a commercial that must be no longer than one minute for the chosen product.
- Give the groups ten minutes to discuss their ideas of how best to advertise this product. Prompt them to think about the pronunciation, body language, music, sound effects, words, phrases and slogans commonly used in commercials.
- Give the groups five to seven minutes to film their commercials, each in a different location, but stress again that it must be no more than one minute long because of the cost involved in advertising on television!

After filming:

- After watching the commercials:
  - Discuss what was memorable about each of them.
  - Compare and contrast the different ways in which the groups chose to advertise their product.
  - Ask the class to say which commercial would most encourage them to buy the product and why.
  - Discuss whether they would change their commercials if they were to have another opportunity.

3 Charity appeal

Possible aims: To practise using persuasive language.

Level: Pre-intermediate +

Before and during filming:

- Ask the students to brainstorm information about charities and how they raise money in their countries. Encourage them to refer to current charity work.
- Explain that, working in groups, they must decide which charity they are working for and must produce a television charity appeal requesting donations. (It can help to give them the opportunity to explore the internet for ideas and examples.)
- Get the students to film their charity appeal. Set strict time limits (eg ten minutes to film a two-minute appeal) and give the students the opportunity to produce their work in another location.

After filming:

- Watch all the appeals as a whole-class activity and give the students a fictional fixed sum of money which they can donate to charity. Encourage them to discuss which charity they will donate their money to and why, making their decisions purely on the basis of the charity appeal.
- The success of the appeals will be shown by the amount of money that they receive in donations from the other groups (and no, they cannot give the money to their own group!).




4 Lip-synchronisation of a prior listening

This activity can be used as an extension to a listening activity consisting of a dialogue or series of dialogues that the students have already been exposed to, and one where there is immediate access to the recording and the transcript (eg from the textbook).

Possible aims: To increase the students' awareness of their strengths and weaknesses in pronunciation (eg connected speech, intonation and rhythm), facial expression and body language.

Level: Pre-intermediate +

Before and during filming:

- Choose the recording from a listening activity that the students have already done. Put the students into groups according to the number of speakers in either the whole listening activity or a section of it, and give them the transcript. (Dividing a listening activity into sections would give greater variation and reduce repetition among the groups.)
- Allocate specific roles from the dialogue they have received to the members of each group, or get the students to allocate the roles within their groups.
- Allow time for the students to rehearse their roles as a group, and tell them to concentrate on how they move their mouths and lips, their eye contact and their body language. It is important, however, to emphasise that during filming they will need to mime and that the actual sound will come from the recording. (You could give them the example of how some singers do this during live concert performances.)
- Ask each group to film their dialogue, playing the sound recording as they do so. Remind them to synchronise their lip movements accordingly and to use appropriate eye contact and body language. (It may be necessary to film in front of the whole class because of the additional complications of using video cameras and CD players together.)

After filming:

- After filming the groups, play back the videos and illustrate how they appear to sound like a native speaker. This should increase their awareness of the strengths/weaknesses in aspects of their own pronunciation and how facial expressions and body language are also an important part of communication.

Extension:

- After the whole class has watched the videos back, you can draw attention to any specific points (eg pronunciation, production of individual sounds, connected speech, etc).
- The same groups can then perform the same roles in front of the whole class and without lip-synching to the original recording. This time they have to perform and produce the sounds themselves. (You may or may not be decide to record them and play back their dialogues.)
- This final performance will hopefully be more natural and can be compared and contrasted with their video performance.

5 Talk-show interview

Possible aims: To practise listening and responding in the context of an up-tempo television talk-show interview.

Level: Upper-intermediate +

Before and during filming:

- Show the whole class an interview with a well-known celebrity (eg I use Will Smith being interviewed by Jonathan Ross on *YouTube*) and prompt the students to look for the type of language and questions used, especially impromptu questions and reactions.
- Put the students into groups and ask them to choose a guest or guests for their own interviews. Tell them to choose their roles: interviewer(s), guest(s) and camera operator.
- Give the 'guests' the opportunity to use the internet to find relevant information about themselves, such as their latest work or details of their personal lives.
- Have the interviewers brainstorm questions that will be asked.
- Emphasise that the interview must run smoothly and must be exciting in order to maintain viewer ratings!
- Have the students film their interviews in different locations and set a time limit for them to complete them.

