



**apac**

Associació  
de Professors i  
Professores d'Anglès  
de Catalunya

**PROCEEDINGS  
APAC - ELT Convention 2012**

Number 75 october 2012



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**ELT - Convention  
2013**

**The Value  
of English**

**February 21st, 22nd & 23rd**

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Associació  
de Professors i  
Professores d'Anglès  
de Catalunya



**Universitat Pompeu Fabra  
Campus Ciutadella**

**Ramon Trias Fargas, 25-27  
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*Dear colleagues*

*The volume you have in your hands is the first of the renewed APAC of News, APAC's journal since 1986, which will now be published twice a year, with different objectives, characteristics and contents.*

*In the first volume, which will reach you each month of October with almost 100 pages, you will find the proceedings of our yearly Convention which were usually published during the year, distributed in the three issues. The October volume will provide APAC members with a self-contained digest of the Convention. The present October 2012 issue contains therefore the assessment of the February Convention, the proceedings of many of the plenaries and workshops and interviews with David Block and Penny Ur. This volume, together with the powerpoints you can access from [www.apac.es](http://www.apac.es), is a very faithful account of the past Convention, and we hope that both those who attended and those who could not attend find it useful.*

*In the second volume, which will be issued in January and will be considerably shorter, you will find, the usual, articles, contributions, hands on recommendations and ready-to-use suggestions from APAC members and from well known authors. As a novelty, the second issue will also include reports and articles from seminars and conferences held during the year and which the Editorial Board considers of interest for APAC's members.*

*This new format allows for the same number of articles and contributions that APAC members have been receiving and which has increased with the years – both in amount and in quality – whilst reducing distribution costs, a much welcome change in difficult financial times.*

*The flow of information with the membership will be continued and updated via the web and the Newsletter where the most relevant recent and future events will be announced. The next Newsletter, due in a couple of weeks, will include information on APAC events held since the 2012 Convention and an advance of events to be held up until Christmas plus the names of the confirmed speakers for the 2013 Convention.*

*We do hope you enjoy this volume, and APAC's best wishes for a good start of the academic year.*



# APAC-ELT CONVENTION 2012

## Opening address by Mr. Miquel Berga, the President of APAC

Good afternoon,

It is, as always, a great pleasure to welcome everyone to our annual APAC ELT Convention. Memories from last year's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary linger on, and I bet most of you still see the two pianos on the stage and the musical lesson from our friend Ramón Ribé, a lesson on how there is life beyond retirement and on how there can be creativity beyond teaching and classrooms. The Rector de la Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Josep Joan Moreso, has asked me to give you a warm welcome, too, and sends his apologies for not being able –against his will- to be here today. Consellera Irene Rigau is again with us this year and we greatly appreciate that and look forward to hearing her views on the current plans of the Government concerning English and education in this country. Whatever one might think of Ms Rigau's policies, it is only fair to say that Irene Rigau is made of a politically tough fabric and she does not shy away from real issues or from direct contact with the profession. And that is why she was here last year just a few weeks after her appointment, and that is why she is back one year later. My suspicion is that she is well aware that APAC brings together a substantial number of teachers from what I like to call –in good standard English- la crème de la crème in the profession. Thank you, senyora Consellera. And thank you Subdirector General d'Innovació, Sr. Joan Gumbert, an old friend of APAC, for being here, too. I also want to thank the Director of the British Council in Barcelona, Mr Chris Dove, for being with us again and for maintaining the long and loyal support of his institution for what APAC stands for. Mention should also be given to the usual presence and co-operation of publishers; the number of stands this year has reached a record high. Last, but not at all least, I want to thank all of you, teachers, students, researchers, members of APAC. My dear friends: It is your presence and active involvement that makes this Convention a meaningful and useful event.

Our motto this time has clear echoes of the ideas spread by sociologist Zygmunt Bauman: "Solid Learning for Liquid Times". It seems fair, then, to quote Bauman himself on the paramount difficulties of teaching and educating in our changing times: "Education took many forms in the past and proved itself able to adjust to changing circumstances, setting



itself new goals and designing new strategies. But let me repeat – the present change is not like past changes. At no turning-point in human history did educators face a challenge strictly comparable to the one presented by the current watershed. Simply, we have never been in such a situation before. The art of living in a world oversaturated with information has still to be learned. And so has the yet more mind-bogglingly difficult art of grooming human beings for such a life." And, of course, on top of all that we are undergoing an economic crisis that makes Charles Dickens –precisely in the bicentenary of his birth- sound like a contemporary voice. And the "Liquid Times" have now the added echo of the "Hard Times" in the title of Dickens' famous novel. So the challenge, I am sorry to inform you, is about how to produce Solid Learning in Liquid and Hard Times. In hard times, in times of crisis, humans tend to get together and think ahead. And that is the spirit of this convention: let us get together and think ahead. APAC has again made an effort to be a showcase of what it means to learn English, what is needed and how these needs can be met. And, as usual, we want to do that with a little help from our friends. No wonder we needed hard-thinking people this time. That is why Jorge Wagensberg is here to give us a walk around the valleys and values of education and knowledge, and that is why the keynote tomorrow directly addresses the topic of this year's convention, which David Block will consider under 3 aspects: language, culture and identity within a society of global citizens which has seen how "cosumerism" has taken over. In past conventions we have addressed the intersection between teaching English

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**ELT - Convention 2013**

**The Value of English**

The choice of theme for the 2013 Convention was not difficult, as it included two words which bind together APAC's membership: values and English, both extremely relevant in the times we are living. As educators we need to help our students become caring and principled citizens, as teachers of English we need to improve their communication skills in a language which has become the world's lingua franca. The challenge is to balance out local identities and global culture, sustainable behaviour and consumerism, English and Englishes. Our classrooms have - once again- changed a lot, as our students live in very different realities from the ones they lived in five years ago, and as teachers of English we cannot fail to see this and use it to our advantage, thinking outside the box and working with our students in other ways. English and Englishes are more freely available now than ever, representing different cultures and different identities, and it should be possible to exploit this fact to give value to our students' own culture and identity. We look forward to discussing these issues in our 2013 Convention and will do our best to secure the best speakers and the best papers to facilitate debate.

See you at the Pompeu in February 2013!!!!

**Call for papers  
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Aquest any us puc també dir, i els que esteu a l'ESO ho sabeu, hem celebrat per primera vegada les proves de 4t d'ESO. D'aquí a un mes, tindrem els resultats exactes i comparables amb tots els centres. No exclusivament de la capacitat escrita sinó també de comprensió oral. Crec que amb la radiografia de 6é i la de 4t d'ESO tindrem una informació que complementarà la que teníem de les PAUS.

L'anàlisi d'aquesta realitat ens marcarà les línies de treball que s'hauran d'establir en el Pla del Departament. Jo els invito com a Associació a reflexionar sobre aquests resultats i invito al Sotsdirector General a comptar amb l'associació per a l'anàlisi, perquè tindrem una radiografia del final de la secundària per comprovar si hem assolit un nivell, no diré òptim, però sí correcte, ja que es tracta d'una tasca progressiva, no automàtica. Hem volgut fer aquesta prova per tenir més dades.

També estem fent gestions amb la Universitat per tal que el coneixement dels futurs candidats a mestres en llengua catalana, castellana i anglesa sigui tingut en compta a l'hora d'accedir a la carrera. Tots sabem que la selectivitat es pot aprovar amb un quatre però ¿fins a quin punt es pot permetre que entrin en el sistema persones que tenen els fonaments tan febles?

Amb el grup de treball del Degans de totes les universitats estem analitzant bàsicament aquestes tres matèries perquè si l'alumne és bo a llengua catalana, castellana i anglès, segur que és bo a tot el demés.

La llengua és el primer instrument que el mestre fa servir i es hem d'assegurar que els candidats tenen un nivell acceptable.

A un projecte molt concret de l'APAC, el Premi a l'Excel·lència professional, el Departament s'hi suma amb la reserva d'una plaça a un curs de formació a la Gran Bretanya per tal d'incentivar aquesta innovació.

Aquest acte en ocasió del vostre congrés s'ha convertit en un balanç del que vam dir que feríem i el que hem fet en realitat.

També vull reflexionar sobre el lema de les Jornades: "Aprentatges sòlids per temps líquids". Curiosament, ahir es publicava un article en el que es deia:

*La retòrica de la societat líquida només funciona sobre la base de una confiança de pedra picada en la societat del benestar i la seva capacitat de parar tots els cops. La societat líquida ha estat la breu il·lusió d'un món fàcil que s'ha acabat.*

Fa pensar. En aquesta reflexió parla de la societat líquida amb valors tous. La crisi farà probablement que ens haguem de replantejar moltes coses. En aquest replantejament, és possible que l'educació torni a ocupar el lloc que li correspon i que no hauria d'haver perdut mai.

Recordo que l'any passat reflexionàvem sobre l'impacte que la pèrdua dels valors associats amb la moral del món del treball havia fet que l'educació estigués contaminada de valors propis del món de l'oci.

Els valors propis del món del treball (disciplina, dedicació, perseverança) són els que han de dominar en el món de l'educació.

En aquest moment són moltes les reflexions que en el món educatiu es replantegen:

*Val la pena tenir cultura general?*

*Hem fet bé en assumir el coneixement superficial de moltes matèries?*

*És millor saber una mica de tot o tenir coneixements profunds d'una matèria?*

*Es pot ser creatiu sense tenir continguts?*

S'aposta per tornar a defensar la cultura general com a carta de navegació.

També és veritat que en aquests anys de bonança les certeses eren amples. Ara, en obrir una nova etapa ens hem de replantejar moltes qüestions. Els valors tous defensen una xarxa forta per les caigudes que tots treballarem per mantenir en els casos essencials, però també és veritat, ara més que mai, que l'educació s'associarà amb el futur de les persones.

Un acte d'educació és un acte d'esperança en les possibilitats d'un món millor a través de l'educació personal fent a cada individu responsable de la seva pròpia vida dins d'una societat per poder viure d'una manera cohesionada i equilibrada.

Aquest valor de l'educació està ara al centre del debat.

*Què és el més important el ser o el tenir?*

Hem passat molt anys en els que el tenir era més important que el ser i ara tornem a veure que allò que manté el seu valor és allò que va relacionat amb la formació. La cultura té el seu valor; no es poden adquirir competències sense continguts. L'escola ha de ser cultura.

Vosaltres feu un pas més enllà. A través de la llengua anglesa podreu compartir i conèixer altres cultures. Esteu a la punta de la llança. El repte és el domini del català, castellà i com a mínim l'anglès. Vosaltres fa 25 anys que treballeu per això i joestic aquí per reiterar el compromís del Departament amb aquest objectiu i amb tot el que vosaltres feu i reflexioneu.

Per tant, una vegada més moltes gràcies per la feina de cada dia, per la feina que feu anualment organitzant aquest congrés internacional, i fins a la propera.

and education in general, and we look forward to Professor Block's lecture tomorrow. Apart from that, our sessions this year will address current topics in EFL (with plenaries by Adrian Underhill and Chris Roland this evening and by Caroline Nixon and Penny Ur tomorrow morning) and with over 40 workshops by materials writers, grassroots teachers and researchers, not to mention our big debate in the usual APAC roundtable tomorrow.

I want to highlight a special panel session this evening on "L'anglès i les sortides professionals". It is especially relevant now that I hear the Department of Education is willing to give a big push to English in Vocational Training. We entrusted the organisation of the session to a well-known APAC member, who is also one of its founders: José Antonio Martín. He is going to be chairing the table today wearing three different hats: as a member of APAC, as a former Director de l'Escola d'Hosteleria i Turisme de Barcelona, and as the current

Sotsdirector General de Formació Professional. He has been able to put together a fantastic group of panelists including –just in case you happen to like celebrities– the cook Joan Roca, from El Cellar de Can Roca, a qualified contender for the title of Best Cook in the World. There you are: teachers and cooks, professions where method, art and creativity go hand in hand. Teaching English in vocational schools, in FP, holds not only a huge future for all teachers of English (posts will have to be opened) but also a great challenge, which calls for the redefinition of what we teach, why and how.

And I am delighted to end my address today by naming all the winners of the APAC prizes awarded this year to students and teachers from different schools in primary and secondary education.

Thank you all and it is time now for Consellera Irene Rigau to address the audience.

## Address by Irene Rigau, Consellera d'Educació de la Generalitat de Catalunya

Molt bona tarda. President de l'Associació de Professors d'Anglès de Catalunya, senyor Director del British Council, representants de les juntes anteriors i de l'actual de l'APAC. Vull saludar també al sotsdirector i sotsdirectora que ens acompanyen i de manera especial a tots els premiats. Enhorabona a tots. Un any més soc aquí. Com a Consellera és el segon. Deu ser de les Jornades a les que al llarg de la vida jo he assistit més vegades, sense ser de la matèria.

Ja sabeu que em costa dir que no a una invitació i més una feta pel Miguel Berga. Però el que és més important i més em motiva és el fet de que sigui una trobada consolidada un any més, amb una assistència molt important de professorat format, motivat. Crec que heu establert una dinàmica que va incloent noves generacions, perquè hi veig noves cares. Però també hi són presents els "històrics". En aquesta associació el relleu generacional no desplaça a ningú sinó que amplia i engrandeix el conjunt.

Jo venia simplement a donar-vos las gràcies de mantenir viva l'entitat. L'any passat celebràveu el 25 aniversari, i us vull animar a continuar treballant.

L'any passat vàrem parlar d'un projecte del Departament d'Ensenyament de posar la matèria Anglès a la Formació Professional. Ho vàrem dir i ho vàrem fer. A partir d'aquest setembre a totes els cicles formatius de grau superior s'impartirà anglès al llarg dels dos cursos.

Abans, només estava previst que l'anglès formes part del currículum de les especialitats de Turisme i Restauració. El Decret que havia preparat el Govern anterior que desplejava la LEC juntament amb les matèries de cada currículum s'afegia "...si s'escau, l'anglès". Valia la pena aprofitar-ho. Vàrem eliminar "si s'escau" i es va treure el decret. Considerant que s'esqueia "sempre", es va incloure en totes les especialitats.



Jo vull destacar la importància que té per la formació professional i per l'economia la capacitat de poder llegir un prospecte, unes instruccions, comunicar-se amb un tècnic i també per a la mobilitat personal. El món de l'economia ens demana aquesta preparació.



When at home, warm and comfortable, we might not want to go and find food unless we have the stimulus of hunger. The same can be said about thirst or sex. "Why go out and look for a partner and convince him to have offspring? I will do that tomorrow." The human species would disappear if its members thought like that. Even the passion of love is a temporary mental illness which forces us to go out and solve this problem and satisfy the stimulus.

Our problem with knowledge is that it is the last conquest of evolution, and we do not yet have the stimuli to acquire it. We have curiosity, but it is not strong enough if compared with other kinds of stimuli.

Cognitive knowledge on Earth is perhaps 200,000 years old, and we cannot wait for natural selection, because that takes a very long time. So this is why we need stimuli. We do, in fact, have some stimuli in favour of knowledge. The technical word is "neotenia", which means that we reach the adult stage while keeping characteristics of the pre-adult stage. For example, if we compare an adult, 30-year-old gorilla with an adult human being, there is a big difference. There is no so much difference between a gorilla baby and a human one: they play together; they have the same curiosity about the world. But once a gorilla reaches maturity he has no more interest in the world. You remember "Copito de Nieve", the albino gorilla from Barcelona zoo; he would sit in the position of Rodin's Thinker but without stimuli.

What is a good stimulus? The best are in contradictions. So, when a scientist observes A and then he discovers not-A, that paradox give him intellectual joy.

In school and university the contradiction is hidden. We give the knowledge to our students removing the contradiction. So we remove the good stimuli. A good pedagogue is a good provider of stimuli.

If you agree that stimuli is a contradiction between reality and what I think, the best stimuli are in reality. There is no reality in the schools where the professor explains reality or tells stories about reality. Books tell stories about reality. Computers and simulations describe reality, but in the classroom there is no reality. Sometimes there is an aquarium or a hamster in a corner, but we do not go into the real world enough.

The idea of museums is to use them as the last reserve of reality. Unfortunately in some museums you see screens and no real objects. I will give a first example taken from the biography of Albert Einstein. When he was five years old his father gave him a gift: a compass. He spent five days playing with it nonstop. His mother became worried and asked her husband to talk to Albert. His father asked him what the problem was and young Albert answered that the needle of the compass moved without anybody touching it. The father explained about the needle being a magnet, the same as the planet and how it moved in relation to the planet when you

change the position of the compass. Then the father asked Albert:

*Do you understand?*

*No, said the child, but I think that you do not understand either.*

First recommendation: Devote one day in the week to going out into the world to make a good collection of stimuli that provides the raw material for the second phase: Conversation.

### **Conversation**

In science everything is conversation: to observe nature. To conduct an experiment is to pose a question to nature. A person thinking is having a conversation with himself. That is why a chimpanzee is unable to think. In order to think you need to compare the differences between elements.

To have a conversation you need to listen before you speak, but this is very difficult to practice. Normally, when we have a conversation, we are not listening but preparing our answer and waiting for the other person to finish so we can continue.

Criticism: I think the word silence was coined in school. This has changed in the last few years, but 10 years ago I discovered that my mother had kept all the punishments I got in school, and all of them had the same reason:

*He tried to speak in the classroom*

A scholar was not supposed to speak. It was not in the programme.

That has changed. Conversation is also important because, linked to the conversation, there is also intellectual joy. Let us say where exactly. In a conversation you have questions and answers. When you change the answer, you have an evolution. When you change the question you have a revolution. The history of science is the history of the new questions, rather than the answers.

In Spain we have the luck that conversation is very much a part of our tradition: the "tertulia".

I will try to produce an intellectual joy in the room concerning conversation. In science we have a problem with the distinction between *understanding* and *being used to*. If asked why the vegetation of the earth is green and we say that it has always been like that, we are not understanding. We can talk about chlorophyll but then how do we explain those aquatic plants that also use chlorophyll and are not green? The answer is that for millions of years plants tried to conquer land outside water but they failed because the radiation was

# Introduction of Jorge Wagensberg

by the President of APAC

I mentioned cuisine a few minutes ago, and I think there might be a connection here with our main speaker. It is widely accepted that one of the key factors in Ferran Adrià's revolution and how he has changed people's perceptions about food has to do with having introduced a sort of sixth sense to the 5 senses that we thought were involved in eating. Our man introduced the concept of thinking about eating and food: thinking about the process itself became an essential ingredient in El Bulli's success story. Likewise, we, teachers of English, were told that the game was about teaching the four skills, that is putting the focus on listening, reading, writing and speaking... until some people began to realize we were leaving aside a fifth skill, the one, in fact, that matters most: thinking.

Well, Mr Jorge Wagensberg is a curious man who has been able to make thinking a way of life, and even better than that: he has been able to make thinking a way to earn a living. His books are always shocking, always lucid... always

amusing, always inspiring. His topic today is a reminder of what, ultimately, gives sense to the teaching and learning process, and that is the pleasure of knowledge, or as he puts it: intellectual joy. "El gozo intelectual" is precisely – amongst his numerous publications- the title of his celebrated essay on knowledge and the ways we acquire it. As you all know, Mr Wagensberg has directed the prestigious Science Museum, CosmoCaixa, in Barcelona and is a Professor at the Universitat de Barcelona. But it is the impressive quality and the overwhelming brightness of his scientific mind at work that makes him such a dearly valued guest speaker at our Convention.

I can't think of a better first line to open a conference of practising teachers: Intellectual Joy. Jorge: Thank you for accepting our invitation. It is a pleasure and a privilege and, well, a joy to welcome you to the annual APAC Convention. Thank you!

## Intellectual Joy and How to Acquire New Knowledge

by Jorge Wagensberg

Thanks for the introduction, Miquel. I will give some ideas in English. It is a pity but you shall miss an opportunity to listen to good Spanish or Catalan.

I will try to give some ideas on the acquisition of new knowledge. Here "new" can refer to education: to the learner or to pedagogy in education. "New" can also have an absolute meaning, referring to the whole planet, the result of research. I will refer to both meanings in my talk today.

The idea comes from the scientific method but can be extended to any type of knowledge.

There are three phases in the process of acquiring knowledge:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Stimuli
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Conversation
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Understanding



After 40 years of doing science, I think there is an intellectual joy linked to every one of these phases, and I want to propose a way to give knowledge, a way to teach, a way based on this intellectual joy. I will give examples and also make some criticism, because knowledge becomes new when you can make criticism.

You are teachers, a very interesting audience for this theme, and I will try to provoke you with these ideas.

### Stimulus

A stimulus is a transaction between two states of the mind, one in which you are not specially interested in anything and a second one in which you obsessively interested in something. The idea is that any function related to a living system needs stimuli. This is a unwritten principle of matter. Between the alternative of doing or not doing, matter always chooses "not doing". In order to do something we need stimuli. In order to be alive we need to eat. But the process of eating needs a stimulus because of the principle of universal mediocrity.



To sum up: I think we have to change education in order give priority to stimuli, conversation and understanding.

If you look in the history of science, in the history of humanity there are moments that are particularly creative, for example Florence in the Renaissance. La Piazza de la Signoria. There was Dante, who invented the language; Galileo Galilei, who invented science (there was no science before Galileo); Leonardo da Vinci, who was the first artist to find a fossil on the top of a mountain. He said:

*This is not the rest of a paella!*

He invented palaeontology. There was Michelangelo, etc. Florence was a meeting space in which stimuli and conversation among artists and scientists entered into a kind of crossfire of ideas.

In the Vienna of the 1920s, something similar happened. It was a small city where scientists, philosophers, and musicians converged in the cafés.

The initial idea of the university campus was a place where people could meet. The lessons were not so important because people could find information elsewhere. What counted was the opportunity to meet, to have conversation. Every year we have a list of the best universities in the world. Cambridge always comes first because the teaching there is based on

conversation. This is the peripatetical idea of Aristotle's that we have forgotten.

I have been telling you what you should do, not how to do it. I will now give a few preliminary hints.

- For the stimuli, you have to go outside school to the countryside, the city, a museum, a beer brewery, for example, to see the process -how you enter the cereals and have beer at the end. After that, coming back to school, you cannot avoid having a
- Conversation, perhaps in different languages. When you learn a language you cannot avoid learning the culture behind it. You cannot learn English without hearing about Shakespeare, or Spanish without hearing about Cervantes.
- The joy of understanding arrives eventually.

That is the way to change schools, to change the university, where the most important thing should be the relationship between the professor and the pupil. In music it is impossible to think otherwise. I cannot teach violin to a room of 300 people. The teaching should be one-to-one, with the teacher guiding the hand of the learner. The same with science and education in general. It should be a long conversation.

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too strong and the air was too dry. After 2 billion years, a modest plant succeeded, and it was green. Had the plant been pink, we would have now the most kitsch vegetation on our planet, as simple as that.

In the exchange of information, the mistake and its correction bring about the joy of the conversation. This is the best floor to say that. In the schools we have many subjects: maths, sciences... Why not having a subject like conversation in more than one language?

Perhaps you would think that this is exaggerated, but in a few years I would be teaching only languages: one, two, three or maybe more. Practising language, or practising conversation, is very important. There are some crazy people who call for having one language less in schools rather than one language more. That is ridiculous.

In a related vein, chess is a very interesting game where you cannot move a piece unless you previously analyse how your partner has moved his. That is an invitation to have conversation. But in the university, when a learner asks a professor a question, he will provide the quickest answer he has available, never stopping to think. We do not have the culture of thinking. Conversation provides an intellectual joy as does stimulus.

### Understanding

The third great joy is understanding. It might become an addiction to knowledge. When does understanding arrive? When you realise that two, or three, apparently different things have something in common. This "in common" is understanding.

I know how to give the intellectual joy of understanding in a museum, but I am not so sure how can I give intellectual joy in a school. For instance, the way we examine our students can be characterized like putting a gun to the learner's head and say : *Either you confess that you have understood or I shoot you!!!*

The learner then confesses. *OK. OK, I understand.*

But it is not the same reaching the understanding by yourself as having something or someone handing it to you. It is the same difference as eating caviar yourself or having someone tell you how nice tastes.

Now I will give you an example of the joy of understanding that happened in the museum. Once I received a fossil, an object that represents a scene that happened many millions of years ago. I was amazed by this fossil because you can very clearly see a big fish eating a small fish. I told myself I would put this in the museum and I would provoke the intellectual joy of understanding in the visitors through it. I put the piece in a showcase and hid, spying on the visitors' reactions.

It was a sad lesson because nobody stopped to look at the fossil. I concentrated on teenagers because they are chemically prepared not to be interested in anything. Once I took a teenager of my family to a tribe in the Amazon, and she shrugged her shoulders at the most beautiful sunset. In a museum, if you can provide the stimulus for a teenager, success with other age groups is assured.

So I asked a teenager if the fossil was interesting and his answer was:

*Not at all!!*

*Why not?*

*Because it is a big fish eating a small fish, and we all know that the big fish eats the small fish.*

That was a lesson, because for a scientist the chance of the process of fossilisation happening just at the moment when one fish is eating another one is minimal. But lay people are not aware of that.

The next step was to look for other similar fossils. I found eight of them and put them in the showcase to make the process more evident. Second failure: nobody stopped.

The third step was try to provoke conversation. We looked for two actors, one dressed up as Sherlock Holmes and the other one as Dr. Watson. We put them in front of the showcase and we wrote a small conversation for them. The success was immediate. In a few seconds we had 50 people around the showcase, not looking at the fossil but at the actors. Their skit went like this:

*Sherlock: Watson, don't you find anything strange in this showcase?*

*Watson: No, it is big fish eating small fish.*

*Sherlock: But what do these fossils have in common?*

A child of nine years said, before Watson:

*I get it! The common point is that in all eight cases the big fish is trying to eat a small fish that is too big for it and it gets struck in its mouth. They died and the process of fossilisation began.*

The audience enjoyed the moment of comprehension, of understanding. Fifty people with a brightness in their eyes. It was the intellectual joy of understanding.

If we look at the lectures and workshops on Friday afternoon and Saturday morning we find an overall feeling that technology is often playing tricks on speakers and even impairing a session every now and then. We must admit that the evolution of ICT is surpassing the UPF rooms' equipment reliability ... or that some speakers rely too much on technology and a Plan B becomes a must. Nonetheless, despite the inconveniences, 21 presentations were successfully delivered on Friday, and 24 on Saturday. In the organising committee we always try to plan a balanced and wide spectrum of topics on the many aspects of ELT, and we invite delegates to actively participate in workshops and discuss and reflect on the ideas presented in more theoretical formats. Many sessions on Friday afternoon and Saturday morning are selected from the proposals we get via call-for-papers, so we do hope they reflect the state of affairs in our schools. Others are offered by publishers and ELT institutions and aim at presenting the latest hits in the field or expert views of the ultimate materials writers.

But let us go strand by strand. At 3:00pm, Adrian Underhill, a great speaker according to our records, gave an engaging session on pronunciation addressed to all levels considered simple and extremely useful. Gemma Pou's session entitled "Save the Drama for your Mamma and Speak!" for Secondary was considered a good and reliable project. YL teachers who attended the "Power phonics" session by Coral George had a good time in a highly participative session, that managed to overcome the initial technical difficulties.

At 4:30 the absolute winner is Chris Roland with his "Teen-angles". Excellent speaker, useful materials, simply great, "...once again" write some of his most faithful followers. Christine Appel approach to SpeakApps for Secondary and Higher levels aimed at persuading teachers on the advantages of online tools to develop oral skills, though some objected they might feel washed away from the teaching scenario!

Friday's last session featured several very engaging presentations such as Nina Lauder's inspiring, optimistic, dynamic and motivating "Creating Curiosity", Ricard Garcia's "Writing 2.0" who made the audience "dizzy" with a bounty of on-line resources, Anna M Nieto's "Three films" for batxillerat and EOI presenting a good lesson plan full of handy ideas, and Maria de Mir's YL's fun and experiential approach, singing included.

Saturday morning, 9:30. Kieran Donaghy's session about how to use short films to promote speaking was labelled as brilliant and useful. Vanessa Reilly's session for YL and early Primary got very high marks and APPI colleague Vanessa Reis'

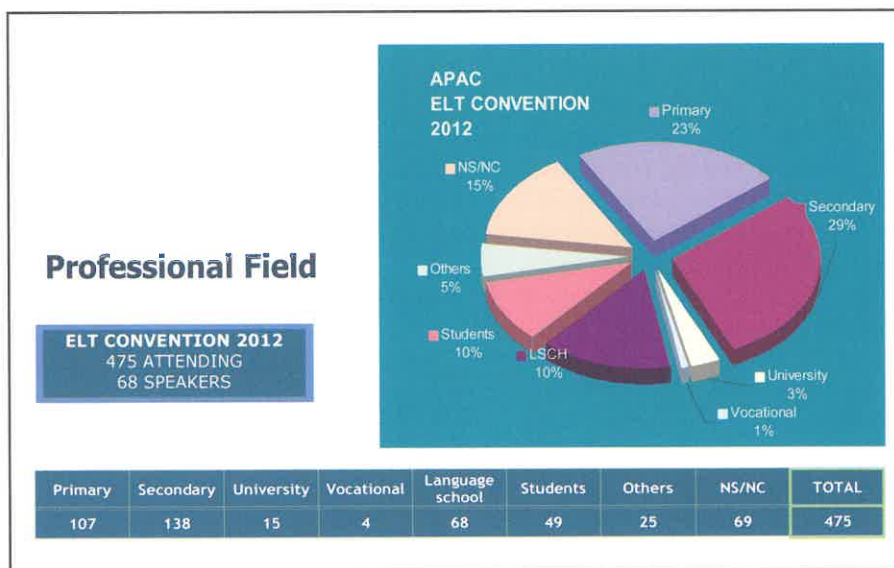
approach to difficult students was considered to be an amazingly powerful talk. You will find some of these sessions in written format in this issue or the coming one in February. Joanne Sintes and Josie Rich presentation of ICT resources for the Arts and Craft primary subject was also considered hands-on and updated.

After the coffee break, eight more sessions took over. Lynn Durrant delivered a clear and enlightening speech entitled "Creating Commitment" addressed to secondary teachers. Teachers considered Josep Suller's "Reinventing the Wheel with ICT" a brilliant, entertaining, and easy-to-use session. They say the same about Joanna Gore's "Getting Teenagers to speak English", and The Tale Tellers Beacraft and Heydel made a very dynamic and attractive point on how to use drama in Primary.

And last but not least, the 12:45 strand with two "super-excellent" sessions, according to many: Penny Ur's "Teaching Mixed-level Classes", a very crowded talk addressed to all level teachers and Usosa Sol, who delivered a very successful workshop on ICT resources for Primary. Nonetheless, new-at-APAC Carme Oller presented a very meaningful and down-to-earth "global approach" full of examples on how to deal with English in YL and early primary contexts and the only workshop on VET, by Toni Kelly, will hopefully be the first of many more VET proposals to come. By 3:00pm all the delegates had picked their certificates of attendance and were on their way back home for a well-deserved rest.

Once again, our hearty thanks to those who have made this edition possible. We are already working on the coming one and look forward to getting many interesting proposals to make the Jornades 2013 an enriching event.

