apac

ELT CONVENTION 2007

The quarterly selection from our last ELT Convention

The 6th Skill: Information Technology Competence

by J. Angrill

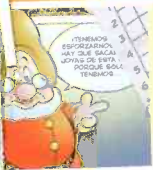## Learning to Learn: TeachersReflecting, Students Reflecting

by Lesley Bobb Wolff

...AND MANY OTHER INTERESTING ARTICLES.

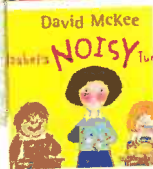What to read..., recommended by our experts in our Book Review Section

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Editorial

Dear Members:

Feast your eyes on our new design! We hope you like it. We've tried to make the journal more visually appealing, but we haven't changed the sections. They continue to bring together the articles we've been receiving in regard to our Conference (highlighted in the orange band), the different contributions offered to us by writers or requested of them by us due to the importance of the topic they deal with (in the green band), and the book reviews we always have (in the blue band).

In this issue, you will only find two articles on workshops given in the 2007 ELT Convention, but, on the other hand, there is a good range of articles that we are sure will interest primary school and secondary school teachers.

As you all well know, we're immersed in a time of major curriculum changes, and all of us teachers are making an effort to reflect the new directives in our syllabuses. We hope that the topic will be dealt with in some of the presentations in the upcoming Conference and that we'll be able to offer you reports on them in future issues.

But, we also hope to receive contributions from all of you, in the form of any ideas or material you would like to share with the rest of the members of APAC. We're all in the same boat, and the more we share with each other and bail each other out, the more we help ourselves. Of course we enjoy reading what the great captains of knowledge in the ELT field have to say about their research findings or their latest ideas, but we cannot forget that the wealth of experience among all of us new deckhands and old salts is nothing to sneeze at. This kind of know-how is one of the best sources of teacher training and renewal.

We encourage you to send us accounts of your experiences, views, good practices, and articles and books you have read and consider to be of interest. Your fellow travellers and comrades in arms will appreciate them. So, at the risk of making you completely seasick with this extended metaphor... let us conclude with a hearty "All hands on deck! Full steam ahead into 2008!"

Cordially,
The swabs and galley cooks of the editorial board

Editorial Team

Letter from our president

Dear colleagues,

February is always an eventful month at APAC. Hopefully, this being a leap year, we might as well get more than usual. As this new issue reaches you everything is getting ready for our annual convention at Universitat Pompeu Fabra. David Graddol, whose recent research on the state of Global English has made a great impact on policy makers, will offer the opening lecture on February 28th. As English becomes positioned as a generic learning skill in many parts of the world, Graddol's insights are likely to play a key role in redefining who is teaching what. His lecture and Mr. Ernest Maragall's inaugural address will mark the beginning of a three-day conference packed with lectures and workshops on aspects of ELT that should prove useful and meaningful to everyone. As usual, APAC will chair a roundtable with the active participation of members. Considering that our organization has been around for more than twenty years now we thought it was about time to have a look back. We want to hear practising teachers –experienced and new- exchanging views on the way it was and the way it is for English teachers in Catalonia.

February will also bring a new title to our monograph series: "Technology in English Teaching: Looking Forward". The role of ICT in teaching and learning processes in the near future is assessed by outstanding researchers in a volume edited by Neus Figueras. And, yes, before this longish February ends, members will notice how we have managed to upgrade APAC's website see inside. We have a tool for all that is now more user friendly, more informative, and more useful. As you can see, there is a lot for you to read about and check out during the leap year. Make the most of it and, please, don't let us down. Register for the 2008 APAC-ELT Convention! Come to share views and come to learn. Although Oscar Wilde suggested that everyone who is incapable of learning takes to teaching, we should prove that good old Oscar's remarks can, now and then, sound outdated.

With best wishes,
Miquel Berga - President

Revamping of www.apac.es

The APAC website has been updated to make it even more user friendly, informative and useful for hard worked teachers.

The side menu has been simplified to enable fast access to the full website which ranges from membership invitations to an interactive forum and links for classroom use to a section reserved for members.

The home page gives you all the links to new info. on the web. One click and you get all the lowdown on the ELT Convention in February or details on new fees or members' theatre discounts.

Another section of the site is dedicated to explaining what APAC is, how it has evolved and the advantages membership offers you. Members will have a space on the new site which will promote their personal webs and blogs. Membership also offers advantages in the real world such as book discounts and free publications.

The link to resources, open to all, will be of interest to teachers of English at every level. No need to plough through search engine results since the site list is graded according to skills, levels and includes a summary. It will be updated regularly and incorporate material which will be directly useful in the classroom whether you use paper, computers or a digital smartboard : ELT novelties for tomorrow's class at your fingertips.

The John McDowell awards and paper publications links are retained.

Another novelty is the forum where teachers can give their opinions on what matters to them, initiate new subjects and generally exchange views on the profession.

Happy surfing on apac.es

How We Think Young Learners Learn Languages?

by Annie
Hughes

Adapted from a paper
first given at the APPI
Conference, Portugal,
in 2006)

We need to try to understand how children think and learn and then how they learn a foreign language so that we can work towards creating the right teaching and learning environment for their target language success. We want to provide activities in the teaching English to young learners (TEYL) class that will encourage and support the teaching and learning of English, general cognition and, ultimately, lead to more motivating classes for our learners….and teachers!

In this paper I will attempt to highlight specific areas we should take into account before, and as, we teach English as a foreign language to young learners. I shall introduce the 'Building Blocks for TEYL', discuss each 'block' and hope to show that the links from the foundation block right up to the top level block are inseparable and should always be kept in mind by all of us involved in TEYL.

First, let me show you the 'Building Blocks' of understanding are that we should address for TEYL:

'Building blocks' for TEYL

Assessment, evaluation and reflection in TEYL

Implications for TEYL materials, activities & skills needed by the teacher

Implications for the TEYL environment and how we teach the target language

How young learners learn a foreign language

Factors which help YL's acquire a target language

How do young learners develop, learn and learn languages?

We shall take a look at each of these blocks, one by one. As you can see, we have *How do young learners develop, learn and learn languages* as the foundation block with the next layer being *Factors which help YL's acquire a target language* and then, going up from this, we have *How young learners learn a foreign language, Implications for the TEYL environment and how we teach the target language, Implications for TEYL materials, activities and skills needed by the teacher and, finally, Assessment, Evaluation and Reflection in TEYL.*

I am hoping to show, in this discussion, that we need to be aware of all the 'Building Blocks' of TEYL, or the layers of our understanding, when we think about any aspect of TEYL and how we can best support young learner foreign language learning.

Without all these 'building blocks' in place our provision for young English learners would be inadequate So let us take a look at each one in turn.

How do young learners develop, learn and learnlanguages?

We have no room in this discussion to consider absolutely all the studies there have been into children's learning, or their learning of foreign languages, but we will be able to take a brief look at those that seem to have particular relevance and interest to us as TEYL practitioners today.

We will first go back in history, then, to look at the work of one of the most well-known theorists in developmental psychology who tried to work out how children thought and mentally developed. We are, of course, talking about Piaget (Piaget 1967 Brewster 1991, Brewster, Ellis and Girard 2002, Cameron 2001). Piaget set up various experiments to ascertain how children thought during and about different situations and to determine how, then, they cognitively developed. It seems he was particularly trying to understand how children would solve problems during their life experiences and how this changed as they got older. His assumption was that children actively constructed knowledge from experience and he wanted to try to establish how the child did this as a 'lone scientist'.

Based on the results from this work he suggested that children developed through specific stages. His experiments with children were carried out under rather strict conditions in research labs.

The specific stages he felt children developed through were the Sensori Motor Stage, from 0-18 months, in which the child was learning through interaction with the world around it with Piaget feeling the child was particularly ego-centric at this stage. The next stage was the *Concrete Operational Stage, from 18 months-11 years, being split into the subsets of pre-operational* and the *concrete operational stages* in which the child developed and was able to operate through interaction with the concrete world around them. Then, Piaget believed, the child moved to more abstract thought within the final stage, the *Formal Operational Stage* (Brewster 1991, Cameron 2001). His work particularly tried to identify how children could *assimilate*, (add new knowledge to support old knowledge already established by them) and *accommodate* (change their present understanding of something based on the new experiences they have) and thus, he felt, they develop understanding using both.

Piaget believed these stages were more or less fixed in age and sequential order. He also believed that children could only move onto the next stage when they had completed the stage before and were ready to move on.

Following his highly influential work, lots of teaching then tried to link with his findings and based teaching on the 'readiness' of children to move onto the 'next stage'. Many of us will remember the terms 'readiness' and 'reading readiness' when thinking about the influence his work has had on the teaching of young learners over the last forty or so years. (Brewster 1991, Cameron 2001).

However, within the work of Margaret Donaldson (1978) many of Piaget's experiments were recreated and she found that his measurements did not really reflect the way children were actually able to think. She found that Piaget did not, for example, take into account what sense the child was making of the adult questioning in the sorts of 'experiments' he carried out or the fact that the 'experiment' was taking place in a very unnatural setting for the child (Cameron 2001).

Piaget's work has also come under quite heavy criticism because he did not consider the role of language as being a catalyst in the cognitive development of the child at all.

His work, however, was very important for us all and though it is now longer thought to be highly influential in the way we feel about children's lear-

ning, he did try to establish exactly what was going on in the child's head and, more importantly, considered the child as an individual who developed and thought as an individual or 'lone scientist'. His work was thus very important as a first step in gaining a contemporary understanding of the cognitive development of children.

Vygotsky (1978), another development psychologist, and then, later, Bruner (1983, 1990, Bruner and Haste 1987), believed that language was actually very central to the cognitive development of children. They believed that it was instruction that particularly helped children to learn and develop.

They also believed that the act of *internalisation* (moving thought from 'out loud' to thought which is 'in their heads') was helped when an adult or able peer talked 'thinking' through with children and instructed or guided them. Vygotsky (1978) described the difference between what development a child could achieve on their own and the development in a child when an adult was able to work with them, like this, as the *zone of proximal development.*

Bruner (1983 ,1990, Bruner & Haste 1987)) developed this idea further and described the cognitive support that could be given to a child by an adult, or a more able peer, as *scaffolding* through which the child could develop and grow because the adult would give support to their thinking and encourage them to think in certain ways.

Returning to Donaldson (1978) again, she believed that it was through experience and trying to 'make sense' of experiences, by asking questions and trying things out, or hypothesizing, that children were able to develop. To some extent this links back to what Piaget set out to explain through his experiments but, perhaps, they were too clinical and not child-friendly enough for him to gain clearer insights into what children were really able to do in their own minds. Donaldson's work, in contrast, showed how young children were able to think in ways that Piaget felt they could not.
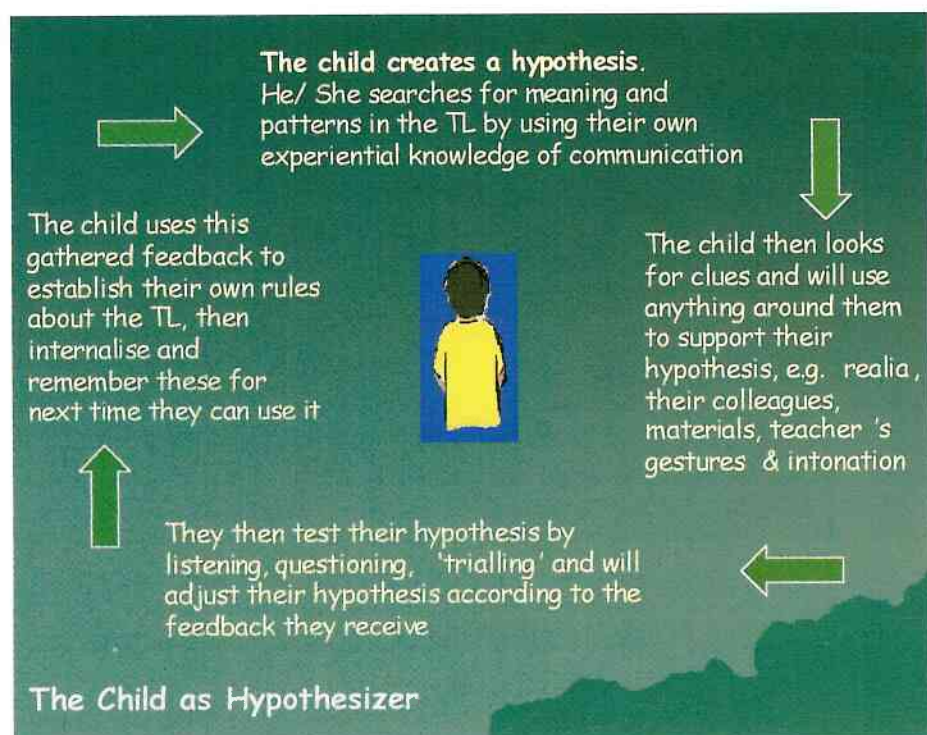
Factors which help YL's acquire a target language

Meanwhile, if we think about the learning of language, Chomsky (1959) considered the idea that learning was innate. This idea was developed by the Innatists, so called because they felt that all learning was innate, and therefore universal. Chomsky felt that there was an innate language capacity in all of us, which he called the Language Acquisition Device (LAD – though later he referred to this as the Universal Grammar (U.G.)).

This idea linked neatly, around the same time, with the *Critical Period Hypothesis* (CPH) suggested by Lenneburg (1967) who thought that there was a critical period, up to about the age of eleven, in which children were able to learn language. His hypothesis was that if language was introduced after this period then it was extremely difficult for children to learn. This CPH has often been cited as one of the main reasons for starting teaching foreign languages early in the child's schooling.

However, both the LAD and the CPH theories and applications were heavily questioned. Bruner (1983, 1990, Bruner & Haste 1987) felt that there needed to be a *language acquisition support system* (L.A.S.S.) supplied by adults or carers that would help children to really develop such a LAD.

More recently, there have been some very interesting suggestions that children do not all learn in the same way and that there are, probably, many

The child creates a hypothesis.
He/ She searches for meaning and patterns in the TL by using their own experiential knowledge of communication

The child uses this gathered feedback to establish their own rules about the TL, then internalise and remember these for next time they can use it

The child then looks for clues and will use anything around them to support their hypothesis, e.g. realia, their colleagues, materials, teacher 's gestures & intonation

They then test their hypothesis by listening, questioning, 'trialling' and will adjust their hypothesis according to the feedback they receive

The Child as Hypothesizer

different types of learner. This work seems to have developed alongside studies into neuro-linguistic programming (N.L.P.) and focuses on the preferred learning style/s that learners seem to have and how this influences what and how they learn. In essence these are known as visual, auditory and kinaesthetic (VAK) learning styles. Perhaps linked closely with this, is the work of Gardner (1993) who suggested that there are actually a lot of different *intelligences* that we all have at our disposal and that we individually favour some more than others plus some to a greater or lesser extent than others, too.

Initially he suggested there were seven such Multiple Intelligences but in his later work he suggests there may be even more than these. The initial seven are:

Linguistic Intelligence: reading, and the use and play with words, such as completing crosswords, is usually enjoyed by this intelligence. We would probably see a journalist using this intelligence.

Logical-Mathematical Intelligence: sorting and ordering are liked by this intelligence which also favours classifying, ranking, ordering and sequencing. It is likely that people who like research and organisation of results would show high tendencies to use this intelligence more,too.

Spatial Intelligence: this intelligence links well with the use of diagrams, maps, charts, plans, pictures and physically seeing how things fit together. Cartographers and designers are likely to show strong signs of this intelligence.

Kinaesthetic Intelligence: this intelligence leans toward physical interaction with and manipulation of themselves and objects. Dancers use this intelligence a great deal.

Musical Intelligence: the use of rhythm, music and song is particularly important to this intelligence and songwriters, singers and musicians would use this intelligence particularly.

Interpersonal Intelligence: this intelligence links well with personal interaction with others and those who relate well to others. People who enjoy counselling use this intelligence a lot.

