



Associació
de Professors
i Professores
d'Anglès
de Catalunya

Quarterly Magazine

Number 67

October 09



ELT Convention

Usage Guides: What are they for, Who are they for by Machiel Swan

Listening Strategies for the Digital Age by Michael Harris

Creating a New "BLEND" Using Wikis by Susan Dregger

What do I do with them: Ideas from "Teaching Low Level Teens' ESO Students" by Chris Roland



Contributions

Granada: The Hay Festival by Ann Fernandez Vidaurreta

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One Year and Still Teaching! by Lianne Ross

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Britlit by Laura Nogués



Book Review

How to Teach English with Technology by Gavin Dudeney and Nicky Hockly reviewed by Sònia Guilana

APAC

ELT - CONVENTION 2010

Skills for Life: ELT and Education

February 25th, 26th & 27th

Universitat Pompeu Fabra

Campus Ciutadella

Ramon Trias Fargas, 25-27

Barcelona

www.apac.es



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear colleagues,

Let me use this letter as an invitation to participate in the election of a new APAC board for the coming three years. You are, I suppose, well aware that in our last "assamblea de socis" the process for the coming election was announced and that there is time until the end of September to present candidacies. APAC needs each and every one of its members to make it better and bigger and an obvious way to contribute to this end is getting involved in the daily running of the association. You are all welcome (and encouraged!) to participate in this essential process in whatever capacity you may choose.

As for myself, and after some deep thinking with the other members of the board, there is willingness to stand for another term. We evaluated energies in store, considered projects in progress and plans for the future. The conclusion was that, providing we get the necessary support from members, it made sense to offer APAC another term in the team spirit of the last few years. We are no team of rivals but a group of practicing teachers with the willingness to put our different skills and abilities in the service of a common cause. So, with some reshaping of responsibilities and the inclusion of some new members, we present a group that, I believe, can give APAC renewed energies and ambitions. You probably know most of us. Have a look at our names: Miquel Berga, Neus Figueras, Silvia Borrell, Miquel Bretón, Neus Serra, Tom Maguire, Esther Martín, Mireia Raymé, James McCullough, Carme Tinoco, Vicky Pizarro, Núria Salvador, Adam Lang, Laura Nogueras i Àngels Oliva. Fifteen people to cater for the different areas of activity: annual convention, communication and publications, webpage, Brit Lit project, treasury, external relations, all-year activities... Now, the interesting thing is that we are never enough and that this team is open to any member who might wish to join in. Do, please, consider that possibility and, in any case, do your best not to miss the next members' meeting and participate actively in the election of the board and in shaping APAC's policies for the coming years.

And, yes, I know, summer days are over but good teachers know life is but a glorious cycle. OK, you may find that a bit too optimistic, in which case you need Dylan Thomas: " Oh, isn't life a terrible thing, thank God? ".

With best wishes,

Miquel Berga

"D'acord amb el que es va anunciar a l'assemblea general de socis 2009 i segons els nostres estatuts, es declara obert un període de presentació de candidatures a la junta directiva d'APAC, l'Associació de Professors i professores d'Anglès de Catalunya. Les candidatures han d'incloure els càrrecs següents: president/a, vice-president/a, tesorera, secretari/a i un vocal com a mínim i un programa de mandat. Es poden enviar per correu electrònic o correu postal a les oficines de l'APAC fins al 20 de setembre de 2009. Passat aquest termini, es convocarà una assemblea general extraordinària on es procedirà a l'elecció." Minutes of Meetings

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Paratge Ca n'Aulet, s/n.
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Tel. 972 42 01 07
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Revista núm. 67
October 2009

D.L. B-41180 - 1998
ISSN 1137 - 1528

Editorial

Dear members,

Vacations are a time for relaxation but also for reflection. As we think about the work that awaits us when we return, the unhurried pace of summer allows us to mull over how our teaching has gone up till now and what we can do to improve it.

The APAC editorial team has also been relaxing but reflecting these days, pondering how to give you a new issue of the journal that can help you the most in meeting your goals. The result is the magazine we are now delivering to you, which brings together articles by speakers in the 2009 ELT convention and many contributions from fellow English teachers who want to share their experiences and projects with all of you.

As many of you know, Michael Swan came to the ELT convention and was greeted with standing-room-only crowds. Ana Aguilar has provided us with the transcript of his presentation, "Usage Guides: What Are They For? Who Are They For?" In this session, he put the role of grammar in language teaching into perspective and focused attention on the danger of perfectionism, which can silence students who are afraid of making mistakes. It would be good to reflect on what he says and see if we can modify some of our classroom activities.

One concern of teachers in general is students' lack of reading skills and their low level of interest in picking up a book and trying to get into it. In her article, "An Approach to Extensive Reading," Joana Angryll presents strategies for motivating students to read. We all know that motivation is the key to everything and that reading is one of the best ways to gain knowledge and to see the wide variety of possibilities this world offers us. So we hope you will be motivated to read this article, and then to look into the gamut of possibilities in Michael Harris' "Listening Strategies for the Digital Age," and Chris Roland's "Ideas for Teaching Low-Level Teens." Harris gives us ideas on where to find material for working on listening comprehension skills, and Roland's excellent article presents us with strategies for making our classes work.

We're also maintaining a focus on adapting our teaching to fit in with the computer age, as the use of new technologies can motivate students to put themselves into situations in which they have to use at least one of the four skills in English, if not all of them. In this vein, we give you articles by Susan Dregger, on "Creating a New Blend Using Wikis," and by Cristina Arnau, on the applications of "Web2 in the English Class."





We hope that the content of this issue meets your needs and desires, that it gives you good food for thought, and that it fosters creative reflection without truncating healthful relaxation, so that you all start the fall with full tanks of ideas, energy, and motivation and spread these good vibrations (along with course content) to your students, like a pandemic.

Best wishes for the new school year!

The APAC editorial board

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SKILLS FOR LIFE: ELT and Education

The importance of English in the future of young and not so young Europeans has been central in all discussions on basic skills and competencies and has been one of the main issues in the debate to raise Europe's productivity, competitiveness and employment.

School curricula have finally incorporated the work done by the OCDE and other international organisations in the identification of key competencies, and teaching programmes are now more cross-curricular than ever. It seems only logical that the teaching of English should try to transcend its language boundaries to the wider field of education with a capital E.

Teachers of English have always been highly specialised, with agendas full of hot topics. A look at the mottos of APAC Conventions is sufficient to see what has been worrying us: ICT, Communication, Tasks, Projects, Motivation, CLIL, Classroom diversity, always closely linked to how language is learnt and how it can best be taught. As teachers of English we have been able to use resources that open windows of imagination for our students, and have an influence on students that teachers of other subjects can seldom have. If English is central in the debate for the future of our young people, our challenge as teachers of English at present is whether we will be able to use that influence and opportunity to go beyond our language niche(s) and consciously contribute to the Education of our students.

APAC's convention this coming February 2010 includes the confirmed participation of speakers who have not visited us for some time now, such as Henry Widdowson, John Mc.Rae or Scott Thornbury, and we are about to confirm the participation of regular visitors, local and international. We look forward to listening to interesting sessions and to the usual opportunity for rich exchanges at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra . See you in February!!!



Update on APAC's Websites



On opening www.apac.es the first novelty you notice is the layout. The double line of icons has been transformed into a slideshow displaying the featured websites. As each slide has a four-second timer you can either wait for the next featured site to appear or use the small forward and back buttons beneath the show to navigate through the slides. Clicking on each image will bring up its link.



A new vertical line to the right of the slideshow now holds the highlights. The first is a link to the mobile-friendly version of the APAC website.



The top-right icon links to a completely new section on BritLit. The leading page gives a general introduction to the aims of BritLit. It also offers links to the APAC activities connected with this new initiative plus some British Council teacher kits on the subject and a useful contact for more information.



Notice the link on the portal to the upcoming APAC meeting in September. This is when the present board is due for renewal. Read the website link for more details.



<http://apacelt.ning.com>, the social network, is gradually increasing in numbers with a total of 173 members as we go to press. There have been a couple of new blog postings since June: one on a Peace Campaign run by the Olivar Gran secondary school and the other the monthly newsletter by Nuria de Salvador. Two new videos are also on show, both on the use of technology in classrooms. The Digital Textbooks forum, too, invites comment from those using computers coupled with textbooks as learning tools. In addition you can see a new flash presentation of the featured websites which brings a point of animation to the site. If you have a 3G phone you'll also find a link to a mobile-friendly version of the network.

As you know this social site is bottom-up in that it relies on your cooperation for content. This is called crowdsourcing, a neologism meaning that it is we, the crowd, who provide the resources. This is quite a departure from the usual top-down approach we are used to in traditional education and it is a taste of what may well be the future trend in all learning activities. Your resources are welcome!

trying to establish an agency deal to bring students from Italy.

During the half hour I was sitting in the waiting room, I had three thoughts:

- I bet one can earn more money teaching English than showing tourists round Oxford
- I bet your feet do not hurt
- I bet they have air-conditioning in this school.

As we were going out, I turned to the principal of the school and asked:

You haven't got a job, have you?

He said: "*Come back on Monday*" as it happened one of his teachers had run out to Scotland with one of his students. All perfectly true.

So I found myself the following week in a classroom teaching English to foreigners. I did not know anything about it but my feet did not hurt and they paid me more money. They had not got air-conditioning, but two out of three is not bad.

I taught for the rest of the summer not knowing what I was doing but quite enjoying it. Students were nice. Sometime I could teach them things they did not know by reading ahead of them in the textbook. But they kept asking questions I did not know the answers. Because there was not a book I could turn to, I had to make up the answers.

I go back now in time to the typical Teachers' nightmare: An enormous classroom with a lot of disturbance, you try to write something on the blackboard and you discover you are not wearing any clothes. I suffered from other nightmares: I had prepared a text with some useful language I was trying to teach them.

Hi, John. Thanks a lot for your e-mail. Good to hear everything is going well. Pity you couldn't get to Ann's party. Anyway, she is going to be in London next week and Sally and me will probably go and see her. Why don't you come along?

You said you were going away in April, haven't you forgotten something? It's Lucy's birthday on the 15th and you have got to be there for that.

By the way, have you got her new address?

That is all for now, I guess. Drop me a line sometimes.

Cheers

Mike

The little devils keep asking questions.

Hi:

St: Can you say "hi" to anybody?

St : Who can I say "hi" to?

Tch: Well, it is kind of informal

St: What does informal mean?

Tch: It is sort of casual

THANKS A LOT

St: can I say "thank you a lot?"

Tch: no

St: Why not

Tch: It is a matter of emphasis

St: Can I say Thank you much?

Tch: No

St: Why not...

I taught in a school where there were students from all over the world. They spoke different languages. You know your problems with the second language depend on the nature of your first language. Chinese learners of English do not have the same problems as German learners of English.

I wanted to find answers to my students' questions. I spent a lot of time in libraries reading bad explanations. The idea to write a user's guide came to me. I thought at the time that when I finished it I would open a bottle of champagne and be able to retire and live on the copyrights.

I was determined to make my explanations clear and useful for the users so I thought quite hard about what makes a good explanation.

There are several elements about a good explanation:

- **It ought to be true.** It sounds obvious but there are lots of explanations in reference books which are not true. Here is one:

Past tense refers to a "definite" time in the past

That is wrong. There is nothing definite in:

Once upon a time a prince went

If you substitute "definite" for "finished" the explanation works.

The trouble is the jargon used by grammarians where



Usage Guides:

What Are They For? Who Are They For?

by Michael Swan

Tapescript by Ana Aguilar

Michael Swan's talk discussed and illustrated the nature and function of usage guides. These works occupy the middle ground between grammar and dictionaries, providing in-depth information on specific lexical, grammatical and stylistic problem points. They may be designed for native speakers of a language or for foreign learners; the two types deal mainly with quite different matters. Usage guides are a valuable reference tool for language teachers, who cannot possibly hold in their heads the information needed to correct every mistake and answer every question. They are an equally important resource for students, enabling them to solve language problems for themselves outside of class time, and thus encouraging learner autonomy. With regular updating, usage guides can track changes in the language, and so help teachers to make informed classroom decisions on questions of correctness. Their value can be greatly increased by the use of linked diagnostic tests. These can tell teachers and students which key points of grammar and usage are already known, and which ones need to be learnt or revised.

There was a time when my interests were not in English Usage. After graduating I was at Oxford doing some research on a neglected XVIII century English poet and completing my income by showing tourists round the town.

One hot afternoon, I was accompanying Dr. Gambarrone round the University. He was very interested in late gothic architecture and he wanted me to show him some examples of English late gothic architecture and talk about them. He spoke very little English and I spoke very little Italian having taught myself les-

sons 1 to 6 of *Teach yourself Italian* for a holiday earlier in the year.

But lessons 1 to 6 of *Teach yourself Italian* are *strangely* silent on late gothic architecture. All I could say were sentences like

The postman has brought a rose for the cook.

It was a sticky afternoon, my feet hurt...

At the end of the tour, I had been asked to take this chap to a language school in Oxford. I think he was

Michael Swan is a writer specializing in English language teaching and reference materials. His publications include *Grammar* (in the "Oxford Introductions to Language Study" series) and *Practical English Usage* (OUP). He is also co-author, with Catherine Walter, of the "Cambridge English Course" series, and of "How English Works" and "The Good Grammar Book" (OUP). His most recent publication is "Grammar Scan" (OUP2008), written in collaboration with David Baker; this is a comprehensive set of diagnostic tests to accompany *Practical English Usage* 3rd. Edition. Michael Swan's interest include pedagogic grammar, mother-tongue influence in second language acquisition, and the relationship between applied linguistic theory and classroom language-teaching practice. He has had extensive experience with adult learners, and has worked with teachers in many countries.

get away without it. That is the difference between pedagogic and academic grammar.

- **Relevance** is also an issue because there is only so much of English that is necessary to speakers of other languages. Many course books are full of examples that are not very useful for the learner such as:

The oxen are stepping on my feet.

Some substitution tables are pathetic as well as some exercises like: Answer these questions:

How many arms have you got?

Is your husband a man?

Has your grandmother got any grandchildren?

If your grandmother has not got any grandchildren you have problems which go beyond the purely linguistic domain.

The current practice for language examples is taking them from “corpora”, those enormous collections of hundreds of millions of words in the computer where all the sentences have been taken from genuine conversations or writings. One can get access to these corpora through special programs and so get examples of real language.

I looked in the corpora for an example of the verb “fly” in the 3rd. person plural:

I.D.T airplanes fly all over the world to distribute flowers for what is now a very profitable industry.

According to my opinion, this sentence is rather complicated just to illustrate a grammar point. Sometimes realistic made up material is more useful than authentic one.

When I finished my Users' Guide I could not swim in champagne and retire as it had been my intention initially because usage changes and the book needed updating. English changes in small ways as many other languages and a good reference book needs to be brought up to date.

British English is now changing faster due to American influence and even without it. The gap between written and spoken language is closing. It can never be completely close because different media need different ways. But in the XIX century the gap between the way people spoke in the street and the way novelists wrote was enormous. Oral media is bringing in utterances like:

Thank for great party

See you about the biography at 9

I have to include things like that in the latest edition of my PRACTICAL ENGLISH USAGE.

How useful are usage guides?

They are useful reactively and not proactively: a mistake has been made and the answer is unknown. In a good usage guide the answer might be found.

It is hard to use those books for the things one does not know because one does not know what one does not know until one makes a mistake.

It is not very useful to take a grammar book or usage guide and read through it from beginning to end. One needs to find out what one does not know about the language. The obvious way is the right kind of test.

Recently, a colleague, David Baker, and I decided to put together a book of diagnostic tests that will tell teachers and students what they do/don't know about **that particular** usage guide. The book is called Grammar Scan. The tests are in three levels and separate for points of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation...

Students, after the test, go to the answer book that guides them to the right section of the guide in case they have made a mistake.

Test question → Answer in answer book → Explanation in the User's guide.

This system gives the student a chance to learn out of class without wasting precious class time in little questions that might not interest everybody.

The teacher needs to answer all the questions even if he considers them unimportant because they are important for the learner. The teacher needs to tell them what they want to know but does not want to waste class time explaining a tiny point that might only interest one student. If the student can consult the material out of class that helps a lot.

The teacher needs to answer all the questions even if he considers them unimportant because they are important for the learner.

The expert level questions are difficult to answer even by native speakers. They do not make mistakes but are not aware of the reason why. They need the guide for it. Questions like:

Why do we keep changing from active to passive in our discourse?

The reason is because if we want to maintain the

words have a different meaning as the usual among human beings and that make the explanations confusing.

• **Demarcation** is also needed if we want to have a good explanation. The easiest way to explain this concept is to refer to animals. Take for example a **PIKER**. It is very rare animal and if I want to tell you about it is not enough to say that it has four legs and whiskers, as there are many other animals with these characteristics. I need to demarcate and tell you what distinguishes the Piker from all other animals. Many rules do not demarcate. For example

The present perfect continuous tense refers to an action that has begun in the past and it is still continuing or just finished

This explanation would confuse the present continuous with the present. We need to add the concept of duration to understand really this tense.

Actually, the present perfect continuous is not the tense to be used to refer to actions that started in the past and are still continuing. We use the present both continuous and simple:

I'm talking

You are listening

The earth goes round the sun

All these actions started in the past and are still continuing. We use the present tense. It would be strange to say:

I have been talking

You have been listening

The earth has been going round the sun

To make that a good rule we need to demarcate. The difference between the present and the present perfect is one of duration:

I have been talking for 15 minutes.

• **Clarity** is another requisite for a good explanation. Often we blame ourselves for not understanding some grammar explanations but it possible that the blame should be put on the author for not using the right terminology.

• **Simplicity:** It is nice if rules are simple. In my first years of teaching I tried to say the whole truth when explaining and it sometimes became indigestible. I remember a class where half the student had a problem with the articles. They came

from what it used to be Yugoslavia. The languages of the ex Yugoslavia do not have any articles. Actually, most of the languages of the world do not have any articles and the speakers get on perfectly well without them. Those students used to say:

Can you lend me pound of butter to end of week?

At the end of the class, students went away saying:

Thanks for lesson

Being young and conscientious as we all have once been, I thought I better did something about this.

So I invited the Yugoslavs for coffee at my flat on a Tuesday evening to explain them about the articles.

For the evening I had prepared a dream of a lesson. I had got piles of visual aids: countable things, saucers and bottles with uncountable stuff, newspapers with the names of theaters, maps with geographical names...

We went through the magical world of the article doing little exercises on each point. At the end of this experience, they were visibly moved by what we had done. They were really very pleased and as they were going away, one of them turned to me almost with tears in her eyes and said:

Thanks for lesson

Get who got lesson. I got lesson. I had done too much and the students could not take all in.

• **Conceptual economy** is another requisite. Most language learners are studying something they are not particularly interested in. Language learners are not natural grammarians. The kind I taught were those who had failed foreign language at the school and were sent to England to learn it all over again. They did not have in their heads too much of a conceptual apparatus for handling grammar. So I came to the conclusion that the fewer concepts, the better. Take for example a rule about *much* / *many*.

☐ **Rule A:** We use *much* with uncountable nouns and *many* with plural countable.

☐ **Rule B:** We use *much* with singular nouns and *many* with plural nouns.

I believe rule B is more economic than rule A because it only uses two concepts: singular and plural, while rule A uses: singular, plural, countable and uncountable. Rule B works as well as A in these circumstances. You might have to talk about countable and uncountable in other circumstances but here you can

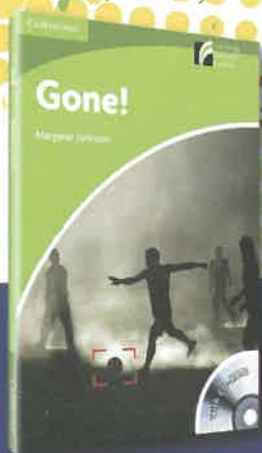
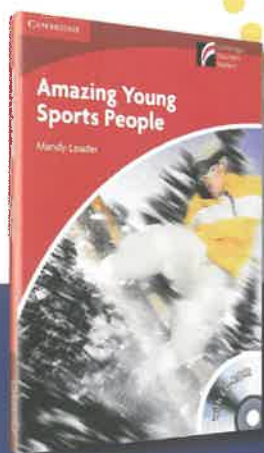
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same subject we have to change the form because some verbs are active and other passive.

