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CAT: A framework for Dogme
Ken Lackman

Teaching at the top
Caireen Sever

Grammar mia
Chris Payne

Dramatic dialogues
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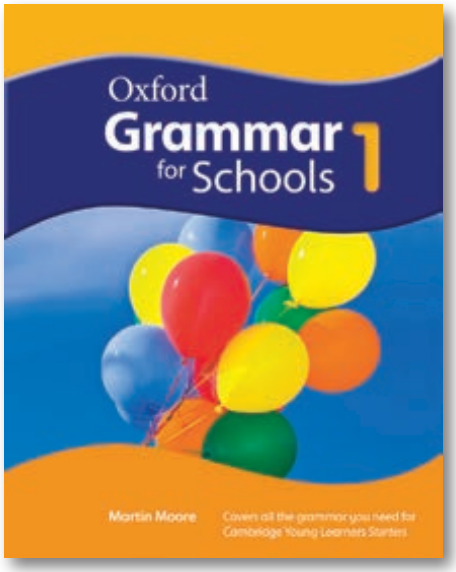
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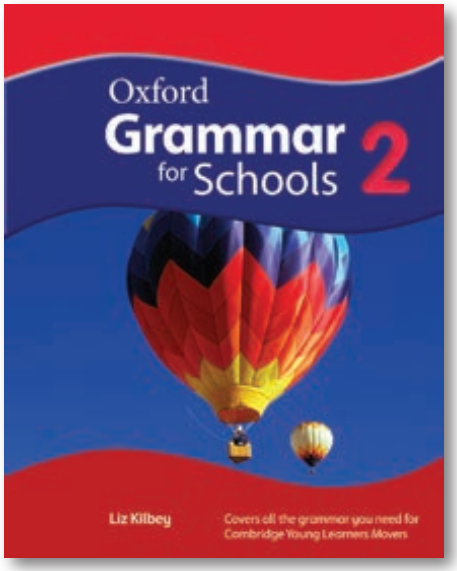
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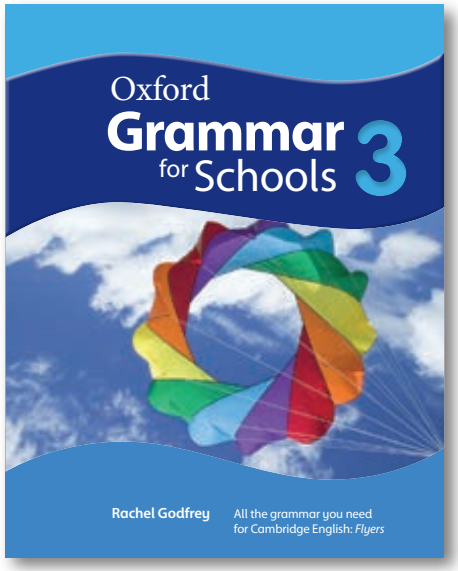
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Contents

MAIN FEATURE

CAT: A FRAMEWORK FOR DOGME 4
Ken Lackman introduces an enhanced method for materials-free teaching

FEATURES

GRAMMAR MIA 8
Chris Payne tackles the problem of inert knowledge

PATIENCE IS A VIRTUE 11
Paul Bress counsels calm

INVITATION TO INTERACTION 12
Mary Cerutti, **Lydia Guill**, **Cheri Pearson** and **Moriah Sharp** suggest a model to get students speaking

NOTICING: A SCAFFOLDING STRATEGY 16
Handoyo Puji Widodo and **Andrzej Cirocki** draw attention to the features of academic writing

TESTING QUESTIONS 20
Douglas Williams advocates flexibility in testing

OVER THE WALL 26
Alan Maley celebrates Shakespeare

DRAMATIC DIALOGUES 29
Paul Harvey finds that drama brings language to life

DOCTOR, DOCTOR ... 34
Maxwell Clark rejoices in roleplay

VOCABULARY FOR ALL 36
Helen Stepanova lists lexis-learning techniques

SPATIAL RELATIONSHIPS 46
Charles Mercer proposes props to teach prepositions

FROM RESEARCH TO REALITY 4 48
Magnus Coney feels that tests are useful learning aids

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY 52
Louis Rogers demonstrates the use of academic word lists

TEACHING IN A LOW-RESOURCE CLASSROOM 54
Sarah Portell outlines ideas for the under-resourced teacher

TEACHING YOUNG LEARNERS

FINDING NEMO ON THE IPAD 23
Michael Tasseron takes his learners on an adventure beneath the waves

BUSINESS ENGLISH PROFESSIONAL

TEACHING AT THE TOP 50
Caireen Sever offers tips for teaching high-level senior staff

TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

ME, MYSELVES, I 57
Lee Shutler exploits multiple personas in the staffroom and the classroom

FROM OBSERVATION TO PRACTICE 58
Saltanat Meiramova relates what she has learnt from observing and reflecting

TECHNOLOGY

A NEW VISION OF REVISION 60
Nestor Kiourtzidis and **Tim Chase** reveal how technology is helping with vocabulary retention

FIVE THINGS YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT: SMS/TEXT MESSAGING 61
Nicky Hockly exercises her thumbs

WEBWATCHER 63
Russell Stannard presents *Prezi*

REGULAR FEATURES

LANGUAGE LOG 40
John Potts

IT WORKS IN PRACTICE 38

SCRAPBOOK 42

REVIEWS 44

COMPETITIONS 41, 64

Includes materials designed to photocopy

Editorial

It is a common lament of teachers that students successfully complete grammar and vocabulary exercises in class, but then seem unable to replicate that success when called upon to use the same language in free speaking and writing activities. Several contributors to this issue highlight this problem and offer strategies and solutions for dealing with it.

In our main feature, Ken Lackman outlines the method he uses to enable his students to get the most out of their speaking activities. He ensures that every student gets multiple opportunities to practise and perfect the language they are trying to use and that feedback on each student's performance contributes to everyone's progress.

Chris Payne relates how the problem of the lack of transfer of linguistic knowledge from one context to another was identified back in 1929 and given the name 'Inert Knowledge Problem'. He advocates a strategy of noticing and analysis in grammar teaching to improve the students' understanding of the way in which language works.

Noticing is also the technique recommended by Handoyo Puji Widodo and Andrzej Cirocki – in their case, applied to academic writing. They maintain that if students are able to identify the features of academic text they will be better able to apply them to their own work.

Knowing what language has been successfully learnt and what hasn't is the focus of Marcus Coney's article. He puts forward a convincing case for testing as a means of teaching, believing that tests give students an opportunity to try out what they have learnt and find out whether they really know it or not. As such, tests are an aid to ensuring long-term internalisation of language, rather than simply a means of assessment.

Nestor Kiourtzidis and Tim Chase demonstrate how technology is coming to the rescue of those who want to make their revision more targeted and effective. They recommend 'spaced repetition' activities and explain how new technologies are making these not only possible, but a highly efficient speed-learning method.

The key to successful retention of learnt language seems to lie in making the students' study of new vocabulary and structures more focused and deliberate, and I am reminded that these words were also used by Jeremy Harmer in a talk at this year's IATEFL conference, where he described asking successful musicians about how they learnt difficult passages of music – with a view to seeing how these techniques might be applied to language learning. They all, without exception, spoke of the need for concentration, focus and deliberate repeated practice of small sections of a score, rather than playing the whole piece all the way through a few times, ignoring the mistakes.



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CAT: A framework for Dogme

Ken Lackman centres his method on his students.

Even though it was way back in 1997, I distinctly remember one of the first observations I had to do in a supervisory role. It was a one-to-one lesson and, although it had been a textbook lesson, I felt that there was something seriously wrong with it. In fact, that was the very thing that *was* wrong – it was a *textbook* lesson. After having an evening to think about it, I brought this up in the feedback session the next day. I asked the teacher whether it had made sense for the two of them to talk about Elton John's life rather than their own lives. I said that I felt that the coursebook had been a barrier between them through which almost all their communication had been filtered. He could see my point, but he really didn't know of another way of going about it and, to be honest, neither did I.

One to one ... or more

That marked the beginning of my experiments with teaching without coursebooks. With one-to-one lessons, it was fairly easy. I engaged the student in conversation and I worked with their language to reformulate it in a way that was more accurate. I had learnt to do this from Peter Wilberg's book *One-to-One: A Teachers' Handbook*. His thoughts on working with students rather than materials, basing lessons on conversation and dealing with emergent language would later reappear as the three key aspects of the Dogme approach.

But what was perplexing to me was how to apply those three principles to a group lesson rather than a one-to-one. And this is what many teachers find intimidating about Dogme: As it is an approach rather than a method, there is no comforting framework on which to structure your lesson. Methods and coursebooks provide frameworks that determine where lessons go, but the direction in which they might go when based on language that emerges from conversations is much less predictable. While it is often exciting to throw yourself into a lesson with your students and see what happens, it can also be somewhat stressful – and even very experienced teachers using Dogme often appreciate a break from it with the framework provided by a method and/or a coursebook.

New dogs, old tricks

In my own quest for a framework for Dogme, I got some ideas from an old method called Community Language Learning, which arguably has Dogme's three key conditions – although the communication that takes place can only loosely be described as 'conversation' (see my article in ET*p* Issue 67). My adaptations of it improved this aspect

The teacher's reformulation is done after the conversation, with the teacher reiterating what the student has said, using brief notes taken during the conversation

significantly, but one thing about them still seemed less than ideal, and that was that the correction of the utterances occurred well after they were produced by the student. And this is something else about Dogme that always perplexed me. How can the teacher take emergent language and reformulate it without being intrusive or, even worse, completely dominating the lesson? But by taking little bits and pieces from my adaptations and from Community Language Learning itself, I pieced together a method that eliminated that problem. As a homage to Dogme and just because I love wordplay, I decided to call the method CAT: *Conversation Activated Teaching.*

Letting the cat out of the bag

CAT is a step-by-step method that has students engaged in conversation on a topic that they have chosen. The reformulation is done with only one student at a time, based on that student's short conversation with the teacher. In order to encourage a fairly natural exchange, the teacher's reformulation is done after the conversation, with the teacher reiterating or paraphrasing what the student has said, using brief notes taken during the conversation. The other students in the class listen to the whole exchange and are asked to pick out language that *they* could use in further conversation on the topic. Here is a detailed explanation of each stage.

Warmer

The first stage serves as a warm-up and, more importantly, as an opportunity to give the students a chance to decide what they would like to talk about in that lesson. The easiest way to do this is to have them brainstorm a list of conversation topics in small groups. You can also add a competitive aspect by challenging each group to come up with the longest list. When you stop the activity, find out who got the longest list and write it on the board. You can ask other groups for further ideas and add them to the list. Read the list out and get the students to raise their hands for each topic they would like to talk about. Explain that they can raise their hands as many times as they wish. Then write the number of votes next to each topic. Circle the one that has the most votes and announce it as the conversation topic for that class. If there are two or more topics with the same number of votes, ask the students to vote again on just those topics – and this time they can only choose one.

Pair conversations 1

Put the students in pairs and tell them that one student in each pair is to ask the other questions to get them talking about the topic. Explain that asking questions to find out about another person and their ideas is a valuable conversational tool. Start the activity and, after a few minutes, ask the pairs to switch roles. Let them continue for roughly the same amount of time as before.

If you have an uneven number of students, you can use a group of three. Tell that group that they can have two students asking questions to find out information from the third, or they can have one student asking questions to find out information from the other two. It depends on what you think they would feel most comfortable with.

Conversation with teacher

Call one student up to the front and explain to that student that you will be asking them questions on the same topic, similar to the activity the students have just finished. Explain to the rest of the class that they should listen for the different questions you ask and write them down. Emphasise that, by doing this, they will get examples of questions they can use when they repeat the task with their next partner, which will happen as soon as your conversation with the student ends.

Start the conversation and make brief notes about what the student says. You're mostly only looking for content, as you will be using your notes to put the student's utterances into your own words. However, if the student uses particular language that is accurate and worth sharing with the class, make a note of that also.

When you have finished the initial conversation with the student, explain to the rest of the class that you will be reiterating what the student said in your own words and they are to listen carefully and make note of any useful expressions they hear. They should particularly make note of any expressions that they feel that they could use when speaking on the topic. Let your students know that this is an invaluable learning strategy which, if practised consistently, will one day lead them to produce language like native speakers. If your students are not used to noticing useful expressions, you should spend a few minutes explaining this task and exactly what an *expression* is. Then, tell the student you are paired with that after each reformulated utterance, they are to confirm that that was what they had said, either with a short answer or by repeating the whole utterance. Note that for lower-level students you may want to reiterate in direct speech, eg *'You said, "I stayed at home last night."'* Emphasise to the student that this is a learning opportunity and, if they want to remember the best way to say something, it will be helpful to repeat it. Now do the reformulation, and if there is an utterance that the student doesn't repeat and you think it's important to practise, you can ask the student to repeat it. This also goes for any language that you recorded verbatim from what the student said.

The students who are listening might initially be reluctant to write down expressions, as mine were when I first started using this method. The way I solved the problem was to make the task a competitive one. I put the students in small groups of around four or five and told them they would be competing against other groups to see who could record the most expressions. I emphasised that I was just looking for the group total of expressions written down and that a particular expression could be repeated by some or all of the members of the group. After your conversation with the student, ask each group to total up their expressions and get each total and write it on the board next to their names or initials. Since you will be repeating these steps, you can draw attention to the low scores and challenge those groups to come up with a better total next time. This adaptation worked perfectly for me, probably

CAT: A framework for Dogme

because no student wanted to be personally responsible for their group getting a low score.

The recognising and recording of expressions will be much more challenging for lower-level students. The best thing to do is give them some guidance when you do your reiteration. As well as speaking more slowly and clearly, you'll need to draw attention to what you want the students to write down and to give them ample opportunity to do so. The best way to do this is to insist that the student at the front repeats the reiteration and, while you are asking them to do that, make a writing gesture to the rest of the class, indicating that they are to write down what they hear. You might even want to repeat the utterance again at this point.

Language focus

In this stage, you will be eliciting language that the students noticed and wrote down. First, take a section of the board and use it to write down your questions, as repeated to you by the students. Do any necessary clarification in terms of meaning, form and pronunciation, and then draw special attention to questions that students could use in further conversation in that lesson and also beyond it. In this regard, you may want to emphasise useful semi-fixed expressions such as *'What is your favourite _____?'* or *'How do you feel about _____?'* You should not dedicate too much of the board to the questions as the main focus in terms of structures will be on those that are used for the responses. However, in your further conversations with other students, other important questions may come up, so you can allow some room for those.

After dealing with the questions, start eliciting the expressions that were used in your reformulated responses. Again, you should deal with meaning, form and pronunciation where necessary, and point out any expressions that are especially useful for your particular topic. As in the question stage, if you have any semi-fixed expressions that are worth expanding by showing other variations, do that with as much input from the students as possible. Once you've finished dealing with the language on the board, let the students know that you will be putting them in pairs again and that they can use the structures on the board in further conversations on the topic.

Below are some sample utterances and reformulations from a lesson where the students talked about their future plans. Alternative slot-fillers were provided for the semi-fixed expressions so that the students could see how they could change them for their own purposes.

Student utterance

1 *I will continue learn English.*

2 *For me the best work is flight attendant.*

3 *I want to move to city.*

4 *I want to move the job.*

5 *I want to move from the home of my parents.*

Teacher reformulation and expansion

- *You are going to continue **learning English**. (studying at university, working at ..., etc)*
- *Ideally, you would like to be a **flight attendant**. (a teacher, happy, rich)*
- *You want to move to **the city**. (the country, the suburbs)*
- *You are planning to **change jobs**. (get married, go to university, move to ..., etc)*
- *You want to move out of your **parents'** place. (mother's, father's, sister's, friend's)*

Pair conversations 2

Now the students find new partners and repeat the previous pair conversation stage in exactly the same way. This time they may use some of the language that is highlighted on the board, both for answering and asking questions. However, it is important that use of the structures is optional as this is not meant to be a controlled practice stage. Still, the students will probably use some of the structures, as this will often make communication easier and they will naturally be motivated to use language that is closer to what native speakers use.

Continuing the lesson

The rest of the lesson just repeats the cycle, each pair conversation being followed by a dialogue between a different student and the teacher, from which useful language is extracted. However, if you put the students into teams to challenge them to write down the most expressions, you will need to ask them to reassemble in their teams after each pair conversation stage. You can then keep a running total on the board of the expressions each group writes down for the conversations between the teacher and student. The collaborative and competitive aspect of this task should motivate them to notice and write down more expressions.

The lesson can be drawn to a close at the end of any *Pair conversation*, *Conversation with teacher* or *Language focus* stage. All are acceptable ways to finish. Ending with the pair conversation allows the students one more chance to use the language that has been accumulated up to that point. The dialogue with the teacher gives them one more chance to practise noticing useful language. The language focus stage gives the teacher one last chance to clarify any new expressions that come up, as well as to summarise everything else that has been extracted.

In addition to varying the number of stages in the lesson, you can adjust the length of each stage. For students who really need speaking practice, the pair conversation stages can be extended to whatever length seems appropriate. For students who need and can handle more linguistic input, the teacher and student dialogue can be extended to produce more language. Of course, adjustments will be made according to the students' level. For example, you may decide to keep the student–teacher dialogue short for lower-level students, to ensure that they are not overwhelmed with new language and that the reformulation occurs relatively soon after the initial utterance is produced. Note that with larger classes, not all students will have the chance to speak directly to you. You should keep this in mind for future lessons so those students who didn't get the chance can be given priority.

Feedback from students

The value of any teaching method cannot really be established without getting some feedback from the students, particularly about whether they enjoyed the lessons and whether they felt that they could learn with the method employed. In addition, feedback from students can lead to modifications which improve the method. With CAT,

feedback was obtained after the very first trial. Here are some of the comments from a class of 15 intermediate students:

- *The new method I like it because you use our examples and is easy to identify where I can use the expression.*
- *I think the new method is good because we have the possibility to interact with many areas to improve our English.*
- *The method is great because we can practise speaking, grammar, new vocabulary, new expressions. If it is up to me, you should really continue with this method.*
- *I love to learn English with this method.*
- *The method is very good. I liked so much.*
- *There is too much imitation.*
- *I think it is good. I can improve my English fluency.*
- *Is good because is more interesting for me.*

The comment about there being too much imitation was the only negative one. This was because, in the initial lesson, the students who were talking with the teacher were asked to repeat every reformulated utterance. This stage was then modified to make it optional for the student to offer or the teacher to ask for the repetition. This must have worked, as feedback was uniformly good after that. In fact, after the third trial, the students were asked how often they would like to learn with the new method instead of their regular classes. The results in this case were rather remarkable as the students had five lessons a week and the average number of lessons they wanted devoted to the new method was around 3.5. Five students out of 15 asked for CAT for every class, and no student chose it less than twice a week.

★ ★ ★

CAT seems to be well-suited to both teachers and students. From the teacher's perspective, the method is easy to use and it requires no preparation, planning or materials. There is a definite framework to follow, but there is no need to follow time guidelines as the lesson can be ended at any point and the stage lengths are completely flexible. Extensive linguistic knowledge is not required, as the extent to which teachers deal with grammar is also completely variable. Teachers may choose to focus on specific grammar points as they come up during reformulation, but this is not necessary as the main thing is that students get native-like structures to use for the topic.

There are, as there should be, more benefits for students. The lessons are completely learner-centred as the students are actively involved in every stage. And in terms of content, it's the students who decide what they want to talk about. The conversations are very realistic and the students practise an important conversational skill – that of asking someone questions in order to find out more information about them or their ideas. Sadly, it's a skill that a lot of native speakers could improve on, and that's why learners will make a great impression if they use this skill in the real world.

Another skill that will prove useful in the real world is listening to notice useful expressions in spoken language. A unique feature of CAT is that the students do not have the difficult double task of listening for comprehension and for language. They will have already heard the teacher–student conversation when they focus on expressions used in the reformulations. But I think one of the greatest advantages of this method is the repeated conversations after each language focus stage. This allows the students to produce at will whatever language has been focused on earlier. In essence, this mirrors how language proficiency develops in the real world, with learners getting more fluent and more accurate every time they speak on a particular topic or do a particular task. And, in the end, I think it is the strong real-world connection that leads to such positive student feedback and that will ultimately lead the learners to becoming much better integrated into the English-speaking world. ETp

Wilberg, P A *One to One: A Teachers' Handbook* LTP 1987



Ken Lackman was a senior teacher in charge of developing materials at the Caledonian School in Prague from 1996 to 2002. He then spent five years as the Director of Studies at EF Toronto. Now he is a freelance teacher trainer and presenter.

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Grammar mia

Chris Payne presents the Inert Knowledge Problem and sets about solving it.

Picture this classroom scene: the students are learning a grammar structure and are using it correctly during class exercises, but then they seem to forget how to produce it in a more communicative part of the same lesson. Later, in real-time communication outside the classroom, they struggle to put into practice the grammar that they have been taught.

Way back in 1929, the English mathematician and philosopher Alfred North Whitehead described this phenomenon as the Inert Knowledge Problem (IKP). The knowledge of grammar that is gained in our language classrooms remains inactive or inert when it is required in a non-instructional setting. The IKP is undoubtedly a source of great frustration for learners, who see, all too frequently, that they cannot do anything meaningful with what they are studying. Of course, it can also be frustrating for teachers, who don't want to feel powerless to help their students. But is the IKP an insoluble problem? Before I attempt to answer this question, another question springs to mind: Should we be teaching grammar at all?

The teaching of grammar

Some researchers and teachers, such as the proponents of the Natural Approach and a strong interpretation of Task-Based Learning, argue that explicit form-focused instruction is not necessary for successful language acquisition. They suggest that if learners are exposed to sufficient comprehensible input, as they are when they acquire their L1, they will learn the language and its grammatical rules on their own. This claim is based on the premise that second language acquisition is exactly like first language acquisition.

Few of us would dispute the idea that some learners can acquire a second language without an explicit focus on form, but the theory that *all* students of a second language will achieve acquisition in this way is hard to substantiate. Merely providing our L2 learners with abundant comprehensible input is not suited to all students, many of whom want or need to study grammatical rules. Students value the generative capacity of rules, which enables them to create and understand new language. Maybe knowing grammar rules gives students a feeling of security, even though the number of exceptions to rules might mean it is a false sense of security.

Research suggests that when students don't receive grammatical instruction, they may not acquire an ability to use grammar accurately

Contrastive analysis can also help learners comprehend the differences between the target language and their L1. Research suggests that when students don't receive grammatical instruction, they may not acquire an ability to use grammar accurately. Often cited is the experience of those learners who have lived in a target language environment for a considerable length of time and yet have failed to acquire an adequate grounding in grammar.

Some degree of grammar instruction *is* necessary if we want our learners to possess effective communication skills – and essential if accuracy is the aim of our learners, which it often is.

Overcoming the IKP

Let us now return to the question of whether we can solve the Inert Knowledge Problem. It would be overly optimistic to believe that there is an easy solution to a problem that has persisted for such a long time, and expecting students simultaneously to use language both

grammatically and communicatively is a difficult goal to achieve. With this in mind, a more achievable objective is to *mitigate* the IKP – by reflecting on and reacting to *how* we teach grammar.

Perhaps some teachers are unintentionally perpetuating the IKP because of the way in which they teach grammar. Grammar is often taught as declarative knowledge (knowing rules *about* the language) rather than procedural knowledge (knowing how to use the language for meaningful communication). If we perceive grammar and communication to be completely different things, then we will teach them differently, thus placing the onus on our students to integrate the two. If they can't integrate them, they will know *about* grammar but they will be unable to put their knowledge to effective practical *use* in communication.

Here are some ideas for contending with the Inert Knowledge Problem:

Noticing grammar

One way of focusing on grammar in a communicative approach is to draw our students' attention subliminally to correct forms while they are engaged in reading a text for meaning. To do this, we can highlight grammatical structures so that students notice them. For example, if we wish to focus on instances of the present perfect in a text, we could colour all uses of the present perfect to make them more noticeable. Alternatively, we could underline and/or *italicise* words, or use **bold** and different fonts.

We can also emphasise grammatical morphemes that are difficult to notice in speech, such as the 's' at the end of verbs and nouns, although care should be taken to ensure our pronunciation doesn't become unnatural. Increasing the frequency of a particular structure to which students are exposed can also promote noticing, which in turn can lead to 'priming'. Priming is the processing of recently encountered language that is activated, resulting in the learners' tendency to produce a salient structure.

Naturally, the effectiveness of these proposals depends on students noticing the enhanced input. However, like Merrill Swain, who formulated the Comprehensible Output Hypothesis, I believe that students need to do more than notice grammar in order to acquire it. They also need to *produce* language, which forces them to pay attention to structures in language use.

Psychological authenticity

In her insightful book *Teaching Language: From Grammar to Grammaring*, Diane Larsen-Freeman draws on research from psychology to support the theory that psychological authenticity plays an important role in helping students transfer what they learn in class to everyday use outside the classroom. She defines a practice activity as psychologically authentic when students learn something in the same way that they will use it later. Written grammar exercises have their place in language teaching, but it should not come as a surprise that students are unable to use grammar effectively in speech if they have only practised it in written form. Psychologically authentic activities do not necessarily mirror linguistically authentic communication, but they will be meaningful and have an end goal.

