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CLIL: the nature of the beast
Mary Spratt

Is the Bard barred?
Mark Almond

Choosing tunes
Martine Ashmore

Which side are you on?
Adam Brown



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Editorial

On a final read-through of the articles in this issue, I was struck by the trouble to which teachers will go to make learning as easy and pleasurable for their students as possible. Rose Senior sums up the principle in her article on scaffolding, outlining the way teachers can provide support for learners and gradually remove it as they become confident of their own abilities – in the same way that construction workers erect scaffolding as a support, only removing it when the building can stand on its own.

Simon Mumford supports students' learning by making his own materials. He has a variety of games up his sleeve which use illustrated vocabulary cards to get his students speaking and interacting in class. Nicky Hockly also looks at the materials teachers make for their classes and recommends a little extra work on their word processing skills to give a better quality of presentation.

In a detailed attack on a specific linguistic problem, Jackie Lee pins down exactly what it is about pronouns that some students don't understand. She works systematically to tackle the issue and get her students first to understand the function and use of pronouns and then to employ them successfully.

For Martine Ashmore, too, the devil is in the detail. Rather than simply using popular songs to fill the odd spare five minutes in a lesson, she analyses potential songs closely to ensure that a song will not only resonate with the students, but that there is a learning point, the lyrics are clear, the content suitable and that even the length and proportion of words to instrumental sections are appropriate.

Paul Bress goes that extra mile in ensuring that his students attain a reasonable level of intelligibility in their pronunciation. He recognises that it is not enough for them to be intelligible to their teachers and fellow students in class; they have to learn to hold their own out in the real world.





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CLIL: the nature of the beast

Mary Spratt sets CLIL and ELT side by side for a close comparison.

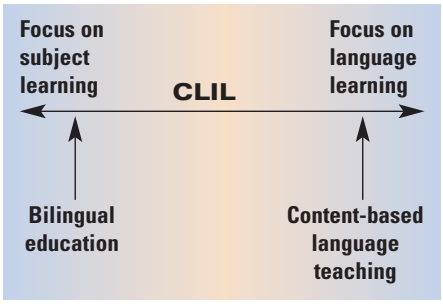
CLIL is being put forward more and more as an alternative to ELT, and many teachers are asking themselves: *What exactly is CLIL? Should I be using it with my classes?* This article aims to provide readers with some pointers for answering these questions.

We will start by defining CLIL and ELT.

Definitions

CLIL (content and language integrated learning) is an approach to teaching and learning in which school subjects are taught and studied in a second (third/fourth) language. So it is different from foreign language teaching, as in CLIL a foreign language is the vehicle for a form of subject-based teaching. In other words, while language and subject learning are both the aims of CLIL, the main focus of the lesson is the subject, not the language.

This is a 'hard' form of CLIL, but not the only form. In practice, CLIL exists in different guises on a continuum with content-based ELT at the softer end and bilingual education focusing exclusively on learning subject matter through the medium of a foreign language at the harder end. We could show this continuum, as follows:



This article will refer to CLIL as taught at the mid point on this diagram, ie with the dual aim of subject and foreign language learning. I will use the term ELT (English Language Teaching) to refer to learning or teaching the English language as a tool for communicating in daily situations or about daily, social or professional needs, and in ways which may follow a variety of methodologies, eg task-based learning, PPP, the lexical approach, the communicative approach.

Aims

Broadly speaking, the aims of CLIL are to improve both the learners' knowledge and skills in a subject and their language skills in the language the subject is taught through. Language is used as the medium for learning subject content, and subject content is used as a resource for learning the language. The aims of CLIL are often specified in terms of Do Coyle's 'four Cs':

- **Communication:** improving overall target language competence;
- **Content:** learning the knowledge and skills of the subject;
- **Culture:** building intercultural knowledge and understanding;
- **Cognition:** developing thinking skills.

The aims of ELT, as often stated in course descriptions and syllabuses, are to enable learners to learn the structures, vocabulary and skills needed for a particular purpose. This purpose will sometimes be related to some form of English for Special Purposes, but is more often related to daily or survival needs and topics of general interest.

The different aims of CLIL and ELT lead to different classroom experiences in terms of teaching methodologies, content for learning and language use. They also involve different contexts for learning. Let's look at these.

Classroom experiences

Methodology

The methodology employed for CLIL generally focuses on developing in an interactive way the knowledge, skills and cognitive abilities involved in subject learning. Language is taught mainly through acquisition, though with some overt support through the use of scaffolding devices such as speaking and writing frames and word glossaries. Methodologies in ELT vary along the cline of more to less communicative, with language taught either by acquisition or focus on form, depending on their point on the cline. Many ELT classrooms combine the two.

Content

The content of CLIL lessons varies according to the subject being taught through CLIL, eg geography, physics, music. However, it will centre on the facts, information and skills of the subject, subject-related concepts and the cognitive skills required to learn about the subject's concepts. In ELT, content is generally related to the learners' daily and survival needs and general interests, particularly at lower levels, with sometimes a more ESP focus, such as English for academic purposes or English for business, taking over at more advanced levels, and a more content- or topic-based focus at primary level.

Language

The different content of CLIL and ELT results in different types of target language and language use in the classroom. In CLIL we see:

- a predominance of subject-related vocabulary;
- language for exploring, discussing and writing about the subject matter;
- language for employing cognitive skills (eg defining, giving reasons for opinions, evaluating, hypothesising, drawing conclusions, exemplifying);
- language for carrying out learning skills (eg locating information, interpreting information, classifying).

Much of the language taught in CLIL is related to the development of cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP).

Language is not graded across a CLIL syllabus and, if they are focused on, grammatical or structural patterns occur in the context of achieving particular academic functions, eg the use of the passive voice to report on the procedure in an experiment, or the use of the past tense to relate a past event in history or geography. These patterns do not form the building blocks of a syllabus and are not usually subject to 'controlled' or 'freer' practice, but may be introduced through scaffolding.

In ELT, the language focused on may be the grammar, functions, skills or vocabulary relevant to dealing with tasks, daily situations or an ESP focus. Language itself or language skills are often the starting point for lesson planning, and daily contexts, tasks or topics are provided to give the language meaning and relevance. The language is likely to be graded to a greater or lesser extent, and is likely to form the basis for the syllabus and its progression.

> *The language taught in CLIL is primarily related to the subject being taught and to the learning of academic learning and thinking skills*

We can see from the above that there are significant differences between CLIL and ELT. To recap, CLIL focuses on teaching a *subject*. It uses language as a vehicle for doing this and the method of learning language is predominantly acquisition. The language taught in CLIL is primarily related to the subject being taught and to the learning of academic learning and thinking skills. It tends not to be graded and does not determine the content or progression of the syllabus.

ELT, on the other hand, generally focuses much more on linguistic forms and meanings than CLIL and on practising them in the classroom. It does not generally concern itself with teaching cognitive or learning skills or the facts and figures of a subject (with exceptions, mainly at primary level). The main focus of ELT lessons generally remains what it always has been, ie language itself and/or using it. The language it teaches is usually related to daily survival language and interests, is likely to be subject to some form of grading and forms the building blocks of the syllabus.

Contexts

Let's look at these factors in the contexts of teaching CLIL and ELT: where, how often, by whom and materials.

Where?

CLIL operates primarily in compulsory learning settings. ELT is taught in compulsory learning settings, too, but it is also widely taught in language school settings, spanning a greater age range than CLIL and learners with a wider range of immediate and/or identifiable needs for the language.

How often?

The time allocations given over to the study of CLIL differ widely, from immersion contexts, in which students learn all or most of their school subjects in a second language, to drip-feed contexts, in which learners learn perhaps just one school subject in a second language for a few hours a week and possibly for a limited period. In compulsory schooling, ELT tends to be taught for approximately three hours a week, while at tertiary level or in language schools this can vary considerably.

By whom?

In terms of teachers, CLIL can be taught by either a subject teacher or a language teacher. Sometimes in certain school settings, language and subject teachers cooperate through team teaching to teach a particular subject. Keith Kelly has suggested that ideally a teacher teaching CLIL would have this profile:

- has subject specialism;
- is proficient in the L2;
- uses CLIL methodology;
- uses language-appropriate materials;
- integrates content and language learning during lessons;
- has the skills needed to plan CLIL lessons;
- is able to identify the language demands of subject materials;
- is familiar with aspects of CLIL task design;
- participates in professional development.

ELT teachers, on the other hand, are generally required to have proficiency in English, knowledge about the English language and a grounding in ELT pedagogy and methodologies. We can see that the abilities suggested for a CLIL teacher, even if ideal, go well beyond those required of an ELT teacher.

►►►

CLIL: the nature of the beast

Materials

Finally, in terms of materials, there is a wealth of ELT materials available commercially, catering for different ages, contexts of learning and learning purposes. CLIL, which is younger than ELT, is yet to be supported by a similar range of materials. The large differences currently existing in teaching contexts, eg age of uptake, subject area and amount of time allocation, no doubt make commercial materials less easy to produce.

Effectiveness

Besides knowing what makes CLIL and ELT intrinsically different, teachers thinking of adopting CLIL may also want to know more about its effectiveness as compared with ELT. While ELT is able to boast many success stories, it has also been criticised (for example by Pérez-Vidal) for not being able to provide in the classroom sufficient exposure to or interaction with the foreign language to allow sufficient language processing to take place, and for tending to be quite superficial in its topic content. These shortcomings are said to lead to demotivation of learners and insufficient cognitive engagement with the language.

Here are some of the claims that have been made for CLIL:

- CLIL does not negatively affect learning of a content subject; it can enhance it. (Zarobe)
- CLIL can enhance language proficiency. (Ackerl; Hutter and Rieder-Beinemann)
- CLIL can enhance students' motivation, language retention, involvement and risk taking. (Coyle)
- CLIL may help those boys who see language learning as 'something that girls do'. (Baetens Beardmore)

These claims have been made not just by the above researchers but also by many others, and they are based on studies of CLIL in action. For reasons of space, we can't go into them any further here.

Other researchers, though, have expressed concern about CLIL, suggesting, for example, that learning subjects in L1 rather than L2 produces better exam results, greater progress in subject learning, better learner self-perception and self-esteem and greater classroom participation. There are also concerns that CLIL takes time from L1 learning at primary level, leaving children unsure in their mother tongue; that weaker learners are disadvantaged; and that teachers may sometimes have insufficient L2 proficiency to teach CLIL effectively.

These findings on the effectiveness of CLIL seem contradictory, but when you look at what experts suggest leads to a successful CLIL experience, it is clear that much hangs on how it is implemented. John Clegg has put together a list of 12 factors needed for successful implementation of CLIL. Among them are the need for language upgrading of teachers, training teachers in specialist pedagogy for working with low-L2 learners, ensuring quality of literacy and cognitive development in L1 in the early years, partly re-orienting training of language teachers towards teaching of language for subject learning, starting CLIL only after some years of good initial L1-medium education, writing textbooks with L2-medium learners in mind, spending a lot of money on implementing CLIL and giving yourself ten years for it to succeed.

There are concerns that CLIL takes time from L1 learning at primary level, leaving children unsure in their mother tongue

David Graddol, the author of *English Next*, has said of CLIL: *'there is a potentially large downside to it. In many countries they just don't seem to be equipped to implement CLIL. When it works, it works extraordinarily well, but it is actually quite difficult to do well. My feeling is that it may actually take 30 or 40 years for a country to really to pull this one off.'*

★ ★ ★

To my mind, ELT teachers thinking of adopting CLIL need to know the nature of the beast, evaluate their own skills carefully and look hard at whether the learning environment they and their learners work in can support a CLIL programme. ETp

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Is the Bard barred?

Mark Almond invites Shakespeare into his classroom.

The inspiration for this article comes from the frequent reaction I get from language learners and teachers I'm training or doing workshops with, who visibly recoil when I suggest we work on a Shakespearean text. Admittedly, they usually relax a little when I assure them we won't be studying it in any kind of academic way but, rather, we will be physically dramatising it as a group. Nevertheless, there is still a reluctance. Of course, this reluctance comes as no surprise because, for many years, the perpetuating myth that Shakespeare's plays and sonnets are the exclusive property of literary academics has erroneously led many to believe that his work is incomprehensible, impenetrable and, as a result, dull and irrelevant in the 21st century!

In this article, I hope to debunk this myth and demonstrate that Shakespeare, broken down into manageable chunks, can be interesting, enormous fun and relevant to all ages. Most importantly, his language and stories can be exploited in many ways in the language classroom to develop learners' general communicative competence ... and, dare I say it, enjoyed in a way Shakespeare intended: as a physical and multi-sensory experience, rather than an inactive and academic one.

Shakespeare and his works

The time from the Elizabethan age (1558–1603) to the middle of the 17th century was a period when English underwent radical changes, particularly in its influences from other languages. In fact, in this period more than any other in history, more words were borrowed into English from Latin, French, Spanish and Dutch than ever before or since. The peak coincided with the time Shakespeare really flourished, 1590–1610, when approximately 3,000 words were borrowed from Latin alone. This is reflected in one calculation that suggests that Shakespeare used 17,677 words in his works, of which one tenth had never been used before. To illustrate the extent of Shakespeare's impact on, and creative input into, English, it is estimated that he coined around 2,000 words, countless expressions and made around 3,000 puns.

Working with Shakespeare

The important thing to remind ourselves of is that a great number of the words and expressions introduced by Shakespeare still enrich English today. For example, where would we be without the following?

to gossip *well-behaved (adj)*
to undress *to torture* *retirement (n)*
to puke *to negotiate* *manager (n)*
to hurry *to grovel* *fashionable (adj)*
critic (n) *to line your pockets*
to lay it on thick *in my mind's eye*
to be somebody's flesh and blood

Even though not everyone was a fan of the Bard (the Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw famously wrote, *'There is no eminent writer whom I despise so entirely as I despise Shakespeare when I measure my mind against his. It would be positively a relief to me to dig him up and throw stones at him'*), there can be no doubt that with a suitably enthusiastic approach by the teacher, Shakespeare

can be made appealing to learners. This is not just because of the colourful words and phrases he has given us, but because he was also an exceptional storyteller. Many of the themes and characters that make up his plays are just as relevant and interesting today as they were over 400 years ago, and they should certainly be of interest to most of our learners. These themes include ambition, royalty, sex, death, violence, nature, love, greed, racism, alcohol, family relationships and even cannibalism! So, are Shakespeare and the 21st-century communicative language classroom natural bedfellows (another Shakespearian coinage)? I think they should be – if handled thoughtfully and carefully by the teacher.

Many of the themes and characters that make up Shakespeare's plays are just as relevant and interesting today as they were over 400 years ago

Working with students

In this section, I will draw on my experiences of how I have exploited certain extracts from plays in the classroom and how I have used them to develop my learners' appreciation of Shakespeare's classic texts through physical, multi-sensory drama exercises, as well as for work on pronunciation and general speaking skills. I personally don't feel any kind of scholarly literary analysis belongs in the communicative language classroom, but I have found that guiding learners through manageable exercises with short extracts from the original text works wonders for their confidence and motivation, and their creative output too. As will be seen, more oral communicative benefits and extended speaking practice can be achieved through working with original themes, narratives and characters but transposing them into a modern context.

A good place to start is to look at the rhythm of the blank verse (verse that doesn't rhyme) in which Shakespeare often wrote. This is called *iambic pentameter*. An *iamb* is an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable, as in the word *pretend* for example. A line of iambic pentameter has ten syllables, arranged into five rhythmic units or metres; it should be spoken like this: *ti dum ti dum ti dum ti dum ti dum* or *'To be or not to be, that is the question'*. (This is generally true, though not all examples fit neatly into this pattern.) This rhythm reflects the natural rhythm of English, and it is useful to explore and play with it in a physical way with learners. You first need to clear a space in the classroom and ask the students to stand up. Play a piece of current pop/rock music in 4:4 time and ask the students to dance to it, but *off the beat* (some might feel embarrassed, so they can shut their eyes if it helps). This is both difficult and funny. Then ask them to move or dance *in time* to the music – wait for the sighs of relief! This simple exercise illustrates how awkward and unnatural it feels to move *off the beat* and demonstrates the importance of natural-sounding stressed and unstressed features of speech.

Working with sentences

Let's now look at how we can exploit short pieces of original text. Give individual students short well-known quotes (see the examples in the box on the right) to work with, and do the following:

1 Ask them to repeat their quote and move around the space simultaneously varying the tone according to your instructions. For example, you can ask them to say it angrily, excitedly, lustfully, or giggle it, chant it, gasp it, etc. You can also get the students to say their line like a cowboy, a Martian or a kung fu fighter, complete with appropriate movements and facial expressions. Ensure they don't rush their lines. They should enjoy it and take ownership of it as this brings fun into the work and helps demystify Shakespeare.

2 Choose quotes that are easy to *externalise*. As students mill around the space repeating their quote, tell them they should try to externalise as much of it as possible. For example, using the quote from *Julius Caesar 'Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears! I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him'*, each key word (the ones underlined) can be literally mimed with gestures and movement that signify the meaning. The theory behind this exercise is that externalising the language physically like this helps students internalise it and make it meaningful.

3 Get the students to work with longer stretches of original text. This can be challenging but also very rewarding. For example, they can be asked to work in small groups and to prepare and perform a dramatisation of a piece of verse or a sonnet. The witches' spell in *Macbeth* works very well for this because of its rhythm as



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Example quotes

What's in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other word would smell as sweet.
(Romeo and Juliet)

Now is the winter of our discontent
Made glorious summer by this sun of York;
And all the clouds that lour'd upon our house
In the deep bosom of the ocean buried.
(King Richard III)

If music be the food of love, play on;
Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting,
The appetite may sicken, and so die.
(Twelfth Night)

Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand?
Come, let me clutch thee.
I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.
(Macbeth)

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players.
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages.
(As You Like It)

Is the Bard barred?

well as the characters and theme: *'Double, double, toil and trouble; fire burn and cauldron bubble. Fillet of a fenny snake, in the cauldron boil and bake, eye of newt, and toe of frog, wool of bat, and tongue of dog'*, etc. In addition to devising a ritualistic movement, the students also need to adjust and vary their volume, pace, pitch and tone to create a suitable atmosphere. They can also devise some possible sound effects (eg howling wolves). Another thing they must consider is who will deliver which lines of text and which lines will be said in unison. One group I worked with spent two minutes coming into the space, making eerie noises and getting into position before delivering a single line of text. It was spellbinding (pardon the pun)! They completely took ownership of the text.

Working with scenes

I have used the following activities for more extended work that has stretched over a series of lessons. These activities allow the learners time to consider and discuss the themes, empathise with the characters and transpose the work of Shakespeare into a modern context.

1 Give the students a scene in the original language and a jumbled-up current English equivalent. Their job is first to match them up. They then, in small groups and working with the modern text, prepare and dramatise the scene transposing it to a more recent setting. For example, using *Macbeth*, Act 3 Scene 3 when Macbeth has his best friend Banquo murdered, they might choose to have the action take place outside a nightclub rather than a castle, on motorbikes rather than horses, etc. It's a murder scene and notoriously difficult to stage so careful direction from the teacher may be necessary to make it unrushed, aesthetic and convincing.

2 Working more broadly on the themes of a play in a modern context, you might set the scene as shown in the boxes above for the students to improvise around. To gain maximum benefit, take them through some characterisation exercises beforehand, bringing depth and conviction to their parts (see my book, *Teaching English with Drama*, for lots of ideas). Sufficient time should be spent in discussion, and the improvisations should be staged and repeated after feedback from the teacher and other groups. This could even develop into a piece of creative writing.

★ ★ ★

I hope this goes some way to inspiring you to try out some Shakespeare in your language classes, if you haven't already. The ideas presented here are essentially drama in the sense that they require the students' physical and multi-sensory engagement, the emphasis on almost all drama work being on group cohesion and collaboration. I have found that students are incredibly proud and motivated when they have tackled Shakespeare, and they soon realise just how accessible and relevant his body of work is today. ETp

Macbeth

Work in groups of four: Mr and Mrs Macbeth, the medium, the boss.

Background: Macbeth is a businessman working for an important IT firm. He is good-looking, young, ambitious and has made many profitable deals for the company. He's also quite wealthy (he has the latest BMW, a big house in central London as well as a country estate in Wiltshire, and he only wears designer clothes). His wife is also young and ambitious and she wants her husband to replace the old managing director, who is very old-fashioned and boring. Unfortunately, the managing director has two sons whom he wants to take over from him when he retires. Mrs Macbeth is interested in the occult and knows various psychics and mediums who have prophesied that her husband will one day be managing director. She takes her husband to see one of them.

Scene 1
Improvise a scene around the visit of Mr and Mrs Macbeth to the medium. Is Mr Macbeth cynical or is he a believer in the occult?

Scene 2
Improvise a scene between Mr and Mrs Macbeth after the visit to the medium, in which Mrs Macbeth urges her husband to kill the managing director and take over the whole firm.

Scene 3
Improvise a scene in which Mr and Mrs Macbeth invite the managing director to dinner and dispose of him by the end of the evening. How do they kill him and dispose of him?

Romeo and Juliet

Work in groups of three: Juliet, Juliet's father, Juliet's mother.

Scene 1 (Father and mother)
Father: You are arranging Juliet's marriage and are pleased that you have found a suitable husband for her. Tell your wife about the man you have chosen. You assume she will also be pleased with your choice. You think Juliet might be a bit young to get married but believe you have made a good choice. However, you let your wife do most of the talking.

Scene 2 (Father, mother and Juliet)
Juliet: Your parents tell you about the man they have chosen to marry you. You are worried and anxious about this. You refuse to marry the man they have chosen because you have already secretly married Romeo. Don't tell them this, though! You are a bit frightened of your father. Your relationship with your mother is much closer.



