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The Leading Practical Magazine For English Language Teachers Worldwide

By teachers, for teachers
Peter Watkins

Mixed-ability teaching
Susan Purcell

In it up to your ears
Mark Hancock

Lessons from wikis
Stephanie Ashford

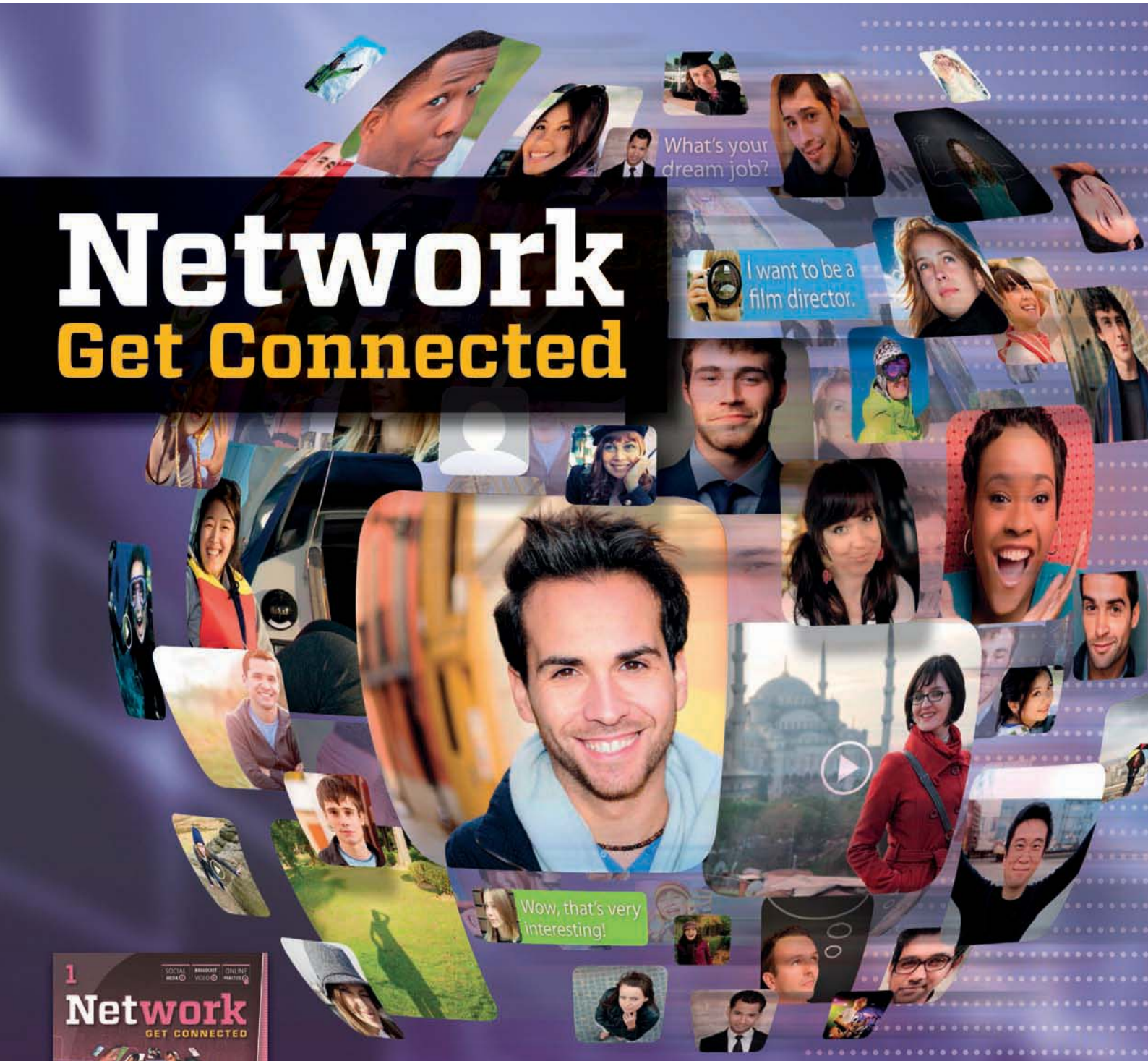
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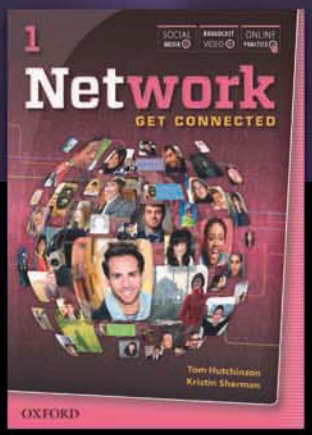


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Editorial

Most people recognise that learning is a life-long endeavour – and, certainly, one that doesn't stop when you become a teacher. Several of the contributors to this issue look at how teachers can go on learning and how we can all contribute towards helping each other along the developmental path.

In our main feature, Peter Watkins praises the way that teachers further develop their skills, share ideas and give support to their colleagues through workshops, action research, peer-observation and shared reflection initiatives, and shows that even those teachers who are working for institutions that don't offer much in the way of professional development programmes can help themselves and each other to grow.

Ana García-Stone continues our series on the different roles available to people within the teaching profession with a look at the duties and responsibilities of a Diploma-level tutor. The commitment and energy required of teachers pursuing a Diploma course in order to enhance their professional development is clearly matched by that required of those who train them!

Paul Bress points out that his language students are often teachers – non-native teachers who want to improve their English – and he celebrates the opportunities this provides and the dedication and enthusiasm of his students as they take advantage of the chance to take their knowledge of English to new levels.

Looking at learning from the point of view of the student, Emily Edwards recognises that it needs to continue both outside the classroom and when an English course is over. She tries to ensure that her one-to-one students are equipped to improve their language skills even further in the outside world.

Mark Hancock also considers the reality of the learners' experience of English outside the classroom, and he examines how we can best prepare them for the variations in pronunciation they are likely to encounter when faced with authentic speech.





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By teachers, for teachers

Peter Watkins sees that teachers are doing it for themselves.

Schools and other institutions often pride themselves on the professional development opportunities they provide for their teachers. This provision is obviously a good thing, although in reality what is actually provided may vary enormously in both quality and quantity. At an institutional level, teacher development (TD) is often seen as a programme to be implemented: designed by senior staff to be consumed by less senior staff, measured in workshops and observations.

These programmes are of value when they inspire teachers to experiment and when they encourage reflection on teaching. This is because TD is a process, not a product, and that process happens as long as teachers are prepared to be thoughtful about their own teaching. Put simply, we develop as teachers by teaching and thinking about our teaching.

Organised TD activities that address the needs of teachers, encourage critical reflection and bring people together to talk about areas of common interest can be an enormous support to this developmental process. And teachers don't need to wait to be offered such a programme, or just take what they are given – they can do it for themselves. Here's how.

Core principles

First of all, it's important to remember that if you are a teacher, then you are almost certainly already a teacher educator. Not only do teachers teach themselves through reflecting on their lessons, but they also teach other teachers through talking about teaching and classroom experiences. Teachers clearly value talking to each other about their professional concerns, so what is it about these staffroom conversations that makes them so important?

Well, the conversations you engage in with a colleague are typically non-judgemental. Instead, they are based around mutual respect and empathy, and such empathy is possible because of the shared knowledge of the teaching situation – you teach the same kinds of learners and classes, with the same kinds of materials and resources, and therefore experience similar triumphs and failures. By talking about these shared situations, the knowledge that emerges is relevant to the teaching context in which you work.

Teachers value talking to each other about their professional concerns, so what is it about these staffroom conversations that makes them so important?

Another feature that makes these conversations between teachers so valuable is that they often have practical outcomes, typified by phrases such as *'When that happened in my class, I ...'* or *'Have you tried ...?'*. These phrases encode practical advice in a non-judgemental way. What's more, the interactive nature of conversation brings to the fore the social and collaborative possibilities for learning. You are not struggling alone, but pooling knowledge and ideas with colleagues to your mutual benefit.

So even if you are the newest teacher in the staffroom, the chances are that you are already a teacher educator because you talk about teaching and, more importantly, you are probably promoting a principled model of teacher learning that is:

- reflective
- practical
- non-judgemental
- localised
- empathetic
- collaborative

These are sound principles on which to base TD, so let's move on to look at how they can be put into operation in programmes designed by teachers, for teachers.

Principles in practice

Reflective practice is a very pervasive model of TD and is certainly nothing new. John Dewey, for example, was promoting reflection in the 1930s. It should be noted that *reflective practice* is sometimes interpreted differently by different people, but we need not worry too much about the subtleties of such interpretations for our purposes. We can simply take it to mean a teacher thinking critically about the practice of teaching. For some people, this might be quite a structured process, with

prompts to recall critical incidents and time set aside for writing a journal entry, for example. For others, critical thinking may be achieved by thinking through a lesson, or part of a lesson, while walking home from work.

Such practices are undoubtedly useful, but reflection does not have to be a solitary experience. Reflecting with other teachers can also be highly beneficial. Not only do we gain insights that we may not have seen ourselves, but it also allows for ideas to be jointly constructed. Something which starts as a tentative suggestion proposed by one teacher can be teased out, added to, reformulated and developed by others. So, how can we promote opportunities for such shared reflection? Here are two ways:

- First, find another teacher or two that you feel comfortable working with. Agree that after you have all taught your next lesson(s) you will make a note of something that went well and something you think could have been done better. Get together with your colleagues and describe the incidents in as much detail as you can (you may want to make a few notes soon after the lesson so that you remember clearly). Taking each incident in turn, allow your colleagues to ask as many questions as they want about what happened and, together, try to explain why things went well or badly. Can you replicate the things that went well in other situations, with other classes? If things didn't go so well, can you think of any alternative actions that may lead to a better result next time? This process of deciding what incidents to report, describing them and accounting for them, is a collaborative, reflective activity.
- Another way of promoting joint reflection is to experiment with new teaching techniques. Try using a technique or strategy that you have not used before, or do not frequently use. You can probably think of lots of things you would like to try out in the classroom, but to start you thinking, here is just one suggestion. We have probably all experienced asking a question and unless someone answers immediately, in our anxiety to keep the lesson moving, we fill the silence by speaking ourselves. This is a natural response, but experiment with disciplining yourself to remain silent. The silence will create space for the learners to think and process what you have said. Silence also acts as a prompt for others to 'take the floor' and speak, and you may find that the learners will fill the void and talk themselves. So you could experiment with using more silence at different stages of your lesson. Using more silence in class is just an example to help you think of your own ideas. Choose something that is interesting and relevant to you. Again, working with colleagues that you feel comfortable with, either each try a different experiment or all try the same one. When you are ready, get together and discuss what happened. Would you consider using the technique again? Does it need minor alterations to make it work better? In what situations might it be useful? Or should it be discarded totally?

An example workshop

Using word bags

Explain

- Learners have a better chance of remembering new vocabulary when it is recycled.
- Word bags, where a small bag or envelope is used to keep slips of paper with words and phrases written on them from previous lessons, can be a useful way of achieving this.
- Word bags can give the teacher options for flexible, short activities during lessons.

Demonstrate

- Show how you begin a lesson by asking the learners to guess which words from the previous lesson you have put into the bag.
- Take five or six words at random from the bag, check the meanings and ask the learners to use these words in a short narrative that they write with a partner.
- The learners work in pairs. Give each learner three words from the bag. They have to elicit the words from their partner by describing the meanings or other associations.
- Give the learners some nouns from the bag. Brainstorm adjectives and/or verbs that collocate with each one.
- Ask a different learner each lesson to choose the words that should be put into the bag from that lesson.
- At the beginning (or end) of a lesson, take five or six words from the bag and elicit each word from the learners by giving the meaning.

Evaluate

Invite your colleagues to comment on the activities you have shown them and share their experiences and ideas.

Workshops

Programmes aimed at supporting TD can include many elements, but perhaps what many teachers first associate with TD are workshops on a particular area of teaching, provided by the school or institution. These may be organised and led by a designated person and they are often a valuable source of new ideas. New ideas give us opportunities to experiment (and reflect) and also prompt us to re-evaluate what we currently do. If your school does not already have such a programme, then create a workshop yourself! Look at the outline of an example workshop in the box above. You might start by trying out these ideas yourself in class and then presenting them. You can comment on your experience of using the activities and, of course, you can adapt the session by including your own activities or disregarding any ideas that you don't like or don't want to talk about. Or you could take a completely different teaching technique but follow the same basic stages of *explain*, *demonstrate* and *evaluate*.

Standing up in front of people you know is not always easy, but you will probably find that your colleagues are extremely supportive and also grateful for your ideas. However, if you would feel more comfortable, you can share the responsibility by presenting jointly with a like-minded colleague. Don't put pressure on yourself to lead a particular number of workshops, just try to address issues that you are interested in. It's very likely that your colleagues will be interested in similar things.

By teachers, for teachers

Observation

Another traditional part of a school-organised TD programme is observation. When such programmes are imposed on teachers, they can sometimes feel like an exercise in quality control, with teachers feeling defensive and 'playing safe', ensuring that they are observed teaching a class they feel comfortable with and teaching a lesson that they are confident will proceed as planned. However, observation programmes can offer a lot more than that.

A peer observation programme, where observations are reciprocated with someone you trust and whose opinion you value, can be very useful. First of all, there is a benefit to watching other teachers as well as being watched. You can pick up techniques your colleagues use, as well as getting a sense of what lessons feel like from a learner's perspective. Remember that being non-judgemental and showing empathy were two of the core principles (above) that we wanted to include in a TD programme – and nowhere are these more important than when observing others. The observer must always be supportive, constructive and aim to address the issues that are important to the teacher being observed. When this is the case, observations can give a teacher feedback on new ideas they are experimenting with or areas of teaching they find difficult. This can be genuinely developmental and contrasts with the defensiveness that is often associated with more top-down models of observation.

If the peer observation programme is of a reasonable size, it is a good idea for teachers to get together and share the good practice that has occurred. This can be achieved by a number of observers introducing activities in turn ('*I've asked Jay to talk about the practice activity I saw in her lesson*') and then the teacher concerned describing what they did and the rationale behind it.

Action research

Let's move on to slightly less-well-known TD activities. Action research fits in with the notion of teachers taking control of their own development and usually takes the form of teachers investigating very local, context-specific issues. Like most research, action research begins with the identification of a problem or a gap in knowledge.

Let's take an example. A teacher feels that her learners are not saying as much in pair- or groupwork as might be expected. To find an answer to this problem, she reads about speaking/listening activities and, from that reading, concludes that by allowing preparation time before pair- and groupwork, the situation may improve. She acts on this plan and allows five minutes of thinking and preparation time before a groupwork activity. The teacher then observes the results of this action. After that, she reflects on the results, perhaps by asking herself questions: *Did the learners participate more? All of the learners? Some of them? What would be the effect of increasing planning time further?* This final question may lead to another round of research. Notice that there is a cycle from the identification of a problem through planning, acting, observing and reflecting.

> *A peer observation programme, where observations are reciprocated with someone you trust and whose opinion you value, can be very useful*

Action research is an ideal way for teachers to find answers to the questions they want answering, whether those questions concern learners or teaching techniques. As in any other form of research, there is no reason why a researcher has to work alone. You could work with other teachers to address common concerns in your school or area. As with any research, the results should be made public, if possible. This allows people both to *learn* from what you have done and also to *comment* on what you have done. This sort of peer review adds rigour to the research process. 'Making public' in this sense would be achieved by, for example, sharing your results with colleagues, although you could be more ambitious and choose to present them to a wider audience.

Reading

Reading will inevitably be part of action research because you start that process by looking for principled solutions to problems, but reading is also a useful way for teachers to stimulate their own development in its own right. Again, this can be done in a collaborative and reflective manner. For example, you could set up a small reading group whereby you and colleagues read the same text and then arrange a time to discuss the key issues it raises and what relevance they have to your teaching context. You could find a text by looking through some back issues of ET*p*! Alternatively, you could find a variety of texts, all on the same subject – such as approaches to teaching reading – and have each teacher read one, before coming together to share what everyone has learnt in a jigsaw-style activity.

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TD is not a product that is given to a teacher. Instead, it is a naturally occurring process within all of us who are prepared to think critically about teaching. However, teachers can come together to take part in organised activities that will support this process. There are great advantages to programmes that are organised by teachers for teachers because this ensures that relevant issues are addressed.

So if your institution does not already organise a TD programme, or you would like more of it, why not try some of the ideas outlined here? ETp

Dewey, J *Experience and Education* Collier 1938



Peter Watkins is a principal lecturer in ELT at the University of Portsmouth, UK. He is the author of *Learning to Teach English* (Delta Publishing) and is the co-author (with Scott Thornbury) of *The CELTA Course* (CUP).

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Mixed-ability teaching

Susan Purcell

suggests some strategies to meet everyone's needs.

Mixed-ability teaching is still a challenge for many English teachers, and the need to develop strategies to deal with this situation, therefore, remains pertinent. As the name indicates, a mixed-ability class is one that includes learners of different abilities, who thus progress at different rates. The reasons for the differences in ability are complex; it is not merely that one student is 'brainier' or more talented at learning languages than another. A number of different factors contribute. These include:

- Differences in motivation: highly-motivated learners will make more progress than reluctant students.
- Differences in physical ability/disability: students who can't hear very well, can't move around very easily or who are dyslexic will be at a disadvantage.
- Differences in personality: outgoing learners, who are willing to 'have a go', will make faster progress than learners who are frightened to open their mouths in case they make a mistake.
- Differences in preferred learning styles: some people learn best when they see something written down, some prefer to hear the language, while others learn by doing things for themselves. If lessons are biased towards one style of teaching or one type of activity, some learners in the group will be at a disadvantage.
- Differences in interests: what turns one learner off might fascinate and stimulate another.

All classes contain learners with different personalities, different styles of learning, different interests, and so on, which means that virtually every class you teach will be mixed ability. Don't be alarmed! This means that you are already dealing with the challenge. There are, however, some specific strategies that you can put into practice to ease the task of coping with a very mixed class.

No matter how good a coursebook you are using, some of it will be irrelevant to your students

Wean yourself away from coursebooks

Coursebooks are not written with *your* students in mind, nor anybody else's students for that matter. No matter how good a coursebook you are using, some of it will be irrelevant to your students. Exercises in standard coursebooks are often prescriptive and limited – if it is a gap-filling exercise, students are obliged to fill in the gaps supplied by the author and/or publisher; there may be ten sentences in an exercise, but some students will need double that number before they absorb the point, and so on.

Coursebooks are tools to help you do your job. They should never become your master. By all means follow a coursebook, but don't stick slavishly to it. Don't worry about omitting

dialogues, texts and exercises that are irrelevant to your students' needs. Even better, adapt the texts and exercises in the book, using them as resources or for ideas, but substitute vocabulary and situations that will be more relevant to your learners. The book exercises can be given for homework, as reinforcement for the less able and as extension work for the more able in the class.

Prioritise core language

It is tempting to aim your lessons at somewhere near the middle of the class. Don't! This strategy is frustrating for everyone – half the class will find the work too difficult and the other half too easy. So, what is the solution? You need to identify the key, or core, language, the big ideas, the main principles, the key concepts – whatever you like to call them – that you require *all* the students to acquire by the end of the lesson. Over and above that, you will offer the more able students extension work (based around the teaching point), which will stretch *them*, while offering those who may be struggling plenty of practice at the basic or core level, which will stretch *them*. A listening exercise, for example, could consist of columns asking for time of departure, train destination, type of train – this would be the 'core' language – but there could be an extra column on the students' answer sheets headed 'Any other information' to challenge the stronger learners (information to complete this column might include delays, or that the train divides en route, for instance).

Use your learners as a resource

Let's imagine the teaching point is hobbies or likes and dislikes. You have decided to dispense with the coursebook and, instead, use hobbies and leisure-time activities suggested by your students. Everyone can contribute here; there is a 'level playing field' – there are no 'wrong' answers. The weaker or less confident learners can offer *swimming* or *football*, even if other members of the class are offering *white-water rafting* or *toxophily*. Acknowledge every contribution, briefly explain new and/or difficult words, but don't get sidetracked, don't write everything on the board and don't feel obliged to use

You need to identify the key, or core, language, the big ideas, the main principles, the key concepts – whatever you like to call them – that you require all the students to acquire

all suggestions – just the vocabulary you consider 'core'. The other suggestions won't go to waste – it's always good to find out about your students, and you can include these suggestions in activities you devise for the stronger learners at some future date.

Vary the format of questions

Weaker students often get used to being the last in the class to be asked questions, after everyone else has had a go. To avoid embarrassing these people, change the order in which you ask questions. You can do this effortlessly by changing the question form. Some questions are easier than others, and if you start with a very easy question, you can ask a weaker student first for a change. The questions *I went to France on holiday, and you? I went to France on holiday; where did you go?* and *Where did you go on holiday?* all lead to the same answer, yet make varying demands on learners. The first format is the easiest because you are modelling the correct verb form – the learner just has to copy. No help is given in the question form *Where did you go?* – the learner has to remember to change the verb form and has to remember what the correct form is, so this question is more suitable for a more able student.

Offer a range of activities

It is when students are working individually, in pairs or in small groups that differences in ability between them will become more apparent. Some students will finish a task very quickly and get bored waiting for the others to finish. Yet if you stop the activity before the weaker members of the class have finished, those students probably won't have fully assimilated the key teaching point.

If the whole class is doing a listening comprehension task, or individuals are doing a reading comprehension, instead of having just one exercise based on the text have several and tell your students they can choose which one(s) they do. These different exercises can include something easy, eg true/false questions, multiple choice or putting ticks on a grid, as well as more difficult activities, eg identifying missing words, answering questions in English, summarising or giving an opinion on what they have read or heard. In practice, the stronger students may well have completed all the exercises while the very weakest are still struggling with the true/false or 'tick the words you hear' exercises. However, the advantage of giving every student the

It is when students are working individually, in pairs or in small groups that differences in ability between them will become more apparent

same sheet with all the exercises is that nobody knows what anyone else has or hasn't done. Go through all the exercises when checking the answers; in this way, weaker students won't feel embarrassed.

Similarly, for a pairwork speaking exercise, you can give each pair the same cue card. There might be six or eight conversations to roleplay, but only the first four will be 'core' – the minimum amount of practice you want everyone in the class to have. Roleplays five and six will be slightly more challenging, and roleplays seven and eight will be very challenging. Tell your students you don't expect them to finish the lot. In practice, the weaker students will take all the allotted time over the core dialogues, whilst the quicker students will race through these. However, instead of getting bored waiting for the slower ones to finish, they will be able to continue practising

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Mixed-ability teaching

at their own, higher level. No one gets bored, and no one gets embarrassed or is made to feel that they are 'behind' the rest of the class.

Manage the configuration of pairs and groups

When dividing the class into pairs or small groups for practice activities, it might seem easier to match students of similar ability. There are several disadvantages to this strategy: the same students always work together, and weaker members of the group may not learn very much. It can also be detrimental to class cohesion and good atmosphere, with students only too well aware of where they belong in the pecking order. On the other hand, pairing weak with strong can be frustrating for the stronger, daunting for the weaker, and also means that the same students always work together.

In many pairwork activities, one role is much easier than the other; one person may have to ask a lot of questions (in a job interview roleplay situation, for instance) while the other person needs only to give one-word answers or use more simple English. If pairs are organised at random, or designed so that people have different partners each lesson, you can give the 'easier' role to the weaker student, at least for the first round of the activity. This can be done in a very relaxed way as you hand out the roleplay cue cards. Give the appropriate card to each student or, if both roles are on one sheet, say as you hand them out *'You're A'* or *'You're B'*. No one will realise that your allocation of roles is anything but random.

