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Peter Levrai

Demand-high teaching
Jim Scrivener and Adrian Underhill

Let there be light!
Steve Brown

Focus on fluency
Diana Mazgutova



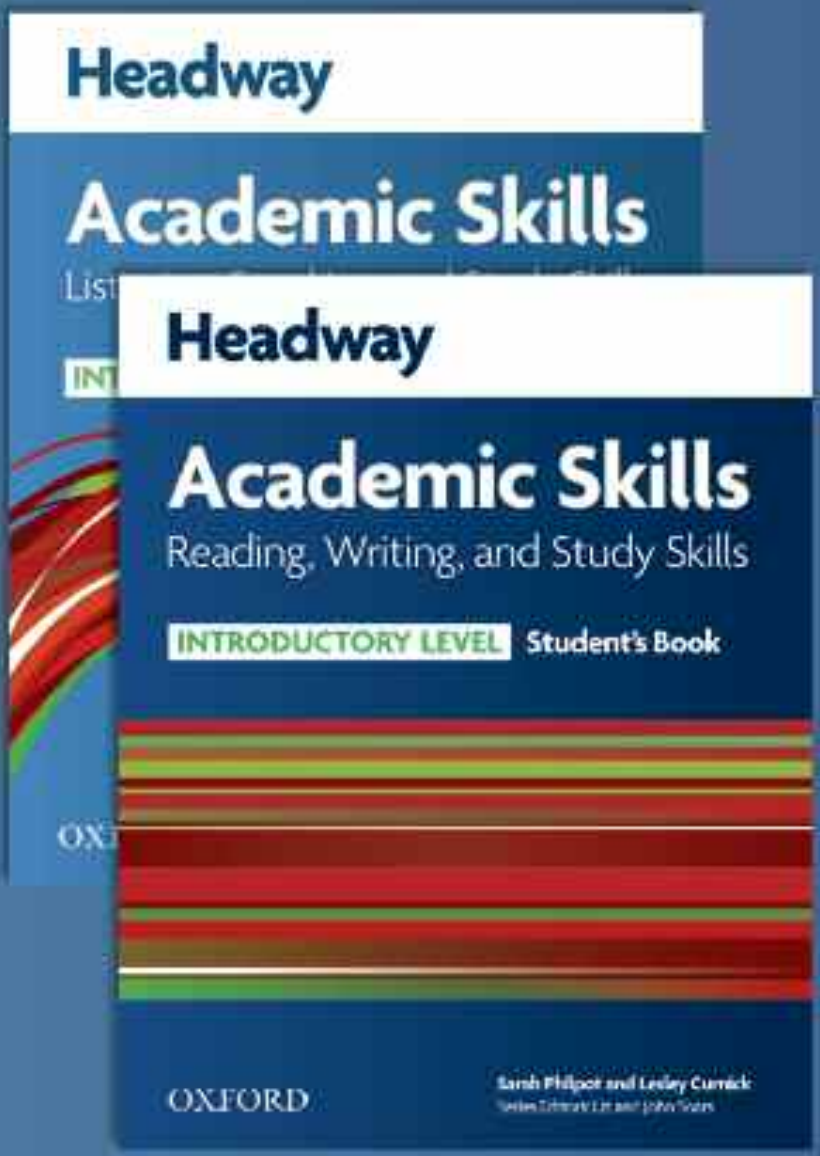
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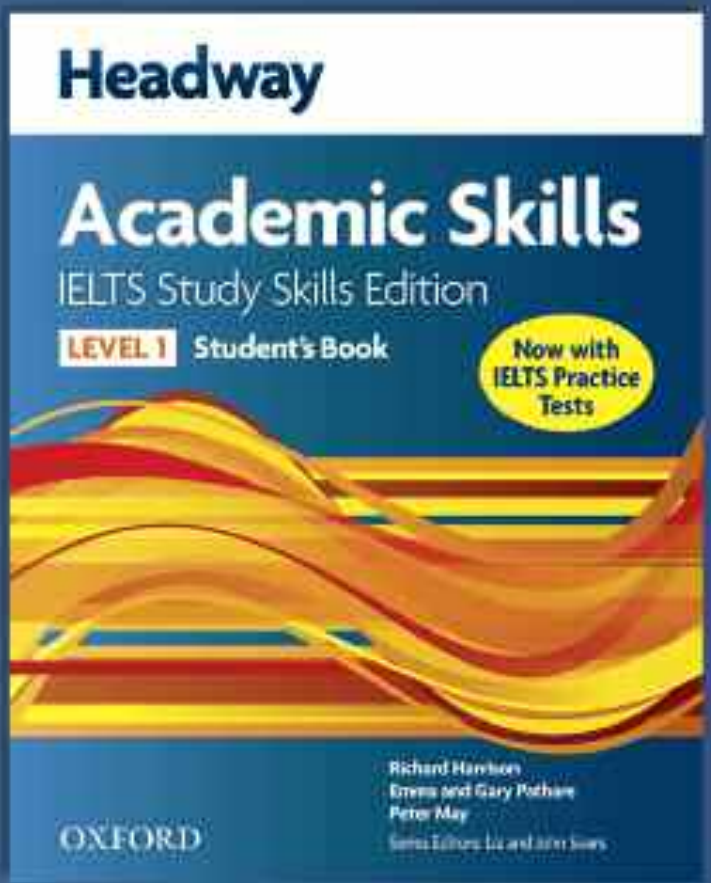
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Contents

MAIN FEATURE

THE COURSEBOOK AS TRAINER 4
Peter Levrai identifies a symbiotic relationship between materials writers and teachers

FEATURES

SMALL WORDS, BIG PROBLEMS 9
Isabel Haller-Gryc believes a deeper understanding of determiners is desirable

FABLES AND FAIRYTALES 13
James Venema finds folktales a fabulous resource

DEMAND-HIGH TEACHING 16
Jim Scrivener and **Adrian Underhill** wonder whether we are aiming high enough

LET THERE BE LIGHT! 18
Steve Brown shines his torch on Underhill and Maley's 'dark matter'

LIGHTENING THE LEXICAL LOAD 26
Samuel Barclay gives his students a break

TESTING, TESTING, 1 2 1 28
Emily Edwards assesses the assessment of individual students

FOCUS ON FLUENCY 34
Diana Mazgutova suggests strategies for stepping-up speaking skills

FROM RESEARCH TO REALITY 2 38
Magnus Coney finds that timing is key to remembering

OVER THE WALL 46
Alan Maley charts the changing nature of reading

IN IT UP TO YOUR EARS 2 56
Mark Hancock creates his own listening materials

TEACHING YOUNG LEARNERS

SAVING THE PLANET (IN ENGLISH) 22
Betka Pišlar awakens her students' ecological awareness

KEEP QUIET! 24
Laura Besley indicates that hand signals are helpful for class control

BUSINESS ENGLISH PROFESSIONAL

THE NEXT BIG THING? 49
Reet Soosaar provides her students with hands-on experience of project management

DIFFERENTIATION IN THE BUSINESS ENGLISH CLASSROOM 52
Louis Rogers caters for individual needs

TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF GRAMMAR 61
Ken Milgate thinks we need to get our grammatical house in order

KEEPING A REFLECTIVE TEACHING JOURNAL 63
Dominick Inglese promotes professional reflection

TECHNOLOGY

TWEET, TWEET! 66
Lesley Lanir has a taste for *Twitter*

WEBWATCHER 70
Russell Stannard explains what *Dropbox* can do

FIVE THINGS YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT: DIGITAL LITERACIES 71
Nicky Hockly explores some new skills we now need

REGULAR FEATURES

TALKBACK 20

LANGUAGE LOG 40
John Potts

IT WORKS IN PRACTICE 42

SCRAPBOOK 54

REVIEWS 58

COMPETITIONS 41, 72

INTERNATIONAL SUBSCRIPTION FORM 32

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Editorial

Just the other day, I received an email from someone who wanted to have an article published in *English Teaching Professional*, which he described as a *'leading trade magazine'*. I was surprised, if not a little shocked, by this description, but it set me thinking about the ways in which English teaching is a *profession* rather than a *trade*, and about all those people who have contributed to its status as such.

In the same week that I got this email, I was sent details of International House's 60th anniversary celebrations. Over this long period, the staff and trustees of IH have worked tirelessly to improve the level of teaching and training all over the world, maintaining the outstanding reputation secured by the founders, John and Brita Haycraft. I thought of all the people who have been through the doors of IH. Some are now well-known figures in the world of ELT; some are simply very good teachers.

In January, Penny Ur and Simon Greenall were both awarded an OBE for services to language teaching in the Queen's New Year Honours List, and it is good to see people who have contributed so much to our profession receiving official recognition. Interestingly, Penny Ur wrote the main feature of Issue 2 of ET*p*, back in 1997. Her title? 'The English teacher as professional'.

In Peter Levrai's main feature in this issue, you will meet a teacher called Bob: not a high-flyer – not even, at first, a teacher with a particular sense of vocation. Like many before him, Bob drifted into language teaching at the end of his university degree. But he liked what he found; he developed his skills and he made teaching his life.

So let's also raise a glass to the Bobs of our profession and to the many unsung heroes who have made, and continue to make, major contributions to the reputation of English language teaching: the army of teachers, trainers, materials writers – even editors – who see what they do as so much more than a *trade*.





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The coursebook as trainer

Peter Levrai identifies a key role for the commercial coursebook.

Love them or hate them, commercially produced coursebooks are with us and will remain with us for the foreseeable future. As our profession continues to grow and evolve, so too must these coursebooks and our attitude to them.

Meet Bob

Bob studied philosophy at university and, when he graduated, he realised that the world was not beating down his door to give him a job. A friend had mentioned teaching overseas as an option and, for want of anything better to do, Bob signed up for a four-week CELTA course and bravely stepped into the unknown, armed with what little grammatical knowledge he could remember from school (*noun*: naming word; *verb*: doing word; *adjective*: describing word).

The first school he worked for didn't have a staff development programme – as long as the students weren't stampeding down the stairs with complaints, everything must be going OK. Nor were there many experienced older colleagues to learn from as there had been a mass walk-out the year before. But it was a great job: a bunch of new teachers with no idea what they were doing, but doing it together.

His second school did run workshops, whenever anyone could be bullied into running one. There was the 'warmers, fillers and coolers' session for when a teacher had five minutes to kill in a lesson. Then the 'running dictation' session, which saw a rash of sweaty students racing round the building trying to find the slips of text on the walls for their particular lesson, made more complicated by the fact that virtually every teacher in the building was doing the same activity at the same time. A session on 'listening' introduced music to the school, Suzanne Vega's *Tom's Diner* being the go-to tune for teaching the present continuous.

Fast-forward a few years, and Bob is still in the profession. He's become a Cambridge ESOL examiner and done some in-company work, as well as working as a senior tutor, then director of studies. He's put together a lot of supplementary material and some business-oriented short courses. If asked about his teaching method, he probably wouldn't articulate it much beyond 'communicative' and, if pressed, it's unlikely he'd come out with an academically sound definition of what that actually means. What *he* means by it is the importance of getting the students interested and getting them to talk to each other, getting them engaged with the topics and comfortable expressing their ideas. He's never been to a conference, picked up the *ELT Journal* or *TESOL Quarterly*, or taken the DELTA. Everything that he has done is based on that initial four-week course and then the years of experience built on top of that.

He is also, by the way, an excellent teacher, his classroom the one that new teachers are sent to observe. He consistently gets very positive feedback from students, who not only enjoy their lessons but also develop their language skills.

Bob is not representative of every teacher, but he is by no means unique. Although many teachers spend *years* learning to teach English and extending their qualifications, it is eminently possible for a native speaker to succeed in our profession (ie stay employed) without taking anything other than entry-level 'qualifications'. Depending on the organisation you work for, there may be no pressing need to be aware of the major debates dominating the industry or to keep up-to-date with the latest theories and principles proposed by the experts. Indeed, as Michael Swan confesses on his website:

'I feel bound to confess that, as I drifted into English language teaching and applied linguistics with no professional training in these areas, I have no qualifications whatever for the work that I do. If I applied to myself for a job as a research assistant, I would have to turn myself down.'

If this is the case – if teachers are not necessarily informed by theory or qualifications – just how do they develop and grow as professionals?

Centrality

Put simply, teachers develop their principles and methodology by and large in the classroom. It's not conferences, journals or academic texts that directly inform teacher practice; it's walking into a lesson and making it out the other side, day after day. It's discussions with colleagues, experiences with classes, the different coursebooks and materials we use.

For a lot of teachers it is the coursebook, more than anything else, which broadens their repertoire of classroom practice, which raises their awareness of language, which provides the basis for both what they teach and how they teach. Indeed, in a lot of cases the coursebook may be the only support a teacher has when in front of a class of students.

The centrality of teaching materials is nothing new. Despite the debate which surrounds the issue of whether coursebooks should be employed or not, teaching materials have always been with us, providing a scaffold for what happens in the classroom. They serve certain needs, from helping structure and manage a lesson, to providing a wider framework that the lesson fits into and serving as a map as to what will happen in a course. So, too, do coursebooks save busy teachers preparation time they might not have and provide a basis that students and teachers can use to negotiate what they will study.

Coursebooks are often criticised for being methodologically unsound and for failing to embrace the implications of the most up-to-date research. But on the theoretical side, how can it be possible to produce a course to keep the sociolinguists, genre analysts, corpus linguists, multiple intelligence advocates, learning style gurus, post-method eclectics, task-based-learning proponents, new grammarians and SLA theorists happy? And on the practical side, what material can serve the teacher stepping into their first-ever class in Vietnam and an MA-qualified teacher in Spain with 20 years' experience behind them? How can material connect with the Iranian businessman trying to negotiate a deal with his Chinese counterparts and a Venezuelan nurse hoping to emigrate to Canada?

For a lot of teachers it is the coursebook, more than anything else, which broadens their repertoire of classroom practice

This need to be *for* all the people all the time, or at least *judged by* all the people all the time, is the central dilemma for material developers. Whatever material you produce, there is no way it can reach universal acceptance. Our knowledge of language acquisition and approaches for encouraging acquisition most effectively are imperfect and, consequently, this means we can only develop imperfect materials. Every choice we make has the 'opportunity cost' of the myriad of other options *not taken*.

Constraints

If coursebooks as they are are inadequate, that means there has to be some innovation to enable materials to fulfil the role they find themselves in. However, this innovation is more easily envisaged than implemented. Any significant change in coursebooks could meet resistance from publishers, teachers and students. There are also physical constraints limiting innovation, ie there is linearity to a book which to some extent imposes linearity on the content. So while there is a need for innovation, it is more likely that this will be an evolution, rather than a revolution.

Theorising about methods seems centred on teachers, *while theorising on learning is centred on* learners

The obvious thing to look for is an e-solution, as digital platforms can escape the confines of the linear page. As Jonathan Turner states, e-learning is *'short, targeted, task-driven and episodic'*, which would seem in line with the major trends in teaching at the moment. Using a digital platform, students can select the material they want, to deal with whatever language point or function is most relevant to them at the time. This 'pull system' counters many of the criticisms of printed coursebooks, in that there is no imposed syllabus and no assumptions about the stages of language acquisition. Students can pull what they want from the system, when they want, if indeed they recognise what they want or, more pertinently, what they need. From Turner's description, it seems as if the digital solution is the holy grail many publishers are currently searching for. One concern with this is that while resources are invested in the development of an e-solution, printed coursebooks might well continue as they always have, each generation a repetition of what was successful before.

Choice

Curiously, when reading about teaching methodology one encounters surprisingly little direct reference to second language acquisition theory or developments in the field of learner styles. Theorising about methods seems centred on *teachers*, while theorising on learning is centred on *learners*. Obviously, SLA is in teaching method theories implicitly, in the call for learner autonomy, etc, but it leaves the materials developer caught in a cacophony of competing voices, theories, proposals and techniques.

The coursebook as trainer

What is more, there is no one single method which embodies the perfect way to teach, nor are we ever likely to find one, as B Kumaravadivelu points out. This lack of a single solution is at the core of the post-method movement where, rather than providing a method for teachers to follow, the aim is to *'help practising teachers develop their own theory of practice'*. Kumaravadivelu proposes that pedagogy be informed by what he terms *macrostrategies*, ranging from contextualising input to promoting autonomy, which the teacher then puts into practice through *microstrategies* they develop themselves.

Helping teachers develop their own methodology, and students their learner strategies, should, therefore, be at the centre of modern teaching materials. In terms of choosing an approach or method, the material writer has to

> *There has to be space in materials, an awareness that they are not the be all and end all of what is needed*

abdicate responsibility. Crucially, it isn't a choice that has to be made at the material *generation* stage but at the material *activation* stage by the teacher. What the material writer can do is cherry-pick from the methods of the past. As Nigel Harwood points out, the materials writer has to embrace plurality and be aware that the coursebook should no longer represent a script to be followed – it will be put into operation in different ways by different teachers in different contexts. Consequently, material writers need to make sure their materials are flexible and open to adaptation. It is through this principle of using multiple approaches that a vital step in teacher development takes place. Exposure to different ideas and different techniques which can be employed to reach the same goal will lead to better-equipped teachers who can employ alternative strategies if a planned activity is not working or seems unsuitable for a particular class and learning point. So too can this multiplicity benefit students, who will also develop a wider range of strategies they can use in various learning situations.

Challenge

There has to be space in materials, an awareness that they are not the be all and end all of what is needed. And rather than filling that space with an increasing range of workbooks, CD-ROM activities and online extensions, perhaps what would be better is leaving the space as it is, in fact, encouraging learners and teachers to see the spaces, see what is missing, and enable them to produce local solutions.

The single biggest challenge that coursebooks have to overcome is the limitation of pre-determined linearity, which is at odds with what we know of language acquisition. The proposal of this article is that linearity can be overcome through offering choice. A coursebook should be a collection of inputs (texts, audio, video) with each input supported by a selection of tasks and activities to promote different outputs, drawing on various aspects of teaching methodology and SLA theory. These activities could be categorised as shown below:

- **Language exploration** – activities to develop understanding of meaning and context
- **Focus on form** – activities to raise awareness of language structure and functions
- **Vocabulary building** – activities to develop knowledge of lexical items and chunks
- **Learner strategies** – activities to develop student strategies for processing and producing language
- **Language production** – activities to lead to student production, ie discussion, roleplay, writing

An initial needs analysis at the start of the book could guide students and teachers towards the categories of activity that might be most beneficial, and this could be revisited as the course continued. There would be no set prescription as to which, if any, of the activities should be done. and to overcome the concept of linearity the book could be provided into four sections, as follows:

Section		Content
A	Input texts	written text, audio, picture or video inputs
B	Suggested activities	activities to go with specific input texts
C	Template activities	activities to be used either with any of the input texts or with texts sourced locally by the students or teachers
D	Reference bank	grammar reference and genre models for writing

In this way the advantages of e-learning can be mimicked in print, allowing students and teachers to pull the syllabus they want from the material, rather than having one imposed.

Considerations

Central to the success of this type of coursebook would be the guidance in the teacher's book and students' book. It's not enough to offer choice: the purpose of each option has to be articulated clearly so teachers can make an informed evaluation of what might be most appropriate in their classroom and so the students themselves can determine the most effective ways for them to engage in the process of improving their English, according to their learning style or learning preferences. More than a language course, the suggestion is that coursebooks evolve into a language acquisition skills training manual for both teachers and students.

As to the input texts themselves, there will be a place for fully authentic materials (texts generated without the intention of use in the ELT classroom) but authenticity in and of itself is not the most important consideration. There will also be scope for materials which have been enriched to highlight a particular feature or make it more accessible to learners. It's not so much a question as to whether the inputs are authentic or fabricated, so much as how engaging they are and if they are truly representative of the language the students will have to deal with.

The positioning of material as a source of teacher development has major implications for the materials writer

As a practical example, look back at the story of Bob at the start of this article. Its purpose was to highlight the disconnect many teachers have from the theoretical debates at the heart of our profession, but if we consider it now as an input text, it lends itself to exploitation in different ways:

- Perhaps we might want to focus on the use of idiom, or the use of tenses in narratives.
- University students might want to consider the appropriacy of the language for an academic paper and perhaps rewrite it in a more formally academic style.
- There could be a discussion (pre- or post-reading) as to what makes a good teacher.
- Students could be encouraged to reflect on how their education prepared them for what they are doing at the moment, or how they hope it will benefit them in the future.
- There could be a reflection on the types of classroom activity students find useful, raising awareness of learning styles and kinaesthetic learning.
- It could be used to open a discussion on how people plan their careers, or the importance of life-long learning.

Many possible activities spring from a single item of input and it is impractical to do them all. However, rather than making the choice themselves, the materials writer should present the many, leaving the all-important choice as to which activities to do to the stakeholders in the context.

Consequences

This positioning of material as a source of teacher development has major implications for the materials writer. If teachers do not have a 'method' which they impose on material, then the methodology of the materials itself takes on even greater significance. Rather than teachers simply being the mediator of the coursebook, going through the activities in a pre-determined way and the students following along, the relationship has to become more dynamic, with the coursebook offering a buffet of options, but the actual decisions as to what is consumed determined in the classroom.

At most, coursebooks are a jumping-off point for teachers and learners and, as such, their prime function should be enabling the learning experience to blossom outside the scope of the materials. This can be achieved by awareness-raising, for both teachers and learners. That is not to say materials necessarily need lengthy explicit explanations of the theories which inform them but, through the promotion of different types of task and activity, they can enable the teachers and learners to exploit any input or situation for language acquisition purposes.

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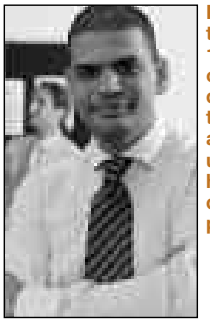
In sum, when writing the coursebook of the future, it becomes less a case of what language the coursebook teaches and much more an issue of how well it encourages teachers to refine their teaching techniques and students to develop their learner strategies. ETp

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Small words, big problems

Isabel Haller-Gryc activates an appreciation of the use of articles.

Although determiners, which include articles, are little words, they can cause big problems for learners of English. Choosing the proper article or determiner to precede a noun is usually quite simple for native speakers. However, for those whose L1 is not English, this simple task can hamper their mastery of the language; yet many grammar books fail to provide adequate practice of this skill.

An unhelpful drill

The following excerpt from a drill activity for practising articles is a typical example of a grammar practice book exercise:

> **Choose the correct definite or indefinite article: *the*, *a*, *an* or *x* (zero article).**
>
> 1 I saw _____ cat. _____ cat was being chased by _____ dog.
>
> 2 Please meet me at _____ train station in _____ hour from now.
>
> 3 My father won _____ award for being _____ fastest runner in his school.
>
> 4 I bought _____ new coat, but _____ sleeves are too short.

This activity requires the students to decide between four choices (sometimes more if other determiners or quantifiers are included) but often leaves them guessing rather than truly understanding which is the correct answer. Furthermore, gap-fill activities like this imply that only one choice is correct, and disregard the fact that article choice is reliant on other factors and may vary from person to person. This can be seen best by looking at Martha Kolln's discussion regarding choosing determiners. She presents the following paragraph and poses the challenge of inserting determiners in front of all the nouns that require them.

Dorothy was little girl who lived on farm in Kansas. Tornado struck farm and carried her over rainbow to land of Munchkins. Soon afterwards she met scarecrow who wanted brain, tin man who wanted heart, and lion who wanted courage. On way to Emerald City four friends met wicked witch who cast spell on them in field of flowers. Witch wanted magic shoes that Dorothy was wearing. When they reached city, as you recall, they met wizard. Story has happy ending.

