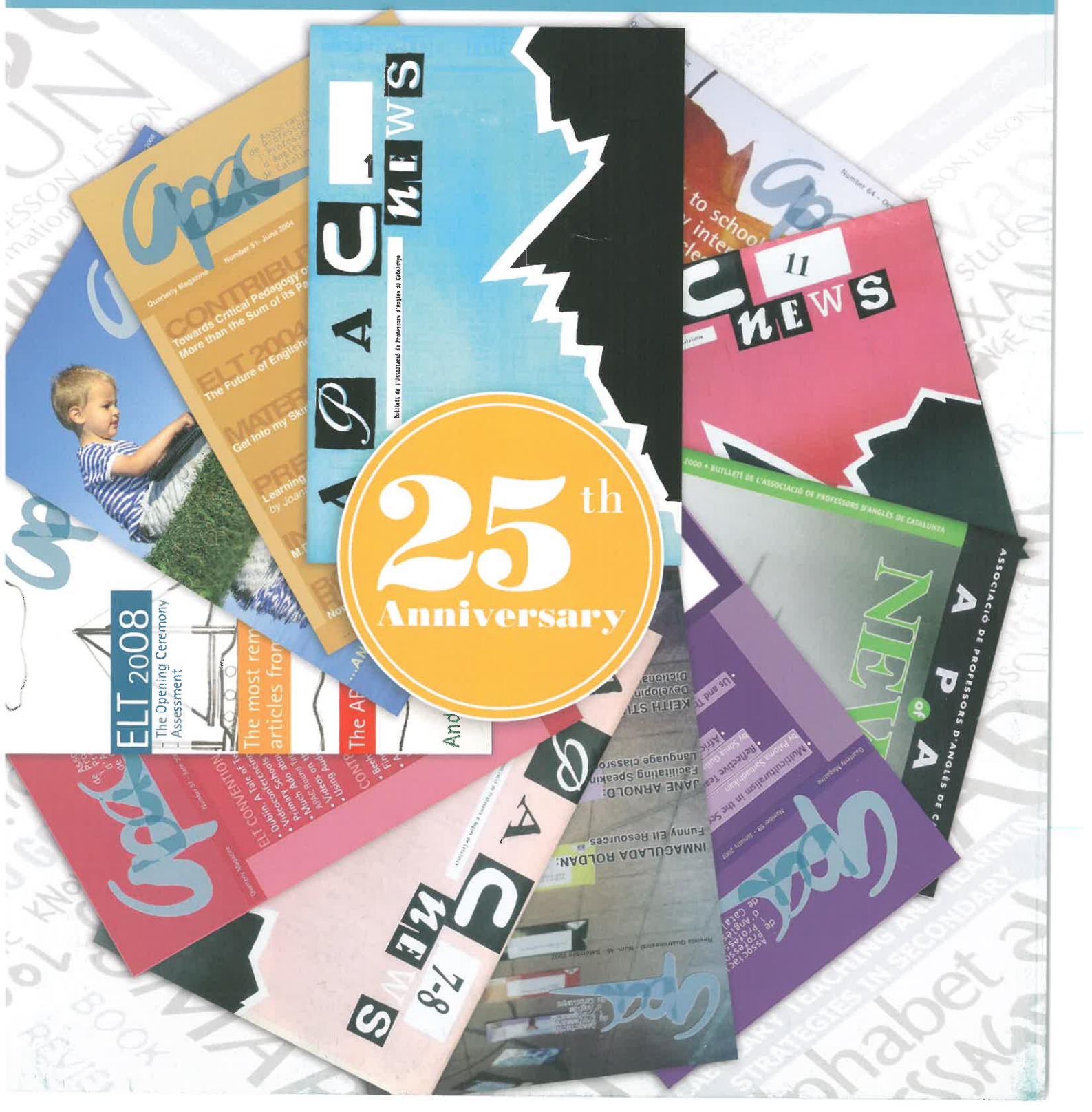


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Assessment

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Funny ELT Resources

JANE ARNOLD:
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ELT - Convention 2012

**solid learning
for liquid times**

February 23rd, 24th & 25th

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Editorial

The wheels of time keep rolling, our well-deserved vacations come to an end, and we find ourselves back in front of our students again, be they new ones or the continuation of groups we had last year.

In addition to changes in our students, there have also been changes in our profession... and not always positive ones. This year, many schools face drastic reductions in staff and resources, which will make their work harder.

APAC, as always, will try to make teachers' burdens lighter by offering new ideas and reflections for the classroom. In this issue, we have put together quite a bit of material from the 2011 APAC-ELT Convention, which we hope will be of interest to everyone. You will find the main points of the excellent opening speech by Luke Prodromou, ideas on how to work on literature by Annabel Fernández, points for working on writing in virtual environments by I. Higuera, A. López and S. Millán, and tips for working on the process of re-writing by Montse Irán. For primary school teachers, we have included hints from Chris Roland on how to make young students speak and a description of a project implemented by V. Goitia and C. Sugranyés in a school where 95% of the students come from immigrant families. And, for everybody, we have the contribution of L. Peterson on what can be considered grammatically correct these days and interviews with M. Irán and E. Llorca.

Even though we have stretched the size of this issue to a considerable length, we still were not able to include the complete text of all the articles. So, given their interest, two of them will be put on the web in their entirety. Also, we have devoted this issue to material generated by the APAC-ELT Convention, since we had so much to share with you. But, we are keenly interested in receiving articles on your teaching and on other topics related to the teaching and learning of English. So, we invite you all set a goal for yourselves this trimester to write something up for the APAC Journal. It's a win-win situation!

We hope that all of this material will be of interest to you and that it will give you new ideas. And we hope that the wheels of time spin out many gratifying experiences for all of you this year!

Best wishes, and the best of luck to you all,

The Editorial Team

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear colleagues,

Here we go again. This is no longer a commemoration year at APAC. The flourish of trumpets on the occasion of our 25th anniversary last year is over. It is time, quite simply, to keep going. There is something deeply substantial in that existentialist line by Samuel Beckett: "I must go on. I can't go on. I will go on". You are all going on in your classrooms and in APAC's board everyone is busy thinking about the future, not the past. The concepts that come to mind have to do with continuity, endurance, preservation, tenacity. That's the game: in life and in teaching. And that is why our main concern these days is to offer all members yet another interesting, useful, inspiring ELT Convention.

The motto for our general gathering next February is: *Solid Learning for Liquid Times*. It is indebted to the term *liquid modernity* coined by Bauman when trying to describe the present condition of the world. There seems to be an obvious truth in the fact that things are changing in the sense that social forms and institutions no longer have enough time to solidify and cannot serve as frames of reference for human actions and long-term life plans. Most people –not counting our students- have to find other ways to organise their lives. Individuals, Bauman would argue, have to involve themselves in an unending series of short-term projects and episodes that don't add up to the kind of sequence to which concepts like "career" and "progress" could traditionally be applied. We live under a sort of endemic uncertainty (not helped by the present financial crisis) that requires individuals who can be flexible and adaptable. Our guess is that only solid learning will be of any use for navigation in liquid times. As we put it in the presentation text of the convention: "A solid basis for learning in liquid times requires reflection, motivation, flexibility and inspiration, *how to* qualities which prepare for uncertainty, both in teachers and in students, and these have to grow from the inside, a rather difficult endeavour in times where easy-to-download seems to be the most coveted characteristic of goods, resources and knowledge". We'll take it from here and set into deep thinking. It will help to have the likes of Jorge Wagensberg –a man who's made thinking a way of life- as our guest speaker in the opening session. Will you join us?

With best wishes,

Miquel Berga
President

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ELT - Convention 2012

solid learning for liquid times

February 23rd, 24th & 25th

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Solid learning for liquid times

Bob Dylan sang in his 1963 *The Times They Are a Changin'* about the beginning of a new order of priorities in life, in culture, in politics and in education. The new order which bloomed in the 1960s has been shifting and evolving since then, and in our EFL field teachers who are now about to retire have lived through many changes. Those teachers started their profession with a piece of chalk and a blackboard, and lived changes in technology (from tapes to *Moodle* software), in how language is perceived and described (from grammar translation to communicative approaches), and in how learning is perceived and geared (from conductivism to socio-constructivism).

But no matter how familiar we teachers may be with changes in the recent past, society is now heading towards changes which affect the very roots of curriculum development and learning theories. Zygmunt Bauman, the English-Polish sociologist who has been publishing on what he calls the liquid modern era for the past 10 years, goes deeper, (and) beyond the changes we have witnessed throughout the 20th century. Durability and solidity are no longer an asset in a world that is continuously changing, and this not only affects tangible properties but also education and knowledge. If what is learnt today may not be necessary (or useful) tomorrow, then how can content be defined and made accessible and relevant to students?. How can reading in English be taught if there is widespread access to online translation? What English is to be chosen if different students will need different Englishes to cater for their different needs? An easy answer is possible: learning to learn is the way to go,... but on what basis should learning to learn be approached ?

A solid basis for learning in liquid times requires reflection, motivation, flexibility and inspiration, *how to* qualities which prepare for uncertainty, both in teachers and in students, and these have to grow from the inside, a rather difficult endeavour in times where easy-to-download seems to be the most coveted characteristic of goods, resources and knowledge.

Our Convention in 2012 will aim at tackling how we teachers of English can grow professionally and enable our students in the challenge to achieve solid learning that can be useful in whatever context they find themselves needing English. Jorge Wagensberg – director of Cosmocaixa Barcelona - has kindly accepted to give the Opening session and speakers who have a lot to say in this respect have already confirmed their participation: David Block, Adrian Underhill or Chris Roland, and we look forward to your responses to our Call for Papers.

The organizers

APAC - John McDowell Award 2011

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

BASES

Oberts a professorat i alumnat 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 **Premis APAC - John McDowell**, que tenen la finalitat de reconèixer l'esforç realitzat tant per professors com per alumnes en els seus treballs en llengua anglesa. Els premis volen promoure la recerca i la innovació pedagògica del professorat i donar un reconeixement a les activitats d'aula de l'alumnat. És per això que l'APAC us anima a presentar tant els vostres treballs com els dels vostres alumnes.

• MODALITAT A: TREBALLS PRESENTATS PER PROFESSORS (o futurs professors)

(Matèries optatives 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 de les matèries optatives 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
- 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€
- 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:
 - o Modalitat en la qual participa (Modalitat A, Modalitat B o Modalitat C)
 - o Nom, adreça, correu electrònic i telèfon de contacte del concursant
 - o Nivell educatiu o curs (en cas dels alumnes i grup classe)
 - o Escola i nom del professor/a
- **El termini de presentació dels premis finalitza el dia 31 de desembre de 2011.**
- El jurat estarà format per cinc membres d'APAC.
- Els premis es lliuraran en el marc de l'APAC- ELT Convention 2012
- 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 via e-mail, per correu postal o en mà:
 - a: APAC Gran Via de Les Corts Catalanes, 606 4rt 2a
 - Despatx F-G, 08007 Barcelona info@apac.es
- APAC no es responsabilitza dels treballs no recollits abans del dia 30 d'abril del 2012.





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Opening Lecture APAC 2011

40 years of motivating teachers and motivating learners

By Luke Prodrômou
Tape script by Ana Aguilar

My title is ambiguous: It would be conceited to say I have been 'motivating teachers' for 40 years. In fact, my title refers to the other meaning of 'motivating teachers': teachers who have motivated us.

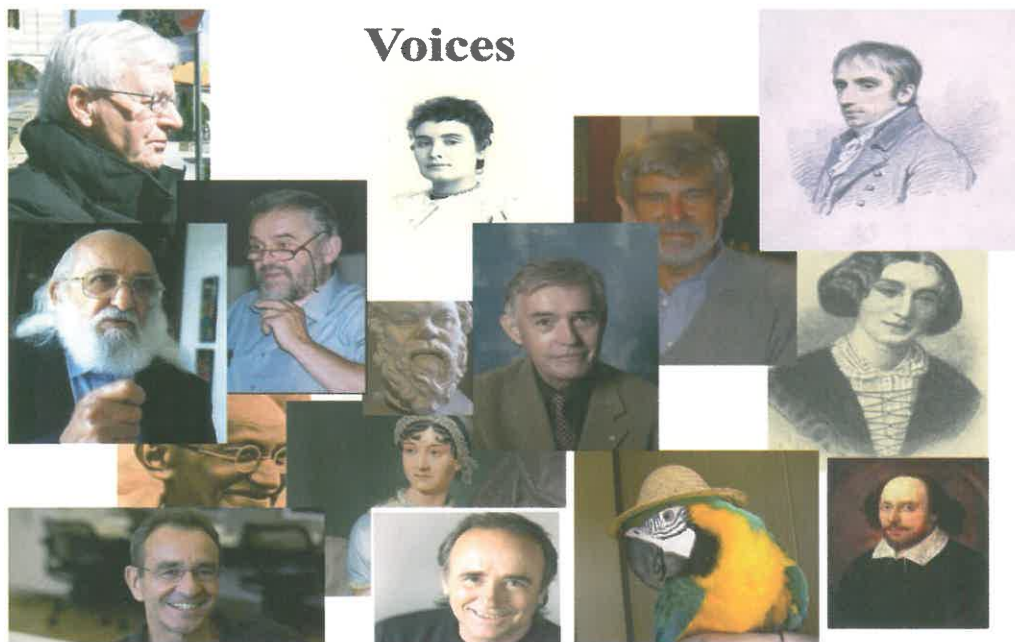
In this session, we will be having a conversation about teaching and learning, using the most powerful instrument in our repertoire: our voice.

Voices

First, we are going to use our voice to express our beliefs and feelings. For two minutes, I would like you to talk about one of these topics:

1. a film about teaching
2. someone who has influenced my teaching
3. what do we mean by expertise in teaching?

Use your voice; fill this lovely room with your creative voice. Next, I want you to use your voice again to project. From the back of the room, I would like you to shout out, at the appropriate moment and for good pedagogic purposes: we are going to play a game which involves you using your voice. To prompt you, I will show you a number of 'voices'- or the faces of people that have motivated me and perhaps you, too.



Luke Prodrômou is a freelance teacher, teacher-trainer and materials writer. He has trained teachers in many European and Latin American countries. Luke has published numerous articles, and written textbooks for all ages and levels. He has a special interest in drama for teaching purposes, the washback effect of exams and mixed-ability classes. Luke has published widely in ELT magazines and journals and is the author of *Flash on* (ELI, Italy) and *Grammar and Vocabulary for FCE* (Longman Pearson, 2011). He is also co-author of *Dealing with Difficulties* (Winner of the Ben Warren Prize and an English Speaking Union Award and shortlisted for an ELTON prize). Luke graduated from Bristol University and has an MA in *Shakespeare Studies* (Birmingham University) Diploma in TEFL (Leeds University) and a Ph.D (Nottingham University). His book *English as a Lingua Franca* was reissued in paperback in 2010. He has recently taught young learners in private language institutes in Thessaloniki and is currently an item-writer for the Greek state Examinations in English.

For each person you recognise, I would like you to shout out the name. For each correct name, you get a point. But make your voice heard, because if our pupils cannot hear us at the back of the room, it will be impossible for us to motivate them.

(Luke shows pictures one by one)

Audience: *Socrates!*

Luke: Well done. Socrates. You get a point. I include him in my pantheon of great teachers for many of the wise things he said. For example, he said: *I know one nothing, I know nothing.* This statement seems to me to capture that state of open-mindedness and readiness to learn that is a prerequisite for continual teacher development; a willingness to learn something new, however experienced or expert we may feel ourselves to be.

(Luke shows another picture)

Audience: Mario Rinvolucri

Luke: One point. From Mario we have learned so much on a practical classroom level and always with a touch of humanity.

Audience: Scott Thornbury

Luke: .. Scott, from here in Catalunya. From Scott, we have been reminded of the importance of what learners bring to the classroom and the beauty of relying on learner input rather than the paraphernalia of technology.

(Luke shows another picture)

Audience: Anne Sullivan

Luke: ...teacher of the deafblind Helen Keller.

(Luke shows another picture)

Luke: George Eliot, author of the wonderful *Middlemarch*. The society she describes is like a community of interconnected parts. It is like the classroom; if you do something in one part of the network, it affects the whole.

(Luke shows another picture)

Audience: Henry Widdowson

Luke: ...who has written eloquently of the importance of moving from principle to practice, from

practice to principle in language education. He reminds us of the practical value of theory.

(Luke shows another picture)

Audience: Paulo Freire

Luke: ...the great educator from Brazil, who talked about education as the practice of freedom.

(Luke shows another picture)

Audience: Joan Manuel Serrat

Luke : ...the great Catalan singer, from whom I have learned a bit of Spanish and poetry from Antonio Machado. A reminder that language learning is also a passion for the culture of the country where the language is spoken.

Informal research

Those, then, are just some of the voices that have shaped my own voice as a teacher. I hope this activity will encourage you to recall your own diverse voices from the past and how they have made you what you are as a teacher.

Next, I am going to summarise the results of an online discussion about good language teaching; I will sum up the issues that came up during the discussion between 100 teachers from different countries: the controversies, and the things they agreed about. It is informal research into pedagogic expertise and I will later compare it with more formal empirical research. The question I asked the participants was who 'was your best teacher and why?' Here are the main issues that emerged from the online exchange of views:

Good teachers:

1. born or made?
2. spontaneity or preparation?
3. knowledge of the subject or personal qualities?
4. the practice of language or the practice of freedom?
5. repeat or reflect?
6. technicians or educators?

The actual words teachers used to describe their best teachers were along these lines:

'knowledgeable, passionate, humorous, open-minded, talkative'

'...supportive, especially when students have to take a difficult exam'

ELT Convention

'The best teacher was strict up to a point and at the same time so patient'

'The best teacher I've ever had was calm, open and sympathetic. You could discuss everything with her...'

'A good teacher is friendly. Sometimes he tells jokes in order to cheer us up'

'First of all, she should know very well what she has to teach'

'she was very well organised and dedicated to her job; but also made me study hard'

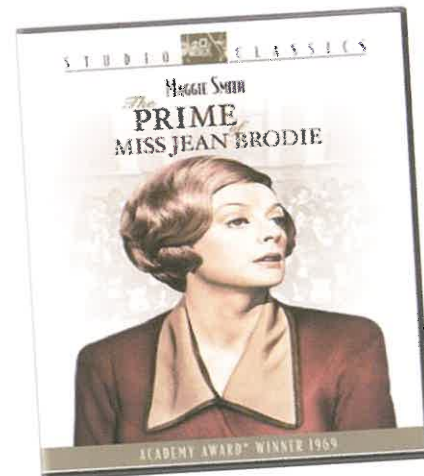
'knows the subject and facilitates'

'Talks about other subjects'

'Uses mistakes'

I was interested in taking these impressions, often unsystematic, often contradictory, and trying to identify useful patterns, without being prescriptive. On the one hand, good teaching cannot be reduced to a checklist or a formula but, on the other, in teacher training and teacher development we cannot pretend that 'anything goes'. We need some idea of where we are going, what kind of teachers we want to train and develop, what skills and competencies to focus on. In this bit of informal research and in a similar one I conducted with another 100 teachers in a written survey writing a few years ago, the comments that came up again and again are summed up in the following chart:

The most frequent quality of good teaching which informants referred to was: **FRIENDLY**, at least in Western Europe, where most of the participants in the survey were based. The quality of being 'friendly' may not be a defining quality of good teaching in other parts of the world and in different cultures. I was curious to know if what we think in Europe about expertise applies across cultures or is it dependent on cultural context? Is there a universal quality of a good teaching? Is 'Friendliness' universal or culture bound? Can you be a good teacher without being friendly with your learners? We hear about really strict teachers, the Miss Jean Brodie type (the heroine of Muriel Spark's novel: *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*), who were effective in their own way; but perhaps, deep down, Miss Brodie *was* being friendly, despite being a bit of a fascist, not to mince words. If this is the case, there is a contradiction here that requires further exploration.



	QUALITIES	VOTES
1	Friendly	52
2	Explained well	48
3	Sense of humour	32
4	Knew the subject	30
5	Patient	29
6	Kind	26
7	Believed in students	21
8	Interesting	17
9	Talked about other things	17
10	Enthusiastic	14

HUMOUR is also frequently mentioned in my surveys. It is an issue that worries many teachers. Like being 'friendly' it is potentially dangerous: 'If you give kids an inch they take a mile'. Some teachers feel learners will eat them alive if they make any jokes. So it is sometimes said that for the first lesson with a new class it is best if you put on your best Miss Brody manner, and then, later, when you have laid down the rules of the game, you can relax.

My informal research was done with adults. Now let's look at some more recent research done online with young learners and see if we can observe any patterns in the two sets of data.

actually match up with what good teachers do in the classroom. The first teacher I will look at is Haluk, from Izmir, Turkey. I had gone to Izmir to observe a class taught by Haluk at elementary level with young learners of 9-10 years old. I arrived at the Staff Room and there was Haluk with his pens, his flashcards, textbook and everything he needed for his lesson. I was surprised to see a bandage round his head. There seemed to be blood trickling down his forehead. I asked: *Haluk, are you alright?* And he says: *Do not worry, I'll be OK. Follow me.*

As we walked along the corridors and up and down stairs towards his classroom he attracted

	Young learners say...GLTs...
1	friendly
2	Firm but not strict
3	Are motivating and fun
4	Involve all learners
5	Have a good sense of humour
6	Do not burden learners
7	Are passionate, enthusiastic
8	Are patient, sympathetic
9	Encourage and reward all
10	Are calm and relaxed



In this piece of research, conducted at a different time and in a different context from my own, **FRIENDLINESS** is again the teacher quality most frequently cited; but **MOTIVATION** and **FUN, PASSION, ENTHUSIASM** and **PATIENCE** also come up in both surveys.