Avoid the written word in speaking activities

A roleplay in a book might say (in English or the learners' own language) *'Ask for her nationality'* or *'Say you enjoyed the party immensely'*. Faced with these words on the card, most students cannot help trying to use the words *nationality*, *enjoy* and *immensely* in their questions and responses. Some students will struggle to reproduce the modelled vocabulary and grammatical structures. It is better to avoid the use of words, and particularly of full sentences, on a cue card and instead use symbols, pictures or diagrams – just clear enough to provide a hint or a prompt. All the A students could be given a copy of an actual form (eg a hotel registration form) with the instructions *'Fill in this form'*, and then it is up to them how they get the relevant information. A whole range of options is possible, some more difficult than others, but none is wrong in the context: *Your nationality, please. Are you American? What nationality are you? What is your nationality? Where are you from? Which country are you from?* A smiley face given as a prompt can elicit *The party was good. I liked the party. I enjoyed the party very much* and *What a great party!* as well as the trickier *I enjoyed the party immensely* and other versions.

Broadly speaking, using open-ended activities, where learners have a choice in what to say or how to respond, will benefit the weaker members of the class more than prescriptive guidelines and instructions.

Offer support

Give support, but allow the students the opportunity to take only as much as they need. You might give out an exercise where they have to fill in missing words, for instance. The answers could be jumbled up at the bottom of the page for the students to refer to if they wish. Tell them in advance that *ideally* you would like them to answer the exercise without looking at the jumbled-up answers, but they are there if they need them.

Keep the class informed

Remind your students frequently that they will not necessarily always understand everything.

Make sure that they know what you expect from them individually (this comes back to the concept of 'core language'). For instance, the objective might be that everyone must learn and use three new words or phrases related to likes and dislikes; that is, new words for *them* – it doesn't matter whether the other students know the words or not. Weaker students will reach their objective if they learn and practise *enjoy*, *prefer* and *detest*, if those are new words for them, whilst stronger students may be using *be mad about*, *be a big fan of*, *not too keen on* or whatever is appropriate for them. Everyone can go out of the class having learnt something new, so the demands will have been equally challenging for all the students, and they will all have been equally stretched.

★ ★ ★

Mixed-ability strategies boil down to two key principles:

- Know your students.
- Know your material.

Knowing your students means knowing their strengths and weaknesses, knowing who needs more practice in grammar, in forming questions, in verb forms, etc. Knowing your material means knowing which of the two roles in a pairwork activity is the tougher; which are the more difficult words in a reading passage that some students may need to have explained to them; which vocabulary is likely to be unknown or confusing; and what irregular forms are likely to crop up. You can then offer individuals the support they need, whilst stretching and challenging them at an appropriate level. In this way, you will ensure that your lessons meet the needs of *all* your students. ETp



Susan Purcell is a freelance teacher and former teacher trainer. She is the author or co-author of *Mixed-Ability Teaching in Language Learning*, *Language Games and Activities* and *Teaching Grammar Communicatively*, all published by CILT.

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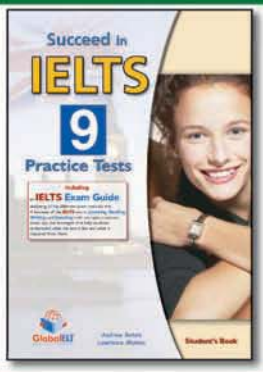
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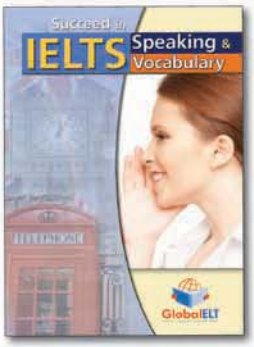
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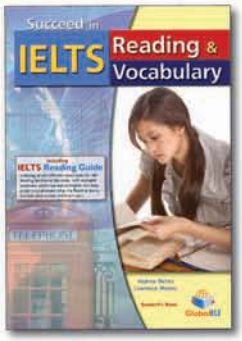
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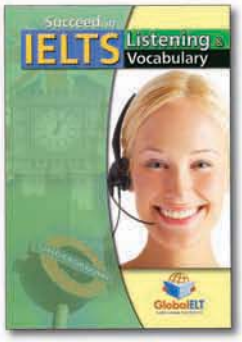
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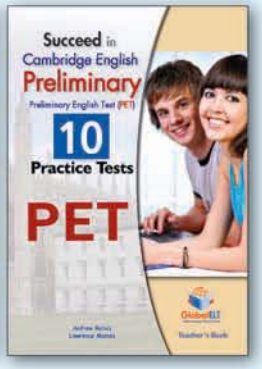


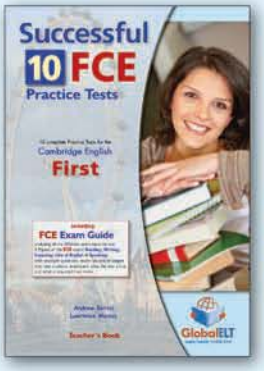


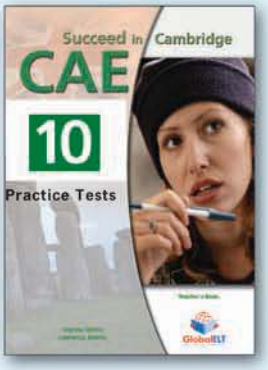


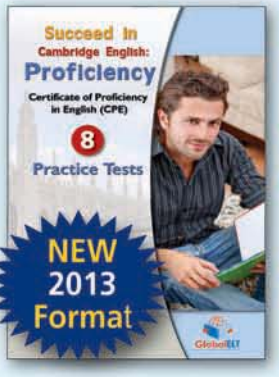
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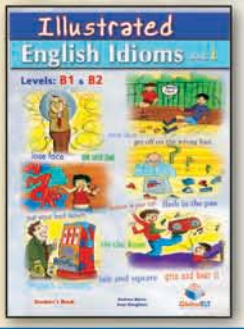


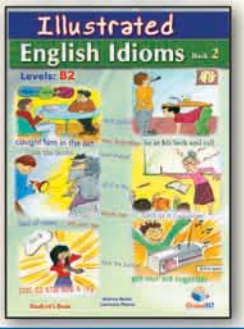




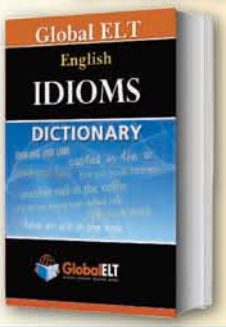
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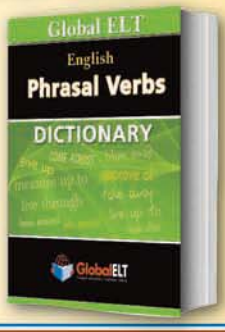




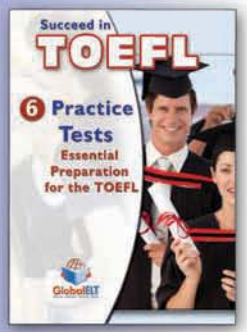


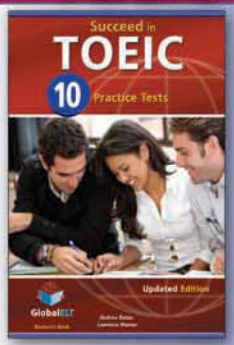
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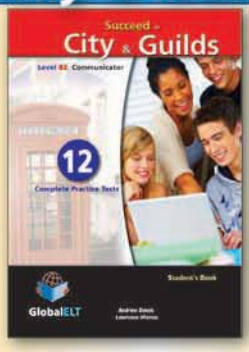


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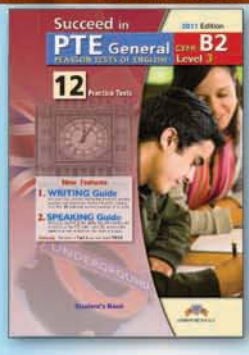




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Ownership of learning

George Drivas

recommends personalising report cards.

Personalised learning is a model where, according to David Hargreaves, *'students are offered a customised package of activities and programmes to meet their individual needs'*. Hargreaves goes on to identify five core elements that characterise the student for whom learning is personalised: Engagement, Responsibility, Independence, Maturity and Co-construction. These characteristics support and enable learning in ways that extend beyond the classroom and shift the balance of ownership from the teacher to the student.

Ownership is a legal concept widely recognised across a variety of cultures and societies. It brings with it rights and responsibilities, risks and rewards for all stakeholders – in education, these stakeholders are teachers, learners and (in some cases) their parents. Yet, the characteristics listed above are not an inherent part of human behaviour; they may require training. Furthermore, they need equal degrees of commitment from all sides, together with a range of systems that support and promote them.

Ownership brings with it rights and responsibilities, risks and rewards for all stakeholders – in education, these are teachers, learners and parents

The ideal situation, then, would be one where teachers and learners (and their parents) operate within a learning environment driven by pedagogy rather than systemic priorities, where they reflect on and analyse educational events rather than just keeping a record of them, where they construct and work with a syllabus that reflects individual learner needs rather than one that itemises formal requirements and, finally, where they prioritise and assess goals set by individuals rather than by external authorities or examination bodies. This would entail a system that is geared towards mass customisation rather than mass production. (For an extensive discussion of this, see the work of Ted Kolderie and Tim McDonald.)

Standards and goals in syllabus design

A syllabus is the road map used by stakeholders to plan their educational journey. It consists of three elements:

- Content – the subject matter that needs to be acquired
- Competences – the processes to be used for the acquisition and application of knowledge
- Skills – the abilities required to progress and develop

The syllabus sets the standards against which teaching and learning are to be assessed. The former must provide opportunities for content, competences and skills to be acquired, nurtured and developed. The latter must provide evidence that the required level of success has been achieved.

The ideal situation would be one where the learners are consulted when we set goals and select the activities that will help them reach the desired level

In most typical educational environments, the syllabus is translated into a universal set of goals for all learners. Teachers plan lessons and design activities for their assigned classes of learners which aim at achieving these goals. As a result, ownership of learning lies with the teacher or, even more dangerously, with the syllabus designer. Furthermore, the individual learners may feel excluded from a process in which they should have an active role.

The ideal situation would be one where the learners are consulted when we set goals and select the activities that will help them reach the desired level, a level determined by personal or professional requirements.

Evaluation and assessment

Evaluation and assessment in education are the processes used to measure success. They usually identify how well teachers and learners are performing, how much of the prescribed syllabus the teachers are delivering and how much of it the learners are acquiring. In most cases, the tools used are in the hands of the teacher or syllabus designer, and the results are communicated to the learners as grades, posssibly with additional comments in the form of advice or criticism.

This approach commonly creates antagonism rather than collaboration, distinguishes learners as either achievers or underachievers and stresses weaknesses over strengths. The tools used in measuring performance are also subject to evaluation: a project may be deemed easier than a test and a standardised test easier than an essay.

The ideal situation would be one where both learners and teachers were actively involved in selecting evaluation and assessment tools that would match the profile of individual learners and their goals. In addition, learners and teachers would be trained to evaluate and assess *themselves* (and possibly their peers). Self-evaluation and self-assessment engage learners and teachers by helping them think about the time and effort invested in the educational process, their own strengths and weaknesses and possible remedial actions.

Feedback and consultation

Feedback is an integral part of the educational process. Stakeholders need to hear what other participants think and how much they value their contribution. It gives insight into preparation and performance; it provides suggestions about alternative courses of action and may lead to changes in expectations and beliefs. However, in real life, feedback sessions tend to be sporadic and unsystematic. High achievers are often excluded for the sake of those learners who seem to need additional support. Spending time on actual teaching is given priority over time dedicated to feedback. The extent and detail of the advice given is directly proportionate to the time available and the importance given to it by the stakeholders.

As a result, learners pay attention to the result and not the process involved in a particular activity. The next time a comparable activity is assigned or undertaken, very little change occurs in learner attitude and teacher behaviour. The same difficulties surface, and indifference settles in.

The term *communications protocol* is usually used to refer to the transfer of data between electronic devices. However, just such a protocol (a set of rules defining feedback exchange between learner and teacher) is needed in the educational context. This protocol needs to have the following characteristics:

- It needs to focus on and address specific aspects of the work at hand.
- It needs mutual agreement between teacher and learner in terms of its frequency and length.
- It needs to use a common language, ie that which both learner and teacher understand.
- It needs to use a 'full-duplex' mode, ie feedback flows in both diretions between teacher and learner.
- It needs to convey a manageable load of information, ie to concentrate on points that interest both teacher and learner.

The ideal situation would be one where teachers and learners meet for a feedback session before a specific milestone in the course and not only during or, most commonly, after a particular activity. This would enhance ownership and engagement.

Report cards

A report card communicates information about a learner's performance. In most cases, it is issued by the school to the learner or the learner's parents at regular times during the period of teaching. A typical report card uses a grading scale to indicate the quality of the learner's work. Grades achieved in class contribute to this grading scale. As such, the report card is basically a tool for providing assessment and feedback. Used properly, it helps learners and teachers to evaluate their work and plan the next steps in order to achieve their goals. It can also enhance productivity and accountability.

Feedback gives insight into preparation and performance; it provides suggestions about alternative courses of action and may lead to changes in expectations

It is becoming increasingly important for report cards and for teachers, in general, to provide students with comments about their performance which relate to certain established standards, such as those set by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. These standards can reflect a broader spectrum of educational aims and often use descriptors to define goals and map a learner's progression towards a final goal. Descriptors (often referred to as 'can do' statements) describe what a learner is capable of doing. These 'can do' statements are always positive: they describe what learners are able to do, not what they cannot do or do wrongly. This helps all learners, even those at the

Ownership of learning

lowest levels, to see that learning has value and that they can attain language goals. Similar statements can refer to and assess not only content, but also learning strategies and skills.

The report card, therefore, can use such statements to itemise goals for each subject area in terms of content, competences and skills. It ranks them in terms of preference, rates them in terms of progression over a period of time and indicates whether the learner is moving in the right direction.

Personalised report cards

Report cards can be personalised in the following way:

1

The teacher ensures that there is a syllabus available which describes and defines its components – content, competences and skills – with descriptors covering manageable units of knowledge for different levels of proficiency, preferably in the learner's native language. These descriptors itemise the points necessary to achieve the course goals. They need to be focused, mutually agreed and understandable. They also need to be matched to a range of activities that correspond to different learner profiles. Furthermore, they need to be linked to methods of assessment and evaluation that produce accurate results.

2

As a class, the teacher and the learners review the descriptors that are to form the goals for a specific time period – a week, month or academic term. Once everybody is satisfied that they understand what is to be achieved, there are two options available:

- Using one of the many online survey tools available (eg *Google Docs*) the teacher produces a survey so that the class as a whole can decide what they would prefer to deal with first, second, etc. (There is an example of a survey relating to listening in Figure 1 on page 15.) In a follow-up consultation meeting, the teacher points out any difficulties or inconsistencies in the resulting prioritisation and lists the activities that are most suitable for each goal, together with the assessment methods. The learners can express their preferences at this point, and add activites or assessment methods to this list – or delete them.
- Again, using an online survey tool, the learners prioritise the descriptors individually and print a copy of the results in preparation for a consultation with their teacher. At this point, the learners can also take a learner profile test, such as the one at *www.learning-styles-online.com/inventory/questions.asp* to identify the ways in which they feel they learn better. They can also print a copy of these results. During the consultation with the teacher, they discuss the results of the survey and the test, mapping their course of action – the number and frequency of activities, number and frequency of assessment methods, etc. Both documents are finalised and kept in the learner's portfolio for reference.

3

Once the consultation meetings are completed, the teacher produces individual report cards. Where possible, the teacher also puts the learners in groups according to their goals and/or profiles, making sure to offer as many suitable and appropriate learning and assessment opportunities as possible.

4

The learners self-assess their performance in each of the areas listed and their achievement of each of their goals. They also express their preferences for the assessment tasks and methods. During interim consultation meetings – feedback sessions initiated by either the learner or the teacher – these points are raised, progress is discussed and any necessary adjustments to the course are decided.

5

Finally, the teacher assesses each learner's performance and achievement for each of the descriptors listed. During a consultation meeting at the end of the agreed period of time, the teacher and the learner discuss outcomes, how well specific goals have been achieved and possible next steps. This meeting is documented in the report card, which is kept as part of the learner's portfolio. Figure 2 on page 15 shows a sample page of a personalised report card. The descriptors were prioritised by the learner and there is space for self-assessment in the 'My goal' columns, as well as space for teacher assessment. The report would contain similar pages for listening, speaking and writing.

6

Steps 1–5 above are repeated until the learning period is completed and/or the learning goals have been achieved. Figure 3 shows the back of a report card where the performance rating codes are explained and where there is space for dates and signatures that document the consultation meetings.

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A personalised progress report card can help learners develop and adopt a more active role in their learning. It can influence teachers to become more active and systematic in providing advice and feedback. It can help stakeholders define and set specific goals as well as monitor the learners' progress and take action when necessary. The personalised progress report card requires a change in format, layout and content to reflect and take advantage of digital reality and pedagogical developments. ETp

Hargreaves, D *Personalising Learning, Next Steps in Working Laterally* Specialist Schools Trust 2004

Kolderie, T and McDonald, T *How Information Technology Can Enable 21st Century Schools* The Information Technology and Innovation Foundation 2009



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What are your priorities this term?

1 Listening. Indicate the order in which you would like to deal with the points below.

	1	2	3	4
I can generally follow the main points of extended discussion around me.	○	○	○	○
I can follow a lecture or talk within my own field.	○	○	○	○
I can understand simple technical information, such as operating instructions for everyday equipment.	○	○	○	○
I can follow detailed directions to a place of interest.	○	○	○	○
I can understand the information of recorded messages				

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey.

Finish survey

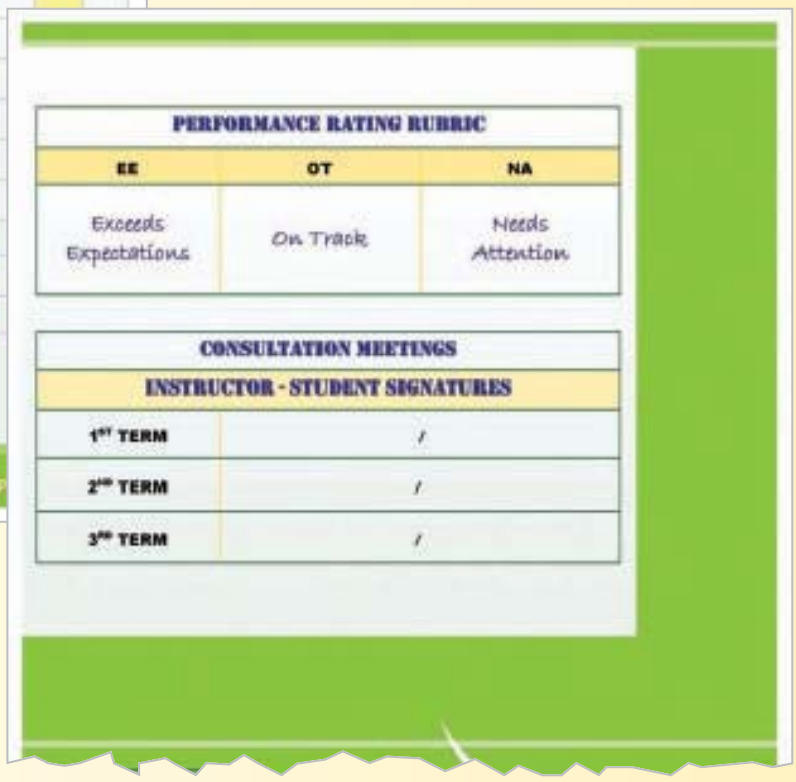
▲ **Figure 1**
An example survey



	1ST		2ND		3RD	
READING						
Can understand short simple texts						
Can understand longer, more complex texts						
Can understand overall meaning of text as required						
Can find relevant details as required						
Can complete reading tasks as required						

	1ST		2ND		3RD	
CLASS PERFORMANCE RATING						
Makes an effort to learn						
Completes homework on time						
Participates in class activities						
Listens and follows instructions						
Uses class time effectively						
Works effectively on his own						
Works effectively in groups						
Follows class rules						
Asks for clarifications / explanations						

◀ **Figure 2**
A page from a personalised report card



PERFORMANCE RATING RUBRIC		
EE	OT	NA
Exceeds Expectations	On Track	Needs Attention

CONSULTATION MEETINGS	
INSTRUCTOR - STUDENT SIGNATURES	
1ST TERM	/
2ND TERM	/
3RD TERM	/

▶ **Figure 3**
The back page of a personalised report card

Non-native teachers

Paul Bress delights in having overseas teachers as his students.

When students go overseas for an English course in, say, the UK, the USA or Australia, they are usually highly motivated to achieve a lot in a short space of time. When non-native teachers of English (NNTEs) do so, they are likely to be even more highly motivated. This is their golden opportunity: their chance to catch up on how the language has changed since their last visit; their chance to be reminded of their strengths and weaknesses in English; their chance to fine-tune their communicative performance. Against this background, how should trainers go about improving NNTEs' language skills? Let's look at five possible ways.

1 Input new words/phrases that they probably haven't heard before.

Your class of NNTEs will probably have an advanced knowledge of English vocabulary and phrases. However, it is possible that they may have neglected to keep up with recent changes in English. They have not, perhaps, watched TV programmes or read newspapers, magazines or websites in English. As a result of this, their English may be beginning to sound a little archaic.

This is why it is important to teach useful new words/phrases very regularly on the course. One way of dong this is as follows:

- Write a list of new words and phrases (eg *twenty-four seven*) on the board and ask the NNTEs to discuss their meanings.
- Get the NNTEs to read the (same) words and phrases in natural-sounding contexts.
- Ask the NNTEs what these (same) words and phrases mean, using carefully worded concept questions.
- Give the class a concept statement for each new word or phrase – to reinforce the meaning.
- Elicit a target sentence with each target word or phrase.

2 Get them to express opinions on difficult topics – and give feedback on their performance.

Some trainers will be somewhat wary of guiding NNTEs towards better English. But let's not forget that improving their English is precisely why they've chosen to do their course! They want their trainers to pinpoint what they should work on.

Trainers can give specific feedback to each NNTE to enable them to see a pattern in what they need to work on in future. Here are some examples of possible feedback:

You need to make a clearer distinction between strong forms and weak forms.
You need to use conventionally acceptable collocations.
You need to adapt your register so that you indicate the amount of unease that there is in a situation.

Note: This exercise can be done again and again, which makes the feedback you give to any individual more effective than if it is only done once.

3 Get them to take part in difficult simulations – and give feedback on their performance.

Basic simulations (eg buying a cup of coffee in a café) aren't that difficult to set up, but, clearly, these would be too easy for a class of NNTEs. Therefore, trainers need to set up much more demanding simulations. The NNTEs should be asked to do things they probably might want to do in their own language, for example making unusual requests such as:

- Asking for one restaurant meal to be put on two plates – for two people to share
- Asking to borrow a stranger's mobile phone
- Asking a stranger in a railway station to look after a bag for five minutes

After you have watched the simulation, you can give feedback on how successful they were at communicating appropriately in an awkward situation. You can then provide ample opportunity for further oral practice, so that the NNTEs go away feeling that they have achieved something important.

4 Review the language you have covered every day.

Some trainers of NNTEs tend to treat their students as if they had miraculous learning powers – thinking that, because these students are teachers themselves, they will be able to acquire the language input with hardly any practice. You may, indeed, find some NNTEs who have this extraordinary aptitude, but most will need regular reminding of what they've learnt. In short, it is not a good idea to cover too much ground, because then the learning experience may be unsatisfactory.

5 Set homework tasks.

Some trainers will not take advantage of the fact that their NNTEs are now in an English-speaking country. It is important to make the most of this situation! The NNTEs will be surrounded by language as soon as they leave the class: newspapers, magazines, websites, people talking to them, people talking to each other, etc. The best homework task you can set is to ask them, each day, to note down three words or phrases (heard or read in an authentic context) which they have never encountered before. First, they have to guess what the words or expressions mean. Then they have to check the meaning in an English-English dictionary. Finally, in class, a selection of NNTEs can choose one of their items, tell the class about the situation, and say whether their hypotheses were correct or not.