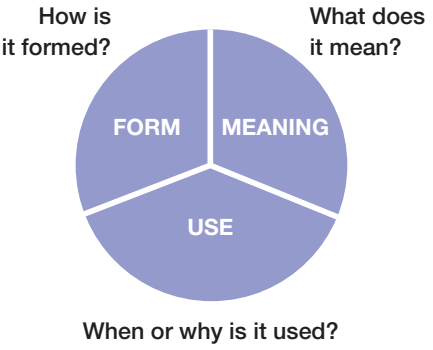
An example of such an activity is an information gap, in which one student or group of students has certain information, while another student or group has different or no information. The students practise structures by working together to find out information that they don't already know, as they would to communicate outside the classroom when they ask questions to which they need or want an answer.

It should not come as a surprise that students are unable to use grammar effectively in speech if they have only practised it in written form

If our aim is for learners to attain communicative competence, we should recreate in the classroom some of the conditions experienced by people engaged in real-time communication. One such condition would involve giving students little or no time to prepare what they need to say, as outside the classroom they are expected to produce language promptly. Clearly, we would also have to teach students strategies so that they are able to cope with the conditions of psychological authenticity.

The dimensions of grammar

Grammar is mostly associated with rules, but it also comprises recurring patterns which are combinations of particular words. However, even knowledge of patterns and rules is not sufficient if we want to avert the Inert Knowledge Problem, as rules can lead learners to produce language that we wouldn't actually use. Grammar can be said to consist of three dimensions – form, meaning and use – which can be depicted in a pie chart that focuses attention on the interconnected but different aspects of structure:



The challenge principle

According to Diane Larsen-Freeman, one of the three dimensions of form, meaning or use usually affords the greatest long-term challenge for language learners. It is often possible to predict which dimension of a structure is likely to be the most challenging. For example:

- The learning challenge for comparative adjectives is form: eg *more boring* or 'boringer'?
- The problem that prepositions pose for learners is normally one of meaning.
- Use tends to be the main learning challenge for the passive voice and present perfect.

Teachers could draw a pie chart for a structure they are teaching, which will help them define the learning challenge for a particular class.

Although these observations will sound like common sense, we need to remember that our class time with students is limited, so identifying the learning challenge for grammar can inform our thinking about how to create optimum learning opportunities in the classroom. I do not advocate disregarding an entire dimension, as obviously students need to know about form, meaning *and* use. However, if we

Grammar mia

don't prioritise and select a dimension according to the challenge principle, it is easy to spend too much valuable class time on a part of grammar that is not particularly problematic.

Let us look more closely at the passive voice and the challenge of using it appropriately. The passive might be expressed by a different structure in other languages, with the result that some students will *over*- or *under*-use it in English. How can we teach the passive voice in a way that honours the challenge principle? One way is to refrain from presenting the passive as a transformed version of the active voice, and from focusing too much attention on the agent *by*. The passive voice is not derived from the active and the two are not always interchangeable; and only about 15 percent of all passive sentences include the agent.

I do not wish to give the impression that applying the challenge principle is straightforward! Occasionally, the learning challenge that we anticipate might not be the one that our learners experience, so we will need to react to their difficulties and focus on a different dimension. Or some structures need more attention in two dimensions. In the case of phrasal verbs, the *meaning* is a challenge – as it is for other vocabulary items. But as well as lexical meaning, the *form* can also be hard to learn because students have to know which phrasal verbs are inseparable and where they have to place their pronouns. It is also worth bearing in mind that the learning challenge that a structure presents can be different for different students, and that the short-term and long-term challenge may differ.

Use

Knowledge of structures is important, but acceptable language isn't just grammatical, it is also appropriate for the context. The dimension of *use* is sometimes overlooked, maybe because it is considered to be something different from grammar. But to neglect use is to contribute to the Inert Knowledge Problem. If two grammatically correct sentences have a similar meaning, the slight difference between them will be related to how speakers use them. For instance, *'It is a book'* and *'This is a book'* are both grammatically correct sentences. *This*, *that*, *these* and *those* are demonstratives which are used to refer to near and distant things. But we don't normally use a demonstrative to answer the question *'What's this?'* Instead, usage prefers a personal pronoun:

Teacher: *What is this?*
Student: *It's a book.* (not: *This is a book.)*

Roleplays are ideal for practising use, especially if we ask the students to choose the more appropriate of two forms for a given context. An example is a job interview in which students take turns to play the role of the interviewer and the applicant. They choose between using the present perfect and the past tense to talk about past events:

Interviewer: *Have you had any experience of working in a hotel?*
Applicant: *Yes, I have worked as a receptionist since last May. Before that I worked in a hotel bar for two years.*

Other factors that influence appropriate use are the formality of the situation and if written or spoken English is required. Also, teachers ought to establish whether native-speaker use is the learners' objective. In certain situations, adhering to native-speaker conventions might be inappropriate for learners.

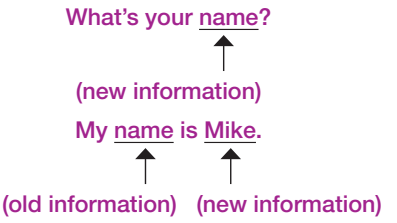
Choice and reasons

I mentioned earlier that many students want to be given grammar rules and to be told what is right and wrong in a language. The danger with students simply accepting that 'rules are rules' is that their learning can become more rote and mechanical. We need to make them aware of the concept of 'grammar of choice', that is, more than one structure can be correct for a context, depending on the meaning they wish to express.

In addition to teaching rules and explaining grammatical choices, we can help our students learn by enabling them to see whether there is an underlying reason why language is used in a certain way. Let us return to our previous example of phrasal verbs. We can say *'Turn off the TV'* and *'Turn the TV off'*, but when 'TV' is replaced by the pronoun *it*, we can say *'Turn it off'* but not *'Turn off it'*.

Most grammar materials would say that here the pronoun can't go after *off* and that it must be placed between the verb and its particle. This rule might seem arbitrary, but it has a logical explanation. English grammar distinguishes between old information and new information. New information is what is being introduced, while old information has already been referred to in the context.

For example:



When native speakers of English have a choice, they prefer 'end focus', which is a tendency to place new information at the end of a sentence. Thus in the example above, *'Mike is my name'* would be a less common answer because *name* is old information.

Pronouns are old information, so 'end position' is avoided when we use phrasal verbs because we have a choice of where to place them. (The same cannot be said of this last sentence, in which I had no choice but to put the pronoun *them* at the end!)

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Not everyone is enthusiastic about grammar, but we are still duty-bound to teach it. Some people may even consider it to be the most boring part of learning a language, but grammar is not in itself boring: what *can* be boring is what we ask students to do with grammar in order to learn it. It can be helpful to think of grammar as something we *do* rather than just something we *know*.

We must provide our learners with grammar practice that is meaningful and engaging, and which integrates form and communication while maintaining a focus on the learning challenge. My grammar advice is to strive to build a bridge between forms and use, in order to lessen the Inert Knowledge Problem. ETp

Larsen-Freeman, D *Teaching Language: From Grammar to Grammaring* Thomson Heinle 2003



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Patience is a virtue

Paul Bress praises a much-forgotten quality.

It hardly needs stating that English language teaching has changed radically over the last generation. For one thing, it never even used to be called ELT (it was EFL when I started my teaching career). For another, there have been significant methodological changes, with the emphasis now much more on deciding on, and helping students achieve, communicative objectives rather than 'talking about' the target language. And finally, there have been enormous technological changes: with each passing year, more and more teaching, testing and independent learning is done online.

Patience is an ability

But there is one aspect of language teaching that remains as important as ever – perhaps even more so now. The quality I am referring to is *patience*. As a (very poor) practitioner of yoga, I am more aware of my yoga tutor's ability to be patient with me than I am of any other ability. The same applies, assuredly, to our ELT students. Many of these, particularly students with little self-confidence, must really crave a patient teacher. Against this background, what practical steps can we take in order to increase our patience and, thereby, offer our students the time and space in which to learn effectively? Here are four suggestions:

1 Try to imagine what it is like to be your students (especially those who are struggling with the language).

This is, by far, the most important step. Impatience derives, largely, from a compulsive preoccupation with our own thoughts, feelings and intentions. When we are preoccupied with our own concerns, we absolutely detest operating at a speed that is different from our own. If, instead, we can try to engage in a more empathic style of communication, then our impatience is likely to lose a lot of its fuel. As we listen (and watch) our students more intently, we should find that we change both mentally and physiologically. Empathic listening should help rid us of our impatience and allow us to teach much much better.

2 Don't move your body around nervously.

If you engage in an empathic way of communicating, then this should follow naturally. However, sometimes it's a good idea to give yourself that extra chance to empathise properly. This means sitting comfortably on a chair so that you are at eye level with your student(s). Lean back, stretch your legs out, intertwine your fingers and relax. If you are constantly pacing up and down the classroom, you will cease to be able to enter into the individual worlds of your students.

3 Be prepared not to meet the learning objectives (when it's clearly not possible).

Of course, it's generally a good principle not only to set communicative objectives, but also to do your very best to help your students to achieve them. However, it's the mark of a more enlightened teacher to be able to let go of the above principle on certain occasions. Your students' heads are full of any number of preoccupations and distractions. Sometimes they are not in a psychological state of readiness to learn what you want them to learn. This doesn't signal defeat for the teacher; it's just how people learn. Even though we plan syllabuses very rigorously, there will always be a gap between our good intentions and the actual working of the students' minds. The result of this willingness to wave goodbye to syllabuses and plans is that you can give your students the time and space to fully internalise what you are trying to teach them.

4 Don't intervene before a 'learning opportunity' has definitely passed.

Sometimes, a teacher's anxieties make it very difficult (painful even) to listen to a student struggling over a word, phrase, clause, sentence or longer utterance. Silences are often, for some strange reason, considered to be the enemy. But behaviourist days are long gone. We must not expect our students to behave like performing seals! They need time in which to hypothesise, begin, self-correct, reformulate and finally produce a piece of English which reflects their best efforts. To jump in before this process is realised is to rob them of a valuable learning opportunity.

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Even though everything is so much faster today than it used to be, I think the need for patience is just as important as it ever was. When things go wrong in this digital age, they tend to fail completely. How many times have you been unable to send a text, or record a programme on your digibox, or download something from a website? The scope for disappointment today is enormous. It is important to nurture our patience both inside and outside the ELT classroom, and this should prove beneficial to both our home and professional lives. ETp



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Invitation to interaction

Mary Cerutti, Lydia Guill, Cheri Pierson and **Moriah Sharp**

bridge gaps and go beyond.

Abdul: *Do you live in an apartment?*
Ramona: *No, I live in a house.*
Abdul: *Does it have a yard?*

Andy listened as his students diligently practised their dialogues in pairs. *'All right, time's up. Let's have this pair come up to the front and recite their dialogue for the class.'* Abdul and Ramona stood in front of the class and began:

Abdul: *Do you live ...*

Andy couldn't help but notice the rote manner in which his students recited their dialogues. *They obviously know this dialogue. But they sound so unnatural! How can I help them sound more natural?*

Having a good model of interaction helps promote an atmosphere of risk-taking and speaking, an atmosphere which can help the perpetually silent class. Instead of hunting for new ideas for interaction, take a few moments to reflect on what you already do in your classroom with interaction. Does your practice match with your beliefs?

In this article, we first define interaction and then present a model to provide a framework for teachers' reflection. Finally, we provide a range of high-interest classroom techniques based on the model to enhance interaction among adult learners.

What is interaction?

Interaction is a stated goal that most teachers of adult English language learners (ELLs) strive for, but many are often unsure how to foster and develop it among their learners. According to H Douglas Brown, interaction is *'the collaborative exchange of thoughts, feelings or ideas between two or more people, resulting in a reciprocal effect on each other'*. Interaction is obviously important, as learners use language to negotiate meaning in a range of situations. All aspects of communicative competence are involved in human interaction; thus, language teachers need to understand ways to enhance oral communication among their adult learners. Wilga Rivers suggests that in interaction, students can use all they possess of the language in real-life exchanges:

'Through interaction, students can increase their language store as they listen to or read authentic linguistic material, or even the output of their fellow students in discussion, skits, joint problem solving tasks, or dialogue journals. In interaction, students can use all they possess of the language – all they have learned or casually absorbed – in real-life exchanges ... Even at an elementary stage, they learn in this way to exploit the elasticity of language.'

Interaction is a stated goal that most teachers of adult ELLs strive for, but many are often unsure how to foster and develop it among their learners

Interaction has clear benefits. First, it provides students with a large amount of speaking and listening practice. According to Donald Snow, if students are to have a breakthrough in spoken English, they need to have practice that allows them to express ideas in their own words. Second, interaction resembles real-world communication: Rather than focusing heavily on structures and dialogues, students are motivated to interact when the tasks are relevant to them. Third, interaction fosters a cooperative, more relaxed environment that supports learning. Moreover, research indicates that a positive learning environment lowers students' anxiety and fosters confidence in their ability to interact successfully with others. Finally, interaction creates more autonomous learners. Autonomy is not automatic but, rather, fostered by teacher modelling and direction. When teachers move from a directive to a facilitating role and allow students to initiate conversations, the students learn to internalise and recycle language and, in the process, make it more personal and malleable.

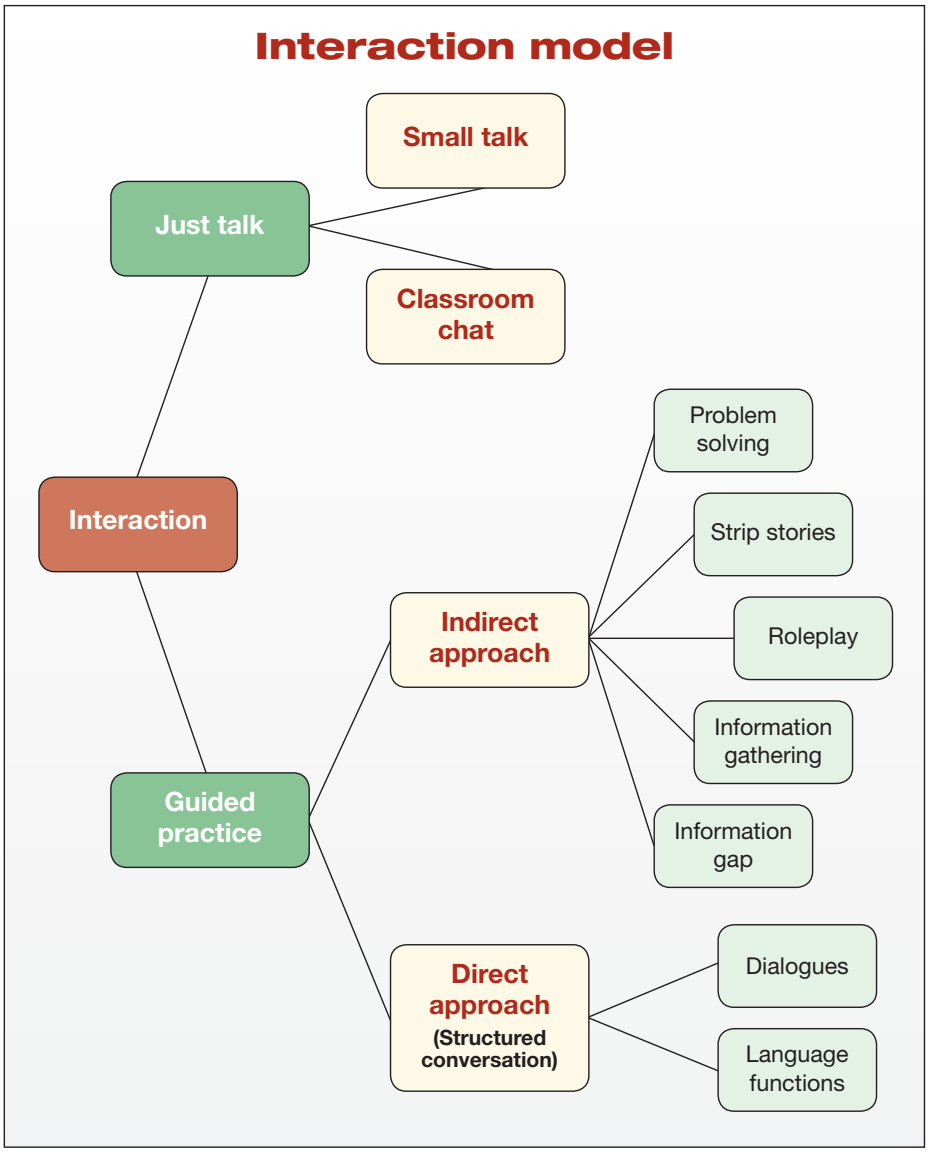
A model of interaction

The model shown here incorporates direct and indirect approaches to foster and develop interaction in the classroom. The 'Just talk' category focuses on fluency and creative use of the language, while the 'Guided practice' categories focus on fluency, accuracy and conversation management strategies.

Using a model such as this helps the teacher in three distinct ways. First, it provides a framework for reflective teaching. According to Richards and Lockhart, teachers *'who are better informed as to the nature of their teaching are able to see what aspects of their teaching they need to change'*. When critical reflection is integrated into our teaching routine, it enables us to ask questions about current practice and uncovers new options. By focusing on aspects of the model, the reflective teacher may ask: *What constitutes an interactive classroom? To what extent do the activities I use foster authentic interaction?* If this model is used as a starting point, more objective evaluation may occur, in terms of purposeful interaction in the teaching context.

Second, the model provides the teacher with a range of traditional and communicative techniques. For example, 'Classroom chat' encourages what Rivers calls 'elasticity' in language. 'Just talk' and 'Classroom chat' activities can provide opportunities for students to interact, albeit in short intervals, with each other, without a conscious focus on accuracy. The teacher should provide a relaxed environment but with interesting and motivating topics. This can be especially effective during the initial phase of a lesson.

Finally, 'Just talk' activities are not enough. 'Guided practice' activities also need to be integrated into a model of interaction. Here the focus is on direct and indirect aspects of interaction, including fluency and accuracy. Issues such as vocabulary and grammar should not be neglected. Snow suggests that the teacher's role is to ensure that the students learn new material in ways that improve their interaction, learning productive ways to use vocabulary and grammar structures to express ideas, rather than only using them receptively. It is important to incorporate both of these categories, to encourage fluency. Activities should help develop fluency and accuracy while also helping students to initiate interaction with confidence, in and out of the classroom.



Techniques to invite interaction

Small talk

Small talk is conversation about common topics that helps build rapport between people; it is important in daily life, work, school or community activities. When students are able to interact using small talk in the classroom, they will gain confidence in practising this same language outside the classroom. Besides the actual vocabulary, it is important for ELLs to gain sociolinguistic competence in

Invitation to interaction

appropriate topics for small talk. An ELL who discusses age, salary or weight in the USA might be negatively perceived; therefore, a classroom discussion on appropriate and inappropriate topics is critical. After a discussion about possible small talk topics, the students can practise, using a ladder drawn on the board. On each rung of the ladder is a small talk topic, such as the weather, family, sports or current events. The students move up and down the ladder, using a dice. Each student in turn must lead a small talk discussion on the topic they land on. After three to five minutes, the next person rolls the dice and continues the activity with a new topic. Practising small talk helps students gain confidence in talking with native speakers outside of class.

Classroom chat

The primary difference between small talk and classroom chat is that classroom chat goes beyond developing rapport and moves into substantive topics. With classroom chat, the discussion is from a lesson-based content area, using relevant vocabulary. Activities to facilitate classroom chat include conversation cards, corner chats and circle talks.

- Conversation card activities involve each student receiving a card with a question or topic which they must discuss with a specified number of classmates.
- Corner chats involve students moving to specific corners of the room, in each of which several questions are posted. These are based on specific aspects of the overarching topic being practised. The students spend a predetermined amount of time in each corner discussing the questions, and then move to another corner to begin a new discussion.
- Circle talks are appropriate for all levels. The students form an inner circle and an outer circle. The students in the outer circle speak for one minute on a given topic to the person facing them in the inner circle. The outer circle then rotates and the students talk about the same topic with new partners. Because of the repetition, this activity provides thinking time and recycling opportunities for the students.

All of these activities involve a great deal of interaction, focusing on fluency and lowering the students' affective filter, while simultaneously developing a sense of community in the classroom.

Problem-solving assignments

Problem-solving activities in pairs or small groups are a popular way to encourage interaction and authentic use of the language in the classroom. Some examples include creating an advertisement for a new coffee shop, developing a flyer for a new class, listing instructions for a special recipe, drawing a poster for a movie, putting together a menu for a restaurant or planning a class party. The overall goal is authentic language practice, not the resulting products. These activities can also have a beneficial effect on a student's affective domain. A student who may be struggling with the language may have artistic or organisational talents, and these projects allow those students to gain positive recognition. Along with the interaction that results from these projects, another by-product is basic language survival skills through generating ideas, such as reading signs, price tags and newspapers.

Strip stories

Strip stories provide practice in negotiating meaning, encouraging fluency development. Strip stories are very effective because there is a correct answer, and this facilitates more negotiating and discussion.

For this interactive activity, a pair or small group of students is given a picture story, which has been cut into pieces. Each piece shows a clear step in a story or process. The students must put the pictures in the correct order.

This activity can easily be accomplished without much conversation, so the teacher needs to provide some clear guidance, such as questions to ask and the vocabulary required to discuss the pictures. A follow-up activity that encourages conversation is to have the students prepare to narrate the picture story or process to the whole class, once they have put it in order.

Roleplays

In a roleplay, the teacher gives each student a role with a specific setting and scenario in mind. Roleplays may be used to give students opportunities to practise specific language functions in a scenario which simulates an authentic context. For example, in a beginning-level class, the teacher might choose to have students practise the language function of accepting and declining invitations by first having every student complete an invitation template (event/date/time/place) before putting them in pairs to practise accepting and declining invitations. Moving students from the structured, controlled activity of completing a template to the less structured, free activity of using language appropriately builds the students' confidence by allowing them time to process their language before they actually speak. This activity also provides ample opportunity for them to work on conversation management skills, such as asking for clarification or reading body language. Some helpful pointers for teachers to ensure full participation of all students, in addition to clearly defining and assigning roles for every student, include teaching the language necessary for the roleplay before beginning the activity.

Information gathering

Information gathering activities and surveys tap into our natural human curiosity for learning about new things, while also capitalising on our natural enjoyment of talking about ourselves. They can be effective as warm-up activities or 'energisers' in the middle of a long lesson. The information gathered can and should be recycled in follow-up activities or subsequent lessons. Additionally, these activities generate a lot of spontaneous, student-generated communication. However, each student has a relatively small part, making it less intense than pairwork. Also, surveys are highly structured activities and can be useful when you want to give students more controlled practice. Finally, engaging in information gathering activities creates positive shared experiences, which build relationships, increase motivation and lower the affective filter.

When designing an effective information gathering activity, first set some specific guidelines. Go beyond generalities like *'Get up and ask your classmates the questions'*. For a lower-level class, running the survey within an

interactive activity like 'Corner chat' (described above) might be helpful. Give higher-level students a number of people they are required to survey in the time allotted.

Second, make sure that the students have the language necessary for the activity. The questions on the survey should either be student-generated or else already covered in class. The survey is an opportunity to use vocabulary and structures in communicative situations, not to introduce new content.

Third, model the survey process. This is especially important if this is the first time you are leading your class in this activity, or if the class is lower-level and modelling is an important part of clarifying instructions.

Finally, always make sure to tabulate the results of the survey. This can be done in the same class period or on a following day. Tabulating the survey data is essential to the effectiveness of this activity type. There are many ways that survey results can be used or expanded to tap into other skills, and hopefully these ideas and results will stimulate creativity in the classroom.

Information gaps

In an information-gap activity, the teacher pairs students and gives each student either an A or B worksheet. These two forms of the worksheet have different information missing. The students are then required to ask and answer questions to complete the blanks on their worksheets. Finally, the students work together to check the accuracy of their answers. These activities provide students with practice in using the language necessary to complete the task. For example, a teacher might choose to use this kind of activity to give the students an opportunity to practise asking for and giving phone numbers. The teacher would first make two copies of a simulation of a phone book page. The two worksheets would be identical, except that Copy A and Copy B would be missing different names and different phone numbers. To set up the activity, the teacher should first teach the language necessary for completing the task. For example, the teacher would want to have the students first practise asking and answering *What's _____'s phone number?* and *Whose number is ___?* Carefully teaching the necessary language before the task is essential to ensure that the activity runs smoothly and that everyone is an interactive participant. After teaching the language for the task, the teacher should then model the task with a student before pairing the students and beginning the activity. After all the student pairs have completed the task, the teacher can facilitate a whole-class discussion of the information to check their answers.

Dialogues

Dialogues include interaction that starts with controlled practice and moves toward more authentic and fluent interaction. Dialogues are often practised in A and B pairs, with the students taking turns practising each role. A common problem with using pairs is that students often practise with the person sitting next to them in class. One way to encourage interaction between all the students is to use a circle or line format. Half of the students are given an A card, with lines for one speaker of a dialogue, and they form the outer part of a circle. The other half are given a B card with the other speaker's lines. The Bs then find a partner from the As and practise the dialogue several times together, before moving around the circle to find a new A partner to practise again. After several rotations, the partners switch cards, allowing the students to practise both parts of the dialogue. Finally, the students practise the dialogue without looking at their cards. At this point, the focus should not be on producing the dialogue word for word, but rather on being able to communicate clearly the main message of the dialogue. This final step is important in moving the student to automaticity of the language.

