

# NEWS

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**ACTES ELT**  
convention '97

**COPING WITH THE MIXED LEVEL CLASS**  
Luke Prodromou, interviewed by Neus Serra

**AND WHAT ABOUT THE LANGUAGE  
TEACHER IN THE STATE SYSTEM?**  
Anthony Bruton

**LINGUISTIC PROFILING AND LANGUAGE  
ASSESSMENT**  
A secondary school teacher's reactions to the Processability Theory  
Rosa Trenchs

**Presidenta d'APAC**

Isabel Vidaller

**Editors**

Eva González

Rosemary Hancock

**Publicity**

José Antonio Martín

Eva González

**Design**

Marc Miquelay

Mònica Valls

**APAC**

Gran Via, 606, 4rt - Zona - F i G

08007 Barcelona

Telephone and Fax 317 01 37

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# From Me to You

Dear APAC members,

By now all of you will be well and truly back into your respective routines, whether at school, university, language school or any other place connected with education, so let us wish you a very happy and fulfilling new academic year!

This year begins with changes: EGB is a thing of the past now as ESO comes into its own; university students have begun classes earlier as the academic year evolves; and in Scotland and Wales recent referendums have gained a vote of approval for devolution!

This leads us to Roger Marshall's most interesting insights into the subject of diversity in his article on British Cultural Studies in the ELT classroom in the British Council section of the magazine. Anthony Bruton (Universidad de Sevilla) poses an interesting question in his article entitled "And What about the Language Teacher in the State System?" Hopefully, Anthony's article will provide you with some answers! Rosa Trenchs' brings up a perennial question, "Why do students who are able to write beautiful passive sentences in the strangest verb tenses suddenly become Sitting Bull when it comes to speaking?" (Sound familiar?!) In her article, "Linguistic Profiling and Language Assessment" she tells us her reactions to what Mr. M. Pienemann had to say on this subject at the Mediterranean Institute.

The interview in this issue features Luke Prodromou from Greece talking to Neus Serra at last year's APAC convention on the subject of "Coping with the Mixed Level Class". Yet another familiar problem to many of us, we're sure!

From the selection of "Actes" of this year's APAC convention there is certainly something for everyone: material on the subject of reading ("A Content-Based Approach to Reading in an EST Context"), writing ("Newspapers are 'in'"), listening ("The Live Model - Listening and Speaking in the Classroom") and project-work ("Two Activities from an Interdisciplinary Project Carried Out in Metropolitan Barcelona by the Content Teaching Group"). In addition, there are two accounts of activities for primary school learners: "Let's Make a Film!" and "Cross-curricular Topics in a Young Learners' Class". Computer fans should see "Hands On", an article about practical reading and writing activities using computers, tried and tested with ESO students. Something a little different is the summary of the panel discussion that took place at the convention on the subject of evaluation in the new education system.

Once more we would encourage anyone interested in writing reviews of recent EFL publications to get in touch with us and, what's more, we would very much like to hear from you in letter form on any topic of your choice. So take a careful look at this issue and read our "letters to the editor"!

We hope you enjoy this issue of APAC of NEWS and will be able to use some of the ideas in it over the coming months. Have a good academic year!

Yours,

Rosemary Hancock  
Eva González

## A P A C of NEWS

n° 31

October 1997

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The opinions expressed by contributors are their own and not necessarily those of APAC itself.

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*Dear Apacs,*

*Hem aprofitat part d'aquestes vacances d'estiu per a crear un diàleg més fluid i efectiu amb vosaltres, per la qual cosa hem fet unes pàgines Web; la nostra adreça és <http://www.fm2.com/apac>. També tenim una adreça de correu electrònic a la vostra disposició, [apac@seker.es](mailto:apac@seker.es), per tal de donar una major fluïdesa i rapidesa a les vostres preguntes i suggeriments.*

*Crec que de mica en mica estem aconseguint que la nostra seu sigui "a meeting point" per a tots nosaltres; ja s'han fet algunes reunions a la nostra sala de juntes, la qual tot i ser petita té una cabuda suficient per a reunions de deu o dotze persones. Recordeu que la podeu reservar telefonant a l'oficina de 4 a 8 del vespre.*

*Estem contents d'haver rebut alguna carta al butlletí, per la qual cosa es reobrirà la bústia que havíem tingut en altres números. Recordeu que representem un col·lectiu prou nombros per a que, si més no, siguem escoltats. El que parlem en els nostres respectius cercles es pot publicar, tenint d'aquesta manera molta més difusió i força i podent esdevenir fins i tot un punt de partida per a possibles reivindicacions.*

*Hem organitzat un Comitè de Redacció per a intentar que els continguts del nostre butlletí estiguin més equilibrats de manera que tractin temes d'interès per a tots els nivells d'ensenyament. Volem proporcionar-vos material que pogueu utilitzar directament a classe, però per això necessitem la vostra col·laboració, les vostres experiències a l'aula... També necessitem associats que facin 'reviews' dels llibres que rebem al nostra associació. Penseu que a més de compartir experiències afegireu publicacions al vostre currículum.*

*Us recordo de nou que el proper 30 de novembre es tanca el termini de presentació de candidatures i que, tal i com especifiquen els nostres estatuts, per a presentar una candidatura es necessita: president/a, vice-president/a, secretari/a, tresorer/a i un mínim de sis vocals. També voldria recordar-vos que les pàgines d'aquest butlletí estan a la vostra disposició per a fer campanya, donar-vos a conèixer o el que creieu més oportú.*

*Bon inici de curs.*

*Ben cordialment,*

*Isabel Vidaller*

*Presidenta d'APAC*

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# Teacher Training Courses

OUR CENTRES IN 1997 HAVE INCLUDED THESE SCHOOLS.

IN 1998 WE SHALL ADD MORE.

*Alpha College - Dublin*

*Anglolang - Scarborough*

*Basil Paterson College*

*Beet Language Centre*

*Bell Teacher Training Institute*

*Cambridge Centre for Languages*

*Colchester English Study Centre*

*Eastbourne School of English*

*Edinburgh School of English*

*Globe English Centre*

*Harrogate Tutorial College*

*Hilderstone College*

*International House, Hastings*

*Intl Teaching/Training Centre*

*ITS - Hastings*

*Lake School of English*

*Lydbury English Centre*

*Pilgrims - Canterbury*

*Project Scotland*

*Regent Edinburgh*

*Salisbury School of English*

*Sidmouth International*

*Skola Teacher Training*

*St. Clare's Oxford*

*Studio Cambridge*

*Swan School of English, Oxford*

*Swan School of English, Stratford*

BC Teacher Training S.L. is probably the Nº 1 Agency in Spain for Courses for Teachers of English. In 1997 we have been responsible for booking 226 courses in the United Kingdom & in Ireland.

Firstly, we would like to thank all the teachers, both in Catalunya and elsewhere, for depositing their confidence in us. For 1998 we hope to have an even bigger portfolio of courses at the best UK & Irish centres and also at Universities. If you are thinking about taking a course next summer, we invite you to send us your name and address and you will automatically receive a copy of the 1998 guide at your home or school.

Secondly, we shall be negotiating with the centres we represent, to provide short inexpensive courses here in Catalunya in 1998. We shall be very interested to have your opinions about the content and the best dates/times so that you can all take the maximum advantage of them. All teachers in Catalunya who contact us with their opinions will receive a discount on the courses offered.

We shall, as always, have a table at the APAC Jornades in February and hope to see you all there.

**BC Teacher Training, Apartado 337, Sant Cugat del Vallès, 08190 Barcelona, Tel / Fax 589 23 84,  
Mobile 939 002 542  
e-mail [bcteach@mx3.redestb.es](mailto:bcteach@mx3.redestb.es)**

# AND WHAT ABOUT THE LANGUAGE TEACHER IN THE STATE SYSTEM?

Anthony Bruton

*Universidad de Sevilla*

**'Oh, come on now, you know about my debutante.'  
She said, 'Your debutante just knows what you need,  
but I know what you want.' (Bob Dylan)**

**T**he words from Bob Dylan might well reflect the concern for the learner in recent years. Implicit in this concern is the assumption that language instruction has not been paying sufficient attention to the learner and that the pendulum should swing in that direction. On the other hand, a number of less conventional approaches, described in Stevick (1980) or Richards & Rodgers (1986), have been heralded as learner-oriented, though they are usually teacher-selected in disguise.

The learner-centred arguments very often portray the adversary as the 'traditional' teacher, who is rather despotic and insensitive to learners' needs. In my experience, there have been teachers who just did not care, but most of those who did, certainly had very clear learning goals. A possible criticism might be the goals were too clear with little flexibility, which was partly a reflection of the more general socio-cultural context and the existing goals and expectations. However, any generalization about teachers, and specially about their effectiveness, should be tentative. With this in mind, let us consider some of the learner-centred arguments in ELT over the last few decades.

## LEARNER-CENTREDNESS

Learner-centredness has had many interpretations, some of which are very confused (Nunan, 1993, for example). One of them assumes taking into account learners' needs (Harmer, 1992). So, we can begin with the needs analysis debates of the 1970s on the target product, which were partly induced by ESP. In two significant books of the time, Wilkins (1976) and Munby (1978), needs were defined in target language knowledge and skills terms. The most successful

applications of needs analyses were to groups of learners with common mutual specialist interests, or to short intensive induction courses. However, in state systems, determining needs is fraught with difficulties. Given large numbers of learners with varying specialized interests, even the choice between general-specific English is never clearcut. This choice is complicated by possible conflicts between immediate wants and particular interests, and an array of possible longer term intrinsic or extrinsic target needs. If we agree that some kind of communicative goal is probably desirable, we have the additional question of the identity the learner establishes in the target language. And this is only in terms of outcomes, but what about the means or process?

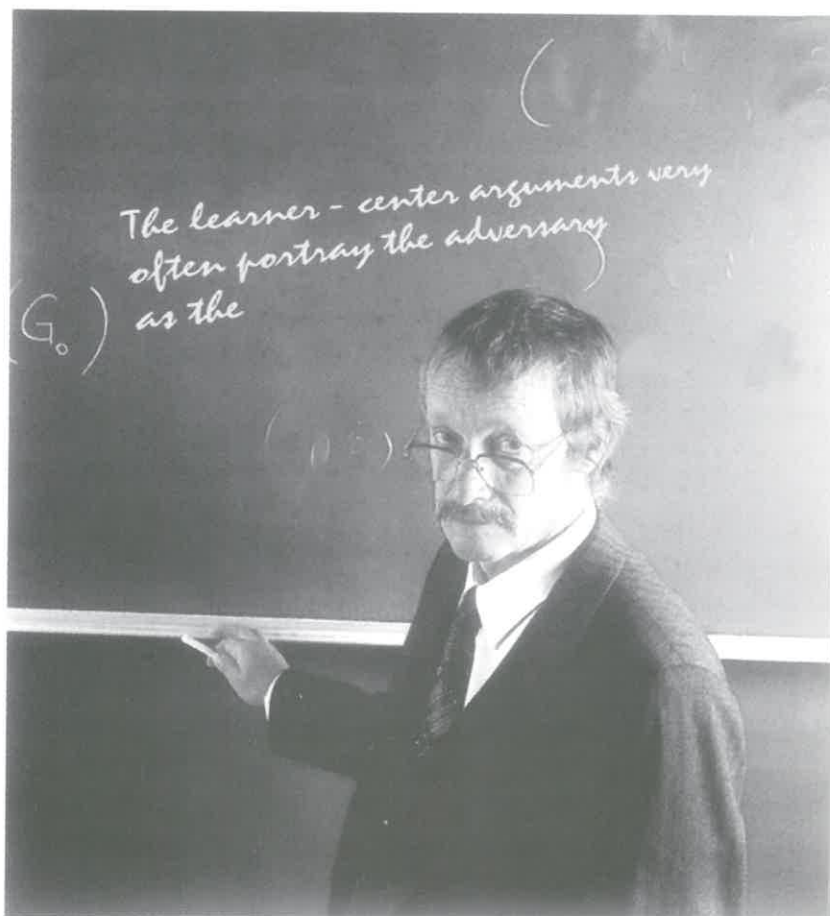
The process issue directed attention to how learning proceeds and how it is best achieved (see Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). The hypothesis testing framework, which borrowed heavily from Chomsky (1959), supposed that learner similarities were greater than their differences. Krashen's (1981) natural order hypothesis is a reflection of this view. It was in this climate that some of the less conventional process-based approaches appeared. Although they were based on learning principles, they took a limited set of features, generalized them and enlarged them. The result was that, instead of being applicable to everyone, these approaches threatened many learners, so that only the adherents to THE approach persevered. THE approach usually included certain materials and rituals, spelt out in a manual, which were applied by the instructor, with greater or lesser orthodoxy, like evangelical religions. Ironically, the tendency in most such prescriptive proposals is towards teacher conformity and uniformity.

In fact, these approaches suit the (type of) teacher first and then those learners who find them rewarding. Any successes are attributable to self-selection as much as anything else. Not surprisingly, it is in the private sector that they have had their greatest success, since many institutions do not cater for all-comers and the public can choose their learning centres. However, in the state sector we must tread more carefully, in trying to adopt learning procedures. For this reason, conventional approaches persist, since they are actually more flexible on teacher roles, and can be modified to accommodate a broader range of learners.

At the other end of the spectrum, we find a concern for differences, in the literature on individualization and autonomy. Brooker & Grundy (1987) argue that individualization is the corollary of learner-centredness, and has the goal of catering for diverse needs, but also fostering autonomy. Dickinson (1987) adds numerous other reasons for self-direction, including affective or motivational factors, and the efficient use of time. He distinguishes between learner-centred and materials-centred self-instruction. There is an assumption that learners develop from supervised use of prepared self access materials as a precursor to greater autonomy in the selection of materials and their implementation. This presupposes an implicit or explicit need to develop learning strategies, at the macro and micro level.

In this respect, O'Neill (1991) is totally justified in pointing out that non-interventionism and inappropriate group tasks might not be learner-centred at all. However, in reply, both Harmer (1992) and Bruton (1992) point out that group tasks can be structured or not, with or without feedback. For this reason, we should be very cautious about the use of some non-teacher-fronted materials since they can be even more controlled, prescriptive and deductive than teacher-fronted ones. For example, Fortune's (1988) study shows clearly that most grammar (work)books are actually more deductive than inductive, in contrast to course materials most learners use. Furthermore, we might find that the less proficient learners are the most prejudiced by such activities, unless the teacher employs the decentralized class to attend to their problems. This reflects the need to distinguish classroom organization variables from material design ones.

A third set of factors have been labelled 'affective'



(Krashen & Terrell, 1983). These should be divided into at least (a) affective factors towards the target language and its community, and (b) affective factors in the classroom. Sometimes these two sets of factors are closely associated. However, it is possible for a learner to despise British culture, believe that English is important and enjoy the English class. So, we would have a positive affective environment, instrumental motives and negative attitudes towards the culture, at the most general level.

Where activities for affective development are central to an approach, some learners might feel like psychiatric patients and not be able to escape from these classes fast enough. Even less extreme affective-oriented suggestions, such as Moskowitz's (1969) humanistic techniques, have their contradictions. She stresses the affective over the cognitive, and emphasizes recognizing only the positive aspects of student behaviour. In which case, does humanistic mean being unnatural and false?

From this consideration of some learner-orientations over the years, the teacher is advised to steer well clear of instant recipes for classroom cohesion and harmony, and claims made for a perfect approach. The essence of any positive development will be



reflection and negotiation, however minimal it might be, though it is more problematic than Nunan (1988) might have us believe.

## TEACHERS

We already have some idea of the complications in so-called learner-orientedness. Obviously, we cannot be over-scientific about needs/wants, nor can we cater for everyone all the time. However, teachers do not need to be aware of the diversity of learner interests, and in some cases 'causative'. That is, they have to be capable of affecting learners, though the manner and the amount is a sensitive issue.

In state institutions, with mainly non-native teachers, we should recognize that the teachers have had first and experience of practices that are affective, or not. They are aware of viable objectives and experimented means. For these teachers to adopt a communicative orientation is no mean feat in itself. However, much of the theory, in ELT at least, has filtered through native speakers of English in fairly unrepresentative contexts of learning. The consequence is that many recommended materials and practices may actually be questionable, when applied elsewhere. Very typical examples are: simulated target language contexts over local ones; the use of monolingual rather than bilingual dictionaries; the exclusion of L1 use in translating, explaining or stimulus materials; the superiority of inductive grammar over deductive, or inference over explanation; the rejection of formal practice and correction; the preference for non-teacher-fronted activities over teacher-fronted ones, etc.

Having said this, we must admit that non-native teachers may also have limitations. A very common tendency is for teachers to believe that the way 'they did it' is best, while failing to recognize that they actually reflect a minority of those who succeeded in the system. State system instruction should encompass as broad a student appeal as possible, catering especially for the less motivated or proficient, which is where much of the concern for learner-centredness originated.

## CONCLUSION

Teachers are the critical element in classroom learning. Furthermore, they are ultimately responsible and accountable for outcomes, however much negotiation we might recommend. They are also human and have differing interests, personalities, experiences, abilities and feelings. They usually have limited resources and disposable time as well.

In discussions on learner-centredness, realistic options for the average teacher should be the main concern, not idealistic suggestions from non-practitioners. At the same time, there should be no shame in making it clear that teachers can do a certain amount, beyond which society has to make demands elsewhere, or budget for additional resources. Impositions and lack of support are never likely to deliver long-term benefits. With the greater demands being made on state language instructors, we need practicable solutions, based on a realistic understanding of common teacher-learner interests and goals.

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# LINGUISTIC PROFILING AND LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT

*A secondary school teacher's reactions to the Processability Theory*

Rosa Trenchs

After ten years experience as a teacher of English, there was something that puzzled me: why do students who are able to write beautiful passive sentences in the strangest verb tenses imaginable suddenly become Sitting Bull when it comes to speaking? - I'm not talking about making a speech in the House of Lords, only about answering a simple question or giving their opinion in class. I know that mastering the passive voice doesn't mean that you know English, but still, why couldn't they apply at least some of their "knowledge" to speaking?

I have to say that after attending Mr. Pienemann's course at the Mediterranean Institute I think I have an idea of the reasons why that happens.