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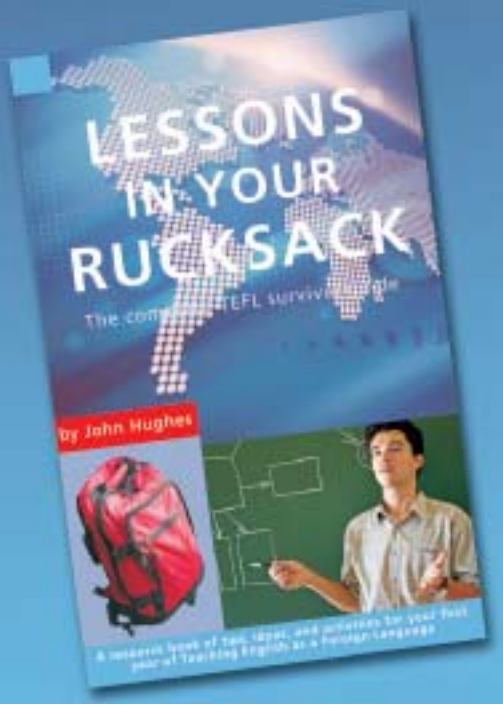
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Pick up a pronoun

Jackie Lee discusses effective methods to teach an often neglected grammar point.

Recent observation of a trainee teacher's lesson on personal pronouns has made me feel the need to explore ways to teach and learn this basic grammatical concept effectively. To some people, the forms and meanings of pronouns are not difficult to master. Owing to this, perhaps, not many coursebook writers have put much effort into the design of effective and interesting language activities on this topic. The exercises found in many coursebooks and grammar exercise books usually include traditional blank-filling or multiple-choice questions, as in these examples:

Fill in each blank with a suitable personal pronoun.

Susan is a teacher.
_____ teaches Putonghua.

David and Tom are brothers.
_____ live in Kowloon Bay.

Read the following conversation between Susan and Jane. Circle the appropriate pronouns.

Susan: Jane, I bought a new hat yesterday.
Let (I / me / mine) show (it / its / her) to you.

Nevertheless, there are students who have problems with pronouns, and we need to find more engaging ways of teaching them these structures and helping them to use them accurately.

Discussing the problem

According to Michael Swan, students often need to get used to building a structure before they are ready to use it more freely. Learners can benefit from some undemanding 'mechanical' exercises, which enable them to concentrate on one thing at a time. However, the weakness of drills is that they cannot keep the students' interest and attention for long, and that they usually focus only on forms (eg *He* is a subject pronoun and *him* is an object pronoun) and meanings (eg *She* and *her* are used for girls and women), but not often on the *use* of the particular language expression (eg pronouns are a kind of substitution which make writing and speech concise and coherent). I examined several grammar activity books to see what advice ELT experts give to teachers on the presentation and practice of personal pronouns. Surprisingly, it is hard to find a discussion of this topic. This suggests that the teaching of personal pronouns is an under-researched area, despite the fact that many learners have problems with their use. According to Gao and Ko, although pupils in Hong Kong are taught about pronouns in primary school grades 3 or 4, teachers are often troubled by the fact that a number of learners, including those at the secondary level, are still confused about the English pronoun system. As part of their research with a group of primary grade 5 teachers, Gao and Ko conducted pilot interviews and pre-tests with four classes of students and found that most of them had an

It is important to allow students to discern language features through the manipulation of appropriate data

impoverished understanding of English pronouns. The students relied on the position of pronouns in a clause to differentiate subject pronouns and object pronouns, and had difficulties in understanding the meanings and functions of *they* and *it*. Furthermore, the pupils were not willing to use pronouns in writing, and used full noun phrases instead, as in *Mary … Mary … Mary …* rather than *Mary … she … she …* . In my own recent study of secondary students' writing, grammatical errors such as *'We brought he to find him mother'* and *'I was waiting for my mum but I couldn't see him'* were common. I feel that the mismatch between the learning needs of students and the availability of effective teaching resources on pronouns should be addressed.

The following is a discussion of some effective ways to teach these commonly used language items.

Discovering solutions

An effective way to teach grammar is through learner discovery. It is important to allow students to discern language features through the manipulation of appropriate data. Use of the variation pattern of contrast (see Lo and Pong for details) can allow learners to discover the English pronoun system by themselves. Here I will illustrate how teachers can make use of two different versions of a text to help learners understand the use of pronouns. The text chosen can be any passage which includes a variety of personal pronouns. I have chosen the children's classic *The Emperor's New Clothes* for my illustration.

First, the teacher can show the students Version 1 of the story (see Text 1, Version 1), which has all the pronouns replaced by their corresponding noun phrases. The students are then encouraged to discuss what is wrong with the text. This activity can help them understand the use of pronouns – pronouns make statements less repetitive while showing how the entities of a clause or a series of clauses are connected; without pronouns, the writing will become verbose, unnatural and difficult to read. With elementary students, the teacher can then show the original story (Text 1, Version 2), and ask the students to compare the two texts, and identify and classify the pronouns used. Intermediate students can be asked to rewrite Version 1 using pronouns. When this re-writing is complete, the teacher can encourage them to compare their story with Version 2. Through this comparison and contrast activity, students can come to understand that correct use of pronouns is essential for concise and coherent writing.

Text 1
The Emperor's New Clothes
(Version 1)

Many years ago, there was an Emperor who was so excessively fond of new clothes that the Emperor spent all the Emperor's money on the finest suits. The Emperor did not trouble in the least about the Emperor's soldiers; nor did the Emperor care to go to the theatre or out hunting, except when there was a chance to show off the Emperor's new clothes. The Emperor had a different suit for each hour of the day. Just as you might say of any other king or emperor, 'The Emperor is sitting in the Emperor's council', people used to say of the Emperor, 'The Emperor is sitting in the Emperor's wardrobe'.

Text 1
The Emperor's New Clothes
(Version 2)

Many years ago, there was an Emperor, who was so excessively fond of new clothes that he spent all his money on the finest suits. He did not trouble in the least about his soldiers; nor did he care to go to the theatre or out hunting, except when there was a chance to show off his new clothes. He had a different suit for each hour of the day. Just as you might say of any other king or emperor, 'He is sitting in his council', people used to say of him, 'He is sitting in his wardrobe'.

Students also need to understand that pronouns are used to substitute for longer expressions referring to entities which have been mentioned in a text. In order to facilitate this, the teacher can show another text containing pronouns without clear referents (see Text 2, Version 1). The students can be asked to underline all the pronouns and see if they can find the antecedents. Failure to find the antecedents will allow the students to perceive how important it is that there should be a relationship between antecedents and pronouns. (Version 2 is a more comprehensible text with a better mix of nouns and pronouns.)

Text 2 **(Version 1)**

The following day he found a job with him, who agreed to give him a cream cheese for his work. In the evening, he took it, and went home with it on his head. By the time he got home it was completely spoiled, part of it being lost, and part matted with his hair. 'You good-for-nothing boy,' said she, 'you should have carried it very carefully in your hands.' 'Next time, I will,' replied he.

Text 2 **(Version 2)**

The following day Jack found a job with a farmer, who agreed to give him a cream cheese for his work. In the evening, Jack took the cheese, and went home with it on his head. By the time he got home the cheese was completely spoiled, part of it being lost, and part matted with his hair. 'You good-for-nothing boy,' said his mother, 'you should have carried it very carefully in your hands.' 'Next time, I will,' replied Jack.

Furthermore, students need to be taught that there are some contexts in which pronouns should be avoided, for example when they give rise to ambiguity, as at the beginning of a paragraph and when two or more different things or people have been mentioned. To help students understand this, the teacher can present them with the following sentences for comparison and contrast, and invite them to give an explanation for their preferred version:

Jack and Peter were colleagues. He went to work in his car with him every day.

Pick up a pronoun

Jack and Peter were colleagues. Jack went to work in his car with Peter every day.

By engaging the students' inductive reasoning processes, the teacher can help them to work out the rules and the usage of the target language items themselves.

Doing games

A number of ELT experts have written books and articles on how to use games in the classroom. I agree with Michael Swan that learning grammar effectively does not mean that we have to reject drills completely. What we can do is redesign the traditional exercises in a context that encourages interaction between students in the form of games. While both have the value of enabling students to concentrate on one thing at a time and form language pattern habits, the advantage of language games over traditional drills is that the former include the elements of challenge, amusement and surprise, which can sustain the students' interest and enliven the learning atmosphere. I should like to describe two games which can be used for pronoun practice.

1 Fishing

Materials:

Sets of 50 cards made up of matched pairs of sentences with pronoun gaps and their corresponding pronouns (see the example opposite). Each sentence may contain more than one pronoun gap.

Procedure:

1 Put the students into groups of three or four.

2 Ask one student in each group to shuffle all the cards and put ten cards face up on the table.

3 Tell them to distribute the remaining cards to the other players.

4 Explain the game: The first player tries to match a card in their hands with a card or cards on the table in order to make a grammatical sentence. The player has to read the resultant sentence aloud and the other players have to judge whether it is correct or not. If it is grammatical, the player can keep the cards. If not, they have to give a pair of previously-matched cards to the next player.

A player who cannot find a match has to put one of the cards from their hand on the table, face up, and the next player then has a turn.

The game continues until all the cards have been matched correctly. The winner is the one who has the most correctly-matched pronouns.

Examples of cards for 'Fishing'

Sentences	Pronouns
'_____ dear Mr Bennet,' said _____ wife to _____ one day, 'have _____ heard that Netherfield Park is let at last?'	my his him you
Mr Bennet replied that _____ had not.	he
'Don't _____ want to know who has taken it?' cried _____ wife impatiently.	you his
'It is very likely that Mr Bingley may fall in love with one of _____ daughters, and therefore you must visit _____ as soon as _____ comes.'	our him he
'_____ are all silly and ignorant like other girls; but Lizzy has something more of quickness than _____ sisters.'	they her
'Mr Bennet, how can _____ abuse _____ own children in such way?'	you your

(Adapted from Pride and Prejudice: www.pemberley.com/janeinfo/ppv1n01.html)

2 Down the ladder*

Materials:

A worksheet (see page 15) with columns and rows of words: the number of columns and rows can be increased for more advanced students.

Procedure:

1 The game can be played individually or in pairs.

2 The player has to connect words to form a grammatical and meaningful

sentence by going down a grid and choosing one word only in each row. (For example: *This box is ours. This dog is ours.*)

This	Her	He
dog	box	is
called	is	has
died	Peter	ours

3 Alternatively, more advanced students can be provided with a grid with several pronouns interspersed with blank squares and encouraged to write in words to form their own sentences (eg *I didn't buy my bag in London*) to complete a grid, as below. The completed grid can then be given to their classmates for the *Down the Ladder* game.

★ ★ ★

Instead of traditional teacher-fronted lessons with a lot of teacher talk and mechanical drills, teachers should consider creating a more relaxing learning environment with learner-centred discovery activities. Grammar teaching should not just focus on form and meanings: students should also be guided to understand the *use* of different structures. It is hoped that the above discussion of how to teach personal pronouns may give teachers and coursebook writers insights into how to design new ways of teaching old topics. ETp

* This idea is adapted from 'Sentence Drop' at *http://freelanguagestuff.files.wordpress.com/2008/08/untitled-49.jpg*.

		I		
his			**her**	**us**
	them			

The	Peter	**I**	Our	Their
girl	brilliant	has	didn't	principal
gave	took	buy	done	performance
his	made	my	**her**	**us**
pills	**them**	a	bag	geography
in	speech	the	project	after
lunch	London	finally	stars	yesterday

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Learning disability 6

Lesley Lanir reflects on the orchestration required for writing and spelling.

Anna, 12, sits quietly looking at her notebook. She hasn't started to write yet and probably won't complete one sentence before the lesson ends. When she does put pen to paper, she positions herself strangely, holds her pencil awkwardly and produces disorganised compositions with erratic handwriting, poor spelling and margins that start at one centimetre and end up as five. Writing is more than a challenge for her.

Anna is not alone. Writing involves simultaneously combining numerous physical and mental processes and, as a result, a great number of students find acquiring this skill problematic. For instance, they need to control a pen, retrieve vocabulary, form letters, remember spelling, grammar and syntax rules and organise their thoughts on a piece of paper. No wonder learning expert and paediatrician Dr Mel Levine calls writing *'one of the largest orchestras a kid's mind has to conduct'*.

Writing difficulties are known as *dysgraphia* – a disorder characterised by problems with handwriting, spelling and composition. Its sources have not been fully identified due to the neurological and cognitive complexity involved in the writing process. However, it is clear that certain brain dysfunctions do affect the neuro-developmental functions which are employed in the writing process.

Although we cannot perform brain imaging in our classrooms, identifying differences in handwriting, spelling and composition can help teachers understand the source of the problem. Each of these three key skill areas is discussed below and the discussion is illustrated by a table listing the common problems that emerge in our lessons, their possible neurological or cognitive developmental basis – and the possible effects they have. Each table is followed by strategies for helping students and my favourite teaching suggestions.

1 Handwriting

Before even moving their pens, students have to identify letters from their sounds, recall their appearances and, only then, prepare themselves to position their pens on the paper.

Besides difficulties in recalling and remembering letter shapes and word configurations, many students shy away from writing because they have difficulty coordinating the different muscles needed to form letters, which may cause them to have an odd pencil grip, to position their paper at a strange angle or to produce untidy handwriting.

Strategies for helping

Awkward pen grip

- Allow students to choose their preferred writing instrument.
- Mark the correct finger position on the pencil/pen with an elastic band or piece of coloured sticky tape.
- Provide a diagram of the correct pen grip.

Weaknesses in:	Handwriting • Common problems				
	Awkward pen grip	Incorrect letter orientation	Poor letter formation	Slow pace and lack of fluency	Spatial organisation
levels of attention			✓	✓	✓
spatial awareness		✓	✓		✓
sequencing abilities				✓	
language				✓	
memory		✓	✓	✓	
grapho-motor/ fine motor skills	✓	✓	✓	✓	

(Adapted from Levine)

Poor letter formation and incorrect letter orientation

- Check directionality and correct letter formation.
- Encourage the students to:
  – form letters with their index finger on sand paper;
  – trace over faint letters or letters made of dots;
  – practise writing similar letter forms together, such as *c*, *s* and *o*; *m* and *n*; *u* and *w*, etc.

Slow pace and poor fluency

- Keep practising forming the most frequent words and phrases.
- Break up writing assignments into smaller chunks.
- Hand out notes or copies of material presented.

Spatial organisation

- Use graph/maths paper to practise writing the letters in one square (*a*, *c*, *e*, etc) or two squares (*b, d, f*, etc).
- Make sure margins and lines are emphasised.
- Delineate the area within which the student has to write.

If symptoms persist, sessions with a handwriting specialist or an occupational therapist may be necessary.

2 Spelling

Producing correctly spelled words is a mammoth task for students with learning differences. Even though English orthography is 87 percent reliable, many speech sounds in English are represented by multiple English spellings. In addition, the unaccommodating 'schwa' sound, the number of homophones and the fact that the same letters and letter combinations can be pronounced differently can cause problems. So it is perhaps unsurprising that native speakers, as well as EFL and ESL students, have trouble mastering the English spelling system.

Strategies for helping

Letter–sound system

- As with teaching reading, practise letter-to-letter combinations using multi-sensory techniques, taking into consideration phonological and visual similarities as mentioned in my previous article (ET*p* Issue 71).

Weaknesses in:	Spelling • Common problems			
	Incomplete knowledge of letter–sound system	Lack of awareness of common letter sequences	Overall inaccuracy	Incorrect application of spelling rules
levels of attention		✓	✓	✓
spatial awareness			✓	
sequencing abilities		✓		
language	✓	✓	✓	✓
memory	✓	✓	✓	✓

(Adapted from Levine)

- Use 'phoneme sound out': the students place a counter or bead on squared paper. As they say each phoneme of a word, they move the counter across the squares. After this, they can write the word in the squares and say the individual sounds out again as they do so.

For all types of other spelling problems

- Practise common spelling rules one at a time. For example:
  – *q* is always written as *qu*;
  – no common English words end in *v*. The letter *v* is usually followed by *e*;
  – to make the sound /k/, use *k* before *i* and *e*, but *c* before *o*, *a* and *u*.
- Focus on morphological awareness and rules. For example, work on suffixes and prefixes since they are stable and meaningful word parts. Practise:
  – common grammatical suffixes (*-ed*, *-s*, *-es*, *-ing*, *-er*, *-est*);
  – the three major rules for adding endings to base words: the doubling rule (*running*), the drop *-e* rule (*coming*), the change *y* to *i* rule (*studied*);
  – suffixes such as *-en*, *-ly*, *-y*, *-ful*, *-less*, *-ment* and *-ness*, most of which also signify the part of speech and will help develop a larger vocabulary;
  – the most common prefixes, such as *pre-*, *sub-*, *re-*, *mis-* and *un-*.
- Group words with some memorable similarity. For example:
  – common word families, to highlight sound patterns and digraphs: *-ake*, *-ay*, *-eat*, *-ill*;
  – words with the same roots: *two*, *twice*, *twelve*, *twenty*, *twin*.
- Drill sight words and frequent words: *the*, *was*, *here*, *there*, *because*, *how*, *who*, etc.
- Teach the 12 most common verbs and their conjugations: *say*, *do*, *see*, *take*, *get*, *know*, *make*, *want*, *go*, *think*, *come*, *give*.
- Introduce large amounts of 'over learning'. For example:
  – highlighting or underlining the hard parts of the word;
  – using mnemonics – for example, *there*: – 'here' is in *there*; *their* – 'he' and 'I' are in the middle, etc;
  – breaking the word down or pronouncing it in a strange way. For example, *because* – *be*, *ca*, *use*;
  – using exercises such as the one in the following example.

For a 'write and repeat' exercise, provide a table like this with no more than five target words to practise:

1 target word	2 copy	3 remember	4 rewrite
was			

The student:

1. looks at, says and writes the correct version of the target word in Column 1.
2. looks at and says the word and copies it into Column 2.
3. looks at and says the word and folds under or covers Columns 1 and 2.
4. says the word and writes it in Column 3.
5. reveals Columns 1 and 2 and checks Column 3.
6. if the word in Column 3 is correct, copies it into Column 4, if not, copies the correct version from Column 1.

Repeat the sequence at least three times, whether or not the student is successful the first time round.

Learning disability 6

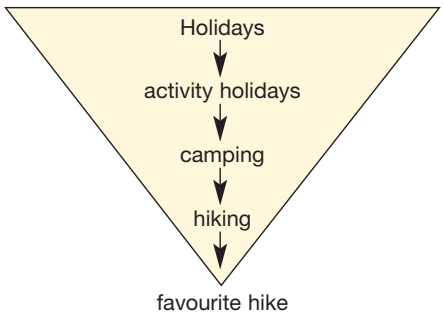
3 Composition

As students write, they must retrieve the rules for handwriting, spelling, grammar, punctuation and capitalisation, call on semantic memory, remember and organise their ideas and suspend them temporarily in working memory while creating sentences. This multilayered type of parallel processing draws heavily on cognition, mental energy and active working memory resources.

Strategies for helping

Main ideas

- Teach the students that a 'topic' is usually the title they give a passage and the 'main idea' is the most important thing they have to say on the topic.
- Provide two topics and two different main ideas for each writing activity and allow students to choose which one they want to write about. For example, if one of the topics is 'holidays', the two main ideas could be: 1 *My favourite place to go on holiday is …* and 2 *I like activity holidays because … .*
- Give topics and provide a visual hierarchy showing how to reach a main idea. For example:



- Give short model paragraphs with the main idea highlighted. For example:

> The internet is the world's largest computer network, providing easy access to information. Today, from your computer, you can enter a shop in one country, 'talk' to a friend in a second country and send an email to someone else in a third country.
> **Topic:** The internet
> **Main idea:** The internet provides easy access to information all over the world.

Weaknesses in:	Composition • Common problems					
	Lacks focus and main idea	Incorrect use of language structures	Disorganised structure	Poor vocabulary	Inaccurate punctuation and capitalisation	Inappropriate layout
levels of attention	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
spatial awareness						✓
sequencing abilities	✓	✓	✓			✓
languague	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
memory	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
higher-order thinking	✓		✓			✓

(Adapted from Levine)

Correct use of language structures

- Help students to grasp the basic word order in an English sentence and give them practice in writing simple sentences and joining them together to form paragraphs by using an exercise such as the example below, adapted from one described by Louis Alexander. (This exercise also practises handwriting, awareness of grammar in context, reading comprehension, grammar constructions, spelling, paragraphing skills, frequently used vocabulary and cohesive devices. It involves repetition, is structured, self-teaching, self-checking, safe and confidence building.)

Paragraph creation

a) Read the following paragraph.
My name is Anna. I am 13 years old. I am happy because today is Monday. On Mondays I always go swimming with my brothers. We always eat pizza. Tom is a very good swimmer. Dan likes to dive into the pool. My brothers are my best friends. They are fun to be with.

b) Write the answer to the following questions using full sentences.
1 What is your name?
2 How old are you?
3 Why are you are happy?
4 Where do you go on Mondays?
5 What do you eat?
6 Who is a good swimmer?
7 What does Dan like to do?
8 Who are your best friends?
9 Who is fun to be with?

c) Rewrite your sentences and join them together using some of the following connecting words: *actually*, *and*, *because*, *after*, *then*, *in fact*.

The students rewrite their sentences and create a paragraph using as many cohesive devices as they can. Eventually, they internalise basic sentence structures and progress to producing their own simple paragraphs.

Here is another example of a very effective exercise:

Sentence rewrites

1 Read the sentence.
2 Choose the correct option and circle it.
3 Rewrite the full sentence underneath.
4 Write your own sentence (*I …*).

1 He (don't always does / don't always do / doesn't always do) his homework before going to bed.
a) Rewrite: _____
b) I _____

2 They (don't always does / don't always do / doesn't always do) their homework before going to bed.
a) Rewrite: _____
b) I _____

Capitalisation and punctuation

- Make sure your students know how to write all the capital letters.
- Have the students perform tasks that practise one new punctuation rule at a time.
- Have the students circle or highlight the punctuation or capitalisation used on an example page, then on their own pieces of work.

Organisation and layout

- Provide clear templates to guide students how to produce a composition. For example, on page 19 there is a partial example of a basic template that can be adapted:

Writing template

1 Topic: Holiday

2 What words can you think of?

blue	*water*
beach	*swim*
food	*snorkel*
nice	*fun*
tasty	*eat*

3 Group your words:
sea: *blue, beach, water, swim, snorkel*
restaurant: *food, nice, tasty, eat*

4 Organise your words

a) nouns:
sea, restaurant, food, beach, water

b) verbs:
swim, eat, read, snorkel

c) adjectives:
tasty, blue, fun

Your story

1 Title: My holiday

2 Introduction

a) General statement
My favourite holiday place is ...

b) Main idea. What do you want to write about?
It is my favourite place because there are many things to do there.

c) List three things that support your main idea.