Teachers in action

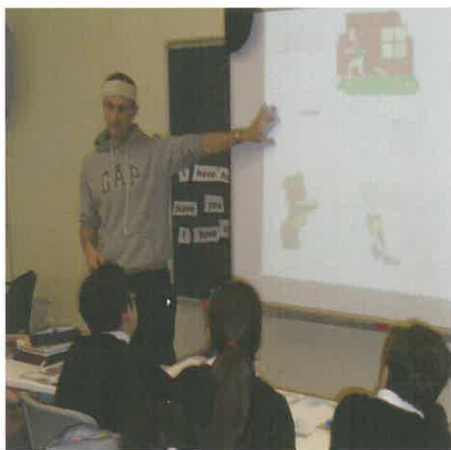
In the next part of my presentation, I will look at actual teachers in action, to see if the qualities of good teaching that my informants mention

more and more pupils, asking: *Mr Haluk, what's wrong? Problem, problem? Blood, blood?* and he answered: *'Do not worry, I'll be OK. Follow me.'* And they followed him along the corridor. He gathered these little kids like the Piper of Hamelin. Finally, we arrived and Haluk stormed into the classroom. The first thing he said, in a loud voice, was: *It stinks here, Open the windows!* He then launched into the lesson and encouraged kids to ask questions about his 'injury': *What have you done? What happened?* They asked in imperfect English. It soon became apparent that he was try-

ELT Convention

ing to teach the Present Perfect and he had had this idea of creating a context which would make it necessary for kids to use the target language. There was nothing wrong with his head. He had just put a little ketchup on and covered it in a bandage.

He seemed to me to be a very good teacher. He created a context, he created interest, even before he went into the classroom and he kept the students attentive and engaged throughout the class. He and the class also seemed to like being together.



But what about the opening gambit: 'it stinks in here'? Even this ambiguous comment is perfectly consistent with the principles of motivation

as developed in the classic model by Abraham Maslow.

Maslow summed up his views in a pyramid of motivation; at the top of the pyramid we have motivation as self-actualisation or personal fulfilment. But to achieve that we need to fulfil the most basic needs first. If we do not satisfy the physiological needs of our learners we will never reach the higher levels: by 'physiological needs' we mean not feeling hungry or thirsty; not wanting to go to the toilet; if the room is too hot or too cold or if it smells bad for whatever reason we will struggle to get students' attention. Thus, it seems to me that Haluk's initial cry of 'open the windows, it stinks in here' was a good sign in our search for the good teacher. I once had a class who refused to learn English because the room had a radiator leaking and it smelled awful. As a result, the kids were restless and inattentive. So Haluk was right to open the window; otherwise, the learners would be thinking about the smell and not about the present perfect. Next, we're going to talk about another two teachers, not in Turkey but somewhere else, in western Europe. Again, I was privileged enough to be invited to watch them teaching. Let's call the first teacher 'Maria' and the second one 'Julia'. The first lesson by Maria was not very successful while Julia's lesson went very well. This what I saw in each lesson:



Unsuccessful lesson

Stood up
Walked around
Smiled a lot
Played games
Got them to do pw
Was very polite
Was very friendly

Maria



On the face it, Maria had done all the right things as a teacher: she did the kind of things we are taught on teacher training courses and are encouraged to do by the latest handbooks for teachers. In a word, Maria was 'methodologically correct'.

Methodological correctness

There is now a long tradition of **METHODOLOGICAL CORRECTNESS**, which represents a common-sense view of what modern, progressive teachers are supposed to do in the classroom; this orthodox view, inspired by communicative-humanistic theories of education, suggests that a good lesson involves things like:

- using the space by not sitting down during the lesson
- motivating students via the use of game-like activities
- pair and group work
- communicative activities
- focus on meaning and use rather than form
- social interaction
- being friendly and polite.
- encouraging personal expression

On the other hand, Julia seemed to be methodologically *incorrect*: doing grammar, correcting a lot of mistakes, sitting, being serious, explain-

The 'expert'

Sat
Was serious
Did grammar exercises
Corrected errors
Was strict
Explained rules
nominated

Julia



ing the correct answers to tests or homework exercises.

How do we interpret this apparent contradiction of the insights of our informal research and the principles of mainstream ELT methodology? Why did Julia's conventional, apparently teacher-centred focus on form, 'work', while Maria's methodologically correct lesson caused chaos?

Empirical research

In order to throw light on the puzzle of Maria and Julia, I am going to look at the results of empirical research into expertise in language teaching. I am not going to try and guess why Julia's 'grammar' lesson worked but quote from a book called *Teacher Cognition* by Simon Borg. In his book, Borg summarises the research into expertise in applied linguistics conducted over the last 25 years. Borg draws on research using observations, interviews, journals, questionnaires and other research devices in order to explore what expert teachers do when they teach well. Here are some of the findings:

Expert teachers:

- have knowledge derived from the classroom, not from books.
- know a lot about their students even before they meet them
- use their knowledge to make predictions about what might happen in the classroom

-pay more attention to language issues than novice teachers....who worry more about classroom management

-learn to automatize the routines associated with managing the class; this skill leaves them free to focus on content

-improvise more than novice teachers—they make greater use of interactive decision-making. She does not ignore what comes up but incorporates it into the lesson.

-build on students' difficulties

-notice errors and classify them. There is nothing wrong with correcting errors. Students want to be corrected but teachers do not. There is a conflict of perception here

-maintain active student involvement

-have a clear language learning focus

-internalize theory and link theory to practice

-are able to articulate their pedagogic principles and make conscious decisions.

-are both technically skilled and emotionally intelligent.

The mystery of Julia's success may well lie in her exemplifying some of the above practices of expert teaching as revealed by empirical analysis.

A fine teacher

Let me end on a personal note.

Many years ago, in 1967, when I was just 16 years old, I had a teacher named John Wakeley. He was our English teacher, responsible for language, literature and the school drama club. He was one of my best teachers ever. Why? Here I will just say, he taught us two things which have remained with me till today, 44 years later. First of all, through the drama activ-

ities we did together, he taught us to use our voices; in playing our roles effectively, we needed to learn to project and make the most of voice in terms of its power to express feeling and attitude. Both volume and expressiveness of voice as we have seen are important tools for good teachers. Secondly, John taught us to love his subject: to love literature and language, to love the words of the great writers and I remember 44 years later, lines John taught us, like Shakespeare's:

*If music be the food of love, play on,
Give me excess of it; that surfeiting,
The appetite may sicken, and so die*

He taught us to love Wordsworth too, the romantic poet of nature. Because at the end of the day the greatest teacher is not John or Julia but nature and the respect for nature; in the world we are living in, in the mess we are in today, perhaps we have to go outside the classroom to find lessons for inside the classroom. Wordsworth says:

*Come forth into the light of things,
Let Nature be your teacher*

*One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can*

Here is John, then and now, 44 years later; Wordsworth's words may well apply to John:



**'...a good man's
life...
his little, nameless,
unremembered,
acts of kindness
and of love'**

Wordsworth



When I asked some of John's students to look back at why John was a fine teacher, they said things like:

'...he had a passion for literature; he was able to link language to other areas of life; he had a sense of humour; he was a good egg...'

Conclusion

To sum up: we need to listen to the voices that have inspired us; and like the King in the *King's Speech* to discover our own voice, a voice that is resonant and rich with other voices.

I do not want to simplify what it means to be - and continue to become a good teacher. It is a complex process. As Simon Borg says:

'Expertise in language teaching is a complex, dynamic process, involving constant: engagement, experimentation and exploration'.

Becoming a good teacher is a never ending journey of constant discovery and delight.

When we are happy in our job the kids will like what they hear and our voice will spread a message to them that education is important, education is powerful - it gives you a voice. And when the class is over, those kids will go home and tell their mum and their dad, their abuelo and their abuelita:

'I had a good lesson today'.

And they in turn will tell others. Education is important and it is enjoyable. The free-market sirens that would cut back on education for all and save money on the best education we can give all children must be resisted. Kids need to have chance to acquire their own voice, to learn from good teachers in a positive learning environment. Years later, the message of good teaching will continue to spread, multiplying the voices speaking out for a better, more just society.

Films related to education that might interest you:

- Dead Poets' Society
- To Sir, with love

- Dangerous Minds
- The Wave
- Blackboard Jungle
- Kes
- The Blackboard
- Les Choristes
- Take the Lead
- Lord of the Flies
- My Fair Lady/Pygmalion
- Between the Walls
- Italian for beginners
- The Principal
- The History Boys
- The Freedom Writer's Diary
- Goodbye Mr Chips
- The Emperor's Club
- Stand and Deliver
- An Education
- Educating Rita
- Madadayo
- Prime of Miss Jean Brodie
- If...
- The Browning Version
- Billy Elliot
- The King's Speech.

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for approximating their speaking patterns to the native speaker norms by adhering to the principles of rhythm, rhyme, and intonation. Students in the 21st century live in a digital age, dominated by ICT tools which provide immediate short-term gratification and in general do not demand sustained concentration. On the other hand, reading literary texts requires concentration over a period of time, hard work from the reader and considerable patience (Carter & Long, 1991). If as EFL teachers we are to engage our digital age students in reading and enjoying literature we may as well use ICT tools to our advantage and present literary texts broadcast on YouTube, poems accessed through websites (Sivaplan, 2009) like the Poetry Archive (www.poetryarchive.org) or short-stories presented on computer game video clip format. Many of these activities show that poetry, or literature at large, can be a collaborative medium which can be co-authored, slammed, recorded or filmed by makers working together in the same real or virtual space (Dymoke & Hughes, 2009). The use of literature can also inspire students to take risks with the target language, enrich their vision, fostering critical thinking, stimulating their creativity and promote their greater cultural tolerance and sensitivity (Wen Su, 2010). As literature abounds in imaginative language it provides students with a context to engage emotionally with the language and nourish their capacity for imaginative and expressive use of language by giving them agency and voice (Sivasubramaniam, 2006).

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO USING LITERATURE IN THE EFL

It is essential for teachers to choose an approach to help us develop our own classroom materials and for using these materials in a way that is relevant to our stu-

dents (Lazar, 1993). The three main approaches to teaching literature (Carter & Long, 1991) differ in terms of their focus on the text. The first approach regards the text as a cultural artefact; in the second the text is used as a focus for grammatical and structural analysis and for the third approach the text is the stimulus for personal growth activities (Khahib, 2011b).

1- THE CULTURAL MODEL

This model represents the traditional approach to teaching literature, it requires learners to explore and interpret the social, literary and historical context of a specific text. It is teacher centred and has been largely rejected by TEFL. (Carter & Long, 1991).

2- THE LANGUAGE MODEL

This is the most common approach to literature in the TEFL enables the learners to access a text in a systematic and methodical way in order to exemplify specific linguistic features (Carter & Long, 1991). This approach lends itself well to the repertoire of strategies used in language teaching-cloze procedure, prediction exercises. (Savvidou, 2004).

3. THE PERSONAL GROWTH MODEL

It focuses on the particular use of language in a text and placing it in a specific cultural context. Students are encouraged to express their opinions and feelings to make connections between their own personal and cultural experiences and those in the text. Learners are encouraged to express their opinions, feelings and make connections between their personal experiences and those expressed in the text (Savvidou, 2004).

4. AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

These models are necessarily abstractions and ideal types but in reality there is a greater overlap

between the models and this is what I aim to do here, to advocate for an approach that integrates the three models. An integrated approach stresses that literature in a EFL classroom can make the learning experience much more enjoyable and stimulating than classroom instruction that requires mere acquisition of the linguistic component of the text (Savvidou, 2004). This approach therefore contributes to students' personal development and it enhances their cultural awareness and develops their language skills. Students are encouraged to articulated their thoughts and feelings on texts and explore why they responded as they did.

As Gillian Lazar (Lazar, 1999) explains:

"By exposing students to the rich language of the text, we can expand their language awareness, their overall knowledge of how words and grammar can be used. By presenting students with the complex themes in the literary text we can motivate them to reflect imaginatively on their own experience and on that of writers in different societies. By gently encouraging them to make their own interpretations of a text, we can develop their confidence in forming well-reasoned interpretations of the language that they read and hear"

LITERATURE AS A RESOURCE: A SET OF ACTIVITIES

The EFL set I have prepared consists of a collection of activities that revolve around 5 authentic contemporary literary texts: including 2 poems, 2 excerpts from novels and 1 short story. My choice was less concerned with evaluating the "aesthetic merits of texts" and view literature with a small "l" rather than

with a capital “L” (McRae, 1991). Therefore I chose texts that can be stimulating for students and that can be read between the lines. I also bore in mind the language difficulty factor because access is restricted if students cannot attain a basic level of comprehension and as a general rule it is better to choose texts which are not too far beyond their normal reading comprehension (Carter & Long, 1991). Another key factor for my choice of texts was access on an experiential level, that is, students need to be able to identify with the experiences, thoughts and situations depicted in the text to be able to discover the kind of pleasure and enjoyment that comes from making the text their own knowledge of themselves and of the world that they inhabit. The themes of the texts chosen are: love and loss, sadness over a deprived childhood, racial, sexual and aesthetic discrimination, everyday pleasures and dreams.

The extracts from novels are both letters, one is from “*Angela’s Ashes*” by Frank McCourt and the other one from “*Eat, Pray, Love*” by Elizabeth Gilbert both novels have been made into films. Students enjoy watching a film and it is more likely for them to have seen the film version of a book than it is for them to have read the text so it is engaging and motivating to appeal to texts they have had access to outside the EFL classroom. If the text is difficult students may find that the film is a superb way in, (Carter & Long, 1991), however in the activities I have designed case I have just used the film trailers a lead-in activity into the text. However here the film trailers are used as an aid in language teaching but I do not dispense with the text but supplement the study of the printed version. I also use two captions of the film “*Pretty Woman*” to make students think on a deeper level of the narrative voice of Grace Nichols’ poem “*The Fat Black Woman goes shopping*” and to foster group discussion.

Listening to a recording or watching a video clip of a literary work may certainly be stimulating for some students and I have used Dorothea Grossman’s reading of her own poem “*Future Past*” and a film that illustrates Dan Rhodes’ short story “*Toy*”. Though watching and listening can be a passive process, (Carter & Long, 1991), reading a literary work is certainly not passive, and though reading literature may be harder it is part of the learning process and, hopefully, a pleasure. However in this process of discovery the audio and video feature of the literary texts help me to capture students attention and interest and then allows me to move on to work on the literary texts.

This set of activities is designed to be used with teenage and adult EFL in 2nd and 3rd level at EOIs, so at a pre-intermediate to intermediate level. There is practice for the four skills and for what John McRae calls the fifth skill: thinking. Following Lazar guidelines (Lazar, 1999) I have prepared different type of activities and for every text and there are:

- 1) Warm-up activities
- 2) Vocabulary activities
- 3) Comprehension activities,
- 4) Activities concerning the language of the text
- 5) Activities to encourage inference and interpretation
- 6) Activities to encourage creative writing

The questions posed are aimed at different levels of understanding of the texts, and they range from low-order to high-order and they try to help students work out for themselves what the texts mean. There are language-based vocabulary activities to help them deal with texts and encourage them to find the meaning of words from context. On the one hand there are factual reading comprehension activities that focus on the factual meaning of the text and on the other hand there are activities concerning the language of the

text which focus on the linguistic and literary qualities of the text: unusual uses of collocation, binary oppositions, figurative language, rhyme and style....There are activities designed to encourage inference and interpretation, to make students reflect on their own experiences in connection with the texts.

Finally creative response activities are designed to encourage students to take risks and play with the language creatively and imaginatively (McRae, 1991) either speaking or writing. If we regard creative writing as the production of texts which have an aesthetic rather than a purely informative, instrumental or pragmatic purpose (Maley, 2009). One of the main feature of creative writing texts “is a playful engagement with language, stretching and testing its rules to the limit in a guilt-free atmosphere, where risk is encouraged” (Maley, 2009).

Creative writing puts the emphasis on the right side of the brain, with a focus on feelings, physical sensations, intuition and musicality which is a healthy restoration of the balance between logical and intuitive faculties (Maley, 2009) and it increases students’ self-confidence and self-esteem because they discover things for themselves about the language and about themselves too (Maley, 2009).

In a nutshell, these activities are designed to help students discover the kind of pleasure and enjoyment which comes from making a text their own and to create conditions under which students can develop genuine response to literary texts. As Elliott (Elliott, 1999) points out

“My feeling is that literature can only be understood if the student develops literary competence. The exact nature of this competence is hard to define but it must intricately involved with reader’s response.”

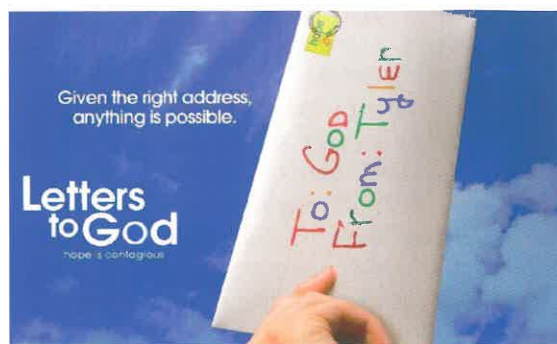
WRAPPING IT UP: A conclusion.

After working with my students with this set of activities I can conclude that literature provides a motivating drive for language learning and teaching due to its spectacular features not readily found in any other texts (Khabib, 2011a). Literature as an EFL resource is a priceless pedagogic tool and the more it is used in ELT the more students will be able to acquire literary competence, use their critical skills, grow personally and gain both systematic knowledge of the language and meanings interpreted. Furthermore it develops EFL students' motivation in learning English and in reading literature and it enhances the enjoyment of reading in English.

Students showed deep personal involvement with the texts, engaging imaginatively with literature and shifting the focus of their attention beyond the more mechanical aspects of the foreign language system and interpretations (Sivasubramaniam, 2006).

The creative writing texts I corrected were rich, interesting and genuinely enjoyable to read possibly the best pieces of writing I have ever come across.

As EFL teachers we can use our particular stage to promote interest on reading and literature and its wealth, in the belief that literature provides language learners with highly motivational material of an incomparably rich nature (Elliot 1990). Probably the key to success in using literature in the EFL classroom depends on the works selected and in working in "a communicative and interactive way which involve students experiencing language, playing with language, analysing language, responding to language and enjoying language" (O'Sullivan, 1991). Last but not least, another key component which underlies students' successful engagement with the literature in EFL is teachers' enthusiasm for it and their ability to convey this enthusiasm to students



and to help them respond with the same enjoyment and pleasure. Motivated teachers can be highly motivating for their students.

Furthermore I believe that we as teachers should engage with extensive and intensive reading ourselves and in the same spirit in creative writing, (Maley, 2009). The benefits of teachers participating in creative writing are remarkable: it keeps our English fresh and vibrant and it has an effect on the writer's level of energy in general (Maley, 2009) and this inevitably impacts on our relationships with students. I think it is worth embarking on this journey that is rewarded with motivated and therefore motivating teachers, motivating classes and motivated students.

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ANGELA'S ASHES by Frank McCourt

WARMING UP

- What school did you use to go to as a child? Did you have Religious Education as a subject?
- Were you baptized? Did you learn the Catechism? Did you do the Communion and Confirmation?
- What kind of written assignments were you given at school? Did you enjoy them? What did you like writing about best?
- Where did you grow up? What was the weather like?



ABOUT THE BOOK

Angela's Ashes is Frank McCourt's autobiographical novel told from his own point-of-view as a child. Because of this perspective, the novel is often as funny as it is tragic.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pzAyZygyfjo>

VOCABULARY

Match the words with their definitions below:

- 1.- Manna
- 2.- Fists
- 3.- Consumption
- 4.- Damp

- A) a hand with the fingers and thumb held tightly in
- B) slightly wet, especially in a way that is not pleasant or comfortable
- C) (in the Bible) a food which dropped from heaven and prevented Moses and his people from dying of hunger in the desert
- D) old-fashioned for tuberculosis



READING AN EXTRACT

JESUS AND THE WEATHER

This is my composition. I don't think Jesus Who is Our Lord would have liked the weather in Limerick because it's always raining and the Shannon keeps the whole city damp. My father says the Shannon is a killer river because it killed my two brothers. When you look at pictures of Jesus He's always wandering around ancient Israel in a sheet. It never rains there and you never hear of anyone coughing or getting consumption or anything like that and no one has a job there because all they do is stand around and eat manna and shake their fists and go to crucifixions.

Anytime Jesus got hungry all He had to do was go up the road to a fig tree or an orange tree and have His fill. If He wanted a pint He could wave His hand over a big glass and there was the pint. Or He could visit Mary Magdalene and her sister, Martha, and they'd give Him His dinner no questions asked and He'd get his feet washed and dried with Mary Magdalene's hair while Martha washed the dishes, which I don't think is fair. Why should she have to wash the dishes while her sister sits out there chatting away with Our Lord? It's a good thing Jesus decided to be born Jewish in that warm place because if he was born in Limerick he'd catch the consumption and be dead in a month and there wouldn't be any Catholic Church and there wouldn't be any Communion or Confirmation and we wouldn't have to learn the catechism and write compositions about Him.

The End.

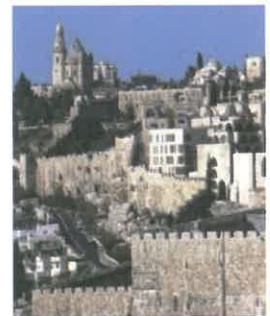
READING COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

11.- In the text there is a clear contrast between life in Ancient Israel and life in Limerick in the 1940s. Classify the words used to describe each place:

LIMERICK



ANCIENT ISRAEL



What are the connotations linked to each place?

What has the writer chosen to focus on and why?

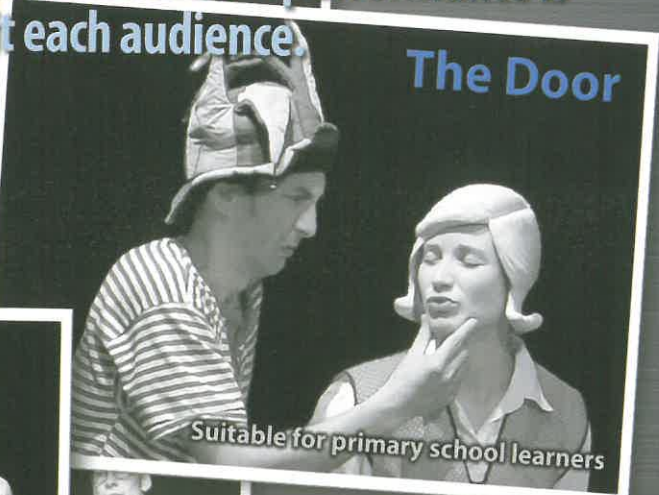
What is the relationship of character to place?