If several people completed this paragraph, their versions would most likely not be exactly the same, demonstrating that article usage depends on perspective and context, and not always on rules.

Merely relying on gap-fill activities can be problematic, especially for students at beginning levels, for the following reasons:

- Article usage often depends on context rather than rules and sometimes not enough context is given to help the students make an effective choice.
- Gap-fill activities often lead students to believe that an article is required and they often forget that just because there is a blank, it doesn't mean they have to complete it with an article: there are many situations when no article is needed.
- Gap-fill activities do not promote critical thinking (especially if no discussion follows the activity); instead, they may promote guessing.
- Gap-fill activities do not offer examples of correct article usage in natural language.

To help students become more successful in dealing with articles and to help them understand the patterns and exceptions, a better approach that eliminates the need to choose – but, instead, has the students analyse reading passages to determine why the articles in the text were chosen – will be presented here.

A more helpful approach

Before a lesson on articles can begin, it is important that the students understand some concepts related to nouns. First, they must be able to identify countable/uncountable nouns, singular/plural nouns and common/proper nouns. This understanding is crucial, as students need to be aware, for example, that every singular countable (common) noun must have some kind of determiner in front of it (eg a possessive or an article). Another instance of the importance of these concepts is illustrated by the fact that *a* and *an* can only be used with countable nouns, whereas *the*, which is slightly more versatile, can be used with countable and uncountable nouns but

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Small words, big problems

not with most singular proper nouns. It is clear from these few examples that understanding nouns is crucial to understanding how to use articles.

Once these features related to nouns are understood, a discussion of how to determine 'definiteness' must follow. Many grammar books use the terms *definite* and *indefinite* and this terminology can be very confusing for students, so explaining what they mean is necessary.

Indefinite articles *a/an* refer to nouns which are unknown to the listener or reader when they are first used in a conversation or story. The definite article *the* is used for nouns that have already been introduced and are already known or understood. Students usually have no problem understanding the definition of indefinite articles versus definite: determining what is known or unknown is the difficult part. So at this point the sources of definiteness need to be explained. John Kohl lists these as:

1 The noun has been previously mentioned.

2 A superlative or ranking adjective makes the noun's identity specific.

3 The noun describes a unique person, place or thing.

4 A modifying word, phrase or clause follows the noun and makes it clear which specific person or thing you are referring to.

5 The context or situation makes the noun's identity clear.

After attributes related to nouns and basic 'rules' that apply to articles have been presented, the students should at least, for initial practice, be directed to analyse reading passages instead of completing gap-fill activities. The following process works well to encourage discussion and critical thinking.

Procedure

Assign a simple reading passage that has lots of nouns that appear with and without articles. Have the students go through the text and underline all the *nouns*. Then have them go back through and highlight all the *articles*, if possible using a different colour for each different type of article (*a*, *an*, *the*). Once all nouns and articles have been identified, put the students in pairs or groups to discuss each noun. If it does *not* have an article, a reason must be given (eg it's a singular proper noun or a plural indefinite common noun). If it *does* have an article in front of it, then, again, the students must explain why.

The short paragraph above and the explanations that follow demonstrate this process.

This example does not represent all the situations that students will encounter, but is meant to show the process of this approach. This process is helpful because it provides an example of a text that already has correctly placed articles, and it requires the students to think critically about why each article (or lack of article) is correct. When implementing this activity, you should select passages that have varied article use to maximise the opportunities for discussion.

★ ★ ★

Even advanced learners find choosing which article to place before a noun a daunting task. However, grammar books are filled with endless gap-fill activities that require students to do this. Offering an activity that promotes discussion can help the students understand the thought process involved in choosing articles and to appreciate that although article usage is partly determined by rules, the context and the shared knowledge of those who are participating in the communication also play a key role. ETp

Isabel Haller is from *Monroe*, *New York*, which is located about 50 miles north of
1 2 3

New York City. *New York City* is *the* largest *city* in *the* *United States*.
4 5 6 7

Now *Isabel* lives in *Pullman*, *Washington*, which is *a* small *town* in southeastern
8 9 10 11

Washington in *the* *Palouse region* of *the* *Pacific Northwest*. *Pullman* is home to
12 13 14 15

Washington State University. *Isabel* works as *an* ESL *Instructor* at *the* *university*.
16 17 18 19

Explanations

1, **2**, **3**, **4**, **5**, **8**, **9**, **10**, **12**, **15** and **17** We do not normally use an article with city names, state names and people's names.

6 We use the definite article with a superlative adjective.

7 We use the definite article with place names that are plural.

11 We use an indefinite article with a singular countable noun when the noun is just 'one of many' and is therefore indefinite.

13 and **14** When a place name is the name of a geographical region, we use the definite article.

16 We do not normally use an article with university names. *If the word *of* is part of the name (eg the University of North Carolina), we need to use *the*.

18 We use an indefinite article with a singular countable noun when the noun is just 'one of many' and is therefore indefinite. We use *an* because it is before a vowel sound

19 We use the definite article *the* when a noun has been mentioned previously.

Kohl, J R 'Article usage' *www.rpi.edu/web/writingcenter/esl.html*

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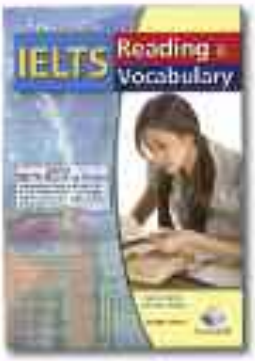
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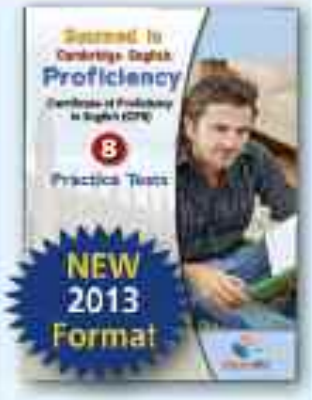
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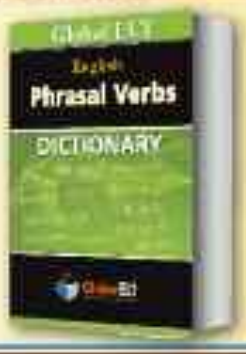






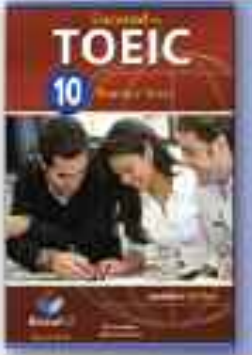
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Fables and fairytales

James Venema

suggests we surprise ourselves and our students with some very special stories.

'There can be no good fable with human beings in it. There can be no good fairytale without them.'
(G K Chesterton)

There are probably few places in the world which have not been permeated by fables and fairytales. A teacher need only show an image from *The Tortoise and the Hare* or write the word *Cinderella* on the board to start students from Germany to Japan, from Greece to Mexico, off on the stories. This familiarity is an obvious advantage in facilitating reading and/or listening comprehension that many teachers may already be taking advantage of. However, some of this familiarity may be based on modern versions and on a cultural filtering that can leave out lesser known, and occasionally less digestible, stories. Furthermore, a closer look at the morals of the stories – *explicit* in the case of most fables and usually *implicit* in the case of fairytales – can uncover very different and often surprising messages.

A closer look at the morals of the stories can uncover very different and often surprising messages

Both the familiarity of fables and fairytales and their ability to surprise present opportunities to facilitate reading, listening and discussion in the English classroom.

Fables

'So in all the fables that are or are not Aesop's, all the animal forces drive like inanimate forces, like great rivers or growing trees. It is the limit and the loss of all such things that they cannot be anything but themselves: it is their tragedy that they could not lose their souls.'
(G K Chesterton)

While fables may be common to many cultures and languages, one cannot begin a discussion on fables without reference to Aesop. Yet there remain questions and controversy regarding the author of the original Greek fables. Most historians attribute the fables (or the majority of them) to Aesop, a slave in the ancient republics of Greece, born around the sixth century BC and later freed – as a reward, perhaps, for dazzling audiences and readers with his stories. Whether he is real or fictional, the author or the collector of fables, the sole author or one of many, does not, for our purposes, really matter. The power of these fables to entertain and instruct remains.

The fables are typically short and almost always contain animal characters. There are normally three parts: the situation in brief, a choice of action and, finally, the result and evaluation. The evaluation, whether overtly written or implied, is key as the stories are primarily vehicles for instruction. Therein lies the rationale for animal characters. Whereas with humans it might be difficult to refrain from assuming complexity in motives and character, the animals

Fables and fairytales

remain trapped within their own characterisations. A lion will always be strong and ruthless; a fox cunning and spiteful; a crow silly and vain. Where animal characters try to change who and what they are, the inevitable result is failure and, often, their downfall.

The morals are by reputation timeless and universal, but can also be jarring to the modern liberal mind. Thus, the lovesick lion who strips himself of claws and teeth to satisfy the protective father of the girl he adores is then sent scornfully packing with a brandished club by the same father in *The Lion in Love*. The wolf, after repeatedly failing to find an excuse to absolve his conscience, goes ahead and devours the helpless lamb in *The Wolf and the Lamb*. And the farmer's good deed in nursing a snake back to health is rewarded with a fatal bite in *The Farmer and the Viper*. The overall theme is clear: the world is a dangerous place that is divided into the weak and the strong, and one must use cunning and be street-smart to survive. Foolish idealism and wishful thinking can only result in one's own downfall.

Fairytales

'Self-sacrifice becomes the prudent course of action [in fairytales]. There is a puzzling irony here. The tales imply that it is wrong to set greater value on wealth than on goodness, yet material rewards are given to those who set the least store in them.'
(P Gila Reinstein)

The origins of fairytales can be traced to folklore. The literary fairytale with which we are most familiar evolved from oral folktales to a written genre, becoming most famous in the works of Perrault in France, the Grimm brothers in Germany and Andersen in Denmark. In the twentieth century they underwent another metamorphosis – or 'Disneyfication', if you will – in modern animated film. In addition, movies and children's books offer further versions, often adapted so as to be more palatable to modern western values. The original stories from which the fairytales are derived were often not intended for younger, more sensitive ears.



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Thus, in an earlier version of *Little Red Riding Hood* published by Paul Delarue, called *The Story of Grandmother*, the heroine unwittingly cannibalises her grandmother, strips off and burns her clothes and climbs into bed with the wolf, before finally engineering her own escape by protesting the need to relieve herself. And in an earlier version of *Sleeping Beauty*, called *Sun, Moon and Talia*, by Giambattista Basile, instead of a handsome prince and a chaste kiss, we encounter a rather sordid king who, upon encountering the sleeping beauty *'gathered the fruits of love and left her lying there'*, only to return much later to find her miraculously awake and with two children. The king 'redeems' himself by stepping in at the last minute to protect the sleeping beauty from the vengeance of his bloodthirsty queen, intent on serving the girl and the children to her husband for dinner!

Stories like this (particularly the suggestive parts) were deemed unfitting as the fairytale evolved into a written genre specifically aimed at children. Therefore, in updated versions of *Rapunzel* by the Grimm brothers, Rapunzel's deceit is uncovered by a slip of the tongue rather than the tightness of her clothes, indicative of pregnancy. Somewhat surprising to the modern reader is how much violence survived the editing process. Thus, Cinderella's sisters, in the Grimm brothers' version, cut off their own toes and heels to fit into the slipper, only to have their deceit uncovered by the blood dripping from their shoes; and they are subsequently rewarded for their ill-treatment of Cinderella by having their eyes pecked out by birds on her wedding day. And the heroine of Andersen's *The Little Mermaid* suffers having her tongue cut out in order to become human. Of course, these parts of the story didn't survive the editing board of the Disney writers.

Whereas fables offer a cynical vision of a world where only the cunning and ruthless survive, fairytales reward meekness and obedience in their female characters with magical rewards. Thus, Cinderella's humility and stoicism in the

face of bullying and taunting by her stepsisters and stepmother is rewarded by the intervention of a fairy godmother or, in the Grimm version, a magical tree and birds. Charm is rewarded over cunning. Self-sacrifice is rewarded over cynicism. And magic prevails over all obstacles.

The ELT classroom

Fables such as *The Tortoise and the Hare*, and the moral they convey, may be familiar to most readers, but select fables still have the ability to surprise with their cynicism. Three notable fables are already cited above and can be found online at the Project Gutenberg Ebook of Aesop's Fables (*www.gutenberg.org/files/11339/11339-h/11339-h.htm*). A quick perusal will uncover more fables conveying the same rather harsh world view. Since fables, as well as fairytales, have been around more than long enough to avoid copyright law, teachers are free to copy and paste (and even adapt) the stories to suit their students' needs. Indeed, while fables are short, the language tends to be literary and dated, so some gentle rewriting can make them much more accessible to lower-level readers.

Fables, with their short simple stories and standard format, are an ideal form to inspire prediction, storytelling or some creative revisionism. Before telling a fable or getting their students to read it, teachers might consider presenting the students with a picture from which they can pre-tell the fable. There are some high-quality illustrated editions of Aesop's fables, such as that by Charles Santore. Those teachers without access to such editions can always search online for pictures, and will typically find themselves with a wealth of images to choose from. Where students are uncomfortable with the moral of the fables, they can be encouraged to revise them to alter the message. There are some examples online, my favourite (despite the inaccurate subtitles) being a *YouTube* video revision of *The Ant and the Grasshopper* at *www.youtube.com/watch?v=VKFsnfK0Ao0*.

Fairytales, because of the prevalence of watered-down versions in modern mass media, offer an even greater opportunity to surprise or shock modern readers. A number of examples are already noted above. For more examples, *Folk and Fairytales*, edited by Martin Hallett and Barbara Karasek, offers a wonderful anthology of classic fairytales and folktales, as well as world stories that bear a striking resemblance to their European cousins. Many of the stories are also available online and can be easily adapted by teachers to make them more accessible to students. There are, of course, more modern versions of the classic fairytale available, such as the post-feminist interpretation in the illustrated children's book *The Paper Bag Princess*, or the more recent revisions as graphic novels in the series by Stone Arch Books. Wherever different versions of fairytales are found, there is the opportunity to ask students to compare and contrast, and perhaps choose their favourite version.

Fables, with their short simple stories and standard format, are an ideal form to inspire prediction, storytelling or some creative revisionism

Fairytales are abundant in film, from early animated versions such as some of the Betty Boop films by Max Fleischer (where copyright is also void) – if you can stand the sexism– to the ubiquitous Disney films, to more creative works, such as those based on *Little Red Riding Hood*: Neil Jordan's *The Company of Wolves* and the beautiful short film *Little Red Riding Hood* by David Kaplan (based on the more shocking original story by Paul Delarue). Hollywood's fondness for fairytale adaptations shows no sign of abating, with the release in 2012 of two adaptations of *Snow White*, entitled *Mirror, Mirror* and *Snow White and the Huntsman*. For a thorough reference of fairytale and film (up to 2011), *The Enchanted Screen* by Jack Zipes is an excellent resource.

Students can also be asked to compare and contrast the messages of fables and fairytales. Which genre students prefer as a vehicle for instructing children may depend on their socioeconomic status, at least according to an article by Reinstein. She writes that inner-city adult students found that Aesop's fables offered valuable lessons in survival, and they disdained the impractical, idealistic messages in fairytales. Conversely, middle-class students from a state college found Aesop overly cynical and preferred the cloistered, more secure world of fairytales for teaching valuable social skills such as kindness, loyalty and love.

★ ★ ★

For teachers searching for authentic stories for the classroom, fables and fairytales may warrant a second look. Despite their ubiquity, or even because of it, they still retain the ability to entertain, enlighten and surprise. As genres with explicit or implicit messages, often undergoing revisions over time, there is also the opportunity for interpretation, for comparison and for discussion – even for rewriting. So go back and dust off some of those 'children's stories': you just might be surprised by what you find. ETp

Chesterton, G K In Vernon Jones, V S *Aesop's Fables: A New Translation* Avenel Books 1912

Hallett, M and Karasek, B (Eds) *Folk and Fairytales* Broadview Press 2011

Jordan, N (director) *The Company of Wolves* 1984

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Reinstein, P G 'Aesop and Grimm: contrast in ethical codes and contemporary values' *Children's Literature in Education* 14 (1) 1983

Sanders, R (director) *Snow White and the Huntsman* 2012

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Demand-high teaching

Jim Scrivener and **Adrian Underhill** propose making learning visible.

In the *Matrix* series of films, the protagonist, Neo, lives within a happy lie – though he has doubts which he struggles to investigate. When he is offered a choice between taking a blue pill (which will maintain this illusion) and a red pill (that will allow him to see the underlying truth of things), he takes the red pill – and suddenly realises that what seemed 'normal' was just a front, an illusion, a Potemkin village.

Teachers, trainers and writers in ELT sometimes feel uneasy about aspects of our work – and it can be difficult to know whether and how to articulate this. A magazine like this keeps offering us red pills to wake us up. Here is one.

Illusions

Many would say that ELT now has a well-developed methodology, with sophisticated skill sets, techniques and activities and an intelligent take on the language and what should be taught. Our current methods 'work', teachers are friendly, lessons have been prepared to shared standards, materials are colourful and interesting, methods are 'received contemporary' (ie familiar and acceptable), activities are 'interactive' and students happy. But have we taken our eye off something else?

Where is the detailed attention to the learning going on in the learner, as opposed to the teaching going on in the teacher? Are our learners as fully challenged as they can be? Are we teaching below the 'learning level' of the students, perhaps because of a preoccupation with something else?

Do our sophisticated coursebooks steer teachers towards attending to the mechanics of task rather than to the learning? We turn pages, check through answer lists, tick off syllabus items. Might we get lulled by an illusion that learning has been accomplished?

Where is the detailed attention to the learning going on in the learner, as opposed to the teaching going on in the teacher?

If you ask teachers *'Are your students challenged to their full potential?'* they may respond with *'Perhaps not, but I don't want to push my students too hard'* or *'Perhaps not, but I don't want to put them in the spotlight or make them feel bad'* or *''Perhaps not, but I am a humanistic teacher and so I …'*, etc. It may be that they are reacting against their own experience of being pushed and demanded of, in ways that were not helpful, engaging or enjoyable. But leaving aside unreasonable demand, what quality of demand can we put in its place?

Questions

At the IATEFL conference in Glasgow in 2012, we started sowing a meme. We called it *demand-high teaching* – but it could have other names. It is the beginning of an inquiry. It isn't fixed or concrete or certain – but it does take a stand and argue. It isn't a method or anti-method – but it has a view on how any method is applied. We are proposing small tweaks to where we are, not wholesale reboots.

Our initial question is simple:

- *Is **whatever** I do enabling my students to be challenged to their full human learning capacity?*

Other questions swiftly follow from this starting point:

- *What is my role in helping them to be fully challenged? How can I tell when this is happening?*
- *Have the tasks and techniques I use in class become rituals and ends in themselves? Do I need to shift preoccupation from running a successful **task** to optimising **learning**?*
- *What small adjustments can I make to optimise the **doable** demand on the students' learning processes? What is the minimum tweak necessary at any point in any lesson to shift an activity into the challenge zone?*

Proposals

Having started asking these questions of ourselves, we want to invite others to ask them of their own classes too. We also want to offer our own proposals, not as right answers or solutions, but as experiments to be tried, tested, amended, rejected or improved. We're suggesting that ways forward might be at three levels:

a) a shift of attitude: especially the expectation that learners are capable of more than we typically ask of them;

b) a change of focus of teacher energy: moving from preoccupation with the mechanics of activity, task and material towards making the learning itself visible;

c) tweaks in technique: well-tuned interventions and higher skill sets of classroom management.

Demand-high does *not* mean 'making things more difficult'. It's a doable demand that comes precisely at the point where the learners are capable of taking their next steps forward – and helping them to meet that demand, rather than ignore it. This contrasts with past experiences we may have had of teachers simply making things more difficult: an undoable, probably unhelpful, demand. Demand-high does not mean asking for *more* of the same. It is asking for *different*.

We watch Jim's one-year-old child exploring the world and his own growing abilities. No one has to tell him to try to stand up, balance, climb on a chair. He is naturally working at the edge of his capacity; he doesn't waste time working below it. He is engaged, living in the moment of immediate unfolding learning. For an adult, too, engagement – when it happens – has a quality of worthwhileness about it that opens up something, moves you forward, solves and resolves. But adults have other distractions and can find it hard to engage as fully as an infant. Often, it doesn't just happen by itself.

Learning

Teachers have a role in facilitating that engagement by exerting some degree of push at just the right place in just the right degree at just the right moment. The activities and the materials are no longer the end in themselves; in a demand-high classroom they are just the scenario, the location in which something else, something immediate, something more important, more exciting and more valuable happens.

Engagement has a quality of worthwhileness about it that opens up something, moves you forward, solves and resolves

Here is an example of demand-high inquiry focusing on one small (but crucial) area of a teacher's work – working with answers to questions:

When a student gives a correct answer, do you tend to acknowledge it, maybe with a rubberstamping validation comment such as *'That's right'* or with praise or echo, and then move on to the next question? This way of working has the advantage of being quick and successfully ticking the 'right answer' boxes. But could it be covering up as much as it is uncovering – creating a comforting illusion that learning is happening?

We assume that one person giving an answer means that everyone has 'got it' and we can move on

What if, instead, we involved many more students in thinking about and unpacking the question and answer, and in listening to each other? What if we used techniques such as postponing our own validation of responses in order to leave them (and any further responses to responses) hanging – not as an abdication, but to replace them with pushing, nudging interventions that force each student to think, re-question, readjust at their own level: to one student, a question to make her question her own answers; to another, a correction; to another, a hint towards an insight; to another, a different word choice. As the teacher holds open this space (which may last a few seconds or a couple of minutes), the group co-creates a learning story and, as it opens up, participants can start to inhabit the territory and move to the frontier of their own learning zones – which, in turn, alters the perspectives of everyone else. The teacher starts to see the learning processes, as may the students. This is demand-high because, instead of extinguishing the question before it gets going, the teacher has let the question develop, following the contours of the students' unfolding insights.

★ ★ ★

None of these techniques is new or unfamiliar – but we are proposing that when used together, with the purpose of making learning processes visible, they can be immensely powerful.

Yes, it takes time, but perhaps the first version – the swift answer check – takes up too *little* time, creating a sweet blue pill illusion where we assume that one person giving an answer means that everyone has 'got it' and we can move on. But is this a kind of falseness in contemporary methodology, so familiar that we hardly stop to notice its disconnection from learning? The right words in the right order are only one kind of right answer. And saying 'yes' to the first person who gets that doesn't take us very far.

'Demand-high' challenges some of these blue pill illusions. We ourselves find this demanding. As Morpheus says in *The Matrix*:

'Red pill or blue pill? After this there is no turning back. You take the blue pill: the story ends, you wake up in your bed and believe whatever you want to believe. You take the red pill … and I show you how deep the rabbit hole goes.' ETp

If you are interested in demand-high, have a look at Jim and Adrian's website: *demandhighelt.wordpress.com*.



Jim Scrivener is Head of Teacher Development for Bell. His publications include *Learning Teaching* (Macmillan), two business coursebooks for OUP, *Teacher's Books for Straightforward* (Macmillan), *Teaching English Grammar* (Macmillan) and *Classroom Management Techniques* (CUP), which was overall winner of the HRH The Duke of Edinburgh ESU English Language Book Award 2012.

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Let there be light!

Steve Brown revisits the reasons we are not reactive enough in our teaching.

In Issue 82 of ET*p*, Adrian Underhill and Alan Maley put forward the suggestion that we, as English language teachers, are perhaps not placing enough importance on the 'dark matter' of teaching, that is to say the unpredictability of the classroom situation. In practice, lesson plans tend to act merely as a starting point, and the 'real' teaching exists in the teacher's ability to improvise. Most experienced teachers will be familiar with scenarios where unplanned lesson segments become critical in terms of maximising learning.