3 Paragraphs 1, 2, 3

a) Topic sentence: Use the items listed in c) above.

b) Supporting sentences: List three things that support your topic.

c) Concluding sentence

4 Conclusion
Take your general statement and main idea and reword them.

5 Connect your ideas to make your writing flow. Use words such as:
in addition, but, however, because, also, next, furthermore, such as, therefore.

Achieving writing proficiency in a second or foreign language requires considerable amounts of effort for some students. In order to provide a safer learning environment for struggling writers, where possible, begin by providing the following accommodations:

- Break assignments into a series of manageable steps and evaluate each stage.
- Extend the time allowed for written responses.
- Permit word processing.
- Allow electronic dictionaries.
- Ignore spelling errors when grading.
- Test orally or agree to students handing in recorded versions of their compositions.

★ ★ ★

This is the last article in this series, the aim of which was to create awareness of learner differences, offer useful tips and encourage greater interest and further investigation into the subject of learning disabilities and differences – an area that has fascinated me for over 20 years. ETp

Alexander, L G *A First Book in Comprehension Precis and Composition* Longman 1965

Carreker, S 'Teaching spelling' In Birsh, J (Ed) *Multisensory Teaching of Basic Language Skills* Paul Brookes 2005

Graham, S, Harris, K R and Loynachan, C 'The spelling for writing list' *Journal of Learning Disabilities* 27(4) 1994

Levine, M *Developmental Variation and Learning Disorders* Educators Publishing Service 2001

Levine, M *A Mind at a Time* Simon & Schuster 2002

Moats, L C 'How spelling supports reading: And why it is more regular and predictable than you think' *American Educator* 2005/06

A wealth of teaching suggestions can be found on the internet, for example at:

www.righttrackreading.com/phonemiccodeactivities.html

www.spellzone.com/ (a site for which you have to pay but, nevertheless, brilliant)

www.enchantedlearning.com/rhymes/wordfamilies/



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Crossing the Rubicon

Patrick Lagendijk logs his unordinary experience of an ordinary class.

I thought I'd try to write down some of my impressions from teaching my young learners class today. My aim is twofold: to better understand the classroom mechanics that led to my own 'Rubicon' experience, where a change in attitude on my part and the students' has permanently transformed our working relationship; and also to encourage you to share your thoughts with me in the hope that these experiences may become more regularly a part of our lives as teachers.

A matter of age

It was the first time I had felt comfortable teaching that particular class (incidentally, I have never felt comfortable teaching young learners, and have even spectacularly failed at teaching pre-schoolers). I have often wondered why this should be so – why a grown man should feel 'at the sharp end' with a group of youngsters. Could it be that my maturity already puts me at a disadvantage? That to understand children compels from one a mental readjustment, even a sort of lobotomy? At the same time, I am endowed – due to my advanced years – with the gift of foresight, of self-reflection and of reason. (However, I can all too easily be criticised for denying the existence of these in my students – in fact, I am often taken by surprise when they respond with what would normally be considered 'adult' behaviour. More on this later.) I therefore have the responsibility to plan their time in the classroom, to justify the choices I make and to reflect on what I believe to have happened.

A matter of time

I decided in this lesson to focus on *time* – understanding and telling the time. I chose as a context some common everyday rituals which would also recycle past irregular forms (eg *This morning I woke up at 5.30*). We had already touched on the topic of time in the previous lesson, but I felt that the students needed more practice, and I was not at all convinced that they all had understood certain key phrases. And so I quickly devised a lesson around telling the time – though I must admit from the outset that the actual lesson was far removed from the lesson plan, which turned out to be hopelessly inadequate anyway.

I started by informing the class that they would be drawing a story about their teacher. Their ears pricked up. I then drew six blank clocks on the interactive whiteboard (IWB) and told them that I would be dictating six different times. I then asked individual students to come up to the board and draw in the hands according to the times I dictated. (With hindsight, it might have been a good idea to have them copy the clocks on paper and write out the times individually, as this would have allowed me to check whether certain learners were having difficulty or not.)

Having got the six times displayed on the board, I projected six different sentences on the IWB about what I had done the night before and that morning. I asked them which time matched the first sentence and saw a sea of hands. I asked a few students before someone gave me the 'right' time (it didn't matter that they got the right answer, only that they tried – in so doing, they were latching a sentence onto a time for later recall). I crossed out the corresponding clock and did the same with the following sentences, each time checking the previously crossed-out clocks, thus making sure that the students remembered how to say the previous times.

> *I had already touched on the topic of time with this class in the previous lesson, but I felt that the students needed more practice*

I then blanked the IWB and elicited the sentences just by pointing to the clocks. This showed me that the students had 'internalised' the sentences. But had I really checked that they had understood what the sentences meant?

As a means of consolidating the information and checking their understanding, I repeated what I had said initially about getting them to draw a story about me, and I allocated sentences to individual students. I then gave them paper and crayons/felt-tip pens and asked them to draw a picture for their sentence (see page 21 for an example), including a clock showing the time as well as the sentence itself.

(I had already turned the IWB back on, although I am unsure this was needed.) They did this willingly – and particularly enjoyed drawing their teacher waking up! Once they had finished, I displayed the story on the wall.

I now wanted to move on to the production stage of the lesson. I projected four jumbled questions on the screen which the students duly un-jumbled (eg *What time did you go to bed last night?*). With hindsight, it might have been better to elicit the verb form, instead of giving it to them (eg *What time __ you __ to bed last night?*). This would have had the advantage, I think, of focusing their attention on form (as opposed to word order), which would have provided a contrast to the previous affirmative sentences.

Alea iacta est

Once they had un-jumbled the questions, I instructed them to work in pairs and ask their partner the questions, noting down the answers. I have in the past met with some resistance to pairwork, so I was pleasantly surprised that they obliged so willingly, not because they were usually insubordinate, but because they displayed those very grown-up qualities alluded to above. I cannot emphasise this enough, and will remember this as my own Rubicon. What they did then was not so much obey my instructions as evidence trust in my decisions, not to mention trust in themselves and respect for each other as learners. Having seen what they are capable of once, I shall certainly expect more of them in future.

The lesson ended with some correction of their written texts. This was done with too much haste, and I can think of countless reasons why and how this could have been more effective. Never mind, I'll incorporate a revision slot in our next lesson. They then hole-punched their sheets of paper and filed them in their individual folders (this, by the way, works wonders as separate pieces of paper tend to metamorphose into paper aeroplanes).



★ ★ ★

There you have it: a lesson that on paper looked pretty average and which lacked much forethought took on a life of its own in that very class at that very time. Which brings me to the future. We (the class) could of course revert to simply opening our books and going through exercise after exercise, spiced up with some entertainment in between. However, because discipline is less an issue now than it was before (I assume that all young learner classes undergo teething problems in this area), and because the students and I have now experienced self-discipline in action, I believe that the class will take on a new collective identity. The lesson has reaffirmed in me a need to tap into the students' beings, warts and all. I am thinking of using international time zones to expand our time theme – and to do this through project work, maps, presentations, arts and crafts, song and dance, drama: all the available means at my disposal to awaken their creativity and work with me through language. ETp



Patrick Lagendijk has reached another 'Rubicon' in his professional life – for ten years a Krakow-based teacher, he is moving to Malaysia with his family to help train primary school teachers in rural areas. Patrick would like to extend his thanks to the kids in Primary 4 at the British Council in Krakow, Poland, for making this article – and the move – possible.

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Choosing tunes

Martine Ashmore has suggestions for selecting songs for students.

Songs are a ready source of authentic language. They can be exploited in countless ways to practise any of the language skills, and students enjoy learning through them. But with millions of recorded songs available, how do you go about choosing, and what should you keep in mind when selecting a song for your lesson?

Why are you using the song?

Having a clear purpose in mind, and not just 'doing' a song to fill a spare five minutes, is essential. Adult classes may see a song as a waste of their time if you don't choose and plan your material carefully. You'll find interesting teaching points in most songs, so if you're looking for something to kick-start the week or bring a bit of life to a lesson after a weekly test, you might consider choosing a song based on a recently-covered topic, or a topic you'd like to introduce next. Alternatively, you might want to present or revise a grammar point, in which case you might have to search a bit harder to find something fitting. Search engines are a useful place to begin in most cases. The language skill you want your students to practise will also affect your choice of song: a slower tune will be often be preferred for listening tasks; longer songs are well suited to practising reading; repetitive lyrics are great for teaching structures and pronunciation.

Are the lyrics grammatically correct?

Many native speakers use non-standard forms of English, and songwriters are no exception, so lyrics may be grammatically 'incorrect'. There is debate over whether this is actually important. It may be an issue when teaching lower-level students who are still trying to learn basic structures correctly. At higher levels, however, although reinforcement with correct forms remains necessary, as long as the students are made aware of the 'mistakes', this can actually become part of the learning process. For example, you could ask the class to spot and correct the errors, and say whether they've heard them before. Students can also consider why the lyrics were written that way. Was grammar sacrificed for rhythm or rhyme? Is it something to do with the artist's background or culture?

Is the content appropriate?

Native speakers often express themselves thorough expletives, so songs are likely to contain them. As long as you know your class well enough to be sure they won't take offence, there shouldn't be a problem using songs that include a little lewd language. If you feel it's at all inappropriate, choose another song.

But how about discriminatory language? Here, presentation is key. Consider the messages students receive in the following alternative ways of presenting a gangster rap song with racist or homophobic language:

1 A discussion lesson on the influence of popular music in promoting discriminatory beliefs.

2 'Doing' the song as a gap-fill at the end of a lesson for a little extra listening practice.

The first would be an appropriate use of such a song, giving a clear anti-discrimination message; the second would not.

Are the words clearly enunciated?

It is important to listen carefully to a song before deciding on its appropriateness for the classroom. Skimming through the lyrics alone could mean you overlook something, such as an overpowering backing track that obscures the words, or a singer who doesn't enunciate well. Remember, it isn't always easy even for native speakers to make out song lyrics. The clearer the lyrics, the better; although, as always, appropriateness for the language classroom often depends more on the task set. For a reading activity this wouldn't be an issue, but it could spell disaster if students are attempting to complete a cloze. However, using songs that the students perceive to be more 'difficult' can build confidence. As long as the words you choose to delete for the cloze can be clearly heard, those around them will be less important because the students have a copy of the lyrics to follow.

Are there any long instrumental passages?

Another reason why it is essential to listen to a song before using it in class is so that you can check for long instrumental breaks – in the middle of a song these can cause students to lose focus and become bored. But if the track is perfect in every other way, there are ways around this. One idea is to have a question prepared, such as *Which instruments can you hear now?* Another possibility is to tell the students about the break beforehand and give them a non-language activity to do when it comes along, such as playing air guitar/piano/drums. Just make sure you know when to get them back on task in time for the remainder of the song! Instrumentals in song introductions or lead-outs are easily skipped through or chatted over with the volume reduced.

Will your students be *into* the song?

Bringing songs you personally enjoy to class might mean you're more enthusiastic about the lesson, but it's not necessary for you or the students to like the songs you use. Being able to understand songs in another language is a great achievement for most learners, no matter what the genre or who the artist. If you've carefully designed challenging and interesting tasks around the song, your students will always appreciate the lesson – even if they (or you) wouldn't personally listen to the music outside of class. Discussing opinions of the song also makes for an interesting conclusion to the lesson, so in a way it's better if not everybody agrees they like it. Having said that, you'll be flavour of the month with a class of teenagers if you create a lesson around what happens to be one of their favourite songs! ETp



Martine Ashmore manages the website *teflTunes.com*, which publishes song-based lesson plans for ELT. She has taught English across Europe and Asia, and has been passionate about teaching through music since an inspiring lesson given on a CELTA course at British Study Centres, Oxford, UK.

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Little and often

Paul Bress offers a blueprint for teaching phonology.

When a non-native speaker of English endeavours to speak English to a native speaker, the latter may react in any number of ways. They may feel at ease, wary, impatient or even nonplussed. The closer the speaker's English is to the listener's, the more likely it is that the communication between the two of them will flourish. The sounds coming out of a person's mouth, then, will contribute significantly to the success of the interaction.

To teach or not to teach?

In my experience, English teachers express a wide range of opinions about the teaching of phonology. Some say it's crucial; others say it's a waste of time. Some say it should be part and parcel of the everyday teaching of oral language; others say that specific lessons (or large parts of lessons) should be allocated to it. Personally, I think that the 'little and often' approach works best. This may be because it mimics L1 acquisition. As babies and toddlers we didn't really have phonology lessons – instead we just heard our weak efforts repeated back to us, better, by our parents.

Occasionally, though, the case can be made for out-and-out phonology lessons. For one thing, such lessons appear to have face validity – students invariably see the point of them. Also, it is possible that a group of students can lag behind in phonology, while doing fine in other aspects of communication.

Focus on phonology

How can the teacher best help the students? Here are some ideas:

1 Help the students to understand some of the *principles* of English phonology.

If you don't help your students to see some of the frequently occurring patterns of English, they may be less likely to guess how they need to say something. Conversely, if they know that the English language has some predictable features, they will be able, for example, to put the stress on one syllable of a polysyllabic word, and put the stress on a tonic syllable in a sentence. You can encourage students to be analytical as well as being good mimics of the models you provide.

2 Encourage students to practise natural examples of English.

I know it is quite common for students to have to repeat funny phrases like *'Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers'*. I suppose this must have some humour value. But I also think that it can lead to disaffection amongst students. They know that in real life they will never want to say anything like this. It is better to invent simulated authentic discourse that incorporates the target features. For example, *'Where are Sarah's parents?'* would be a good target sentence if you wanted to encourage practice of the diphthong sound in *where*.

3 Be honest about how intelligibly the students are speaking.

Teaching phonology is a fast-moving, multi-skilled task. For instance, at some point you will have to jump from modelling to listening. And, when you do the latter, it is quite easy to feel overwhelmed by the pressure to give valuable feedback in a short space of time. But this feedback is vital. If necessary, take a little time to consider how the lay speaker of English would react to what *you* have just heard. You probably understood it because you are used to hearing your students' English, but would someone in the street have understood it? You could give the students a score of 1–5 to show how intelligible you think they are.

4 Guide students if they are having difficulty with pronunciation.

Of course you can't just evaluate the students and then leave them in the lurch. You now have to facilitate intelligible pronunciation. For example, if your students are struggling with the vowel sound in *bird*, you can first ask them to repeat the schwa after you, then to elongate it to the target sound vowel, then to say the whole word. Then you could ask the students to say the word five times in a row. Eventually they will feel more confident making that sound so that it can be understood.

5 Give the students the chance to practise individually and in pairs.

While you are of critical importance in a phonology class (as a provider of models and shaper of utterances), students will want to practise with a looser rein after a few minutes have passed. That is why it is good for them to practise saying the target language in pairs. This could involve interaction between them or simply one student speaking while the other listens. At the end, some students might want to ask you about the mechanics of how a particular sound is made.

6 Get students to practise in freer speaking situations

If you end the lesson at this point and send your students out into the 'real world', their chances of communicative success with the target sound would be slim. That is why it makes sense to set up a freer communicative activity before the end of the lesson. One thing you can do is to ask pairs of students to write dialogues incorporating the target sound – *but only in a natural way*. Then they could rehearse the dialogue, enact it and then try saying it without reading (perhaps even in front of class). It doesn't matter if they forget some words or phrases: at least they will have had some practice saying the target sound in a simulated authentic setting. ETp



Paul Bress lives in Whitstable, UK, where he works as a part-time teacher of English to overseas students and also writes novels. His novels are: *The Man Who Didn't Age*, *The Dysfunctional Family*, *For Adults Only* and *The Check-out Operator*, all published by Fast-Print and available in Kindle.

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Over the wall ...



Alan Maley considers greed and need.

All the titles reviewed here tackle the consequences of the headlong rush of humanity towards its own annihilation. Of course, there have been plenty of precursors, from Veblen's *Theory of the Leisure Class* (he invented the phrase *conspicuous consumption*), Galbraith's *The Affluent Society* in the 60s, through Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful*, Packard's *The Status Seekers* and *The Waste Makers* and Tenner's *Why Things Bite Back*, to Meadows et al's *The Limits to Growth* and its updates. More recently, Lovelock's *Gaia* books have continued this critical tradition.

Affluenza: The All-Consuming Epidemic

Affluenza is defined as a disease: *'a painful, contagious, socially-transmitted condition of overload, debt, anxiety and waste resulting from the dogged pursuit of more'*. According to John de Graaf et al, *'the affluenza epidemic is rooted in the obsessive, almost religious quest for economic expansion that has become the core principle of … the American dream'*. The book is in three parts: *Symptoms*, *Causes* and *Treatment*. Part 1 is rich in case studies and examples of stress, family dysfunction, community breakdown, exploitation of children by advertising, environmental damage, etc, all attributed to the greedy pursuit of material goods. Part 2 attempts to unveil the causes of the disease, though this is perhaps the least satisfactory part of the book. Essentially, affluenza is contracted when industrial productivity requires us to consume the goods produced in ever-increasing quantities, leading to a culture of greed and waste, where the keywords are *more*, *faster*, *bigger*, and where 'efficiency' is procured at the expense of human well-being. In Part 3, there are suggestions for treating the disease: slowing down, 'voluntary simplicity' (see *http://voluntarysimplicity.org.uk* among many others), group action, better design, more contact with nature, resistance (see *www.adbusters.org*) and political action by government, such as reducing statutory working hours. Although the book is based on the United States, the disease it describes is now so widespread that it clearly affects us all.

Enough: Breaking Free from the World of Excess

The theme of voluntary frugality is taken up in *Enough: Breaking Free from the World of Excess*. John Naish contends that we need to learn to live in a 'post-more' way if we are to avoid global and personal catastrophe. He examines the consequences of too much information, too much food, too much 'stuff', too much work, too much choice, too much chasing after 'happiness' (the 'fulfilment industry' – I found this chapter particularly rewarding) and too much growth. For each category, he makes practical, commonsense suggestions for reducing excess to a more balanced and sustainable mode of living. He recognises the schizophrenic reaction of the majority (*'Yeah! It's scary. Whatever'*), warning that *'our entire society is filling its ears with sand'*. Yet he is cautiously optimistic: *'all the higher-level human commodities that we might increasingly value as status symbols – such as time, space, leisure, balance, energy and autonomy – are now becoming increasingly scarce and precious'*. We have to hope that he is right.

Willing Slaves: How the Overwork Culture is Ruling Our Lives

The consequences of the consumerist economy for conditions of employment are examined in much greater detail in *Willing Slaves*. Madeleine Bunting *'seeks to disentangle how the dictates of the market, with its cult of rationalism and efficiency, extend into people's individual lives'*. The book focuses on Britain, which has one of the world's highest hours-per-week

iStockphoto.com / © Steven Robertson

working practices (without correspondingly high levels of productivity so, paradoxically, more = less!). The book has five parts. In Part One, she analyses how work has encroached on life in a 24/7 world: the way work has intensified so that workloads have increased as people become 'totally accessible' through mobile phones and the internet, and the cynically unethical way employers have hijacked the emotional commitment of workers to their jobs. In Part Two, she considers those responsible for pressurising workers in this way. This includes a description of 'missionary management' – *'give us your hearts and minds and we will give your life meaning'*! This, she asserts, amounts to the *'commodification of human beings'*. Government, too, is held responsible for the imposition of a 'measurement culture', involving endless inspections, targets and documentation, which has imposed greater levels of work and stress than ever before, and has led to the emasculation of professionals in many fields, especially health and education. Part Three looks at why we accept this without organised protest against it, and Part Four details the human costs in terms of stress-related sickness, the care deficit for children and the old, and the erosion of human relationships brought about by overwork. Part Five offers some discussion of possible solutions, including individual opting out, trade union pressure and more enlightened management. The final chapter, 'The Politics of Well-being', considers measures the government might take to develop a 'wisdom ethic' to replace the ruthless logic of the market.