Intrapersonal Intelligence: an intelligence which favours reflection and personal thought on what is happening to them and the world around them. Often religious leaders have a strong tendency to use this intelligence.

Do you feel you use more of some of these intelligences than others?

Bermen (1998 in Ellis and Brewster 2002: 34) felt that there was a clear link between learning language and preferred learning styles. He carried out some research in an average adult class of learners and found that 29% were visual learners, 34% were auditory learners and a surprising 37% were kinaesthetic learners. This seems to be a very surprising result and as such, we cannot underestimate what the implications might be for our teaching.

Smeets' research in Switzerland (2004) with young language learners and these three learning styles looked at whether learners acquired vocabulary easier when using their preferred learning style. She found that the students did seem to be able to learn more words when using their preferred learning style.

How young learners learn a foreign language?

Keeping this in mind we should focus now on language learning and the interesting work that has been carried out by Cummins (1979) who suggests that there are two types of language that can be taught, BICS – basic interpersonal communicative skills, and CALP – cognitive academic language proficiency. His work suggests that we often teach the CALP-type language in foreign language when, perhaps, we should first teach the BICS-type language. If this is the case then perhaps we should always teach children, as language learners, the BICS type language first and the CALP when they are more able in the target language. Certainly, if we think about the adaptation of some courses, in the past, for young learners, which often focused more on CALP language, we can see how problems arose and how this idea of introducing BICS language first to language learners seems to be extremely valid.

So, to review, if our present understanding of how children learn is that they learn to think, problem solve, question and try to make sense of things around them best when they have the guidance, learning environment, intellectual and emotional support created by an adult or mentor figure, then this is likely to be highly applicable in the L2 setting, too. The mentor (or teacher) should be able to model L2 learning, questioning and thinking and through this will be able to help and scaffold children when acquiring a target language. (Bru-

ner & Haste 1987; Vygotsky 1978; Donaldson 1978). If, additionally, we believe that we should teach BICS language to young learners before CALP language, and support the child as they learn L2 through particular learning stages, this should also be reflected in our teaching approach.

If a foreign language is introduced to our young learners, then it would seem wise do this in the same way as any other subjects are introduced to them. It is worth pausing for a moment here and reflecting on why young learners are taught anything – science, history, music or any other subjects. We introduce a range of subjects to young learners, not as pure and abstract subjects, but as an introduction to them of the idea that these interesting things are to do with them and their lives. We are initially building the foundations of understanding in each subject in a very practical, 'hands-on', way so that the children can interact with 'actual', 'physical' and 'here and now' or concrete aspects of them at this early and crucial stage of their cognitive development. We are also doing this by scaffolding their learning in each and every subject and as a general support for their overall cognitive development.

In other words, we would not teach science to young learners at quantum theory level but would teach them about the everyday science that is in the world around them and that they can interact with. This would be the sort of science that they can see, feel and experience and can cognitively understand. Topics like weight, magnetism and growth, healthy eating and so on could be focused on.

The most important aspect of teaching younger learners is that we should approach any, and all, of this teaching with a full understanding of what each age group is cognitively able to understand, relate to and carry out and how we can help develop and scaffold their thinking and learning skills further in each and any subject.

Before embarking on teaching a foreign language to younger learners, then, we
need to remember that we are trying to provide opportunities for these learners to find out about and use this other language. Teachers need to show them how the new language can have a link with their everyday lives and can be fun. Teachers can also, depending on the age of the learners, introduce the idea that it is positive to speak another language and communicate more easily in a world which is becoming 'smaller'. Language tea-

chers, therefore, also need to act as mentors and language and thinking 'modellers' of this other language for their young learners.

So what, then, are the implications of how we believe young learners learn for the teaching of foreign languages to young learners? First and foremost, the structure of the target language is not what we want the young learners to focus on, the teachers will be doing that for them at the beginning of their language learning though the young learners can move on to thinking about the language itself, in detail, later. Initially, we want them to communicate in the target language, just as we would want them to notice how, in science, for example, the rock and feather fall in different ways, or that cutting an orange into four, in maths, shows that quarters are equal.

Only when children have the initial ability to communicate and use the target language as a tool (or science and maths as tools) can we then start telling them some of the 'nitty gritty' or detail of how this language works (or the detail of cells growing from the seed, or the extended and detailed way that we can calculate what a quarter of anything is). These concepts are usually developed in greater depth later in their cognitive development and educational career. We can, though, introduce some aspects of 'talking about the language' to younger learners for, as Cameron suggests (2001) even very young learners are able to talk about some aspects of language such as action words and, as Garvie also states 'The handling of the tools must become second-nature to the handler.' (Garvie, 1990:56). Just as the use of language to talk about maths, science, music and art are introduced to younger learners so that they can also talk about these subjects.

Activities in the language class should, though, be cognitively challenging and developmental for our learners. It seems that a language level just slightly beyond learners' present stages of understanding will encourage and interest them in the L2 activity more than if they are continually faced with activities which are too linguistically or conceptually easy for them. It is really important that our young learners find a challenge in any and every learning activity.

A word of warning, however. While the young learners are not actively encouraged to understand all the workings of language or the descriptors of this target language at the beginning of their L2 learning, the message for teachers should not be

'grammar and structures do not matter at the beginning'. The teacher must know exactly what is being taught, on a linguistic as well as a conceptual level, all the time, and should follow a carefully constructed all-round linguistic and cognitive syllabus to support this learning.

Implications for the TEYL environment and how we teach the target language

We need to reflect on the teaching environment we are creating for TEYL classes and aim to promote the most supportive, inspirational and rich language learning context. The following provides a checklist for us all when trying to establish the right environment for the foreign language classroom for young learners. It links back to our discussion of the 'Building Blocks' so far and our understanding of how young learners learn language:

1. Sometimes, try to create everyday, real situations for language use within the classroom, in which one of the only new aspects of the interaction is the foreign language. This way the child will be familiar with everything else that is going on around it and can concentrate mainly on the new tool of communication (Tough 1976).

2. Have a continued exchange of meaning in activities in the classroom using real interaction and communicative activities and which involve all intelligences (Wells 1986; Gardner 1993).

3. Create activities within a range of topics, which are cross-curricular and use a wealth of materials that are related to situations that are relevant and interesting to our learners, and which encourage them to hypothesise constantly about what they are learning. (Donaldson 1978; Tough 1976)

4. Support and extend children's learning and thinking as 'scaffolders' and help them to structure their own thinking which will then help them learn how to learn. (Bruner & Haste 1987; Vygotsky 1978)

5, Encourage all learners to be thinkers and problem-solvers and to respond to and develop through challenge in activities. (Fisher 1990)

6. Create a stress-free, interesting and supportive environment for our language learners, catering for all intelligences and learner types. (Donaldson 1978 ; Tough 1976)

7. Recycle input in a variety of different contexts that will create a highly meaningful, purposeful and motivating learning environment. (Hughes 1993)

Implications for TEYL materials, activities and skills needed by the teacher

We can transfer some ideas from L1 acquisition and mainstream teaching and learning across the subjects, too, in that we should try to make the L2 language environment as rich as possible and one in which the learners are surrounded by language :

• which is contextualised, to aid their understanding and support any new cognitive and linguistic concepts
• which relates to themselves - to do with them, their interests and preferences
• which is linked to immediate and visible action, to allow children to hypothesize about the language they are hearing, linked to action going on around them
• which is both verbal and non-verbal, as language is not just 'spoken' but is shown physically, too
• which is meaningfully repetitive - repetition in language learning is highly necessary and lots of examples are needed to show learners language used in a variety of different situations
• which is large in amount, as we need to offer as much of the target language for our young learners to hear and relate to, such as classroom management language, as well as the focused language of activities within each lesson
• which is challenging and sometimes requires problem solving skills, as the listener should be encouraged to 'work out' what is happening as this will then not only help develop their cognitive skills but will also keep them motivated and wanting 'to find out more'
• which caters for a wide variety of learner types, as we must make sure that activities do not just cater for one or two intelligences but cater for all learner types which may be in each class

Remembering to use meaningful and purposeful activities

We need to remember that activities need to consist of real language interaction, as opposed to 'empty' language activities. By this I mean that children need the opportunity to interact with each other in a meaningful way, for

example, by carrying out a survey of their favourite fruit (in the target language), rather than by drilling names of fruit with no personal context for that particular language. Purposeful activity not only encourages real interaction, but also gives the learners a wonderful opportunity to talk about themselves – always a great motivator! Observation has shown that the target language is remembered easier by the learners when the language is linked to highly purposeful activity.

The syllabus should be topic-centred, activity-based and cross-curricular in nature with activities which link directly with the topic being focused on. A topic-centred, activity-based and cross-curricular approach is particularly appropriate because it creates a more natural language environment than if the syllabus was language structure based. This approach can also help teachers:

- cater for different ability levels
- provide a rich context for a wide variety of activities that can recycle the language
- create an opportunity for lots of practise and repetition without boredom in the activities
- promote group, pair and individual work
- make the language learning process more meaningful and purposeful for all learners
- develop natural language skills and learning in general
- increase the relevance of the target language for the learners.

Materials

Materials, then, should also match the cognitive stages of the learners, reflect their intelligences and interests and the environment they are in. The materials should extend their established knowledge, across the curriculum, through the target language. There is a clear need to use a syllabus which encourages this and builds in new and suitable challenges for each learner, so that more than language is developed and fostered. Activities and materials should reflect the interests of the different groups of young learners while developing their further knowledge in general across the curriculum.

As a useful checklist, teachers should be able to answer the following questions positively when teaching English to young learners:

Is the activity interesting and relevant for this age of the learners?
Is the activity suitably challenging – not too hard or too easy?

Is the activity purposeful – can the learners understand why they are doing it, is there a real reason for doing it and has the teacher helped them understand this?
Is there any *real* language in the activity – would these learners use this type of language naturally in their first language in a similar activity?
Is there a real product at the end of the activity e.g. a song sung, information exchanged, a survey finished, a quiz completed, a story listened to, a game played or a role-play engaged in?

Assessment, evaluation and reflection in TEYL

If we believe young learners are cognitively different from older learners, and that we should therefore teach them in a different way, this will also mean that we should assess and evaluate the learning and teaching that is going on in a different way, too.

It would seem that it is most important to assess and evaluate as we teach, meaningfully and constructively, and through the same type of ' approach' used in everyday language classroom activities. Assessment, therefore, would be by way of the same type of activities that the learners are involved in in the target language lesson. If we introduce a completely different type of activity for assessment from those that the learners are used to, such as a more formal-looking paper based 'test', they are likely to find it extremely difficult to relate to or understand it and it is likely that they will not do well within the activity because of the different context they have suddenly found themselves in. We must also make sure that our assessment tools take into account the different learner types that we might have in each class and reflect this.

Lastly, even if the children do appear to cope with new formats for assessment activities, is the teacher really sure what has been assessed? It might be that the teacher has not, in fact, assessed learning, but has only assessed a reaction to a new or unfamiliar activity or the reaction to instructions that are unclear. Unless the assessment tools that are being used can clearly show it the teacher may have no real or substantial reflection or measure of what the individual child can accomplish in the target language. The learners may just react to the tool, perhaps negatively, if they find it difficult or unusual to use, but it may be that the teacher is unaware of this and takes not account of it when looking at the results.

Additionally, we should, on a regular basis, reflect on our teaching and learning in the TEYL and carry out small-scale action research in our classrooms to help us, as teachers, clarify what is really happening within learning and teaching on a daily and weekly basis (Hughes 2006). By doing this we may find out things that will help us improve or adapt aspects of the teaching, materials or assessment that are being used in the classroom for a more successful outcome for our young learners.

Any changes in approach to teaching require changes in assessment and evaluation of *all* aspects of the approach being used, including the teaching, the materials used, the classroom environment and, not least, the individual learners themselves.

To conclude, young learners are very different from older learners and should be given a suitable learning environment, cognitively and linguistically appropriate tools, and a supportive and 'scaffolded' learning context in which to be successful.

To create the most suitable and successful TEYL environment, we need to ask *How do young learners develop, learn and learn languages?* Think about *Factors which help YL's acquire a target language.* Consider *How young learners learn a foreign language.* Build on our understanding of all of these in terms of the *Implications for the TEYL environment and how we teach the target language.* Be fully *aware of the Implications for TEYL materials, activities and skills needed by the teacher* given our understanding of the previous building blocks of TEYL and, finally, carefully and supportively use *Assessment, evaluation and reflection in TEYL..*

Our young learners are our older learners of the future: the more successful they are earlier, the more successful they will be in the long run.

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Dare Foreign Language Teachers Use Translation?

by Maria
González Davies

Universitat
Ramon Llull

Times are changing for the role of the L1 –or, in fact, of any previously acquired languages– in the acquisition of a foreign language. Voices on how the L1(s) can benefit rather that interfere with learning a new language are emerging, putting forward both research questions and the doubts of foreign language teachers as to the wisdom of denying this previous knowledge which is directly related to the new skill. The main reasons for this new viewpoint may lie in recent research in both FLA and in Translation Studies, as well as on the perceived relevance of the native tongue(s) to the construction of identity (Deller and Rinvolucri 2002; González Davies 2002a, 2002b, 2004, 2007; Macaro 2001, 2003/2005; Owen 2003; Satorres and Closa 2003).

Most European countries are bilingual and policies are drawn to protect all languages. In this context, the native tongue(s) shared by students in different communities should be viewed not so much as a taboo element in the teaching scene, as a powerful starting point to favour the acquisi-tion of cognitive, metacognitive and socio-affective skills. The main point put forward here is that an informed use of the L1(s) and of translation procedures (activities, tasks and projects), on the one hand, and of the foreign language –in our case, English– as the main language of communication in the learning process, on the other, may help improve –and not hinder– the acquisition of a new language.

What's in a translation?

Unfortunately, until recently, translation has been viewed rather inaccurately by most foreign language researchers and teachers. Their perspective – both as a consequence of the Grammar-Translation Method and also since the introduction of complete immersion programmes and the Communicative Approach– differs greatly from that of professional translators. To the latter, translation is about *communication* and involves both critical and creative thinking skills. It is definitely not about relaying words in another lan-

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guage, still a widespread notion: take the case of the person responsible of the translation department at a well-known museum who used what she thought was an infallible method to evaluate the quality of the translations handed in: she made sure the translation had exactly the same number of words as the source text!

When this word-to-word rendering is considered an appropriate yardstick, howlers such as the following are produced:

Blog, 31.10.06
¿Buenos vaqueros?
No es un ejemplo ortodoxo de mala prensa, pero sí un patinazo bastante divertido. Oído en Informativos Telecinco, ayer día 29: entrevista a Rod Stewart. Según el cantante, el secreto para mantener intacta su voz a los 61 años son: "unos buenos vaqueros y, por supuesto, no fumar".
¿Vaqueros???? ¿No es posible que el original fuera "very good GENES", o sea, buenos genes? Naturalmente, en inglés "genes" y "jeans" son homófonos. Pero quizá deberían no haberse conformado con traducirlo por "vaqueros" sin más, lo que hace que la respuesta sea incomprensible. ¿El efecto de los vaqueros en la voz rasgada?

It is the *meaning* and also the e*ffect* behind words that have to be relayed and, often, different strategies have to be used to accomplish the task, such as, precisely, changing the words, e.g. "the whole project is at *stake"* / "todo el proyecto está en *juego*".

Other examples of translation strategies or techniques are explicitation, parallel translation, paraphrasing, omission, foot-notes (not too many and none at all depending on the channel, as, for instance, when translating plays, or in dubbing or subtitling), coining new words or idiomatic expressions, using synonyms, and so on (see the suggested activities below designed to prompt their use and translate suitably; also González Davies 2004).

Translation also involves knowing about the cultural and pragmatic aspects of a language. How do you translate kettle or *aixeneta or tener duende?* Or how do you translate a commercial letter adapting it to the target language style and

tone? Or, do you always remember to add "please" and "thank-you" to most requests in English?… and so on.