Let me digress for a while and tell you a personal story. About a year ago I decided to buy a computer. I had never had one at home and had only used them seldom and for very specific tasks, so I was almost an absolute beginner in that field. I had only had my brand new computer for twenty-four hours when an enthusiastic colleague at school very kindly offered me something like thirty disks with all



kinds of games, fonts, word processors and programmes to copy - I am conscious that I am acknowledging having done something illegal, but let's be realistic: this is how things work round here. He spent a whole hour giving me instructions on how to load all that into my hard disk while I took notes very carefully and thought I had understood everything: it sounded so simple and straightforward. That very evening I decided to start. I had my computer, my friend's disks, my notes

and all my neurons ready so, off I went!

At about one in the morning the computer started asking questions that were not in my notes but I could not ask anybody for help so late at night. What did I do? I improvised; I tried to use my own neurons to solve, in what at that time seemed a logical way, the problems that came up in the order in which they came up. It seemed the most intelligent thing to do but the result was complete disaster. At four a.m. my computer decided to go on holiday to Jamaica and said it would send a postcard when it

got there. It had got blocked, frozen. The worst of it was that I couldn't even switch it off because to do so I was supposed to choose an option on the menu and both the mouse and the keyboard seemed to be on a British Airways flight to the West Indies. I was desperate and again I tried an "intelligent" solution: I unplugged the whole thing and plugged it in again. What was the result? Sarcasm - yes, my computer has the ability to become sarcastic at the worst moment possible for my nerves. The first thing that appeared on the screen was the following message: "You have switched off the computer in the wrong way. Next time please be so kind as to choose the switch off option in the Apple menu that you will find at the top left corner of the screen". I'll spare you the list of four-letter words I hurled at it and will only tell you that I felt strongly tempted to kick the computer out of the window. The only thing that refrained me from doing so was the fact that I still had the bill on the table, right before my eyes.

So, what does all this have to do with teaching English? Well, I now have the feeling that over the last ten years I have been doing to my students the same thing that I did to my computer that night. Mind you, I am not comparing my students to computers. While students are intelligent - if anybody knows exactly what being intelligent means - my computer is only sarcastic, certainly not intelligent. The problem that night was not the computer, it was only following my instructions in a very submissive way. I cannot put it all down to my neurons; I will never win a Nobel prize but I consider myself intelligent enough to use a home computer successfully. The problem was that I didn't know enough about how computers work when I set about loading information into the machine.

Similarly, the problem is not that teachers are not intelligent - no doubt they are -, or that teaching methods are inadequate - some methods are better than others but they are all useful. The problem is not that students are not intelligent either - some are more brilliant than others but every single one of them, I believe, can improve. The problem is that we are giving them lots of information in the order that seems logical to us, but that order is not the same in which they can process and acquire that information. They are solving the problem of the passive voice in odd verb tenses in the same way as they solve mathematical problems: they take bits and pieces of sentences, put them together in a different order, apply

some rules that they have learned by heart and there you have a beautiful, perfectly constructed passive sentence in the future perfect continuous! When it comes to speaking, they simply don't have time to connect all those things - they are different abilities in different parts of the brain - and they go back to the English they really know and forget all the things they can do with English words. Then you have an interview with Sitting Bull when you were expecting Buffalo Bill! The teacher is disappointed, the student is scared and disappointed as well, and the whole of it becomes frustrating for both. The worst thing is that in that process some of our students just get blocked and decide to take a trip to Jamaica, as far as learning English is concerned, for the rest of their lives.

Personally, what I have learned on this course is that things that to me seemed logically easy to learn are in fact quite difficult and need a lot of previous processing in the brain. For example, the third person singular "-s" of the present tense should "logically" be quite easy to be learnt, especially for Spanish students, whose mother tongue has so many different verb morphemes. Come on! It's only an "-s"! Why don't they put it in the right place? At times I have even thought that the KGB was behind it, conspiring against me. Well, in order to put that "-s" in the correct place they have to be able to analyse the sentence, decide what the subject is, decide whether the tense is going to be present simple and then add the correct morpheme. A lot of things have to be acquired before they can actually produce that famous "-s".

By the way, my computer finally came back from its trip to Jamaica and is working perfectly. In fact it is now helping me to write this article. I have to say that I felt great relief when I found out what it was that I had been doing wrong, something very similar to the feeling I have now after getting a grasp of Mr. Pienemann's Processability Theory. I hope next year I will not send so many of my students on language trips to Jamaica.

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# REVIEWS

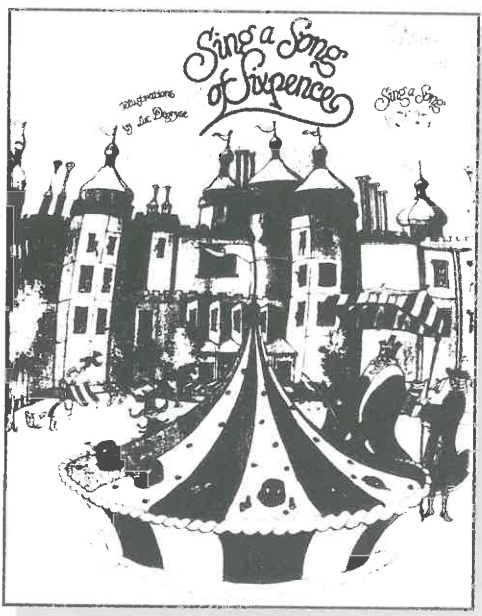
**HUDAK, I & DEGRYSE, L.**  
**SING A SONG OF SIXPENCE.**  
**BOUVARD & PECUCHET.** 1992. Pp. 48  
**Carme Tinoco**

Here we have a lovely book for those Primary teachers who enjoy playing and dancing nursery rhymes as much as their pupils. The book provides a wide variety of songs and rhymes that are hundreds of years old and which have been passed down from generation to generation. Although not all of them are suitable for our classes - obviously, our history, customs and culture are different - there are many different types of rhymes which are quite useful for our English classes:

- counting rhymes, such as «Eeny, meeny, miny, mo» or «Hickory, dickory, dock»
- lullabies, such as «Hush, little baby»
- teaching rhymes and memory aids, such as «Thirty days hath September» or «A was an apple pie»
- riddles, such as «Humpty Dumpty»
- dancing songs, such as «Hey, diddle, diddle» or «Ring- a- ring o'roses»
- toe games, such as «This little pig to market»...

At the end of the book you will find some especially interesting caps off explaining the history and meaning of many of the rhymes.

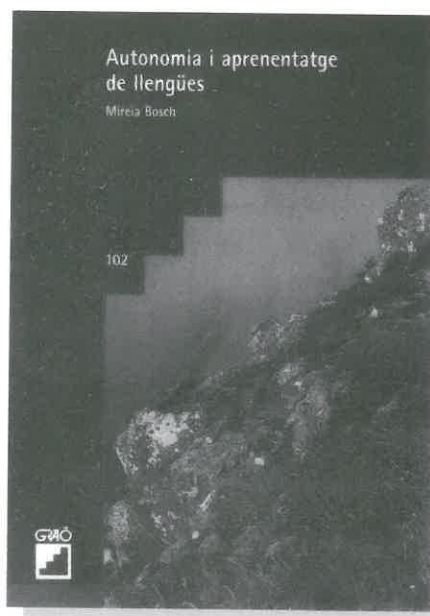
It is important to note that there is also available a matching audio cassette.



**BOSCH, MIREIA.**  
**AUTONOMIA I APRENTATGE DE LLENGÜES.**

**BARCELONA: EDITORIAL GRAÓ.** 1996. Pp. 120.  
**Neus Figueras**

This book is a *must* for all of us teachers of English, and for all teachers of other subjects. We have all read about autonomy and we have all tried to put ideas from *learning to learn* approaches into practice, but this book offers a comprehensive background and tells us how others have done it and why and what to do if we want to do it too. Although to most teachers who work alone in a primary or secondary school many ideas on how to organize a self-access centre (chapter 5) will sound impossible, there is plenty that can be done straight away (chapter 5). We must always remember that *when there's a will here's a way*. For those who always want more, there is a very interesting general bibliography list with a very useful selection done by the author.



If you want to contribute to this section, *Apac of News* gives you two options:

- a. You can review one of the titles available in our office, which you can borrow during our regular office hours (Monday to Friday 16.00 to 20.00).
- b. You can review one of the titles you have read recently. (Do not forget to include the complete bibliographical information and, if possible, a photocopy of the cover of the book).



# COPING WITH THE MIXED LEVEL CLASS

Luke Prodrinou, interviewed by Neus Serra  
(APAC 1996)

**Neus:** Teachers often say their job is made very difficult by the existence of many different levels in the same class - what can be done about this problem?

**Luke:** Yes, this is one of the most difficult problems teachers face, not only in Spain but in many other countries, too. As a teacher trainer, I have found that mixed ability is one of the most frequent topics raised at seminars along with discipline and motivation. Of course, this is quite understandable, given that these three areas are very much related, don't you think?

**Neus:** Yes, especially in young learners' classes. But how can teachers cope with all these pressures, given lack of time and the need to implement a particular syllabus?

**Luke:** I think one important point to stress at the outset is that mixed ability is not abnormal; it is not an infectious disease or anything. What I mean is that it is an integral part of educational practice; in other words, every class in every subject has a mixture not only of abilities but also of styles of learning and attitudes to learning. Of course, this diversity becomes a problem when the differences in level are acute - this happens when students of widely different levels are thrown together for administrative reasons, but even normal levels of diversity can become a problem when a teacher ignores them or doesn't know how to incorporate

them into normal teaching. Naturally, the more students can be grouped into roughly homogeneous groups the better. There is enough diversity in any group to keep the ambitious teacher busy. Whenever you bring two ordinary people together you have mixed ability, don't you think? It's the most natural thing in the world.

**Neus:** But let's say the problem is, as you say, 'acute'. What then? The more able students get bored when you focus your attention on the weaker pupils and the weaker pupils can't follow what's going on when you focus on the better students...

**MIXED ABILITY IS NOT ALWAYS AN OBSTACLE; DIFFERENCE CAN PRODUCE SOME INTERESTING LEARNING EXPERIENCES, IF WE CAN DRAW ON THE DIFFERENCE AS A RESOURCE.**

**Luke:** Whatever we decide to do, it will involve training and teacher development, which is a long term process. There's no getting away from that; a motivated and skilled teacher will motivate learners... but in the meantime, let's look at what kind of things teacher development

would involve. The first step, as we said earlier, is to see the problem as part of our everyday routine - to begin to think in terms of diversity as a defining feature of educational practice, right?, not unusual or atypical.

Now, diversity and difference involve more than just ability; that is very important. Apart from differences in language level, we have differences in rates of learning - how quickly people work - and we all have different rhythms and, of course, styles of learning. Some like to listen, others like to talk; I had a student who was very accurate when she wrote but hardly said anything in class; other students like to work in groups while others blossom in front of the whole class. You know, the performers. So the differences are always present, in a variety of ways. The first big - and essential step - is to see these differences in a positive light, almost as an advantage, and to fashion our techniques and methodology around this basic idea. Mixed ability is not always an obstacle; difference can produce some interesting learning experiences, if we can draw on the difference as a resource.

**Neus:** Can you give an example of what you mean, because it sounds almost paradoxical...

**Luke:** Take something very ordinary like asking questions and eliciting. One of the most satisfying

moments for me as a teacher is when a student - especially a so-called 'bad' student - is asked a question and draws a blank. Doesn't know. Or says she doesn't know. If you can make this an opportunity for success it can be very satisfying. Let's see how it works. The most common reaction you find amongst teachers when faced with silence is to switch to another student who knows the answer and solve the problem that way. And the other students of course have been trained to put their hands up or to shout out the right answers. And it's all over. The 'problem' has been solved. But it need not have been a problem at all. If the teacher had seen the students 'not knowing' in a more positive light it could have been an opportunity for learning. The first thing to ask is: *how long did the teacher wait for an answer?* A few seconds makes a lot of difference. Research has been done into this - I think by Nunan - and it has been shown apparently that those few seconds of 'wait time' lead to more successful learning. It has certainly been like that in my classes. It's a great moment when what looks like a failure to answer correctly is transformed into success. A small success. But nevertheless, a success. It makes big difference to morale.

**Neus:** *But what is everyone else doing while you are waiting for the slow student to catch up?*

**Luke:** But there's more to it than that; it's not just waiting a few seconds for the so-called 'bad' students. It's also how you use elicitation techniques to draw on what the students already know. This can involve everyone in class. Instead of waiting around for the other student to come up with an answer, the rest of the class can be answering elicitation questions, so the right answer emerges naturally

from the pool of knowledge in the class. You do other things, too. You reformulate the question so the answer is easier to arrive at; you reformulate using the students existing knowledge or experience; or you give them a bit more information. So the dark patch in their minds becomes brighter and as you formulate your question you use eye contact to involve the rest of the class. And so on and so forth. So classroom management techniques are important. This is partly what teacher development is all about. Classroom management is at least as important as methods and techniques. Eye contact is just one aspect of this. I've noticed how voice is important in involving

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everyone in the question and answer routines we teachers indulge in. You cannot begin to solve the problem of dealing with a large diverse class if you haven't yet begun to manage the class properly. Most teachers ignore classroom management. On training courses, how often do you find eye contact, body language and the use of voice? They might get a passing mention, but that's all. But they are not extras. They are at the heart of dealing with groups of people and classroom dynamics. Teachers must be trained to discover their own potential and to be more confident in the use of their skills; only then will they see their role more broadly, in the context of classroom management and their role as educators. We are more than

language teachers whether we like it or not. Mixed ability will never go away or even be alleviated if we see our objectives in narrow linguistic terms and no more.

**Neus:** *But teachers are under great stress as it is; they have pressures from outside, a lot is expected of them. What kind of support can they be given?*

**Luke:** Well, teacher development can mean a lot of things. But the role of the teacher herself is an active one. Solutions will not be given to you on a plate - you have to go out and get them for yourself, in collaboration, or course, with other teachers. Co-operative development as Julian Edge says. But teachers can begin to prepare for their role as educators by attending seminars and conferences; this kind of interest in the profession can only do good. Teachers cannot expect administrators to solve the problem; there is no magic formula for making mixed ability go away; what happens inside the four walls of the classroom is really up to us. I see the classroom as an empty space, an open space - in a sense there's nothing there - we put it there, the teacher is a catalyst of change: if you are interested in your job the kids will be interested in you and that opens the way to all kinds of developments. Teaching can be defined as a way of bringing about change - how are we going to do this? Just following the textbook is not enough. Attending courses, seminars and so on, reading books and articles, working with other teachers, doing a bit of classroom research: all these are ways of building personal and professional skills and opening the way to change and to new techniques too. I have been to many seminars over the years, where I've picked up some nice ideas for dealing with mixed level classes

and I have been using them ever since. So I think the solution is a combination of short-term tactics and long-term strategies.

**Neus:** Which techniques have you found most successful in dealing with the problems of mixed ability?

**Luke:** In dealing with the opportunities offered by diversity, more like. Of course, we all have our own style of teaching and preferred techniques, but I would say in general anything that involves learner input has been helpful. What do we mean by learner input? It is a specific form of learner-centredness inspired I would say by Community Language Learning. Take students' errors. Error is particularly acute in mixed ability classes and it can be really demoralising if handled badly. So I have found techniques that use this particular kind of learner input - errors - in a positive way essential. For example, dictation techniques based on students texts. You simply read out the texts and correct the errors as you do so. A text can be as little as a sentence. I first saw something like that used by Mario Rinvolutri and I've been using it with variations in mixed level classes ever since.

**Neus:** Do you think non-native speaker teachers working in state schools can put into practice a lot of the techniques suggested by people at conferences? They are not always practical.

**Luke:** Good question. I am again in favour of positive thinking here and the first thing to say about the non-native speaker teacher of English is that she has a lot of advantages, as I'm sure you too have discovered. Take teaching the textbook: if a book has been chosen and is unsuitable for a number of reasons, the Spanish teacher is probably in a better position to make sensible and appropriate adaptations than

someone who is not familiar with the students' culture and pedagogic background. If a teacher decides to adapt the book by using a bit of learner input then knowing the students' culture is going to help a great deal. One example I remember is a lesson about British authors that didn't mean much to my 13 year olds; so I got them to do a little project on Greek

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authors and they did. I took the texts and corrected bits of them and used the extracts in class as the basis for a dictation and then speaking activity. It worked well I think and it involved everyone. The weak student was integrated through the anonymous correction technique. Being bilingual and bicultural is an enormous resource when you are teaching a monolingual class. You see that a lot of the theories and methods for language teaching have been developed with the multi-lingual class in mind. You can also elicit more effectively if you know the students' language and culture.

**Neus:** What about the size of classes - how can you involve so many children at the same time?

**Luke:** Yes. How to work with large classes. One really needs to demonstrate this rather than talk about it. It really goes back to

classroom management on the one hand but also to the belief that no-one is dispensable - everyone can contribute and then you find what I call 'collective techniques' for maximising involvement. It is to a large extent a question of using pair and group work effectively and also of using techniques that make the whole class focus on what's going on and getting them to pay attention to what's happening in different corners of the room. It's cohesion - keeping the different parts together so your control of the class doesn't fall apart. Students must be given a reason for listening to each other, otherwise why shouldn't they look out of the window and chat to their neighbour? The ideology of the class should be 'look, we're all in this together' - if one student asks a question, we all listen; if one student has a problem, we all help; we do not talk while others are talking... If you do not establish these ground rules then nothing will work. Of course, rules are no good if people aren't motivated; students have to feel good being in class; they will respect us, that's vital, but it will be difficult if they are bored. Rapport is the name of the game. It is like a small window, as someone said, opening up vistas, a huge garden ... kids only misbehave because they are not motivated to 'behave'; in other words, we behave when we are respected and when our attention is engaged by things we are interested in. I'd like to end by quoting a 'bad' student of mine, so-called, who said the good teacher was one who believed in her and helped her believe in herself.

**Neus:** Yes, that's nice. Thanks very much.

Luke Prodromou works for the British Council in Greece.