What does the extract suggest about the story?

Write your own composition from the perspective of an eight-year-old explaining how your childhood was affected by the place and the time you were brought up in. Make it as humorous as you can.

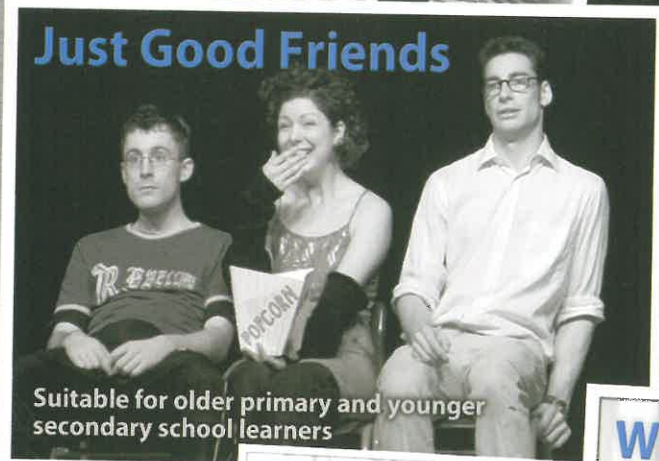
For more activities read the full article in
<http://www.apac.es/publications/>

a "made to measure" English language theatre with specific plays for specific ages and levels and where each performance is tailored to suit each audience.



The Door

Suitable for primary school learners

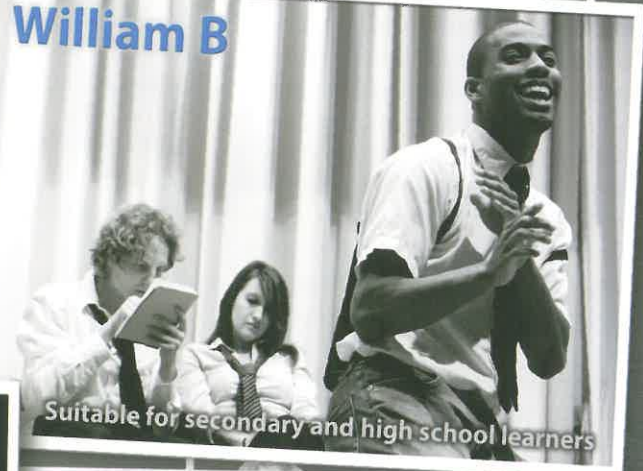


Just Good Friends

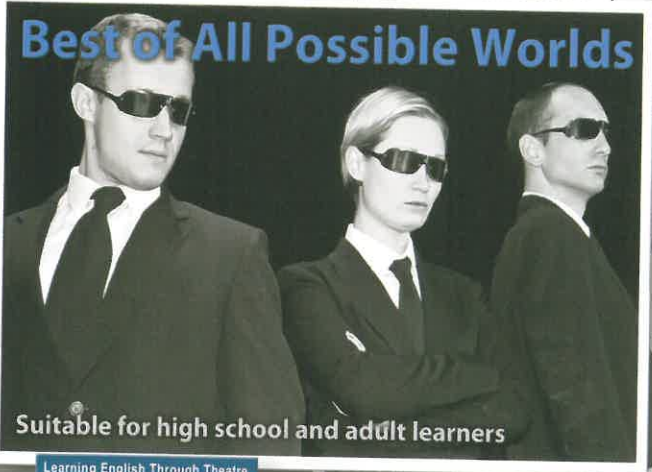
Suitable for older primary and younger secondary school learners



William B



Suitable for secondary and high school learners



Best of All Possible Worlds

Suitable for high school and adult learners



Learning English Through Theatre



ENGLISH THEATRE COMPANY



The foreign Language Classroom: A Positive Context for Promoting Plurilingual

by Goitia, Verónica & Sugranyes, Caterina

Mobility, immigration and economic matters are currently leading to new forms of contact among diverse groups of people and this contact inevitably involves contact among different languages. In Barcelona itself more than 200 different languages have been identified as coexisting among the inhabitants¹, whether in the home, at school or work or on the streets. Given this situation, there is an urgent need to identify and to promote plurilingual competences among our students in order to prepare them for the world in which they are living.

The aim of this article is describe a project carried out in an English class of a 6th year primary school where 95% of the students were of foreign origin and 10 different mother tongues coexisted in the

class. Stories were created and written in English and were then translated into all the mother tongues of the members of the group of pupils who had invented the stories. These were then read to P3, P4, P5 and 1st year primary pupils in English and in all the languages spoken in the group.

Not only did the general level of English of the class improve but all the languages of the pupils were also used and visualized leading to overall academic improvement and an increase in plurilingual and intercultural competence.

✿ Setting the framework

The Catalan Curriculum for Primary Education² underlines the importance for all pupils to acquire

an intercultural communicative competence in accordance with the society in which they are living. What is more, it states that this intercultural competence should be worked on from all levels even though it seems especially relevant to the learning of English. Moreover and related to this, it establishes the imperative of working towards a communicative competence in all languages which again not only derives directly from the contents of the Common European Framework for Languages (CEFR)³ but is also essential, bearing in mind the current situation of schools in Catalonia and elsewhere, where language and cultural diversity is more and more present.

Children should finish Primary school having the ability to com-

¹ <http://www.linguamon.cat/>

² <http://www20.gencat.cat/portal/site/Educacio/menuitem>.

³ http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/cadre_en.asp

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communicate 'perfectly' in Catalan, considered to be the language of Catalonia, and also in Spanish. They should also show respect towards linguistic diversity and desire to learn other languages and to learn from all languages and cultures.

The Catalan education system is based on a bilingual immersion system envisaged, when it was implemented, to promote Catalan competence among all students who came from Spanish family backgrounds. It was expected to have linguistic educational and social benefits for the students involved (Muñoz 2000). It led to a language shift for many children who spoke Spanish at home and Catalan at school. Children receive instruction in a Catalan immersion system and have Spanish as a separate subject, in order to guarantee that they will complete their compulsory education being fluent in both languages. This model is based on Cummins' Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis (1979) which establishes the existence of a general linguistic competence which can be linked to one language or to another. Cummins' underlying linguistic competence suggests the inexistence of separate compartments for each language and the existence of an underlying capacity general to all languages (1984).

It could be suggested that the bilingual approach on which the Catalan education system is based is no longer applicable, as an increasing number of schools have many more foreign students than Catalan students. A high percentage of these students no longer have just one home language. Many have two, three or even four home languages.

The importance of the L1 Cummins suggests that, in order to ensure effective transference from one language to another, the individual must have a minimum threshold level in one of the two languages. If this level exists, to be able to achieve all the positive effects of being bilingual, the individ-

ual must reach a second threshold competence level in both levels. If this is not attained, the effects of being bilingual may be negative, as neither of the languages can be learned efficiently. Therefore the use and visibility of mother tongues seems an imperative in order to work towards correct language competence and recent studies reveal that knowing other languages benefits the use of the first language (Cook 2003).

• Learning of additional languages

Extensive research has been carried out on the advantages that bilingual and multilingual pupils have with regards to language learning in comparison to monolingual speakers. (Cenoz and Genesse 1998). It has been found that bilingual speakers generally have higher linguistic competences than monolinguals and 'use' these linguistic skills in their first, second, and perhaps third language to learn a third or fourth one (Cummins 1984). Metalinguistic awareness and strategies such as risk taking, making mistakes, translating, adapting words, understanding general meaning, which are an integral part of learning a foreign language are much more commonly used by bilingual and or multilingual students than by monolingual students (Lasagabaster 1997).

• Translation as a tool to promote the use of languages

Translation, used as a tool to promote the mother tongues of all the pupils in the class, provides teachers and learners who do not know the source or target language to get in touch with a new language and culture. It helps to live new experience of otherness through the mediation between different cultures (Hélot, 2010) and therefore improves additional language skills as it makes mother tongues and all languages visible in the classroom.

In a multilingual context translation can be considered an opportunity to highlight lesser known languages. It seems especially relevant when the languages are not part of the environment where its speakers live. Translating for example from English into Tagalog entails promoting the language to the same level as English, giving it the same importance, making the language visible to others.

✿ Setting the context

The story book project was carried out in a state infant and primary school in the Raval neighbourhood of Barcelona where 92% of the pupils are of foreign origin, 20 nationalities coexist and over 15 languages are spoken. Mainly children are from Pakistan, Philippines and South America. There is also a relatively high number of unjustified absences (a pupil who, from one day to the next, stops coming to school). This is what is called "Matrícula viva".

There is therefore a diversity of levels in each class depending on the origin of the students, their arrival, adaptation, capacities, and on course their mother tongue which entails on the other hand, a great multicultural and multilingual richness.

Catalan is the main language of communication in the school. All the teachers and staff speak Catalan to all the pupils and with each other. All subjects are taught in Catalan except for Spanish and English, however only 2% of the pupils speak Catalan as their home language.

Apart from pupils who arrived recently and have some difficulties understanding Catalan, the rest of them understand Catalan, but rarely use the language to communicate orally. They use Spanish to communicate with each other in the playground and with their friends when they are not in school.

ELT Convention

English is also only learnt and spoken at school.

• The English class

A humanistic, constructivist and communicative approach based very much on each pupil's needs and demands is followed in the English classes. They know they should talk in English at all times but other languages are also accepted as a means of communication. Mistakes are understood to

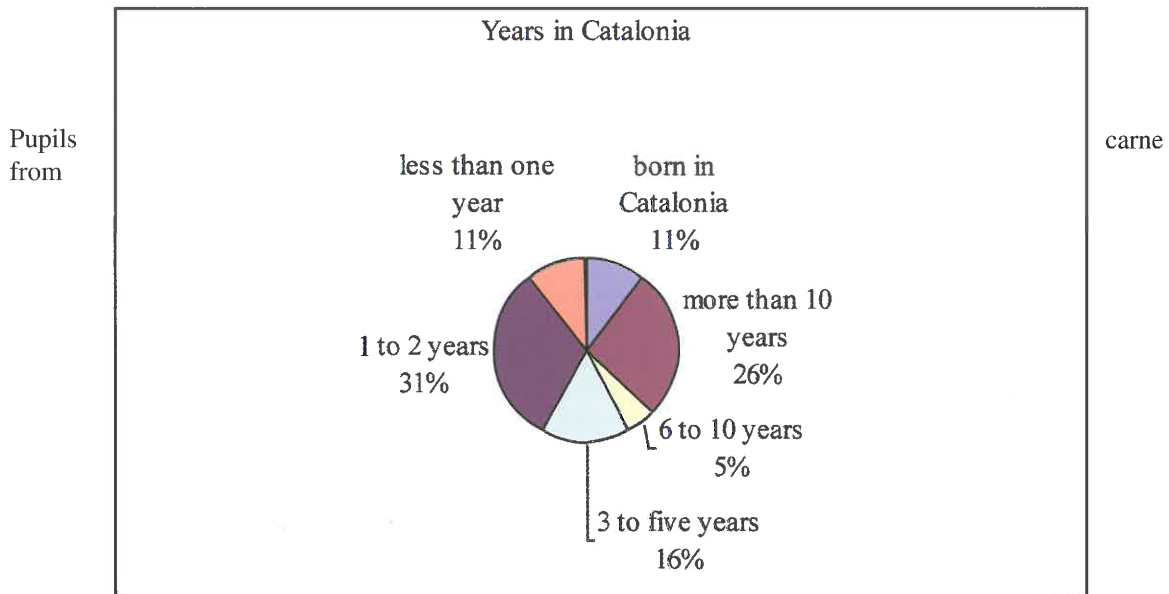
be part of the learning process and fluency is promoted much more than accuracy.

Many pupils feel especially motivated in English class precisely because it is the foreign language classroom. There are no native speakers of English at the school, so English is a foreign language for all the pupils and in class. It is the only academic context where all the pupils share the same foreign language. It seems the ideal

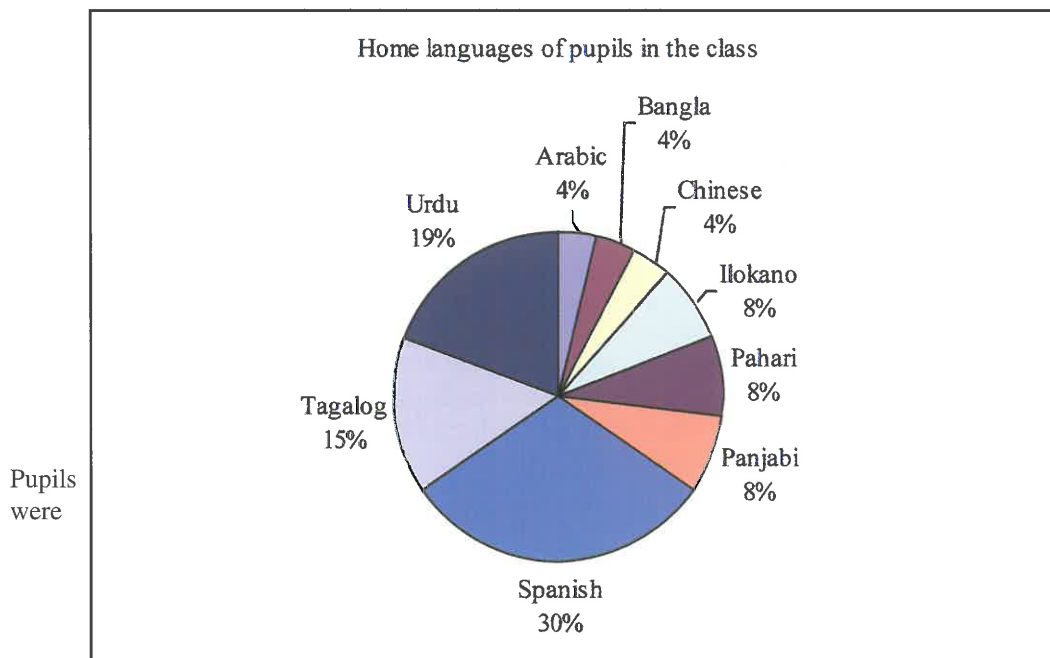
context to promote language use and plurilingual and intercultural competence.

• Characteristics of the group

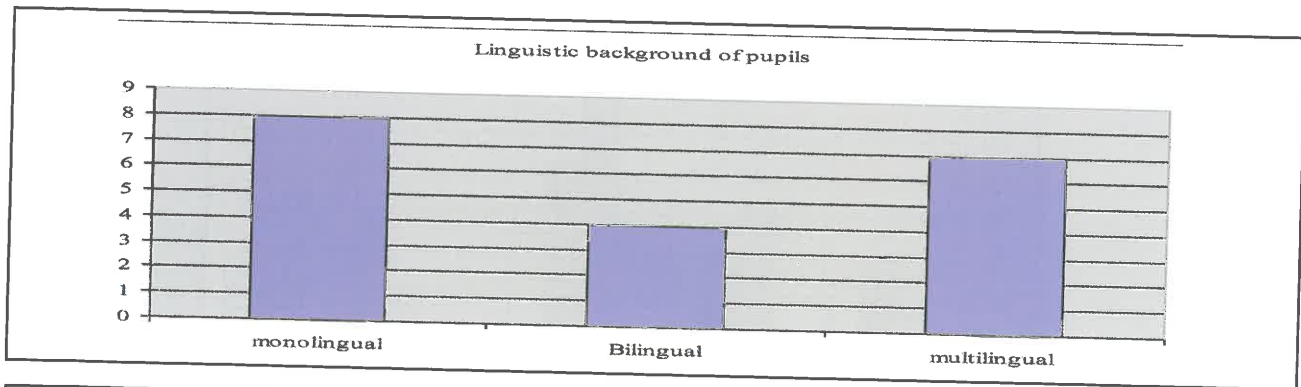
This sixth grade primary school classroom consisted of nineteen eleven and twelve year old pupils. Only 2 pupils were born in Spain, the other 17 had been living in Catalonia for different periods of time (from one year to 10 years).



Pupils came from Pakistan, the Philippines, Morocco, Cuba, Bangladesh, China, Ecuador, Bolivia, the Dominican Republic and Spain; 9 languages coexisted in the classroom.



Pupils were classified according to their linguistic background:



Multilingual pupils

Home Languages: Lx / Ly (Tagalog-Ilokano/Urdu-Panjabi/Urdu-Pahari/ Bangla-Urdu)

Social Languages: Spanish

School Languages: Catalan / Spanish / English

Bilingual pupils

Home Languages: Lx (Tagalog / Arabic / Chinese)

Social Languages: Spanish

School Languages: Catalan / Spanish / English

Monolingual pupils

Home Language: Spanish

Social Language: Spanish

School Language: Catalan / Spanish / English

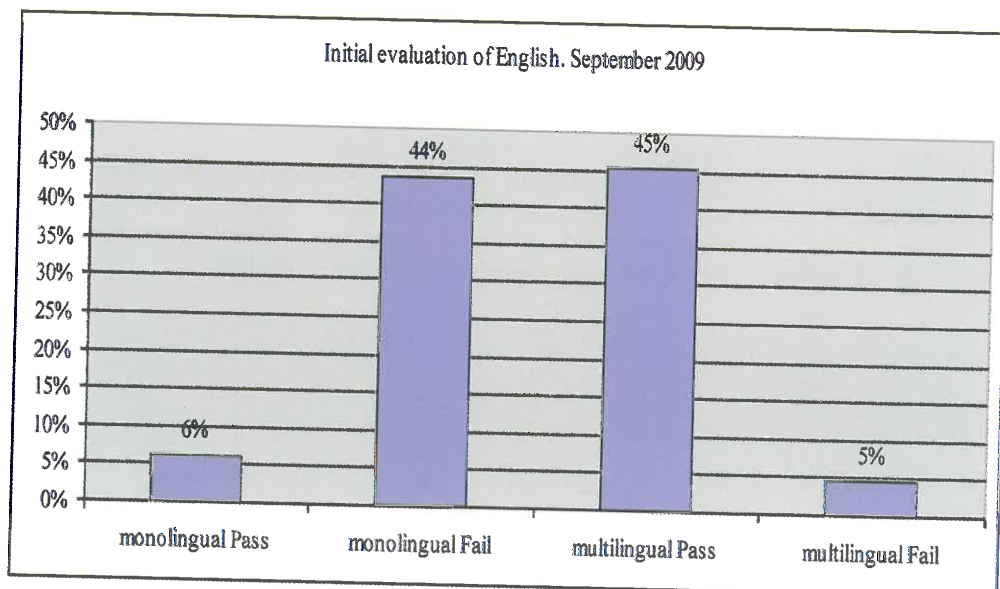
This classification is based on the language use of pupils according to their language background and the language they used when they were not in school. All pupils who did not have Spanish as their home lan-

guage admitted using Spanish with friends out of the school context. Catalan and English are languages which are taught at school but for the purpose of this study, will not be taken into account when assessing

whether students are monolingual, bilingual or multilingual.

✿ The project

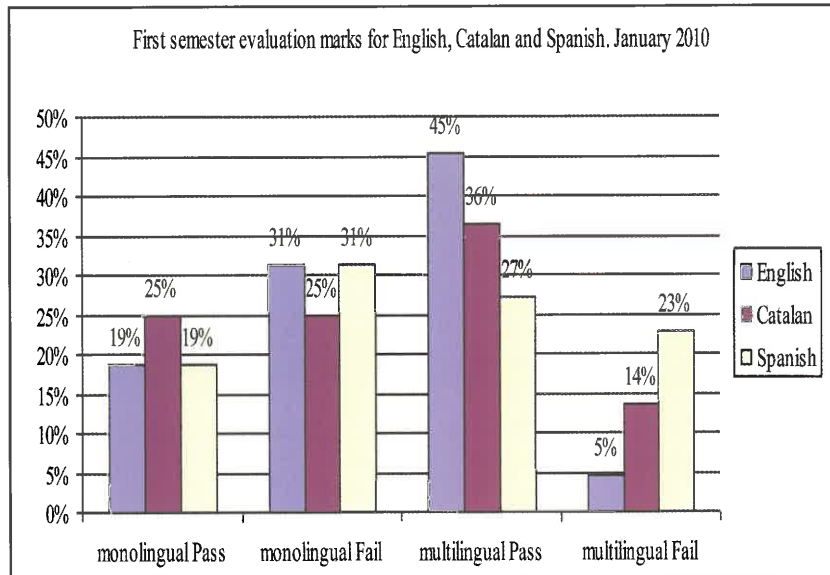
The starting point to this project is based on the following data:



An initial evaluation of English level was done. Marks for the English

initial evaluation were crossed with languages pupils speak. The per-

centage of multilingual pupils who passed the initial evaluation con-



cerning English was practically equivalent to the percentage of monolingual pupils who failed (45%). The percentage of multilingual pupils who failed English was practically equivalent to monolingual pupils who passed.

Marks for the Catalan, Spanish and English were crossed then with the languages pupils speak. A higher percentage of multilingual pupils passed Catalan in the first semester than monolingual pupils. There was a notable difference between 25% of monolingual pupils who failed Catalan and multilingual pupils (14%). The differences in relation to Spanish were similar to Catalan.

Catalan and Spanish are not the mother tongue of any of these multilingual pupils, this is the third or fourth language they are learning and they still get better marks than their monolingual peers.

✿ The story book project

The aim of the project work was to

create stories in English in multilingual groups and translate them into student's home language as a way to:

- Develop a positive attitude towards languages.
- Make all the cultures visible in the class through the use of the different languages pupils spoke.
- Increase motivation towards language learning.
- Improve academic performance in English.
- Increase intercultural communicative competence.

✿ Conclusions

Implementing the story book project in this 6th year classroom was a very positive experience for these pupils. They learnt to use languages in meaningful situations; they enjoyed working in groups, trying to understand what their peers had written in their own home language. They benefited from being creative and enjoying themselves a lot while learning

through and with languages.