When students have to translate these and similar words and expressions, they are putting into practice, not only their cognitive skills –mainly, English vocabulary and syntax– but also their metacognitive thinking skills such as interpreting, selecting, deciding, and justifying. Moreover, this is an a*uthentic* activity, one they probably carry out in real life outside the classroom in summer immersion camps, student exchanges, when talking with tourists, when translating from their two native tongues in bilingual contexts (e.g Catalan and Castilian), when talking with their classmates from other countries… What's more, by giving weight to all the native languages in the classroom, you can boost the self-esteem of non-English speakers in your class.

Intercultural communicative competence is thus also reinforced. In this line, very often, the illustrations of translated books are eye-opening clues as to the beliefs and customs of different communities. Take for instance the translated version published in Great Britain of this Finnish children's story:
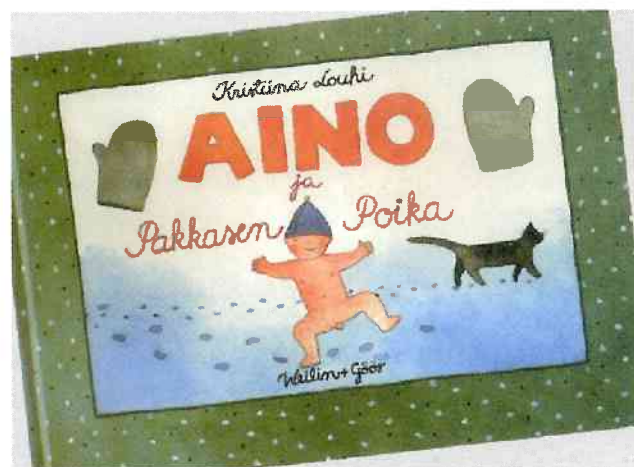
As we have seen, translation holds many fascinating features involved in comprehensive language learning. We can now take a brief look at some of the main elements involved in translation competence that can be positive for foreign language acquisition.

Translation competence for FLA

A good deal of research has been carried out in Translation Studies related to what goes on in the translator's mind when carrying out their task and to the knowledge they need to translate professionally, which, basically, means fast and well! Our main question here is: (how) can these skills be used to improve foreign language acquisition?

If we think in triads, a good mnemotecnic exercise, we can list the following translation competence skills (González Davies 2004: 131, 217; 2007):
1. Linguistic,
2. Encyclopedic, and
3. Transferential knowledge

1) Linguistic knowledge: besides written and oral knowledge of the source and target languages, this aspect includes an awareness of the interferences that can be produced between them so that, by dealing with them explicitly, our students can cope with them more efficiently. Interlinguistic transfer can be both positive and negative: we can contend with false friends, calques, or collocations, but we can also take advantage of similar constructions or vocabulary, or think of words in English that come from languages shared by our students (patio, cul-de-sac, etc.), use the students' own language(s) to establish relations in their brain, and, also, try intralingual translation, that is, from one variant of English to another.

Activities

a. Calques. Think about the correct way to say these sentences and about what has happened for them to be incorrect: ↓

Mistranslation	Possible source text	Problem	Solution (correct translation)
Have you paid the water?			
People is happy			
Deja de repetir lo mismo. Déjame solo.			
Mi abuelo no me quiere. Estrella mágica, haz que sea como yo.			
KEY			
Mistranslation	Possible source text	Problem	Solution (correct translation)
Have you paid the water?	¿Has pagado el agua?	preposition	Have you paid for the water?
People is happy	La gente es feliz	Changes: plural / singular	People are happy
Deja de repetir lo mismo. Déjame solo.	Stop repeating the same old thing! Leave me alone!	Idiomatic expression	Déjame en paz
Mi abuelo no me quiere. Estrella mágica, haz que sea como yo. (from the film Heidi)	My granfather doesn't love me. Magic star, please make him like me.	Calque, no meaning, word-forword translation	Mi abuelo no me quiere. Estrella mágica haz que yo le guste.

b. Everyday expressions. Translate these expressions. Can you translate them literally?

Expression	Translation
Oh, dear! I've left my homework at home again!	
Oh, boy! I'm so happy about passing my exams...	
Guess what? We're going to Greece this summer!	

KEY

Expression	Translation (suggestions)
Oh, dear! I've left my homework at home again!	¡Vaya! Ya me he dejado los deberes otra vez...
Oh, boy! I'm so happy about passing my exams...	¡Ostras! Estoy muy contenta porque he aprobado los exámenes...
Guess what? We're going to Greece this summer!	¿Sabes qué? ¡Vamos a Grecia este verano!

2) Encyclopedic knowledge: in these days when CLIL (Content and Integrated Language Learning) is becoming an exponent of meaningful FL learning, knowing about the subject in hand is essential. Also, this is the area that allows for activities directly related to many of our students' *real* life, e.g. when talking to fellow students from other countries or when they travel.

Activities

a. Meeting people. Using translation strategies to bridge cultural references. Imagine you're with an English-speaking friend and you have to translate his or her conversation to your friends, who don't speak English, or explain things that do not exist in his/her culture. What would you do with these sentences and situations, for example?

Your friend – "I love *scones!* Are there any here in Catalonia?"
Your friend – "I'd love a cup of tea! Where's the *kettle*?"
You - You offer him a *botifarra or mortadela* sandwich... What do you say?

b. Domesticate or foreignize? Observing the changes in translated texts can help develop in-tercultural awareness and understanding. Professional translators have to choose between domesticating or foreignizing strategies when dealing with cultural references, style, text type conventions etc., that is, in the first case, the text is adapted to the target readers' culture whereas in the second case, the translated text keeps the source culture's "foreign" flavour, thus highlighting the differences so that we can learn about the other culture.

Ask your students to think about these questions, look up the cultural references, suggest how they would translate them and why:

a. Do you have a *blue* day or a grey one when you're sad?
b. What do Jay Leno and Andreu Buenafuente have in common? Are the names intertranslata-ble[1]?
c. Would snails (e.g. *cargols a la llauna*) or frog's legs (*ancas de rana*) be an appropriate dish to offer a British friend on their first day with you? Would *you* like to eat kidney pie, haggis or laver bread?

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[1] In fact, this domesticating strategy (substituting well-known cele-brity names) is common practice when translating plays, sitcoms, etc.

3) Transferential skills: These have to do with translation proper. It is in the command of these skills that non-bilinguals may beat bilingual speakers. They involve problem-spotting and solving, deciding, mental agility, flexibility, adaptability, and resourcing skills, among others. And this is where students have more fun, as the activities are quite challenging:

a. Reverse dictation. Dictate a text (it can be one you've already worked with), but the students have to *take it down in directly another language.*

b. Bilingual reading. In pairs, the students take turns to read a text. They read each part in a different language from that in which it has been written and do so as close to natural reading speed as possible. The teacher an prepare the first text and the students can prepare others for each other to read.

Excerpt from The Snow Spider
by Jenny Nimmo (1986/2000)

When Mrs Griffiths had left the room Gwyn lifted la bufanda del cajón and pressed it to his face. The scent of roses todavía era fuerte. Bethan seemed very near. How good she had looked con

su bufanda amarilla, con su pelo oscuro and her red mac, all bright and resplandeciente. He remembered now; llevaba la bufanda that night; the night she had climbed the mountain para no volver. Why had Nan kept it secret all this time, and given it to him now, en su cumpleaños?

KEY. COMPLETE SOURCE TEXT IN ENGLISH:

When Mrs Griffiths had left the room Gwyn lifted the scarf out of the drawer and pressed it to his face. The scent of roses was still strong. Bethan seemed very near. How good she had looked in her yellow scarf, with her dark hair and her red mac, all bright and shining. He remembered now; she had been wearing the scarf that night; the night she had climbed the mountain and never come back. Why had Nan kept it secret all this time, and given it to him now, on his birthday?

c. Find the translator. Resourcing skills. Search for the Spanish/Catalan titles and find the translators of the following books. Remember you can go to www.mcu.es, look for the "isbn" register, and fill in the "search" file.
For books in Britain, go to the British Library Public Catalogue at: http://catalogue.bl.uk/ ↓

Source text	Catalan	Spanish
Prince Biffer by Eillen Cadman		
Agu Trot by Roald Dahl		
Isabel's Noisy Tummy by David McKee		
Fun with Mrs. Thumb by Jan Mark		

KEY

Source text	Catalan	Spanish
Prince Biffer by Eillen Cadman	*El Príncep Punxò* by Elena O'Callaghan i Duch	*El Príncipe Pinchón* by Lluís Roura
Agu Trot by Roald Dahl	*Esio Trot by* Miguel Sáenz Sagasti	*Esio Trot by* Gemma Lienas
Isabel's Noisy Tummy by David McKee	*Què és aquell soroll, Isabel?* by Anna Gasol	*¿Què es ese ruido sabel?* by Elena Umbert
Fun with Mrs. Thumb by Jan Mark	*Trip Trap, que t'atrapo!* by Montserrat Gispert	*Catacrac, cric, creco* by Enrique Otenbach

A final challenge…

Finally, an activity that brings together all the suggestions and reflections made up to now. You could do this with a book that has not been translated yet (such as *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*) and, when the translation comes out, your students can compare their version to that of the "official" publication –a very motivating task! For the time being, before we have the professional translation of the seventh book[2], see the key below for different possible translations for a riddle in the fourth book in the same series– here, once more, the words change so that the message and effect of the riddle are conveyed accurately to the target readers…

Transtraitor or transcreator? Translating riddles. Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire. Translate the riddle. Can you translate it literally? Why (not)?

The sphinx sat down upon her hind legs, in the very centre of the path, and recited:

'First think of the person who lives in disguise,
Who deals in secrets and tells naught but lies.
Next, tell me what's always the last thing to mend,
The middle of middle and end of the end?
And finally give me the sound often heard
During the search for a hard-to-find word.
Now string them together; and answer me this,
Which creature would you be unwilling to kiss?'

Harry gaped at her.
'Could I have it again... more slowly?' he asked tentatively…
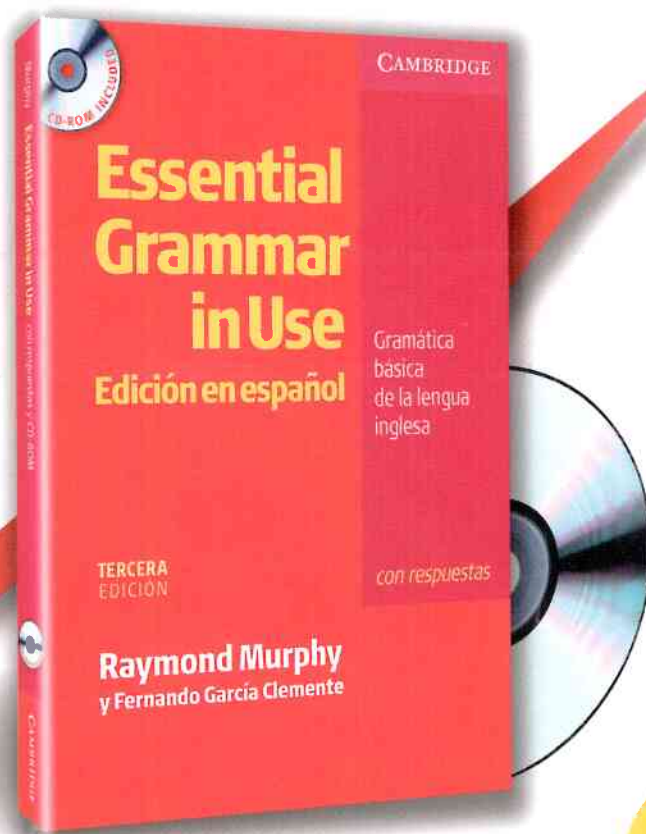
ANSWER: Spider (SPY / D/ ER…)

Catalan translation (Escorihuela, 2001)	Spanish translation (Muñoz and Martin, 2001)
Primer pensa i digues què és *quan no és abans ni després;* *llavors suma-li uns quants dies,* *amb dotze mesos faries.* *Quan ho trobis, el que cridis* *S'haurà d'afegir al que diguis.* *Són els tres sumands de la solució:* *¿a quina bèstia no faries un petó?*	*Si te lo hiciera, te desgarraría con mis zarpas,* *pero eso no ocurrirá si lo captas.* *Y no es fácil la respuesta a esta adivinanza,* *porque está lejana, en tierras de bonanza,* *donde empieza la región de las montañas de arena,* *y acaba la de los loros, la sangre, el mar y la verbena.* *Y ahora contesta, tú, que has venido a jugar:* *¿A qué animal no te gustaría besar?*
ANSWER: Aranya (ARA / aNY / Ah!))	ANSWER: Araña (ARAbia / EspaÑA)

[2] Be careful with blog and amateur translations – literature is very difficult to translate and requires professional translators to do the job well!

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"Please, Please, Please Speak to Me!!"

by Geraldine
Laboria

….looking at ways of helping Primary children to be more competent speakers of English.

As Primary Teachers we would probably be surprised if we added up the time we spend every week asking our pupils to be quiet.

The asking in question ranging from polite requests to shouted commands depending on a degree of noise in the classroom and our own personal control levels, because despite the popular theories of parents and politicians, we are not super human, and like everyone else we have limits and off days.

In view of this, and the facts that we know our pupils have a tremendous capacity for speech in their mother tongue (L1), it can be both surprising and frustrating when we ask them to use those same powerful voices to produce English (L2), and we are met we either silence or more (L1).

This article will be based on past workshops which I gave, given to primary teachers on the subject of helping pupils to become both more competent and more confident at developing and using English in the class.

Basically it will be in 2 main sections. The fist will deal with the "Why?" the reasons and needs of to-day's world, and a second part will look at the "How?" the practical suggestions for teachers.

Why oral skills need to be given plenty of class time:

"Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man how to fish and you feed him for a life time". (Chinese proverb).

We all know that, like it or not, we are living in an age where globalization is one of the main characteristics. It has been estimated that over (2/3) of the children across the globe speak at least 2 or 3 languages. It is expected of them and ample opportunities are given for practise in both the home and the society, the children accept it as normal and it becomes part of their holistic development. It is also said that 74% of all the English spoken around the world is produced between non native speakers.

In view of these facts it is not surprising that the new Institute of Catalonia wants to create a tri-lingual society with English as its 3rd language.

Catalonia has always been at the cutting edge of Spain's T.E.F.L. policies and since last November when Ernest Maragall became the Catalan Minister for education, with one of his main objectives

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being the improvement of learning English, it seems likely that it will continue to lead the way.

The need and the advantages, for being bi or tri-lingual are now recognised and appreciated everywhere, from the politicians and economists to the parents and children themselves. Most sections of today's society accept that English is essential for both work and play, and to many teachers CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) is the next natural step forward, where other school subjects will be taught in English.

In order to assist in the formation of these tri-lingual children primary teachers need to mentalise themselves to see beyond their classrooms, tests and school reports and visualise their pupils, not just within the space of a year or 2, but projected into the future when they will be a new generation of adults. In that future time the skills which they are learning today will help them to study better, get better jobs, and even enjoy a better more interesting sociable life.

90% of all the information in the world is stored in English in one form or another.

Job requirements today are demanding more and more but before any other qualifications are considered are 3 basic requirements which must be met:

1) good interpersonal skills
2) user level knowledge of computers
3) a good level of English (FCE, minimum)

2008 has been proclaimed as the international year of languages by the U.N. and no doubt many professional sectors will follow the decision already taken by the International Civil Aviation Authority which, from March, will be insisting in Proficiency in English for all pilots and air traffic controllers.

With regard to using English for a better social life you need only travel in July and August on a regional train which runs from Barcelona Sants to Cerbere.

The journey is hot, slow and incredibly uncomfortable, but the surprising thing is to see young travellers from all over the world talking to each other a –yes you guessed it-English!!

One hot afternoon in July, on an over crowded train, I shared my journey with 3 boys from Nor-

way, 2 Japanese girls and a young couple from Holland. They hadn't met before getting on the train but they soon shared information, anecdotes and interesting facts about their journeys and their respective countries. E-mail addresses and phone numbers were exchanged long before reaching Girona. Their fluency and excellent level of English made an impact and I couldn't help congratulating them all.