Faster: The Acceleration of Just About Everything

James Gleick's book documents the speeding up of life in virtually all its aspects. He takes us on a rollercoaster ride from compulsive button-pushers in lifts, through the development of watch technology, the global synchronisation of time, the speeding up of the stock market, the growth of telephonic communication, the exponential growth of computing capacity and technological change, the triumph of the soundbite, the shaving off of milliseconds in sport, the saving of nanoseconds in manufacturing, the reduction of sleep (and of sex – 30 minutes a week on average!), fast food, the culture of overwork, multi-tasking, remote-control TV zapping, three-second commercials, the farce of customer support telephone lines, and much more. Although he does not adopt an overtly critical stance, there are many telling quotes along the way: *'there is nothing so boring in life … as the boredom of being excited all the time'*; 'a restless clientele' existing in Saul Bellow's *'unbearable state of distraction'*. In the final chapter, he quotes Stephen Jay Gould: *'If we continue to follow the acceleration of human technological time so that we end in a black hole of oblivion, then Earth and its bacteria will only smile at us as a passing evolutionary folly.'*

In Praise of Slow: How a Worldwide Movement is Challenging the Cult of Speed

By contrast, *In Praise of Slow* describes the gathering momentum of the worldwide movement to counteract the 'time sickness' which afflicts our society. Carl Honore describes the trends towards a more humane and pleasurable lifestyle (*a tempo giusto*) in a number of domains: slow food, with its positive effects on the environment and health; the new urbanism, reinventing cities to reduce car use and increase social contact; mind-body movements promoting what Kundera called *'the wisdom of slowness'*; alternative/complementary medicine, with slower, less-invasive effects; slow sex, which fosters improved relationships; slowing down work so that working less = working better; slowing down the frenetic pace of leisure activities through more slow-paced activities like gardening, knitting (yes, knitting), cooking, music, art, and reading; raising children in a more relaxed way by making space for unstructured free play, 'slow schooling', rationing TV, etc. There is an excellent list of related websites at the back of the book for those who would like to follow up on any of these topics. The style is discursive and anecdotal but the message is well-conveyed and delivered with a degree of realism. *'Even when we long to slow down, we feel constrained by a mixture of greed, inertia and fear to keep up the pace.'* But, as Gandhi once said, *'Speed is irrelevant if you are travelling in the wrong direction.'*

★ ★ ★

What relevance might this all have for us as teachers of English? Surely, as educators, we have a social responsibility to our learners? There need be nothing 'holier than thou' or sanctimonious about the way we do this. There are real limits – to resources, to time, to life itself – so unless we can help our learners understand the importance of substituting less for more, smaller for bigger, slower for faster, restraint for cupidity, the consequences for humanity are bleak indeed. Some, like James Lovelock, contend that it is already too late – Gaia is already in terminal decline. Even if he is right, we can do something to slow down the rate of that decline and to postpone the day of our own extinction. ETp

Reviewed books

Bunting, M *Willing Slaves: How the Overwork Culture is Ruling Our Lives* Harper Collins 2004

de Graaf, J, Wann, D and Naylor, T H *Affluenza: The All-Consuming Epidemic* Berrett-Koehler 2005

Gleick, J *Faster: The Acceleration of Just About Everything* Vintage 1999

Honore, C *In Praise of Slow: How a Worldwide Movement is Challenging the Cult of Speed* Orion 2004

Naish, J *Enough: Breaking Free from the World of Excess* Hodder and Stoughton 2008

Further reading

Galbraith, K *The Affluent Society* Mariner Books 1958

Lovelock, J *The Revenge of Gaia* Allen Lane 2006

Meadows, D H, Randers, J and Meadows, D L *The Limits to Growth: The 30-year Update* Chelsea Green 2004

Packard, V *The Status Seekers* McKay 1959

Packard, V *The Waste Makers* McKay 1960

Schumacher, E F *Small is Beautiful* Blond and Briggs 1973

Tenner, E *Why Things Bite Back: Technology and the Revenge of Unintended Consequences* Vintage 1997

Veblen, T *Theory of the Leisure Class* Penguin Classics 1994



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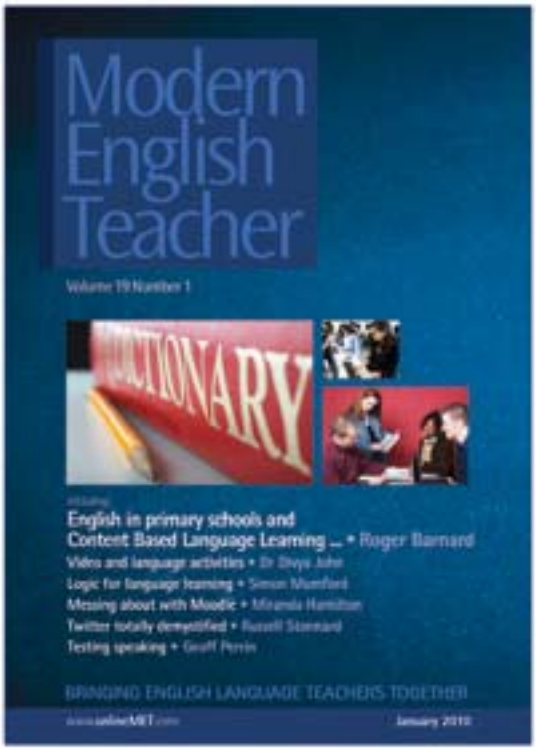
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EAP

An all-round challenge 4

Ruth Bancroft sees synthesising as an essential academic skill.

synthesise: to combine separate elements to form a coherent whole

synthesis: the complex whole so formed

Writing a *synthesis*, or *synthesising*, may sound like a daunting task to students, but in reality it is a skill which most students in higher education intuitively practise at some level. In preparation for an assignment – an essay, a report, a dissertation or an oral presentation – students should read extensively over a range of sources and select and begin organising relevant information. Crucial to this is the process of seeing connections in the literature between ideas, opinions, arguments, evidence and data. Authors may present similar information or share common viewpoints; in contrast, they may differ, offer an alternative interpretation, disagree with, contradict or even criticise one another's position on the issue. To write effectively and persuasively, students need to demonstrate that they have read widely and have understood different perspectives. They should not simply summarise their sources, but should structure their writing so that both similar and conflicting information is presented in a balanced and coherent way.

A synthesis should:

- accurately report information from sources;
- clearly identify the sources;
- be organised in such a way that the reader can instantly see where the information from different sources intersects and overlaps;
- help the reader understand the issues in greater depth.

A first step

To help develop this skill in my EAP writing classes, I first try to ensure that the students practise paraphrasing and summarising from a single source. L2 students, other than very advanced ones, often have little instinct for paraphrasing in English, which is not surprising. The temptation to copy the author's wording and, of course, to plagiarise is all too strong. It is important, therefore, to familiarise the students with paraphrasing techniques, the variety of ways we can link sentences and the correct referencing procedure.

A simple illustration

Before attempting to write their own synthesis, it helps my students to see a simple model (see Box 1 on page 28). I tell them that they should first study the notes taken by the writer of the synthesis. I ask them whether they can see any similarities or points of contrast between the four sources. (*Which authors mostly agree/disagree? About what exactly?*) They then try to organise the authors' points on paper by grouping them under headings such as *Benefits* and *Problems* or by constructing a mind-map. Whichever method they prefer, it is crucial that the students should carefully record who said what. Note-taking skills are clearly very important for EAP students so they should be given practice not only in writing conventional, linear notes but in mind-mapping techniques as well. The latter can be more suitable for more complex texts and may, in fact, make the students aware of less obvious connections between ideas.

In the synthesis which follows the notes (at the bottom of Box 1), the writer begins by introducing the topic to the reader. Then she clearly sets out some of the arguments for and against the use of genetic engineering in food production by bringing together the points she has noted in her reading.

A first task

My next step is to have the students write a synthesis based on some short extracts from different publications on a common theme (See Box 2 on page 28). First, the students need to understand and express in their own words the points made by the various authors. They can do this in pairs, explaining the authors' ideas to each other and discussing whether there is any agreement between them and, if not, in what ways they disagree. They could then follow this by taking some notes or devising a simple mind-map. They should now be sufficiently prepared to write a short synthesis. Remind them that their paragraph will need a brief introduction.

At the top of page 29 is an example of a successful synthesis to give the students a model for how this task might be done. Note that it is important to distinguish the writer's own words from the information derived from the three sources. I have colour-coded the synthesis to show which information comes from each of the sources in Box 2.

A further task

As an optional, follow-up exercise, I find that students benefit from looking closely at the way the writer of the synthesis has paraphrased the original sources. I ask them, for example, to take the second sentence in the extract from Jenkins:

'In Britain, the cheapest energy source is wind power and, because the market and technology are already in place, it does not need a significant financial investment to develop on a large scale.'

and to compare it to the paraphrase:

'Jenkins (2008) … points out that ***wind power is the least expensive fuel in Britain and any major expansion of the industry would not be very costly as the market and technology are already established.'***

I then ask them to say how the writer has transformed this sentence. There are various techniques that can be identified, such as:

1 Using synonymous words and phrases (as far as possible)

- *the cheapest* ➡ **the least expensive**
- *because* ➡ **as**
- *in place* ➡ **established**
- *need a significant financial investment* ➡ **be very costly**

Box 1 • Genetic modification

These are notes a student has taken from four different sources on the benefits and possible harmful effects of using genetic engineering in food production.

Rowlands (2002)

- higher crop yields
- land more efficiently used
- can be grown in difficult conditions: poor soil and bad climate
- cheaper to grow and transport

Owens (1999)

- increased production
- will grow on unsuitable land in harsh climatic conditions
- food has better flavour, appearance
- long shelf life
- more nutritious

Rees (2003)

- more resistant to pests ➡ therefore don't need chemicals
- less nutritious (because better taste, appearance)

Powell (2004)

- genes can spread to other plants and damage ecosystem
- 'superweed'
- could reduce number of species or make extinct
- can cause allergies – inadequate research

Look at how the writer has expanded these notes into sentences, found both similar and contrasting points in the texts and linked them in the following paragraph. In other words, the writer has synthesised the ideas. Note how she refers to the sources.

The application of genetic engineering techniques to the mass production of food is a controversial issue. While there are numerous benefits to be gained, there are also concerns about the undesirable side effects which may result from genetically modified (GM) plants. **Owens (1999) and Rowlands (2002) state** that crop production is substantially increased and that there is more efficient use of land. **They point out** that this is because land which was previously unsuitable for cultivation can be used for GM crops and that they can survive extreme climatic conditions as well. The crops are also more resistant to disease and therefore require fewer chemicals **(Rees, 2003)**. The food products **are claimed by Owens (1999)** to have better appearance, taste, more nutritional value and a longer shelf life, thus reducing costs. **Rees (2003)**, on the other hand, disputes the nutritional content of GM food, arguing that this is largely lost in the effort to improve its taste and appearance. **One of the main criticisms of Powell (2004)** is that GM crops can harm the ecosystem by contaminating other nearby plants and possibly creating a 'superweed'. This could even lead to the eventual extinction of some natural species. **He also points to** worries about possible allergic reactions in consumers, an area where more research is needed.

Box 2 • Wind power

You have been given a writing assignment comparing and evaluating different renewable forms of energy. You are currently discussing the potential use of wind power in Britain and need to say something about its cost. You have found three articles which refer to this, and you have highlighted the relevant information.

1. Read the extracts identifying similar as well as contrasting points.
2. With a partner, try to explain in your own words the points of view of the three writers.
3. Make notes (linear notes or a mind-map).
4. Using your notes, write your synthesis by bringing together the ideas from the three sources.
5. Make sure you clearly indicate your source using a variety of ways (eg different reporting verbs).
6. Don't forget to paraphrase as much as possible.

Source A – S Bevan 2008
'In reality, wind is only a form of solar power, so it has similar, huge advantages over other sources of energy: it is clean, plentiful and free.'

Source B – R Hughes 2007
'Although it is free, the cost of generating electricity from wind is higher than producing power from fossil fuels and even atomic energy (if nuclear clean-up costs are excluded).'

Source C – T Jenkins (chief executive of the British Wind Energy Organisation) 2008
'Britain is the windiest country in Europe, and coastal wind farms are therefore a feasible source of power. … In Britain, the cheapest energy source is wind power and, because the market and technology are already in place, it does not need a significant financial investment to develop on a large scale. … It has been estimated in independent studies that wind power could contribute 20% to electricity generation by 2020 and, compared to other sources, would only add 5% to bills.'

A sample synthesis

There are conflicting arguments on the advantages of using wind to generate power, particularly on the matter of its cost. **One view is that,** compared to other forms of energy, wind power, like solar power, greatly benefits from being clean, abundant and free **(Bevan, 2008).** Wind may be free, but **Hughes (2007) has claimed that** it is more expensive to produce electricity from wind than from fossil fuels and even from atomic energy. **This is, however, disputed by Jenkins (2008),** the chief executive of the British Wind Energy Organisation, **who points out that** wind power is the least expensive source of energy in Britain and any major expansion of the industry would not be very costly as the market and technology are already established. **He adds that,** according to independent research, by 2020, only 5% would be added to bills if 20% of electricity was produced from wind power.

2 Changing the order of ideas

In the original sentence, the cause (because the market and technology are already in place) precedes the effect (it does not need a significant financial investment to develop on a large scale). In the paraphrase, the effect (any major expansion of the industry would not be very costly) precedes the cause (as the market and technology are already established).

3 Changing a verb phrase into a noun phrase

For example: *to develop on a large scale* ➧ **any major expansion of the industry**

A further step

To get more realistic practice, students need to read longer texts (ideally authentic), where they have to select information that is relevant to a particular topic. For example, with a class of students all studying economics, I have used extracts from two economics textbooks on the effects of unemployment on the individual, on the economy and on society. After reading the two texts, I have the students work in pairs on constructing mind-maps to illustrate the key points made by the two authors (who incidentally were in general agreement with each other but had different emphases). Collaborating on mind-maps can, in fact, be beneficial for students as the discussion and negotiation involved can stimulate them into thinking and understanding in alternative ways. My students found this a useful (and enjoyable) activity as it revealed that there was a cause and effect pattern in the multiple consequences of unemployment. This gave them a logical structure to base their synthesis upon.

The end product – writing the synthesis – is still going to be challenging for many but, by gradually building up the strategies involved, with practice, students will feel more confident about tackling it. ETp



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Making words stick

Darius Langhoff presents an overview of vocabulary learning strategies.

The multilayered issue of L2 vocabulary acquisition can be represented through a model comprising four parts: learner, task, context and strategy. These constituents have been subjected to empirical research with the focus on task-dependent guessing strategies, dictionary strategies, note-taking strategies, rote rehearsal strategies and encoding strategies. Researchers have either looked impassively for the strategies that achieve the best results, or argued that the choice of a successful strategy hinges on the task, the learner and the learning context. This article endeavours to demonstrate that learning new words involves complex processes and requires further research to better our understanding of how new words are learnt and retained.

A model for learning

Language learning in general and vocabulary acquisition in particular are problem-solving tasks at different levels of complexity. When learners come across challenging tasks, they adopt certain strategies to overcome the problem. Linguists, teachers and psychologists have long been interested in the effectiveness of the various strategies they use. Researchers have come up with several vocabulary-learning models, which have been fused into a more general person–task–context–strategy model.

Person

Learners introduce into the learning situation a broad spectrum of individual differences that influence the pace of learning and the ultimate degree of success. The factors which determine how learners handle tasks are: age, gender, intelligence, prior knowledge, motivation, personality and cognitive style.

Task

A learning task can be as broad as mastering another language, or as narrow as remembering the meaning of one word. In general terms, the concept of a learning task includes the materials which provide the language input and the goal the learner is trying to achieve by using these materials. Different sorts of materials and differing task aims and levels of difficulty call for different learning strategies.

Context

The learning context refers to the learning environment: the socio-cultural-political space where learning takes place. The learning context may encompass teachers, classmates, the classroom ethos, family support and the curriculum. Learning contexts influence the ways in which learners approach learning tasks. A learning strategy of value in one learning context may prove useless in another.

Strategy

A learning strategy is the course of action a learner tries in order to complete a language task. A strategy commences when learners analyse the task, the situation and their own L2 proficiency. Then, they proceed to select, deploy, monitor and evaluate their actions, and decide whether their plans and actions need be modified. Language learning strategies should be differentiated from language-use strategies: the former include, for example, memorising; the latter involve such things as writing and speaking.

Person, task, context and strategy are interconnected and co-function in the process of learning. An analysis of learning strategies requires knowledge of the person-task-context configuration of the particular learning situation. There are strategies which are more task-dependent and others which are more person-dependent or context-dependent. The first type tends to predominate in second language teaching and learning and will be dealt with in detail below.

Task-dependent learning strategies

It seems sound to claim that the principal aim of vocabulary learning is to bridge the gap between knowing a word and using it. In other words, the purpose is not only to remember new words but also to know how to use them in a variety of contexts. Evidence, such as that collected by Rod Ellis, suggests that the *knowledge* aspect (its breath and depth) requires conscious and explicit learning mechanisms, whilst the *skill* aspect draws mostly on implicit learning and memory. In short, vocabulary learning strategies ought to include strategies for 'using' as well as 'knowing' a word.

Since the majority of L1 vocabulary is learnt through incidental exposure

rather than through direct instruction, it seems plausible that lexical acquisition in L2 might follow the same route. This theory brings with itself a number of questions:

Does guessing meaning lead to vocabulary learning?

Clear evidence shows that children learn a large proportion of their L1 vocabulary incidentally, even accidentally, from hearing and seeing. A similar mechanism operates in L2 contexts, but, as Margot Haynes points out, learners are sometimes conspicuously incapable of guessing the meaning of an unknown word appearing in a text or discourse. Two conclusions may be drawn from this. Firstly, that L2 learners, owing to their inadequate knowledge of the target language, are generally poorer guessers and less effective incidental learners. Secondly, that L2 beginners, who lack basic skills in the target language, are often condemned to ineffectual attempts at incidental vocabulary learning.

How many exposures are needed to learn a word?

There some discrepancies in the research that attempts to answer this question. Some researchers, such as Paul Nation, postulate that between five and 16 exposures are necessary to learn a word from context. Others, such as Paul Meara, put forward a 0.01 hypothesis (1 uptake for every 100 exposures), arguing that L2 learners are not usually exposed to large quantities of spoken or written discourse. Despite these considerable differences, researchers agree that the necessary number of exposures depends on factors such as the conspicuousness of the word in a text and the number of contextual clues.

Is incidental learning more effective than intentional learning?

Although incidental learning is more clearly the primary means of vocabulary learning in L1 contexts, it does still have a role to play in L2 vocabulary learning. Nevertheless, a prerequisite for successful incidental vocabulary learning through reading is actual reading ability, an ability L2 beginners may possess to a limited extent. This problem is exacerbated if the second language has an entirely different orthography. Moreover, when the amount of target language input is small and reading materials are scarce, exclusive reliance on incidental learning is doomed to failure. It is no surprise, then, that a combined approach proves superior to incidental vocabulary learning alone: explicit lexical instruction in conjunction with self-selected reading brings better results. This is particularly true at beginner or elementary level, where incidental learning must be coupled with the support and reinforcement of explicit learning and teaching. A combination of techniques is, however, also effective with advanced L2 learners.

How useful are dictionaries?

Teachers and lexicographers have for a long time debated whether dictionaries should be used in the language classroom and, if so, *what* dictionaries should be used.

It is common knowledge that a dictionary is one of the first things that students purchase. It is their dictionaries that they carry around, not grammar books. However, empirical research into the usefulness of dictionaries is only beginning to emerge. So, is it better to use a dictionary when looking for meaning, or to try guessing from context?

Studies of the efficacy of dictionaries in lexical acquisition have usually been carried out in L1 settings, and have compared the contribution of dictionary definitions to contextual guessing. In general, the results appear to favour contextual guessing. However, as Susan Knight observes, these results are questionable, as the students under investigation who engaged in contextual guessing read not only unadapted texts, but also texts accompanied by definitions and examples, being thus exposed to dictionary-like situations. Again, a combination of strategies may be more productive than either exclusive dictionary use or contextual guessing.

Clear evidence shows that children learn a large proportion of their L1 vocabulary incidentally, even accidentally, from hearing and seeing

At beginner or elementary level incidental learning must be coupled with the support of explicit learning and teaching

If dictionaries are to be used, a further question concerns what kind of dictionary is preferable: bilingual or monolingual? The stance of most linguists and teachers is that monolingual dictionaries should be used. However, monolingual dictionaries tend to be circuitous in their definitions. For example, the words *encourage*, *favour*, *foster*, *foment*, *provoke*, *instigate*, *urge*, etc are all used in each other's definitions. Monolingual dictionaries for learners tend to use a restricted defining vocabulary, usually about 2,000 words, but this pre-selected lexical set is frequently of little use to students below advanced level. I feel that what is needed is a new generation of bilingual reference books, which present students with fuller semantic, grammatical and stylistic information, and with more examples and usage notes, things typically absent in traditional bilingual dictionaries.

Vocabulary learning strategies

Note-taking and memorisation

When dealing with the meaning of unknown words, learners make notes in notebooks, write on cards, in the margins of texts or between the lines. Of course, the exact form of those notes is unique to each learner, and so is their usability. Differences in how new vocabulary is recorded may distinguish the good learner from the poor one.

One of the first problems learners have to solve is how to memorise large numbers of new lexical items. The commonest strategy here is to repeat the new expressions over and over until they are remembered. Thus a substantial amount of research has focused on vocabulary rehearsal and identified four influential factors: the number of repetitions required to memorise a word list; the optimal number of words to be learnt at one time; the timing of the repetition; and loud versus silent repetition.

▶▶▶

Making words stick

An unexpectedly large amount of new lexis seems to be learnable within a relatively short time span. When the words on a list are 'easy', that is to say of high frequency, lists containing 100 or even more lexical items can be studied at one time. Empirical studies show that repeating aloud helps retention far better than repeating silently. The ear assists the eye in the long-lasting retention of vocabulary. This has been attributed to the fact that the ear can split sound into constituent simple sound waves, whereas the eye cannot split light into constituent electromagnetic waves.

Encoding and vocabulary learning

Repeating word lists is just one vocabulary learning strategy; there are others which centre on deeper processes involving memory, form, meaning and use.

The use of mnemonics is one technique which has recently attracted a lot of attention, though mnemonics have been used as a memory aid since antiquity. Probably the best-known mnemonic technique is the *keyword method*, where a foreign word is remembered through linkage to a keyword, a sound-alike native word (acoustic link), or a look-alike native word (visual link).

However, mnemonic strategies for learning L2 vocabulary are not without flaws:

- Mnemonic techniques rely on the retention of paired associates, while an L2 lexicon hardly resembles an ordered collection of L1–L2 lexical couplets.
- The mnemonic approach stresses a rigid one-to-one relationship between form and meaning, while in reality one lexical item stands for multiple dimensions of meaning.
- Mnemonic techniques tend to overrate the referential meaning of a word, often at the expense of its grammatical properties.
- Abstract words, because of their lack of tangible referents, are unsuitable for mnemonic strategies.
- The success claimed for mnemonic techniques in facilitating long-term retention is defined as being correct recall after two weeks under experimental conditions; in real life, retention needs to go infinitely beyond a two-week period.

Word-formation: focusing on form

Lexicographers are particularly interested in form: their work is based on the thesis that the etymological background is important to learners. It is certainly true that knowledge of Greco-Latin roots can often help students predict what a given English word means and why it is spelt the way it is. This knowledge may also help them remember it through a realisation of how its present meaning evolved from that of its original root. Learners may benefit also from affixation: splitting a word into its component parts lays bare its roots; learners may also recognise the meanings and functions of suffixes and prefixes and how they contribute to the meaning of the whole word.

Semantic networks: focusing on meaning

Our knowledge of vocabulary learning has expanded recently due to developments in lexical semantics. The paradigmatic versus syntagmatic treatment of the mental lexicon has instigated new perceptions of the semantic field. Applied linguists design semantic networks, maps and grids in which words are connected by intertwined meanings. Such strategies, although potentially too prescriptive, may be of benefit to learners.