The organising committee





# APAC-ELT convention 2012

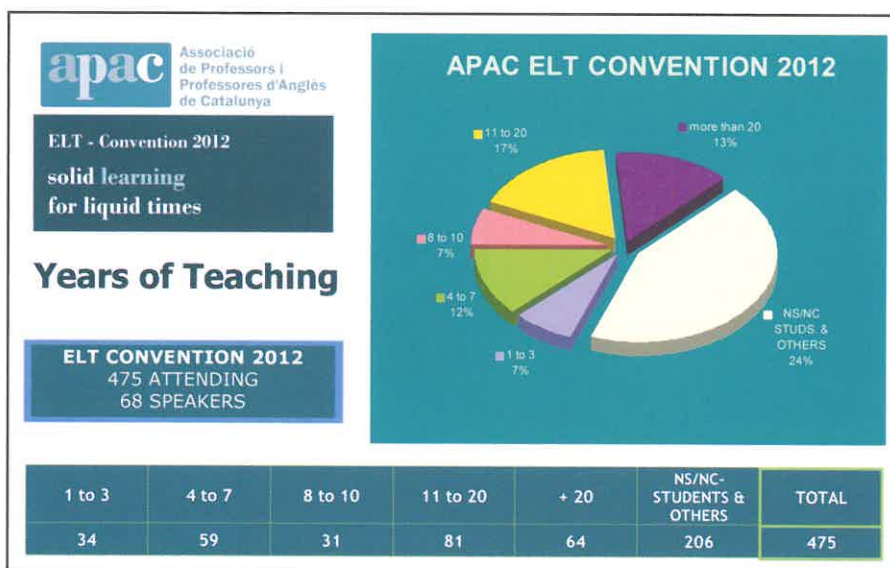
## assessment

Dear friends and colleagues,

Here is the overall view of the Jornades 2012 we, the organising committee, like to deliver after analysing all the delegates' record booklets in detail. On Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup>, 4:00pm, in the Auditori Universitat Pompeu Fabra, the Honorable Consellera d'Ensenyament, Ms Irene Rigau, and the UPF authorities, along with APAC's president Miquel Berga welcomed the audience, opened the congress, gave the APAC-British Council John McDowell awards and gave way to our guest Opening session speaker.

Reactions about Jorge Wagensberg's opening speech are uneven. While most seem to agree on the undisputed and inspiring value of the contents, some regret he did not deliver it in his mother tongue, some argue that his expectations on the learning process are too far away from the classroom. Be as it may, most of the audience admit they felt caught by his "intellectual joy", despite the noisy latecomers and a crowded room.

After the *welcome cava*, the first short meeting point for teachers of all levels and sectors, publishers, speakers and authorities, Thursday plenary sessions and the Panel about VET got very few negative remarks. Chris Roland *première* as a plenary speaker was up to the expectations, although many write they prefer to see him in the close-up workshop format. Nevertheless, his speech on discipline was described as relevant, based on experience, with good visuals, jokes and interaction with the audience. For those who chose Adrian Underhill, his "Teacher-facilitator" view was considered as highly reassuring and motivating (though too academical and self-evident, a few say). As per the VET panel, most find the presence and views of the internationally awarded cook Joan Roca interesting and meaningful, along with the experts' views, although they write there was little time for discussion, being the future presence of ESP (English for Special Purposes) in VET cycles a challenge to retrieve English in all the levels of mainstream and higher vocational education. There is certainly a lot to be done here, and we hope to be able to plan many more interesting sessions on that particular issue next edition.



in addition to the academic programme, the publishers' exhibition provided, once more, opportunities for all to catch up with the latest materials and the exhibition hall proved the right place to socialise for the almost 500 registered teachers and many ELT professionals and friends.

Let us have a look at Friday morning keynote speaker, professor David Block, from the Institute of Education – University of London. The comments reflect the feelings of a well-documented and extremely entertaining session. A remarkable speaker, who gave plenty of food for thought and a fun way to convey a complex topic, we read. A pity he did not deepen on textbooks analysis or deal with more class examples, some listeners note. We hope the interview you can find in this issue will cover some of the information you miss.

Friday's plenary strand featured ELT personalities Caroline Nixon and Penny Ur, along with APAC's roundtable chaired by our editor, Neus Serra and her choice of speakers, who got the favour of the audience. Ms Nixon's approach on how to teach 21<sup>st</sup> century primary students was described as relevant, hands-on, realistic and enlightening. A teacher sitting Ms Ur's Overview of ELT methodology writes that she delivered "ideas that clearly affect the way I'll teach next week", another found it "clear, to the point, and meaningful".

## APAC – British Council John McDowell Award

S'obre la convocatòria dels premis 2012 adreçada a professorat o futur professorat de llengua anglesa membres de l'associació, amb les següents

### BASES

#### MODALITAT A

Premi individual adreçat a professorat o futur professorat de qualsevol tram educatiu obligatori i post-obligatori que presenti des d'un treball enfocat a la reflexió o la recerca en el camp de l'ELT fins a disseny de programació d'aula o experiències concretes.

En el cas d'experiències, és imprescindible introducció, objectius i conclusió.

#### MODALITAT B

Premi individual adreçat a alumnat de Batxillerat que presenti un treball de recerca en llengua anglesa que pot estar relacionat amb qüestions de llengua i cultura, o bé amb altres camps, realitzat durant el curs 2011-2012. Cal que el professor/a tutor/a faci una breu presentació del treball i de l'alumne/a.

#### MODALITAT C – premi col·lectiu

Premi col·lectiu adreçat a professorat i el seu alumnat que presentin activitats d'ensenyament-aprenentatge fetes a l'aula i/o en entorns virtuals etc., durant el curs 2011-2012. Imprescindible que vagin precedides d'una introducció, objectius, continguts i conclusió del professor/a que les presenta així com que s'aprecii i es pugui valorar la feina feta per l'alumnat.

### PREMIS

#### Per la MODALITAT A

**1r premi:** curs de formació de dues setmanes al Regne Unit patrocinat pel British Council que inclou l'allotjament (transport i manutenció a càrrec del guanyador/a)

**Accèssit:** val de 100 eur en material de la llibreria COME IN i un diccionari electrònic

# APAC-ELT Convention 2012 : list of speakers.

Speakers highlighted in blue:

You can read in this issue the written articles of their sessions at the convention.

**OPENING SESSION by WAGENSBERG, JORGE:**

*Intellectual Joy and How to Acquire New Knowledge*

**APAC Roundtable with Marc Julià, Lidia Jové, Maria José Lobo and Neus Serra**

*Is Our Teaching Solid Enough?*

**Keynote Speech by BLOCK, DAVID:**

*English Language Teaching In Liquid Times: Language, Culture And Identity*

**Pannel Session: Anglès I Les Sortides Professionals: Els Cicles Formatius LOE com Estudi de Cas Plenaries**

NIXON, CAROLINE: *Box of Tricks*

**ROLAND, CHRIS: *Let's Talk About Discipline***

**UNDERHILL, ADRIAN: *From Teacher to Facilitator***

UR, PENNY: *Where Do We Go From Here? An Overview Of English Teaching Methodology In 2012*

## WORKSHOPS AND LECTURES

APPEL, CHRISTINE: *SpeakApps: Resources and Applications for Developing Oral Skills Online*

BEACRAFT, JENNIFER & HEYDEL, SOPHIE : *Drama Games and Techniques for the ESL Classroom*

BONTE, HEATHER: *CO-OP Learning on IWB with GENKI English*

CAMPILLO, A.;CASTANYER, M.; MARTIN, M.; PARADEDA, M.; POU, G. & QUIXAL, M.: *Telling Computers How to Feed Learners Back: Managing Materials for Individual Learning*

CORAL, JOSEP: *Physical Education in CLIL: Enhancing Language Through Meaningful Use and Interaction*

CUSTODIO, MAGDALENA: *CLIL in Practice for Young Learners*

DAVIES, FAYE: *Developing Listening, Speaking and Pronunciation through ICT at Secondary Level*

DE MIR, MARIA: *Let's English for the Fun of IT!*

DE SALVADOR, NÚRIA: *Teaching Pupils to Live in a Multicultural World*

DELGADO-ECHAGÜE, INÉS: *Not Squiggles, Words!*

DOOLY, M.; MASATS, D. & MONT, M.: *Snoopy, Go Left!: Real Activities of Young Language Learners in Virtual*

DURRANT, LYNN: *Creating Commitment*

**FITZPATRICK, LIAM: *Differentiated Learning /10 Practical Rules for the EFL Primary Classroom***

**GARCIA, RICARD: *Writing 2.0: Write, Create, Collaborate and Have Fun!***

GEORGE, CORAL: *Power Phonics*

GORE, JOANNA: *Getting Teenagers to Speak*

KELLY, TONI: *Made to Measure: English for Vocational Courses (Cicles Formatius)*

HIGUERAS, MANUEL: *Songs and Storytelling in the English Class*

HUGHES, JOHN: *The Three "I" s of Graded Video: Inspire, Inform, Integrate*

KERSHAW, ADAM & LASZLO, MAGGIE: *Do you Want to See My Photos?*

KNOWLES, GORDON: *Watch, Listen and Share! Using Vox Pop Video on Topical Issues*

LAUDER, NINA: *Creating Curiosity in the Classroom*

MALDONADO, N.; BERGADÀ, R.; CARRILLO, N. & OLIVARES, P.: *Think, Do, Communicate and Feel Science*

MARTÍ, NÚRIA & TEMPLE, MARK: *Doing Double Duty: Building Topic Vocabulary and Improving Reference Skills with the Bilingual Dictionary*

MARTIN, DANIEL: *Repetition, Repetition, Repetition*

**MCCULLOUGH, JAMES: *Making Pronunciation Less "Liquid":***

***A Solid Spelling-Based Approach for Teachers and Students***

MCDONALD, ANNIE: *Helping Learners Become More Effective Listeners*

MCLOUGHLIN, GERARD: *Changing Perspectives*

**NIETO, ANA MARIA: *The Films our Students Might Like (and a Few Ideas to use them in Class)***

**OLIVA, ÀNGELS & WALSH, MARY LOUISE: *A Survival Kit for CLIL: Practical Guide of Scaffolding Method Application for Higher Level Education***

POU, GEMMA: *Save the Drama for Your Mamma and Speak!*

REILLY, VANESSA: *Encouraging Very Young Children to Communicate*

REIS, VANESSA: *Strategies for Reaching and Motivating Difficult Students while Teaching English*

RICH, JOSIE & SINTES, JOANNE: *Using Technology in the Arts and Crafts Class*

ROGERS, PAUL: *Building Bridges with Little Bridge*

ROLAND, CHRIS: *Teen-angles*

ROSQUETE, JAVIER: *Narrowing the Breach in Playing and Learning*

SIMON, JILL: *Establishing an Extensive Reading (ER) Community of Practice (COP) in the L2 Classroom*

SOL, USOA: *Fun with ICT Primary*

SULLER, JOSEP: *Reinventing the Wheel with ICT*

**UNDERHILL, ADRIAN: *Make Pronunciation Physical, Visible, Audible!***

**UR, PENNY: *Teaching Mixed-level Classes***

WILLIAMS, STEPHANIE: *Digital Reader in the Digital Age*



# APAC

## PREMI John McDowell 2011

Acta del jurat:

En la **Modalitat C, treballs presentats per grups classe**, el jurat ha concedit un premi i un accèssit.

- **Premi:** Consisteix en un val de 300 euros per a material didàctic i tres diccionaris electrònics CASIO.

Ha estat concedit al treball *George and The Dragon*, una obra de teatre on els alumnes no només mostren les seves habilitats en llengua anglesa sinó també en les noves tecnologies. Aquest treball el presenten els alumnes de **2n d'ESO** de l'**Institut Jaume Balmes** de Barcelona. Un fort aplaudiment per a ells.

- **Accèssit:** Consisteix en un val de 100 euros per a material didàctic.

Ha estat concedit al treball *'I, Robot'. Become a dubbing actor*, un innovador projecte on els alumnes es familiaritzen amb una pel·lícula americana i l'acaben doblant. Presenten aquest treball els alumnes de **4t d'ESO** de l'**Escola Joviat** de Manresa. Un fort aplaudiment per a tots ells.

Pel que fa a la **MODALITAT B, treballs de recerca presentats per alumnes de Batxillerat i 4t d'ESO**, el jurat ha concedit un premi i un accèssit.

- **Premi:** Consisteix en un diccionari electrònic CASIO EX-WORD. Ha estat concedit al treball de recerca *English Around Teenagers*, on l'autora del treball es replanteja el nivell d'anglès dels adolescents en el nostre país. Presenta el treball la Cristina Espallargas, de l'**Escola Jesús, Maria i Josep** i ha estat dirigida per la seva tutora, la Lurdes Pujadas. Un fort aplaudiment per a elles.

- **Accèssit:** Consisteix en un val de 100 euros per a material especialitzat. Ha estat concedit al treball de recerca *The Development of the English Language: American vs British English*, on l'autora analitza les diferències entre l'anglès americà i l'anglès britànic. L'autora és la **Júlia Andelo**, de l'**Escola Mestral** i ha estat dirigida per la seva tutora, la Ruth Zamora. Un fort aplaudiment per a elles.

Pel que fa a la **MODALITAT A, treballs presentats per professors**, el jurat ha concedit un premi i un accèssit.

**Accèssit:** Consisteix en un val de 100 euros per a material especialitzat i un diccionari electrònic CASIO i ha estat concedit al treball *My School Musical*. L'autora, l'**Ana Maria Fuentes Rullo**, dissenya diverses activitats per acabar gravant un musical amb alumnes de segon d'ESO. Un fort aplaudiment per a l'Ana Maria

**Premi:** Consisteix en un curs al Regne Unit patrocinat pel British Council i ha estat concedit al treball **SplaiEnglish: compartim el nostre anglès amb el món**, un blog engegat fa cinc anys per un professor on els alumnes prenen part activa mitjançant diverses activitats per tal de millorar la seva competència lingüística. El seu autor és l'**Oscar Del Estal Martínez**. Un aplaudiment ben fort per a l'Oscar.

El jurat vol felicitar a tots els guanyadors i animar a tothom a participar en la propera edició dels Premis Apac-John McDowell 2012.

## Per la MODALITAT B

**1r premi:** traductora EX- WORD CASIO

**Accèssit:** val de 100 eur en material de la llibreria COME IN

## Per la MODALITAT C

**1r premi:** diccionari electrònic CASIO i un val de 300 eur en material de la llibreria COME IN

**Accèssit:** val de 100 eur en material de la llibreria COME IN

## **JURAT**

El jurat estarà format per membres de la Junta d'APAC i els assessors/es que consideri oportú. El resultat es farà públic Dijous 21 de febrer, durant *l'opening session* de les Jornades 2013 i es comunicarà amb antelació suficient als guanyadors/es per tal que puguin assistir a l'acte de lliurament.

## **PROCEDIMENTS**

La llengua vehicular del concurs és l'anglès.

En totes les candidatures hi haurà de constar:

- La modalitat a què es presenten
- Nom complet del candidat/a o de la persona responsable de presentar el treball
- Nivell educatiu o curs (en el cas de la modalitat C)
- Adreça postal, email o telèfon de contacte.
- Nom , adreça i telèfon del centre educatiu, si escau.

Les candidatures es poden presentar fins al 20 de desembre de 2012 en suport paper (en mà o per correu postal) o electrònic a:

Oficines de l'APAC

Gran Via de les Corts Catalanes 606, 4t 2<sup>a</sup> despatx F-G - 08017 Barcelona

[info@apac.es](mailto:info@apac.es) – 933170137 (horari d'oficina)

APAC es reserva el dret de publicar total o parcialment els treballs presentats a la revista i/o al web d'APAC

APAC no es responsabilitza dels treballs no recollits abans del 30 de maig de 2013.



nº 1. Experimental Learning

nº 2. SLA: Early Childhood Perspectives

nº 3. Four Perspectives on Classroom Assessment Reform

nº 4. Assessing Secondary School Students' Oral Interaction

nº 5. Describing Learner Strategies Regarding Internet Dictionary Consultations on Reading Tasks

nº 6. CLIL in Catalonia, from Theory to Practice

nº 7. Technology in English Teaching: Looking Forward

**Special Monograph.** Britlit: Using Literature in EFL Classroom

All the APAC's monographs are available from our website.

[www.apac.es](http://www.apac.es)





Associació  
de Professors i  
Professores d'Anglès  
de Catalunya

## PREMI EXCEL·LÈNCIA DOCENT DEL DEPARTAMENT D'ENSENYAMENT

### Bases

El Departament d'Ensenyament obre la segona convocatòria del Premi Excel·lència adreçat a membres d'APAC que siguin professors i professores de llengua anglesa en actiu. El premi consisteix en un curs de formació al Regne Unit, de dues setmanes de durada, a l'estiu, i inclou allotjament. Fins a 150€ de despeses en transport seran coberts per APAC.

La convocatòria s'obrirà el 15 de novembre a través de la pàgina web [www.apac.es](http://www.apac.es). Els candidats i candidates hauran d'adreçar a [info@apac.es](mailto:info@apac.es) tres documents: fitxa personal, carta de motivació i trajectòria docent i formativa abans del 15 de gener de 2013.

El jurat estarà format per tres membres d'APAC i tres representants del Departament d'Ensenyament. El guanyador o guanyadora es farà públic el dia 21 de febrer, durant l'*opening session* de les Jornades 2013.

### Documentació a presentar

#### DOCUMENT 1: FITXA PERSONAL

NOM
COGNOMS
DNI
ADREÇA POSTAL
TELÈFON DE CONTACTE
ADREÇA ELECTRÒNICA
ANY D'INICI DE L'ACTIVITAT DOCENT
CENTRE ACTUAL DE TREBALL
TIPUS DE CENTRE, ADREÇA I POBLACIÓ
CURSOS QUE IMPARTEIX
CÀRRECS O ALTRES RESPONSABILITATS

#### DOCUMENT 2: CARTA DE MOTIVACIÓ

Objectius de formació que es preveuen assolir amb la realització del curs (300 paraules)

#### DOCUMENT 3: TRAJECTÒRIA DOCENT I FORMATIVA

Relació de les activitats realitzades per al creixement professional i amb alumnes (màx. 5 fulls)

Could it be that there is / are:

- A lack of clear communicative objectives?
- Excessive use of textbooks?
- Too much grammar-based teaching?
- Poor quantity and quality of input?
- A lack of interest and motivation on the part of the students?
- Little emphasis on learning strategies?

Or:

- Course plans do not take into account previous knowledge?

Whatever the reasons, the fact is that most of our students cannot maintain a basic conversation in English.

It is a well-known fact that the students who make the most marked improvement are those who are in school settings where the use of English is encouraged as being necessary for effective communication. Therefore a new set of questions arises:

- How often is our teaching task-based?
- How are learning strategies fostered in classes?



- Are students well prepared for future challenges? Can they analyse, reason and communicate effectively?
- How do we foster their capacity to continue learning throughout life?
- How relevant is self-evaluation in our teaching practice?

On our APAC panel, we have three teachers with a wide range of experience in pre-primary, primary and secondary education: Maria José Lobo, Marc Julià, and Lídia Jové. So, my last questions are addressed to them, with the certainty that they will provide some solutions that will be shared with all of you.

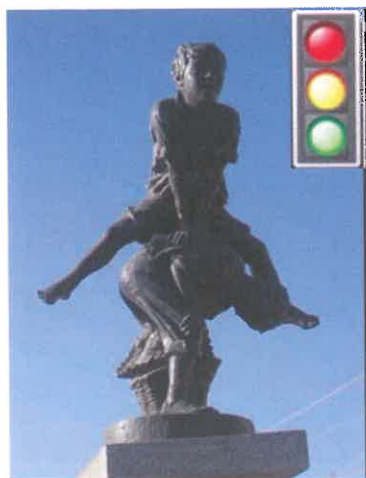
## Is our teaching solid enough?

**Can you propose steps to be taken so as to make our teaching more solid, as a kind of foundation upon which students can build up more solid knowledge of the foreign language?**

### Pre-primary and primary school teacher

Lidia Jové

Teaching English at the pre-primary (ages 3 to 5) or primary school level has never been easy. On the one hand, our classes are large, and there are not enough resources or teachers to split groups. They are diverse and multilevel, with a wide range of abilities and levels of English. On the other hand, evidence from external and internal evaluations indicates that there are things that should be improved, and parents and society put pressure on school attainment.



But this is no excuse for poor performance. Budget constraints or lack of resources should not stop us from doing our best. Moreover, I strongly believe we are not doing as badly as some may say, but I still think that there is room for improvement. We teachers can do a great deal regardless of the circumstances.

You are going to see some classroom activities that represent what I feel are MUSTs in our classes, along with a set of traffic lights indicating whether we deserve a red, yellow or green one. It is not a thorough list of objectives for our pre-primary and primary schools but, rather, a personal list of suggestions.]

In pre-primary and primary schools, English teachers should:

- motivate their learners with attractive displays and opportunities to explore. I think we deserve a **green light** here.

# APAC 2012 Round Table

## Is our teaching solid enough?



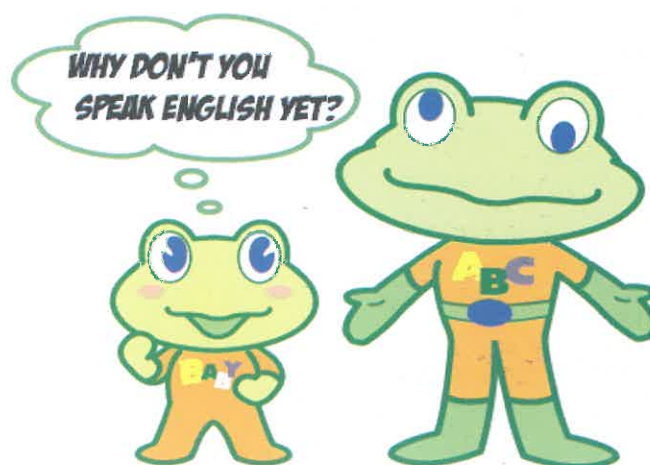
Moderator: Neus Serra



*We start learning a foreign language at a much earlier age than our European neighbours; our teachers' level of English has improved in the last years; teachers work hard making up their course plans and trying to adapt to new "decrees"; there are language schools in every large or small town; the Department of Education has shown its interest in the learning of a foreign language with PELE, CLIL, ANIP, long-term courses abroad, and summer courses; teachers gather together in seminars, workshops, and conventions; and our children have possibilities of spending some time abroad. When visiting foreign language classes in pre-primary, primary and secondary education and for different purposes, one can see some very good, interesting, and exciting activities, and yet we will all agree that our pupils' level of English is not good enough. Is there anything we can do to improve their mastery of the foreign language? Is our teaching solid enough? How can we make it more so?*

Spain is the fourth worst country in the EU in foreign language mastery, according to a recent report by Eurostat (only 17% of the population reads English correctly, 14% understands spoken English, and 11% speak it correctly). The results provided by official exams are not any better. The title of an article in *El Pais* in March 2008, was "Why is it so hard for us to speak English?". There is a general feeling that our pupils' results do not match the time spent teaching them.

It is obvious that there are "external reasons" for such a failure. We can put the blame on the administration, or on education policies, or on society in general, but in this panel we would like to focus on those "internal factors" that may share some responsibility for this under-achievement.





- no meetings, nor collaboration, nor interaction is expected between primary and secondary school English teachers. As for pre-primary and primary, it depends on the schools; sometimes it is the same teacher who teaches both levels. The general lack of communication leads to repetition of contents, not useful repetition (that would be recycling) but useless repetition and also unwanted gaps. For instance, whole genres could be missing from the students' curriculum. Who is teaching poetry? When? Just some year for Valentine's Day and that's all? This is definitely a **red light**.

4. Peer observation could change our ways. There are excellent teachers doing great things out there and we've never been in their classrooms!
5. We should not only assess but evaluate schools, learners, programmes, ourselves... everything!
6. We should not wait any longer to include meaningful and purposeful activities and methodologies such as task-based, content-based or CLIL.

To put it simply, we expect our students to do cooperative work, collaborate, and share, but... **WHAT ABOUT US ENGLISH TEACHERS?**

We pre-primary and primary school English teachers are working very hard, but we are doing it all on our own. And if we keep struggling alone in our schools, facing the elements, coping with pressure and doing our best at the same time as our colleagues in other schools are in similar or identical situations, we will get exactly where we are now, not any further. This is why it is probably high time to take some action:

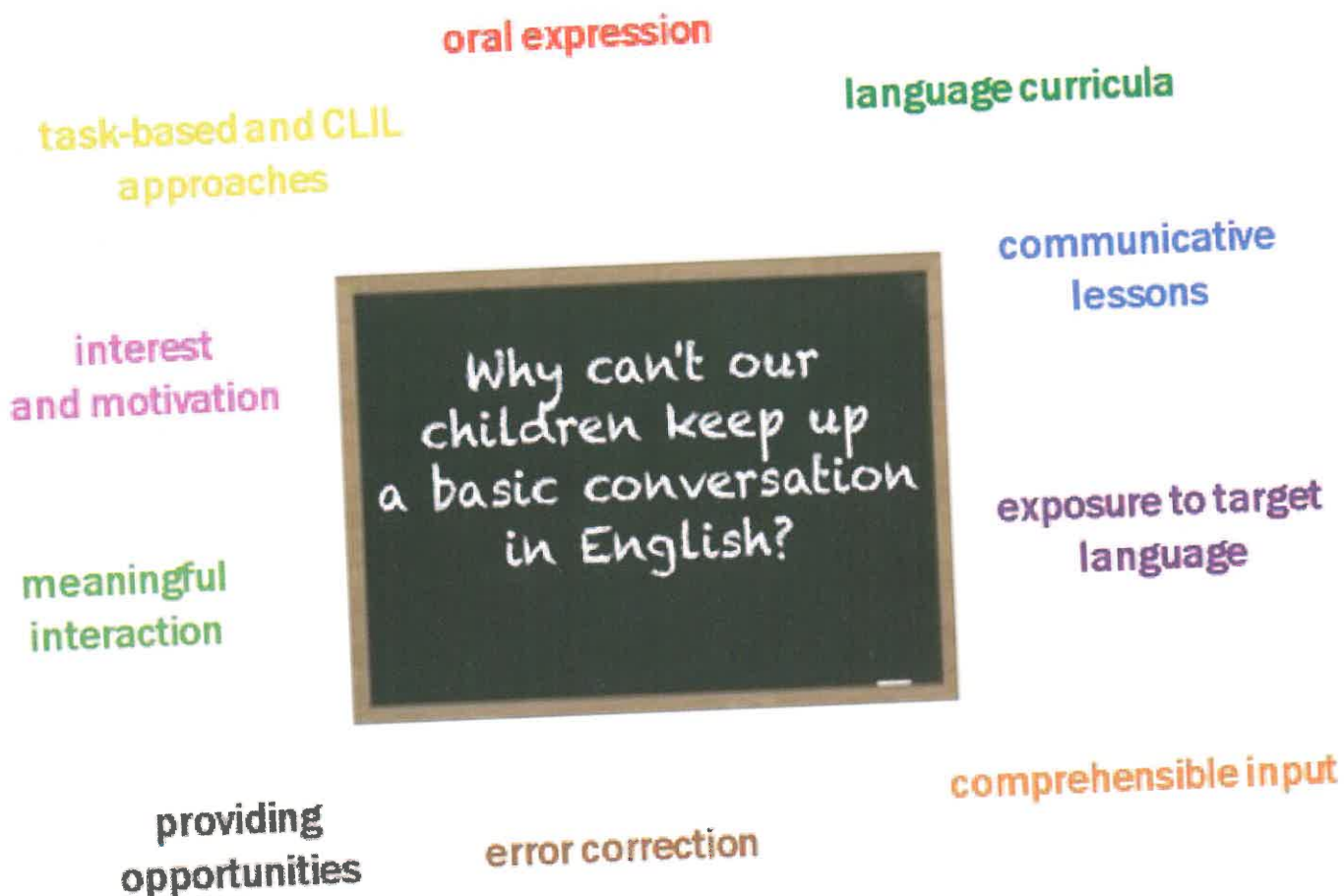
1. We all face similar challenges. We should meet and share.
2. Some school meetings should be devoted to horizontal and vertical coordination.
3. In-service programmes and work groups should include all teachers of all levels.

## secondary school teacher

Marc Julià

Oral expression has always been at the very base of knowledge and understanding. However, while it is widely agreed that no education system should neglect orality, as it greatly enhances language development, today we are all aware that our schools have failed to recognize the value and importance of speaking.

Indeed, oral expression has been slightly pushed aside by our language curricula, which for many years have been based on a structural and grammar-orientated conception of ELT and on a false understanding of how to work on oral skills in the classroom.



- promote activities that are meaningful to students and belong to their world and interests. I think a **green light** is deserved again.

- not only use textbooks. Textbooks are getting better and better. They are well designed and have attractive pictures and activities. But only the teachers know about the needs, interests and diversity in their classrooms. There is a whole world out there to take resources from (sorry, in there, in the classroom) by sharing, cooperating, interacting, displaying... I would give us a **yellow light**.

- be using English to do things in class. The English language is a tool for learning about the solar system or making Halloween recipes, not a linguistic system to analyse. This hardly happens nowadays because our students are too young for reflection on the language, but with upper Primary you still find sad examples of translation and analysis. I think we deserve a yellow light here.

- be teaching content: task-based, content-based or, if you can afford it, CLIL. Teaching content does not mean only learning the names of the planets in English. Kids already know them! This would be simply learning the names in another language. CLIL and content-based teaching are about high-order thinking skills and learning-to-learn strategies. We need to go high up in the Bloom's taxonomy by thinking, speaking, analysing, comparing and creating in regard to the planets. Then, if there is a need to analyse the language, it will be in context and with a purpose. This is a **red light** but with an increasing number of greens. Not many yellows, but then, again, it is a personal opinion.

- should play games not just for the sake of fun and vocabulary, but with added value... with a plus. Games should help students learn together, grow, share, cooperate, ease conflict, increase interpersonal skills, improve social cohesion and learn English, real English. I would give it a **green**.

- be using songs for pronunciation and the three suprasegmental features of language: stress, rhythm and intonation. Very young learners and young learners are good at picking up sounds, but in upper

primary and especially secondary classes, it will be more difficult to get the students to sing, although there is always a way to achieve it. Songs are paramount at all stages and ages in the learning process. I think we are doing quite **green**.

- tell stories, nice stories, stories to make students think and feel, stories for them to enjoy, act out, learn, and retell to others, stories that make them question and become critical, stories to investigate, for content, for CLIL, ... And teachers should use all sorts of support: pictures, books, big books, digital books, videos, Internet and nothing, just their body language. Do we deserve a green light? Maybe just a **yellow** one, because we often use stories to teach chunks of language and vocabulary, which, I think, is only the first step.



- give children every opportunity to show and tell, to talk, to explain, to act out, to retell and to listen to and learn from their peers. Show-and-tell is very common in the regular classes in our schools, especially in pre-primary and lower primary, but not in the English class. And I wonder: Who cares about what Peter in the book likes doing? Let's talk about me, about us! We get a **red light** here.

- publish every successful learning experience on the school website; with photos, podcasts or videocasts. Families should be active participants in their children's "moments of glory". And also non-digital resources such as letters to parents, travelling bags, travelling puppets and school-home interactions should be included on a regular basis. Parents need to know what to expect from school. It is us, the teachers, who should tell families that by the end of their primary school education, their children will not be able to understand a film in English. We must tell them! I am afraid this is a **red light**, with increasing exceptions of green lights...very bright green ones. We still find it difficult to open up our classrooms in this country.

- know what is going on before and after, that is, what other English teachers are doing in their classes. Pre-primary teachers are not only nice people with lots of patience who can prepare very nice displays; primary teachers do not sing *Head and Shoulders, Knees and Toes* all day long; and secondary teachers do not only do grammar exercises. We do more than that. We should do more than that! In our education system,

we should be very careful with everything we do. External tests are good and necessary, but we must be careful with the format. The younger the learners, the more they need to get familiarised with the format of the test.

You would agree with me that not all teachers work in the same way. Some children are used to certain kinds of tasks and to dealing with certain types of context. Others might not be. If children are not familiar with multiple-choice tasks, for example, they might fail. I am not saying that we should tell the children how to do the test, but we should make them aware of the different formats.

Now let us turn to the internal factors, starting with US. What can we teachers do in order to make our teaching more solid? Lídia and Mark have questioned the tasks we give our students. Are they challenging enough? Do we take into consideration that there should be a progression from pre-primary to primary and into secondary education? Do we give our students what they need at the different levels? I have been a primary and a secondary school teacher and I have faced some situations that will provide us some food for thought.

Should we use the textbook or not? Those authors have spent ages thinking of the right content. Believe me, I know. It is all there. Why reject it? Take it. Do not forget that the ultimate responsibility is yours. You are the person responsible for the learners' learning, together with the other teachers. But you are a teacher of English.