Real learner engagement

The idea that teachers need to consider, value and respond to student contributions has been widely accepted for many years. Many well-known approaches like the Silent Way, Community Language Learning and Task-based Learning and, more recently, Dogme all rely on learner input for course content, and they all encourage the teacher to allow the students to use language first before reacting appropriately to the moment. More recent ideas, such as the use of 'future-self guides' (proposed by Zoltán Dörnyei and Ema Ushioda and by Jill Hadfield) and 'demand-high' teaching (described by Jim Scrivener and Adrian Underhill), also support the need for students to be more involved in the development of their own learning and, crucially, for teachers to focus actively on this.

Essentially, what all of the above ideas have in common is the importance of real learner engagement. We need to ensure that learners are involved, and that the teacher is giving them what they need. Again, we go back to the dark matter of teaching: the importance of the moment, the teacher's ability to identify what is going on with the learners and also to know how to respond.

Principles versus reality

If we consider Underhill and Maley's article along with the ideas that have preceded it, we can conclude that the following principles need to be valued highly in ELT:

- Learner needs and goals are of primary importance in a programme of study.
- Classroom dynamics are key elements in a successful learning environment.
- Course content should be dictated (or at least informed) by learner needs.
- Teachers need to value learners' contributions within lessons.
- What is learnt during a lesson cannot be predicted.
- Teaching skills lie less in the ability to plan, and more in the ability to react.

However, in many (perhaps most) English language teaching contexts, what tends to happen in practice is the following:

- Courses follow pre-determined syllabuses which are often very prescriptive in terms of content.
- Courses tend to be driven by the need to cover language points and practise skills, with little priority given to developing classroom dynamics.
- The relationship between course content and achievement of individual learning goals is not always clear.
- The production of lesson plans with clear aims and logical, linear stages is regarded as good practice.
- The success of a lesson is determined by the achievement of a set of pre-determined aims.
- Global coursebooks, which are by nature generic and not specific to anyone's needs, play a major role in course content.

So perhaps we need to ask ourselves why we are still doing all of this. Why are we spending so much time planning lessons when good teaching practice entails digressing from the plan and reacting to the moment? Why decide our aims in advance when there's no way of knowing what the students will actually learn? Why follow a syllabus that doesn't take the needs of the learners into account? Why use materials that were written by people who don't know anything about our students? Why place so much importance on the teaching of specific language points when, as Underhill and Maley point out, *'We cannot predict over the long term what, or when or whether, any given learner or group of learners will learn from our teaching'*?

The reality of the reality

Here are three reasons why valuing unpredictability has so far only had a limited impact on teaching practice:

1 It's not how we're trained.

Cambridge ESOL, Trinity and other TESOL qualification-awarding bodies place lesson planning at the forefront of good practice. Trainees are actively encouraged to spend hours identifying lesson aims, sourcing materials that contribute to their achievement and creating a set of stages that follow a linear progression, culminating in a stage where the students demonstrate that they are able to use the language that is being taught. Aims tend to be very narrow, often focusing on a single language item. Any deviation from the plan is generally seen as a bad thing. If something comes up that was unexpected, the implication is that the trainee didn't 'anticipate problems' sufficiently.

Why are we spending so much time planning lessons when good teaching practice entails digressing from the plan and reacting to the moment?

Other criteria, such as adhering closely to timing, preparing concept checking questions and even planning what your whiteboard will look like, all contribute towards the development of teachers who regard the prediction of lesson content not only as possible, but as being fundamental to good teaching practice.

When teachers complete these training courses, it is understandable that they continue to plan lessons in the same way, despite the time constraints that are put on them. Teachers are so conditioned to value planning during their training experiences that the idea of walking into a class without a plan is regarded as daunting, or even irresponsible.

2 It's not easily measurable.

In a world where everything needs to be evidenced, it is hard to argue a case for valuing the unexpected. As described above, TESOL qualification-awarding bodies expect to see 'evidence of learning'. The idea that a teacher can write a plan and follow it through, showing that the students learnt what was taught along the way, fits nicely into this construct.

Many English language teaching organisations find themselves having to meet criteria set by accrediting or inspection bodies (British Council, HMIe, Ofsted, ISI, etc). Such bodies look for evidence of good practice and the inputting of quality measures. As a result, inspectors expect to see syllabus documents, lesson plans and folders (either paper or electronic) containing course materials.

Teaching institutions that value unpredictability are very difficult to measure in terms of quality; if success hinges on how teachers react at individual moments, how can this be documented? And, perhaps more importantly, how can it be standardised? Syllabus documents and materials folders are a means of ensuring that teachers stay 'on-message' in their lessons and that each course can be seen to cover a particular range of language and skills. However, the more a course is standardised, the less flexibility there is to ensure it caters for its students.

When it comes to assessment – the most common way of measuring progress – standardisation plays a big part in ensuring tests are both reliable and valid. All stakeholders prefer an assessment that allows the candidate to say *'I have achieved this level'*. This lends itself to the creation of assessments that are pre-designed and pre-approved and which, inevitably, wash back into course content: the focus then turns towards what the students need to do to pass the course, rather than what the course needs to do to support its students.

In a world where everything needs to be evidenced, it is hard to argue a case for valuing the unexpected

3 It's not commercial.

It goes without saying that there is a lot of money in English language teaching, and publishing companies are among the main beneficiaries. One of the reasons for this is the phenomenon of the 'global coursebook'.

There is a general acceptance that it is OK to have a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to course materials – the same books are used all over the world, with all kinds of students. Maybe this is because it is convenient for us; as language teachers, we can go anywhere in the world and still be familiar with the materials being used, and we can

►►►

Let there be light!

use the same tried and tested activities no matter who is sitting in front of us. However, there are also clear benefits to publishing companies in creating a single book that can be marketed and distributed globally.

Whatever the causes or motives, we now have a situation where the most commonly used materials have been carefully designed to be suitable for everyone and are, therefore, specific to no one. John Gray says of global coursebooks: *'… content is limited to a narrow range of bland topics … "one size fits all" means the exclusion of the local.'*

> *We have become limited by the constraints placed on us by trainers, employers, inspectors, publishers and broadly held misconceptions.*

It may be convenient and, on the surface, useful for teachers to have such a range of published materials to employ in their teaching. However, what often happens in practice is that published coursebooks provide us with a safe option, stifling creativity and any desire to exploit teaching moments that digress from the materials. Scott Thornbury and Luke Meddings pointed out these limitations in this way: *'If … you take the view that language [learning] is contingent on the concerns, interests, desires, and needs of the user, then the argument for coursebooks starts to look a bit thin.'*

We should also consider the commercial success of teacher training courses. The most widely respected TESOL qualifications are, in business terms, very successful brands. A major overhaul of these qualifications (eg placing less focus on planning and more focus on post-lesson reflection) would be costly and could also jeopardise the success of the brand.

★ ★ ★

To a large extent, Communicative Language Teaching has become a victim of its own success. It is now very much part of the establishment, and teaching practice is bound up with so many other factors that we have become limited by the constraints placed on us by trainers, employers, inspectors, publishers and broadly held misconceptions.

The importance of reactive teaching and being able to respond to learner contributions has been acknowledged and widely accepted for some time now. It is also true that these ideas occasionally find their way into TESOL courses, learning programmes and published materials. But any such focus tends to be on the fringes of a framework that prioritises planning and pre-determined programme design.

To get to grips with the 'dark matter' of teaching we need to bring it into the light and, for this to happen, the whole organisational approach to English language teaching needs to be re-examined. ETp

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TALKBACK!

Phil Wade's article on needs analyses ('If you don't know me by now…' in ET*p* Issue 83) reminded me of the importance of devoting time to discussing needs with students. As Phil suggests, I often spend the entire first lesson discussing my learners' needs – why they are attending an English class, what they feel they are good at in English, what their objectives are and what both they and I can do to help achieve these objectives. We also discuss which subjects interest them. This time is never wasted.

However, it can be difficult to predict what one will want or need far in the future. It may, therefore, also be useful to spend a few minutes at the end of each lesson to discuss the *following lesson*: What do we need to work on next? Is further practice needed? Was anything less useful and why? This can help us better respond to our learners' needs – and not just in terms of language.

Discussing the students' needs with them requires flexibility from the teacher and willingness to give up some power in making decisions. However, letting the learners guide *you* as they let you guide *them* enriches the classroom experience for both parties. After all, isn't teaching and learning about dialogue?

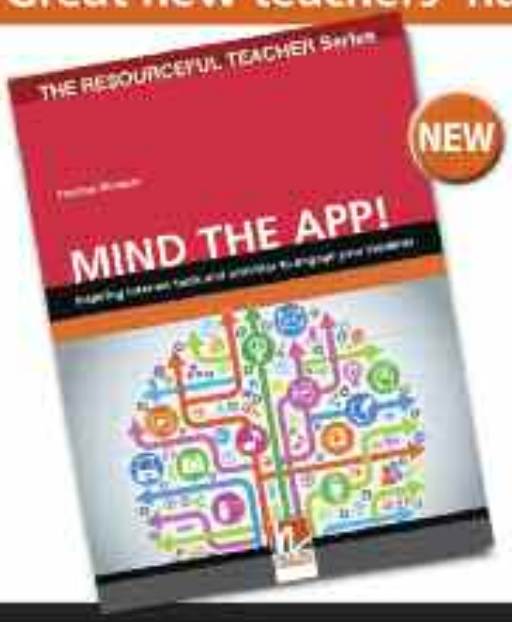
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Saving the planet (in English)

Betka Pišlar shows that learning English and ecology can go hand in hand.

Slovenia lies in a relatively safe part of Europe. It is a mountainous country with an abundance of forests, lakes and rivers with fresh, clean water. In the area around my primary school there is little pollution, so the majority of the pupils enjoy a healthy natural environment. Whilst this is great for them, it has the downside that they are not really aware of the environmental problems that some other countries face.

However, some parts of Slovenia were recently struck by heavy downpours, followed by severe flooding. There was damage to property and in some places people's lives were at risk. One such area was not far from us. After this catastrophe, my pupils became more interested in the impact of severe weather conditions on the lives of people and animals. They started asking questions about what causes changes to the weather.

I decided to take this opportunity to increase my pupils' environmental awareness at the same time as helping them to improve their knowledge of English, so I devised a series of lessons on the topic of ecology.

Discussion

I started by instigating a class discussion in which I invited the pupils to list all the natural disasters they had read about in newspapers or seen in TV documentaries. The most frequently mentioned events were tsunamis, floods, hurricanes, droughts and fires. Next, I put them into groups of four and asked them to discuss (in English) the reasons why at least two of these catastrophes had occurred. This proved to be a good start as they were prepared to listen to each other and to work together.

Ecology is already part of our school curriculum. When we discussed the impact that people have on the environment, the pupils themselves realised that this topic had also come up in a chemistry class.

Quiz

Next, I asked them to answer the following short, easy and fairly light-hearted quiz on environmental issues (in some questions, both answers were correct):

1 Why should we separate the rubbish in our homes?

a) to please our mothers

b) to help the environment

2 Why should we try to grow vegetables in our gardens?

a) to get a sun tan while working in the garden

b) to get healthy food with no chemicals

3 Why should we save water and energy?

a) to help our planet

b) to help our parents pay the bills

4 Why should we use each plastic bag as many times as possible?

a) to save natural resources

b) to produce as little rubbish as possible

5 Why should we cover our saucepans when we are cooking?

a) to save energy

b) to use as many kitchen utensils as possible

Vocabulary

I encouraged the pupils to list all the things we can do to avoid wasting energy and natural resources and creating pollution. They needed some extra help with vocabulary so I introduced several useful verbs, nouns, adjectives and adverbs for talking about the environment, and they wrote these in their wordbanks. These included verbs such as *separate*, *pollute*, *waste*, *recycle*, *reuse*, *damage* and *reduce*; nouns and noun phrases such as *acid rain*, *alternative energy*, *waste material*, *pollution*, *heat*, *natural resources* and

rubbish; and adjectives such as *environmentally friendly*, *biodegradable*, *non-biodegradable* and *renewable*.

We then watched a documentary on environmental issues. The pupils learnt about alternative ways to make electricity, such as solar cells, wind generators and wave power, and the difficulties associated with them. They were already familiar with solar panels, and some mentioned having these on the roofs of their houses. However, the information on wave power and wind generators was completely new to them.

Listening

At the beginning of the next lesson, we listened to some environmentalists talking about deforestation, pollution, the increase in carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and the causes of the hole in the ozone layer. The pupils made notes as they listened and picked up some new vocabulary and expressions.

Speaking

The speaking activity which followed was one that I had been preparing for some time by collecting newspaper pictures on environmental issues. I had managed to find pictures of deforested areas, traffic and factory pollution, rubbish and animals facing extinction. I brought these to class and asked the pupils to work in pairs and to describe each picture, explaining what had happened. This involved quite a lot of revision of tenses.

Competition

All the above activities were rather serious in tone, so I also planned some more amusing things for the pupils to do. I had a class competition to revise the use of irregular verbs on the topic of ecology, which they enjoyed immensely. It involved dividing the class into two teams and getting a member of each team to come up to the board and circle the correct past participle of each verb.

We also did a fun activity where they had to race against the clock to put the new vocabulary in the correct group (verb, noun or adjective) – the winner being the pupil who managed to put the largest number of the words in the correct group in the shortest time.

Experiment

The next activity enabled the pupils to discover, through a simple experiment, how much pollution there was in their environment. I prepared three white cards and put some greasy moisturising cream on each. I then asked the pupils to put the first card near the busiest crossroads in the town, the second in the school grounds and the third in a recreational campsite in the forest not far away from the town. After five days, they collected the cards and compared them. As they correctly predicted, the dirtiest card was the one from the crossroads, while the other two were quite clean. The pupils were happy to find out that we live in a reasonably clean environment.

Action

The final part of the project was to instigate some positive action. The pupils were invited to think about how *they* could help the environment and what *they* could do at home to save the planet. They were asked to discuss this with their families and to come up with some written ideas for homework. The majority of their suggestions involved using bicycles instead of cars, buying and using fewer products containing chemicals, separating rubbish more often and saving electricity by turning lights and appliances off when not in use.

I also wanted them to take part in some joint activity as a class. After discussing what we could do, we agreed on collecting waste paper for recycling. A large container for paper was placed near the school and we got the local radio station to make an announcement informing people about our plan. People were asked to put their waste paper on their doorsteps and the pupils went round collecting it. The pupils were extremely excited about taking part in this project. They all went round collecting paper, even though they had to do it in their free time. In two days they collected nearly 7,000 kilograms of waste paper, which was then taken to a recycling centre. We also decided that this year we would use waste paper to make Christmas cards for our families. These activities gave them a strong sense of achievement and they were extremely proud of themselves. Not only had they done something good for the environment by collecting waste paper but, as the recycling centre paid them for their contribution, they had also earned some extra money which they could spend on a school trip at the end of the year.

★ ★ ★

The pupils involved in this project all showed improvements in their knowledge and use of English vocabulary. They practised listening, speaking and writing in English, which allowed them to learn many new expressions and grammatical structures. They also became more self-confident and proud of their knowledge of English. Cross-curricula links with chemistry, biology and social studies also proved useful to them.

In addition, the pupils became more interested in environmental issues and more careful in their own use of the world's resources, which was demonstrated by changes in their behaviour at school. I noticed that they started to turn off the lights in the classrooms and in the hall when they did not need them. They even suggested we should have separate rubbish bins in the classrooms for different types of waste. Collecting waste paper around the town gave them a real feeling of achievement, and they were proud of their ability to arouse ecological awareness in their own families and in the people of the town.

Through this experience, they saw that it is possible for each individual to do something to benefit the world we live in. ETp



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Keep quiet!

Laura Besley signals the way to achieve a calmer classroom.

Teaching Very Young Learners (VYL) can be more than a little chaotic at times. Still at an age where they are full of energy, most of the students want to run around and make as much noise as possible! This article will focus on how to achieve a calmer classroom environment – not by shouting or even talking, but primarily through using hand signals to communicate. This is firstly because I don't like shouting (and I may lose my voice by the end of the day!) and secondly because I don't think it is the right way to communicate with children. Too much shouting goes over their heads and eventually becomes ineffective.

Getting the message across

It is absolutely critical that VYL classrooms are as safe as possible for your students. No matter how many health and safety checks you do, there are always going to be elements of danger when young children are present, and you have to remain vigilant at all times. In my classroom, children have to remove their shoes and it is very important, therefore, that they don't run as they could slip and fall over, possibly hurting themselves. I also don't want to have to shout *'Stop running!'* a hundred times per lesson. The first time new students are caught running, I kneel in front of them, look them in the eye, hold up one finger and say clearly *'No running'*. I check that they understand, and tell them this is their first warning. If they do it again, they have to sit on a chair to calm down. Over time, they know that as soon as I put up my finger, I mean 'no running'. This way I don't have to shout, and I can communicate what I want from one side of the classroom to the other. This obviously does depend on them looking at you when they're running, but nine times out of ten they do, because they know what they're doing is wrong and I think there's a part of them that wants those boundaries to be reinforced. They want to be told that what they thought was wrong is, indeed, wrong. Then it all makes sense again.

Getting quiet when you need it

Part of getting children to be quiet is getting them to focus on you. You don't want them looking out of the window or talking to their friends. There's no point in just telling them to be quiet: the second you remove your focus from them, they will continue with what they were doing previously.

At the British Council in Hong Kong we use five easy signals to get the children to look, listen, stop talking and sit nicely with their arms folded/hands still.

1. *eyes looking* (mime binoculars)
2. *ears listening* (cup ears)
3. *lips closed* (one finger on lips)
4. *legs crossed* (show them how to sit)
5. *arms crossed* or *hands still* (again, show them what we want)

The first few times you do one of these signals you might have to repeat it several times, doing the actions along with saying the words, to get everyone to join in. Positive reinforcement works wonders, so you should praise those students who are doing what you've asked. In time, you shouldn't need to say the words, miming the actions will tell the students what you want from them.

Getting quiet when you want it

Another way of getting students to be quiet is to count down from five, using your fingers. When I get to zero, I expect them to be quiet. Again, the first couple of times you do this, some children will immediately understand what is expected of them, and others will carry on regardless. It's important to praise the children who have understood and are quiet, as the others will want this praise, too.

If the students are playing or tidying up and I want them to regroup onto the mat, I also use this same technique. Depending on how much time I think they realistically need to get finished and ready, I count faster or slower. The amount of time you give them needs to be fair, otherwise they'll just abandon what they're doing. For example, if they're tidying up and can hear you counting down, they may start to panic that they won't be back on the mat in time. They want the praise, sticker or whatever it is you offer in return for good behaviour, and will probably just drop everything and sit on the mat. This is definitely not what you want!

Getting them in line

When I want my students to line up, I get them to hold out their hands like an aeroplane. This stops them pushing each other.

Storytelling

Hand movements are also great for interactive storybook reading. I like books which have a repeated line (or one you can easily invent) so that the children have more of a role in the process. I always make up a signal for the line they are to repeat. For *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle, the line is *'But he was still hungry!'* When I get to it, I rub my tummy and say *'But he was still hungry!'* I then indicate that it is their turn and rub my tummy again as they say the line, too. This interactive method is more fun, as well as keeping the students more focused.

★ ★ ★

I've found that hand signals work really well for VYL. The instruction is clear, without me having to use my voice. Also, signals can be very effective for low-level learners as they are more or less universal. However, if you make up signals of your own, you must be consistent with them so the students know what to expect and how to behave. ETp



Laura Besley taught business English in Germany for two years and has also taught in the UK. She is currently teaching at the British Council in Hong Kong.

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Lightening the lexical load

Samuel Barclay makes life easier for his students.

Learning vocabulary is one of the most demanding challenges facing a foreign-language student. Moreover, for many it can seem like a tedious battle against a never-decreasing enemy: no matter how many words are acquired, there are always more waiting to be tackled. However, there are some things we can do as teachers to ease the burden of learning lexis.

1 Choose material at an appropriate level

Does the following scenario sound familiar? When doing a reading task, you notice your students refer to their dictionary for every unknown word. On seeing this, you decide to devote some class time to the 'discovery strategy' of guessing meaning from context. Most of the students seem to get the hang of guessing meaning from context, and you're confident that they will resist the temptation to open the dictionary next time they encounter an unfamiliar item. However, to your dismay, in the very next class nothing has changed.

Research has shown that we need to know more than 95 percent of the words in a text in order to be able to comprehend it. This means, according to Liu Na and Paul Nation, that our reading will be seriously affected if more than one word in every 20 is unknown. Therefore, before we start instructing our students in discovery strategies, we need to check that the source of the problem isn't the lexical difficulty of our materials. There is an excellent program for checking the vocabulary level of texts at *www.lextutor.ca*. Furthermore, because we cannot be sure that our assumptions about our *students'* vocabulary levels are correct, it's worth conducting the vocabulary levels test which is also available at this website. Armed with this data, we can ensure that the materials we use are at an appropriate lexical level for our learners.

2 Choose target words carefully

Do you ever find that you confuse words with similar meanings? That you can't remember whether *à gauche* means *left* or *right*? Research by Thomas Tinkham has shown that if items are introduced at the same time as antonyms, free-associates (*car – bus – taxi*), words in the same semantic set (*Monday*, *Friday*, *Sunday*) or synforms (words that sound or look alike), it will make learning much harder.

We need to ensure that similar items are not allowed to interfere with each other. We can achieve this by spacing the initial presentation of such items over several lessons (activities with related words could be used to review items after they have been encountered separately). For example, rather than teaching the days of the week in one class, spread out their teaching according to some scheme (eg teach *Monday* on a Monday, *Tuesday* on a Tuesday, etc). If it is impractical to space the teaching of related items, use a mnemonic device to reduce the interference effect. Most importantly, as Paul Nation points out, we need to *tell* our learners about interference, so that they can avoid it when studying independently.

3 Develop your students' awareness of affixes

Anti-telecommunicator – although you have never seen this string of letters before and will not find it in any dictionary (indeed, it isn't a recognised English word), can you guess what it might mean? Did you use your knowledge of prefixes (*anti* – against) and suffixes (*or* – changes verbs into agent-nouns) to decipher its meaning (perhaps a person who dislikes talking on the telephone or maybe one who hates talking to people in call centres)?

The most common affixes in English deserve explicit teaching because they will help students to guess the meaning of, and learn, words of Latinate or Greek origin. There is a chart of common affixes on page 27.

Try to introduce one or two affixes in every class. This shouldn't overburden the students' memory capacity, and will show them that you consider developing affix-awareness to be important. I typically use an exercise like the one in Figure 1, as it uses acquired vocabulary to introduce new information (ie not overburdening learners) and it implicitly shows the students that they can use word-parts to guess the meaning of unknown words.