After filming:

- Get the students in each group to work together to produce comprehension questions based on their interviews, which can be given to the viewers before they watch.
- The video then becomes a resource where the students watch the videos of the other groups to find the answers.




6 News report

(The same ideas could also be used for a brief documentary.)

Possible aims: To practise using formal English to give factual information in a current affairs setting.

Level: Intermediate +

Before and during filming:

- Put the students into groups and ask them to obtain information from either newspapers or the internet about two current affairs stories, two sport stories and the weather forecast.
- Tell each group to prepare to give this information in the role of news reporters in a three-minute news broadcast.
- Give each group ten minutes to film their broadcast (preferably in another location) while the other groups prepare between five and ten comprehension questions for their own news report.
- Make photocopies of the question sheets for the other groups.

After filming:

- Give the students the question sheets from the other groups and then ask them to watch the videos and answer the questions. The videos have now become a teaching resource.

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Five things you always wanted to know about Web 2.0 (but were 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 looks at Web 2.0 and how it is relevant to language teachers.

1 Web 2.0? I think I missed Web 1.0!

The internet has been around for several decades now, and in that time it has changed quite a bit. Think of a typical web page ten years ago, such as a company website, or an online article. You accessed the page, and read what was there – the page consisted of static content. This was Web 1.0 (pronounced 'web one point oh'). In the last few years, though, there has been a shift towards *user-generated* content, that is, web content produced by the average internet user like you or me. This is Web 2.0 ('web two point oh'). Think of blogs, or videos on *YouTube*, or photos on *Flickr* – the average internet user can easily create and upload contents to these sites. So when we talk about the change from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0, we are simply referring to the growth of user-generated content. Internet users today are not just consumers of content put on the web by someone else; they are now 'prosumers' – we both *produce* and *consume* web-based content. Of course, this doesn't mean that Web 1.0 content has disappeared – it's still there, and very useful it is, too!

2 Can you describe it to me in two sentences or fewer?

You produce all the content. They keep all the revenue. (This is a quote from *http://bash.org/?779320*, which sums it up nicely!)

3 Can you give some more examples of Web 1.0 versus Web 2.0?

Think of an online encyclopaedia, such as *Encarta* or the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* online. The contents of these encyclopaedias have been compiled by experts and are published online as a series of web pages. Now think of *Wikipedia*. The contents in *Wikipedia* are compiled by people like you and me – all you need to do to contribute to *Wikipedia* is to sign up for an account and you can then add or edit information there. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* online is an example of the Web 1.0 approach; *Wikipedia* is an example of the Web 2.0 approach. We can draw the same distinction between a personal web page, in which you can include your biodata, publications, CV, etc, and compare that to your blog, which is regularly updated, is much more dynamic, and can allow readers to comment and interact with you. Web 2.0 is not necessarily 'better' than Web 1.0 – there is a place for both in our lives.

4 What has it got to do with language teachers?

With Web 2.0 tools, teachers and students can now produce content for the internet. As we saw in ET*p* issue 63, you and your students can set up blogs. You can also use other Web 2.0 tools such as podcasting, online slideshows, or wikis to create internet-based content with your students. Getting your students to use Web 2.0 tools is hugely motivating for them for a number of reasons. They get to use up-to-date internet-based technologies, some of which they may already use in their personal lives. By publishing content on the internet, they potentially have a worldwide audience, and they will be that much keener to produce good quality work. You can also make contact with other teachers from around the world (for example via online teachers' networks*) and set up online projects with them to encourage your students to visit and comment on the blogs, podcasts, cartoons, slideshows, and so on of a class in another country.

5 What about Web 2.0 and me? How do I get started?

Web 2.0 is all about user-generated content, so you need to start by generating some content!

- You could set up a personal blog, which could serve as a model for your students to then set up their own blogs.
- You could get your students to create a guide to your city or town in a class wiki.
- You could even get them to research a topic and contribute to the *Simple English Wikipedia* (*http://simple.wikipedia.org*)!