We must not forget about solid methodology. Do you teach your learners to skim and scan a text to get the main information so when they look at it depth they might understand it better? It may seem like a silly thing, but it is very important. Before speaking tasks, do you give them a list of words and expressions they might need? That is particularly important in upper primary and secondary levels. These little things help children to become aware of what they are doing, how they can do it, and how they can improve.

Do we tell our students what we are doing in a particular lesson? I might have told you this story. I was teaching 6th grade. We had started in September, and it was February or March, so they had been learning for a few months. We had been doing a lot of things: singing, making puppets, lovely things.

One day I said, "Begoña (I still remember her name) do you think you are learning?"

She said, "No." And she was a good student.

She added in Spanish, "My padre dice que donde de verdad aprendo es en la academia."

I wanted to hide somewhere because she was a very good student. I talked with her about the tasks we had been doing and about the things she could do in English; she could even help me to do certain things in the class in English.

She said, "Sí, pero donde escribimos es en la academia."

"OK," I said, "if you write so much, would you bring me your notebook so I can see what you write?"

And she did. There were the verbs *to be* and the verb *to have* conjugated on the first page and her father had said that that was the important thing to do. I hope I managed to convince her that what I was doing was at least equally important.

Discipline is another issue to address. You may ask if it is an internal factor. I think it is the first one, in fact, if we understand discipline as being very much linked to the tasks that we propose in our classes. Sometimes, I have found myself in situations in which I realised that I had made a terrible mistake. For instance, the student who was moving too much or doing something I did not like actually had a very good reason for behaving like that. I had not given him or her the kinds of tasks that he/she needed because of his/her level or circumstances, and that led to misbehaviour. Keep that in mind.

One thing that kills me is language that is not used for communication. I mean, what is language for, if not for communication? What is the point of learning English at all if we do not use it for communication? And if we want to communicate, what is the purpose of dealing with the first, second and third conditional? I am not saying that dealing with grammar and reflecting on the language is not good at a particular stage. It does help, especially some students. But, please, do not use grammar as a starting point. It is meaningless.

I think I mentioned this last year in my session. I have been preaching it for a long time and will continue to do so until things improve. And, it is not just me. I have been talking to some of my colleagues and I still have the perception: Not all students at every level are being exposed to English in the English class. This is terrible from my point of view. What is the point of teaching those kids English if the teacher does not use English in class?

That might explain why pupils reach secondary school without being able to maintain a basic conversation in English. Please, help me to spread the word. If a teacher of English does not use English in his or her classes, how are those children going to learn? I know there is English beyond the classroom wall. I know there are a lot of things we can do, but we are the model for kids to understand that English is the language of communication.

Making mistakes is not tragic. There will be many other opportunities to get it right if English is being used often enough for communication. So, English should be spoken by the teacher and by the children.

Another internal factor that is often neglected is the issue of learning strategies. How can we address the different students' learning strategies? We should have ways of reaching holistic learners as well as analytical ones. We should employ tasks that promote field dependence as well as those that foster field independence. This also ties in with the theory of multiple intelligences. We should do things that stimulate musical intelligence, mathematical intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, and so on.

You know what I did when I was asked to come here? I talked to five people who are between 26 and 30 (three engineers, an architect and a physicist) and who have nothing to do with the



Fortunately, soon after notions, functions and then the communicative approach were embraced by both linguists and language teachers, language curriculum designers, followed by teachers, started to become aware of an imperative need to focus more on authentic communication and meaningful interaction rather than on parrot-like repetition and pointless oral drilling.

Certainly, our current language curriculum promotes oral communication (using the word 'oral' 177 times as well as recurrently embracing the 'communicative' dimension in the teaching of languages). It also prescribes oral assessment throughout the ESO studies, and it even sets a specific percentage for the evaluation of speaking skills in Batxillerat.

However, how does this optimal legal framework translate in the EFL classroom? To my understanding, the implementation of such an approach finds its answer in a constellation of aspects upon which the improvement of our learners' oral production hinges. These are only some of the most crucial elements to be taken into account in our daily teaching practice:

- Exposing learners to the language, with English as the only language of communication inside the classroom, both between teacher and students and among students as well.
- Providing comprehensible input, by speaking at the learners' level and at an appropriate pace.
- Reducing teacher-talking time in favor of some more quality student-talking time. Indeed, with teachers doing all the talking, too often students become passive members in the language exchange, with scarce opportunities to use language communicatively, which usually results in demotivation and reluctance to participate.
- Providing valuable opportunities for learners to speak and interact among themselves. Consider, for instance, task-based activities or the CLIL approach, in which pairs or small groups of learners are engaged in meaningful and authentic language use rather than in the merely mechanical practice of language items or pointless recitation of memorized patterns.
- Scaffolding these opportunities with relevant, useful, and most importantly, comprehensible language, when necessary.
- Enhancing meaningful interaction: avoiding ready-made, closed dialogues, memorized oral presentations, and other such activities which are not spontaneous, which involve no negotiation of meaning, that is, which lead to no real language development.
- Addressing error correction in a humanistic way: letting students speak freely, avoiding castrating consistent

correction, creating a relaxed atmosphere where making mistakes is alright.

- Arousing learners' interest and motivation: for example, through appealing topics in content-rich environments, as advocated by researcher Cristina Escobar in her article 'Content-Rich Language Learning in Content-Rich Classrooms'.

## **primary and secondary school teacher and teacher trainer**

**Maria José Lobo:**

With all that has been said thus far, I wonder if I shall be adding anything. But, I shall give my point of view on some of the issues that have been raised here.

I hope that by now you all have noticed that teachers and learners are doing much, much better now. If you compare the current situation with that of ten or fifteen years ago, the differences are incredible. English is much better taught, learned, and spoken in general. But there is still a long way to go.

That is why we are here today on a Friday, and perhaps tomorrow on a Saturday. We have come here to try to learn something else, something that will help us improve our teaching practice in order to make our students happier and better learners, and of course to make it possible for us to become better teachers.

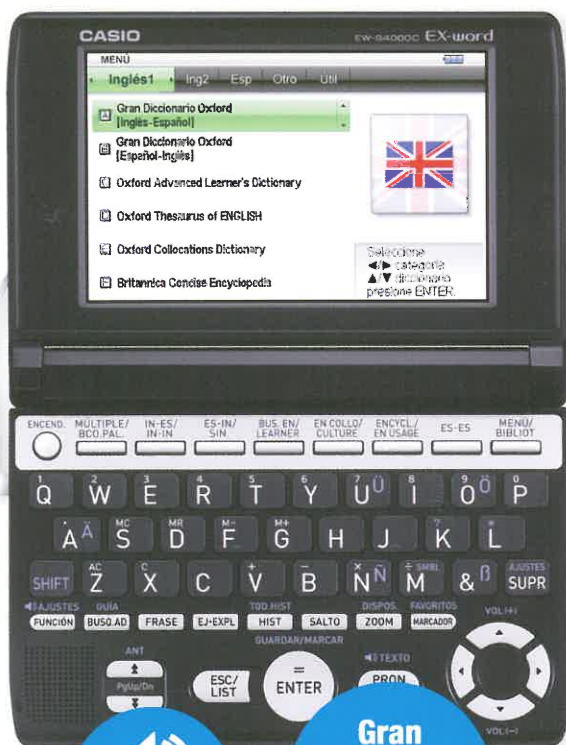
I was very surprised to see that one of the questions Neus shared with us was: "*How is it possible that children cannot maintain a basic conversation in English?*" It made me stop, think, and review what I know about pre-primary, primary and secondary education. And, I realized that the question was not entirely correct because I have seen many pre-primary classes where children can keep up a basic conversation in English, where children can understand perfectly well what the teacher is talking about, where children can easily participate in all the tasks proposed (the tasks, as you may suppose, were not grammar based).

Many primary school teachers are teaching beautifully, achieving excellent results, and getting children to use English. Unfortunately this is not happening in all schools. But many are doing really well, and I think it is our responsibility to follow their example.

My question is: *What happens after those children move on to primary and then to secondary education?* We have so many years of learning to offer them. How can it be that after eight or ten years too many kids cannot say anything in English, or do not want to say anything in English? What is wrong here? I shall deal with that when we consider internal factors.

But first, let us look at the second question Neus proposed: *Learners do not obtain good marks in external exams and assessments that they have to take from time to time.* That is terrible. There are teachers who work very hard and children who respond in kind, and yet they have low scores. I think

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world of teaching or learning English. I chose them because they all speak beautiful English. I gave them a questionnaire with just two questions, and I think their answers reflect what we have been saying here:

1. How could your teachers have helped you to make your learning more solid in primary and secondary school?

*The main issue is that we studied English as another subject, not as a language.*

*More talking would have been better. Smaller classes would have helped.*

*Talking more in English, not only the teacher.*

*The teacher should have spoken to us in English all the time, not on and off.*

*We should have used the language more, also making the lesson more participative.*

2. What principles do you think are important for achieving solid results?

*I think that the best way to learn a language is practising it.*

*Make the students interested in the language.*

*Make them read and listen to a lot of English. More than 3 hours per week. Teach other subjects in English, watch films, etc.*

*English should not be a subject you are forced to learn but a wonderful tool that allows you to do so many things.*

*Put pressure aside. Be free to talk without being afraid of making mistakes.*

I was astounded to read these answers. In answering just two questions, they had touched on so many important issues.

To round this intervention off, I shall just reiterate three points:

- Discipline it is not a question of having it or having a lack of it. It is linked to what we offer as teachers, what we do.

- Using engaging tasks: they will make students maintain good behaviour.
- Using English: If we do not do it, what are we getting paid for?

Neus Serra.

Having heard the excellent presentations of these very experienced teachers and before giving the floor to the audience, just let me summarize the main points that have been presented which up to a great extent answer the questions presented at the beginning.

In spite of the fact that we are all aware that there are excellent teachers eager to improve their children's results in English the outcomes so far are not good enough. Some of the main points that have been put forward can be summarized in the following :

- the need of more vertical and horizontal coordination.
- the importance of motivation in the class
- the need of songs and games as class activities to foster interpersonal skills.
- the use of content teaching to develop not only language acquisition but the development of high-order thinking skills
- the need to move away from grammar orientated concepts of teaching
- the value of oral communication in and outside the classroom
- the correlation between input and output.

It's time now to share our opinions with the rest of our audience, which I'm sure will shed more light on how to put them into practice in our classrooms. Thank you panel for your presentations and thanks to the audience for being with us today.

Lidia Jové is an English teacher at Escola Pérez Sala in Vilassar de Mar, Barcelona, and a teacher trainer for the Catalan Department of Education. She enjoys both the challenges and the joys of teaching English in large primary school classes, and she considers herself fortunate to share experiences and concerns with other pre-primary and primary colleagues.

Marc Julià holds a degree in Interpreting and Translation Studies in English, French and Russian. Marc is a secondary school teacher currently working at IES Thalassa (Montgat). He has also been a teacher trainer at EOI Santa Coloma.

Maria José Lobo is an experienced teacher, teacher trainer and materials writer. She has taught in primary and in secondary schools and has a wealth of experience working in courses and seminars in Spain and abroad. At present she coordinated two Teacher Development Programmes: ANIN and ANIP organised by the Catalan Department of Education and addressed to kindergarten and primary school teachers of English. She also lectures at University Autònoma de Barcelona, Faculty of Education, where she is involved in training student teachers of primary and in the Pre-service Teacher Education Master Course for Secondary Teachers of English. She is co-author of ESU award winning *Big Red Bus* and *Super Bus* (Macmillan) and *Sunshine* (Pearson Longman) course books for the teaching of English in primary education.

Neus Serra worked as a secondary school teacher before entering the Inspectorate for Foreign Languages. She has been a teacher training for a long time involved in several teacher training programmes.



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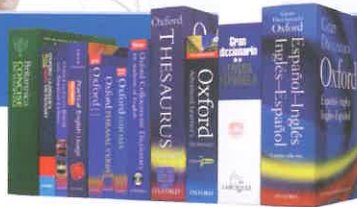
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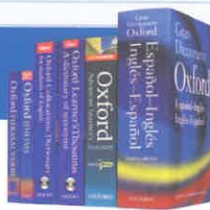
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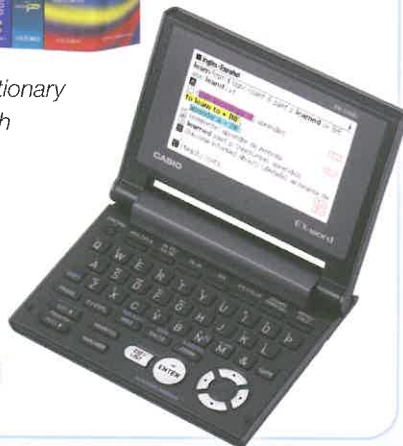
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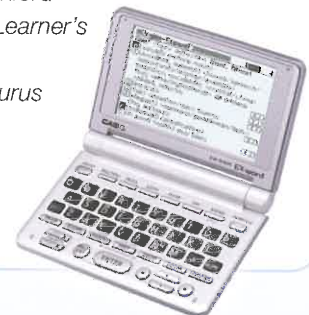
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is that when the children finish secondary school, they have been learning English for 10 years and they are very poor in maintaining a basic conversation, whereas they are asked to do much higher-level grammar exercises. There is a contradiction, because after studying grammar for such a long time they are not able to produce basic conversation. There is a mismatch.

**Penny Ur:** Possibly they had too much practice of form in the classroom and not enough communication practice. Like my own experience that I mentioned earlier. I think there should be a combination of about half and half.

**Ana Aguilar:** It is not Grammar-Translation that is being applied. Nowadays it is only grammar because translation has been banned.

**I think the ideal is a combination, including translation, including learning by heart, including explicit grammar and vocabulary teaching, together with opportunities to communicate**

**Penny Ur:** I absolutely agree with you, but it is coming back, I think.

**Ana Aguilar:** But very slowly.

**Neus Serra:** In your book, *Grammar Practice Activities* (Cambridge Handbooks for Language Teachers), you advocate a grammatical syllabus. Is it not a bit dangerous to say that? Does that not lead to only grammar being taught?

**Penny Ur:** In my opinion, there is no contradiction between having a grammatical syllabus and the inclusion of communicative activities in the classroom. What I was trying to compensate for in this

book is the traditional way grammar is taught: a rule and exercises, which do not transfer to communication. What you need after the rule is meaningful practice that will lead to communication, as in the activities I suggested in the book. I think the grammatical syllabus does not prevent the communicative use of grammar – on the contrary. The problem in most grammar teaching, and the reason why Spanish students cannot communicate using the grammar, is that the practice is limited to very conventional exercises, like gap-filling and matching. They have not got the kind of communicative grammar practice activities that I believe are necessary.

**Ana Aguilar:** Research in language acquisition seems to show that synthetic

syllabuses (structural, lexical, functional) and the classroom practice associated with them are not working. The teacher's primary function should be the unfolding of what Corder recognized as the learner's powerful internal syllabus, not to try to impose an external one.

**Penny Ur:** Anyway, it's not a question of what the syllabus is, so much as what the teacher does with it. I think we all agree that grammar knowledge is a tool, not an end in itself. It is a means to convey meaning. The problem is that some teachers believe that if you know the grammar you know the language.

**Neus Serra:** I ask the teachers what their objectives are at the end of a period. More often than not the answer is: "The present perfect". What kind of objective is that??

**In my opinion, there is no contradiction between having a grammatical syllabus and the inclusion of communicative activities in the classroom**

**Penny Ur:** That is only an interim objective, and I'd much rather they said something like: getting the students to be able to use the present perfect to make meanings.

**Ana Aguilar:** You also say in your book that the value of practice is that the material is then absorbed into long-term memory. I am not an expert in language acquisition but Michael Long told us once of an experiment where some learners practised the use of the relative clause, I think it was, for two solid months. The immediate tests were very successful. But, in six months they had lost 70%, and in a year 100%: they had lost the structure completely.

**Penny Ur:** But that was because the practice was completely mechanical.

**Ana Aguilar:** No, no. They practised all kinds of formats

**Penny Ur:** But they were probably not asked to communicate their own meanings. There are also experiments showing that intensive grammar practice is beneficial. Have a look at the collection of articles in *Practice in a Second Language*, edited by Dekeyser (Cambridge University Press).

**Ana Aguilar:** But our experience as teachers is that after teaching the negative year after year, the structure

never reaches long-term memory.

**Penny Ur:** The answer to that, I think, is doing meaningful practice: getting them to use the structure to

say their own things. And secondly, teachers cannot just abandon the structure. They need to come back to it. To put it another way: Practice might not 'make perfect' but giving no practice at all will be even worse.

**Ana Aguilar:** But what about other means of practising: massive exposure to texts, both written and oral. Focus on meaning.

**Penny Ur:** It's also important, but still, the evidence is that if you do not draw learners' attention to the structure, it may go unnoticed. That is what happens in immersion programmes in Canada. English-speaking children in immersion programmes are exposed to masses of French. They come out of the programmes very fluent in French but making atrocious mistakes.

**Ana Aguilar:** But the mistakes are only with very late-developed morphemes or structures, and you know how difficult it is to eradicate that kind of mistake. They might never be learned or only when the learner is ready, no matter the amount of practice.

**Penny Ur:** Yes, but if they are ready, they will only absorb it if they notice it. And I think it is the teacher's job to make them notice it.

**Ana Aguilar:** I do not think immersion programmes should be rejected because



## Ana Aguilar and Neus Serra Talk to **Penny Ur** on *Teaching and Learning a Foreign Language in our Schools*

**Neus Serra:** For quite a long time the message has been that communication should be the main target for language learning. But, unfortunately, very few teachers really follow a communicative approach and students' results in all kind of tests are very poor.

**Penny Ur:** I think you have to distinguish between the target, the means, and the process. The target in language learning should be communication, but that does not necessarily mean that every activity in the classroom should be communicative. This was perhaps the mistake or miscalculation of the first people who propagated the communicative approach. If you want a learner to be able to play a violin concerto, they should start learning the scales before they are able to play a concerto. It is the same with language learning. You certainly need to practise in the classroom, doing things with the language to communicate meaning, because that is what languages are for. But, that does not contradict the need to learn forms. Together with the tune, the musician needs to learn the techniques for producing sounds.

The best results are obtained, I believe, with a combination of formal practice and activities in which you have the learners communicating. I would go for something

like half and half. Half the time in the classroom looking at the vocabulary, grammar or practising the pronunciation, and half the time with communicative activities.

As I mention in my talk, there is also a middle ground where you are, for example, practising grammatical structures but you are using them to make meaning, to communicate. One is practising language forms through creating and understanding meaning.

**The target in language learning should be communication, but that does not necessarily mean that every activity in the classroom should be communicative.**

**Neus Serra:** But when practising forms does not lead to communication, it is a waste of time. The forms in themselves do not mean anything.

**Penny Ur:** Those forms are the tools. Interacting with the forms leads to better communication. Many of us were taught through Grammar-Translation. You were taught like that, I suppose.

**Ana Aguilar:** The way I was taught French at school was very successful. Pure Grammar-Translation but with a great emphasis on memory. We learned poems and texts. The input was massive.

**Penny Ur.** The result was that you obtained a great capital in French: excellent grammar. What you did not get, correct me if I am wrong, was the ability to communicate. I learned French the same way in the English schools. When I went to France I could not understand a word of what was being said. But once I got my ear tuned, I spoke very good French. I had all the underlying linguistic knowledge. The grammar and the vocabulary were ready: all I needed was the

ability to use them in fluent communication. That is the experience of a lot of people. The practising of form they had had in the classroom did not immediately produce communicative ability. But once they had the opportunity to practise fluent communication, it showed its worth.

**I believe that teaching grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary is a very good investment in the long term.**

I believe that teaching grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary is a very good investment in the long term.

If you teach them only to communicate, there is

a danger that they might become stuck at a basic level: able to communicate in basic conversation, but not much beyond that. They may get stuck when reading more advanced texts or trying to communicate at an academically higher level. They need the basis.

**Ana Aguilar:** But I believe the great success of our method was the translation, not the grammar. We were exposed to a lot of texts and that was what made us acquire the language, because it seems one does not go from the parts to the whole. This focus on form does not seem to build an acquisition model. The texts should be faced as wholes.

**Penny Ur.** It is no coincidence that in the world of today Grammar-Translation is still the dominant approach, and I do not think that that is because teachers are lazy or unaware. There is something worthwhile there. I think the ideal is a combination, including translation, including learning by heart,

including explicit grammar and vocabulary teaching, together with opportunities to communicate.

**Neus Serra:** But the problem here in this country

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of the few mistakes you mentioned.

**Penny Ur:** If you do not mind learners making mistakes in gender, for example in French, ok. But if you ask the learners, they say they want to speak correctly. I think it is great sacrifice to make.

**Ana Aguilar:** I am not saying one should not aim for accuracy. What I am saying is that the evidence I have got is that loads of practice does not eradicate those mistakes. I suppose those learners of French were that part of the population who will never speak a foreign language with great accuracy, no matter what you do to them. Many learners will never go beyond a certain level unless they begin when they are under seven years of age.

**Penny Ur:** And your question is how we can make learning in schools more efficient. In Israel there are a number of students at college wanting to become teachers of English with a superb command of the language learnt only at school. So the teachers must be doing something right.

**Ana Aguilar:** I wish you could tell us what they are doing.

**Penny Ur:** But Spanish students wanting to become teachers of English, do they not have a high level of the language?

**Neus Serra:** Not all of them. But the level is gradually becoming higher.

**Ana Aguilar:** Other important aspects of good teaching you mention in your book are, namely, giving good instructions, making sure the students have understood, and helping them to get their answers right.

**Penny Ur:** Those are what I call pedagogical principles. The task of the teacher is to help the learners to get their production right. Sometimes teachers forget that, because they are testing all the time. Our job is to mediate so they get it right. To show them we are on their side.

**Neus Serra:** My obsession when I am with a group of teachers is to insist on their not going beyond what learners are able to produce. Otherwise they are getting it wrong and becoming frustrated. One can communicate quite effectively with very basic structures.

Teachers want “to finish the book” and tend to go much too fast and abandon practising the necessary skills.

Teachers also complain about having large groups; what advice can you give us for practising the language with bigger groups?

**Penny Ur:** I deal with this question in my first ever book *Discussions that Work*. How do I get the learners to talk and communicate in English? If I have a discussion in a class of 30 kids their chances to talk will be minimal. If you want to have efficient interaction in the classroom you need to organise them in pairs or groups.

You always need an aim when teaching. Sometimes my aim is having them to speak correctly. In this case the aim was to have the learners talk fluently and successfully to get meaning across.

There is also a need for easy enough but, at the same time, interesting tasks where they do not have to revert to mother tongue to achieve them.

I discovered in the 1970's

those principles necessary for fluency practice in the classroom:

- Group or pair work
- Interesting tasks
- Achievable tasks

I wrote an article about this, which fell into the hands of Cambridge University Press. They liked it and we started preparing a book.

### The task of the teacher is to help the learners to get their production right.

**Neus Serra:** Do you find, as is the case here, that mixed-ability groups have increased enormously? How do you cope with it?

**Penny Ur:** The answer is that there is no answer, particularly with cases of huge differences, as you seem to have in this country. There are some simple techniques which can help, but there is a point at which

first time you are likely to forget it. You need to be reminded of it again and be induced to retrieve it. Each time you carry out this retrieval, the root becomes deeper and deeper, until you can retrieve the utterance with no difficulty. In the classroom, this acquisition process should be reinforced. The teachers should help the learners

to achieve this retrieval successfully, perhaps with a bit of effort so that you reinforce the knowledge being acquired.

**Neus Serra:** How much participation should we give our learners in the learning process?

**Penny Ur:** I think that it is a principle of good teaching anywhere that you consult your learners. That does not

### Teachers, not only today but always, should be very sensitive to their students' needs.

I think you need to divide classes by level, or everyone loses out.

**Ana Aguilar:** You mention the importance of repetition in language learning.

**Penny Ur:** Language is a collection of arbitrary phenomena, and there is no way one can remember but through repeating. So, what I am aiming at in those exercises is that students successfully reproduce or retrieve the grammar or the vocabulary. This is particularly true of vocabulary: an item needs to be re-encountered at least ten times, usually, before it is mastered.

My point is that when you hear an utterance for the

mean you have to do exactly what they tell you. It just means being sensitive and aware.

Every so often, teachers should pause and ask the learners for their opinions. The answers can give very valuable feedback. Teachers, not only today but always, should be very sensitive to their students' needs.

I also explain the reason for doing an activity to the learners. They then know why they are going to do it, and that they are not going to do it just because the teacher says so.

**Neus Serra, Ana Aguilar:** Thank you very much. Sorry for keeping you so long.



- Classroom organization: teacher-fronted, group work or individualized.

Some students learn best on their own, others really like working in groups. Some students prefer to learn from the teacher. Some learners are more visual; others more aural; some are more productive, while others prefer to listen or read more reflectively. I want to make sure that in my class I provide many different interactive patterns to cater for different learning styles. So, in terms of material, for instance, I use textbooks, worksheets, the board, the computer and other sources of input and interaction. Variation is an important aspect of teaching.

**Interest:** The teacher needs to make sure that all learners are involved in one way or another. If one day a section of the class might be slightly neglected (dealing with a text on football that does not interest the girls), it is necessary to make sure that the following day that group of students does tasks that interest them much more.

What fosters interest?

**Game-like features.** The definition of a game is that it has a clear, achievable goal with some kind of constraint that stops it being done in the most obvious and easy way. Any game has rules which stop you achieving success too easily. This presents participants with a challenge, and this challenge can increase their interest considerably.

For example, here is a technique where learners are shown a picture. In groups, they are requested to write as many sentences as they can in a limited period of time to win a sort of competition. It is a simple, engaging technique in which students rarely revert to their mother tongue, and they use the structures they have learnt. It can be used, for example, to practice “there is”/ “there are” structures. It is in fact a game, in which the time limitation presents the constraint that challenges them, but it is presented as a speaking task.

The advantage of an activity like the one we have just mentioned is that learners can complete it at different levels: the advanced students can elicit more complex sentences, while the weaker ones can be satisfied with

simpler ones. Any activity can be turned into a game by introducing a constraint element.

**Visual materials.** Give them something to look at. These materials do not need to be particularly dramatic. When working in pairs or groups, referring to a particular visual element fosters collaboration. If the visual aid is something funny, or a video, so much the better.

**Maximum participation.** This is the key to effective teaching and learning. Everybody should be involved at the same time, rather than having a series of interactions between the teacher and single students.

## B. Reaching the individual

**Collaboration:** Learners work together in order to get a better result than they would on their own. An example of this is the *recall and share* technique, in which several items appear on the board. The learners are given a short time to look at them. Then the items are deleted and students have to remember as many as they can. They then share their list with the group. The moment of sharing gives the individual great relief.

It is also a very useful technique for other aspects of language, like spelling or revision of past tenses. This is a case of *situation collaboration*, in which no matter what the level of the student they will always get better results by sharing than they would have got on their own. So any individual, no matter how advanced, can benefit from this sort of activity. All activities based on recalling or brainstorming can really spur collaboration in a mixed-level classroom.

There are several educational gains here as well: working together, feeling like a member of a team, and not very obvious but implicit pair teaching. But we have to be aware of certain disadvantages, too. What about those learners who prefer working on their own? So, we cannot do too much of this because there are students who genuinely do not like working in groups.

Not all tasks work as collaborative activities. Pair work usually works better than group work, partially

because it is easier to control, and partially because there is higher participation. Two students work well together, whereas, in a group of five, one or two might opt out. The teacher must make sure that the task is such that it is likely to be better done by a group than by an individual. But, the teacher must also allow for individuals to work on their own if they prefer.

**Individualization:** The teacher should make sure that the material can be done at different levels and at different paces. He or she should allow for individual variations in speed and level, even in a teacher-led or set exercises.

The following are some examples of techniques to encourage individualisation:

- Different starting points. Learners choose where to start. This allows them to make choices based on their own interests and preferences at that moment.
- Giving a time limit rather than a quantity-of-work limit. By giving an instruction like “*Do as much as you can in five minutes*” rather than “*Do exercise 6*”, the teacher enables students to work at their own speed and set their own limits.
- Allowing self-checking and only asking the teacher when there is a problem. This allows students to take more responsibility for their learning and to work at their own pace.

**Personalization.** The learners express their own opinions, thoughts and desires. This relates to their personal experiences as individual people. One might argue that this is not easily done with beginners or young learners, but here is a very simple example:

Imagine you are seven years old and choosing a pet. Use an element from each of the three columns below to say what kind of pet you would choose.

A big	black	cat
A small	brown	dog
A medium-sized	white	pony

# Teaching Mixed Level Classes

By Penny Ur

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*What is a large class? What is a heterogeneous (mixed-level) group? What are the problems we encounter when we have to teach classes that are both large and heterogeneous? Penny Ur's presentation suggested a series of practical teaching principles, illustrated by actual procedures that involve very little (or no) extra preparation, and that can make the teaching of such classes easier and more effective.*

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One of the big challenges that teachers face today is "mixed ability" classes, because even if the learners are grouped according to level of language, any class, in a sense, is a mixed-level group. In fact, the best definition I have heard of a mixed-level group is a class of two. If you have two students, you have more than one level.

I will, rather, use the word "heterogeneous" to define the sort of groups that are mixed in more than just level of language. Any class is heterogeneous. Students vary in:

- background
- interests
- age
- gender
- personality
- motivation
- cognitive ability
- learning styles.

## Problems

Some of the specific problems teachers face in working with mixed-ability groups are the following:

1. How to teach the students and ensure learning. How to make sure that they all learn. How to cater for different needs.
2. How to choose suitable material. Most of the material in the market is geared to a single level, which is too

easy for some and too difficult for others. This can lead to learners getting bored, ceasing to pay attention, and possibly disrupting the class.

3. How to cater for different interests.
4. What pace to use: too fast, too slow.
5. What level of difficulty.
6. How to reach individuals with different learning styles.

I am not going to deal explicitly with assessment in this article. I apologize but I am much more interested in the learning process here.

## Some advantages

While mixed-ability groups can pose challenges for a teacher, there are also advantages to be gained from the experience. For example, such educational principles as tolerance, respect and cooperation can be developed. This is good preparation for all involved, as the class is a microcosm of what happens outside.

Also, if faced appropriately, teaching mixed-level groups can make a person become a better teacher, thinking of different and better ways to teach his or her students. Therefore one progresses in his or her own professional ability. The heterogeneity of the group can also be seen as a plus. A heterogeneous class has richer human resources.

Contributions to debates and discussions become much more varied. Learners have different ideas and experiences coming from different backgrounds. Pair teaching is a good strategy. When the teacher cannot reach every single individual, he or she can have the learners teach one another, taking advantage of the diversity in the group.

## Things that can help

I am not talking about solutions (too arrogant); I shall propose techniques that have helped a lot with the problems mentioned above and that take into account all the conditions of a heterogeneous group.

### A. Keeping them motivated:

**Variation:** Abraham Lincoln said: *You can fool some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time.* This applies to teaching. The teacher can teach all of the learners some of the time, some of the learners all of the time but not all of the learners all of the time. Therefore, one must vary his or her teaching to reach an optimal overall balance.

Variation can occur on many different planes:

- Level
- Pace
- Amount
- Demands on the learners

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Penny Ur has thirty years' experience as an English teacher in primary and secondary schools in Israel. She teaches courses on aspects of foreign-language teaching methodology at Oranim Academic College of Education. She has published a number of articles on the subject of foreign-language teaching, and several books with Cambridge University Press, including *Grammar Practice Activities* (2009), *Vocabulary Activities* (2011) and *A Course in Language Teaching* (2nd edition coming out in 2012)

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Once you have made your decision, find out if any of your classmates have made the same one.

Learners walk around and feel delighted when they find someone who shares his or her taste. For more advanced groups, you could ask a question like, "What is the best metaphor of an English lesson?"