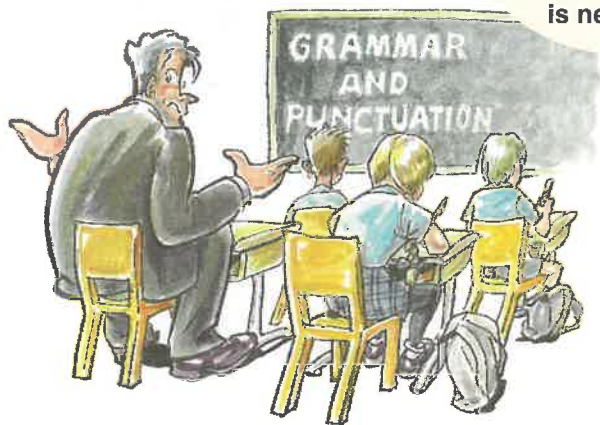
You might ask why I am fascinated about grammar. Well it is easier than people...

A big Usage guide is a heavy book. There is a lot in it that people do not normally go into. The tests help learners to go into those hidden parts: standards, dialects, history of the language.

Dialects are equally linguistically respectable as Standard English. The only reason why it is considered more distinguished is because it was the dialect of the people who came on top. If the Vikings had won in 872 the capital of England might have ended up in York and a different kind of English might have taken prominence instead of the southern modality where King Alfred, the victorious, had his capital. Language is dialect that has an army behind it.

But the love for grammar can become excessive for some teachers. A health warning is necessary. Grammar and tests are easy to handle and help the teacher to keep control. We need a sense of proportion.

But the love for grammar can become excessive for some teachers. A health warning is necessary.



This sense of proportion came from a letter I received from a student:

*Dear Mr. Swan,
I have got a question. Perhaps you can help me. My question is: in all the books I read nobody explained why the verbs in 3rd. person present singular have to add "s" or "es". The books also do not tell me how it was originated and who originated it. My view about this question is that it is troublesome. What is your view if the "s" or "es" is omitted? Is it acceptable? Do you consider it informal? My experience is that it is much more convenient to omit it.*

The chap is right. The third person "s" does not matter. It is leftover from the English of thousand years

ago when we put endings to the verbs. I answered him

I agree with you. The "s" does not matter, but you might have examiners, future employers, teachers who think it does matter, so be careful.

3rd. person "s" is the sort of thing teachers fuss about until they are taken to an early grave. Students leave it out. Teachers correct again and again, do extra exercises, test, explanations..

Perfectionism in language teaching seems to me potentially disastrous. There are teachers who think each mistake is like a weed that needs to be pulled out. Students will go on making mistakes even if you had 40 hours a week to teach them.

Perfectionism might discourage students and make them stop trying. Some teachers achieve a state in their classrooms: "error free silence". Students say nothing and in that way they make no mistakes.

We must be realistic. Only one person in 1000 can learn a foreign language so they can pass for a native. You have to admire those people but I really hate them. I spent 7 years in France. My French is good but I make mistakes. We are not designed to learn foreign languages

after early childhood. We should not be upset about mistakes as teachers. And if we cannot get it right, our students neither.

Children do not need perfect parents to grow up happy. They need good enough parents.

There are teachers who think each mistake is like a weed that needs to be pulled out. Some teachers achieve a state in their classrooms: "error free silence". Students say nothing and in that way they make no mistakes.

Our students need good enough teachers who speak good enough English, who would teach them good enough English and that is all that is required. It helps with that if we can get most of the grammar teaching out of the class and dedicate class time to practicing the language.



Text difficulty is extremely difficult to predict. It depends on too many things, not only on the text itself. The preparations strategies can contribute greatly to the level of difficulty of the task.

Usually we worry too much about syntax when defining text difficulty. But actually syntax is not a big issue. Topic is one of the key issues. If the kids had been doing an experiment in their science class and one gives them a similar text, they might know better what to expect. Ideally we might deal in the English lesson with topics they have been dealing with in their other classes.

• Sound quality

• **Topic.** Whether it interests the learners or has any relevance for them. It is useful to extend content based material: CLIL. Not all learners will find the topic interesting. But one cannot make everybody happy all the time.

• Diction Clarity

• Accent

• Situation

• Language

What can we do with a text ?

These are the obvious

• Listen to the text and answer the questions (example from the Lemon Battery)

1. What is lemon battery?
2. What equipment do you need?
3. How does a lemon battery work?
4. What two metals are used?
5. What is the plus terminal of the battery?
6. What is an LED?
7. How do you connect the lemons?
8. Why do you need more than one lemon?

• Disadvantages of such a task:

- One cannot listen and answer at the same time
- There are too many questions
- Too much writing expected from the learners. The learner might have understood but might not be able to write all that is required from him.
- There is no previous preparation.
- It is a task written by the teacher.

The speaker recommends a very useful book on listening tasks: **How to Teach Listening**, by J.J. Wilson (Longman).

Instead of giving the questions, teacher should work on developing the student's strategies

so they ask the questions themselves and not the teacher. Get them doing things. In that way the life of the teacher is made easier. Often we feel guilty if we do not have a comprehension task to go with each text. We can develop strategies in our students so they can eventually handle listening and watching.

• Listening Strategies

➤ Metacognitive: on the process of listening. Understanding how listening/watching works and managing the process of learning. Ex.

➤ Self-assessment, awareness of learning.

◇ How well you did the task?

◇ How easy was the task?

◇ How easy was the text?

◇ Think about: sound quality / topic / speed / clarity of people / accents / context / language

An interesting book on the subject is **Listening in Language Learning**, by Michael Rost (Longman).

Focus on the process of listening and watching, on how effective they are. Develop their awareness and the learning does certainly improve. Make them aware of the reasons that make a text difficult. One of the frustrations of listening and watching is how sometimes one has no difficulty in understanding the whole while others one feels really depressed for not having understood a thing, and there is no feeling of progress. But here is a reason for both. We always have our good moments and bad moments. We are not always equally alert and sharp.

• But normally, it is not us. It is the text or the task that is the problem. Awareness of text and task can be really important.

• ***Preparation strategies**: where you get learners to predict, to brain storm what they are going to hear. You activate their schemata. It is not only doing the task but also making them aware of what they are doing. In that way, they can use their strategies to the process of learning. It helps to develop learners' autonomy.

• **Information** is the key issue but especially how one handles it.

◇ **Context Inference**: What is happening in the text? Why? What will happen next? What happened before?

◇ **Prediction**: there are different ways of doing it with mysteries, film scenes asking questions about them. The obvious kind of prediction can be carried out with texts like "Phone Messages" Everybody knows how phone messages work and what people are likely to say.

It is important for the students to know why they are doing the prediction before they listen to a text.

Listening Strategies for the Digital Age

by Michael Harris

Summary of his talk done by Ana Aguilar



Digital radio and television, audio and video pod casts, MTV, satelliteTV, CD ROMs, mobile phone downloads, MP3 uploads have all opened up a brave new world of listening for the English language learner and teacher. Before, we were restricted to the course book tapes and, if lucky, a video that always got stuck – now the world is our oyster, Or is it? There must be two important caveats. Firstly, more than ever before, learners need to be equipped with an awareness of listening in a foreign language and strategies (both top-down and bottom-up) to handle all the wonderful new input that we can throw at them, Secondly, we should not forget the importance of “ live” listening and of the crucial role of comprehension in interactive communication.

In the digital age we have access to massive information in the Net. But getting information from the Internet is like getting a glass of water from the Niagara Falls.

Teachers need to ask themselves: What skills do learners need in this century? How do we get the learners to deal with the morass of information and organize it? That is the biggest challenge.

Some ideas for material:

- A starting point can be selecting Educational Videos. They have got teachers who speak slowly, clearly, unlike in other TV programs. This is a good starting point as they can be more accessible than other material such as documentaries.
- Students' produced material is also considered more acceptable by definition because it comes from other

non-native speakers, Spanish or from other places. The teacher might record them in the school intranet.

- Subtitled productions that are often accompanied by a transcript. For years, the teaching methodology did not allow to see the transcripts of the listening material. The skills were kept separate. Listening or reading but one could not do both at the same time.

Ideas have changed. You can do both at the same time and it is actually very beneficial for the learner: **WALSTRING = WATCHING/LISTENING/READING** tasks where all the skills are involved supporting one another.

Previous considerations

Before exploiting any text, the teacher has to consider

- **Text difficulty** is hard to decide. For



Michael Harris has taught in Spain, Bolivia and Colombia. From 1982 to 1992 he taught at the British Institute for Learners in Madrid, where he was responsible for setting up the Junior Department. From 1992 to 1996 he taught English at the University of Alcalá de Henares. He has done extensive teacher training in Spain and other countries in Europe, South America and the Middle East. Michael Harris is the co-author of : " World Class " (Longman 1994), " World Club" (Longman 2000), " Opportunities" (longman 2002), " New Opportunities" (Longman 2005), "Challenges" (Longman 2007). He has also published articles and methodology books on different topics.

Ana Aguilar is a secondary school teacher at IES Abat Oliba, Ripoll. She has been teaching English for 18 years now and has a wide experience in creating her own materials and worksheets. Great supporter of active, motivating and creative English classes. She has taken several methodology courses at Manchester University and Canterbury. She also collaborated in the European project Neuleslernen, a new approach to the teaching of languages.

One can start prediction by having a brain storm on the likely vocabulary they are going to encounter. Take, for example, the topic of "Food". What is a Spanish teenager going to say when talking about food?

- Paella
- Tortilla

"Listen and answer the questions" is not the best task in these situations. Better brain storming preparation first; watching and listening to recordings of other students. In the British Council Young Learners Institute the recordings of the students were put on the net so other classes could use them, particularly students of the same age. It is more interesting and motivating.

Notice about the language. The Catalans have a great advantage having the "6" schwa that does not exist in Castilian and it should not be there anyway.

This is an area where students can do work on their own.

• **Note Taking** is possibly the most important skill for the 21st century. There are different steps for it

- Chunking and organizing the information around a topic
- Selecting important information
- Writing notes

A lot of texts have very clear schemata: news items, people talking about a crime and a good point to start.

Self questioning is much better than giving students tasks. Before they watch something have them thinking about the questions themselves, what they know about the information that might be contained in a documentary, a talk...

For example take a topic like "fashion", ask the students what they know about it or what they want to know. You probably have to narrow the topic a little: "How to become a fashion designer" What studies do you need?. And then you brainstorm the questions. May be you will not get the answers in the text you listen to but "self questioning" is a strategy ones uses

when listening or watching. A good listener or watcher does it automatically.

• **Content inference** is really important. For example in a text with any kind of drama you can ask:

- Who is talking?
- What is their relationship?
- How do they feel?
- What do they think?
- What has just happened?
- What is going to happen?

These simple questions can be used for any dramatic situation: any sitcom, any soap opera, and any film. You can ask the questions even in a functional dialogue, or playing a video with no sound first to focus on context. One gets a lot of information from watching.

• **Language based strategies.** For years EFL methodology refused to have the written text while listening. Learners were supposed to listen "for gist", get the general idea. But there are other strategies that need to be developed. It is fundamental getting the students to focus on the mechanics of the interactive language.

- use of contractions,
- stressed, words,
- content words,
- weak forms .
- homophones,
- word boundaries.

• **Listening Homework.** There is lot you can do particularly with Multy-Rom. The students can listen to it, repeat, play it back. They are in control. They do a listening task and they get feedback and help.

• **Watching as homework.** You can have them listening to the news and identify the topics, the information.

• **Area of awareness:** Such as having the students writing diaries about their reactions while listening.

• **Live listening** goes on in the class also and that is very important: telling stories, giving talks, talking about the news, role-plays.



ELT-Convention 2010

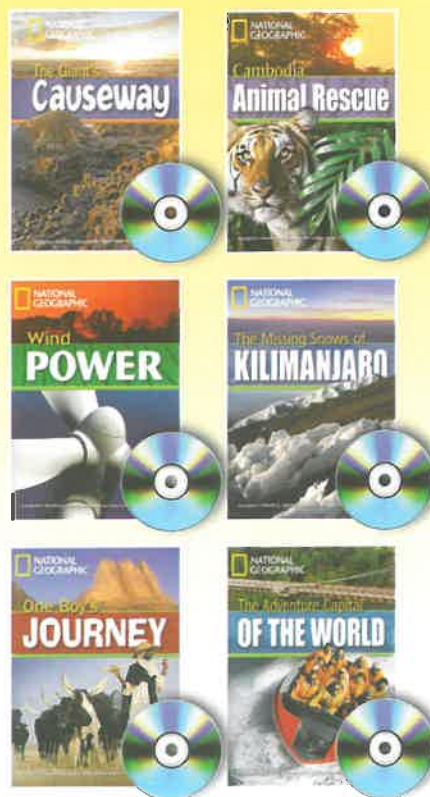


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❖ A wiki allows a group of people to collaboratively develop a website with no knowledge of HTML

❖ EFL students cannot improve their English sufficiently with one or two classes a week. A wiki can provide as many “extra” hours as students are willing to give.

❖ A wiki can serve as a virtual classroom which controls all the resources and gives added opportunities for communicating with the teacher or with others.

❖ Wikis introduce a social aspect and connect students with other students, setting up possibilities for collaboration and/or sharing of information. (Social constructivism)

❖ Wikis can be teacher-guided and scaffolded in order to help students gain autonomy and become more confident in using new technologies for learning English. They can also be used by more autonomous learners as a self-access resource centre.

❖ Wikis give the students editing and changing rights which help students take charge of their learning and reflect more on their needs.

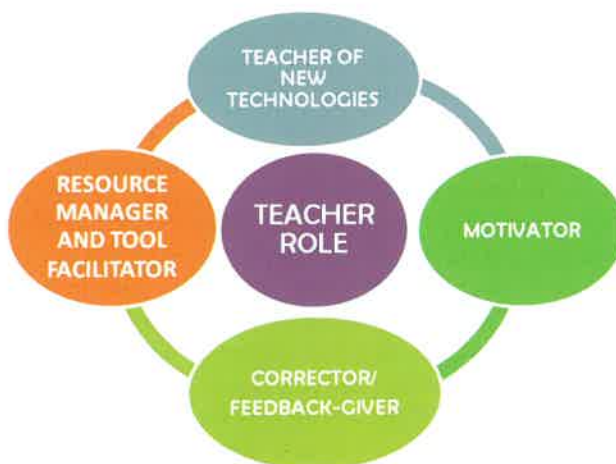
❖ Wikis are both time and place flexible.

❖ Wikis are a very dynamic and flexible learning environment.

ROLE OF THE TEACHER - SAGE ON THE STAGE OR GUIDE ON THE SIDE?


In language learning the teacher has usually always played the main role, however this type of role is slowly changing as we encourage and expect more autonomy from our students. In order to promote autonomy in an online environment, the teacher's role must change from purveyor of information to facilitator of learning and manager of learning resources (Little, 1995). In online environments where students are encouraged to work autonomously, the teacher continues to play a significant role in motivating students to take part in an active manner, however, this role can change and develop with time. The teacher's role will inevitably vary depending on the students' level and on the teacher's particular objectives. As with any new technology, the initial role will probably be ‘teacher of a new technology’ however, once students have learnt how it works, the role can change to that of a facilitator, motivator and resource manager. In order for students to use the wiki successfully, teachers must provide:

2. personal choices and opportunities for learning
3. prompt feedback
4. tools for becoming independent learners
5. tools for social networking



WHICH TOOLS CAN HELP THE TEACHER BECOME MORE OF A GUIDE ON THE SIDE?

There are so many tools available to encourage students to become more autonomous learners, taking more control of their activity or site choices. Many of these tools are free and can easily be embedded in a wiki. Below are three tools which can be used to encourage more student autonomy within the wiki.

❖ **RSS feeds:** RSS stands for ‘Really Simple Syndication’ or ‘Rich Site Summary’, depending on who is defining it. It is usually represented by the following icon or something similar: 

In simple terms, an RSS feed allows users to subscribe to their favourite sites. Because the content of many web pages changes on an unpredictable basis,



an RSS feed informs the reader when any new information has been added. Examples of such websites are news sites, community organization information pages, product information pages and weblogs. Teaching students to embed RSS feeds on a wiki can not only save the teacher time but more importantly it allows students to have a choice in the types of information they wish to receive. The information comes directly to them instead of them having to look for it on the web. Most wikis allow the embedding of RSS feeds which means students can subscribe to their favourite feeds and keep themselves and their peers up to date directly from the wiki.

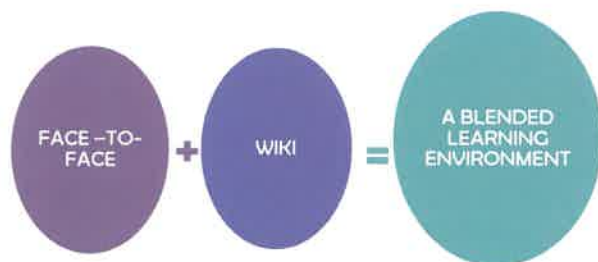
Creating a New 'BLEND' Using Wikis

by Susan Dregger

There has been a lot of talk about 'Blended Learning' recently. New social networking technologies mean that traditional face-to-face classes can now be enhanced with asynchronous virtual environments thus creating a variety of 'blends' for our language students to take part in. One of these new environments can be found using a wiki. Setting up a wiki as an added class component is a motivating way to get students practising more English outside of the classroom and can be especially useful with busy adults who not only have time restraints when it comes to learning a new language, but also have few opportunities for communicating in English in real situations. As language teachers, we must try to create flexible opportunities for our students to use the target language. Wikis could be just the answer.

WHAT IS BLENDED LEARNING ?

According to Sharma and Barrett, blended learning is "A language course which combines a face-to-face classroom component with an appropriate use of technology." In my case, I have found that wikis have become the technology which best suits the needs of older language students.



WHY INTRODUCE TECHNOLOGY INTO A LANGUAGE CLASS?

"Connecting students with their teacher, classmates, learners around the block or across the globe is a way to increase opportunities for communication, to broaden the variety of language usage, and to enhance the quality of involvement in using the target language."
(Warschauer, 1997)

Susan Dreger holds a degree in Education from the University of Regina (Saskatchewan, Canada). She has been teaching English in Barcelona since 1991 and has had experience with all ages. Along with teaching EFL, she has also taught ICT to all ages in the Primary Department at the private school where she had been working for 15 years. She has recently completed her Masters degree in 'Technology and Tesol' from the University of Manchester and has now entered the Public system in Spain as a secondary teacher at IES Pere Ribot, Villassar.



If, like me, you teach EFL rather than ESL, you know that opportunities for practising English can sometimes be very few and far between. Many of these students feel 'stuck' at an intermediate level as they struggle to find authentic opportunities to practise what they have learnt. Language teachers must find new ways of motivating these students by giving them opportunities to use their English for authentic and real purposes. New technologies can open the doors by bringing more English into the EFL classroom and bring in new dynamics and motivation when it comes to learning a new language. In particular, wikis are a fantastic way of getting students to collaborate and work together and are now being used in many language classrooms as a motivating tool for practising English.

WHY WIKIS?

- ❖ Wiki wiki means "quick" in Hawaiian and that's precisely what they are; quick and easy to set up.
- ❖ A wiki is a website where users can add, remove, and edit every page using a web browser. It's so easy for people to jump in and revise pages that wikis are becoming known as the tool of choice for either small or large, multiple-participant projects.

❖ Social bookmarking: Nowadays there are many software programs to help organize and manage one's links to web pages. These links can be found from whichever computer you find yourself on which is a great advantage if like me you are moving around from computer to computer or simply can't keep track of where you left your pen drive! Examples of these sites are del.icio.us, Digg or Google bookmarking, shown respectively below.