There was an overall academic improvement in language competence in all three languages which could suggest that the presence of multilingual pupils may be highly beneficial in classes in schools at present. We are aware that characteristics of this group (high diversity of backgrounds, languages spoken etc.) could still be considered an exception to some extent but this context is becoming more and more common nowadays.

The foreign language classroom of a primary school with many multilingual pupils seems an ideal setting for promoting language awareness and use, as it can contribute towards the development of a more intercultural and multilingual society.

To follow the day-to-day development of the project visit <http://www.apac.es/publications/>

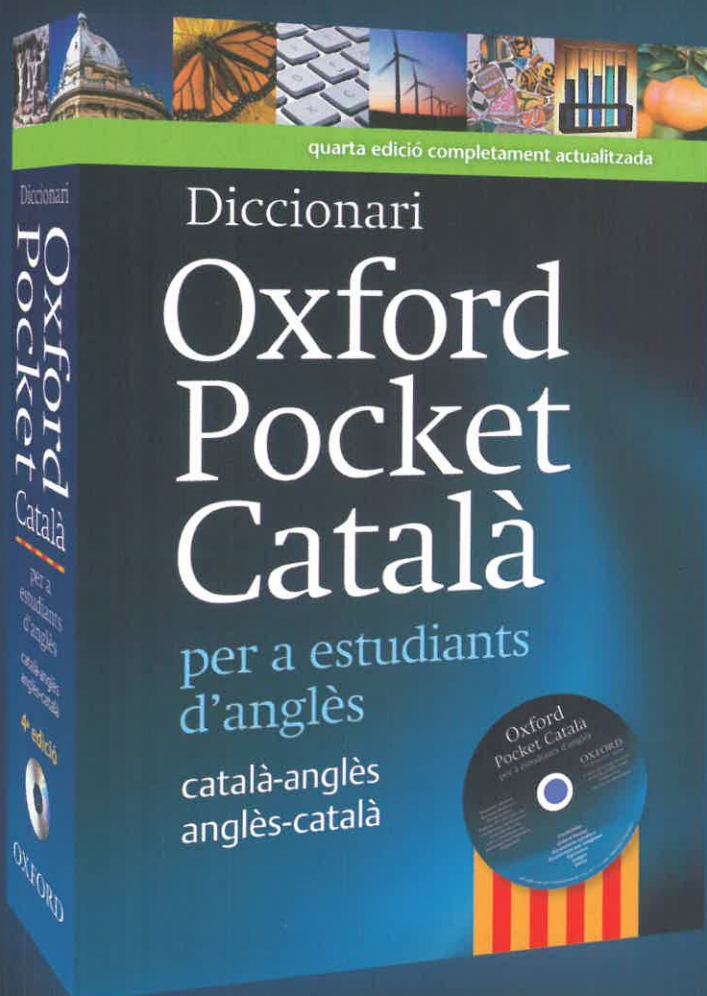
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I'll definitely try *that* in my primary classroom

By Chris Roland

Say it slow

What we think that we are teaching our primary students and what they are hearing, especially at the lower levels, can be two very different things. About 5 years ago, a colleague of mine picked a student produced table up off the floor after one of his classes. It looked like this:

Gaicho nein?	Mi nein is Maria.
Gaicho nein?	Mi nein is Lucas.
Gaicho nein?	Mi nein is Fernando.

Now this little learner obviously thought he knew what he was saying as he went round asking his classmates in turn 'Gaicho nein?' and filling in their neins, sorry, names. Similarly, if you ask most 5 or 6-year-olds to tell you the colours in English, you are also pretty likely to run into similar examples of 'creativity'. So what can we do to try and reduce the amount of 'customised' English from our students? My answer, and my first recommendation for something you might want to try in your primary classroom is to get your students saying things *slowly*.

We are often in a rush to get things done in class, to make the class itself work as an event. So much so that we sometimes don't even hear stuff like this. However, it might be worthwhile taking a few minutes to have your students repeat those stock questions and answers (How are you? Where do you live? Do you like... ?) and checking that all those sounds and syllables are in the right place.

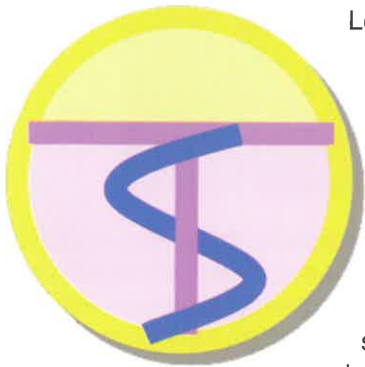


Chris is a teacher, teacher trainer and examiner currently posted at the British Council Barcelona. He has written material for both Cambridge University Press and Pearson. He's presented at events in Syria, Lebanon, Spain, Portugal and the UK and contributed articles to English Teaching Professional magazine.

His own website www.regandlellow.com contains PowerPoint stories for young learners. All the material he has presented at APAC is also, slowly, finding its way onto his ELT page at <http://chris-roland.webs.com/>.

One word of caution here though. When you do model language slowly, it is very tempting to insert extra tones and emphasis that wouldn't normally be there. When you model speech slowly, try to make it just that, normal speech, slowed down.

One Simple Thing



Let me introduce you to my notion of One Simple Thing. It's a way of looking at things rather than an activity in itself but I liked it so much I even styled a logo with the letters (see attached order form for the T-shirts which are available in a variety of sizes and colours - joke).

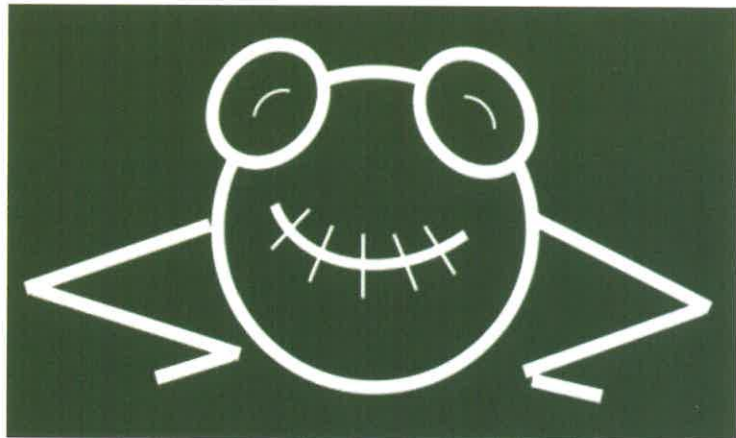
This is the idea that whatever activity you are doing in class, there's always one simple thing you can do to make it better, be it more productive language or tighter classroom dynamic. So my second recommendation is that you think about an activity that you regularly do in class, and that works well, and try to decide what one thing you could do better. It could be something to squeeze out more language, make the initial instructions clearer, involve more students more of the time, or even to round off and pack away more effectively.

Identify just one thing, and keep it simple. Then try it. Once you get into the habit, you can start to try the same sort of analysis with activities that haven't worked quite so well.

Ask Arthur

This is Arthur. If you draw him in one of the top corners of the board, where your students can't reach him, then he stands a better chance of survival.

The thing about Arthur is that he only speaks English, and he only ever speaks to the teacher. The students can address him directly though, and can be encouraged to do so. If their question or their reply is in English and is reasonably constructed, then Arthur will understand and reply via the teacher.



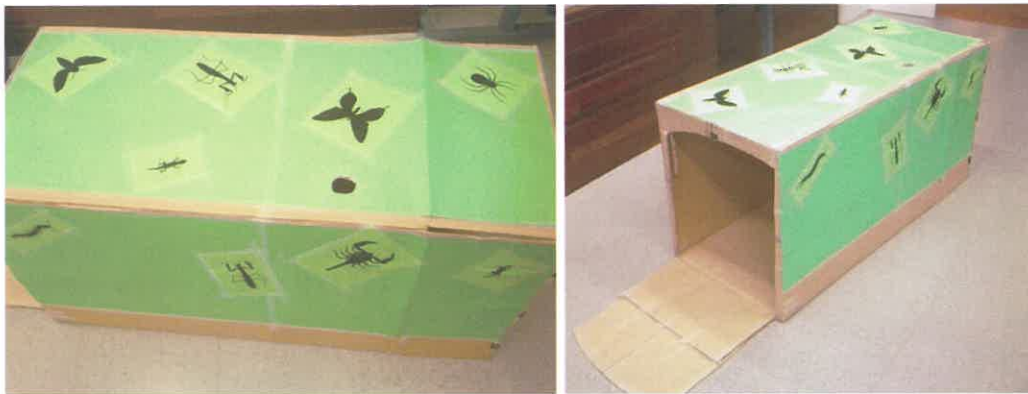
Again, Arthur's not exactly an activity in himself, more a controlling mechanism to encourage students to try reformulating L1 into English. Imagine a student has just asked you a question in L1. The question is perfectly formed, just not in English. They understand it. You understand it. They know you understand it. Turning round and saying '*Now ask me again in English*' seems to be throwing what in any other circumstances would be a perfectly good communication back in their faces. Turning round and saying '*I don't know the answer to your question, try asking Arthur*' encourages them to try to reformulate their question into English with an added element of play. Arthur might give them a straight answer such as 'Arthur says yes, you can drink water' or he might ask them a question of his own first, or ask that the student comes a little closer to the board so he can get a good look at them, or that the student draws a sandwich on the board for him to snack on after class.

Oh and one more thing, when you want to move the class on, just tell the students that Arthur's gone to sleep. He can wake up and go to sleep various times in a class, to suit the teacher - but when he's asleep, he's asleep and *nothing* will wake him up.


ELT Convention

The Buzz Box

I'd like you to look at this box and ask yourself the question: If you were 8 years old, would you want to climb through it?



I very much suspect the answer would be 'Yes' and have had kids from infants right up to secondary crawling (voluntarily!) through a variety of boxes over the years. I call this one a Buzz Box because it's got insects on the sides. I got these silhouettes from: <http://www.arthursclipart.org/silhouettes/silhouettes.htm> and even before we do anything with the box itself, there's lots of language we can play about with using the pictures - insect names, movements, 'lays eggs', 'can fly' 'isn't dangerous', 'eats other insects' comparatives, superlatives the fastest, the most beautiful, the creepiest. Students could even have a table and have to identify, draw then tick off the different insects' characteristics:

Insect	Drawing	Dangerous?	Creepy?	Can fly?	Eats?	Adjective
<i>moth</i>		<i>no</i>	<i>yes!</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>doesn't</i>	<i>'flappy'</i>
spider						

My buzz box took an hour to make from start to finish, which included printing off the pictures. It's fairly crude, but quite a lot of fun. Your students could even copy the silhouettes and help you decorate the outside. It's worth remembering though that most Buzz Boxes, not being the sturdiest of constructions, won't last too long if left in an unsupervised classroom on their own!



So what do we do with it? Obviously the children line up and crawl through the box. It doesn't end there though. As they go through, the teacher, or an elected student, drops messages through a hole in the top of the box.

The students have to pick up the message as they go through. Each message contains a set of instructions - something that the child has to do when they come out of the box. I print the messages on pink and yellow coloured paper then screw them up into balls so that they look like the cocoons that silk worms make (see below) to continue with the insect theme.

Each child has to read their instructions out to the class before they perform the task. That way, the rest of the class are involved. If the student does their task correctly, then everyone else gives them a round of applause. If they get it wrong, then they get buzzed at.

Tasks printed on the 'cocoon' might be:

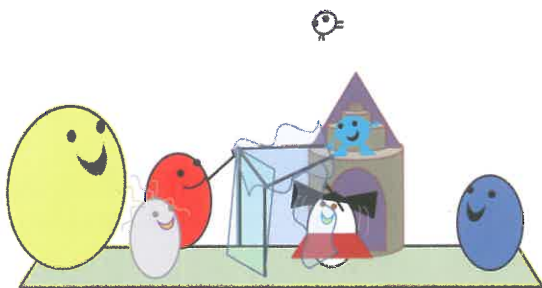
- Point to three of the insect silhouettes on the box and say their names.
- Mime an insect from the box for the rest of the class to guess.
- Point to one of the insects on the box then go through the box as if you were that insect.
- Point to an insect on the box and say three things about it.
- Go and get your course book and go through the box again with that.
- Draw one of the insects on the board for Arthur to look at.

And just to show you that APAC audiences are quite prepared to do what they ask their students to, here's a bunch of us going through the box!



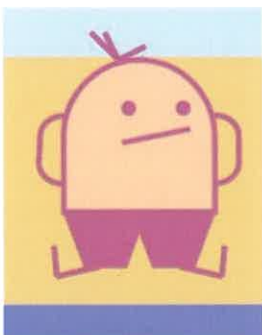
Reg and Lellow

These are stories that I've written for the lower primary age range in PowerPoint format. There are now over 25 stories on their own site at: www.regandlellow.com and they are all free and available for download with or without text. If you look in Number 71 of the APAC magazine you'll find an article dedicated to them. These stories are now being used by primary teachers right across the globe.



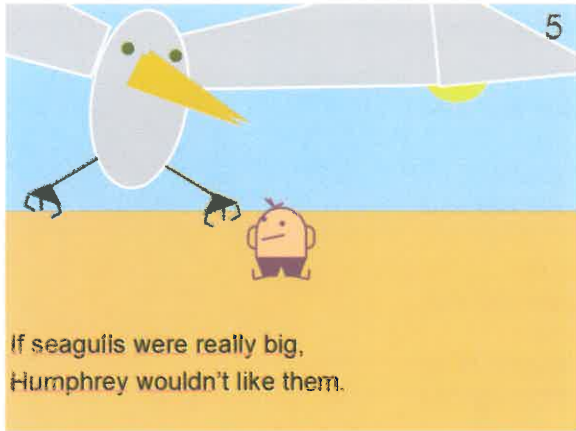
Here, Reg, Lellow, Azrak (blue), Smol (the spider), Lula Woop (the little girl) and Bittum (who's on top of the house) are helping to build Yaya Graya a shelter from the rain.

Humphrey Bogin



Humphrey's a new character I've been working on for students who are a little bit older. Just like the Reg and Lellow stories, you can project these episodes onto a roll-down screen or an IWB for whole class storytelling. The Humphrey Bogin episodes all have 5 built in comprehension questions at the end. You can access these same stories from the Reg and Lellow website.

ELT Convention



The feedback I've had from teachers of special needs students has also been very positive, including for children who do not readily engage with all materials, such as those with hyperactivity or on the autistic spectrum.

Ana put your jacket on

Clothes and phrasal verbs - a wonderful combination! Personally I like to teach as many phrasal verbs as early as possible so it's not a shock when students get to secondary levels and their teachers hit them with page-long lists of 'phrasals' they've never see before.

For this activity you'll need a white lab coat or an old jacket (not so old that your students don't actually want to put it on!). One student comes to the front (let's say she's called Ana) and in the time it takes for the rest of the class to say this chant:

Ana put your jacket on
Ana put your jacket on
Ana put your jacket on
Now! Now! Now!

Ana has to get her arms into the jacket and all the buttons done up. Then, in the time it takes the rest of the class to chant the second part:

Ana take your jacket off
Ana take your jacket off
Ana take your jacket off
Now! Now! Now!

Ana has to remove the garment. If she manages to do it, she gets a round of applause. If she doesn't, she gets a sympathetic '*Don't worry Ana*'. This way we're involving all the other members of the class, even though the

attention is centred on one person at the front. This is worth remembering if you have an activity that involves students coming up to the front and doing something just one or two at a time. What are the others going to be doing at the same time? How are you going to ensure their involvement? If this isn't factored in, then most of your class will be getting restless. You always need to give the whole class something to do, a chance to participate. The kids at the front will generally take care of themselves - they know what they have to do. As teacher, it's the 20 or so other students who are sat down that you need to worry about. They are the ones whose activity you need to be orchestrating.

In this activity, you can increase the amount of students at the front by giving Ana some helpers. Their job is to assist with the sleeves and the buttons. When the teacher points to one of the helpers, the rest of the class say the chant again, changing the name, and the newly chosen student has to get the jacket on in time.

Roll the dice

Similarly, whenever we need to roll a dice, we can have one student do that at the front and the rest of the class chant:

*"Mireia roll the dice
Mireia roll the dice
Mireia roll the dice
Okay, what does it say?"*

Then Mireia says:

"The dice says 5."

Again, we've drawn out the language from what's happening out at the front of the class and ritualised it into a chant that can be repeated over again. This not only ensures whole class participation but also means that our learners are more likely to remember the language. During each class, there are probably dozens of opportunities to draw out language in such a way.

Your favourite action



Let's use the idea of One Simple Thing to take this a step further. At the moment, the dice activity won't stand on its own as it lacks a consequence. Mireia tells the class what number she's rolled and then... what? Let's give it a consequence. When Mireia calls out the number, everyone in the class has to mime their favourite action - kicking a ball, eating, texting, playing a video game, sleeping - and they have to repeat the mime the same amount of times that corresponds with the number Mireia has rolled.

Silhouette Actions

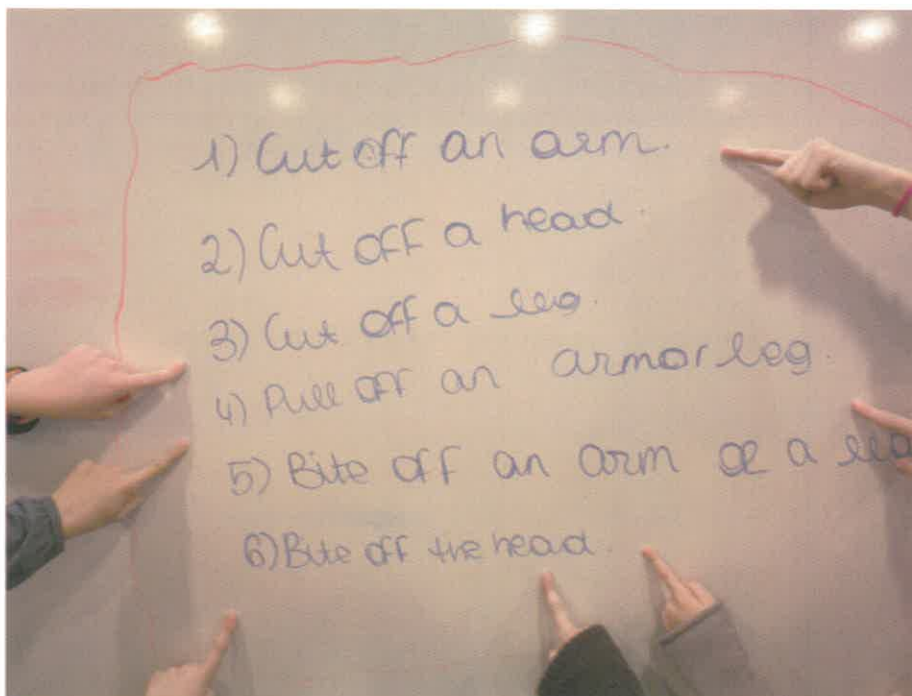


Let's use One Simple Thing again. Now we've got a class of students all doing different actions. It's personalised, they're engaged and participating but they might be miming activities they don't know the words for in English. So there's potential there. As you spot some interesting actions, note them down. Have those learners come up later to make silhouettes of their actions by standing against or lying on top of large pieces of card or architects' paper from a roll and having one of their classmates draw round them as they freeze in mid mime posture. They could even do silhouettes against the board if it's not too high. Then the next time Mireia or anyone else rolls the dice, the teacher can point to one specific activity and have everyone do that. In this way, the teacher is controlling the input and directing the action, but the original inspiration for the mimes has still come from the class.

ELT Convention

Operating on Bread Men

Recently I noticed that my local bakery was selling these little bread men. Alternatively, you could use ginger bread men or anything that's vaguely humanoid. First of all we put a code on the board like this:



Again, you can see my advocacy of phrasal verbs as early as possible here. If you have younger students, you could just have the body parts: 1 and 2 = Arm, 3 and 4 = Leg, 5 and 6 = Head.

Students come up one by one and roll the dice (with the rest of the class chanting 'xxx roll the dice...') and then, depending on what they roll, they play the role of surgeon and remove an arm, leg or head with the rest of the class miming the operation as they do it.



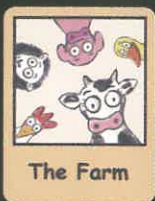
And if you really want to do things properly, you can have the 'doctor' put their white coat on before operating, in which case, the rest of the class will need to chant 'xxx put your jacket on...'

As always, many thanks to the organisers at APAC for another excellent conference and thanks to everyone who came along, volunteered to come up front or helped me with the photos.

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The Garden



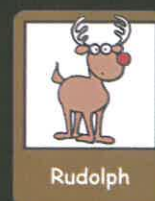
Little Red



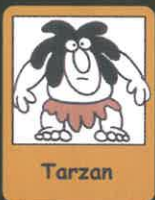
Cinderella



Snow White



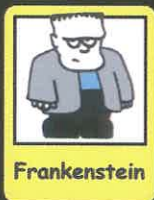
Rudolph



Tarzan



Robin Hood



Frankenstein



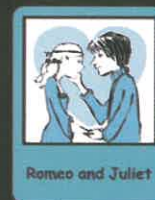
Treasure Island



A Christmas Carol



Pygmalion



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Is That Really Wrong? English Grammar Today

by Len Peterson

As English teachers we have grammar books at hand to help us decide what is “right” or “wrong”. But as we all know, there are constant changes when it comes to usage, in grammar as well as in vocabulary and pronunciation.

Grammar books can't keep up with the living language and how it develops. They also tend to stick to a prescriptive point of view, which for teaching purposes is no doubt pedagogically right.

But what is “right” or “wrong”? Are the grammar rules always inflexible, or are there valid alternatives?.



Grammar ... Just the word sends shivers down most backs. But let's start on a positive note.

Grammar is a word related to 'glamour' - but will your students agree?

Unfortunately the most common collocations are “grammar mistakes/errors/ corrections/freaks”. Not very positive, is it? There is, though, on the Internet, a lone voice:

“I'm a grammarian. Grammar is fun. Grammar is exciting.”

On the desk in my office there are, amongst books, telephones, address books, pens, headphones, staplers and other indispensable paraphernalia, three scribbled notes with my comments:

Number one:

(Football manager in interview after match):

“We're playing well all through the match, but they get a very lucky early goal.”