One way to apply affix-awareness to vocabulary acquisition, as recommended by Nation, is to instruct the students to conceptualise the meaning of an item in terms of its affixes (see Figure 2). This will provide a frame on which the meaning of the item can rest.

tele*communication*
tele_____ *tele* means _____
tele_____

Figure 1: An exercise to introduce the prefix *tele*

*re*view – to look at something again
*anti-tele*communicator – someone who is against communicating with people far away

Figure 2: Examples of conceptualising meaning in terms of word parts

Common affixes and their meanings

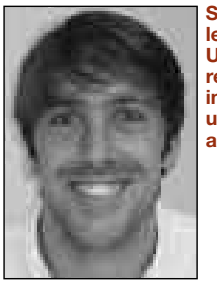
Prefix	Example	Meaning	Suffix	Example	Meaning
ab-	*abstract*	from, away	-able	*amendable*	forms adjectives from transitive verbs; means 'can be done'
ad-	*advocate*	to(ward)	-al	*topical*	forms adjectives from nouns (sometimes adjectives)
com-	*communicate*	with	-er	*researcher*	forms agent-nouns from verbs
de-	*depress*	down, away	-ful	*insightful*	forms adjectives from nouns
dis-	*distinct*	apart, away	-ic	*specific*	derives adjectives
ex-	*export*	out, beyond	-ify	*unify*	derives verbs
in-	*input*	in(to)	-ise/ize	*globalise*	forms verbs from adjectives
inter-	*interval*	between, among	-ity	*integrity*	derives nouns
mis-	*misinterpret*	wrong(ly)	-ive	*positive*	derives adjectives
pre-	*preliminary*	before	-less	*structureless*	forms adjectives from nouns (mostly); means 'without'
pro-	*project*	forward	-ly	*voluntarily*	forms adverbs from adjectives
re-	*revise*	again, back	-ment	*supplement*	forms nouns from verbs
sub-	*subordinate*	under	-ness	*awareness*	forms nouns from adjectives; means 'state of being [adjective]'
trans-	*transport*	across, beyond	-ous	*enormous*	forms adjectives from nouns
un-	*unregistered*	not	-tion	*investigation*	often forms nouns from verbs

4 Use images

We can use images to support the acquisition of new vocabulary. Research has shown that when items are presented with a translation *and* a picture, it increases the chances of long-term retention as the word makes a double association: one with the translation and one with the image. We can encourage our students to imagine a word that they are learning, or to draw a representation of its meaning. I often assign each student a word (from a list of target words) for which they have to prepare a picture before the next class. I then use these pictures to review the vocabulary and for future vocabulary tests.

★ ★ ★

Because the task of learning lexis is such a large one, we need to help our students become more efficient learners. Indeed, we should do everything we can to make the acquisition of vocabulary as easy as possible for them. I hope these four pieces of advice will help you do that. ETp



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Testing, testing, 1 2 1

Emily Edwards assesses her solo students.

This is my third and final article in a series exploring one-to-one teaching. The first article discussed ways of doing needs analysis and planning a syllabus while, in the second, I presented some strategies and worksheet templates for making one-to-one lessons enjoyable and communicative. A third and equally important part of learning a language, but one which I think teachers often forget about or overlook in one-to-one lessons, is testing. This article will look at a range of different ways of testing your one-to-one students so that you can do your best to help them make progress and get the most out of their course of lessons.

Types of testing

Testing language students is important in all types of class. In many general English courses, for example, students take tests to assess whether they are ready to go up a level. Then there are externally-assessed language exams such as Cambridge PET, FCE and CAE, TOEIC, TOEFL and IELTS, which learners take to prove their level of language ability. But why would one-to-one learners need to be tested?

Firstly, let's have a look at the two main types of assessment. Arthur Hughes' book on testing, which is a really useful resource, gives the following definitions:

- **Formative assessment** is used to check a student's progress during a course, and this includes giving them frequent progress tests, but also reviewing and revising new words or language on a regular basis.
- **Summative assessment** is used to 'measure what has been achieved' at the end of a course, which generally means giving the student(s) a final, probably quite formal, test covering the content of that particular course.

Another important and common term is *proficiency test*, which is a test designed to assess a student's language ability, whether or not they have taken a course of lessons. Examples are those externally-assessed exams mentioned above (FCE, TOEFL, IELTS, etc).

Testing one-to-one

OK, so this theory and terminology is all well and good, but what does it mean in practice? Why does this matter to one-to-one students? I must admit that when I first started teaching one-to-one classes, I thought testing my students was quite a strange idea, posing several obstacles. Since the whole point of one-to-one lessons is that they should be tailored to that one learner's needs, wants and goals, then 'ready-made' tests from textbooks or practice exam books are normally not relevant (unless, of course, the student's aim is to take a proficiency test such as IELTS, in which case using examples of this test would definitely be useful). Also, the result of any test taken by a one-to-one student to measure their progress can't be measured against anyone else (as it could be in a group learning context), so does that score really mean anything? In addition, there is the issue of the teacher having to design a test themselves, which can be a bit daunting to say the least!

Choosing one-to-one teaching as the topic of my DELTA extended assignment made me think much more about the whole concept of testing. I realised that one-to-one students, just like any other language learners, need to make progress and to have 'evidence' of this progress, perhaps even more so because they're often paying quite a lot of money for the lessons. The good news is that teachers do not need to (and shouldn't!) spend hours designing detailed and individualised tests, because there are many simple ways of checking progress that will benefit both the student and the teacher.

One important point to note here: I've found that if the course principles or aims have been set clearly at the beginning (see the first article in this series), this makes testing your student much easier, because you should be assessing them on what they wanted to achieve.

So, there are two types of testing that you need to think about when planning assessment tasks for your one-to-one student: *testing progress* (formative assessment) and *end-of-course testing* (summative assessment).

Testing progress

In my view, testing progress is the most important aspect of assessment in one-to-one lessons, and should be done, if not each lesson, then every five to ten hours of the course. Actually, as Priscilla Osborne points out, the nature of one-to-one courses makes testing

progress easier than in group teaching, in that the teacher can provide personalised feedback in a variety of forms on an ongoing basis. Another plus point is that the student can be actively involved in the assessment process through self-monitoring and self-assessment, which helps them to become more autonomous and more able to assess their own progress and future needs. The table on the right shows a variety of useful methods for checking progress in one-to-one lessons, and these can be used each class or every few lessons, as you think is necessary. It's a good idea to establish rituals for revision and reviewing each lesson, and then keep monitoring progress to help you adapt the course so that it continues to meet the student's needs.

One of the ideas in language testing theory which I've found to be especially relevant to one-to-one assessment is *authenticity*: Lyle Bachman and Adrian Palmer define this as the extent to which the test is similar to real-life or 'target' tasks the student will have to perform. So if a student will need to give a business presentation, they should be tested on doing just that: a presentation. If a student wants to be able to make phone calls to make travel reservations, write academic essays or business emails, or simply have conversations with strangers, then practice versions of these 'tasks' should be used as their tests, if possible.

Type of progress test	Reason for doing it
Informal oral and written feedback (see Worksheet 1 on page 30 for an example)	To point out strengths and weaknesses in the student's work
Vocabulary games/reviews	To review and practise new vocabulary in a fun way
Self-assessment and self-editing (see Worksheet 2 on page 30)	To develop autonomous learning, so that the student can identify their own mistakes in the future
Collection of written work in a portfolio	To allow the student to see progress made and areas still to develop, and to encourage autonomy
Short tests/quizzes – designed by the teacher	To review work done during a block of five to ten lessons
Formal formative tasks – these could be 'ready-made' tests or simple tasks designed by the teacher (see Worksheet 3 on page 31)	To assess whether course objectives are being met – if the student needs to take a proficiency test such as IELTS, then examples of this test can be used
Visit to a café, company, college, etc (as relevant to the student's current or future real-life situation)	To find out if course objectives need to be adapted, and to develop the student's confidence

End-of-course testing

At the end of the course of lessons, it's important to finish up with a sense of completion and of goals achieved. It's also essential to point out to your student that the language journey doesn't end there, and that there are many ways they can continue to improve. Below are some ideas of what to do as 'summative assessment':

Testing	Evaluation
Use a test related to what the learner needs to do next (eg an IELTS test, performing a certain task, giving a presentation). Get your student to present a portfolio of their written work to you.	Ask your student to complete a self-evaluation of what they have learnt over this course. Make a learning plan together for your student's future (see Worksheet 4 on page 31 for an example).

Five steps to testing one-to-one

To sum up, there are five steps that you can follow to help you plan and carry out practical and useful testing methods in your one-to-one language classes:

1 Use course aims/goals as the basis for testing, and ask yourself what you actually need to test your student on.

2 Think about what your student needs to do in the 'real world' – can you design a simple test or task based on this?

3 Keep all the material you use with your student in a folder, and then use this to make a quick quiz or, alternatively, get your student to look through the folder or lesson notes themselves and write a summary of what they've learnt.

4 Use a range of techniques for testing progress, such as the ones suggested above, to keep lessons interesting and varied.

5 Do include some kind of summative assessment and evaluation to finish the course in a professional way and to give your student useful suggestions for continuous learning and improvement.

Bachman, L and Palmer, A *Language Testing in Practice: Designing and Developing Useful Language Tests* OUP 1996

Hughes, A *Testing for Language Teachers* CUP 2003

Osborne, P *Teaching English One-to-one* Modern English Publishing 2005



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Worksheet 1
Informal feedback on each lesson

(The teacher keeps a copy of this sheet to hand out during the lesson, and writes notes or examples as the student talks/writes.)

Date: ..... **Lesson:** .....

Speaking and writing	
I said/wrote …	I should have said/written …
New vocabulary	Grammar points

Worksheet 2
Reflecting on learning: self-evaluation at the end of each lesson

(The teacher gives the student these sentence starters at the end of a lesson, the student completes them and this could lead to a useful discussion about progress.)

- The thing(s) that I enjoyed most in this lesson was/were ...
- The thing(s) I learnt today that I did not know before was/were ...
- The thing(s) I am going to do to help me remember what I learnt today is/are ...
- The thing(s) I found most difficult in today's work was/were ...
- The question(s) I would like to ask about what we have done is/are ...

(From Harmer, J *The Practice of English Language Teaching* Pearson Education 2007)

Worksheet 3
Roleplay cards to check progress

(The teacher makes and cuts up role cards according to whichever situations the student will soon find themselves in, or for which they would like to practise – in this example, the cards reflect a set of lessons on giving directions, sightseeing in Sydney, making small talk and checking understanding in confusing situations.)

You're in a café, and you see an old friend whom you haven't seen for a few months. Ask her how she is, and compliment her in a few ways.	You're at Town Hall, outside QVB. A tourist comes up to you and asks for directions to Central Station. Explain how to get there.
You're at Circular Quay and you want to go to Darling Harbour. Ask someone for directions, and check that you understand what they say.	You're talking to your boss, but you don't understand something he just said about your shifts next week …
You're at Central Station. A tourist, who has just arrived in Sydney, comes up to you and asks you to recommend the best attractions to see in one day. Give him some advice.	You're at the supermarket and on the phone to your friend, who's giving you a list of things to buy for her. You get a bit confused …

Worksheet 4
Developing an action plan for the future

(The teacher uses this review at the end of a course to focus the student on their learning plan for the future.)

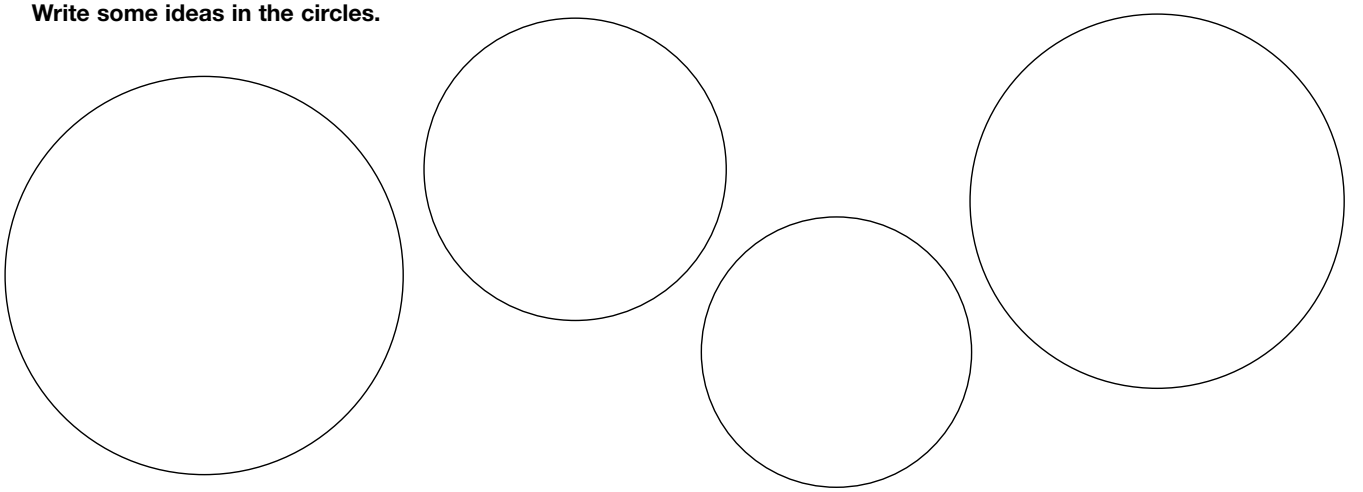
1 What are your strengths now after completing this course?

- I'm really good at ...
- I'm good at ...
- I have learnt how to ...

2 What areas do you still need to improve by yourself in the near future? How will you do this?

Area to improve	How will I do this?
eg I need to keep developing my vocabulary.	*eg Read news articles, highlight five new words per article, and look up the meaning in a dictionary.*

3 What can you do to improve your English while studying/working at .....?
Write some ideas in the circles.



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Focus on fluency

Diana Mazgutova considers the best ways to boost oral skills.

'... fluency constitutes the highest point on a scale that measures [one's] spoken command of a foreign language.'
Paul Lennon

According to Roger Ascham (1515–1568), Queen Elizabeth I's tutor, *'Knowledge of languages beyond one's mother tongue [is] important for gaining access to the intellectual and artistic wealth of Europe, and indeed the rest of the world'*. Though some of the methods he suggested to attain language mastery might appear irrelevant today, human aspiration to be proficient in more than one language has increased substantially. It might not be the case that the majority of people become highly proficient in their L2. In fact, there often exists a fluency gap which causes learner frustration. However, although dysfluency can never be completely cured, there are strategies that teachers could incorporate into their teaching that would help them to develop their learners' oral skills.

Contexts for developing fluency

Some people think of fluency as a phenomenon that emerges naturally and therefore does not need to be explicitly taught. It is often assumed to be the result of living in a foreign country – and it is certainly true that prolonged exposure to language in a native-speaker culture facilitates the development of oral skills. Paul Lennon cites the case of two learners of Japanese: the one who had been born in Japan and had lived there till the age of 12 was found to be more fluent, though less accurate, than the other, who had studied the language in an educational setting but had only lived in Japan for three months. In fact, it is clear that most students who study abroad make, as Nel de Jong and Charles Perfetti put it, *'measurable progress in speaking, especially in terms of fluency'*.

However, not all students have the opportunity to gain extensive exposure to English by travelling overseas, and although it is arguable that fluency should be explicitly taught in the classroom, it unfortunately rarely receives much attention. It is important, therefore, to consider how fluency could be enhanced in a non-native setting where students do not have unlimited exposure to the target language.

Tasks for developing fluency

Marian Rossiter and her colleagues suggest that explicit teaching of oral fluency could be built around *'formulaic sequences to increase mean length of runs and discourse markers to provide online planning time and reduce the length and frequency of silent pauses'*. Additionally, they recommend free-production tasks and consciousness-raising activities as being likely to contribute to learners' fluency development.

1 Formulaic sequences

Fluency can be enhanced by teaching learners prefabricated chunks of language or formulas, eg collocations, phrasal verbs and idioms. Several researchers indicate that the use of what Francine Chambers calls 'automatised chunks' of language can enable students to express their ideas at greater length. This is because the formulaic sequences reduce the amount of language processing that the students have to perform as they speak.

It is also important to recognise the benefits of teaching awareness-raising strategies. For instance, language chunks, once presented, could be broken into parts, and the students' attention could be directed to each of these parts so that, as Elizabeth Gatbonton and Norman Segalowitz put it, they become more aware of the formula's 'internal construction' and, as a result, may be able to reproduce it with less effort later.

Different tasks aimed at promoting automatic production of formulaic sequences have been suggested. One example is a *Disappearing text* activity. First, an interesting text containing a variety of formulaic constructions is displayed on the board. The teacher reads the text aloud, before instructing some of the students to read it aloud themselves. The formulaic sequences are gradually deleted, and the students are asked to reproduce the whole text, including the formulas, from memory.

Fluency can be enhanced by teaching learners prefabricated chunks of language or formulas

2 Task repetition

Task repetition is seen as one of the best ways to develop fluency because it increases familiarity with language – and familiarity leads to fluency. Whenever learners repeat something they have said before, they are no longer having to generate the content from scratch, so their cognitive resources are freed up. One of the benefits this is likely to bring is fluent speech, with less hesitation and decreased pausing. In addition, when a particular structure is being used repeatedly, its retrieval from

In order to promote learning and to encourage fluency, the repeated task should have a clear and meaningful outcome

the memory is greatly facilitated. When the cognitive load is lightened, more resources become available for use in further speech production.

I should make clear that by task repetition I don't mean drilling or reproducing the same language mindlessly. In order to promote learning and to encourage fluency, the repeated task should have a clear and meaningful outcome. One very popular activity that incorporates repetition and can be adapted for fluency development purposes is *Find someone who … .* This task, in which students have to ask each other questions in order to find someone who matches each item in a given list of criteria, contains an information gap, but may be seen to lack an element of genuine communication. Gatbonton and Segalowitz propose some ways to turn this type of activity into a communicative task. They suggest that a further 'overall goal' could be introduced, eg to find out the common traits that the other students possess, as well as specific information about them. Then, the learners would be doing the initial activity but, at the same time, seeking a response to a broader question of common backgrounds. Another noteworthy repetition task, *Poster carousel*, has been described by Tony Lynch and Joan Maclean. Through this activity, which involves repeated conversations with different speaking partners, learners may not only foster their oral fluency, but also improve their grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation.

3 Pre-task planning

It is often argued that when students do some initial written planning of what they are going to say, their cognitive load is lightened and the focus switches to the act of communication, resulting in increased fluency and shorter pauses between utterances. So it is important that students should be allowed adequate time to prepare what they are going to say.

4 Setting time limits

Setting time limits on the oral activities that students do in the classroom may be a helpful technique for improving oral fluency because it forces the students to speak faster with less pausing. A *4/3/2* task gives them an opportunity to deliver the same speech three times in succession, but with less time to do it in on each occasion, thus combining the benefits of task repetition and time pressure. The learners work in pairs, one the speaker and the other the listener. The speaker talks to the listener for four minutes on a particular topic. Then the pairs are changed, with each speaker giving the same information to a different listener within a three-minute time limit. This is followed by a further

Setting time limits on the oral activities that students do in the classroom may be a helpful technique

change of partners and a two-minute time limit. Students' fluency increases substantially by the time they have to produce the shortest, two-minute speech. The content and language have become much more familiar to them and, importantly, their confidence when speaking has grown.

5 Consciousness-raising tasks

Consciousness-raising activities – where students are exposed to and asked to focus on a variety of fluency-related features, such as formulaic sequences, discourse markers, pauses and hesitation – are another way of facilitating fluency. For example, students might be asked to audiotape a short conversation between two native speakers, transcribe it and identify any particular fillers used in the recorded speech. As a follow-up activity, they could tape-record a similar conversation of their own with a peer and compare the use of fillers in their own speech with that of the native speakers.

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In order to help them develop oral fluency, students need opportunities to converse in English. They should be encouraged to work in pairs and groups, should be provided with stimulating topics for discussion, and should be taught formulaic sequences which they can produce automatically. Techniques to assist them include task repetition, allowing time for pre-task planning and using awareness-raising activities. In addition, where possible, teachers should help their students to get more opportunities to interact in English outside of the classroom. Perhaps they could be encouraged to conduct surveys and have telephone and face-to-face conversations with English speakers in their community on a regular basis. All these strategies will contribute towards boosting their confidence and fostering their oral skills. ETp

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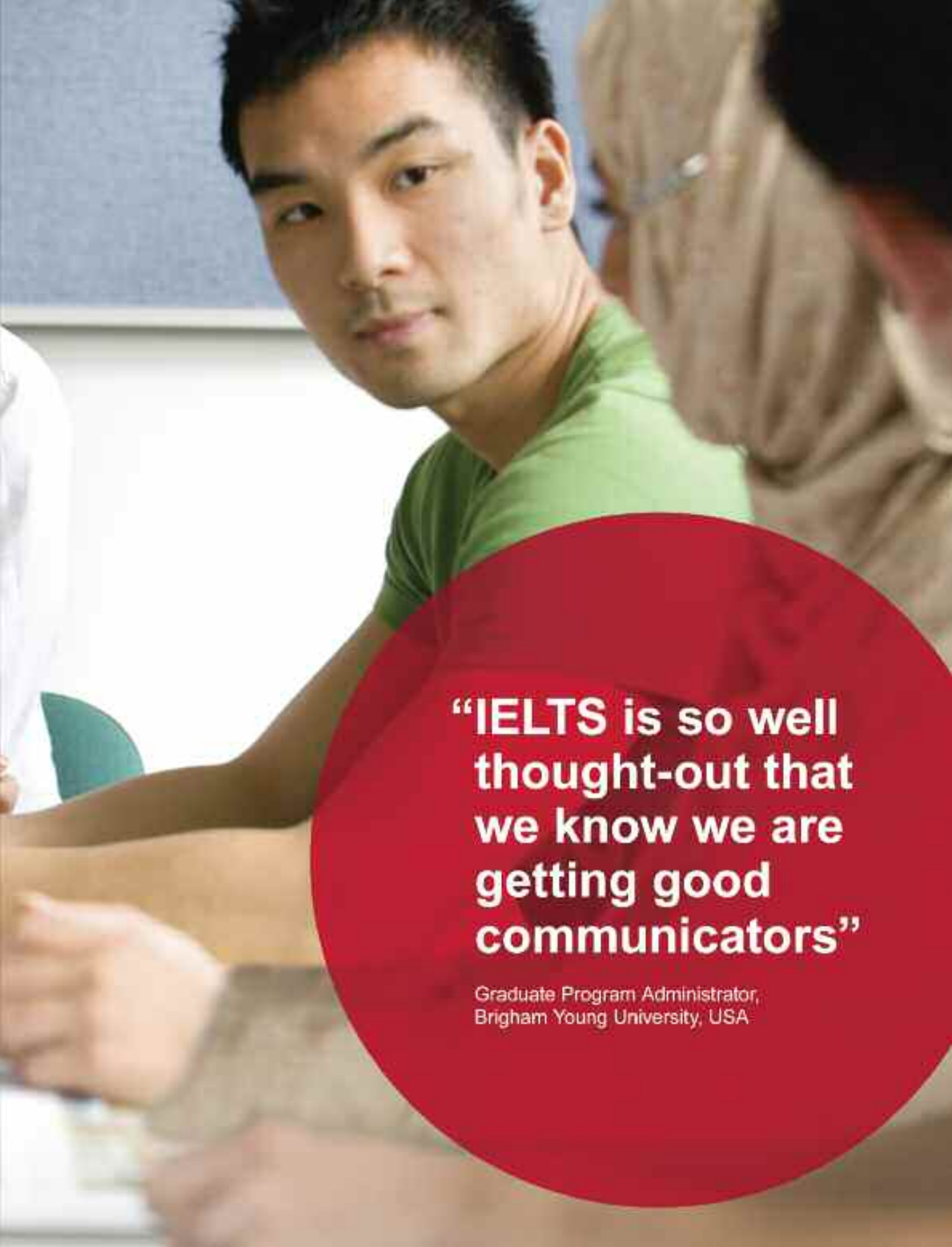
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From research to reality 2

Magnus Coney continues his series on putting theoretical insights to practical use.

In Issue 84 of ET*p*, we looked at how new topics should be related to previous ones to make them more memorable. In this article, I will discuss in which part of the lesson this can be most effective.