★ ★ ★

Some trainers hold the view that teachers are the most *difficult* people to teach. They may say that teachers have unrealistically high expectations of their trainers. Maybe they will even want to *compete* with their trainers. In my experience, though, when a group of NNTEs realise that their trainers know how to facilitate their learning (in the ways suggested above), they are likely to l



Paul Bress lives in Herne Bay, 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 on Kindle.

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Strategies for communication

Emily Edwards

prepares her one-to-one students for life outside the classroom.

In Issue 83 of ET*p*, I discussed ways of planning for one-to-one lessons, and how to design a syllabus using a variety of frameworks. So, assuming that you have already found out your student's interests, needs and goals (using needs analysis) and planned a series of lessons, we will now look at some strategies for making the one-to-one learning process communicative, fun and enjoyable – for both the student and the teacher.

Classroom reality

One-to-one teaching should, in theory, be all about focusing on one student's needs. It should, therefore, be very learner-centred: meaning that the lesson content is tailored exactly to that student, who also has some control over the topics and materials used. However, in day-to-day planning and teaching, I've found that it can be easy to forget this and, despite having a learner-centred syllabus planned, the teacher may just find and use something that is convenient to photocopy, such as a set of textbook exercises, which may not be that relevant to the student. Another common problem is that the student may develop an over-reliance on the teacher, seeing them as a 'fountain of knowledge', rather than as someone to guide their learning process. Student demands and expectations of one-to-one lessons are normally high (as, arguably, they should be) but can sometimes be unrealistic, which may lead to the teacher doing all the work and too much talking, with the lesson then becoming teacher-centred.

The fact of the matter is that many one-to-one students only want or need lessons for a limited time. This is because a short spurt of attention on a student's key weaknesses, as provided by private lessons, can be all they need to give them the confidence to communicate more effectively in English. Therefore, it is vital (in my opinion) to help your student develop strategies that will allow them to tackle tasks themselves in the future, after their lessons with you have ended. It is also really important to keep one-to-one lessons enjoyable, fun, communicative and varied, so that the student has the motivation to continue to develop their language skills as effectively as possible.

General strategies

So, what can one-to-one teachers do to prevent problems arising? I think there are several useful strategies which can help in general:

- Encourage the student to be responsible (along with you) for the learning and content of the course by asking them to bring something to the lesson that they are interested in discussing, reading or editing, eg an email they wrote recently.
- Use frameworks to make learning as flexible as possible, and adapt them to the student's needs as you go. (An example would be a series of speech bubbles showing the start of a conversation, which the student then has to continue.)
- Plan activities that will make the student work and think hard, and which don't need lengthy teacher explanations, eg task-based activities.
- Get your student to perform the tasks they will need to do in the real world, eg giving a presentation, writing an email, asking for travel information – and then give them feedback on this task, such as a list of sentences to correct or words to practise pronouncing.

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Strategies for communication

- Record the student during speaking practice, then play back the recording and pick out things to work on, eg pronunciation of certain words/sounds or inaccurate use of collocations.
- Get shy or low-level students who are nervous about speaking to plan questions or even dialogues (for homework or with you in class); then practise them together. Writing down what they want to say first can give some students a lot of confidence.

Specific strategies

It can also be helpful to think about strategies relating to each skill or language focus to add variety to the lessons, so here are some that I have often used:

Skills work

Reading:
Ask your student to read a short text in class and then summarise the content to you, using their own words. Encourage them to focus on understanding the general meaning first, and then target individual lexis they found problematic.

Listening:
Get your student to watch an online news report for homework, to look up any new vocabulary themselves and then to prepare a summary to present in the lesson (see Worksheet 1 on page 19). If they didn't understand something from the report, you could watch it again together to clarify difficult vocabulary or expressions. Another technique which helps develop your student's listening and conversation confidence is to teach strategies for asking for clarification when they don't understand (and then get them to use these on you). For example:

Asking someone to repeat something	Checking that you understand
Sorry?	*So ...*
Sorry, what was that?	*So you mean …*
Sorry, could you say that again, please?	*So what you're saying is …*

Speaking:
Get the student to decide on the questions they want to discuss (from a list) or make their own questions using vocabulary learnt recently.

Writing:
Get the student to do some writing for homework, and then underline any important mistakes during the lesson, which the student should then correct (this teaches them to notice their own errors). I think it's also very useful to do short writing exercises in the lesson to encourage written fluency.

Language focus

Vocabulary:
There are many different techniques for recording and revising vocabulary that comes up in lessons. See Worksheet 2 on page 19 for an example.

Grammar:
The best way I've found to work on grammar in one-to-one lessons is simply to get your student to speak or write, and then draw their attention to their most frequent (and most inappropriate) mistakes, using a table like this:

What you said	What you should say
Your hairs are very nice!	*Your **hair is/looks** very nice!*

It is important for students to have a record of these corrections, to look at later. You could then choose this grammar area (in this case, uncountable nouns) to work on in the next lesson.

Pronunciation:
Record your student (eg giving a presentation or answering a question). Afterwards, play back the recording and get them to identify words and phrases which are not clear; then work on the pronunciation of these.

Learning strategies

One other aspect of learning I try to cover with one-to-one students is *learning strategies*: teaching them ways of studying so that they can continue to develop their English proficiency independently after they finish having lessons. The ideas of learner autonomy and self-directed learning have been well researched over the last 20 years, and are now often seen as central aspects of language learning. Although I am definitely in favour of such theories and like to encourage my students to be autonomous, it is also important to consider the student's native culture, which may not value independence and 'control' over learning in the same way that western culture does. Of course, in this case it is not a good idea to force a student to adopt new techniques which they are uncomfortable with, but to help them learn English as effectively as possible, taking into account their preferences, likes, dislikes, needs and wants. Here are a few strategies I have used successfully with one-to-one students:

- Use review worksheets to revise language which has been learnt recently. (Worksheet 2 on page 19 is an example.)
- Encourage the students to develop their own ways of recording and learning vocabulary outside of lessons, which suit their learning styles.
- Use self-evaluation checklists after any skills-based exercise.
- Encourage the students to edit their own writing (rather than correcting it yourself).

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Here, then, are five steps to help keep your lessons communicative, fun, enjoyable and as useful as possible:

1 Base your lessons closely on your student's needs, goals and interests.

2 Encourage your student to bring material to the lessons which is interesting and relevant to them (rather than something you have selected yourself).

3 Pick some strategies from those mentioned above to work on skills and language in different ways.

4 Aim to help your student develop strategies for learning English that will allow them to continue improving by themselves after your lessons finish.

5 Be flexible! This is the most important rule for making one-to-one lessons work well – be prepared to adapt to what your student brings along and wants to do that day. ETp



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Worksheet 1: Listening homework

For homework, listen to a news report from one of the following websites about a topic you are interested in.

1. BBC Learning English: a British website for people who are learning English
   www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/general/sixminute
2. ABC news: an Australian news website
   www.abc.net.au/news/#tab=video
3. CNN news: an American news website
   http://edition.cnn.com/video/

As you listen, take notes. You can listen as many times as you need to.
Afterwards, look up new vocabulary in a dictionary. Then complete the information and summary here:

Story topic: .....

New vocabulary:

Summary of story:

.....

.....

.....

.....

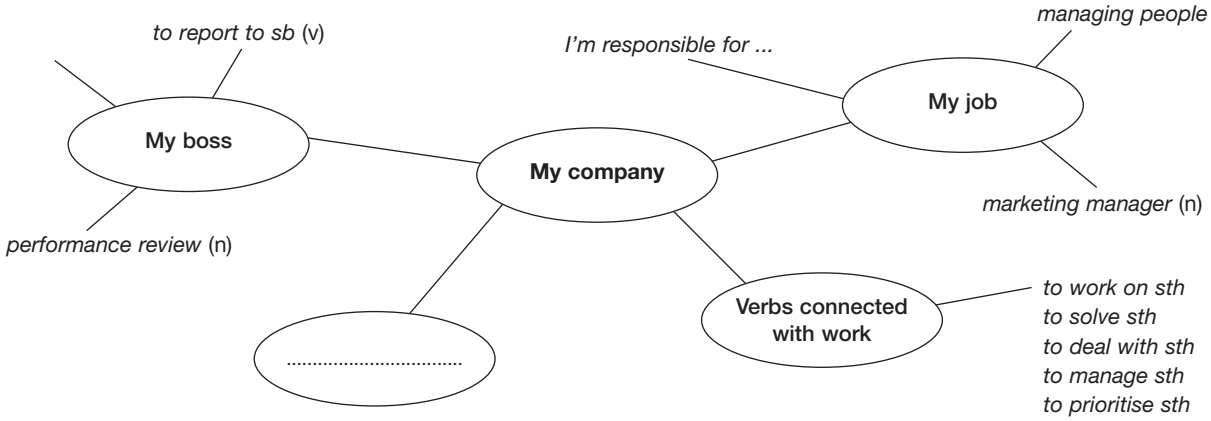
.....

Worksheet 2: Recording and revising vocabulary

1. **Write down five new words from today's lesson in the table. Then find their meanings (use a dictionary if you're not sure) and write an example sentence.**

Word (include word class and stress)	Meaning	Example
*pri**o**ritise* (v)	to put things in order according to how important they are	Every morning, I ***prioritise*** my tasks for the day ahead.

2. **Last lesson we talked about your company – look at the diagram and write down the words from last lesson in the different areas, adding new labels as you go.**



From research to reality 1

Magnus Coney starts a new series on putting theoretical insights to practical use.

Let's say I have a photo of a man and I have two groups of people, A and B. I show the photo to Group A and tell them the man's name is Baker. I show the photo to Group B and tell them that he is a baker. The next day, I ask Group A if they remember his name, and I ask Group B if they remember his job. Which group do you think is more successful at remembering?

Research

As teachers, you may have guessed from personal experience that Group B finds it much easier to remember the man's job than Group A finds it to remember his name. But why is this?

The *Baker/baker* paradox is based on various research findings (eg those by Cohen and by James, Fogler and Tauber), which showed that people remember names less well than other information such as jobs and hobbies. Although the findings are sound, the reasons behind the paradox are still open to debate. However, the generally accepted explanation is that everything in our memories is linked to something else, so when we are told someone is a baker we make a range of associations (big white hat, smell of bread, kneading dough). In contrast, we rarely have these ready-made associations for people's names, unless we know someone else with the same name.

We need to find out what the students already know, and help them 'hook' the new knowledge onto these existing links

This concept shows us one reason why personalising a lesson is so effective. We need to find out what the students already know, and help them 'hook' the new knowledge onto these existing links.

Reality

Grammar

One way of giving the students a reference point for a new grammar item is to highlight the equivalent structure in their own language (see lesson outline A on page 21 for an example). In a recent lesson, I gave my students a translation activity with some discussion questions to elicit the use of the present perfect for unfinished events in English and its equivalent in Italian. This allowed them to connect their existing knowledge of the form used in their own language with that used in English to express the same concept, and avoid the common error *'I live in Milan since three years'*.

Another common approach is to contrast the new area with another grammar item. The only caveat here is to make sure it is a grammar item they already know, rather than contrasting two or three *new* items with each other.

I would also suggest looking at forms sharing the same tense or aspect. In the aforementioned lesson, I contrasted the present perfect with the present simple (rather than the past simple), as the similarities are clearer – they are both present tenses, so they both have a connection to the present, a point which is often ignored when teaching this item. Similarly, when introducing the past perfect you would compare it to the present perfect and highlight how they are both looking back from a particular point (present perfect: before *now*; past perfect: before *then*).

Vocabulary

The traditional way for students to practise vocabulary is to keep word cards in a vocabulary envelope and regularly review the cards, which is known as *maintenance rehearsal*. To make it more effective, the students need to make associations with the new words, such as images or personal memories, and recall these during their practice sessions. This is known as *elaborative rehearsal*. The more associations a student can make, the stronger the memory trace will be.

Students could be encouraged to make and learn collocations of words they already know, such as *heavy rain* or *reach an agreement*. This is often a more useful vocabulary-building strategy than simply teaching progressively less common/useful words. You could also highlight the existence of collocations in the students' own language – many don't realise the concept exists, and may not believe its importance (*'But why can't I say "hard rain"? You understand me!'*).

Skills

Most of the sub-skills we teach in skills lessons (inferring meaning, asking for clarification, using background knowledge, skimming/scanning, etc) also exist in the students' L1. As with

collocation, it is useful to highlight this so the students can make the associations with English. This can be done by providing a task in L1 followed by a list of reflection questions. See lesson outline B for an example of introducing conversation skills by observing them in the students' L1.

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When it comes to planning your lesson, there is a wide range of options, so here is a brief list of things to consider:

- Is there a similar or equivalent concept in the students' L1 to compare this to?
- Is there anything in their L1 to contrast this with?
- Have we studied anything that could be linked to this?
- Could the students relate the new language to a recent news story?
- Could I relate to it to their interests?

I'll end with a one-sentence summary for any skimmers and scanners: *People remember new things better if they can connect them to something they already know.* ETp

Cohen, G 'Why is it difficult to put names to faces?' *British Journal of Psychology* 81 1990

James, L E, Fogler, K A and Tauber, S K 'Recognition memory measures yield disproportionate effects of aging on learning face–name associations' *Psychology & Aging* 23 2008

Useful links

www.cdl.org/resource-library/articles/memory_pt3.php

www.human-memory.net/processes_encoding.html

http://actr.psy.cmu.edu/papers/59/MemCog81.pdf

www.psychologytoday.com/blog/mental-mishaps/201002/large-mocha-without-name

www.spring.org.uk/2011/12/why-peoples-names-are-so-hard-to-remember.php

http://elinharding.wordpress.com/2012/02/05/why-are-names-so-hard-to-remember/



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Lesson outlines

A Introducing the present perfect

1 Ask the students to brainstorm what they know about you. Give them prompts, pictures, etc if necessary.

2 Prepare a text about yourself, similar to the one below. You could dictate it to the students, get them to do a dictogloss, a running dictation, or just give it to them and ask them to see what they were right about and what they didn't know.

I'm an English teacher at Phoenix School of English. I've lived here since 2007 and I love it. I've been a teacher for 15 years, and before that I was a musician. Outside work I like playing the piano and going to the theatre. I've studied Italian for a long time, but I'm not very good! I live near the town hall with my wife, Sarah. We've been married since 1998.

3 Get the students to translate the text into their L1 (optional). Ask them to compare the grammar being used in English with that used in their own language. For example, Italian learners will notice that they use the present simple with *da* where English uses the present perfect with *for/since*.

4 Elicit the meaning and form (in this order) of the present perfect. You could take example sentences from the text and give the students concept-check questions to discuss in pairs. For example: *Do I live here now? When did I start teaching English?*

5 Do a couple of practice activities for meaning and form. For meaning, I give the students pairs of sentence beginnings, one with the present perfect and one with the present simple, to match with possible endings. For example:

Barack Obama is …	*President of the USA since 2008.*
Barack Obama has been …	*President of the USA.*

Then get them to practise the form. Some kind of gap-fill or word reordering activity would work here, perhaps using more sentences about you (students are usually interested in finding out about their teacher).

6 Give them a list of personal questions, such as: *What do you do? Do you have a pet? Do you play a musical instrument?* Ask one of the students to interview you, using these questions. When you answer, make sure you include the present perfect. For example: *Yes, I've had my cat for six years.* Ask the students what they noticed about your answers.

7 Give them some time to prepare their own answers to the questions. Then they interview each other in pairs. (You could tell the interviewees they have to say yes to every *yes/no* question, and the interviewer has to guess which answers are true.)

8 The students make new pairs and tell their new partners what they have found out. For example: *Marco has played the guitar for three years.*

For homework, you could ask the students to translate their texts back into English (if you asked them to translate the original), or write a similar text about themselves.

B Conversation skills

1 Put your students into groups of three. Give a copy of the checklist below to one person in each group (the observer). Tell them to put a tick whenever one of their partners does something on the list.

2 Divide the class in half. Tell all the groups in one half to speak in English, and all the groups in the other half to speak in their own language. Give the two students in each group who are not observers a speaking task, such as talking about their weekend.

Conversation checklist:

- Ask a question.
- Give extra information when answering a question.
- Show interest/surprise (*Really? Wow!* etc).
- Make eye contact when you are speaking.
- Talk for a long time.
- Connect what you say to what your partner said (*A similar thing happened to me …*).
- Introduce a new topic (*A strange thing happened to me on Sunday …*).

3 Stop the activity and ask the observers to share their results with the other two members of the group.

4 Reorganise the class so they are in pairs, one from a group that spoke English and one from a group that spoke in their mother tongue. Ask them to compare and discuss their results.

5 Elicit the differences between their L1 and L2 conversations. Ask the students to choose one or two ideas from the checklist that they want to use more.

6 Repeat the original speaking activity in English in new groups of three, incorporating their chosen ideas. The observer records as before, then they change roles.

7 You could then go on to focusing on a specific area and teaching appropriate language, such as discourse markers or question forms.

Cooking up fun

Chris Roland stirs the ingredients of an engaging and motivating lesson.

I would like to suggest that the defining parameters of any primary English classroom activity are the interplay between three key dimensions: firstly, the micro-mechanics of our task design (see my article in ET*p* Issue 79); secondly, the language content or linguistic aims of the activity; and thirdly, the fun element as experienced by the learners. That's micro-mechanics, language and fun. These three translate respectively into concerns about a) how we are going to get an activity to work, b) what it is going to teach in terms of English, and c) why the learners will want to do it for the duration we have planned – or at all.

All three dimensions can be manipulated, but it's the last one that is often least talked about, perhaps because we don't see fun as something that can be analysed. We see enjoyment as spontaneous and unpredictable, and so we're often left guessing: *Will they like this? Won't they like it? How will it go down?*

In this article, I'd like to go briefly beyond the surface of activities to the underlying *what* and *why* of fun.

Are we having fun yet?

Having observed many children in many classes, I have come to the conclusion that fun is movement. Children need movement. I'm talking here about more than vigorously-led renditions of *'Head, shoulders, knees and toes'*. I'm talking about the movement of, to and from states and situations, abstraction, norms and expectations. Fun is change.

We are, above all else, I believe, creatures of contrast. We are fascinated by the contrasts that happen as we move from one thing to another. If you ask an adult why they enjoyed a certain experience, they'll tell you *'Because it was fun'*. If you keep pressing them with *'But why?'* for long enough, they'll tell you it was because it made a change, it was something different, something they don't usually do or get the chance to do. They'll be describing a *shift*.

So it's in terms of shifts that I've chosen to label the broad set of categories that has arisen as I've tried to identify the most salient opportunities for experiential movement in some of my regular class activities.

Object shift

Things out of their place are much more interesting than things in their place. Things that wouldn't otherwise be outstanding in their own setting can generate enormous interest within the walls of the class. This year, I've had my students form a human chain and pass round a bag of cat litter, repeating: 'It's a bag of sand, here you are'. The novelty of the item drives the functional language of giving and receiving. I do the same with a computer lead, a water melon and an egg.

Once a year, I'll walk about the city taking photos of streets and buildings and then project them in class. The children jump up to tell me where each place is or that their grandmother lives in the block of flats in the background of the picture. They don't get that excited when they walk down those actual streets. It's the shift at work. What's normally 'out there', is suddenly 'in here' with us.

I take internet images of the students' favourite characters such as the Monster High gang. Using *PowerPoint*, I add speech bubbles from their mouths with everyday questions I want my students to practise. They then take turns to 'talk to' the characters.

Just playing Disney Channel songs in class creates an enormous stir. This year the most popular film was *Lemonade Mouth*. If you want to know what is 'in' now, just ask your students.

Object shift works both ways, too. For this reason, your students get much more excited when they see you in the local supermarket than they do when they see you in the classroom.

Text shift

Writing in the activity book is fine, but the moment our students get the chance to transport text elsewhere, they're off! They delight in writing on the board. If an exercise can be done in the book, it can be done on the board. Why not harness their natural energy and let students come up in turn and copy the answers onto it – as well as doing the whole exercise in their books?

Combining object and text shift, I give each of my seven and eight year olds

a small potato and have them draw faces, hair and arms on it with a permanent marker. Then they use the marker pens to write a description of their potato on a plastic plate. Do they ever come to me saying: *'Teacher, I don't want to draw on a potato. I don't want to write on a plastic plate'?* No, they don't.



Spatial shift

In a class where ten children were sitting around two long tables pushed together, I said: *'These are the exercises – numbers 3, 4 and 5. If you want to, you can go under the tables to do them.'* Half of the students immediately disappeared. Children like small spaces. They like crawling under or through things. Sometimes I'll bring a box into class – a long one that's open at both ends – and invite them to crawl through it. As they do so, they have to pick up some instructions that I drop through a small hole and then perform the specified task when they're out.

I let one student sit in the teacher's place and the rest in chairs round the outside of the room. The one in my chair nominates a classmate, asks them a question from the board and then, if the reply is good, shouts *'Beep! Beep!'* and everyone moves to the seat on their left. This way, they all get to sit in the chair at the front and ask a question and to move around the class. We're playing with each child's journey through the lesson in terms of where they are and what they can see.

Rule shift

When we break a rule, we are taking an action and driving that action through an expectation that has been formalised, externalised and officially established.

You can't play football in class normally, but once a year we clear out the chairs, put someone in goal and let the others take penalties with a squashed-up tin foil ball to practise: *'She shoots'*, *'She scores!'*, *'She misses!'* *'Good save!'*. You can't normally throw things in class, but once a term, to recycle vocabulary, I project various images of vocabulary items onto the board and each image is given a numerical value. The students take turns to throw 'sticky slime' toys at the images, with their classmates recording which items were hit and their total scores. They get to break general rules, provided they do it in the way that I've outlined.



This might seem an odd place for me to mention songs, but most of what my own learners enjoy about songs seems to be the chance for expression that, outside of the song, might be received as strange by their peers. A class song might allow them to curl up in a ball as if they were a tiny caterpillar egg, to stalk around the class like an Apache hunting with a bow or to make monster noises at the end of each verse and thus break some customary but unspoken norms.

Incentive shift

I give my students a paper tissue and a piece of coloured chalk. I then tell them they're going to do a 'gentle dictation'. It's gentle because as they write down the ten words I dictate, they're not allowed to rip the tissue. Each time they do, they have to write the word again. The imposition of temporary pressures such as 'false' rules like these, time restrictions and rewards, I have labelled 'incentive shift'. *Competition* is the shift towards being 'better than they presently are' that children desire because, by winning, their status is elevated over that of their peers. *Recognition* is the same shift towards being better than they presently are, but through praise from somebody else.

Role shift

A shift in *roles* allows students to shake off their assigned place in the world's hierarchy. A student reading a line from a text then nominating the next reader from their classmates experiences a radical shift in the power dynamic. When they take ages deciding who to pick, it's worth remembering that this may be the biggest decision they've been asked to make all day.

Early finishers can become teachers. They get to move about the class and help their classmates, earning *helping points* as they do so. Some students never finish early. They can be given a special piece of information that they have to go round and teach to the others.

Cooking up fun

Reality shift

Here's a chance to superimpose a fiction over the reality of the class. Often it's playing a part in a suggested fiction – a roleplay. If that suggested fiction seems appealing, as might pretending to be shopkeepers and customers, then students will run with it. If they are given supplementary props and acting areas, then even better. This might be a corner of the class to construct their shops in and tables and chairs to make the counters – thus, through fiction, they create and control their own child spaces. It could be pretend money and flashcards to 'buy' and 'sell'. *Creativity* is a shift *from* the unreal, allowing our students to take elements from their own fictions and realise them not only in drama but also in their pictures, writing and spoken sentences.