This is what we call “footballer's present” and it has become very common in recent years. We would obviously expect the past simple: “We played well ... they got a ... goal.” I've read an article somewhere about “footballer's perfect”: “We've played well... but they've got ...goal.” Remember to ask someone at GramTalk where I can find it. (more about GramTalk later)

Number two:

John's the oldest of the twins by three minutes.

The grammar books say we should use the comparative when we're comparing two people/things, but this rule has become eroded in recent years. I've got several examples in my grammar file. The Cambridge Grammar of English,

p 764: *“Traditional grammar books indicate that when two entities are compared, only the comparative form (“-er” or “more”) can be used. However, in informal spoken contexts the comparative and the superlative are both used, with a preference for the superlative”.*

Number three

“I am an active member of Rotary for the past ten years.”

You would expect the present perfect here (I have been...). Could it be American usage? Ask Jim McCullough. From a British point of view, Lester Tattersall, an experienced ELT author, says: “I can't say I'm that surprised, though, the way things are going. Americans copying 'foreign-speak and us copying them'...”

These are three examples of what I'm aiming at in my short talk: an examination of how English grammar has changed in recent years, the reasons why it has changed, and how we as teachers should react to the changes.

Many native speakers of English feel very strongly about “new” grammar. I will give just one example. One of the most hated language “errors” is the split infinitive (“I want to actually see you” instead of “I actually want to see you”). David Crystal dedicates a whole chapter in *Who Cares about English Usage?* to this phenomenon. He quotes a typical listener's letter to the BBC:

“Listening to the eight o'clock news on the wireless this morning, I was appalled to hear that two infinitives had been split within three minutes of each other”.

Crystal goes on to say that the split infinitive has been referred to as “a degradation, a corruption, a cheapening, a mutilation of the language. It's been called clumsy, ugly, awkward, tasteless, graceless, barbarous, vulgar, odious and loathsome!”

I'm sure you have all seen or heard the most widely known split infinitive, which is from the introduction to the TV series *Star Trek*: “to boldly go where no man has gone before”. When the series was first shown, this phrase suffered most of the invective mentioned above, but also made people aware of the “problem”. Most people probably use split infinitives every day without thinking about it. And as Crystal notes, you shouldn't worry if you happen to use one, though you should be aware that it is still a sensitive area. Avoid it in formal contexts, particularly in writing, is his advice.

A final comment. G.B. Shaw once wrote to his publisher after a proof-reader had corrected a split infinitive:

“I call for the immediate dismissal of this edant ... It is of no concern to me whether he decides to go quickly or to quickly go!”

I now intend to give you a brief background to the subject, and then go through some basic structures to show you what has happened in grammar in say the last 25-30 years. There's no doubt you will have lots of other examples yourselves

Number 2: Many of my examples are probably old hat to some of you, but perhaps the discourse will offer at least some new insights.

I remember how after one of my talks along these lines an experienced German teacher came up to me, tears in her eyes.

'You've now torn down in one hour what I have spent 30 years to build up', she said. I had to go to great pains to explain to her that what we had discussed was a description of certain changes in modern English. For teaching purposes it is no doubt pedagogically right to stick to a prescriptive point of view - but to be open to the fact that the alternatives exist.

Quite often one gets the impression that most people think that a whole language changes from one decade to another, and even from one year to another. It is as though one could speak of not only 'The English of the 1970s or the 1980s' but also of 'the English of 2011' - as if a language could appear in a new form every year, like car models.

But even if it is true that linguistic change is always in progress, the speed with which such change occurs is often exaggerated. Linguistic changes creep upon us so gradually that we hardly notice them. Suddenly we wake up one morning realizing that a new word, up to now almost completely unknown to us, is in fact in general use - or that a grammatical construction which was up to now deemed 'wrong', now seems to be considered 'right' by the majority of native speakers.

All this obviously causes problems for those of us who want to describe linguistic changes. However, today new, more refined methods are used than in the past.

So, if grammars and dictionaries of today are more reliable than those of a few decades ago, this is only partly because they reflect the change in the language that has taken place during these last couple of decades. To a large extent, the greater reliability is in fact basically due to three things:

- A. Much better data and more accurate scientific methods in the compilation of these data, with the help of computer technology;
- B. Larger and more representative text corpora (of both spoken and written language);
- C. Advanced testing techniques and other forms of questionnaires and interviews.

An important qualification must be made to the statement that language is always changing: all parts of a language are not affected to the same extent. Thus, many grammatical patterns seem to remain largely unchanged for centuries, whereas changes in vocabulary - new technological and media words, slang and vogue words etc - are obviously much more common.

However, there are certain trends in grammar which have become noticeable over, say, a period of some 25-30 years - this is not to say that the so-called new structures have not been in use for much longer - as will be pointed out later.

At this stage, I think we must first make it clear that we are usually talking about different registers of usage:

1 Formal	informal
2 Writing	speech
3 Older speakers	younger speakers

Understandably, it is mainly in the right-hand column that what I am going to describe takes place.

(I then go on to talk about “comprehensibility”, “usage”, “native errors”, and “suitability”- ‘Is this a construction which is not only used by native speakers but which is also suitable for the purpose aimed at in this context?’ AND ‘Is the writer using the correct register?’).

Now for some examples. First I’ll read an extract from a letter I received before giving a talk last year. I had asked participants to give their own examples of what they wanted to discuss. The sender is English, working as a headmistress in a language school in Spain, and she has lived here for at least 30 years. Some of her examples highlight the difficulties someone who has lived abroad for a long time, without daily access to normal speech, has with some recent language changes. But it also shows the interest in language changes which as a matter of fact you may notice much better from the outside, so to speak, where you’re not exposed to the language on a daily basis. I quote (my comments are in brackets):

“I would like to add to your list some of my favourite *bêtes noires*:

1 ‘these ones’ instead of ‘these’ (*totally accepted in speech*)

2 the ‘foot’ and ‘feet’ confusion: ‘It measured ten foot by six foot’ - recently heard on the BBC. (*quite normal in speech*)

3 the confusion of whether to use a plural or a singular verb with collectives, such as ‘the police’, ‘the government’, ‘the clergy’ or ‘the management’
(*We can add “family, crowd, team, staff, audience etc. With “olice” we use the plural – compare “leo”;* with the other nouns you use the singular if you think of the group as a unity, and the singular if you think of the individuals in the group)

4 singular or plural with ‘None of them ...’ (*none = not one; we usually use the singular if we mean one person, and the plural if we mean more than one*)

5 and whatever happened to the use of ‘shall’ with the 1st person sing & plural? (“Will” has taken over in affirmative sentences, but “shall” is still used in questions. It is interesting to see that she ends her letter ‘I’m so sorry that I WILL not be able to attend the first of your talks ...’!)

You have in front of you a number of sentences. They have all been produced by native speakers and writers of Eng-

lish. As we go through them, I would like you to think of the following:

- Are they
- acceptable?
 - not quite right, except in colloquial speech?
 - not acceptable at all?
 - the right register - who would use these sentences, and in what situations?

I will go through the sentences briefly, giving my own view as well as comments by various grammarians, and some results of surveys and corpora.

Then, summing up, you can decide how you want to respond:

1 There's not enough jobs for everyone today.

We obviously expect a plural verb (There are ...), but the singular is very common in informal spoken English. Examples:

There's six ways to save money.

There's a lot of cars on the road today.

There's two good delis within blocks of here.

How's things?

Here's the men to repair the TV.

2 Please read very slow.

Some words can be both adjectives and adverbs, without any change: fast/ cheap / hard / straight, etc.

Eric Partridge, the famous lexicographer, suggested, many years ago, that the -ly form is more polite, the root form more vigorous. Other grammarians claim it's a difference between how well-or badly-educated people speak!

The “root” form is very common in the US. This may partly be because when the first people emigrated from Britain to the US, the -ly form didn't exist in English.

An example of how many people react to what they consider to be wrong: When the ad ‘Dress right - you can't afford not to’ appeared, there were some very strong objections to “dress right”.

And even today there are problems:

Letter to the Ed:

While we are rapidly becoming attuned to the patterns of football-speak: ‘Our boys done brilliant’, I had not until recently realised that the demise of the adverb was becoming widespread. In the past week the following have been said to me:

‘They marked unfair’, ‘The pain comes and goes fitful’, ‘She writes atrocious’.

I fear, Sir that you may have shortly to prepare yourself to receive letters that conclude:

‘Yours faithful’

Caroline McLean

3 These data is sufficient for our purposes. The media is the main problem.

In a British survey in 2005, 80 % accepted this singular.

Now it is probably close to 100%.

To show which way things are going, a journalist published this sentence in *The Times*:

'It is a notable phenomena that one criteria of education in an influential strata of society is to criticise what the media is saying about all this data on linguistic class-indicators.'

The singular of 'data' is 'datum', but it is hardly used at all - I don't think I've heard it for decades! You say and write: 'We haven't much data on that point'.

In the GramTime corpora (see handouts) "criteria" is more than four times more common than "criterion".

Today you can hear a new plural: 'The agendas were given out'; 'What are the criterions?'; 'These are new phenomenons.'

'Dice' has taken over from 'die' in the sing: 'Use a dice.' There is even a new plur: 'dices'.

But there is one fixed phrase: 'The die is cast'!

4 There were less road accidents this summer than last.

Rule: 'Less' is used with uncountables (quantity), 'fewer' with countables (numbers).

But you frequently hear 'less clothes', 'less people' etc. They work less than 150 days a year (quantity or number?)

'Fewer' is considered to be too heavy, particularly before 'than'.

'Less + plural' is much more common in BE than AE (corpora, GramTime)

5 They invited John and myself to the party.

In a recent British survey everybody accepted this.

'Myself' seems to be considered more polite and modest; 'me' more thrusting and personal.

I heard this very recently: 'She was three years younger than myself'.

6 She told Bob and I the whole story. Between you and I, she drinks quite heavily.

Queen Elizabeth has said: 'It's a wonderful moment for my husband and I'. A commentator called it a formal beginning followed by Coronation Street-speak!

Some strange (?) examples:

"It was us who were singing."

'The Guardian has said some nice things about we in the north-east'.

The usage is much more common in speech than in writing: 'Between you and I': corpora 50% in speaking, 10% in writing.

One grammarian has said:

"It would appear that in the English of both Britain and the USA there has slowly arisen the feeling that there is something vaguely improper or ill-mannered about the use of the pronoun 'me' "

7 Everyone has their off-days.

'He' used to be common before the feminists (Everyone has his off-days)!

One reason why the plural (their) is used is probably because 'his or her' sounds clumsy.

There is still resistance in the UK, but the plural is now very common usage. It is not normal US usage.

8 Either you or I are mad.

50% of British speakers accepted this in a survey. As many accepted 'Either you

or I am mad', but only 15% 'Either you or I is mad'.

The rule says that the verb should agree with the last pronoun (I).

9 I saw this play twice already.

This is normal U.S. usage creeping into BE. Most older BE people and 'expats' still reject it.

David Crystal said, in 1986 ("English Today"): "Perhaps this is restricted to certain social groups or settings, and popularized by its frequent appearance in American film and TV dialogue."

Even in AE it is mainly used in colloquial speech, but it is much more established there than in BE.

10 He didn't used to smoke.

This can only be noticed in writing. One of the first times I saw it was in Brian Abbs & Ingrid Freebairn's "Strategies" (which several of the teachers attending had used).

Compare: He used not to / He didn't use(d) to / He used to not (AE)

In a survey participants were told to comment on 'He used not to smoke':

(93 AE/ 92 BE speakers, all university students, between 19-24):

	AE	BE
No change	11	37
didn't use to	18	26
didn't used to	19	23
never used to	9	4
didn't smoke	7	1
didn't smoke before	7	0
used to not smoke	15	-

Many speakers avoid the problem by saying: 'Did he do it in the old days? Did he smoke regularly?' etc.

11 Kevin is more keen than his brother. He is stupider than I thought. He is a more well-known writer than Conrad.

A. What is the rule?

One-syllable adjectives and two-syllable adjectives ending in -ow, -er, -y, -le take the ending -er in the comparative. All other adjectives are compared with 'more/most'.

B. But 'more/ most' are on the increase, and commonly used with one-syllable words: lovely/ true/ keen/ common/ crude/ plain/ fussy/ cruel/ subtle/ quiet/ cloudy/ shy. The following adjectives always take 'more/most' in the comparative: right/ wrong/ real. In the survey I refer to, nobody liked 'more well-known'.

C. Creative writers don't care about rules: 'honester' (Iris Murdoch), 'iller' (Martin Amis) 'awesomer' (Margaret Atwood)

12. We're all understanding the situation better now. I'm sure he's remembering the story. I'm loving it!

Rule: Verbs that denote 'state', 'mental state' don't usually take the pres continuous (believe/ forget/ hate/ hear/ hope/ imagine/ know/ like/ love/ mean/ remember/ seem/ smell/ taste/ understand).

But:

'She doesn't know all she should be knowing in this matter.'

'You're imagining things.'

'I'm hating you!'

'I'm hearing that you're getting married.'

'I was meaning to tell you.'

'I'm smelling something nice from the kitchen.'

In a survey it was pointed out that this usage is very common in the north of England.

13 It's essential that he come without delay.

Very common AE usage after verbs of volition: insist / demand / request / propose / suggest (Time, Newsweek etc). It is on the increase in BE in newspapers.

But in a BE survey (2005) none accepted it!

In speech it is normal to use 'should' + infinitive.

Variety in colloquial BE: present indicative ('He proposed that the governor sails to Kawhia...')

Note: 'If I were you ...' (formal) - 'If I was you ...' (informal) In a survey 50% of the participants more often used 'were' and 50% 'was'. Many said that they used both.

14 It looks like they're getting nervous.

In the same BE survey as in 13 above, everybody accepted this. One participant asked: 'What's wrong?'

'Like' is a preposition but often used for 'as' or as here for 'as if'.

'Like I said last week...'

'It looks like they're getting nervous.'

'It looks like rain.'

'Like I told you' / 'Like I said' (fixed phrases)

This usage is even more accepted in AE.

Many people make fun of uneducated speakers (rock stars, footballers etc) who overuse 'like':

'He came in here like ... you know ... and talked like he owned the place like ...'

15 The dog has lost it's collar.

There is a society called 'Friends of the possessive apostrophe' and another called "Apostrophe Protection Society".

One American professor said he'd inserted 50,000 apostrophes in his students' essays in one term (semester!), and had moved or removed a similar number ...

Difficult for students: elisions like 'it's', 'let's', I wonder where 'Henry's' got to etc

This has always been a problem for native English writers as well:

Apple's for sale

Sweater's marked down

Two pair's of trousers

Here are some club photo's

I've seen "who's" for "whose" in the Times, of all places!

Commonly confused: 'they're' - 'their'.

Robert Grave's characters (in a Cambridge exam!)

Attenboroughs "Gandhi" (film review in the Observer)

In place names both types are used: Land's End / Earls Court ...

16 A great deal of people attended the meeting. The amount of people was amazing.

Rule:

'A great (good) deal of/ a great amount of ...' + singular noun.

'A great (large) number of ...' + plur noun.

In a survey some people reacted by asking 'What's wrong?' when faced with the sentence 'We have a great deal of problems'.

My first example ('A great deal of people ...') is not a very common 'mistake'.

'Amount of' is much more common with the plural.

17 Where did you learn to play guitar?

This is usually called AE usage, but many years ago the BBC published a book called 'Learn to play guitar'!

Rock and jazz musicians almost always omit the article, but this usage is less frequent when talking about classical instruments.

There are many other examples of the loss of the definite article:

ships: (the) Britannia

hotels: (the) Sheraton

Newspapers: Radio Times, New Statesman, Spectator

On radio (like 'on television')

18 The scissors is over there.

In a survey, the singular was not liked, but people admitted that it is fairly common usage.

There are literary examples from Mailer, "The Deer Park"; Updike, "Rabbit Run", Scott Fitzgerald, "This Side of Paradise" – all Americans.

A corpora investigation (GramTime) of:
cattle/ vermin/ pyjamas/ binoculars/ scissors/ pliers/ pin-
cners/ tweezers/ tongs

The result was that the use of a singular verb exists but it is a rare phenomenon, usually in an informal context.

‘Tweezer’, ‘binocular’, ‘scissor’ are sometimes used in the sing like ordinary nouns (‘a tweezer’)

Does that mean there’s a tendency towards normalization of nouns for tools, so that those that consist of two parts joined together are beginning to be used like ‘knife, drill, screwdriver’?

19 The British people is ready to accept change.

The United States are sending a new ambassador there.

‘The British people is ...’ is possible if we think of ‘people’ meaning ‘nation’. The USA is considered as a nation and should be singular (compare ‘America’).

You see The Netherlands is/ are – perhaps because it’s more unusual?

The United Nations is ...

20 He didn't catch any fishes.

How many salmons did you catch?

Rule: Plural ‘fish’ when you talk about the species as a whole, ‘fishes’ about different members of a group of fish, or of individual species:

Will oil harm the fishes? (these particular fishes). ‘Will oil harm the fish (more in general)

The fish don’t look healthy.

I’ll give the cat some fish. Which reminds me - one of those fishes hasn’t eaten today.

In a survey, nobody accepted the two examples above.

21 She thought it a quite ridiculous idea.

This is a too hot saucepan. (said by Jamie Oliver, the chef, on TV)

In a survey, in the 1990s, 30% rejected it, whereas in 2009 practically everyone accepted it.

22 Arsenal is playing Manchester United at home.

In BE you use the plural, in AE the singular.

Compare:

Arsenal is/ are playing well this season.

Arsenal is/ are a London (a rich) club.

Arsenal have/ has won the league 3 times.

Arsenal always play/ plays well at Wembley.

Arsenal is/ are managed by Arsène Wenger.

Arsenal was/ were beaten 2-0.

Arsenal is/ are in trouble.

A colleague and I found that it is always possible to use the plural, but only occasionally the singular (in BritEngl)

23 There's no use crying over spilt milk.

Rule: It’s no use (BE), There’s no use (AE).

In a British survey (ages 20-30): perfect. But many people react and call ‘There’s no use ...’ exclusively American.

However, newer British grammars mention ‘There’s no use’ as well as ‘It’s no use’.

24 We are the people to who they turn when in trouble.

To many people, ‘whom’ is practically dead, but it is still used in writing, particularly after a preposition. As an object, ‘whom’ sounds a bit old-fashioned and formal.

Joke:

- To whom am I speaking?

- Sorry, wrong number. Nobody we know says ‘whom’!

25 You didn't ought to have done that!

A questionnaire showed that ‘ought’ is a modal verb which is practically unknown among young people.

Survey: Comment on this sentence, ‘You oughtn’t to waste your money on smoking’.

	BE	AE
No correction	39	19
ought not to waste	6	1
oughtn’t waste	7	8
shouldn’t waste	39	64

26 Who's the youngest – Trevor or Jeff?

The rule says that when you compare two people/ things you should use the comparative form.

But corpora show that in spoken BE the superlative is as common as the comparative.

27 He was only the Pope for a short time when he was shot.

I’ve noticed this construction a few times, but only in American contexts. We would of course expect ‘He had only been (the) Pope ...’. This is something I’ll have to investigate in the corpora.

28 Rooney may have scored just before half-time, but missed.

I’ve found several examples of ‘may’ used when you would expect ‘might’ (all in BE speech).

But if you say ‘Rooney may have scored ...’ it implies that it is possible that he scored.

‘Rooney might have scored’: he had a chance to score but missed.

It seems that the speaker doesn’t know the difference between the two verbs.

Another thing to investigate!

29 Jason hit Kevin in his stomach.

Rule: You use a possessive adjective (my, your, his, her, etc) when the owner is the subject. Examples:

‘I have to wash my hands.’ ‘She lost her balance and fell.’
Otherwise you use the definitive article: ‘The attacker shot the guard in the arm.’

To me the use of the possessive adjective in the example is strange, but I haven’t checked in corpora whether there is a recent, on-going change.

30 He’s a very ill man.

Here I was surprised at the corpora results which said that “ill” is uncommon. But as a premodifier it is very common in speech (obviously including dialogue in fiction), in BE as well as AE. I heard two examples (by two different speakers) only a few weeks ago when we had British people staying with us.

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Websites

There are virtually thousands of websites – just put “English grammar” in Google and you’ll see.