He has written **Mixed Ability Classes** (Macmillan)



# Letters to the editor

Juny 1997

Benvolguda APAC:

Com cada enguany el darrer febrer vaig assistir a les Jornades la qual cosa s'ha convertit en quasi una obligació per a mi, tot i els problemes que tot sovint els directors ens plantegen. Voldria felicitar-vos per el trasllat de les ponències a l'edifici de la Universitat.

L'Escola d'Idiomes era un lloc agradable i representatiu de les Jornades però és cert que la quantitat de professors que darrerament hi assistiem dificultava la fluidesa. Les aglomeracions a l'escala, l'haver de córrer per reservar lloc, el no

poder assistir a les sessions que interessaven per culpa del tamany de les aules, etc. desmoralitzava a aquells que volíem aprofitar el temps.

Com a sòcia d'APAC voldria agrair-vos els esforços que feu i demanar-vos que continueu introduint canvis d'aquest tipus, per millora de les Jornades.

**Una associada veterana**

July 1997

Dear APAC,

I've been a member of the association almost from the very beginning and I've been enjoying the Jornades as a break from school routine and as a

good opportunity to get to know new ways of dealing with the many problems we all face in our classrooms.

ESO has brought new problems to all of us and therefore there is a need for solutions on how to cope with so much differentiation in our classrooms.

Could you take my suggestion into account when planning next Jornades?

Looking forward to next February,

Yours,

**Rosa Freixes**



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Telephone (93) 403 56 86  
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# 9è CONCURS APAC

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**APAC convoca el 9è concurs per a professors i alumnes de llengua anglesa de tots els nivells educatius (primària, secundària, escoles d'idiomes i alumnes del cicle superior d'universitat).**

## **PODEN OPTAR A PREMI:**

**A) Treballs presentats pels alumnes (video, revista, projecte, còmic, etc.)**

**Tres premis**

**B) Exposicions d'experiències pràctiques d'ensenyament de llengua anglesa**

**Un premi**

**C) Treballs o projectes de recerca**

**Dos premis**

## **BASES GENERALS**

1. Tots els treballs presentats hauran d'ésser en anglès. En el cas de la modalitat B, el treballs, a més de presentar-se impresos, hauran d'incloure: a) una còpia en suport informàtic, b) 2-3 pàgines de material fotocopiable per al seu ús directe a classe; c) un límit de 6 fulls mida DIN-A4 mecanografiats a un màxim de doble espai amb la corresponent descripció teòrica.
  2. Tots els treballs s'enviaran per correu ordinari a:  
**APAC (Premi APAC)**  
Gran Via de les Corts Catalanes 606, 4rt - Zona, F. 08007 Barcelona
  3. Tots els treballs es presentaran en sobre o paquet tancat. Dins es farà constar:
    - Nom, adreça, telèfon i nivell educatiu del concursant.
    - Curs (en el cas d'alumnes), escola i nom del professor/a.
  4. El termini de presentació finalitza el dia 15 de desembre de 1997.
  5. Els premis es lliuraran en el marc de l'APAC-ELT Convention 1998.
  6. El jurat estarà format per cinc socis d'APAC.
  7. APAC es reserva el dret de publicar totalment o parcialment els treballs presentats en el butlletí de l'associació APAC of NEWS.
  8. Els premis de les modalitats A i C consistiran en lots de material didàctic. El premi de la modalitat B consistirà en un curs d'anglès per a professors a Dublín. El curs tindrà una durada de 2 setmanes (70 hores). El premi cobreix: a) allotjament en família; b) assegurança de viatge; c) assistència mèdica; d) recollida a l'aeroport i trasllats. L'anada i tornada a Dublín serà a càrrec del professor premiat.
  9. Es podran atorgar accèssits.
  10. Aquestes bases anul·len les bases publicades al número 29 del butlletí APAC of NEWS.
  11. La participació en aquest concurs implica l'acceptació d'aquestes bases. La decisió del jurat és inapel·lable.
-



# PREMI JOHN McDOWELL 1999

## BASES

*El premi John McDowell, instituït conjuntament per l'Associació de Professors d'Anglès de Catalunya (APAC), la Direcció General de Política Lingüística (DGPL), l'Institut Britànic (IB), la Universitat Autònoma (UA) i la Universitat de Barcelona (UB), es proposa estimular la innovació i recerca en l'ensenyament de l'anglès com a llengua estrangera i del català per a adults com a primera o segona llengua.*

*Aquest premi té una periodicitat bianual.*

### Bases del premi

#### 1. Destinataris

- 1.1 Professors de llengua catalana (batxillerat, formació d'adults, escoles d'idiomes, universitats,...) i de llengua anglesa (primària, secundària, formació professional, escoles d'idiomes, formació d'adults, universitats,...) que treballen habitualment a Catalunya.
- 1.2 Professors de llengua catalana que treballin fora del territori de parla catalana (universitats estrangeres i espanyoles, casals,...).

#### 2. Tipus de treballs que poden optar al premi

- 2.1 Exposicions d'experiències pràctiques d'ensenyament de llengües.
- 2.2 Reculls de materials didàctics.
- 2.3 Treballs o projectes de recerca.

Els treballs presentats han de ser inèdits.

#### 3. Temàtica

Sense excloure cap àrea d'interès, es prioritzaran els treballs

- transversals, és a dir, que continguin materials o tècniques aplicables tant al català com a l'anglès;
- relacionats amb el desenvolupament de l'autonomia en l'aprenentatge de llengua dins i fora de l'aula;
- relacionats amb la formació del professorat;
- transculturals i de contacte entre l'anglès i el català i el català amb altres llengües;
- relacionats amb perspectives supranacionals o europees d'ensenyament i aprenentatge de llengües,
- adaptats especialment a les necessitats del moment.

#### 4. Presentació

Els treballs s'han de presentar mecanografiats a doble espai i per una sola cara, en paper i en suport informàtic. L'extensió mínima és de 20 fulls. Els treballs poden anar acompanyats de material audiovisual i informàtic. Cal presentar un original i dues còpies.

Els treballs s'han de presentar a la seu de l'APAC (Gran Via de

les Corts Catalanes, 606, 4t 2a, F i G. 08007 Barcelona) o a la DGPL (Carrer de Mallorca, 272, 8è. 08037 Barcelona).

#### 5. Dates de presentació dels treballs

Data límit de lliurament dels treballs: 15 de gener de 1999.

Veredictes i lliurament dels premis: febrer de 1999.

#### 6. Jurat

El jurat estarà format per:

- 6.1 Dos representants de l'APAC amb les funcions de presidència i secretaria i dos representants de la DGPL.
- 6.2 Un representant per a cada una de les institucions següents: IB, UA i UB.
- 6.3 Una persona per a cada un dels nivells educatius corresponents als treballs presentats. Aquestes persones seran designades a proposta de l'APAC (per als treballs en anglès) i a proposta de la DGPL (per als treballs en català).

#### 7. Premis

Es concediran tres premis, la dotació dels quals consistirà en:

- Publicació del treball.
- Diploma acreditatiu.
- Matrícula a un dels cursos següents (o equivalent), que s'hauran d'escollir per ordre de concessió dels premis:
  - curs d'estiu del British Council a Anglaterra, viatge inclòs (Institut Britànic);
  - Màster de llengües estrangeres (Universitat de Barcelona),
  - Postgrau o Màster de llengües estrangeres (Universitat Autònoma).

Es farà una menció honorífica als accessits.

#### 8. Publicacions

Els treballs guanyadors seran publicats en la col·lecció «COM/ Materials Didàctics» de la Direcció General de Política Lingüística del Departament de Cultura.

En cas que els treballs siguin molt extensos, se'n publicarà una versió reduïda d'acord amb els autors.

A més, s'estudiarà la possibilitat de publicar les mencions honorífiques o aquells treballs que es considerin interessants per ser difosos. (L'APAC i la DGPL es reserven el dret de publicar la resta dels treballs presentats durant el termini d'un any.)

**APAC**  
Associació de Professors d'Anglès de Catalunya



Institut Britànic



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Direcció General  
de Política Lingüística



UNIVERSITAT DE BARCELONA

# CONTRIBUTIONS TO APAC OF NEWS

Our APAC colleagues need you. Use our bulletin for sharing your thoughts, your experiences, and for letting everybody know about the activities you, your colleagues, or anybody else organize in the area where you live.

All contributions are welcomed. They are read and then given a priority order. However, if you want your article, classroom activity, report, letter to the editor, etc to be printed in APAC of NEWS as soon as possible, these instructions can accelerate the process.

*If you own a computer or have access to it:*

- Send a copy of your contribution on an ordinary 3.5 «floppy disk».

PCs. Recommended wordprocessing formats: **WordPerfect** or **ASCII** for PC compatibles.

If you are using a different program, like Framework, Word, Microsoft Works, etc, please save the document in standard ASCII format (all modern wordprocessors include this option). Include also the original document indicating which WP program you have used.

If you do not have computer skills (or do not own a PC), ask a colleague to type it for you.

MACs. **MacWrite**, **Word**, and **WordPerfect** are usually OK.

If you are using a different program, like Fullwrite or Claris Works, see what is said for PC compatibles

in the previous paragraph.

- Always include a printed copy of it.
- If your article contains graphics, send a quality copy of them.

*If you do not have access to a computer:*

The process will be, of course, slower as your contribution will have to be retyped. Do not despair, though.

- Send a clearly typed copy.

Reminder: Always use a new ribbon (if we are lucky we will be able to scanner the text and avoid endless typing and correction hours).

Include a photograph of you (size: DNI/passport). This is not a condition, but may help give our bulletin a more personal and human dimension. Let us launch you to fame!

Contributions are accepted in English, Catalan, and Spanish. If you feel inclined to use a different language, please include an abstract (about 20 lines) in one of these languages. Contributions are usually accepted. If for any reasons one were not appropriate for our bulletin, we would communicate it to the author and, if possible, suggest alternatives.

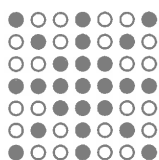
Send your masterpieces, letters to the editor, communications, ideas, or modest suggestions to:

APAC Gran Via de les Corts Catalanes, 606, 4rt, 2on, F 08007 Barcelona

I I

Jornades de Llengües Estrangeres  
a Tarragona

27, 28 i 29 de Novembre



The British Council  
*Institut Britànic*

# British Cultural Studies in the ELT Classroom

Roger Marshall

The link between language and «civilisation» (whatever that means) has always been taken for granted in the study of English as a foreign language, as it has in the study of any other foreign language. It is, of course, a truism that language is one of the main vehicles by means of which any nation or ethnic group asserts its collective identity and communicates itself to the rest of the world, and that when we learn a language we are, in the process, opening a door into the cultures of the speakers of that language. However, early British teachers and theorists, probably on account of the fact that ELT began in the heyday of the Empire, felt that teaching the language itself did not completely satisfy their need to export culture. Even during the 60s and 70s, foreign students of English all over the world also used to have to learn about the Monarchy, the Judiciary, the Education System and lots of other British institutions. There

might also have been something about the daily life of the «average» English family and, almost as an afterthought, the textbook on the subject might have had something to say about Scotland, Wales and Ireland, and the rather quirkish lifestyles of the inhabitants of those dim and distant places. Fortunately, this approach to British Studies fell out of favour in the 1980s. The problem perceived in such an approach was twofold: in the first place, it involved the mere transfer of information, which clashed with the learner-centred and communicative methodologies which had begun to predominate in ELT classes; secondly, it was «ethnocentric»: its main point of reference was middle-class London and the Home Counties, as if London and the London-based institutions were the heart of British Civilisation. It failed to take adequate account of how multifarious, indeed «multi-cultural» British society is.

WHEN WE LEARN A

LANGUAGE

WE ARE,

IN THE PROCESS,

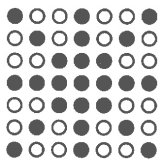
OPENING A DOOR INTO

THE CULTURES OF THE

SPEAKERS OF THAT

LANGUAGE.





**BRITAIN IS NOT JUST  
ONE CULTURE: WHITE,  
MIDDLE-CLASS OCCUPANTS OF A  
COMFORTABLE HOUSE IN THE  
SUBURBS, SPEAKING WITH A  
CLEAR OXFORD ACCENT.  
BRITAIN IS, AND ALWAYS HAS  
BEEN, A RICH, COMPLEX VARIETY  
OF CULTURES AND  
LIFE-STYLES.**

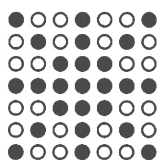
In the 80s, ELT courses tended to focus on the language, and British institutions got left to one side. One reason for this was the belated awareness of the fact that most speakers of the language are not British. It seemed pointless to assume an interest in British culture (at least as it had been taught before) among students who had not been and would probably not be going to Britain. Paradoxically, however, many of the ELT textbooks still in use in the 90s abound in ethnocentric, middle-class stereotypes.

In the last five or six years there has been a revival of interest in British Studies. But the approach to the subject is very different from what it was 20 or 30 years ago. Ironically, we have to admit that we have taken several leaves out of the Americans' books. American culture used to be dominated by the melting-pot idea: the idea that the cultures of the millions of people who arrived in the States from the 19th century onwards were somehow subsumed into a single cultural entity, that cultural differences ceased to be important, because immigrants all ceased to be Polish, Irish, Korean or whatever and became «American». The resulting «American Way of Life» was exported far and wide as a cultural ideal; almost as an example to follow. More recent thinking has discredited this view, and there has been a renewed interest in the thousands of different cultures that live together in the United States, with accounts of American history from the points of view of cultures other than the dominant one. Feminist writers, not all them women, have also brought the issue of gender to the foreground, and they have called into

question the long-standing assumptions of what they see as a male-dominated society. The upshot of this has been that writers of different shades of opinion have begun to look at American history and contemporary society in terms of the «power-structures» that have shaped American opinion down through the years.

Recent British Cultural Studies courses have been based on the same kind of analysis of British Society. The aim has been to get away from, or rather to get behind, some of the out-dated and ethnically biased assumptions that used to inform most of the teaching about Britain. It has not been a question of coming up with an alternative account of British history, but rather of looking closely at the discourse, the «text», through which these assumptions were conveyed, and at the reasons why they were formed. Britain is not just one culture: white, middle-class occupants of a comfortable house in the suburbs, speaking with a clear Oxford accent. Britain is, and always has been, a rich, complex variety of cultures and life-styles. But it is fascinating to observe the process by which a single type of Britishness asserted itself. But it has also been very interesting to bring back into the limelight some of the other cultures, both indigenous and immigrant, that make up the UK, and to look at

**WITH THE RECENT  
DISAPPEARANCE OF THE LAST  
BRITISH COLONY FROM THE MAP  
OF THE WORLD THE TERM  
«POST-COLONIAL» IS, OF  
COURSE, ALL THE MORE  
SIGNIFICANT, AND ACCURATE.  
BRITISH SOCIETY IS NOT  
DETERMINED NOW SO MUCH BY  
THE FACT THAT IT DOESN'T  
HAVE ANY COLONIES AS BY THE  
FACT THAT IT USED TO HAVE SO  
MANY AND HELD ONTO THEM  
UNTIL SO RECENTLY.**



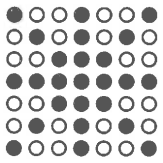
the «discourse», the various types of text, the symbols and the ceremony, through which they have expressed themselves. This has meant scurrying about in the basements, looking for objects and artefacts which have been consigned there by the ruling classes, and bringing them back into the main rooms where they belong. In other words it has meant looking again at Britain and viewing both the past and the present from a number of different angles. «Post-colonial» is an adjective that has been used for several years now to describe different aspects of British society: its art, its literature and its lifestyles. With the recent disappearance of the last British colony from the map of the world the term «post-colonial» is, of course, all the more significant, and accurate. British society is not determined now so much by the fact that it doesn't have any colonies as by the fact that it used to have so many and held onto them until so recently. Anyone wanting to gain an understanding of the country as it is today will find themselves having to grapple with the legacy of the country's colonial past. In the first place, there is the inescapable fact that Britain is now the home of millions of children and grandchildren of immigrants from the former colonies: British citizens who, naturally, insist on being regarded as British but who are also determined not to forfeit their own Asian, African or Caribbean cultural identity. How does this affect one's definition of Britishness? Or take the rich cultural mix that British popular music, art and literature presents: the work of contemporary white authors, performers and artists is imbued with Eastern, African and West-Indian influences, and it is all the more interesting as a result.

This is not to say that the institutions should not be considered important any more. On the contrary, with the new emphasis on *exploration* rather than on the mere *transfer of facts*, analysis of the institutions of the country, of the reasons for their establishment, of the social contexts in which they emerged, and the discourse which has characterised them since their appearance yields some fascinating insights. But institutions, which are themselves in a constant state of flux, rather than being timeless and static as they used to appear to be, are only one piece of the jigsaw, and the overall picture that is emerging keeps changing.

## IDEAS FOR ELT CLASSES

Obviously, it would be absurd to imagine that in any ELT course it would be possible to explore the depth and the breadth of Britain's multi-ethnic and class-ridden society as it has evolved during the course of the 20th century. But in any ELT course, with students of intermediate level and above, it is worth setting aside some time to explore the culture(s) whose language our students are learning. The following are just a few suggestions as to how modern ELT classes might approach the subject:

- While many contemporary coursebooks attempt to get away from the stereotypes, not all of them do. Why not use the coursebook itself to raise our students' awareness of the extent to which stereotypes and false assumptions about Britain still prevail?
- Now that many of our students have access to Internet, and through it to masses of up-to-date information about Britain, why not get them involved in voyages of discovery, maybe by means of structured project work, through Britain's constantly changing cultural landscape? It is now very easy to get samples of any kind of «text». Different ways of seeing and reporting on the same events in Britain can thus be viewed side by side: tabloid reports, opinion columns in «quality» papers, extracts from newspapers from around the world, cabinet ministers' speeches, and so on.
- As European Studies are now an integral part of the curricula of most British secondary schools, e-mail links could be established between English classes here and European Studies classes in Britain. Our students would provide the students in Britain with helpful information about Spain, Catalonia or Barcelona, while the students in Britain would have a great deal to say about their impressions of life in contemporary Britain. They could give the secondary-school students' insights into youth culture, sport, race relations, terrorism or whatever. The two classes could work together during the course of the year to produce a web-page, or an on-line magazine. Or the final result of their interaction could take the form of collages, to be exhibited on the walls of the classroom at the end of the year, with photos and text about each others' city or region.