My enthusiastic praise was met by smiles and looks of surprise, it was one of the Japanese girls who summed up what they were all obviously thinking, when she said "But doesn't everyone speak English?"

I discovered that although they came from all different parts of the world there were some common factors in the learning process. They had started formal English learning at primary school at different ages between 5 and 9, but even before starting school they had heard their parents and family members speaking and using English for a variety of reasons. Also, like all youngsters, they likes watching TV and they said that films and most British or US programmes were not dubbed, they were shown in the original version, sometimes with L1 sub-titles, sometimes not. The same happened with books and music, so they had no choice but to accept English as an integral part of their lives from an early age, necessary for communication, learning and relaxation. This fact was born out by the fact that both one of the Norwegian boys and one of the Japanese girls had bought themselves the newest, and last, Harry Potter book in Barcelona.. and yes, the books were in English! They were impatient to find out what happened to Harry at the end of the saga.

How do we get them speaking?

"It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge" (Albert Einstein)

Before mentioning some of the different activities and suggestions for practising oral skills there are a few basic facts which need to be considered.

Today, most teachers are aware of all the new developments which have taken place in the fields of holistic teaching, brain functions and preferred sensory learning styles.

Every single child, whether they drive you mad or not, is an individual and needs to be treated and

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One hot afternoon in July, on an over crowded train, I shared my journey with 3 boys from Nor-way, 2 Japanese girls and a young couple from Holland. They hadn't met before getting on the train but they soon shared information, anecdotes and interesting facts about their journeys and their respective countries. E-mail addresses and phone numbers were exchanged long before reaching Girona. Their fluency and excellent level of English made an impact and I couldn't help congratulating them all.

My enthusiastic praise was met by smiles and looks of surprise, it was one of the Japanese girls who summed up what they were all obviously thinking, when she said "But doesn't everyone speak English?"

I discovered that although they came from all different parts of the world there were some common factors in the learning process. They had started formal English learning at primary school at different ages between 5 and 9, but even before starting school they had heard their parents and family members speaking and using English for a variety of reasons. Also, like all youngsters, they likes watching TV and they said that films and most British or US programmes were not dubbed, they were shown in the original version, sometimes with L1 sub-titles, sometimes not. The same happened with books and music, so they had no choice but to accept English as an integral part of their lives from an early age, necessary for communication, learning and relaxation. This fact was born out by the fact that both one of the Norwegian boys and one of the Japanese girls had bought themselves the newest, and last, Harry Potter book in Barcelona.. and yes, the books were in English! They were impatient to find out what happened to Harry at the end of the saga.

How do we get them speaking?

"It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge" (Albert Einstein)

Before mentioning some of the different activities and suggestions for practising oral skills there are a few basic facts which need to be considered.

Today, most teachers are aware of all the new developments which have taken place in the fields of holistic teaching, brain functions and preferred sensory learning styles.

Every single child, whether they drive you mad or not, is an individual and needs to be treated and

The 6th Skill: Information Technology Competence

by Joana
Angrill Farreny

Reading, writing and technological skills are the basic competences required to evolve successfully in the new society. Nowadays, however, being literate involves other abilities in managing changes and information to face new requirements: the ability to interact in heterogeneous groups, the ability to work autonomously and the capacity to use technology in an effective and interactive way. This reality demands a reevaluation of our educational aims to include information competence skills as an important part of the learners' educational practice. School is the most relevant space to supply opportunities for the teaching-learning process that ensure the development of knowledge and skills which will continue to serve learners throughout their lives. In this sense, the school library should adopt a more active role in forming information literate students.

1. Introduction

The rapid economical changes are modifying social relationships and the educational system should not be oblivious to them. Information and communication technologies (ICT) have become part of our daily life, yet their slow introduction into the educational world has not led to a modification of the idea that schooling is an old institution in a modern society in constant change. The use of information technologies in higher education has long been accepted and the importance of instructing students in information competence[1] abilities has become more evident. From the sociological and economical points of view, schooling has been qualified as out of date and, hence, the need to revise the functions of the very educational system and face the challenge of providing students with the socially relevant knowledge and skills to succeed in their workplaces. The EFL syllabus is gradually taking into account students' needs in a holistic way, that is, by integrating different skills in the lesson plan. This paper focuses on the set of skills that include a component of learning in the new information age.

2. ICT and the Knowledge-based Society

A sudden modification of the ITC panorama has given birth to a new means of communication, Internet, which is modifying the communicative relations and the organisational processes in companies. Computer-based systems for information retrieval are playing an important role in the ongoing globalisation process. The information age enables people to have instantaneous, world-wide access to such a great vast amount of information that any single human mind may not be able to apprehend in a lifetime or even become *infoxicated*. However, the new society is based

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[1] In this essay the terms competence and ability are treated as synonyms although some authors use competence to refer to a complex system that includes both cognitive and non cognitive elements and the term ability to define cognitive actions.

more on acquiring knowledge (end product) rather than information (raw material). Knowledge-based society demands "informationally" educated citizens. And this poses important questions in all fields, especially in the educational area and permanent training. A technologically well-equipped country may produce an information economy but it will rarely develop its society if it has not info-educationally evolved. The information society has become a driver that shapes employment and learning policies: technological progress will force companies to adapt more rapidly and constantly to the new realities and it will require a shift in the skills of their employees. Educational systems such as the Anglo-Saxon are oriented towards information education by teaching strategies on how to learn, developing essential skills and fostering continuous learning. The Spanish educational system, on the other hand, is organised so that learners are provided with the necessary information for their lifetime working needs. This has little to do with the requirements of the new society: citizens able to have an overall, yet locally centred, view which combines specific knowledge with management abilities.

At this point we should distinguish the commonly mistaken concepts of information and knowledge. The former refers to something external which may easily be gathered and processed whereas the latter is something internalised, structured in the human mind in order to take action. The opportunities and challenges of the 21st century will be available to those who can perform successfully within the requirements of a society highly dependent on information and, in particular, knowledge. Students receive a high amount of information during school years, yet the specific knowledge they gain can promptly become obsolete in the new environment. The ability to continue learning and coming up with creative ideas has become more important than the possession of any particular kind of knowledge, especially with the rapid pace of social and technological changes.

This rapidly changing knowledge economy has increased the interest in lifelong learning, since boundaries between labour, training and leisure are to fade away. As information may be overwhelming, educational systems are to be responsible for providing learners with basic and generic knowledge so that they can renew their skills throughout their professional life. Disseminating

the information required, comparing its usefulness with other sources, analysing information and drawing conclusions are ordinary operations that go beyond the simple search and retrieval of a piece of information in an attempt to build knowledge.

Reading has always been one of the main devices to access knowledge and this is unlikely to change with ICT, yet on the contrary, it seems to reinforce the idea that reading is the key to success in the new society. Reading, though, demands the use and command of new skills and practices with a new typology of texts. Fatalistic discourses have announced the end of reading and the role of the reader, yet reading is to be the tool for communication, relationships, entertainment, thinking, etc. For this reason, the very same term of literacy is acquiring new connotations that broaden our traditional concept of being literate and have their own identity in the educational curriculum: digital literacy, visual literacy, information literacy, etc.

As the new information society is organized around ICT, educational practices need to take into account the distinctive traits and tendencies that will affect the teaching-learning process: the enormous increase of information and its widespread accessibility, the high speed of changes, a new culture based on entertainment and a growing active role of images. In this sense, information and knowledge have become the most valuable raw material in the development of the new model of society.

3. Information Technology Skills

Along with the traditional five language skills traditionally dealt with in the English classroom (i.e. grammar, reading, listening, speaking and writing), another competence has been identified to refer to the ability to recognize the need for information and its acquisition, organisation, processing and evaluation: the information competence or literacy, a survival skill in the information age. Although the concepts *information literacy*[2] and *information competence* may slightly differ in meaning, in this paper both terms are used much in the same way. In a broader sense, the term *information competence* comprises concepts from different fields such as library literacy, computer literacy, technological literacy, critical thinking, etc.

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[2] Information literacy usually refers to the set of skills and knowledge that allow to find, select and evaluate the relevant information whereas the term information competente is used for the integration of computer literacy, library literacy, media literacy, technological literacy, ethics, critical thinking and communication skills.

It has been noticed an educational disconnection between the rapid development of technologies and the audience's abilities to use them. And this gulf will draw the line between the information literate and the illiterate. The English as a Foreign Language curriculum mentions the use of learning strategies and didactic resources in order to search for information to solve learning situations in an autonomous way. Studies show how lifelong learners tend to acquire tacit knowledge that enables them to plan their own learning, work independently and apply their knowledge to different situations effectively. The English language curriculum emphasizes a shift from students being totally dependent learners to being autonomous learners. Teaching information skills is aimed at students to become independent and autonomous in their learning process. Learners should be able to identify their own information needs and find the best resources to satisfy them. These information abilities go beyond the scope of the school subjects and they are interesting and important in the life of those who are to follow further learning as they will allow them to become responsible for their own learning process throughout their lives.

The new curricular approaches focus on communicative spaces suitable for investigation and reading for pleasure and, hence, the importance of the role of the library in the educational project. In general, teachers have not acquired nor developed the information-related knowledge. As the aim is to give students the skills and knowledge for technology use and application by integrating different strategies into the teaching-learning experiences, teachers should be aware of the need to address this issue and willing to develop sophisticated skills in information literacy, including the uses of information technology. In this approach both students and teachers use computers basically for the purpose of searching for reading materials and as a presentation tool.

Cultivating Information Literacy

- Pre-assessing the skills
- Choosing the information literacy skill
- Gathering the resources
- Creating the lessons/units
- Introducing the topic
- Mentoring the skill
- Coaching/guiding
- Project presentation/assessment
- Evaluation of the unit

Extracted from Schrock

> The new curricular approaches focus on communicative spaces suitable for investigation and reading for pleasure and, hence, the importance of the role of the library in the educational project.

3.1. Curriculum inclusion

Although the new curriculum does not mention the information competence as such, it introduces the so-called audiovisual communicative competence, which has more to do with information literacy. Activities related to this competence foster methodological competences as well. Writing processes, specifically, are one of the key factors in the acquisition of a competence in managing information and the use of the ICT for knowledge building. These are to enhance the necessary mental flexibility for critical thinking and learning to take place as they control and guide students' work towards autonomy. This is what the curriculum mentions as regards the use of ICT and the acquisition of information skills:

"Reconeixement i acceptació de les oportunitats que ofereixen els materials de consulta, els mitjans audiovisuals i les tecnologies de la informació i de la comunicació per a l'aprenentatge de continguts lingüístics i per a l'adquisició de competències lingüístiques i comunicatives en llengua estrangera."

"Organització i ús, cada vegada més autònom, de recursos per l'aprenentatge: diccionaris, llibres de consulta, mitjans audiovisuals, documents electrònics (TIC), entrevistes a experts"

"Cerca d'informació i hàbits de consulta per comprendre i ampliar el contingut dels missatges, utilitzant estratègies prèvies a la cerca i amb recurs a fonts diverses: 1) escrites: bibliografia especialitzada, 2) TIC: bases de dades i catàlegs digitals, 3) fonts audiovisuals i electròniques d'informació i comunicació: documentals, reportatges, webs i altres amb continguts de les diferents àrees curriculars.

Among the informational skills which are to facilitate learning are the recognition of a variety of print sources and media sources to access information, the use of graphic organizers to aid in understanding material from informational texts, gathering and recording information on a research topic, retrieving, organising and representing information, using current technology as a research and communication tool, skimming materials to develop a general overview of content or to locate specific information, developing critical thinking, etc.

4. Role of the Reading Skills

Building knowledge in a society that makes huge amounts of information available is a complex task that demands knowing what information is required in each situation, knowing how to search, assessing and selecting the information according to particular needs, ordering, classifying and assimilating to prepare the knowledge wanted. Nowadays everything is volatile and the essential question has nothing to do with information but with the cognitive capacities on how to learn and on how to transform information into knowledge. Indeed, digital reading demands not only technical abilities but also cognitive skills.

Being literate in an information society involves the ability to read and handle information in English for everyday life, as 70% of the internet content is in English. Among the most important skills in this new social context is the reading ability. Reading is the human ability to extract information in a text. In this sense, reading is the magic key to have access to knowledge in this society. The huge amount of information that the digital society has accumulated will be useless if mankind does not manage and assimilate it, and this will not be possible without the mastering of advanced reading abilities. The reading competence is understood as the capacity for building, valuing and reflecting on texts. Admission to digital information requires new knowledge, which had previously been confined to professionals: the ability to manage databases, using keywords in a search, formulating good questions, the use of Boolean operators, selecting the correct type of material, etc. The traditional reading skill is, above all, the basic complex skill that allows information to become knowledge and, as a result, it makes communication possible. The comprehension of Internet documents is different from the reading comprehension of texts in other formats. Digital documents transform the essential elements involved in the reading comprehension: the reading process, the type and structure of texts, the nature and aims of the comprehension activities and the sociocultural context where the comprehension process takes place. Yet, not only is textual reading the essential skill in this new age, but also visual reading in the sense of being able to understand graphics, schemes, iconic information. A learner without the reading ability well-developed will not succeed in the information society.

The educational system aims at providing learning opportunities in relation to reading education and the potential users of diverse information sources. It is remarkable the emphasis the curriculum poses on the reading skills and the need to develop strategies for autonomous learning.
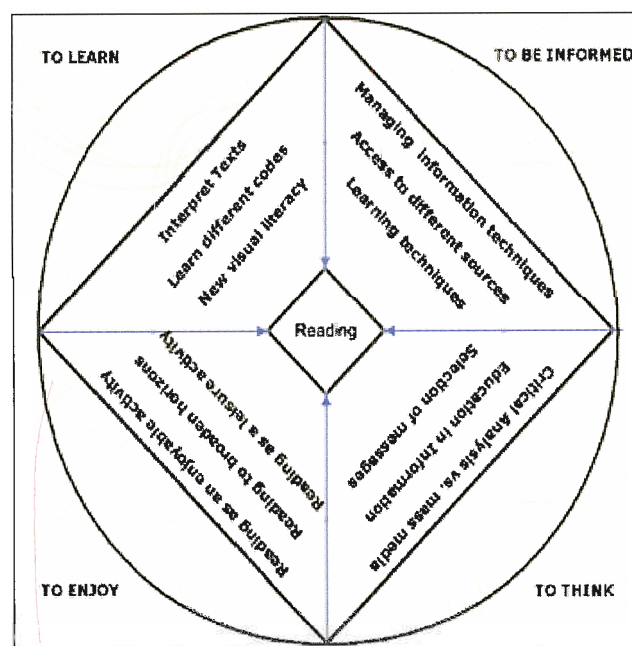
Source: Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia

5. Developing ICT Skills

Recently, terms such as *information and knowledge-based society* have been worldwide considered. This new concept cannot be understood without taking into account the term illiteracy -informational illiteracy- referring to those who do not possess knowledge in the use of information. In this context, many political and educational institutions feel the need that citizens acquire the knowledge and skills required to live and work in the so-called information society. Among all these institutions high schools represent a special category since they have a strong responsibility on future population. For this reason, secondary education must bear in mind and incorporate an *education in information* in the curriculum so that learners are able to learn during all their life. At the end of compulsory secondary education, students should be able to search, select and use information for their own needs and interests. Educational authorities have been following this direction when establishing the guidelines and curricular regulations. Among the aims of the recently passed Decret 143/2007, 26th June (DOGC), is a section referring to this: on the one hand, the development of the basic skills in using informational sources with a critical attitude in order to create knowledge, on the other hand, the development

A "How To..." Guide to Drawing up a Course Plan For The *Oposicions*

Subject Area: English, Secondary Education

by Oriol Pallarés, Marc Julià and Àngels Antorán

PART 2

PREPARING FOR A SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE

In previous issue of the APAC Journal, three high school teachers offered their advice with a step-by-step guide on how to design a course plan for the o*posicions.* The present article will look at the most stressful part of the whole process: presenting your syllabus to the examination panel. It will also pinpoint how the major changes in the Spanish education legal framework (that is, the revocation of the LOGSE law and the consequent implementation of the LOE) should be reflected in your syllabus presentation.