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If Andy were to read this article, he would now understand the answers to the questions *How can I get my students to talk?* and *How can I encourage both accurate yet authentically fluent conversation?* Using the model presented in this article, Andy now has the tools to scaffold students up to fluency tasks, moving from more controlled to less controlled tasks. Interaction is not an unattainable goal, but it takes creativity and intentionality in the classroom to move language activities from mere rote memorisation and recitation to fluidity and ownership. ETp

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TALKBACK!

Do you have something to say about an article in the current issue of ETp? This is your magazine and we would really like to hear from you. Write to us or email:

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Noticing: a scaffolding strategy 1

Handoyo Puji Widodo and **Andrzej Cirocki** analyse the academic essay.

The concept of noticing and its role in foreign language grammar instruction have been widely discussed. There is, however, a dearth of discussion on the role of noticing in L2 writing pedagogies. In particular, the application of noticing as a scaffolding strategy for teaching academic essay writing has been somewhat neglected. This article attempts to fill this void. The noticing strategy serves as a way of giving scaffolded input for inexperienced student writers, providing them with an informed awareness of the typical features of paragraphs in academic essays. These features include topic sentences, supporting sentences, concluding sentences and two textual components: coherence and cohesion.

The noticing-oriented activities discussed in this article aim to prepare students for the difficult task of writing a good academic essay. The teaching of writing skills and the structure of paragraphs tends to vary from one ELT writing context to another. We believe our approach offers a useful way to teach formal academic English to novice student writers, and we recommend that teachers consider integrating the suggested activities into their classrooms.

First, we will discuss briefly the concept of a noticing strategy and its pedagogical benefits. Then we will look at the roles played by the teacher and the students in noticing activities. The implementation of noticing activities for building well-developed paragraphs in academic essays, which deserves a lengthy discussion, will be discussed in a follow-up article.

The concept of noticing

The term *noticing* is sometimes used interchangeably with other related terms, such as *consciousness*, *attention*, *awareness* and *understanding*, in the second language acquisition (SLA) literature. This use of multiple terms makes it difficult to compare theories and results from different studies. The inconsistency may result from the inherent subjectivity in defining those concepts. Richard Schmidt

The noticing-oriented activities discussed in this article aim to prepare students for the difficult task of writing a good academic essay

defines noticing as the *'registration [detection] of the occurrence of a stimulus event in conscious awareness and subsequent storage in long-term memory'*. Paying attention to language appears to be vital in order to convert input into intake. As Schmidt further affirms, noticing is inextricably linked to awareness and consciousness, both of which are a prerequisite for a language acquisition process.

According to Schmidt, attention is equal to awareness, which occurs at two levels: awareness at the level of noticing and awareness at the level of understanding. The first, described as lower-level awareness, contributes to the intake of linguistic items. The second, characterised as higher-level awareness, is related to the learners' ability to test hypotheses. It is awareness at the higher level that contributes to deeper learning. Processes like restructuring are then involved. In short, conscious involvement is required for input to undergo further processing. Such a requirement makes it clear that no learning occurs without noticing.

Noticing is inextricably linked to awareness and consciousness, both of which are a prerequisite for a language acquisition process

Some SLA researchers, such as John Truscott, argue that the foundations of the noticing hypothesis in the cognitive psychology of SLA are weak, owing to lack of empirical evidence. However, the noticing concept has provided a significant contribution to generating important theoretical and empirical debates. It has also afforded the opportunity to integrate a useful concept from the cognitive psychology perspective into SLA theories. Moreover, as Shinichi Izumi points out, in language teaching and learning, noticing plays a crucial role in the processing of new knowledge and rule internalisation. Peter Skehan tells us that noticing also helps learners to become aware of the linguistic and non-linguistic features of the input or task given.

Students need to be aware that academic discourse is governed by a set of principles and that all of these must be adhered to if their writing is to be successful

In order to avoid a misunderstanding of the term *noticing*, we would like to offer an operational definition of this concept in the context of teaching academic writing. Accordingly, in this article, *noticing* should be taken to mean 'a strategy to enable students to identify, classify and grasp the particular features of academic paragraphs'. To be more precise, in our approach, the noticing strategy is used to aid students in identifying or recognising such features as: topic sentences, supporting sentences, concluding sentences and paragraph coherence, as well as cohesion. Our ultimate goal is to provide students with an understanding of the structure and pattern of a well-formed paragraph so that their own texts meet academic English conventions.

The benefits of noticing

Although employing a noticing strategy provides very few chances for students to express their ideas freely and creatively, it does offer several advantages. It enables them to:

1 build confidence in composing a paragraph in English by being exposed to various features of academic writing. Before the students work on the actual writing task, the teacher provides them with support that takes the form of scaffolded input so that they feel less anxious and apprehensive about the challenge of familiarising themselves with academic writing discourse.

2 tap into their capabilities of self-revising and self-editing by giving them a good understanding of the target features of academic paragraphs (eg content, language and organisation). Such skills constitute a crucial part of the writing process. Students develop the ability to apply these skills automatically, once they have mastered the art of writing well-structured paragraphs.

3 practise accuracy and fluency in writing through both careful analysis of ready-made texts and systematic engagement in paragraph composition.

4 identify solutions to problems concerning language, content and organisation while they work on noticing activities. This task assists the students in paying close attention to the characteristic features of academic paragraphs, giving them an opportunity to familiarise themselves with how such paragraphs are typically structured and developed.

The practice of noticing

To illustrate how we can put the noticing strategy into practice in the classroom, let us concentrate on teaching paragraph construction when writing an argumentative academic essay – in our experience, the students' Achilles' heel.

- The teacher should first provide the students with a model essay paragraph and ask them to read it over to get the gist of it.
- Then, the students should be asked to analyse the organisational pattern of the model paragraph.
- Next, a discussion of topic sentences, supporting sentences, concluding sentences, paragraph coherence and paragraph cohesion should follow, to enable the students to grasp the various features of a good paragraph.
- The teacher should go on to draw attention to the diverse lexico-grammatical features found in the paragraph so that the students see how to express ideas in formal academic English.

Introducing the typical features of paragraphs in argumentative essays in this way provides students with useful scaffolding, which should result in the successful production of coherent and cohesive texts of their own.

In short, the noticing strategy is a starting point for teachers to introduce the significant features of such a paragraph before they ask the students to go through the process of composing their own – beginning by generating a topic sentence and ending by completing a coherent and cohesive paragraph. Students need to be aware that academic discourse is governed by a set of principles and that all of these must be adhered to if their academic writing is to be successful. This necessitates a lot of practice on their part.

Noticing: a scaffolding strategy 1

The roles of the teacher

The teacher's roles include guide, facilitator and motivator, as well as resource and feedback provider.

- Firstly, as a guide, the teacher leads the students into doing some noticing-oriented activities, providing clear instructions on what they are to do with the given input. This opening phase is intended to start a lesson so that the students know what the class will focus on. This phase, according to the concept of structuring, allows for the orderly and logical sequence of noticing-oriented activities in the classroom. Consequently, the students are well-informed about the form and purpose of the activities they are involved in.

> *Writers have to make decisions on content, organisation and lexical and syntactic choices so that their final products are understandable to readers*

- Secondly, as a facilitator, the teacher makes sure that the students understand the noticing-related activities. This is necessary since students may not be familiar with the features of academic writing that they are required to notice or identify. The teacher closely monitors the class and responds to individual as well as group queries. By providing support, the teacher ensures that student stress, anxiety and frustration are reduced.
- Thirdly, as a motivator, the teacher encourages the students to grasp new concepts. In doing so, the teacher must ensure that instructional input is both learnable and comprehensible to the students. The model paragraphs which are provided should contain, for example, explicit topic sentences for the students to notice. If the activities are too difficult, the students will show little enthusiasm, will lose interest, and finally may be tempted to give up.
- Fourthly, as a resource, the teacher supplies information, language, strategies and additional materials whenever such a need arises. The teacher helps the students with their attempts at writing by answering all the questions that emerge before, during and after the writing task and by giving advice about linguistic and grammatical choices, topic sentences and supporting and concluding sentences.
- Finally, as a feedback provider, the teacher gives constructive feedback on the students' writing. It is important to point out that feedback must not be confused with criticism, which is often the case. Planned and targeted constructive feedback informs students about which aspects of paragraph writing they need to do more work on and reminds them of the audience for their writing and the reason for it. Feedback should be encouraging, supportive, respectful, objective, clear and solution-driven. Before providing feedback, the teacher should get the students to compare their writing with that of their classmates. Doing this boosts student–student interaction (collaborative work) as well as teacher–student interaction (idea sharing). Both forms of interaction lead to meaningful communication in the target language.

The role of the students

Writing is a highly complex process, requiring constant activity on the part of the text creator. Writers have to make decisions on content, organisation and lexical and syntactic choices so that their final products are understandable to readers. Moreover, while composing their paragraphs, student writers are also interacting with their audiences, and this interaction involves negotiating common ground and cultural understanding. Students should be encouraged to act as engaged feedback providers, promoting critical thinking, social interaction and greater participation in the classroom. This is likely to promote the idea that learning is a shared enterprise.

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The noticing strategy which we are advocating provides a scaffold to help students to gain an awareness of the typical features of a paragraph which is then developed into an academic essay. It is beneficial for two reasons. Firstly, it shows teachers how to introduce the elements of academic writing to their classroom activity repertoire. Secondly, this approach gradually familiarises students with the various conventions which they need to follow when composing essays in English. Since ELT students represent diverse cultures, these conventions may be very different from those used in the students' native languages, and therefore it is important that they notice them and develop the ability to follow them in their own writing. ETp

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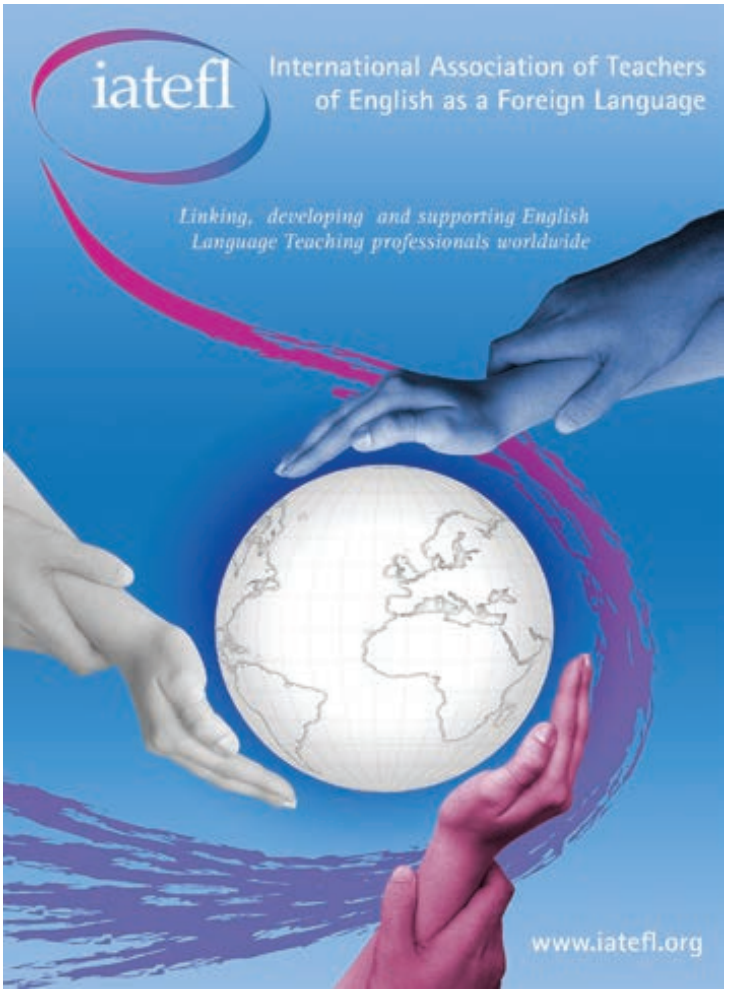
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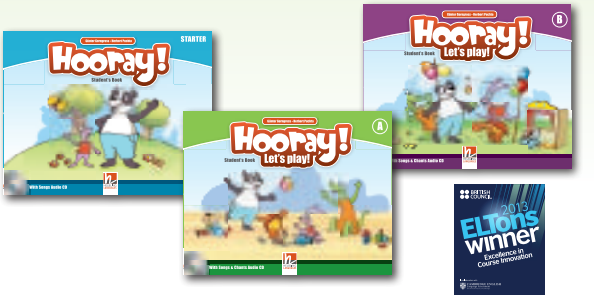
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Testing questions

Douglas Williams

asks why and how we should test our students.

At the IATEFL conference in Glasgow last year, the talk that stood out most for me was given by Jeremy Harmer, and was entitled 'Six key questions for teachers and trainers at the crossroads'. One of these questions related to the benefits and disadvantages of language testing, and, like the other questions, when voted upon by a packed audience, great diversity of opinion was shown as to whether or not testing students actually helps them to learn. Jeremy informed us that this controversy was reflected in previous talks, leading us to believe that it is a highly relevant point of contention in today's ELT environment.

The issue of testing

There is little doubt that testing plays a role, in one form or another, in almost every class of every course. It would, therefore, appear to be in the interests of all teachers to understand more about what testing involves, why it is used and the advantages and disadvantages of testing in different ways. These are issues which cannot be fully discussed in one article, but I hope to offer food for thought, present my own conclusions based on personal experience, and argue the case for flexible reviewing over rigid testing.

There is little doubt that testing plays a role, in one form or another, in almost every class of every course

The types of test we use

Most teachers will be familiar with the following *overt* types of test:

- Placement test, given when new students join the school to establish which level to put them in. This usually consists of a combined grammar/vocabulary gap-fill exercise and a short interview, but may be more comprehensive (or, in some cases, less so!).
- Progress test, given on a regular basis (usually weekly) to test what has been learnt in the short term, perhaps from one unit of the coursebook.
- Achievement test, given at the end of a course to test what has been learnt in the longer term.
- Proficiency test, given to assess overall competence in English. This may be internal or external (such as IELTS or the Cambridge exams). Students doing exam preparation classes may do past papers as a form of internal proficiency test.

The following may also be used as more *covert* forms of testing:

- Games
- Quizzes
- Competitions
- Tasks and projects
- CCQs (Concept-Check Questions)
- Written homework
- Presentations

Although not recognised as standard forms of test, the relevance of these very much depends on the teacher's interpretation of 'testing'. It could be finding out first what language the students can already use (as with Task-Based Learning), checking their understanding of individual vocabulary items (CCQs), questioning their general knowledge (with a quiz) or perhaps assessing their ability to use paralinguistic, as well as linguistic, features (by having them give presentations).

The more we learn about the reasons for testing, the better we will be at selling the positives to our students

Why should we test?

It seems insufficient for the conscientious teacher just to know what school policies are in relation to testing; they should also reflect on and become more aware of why testing is used, critically analysing the reasoning offered by students, colleagues, managers and other individuals involved with the organisation. The more we learn about the reasons for testing, the better we will be at both selling the positives to our students and seeing the bigger picture of testing as part of the educational process, rather than as a necessary evil. There seem to be two main arguments for testing, which I will outline below.

1 It aids retention.

This is the pedagogical reasoning that students learn better (and hence remember more) if they are tested. The testing process itself, it can be argued, is an opportunity to enhance the learning process by identifying specific areas of strength and weakness, which can then be explored through post-test discussion and feedback.

Another commonly cited reason for testing is that it gives the students physical proof that their money has been well spent – ie that their language level has improved

Critical issues to reflect on here are, amongst others, which types of test are best at increasing retention, whether these work for just some or all learning styles, and whether we can isolate the effect that testing has on the learning process from all the other factors involved.

Retention is very closely linked to washback: the effect that a test has on the students. This can include positive and negative consequences. Obviously, students will be more likely to revise if they know a test is coming (or at least we would hope so!). However, they may also avoid coming into school on the test day altogether as some simply hate doing formalised tests. I had one student who, when I was explaining on Monday that there would be a test on Friday, immediately after hearing the word *test* went into a panic. As expected, she didn't show up on Friday morning, and since then I've tried to stop using this word within earshot of all students (I dread to think what *exam* would have done to her!).

2 It gives us evidence of learning.

Another commonly cited reason for testing is that it gives the students physical proof that their money has been well spent – in other words, that their language level has improved. From a teaching and management perspective, it gives us some kind of data to cover ourselves if we need to show that progress has, or has not, been made. We can compare scores from an initial placement test to a final achievement test to show total gains made, or between each progress test as part of continuous assessment. If students think they are in the wrong level, we have hard evidence with which to justify our decision to keep them in the same level or move them.

An important question to ask here is: *Do all types of test give us an accurate picture of a student's language progress?* Clearly they don't; after all, how many times has a student sailed through a school's placement test, answering most of the grammar questions correctly, but has then been unable to string one accurate sentence together in class?

How should we test?

There are pros and cons to every testing method, and no matter how carefully we plan our tests to suit our students' needs, there will always be some drawbacks. There are many questions to consider: *How often should we test? How long should tests be and using which format? Should the format be standardised? Should they cover something from every class? How much production of language should they involve? If they are skills-based, should active and passive skills be represented equally? What weighting should be given to grammar, vocabulary and other sections? Should they be communicative, silent or a combination of both?*

Earlier, I mentioned washback – the effects of testing on students – but just as important are the effects on teaching. A teaching context where the teacher knows, for example, that a certain amount of material *must* be covered by the end of the week, or perhaps that they have to teach something different every day from Monday to Thursday, may be very restrictive. It may not leave enough time for any number of important classroom activities: recycling previously-taught language, going over writing homework or answers to exercises carefully, encouraging students to analyse language in more depth, giving longer explanations, extending or adapting activities on an *ad hoc* basis when necessary, allowing freer activities to take place (as with TBL), spontaneous error-correction, etc. Instead of focusing on students' needs throughout a class and throughout the

There are pros and cons to every testing method, and no matter how carefully we plan our tests to suit our students' needs, there will always be some drawbacks

Testing questions

week, teachers may be constantly thinking *Am I going fast enough?* or *Have I taught something today that I can include in my test on Friday?*

Testing and teaching

This prompts the questions: *How important is the testability of a language point when we decide what to teach? Should it have equal importance as, say, the occurrence of errors connected to that point in our learners' interlanguage?* To give an example, I recently taught how to ask for, give and respond to advice in a variety of situations. I decided to spend more time on this than other things, as I knew that it was a weakness in my students' English. Other errors were dealt with as and when needed. I allowed plenty of opportunity for re-use and therefore retention of the functional language, both in spoken activities in class and written homework. By the end of the week, I was satisfied that every student (even the ones who had missed a class or two) were better able to perform those functions in the real world. Part of my 'review' on Friday consisted of a group task, in which I told the students about an imaginary problem I was having, after which they had to discuss the situation in groups and write down advice for me. While monitoring the groups, I got an overview of how well they could produce the functional language we had practised all week. When time was up, I made feedback competitive by writing points on the board for every correct sentence; this encouraged more and more confidence, as well as variety and risk-taking (as students had to rephrase their advice if it repeated someone else's). Fun and laughter ensued, which can only have aided the learning process.

The other part of my test followed a less enjoyable, much more predictable format: 20 minutes of silent reading and filling in gaps, followed by a brief round of answer-giving and no follow-up questions; the result was a row of unenthusiastic faces. The gap-filling seemed unnecessary, a waste of time even: time which could have been spent extending the previous activity in a creative way. Perhaps it was especially because I had focused on functional language for the first part that a more hands-on way of testing seemed more appropriate: the students could demonstrate for real that they were able to perform the function adequately. If I had focused more on form during the week, practising one or two particular grammar points, the second, more universally recognised, format of test may have worked better than the first.

Criticisms and credentials

Critics may argue that the first task described above was not really a test at all; it had little reliability, as many different answers were possible, the answers were not objectively measurable and the learners were working in groups, meaning evaluation of individual achievement was difficult. However, the task rated highly in content validity (it tested only what had been taught) and construct validity (it contained a task exactly like those used during the week). Conversely, the written test gave me a score for each student (however superficial), was more reliable and had high face validity (it looked like a test of the language covered). However, the construct validity suffered, not to mention the possible negative effect of scoring. (Ruth Butler states that marking using grades may have a detrimental effect on learners' performance, especially for low achievers.)

> *We can never create the perfect test, reliable and valid in every way, and trying to do so would inevitably result in lessons dull beyond imagination*

As language teachers, we can never create the perfect test, reliable and valid in every way, and trying to do so would inevitably result in lessons dull beyond imagination.

So if testing is a compromise between reliability and validity, should we not envisage the test itself as the best possible balance between the two, considering course content, time available and the need for evidence of learning? The true test of whether or not learning has taken place is the students' ability to recognise and use the language taught in life-like situations. However, this method is unreliable, takes more time and does not give us sufficient proof that objectives have been met. Other ways of testing students' comprehension and memory (including cloze-type activities) are valid ways of testing and have a place in the classroom. In the end, test type should depend on what is taught and how it is taught, with freedom for the teacher to choose the most suitable method available. This must include all valid forms and adaptations, not just those that fit the stereotype of a test.

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I have tried to delve into the complex issue of testing in ELT, raising a number of key questions for teachers and managers to explore and discuss further. I have also made the case for needs-based 'reviewing' (prioritising flexibility and creativity, focusing on the best type(s) for the material covered) over regimented 'testing' (using purely traditional, standardised formats, focusing only on gradability). If wide diversity of opinion exists with regards to testing, as Jeremy Harmer demonstrated it does, shouldn't our approaches to testing reflect this diversity, rather than a reductionist view of the many issues involved? As with most things in life, shouldn't quality outweigh quantity, both in terms of what we teach and how we test it? ETp

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Finding Nemo on the iPad

Michael Tasseron goes fishing for fun with his very young learners.



As learners increasingly make use of smartphones and tablets outside of the classroom, it should be expected that teachers also adopt such technologies for use in their lessons. One way the iPad can be used is through storytelling, and a wide range of colourful animated and interactive e-books are now available for this device which will bring stories to life in the classroom. An e-book application which I use regularly in my lessons is Disney's *Finding Nemo*. It can be used successfully with learners aged four to seven. The approach I use for this is guided by the recommendations made by James Bourke in an article in *ELT Journal*, where he argues the case for a topic-based syllabus and the use of materials which should relate to the world of the young learner, where *'there are no tenses, nouns or adjectives'*. In this article, I will suggest ways in which teachers can use this e-book with very young learners to provide them with content which is enjoyable, engaging and educational, and I will also discuss the associated pedagogical advantages. Strategies relevant to using such applications in the EFL and ESL context are also provided.

The value of stories

Stories have immense educational value, and James Bourke recommends that they should be regarded as an essential element in a young learner syllabus. I am also of the opinion that they should be a regular feature of lessons wherever possible, even where the syllabus does not make provision for them. Children love stories and, when they are used effectively, they are bound to engage young learners of all ages.

Authenticity and application

An aspect of stories which I believe is particularly valuable is that they provide learners with authentic input. Authenticity in this instance refers to what David Nunan describes as language which learners will be exposed to outside of the classroom, and which has a real-world application. This is something which is often absent from many classrooms, particularly in parts of Asia, where English lessons at public schools, private schools and language schools often entail only the memorising and drilling of particular linguistic structures.

Procedure and presentation

Fortunately, most children will be familiar with the antics of Nemo, the loveable little clownfish, whose desire for adventure lands him in trouble and who finds himself in a fish tank many miles away from home. His father, Marlin, then embarks on a long and

Finding Nemo on the iPad



perilous search for him, which takes him all the way to a dentist's office in Sydney.

I try to leave ten to 15 minutes at the end of my 50-minute young learner lessons for stories. My typical class size ranges from four to six learners, but this type of storytelling can also be used for slightly bigger groups.

The *Finding Nemo* e-book is interactive and has music and a range of sound effects which accompany the story. When you touch one of the characters on the iPad screen, the name of the character is played. The music used also corresponds to the tone of each scene, and conveys emotions such as excitement, relief or sadness. The e-book contains 29 pages, and I try to cover approximately ten pages in 15 minutes. The aim is to complete the story in three to four sessions, but this is dependent on factors such as the available time for stories. Very young learners have short attention spans and this needs to be taken into account. If they become restless, it may be time to stop; though fortunately this will usually coincide with the end of the lesson.

I would recommend that for this age group the teacher sits on a chair and the learners on the floor. Care should also be taken to ensure that everyone can clearly see the iPad, just as when a normal storybook is used. It should be read facing the learners, placed on the teacher's lap, with the teacher reading it from above. This is easy to do as the text size in the e-book is large and there are usually only a few sentences on each page.

Accompaniment and appropriacy

A useful addition to using the e-book app is a picture dictionary which includes a page about sea creatures, although this is not essential. Prior to starting the story, I open the picture dictionary to the sea creature page and ask the learners what they can see. The aim of using the picture dictionary is to familiarise the learners with the story content. The teacher can also ask questions about the colours and sizes of the different creatures. If a picture dictionary is not available, similar questions can be asked about the host of colourful characters who appear throughout the e-book. With regard to the learners' responses, the emphasis should be on comprehension. Therefore, short one-word answers to questions are sufficient. Questions such as *Is the shark big or small?* facilitate such responses.