Elemental shift

An *elemental shift* constitutes basic contrasts in the weather and our immediate surroundings. It is what makes a cool breeze so refreshing or a sunny morning so delightful. It is also smells and colours, moving clouds, leaves, shadows and people. When our students look as if they are desperate to get out of our class, it will normally be for want of this type of stimulation. If there's a garden or a playground in our school, we can actually take them out. If not, we can at least play with sensory elements. We can build large colourful wall displays. We can turn off the lights and do an activity in the dark or with torches. We can design activities that involve the students looking out of the window and describing what they see. For interior classrooms, we can take it to the level of the imaginary and ask them to complete the sentence *'From my perfect window I can see …'*.

Picture shift

This is movement towards being an observer. Pictures, photos and moving images on a screen allow students to assume the role of lookers, to be entertained. Images can be taken from the web to supplement any language item in a coursebook and create parallel picture dictionaries. The glow of the projector screen has an allure and a focusing energy all of its own – but let's remember that part of this allure is because of the relative lack of natural sensory input (we're inside not outside). Still images without audio have the advantage that they don't drown out the students' own voices and they also leave space for their imaginations, rather than reducing them to creative passivity by providing everything – movement, storyline and audio – which is the case with cartoons or movies.

Unexpected shift

In a way, this is an umbrella shift and mother to them all. Provided it is accompanied by the reassurance of a structured task, the unexpected will be welcomed by your students. We need our expectations to be constantly proven wrong. This is relief from the monotony of our own predictive capacities. According to the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, it's even the unexpected jar between different concepts (namely a generalisation and an exception to it) that makes us laugh when we hear a joke. In fact, Arthur himself would probably tell me I've done nothing more here than over-generalise his 'theory of the ludicrous' to include objects and rules. He was a clever man, but he didn't teach eight year olds.

Shift back

The assertion that fun can be tiring or that we don't really want too much of it may seem counter-intuitive, but all these shifts away from our default positioning *are* tiring. That's why students are often happy to settle down after an activity that's a little bit 'out there' and do something from the workbook. In a way, they're relieved to return to the stability of the familiar.

For us teachers, this works well and is a huge reason to plan fun intentionally into our lessons. It's the return to that default point that forms the majority of the work that 'we need to get covered'. Let's not forget, either, that many primary workbooks are now written in a way that means the children *do* enjoy doing them in their own right.

So we don't have to be planning earth-shatteringly new things every class. That there exists a reasonable possibility of something different happening will often be enough to tide our learners over till it actually does.

As I mentioned above, fun is only one of three very important dimensions to the class. What is intrinsic to an activity is the language tied to it. Perhaps the activity *is* the language. Equally essential are the nuts and bolts of the lesson, the micro-mechanics: where the input points will be, how we keep children on task and what chance there is to practise.

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The above shift parameters are ones that I regularly work along, sometimes consciously, sometimes intuitively, when creating activities that I think my students will enjoy. Obviously there are many more, and what I have described are only deductions based on observations from my own classes. If the idea of shift as an underlying element of fun appeals to you, I invite you to keep an eye out for when and where those contrasts and transitions animate students in your classes. Once we're noticing and recognising such transitions, then we can start to plan for them – and then we're in the right zone to cook up some serious fun. ETp

Schopenhauer, A *The World as Will and Representation, Volume II* Dover Press 1958



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Over the wall ...



Alan Maley reflects on what it means to be a reader.

'Reading is a majority skill but a minority art' – or so novelist Julian Barnes claims.

This is my second article to review books on reading, but it needs no apology, given the importance of reading, both as skill and as art. And interesting new books on reading continue to appear. Indeed, there are so many of them currently that, in order to do justice to them, I shall devote both this and my next article to this subject. I will also quote more extensively than usual, as the writers so often express themselves more eloquently than I ever could myself.



Stop What You're Doing and Read This!

This is a collection of ten essays, mostly by fiction writers and poets such as Jeanette Winterson and Blake Morrison, and some reading researchers like Maryanne Wolf and Nicholas Carr. It is an inspirational book where each writer describes and explains the importance reading has had for them in their personal and professional lives. As stated in the Foreword, the book *'argues unapologetically for the paramount importance of books and reading in a fast-moving, dislocated, technology-obsessed world'*.

For Zadie Smith, the discovery of reading was her escape route from a council estate into higher education and a career as a novelist. The poet Blake Morrison offers us *Twelve Thoughts About Reading*. He reminds us that *'When a poem or story is working, we don't just identify with the persona …we become them'*. He goes on to say that *'The therapeutic element in writing doesn't come from pouring things out … but in finding the right words, ordering the experience, and making the story available to others'*.

Carmen Callil, the founder of Virago Books, describes her exploration as a nine year old of her dead father's vast and eccentric library. *'Books of peculiarity and wonder sat on those shelves.'* She describes how she founded Virago to make available to others *'books that needed to be published, books forgotten or neglected … perfectly certain that there were thousands like me who would buy and read them'*.

Tim Parks, in *Mindful Reading*, makes a case for a more attentive kind of reading as against the rush to gobble up words. He refers to the pleasure of enchantment. *'It is a wonderful thing to let go of your own way of telling yourself the world and allow someone else to do it for you.'* But, *'the second pleasure is awareness, wakefulness: the capacity to see, feel and consciously register all that is going on around you and inside you ... What I'm talking about then is a pleasure that combines relaxation and effort, immersion and detachment, letting go and being vigilant – consciously savouring …'*. He has an eloquent conclusion which goes to the heart of reading: *'… the excitement of reading is the precarious one of being alive now … and reacting from moment to moment … to someone else's elusive construction of the precarious business of being alive now.'*

Looking at reading from a writer's perspective, Mark Haddon advises: *'Select the right words and put them in the right order and you run a cable into the hearts of strangers. Strangers in China, strangers not yet born.'* And of readers, he says: *'Reading is primarily a **symptom**. Of a healthy imagination, of our interest in this and other worlds, of our ability to be still and quiet, of our ability to dream during daylight.'*





In his essay, Michael Rosen re-visits *Great Expectations* as read aloud by his father. And Jane Davis, working for *The Reader Organisation*, gives an inspirational account of her community work in the *Get Into Reading* programme (see *http://thereader.org.uk/get-into-reading*). She makes a powerful case for the redemptive power of reading together among deprived and sometimes severely disturbed people.

My personal favourite is Jeannette Winterson's essay *A Bed. A Book. A Mountain*. This is a passionate, persuasive and eloquent statement of the need for books. *'A book is a door; on the other side is somewhere else ... To cross the threshold of a book is to make a journey in total time. I don't think of reading as leisure time, or wasted time and especially not as downtime.'* For her, too, books were an escape from a deprived childhood and she is adamant in her claim that *'… we need words not empty information. Not babble. Not data. We need a language capable of simple, beautiful expression yet containing complex thought that yields up our feelings instead of depriving us of them'*.

This is a book I shall want to return to. It warrants re-reading. If you only read one book this spring, make it this one!



Reading Like a Writer

In *Reading Like a Writer*, Francine Prose explains that she *'learned to write by writing and, by example, by reading books'*. This kind of writer education *'often involves a kind of osmosis'* rather than formal instruction, and requires us to *'put every word on trial for its life'*. So this book is an extended exercise in close reading, which assists us both in becoming more practised readers and, if we aspire to it, in developing as better writers, too.

Her method is to focus on a particular aspect of the writer's craft in each chapter, and to offer perceptive commentary on the extended texts she has chosen. The chapters offer a steady progression from *Close Reading*, through *Words*, *Sentences*, *Paragraphs*, *Narration*, *Character*, *Dialogue*, *Details*, *Gesture*, and she rounds off with a lovely chapter, *Learning from Chekhov*, and an inspiring chapter to encourage the faint-hearted, *Reading for Courage*.

Her choice of texts is wide-ranging and includes both classic authors, from Jane Austen, George Eliot, Chekhov, Melville, von Kleist and Flaubert, through modernist writers such as Joyce, Hemingway, Beckett, Katherine Mansfield, Henry James, Kafka, Elizabeth Bowen, Henry Green and Virginia Woolf, to contemporary writers such as Alice Munro and Philip Roth. The texts are so skilfully chosen and her commentary so illuminating that I found myself wanting to go back and re-read these works again (or in some cases, as new discoveries, to read them for the first time).



I can only offer a flavour of the book by a few quotes. From *Sentences*: *'… I'll hear writers say that there are other writers they would read if for no other reason than to marvel at the skill with which they can put together sentences that move us to read closely, to disassemble them and reassemble them, much in the way a mechanic might learn about an engine by taking it apart.'* Or *Dialogue*: *'… dialogue usually contains as much or even more subtext than it does text.'* Her discussion of dialogue in Jane Austen and Henry Green really helps us get inside those texts.

She takes an appropriately independent view of style guides and rules for writers: *'If the culture sets up a series of rules that the writer is instructed to observe, reading will show you how these rules have been ignored in the past, and the happy outcome. So … literature not only breaks rules, but makes us realise that there are none.'*

Whether you are a reader, a teacher or an aspiring writer, this book will reward your reading of it. It is absolutely superb, and made me wish I had had the author as my teacher.



A Reader on Reading

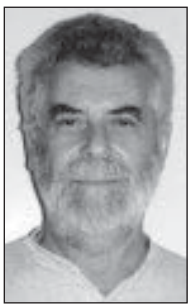
I found this book by Alberto Manguel slightly disappointing. For one thing, the title is misleading. It is made up of articles and essays, some of them published previously. Many of them are not really about reading except in the most tenuous sense. The style and content is more than a little recherché and precious, sometimes narcissistically self-absorbed as he displays his undoubted erudition. Nonetheless, there are some rewarding chapters, including *In Praise of Words*, *A Brief History of the Page* and *How Pinocchio Learned to Read*. *Reading White for Black* deals with translation issues, and *St Augustine's Computer* with the tension between books and the internet, as does the final chapter, *The End of Reading*. One of the most powerful chapters is *The Perseverance of Truth*, about the need to resist political pressure on writers to conform and validate lies. He is similarly critical of authority in other chapters, too. I will close with a quote from one of them. *' "Be sensible and good," the Blue Fairy tells Pinocchio in the end, "and you'll be happy." Many a political slogan can be reduced to this inane piece of advice. To step outside that constricted vocabulary of what society considers "sensible and good" into a vaster, richer and above all more ambiguous one is terrifying, because this other realm of words has no boundaries and is equivalent to thought, emotion, intuition.'* ETp

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

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The merit of the message

George Woolard

advocates moving on from a key word approach.

Why do second language learners often achieve native-speaker-like fluency but not native-speaker-like vocabulary selection? The sentence *I must make sure I* ***catch*** *the opportunity to speak English when I'm in Scotland* came from a Chinese teacher who had just arrived in the UK, and is an example of 'possible' language. The sentence is grammatically well-formed and communicates effectively, but it sounds odd to native-speaker ears. Native English speakers say *take the opportunity*, not *catch the opportunity*. How, then, do we lead learners towards native-speaker selection and actual language? The Lexical Approach advocated by Michael Lewis argues that we can achieve this by adding a focus on word relations, such as collocation, to our teaching.

A key word approach

In Issue 40 of ET*p*, I set out the argument for a key word approach to teaching collocation in which the typical collocations of the most frequently occurring nouns in English are presented through a series of standard exercise formats. Below are two excerpts from exercises designed to highlight some of the common verb and adjective collocations of the noun *problem*.

1 Verb + *problem*

Complete the sentences using the correct form of these verbs.

appreciate *have* *ignore* *solve* *tackle* *wrestle with*

1 We've been _____ a few problems with our dishwasher recently.

2 No one has _____ the problem of what to do with nuclear waste.

3 We can't afford to ignore the problem of global warming. We need to _____ it head on.

4 I fully _____ your problem, but we simply don't have the resources to help you.

2 Common adjective collocations

Choose the more natural collocation from each pair.

1 Excessive drinking seems to be a _____ problem among teenagers in particular. (*growing/rising*)

2 There are a number of reasons why Ben was turned down for the job, but the _____ problem was that he didn't have the right experience. (*simple/basic*)

3 One of the most _____ problems facing cities today is noise pollution. (*pressing/important*)

4 Underage smoking is a very _____ problem, which we need to address urgently. (*serious/large*)

The merit of the message

Shortcomings

Although the key word approach is successful in helping students to increase their knowledge of common collocations in English, in practice the approach has a number of drawbacks. First, the gap-filling format of the exercises directs attention to general word relations: eg verb + noun (*face* + *problem*) and adjective + noun (*pressing* + *problem*). However, this kind of knowledge does not automatically guarantee that the learner will generate actual language. One of my students produced the sentence *I face pressing problems with my ears*, which sounds distinctly odd, as we do not normally use *face* and *pressing* to describe personal problems. By providing only one example of use, the key word exercises give no idea of other possible contexts of use. Furthermore, simply knowing that *problem* collocates with the verb *face* and the adjective *pressing* will not guarantee that the learner will combine them to produce sentences such as *One of the most pressing problems facing the world today is global warming*.

The level of abstraction that the key word gap-filling exercise format encourages means that learners tend to pay insufficient attention to grammar in the example sentences being used to highlight collocations. One cannot assume, as I did, that they will automatically notice the *grammar*. Another of my students produced the sentence *I have problems in my car recently*, having failed to notice from the worksheet example that the present perfect continuous tense was needed, and that *problem* is followed by *with* and not *in*. Appropriate tense, word order and prepositions are equally important in helping the learner to produce actual language, and these features are likely to go unnoticed unless attention is explicitly directed to them.

The key word approach was designed to balance the negative outcomes of giving too much prominence to grammar, but it seems to create its own problems by giving too high a priority to the word. What is needed is an approach which highlights both collocation and grammar at the same time.

A message approach

Michael Hoey suggests that we work towards an understanding of grammar rules and word meaning through increasing encounters with specific instances of language. The fact that native speakers generally find it easier to give examples of the *use* of a word than to give a *definition* of it would seem to support this view. It also explains the difficulty native speakers sometimes have in producing a natural example of use when faced with a *totally new* word in their own language. For example, try writing a sentence with *abashed*, which is defined in the dictionary as 'embarrassed or ashamed about something you did'. How confident do you feel about what you've written? The fact is that a definition of a word is an abstraction or generalisation from specific instances of use of that word and, if we have had no experience of these, we will feel a little uncomfortable with what we produce. We are in the shoes of the second language learner, unsure of a word's collocations, grammatical environment and contexts of use.

It seems to me, then, that there may be some practical advantage in exploring the idea that second language learning follows the direction of learning outlined by Hoey. This is like asking you to reverse the way you use a dictionary or a grammar reference book. Normally, we go to a dictionary to find out the meaning of a word or to a grammar reference book for a description of a grammar pattern, and then we note how it is exemplified through an example of use. What I am suggesting is that we reverse this approach and make the example of use the primary input to learning.

We are in some sense still following a lexical approach as input to learning is driven by meaning, but the unit of meaning now in focus is something larger than that associated with the word, with what we would intuitively call a *message*. Put simply, the word *salt* has meaning but *Could you pass me the salt?* is a message. Our way forward, then, is to move the focus from a word to a message.

1 Framing the message

Applying these considerations to the key word exercises, we begin with a focus on a specific example of use. The following example from the collocations exercises proved popular with my students:

One of the most pressing problems facing cities today is noise pollution.

The next step is to get the learner to notice how grammar and vocabulary work together to create a framework for conveying a specific meaning or message. In this case, we have:

One of the most pressing problems facing ... is ... .

This structure now becomes the main focus, and I shall refer to it as a *message frame*. It is more specific than the general linking of the words *face*, *pressing* and *problem* that the key word format encourages. The learner can now see clearly the grammar pattern that binds these collocations together to create a platform for conveying a specific meaning or message. This combined focus on grammar and vocabulary contrasts with the 'slot and filler' frames that outline general grammar patterns of the sort *I've ... but I haven't ... yet*, which lack a specific focus on particular content words.

2 Chunking the message

Once we have identified a message frame, it is then modified to present other likely messages to the learners. For example:

One of the most pressing problems facing the world today is global warming.

One of the most pressing problems facing big cities today is the lack of affordable housing.

One of the most pressing problems facing our economy today is rising inflation.

This allows the teacher to give the learners further examples of actual language.

3 Personalising the message

The next stage is to encourage the learners to explore and personalise the message frame to produce their own messages. One of my students chunked the message in the following way:

One of the most pressing problems facing Poland today is high unemployment among young people.

This gives the learners an opportunity to say what they want to say, and to find out from a teacher or other

informed source if their examples are acceptable or not. In addition, it should lead to more effective learning as we are more likely to retain and practise what we want or need to say.

An exercise framework

To facilitate a message approach, we provide exercise frames of the following kind to guide learning. The three steps, Framing, Chunking and Personalising the message, can be renamed for transparency of meaning: YOU CAN SAY, YOU CAN ALSO SAY and CAN I SAY?

MESSAGE A

1 YOU CAN SAY:

One of the most pressing problems facing my country today is traffic congestion.

2 YOU CAN ALSO SAY:

One of the most pressing problems facing my country today is _____ .

air pollution from heavy industry
the rising crime rate
the lack of affordable housing
overcrowding in big cities
high inflation unemployment

3 CAN I SAY?

Think of other things you might want to say using this message frame:

One of the most pressing problems facing my country today is _____ .
One of the most pressing problems facing the world today is _____ .
The most pressing problem facing _____ today is _____ .

MESSAGE B

1 YOU CAN SAY:

I've been having problems with my central heating recently.

2 YOU CAN ALSO SAY:

We talk about having problems with devices, people, our health and in particular places.

I've been having problems _____ recently.

with my car with my neighbours
with my ears with my health
at school with my boss
at work with my washing machine

3 CAN I SAY?

Think of other things you might want to say using this message frame:

I've been having problems _____ recently.
_____ been having problems _____ recently.

In the second message frame (B) the student is not only learning that the present perfect continuous tense is used to describe an event which started in the past and is still happening or related to the present, but that it is also a structure commonly used with the word *problem*.

Integrated input

The message focus framework proposed here means that we no longer present the learners with practice exercises consisting of unrelated sentences organised around a specific vocabulary area or word:

*I've been having **problems** with my car recently.*

*Excessive drinking is a growing **problem** among teenagers.*

*Nobody has solved the **problem** of what to do with nuclear waste.*

*The full extent of the **problem** became clear later.*

or a general grammar pattern such as cleft sentences:

*The thing I like best about Scotland **is** the food.*

*The easiest way to get to London **is** by plane.*

*The most popular sports played in the UK **are** football and tennis.*

*One of the most pressing problems facing the world today **is** overpopulation.*

Instead, all language practice exercises are message-based. The focus is on holding specific elements of grammar and vocabulary steady while making small changes to the message communicated:

***One of the most pressing problems facing** the world **today is** global warming.*

***One of the most pressing problems facing** big cities **today is** the lack of affordable housing.*

***The most pressing problem facing** our economy **today is** rising inflation.*

This framework ensures that the learning and practice of grammar and vocabulary is always integrated. A grammar lesson is always a vocabulary lesson, and a vocabulary lesson is always a grammar lesson!

In summary, the main advantage of beginning with a focus on a message and not with a general grammar pattern or a particular word is that the approach is more likely to lead to native-speaker-like language because:

- there is explicit focus on both collocation and grammar;
- we are able to present a range of similar messages by chunking the message frame to show what other messages native speakers are likely to produce;
- the learners have the opportunity to explore and personalise the message frame, which helps them to say what they want to say, and also to find out what it is not possible to say.

★ ★ ★

Scott Thornbury questioned the usefulness of the Lexical Approach *'because practising teachers will have little interest in a set of principles that have few or no clear implications for classroom practice, or that can only with difficulty be operationalised'*. As it will be *you*, the practising teacher, who will decide if there is any merit in a message approach, why not try it for yourself? First, select any reading text or listening transcript from your current coursebook and find some useful language in the text that has not already been exploited by the comprehension, grammar and vocabulary exercises that accompany the text. Then, follow the three-step framework outlined above to create some message-based exercises. In my experience, the reading and listening texts in coursebooks are heavily underexploited for their language learning potential. ETp

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George Woolard has taught in Greece, Malaysia and the UK. He is the author of *Lessons with Laughter*, *Grammar with Laughter* and the *Key Words for Fluency* collocation practice books, all published by Heinle ELT.

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Academic skills

Tim Strike and **Magda Tebbutt** highlight essential needs and ways of mastering them.

English is undoubtedly the most dominant global language. Its *lingua franca* status is clearly indicated by the large number of international students visiting English-speaking countries in order to study the language and to gain university qualifications. According to government statistics, Australia, for example, granted 191,619 student visas in the programme year ending March 2012. A large proportion of these international students come to Australia to study on degree programmes. However, although there are a number of general English coursebooks, there are few good EAP coursebooks and, in our experience, most centres are forced to create their own programmes and materials to teach academic skills.

This article suggests different ways in which teachers can facilitate their students' preparation for future study at university. It also proposes the teaching of several essential academic skills of which students often have little prior knowledge. These include the avoidance of plagiarism – proper referencing techniques and the importance of summarising, paraphrasing and citing other sources when writing – competent note-taking skills, essay structuring and, finally, giving effective oral presentations. How many of us have read a student essay that is either completely illiterate or is entirely 'cut and paste' from a website and thought to ourselves: *How can I remedy the situation?*

Referencing skills

The most practical way to prevent your students from committing blatant plagiarism is to teach them when and how to reference properly.

In the era of advanced technology and with a wide variety of resources and sources available on the internet, it is challenging for us teachers to control and discourage students from incorrectly using materials that are available there. Partly because it is a lifetime habit and partly because they are ignorant of the referencing rules, students copy large chunks from existing materials or sources and claim them as their own. As difficult as it is to do so, this habit needs to be discouraged and good habits need to be instilled in its place in the students' study patterns. This can be done in a variety of ways, depending on a teacher's teaching style and the class they teach. Here are some suggestions:

1. Access the website of a university of your choice and find that university's referencing guide (eg, *www.csu.edu.au/division/studserv/my-studies/learning/guides/referencing*). Although styles do differ from one institution to another, this will give a good example of how to cite the most common sources correctly. Use this guide to create a handout which is tailored to the specific needs of your students and will ensure that they fully comprehend referencing rules. It is crucial to make the students aware of the existence of these websites and to teach them how to use them effectively.

2. Another way of introducing set rules on how to reference properly and avoid plagiarism is to do it through a 'running dictation' activity. The students work in pairs, one the runner and the other the writer. The runner in each pair comes to the front of the class and has to memorise sentences from a text giving information on what constitutes plagiarism and then has to return and dictate them to the writer. Halfway through, they swap roles.

3. Any practical exposure to correct referencing and, therefore, avoiding plagiarism is very useful. Allowing the students to work with authentic sources such as newspaper articles, online journals and books which include proper referencing will raise their awareness of how it is possible to think for yourself but, at the same time, use other sources. To practise referencing skills, it is a good idea to get the students to write essays using these authentic sources in class time and under supervision.

More information on how to tackle plagiarism can be found at *www.plagiarism.org*.

Dealing with sources

Introducing the skills of summarising, paraphrasing and directly quoting other sources is vital for students who intend to go on to study at university. Working with authentic material, doing online research and brainstorming possible ideas for essays is a good way to show the students that there are ways to use authentic sources without copying and pasting from them. Exercises practising these skills might include:

- Getting the students to compare examples of articles that have been paraphrased wrongly and then in a correct way. A great website showing examples of both is *http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA_paraphrase.html.*
- Bringing a variety of authentic texts to class, demonstrating how to paraphrase them properly and then getting the students to paraphrase a sample text and do a peer review.

Structuring essays

In our experience, many students start writing essays immediately they are given the title, without unpacking the topic and thinking about it carefully. Teachers should make students aware of the need to plan and draft their essays.

It is important to train students to think for themselves. This can be done by showing them how to brainstorm, produce mindmaps, create flow charts, and so on. Initial practice should be done on familiar topics in order for the students to focus on the process of planning and thinking for themselves. Students need to be shown how to use

wh- questions to generate ideas, how to identify key subtopics and how to develop a proper plan by devoting some time to thinking about the topic of their essay. In this way, they will gain confidence and realise that they are capable of mapping out a topic for themselves, instead of turning automatically to the internet or to other students' essays for ideas.