Your younger students may already be using Web 2.0 tools, and uploading videos taken on their mobile phones to *YouTube*, or they may have their own blogs or *Facebook* accounts. A very good starting point is to ask your students about their own digital lives!

* One of the most active and effective online teachers' networks I know of is the *Webheads* community (*www.webheads.info*).



Nicky Hockly has been involved in EFL teaching and teacher training since 1987. She is Director of Pedagogy of The Consultants-E, an online training and development consultancy. Nicky is co-author of *How to Teach English with Technology*, published by Longman, which won the 2007 Ben Warren Prize.

Contact Nicky at **nicky.hockly@theconsultants-e.com** and let her know of any other ICT areas you'd like her to explore in this series.

Webwatcher

Russell Stannard shares the easiest screen recorder software on the market.

I usually use *Webwatcher* to show you websites that you can immediately use in class, but for once I am going to introduce a *tool* you can use, rather than *content*. But I promise this is a very very special tool!

Jing

Some of you are already using my teaching videos at *www.teachertrainingvideos.com* and some readers have written and asked me how I make them. Basically, I use a piece of software that records a computer screen just as if there were a video camera pointed at it. It also records your voice if you have a microphone connected. It is known as *screen capture software*, and there is now a really easy free version available, called *Jing*. It even saves all your screen captures on their server, so you don't have to keep them on your computer. You just have an individual link (URL) to each screen capture you make. This, of course, makes it very simple to send a link for your screen capture to your students, who can then use it.

Here are a few quick ideas of how screen captures can be used:

Produce a list of words you want the students to learn in *Word* and then turn on the screen recorder software (SRS) and record yourself reading out the words and highlighting the stress in each one. You could also read out example sentences using the words. Send the link to your students, who can view the list, repeat the words and learn them. You can see an example at **http://screencast.com/t/1sRsHp6ZFrP**.

If a particular grammar problem keeps coming up in the class, you could make a small video where you give an explanation. Open up *Word* and key in some example sentences. Then turn on the SRS and record yourself explaining the grammar point. Remember, the software just records what is on the screen, so if you use the bold or highlighting tools or add anything to the screen, it will all be shown when you play back the video. You could build up a whole collection of mini-grammar lessons for your students. There is an example at **http://screencast.com/t/mSNylyD69**.

Of course, you could also turn the tables around and get the students to use the software, if they have it on their computers. For example, for homework you could ask them to write the names of five important people in their lives in a *Word* document. They then turn on the SRS and begin talking about the people: where they met them, why they are important, what sort of personalities they have, etc. The students save their screen captures and send you the links. In this way, you can get them speaking as part of their homework!

Capturing

People are often surprised at how easy it is to use *Jing*. Basically, you just need to download the software onto your computer. You can get it from **www.techsmith.com** and it is free.

A *Jing* button will appear at the top of your screen (like a little sun). Roll your cursor over this button, and you are offered three choices. Choose the first of these, which asks you to mark out an area of the screen that you want to capture. You then have the choice of capturing an image (like taking a picture of the screen) or capturing the screen as a video (as if you had a video camera pointed at it). Press the correct button and off you go. If you are videoing, you can pause and continue at any time. To stop the video recording, press the stop button; the video will immediately be processed and then you will be presented with a button to click on, which will play it back. If you are happy with what you see, you can save it onto your own computer or you can choose to add it to your screen cast server. This is where you can store, edit and re-use all the videos you have made without having to save anything onto your own computer. It also makes it much easier for other people to play back and access your videos.

Saving

You need to register to use the screen cast server by giving a few details. But once you have done that, you can save all your videos and screen captures to the site. What is incredible is that, once your screen cast is loaded, it will tell you that it is ready and the URL for that video will be available to paste into your browser. This really saves you time. So you could make a video, load it up onto the screen cast server, wait for them to tell you it is ready, then open up an email to your students and paste the URL directly into the email. The students simply open up the email, click on the URL and play the video. It is actually harder to explain than it is to do! I have made a set of videos that show you very quickly how to do everything. You can find them at **www.harbornecomputers.co.uk/~teachertraining/Jing/index.html**.