The iPad is a wonderful tool, and in the appropriate setting learners can be encouraged to interact with it. However, caution is advised. Allowing learners to touch the screen to turn the page or find out a character's name may seem like a great idea, but it is best left to the teacher to do this. I find it more efficacious to ask the learners what they hear when I touch the screen and a character's name is played, or what they can see on the screen. The reason for this is that learners in this age group are easily distracted by different sources of stimulation. They are also not usually able to remain focused on what the teacher is saying, while at the same time using the iPad. Also, bear in mind that their young brains are trying to process information being presented to them in a foreign language. Thus, distractions caused by squabbles about who can touch a colourful character can disrupt the chain of thought and result in a loss of interest or discontent. Stories provide opportunities for children to dream and enter into a world outside of direct teaching and learning. As such, it should be a time where everyone can be comfortable and enjoy the magic.

Sound and suspense

After a quick reference to the picture dictionary, I start reading the e-book, using the appropriate intonation and pace to accompany the narrative. For instance, for dramatic scenes I increase the reading speed for effect, and I slow it down for sad scenes to depict the emotions felt by a certain character.

The music and sound effects in the e-book are a wonderful aid in generating excitement at climactic events in the story, such as when Marlin and Dory make a timely escape from the three sharks in the sunken ship. What I do in this particular scene is tap the screen to turn the page, close my eyes and look away, conveying the idea that I am too afraid to see if the two fish are going to escape, and letting the learners be the 'first' to see what happens. I then ask them if the sharks ate Marlin and Dory, using total physical response (TPR) to help the learners

understand what I am asking, if necessary. Prior to other dramatic incidents, I may turn the iPad over, look at it and keep the screen covered. I then use the appropriate emotion to convey disbelief or surprise at what I saw, and then ask the learners if they really want to see what happened. This is likely to induce gasps and anxious requests to see what took place, of course, all of which add to the enjoyment.

Direct and indirect learning

Christine Nuttall advocates the use of pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading strategies, and these can also be employed by the teacher. The teacher can ask the learners to make predictions about the story by pointing to the relevant character or scene and asking what they think is going to happen. Once again, the aim should be to elicit short answers. Examples of questions I use are: *Are the sharks going to eat Marlin and Dory?* Questions can also be asked as the story proceeds, such as *Where is Nemo now? What do sharks eat?* and *Is Nigel* (a pelican) *a fish?* Questions such as these help to keep the learners engaged and aware that they also have a part to play in telling the story.

The sub-menu of the e-book contains numbered miniature pages. At the end of the lesson it is important to note the last page read, by asking the learners *What page is this?* In the next lesson the teacher can ask the learners where they should start from. I have found that learners are usually able to tell me the correct page number. If they are not, a quick look at the sub-menu will help them to remember and they can then tell the teacher. At the start of the next lesson, the teacher can quickly recap what took place by asking questions about the names of the characters and key events. This type of interaction is beneficial because it facilitates meaningful communicative exchanges and promotes what Jack Richards refers to as 'indirect learning'. What is proposed here is that learning takes place unconsciously through such interactions. This is contrasted with 'direct learning', which entails explicit attention to the taught target language.

Repetition and revision

While reading, it is a good idea to repeat the names of the characters and what is taking place, to help the learners to follow the story. When you have finished the story, the learners are likely to request that you read it again in subsequent weeks. If you are using a number of different e-books, you can ask the learners which story they want to read. This is again another opportunity for authentic communication in the form of negotiation. Furthermore, repeating a story is advantageous as it serves to review the linguistic content the learners are exposed to.

Input and output

As with illustrated storybooks, it is both the visual and the auditory input which engages learners. For L1 learners this input is provided by a parent, a teacher or a sibling, who can explain new vocabulary or concepts with relative ease. However, the concern for an ESL or EFL teacher is how to read a story in a way that their learners can understand. The teacher also needs to consider what can be done to ensure that the joys of storytelling can be transferred to their learners without sacrificing the richness of the text by oversimplifying it. My recommendation in this regard would be to read the story as it is. The reasons for this are:

1. Learners at this age, even L1 learners, are unlikely to understand everything they hear in a story. This is not an overriding concern, as the emphasis should be on comprehension of the story as a whole, not individual linguistic units.
2. The visual elements in this e-book are very well sequenced, and this allows the learners to follow the storyline with relative ease.
3. I do not believe that very young learners consciously make distinctions between their L1 and the foreign language they are exposed to, especially in a storytelling context.
4. Attempts to simplify the language in the e-book are unlikely to serve any purpose, particularly in light of point 1.

In terms of linguistic output, as mentioned previously, teachers can and should expect their learners to be active participants while the story is being read. However, just as with any other classroom interaction, the degree of participation will differ from learner to learner. What is important is to encourage short responses, which demonstrate that the learners are following what is being read by the teacher. Learners will often make lengthier responses in their L1 to add something they believe to be important to the tale; and again, this is perfectly acceptable.

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As teachers, we all know that our learners enjoy variation, and making use of new technologies such as the iPad, combined with traditional teaching approaches, can work wonders in engaging our learners. Storytelling is one example of this, and literally any story can be transformed into an exciting part of the lesson, with animated characters that move around, accompanied by sounds and music. Young learners are bound to relish this. Apart from the aspect of enjoyment, such stories are also a valuable learning tool, as they expose learners to authentic language use and allow for both direct and indirect learning opportunities and negotiation, as well as revision. ETp

Finding Nemo iPad App Disney Pixar 2012

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Over the wall …

Alan Maley

revisits the relevance of Shakespeare.



The most famous British writer of all time, yet the one we know least about. That's Shakespeare. Yet the Shakespeare industry continues to pour forth publications at a rate no reader could possibly keep up with, his plays are still performed worldwide to packed houses and, of course, he is still a staple of literature courses.

Shakespeare

Bill Bryson's book is a witty yet perceptive take on the bard. The chapters are short, the style accessible and the observations not only acute, but often barbed.

His first chapter shows how very little we know for certain about Shakespeare: *'… he is a kind of literary equivalent of an electron – forever there and not there.'* Only about 100 documents have been found connected with Shakespeare and most of them are legal documents. No manuscript has ever been found in his own handwriting. There are only three depictions of him, none of them authenticated. We are not even sure how his name was spelt. So most of what is written about him is sheer speculation. *'We can know only what came out of his work, never what went into it.'* Yet Shakespeare *'is not so much a historical figure as an academic obsession'*.

In the rest of the book, Bryson introduces us to what *is* known about Shakespeare and the context in which he lived and worked. His linguistic contribution to English is staggering. Of the 12,000 new words which came into English between 1500 and 1650, 2,035 came from him – and 800 are still in use. One tenth of the most quoted quotations in English are from him. Bryson explores the labyrinthine, messy and complicated way the plays have come down to us, with multiple versions, typographical errors and uncertainty as to authenticity of provenance. He discusses the sonnets and their unsolved puzzles, and agrees with Auden's judgement: *'… it seems to me rather silly to spend much time on conjectures which cannot be proved true or false.'*

His final chapter, on rival candidates for the authorship of Shakespeare's plays (Bacon, the Earl of Oxford, Marlowe, etc) is hilariously funny – and damningly dismissive. (Believe it or not, one of the major supporters of the Earl of Oxford's claim to be the author of Shakespeare's works was a man *'with the inescapably noteworthy name of J Thomas Looney'*!) Bryson concludes: *'… it is an amazement that one man could have produced such a sumptuous, wise, varied, thrilling, ever-delighting body of work, but that is … the hallmark of genius. Only one man had the circumstances and gifts to give us such incomparable works, and William Shakespeare of Stratford was unquestionably that man – whoever he was.'*



Shakespeare Our Contemporary

Jan Kott was very much the product of his time – growing up under Nazism, then living under Communism in Poland (which he initially supported) – and this is starkly reflected in *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*. In Kott's bleak vision of Shakespeare's world, we are all caught up in 'the great mechanism', helpless to avoid its indifferent churning, where no one is a winner. And this is the mirror Shakespeare holds up to our own world, where greed, violence, war, corruption, hypocrisy and indifference rule. 'Hamlet *is a sponge … it immediately absorbs all the problems of our time.'*

The book is in two parts: *The Tragedies* and *The Comedies*. The analyses of the history plays, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear* and *Coriolanus* are unremittingly raw and black, and Kott draws interesting comparisons between them and the work of Brecht, Beckett, Genet and other contemporary writers of the absurd. *'Tragedy is the theatre of priests, grotesque is the theatre of clowns.'* There is no way out: *'… when all has been lost, only memory remains, but it, too, must be stifled. One must kill oneself or kill in oneself the last vestiges of shame.'* Of Macbeth, he writes: *'He knows there is no escape from nightmare, which is the human fate and condition … There is no other.'* Even the comedies are seen though a jaundiced eye: *'Love tales, stories of lovers and married couples are just as ruthless and cruel as the histories of kings, princes and usurpers. In both, dead bodies are carried away from the empty stage.'* So *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It* are seen as visions of a 'bitter Arcadia'.

This book, published in Britain in 1965, had an immediate and enormous influence on Shakespearean theatre, including iconic productions, such as Peter Brook's *King Lear*. And the influence continues. Like Shakespeare, Kott remains our contemporary, and reminds us, uncomfortably, of who we are.

Teaching Shakespeare

With the last two books, I am departing slightly from my original intention: only to discuss non-teaching books. Both titles discuss how to teach Shakespeare – but they do far more than that, offering a rich and accessible way into a deeper understanding of Shakespeare's work.

Rex Gibson's *Teaching Shakespeare* is a fabulous resource, as might be expected from the director of the *Shakespeare and Schools Project (1986–94)*, and editor of the *Cambridge School Shakespeare* series. His approach is based on 'Active methods' – *'Shakespeare is not a museum exhibit … but a living force inviting active, imaginative creation.' 'Active methods dissolve the traditional oppositions of analysis and imagination, intellect and emotion. They encourage informed personal responses which are both critical and appreciative.'* Chapter 1, *Why Teach Shakespeare?* sets out his rationale: the enduring relevance of the themes, the power for personal development, the importance for language development: *'The language … is energetic, vivid and sensuous. Its difficulties are enabling difficulties.'* In Chapter 2, he establishes the principles underlying the approach. Paramount among these is the need to treat Shakespeare as a script: *'A script declares that it is to be played with, explored … brought to life by acting out. A text makes no such demand.'* Chapter 3 clears away some of the theoretical thickets: Tradition v Post-modern, Feminism, Psycho-analytical, Deconstruction, etc. He is remarkably tolerant of theory but, on page 44, sets out a list of practical questions to help teachers navigate through it.

The remainder of the book examines various aspects of the bard's work. Chapter 4 looks at Shakespeare's language and reminds us of the



importance and vibrancy of Elizabethan English: *'The human voice was held in high esteem ... The vigour of language, its sound and evocative power, mattered as much as its logic.'* And language substituted for elaborate scenery and lighting effects. The chapter deals with imagery, personification, repetition, rhyme, prosody, puns and all the tropes Shakespeare so extravagantly deployed. Along the way, there are concrete suggestions for activities related to each category. And on pages 90–91, he draws attention to the way Shakespeare's language evolved over his lifetime. The succeeding chapters deal with story, character, themes and their relevance for our time, and dramatic effect, including using stage directions, critical incidents and opening scenes. Each chapter is bubbling with ideas for activities.

Chapter 9, the longest in the book, is wholly devoted to 'Active methods', including the teacher's role and attitudes and the organisation of the classroom. Most space is given over to suggested activities for speaking, improvisation, warm-ups, tableaux, choral speaking, insults, video work and writing. These could equally well be used with any theatrical script, not just Shakespeare. Chapter 10 suggests ways into Shakespeare for younger learners through storytelling, puppets and set design. The final chapter, on assessment, offers a sensible and humane set of varied ways of assessing the work, ranging from self-assessment and assessment through performance, through to tasks and examinations. His principles for assessment are particularly important in our measurement-obsessed age. Sadly, there is no bibliography.

The North Face of Shakespeare

James Stredder's book can be treated as a companion volume to Gibson's. His main concern is to de-mystify Shakespeare, regarded by many as being more unscaleable than the North Face of the Eiger. He draws on the work of key figures in theatre education – from Viola Spolin, through Cicely Berry, Augusto Boal and Keith Johnstone, to Patsy Rodenburg – and offers a rich variety of classroom activities focusing on Shakespeare's language, narrative and character. Part II concentrates on activities for practical drama workshops, including group formation activities, theatre games and drama exercises. The two books together form an invaluable resource for any teacher wanting to work with Shakespeare.

★ ★ ★

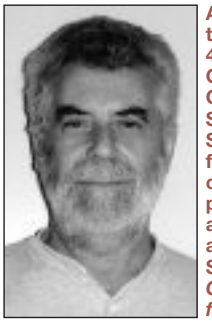
Even if Shakespeare does not figure in our teaching programme, he is ever present, both in the language and in the relevance of his themes for our troubled times. We cannot ignore him. Neither should we wish to! ETp

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Dramatic dialogues

Paul Harvey thinks well-targeted drama activities are guaranteed to hit the mark.

I have spent a lot of my career in places where the conditions may cause teachers to believe that drama, or anything associated with it, is really not possible in their situation. Part of my job over the past few years has been to persuade teachers who work in crowded classrooms, often with time constraints as well as spatial ones, that engaging learners through various drama techniques *is* possible; not only possible, but also profitable and enjoyable. I am not going to try to say that it always works. There are very few activities done in the average ELT classroom that always work. We all know that what works with one group doesn't work with another; what works at ten in the morning on a Monday, doesn't work at four in the afternoon on a Friday; what works on a sunny June afternoon doesn't necessarily work on a cold November morning. However, there are some activities which have a very good chance of hitting the mark if they are set up in the right way, and if they are written with the right target group in mind.

What don't you need?

Here are some things that you don't need in order to bring language to life in the classroom through drama:

1 You don't need to be particularly extrovert.

2 You don't need a great deal of space.

3 You don't need to spend time reorganising tables and chairs.

4 You don't really need to make a lot of noise (although if you do, it will, we hope, be good noise).

What kind of dialogue?

I must admit to not being a fan of most of the dialogues that I see in coursebooks. The necessity to include target structures often makes them sound very unnatural. More often than not, they don't reflect what we might hear in the real world. I have very rarely read a dialogue in a coursebook and thought: *Yes, I've had a conversation similar to that one*. In fact, I have more often than not thought: *Imagine if we all really talked like that!* However, dialogues *can* be written to practise a particular structure, to focus on certain lexis or to concentrate learners on certain aspects of pronunciation. They *can* lead to writing activities and they *can* be used for reading practice (see *What can you do with a dialogue?* below).

A dialogue should, I believe, try to adhere to ten key rules:

1 It shouldn't be too long, especially at pre-intermediate levels.

If the dialogue goes on for too long, students can become daunted by the 'wall of language'. It also makes the performing of dialogues for the class more difficult (although there is always the possibility of getting different groups to perform different sections if the dialogue is longer than average).

2 Each line/turn should be short, with few exceptions.

Having short turns mean there is less language for the students to stumble over, and so the whole experience is less stressful. It also means more efficient pronunciation practice and the language is more 'chunky' and more easily absorbed.

3 The language used should be as near to real everyday English as possible.

This, for me, is often the most important aspect of a dialogue – even if the dialogue is 'structure-loaded'. It is, I think, always possible to make speech approximate to natural speech while still making sure the target structure is repeated as often as possible.

4 It should have a definite ending/ conclusion.

A mini-play is always more satisfying than a set of exchanges.

5 There should be some attempt at humour.

This may not always be possible, but creating a sense of fun definitely helps to lighten up the lesson.

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Dramatic dialogues

6 There should be some kind of action.
This is essential (unless the dialogue itself, probably at higher levels, is particularly entertaining). Action doesn't have to be the storming of the Bastille. There just needs to be something for the characters to *do*. In the two examples on page 31, not a lot happens, but there is always something for the characters to concentrate on as they are speaking. The action adds another dimension; and not only does it make the dialogue come to life more, it also makes it more interesting for the audience and for those performing it. In the examples, the action is simple enough not to cause too many difficulties for the performers.

7 The lines to be spoken by the various characters in the dialogue should be differentiated by the use of colour, bold, italics, etc.
It is amazing how easily some people lose their place in a script!

8 Repetition of useful language should be a common element.
Repeating phrases in a 'natural' situation reinforces them and is a form of drilling within a context.

9 It should have a title and some kind of pictorial representation of the content.
Being able see who the characters are, where they are and/or what they are doing can make a big difference to the way that some students approach the dialogue.

10 Most of it should be readily understandable by the majority of the students.
The activity is always more enjoyable if the students are not required to learn a lot of new lexis before beginning.

How do you prepare students for a dialogue?

Here are four suggestions for preparation activities:

1 Give them time to read the dialogue first.
I put myself in the place of a student. If I were given a dialogue in Arabic, a language I am trying to learn, I would much prefer to have time to digest the content and get, at least, a general idea before I heard it read.

2 Read it out loud with the whole class.
Either do this with you playing one of the parts or, if you have students that you can trust to do it well, let them do it without your participation. I think it's important that the first time students hear a dialogue, it should sound good.

3 Do some pronunciation practice.
Choose some lines from the dialogue, probably between five and eight, depending on the level of the class and their exposure to drama techniques, and practise these as a class for pronunciation: intonation, stress – the lot. Try to make this as lively and enjoyable as possible.

4 Ask questions about it.
Ask comprehension questions to check general understanding of the text, the 'plot', relationships, how the characters might be feeling, etc. Also ask questions to get ideas for how to approach any action in the piece.

What can you do with a dialogue?

Here are eight ideas for various activities you can do with a dialogue:

1 Ask the students to perform it in the style of a particular film genre.
My top ten genres are comedy, documentary, horror, romance, silent movie (see 2 below), cartoon, action, western, soap opera and 'in the style of …' – eg James Bond, Mr Bean, Russell Crowe, and any other characters or actors you think your students will be familiar with.

2 Ask them to mime the dialogue first.
This really concentrates them on the action and the dialogue simultaneously.

3 Ask them to do it as quickly as they can.
Insist that, despite the speed, it must still be comprehensible when they perform it. This will encourage them to concentrate on diction.

4 Ask them to choose the line they think they say the best and perform it for the class.
This is best done in a class that has gelled well and is comfortable with such activities.

5 Ask them to translate certain parts into their own language.
While this may not help on the stress and intonation front, it does allow the students to get to grips with the meaning of a line, and highlights the dangers of literal translations. This could be done in parts of the dialogue where there is an underlying meaning or nuance, or the language is culturally specific. In the latter case, a local alternative can be found. For example *Take a hike!* will not translate into another language as 'Go on a mountain walk'!

6 Take in the dialogues and hand out a version with every second line taken out.
This now becomes a reading and writing activity. This could, of course, be done as an initial activity.

7 Ask the students to finish the dialogue.
Either leave the 'story' unfinished or ask the students to add to your original.

8 Ask them to improvise the dialogue.
Give them a 'last chance' to read the dialogue, then take it away and ask them to practise improvising it without writing anything down.

★ ★ ★

Why not try some of these activities with the two example dialogues on page 31 and see how they work for you? ETp



Paul Harvey has been a teacher since 1984 in the UK and many countries in the Middle East and a teacher trainer since 1996. He has a special interest in the uses of drama in ELT and the DOGME approach.

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It **really** worked for me!

Did you get inspired by something you read in ETp? Did you do something similiar with your students? Did it really work in practice? Do share it with us ...

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1 I am Sam Blackson!

X and Y are in an office, where Z works, waiting for a tax refund.



Z: Next! Sam Blackson!
X: Hello. Yes. I'm Sam Blackson.
Y: Really? So am I
X: We're both Sam Blackson?
Y: Yes, I think so.
X: Which Sam Blackson is next?
Z: Sam Blackson from ... Hammersmith.
Y: That's me, then.
X: And me, actually.
Y: What? Where do you live?
X: Hammersmith.
Y: Wow! What a coincidence!
X: What address do you have there?
Z: 35, Rose Hill, Hammersmith.
X: Right. That's my address.
Y: And mine.
X: What?
Y: Yes. 35, Rose Hill, Hammersmith.
X: Impossible.
Z: Excuse me! There are other people waiting ...
Y: Yes, I know ... but he/she says he's/she's me.
X: No, I don't.
Y: You said you were me.
X: No. I'm not you. I'm me.
Y: You want to be me.
X: No. I'm me. You're you.
Y: I'm me! You're you!
Z: Excuse me! The Sam Blackson we want has ...
Y: Yes?
X: Yes?
Z: Let me check the distinguishing features ...
X/Y: Aha?
Z: Sam has one arm longer than the other ...
X: (X tries to make one of his arms appear longer than the other one) You see! It's me! See! Look! This arm's longer!
Y: What? No, it ...
Z: ... and he or she has a limp.
Y: Look! (Y begins to limp around the place) *Yeah. Look! Terrible, isn't it? The war, you know.*
X: You haven't got a limp! War? What war? This is ridiculous!
Z: Oh ... and he or she has a tic in the right eye.
X: (X begins to make his/her eye twitch) See! That's me, too. Terrible it is! Terrible!
Y: (Still limping) *Liar!*
X: Fake!
Y: I am Sam Blackson!
X: I am Sam Blackson!
Z: Oh dear ... it also says here that he or she is deaf.
Y: What?
X: Pardon?
Y: What did you say?
X: I just can't hear you.
Z: Yes. Deaf. Completely deaf.
Y: What did he/she say?
X: What? I didn't hear him/her.
Y: Sorry?
X: Pardon?
Y: (Using sign language, pointing to himself/herself) *Deaf.*
X: (Using sign language, pointing to himself/herself) Me, too.
Z: Next!

2 You can't sit here!

B is sitting on a bench in a park. A comes over.



A: Excuse me.
B: Yes?
A: I'm afraid you can't sit here.
B: Why not?
A: You just can't.
B: I 'just can't'?
A: Yep.
B: What do you mean, 'You just can't'?
A: I mean it's illegal.
B: No, it's not.
A: It is.
B: Rubbish.
A: It's not rubbish. It's true.
B: It's nonsense.
A: It's absolutely true!
B: If it's true, you get the police.
A: I am the police.
B: No, you're not.
A: Yes, I am.
B: You're not the police.
A: I am the police.
B: You're a nutter.
A: I'm a what?
B: You're a nutter.
A: Now you're being rude.
B: You tell me I can't sit here again and I'll get ruder.
A: Will you?
B: Yes, I will.
A: OK. You can't sit here.
B: Right! Go away!
A: You can't sit here.
B: Go and jump in a lake!
A: You can't sit here.
B: Pea-brain!
A: You can't sit here.
B: Give it a rest!
A: OK. I'm going.
B: What?
A: I'm going.
B: Good
A: I'm not staying here to be insulted! (A goes)
B: Idiot!



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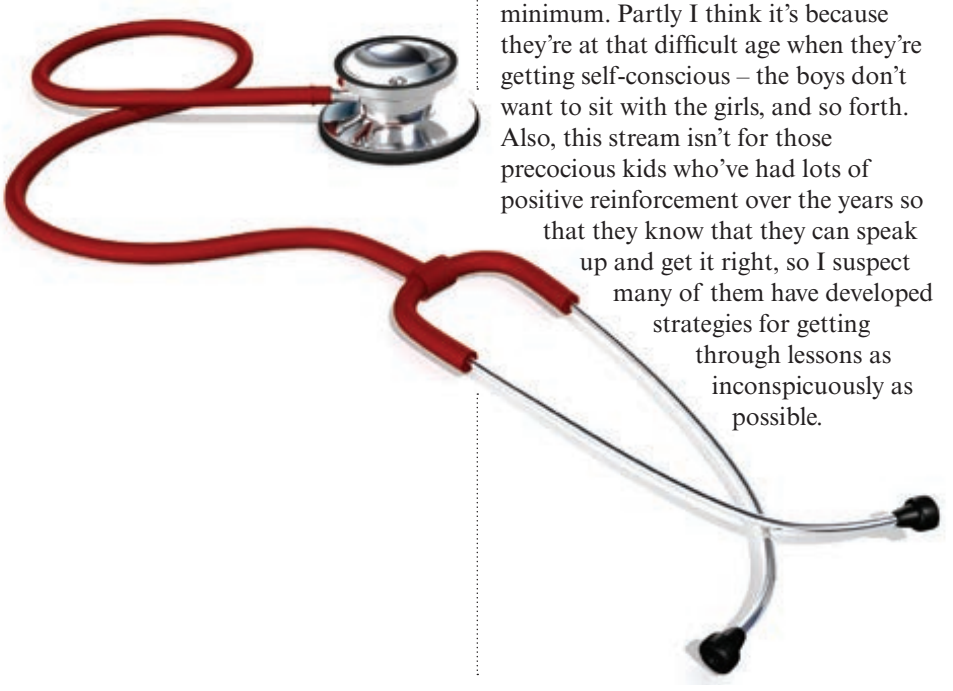
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Doctor, doctor …

Maxwell Clark rounds up some rules for roleplays.



I've just taught one of those happy, thought-provoking lessons that happen from time to time when we're lucky.