The key to writing a good essay is structure, even if it is as simple as introduction–body–conclusion. Simple and short writing exercises will make students aware of the significance of topic sentences within paragraphs and of paragraph structure as a whole. The introduction of general statements and thesis statements will help them organise their essays, once the initial planning is done. Alice Oshima and Ann Hogue's book *Writing Academic English* is a great source of activities and ideas on how to write paragraphs and essays, and it

EAP teachers need to teach their students to use a logical structure for their notes in order to make them more effective

stresses the need for coherence and cohesion in paragraphs. Like any other skill, writing an essay is a process which develops in stages. Revision and proofreading are important stages that are forgotten and overlooked by most students. Teachers should provide their students with proofreading handouts with checklists to ensure that all the elements of the essay have been considered and checked.

More information on how to teach essay writing skills can be found at *http://elearning.insearch.edu.au/skills/Writing.asp*.

Note taking

Many international students don't follow any particular formula for note taking and, as a result, their notes are random and ineffective. EAP teachers need to teach their students to use a logical structure for their notes in order to make them more effective. Here, we will distinguish between two different kinds of note taking: note taking from lectures and note taking during preparatory reading and research for assignments.

Lectures

It is crucial that students attending lectures given by a native speaker have a range of strategies which will enable them to follow what is said and sift out the information they need to make notes on. If students have some understanding and appreciation of the way in which lecturers structure their talks, they are more likely to be able to extract and make notes on the most important information. Teachers should make sure their students pay careful attention to the lecturer's introduction and conclusion and to the way the lecture is divided into different sections. Listening for signpost words (*first*, *then*, *next*, *however*, etc) will help students understand the pattern of the lecture.

Other important elements which can assist a student's understanding of a lecture include an awareness of the meaning of body language and the ability to recognise phonological cues, such as volume, speed and repetition. Teachers need to draw these to the attention of their international students.

One worthwhile thing that EAP teachers can do to prepare their students for university life is to provide a lot of practice in listening to and taking notes on lectures and encouraging them actually to attend authentic lectures (if available). Where materials to do this are not available in their coursebooks, teachers need to be prepared to do some research themselves in order to find supplementary materials. David Beglar and Neil Murray's book *Contemporary Topics* is a good example of a resource which shows students how to follow a lecture and provides practice.

Reading and research

When taking notes while they are reading and doing research for assignments, students will find it more productive to follow set patterns, such as identifying key topics and subtopics and arranging their notes under different headings, highlighting main ideas, etc. Other skills that need to be introduced include learning how to be selective and systematic and making sure that they understand the overall purpose of a text. Of course, they also need reminding that they will have to use proper referencing techniques when they turn their notes into writing, so the information they will need for this will have to be compiled whilst the research is being done and should form part of their notes.

Make the students aware that the structure of a presentation is no different from that of any other written work that they produce

Making presentations

Another fundamental skill that needs to be taught before students enter mainstream tertiary education is the skill of delivering oral presentations. Teachers need to make sure that their students know how to design a presentation using *PowerPoint* or other presentation software, and understand the structure of a presentation and the use of key transitional phrases.

Presentation design

The necessary information can be introduced in the form of a list of 'golden rules', including consistency in font size and type, not overcrowding the slides with too many pictures, making sure any images match the message of the presentation, etc. (These guidelines can be found on many websites.) The 6x6x6 rule – no more than six words per line; no more than six lines per slide and no more than six lines without a visual – is also common and should be taken as a guide to discourage students from putting too much information on slides, rather than taken literally. It is important to emphasise that the *PowerPoint* display is not itself the presentation: it should be used to *support* the presentation.

Presentation structure

It is a good idea to make the students aware that the structure of a presentation

Academic skills

is no different from that of any other written work that they produce in their academic life. Point out that the introduction–body–conclusion pattern is still important. Following this structure will help the students establish a logical progress of thought and structure in their presentations.

As well as teaching the basic introduction–body–conclusion pattern, it may be worth pointing out, too, some more unconventional ways of opening a presentation in order to create interest in the topic. These may include:

- using a picture or an image;
- using an amazing fact that shocks or surprises;
- using a personal story or a case study.

The body of the presentation needs to be designed in order to reflect the key points. A logical structure that subdivides topics into sections is a good idea, and students should be taught how to select relevant information to support their ideas and opinions. Again, they need to be reminded that proper referencing is just as important in an oral presentation.

The students need to be taught to check and make sure that their conclusion summarises the main points and reinforces their main argument.

Key transitional phrases

Students sometimes lack the skills to develop their ideas or to arrange the flow of their thoughts in a logical and comprehensible way. Teaching them some common transitional words may help. A list of useful signposts, such as *firstly*, *then*, *next*, *last but not least*, etc is a good start and can be used in conjunction with a list of linking words. It is advisable to practise the use of these in the context of short presentations on basic familiar topics. As always, the more practice the students get, the better. Not only will this help them gain confidence in presenting, but it will also enhance their general fluency in English. Giving a presentation in front of an audience can be a daunting prospect, so incorporating giving presentations into as many tasks as possible (eg after writing a report or essay) can help the students gain confidence.

Other things worth mentioning to the students are the common dos and don'ts of giving an oral presentation, such as awareness of body language, maintaining eye contact with the audience and controlling intonation and speed.

There is more information on how to teach oral presentation skills at *www2.elc.polyu.edu.hk/CILL/tools/presplan.htm.*

★ ★ ★

Academic skills such as essay writing, note taking, avoiding plagiarism, summarising and giving oral presentations sometimes tend to be overlooked in favour of the macro skills of listening, reading, writing and speaking – even on specific EAP courses. However, it is preparation for an academic life involving writing essays, reading and analysing texts critically, attending lectures and making presentations that our students expect us to provide, and we need to teach them these skills in order to give them any chance of success in the academic world. The purpose of this article is to offer alternatives to existing curricula and highlight the essential academic skills that need to be taught. ETp

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ENGLISH TEACHING *professional*

This is *your* magazine. We want to hear from you!

IT WORKS IN PRACTICE

Do you have ideas you'd like to share with colleagues around the world? Tips, techniques and activities; simple or sophisticated; well-tried or innovative; something that has worked well for you? All published contributions receive a prize! Write to us or email:

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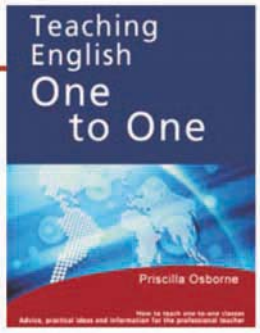
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New Titles for English Language Teachers

Teaching English One to One by Priscilla Osborne

This new book provides an analysis of the problems of teaching students on a one-to-one basis. The book covers a wide range of topics in this field and explains learner needs analysis and learner profiles, especially the student's current use of English and the reason for taking a one-to-one course; course planning; techniques which are specific to one-to-one teaching; techniques which don't work with one-to-one teaching; and using the learner as the resource for teaching.

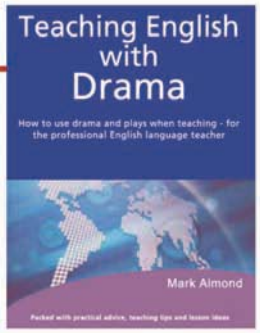
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Teaching English with Drama by Mark Almond

This new book covers the exciting sector of teaching English language students using drama, plays and with theatre techniques. The book covers a wide range of subjects for teachers including how to plan class work, choosing appropriate texts, working with students with theatrical techniques, modifying dialogue and lines for different levels of student, stage management, and how these all work together to improve language appreciationand learning; using classic plays, suggested characters; resources beyond the textbook; using stories, songs, games, etc.

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IT WORKS IN PRACTICE



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

All the contributions to It Works in Practice in this issue of ET*p* come from participants on a teacher training course in Ethiopia and were coordinated by Sandy Willcox. The contributors will each receive a copy of *Teaching English Grammar* by Jim Scrivener, published by Macmillan. Macmillan have kindly agreed to be sponsors of It Works in Practice for this year.



The contributors: Sandy Willcox, Teferi Bora, Eyasu Endashaw, Adinaw Abuye and Caitlin Miles pictured amongst other participants on a teacher training course in Ethiopia



Flashing flashcards

The aim of this activity is to learn or review nouns and verbs. You will need two sets of identical flashcards for the two teams, with words on one side and definitions of those words on the other, and a set of pictures which represent the words on the students' flashcards for yourself.

- Divide the class into two teams. Give each member of each team one flashcard with a word on one side and the definition of the word on the other. Both teams get the same set of flashcards. Allow the students a few minutes to read the words and their definitions.
- Hold up a picture of a word. The member of each team with the matching flashcard must stand up and call out the word. The one who is quickest to stand up with the correct flashcard wins a point for their team. The winner must then read the definition out loud to the class, then put down the flashcard and write the word (with correct spelling) on the board, from memory.

The competitive element of this activity engages the students. Furthermore, the game includes reading, speaking, writing and listening – the full spectrum of language skills.

This game can easily be scaled up, with students receiving more than one flashcard each.

Swat a word

This activity is useful for teaching verbs and nouns. You will need approximately ten pictures of words you want the students to learn.

- Hold the pictures up one at a time, saying the word and then sticking the picture on the board or wall (or ask a student to do this).
- Divide the class into two or more teams and give each team a fly swatter. The team members take turns to hold the fly swatter.
- Call out a word. The person with the swatter finds the corresponding picture, runs up and swats it. The first student to swat the correct picture wins a point for their team.
- To play this game using more advanced vocabulary, have the students find suitable synonyms for common words from the academic word list. Write words from the list on cards placed around the room. The teacher or a student 'caller' calls out a word from the synonym list. The teams search for the word on the wall, run up and swat it. Team members may consult each other, and this generates discussion about word meanings.

Matching words and definitions

You will need two identical sets of flashcards, each with a word written on one side and a definition and example sentence on the other.

- Divide the class into two teams, A and B, and give each team a set of flashcards. Allow the students time to study their words and definitions.
- Team A then place their cards in front of them with the *definitions* face up. Team B place their cards in front of them with the *words* face up.
- A student from Team A reads out a definition – the person in Team B who has the matching word says it (and also possibly writes it correctly on the board from memory).
- A student from Team B then reads a word and the student in Team A with the definition reads the definition and the example sentence.

This activity is even better if the students make the flashcards themselves. It can be used with basic vocabulary, but works well with more advanced vocabulary (eg words on the academic word list) which cannot be communicated by means of a picture.

Past tense folding game

This activity teaches irregular past tense sentences, using a childhood game consisting of creating a fun story through folding and passing round a piece of paper.

- First, review the rules for regular and irregular past simple verbs.
- Give each student a piece of paper with a section folded over at the top. Tell them not to unfold this section – unbeknown to them, each piece of paper has the name of a student hidden underneath the folded part. The students are then prompted to write a sentence using *went*: *He/She went to* ... and are encouraged to complete it creatively with the name of a place, such as the moon or the garden. They each write their sentence below the folded part, and then refold the paper to cover their sentence. They then pass their paper to the person on their left.
- In the next round, the students are prompted to write what the person *wore* (eg a running suit or a wig), and then they fold their paper again and pass it to the left. The next sentence says what the person *took*. The students complete their sentence, fold and pass their paper.
- In the final round, they write what the person *did* there, and then pass their paper to the left.
- Each student then unfolds the story they have received and reads it to the class, using the person's name (from the top of the piece of paper) and the appropriate pronoun.

This activity results in highly amusing stories. Additionally, it ensures that the students practise writing correct sentences in the past tense. They also read aloud in English, which enables the teacher to make corrections to the sentence structure or pronunciation.

IT WORKS IN PRACTICE

Do you have an idea which you would like to contribute to our *It Works in Practice* section? It might be anything from an activity which you use in class to a teaching technique that has worked for you. Send us your contribution, by post or by email, to *helena.gomm@pavpub.com*.

All the contributors to *It Works in Practice* get a prize! We especially welcome joint entries from teachers working at the same institution. Why not get together with your colleagues to provide a whole *It Works in Practice* section of your ideas? We will publish a photo of you all.

LANGUAGE LOG

Stranded prepositions

John Potts charts the intricacies and idiosyncrasies, the contradictions and complications that make the English language so fascinating for teachers and teaching. In this issue, he suggests that the position of prepositions isn't something about which to get overexcited.

In 1672, the English poet, playwright and critic John Dryden published his essay 'Defence of the Epilogue', in which he criticised the line from Ben Jonson's *Catiline* (1611): *'The bodies that those souls were frighted from'* with the comment: *'The Preposition in the end of the sentence; a common fault with him, and which I have but lately observ'd in my own writings.'*

It seems that since then, John Dryden's observation on what he considered to be poor literary style has become an entrenched 'rule' of English grammar, despite being no such thing or, at most, a question of 'elegant' and 'inelegant' syntax. Note, too, that Dryden was criticising its use in a literary text (on a very classical subject, the Catiline conspiracy in ancient Rome). Incidentally, Dryden also criticised Shakespeare's style for the same reason.

Winston Churchill is supposed to have given his own verdict on this 'rule' when some Cabinet papers were returned with a final preposition 'corrected' by one of his civil servants. He is said to have written in the margin: *'This is nonsense up with which I will not put.'* Unfortunately, this now appears to be an apocryphal story, one of the many witticisms attributed to Churchill but most likely not actually made by him.

No matter, the principle remains: there's nothing inherently *ungrammatical* about ending sentences with prepositions. We may, of course, object on grounds of *style* and/or elegance of *syntax*.

To avoid the problem (if indeed it is one), we can re-express a sentence in order to avoid a final preposition by using 'equivalent' verbs, or through active/passive transformations (although there will inevitably be greater or lesser differences of meaning, force, connotation, etc):

What were you afraid of? ➧ *What frightened/worried you?*

The discrepancy was looked into. ➧ *The discrepancy was investigated.*

My flat was broken into. ➧ *Someone broke into my flat.*

My flat was broken into. ➧ *My flat was burgled.*

However, sometimes this will sound very clumsy, make the style far too formal for the speaker's/writer's purpose, or appear merely pedantic:

What are you thinking about? ➧ *What are you contemplating?*

What are you thinking about? ➧ *About what are you thinking?*

The issue is complicated by phrasal verbs, where the verb is complemented by adverbial particles such as *up*, *into*, *down*, etc (which resemble prepositions in form, and are often mistaken for prepositions). In the case of phrasal verbs, reordering the words to avoid a final 'preposition' (strictly, a final particle) is impossible:

If you don't know a word, look it up.
When you meet a new word, write it down.

All one could do in such cases would be to avoid the phrasal verb entirely:

If you don't know a word, refer to a dictionary.
When you meet a new word, make a note of it.

Some phrasal verbs comprise both a particle and a preposition, eg *look forward to*, *look up to*, *look down on*, so even if we avoid the final preposition, the particle still remains:

That's something I'm looking forward to. ➧ *That's something to which I'm looking forward.*

That's the man she's going out with. ➧ *That's the man with whom she's going out.*

Or as Churchill might (apocryphally) have said: *That's something forward to which I'm looking* and *That's the man out with whom she's going.*

While preparing this article, I did some internet research, and found two excellent scholarly articles online, both written by Dr Nuria Yáñez-Bouza of the University of Manchester in the UK. Here are the links, if you are interested in knowing much, much more about how the 'rule' developed after Dryden:

- *www.let.leidenuniv.nl/hsl_shl/preposition%20stranding.htm*
- *www.llc.manchester.ac.uk/research/new-research/lel/nuriayanez-bouza/Fileuploadmax10Mb,127649,en.pdf*

Here is a brief extract from the introduction to the first article above:

*'(1a) Who are you talking **to**?*
*(1b) I was shouted **at** for being late at work.*
The construction illustrated in (1) above is generally known as preposition stranding, which Denison ... defined as the syntactic phenomenon whereby a preposition is left in a deferred, ie stranded, position at or near the end of a clause without any immediately following object. It must be noted at this point that there is a close link between the occurrence of stranded prepositions and informal discourse situations, since style has been one of the primary reasons for grammarians to criticise the phenomenon in question: preposition stranding has always been used more frequently in informal style and spoken language; it is "one of the outstanding features of our language" and "is so natural ... that we have extended this usage beyond its original boundaries".'

Notice that the issue extends beyond ending merely *sentences* with prepositions, as in example 1a; it includes prepositions at the end of *clauses* too – see example 1b. Interestingly, few people today seem overly concerned about the latter – it's the former that excites them.

Notice, too, that whereas 1a can be rephrased by moving the preposition to a pre-position: *To whom are you talking?*, 1b cannot. In this case, it can be rephrased by an active/passive transformation: *Someone shouted at me for being late at work*, or by the substitution of another verb: *I was scolded/reprimanded/criticised/rebuked for being late at work.*

As we saw above, the first rephrasing raises all the issues associated with the choice between active and passive, while the second raises all the lexical issues associated with connotation, force, register and so on.

In conclusion, avoiding a postponed preposition may cause even more problems than it is intended to solve, and since the 'stranded preposition' isn't in any case a grammatical rule but a matter of style (and perhaps elegant syntax), it is usually better to leave it where it is – generally, it isn't anything to worry about. Which is a good note to end on.



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

johnpotts@swissonline.ch

COMPETITION RESULTS

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

Congratulations to all those readers who successfully completed our Prize Crossword 54. The winners, who will each receive a copy of the *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*, are:

Christiane Anderson, Petersfield, UK
Pilar Guzmán, Salamanca, Spain
Shona Hagger, Vergiate, Italy
Anastassia Ivanova, Tallinn, Estonia
Aimée Laurent, Calais, France
Evangeline Morrisson, Bergen, Norway
Caroline Perget, Weymouth, UK
Roger Trett, Samutprakam, Thailand
Tim Wilkins, Glasgow, UK
Sally Young, Manchester, UK



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

3 T	8 H	1 E		25 I	15 M	16 P	5 O	26 R	3 T	19 A	21 N	3 T		3 T	8 H	25 I	21 N
18 G		25 I	21 N		6 L	25 I	11 F	1 E		25 I	10 S		21 N	5 O	3 T		3 T
5 O		3 T	26 R	25 I	20 U	15 M	16 P	8 H		7 B	20 U	3 T		3 T	5 O		23 C
5 O	15 M	16 P	1 E	3 T	1 E	Pierre de Coubertin											

SCRAPBOOK

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

Here in the UK, it is about this time of year that we get very bored with winter, especially when that means cold, wind and what is now euphemistically called 'precipitation'. In the Old Days, this was simply referred to by the particular flavour of the descending stuff – now, the blanket term *precipitation* can refer to rain, but also covers the unwary weather forecaster against such changes of mind/temperature as sleet, hail and snow or, indeed, a combination of all four!

However, justified as we are to complain about our weather in the UK, we need to bear in mind those places where the elements pose a really serious challenge. When it comes to rain, for instance, cast a sympathetic thought to the inhabitants of the city of Cherrapunji, in the easternmost tip of India, where the average rainfall is some 12.7 metres (over 40 feet). In one year, the rainfall exceeded 85 feet! Ironically, there are often long periods of drought there and, in the dry season, people often have to travel on foot for several miles to get water suitable for drinking or washing.

Weather is fearsome stuff, as witness the destruction wrought by Atlantic storms such as Superstorm Sandy last October. In ten minutes, a hurricane can release more energy than all the world's nuclear weapons combined.

The extremes often provide a special challenge to the world's explorers: a journey is being planned for later this year which will take Sir Ranulph Fiennes across the Antarctic in the depths of its winter – the air temperatures will drop to an imagination-stretching minus 90 degrees Celsius, and there is likely to be a gale-force wind on top of that!

Records

While we are on the subject of temperatures, there are some surprising records:

The highest recorded temperature on Earth was in Death Valley, USA, on July 10th, 1913. It reached 56.7°C (134°F).

If you are not a hot weather person and your idea of bliss is somewhere cold, how about going to Snag, Canada, where the temperature dropped to minus 63°C (minus 81.4°F) on February 3rd, 1947. This record is second only to Vostock in Antarctica, where the temperature plunged to minus 89.2°C (minus 128.6°F) on July 21st, 1983.

How **cold** is it in **Canada**?

We saw that Canada claims one of the coldest temperatures ever, but Canada is a vast country and attitudes and stamina vary – as this temperature gauge demonstrates.

Degrees Celsius	
+25	Visitors from Miami turn the heat down slightly.
+20	Australian visitors take their sweaters off.
+10	You can see your breath. Vancouver residents shiver uncontrollably.
+5	Italian cars don't start.
0	Water freezes.
-5	Maritimers put on T-shirts to keep warm. Politicians begin to worry about the homeless. British cars don't start.
-10	Water freezes in Toronto. Vancouverites weep pitiably. Manitobans eat ice cream on the patio. Maritimers go swimming.
-15	You can hear your breath. Politicians begin to talk about the homeless. Montreal water freezes.
-20	French cars don't start. You plan a vacation in Mexico. Your cat insists on sleeping in your bed with you.
-25	Too cold to ski. Manitobans do up their top buttons. You need jump leads to get the car going.
-30	American cars don't start. People in the Yukon put on T-shirts to keep warm. Too cold to skate.
-35	German cars don't start. Your eyes freeze shut when you blink. You can cut your breath and use it to build an igloo. Newfoundlanders get their tongues stuck on metal objects.
-40	Your cat insists on sleeping in your pyjamas with you. Politicians actually do something about the homeless. Ottawans shovel snow off their roofs. Japanese cars don't start.
-45	Too cold to think. You need jump leads to get the driver going.
-50	You plan a two-week hot bath (if you could only thaw the water). The St Lawrence River freezes over. Swedish cars don't start.
-55	Vancouverites disappear. Maritimers put on sweaters. Other Canadians put on overcoats. Your car helps you plan your trip south, but won't start.
-60	Parliamentary hot air freezes. People in the Yukon close the bathroom window.
-70	Hell freezes over. Polar bears move south.

Whether it's **funny** or **not**

Often the only way that we can cope with large quantities of unpleasantness is to joke about it.

If you are standing in the main street of Amsterdam, and you can see the clock tower of the Central Railway Station, it means it is about to rain. If you can't see the clock tower, it means it is already raining.

A ship's captain radioed a lighthouse keeper: 'Radio reception very bad. Please spell out weather report.' The keeper replied, 'W-E-T-H-O-R-R-E-P-O-R-T.' The captain then said to his second-in-command, 'Oh dear, that's the worst spell of weather I've had in a long time.'

A rambler, seeing an old farmer standing in a field holding a short length of rope, asked, 'What's the rope for?' 'Ah, 'tis an old country way of telling the weather,' replied the farmer. 'And how does it work?' asked the rambler. 'Well,' replied the farmer, 'when it swings about, it's windy. And when it's wet, it's raining.'

Islanders on the Eastern Isles of Scotland are said to gauge the wind conditions by the number of times that their chickens lay the same egg …

Predicting the weather

Old wives are credited with much and varied wisdom (what about the poor old husbands?), and the subject of weather is no exception. Some of these tales have a greater or lesser element of truth – others, however, have none. See if you can tell the difference in the ones below: Is there any truth in them or not?

1. Red sky at night, sailor's delight.
   Red sky in the morning, sailor take warning.
2. If the moon is blue, there'll be a clear view.
3. If a snail travels clockwise, you can be sure of a hard frost.
4. Rainbow in the morning gives you fair warning.
5. If a beech tree's shed leaves lie with the underside upwards, there will be sunny days to come.
6. Ne'er cast a clout afore May is out.

Answers

1 When the western sky is especially clear, there is often a red sunset. This is because as the sun sets, its light shines through much more of the lower atmosphere, which contains dust, salt, smoke and pollution. These particles filter some of the shorter wavelengths of light (the violets and blues), leaving only the longer wavelengths (the oranges and reds). If an area of high air pressure is present, the air sinks. This sinking air brings the particles nearer the earth, making the sunset even redder than usual (red sky at night). Since high pressure coming in from the west generally brings fair weather, this type of red sky at sunset is red in the eastern morning sky, then approaching (sailor's delight). If the sky would indicate that clear weather is the high-pressure region has most likely already passed from the west to the east, and an area of low pressure may follow. Low pressure usually brings clouds, rain or storms, a warning for sailors.