You are limited as to the length of the video (I think it is five minutes for the free edition), but that is the only restriction. If you choose to take a still screen capture, you can also annotate the image by drawing lines, writing text and adding arrows, etc – and this is all provided by *Jing*. It really is a great tool and worth investigating.



Russell Stannard is a principal lecturer at the University of Westminster, UK, where he teaches using technology on multimedia and TESOL courses. He also runs www.teachertrainingvideos.com, a website that trains English teachers to use technology, which has won a Times Higher Education Award for Outstanding Initiatives in Information and Communications Technology (ICT).

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

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Advertising



In this column Rose Senior explains why certain teaching techniques and class management strategies are effective, and identifies specific issues that can assist all language teachers in improving the quality of their teaching.

Questioning 2

In the real world, outside the language classroom, we normally ask questions because we want to find something out: where the station is, who won the soccer match, whether anyone has seen our door keys, and so on. We're asking because we don't know the answer. In language classrooms, the situation is different: we commonly ask questions to which we already know the answer. Why do we do this and how should we do it? In this article, I will explain the purpose of asking questions for which we already have the answer – technically known as *display questions* – and suggest ways in which we can ask such questions in varied, engaging and motivating ways.

We ask display questions because we want to find out how much our students have understood, how much they remember, or how well they can reproduce the language we have just taught. When the focus of our lesson is grammar, our priority is accuracy: we want our students to produce grammatically accurate responses to our questions and to complete grammar exercises correctly. When the focus of our lesson is the development of interactive skills, our priority is fluency: we want our students to respond readily to questions using whichever words come most easily to them. When the focus of our lesson is the development of listening or reading skills, we often want our students to complete multiple-choice or true/false questions, thereby demonstrating the extent to which they have understood what they have just heard or read.

We ask display questions because we want to find out how much our students have understood

Whatever the purpose of our questions, we need to respond to our students' answers in ways that are as encouraging as possible – even if the answer is incorrect. Although there are occasions when it is appropriate to call out *'Wrong!'* in a jokey tone of voice, it is normally better to say *'No, not quite'*, *'Yes, that's one possible word'*, or *'Y-e-e-s'* in a doubtful-sounding manner – before inviting the student or others in the room to supply alternative answers. Students need to understand that our responses can be to what they are saying, to how they are saying it, or to a combination of both. If a student provides an answer that is correct in content but not in form, a good technique is to look at them in a questioning manner, thereby encouraging them to repeat what they have just said. Students often spontaneously self-correct when repeating an answer and, if they do not, we can supply the correct form. It is good to have students develop the habit of echoing correct models of the language: a strategy used by all good language learners.

Most of us can usefully expand our range of questioning techniques. We always need to frame each question clearly, using words that the students already know and writing the question on the board if necessary. We should address each question to the class at large, looking round the room as we do so. It may be appropriate to have students confer with a partner, in which case we should say *'Talk to your partner!'*, using a gesture such as bringing our hands together as we do so. (This gives students more thinking time and shows that we value collaboration.) If no one is able to answer, we can jog our students' memory by giving hints: *'It's a word beginning with B'*, *'It's an adjective that means the opposite of "lazy"'*, *'It's an expression we learnt last week'*, and so on. By questioning in these ways, we are putting into practice the class-centred principle of inclusivity: constantly seeking to involve all members in the collective learning of the whole class.

Most of us can usefully expand our range of questioning techniques

When checking the answers to grammar exercises with our students, we can make the task more engaging by occasionally doing things differently. For example, if we are checking true/false answers to reading comprehensions, we can go through the questions and encourage the class to give their response in unison. If we detect that some people have called out *true* while others have called out *false*, we can say *'Right! Let's have a show of hands. How many people think it's true and how many think it's false? Everyone must decide one way or the other!'* Then – after a short pause for dramatic effect – we can give the correct answer, making sure that everyone understands why one answer is correct and the other not.