A variety show	Eating a meal	A symphony
A conversation	Doing the shopping	Consulting the doctor
Climbing a mountain	A football game	A menu
A wedding		

It is very illuminating to hear other people's ideas about a language class.

**Open ending.** Provide students with open-ended exercises and activities. An open-ended item has many right answers, so learners can respond at different levels. A closed-ended item, on the other hand, has only one right answer. Instead of teacher-answer, teacher-answer, open-ended items yield the interaction pattern of teacher-answer, answer, answer. You get more learner-talk than teacher-talk, and the answers are unpredictable and very often interesting. Some students will give easy answers, while others will give more difficult ones. This kind of technique develops creative, higher-order skills.

**A closed-ended exercise is homogeneous.** For example:

Complete the following sentences by putting the verb in parentheses in the correct past form:

She \_\_\_\_\_ early. (leave)

He \_\_\_\_\_ the cake. (make)

I \_\_\_\_\_ there for six hours. (sit)

The man \_\_\_\_\_ the book. (read)

Apart from the fact that this can be done without understanding, it is inappropriate for a heterogeneous class. But this can be turned into an open-ended exercise. For instance, the teacher could put in the target form and ask the learners to end it up.

She left \_\_\_\_\_

He made \_\_\_\_\_

I sat \_\_\_\_\_

The man read \_\_\_\_\_

Another way round:

She \_\_\_\_\_ early.

He \_\_\_\_\_ the cake.

I \_\_\_\_\_ there for six hours.

The man \_\_\_\_\_ the book.

Another type of open-ended task is brainstorming. For example, an oral fluency exercise focusing on *can/could* could consist of answering the following kind of question: *How many ways can you think to use an empty tin can? (A pen? A piece of plasticine?).* Exercises on adjective position and vocabulary could answer these kinds of questions: *How many adjectives can you think of to describe the noun 'road'? How many nouns can you think of that could be described by the adjective 'hard'?* Comparatives could be worked on through questions like: *How many things can you think of to compare a train with a car?*

In a similar vein, originality or "lateral thinking" thinking can be fostered through activities like:

- Think of ten ways to compare a tree with a piece of spaghetti.
- Think of as many reasons as you can about why a lesson is like a wedding.
- Suggest at least three advantages of being an only child / of not having a cell phone / ...

- Name ten things you have never done.

**Compulsory plus optional.** One more way of making lessons and activities personalized is by giving students the opportunity to do more than what is required. Such phrases as "Do at least..." "Optionally," "If you have time..." are key components of instruction, particularly with mixed-ability groups. The class is given a task that is easy enough to be done successfully by everyone (or nearly everyone), but they are also given an optional task which may be done if they have time, such as the following test item:

Test on the past tenses

Part A. Complete using past tenses

Her mother.....to Little Red Riding Hood: "Take this cake to your grandmother, but don't talk to strangers."

Little Red Riding Hood..... through the woods, and on the way she..... the wolf.

"Hello, Little Red Riding Hood,"..... the wolf. "Where are your going?"

Little Red Riding Hood..... what her mother.....

"I am going to visit my grandmother," she..... "She lives in the forest over there."

The wolf..... off through the forest and..... to the grandmother's house.

Part B. Optional: Finish the story as you like but not in the usual way.

## Conclusion

Every group is heterogeneous, and we must take this into account. The activities outlined above are just a small part of the things we should do with our students in order to meet the needs of all of them. The important thing is to bear the group's heterogeneity in mind constantly and to seek to address it in every lesson.

perhaps how things were decades ago, then we might see the culture of the EFL classroom as the culture of the main countries deemed to be English speaking. This would likely include the US, the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and Ireland. In this case, the idea is that the culture of EFL is linked to some notion of native speakerism. But of course even this approach to language and culture was never as simple as it looked, in part, as I suggested above, because culture does not sit still.

If the culture on offer in commercial EFL teaching materials in the past was about native speaker culture, then the culture coming through in recent EFL textbooks is the culture of global consumerism. These books do not say to students of English that they need to 'become American' or 'become British'; they say that learning English will lead to success and status as a cosmopolitan global citizen in a world given over to consumerist capitalism.

**1. In Spain, many ELF teachers are non-native speakers, with their own non-native identity. What kind of culture should they teach along with the language? Should they inscribe themselves into some kind of locality (some regional accent, mannerism, taste...) or stick to the so-called global English?**

You will not be surprised if I say that I am reluctant to tell EFL teachers in Catalonia what to teach. And what culture to teach would really be difficult! But with reference to what I have just said above about culture and identity in EFL textbooks, I think that teachers often (though not always) have a choice between two general

options. They can go with the status quo, which to a great extent means trying to entertain students with tales of celebrity success and excess, whilst inserting, where possible, work on grammar, lexis, phonology and so on. Alternatively, teachers can work from a list of themes which they and their students would like to deal with through the English language. I think the latter is best because English language culture-making thereby becomes more of a joint enterprise: between what can be found out there in different English language speaking cultures—both great and small— and what students bring to the process as individuals who are in the process of becoming English language users. I hate to use a term that has become almost cliché, but we need to have a strong dose of *glocalization*, that is, the development of syntheses of the local and global. I'm sure that many EFL teachers in Catalonia already do this.

**2. Does widespread access to internet make it easier to access other worlds, other contexts, other identities? How could teachers best use the potential of internet to virtually leave the classroom in Tarragona or Girona, and go to other realities?**

The answer to the first question is yes, but in the sense that these 'other worlds' might in many ways not be 'other' as they are already part of the worlds of the students. What I mean here is that independent of their English classes, students may already be connected to networks, or communities of practice (to use Lave and Wenger's term) of individuals around the world who have interests similar to their

own (e.g. an interest in hip-hop music, an interest in environmental issues, an interest in cats, etc.). In this case, part of who they are (their identity) is 'out there' in cyberspace. And if English is the mediator of their cyber activity, the issue then becomes how to help them improve their ability to communicate when they engage in this activity.

This means bringing technology to a centre stage both inside and outside the classroom. I would be in favour of adopting an approach which turns students into ethnographers who are tasked to find different contexts of English language use on the internet and then bring these examples to lessons where they would serve as the basis of language practice. This is not easy and it means a lot of work for teachers, but it would lead to more rewarding learning experiences for both students and teachers. But actually, it's easy for me to throw these ideas around. The reality of access (or better said, a lack of access) to computer technology might work against what I am suggesting here to such a degree that one cannot even get started.

**3. What can teachers do to go beyond "international" English? Or perhaps International or global English is related to cosmopolitanism understood in a limited sense, but this is what most students and most companies ask for.**

First of all, I would say that unless they are in agreement with the dominant neoliberal agenda, they should do something to resist it. I'm not sure that there is any question of going 'beyond international English', because in a sense English is

being studied as just that, at least in the general sense of the word (i.e. it is the most used language in *lingua franca* settings of all kinds around the world).

The real issue is what we mean by 'international' and what we mean by terms like 'cosmopolitanism' and 'global citizenship'. As I noted in my plenary, David Held (2002) has defined cultural cosmopolitanism, a high-minded ideal for education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as 'the capacity to mediate between national cultures, communities ... and alternative styles of life'. He further states that cultural cosmopolitanism 'encompasses the possibility of dialogue with traditions and discourses of others with the aim of expanding horizons of one's own framework of meaning and prejudice'. In this case, the idea is to educate global citizens who are knowledgeable of cultural differences across a range of contexts and who are able to act as 'cultural brokers' in their contacts with others. The idea I floated above, about turning students into ethnographers, is I think consistent with this ideal and it would certainly mean going beyond what 'most students and most companies ask for'.

**4. With other authors, you share a concern about students being regarded and treated as "consumers" or "clients" who - thanks to English - will obtain benefits they would otherwise not be able to get. This is perhaps due to the fact that the thriving commercial world built around the teaching of English has taken advantage of the human tendency to reach for success. How does this situation affect the te-**

## David Block for APAC

**1. Your keynote speech at APAC last February 24th “English language teaching in liquid (and solid ) times: language, culture and identity” raised issues which are seldom addressed in ELT conferences but which bear directly on what and how teachers teach. The ppts of your session are already on APAC’s web page, but we would like to ask you to briefly summarize your session so that those who could not attend can get the best out of the slides. What aspects do you think teachers’ attention should go to?**

I organised the keynote around three key concepts: language, culture and identity

As regards language, I made a call to move beyond a one-dimensional approach to communication, suggesting a view of communication which involves a range of semiotic resources. I drew on work in multimodality, defined as approaches to communication which understand it to be about more than just representation via the use of language. For multimodal theorists such as Gunther Kress, language is just one of many modes which constitute communication, alongside image, posture, gesture, gaze, clothing,

accessories and so on. I gave a good number of examples which I hope showed that communication sometimes involves no language (e.g. a shrug) and sometimes it involves language and gesture working very closely together (the example of my experience with the Catalan expression *Déu n’hi do!*). But then I was left with the ‘so what’ question as regards what all of this might mean for EFL classroom practitioners.

What I said was that in classrooms there is very little opportunity to take on multimodality in far away contexts, except for via the internet. For sure, students can practice a service exchange in English, but in the classroom they are missing the visual backdrop, the smells, the sounds and so on that accompany the use of words. It should be noted that classrooms are the sites of their own emergent multimodal ensembles. However, these ensembles are quite different from what students of languages imagine as their future uses of language. I would say that there is a need to explore multimodality (and other related phenomena). For example, how the very personal way that students use their bodies, tied to languages like Catalan and Spanish, inflects their communication in English.

Do they speak English but do everything physical in communication according to deeply acquired Catalan modes of behaviour? This would be an interesting thing to explore in classrooms (see what I say below about students being ethnographers).

I then dealt with culture and identity together. With culture, we need to ask ourselves what exactly we mean. Indeed, we might ask ourselves what we mean by something like, for example, ‘British culture’. As has been noted by so many scholars over the years, culture is very difficult to define. But there seems to be a general consensus today in sociology and anthropology that while there is always history and there are always social structures in the present, culture is, in effect, made on a moment-to-moment basis in the activities which people engage in. It has a behavioural element- it is about how people do things- and it has a cognitive element- it is about evolving collective belief systems or worldviews. There is also a material element in that culture is often about artefacts such as buildings, works of literature, fashion, sport and so on. So ‘British culture’ is being made all of the time and it has behavioural, cognitive and

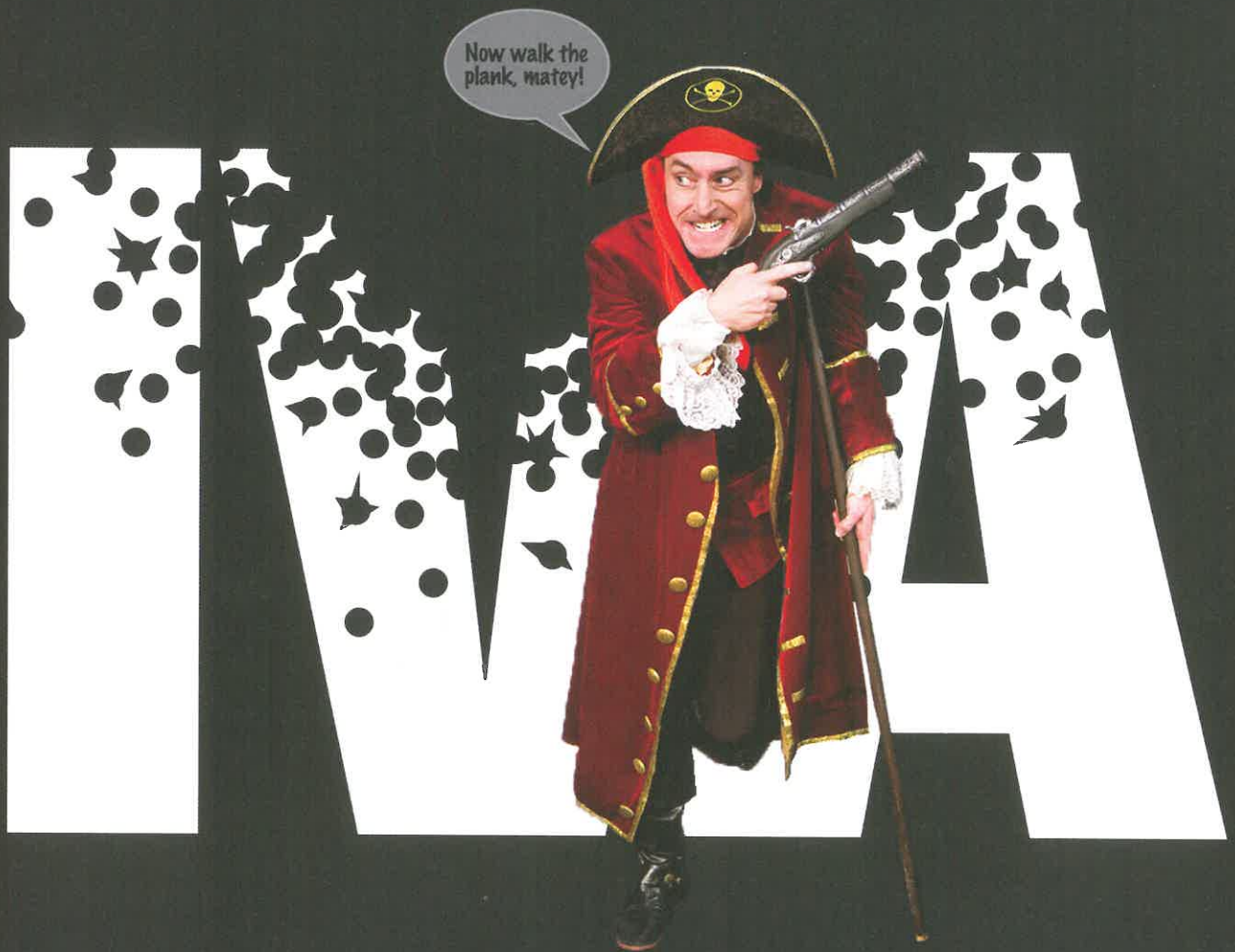
artefactual dimensions. From this perspective, the tens of thousands attending Diwali Celebrations in Leicester each year, the many London schoolgirls wearing headscarves, the heptathlete Jessica Ennis from Sheffield, all of the looters in the August 2011 riots in British cities and Prime Minister David Cameron are all contributors to what British culture is in 2012. In a sense one of the big problems with multiculturalism in countries like Britain is the problem of people who cannot get their heads around this notion. But I digress.

As regards identity, I talked about an approach which is fairly widespread today in education circles. This approach sees identities as socially constructed, self-conscious, ongoing narratives that individuals perform, interpret and project in dress, bodily movements, actions and language. We construct our identities in the company of others, who to varying degrees share our beliefs, motives, values, activities and practices. Identities are about our pasts, presents and futures.

So what does this mean for EFL teachers? If we stay in the realm of more traditional approaches to English language teaching,



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## ching and learning of EFL?

I'm not sure that there is a 'human tendency to reach for success' and it is perhaps the assumption there is one (along with many other similar assumptions) which has got us into the mess that is the current economic crisis. In any case, as I have said above, a way forward is to question, and if appropriate, resist some of the notions embedded in this question. Yes, English may be framed as the language of global capitalism, but it is also the language of resistance to global capitalism, as we have seen in recent years with a range of 'anti-system' social movements.

**1. In your session you gave some examples of how published materials play an influence on the identities students see and on how some models are given importance, and how others are downplayed. What is the responsibility of publishers in the challenges you posed in your session? How do you think they should address multimodality?**

The first question is very general but not difficult to answer. Because I'm not

sure publishers would be interested in overturning the system in which they are thriving, I would not even try to convince them to act in a different way. Where appropriate, I think it is the job of teachers to teach *against* published materials and for students to learn *against* them. So one can take that exercise about Bill Gates and his overwhelming success and use it as a starting point for a critique of growing inequality in the world: How is it right that one individual should be able to amass such a fortune? Is anyone really worth that much more than his fellow human beings? And so on. Something along these lines could be done instead of celebrating the life of a multimillionaire and everything he stands for.

As regards multimodality and published materials, I would say that the two already go together in that materials today tend to be overtly multimodal as regards design and the organisation of content. Just look at the wonderful photography and artwork and the backup for written materials which can range from audio recordings to uses of computer

technology. What is missing in all of this, however, is a multimodality of content, or better said an open and full acknowledgement that communication is multimodal. And what I mean here is something beyond a passing mention of gesture or a little short text about 'body language'. But, as I said in the keynote, it is difficult to anticipate multimodality or recreate it out of context. So perhaps current published materials do not take on multimodality because it is too difficult to do so. On the other hand, it could just be a blind spot, as it is for most second language learning researchers. Perhaps it's a case of not being able to see beyond language as the be-all and end-all of English language learning.

But the question is how published materials should address multimodality. Well, I suppose that what I am saying is that perhaps they shouldn't, or better said, that perhaps we should not expect them to. Again, I think this is a matter that could be handled at the local level of the classroom. For example, teachers and students could access via the internet examples of people

speaking English and then set up a multimodal analysis of the communication taking place. So instead of just having an analysis of grammar, or even 'communicative' speaking activities, students could analyse a range of semiotic modes which contribute to communication. I mean, one could spend days watching the nonverbal communication of Anthony Hopkins's character in the film version of Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*.

Of course to do all of this, teachers and students will need to have a language to talk about what they are watching and hearing. So the teacher's job would be to read up on multimodality - books like Sigrid Norris's *Analysing Multimodal Interaction: A Methodological Framework* (2004, Routledge) are very helpful- and then work from there. I know I make it sound easy and it probably isn't. But then again, I actually don't think it is really that hard. It certainly would be something different for a Monday morning!

## Converses a La Pedrera. Julian Barnes

L'escriptor britànic Julian Barnes conversarà amb Miquel Berga en el marc del cicle "Converses a La Pedrera", en el que personalitats de primer ordre de diferents àmbits del saber, reflexionen sobre l'actualitat social i política, i ens exposen la seva visió del futur.

- Barcelona , 26 de novembre del 2012, a les 19:30

In learning-to-learn, it seems to me that learning gets confused with the subject. I want to learn a language to get the content: sports, cooking, or what have you. But, we should distinguish between the two. Perhaps learning is hiding behind the content. So, what about doing content only to get the learning? We like problems, we like games, we like puzzles where you are faced with a perfectly inconsequential piece of content to challenge yourself and have the experience of being a learner.

That is my first point: separating learning from content. In the 70s, 80s and 90s, I acted as the director of a teacher training institute. I was supposed to be in a place which was very much open to all the different methodologies or influences that were around at that time, which included, in this case, *Grammar-Translation and the Direct Method*. Then, before this invention of **communicative language teaching**, there were approaches like *Suggestopedia and Community Language Learning*. The CLL method was developed by Charles A. Curran. We used to sit in front of our black and white television and watch his programme on the *Open University*.

Apart from that, there was stuff coming from California, for example the work of Earl Stevick, whose book came out in 1976. It was called *Memory, Meaning and Method*, and it was the first book that seemed to address the question that we were all looking at. He produced what he called a **riddle**. I call it Earl Stevick's Riddle. Behaviourist approach, cognitive approach, it did not really matter which one a teacher used. The question was: why were some people getting great results regardless of the approach employed?

**Earl Stevick's riddle:  
You can have two quite  
different Methods A and B,  
based on different assumptions  
about how people learn,**

**yet one teacher gets  
excellent results  
with A and another with B.**

**How is this possible?**

There was a second part of the riddle:

**Also ... why does  
Method A (or B) sometimes  
work so beautifully  
and at other times  
so poorly?**

Stevick went on to say that if we stick to the visible differences between A and B, we may miss the really important thing. We may miss something else that might be going on when both of the methods are being applied well. Mainly, we may miss the fact that each method, regardless of its surface methodology, can fulfil some other requirement at a lower level which we do not see when we talk about it. There is something else going on. It is like when they saw the planet Uranus making a funny orbit and they eventually discovered two other planets, Neptune and Pluto, hiding behind it.

Stevick goes on to propose in *Memory, Meaning and Method* that:

the deeper the source of a sentence within the student's personality the more lasting value it has for learning and that this is more important than the method. Thus the more meaning it has for the student the more learning it might bring. That is independent of any surface methodology.

That comes from somewhere else, some other event that is largely invisible in the classroom but need not be invisible.

**... each method  
regardless of its surface  
methodology can fulfill a set  
of other requirements  
that goes beneath and beyond  
any of them**

It was the first book to give a very well-read and very well-argued view of a topic that was seen and left off-centre: namely, that people could make a difference. That was seen as a bit humanistic, soft, nutty.

A process is going on independent from the methodology, and it seems to have more importance than the method itself. That is not very surprising nowadays.

I want you to do a little experiment and think about good teachers that jump into your emotional memory. Then, question yourself:

*Roughly speaking in your mind's eye:*

*How old were you?*

*Where were you?*

*Who was the teacher?*

*What was she doing?*

*What was it that was good?*

*Why does it stick in your mind now?*

*In what way is that teacher alive in you now?*

*What is the resonance of that teacher?*



# From Teacher to Facilitator

By Adrian Underhill

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*Carl Rogers said of our age that the only one that can be called educated is the one who has learnt how to learn. And it was Rogers who popularised the term and practice of facilitation, which referred to a holistic and experiential approach to learning how to learn, no matter what topic at hand. Adrian Underhill's talk explored some of the similarities and differences between the activities of Teaching (which explicitly include mastery of content and methodological skill and are well covered in ELT discourse) and Facilitating (which explicitly include qualities of relationship, personal presence, learning atmosphere and intention, and tend perhaps to be less well articulated in our discourse). These issues were addressed, a map of the "mysterious" territory of Facilitation proposed, and suggestions given relating to the developmental journey of the Facilitator and some of the obstacles that may be encountered.*

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This is really one of the few conferences I have been to in my life which has a really interesting title: ***Solid Learning for Liquid Times***. Most conferences have a rather banal one.

I want to pick up on some of the themes as they appear in the introductions. They have to do with the "*Liquid Modern Era*":

Your solidity is no longer an asset in a world that is constantly changing. That affects education and knowledge.

How can content be defined and accessible when it is changing all the time?

An easy answer is possible: Learning to learn, but on what basis should we approach that and how to prepare for uncertainty. Is that possible?

This is what I am going to talk about. I am going to talk about facilitation. If you take that theme, ***Preparing for uncertainty***, and think about it, you become aware that in these days there is no stability. You think you have got stability, but if you see stability out there, it is passing. It is not stable. There isn't any stable stability. There is a chance of a coincidence to see stability when you are looking, but if you look again it would not be there.

Progress is not the move from one form or moment of stability to another. What is more, solutions are also passing. To use an audio-visual metaphor, if you see a movie, there isn't a solution; a snapshot is a solution but never the whole movie. In fact every solution causes new problems.

You have not got to look very far in education to see the accumulation of enforcing consequences. A very good idea has five less optimal consequences. You end up with something like the Home Service in Great Britain, which is so complex, so impossible, and so full of people's good ideas that have not worked either. But now nobody remembers where the problem began, and we cannot even learn from experience, because it changes so quickly, and you cannot see cause and effect, which is another aspect of complexity. The cause is here but the effect is there, perhaps five years later.

There is nice distinction between "**difficulty**" and "**mess**".

A difficulty is something complicated but we can still solve it with what we know. It is complex but we can fix it. We call it "**hard complexity**", and it is something like **physics**.

But a mess is "**soft complexity**". When you poke it, it gives way.

Adrian Underhill is a freelance consultant, helping schools to develop their organisational intelligence, and trainer offering programmes on facilitation, leadership and learning from experience. He is a past president of IATEFL. His interests include applications of complexity thinking to leadership and teaching and the use of action inquiry and reflective practices in professional learning. He is working on forms of post-heroic leadership and on the role of skilful improvisation in teaching. He is series editor of Macmillan Books for Teachers, and author of *Sound Foundations: Learning and Teaching Pronunciation*. He has just brought out an I-phone/android app: *SOUNDS: The Pronunciation AppOn*

<b>F</b>		
<b>T</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Method</b>
<b>L</b>	<b>Topic</b>	

So teachers have this double focus. Their interactions are relatively transactional as opposed to transformational. The teacher is much better than the lecturer to see the **outer moves**, what is happening in the classroom. Particularly in language classes, there are a lot of outer moves: teacher and students speak; they get things right and wrong, they do things. In fact, a lot of the language lessons are around performance. The teacher can see what is going on. But he does not see **inner moves**. Methods tend to look at the outer moves, not the inner ones.

My horizontal development as a teacher made me collect instances of “**what works**”, as I searched all around.

My vertical evolution made me gradually aware that all my methodology did not quite access the psychology atmosphere of the class. There was suffering beyond my reach. I do a lesson that goes very well. I do it again and it does not work. I am full of “**it works**”. I began to get interested in lessons that worked and began to realise that *it* never works. It is *we* that works. The *I*, the *you*, the *us*.

The “*it*” might look like it works because I am not looking to what is going on, the psychological atmosphere, the little intangibles. I learned about relationships and relaxing and spontaneity and letting go of distress, which is not always possible but is highly desirable.

I began to realise that the way I am has as much impact as what I do. I was beginning to move from teacher to facilitator.

The facilitator needs to add his capacity for rapport to the previous ones. He needs all three.

<b>F</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>Relationship</b>
<b>T</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Method</b>	
<b>L</b>	<b>Topic</b>		

I am becoming gradually aware of how learners perceive me, notice my intentions even when I am not aware of them. For example, I think that I hide my impatience, or my dislike of a certain student, but it is visible. You cannot act patience. It is even more obvious.

Part of the facilitator agenda is:

*How can I be a learning companion?*

*What can I be learning?*

I am learning **them**; I am seeing their learning. I am gradually beginning to see the inner moves and not just the manifestations of the inner moves in class.

Methodology is full of outer moves but rarely gets to the inner moves.

There is a wonderful film by Paul Newman, *The Hustler*, in which he plays an old pool player who is instructing a younger guy. Referring to his capacity to play in big competitions he says:

*I'm a student of human moves.*

I thought that was exactly what a teacher should be. The facilitator gradually becomes sensitive to what is going on inside and between people. My learning as a facilitator is about your learning as students. It is not learned-centered. It is **learning-centered**. One needs eyes that see learning rather than learners.

In the 80's and 90's, humanistic approaches were embraced and rubbished equally and misunderstood by both the embracers and the rubbishers. But there was something exotic and attractive about what these facilitators were getting up to, especially extraordinary approaches like **Suggestopedia**, which did not work with other teachers because it is not the technique but rather the attitude that counts.

A new technique with an old attitude is nothing new. On the other hand, someone who calls himself a lecturer might have wonderful qualities as a facilitator, while somebody who calls himself a facilitator might be an absolute pain. All can be done well and badly, inappropriately or appropriately.

My intention with this map was to put together the conventional and the unexplored.

To the three qualities mentioned above, Rogers added a fourth: **PERSONAL PRESENCE**. He was a behaviourist and made thousands of videos to confirm his view. He was submitting human conduct to scientific verification. What it means, I think, is to be present, to be here and now, not scattered, because students notice when you are not there and so they can have so much fun if they want to. It means knowing how to be present in stressful circumstances; how to be gathered in one place, beginning to listen and pay attention; how to listen with open ears.

When you listen attentively to a person, something happens. For a moment or two there is a touch of real communication, real contact. The moment eventually gets lost, but that is

To give an example, when asked these questions, I think of Mr. Jones, my physics teacher when I was 15 or 16 years old. One of the many amazing things about him is that he could not remember any of the things that we needed to learn. He would set up the problem and ask for the formula, because he could not remember it (or pretended not to remember it), and through a few well-guided questions he made us work out the formula.

I came to the obvious conclusion that if you understand, you do not need to remember anything. He gave us immense confidence. Another characteristic of his classes was the humour, mostly focused about the subject at hand. There is still something of Mr. Jones in me because I do not remember what I have to do and tend to make it up as I go along.

If we were to write down your ideas we would come to the conclusion that there is a full range of qualities, some of which contradict one another.

Carl Rogers, responsible for a lot of what was happening in California in the 60s, a father of the humanistic approach, said in a nutshell that:

*When you are in education, if you really want to facilitate learning there are three important human qualities one needs which supersede any methodology. The three core qualities*

- *Unconditional positive regard for the students*
- *Empathy*
- *Authenticity*

**Unconditional positive regard** means positive respect without conditions. It means having a regard, as positive as we can make it, and that, as far as possible, does not depend on the students doing what I want them to do. As teachers we are heavily engaged in the culture of being judgemental. Positive regard is a goal to work to during your life. What it is basically saying is: *You are OK*. That will foster self esteem, one of the primary moving forces in education.

**Empathy** means somehow putting myself in your shoes and seeing what the world looks like from your perspective. I am human and I might not be able to do it 100%, but I can try. I can ask questions to see what it is like from your point of view.

**Authenticity** is what Rogers also calls “*unattractive concreteness*” and “*congruence*”. Do not pretend, defend, or play games. Be yourself first and a teacher second. Learn alongside the learners and be on the same side of the fence as they are. The teacher is learning to be a teacher while the students are learning the topic. “*Genuine*” is another word for it.

Foremost within these qualities is the **capacity to listen well** and without judging. Acceptance, letting the other person be where they are. It does not matter whether I like you or not or

whether I agree or disagree with them, telling them: “you’d be better if you were different” or “you’d be better if you were like me”.

As I read Stevick’s book, I began to consider the important dimensions in learning: **Topic**, which means knowledge of the subject matter (English, maths...); **method**; and “?”.

Teacher training has been very efficient and proficient in making us to learn the topic, if not fully, at least sufficiently. We were also introduced to various methods, but a third dimension was missing.

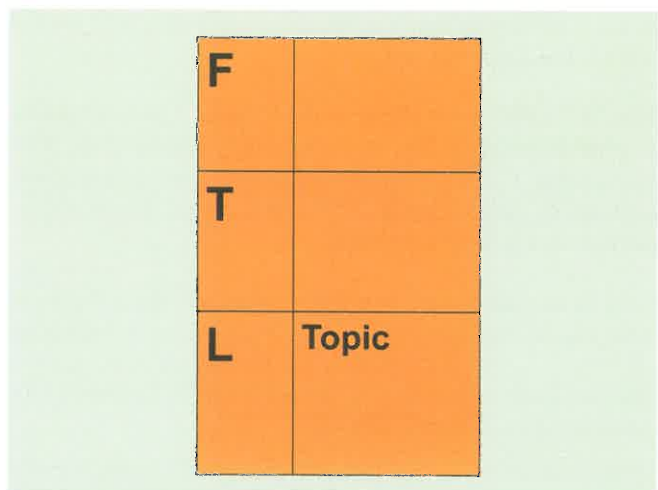
One could find resonances of this third question on observation forms where, beside the boxes on subject knowledge and methodology, there might be little ones on “**rapport**”, but none of the courses available included that dimension.

I wanted to put that dimension on the map. So I made a map to help us think about teacher development:

<b>FACILITATOR</b>
<b>TEACHER</b>
<b>LECTURER</b>

This map might not be the truth, but it has helped me to think, and it might guide you when analysing your own situation.

Lecturers are licensed to teach (like James Bond to kill) when they have the topic under their belt. The qualification is possibly a topic qualification.



The lecturer thinks that if the method fails, it is not entirely his fault. Learning is checked through the correction of assignments. His horizontal development is to know more about the subject, more specialisation, more research.

I started by being a lecturer. My vertical learning made me dissatisfied with looking only at what to teach, and I began looking at how to teach. That was not given to me at first. It was not part of the culture. I began to look at the learning process itself, and discovered and explored the line of “methodology”: techniques and classroom activities, and so I became a teacher.