Presenting your course plan to an examining board can be difficult, especially if you take into account that those listeners are not mere spectators but a panel of evaluators formed by experienced teachers. This is one of the reasons why our defense needs to be carefully designed in advance.

The time given for the course plan presentation will definitely determine its structure and organization. Although the duration of a syllabus presentation may vary from one year to another, it is usually allotted as follows: an initial twenty-minute block is dedicated to giving a general introduction of the submitted course syllabus followed by another twenty minutes entirely devoted to the development of a specific unit from the course plan randomly drawn by the candidate. After that, there is still a five-minute block open for discussion or for the examining panel to pose questions. It is important to stick to the time allocations.

Designing a successful presentation

The planning of your oral presentation, just like your careful designing of your written course plan, is essential to reaching your goal: transmitting your teaching skills through a coherent and convincing presentation as well as catching the attention of the panel members. You may want to consider attending other presentations before the

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day of your defense. A careful, balanced structure for your speech will help you deliver the same outstanding proposal orally as you have submitted on paper. Therefore, it is highly advisable to use the first theoretical section of your written work (or even the table of contents itself) to organize the outline of your oral defense. This way you are ensuring a total and coherent connection between your submitted work and your oral presentation. You need to make sure that you cover all those aspects mentioned in the assessment criteria which your examining board will publish prior to your defense.

Presenting the course plan

Here are some ideas on how to structure your defense:

Course plan presentation: A brief introduction should present your work: its title, the school subject (English as a first foreign language, as a second foreign language...) and the stage, level and age range it addresses (ESO Year 1, Batxillerat 2...). It is recommended that you explain the reason for your course and level selection by expressing the personal and/or professional preferences that led you to that particular choice.

Consider giving an outline of your speech to the members of the panel so that they can easily follow your defense. Although the board of evaluators already has a copy of your work, it would be advisable to provide them with additional copies; this way you can invite them to go to a specific section any time during your presentation.

Structure of your course plan: Before you start defending your proposal, let the panel know the steps you followed to come up with your written work.

Course plan characteristics: Show how your syllabus is connected to the legal framework by referring to the current laws and decrees that you have used as your starting points. You should also mention the general features of your syllabus that make it original and successful (its usefulness, its flexibility, the richness of the activities in it and their do-ability in a particular classroom setting...).

Context and school setting description: Although a syllabus should be flexible enough to be implemented in different schools, the LOE advises carrying out a sociolinguistic study of the school which is to be the starting point of any course plan. It is sometimes useful to design your syllabus for a more or less specific school setting you are familiar with.

Course time allotments: Refer to the number of instructional hours your course plan covers, the units it is divided into and their approximate distribution throughout the school year.

Objectives and contents: This part should show the connection between your course plan and the new legal framework established by the new curricula[1]. The new curriculum specifies the syllabus to be followed in each subject. While other subjects are dealt with in different sections of the curriculum, English as a foreign language is dealt with together with Catalan and Spanish in a general section called àmbit de llengües. It establishes that certain competences will be worked on in the different language subjects, promoting an integrated learning of languages. The àmbit de llengües general objectives are the cornerstone of the course plan.

The new curriculum contents favor the achievement of key competences (competències bàsiques) as well as specific linguistic competences:

• Multilingual and intercultural competence

o We need to teach students not only those contents related to the language they are learning but give them the tools necessary to live in a multilingual and multicultural world. Our students need to learn to learn any language.

• Communicative competence, which is divided into oral competence, written competence (reading and writing), audiovisual competence and literary competence.

o With the new curriculum, communicative competence becomes a priority. Not only is it addressed in the language classroom but also in a cross-curricular way. In our classroom, communication will become the motor of our teaching: exposing students to real communicative situations, be they oral, written or audiovisual, will ensure successful and meaningful learning.

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1 Currículum d'educació secundària obligatòria – Decret 143/2007 DOGC núm. 4915.

of the skills related to ICT so as to use them in the learning process to find, analyse, exchange and present the information and knowledge acquired.

The new approach to learning relies on the use of information technologies and the application of computer knowledge. Students with an attitude towards lifelong learning are more prone to feel more confident and positive about working with computers for different purposes and, therefore, they learn new technologies easily as they are seen as an opportunity for accessing to information and not as an increase of workload. Indeed, deep learners consider computers as learning tools that save them time and improve the quality of their work. They seem to learn from librarians and technical support staff and develop autonomous learning strategies through helping others and personal exploration. On the other hand, though, surface learners show a better performance in using technology for taking tests and playing games. Their primary source of learning stems from formal classes and teachers. In this sense, as the same instructional element is viewed differently, the educational program should propose activities catering for diversity.

> The new approach to learning relies on the use of information technologies and the application of computer knowledge.

6. Role of School Libraries

The current educational system needs to change its structure in order to adapt to the reality of 21st century as other strategic sectors in society have done. Education needs to reconsider the procedures and tools to transmit and develop culture and the ways to manage and organize it. Immersion in the new information society involves lifetime learning and the development of skills to use information according to different goals. Information literacy is an essential tool to acquire a competence in information as well as for the development, participation and communication of citizens. For this reason, libraries in general contribute to keep and improve the educational levels of population.

> Education needs to reconsider the procedures and tools to transmit and develop culture and the ways to manage and organize it.

The use of the school library is justified from different points of view: curricular, sociological, pedagogical, technological, etc. The school library should be fully integrated in the curriculum so that it has an active role in the pedagogical information literacy process, that is, a dynamic role in reinforcing the reading comprehension skill and in the

mastery of information management rather than in the technological side. As a learning resource centre providing and organizing knowledge, the school library represents the best place to cater for diverse learning styles. The knowledge-based society will trigger a shift in the concept of teaching-learning contexts, not only because of the introduction of ICT in educational institutions, but also because of the transformation society has undergone as a result of ICT. The essay PISA (2000) showed the great difficulties learners have when using technology for information search and how low levels of reading comprehension are a barrier to locate and use information from the Internet.

At present, the school library is the most well-endowed and prepared agent to carry out training in information successfully so that learners become independent citizens when managing information. Secondary students' learning is mostly based on essays and projects which require a high level of methodological skills, a set of abilities that do not specifically belong to any of the curricular areas. Secondary education is the initial basis for training in the use of information and in this sense, it is essential to grant the school library a leading role as a resource centre for learning. In fact, the *UNESCO/IFLA School Library Manifesto* outlines the mission and states the importance of school libraries for providing students with lifelong learning skills and tools for living in the 21st century. Many times, though, learners end secondary education without an acquisition in information competence. In most of the European countries, the school library has a role of paramount importance in the training of the use of information and all learning programmes take place partly in the library in collaboration with the specialist teacher. In the information process four phases may be distinguished: an approach to the information need, a search in the sources, a selection of the relevant documentation and enquiry and a comprehension of the information. Although the library should control all the informative process, in most of the cases it tends to focus on the searching and selecting phases.

> Secondary students' learning is mostly based on essays and projects which require a high level of methodological skills, a set of abilities that do not specifically belong to any of the curricular areas.

Contributions

7. Sample Activities in the EFL classroom

Glòria Durban (2005) proposes a series of activities related to students' familiarisation with the library and its documents as well as activities which centre their attention on dealing with information search and management and on the reading ability per se. The following sample activities are extracted from "Accions concretes de dinamització".

7.1. News in the *telibrary*
The class is to prepare a news broadcast video. Students share out the different sections found in the News on television. Each section becomes the starting point for a thorough research for a news presentation.

7.2. A journey
A trip is taken as a pretext to present a route or a city. Students are to create a travel guide on the chosen destination using the results of their search.

7.3. The horror week
A week entirely devoted to activities related with the above-mentioned topic: cinema, literature, folklore, etc. The organisation and development has to be based on a thorough research in the school library.

7.4. Bookmarks and ex *libris*
Students design a bookmark in relation with the book read. Ex libris is a short piece of paper, usually illustrated, with the identification of the owner of the book.

7.5. Book recommendation
Students recommend books they have read to each other and make a public list with a slogan, summary or technical worksheet as a propaganda.

For further information and ideas for teachers not proficient in library and information science Baró and Mañà in *La formación de usuarios en la biblioteca escolar 4. Educación Secundaria* supply a useful resource book with activities that enhance students' taste for reading, information retrieval and treatment and learners' knowledge of library working procedures.

8. Conclusion

Implementing ICT in education is an issue to be considered for both teachers and learners to become computer literate citizens. It is different being literate just to continue in the educational flow from following the path of a lifetime. ICT fosters new ways of writing and reading that demand new abilities and knowledge from the writer and reader. The appearance of new literacies inexorably leads to their correspondent illiteracies and for this reason citizens will soon be required to be competent in digital technologies, audiovisual languages, the use of information, etc. Being literate refers to the training of an ability that allows students to face real life challenges and manage in the adults' world. The student who is information literate accesses information efficiently and effectively, evaluates information critically and competently, and uses information accurately and creatively. The school needs to train students with a set of skills that allows them the ability to carry on learning throughout their lives and literacy in information becomes the key competence for their development and maturity after schooling. As Dunn says "information competence is the new route to personal freedom". Thus, the school library may play an important role to disseminate the socioeconomic distances between students and, thus, information literacy contributes to mitigate the well-known digital gap.

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It is important, then, that your distribution of contents be divided according to these new categories and that it include the new terminology.

Different studies show that all languages are learnt when they are studied from the point of view of their social use. The need for communication is what facilitates learning. Our curriculum reminds us that some studies have shown that the mere teaching of forms and rules, or teaching component by component, like the teaching of grammar, or even the isolated teaching of the languages studied at school have proven to be not as successful as they were thought to be.

Methodology: As well as justifying your teaching methodology, in this section you should explain all the different types of learning activities you have designed for your syllabus. Make sure to refer to audiovisual and ICT activities since they have become a priority in the recently published curricula. Other methodological remarks to be included in this part of your defense could deal with classroom configuration, student groupings, learning spaces, equipment and resources, and other such issues.

Diversity: At this point, you should give evidence of how you deal with special-needs students in your course plan by mentioning the measures you have designed to reach them, that is, structural, methodological and assessment measures which will be clearly displayed during the later development of the course unit.

Assessment: Since assessment is one of the most important parts of the teaching and learning process, it is important to put special emphasis on every one of its aspects by, for example, making a good definition of it, establishing its aims (that is, evaluation of both the students' progress and the teaching practice), referring to the wide range of assessment tools you have included in your course plan and mentioning the different stages of the evaluation process.

The new curriculum establishes the assessment criteria for foreign languages. Make sure, then, that your assessment plan addresses the evaluation of oral interaction, the understanding and production of oral, audiovisual and written documents, the observation and inference of language rules, the use of ICT for researching, managing and presenting information, the use of strategies for promoting autonomous learning, a respectful and curious attitude towards language and culture, and a willingness to engage in collaborative learning.

Unit plan outlines: This section is intended to justify the distribution and organization of your unit plans. It is important to show the panel a sample unit from your syllabus so that they become familiar with the unit structure and layout which you will be asked to develop more in depth later on. As we explained in our previous article, you can design a unit plan in many ways. Here is an example:

UNIT I	Title (or topic, starting point...)		Time allotment:
Objectives: At the end of this unit, most students will be able to: • • • • •	Working towards the "basic competences" • • • •		
CONTENT (The communicative dimension / The literary dimension / The multilingual and multicultural dimension)			
ASSESSMENT CRITERIA			
• • • •			
General end-of-ESO objectives:			

Possible learning activities	Groupings	Methodology	Assessment strategies and tools
Introductory		Strategies and techniques	Initial evaluation
Systematic		School facilities and resources	Formative evaluation
		Teaching resources + supplies	Summative evaluation
			Self-assessment
Reinforcement		Stimuli	Reaching all students
Extension		Prior learning	
Synthesis			
Problem anticipation:			

References, resources and annexes: To conclude with your first twenty-minute presentation, you can pinpoint any particular meaningful references or resources you have used in developing your proposal.

Developing and presenting a unit from your course plan

The development of a unit from your course plan is a crucial part in the whole examination process for the candidate, since during these twenty minutes you are to display all your teaching skills by bringing together everything included in your course plan and putting it into practice. This is the time for you to show the panel that your proposal is do-able, that it can work in a real classroom, so be ready to justify everything in the most convincing way.

It is important to know that, after randomly drawing a unit number, you will be given an hour to prepare the final presentation of the unit lesson plan. Given this limited amount of time, it is highly recommendable that you do advance preparation of all the materials you may want to use to put the presentation of your unit plan together or that you may want to show the panel in your presentation. During this hour you are allowed to have as many resources as you want with you. But make sure you have them well organized so that you can manage this nerve-wrecking sixty-minute block as efficiently as you can.

Although it may vary from one year to another, the candidate is usually allowed to write an outline of the unit development, which can later be used during the oral presentation. Be advised that this is only a sketchy outline, not a summary of your speech.

Besides writing an outline of everything you will want to tell the panel, we advise you to draw up a calendar-type table with all the sessions of your unit, in which you can sequence and distribute all the learning and assessment activities that you had listed by categories but not sequenced in your syllabus. This will help you visualize the flow of your unit and you may even want to consider writing it on the board or projecting it so the panel can follow your explanations when you speak about each of the sessions. Here is an example:

Session 1	Session 2	Session 3 Split class
✓ Warm-up...	✓ Warm-up...	✓
✓ Textbook	✓ Workbook	✓ Jigsaw activity
✓ Podcast: record your personal description	✓	✓
✓	✓ ICT: Videoconferencing (school in England)	
✓ Homework: e-mail to teacher	✓	
	✓	
Session 4	**Session 5**	**Session 6 Split class**
✓ Warm-up...	✓ Warm-up...	✓
✓ Cooperative project	✓	✓
✓	✓ Audiovisual	✓ ICT: Treasure hunt
✓	✓	
✓ Assessment: oral presentation of project + ppt	✓ Homework: WIKI (opinion about the audiovisual)	
Session 7	**Session 8**	**Session 9 Split class**
✓ Textbook reading	✓ Unit test	✓
✓ Song	✓	✓ Running dictation
✓ Lip-singing	✓	✓ Speaking: board games
✓	✓ Assessment: self-assessment questionnaire	
✓	✓	

As you can see, this visual display of your unit sessions will allow you to sequence all your learning activities and the competences and skills they address in a balanced way as well as distribute the corresponding assessment activities at the optimal time.

Start your unit presentation by referring the panel to your course plan and to the specific unit you will be talking about. If you are planning to use a visual presentation, project it.

Here are some aspects that you should cover during your presentation:

• Contextualize the unit (core of unit, starting point, title, number of hours, time allotment, year, term, justification, where you are coming from, where you are going...)
• Talk about the unit-specific objectives and how you will be working towards them in each of the sessions. Your unit objectives need to be very specific. You can even have smaller objectives for each of your sessions. Give examples.

• Refer to the contents that you are addressing, by either mentioning them or by explaining how they are addressed in each of the sessions or activities
• Use the sessions chart to start explaining the sequence of learning and assessment activities and justify your decisions and choices.
• Talk about the types of activities you are using, the different learning styles they address, the groupings, the possible classroom configurations, the diversity of resources... Take this opportunity to share with the panel any original materials that you would use in your sessions.
• Justify the methodology that you will use in the classroom and give examples to support your choices.
• Tell the panel how you are going to keep students engaged and motivated.
• Explain how you reach all students' needs, how you address diversity and give some specific examples (a newcomer, a gifted student, a student with ADD...), how you work at different paces and levels.

• Explain your assessment strategies and tools and how you have distributed them throughout the unit. Relate them to the curriculum assessment criteria. Give and show examples of assessment tools (a portfolio, a questionnaire, a quiz, how you would grade participation, oral interactions, rubrics...).

• Finally, make sure that everything you have explained reflects the ideas expressed in your written course plan and tell the panel if you anticipate any possible problems and if you have any alternatives.