Needing to plan a lesson in a hurry for my intermediate-level teenage English learners (13–14 years), I looked at the materials my colleagues had prepared for classes at the same level and which they had left on the shared drive. (Thank you, whoever that was!) I was delighted to find a fully-developed lesson plan which included a speaking activity that proved really effective: a doctor–patient roleplay by Chris Gunn on *bogglesworldesl.com*.

Now, it's usually a struggle to get these kids to speak more than a bare minimum. Partly I think it's because they're at that difficult age when they're getting self-conscious – the boys don't want to sit with the girls, and so forth. Also, this stream isn't for those precocious kids who've had lots of positive reinforcement over the years so that they know that they can speak up and get it right, so I suspect many of them have developed strategies for getting through lessons as inconspicuously as possible.

I won't say the classroom exactly rocked with lively chatter during the roleplay, but it did achieve a respectable thrum of productive activity. Moreover, the speaking went on long enough (around 20 minutes, once we got started) for me to get round and monitor thoroughly, making notes about each student's performance. In short, I counted it as a spectacular success.

I'd like to extract the characteristics of this activity that made it successful, so as to bear them in mind when designing future speaking tasks.

1 A relevant communicative purpose

'Kids are up for anything,' I've heard. This may be true of younger children, but teenagers are developing the critical faculty to regard poorly-conceived activities as pointless and can quickly withdraw their cooperation. The relevance of a doctor–patient roleplay is obvious to the kids, who have probably experienced such situations already. Furthermore, the situation itself underlines the importance of accurate communication. (We don't want to get the wrong treatment, do we?)

Well, it's easy enough to do a relevant roleplay when the topic in the syllabus is health, but what about when it's something further removed from our own lives? Recently, our syllabus has given us the topic of magicians, escapologists, etc. How can you extract a speaking task from that? At first, I was tempted to fall

back on the tired old 'Make a presentation about ...' rubric, but then I started to wonder what the kids could do in real life in this topic area. This led me to the answer: they could learn card tricks (and the associated patter) from a *YouTube* video and perform them to each other. The kids loved that one, and some of them even said they performed their card trick later for their parents!

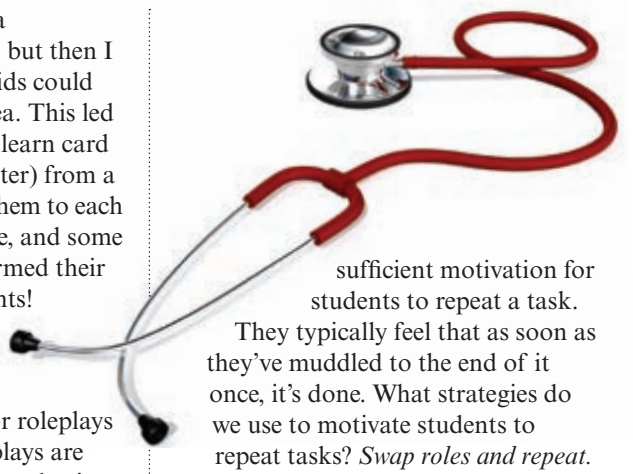
2 A script

You can find handy scripts for roleplays at *bogglesworldesl.com*. Roleplays are scary things for many people, so having a script to hand is a necessary crutch for lower levels. I don't think it's cheating or spoonfeeding. The cognitive activity of adapting the script to the particular case and the repeated reading and production of an accurate model strike me as extremely intense learning experiences. I've seen cognitive theorists refer to our repertoire of mental 'scripts' that enable us to deal fluently with the various situations we find ourselves in. Coursebooks often include such scripts, but perhaps I should provide more opportunities for the students to operationalise them in order to internalise them. I suspect we often push our students to perform without a script before they're ready to, for fear they may continue depending on the script when they no longer need it. To avoid this, I told my class at the outset that they could use the doctor–patient script, but that when they had enough confidence, they could use their own words. Then after a few rounds, I stopped everyone and suggested they try continuing without looking at the script if they could (but saying it was OK to peek if they got stuck).

What if your materials don't include a script and you don't have time to write one? Why not build one together with your learners on the whiteboard as you model the activity?

3 Repetition

I suspect few teachers I know would endorse the degree of soul-numbing repetition I endured in my French lessons at school (*Je suis*, *tu es*, *il est*, *elle est* ... ad nauseam!). But repeating a task is almost always a good idea, provided there is enough scope for improvement and variation between each repetition. Unfortunately, it can be hard to provide



sufficient motivation for students to repeat a task. They typically feel that as soon as they've muddled to the end of it once, it's done. What strategies do we use to motivate students to repeat tasks? *Swap roles and repeat.* (OK, fair enough, they think.) *Swap partners and repeat.* (But why, teacher?)

The nice thing about *BogglesworldESL*'s roleplay is that it provides a record sheet for both the doctor and patient. The repetition is thus embedded in the task, which consists of making eight doctor visits, so it's clear how much work is to be done and how far through it you've progressed. School kids are strongly conditioned to 'complete the exercise', and this can be harnessed to encourage repetition of a speaking exercise. Another nice touch is the idea of getting a second opinion on the same ailment before getting a new ailment card. The doctors have a choice of advice to give the patients (giving the doctors more control and the patients more variety) so, as they go to get their second opinion, they might get the same or different advice. This satisfyingly simulates the stakes of the real-life communicative situation.

4 An aspirational role

'Who wants to play a doctor?' – a couple of students raised their hands, and I made sure they got the role they wanted. It's fun to play at being a doctor or a pilot or a police officer, even if we don't particularly aspire to be one. 'Trying on' a role (especially that of an authority figure) is fun, memorable and motivating. The patient role might seem less aspirational, but it is not without its attractions, too: for a teenager, seeing a doctor without Mum or Dad mediating is a significant milestone on the way to independence.

Incidentally, in my lesson the doctor–patient roles were fixed for the duration. It would have been nice to give each student a taste of both roles, but I decided to trade off thoroughness for increased coherence of the simulation for classroom management reasons. I think the students accepted this: we don't suddenly swap roles in real life or drama, do we? I'm sure the actress who plays Lady Macbeth learns a lot about Macbeth and his lines, too, even though she doesn't swap roles with him. Mind you, swapping roles gives me a pretext to re-run the activity at the end of term if we want to.

5 Mixing

I love mixer activities, where students move around the classroom talking to each other. Perhaps it's because I'm such a restless person – whenever I sit in on a class, after about 30 minutes sitting still starts to feel oppressive. When I'm teaching, I'm on my feet most of the time anyway, so I forget that some of my students may need a pretext to get up and use those fidgety bodies our simian ancestors bequeathed us.

Here's another thing: as my 'patients' moved around from 'doctor' to 'doctor' (deciding where to go and when – giving them a tiny bit of self-determination), I realised that they were asking and writing down each other's *names*. They had been studying together weekly for three months and they hadn't yet got each other's names! But of course, *they* don't call the register every week, do they? *They* don't feel empowered to strike up a conversation with each and every one of the class members, do they? This was a reminder to me that activities which entail gathering information from classmates (including their names) may play an important role in building *esprit de corps*, which has numerous benefits for a class.

★ ★ ★

Thank you Chris Gunn and *BogglesworldESL* – I learnt a lot from that roleplay! ETp



Maxwell Clark (DELTA, MBA) has been teaching English since 1996 in several countries. He presented about 'Stone Soup' at IATEFL 2012, and currently teaches at Yew Chung International School, Hong Kong.

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Vocabulary for all

Helen Stepanova proposes practice to process new lexis effectively.

The English language is becoming more and more popular all over the world and in all spheres of life; in particular, anyone who wants to succeed in the business world has to be able to speak English. Knowledge of vocabulary has a serious influence on general language competence. The more words students know, the more secure they feel and the more willing they are to communicate. But how can they best process new words? And how can teachers make it easier for their students to learn new words and retain them in their long-term memories?

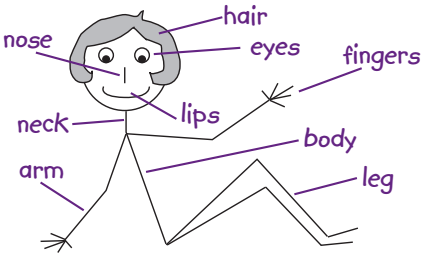
Different learning styles

According to the proponents of VAK there are three innate learning styles, which are used to process new information: *visual*, *auditory* and *kinaesthetic*. They propose that teachers should help their students to identify their preferred learning styles and to exploit them when memorising new words by using techniques which match their learning profile. (See Marjorie Rosenberg's article in ET*p* Issue 86 for a fuller exploration of learning styles.)

I have collected a number of techniques which I have used on numerous occasions over the last 14 years, and which have proved extremely useful in the teaching of new vocabulary. Here is a selection of them that you might like to try with your students.

1 Labelling images

Putting new words in a picture or diagram gives the students a useful visual reference. Those students who learn words best by seeing them written down will benefit from this technique. Actually drawing the picture or diagram is a way of stimulating creative thought, which helps make memorisation easier. Students can also be encouraged to draw pictures and words in the air with their hands if they find this is a good way to help them remember them. In the example here, the student has drawn a body and labelled the



different parts, but you could also get them to draw a house or flat and write the names of the rooms, the furniture, etc.

2 Using sticky notes

Writing new words on sticky notes, together with a translation, synonyms and example sentences, is another technique which will appeal to students who like to write things down and learn by seeing words in their written form. The sticky notes can be put in those places where the students spend most of their time or where they are sure to see them several times a day. Each time they look at the note, they revise the words. When they have finished with one note, they can stick up a new one.

3 Creating associations

Some students learn by making associations between a new word and one they already know. These associations are very personal, so the students must be left free to create their own: the ones that will work for them. The teacher could give some hints, however. The point is that the word will be memorised and years later the students will be able to remember it.

For example, many years ago I tried to memorise the word *syringe* by associating it with Syria. There is no logic to the association, but the word is still in my memory!

Another example is the word *cumbersome* – the first association I made was with *cucumber*. I imagined a long bulky cucumber which it would be impossible to hide.

This technique is appropriate for several different learning styles: visual learners will draw a picture in their minds (*cumbersome* – *cucumber*), auditory learners will memorise using sound association (*syringe* – *Syria*), and kinaesthetic learners will memorise words through the emotions generated by their associations.

4 Reading books

Another technique is to read books and to write down new words as you encounter them, learning them in the context of the story. Some students will be able to remember not only the word, but even the page and the position on the page where a word was printed.

5 Listening to audio input

Students who like to learn by listening should be encouraged to enlarge their vocabulary by spending as much time as possible listening to recordings, the radio, podcasts, etc.

6 Working with a dictionary

One of the best techniques for expanding vocabulary is to write down words from the dictionary in groups, for example a group of compound words made from two other words, such as *headache*, *lighthouse*, *snowman*, etc.

7 Finding international words

Students can be told to look for international words, those which also occur in their native language(s). There are plenty of examples nowadays. Sometimes we even do not realise that a word from our mother tongue is used in English or vice versa. For example, *boss*, *catastrophe*, *hooligan* and *tornado* are all English words which come from other languages.

Students who like to learn by listening will find the similar sounds an aid to memorisation.

8 Looking for familiar words

There are a lot of words – often the names or parts of the names of internationally famous companies or corporations – which will be familiar to the students. The teacher can demonstrate that these have some meaning and so can easily be added to the students' English lexicon. Examples include *smash*, *bush*, *dell* and *sharp*. ETp



Helen Stepanova is an English language teacher, teacher trainer and author. She works at the International University EIHSEBA in Riga, Latvia, and runs her own English language courses at 'Bright World' (*www.brightworld.lv*). She is interested in the promotion of independent language learning.

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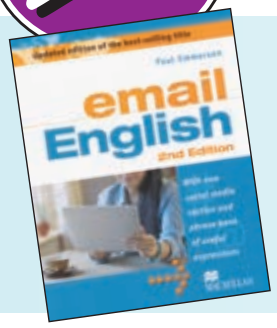


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IT WORKS IN PRACTICE



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

All the contributors to It Works in Practice in this issue of ET*p* will receive a copy of *Email English* by Paul Emmerson, published by Macmillan. Macmillan have kindly agreed to be sponsors of It Works in Practice for this year.

A medley of metacognition

Here are some ideas for helping your learners become more self-aware, task-aware and strategy-aware. Why? So that they are better able to make use of what you do with them in the classroom and continue learning outside the classroom, where most of their time will be spent.

1 Subvert the sequencing

Subvert your coursebook (they tend to follow a predictable pattern, so breaking this pattern can spice things up) or your usual approach to sequencing activities:

- Skip an activity or a stage that you would usually use to help your learners. (*But be nice about it – explain that today you are going to do things a bit differently, before launching into a different game plan: get them on board and ready to spot the differences!*)
- Build in time for discussion following your atypical choice of activities or sequencing. Get your learners to consider in what ways the lesson was different – and what impact this had on how easy or difficult they found the reading text/listening text/speaking task/writing activity, etc.

This will help the learners to become more aware of the value that different activities have for them, in approaching texts or tasks.

2 Pinpoint the purpose

Encourage your learners to think about the purpose behind the activity you are using:

- Before they start doing an activity that you have prepared, and when they know what is expected of them, ask them how they think doing it might help them. (*'It will improve our English'* is not an acceptable answer! Get them to be more specific.)
- At the end of an activity, ask the learners to reflect on the experience of doing the activity and whether it met the expectations they had prior to starting it.
- Put them in groups to share their response to the activity (Was it hard? Easy? Challenging? Fun? Boring? Useful? Useless?). Every opinion is valid, provided it is backed up with a good reason or reasons.
- Ask each group to come up with an idea for adapting the activity to make it more useful for them.
- Next time you do a similar activity, let them use their adaptation idea and see if it *does* make the activity more useful for them.

3 Encourage evaluation

At the end of a coursebook unit, or a series of self-created lessons, build in a reflection and evaluation phase:

- Ask the learners to turn back to the beginning of the unit and look through all the activities they've done.
- Give them a set of the following questions to discuss in relation to that unit. For example:

  What was the aim of each activity?

  How useful did you find each activity? Why?

  What do you think you could do to be more successful next time you do a similar activity?

  Could you use any of these activities outside the classroom to help you learn? How?

- Give the learners a chance to discuss their answers together and learn from each other.

The first few times you use this activity, you may want to monitor and feed in ideas by asking guiding questions based on what you know the purpose of certain activities was, and do a short plenary at the end to bring it all together. However, once the students are accustomed to doing it, this will become unnecessary and you will be able to let them take full responsibility for the activity.

Lizzie Pinard
Leeds, UK

TV games

As we all know, games can be both educational and fun for students. Adaptations of famous TV games often work particularly well as the students already know the format and enjoy watching them in their free time. Here are some games you may like, and which can be done in teams, competing for points.

1 The weakest link

Put the students into small teams and give them sheets of paper. Ask a question and, after one second, ask the teams to hold up their answers. Give 100 points for each correct answer and put the points up on the board so everyone can see them. After three questions, ask the teams to vote for one other team to be 'the weakest link'. They must explain their reasons. At first, this may simply be because they did not get the last question right or have the least number of points, but later on, teams usually start ganging up on rivals and become very competitive. The team that is voted the weakest link loses 200 points and the questions resume. After a further three questions, have another vote.

2 Deal or no deal

Put the students into two teams and ask a question to the first team. They have ten seconds to answer it correctly for ten points. If they can't, then it goes to the second team for ten seconds and you add a little more information to help them. If they get it right, they get five points. If they don't, it goes back to the first team for one point.

3 The price is right

This works well for revising numbers, weights or prices. Put the students into teams and ask them a question, such as *How much does a ticket for X cost?* or *How old is Y?* The group which guesses nearest the correct answer wins 100 points, but then can try 'double or nothing' to guess the exact amount. If they get it exact, their points are doubled to 200; if they don't, they lose their 100 points.

4 Mr and Mrs

In this adaptation, the students ask and answer questions about each other.

Select two students to be presenters and put the others into two teams. Get the teams to ask each other questions about themselves to find out as much information as possible, while the two presenters write a series of questions asking for personal information. Tell the presenters to select one person from each team and to ask them their questions in private, noting down the answers. Meanwhile, the teams brainstorm what they remember about the person from their team who has been selected, pool what else they know about them and also what they know about the person from the other team. Finally, the presenters tell the teams the first question they asked and give three possible answers for each person, only one of which is correct. The team that selects the correct answer wins a point.

Phil Wade
La Réunion, France

What are you plinning at?

This a good activity for both reviewing verbs and practising questions in English. It can be done in pairs, but you need to model the exercise first with the class.

1 Tell your students that you are thinking of an action verb and that they have to guess what it is.

1 Write on the board some suitable questions for them to ask, but don't use the verb which you have in mind. Instead, use a nonsense word, such as 'plin'. For example:

*Do you **plin** every day?*
*Do you need your hands to **plin**?*
*Are you **plinning** now?*

For elementary students, write as many questions as possible. With higher levels, just write a couple of examples so that they have to think up further questions for themselves. The questions can be in the present, past, present perfect, etc (depending on the level of your students or the verb tense you want to focus on).

1 Get the students to ask questions and try to guess the verb you are thinking about When you answer the questions, be sure you use 'plin' in your answers.

For example:
Students: *Do you **plin** during the day?*
Teacher: *No, I only **plin** at night.* (if your verb is *sleep*)

Ronaldo Lima
Recife, Brazil

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

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

The proof of the *pudding* is in the *eating*

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 is *looking* at words *ending* in *-ing*.

The title and introduction say it all, really: four examples of the same form, all ending in the same three letters: *ing* – but are they all the same kind of word? Both my learners and my trainee teachers often struggle to identify words like these, and some tend to view almost anything with this ending as a present (or past) continuous tense. So, what are the different classes and meanings of *-ing*?

Taking the title as our starting point – oops, I've done it again. Twice. Time to slow down, I think. Let's look at the first example: a ***pudding***. It's perhaps the easiest to identify: it's a noun. It's concrete (my puddings often turn out that way!) and countable. There are lots more very useful examples: *a painting*, *a drawing*, *a building*, *a ceiling*, etc, and these are usually met from CEF level A2 onwards.

The second example, the ***eating***, is also a noun, though this time abstract and uncountable. One dictionary defines this word as the *act* of eating, and there are many other similar nouns that refer to a particular instance of the act. Literature gives us good examples: *Nothing in his life became him like the **leaving** it* (from Shakespeare's *Macbeth*), Lewis Carroll's poem *The **Hunting** of the Snark*, or the refrain to the English carol *The Holly and the Ivy*: *O, the **rising** of the sun, And the **running** of the deer, The **playing** of the merry organ ...*

But what about *eating* without the definite article, as in: ***Eating** junk food is bad for you*. Or ***Hunting** should be banned* and ***Running** is good exercise*. Here, the word doesn't take an article and doesn't refer to an instance of the act of eating, hunting or running. Instead, it covers multiple acts (infinite acts, even) and so we see the word as referring to the activity generally, rather than to a particular example of it. Words such as these are often classed as *gerunds*, rather than as nouns but, like nouns, they often function as the subject or object of verbs, as well as the object of prepositions.

So far, *we've been **looking*** at words that are nouns or that have some noun-like qualities. But what about the continuous form, as in this last sentence here? As I'm sure everyone knows, continuous tenses are formed with the auxiliary verb *be* and the present participle of the verb – in this case, *have been + looking*. Here, the *-ing* form has a verb function, to show the continuous/progressive aspect. As a *form*, this is usually not particularly problematic, although the spelling can be an issue. Knowing when and why to employ a continuous tense form is another matter altogether, of course, and one that many learners find notoriously difficult.

However, the present participle is very versatile and not restricted merely to helping to form continuous tenses. It has more roles: for example, in a *non-finite adverbial clause*, in a *reduced relative clause*, as an *adjective* and as an *object complement*.

Let's take the *non-finite adverbial clauses* first. 'Non-finite' means that the verb element doesn't reveal all the information that finite verbs do: if we say *When I opened my bag, I saw that it was empty*, we know when, who and how many – past, first person, singular. In that sentence, both verbs are finite.

But if we say ***Opening** my bag, I saw that it was empty*, we don't immediately know that information. We know that the verb in question is (to) *open*, but that's all. In this sentence, the first verb is non-finite (*opening*) and the second is finite (*I saw*). Only when we reach the finite verb (*I saw*) are we able to supply the missing information about the non-finite: now we know that *opening* = in the past, first person, singular. We can now (mentally) expand it to its full finite version – *when I opened my bag*. Note in passing that we can't assume that our expanded finite version is necessarily past simple – it could be past continuous if that makes better sense: ***Walking** along the road, I met my favourite cat* could easily be expanded to *While/As I was walking ...*

And notice, too, that our expanded versions are all in the *active* voice: we need a different participle in non-finite constructions that have a passive voice.

LANGUAGE LOG: The proof of the *pudding* is in the *eating*

A similar process takes place in *reduced relative clauses*: *The train **arriving** at platform nine is the 8.15 from Oxford*. In this case, we can quickly see that the expanded version will contain a full relative clause: *The train **that is arriving** at platform nine is the 8.15 from Oxford*.

Once again, the time reference depends on that of the main verb (*is* = present, in our example above), but our choice of tense depends on what makes good sense. In the following example, we would expand the reduced relative clause to a present simple, as it expresses general circumstances rather than an event in progress: *Passengers **arriving** late should proceed immediately to the gate = Passengers **who arrive** late should proceed immediately to the gate*. And again, the full relative clauses are in the active voice.

Next, let's look at *adjectives* formed using present participles. Every verb will provide us with a present participle and a past participle, and these can often be used as adjectives. Learners often first meet them as contrasted pairs: *a **boring** book / a **bored** reader*. Sometimes, these participle-adjectives are categorised as having active and passive senses respectively: a ***boring*** book is one that bores the reader, whereas a ***bored*** reader is bored by the book. This is true, but only provided that the root verb that provides the two participles, in this case *bore*, is a transitive verb.

If the root verb is *intransitive*, it can hardly form adjectives with active and passive senses. Instead, the two participles provide adjectives expressing different aspects. For example, a road sign reading: *Danger, **falling** rocks* tells us that more rocks may still yet fall. The present participle adjective has the aspect features of *progressive* tenses (incomplete, in progress, etc). So, look above you – there may be some rocks on their way down!

In contrast, a road sign reading: *Danger, **fallen** rocks* tells us that the process has been completed – the past participle adjective has the aspect features of *perfect* tenses (completed, perfected, etc). So, look in front of you – the rocks are already on the road!

Finally, the present participle can be used to complement the object of a verb: *I watched a street artist **drawing** a tourist's caricature*. In this case, we infer that I didn't watch the artist draw the caricature completely, from start to finish, but that I watched just a part of the process. For the former, we'd say: *I watched a street artist **draw** a tourist's caricature*. Again, the present participle provides the aspect features noted above, namely incompleteness and in progress.

But that's enough for one *sitting*, I think: time to be *leaving* while the *going* is good.



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.

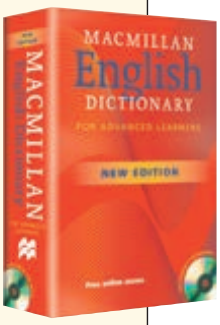
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COMPETITION RESULTS

4 C	25 O	1 M	1 M	21 U	17 N	2 I	4 C	5 A	18 T	2 I	25 O	17 N		3 W
16 R		22 E		7 S			25 O		5 A		12 V	25 O	18 T	22 E
22 E	16 R	5 A			18 T	2 I	26 G	22 E	16 R		22 E			22 E
15 D		26 G	16 R	22 E	5 A	18 T			17 N		16 R	25 O	25 O	20 K
2 I	16 R	16 R	22 E	7 S	11 P	22 E	4 C	18 T	2 I	12 V	22 E		1 M	
19 B		22 E	5 A	18 T		16 R			7 S		24 X		17 N	
10 L	25 O		4 C	22 E	15 D	5 A	16 R		14 H	22 E	4 C	18 T	2 I	4 C
22 E	10 L	2 I	18 T	22 E		18 T					2 I		11 P	
	2 I			1 M		2 I	17 N	12 V	22 E	17 N	18 T	25 O	16 R	13 Y
5 A	26 G	22 E				12 V		22 E			22 E		22 E	
	5 A		9 F	16 R	22 E	22 E	8 Z	22 E			15 D	25 O	7 S	22 E
	16 R		25 O				2 I	16 R	2 I	7 S			22 E	
5 A	47 C	6 Q	21 U	5 A	2 I	17 N	18 T			5 A	1 M	22 E	17 N	15 D
	14 H		27 N			25 O		16 R	22 E	26 G	16 R	22 E	18 T	
		5 A	15 D	23 J	21 U	7 S	18 T			22 E		10 L		

Congratulations to all those readers who successfully completed our Prize Crossword 57. The winners, who will each receive a copy of the *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*, are:

Olga Andreeva, Samara, Russia
Damian Barnett, Manchester, UK
Steve Roberts, Aranda de Duero, Spain
Klaudia Bednarczyk, Sosnowiec, Poland
Teresa Mendiguren, Dungannon, UK
Ludmila Bogdan, Trowbridge, UK
Eileen Maguire, Bray, Ireland
Elizabeth Smith, Cardiff, UK
Frédéric Amoureux, Cellettes, France
Janice Anders, Pulborough, UK



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

11 P	16 R	25 O	26 G	16 R	22 E	7 S	7 S		3 W	5 A	7 S		5 A	10 L	10 L	
16 R	2 I	26 G	14 H	18 T		25 O	17 N	10 L	13 Y		2 I	18 T		3 W	22 E	17 N
18 T		25 O	17 N		18 T	25 O	25 O		10 L	25 O	17 N	26 G				

James Thurber

SCRAPBOOK

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

The **wind** is like the **air**, only **pushier**

Earth's atmosphere is a layer of gases surrounding the planet and kept in place by gravity. It contains roughly 78% nitrogen, 21% oxygen, 0.97% argon, 0.04% carbon dioxide and trace amounts of other gases, in addition to water vapour. So far, so good – if a bit dull. So that's air, the stuff we breathe and wade through every day, whether outside or in. It is indeed very useful, but the really interesting things happen when it starts to move about. When it does, we have various names for it: *breeze*, *zephyr* (pleasant); *squall*, *gale* (less so, especially when accompanied by rain or hail); *tornado*, *typhoon*, *hurricane* (these very definitely *not* on my wish list of things to experience!) ... And its generic name? Wind.