• A society's iconography is something that changes so fast that it is impossible for coursebooks to keep up with it. Any coursebook with interviews with the Spice Girls, samples of their songs and biographical information will be popular with young students for the next year or so, but possibly not for much longer than that. If we want to help our students to satisfy their curiosity about British culture by highlighting some of the latest icons, we will need to rely on newspaper articles and material obtained from Internet. One group project might be to compare Spanish with British icons, or to explore the evolution of British ones: which modern British national symbols are exportable (to Spain or elsewhere) and which are not; if they are, why is this so?; and if not, why not?; which are intended for «exportation» and consumption by non-Brits, and which are intended to be seen as thoroughly British? Which icons from Britain's colonial past have survived into the present, and how have they changed? (The evolution of cricket is an interesting case in point; once regarded as a sport for (English) gentlemen, it has recently found its way into black communities in Los Angeles, where many young people now prefer it to basketball and baseball!)

• Most listening material in coursebooks is still, perhaps in the interests of clarity (though there may be other less obvious reasons), biased in favour of Oxford accents. There are, of course, signs of a movement away from this, but we have by no means come far enough. The fact is that the phonetic alphabet available in all coursebooks and dictionaries completely ignores regional variations, and sets itself up as standard, to the consternation of teachers from places other than the Home Counties who are implicitly required to teach pronunciation using a

model which they actually find it difficult to adhere to themselves. And why should they? So-called «non-standard» pronunciations must be taught, not as if they were peripheral and deviant (a periphery implies a centre), but as the characteristic speech patterns of thousands of people, in some cases of many more people than the pattern that is used to construct the phonetic alphabet of ELT coursebooks. Listening material should, and nowadays can very easily, be collected which reflects the many different ways in which certain words are pronounced by native



speakers. At intermediate level, provided that more than one regional source is used, it is unlikely that this will have a negative effect on the students' oral performance, as non-native speech generally develops along its own lines anyway. It goes without saying that students' attention should always be drawn to the fact that the phonetic alphabet is just one of many possible constructs and should by no means be presented as «standard». This could be done by their being asked, having spent some time on the phonetic alphabet, to compare the performance

of native speakers from different parts of the UK, and from different ethnic backgrounds, with the phonetic chart.

These are just some of the things that can be done in class to raise our students' awareness of the fact that in encountering British «culture» through their classwork in English, they are actually encountering a vast number of cultures, or at least they should be. If the coursebook does not help them to realise this then we must supplement it with activities and materials which do, as well as examining with them the assumptions that underlie the coursebook.

# APAC Associació de Professors d'Anglès de Catalunya

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Empleneu aquest full solament si han canviat les vostres dades.

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# A CONTENT-BASED APPROACH TO READING IN AN EST CONTEXT

Elisabet Arnó Macià (EU. Politècnica de Vilanova i la Geltrú, UPC)  
Carmen Rueda Ramos (EU. Politècnica de Vilanova i la Geltrú, UPC)  
Antonia Soler Cervera (Facultat d'Informàtica de Barcelona, UPC)

## 1.-WHY READING?

As teachers of technical English, we found that it was essential to design a course which could meet the needs of our learners, university students of Computer Science. After surveying the existing materials, we found that they were not suitable for our students because they are addressed to a wide audience -e.g. secondary school students, people taking part in in-company training courses, etc. Since all our students need to become specialists in their subject matter and most of the selected bibliography for their courses is in English, we can perceive the ability to read technical texts as a basic need. Besides, students are strongly motivated towards reading, as they are also aware of this need. It seems clear to us that a course focusing on the reading skills has a place in an EST context. We think that an effective way of training students in the reading skills is by providing them with a lot of reading material, together with a series of appropriate tasks that can help them cope with authentic texts.

According to Strevens' widely accepted definition (Johns and Dudley-Evans, 1993:116), ESP teaching aims at meeting the "specified needs of the learner;" is "related in content (i.e., in its themes and topics) to particular disciplines, occupations and activities;" is "centered on the language appropriate to those activities;" and is "in contrast

with 'General English'." Within his definition, he also stresses that ESP courses may focus on a single skill, e.g., reading. The approach that we have adopted for our course is, then, in keeping with the principles stated in this definition. Accordingly, we have created a course that focuses on reading as the main need of our students, with texts related to their subject matter and that exemplify the language commonly found in technical discourse.

## 2.- OUR APPROACH TO READING

Within the framework of EST, we have developed a set of materials tailored to our students' real and specific needs. Trimble suggests that "the more homogeneous the group, the more closely these materials should relate to the learners' subject-matter interests" (1985:27). Similarly, Widdowson points out that the most appropriate English teaching materials are those which include examples of "real academic discourse" (1979:ix), that is, textbooks specifically written for students. Therefore, following these complementary approaches, for our Computer Science students, we have selected authentic texts from their recommended bibliography as the basis of our course. The main advantage of using academic texts is that our students, as subject-matter specialists, are also part of the intended audience of those texts. In fact, we believe that these materials are suitable for them, both in terms of content and communicative

functions (such as describing, reporting, defining, etc).

Although it might be argued that authentic texts can be difficult for students in terms of language level, we believe that authenticity does not necessarily entail an increased difficulty for comprehension. Actually, the use of non-simplified texts offers many advantages. First of all, we may regard these texts as a means of providing the "roughly-tuned input" that is necessary for the development of the receptive skills, i.e. reading; by roughly-tuned input we understand language that can be processed in spite of being above the students' production level, as Jeremy Harmer pointed out (1983:35). Second, by

**ALTHOUGH IT MIGHT BE ARGUED THAT AUTHENTIC TEXTS CAN BE DIFFICULT FOR STUDENTS IN TERMS OF LANGUAGE LEVEL, WE BELIEVE THAT AUTHENTICITY DOES NOT NECESSARILY ENTAIL AN INCREASED DIFFICULTY FOR COMPREHENSION. ACTUALLY, THE USE OF NON-SIMPLIFIED TEXTS OFFERS MANY ADVANTAGES.**

using a lot of reading material which contains this type of input, we provide students with a considerable amount of exposure to the foreign language. Therefore, by increasing students' exposure to the language we not only help them become fluent readers, but also facilitate language acquisition. Third, input that is beyond the students' performance level proves to be useful for mixed-ability groups. Although our groups are homogeneous in terms of subject matter knowledge, needs and interests, the students have different language levels-ranging from lower to upper intermediate. This diversity, far from being a problem, can be tackled by using roughly-tuned input rather than finely-tuned input, which would only be addressed to students with the same level of proficiency.

All these advantages favour our conception of the reading process as communicative activity. We understand reading comprehension as the interaction of reader and text, where the reader integrates his/her previous knowledge (both linguistic and schematic-in terms of subject matter and genre) to build up meaning. In fact, between reader and text there is genuine communication since the student approaches the text with a specific purpose, that is, there exists a real information gap for the student to bridge. Therefore, the starting point is a real communicative need. This approach to reading follows Wallace's view (1992:39):

**BETWEEN READER AND TEXT THERE IS GENUINE COMMUNICATION SINCE THE STUDENT APPROACHES THE TEXT WITH A SPECIFIC PURPOSE, THAT IS, THERE EXISTS A REAL INFORMATION GAP FOR THE STUDENT TO BRIDGE. THEREFORE, THE STARTING POINT IS A REAL COMMUNICATIVE NEED.**

**...researchers into both first and second language reading have argued against the view that texts are self-contained objects, the meaning of which it is the reader's job merely to recover. They [Alderson & Urquhart, 1984] have proposed a dynamic relationship between text and reader. Texts do not 'contain' meaning; rather they 'have potential for' meaning. This potential is realized only in the interaction between text and reader. That is, meaning is created in the course of reading as the reader draws both on existing linguistic and schematic knowledge and the input provided by the printed or written text.**

If we understand reading as process rather than product or, as Wallace says, as "dynamic" versus "static," then our focus is on fluency and performance rather than on accuracy. Our aim with this approach is to train students in the skills and strategies involved in the reading process, which, in our view, can be grouped into the following: (a) *predicting*, (b) *recognizing discourse organization*, (c) *comprehension at different levels* (intensive, extensive reading, etc), (d) *reacting to the text*.

Bearing in mind, then, on the one hand, the type of students we have and their specific needs and, on the other, the type of reading materials together with our conception of reading, we have adopted a *content-based approach*. It seems to be the natural consequence of all the factors that intervene in the design process of our course.

### **3.- OUR VIEW OF A CONTENT-BASED APPROACH**

A content-based approach seems appropriate for EST, where students share a common background knowledge of their subject matter and the same needs. The adequacy of a content-based approach is justified by the use of teaching materials thematically relevant to the students' interests. As Snow (1991:462) pointed out "Content-based instruction rests on the premise that the second or foreign language is learned most effectively when used as the medium to convey informational content of *interest and relevance to the learners*" [our italics]. However, our view differs from hers in that we do not regard content-based teaching and teaching content *through* English as being equivalent. She states that "More specifically, it [content-based instruction] refers to the concurrent study of language and subject matter, with the form and





sequence of *language presentation* dictated by, or at least, *influenced by the content material*" [our italics]. Although we may agree with the role of English as an enabling tool for students and also with the idea of a thematic sequence influenced by the progression of the different subjects within their studies, our aim is not to teach Computer Science but to use it as the context to develop reading skills.

Another important aspect of a content-based approach is the role of authentic materials. The thematic core of the course consists of authentic texts (as mentioned in Section 2). Wallace, quoting Meinhof (1987), defines authentic materials as "original pieces of written or spoken language which occurred naturally between native speakers and could therefore be accepted as 'genuine communicative acts'" (1992:79). In some teaching contexts, authenticity may be lost because the students are not part of the intended audience of the texts, thus, losing part of their communicative function. However, in our case, the authenticity of the materials is not lost. As a matter of fact, the materials are even more authentic as they are part of the bibliography that students have to deal with for their studies. Actually, to help students understand and use material which is basic to their needs constitutes the objective of the course.

Authenticity also applies to the concept of genre. Authentic materials should retain those features that identify them as belonging to a specific genre, such as layout, structure, jargon, type of information, etc. Bearing in mind that the students—as part of the intended audience—are already familiar with the genre, we help them activate their knowledge of the conventions that make a genre easily identifiable, thus

overcoming the problem of facing authentic texts above their linguistic level. Genre authenticity is then seen as an aid to the reading process.

Some people might argue for the use of simplified or simulated authentic texts as source of reading material. However, when simplifying a text for the sake of clarity and to avoid a supposed difficulty, one may increase its difficulty by eliminating cohesive devices. Even if one uses the appropriate techniques to simplify a text successfully, by giving a "simplified account" or rewriting the passage as Grellet suggests (1981:7), you may also run the risk of suppressing those features that would allow the reader to recognize the genre.

A *content-based approach* for EST students seems, then, justified by the relevance of the information contained in the *authentic texts* of the academic / technical *genre* that are provided as reading material.

#### 4. ORGANIZATION OF OUR CONTENT-BASED MATERIAL

The course is organized in thematic units which highlight the most important topics of Computer Science. In order to select the thematic units, we have counted on the helpful advice of subject-matter professors. We have graded the different units according to the sequence established by the curriculum. Therefore, we can assume that reading about a topic makes it easier for students to tackle following units. The thematic units that were chosen as the syllabus of the course are the following:

- Unit 1.- History of the Information Age.
- Unit 2.- Programming Languages.
- Unit 3.- Computer Architecture.

- Unit 4.- Operating Systems.
- Unit 5.- Databases.
- Unit 6.- Artificial Intelligence.
- Unit 7.- Compilers.
- Unit 8.- Computer Networks.
- Unit 9.- Peripheral Devices.
- Unit 10.- Computer Graphics.

Each thematic unit is made up of a series of texts (ranging from 3 to 6) closely related in terms of content. At the beginning of the unit, there is a brief introduction to the topic whose function is to provide contextualization and a greater thematic coherence to the unit (see Fig. 1). Another advantage of having a short introduction is that it activates the students' schematic knowledge of the topic, thus creating a purpose to read and enabling them to predict the content of what they are going to read about. The fact of having related texts about the same topic provides the reader with a real communicative situation, since the reading process may involve references to previous reading—appealing to the notion of *intertextuality* (Beaugrande & Dressler, 1981:10).

**Unit 2**

**PROGRAMMING LANGUAGES**

The solution to communicating with the computer is to develop a language that can be understood by both you and the computer. This is what a programming language is—a set of rules that provides a way of *instructing the computer to perform certain operations*. The choice of a programming language is, however, an important one. How do you know whether to use JOVIAL instead of PASCAL, COBOL instead of SNOBOL? Actually, it is not as difficult as it looks because certain languages are used for certain disciplines.

Fig. 1

In order to select the texts, we have followed these criteria:

**1. Relevance of texts.-** We have chosen interrelated texts that deal with essential aspects of the thematic unit.

**2. Authenticity of texts.-** They belong to the recommended bibliography of Computer Science.

**3. Accessibility of texts.-** It refers to both conceptual and linguistic difficulty. We have chosen texts which are accessible to the students, although they are beyond the students' language level.

**4. Contextualization of linguistic content.-** The reading passages are good examples of the functions commonly found in technical discourse (classification, definition, etc.).

**5. Readiness of the text.-** It refers to the way in which texts implicitly provide a particular task, which corresponds to the reason why one would read the text for a real communicative need.

**6. Use of visual information.-** Because of the characteristics of technical discourse which is prone to the use of diagrams, figures, etc., visual information is also an important criterion to be considered.

## 5.- SKILLS AND STRATEGIES TO BE ENHANCED IN THE READING PROCESS

According to several theorists, Nuttall (1982), Grellet (1981) and Harmer (1983), we have distinguished five general reading skills and strategies suitable for an EST context:

**1.- Those which involve extracting different types of information:** reading for specific information (also known as scanning), and reading for gist (skimming).

**2.- Those which involve the use of visual information:** graphs, diagrams, figures, pictures, etc.

**3.- Those which involve recognizing discourse features of technical texts:**

function of the passage, general organization (argumentative, narrative, etc.), rhetorical organization (description, definition, classification, etc.), and cohesive devices.

**4.- Those related to the lexis:** word formation, deducing meaning from context, dictionary use, synonyms, antonyms, etc.

**5.- Those that enable the effective comprehension of the concepts in the text:** direct reference (explicitly stated facts in the text), inference (facts implied in the text, or deducing meaning), evaluation (i.e., to agree and disagree with the author, to distinguish between fact and opinion, to decide on the writer's intention, on tone, the type of language, etc.).

## 6.- TYPES OF TASKS

We think that it is essential to provide students with the appropriate tasks to help them to deal with the text. Since we understand the task as an enabling tool which allows the student to approach the text, then, the task should not only emerge from the text (Grellet 1981:10, Wallace 1992:74) but also reflect those aspects that are relevant to the students' communicative needs. It is important to keep a balance between exploiting a text and "squeezing a text dry." For example, in a text giving a chronology of events, a task which probably helps to fulfill the communicative needs of the reader and which arises naturally from the text will involve extracting specific information from the text.

According to this view, which considers a narrow relationship between task and text, and taking into account the different skills to be developed in our course, we have distinguished the following task-types: *preview, comprehension, text work, vocabulary work and follow-up*, corresponding to the different stages that take part in the reading process:

previous, simultaneous and post-reading.

**1. PREVIEW:** These tasks involve the use of background knowledge to predict the contents or function of a passage or to locate specific information within the text. The aim of these tasks is to establish a purpose for reading and to make the student aware of the expectations when facing a text about a specific topic.

### • PREVIEW: 1.- READING FOR GIST

Look at the text and decide which of the following options best expresses what the text is about:

- a) It is a description of different types of chips.
- b) It narrates the invention of computers.
- c) It is a description of the technology used for computers.
- d) It is a classification of computer components.

**2. COMPREHENSION:** These tasks seek to help the student understand general and detailed information in the text. They include:

- **comparing or matching text and pictures** (true/false, multiple-choice exercises, etc).
- **transferring information** (labelling, completing diagrams, answering open questions, etc).
- **using the information for other purposes** (such as problem solving exercises, etc).

• **COMPREHENSION:**

2.-Complete the following table which summarizes the main features of the models mentioned in the text:

MODEL	DATE	DESCRIPTION	INVENTOR	PURPOSE
Harvard Mark I			Aiken	
ABC				to create an electronic calculating device for his students
	February 1946			
EDVAC			Von Neumann	

3. **TEXT WORK:**

These tasks are related to the organization and function of the passage. They aim at approaching the text globally and help the student understand the patterns of development or the rhetorical organization of the text. They

may involve:

- **reorganizing paragraphs.**
- **identifying the function of a passage.**
- **recognizing discourse patterns, markers and cohesive links.**
- **distinguishing main from supporting ideas.**

• **TEXT WORK:**

1.-Read the text and decide the right order of the paragraphs to make a logical text. Justify your decision by underlining relevant parts of the text.

- a) Writing in COBOL is much like writing a paper. You write sentences, which tell the computer which operations to perform. Several sentences dealing with the same operation are grouped into paragraphs, similar paragraphs are grouped in sections, and sections are grouped into a division.
- b) The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) first standardized COBOL in 1968 and again in 1974, producing a version known as ANSI-COBOL. The advantage of standardization is that COBOL is reasonably machine-independent so that a COBOL program developed for one computer can be run with only slight modifications on another machine for which a COBOL compiler has been developed.
- c) Developed in 1959, COBOL-which stands for Common Business-Oriented Language-is the most frequently used programming language in business. Now this general-purpose compiler language has been developed for nearly all large computers used in business information processing. Indeed, it has been estimated that between 60% and 80 % of application programs written for business purposes are written in COBOL.
- d) There are four divisions, organized in a structural hierarchy: (i) The Identification Division presents the name of the program and the programmer. (ii) The Environment Division indicates the computer to be used . (iii) The Data Division consists of a file section and a working storage section. (iv) The Procedure Division contains the actual processing instructions.

4. **VOCABULARY WORK:** These tasks foster vocabulary acquisition.