• You could conclude by letting the panel see what your students would have achieved by the end of your unit.

Open discussion and questions

After your prepared presentation, there will still be a short period for discussion and questions from the examining board.

If you do not understand a question, paraphrase it to check for correct understanding or ask the panel to repeat it again.

Do not start answering a question right away. Give yourself some time to think of a convincing answer and try not to mumble. If there is anything you don't know, be honest.

When there are no more questions, thank the panel for their attention and gather your materials as quickly as possible. Remember that they are examining other people after you.

Final thoughts and tips

Technical aspects

• Ask the panel about the materials and resources you will be allowed to use in your presentation the very first day of the oposicions.

• If they allow you to use any school equipment, make sure that it is set up and in good working order prior to the presentation.

Timing

• Use a stopwatch to time yourself in at least one rehearsal before the day of your presentation.

• Use a timer or a clock to time your presentation.

Stress management

• Some nervousness is not only expected, it is a source of productivity. Think about the tests you have passed so far in order to reach this point and remember that you have something to say that no one else in the room knows.

• You're the person who knows the most about your course plan, so you need to feel confident when talking about it. Exert your knowledgeability with confidence.

Attitude

• Present the desired image to your audience: dress appropriately for the occasion.

• Look pleasant, enthusiastic, confident, proud, but not arrogant.

• Greet the panel before starting your presentation.

• Be polite and treat and address all members of the panel equally.

• Establish rapport with your audience through sincere eye contact and body language.

• Do not read from notes, although it is quite acceptable to glance at your outline.

• Be sure to speak clearly.

• Ensure your voice is loud enough to project to the back of the room.

• Speak at a normal pace (not too fast, and not too slow to bore the audience).

• Pause. Do not race through your presentation. Allow yourself and your audience a little time to reflect and think.

• Avoid filling pauses with "uhm", "like" and "you know".

• If you make a mistake, correct yourself immediately.

• A right dose of humor can be very effective both to humanize your presentation and to catch the panel's attention.

Materials

• If you are planning to use the blackboard, limit the time your back is to the audience.

• Using a computer to project a visual presentation or transparencies on an overhead projector will allow you to face your audience all the time.

• Audiovisual aids are very effective when they are used properly.

Note: This article reflects the experience of three

secondary school teachers in course planning. We hope you can take advantage of our suggestions, although there may be other valid successful approaches to course planning which you can consider.

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EALTA
www.ealta.eu.org

EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION
FOR LANGUAGE TESTING
AND ASSESSMENT

From Curiosity to Full Awareness:
The enlightening trip of a teacher of English to the changing European field of testing and assessment.

by Josie Pont

The first time I learnt of the European Association for Language Testing and Assessment (EALTA) was through the APAC web page. At that moment, I only knew **EALTA** was holding a conference in Sitges from the 15th to the 17th of June; the conference was co-ordinated by APAC, and it dealt with testing and assessment. As a full-time secondary teacher, summer-intensive EOI teacher, and instructor and teacher-trainer for applicants trying to pass *"Oposicions de Secundària"*, I thought this would be the perfect chance to get more acquainted with the enormous change that assessment in foreign-language teaching has been undergoing since the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages **(CEFR)** has started to be gradually implemented in the education systems of all European countries.

By now, almost everybody in the foreign-language teaching field is familiar with the content, principles and aims of the CEFR. However, I will try to summarize a few concepts relevant to this paper. We know that one of the main objectives of the CEFR is to try to overcome the present communication barriers which exist among the professionals of this field, barriers which spring from the different European education systems. In a very succinct manner, we can say that to achieve this goal, the CEFR:

a) Establishes the common bases for elaborating the language programmes, curricula orientation, textbooks, tests, etc., for Europe.
b) Describes in a comprehensive manner (descriptors) the knowledge and skills that learners of languages should develop in order to communicate in an effective way.
c) Defines the different levels - A 1-2 (elementary); B 1-2 (Intermediate); C 1-2 (Advanced) - which allow us to measure the diverse proficiency standards in the learning process.

One of the objectives of this framework is to promote European mobility, which is why, with this common base of objectives, content, methodology, and assessment policy, the framework aims to increase transparency in courses, programmes and qualifications.

So far, this is common knowledge. However, what, I believe, language teachers are not so fa-

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miliar with is EALTA. Neither was I before the conference, so I resorted to this wonderful tool called internet to get the information I needed. For the benefit of those who have never visited their web, I will synthesise some of the relevant data.

EALTA is a professional association for language testers in Europe which was founded in 2004. From then until the June conference, Professor Neus Figueras (Vice-President of APAC), teacher of EOI currently working at the Departament d'Educació de Catalunya, was the president.

Among others, their primary aims and objectives are:

> • To share professional expertise in language testing and assessment while promoting recognition of this field, together with improving their systems and practice in Europe.
> • To increase public understanding of language testing and assessment while providing training and making expertise in this field readily available solving assessment problems.

If we stop here, we will probably assume that only professional language testers might be interested in this association. If we continue to explore, however, we can also find on their web site the **"EALTA Guidelines for the Good Practice in Language Testing and Assessment."** Then, when we read to whom they are addressed, we immediately understand that we language teachers are also an integral part of their target audience. These guidelines are for those involved in:

"The training of teachers in testing and assessment; the development of tests in national or institutional testing units or centres; and classroom testing and assessment."

Secondary school teachers both carry out classroom testing and assessment and, at the same time, elaborate tests which enable students to be promoted to another grade or decide whether they are prepared to take the "selectivity exam" or not. I suppose I share with all my colleagues the awareness and sometimes weight of this responsibility, so it is quite understandable why my interest to learn more about what exactly was meant by "assessment" and by "good practice" was immediately raised.

Soon however, I realized I would need more background knowledge about testing and assessment and a better handling of its terminology to be able to grasp the full meaning of its discourse. Therefore, I consulted my copy of the CEFR, chapter 9: **Assessment,** to get a more accurate insight into the topic as it is handled there. I have to admit I had never read it, because I honestly believed I already knew enough on this topic. "Since the concepts: initial, formative, summative, continuous ... assessment entered the education system, we have become sick and tired of hearing about them, so what else is there to learn?" I thought. I was immediately proved wrong when there, on the first page of the document, I encountered the three concepts which are key to any discussion or understanding of assessment: **validity, reliability and feasibility.** Of course I had heard about them, but I had not taken the trouble to fully understand what they meant, and I believe I am not the only one. Now I have realized how important they are, so I will try to summarize them in my own words.

The **validity** of a test is achieved when it can be demonstrated that the item which is being tested or assessed, called the construct, actually corresponds to what is meant to be assessed, and when the results obtained accurately represent the standard of the candidate.

The **reliability** of a test is guaranteed when the results obtained are the same regardless of the administrations, examiner or place. However, results from different organisations or countries will only correlate if the criteria used to define the construct, evaluate the results and award standards are the same. In other words, when the term validity can be applied to all theses processes. That is why the CEFR is concerned with: "what is assessed; how performance is interpreted and how comparisons can be made." (p. 178)

The term **feasibility** is related to the practicality of the assessment procedure, because the criteria of the examiners can only be based on the limited samples of performance they test, and the limited type and number of categories they can handle.

After I had thoroughly understood the complexity and the implications of the three concepts, I began to wonder how the "tests" I usually produce would pass the "test" of validity, reliability and feasibility. As I continued reading the chapter, the awareness of my lack of knowledge increased. I am not going to go deeper into it, anyone can download the whole document from internet, I will only reproduce a very significant table (by no

means exhaustive) of the types of assessment listed there.

1	Achievement assessment	Proficiency Assessment	
2	Norm-referencing (NR)	Criterion-referencing (CR)	
3	Mastery learning CR	Continuum CR	
4	Continuous assessment	Fixed assessment points	
5	Formative assessment	Summative assessment	
6	Direct assessment	Indirect assessment	
7	Performance assessment	Knowledge assessment	
8	Subjective assessment	Objective assessment	
9	Checklist rating	Performance rating	
10	Impression	Guided judgement	
11	Holistic assessment	Analytic assessment	
12	Series assessment	Category assessment	
13	Assessment by others	Self-assessment	

I was disappointed with myself, I had not even known so many types of assessment existed, nor was I able to distinguish and define them. Thus, soon after finishing the CEFR 9 chapter and having returned to the EALTA guidelines for Good Practice in Language Testing and Assessment, it was clear to me that I needed all the clarifications and guidance possible if I were to continue being responsible (as the majority of secondary teachers are) for the tests which award the pupils of my school a given standard and the consequent certificate.

With this project in mind I headed for the EALTA conference in Sitges. I thought that if presentations became too impenetrable I would, at least, benefit from the nice June weather and beautiful surroundings the location offered the visitor. To my surprise, though, and perhaps because I had also done my homework, researching the intricacies of the topic and the meaning of the terminology, I was able to follow the various presentations. They were mainly concerned with classroom assessment, test development, validation procedures and testing and assessment research. Although I was sometimes lost in the many statistics presented, it was very interesting to see, through the results of their research, the effort different European countries are making to try to unify their standards and criteria. Increasingly, however, the impact of the CEFR seems to be expanding, reaching countries beyond Europe. There were presentations from as far away as the United States, Australia and Taiwan. From all the papers presented, and from the perspective of a secondary school teacher, I would point out three which stood out most: these were on assessment related to ethical issues and assessment in the Spanish education system.

Professor McNamara from Australia discussed the fairness of language tests when these could grant or deny Australian citizenship. He also mentioned that a further step is taken in the tests used by the U.K. or the Netherlands for the same purpose - devoid of the human factor, they are designed and corrected by computers and taken on-line.

Professor Immaculada Sanz deplored the unfairness and uselessness of the present English "selectivity" test, and proposed a more complex and complete model which would be more in accordance with the CEFR requirements.

Professor and President Neus Figueras' presentation was called: *"Language Assessment to Improve Teaching Practice in Mainstream Education. The Catalan Experience."* She focused on the implementation and assessment of the basic competences for primary and secondary schools outlined again by the CEFR and she commented on the need they had to undertake the project for internal evaluation: "We didn't seem to be teaching what children were willing to learn. They were not learning what was needed in the real world. So there was a need for quality control and accountability. School teachers need help with different materials and exams to satisfy their demands." As drawbacks, she also mentioned the limited resources available, together with some resistance and organisation problems from some schools.

At the conference closure my overall sensation was very positive. Not only had I had a good time meeting professionals in the field and exchanging viewpoints about countries and their education

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systems, it had also been a transformational experience which would not allow me to set a test with the same lack of awareness as before. However, teachers of English cannot continue taking responsibility for all the goals and targets which are not achieved in our field and for the deficiencies in our present compulsory school assessment system and its multiple implications. The low proficiency levels that our students in the state secondary school reach have been widely publicized, and we all know who the scapegoats are. So, now the awareness that we are possibly not doing our assessment in the required manner should not be a cause for further anxiety but should be the starting point for a collective demand. We do need the resources and the aid of professionals; those who are trained to take responsibility for the validity, reliability and feasibility of our school tests.

The same view was also expressed by Professor *Neus Figueras who in the "III Congreso Internacional de la Lengua Española", (Rosario, 2004)* referred to the important implications of the lack of validity in tests. She stated that although it seemed easy to guarantee that what is being actually assessed is exactly what we want to assess, this is in reality the cause of the majority of irregularities and unfairness in assessment, and it directly affects the credibility of the certificates, the systems which have created them, the teaching field and the learning process. (My translation)

With regard to feasibility, Professor Figueras claimed that we have to confront the high cost of creating and maintaining certificates or certification systems which respect the required quality parameters and guarantee the stability of standards. Such a system of quality requires professionals from the field and cannot be improvised. However, at present, there is neither sufficient training in initial or continuous assessment, nor enough social awareness about the importance of having quality, transparent and comparable certificates. (My translation)

After my humble quest in search of the realm of assessment I could not agree more with the previous statements. When faced with my ignorance on the topic, and thinking I was the odd one out among my group of professionals, I carried out a little survey among the many language teachers I know and nobody could give a clear account of what the three key concepts in assessment meant. Although they were familiar with initial and continuous assessment, they admitted to always resorting to the same tests and techniques, usually designed by themselves.

If in the future we aim at the mobility of our university students, well-equipped with a good proficiency level in the target language, we have to make sure that the bases are well established, from primary school to Batxillerat. However, to carry out this project, the "real" needs of our students in this increasingly complex and multicultural classroom and world must be identified and acknowledged. A "real" communicative approach syllabus should be designed and, most importantly, "really" be allowed to be carried out, which implies more resources and a maximum of 15 students in every class. With 30 young students, a lot of communication does really take place but usually in the mother tongue. The famous use of new technologies should "really" be made available, but for such an objective we would need more than 20 new and 10 obsolete computers and 60 teachers trying to use them. And finally we need our tests to be prepared by professional testers or we should receive the training to accomplish the task professionally. Then, maybe, we will really be a part of the successful achievement of the CEFR's goal: the standardization of knowledge and certificates in Europe.

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Dealing with Difficulties, Solutions, Strategies and Suggestions for Successful Teaching

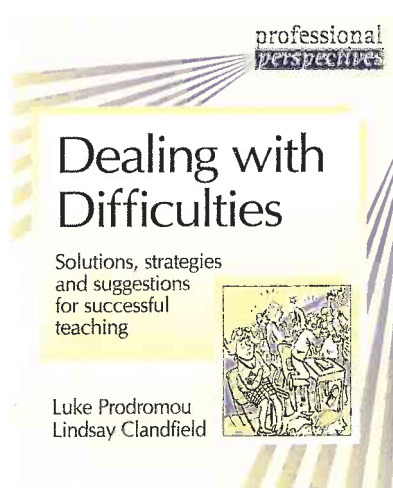by Luke Propdromou and Lindsay Clandfield

In *Professional Perspectives* (Series Editor Mike Burghall). Delta Publishing, 2007.

Teaching is a real struggle for many professionals, and, what is worse, their only way out is either suffering in silence or griping with other teachers. Neither provides an adequate response.

Dealing with Difficulties puts together more than 150 activities designed by two very experienced teachers and teacher trainers, Luke Prodromou and Lindsay Clandfield. Both of them went through the anguish of having to teach large, mixed-level, unmotivated classes. After years of observation of teachers at work and serious reflection they have come up with the most common difficulties faced by teachers, such as mixed levels, large classes, getting and keeping students' attention, discipline, encouraging independent learning and so on.

The authors offer a wide range of techniques and practical methodology presented through more than 150 carefully planned activities which will enable teachers not only to cope with classroom problems but also to turn them into actual learning opportunities.

The book is organized around 5 main areas in which the problems are first examined so as to eliminate the negative aspects before suggesting constructive solutions: large-class management, discipline problems, mixed-level problems, homework and teaching exam-oriented classes.

The different chapters start with a **short introduction** as a sort or awareness-raising of the problem and a presentation of broad methodological issues. A **tips and techniques** section offers ideas for teachers to sort out difficulties. The main core of each chapter is made up of the different activities which are carefully designed but allow teachers to arrive at their own practical solutions at the same time. In my opinion, all of these **activities** should be ingrained into the teachers' way of conducting classes rather than being used on and off or whenever the problems arise.

Dealing with Difficulties is an excellent resource book for teachers which should be kept ready at hand when preparing language lessons. It will not give solutions to every single problem than teachers face nowadays but it will certainly trigger new ways of tackling old problems.
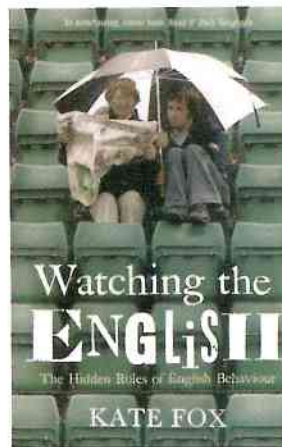
Reviewed by Neus Serra

Watching The English

It is constantly said that the English have lost their national identity and that there is no such thing as Englishness. Having spent much of the past twelve years doing research on various aspects of English culture and social behaviour- in pubs, at racetracks, in shops, in night-clubs, on trains, on street corners- the author of *Watching the English*, Kate Fox, is convinced that there is such a thing as "Englishness".