Who has **seen** the **wind**?

Wind is a very curious phenomenon, if you stop to think about it.

In itself, it is quite invisible, but its effects are widespread and easy to see. Even a gentle breeze will move plants and turn the pages of newspapers or books, while a major storm can demolish buildings and fling vehicles for miles.

The movement of air (which makes the winds) is caused by differences in atmospheric pressure. Air moves from higher-pressure areas to lower-pressure areas to fill the vacuum. These streams of air, apart from wreaking havoc with our umbrellas, can have a major impact on our weather. I recently learnt of a wondrous (if fickle) animal called a *jet stream*. These (there are several) are narrow, often very strong winds of 100 miles an hour or so, blowing at high altitude (anywhere from 20,000 feet to over 50,000 feet). Jet streams are responsible for the sometimes abrupt and frequently bizarre changes in our weather. For the global travellers among us, they can also be responsible for some pretty dramatic alterations to flight schedules – depending on whether the pilot is trying to fly with the jet stream or against it.

The **answer** is **blowin'** in the **wind**

Try your hand at this wind quiz.

1 Which of the following is not affected by wind chill?
a) person **b)** dog **c)** car radiator **d)** bird

2 What instrument is used to measure wind speed?
a) a radiometer **b)** an anemometer
c) a ammeter **d)** a wind vane

3 Which of these is not a wind deity – and, for extra points, what nationality/religion are the others?
a) Aeolus **b)** Fujin **c)** Vitztlampaehecatl
d) Vayu **e)** Chillipuff

4 Which of these winds played a pivotal role in a war?
a) Kamikaze **b)** Protestant Wind **c)** Khamsin

Answers **1** c (Wind chill is based on the rate of heat loss from exposed skin. As the wind increases, heat is carried away from the body at an accelerated rate driving the body temperature down. Wind chill has no effect on cars or other objects.) **2** b **3** e is not a wind deity (a ancient Greek, b Japanese (Shinto), c Aztec, d Hindu) **4** All of them; Kamikaze means *wind of god* and is used to describe typhoons that protected Japan from the invasion fleet of Kublai Khan in 1274; the Protestant Wind protected England from the Spanish Armada in 1588; the Khamsin is a North-African wind that affected both Allied and German troops in World War II, bringing sand storms which several times forced them to halt mid-battle.

Walking in the **air**

When conditions are calm, walking through air is pretty easy, really; as its speed picks up, the stuff becomes more and more solid – think of putting your hand out of a moving car and feeling the resistance of air as you create your own 'wind'.

While we are talking about air at speed and have already mentioned flying – did you know that planes are held up by a vacuum, or relative lack of air? The cross-section of a plane wing means that as the aircraft ploughs through the air a vacuum is created on the upper surface of the wing, so enabling the whole thing to be held up by a sort of suction!



© behindlens / Shutterstock.com

A **wind** by any other **name**

I've mentioned various descriptive words that we have for different wind strengths: words like *breeze*, *zephyr*, *gust*, *gale*, *typhoon*, *hurricane*, *tornado*, etc, but there are also many proper names given to winds that feature regularly in a particular area.

One of my favourite names is used for the winds that you find in and around the Mediterranean Sea near Greece. Here, you basically have winds which take it in turns to drive the local population to distraction – if not actual insanity – by blowing regularly for days on end. When one wind gets bored, there is obviously some secret coded message that passes between them, and another one takes over. The name for these winds is the **Meltemia**, meaning 'the bad-tempered ones' – which, I imagine, can refer equally to the winds and the humans on the receiving end!

The **Shawondasee** (a word from the Native American Algonquin tribe, meaning 'lazy wind') blows across the American prairies from the south in the late summer.

The **Williwaw** are violent gusts of cold air that blow off the mountainous coasts into the ocean in South America.

The romantically named **Chocolatero**, off Mexico's Gulf Coast, unfortunately doesn't bear out its promise – it is so-called because it is a hot sandy squall coloured brown by dust.

The **Trade winds** circle the globe both north and south of the Equator. They got their name because they provided early sailing ships with steady and reliable winds which would transport valuable cargo from Europe or Africa to the Americas.

The **Mistral** is a penetrating, stormy, dry and cold wind that blows through the Rhone Valley of France toward the Mediterranean coast.

Some of the names given to winds can indicate various degrees of violence:

A wind of Arabia, the **Mezzar-Ifoullousen**, has a name that translates as 'the wind that plucks fowl'.

But my all-time favourite of a name must be on the next rung up the tempestuous ladder: the Spanish **Descuernacabras** – the 'wind that de-horns goats'. While this experience would not be rated a success by many goats, it might be marginally preferable to meeting another Iberian 'breeze': the **Matacabras**. This wind is perfectly capable of killing the animals!

Enough to **knock** the **wind** out of your **sails**

The power of the wind is not confined to simple air movement; anyone who lives near the coast, or spends any time on the water, will know the effect of the wind on the sea. It is said that a 15-knot wind blowing for a day can whip up waves five feet high or more, while a 15-knot wind, given 48 hours, can create waves some 33 feet high.

We generally become worried when the wind speed reaches the 75 mile an hour mark, but the greatest surface wind speed ever officially recorded was a truly terrifying 231 miles per hour on the top of Mt Washington in New Hampshire, USA, in 1934!

However, possibly the most damaging wind is the one that changes just as you are pulling a particularly silly or unpleasant face. Folklore (of the sort used by mothers all over the world) states that if you pull such a face and the wind changes while you are doing so, you will be stuck with that face for the rest of your life.

We are not told what happens in the event of subsequent gurning (face-pulling) activity during a changing wind …



Wind or just a **lot** of **hot air**?

Which of these is a genuine name (wind) and which is made-up (hot air)?

1 Cat's paw
2 Whiffler
3 Elephanta
4 Maria
5 Cock-eyed Bob
6 Stoat Strangler

Answers **1** wind (a gentle breeze in the US) **2** hot air **3** wind (a southerly gale at the end of India's wet season) **4** hot air (a fictional wind in the song 'They call the wind Maria' from the musical *Paint Your Wagon*) **5** wind (a tropical cyclone in Australia) **6** hot air

Gone with the **wind**

I live within earshot of two bell-endowed church towers. Depending on the way that the wind is blowing, I can hear the near tower (a quarter of a mile away), the far tower (just under one mile away), neither or both. Similarly, especially in the animal kingdom, wind is an invaluable transmitter of scents as well as sounds, enabling creatures to know when there is trouble/prey/help about. This has been well understood by hunters in the past, who spent the time before a hunt in 'sweat tents' purging themselves.

So, we can see that the movement of air can have a huge and far-reaching effect; in weather terms, wind rarely pleases everyone, even though, in its defence, we have that saying: *'It is an ill wind that blows nobody any good.'* This phrase has possibly been overshadowed by its more recent adaptation by musicians to savage the oboe as 'an ill wind that nobody blows good'.

Scrapbook compiled by Ian Waring Green

Reviews

Past Simple: Learning English through History

by David Ronder and Peter Thompson
Garnet Education 2013
978-1-85964-529-1



This is a cleverly thought-out and attractively presented book, which uses amusing classroom activities and insightful articles to develop language learning. It does this by providing stimulating discussion topics, a selection of playful English idioms, good internet-based research and creative writing tasks, all within a historical, cultural and British citizenship context.

Its 22 chapters are divided into two parts, beginning with the *Chronological chapters*, a short but nuanced chronological survey of British history, beginning in Roman Britain and ending, presciently, 12 chapters later with *The Iron Lady: Margaret Thatcher*. Also included in this section are chapters on the 1960s and the national health service (NHS). A further ten chapters (the *Thematic chapters*) deliver material on topics such as democracy, immigration and even cricket. The chapter on democracy, for instance, sympathetically explores the emancipation of women through the activities of the suffragettes, and in the chapter on cricket – *'a funny old game'* – there is an exploration of class and race issues. The book is not exclusively Anglo-centric either; it is about Britain, and rightly includes Ireland and Scotland.

The structure is accessible, but an entire chapter is not doable in a single two-hour lesson. Each chapter has pre-reading discussion questions, followed by an in-depth reading text with a glossary, which will take students between 20 and 30 minutes to complete. (I think it would be a very good idea to set the pre-reading at the end of class and then get the students to do the reading for homework, ready for a follow-up lesson.)

Illustrations, graphs and tables develop topics interestingly, so that in the chapter on Henry VIII, we are presented with six portraits of Henry's wives and asked which one we think is Anne of Cleves (Henry was supposedly charmed by the flattering portrait he was sent of her – and agreed to marry her on the strength of it – but was bitterly disappointed when he met the real thing). There are also further opportunities for research, so that students, in one instance, can find out more about the talented black South African cricketer Basil D'Olivera, who embarrassed the South African apartheid regime to its very core with a very successful career in the UK after being denied a platform at home in which to shine.

Past Simple is also very internet-savvy and web-wise, with recommendations for plenty of very good *YouTube* clips. It has web links to further develop the students' understanding. For example, they are invited to investigate whether Henry VIII really wrote the words to *Greensleeves*. I particularly like the way keyword search engine prompts are given. For example, when doing research on the welfare state, it is suggested that they search for 'state pension' + 'history' and 'William Beverage' + 'last words' and 'NHS' + 'number of employees' + 'annual budget', thus guiding the students to excellent interactive material.

The final writing tasks in each unit range from writing short essays to more creative approaches, like writing a childhood account or a poem. Best, however, is the treatment of idioms – so on the section for topic development, students are asked if they know the meaning of words like *chuddies*, *chutzpah*, *kushti/cushty*, *craic/crack*, and so on. My students really warmed to this in class.

Altogether, this is a very pleasing addition to the plethora of English language teaching books out there, but one that stands out as it gets students to practise the four skills while getting to grips with the rich and diverse cultural backstory from which the English language has emerged.

Ashley Chapman
London, UK

We have organised a 12.5% discount on this book for ET*p* subscribers. Simply go to the ET*p* website to order and quote AFZ713 at the checkout.

Lingle

www.lingleonline.com

I found the Lingle website to be a very useful resource and I would recommend it to all English teachers. This site provides texts taken from a wide variety of newspapers (updated and added to daily). Not only does it provide you with this material, but you can modify the texts, adapt them to suit your personal needs, create lessons and exercises that exploit them, or even choose and upload your own texts and use the online facilities to create lessons and exercises based on those.

Once you log in (a free trial is available), the homepage opens and you will see three sections: 'My Lessons', 'My Bookmarks' and 'My Content'. You will also see a couple of recent news articles. Click on one of these, and when the text opens, you can choose to have some of the vocabulary highlighted. Difficult words or topical words can be



highlighted (or both), and you choose the number of words: five, ten or 20. Difficult words (the choice is informed by various corpora) are highlighted in the text in purple; topical words appear in blue. When you click on one of the highlighted words, you can hear the pronunciation and see the meaning.

You can then create a lesson from the article by clicking on the 'Create a lesson' button. You are offered several options. You can choose to have a glossary of difficult words, a glossary of topical words, a difficult words gap-fill exercise or a topical words gap-fill exercise. You can have all of them if you want, and you can select the level. You just tick your choices and in less than a minute your lesson is ready. If you choose to have a glossary, it appears under the text, with each word explained, including its part of speech. It is followed by the text with gaps, which can be filled by dragging and dropping words from a box (or you could print it out and get the students to write the words in). You can also provide a list of words that you would like to be included in the exercise. If you want to focus on the grammar in the text, you can click on the 'Grammar' tab and highlight the grammar points that you want to target. If you select several grammar points to focus on, they will all appear in different colours. If you want to create a grammar lesson based on the same text, you click on 'Add exercise', then on 'Grammar gapfill', and then select the grammar points which you want to focus on. Again, students can drag and drop the parts of speech into the available gaps. There is a 'Check answers' button for checking accuracy and scores. There is also a very useful 'Grammar gapfill (Usage list)' tool, which will pull out and display example sentences from a variety of texts to illustrate grammar and vocabulary use. There are other exercise types available, such as ordering and matching.

To find texts on interesting topics, use the 'Search' tab at the top of the homepage and put key words in the box. Again, you can also specify the level and particular grammatical structures you want to focus on when you search for texts.

You can share your lessons with other teachers as well as track and assign work to students, who need to log in to complete the exercises online.

Could this be the end of textbooks? By using sites like this, teachers can make their lessons completely up-to-date and can vary their content according to the interests, level and degree of knowledge of their students.

Evelina Miscin
Zagreb, Croatia

ENGLISH TEACHING *professional*

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Spatial relationships

Charles Mercer boxes clever to teach prepositions.

I have often noticed how students respond correctly while I am actually teaching a particular point of grammar. For example, repeated drills of the present perfect tense in the classroom seem to produce the correct answers, both spoken and written. But once the students are out of the classroom, and find themselves in a situation where the tense is required, they immediately revert to a past tense which they have previously assimilated and which adequately (for them) fills the gap. Beginners manifest this phenomenon by speaking in infinitives, somehow being unable to push their brains another mental step further to unlock the file with the correct form of the tense.

I have partially solved the memory retention problem while teaching prepositions, which, I think it could fairly be argued, represent a minefield for language learners. It does require the use of the currently unfashionable technique of repetition, but it produces positive results. I stumbled on the idea while teaching French air traffic controllers. As you may imagine, getting professional students like these to use the correct prepositions could literally be a matter of life or death, so I needed something relatively foolproof. I used two plastic boxes, which I placed on the desk in front of me and moved around, asking the students to say where each box was in relation to the other.

When I have used this exercise with multilingual classes, I have received some intriguing responses, which would seem to indicate that different nationalities see spatial relationships in different ways. The responses from



Figure 1

students are so consistent that I believe the incorrect answers are more than mis-translations from the mother tongue into English. Consider these answers to the question *Where is the blue box?* with reference to Figure 1.

French speaker: ***Above the white box.*** (incorrect)

German speaker: ***Over the white box.*** (incorrect)

Native English speaker: ***On the white box. / On top of the white box.***

Above and *over* tell us where the blue box is, but we don't use those prepositions in English in this specific situation. Imagine if you have forgotten where you left your book and your friend says: *It's over the kitchen table.* To a native English speaker, this answer would sound decidedly odd, as we would expect to hear: *It's on the kitchen table*. And this points to one of the major difficulties that prepositions introduce: some of them are interchangeable, some are not.

Focusing on the white box and asking *Where is the white box?* produces answers that are usually a little more encouraging:

French speaker: *Below the blue box.* (correct)

German speaker: *Under the blue box.* (correct)

Native English speaker: *Under the blue box. / Underneath the blue box.*

Above and *below*

Above and *below* are particularly difficult because they can be used in the form of prepositions, adverbs and adjectives (and sometimes even nouns). They can also sometimes be interchanged with *over* and *under* – just to add more confusion. To reinforce the explanation of their use, I hold the blue box above the white one with about half a metre separation and ask:

Question: *Where is the blue box?*

Answer: *Above the white one.* (correct)

Question: *Where is the white box?*

Answer: *Below the blue one.* (correct)

Note: in this case, it is best to supply the answers yourself the first time you do this – to avoid confusion. On the next occasion, wait for the students to answer and correct as necessary.

Admittedly all this is an over-simplification, but it fits in well with the concept of the drill exercise. And it gets the idea of a spatial relationship into perspective. I would also slip in at this point a reference to an iceberg and how it floats in water, which is a fairly well understood principle (most students have seen the film *Titanic*). One eighth of the iceberg is above the surface of the sea, seven eighths of it is below the surface of the sea. Note: it would not be incorrect to say: *Seven eighths of an iceberg is under the surface of the sea*, but *one eighth of an iceberg is over the surface of the sea* is incorrect.

Over and *under*

Because of the inter-changeability of *over* and *under* with *above* and *below* in some situations, I usually offer two example sentences related to sport, which are familiar to most of my students:

1 *To score a goal in Rugby Football, you have to kick the ball between the goalposts and over the bar.*

2 *To score a goal in Association Football, you have to kick the ball between the goalposts and under the bar.*

Based on these examples, the students will quickly introduce examples of their own, and your clarifications will usually promote a lively discussion.

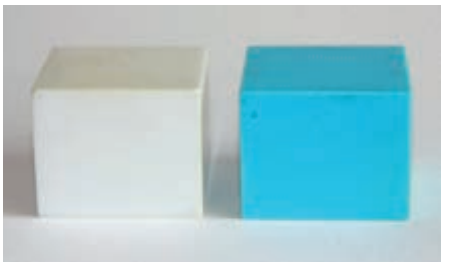


Figure 2

Placing the boxes side by side, as illustrated in Figure 2, produces a different spatial relationship and the original question may be repeated: *Where is the blue box?*

The correct answers are: *Next to/near/beside/on the right of the white box.*

Sometimes I hear *besides*, which is incorrect, instead of *beside*. Used as a preposition, *besides* means 'in addition to'. Also incorrect is: *The blue box is nearby the white box. Nearby* is an adverb and usually appears at the end of a sentence, eg *Our school has a bus stop nearby*. *Nearby* can also be used as an adjective, eg *There is a nearby post office.*

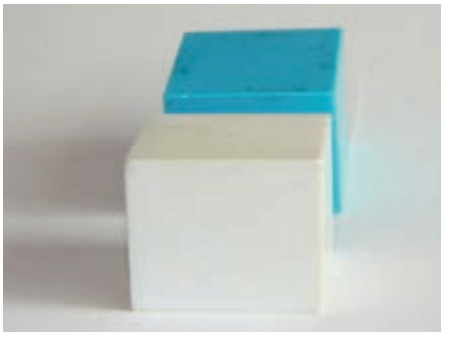


Figure 3

Now I place the blue box behind the white one, as illustrated in Figure 3, and ask:

Question: *Where is the blue box?*

Answer: *Behind/In back of the white box.* (correct – *in back of* is American English)

Question: Where is the white box?

Answer: In front of the blue box. (correct)

One incorrect answer which is quite common here is *before the blue box*. Used as a preposition, *before* refers to time, eg *two days before the holidays*. As an adverb, *before* means at a previous time, eg *I've seen this film before.*

★ ★ ★

By starting the first lesson of the day with the boxes, I found both accuracy and retention were usually achieved by the fourth day. I extended the principle to a library of pictures, collected from magazines, which as closely as possible targeted one preposition. You have to accept that in some pictures multiple answers are possible, but this, in itself, is not a bad thing as it extends the knowledge of prepositions. Consider a picture of a man walking in a street and ask:

Question: *Where is the man?*

Answer: *He is walking along/through/down/up the street.* (correct)

I found that ten pictures were usually enough to fit in as a warmer before the main lesson began. Occasionally the pictures will produce so much additional vocabulary that the exercise can consume the whole lesson. But daily repetition is the key, and, for me, a proven way of helping students to retain their knowledge and use of prepositions. ETp



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From research to reality 4

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

Two different teachers tell you how they recycle previously-studied vocabulary in class. One of them gets her students to go through their personal word list (with the English words and L1 translations). The other gives her students regular tests. Both end the cycle with a final assessment. The two approaches could be summarised as:

1 S–SSS–A
2 S–TTT–A
(S = study, T = test, A=final assessment)

Which group of students would you think does better on the final assessment?

Research

Studies performed by Robert Bjork and his colleagues at UCLA showed that students who are forced to retrieve previously-learnt information learn better than those who simply study the same material repeatedly, so the second class in the example above would perform better on the final assessment. The theory is that students get more useful feedback from a test than they would if they simply studied something without seeing if they could remember it first, which requires much less in the way of mental effort. Bjork and his team also discovered that testing people on the material *before* they learnt it improved their ability to remember the material *after* they learnt it.

Reality

This article is not advocating a testing culture of the sort that has blighted many educational systems. I have always considered tests a learning opportunity for students, and Bjork says the same, suggesting that they should be frequent, low stakes (ie having no important consequences for the students) and designed to elicit links with other material beyond the item being tested (eg through careful selection of distractors in a multiple-choice test).

The research has obvious implications in several areas, some suggestions for which are presented here.

Lesson planning

The research suggests that a test–teach–test approach to lesson planning is more beneficial than the standard PPP (presentation, practice, production) approach. The simplest way to do this is to decide what you want your students to be able to do at the end of the lesson, and get them to try the same exercise at the beginning of the lesson before they learn anything.

Another option is to 'problematise' the language point. This involves setting an awareness-raising task that highlights the misunderstandings that can result from using this item incorrectly. An example suggested by Scott Thornbury can be seen on the facing page.

Use an inductive approach, where the students attempt to work things out for themselves before they get feedback. This can be supported by providing guiding questions to direct them to the right answers. I have found in my own informal (and undoubtedly not scientifically valid at all!) classroom research that students who attempt to infer the meaning of a word before looking it up retain the word better than those who look it up immediately.

As suggested in a previous article in this series, lessons could end with a final reflection, where students attempt to retrieve what they have learnt that day. They should have an opportunity to get feedback on this, whether through peer-, self- or teacher correction/support.

Testing

Make testing low stakes: help the students to see it as a learning opportunity rather than an evaluation. You can support this by playing background music, allowing the students to work together, and incorporating the students in your questions (*Matteo was late today because he _____ the bus*) to bring a little levity to the situation.

Make sure students get feedback on their tests. This can be done through peer- and self-correction, but students should also be encouraged to consider which areas they struggled with and why – and what they could do about it.

Recycling

Keep a vocabulary envelope for the class, containing flashcards with new words in English on one side and a translation and/or definition on the other. The students could also be encouraged to keep their own. These envelopes lend themselves to a variety of games and force the students to attempt retrieval of the word, as they cannot see the translation until they turn the card over. One possibility, depending on the number of cards/students, is to lay them out on the table in the form of a board game. As students throw dice and land on each card, they have to use the English equivalent in a sentence.

If your students are digitally literate and have their own tablets/smartphones, there are various websites and apps that can be used to keep online vocabulary envelopes. One of the most popular is *www.quizlet.com*.

Any text that is used in class should be re-used at least two or three times in a variety of activities, such as to create a gap-fill or word re-arranging activity. The

benefit of this is that, if the text is from the students' coursebook, the activity can be set as homework (if you trust them!) which they can mark themselves, because they already have the original text.

Self-study techniques

Share this research with your students! Something else that researchers found was that the repeated testing process was the one rated least effective by the subjects, even though they went on to perform best in the final assessments.

Encourage your class to try to remember things for themselves rather than immediately reaching for the dictionary or reference book.

If they are using a self-study book, they could try to do the end-of-unit test first, then the unit itself.

★ ★ ★

As I said before, this is in no way a validation of the stressful, high-stakes testing culture prevalent in many schools. The key is that the students are trying to retrieve what they have previously learnt without being 'given' it, whether this be through a test, a task, re-reading a previously-used text or even playing a game. We need to appreciate, even welcome, errors as signs of learning (*'desirable difficulties'* as Bjork terms them), moving from the prevailing *'get it right in the beginning'* approaches to accepting that learners will *'get it right in the end'*, as Patsy Lightbown and Nina Spada put it. ETp

http://bjorklab.psych.ucla.edu/research.html

http://robinheyden.wordpress.com/2011/03/16/robert-bjork-remembering-forgetting-and-desirable-difficulties/

www.nytimes.com/2011/01/21/science/21memory.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

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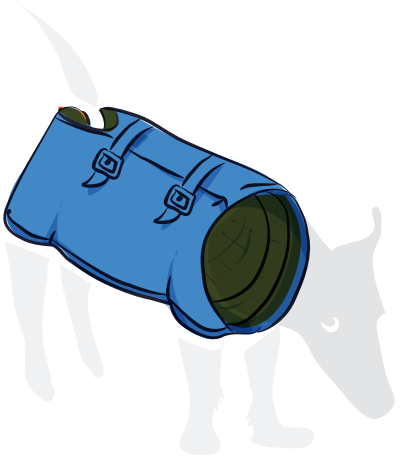
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Phillip Burrows

A drawing game

(Adapted from an activity suggested by Scott Thornbury)

This is a good way of starting a lesson on articles, and can be adapted to other language points (eg dependent prepositions: *Draw a coat made for a dog* versus *Draw a coat made from a dog*).

- Put the class in pairs, A and B. Tell them that they will be giving each other a series of instructions to draw various simple pictures. Distribute the handouts below, making sure each pair has one copy of A and one of B, which they keep secret from each other. They take it in turns to read out the descriptions of each picture and draw what they hear.
- When they have finished, get the students to compare their pictures with their partners and look at the sentences they read out.