★ ★ ★

Today, vocabulary learning is better understood thanks to the pioneers in the fields of incidental vocabulary learning, memorisation and mnemonic techniques. But there are still unanswered questions, and the following three points are what I consider to be the most important issues for future research:

1 Research efforts have mostly been directed towards discovering the 'best' strategy for vocabulary retention, ignoring the diversity of strategies students actually employ.

2 Quite a lot of emphasis has been put on incidental vocabulary learning, overlooking the potential of intentional learning.

3 Research into vocabulary learning conducted in the linguistic tradition has concentrated on the product (what is learnt or is to be learnt) rather than on the process of acquisition (how things are learnt).

The choice and effectiveness of vocabulary learning strategies depend on the task, the learners and the context. In future, researchers may want to identify strategies which help learners acquire multi-word expressions or which are specifically applicable to students at different levels of proficiency. In addition, the contextual perspective must not be underestimated in our search for the perfect strategy.

Successful vocabulary learning comprises far more than the presenting and retaining words. A steady L2 vocabulary growth nurtures itself when learners apply strategies aimed more at the use than at the retention of words. What is now needed is a developmental model which will recognise the intricate complexity and diversity of lexical acquisition. ETp

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Which side are you on?

Adam Brown nurtures the non-committal.

Learners often believe that writing, particularly academic writing, is or should be objective – often because we, as teachers, tell them that subjectivity should be avoided. However, we very often set general essay topics that require learners to give their opinions. That is, we ask for the pros and cons of topics that clearly have two sides to the argument, such as arranged marriages, vegetarianism, jogging, the nuclear/extended family, euthanasia and the death penalty. Any final opinion from the learner is valid, provided it is supported by evidence, with some argumentation about why the writer comes down on one side or the other. This involves evaluating the merits of data and arguments. Such material cannot be presented wholeheartedly, as it often represents conflicting and contradictory points. The process of arguing for claims that you agree with, and distancing yourself from those that you disagree with or feel are weak, can be achieved by *hedging*.

Hedging your bets

Hedging is the process of limiting your commitment to the truth of what you are writing. For instance, we could write *Jogging leads to injuries of the joints.* However, that would imply that all jogging necessarily results in injuries, which is clearly an overstatement. It is, therefore, normal in English to add hedging expressions such as *may contribute to injuries, occasionally, if carried out without adequate stretching and coaching, some types of jogging,* etc. That is, we are toning down the strength of a statement, or our commitment to its truth, from 100 percent. Hedging expressions have, therefore, also been referred to as language that is cautious, tentative, non-assertive, non-committal, mitigating, qualifying, softening, distancing, indirect and protective or, more negatively, evasive, apologetic and vague.

Such hedging is common in English writing, as shown by the following extract from a *New Zealand Herald* report about the recall of faulty cars by Toyota:

'Ideas being considered include warranties of as long as ten years and rebates of thousands of dollars per vehicle that would start in March, said three executives from retailer groups with Toyota franchises. … Incentives might help Toyota keep customers as it tries to recover from recalls linked to unwanted acceleration that included about eight million vehicles worldwide.'

Note that the warranties are *as long as ten years*, that is, some of them may be ten years, but many may be less. The rebates are *thousands of dollars*; this could mean $2,000 or $20,000, a wide range. The modal verb in *would start* shows that this idea may not be implemented. This information is attributed to *executives from retailer groups*; the writer is thus being defensive in case it proves not to be true or accurate. *Incentives might help Toyota keep customers*, but, there again, they might not. The recalls are *linked to unwanted acceleration*; this 'link' does not mean that unwanted acceleration inevitably results. The problem relates to *about eight million vehicles*; we do not need to know the precise figure.

Sitting on the fence

It has been found that learners of English are often not taught such hedging expressions in English and are, therefore, poor at writing with the correct amount of hedging. Often, they state personal opinions and biases without any hedging, as if they were facts. As Skelton expresses it, *'It is important for students to learn to be confidently uncertain.'*

Nevertheless, it is likely that hedging exists in all languages. The academic investigation of hedging has flourished since the 1980s, and Schröder and Zimmer refer to studies in many languages.

There may be intercultural differences in the amount of hedging expected and used. Academic writing by British researchers is often guarded, reserved and hesitant, as if in deference to readers who may disagree with them. However, to readers from other cultures, this may appear to be sitting on the fence. Similarly, British speech may contain more hedging than other cultures. For instance, contestants on the British version of TV show *The Apprentice* are likely to state, *'I think we did a pretty good job in the circumstances'*, while their American counterparts often avoid all hedging: *'We did an outstanding job.'*

There are also differences in hedging depending on the kind of writing. We have already said that, despite

▶▶▶

Which side are you on?

impressions to the opposite, hedging is a common feature of academic, including scientific, writing. However, similar amounts of hedging would be unacceptable in user documentation or requirements specifications, which need to be precise, unambiguous and direct.

Hedging in writing

Hedging is particularly important in academic, scientific and business writing. The majority of writing in academic and technical fields is in English, and it is, therefore, important that researchers hoping that their work will be read by the global academic community are able to express it well in English.

It is especially important to use the correct amount of hedging in academic writing. We have just said that using no hedging means that material is stated too boldly, in black and white terms – and life is not like that. On the other hand, the reverse – using too much hedging – may lead to a piece of writing that gives the impression of being vague, ambiguous and not stating anything of any substance.

Hedging in speaking

While the main focus of this article is written language, hedging clearly also exists in spoken language. Alex Case takes the chief executive of Wimbledon tennis club to task for being too vague in these remarks quoted in the *International Herald Tribune* in June 2007:

'We take very seriously being a sort of world-class event, hopefully. … And to a degree there's always been those people who have said it's a bit cloistered. Maybe with the roof off, I don't know, it is going to get people more excited.'

Note the hedging expressions: *sort of*, *hopefully*, *to a degree*, *a bit*, *Maybe*, *I don't know*.

There are various features of spoken and nonverbal language that can affect the hedging strength of an expression, but which obviously do not apply in writing. Appropriate intonation, speed, facial expression, etc can turn a tentative *'You might be right …'* into a more confident *'You might be right!'*

Hedging expressions

- **Modal verbs:** *would*, *may*, *might*, *could*, etc (See Exercise 1 below.)
- **Lexical verbs:** *appear*, *seem*, *tend*, *look like*, *think*, *believe*, *doubt*, *be sure*, *indicate*, *suggest*, *assume*, *estimate*, *claim*, etc
- **Modal adverbs:** *probably, certainly, conceivably, likely, unlikely, apparently, seemingly, arguably, possibly, definitely, clearly, perhaps, maybe, without a doubt, undoubtedly, to a certain extent, tentatively, presumably*, etc, and their related adjectives (*probable*, *certain*) and nouns (*probability*, *certainty*)
- **Modifications to nouns:** *a strong/good/definite/slight/remote possibility*
- **Adverbs of frequency:** *often*, *generally*, *sometimes*, *seldom*, etc (See Exercise 2.)
- **Numerical expressions:** *most*, *some*, *few*, *a lot*, etc (See Exercise 3.)
- **'Approximate' words:** *approximately*, *about*, *around*, *or so*, etc
- **Attribution:** *according to*, *based on*, *on this evidence*, the passive *(it is believed)*, etc
- **Imprecise expressions:** *kind of*, *sort of*, *as it were*, *if you will*, *like*, *if you like*, etc

Practice in hedging

The following exercises can be used with students to enhance their understanding of hedging and to increase their productive vocabulary of hedging expressions.

Exercise 1

One context in which the appropriate amount of hedging is important is the 'recommendations' sections of reports. Writers may believe that some recommendations are essential, but others are simply suggestions. One way of showing this is the choice of modal verbs. Arrange the following in order of the strength of the recommendation.

a) The present photocopier should be replaced.

b) The present photocopier could be replaced.

c) The present photocopier ought to be replaced.

d) The present photocopier must be replaced.

e) The present photocopier can be replaced.

f) The present photocopier has to be replaced.

g) The present photocopier might be replaced.

h) The present photocopier may be replaced.

Answer

The following order represents my intuitions, and what is found in grammar books: (strongest first) *must*, *has to*, *should*, *ought to*, *may*, *could*, *can*, *might*. Since the writer cannot usually force the reader (often the writer's manager) to carry out the recommendations, *should* normally represents the right level of hedging. Note also the use of the passive without the *by …* phrase (*be replaced*): the writer can state what needs to be done, rather than who needs to do it.

Exercise 2

Arrange the following expressions of frequency on the scale below. You might like to use the frame: *Such behaviour … leads to breathing problems.*

a) *at times*

b) *frequently*

c) *generally*

d) *hardly ever*

e) *often*

f) *on occasion*

g) *rarely*

h) *seldom*

i) *sometimes*

j) *usually*

k) *more often than not*

l) *now and again*



Answer

Again, the following order represents my intuitions: (most frequent first) *generally, usually, frequently, more often than not, often, sometimes, at times, now and again, on occasion, seldom, rarely, hardly ever.*

Exercise 3

Arrange the following numerical expressions, on the scale below. You might like to use the frame: ... *Premier League teams are foreign-owned.* (There are 20 Premier League teams.)

1 *a couple of*
2 *a few*
3 *a handful of*
4 *a lot of*
5 *few*
6 *half a dozen*
7 *many*
8 *not many*
9 *one or two*
10 *several*
11 *some*
12 *three or four*

all ◄——————► *no*
most — least

Answer

As before, the following order represents my intuitions: (most first) *a lot of, many, several, some, half a dozen, a handful of, a few, three or four, not many, few, a couple of, one or two.*

Exercise 4

In each of the following pairs of sentences, the first carries no hedging and often sounds too assertive. What linguistic device does the second one contain, and what is the effect?

1 a) Women make good drivers.
b) It is said that women make good drivers.

2 a) It is a good idea to start again.
b) I think it is a good idea to start again.

3 a) Mary has red hair.
b) Mary has reddish hair.

4 a) A penguin is a bird.
b) A penguin is a sort of bird.

5 a) The play was good.
b) The play was OK.

6 a) There is a mistake in the invoice.
b) There seems to be a mistake in the invoice.

7 a) It's 5.32.
b) It's half past five.

8 a) That child is ugly.
b) That child is not particularly cute.

Answers

1 Using *it is said* (attribution to a third party) allows the writer to be less assertive, avoiding implying that they are claiming it is true.

2 *I think* (a lexical verb) reduces the force of the statement.

3 The suffix *-ish* shows that the hair is not red, but only somewhat red.

4 While to a zoologist a penguin is technically a bird, to lay people it is not a prototypical bird. *Sort of* (an expression adding imprecision) shows this.

5 *OK* is a weaker adjective than *good*, and shows less wholehearted approval.

6 *There is a mistake in the invoice* might be construed as criticism, accusing the listener of making a mistake. *Seems* (a lexical verb) softens this implication, perhaps saving face for the listener.

7 We seldom need to be precise to the minute, unless we are catching a train, etc. *Half past five* is a vaguer expression, extending, say, from 5.25 to 5.35.

8 *Ugly* is blunt here and could offend. Using *not* with the opposite adjective (*cute*), especially with the adverb *particularly*, softens the effect, is more polite and could be called a euphemism.

Exercise 5

The following are real pieces of language from the Collins Wordbanks Online corpus. Identify the hedging in them.

1 Blood pressure also tends to rise as you get older.

2 Darjeeling and Boudhanath were probably the two best spots outside Tibet for news of that country.

3 Italians appear to be no longer voting according to ideology.

4 Has the suggestion been made that perhaps there might be a better way of doing this? Maybe public financing?

5 With hindsight I think I would probably do the same again.

6 Salaries and bonuses may be forced up as clubs attempt to tie their best players to long-term contracts. But prices should come down for the first time since Alf Common's day.

7 The feeling of well-being caused by a few pieces of chocolate or a glass or more of wine can, he declares, be linked with resistance to ill health. 'A modest indulgence may have a beneficial effect,' he says.

8 I would guess it would be somewhere in between $400 million and $800 million.

Answers

1 *tends* (a lexical verb)

2 *probably* (a modal adverb)

3 *appear* (a lexical verb)

4 *suggestion* (a lexical noun), *perhaps* (a modal adverb), *might* (a modal verb), *maybe* (a modal adverb)

5 *think* (a lexical verb), *probably* (a modal adverb)

6 *may*, *should* (both modal verbs)

7 *a few* (numerical expression), *or more* (an approximate expression), *can* (a modal verb), *he declares* (attribution to a third party), *linked* (a lexical verb), *may* (a modal verb), *he says* (attribution to a third party)

8 *would* (a modal verb), *guess* (a lexical verb), *somewhere in between* (imprecise expression), *$400 million and $800 million* (a huge range).

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PREPARING TO TEACH ...
Vocabulary 1

John Potts considers some of the components of teaching new vocabulary items.

Language analysis: four things to consider

1. **FORM** – this refers to how a word is spelled (or spelt!), how plurals and derived words are formed, etc.
2. **MEANING(S)** – this can be very complex, as one 'word' may have very different meanings (and in fact be different words – and hence appear as separate headwords in a dictionary). Moreover, the same word may also perform different grammatical functions, eg *fake* can be a verb, noun or adjective.
3. **PRONUNCIATION** – the basics are sounds and word stress.
4. **GRAMMAR** – for example, is a verb regular or irregular? Is a noun countable or uncountable? Is a word followed by an infinitive, a gerund or something else? Is a phrasal verb separable or not?

Choosing which words to teach: two things to consider

Especially at lower levels, it is important to decide how useful words are for the learner.

1. **FREQUENCY** – some words are met and used far more frequently than others, and form the basis of a core vocabulary. Learner's dictionaries often highlight these words (eg by using a colour code).
2. **RANGE** – some words also have a wider range and are, therefore, more useful at lower levels: for example, *heavy* versus *weighty*, *thin* versus *slender*, *red* versus *scarlet*.

Connotations and collocations

Some words have special associations or **connotations**: for example, *home* has connotations that *house* does not. Words may have different connotations in other languages, leading to potential problems for learners.

Collocations are the combinations that a word may frequently make: for example, *heavy traffic/rain/duty/weather*, etc. Again, these are often not the same in other languages, and some are idiomatic (eg *make heavy weather of something*).

Language awareness: more things to consider

1. **DEGREE OF FORMALITY AND APPROPRIACY** – some words are inappropriate in some contexts, eg at a formal meal you wouldn't say that the food is *yummy*.
2. **REGISTER** – some words are used by particular professions (eg in legal or financial English), or in particular social contexts (eg with young children: *tummy* rather than *stomach*).
3. **VARIETY** – the main two varieties covered in learner dictionaries are British and American English. Coursebooks tend to be written in one variety, though they may sometimes refer to the other. Learners may have had more exposure to one variety than another, and so may have problems when meeting the other. Teachers, too, may not always be sure about words from different varieties – compare these words in British and American English: *vest, braces, pants, suspenders.*
4. **CURRENCY** – some once-common words are now dated or even obsolete, such as *gramophone player* or *musket*, while others have changed their meaning significantly with time – *wireless*, *gay*, *jet*.

False friends, true friends

1. Mistakes may often be due to **L1 interference**, resulting in **false friends**. For example, a typical mistake made by speakers of many European languages is to think that *actual* means 'now, current, topical, contemporary', etc.
2. In addition, learners may use English words (or English-looking words) that have been taken into their own language – but which don't have the same **meaning** in English. For example, a *handy* (= mobile phone, cell phone), a *beamer* (= digital or video projector) or a *dancing* (= club, disco, etc).
3. Learners may **confuse** two similar-looking words in English, for example: *economic* and *economical*.
4. On the other hand, sometimes words may be very close or even identical to the learners' L1, and so they can be **compared**.

Vocabulary in context

Like grammar structures, vocabulary items benefit from having a **context** for them to make sense. Here are some approaches:

1. Reading texts provide the context for the new items, and students can develop skills that allow them to make reasonable guesses at their meaning.
2. Pictures, diagrams and other visuals can be very helpful, especially at low levels.
3. Putting new words into meaningful phrases or sentences is important, otherwise learners may just have lists of contextless words.
4. Personalising new words is also very helpful as an aid to internalising meaning.

PREPARING TO TEACH ... Vocabulary 1

Word fields, lexical sets

Grouping words into topics or fields is often considered helpful (although this is somewhat controversial, with some authorities suggesting that a group of similar or related words can confuse the learner).

1. topic-based: for example, words connected with food. This approach can be made quite specific: for example, words connected with cooking and eating food.
2. concept-based: for example, different verbs of seeing (eg *gaze*, *stare*, *peep*, *wink*, *blink*).
3. stem words and derived words: for example, words derived from the verb *apply*, such as *application*, *appliance*, etc.

Word building, word formation

A related approach to the one immediately above is to focus specifically on how words are built using affixes (prefixes and suffixes).

1. paradigm approach: for example, *receive/receptive/reception*, *deceive/deceptive/deception*.
2. affix approach: for example, adjective ➡ noun using *-ness* (*calm* ➡ *calmness*, *flat* ➡ *flatness*).
3. antonyms: using affixes to make opposites (eg *impersonal*, *hopeless*, *non-smoking*).
4. topic approach: for example, a table of words relating to personal qualities and characteristics.

Clarifying and checking

As with new grammar items, it is important to **clarify and check the meaning** of the new vocabulary, for example by asking a set of **concept questions**. These should be prepared in advance – they're very hard to think up on the spot! Keep them few, short and simple – with equally brief answers.

For example: *Ann took **effective** action to solve the problem.*

1 What kind of word is this?	*(An adjective.)*
2 Is it a positive or a negative quality?	*(Positive.)*
3 Did her action work?	*(Yes.)*
4 So the problem was solved?	*(Yes.)*

There are many other ways of clarifying and checking – by using realia and visuals, for example, or by using a dictionary (whether a learner's dictionary or a traditional translation dictionary).

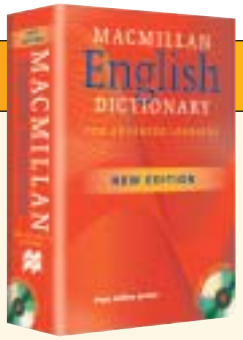
There will be more on using dictionaries in part 2 of this article: plus ways of practising, recycling and recording vocabulary.



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COMPETITION RESULTS



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

Congratulations to all those readers who successfully completed our Prize Crossword 42. The winners, who will each receive a copy of the *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*, are:

José Luis Rupérez Aguado, Madrid, Spain
Suzanne Brems, Coshocton, USA
Bojana Djindjic, Belgrade, Serbia
Michele Garcia, Castelnuovo Don Bosco, Italy
Ana Beltrán Hetherington, Andújar, Spain
Valerie McCabe, Gosnells, Australia
Sarah Marshall, Bangor, UK
Alistair Ratcliff, Cádiz, Spain
Sharon Roberts Sibson, Caernarfon, UK
Betty Taylor, Dorking, UK

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

7 M	3 E	4 N		24 O	8 F		8 F	3 E	22 W		22 W	24 O	13 R	20 D	2 S
10 A	13 R	3 E		5 T	21 H	3 E		9 B	3 E	2 S	5 T		7 M	3 E	4 N

William Shakespeare

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 *Meetings in English* by Bryan Stephens, published by Macmillan. Macmillan have kindly agreed to be sponsors of It Works in Practice for this year.



Towers of fun

By introducing numbers at an early stage in your young learner English classes, you are putting in place a structure on which your students can expand their vocabulary, and providing a base for a variety of games and activities.

Building towers is a fun game. With the children seated in a circle on the floor, place a pile of coloured wooden blocks in the middle of the circle. Everybody takes turns to roll a large dice and then collect the corresponding number of blocks in order to build a tower. The children become engrossed in building their towers, with the highest one being the winner. There is equal enjoyment afterwards as each tower is knocked down. The final tidy up of returning the bricks to a bag or box, ordered by colour, introduces and practises further vocabulary.

Emma Saul
Essertines sur Rolle, Switzerland

Basket case

This is a game that can be played by students of intermediate level and above. I usually play it with three teams of five students each, but the numbers can be varied. The aim is to have some fun whilst practising the present perfect tense. You will need to prepare in advance three copies of a reading text whose focus is the present perfect, with twice as many words or expressions as there are students on each team blanked out. Each blank should have a number. You will also need some small plastic balls (one for each missing word or expression for each team), pieces of paper and three large waste-paper baskets. Write the missing words/expressions on paper and attach them to the balls with tape.

Divide the class into three teams, A, B and C. Each has a basket labelled with the letter of their team. The basket is placed two metres away in front of them.

Each set of balls should be laid on the floor behind each team, at least one metre away. A line should be drawn on the floor (or it could be an imaginary one) where the students have to stand to throw their balls in the basket.

The students need to read the text and find *quickly* the ball that carries the correct word or expression for each blank. They then write the number of that blank on the ball and throw it in the basket. Set a time limit for them to do this. If they miss the basket, they have to retrieve the ball, return behind the line and throw it again.

At the end, check the contents of the three baskets. The team with the most correct answers wins. In the case of a tie, the team which finished first wins.

Variations:

The text can be written on the board or displayed via *PowerPoint*.

There can be more than three teams or fewer, depending on class size, and the number of the members of a team can vary. However, the number of blanks should always be double the number of the members of each team.

If the teams are not of equal size, the team with an extra student will need an extra couple of distractor balls, carrying words that cannot be used to fill in any of the blanks. When they identify a distractor ball, the team should write Ø on it and then throw it in the basket.

This game can be used for practising other grammatical structures, writing (adding topic sentences to appropriate paragraphs) or vocabulary.

Mohammed Arroub
Homs, Syria

Students' posters

My first-year students in the faculty of chemical and food technology in Bratislava, Slovakia, end their English language course with an examination in the summer term. One part of their oral exam involves presenting a poster on a scientific topic. The students can choose any technical topic they are particularly interested in, preferably related to chemistry. Most of the material they use is taken from the internet, encyclopaedias and chemistry texts. After the examination, we keep the posters in the department, so each year there are hundreds of posters left. We tend to display the best in the classrooms, while others serve as examples of good and bad work for the next generation of students. Some, unfortunately, end up in the bin.

As this seems such a waste, this year we have decided to keep almost all the posters (with topics relevant to our courses, eg oxygen, fractional distillation, wine production, coffee, the water cycle, the environment, etc). We have found various ways of using them as additional teaching materials.