I would, however, like you to consult this Swedish university site which I mentioned before:

www.vxu.se/hum/publ/gtn

You will arrive at GrammarTime whose authors have, over the years, investigated a large number of grammar structures, using corpora:

The British National Corpus (100 million words; written/ spoken; from the 1980 & 90s)

CoBuild Direct Corpus (50 million words; BE, AE, Austr; 1980 -)

The London/ Lund Corpus (500,000 words; spoken BE; 1960s - 70s)

The Brown Corpus (1 million words; written AE)

The Lancaster/Bergen Corpus (1 million words; written BE)

The Longman American Spoken English Corpus

The Wellington Corpus of spoken/written NZ English

The Times

The Independent

The New York Times

The Los Angeles Times

The Sydney Morning Herald

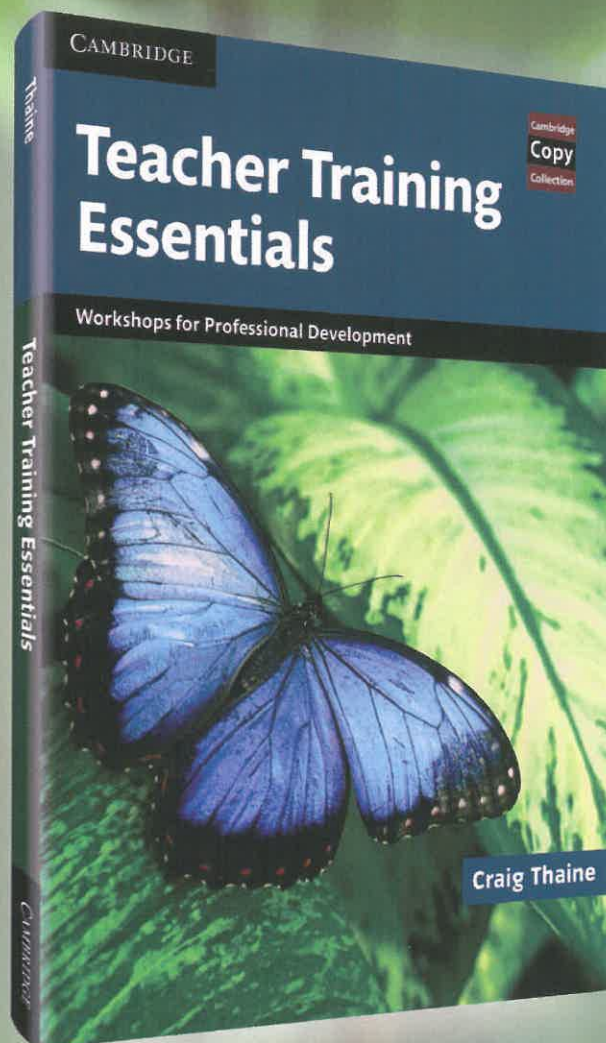
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24, 25 i 26 de novembre de 2011

Institut Jaume I de Salou

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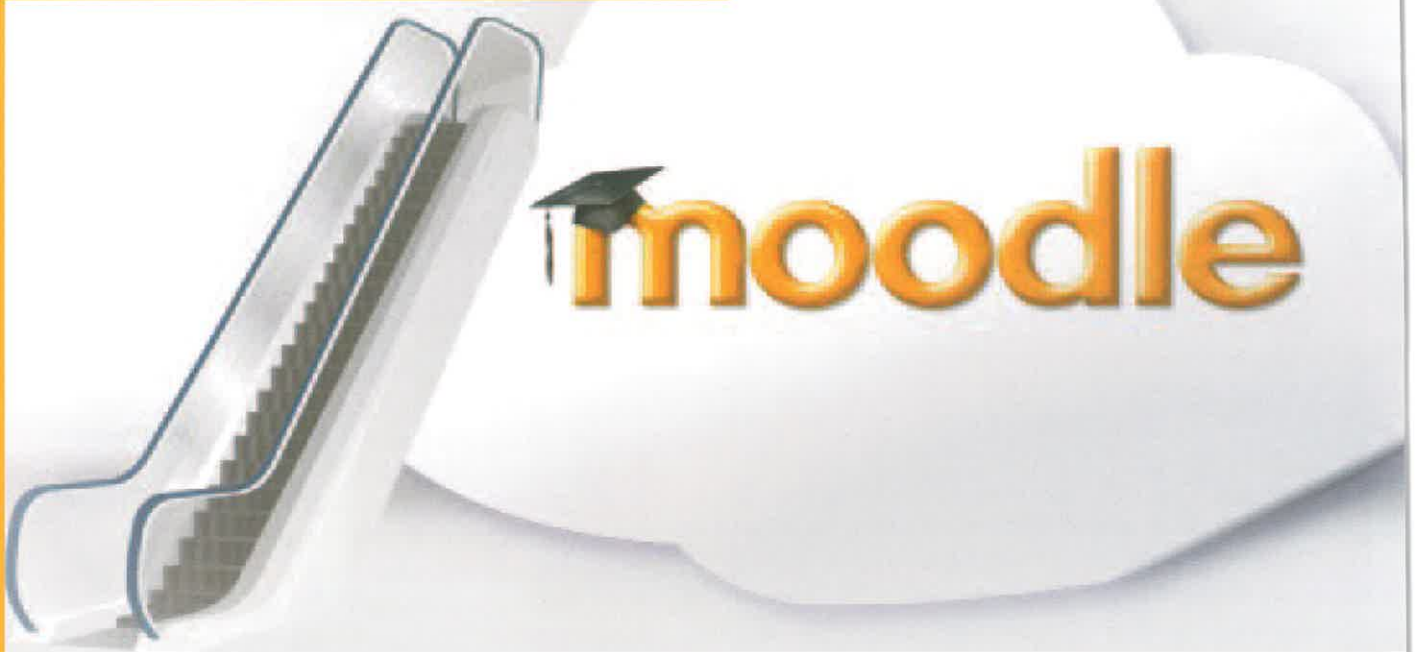
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“Collaborative language activities using Wikis in a Moodle environment”

by I. Higuera, A. López and S. Millán

We fully share the philosophy of the Department of Education, which regards innovation as one of the changing engines in the educational system, as well as an important element to improve its quality and the progressive adaptation to the challenged posed by social evolution. Certainly, the development of innovation action is key to reach a type of learning which allows us to face the fast changes in our dynamic society.

The innovation proposal that we are going to present gives priority to the use of information and communication technologies, learning for the sake of learning and it fosters thinking and working in teams. In the same way, we believe that it awakens students' critical thinking and that it strengthens self learning. Our proposal is based upon collaborative writing using wikis in Moodle.

It goes without saying this activity, devised for some second year students of French and English from *Escola Oficial d'Idiomes del Prat*, can be used with some modifications (language, type of text) in other types of schools such as IES with ESO and *Batxillerat* students. Summing up, our goal is to share with the rest of the educational community the experience in our school, in order to give impulse to writing in virtual environments.

1. Goals

A wiki is a type of web site that allows anybody to modify its contents. You just need to access the nav-

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igator, click on “edit” and change what you want, preview the result and, if you like it, save the changes. With these few steps, changes will remain available for everybody who visits the web. Fast, isn’t it? That is precisely the meaning of “wiki”, which means “fast” in Hawaiian.

A wiki can be used, for example, so that each student has his/her own presentations page and they can change the information contained there anytime they want to, or it can also be used for group work: one student starts the assignment, and the other students add or change things. It can also be used as a personal draft where each student gets comments and orientations from the teacher while he is developing his or her work, and this will allow students to make changes. As you can see, the teaching possibilities are endless.

One of the teaching possibilities of wikis that we have put in practice at the EOI El Prat is the use of Wikis to carry out collaborative language activities, with the following goals:

- To understand the text as a unit of communication
- To foster group work
- To develop the ability to reflect upon one’s learning process by correcting both your own mistakes and other students’ mistakes.
- To promote the use of ICT, and therefore, of self-learning.

2. Preparation of the task

2.1. Task definition:

Students have to take part in a Wiki of collaborative writing which will last four sessions. The task consists of writing a short story of about 1500 words (50-60 words per student), which is coherent and well structured, with an end reached by consensus by the whole class.

This task has three differentiated stages:

1. Initial stage: creation/edition of the story
2. Revision stage: correcting and reediting the text
3. Final stage: (a) writing different endings to the story and (b) voting which one is the best.

2.2. Procedure:

Before starting the task in Moodle, we should inform students about the methodology to be followed, that is, the number of sessions, calendar, individual responsibilities, etc. It is important to define exactly the document rubric in order to guide students’ individual contributions. This way everybody will know how the activity will be evaluated.

Internet is present in most homes nowadays, but Moodle environments are practically unknown to most students. Therefore, it is necessary to devote a session in the computer room in order to show them what a Wiki is like, how to edit it, and how changes are saved. Moreover, once this introductory session is over, it would be a good idea to provide students with a short manual on the steps they need to follow in order to access and edit the classroom Wiki.

After this, we could already move onto performing the activity in the virtual classroom, following the three stages which we have already mentioned before: Initial, Revision and Final stage.

2.3. The rubric:

“The evaluation is one of the most delicate activities in the job of a teacher, and one of the most important factors for successful teaching and learning. A good evaluation system correctly guides students, makes them feel at rest, and helps them understand what the teacher is asking them to do. It also helps the teacher, but forcing him to rethinking what he or she has to teach and how this is supposed to be done. Surely the discipline in daily work will enrich teachers’ discourse and method.” (2006: Àngel Solans).

We think that it is especially necessary to devise a rubric in order to evaluate a virtual activity, in our case in particular, a collaborative writing wiki. Rubrics are instruments which can help teachers orient the evaluation of complex activities. They are part of the Anglo-Saxon education tradition and they are progressively consolidating in our country.

The rubric document is organized as a table. In the arrows all the competences that the activity can be split into are listed. The columns indicate the gradation in the quality with which these competences can be performed, ranging from “very bad” to “very well, or the other way round. We should mention here that teachers are free to change the descriptors and the marks according to the type of text and the students’ characteristics.

RUBRIC DOCUMENT example

TASKS		Grade	GOOD	PASS	FAIL
WIKI - PARAGRAPH	Coherence and cohesion: the text as a unity	10 points	The paragraph follows the story/plot and it's original (10 points)	The paragraph follows the story/plot, but lacks originality (8 points)	The paragraph does not follow the story/plot (4 points)
	Grammar	3 points	Use of appropriate structures. The paragraph is easy to understand (3 points)	Minor errors do not obscure the meaning (2 points)	There are many errors and it's not understandable (1 points)
	Vocabulary	3 points	Sufficient range of words or phrases to communicate the message clearly (3 points)	Limited use of words or phrases (2 points)	Inappropriate use of words (1 points)
	Vote	4 points	***	***	***
TOTAL Continuous Evaluation: Part 2-> 'Others' = 10%		20 points			

2.4. Evaluation grids:

In the same way as the rubric document is important to evaluate a complex activity, it is also necessary to design, before starting the activity, an evaluation grid in accordance with the rubric, give the fact that the teacher will have to monitor all the students' contributions both from the quantitative and the qualitative point of view.

The function of this grid is to make teachers' work easier, who, ideally, should fill it out as the activity goes through all the different stages. This allows to have a better command over students' contribution to the wiki, since students' grades can be noted down and updated for each descriptor at any moment.

Likewise, it would undoubtedly be a harder and time consuming job to evaluate the activity without grids once it is over. If that were the case, the teacher would have to count the contributions, one by one, and he should also evaluate the writing competence of the contributions. In fact, this would entail a lot of uncontrolled work which would not encourage teacher to devise new wikis in the future.

Moreover, the fact of using grids has a double fold function: on the one hand, it allows to write down students' grades while the activity is being carried out, and on the other, these grades are part of each student's gradebook in Moodle. Needless to say that we should change the student's name, for example, for his id card number or his academic record number, in order to respect data privacy.

EVALUATION GRID example

		Coherent narration: the text as a unity				Grammar			Vocabulary			VOTE
		10 POINTS: Follows the plot and it's original	8 POINTS: Follows the plot but lacks originality	4 POINTS: Does not follow the plot	3 POINTS: Appropriate structures, easy to understand	2 POINTS: Minor errors don't obscure meaning	1 POINTS: Many errors, not understandable	3 POINTS: Sufficient words to convey the message	2 POINTS: Limited use of words or phrases	1 POINTS: Inappropriate use of words	4 POINTS: vote	
STUDENTS' DATA												20 points- > 10%
1	Student-1											0
2	Student-2											0
3	Student-3											0
4	Student-4											0
5	Student-5											0
6	Student-6											0
7	Student-7											0
8	Student-8											0
9	Student-9											0
10	Student-10											0
11	Student-11											0
12	Student-12											0
13	Student-13											0
14	Student-14											0
15	Student-15											0
16	Student-16											0
17	Student-17											0
18	Student-18											0
19	Student-19											0
	ETC.											0
BIG TOTAL CLASS											0	

2.5 Students' instructions manual.

As we have already mentioned (2.2. Procedure), before starting the task in Moodle there should be a session with the students, preferably in the computer room, in order to make them familiar with the environment, and to practice the use of a wiki.

At this particular stage we would present the activity to the students and we would inform them about the methodology to be followed, that is to say, the number of sessions, calendar, individual responsibilities, evaluation system, etc.

In order to reinforce teachers' explanation, he or she would provide students with an instructions manual where all the guidelines explained before are gathered in written. This material is also useful for those students who were not able to attend the sessions but who anyway are going to participate in the wiki activity as part of their continuous evaluation process. In other words, this manual can be used by students as a reference tool, and it is also a way for teachers to make sure that everybody participates in the activity without any exception.

We will now show an example of instructions manual that has been provided to the students participating in the Wiki.



WIKI INSTRUCTIONS Collaborative writing: A famous person's routine

1. What's a wiki?
2. Class wiki: calendar and instructions
3. Evaluation
4. How to enter the class wiki
5. How to edit the wiki and save your changes
6. How to send your vote

1. What's a wiki?

A wiki is a page to enable anyone who accesses it to contribute or modify content. Wikis are often

used to create collaborative work, as for example, the online encyclopaedia *Wikipedia*, which is one of the best-known wikis.

Read more at <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wiki>>.

2. Class WIKI: Calendar and instructions

The task consists of writing an invented short story, around 1.500 words, coherent and well-structured, with an ending consented/approved by all the class. The first paragraph of the narrative has already been written by the teacher.

- **5-9 March:** Firstly, ALL STUDENTS are responsible for writing a short paragraph: Instructions in Moodle-> *"WRITE A PARAGRAPH AROUND 40-50 WORDS. You must continue the story/follow the plot. Use clear language and structures. You can use present, past or future verb tenses. Your originality, grammatical correctness and richness of vocabulary will be evaluated. At the end of your paragraph, write your initials (name + surname) and the numbers of words"*.

- **10 March:** Secondly, THE TEACHER highlights the parts of the text that need to be corrected (grammar, vocabulary, word order, spelling mistakes, etc.).

- **11-13 March:** Thirdly, ALL STUDENTS are responsible for correcting, at least, their own paragraph. Also, they can correct other students' paragraphs.

-

- **14-15 March:** Then, once we have the complete story written and its errors corrected, ONLY FOUR STUDENTS are responsible for writing the ending. These 4 students will be selected in advance. They don't need to write a story-paragraph, only the ending.

- **16-17 March:** ALL STUDENTS send their vote for the best ending to the story. Instructions in Moodle: *"HAVE YOUR SAY! Possible endings have been numbered from 1 to 4. Consider their originality and coherence with the text and choose one. VOTE NOW"*. You can only vote once! The ending with more votes wins.

- **18 March (group E215) and 19 March (group E217):** We'll read the full story in class time and value our participation in this task.

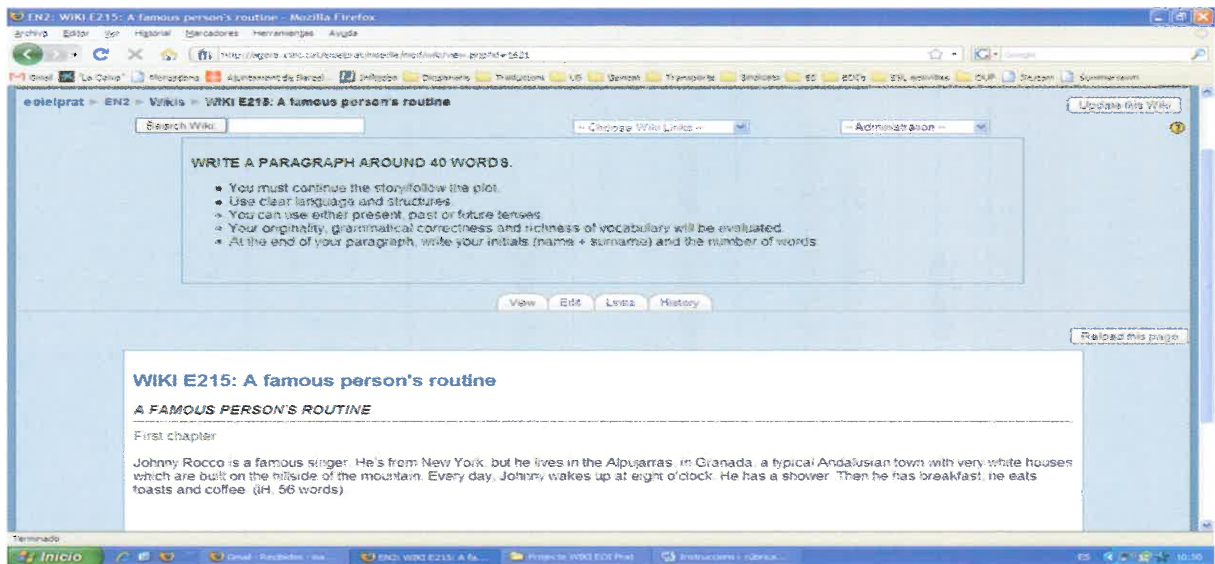
3. EVALUATION

TASKS		Grade	GOOD	PASS	FAIL
WIKI - PARAGRAPH	Coherence and cohesion: the text as a unity	10 points	The paragraph follows the story/plot and it's original (10 points)	The paragraph follows the story/plot, but lacks originality (8 points)	The paragraph does not follow the story/plot (4 points)
	Grammar	3 points	Use of appropriate structures. The paragraph is easy to understand (3 points)	Minor errors do not obscure the meaning (2 points)	There are many errors and it's not understandable (1 points)
	Vocabulary	3 points	Sufficient range of words or phrases to communicate the message clearly (3 points)	Limited use of words or phrases (2 points)	Inappropriate use of words (1 points)
CHOICE - VOTE	Vote	4 points	***	***	***
TOTAL Continuous Evaluation: Part 2-> 'Others' = 10%		20 points			

ELT Convention

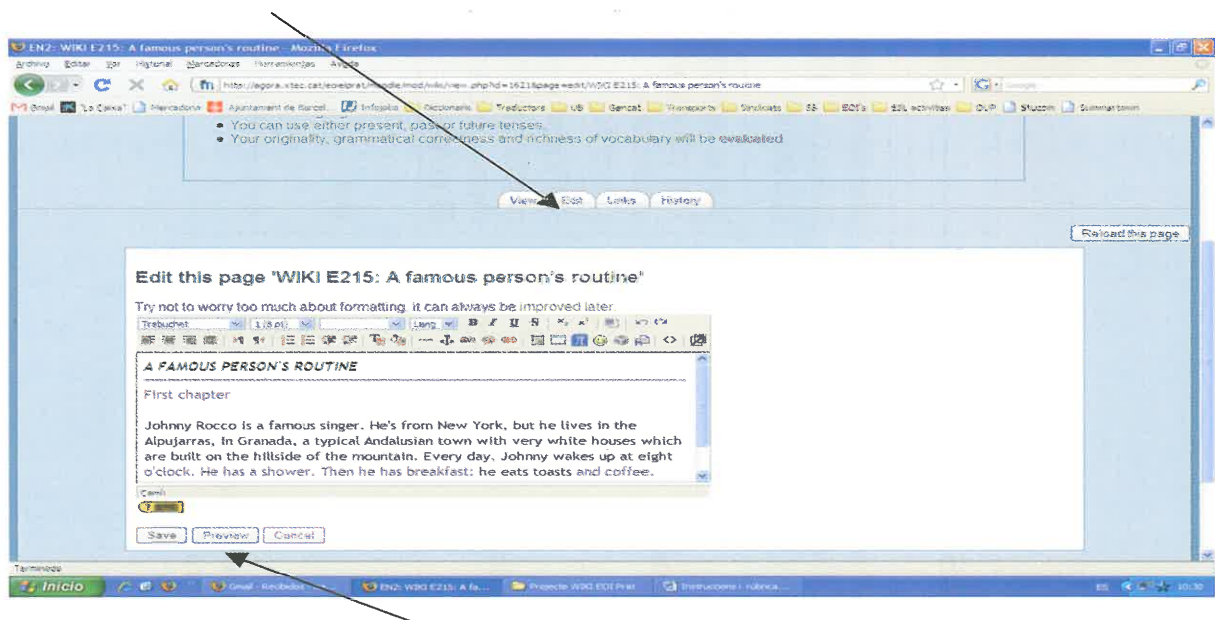
4. How to enter the class wiki

- Enter the site: <<http://agora.xtec.cat/eoielprat/moodle>>
- Click on course “English 2”
- Write your user name + password
- Scroll down the page and go to Unit-5
- Go to “Assignments Unit-5”
- Click on “WIKI E215” or “WIKI E217” to open your class Wiki.
- Now you are viewing the wiki page.



5. How to edit the wiki and save your changes

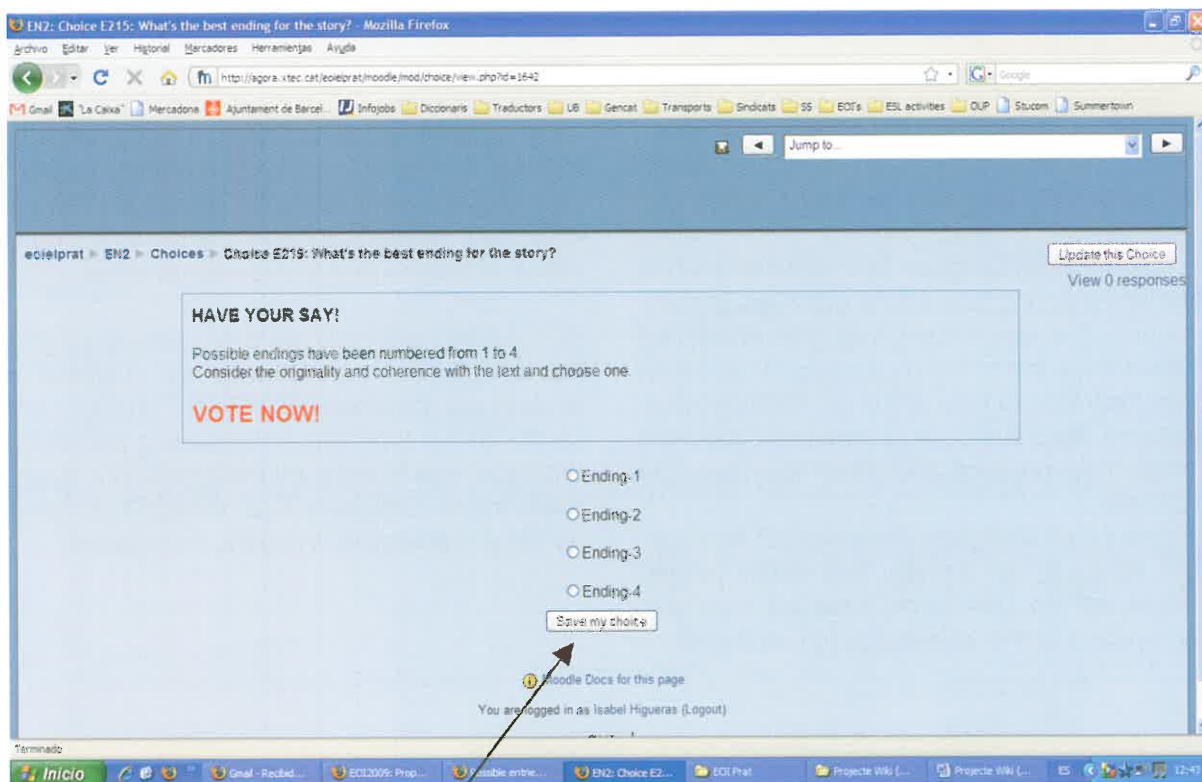
- Click on “EDIT”. An editing window opens for you to write.