Student A

Tell your partner to draw these pictures:

a room with a glass on the floor

a man buying paper

a boy with egg on his head

a girl with a long hair

a cat on TV

a bowl with tomato in it

Student B

Tell your partner to draw these pictures:

a bowl with a tomato in it

a room with glass on the floor

a girl with long hair

a boy with an egg on his head

a man buying a paper

a cat on a TV

Teaching at the top

Caireen Sever addresses high-level, high-status learners.

Teaching business English is an exciting job. The teacher has to get to know different people in different industries and has to understand enough about their jobs, their companies and their English needs to be able to design a course to help them improve.

One of the more challenging situations we face is when learners are at advanced level, for example CEF C1. This means that they speak fluently, they make few mistakes and they are already easy to understand. As a result, it is sometimes difficult to see progress lesson by lesson. In addition, these learners are often senior managers or board members, usually having one-to-one lessons. But their lessons are not just an opportunity for you to drink good coffee and admire the view from the top floor. These are busy people and expect their time to be used productively. They will certainly tell you if that is not happening – or they will just stop booking lessons with you.

Your aims

You need to start such a course by firmly establishing your course aims with your student. Despite their advanced level, this busy person is giving up precious time to improve their English. Find out why that is. Did they recently have to use their English in their job and found it wasn't good enough? What exactly can they tell you about where they feel they lack language? Is it vocabulary – and if so, is it work-related or do they find they can only talk about work and it's the small talk that follows which is a problem? Do they lack confidence or suspect that what they are saying isn't accurate enough? They might also want to improve specific business skills – for example, chairing meetings or giving presentations.

Once you have decided these course aims, put them in writing and make sure you both have a copy so that you can refer to them every lesson and check that you are making progress towards achieving them.

Your role

Your role in a lesson with an advanced-level senior manager will be different from that in a group or lower-level lesson. It is likely to be a conversation-based situation, with you usually in the role of *listener*, encouraging the learner to talk by asking questions, helping out with vocabulary where necessary and offering corrections if any errors are made.

However, there is also some room for you to be a *talker* – your own language is a rich source of new vocabulary, including phrasal verbs, collocations and idioms (and ones which are really used rather than just found in a list in a book). Your advanced-level learner is likely to be good at noticing new language; after all, they must already have good learning strategies to have achieved this level, but you may also sometimes need to help out by making notes or pointing out alternative ways of saying something. For example:

Learner: *Things are hard at the moment and no one has had a pay rise for three years. Even the annual managers' meeting is taking place on site this year, rather than at a luxury hotel. We felt that was a better sign to give to the employees.*

Teacher: *Yes, so they feel as if you are all in the same boat.*

Learner: *Exactly. That's what I meant.* (writes it down)

Another role you will take on in such lessons is that of *motivator*, by encouraging the learner to increase their contact with English in their daily life. This might be by reading their company newsletter in the English version first (if available), by watching DVDs in English or by reading books or news websites. If you ask every lesson what they have done this week in English, you will motivate them to spend *some* time doing *something*. You can also talk to them about how to fit extra English practice into their already very busy lives, eg by listening to an English podcast while driving to work.

Your lessons

But what will you actually *do* in the lessons with learners who seem to know everything already? Here are some elements which will probably feature:

- Prepare for real work situations – use a meeting agenda or the minutes of the previous meeting to prepare for upcoming meetings by talking about the topics involved, feeding in vocabulary where necessary and enabling the learner to voice their opinions and practise their arguments in the 'safety' of the lesson before doing it in the real meeting. Use authentic emails and presentations to discuss the issues contained in them as well as to exploit them for useful language. Your learner will already be effectively doing business in English, but almost definitely will not be getting any feedback on the accuracy of their language, or on areas they could improve – and this where you can help. Even better, if it is possible, 'shadowing' provides invaluable language for feedback. For example, you could listen to your learner making a genuine phone call or sit at the back of a real meeting and take notes.

- Get learners out of their 'comfort zone'. For example, they may be avoiding talking about difficult areas where they know they don't have the vocabulary. Keep yourself aware of current events in business and politics and get your learner to explain them to you. Ask probing questions to stretch them further: *Why exactly was that? Tell me more about that.*
- Deal with fossilised errors, which happen because the learner has not had feedback on their language for some time. Error correction in your lessons will more often be on-the-spot, rather than making notes to go through later, because they are things which the learner 'should' already know. For example:

  Learner: *The finance department is doing the annual report at this time every year.*
  Teacher: *is doing?*
  Learner: *does!*
- Use online dictionaries and corpus statistics, especially as the lesson is likely to be in the learner's office so their computer will be there. Alternatively, this type of learner might have a laptop or tablet. Showing them how to look things up on their own equipment is teaching them to be a self-sufficient language learner.
- Think beyond single-word vocabulary. Collocations and phrasal verbs will help push their language further, so make sure they get used to looking for and recording whole phrases.
- Use authentic materials such as podcasts and video clips. This can stimulate discussion, can encourage students to listen to podcasts and watch video clips in their own time and is also a rich source of useful new language.
- Keep asking them about their use of English in their jobs: *How did it go? How did you feel? Where did you feel your English was lacking?* This will help inform future lessons. It will also show them that they are making progress, as situations will get easier, and this will keep them motivated.
- Leave time for silence. For example, use a framework and give them a few minutes to make notes on it (see the example here). Giving them planning time may help them to focus on their language and cut out some of their fossilised errors or to try out new vocabulary.

Note down an event you have seen or heard about recently in the news, eg recent elections, strikes, summits, etc.	
Why is this interesting for you?	
What impact might this have in your country?	
What impact might this have on your company?	
What developments do you think there might be in this news story?	

- Use their previous learning experience. To have achieved this level, they have been doing something right, so exploit this – for example, by asking how they learn new vocabulary. Suggest new ways of learning; for instance, they may never have tried recording not only the noun but also the related verb and adjective forms.
- Record them speaking – even film them, if possible – and go through the recording together to suggest improvements. This will force them to focus on the details of what they are saying and may highlight problems they were unaware of, such as flat intonation. If you keep these recordings, you can also use them later in the course to prove that they have made progress – which will help them stay motivated and encourage them to book even more lessons with you!

★ ★ ★

Teaching high-level learners at the top of their profession is challenging but stimulating, and with these tips you will be helping them do business better in English. ETp



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ESP

Academic vocabulary

Louis Rogers differentiates between two different word lists

In this ongoing series on using corpora to develop materials, I should like to move the focus to corpora of academic vocabulary and how they can be used to develop EAP materials. There are a whole host of corpora analysing academic language, but I would like to look here at two main lists – Averil Coxhead's Academic Word List and Magali Paqout's Academic Keyword List. Both were designed to help students in an EAP environment, though they were created in quite different ways and, arguably, for quite different purposes. These two lists, though similarly named – and, at face value, appearing to deal with the same issue – are significantly different.

'Academic vocabulary' is often defined as words occurring frequently in academic texts which are transferable across disciplines, ie they are not technical or specific to any one subject. However, not everyone accepts this definition, and there is much debate about transferability and specificity. Ken Hyland and Polly Tse argue against the concept of transferability. They feel that it would be better to create and use discipline-specific lists. Personally, I can see the benefit of both and I will look at discipline-specific lists in a future article.

Here, I will give a brief overview of the Academic Word List and the Academic Keyword List and follow this by presenting a set of materials for teaching the language of *cause and effect* to students.

The Academic Word List

To create the Academic Word List (AWL), Averil Coxhead analysed 3.5 million words from 414 texts in four main discipline areas and across 28 topic areas. It consists of the 570 word families that are used the most frequently across a range of disciplines. The study excluded the first 2,000 words found on the General Service List, as the main aim was to focus on transferable academic vocabulary for students about to start academic study. There was an assumption that students at this stage and level would already know this more frequent vocabulary. Frequency was the key in determining whether a word was included in the list. Each word's family had to occur at least 100 times and a member of the word family needed to be in all four disciplines, with a frequency of at least ten appearances in each sub-list and in at least 15 of the 28 subject areas.

This study was embraced to such an extent that the AWL can be found in many published EAP materials. In many cases, the list has been used well, such as in *Focus on Vocabulary: Mastering the Academic Word List* by Diane and Norbert Schmitt, but in some cases I think it has been overused. The main aim of the study was to identify important words to help students deal with the *reading* texts that they would encounter on their degree courses. It used printed written texts and did not look at *spoken* language. However, you still find the list being used in academic listening and speaking courses. Had the study only looked at spoken language, I doubt many people would have used it as a tool to improve their students' vocabulary for dealing with academic reading texts. Whilst there could well be some crossover, using it to inform speaking and listening materials is to some extent second-guessing the transferability of the language into a context that was not studied.

The Academic Keyword List

The 930-word Academic Keyword List (AKL) was designed at the Centre for English Corpus Linguistics, Université Catholique de Louvain in Belgium, within the framework of a research project led by Professor Sylviane Granger. It is available on the CECL website: *www.uclouvain.be/en-372126.html*. The list was created in quite a different way from the Academic Word List: the sources were not only published academic texts, but also two student writing corpora: the Louvain Corpus of Native Speaker Essays and the British Academic Written English (BAWE) Pilot Corpus. A second important difference is that the list does not exclude the 2,000 most frequent words of English.

Different uses

The different approaches used to produce these two lists of transferable academic vocabulary give us two sets that are quite different and contain words that can, consequently, be used in different ways. As the AWL excludes the first 2,000 most frequent words of English, it can arguably only be used with higher levels, potentially from CEF B1 or more likely from B2 upwards. Also, because it is an analysis of published academic texts and does not include student writing, it is also potentially most valuable when used alongside an academic reading course. The AKL, by bringing in more frequent words and two corpora of student writing, is perhaps more valuable when working on productive writing skills. Students' writing is unlikely to have the sophistication of published texts, so using these as a model for productive language may be counterproductive.

Choosing the right corpora to inform your materials development can be tricky. In many cases, it is useful to go back to the original research and analyse how the corpus was created and what its intended outcome was.

Here we have two very different academic vocabulary lists that can serve learners and teachers well, but that perhaps need to be used in different ways and for different outcomes. The material on page 53 looks at using the AKL to teach students the language of cause and effect.

Coxhead, A 'A New Academic Word List' *TESOL Quarterly* 34 2000

Hyland, K and Tse, P 'Is there an "academic vocabulary"?' *TESOL Quarterly* 41 2007

Paquot, M *Academic Vocabulary in Learner Writing: From Extraction to Analysis* Continuum 2010



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Cause and effect: Lesson plan

These materials and this approach can be adapted to almost any topic that lends itself to teaching cause and effect. Here, the examples are based around the topic of urbanisation.

1 Start the lesson by giving the students an info-graphic which will provide an interesting stimulus to generate ideas and discussion. The info-graphic at *http://blog.thomsonreuters.com/index.php/the-world-at-7-billion-urbanization* highlights the rate and distribution of urbanisation around the world. Ask the students to look at this and discuss the following questions:

1 *Why do you think people move to urban areas?*

2 *What problems might urbanisation cause?*

3 *What might the benefits of urbanisation be?*

2 Elicit the students' answers and write them up on the board. Put a number or letter next to each one as you do this.

3 Ask the students to divide the ideas on the board into *cause* and *effect* and to underline any examples of 'cause and effect' language in the answers.

4 Give out copies of Worksheet 1 and ask the students to match the two halves of the sentences together.

5 Get the students to identify the 'cause and effect' word(s) in each sentence and to decide if these words are nouns, verbs, adjectives, prepositions, adverbs or conjunctions. Ask them to think of other words for each group and to say which word *form* they think is most common in marking cause and effect. When analysing the British National Corpus: Academic sub-corpus (humanities), which is part of the AKL, we find that *nouns* make up just over 30 percent of cause and effect markers, *adverbs* and *conjunctions* just over 20 percent each, *verbs* just over 15 percent, *prepositions* approximately 5 percent and *adjectives* 1.49 percent. The most common in each category are:

Nouns: *cause, factor, source, origin, root, reason, consequence, effect, result, outcome, implications*

Verbs: *cause, bring about, contribute to, generate, give rise to, induce, lead to, prompt, provoke*

Adjectives: *consequent, responsible (for)*

Prepositions: *because of, due to, as a result of, as a consequence of, in view of, owing to*

Adverbs: *therefore, accordingly, consequently, thus, hence, so, thereby, as a result*

Conjunctions: *because, since, as, for*

Answers:
1 c 2 a 3 d 4 f 5 b 6 e

6 Give the students Worksheet 2 and ask them to complete each sentence with words from Worksheet 1.

Answers:
1 1 Since 2 Thus 3 due to 4 contribute to 5 factor 6 responsible for
2 reason – factor; lead to – give rise to; because of – due to; therefore – thus; as – since

7 Finally, ask the students to use these words to write sentences of their own related to their initial discussion at the start of the lesson.

Worksheet 1

Match the two halves of the sentences.

1 Improved standards of living are a	**a** higher levels of air and water pollution.
2 Increased urbanisation gives rise to	**b** governments need to take control and manage the transition from a rural to an urban country.
3 Developing countries will be responsible for	**c** factor in increased urbanisation.
4 Much of China's economic growth is arguably due to	**d** much of the future urbanisation in the next decade.
5 When managed effectively, urbanisation can bring many benefits. Thus,	**e** the countries are at a different stage.
6 Problems associated with urbanisation in the developed world are different since	**f** its rapid urbanisation.

Worksheet 2

1 Complete these sentences using words and expressions from Worksheet 1.

1 _____ urban lifestyles are less physical, many people gain weight.

2 There is a belief that employment opportunities will be better in an urban area. _____, many people choose to leave rural areas behind.

3 The additional pressure placed on agricultural land is _____ changes in diet that mean urban residents consume more meat.

4 Poor living conditions _____ the many health problems residents face in slum areas.

5 Poor urban planning is a _____ in many transport issues modern cities face.

6 Urbanisation is arguably _____ the breakdown of many traditional societies.

2 Which words in Exercise 1 can these replace?

reason lead to because of therefore as

Teaching in a low-resource classroom

Sarah Portell revives some old ideas in high-tech times.

Do you teach in a modern classroom, fully equipped with an LCD projector, screen, computer, sound system and interactive whiteboard, with access to limitless copies of materials and a full range of online ELT resources? Or do you teach in a classroom that may or may not have electricity? Do your students have to share books because there are not enough to go round? Is the blackboard cracked and stained? Is there usually, but not always, chalk to use?

Although the situation of English teachers around the globe is varied, many teachers in South America, Asia and Africa must teach with few resources available to them. Many of these teachers teach in rural areas to vulnerable children. Even if your own classroom is well equipped, you may be teaching future English teachers who will return to work in low-resource areas. How we equip teachers in low-resource areas to adapt to situations and overcome various problems is what will differentiate mediocre and excellent teacher trainers.

You don't need to have elaborate PowerPoint *presentations and reams of photocopied matching activities to motivate students to learn*

Many low-resource-area teachers rely on the 'grammar-translation' method of English teaching because they do not know what else to do in the situation. Recently I co-facilitated a workshop in Western Mongolia for rural English teachers entitled 'Activities for Language Practice'. Simple, virtually paperless communicative activities were groundbreaking for the teachers.

I produced a feedback form in order to learn what resources the teachers had available and which of the workshop activities they thought would be the most useful in their particular contexts. Most of them reported having only a blackboard, chalk and limited textbooks (ie more students than textbooks) as their available resources. Each student had a notebook and pen as well. However, there was no photocopier, no extra paper, no teacher's book, no listening CDs, no internet and no dictionaries available for the teacher to use.

I reminded them that you don't need to have elaborate *PowerPoint* presentations and reams of photocopied matching activities to motivate students to learn. Interaction using English is intrinsically motivating for students, even if the activity seems like it is one of the oldest ideas in the book! Here are some of the activities the teachers picked out as being likely to be the most useful in an under-resourced teaching context.

1 Dictation relay race

Materials: One piece of paper, students' notebooks and pens

Preparation: Using new vocabulary or grammar structures, write sentences on a piece of paper. Attach the paper to a wall. (With a large class, you may need to write the sentences on two or more pieces of paper and attach them to different walls.)

Procedure:

1. Put the students in pairs. Designate one student in each pair as the reader and the other as the writer.
2. Ask the readers to stand up. Then ask the writers to stand up. Make sure that all the students know what they are before you start!
3. Demonstrate with one pair first.
4. Ask the writer to take out a pen and notebook. Ask the reader to stand up. Tell the reader to go to one of the pieces of paper and to read a sentence, then come back and tell it to the writer. The writer must write the sentence down in their notebook. The reader must keep going back and forth, reading the sentences and dictating them to the writer.
5. Now ask *all* the writers to take out their pens and notebooks. Check that they have them. Ask *all* the readers to stand up. Show them the location of the sentences and tell them to begin.
6. The first pair to write all the sentences wins.
7. Pairs who finish first can compare and check their answers with another pair who have finished quickly.

2 Tic-Tac-Toe error correction

Materials: One piece of paper, blackboard/whiteboard and chalk/whiteboard pens

Preparation: Record on a piece of paper at least 12 common mistakes that the students make.

Procedure:

1. Divide the class into two teams: X and O.
2. Draw a grid of two vertical lines and two horizontal lines on the board. Demonstrate that team X want to put three Xs in a row and team O wants three Os in a row.
3. Tell the students that they must listen to a sentence and correct the mistake. If they can correct the mistake, they can write an X or an O on the board.
4. Ask two people to be the writers and to stand at the board, one for X and one for O.
5. Ask two people to be the speakers: one for X and one for O. Each team must talk to their speaker and the speaker then talks to the teacher. (The speaker can change in each round of the game.)
6. Say the first sentence to one team. They discuss for a few seconds and then tell their speaker what to say. If the teacher agrees that their version of the sentence is correct, the speaker can tell the writer where to put their mark.
7. Then do the same with the next team. Repeat until one team has three of their symbols in a row in the grid, or it is not possible for either team to win.

3 Reading jigsaw

Materials: Textbooks with a reading text, blackboard/whiteboard, chalk/whiteboard pens

Preparation: Choose a text from the textbook and divide it into four or five sections, depending on how many students there are in the class. Paragraphs are the best way to divide it.

Procedure:

1. Divide the students into groups of four or five, depending on class size.
2. Assign each group a different section of the reading text.
3. Ask each group to read their section and help each other remember the important words. Monitor the groups closely to help them understand any new words they don't know. (This stage should take three to four minutes.)
4. Ask each group to try to memorise the important ideas in their section. You may want to write some questions on the board to help them identify the key ideas. (This stage should take three to four minutes.)
5. Give each group member a number and rearrange the groups so that there is one person from each old group in the new group.
6. Each person must tell the others in the new group about their section. The students may ask some of the key questions written on the board in order to try to understand the text. (This stage should take four to six minutes.)
7. Write other questions on the board to help the groups find and share all the information in the reading text.

4 Disappearing dialogue

Materials: Blackboard/whiteboard and chalk/whiteboard pens

Preparation: Prepare a dialogue that practises the vocabulary or grammar structure that you are teaching.

Procedure:

1. Write the dialogue on the board.
2. Ask the students to practise it in pairs.
3. After most students have finished the first reading, erase one or two words from each line of the dialogue. Ask the students to practise it again, supplying the missing words from memory.
4. Repeat Stage 3 until there are no words on the board.

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These activities are not new or original, and many readers will have come across them before. What they have in common is that they will all work in a low-resource environment, and even teachers in classrooms full of the latest technological equipment might like to be reminded of some simple ideas that genuinely work. After all, who knows when your next power cut may occur and you find yourself left to your own devices? ETp

Thank you to Mindy Bergen who taught me these simple activities when I was a new teacher, teaching in a low-resource middle school classroom in Lhasa, Tibet.



Sarah Portell and her husband Craig started an English training centre called NovaLingua in Bayan-Ulgii, Mongolia, in 2011. She enjoys working with new teachers, especially in remote places where people want to learn English but have few opportunities to do so.

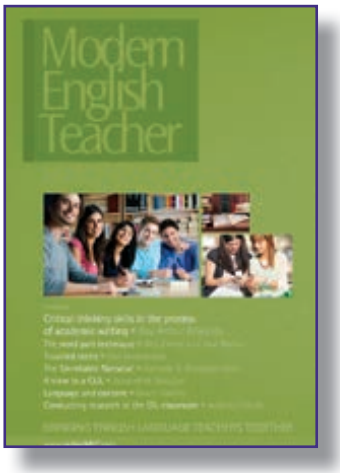
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Me, myselves, I

Lee Shutler widens his horizons.

'*I don't know what to say!*' This is often heard in classrooms around the world – usually from students. However, it wasn't until I heard the same thing during an appraisal with a relatively young and inexperienced teacher starting out on her ELT journey that I really began to think about the statement. She was bemoaning the fact that she seemed and felt isolated in the staffroom and that, while she wanted to join in the daily conversations and banter, she felt she had nothing worthwhile to contribute as she was only newly qualified.

A teacher

My conversation with this shy but very promising teacher developed along the lines of her needing to remember that she was not *just* a teacher, that we all have other 'personas' that we bring with us into the classroom or the staffroom and that her relative inexperience in the classroom did not mean that she was inexperienced in life or that her opinions were, in any way, invalid.

We then explored her other personas. As well as being a teacher, she was a wife, an ex-pat, a graduate, a wine-drinker (moderate!), a baseball fan, a dog lover, a sister, a daughter, an athlete and a tourist. Therefore, when someone asked her how she was, she didn't have to give a 'TEFLish' answer and define her state of being on how well her classes were; instead, she could bring more of herself into the staffroom and into the lives of the other teachers.

She thought about this and, slowly over a number of weeks, became more confident and involved in staffroom life.

A student

In a Road-to-Damascus moment, it then occurred to me that if it worked for her in the staffroom, it could work in the classroom, too.

Like many teachers, I tended to start the lesson (in this case, a monolingual pre-intermediate group at the British Council in Incheon, Korea) with a casual question, such as '*What did you do at the weekend?*' and often got variations on the response '*Nothing much*'. I decided I would hear this answer no more.

I introduced my idea by getting the students to consider the question '*Who am I?*' and to brainstorm in small groups a list of possible roles that they play in life. They came up with a list of over 30 – similar to those of the teacher above. Here are some examples:
husband, wife, daughter, son, brother, sister, divorcee, lover, student, graduate, post-graduate, sportsperson, non-sportsperson, armchair sports fan, linguist (they are in a language class after all!), *drinker, dog lover, cat lover, religious believer, traveller, communist, socialist, liberal* (etc), *charity worker/volunteer* ...

I then put a list of simple questions on the board:
How was your weekend?
What did you do last night?
How was your day?
What did you do on your last holiday? etc

I then asked them to think of the answers to these questions in relation to their various personas.

I then 'picked on' a student about whom I had some inside information:
Teacher: *Hyesun, tell me about your weekend.*
Hyesun: *I stayed at home.*
Teacher: *Hyesun, as a sports fan, tell me about your weekend.*
Hyesun: *It was good. My team won and we are now in the playoffs.*
Teacher: *Hyesun, as a sister, tell me about your weekend.*
Hyesun: *I am worried about my sister's baby. She went into hospital on Friday with a fever.*
Teacher: *Hyesun, as a student, tell me about your weekend.*
Hyesun: *My professor said my work was good and he wants me to do a presentation, so I did some reading.*

Even Hyesun was surprised that her weekend was fuller and more interesting than she had thought. All of her responses were worthy of exploration – her team, her family and her studies – and would have produced interesting conversation, confidence-building fluency and affective strengthening of the class bond between the students.

A class

I then asked the other students in the class to have similar conversations with each other in pairs. At this stage, I just wanted them to follow my example and not follow up on their partner's answers.

This had the (desired) effect of the students wanting to investigate their partner's answers: the questioners wanted to be nosy and the answer-givers wanted to be given the opportunity to expand.

We then did some gambit work on how to react to interesting news so that the conversations would not sound too much like a 1970s ELT textbook, before I asked the class to change partners and repeat the activity. This time I allowed them to explore the response as they wished.

This produced a hearteningly long period of conversation. Afterwards, the students said they felt they had been having conversations in English that they may not have had in Korean (their native language) and that they felt better for the practice, but also for the opportunity to treat their classmates as real people.

★ ★ ★

Subsequent lessons with that class now often start with a variation of that theme – reminding students of their various personas. Information from the initial lesson has been followed up: Hyesun's team didn't do well in the playoffs but her niece is fine and her professor continues to be happy with her work.

The aim of this article is to let teachers know that if they have a class of (say) four students, this could mean that they have well over 40 personas in the class. A small class has suddenly become a big class in which there should be a lot to talk about. ETp



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From observation to practice

Saltanat Meiramova deciphers seven key criteria for learner-centred teaching.

When I first started my internship (as part of the 'Bolashak' international scholarship programme) on Theory and Methods of Professional Education at the University of Glasgow, UK, I found many differences between the style of language teaching and learning I was witnessing and that of my home country, Kazakhstan. I was invited to observe three types of classes: English speaking skills (ESS), MEd English Language Teaching and classes taking place at private language schools in Glasgow. This allowed me to examine how teachers select appropriate methods and strategies and how they apply new techniques and the theory behind them in practice in order to achieve effective learning. This observation has opened my eyes to the task-based approach and has made me think that the fundamental principles of learning and teaching should be reconsidered in the context of English teaching and teacher training in Kazakhstan.