This has required some preparation, mainly cutting them into sections, removing the titles supplied by the students and sorting them according to topics and needs. Here are the ideas we have come up with for using them:

1 Vocabulary practice

Teaching new and unknown technical terms, expressions and their meaning. Determining the key words (with the correct pronunciation) is very important practice for our students, along with giving definitions of new words in English.

2 Grammar practice

Students have to identify structures typically used in technical language, such as passives, participial phrases, time clauses, nominal compounds, etc.

3 Reading skills

Articles are chosen and exercises prepared for reading comprehension (eg true and false, gap fill, whole sentences removed from a text that have to be matched up, etc).

4 Writing skills

To practise summary writing, some posters are kept intact, with just the abstracts at the beginning and the conclusions at the end removed. Working in pairs, the students have to write a summary and/or abstract for each poster.

5 Describing diagrams, graphs and pictures

The graphs, charts, pictures and diagrams included in the posters are ideal for practising descriptions. This means that we no longer spend hours searching for suitable visuals in textbooks for the students to describe.

I would like to emphasise how easy it is to motivate students just by getting them to work with materials that have been created by fellow students the previous year. They are always eager to see in detail what the posters look like, and they realise that they must be properly prepared – not just for the exam but because they will be used later by a new generation of students.

Magdalena Horakova
Bratislava, Slovakia

Syrian whispers

If possible, clear all the desks and chairs to the side of the room. Ask four students to leave the classroom and divide the remaining students equally into four groups, A, B, C and D. (With smaller classes you can have fewer groups and send fewer students out of the room.) Ask the students to put Post-it notes on their foreheads indicating the letter of their group. They should then mingle together and move round in the classroom.

Assign a group to each of the students outside the classroom and give each a sentence to memorise. They then have to rush into the classroom looking for the members of their group (as indicated on the Post-it notes on the students' foreheads). They have to whisper their sentence, once and once only, to one of them who, in turn, hurries to whisper the same sentence to another member of the group, and so on till all the group members have heard the sentence. The listening student may not ask for clarification but has to do their best with what they have heard. When a student has delivered the sentence to another member of their team, they should sit down so it is clear how many group members are left. The last student from each group has to go to the board and write down the sentence as they heard it. At the end of the game, there should be four sentences on the board, equal to the number of groups. The winners are those whose sentence most closely matches the original which you gave to the student outside the classroom.

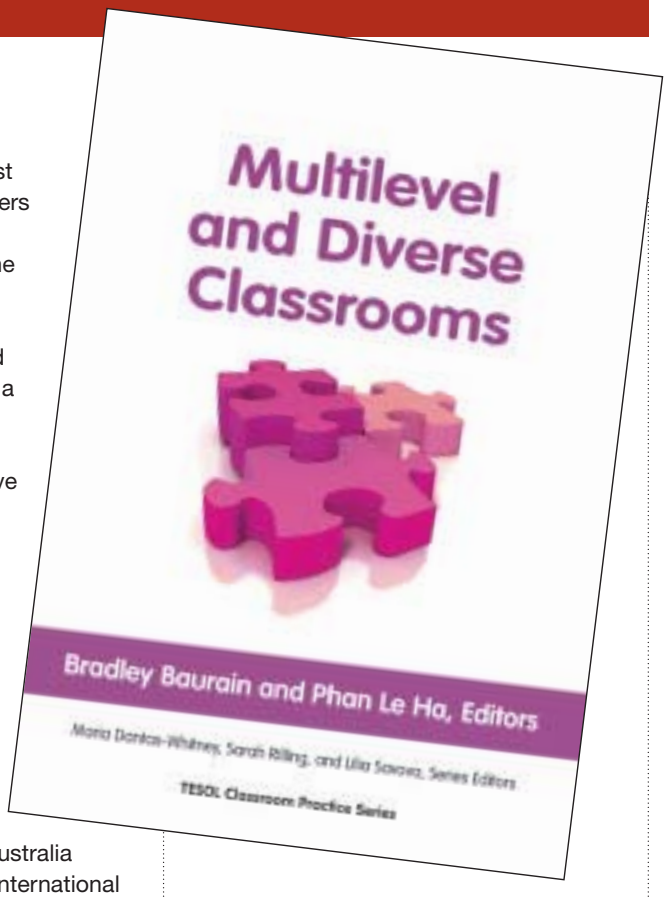
This game might sound easy, but in reality it is quite challenging: students often mis-hear some words in the sentence and end up with a totally different sentence.

Riyad al Homsi
Homs, Syria

Reviews

Multilevel and Diverse Classrooms

by Bradley Baurain and Phan Le Ha (Eds)
TESOL 2010
978-19311-8565-3



Although there is a sense in which every classroom in the world is 'multilevel and diverse', the contexts collected in this book really do stretch those parameters. This review aims to give enough of a taste of the contents to allow people to follow the modest words of the editors that *'you [the reader] are the best judge of what is useful and relevant'*. The 16 chapters all differ in their context, the focus of the lessons and, of course, the inventiveness of the teachers. Reading of their enthusiasm and innovation makes it easy to agree with one of the contributors, Karla Garjaka, who believes that *'teachers are the single most important resource in any classroom'*.

Multilevel and Diverse Classrooms follows the practice of the TESOL Classroom Practice Series by grouping the chapters under broad headings, in this case three. For me, the very general section headings (*Standing before a sea of faces, Spurring creativity and imagination* and *Expanding the boundaries*) were less of a guide to content than the clear chapter headings. Thus a quick skim across the titles in each section reveals chapters on oral activities (Section 1), using iPods (Section 2) and self-access (Section 3).

The geographical spread of contributions is wide, although there is a bias towards Asia. In the first section there are accounts from China, the Philippines, Thailand and a chapter with ideas collected from the experiences of its three authors in the Middle East, Asia, Central America and Africa. This chapter has a list of realistic suggestions for dealing with management problems in large classes, written in the format of challenges and responses. I look forward to passing on these suggestions to groups of in-service teachers in Asia.

It is probably the innovative ideas which will attract readers more than the country of origin, since these ideas seem transferable to many contexts. As an example of the range, the five chapters of the second section have ideas for using television commercials, photography, iPods, art and online comics. Although most contributors are either teachers or teacher educators, Bill Zimmerman, author of 'Online comics: Writing, reading and telling stories in English', is described as a journalist and newspaper editor as well as a volunteer ESOL teacher with basic literacy students. His students are fortunate to have such creative opportunities.

For some readers it will be the learning focus that is most important in selecting which chapters to read first. As the descriptors show, we are a profession which enjoys acronyms. The third section starts with a chapter by Roby Marlina about working with first-year university students in Australia studying EIL (English as an International Language). It continues with ideas for teaching academic reading and writing to theology students in India from Iris Devadason. Then comes Karla Garjaka's contribution about her class in the USA, described as being for CLT (culturally and linguistically diverse) students, followed by an account of a pre-university EFL class in Vietnam (from Le Van Canh and Nguyen Thi Thuy Minh) which focuses on academic writing. Chapter 16, by Garold Murray, is about self-access facilities at a Japanese university, while in the final chapter Jo Bertrand reports on teaching business communication to two different groups in China.

Each chapter starts with a literature review before presenting the context followed by a detailed account of the ideas. References for these reviews are mostly grouped alphabetically at the end of the book, although some authors also have some titles listed after their chapter. A look at a couple of chapters will give a further taste for the details. In Chapter 2, Alan Seaman from the USA takes up the challenge of spending a sabbatical at a Chinese university, where 60 students per class is the norm and the furniture consists of *'rows of bolted-down desks and chairs'*. His response is explained in a combination of general principles and specific suggestions, such as one for remembering names. The summary of principles he developed could be adapted to suit other contexts.

Some chapters are presented graphically. For example, in Chapter 3 Doris Christopher and Roland Niez report from the Philippines on group projects, showing samples of students' work plus a diagram explaining the language relationships in that country. For readers concerned about how to grade such innovative assignments, the marking rubric is attached.

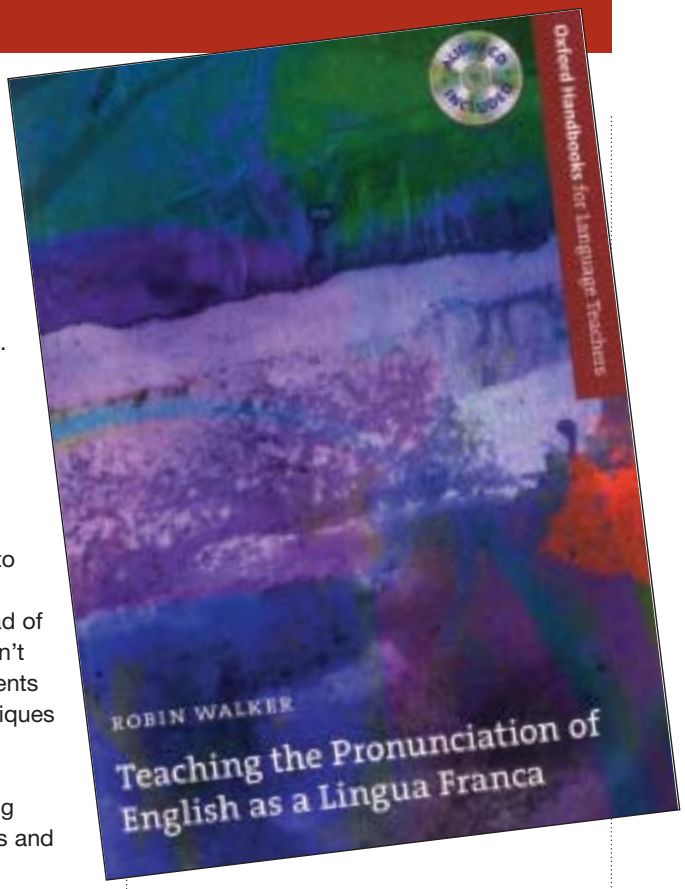
The book is likely to attract many groups of readers. Classroom teachers (or those who sponsor them) looking for a cheaper alternative to attending a conference in another city could form a reading group to discuss how the ideas might apply in their context. I recommended the collection to university teachers in Vietnam recently, and look forward to doing the same with groups of teacher trainers. I also plan to use it as a textbook on a future course for teachers, treating the chapters as case studies, with tasks to guide readers through them.

Marilyn Lewis
Auckland, New Zealand

Reviews

Teaching the Pronunciation of English as a Lingua Franca

by Robin Walker
Oxford University Press 2010
978-0-19-442200-0



In language teaching, we often assume that the objective is to enable the learners to communicate with native speakers, perhaps in a country where the target language is spoken. In the context of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), this assumption is no longer valid. With ELF, the objective is to enable the learners to communicate internationally, not necessarily with native English speakers and not necessarily in a country where English is spoken. This new objective has important implications for language teaching generally, and pronunciation teaching in particular, and it has generated a large amount of research and theorising. Robin Walker's new book, *Teaching the Pronunciation of English as a Lingua Franca* (TPELF), is intended to bridge the gap from this research and theory to actual classroom practice.

TPELF does not assume that readers are already familiar with ELF, and the first two chapters are dedicated to filling in the background. Chapter 1 explains the new role of English as a medium of international communication, and suggests that the goal of pronunciation learning in this context is mutual intelligibility rather than approximation to native-speaker norms. Chapter 2 summarises the lingua franca core concept as developed by Jennifer Jenkins. This core is an inventory of the features of pronunciation which are essential to ensure international mutual intelligibility. It also lists the features which are non-essential and those which actually make a speaker *less* intelligible. Walker makes it clear that this core should not be regarded as finished and definitive, and this is a very important point. I think that teachers could refer to the core for guidance, but they will also need to use their own judgement in its application. I personally would still teach some of the features that the core currently leaves out.

Since it was published in 2000, Jennifer Jenkins' book *The Phonology of English as a Lingua Franca* (OUP) has provoked a lot of controversy, and many teachers have expressed concerns about adopting an ELF approach to pronunciation teaching. In Chapter 3, Walker outlines the most frequently expressed concerns and responds to them. He goes on to point out the benefits of adopting an ELF approach. In particular, I would highlight the new positive role it implies for the learners' mother tongue and for non-native teachers. I think it is very good to discuss teachers' worries about their own accents openly, instead of trying to pretend the issue doesn't exist. In Chapter 4, Walker presents some practical classroom techniques for teachers following an ELF approach. Some of these are traditional pronunciation teaching favourites, such as minimal pairs and drills. The author also includes techniques which are more commonly associated with speaking practice in general rather than pronunciation work, such as information gaps. The reason for this is that a key aspect of the ELF approach is accommodation. In real-life interaction, learners are going to encounter a wide range of different accents, not just an idealised standard English, and they need to be flexible enough to accommodate to these varieties. Here, communication tasks are adapted to provide practice in this vital accommodation skill.

The chapter concludes with a section dedicated to the problems and possibilities of adopting an ELF approach in a classroom where all the learners share the same mother tongue. I was very pleased to see this because, on the surface, it would seem almost impossible to get a group of students to use English as a lingua franca when they already have their own L1 as a lingua franca. Again, the author is tackling a key practical issue head on instead of pretending it doesn't exist.

The new positive role for the learners' L1 mentioned earlier is expanded in Chapter 5 in glorious detail. Experts from around the world have contributed specific details about ten different languages, which are particularly pertinent to ELF learners. This will be a very useful reference resource for pronunciation teachers. Finally, Walker concludes in Chapter 6 by considering the implications of an ELF approach for syllabus planning and assessment. This latter is vital, since it would be grossly unfair to teach ELF and then test for native-speaker-referenced pronunciation features. Many pronunciation features which are regarded as errors in a traditional ELT context are considered as accent variations in an ELF approach, and accent variations do not need to be corrected or penalised.

TPELF is accompanied by an audio CD featuring interactions in English between pairs of speakers from a range of different L1 backgrounds. The author makes reference to these conversations throughout the book and this helps to keep the practical reality of the issues clearly in focus – we are not talking about imaginary beings in a theoretical world, but real people communicating using English as a lingua franca. Indeed, practicality is the keynote in this valuable new addition to the literature on pronunciation teaching.

Mark Hancock
Madrid, Spain

Picture card activities

Simon Mumford

cuts and pastes his way to success.

Packs of small picture cards are easy to make and use, and they can be a very effective teaching resource. Picture cards have many different uses, and they are especially useful for group games, which can be either cooperative or competitive, depending on your students' preferences.

To make a set of cards, simply draw, photocopy or cut out a series of pictures and mount them on stiff card, laminating them if possible so that you can reuse them easily. This is well worth the investment of time because you will find that the more games you play with them, the more new ideas you will have and the cards will quickly become tatty if not mounted on card or laminated. There are some photocopiable cards on page 45 which you can use to start you off. Below are some activities which you can do with them.

It is worth noting that the potential ambiguity of the cards is an advantage – and is where picture cards score over word cards. The students will have to negotiate and reach agreement on a standard interpretation of what some of the cards represent. In 'Alphabetical order', described below, the students will need to decide which word each picture represents in order to negotiate their place in the line. For example, does the cloud picture represent a cloud or rain? Moreover, some degree of ambiguity can increase the flexibility of some activities. For example, in 'Card story', the card which shows two people dancing could be interpreted in different ways, leading to ideas such as *'Then she went dancing where she met a nice boy and danced all night'* or *'The next day she went to a friend's birthday party'*, *'He went to a disco'* or even *'They were so happy they danced all night'*.

1 Alphabetical order

Give each student in the class one card. Ask them to stand in a line in alphabetical order according to the first letter of the object shown on their card. The students stand up, show each other their cards and find their place in the line. Using the photocopiable cards on page 45, for a class of 20, *bird* will be next to *camel* at one end, and *toothbrush* next to *yacht* at the other. Once they are in position, students next to each other can talk about the objects in their pictures.

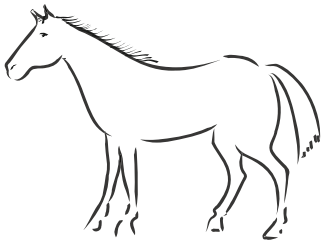
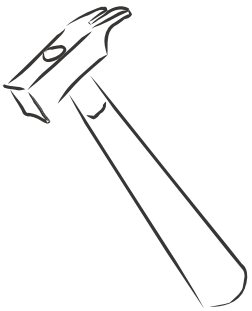
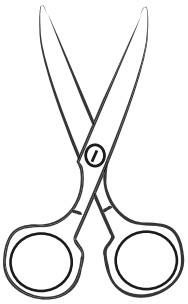
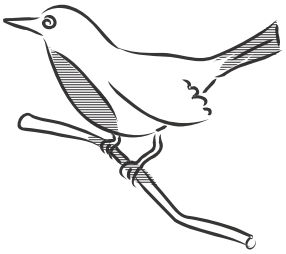
2 Spelling with cards

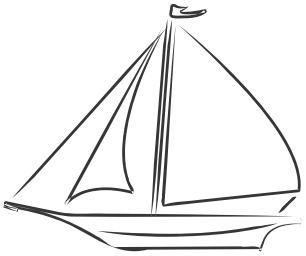
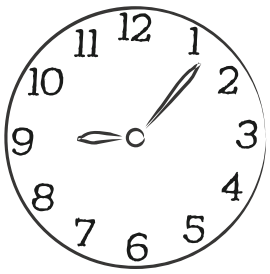
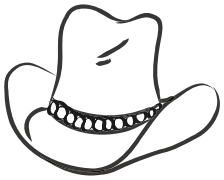
Copy two sets of cards for each group of four or five. Cut one set up and deal the cards equally. Put the other set as a single sheet in the middle. One student starts by saying a letter of the alphabet, eg *h*. Anyone who has an object containing the letter *h* must put it on top of the corresponding picture on the sheet. Then the second student says another letter, and so on. The winner of this game is the last person to hold a card. For a longer game, tell the students that they only have to play a card if the object on it *starts* with the chosen letter.

3 Card definitions

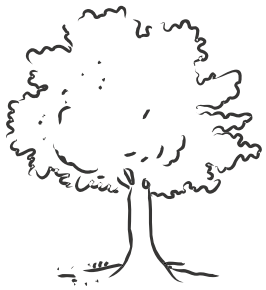
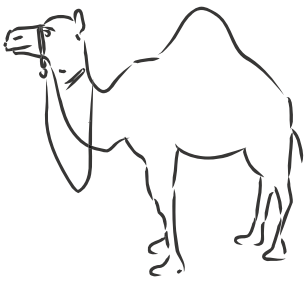
Copy two sets of cards for each group of students. Cut one set up and deal the cards. Put the other set as a single sheet in the middle. The first player puts a card face down in front of them. The others call out an object from the sheet. Each must choose a different one. The first player then defines the object on the card they put down, eg *A small piece of metal we can use for buying things.* If a student thinks this matches their choice, they claim the card. Then the next person chooses and plays another card, and so on. Stop the game after five minutes or so. The student with the most cards is the winner. There are two important rules: the player defining the card they have played must not say the name of the object, and anyone wrongly claiming a card is out of the game.

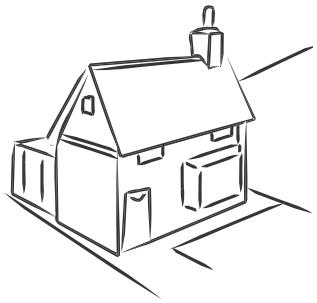
Phillip Burrows

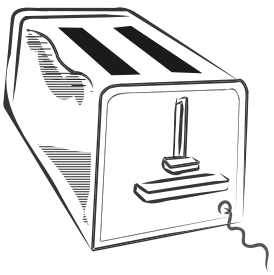
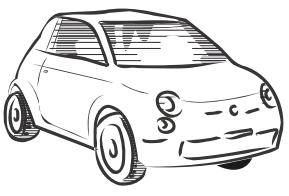







Picture card activities

4 Remembering cards

Stage 1: Spread out a set of cards, face up, for each group of students. One player says the name of an object. The first person to put their hand on the appropriate card claims it, putting it face down in front of them, and then says the next word. Continue like this until all the cards are gone.

Stage 2: The students take turns to try to remember who took which card, eg *John, have you got the bird? I think you took the party, Marie.* If correct, they take the card and keep it in a separate pile, and it cannot be asked for again. When all the cards have been found, the student with the most is the winner.

5 Grouping cards

This game can be done in groups or as a whole-class activity. Copy enough cards for each student to have four. The students have to collect four objects that form a set. For example: round things (*hat*, *coin*, *clock*, *football*); things that collocate with *black* (*horse*, *bird*, *hat*, *cloud*); things connected with travel (*horse*, *camel*, *car*, *shoe*); objects beginning with *c* (*clock*, *car*, *cloud*, *coin*), or *h* (*horse*, *house*, *hat*, *hammer*); things made of wood (*tree*, *violin*, *yacht*, *hammer*); activities (*football*, *dancing*, *riding*, *sailing*). The students mingle, describe their cards and swap them if they agree. A dialogue might go like this:

Student A: *I've got a horse, a hat, a house and a cloud. What have you got?*
Student B: *I've got a hammer, a coin, a bird and a present.*
Student A: *I'll swap a cloud for a hammer.*
Student B: *OK. / Sorry, I want to keep it.*

When the students have completed a set, they show it to the teacher, and then sit down. Some students may not be able to finish, so don't let the activity go on too long.

6 Card story

Deal out one set of cards for each group of four or five students. They take turns to play their cards to build up a story. For example:

Student A: *One day Jane was riding her horse.*
Student B: *It began to rain.*
Student C: *So she went home.*
Student D: *She was hungry, so she had some toast.*

And so on.

7 Card cues

Give the students the structure you want them to practise, eg *I'd rather have (a) _____ than (a) _____ because _____*. Put a set of cards face up on the table for each group.

The first student takes two cards and makes a sentence using the structure, eg *I'd rather have a violin than a bird, because you don't have to feed a violin.* Continue round the group. The students keep the cards they use and so it gets more difficult as the choice of cards is reduced. Encourage the students to be creative. This format can be used to practise many structures. For example:

- *(A) _____ is more useful than (a) _____ because _____.*
  eg A toaster is more useful than a camel because camels can't make toast!
- *If I had (a) _____, I'd need (a) _____ too, because _____.*
  eg If I had a horse, I'd need money too, because it's expensive.
- *You can't (verb) (a) (noun) with (a) (noun)*
  eg You can't clean a shoe with a toothbrush.