2 No truth in it at all.

3 Nice idea, but utterly unsubstantiated.

4 In the morning, when the sun is in the east, any shower which results in a rainbow will be in the west. As the weather in the mid-latitudes of the northern hemisphere moves mostly from west to east, a morning rainbow indicates that rain is moving from the west towards you.

5 Only true in so far as sunny days are inevitable sooner or later.

6 Casting a clout – that is, removing some layers of winter clothing – can often be ill-advised too early in the year in the UK's notoriously changeable climate.

Trust nature!

When it comes to weather, nature has a few more clues to offer.

Animals and birds

There are people who believe that they can predict the weather, particularly the likelihood of rain, by observing the behaviour of animals and birds. It is thought, for example, that if cows are lying down in a field, cats are purring and washing themselves or birds are flying low, then rain is imminent. It may seem unlikely that the weather can be predicted in this way, but there are scientific explanations for many of these beliefs.

Most animals are vulnerable to environmental changes that humans often can't detect. Swallows flying low may indicate that the air pressure is dropping. Falling pressure may affect the digestive system of cows, making them less willing to graze and causing them to lie down. Static electricity may increase the grooming activities of cats. In addition, the calls of some birds, including crows and geese, have been known to increase in frequency with falling atmospheric pressure. Deer and elk sometimes react to wind and air pressure by coming down from mountains and seeking shelter. Some species – from rabbits to rattlesnakes and even certain species of fish – may feed more before a storm so they can then seek shelter.

Plants

Some flowers close up as humidity levels rise, and this may well be so that rain won't wash away their pollen. It has also been observed that the leaves of some types of tree curl up just before a storm.

People

Some English people gauge the chances of rain by the clarity with which they can hear distant church bells. This makes some sense because it is a fact that the higher the humidity, the better sound travels.

A drop in barometric pressure often affects people with joint diseases, bad teeth, recently healed broken bones, or corns and bunions, bringing pain or pressure to those areas of the body and causing them to say that they feel 'in their bones' that it is going to rain.

Insects

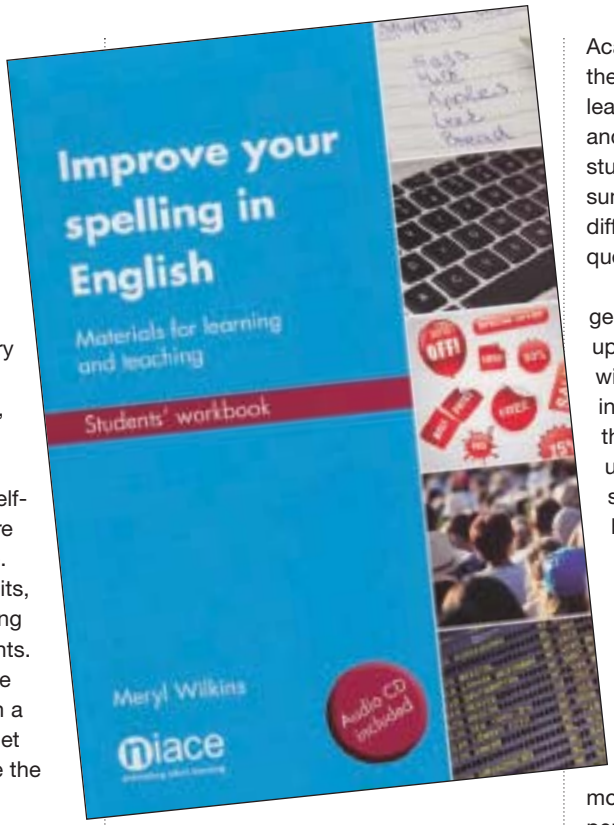
It is known that cicadas can't vibrate their wings when the humidity is very high, giving rise to the prediction that their silence means that rain is approaching. Flying insects are more active when the air pressure drops and they stay closer to the ground, so they appear to be swarming before a rainstorm.

Scrapbook compiled by Ian Waring Green

Reviews

Improve Your Spelling in English

by Meryl Wilkins
NIACE 2012
978-1-86201-554-8



Many English language teachers will be familiar with students who find spelling difficult. Meryl Wilkins's *Improve Your Spelling in English* is designed for ESOL Entry Level 2 or elementary EFL learners. The student's workbook, which has an audio CD included, can be used as a classroom resource by the teacher or as a self-study guide by the students. There is also a teacher's guide available.

The workbook contains 22 units, each focusing on a specific spelling pattern, such as double consonants. Each unit is presented in the same way over four pages, starting with a text which contextualises the target language. Exercises to encourage the students to notice words follow, together with a series of gap-fill exercises to practise spelling and a section on learning how to learn. There is an answer key for all the exercises. The CD has audio recordings of dictations, sound discrimination exercises of minimal pairs and gap fills.

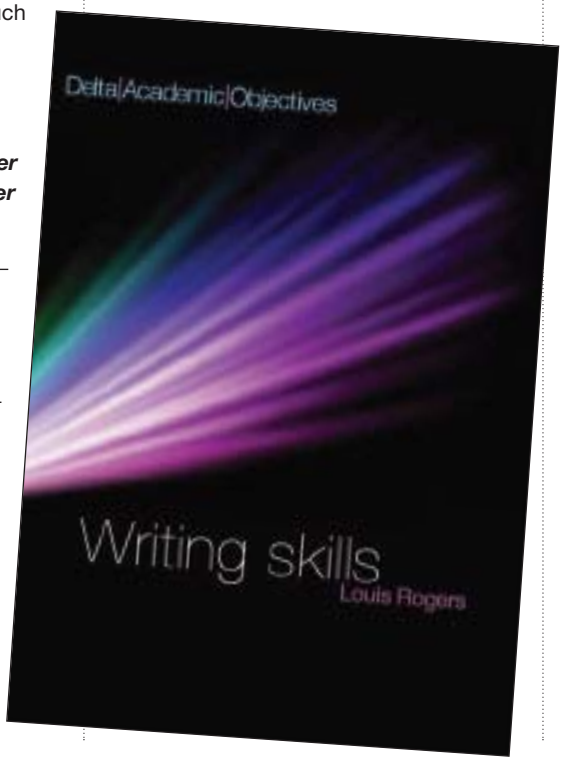
Overall, the book is well presented and the repetitive structure of the units will make it easy for students to navigate. What really appealed to me was a short section in each unit on *exceptions* to the presented spelling pattern, alerting students (and teachers) to words which do not fit the pattern. Additionally, I believe the audio recordings are useful as they can also be used for pronunciation work. On the other hand, the book does not contain a great amount of material, and all the exercises could easily be put together by a teacher. It would not, therefore, be a book that I would necessarily select to take with me for a teaching assignment. However, it would be one that I would recommend to individual students or which I would be grateful to find in a school library.

The teacher's guide contains a discussion about the structure of the student's workbook, as well as example lesson plans and tips on how to use the material in class. It seems to be aimed at novice teachers or volunteer teaching assistants, so I would not expect a qualified English teacher to gain much from it. However, it is available as a Kindle edition, a move which I, as a member of a nomadic profession, can only wholeheartedly support.

Gudrun Stummer
Manchester

Writing Skills

by Louis Rogers
DELTA Publishing 2011
978-1-90508-558-3



Writing, never an easy task for English language students to master, becomes even harder when they are required to focus on the skills needed to produce well-formulated academic assignments. In *Writing Skills*, Louis Rogers sets out succinctly and with great clarity to help students to tackle this daunting challenge. The book, in the Delta Academic Objectives series, is aimed at the upper-intermediate to advanced-level learner, and focuses on analysis of texts and critical thinking. It aims to help students to develop the abilities to summarise, paraphrase, integrate different ideas and incorporate quotations into their own writing.

Don't be put off by the rather dark generic textbook cover. Open the book up and you will find that each unit starts with a bright and interesting visual lead-in activity. These activities work as thought-provoking introductions to each unit's main theme and the subsequent series of exercises. All the themes are broad-based and are coupled nicely with those in Rogers's book *Reading Skills* in the same series. These themes have been chosen for their relevance to the students' needs: the book starts with a unit entitled *Education* and there are further units on the themes of language learning, culture and leadership, as well as more universal topics, such as crime, personality and ethics.

Every page encourages the students to make their own choices and form their own opinions on the issues at hand through a wealth of different exercises.

Reviews

These exercises can be as simple as matching up the correct word to its definition, or as challenging as deciding whether to agree or disagree with statements such as *'Bribery is sometimes necessary for business'*.

Having tried out several of the units on one of my writing classes, I found that my students enjoyed matching up pictures and deciding whether or not one could identify a criminal type simply by appearance. They also enjoyed thinking about personality traits and discussing who would make a good leader. I did find, though, that they got bogged down in the book's rather excessive focus on vocabulary usage. I feel that several of the exercises would be more stimulating if they actually got the students engaged directly in the writing process itself. This was one drawback of the book. However, I found that as the units take many hours of class time to cover, cutting out some of the exercises and interspersing them with short spurts of five- to ten-minute writing activities seemed to do the trick and bring the students back into the picture.

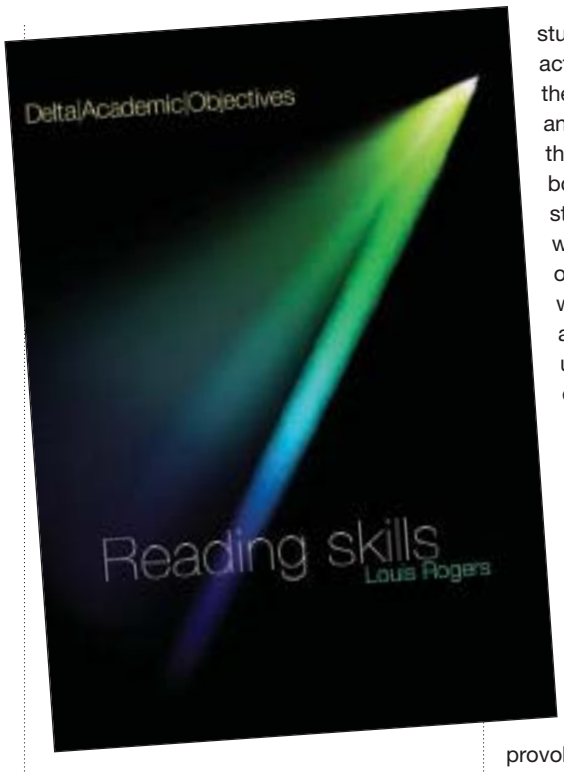
Writing Skills is very well organised and often thought-provoking. The nice thing about its overall concept is that it does not lay down any hard and fast rules of exactly how to construct an academic essay. Instead, it makes the students think for themselves about what skills they can utilise to create a better piece of academic writing.

Andy Starck
Tainan, Taiwan

Reading Skills

by Louis Rogers
DELTA Publishing 2011
978-1-90508-556-9

Reading Skills is a mirror image of its sister book *Writing Skills*, both in the Delta Academic Objectives series. Its dark cover, the overall layout, the table of contents and even the unit headings are spitting images of the other title. At first glance, there seems to be nothing at all to tell the two apart bar the colour of the cover graphic and the title itself: identical twins by any other name.



On opening the book, the parallels continue: the universal themes of crime, personality and ethics, and student-based themes such as education, language learning and culture are all laid out in identical order. I wondered whether Louis Rogers had cleverly pulled a fast one: Had he managed to get exactly the same book published twice, simply by the substitution of the word *Reading* for *Writing* in the title? How many other titles could he bring out in this series?

Of course, it did not take long to discover otherwise. This really is a book very much focused on the higher-level reading skills of text analysis and interpretation rather than academic writing. The author does, however, make clever use of similar techniques in both books. These are apparent in the use of excellent little appetizers at the beginning of each unit: beautifully integrated visuals coupled with great lead-in exercises to get the students thinking about their own personal preferences, examining other people's thoughts on the subject and formulating initial opinions.

The only blips in the book are in the focus of two of the units. The first is the very opening unit on education, obviously totally relevant to both teachers and students and employing good opening activities. Unfortunately, it moved into the arena of assessing performance and testing. By the time they reach the university age group, which the books are directly aimed at, most students – particularly in Taiwan where I teach – have had an overdose of examinations and don't wish to spend too much time analysing their pros and cons. In the unit on culture, it was the over-emphasis on writing that was a little off-putting. The author uses pictures so well that it is a shame this unit wasn't based more on the visual arts.

In *Reading Skills*, Louis Rogers has again produced an extremely well-organised coursebook for a reasonably high-level undergraduate or post-graduate student of English. Its strong emphasis on critical thinking provokes the students to examine texts in depth, questioning their logic, bias and even their validity. A great complement to *Writing Skills*, it is easy to cross-reference between the two. It is also, I believe, a valuable addition, in its own right, to the set of skills needed for academic achievement.

Andy Starck
Tainan, Taiwan

Reviewing for ETp

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In it up to your ears 1

Mark Hancock

helps his students to prepare for the reality of authentic speech.

Listening is a feared skill. There is nothing to grab hold of – the message sweeps past in an instant and is gone. No wonder that coursebooks are usually accompanied by audio texts which are clean and tidy. The students need all the help they can get. But authentic, unscripted speech is usually 'messy' – full of simplifications and reductions, and delivered in a huge variety of voices and accents. At some point in their learning, students have to confront this reality and, when they do, it often comes as a shock. *'Why do they speak so fast?'* they complain, as the stream of speech flows by in a jumble of meaningless syllables.

Not like it is in the dictionary

At the root of this problem lies pronunciation. Students often learn – and then expect to hear – the 'citation form' of words. This is the pronunciation given in dictionaries: the way the word would be said in isolation, in a standard accent such as RP (British) or GA (American). The reality, of course, is different, and there are massive variations in the way that a word is pronounced. The sources of this variation can be classified into two kinds: variation according to context and variation according to speaker. The first involves aspects of pronunciation which fall broadly within the category of *connected speech*. The second relates principally to *accent*.

Awareness-raising

How can students learn to cope with such unforeseen variations? One way is experience: by listening to a massive amount of authentic English, they eventually get used to it. If they don't give up along the way, that is. Another approach – a supplement, rather than an alternative, to experience – is to make the variations less unforeseen. In other words, we can help to raise the students' awareness of how pronunciation varies in connected speech and across accents. In this way, when students encounter these variations in real life, they come as less of a surprise.

In this article, I will present some ideas for awareness-raising in the classroom, first for connected speech and then for accent. The follow-up article in the next issue will deal with ways of working with authentic recordings in the classroom.

Preparing for connected speech

It's very disheartening when, as a listener, you discover that you can't even tell where one word stops and the next one starts. Somehow, you expect there to be a gap, as there is in writing. The cartoon on page 47 is intended to raise awareness of this problem in a very concrete way.

This way of writing the dialogue displays how a listener can fail to identify word boundaries. In particular, it shows how the consonant at the end of one word may often seem to move to the following word, in a process John Field calls 're-syllabification'. For example, the *d* at the end of *bruised* sounds as if is at the beginning of the

next word, so that *arms* sounds like *darms*. It is good for students to be aware that this happens.

In the kitchen

The following mis-spelling is a useful way to introduce some other features of connected speech: *sol tum pepper*.

Ask the students to suggest what it could mean (*salt and pepper*) and then suggest why it has been written wrongly. Guide them towards awareness of the following features:

A Consonant move: The *t* of *salt* has linked to the following *and*.

B Weak vowel: The vowel of *and* has been reduced to schwa.

C Consonant cut: The *d* of *and* has been elided.

D Consonant change: The *n* of *and* has changed to /m/ under the influence of the first *p* in *pepper*.

Having introduced these features, you could give further practice with a noughts and crosses game. In order to win a square, the students must identify what the phrase is, and then explain why it has been wrongly written, with reference to processes A–D.

sol tum pepper	a **loafer slice bread**	a **napple** ana **nor**ange
wom potato	**froz**um **peas**	**fruik cake**
greem beans	**sick eggs**	a **tinna sweek corn**

A Consonant move **B** Weak vowel
C Consonant cut **D** Consonant change

Preparing for accent variation

Try saying this aloud, and try to work out what it means:

Died o'clock odd a budday bordig

It's *nine o'clock on a Monday morning*, as said by someone with a cold. We know this because all of the nasal consonants have been replaced by their nearest non-nasal equivalent – on account of the speaker's nose being blocked. When we meet someone with a cold, they may seem unintelligible to us for a couple of moments. But as soon as we realise that their nose is blocked, we adjust our ears accordingly and have no further trouble.



Phillip Burrows

Flexible listening

Adjusting for 'blocked nose speech' is an example of flexible listening, or accommodation. Much the same kind of adjustment may happen with accents. Here are a couple of examples:

- You are speaking to a woman from the north east of England, and you think you hear *I've forgotten my caught*. After a moment, you realise that she meant *coat*, not *caught* – in her accent, words like *coat*, *boat* and *cold* sound like *caught*, *bought* and *called*. You adjust your ear accordingly and accommodate to her accent.
- You are speaking about music to a man from Brazil. You are puzzled for a moment when you think he says *hock and hole*. Then you realise he said *rock and roll* – every time you expect an initial /r/ sound, he produces an /h/. Again, you adjust your expectations and accommodate.

With regard to accent, flexible listening is your students' objective. One approach is simply exposure – the more accents a student has been exposed to, the more flexible their listening is likely to be. But, as with connected speech, we may enhance experience with awareness-raising tasks.

Vulnerable sounds

First of all, we can alert our students to the fact that not all the sounds of English are equally variable across accents. In the tables below, I have identified ten sounds which are especially vulnerable to variation:

FIVE VULNERABLE VOWELS				
1 /æ/	2 /ɑː/	3 /ɔː/	4 /ɒ/	5 /əʊ/
had bad cat	fast laugh dance	walk bought	hot shop not	cold slowly go

FIVE VULNERABLE CONSONANTS				
1 /r/	2 /h/	3 /t/	4 /θ/	5 /ð/
rare reader	hear hair	waiting waiter	think faith	though mother

In it up to your ears 1

Listeners need to be flexible in their expectations of these sounds. Here are some examples of accents with variations on these sounds:

Vulnerable vowels

1 *had*, *bad* and *cat* may sound like *head*, *bed* and *ket* in New Zealand English.

2 This vowel sound is long in RP, but short in many other accents, such as that common in the north of England.

3 This vowel sound is significantly different in RP and American English. For example, *walk* sounds a little like *wok* in American.

4 This vowel is different in RP and American. For example, *hot* said by an American sounds like *heart* spoken by an RP speaker.

5 This vowel sound is not a diphthong in north-east English and Scottish. For example, *cold* sounds like *called*.

Vulnerable consonants

1 In RP, /r/ is only pronounced before a vowel. In other accents, such as Scottish and American, it is pronounced in all positions.

2 /h/ is dropped in informal speech in many native and non-native accents.

3 /t/ between vowels sounds like a /d/ in American. For example, *waiting* sounds like *wading*.

4 and **5** These sounds are absent from the speech of many English speakers, both native and non-native. They are replaced by alternative sounds. For example, *think* may sound like *tink* in Irish, *fink* in cockney and *sink* in French-accented English.

Accent limericks

Accents are of course something you hear, not read. However, it is possible to raise awareness through the written medium. The following limericks are written in four different 'accents'. Give your students the vulnerable sound tables on page 47 and ask them to work out what the limericks mean – and then to identify *why* they were wrongly written. In each case, one of the ten vulnerable sounds above has mutated. The double take you get on first reading these limericks is similar to the sensation you get on hearing an unfamiliar accent, and the subsequent adjustment is similar, too.

I head a good friend called Pet
Whose ket set on the met
Pet was said
When yer clumsy old dead
Set on the ket on the met

(Clue: vulnerable vowel 1)

I met a fat lady called Reader
Who drank her milk by the leader
She said, 'I'll get fadder
But what does it madder –
My belt is already a meader

(Clue: vulnerable consonant 3)

I once had a friend called Jaw
Who slept in a hall in the snore
His caught was all'd
And his feet were saw called
That he walk with a frawzen tour

(Clue: vulnerable vowel 5)

I once had a friend called Fred
Ooo wore is at in bed
When ee took off is at
They said, 'Look at that –
Ee asn't an air on is ed!'

(Clue: vulnerable consonant 2)

Field, J *Listening in the Language Classroom* CUP 2008



Mark Hancock has been an English teacher since 1984, working in Turkey, Brazil, the UK and now in Spain. He has an MSc in teaching English from Aston University, UK. His books on pronunciation include *English Pronunciation in Use Intermediate* and *Pronunciation Games*, both published by CUP. He also regularly uploads pronunciation material and articles onto his website: *http://hancockmcdonald.com*.

mark@hancockmcdonald.com

Answer key

Task 1

Patient: *Doctor, doctor, I've got a toothache, an earache, sore eyes, bruised arms, a stomach ache, and I fart all the time!*

Doctor: *I see. Perhaps you'd like to wait in the corridor.*

Task 2

1 salt and pepper (see the explanation in the article)

2 a loaf of sliced bread (weak form of *of*, consonant cut from end of *sliced*)

3 an apple and an orange (linking of *an* to the following word)

4 one potato (consonant changed to /m/ at the end of *one*)

5 frozen peas (consonant changed to /m/ at the end of *frozen*)

6 fruit cake (consonant changed to /k/ at the end of *fruit*)

7 green beans (consonant changed to /m/ at the end of *green*)

8 six eggs (linking of final consonant of *six* to the following word)

9 a tin of sweet corn (weak form of *of*, consonant change at the end of *sweet*)

Task 4

I had a good friend called Pat
Whose cat sat on the mat
Pat was sad
When her clumsy old dad
Sat on the cat on the mat

(eg New Zealand accent)

I met a fat lady called Rita
Who drank her milk by the litre
She said, 'I'll get fatter
But what does it matter –
My belt is already a metre.'

(eg American accent)

I once had a friend called Joe
Who slept in a hole in the snow
His coat was old
And his feet were so cold
That he woke with a frozen toe

(eg North-east England accent)

I once had a friend called Fred
Who wore his hat in bed
When he took off his hat
They said, 'Look at that –
He hasn't a hair on his head!'

(eg Cockney accent)

Playing the game

Louis Rogers doesn't see why business students shouldn't have some fun.

The image portrayed by some business English coursebooks is that the world of work is all corporate – that it consists of men and women in dark suits in very formal settings and that everyone is involved in high-powered decisions. Whilst this element of business clearly exists, there are a great many more people who need English to do their job but are not involved in the corporate side. Teachers new to business English may find that the first books they are given to use in class can create a somewhat unrepresentative view of what business English is. In particular, it can lead them to abandon some of the lighter side of their repertoire from teaching general English, such as communicative games. Obviously, as some settings are more formal than others, the appropriateness has to be judged. However, in many cases, games can prove to be a useful revision tool, a way of changing the pace of the lesson and a way of motivating the learners.

Motivation

In terms of motivation, business English learners may have instrumental and/or integrative motivation. By *instrumental*, I mean wanting to learn a language for the purpose of a goal, such as a job, graduation or to get a visa – and perhaps this is the type of motivation most obviously associated with a business English learner. However, others may have *integrative* motivation, meaning they want to understand the language better out of interest in a society or culture.

Business English courses are typically needs-driven and are based around a needs analysis done at the start of the course. Sometimes, however, the needs and the motivation don't match up.

In many cases, games can prove to be a useful revision tool, a way of changing the pace of the lesson and a way of motivating the learners

Many people are told to learn English by their employers, perhaps because of a merger, a takeover or a new international contract. Such situations create anxiety in the company management and engender the feeling that their employees need better English skills. This may be the case and a lot of the employees' roles will now need to be conducted in English, but it can also be the case that they will have a very sporadic need for English in their new roles – an occasional email or phone call in English, or company reports to read. This can sometimes lead to a lack of motivation as a lot of time can be spent on material that seemingly has little relevance to the person's actual needs.