They help students tackle the lexical problem, enabling them to become familiar with the jargon and training them to develop vocabulary guessing techniques:

- **using linguistic clues** (deducing meaning from context, prefixes and suffixes, synonyms, antonyms, semantic fields, acronyms, identifying parts of speech, abbreviations, compound nouns, homonyms, polysemy of different words in different contexts, false-friends, etc.).
- **using non-linguistic clues** (graphs, schemes, pictures, figures, etc.).

• **VOCABULARY WORK:**

3.-Rephrase the following expressions using your own words:

- "..thus giving IBM a substantial foot in the door to the computer market..."  
(line 15-16)
- "..repaid IBM's investment many times over."  
(line 24-25)
- "...immediately zoomed to the top in microcomputer sales..."  
(line 41)
- "...was the company's opening gun."  
(line 53)

5. **FOLLOW-UP:** These tasks involve some kind of production after reading the text. Reading is understood as embedded in other activities which include the integration of different skills:

- **study skills**, (Grellet, 1981:23) like note-taking, summary writing, etc.
- **extension work**, such as essay writing and class discussion.



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### • FOLLOW-UP:

4.- Now make compound nouns to make the following expressions more concise and technical:

- 1) a tube in which vacuum has been created is \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) a program of research into supercapacity computers is \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) a system which operates on a disk is \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) a code which checks itself is \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) considerations for the programming of files are \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) a programmer of computers who is intelligent is \_\_\_\_\_
- 7) The Interconnection of Open Systems is \_\_\_\_\_

### 7.- CRITERIA USED FOR SEQUENCING TASKS

In the conception of reading as an interaction between text and reader, it is very important to consider the fact that the reader approaches the text with a specific purpose, which is reflected by the task. In this sense, we regard the text and the task as a whole, whose interaction determines its level of difficulty.

Throughout the course, the tasks have been sequenced on the basis of *task complexity*, that is, the cognitive effort required from the learner, e.g. tasks involving production are more difficult than those involving reception. For example, in the first units of the course, we have included comprehension questions in the form of multiple-choice exercises, whereas as the course develops these tasks tend to require a greater amount of production, e.g. in the form of open-ended questions. The same can be applied to other task-types, for instance, *Follow-up* exercises may progress from text completion to essay writing.

The difficulty of a particular task is also affected by its *situation in context*, meaning both the contents of the text and the students' previous knowledge of the subject matter. In the following example students can answer the question by appealing both to the information provided by the text itself and by their knowledge as Computer Science students at university:

### • FOLLOW-UP:

5.- The text says "that companies and universities had to have special departments called computer centers", can you explain briefly what a computer center is?

Another aspect related to difficulty is the interrelation of tasks, which provides coherence to the course and facilitates the reading process. The recurrence of tasks that have a similar mechanics gradually makes them easier.

Within the general grading of tasks, in some cases a particular text may appear as more or less difficult than the rest. To overcome this problem, we have graded the tasks accordingly. In this sense, the difficulty of the texts can be made more flexible by choosing an appropriate task, that is, the more difficult the text, the easier the task.

In a content-based syllabus, an exact grading of texts according to difficulty is hard to accomplish due to the very nature of the syllabus. Therefore, grading the tasks—as we have already suggested—can enable a more accurate grading of texts. So the difficulty of the whole, consisting of text and task, is not determined by the text itself but also and more "importantly" by the tasks that accompany it.

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# NEWSPAPERS ARE "IN"

DIANA L. KELHAM AND PETER HOLLAMBY

## BACKGROUND



For two weeks in June, 1993 two science teachers from St. Cyres school in Penarth organised a multilateral environment workshop and conference in Wales. The workshop attracted pupils and teachers from eleven different European countries. They enjoyed a series of lectures, practical field work exercises in chemistry and biology, visits to industry and other places of interest and a variety of sports and social activities.

The workshop required a lot of commitment from the visiting teachers and organisers and

towards the end of the workshop it became clear that the leaders of each visiting group should make every effort to maintain a solid link between the schools involved.

The English teachers attending decided that in order to achieve this aim, it would be a very good idea to develop an inter-schools newspaper that would allow exchange of ideas and information between themselves and between the ever increasing numbers of pupils who were discovering that there was actually life outside of the classroom. As the coordinating school, it was the job of the St.

Cyres staff to produce the newspaper collating contributions from their own pupils and from pupils in the participating schools.

The newspaper is called the "Eurolink" and is produced once each term.

Contributions came initially from schools in Spain, France, Denmark, Portugal and Norway but since the first issue, more schools have the opportunity to take part. The newest members come from Sweden, and Italy and it is hoped soon that a school from Greece will join the group.

## PART I

What do students like reading in a newspaper, or don't they read?

A survey we've done in school of what subjects students read, and what percentage don't read papers:

### THE MOST POPULAR SUBJECTS

Sports  
Horoscope  
TV programming  
Music/concerts  
Film reviews  
Accidents/death  
News  
Scandals/gossip  
Comic strips

### THE LEAST POPULAR SUBJECTS

Weather  
Economy  
Letters to the Editor  
Fashion  
Social events  
Animals  
Travel  
Gastronomy  
Travel  
Economy/work

Among the 15-18 year-olds interviewed, *as many as 30% admitted never, or hardly ever, reading a newspaper*; they consider it a "tedious" job for an older generation. What can be done to change this situation? - making a

paper with the topics that really interest them, getting THEM to write about the subjects they're interested in.

### Is writing important?

There is so much emphasis on oral

expression and comprehension that we sometimes wonder if writing is becoming a forgotten skill. Television pushes both reading and writing into the background, with the exception of the compulsory reading and carrying out of written exercises for homework. What is happening to **CREATIVE WRITING?** Those of us who are teaching the new "bachiller" courses, or 3<sup>o</sup> and COU, where essay writing is now an essential part of their English university entrance exam, are going through a frustrating time. We are faced with the fact that the majority of students have no idea how to write an essay *in Spanish*; so step 1 is teaching them HOW to plan an essay, paragraphs, punctuation, style, and step 2 is the English part....

In actual fact, most students feel more sure of themselves when they have written down new language, and at the same time as they are writing it, they are learning. So on the one hand writing is a reinforcement for the oral skills acquired, whereas on the other it is an important ability in its own right - and many of them are already using it to communicate with their pen pals. And they all know how essential it is for future studies, careers, business etc.

Writing and reading are reciprocal skills - they feel more secure having written something, and consequently find their reading ability and perception is increased too; becoming familiar with the written word means losing that "fear" of it - so even written exercises come more easily.

#### How can we help our students?

Let them read a couple of very short news items/articles; point out

that the sentences are short and direct, not long-winded; pronouns are used to avoid repetition of proper names or nouns; new paragraphs are for new ideas.

Maybe all of this is too much to ask to begin with, but at least it is what we are proposing to do eventually. What we aiming at initially is a simple kind of creative writing in order to put together a newspaper of sorts.

#### What are they going to write about?

Write about something they *know* about. Favourite subjects:

- their home town or village and its traditions
- big sporting events and sportsmen
- local pop concerts and singers
- love affairs and scandals of famous people

#### When should the students write?

It's often easier at first in pairs, not just the ideas are easier between two head, but also the actual writing. MAKE IT SIMPLE, because it'll be easier for them to understand each other's articles, and it won't make so much correcting on the teacher's part, which at the same time will be more encouraging for them. There's nothing more depressing than a page of writing covered in red marking! It may beabit noisy, but as they get thinking, it generally quietens down.

Next time, they can write their article "at home", and many of them will be happy about this, because they will need to consult reference books, magazines and papers.

Several will choose the same topic... that means choosing the

best one to include in a newspaper. Others will want to draw a comic strip or a cartoon - make sure the captions really ARE in English.

There are always a few students who really have great difficulty with the foreign language; give them the organizing tasks:

- prepare lists of possible subjects for articles
- organize *who* is going to write
- find a team of students keen on media studies to do the computing work
- find and give tasks to the "artistic" students
- set a "photographer" to take some shots

**Why it's useful, interesting etc.** to do school/interschool papers.

Students express their opinions,

- are activating their knowledge
- feel they have accomplished something personal (like seeing their name in print)
- are improving their English reading others' articles
- are making an effort to write themselves in English
- feel that English is a means of communication and enjoyment
- have an excellent opportunity to develop their knowledge of media studies

## PART II

### THE EUROLINK

Two teachers are responsible for the newspaper. One is in charge of the Media Studies department and the other teacher is the school's cross-curricular coordinator. Pupils studying GCSE and 'A' level media studies form the editorial team.

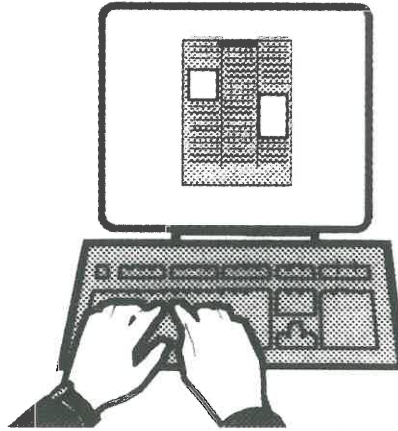
There is no doubt that pupils and teachers get a great deal of pleasure from being involved with the Eurolink.

- **They enjoy exchanging views and information with their European neighbours developing mutual respect and admiration for each other.**
- **They see the newspaper as a vehicle for communication with each other**
- **They love to see their work in print.**
- **They are very keen to work together on a common project.**
- **They are very keen to use word processors developing their desk top publishing techniques.**
- **They are excited by the prospect of using e-mail and the Internet.**

The newspaper is normally produced during one week of frenetic activity when faxes, letters, floppy discs and e-mail articles arrive at the school. The team type, re-type or load articles into the computer and past up the final edition of the newspaper. Master copies are then posted to all of the participating schools where they are duplicated and distributed to pupils.

St. Cyres school is able to make use of the Daily Telegraph newspaper. The paper produces guidelines to newspaper production and runs an annual national newspaper competition. St. Cyres school hopes to produce a very special edition of the Eurolink as their entry for the next competition.

Desk top publishing software is continually advancing and the



quality of newspaper presentation is improving at a staggering rate. It is hoped that before too long, all of the participating schools will be able to communicate via e-mail. The Swedish school hopes to fund video-conferencing. They are the only school who can communicate by e-mail at present and it is possible for St. Cyres school to e-mail the Eurolink directly to them.

#### Visits abroad

One very exciting development of the newspaper project is that participating schools have been able to organise a newspaper writing workshop involving pupils and teachers from a number of different countries. The inaugural meeting took place in Ireland in the summer of 1994 and involved pupils from Norway, France, Wales, Spain and Portugal. Pupils wrote articles in multilateral groups which were based on visits and interviews made with members of the public. All of the visitors got a very special taste of Irish life and gained tremendous benefit from working together.

The success of the meeting encouraged the newly recruited Swedish school, Soedervik skol to organise a workshop in Vaesby, near Stockholm. Visitors from Wales, Spain and Portugal wrote an

environmental edition of the newspaper. Pupils wrote articles before they left their own country and then gave a presentation on their chosen environmental theme. Apart from the inclusion of their own articles, pupils also worked in mixed groups writing about their visits and other experiences.

An added feature of the visit was the fact that pupils were hosted in the homes of their Swedish friends and this further enhanced the pleasure of the visit.

In April this year, Escola Secundaria de Mirandel, Portugal will be hosts for another workshop. Forty visitors are expected from four countries. The theme for the April edition is "Water".

#### European Education Project

The Eurolink is a very important vehicle for communication between St. Cyres School, Wales, Colegio Ave Maria, Spain, Escola Secundaria de Mirandela, Portugal and Soedervik skol, Vaesby, Stockholm. These schools have embarked on an EEP (European Education Project) and the newspaper will be used to map progress of the project

#### Newspaper Day

In May, the four schools intend organising a newspaper day. On this day the paper will be produced simultaneously in each of the schools. The outcome will be four different newspapers but having the same content! Plans for this day have not been fully developed, all of the key staff will be meeting in Mirandela this April and will formulate a method for what is bound to be a very hectic but enjoyable day.



## Some newspaper tips

### Reporting!



- Don't just copy a current paper. Make yours different from all the rest by using your own ideas.
- Make the pages easy to read.
- Listen to the news on the radio/television for up-dates on stories.
- Try and have one or more pictures on a page. Pictures can be cartoons, computer graphics etc. They don't have to be photographs.
- Use direct quotes to give stories life.
- Always check accuracy of names.
- Readers like to know how old the people are that they are reading about.
- Use Christian names not initials.
- Each page should have around three features on it.

**Who did it happen to?**

**What happened?**

**When did it happen?**

**Where did it happen?**

**Why did it happen?**

- Collect a lot of material so that you have a choice of what to use, but don't try to squash everything in.
- Try and get all the basic facts of the story into the first paragraph, and then after that go into more detail.
- Ensure that your name is on each story that you write. This is called the "By Line".

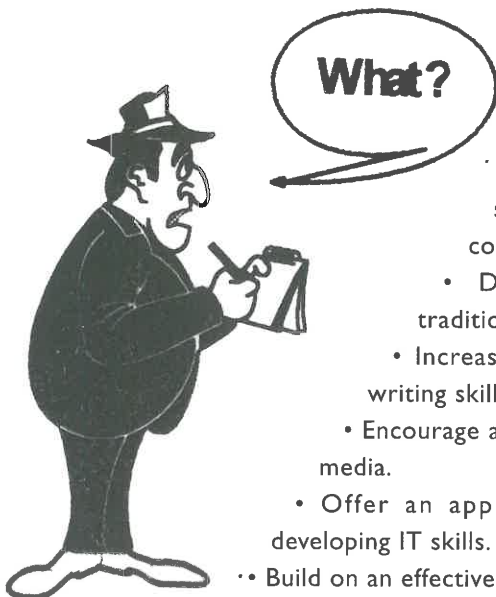


## Sectioning the paper

- **Local school and local area news.**
- **Home and foreign news.** (Gathered from daily papers/magazines or down loaded from E-mail or internet).
- **Features** - such as education/school life, fashion, gossip, travel/school trips etc.
- **Sport** - accounts of matches, results and comment.
- **TV guide and cinema guides.**
- **Crosswords, Horoscopes, letters to the Editor** etc.
- **Weather.**
- **Advertising.**



## A Newspaper Day!



- Give an opportunity for students to write for a real audience, either in their natural language or another European language.
- Create an opportunity for school children to work collaboratively to real deadlines.
- Develop a newsgathering tradition across the curriculum.
  - Increase awareness of professional writing skills.
  - Encourage a critical understanding of the media.
  - Offer an appropriate environment for developing IT skills.
- Build on an effective industry education link.
- Take part in a **FUN** activity.

## Newspaper processes

- Reading incoming E-mail, messages/faxes and downloading these articles to disc.
- Selecting the news articles the news team might want to include.
- Editing articles, writing full length features, using news, making the items appropriate for the school newspaper.
- Selecting which local/pre-prepared articles the news team wants to use.
- Creating selected articles and suitable graphics into page layouts.
- Following up stories/monitoring progression of news stories throughout the day.
- Proof reading news articles/features.
- Printing and copying the final newspapers.

# CROSS-CURRICULAR TOPICS IN A YOUNG LEARNERS CLASS

**Elisenda Papiol Solé**

*This workshop is part of the project I am developing this academic year thanks to a «llicència d'estudis» given by the Departament d'Ensenyament de la Generalitat de Catalunya (DOGC núm.:2256 de 16.9.1996)*

The workshop has three main parts:

**A-** Aspects to consider in a young learners class.

**B-** How to deal with CCT in the foreign language class.

**C-** Analysis of a practical example.

## **A-ASPECTS TO CONSIDER IN A YOUNG ENGLISH LEARNER (FROM 6 TO 8 )**

When students have their first contact with English, we want them to start to develop their communicative competence. As teachers, we plan communicative situations that allow the modification of our students' strategies of communication according to the specific context and to their own intentions.

When students are six, this process is unconscious, as they are acquiring a language rather than learning it. Therefore, in the acquisition of a second language we must also take into account the way we acquire our mother tongue.

Our mother tongue is acquired

through a process of imitation. The child is surrounded by language used in communicative situations. First, he/she listens and receives «input». Secondly, he/she responds physically to the language when it is needed. Finally, he/she produces sounds, words, phrases etc. Moreover, the natural acquisition continues to develop and language becomes richer. The child learns the oral code and afterwards the written one.

But during the process of acquisition of a language there are lots of variables that will foster or block the increase in communicative competence (e.g. motivation, «input» received by students, interaction between them, respect to their productions, etc).

A child has a natural desire to communicate and motivation has a fundamental importance on a pupil's effective language learning:

- A child takes pleasure from playing with the new code at all levels (phonologically, lexically, semantically, and syntactically).
- A child takes pleasure from learning and understanding meaning and the way the new language functions.
- A child takes pleasure from discovering.
- A child has a great facility for acquiring the phonological system of a new language because of his/her

lack of inhibition and great capacity for imitation.

All these factors decrease with age. When children are six, they are better learners than when they are nine. So the earlier we begin the better results we will have.

But, we must be careful: we can't introduce children to a new language before having planned **HOW** we will do it and what we expect from them.

If a language is acquired by using it to communicate with others, **how will we make our students use a language that they still don't know?**

**a-** By making them participate in tasks or activities in which language is needed as a code which is received («input»), or produced («output»).

**b-** By not introducing meaningless English. With children we use language to do things and to learn more concepts in which children are interested; so, we use English to count, to measure, to learn more about animals, to observe the process of growing a seed, to learn and speak about prehistoric animals, to learn to take care of our environment, to speak about famous people, festivals or food, to make

masks, puppets and clocks, to sing songs, to say rhymes, etc.

c- By taking time factors (i.e. frequency and regularity of teaching) into consideration. Relatively frequent concentrated teaching effort is better than having a little teaching over a long period of time. Doing a little English everyday will produce better results than teaching English once or twice a week.

d- By making English appear attractive to children.

### **Didactic principles we must take into account when introducing young learners to English**

#### **\* Routines**

• Observe the weather. Walk into the classroom and ask about the weather and the day.

• Propose warming-up activities related to the topic you are doing.

• Say a "chant" while they wait.

• Sing a song at the beginning/end of the class.

• Praise them if they are doing well.