# Making Pronunciation Physical, Visible, Audible: A Multi-experience Approach

By Adrian Underhill

*One of my aims in teaching pronunciation is to get pronunciation work “out of the head and into the body”, to make pronunciation a physical as well as a cognitive activity. First, I help learners to stop thinking about pronunciation in the abstract by focussing them on the muscles that produce sound, rhythm and articulation. I use a number of simple activities that do this. Then, I engage their minds in sensing physically what their muscles are doing, in order for them to become aware of the total interaction between muscle movement, sound production and aural perception. There is a parallel between this kind of pronunciation work and coaching in sport, athletics or dance.*

Pronunciation (and articulation generally) can be said to represent the physical aspect of language because it is the muscular amplification of a minute impulse in the brain into a spoken utterance that vibrates the air. It is a sophisticated and subtle physical activity. Looking at it this way suggests different ways of studying it. It seems to me that the traditional or mainstream way of approaching pronunciation teaching and learning easily becomes cerebral and disconnected from the body, resulting in approaches that are either too academic (theoretical rather than

experiential) or too much based on habit formation (leading to unaware repetition of ‘correctness’ at the expense of insight, curiosity, and awareness).

## **There are a number of advantages to a physical approach**

1. Activities that encourage conscious contact with articulatory muscles give learners a way of intervening in their own pronunciation. They find there are quite systematic things they can do to change the way they say a sound or stress a syllable once they start to become aware of how to contact the muscles that make the difference. Exploring muscles in this way is not new, since everyone did this as a baby when learning their first language.

2. Muscles move, and movement can be visible. Deaf people in every language can lip-read by watching the sequence of muscular movements when their friends speak. In fact the muscular movements of pronunciation cannot be heard at all, it is only their effect on the vibrating air stream that can be heard. This means that there is a great deal of articulation information that is visually available only. Imagine trying to learn T'ai Ch'i or gymnastics or football only by listening to the movement of the muscles of

the demonstrator! You have to see it with your eyes to inform your muscles. As soon as we realise this, we can introduce the visible aspect to pronunciation work.

3. The movement of muscles yields an internal sensation, or feeling of movement, through the nerves in the tissue connected with the movement. Registering this internal sensation provides another “fix” on what is happening, which can feed the awareness of the learner.

So, in addition to hearing sounds with the ear, we can see movements with the eye and also feel movements through the internal sensation of muscles. And by adding this focus on the muscles, we provide the learner with a more concrete point of intervention and a richer web of information feeding back into the learner's awareness, helping to promote conscious choices. And we begin to make better use of muscular memory.

Here are some examples of these ideas in practice:

### **Activity 1. Example of working with what is visible**

I can give models of individual phonemes (and later of words and short phrases) by miming them rather than by saying them. When I mime, I make the muscular movements

associated with the sound, but without actually voicing the sound. Thus, the students have to use their eyes, and their eyes inform their ‘inner ears’, as they try to create an internal impression of the sound they have ‘seen’. They also have to use their muscles, as I invite them to say the sound they have seen and ‘heard’. They say their approximation of the sound aloud, and I invite them to listen to the differences between each person's attempt, in which I take a real interest myself. Then, I indicate those student responses which were nearer to my (albeit silent) model, and the students listen to those in particular. Miming is a personal preference of mine and I encourage others to try it, but it does not necessarily suit the teaching style of all teachers. So, here is another way, using an audible model.

### **Activity 2. Working with an audible model**

This gains in precision from the supporting work with the visual, the tactile and the muscular that I have just been describing. When I give a spoken model (whether of a sound, a word, or a phrase), I try to go against two of the legacies of behaviourism. First, I try to say the model only once, rather than repeating it several times, and second, I leave two or three seconds of silence for the students to consciously process the

better than having no moment of communication at all.

Teachers can learn all this, but it cannot be imposed upon them.

I have a **learning mantra** for life and for teaching:

**See what's going on:** Rhythms, moves, patterns. See the impact you are making; see not only the simple interaction, but the system. Use your intuition, which is good for systems. Your head is not much good, but your feelings and intuitions are for grasping large pictures.

**Do something different.** Why? Because if you do something you do not usually do, you learn something about the system. The system speaks back. When you do what you usually do, nothing speaks back. Doing something different is part of seeing; it is extra seeing.

**Don't do what you usually do.**

**Do what you usually do but observe it differently.**

**Learn from it.** Take something back into your teaching.

The syllabus of the facilitator includes:

## Developing facilitator skills

Listening  
Speaking  
Use of power  
Attention to group processes

**Listening:** the queen of skills of any improviser. My hobby is jazz. In jazz you improvise or try to. We speak about *hot licks*, a sequence that sounded good once and is habitually repeated. This becomes a habitual response. You keep doing it, but it is not a real response to what is happening now. So the curse of the improviser is the hot lick. A *riff* is your own response. That is ok.

Teaching is about improvisation. You have a lesson plan, but actually you leave the plan very quickly and do something that corresponds with the moment.

You listen with attention, not judgment. How do you gaze? Not penetratingly, but not in a glazy way, either, which means you are elsewhere. One temptation is to spend my listening time thinking of a clever answer, waiting for the person to finish so I can have space for my clever answer. That is not proper listening.

**Speaking:** Am I aware of the unintended messages I give when I speak? Can I become aware of my first voice and my second voice? That is, the voice that has words and the voice that has look, intonation, body language, and gesture. Do my two voices say the same thing? When they do, that is **presence**. Otherwise I am a bit of a ninny, I am scattered. When the voices say different things, one believes the second voice. The mistake that we make is imagining that I can get away with the first voice and fool people. Can I become aware of my second voice with its contradictions? I am human. Gently one has to become aware of the beautiful humanness.

**Use of power:** We talk about student-centered learning. Observing classes, you perceive many examples of teacher power from teachers who genuinely think they are distributing power. All the micro-decisions are carried out by the teacher: what to ask; who to ask; whether to correct; how long to spend on each activity; in short, thousands of decisions. Which of these decisions could be delegated to empower my learners? We could ask:

*Guys, which exercise should we do now?*

*Have we done enough of this now?*

*Shall we leave it now?*

*Who wants to correct?*

**Attention to group processes:** In every group, there are two groups: the task group and the process group, which is kind of invisible. The facilitator develops eyes for the process group, to see what is going on between people.

**Remember:**

**Learning brings us closer to ourselves**

**We are learning beings**

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<http://www.apac.es>

the target language, and the layout presents the symbols in a significant visual/spatial relationship to each other. Built into this design are references and indications as to how and where each sound is produced and many other clues that help learners to recognise, correct and recall sounds. Each symbol has its own box, which can be seen as containing all the allophones of that sound. Sounds are selected for attention by simply touching them with a pointer. Many people have designed such charts, and you can use any of them. I will just say that the Sound Foundations chart has information about manner and place of articulation built into it, as well as clarity of visual presentation, which may help the learning process.

**The aim of using the chart is:**

1. To provide learners with a map of the sound system of the target language. Such a sound map can be used to identify sounds that the student has already explored or knows well, and it can be used to identify sounds that the student has not yet explored or is uncertain about.
2. To see all the sounds of the target language in one visual sweep. This reinforces the message that for practical purposes the number of different sounds is limited. ("The whole of the spoken language is here on this chart!")

3. To provide a permanent reference. The chart is always visible at the front of the classroom and can be referred to at any time in any lesson. Not only can the chart be used for pronunciation work such as changing and correcting sounds, syllable stress, linking in connected speech, comparing sound and spelling (spelling problems are affected when the pronunciation is not right in the first place), but it also has more general classroom applications such as correcting word endings and syntactical features, introducing new vocabulary, providing prompts silently by pointing instead of by speaking, and so on.

4. To learn sounds not symbols. The aim of this approach is to enable learners to experience sounds and sound sequences in a physical and vivid way, and to use the symbols as memory hooks that can trigger that auditory and physical experience. Once you have the sound, it is very easy to link it to the symbol, and then to 'acquire' the symbol itself, and then be free to use dictionaries to discover and check pronunciations and stress patterns.

5. I suggest that phonemic symbols do not represent absolute sound qualities of any sound, but the temporary sound that teacher or course materials attribute to it, including the accents of different native and non-

native speakers. The chart shows each phoneme in a box, and you can imagine that the box contains all the variations (or allophones) of that sound that are for the moment acceptable.

**Three levels of pronunciation**

The *first level* involves work with individual sounds. At the *second level* we string the sounds together into words, adding the distinctive energy profile called word stress. At the *third level* we string words into connected speech, adding the energy distribution of the simplifications and reductions of connected speech, the prominent stresses chosen by speakers to convey their meaning, and the intonation that is carried on top of this. All three levels are available at any time in the classroom according to the nature of the work that needs to be done. In this way the chart can be used as a kind of screen onto which we can project any piece of class work, focussing on its pronunciation content, in the very moment that a question or problem arises. The chart thus replaces the usual kinds of pronunciation materials in favour of the live and spontaneous context in which the problem has arisen, made accessible by the use of the chart.

Behind the teacher's set of technical facilities lies the teacher's set of psychological attitudes

that can help or hinder the work in hand. Here are some of the questions that I like to keep asking myself while I am working with pronunciation:

- Can I respond to classroom events in a spontaneous rather than a routine way?
- Can I work with the student from where she is, so that her mistake becomes our starting point?
- Can I be intrigued and curious about what may happen, and then delighted by what does happen - whatever it is?
- Can I be "a student of learning" even while I am teaching?
- Can I be on the same side of the learning fence as the learners themselves, so that while they are learning the topic I am learning about their learning?

When the class is working with such vivid and engaging activities as those I have described, and when the teacher is conducting those activities in an inquiring manner and with the attitudes implied in the last paragraph, my experience is that learning becomes a joyful expression of each person's natural capacity to learn, and their natural capacity to be delighted by the experience of learning! If this approach interests you, visit my blog: [adrianpronchart.wordpress.com](http://adrianpronchart.wordpress.com)



sound they have heard, by listening to it with their inner ear. Here is an example:

I give the model, let's say it's the vowel phoneme /e/. I say it once, clearly, making sure they see my mouth movement as well as hear the sound. I gesture that they be silent for a moment, and that they try to keep hearing the sound, in my voice, internally in their inner ear. Then I ask them to say the sound aloud, as similar to mine as they can. Again I ask them to listen to each other and to notice the differences. Then if they need to hear the sound again I say it, once only. Giving a model only once carries a more positive message than repeating it several times, and it also makes the students more alert, which seems to make them more engaged. My aim is to see what they can do with one model, then, if they need another, I will give it to them.

This activity becomes quite natural to them, since I often ask them to hold sounds and sentences in their heads and to "replay" them in their inner ear. This natural but under-used human capacity develops very quickly and becomes a powerful ally, not only in pronunciation learning, but in many aspects of listening, speaking, grammar and vocabulary practice.

**Activity 3. Example of working with what is tactile**

When working with monophthong vowels, I take such front and back vowels as the learners can already manage, and help them to do a series of simple but powerful awareness-raising activities. First I ask them to glide between /i:/ and /u:/ like this /i: i: i: i: ..... u: u: u: u: ..... i: i: i: i: ..... u: u: u: u:/. When this is more or less established, I ask them to put the tip of the thumb

and the tip of the forefinger on the other corner. And again they make this glide back and forth. This gives them tactile feedback on the movement of the lips between the spread and the rounded position. Then I ask them to touch the forefinger to the front of the lips, and again make the glide. This time they get the sensation of the lips moving back (spread) and forward (rounded). Then, still with the same pair of sounds, I ask them to touch the tip of the tongue (with finger or pen) while in the /i:/ position and then to slide to the /u:/ position but without losing contact with the tongue. In addition to the laughter this causes, this gives them the sensation of the tongue moving forward and backwards in the mouth.

Later I establish a pair of high-low sounds such as /i:/ and /a/ and in the same way help them to slide between the two. This time I ask

them to place the forefinger on the bridge of the nose and the thumb on the point of the chin. As they slide between these sounds they get tactile confirmation that the jaw opens and closes and that this movement is sufficient to produce a range of perceptibly different sounds.

From these four exercises they begin to discover for themselves that movement of tongue, lips and jaw enables them to make a whole range of perceptibly different sounds. In fact, these simple awarenesses, or internal connections, form the basis of the toolkit that will enable them to make and gradually learn all the sounds of the new language, as well as the characteristic simplifications, reductions and energy distributions of connected speech.

**Using a phonemic chart**

The phonemic chart I use shows all the phonemes of

ɪ	I	ʊ	u:	Iə	eɪ	ɪ	ɔ
e	ə	ɜ:	ɔ:	ʊə	ɔɪ	əʊ	ʊ
æ	ʌ	ɑ:	ɒ	eə	aɪ	aʊ	ʊ
p	b	t	d	tʃ	dʒ	k	g
f	v	θ	ð	s	z	ʃ	ʒ
m	n	ŋ	h	l	r	w	j

# Boosting Brain Power:

## How to fully activate our students' brains in the EFL classroom

By Liam Fitzpatrick

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*How the brain really works still remains a mystery. To create a classroom environment that supports what the brain is good at doing, we need to take certain factors into consideration. When we begin to understand the marvellous workings of the mind, we can organize our classrooms in a way that is conducive to boosting brain power.*

*The following article is a summary of how eight of John Medina's twelve "Brain Rules" (<http://www.brainrules.net>) can be applied in the EFL classroom at all levels and in all contexts (from pre-primary school to adult learners, and in large and small groups of students). In demonstrating the benefits of fostering a "brain boosting" classroom environment, some questions for reflection will be posed and some possible suggestions for task and material types will be proposed.*

---

### 1. Exercise improves cognition

In order to place this Brain Rule into perspective, Medina takes us on a chronological journey from our early evolutionary history as a species to one of the nasty side-effects of modern civilization: our sedentary lifestyle. Based on research results, he argues that we as human beings and our brains are not made for sitting behind desks for hours on end, day after day, and that physical activity is cognitive candy. This is basically due to the fact that movement (even of the slightest in nature) provides oxygen to the brain.

is enhanced over a short period of time. Once that element is taken out of the classroom / learning setting, the cognitive gain plummets.

What types of cognitive performance are we referring to and how does this apply to the EFL classroom? Of the types that Medina mentions, three of them are crucial to language learning and acquisition: long-term memory; attention; and fluid intelligence, which is defined as the ability to reason quickly and abstractly, from previously learned knowledge (taking us into our zone of proximal development).

someone-who-.... tasks, among others. All of them involve movement, thereby guaranteeing the supply of oxygen to our students' brains. Medina goes as far to suggest that we should put treadmills into classrooms!

### 2. Every brain is wired differently

Medina cites cases involving a behavioural theorist, a neurosurgeon and an elite sportsman to demonstrate that every brain is wired differently (it's what makes each and every one

**We as human beings and our brains are not made for sitting behind desks for hours on end, day after day, and physical activity is cognitive candy.**

Controlled experiments with groups of students that have elements of movement/physical activity introduced into their classroom / learning settings have shown that cognitive performance

What task types does this involve? We already have many of them at our disposal in the EFL classroom: TPR activities, role-plays, dialogues, talk-with-your-friend activities, and find-

of us unique) and that brains develop at different rates in different people. The behavioural theorist is Howard Gardner, whose breakthrough Multiple Intelligences theory talks about

Liam Fitzpatrick has 15 years experience in the field of teaching English as a Foreign Language. Originally from Ireland, he graduated with a BA in Social Sciences with La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia. Based in Spain since 1994, he has also completed post-graduate studies in TESOL with Aston University, UK. Liam works as an ELT consultant and teacher trainer for Express Publishing.



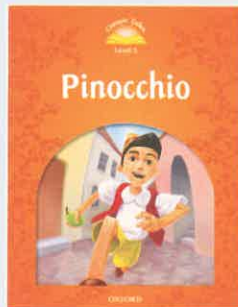
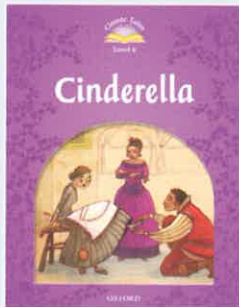
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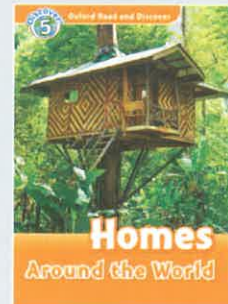
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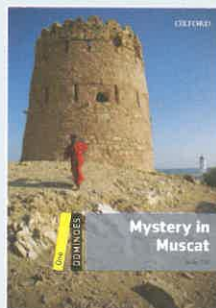
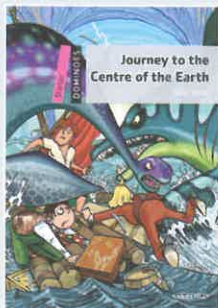
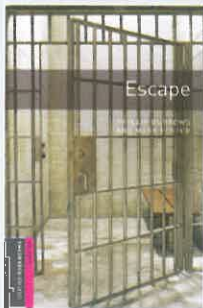


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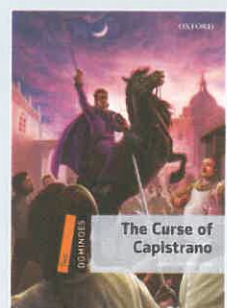
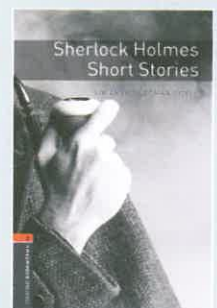
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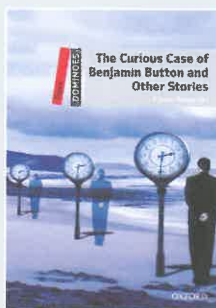
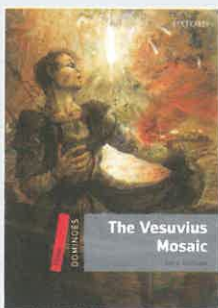
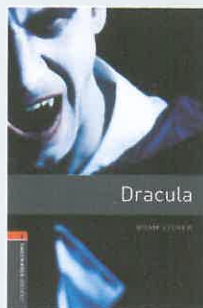
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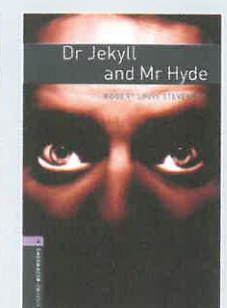
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guarantee that we are proving more and richer stimulants for our students in the learning process.

## 6. Vision trumps all other senses

“Words are only postage stamps delivering the object for you to unwrap,” said George Bernard Shaw. This rule in particular poses a dilemma and a paradox for us as language teachers: text is perhaps the most inefficient means of transferring information. Brain research in the area has shown that when we read, we are actually trying to visualize what the text is telling us. Vision is by far our most dominant sense (for those of us fortunate enough to have this sense operating at full capacity), and pictures, images and imagery grab our attention and transfer information.

Medina defines this as the PSE – the Pictorial Superiority Effect. It means that we pay attention to colour, size, orientation, and, in particular, objects in motion. There is more: animation is the most effective delivery mechanism of information. However, for educational purposes (and language learning in particular), the animation itself does not need to be complex. Simple, two-dimensional animation / illustrations are sufficient to capture our students’

attention and transfer concepts / information. Anything more complex will only distract the learners’ attention from what it is we are trying to teach them or expose them to, which in our case is English as a foreign language.

**The games, quizzes, and songs shouldn’t just be “fun for the sake of having fun” but rather integrated with the target language and learning objectives.**

## 7. Stress changes the way we learn

Is there a straightforward relationship between learning and stress? Based on the findings of some of the most famous case studies from the field of psychology, Medina says we can easily answer this question in the affirmative. Stressed (and distracted) brains do not learn in the same way as relaxed (and engaged) brains. We all know that the stress levels in a classroom come from a wide variety of sources (factors that enter it from home environments, school / work environments, etc.) and can influence classroom environments, relationships and dynamics. The need here is to lower as much as possible

the affective filters which may inhibit effective learning.

Given that we as teachers cannot control all these factors, what can we do in the EFL classroom to ensure that our students are engaging in the

learning process as much as possible without unnecessary stress? As in the first brain rule, many of the task types and materials are already at our disposal for use

in the EFL classroom, such as games, quizzes, and songs. However, the games, quizzes, and songs shouldn’t just be “fun for the sake of having fun” but rather integrated with the target language and learning objectives of the particular lesson / unit / module we are engaging the students in.

In closing, here’s a quote by William H. Payne from the University of Chicago: “Psychology, in fact, stands in the same relation to teaching that anatomy does to medicine”. Medina says he would replace the term “psychology” with “brain science”.

...



## Forests

**Calixto Bieito endinsa Josep Maria Pou en els “boscós” de Shakespeare**

seven to nine categories of multiple intelligence. George Ojemann is the neurosurgeon, and Medina discusses his expertise in a brain surgery technique called Electrical Simulation Mapping to state that the number of possible intelligence categories is perhaps more than 7 million. And the elite sportsman is Michael Jordan, who failed in his attempt to make the conversion from basketball to baseball in the 1990s. Medina shows that no two brains are wired the same, neither in terms of structure nor function. In fact, we all store and retrieve language in different areas of our brains (from nouns to verbs to other aspects of language).

**We need to provide students with variety in our input, through materials and activities that provide multiple pathways to acquiring knowledge of and about language.**

What can we do in the EFL classroom so that this Brain Rule is taken into consideration? Firstly, we need to provide students with variety in our input, through materials and activities that provide multiple pathways to acquiring knowledge of and about language. Interactive whiteboard (IWB) material allows us as teachers to present content and carry out tasks in a number of different ways (many of which are multisensorial). What about outside the classroom? If our students' brains develop at different rates, and contact time with them in the classroom is limited (even more so in large groups), are we providing them with enough opportunities and the right resources to acquire the target language and reach the learning objectives of their particular course?

### **3. People don't pay attention to boring things**

Can I have your attention please? Medina asks: Does it matter to learning if we pay attention? Apart from "you bet it does," he states that the more attention the brain pays to a given stimulus, the more elaborately it will be encoded and retrieved. Attention is inextricably linked to three key cognitive (language-learning) areas:

memory, interest and awareness. Medina also discusses the importance of emotions in grabbing our attention and the limitations of our concentration spans when it comes to maintaining it.

In the EFL classroom, we need materials / lesson structures that trigger our students' curiosity (as well as their critical thinking in some levels) and, at the same time, materials / lesson structures that allow for flexibility and variety in terms of the duration of the tasks and the task types we use to grab and maintain their attention.

### **4. Memories are volatile and susceptible to corruption**

This is actually a combination of two of Medina's Brian Rules related to how our memories work.

They are:

Repeat to remember! (short-term memory)

Remember to repeat! (long-term memory)

**The pathways of neural connections will be lost if we as teachers don't walk our students along them again and again.**

The freakish ability of people such as Kim Peek ("Rain Man") to read and memorize ridiculously huge amounts of information from library shelves (two pages at a time) has helped brain scientists to define the four stages of memory: encoding (learning); storage; retrieval; and forgetting. Medina states that researchers are still only beginning to really understand the first one, encoding (learning). What they have been able to ascertain is

that the more elaborately we encode information at the moment of learning (or perhaps input), the stronger the memory. In terms of language learning, there is a need to provide our students with multiple exposures ("repeat to remember") in a variety of formats at the point of learning. Pronunciation drills and IWB material are the first language activity and material types that come to mind.

Medina also states that the "good news" is that memory is not altogether fixed at the point of learning, but rather "...repetition, doled out in specifically timed intervals, is the fixative". In other words, remember to repeat! The pathways of neural connections will be lost if we as teachers don't walk our students along them again and again.

Medina concludes this section on memory by suggesting that schools of the future should have timetables that adhere to these two rules in order to create brain-boosting classroom environments. How? By having 25-minute modules (classes), cyclically repeated, segmented and interleaved throughout the day, combined with periods of "study holidays" (no new input).

### **5. Sensory integration**

Richard Mayer (cognitive psychologist) and his controlled experiments on different groups of students in multisensory environments (e.g. sight and hearing) as opposed to groups in unisensory environments (e.g. hearing only) provide Medina with the basis for stating that multisensory presentations are "the way to go". The experiments have shown that the students exposed to multisensory classes have more accurate recall. The implications of this for areas such as pronunciation, the use of grammar structures and vocabulary in the EFL classroom are enormous. Although this article advocates the use of IWB material (which can in fact be used in some cases without the need for an interactive whiteboard by simply projecting), there are other types of materials and / or activities that achieve sensory integration in the classroom. Integrating sight, hearing, touch and even smell and taste (realia) into our classroom / learning settings will

# A Community of Readers: Establishing an Extensive Reading Community of Practice

By Jill Simon Auerbach



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*The use of dynamic, reading-related communicative and cooperative tasks in the classroom contrasts with the solitary nature of reading by creating an environment in which students are engaged in sharing knowledge, developing expertise and solving problems. This article will describe the characteristics of an extensive reading community of practice in a Catalan high school that encourages skill development in all aspects of the foreign language with the aim of converting a group of individuals into a community of readers.*

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## **Introduction and Program Objectives**

The objective of this article is to describe the characteristics of an extensive reading program (ER) community of practice in a Catalan high school. The program, entitled A Community of Readers is based on many of the principals of extensive reading combined with cooperative and communicative activities that make the reading material come alive and convert the solitary experience of reading into one that is shared by all participants. The principal aims of this program are the following:

- to encourage skill development in all aspects of the foreign language (oral/ aural comprehension and production) by providing a varied and plentiful

exposure to the language which serves as the starting point for further individual and communicative expressive activities.



Image 1: A Community of Readers

Jill Simon Auerbach is an English teacher in a public high school in the province of Barcelona. For the past seven years, she has designed and run A Community of Readers for students of ESO and she has taught workshops on extensive reading in two editions of the Escola d'Estiu Rosa Sensat. She has a degree in biochemistry which she has used to teach CLIL science classes and is currently a Masters candidate in the Department of Teaching Language, Literature and Social Sciences at the University Autònoma de Barcelona where she is specializing in CLIL.



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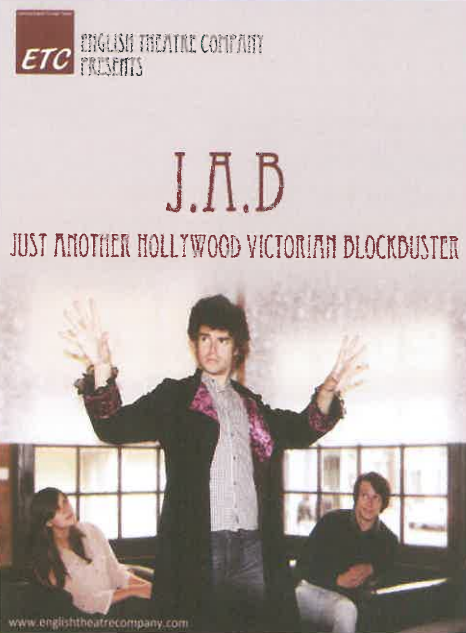
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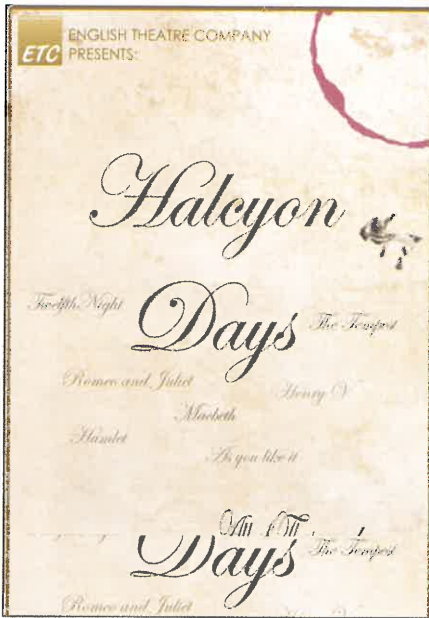
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The heterogeneity of student foreign language linguistic ability is well-known to teachers. As different editorials apply their own particular scales to the rating of their books, all of the books in our program are labeled with a color-coded sticker indicating the equivalent of the school grade level of the book. At first, these levels are determined using the information provided by the publishers, such as CEFR levels, editorial levels, lexis, word count or grammatical structures and length. However, student opinions may alter this initial scheme, as the reading program is tailored to student needs and their subjective opinions carry more weight than any objective criteria.

The books are assorted into boxes according to their level and are brought into the classroom on a portable cart. Many of the titles offer audio material which can be of great assistance in marking the reading rate of students, especially at lower levels.



Image 3: A portable library

Students must feel that they take an active role in the community of practitioners. One of the means of achieving this is to distribute the roles involved in the program logistics and administration to different students, thereby developing student autonomy (Bell, 1998). The logistics of A Community of Readers involve transporting two carts of books to and from the classroom, assuring that the books are displayed correctly at the end of each reading exchange session, marking the check-out and check-in of books during each exchange session, organizing the CD collection, taking periodic inventories of the books,

and maintaining the books in good condition.

### *Reading Level, Individual Choice, and Quantity of Reading*

Although there are many ways to test students in order to determine the level on which they should begin reading, the most efficient method is often that of 'informed trial and error'. All except the most advanced students usually begin reading one level below their assigned grade due to the fact that they must read comfortably and independently.

The quantity of material that students read is an essential part of any ER program. It is important, however, to set reasonable reading target goals that may be met without undue stress by the majority of students, especially if the reading is accompanied by written activities. In A Community of Readers, the amount of reading is linked to a student's foreign language skills. This flexibility in quantity is due to the total reading time employed by students according to the level on which they are reading. Any student, however, may read beyond the established minimum.

At first, students tend to plow through a book they consider boring or unoriginal, as their experience with reading foreign language books has always been in a relationship of obligation. As the program continues, students learn that they are expected to enjoy what they read and they are encouraged to exchange one book for another if they are struggling to get through it.

Reading takes place both in the class and at home. For the last three years, our school has implemented a reading program in which half of one class period each week is dedicated to pleasure reading. Although students are not obliged to read their English readers at this time, they may do so if they choose. The teacher acts as a role model during this time by reading her

own book for pleasure, giving reading the prestige and respect it is due and making the students feel that what they are doing is worthwhile and important.

### *Linking Reading to Writing*

In our book program, students are expected to complete a book report



Image 4: Collaboratively constructing a narrative

on the book that they have chosen. If, however, they read beyond the minimum, no extra book report is required. Specific book reports exist for fiction, non-fiction, stories, surveys and magazines.

One can argue that completing book reports is not a pleasurable activity and that making reading its own reward is not achieved if students are forced to write reports. However, there are compelling reasons to include book reports in an extensive reading program, and, as shall be shown, students seem to enjoy their reading despite its obligatory nature.

In the first place, students need practice in writing and 'thinking' in English. One of the aims of A Community of Readers is to improve all aspects of students' language performance. The fact that students learn to think and write quickly in English is a skill that they will need to master in future years. Normally, student book reports are not scrutinized for perfect grammatical, syntactical and lexical expression. Students are encouraged to lose their fear of expressing themselves in English, and, therefore, to think in English.

Secondly, the writing component of the program is by no means limited to doing book reports. Writing activities



- to develop student autonomy by involving students in the administration and maintenance of the program and by allowing students to decide for themselves what, where and when to read.
- to develop the competence of 'learning to learn' as students become aware of the benefits of extensive reading in improving their language skills.
- to encourage students to enjoy reading in any language and, specifically, to enjoy this experience in a foreign language.
- to raise the cultural awareness of the students by providing reading material on a broad range of social, cultural, political and ecological topics as well as a sampling of some of the most important literary works in the English language.
- to encourage students to form a community of practice in which they share the common aim of improving their English ability through reading and the activities associated with this reading. The formation of this community involves students
  - sharing knowledge with another about the reading material that they have read.
  - solving problems together related to the aims of the program whether they be of comprehension, expression, organization, motivation, or developing autonomy.
  - developing expertise as readers and practitioners of English.

In order to understand the characteristics of this program, first we will describe the general characteristics of a community of practice and an extensive reading program.

### *A Community of Practice*

The term community of practice was first coined by Jeane Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991). According to Etienne Wenger (2007), a community of practice is "formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning. (They) share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly." A community of practice is defined by three characteristics. First, all members share a common domain

of interest. Second, members interact and assist each other in their perusal of this interest. This necessarily implies that members establish relationships in which one member is learning from another. Lastly, a community of practice must actively engage in shared, interactive activities that build up a common repertoire of resources and experiences. Members may show interest in the same domain, but it is in the moment that members interact and pool their experiences and resources that a community of practice begins to take shape (ibid). To conclude, a community of practice is formed by a group of practitioners who share knowledge, develop expertise and solve problems.