Many learners see the bigger picture in that increased English skills could enhance their CV in general – they may have a future position that requires more English – or they may simply see the benefit of improving their English for their own private use outside of work. This could then mean that the need is occasional emails and calls in English but the motivation encompasses *'I could use English more on holiday'*.

All this means that learners often respond well to different tasks and approaches being employed. Some teachers worry that a communicative game does not match a formal environment. However, providing a welcome change in pace – as long as the game has a clear learning outcome – can work very well.

Variety

Changing the pace of a lesson and varying the types of task that the learners are required to do is a valid technique to use in any class. This has been shown to be particularly true when listening to monologues in lectures and presentations. Several studies (for example, those by Fry, Ketteridge and Marshall and by Wankat and Oreovicz) show that the

Playing the game

human brain's capacity for focused attention to a lecture is between ten and 30 minutes, with maximum concentration of not more than 20 minutes. After this period of time, learners struggle to concentrate. However, this is not just true in situations where a monologue is being delivered; it also applies to other classroom activities. Whilst any good ELT coursebook should arguably be offering variety – and may include game-like activities – games are often avoided in ESP classes. However, Verzat, Byrne and Fayolle found that games were an effective tool in corporate training in general – not simply in business English teaching. They found that a pedagogical approach incorporating games enhanced the learners' teamwork and interpersonal skills.

★ ★ ★

The use of games, then, in this traditionally 'sensible' area of ELT may enhance learning, and it will certainly provide a variety of approach. The activity opposite and on page 51 is essentially a framework that could be adapted for any group or class. The exercise can simply be changed or tweaked to match the learning objectives of your course. ETp

Fry, H, Ketteridge, S, and Marshall, S *A Handbook for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* (2nd ed) Routledge 2002

Verzat, C, Byrne, J and Fayolle, A 'Tangling With Spaghetti: Pedagogical Lessons From Games' *Academy of Management Learning & Education* 8 (3) 2009

Wankat, P and Oreovicz, F 'Breaking the 15-minute barrier' *ASEE Prism* 12 2003



Louis Rogers is a Course Tutor at the University of Reading, UK. He is the author of *Reading Skills* and *Writing Skills*, in the *DELTA Academic Objectives* series, and the Intermediate and Upper-Intermediate *Business Result Skills for Business Studies* workbooks, published by OUP.

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Noughts and crosses

This activity can be used exactly as it is here or it can be adapted to review grammar, vocabulary and phrases you have been teaching during your course. It is particularly useful to keep the error-correction section flexible in order to focus on typical errors made by learners in your class. If you are in a monolingual setting, you could also base these on typical errors made by speakers of the learners' L1, such as commonly confused phonemes or words commonly mistranslated (false friends). This particular activity could be used with intermediate learners, but similar activities can be written for any level.

1 Divide the class into two teams and check that everyone knows how to play noughts and crosses by modelling and playing the basic game on the board or on a piece of paper.

2 Once everyone is clear on how the basic game is played, explain that they are going to play noughts and crosses, but that they will have to answer questions to be able to place a nought or a cross on the board.

3 Write the noughts and crosses board (see below) with the categories on the board. Ask Team A (crosses) to choose a category. The middle square, labelled *Free choice*, means they can choose any category from the board.

4 Once Team A has chosen a square, read the instructions and the question to the learners. (You may want to model one as an example first.)

5 If Team A gives you the correct answer, place a cross in the square. Then switch to Team B and repeat steps 3 and 4. Continue until one team gets three in a row.

Describing change	**Adjectives**	**Present perfect / Past simple**
Past simple pronunciation	**Free choice**	**Error correction**
Giving your opinion	**Collocations**	**Telephoning phrases**

Describing change

Say: *I'm going to read you a sentence. In the part where I say 'beep', you need to complete the gap or gaps with the correct preposition.*

1 The percentage of satisfied customers has decreased _____ 20 per cent to 60 per cent in the last year.

2 Unemployment has fallen _____ 4 million _____ 3.5 million this year.

3 Money spent online has fluctuated _____ 3.7 and 4.1 billion pounds per year.

4 The number of people following the company on *Twitter* shot _____ to 10,000 in just three days.

5 The company's revenue now stands _____ over $10 billion dollars annually.

6 CD sales have plummeted _____ 90% in some markets.

Answers 1 by 2 from, to 3 between 4 up 5 at 6 by

Adjectives

Say: *I'm going to read you an adjective. You need to tell me which of the following it can describe: food, city or people. Some words can describe more than one thing.*

1 cosmopolitan **3** plain **5** crowded
2 outgoing **4** sociable **6** ancient

Answers 1 city/people 2 people 3 food/people 4 people 5 city 6 city/people

Past simple / Present perfect

Say: *I'm going to read you two sentences, one in the past simple and one in the present perfect. You need to tell me which one is correct.*

1 **a** I worked here since 2002.
b I have worked here since 2002.

2 **a** I have been an accountant for a decade now.
b I was an accountant for a decade now.

3 **a** He has founded the company in 1989.
b He founded the company in 1989.

4 **a** This meeting has gone on too long. We need to finish soon.
b This meeting went on too long. We need to finish soon.

5 **a** Did you write the report yet?
b Have you written the report yet?

6 **a** I didn't see John all morning and it's after lunch now.
b I haven't seen John all morning and it's after lunch now.

Answers 1 b 2 a 3 b 4 a 5 b 6 a

Past simple – pronunciation

Say: *I'm going to write a regular past simple verb on the board. You need to decide if the ending is pronounced – /ɪd/, /d/ or /t/.*

1 consulted **3** answered **5** laughed
2 posted **4** shipped **6** stayed

Answers 1 /ɪd/ 2 /ɪd/ 3 /d/ 4 /t/ 5 /t/ 6 /d/

Giving your opinion

Write one of these phrases on the board for the learners to complete:

1 from my p _ _sp_ ct_ _ _

2 I agree with you up to a p_ _n_

3 I couldn't _g_ _ _ more

4 yes, b_t

5 I'm not s_ _ e about that

6 as far as I'm c_ _ c_ _n_d

Answers 1 perspective 2 point 3 agree 4 but 5 sure 6 concerned

Collocations

Say: *I'm going to read you a verb and two nouns/noun phrases. You need to tell me which noun or noun phrase is the correct collocation.*

1 put forward	**a** my instincts	**b** an idea
2 reach	**a** a consensus	**b** an outcome
3 avoid	**a** confrontation	**b** all the options
4 make	**a** your mind up	**b** a conclusion
5 weigh up	**a** between two things	**b** all the options
6 trust	**a** my instincts	**b** confrontation

Answers 1 b 2 a 3 a 4 a 5 b 6 a

Telephone phrases

Write one of these phrases on the board for the learners to complete:

1 Can I _____ _____ _____ calling?

2 Can you _____ _____ line?

3 Can I _____ a message?

4 Can you _____ _____ to call me back?

5 Can you _____ _____ your name, please?

6 I'll _____ _____ you through.

Answers 1 ask who is / say who is 2 hold the 3 take / leave 4 get him / get her 5 tell me / give me 6 just put

Error correction

Say: *I'm going to read a sentence to you that has a grammatical mistake or a vocabulary mistake. Try to correct the mistake.*
(Alternatively, you write the sentences on the board.)

1 I can't stop. I've got some meeting at three.

2 I'm so relieved. Someone has been found my USB.

3 This is the most tasty dish I've ever eaten.

4 She work in the IT department.

5 I'm so busy I'm not going to finish this on five o'clock.

6 Can you check my email? I think I might have done a mistake.

English for tourism

Phil Wade takes a trip into an expanding area.

When you are an English speaker travelling abroad, you realise how important English has become as a means of communication in hotels, tourist information centres and shops all over the world. It is the means by which countless non-native speakers communicate with each other, so you may encounter a local French guide using English with a monolingual group of Italians or a multilingual group of Spanish, Austrians and Dutch. Anyone who has been on a plane will have encountered English on airport signs and used to make announcements. We can safely say that English is the language of tourism.

Courses

The utilisation of English by any industry is great news for business English teachers. Where there is demand for English, there are students, and where there are students, there *we* should be. English for Tourism takes many forms. Degree courses in subjects like 'travel and tourism' have been run for many years, but these are now expanding to include more specialist courses, such as tourism management, often with a strong business element. Growing numbers of business and tourism courses are now delivered in English. And why not? If English is the international language of business and tourism, then students should be immersed in it from the start.

Clients

Tourism is a huge industry, consisting of a web of inter-connected public and private sector companies. At the top are the local government departments, dealing with international exchanges and further education establishments. Then there are tourist information centres and airports. In the private sector, there are tour operators, travel agencies, hotels, guides, shops, restaurants ... in fact, anyone offering services or products to tourists.

Many people working in the tourism industry find that they need to learn English. Some will have studied general English at school or college, but now feel that they require more specific language training related to their work. Employers may be looking for courses for individual staff members, groups of staff or even for a whole department or office.

Needs

The diversity of jobs within the industry means that the students' needs are incredibly varied. If you teach at a university, you will probably deliver a set course. However, if you work in a language school, you could have ten students from different sectors of the industry in one class or even ten students with the same job to teach on a one-to-one basis and, although their jobs may be the same, their needs may all be slightly, or extremely, different. If you teach at a company, the boss may not have a clear idea of what the staff need and the objectives might just be a vague 'improve English customer service', 'learn English for my job' or 'be able to take all bookings correctly'. So it may be up to you to design and propose an entire course.

Choosing materials

The first step in course creation after doing needs analyses and/or diagnostic tests is to source materials. You may find a coursebook – or several – but probably not one that is entirely suitable for the department head of a tour operator or for security checkpoint staff at an airport. It is possible that such titles will be published in the future if there is sufficient demand, but at the moment most of the books on offer can be fairly generic, aimed at mass audiences. You may find, therefore, that only a couple of units are suitable for each student or class. The answer may be to build your own resource arsenal:

- **English for tourism books** Choose two or three books that have enough material to meet varied requirements and jobs. Look for essential functional language and relevant speaking and writing activities.
- **Grammar and vocabulary books** A good business grammar book and an English for tourism vocabulary book are worth their weight in gold.
- **The web** Look online for tourism-related exercises, audio recordings, videos, roleplays – anything you think your students would find useful.

Coursebooks are generally based on authentic (or near-authentic) texts, which are adapted and given exercises to help the students understand them and to enable them to produce similar language for themselves. Having your own bank of tourist-related resources to use as the basis of lessons pays off. You can source authentic resources yourself for free and they have the advantage of being about the area where you live. This is invaluable as students will not be doing activities based on a fictional place in a book, but on their own city and their place of work. Have a look on your local tourism information website. This will often be in English and will have links to everything in the area that is related to tourism.

Creating materials

Once you have your resource arsenal, you can create your own materials. A two-minute *YouTube* video dialogue on booking a hotel room is perfect for anyone whose job involves reserving accommodation. Accompany it with some basic comprehension questions, functional language work and a similar roleplay set-up and you have a great lesson. A reading based on descriptions of local hotels, together with vocabulary work on facilities, topped off with short presentations, would be ideal for students who book those hotels on a daily basis. All this could be done with worksheets or on a basic blog such as Google's *Blogger*, where you can embed videos, audio and your own quizzes.

★ ★ ★

The tourism industry is a fascinating area to work in and is perhaps the best reflection of the international role of English – a role which looks set to continue expanding and opening up more exciting opportunities for teachers. ETp



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Write all about it!

Emilce Vela recommends sharing your experiences.

Have you ever thought of writing about your teaching experiences – those successful lessons you usually talk about with colleagues, or the techniques which have gone gratifyingly well and which you think are worth using again? Many teachers with an interest in professional development like to read about proven techniques, methods or experiences, which can help them enrich their own teaching. However, few dare write about and share their *own* experiences, mainly because writing an article for a professional magazine seems intimidating: something reserved for 'experts'. This is a shame because writing is not daunting if you approach it in a systematic way – and everyone has something they can share.

Writing articles

I was recently given the opportunity to train a group of teachers in writing articles. My starting point was to establish the general goals of the course: to engage the teachers in an interesting professional challenge; to encourage them to assume responsibility for their own writing; to challenge them to express their opinions and experiences; and to help them produce an article suitable for publication on the college website and which might be submitted to a professional magazine.

I put together a plan with three stages:

- Getting started
- Preparing to write
- Producing an article

Getting started

During my introductory talk to the participants, I explained the process we would follow. I then put them into groups and distributed sets of teaching magazines for them to browse through and comment on in their groups. I included some magazines which contained my own published articles in order to make the challenge ahead seem more achievable and more real.

My primary aim was to provoke emotional engagement – I knew that the idea of writing articles about personal teaching experiences might not be attractive to all the participants. However, having direct contact with the magazines, seeing their visual appeal and finding that they had familiar and interesting contents had a significant motivational effect on all the teachers. They were immediately keen to work on the first task: a close analysis of the magazines and particular articles within them. I handed out worksheets with tables for them to complete when reading, analysing and comparing the magazines. The tables below show the features the teachers were asked to identify. Table 1 was for general analysis of the magazines, with the aim of determining the editorial requirements; Table 2 was for analysis of a chosen article, with the aim of identifying the structure and organisation of ideas. I also used one of my own articles as an example to demonstrate the kind of structural analysis that I was expecting.

All these activities were followed by feedback sessions and discussions of the different professional magazines studied, the articles which had been read and the features which had been identified.

Preparing to write

My basic aim for the second stage was to get the participants to start thinking about writing and planning their articles. I prepared guidelines for them to follow and I also provided examples of relevant articles from magazines and other resources, plus activities from books on writing. The goal was to guide the teachers into examining introductions, conclusions, titles, the development of topics, the organisation and relationship between ideas, the use of vocabulary (including specific jargon) and grammar. The activities in the books on writing were originally designed to prepare language students for exams. However, with some adaptation, they were useful for getting the teachers to identify the particular features they would need to include in articles on teaching English.

Table 1

Name of source	**Organisation** (sections and contents)	**Topics** (what authors write about)	**Layout** (arrangement of the piece of writing)	**Style** (design, visuals, format)	**Length of articles** (number of pages)	**Author** (experience of teaching, career, country of origin)

Table 2

General information about the chosen article								
Title	Author	Country	Type (opinion, experience, etc)	Aim(s)	Source, issue, date of publication	Students' age or level of English	Area of concern	Length
Specific information about the chosen article								

Write all about it!

I encouraged the teachers to produce checklists of the main features to consider when writing their own articles. An example is shown opposite.

While the teachers were working on the activities, I encouraged them to start thinking about the topics, experiences or opinions they could write about, the structure they would use and the aspects they would need to consider in order to produce a good piece of writing.

Producing an article

Although the participants were already familiar with the process of writing, I encouraged them to read an article on writing by R K Singh and Mitali De Sarkar. This article proposed a three-stage writing process, together with the use of a questionnaire for analysing one's work; I asked the teachers to produce one of these and to use it when drafting, revising and editing their articles.

The summary below shows the main ideas they extracted from the article and some of the items in their questionnaire.

After producing the first draft of their articles, the teachers used their checklists and questionnaire to work on revisions. In class, they exchanged articles with their colleagues and engaged in peer-correction. They also produced organisational plans of the articles they read to show to the writer of the article in order to check if the structure matched the author's purpose. The articles were submitted to me so that I could work on any final corrections and suggestions before the final editing process.

Article checklist	
General aspects	Be interesting. Think about the reader. Specify your aims. Consider the layout. Organise and plan. Make it relevant. Keep to the required length. Choose an appropriate title. Address the reader directly. Write in a lively style. Be vivid and descriptive. Appeal to the reader's imagination. Edit your work: look at grammar, spelling and punctuation. Re-read your article as if you were unfamiliar with the text. Be prepared to rewrite sections. Think about the purpose and tell the readers about the topic and content. Move from general to specific information.
Specific aspects	**Title** Be short and pithy. Summarise the central idea. Use well-chosen words: adjectives, nouns, past participles, gerunds, imperatives, questions. **Introduction** Be relevant and to the point. Interest the reader and establish a good relationship. Use more than one sentence, but keep to the main point. Follow a regular format with established conventions. Achieve credibility. Start from the general and move to the specific. Address a problem of general interest. Signal the topic early on. Announce in advance what and how. Give an indication of the structure. **Body** Make the paragraphs serve the larger organisational structure. Use headings to structure the article. Make sure each paragraph supports the heading. Orient the readers to help them follow the connections. Ensure each section fits into the whole. **Conclusion** Give the reader a sense of closure. Start from the specific and move to the general. Re-read and revise. Use more than one sentence.

★ ★ ★

Everyone really enjoyed writing about a rewarding teaching practice and sharing it with other teachers. When the time came to share the articles in class, I noticed the pride each participant felt when their own article was under discussion and the respect and interest paid to their colleagues' contributions. The participants reported that they had appreciated the process of peer correction and considered it valuable. I, too, gained satisfaction from the course, having achieved the goals I had originally set and having contributed towards the empowerment of the other teachers, as well as their professional development. ETp

Stages of the writing process	
Pre-writing	Knowledge of the subject, ability to organise one's writing and linguistic competence. Organisation of the main ideas in order to develop a framework for writing and assembly of illustrations, graphs, tables, etc.
Writing	Giving shape and linguistic expression to the formal organisation. Consideration of the layout: heading, subheadings, tables, diagrams, graphs, images.
Post-writing	Consideration of the processes of self-correction and peer-correction. Use of a questionnaire-cum-checklist. Re-examination and feedback. Production of final draft for editing.

Questionnaire

1 What is the writer's main contention/point/idea?
2 What is the main idea in the first paragraph? Is the main idea appropriately placed in the first paragraph?
3 Make an outline of the writer's central ideas.
   a) Do you think the writer's reasoning is sound and logically presented?
   b) Is the ordering of information within various paragraphs, and within the whole article, appropriate?

Useful reading

Cory, H *Advanced Writing with English in Use* OUP 1999

Miller, T and Parker, D 'Writing for the reader' *English Teaching Forum* 35 (1) 1997

Singh, R K and De Sarkar, M 'Interactional process approach to teaching writing' *English Teaching Forum* 32 (4) 1994

Stephens, M *New Proficiency Writing* Pearson 2002



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What does a Diploma tutor do?

Ana García-Stone delves into the duties of a Diploma trainer.

When I decided to become a teacher (after some years of working in different fields), I realised I had made absolutely the right career choice, and that the classroom was where I wanted to be. Later, I wanted to extend my professional practice but I knew that I didn't want to leave the classroom – so I started teacher training. Since then I have continued to do both language teaching and teacher training. In this article, I will discuss the roles of a trainer tutoring teachers at Diploma level and the qualities needed. I will also recommend a path into teacher training.

Roles and requirements

Many of the roles of a teacher trainer are similar to those of a teacher, so, depending on the context or situation, you will need to be: motivator, mediator, quality controller, chairperson, presenter, counsellor and many others. The difference is that your audience are your professional peers, and training is more about changing behaviour – or at least challenging it.

As a trainer, it is easier to talk about a typical week rather than a day. The table on page 57 illustrates what a typical week may look like. At the moment, I am working on a face-to-face Diploma course so I regularly give input. I have to ensure that I am up-to-date on theory, that I have a firm grasp of all the information/concepts I am going to present and that the session is at the right level for that group of trainees. In addition, I have to make sure that I present my material in an interesting and lively way. At Diploma level, the input is dense, and trainees are also expected to read extensively around the topics, so trainers must expect challenging questions.

I also observe trainees, and often I have a lesson consultation with them before they write their final lesson plan. I may observe two different candidates in any given week and will have to arrange both pre- and post-observation meetings. At Diploma level, it is the candidate who leads the post-observation meeting but, as a tutor, I have to give a clear indication of whether or not the candidate has passed (for assessed lessons) as well as feeding in ideas and making suggestions for the future.

It is vital to have a well-developed questioning technique to help the candidate analyse the lesson they have taught and to develop their self-awareness. Once the meeting is over, I can start to write up the feedback, and I try to send this to the candidate as soon as possible. On Diploma courses, the candidates are encouraged to experiment and this can lead to them suffering a crisis of confidence: they feel they no longer know how to teach. In fact, the questioning of old habits and established ways of working can be vital in bringing about a 're-structuring' of their teaching, which will contribute to their development.

Candidates on Diploma-level courses have to submit written assignments, so I give feedback on written work. The nature of this feedback depends on where we are in the course. At the beginning, it will be on ideas, and I may question what they say, give suggestions for academic reading or suggest tasks they could carry out in class; at a later stage, I will give feedback on the assignment itself and may limit myself to a few comments or suggest some re-writing. Finally, I am responsible for marking the final versions of assignments I have not supervised.

The qualities a teacher trainer needs also coincide with those required of a teacher, in that you need to be organised, be a good communicator and listener, be flexible, have developed self-awareness, etc. However, as a trainer it is important to empower your trainees and to give them the confidence to experiment in the classroom in order to develop their own teaching style. There is a fine line between discussing a person's teaching style and their personality, and it's important to be aware of that.

Recommendations

As far as I know, there are no training courses for trainers and I started training by giving INSETT sessions in my teaching centre on my particular area of interest which, at the time, was preparing teenagers for Cambridge ESOL exams. But how do you even start to write teacher training sessions? I would recommend that you attend sessions given by others and go to teachers' conferences. See what ways of presenting suit your own style and use them! Adapt ideas that you see other people using. If you have the opportunity, talk through your sessions with more experienced trainers. Experiment and ask for feedback.

If you work at a centre which offers Certificate or Diploma qualifications, then there will be procedures in place for selecting and training tutors. I think that in order to deliver training at Diploma level, it is advisable to have an MA in TESOL or Applied Linguistics, although this is not essential.

★ ★ ★

The longer I train, the less I think there is a 'right' way to teach, so it is important to encourage the trainees to reflect on what they do and to develop their own style. Unlike many teacher trainers, I also teach language students throughout the year, so I am able to bring my own classroom observations into the training room. I believe good classroom practice is based on reflective experience with a theoretical underpinning, which in turn benefits the language learner. ETp



Ana García-Stone is a teacher and teacher trainer at the British Council, Madrid, Spain, in the Young Learner Teaching Centre. She has worked on Diploma-level courses as well as short courses in the UK, Lisbon, Vietnam and India and in different teaching centres in Spain. She is currently the Lead Tutor on a face-to-face Trinity Diploma course and is Orientation Course Tutor on the Distance Delta.