The way that we select which student to answer each question should be governed by the class-centred principle of equity: giving all class members a fair go. If we decide to select students randomly, we should try to choose stronger students to answer the more difficult questions and weaker students to answer the easier ones. Every student should be given the opportunity to answer a question: no one should be left out. If we forget who hasn't yet had a question, we only have to ask the class – who will willingly tell us who hasn't yet been chosen. Alternatively, we may decide to ask questions round the class in a set order – up and down rows or table by table – in such a way that each student can predict when they will be asked, and can prepare their answer in advance. Although it is unwise to ask questions in a predictable order all the time, this practice benefits weaker learners, who have more time to prepare their answers.

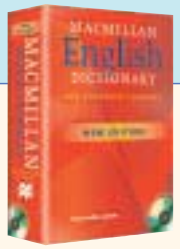
By focusing on how we can ask questions and respond to student answers in ways that both boost the self-confidence of individuals and enhance the learning experience of all class members, we can increase student motivation and engagement. ETp



Rose Senior is a conference presenter and teacher educator. She is the author of *The Experience of Language Teaching*, published by CUP.

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Prize crossword 37



ET*p* presents the thirty-seventh in our series of prize crosswords. Try it … and maybe win a prize! Once you have done it successfully, let your students have a go.

Send your entry (not forgetting to include your full name, postal address and telephone number) to Prize crossword 37, English Teaching *professional*, Keyways Publishing, PO Box 100, Chichester, West Sussex, PO18 8HD, UK. Ten correct entries will be drawn from a hat on 10 November 2009 and the senders will each receive a copy of the second edition of the *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*, applauded for its unique red star system showing the frequency of the 7,500 most common words in English.

13	2	25	26	13	13	■	19	3	15	7	26	25	13	26
21	■	■	■	22	■	■	■	19	■	15	■	26	■	■
19	■	■	■	23	22	17	26	9	■	13	■	13	■	20
22	■	8	■	26	■	■	■	1	■	19	3	2	15	26
9	■	25	■	■	■	■	■	26	■	22	■	■	■	■
25	26	22	11	15	2	16	■	■	■	11	22	25	1	26
18	■	17	■	■	■	26	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	7
3	■	2	■	15	■	11	26 E	1 G	22 A	11	■	■	■	26
■	■	15	■	3	■	11	■	22	■	18	17	17	19	25
■	■	17	■	13	■	18	■	5	■	12	■	11	■	■
8	25	26	7	15	26	10	■	26	■	12	18	19	1	6
22	■	■	■	13	■	■	■	■	■	16	■	26	■	■
13	22	1	■	2	26	22	17	6	■	■	■	13	26	24
2	■	■	■	■	■	15	■	22	■	14	■	■	■	■
26	4	26	17	2	26	9	■	2	25	18	8	6	16	■

1 G	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22 A	23	24	25	26 E

To solve the puzzle, find which letter each number represents. You can keep a record in the boxes above. The definitions of the words in the puzzle are given, but not in the right order. When you have finished, you will be able to read the quotation.

22	2	■	26	7	26	25	16	■	10	18	25	9
22	■	25	26	8	19	2	22	2	15	18	3	■
9	15	26	13	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

Alexander Pope, *The Rape of the Lock*

VERY FREQUENT WORDS

*** To emphasise an idea, fact or detail
*** Confronted head-on
*** To relax after exertion
*** Used for referring to yourself
*** Bigger than usual in size
*** At any time, all the time
*** The real character or nature of things
*** The business of a doctor, lawyer or other professional
*** To give instructions firmly
*** Allowed by the law
*** To happen unexpectedly
*** Males or females considered as separate groups
*** To help students to learn something
*** A piece of clothing worn on the head