This will keep their enthusiasm alive and make them feel successful from the beginning. So, when a boy or a girl does a very good thing say «Very, very, very good»

#### **\* Using games**

Children need playing to grow up; they learn more when they are enjoying themselves. But they also understand the language of rules. Sometimes the purpose of a game is to establish a control code to communicate which will be used unconsciously.

#### **\* Using mime, gestures and faces**

Extralinguistic elements provide a meaningful context and great

support for children. Children can understand extralinguistic strategies very well. As a teacher, try to use the same gestures for the same situations.

#### **\* Using songs, rhymes and chants**

Skipping, dipping, counting and finger rhymes can all be included in this category, as well as other songs which can be accompanied with actions.

They learn them by heart automatically and there is no problem in using them. While they are painting, cutting, etc, say a rhyme children know and they will spontaneously repeat it.

#### **\* Stories**

Stories should be motivating; then children cease to be listeners and viewers and become participants, co-narrators.

Stories are a good starting point for:

• Reading (recognising letters and words)

• Writing (producing their own books)

• Drama (producing their own plays and making puppets)

• Conversation

• Listening

• Speaking

• Revising or introducing new topics, vocabulary, sentences, and structures.

Stories can be chosen to consolidate learning through topics used across the curriculum and reinforce the conceptual development of students. Many different types of stories are available to be used in the classroom (folk, fairy, fantasy, animal, real, imaginary etc); however, some selection criteria can be stated independently of the sort of story the teacher wants to use:

• Stories should be enjoyable and written in a natural and rhythmical style.

• Learners should be familiar with part of the vocabulary.

• An action story should be illustrated with pictures.

• Stories should be cumulative and contain a lot of repetition.

• Stories should be told in a session.

• Illustrations should be clear, attractive, colourful and understanding.

• Stories should be accompanied by a rhyme or an action song.

A good story is cumulative, repetitive and structured (children guess what is coming).

#### **\* Aim at globalisation**

Children learn by relating what they know (previous knowledge) to what we introduce (new contents); therefore, we must always take into account which is their previous knowledge of what we want to introduce.

#### **\* Respect the silent period of students.**

Don't force your students to produce immediately.

#### **\* Don't introduce the written code and the oral practice simultaneously.**

Writing has specific characteristics.

### **B-WHAT IS A CROSS-CURRICULAR TOPIC?**

#### **Clarifying the concept.**

Cross-curricular topics have the following characteristics:

\* They introduce aspects that must be treated across and along the curriculum.

\* They are not specific to any area.

\* They help a student grow as a person.

If we introduce cross-curricular topics in Primary Education, our students perhaps will not know what a pet is, or where the Big Ben is, but they will keep the room and materials they use tidy, they will read the label of a product carefully to find out what is in it, they will probably use a trolley or a paper bag to go shopping instead of using plastic bags or perhaps they will say *thank you* or *please* spontaneously.

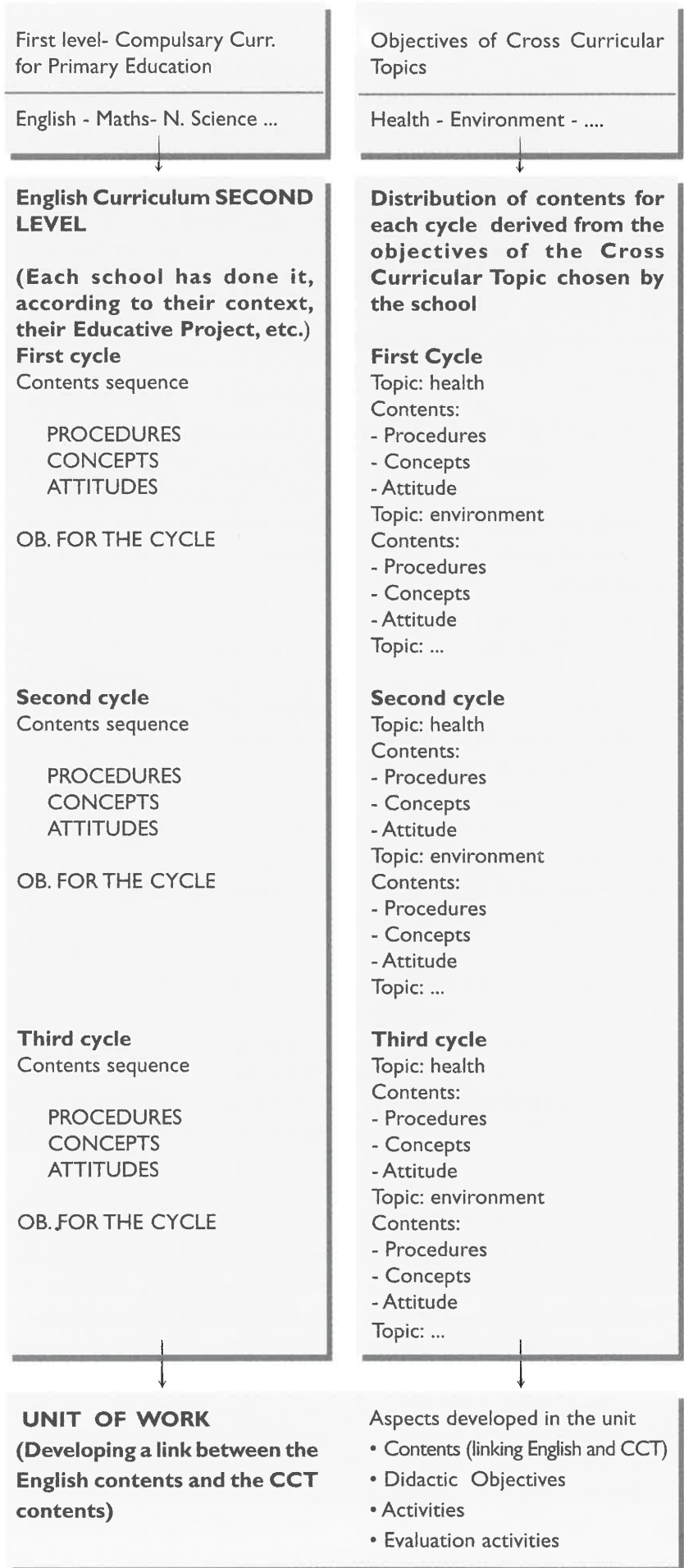
These are not attitudes towards their work; these are attitudes towards life and their relationship with other people, but they must be introduced through class work.

**How to introduce Cross-curricular Topics into the English class (specially with young learners)**

As said before, a foreign language cannot be taught in isolation: we need to introduce some concepts that will be developed. While we are listening to or working on a story, while we are practising a rhyme or singing a song, if we have planned their content previously, we will be able to use the language class to elaborate on the concepts they develop and at the same time acquire a foreign language.

How to do it:

- 1- Decide which are the topics (CCT) you want to deal with.
- 2- Set yourself some aims (e.g. «What do I want to have reached at the end of the Primary School through the use of each CCT»?)
- 3- Which English language concepts/procedures/attitudes can be practised by dealing with this CC topic?
- 4- Choose the topics you will introduce in the first/second third cycle, relating them to language.





**C- ORGANISING THE UNIT OF WORK BY INTEGRATING CCT IN THE WORK PLANNED**

This process implies the following stages:

- Choosing a topic related to the CCT we want to deal with.
- Selecting the objectives and the contents introduced by the topic: Which English contents am I going to develop? (relating them to the CCT)
- Developing procedures Attitudes

and Concepts

- Setting some didactic objectives
- Creating activities that develop the contents previously established
- Evaluating

**Example**

**RUBBISH, RUBBISH, RUBBISH**

**Topic**

"Respect for the environment": keeping the materials of the class tidy, throwing things into the correct rubbish bin depending on the material they are made from (e.g.

plastic, paper, tin, glass, etc), learning that some people throw papers into the sea, in the mountains, etc.

**Objectives for Primary Education**

- \* Learning that human beings need clean air and water to live.
- \* Showing respect for our natural surroundings.
- \* Creating a positive attitude towards the selection of rubbish.
- \* Keeping the places and materials we use tidy .

CONTENTS		
PROCEDURES	FACTS AND CONCEPTS	ATTITUDES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification of elements that pollute the environment.</li> <li>• Selection of wrappings that can be recycled.</li> <li>• Classification of wrappings according to the material they are made from.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elements that pollute our environment.</li> <li>• Rubbish that can be recycled.</li> <li>• Rubbish bins for the different materials.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive attitude towards the conservation of the environment.</li> <li>• Positive attitude towards the acquisition of products because of their wrappings.</li> </ul>

**English contents related to contents of the topic**

CONTENTS		
PROCEDURES	FACTS AND CONCEPTS	ATTITUDES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Execution of commands.</li> <li>• Dramatisation of the story «The bottom of the sea».</li> <li>• Repetition of sentences from the story.</li> <li>• Memorisation of vocabulary.</li> <li>• Use of expressions to play a board game.</li> <li>• Use of the vocabulary for the different materials and bins.</li> <li>• Debate in LI about the need to keep our environment clean.</li> </ul>	<p><b>* Vocabulary</b> Fishy, a blue fish, a red fish, a goldfish, a sea horse, a shark, a dolphin, a starfish.</p> <p>Colour: Blue, yellow, green, red, pink.</p> <p>Related to rubbish: a coke tin, a plastic bag, plastic bottles, tins, aluminium, white papers, black papers, glass, dustbin, rubbish, bin.</p> <p><b>* Communicative functions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What colour is it?</li> <li>• It's my turn / it's your turn.</li> <li>• A moment, please.</li> <li>• Thank you.</li> </ul> <p><b>* Grammatical categories</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is/there isn't</li> <li>• Action: stick, glue, cut, fold.</li> <li>• It's made of.</li> <li>• I throw ...</li> </ul> <p><b>* Phonetics</b> /S/</p> <p><b>* Extralinguistic elements:</b> Face</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effort in keeping the classroom tidy and the environment clean.</li> <li>• Active participation in a board game.</li> <li>• Collaboration in the selection of rubbish.</li> </ul>

### Didactic objectives

- Execution of commands related to the story « The bottom of the sea».
- Physical response to the commands given by the teacher.
- Participating in a board game actively, using the expressions taught.
- Relating the rubbish bin to the colour and the material which must be thrown away.
- Participating in the «chant» .
- Making a rubbish bin.
- Participating in the elaboration of a map of concepts about the story.
- Learning about the problem of the increase in rubbish.

### Main activities

- Warming up. Making fish-faces
- Activity for the initial evaluation
- Presentation of the new vocabulary. Flashcards and real elements.
- Practising new vocabulary: « Don't sit down on the Fish's chair»
- The rubbish bins arrive. Each one eats different kinds of rubbish.
- Dramatisation of the story. Before the explanation, some drawings are given to the students.

### Language produced by the teacher and students

1997. Fishy lives at the bottom of the sea, among weeds and little stones and pink coral reefs. The sea is very clean.

The blue fish

The red fish

The goldfish

The sea horse

The shark

The dolphin

The starfish

They are happy

One day, noisy people arrive at this place.

Strong music plays

The blue fish is frightened: Oh what a terrible noise!

The red fish is frightened: Oh what a terrible noise!

The goldfish is frightened: Oh what a terrible noise!

The shark is frightened :Oh what a terrible noise!

The dolphin is frightened: Oh what a terrible noise!

### Actions done by the teacher and the pupils

*The teacher sticks Fishy and shows the elements of the bottom of the sea.*

*A student with the «blue fish» sticks it on the scenery.*

*A pupil with the «red fish» sticks it on the scenery.*

*A pupil with the «goldfish» sticks it on the scenery.*

*A pupil with the «sea horse» sticks it on the scenery.*

*A pupil with the «shark» sticks it on the scenery.*

*A pupil with the «dolphin» sticks it on the scenery.*

*A pupil with the «starfish» sticks it on the scenery*

*The teacher smiles and makes the students smile too*

*The teacher sticks some pictures of noisy people*

*Looking annoyed by the noise*

*Teacher moves the drawing of the blue fish*

*Teacher moves the drawing of the red fish*

*Teacher moves the drawing of the goldfish*

*Teacher moves the drawing of the shark*

*Teacher moves the drawing of the dolphin*

The starfish is frightened: Oh what a terrible noise!

*Teacher moves the drawing of the starfish*

After a while, strange objects appear in the sea water.

A coke can

*A pupil with a drawing of a «coke can» sticks it on the scenery*

A plastic bag

*A pupil with a «plastic bag» sticks it*

Plastic bottles

*A pupil with a «bottle» sticks it*

Aluminium

*A pupil with «aluminium» sticks it*

White paper

*A pupil with «white paper» sticks it*

Black paper

*A pupil with «black paper» sticks it*

The blue fish asks: What's this?

*Teacher moves the «blue fish»*

The red fish asks: What's this?

*Teacher moves the «red fish»*

The goldfish asks: What's this?

*Teacher moves the «goldfish»*

The sea horse asks: What's this?

*Teacher moves the «sea horse»*

The shark asks: What's this?

*Teacher moves the «shark»*

The dolphin asks: What's this?

*Teacher moves the «dolphin»*

The starfish asks: What's this?

*Teacher moves the «starfish»*

The sea is very dirty

*Teacher puts her hands on her head*

Let's clean the bottom of the sea. The fish clean the water and the dustbin eats the rubbish.

The blue fish cleans and cleans

*The «blue fish» moves*

The red fish cleans and cleans

*The «red fish» moves*

The goldfish cleans and cleans

*The «goldfish» moves*

The sea horse cleans and cleans

*The «sea horse» moves*

The shark cleans and cleans

*The «shark» moves*

The dolphin cleans and cleans

*The «dolphin» moves*

The starfish cleans and cleans

*The «starfish» moves*

The dustbin eats rubbish

*The «dustbin» moving and sticking all the elements at the back*

25 days later they finish their work. The water is clean and transparent, the sea weed is green, the coral reef is pink

Fishy invites them to a party. They eat and play the violin, the trumpet, etc.

*Happy face, singing a song.*

They all live very happy ever after.

Adapted from a story written by children (5th class, aged ten) at Scuola Elementare Arcobalena, Cailungo, Republic of San Marino. Readapted by Andrew Wright, published on pag. 120-121- «**Storytelling with children**» Oxford University Press 1995

#### Some activities on the story

- Let's play memory with the names of the fish.
- Each rubbish bin has got a colour and eats different rubbish.
- Repetition of a chant.  
**Paper, paper  
plastic, plastic  
glass, glass**
- Spot the differences. Two drawings of the «bottom of the sea» are shown (one when it is clean and the other when it is dirty).
- This is a bin - let's make one.
- Activity for the formative evaluation.

- Elaboration of a concept mapping about the story.
- Let's sing a song.

#### Paper, paper

##### Song

Paper, paper  
Plastic, plastic  
PVC  
PVC

this is aluminium

this is aluminium

No, it's glass!

No, it's glass!

(rhyme Frère Jaques)

- Let's talk about our environment.
- Mini project- I throw paper into the paper rubbish bin (also with plastic, glass, etc).
- I'm a good selective.- Board game.
- Odd one out. Choose which is the odd one out for each rubbish bin.
- Activity for the final evaluation.



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# TWO ACTIVITIES FROM AN INTERDISCIPLINARY PROJECT CARRIED OUT IN METROPOLITAN BARCELONA BY THE CONTENT TEACHING GROUP

Joellen Quincannon and Teresa Navés

*This is a summary of the workshop held at the APAC- ELT Convention at the Universitat de Barcelona in February 1997. The workshop consisted of four parts:*

1. Brief introduction to content teaching and its relevance to our present teaching situation,
2. Hand-on tasks using some samples of the materials designed for the interdisciplinary project and
3. Discussion on content-based instruction.
4. Conclusions.

## 1. A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO CONTENT TEACHING

### A. What is content teaching?

• Content-based language instruction. In this approach foreign language teachers use instructional materials, learning tasks and classroom techniques for academic content areas as the vehicle for developing language, content, cognitive

and study skills.

• The foreign language is used as the medium of instruction for science, history, physical education, and other academic subjects.

• Instruction is usually given by either a content teacher, or by a foreign language teacher, or by a teaching team formed by a foreign language teacher and a content teacher.

### B. Is it useful in a 'reforma'-based teaching/learning situation?

• The focus is on acquiring information as well as on acquiring language.

• There is a match between learner needs/ interests and the teaching materials.

• Content-based materials increase student motivation.

• The language of the materials is authentic.

• Content-based materials can be used to exploit all skill areas (listening, grammar, reading, etc.). Content-based instruction emphasises the use of teaching techniques which facilitate understanding.

• Content-based instruction is directed at students with limited academic skills and weak language proficiency.

## 2. EXAMPLES FROM A CONTENT-BASED PROJECT IN METROPOLITAN BARCELONA

The following two sample materials are part of the content-based project for students 14-16 years old. The purpose of these activities is to understand why we need detergents to clean our clothes. They are hands-on experiences in which students find out why detergents are necessary.

### SAMPLE MATERIAL 1. THE PROCESS OF CLEANING.

A. Working with a partner, answer the following questions

#### QUESTIONNAIRE

At home who does the laundry?

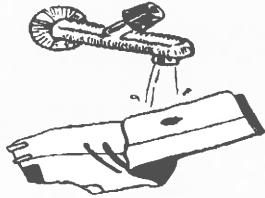
Have you ever washed anything by hand? If so what?

Do you remember how you did it?

B. Look at the pictures. What do you think the pictures describe? Match each step of the cleaning process with

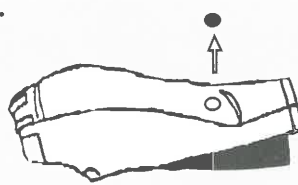
the correct drawing. Now read the steps of the cleaning process. Use the pictures to help you understand any difficult words. Also, remember what you know about cleaning clothes. Then underline the words in the text which you consider specific to the process of cleaning.

1.



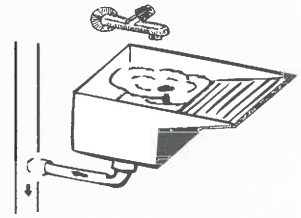
A. Mix grease and dust with water in order to separate the grease and dust from the fibres of the cloth.

2.



B. Make the water penetrate the fibres of the cloth.

3.