Research

Try this simple activity devised by Madeline Hunter (cited by David Sousa). You will need a pencil and a timer, set for 12 seconds. When you start the timer, look at the list of words below. When the timer beeps, cover the words and try to write as many of them as you can in the spaces to the right of the list. Make sure you write the words in the correct position in the list (the first word next to 1, the second word next to 2, etc). Ready? Start the timer.

KEF	1	_____
LAK	2	_____
MIL	3	_____
NIR	4	_____
VEK	5	_____
LUN	6	_____
NEM	7	_____
BEB	8	_____
SAR	9	_____
FIF	10	_____

How did you do? Most people find that they remember the first few words and the last couple of words best, and have more problems with the ones in the middle, from about 6 to 8.

As the activity above hopefully demonstrated, people tend to remember things from the beginnings and endings of learning episodes the best, a phenomenon known as the primacy/recency effect. It has been documented in numerous studies (eg those by Klaus Oberauer and by Marc Howard and Michael Kahana), although the reason for it is unclear. It is generally thought that the first things you learn are unconsciously reviewed for the rest of the learning episode, while the last things we learn are more recent and therefore memorable.

Reality

The beginning

We all know how difficult it can be to get a lesson going. There's homework to be collected, a register to be taken, messages to be read out, and so on. If you work in a private language school, you may start your lessons with an informal chat about the weekend or with some kind of warmer. But is this really what we want our students to remember from the lesson?

Clearly, it would be better to get straight to the point at the beginning of your lesson, to take advantage of that extra attention and then perform the more administrative tasks later. Alternatively, considering what we looked at in the previous article in this series, the beginning of the lesson is a good time to get straight into consolidating an earlier topic which will then lead you into the new topic. And if your students know that your lessons get off to such a flying start, hopefully they'll soon realise it's better to be on time. Try these suggestions:

Thinking starter: Put a picture or question on the board related to the topic of the lesson to get the students thinking straight away.

Table tasks: Have worksheets out on the tables that the students can start doing as soon as they come in. This is a good way to review previous lessons – and it also worked wonders for behaviour in one of my more unruly kids classes!

Give the password: Tell your students that they can't come into the room until they answer a question. Make it an easy-ish review question so it doesn't take too much time!

The end

As with the beginning, the end of a lesson can often be filled with many non-learning-related tasks, such as handing out homework or playing a game (sometimes with no connection to the rest of the lesson) to use up any spare time. However, this period might be much better spent reflecting on what has been learnt. A good plenary session can save what might otherwise be a weak lesson, if it is used to revise and consolidate the learning. A final free-practice activity can also be effective, but I think students benefit from having some time to reflect on and organise their learning. The following suggestions are from Mark Meier and Ted Panitz:

One-minute tests: The teacher asks a question such as *What was the most useful thing you learnt today?* and the students have a minute to write their answers. The teacher collects the papers and uses them for assessment.

Think–pair–share: The teacher asks a question like the one above but, this time, the students think about it for a while, then compare ideas with a partner before sharing their ideas with the rest of the class.

Metacognition: The students can also benefit from considering how and why they learnt a particular item/skill. The previous two techniques could include a question related to this.

Another possible activity is to ask the class to write (in pairs) a brief lesson outline for a (real or imagined) absent

End-of-lesson questionnaire

You have three minutes to answer these questions:

What did you learn today?

Why did you learn this better than other things in the lesson?

What errors did you make? What are the correct forms?

How will you remember what you learnt today?

Do you have any questions about today's lesson?

student, or to create their own short homework task.

Above is an example of a reflection worksheet which students could be asked to complete towards the end of a lesson. After completing it, they share their ideas with a partner, then with the class.

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You may have noticed that this article started by mentioning the key point of the previous article, and applied it to the theme of this one. Now I'll finish by reiterating the point that the beginnings and endings of lessons are what students remember the most, so we need to make sure they learn something in these periods. If you only remember the beginning and ending of my article, hopefully that will be enough! ETp



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Always + present continuous

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 just because we're always doing something, it doesn't necessarily mean it's a bad thing.

A language point that often comes up in intermediate or upper-intermediate coursebooks and language practice books is the use of *always* combined with the present continuous, forming sentences like *He's always leaving the fridge door open* and *I'm always losing my keys*. This grammar point is frequently analysed as expressing annoying or irritating habits, and these examples would certainly support that interpretation.

In one best-selling grammar practice book, the main example is *I've lost my phone again. I'm always losing things*, with the explanation that this means that *I lose things very often, perhaps too often, or more often than normal.* Other examples are *You're always playing computer games. You should do something more active (= You play computer games too often)* and *Tim is never satisfied. He's always complaining (= He complains too much)*.

And a popular grammar and usage reference book has similar examples: *She's always smoking and coughing. Ugh!* and *I'm always losing my glasses*, with the explanation that this combination has the sense of 'continually', and that we often use it to describe a habit we don't like.

But is this the whole story? Does *be always doing* necessarily require a habit to be seen negatively, as too frequent or as one that we don't like?

For example, see this recent post from a website that specialises in giving advice about relationships. I've shortened the text for reasons of space:

My boyfriend lives by himself. Sometimes I'll go over and buy everything and cook dinner. I'm always buying him little things for his apartment that he needs ... I feel like I'm also more inclined to do thoughtful things because he's so good to me, always taking me out to dinner and buying me gifts here and there ...

When we look at the textbook examples above, we can see immediately that the 'too often/too much/don't like' elements certainly fit: the habits are 'negative' and the *always doing* does express the speaker's dislike (etc). But that's not the case with the web post: it's hard to see these as *annoying* or *irritating* habits, or as 'too often/too much' or as 'disliked'. In fact, it's clear that the woman regards her own behaviour positively, as she later describes it as being thoughtful, and she definitely likes her boyfriend's behaviour – *'he's so good to me'*.

So what's going on here?

If we take the 'irritating/annoying habit' question first, one clue lies in the words *very often* and *continually* used in the explanations above. If someone has a bad habit and does it *very often* or *continually*, it's likely other people will find it annoying or irritating! But suppose it's a nice habit, an attractive or endearing one? By the same token, people will find it ... attractive and endearing. In other words, this explanation is based on the *vocabulary* items that describe the behaviour *(losing my phone, smoking and coughing, complaining, buying gifts, taking me out*) – not surprisingly, we usually find negative habits irritating and nice ones attractive. So it isn't the *grammar* in those sentences that determines whether the habit is seen negatively, it's the *vocabulary* and what it means.

At this point, let's look at the continuous aspect, and what it does. The concept of the continuous is in contrast to that of the simple: *I'm wearing a suit today* compared with *I always/usually/sometimes/rarely/never wear a suit*. A key feature of continuous aspect is that it marks the verb activity as incomplete in some way, and this may have various implications. Here, it shows that *wearing* should be considered as a specific instance (today) rather than as a universal or general case, as in *wear*. The continuous tells us:

LANGUAGE LOG *Always* + present continuous

Don't assume that I always wear a suit! Today yes, but perhaps it's a special occasion, like a wedding or an interview.

It follows that frequency adverbs are (usually) used with simple forms, because they are concerned precisely with these general cases, placed along a line from *always* to *never*. And so if we use the frequency adverb *always* with a *continuous* form, we must be doing so deliberately, to show something special. We must want the reader/listener to understand that this habit is not a general, common-or-garden habit, but something different and individual. A habit that has a special quality, one that's worth drawing attention to. Something with a unique personal stamp.

With this mind, all the examples we've seen make perfect sense: whether the habit is irritating or likeable (or eccentric or amusing or quirky or whatever), we can show this by using the continuous form to mark it as such. Take this example from a blog (posted in November 2012):

It's Xmas (all) year round for me (be)cause I'm always buying random stuff I want, whether it be for the house or for me.

Here, we see the writer describing their own characteristic behaviour, something that's typical and special, something that marks them off from other people.

Michael Swan, in *Practical English Usage*, introduces another facet of 'specialness' with these examples: *When Alice comes to see me, I always meet her at the station* and *I'm always meeting Mrs Bailiff in the supermarket*. The former is analysed as a regular, planned arrangement, whereas the latter indicates accidental, unplanned meetings. Again, the continuous is used to indicate that the supermarket meetings are in some way 'different' – not the routine sense of arranged meetings but, instead, with a special flavour of coincidence or chance or serendipity.

So, we can use *always* and the present (or past) continuous to customise those frequent and characteristic habits that we feel deserve special treatment: as my students would say, when we want to 'pimp them up'. It's the ideal form for us to use when we want to reveal our own quirks and idiosyncrasies, too: *Pimp up your habits? I'm always saying things like that!*

Swan, M *Practical English Usage* OUP 2005



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

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

Congratulations to all those readers who successfully completed our Prize Crossword 55. The winners, who will each receive a copy of the *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*, are:

Gilles Baggi, Malvaglia, Switzerland
Anaïs Bouque, Clamart, France
Danuta Hohner, Röthenbach, Germany
Maya Majewska, Poznan, Poland
Luz Díez Martín, Valladolid, Spain
Armelle Masson, Villebarou, France
Maria Mastrangelo, Alife, Italy
Krystyna Pawlowska, Sosnowiec, Poland
Michaela Seserman, Leeds, UK
Ali Souli, Le Kef, Tunisia



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

6 R	1 E	18 G	6 R	1 E	9 T	15 S		5 A	6 R	1 E		9 T	16 H	1 E		3 N	5 A
9 T	12 U	6 R	5 A	24 L		7 P	6 R	22 O	7 P	1 E	6 R	9 T	25 Y		22 O	11 F	
18 G	6 R	1 E	25 Y		16 H	5 A	13 I	6 R	15 S	Charles Dickens							

IT WORKS IN PRACTICE



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

All the contributors to It Works in Practice in this issue of ET*p* will receive copies of *England* by Rachel Bladon and *The Unites States of America* by Coleen Degnan-Veness with Chantal Veness, published by Macmillan. Macmillan have kindly agreed to be sponsors of It Works in Practice for this year.

Quote, unquote

Some time ago, I chose a set of quotations in English which I thought would interest my students, and I then printed them out and laminated them. These quotations are short, funny and said by a famous person, as this seemed the best way to ensure that they attracted the students' attention. Every week I put one or two of them on my classroom door. After a week they are moved to a noticeboard inside the classroom and replaced with new ones on the door.

The quotations can be used as a springboard for different activities, either forming part of the main lesson or as an additional activity for early finishers. For example:

- **Choose a quotation and change it into reported speech.**
- **Choose a quotation and comment on it.**
- **Say which of the quotations you don't agree with.**
- **Create your own quotation on the same topic.**
- **Find the circumstances in which the quotation was said.**
- **Find five other quotations about the same subject.**
- **Find five other quotations by the same person.**

Katarzyna Wiacek
Minsk Mazowiecki, Poland

Read, draw and speak

This task is a good way to vary a reading lesson and to bring some creativity into the process. I've used it with a class of adults at elementary level, but as adults can be reluctant to speak (although mine did cope with the task successfully), it might work better with teenagers. The task will work best if you have several reading texts on one topic, and you will need to group the students according to how many texts you have.

In my case, the reading texts were four short extracts about street markets in different countries. The texts contained similar information (name, size, products, etc). I decided that simply going through the texts would be tedious, so after doing the usual pre-reading routine (discussion and introduction of new words), I divided the class into four groups (one for each text) and distributed large sheets of paper, coloured pencils and felt-tip pens. I assigned one text to each group and told them to read their text and draw the information presented there. The main idea was for them to write as few words as possible (ideally, just the name of a market) and, instead, try to draw everything they found interesting and important about 'their' market. I set a time limit of around 15–20 minutes and told the students that they should try their best to produce pictures which would help them later to present the information to the class.

At first, the students were surprised and a little puzzled but, after reading their extracts, they set to work, cooperating well in their groups. First, they decided what to draw and who should draw what. I monitored the process, helping with ideas and reminding them of the time limit. Each group then described their markets to the rest of the class, using only their pictures as prompts. The reading texts used the present simple, and the students used the same tense to describe them, which made the task fairly straightforward: afterwards, they confessed that they were amazed at how easy speaking can be!

This task could be expanded by following up with a discussion about which of the markets they would like to visit and why.

Anastassia Ivanova
Tallinn, Estonia

Low-tech but high-value

I teach on a BEd degree programme in the Gulf region; I am also a dedicated CLIL teacher because my students are concurrently studying English in support of their studies and, as a content specialist with a background in teaching EFL, I am always aware that the technical language of the content demanded by the programme is higher than the students' overall language proficiency.

In my Human Development course, my sessions cover holistic development in early childhood. The students learn about the value of play-based learning and toys as learning tools. Perhaps the most powerful tool for play in early learning is the simple wooden unit block. When I introduce this, the students always express a mix of horror and surprise: they themselves are technically savvy and always tell me that their two-year-old brother or sister is already using an i-Pad. So, what follows is that I put the simple unit block to the test and give the students hands-on experience with a box of blocks. Time and time again, I have found not only that the students agree that the unit block is a powerful vehicle for child development, but also that it engages the students themselves naturally in the four Cs of CLIL: content, communication, culture and cognition. I have rarely seen my students so engaged in creating, negotiating and using language to describe and discuss as when they avidly build something with blocks cooperatively in groups. I have witnessed a Burj Khalifa replica being built at record speed and with finesse, accompanied by a multitude of exclusive villas with accompanying Lamborghinis in the drive. Not only this, but students have started to explain to me what they are building and have initiated storytelling in the form of Arabic fables. Many have added extensions to their buildings by taking an item from their handbag or pocket. Most recently, a student applied some lipstick and a paper hat to a block, which caused much hilarity and engagement amongst the whole class. Even the more hesitant students have enjoyed building, discussing and reporting back. Interestingly, student reflections have not only involved discussing the learning of content, but also language.

As the teacher, I have done very little other than interject a few questions, and perhaps provide some clarifications of vocabulary. I have simply stood back and enjoyed the language as it emerged from what proved to be a very liberating language-generating activity for all those involved. I have also been entertained by some creative storytelling and learnt some interesting Arabic fables. I was stunned to discover that not only do unit blocks hold remarkable power for early learners, they also do so for CLIL language learners at college level. The joy on the students' faces as they went round photographing their efforts and admiring their constructions made we wish that I had let them build higher and longer. In future, I aim to create further avenues to explore the language prompted by the remarkable wooden unit block and to encourage the students themselves to use this tool with *their* learners.

Simple wooden unit blocks are not easy to come by these days, but it really is worth trying to find them; Lego is a lesser, though acceptable, replacement and could certainly be used. After all, the power of the unit block lies in its potential to develop cognition and to create and use language while employing culture and communication to the fullest. I would urge any and all English teachers to explore the power of this simple play-based learning tool and realise its potential through creating for their learners applications for learning and language development.

Fiona Baker
Abu Dhabi, UAE

Making groupwork work

A problem that teachers in Japan face when doing groupwork is that those students assigned the role of group leader are often quite passive and do nothing to get the members of the group working together. As a result, some members of the group will start doing the exercise on their own, some will do nothing. I have found that groupwork is best done in the following manner:

First, the students stay in the same groups throughout the semester. At the beginning of a lesson, each group chooses a leader by playing 'rock, paper, scissors' (the winner is the leader). At the beginning of a group activity, all the members of a group except the leader have their textbooks closed. They then move position so that they can all see the leader, who reads out the instructions and solicits answers from the group. When the activity (a vocabulary matching exercise, for example) is completed, all the group members open their textbooks and, as the teacher goes over the exercise, they write the correct answers.

I have found that all the students stay active and on-task if I do groupwork this way.

Tom Anderson
Yokohama, Japan

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Over the wall ...



Alan Maley reflects on reading in an electronic age.

In this, my third article on books about reading, I have chosen to focus on two essentially 'humane' titles. These are books which convey something of the complex reality of the act of reading from a very personal viewpoint. I had originally intended also to include Nicholas Carr's *The Shallows: How the Internet is Changing the Way We Think, Read and Remember* and Stanislas Dehaene's *Reading in the Brain*. Both are highly significant books which enhance our understanding, in the former case, of the effects of instant, electronic communication on more deliberate forms of reading and, in the other, of how brain science is changing our perceptions of what happens when we read. Both are books well worth reading. I chose not to include them this time, partly for reasons of space and partly to remind myself of the original purpose of *Over the wall*. This series was not originally conceived to review highly technical, professional books but, rather, to stimulate readers' awareness of a wide range of books which touch, however peripherally, on the teaching we do and on the kind of people we are.



The Pleasures of Reading in an Age of Distraction

In *The Pleasures of Reading in an Age of Distraction*, Alan Jacobs makes an impassioned case for reading for the sheer pleasure it brings. He takes a strong stand against the idea of reading as some kind of duty – what he calls the *'eat-your-vegetables lists of approved texts'*. This attitude has little to do with reading – rather with 'having read' (and ticked titles off the list). By contrast, he advocates 'reading at whim'. *'Read what gives you delight … and do so without shame.'* He disapproves both of the admonitions of 'experts' like Harold Bloom, who turn reading into a moral imperative, and of scientific approaches like Dehaene's: *'When I encountered [their] accounts of these psychological processes, I was nearly disabled as a reader.'*

He writes compellingly about the need to develop a readerly response to what we read, and quotes the 18th-century scientist Lichtenberg: *'A book is like a mirror: if an ass looks in, you can't expect an apostle to look out.'* To do this, we need to re-discover the relish of 'slow'. *'It's what you're reading that matters, and how you're reading it, not the speed with which you're getting through it.'* What is more, *'… if you think of reading in this way, as a means of uploading data, then reading will always seem too slow'*.

Jacobs has some interesting things to say about Kindle too, not all of them negative, but he is critical of the claims of proponents of multi-tasking. For him, we do not multi-task, we shift back and forth among tasks, leading to *'continuous partial attention'*. A key quote from David Foster Wallace emphasises the development of conscious choice, rather than information-grazing: *'… learning how to think really means learning how to exercise some control over **how** and **what** you think. It means being conscious and aware enough to choose what you pay attention to and to choose how you construct meaning from experience.'*

A large part of the book dwells on the importance of developing different modes of reading for different purposes and on the ability to screen out the important from the welter of information that targets us. Jacobs is also clear that becoming a reader should be separated from the academic learning of how to read – it has nothing to do with the institutional rituals of 'education'. He doubts whether it can be taught, but knows it can be acquired, if only by a minority.

Like Susan Hill (see below) Jacobs advocates more silence, and emphasises the importance of solitude in the act of reading, but acknowledges the importance of the social dimensions of reading, through sharing books with other like-minded people, whether in reading groups or in virtual environments. Like Hill, he also recommends re-reading, partly for the way it enables us to re-evaluate the same book at two different points in time.

Inevitably, as readers, we critically evaluate what we read. He recommends the generous suggestions of W H Auden: *'For an adult reader, the possible verdicts are five: I can see this is good and I like it; I can see this is good but I don't like it; I can see this is good and, though at present I don't like it, I believe with perseverance I shall come to like it; I can see that this is trash but I like it; I can see that this is trash and I don't like it.'*

Apart from its accessible style and pungent, thought-provoking opinions, this book also refers to a very wide range of other books touching on reading – many of which I shall want to read!



Howard's End is on the Landing

Susan Hill's book is a pleasure trove for readers. It arose when she was looking for a book which was not where she remembered it being. Her search through her bookshelves made her realise how many books she had not read, so she devoted a year to catching up: *'I wanted to re-possess my books. A book which is left on the shelf is a dead thing but it is also a chrysalis, an inanimate object packed with the potential to burst into new life.'*

The book is an inspiring ramble – and sometimes a romp – through the land of books. It is highly personal, and blends the books themselves with the places and circumstances in which they were read, the authors she has also met and her evaluations. Her journey *'inevitably led to my thinking, remembering, ordering, assessing, my entire book reading life'*. And later in the book she reflects: *'Just as my genes and the soul within me make me uniquely me, so I am the unique sum of the books I have read. I am my literary DNA.'*



Some of the chapters (all of them short and written in an engagingly accessible style) refer to writers: Charles Dickens, Kingsley Amis, Jane Austen, Ian Fleming, Roald Dahl, Iris Murdoch, the Angry Young Men, Virginia Woolf, Elizabeth Bowen, W G Sebald, Arnold Wesker, Anthony Trollope, Thomas Hardy. Others are more focused on genres: travel writing, humour, diarists, the short story, children's books, anthologies, picture books, spiritual books. Still others deal with reading-related topics such as libraries, the key importance of book titles, the value and pleasure of learning poems by heart, on scribbling in the margins, on book covers, on setting up her own small publishing company …

On the act and art of reading she is forceful, and even scathing at times. On internet reading she states: '*Too much internet usage fragments the brain and dissipates concentration so that after a while, one's ability to spend long focused hours immersed in a single subject becomes blunted. Information comes pre-digested in small pieces, one grazes on endless ready-meals and snacks of the mind, and the result is mental malnutrition.'* She asserts that getting back to proper reading was *'like diving into a deep, cool ocean after flitting about in the shallows. Slow reading as opposed to Gobbling up'*. In her chapter 'Slow, slow, slow-slow, slow' she questions, *'Why has reading turned into a form of speed-dating?'* Fast reading, she contends, *'will not allow the book to burrow down into our memory and become part of ourselves, the accumulation of knowledge and wisdom and vicarious experience which helps to form us as complete human beings'*. She has strong views about unreadable (for her) books: *'I am bored by Jane Austen.'* A whole chapter is devoted to books not read and never to be read or re-read. But she recognises, quoting Lord David Cecil, that *'you cannot force a taste on someone else, you cannot argue people into enjoyment'*. (Surely a strong case for allowing learners to choose what they read!)

Her book stirred the fallen leaves of memory for me, and had me reaching back into my own bookshelves, and looking forward to books I have not yet read.

★ ★ ★

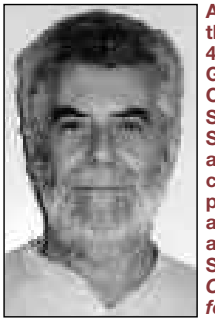
The Extensive Reading (ER) movement has tended to emphasise copious and, therefore, fast reading as a way of reinforcing, acquiring and extending target language proficiency. This is undoubtedly valid, and well-substantiated by research. However, these two books remind us that there is also a reflective side to reading. Where both ER and these books share common ground is in the sheer enjoyment that reading can furnish. ETp

Carr, N *The Shallows: How the Internet is Changing the Way We Think, Read and Remember* Atlantic Books 2009

Dehaene, S *Reading in the Brain* Penguin Books 2009

Hill, S *Howard's End is on the Landing* Profile Books 2009

Jacobs, A *The Pleasures of Reading in an Age of Distraction* OUP 2011



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 next big thing?

Reet Soosaar's project launches her students into the world of the entrepreneur.

For the last three years, I have been teaching business English at a college of further education as part of a course on entrepreneurship and project management. This course is extremely popular, probably because the students find the content interesting and they can see its relevance to their prospective future employment. Students are admitted to the course on the basis of the results of the state examinations they take before leaving high school and no aptitude tests are administered. So have they got what it takes to be entrepreneurs or project managers?

Although some of the first-year students do have some experience of teamwork, having previously been involved in school projects, the majority of them seem to have quite a vague understanding of what their future professions might entail. At the start of the course we discuss their expectations of their future jobs and what the requirements of those jobs might be. However, it is difficult to know how best to give them an idea of what a project is and what project management involves before they start lectures. I also wonder what they themselves expect from their business English classes.

I have come to the conclusion that practice and hands-on experience are necessary to bring out my students' entrepreneurial qualities, so I have introduced into my lessons a one-month project involving the development, launch and marketing of a new product or service. We still use reading texts, do vocabulary exercises and roleplays and all the other things you would expect of a business English course, but these are done within the context of the project, which aims to teach the students the basics of project management at the same time as developing their language skills.