### *Extensive Reading Programs*

In extensive reading (ER) programs, students independently read large quantities of self-selected, level-appropriate material. The principle aims of an extensive reading program are to develop good reading habits, to build up lexical and structural knowledge, and to encourage reading pleasure (Day and Bamford, 1998). Research into the benefits of extensive reading over the last three decades has shown the important role that extensive reading plays in developing a broad range of foreign language skills including, but by no means limited to, reading itself. (Bell, 2001; Day & Bamford, 1998; Day, Omura & Hiramatsu, 1991; Krashen, 1989, 1993a, 1993b).

One way to understand extensive reading is to contrast it with another form of reading that is more common in school classrooms- that of intensive reading (IR). In an IR program students are expected to develop reading skills and construct detailed meaning from texts by closely inspecting all aspects of the text in order to enhance their lexical and grammatical knowledge. In an ER program, on the other hand, students are expected to obtain a global understanding of the text while enjoying the reading experience.

### *A Description of A Community of Readers*

The fact that extensive reading is individual would seem, then,

to contradict the formation of a community of practice of readers. However, by including a variety of communicative and cooperative activities in the program, the solitary nature of reading becomes a shared experience. Jacobs and Gallo (2002) argue in favor of adding a group element to ER programs in which students interact with peers about their reading. Interaction creates an environment of enthusiasm about reading, allows students to recommend books to one another, allows more proficient students to help others and provides an audience for students to share their reading experiences. These authors also describe the advantages of using cooperative activities in an extensive reading program. Cooperative learning principles, as described by Kagan (1994) are summarized in the acronym PIES which stands for positive interdependence, individual accountability, equal participation, and simultaneous interaction.

### *Reading Material Catalogue and Organization*

The key to a successful reading program is precisely in the variety of books and other reading material that the program offers. At this moment, the Community of Readers Program has a catalogue of approximately a thousand books and over five-hundred different titles divided among nine different reading levels ranging from pre-first of ESO to native-level examples. The library holdings also include adapted and native children's magazines. The genres of the books are from a wide selection including biography, adventure, romance, history, comedy, and mystery, among many others.



Image 2: Reading Levels



students to share their enthusiasm with each other. The three characteristics of a community of practice- sharing knowledge, solving problems and developing expertise- are put into play each time that students work together.

All participants are experts of the book they have just read, potential problem solvers for their companions, and sharers of their reading and writing experiences. The formation of a community of practice of readers begins in the selection of new reading material in which the moment of exchange constitutes an informal communicative exchange among students. Students must be given sufficient time to express their opinions to one another as a first step in forming a community of readers.

The role of 'expert' in A Community of Readers shifts- while one student may have a more proficient level of English and may coach his or her partner in linguistic aspects, it is the student who has read the book who is the content expert. In this sense, a community of practice is built up in which sharing knowledge, solving problems and sharing expertise is not limited to a handful of advanced students, but is equally distributed throughout the class.

At first, communicative and collaborative activities may be of a more general nature- such as those related to orientation or reading experience. As the program continues, the possibilities for using students' current reading material as the starting



*Image 6: Collaboration during a Question Game Round Robin*

point for communicative activities grow. Activities may take advantage either of the fact that a number of students have read the same book, and, therefore, may work collaboratively, or, that most students have read different

books providing an opportunity for a true communicative exchange of ideas and information.

A wide variety of communicative and collaborative activities in extensive reading programs have been described by various authors (Bamford and Day, 2005; Bell, 1998; Jacobs and Gallo, 2007) including artwork, orientation activities, oral fluency activities, storytelling with toothpicks, three-step interviews, round-robins and radio plays.

Collaborative activities allow students to work together to achieve a common goal. These types of activities have been shown to promote student learning, to enhance student satisfaction of the learning process, to increase positive affect among students and to develop students' social skills. The basic principles of cooperative learning as defined by Kagan (1994) are summarized in the acronym PIES: positive interdependence, individual accountability, equal participation and simultaneous interaction.

A specific Question Game Round Robin designed for A Community of Readers is a collaborative game in which students work in groups of four. Each student takes on a specific role within the group: interviewer, reporter, interviewee and follow-up interviewer. In any given round, the interviewer



*Image 7: Enthusiasm*

chooses a question from a pile of cards that is directed to the interviewee. The interviewee answers the question about his book and this information is recorded by the reporter. The follow-up interviewer then asks a further question based on the response provided by the interviewee. The procedure is repeated with three different questions from three different piles of question cards which containing questions related to different aspects of the book, such as characters, setting, plot, context, message or opinion. When a complete

round of questions has been completed, the students change roles and the game continues.

### **Ten Tips for Forming an Extensive Reading Community of Practice**

1) Give students plenty of autonomy in the administration and maintenance of material and orient them to the aims of the program through dynamic activities.

2) Involve the families of students by informing them of the principle aims and economic responsibilities of the students in the care of the material. Keep families involved throughout the program by, for example, having students interview their relatives about their reading habits or the most influential book they have read in their lives.

3) Share the pleasure and peacefulness of reading in silence with your students.

4) Read, read and read some more! The more you are familiar with the material in the program, the better you can counsel your students and evaluate their work.

5) Let students know from the beginning that all of their written work will be available to them for an open-portfolio exam in order to encourage them to complete these tasks to the best of their ability.

6) Put your pen down when you correct student book reports! We're aiming for fluency and ease of expression, not grammatical or lexical perfection.

7) Worried about students getting around their reading? Use more communicative and collaborative activities. Besides the good time students have during these activities and the resulting boost to their motivation, students are less likely to let another student down than they are to let down the teacher.

8) Use IT programs to allow students to share their opinions and to give feedback to each other about their

may be designed as individual but also as collective tasks. In this way, a community of readers who share their reading experiences through their writing is developed. A small sample of activities includes writing letters from one character to another or to an authority asking for advice, changing the ending of a book, or inventing a narrative based on scrambled illustrations from a story and then comparing their narratives with that of other students and the original.

A third reason for incorporating writing into A Community of Readers program is the difficulty that many students find in summarizing information, either because they write about all the details, or because they miss the essential points. This important skill is practiced each time a book report is completed.

Fourth, as teachers we must evaluate our students in both summative and formative evaluations. Book reports are one means by which to determine if our students are complying with the minimum requirements laid out in the reading program.

Lastly, the book reports in A Community of Readers form the basis of an open-portfolio general book exam. Since students know that they will have access to their book reports during this exam, they are motivated to complete them to the best of their ability.

Despite the obligatory nature of the program, students express time and time again their enthusiasm when they discover a book that has kindled their imagination or their emotions. The following quotes from tenth grade student book reports seem to point in this direction:

**The Secret Garden.** Macmillan Readers:

“I like books that have mystery and adventure. It also speaks of the power of the friendship and how could you live when you are alone. It’s a fantastic book!”

**Washington Square.** Burlington Books:

“I think that this book is awesome and very interesting, because I simply love the impossible loves and the way they fight for their relation until the very end.”

**Just Good Friends.** Cambridge University Press:

“This book I liked so much because I’ve read in a day because the theme of the book is very entertaining and when you started to read it, you can’t stop”.

**Love Story:** Oxford Bookworms:

“My opinion of this book is that this is the most beautiful story I know. This book don’t talk about the typical love story. The book said that if you really love someone, fight for him and if things go wrong, you must be strong and never give up.”

**Braveheart:** Penguin Readers:

“I like so much this book because I like the idea about fight for the freedom. You can’t stop reading because always there were a war and you want to know the end”.

**Great Crimes.** Oxford:

“I think this book is so interesting because this crimes are so famous in the history and know all the things that involves this crimes are so good. You can know all of the most intelligent and evil brains of the history.”

**The Secret Garden.** Macmillan Readers:

“I really liked this book because the ambient is so peaceful and beautiful and calm, and the author invites you to want to enter in the garden.”

**The Teacher Is a Counselor, Role Model, Participant and Activity Coordinator**

Students must be made to understand that the benefits which they may gain from A Community of Readers are directly related to their effort in the program. The teacher needs to act as

a counselor encouraging students to be honest, to make an effort, and to develop autonomy and responsibility. These are aims that go far beyond the learning of a foreign language and are intricate components of the program

Furthermore, teachers must act as role-models to their students as both a reader and a participant in the activities carried out in the program. The student who has recently read a book is an expert when explaining his book to the teacher who learns and benefits from the expertise of this student.

Lastly, teachers have the important



Image 5: Recording a radio play

task of determining what activities will be used and when in order to work on different language skills and to foster a climate of cooperation among the students and motivation towards the reading program. It is precisely these activities that convert an extensive reading program into A Community of Readers.

### **Converting Solitary Readers into a Community of Practice Through Communicative and Cooperative Activities**

Due to the very fact that reading is individual and silent, adding a cooperative and interactive element to the program is essential in converting a solitary experience into a shared one in which students feel that their reading adds to that of a community of readers whose aim is to enjoy their reading experience while bettering their English linguistic abilities. These types of activities maintain the diversion and intrinsic motivation that are necessary to the success of the program and allow

# Making Pronunciation Less “Liquid”: A Solid, Spelling-Based Approach for Teachers and Students

By James McCullough

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*Most students and a fair number of teachers think there is little correlation between how words are spelled in English and how they are pronounced. The vocabulary in beginning and intermediate classes abounds in such words as “meat”, “great”, and “sweat”, so, it is not surprising that students find few patterns to guide them. However, these words are part of a few hundred that are exceptions to the rules. The sounds of the remaining hundreds of thousands can be correctly predicted from their spelling and their part of speech. Students can be taught to analyze new words and successfully guess which syllable will get the main stress, which one(s) will be unstressed, and which one(s) will have a minor stress. From this, they can also predict how each vowel and consonant will be pronounced and which syllables can be elided completely. All of this can help them achieve native-like rhythm and intonation in their speech without always having to depend on teachers, dictionaries and native speakers for pronunciation models. This article will give teachers a look at the tip of the iceberg of a system of pronunciation teaching / learning which could become a powerful tool for them and their students.*

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## Introduction

Among teachers and students, a recurring complaint about English arises: “It is hard to teach and learn proper pronunciation of the language because English does not have many rules in this area. It is haphazard, and spelling does not help much, in contrast to languages like Catalan, Spanish, or French.” This article aims to debunk this misconception. English does have rules regarding pronunciation. In fact, it has so many of them that it is difficult to decide where to begin when one wants to teach them to students. Moreover, the spelling of words and recognition of their part of speech (noun, verb, adjective, adverb, etc.) can give learners all the information they need to successfully predict the stress pattern and individual sounds of the vast majority of words in English. In addition, there are rules regarding the suprasegmental aspects of the language (sentence stress, rhythm, and intonation) that can also be learned and practiced, and that can give students native-like abilities to predict, produce and perceive these phenomena in the spoken language.

All of these rules are set out in the student’s book and teacher’s manual of *Stress in the Speech Stream. The Rhythm of Spoken English*, by Wayne B. Dickerson (1989a, 1989b) of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. It is a very complete work, which could be considered analogous to Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech and Svartvik’s *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* (1985) but in the area of pronunciation. And, just as Quirk and Greenbaum (1990) have a more manageable, reduced version of their *magnum opus*, so does Professor Dickerson, in collaboration with Laura D. Hahn: *Speechcraft. Discourse Pronunciation for Advanced Learners*, with a workbook for either academic discourse in general or for the discourse of international teaching assistants in English-speaking universities (Hahn and Dickerson 1999a, 1999b, 1999c).

This article will only deal with one area of these rules, those regarding how to predict the stress patterns and vowel sounds of multi-syllabic words, because this can illustrate the power of the teaching system that Professor Dickerson advocates. He offers a wealth of information and exercises, which, in a format adapted to the needs and levels of particular groups of students, can be used to successfully teach them how to become autonomous and self-confident in speaking English. Also, the exceptions to the rules, which are what students need to learn in order to successfully implement these rules over the course of their lives, can be found in the handout of the presentation given in the 2012 APAC-ELT Convention or in the full version of this article, also on the APAC website.

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reading as well as their written and oral creative productions.

9) Help weaker, 'peripheral' students to take on the role of experts of the books they have read with you and with other students.

10) Keep your expectations high and your enthusiasm up and you and your students will be surprised by how much a community of readers can learn together!

### Conclusion

Forming a community of readers through the use of communicative and collaborative activities anchored around an extensive reading program involves creating a dynamic environment in the classroom in which all members feel that their contributions are valued individually and collectively. Providing students and the teacher with time together in order to share their experiences and expertise and to overcome their problems allows them to feel that they are united in a common goal. It is this feeling of belonging and the numerous practical communicative moments associated with it which takes a group of individual students obliged to read a certain amount of books in a foreign language and transforms these individuals into a community of readers.

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*Un nou Shakespeare de Propeller a Temporada Alta*

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*Oskaras Koršunovas torna a Temporada Alta*

El cor de les tenebres (Duister Hart)

*Guy Cassiers i Josse De Pauw adapten el clàssic de Joseph Conrad*

-able	-en	-ish
-al (on nouns)	-er (nouns and adjectives)	-y (adjectives)
-e	-est (adjectives)	
-ed	-ing	

One prediction rule that incorporates them is:

$q/g\underline{u} + B = \emptyset$  (A *u* following a *q* or a *g* and preceding a basic weak ending will be silent: *league*, *antique*, *cataloguing*, *piqued*.)

## Neutral endings

These endings have no effect on the placement of stress within words nor on the sound of vowels or consonants that precede them. So, non-native speakers can ignore them when analyzing a word. They can just put a slash through them. They are the following (Dickerson, 1989a: Unit 1, pp. 83-34 and Unit 3, pp. 152-155):

-ful	-ment	-s	-th / -eth (ordinal numbers)
-hood	-most	-’s	-ward
-like	-ness	-ship	-wise
-ly	-ress / -ess	-some	
-man			

The *-s* ending applies to plural nouns and 3rd-person, singular, present-tense verbs, like *cars* or *He works hard*. So, sequences like *-ss*, *-is*, *-os*, *-ous*, or *-us* do not have a neutral ending. Also, the verbs *is* and *has* are exceptions, and their *-s* is not considered a neutral ending. Neutral endings do not precede weak endings, so words like *disease* cannot be considered to end in a neutral *-s* ending followed by a weak ending, *-e*. The *-ly* sequence must be part of an adverb or an adjective to be considered a neutral ending. This eliminates nouns, like *filly*, and verbs like *to tally*.

## Terminals

These are a subset of endings that apply to long words. Long words are those that have 3 or more syllables after weak and neutral endings have been removed. The terminal is the last spelling pattern in such a word. For instance, the terminal is underlined in these words (Dickerson, 1989a: Unit 3, p.45):

*rectify*(ing)      *panopli*(es)      *typifi*(ed)

## Finding the Key Syllable

*Syllable* in this system of analysis does not correspond with dictionary or general linguistics considerations of *syllable*. The term is convenient shorthand for a unit within a word that non-native speakers can use in order to predict all of the important phonetic features of that word, not to decide where to divide the word when it is too long to fit on a single line of written text.

The Key Syllable is composed of a vowel spelling pattern and all extra consonant letters to the right of it (Dickerson, 1989a: Unit 1, pp. 94 and 169-170). For instance, in the examples below, the Key Syllable is underlined in two different contexts:

- at the end of a word: *hint*, *boast*, *culprits*, *quickty*
- before a weak ending: *hint*(ed), *boast*(ing), *whit*(en(ed))

In order to find the Key, learners start at the right end of the word and work toward the left. They separate neutral endings, weak endings and terminals. Then they begin to underline the letters to the left of those endings. If the first one is a consonant, the learners continue to underline to the left until they find a vowel. Then they look to the left one more time to see if this vowel is part of a two-vowel, *VV*, spelling pattern. If it is, they underline both vowels. Some two-vowel patterns are affected by consonants to the left of them, like the *CCów* pattern (that is, a pattern of two consonants followed by the letters *ow* in a stressed syllable and then followed by either the end of the word or a basic weak ending). So, in these specific cases students continue scanning to the left to see if there are any more relevant consonants for their analysis. If none are present, they stop looking left, and all of the consonants and vowel(s) they have underlined constitute the Key Syllable.

## Preliminaries

In order to use this part of the system, students need to learn various things previously: different types of prefixes and suffixes on words and how to find a unit called the “Key Syllable”. In this system, they also learn various different vowel quality patterns and consonant concordance patterns. This article will give an overview of endings and how to find the Key Syllable before giving the rules for predicting the stress patterns of polysyllabic words. It will also mention some vowel quality patterns and consonant correspondence patterns, but it will not look at prefixes in any depth.

A “pedagogical” system of phonetic symbols will be used, rather than the IPA system, because this is what *Stress in the Speech Stream* employs and it is very intuitive, easy to learn, and easy to use for students. In fact, it parallels the way native-speaking children learn to sound words out when they are taught to read, because it divides the vowel sounds into *long* and *short* ones. *Stress in the Speech Stream* signals long vowels by putting a macron over the letter ( $\bar{a}$ ,  $\bar{e}$ ,  $\bar{i}$ , ...), and just uses the plain letter to signal short vowel sounds ( $a$ ,  $e$ ,  $i$ , ...). In this article, however, to make the difference more visible and to avoid confusion with IPA symbols, a curved macron will be put over short vowel sounds ( $\check{a}$ ,  $\check{e}$ ,  $\check{i}$ , ...).

## Types of Endings

### Weak endings

There are about 40 weak endings in English, and they are generically symbolized by a W in analyses that students carry out (Dickerson, 1989a: Unit 1, p. 79 and Unit 3, pp. 158-166):

-able**	-ative*	-er (adj. and do-er)	-n (past part.)*
-age**	-atize / -atise*	-ery**	-oid*
-al* (**for nouns)	-atory**	-est (adj., adv.)*	-ol*
-an*	-ature**	-ide*	-on*
-ance*	-e	-ile**	-or / -our**
-ancy*	-ed*	-ing*	-ory**
-ant*	-en* (V/VC – nouns)	-is (nouns: <i>crisis</i> ...)*	-ous*
-ar*	-ence*	-ish**	-um*
-atism*	-ency*	-ite*	-ure**
-atist*	-ent*	-ive**	-us*
			-y (adj., adv., 2-syll. nouns)**

\* = endings associated with the V/VC Weak Stress Rule.

\*\* = endings associated with the Prefix Weak Stress Rule.

When students see them, they should separate them from the word they are analyzing by putting a parenthesis in front of them, for instance: *whit(e)*, *whit(ing)*, *whit(en(ing)*. As can be seen with the last example, a few weak endings can occur at the end of a word.

It is important to recognize these endings and to signal them in a way that keeps them visible, like with the use of parentheses, because they are significant in vowel quality patterns, such as:

$\check{V}C + W = \text{long}$  (This means “a stressed vowel followed by a consonant and a weak ending will be a long vowel.”)

$\forall C + W = \text{reduced}$  (This says that “an unstressed vowel followed by a consonant and a weak ending will be a reduced vowel:  $\text{ə} / \check{i}$  (short  $i$  ).”)

### Basic weak endings

There are only 12 of them, which are symbolized with a *B* and become significant in a few vowel-quality and consonant-correspondence prediction rules (Dickerson, 1989a: Unit 1, p. 79):



## Exceptions

Every rule has exceptions, and students need to learn them. That way, when they encounter a new word and they know that it is not among their lists of exceptions, they can confidently apply their rules to it and make the same prediction a native speaker would. These exceptions can be found on the APAC web page, either in the handout from the presentation this article is based on, or in the full version of this text.

## The V / VC Weak Stress Rule

This rule (Dickerson, 1989a: Unit 3, pp. 23-32) covers the words that have endings with a single asterisk in the list of weak endings above. For example, it covers all words ending in *-ic*, adjectives that end in *-al* or *-ous*, and nouns and adjectives that end in *-ant / -ent*, *-ance / -ence*, and *-ancy / -ency*.

In many cases, there might be a letter *i* preceding these endings, as in *-ial*, *-ious*, *-iant*, *-ient*, *-iance*, *-ience*, *-iancy*, *-iency*. Then, the strong *iV*-sequence takes precedence, and the Key Strong Stress Rule applies. "Strong" rules always take precedence over "weak" ones, so pattern searches have to prioritize their clues when they are found, rather than those indicating the application of a weak rule. Nouns can also end in *-al*, but in these cases, the *-al* is considered a Basic Weak ending and the rule to apply is the Prefix Weak Stress Rule.

## Rule

Stress the Key, unless it has a V or VC spelling. In that case, stress the syllable to the left of the Key Syllable, which is known as the Left Syllable and must be marked in a different way than the Key. If students use a single line to underline the Key Syllable, they could use a wavy line to underline the Left Syllable.

## Where is the Key?

Usually, the Key is the syllable immediately to the left of the V/VC weak ending. But, if the word ends in *-ic*, the *-ic* itself is the Key.

Examples:

### non- V or VC Keys

stupénd(ous (VCC Key)

abnórm(al (VCC Key)

overzéal(ous (VV Key)

continént(al (VCC Key)

reférr(al (VCC Key)

### V or VC Keys

precípit(ous (VC Key)

abdómin(al (VC Key)

resídu(al (V Key)

incóntin(ence (VC Key)

mágic(al (VC Key)

mosáic (VC Key)

These examples illustrate why in some cases the stressed syllable is next to the *-ous* ending, for example, and in other cases it is two syllables to the left, as in *stupendous* and *precipitous*. They also illustrate why different syllables are stressed in words with similar spellings, like *continental* and *incontinence*. So, with this rule and the other weak stress rule, learners can see that stress placement is not so haphazard in English. They can also see why words like *residual*, *continuous* and *mosaic* do not have diphthongs.

## Vowel quality predictions the rule makes

In this rule, the Left Syllable is important, and there is a set of rules that governs how vowels are pronounced in this context:

VC ← = short

áC ←

éC ←

íC ←

óC ←

mágic (-ǎ-)

epidémic (-ě-)

medícinal (-ĩ-)

óminous (-ö / ô-)

úC ← = long

úC ←

refúsal (-ū-)

In other words, a stressed vowel followed by a single consonant in the Left Syllable is pronounced as a short vowel, except in the case of *u*, which is pronounced as a long vowel.

## Predicting the stress of polysyllabic words

Once these preliminaries have been more or less mastered and students are comfortable with predicting the sound of new monosyllabic words or well-known polysyllabic ones, they can begin to learn how to predict the sound of new polysyllabic ones. Four word-stress rules predict where to place the major stress in over 25,000 polysyllabic words in English. And, once it is known where the major stress goes, all of the minor stressed and unstressed syllables in the word can be quickly found. The rules are the:

- Key Strong Stress Rule
- V / VC Weak Stress Rule
- Left Strong Stress Rule
- Prefix Weak Stress Rule

*Strong* indicates that the rule can be applied without any contemplation. If students see the condition for applying the rule, they stress the syllable the rule mentions (the Key Syllable, in one rule, or the Left Syllable in the other). *Weak* indicates that students cannot apply the rule blindly; they have to look at the word a little more closely in order to make the decision about whether to stress the Key Syllable or the Left Syllable (Hahn and Dickerson, 1999: 92-24; Dickerson, 1989a: Unit 2, pp. 75-158 and Unit 3, pp. 23-80).

### The Key Strong Stress Rule

Words that are governed by this rule (Dickerson, 1989a: Unit 2, pp. 149-158) have what is called a *strong iV-sequence* (*iV* means the letter *i* followed by a vowel). A strong *iV*-sequence is defined by these characteristics:

1. It begins with *ia*, *io* or *iu*, but not *ie*, unless it is an *ienC* sequence. So, a word like *society* would not fit the bill, because it has an *iet* sequence, but *omniscient* would.
2. It may be followed by other consonant or vowel letters, as in *ial*, *ious*, or *ium* sequences.
3. It always has at least one syllable to the left of it. This is the Key Syllable, in fact, and it is underlined in the following examples.  
*radial* has a strong *iV*-sequence: rad(ial)  
*dial* does not: di(al)
4. Finally, in strong stress rule words, the Key has only one vowel or an *au*, *eu* or *ou* sequence.

### Rule

The Key Strong Stress Rule states that when there is a strong *iV*-sequence present, the Key Syllable is the one immediately to the left of it. Speakers must stress the Key, regardless of whether or not it is a prefix or contains part of one. If there are two strong *iV*-sequences present, the Key is the syllable preceding the right-most one. In the following examples, the Key Syllable is underlined. And, in the remainder of the article, stressed vowels will have an accent written over them.

óbv(ious)    mán(iac)    precáut(ion)    initiát(ion)    sál(iency)    tuút(ion)

### Vowel quality predictions the rule makes:

<u>ÝC + S = long*</u>				<u>íC + S = short**</u>	<u>ýC + S = short**</u>
áC + S	éC + S	óC + S	úC + S	íC + S	ýC + S
r <u>á</u> díus (- <u>á</u> -)	s <u>é</u> níor (- <u>é</u> -)	j <u>ó</u> víal (- <u>ó</u> -)	st <u>ú</u> díio (- <u>ú</u> -)	tr <u>í</u> víal (- <u>í</u> -)	el <u>ý</u> sían (- <u>ý</u> -)

\* This means that a stressed vowel followed by a consonant and a strong *iV*-sequence will be long.

\*\* These mean that a stressed *i* or *y* followed by a consonant and a strong *iV*-sequence will be short. In the case of *y*, the vowel is pronounced as a short *i* (*i*).

It could be said that it applies to words that are three or more syllables long and that are not covered by other stress rules.

## Rule

Stress the Left Syllable, no matter if it contains a prefix or part of one.

## Where is the Key?

The Key Syllable is immediately to the left of a terminal, even if the Key may have the same spelling as a weak or neutral ending, as also occurs in the Prefix Weak Stress Rule. For example:

cómed(y / cómed(i(es	félon(y / félon(i(es	clássif(y / clássif(i(ed	anómal(y
exágger(ate	eléc(troc(ut(ed	illí(ter(acy	léga(cy

When the -y becomes an -i before a weak ending, then two strategies can be applied for finding the Key:

1) in long -fy words, the *f* is the last letter of the Key;

2) the last -i is the Key in nouns that end in -ier (regardless of whether or not they have 3 syllables when all endings are ignored), adjectives that end in -ied, and any verb.

In all other cases, the Key is left of the last *i*, -li, or -aci. (One must bear in mind, however, that sequences preceded by an *i*, like -iat + *W* or -iacy are strong *iV*-sequences, so the Key Strong Stress Rule applies in those cases.)

With -ate and -ute terminals, they are often followed by weak endings, like -ed, -ing, or -or. So, one has to look for -at + *W*, -ut + *W* terminals as well. However, not all -at + *W*, -ut + *W* or -acy sequences are terminals. They have to pass 2 tests:

1. There have to be at least 2 syllables to the left of the -at + *W*, -ut + *W* or -acy. For instance, the words *restate*, *pollute* and *legacy* do not meet this criteria. The first two are normal Prefix Weak Stress Rule verbs, and in the last one only has the -y as its terminal, with the -ac being its Key.

2. There must be no prefix (or any part of one) immediately to the left of the -at + *W*, -ut + *W* or -acy sequence. For example, *to underrate* and *to recompute* both fail this test. They are normal Prefix Weak Stress Rule verbs.

As with the Key Strong Stress Rule words, the Key Syllable in this rule must have either a one-vowel spelling pattern or an *au*, *eu*, or *ou* sequence.

## Vowel quality predictions

1. The *y* or *i* of long nouns is unstressed, and unstressed *y* and unstressed *i* both predict a long e,  $\bar{e}$ .

2. The *y* or *i* of long -fy / -fi words has a minor stress. So, the rule of  $\acute{V}$  = long ("a stressed vowel predicts a long vowel") applies, and the sound is a long i,  $\bar{i}$ . The -at + *W* and -ut + *W* terminals (and the *a* of strong -iat + *W* sequences) also have minor stress, with the same prediction applying. Special cases, however, are the -ate and -ates of nouns and adjectives, which are usually unstressed and get a reduced vowel (this applies to the -iate and -iates of Key Strong Stress Rule nouns and adjectives, as well). On the other hand, the -ate or -ates of chemical compounds are minor-stressed, while the ones on statuses (like *magistrate* or *candidate*) are variably minor-stressed or unstressed (except for -orate statuses, like *electorate*, where the -ate is unstressed). The -acy and -aci terminals are always unstressed.

3. The Key syllable of a word with a terminal is always unstressed. So, the same rules that apply for unstressed syllables before a weak ending apply. But in this case, the symbol *T* is used rather than the *W*.

## Exceptions

Again, there are few exceptions to the rule in terms of percentage. The rule covers thousands of words, yet there are only 80 individual words and a handful of sets of words with a given ending that do not behave in complete accordance with this rule.



## Exceptions

There are over 4000 words that have V / VC-rule endings and relatively few exceptions (Dickerson, 1989a: Unit 3, p. 27).

## The Prefix Weak Stress Rule

This rule (Dickerson, 1989a: Unit 2, pp. 97-118, 129-138) covers a wide variety of words:

- 1) verbs<sup>1</sup>;
- 2) any word ending in *-ed*, *-en*, or *-ing* (except for nouns that end in *-en*, like *chicken*);
- 3) nouns<sup>2</sup> that end in *-ening*;
- 4) nouns, adjectives and adverbs that end in *-ar*, *-er*<sup>3</sup>;
- 5) adjectives and adverbs ending in *-est* or *-y*; and
- 6) two-syllable nouns ending in *-y*.

So, it is a rule in which students need to recognize whether a word is being used as a noun, verb, adjective or adverb and whether or not it has any prefixes on it. Before learning this rule, students will have had ample practice with prefixes, especially Latin and Anglo-Saxon ones.

## Rule

Stress the Left Syllable if it is not a prefix or part of one. Otherwise, stress the Key Syllable.

## Where is the Key?

The Key is the syllable immediately to the left of a final Prefix Weak ending, even if the Key looks like another Prefix Weak ending. For example:

decid(ed)ly      to enli(v)en      shiver(ing      he conced(es)

In two cases, two Prefix Weak endings can stack up: *-ened* and *-ening*. In these cases, the *-en* is considered a Prefix Weak ending and the Key is immediately left of it. For example:

sadd(en)(ed)      fatt(en)(ing)      an op(en)(ing)

The Key is spelled with one or, if possible, two vowel letters. However, only the V of *iV*- and *uV*-sequences is permitted in the Key (as long as the *iV*- sequence is not a strong *iV*- sequence, in which case the Key Strong Stress Rule would apply).

## Exceptions

Numerically, there are many exceptions to this rule, because it is a rule that covers many thousands of words. But, in terms of percentage, there are really very few of them. For example, there are over 5000 words that fit into categories 4, 5 and 6, and less than 1% are exceptions to the rule (Dickerson, 1989a: Unit 2, p. 133).

## The Left Strong Stress Rule

This last rule (Dickerson, 1989a: Unit 3, pp. 43-72) applies to *long words*. A *long word* is any word that is at least 3 syllables long once any weak or neutral endings have been separated from it. It applies to:

- long nouns with a *-y* or *-i* terminal;
- any long word with a letter *f* preceding a *-y* or *-i* terminal; and
- long nouns, verbs and adjectives that have *-ate*, *-ute*, and *-acy* terminals.

# A Survival Kit for CLIL: A Tool to Review CLIL Materials

By Àngels Oliva (UPF) and Mary Louise Walsh (EUSES)

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*Using CLIL in higher education, baccalaureate or second-cycle secondary education is no small feat: there are large class sizes, with students from different backgrounds and with different levels of foreign language, cognitive and communicative skills; it is hard and time-consuming to co-ordinate syllabi and skill development across different departments; and there are strong demands regarding high-level cognition, field-specific content and foreign language proficiency. On the other hand, there is increasingly more pressure on both teachers and students alike to learn and teach in English within the European Space for Higher Education, and in order to compete within the European and global market.*

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With these issues in mind, and out of our past teaching experience in primary and secondary education and now as university lecturers, we set out to develop a teacher-friendly tool that could direct teachers' attention towards the key elements in CLIL material design, such as the different types of scaffolding and classroom interactions, and that could provide a quick overview of the relationship between cognitive and linguistic demands, students' zone of proximal development and the creation of potential learning opportunities in class.