C. Suspend the dirt in the water so that the dirt can be washed away.

1-B 2-A 3-C

Answer key

### SAMPLE MATERIAL 2. MIXING OIL WITH WATER.

Another problem in the process of cleaning is this: water alone cannot dissolve oil stains on clothes. In the following experiment you will observe oil react with water when you mix them together.

First, look at the table below. Are you familiar with the equipment and materials needed? Follow the instructions of each experiment and perform the experience in small groups/ pairs. What do you think will happen in each experiment?

#### PRACTICAL WORK: Mixing oil and water

##### Objective:

to compare how oil reacts with water alone and with water and detergent.

##### Material:

water  
oil  
washing powder

##### Equipment:

beaker  
stirring rod  
spatula

#### EXPERIMENT 1

1. Put 10cc of oil in a beaker.
2. Add 150 cc of water.
3. Stir with a stirring rod.
4. Don't touch it for one minute.
5. Observe what happens:
  - a) Is the oil dissolved in the water?
  - b) Is the oil mixed with the water?
  - c) Do the oil and water form two layers?

#### EXPERIMENT 2

1. Put 10cc of oil in a beaker.
2. Add 150 cc of water.
3. Add 2 g of detergent and stir with a stirring rod.
4. Don't touch it for one minute.
5. Observe what happens:
  - a) Is the oil dissolved in the water?
  - b) Is the oil mixed with the water?
  - c) Do the oil and water form two layers?

### DRAW CONCLUSIONS

Compare the results of the two experiments.



1. In which experiment is the oil mixed with water?
2. In which experiment do the oil and the water separate in two layers?
3. Choose the right answer
  - a) Oil dissolves in water
  - b) Oil mixes with water with detergent

1. In experiment 2 oil mixed with water thanks to the detergent which is added to the. Oil alone does not mix water.  
2. In experiment 1 oil and the water will eventually separate in two layer if left alone. No matter how long and how hard you stir, the oil will not dissolve in water.  
3. Oil mixes with water and detergent.

Answer key

### 3. DISCUSSION

The following checklist was used to evaluate the extent to which the tasks presented fulfilled some of the content teaching principles discussed previously.

<b>CHECKLIST FOR CONTENT-BASED INSTRUCTION</b>		
1. Are the tasks linked to your students' personal experience?		
2. Do the tasks connect to previous learning?		
3. Do the students have the opportunity to use skills which aid their intellectual development?		
4. Are the instructions and texts clear?		
5. Is the level of difficulty appropriate for the level of proficiency of your students?		
6. Will the task interest your students?		
7. Does the task use authentic language?		

### 4. CONCLUSIONS

The two activities described above were chosen to illustrate some of the principles underlying content teaching approaches. The first four are general content teaching principles whereas number five is specific to our content teaching project:

1. **The foreign language is the vehicle of instruction.** (Students practise English while performing science activities)
2. **Visuals and realia** are used to facilitate comprehension (see drawings in the experiments),
3. **Redundancy** is used to facilitate comprehension (the instructions of the two experiments are very similar)
4. **The tasks involve highly demanding cognitive skills** (inferring, predicting, drawing conclusions, comparing, relating, linking, etc.)
5. The teaching learning activities follow this sequence:
  1. Students are asked **to solve a problem from everyday life** <sup>(1)</sup>.
  2. Students think about their **previous experiences** and based on them they come up with ways to solve the problem<sup>(2)</sup>.
  3. Students either **design their own experiments** to find the answers to the problem or as in the sample materials they **perform an experiment** according to the instructions given <sup>(3)</sup>
  4. Students **draw conclusions** from the findings of the experiments performed <sup>(4)</sup>
  5. Students **link the conclusions** from the experiments with the initial problem <sup>(5)</sup>
  6. Students **reflect on the scientific basis** of the everyday problem <sup>(6)</sup>

<sup>(1)</sup> The students are asked to *investigate on an everyday problem* such as why we need detergent in order to remove stains from clothes.

<sup>(2)</sup> *Tasks are based on students' personal experiences in everyday life.* Students have to think about their previous experiences in cleaning clothes. They are asked to reflect on an everyday activity such as the laundry.

<sup>(3)</sup> In order to solve a problem students have to acquire new information by performing experiments (learning by doing). It is by *hands-on activities* that students internalise scientific concepts and processes.

<sup>(4)</sup> Students need to both infer and make predictions inductively as well as deductively. The inductive method consists of posing problems and allowing students to discover the answers and draw conclusions. The deductive method consists of presenting students with familiar information and then asking them to deduce the results.

<sup>(5)</sup> It is essential that students are able to see the relationship between their initial everyday problem and the conclusions drawn from the scientific experiments performed.

<sup>(6)</sup> The students are given the opportunity to *investigate the scientific basis* of the cleaning process. In experiments 1 and 2 students explore the chemistry of mixtures by mixing two different substances such as oil and water and oil and water with detergent.

# THE *LIVE* MODEL - LISTENING AND SPEAKING IN THE CLASSROOM

Helen Stephenson

**A LIVE «MODEL» AS OPPOSED TO SIMPLY A «SPEAKER» REFERS TO SOMEONE WHO DELIVERS SPOKEN LANGUAGE IN A NATURAL WAY WITHIN A CONTROLLED FRAMEWORK FOR A GIVEN GROUP OF LEARNERS. THE LIVE DELIVERY ENHANCES THE LEARNERS' LISTENING SKILLS AND THE SPOKEN LANGUAGE ITSELF IS A USEFUL MODEL FOR LEARNERS' OWN LANGUAGE PRODUCTION.**

Do you know anyone who talks back at the radio? Maybe you do it yourself. Isn't it only natural to want to join in with the amazing, scandalous or just plain boring things you hear? Then a motorbike goes by and you miss that vital piece of information - the name of the tune, the title of the book - although if you are lucky and you are listening to the news you might catch it repeated later. Otherwise, you'll never find out unless you resort to ringing the radio station. Radio is a wonderful thing, but it's hardly *interactive*, no matter how much you shout along with the football commentary: listening to a disembodied voice is both an unnatural and a frustrating activity. This applies equally to prerecorded cassettes - they have their role in the language classroom but they also have their limitations. A *live* speaker (and therefore also listener) offers altogether different possibilities.

## **A definition**

A live «model» as opposed to simply a «speaker» refers to someone who delivers spoken language in a natural way within a controlled framework for a given

group of learners. The live delivery enhances the learners' listening skills and the spoken language itself is a useful model for learners' own language production.

In this article I will focus mainly on the first part of this cycle - the use of a live model for listening practice.

## **What prerecorded cassettes can't do**

You may feel that recorded dialogues provide adequate models of natural spoken language. Take a minute to do the following task:

Which of these features of natural (ie. person to person) dialogue do you experience when you listen to a recording?

eye contact  
body language  
monitoring (of your comprehension/attention)  
monitoring leading to repetition  
monitoring leading to rephrasing  
fillers, eg. *um, er, well*  
interruption  
interaction  
negotiation

We could add more features to this list of things which you don't experience when you listen to a cassette.

Of course, you can play a few words on a cassette over and over again and it won't lose its temper, but on the other hand a live speaker can also repeat, and rephrase, make pictures in the air, slow down, speed up and monitor your comprehension as well!

## **What a live model can do**

The teacher who wishes to act as a useful model of spoken language for learners needs to structure the speaking/listening activity via **preparation, delivery** and **feedback**. I will expand on each of these terms in turn.

## **A Preparation**

This consists of the following points:

1. Selecting the topic/content of the spoken text.
2. Preparing notes to speak from.
3. Preparing learner tasks (for reception and production)
4. Rehearsing delivery of the text.

In practice, the second and third



points follow on naturally once you have a clear idea of your topic and content, as we shall see:

**1 Selecting the topic/content of the spoken text.**

If you can forget, for a moment, that you are a language teacher, think about a recent conversation you have had or have overheard. Scribble down a few things you remember about it. Now look at what you have written and decide if it would fit under the label of «information» or «tense/language exponent/accuracy...» (linguistic terms ad infinitum). I'm assuming you have in fact, noted down «information», since (apart from the fact that I asked you to forget you are a teacher) in real life we are interested in, and hence store in our memories, the informational content of an exchange, not the detail of the linguistic code used to transmit that message. So a useful classroom model will focus on a message with some informational content. And leaping quickly ahead to point 3, the learner tasks will focus the learners' attention to that content just like in real life.

What information to choose? We can be quite repetitive in selecting the **type** of information, since the actual details can be easily varied. For example, in a narrative text the key information content derives from answering the questions *who?*, *what?*, *when?* (and then *where?*, *why?*, *how?* etc). In a descriptive text it is often useful to think in terms of categories or conceptual areas and answer the questions *what?*, *what...like?*, *where?*. The message in an instructional text focuses on primarily on *what?*, *where?* *how?* and *when?*. With the limited space available, I will exemplify this process using only a narrative context.

If you start to make some notes based on the informational content of a simple narrative, you might come up with something like this:

who	what	
Gregor	woke up	early
	yawned	
	stretched	his body
	tried to	get up
	couldn't	
	looked at	his hands
	gasped	

Obviously these are the barest bones of a story - in this case Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, in which the main character wakes up one day to find he has turned into a cockroach - and it is not our intention here to exploit it as a literary text at all. So we have selected our topic, perhaps «early morning surprises», and isolated the main informational content of the narrative thread, which centres around the verbs.

**2 Preparing notes to speak from.**

If you are familiar with the story, then the notes presented above will probably be sufficient to prompt you in the telling of it. You may need a few extra details:

Gregor	woke up	early	(room still dim)
	yawned		
	stretched	his body	
	tried	to get up	(on his back)
	couldn't		(feeling worried now)
	looked at	his hands	
	gasped		(they were furry)

Beware of adding too much detail to these notes. If you have full sentences in front of you in class, you will end up reading out a written text, not speaking in a natural way.

**3 Preparing the learner tasks**

As mentioned above, in the real world we listen to get information. We might react to that information by speaking, by thinking, by doing something or we might simply ignore it. In all of these reactions we are largely unconscious of how we are processing the information. However in the language classroom we need to focus the learners' attention on

both the information and language forms that express it. Logically, then, listening tasks for our simple narrative would involve a focus on the sequence of events and what they were. A first listening task could be to «tick the verbs you hear». The learners could then listen a second time and sequence these verbs, and then transfer the list to a note format. With further listenings, more and more details could be filled in:

1. Tick the verbs you hear:

gasped
yawned
sat
looked at
slept
woke up
stretched
tried to

Learner task 1

2. Now sequence the verbs you hear:

gasped
yawned
looked at
woke up
stretched
tried to

Learner task 2

Gregor	woke up	early
	yawned	
	stretched	
	tried	to get up
	could not	
	looked at	his hands
	gasped	

Learner task 3

On completion of the tasks, the learner has a set of notes which mirrors the teacher's notes. In other words, the learner possesses a framework which highlights the informational content, the discourse organisation and the linguistic forms of the spoken text. The next learner task could be to match the notes to a set of jumbled pictures, which include a final frame showing what *jk* has metamorphosed into. Such visuals check (and aid) comprehension of the text. These notes (written and visual) can then be used as a prompt to the learner's own

speaking and writing, and give a pattern which can be easily used to generate additional models with the learner filling in the details of their own story lines.

#### 4 Rehearsing delivery of the text.

It may sound paradoxical to suggest that we need to practise speaking naturally. However, the one element of live and natural discourse we have diminished slightly in this model is that of spontaneity. Evidently, since we have pre-selected and «tweaked» the narrative for a particular group of learners, the delivery is different from that of a spontaneous utterance. It is a good idea, therefore, to rehearse saying the text **once or twice** before doing the class. This enables you to:

- establish the facts in your mind so that you don't rely too much on reading aloud from your notes.
- check that the language you actually use is consistent with the tasks you have set. For example, with the story given above, don't get too side-tracked into **describing** the scene, but focus on the **narrative** events.
- practise any awkward pronunciation items or troublesome constructions.
- feel confident with varying what you say each time while still delivering the information in your notes.

Don't aim to learn the text by heart - the whole idea is to speak naturally, not to recite!

#### B Delivery

By this stage you know what you

are going to say and what you have asked the learners to focus on, and as you speak to the class you find that you naturally incorporate all the features of natural spoken language such as hesitation, rephrasing, monitoring and so on which assist the listeners' comprehension. Even with a monologue such as the narrative outlined above, learners are able to *participate* via eye contact and *interact* with the speaker. The tasks focus the learners' attention in a controlled way and leave you free to vary and embellish the story as appropriate.

#### C Feedback

The listening activity concludes when the learner «while-listening» tasks (tasks 1-3 above) are complete. As the class feedback the information they have noted down to the teacher they are in effect reproducing a less sophisticated version of the language model. As suggested above, the completed tasks provide the basis for the learners' own language production, just as in the real world we usually recycle the information we have received in one form or another, even if it's just to shout at the radio.

#### Acknowledgements & useful reading

The ideas expressed in this article derive from the work of Dr Pat McEldowney, John Whitehead and John Burgess at the University of Manchester and can be followed up in:

Burgess J. & Whitehead J. (1995) *Listening - Teacher as Model, Tasks as Control*. CELSE, University of Manchester

McEldowney, PL. (1982) *English in Context Teachers' Book*. Nelson



# L'AVALLACIÓ EN EL NOU SISTEMA EDUCATIU

## PANEL DISCUSSION

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### Neus Figueras

#### **PARTICIPANTS**

**FINA MISERACHS:** Secondary School Teacher of French at the Institut Sant Just in Barcelona. She has collaborated with the Departament d'Ensenyament in a number of curricular design projects.

**NEUS SERRA:** Secondary School Teacher of English. Inspector at the Delegació Territorial de Girona. APAC's secretary.

**NORMAN COE:** Lecturer at the Facultat de Filologia of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and at the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya. He is interested in testing and has collaborated with the Departament d'Ensenyament as an expert in this field.

**MICHAEL HARRIS:** Lecturer at the Departamento de Filología of the Universidad de Alcalá de Henares. He has co-authored textbooks for secondary schools and a book on assessment. He has been a teacher trainer for some time and is interested in process testing.

#### **MODERATOR**

**NEUS FIGUERAS:** Teacher of English at the Escola Oficial d'Idiomes. Currently working at the Departament d'Ensenyament on the design and administration of EOI certificate exams. APAC's treasurer.

Attendance at this panel discussion

was very high. More than 150 people decided to devote the first hours of a Saturday morning to attend and participate in a session on evaluation, which shows, we think, that this is a hot issue among the academic community.

The discussion had two parts: during the first one, the panellists were asked to give their opinion on the following questions:

*1- Which is your position concerning evaluation in the new educational system?*

*2- Considering your involvement in the world of teaching and your relationship with its different users (teachers, parents, students), which are the problems you can identify and which solutions do you foresee?*

*3- It seems that teachers have to give more and more. Is that so? What would you say to those teachers who are worried about the many roles they have to play both in the classroom and in the system?*

During the second part, all the participants engaged in a debate which emerged from their answers to the questions prepared by APAC. The discussion took place in Catalan, Spanish and English.

The first participant to speak was Fina Miserachs, who explained how

she saw the situation. She insisted that teachers had to change and that evaluation had to be looked at from another angle, from a new perspective which took the following factors into consideration:

1. There is a need for a definition of the term *evaluation* from a pedagogical point of view.

2. Evaluating is not the same as measuring. Not all evaluation implies qualification. Can we possibly quantify attitudes?

3. We do not evaluate a student. We evaluate something from that student by means of an activity in a defined context.

4. Evaluation must help students, informing them of their successes and the difficulties they must face, not of their failures.

5. In spite of the fact that our students have to pass each credit, summative evaluation only makes sense at the end of a stage or "etapa", when it is necessary to take decisions.

6. The different instruments used at the IES for evaluation only include tests and exams. We have to bear in mind that the results produced by these instruments can lead to error because they are always relative.

Fina Miserachs also listed the qualities which, according to her, evaluation at ESO must have. These are some of the attributes that should characterise it:

- continuous and permanent
- educative
- dynamic
- related to specific (and specified) objectives
- discriminatory
- economical
- transparent
- democratic
- demanding
- the result of careful planning

The second member of the panel to talk was Norman Coe. He adopted a totally different position and showed his concern about the fact that evaluation and its results should always be in the hands of the teachers and that they were not publicly equatable and comparable. Norman Coe insisted that a distinction should be drawn between formative and summative evaluation. He compared the world of teaching with the world of sports and asked the audience to imagine how incoherent it would be to ask the coach of the Barça Football Club to decide on the result of each match.

Norman Coe also insisted that it is necessary to have explicit documents from the educational authorities regarding evaluation and its objectives. As a solution to the problem of evaluation in the new educational system, he proposed the existence of exams provided by the educational authorities which could be given to all students of the same educative level every month or every two months so that comparisons between levels and results could be made, which

is not possible nowadays.

Norman Coe finished his contribution with a word of caution to all teachers: what we teach is not what students learn, and that has to inform any step taken towards evaluation.

Neus Serra was the third participant to give her opinion on the initial questions and was in agreement with Fina Miserachs' words. She added that the new educational system was new to everybody and asked for a special effort from everybody to implement it. Changes, she said, will make all of us suffer, they will ask for more work and more resources, and we know that resources, both human and material, are limited these days. We will have to do our best with what we have. She went on to explain how she organizes the resources at Girona and how things can improve with the collaboration of the teachers working there.

The fourth and last member of the panel to speak was Michael Harris, who drew a clear difference between the old and the new systems. In the new system, he said, the centre of attention is and has to be the student, and what students need is feedback on what they can improve; we should not put pressure on them to do what they cannot or don't know how to do. He made some suggestions about how to let off this pressure and recommended using short, informal tests or other instruments, like questionnaires, observation sheets, etc and insisted that teachers should have a clear idea of what they want to do and plan everything well in

advance. Michael Harris criticised the use of time and effort in end-of-term tests with obsessive concern for numerical results. Feedback, he said, has to be given throughout the year: this will improve learning. Giving feedback at the end of a course is like using military intelligence at the end of the war; the results will not change and the learning process will not improve either as it is already too late!