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A week in the life of a DELTA tutor

Day	Task	Notes
Monday	• Check emails and arrange to meet two candidates for lesson consultations	Candidates have one lesson consultation before each observation and are expected to bring a fairly complete lesson plan. As a tutor, I often question the aims of activities, staging, etc, and the consultation is more developmental than directive.
	• Check materials for INSETT session	I have been invited by another teaching centre outside Madrid to give an INSETT session, which I enjoy as it gives me the opportunity to meet other teachers.
	• Lesson preparation • Teach for three hours	As I teach from 6.30 to 9.30 pm I have to prepare for two different groups of learners, one lower-intermediate and the other at FCE level.
Tuesday	• Give INSETT session at a different teaching centre	As the teaching centre I am visiting is outside Madrid, it involves quite a lot of travel, but the session goes well and is enjoyable.
	• Lesson preparation • Teach for 1.5 hours	Back in the classroom, this time with an advanced class.
	• Check and catch up on emails	Electronic administration!
	• Read lesson plan before observation and make notes as well as write questions to ask candidate	At Diploma level, lesson plans are long and have to be read with care. At times, the questions for the pre-observation meeting are related to information that might be missing or the fact that I cannot see from the lesson plan what will happen in the classroom.
	• Pre-observation meeting with candidate off-site	Candidates are often nervous as this meeting is held before they go in to teach the observed class, so it is important to be positive about the lesson.
	• Observation (1 hour)	On the Trinity Diploma, observed lessons are 60 minutes long. I try to sit where I can see both the candidate and the learners.
Wednesday	• Lesson consultation with a candidate	A different candidate this time, and I always enjoy these consultations as it is a creative process.
	• Check material for a Diploma session on syllabus design • Make photocopies of materials and handouts for session	This is a session I have given before, but I often make changes based on my own observations or as a result of any reading I have done on the topic. Once I'm satisfied, I can make copies of the materials, etc.
	• Write up feedback from a candidate observed last week	As well as filling in a mark sheet, we give our candidates written feedback on their lesson, which may be two to three pages long. Candidates find this useful and I try to include pointers and suggestions.
	• Check and catch up on emails	The never-ending electronic housekeeping.
	• Lesson preparation • Teach for three hours	Back in the classroom.
Thursday	• Give input session on syllabus design (1.5 hours)	I like to arrive well before an input session, to re-read the material and then to arrange seating and perhaps also decide how to group the candidates.
	• Oral feedback with the candidate I saw on Tuesday	I am worried about how this feedback will go as the lesson did not go very well. However, the candidate has good self-awareness so the feedback is very productive.
	• Lesson preparation • Teach for 1.5 hours	Back in the classroom with my advanced learners.
	• Check and catch up on emails	I meet with the Diploma course leader and check whether I will lead any part of the meeting. We also discuss course developments as well as any candidate issues, in this case the failed assessed lesson.
	• Prepare for tutors meeting on Friday	
Friday	• Diploma tutors meeting (three hours)	We have one meeting a term so there is usually a lot to discuss. This is Term 2 so it generally involves responding to any perceived problems with the course and discussing candidates who may be having problems with the work.
	• Consultation with trainee Diploma tutor on two sessions he is going to give	We have two new tutors this year and I am mentoring one of them. He is due to give two sessions, so he is presenting his session plans to me and we discuss the content.
	• Lesson preparation • Teach for three hours	Back in the classroom with a group of lower-intermediate 12 year olds for an intensive three-hour class.
	• Drink with colleagues	Much needed – it's been a long week!

Lessons from wikis

Stephanie Ashford

reports on a taxing project.

In discussions about the use of digital technology in language teaching, wikis are praised for their versatility and opportunities for collaborative learning. However, a common complaint is that it can be difficult to get students to participate and to sustain their interest.

I recently put this to the test when supervising a wiki project with a group of tax law students. The aim was to create an English-language guide to filing a tax return in Germany. The project is work-in-progress and ready to hand over to a new group of students, so now is a good time to take stock and draw lessons from the experience. This account can be seen as a progress report, with some reflections on ESP and advice for teachers interested in trying out similar projects.

The students

The students involved in the project were in their second year of studies in accountancy and tax law at the Duale Hochschule Baden-Württemberg (DHBW), a German university that provides vocational degree courses in business studies and the social sciences. Students are employed throughout their studies, with academic terms alternating with periods of workplace training. Those who do English as a compulsory subject are expected to reach a target level of C1 on the Common European Framework scale in their professional context after 126 classroom hours, plus the equivalent in self-study. Most of the students taking the 'English for Taxation and Accountancy' course will go on to become qualified tax consultants.

The syllabus

The 'English for Taxation and Accounting' syllabus advocates a task-based approach that draws on the students' understanding and experience of their profession. Many students get exposure to English during their training, where they find themselves dealing with clients who have little knowledge of German, or who speak good German but are grateful for explanations in English of specialist terms, some of which have no direct English equivalents.

According to Amna Bedri, the goal of ESP is *'to help learners acquire a higher level of competence in their chosen field than the average native speaker'*.

> *While a passive knowledge of specialist vocabulary is useful for tax consultants, an ability to communicate in plain English is crucial*

This goal is certainly relevant in another course I teach, 'English for Auditing'. Auditors typically work in teams with other auditors, so their English needs to be at a level that enables them to 'talk shop' (peer to peer). Tax consultants, in contrast, deal with clients who are non-expert, so while a passive knowledge of specialist vocabulary is useful, an ability to communicate in plain English is crucial.

Why the wiki?

The idea for the wiki project came about after the students had done an improvised roleplay in which a tax consultant helps a client to complete an income tax return. One student pointed out that English translations of the cover sheet and the various supplements would be useful references when advising English-speaking clients.

At the time of writing, there are no official English translations of these forms. One student managed to locate an in-house translation of the cover sheet, but it contains too many language errors and inconsistencies to be useful. In any case, a translation alone would not be enough. What my students need is a guide that contains not only instructions for completing the form (eg *Enter your expenses for …*) but also useful explanations for taxpayers unfamiliar with the German tax system.

Having established the need for such a guide, I proposed that we pool our expertise to produce one together. The students would be the authors and tax experts. My role would be that of language consultant. When I broached the idea of a wiki, they seemed willing to give it a go.

My experience with wikis is limited. I have found them useful in course management, but was sceptical about their benefits in teaching. The idea of using wikis for peer editing seemed promising, but I needed a suitable pretext. A practical guide that students could use at work and share with colleagues, however, was an opportunity not to be missed. It also appealed to two of my colleagues, who were teaching parallel courses and who brought their own students on board.

Setting up the wiki

A wiki is a website or online document that can be edited by its users. Setting up a wiki requires access to a learning management system (LMS), such as *PB Works* or *Moodle*. Using an LMS requires little more than web browsing and word processing skills. My first step was to set up a 'course' on the university's *Moodle* platform and then enrol the students and teachers. This was straightforward, but I was grateful for technical support once the wiki began to take shape.

After learning from my students about the number of forms issued by the German tax authorities, we agreed on a writing process based on division of labour. Each student would be responsible for a different form, writing line-by-line instructions and explanatory notes. They would send the teachers a first draft for correction, and then incorporate a polished version into the wiki.

At the time of writing, the 'course' has the following features:

- **News and announcements** This is useful for kicking off a project, making announcements, giving updates on progress and bringing a project to a close. Communication is one-way, so replies are not possible.
- **Discussion forum** This is designed for interaction. Anyone enrolled can post a topic, and anyone can reply. For example, one student raised a question about the translation of certain specialist terms. A colleague invited discussion on the verbs the students were using for instructions (*fill in/out*, *put in/provide/enter*, etc), asking them to explain their choices and their preferences regarding British or American English.
- **Wiki team** This is a grid which shows who is doing what on the project. The students enter their names next to the names of the forms they wish to deal with, on a first-come-first-served basis. As more students join the project, new forms and new roles can be added.
- **Wiki guide to filing a tax return** This is the main document. It starts with an introduction to filing a tax return in Germany, followed by line-by-line instructions for completing the various forms. Using a grid layout suggested by one of the students (see below), the 'authors' enter information with page and line references, instructions and explanatory notes. My comments and queries are colour-coded in blue.
- **Wiki glossary for income tax returns** This is a German–English glossary I have developed with my students over the past few years. It consists of vocabulary specific to the German income tax return. Students can suggest further items and translations, the only rule being that a teacher vets the translation before it is added to the glossary.
- **Downloads and links** These include pdf files of the forms needed for completing a tax return, a guide to using wikis, a guide to completing the UK tax return, a guide to completing a US tax return form (IRS Form 1040), the form itself and a web link to 'Your Tax Form Explained' (Bill Bryson).

I encourage the students to refer to the US and UK guides to get a feel for the target language. The UK guide is interesting for its use of plain English, and can be compared with the US equivalent in terms of structure, content, vocabulary and register. 'Your Tax Form Explained' is a parody, showing how *not* to write a guide!

Assessing the progress

It was initially assumed that the project would be finished by the end of term. This turned out to be unrealistic, for various reasons.

Firstly, I underestimated the scope and scale of the undertaking. I had not anticipated the number of forms involved and how much time we would need to deal with language points. Also, with more students joining the project mid-way, it was not possible to set milestones for the various stages. Some students were unclear about what was expected of them and produced translations rather than guides.

The first-come-first-served principle,

Page	Line	Instruction	Explanatory notes
1	1	Put in your Taxpayer Number. *(taxpayer number? tax number?)*	Leave this blank if you have not yet been assigned one. The tax authorities will do this for you.
2	32	Put a cross if you have income from agriculture and forestry.	You will also need to fill in Attachment 7. *(Supplement? Form?)*
2	48	Enter expenses paid to builders, eg for renovations, repairs, maintenance and modernisation measures. *(modernization?)*	Only enter labor costs, not costs for any materials used. *(labour? BE/AE consistency needed.)*

Lessons from wikis

whereby the students enter their names next to the document of their choice, has worked reasonably well. Latecomers inevitably had to make do with more limited choices. In some cases, students teamed up to work on a particular form, with certain individuals putting in more work than others. Also, where students produced an impressive amount of writing, teachers struggled with the amount of correction involved. It soon became clear that more than just light editing would be necessary.

This raised the issue of our role as language teachers. How much time can we be expected to spend on correction, and what level of accuracy are we aiming for?

A lot more work is needed before the guide is of a publishable standard. Some sections are missing, and numerous language points need to be dealt with. For example:

- expressions that can be translated in different ways, depending on context or taste
- explaining expressions for which there is no direct equivalent in English
- creating consistency in the use of verbs in instructions
- creating consistency in register and style
- using commas in the right places

Use of the discussion forum was disappointingly low. This could be because the questions asked on it were not specific enough, or because the students did not see any point in responding. It could also be because some students see it as the teacher's job to provide the answers.

The glossary was also neglected. I could have encouraged the students to refer to it more often, rather than supplying corrections myself. Also, only two students suggested words to add to the list. Regular prompting would have helped.

The UK and US guides offered valuable models, but were underused. Rather than simply inviting students to refer to them, it would have been more effective to analyse and compare them in class beforehand.

What next?

The term is over and the students are back in their companies. I explained that it was unrealistic to expect them to produce a definitive guide in just a few months, and they can reasonably assume their contribution to the project to be over. The plan is to build on the guide with a new group of students, while encouraging the 'pioneers' to remain involved.

As well as extending the glossary and paying closer attention to language points, there are further roles that students could adopt, for example writing a section with general tips for non-German speakers paying tax in Germany for the first time.

Decisions also need to be made as to how the guide might be published. This could be in the form of an e-book, or it could even be developed into a website, run by the students themselves. Ideally, the project members will have suggestions of their own.

Lessons learnt

Reflecting on how I would do things differently next time, I am reminded of the saying *'A good workman never blames his tools'*. Where things did not go as smoothly as expected, the reasons have more to do with project management than technology. My colleagues agree that, on the whole, the project has been worthwhile, so I conclude with some tips for teachers interested in doing similar projects:

- Choose a project that is interesting and worthwhile in its own right. Ideally, the impetus will come from the students, who are more likely to contribute if they see how it benefits them at work.
- Help the students with their English. This may seem obvious, but they do want to see that their English is improving.
- Check that the students see the point of collaborating. If they know what others can contribute, they will be willing to pool their expertise. This also applies to teachers.
- Agree on goals, roles and milestones, as you would in any project.
- Resist the temptation to micro-manage. Some tasks can be delegated to the students (eg ensuring that deadlines are met), with you as supervisor and language consultant.
- Consider offering the project on a voluntary basis. In this way, nobody feels coerced. If the project is imposed on a captive audience in a compulsory course, it could fall flat.
- Make sure the students see the point of using a wiki rather than some other resource. Demonstrate how to use it in class, discussing benefits and pitfalls.
- Consult the experts (see references) for guidance on user-friendly software and getting the most out of wikis.

★ ★ ★

If you have any tips to add, do let me have them! ETp

Bedri, A M quoted in 'Assessing English for Accounting' by Evan Frendo in 'English in the Workplace' IATEFL symposium 2010 (*http://english360.com/blog/2010/04/thoughts-from-the-iatefl-english-in-the-workplace-symposium*)

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ELT chat on using wikis: *http://eltchat.com/2011/11/28/using-wikis-in-elt-eltchat-summary-09112011/*

Video on wikis: *http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-dnL00TdmLY*



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Five things you always wanted to know about MOOCs (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 reveals what a MOOC is.

1 MOOC? Another acronym! What does this one stand for?

A MOOC is a Massive Open Online Course. And it does what the name suggests. It's a course which is free of charge (open) to as many people who want to sign up (often a massive number) and it's run online. Although such courses have been around for a number of years, they have only recently started to appear in the mainstream and educational press, with free online courses being offered by the likes of Stanford and Harvard universities. One can now read heartwarming tales like that of the student from Kazakhstan who took a Stanford MOOC in computer science, received a certificate and then landed a plum job (*http://goo.gl/mr4MS*).

2 Where does the MOOC movement come from?

The term *MOOC* emerged around 2008 via a group of academics in Canada. Early courses developed from an interest in 'connectivism' as a learning theory (social learning based on networks and conversations), and how Web 2.0 could facilitate and enhance these connections. However, MOOCs remained fairly unknown until in 2011 Stanford University ran one in Artificial Intelligence, which attracted thousands of sign-ups. Shortly after this, companies such as Udacity, edX and Coursera appeared. Udacity offers MOOCs for Stanford University, edX for MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) and Harvard University, while Coursera is a consortium of international universities (33 at the time of writing) offering MOOCs in a wide range of disciplines.

3 How does a MOOC work?

You pay no fees to take a MOOC – they're free. There will be a handful of tutors/facilitators and thousands (or even tens of thousands) of students. They can run over several weeks or months, with weekly topics and deadlines. Depending on the MOOC one takes, the learning materials may take slightly different forms. The more connectivist-orientated MOOCs – or cMOOCs – tend to have little or no content as such. Instead, there may be a few suggested weekly online readings or videos to watch, and learning develops through the participants discussing the contents or collectively solving issues, with particular emphasis placed on the online conversations that can develop via forums, blogs, weekly video-conferencing sessions and social network channels, such as *Google+*, *Facebook* and *Twitter*. Other MOOCs may have more formal learning content, such as access to recorded lectures and specially created content, with automatically graded exercises and quizzes, and the online conversations may not be the main focus. These are the so-called xMOOCs. Typically, any MOOC will have a core of active learners, and a larger body of 'lurkers' (passive onlookers). The xMOOCs run by Coursera, Udacity and edX can offer certificates of completion, and possibly some sort of assessment. What one doesn't get, though, is a university 'degree' from any of these MOOCs.

4 Is there a downside?

Given the high percentage of lurkers and dropouts on MOOCs, there is some debate about whether the participants actually 'learn' anything, and how (or indeed whether) this learning should be assessed. Typically, one will benefit from a MOOC to the extent that one is prepared to contribute, so a certain amount of self-discipline is needed to get anything out of the experience. There is also some discussion about how these MOOCs can sustain a business model – after all, they are offered for free. The xMOOCs are sometimes seen as thinly-disguised marketing by institutions offering samples of their traditional course content for free online. But the fact is that there is a wide range of free online courses being offered by reputable educational institutions – whether they are xMOOCs or cMOOCs – and people who would like to can take part in courses for free.

5 Are there MOOCs for ELT?

There are several MOOCs about educational topics of interest to any educator. Recent offerings include a MobiMOOC on mobile learning, a PLENK MOOC about developing PLNs (personal learning networks), a Games MOOC looking at educational games, and EdFutures, a MOOC looking at how technology is transforming higher education. Stephen Downes' *Online Daily* site (*www.downes.ca/news/OLDaily.htm*) is a good source of information about upcoming MOOCs in education.

In the field of ELT, probably the closest that we currently have to MOOCs are the open online courses offered by SEETA (South Eastern Europe Teachers Associations: *www.seeta.eu*). These short courses (or mini-MOOCs) last a week or two, are offered by well-known ELT experts, and can attract several hundred teachers. Past offerings by SEETA include courses on mobile learning, using video, using digital games and digital literacies (I blogged about my own experiences of running the mobile mini-MOOC for SEETA at *www.emoderationskills.com/?p=444* in 2011). All of SEETA's past courses are archived and available on their website, where you can also keep an eye out for upcoming free courses. Happy MOOC-ing!

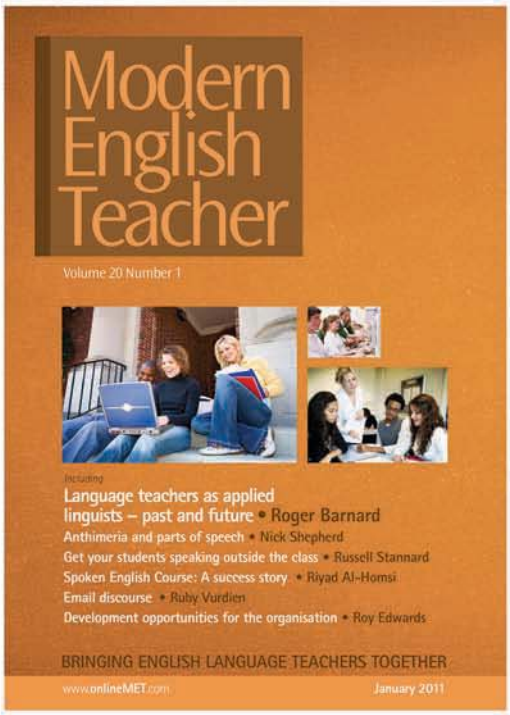


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Webwatcher

Russell Stannard gets his students recording themselves.

Readers who follow my *Webwatcher* articles will know that I am very keen on tools that can develop discussion and oral work outside the classroom. I am especially interested in those that allow students to record themselves speaking and to share their recordings, either as emails or embedded in blogs and wikis. One problem with many of the tools I have focused on so far is that they are not very good if you want to do a threaded discussion (a chain of submissions, linked in sequence). However, I have recently been working with *Intervue* (*http://intervue.me/*), which offers some real opportunities for threaded discussions and collaborative stories. It is free, very easy to use and has a nice interface.

What is *Intervue*?

Intervue allows you to create an account on its website (this is very simple to do) and you can then post questions for your students to log in and answer. You write the questions up as text, but the students' answers are videoed using a webcam (nearly all laptops have webcams these days). Of course, you don't need all the students to have their own webcam; for the activity described below, I only needed three computers in the classroom for my nine students.

Getting started

Once you have set up your *Intervue* account, decide on a topic and write some questions for the students to answer. I decided to do a trial run with a group of Japanese students living with host families in the UK. My topic was 'Differences between Japanese and English culture'. The questions that I wanted the students to think about included the following, which I put on the site:

1 *What differences have you found between the way people live in Japan and in the UK?*
2 *What places have you enjoyed visiting in the UK, and why?*
3 *What have you missed about Japan?*
4 *What has been the best thing about your experience so far?*

I decided that I would tackle the first question in class. I wanted the students to work in groups, brainstorm and discuss ideas, prepare a basic framework for recording their answers and then actually do the recordings in lesson time. I wanted to see how easy or difficult it would be to get them to make their recordings in the lesson – and also whether doing so would change the class dynamic. It took well over an hour in the end, but I was really pleased with the results.

Getting the students started

First, I got the students to log onto the *Intervue* site and I showed them the four questions I had posted, explaining that I wanted them to record their answers to the first question in the lesson.

To stimulate interest, I began by talking about my own experience of living in Spain. I wrote some key areas on the board (*background to my life in Spain*, *friends*, *family*, *timetables*, *priorities*) and then spoke about them for about ten minutes. I tried to provide lots of concrete examples and anecdotes about life in Spain and the UK.

Getting ideas

I then asked the students to think about the differences they had noticed between life in the UK and in Japan. We first brainstormed some areas they might like to consider. They came up with *transport*, *food*, *nightlife*, *dress*, *relationships* (*neighbours*, *friends*, *family*), *timetables*, *cleanliness*, *noise* and *pace of life*.

Next, I put them into groups of three and allowed them to share their experiences and opinions. At first, they kept wanting to break into Japanese, but once they got talking, I think they were quite surprised about just how much there was to discuss and how much they could say in English.

Getting ready to record

I asked the students to take notes on the things they wanted to talk about and to plan and structure their thoughts. I moved around the class, giving help where needed. I then explained that they should rehearse making their recordings. I re-grouped them, and each student in turn practised by telling the rest of their group what they were planning to talk about. Again, I moved around the class, took notes and then gave feedback.

Getting on with it

Finally, the students made their recordings. There were three computers, one for each group. The students took turns to record their answers while the other two members of their group listened. The recordings were better than I had expected – and quite clear, despite the background noise. However, not all the students managed to finish their recordings in class time, so some did them afterwards.

What were the results?

This was a surprisingly good lesson, and some students told interesting stories. One student, for example, was surprised to discover one day that her next-door neighbour had a key to her host's house and had come in unexpectedly to leave some milk and bread. Another talked about how calm life was in Warwick compared to her home town. For feedback purposes, I simply listened to their recordings, took notes and provided general comments. I could have set up a peer-feedback situation, with each student listening to another student and then leaving their own comment.

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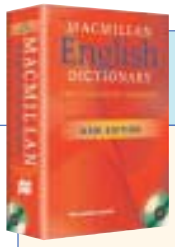
Sadly, I didn't teach this class again, so I never got the chance to do more recordings. I would love to have done a threaded story, for example. Since the videos are added to the screen in order, one student could start a story and the next student could then continue it. Alternatively, *you* could make the first video, getting the students to watch and add their comments, with each student responding to your video and also to the previous student's post. ETp

I have made some help videos for using *Intervue*, which will show you step by step how to use it. You can find these at: **www.teachertrainingvideos.com/intervue/index.html**



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



Prize crossword 57

ETp presents the fifty-seventh 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 57, ENGLISH TEACHING *professional*, Pavilion Publishing and Media Ltd, Rayford House, School Road, Hove, BN3 5JR, UK. Ten correct entries will be drawn from a hat on 10 April 2013 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*).

To solve the puzzle, find which letter each number represents. You can keep a record in the boxes below. 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.

VERY FREQUENT WORDS

*** A period of seven days
*** The process of making information or ideas known
*** A negative answer
*** To start an organisation, company, etc
*** A plural pronoun
*** Bigger or more than is usual
*** To put food in your mouth and swallow it
*** Used in front of the name of man
*** The number of years someone has lived

FREQUENT WORDS

** To change something slightly in order to improve it
** To make a formal choice between two or more issues, people, etc
** An amount of a drug that has been measured so you can take it
** To behave in a particular way because of something that happens to you
** To make a soft knocking sound
** To make changes to a document
** A wild cat with yellowish fur with black stripes
** To feel sorry that something has happened
** To turn to ice
** A small group of people with power and influence
** A period of time with particular characteristics

FAIRLY FREQUENT WORDS

* Able to be believed or trusted

LESS FREQUENT WORDS

– Smaller or less than you need
– A tall evergreen tree with red wood
– An old word used to draw someone's attention to something
– A long thin fish that looks like a snake
– A list giving details of all the things in a place
– Able to be everywhere at the same time
– A large black bird or a chess piece
– A herb used to flavour food
– To give someone information about something
– Despite a particular fact, situation or quality
– So stimulated by something that you behave in a silly way
– Describing a process that you repeat again and again, using the results from the previous stage
– A small infected spot on the face
– A member of a small group that runs a country or organisation
– Full of busy activity
– A tall plant with large purple, yellow or white flowers and long pointed leaves
– A feeling of admiration and respect for someone
– A small wheel that forms part of a machine
– To spoil a reputation or image
– To move suddenly in a different direction
– An abbreviation for *numbers*

4	25	1	1	21	17	2	4	5	18	2	25	17	3 W
16	■	22	■	7	■	■	25	■	5	■	12	25	18	22
22	16	5	■	■	18	2	26	22	16	■	22	■	■	22
15	■	26	16	22	5	18	■	■	17	■	16	25	25	20
2	16	16	22	7	11	22	4	18	2	12	22	■	1	■
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10 L	25	■	4	22	15	5	16	■	14	22	4	18	2	4
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■	■	5	15	23	21	7	18	■	■	22	■	10	■	■

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14	15	16 R	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

11	16	25	26	16	22	7	7	■	3	5	7	■	5	10	10	■
16	2	26	14	18	■	25	17	10	13	■	2	18	■	3	22	17
18	■	25	17	■	18	25	25	■	10	25	17	26	■	■	■	■

James Thurber





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