This is an entertaining book that tries to reveal the hidden rules of English behaviour and what these rules tell the English about their national identity and character. It describes why people never share personal information unless they know someone particularly well. Fox's comments on ignoring other passengers on train journeys, on behaviour when queuing, on mobile phone use, on class distinctions and on many other subjects are completely true and acute. It is a long book, 424 pages, but it is amusing and entertaining and does not need to be read linearly to be understood.

The book opens with *Anthropology* at home, an introduction which explains the aim of the book, how she conducted her research and why her analysis of Englishness focuses on rules. After the introduction, we come to the core of the book, which consists of two parts. Each one is subdivided into different headings and subheadings. Both parts uncover the defining characteristics of Englishness and provide a "grammar" of English behaviour. Part One, entitled *Conversation Codes*, consists of six sections: *The Weather, Grooming-Talk, Humour Rules, Linguistic Class Codes, Mobile Phone Etiquette and Pub Talk*. Part Two, whose title is *Behaviour Codes*, comprises the following eight sections: *Home Rules, Rules of the Road, Work to Rule, Rules of Play, Dress Codes, Food Rules, Rules of Sex and Rites of Passage*. The book ends with a conclusion, in which Kate gives a list of definitions of each of the key characteristics of Englishness, and a diagram showing how they fit together.

The book is very interesting, since every aspect of English conversation and behaviour is put under the microscope. It is a recommendable book for English teachers because it is reasonably accurate in its portrayal of English society. It would also make an ideal present for anyone about to travel to the U.K. in order to avoid misunderstandings due to others' behaviour. While I was visiting the U.K., this book explained many things I had been wondering about. After reading it, I had a much better understanding of why people there were behaving as they were. I have talked about the book to some English people and they like it as well and have great fun reading it. They even laugh at themselves.

Book reviewed by Belén Batalla Beltri

LAROUSSE

bilingual dictionaries
## for effective language learning

Larousse English-Spanish bilingual dictionaries are powerful reference tools for both language learners and professionals, not only because of the breadth and depth of their coverage of language, but because of the valuable information they provide about the cultural and social aspects of life in English-speaking countries.

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- over 250,000 words and expressions
- over 400.000 translations
- visual dictionary: 20 thematic colour plates
- CD with the entire contents

All titles featured here are accompanied by an electronic dictionary on CD-ROM
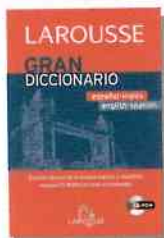
Concise
- over 170,000 words and expressions
- over 260,000 translations
- supplement about the cultural aspects of life in English -and Spanish-speaking countries
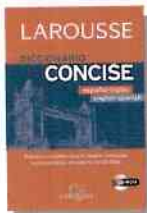
Compact plus
- over 125,000 words and expressions
- over 200,000 translations
- 64-page communication guide with templates for CVs and e-mails, set phrases and standard expressions

Compact
- over 90,000 words and expressions
- over 120,000 translations
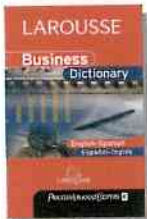- phonetic transcription of English words
- notes on culture and society

Specialist dictionaries

Business
Price Waterhouse Coopers
- business vocabulary: finance, stock market, marketing, insurance
- examples of usage taken from the specialist press
- communication guide with templates for letters, e-mails, faxes, CVs

Guide to Essential Business English
- terminology and expressions for writing reports, making presentations or negotiating
- examples of letters, e-mails, etc.

Diccionario de Marketing
Price Waterhouse Coopers
- over 6,500 words and expressions
- lexicon includes advertising, distribution and import / export terminology
- examples of usage taken from the specialist press

Slang
- familiar, colloquial and impolite words and expressions
- register of usage is clearly indicated
- a wide range of examples

School dictionaries

School
- 22,000 words and expressions
- 20,000 examples of usage
- tables listing false friends and about culture
- visual dictionary with over 500 illustrations

Larousse Junior
- 32 monolingual thematic plates
- bilingual dictionary adapted to primary school children
- notebook with activities and puzzles
- interactive CD with games and songs
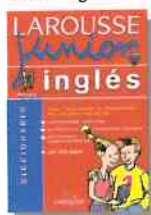
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course, since I always ask them to justify in writing the mark they think they deserve, this makes wishful thinking more difficult. It is certainly not something I leave only for the end of a marking period. I do think that for students to take self-assessment seriously, their teacher has to show that she takes it seriously and will take their self-assessment into account. The first step towards this is through including self-assessment in the assessment criteria explicitly. The next one can be to either negotiate with the students or simply tell them the percentage of weight their mark will have.

7 It is possible to become an autonomous learner without doing self-assessment.

It may be possible to become somewhat more autonomous in your learning without doing self-assessment but I think that self-assessment is really necessary. The reason is that to have autonomy in learning one must be able to analyze and make decisions about how well one has done and then decide what one will do next. This is self-assessment. By definition, learner autonomy includes self-assessment. If you don't know where you are going and can't say if you've gotten there, you always need to rely on outside informants (usually your teacher).

8 It is easy for us teachers to incorporate student self-assessment into our assessment of students.

At least for myself, I haven not found this to be true. I was raised in a school culture in which the teacher did all the assessment (or even some entity beyond the teacher). My first training as a teacher was entirely in the line that assessment is a complex, difficult process and that even for the average teacher it was difficult, better left to 'experts' who would prepare tests for me to use with my students.

Each step I have taken to include a new self-assessment tool has been more difficult for me than for my students, more questioning on my part – will they be able to do this, will they take it seriously, am I going to lose control/respect from the class, from their parents?

Some final remarks

If we want our students to 'learn to learn', we need to facilitate their context of learning so that this can take place. If students have not learned how to reflect on their learning process and results, then it is my job to help them learn how to do so. The teacher who wants to incorporate 'learning to learn' activities and objectives with her/his students also needs to reflect on how to go about this, and, more importantly I think, why to do so. If we are aiming for our students to become more autonomous learners, it seems clear to me that we need to help them to learn to learn.

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Contributions

2. Students need to learn how to do self-assessment well.

This is the second part of number one. I agree in the sense that students need to learn to do it in a conscious, organized way. Students do, in fact, do informal self-assessment all the time: just ask any student how he or she is doing in class or listen to what they say as they walk out of exams. However, for them to do conscious self-assessment, they have to learn how to do so. And it's not all that easy for some of them; my experience, in fact, is that the older the students are, the more difficult it is for them (keep in mind that my experience is with secondary students and up). Colleagues have told me that younger students can learn to do this just fine and, while older students may need a bit more time to learn, they end up self-assessing perfectly well also.

Again, in my experience, the first thing students need in order to self assess is to have a very clear idea of what they are assessing - that is, they need to be clear about the objectives and the criteria of assessment. Both the objectives and the general criteria of assessment (or specific ones) can be given out to the students at the very beginning of the year; in fact I think they should be. Among other reasons because this is playing fairer with the students - they know what the rules of the game are from the beginning. Both can be discussed from the first days of class and referred to after that.

I prefer to give out somewhat general evaluation criteria because then I can ask the students to participate in the definition of these. I think that when students take part in this definition, in this kind of decision making, they realize that their opinion is also important and they take the whole class more seriously.

3. Students should participate in the definition of assessment criteria.

In my opinion, they definitely should. For me this is a logical consequence from the above as well as facilitating it. To the degree students help set the evaluation criteria, these become theirs, not just mine. If we want our students to be responsible for their learning, to take responsibility for what goes on in their learning, in and out of class, we've got to give them responsibility. I have always found that my students are more severe than I am in setting criteria. Not only that; by working through general assessment criteria, which I

(alone or with other members of my department) have previously set, the students not only have a clearer idea of what these are but they also identify more closely with them.

4 Students should take part in the assessment of their learning process.

From what I have written above, it must be pretty obvious that I agree with this statement wholeheartedly. One of the most important reasons for this is that, in my experience students learn tremendous amounts about themselves and their individual learning process through and while doing so. We need to find ways to help students reflect on the different aspects of their learning process: analyzing how well they are doing in their work, both with respect to the content objectives and the process objectives, helps them to do this. Of course, it also makes my life easier as a teacher when I can share the responsibility with them.

5. You can't ask students to do peer correction or assessment because they will not do it impartially.

I disagree with this statement, based on my experience with my students. What is also true is that for students to do peer assessment well, as the teacher I have to work at creating an atmosphere of trust among the class members and with me. Students also need to learn how to correct and assess. This takes work and time, as with any other learning process. However, I have always found learning to correct and assess peer work to be so beneficial that it is more than worth the investment. In addition, I have found that students learn tremendous amounts about their own performance and how to improve it through correcting and evaluating classmates.

6 Students do not take self-assessment seriously; they give themselves the mark they'd like to have.

This can happen if you simply drop students into a situation with a 'now assess yourself', although in this case I have also found the opposite to be true – that students will seriously underrate themselves. In the years I have been asking students to do self-assessment, once they have helped define assessment criteria and practiced, they can be very accurate and certainly do not simply give themselves the mark they'd like to have. Of

ther good example of different strategy use. Some people have responded are that they grouped the words into meaningful units such as TV and chair, bowl and cup; others placed the items in rooms in their house, still others put the words in alphabetical order.

As I said above, there are no right or wrong answers here. Not everyone uses the same strategies to figure out the answers to these questions; this is a good example of how different people will use different learning strategies to find an answer or to help themselves learn better. It is also an example of the fact that a 'good' strategy is one that works for me, which does not mean that it will be a 'good' strategy for everyone.

The role of assessment

Once again, before commenting on the role assessment has in learning to learn and student reflection, I would ask you to think about the following statements and decide to what degree you agree or disagree with each of them. You can do this any way you choose; one way is this: If you strongly agree with a statement, write 'AA', if you agree with it but not strongly, just 'A'. If you strongly disagree with the statement, write 'XX', if you disagree but not strongly, only 'X'. If you can-

I believe that assessment plays a central role in helping learners to 'learn to learn'. However, of course I am referring to student participation in assessment, through both self and co assessment. As anyone who has worked with me knows, I am relatively boringly insistent on this point. In order for student to take any kind of responsibility of their learning, they need to be able to judge how well they are doing, that is, they need to be able to assess their work. But let me go through this questionnaire with my responses to each point[6].

I have regrouped them and my comments because some go more logically with others.

1 The teacher is really the only person qualified to assess students' progress.

I disagree. I think this is more a question of attitude on our (and sometimes the students') part. We (more us but also our students) have been brought up in school to think of assessment as some kind of sacred ground, where only experts, or, at best, teachers may tread. As a matter of fact, I think that once students learn how to assess their own progress, they can do it much better than I can - I've got too many students to be able to go into much detail with any one of them.

1 The teacher is really the only person qualified to assess students' progress.	
2 You can't ask students to do peer correction or assessment because they will not do it impartially.	
3 Students need to learn how to do self-assessment well.	
4 Students should take part in the assessment of their learning process.	
5 Students do not take self-assessment seriously, they give themselves the mark they'd like to have.	
6 Students should participate in the definition of assessment criteria.	
7 It is possible to become an autonomous learner without doing self-assessment.	
8 It is easy for us teachers to incorporate student self-assessment into our assessment of students.	

[6] My responses have been published in an earlier version

these GLL characteristics. However, I find that asking students, at the beginning of a term, to define what for them is a GLL to be an excellent exercise. I ask them to think about what a GLL does and does not do and also to contrast this with what someone who they would not consider a GLL to do or not, emphasizing that I do not mean 'has a good ear' but what they do. This is carried out through pyramid brainstorming, ending with a cumulative list on the board. Once students have this list, it is simply a question of asking them to each choose and try putting in practice a few items which they haven't done. While no student will have all the qualities included on any list, the fact that the students brainstorm their own list, rather than using a given one, will help make them more conscious of what each can do to become a better learner[4].

What are learning strategies?

This second questionnaire[5] is more specifically aimed at thinking about types of learning strategies and how we use them. It is more fun to do it with others and then compare your answers but if you haven't got anyone close by, you can certainly do it on your own. Please begin by reading the questions quickly and circling the ones you can answer without thinking.

Now, go back to the questions you could not answer 'without thinking', i.e. questions you need to spend more time on, and figure out the answers. Then, and this is the most important part here, write how you went about finding each answer, that is, what did you do to find the answer.

Again, there are no correct or incorrect answers. The questions you could answer 'without thinking' are examples of strategies you use unconsciously or automatically, that is mental processes taking place below the conscious level, Those which you needed to think about, if you go back and look at what you've written about how you found the answers, are examples of learning strategies that you consciously use to find answers, this is to say, the processing becomes conscious because the problem is unfamiliar.

To look at just a few examples, for the first question you probably used a memory strategy, visualizing your front door and how you open it. For question number nine, I have heard several different kinds of strategies: some people add $1+2 = 3$, $3+3 = 6$, $4+6 = 10$, etc. Others, start at the other end: $10 + 9 = 19$, $19 + 8 = 27$, etc. Some use paper and pencil, some do the sums in their heads, some even use a calculator. Different people use different strategies. Question ten is ano-

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1 Does the front door of your home open to the left side or the right?

2 What is the President's telephone number?

3 How do you get from the bus stop nearest your home to your front door?

4 What's a seven-letter word ending in 'y' that means 'a group of interacting individuals living in the same region and sharing the same culture'?

5 How would you say '¿Qué hora es? in English?

6 How would you say 'desarme nuclear' in English?

7 EGG is to CHICKEN as INFANT is to ……..

8 Which word in the following group doesn't belong?
      Rose, lily, potato, tulip

9 What's the answer to the following addition?
      $1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5 + 6 + 7 + 8 + 9 + 10 =$

10 Memorize the following list of words
        bowl   log   painting chair
        cup   sock   TV set   cigarette

---

[4] After students have developed their own list of GLL characteristics is the time to show them a list such as the one above. They can be asked to compare the descriptions in both lists, to possibly add to their own list, etc. The objective is to have them continue to reflect on – and hopefully to incorporate – more of these characteristics into their own learning.
[5] adapted from Wenden, A. p. 98

Learning to Learn:
Teachers Reflecting, Students Reflecting

by Leslie
Bobb Wolff

Universidad de
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Learning to learn is part of learner autonomy. Characteristics of a good language learner, learning strategies and self assessment are all areas that can help students improve their learning ability. We teachers need to reflect on our role in our students' 'learning to learn'.

In this paper I would like to reflect on some of the aspects of 'learning to learn' and look at the relation between 'learning to learn' and learner autonomy.

order of importance they have for you; that is, which do you think is the most important for someone who is a good language learner (GLL), which is second most important, etcetera.

What can we learn from the characteristics of the good language learner?