On an educational note, students or teachers often want to share sites of common interest with each other. Teaching them to share their favourite sites using social bookmarking tools will bring them endless resources to use and will put them in contact with others who have the same interests. A link to whichever bookmarking tool you decide to go with can be added directly to the wiki. Students will be more likely to add links if they have easy access to it from the wiki.

❖ Skype: Skype will enable students to either chat in synchronous conversations with the teacher or with the entire group. It can also be used to contact the teacher when in need. Students can contact the teachers or others in a spontaneous way or set up appointments. Although I have not found a way to embed Skype directly into the wiki site, links for downloading Skype can be put in the wiki and students' IDs can be organised on the wiki.

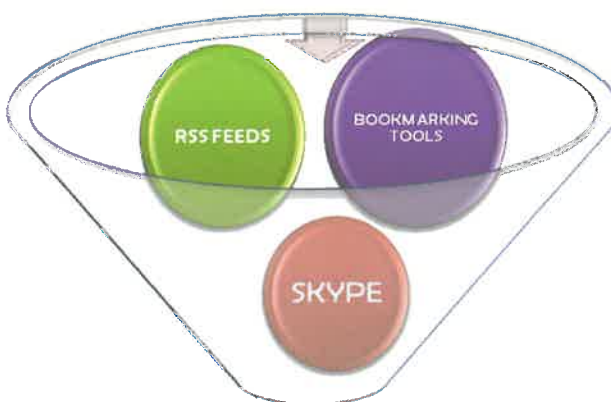
FEATURES TO LOOK OUT FOR WHEN CHOOSING A WIKI

- Collaborative Page Editing
- Document management & file sharing

- Complete history and audit trail
- Easily invite others to collaborate
- Notifications by RSS and email
- Access Controls
- Tags and Folders
- Automatic Backups
- Storage Space
- Customizable Templates
- Possibility for ad-free site

MY PERSONAL CHOICE OF WIKIS

1. www.wetpaint.com
2. www.pbwiki.com
3. www.wikispaces.com



A link to the presentation given in February called 'Collaborative learning through wikis and other collaborative tools' can be reached at:

<http://wikis4collaboration.wetpaint.com/>

The choices are endless but the abovementioned wikis are easy to set up and have many if not all of the important features mentioned. Creating a blended course using a wiki can be an effective and motivating way to bring more English into the language classroom. Why not try it, THE WIKI WAY!

...

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Wiki site: www.wikis4collaboration.wetpaint.com

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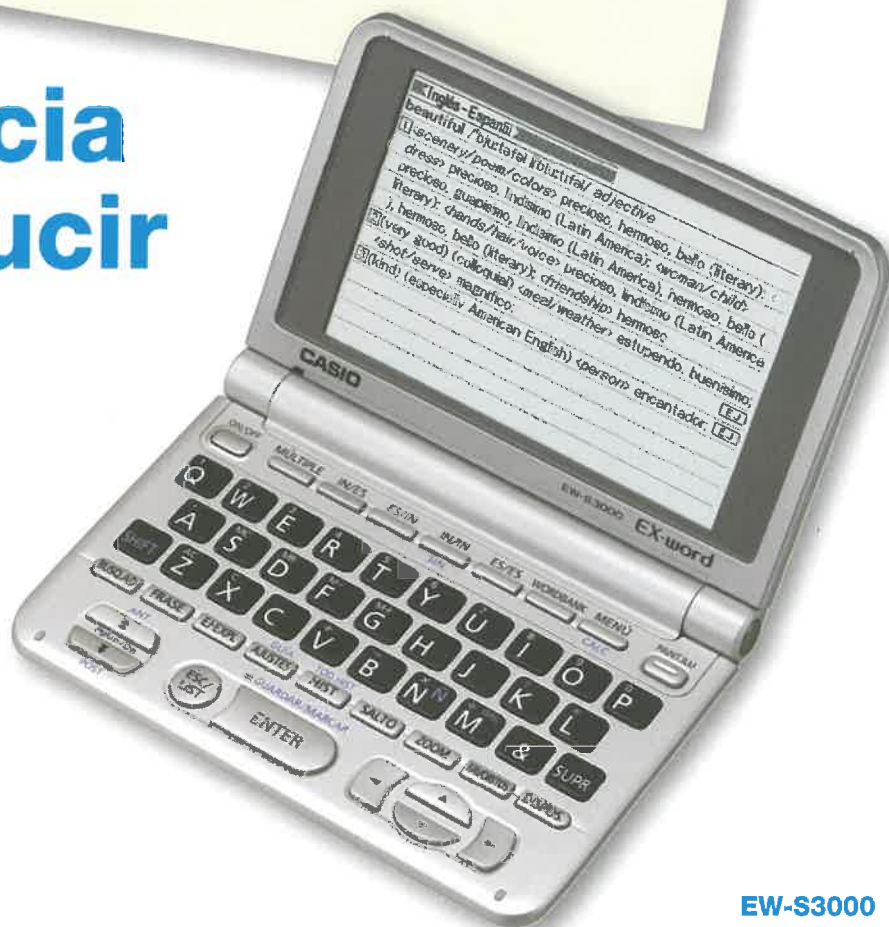
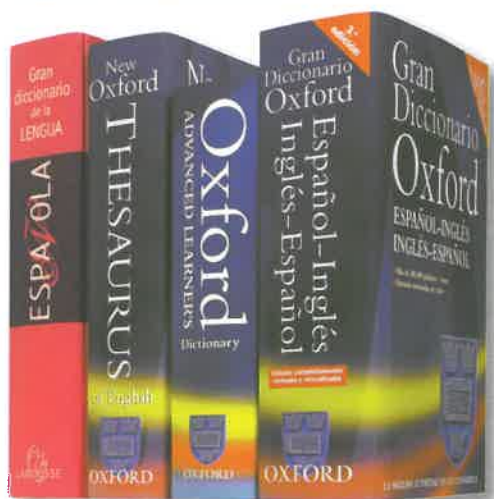
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diccionario electrónico: Que define todas las palabras de un idioma. Que propone sinónimos y frases hechas y muestra las palabras en un contexto práctico. Que encuentra ejemplos de frases completas. Que, a diferencia de la traductora, explica con claridad y precisión el significado de las palabras.

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Ongoing electronic word lists

Most teachers have their students write down vocabulary, in some form or other, and often in a designated vocabulary book. Such vocabulary books often end up covered with various combinations of Tipex, permanent marker pen, doodles and scrawls, and that's just the outside covers. When you actually look inside, what you discover is chaos – like the inside of a teenager's head. Words are often copied down wrongly or incompletely. If you ask the teenager to read it back to you, sometimes they can't even read their own writing and if you ask them to look at the same material two months later, they might not be sure that it is even theirs.



Higher level students have probably developed successful copying strategies – ways of recording, grouping and cataloguing words. That's why they're at a higher level. Lower level teens often don't have these strategies. In fact, some low level students even use copying as a kind of refuge or sanctuary. They take even longer than necessary to copy and so it looks as if they are doing something, or they give copying the top priority because it's a tangible task, rather than trying to follow what the teacher is saying (which is a much more frustrating and ephemeral task). If the teacher asks them something they will say: I can't answer teacher, I'm still copying. And so they are saved from having to engage in the actual concepts being covered. By getting rid of any unnecessary copying, in theory, we free students up to listen to the teacher.

In any case, as teachers, we can't work with this material. We need a standardised list that is the same for everyone, that is correct and that is readily accessible to the teacher. If we're going to teach words, we need to know what words we are teaching and we need to keep track of them.

So recently I have started taking on more responsibility than I normally would for my teens' vocabulary learning and I also try to ensure that a lot more learning takes place in the classroom itself. Every time a student asks me 'How do you say...?', or 'What does this word mean?' I write it down. At the end of the class I add it to an ongoing word document. Here are the words from the first lesson of last year:

Here you are.	I don't mind.	I don't care.
Next	Pass	Time
A moped	A games console	Motorbike
Street	A celebrity	To learn English
A bit	Boring	Place
Very far	English is boring.	I'm bored.
Friendly	City	Because
Superficial	Materialistic	Necessary
It is necessary.	Fourteen	Spain
Difficult	Understand	A good level
It is a normal place.	Stressful	A language
I am here.	I can hear you.	It is little.

I'm from a village but at the moment I'm living in Barcelona.
I'm in the first/second/third/fourth of ESO
(38)

I keep a running score of how many words/phrases we have on our list, putting it in brackets after each new batch of words, and use this to motivate the students. This year I said to the students "Let's try to get to 1000 words!" They liked that. 1000 of anything sounds good. We didn't make it. We got to 600 over the year but it didn't matter. If you can sell your students the idea of learning words in itself then you really have managed to push them towards real language acquisition. Our word lists form part of my lesson preparation, course assessment and discussion material for parents' evenings.

You may ask: Where is the context? The context is the original conversation or utterance that the student was engaged in when they asked about the word. Because each word came up in context, we can go back to that and it will help them remember. We can ask: Who said this word? What were they trying to say at the time?

Okay. So what can we do with this word list? My classes spend time in the first part of most lessons looking at the words from the previous lesson. It's a routine. The students are used to it now. The list can be brought up on



What do I do with them?

Ideas from “Teaching Low Level Teens/ESO Students”

by Chris
Roland

Some ESO/teenage students “fall through the net” and fail to learn any substantial amount of English despite having had several years exposure to English in classrooms and having passed through a number of years, courses or levels. Similarly, for one reason or another, students may begin studying “late” and find themselves behind in terms of syllabus requirements. Sometimes an entire class will have a “low level”. With such students or classes, classic CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) activities do not always work. The students can’t speak in pairs, because they can’t speak. The teacher might like to speak to the students in English more, but then the students wouldn’t understand anything, and this would quickly lead on to various other classroom management/discipline problems.

Over the last few years I have been lucky enough to teach homogenous classes of low-level teens – that is, classes where the general level was low. All the examples and recommendations made below have come out of those classes. It’s worth bearing in mind though that we are all working in slightly different contexts. My classroom isn’t yours and vice versa, so not everything that’s useful for me will necessarily be useful for you. Some readers may be teaching mixed ability classes where there’s a huge difference between the students at the ‘bottom’ and the students at the ‘top’. The extra challenge for these teachers is how to include or adapt strategies such as or similar to the ones described here, in order to reconcile the two extreme ends of their groups and make the classes ‘work’. These are then, a couple of points to bear in mind as you are reading.



In recent years, Chris has been teaching low-level teens on intensive and year long courses at the British Council Barcelona and British Council Damascus teaching centres. He has also worked as the regular English teacher to 4ESO students in a concertado/semi-private school. He writes children’s material for Cambridge University Press and presents numerous workshops throughout the year.

ELT Convention

fill in the past and past participle, in front of me, within 1 minute. I knew if they'd learnt the verbs because I could see the ink rolling from their pens. Again, I made the mini-tests all slightly different, and with one student working on either side (a student sat on my left and a student sat on my right) we were able to get through everyone in 1 or two lessons.

It's important to remember that children are task orientated. You ask them to do an exercise, so they'll do it and they'll tell you: I've finished! They think in terms of scores, points, 'notas', results and completion. So whatever my students do, they get a tick in a box on a checklist like this:

Student	Translate words	P.25 Ex. 1, 2, 3 done and corrected	Name pictures from P24 with me one-to-one	Second draft of environment writing	Finish survey
Mireia					
Juan					
Berta					

It helps them to chart their own progress throughout the class and gives them a sense of task completion.

I used this very rudimentary check list to monitor a speaking activity. The students were in pairs with a list of questions. I said to them: Each time I look at one of you, I shall make a note about what that person is doing: whether they are 'on task' (i.e. talking in English), asking a friend or the teacher a question about English, or 'not on task'. Structured micro-monitoring like this works, and as long as the students know the parameters by which they are being evaluated then they don't resent it as being too much like 'Big Brother' but instead appreciate the attention and effort on the part of the teacher.

Xavi on task Ask on ✓. on T
 Jordi vegetables - Table. Asking on T. ✓ Ask on T. on T.
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 David on T on T on T. from with paper. on T.
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 Eli on T on T. on T.
 Irene A
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 Ana A
 Lluís A
 Robert on Task. ✓ & singing on T.

Another form of micro-monitoring is a double marked dictation. I read it out as a normal dictation, then I ask the students to correct it themselves, making sure EVERY word is correct, and then, *after they have corrected it*, I correct the text myself, giving a tick for EVERY correct word. By using a process like this, the amount of student attention to what they write or correct increases by double. It's more of the same 'kind cognitivism'

PowerPoint, or handed out. The students can translate the words and they can do this individually or in pairs. They can also test each other without writing out any translation. Another thing I do is to take the most recent words and remove one or two letters from each to create one letter spell checks. My students like these. They go through them quickly and they can mark each others', increasing time spent on the words.

Alternatively, the students can be given words from the list and asked to underline or circle each word in a colour that for them somehow represents that word. They can then be asked to explain a few of their choices to the teacher or to choose 3 words and write a sentence for each explaining their choice of colour.

The next thing the teacher can do is to take the vocabulary list and reformulate items into questions. The students can then survey each other in a more communicative task. For example:

What does 'Here you are' mean?

Do you mind if people smoke near you?

Do you have a games console at home?

Do you prefer mopeds or motorbikes?

Here you can see that every underlined word corresponds to a word in our ongoing vocabulary list. The questions are put on a worksheet with spaces for students to collect answers from their classmates. Everything's handed in and everything's checked by the teacher, so the students know there's always a consequence/outcome to everything they do – even speaking activities.

One-to-one learning, monitoring and checklists

I have come to the conclusion that teenagers, like the rest of us, want two things. They want a little bit of entertainment and they want attention. Of these two, they want attention most and, one way or another, they are going to get it. Now there's good attention and there's bad attention. For teenagers, if they can't get the good attention, they'll go for the bad one. Have you ever noticed how many more times you say the name of your worst behaved student than you do the name of your better behaved ones? So one thing I try to do is to give them all some sort of personalised attention before they start to feel unloved. One way to do this is to walk round and look at their work individually. They love it! But it's tiring and stressful for the teacher because suddenly everyone starts calling the teacher.

The way I'd like to suggest here is regularly having students come up and sit with the teacher for one to two minutes each while the rest of the class is doing another exercise. That way, when a student asks themselves at the end of the day: What did I do in that English class? They have as the answer: I went and sat with the teacher and read to him/or her. And the teacher listened to me.

These mini one-to-one's can be used for many different things. I've done them with classes of 14 in the British Council and I've done them with classes of 30 4thESO students in a semi-private/concertado school. It's important to get the students to come to you. The moving represents a transition. I WENT and sat with the teacher. It makes it more personal, more tangible. It also gives them the chance to burn off just a tiny bit of energy.



The first method I use is a blank exercise from the book. If the class as a whole are working on exercise two, I'll go back and ask students one by one to come up and tell me the answers to exercise one, from memory. It might be something as simple as covering up a vocabulary box and getting them to name a series of pictures. The students may have done the exercises in their book but do they know it? If they know it, they'll be able to tell me without needing to see their books. All over the world, right now, there are millions of students doing English exercises but can they remember the answers when given the same blank exercise afterwards? If they can't, my students get 5 minutes to go back to their seats, have another look and try again. This works wonders. It also gets the other students in the class to pay more attention to the exercise. It's a sort of 'kind cognitivism' if you like, because, basically, there's a difference between working out the answer to an exercise and actually learning the language content of that exercise.

If we are doing a reading in class, I'll pick a paragraph and say: Read that to me. Or: Read it then translate it. I also use these one-to-one sessions to give students a quick spoken individual vocabulary test. With my 4thESO I used to do individual written tests. Each student got a sheet of paper with 5 or 10 irregular verbs and had to

Child exploitation is not a complicated issue []. It is quite simple [].

Child slavery is wrong []. However, the reasons for child slavery are often quite complicated []. Sometimes a child will agree to work in very bad conditions []. This does not, however, mean that it is good for the child or that it is ethical [].

Wh?! ? ☺ 100%

and at the end of each line, they mark their response, inserting one of the symbols into the square brackets. This way, the teacher can monitor their understanding. If the students have to respond to the text, they are automatically more engaged with it. I have called this 'Sentence Response Thumbprints – as in 'huellas' – because it gives students the chance to personalise the text.

With a text on Sumo wrestlers, I asked the students to thumbprint their interpretations of the whole paragraph, in pictorial form, so I could monitor their global comprehension of each part of the text. They asked me: 'Do we just draw what's in the paragraph?' and I said yes. This is one of the results:

Some people want to get fat . Japanese sumo wrestlers want to get fat . Their typical meal is a mixture of rice, meat and vegetables. It's healthy, but it has a lot of calories.



It is difficult to throw a heavy man to the floor. This is why sumo wrestlers eat a lot of food. They go to bed straight after eating. Some sumo wrestlers weigh 250 Kilograms. Some of them even weigh 280 Kilograms!



But most people want to keep their weight down. In Britain, and the USA, doctors are worried that a lot of teenagers are overweight. They often eat unhealthy food and spend a lot of time sitting in front of the computer or television.



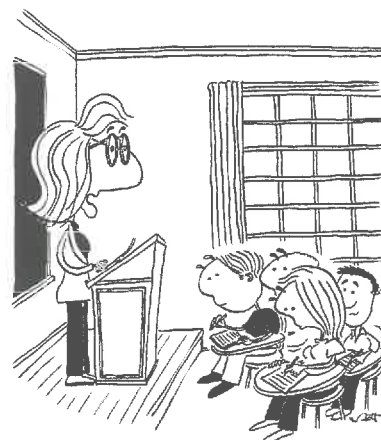
I called these 'Paragraph Response Thumbprints'. Now there's always one student that tells you 'I can't draw' but for the purposes of this exercise, as long as the teacher can understand the representations, it doesn't matter.

A sentence from each student

I like to pick a table or group of students and ask each of them: Tell me a sentence in English – anything. It's interesting what they come up with and can give you the chance for follow up questions. Here's an example:

Working with text – making writing and reading less painful

Many of you will know of 'process writing', which involves students drafting and then redrafting work. This can be done with students of any level. In my own context, I've lovingly renamed it 'slow-process writing'. Any student, no matter what their level of writing, can build upon what they have already written. So if a student writes just one sentence, I take that work in and correct it and give it a mark. When they get the work back, they rewrite what they have written, incorporating my corrections and adding more text if necessary to make it longer. Some of their classmates might be writing 3 paragraphs whilst they are writing 3 words but it doesn't matter. Proportionally – that is, relative to what they already know - they might be improving their own writing more than their classmates who are writing much more. If the piece of work has to go backwards and forwards five or six or more times before it reaches the required length or standard then that's fine too – it means we have taken the student to where they need to be and that the end product – a joint work between teacher and student – is something to be proud of. *That's education.*



"When writing your essays, I encourage you to think for yourselves while you express what I'd most agree with."

With long and difficult readings, we can make things easier for our students. I might sit my class down and tell them I am going to read them something about the environment. In my less than perfect Spanish I tell them what is basically a translation of the next reading we are going to look at in the book. At this point the students don't know it's a translation from the next reading, so they pay more attention. I then go to the other end of the class where the English text is already written up on the board (or projected). Next we drill the text. The students already know what it means as they have the residual meaning from the translation before. There's nothing wrong with helping them in this way and it makes life easier for everyone.

Then I draw a large numbered grid on the board next to the text. I put the class in teams and give each team a symbol. One person from each team takes it in turn to read a line next of the text and translate it. They then choose a square in the grid and put their team's symbol in that square. The aim is to make three in a row – noughts and crosses/tic tac toe. All of this increases the amount of time that the students spend engaging with the text (even if they are not reading purely for the love of reading itself!).

To further increase students' familiarity with texts, each word can be gapped like this:

The e_viro_men_t is a c_mpl_c_ted is_ue to ta_k about but I b_lieve that it is also very _mp_rt_nt. Th_r_ are s_v_ral areas that we n_d to c_ns_d_r. The f_rst is gl_b_l w_rming. The w_rld is g_tt_ng ho__er. We can st_p this by using l_ss spr_y c_ns.