Students find this project work motivating and inspiring; they really enjoy working on an idea they have come up with themselves and seeing its development step-by-step. Although they have a lot of fun doing it, there is a serious purpose and each year I am amazed at their creativity. I have seen some great innovative business ideas – new products and services with such intriguing names as Wonderwall, Mini-projector, Laughter Club and Pet Café, to mention just a few. Perhaps one day they will actually materialise! It is certainly true that in the last three years two former students have started their own business after graduation. I hope that the feeling of accomplishment they have at the end of the project will encourage them to have a try in this tough business world.

Students find this project work motivating; they enjoy working on an idea they have come up with themselves and seeing its development step-by-step

The students

The students in my classes generally have a good command of English, which is a great advantage because they don't need to be taught basic communication skills. It is also helpful that some already know what teamwork is and have some of the interpersonal skills required for project-based learning.

During the project, the students work in teams of four or five and there are usually four or five teams per class.

The software

In their teams, the students use *Zohoprojects* project management software. This helps them to work in collaboration, sharing ideas and documents online. This particular

The next big thing?

software is very good for promoting understanding of project work and acquiring content knowledge, and using it also helps develop the students' IT skills. The project is simple to monitor and facilitate – I can check the students' progress easily, seeing what they are working on, how their ideas are developing, and where they could use some extra help. Sending messages to the teams to keep them informed about tasks, deadlines and meetings is also easy.

The organisation

The goal of the project is to develop and launch a new product or service, complete with marketing and advertising. We have only one month – 20 contact hours – to complete it. All the classes (which are termed *project meetings*) start with a warm-up activity to set the atmosphere and establish the goal of that meeting. Typically, half the time is devoted to an introduction of the topic (project management, product development, marketing and promotional tools) and this involves text reading, comprehension and discussion, and the introduction of key vocabulary. The rest of the time, each team works on a series of authentic, practical tasks related to their own product or service, which have to be completed by the next project meeting.

The tasks

The tasks enable the students to acquire content-based knowledge and skills. They include brainstorming ideas for a product or service and describing it; writing a project plan; carrying out market research; compiling questionnaires to determine whether there is a market for this product or service; composing a marketing mix for it; writing a progress report; creating a promotional tool that will attract potential customers; and preparing a presentation of the product or service for the last meeting of the whole class. I provide worksheets for all the tasks, with detailed guidelines and clear instructions.

The assessment

Assessment is formative. The whole project is divided into tasks, which are assessed separately and contribute to the final grade. Throughout the project, continuous peer-assessment is used with regard to teamwork and the contributions made by team members; self-assessment is used with regard to how well the students cope with the tasks. Assessment criteria are supplied for oral presentations, written assignments and teamwork.

The conclusions

In my experience, there are many advantages to using integrated and project-based learning. First, there is the effect on the students' motivation and the relevance of the content to them. Students can see they really are synthesising theoretical and practical knowledge. Surveys conducted between 2009 and 2011 showed that 100 percent of the students thought that using project work was good for learning project-management and marketing/advertising skills and for acquiring specific content vocabulary. Their assessment of the teamwork was varied, depending on the level of contribution made by individual team members. The students reported that they valued the whole process of the project and appreciated its creativity. They also suggested a range of possibilities for developing the project in future: ways of making it more real and extending it in terms of both topics and time. Most valuable was the fact that the students gave some negative feedback as well as positive; this is worth more than agreement with everything that the teacher has planned.

Recommendations

Here are four recommendations for turning your students from simple users and transmitters of information into creators and authors of knowledge who construct their own understanding of the content by transforming it to suit their own particular context and purposes:

1 Design meaningful tasks with a distinct and visible end result.
Students like challenging and meaningful tasks which enable them to use their imagination and creativity and which allow them to invest something of themselves in the end product. The best way to increase motivation is to give the students tasks in which they can see the end result of their efforts.

2 Design collaborative tasks and put the finished work on public display.
Students like tasks where they work together, learning from each other, seeing different solutions and analysing and defending their opinions. Working towards a goal also develops their interpersonal and teamwork skills. The end product, which comprises all the completed tasks, should not only be seen by the teacher, but should also be presented to the whole class. Firstly, this can be done by getting the teams to make oral presentations, but video recordings of these presentations can also be made and uploaded to the project website for later peer review, discussion and feedback.

3 Design tasks which enable recycling of all the language skills.
In this project, the students are engaged in authentic tasks that require them to read articles in order to write summaries or reports; to produce written plans for their work; to listen to presentations, write reviews, discuss progress, and so on. Practice of a variety of different language skills and recycling of key vocabulary and structures will help to improve their general language ability.

4 Cooperate with your colleagues.
Discuss the possibilities for new project ideas or case studies with the content teachers or programme managers from your institution. Find ways to include several topics from the business English syllabus. By working together as a team with a common goal, you can come up with some excellent ideas – to say nothing of the fun involved. ETp



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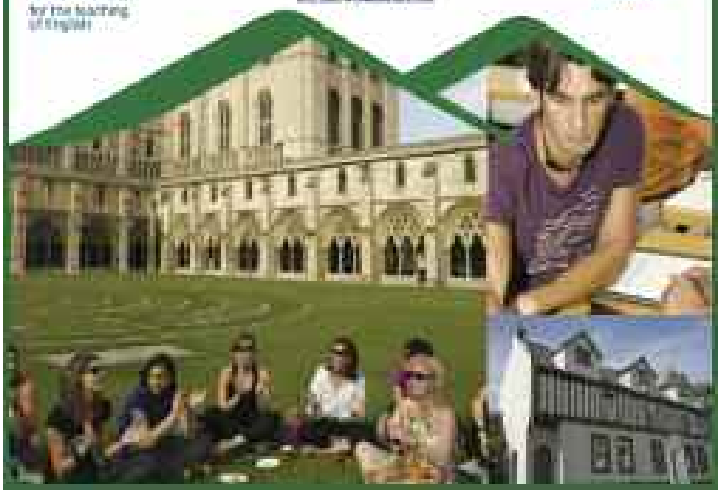
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Differentiation in the business English classroom

Louis Rogers deals with diversity.

Differentiation is not something unique to English language teaching – or indeed to language teaching in general. It is, perhaps, a term associated most commonly with mainstream education in schools. Initially, at least, it addressed the issue of dealing with different abilities in one classroom, in particular with helping the weakest and challenging the strongest. And that is probably still the predominant interpretation of the term.

However, the issues which differentiation encompasses have gradually grown to include many wider concerns and contexts. In some ways, the term has become so broad that it considers almost everything the teacher and the students do in the classroom. For example, Diane Heacox defines differentiated instruction as changing the pace, level or kind of instruction teachers provide in response to individual learners' needs, styles or interests. Carol Tomlinson defines it in terms of content, process and product. Remove content, product and process from the classroom and there is little left, other than a collection of people in a room!

If differentiation has become an almost all-encompassing term, which aspects are particularly relevant to business English settings and what impact can they have on the content, processes and product we use in the classroom? In this article, I will outline a number of the key issues related to differentiation and assess their relevance to the business English classroom.

Differentiating instruction

In terms of *content*, different resources can be given to different learners. For example, if you are using a coursebook with a text on a given topic, then the original authentic text (often referenced in the acknowledgements) or perhaps a more challenging one on the same theme can be given to students of a higher level. Or if level is not the issue, but needs and goals are, then a similar approach could also be used. For example, those students who are interested in developing their language ability rather than cultural knowledge can be given further work on forms, whereas those with a greater interest in culture or communication styles can be given a further text on the same topic. To a certain extent, some good teacher's books will provide activities to enable teachers to differentiate in this way. If not, finding multiple sets of materials obviously places a much greater demand on the teacher. Using multiple materials will also create issues with classroom management when feedback on an activity is conducted.

Initially, differentiation addressed dealing with different abilities in one classroom, in particular with helping the weakest and challenging the strongest

In terms of the *process*, all the students might be given the same task or resource but not be expected to carry it out in the same way. For teachers, this is perhaps the easiest method with which to differentiate as it requires little planning and they are in control of the marking criteria. However, inevitably some students measure their success against others and they will quickly realise they are below the level of their classmates.

Finally, in terms of *product*, the same task is given to all the students, for example preparing information for visitors, but different students are asked to present it in different ways, eg via a short email, a phone call or a presentation. This allows for a range of language needs to be met from the same starting point. This approach is useful for helping the students to work on their own needs or weaker areas. However, for the teacher it can be very time-consuming and challenging.

Differentiating business English instruction

Business English is quite a loose and broad term that can mean many different things in different situations. However, one thing that nearly all business English courses have in

common is that they are needs-driven rather than syllabus-driven. As a result, the adaptation of materials is one of the key characteristics that defines the very heart of business English teaching. In particular, adapting or selecting the content to meet the students' needs and relating those to the product the students need to generate in their roles at work is integral to the success of most courses. Carol Tomlinson argues that research has proven that students are more successful when they are taught based on their own readiness levels, interests and learning profiles.

Whilst business English may feel more specific than general English, it is still very broad – and proponents of an ESP approach would perhaps argue that it is too broad. In 1978, Gerry Abbott coined the term TENOR – *Teaching English for No Obvious Reason* – with a rather cynical take on the validity of having a broad syllabus. However, many of us find ourselves in a situation with a wide variety of needs and abilities in one classroom and the challenge is meeting these to the best of our ability.

Differentiating business English learners

While the issues of differentiation mentioned above are common to many language teaching situations, there are some areas in which business English provides particular challenges for the teacher, some of which I would like to outline here:

Businesspeople

It can often be the case that you are assigned a class of six or seven businesspeople who work for the same company. They have been tested as being at the same level and, because they work together, a decision is made to place them in the same class. This group is now your 'Insurance English intermediate class'. However, very soon after this initial label is applied, all similarity in the learners' needs quickly disappears. Each person has an entirely different role and uses English for different purposes. One person negotiates in English frequently – no one else does. Another person reads contracts in English – no one else does. Trying to meet everyone's needs becomes incredibly challenging.

Pre-work learners

Perhaps none of the students in your class currently uses English to do a job. However, half want to improve their English because they intend to study for a year in another country, while the other half want to improve their English in order to do an internship in an English-speaking firm next summer.

Attendance

Of course, erratic attendance can be an issue in any course, but it is such a frequent issue in business English that the same group of six or seven students are never in the class together. A spread in the levels that is not particularly noticeable when everyone is there can become startlingly obvious when only two or three students turn up and they include the strongest and weakest in the class. Furthermore, because of the sporadic nature of the attendance, your lesson plan, which meets the aims of three to four of the students, suddenly appears less valid as only one of these students is actually present.

Dealing with differentiation

Differentiation is not a new concept, and to any experienced business English teacher it will probably just sound like a description of their day-to-day role. However, the greater the flexibility teachers can have in their content, product and processes, the more likely it is that the students will benefit. The challenge can lie in identifying key lesson aims that will benefit all the students but, at the same time, be differentiated to each student's needs.

- One example would be teaching pre-intermediate students the present continuous for future arrangements. This structure and aim is likely to be relevant to all the students. However, the tasks set could be devised to meet a variety of needs. Any number of the main communicative aims of a business English classroom – namely meetings, emails, presentations and telephoning – can be given to different students as an output task, depending on their personal needs.

Many business English courses fall down by focusing on the *genre*, for example 'meetings', rather than the *function*, such as 'agreeing and disagreeing'. Focusing on functions rather than genres allows teachers more readily to set multiple aims in one situation.

- To give another example, 'culture' is often taught within an individual unit and does little beyond covering some general stereotypes. Culture can be defined in many ways, however, and many definitions combine language as an element of culture – not simply the language itself being different but also the differences in how people communicate in different cultures. Integrating communication strategies with functional language could be another way of meeting different needs within the language classroom.

★ ★ ★

Differentiation ultimately has many limitations, as it requires additional planning and time and raises classroom management issues: it can be difficult to administer one summative assessment to all the individuals in a group. However, with the right planning and an effective set of materials available, differentiating in this way can be very effective in developing each student's ability. ETp

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SCRAPBOOK

This issue's *Scrapbook* is about water going downhill. No, I'm not referring to the declining quality of the stuff that comes out of the tap but, quite simply, to rivers. We have all seen a river, however small (more on relative sizes later). Some of us live close to one, some live on the banks of one, and some, such as those in Bangkok, live on top of one! Water has a huge fascination for so many people, and the varied forms and sizes of rivers add to this allure.

The long and the short of it

We are obsessed by size: the Nile is well-known as the world's longest river, at some 4,160 miles (over 6,600 kilometres), but I wonder what you would guess as the length of the shortest named river? The Reprua, in Abkhazia, at only 18 metres (59 feet) long can probably claim that title! (Anything shorter would perhaps qualify as a puddle!)

Thinking of the word *puddle* brings to mind the number of words for water that English has, particularly at the smaller end of the flowing water scale: there are *rivulets*, *brooks*, *rills*, *streams*, *becks* and *burns*, to name but a few.

Grand rivers inspire grand adjectives, such as *mighty* and *majestic*; their sheer power inspires even more purple prose, especially where flooding caused by bursting of the banks is concerned.

Rivers are important in so many ways; their associated ecology is vital to the balance of life on our planet, while the simple fact of their position has given rise to the placement of so many of the world's great cities.

How many of the following eight cities can you match with the rivers they stand on?

1 Prague
a) Moldau b) Main c) Elbe d) Vistula

2 Florence
a) Po b) Arno c) Ebro d) Tiber

3 St Petersburg
a) Spree b) Moskva c) Volga d) Neva

4 Lisbon
a) Tagus b) Po c) Porto d) Ebro

5 Dublin
a) Dublin b) Mersey c) Liffey d) Shannon

6 Khartoum
a) Limpopo b) Niger c) Congo d) Nile

7 Moscow
a) Moskva b) Sumida c) Danube d) Volga

8 Washington D C
a) Ohio b) Potomac c) St Lawrence d) Hudson

However, fascinating as rivers may be, it is when they do something strange or spectacular that we become really hooked. For instance, rivers flow downhill, yes? That means invariably towards the sea, and always in one direction. Well, actually, not always …

Reversing rivers

The Tonle Sap Lake, the largest freshwater lake in Southeast Asia, and its feeder, the Tonle Sap River, exist as an ecological anomaly. In early June, at the start of the annual rainy season, the water level of the Mekong River rises spectacularly enough to divert part of its flow off its course to the South China Sea and redirect it into the Tonle Sap River. This forces the current of this 100-kilometre-long river to reverse direction, beginning a process that by the end of October will see the area of the Tonle Sap Lake grow from 2,500 square kilometres to as much as 12,000 square kilometres, with its boundaries extending anywhere from 20 kilometres to as much as 50 kilometres inland and its depth increasing from a mere two metres to as much as ten.



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There are several other examples of this 'unnatural' behaviour, one of which is the Wye River in the UK, which discharges into the River Severn, which in turn discharges into the sea. Partly due to the Severn's extremely wide mouth, it is very susceptible to tides. The combination of these factors causes the pressure of water at high tides to force the surface water of the Wye River to change direction regularly twice a day for an hour or more. The effect is not as extreme as with the Tonle Sap, and it is only the surface water that changes direction, with the river continuing to flow downstream beneath this layer. Nevertheless, you are treated to the spectacle of surface debris proceeding downstream in a stately and

majestic fashion, only to be seen a little later making equally stately progress in the other direction in the occasional company of a puzzled-looking duck!

To the sea, to the sea!

In our minds, the 'natural' order of things where rivers are concerned requires a source, a visible path and a successful journey into the sea. This doesn't always happen, much to our mystification.

There are several cases of rivers apparently wasting their efforts to reach a sea, and the best-known is probably the Okavango Delta in Botswana. This is a very large inland delta, formed where the Okavango River reaches a tectonic trough in the central part of the Kalahari. Every year, approximately 11 cubic kilometres of water spread over the 6,000–15,000 square kilometre area. Approximately 60 percent goes to sustaining plant life, 36 percent is evaporated (freeing it to come and rain on poor unsuspecting souls like us in the UK), 2 percent percolates into the underground aquifers and 2 percent flows into Lake Ngami. The area is perhaps most noted for its plentiful wildlife, which attracts many tourists to this area and is sustained by the waters of the delta.

Hidden rivers

I mentioned underground aquifers, and this is another source of wonder: some rivers don't do as they are supposed to, but dive underground for most of their length. There are many natural examples, and many spectacular cave systems created by such phenomena, but in our haste to expand major cities in spite of natural obstacles, we covered up quite a few ourselves. Notable examples include:

- the Dommel, which lies underneath 's-Hertogenbosch in the Netherlands;
- the Neglinnaya River, which runs through a series of tunnels underneath the central part of Moscow;
- the Tank Stream, which flows underneath Sydney;
- the Bièvre, buried in tunnels underneath Paris.

I have in front of me a map of the underground rivers in London, and they number over 20 – other cities built on the banks of major rivers may well have similar numbers. Incidentally, talking of London's major river, the Thames, do you know why it is pronounced /temz/? Originally it was pronounced as it is spelt, but one of the Georges (Kings of England, thoughtfully imported from the continent) had such a heavy Germanic accent that he couldn't manage the soft 'th' sound – so the /temz/ it has been ever since!



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Going downhill fast

The other thing that water does which captures our interest is when it stops going along at a reasonable and steady gradient – and jumps. There are some amazing waterfalls around the world, and here are a few statistics:

The world's highest waterfall is Angel Falls in Venezuela with a drop of 3,212 feet (979 metres).

Victoria Falls is thought to have the greatest volume of water flowing over it, but even at over one mile (1.6 kilometres) in width, it is dwarfed by the Chutes de Khone, on the Mekong River in Laos, with a span of over six miles (10 kilometres).

Jumps and plunges

Most of us like playing with and in water, but some take it to extremes: on October 24, 1901, a 63-year-old school teacher, Annie Edson Taylor, was the first person to go over Niagara Falls on the American–Canadian border in a barrel. She did this as a publicity stunt and she survived, bleeding but virtually unharmed. Soon after exiting the barrel, she said *'No one ought ever do that again'*. Despite her advice, 14 people have intentionally gone over the falls in or on a device since her historic ride. Some have survived intact, but others have drowned or been severely injured. Survivors of such stunts face charges and stiff fines as it is illegal, on both sides of the border, to attempt to go over the falls. Nevertheless, this foolhardiness still goes on today – as recently as May 21, 2012, an unidentified man in his early 40s became the third person to survive an unprotected trip over Horseshoe Falls, one section of Niagara. Eyewitness reports indicate that he deliberately jumped into the Niagara River after climbing over a railing!

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

Scrapbook compiled by Ian Waring Green

In it up to your ears 2

Mark Hancock insists that working with authentic recordings is a valuable investment.

In Issue 84 of ET*p*, I looked at variations in authentic speech that cause comprehension difficulties for students. I focused firstly on variations relating to connected speech and, secondly, on those relating to accent, and I presented some awareness-raising activities to prepare students for these variations. In this issue, I will turn my attention to authentic recordings and how these can be exploited to develop pronunciation as a listening skill.

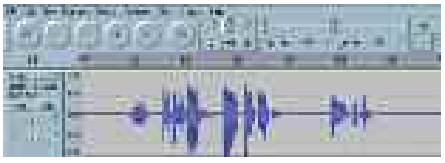
Micro-listening

John Field argues that the typical listening lesson, featuring a text plus a series of comprehension questions, *tests* rather than *teaches*. He suggests that listening lessons should also include a close-up focus on very small segments, or *micro-listening*. This will help to make the students more aware of the characteristics of speech described in my article in Issue 84. Published listening materials rarely feature segments of authentic text extracted for micro-listening, so you might like to make some yourself.

Creating your own materials

In order to create your own micro-listening materials, you will need some audio-editing software. *Audacity* is one such product and it is available free from *http://audacity.sourceforge.net*. (An alternative is *Wavlab*.)

In *Audacity*, when you open an MP3 file with your audio text, you will see the audio file shown as vibrations along a line, as in the example here:



Click on the green 'Play' button at the top to listen and watch the display. Then identify a very short segment that you wish to focus on because it is likely to be difficult for your students to understand – this may be because of connected speech features or because of the speaker's accent. Highlight that segment on the display in much the same way as you would highlight a piece of text. You can then copy it and paste it into a fresh file. You can paste it multiple times so that your students can hear it repeatedly – an 'acoustic drill' – or you can paste lots of different segments together which all share one common feature – an 'audio-concordance'.

Acoustic drills

We usually think of drills in connection with spoken production, with multiple repetition to train articulation. The same idea could be transferred to listening – for ear training. Identify and copy a segment of a listening text as described above, pasting it repeatedly into a new file three or four times with hardly any gap between them. The effect of the multiple repetition is to make the pronunciation of the segment extremely noticeable and memorable. You would probably choose a number of these problem segments from any given authentic audio text. You can also make slowed-down versions of your acoustic drill in *Audacity* by clicking on the 'Effect' tab and choosing 'Change tempo'. A slowed-down version will really enable your students to analyse what they are hearing.

Audio concordances

Identify a feature of your text which is noticeably frequent and potentially confusing for an apprentice listener. Copy multiple examples of this feature, plus a small amount of the co-text to the left and right of each example, and paste them into a fresh file. Once you have a collection of such snippets, it will sound something like the audio equivalent of the typical concordance display, with the key word in a vertical column and a little of the co-text to the left and right.

When you play this audio concordance for your students, it will make the targeted feature very noticeable and thus raise awareness of it. For example, working with a podcast from a radio station, I found a discussion with multiple occurrences of the word *actually*, which was radically reduced and elided. I made the following audio concordance. The word *actually* is transcribed roughly as it sounds:

… do you ***achly*** *know …*
… if you ***achly*** *highlight …*
… have you ***achly*** *met them all …*
… but it ***sachly*** *…*

By hearing these various instances of the same word, pronounced a little differently every time, the students get a feel for the variability of its pronunciation. The fragments in the above example were all edited from a single authentic text. However, there is no reason why you shouldn't create audio concordances from many different audio texts to get a bigger sample of the target feature, presented in a variety of voices and accents.