In this article, *students* refers to university students who are learning the English language and those simultaneously training to be future English teachers.

A shift towards task-based learning

As practitioners, we are always concerned with improving our own experience as teachers and employing methods that will increase our students' motivation and academic achievement. Teachers should not just 'fill up' their students with knowledge (as happened in my university when I was a student), but encourage them to learn by doing and help them to personalise what they learn and appreciate its usefulness for their future teaching careers. The many round-table discussions, teachers' interviews, seminars and classes I have participated in while in the UK have helped me to see the task-based approach as the most effective and appropriate to use. The main reasons are as follows:

- It is learner-centred.
- It seems more useful to me than the presentation–practice–production (PPP) approach.
- It provides target language exposure rather than rote learning.
- It requires classroom dynamics which involve the students in a socialising process.

Key criteria

As a result of observing classes and reflecting on what I have seen at the University of Glasgow, I have developed seven key criteria for teaching and learning, which I believe should be implemented in Kazakhstan (see Figure 1).

The reason why I have chosen these criteria is that they reflect the contexts in which English is taught and used. In other words, they contribute towards a real picture of what is happening in the classroom.

1 Classroom management

Four important features of classroom management are considered here: cognitively-challenging lesson content; learner-centred teaching; staging cohesion; and appropriacy of activities.

Cognitively-challenging lesson content

This includes the learning context, activities and class organisation, teaching aids, language exposure and possible problems. Students should be able to make attempts at using the target language in meaningful but controlled contexts.

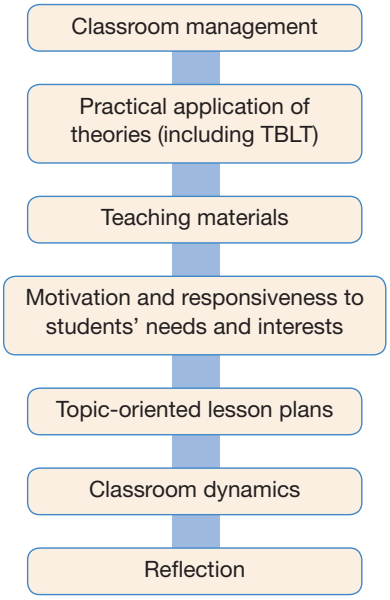


Figure 1 Key criteria in a task-based learning and teaching context

Learner-centred teaching

Teachers in Kazakhstan are gradually moving from a teacher-centred approach towards a learner-centred approach, realising that this is a viable way to meet diverse needs. This involves ensuring that the classroom organisation is student-focused; that students engage actively in the lesson, whether working in pairs, groups or individually; and that the content is task-based. This encourages the students to become self-directed and responsible decision-makers, participating actively in their own learning.

Staging cohesion

The role of staging cohesion in classroom management is very important and relies on the teacher developing a well-structured lesson plan, focused on a unifying theme, topic and aims. In a well-staged lesson, language learning is seen as a 'process' rather than a 'product'. Much attention is paid to vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation through practice, and both receptive and productive skills are dealt with. (See Figure 2.)

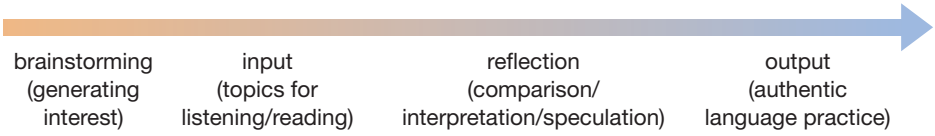


Figure 2 An example of lesson staging

Appropriacy of activities

It is important for teachers to identify activities which will lead to communicative, authentic use of language – at the same time taking into consideration the students' learning styles and preferences. These activities might include awareness-raising activities and information-gap, reasoning-gap and opinion-gap tasks. The think–pair–share approach, in which students first think of ideas individually, then discuss them in pairs before sharing with the class, is one way to involve students more actively with the lesson content.

2 Practical application of theories

Teachers should provide their students with an introduction to the theories and concepts which relate to language acquisition and to the learning and teaching of language. These theories should include an overview of the language itself and the language teaching/learning process. The integration of skills in language development and theories underlying assessment procedures should also be considered in syllabuses. This can help both teachers and students to relate underlying principles to practical applications by creating their own new understanding of teaching and learning.

3 Teaching materials

Teaching materials play a crucial role in language learning and teaching. They can be taken from authentic sources, such as journals, newspapers, the internet or recordings from TV, radio and films; they can be textbooks or reference materials, such as linguistic corpora, grammar reference books and dictionaries. Authentic materials, in particular, can provide students with examples of the target language in a *real* context. Teachers need to ensure that the teaching materials they use are suitable for the purpose and are likely to engage the students' interest.

4 Motivation and responsiveness to students' needs and interests

Identification of strategies to stimulate student engagement and student autonomy should be used to manage the students' level of motivation. Presenting teaching materials with media-intensive support and ensuring the students' engagement in a meaningful learning process should contribute towards motivating them to make efforts to learn the target language. Taking into account the students' needs and interests is very important because this will encourage them to pursue their own enquiries and express themselves in a supportive and productive learning environment. Such an environment will help the students to take responsibility for their own learning and make them prepared to pursue and try out new ideas.

5 Topic-oriented lesson plans

Jack Richards states, that *'the success with which a teacher conducts a lesson is often thought to depend on the effectiveness with which the lesson was planned'*. There are some pedagogical implications to be considered here:

- A lesson plan should list the topic and aims of the lesson and should outline the method and materials to be used.
- The lesson plan should take into account the construction and design of teacher-produced materials and/or the selection of appropriate published materials.
- The lesson plan should outline ways in which meanings can be made accessible: by visual/aural support; by editing and simplifying texts; by allowing for groupwork; by specifying the staging and presentation of tasks; by outlining plans for getting the students involved in activities designed to develop their language skills.

It is worth noting that teachers should choose tasks which are relevant to the students' needs, and should provide clear specifications for how they intend to set up and run each task. An example of a smooth lesson sequence would have the following features:

- **Knowledge** = activating the students' prior knowledge of a topic and/or piece of language
- **Comprehension** = ensuring the students understand the instructions and the nature of the problem to be solved
- **Application** = highlighting the application of knowledge and skills in a new context by providing the students with prompts to activate relevant prior knowledge
- **Analysis** = recalling and applying prior knowledge to explain, extrapolate and further analyse a topic, situation or problem
- **Synthesis** = providing answers within the context of readings or tasks assigned by the teacher, eg recalling previously memorised information and applying it to a new context
- **Evaluation** = making judgements based on defined criteria, eg judging the logical consistency of written materials and the adequacy with which conclusions are supported by data.

6 Classroom dynamics

Classroom dynamics can involve whole-class interaction, small group interaction, interaction in pairs, student–teacher interaction and individual work. These will vary according to the type of activities being undertaken. Teachers should exploit any opportunities to get their students to socialise in the classroom as this can be a very motivating process.

7 Reflection

Critical reflection on your own teaching and learning, which includes examining your own particular context, interpreting what takes place in a lesson and evaluating your decisions, is important for both teachers and students. It brings about a deeper awareness of what you are doing, learning and teaching, which may lead you to decide to make changes to your teaching and learning practice.

★ ★ ★

The key criteria I have outlined here are ones that I believe are important for facilitating the students' understanding, cognitive perception and effective language use so that they can communicate successfully. ETp

Richards, J C *Beyond Training* CUP 1998



Saltanat Meiramova is an associate professor at Gumilyov Eurasian National University and Seifullin AgroTechnical University in Kazakhstan, where she teaches BA, MA and PhD students. Her coursebook *English in Professional Activity* is published by LAMBERT AcadPublishing.

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A new vision of revision

Nestor Kiourtzidis and **Tim Chase** say that spaced-repetition tools are the name of the game.

We've all been there before ... You deliver the perfect lesson, the students are eagerly putting the target language into practice. However, the following week they can barely recognise the new words you taught them, much less use them in a sentence.

It seems that no matter how you look at it, revision is the name of the game for genuine, long-term vocabulary acquisition.

English language teachers have long been advised to get their students to record new vocabulary in a notebook and to review it outside class time. Although this is a tried and true study method, the problem with any type of revision outside the classroom is that the effort required to memorise lists of words or phrases rises exponentially the more items students are required to learn. Every word or phrase has a unique level of difficulty for a particular learner and requires a different number of repetitions to become locked in the impenetrable vault of the long-term memory. In practice, students tend to revise easier items too often, and more difficult items not often enough. And what if the students are simply too 'lazy', or too busy, to pick up their rapidly-wearing-out notebooks?

Back to the past

Much to the elation of concerned teachers everywhere, modern technology has come to the rescue and is making it possible to optimise the revision process (can't you hear the students dancing in the streets?). But before we get too far ahead of ourselves, let's jump back a bit in time to the late 19th century and examine the foundations of a learning technique called 'spaced repetition'.

Noted German Psychologist Hermann Ebbinghaus (1850–1909) conducted extensive experimentation with lists of nonsense words. He discovered that the rate at which we start to forget a recently-learnt or reviewed item of knowledge follows a predictable pattern or curve. (Ever heard of the *forgetting curve*? Yep, this is that guy.) Significantly, the process of forgetting slows down after



each repetition or review. With time, increasingly less frequent reviews are needed in order to remember an item of any level of difficulty.

Since Herr Ebbinghaus's time, sophisticated algorithms (sets of mathematical equations) have been developed to calculate the optimum intervals between each repetition, minimising the number of repetitions needed and maximising the period of memory retention. Early experiments were based on ordinary paper flashcards. Students were first shown the question part of a flashcard and then, depending on their response, the flashcard was scheduled for repetition on a specific future date. Unfortunately, due to the extremely time-consuming nature of creating physical flashcards and manually scheduling their review, this method was rendered completely impractical for everyday use.

Back to the future

With the arrival of the computing age, spaced-repetition activities have been transformed into highly efficient speed-learning methods. These days, there are a number of computer programs and mobile apps that harness these powerful learning algorithms. Most of these applications offer prefabricated sets of *electronic* flashcards for review – and some even offer users the option to create their own flashcards.

So, as much as your students' trusty vocabulary notebook is a beloved item in the classroom, it may soon go the way of the telegraph. Creating customised electronic flashcards greatly enhances language acquisition and makes the learning process more productive. Electronic flashcards can also include multimedia elements, such as audio, images and even animation. Having said this, we may have reached the laziness threshold once again. Asking students to prepare their own media-rich flashcards after every lesson would be totally impractical, not to mention requiring an element of technical skill.

★ ★ ★

There is a veritable sea change in the ELT world, and online resources are playing an increasingly important role in how students are learning and – more importantly – how teachers are teaching. Perhaps future language learning courses that take advantage of spaced-repetition technology will start to include their own prefabricated electronic flashcard packages, covering the new language from each lesson. Integrated applications that allow teachers and students to access the flashcard database will help both teacher and student keep track of progress, maximise language acquisition ... and minimise laziness. ETp



Nestor Kiourtzidis is the co-founder of *www.linguahouse.com*. He develops printable EFL/ESL lesson plans and other resources that are integrated with spaced-repetition learning. He has a passion for implementing technology in language learning.

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Five things you always wanted to know about

SMS/text messaging

(but were too afraid to ask)

In this series, Nicky Hockly explains aspects of technology which some people may be embarrassed to confess that they don't really understand. In this article, she suggests how to work with SMS. SMS (Short Message Service) is also known as 'text messaging' and is typically done via a mobile phone.

1 What's to know? I already send text messages with my phone regularly.

I'm sure you do, but have you thought about how you might use text messaging with your students, both inside and outside the classroom? Have you considered using SMS with students of different ages, both adults and young learners? If not, read on.

2 OK, so how could I use SMS with my students?

In a number of ways: for admin and for language work. Admin-related text messages can include reminders about upcoming deadlines, exams, meetings or excursions, or general school news and information. You and/or the school admin department can be responsible for sending these to your students via group text message services. There are free group text messaging services, such as gText (*www.gtext.com*), so sending text messages to students doesn't need to be expensive.

You can use SMS both inside and outside the classroom for language-related work. It's easiest to start slowly, by using text messages *outside* the classroom. For example, by sending your students short homework assignments by text. Or by sending them idioms or vocabulary items regularly. Of course, you first need to check that everybody in the class owns a phone! The advantage of sending an SMS rather than an email is that the students are more likely to read it – immediately.

For using SMS *in* the classroom, simple activities include:

- short dictations (see a lesson plan for this at *http://goo.gl/FM85N*)
- taking part in live polls (eg using a free polling service like Poll Everywhere: *www.polleverywhere.com*)
- sending and decoding emoticons, or using them to change the mood or direction of a roleplay
- 'translating' textspeak messages into standard English
- creating chain sentences by passing a phone around in a small group
- creating SMS conversations between fictional or historical characters

3 But what if my students don't own smartphones?

To use text messaging, you and your students don't need to own expensive smartphones or phones that connect to the internet. Simple low-end phones (often called 'feature phones') are fine. One thing to check is whether your students need to pay to send text messages. Some phone contracts will include a large – or even limitless – number of free text messages per month, but this is not always the case. If text messaging is expensive for your students, then you can do activities using the SMS function in their phones without actually sending the message itself, or *you* can send the text messages and just have the students receive them.

4 Some of my students are young learners. How could I possibly use SMS with them?

If your students are under 18, then you need to work within the confines of your school's 'acceptable use policy' (AUP). An AUP will typically cover a range of digital issues, such as rights over digital photos taken in school, appropriate use of personal devices, e-safety practices, consequences for cyberbullying, etc. It can include a section on the use of mobile devices in and outside the classroom. If you work with very young learners, it's a good idea to get the parents on board by explaining how and why devices will be used with students, and how this is beneficial for learning. Some schools hold meetings with parents at the beginning of the school year to explain the rationale behind their AUP.

Of course, many younger learners don't own mobile phones. Carol Rainbow, a trainer based in the UK, ran a project using class sets of cheap feature phones with young learners, as part of a strategy to encourage reluctant readers. You can read about this very interesting initiative at *http://goo.gl/JZ72K*.

5 What about classroom management issues? Won't my students just text their friends and fool around if they are allowed to use phones in class?

Classroom management is arguably more of an issue with younger learners and teenagers than with adults. You can include guidelines for appropriate classroom use of phones in your school AUP, with a clear indication of consequences for misuse (such as filming the teacher or classmates without permission, or texting inappropriate messages). The other 'trick' is to ensure that, during class, phones are kept visible and face down on the students' desks. The students are told when to pick up and use the phones to carry out a specific task (such as a dictation), and as soon as the task is completed, the students need to place the phone back on their desks, face down and clearly visible to you. Having a clear reason to use the phones in carrying out a specific task – and only using them for this brief period of time – will help deal with potential classroom management issues.

And finally, don't be afraid to discuss the use of SMS and mobile phones with the students themselves. Let them know the rationale, and get feedback from them. Including them in the reasoning, and allowing them to voice an opinion, will ensure more buy-in on the part of the students.



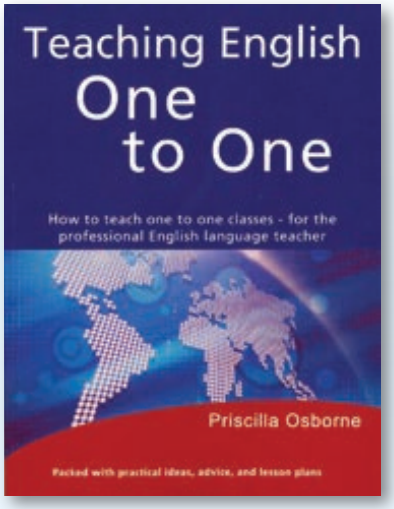
Nicky Hockly is Director of Pedagogy of The Consultants-E, an online teacher training and development consultancy. Her most recent book is *Digital Literacies*, published by Pearson. She has published an e-book, *Webinars: A Cookbook for Educators* (*the-round.com*), and is currently working on a book on mobile and handheld learning. She maintains a blog at *www.emoderationskills.com*.

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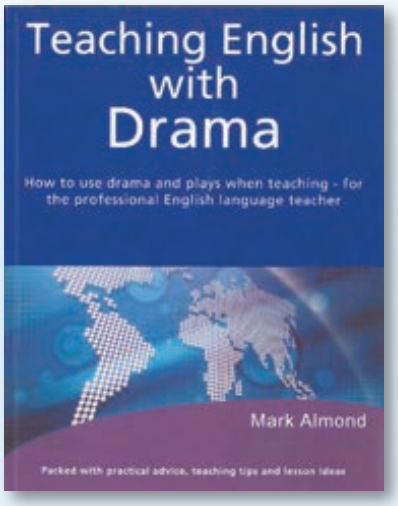
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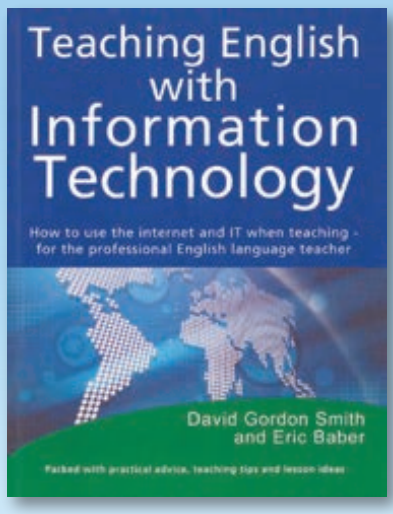
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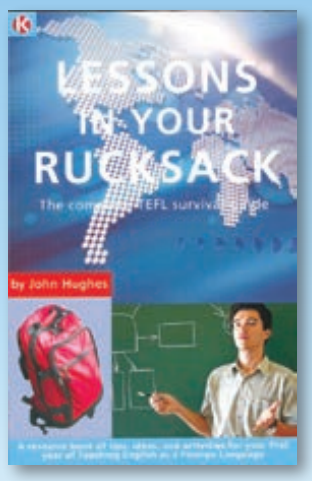
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Webwatcher

Russell Stannard finds *Prezi* to be a real alternative to *PowerPoint*.

PowerPoint is probably one of the most frequently used technologies in education. Most people use it, or something similar, when they give presentations and talks. It is quite common to see teachers using it in ELT classes, too. Of course, it is also great to get students to create their own *PowerPoint* presentations and then give them to groups or even to the whole class.

You may also have heard of *Prezi*. It is a genuine alternative to using *PowerPoint* and one that has been getting a lot of attention in the educational world. It works in a completely different way from *PowerPoint*, being based on the idea of brainstorming or laying out all your ideas and then connecting them. You create an 'animation path' that takes you through your ideas, linking them together – and this becomes your presentation. By working this way, you avoid the rather linear approach of *PowerPoint*. *Prezi* can take a lot of getting used to, and many *PowerPoint* users find it difficult to move from one product to the other. However, it does offer lots of possibilities and a genuinely different way of creating your presentations.

What you can do

Imagine you were going to make a presentation on the subject of human trafficking. You might want to make some important points, you might have an interesting video you want to show, you might have some images, too. You could lay all these items out on your 'canvas' in *Prezi* and then think about how you want to link them together. You could start with some opening key points, then go to each key point individually to add more detail, then go to a picture, then a video, and then even come back to the opening points and reiterate them. Once you have your plan, you can simply link the ideas together by creating an animation path. You can jump back to points made earlier and zoom in on individual points to show how they are linked to the broader picture. Though it is tricky to use at the start (you will find the videos mentioned at the end of this article a massive help), eventually it really starts to make sense.

The *Prezi* canvas

The way you develop a *Prezi* presentation (a prezi) sometimes makes it hard to visualise, especially if you create your own one from scratch. Most people think of the 'slides' on the left-hand side the same way they do the slides in *PowerPoint*. Actually, what you are seeing on the left-hand side is not slides, but the animation path. You have just one canvas and you move around the different objects on that canvas. You can access the whole canvas at the top of the screen on the left. So the presentation is put together by creating the path through the objects and choosing what you zoom into and focus on.

The next problem is 'objects' and 'frames'. When you add an *object* onto the screen (using the *Insert* tab), it is simply an object, which you are adding to your canvas. So an object might be a picture or a video which you add to the canvas, but this does not affect the animation path. To add the object to the animation path, you need to click on 'Edit path' and then click on the object. Only then will it be part of the animation path and included in the presentation. However, *frames* don't work like this. When you add a frame onto the screen (using the *Frames & Arrows* tab), it is also added to the animation path automatically. Once you get your head around these two concepts, you will start to understand how the tool works.

The *Prezi* templates

A good way to start with *Prezi* is to use one of the pre-prepared templates. These already have the animation path defined and so you simply add in the text, video, pictures and objects you want and it is ready. *Prezi* offers a range of templates to work with and some of them work really well. So, for example, if you want to focus on a central point and then talk about a related point and then come back to the central point, you could try using the 'Cohesion' template. Another nice one that works well with 'for and against' or balanced arguments is the template called 'Balanced'.

The *Prezi* account

To use *Prezi*, you actually create an account online (the basic one is free) and then all your prezis are accessible from your account. You simple click on the prezi you want and then click on *Present*. You can then use the arrow keys on your keyboard to move back and forth through your prezi. Prezis can also be downloaded to be used offline.

What your students can do

Prezi allows for collaboration and so you can have more than one person creating a prezi. This could be an interesting way of using the tool with your students. They can build presentations together in pairs or groups and can also do this remotely. Your students might like the idea of brainstorming their ideas and then linking them all together, and they might find that creating a presentation on *Prezi* is a more interesting way of presenting their ideas.

Prezi is a bit tricky at first, but once you get the hang of it, it has real potential.

I have made some help videos for using *Prezi*.
You can find these at:

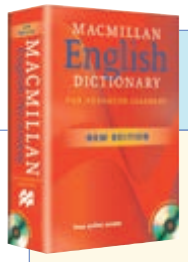
www.teachertrainingvideos.com/prezi1/index.html

www.teachertrainingvideos.com/prezi2/index.html



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



Prize crossword 60

ET*p* presents the sixtieth 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 60, 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 October 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*).

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

VERY FREQUENT WORDS

*** To gain knowledge or experience of something by being taught

*** A building where people get on and off buses and trains

*** A reply to a question

*** To realise that someone or something is making a sound

*** A soft furry pet with a long thin tail that catches mice

*** On every occasion

*** Producing good results by using available resources economically

*** A road vehicle for one driver and a few passengers

*** Owning a lot of money or valuable possessions

*** A time at which something happens

*** *A Dog ___ Small* (children's book by Philippa Pearce)

*** The mixture of gases surrounding the Earth, that we breathe

*** *Last Year ___ Marienbad* (film directed by Alain Resnais)

FREQUENT WORDS

** A large bird with big eyes and a small sharp beak

** A statement that two sets of numbers, letters or symbols are equal

** A flat piece of plastic, metal or wood with raised edges, used for carrying things

** An exclamation used to show pleasure or achievement

** A vehicle that people can live and travel in on holiday

** An object used for writing or drawing in ink

** An enclosed area in a port where ships tie up

FAIRLY FREQUENT WORDS

* A light brown colour

* A place where people go as punishment for a crime

* A long journey, especially by boat or into space

* A strong artificial material used in making plastic and cloth

* To put one or both knees on the ground

* To give something to someone officially or decide that something can be used for a specific purpose

* Trousers made of denim

LESS FREQUENT WORDS

– An exclamation used to show understanding

– To make someone liked by someone else

– An attitude that shows a lack of respect or care for people's needs

– A young horse, donkey or mule

– A prefix that gives the opposite meaning to some words beginning with 'I'

– Relating to something very basic

– White stone used for making statues and decorations

– A rubber for removing pencil marks

– Typical of or suitable for a monarch

– A competition in which ticket holders can win a prize

– To dig in the ground in order to find things from the past

– An exciting and attractive quality

– The crime of setting fire to buildings

– Great effort, energy and enthusiasm

– Something that is related but not exactly the same

– An old word used to draw attention to something

– An abbreviation that means you should pay particular attention to something

– An exclamation used to show lack of understanding or surprise

– A female sheep

– A relaxing activity involving physical and breathing exercises

– To make marks on a hard surface by cutting into it

– Someone who deliberately damages property

– To kill someone by burning them

– An abbreviation used to introduce the subject you are going to write about

– To want something in a way that is hard to control

16	12	23	15	24	12	9		21	23	6	26	11	1	2	14
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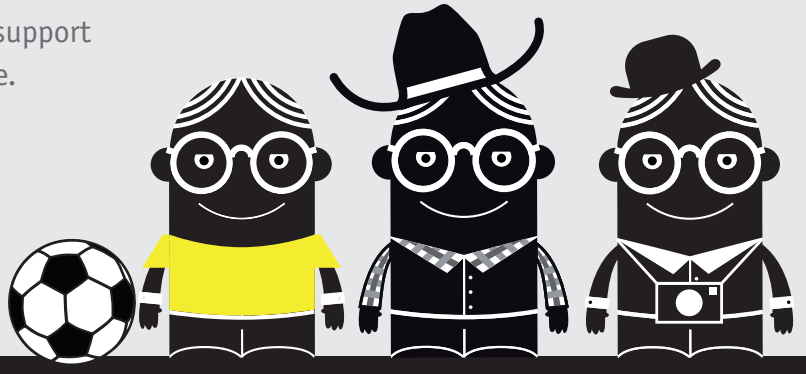
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