Students can then practise filling in the gaps from memory or they could try to read the text aloud to the teacher, restoring the incomplete words without writing anything, in one-to-one mini checks.

Another way of dealing with a text is to give your class an index. Here there are 4 symbols:

Wh?! =	What?! I understand NOTHING NOTHING NOTHING!
?	I'm not so sure about this sentence.
☺	I understand this sentence though there are some words that are new. Or// I understand all the words but I'm not so sure about the meaning.
100%	I understand this sentence completely.

Once the students understand these symbols, they receive the text:

ELT Convention

<p>Name:</p> <p>I think that I have done quite well this term. I think that if I maintain this level of work I will pass. I think that the teacher is satisfied with my work. <i>Honestamente, pienso que este semestre he estudiado bastante. Si puedo mantener el nivel de trabajo creo que aprobaré. Creo que el profesor/a esta satisfecho conmigo.</i></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____ 2</p>	<p>Name:</p> <p>I think that I have done the required work this term but from the teacher's point of view, perhaps I haven't done much to help the class function well either. <i>He hecho el trabajo requerido pero, desde el punto de vista del profesor/a no he ayudado mucho al buen funcionamiento de la clase.</i></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____ 3</p>
<p>Name:</p> <p>I realise that I didn't do very well in the first half of this term but more recently I have been trying harder. I understand that my report/grades must reflect the whole of the term and so probably won't be very good but I would like the teacher to remember my recent improvements which I will try to maintain. <i>M'adono que no he treballat massa al principi del trimestre però últimament he estat treballant més. Entenc que les meves notes han de reflectir tot el trimestre i per tant probablement no seràn gaire bones però m'agradaria recordar-li al professor/a la meua millora i que la procuraré mantenir.</i></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Name:</p> <p>I don't think that any of the other comments apply to me. I'm a special case and will explain why below: <i>Crec que cap dels altres comentaris s'ajusten a mi. Sóc un cas especial i explicaré el perquè:</i></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>

I put one copy of each comment on the board. The students came up, read the comments and then came and told me which comment best applied to them. I gave them the corresponding card from a stack I had prepared and they added any additional comments they wanted to. This helped me a lot when deciding what comments I was going to put on their final reports and what I was going to say to parents. It gave my reports another dimension – so I called this strategy '3D report writing'. An article dedicated solely to these should be appearing in English Teaching professional magazine this autumn but you can mail me for a copy of the cards themselves at any time – or develop your own, which will certainly be more suitable for your own class.

Stay strong but be crafty

Just because you work hard at preparing an activity, it doesn't mean that your teenage students will be any more appreciative. They might be - they might be secretly impressed or even impressed without really knowing it. On the other hand, they might take the new activity as an opportunity to mess around. Sometimes you may find yourself wondering 'Why do I bother?' But that is part of teaching teenagers. I think, as a teacher, you have to try new things in class as much for yourself as for your students, so that you, as a professional, take something away from each class for yourself as well. As teachers we give. We give patience, time, attention. We can afford to be a little bit selfish as well sometimes and try new techniques out because we are enthusiastic about them as teachers. We have to be careful though. Sometimes, if the students can see that the teacher is really enthusiastic about an activity, then this will disturb them, and they may react against this by becoming less enthusiastic or not co-operating. So I recommend not showing too much enthusiasm when introducing new activities – even if you think they are good yourself. I would also try to avoid saying to students: Did you like that activity? Even if they did like it, the most you will get is usually a shrug. Sit back and watch. You can normally see if they have liked or engaged with the activity.

Not everything you try in class will work, whether you invented the activity yourself, got it from an article like this or a book by one of the 'experts'. Some things will work and some things won't but if you spend more time thinking about what goes on in your classroom than anyone else, then I believe, that you, more than anyone else, will be able to determine the direction that classroom takes.

Contact

Chris can be contacted at: chris.roland@gmail.com. Extra material connected to the ideas discussed here is available by joining the following group: <http://es.dir.groups.yahoo.com/group/TEFLafterparty/> and going to the 'Files' section.

Chris: Jordi, give me a sentence in English. Tell me something. Anything.

Jordi: I like motorbikes.

Chris: You told me that last week. What else do you like?

Jordi: What 'else'?

Chris: Another thing.

Jordi: I like cars.

Chris: So you like motors in general.

Jordi: Motos?

Chris: Motors – engines.

Jordi: Yeah.

In this conversation, Jordi has begun to learn the meaning of 'What else?' which will help him when he comes to the waiter in the restaurant dialogues in the next unit asking 'Anything else?'. He's starting to appreciate the fact that 'motos' and 'motors' are not the same and he's hearing the word 'engine' for the first time in this particular context. *He's also interacting with his teacher and his teacher is learning about him.*

Teacher and student attitude

I think we should make students aware of what, from a teacher's perspective, makes a good student. It is, amazingly, not always obvious to them. Recently, I've been trying to highlight the fact to my teenage students, that when they don't listen to me, they are in fact making a conscious decision not to listen to me. I represent this on the board. It goes:

1. Students are talking
2. Teacher signals that he/she wants to speak
3. Students look at teacher for a brief second
4. THIS is where the decision is made. It goes one of two ways. The first is to listen and see what the teacher has to say. The second is to turn back to one's colleague and ignore the teacher.

Sometimes I draw little stick people to accompany the idea. My argument is that it's a decision and it's a very real one. The students are free to make either decision here, but if they make the decision to ignore me and go on talking, then I, as teacher, am free to bring in the institutional and disciplinary procedures that I have at my disposal as back up. I tell my students all this. I tell them it on the first day, with a smile on my face and a certain degree of love in my heart. When my students are not letting me talk, I don't tell them to shut up. I don't get angry. I just remind them: You are making decisions. They quickly remember that the moment is coming when I shall hold them accountable for those decisions and mark down warnings or 'avisos'. I implement the disciplinary procedure **BEFORE** I get angry as a person. In that way I can go on liking the students as people, even if I have to progress them along the disciplinary route quite a long way.

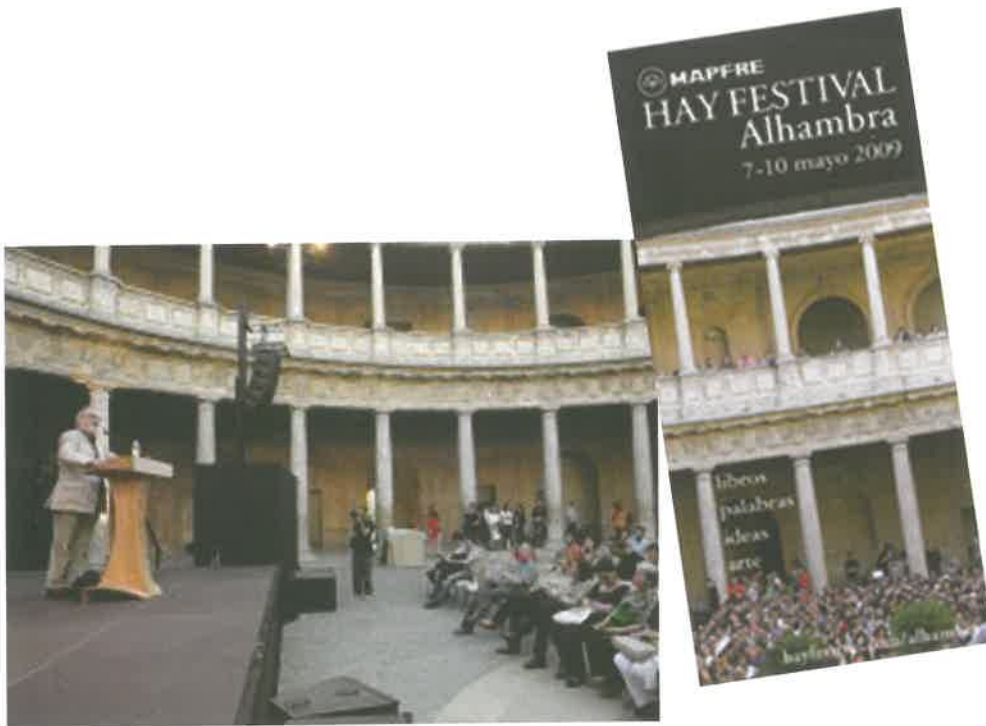
Another example of making good/bad behaviour obvious to students is this: If you walk in late to class, that's one bad thing. If you then distract or interrupt everyone else, and the teacher, that's another bad thing. One bad thing plus one bad thing equals two bad things.

However, if you arrive late, that's one bad thing. If you then sit down quickly, get your book out and start the activity with energy, that's one good thing. One bad thing plus one good thing equals 0. 0 equals no problem.

A small shift in attitude I found helpful recently was in how I verbalised my own internal thoughts before a class. My previous mental voice went: *I have a class at 2:30 till 4:00. What can I do with them?* As in: *How can I get through it or fill up the time?* Now, what I ask myself is: *What can I teach them. What specific language items can I try to teach my students in this next class?* And the moment I do that, the moment I say that to myself, the whole prospect of the class becomes brighter, and I find that I am already in the planning process.

Recently, I was writing reports, and I thought that it might be useful, when writing those reports, to know what my students really thought of how they'd done – how they'd tried. So I prepared 7 different comments for the students to choose from. Here are two examples:





Granada - The Hay Festival

by Ann Fernandez Vidarrueta

For any APAC member who thrives on three solid days of talks during the '*jornades*', the Hay Festival in Granada is an absolute orgy for the senses and the intellect. A whole variety of activities ranging from concerts, art exhibitions, cultural visits, interviews, conferences and films are held in the most magical surroundings of a city which has been deeply influenced by different cultures and religions. Imagine walking up the *Cerro de la Sabika* where

the Qa'lat Al-hamra (red castle) stands, through shady groves and with the sound of flowing water seeping into your thoughts, to sit in Carlos V's Palace or in the hall of the *Carmen de los Martires* – sometime home for San Juan de la Cruz, also prison and now an exotic mansion filled with chandeliers and palms which might have been the Brazilian setting for a 1940's film of romance, intrigue, and suspense.



EVA YERBABUENA - Opening Session



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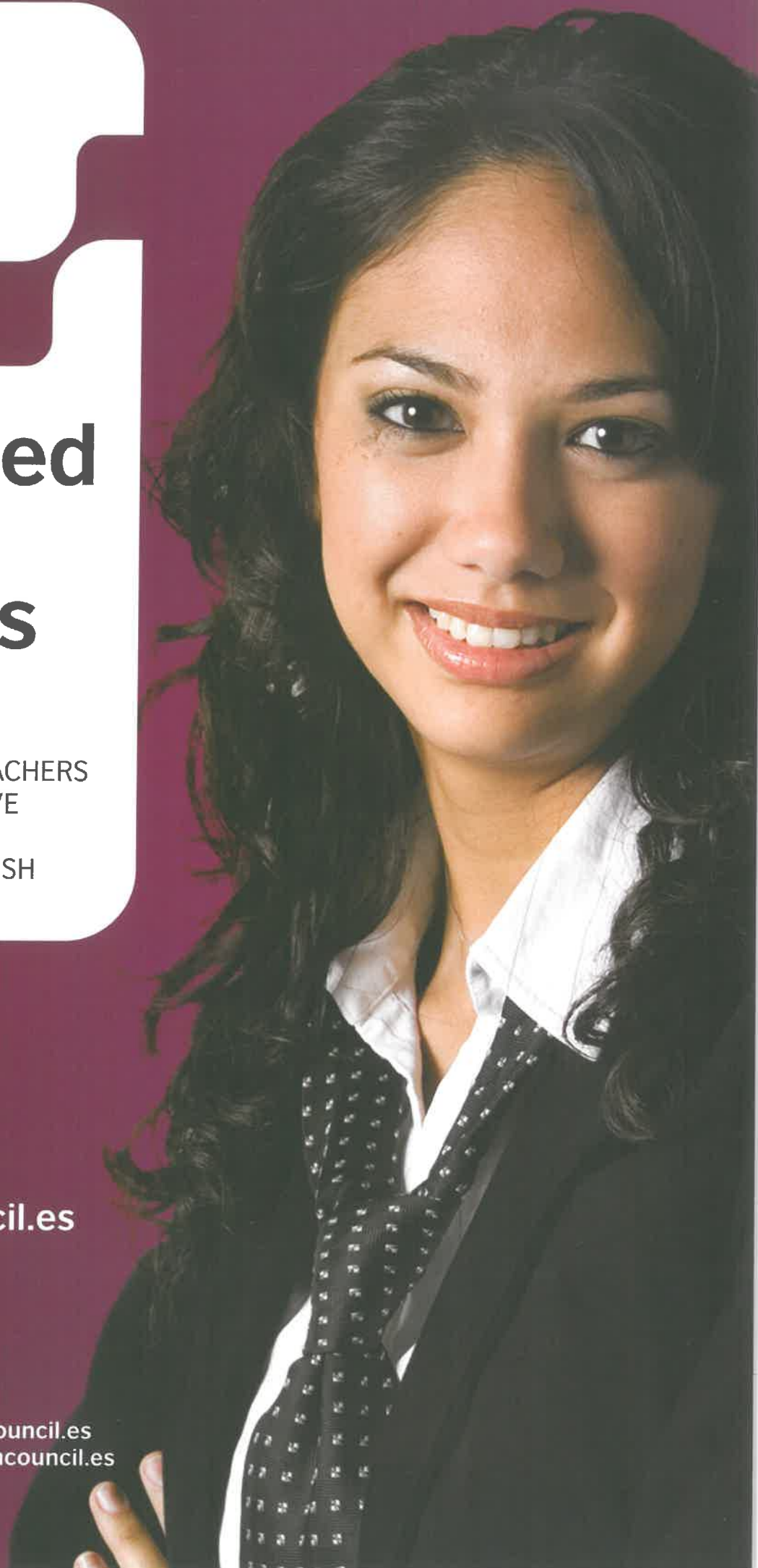
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Contributions

himi, Afghan author living in France who won the Goncourt prize in 2008 for his novel *The Stone of Patience*. He appeared very romantically dressed, hat and all, and although it took him a little while to warm to his audience, we suddenly found ourselves immersed, firstly in his novel about a paralysed husband who can do no other than listen to all the complaints of his wife and secondly in his analysis of violence in Afghan life. According to Atiq Rahimi, one reason for this tension is that the population never has time to grieve over or heal their social wounds between one war and the next, creating a vicious circle of hatred and revenge. He believes that aggression also flourishes in family circles, since young boys are brought up and disciplined in a totally female environment until puberty when they are thrown into an all masculine world; a world where the roles are suddenly reversed and they become the lords and masters of their female relatives.



VIKRAM SETH

Another bewitching speaker was Elif Shafak, a young and beautiful Turkish novelist, author of *The Bastard of Istanbul*, who refused to be put into any sort of category. She agreed that she was Turkish and a novelist, but not necessarily a 'Turkish novelist' or feminist, or anti-Turk, or Muslim or even controversial. She writes in Turkish, English and French on a wide variety of topics and believes that writing in different languages frees you from many cultural ties, making you more creative because you are continually experimenting with language. She believes passionately in promoting inter-cultural understanding and thinks that all marriages should be between people of different countries in order to encourage tolerance!

Perhaps the most interesting speaker of all was Kiran Desai, winner of the 2006 Man Booker Prize for *The Inheritance of Loss*, a novel set near Darjeeling on the Indian frontier with Bangladesh, Nepal and Butan during the Ghorka (her spelling) uprising at the end of the 70's - for which reason she is no longer welcome or safe in that area of

India and is unable to visit family there. The book draws on her own experiences as a fifteen-year-old living in that region and explores the problems of intercultural relationships and emigration, especially in the characters of her grandfather and the cook's son. According to Ms Desai, all Indians want to emigrate, and one day, without really knowing why, they find themselves in a queue waiting to obtain the necessary documents. During her teens, her diplomat mother decided that they should emigrate themselves and suddenly, having come from a highly respected, wealthy Indian family, she found herself in France as a displaced person, an immigrant herself. On moving to the United States she was dismayed to discover that she was again in this unsettling no man's land. She realized that she was part of the 'shadow class', people who suddenly become totally insignificant once they have been removed from their own environment and have to establish a reputation for themselves, gaining people's respect afresh; people who do not fit in and who have lost their identity. Her next cultural shock was when she returned to India and discovered that she was no longer an Indian either; that she was neither accepted as an Indian by her compatriots nor really wanted to consider herself Indian any longer, feeling repulsion for the wealthy Indian society which was totally unconcerned about the poverty literally on their doorsteps. She concludes that any opinion you have of yourself is relative, and is coloured by the environment in which you happen to be.

Martin Amis amused us with his caustic sardonic humour. He told us about his latest novel, a horror story as he put it, about growing old. He complains that nowhere in literature did anyone warn him of the terrors he would have to face when he reached his sixties. A staunch feminist and an opponent of multi-culturalism, he came up to everyone's expectations in outspoken opinions and unexpected jokes. The hour swept by and ended abruptly when Mr. Amis could no longer overcome his desire for a cigarette.



MARTIN AMIS

A few years ago, Peter Florence created a small festival in a village called Hay-on-Wye in Southern Wales with the idea of bringing writers together to talk, not only about their works, but their lives, their inspirations and their knowledge, in the hopes of enriching or even changing the lives of their listeners. When Peter Florence thought about inviting Gabriel García Márquez to one of the festivals, Carlos Fuentes told him that García Márquez would never agree to go to such a cold place as Wales, so he immediately decided to set up a yearly festival in Cartagena de Indias too. It is now celebrated in several other cities such as Belfast, Nairobi, Segovia and of course Granada. The geographical and strategic setting of Granada, with its glittering backdrop of abrupt, snowy mountains, narrow white streets and clear blue skies could not be more different from the rolling green countryside of Hay-on-Wye, where talks and conferences are held in marquees, and given the weather, enthusiastic boot-clad participants, who have slept in tents or cheap lodgings, frequently squelch from marquee to marquee in order to listen to speakers and performers from all over the world. However, the spirit of the festival is the same: dialogue and the exchange of knowledge and experiences, comparable perhaps to encounters on pilgrimages such as *El Camino de Santiago* during Mediaeval times.

The guest speakers were not only Spanish or English. There were novelists from India, Afghanistan, Turkey and Algeria for example, poets from countries such as the Le-



JOSÉ SARAMAGO

banon, Colombia and Syria and two Nobel prize-winners, José Saramago and Orhan Pamuk were also invited. Talks were given in Spanish, French, English and Arabic.

However, the talks were not restricted to novels and poetry. Journalists talked about topics ranging from the political effects of the fall of the Berlin wall - and other walls which have still not fallen - to the future of China or even the influence of blogs on journalism. Historians, architects and travel writers exchanged views on the future of architecture or the relationship between Andalusia and the Orient. Fernando Savater, the only philosopher invited, met with great enthusiasm from his audience through his

ironical analysis of our fear of progress and the recent appearance of justifications for torture, religious fanaticism and the questioning of democracy. There was even a workshop for English teachers!

So, as with the '*jornades*', one of the problems is choosing which activities to go to. I regrettably missed many sessions such as the reading of Saramago's novel *La balsa de piedra*, or a jam session-cum-workshop with a Senegalese percussionist (I didn't have a drum to take along!)



ORHAM PAMUK with PETER FLORENCE

It's hard to imagine what the festival would be like without Peter Florence's direction. His relaxed presence throughout the four days puts writers faced with large audiences at their ease and involves his listeners in what seems to be an intimate conversation. That seemed to be intrinsic to the festival because other conversations guided by Marian Hens and Juan Gabriel Vásquez were also very sensitive. Florence's interview with Vikram Seth, Indian author of *A Suitable Boy*, was masterly in that he only said enough to bring out the charm and wit of this writer, who came onto the stage with a glass in one hand and a bottle of wine in the other and with every intention of entertaining us, not only with anecdotes from his life, but also with the reading of seven unpublished poems which he had written expressly for the festival. The belief that poets cannot read their own poems was refuted by Vikram Seth's rendering of his seven poems related to seven elements: earth, air, fire and water, the four belonging to our European culture, together with space, an Indian element and wood and metal, which are Chinese ones. Apparently, the festival's interpreters were also very accomplished; the reading and translation of '*Fire*' was just as fiery as Vikram Seth's own. One member of the public who was deeply affected by the poems was Enrique Morente, who is already hoping to set them to music.