- When you finish, click on “PREVIEW” to see the result.
- If you like it, then click on “SAVE” to include your work in the Wiki, or click on “CANCEL” to modify your text. When you finish, click on “SAVE” to save your changes.
- Now your paragraph has been added to the wiki. You'll get this feedback from Moodle: “Thank you for your contribution”.
- Well done! Now everybody can read what you've written.

6. How to send your vote

- Enter the site: <<http://agora.xtec.cat/eoieiprat/moodle>>
- Click on course “English 2”
- Write your user name + password
- Scroll down the page and go to Unit-5
- Go to “Assignments Unit-5”
- Click on “Choice E215” or “Choice E217” to send your vote.
- A new screen shows these options: “Ending-1”, “Ending-2”, “Ending-3” and “Ending-4”. Select/tick your choice.



- Click on “SAVE MY CHOICE” to send your vote.

TO SEE THE IMPLEMENTATION IN THE VIRTUAL CLASSROOM GO TO:

<http://www.apac.es/publications>

4. Conclusions

Once the virtual activity is over, we would like to put forward some thoughts regarding the positive and negative aspects of collaborative writing using Wikis.

In our humble opinion, the main advantages of Wikis are that:

- They facilitate a group working atmosphere, and they strengthen the idea of group/class as a global unit.
- They provide students with autonomy because, even though they have to follow a scheduled calendar, they log on the Wiki to make their contribution when they want/can.
- Feedback can be given very easily, that is, it is possible to help and guide students the moment they do the tasks, since they can access previous drafts of their work (the different ver-

sions of the Wiki). Therefore, Wiki activities enable to evaluate and to accompany students throughout the process, and not only at the end, in a very easy manner.

- Students get more personalized attention, since wikis allow teachers to devise activities which are more adapted to students' different paces and needs.
- For a large number of students, the fact of working in virtual environments is a motivating tool.

The main disadvantages are:

- Teachers must devote extra time to prepare the activity. Teachers tasks multiply: the evaluation done throughout the activity, the design of the activity and its preparation entail time and effort.
- The importance given to instructions when we are carrying out virtual activities is paramount. The wiki activity we have presented has demanded more preparation and definition than face to face activities. All things considered, teachers have to plan more carefully what they present and what they want to achieve.
- How can we engage all students? How can we evaluate an activity that some people might not be able to do because they lack computers or the knowledge to use them?

Leaving aside the negative aspects that we have just mentioned, we are fully satisfied with the results obtained. Participation was high. Moreover, students have felt responsible and involved in the activity. They were fully aware that this was a collaborative task, and that the result affected everyone.

For us, as teachers, it was very pleasing to present students with a working scenario which is different from a face to face scenario, and even though we have devoted time to designing the activity, deep inside we know that we will be able to use it again. In other words, virtual environments allow teachers to reuse and share activities and resources in a very easy manner: we do a backup of the Moodle course and we can restore it by changing the former students for the new students. This is a strong point which can easily help overcome the extra work that virtual or semivirtual environments entail.

As language teachers, we think that a great change has taken place from the traditional "magistral" class to class activities nowadays. Today, students are the centre of the teaching and learning process, and teachers' role is more that of moderator, tutor, but surely more changes will be needed to achieve educational excellence. We think so anyway!

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Teaching English in a Global Context

by Ana Aguilar talks to Enric Llorca

A.A. It is a privilege to sit here with you being, as you are, such a busy man. Thank you for talking to us.

Dr. Llorca, we are going to focus here on the Spanish teachers and learners of English, if you do not mind.

A.A. From School teacher to University Professor at a very early age; has it been hard to achieve?

E.L.L. I wouldn't say it has been hard as much as intense. When I started working at the university I thought I would spend most of my time teaching and preparing lessons, and, little by little, I realized that this job also involves spending a great amount of time doing research and writing academic publications. But I can't complain at all, because I like what I do and I think it's a 'fun' job.

A.A. Many teachers consider that dealing with questions of "globalisation" and "interculturality" is a great waste of time. Do you think these issues are relevant for the learning and teaching of English in our situation?

E.L.L. I do, because we are teachers of English, which happens to be the language of globalisation. If we had to teach any other language we should

concentrate on aspects of the language and culture of its native speakers, but the community of speakers of English is mostly made of citizens of non-English speaking countries in every continent. So, how can we aim at using English successfully without developing an intercultural perspective of the world as a global space? Teachers themselves may have developed their interest in the English language for different reasons, including an appreciation for the culture of English-speaking countries. However, their learners are mostly going to need to learn English in order to communicate with the rest of the world, and so they cannot be exclusively oriented towards two or three (native) English-speaking countries. They have to be directed towards the use of English in any context with any speaker, be it American, German or Chinese.

A.A. You said in your last speech at APAC in February that the Spaniards' proverbial failure to learn English is not the "teachers' fault, how comes?

E.L.L. I meant that we have a structural deficit in our society that is in part due to our historical background and the social-cultural characteristics of our society. Teachers have a big responsibility in determining how much learning takes place among their students, but it is any students' experience that we actually learn or fail to learn with the help of our teachers, but also in spite of our teachers. What I mean is that we need

well-prepared and highly motivated teachers who are not afraid of spending long hours preparing innovative and engaging activities, but we also need to be aware of the limitations imposed by our society. A society that has suffered in recent history from low levels of cultural development, and still suffers from low levels of literacy beyond the basic principles of reading (how many books are read per person per year in our country?) is a big obstacle for the development of foreign language skills among its student population.

A.A. You attribute our society's general failure to learn English to the incapacity to see beyond the borders of our country and our language, is that all?

E.LL. There probably are various reasons why so many people in our country are not able to communicate fluently in English, in spite of the efforts put into it by our educational authorities and the general agreement that English is a necessary language.

Some of these reasons have been repeated again and again, like for instance the lack of opportunities for watching films and TV serials in their original version, or -a few years ago- the insistence on the need to start learning the language at an earlier age. This latter explanation can no longer be used since most school children are now exposed to English when they are 4 years old, but the situation is still about the same: average low levels of proficiency at the end of education. So, I argue that a very important reason is the mental borders of our citizens, their frames of reference. If their frames of reference are global, their borders will be permeable and they will accept the need for learning an international language like English. If their mental borders are rigid, they will not perceive any need for English and will not have the adequate mindset for learning the language. Teachers are obviously important, but I think that schools and society at large must play a bigger role in making English visible and in showing the obvious, which is that English is an essential commodity that we all need to possess.

A.A. Actually, I agree with you here. When I taught at the CAP (Certificat d'Aptitud Pedagògica) I was surprised to see how few of the English Graduates were willing to spend a year in an English speaking country as Assistant Teachers or otherwise; is that still the case with your students at the University?

E.LL. It depends on the students. Those who choose

English Studies are more willing to go abroad than those who take other degrees. But I regret to say that there is a big amount of students who are literally afraid of going abroad, and the international office at the university has to try hard to convince students to apply for a mobility grant. Unfortunately, there are always available positions that are not filled, which means that many more students could benefit from mobility programs, but they choose not to.

A.A. As Presidents for the "Oposiciones" Examining Boards we are quite shocked sometimes by the language level of some of the university graduates; how can that come about?

How can we aim at using English successfully without developing an intercultural perspective of the world as a global space?

E.LL. Developing high levels of proficiency depends on many factors, such as high motivation, great exposure, opportunities for meaningful interaction, and developing a high level of awareness, among others. A university degree in English can offer exposure to the language, a greater cultural understanding of the

contexts where the language is used, and increased awareness, but students have to come up with their own motivation, increase their exposure to the language and find opportunities for interaction. Some are good at it and some are not so much. However, I think that the level of English graduates is in general rather high. There might be specific cases that are not, but I'd say these are a minority.

A.A. Have, in your experience, our school teachers an inferiority complex when compared to the native teachers?

E.LL. I think non-native teachers often compare themselves to native teachers and the outcome of such a comparison is often hurting their self-image, and in some cases it may originate feelings of inappropriateness and fear of making mistakes in front of students or in front of other colleagues. This is a sad situation,

as teachers need to feel confident of what they do and not be afraid to share experiences, thoughts and doubts with other fellow teachers. Some non-native teachers may tend to resort to the textbook in excess in order to feel safer in their daily teaching routine. Understanding that non-native teachers are different but in no way inferior to natives is vital, and embracing the notion of English as a truly international language

is, in my opinion, the way to go to overcome any feeling of inappropriateness and to start contributing to the profession in a positive way.

It is a sad truth that the level of fluency in English by Catalan and Spanish students is not as high as it is in many other European countries

A.A. Global or not global, we think there is too little English input in the Foreign Language Lessons in our schools; do you agree?

E.LL. I think that three hours a week of exposure to English is certainly not enough for developing high levels of competence in the language. Obviously, if a good portion of that time is spent doing and checking the exercises in the book, the time spent using the language is even shorter. I insist that schools need to find ways to incorporate the language into the everyday life of their students, by providing exchange experiences with students of other countries (not necessarily the UK, as they can and will use English with students of any other country in Europe) and bringing real life discussions into the classrooms. Naturally, CLIL is another good way to increase meaningful exposure.

A.A. As School Inspectors and Teacher Trainers we have observed many lessons and were very disappointed to see how little English our learners knew after so many years of tuition; do you share that perception?

E.LL. It is a sad truth that the level of fluency in English by Catalan and Spanish students is not as high as it is in many other European countries, but as I said before, this is probably due to a set of different factors. The amount and quality of opportunities for speaking is one of them, but there are other social factors, as well.

A.A. Why do you not undertake in the *Cercle de Lingüística Aplicada* some sort of research on that issue?

E.LL. In the Cercle de Lingüística Aplicada of the Universitat de Lleida, we have so far done research on language awareness, language attitudes, the

development of multilingual and intercultural communicative competence, non-native teachers, the processes involved in foreign language writing, and we are currently focusing on internationalization and the development of multilingualism at the university level. We are not many people and we need to concentrate our efforts on specific areas and research questions, but we don't say no to investigating this issue in the future. It is certainly fascinating and it deserves being studied in depth.

A.A. Anything else you want to say that might be of interest to the readers of APAC of News?

E.LL. I'd encourage them to keep open to new ideas and new sources of inspiration, so that they can try out new things in their classrooms and in their schools at large. Learning a foreign language is a vital experience for everybody, but learning English in our current globalised society is even more than that. So, I'd tell them to be open to what's happening in the world today and make an effort to bring it to the class, so that students develop a curiosity and an understanding of our world, which is much bigger than our country, but is much smaller and interconnected than what many people are aware of. We come from a society that lived many years self-enclosed in its own boundaries and in which cultural understanding was not one of its defining features. Unfortunately, we are still suffering the consequences of that story. On the positive side, we can individually and collectively break our mental barriers and open ourselves to the rest of the world. By doing so, we will contribute to a higher level of English competence in our society. I'm absolutely sure of that!

A.A. Doctor Llorca, thanks very much for answering our questions.

E.LL. My pleasure. Thank you!

I think that three hours a week of exposure to English is certainly not enough for developing high levels of competence in the language

Be open to what's happening in the world today and make an effort to bring it to the class, so that students develop a curiosity and an understanding of our world, which is much bigger than our country, but is much smaller and interconnected than what many people are aware of.



Ana Aguilar talks
to **Montse Irun**
ABOUT HER OPINIONS ON

THE PEDAGOGICAL VALUE OF RE-WRITING

Ana Aguilar: Montse, thanks very much for dedicating us some of your very, very busy schedule. Your bio data is really impressive: Secondary School Teacher, PAU Coordinator, University Teacher, Researcher, Technological expert; Where do you find the time and energy for all that?

Montse Irun: Well, I have no idea. I like what I do and that's what makes me keep going. I'm lucky to be able to do things I enjoy. I'm very active and organised, those two characteristics also help.

Ana Aguilar: We would like to comment on several of your papers that appear on the Internet. Let's start with the most academic: **RE-WRITING AND ITS PEDAGOGICAL VALUE: A CASE STUDY** is an example of

really pragmatic fieldwork and research useful to the teachers. Could you perhaps produce a briefer version for the readers of APAC for News?

Montse Irun: Yeah, why not? It was one of the first serious research papers I wrote so it would be a pleasure to re-write it for our magazine.

Ana Aguilar: In that paper you show the advantage of Writing as a Process versus Writing as a Final Product; Do you think many teachers are aware of it?

Montse Irun: We're living in a now and here period, everything is quick and immediate. This, of course, doesn't apply to writing. You need time, time to think, time to plan, time to write, time to check you've written

what you wanted to convey and time to correct. It's only then that a good piece of writing is possible

Research shows that students don't spend much time in class writing and that most writing activities are done for homework. I think that they need to be taught, to be shown the advantages of looking at writing as a process. We, teachers, need to **spend more time teaching and less time correcting or testing.**

Ana Aguilar: The data you present in that paper refers to 2nd year Batxillerat, do you begin to practice process writing with your students in that course?

Montse Irun: No way, I carried out that research project in Batxillerat because I thought that due to the PAU exams students in batxillerat would be more

aware of their writings. That was the only reason. No, I think that learners should write as soon as possible. Writing is just one of different channels of communication, Teachers have to make sure students speak, read, listen to and write in English as **much as possible and as soon as possible**.

Ana Aguilar: Do you not think the learners should begin to learn to write from a much earlier age with the agreement and collaboration of all the teachers in the department?

Montse Irun: Sure. When kids start learning a foreign language they should start by listening to English as much as possible. In fact, I think they should listen and do things accordingly; that is listen and do practical things such as listening to a tale and painting the best ending or following the instructions to make a paper plane. Only when they are 8 or 9 years old and they master reading in their mother tongue, they should start writing in English. And I'm talking about writing to convey meaning. I'm not talking about writing lists of words. I'm talking about writing a note to the teacher to say things like "My homework is on the table." Or a letter to the Three Wise Men telling them what they would like to get for Christmas. Later, they can write more complex things and it is then that coordination between teachers is a must. Writing pieces should be more complex in terms of language but also in terms of audience, formats, registers, etc. And this has to be planned. Teachers are really good at planning grammar complexity but tend to forget that skills also need to

be planned. Let me tell you an anecdote: Some years ago I was teaching a group of 1st ESO students and I asked them to write a description of their family together with a family tree. One of the students in the class said, "Can I hand in the one I wrote for my 4th or my 6th primary teacher?" That made me think that something was wrong. Writing should also be planned

Ana Aguilar: Should it not even be an issue in the coordination between Primary and Secondary levels?

Montse Irun: Definitely. This is one of the issues that need our attention: coordination between Primary and Secondary levels. I have the impression that teachers consider 1st ESO students as beginners and don't pay attention to what they have done in primary school. The amount of things they are able to do in primary school is amazing and how little attention is given to these things in ESO. They act in theatre plays, they give oral presentations on a number of topics, they write stories, ... But in 1st ESO they study the verb "to be" and write about what they do in an ordinary day. If teachers at primary and at secondary schools speak about the aims, activities and competences developed, we'll all win: our task as teachers will be regarded as more professional and our planning will be based on reality and not on our suppositions. Our students will learn more effectively and meaningfully since their learning will sprout from their previous learning.

But I do know many places

where this coordination is a reality. And in those places, everybody, but particularly students in 1st ESO, profits a lot from that coordination.

Are you carrying out some further research on this and other related issues?

Montse Irun: Well, I'm very interested in evaluation and competences at the moment. I do think that evaluation is the Cinderella of EFL and that it deserves a much more important place since it is the engine of our students' brains. So I'm trying to develop units of work that integrate evaluation, technology and all skills in order to make my students more competent. A hard but at the same time inspiring task!!!

Ana Aguilar: In *X 1 A L'AULA D'ANGLÈS* you give very sound advice on the use of new technology and what schools should do to have a proper foreign language space, but we came to the really important question: do kids learn more with the *Pissarra Interactive* or *el Llibre Digital*?

Montse Irun: No way. It's the methodology not the technology that is going to make our learners learn better. We all live in the 21st century and technology is here to stay. It's absurd to keep computers and digital books or digital blackboards out of the classroom. And I do think that these tools can help us get to students easily. I do not know if they learn more but I assure you that my students are more involved in the tasks they do and that good students are able to show their abilities and are able to work on their own and improve their English. One of

the first things that you notice when you work in a 1x1 Classroom is that diversity is dealt with in a much easier way. But again, it is not the computer but what teachers ask students to do with it.

Ana Aguilar: Another of your presentations *ELS ESTUDIS UNIVERSITARIS* describes the University after Bologna where the student is supposed to take a much more active role; is that the case nowadays?

Montse Irún: Again this is related to our society. Information is everywhere so the point today is not to have one's brain full of knowledge but to know how to get the information you need and where to get the most effective and reliable one. They also need to be more critical, more aware of a much larger number of topics and issues. So, yes. They should have a much active role; students are responsible for their learning. Teachers can tell them how they can

learn but it is only them who can actually learn. I can teach them how to swim but I cannot swim for them. They are the ones that have to jump into the swimming pool and actually swim. I'm there to prevent them from drowning and to help them.

Ana Aguilar: And does *procedural processes* take priority over lectures and rote learning?

Montse Irún: They should. Lectures are still important but not so important as they used to be. Knowledge is important but it is more important to know how to do things with that knowledge. Students need to develop other competences and that's what the university is trying to do.

Ana Aguilar: You also help candidates for the *Oposicions* in how to prepare their syllabus. In our experience as presidents of the examining boards we found a real lack of connexion between the theoretical first part and the concrete lessons. After having quoted all the right points of the new curricula their lessons were geared around

the present and past tense; have you encountered the same contradiction?

Montse Irún: Yes, and I have to admit it's one of the things that worries me the most. Why can't we make new teachers understand that they should do in class what they have said they will in the planning? Sometimes I think it's not the training but their experience as students that teachers "imitate". And that's what research also shows. Never before have pre-service teachers got so much training on how to develop competences in English. Still they do in class what they have seen their own teachers do in class. So when I'm in despair I think that all changes need time and that we have to keep going since our work today will also be imitated one day when our students become teachers.

Montse, thanks a lot. We might want to come back to you shortly to pick up your brains in many other issues that interest our readers

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RE-WRITING AND ITS PEDAGOGICAL VALUE: A case study

Montse Irun Chavarria

A lot of time and energy is devoted to correcting compositions. **It is a time consuming task for the teacher, who nevertheless goes on marking papers because of her belief that error correction is beneficial for the learner.** Correction seems to be worthless if students just put their corrected piece of writing away and never look at it again (Harmer: 1998). Furthermore, **students commit the same errors or similar ones from one essay to the next one.** Seeing the same mistakes coming up again and again is very frustrating for teachers. And the same happens to students when they receive their papers all covered in blood-red ink. This may hinder rather than help their second language acquisition.

In order to shed some light on this issue, I intend to show the effect that two different types of feedback have on the learners. The first section of this study will define what is understood by writing as a process and what feedback is. The second section will deal with a case study where two seventeen-year-old students (in their last year of secondary school) will respond to two different types of feedback. Finally in the third section I will draw some conclusions from the experiment and I will point out some further research.

1.- Background

In this section I will define re-writing and I will deal with two main issues about re-writing: (a) process writing and (b)

providing feedback. These two issues seem to be very influential in the way teachers deal with re-writing in the classroom.

Re-writing is considered as the main exercise for the acquisition of the writing skills. This idea comes from the belief that students should be taught how to write, and not evaluated on their final product. According to this belief, writing classes should help the student develop a series of strategies that allow him/her to write better and better texts as regards both their internal organisation and their grammar. It is within this concept of writing as a process where rewriting has a major role. Re-writing is more than an exercise marked "good" or "bad"; it is a very important part within the writing process (Raimes 1983). The teacher's answer does not arrive after but during that process, and it can even influence it by helping the learner. Hedge (1988) also states that "marking is maximally effective in enabling students to improve only if it provides constructive feedback which can be channelled into the processes of redrafting and editing". Chenoweth (1987) adds that revision and re-writing give the learners the opportunity of exploring their own ideas and developing them in a more successful way. So Chenoweth suggests that learners should be helped to improve their versions -just as good writers do. They are not given that opportunity if they are asked to write on a new topic. Re-writing is considered as a help to improve and develop students' writings and not as a sign of their incapacity. Rewriting is a discovery approach carried out by the learner. And teachers should consider compositions as 'efforts in a developmental process' and not as final products.

Rewriting is, then, a main activity if we consider writing as a process. The question now posed is how students arrive at a better version of their writing. Probably the issue faced by both teacher and students lies not in the writing but in the nature of the teacher's response to those assignments. Depending on the way teachers respond to compositions, students would feel one way or another and they would respond accordingly. That is important because feedback is only valuable if the composition is revised (Cohen 1997: 57). Current educational literature points out the relationship between affective and cognitive factors in the learning process: anything which has a negative effect on attitude and motivation may delay acquisition (T. Pica 1985 and R. Ellis 1994).