★ ★ ★

Like any other preparation of class materials, making these micro-listenings will take time. This is particularly true if you are new to the software. However, the time spent familiarising yourself with it is an investment which will pay off later, when you'll be able to edit classroom audio much more quickly. ETp

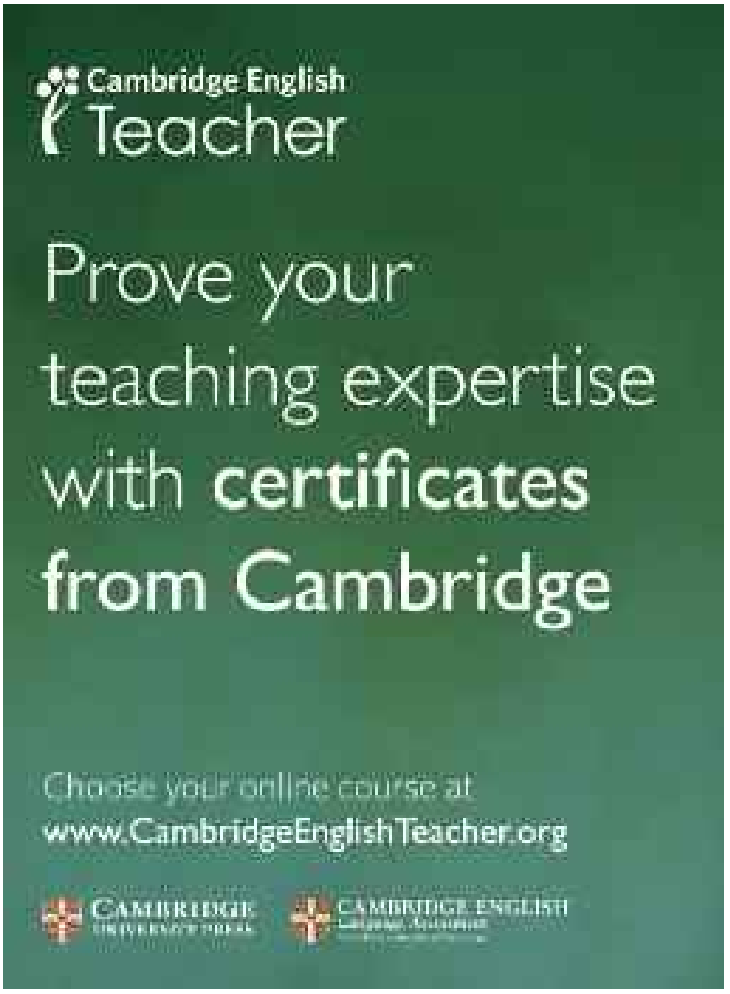
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Mark Hancock has been an English teacher since 1984, working in Turkey, Brazil, the UK and now in Spain. He has an MSc in teaching English from Aston University, UK. His books on pronunciation include *English Pronunciation in Use Intermediate* and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

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Reviews

Traditional Folk Songs

by David A Hill and Andrew C Rouse
Helbling Languages 2012
978-3-85272-433-1



Songs have long been a popular resource for language teaching, and for good reason. At their best, they offer enjoyable exposure and interaction with the language in context. They have potential spin-off value for language skills – in particular, pronunciation, lexis and grammar – as well as for cultural background and world knowledge. And they are highly memorable. Equally importantly, songs (and especially folk songs) touch the fund of human feelings we all share – love, death, disappointment, loss, deception, pain, joy ... There is all too little of this in many published materials.

But although there have been a number of books on the subject, the use of songs has mostly remained a 'wet Friday afternoon' option, and teachers have tended to be left to their own devices. Moreover, although traditional folk songs are often used, there has not been a readily accessible collection for teachers to draw upon. This book is, therefore, most welcome, and its subtitle *–15 folk songs from Britain and Ireland to liven up your lessons* – is true to its word.

The collection comes in a ring-bound photocopiable format, with a CD-ROM with the words, music and other printed material, and an audio CD with the soundtrack. The 15 songs include many well-known favourites, such as *Cockles and Mussels* and *What Shall We Do with the Drunken Sailor?* as well as some which will be less familiar, like *So Early in the Spring*.

Each unit of the book is based on one of the songs and there is a standard unit structure. The first three pages contain detailed lesson notes and answer keys for the teacher. Next, the lyrics and musical score for the song open the students' part of the unit. There are then one or two worksheets directed to a CLIL exploitation of the text. These are followed by two further worksheets: one exploring the song through various kinds of questioning and one with more detailed language work. The last of the worksheets in each unit is headed *Performers' Corner*. This focuses on a well-known singer (eg Van Morrison, Pete Seeger) or group (eg The Dubliners, Pentangle) associated with the song, and provides information about other recordings and artists for those who want to explore further.

The songs themselves are well-recorded and pleasing to the ear and, most importantly, clearly enunciated, so they are easy to follow, with or without a script in hand. There is a nice variety of modes, from single unaccompanied vocal, sung by the two authors, to two voices accompanied by violin and guitar. My only small regret was that there was no female voice. Apart from reasons of gender balance, some of the songs are sung by a female persona (*The Trees They Do Grow High*, *All Things Were Quite Silent*, etc), while others are dialogic between male and female voices (eg *The Outlandish Knight*).

There is a good range of activity types, leaving the teacher to decide how much or how little is appropriate in a given class context. I liked the fact that the authors do not make the molehill of archaisms and unusual vocabulary or syntax into a mountain of difficulty. Such things are secondary to the appeal of the songs themselves.

In one or two cases, there is reference to a parallel literary text. I would have welcomed this as a regular feature. *The Wild Rover*, for example, could have been set alongside Byron's poem *So We'll Go No More A-Roving*. In other cases, variant versions of the songs might have been used for comparison.

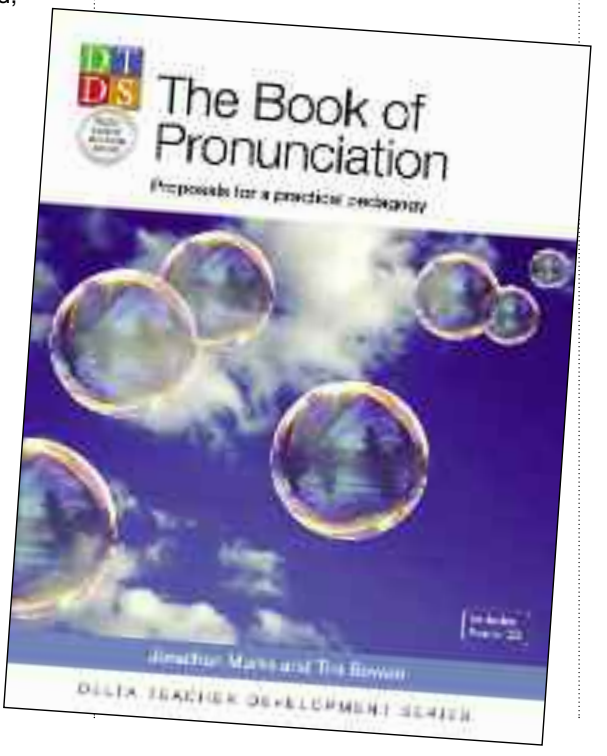
Overall, I can thoroughly recommend this book to teachers who wish to 'liven up their lessons'. And I look forward to the next one – American folk songs, perhaps?

Alan Maley
Fordwich, UK

The Book of Pronunciation

by Jonathan Marks and Tim Bowen
DELTA Publishing 2012
978-1-905085-70-5

I don't know if Jonathan Marks and Tim Bowen can write verse anything in the vein of Yeats, but this text is poetry for any teacher hoping for an all-encompassing guide to both the theory and teaching of pronunciation. I was



made to realise that I know less about pronunciation than I thought I did. Have you ever elided? Do you have a rhotic or non-rhotic accent? What exactly should you do with your tongue and lips to make a fricative? Part A will tell you if you *have*, if you *do* and *how*. It not only explains these, but many other technical terms, in crystal clear layman's language. I now look forward to impressing some unsuspecting colleagues with my new-found vocabulary!

This book is from the award-winning Delta Teacher Development Series and is, as the subtitle denotes, of an extremely practical pedagogy. After being enlightened with some of the terminology in the early section of Part A, a schematic representation of English phonemes is illustrated with sounds, symbols, spelling and stress. Included here are some useful rules of thumb: for example, which suffixes *do* and which *don't* change the stress patterns of words they are added to.

Part B is the meat of the book, handouts upon handouts, each with very practical guidelines as to how to use them. The first of these handouts, in Chapter 1, asks the learners to consider the importance of pronunciation and focuses on the introduction of the phonemic chart. This is followed up with a fun activity – 'Introducing syllables' – with the placement of coins in different corners of a table as each student calls out a word, eliciting awareness of syllables in a non-intellectual way. Try it out and see how long it takes before the first learner cottons on to what's happening.

The look of the book I feel is less impressive. I find the cover design far from appealing. Why not create an eye-catching sketch to illustrate one of the activities within? The printing throughout the text is grey and the font size very small, which makes it not very reader-friendly.

The CD included may be a useful tool for non-native language teachers, but I personally find letting the learners struggle to work out the stress, the intonation or the rhythm for themselves far more rewarding.

On the plus side, there is that wealth of handouts, all meticulously laid out, followed by detailed procedures on to how to apply them, which is great. My students particularly enjoyed 'Word families', 'Everything but', 'Disappearing text', 'Nothing a tall' and 'Who's got the tickets?' If only a few more of these were turned into games or activities where students were made to get out of their seats and move around the classroom, it would be perfect. But saying that, I don't believe you could find a more well-rounded and definitive tool for the application of pronunciation in the classroom. Jonathan Marks and Tim Bowen have created a really valuable book, full of an abundance of engaging, practical material.

Andy Starck
Tainan, Taiwan



Get on Stage!

by Herbert Puchta, Günter Gerngross and Mathew Devitt
Helbling Languages 2012
978-3-85272-248-1

The pressing need for plays which can be staged with students is familiar to teachers all over the world. The main problem teachers face is finding engaging and relevant stories which learners really want to act out. *Get on Stage!* caters for this need by offering a wide range of plays which can easily be staged, along with a bank of ideas on how to go about it. What first meets the eye is how complete and thorough the work of the three authors is: two seasoned ELT writers and materials developers, Herbert Puchta and Günter Gerngross, have been assisted in this endeavour by the experienced actor and director Matthew Devitt.

Get on Stage! has been designed for use in the ELT classroom with students at elementary to upper-intermediate level (A2 to B2 on the Common European Framework scale), and it forms part of the Helbling Photocopiable Resources series. The book is broken down into four chapters, each hosting plays of different lengths. At the end, teachers can find a quick reference guide which will help them to select the most suitable play for their class. What I found most exciting about this resource book is its extensive introduction, which covers all aspects of staging a play and provides ideas for warm-up games as well as the theoretical background to why the use of drama benefits language learners. Among the definite pluses of the book is that it comes with a DVD and a CD that includes some recorded plays: these can be used as listening material or as an aid to improve the learners' own pronunciation and intonation.

Get on Stage! is more than just a collection of plays, as the authors have also provided some thought-provoking teaching material. Attention has been given to the learners' need to understand the plot and the language of the play before attempting to learn their lines. Comprehension and vocabulary development worksheets accompanying each of the plays will help the students to pick up chunks of authentic language, which in turn will help them to remember their lines more easily and to act more naturally.

One really needs to nitpick to find drawbacks in this book, but I have to say that a few of the plot ideas and endings seem a little contrived or underdeveloped to me. I suspect that in some places they have been sacrificed to allow the language of each play to be carefully controlled.

Get on Stage! made me want to stage a play with my students as soon as possible. Perhaps this is the greatest accomplishment of this book: it offers inspiration to teachers to inspire their learners.

Maria-Araxi Sachpazian
Thessaloniki, Greece

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The building blocks of grammar

Ken Milgate identifies the need for proper grammar training.

For the second year running, I have a student in my Cambridge Proficiency in English (CPE) class whose principal objective is to take a GCSE in English (a public examination taken by students in UK schools, usually at the age of 16). She attends my evening class, however, because her chosen course does not involve any formal grammar teaching.

Expectations

Like the majority of overseas students, she expects some grammar input on a language course, and the omission of this traditional element in school exam courses in the UK may be one of the reasons why there is so much adverse comment with regard to the level of language accuracy and appropriateness displayed by today's school leavers.

Examinations

The Cambridge suite of examinations, which is much favoured by overseas students by virtue of its international status and acceptance, lays great emphasis on grammatical structures: some of the transformation exercises at CPE level would tax native speakers.

Some years ago, a member of staff from another department with a degree in English Literature asked if she could sit in on one of my basic grammar classes prior to a year's study leave during which she was to teach English in Mexico. At the end of the lesson she was, in her own words, 'gobsmacked' at how unprepared she felt to deliver the kind of lesson that non-native speakers expect.

A major consideration in my grammar classes at all levels is to effect the transfer from theory to practice in



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the safe environment of the classroom. It is vital that any new structure is field-tested to prove its practical application.

Emotions

In a recent CPE class, I introduced (at the request of one of my students) examples of sentences using *I wish* and *If only* to express preference and regret. It was examples of the latter that proved particularly rewarding: my own examples – *I wish I could go to the party tomorrow* and *I wish she wouldn't use my phone so much* – were dwarfed by subsequent voluntary revelations from students who had no qualms about making very emotional declarations and confessions. Confidentiality prevents me from citing them all, but suffice it to say that the constructions were the catalyst for a barrage of highly-charged language examples.

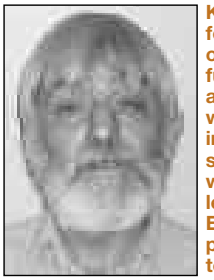
I have always contended that the port of arrival in a foreign language is when you can talk about your emotions in depth. What started out as an input of theory soon became a truly human experience of soul-searching and catharsis: *If only I hadn't been so nervous* and *I wish I had not written that letter* were authentic responses which triggered off further language development.

Of course, the regular features of my classes at this high level also include the methodical exploitation of short newspaper or magazine articles: we analyse the use of punctuation, the choice of constructions for emphasis and the reason for verb tenses, to name but a few examples.

★ ★ ★

It is no surprise that, in general, the British do not make good linguists when the UK educational system denies learners the basics of sentence construction; it is like expecting a builder to construct a house without first being taught how to lay a solid foundation.

Potential teachers of English as a foreign or second language, however, will need to ensure that their training includes a study of English grammar and its teaching before they face a class of students who will expect the teacher to have an in-depth knowledge of how their mother tongue works on a fundamental basis. The alternative might well be embarrassed silence in a classroom a long way from home. ETp

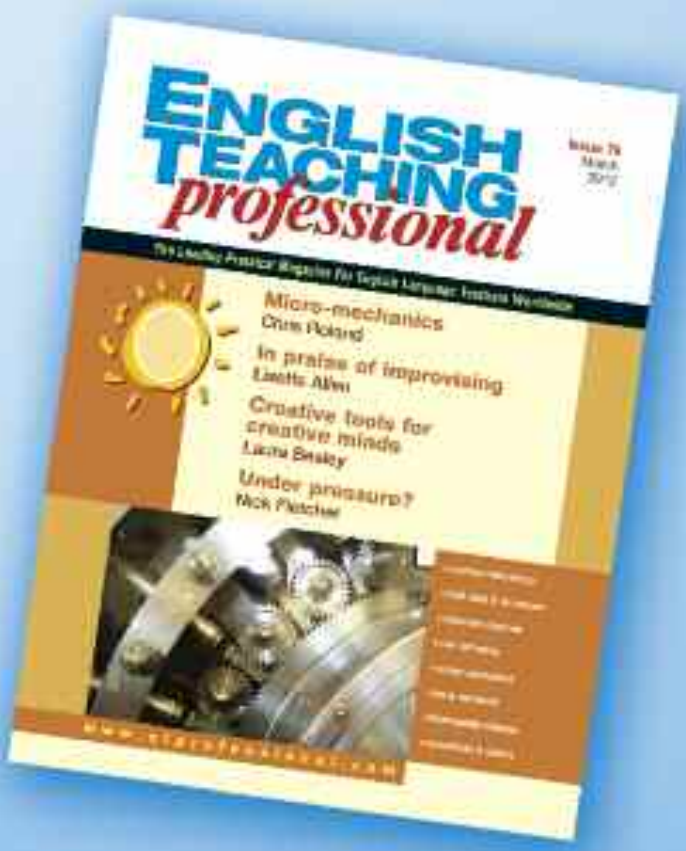


Ken Milgate has over forty years' experience of teaching ESOL in further education. He is a reflective practitioner with research interests in innovative teaching strategies and also works as a distance learning tutor for Eurolink, preparing prospective ESOL teachers worldwide.

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Keeping a reflective teaching journal

Dominick Inglese relates his personal experience of action research.

Reflection is a deep thought process whereby the person involved consciously ponders what has happened in a particular situation. Reflective journals are used to make a written record of that process and, in the context of education, there are two main types: learner journals and teacher journals.

In the classroom, learner journals are a fairly common assessment tool; and professional reflective journals are often used in pre-service training programmes to assist teachers in analysing the internal and external forces that affect daily teaching experiences. They are a way of encouraging trainee teachers to become more sensitive to their interpersonal relationships with their students.

Professional reflective journals

Volumes of literature are devoted to the benefits of using journals in the classroom, most of which explain how to generate, administer and assess *student* journal writings (see the works of Mary Lou Holly, Jo McDonough, Melina Porto, and Jack Richards and Thomas Farrell). Although vast numbers of publications overflow with literature on the theories and methods of engaging in reflective practice, few have concrete case studies of professional teacher diaries, and fewer still include submissions from young adult teachers. There are, however, two examples that stand out: those by Melina Porto and Jo McDonough.

Porto's in-depth 35-week-long study involves massive amounts of raw data taken from journals written by herself and her students. In an exposing statement, she demonstrates that reflective journal keeping is beneficial, but can also be painful: *'Reading and rereading my teaching diaries has been an incredibly painful experience, if not one of the most traumatic of my professional life so far.'*

> *Journals are a way of encouraging trainee teachers to become more sensitive to their interpersonal relationships with their students*

McDonough looked at the diaries of four experienced teachers and asserts that diaries *'help us document and formalize the everyday working experience that might otherwise be lost'*.

My action research project

I am a visiting instructor at a large private university in Southeast Asia (over 20,000 students are enrolled in the undergraduate programme). I teach a required undergraduate English conversation course where nearly all of the students are aged between 19 and 23 and are in their first year of college.

Having a sincere desire to implement some of the theories that I have read about endlessly, I decided last semester to go beyond the requirements of my allocated duties and implement a personally-designed curriculum, using original lesson plans consisting of customised rubrics, worksheets, homework assignments and classroom activities. I was also eager to engage in professional development by means of reflective practice, so after each class I would write about the day's events. Like Melina Porto, I felt inspired to do this action research because I had a desire to deviate from the standard textbook-based teacher-centred curriculum. However, I was too insecure and intimidated to solicit my students' opinions as she did!

My teaching context

To help you understand the context in which I am working, here is some information about my teaching situation:

- I have both male and female first-year university students.
- They are mostly business management majors and communication majors.
- They are aged 19–23 (the average age is 20).
- The lesson takes place once a week for 1 hour and 50 minutes.
- Our classroom is fully equipped with a computer and sound system hooked up to a large screen projector.
- The large projector screen drops down in front of the blackboard at the flip of a switch.
- The desks are aligned in five rows facing the large screen.

Keeping a reflective teaching journal

- I have an internet connection, allowing me access to my website, which I use to conduct the lesson.
- The students can see the worksheets and videos posted on my website on the large screen.

Procedures and results

The procedure for my action research project was very simple: every day after class, I would write about the day's events, giving details about what happened and telling myself what I wanted to do in the next class. I kept this journal for the first half of the semester, during which the daily lessons were based on popular songs. There are some examples of my journal entries at the end of this article.

As a result of keeping a reflective journal, I made several changes during the course of the semester and I have a clear plan on how to improve the curriculum for the next semester. I have also gained a profound realisation of the extent to which teachers have the potential to affect their students' lives.

★ ★ ★

As you will see from the journal entries shown here, I felt ecstatic during this experience. In future action research, I believe I should also get the students' opinions on the experience by conducting a survey at the end of the semester.

This article offers a glimpse into my genuine emotions as I experienced 'feeling like a teacher' for the first time. The results are offered here in an attempt to bridge the gap between theory and practice in English language teaching. ETp

Holly, M L H *Keeping a Professional Journal* (2nd ed) UNSW Press 2002

McDonough, J 'A teacher looks at teachers' diaries' *ELTJ* 1994

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Richards, J C and Farrell, T S C *Professional Development for Language Teachers: Strategies for Teacher Learning* CUP 2005

Richards, J C and Farrell, T S C *Practice Teaching: A Reflective Approach* CUP 2011



Dominick Inglese has a BA in English and a MAEd in Curriculum/ Instruction. A saxophone and flute player, he focuses on incorporating music into lesson plans, especially for English language learners. As an extension of his Master's research, his ongoing project is constructing a *Moodle* site for English language learners: *http://englishusingsongs.com.*

info@englishusingsongs.com

Journal Entries

Journal entry (1) March 7, 2011

Today was the first full class in which I used the worksheets and website I have developed to teach English using music. There were 36 students in the class and I asked them which song they wanted to do from the list on my website; they chose 'Let it Be'.

Using the worksheets, we began the lesson with the vocabulary section. As a class, we wrote sentences for each vocabulary word. I walked around the room as they wrote their sentences, reading out loud ones that came to mind as well as exemplary sentences from various students. After we finished the vocabulary section, we listened to the song once with our eyes closed. Next, the students copied the lyrics of the song, in the form of a cloze exercise, from the large screen into their notebooks. Then we did the cloze section as a class. I played the song, pausing after each stanza and we filled in the blanks together. We proceeded through the song in this manner. After this exercise, we sang the song together. All of this took about 1 hour 20 minutes. I had an amazing experience. I was happy and I felt satisfied with my job and with my life.

Journal entry (3) March 15, 2011

Today the lesson plans went great! We did 'Hello' by Lionel Richie. This went very well, actually, despite my original frustration this morning with the sound not working. The students really got into 'Hello'. We all sang quietly. They got the tune after only hearing it three times.

We sang R Kelly's 'I Believe I Can Fly' in the next class (1-2.50 pm) at the suggestion of one of the students. This also went great! R Kelly's song is very inspirational.

Journal entry (4) March 17, 2011

I had two classes today, Thursday. The first class did Bob Marley's 'Redemption Song' and we did 'Closer to Fine' by the Indigo Girls in the second class.

The hairs on my body stood on end and I had shivers as the first class whispered 'Redemption Song'. This is a very powerful song.

With the second class, I think 'Closer to Fine' was a little too fast, but it is good to have a challenge.

Note: In the second class, one student sat in on the class, even though she was not officially on the roster.

Journal entry (5) March 20, 2011

This Friday I had two classes. We did 'Sunday Bloody Sunday' by U2 with the first class (1–3 pm) and we did 'Let It Be' with the second class (3–5 pm) at one student's request.

I had an amazing experience in the second class. Maybe I am just sentimental, but I felt chills when this class sang 'Let It Be'. After hearing this song only three times, they could sing it with the volume turned down.

Journal entry (8) March 28, 2011

Today was a review day. Thank goodness I did not plan on using the screen today because in both classes major technological issues prevented me from using the computer. In the first class, the computer worked but the projector would not turn on, thus rendering the computer useless.

In the next class, the computer completely died. Luckily, one of my students had his laptop and he also had the songs we needed for the day on it. So, that was cool; I was not too embarrassed.

I was really impressed, especially with the second class. There are a few really good singers in there who naturally lead the entire class. Because of them, I think the entire class benefited.

Journal entry (9) March 31, 2011

Today's class was a review class. Several students were sleeping. I don't know what it was but maybe they were just exhausted, sick or hungover?

So, I am trying to make everything very clear. The midterm exam is in two weeks and I have never done anything like this before. We will see what happens.

Journal entry (11) April 4, 2011

Today went well, but I learned something about being a teacher. I realized that I need to write more often on the blackboard. I should, especially, write important things on the board that students must not forget. That way I can say: 'I even wrote it on the board!'

So, today I spent the first 20 minutes going over the rubric for next week's midterm exam. I did this to try to make sure they understood the grading criteria. Then I wrote on the board: 'Now study your song.'

Journal entry (12) April 7 2011

Today was a great and busy day. The time went by fast as both classes repeated the procedure I did with Monday's classes. But, this time, I wrote more details on the board. I am going to get in the habit of writing more details on the board.

We went over the rubric for next week's test by assigning groups of four to explain one section of the rubric to the whole class. This took about 20 minutes. With the remaining time, I went around the room and had students practise their songs, first alone and then by singing their song to their neighbours.

Next week is the exam!

Journal entry (14) April 11 2011

Wow! So, today was the day we were all waiting for! Action day! Moving day! WOW! What a great time! Everything worked out well in today's classes. I went shopping yesterday (Sunday) and got snacks and drinks for the test-day party. Students had snacks and drinks while I did roll call, checked their papers and took photos.