8 Guess the story

Without telling the others, each student makes up a story including the objects on four cards drawn at random. Others in the group look at the cards and ask *yes/no* questions until they find the story. For example: *tree*, *present*, *clock*, *horse*.

Was the present a clock? Was the present for the horse? Was the horse a present for someone? Did the horse find a clock? Did someone tie the horse to the tree? Did someone find the present under a tree?

9 Card conversations

Put the students in groups of four. They each draw two cards without the others seeing. They have a conversation for three or four minutes, into which they must introduce their objects as naturally as possible. At the end, the students have to guess what is on the other students' cards.

10 It's not what it seems!

Tell the students that they are at an auction and that each has £10,000 to spend. Auction several objects in the class, giving the card to the buyer, and keep a note of who bought what. After a few items have been sold, tell the students what they have really bought, eg *You bought a picture of a cloud for £10, but it was by Picasso and is worth tens of thousands. You bought a house for £10,000, but it's really only a doll's house. You paid £100 for the present, but the box is empty! The coin went for £20, but it's actually a collector's item.*

Put the students in groups and give them five or six cards each. Tell them to think of a surprise like this for some of the pictures and make some notes. Then one person from each group goes to another group with the cards and auctions them. (Teach: *Do I hear £100? Who'll give me £300? £500 anyone?*) When all the cards have been sold, the auctioneer tells the stories behind the objects.

★ ★ ★

Picture cards are a flexible resource because they provide the benefits of visual aids in a playing card format and they can be dealt at random, picked up, put down, swapped and collected. The result is a potentially unlimited number of activities for work on vocabulary and definitions, spelling and the alphabet, structure practice, listening and fluency practice. ETp



Simon Mumford has been teaching in Izmir, Turkey, for 23 years. As well as classroom activity design, he is interested in academic writing. He is on the organising committee of an international ELT conference to be held at his institution, Izmir University of Economics in March 2011.

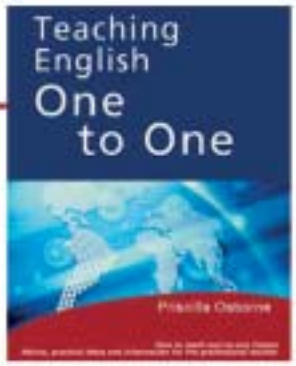
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Titles for English Language Teachers

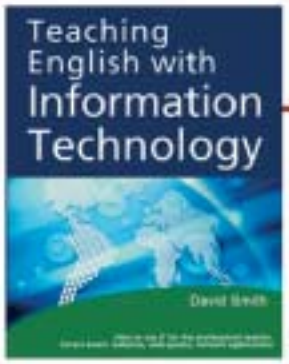
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Writing a graded reader

Sue Leather has some tips for teachers who want to try their hand at creative writing.

Do you like the idea of writing stories? Earlier in this series, I wrote about getting into writing for publication, suggesting that it could be a good move for teachers looking for new challenges outside the classroom. For this article on writing a graded reader, I've gathered ideas from extensive reading experts about the joys of writing fiction for learners.

What are graded readers?

Graded readers are books especially written for language learners. They help students to read systematically by moving from easy to more difficult language. They are called 'graded' because they come in levels, and each level is carefully controlled in terms of vocabulary, grammar and sentence complexity. In many ways, they can be seen as a kind of bridge to the reading of books intended for first-language readers.

Graded readers allow students to access extensive pieces of text, written with the aim of providing reading for pleasure: stories, in other words. The idea is that, if the books are at the right level, students can just read and enjoy them, without having to struggle through incomprehensible language. They can be existing stories which are adapted, or original stories written specifically for language students. Many teachers are familiar with adapted versions of novels by writers like Dickens or Austen, and may use them as supplementary material inside or outside the classroom. In recent years, though, there has also been an interesting growth in *original* fiction written for adult and young adults, and a number of publishers are now producing original work by writers in our profession.

> Graded readers help students to read systematically by moving from easy to more difficult language

> In many parts of the world, graded readers of all types are widely used in and out of the classroom

Whether it's an adaptation of an existing novel or an original, there is plenty of research to support the idea that extensive reading is really effective in helping people to learn a second language. A good short survey into the research can be found in 'What is the secret of extensive reading?' by Philip Prowse, series editor of Cambridge English Readers.

Why write a reader?

Writing a graded reader can be a stimulating way to develop both your writing skills and your professional profile. It can also be profitable. In many parts of the world, graded readers of all types are widely used in and out of the classroom, and there is a huge world market for them. Many of the big publishers, and some smaller ones, produce at least one series. An additional attraction is that graded readers tend not to go out of print as quickly as some other books – one of mine has now been in print for 20 years, for example – so the chances of getting royalties on your work for years to come are high. Furthermore, the publication of readers as e-readers, downloadable to devices such as Kindle, is only likely to diversify and enhance sales. All in all, there are plenty of reasons to have a go at writing a reader!

Exploring the genre

As with other types of publishing, a good way of getting an idea of the field is to do some research. Have a look through publishers' catalogues and websites and find out what kind of graded reader lists are being published by the different publishers. Then go to a good ELT bookstore, if possible, or go online to find yourself a good collection of readers from different publishers' lists – and read! Learner fiction is a genre in itself, different in some ways from other types of fiction writing, and most people have to study it at least a little before they can write it successfully.

> Hooks at the ends of chapters and lively dialogue are particularly important

Alan Maley, board member of the Extensive Reading Foundation and successful reader-writer, suggests: *'To write a reader that will grip your audience and make them want to read you to the end, you need a strong plot, a small number of credible and engaging characters, and some realistic-sounding dialogue.'* This may be true to an extent of *all* fiction, but since the second language reader has limited access to the language, there are some aspects of narrative writing that need special focus and attention. Features like a compelling opening, *showing* action rather than *telling* the reader about it, hooks at the ends of chapters and lively dialogue are particularly important in graded readers.

Adaptation or original?

There's no one answer to the question of whether it's better to adapt or write an original story – it depends on you as a writer. I started with adapting a few stories and moved quite quickly into writing original fiction. Now I only write original fiction because I find it personally most rewarding. However, many writers only write adaptations and find that immensely rewarding, too. As Jennifer Bassett, series editor of Oxford Bookworms, remarked about adaptations in a discussion in the IATEFL online forum on extensive reading: *'Adaptations these days are no longer confined to the great classics, the canonical works. There are retellings of modern novels, genre novels, and stories by writers from the Outer Circle*[1]*.'* Jennifer is currently working with Asian and African authors to retell their stories for language learners. This gives an indication of the breadth of the field.

The story's the thing

One thing is for certain: whether you are writing adaptations or originals, a keen interest in storytelling is essential. Graded readers go beyond being simply schoolbooks. As Jennifer Bassett says, *'The story's the thing. Writing in a reduced code does not mean taking a teacherly approach to writing a graded reader.'* Rob Waring, series editor of Heinle Cengage's Page Turners, agrees. He says it's about *'helping readers see the text as a whole, ensuring richness to build connections and consolidate knowledge – and helping them to forget they are reading'*.

How do writers find stories? Talking about original stories, successful reader-writer Antoinette Moses advises writers: *'Stories are all around us, they are there in the people we meet and observe, in the stories we read in newspapers and the issues that make us angry. What writers do is keep notes. We keep notes all the time and jot down anything that is interesting. And we make connections. So we observe someone, place them in a situation and begin to ask questions about them. From that we build our stories. So, we never start from zero, there are always ideas buzzing about.'*

Getting started

How do you start? Many people get into reader-writing almost by accident. Philip Prowse's story is not untypical. He says: *'I first got into writing readers when I was teaching in a secondary school in Egypt. The class reader was "The Grand Babylon Hotel" by Arnold Bennett, a story of intrigue among 19th-century millionaires in a hotel in London, and culturally about as far from the lives of my 16-year-old students as possible. So for each chapter I wrote short dialogues dramatising the plot and the students acted them out. A visiting teacher trainer from the UK came to observe and asked me if I'd be interested in writing for a new series of readers he was starting. I was interested and have been writing readers on and off ever since!'*

There are many ways to find a way in. One thing you can do is to find out which of the publishers are looking for proposals, find out who the series editor is, and contact them. Most publishers' websites will have a list of contacts.

Writing original learner fiction has certainly brought a very rewarding dimension to my professional life. If you feel that you would like to have a try at either an adaptation or original fiction, I really recommend it. ETp

1 The 'Outer Circle' is a term coined by sociolinguist Braj Kachru for contexts where English is spoken as a second language, for example in countries such as India.

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Prowse, P *'What is the secret of extensive reading?'* www.cambridge.org/elt/readers

Useful websites

www.extensivereading.net

www.erfoundation.org



Sue Leather is a trainer, educational consultant and writer. She has delivered talks, workshops and courses in over 25 countries for the British Council and other organisations. She has published a number of original readers for CUP, OUP and Macmillan Heinemann, among other publishers. She is currently development editor for the Heinle Cengage Page Turners series.

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Learning coach 2

Daniel Barber and **Duncan Foord** advocate shifting the focus in the classroom away from teaching towards greater learner independence. In the second article of their series on learner coaching, they look at coaching learners in reading and listening.

We made the point in our first article that students who practise their English outside class on a regular basis are likely to make more progress than those who don't. An obvious piece of common sense, maybe, but how do we make this common sense common practice? Students and teachers tend to concentrate on what happens in the two or three hours-per-week class time they have together and not the 100-plus remaining hours of waking time which the students could potentially direct towards practising their English. As teachers, we need to think about *learning planning*, not just *lesson planning*. Consider this: by dedicating 2–3 percent more of waking time to English, students can effectively double their progress! Any impact will be far greater than just having a successful lesson. So what can teachers do to help make this happen?

Reading and listening independently

Reading and listening lend themselves naturally to independent practice. You need someone else to have a conversation, but you can read and listen on your own. Here are six ways we think teachers can encourage students to do a little more work on listening and reading outside class:

1 Encourage the students to build up and share reading and listening resources. Let them try them out in class time. At the end of this article you will find a list of websites where students can find listening and reading material, some authentic and some designed specifically for learners. Students tend to pick up on recommendations from their peers more eagerly than those from their teachers, so provide 'sharing slots' during lesson time.

2 Incorporate student choice. Rather than getting everyone to do the same thing, encourage the students to choose from a range of options. For reading practice, for example, they can be encouraged to find a website related to an interest they have. You can help them identify their key words for *Google* searches.

3 Bring to class simplified readers, books specially modified for learners of differing levels, and lend them out to the students. If you've ever finished a book in another language, you'll know how motivating it is.

4 Use the course workbook if your students have one. They usually come with further reading texts and these days most have a CD, too. Completing exercises can be very satisfying because it provides systematic written evidence of the students' work and because it often links with and directly reinforces language covered in class.

5 Explain the rudiments of reading and listening task design, so that the students understand key concepts and can use this rationale to make their own tasks:

- It's easier to tackle texts on subjects you like and are interested in.
- If you think about what you already know before you read or listen, you'll understand it better.
- Give yourself a reason to read. A task helps you focus.
- The first task should help you get the general idea; you can get the details the second time you read.

6 Provide clear step-by-step procedures to support and structure independent practice. You can find some examples below. You'll notice they put into practice some of the concepts just mentioned and they can be used with a range of texts. It's always a good idea to do a practice run in class, just as it's a good idea to bring in a laptop to promote any online activities you recommend.

Sample activity 1

Authentic internet reading

15 minutes

Rationale

This is a simple procedure to encourage you to practise your reading, a little at a time and often. The idea of this procedure is that you don't worry too much about how you read or what you learn exactly, you just read.

Step 1

Find a website relating to an interest you have (a site in English, of course). You may already have some favourite sites. For example if you like football, you could go to the site *www.uefa.com*.

Step 2

Spend 15 minutes looking around the site and reading bits that interest you. Refer to the top tips for reading on the internet (see page 51).

Step 3

When you have finished, record what you have done in a log. This can be an e-document or a notebook. It could be simply a few sentences to say what you read and perhaps a note of any vocabulary you have learnt.

Sample activity 2

Make your own reading or listening task

30 minutes

Rationale

This is a more structured activity than the one described above and encourages you to prepare and give yourself a

Top tips for reading on the internet

- Aim to understand the main message of what you read.
- Use *Google translator* or a dictionary to look up a few words if you think they are important to understanding the meaning or interesting for you to learn. When the translator is activated on your computer, you can see a translation of a word when you hover over it with the mouse. Ask someone to help you activate it if you are not sure yourself.
- Remember to practise actually reading! Don't spend a long time looking at images. This is your English time.
- Make a note in your notebook or a computer document of useful new words you find.
- If you have the opportunity, tell someone about what you read in English. Re-telling and summarising what you have read will help you remember it.

reason to read or listen. You predict what you are going to read or hear and ask questions before you start.

Step 1
Find an online magazine, newspaper article, interview, news report, etc, relating to a topic you'd like to know more about. Think about the topic beforehand. Write down, in five minutes, as much as you can about it.

Step 2
In the next five minutes, write some questions on things you would like to know about the topic.

Step 3
Now read or listen to the text. Tick any of the information you already knew.

Step 4
Read or listen again, and this time answer any of your original questions that you can from the information in the text.

Step 5
Read or listen for the third time. Make a list of things you have learnt.

Sample activity 3
Learning from listening to songs in English

30 minutes

Step 1
Choose a song you want to understand (see the list of song websites on the right, or use a song from your own collection).

Step 2
Listen to the song twice and, as you listen, write down some of the words or phrases you hear (or think you hear).

Step 3
Find the lyrics of the song (search on the internet for 'dancing queen lyrics', for example).

Step 4
Listen again to the song and follow the lyrics. Check to see if what you wrote is correct.

Step 5
Read carefully through the lyrics and use a dictionary or *Google translator* to understand the words you don't know. You may find a translation of the lyrics in your language. If so, use that to help you. Make a note in your vocabulary document or vocabulary notebook of words you think are useful for you to learn.

Step 6
(Optional) You can post a short comment about the song on *YouTube*. Respond to something someone else has posted or simply say why you like the song or the singer/band.

Top tips for listening to songs

- Listen to songs you like.
- Start with songs you think will be easier to understand.
- Don't worry if the vocals are not always clear. Native speakers find it hard to catch all the words of a song when they hear it.
- Use the written lyrics and a translation if there is one available to help you understand.
- Listen a couple of times without the lyrics to give yourself the opportunity to understand and practise your listening skills.

Sources for reading

The list of websites that may be useful for learners is practically endless and ever-changing. You and your students will have a better idea, so treat this as a tiny sample of the possibilities.

http://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page
This is a version of *Wikipedia* designed for school students so it is easier to understand.

www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/language/wordsinthenews
This has up-to-date news articles with glossaries and other support for students.

www.nationalgeographic.com
This is a good example of a large website with engaging and accessible texts that might interest students.

Sources for listening and songs

YouTube, *Grooveshark* and *Spotify*
These are free sources of music.

www.subingles.com
This is a Spanish site that offers songs with subtitles (and exercises).

http://lingual.net
Here you will find a range of types of video (documentaries, cartoons, etc) with subtitles.

www.elllo.org
This site has lots of types of listening (conversations, opinions, etc) with subtitles.

www.euronews.net
Look here for up-to-the-minute news clips with transcripts (in several languages).



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SCRAPBOOK

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



In time, not on time

The pianist Oscar Levant tells the story of how he was playing one evening when a woman arrived late and proceeded to distract the audience by walking directly down the centre aisle:

'I stopped my performance of a Poulenc piece and began choreographing her walk by playing in time with her steps. She hesitated and slowed down; I slowed down, too. She stopped; I stopped. She hurried; I hurried. By the time she reached her seat, the audience was in hysterics and the matron in a state of wild confusion.'

Folk, but no folk

In August 1980, Joan Melu, a Romanian folk singer, broke all existing records for the smallest-ever audience. Effortlessly pushing aside the previous contenders, he drew an audience of none whatsoever for a concert of what he described as his own style of country and western.

Arriving on stage at the Capitol Theatre, Melbourne, Australia, in dark glasses and casual clothing, he gazed down on 2,200 empty seats and gave a two-hour show which overran by 30 minutes due to encores.

Mr Melu performed throughout as if people were there. Coming back on stage after a 15-minute interval, he announced over the speaker system: *'Ladies and gentlemen, Joan Melu!'* Towards the end of the performance he asked: *'Hey, everybody! Do you want to hear my new one?'*

After the show, he said that he was a little nervous beforehand, but felt very satisfied with the way it had gone. *'I love this life,'* he commented.

Final fling

Modern medicine's most dramatic contribution to opera was surely that made in 1961 by a party of local medical students recruited to play the walk-on firing squad in the last act of *Tosca* at the San Francisco opera house ...

The students, chosen for height rather than stage experience, knew nothing of the opera or its plot, and the producer had little time to brief them. He wasn't worried because they didn't actually have to sing. Five minutes before the start of the dress rehearsal, he gave them their instructions: *'You're a firing squad. Just follow the officer. Slow march on in time to the music, line up and when the officer lowers his sword, shoot.'*

'And how do we get off?' one student enquired.

'Just wait on stage and, at the end, exit with the principals,' was the reply.

The dress rehearsal ran out of time and never reached the final scene so, on the first night, the San Francisco audience saw *Tosca* end in an unusual way.

When, at the tragic denouement, the firing squad marched slowly on, its members were momentarily confused by the fact that there were both a man and a woman on stage. However, when Cavaradossi stepped bravely in front of them, they decided he must be the one they had to shoot. Yet as they lined up their sights, they noticed he kept nodding in a conspiratorial way towards the woman. So, as the officer dropped his sword, they swung their rifles through 180 degrees and shot Tosca.

They were clearly discomforted when she remained standing and they heard Cavaradossi, now directly behind them, hit the stage as he dropped. They gawped nervously as Tosca rushed to him as if he were still alive, and then screamed. And they began to grow panicky when they heard the shouts off-stage and saw Tosca mount the battlements. Then, as she flung herself off, they remembered their final instruction. As the curtain slowly descended, they rushed upstage and flung themselves after her.

As fast as you like

Composer Gabriel Fauré was once asked what the ideal tempo for a song should be. *'If the singer is bad,'* he replied, *'very fast!'*

© iStockphoto.com / Marcella Barsse

Musical multiple choice

1 **Which American wrote *Rhapsody in Blue*?**
- **a)** John Williams
- **b)** Gary Gershwin
- **c)** Vaughan Williams
- **d)** George Gershwin

2 **Which Norwegian wrote the *Holberg* and *Peer Gynt* suites?**
- **a)** Felix Mendelssohn
- **b)** Edvard Mendelssohn
- **c)** Edvard Grieg
- **d)** Christian Grieg?

3 **Which Frenchman wrote the opera *Carmen*?**
- **a)** Haydn
- **b)** Bizet
- **c)** Offenbach
- **d)** Stravinsky

4 **Which Austrian was regarded as the greatest classical period composer?**
- **a)** J Strauss II
- **b)** J Strauss III
- **c)** J Strauss IV
- **d)** Mozart

5 **In music scores, which language is universally used by all musicians, whatever their nationality?**
- **a)** English
- **b)** Spanish
- **c)** Italian
- **d)** Russian

6 **In ordinary music staves, how many lines are there?**
- **a)** three
- **b)** four
- **c)** five
- **d)** six

7 **In music. the instruction 'tacet' means that you should:**
- **a)** leave the hall
- **b)** play more quickly
- **c)** play more loudly
- **d)** not play at all

8 **The world-famous series of concerts known simply as 'The Proms' are held in which UK concert hall?**
- **a)** The Royal Festival Hall
- **b)** The Royal Albert Hall
- **c)** The Queen's Hall
- **d)** The O2 Arena

Answers 1d; 2c; 3b; 4d; 5c; 6c; 7d; 8 b

Cutting **critics**

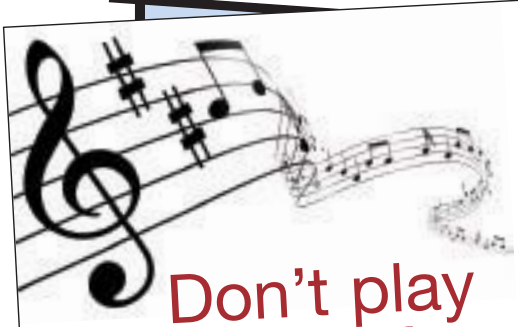
Novelist Alexandre Dumas, calling upon the composer Richard Wagner, made some self-deprecating remarks about his own ignorance of music, which he had once defined as *'the most expensive of noises'*, but his pleasantries were listened to with such a humourless stolidity that he went home in a huff, and wrote his contemptuous protest against *'Wagnerian din inspired by the riot of cats scampering in the dark about an ironmonger's shop'*.

A similarly savage criticism was once made of a pop singer, whose voice was described as sounding like *'a pet shop burning down'*!

The critic Bernard Levin was also prone to the cutting remark in his pieces: one hapless soprano was *'like a yak clashing its tonsils together'*. Even the great were not immune from his pen: a recital by Vladimir Horowitz (the great pianist who was renowned for exhibitions of his prodigious technique) was, apparently, *'less to do with Beethoven, and more to do with an exploding sewing machine'*, whilst British composer Frederick Delius was written off as *'the musical equivalent of blancmange'*.

Ethel Merman once remarked about Cole Porter: *'He sang like a hinge.'*

The Duke of Wellington, replying to a question from the Russian ambassador on whether Beethoven's *Battle Symphony* was like the actual battle of Victoria, said *'By God, no. If it had been, I should have run away myself.'*



Don't play with your **food**!

The Vienna Vegetable Orchestra comprises between ten and 20 players, who began performing on instruments made from carved-out carrots, aubergines, pumpkins and other vegetables in 1998. The orchestra was founded by Jörg Piringer, whose own instrument is a 'gurkaphone' horn made from a hollowed-out cucumber, a bell-pepper bell and a carrot reed.

After each performance, the vegetable instruments (which take several hours to make) are thrown into a large pot of soup for the musicians and audience to enjoy a second helping.