Novelists are not always good story-tellers either, but many of the speakers in Granada led us into Aladdin's cave all unawares. So it was with Atiq Ra-

A lot of writers talked about literary creation. Julián Ríos, in whose latest novel, *Puente de Alma*, he plays with the themes of myths, human relationships and death, described the creative process as being like a grain of sand which starts to irritate the mind, growing slowly and with great suffering into a pearl. He insists that any work of art needs head, heart and hand and, using Picasso as an example, believes that no artist or writer should experiment before he has mastered his craft. He also suggests that books are written like a tornado or a spiral where ideas swirl round, mixing and confounding themselves. He likens the writer to a voyeur, and the writer of myths to a hungry animal that picks up crumbs from other meals as it cleans the plate, mixing and converting one story into another, just as Princess Diana, hunter and hunted like the ancient goddess, has become a myth. 'Los elegidos de los jóvenes mueren dioses' he quips in his typical love for playing with language. Kiran Desai believes that she uncovers stories that are already there, perhaps at a bend in the river, Vikram Seth may be inspired by an overheard conversation or the reflection of something in a pool, and Orhan Pamuk, who incidentally needs a bodyguard, believes that the art of the novel is based on the mental effort of putting yourself in someone else's shoes, by representing people who are not represented or even by finding immense enjoyment in discovering your second self.

In contrast to Julián Ríos, who is constantly playing with words, and Elif Shafak and Atiq Rahimi who explore new ways of saying things, Orhan Pamuk does not want linguists to tell him why he is successful or how he writes in case he becomes too aware of the language he is using.

Only Martin Amis talked about how he overcame lack of inspiration while writing. In the past, he would sit down and work hard until it came right, whereas more recently he has turned to his old favourite writers and just reread them until inspiration returned. This led to him mentioning his love for the classics and particularly Nabokov, and the fact that he doesn't have time to waste on modern writers. Vikram Seth greatly admires Pushkin's Eugene Onegin, T.S. Eliot and early Chinese poets, Julián Ríos mentioned Flaubert and Celine and Kiran Desai said that as a young girl she greatly enjoyed that very 'Indian' writer, Jane Austen.

And as most APAC members will agree, one of the greatest enjoyments of these talks is meeting other participants who share your interest and enthusiasm; with whom animated discussions break out as you choose the next session or stroll down the shady Cuesta Gomérez, abandoning the palatine city amongst old trees and new, enriching experiences.

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After reading McNamara's general introduction to language testing and part of the works of Alderson, Hughes, and Bachman, one becomes familiar with terms such as validity, and true score, and item discrimination (for a glossary of language testing terms, see:

www.testing.ugent.be/glossary.html). By the time you've read enough to understand the complexity and importance of the subject, you're likely to feel glad (and relieved) that the type of assessment most of us are usually responsible for does not involve rigorous piloting or formal calculations of reliability coefficients. Still, however unrelated these concepts may seem to the practicalities of the classroom, the more you read about testing the more you realise that research on testing is but a continuous strive for fairness. And this is very much connected to our daily work as teachers.

Discovering some of the intricacies of testing might also help teachers make explicit in their own mind ideas that had previously been just intuitive impressions. For example, it is but through reading about testing that your notion of test fairness will move from *holistic* to *analytic*, and by this I mean that you will be able to break down the requirements for a test to be considered fair into a series of manageable straightforward questions: Does the test adequately reflect the course objectives? Does the test emphasize important, long-run achievements? Is the test an appropriate level of difficulty? Is there excessive overlap in the structures or skills tested? Are rubrics unambiguous and user-friendly? Are students familiar with test format and testing techniques? Is the test effective in distinguishing between high and low achieving students? And above all, does the test serve its purpose? That is, can we make appropriate inferences about the learners' command of the language on the basis of the test results? (Can we assign students a grade that reflects their overall language level with a purely written exam?)

As practising teachers, we all have some pre, or miss, conceptions about testing. Reading about testing will definitely help teachers confirm some of their previous ideas on the topic, and hopefully feel proud because they are already getting a lot of things right. Some of the facts you might read about may include: the importance of having tests revised by colleagues, the relevance of layout, the pointlessness of creating tests that are unnecessarily troublesome to mark, the significance of administration conditions, or the fact that

it is usually better to have one too many samples of students' behaviour than one too few.

Another aspect you may find particularly relevant is learning about different test types and assessment techniques. You might find out that you are making less use of diagnostic tests than you and your students might benefit from. Or you might start considering alternative assessment methods that you probably knew existed but had never seriously thought of using. In the era of computer adaptive tests, paper and pencil tests are no longer the only assessment option. Portfolios, self-evaluation, class observation, and alternative qualitative assessment methods might seem to some teachers, especially those who are not fond of holistic integrative assessment, to be a way of being lenient towards students. However, qualitative data about students' performance can give teachers information that is at least as valuable as the one provided by quantitative testing.

One last aspect of language testing that is worth being reminded of refers to the amount of class time that teachers devote to test preparation. Every year, thousands of students decide that they are ready to take one of the Cambridge exams (like FCE or CAE exams) or, in a more local context, the Intermediate or Advanced Level Certificate Examinations which take place in February and June in many Official Language Schools (EOIs)

across the country. These examinations are taken very seriously by institutions, teachers, examiners and examinees. They are usually prepared by a board of experts, exams are piloted before they are used and come with a detailed test manual, examiners are trained and know exactly how the test is to be administered and scored, and there is a post-test questionnaire so that all examiners involved can report on their impressions. Teachers responsible for students taking these standardized tests are aware that statistics will be generated comparing the results of their groups to the results obtained by other students. Obviously, nobody likes getting results that are below average. This means that there is substantial risk of spending



Achievement even

Testing: a Blessing or a Curse?

by Carme Roig Papiol
EOI de Mollet del Vallès

Summer is time for busy teachers to rest, relax, recharge and have some fun. It is also time for a great read -or two. Thrillers and classics make typical beach reading. However, many teachers also like to devote some of their free time to catch up with the latest teacher development books. I had been wanting to do some general reading on language testing for some time. So, at last, this summer I decided to spend some of my afternoons in the company of Alderson and McNamara.

Why read about testing? First of all, because it is difficult to imagine language teaching without any kind of assessment. End-of-course tests are almost a ritual amongst teachers and students alike. Tests have been there for ever, and tests are not going to go away. This being the case, why is it that testing is by no means considered a priority of language teacher training courses? As an undergraduate student, I did not get any specific training on testing or assessment. And I am very much afraid that this continues to be the case in most modern language faculties across the country.

For many a teacher, testing is just a peripheral part of the teaching and learning process, a relatively straightforward part of their job, rather tedious at times, and one which does not deserve too much effort or attention. However, there is a lot more to testing than just teacher-made end-of-course exams. Language testing is a discipline on its own right. It has its international conferences, its own journals (*Language Assessment Quarterly* and *Language Testing*), and even an international professional organisation (ALTE).



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One year on and still teaching!

A personal account of the realities of working as a new EFL teacher in Barcelona

by Lianne Ross



Introduction

As the summer break approaches, I am reminded that I have now completed my first full academic year as an EFL teacher in Barcelona. My story begins in January 2008 and is one which shows the highs and lows in this somewhat precarious profession. My TEFL career has been one of many firsts, although not as a teacher, as I came to Barcelona with many years teaching experience behind me. I will retell my journey into the field of TEFL reflectively, and pose questions, of which I have many.

The training course

I remember reading on a wet autumn day in England, that finding work as an EFL teacher in Spain was easy, especially if you were a good native speaker, and that you could find work by knocking on the doors of the numerous academies. The article did advise that you should have a TEFL certificate, but it was not always necessary. Little did I know at the time of reading the article that I would be one of those teachers 'knocking on the doors'.

A few months later however, I made the decision to move from comfortable English suburbia to Barce-

lona. The culture shock was massive, and at times still is! With the aid of the internet I located three training schools in Barcelona and eventually chose the school with the earliest start date, January 2008. At the time, and rather naively, I did not realise that there was a difference between the TESOL course that I chose and the CELTA course. Although with hindsight, always a wonderful thing, I would have opted for a CELTA course. The course cost me €1300, and although I enjoyed it, and it introduced me to local people learning English, which was a really good experience, as I had never taught non-native English speakers before, the course bore little relationship to the real world of EFL teaching.

Although the course 'did what it said on the label' - ie it provided me with a teaching certificate, I viewed the course as a money making scheme for the owner. In terms of professionalism, the materials were poor photocopies, the hours that we worked were much reduced and the classroom teaching experience was dependent upon local students turning up for free classes. Having said that, the tutors were excellent giving the student cohort, myself and four Americans, some excellent 'off the record' advice about the local job market and the realities of teaching in the city. In the end, the value of the course was due to the tutors, who had pride in their work, not to any external

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lots of valuable class time on providing test practice, rather than teaching, and this might have the undesirable consequence of getting our students distracted from the real task of learning.

In a sense, English teachers working in the Catalan context, or Spanish for that matter, are pretty lucky. Far from being considered just a necessary step for admission to college, foreign language study -especially English- is often perceived by students (and parents) as a practical subject having intrinsic value. It is difficult to put in a nutshell the two or three main aspects of language testing that might be the most relevant for teachers looking for practical ideas to put into practice with their students. Maybe one of them is acknowledging the important role of testing within the teaching-learning process as a whole. Unless teachers have a clear understanding of the types, purposes and basic characteristics of tests, they will not be able to accurately interpret tests results.

Before embarking into more in-depth readings, teachers with no background on language testing might want to take a look at the online tutorial developed by de Center for Applied Linguistics (<http://www.cal.org/flad/tutorial/>). It includes brief but very clear definitions of the key concepts in language testing.

Making our testing skills better will make us better teachers. As humans, we are not infallible. We are bound to make mistakes and we will continue producing tests that are not one hundred per-

cent valid and reliable. We can, however, try to remember that a good test is not one where nothing necessary has been left out but rather one where nothing unnecessary has been left in. Summer is gone. Autumn is here. Another year is about to begin.



Suggestions for further reading

Alderson, C., Clapham, C. and Wall, D. (1995). *Language test construction and evaluation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Alderson, C. and North, B. (eds) (1991). *Language Testing in the 1990s*. London: Modern English Publications and the British Council

Bachman, L.F. (1990). *Fundamental Considerations in Language Testing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hughes, A. (1989). *Testing for Language Teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McNamara, T. F. (2000). *Language Testing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Weir, C. (1993). *Understanding and Developing Language Tests*. London: Prentice Hall.

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wheat from the chaff? This is an area where I believe the training schools could support students more. As a new TEFL teacher I needed to earn a living. However, if I could start my TEFL career again, I would be more discerning in my choice of employer. I now teach classes through a well established and highly regarded language school and have 2 private clients of my own, as well as a growing pool of work that I am able to offer to other teachers and take a commission on. I would strongly recommend that any new teacher distribute their hours over 2-3 employers, as if you lose your main employer, at the 'wrong' time of year, as I did, you may find yourself severely financially disadvantaged.

The first month

My first month working as an EFL teacher in Barcelona was tough. Coping with living in a new city, finding my way around by public transport, finding accommodation, learning a new language and work was a lot to deal with. On the work side I followed the strategy which had always worked for me in England – I paced myself. I got to know my numerous students, I found out about their learning style preferences so that I could deliver effective classes, and most importantly, I used as much material from the training course as possible. Initially, it is easy to get bogged down in detailed planning for each class – 'at 9.00 we will do this, at 9.05 we will do this, at 9.15 we will.....', but I trusted to past experience, wrote a brief 3 part overview for each class and went with the flow. The early days were difficult, but fun. I was teaching students of all abilities, from absolute beginner to Advanced Certificate preparation. Being able to think on my feet was a prerequisite, and I made the decision in the early weeks to reward myself at the end of every successful week with a cake (I do love the chocolate and crema cakes here!). Fortunately, as I do so much walking I haven't added any extra kilos.

Learning the lingo

For me, the most difficult part of the training course were the grammar classes. As a native English speaker I was not taught grammar in school, and I still cannot fathom out why so much emphasis is placed on learning grammar as a separate entity. Yes, grammar gives structure, meaning and emphasis to our spoken and written language, but grammar is just language, it is not a separate bolt on entity.

As far as possible I teach what I have come to term 'natural English'. I do give grammatical explanations if they are requested and will help the students, but I have found that most students do not want grammar classes, they want to learn to speak and write the way native English speakers use the language. They want

to sound natural, and be confident that they are saying things in a way which allows them to integrate, whether in business or leisure situations using the language in a manner which does not identify them immediately as L2 or L3 language users.

My young daughter attends a local school, where everything is taught in Catalan. At first, as an English only speaker, full immersion in a new language for 5 days a week was tough. But after only a few months she now speaks fluent Catalan, and without any grammatical explanations.

So why is there the continued emphasis on grammar when teaching English to students? Does it make us feel superior or more intellectual than our students? Or does it hide the fact that so many who teach English are not fully comfortable with the language?

As I was writing this piece I read with interest the comments made by Carme Porcel (APAC No.66, p.43) and her reflections on the difference between the spoken language abilities of her students and the Swedish student visitors. What struck me most in this honest account were the words, 'we were doing some grammar stuff. I don't remember exactly what it was'. EXACTLY – this is why as language teachers we fail our students when we teach grammar, rather than taking a more 'natural' approach to language. If we don't remember the class why should they, and therefore how can they learn effectively? By making classes fun and engaging, our students, whether they be young learners or adults will remember the language much more readily. In all of my classes I aim to bring an element of fun because I know it works.

Generalist or Specialist

When I started teaching in Barcelona I accepted whatever work was offered, General English, Business English and teaching children. After all, it was all teaching and that is what I love doing. As I developed my EFL teaching style I quickly realised that I wanted to use my past skills and experiences to add an extra dimension to my work, and because of this I focused on Business English.

Having worked as an Education Business Consultant in England, where I was required to speak at large conferences, turn around ill-functioning teams and departments, deal with complex Human Resources issues, write detailed reports and manage large budgets, I knew that I had a lot to offer above the basic textbook 'this is the language you need to give a presentation'. At times the language is a useful starting point, but it is only that. What is the point of learning the language if you then can't deliver the presentation effectively or write the report in an effective style? As we all know, what we say is only part of the equation.

regulations on student standards. I found that lack of external validation disconcerting. After all, how could a fellow student who showed no aptitude for teaching, and was a very unclear speaker, pass the course on the basis that she understood the grammar! If as EFL teachers we want to be seen as professionals, and I am sure that the majority of us do, then I feel that a radical overhaul of the qualification system is necessary.

Looking for work.

I was very fortunate in that I had chosen a good time to study and was therefore qualified and ready to start teaching at the end of January. I now know that January and September



are when the new classes (generally) start. To have paid for a teaching certificate in May, for example, and then to have to wait until the end of the summer to find work must be very demoralising, especially if you need to earn a living as soon as possible after arriving in the city. For me this is an area of dual responsibility, yes, the prospective teacher needs to do their research, but also the training schools need to be honest on their websites about the availability of work.

I started looking for work at the beginning of the third week of my four week course. Job hunting was easy. Twice daily visits to 'loquo' provided me with an endless stream of employers looking for teachers. By the end of the fourth week of my course I already had more than sufficient work to survive. This was apparently a first for the school, who had advised us that we should expect our earnings to be around €800 - €1000 a month a ridiculously low amount for anyone to live on, especially in Barcelona, where a typical rent costs this amount.

The employers

Between February and June I worked for four different employers, all of which were very different and all but one of which I had left behind by the start of September. Having worked in business after leaving teaching in the UK, I understood the fundamental skills required of good leaders and what makes companies successful. Unfortunately, my new employers in Barcelona lacked many of these pre-requisites. In my new employers I met :

- The dictator – 'you must teach this way and I will monitor you every week'
- The team teaching approach is the only way
- The disinterested and vile, and
- The disorganised but promised the world

The dictator and I lasted for one month. A surprisingly long period when I look back, as I was expected to pay out over €100 a week on taxis for 4 weeks before any re-numeration for the work that I was doing, which amounted to €60 a week. After eventually being paid we parted company.

The second employer was much more organised and I did enjoy working for them. However, their approach was based on team teaching, which should have meant that you taught the same students ever other class. In reality, due to timetable changes, it could be four or more classes before you taught the same students again. For me, building rapport with my students is essential in the learning process, and this method did not allow for this. Additionally, as a new EFL teacher I needed to become confident in my teaching practice and see continuity and development in my student groups. At the end of June we parted company on good terms.

The third employer was an individual who duped small companies into thinking that he would be their teacher, and then when they had an agreement he sent in another teacher. I started working 4 evenings a week in one company for him, on the same day that he called me. No interview, only the question 'are you available for these hours?' Eventually, after a very unpleasant encounter with him when I went to collect my wages, and he ran up the street behind me shouting obscenities, I took over the running of the classes and the company paid me direct.

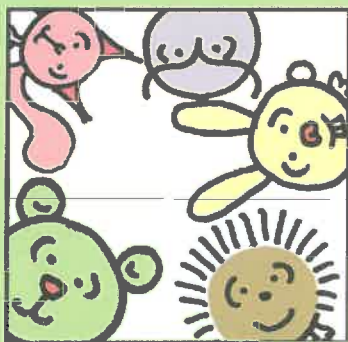
The final employer of this first period was a new Business English School. At the time they had some big contracts and initially offered me 15 hours a week. By the end of the summer term I was working 25 hours a week for them as well as classes through other employers. After promises of more lucrative work in the autumn term, I returned to the school in September and started working 28 hours a week, along with 12 hours a week of my own work. It was a gruelling schedule, with my day starting with 7.30am classes outside St. Cugat and finishing at 8.00pm in Barcelona. In mid-November, when I could no longer endure the schedule any longer, and asked to reduce my workload by 3 classes a week, I was sacked on the spot. So much for loyalty!

So, as a new teacher is it possible to discern the



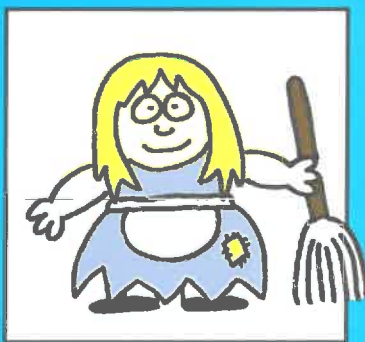
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When I am contacted by new teachers on the generalist – specialist issue, I always advise that they take the route which appeals most. If you need to work why not enjoy it?

Professional development

As a teacher in England I was able to access excellent 'In Service Education and Training' to further develop my practice and support me in gaining an understanding of new theories and methodologies'. In Barcelona, and especially working as an autonomo, I have found it necessary to be creative with regards Continuing Professional Development. Here is a short resume of some of the inroads that I have made in order to develop and deepen my understanding of the work that I am now involved in:

- I read as much as possible on the subject of language learning and production as possible. Whether this be from free downloadable articles or professional magazines. More importantly, I trial one new idea or theory a month, if it works great, if not I have learnt something new.
- I use my students as a resource, both in terms of what works really well with them in class and why so that I can re-use the ideas, and as a group to provide critical feedback on my teaching style and lesson content.
- I have observed a couple of other EFL teachers in class in order to compare and contrast our styles, and of course to integrate the best of what they are doing in my practice.
- I have started writing for professional teaching magazines and websites and have a number of articles coming out in print soon.
- I have joined a Teaching association as a means of having contact with other teachers.

• I plan to take further training and qualifications in this exciting field and also to attend future APAC conferences.

• I am also considering branching out into other related areas of the TEFL world and am continually looking for new opportunities to do so.