Once the four members of the panel had given their opinion on the initial questions, the moderator read them the questions asked by the audience. The questions included a wide range of views on evaluation and reflected different concerns: the need to have unique external tests for all, the difficulty of having to "pass" the vast majority of students - some of whom do not wish to sit in a classroom until they are 16 -, the absence of clear directions from the educational authorities on how to evaluate attitudes and skills, and, of course, having to do it all with groups of 35 students!

The members of the panel answered the questions addressed to them and confirmed their initial positions. Then a rich and fruitful debate was held between them and the audience.

The discussion took longer than expected and was finally brought to a close two hours later. APAC, however, would like to offer this magazine to continue this and many other debates that are of interest to our profession. From here we invite you to write and send your opinions, letters to the editor or articles so that we can exchange ideas and help one another.



# LET'S MAKE A FILM!

## DUES PROPOSTES PER A LA TEVA CLASSE DE PRIMÀRIA

### Neus Valldeperas

Tots tenim clar que la utilització del conte és bàsica en una classe de primària, entenent per primària la franja dels 3 als 12 anys i independentment de la modalitat de TEFL en la qual estem personalment involucrats (a la pública, a la privada, fent classes extra-escolars...). El conte o la història poden utilitzar-se a molts nivells i de moltes maneres diferents depenent de les característiques especials del grup que tenim al nostre davant. Les seves justificacions pedagògiques han estat elaborades en molts dels llibres amb els quals treballem i des de molts angles diferents. N'anomenaré sols unes quantes:

- Stories allow children to form their own inner pictures.
- They develop and stimulate the imagination as well as the comprehension of new vocabulary items.
- They develop positive attitudes towards English and language learning.
- They help children acquire new vocabulary in significant contexts.
- They imply communicative interchange.
- They provide an opportunity for integrating skills.
- They help unnoticeable repetition.

Bé, la llista seria massa llarga per

a fer-la completa. Només apuntar que la manera concreta d'utilitzar aquest recurs té tan sols com a límit la pròpia imaginació del mestre que la utilitza.

Però, què passa **quan** es vol anar més enllà, **quan** es vol estendre les oportunitats ofertes a tot un curs i no només a parts periòdiques de la class, **quan** creus que per molt bé que es programi un conte aquest no ofereix prou TPR per a satisfer les ganes de participació dels alumnes, **quan** voldríem que fossin ells els qui expliquessin les seves pròpies històries però no compten amb prou recursos lingüístics per a fer-ho, **quan** volem afegir-hi el màxim contexte interdisciplinar, intercultural, inter-eixos transversals, inter- no sé què més, **quan** els volem fer protagonistes del seu propi procés d'aprenentatge, però de veritat, no només com a part retòrica de la nostra programació, **quan** volem contemplar la diversitat, però no sols contemplar-la sino tenir prou recursos com per a assumir-la sense treballar el doble o el triple o... , **quan** volem estimular el treball en comú i obtenir un veritable producte de classe-grup, **quan** els volem tenir estimulats però no esverats, xerrant però en anglès o sobre

l'anglès, en moviment però sense perdre el control?

Bé, personalment no havia trobat mai respostes màgiques fins a la utilització de la video-càmera.

Engrescar un curs a fer una pel·lícula durant tot un any escolar, inventant-se una història, elaborant un guió i passant-se 9 mesos millorant-lo, fent decorats, preparant petits diàlegs, treballant en grup per a dedicar el darrer dia de cada mes a filmar el que s'ha preparat durant el dies anteriors, no veure el resultat de tot aquest treball fins a final de curs i finalment aconseguir involucrar-nos tots en una feina comuna i atractiva, tot això m'ho ha ofert el " **Let's make a film!** ".

En la xerrada volia mostrar com ho faig i quin és el resultat. Mostrar una de les pel·lícules realitzades a classe i evidenciar com n'és de senzill fer-la, de quina manera pot integrar-se un programa de curs en la seva elaboració, com n'és d'econòmic en temps de preparació i en material, com n'és d'engrescador per a la canalla i què bé que s'ho passen -ens ho passem- 'fent' anglès.

Resumiré, doncs, consells i mètode així com comentaris i conclusions extrets entre tots els



participants a la ponència :

**1-** No assistiu a classes de com utilitzar el video. Sembla d'entrada tan complicat que mai us engrescareu a fer una pel·lícula vosaltres sols.

**2-** No hi ha llibres al mercat de com fer una pel·lícula-curs. Els llibres publicats són sobre la utilització de la video-càmera (aquí remeteixo a l'apartat 1 com a comentari) o sobre com visionar videos a la classe o fer petits "role-plays" (molt útil si sols és això el que voleu fer!).

**3-** Observar bé el grup i decidir en funció de les seves característiques si la idea és o no és viable.

**4-** Establir un programa de curs, el qual s'inclourà temàticament en

l'elaboració del guió inicial (sota una subtil manipulació per la nostra part ).

**5-** Plantejar la idea a la classe i elaborar un guió d'aventures entre tots. Aquest inclourà l'aparició de tots el nens com a protagonistes (per exemple, *un grup d'amics marxen de viatge en avió quan...* ). La participació real de cada nen anirà en funció de la diversitat de l'aula, però tots tindrem un paper important de cara al producte final (encara que la nostra tímidesa només ens permeti aguantar un decorat o posar la música de fons!).

**6-** Dividir el guió en seqüències no massa llargues de manera que es dediqui 1 classe al mes a filmar el que s'ha estat preparant durant 3 o 4 classes prèvies (el temps anirà en funció de les hores de

classe per setmana o de l'edat dels nens).

**7-** Treballar prèviament els temes que inclou el guió utilitzant els recursos propis d'una classe tradicional (si anem a l'Àfrica, farem *animals* com a tema previ).

**8-** Consells tècnics: convé saber apretar l' ON i l' OFF, així com el BACKUP per a comprovar que no hem fet "pífies " (per exemple, deixar la càmera engegada). Res més. Ah sí! No repetir les escenes més de dues vegades, es fa pesat i es perd massa temps!

**9-** Material: 2 rotllos de paper d'embalar, ceres de colors, tisores, cinta adhesiva, video-càmera i pel·lícula .

**10-** Post-utilització de la pel·lícula:

**a)** visionar-la només al final del curs, a ser possible també amb els pares; fer-ne còpies per a tothom (se n'encarreguen generalment els mateixos pares); **b)** utilitzar la pel·lícula, un cop acabada, en altres cursos com a treball de video amb tasques específiques per a realitzar durant o després de passar-la . Resulta molt atractiu i divertit per als alumnes, alhora que els anima a voler fer-ne una l'any següent si s'escau.

Conclusió dels alumnes. Es fàcil i fins i tot requereix menys preparació que una classe normal. Es té els alumnes super-estimulats des del primer dia. S'integren tots aquells mençament de la ponència. FUNCIONA !!!!!

**Pregunta:** No podria ser aquest el títol i el projecte per a un crèdit de secundària ?

# Hands On!

Tom Maguire and Maite Galán

**This article describes some of the Reading and Writing activities found effective in 3rd. ESO. You will find they work in most classroom contexts and that they are easy to incorporate into your present practice. We have used them with computers to heighten students' motivation.**

## Charlie

To combine Listening and Writing you can use the reader *What's Next?*(1) which is full of folk-tales told in short paragraphs. The first story, "Charlie", is amusing and easy to the ear because it uses the same basic routine to tell each paragraph. You introduce the story explaining that the English word "charlie" means *numbscull*. You can then easily elicit that this is the story of silly boy called Charlie.

The basic plot is that Charlie and his mother are poor, so Charlie works on a farm each day. The problem is that the farmer pays him in goods, not money, and Charlie always manages to destroy his day's wages on the way home from work. For instance when the farmer gives him eggs, he gets into a fight and throws the eggs at some boys, when his mother gives him a basket the farmer pays him with milk and he pours it into the basket... and so on with butter which melts in his pocket and corn which falls through a string bag. The funny storyline is easily followed because it is predictable and uses similar structures to recount each episode. You can read it to your students, section by section, checking their comprehension. In the final chapter, left unread, Charlie's mother is so fed up that she decides to go to work on the farm. This is the section students write on their computers.

They have had intensive aural input of structures and are usually able to finish the story creatively.

Once students have typed out their version on the word processor they use the speller, thesaurus and grammar check options to do their own correcting. They also make a note on paper of all their corrections which they later write into a multiple-choice programme(2) for review.

## Dictation

An all-round exercise is that of dictation which has a myriad of variations(3).

You will find the song "What a Wonderful World" is easy enough to understand to be useful at the ESO level. You can also use this opportunity to familiarise pupils with the format keys on the processor by dictating the format along with the lyrics. For example you dictate the title and the keys necessary for it to appear underlined. The refrain is repeated so you can also dictate the Copy & Paste keys to have students move lines of text without retyping it. Tab keys are also handy, so include them too. Students can use the processor's spellcheck facility to correct spelling before the whole result is checked on the board. Then you have your students translate the text with their electronic dictionaries(4).

The perfect completion for this class is listening to Louis Armstrong's version of the song.

Another effective dictation activity is The Race where teams of students have to copy from a text placed at a distance from their computer. One from each group runs up to the dictation, reads a part, then runs back to repeat it to the group who write it

on the computer. The trick here is to use the correct form of typical student errors to construct the text because these will be assimilated more easily on account of the meaningful repetition involved in the race.

Teams spellcheck their dictation and switch off their screen to show they have finished. Teams then exchange computers and count up others' mistakes. 0 points are allotted for finishing first and points are added for each mistake, so the team with the least points wins.

## Daydream

The real difficulty with creative writing is often getting pupils into the right frame of mind to create ideas. You may find that the following technique jumpstarts your students's creativity. Write "daydream" on the board and elicit its meaning. Announce that for the first part of this class everyone is invited to daydream. To help you will put on some background music - play a piece of instrumental music (I suggest New Age.) Ask your students to sit back, relaxing and listening, letting their minds float away on the sound of the notes... Invite them to allow themselves to conjure up images to fit the harmonious melody...

As your pupils are settling into their dream there will probably be giggles and general murmuring in the class - ignore it, it is only a reaction to their own visualisations.

When the piece has ended and everyone has gradually returned from their "trip" ask students to describe their experience by writing down the images and the sounds and sensations related to them. Advise them that to bring out the detail in their pictures they can describe the colours in the





image, the background scene, the foreground, the different shapes, the intensity of light, the quality of the sounds, the rhythms, the volume, the temperature, and so on.

Explain that this is what writing is about: putting your images, sounds and feelings into words.

Pupils use their electronic dictionary to write, then they spellcheck, grammarcheck and write their findings to Basetest.

This example was written during a class by a 14 year-old girl.:

*"With this song that gives me a strange vision I can see a warm and green field with a river crossing it.*

*This song makes me think in beautiful things like: peace, love and harmony and a lot of things I can't describe with words.*

*This song makes me dream of fantastic things. I can sleep with it with a lot of calm in myself and without problems. The song's harmony is alright and there are no lyrics.*

*I can observe a field of wheat. It's yellow like the sun and a lot of sheep, black and white sheep.*

*I can appreciate a pair of frogs in the river. Both are greenish or brownish. I can't see them very well.*

*The sky has some little clouds. There isn't any danger of rain because there is no wind.*

*I'm under a tree, reading a book ... that's the end of the song."*

### Storylines

**Mixed-up stories** is an amusing reading exercise where you have two stories interlaced and students have to read intensively to disentangle them. Use of the Copy and Paste facilities on the processor make this good fun.

**The diminishing sentence** is an exercise in editing where your students are asked to delete unnecessary text while retaining the same meaning. This can work equally well on the board in a normal classroom with groups getting marks for deleting sequences of unnecessary text. In the computer class it only requires the delete button on the processor. Here's an example:

*"The fat and ugly sisters who were jealous of beautiful young Cinderella's good looks and tried very hard to stop her from meeting or even seeing the rich and handsome Prince Charming who lived a wonderful life in the great golden palace in the land of Fairytale were very unhappy when she lost her slipper then met the Prince in her kitchen where she accepted his marriage proposal and lived happily ever after."*

Students do all of these activities in groups around the same machine. We believe this groupwork setup is a another strong motivational factor worth taking into account. In fact in their answers to the final questionnaire most students express a preference for working in groups, which they said makes for more enjoyment and learning.

### Blank Page

Ask students if they have ever experienced the blank page syndrome during an exam, when they just can't think of anything to say or write. Talk about the episode. Announce to your pupils that you have good news for them: after today's lesson they will know how to overcome this syndrome.

Present this strategy:

1. Students write for three minutes.

They are to write without thinking or revising, whatever comes into their minds.

2. They exchange papers with their partner who comments on one aspect they like and one they dislike, then return the paper. They now add something and delete something.

3. They rearrange the structure, for example by exchanging the introduction and the end, or the middle and the end.

4. They spellcheck and do a grammarcheck of their writing.

5. They rewrite the whole piece.

You can round off the class by reading a few creations out loud. Remind students that they can use this strategy anytime they have to create something from nothing.

Here is an authentic example written by a 15 year-old during a class:

*"When I'm in the English class I hear the teacher, I practice the exercises and I sometimes speak with my neighbour.*

*Sometimes I think about the words of the teacher, they are clear words for me to understand the sentences. Sometimes I don't understand the sentences, then I think about it and I know that my vocabulary isn't enough. Then, when I arrive at home I take the dictionary and read some words that I don't know their meaning.*

*After my mother enters into my room and she talks with me some things, sometimes she makes me angry and I speak a lot, then I realise that I use many words in my language, then I understand that English is an easy language but I still need practice."*

(1) Abbott, G. (1976) *What Next?*, Longman

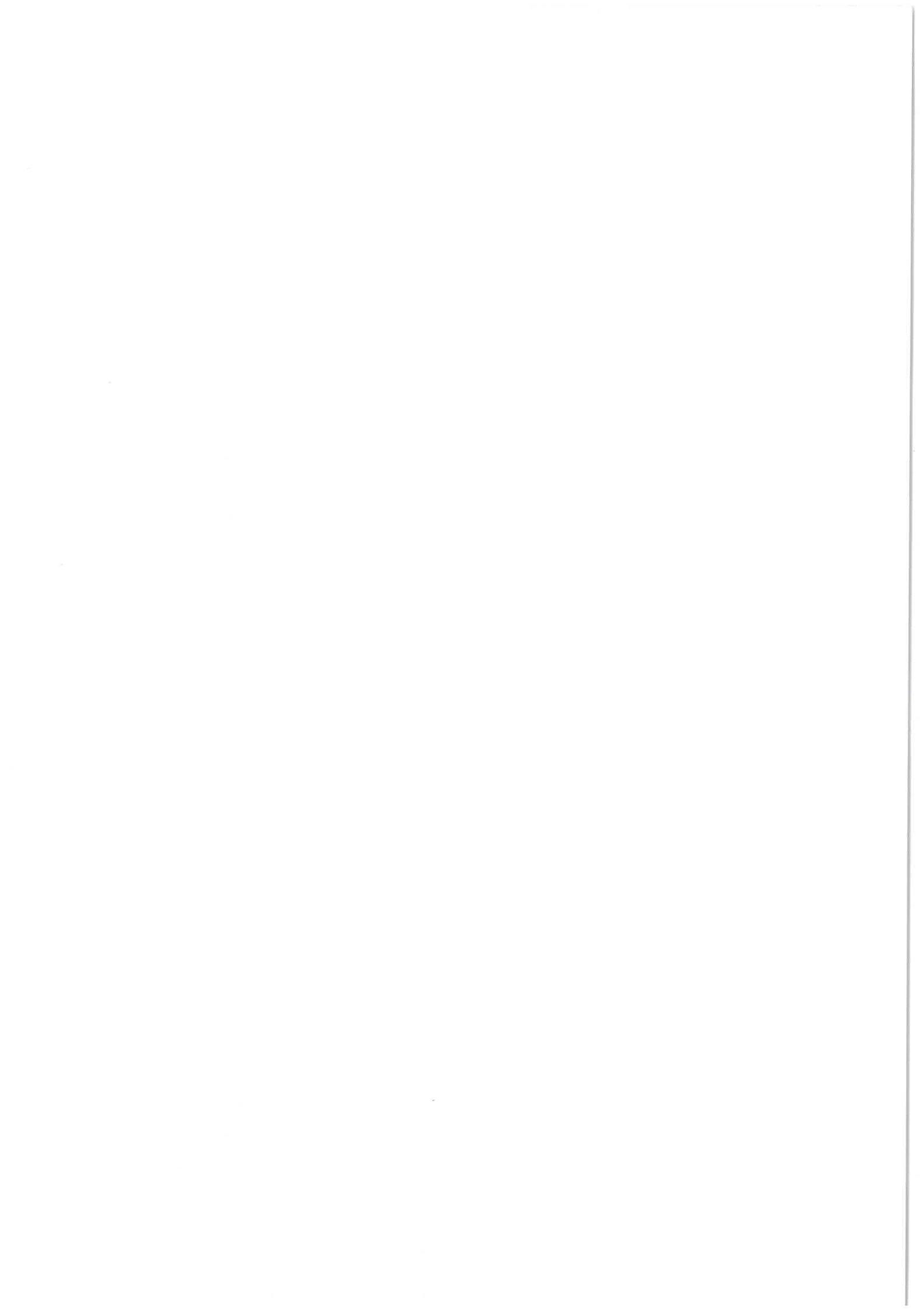
(2) Casas, J. (1970) *Basetest* (software), Generalitat de Catalunya.

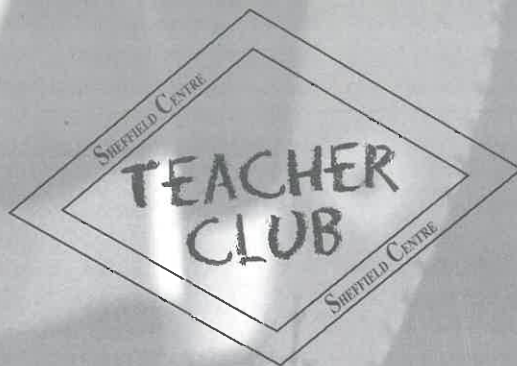
(3) Davis, P & Rinvolucrí, M. (1988) *Dictation*, CUP.

(4) *We bought a inexpensive dictionary called "Rapid" which is available commercially.*

**You can send comments to [jmaguire@pie.xtec.es](mailto:jmaguire@pie.xtec.es)**







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