(*www.gemueseorchester.org* is well worth a visit!)

Missing in **action**

One night before a concert, the conductor became ill and could not go on. The management didn't know what to do, until a viola player came up and said, *'I'm also a conductor and I know this show. Let me conduct!'* So they did, and everything went well. The next night, the regular conductor was back, and when the violist sat down, his neighbour turned to him and said, *'Where the hell were you last night?'*

Scrapbook compiled by Ian Waring Green

The web is the way

Andrea Paschoal

considers the role of technology in teacher development.

To me, continuous professional development often seems to happen in a closed universe, either through in-service training or a TEFL course. Having attended CELTA training and DELTA training myself, I believe that on these courses a lot of the learning happens by sharing experiences and reflecting together as a group. However, goals are then limited to what is presented and discussed within a limited group of people: tutors and trainees. Wouldn't it be great if we could exchange thoughts and ideas with thousands of other teachers and learn about different teaching contexts anywhere in the world? This is where technology comes in.

One of the most important aspects of technology is that it is easy, fast and can shorten distances – even more so in recent years, with the web changing from a context defined by text-based content and interactions to one in which all forms of media are supported. However, for many of us technology is very student-centred; we often think of Web 2.0 tools or interactive websites as being solely for the students' benefit, but in fact there is a lot out there to cater for teachers' needs, too.

The references below are obviously based on my own experience and personal choices, but they are by no means exclusive, and you can research many more opportunities.

Peers

If you feel you need to brush up on learning strategy theories or you have recently thought about trying some form of alternative assessment with one of your classes but don't quite know how to do it, then you may find a free teacher training course developed by the University of Oregon helpful. It consists of good quality video material, complete with viewing tasks and observation checklists to help EFL teachers. A range of teachers from various different parts of the world have been filmed working with their classes and reflecting on the way they teach. I always find observing my peers teaching is a great way to reflect on my own teaching and learn new ways of doing things.

We often think of Web 2.0 tools or interactive websites as being solely for the students' benefit, but there is a lot to cater for teachers' needs, too

Experts

Let's face it, getting to grips with all the new web tools and sites can be daunting. There is so much out there that sometimes all we want is someone who knows what they are talking about to tell us what is really worth investing our precious time in. Well, Nik Peachey is one of these people. He is a freelance learning technology consultant and has a blog and a channel on *YouTube* where

you can watch various tutorials on many of the web tools that are around. His blog is constantly updated and you can find materials and advice on the use of new web tools and social media websites in education. This is an excellent resource for helping teachers interested in developing and building networks for professional development or maybe setting up a class project. In fact, Nik Peachey's main aim is to promote and expand the educational potential of new technologies through educational principles.

Courses

Contrary to popular belief, the major drive for enrolment in distance learning is not a question of physical access but, rather, having the time to work through a course of study at a pace of one's own choosing. Moreover, online content can be uploaded and revised quickly and easily, which makes online learning more interactive and potentially more up-to-date than content developed for other media.

This move towards distance learning has been evolving for some time now, but it all came together with the development of user-friendly course content management systems, such as *Moodle*, which provide an environment in which teachers and learners can create and update their course content without the aid of web designers.

The focus of online learning on the real world gives an opportunity to create activities that are project- and classroom-based, instead of working on the assumption that theory can simply be applied. Online learning thus provides us with tools and resources to 'theorise from practice', plus the ability to learn and utilise feedback from others sharing the same job and facing similar issues.

Qualifications

Getting a professional qualification such as the Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults, or DELTA, is normally quite a big step for any teacher. It involves a lot of commitment and personal investment of time and money. So, it is worth leaving behind your preconceptions gathered from both formal and informal experience of the virtual environment, and considering applying for a distance DELTA. International House London and the British Council run a distance DELTA course and it is available in the form of one integrated module or several individual modules which are separately certificated. You will still need to commit to 3–15 hours per week, depending on how many modules you take. There is, however, plenty of support online, such as video tutorials of how to access features of the website and an initial orientation course. You will also have a local DELTA tutor assigned to help you and give you all the support you need. You can find out more at *www.thedistancedelta.com*.

Exams

For me one of the most stressful times during my DELTA course was the actual exam. Unluckily for me, I only recently found out that if you are already doing a DELTA course and feel slightly anxious about the exam, International House Online (*www.ihonlinetraining.net*) has created an exam preparation course which aims to review the key areas needed to answer the DELTA examination questions. It provides tasks to give you practice of each question and to help you understand what makes a pass answer.

The same organisation also runs courses on teaching business English, one-to-one teaching and other subjects.

Management

If you are already involved in ELT management or, like me, are ready to take up this new challenge, International House London offers an online course in education management. This course consists of several short subject-specific management training modules, such as 'Observation and giving feedback' and 'Managing change'. Although the materials are online, the modules are delivered in a class with a course tutor, so it's a good way of easing you into the e-learning world. What's more, if you complete four modules and their respective written assignments, you can carry 20 credits towards the distance learning MSc in TESOL which is offered by Aston University.

The Aston Masters programme has four strands (TESOL, TESP, TEYL, EMT). It is open to international students as long as they are proficient in English. If you want a bit of a change from teacher training jargon, they also offer a distance MSc in applied linguistics. Aston's postgraduate-level distance learning programme is over 25 years old, which probably makes them one of the most experienced providers of off-campus learning programmes in the UK.



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Journals

The concept of writing a journal for self-reflection may be known to most of us. In a journal we are free to write what we want without restrictions, to address issues without fear of criticism, and doing so will lead us to reflect on how to do things differently should similar situations arise again. Thus, writing journals provides us with an organised approach to our development as critical and constructive professionals.

If you have been nodding in agreement through the last paragraph, then it's time you learnt about *Penzu*, a free online diary and professional journal with a focus on privacy (although you do have the option of sharing your thoughts with those you choose to). This is ideal for post-lesson observation reflection and peer

▶▶▶

The web is the way

observation feedback, too. The great thing about this online tool is that its paper-like background feels authentic, plus it is really easy to use and very intuitive. You can access it wherever you are and add photos, insert tags, links, etc. It is a fantastic tool, though I have to confess that I haven't converted to it 100 percent: I still find enormous pleasure in taking a pen to paper and noting down my thoughts on real paper. Nevertheless, I do use *Penzu* for making summaries of articles I have read or to record what was done in class. It is simple and user-friendly and it makes writing online as easy as writing on paper.

E-portfolios

The simplest starting point is to consider an e-portfolio as an expansion of the paper-based portfolio, except the online version allows you to edit and share your work anywhere and with anyone you wish to. In fact, an e-portfolio has a much broader scope as it allows you to include a large number of online resources, such as documents, images, blogs, etc. The way most e-portfolios work is not so different from many of the social networking websites such as *Facebook* or *Myspace*, the difference being that with an e-portfolio like *Mahara* (*www.mahara.org*), you can personalise your space and it is completely user-centred, allowing you to choose how you present yourself to the world. *Mahara* is an open-source application and it was developed specifically for education, but it also has a resumé builder, which allows you to create a digital CV by entering information in a very intuitive process through a variety of guided fields on the website. After setting up your *Mahara* page, you can then share this information with anyone you select: colleagues, friends, employers or even prospective employers.

★ ★ ★

Whatever you choose to invest your time in, it is important to keep in mind that although the web provides a near limitless means for increasing our knowledge, it can be a little overwhelming. It is crucial that we learn some new study skills to help us find our way around the web and benefit from all the thousands of possibilities and contexts it offers. For instance, it is important to gain an understanding of what is more useful rather than what is more easily accessed; we should also spend time learning the basics of online tools which can help us tackle the collaborative tasks involved in most online courses – this may even be something as simple as learning about email and chatroom etiquette. Remember, a good teacher is first of all an excellent student! ETp

http://oelp.uoregon.edu/shaping.html
http://nikpeachey.blogspot.com
www.youtube.com/user/NikPeachey
www.thedistancedelta.com
www.ihonlinetraining.net
www.aston.ac.uk
http://penzu.com
www.mahara.org



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Five things you always wanted to know about word processing (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 invites you to take a closer look at your word processing skills.

1 What is word processing? Is that like *Microsoft Word*?

A word processor is a computer program that allows you to create, edit, format and save documents. So yes, it is like *Word*. *Word* is part of the *Microsoft (MS) Office* suite of tools, and is probably the best-known and most-used word processing program. Other word processors include *Writer*, which is part of the free, open-source *OpenOffice* suite, and *TextEdit*, the word processing program for Mac computers.

Even teachers who claim to be complete technophobes are usually familiar with a word processing program, and that program is usually *MS Word*.

2 Apart from the basics, what is there to know?

These days, most people with computers know how to edit, format and save documents, at the very least. But there are a number of other features that are not as commonly known, which can be very useful. Here is a short checklist. How many of these word processing features do *you* know how to use?

- copy, cut and paste text;
- format text by using bold, underline and italics, and change font, text size and colour;
- align paragraphs, indent, change line spacing and margins;
- use tools such as the spell and grammar check, and the thesaurus;
- insert images from your computer hard drive, from *Clipart*, and from the internet;
- create tables and columns;
- insert headers, footers and page numbers;
- use track changes and insert comments;
- create templates, macros and forms.

3 How are these word processing functions relevant to teachers?

Many of the functions in our checklist above are straightforward and easy to learn, and they can help teachers in a number of ways. They can help you make attractive and professional-looking worksheets. They can help you provide detailed, clear feedback on word-processed homework for your students. They can save you a lot of time in preparing quizzes, questionnaires and tests.

4 How exactly could I use some of these functions in my teaching?

Let's take my first point above: making attractive and professional-looking worksheets. Imagine that you want to do an activity in which you show students a holiday postcard. They need to read the text and guess which country you sent it from. You could create a word-processed document using tables as a postcard. Insert an image from the country; underneath add some lines of text in a handwriting font on the left, add a few lines for the address on the right, and include an image of a stamp from *Clipart*. You could then get students to create their *own* postcards, by giving them a blank template of this table. Students then choose and insert their own image, and create their own text. The results look wonderful and can be displayed around the classroom or electronically on a class blog, or even a school website.*

Knowing how to use track changes and inserting comments means that you can correct your students' (word-processed) homework very clearly. Track changes will show the exact changes that you have made to a text, such as adding an *s* to a word such as *buys* in *he buys*, or rewriting something ~~collect~~ correctly. Adding a comment in the margin of the text via the 'insert comment' function can help students correct their own work. You could add comments like *Check your tenses here* or *Wrong order of adjectives* or *I like your ideas here*, and so on.

Templates and forms can help you create quizzes and tests for students, including multiple choice, cloze tests, drag and drop, etc. Once you have templates for these test types, it's a simple matter to change the content for subsequent quizzes or tests, and this can save you time.

5 How can I learn to do more things with word processing?

One of the great things about the internet is that you can use it to learn about almost anything. You will find literally hundreds of tutorials on things like how to create tables in *Word*, or how to create a template. And this goes for whatever word processor or version of it you are currently using. Simply google a phrase like 'how to create a template in [Word 2007]' and you will get hundreds of hits. I personally prefer video tutorials, in which somebody talks you through what they are doing. I watch and pause the video, while I try out each step myself on a *Word* document. You will find lots of tutorials about word processing functions on sites like *YouTube*, *Vimeo*, *Ustream*, *OurMedia* or *BlipTV*.

*Thanks to Valentina Dodge for the 'postcards from tables' idea.



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. She is co-author of *Learning English as a Foreign Language for Dummies* (John Wiley & Sons) and *Teaching Online* (Delta Publishing). She maintains a blog at *www.emoderationskills.com*.

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

Webwatcher

Russell Stannard
mines more internet gems.

Every so often a website comes along that is truly outstanding and which deals with a key issue in language teaching. Amazingly, I have recently come across three such great websites. The first helps students to learn song lyrics in English; the second deals with writing; the third is an interactive newspaper. All these fantastic sites have some remarkable features that will really surprise you. As usual, I have produced a set of training videos to help you navigate your way through them. The links are at the end of the article and it is worth watching the videos to find out about some of the extra features that all these sites offer.

www.lyricstraining.com

There are plenty of lyrics sites on the web, but I have never seen one like this before. There are lyrics in a whole variety of languages, including English, Spanish and French, together with videos of songs being sung by the original artists. The idea is simply to learn the lyrics of a song by completing them with missing words as you listen. The gapped lyrics appear on the screen as subtitles to the video. Once you have chosen a song, you can choose the level you want to work at. The harder the level, the more words are gapped. The songs are also graded by how difficult the vocabulary is and how difficult it is to hear the words.

As you play each song, the site clearly marks the line you are on, and if you do not complete the missing word, the song will stop and wait for you. If you want to listen to that particular line of the song again, then you just press the backspace key on your computer and it will play the line again. If you can't work out the answer, then simply press your tab key: the word will automatically be filled in for you and the song will continue. You can also use your computer's arrow keys to move up and down the song. If you want to hear the whole song and see all the lyrics then click on the 'Withdraw' button. You can go right back to the start by clicking on the 'Restart' button.

If you sign up (the site is free at the moment), then it keeps a record of your scores (how many words you filled in correctly and the time it took you). It also records all the words you had problems working out, and you can see these by clicking on the 'Vocabulary' button.

This site is well constructed and well laid out, and it includes many up-to-date songs. So if you know your music and want to impress your students, it is a great site to use in class. It is also an absolute must to recommend to students to use in their own time – they will really enjoy being able to learn the lyrics of their favourite singers. I tried to do 'Love the Way You Lie' by Rihanna and Eminem. Following Eminem is not easy!

www.writingfun.com

This is a much-needed site on writing and it is highly interactive. Click on the 'Enter here' button and then choose from the different text types on the right-hand side. A new page will load and you will see a quick presentation that goes through the structure and format of that particular text type. Now click on the 'Examples' button below to see some great examples of actual written work produced by students and related to that text type. The great thing is that these examples (normally six for each text type) go from ones produced by really young learners to those written by quite high-level students. This is a lovely feature and very useful as it makes the tool really flexible and useful at a variety of different levels. If you hover your mouse over the tips on the right-hand side, you can see how they relate to the actual examples.

The site works really well on an interactive whiteboard. Click on 'Blank Organizer' and get the students to review the structure. If you want to look at another text type, then click on the menu button. There are loads of text types and examples. It is a wonderful website and very well thought through.

www.thewclc.ca/edge

This is another superb site that is made in *Flash*. Just click on any of the newspapers shown on the home page and an interactive page will appear. There is a whole variety of different things you can do. Sometimes you can listen to the news being read out. You will notice that the text changes colour as it is being read to you, and most articles have related activities, some of which are aimed at provoking discussion and can easily be used in class. Some of the listening content is accompanied by animations, too. The exercises related to the articles are all very interactive and include oral as well as text instructions, which is a really nice feature. There is so much variety in the content of each newspaper that it is hard to describe exactly what you will get. I suggest that you go to the site and play around with it; I am sure you will find great material to recommend to your students or use in class. If only all websites were like this! ETp

You can find out about these three sites in more detail by watching these videos at the following site:

www.teachertrainingvideos.com/3gems/index.html



Russell Stannard is a Principal Teaching Fellow at the University of Warwick, UK. He won the Times Higher Education Award for Outstanding Initiatives in Information and Communications Technology in 2008, TEFLnet Site of the Year in 2009 and a 2010 British Council ELTons award, all for his website *www.teachertrainingvideos.com*.

Keep sending your favourite sites to Russell:
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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.

Scaffolding

The literal meaning of the word *scaffolding* is one with which we are all likely to be familiar: a system of temporary structures put up to assist in the construction of buildings, which is removed when no longer needed.

In the mid-20th century, a famous educational psychologist gave the word *scaffolding* a figurative meaning, using it to describe the way in which parents intuitively support their children's intellectual development through their everyday speech: continuing to talk around particular topics until relevant concepts have been grasped. Like its physical counterpart, which can be removed as soon as construction workers have no further use for it, this figurative scaffolding can be removed when it is no longer needed to support learning.

Scaffolding offers students valuable support in the development of all four 'macro-skills'

In education, the term is used to describe the range of strategies that teachers can use to ensure that learning tasks are more achievable. In language classrooms, scaffolding offers students valuable support in the development of all four 'macro-skills' (listening, speaking, reading and writing).

With **listening** tasks, for example, it is helpful to provide tables, grids, schedules or diagrams to be completed so that the students are guided towards what precisely to listen out for. If a recording containing announcements of airline arrivals and departures is played, for instance, the students can be required to fill in the gaps in a chart where certain arrival and departure times, flight and gate numbers, etc have been omitted. This will help them to listen carefully for specific numbers – and perhaps to distinguish between easily confused numbers such as *fourteen* and *forty*.

With **speaking** tasks, students can usefully be given roleplay cards or cue cards so that they are not lost for words when required to participate in interactive tasks with classmates. These props can be removed, of course, once the students have rehearsed their dialogues and have the confidence to speak unaided. In mixed-ability classes, confident students can be encouraged to interact without support first time around.

It is now increasingly recognised that proficient **readers** access the meaning of text by building up a global understanding of what they are reading as they go along – rather than by decoding the meaning of each individual word in turn. If teachers wish to give their students practice in reading skills development (rather than have them examine written text for other purposes, such as grammatical analysis), a range of scaffolding techniques can be used at the pre-reading stage. Teachers can have their students examine the title of the reading – or look at a picture related to it – and predict what the text will be about; they can have them focus on the meaning of key words that will appear in the text; they can have them examine the overall organisation of a factual or argumentative piece of writing (identifying the topic sentence and controlling idea of each paragraph) before reading it right through; they can have them guess how a story will end, and so on. Scaffolding techniques such as these, which give an idea of the content of reading passages without giving too much away, place students in a state of reading readiness, thereby making reading tasks both more inviting and more readily achievable.

Of all the macro-skills, writing is the one that requires the most extensive scaffolding

Of all the macro-skills, **writing** is the one that requires the most extensive scaffolding. This is not surprising. Sitting with a blank piece of paper (or a blank computer screen) in front of you, knowing that you are required to produce a set number of words but not knowing where to start, is a daunting prospect for anyone. For language learners, who must also identify appropriate English words and phrases with which to communicate effectively, the situation is even more challenging.

There are many ways in which language teachers can scaffold the writing tasks that they set their students. If the task requires students to write a story in which they describe what happens in a series of pictures, the class can first focus collectively on the pictures, with the teacher eliciting what is happening and writing key words and expressions on the board. The students can then repeat the story orally before retelling it in written form. If the task requires the students to write more creatively (such as writing a mystery story starting with the words *One dark night …*), the teacher can get the class in the mood by drawing or projecting pictures on the board (ghosts, witches on broomsticks, full moons, etc) and brainstorm with the class words and phrases that individuals might like to use in their own stories.

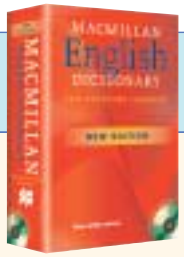
If the task is to write an essay following a specific format (such as the 'advantages and disadvantages' or the 'compare and contrast' essay), students can brainstorm ideas relevant to the given topic in small groups. In discussion with the class, the teacher can then write the information on the board, logically grouping similar or contrasting points or arguments under relevant headings, using columns, boxes, arrows, and so on. The information on the board can then function as an essay plan, guiding the students towards sequencing their essays in logical ways and deciding which pieces of information should be included in which paragraph.

In conclusion, the term *scaffolding* is a useful one since it reminds us of the importance of providing supportive frameworks for the learning tasks that we set our students. Without the support of scaffolding, students may well approach tasks in a hasty, slapdash manner. With appropriate scaffolding, however, they are likely to complete challenging tasks successfully and to a higher standard. ETp

Dr Rose

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Prize crossword 45

ET*p* presents the forty-fifth in our series of prize crosswords. Send your entry (completed crossword grid and quotation), not forgetting to include your full name, postal address and telephone number, to Prize crossword 45, English Teaching *professional*, Pavilion Publishing (Brighton) Ltd, PO Box 100, Chichester, West Sussex, PO18 8HD, UK.

Ten correct entries will be drawn from a hat on 10 March 2011 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 (*www.macmillandictionary.com*).

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

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

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.

12	4	15	9	7	11	16	2	14		16	13		11	1	12		18
2	13	11		23	2	20	12	26	24	15	19		20	12	7	23	2
14		20	1	16	9	1		5	2	15		9	7	14		15	13
12		11	2		9	1	7	14	22	12		11	1	12		20	2
26	19	4	Nelson Mandela														

VERY FREQUENT WORDS

*** A preposition of place
*** Possibly the most common verb in English
*** The system by which a country's trade, industry and finance are organised
*** The opposite of *in*
*** A male pronoun
*** A pronoun of indeterminate gender (*in two places*)
*** '___ are not amused!' (Queen Victoria)
*** To change position or cause something to change position
*** 'The quality __ mercy is not strained' (Shakespeare)
*** A word used to connect possibilities in a list
*** Including or affecting the whole world
*** A reward for being successful in a sport or competition
*** To place something in a particular position
*** A modifier used to suggest that something has only a little of a certain quality
*** Something given to someone to mark an achievement
*** A plural object pronoun
*** To be in a position in which your body is flat
*** An affirmative answer

FREQUENT WORDS

** A serious disease that destroys the body's immune system
** The back part of the foot
** Something done or said to make people laugh
** A vehicle for carrying goods

FAIRLY FREQUENT WORDS

* A sudden shaking movement of the ground
* Forming an essential part of something and needed to make it complete
* Characterised by beauty of movement or style
* The beginning of something, particularly something bad
* To make changes to a text in order to improve it
* A slang expression meaning that everything is all right

LESS FREQUENT WORDS

– A compartment for one animal in a stable
– An acronym for an organisation that monitors diseases around the world
– To reduce the intensity of something
– Also known as
– Similar to something
– An organisation offering help to alcoholics
– A baby's bed with high sides, often made of wood
– The person someone used to be married to or used to have a romantic relationship with
– A long pointed tooth that some animals have
– An unpleasant young man who behaves badly in public
– A long stick with a flat blade used for rowing a boat
– Shortened version of a Latin word meaning *work*, used to identify a particualr piece of music
– A strong alcoholic drink from Greece
– Serious or sad
– An organisation of independent states formed in 1945 to promote international peace
– Deplorable



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