To conclude

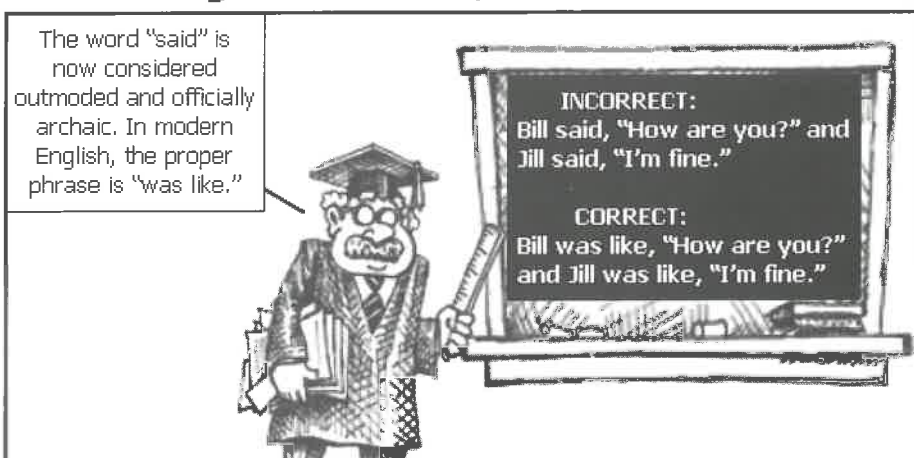
In general, I have enjoyed my time so far working as an EFL teacher. The students, on the whole have been wonderful people who are motivated and interesting to be with. But there are many areas where the profession would benefit from an overhaul. The main areas that I would like to see reviewed are:

- The standardization of the quality of teacher training courses
- The quality and professionalism of the teachers employed in the profession.
- The employment terms of teachers, especially those working through small private academies
- The flow of information between the Department of Education and all English language teachers, with regards to news, developments and training.

As a native English speaker and a qualified teacher, there are so many ways in which I and colleagues like myself could support the work that is already happening in local schools and universities, we just need a way in. I am sure that when I reflect back in the summer of 2010 on the academic year that lies ahead I will have developed my thinking further, and the exciting area of work that we are involved in will also have taken steps forward.

...

Modern English Lesson by Eric Perlin



www.funnytimes.com

Contributions

CLASSROOM ORGANIZATION:

The class is organized in four groups of five or six students. Each group focuses on a different topic or skill. As the English session lasts one hour, two sessions are needed to be able to work on the four topics or skills. In one session we make two changes, that means that the students can do two different activities and the other two activities will be done in the next session. As every group has got a tutor (a volunteer, family...) the English teacher can walk around the classroom assessing the children, managing and solving possible problems. At the beginning of the class the English teacher makes a general explanation of the activities that are going to be done that session. Each activity lasts twenty minutes and at the end of the session the children have 5 minutes to do their assessment. The chart below is an example of an interactive session.

INTERACTIVE GROUP 1:

Activity: Classroom language domino game.

Aim: To acquire classroom instructions.



INTERACTIVE GROUP 2:

Activity: Crossword.

Aim: To review vocabulary and grammar.



INTERACTIVE GROUP 3:

Activity: Activity book. Revision activities.

Aim: To review unit contents.



INTERACTIVE GROUP 4:

Activity: Board game.

Aim: To improve oral skills and vocabulary.





Interactive Groups in the English Classroom

by M^a. Goretti Blanch Llosa

CEIP Amistat Comunitat d'Aprenentatge
Figueres

A learning community like mine is based on the dialogic learning in order to achieve two main objectives: the maximum learning from the students and a good coexistence. The learning community and specially the families get involved in the school organization and management through committees; they go into the classrooms working on interactive groups and they participate in all the school learning activities and workshops.

The CEIP Amistat had decided to become a learning community to cope with diversity, giving all the children the same opportunities and letting the families participate in our school life. One of the steps forward this achievement was the work in interactive groups in Maths, Catalan and English.

Interactive groups in the English classroom were started during the school year 2007-2008, one session per week with the 6th grade students and the results were quite beneficial: fewer ratios, more motivation, a bigger interchange among the students, reinforcement, an individual monitoring, a better classroom atmosphere, more expectations, an improvement in the communicative skills and in the social skills (team work, initiative, self-esteem), more cooperation and solidarity and more respect towards diversity.

Working in interactive groups means that the children are learning individually and in small groups, they are constantly interacting and participating in an open classroom where teachers, family and volunteers share the same space and time, all of them get involved in the teaching and learning process. The critical thinking and the respect for diversity are encouraged through the multiple speeches and opinions. Working this way optimizes the resources and the students get a direct monitoring.

An Approach to Extensive Reading

by Joana
Angrill



Reading has traditionally been part of English courses as a means to check comprehension through the analysis of the language. As opposed to a linguistic focus, reading extensively may lead to substantial benefits in a positive development of the language learning process. The maximum behind extensive reading theories is that students learn to read by reading. Student motivation is the key element in this approach and, for this reason, all efforts are devoted to centralise the role of the student in the reading process. Thus, in extensive reading programs teachers need to adopt a different position and act as guides and counsellors.

1. Introduction

There seems to be a common agreement among teachers that, despite the increasing enrichment of the cognitive levels of children during the last decades, the levels of readership comprehension performance among teenagers have significantly decreased. Specken and Krashen, nevertheless, oppose to such a statement by claiming that interests evolve as children grow up. Peer groups rather than the family environment take the most influential role on the individual; the computer culture and other media have led to a competition in filling the teenage leisure market and, thus, to a decline in both the interest and capacity of reading books to the point that they are the age group spending less time in this activity. In this sense, we need to find strategies to increase recreational reading among teenagers. Extensive reading plays an important role to this end, as the quantity of exposure to reading implies a huge step in becoming proficient in a language.

There seems to be a common agreement among teachers that, the levels of readership comprehension performance among teenagers have significantly decreased.

Strongly supported by the data, recent research on the subject in specific experiments has highlighted, under certain circumstances and given some conditions, the high value of extensive reading for language learning at different levels and, as we shall see further on, has considered extensive reading programs as an essential part of all language courses. In fact, the literature promotes the importance of reading for enjoyment as resulting in benefits in areas such a vocabulary acquisition, reading speed and comprehension, motivation enhancer, etc. Yet, most of them agree on the need to promote L1 reading as a starting point to foster reading habits and, thus, increase reading comprehension. Little is the research questioning the benefits of the use of extensive reading in the foreign language classroom, being the reasons behind it comprehensible enough for a fervent defender of an analytic or bottom-up approach to reading.

Joana Angrill Farreny holds a BA in English Philology from the University of Barcelona and a BA in Library and Information Science from the Open University of Catalonia. Currently, she is a teacher of English at a state secondary school in Manresa. As a visiting teacher, she has also taught Spanish as a foreign language in England

ASSESSMENT:

Every session the teacher completes a chart, the same chart than the volunteer or group tutor completes. As I mentioned before the children make an assessment at the end of the session, they have five minutes to complete a page from a booklet cooperatively.

ASSESSMENT CHART					GROUP ASSESSMENT BOOKLET	
INTERACTIVE GROUPS	ACTIVITY:	ACTIVITY:	ACTIVITY:	ACTIVITY:		
THE GANGSTERS					<div style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; margin-bottom: 10px;">INTERACTIVE GROUPS</div> <div style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; margin-bottom: 10px;">GROUP EVALUATION AND SELF-EVALUATION BOOKLET</div> <div style="margin-bottom: 10px;">Group name: _____</div> <div style="margin-bottom: 10px;">Names: _____ _____ _____ _____</div> <div style="margin-top: 20px;">Date: _____</div> <div style="margin-bottom: 10px;">Activities we've done: _____ _____</div> <div style="margin-bottom: 10px;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We like the activities • We understand them • We speak in English • New vocabulary in English we learnt: _____ </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 20px; width: 100%;"></div> <div style="margin-top: 10px;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We know and we learnt to: _____ </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 20px; width: 100%;"></div>	
1. Maurici						
2. Aliou						
3. Martin						
4. Darío						
THE LEGEND KILLERS						
5. Gina						
6. Yen						
7. Carlos						
8. Andrés						
9. Sam						
10. Yulian						
JAMP ROCK						
11. Darío						
12. Abou						
13. Israel						
14. MP Torres						
MANGLA						
15. Alex						
16. Bryon						
17. Jose						
18. Mar						
19. Geanina						

ENGLISH TEACHER'S WORK:

The English teacher prepares the activities and the materials for every group work, distributes students in groups, controls the time, helps volunteers and students when necessary, follows up group and individual work and assess children.

VOLUNTEERS' WORK:

The volunteers or the group tutors explain the activities more deeply to the children, help students while working and help them to work cooperatively, promote self-esteem and help the English teacher with the individual and group assessment.

Our volunteers or group tutor are the two other English teachers working in the school, parents who are natives or who speak English, Secondary School students, native speakers and EOI students. These volunteers have a great commitment with the school, they take this job very seriously, letting us know if they cannot or if they do feel or not comfortable with the tasks they are doing. I must thank all these volunteers that had helped me along the last two school years, without them all this work had not been possible.

school as a voluntary activity that inexorably leads students learn how to read. Many components from Extensive Reading

are inspired from the

Print Rich Environment the-

ory by Krashen by which students are engaged in classroom reading through the use of interesting printed, and most of the time authentic, material such as stories, wall posters, poems, lyrics, etc. Easy access to reading material is a must to develop a reading atmosphere and give a sense of genuine importance to this activity. So, promoting reading may take different forms ranging from simple class libraries to specific corners where information on authors, covers, novel-ties, etc. can be found.

All in all, extensive reading involves a top-down language learning approach. In this sense, learners read material for the sake of reading. As the input they are digesting is interesting and cha-

llenging enough for them, students read for the gist or general meaning.

Knowledge on how every single detail of the language works is irrelevant and interferes with concentration on the act of reading. However, classroom instruction should not obliterate bottom-up approaches that cater for rare

elements in a language, which cannot be understood without a formal analysis. From this perspective, extensive reading implies the need for the student to develop cognitive strategies to decompose whole pieces of text from prediction, from previous knowledge of the world, from the context, etc.

c. Requirements for ER

Some of the principles as regards the requirements for the teaching of ER have already been mentioned: the freedom of choice of the readings and their simplicity, the amount of reading and the need for constancy. Yet, an ER programme is guided by a set of elements that might seem out of the ordinary but which are in the line of reading for enjoyment and as an individual activity that leads to a personal growth and enrichment, not to mention the learning of a language. It has been stressed the role of the student in the selection of texts. For this reason those materials that engage students to immerse in the story and interact with it, this is what commonly happens with

Great amounts of significant exposure to the target language are proved to lead to a solid establishment of L2 structures in the learner's mind.

As the input they are digesting is interesting and challenging enough for them, students read for the gist

page turners. As when reading in L1 we do not find the need to search for the meaning of unknown words, dictionaries in ER programmes are also not allowed. Otherwise, reading would lose its meaning as a pleasant activity and would prevent developing valuable reading skills such as deducing from context. Reading, thus, takes the form of individual silent reading where students feed their minds with moving pictures. And since page turners are read for entertainment, comprehension questions or tests have no place in this reading programme. Otherwise, they would interfere in all what

ER represents. The

most valuable test is

the learner being

able to talk and

reason about

the book in

their mother

tongue both in

positive or nega-

tive ways. There is

no mark from a writ-

ten test or whatsoever

and the satisfaction stems

from the very fact of reading itself. If self-election is a requisite, a wide range of materials of genre, topic and level should be offered according to age, sex, nationality, etc. and they should fulfil the needs of reading for pleasure, information and general understanding, basic areas usually found in the distribution of material in a library.

The most valuable test is the learner being able to talk and reason about the book in their mother tongue both in positive or negative ways.

3. Reasons for ER in the EFL Classroom

a. Effects on EFL Students

Most of the literature agrees on the beneficial effects of extensive reading in arousing students' motivation and interest in the foreign language and culture. Apart from stimulating learners, reading as a habit is also a way to generate confidence in the English language which, in turn, fosters a positive attitude towards the foreign language and the reading activity in itself. When motivated, learners identify a meaningful purpose in the activity and, thus, make an individual effort to learn the language. Krashen found that reluctant students could reach similar levels to those of eager readers. Given the option to discard material at any point of their reading process, students are left with the power of decision. A pleasure and decision oriented approach seems to have an overall impact on students' perception of learning English. What is most relevant of ER is the fact that, if successful, it may lead students to read for pleasure outside the classroom as well. In fact, this is one of the main goals of ER. Students are to be offered foreign language input with meaningful and enjoyment purposes. In this sense, reading for meaning in a sustained silence way may raise students' autonomy and independence to be-

2. Extensive Reading (ER)

Reading in schools has traditionally been considered as an intellectual compulsory activity used for specific didactic purposes. Very little room has been left in the curricula to introduce reading aimed at arousing students' interest in voluntary reading. As times have evolved and newspapers and magazines expanded the circulation of information, reading has also moved in schools from being an activity for intensive goals to one for extensive aims. During the last decades, promoting an interest in reading for pleasure has been encouraged in the educational systems. Yet, what exactly is extensive reading?

a. What is it?

Extensive reading, also found in the literature as reading for pleasure, is an absolute student-centred approach to reading, where learners are left free to choose the reading according to their own interests and levels. The core idea is constant and wide reading for the gist as opposed to intensive reading of a given passage in depth.

Traditionally, EFL teaching in secondary

has been treated in an intensive way, usually assigning one common book per course or, if lucky, per term, and checking understanding through comprehension questions, writing summaries or translating. Just as in the real world reading as a free time activity does not come along with a test, extensive reading leaves little room for testing either. Extensive reading, though, takes into account individuals with their own tastes and opinions, as catering for pleasure and enjoyment has a highly personal component and as Helgesen puts it "it is impossible to find a single title that all members of a class find interesting". For this reason, there is no better way than students selecting their own reading materials. Moreover, ER advocates for the use of a high quantity of material at one's level of understanding, usually meaning easy levels. Reading, thus, becomes a synonym for skimming or rapid reading and it only occurs because it makes sense in the reader's world. Extensive reading is supposed to have an effect on the reader as they become involved within the story of the text.

Extensive reading, is an absolute student-centred approach to reading, where learners are left free to choose the reading according to their own interests and levels.



Extracted
from Nutfall
(1996)

b. Theories behind ER

Extensive reading stems from a variety of currents in applied linguistics. The theory from which ER is most influenced is the Input Hypothesis by Krashen. Krashen claims the need to move gradually from the learner's initial level (i) towards the acquisition of language structures one step above (i+1). The quantity of input determines the improvement in language skills such as vocabulary recognition and acquisition and grammar patterns and, in the long run, an improvement in reading comprehension skills and reading speed; however, it has not been proved any significant bettering in the last two areas. For Krashen, exposure to the target language implies that input be comprehensible, and this can only be guaranteed if it is at one step under the learner's level. Acquiring a language follows a predictable order and acquisition can only take place if the learner receives enough challenging input within their level of competence. Sufficient input in the foreign language –Hill suggests about fifteen

readers per level- must occur for students be confident enough to move to the next level. Apart from being comprehensible and challenging, input needs to be perceived

Acquiring a language follows a predictable order and acquisition can only take place if the learner receives enough challenging input within their level of competence.

as pleasant for acquisition to take place. Pleasure, although slower, is a successful path to knowledge, especially as regards language acquisition. Reading as a recreational activity has much to do with the idea of reading as a relaxing activity, especially when material is interesting and comprehensible. Input needs to be within what Vygotsky called Zone of Proximal Development, that is to say, input that is between the student's development level where they can solve problems autonomously and the development level where solution comes from colleague cooperation. This has been referred to as the optimal level at which learning is to take place; in other words, input which is not too easy to become boring neither too difficult to impede further learning and, therefore, cause frustration. Day & Bramford point out the need to facilitate material that contains input within the learner's linguistic competence.

For this reason, great amounts of significant exposure to the target language are proved to lead to a solid establishment of L2 structures in the learner's mind. Alongside the Pleasure Hypothesis, sustained and constant reading is considered to help improve reading skills. One more time, the Sustained Silent Reading also promotes individual silent reading in

Contributions

crucial to find the support and involvement of the whole teaching team.

The next step is to get enough funds to get reading materials, replace old or damaged material, maintain and update the library. Apart from the school budget for the programme, students should be involved in raising funding and in the running in general of the library. Material obtained shall be graded into categories according to a well-defined criterion of degree of difficulty. It is worldwide agreed that degree of difficulty is established by the number of headwords. However, we should leave room for flexibility and adopt our own criterion as publishing houses differ in the method of classifying their books. Most ER programmes use coloured tags to define difficulty in levels from 1 to 8 and letters of the alphabet to classify the genres within each level. Learners should also take an active part in the borrowing system assigning the roles of in a library.



Extracted from the Edinburgh Project on ER

Before immersing in the reading programme, students should be aware of the real purposes and benefits of extensive reading. Lack of sense or direction may lead to failure of the programme. Thus, it is worth considering the need to make clear, from the very first day of class, the importance of reading. Waring and Welsh exemplify and propose a very useful and easy way to introduce extensive reading to students as summarized in the table that follows:

Also, from the very beginning, learners need to know the rules of the programme: quantity of books to read, time allowed to keep the materials, instructions on

how the library works, the library card, how their reading will be tracked and evaluated, etc. Before heading straight for reading, learners need to know their own reading level. A common way to do this, as anyone would do in their mother tongue when choosing a book to read, is letting learners browse books and choose the one they think they may like and then they read the very first page. If there are more than 2 unknown words per page, the book needs to be discarded and choose one at an inferior level. They move levels until they find a book at a level they feel comfortable with.

Extensive	READING	Intensive
General understanding, enjoyment and fluency	PURPOSE	Study of the language
Easy (graded readers)	DIFFICULTY	Often difficult (material for native speakers)
A lot (a book a week)	AMOUNT	Not much
Fast and fluently	SPEED	Slow
Learner	SELECTION	Teacher
All learners read different things	WHAT MATERIAL	All learners read the same material at the same time
Mainly at home	WHERE	In class
Checked by reports, summaries or projects	COMPREHENSION	Checked by specific questions

Adapted from Welsh (1998) and Waring (2006)

come a fluent reader and to make an effort to learn the language. Bell also puts forward the use of ER to increase learners reading speed as it develops naturally with practise. However, this does not cater for a bettering of the reading comprehension skills. It does, indeed, foster a sense of confidence with extended texts and a global sense of the language and, thus, an overall improvement of the performance on language tests.

A pleasure and decision oriented approach seems to have an overall impact on students' perception of learning English.

b. Benefits in Other Skills

It is clear that vocabulary and their multiple meanings and uses, collocations and infrequent structures cannot be accounted through an intensive analysis of the language. Average advanced learners of a foreign language have acquired a great amount of their knowledge through an extensive exposure to the target language, either reading or listening. It is highly agreed that ER inexorably enhances students' improvement of their reading comprehension skills¹ and the development of personal reading strategies: practice makes perfection and one learns how to read by developing the reading

habit. Yet, benefits of reading extensively

may be accounted in other areas as well. On the one hand, vocabulary acquisition is one of the key areas to survive in a language learning environment. Graded

readers, especially, make use of a controlled vocabulary and they make sure that the acquisition of vocabulary is built through repetition. The higher exposure to the quantity of input, the higher are the chances for vocabulary positive recognition to occur gradually and naturally in the long run. Although little research indicates there is vocabulary threshold for reading, most proponents of ER admit the need for about 10 exposures to a word in a

The higher exposure to the quantity of input, the higher are the chances for vocabulary positive recognition to occur gradually and naturally in the long run.

comprehensible and familiar context to become acquired. Vocabulary acquisition is the key for language learning and through extensive reading it has also an impact on and increases competence in other skills such as writing, speaking, grammar and listening –when using audiobooks. Helgesen clearly advocates for an improvement of the spelling skill.