This tool had to contain all the essential, underpinning, CLIL pedagogies, while still being easy to grasp, flexible and thorough. After trying out different formats (checklists, rubrics, even flashcards), we opted for a one-page grid that could be easily photocopied and used by individual teachers

or team-teachers, either as guidance during the planning process or as an assessment tool for already-existing materials. Every item in the grid, and indeed its very structure, refers back to some key concept of CLIL pedagogies, which we will briefly describe as we go over it in more detail in the following pages. Where possible, we also provide practical examples from a course we are currently teaching to illustrate the main features of the grid.

## Description of the grid

The left-most column of the grid is divided into seven categories, namely **content, cognition, communication, culture, feedback, scaffolding and roles**. These provide the main aspects we have chosen to focus on, with any subcategories on the right side in a lighter colour.

The first four cells assess the correspondence of the

course or lesson with the four dimensions of Coyle's 4C's Framework (1999, 2000), which studies the interaction between contents, communication, cognition and culture. Contents refer to subject knowledge and discipline-specific skills. The acquisition of content involves learning and thinking (cognition) in an interactive, meaningful context in which the L2 is the language of multi-modal communication, connecting contents to context, and the L1 culture to the L2 culture. In the grid, we have added scaffolding, feedback and roles separately for the sake of simplicity, as they could have been embedded into the other categories, so that we could analyse the assessment of content, cognition and language separately, for example.

The first category, **content**, covers the four types of knowledge students should acquire: factual, conceptual, procedural and

metacognitive (see Anderson and Krathwhol, 2001). Factual and conceptual knowledge cover aspects of field-specific theory and semantic concepts. Factual knowledge describes the basic elements that students must know to be acquainted with a discipline or solve problems in it, such as field-specific elements and terminology; whereas conceptual knowledge refers to how these components are interrelated as part of a larger network that enables them to function together; for example: theories, models and structures; principles and generalisations; and classifications and categories. Procedural knowledge describes the necessary know-how to employ subject-specific skills and methods, and the criteria to choose what procedures to follow. Metacognitive knowledge is the most generalisable type of knowledge, as it describes knowledge of cognition in

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## Conclusion

The four stress rules given here are just an illustration of the fact that there is actually only a small percentage of words in English that are exceptions to pronunciation rules. Students can be taught a rule-based system for speaking that can give them native-like decision-making skills in this area. However, the system is dense and complex, as this “tip of the iceberg” illustrates. It must be given to the students in manageable doses on a regular basis over time. In fact, this is the same approach we use when teaching grammar. We give beginning students the rules that they need in order to begin to use and understand English, and we give them these rules in a format and quantity that they can handle. Then we expand on them and recycle them over subsequent years.

What has been laid out in this article would be covered in about six to eight weeks (in two 20-to- 30-minute segments per week), with students doing exercises at home to internalize the exceptions to the rules and to get comfortable in applying them to unfamiliar words. They would also make recordings of themselves doing some of the speaking exercises found in *Stress in the Speech Stream* or *Speechcraft* (or made up by the teacher) in order for them and their teacher to be able to assess their production.

This system can work well with upper intermediate and advanced students, especially adults. But, it can also be adapted for lower-level students. For example, in the case of the stress rules, students can be presented with new vocabulary grouped together according to the rule that applies to them. That way, the students learn new words that are appropriate for their level, and they can perceive that there is a pattern underlying their pronunciation. Then, at a later stage, when they are explicitly taught the rule, they are already subconsciously prepared for it.

This would be a much better approach to pronunciation than the one used in the following exercise taken from an Intermediate level textbook (Clare and Wilson, 2011: p. 47): “Listen to and mark the stress on the strong adjectives. Notice how speaker B emphasises the stressed syllable in their intonation.” The adjectives in question were: *delicious, boiling, furious, beautiful, and fascinating*. In other words, they were a Key Strong Stress Rule word, a Prefix Weak Stress Rule word, another Key Strong Stress Rule word, and two more Prefix Weak Stress Rule words. What conclusions are students supposed to reach about stress in these cases? That usually strong adjectives in English have their main stress on the first syllable and that *delicious* is some kind of exception? It would be better to give the students more adjectives, and group them like this: *furious, glorious, delicious, obnoxious...; boiling, boring, fascinating, interesting, ...; beautiful, wonderful, grateful, ...* That is why it is important for teachers to be aware of the rules underlying the pronunciation of the English language. It would enable them to help their students see the patterns that really are useful, give them some solid basis on which to predict how to say new words they come across in reading or that they have to make up spontaneously when speaking, and help them become autonomous and confident in this liquid area of the language.

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<sup>1</sup> It does not apply to verbs that are three or more syllables long and that also end in *-fy, -ate, -ion, -ise, -ize, -ment*. Nor does it apply to compound verbs. They are covered by the Left Strong Stress Rule.

<sup>2</sup> It does not apply to nouns that are three or more syllables in length or that end in *-fier, -ator, -ioner, -iser, -izer, or -menter*. They are covered by other rules. Source: Dickerson, W. B. 1989a. Unit 2, p. 131.

<sup>3</sup> To distinguish between 2-syllable endings, like in *overseer*, and one-syllable endings, like in *engineer*, the rule is that an *-eer* ending is always a one-syllable, stressed VVr pattern except for the word *freer* and all uses of *seer*. Then it is a stressed V followed by an unstressed Vr#. Source: Dickerson, W. B. 1989a. Unit 2, p. 132.



contributes to bringing about wider, more ambitious agendas to foreign language learning. The intercultural competence requires from students the capacity to establish connections between their native culture and the culture embedded in the foreign language. This is achieved in three steps, which we reflect in our grid. Students are made aware of the cultural assumptions underlying their values, opinions and views of the world; secondly, they compare these to their equivalents in the foreign language, and in connection to the context in which they occur; and thirdly, students can understand and discuss the differences in communication patterns, behaviours or traditions that originate in different cultural backgrounds. Accordingly, in the grid we included the notions of cultural awareness, intercultural understanding and pluri-culturalism in order to measure to what extent they are promoted in a CLIL course.

**Feedback** is analysed according to three aspects. On the one hand, the grid requires considering what goals teachers set out with, and hence the type of feedback students are provided with, either formative or summative. Both types of feedback are equally valid and necessary as support for students' learning, although their functions differ greatly. Formative feedback aims at improving the quality of students' learning by raising their awareness of possible problems and suggesting ways to overcome such difficulties. Summative feedback, on the other hand, provides judgements on students' achievements and assigns them a grade that locates them on a scale (the

CEFR, in our curriculum). The assessment methods for these two types of feedback are also different. Summative feedback tends to take the form of quizzes or tests, whereas formative feedback is more interactive and cyclical, and often uses a wider range of tools such as journals, portfolios, self-assessment sheets, and such. The agent section determines who provides the feedback (the teacher, the group of peers or each student him/herself). Finally, the section named *area* covers the contents of the feedback, since in a CLIL course, feedback should cover not only field-specific contents, but also the cultural, communicative and cognitive skills students need to successfully carry out the activities.

**Scaffolding** refers to techniques that guide students' acquisition of the language and cognitive skills that are necessary for learning to occur. It is precisely the contingency of scaffolding that sets it apart from helping. According to Mercer (1994), scaffolding means that students could not fulfil the task at hand without the teacher's intervention, even though the goal of scaffolding is to gradually increase student autonomy. For Mercer, scaffolding begins at the planning stage, with the teaching goal of students' reaching some new level of independent competence via the learning of some specific skill or concept. Successful scaffolding also requires evidence of students' successful completion of the task and their being able to go on to deal independently with subsequent related tasks or problems.

Scaffolding is spread throughout all teaching stages. It starts with how

the program is sequenced, which activities will be included, and why. During the planning stage, teachers should determine at what points the students' attention will be directed to specific aspects of educational knowledge, and at what points their attention will be directed to the patterns and choices of language that enable them to construct knowledge. Similarly, scaffolding requires teachers to know when to challenge or support particular students and, most importantly, the pace and the moment to gradually withdraw support to enable their students to work more and more independently.

There are two types of scaffolding, as shown in the grid: *macro-level* or *built-in scaffolding*, which is part of lesson design and refers to the contents of the curriculum, and to the demands tasks place on students; and *micro-level* or *point-of-need scaffolding*, which occurs more spontaneously during the lessons, as teachers scaffold interactions in class to adapt to individual students. For the grid, we chose four aspects of lesson design that summarise built-in scaffolding. Regarding teaching goals, we included the planning of guidance, and the sequencing of tasks and contents so that students can develop the practices needed to reach the goals. Sequencing implies a gradual but constant shift towards student autonomy and responsibility for their own learning. Tasks should be suited to the specific groups of students, and there should be supporting materials, which requires teachers to understand the demands tasks place on students' communicative

and cognitive skills, and prior knowledge of their students' abilities and understandings.

In the built-in scaffolding cell, therefore, teachers should ideally tick all four categories, bearing in mind content, language and cognitive demands. As for point-of-need scaffolding, we have included four techniques (Mercer, 1994) that can be used during lessons to facilitate learning: elicitation of students' responses to guide them through a particular line of reasoning by cueing their responses as questions, for example; repetition of student remarks and instructions in different forms to ensure understanding; recasting of their remarks in a technically suitable form; and appropriation of the contents of students' contributions, for instance using first-person plural pronouns to convey the feeling of a shared experience. The right-most subcategory within scaffolding, *area*, records whether scaffolding covers language or content issues.

The last row, **roles**, refers to the types of interactions that occur in class. This section covers the possible roles the teacher and the students can play in the classroom. Students can be either active or passive, and more or less dependent on the teacher. The teacher's function during the lesson can be that of primary knower (Burton, 1981; Infante, Benvenuto & Lastrucci, 2009); facilitator, increasing or decreasing the degree of autonomy students have according to their needs; manager of interaction (Dalton-Puffer, 2007; Infante et al, 2009), in charge of managing discourse and exchanges; or monitor of students' progress and learning. These

general, as well as awareness of one's own cognition. It also describes knowledge of the context of the field and of the key strategies to operate in it. To use this part of the grid, you should circle or underline the items that correspond to your content learning goals. Ideally, all types of knowledge should appear throughout the course.

Within the content section, we have included *source* and *medium*, which refer to who or what conveys knowledge and how, respectively. There are four possible sources of knowledge, the teacher, the students, the materials or other(s). For the sake of brevity, we have not distinguished between individual students, groups or whole-class, although it might be a valid distinction to bear in mind at the planning stage. In relation to the notion of agency, we felt it was necessary to distinguish between knowledge presentation and discovery, as one of the key points of CLIL is to promote student autonomy: Are students given opportunities to discover things by themselves or are they presented with knowledge straight away? Sometimes, it is more convenient to present things, while at other times it is worth giving students more time to discover things on their own.

Under the second category, *cognition*, we have grouped the thinking skills need to use when performing tasks. They are divided into higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) and lower order thinking skills (LOTS). The examples we provide are based on a revision of Bloom's original taxonomy (Andersen and Krathwohl, 2001; Krathwohl, 2002). Moving up from least to

most demanding thinking, we find *remember*, *understand* and *apply* as the three LOTS, and *analyse*, *evaluate* and *create* as the HOTS. For every skill, we have provided a short list of verbs associated with it, which should appear in lesson plans or can-do lists to keep track of students' progression. The skill, *understand*, for instance, is made up of *interpret*, *exemplify*, *classify*, *summarise*, *infer*, *compare* and *explain*.

To use this part of the grid, circle the skills that students need to use to carry out tasks, or highlight them using different colours in your course plans. This row can be used to check the progression of cognitive demands through time, in order to balance their difficulty with the associated language and content demands and make sure that students actively use a wide range of skills.

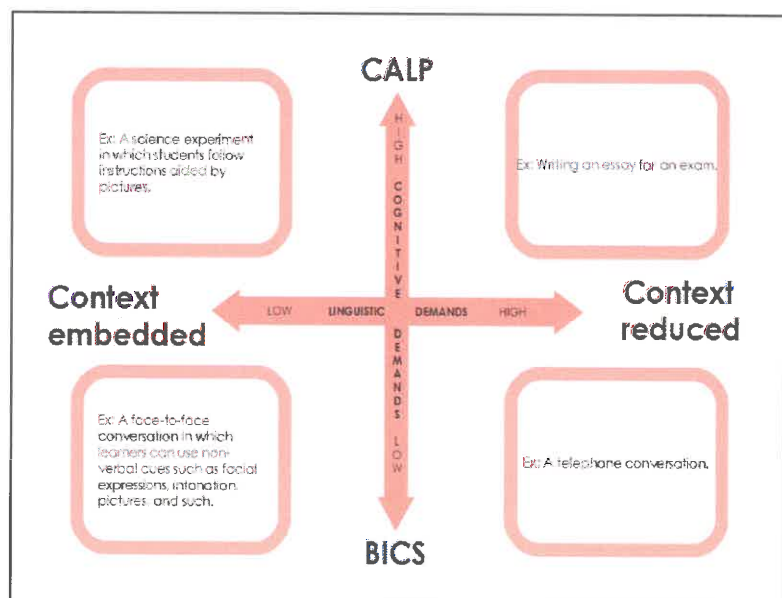
The level of cognitive demand should be balanced with the levels of linguistic demands, as shown in Cummins' matrix (1981, 1984), which we have adapted in Illustration 1. The matrix shows the four different combinations of language and cognitive demands. On the vertical axis, the language one, task demands can range from BICS (basic interpersonal communicative skills) to the much harder to reach CALP (cognitive academic language proficiency). On the horizontal axis, focused on cognition, tasks can be context-

embedded, meaning that the context of the task provides support for understanding, or context-reduced, in which students only have linguistic input. Cummins posits that the students should find the tasks both challenging and engaging in order for learning to be optimised, which occurs when there is not a language challenge, yet the content should be challenging. CLIL instructors can use Cummins' matrix to balance the level of demand placed on students' communicative and cognitive skills, and to think about how this affects students' capacity to concentrate on different aspects of the task at hand, either content- or language-related. Basic users will typically need tasks closer to BICS to start off with, and then move progressively towards CALP. In the grid, Cummins' matrix appears within the cognition and the communication rows. Under *cognition*, we find the subcategories of *context* (reduced or embedded) and *challenge* (language, content, cognition or none); whereas the distinction between BICS and CALP belongs in the communication row.

As for the *communication*

section, we have chosen to focus on the way language is used in class, and have therefore included under this heading the type of linguistic demand students find in the tasks, the patterns of interaction promoted in the classroom, and the balance between the use of L1 and L2. Regarding the level of demand, we have used Cummins' BICS and CALP categories (see Illustration 1), between which there should be a progression throughout the term. In the *pattern* category, you can circle the type of interaction that is used in every activity in order to assess the distribution of teacher and student talking-time. The third category reflects the use of L1 and L2 in the activities, in connection to interaction patterns and level of linguistic demands. We have distinguished between teachers' and students' use of L1 (*T's language* and *S's language* in the grid respectively), to record the relationship between language choice and task demands.

The last C, *culture*, covers the relationship between cultures and languages, and how the intercultural understanding that CLIL pedagogies promote



## Using the grid

To illustrate the practical implementation of the grid, we shall use an initial version of a sample unit from the course, *History and Sociology of Sports*, for 1st-year Sports

Science students at EUSES (*Escola Universitària de la Salut i l'Esport*). The global learning goal of this unit consisted of raising awareness and building further understanding of the role of Physical Education teachers

in the promotion of inclusion and interculturality. The materials we have examined with the grid include two lists of learning goals (one for contents, and one for linguistic objectives), and a table summarising the

contents of the unit based on the three sessions devoted to it, including a brief account of some specific CLIL-related aspects of the materials by the teacher who designed them.

### • Content Learning Objectives for the unit:

C.L.O.1. Analyse and demonstrate comprehension of the influence and role of gender in the evolution of physical activity and sport.

C.L.O.2. Understand the importance of physical activity and sport in the inclusion of immigrants and disabled students within society.

C.L.O.3. Analyse the relationship between sports and inclusion of the immigrant population and disabled children in Spain.

C.L.O.4. Apply the content of the unit.

*Table 1: Content objectives*

### • Language Learning Objectives for the unit:

L.O.1. Understand written texts in English.

L.O.2. Understand information presented as listening activities.

L.O.3. Be able to identify key information from the text and the listening.

L.O.4. Be able to write a summary of the key points.

L.O.5. Create a dialogue in English about the issues raised in the unit.

L.O.6. Express opinion and participate in class discussions.

*Table 2: Language objectives*



roles are not permanent or intended to occur consistently from the start of the course, but need to

be worked on throughout individual sessions aiming at an increasingly collaborative construction of knowledge,

implementing scaffolding, different interaction patterns and other resources detailed in the grid in order to

create and exploit potential learning opportunities.

<b>Content</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>Factual</b>	Terminology Specific elements	<b>Procedural</b>	Subject-specific skills & methods Criteria to choose procedures	Teacher	Students	Materials	Other
	<b>Y</b>								
<b>Cognition</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Conceptual</b>	Classifications and categories Principles and generalisations Theories, models and structures	<b>Meta-cognitive</b>	Strategic Contextual Self-knowledge	Context	Challenge	Reduced Embedded	Language Content Cognition None
	<b>e</b>								
	<b>Medium</b>		Presentation Discovery	<b>Source</b>					
	<b>L</b>	<b>Remember</b>	Recognise Recall						
	<b>O</b>	<b>Apply</b>	Execute Implement						
	<b>T</b>	<b>Understand</b>	Compare Classify	Exemplify Interpret					
	<b>S</b>	<b>Analyse</b>	Differentiate Organise	Attribute					
	<b>H</b>	<b>Evaluate</b>	Check Critique						
	<b>O</b>	<b>Create</b>	Generate Plan	Produce					
	<b>T</b>								
<b>S</b>									
<b>Communication</b>	<b>Pattern</b>	Teacher talk Pair talk Small groups	Teacher talk Pair talk Small groups		Whole-class talk No talk				
<b>Communication</b>	<b>Type</b>	BICS / CALP Teacher	L1 / L2 Teacher	Students	L1 / L2				
<b>Culture</b>		Cultural awareness	Intercultural understanding		Pluri-culturalism				
<b>Feedback</b>	<b>Goal</b>	Summative Formative	<b>Area</b>	Cognition Communication	Peers Teacher	Self Group			
<b>Scaffolding</b>	<b>Built-in</b>	Guidance Sequencing	Suitability Support materials	<b>Point-of-need</b>	Recasting Appropriation	<b>Focus</b>	Language Contents		
<b>Roles</b>	<b>Students'</b>	Dependent Receptive	Autonomous Productive	<b>Teacher's</b>	Manager of interaction	Facilitator Monitor	Primary knower		

Table 1: CLIL Revision Grid, by Oliva and Walsh, 2012.

## SESSION 2

### Listening activity

- ∞ CLO2, CLO3, LO2, LO3, LO6
- ∞ Materials: Presentation, key concept questions, videos of examples of activities with instructions.

1. Revise what S did in the previous class.
2. T explains and expands on the information in the article and the presentation.
3. S respond to the key questions during the lecture.
4. S give the T the written summary for correction.

Oral  
Presentation

Examples from various cultures (Brazil, England, Spain and America) can make S aware of as many other cultures as possible and provide them with the opportunity to develop a better understanding and awareness of their own situation in relation to S around the world.

Examples of games and sports from children living in poverty in Pakistan and Africa who used plastic bags to make a football and a broken box to make a wicket and stump for cricket. Bearing in mind that the majority of S are from high to medium economic status, it was important to make them aware that not everyone has access to basic sporting equipment. As the immigrant population in Spain comes from some of these countries, this would also raise S's awareness of the differences in economic resources around the world and at home.

## SESSION 3

### Students' oral presentations

- ∞ CLO2, CLO3, LO6
- ∞ Materials: S's corrected summary from previous class.

1. S have 10 minutes to revise the summary they prepared in the previous class.
2. Each group presents the summary to the rest of the class.
3. The rest of the class comments on the presentation.

Oral  
Presentation

During these activities, the linguistic demands are increasingly challenging, as S need to learn the new vocabulary and answer the concept questions to be able to make their oral presentations, thus moving from receptive to productive skills.

## SESSION 1

### Class discussion of course content to lead into new topic

∞ CLO1, LO6

∞ Materials: none.

1. T elicits previous knowledge from S.
2. T guides S to focus on the role of women.

At the start of the first class of the unit, T guides the students towards the new knowledge with point-of-need scaffolding. Through the use of techniques such as eliciting, recasting the key points, repetition of key vocabulary and appropriation, T leads into the new unit, building on the knowledge that S have already acquired.

S's  
participation  
in  
discussion

This is also a meta-cognitive activity as S need to contextualise as well as recall (LOT 1), generalise (LOT 3), infer (HOT 1) and relate (HOT 2) what they have already learnt. Once the students have achieved this, they are prepared to begin discovering the new knowledge in groups.

### Jigsaw reading activity

∞ CLO2, LO1

∞ Materials: Translated and adapted article, "Physical Education and Inclusion", presentation, key concept questions.

1. In groups of 3-4, S read the article and the presentation.
2. Divide 8 key concept questions.
3. Discuss answers.
4. Write a summary.

Written  
summary

LOTS are present in the first activities in the unit: describing and defining for *LOT 1*, explaining, distinguishing and summarising for *LOT 2*, generalising, choosing and preparing for *LOT 3*.

HOTS are also present in the form of select, classify and analyse for *HOT 1*; relate, evaluate and criticise for *HOT 2*; and produce, plan, develop and create for *HOT 3*.

Using a jigsaw reading activity, S are provided with built-in scaffolding in the form of the key concept questions and adapted supporting materials.



## Socio-drama

- ∞ CLO3, CLO4, LO3, LO4, LO5, LO6
- ∞ Materials: Translated and adapted article, presentation, key concept questions, videos/examples of activities with instructions, website of games for disabled children.

1. T elicits what a socio-drama is from S.
2. Groups are given a fact sheet with a situation related to Interculturality and Physical Education to resolve.
3. S identify the conflict.
4. S work together to create a socio-drama.

Socio-drama

Key concept questions were challenging and required the students to first of all create a solid base from which they could then produce a socio-drama based on what they had learned.

An example of built-in scaffolding can be found in the sequencing of activities. S are provided with the class materials before the class to read and familiarise themselves with the topic before T presents it: A translated and adapted article with graphs, images, summaries and diagrams, a power point presentation that highlights the main points, and diagrams.

Table 3: Description of the unit

On revising the materials using the grid, we found some things that needed further development (or that needed to be made explicit in the teaching plan) in different categories. The learning goals, for example, should have listed the types of contents they

corresponded to in order to check they were properly balanced; and listing the cognitive skills would make it easier to check their progressive activation during the semester. Using the grid and the summarised version of the lesson plans (Table 3), we were able to

spot these easily and plan some steps to solve these issues.

- Rewrite the *Contents*: specify the types of knowledge, redistribute *Language*, *Cognition* and *Content* goals.
- Be more specific about

*Feedback* methods, goals and agents, and about *Roles* and *Communication patterns*.

As an illustration, this is the second version of the content objectives as shown in Table 1, with the inclusion of the types of knowledge,

### • Content Learning Objectives for the unit:

CT.O.2. Conceptual. Understand specific terminology for methods and techniques used to promote interculturality.

CG.O.5. Apply. Interrelate the different methods and techniques with Physical Education in Spain.

CL.O.3. Analyse the relationship between sports and inclusion of the immigrant population and disabled children in Spain.

Table 4: New content learning objectives

and the redistribution of previously mixed-up learning goals for content, cognition and language:

The grid provides formative feedback on one's teaching by making problematic areas visible and pointing at possible areas to improve, but it also shows current achievements. By revising the materials jointly, we also became aware of the teacher's strong points:

- Good work on interaction and the setting of realistic communication goals.
- She should pat herself on the back for her built-in scaffolding.
- She sees that culture is actually an essential part of CLIL.

## Conclusions

We developed the CLIL revision grid as a tool to guide teachers willing to take up CLIL through the

implementation of this methodology by providing them with a thorough but approachable summary of its main features; and as a tool for experienced CLIL teachers to reflect on their practice and find areas of potential improvement.

The grid summarises the main theoretical points underpinning our views of language and learning, as they determine our approach to CLIL and the way we choose to implement it in our classes, which is deeply coloured by socio-constructivist theories on the relationship between discourse and learning in educational contexts:

Language is a tool for social action, deeply embedded in its context of use. Language cannot be separated from the meaning it conveys, as language choices are inextricably linked to the functions they

perform. Teaching language, therefore, does not mean teaching a series of grammatical constructs, but rather how these grammatical forms are embedded into a network in which users interact to achieve goals using discourse as a tool.

CLIL works on three dimensions of language, or in Coyle's words, *the language triptych* (2000, 2002). Firstly, CLIL develops the language related to subject learning and the structures, functions and grammatical features related to it (also referred to as *language of*). Secondly, CLIL builds on the language necessary to learn the language required to participate in activities such as finding key information, answering questions, or participating in c o m m u n i c a t i v e activities (also called

*language for*), thus activating students' metacognitive skills, language awareness and the functions associated to them. Thirdly, CLIL expands students' linguistic repertoire, as they learn the discipline-specific genres that accompany new knowledge and newly activated cognitive skills.

Learning occurs when students are working within their zone of proximal development (ZPD) and when teachers, through their mediating support role, are able to assist students to extend their current understandings and knowledge. Teachers facilitate students' learning by creating learning opportunities, as the ZPD is constructed in and through the activity in which learners and teachers jointly participate.

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# Strategies for Teaching and Motivating Difficult Students while Teaching English

By Vanessa Reis

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*I initially presented this talk at A.P.P.I.'s 25<sup>th</sup> annual conference, entitled "Shaping the Future of ELT", in Lisbon in 2011. Since then, I have transformed it into a short article, which is shortly due to be published as part of the conference's selected papers. I have since had the privilege of being invited to present the same talk at this year's annual APAC ELT Convention, entitled "Solid Learning for Liquid Times". I would hereby formally like to thank the president of A.P.P.I., Dr. Alberto Gaspar, for his permission and collaboration with APAC so as to allow me to republish the article in question as part of this year's annual conference selection papers.*

*This article is dedicated to analyzing the challenging and ever-increasing task of teaching in order to reach and motivate our difficult students. It will begin by analyzing and defining what is understood by a challenging and difficult class. Next, a plan of action that a teacher can and should implement before actually beginning to teach will be presented. Finally, some practical and easy ways of opening our students' gates to learning will be examined. This is of the utmost importance as, if a student's learning gates are not open or even just slightly ajar, then anything that we as teachers aim to introduce and present in class will go by the wayside!*

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## Difficult students?

So, what exactly do we mean by a difficult student? In my experience, the more teachers you ask, the more answers you will get. Difficult students can represent very different things for various people, ranging from students who misbehave to ones who are very demanding and who constantly keep the teacher on his/her toes. Bill Rogers provides us with the following clear definition, which will serve as a basis for this article:

Classes can be considered "hard" when the *frequency* and *intensity* of the disruptive behaviour of a number of its members are significantly affecting the welfare of one or more of their teachers. Such behaviour is also significantly affecting any sense of productive teaching and learning. The other factor is *duration*. If the behaviour of the class (not just one or two members) is well beyond bad day syndrome, it needs to be addressed as a hard class... (Rogers, 2001 (1997): 14).

## Difficult students' needs?

If this corresponds to the truth, then what exactly do "hard" or difficult students need in class? Although the question may appear to be simple at first glance, in reality the answer is rather complicated, and at times difficult to implement. Before going any further, or even thinking about teaching and learning in the classroom, we must realize and accept that this type of student desperately needs a behaviour model. To put it quite simply, this means that "hard" students need to be taught correct behaviour. As teachers, we need to bear in mind that, more often than not, these students come from disruptive and destructured families which have not dedicated much time and effort to teaching their children much, if anything, about the correct, desirable, socially acceptable behaviour. According to Lee and Marlene Canter:

**Difficult students can represent very different things for various people, ranging from students who misbehave to ones who are very demanding.**

Many difficult students come from home environments where the parents themselves had negative school experiences, and where respect for teachers and school has not been communicated. Other students come from homes where the adults in their lives have been unreliable role models, unresponsive, abusive, or simply overwhelmed and unable to meet the child's needs for motivation and support (Canter and Canter, 1993: 13).

## A Simple Behaviour Plan

Yet, Rome was not built in a day. Consequently, when attempting to teach them about correct and appropriate classroom behaviour, we should begin by setting up a very simple, yet clear, behaviour plan with a maximum of three to five very objective rules and consequences which will be taken

seriously and implemented in class without any exception. One should bear in mind that if the teacher doesn't take this seriously neither will the students.

**The social pressure to be part of and conform to a group is very persuasive.**

### Acknowledging change

We should also make sure that we are providing them with constant feedback on their behaviour and the progress that they are making in this regard. This is essential if we are to scaffold the behaviour-changing process for our students. Instead of constantly focusing on the negative behaviour that a student or class may still be displaying, we need to move on to focusing and stressing any progress that has already been achieved, so that the student or class does not feel as if they are on an impossible and unattainable mission. In addition, we need to respect the fact that mankind is not perfect by nature, and thus, we need to allow for some cool-off time when things begin to get out of hand. This is of the utmost importance when attempting to avoid behaviour confrontations with students, which we may not necessarily win. Yet, none of this is possible without a fair amount of patience on behalf of the teacher! Without this, the fundamental principle of establishing a positive classroom environment leading to meaningful teaching and learning will continue to be a distant dream in any classroom.

**Instead of constantly focusing on the negative behaviour that a student or class may still be displaying, we need to move on to focusing and stressing any progress that has already been achieved.**

### Promoting a change in behaviour

In order to promote behaviour change in the classroom, we can also make use of one of man's most basic social characteristics: our inner need to belong to a group. Mankind is by nature a social creature who does not like or desire to live in isolation. Thus, if a student refuses to respect the rules that have been set up for any particular group or class, then, as teachers we can choose to temporarily remove them from that group. Alternatively, if the student refuses to leave the classroom and group in question, then we can always resort to the dramatic and drastic tactic of moving the group

elsewhere and leaving the student to spend the remainder of that particular lesson alone in the classroom. If nothing else, this will get the student to reflect on his/her behaviour and its consequences. The social pressure to be part of and conform to a group is very persuasive.

### Maintaining the learning gate open

Once we have dealt with the essential behaviour problems, then we need to move on to maintaining the students' learning gates open. This is more easily achieved if we tap into their natural desire to learn. Although a student may not be open to learning English, everyone is open to learning in general in order to survive socially and professionally in the real world. If we are able to tap into this, then sooner or later they will begin to focus on learning English. This of course means that we need to ensure that we have a dynamic teaching style which caters for different types of learners, in addition to their various learning styles.

**We need to ensure that we have a dynamic teaching style which caters for different types of learners, in addition to their various learning styles.**

It also means that we need to relate what we are teaching to the students' characteristics, interests and needs. Last but by no means least, we need to ensure that students are being provided with ample encouragement and support in addition to regular experiences of personal success in the classroom. "Why should I keep on trying if no matter what I do, I never seem to get it right?" This is a question that is well worth us thinking about! As Bill Rogers explains: "Encouragement is the necessary balance to correction. It is the *conscious* effort to acknowledge and build up what is positive in the class or group." (Rogers, 2001 (1997): 78).