What is it that learners do so that we consider them 'good language learners'? This area was originally researched by Rubin (1975) and Naimen, et al (1978), and since then by many others. Below is a questionnaire with characteristics of the "good language learner"[1]. Please read through this list and number the characteristics in the

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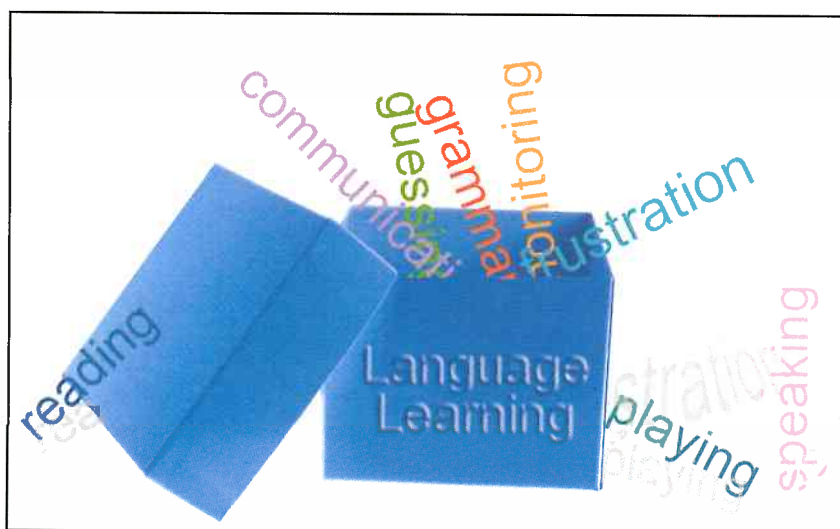
[1] Adapted from Rubin, J. and from Naimen,N., Frohlich, M., Stern, D. & Tudesco, A.
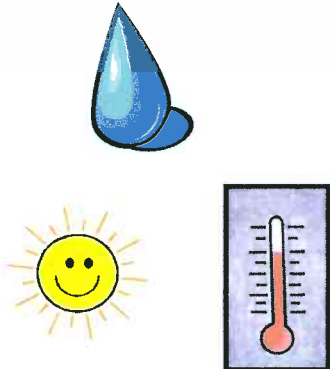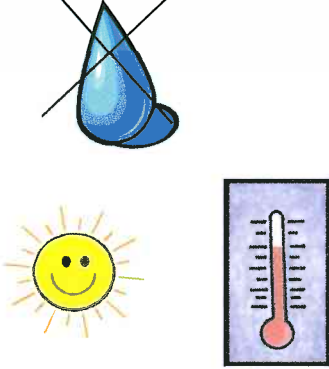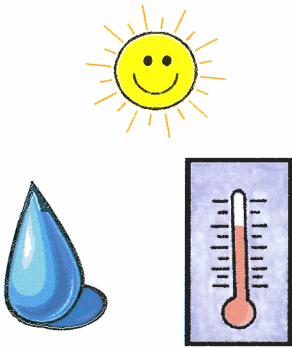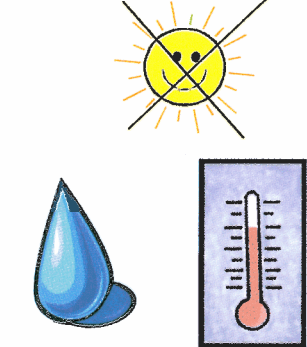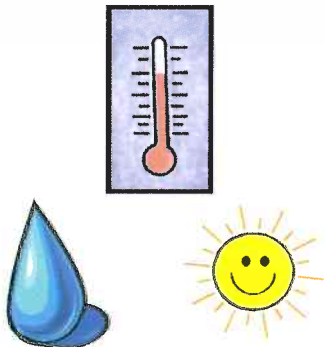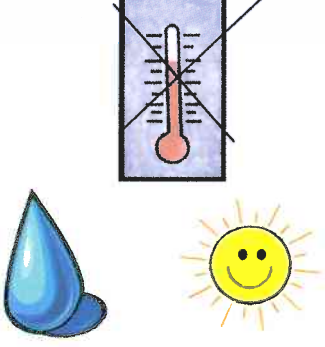
Activity sheet 2-1

WATER/LIGHT/WARMTH

Name .... Date ....

WHAT DO SEEDS NEED TO GROW?
WRITE A TICK OR A CROSS IN THE BOXES.

Activity sheet

SEEDS, FRUITS, AND PLANTS

Name .... Date ....

beans

a bean plant

Beans come from a bean plant. They are long and green.

chestnuts

a chestnut tree

Chestnuts .... They are ....

lentils

a lentil plant

....

acorns

an oak tree

....

Activity sheet

SEEDS, FRUITS, AND PLANTS

Name .... Date ....

Match the plants to the seeds and fruits.

Activity sheet

FRUITS AND SEEDS

Name .... Date ....

TOMATO   PEAR   APPLE   KIWI   LEMON
CHERRY   ORANGE STRAWBERRY LENTILS

_____   _____   _____

_____   _____   _____

_____   _____   _____
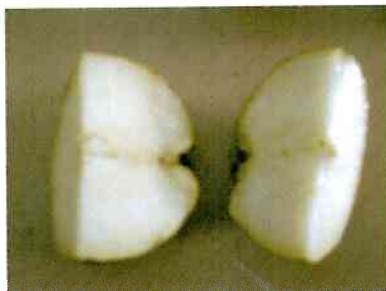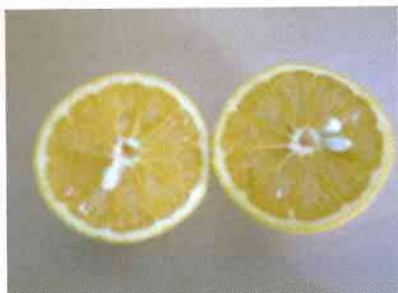
An Exciting Challenge: SEEDS

by Aïda Micó
and Sónia Marcos

Is it possible to teach Science in English from second grade onwards in a state elementary school? We think so.

Is it possible to teach Science in English from second grade onwards in a state elementary school? We think so.

CEIP Sant Jordi has a history of being a pioneering school as far as languages are concerned. English was introduced in the first cycle of Primary education long before the Department of Education decided to make it compulsory; French has been taught as a second language in third cycle since 1998; and pupils were receiving 3 hours a week of Spanish long before it was made compulsory.

Looking to achieve better results in English, we decided that it was time to increase the amount of time pupils were exposed to English as well as to provide them with a real purpose for using it. We felt the need to give students the opportunity to use the language for learning as well as for communicating. Therefore, we decided to design a "Projecte d'innovació curricular" ("Curriculum Innovation Project"), and one of us spent a year in Britain on a "Llicencia d'estudis retribuida" ("Paid Leave for Studies").

Our project is grounded in CLIL in the area of Natural Sciences, as we believe that this area allows pupils to experiment, and our students have traditionally been involved in natural science projects and workshops. Our project was initially intended for second, third and fourth grade, but due to its great results and acceptance we are now extending it to 3rd cycle of primary (fifth and sixth grade).

The following is a sample unit of our project intended for pupils of in the second year of the initial cycle (i.e., second grade).

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Lecturer at the UdG
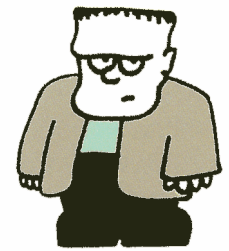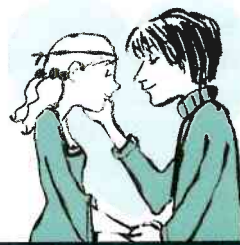
use English. Children learn by imitation, so a positive, confident attitude from the teacher is one of the most essential elements in the learning process. Any short-comings or worries about pronunciation can be overcome by using cassettes, CDs or DVDs at appropriate moments in class. Children are very flexible and will be able to alter their pronunciation to coincide more with the accent on the cassette or CD if necessary. Also, keep in mind that in these days of globalisation and global Englishes what really is a correct pronunciation? Confidence and fluency to achieve communication are more important than sounding like the Queen of England!

The second and third learning needs: patience, encouragement and praise, rely completely on the relationship between teacher and pupil. In the words of Carl Jung:

"....warmth is the vital element for the growing plant and for the soul of the child".

All children, but especially the very young, need a good personal relationship with their teacher which is warm, close and offers support and encouragement. This is true for any learning situation, but especially that of language learning. Language is communication and, as we have already mentioned, according to Tomatis's research for language to develop there must be interaction, it is not something which can be done either with a machine or alone.

Patience! How many of us finish a class or a day's work wondering if we still have any left? Patience is not only one of the basic learning needs it is also one of the most basic teaching requirements and it is certainly present in the Motherese language techniques which create opportunities for learning where the child feels safe and unhurried.

Praise and encouragement should be given spontaneously and ungrudgingly by the teacher but it must be genuine because children instinctively know if an adult is being sincere or not. In the L2 class there is no benefit in either constantly correcting children in the middle of speaking activities, or of over-insisting on correct pronunciation, as these can both be counterproductive. In the early stages of L2 it is better to accept an approximate pronunciation and rely on Motherese techniques for rectifying mistakes by either correct repetition, or by making a note of general problems and modelling the right forms in front of the whole class.

Now we will look at the special characteristics of Motherese which teachers will find useful. It is usually spoken at a slower rate with a more distinct pronunciation. Correct language is used but the sentences are kept short and uncomplicated as they match the child's own comprehension level. The voice tone is usually softer and more affectionate, while the pitch becomes higher making it easier to listen to. The child is given plenty of opportunities for repetition as they gain confidence in using first words, then later whole chunks of language. There is no evident correction, certainly the parent never stops a child in mid-flow to correct a wrong verb tense! Instead repetition is used to supply the correct forms. There are frequent pauses in ored to give the child time to absorb and reply, (remember the 3-seconds-wait), and equally frequent stops to instinctively check understanding before continuing.

Physically there is often close contact as parents kneel of bend so that their faces are on a level with the child, giving the eye contact which is expected and necessary for real communication.

Body language also plays a major part as parents explain difficult words, or add emphasis, using hands, arms and facial expressions. In the 1950s Albert Mehrabian´s research into body language produced the percentages of human communication, which, unfortunately in these days of speed and hi-technology, we don't pay much attention to! According to his findings the words we actually use only account for 7% of total communication, voice tone and pitch make up 38% and body language is a very important 55%. Perhaps we should keep these percentages more in mind, especially when we rely on e-mails and SMS to communicate, thus losing 93% of the total! As teachers we really do need to keep these things in mind and use every possible chance to teach pupils how to communicate as fully as possible, using not only words, but also voices and bodies. Remember also a well-known fact: that families who chat a lot to each other usually produce children who have not only a rich and varied vocabulary in their L1, but also grow up to be good communicators.

Apart from taking advantage of various class moments already mentioned,(greetings etc.), primary teachers need to offer a variety of speaking and listening activities in order to encourage pupils to use English for real, everyday communication and study. Speaking activities will also help them to naturally learn other essential communication

Contributions

cause speech to happen. At this stage children progress at their own speed and cannot be hurried, when they have created their own resource bank they will talk and this will happen earlier for some and later for others. If we equate this stage in L1 with the same stage in L2 this is the time when teachers need to take care to not only give plenty of listening opportunities, but also not to block any chances for speech by answering questions for the pupils instead of giving them time to talk. Oral examiners are trained to count to 3 after asking a question because this 3-second-wait-time allows candidates to process the question and prepare an answer without feeling intimidated into giving an immediate reply. The same technique is valid for teachers. The 2nd phase of speech production in L1 is known as the Intermediate period, which begins when the child actually starts to speak.

This phase is usually met with shows of enthusiasm and encouragement from family and friends which, in turn, motivate the small child to continue speaking. During this stage the child speaks in very short sentences which rely on key words, usually nouns, and omit anything not essential or complicated, such as prepositions or correct verb tense endings (something like Tarzan). At this stage children usually begin the process of asking endless questions which gives them more opportunities for speech and learning, and parents respond incorporating the child's key word questions into a fuller correct version. In this way a child learns how to build blocks or "chunks" of language which is stored in their memories to be used at a later time.

This language interaction is like a game of throwing and catching a ball. In L1 young children use a few words to mean a lot. The parent "catches" the words and "throws" them back to the child in a correct version, naturally incorporating the missing articles, prepositions etc....

An example of a typical conversation in L1 at this stage could sound something like:

Child: "Cup?"
Adult: "Yes, it's mummy's cup"
Child: "Mummy cup ?"
Adult: "Yes, it's mummy's blue cup"
Child: "Mummy blue cup"

This example is how the special, instinctive language of mothers works. This language is known as Motherese or Parentese, and it starts from the child's words and builds on from there, taking advantage of as much natural communication as possible. Further on in this article we will be looking at some of the more important characteristics of Motherese which can be very useful for teachers to learn and use in class.

The final stage of L1 learning, Breakthrough, comes when the child is able to create his/her own language, using more words and structures and gradually making less mistakes.

In order to replicate these phases in the L2 classroom, so that pupils can progress from the Silent stage to being able to use their oral skills to the best of their abilities the teacher's role and work are essential. By being aware of the different stages in natural development and by using some of the skills of Motherese to create their own personal version of "Classroomese", good primary teachers can play their important part and give their pupils the support and help which is needed.

For children to enjoy success in any learning situation 3 basic needs have to be met:

1. Regular time for practise and opportunities,(but remember: quality not quantity)
2. Patience. (lots of it!)
3. Encouragement and praise, (as long as it is genuine.)

The first need, for time and opportunities, can be met by creating as many learning situations using English as possible, for example for greetings and farewells, for starting and ending activities, for instructions and, of course, for games, songs and stories. In real life nearly all conversations offer a child an opportunity for learning how to speak, and the same can be true inside the classroom. L1 doesn't have to be totally banned, always remember that languages are about communication and there are times when using L1 saves valuable minutes and frustration in order to explain difficult words or concepts, but at the same time don't miss opportunities for using English.

Having said that, there are some teachers who feel embarrassed when they have to speak or read stories in English in front of their pupils. Some because they are worried about their own levels of English, others because they feel their pronunciation is not correct. To all these teachers I would like to ask them to keep firmly in their minds that they are in fact the best role models the pupils can have because they have the same L1 as the children but have been able to learn and

respected as such. Inside every head sitting facing you there is an incredible brain, which given the correct stimulation in a healthy child, can create a greater number of ideas than the number of atoms in the known universe. They say it would cost over 1.5 billion Eu. To build a machine capable of doing the same things as you can do!!

Learning a foreign language is usually something which young children are motivated to do. Like the young of any species they are naturally curious and want to try out any thing new. At infant and primary age they are still learning a lot about themselves, their world and their language, so L2 learning should just become an integrated part of everything else.

There are always exceptions, but in general my experience with young children has been that they enjoy learning English, they want to progress quickly, they want instant results and they also want to leave even their first lesson with a few words in order to show off to their parents and friends. Motivation is high, they are incredible mimics and learn quickly, but unfortunately, due to a short concentration time span, they also forget quickly so they need a lot of different activities for revision and recycling. It is useful for teachers to remember the formula for roughly calculating concentration time:

AGE+5= x minutes. However, also remember that the concentration span is often shorter when working in L2 than in L1.

Children learn by movement and doing, infants and very young primary pupils make no division between work and play, so it makes sense to include a lot of TPR activities when developing any of the learning skills, but especially the aural and oral ones. Finger chants like "Ten little Indians", and songs with movement like "Head and Shoulders" are excellent for this.

The Council of Europe's linguistic requirements have made 2 divisions in the skill of speaking. One skill is interaction: the ability to ask and answer questions and interact with others. The other skill is production: the ability to produce language without any outside interaction. Both skills need to be developed, although in a natural order of things interaction will come first. The best place for teachers to start is by remembering how the children learnt their L1 and follow a similar process.

Broadly speaking the process of learning L1 goes through 3 phases:

1) Non-verbal
2) Intermediate
3) Breakthrough

The first stage, known as Non –verbal or silent, begins from the moment of birth. The human ear becomes active while the foetus is still in the womb, usually at some point between the 4th and 5th month of pregnancy. From that time on the unborn baby instinctively uses this ability to absorb sounds and vibrations, and after birth this listening skill becomes essential for survival and development. To the new baby words are just sounds with which they associate experiences so, for example the word "milk" means a nice warm liquid. Words are internally represented through the senses and eventually the whole process becomes unconscious as known words automatically trigger the sense associated with it. It is said that we have 2 ears but only 1 mouth because we need to listen twice as much as we need to speak! This is certainly true for babies, and it is also an important fact for teachers to remember.. children need lots of opportunities for listening if we want them to speak later, from classroom instructions to stories and chants, the more the better. A famous French doctor, Alfred Tomatis, spent over 50 years of his professional life treating and researching ear problems and hearing disorders in children. One of his investigations proved that the human voice can only reproduce sounds which the era has heard, so it follows that if there is no dialogue there will be no speech. It is interesting to note that Tomatis also worked with Don Campbell on some parts of his research into the Mozart Effect, but that, as they say, is another story!

During this initial phase the child outwardly only listens, but inwardly a lot of work is going on as the brain makes sense of the sound waves and creates the neuronal connections which will later