4. Setting an ER Program

a. Materials

As mentioned before, reading materials need to be significantly interesting for the reader and at a reasonable understandable level. Not all books are valuable for extensive reading purposes. As in the mother tongue, good books for reading for pleasure should, first and foremost, be entertaining, and the book that fails this criterion should not have room in an ER programme. The ability to raise interest is the main reason that makes a good book. Interest rises from stories with imaginative and varied characters and creative situations. Books with plenty of illustrations provide with appropriate support and encourage the learner to get involved in the story and respond to it. When choosing materials, not only books should be taken into account but also adolescent literature, film books, teenager fiction including scripts from popular series, teen magazines, ezines, websites, comics, newspapers, poems, stories, brochures, etc.

b. Aims and Organization

Extensive Reading has the following aims:

- to raise students' awareness of the importance of reading for language learning,
- to develop a reading ability and the subsequent benefits on other skills,
- to motivate learners to read,
- to build a library or a foreign language section,
- to devise instruments for cataloguing, classifying and recording the checks in and out of the materials, expand the range of reading materials.

Waring establishes a set of guidelines for those who intend to implant an ER programme, from which he emphasises the need not only to integrate the programme in the curriculum of the foreign language area, but also within the general goals of the school's educative plan. Otherwise, the students may not perceive the importance of the programme and it may give the impression of being an experiment of a group of English teachers with no direction. For this reason, when establishing an ER programme it is

¹ For studies presenting an opposing view, see Gao, U.M. *A Study of Using Extensive Reading as a Supplement in a Senior High School English Curriculum*. Taiwan. Tsing Hua University, 2004.

7. Conclusion

Promoting extensive reading as an activity for enjoyment seems to contradict the established purposes and aims associated with controlled intensive reading methods. Instead, intensive and extensive reading should be seen as two complementary yet not mutually exclusive concepts; one has to discern the motivations and situations for each of them. Recently, there seems to be a tendency from intensive towards extensive reading. In fact, most of the research carried out in the ER field shows that reading extensively has benefits in the language learning proficiency as long as learners are motivated enough and enjoy what they are reading. The challenge for teachers is to maintain the same level of motivation from the very beginning. All in all, extensive reading does not seem to have gained much room in schools and this may be due to the limitations of the programme. ER may be thought to be effective mainly for advanced readers and many may doubt about the utility of such programmes at early stages of the learning process. At times teachers may have their own reservations as regards the quantity of language they can demand from their learners and, thus, assume that studying texts intensively is sufficient for the reading ability and its subsequent skills to be developed properly.

Intensive and extensive reading should be seen as two complementary yet not mutually exclusive concepts;

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9. Further Reading

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- The Edinburgh Project on Extensive Reading [<http://www.ials.ed.ac.uk/postgraduate/research/EPE R.html>] retrieved on 29th January 2009.

visit: <http://apacelt.ning.com>

c. Teacher's Role

In a programme that places the student at the centre of the learning process, it may seem teachers have little room. However, the success of the programme lies in part in the role of the teacher, which may run the risk of being undermined as teachers may not appear to be teaching. The teacher sets up the reading course ensuring all students have a wide range of books at their own level, plans activities that keep on motivating students to read and, as it will be seen further on, supervises and keeps record of students' readings. Yet, the teacher acts, first and foremost, as a role model and, thus, has to be a reader as well, with an active participation in the programme and the reading community: as a good reader they should be seen reading and giving recommendations, encouraging students to read and organizing reading events such as rewards, reading competitions, fund raising events, etc. For this reason, the teacher needs to get familiar with all the material in the library so that they can recommend and help students find material that match with students' interest and level of comprehension.

Occasionally, the teacher may direct to the whole class to stimulate interest in reading (by discussing books and reading aloud extracts from books), but most of the time they monitor students' reading and make sure, through individual counselling, that each of them has material at their appropriate level. Learners are assisted individually and receive feedback on how to work in the book reports, projects or other written work.

5. ER Activities

a. ER in TBL Curriculum

Reading is a powerful tool for ideas when working with projects in a foreign language. In a task-based language learning environment, situations from books can be exploited to carry out meaningful tasks in the target language such as writing a letter, producing a play, publishing their own ending, performing a character academy awards, designing book covers and blurbs, building bookmarks, etc. Assessment in task-based learning is based on the completion of the projects rather than on the results of a grammar test. In the same line of thought of extensive reading, assessment focuses basically on fluency and confidence in the target language.

**Reading
is a powerful
tool for ideas when
working with projects
in a foreign
language.**

b. Evaluating Extensive Reading

As mentioned before, extensive reading should mainly take place outside the classroom, being the classroom time devoted to a balance of intensive and extensive reading activities to build on skills. ER does not emphasise testing and book evaluation yet classroom management and grading require a system to keep record of the learners' progress. And at some point we need to know the amount of reading each student has done and the levels at which they have been moving so that we can assess them. Verifying and assessing that students are in fact reading and understanding their reading is difficult in an ER programme. The extent to

which a teacher is interacting with a student and the frequency with which the work is examined are the only way that allows teachers to claim their knowledge of

the students' progress in the reading. Apart from regular feedback, students' reading progress is monitored through written tasks. Reporting books is the most extended and used activity to check not only students' comprehension but students' commitment to the reading programme. Helgesen proposes different types of reports so as to cater for all the different styles of learning in the classroom, to supply variation and thus avoid boredom and to work on the different skills.

**Extensive
reading should mainly
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classroom, being the
classroom time devoted
to a balance of intensive
and extensive reading
activities to build
on skills.**






6. ER & the Web

Technology cannot be ignored even when talking about reading. In fact, the concept of reading online is spreading and surely our students will read and write mostly on the Internet than by means of any other material ever. Among teachers there is a controversy as regards the pedagogical benefits of reading and learning online. However, what is clear is that new jobs require new skills that may involve the use and process of information, that is, navigation knowledge. The development of technology through the World Wide Web has created so many texts that one needs to find their way among the overabundance of writing. Thus, it is essential for students to develop analytical and critical skills that permit to discriminate what is relevant from what is not. It seems logical then to affirm that extensive reading should prevail over any other type of reading.

Contributions

The term blog was coined by Jorn Barger in 1997 and refers to a simple web page consisting of brief paragraphs of opinion, information, personal diary entries or links arranged chronologically (Paul Anderson, 2007). A typical blog combines text, images, links to other blogs, web sites, and other media related to its topic. The ability for readers to leave comments in an interactive pattern is an important part of many blogs.

In our English classes, we can use blogs for real-world writing experience. Students can write to each other, to share photos, videos, writings with their partners and comment them.

Create your blogs easily		
http://blocs.xtec.cat/		It is an internet portal of Catalan Education where you can create your blog if you work as a teacher.
https://www.blogger.com/		Everybody can create blogs. They are easy to be used.
http://www.classblogmeister.com/	 By David Warlick	You can have one blog for you and many for your students. Moreover you can revise your students text before being published.
http://www.blogia.com/		You can create your blog easily.
http://www.edublogs.org/		Bloggng for teachers and students.

b) Wiki

Wiki is a webpage that it can be easily edited. Wiki means a production of a group work. All the users can easily access online editing, changing and deleting the contents of a page.

Create your wiki easily	
http://pbwiki.com/	You can create a wiki.
http://www.tiddlywiki.com/	You can create a wiki
http://www.wikispaces.com/	You can create a wiki

It is not sometimes clear the difference between wikis and blogs. However, I could state that a blog is a sort of online journal. It is updated daily or weekly or whenever the author desires. A wiki is a platform that it is meant for anyone to update in real time. In my opinion, wikis are excellent for student projects where group members need to contribute at different times and from geographically diverse locations, so high school students from different towns and villages can work together online. Blogs are better to work individually, each student has his/her own blog to publish his/her projects. A class blog can also be created and all the students and the teacher can upload their works there too. Thus, using a blog or a wiki depends on the objective of the project.

Juan José de Haro has an interesting blog where he has a very clear chart which can help a teacher to choose what he/she needs to use in his/her class: a blog or a wiki. It depends on objectives of the activity.

This diagram was made by Juan José del Haro but I translated it into English, but take a look at the Spanish version in this web site:

<http://jjdeharo.blogspot.com/2008/03/la-eleccin-entre-el-blog-o-el-wiki.html>

Web 2.0 in the English Class (English a foreign language)

by Cristina Arnau Vilà



1.- WEB 2.0

The term 'Web 2.0' was coined in 2004 by Dale Dougherty, a vice-president of O'Reilly Media Inc., during a team discussion on a potential conference about the Web. It was said that the 'Web 2.0' was 'more important than ever, with exciting new applications and sites popping up with surprising regularity' (O'Reilly Media, Inc., 2005)

'Web 2.0' is the use of World Wide Web technology and web design that aims to facilitate the users to share ideas, opinions, reflections and contents. I understand that some years ago we were just reading web pages on the web but this new concept caused a revolution because it does not only mean reading but writing and sharing on-line. Therefore, we deal with a new user who has a new role.

This new vision of the web promotes a huge participation and it facilitates an autonomous learning. It saves time because the online spaces are easy and agile to search for, store, classify and publish information. Some researchers are already mentioning the word 'Web 3.0'

2.- WEB 2.0 CHARACTERISTICS

'Web 2.0' is a tool that contains many characteristics to achieve the objectives of the new ESO curriculum. Thus, a significant reason for educators to turn to Web 2.0 is that it seems to "fit in with certain experiences emphasised in contemporary theories of learning and modern thinking about how best to design the conditions of learning. Within the psychology of learning, there are four influential but overlapping frameworks (this term more appropriate than 'theories'). These are: behaviourism, constructivism, cognitivism and the socio-cultural perspective" (Crook, 2008). These theories are sympathetic to this new online environment for stimulating educational practice.

Moreover, the most straightforward reason is that teenagers are already engaged by 'Web 2.0' applications. Therefore, students will already be familiar with many of these tools.

'Web 2.0' helps students to work in an autonomous way, to work collaboratively, to find, to publish and to share data, information, resources easily. It also provides on-line spaces to publish and classify contents in different formats. Therefore, it is a way to improve on the different competences that our language curriculum mentions: intercultural competence, communicative competence, audiovisual competence.

3.- WEB 2.0: SERVICES AND APPLICATIONS

There are a number of Web-based services and applications that demonstrate the foundations of Web 2.0 concept, and they are already being used to a certain extent in education. I am going to explain some of them, recommending you some examples which I usually look at. These applications are the following ones:

To generate and publish material:






a) Blog

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Contributions

c) Podcast

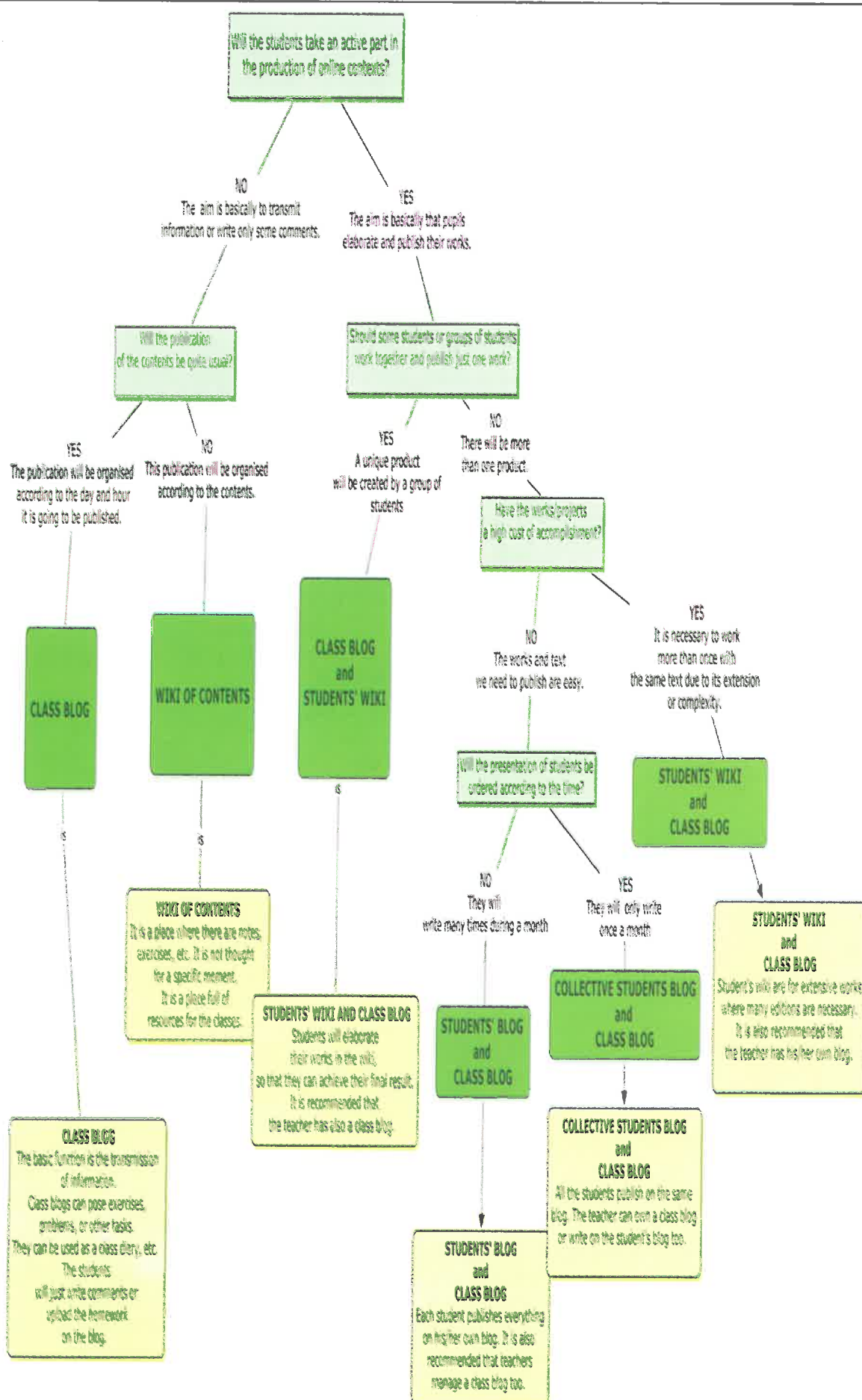
Podcasts are audio recordings of interview, conversations, lectures, they are usually in MP3 formats. For example, we can use a podcast to create a classroom radio show and publish it to an authentic audience, pupils can also create and record interviews in and out of the class, listen to audiobooks, record their essays, short stories and other written works and shared them into a blog or a wiki. Therefore, students can listen to their podcasts or the podcasts of their classmates.

Share podcasts		
http://btpodshow.com/	BTPODSHOW	You can find, share and create podcasts.
http://www.odeo.com/		You can find, share and create podcasts.
http://www.ourmedia.org/		You can find, share and create podcasts.
http://www.podcastsinenglish.com/index.htm		Listen English and learn English.
http://www.eslpod.com/website/		All podcasts are free for language learners and teachers, but only members receive the learning English worksheets, vocabulary tasks, webquests and transcripts
http://www.podomatic.com/		You can find, share and create podcasts
http://www.espapod.com/		You can find, share and create podcasts
http://www.clickcaster.com/		You can create, edit podcast easily.
http://boomp3.com/		You can upload and share MP3.
http://chirbit.com/		Chirbit is a free online tool for audio sharing. Chirbit enables users to record, upload, listen to and share sound bites easily.
http://www.espaciopodcast.com/		You can upload and share your podcasts easily.

d) Multimedia sharing (Pictures, Videos)

The huge growth of sites that facilitate the storage and sharing of multimedia content has increased enormously. The widespread of low cost digital media technology has caused this. Sharing multimedia resources can help students to improve their English. Teachers can use video sharing sites to find videos on current issues, maybe a natural disaster or an interesting event. Students can also create their own videos about their daily life, a typical recipe from their country, a videoclip on a song they created, news about their town or high school, etc. I can claim that pupils really enjoy watching their own video productions
















Contributions



Contributions

http://nces.ed.gov/nceskids/createagraph/default.aspx	NCES Kids Zone	Create graphics.
http://www.convertworld.com/es/	Convert World	Convert money, measures, and so on.
http://www.scrapblog.com/	Scrapblog	Combine your photos, videos, audio and text to create stunning multimedia scrapbooks.
http://www.slide.com/		Slide lets you use photos and other digital content to publish and discover the people and things that matter to you.
http://www.divshare.com/		It is a web's best place to store and share your videos, photos, music and documents.
http://www.scribd.com/		You can publish and share your documents easily to the web. You obtain an embedded code.
http://www.goeear.com/		To listen to free music and share it.
http://www.esnips.com/		Get 5GB of free space to upload and share your files, photos, videos and music.
http://www.toon-books.com/		TOON Books are the first high-quality comics designed for children ages four and up.
http://www.yakitome.com/		Listen to work documents, homework, PowerPoint presentations, emails, RSS feeds, blogs and novels while you relax, or exercise.
http://sl-lists.net/	 Welcome to the Student List Project	List of projects to do with your students.
http://www.slidestory.com/		Combine sharing pictures and narration.
http://www.myheritage.es/		You create your family tree easily.
http://kindo.com/		You create your family tree easily.
http://edublogs.tv/		The video hosting side dedicated to education.
http://www.voki.com/		You create your character and you make him/her talk.
http://vozme.com/index.php?lan=es		Convert the text to voice.
http://www.chinswing.com/		Create conversations
http://www.overstream.net/		Add subtitles easily to your videos from YouTube, Google Video, MySpace Video, Dailymotion, Veoh y Megavideo
http://www.trailino.com/en/		To create your own ways/tracks, for geography and physical education classes.
http://www.pimpampum.net/phrasr/index.php	PHRASR	You can associate sentences to pictures if you are a visual students.
http://www.doodle.com/		You can create surveys, opinion polls and people (pupils) can tell their opinion.

Contributions

Find, Create and Share videos	Find, Create and Share pictures
http://www.youtube.com/  http://eyespot.com/  http://ourmedia.org/  http://blip.tv  http://www.teachertube.com  http://www.edu3.cat  http://video.google.es/  http://www.edublogs.tv/  http://blip.tv/ 	http://www.flickr.com/  http://www.ourpictures.com/  http://www.23hq.com/ http://picasaweb.google.es  http://www.shutterfly.com/  http://www.dumpr.net/ http://www.bubbleshare.com/ [...]
Create and Share multimedia presentations or documents	
http://www.slideshare.net/  http://www.docstoc.com/  find and share professional documents	





There are other applications and services:

Social bookmarkings. To share interesting links.

http://www.mister-wong.es/	
http://del.icio.us/	

Other web 2.0 resources

There are thousands of web 2.0 links easy to be used as you can see in this webpages. Here I show you some applications that will be as auxiliar for our webs, blogs and wikis:

http://letterpop.com/	Letterpop	Use LetterPop to create eye-popping newsletters, actionable presentations, irresistible invitations, beautiful product features, sizzling event summaries, informative club updates, lovely picture collages, and a whole lot more.
http://www.lunapic.com/editor/		Edit images, pictures on-line.
http://www.magmypic.com/		Put your photo on a magazine.
http://www.mycoolbutton.com/	My Cool Button	You can create buttons for your webpages.
http://www.roxer.com/		Create webpages easily.
http://www.google.com		Create webpages easily.

Contributions

- Learn a little bit more about Leonardo Da Vinci and Archimboldo.
- Improve their vocabulary to describe paintings.
- Practise present tenses.

Most of the students enjoyed the activity, because it was something different. Most of them wanted to create a Voki as I did in activity 3.

However, I know that we are teachers, not publishers. We do not have time to prepare everything. Moreover, what we sometimes do as a teachers is to use the same resources because if you surf on the internet, there are so many resources that you feel frustrated to waste so much time trying to know which resources will work best with our students. I hope my list of links facilitate your work a little bit more.

In this process of learning English it is also very important the student's role and the teachers's role. Teachers are essential as they act as guides in order to facilitate the construction of meaningful learning which will allow to establish relations among the knowledge and previous experience and the new contents. It is also necessary for the students to have a favourable attitude and to be motivated to connect the new knowledge with the previous one. Thus, in web 2.0 the teacher's role and the student's role is very important, and many web 2.0 tools are very motivating for teenagers. However, the most important thing is to prepare and design the activities very well to reach our aim/s.