FREQUENT WORDS

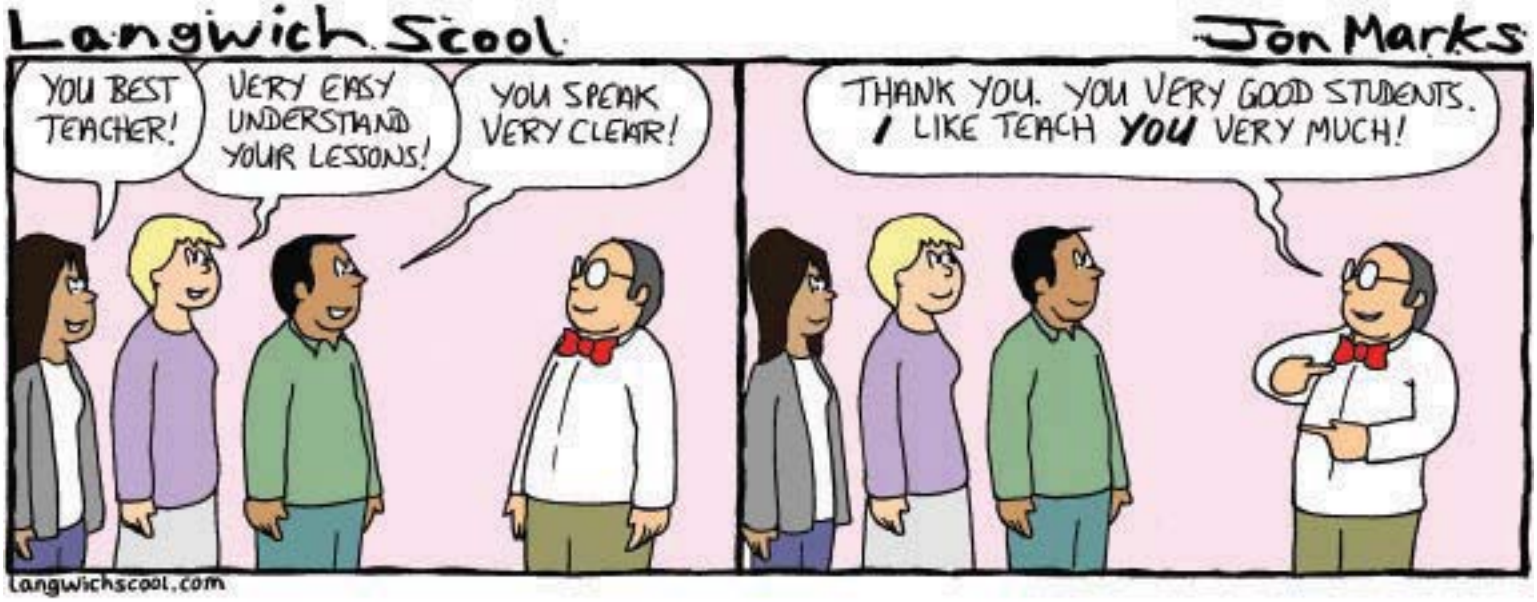
** Space and everything that exists in it
** Relating to things that you can see
** To look longingly
** Pieces of information that provide solutions
** Money, food or other help given to people who need it
** An object given as a prize to the winner of a competition

FAIRLY FREQUENT WORDS

* A section of the armed forces, especially of the air force
* A strong metal box with a special lock
* To take the knot out of a piece of string
* The colour of the middle of an egg
* The area just inside the entrance to a hotel

LESS FREQUENT WORDS

– To use a part of your body to give a little push to someone
– The opportunity to see something before the general public
– A big branch on a tree
– To become soft and start to bend
– A kind of glue, often made of flour and water
– Removed forcefully from a place or job, or removed from a machine
– A knockout in a fight



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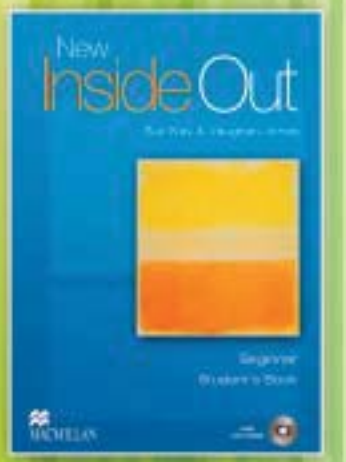
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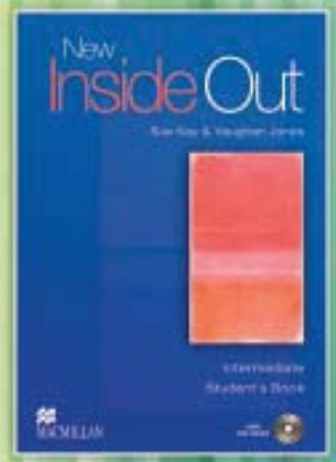
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