The most usual ways of giving feedback in the English classroom will now be outlined. Most researchers claim that the learner needs some kind of assistance during the process to promote revision and rewriting of the text. One of the feedback methods is written comments. According to Raimes (1983), these are more effective if they are questions, suggestions or praises than if they are comments such as "Good", "You need to work more on that", "Not bad". She adds that suggestions should be specific. Sommer (1984), where we can find many suggestions about how to comment on a piece of writing, analyses the comments given to the first and second drafts of a text by thirty five teachers and a computer. The conclusion is that the comments made by most teachers are arbitrary and some students do not even understand them. Another conclusion seems to be that "the teacher appropriates the text from the student by confusing the student's purpose in writing the text with her own purpose in commenting. Students make the changes the teacher wants rather than those that the student perceives are necessary". Sommers adds that most of these comments encourage the students to think of their drafts as finished drafts; the meaning is there and it is finished, what needs to be revised is one word or one grammar structure. This is probably due to the fact that teachers make the comments with the preconception that they have to find mistakes, and so they find what they look for: mistakes. Sommers (1984) and Hedge (1990) make a difference between redrafting and editing. These two processes are included in what we call rewriting. Following Hedge's definitions, redrafting is "the process that good writers go through as they evaluate, rethink, and rewrite parts of their texts" whereas editing is the activity "which involves checking for accuracy and making final revisions" (Hedge 1990: 145). Students should first focus on redrafting

and only when this is done should editing come over.

A second type of feedback is conferencing. It is a procedure in which the teacher and the writer work together face to face on what the writer has written so that advice is provided on an individual basis. Goldstein, Lynn and Conrad (1990) carried out a research to see if the improvement on compositions was due to conferencing. They concluded that revisions are successful only when there is negotiation and when the student realises what it is he should improve, why and how. This was one of the problems that Sommers (1984) posed. In fact, and even though they do not mention it, these authors assume that negotiation may lead to better retention of what has been discussed and this retention may facilitate learning. Something similar is suggested by White and Arndt (1991) when they mention that the discussion can be one of joint negotiation of meaning, whereas written comments tend to be one-way.

As it is not always possible to have conferences, Chenoweth (1987) proposes to use only one writing assignment and hold the conference with the whole class. This would motivate learners to revise their own texts. Something similar is suggested by Allwright, Woodley and Allwright (1988). According to these authors, learners should analyse and discuss the differences between a non-native learner's composition and the rewriting done by a native.

All the articles mentioned do not give a clear answer about which type of feedback helps acquisition but they help analyse the qualities of other studies that do try to answer the question I am dealing with. After analysing four groups who have been given different feedback treatment – (a) praise, (b) criticism, (c) praise and (d) criticism and no feedback-, Cardelle

and Corno (1981) conclude that the written performance of students learning a foreign language can benefit most from focusing on homework errors in a motivationally favourable manner. The test results of the group which received written feedback with both praise and criticism are much better than the results from the other groups. If this is true, we could state that rewriting facilitates language learning if the comments are motivating. Something known and difficult to rebut is the fact that motivation generates learning and that "the student does not improve his skill if his work is not corrected" (Thompson 1952). However, little is said about how to correct or how to motivate students.

Re-writing is considered as the main exercise for the acquisition of the writing skills

Revision and re-writing give the learners the opportunity of exploring their own ideas and developing them in a more successful way.

Teachers make the comments with the preconception that they have to find mistakes, and so they find what they look for: MISTAKES

It is not the rewriting activity in itself that makes students write better texts, but the use of problem solving activities within the revision

Lalande (1982) proposes a third type of feedback: the teacher underlines the mistake and uses an error correction code. This kind of activity is presented to the student as a problem-solving activity. In the experiment he carried out, the group of learners who solve the problem is the group that has a better performance. The point Lalande raises in the article is that it is not the rewriting activity in itself that makes students write better texts, but the use of problem solving activities within the revision. This idea is also suggested by Allwright, Woodley and Allwright (1988). Thanks to the cognitivist theory we know that this type of activities may facilitate learning because it requires the student to process language at a deep level, which favours retention. Revision should be set out as a process of discovery where the student learns to look for answers, to find solutions that improve his/her written production.

What has been said about feedback seems to be in contradiction with the results presented by Semke (1984). She says that error correction does not facilitate accuracy and, furthermore, it may have a negative effect on the learners' attitude, especially if they have to correct their writings themselves. From the four groups included in her experiment (comments, corrections, comments and corrections, corrections by the students), the one that receives comments is the one that shows better results; whereas the group that has to correct their mistakes by themselves is the one that gets the worst results in the post-test. This is due, according to Semke, to their lack of motivation.

From the review of literature we can conclude that, even if providing feedback is seen as a beneficial tool to promote the writing skill, research is inconclusive and teachers still do not know the kind of feedback which is beneficial to learners.

2.- The experiment

Even if rewriting is considered a good writing strategy, there seems to be a lack of consensus between the kind of feedback teachers should give to written compositions. In order to contribute with some evidence to this issue, I conducted a case study which deals with this problem but from the point of view of the learner and not of the teacher. That is, how students actually respond to each of these methods, what their reactions to the feedback are when they receive it. This study prompted a survey to obtain more data from 52 students at the same level as the two girls involved in the study.

The research questions posed in this study are the following:

- 1.- While teachers may spend hours marking students' essays, do learners really take advantage of them and do such corrections make a difference?
- 2.- Does rewriting promote more accurate and fluent essays?

In the light of the literature, this paper aims to find evidence for the following claims:

Written comments have a positive effect in motivating students to re-write.

Error correction produces a higher level of accuracy in re-writing and in post compositions.

Students express a preference for a mixed type of feedback: error correction and comments.

2.1. Method

2.1.1. Subjects

Two 17-year-old girls –Dolors and Marta- were selected from 46 students in *2nd Batxillerat* (lower intermediate) in Joan Oró Secondary School in Lleida. They had roughly the same proficiency and were similarly considered by the teacher. Both of them received a grade of *bé* (six points out of ten) the previous year and had been exposed to English instruction for the same number of years. They were both bilingual in Spanish and Catalan. When the research was carried out during the winter quarter of 2000-01, the researcher was their teacher.

2.1.2. Data collection

All the students in the class were asked to do the same kind of writing and re-writing so data collection was not something very special and the experimental treatments supplemented the regular homework evaluation system. The criteria used to evaluate essays were the same as the ones used in the University Entrance Exam and the rating scale was as follows:

- Coherence: clear and correct use of linking devices, referents, determiners, etc., clear organization of ideas. (20%
- Usage: appropriate register and style, appropriate vocabulary. (20%
- Vocabulary: correct spelling, range of vocabulary. (20%
- Presentation: correct layout, skilful handling of topic, well reasoned ideas, creativity. (20%
- Grammar: correct and appropriate use of morphological and syntactic structures, variety and complexity of structures used (20%

Students handed in a first draft, which I revised, and the final version of their compositions. A different feedback treatment was used for each informant for three months (eight essays). The feedback variation was as follows:

a: Marta: I underlined the mistakes on the written assignments of the first informant. For example: "I like to learn english, the coustum of english people" (grammar or lexical mistakes) or Write to me (formality).

b: Dolors: I made comments at the bottom of the assignments of the second informant. This second informant received praise on correct and appropriate sentences as well as criticisms on errors. For example: "Your letter is excellent: good layout, good structure, appropriate and

very convincing (I'll think about giving the job to you!) But you still have to improve spelling. Try to correct those mistakes."

As I wanted to know the students' attitudes and feelings towards feedback, I needed an introspective method of research. As all students in the class were writing a diary, I asked them to pay special attention to their feelings about written assignments and feedback in their diaries. An informal interview with the two informants was also carried out in order to make sure my inferences were correct.

The pre-test data were obtained from the first essay which students had written for the course. At the beginning of the year students were given a letter from the teacher and asked to write a letter back. The aim of the letter was to get to know the group and so the language was informal and quite simple. There was no possibility of rewriting. Both informants got similar results (Marta got 65% and Dolors 60%). This was something predictable since they had the same results in the last course. By the end of February a written test was carried out. The test included a formal letter asking for a job advertised "the perfect student". So performance data were collected before and after the treatment, as well as from homework during treatment.

Students were not informed of their participation in the experiment. All the students were asked to write a diary and all students received one kind feedback on their essays. Probably students attributed differences in feedback to differences in individual learning style.

In order to have more data and be able to find a contrast between the two different writing approaches (writing as a process and writing as a product), a survey was conducted to two different groups. The group Marta and Dolors belonged to was following a writing as a process approach. There were 27 students in that group. The other group considered writing as a product and therefore re-writing was not considered. There were 25 students in that group.

To sum up, the data for my research come from different sources: the informants' diaries, their written assignments, their tests, an informal interview with them and a questionnaire to 52 students.

2.2. Results and discussion

2.2.1. Hypothesis 1. Written comments have a positive effect in motivating students to rewrite.

One of the goals of this study was to look into the relationship between written comments and motivation. I used the diaries and the informal interviews with the two informants and looked for recurrent patterns and variations across the two students that suggested to me that their motivation was increased, decreased or invariable.

Only Marta, whose essays were commented upon, suggests positive comments as being motivating for her in her diary: "Comments about the things I did not correctly help me to

improve them and comments about the things I did well are a kind of prize that encourages me and then I feel like going on writing and learning English". So we can assume that, in her case, comments act as motivators.

However, comments may not be the only source of motivation. Both girls mention that rewriting seems to help them learn more: "The fact that I could give you the compositions two or three times with some of the errors corrected has helped me a lot. Because if you corrected the mistakes we would not pay attention and this is the only way that we pay attention and we remember them". (Dolors) "The comments increase my interest for the composition and even for English. If the mistakes are not corrected, very often I have to look up grammar books and dictionaries to be able to correct them, which makes me remember them better when I write a composition" (Marta). This is also present in Cotterall and Cohen's (2003: 165) research where one of the subjects reported "it is very important to get feedback ... Because they can give you good suggestion and correct your mistakes."

In conclusion, written comments seem to have a positive relationship to motivation according to Marta's wording. However, Dolors, who was not given comments, mentioned that having to correct errors makes her re-write compositions and that it is re-writing what helps her to learn. So even though our hypothesis is confirmed, it may be the process approach to writing as a whole and a supportive feedback in particular what, in fact, motivate students most. This might be an issue for further research.

2.2.2. Hypothesis 2. Error correction produces a higher level of accuracy in re-writing and in post-compositions.

The second claim I made was that error correction would produce a higher level of accuracy. As we have seen, in their diaries both girls mentioned that rewriting was helping them a lot to improve their English. In the conversation I had with Dolors, whose written assignments were corrected by underlining the mistakes, she said: "When I see what you have underlined, I think where the mistake is and I very often remember it when I am writing a new composition but there are many times that I do not know why a word or sentence is underlined. It may be one of those mistakes you... I mean, mistakes related to style, structure,... You understand. This type of mistake is impossible to recognise." This kind of comment was never made by Marta probably because my comments gave her the clue to improve her papers.

In order to see if my hypothesis was true or not, I compared the results Marta and Dolors got in the last assignment: a letter applying for a job. The criteria used to evaluate the letter was the same as the one used to mark homework assignments. Both students presented a first draft and the final version. They got the mark only after the final version:

- Presentation: (correct layout for a formal letter: addresses, date, appropriate opening and ending). There was no improvement between the first draft and the final

version because this was correct from the very beginning. Both Marta and Dolors got 20%.

- Usage: (correct formal style, appropriate vocabulary) Marta's letter was more daring, long and appropriate. She improved a couple of sentences which seemed a bit aggressive. She got 20%. Dolors's was a bit too short, not giving enough information for the referee to write a reference about her qualities for the job. She did not improve this aspect of her composition in her final version. She got 15%.
- Coherence: (correct use of linking devices, referents, determiners, etc) Both of them improved this aspect of the letter but Dolors did not improve a couple of referents which did not have antecedent nouns. Marta got 20% whereas Dolors got 15%
- Spelling: Dolors corrected all her spelling mistakes and she got 20%. Marta only corrected three mistakes probably because of my comment "...but you still have to improve spelling". She got 15%.
- Grammar: Dolors corrected all her grammar mistakes so she got 20%. Marta did not correct all of them but they did not interfere with meaning so she got 18%.

What seems to happen here is what was already pointed out by Dolors. She could correct all her spelling and grammar mistakes because they were underlined. So all she had to do was to look up the word in a dictionary or the structure in a grammar book and correct them. She did not know what to do with the other types of mistakes, so she overlooked them. On the other hand, Marta could improve style and appropriacy if needed since she was told to do so. Therefore when students were not suggested what to revise, revisions were not even attempted.

Their marks on that letter were not significantly different: Marta got 93% and Dolors 90%. If we compare these results to the ones they got in the first letter they had to write at the beginning of the year, we notice an improvement which may be due to the instruction received since. In fact the improvement is similar in both of them because Marta already had higher marks then.

Summing up, students should be told what to improve. So it does not matter whether we use a code, we underline mistakes or write comments. In fact Marta's and Dolors's results are not significantly different. In the light of these results we cannot claim that these two types of feedback make a real difference. However what we can state is that rewriting works in the short term since both students improve their writing papers in one way or another.

In the long run, there has also been improvement; both Marta and Dolors had a better performance in the last essay. However, there could be improvement because of the instruction received during that period or because, as Marta said, a discovery approach would help students make inferences and formulate concepts about the target language, and would help them to fix this information in their long-term memories.

2.2.3. Hypothesis 3. Students express a preference for the mixture (that is, error correction of some kind and comments).

My final claim was that students express a preference for a type of feedback which combines comments and error correction. A survey questionnaire was given to students a couple of days after they had been given their papers back so as not to influence them. The aim was to find out how many students do not look at the comments or do so only sparingly and which kind of feedback students thought helped them most.

The questionnaire given to the two different groups raises some interesting issues. In the writing-as-a-process group all the students reported reading over all or most of the composition and a significant 68% say they read all of it. In the writing-as-a-product group 87% of the students read over all or most of the composition but, in this case, the majority read only some of it. What is also important to note down is that 13% of the students of this last group did not read any correction.

Table 1: Percentage of the compositions read

	<u>Writing as a process</u>	<u>Writing as a product</u>
a. I always read them	68%	21%
b. I read what I am interested in.	32%	66%
c. I never read them	0%	13%

A similar distribution of responses was found for the item regarding attention to the teacher's feedback. Again, 95% of the students in the writing-as-a-process group reported reading all or most of the corrections and the great majority read all of them (53%). In the other group 50% of the learners reported reading most of them and 25% read all the correction. But a more significant fact is that 4.2% of the students in this group did not pay attention to the teacher's correction at all and that 8.3% do not answer the question. If we add to this 12.5% of students who do not care about corrections the 12.5% that only attend to a few corrections, we can conclude that a quarter of the corrections made by the teacher are lost.

Table 2: Percentage of the attention paid to corrections and/or comments

	<u>Writing as a process</u>	<u>Writing as a product</u>
a. To all corrections	53%	25%
b. To most of them	42%	50%
c. To few corrections	5%	12.5%
d. To none of them	0%	4.2%
e. Question not answered	0%	8.3%

It is worth pointing out here that students were asked to give the reasons and that 30.7% of the students in the writing-as-a-product group either do not answer this question, are not interested or the reason they give is the mark awarded. In fact this is a criticism which has been made to that approach: there is no room for improvement and therefore the student

is not motivated enough to correct his mistakes. Most of the students who reported paying attention to all or nearly all the corrections in both groups thought that that was a way of improving (61.8% and 60%). One of the students from the writing-as-a-product group added a comment in Catalan which is interesting because it relates to the answers given by the students who did not pay any attention to corrections from this very same group: "I pay attention to do it better but I can't see any improvement since I always make the same mistakes". It is this sense of defeat, of trying to do it better than the previous time but getting a paper back full of red marks that overburdens students, some of whom give up and answer "I don't look at them because I don't understand them". And, furthermore, another student from that same class says "I'm not interested and if I do it is to pass English, not because I like it".

Table 3: Why do you read your compositions?

	<u>Writing as a process</u>	<u>Writing as a product</u>
- To know where I made a mistake	26.3%	23%
- To correct mistakes and not to make them again	47.3%	27%
- To understand mistakes	13.2%	0%
- To know my English level	5.25%	0%
- I'm curious	2.65%	7.7%
- I don't read what is correct because I already know it	5.25%	11.5%
- Because of the mark	0%	7.7%
- That is why the teacher corrected them	0%	3.8%
- I am not interested	0%	7.7%
- No answer	0%	11.5%

Table 4-1: Why do you pay attention to all or most of the corrections?

	<u>Writing as a process</u>	<u>Writing as a product</u>
- To learn and improve	61.8%	60%
- To know which kind of mistakes I make	20.5%	16%
- I like it because it is interesting	5.9%	0%
- To know what the teacher thinks about what I've written	2.95%	0%

Table 4-2: Why do you pay attention to none or nearly none of the corrections?

	<u>Writing as a process</u>	<u>Writing as a product</u>
I don't have time	2.95%	0%
I'm curious	5.9%	0%
I'm not interested	0%	12%
I don't understand corrections	0%	4%

I can only remember a few corrections	0%	4%
No answer	0%	4%

With regard to how students reported processing the feedback, results are similar in both groups. But in the writing-as-a-process group most students reported either making a mental note or trying to correct the errors whereas students in the other group did both things. It is also worth pointing out that 15% of the students reported re-writing the compositions in the writing-as-a-process group whereas none did so in the writing-as-a-product group.

Table 5: Percentage of what students do with the feedback they receive

	<u>Writing as a process</u>	<u>Writing as a product</u>
a. Nothing	0%	3.8%
b. Make a mental note	28.33%	30.7%
c. Try to correct errors	26.66%	30.7%
d. Write down the errors & comments	8.33%	7.7%
e. Rewrite the composition	15%	0%
f. Take a look at the errors	21.66%	27%
g. Others (please specify)	0%	0%

The final item in the questionnaire was included to learn about the students' preference for the type of feedback. There are significant differences in the way this question is answered by the two groups. By far the largest number of students in the writing-as-a-product group (40.7%) reported that the teacher commenting the positive and negative aspects of the composition and underlining the mistakes was the type of feedback which helped them most. This is something odd since their teacher has never used that type of feedback. Eighteen per cent and fifteen per cent of the students in both groups reported that the teacher should correct all their mistakes. This might be due to the type of written instruction they have been given in previous years where there was an emphasis on grammar and the teacher corrected all their mistakes. Nevertheless, the large number of students preferring the teacher to correct the mistakes in the writing-as-a-process group is striking since they could hand in their drafts for revision and once that was good, their compositions were edited. The mark they obtained was the one for the final paper they hand in. This was negotiated at the beginning of their school year.

Another interesting result was the fact that students in the writing-as-a-process group had a wide range of preferences. Nevertheless, comments, with or without underlining mistakes, was the most popular (32.8%).

Table 6: Percentage of the type of feedback which helps students to learn to write in English, according to the students.

	<u>Writing as a process</u>	<u>Writing as a product</u>
a. Conferencing	7.9%	11.1%
b. The teacher corrects all the errors	18.4%	14.8%
c. The teacher corrects the most important errors	9.2%	7.4%
d. The teacher underlines all the errors	14.5%	3.7%
e. The teacher underlines the most important errors	7.9%	0%
f. The teacher comments the positive and the negative points of the paper	13.1%	3.7%
g. The teacher comments the positive and negative points of the paper and underlines the mistakes	19.7%	40.7%
h. The teacher uses an Error Coding System and underlines them	9.2%	14.8%
i. Nothing helps the student	0%	3.7%

However, most of the times feedback is not understood as the following comment made by a student who never receives correction of his/her mistakes but who is given a clue for him/her to correct them (either a code, comments or underlining mistakes) suggests:

"If I make a mistake it is because I did not know it was a mistake. If I did, I would not have made it. That is why I prefer you to correct my compositions"

In conclusion, the results of the survey suggest that although it has been claimed that feedback is only valuable if the composition was revised, it would appear that such revision is infrequent when the class followed the product approach to writing. The survey also suggests that students preferred the teacher to comment on the positive and negative aspects of the compositions and to underline the mistakes probably because they feel lost.

2.2.4. Other comments

My findings prove Sommers' (1984) findings that some students do not even understand comments and that most corrections encourage students to think of their drafts as finished drafts (Dolors only corrected spelling and grammar).

Even though it is true that students who have followed a writing as a process approach preferred comments to other

types of feedback, they do not show a significant improvement. So in a way my findings are against Cardelle & Corno (1981) who found constructive feedback did help performance. In fact, both Marta and Dolors improved their written proficiency and accuracy but that could be because of the whole instruction or because both of them use a sort of problem solving activity to improve their assignments. This last factor would agree with Lalande's (1982).

After a detailed analysis of the data collected, it seems that not all the hypotheses established have been confirmed. It cannot be forgotten that a general conclusion would be premature as this study was carried out in a restricted setting. Nevertheless it provides a database of material which may be reinterpreted in future research.

3.- Conclusion

The study seems to suggest that learners do not really take advantage of the many hours teachers spend marking papers. This feedback has a limited impact on students as such and corrections in the short run do not make a difference. On the other hand, re-writing, understood as revising and improving drafts, does work; at least for the two girls involved in this case study.

It is important to note that the notion of rewriting is successful but certainly many research questions on feedback for written assignments still remain for future research: the long-term effects of rewriting, the type of feedback on writing acquisition, the most effective correction techniques for particular cognitive styles and personality types.

What seems to me an important conclusion to be drawn is that new, more efficient and humane ways to correct students errors should be developed. Traditionally, feedback tends to concern itself more with accuracy in form than with

meaning. If we only correct surface level features of writing - what is called editing-, we are misleading students into thinking that writing is primarily about surface accuracy. Moreover their motivation decreases as they see teachers focusing their attention on the things they are interested in and not on the students', as they cannot understand either the mistake underlined or a vague comment at the bottom of the composition. In conclusion, at the end, students do not know why or what for they have to revise their composition. Errors have to be considered information feedback to motivate the learner. Only in this way would students' interest not be in their grade but in the feedback they get when they receive their papers back.

Learners do not really take advantage of the many hours teachers spend marking papers

More efficient and humane ways to correct students errors should be developed

As Murray (1991) says, "writing and re-writing is a process of discovery". Teachers should learn to view their students'

papers as efforts in a developmental process. The papers they hand in are not final products, one-shot attempts. Rather they show how much the student has been able to accomplish at that time.

With regard to this study and the literature analysed in this paper, feedback is not in itself what facilitates learning. How we, as teachers, present this activity to our students and the position we give to it within the process approach to writing will be the clues that make it valuable as a facilitator of the written production acquisition.

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When diaries are quoted the wording is the one used by the learners.

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