5.- CONCLUSION

The services and applications of Web 2.0 can help teachers to facilitate their resources in the class but also students to improve their English level. There exist so many resources, that we may choose those activities related to our syllabus and also related to topics which are of most of the teenagers' interest. The methodology we are using is one of the most important issue, the activities must be very well-designed to reach our objectives.

However, there are drawbacks too. We do not have enough time to surf on the internet to find and prepare new activities, tasks for our students. Furthermore, the new technologies do not sometimes work so well in our schools. So when you switch on the computer, you always find problems and it is so slow that you waste a lot of time. Moreover, there are not always enough computers for all the students in the high school.

As an English teacher, one of my main aim is to help students to be more autonomous in the process of learning a foreign language, to teach students to communicate in English (develop their communicative competence) and to teach new contents. Thus, I think web 2.0 is a tool that can help us to teach English achieving these objectives, although it may not be always easy.

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1 Voki is a web 2.0 tool and it can be used in an educational context. For example, students can create avatars that are similar in looks or personalities and record a message that tells about themselves, about famous people, etc. Here you can find more information: <http://theedublogger.edublogs.org/2008/02/24/adding-a-voki-speaking-avatar-to-your-blog-sidebar/> by Sue Walters or <http://www.voki.com/>

Contributions

http://www.poll daddy.com/		With your free account from PollDaddy you can now create surveys and polls for your website, blog and social network profiles.
http://www.dimdim.com/	DIMDIM	Dimdim is an easy web conference which let's you deliver synchronized live presentations, whiteboards and web pages while sharing voice and video over the Internet.
http://www.jumpcut.com/		Jumpcut is a quite easy programme to upload, share and edit your video and your photos.
http://jotform.com/tutorials		JotForm is a completely web based form builder. It is developed for webmasters with minimum design experience. JotForm has an intuitive drag&drop and instant edit form editor. You can create web forms, collect submissions and payments from your web site visitors.
http://www.mikogo.com/en/		Mikogo is an easy-to-use cross-platform desktop sharing tool, ideal for web conferencing, online meetings or remote support.
http://www.google.com/talk/		Chating, talking to your friends and family.
http://www.jajah.com/		Talking to your family and friends.
http://gizmo5.com/pc/		Talking to your family and friends.
http://oovoo.com/		Video chat with up to six family members or friends at once.

There are many other easy webs to create different things. Here you can find some lists of more Web 2.0 applications:

http://www.whatsnew.blogspot.com/2006/03/324-aplicaciones-gratuitas-lo-web-20.html	La Lista Web.com
http://www.go2web20.net/	

4.- WEB 2.0 in THE ENGLISH CLASS.

As an English teacher, I know it exists a great variety of interesting and stimulating material on 'Web 2.0'. The most important is to choose the appropriate material to the student's interest and levels and reinforce positive learning as part of the course programme. I know that sometimes ICT (Technologies of Information and Communication) are not so motivating for our students nowadays. However ICT can help us to facilitate our classes in many ways. 'Web 2.0' helps teachers to generate material easily. You can generate material for your classes in just five minutes since you can find thousands of activities already made on internet, however it is essential to know the aims you and your students want to achieve on that activity.

For example as you can see in this blog I prepared one hour session for my 3rd ESO students to learn a little bit on art. It took me just some minutes to prepare them and my main objective was that students could improve on how to describe pictures and at the same time they could learn a little bit about art.

What I created was a teacher blog, take a look at this blog:

<http://fiveweb20activitiesinfiveminutes.blogspot.com/> where I posted the activities and students could do them easily at class or at home.

I prepared five activities as a complement of the book we were following in the class, the main aim of these activities was that students practised what they learnt in the unit but in a different way:

- Describe a painting.
- Find similarities and differences between paintings.



Cooperative writing between BritLit author Louise Cooper

AND 1 ESO STUDENTS AT IES CONSELL DE CENT

by Laura Nogués, IES Vilatzara, Vilassar de Mar

The idea of writing a cooperative story with Louise Cooper came right after her visit to IES Consell de Cent on February 2009 as part of the Meet the Author tour of the BritLit Project, a joined effort between the British Council and APAC.

When preparing for Cooper's visit, my 1 ESO students had been reading some of her stories from her book 'Short and Scary' and after a receptive stage, it was high time to turn to a productive one. Of course, if writing is not an easy task, writing in cooperation with a contemporary British author came as a shock to my students at first. Yet, since they had already met Louise and were familiar not only with her stories but with the person behind them, they were eager to engage the author on-line in writing a short story together. At this point students became writers and the magic started!

As the starting paragraph my students and I agreed on choosing a story written by the 1 ESO winner of Sant Jordi 2009. Since IES Consell de Cent is in the seafront of Barcelona's port, all stories participating in Sant Jordi's competition had to include the words 'sea', 'port' and 'seagull'. Being from Cornwall, Louise also had a devotion for the sea, most specially for sailing, so the topic was a good match.

Every week over the period of five weeks we would either send our paragraph or receive Louise's one until the story came to its natural end. Each of my stu-

dents had to write a paragraph and as a class, we would select the one which followed best the thread of the story. I remember Louise's words in one of her emails to my students: "There seems to be a pattern developing... the seagull ate the fish and turned golden, then the shark ate the seagull and it, too, turned golden. What next, I wonder? I'm sure you will

have lots of ideas! The story is becoming more mysterious! I like Ismael's paragraph very much". Of course, my students loved this kind of feedback which focused on content (not on grammar mistakes) and stimulated creativity.

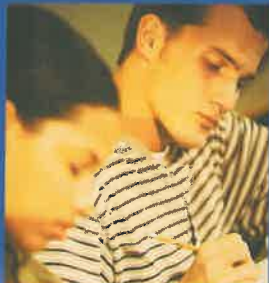
From reading and role-playing Louise's work my class had learnt that all of her stories had a moral and a twist in the tale, but what proved to be the most exciting in terms of language work was that my students' paragraphs seemed to integrate Louise's language (eg. 'dropped dead' or 'to my amazement'), expressions that are not particularly used in a 1 ESO level or wrote two adjectives premodifying a noun ('the poor exhausted seagull') instead of one. Had it not been for



Laura Nogués teaches English at IES Vilatzara in Vilassar de Mar and is one of the APAC team of teachers who have used the BritLit materials and worked with the writings of Louise Cooper, a BritLit author who visited Barcelona on occasion of the APAC 2009 Convention thanks to the joined effort between APAC and the British Council

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Louise Cooper visits IES Consell de Cent: From the Cornish coast to Barcelona's sea front

Louise Cooper is a British novelist and a BritLit short story writer. She lives in a small wooden house in Cornwall with her husband Cas Sandall and a big black cat called Simba. On the 25th of February she visited IES Consell de Cent and we interviewed her in the school library. She read *The Wolfs Tale* and *Silly Billy* from her book *Short and Scary* and 1 ESO students performed Silly Billy for her, which we had turned into a comic. Louise likes singing and together with her husband Cas they sing sea shanties, sailors'songs which are very popular in Cornwall. They also taught us a couple of shanties which became a huge student hit.

Your everyday routine...

I have a cup of coffee, I check my email and I start writing. Then, I go to the village and do some shopping. If it's sunny I go to the beach.

Your family life...

I live with my husband and a big black cat called Simba. I don't have children.

A place to live...

My home. A small wooden house called AN GREFTA, the House of Arts and Crafts, with a big garden surrounded by a stone wall in the village of St Agnes.

Your hobbies...

My big hobbies are music and singing sea shanties. I also enjoy going shell collecting on the Cornish coast.

A place to spend your holidays...

We have got a boat and we go sailing in Falmouth.

A good memory from your high school days...

I didn't like school, but when I was 14 my school put on a Folk concert and I really enjoyed it.

Your favourite children's book...

My favourite children's book is *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis.

Your favourite short story (written by you)...

My favourite short story is *Genius*.

Laura Nogués teaches English at IES Vilatzara in Vilassar de Mar and is one of the APAC team of teachers who have used the BritLit materials and worked with the writings of Louise Cooper, a BritLit author who visited Barcelona on occasion of the APAC 2009 Convention thanks to the joined effort between APAC and the British Council

Louise, they would have used 'died' instead of 'dropped dead' or 'to my surprise' and not 'to my amazement' and would probably not dare to write two adjectives before a noun.

In a nutshell, reading authentic and unabridged literature from contemporary British authors forces students to get out the best of themselves in a creative way and at the same time it stimulates thinking and suspense (what's next???) and in the case of this project, cooperative writing.

What follows is the final version of 'The Golden fish' by 1ESO students from IES Consell de Cent and the BritLit author Louise Cooper. I do hope the BritLit project continues to inspire teachers as much as it has inspired my students and myself. The key: creating a non-linear writing atmosphere where neither the students nor the teacher know where the story is going to lead them. And all this thanks to Louise Cooper and the BritLit Project.

Marina's short story:

The Golden fish

John is 15 years old. He lives in a house next to the sea and opposite the port. One day, John went fishing with his dad and sister. They caught a fish of gold and they took the golden fish home. The following day, John went looking for his golden fish, but it wasn't there. They all went looking for the fish, but it had disappeared. So they went back to the sea, and there they found a golden seagull.

Louise's paragraph:

Why was the seagull golden? Had it eaten John's golden fish? John and his family tried to catch the seagull, but it flew off. It landed a few metres away, then looked back at them. John had the feeling it wanted them to follow it...

Isma's paragraph:

John followed the seagull, but to his surprise he found five golden feathers. Then, he saw the seagull in danger... A shark was trying to eat the golden seagull!!!! After a while the poor exhausted seagull dropped dead in the mouth of the shark.

Louise's paragraph:

The shark swallowed the seagull. And to John's amazement, the shark turned golden! It looked at them, and seemed to be grinning. Then it swam away. 'Quickly! said John's father. There's a boat over there. Let's take it, follow the shark, and see where it leads us!'

Saba's paragraph:

John and his dad got on the boat and went looking for the shark. One hour later, they finally saw the shark, but it was not alone. A big white whale was about to swallow the shark. And to John's amazement, the whale also turned gold. Behind the golden whale there were some fishermen trying to catch the whale. The fishermen's boat finally captured the whale and took it to the port's village. The village people happened to eat the whale and to their own amazement they also turned gold.

PREMI APAC – JOHN McDOWELL

Concurs per a professors i alumnes de llengua anglesa de tots els nivells educatius

Com cada any, l'APAC (Associació de Professors i Professores d'Anglès de Catalunya) us convida a participar en el **premi APAC - John McDowell**, que té la finalitat de reconèixer l'esforç realitzat tant per professors com per alumnes en els seus treballs en llengua anglesa. El fet de participar en un premi d'aquestes característiques pot ajudar a fomentar la motivació de professors a seguir fent recerca i innovar dins l'aula i la dels alumnes a trobar-li un sentit a tot allò que realitzen diàriament a classe.

És per això que l'APAC us anima a presentar tant els vostres treballs com els dels vostres alumnes.

MODALITATS

- **MODALITAT A: TREBALLS PRESENTATS PER PROFESSORS (o futurs professors) (Crèdits variables d'anglès, treballs d'investigació, projectes, memòries, treballs acadèmics, etc.)**

Els treballs presentats en aquesta modalitat han de ser inèdits i han d'incloure: objectius, continguts i conclusió. En el cas dels crèdits variables també s'hi ha d'incloure el material per utilitzar a classe i les activitats d'avaluació. Pel que fa als treballs d'investigació han d'estar relacionats directament amb aspectes de la llengua anglesa.

1 premi que consistirà en un curs de dues setmanes al Regne Unit, esponsoritzat per l'Institut Britànic (l'anada i la tornada al lloc de destinació serà a càrrec del professor/a premiat/ada) **1 accèssit** que consistirà en un val de 100€ i una traductora CASIO

- **MODALITAT B: TREBALLS PRESENTATS PER ALUMNES (Treballs de recerca)**

Tots els treballs presentats en aquesta modalitat han d'incloure objectius, contingut i conclusió i han d'estar directament relacionats amb aspectes de la llengua anglesa.

1 premi que consistirà en un mini-portàtil i **1 accèssit** que consistirà en un val de 100€

- **MODALITAT C: TREBALLS PRESENTATS PER GRUPS CLASSE (Vídeos, DVDs, projectes, revistes, pàgines web, etc.)**

Els treballs presentats en aquesta modalitat han d'incloure una introducció del professorat de la matèria indicant els objectius de l'activitat.

1 premi que consistirà en un val de 500€ i **1 accèssit** que consistirà en un val de 100€

Bases generals

- És condició indispensable que tots els treballs siguin en anglès.
- Tots els treballs s'han de presentar en un sobre o paquet tancat. La informació imprescindible que hi ha de constar és:
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 - Nom, adreça, correu electrònic i telèfon de contacte del concursant
 - Nivell educatiu o curs (en cas dels alumnes i grup classe)
 - Escola i nom del professor/a
- El termini de presentació dels premis finalitza el dia 31 de desembre de 2009.
- El jurat estarà format per cinc membres d'APAC.
- Els premis es lliuraran en el marc de l'APAC- ELT Convention 2010.
- APAC es reserva el dret de publicar totalment o parcialment els treballs presentats a la revista i / o a la web d'APAC.
- Tots els participants al Premi APAC han de ser socis d'APAC amb l'excepció de les modalitats B i C.
- Tots els treballs s'enviaran per correu ordinari :
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- APAC no es responsabilitza dels treballs no recollits abans del dia 30 d'abril del 2010.
- Aquestes bases anul·len les bases publicades anteriorment.

The name of your favourite characters (written by you)...

Tarod, from the Time Master Trilogy and Lizzie from the Mermaid.

The place from where you usually write ...

I write in my room and in my office where I have two windows, one facing the lane and one facing the garden, so I can choose where to look for inspiration.

The number of hours you read a day...

I read one hour a day.

The number of hours you write a day...

I write about six hours a day or none.

Who is Silly Billy?

Silly Billy is a boy called Kith, the little brother of a school friend.

Who is the voice?

The voice is Silly Billy's wise self.

Your favourite English words...

Happiness

**Your first impressions of Barcelona...**

I love the buildings and the trees.

Your penpals

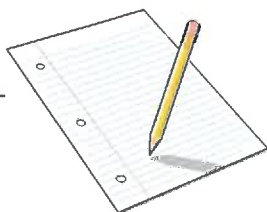
My penpals are from South America, Australia, France, Canada and Singapur...and now from Catalonia!

Thank you Louise and Cas for coming to our school.

Thank you for inviting us.

By 1 ESO students - IES Consell de Cent

For more information about Louise, visit her webpage <http://www.louisecooper.com>. Special thanks to Lesley Denham and Jo Dossetor from the British Council BritLit team and to Neus Figueres from APAC for their help in the organisation of such a successful event.



CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

APAC welcomes the contributions of teachers who want to share their experiences and their thoughts, both for our quaterly magazine and for our annual convention.

Articles or presentations dealing with new materials, new techniques and new methods are most welcome. We are also interested in methodological and educational issues related to the teaching profession. Reviews of books, interviews and other texts are also published regularly. If you have read a book you would like to recommend or if you have the opportunity to interview somebody who you think may be of interest to our readers, or you have had an experience, attended a course or been to a lecture you would like to tell other teachers about, please write it down and send it to us. (info@apac.es)



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How to teach english with technology (With CD-Rom)

by Gavin Dudeney and Nicky Hockly

Publisher: Pearson Longman

ISBN 978-1-4058-53085-8

2007, 192 pages

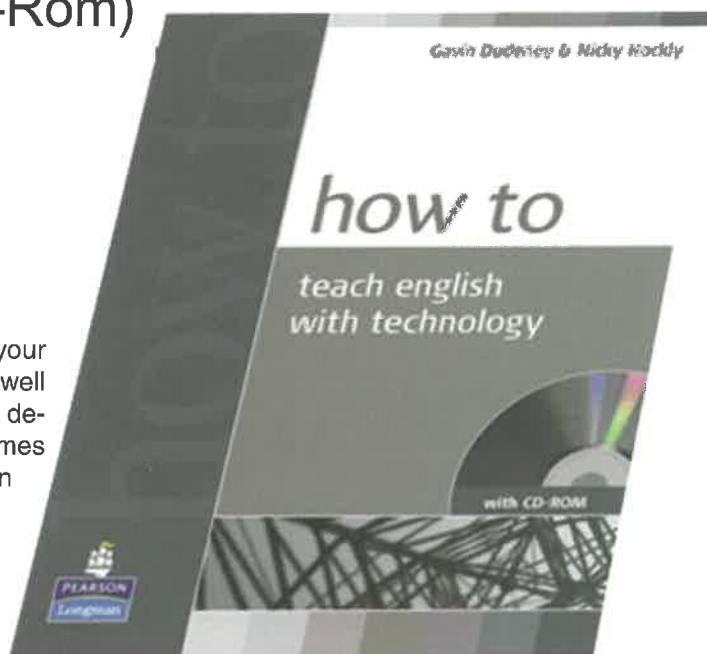
How do you feel about using technology in your teaching? Although the majority of teachers are well aware of the urging need to respond to society demands as well as students interests, when it comes to integrating technology in our daily classes can be daunting for many.

The lack of time for training courses often postpones the shift to ICT use or, in some cases, teachers begin experimenting for themselves, with the help of other colleagues if they are lucky. Yet most teaching professionals feel the need for a comprehensible introductory framework with a step-by-step guide and clear examples in order to have a sense of security before plunging into the technology world for teaching.

Well, here it is. In book format with a CD-Rom support, Dudeney and Hockly provide a user-friendly guide for digital immigrants from the beginning, but can also be used for teacher trainers as a course guide. Starting off with a discussion on the doubts technology may cause in its implementation in the classroom, 12 chapters lead us into the use of great tools to promote language learning in the digital age. The range of tools begins with a safe classic used by all: word processors. However, the chapter highlights some practical uses of a simple tool for effective classroom use such as marking or creative writing.

From the third chapter onwards we are online, using websites in the classroom with a useful list of internet teaching dos and don'ts, considerations not to missed by any teacher. Project-work deserves a chapter of its own, as the Internet fosters its enormous didactic potential for competence development, not only communicative but also in developing critical and autonomous learners.

Chapter 5 and 6 are devoted to communication tools: email and chat, their benefits for class and ideas for implementation. Chapter 7 explores the social software, basic collaborative tools to connect and work online, with blogs, wikis and podcasts. Chapter 8 focuses on the use of dictionaries, translators and encyclopedias. Chapter 9 covers courseware from CD-Rom to interactive whiteboards and used in action in the accompanying CD Rom. Chapter 10 analyses the use and creation of electronic materials with popular authoring tools like Hot Potatoes to cre-



ate interactive exercises for learners. Chapter 11 tackles e-learning, online teaching and training with clear and insightful considerations for course design and the professional development online with mailing lists, discussion groups and communities of practice. Finally, chapter 12 is an outlook into the future with web 2.0 social media, virtual learning in Second Life and m-learning (mobile learning).

Writing a book to use technology can seem a bit paradoxical, as it may soon become outdated, given the rapid and constant evolution of Internet. For example, part of what was called preparing for the future (chapter 12) in 2007 is already embedded in the landscape of internet in 2009. Web 2.0 is mainstream and commonly used for teaching. Social networking with sites like Twitter, Facebook are gradually taking up the role of former discussion lists, online groups and RSS. Virtual Learning Environments (VLE) like Moodle are used in many schools and teaching institutions as a support to face to face programmes or totally online learning, although they begin to be supplemented with/by Personal Learning Environments (PLE), in the pursuit of engaging learners with integrated, connected and more student-centered models.

All in all, this book serves as a clear introductory guide into the use of technology for teaching, with practical ideas for classroom use and useful tips for implementation. It's a necessary transition support to move forward from 20th century text-based models to 21st century digital teaching. In 2007, Nussbaum-Beach said "We are the last generation of teachers who will have a choice whether or not to use or not to use the new technologies in the classroom." Well, I am not so sure. Can society afford digital illiteracy for learning anymore?

Reviewed by Sònia Guilana