Procedure: I called each pair of students to the front of the class. They sang their song without looking at their papers. I sat at the back and circled rubric points on their sheets. All pairs of students did their best and, as they sang, the other students in the 'audience' were clapping along. It was awesome!

So, today was honestly the best day of my career. I felt so natural. I felt like this is the best thing in the world.

Journal entry (15) April 16 2011

Thursday and Friday were a great success (I think so, and I hope my students think so too)!

As I did for Monday's classes, I went shopping at a nearby grocery store for drinks, cups, plates and snacks. The Thursday class was a little disappointing but the 1 o'clock Friday class was great. It is surprising how well many of the students sang. One student did 'Yesterday' and it was flawless. Several students did the same song, namely 'My Love' by Westlife. This Friday class is my biggest class, about 40 students, and it was a vibrant experience. Two students were there just to sit in and have fun with their friends.

The second Friday class, 3 o'clock, is my smallest class and they also had a good time. I distributed the snacks as in the other classes.

So, this has been an amazing experience.

Tweet, tweet!

Lesley Lanir sings the praises of a social media platform.

Teachers who once used only books, overhead projectors and blackboards now have a multitude of digital applications available which can enhance their students' learning experience and contribute towards their progress.

Some of the digital applications teachers should start thinking about include social media: digital means of reaching millions of people who hopefully share common interests. Nowadays, using social media is an expected part of everyday life and it isn't going away – today, tomorrow or in the near future. In fact, the very opposite – it is becoming ever more powerful.

Social media and education

Educational institutes seem to have been quite slow in adopting social media for digital learning. However, there has recently been a surge in usage, and surveys now show that approximately two-thirds of education faculties in the US alone have used some form of social media during their classes. Digital and social media are becoming more popular in UK schools and universities, too. As part of a project set up by Cisco, the Royal Shakespeare Company, JANET (a government-funded research and education network) and Ravensbourne, a college in the university sector, 9,000 students from 140 schools watched a webcast of Tim Crouch's play *I, Cinna*, based on a character from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. After taking part in a live chat with the actor and director, the students then did their own creative writing, producing both poems and prose.

So how can social media help *your* educational institute, *your* classrooms, *your* students and *you* as a teacher?

What are the benefits?

As 'social media' is a pretty new concept and field, research into the benefits is limited; no one has figured out fully what is truly effective or not. Nevertheless, a growing body of scholarly research suggests that, when used properly, social media can boost both learning outcomes and student engagement. But the phrase 'when used properly' needs to be taken into consideration; and whether you choose to have your students watch *YouTube* videos relevant to a language point or 'tweet' questions in class, you need to ensure that you have a useful educational language-teaching activity in mind and that your students are not embarking on a task that merely provides a fun distraction to keep them awake and present in the classroom.

Before you start introducing any individual social media into your classroom, it is helpful to pinpoint the benefits of each one

Before you start introducing any individual social media into your classroom, it is helpful to pinpoint the benefits of each one and to have a clear understanding, ahead of time, of exactly what your objectives are. Afterwards, an appropriate social network can be selected that fits in with those specific goals. Obvious first choices for teachers are *YouTube* and *Facebook*. However, the micro-blogger *Twitter* has a lot to offer.

What is *Twitter*?

Launched in 2006, and reported to have over 150 million registered user accounts, *Twitter* is a relatively easy micro-blogging, social media platform that can be usefully applied in the classroom for specific activities. It combines the simple concept of social networking, a resource for up-to-the-minute news and micro-blogging. *Twitter* users share prolifically what they are reading, doing, planning, thinking and making, and *Twitter* has become a popular place to turn to for:

- journalists with breaking news;
- hot tips and trends;
- events and other timed happenings;
- celebrity gossip.

A basic *Twitter* message is limited to 140 characters, including spaces and punctuation, which is why it is called a micro-blogging service. These messages can be sent to the *Twitter* website via mobile phones, the internet or other mobile applications.

Each user 'follows' or accumulates a list of 'followers' comprising friends, celebrities, companies and organisations. (Newcomers to this new social phenomenon shouldn't despair: an online dictionary, *Twittonary*, is available to help decipher *Twitter* terminology.)

Users can follow other users, creating lists of many small social networks, categorised into topics, known as a PLNs (Personal Learning Networks), which can share information among the group within a matter of seconds. When a user receives a tweet they wish to share with their followers, they re-tweet it, thereby quickly passing along messages or certain trends that *Twitter* picks up on (known as 'trending topics'). A hashtag (the # symbol) is added by *Twitter* users to identify topics that are trending at the time or that they wish to see trending.

The hashtag symbol is placed in front of a word or a series of words to bring attention to them and group them with other users' tweets on the same subject. Teachers can use hashtags to help them organise tweets according to a specific topic.

In addition to messages, tweeters can send photos and video clips. However, *Twitter* does not host any content other than text tweets, so to add photos, third-party websites such as *Twitpic* and *TweetPhoto* are used.

The feature of following others, plus excellent search engine and tagging systems and the possibility of adding images, creates a user-friendly, flexible and dynamic social medium for people to connect with others and to share information quickly.

Twitter in teaching

So how can teachers, students and schools use the benefits of *Twitter* to teach, connect, notify and manage?

Teachers

You can set up as many *Twitter* accounts as you wish for different purposes. You also have to decide whether you want your accounts to be private or public. However, it's all about getting noticed, so when setting up a *Twitter* account, you need to word your profile in such a way that it appeals to like-minded people in order to attract an interested audience. Also, you should write a tailor-made introduction to your tweets to raise interest and cause followers to think about how useful or entertaining the linked item might be to them personally or professionally. Think in terms of 'news headlines'.

Once an account is set up, followers can be added and rearranged into lists – for example, School staff, English teachers, Class A, Class A parents – the purpose being that you can choose to open a particular list at a certain time so you only read the latest tweets from them. Otherwise, if every follower or *Twitter* account you are following remains in the same feed, you could become inundated with hundreds of tweets and not be able to discern the relevant from the irrelevant.

You can use *Twitter* to share new ideas and collaborate with other teachers, following other teacher's tweets in order to keep up with the latest teaching trends.

Classes

You can connect with your students and disseminate information to them by:

- sending tweets on topics ranging from material for tests and assignments to study tips;
- scheduling tweets to remind students of due dates for tests, assignments, etc;
- posting supplementary materials, such as links to articles and documents for after-class studying;
- creating a feed for your classroom so you can tweet about events and classroom news;
- joining in with other classrooms in different geographic locations;
- connecting with parents to increase communication.



Lessons

You can use *Twitter* in lessons by:

- having your students follow the news and take turns posting current or breaking events;
- setting up a *Twitter* information search or treasure hunt. Students follow tweeted clues to reach whatever goal has been set, eg a famous person or place, a grammar point;
- starting a story by tweeting a 140-character standard opener – the students carry on from there;
- collating ideas on one subject for projects, tests and discussions;
- summarising material in a limited number of tweets;
- using *Twitter* rules for class discussions – each statement can have only 140 characters;
- playing word games – anagrams, synonyms, antonyms, definitions, etc.

English teacher Steve Rayburn came up with a new way to approach an old classic: He asked his class to use *Twitter* to write about Dante's *Inferno*. The tweets were written as if Dante were posting them for his love, Beatrice.

In assignments such as these, always limit the number of tweets each student can send and the time they should spend doing so.

Students

Students can use *Twitter* in lessons for:

- taking notes about classwork – as every tweet is saved, students can review notes at a glance;
- participating in discussions with, or posing questions to, classmates about a class activity or upcoming test;
- exchanging class notes and assignment instructions;
- following and tweeting questions to experts all over the world in specific subject areas (useful for getting information for projects and book reports);
- connecting with students from other classes, schools and countries.

Schools

Schools and educational institutes can use *Twitter* for:

- fund-raising;
- setting up meetings;
- hiring new employees;
- promoting and marketing.

Twitter in practice

For overall organisation, you may want to consider *Twitter*'s popular free software application *Tweetdeck* (*tweetdeck.com*). This is a multi-column social media dashboard/control panel for managing *Twitter* accounts. Here are some things it will do for you:

- Organise tweet information into customised columns and in a design that works efficiently for them.
- Arrange those you are following into groups, based on interests, professions, etc.
- Set up frequently-updated content (feeds) from selected sites.
- Use the numerous filters to focus on only important information.
- Schedule tweets to allow pre-planned posts.
- Monitor and manage unlimited *Twitter* and *Facebook* accounts.
- Stay up-to-date with chosen information by receiving alerts by notification.
- Receive real-time updates from *Twitter* accounts.
- Save tweeted interests and topics.

▶▶▶

Tweet, tweet!

Twitter in the classroom

Once you have got yourself organised, you can get down to some of the practical uses of *Twitter*.

Here is a selection of suggestions from Reg Swanson, an eLearning Project Officer who runs the blog *appsineducation* and who has had success using *Twitter* in his classroom:

Creating a news magazine with *Flipboard*

Flipboard (*http://flipboard.com*) is a graphically-advanced free media aggregator that organises tweets, posts and links into magazine-like spreads. It can be used to bring together world and social news in a magazine format – with the added benefits of sound.

Using *Twitter* together with *Flipboard*, Reg and his class created a class textbook for those students who wanted to complete some further reading around the subjects they had been working on (Picasso and the development of Cubism). They created a class *Twitter* account and each time any class member found a useful online resource, they re-tweeted it back to the school account. Using *Flipboard*, they fed the information stored on the *Twitter* account into one of the content pages. Eventually, the students had all of the resources they needed in a format that resembled a magazine.

Creating magazines and e-books with *Zite*

Zite (*www.zite.com*) is similar to *Flipboard* and is ideal for group projects. Teachers can set up different chapters or areas of interest. Each group could be allocated a sub-topic and asked to produce a chapter within a book by re-tweeting the relevant tweets they identify around a specific concept or issue. Reg Swanson recommends this as a way to quickly produce an e-book specifically designed for a class unit.

Both *Flipboard* and *Zite* can be used to create a class newspaper.

Crowdsourcing

The idea of 'crowdsourcing' is that you make a problem public and use a crowd to solve it or come up with helpful ideas.

Teachers can crowdsource a real problem in their classes, school or community. The students could start with brainstorming possible solutions themselves and then put the question to other classes using *Twitter*. Parents could also be included.

Biographies and autobiographies

The students are asked to write a 140-character autobiography or to complete a biography of a famous person within the 140-character limit.

Twitter debates

The students contribute to a written debate on a given topic or question. With only 140 characters at a time in which to give their opinions, they need to be clear about what they want to say before they start to type. Reg found this type of written debating format to be a confidence booster for a number of students whose speaking skills were less well developed.

In their 2012 *Free Education Technology Resources eBook*, EmergingEdTech (*www.emergingedtech.com/2010/02/100-ways-to-teach-with-twitter*) recommend teachers use the following free apps:

Twitpic (*twitpic.com*) *Twitpic* allows users to upload photos or videos and share them directly to *Twitter*, creating many possibilities for teachers. For example:

- posting visual content related to classes or coursework;
- keeping classroom penpals connected;
- developing class projects that require the students to connect photos with specific subjects or themes.

Twtpoll (*twtpoll.com*) *Twtpoll* is a polling and survey tool that can be shared with *Twitter* followers, *Facebook* friends or email contacts. Teachers can:

- poll students about their thoughts on class materials and subjects;
- use the poll as an educational tool about voting and democracy.

GroupTweet (*grouptweet.com*) *GroupTweet* enables teachers to create a classroom *Twitter* group, where anyone who is authorised and has a *Twitter* account can contribute.

A *GroupTweet* classroom account can focus only on students, or can be used to aid communication between educators, students and parents.



Twitter may at first glance seem to be a digital medium that has no real purpose. However, it is a great tool that is growing in popularity amongst educators. The idea of composing and sending small posts of 140 characters or fewer to a group of your followers is a novel way of connecting, informing and updating. Teachers may be under the impression that this is yet another passing fad and feel that within their busy day they simply don't have the time to learn about *Twitter*. However, I hope the benefits and functions listed above will give a taste of how *Twitter* tools and applications can enhance both teachers' and students' ability to communicate and share ideas. ETp

More *Twitter* sources and resources for teachers:

http://twittonary.com/

www.onlinecollegedegrees.org/2009/03/19/100-tips-apps-and-resources-for-teachers-on-twitter/

www.emergingedtech.com/2010/02/100-ways-to-teach-with-twitter/

http://appsineducation.blogspot.co.il/2011/06/can-you-use-twitter-in-your-classroom.html

http://edudemic.com/2010/11/25-important-twitter-guides-and-apps-for-teachers/

www.slideshare.net/MmeNero/twitter-101-twitter-for-teachers

http://appsineducation.blogspot.co.il/2011/06/can-you-use-twitter-in-your-classroom.html

www.onlinecolleges.net/2009/08/10/25-twitter-projects-for-the-college-classroom/

www.onlinecolleges.net/2009/08/10/25-twitter-projects-for-the-college-classroom/

www.theconversationprism.com/media/images/twitterverse-poster-highres.jpg



Lesley Lanir is a freelance writer, lecturer and teacher trainer who has been involved in teaching English for over 20 years. She specialises in learning disabilities and foreign language learning. She has a BA in English and Education, CTEFLA/RSA and an MA in Learning Disabilities. Her website is *www.foreignlanguagelearningdifficulties.com.*

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Webwatcher

Russell Stannard explores how *Dropbox* can make your life easier.

These days, we often hear about 'cloud computing'. The idea of this is that we can load more and more of our content onto purpose-built servers instead of saving it on the hard disk of our computers. Most of us are already using the cloud when we do things like upload video onto *YouTube* or work with *Google Docs*. Even using *Blogger* means you are saving content on the *Blogger* server and using a *Blogger* application on the cloud. In this article we will look at a simple, easy-to-use, cloud-based file-sharing application called *Dropbox*, and explore some of the uses it can have for teachers.

What is *Dropbox*?

Dropbox is an application that gives you a free account where you can save up to 2GB of digital content. You sign up initially using your email address and, afterwards, you can sign in at any time to access your content. This means you can easily find your files from any computer: a friend's laptop, the university computer, even an internet café. This is clearly a huge advantage, and one I often make use of when I am working in different countries and on different computers. For example, if I have a talk prepared, I can save it on *Dropbox* and then access it from anywhere in the world.

However, the most powerful aspect of *Dropbox* is that folders saved on it can be shared. So, for example, each student in a class can share a folder with their teacher and the teacher can then access any content put into that folder. This can be really useful for e-portfolios: a student can upload mindmaps, recordings, videos, essays, etc into a single folder where the teacher can access them.

Of course, this can also be done the other way around: the teacher can create a folder which is shared with their students, thereby creating a class folder where students and teacher can upload content. This can be an alternative way of distributing material to students. For example, a teacher who wants the students to read a certain article before the lesson can upload it into the class folder where all the students can access it quickly.

Shared folders allow content to be accessed by anyone who shares the folder, and anyone who shares the folder can add content, but all users must have *Dropbox* accounts.

Possibilities for linking

Another feature of *Dropbox* is the ability to link. Links are very useful because they allow a certain folder, and the contents of that folder, to be shared with anyone, even if they don't have a *Dropbox* account. However, with shared links, only the creator of the folder can add content. So if it is only the teacher who has a *Dropbox* account, the students can still access the content of the teacher's folder if they are sent a shared link, but they can't upload anything themselves. Links to *Dropbox* can be added to *Moodle* sites, written on the board or distributed in the way you usually do with any normal links on the internet.

Possibilities for uploading

Dropbox also has a very simple app that you can download to make it even easier to upload files to your folders. You can even have the app on an iPhone or iPad. This opens up all sorts of possibilities. For example, if you use an iPhone to take pictures in class, record your students speaking or even take some video footage, this can immediately be uploaded onto *Dropbox* where it can be shared with your students. Likewise, any recordings or videos that the students make can all be uploaded into the one area.

If you use the app on your folder, it simply feels and works like any normal folder on your computer. So you can right-click with your mouse and create folders, delete folders and copy folders just as you do on your computer. You can also drag and drop content into the app. This makes the process a little faster since you don't need to log onto the internet to access your files. However, everything is synchronised so it doesn't matter how, where or when you add the content: it will be available from any computer at any time, either by logging into the website or using the *Dropbox* app.

Possibilities for teaching

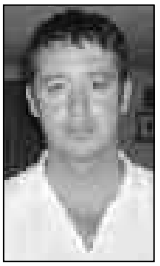
If your school or institution doesn't have a virtual learning environment, sharing digital content with your students can be difficult. If you get your students to create *Dropbox* accounts, then it is easy to share a folder with them where they can access materials. Of course, you can also have folders inside folders, so, for example, you can have a class folder for each class you teach, and inside each class folder you can have weekly folders where the students can find the class content. This way, everything stays organised.

If the students are doing group projects, they can create a folder, which they can then share amongst the members of the group. Any content they want to share with the rest of the class can then be added into the class folder and accessed by everyone. This works well when students want to share interesting links, articles and images that they have found on a given topic.

If students create their *own* folders, which are then shared with the teacher, these can be a great place to upload feedback as well as to access the students' work. Only the student concerned and the teacher can access the folder and see the work and the assessment. The student does not have to hand anything into the teacher; they just drop their work into the folder and the teacher can access it, read it and then provide feedback. If set up properly, this can save a lot of time.

I have made some help videos for using *Dropbox*. You can find these at:
www.teachertrainingvideos.com/dropbox/index.html

If you sign up for *Dropbox* on my recommendation, I get some extra space on my account for recommending you, so if you can, please do it at:
www.dropbox.com/referrals/NTEyNTI1NDAxOQ?src=global9



Russell Stannard is a Principal Lecturer in ICT at the University of Warwick, UK, where he teaches on the MA in ELT. He won the Times Higher Education Award for Outstanding Initiatives in Information and Communications Technology in 2008, TEFLnet Site of the Year in 2009 and a 2010 British Council ELTon award, all for his popular website *www.teachertrainingvideos.com*.

Keep sending your favourite sites to Russell:
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Five things you always wanted to know about digital literacies (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 explains what digital literacies are.

1 Digital literacies ... why not 'literacy'?

Basic literacy means being able to read and write. But in our increasingly digital world, simply knowing how to read and write in the traditional sense is not enough. Technology has brought a wealth of information and opportunities to us in digital format. Of course, we still need to know how to read and write, but we also need a wider range of digital competences or 'literacies' if we are to fully participate as digital citizens in the 21st century.

2 What exactly does 'digital literacies' mean, then?

Essentially, *digital literacies* is an umbrella term for a range of skills: not just technical skills, but also a keen awareness of the social practices surrounding the appropriate use of technology. Here's a simple example. Let's imagine that we need to create a worksheet with images in a word-processing program for our students. This involves:

1 Knowing how to create a document and how to insert images into it.

2 Knowing what images we can or cannot use. This involves an awareness of copyright and of alternatives such as *Creative Commons* (*http://creativecommons.org/*). We also need to know how to attribute a copyright-free image.

People frequently think that digital literacies involve only the first point – what we might call the 'tech' stuff. But equally important is the second point – what we might call appropriate social practices.

3 Can you give me more examples of these digital literacies?

The example above already includes a number of literacies: you need to know how to work effectively with images and text in a word-processing program to create something (*multimedia literacy*), and you also need to know how to search for and find appropriate copyright-free images (*search literacy*). These are just two digital literacies from the whole range that we need. A detailed consideration of each literacy is beyond the scope of this article, but let's take a brief look at a few of them:

Focus on language: *multimedia literacy*

Knowing how to understand, critique and produce multimedia is a skill needed to participate fully in Web 2.0, where we are no longer just consumers of media produced by others, but potentially producers too.

Focus on connections: *personal literacy*

This literacy comes to the forefront in social networking spaces. For example, how do you portray yourself in social networks such as *Facebook*? How do you manage your online footprint, and shape and project a desired identity in these spaces?

Focus on information: *search and information literacies*

In many ways, these are two of the most important literacies for any learner to acquire – the ability not only to find information amongst the mass of sites and sources afforded by technologies, but also to evaluate the reliability and veracity of that information.

Focus on (re)design: *remix literacy*

This refers to the trend of 'remixing' pictures, videos and other media to create something new. Understanding 'remix' is crucial to an understanding of digital media.

4 What have digital literacies got to do with English language teaching?

Well, everything. Quite apart from the emphasis put on the acquisition of ICT skills in all areas of education in many countries, we are teachers of the language of global communication. And that communication is increasingly digitally mediated. If our learners are to be fully functional citizens in the 21st century, they need digital skills. We can promote these skills in parallel with teaching English. Digital skills and English can help many of our adult learners get ahead in the workplace or prepare our younger learners for better future job opportunities. And equally important, they can make our classes a lot more relevant and interesting in the here and now.

5 How can I bring digital literacies into my classroom?

Incorporating a focus on digital literacies in our English language classes does not mean throwing out everything we've done to date and starting anew. Quite the opposite, in fact. English language teaching lends itself extremely well to integrating digital literacies. For example, how about replacing that rather uninspiring coursebook reading with a web page from a spoof site? At the same time as helping our students develop their reading skills, we can help them evaluate the reliability and veracity of online information – a key element of *information literacy*.

How to do this? Choose a website from a list of spoof or bogus sites (eg *http://goo.gl/ive5b*) and set a reading task. See if your students spot that the site is a spoof, and then analyse the elements that show that it contains false information. These will include not just the content, but possibly the layout, colours and font used on the site (the 'look'), the lack of links to credible sources, the URL of the site itself, and so on. One of my favourite bogus sites is about the fictional Pacific Northwest tree octopus. You can download a detailed lesson plan on how to use this spoof site with your students from *http://goo.gl/bN66W*. ETp



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Prize crossword 58

ET*p* presents the fifty-eighth 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 58, 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 June 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*).

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

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

10	13		11	13		25	14	18	5	14	4		1	13	2
11	25	14		24	9	6	23	18	11	14		25	14	9	9
1	13	2		11	25	14		24	13	23	17	18	4	7	

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

*** To hit something with your foot
*** To move your feet and body in time to music
*** ___ *Sir, With Love* (film starring Sidney Poitier)
*** The part of a plant that grows under the ground
*** To employ something, such as a tool, to do a job
*** ___ *Whom the Bell Tolls* (novel by Ernest Hemingway)
*** A change that is produced in one person or thing by another
*** *Five children and* ___ (children's book by Edith Nesbitt)
*** A system of words, numbers or signs used for sending secret messages
*** ___ *fools and horses work* (English proverb)
*** A piece of information known by only a small number of people and kept to themselves
*** To come out of something or from behind something
*** A planned activity involving a lot of people, especially police officers
*** A building, usually where one family lives
*** In a way that is fair and the same for everyone

FREQUENT WORDS

** One of five digits at the end of the foot
** Unusual in a way that attracts attention
** To prohibit something
** A straight surface with one end higher than the other
** Morally right or supported by a good reason

FAIRLY FREQUENT WORDS

* A device for fastening clothes to a washing line
* A kind of oxygen high in the Earth's atmosphere
* To expel air from your throat with a sudden noise, especially if you have a cold

LESS FREQUENT WORDS

– Clear and simple; often used of an explanation
– To start a fire by lighting small items that will burn easily
– A female sheep
– A large tree with hard yellow-brown wood and white flowers
– Two letters denoting an example
– A long bridge across a valley
– UK slang for a pound
– Lacking experience of life
– The yellow part of an egg
– Someone who behaves badly but is still liked
– The resting place of a wild animal
– A member of a Germanic tribe who came to England in the 5th century AD
– Relating to the firmament; divine
– Humorous because it is the opposite of what you would expect
– Chinese principle representing the male qualities of light and heat
– A large north-American bear

Mark Twain



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