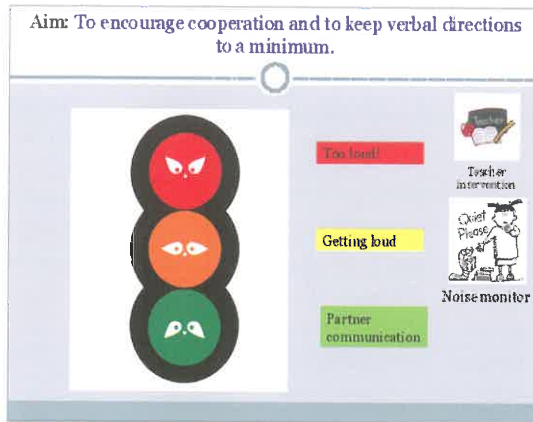
It has thus become apparent that behaviour management is of the utmost importance if we are to create a classroom environment in which learning can flourish, to ensure that we are protecting basic rights of safety, learning and respect in our classrooms, to set boundaries in which students can feel successful and consequently achieve, and, finally, to teach them about socially appropriate and acceptable choices.

### Controlling the noise level in class...

I will now move on to providing you with two concrete examples of how I control the level of working noise in my classroom. To begin with, I make sure that I am constantly

teaching students about the behaviour that I would like them to adopt in my classroom, instead of focusing on any undesired behaviour and spending a great amount of my time and energy on punishing them for this. Basically, this means that I am approaching the whole issue of behaviour change from a positive and not negative point of view. As has been previously mentioned, I begin by making sure that I am giving them constant feedback and orientation on their behaviour at any particular time or moment of the class.

In order to do so, I make use of a behaviour traffic light, which is stuck up in front of the class next to the board and which uses what students already know about the real world to pave the road for a change in terms of behaviour within the classroom. It functions in the exact same manner as a regular traffic light: If students are making too much noise then I stick a visual signal or sticker on the red light. Before this happens, I usually try to show them that a change of behaviour is in order by sticking the sticker on the yellow light. Instead of yelling at them and mirroring incorrect behaviour myself, I am telling them that they need to moderate their behaviour by reducing the noise level before things get out of hand. In short, I am exemplifying the behaviour that I



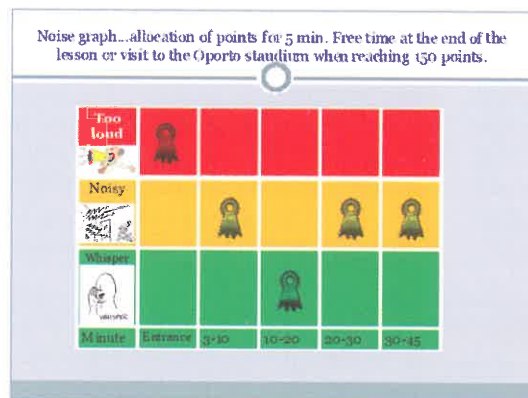
would so like them to have. As Hook and Vass point out “Although this may seem obvious, it is worth reinforcing that your behaviour is the most significant influence in the classroom. Children are in the process of acquiring the social skills to make successful choices about their behaviour. They need you as a role model.” (Hook and Vass, 2010 (2004): 55). If however, the sticker is on the green light then, things can proceed as they are.

You may be thinking that all of this is fair and well, but how on earth does one get them to behave over an entire lesson? Pavlov used to control his mice by giving them negative reinforcement in the form of electrical shocks. I, however, choose to go about this by resorting to positive reinforcement! This means that before I can go any further I need to find out a bit about my students, more precisely, what they would desperately like to have happen to them. In one of my classes, their dream experience involved visiting the Oporto stadium. And so I set about the seemingly impossible task of giving them a very valid reason for changing their behaviour in order to please me, so that at the end of the term, I could try please them in turn.

As you may observe in the figure on the right, I have divided the lesson into five critical time slots which are evaluated as they happen. Once again I make this very visual by resorting to the colour code which has been previously introduced by my behaviour traffic light. Instead of telling them off for entering the classroom in an unacceptable manner, I simply stick the sticker in the red block thereby indicating that a behaviour change is necessary if students are to earn the prize that has been previously agreed upon. If they alter their behaviour in order to ensure that the balance of the lesson is positive, then they earn

ten points. Once they have a total of one hundred and fifty points, which is usually only possible at the end of the term, then they have earned the right to their dream experience. Alternatively, on days when students need a more immediate reward, I can humour them by giving them the one thing that I have which they so desire: time management! If they behave well, they get to have the

final five minutes of the lesson to do as they wish. In this manner I ensure that students can choose between a more immediate or long-term reward. The final decision is up to them. Thus, in my class there is always a reason to behave and that reason is never the teacher! Students are working for and behaving for the group! As Rodrick Lucero points out: “A learning environment will happen, whether intentional or not... so why not go about building a positive environment intentionally.”



### Promoting a positive classroom environment in 5 easy steps

By investing in and promoting a positive classroom environment, I am increasing student engagement, creating a safe and discursive environment, whilst simultaneously encouraging student collaboration and participation. The key to achieving this, in my opinion, is relationships. If students are to like and respect us, then they need to see us as more than mere teachers. Instead, they need to realise that like them, we are people with feelings who just happen to enjoy spending time with and getting to know our students as people as well as students. I can't help but ask the following question: “How can I like my students if I don't even know them?

The opposite is just as true of course. How can they like me if they don't know me and can't even remember my name?

Now that we have understood the importance of a positive classroom environment in the learning process, I will now move on to presenting a simple action plan for creating meaningful relationships in the classroom.

**I am increasing student engagement, creating a safe and discursive environment, whilst simultaneously encouraging student collaboration and participation.**

**Step 1:** Dedicate the first three minutes of your lesson to meeting and greeting everyone at the door. Not only does this show students that you have taken a personal interest in them, but it also allows you to calm them down in a cunning manner, thereby reducing

any confusing and rowdy entries into the classroom. Once again it allows one to avoid focusing on negative behaviour whilst teaching students the type of behaviour that is acceptable and desirable in class.

**Step 2:** Show a personal interest in them as individuals. Find out about their likes and dislikes. If

for example, I discover that Ricardo likes FCP and find an interesting article about the coach in the Sunday paper, then I'll cut it out and simply place it on Ricardo's desk when I next see him. Without having made a fuss, I have shown Ricardo (and the rest of the class) that I think about them once our time together is over. For me they are far more than just students. If you allow them to find out more about you, too, you will soon discover that they will soon be doing the same for you. Proof of this is my personal George Clooney stash, which my students have so generously and lovingly built up for me over the last few years!

**Step 3:** Listen to their point of view in class. Let them have a voice. This is very empowering for students. Once



again it tells them that you care and that the lesson is partly theirs as well. It builds up an active, collaborative and engaged learning community, whilst simultaneously teaching them about socially appropriate behaviour and responsibility, which leads on to the next step.

**Step 4:** Transform them into responsible students who are responsible for their individual and collective choices and behaviour in class. In class, as in life, you can choose anything. However, you need to stand up for the choices you have made: I can indeed choose to behave incorrectly, but this choice implies that by so doing, I will also have chosen to leave the class and probably be given some form of a behaviour reprimand.

**Step 5:** Always ensure that you maintain students' dignity and self-esteem, especially when correcting them, and treat them with the same level of respect that you believe you are due. This means that the behaviour issue in class can never become personal. As Jeffrey Kottler points out: "Challenging students are not doing anything *to you*; rather, they are just doing their best to help themselves or their families." (Kottler, 2002: 27) It is not Ricardo who you are correcting but rather Ricardo's behaviour on any particular day, which according to the class' rules is deemed unacceptable. Whenever you are correcting behaviour, always make sure that you are providing the student with a way out: "Ricardo, if you choose to change your behaviour, I am more than willing to allow you to participate in the activity again. In our classroom we all have a right to learn in a safe and secure environment!" If necessary, provide the student with a time-out in which he/she can think about his/her behaviour and the consequences that it may bring about in class instead of promoting a head-on collision with the student in front of the entire class by backing him/her into a corner from which there is no easy escape.

### Promoting Change right from Day 1

In order to prove to students that you are very serious about behaviour change in your classroom, you need to show them that you are serious about this right from Day 1! In this particular case, actions do indeed speak far louder

than words: Think back to the first day/ week of the new school year. Have you ever told your students that this year things are going to be different in your English class, only to move on to telling them about the material they need, the evaluation procedure that you will be following and informing them of the test dates for the term if not for the year ahead? Think about the message that you are subconsciously transmitting to your students: Can they take you seriously? Are things really going to be different? Yeah, yeah, yeah... As Fred Jones points out: "Students do better in class both academically and socially when they feel comfortable, relaxed, and 'at home'. They do not do so well in an impersonal environment." (Jones, 2007: 141). However, what would happen if you began to get to know them on an informal level on your first day together and organised a welcoming party for them with a good getting-to-know-you class activity in addition to a few drinks and snacks. What would they be thinking as they left the class? Would you still have transmitted the same message?

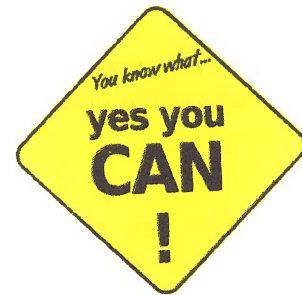
### Maintaining a positive tone

I would strongly defend that you need to keep up this positive message as the year wears on, and so, I always try to begin and end each and every lesson on a positive note. As Hook and Vass point out: "Lesson beginning and ending routines are an essential part of effective behaviour management. They are the points at which you either set the social tone for this lesson or pre-frame the agenda for next lesson." (Hook and Vass, 2010 (2004): 35). As has been previously mentioned, I begin the lesson by welcoming every student to class. Similarly, I end it on a very positive and personal note by standing at the door, saying goodbye and adding a personal comment and/or word of praise for anything that they have done well in that particular lesson. This does of course imply that I have to plan my lesson in such a manner as to guarantee that I do have something positive to say about each and every student. If nothing else, you can always say "Bye, see you again on Wednesday" while offering a friendly smile! Logistically speaking, I am working on creating meaningful relationships with my students, "filtering" students into busy corridors and mirroring the behaviour

change that I so desire and constantly speak of. **As has been previously stressed, sometimes a simple action can speak far louder than a million words!**

### Conclusion

In conclusion, teaching difficult or "hard" students is all about teaching them to become involved and engaged in class. It is also all about creating a positive learning environment in which, as a class community, we can all play, learn and grow together! It's about teaching students that:



Or should I rather say: "Yes, we can!"?

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# Writing 2.0 Tools: Get Creative and Motivated

By Ricard Garcia

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*Ricard Garcia has been a secondary school teacher since 1988. At present he is editor of edu365.cat, curator of CREA and JUGA sections ( sections devoted to 2.0 tools and games in the classroom). He is a publisher of ELT blog Blog and Teach and ELT Teacher Trainer.*

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Writing skills have historically been regarded as paramount in ELT. For many years, students have learnt how to write properly, regardless of their need to improve their other communicative skills, like listening and speaking. Probably this is why, in some cases, writing is regarded as something more cumbersome than speaking skills. Teachers need to show students that writing can be fun, good fun, and rewarding as well.

2.0 tools or applications can help us carry out this task. They engage students, as they are creative, motivating, collaborative, and extremely rewarding, something highly relevant when it comes to raising learners' self esteem. Let's have a quick look at some different types of applications that may help us teachers to enhance our students' writing skills.

Ricard Garcia intends to help teachers to see the benefits of collaborative writing tools available in the Internet. It is paramount to see that these tools may help us teachers to motivate students in their learning process. They will easily get engaged in the creative process of storytelling and therefore, they will improve their communicative skills. Writing is not only text: cartoons, digital storytelling, pictures, films....

loudly. My God! I thought. I can't let him carry on like that because all the other teachers in the school, the real teachers who can speak Spanish 'cos they are Spanish, and who know not only the kids but all the parents too, they'll think I can't control my class! Got to stop this! Got to stop this!

Remember E.T., Spielberg's friendly alien? There's a line in E.T. where he tells Eliot to behave himself. In English, E.T. says "Eliot, be good!". It's an imperative, like *Portate bien*, and I wanted this boy, Álvaro, to *comportarse bien* conmigo. I wanted him to be good for me. That's what I wanted to say, but the problem was, I translated literally from the English and got a bit confused with the verbs *ser* and *estar* along the way. So I pointed at him, and said in a commanding voice:

- Álvaro, estás bueno para mí.

Now in case anyone is reading this who doesn't speak Spanish, I'd just told him that I found him 'hot'.

Álvaro spun round.

- ¿Qué?

And the whole class went silent. Yeah, I thought. Yeah I've got 'em now. Time to put my foot down, impose my will. So I looked him in the eye and I said it again.

- Álvaro, estás bueno para mí.

And what did Álvaro do? He thought about his options for a fraction of a second and he sat down. No more shouting. In fact, no more real problems with Álvaro ever. So what's my point with this? My point is that even though the measures I took to improve the level of discipline in that classroom at that moment, were completely inadequate, even though the words I chose to try to restore order were completely the wrong ones, we still got there. Why? Because the situation hinged not upon what I did, or what I said. It hinged upon what Álvaro did and what decisions he made. And that, for me, is crucial. Discipline is about students consciously making decisions that help the running of the class. It's not about me being angry. An angry teacher is just entertainment for the students - a form of entertainment not without its risks perhaps, but entertainment nonetheless. This is me when I'm angry.

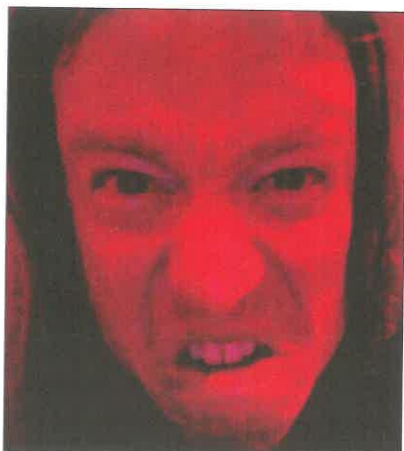
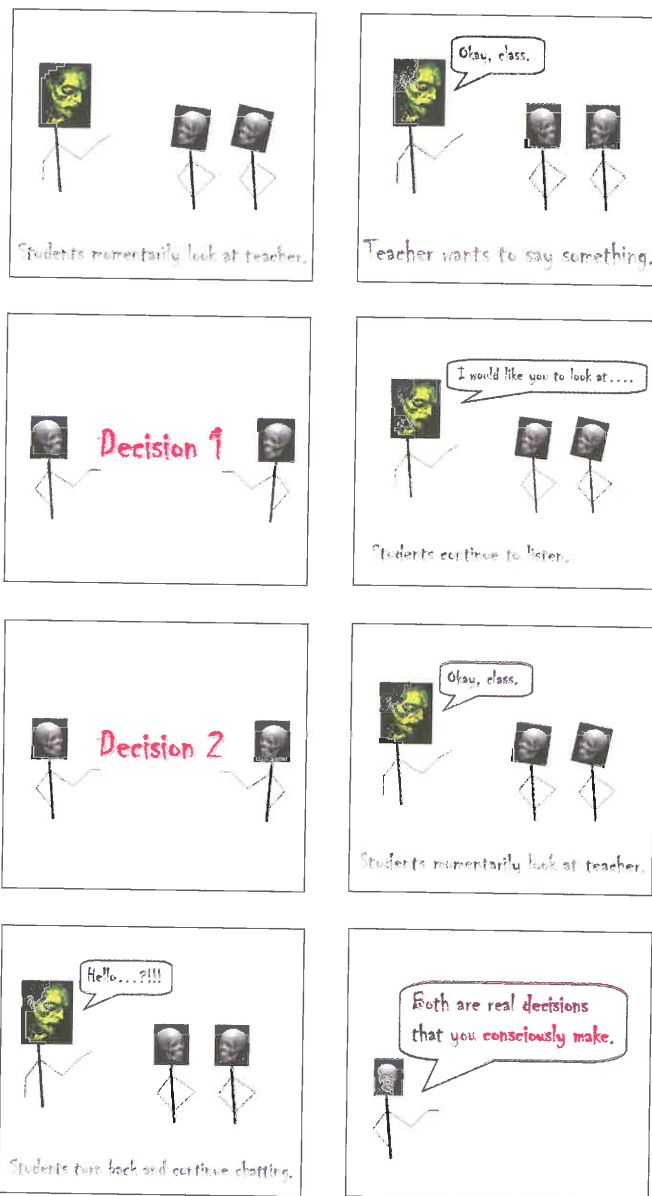


Fig 1. Angry Teacher: Not the best time to share logic with your students.

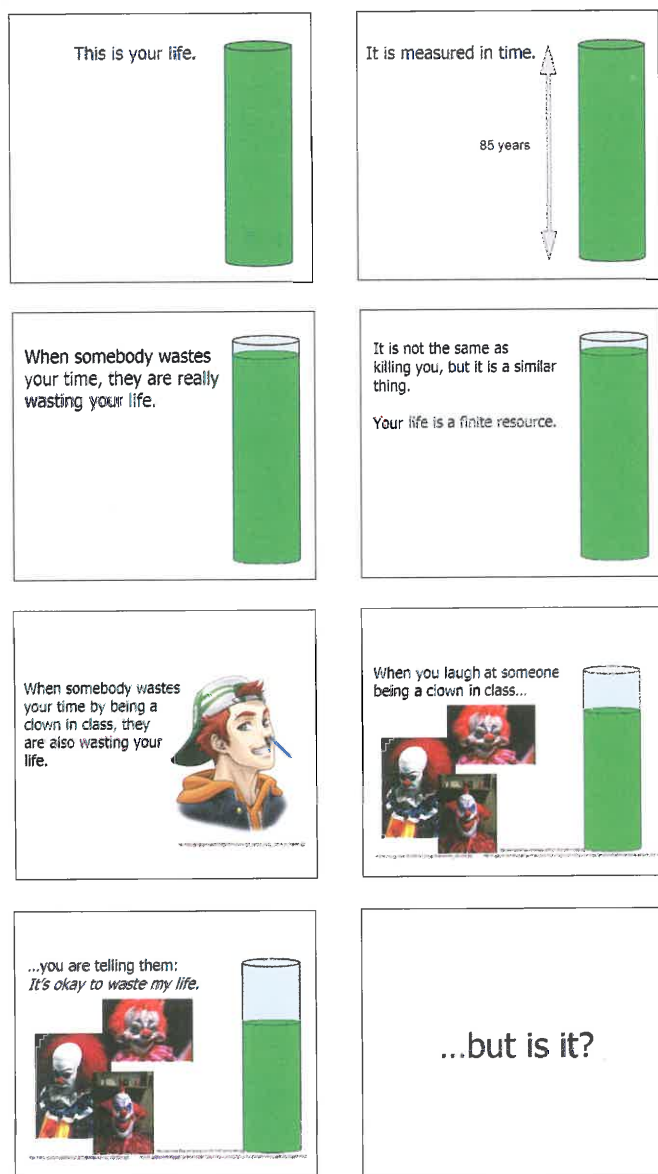
Now I ask you, if you were a student, would you be more receptive to the logical content of my discourse or more distracted by my heightened emotional state? Exactly. So that's why I choose to talk about discipline when I'm not angry and before anything's gone wrong. In fact, I talk about discipline all the time. It's decisions, decisions, decisions. The first decision students are going to take is whether or not to listen to me. From a teacher's point of view, I think if we can get past this hurdle and have everyone listening to instructions, then we're already well on the way to success. Sometimes I use this PowerPoint sequence to get my point across:



Elsewhere I've talked about classroom micro-mechanics in relation to task design but here we are looking at student micro-decisions. If we can get them to acknowledge the fact that they are making decisions, then we can start to hold them accountable for those decisions. I talked about making this same point to students back in Issue 67 of this journal. I'm now using more visual material like the slides above to try to convey lines of reasoning from the perspective of the teacher - teacher-logic - to help make what we do, and what we ask them to do, slightly more transparent and decipherable - for them.



Inspired by a branch of linguistics called tagmemic theory<sup>3,4</sup> and in an effort to build bridges between my world and my students' I have put together a number of these sequences of logical argumentation, which I have termed simply Logics and which you can currently view and download from my website at [www.chrisroland.net](http://www.chrisroland.net). Here's another one:



Now teenagers can get pretty fed up of being told stuff. They're at a time in their lives where everyone is telling them something and demanding that they treat it as equally serious. I myself often fall back on the maxim: 'I'm only an English teacher. My job is to teach them English, nothing more.' Maybe though, we have a responsibility as educators to share with them the underlying logic of the demands we make in class, to make that logic explicit, but with a neutral charge, rather than just tell our classes off when they don't do as we want (when they don't deduce and run on that logic for themselves automatically). After all, it is this logic or an extension of it, that we hope they will run on later in their adult lives.

Now obviously making students aware of their decisions, on its own, does not mean that they will make the right decisions. It does, however mean that when a student consistently makes decisions that sabotage class learning, then we already have

our first line of explanation ready as to why we have reacted by bringing in the various disciplinary measures we have at our disposal.

- Teacher, why did you send Pepe out?" asks one of his classmates.

- I sent him out because the decisions he was making were not helping the class to function well.

It's neutral language. It's not angry. It's fairly logical and it answers the question quite comprehensively. When we speak to Pepe himself after the class, we can ask him what decisions he thinks he made. He may maintain that he made no decisions at all. We might want to go back over key points of his misbehaviour and consider with Pepe if he could have made any alternate choices at those times. Did he do anything to actually help the class?

One very important point is that there is a way back for Pepe though. He needs to be convinced that if he starts making the right decisions, then we will start treating and thinking of him differently. His current misbehaviour may not be totally forgotten, after all, in the end of term reports, we need to take into account the whole term, but there needs to be some possibility of a reprieve.

In fact, this way back, this road to recovery, starts even as we are sending Pepe out of the classroom in the first place. We can say:

- I like you Pepe and it's nothing personal, but right at this moment your decisions are not helping the class. Please come with me.

Even here, he's being assured that we don't hate him, that it's not manía, and there is implicit in our words the idea that if he changes his behaviour, this situation can be avoided in the future. You won't get very far at all with teenage students if they think you hate them. It may seem obvious but it isn't that obvious to teenage students and it's a point often missed by us teachers. The way you avoid this is quite simple. You tell your students that you like them: Mireia, I like you, but I've given you a really low mark for this writing. Do it again without all the scribbles and swear words and I'll give you a better mark. Pau, I like you, but I'd like you more if you did this exercise.

Notice also please that we are leading Pepe out of the class. This is much easier than pointing to the door and telling him to get out. If we do that, he's not sure what he's meant to do when he gets outside. Here, we are taking him somewhere. There is a plan. This also means, of course, that we must have a plan ready. Where is he going to go? What is he going to do? Who is going to keep an eye on him?

With this latter point, we really need to reach out to our institution and co-workers again. How effective our disciplinary measures are often depends on the quality of our relationship with it and them.

Imagine a triangle. At the top you have notas - termly and

yearly marks. These are often a large motivating factor for students. At one of the other points you have the teacher figure - the respect students have for her or him and what that teacher does to manage the class (an area on which, APAC's own Tom Maguire rightly reminds me, there already exists a considerable body of work). At the last point of the triangle I would like to place significant others. This triangle represents the external factors we can exploit to try to stack the odds in our favour and get students to make the 'right' decisions when their internal logics are running incongruently to our own classroom aims.

The last point of the triangle, significant others, is a big one. This is about how students relate what happens in your class with the rest of their world. If they don't care so much about what you think of them, maybe they do care about what the school secretary thinks, because she or he is a close friend of their family, for example. So then when you sit Pepe down outside the office to continue with his activity book exercises there for a while, you might want to say to the secretary:

- Pepe is a wonderful young man but right now he needs to cool off and focus a bit. He's going to do some exercises out here for a bit. Could you send him back in 10 minutes please?

Make no mistake, how you manage this interaction with the secretary, or the head of the school, or his class tutor, is as important as how you manage your dealings with Pepe himself - and he will be watching and taking note of this too. I mentioned at the beginning of this write-up that it is your institution's obligation to back you up. It is. It is also in your interests, however, to reach out wherever you can and develop effective working relationships with the other adults that are significant to your students in their immediate school context. Where there is a barrier to those effective working relationships - whether the reasons be logistical or personal - it is also in your best interests to overcome it and repair them.

While you're thinking about what I've written (if indeed I've succeeded in saying something you think warrants some thought) and testing it against your retrospective classroom experience, I would like to ask you not to do three things. Firstly, don't feel guilty about the misbehaviour of the students you might have. It's only when YOU start to flick pieces of paper, deface the furniture or swear at other students that you should start to feel bad. Secondly, don't take too much credit for your good classes. Finally, don't compare yourself or your classes to other teachers or other teachers' classes. There's nothing good that lies down that road.

Do, please, keep talking about discipline to your colleagues and to your students and do back you co-workers up whenever you get the chance.

To end, I would point out that although as teachers we tend to remember classroom incidents, it is some of the more colourful characters that often remember us with most fondness. They are the ones that often need us most - though they don't always know it at the time.

I was walking along a village street in 2005, just before leaving Seville for a two year teaching post with the British Council in Damascus, and a moped pulled up at the side. A man got off. He was a big man - my height and a bit wider. He took off his helmet. I didn't recognise him at first which made it all the more disturbing when he gave me a man hug (bearing in mind here that I'm British so I don't really do the whole hugging thing too well - I tend to freeze and go rigid a bit like a stick insect). It was Álvaro. He had just started his second year of an economics degree. He said: I didn't like school very much but you were my favourite teacher. Ironic really that whenever I mention him it's to tell an anecdote about a 3<sup>o</sup>ESO boy shouting out the window.

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<sup>1</sup>Roland, C. (2012). Micro-mechanics. *English Teaching Professional*. 79 pp. 4-6.

<sup>2</sup>Roland, C. (2009). What do I do with them? Ideas from "Teaching Low level Teens/ESO Students". *APAC Quarterly Magazine*. 67 pp. 21-29,

<sup>3</sup>Young, R. E., Becker, A. L., Pike, K. L. (1970). *Rhetoric: Discovery and Change*. USA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

<sup>4</sup>Pike, K. L. (1981). Tagmemics, discourse and verbal art. *Ann Arbor: Michigan Studies in the Humanities*.

# Three Films Your Students Might Like

## (And a Few Ideas for Using Them in Class)

By Anna Nieto

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*The overall objective of this article is to reflect on the way we use audiovisuals in EFL teaching, and more specifically how films can be used in order to provide students with valuable communicative practice. We also seek to encourage them to familiarise themselves with other cultural aspects such as movie classics, history and literature. Another objective is to encourage teachers to design activities based on films and film-related materials by themselves according to their students' profiles and needs. We will start by explaining why using films can be beneficial, even for less advanced levels, and we will present three different lesson plans that can be done with different levels.*

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### Why use movies in class?

Nothing beats watching a movie. A movie in itself is appealing enough, and, very often, we have played whole films for our students just for relaxation. However, films offer much more than this.

Learning English through film viewing may still represent a novel approach for some adult students, whose preconceived notion of learning English is based on textbook-oriented and test-driven activities, with the focus on form rather than meaning, and accuracy rather than communication. Working with films is a refreshing learning experience for students who need to take a break from vocabulary lists and drill practices, and combine it with something realistic.

Feature films are more motivating than videos made for EFL/ESL teaching because they provide contextualized linguistic, paralinguistic and authentic cross-cultural information,

intensive and extensive listening comprehension and fluency practice. Films present colloquial English in real-life contexts, a precious opportunity for being exposed to different native speaker voices, slang, reduced speech, stress, accents, and dialects, and students of all levels can (and should) benefit from this.

### What materials to choose?

One of the reasons why English has become the world language (apart from economic and historical reasons) is the powerful cultural industry behind it. Pop music is perhaps the clearest example. But together with pop music, we have good blockbuster films and other audiovisuals which have helped to export cultural values, clichés and traditions. All these materials are now within easier reach than ever and we EFL teachers must view this as a privilege granted by the digital revolution we

are going through. However, there is so much to choose from that one should stop and think about which guiding criteria to follow. Personally I think that it is easier to establish what an audiovisual should NOT be, that is, a mere time filler. I suggest we remember this word (FILLER) as an acronym of the following:

**F** for fun. The videos we choose must be fun and funny. No one would argue that humour is a powerful force in any learning process (and in life in general).

**I** for interesting. This means being aware of your students' interests. Are they teenagers? Adults? Are they a generic group or are they learning English for a specific purpose? How old are they? Interest boosts motivation.

**L** for level. An authentic text will always be more difficult than a text made specifically for EFL purposes, but,

still, difficulty varies depending on things such as the subject matter, cultural references, accents, etc.

**L** for (task) level. Once you've chosen a text, plan the task carefully. Successful task completion will boost your students' confidence. A good combination of text and level of task difficulty makes it possible to expose our students to a wide range of authentic texts even at lower levels.

**E** for engaging and entertaining. The leisure element helps to create a relaxed atmosphere. Again this improves motivation and facilitates learning.

**R** for relevant. The materials chosen must be in keeping with our teaching objectives and our syllabus.

Let us now present three lesson plans to illustrate all this.

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## Lesson plan 1 - SLIDING DOORS

### **Objectives:**

To provide students with extensive listening practice.

To practise third conditional sentences, using prompts from the film script.

### **Content:**

This film tells us the story of Helen, a girl whose life would have been different depending on such a simple fact as catching or missing a train. Thanks to clever editing, we can see how each story would unfold: on one hand we can see what could have happened if Helen had missed the train (visually we identify her with long hair); on the other we can see what could have happened if she had managed to catch it (the same actress with a different hairstyle).

**Level:** Intermediate and above.

**Time:** 2 hours.

### **Procedure:**

Tell your students that they are going to watch a film. Briefly explain what the film is about. Alternatively you can ask them to watch the trailer (at home or in a previous session).

Give them the activity handout and go through the instructions. Make sure they understand them. The task is devised to ensure active listening and they must match each action in the film with its corresponding version of the story.

Play the movie and check answers orally. Ask the students what would have happened anyway. This can lead to some discussion about whether or not fate is the guiding force in our lives.

Give your students the last exercise for homework. This is a traditional grammar exercise where they must use the infinitives in brackets to make third conditional sentences.

## Lesson plan 2 - ABOUT A BOY

### **Objectives:**

To provide students with extensive listening practice.

To encourage students to compare a book and its film adaptation.

**Level:** Upper intermediate or advanced.

**Time:** 2 hours.

### **Procedure:**

Tell your students that they are going to read a book and watch a film at the same time in one single session. This will surprise your students and create a positive and expectant atmosphere. Divide the students into pairs. Give student A Chapter 1 to read and student B Chapter 2. Each chapter is a description of the main characters (Marcus, the boy and Will, the adult). Then ask them to describe their character to each other using their own words. Get feedback.

Play the movie. In order to ensure active listening, give each pair a set of cards (see handout) and ask them to put them into the correct order as the film goes along.

Stop the film just when Will is about to tell Rachel the truth about himself and Marcus. Check comprehension (cards).

Ask students to predict the ending.

Give your students the last chapter to read and check their predictions.

Play the rest of the movie.

As a follow-up activity you can conduct a debate on the following issues:

- New families
- School bullying
- Adulthood in modern times
- Solidarity

## Lesson plan 3 - CHICKEN RUN

### **Objectives:**

To provide students with practice in listening to different varieties of English so they overcome “fear of difficult accents”.

To listen to and understand the general idea of what happens in a film clip.

To learn about different stereotypes in the English-speaking world.

To reflect on stereotypes in general.

**Level:** Pre-intermediate and higher.

**Time:** 50-60 minutes.

**Procedure:**

Write the word STEREOTYPES on the board and ask students if they know what it means and to give examples.

Give the students a copy of the first handout. Introduce the characters and the different accents.

Tell the class that they are going to watch an extract from the film “Chicken Run”. Warn them that the characters speak with an accent. Emphasise the fact that the point of the activity is to identify what happens in the scene. Because listening activities can be stressful for our students, and we are working with a pre-intermediate class, it is very important to put them at ease and make it clear that one aim of this activity is for them to have fun. They must not worry if they do not understand things word for word.

Ask the students to match the accents / nationalities with the adjective describing their stereotype.

Play the scene and ask the students to put the shots in the correct order.

You can conduct a speaking / vocabulary activity, talking about stereotypes in your country.

Listening for language practice: play the fragment in which Ginger is encouraging the hens to escape. In this dialogue, there are different questions and answers. Your students must write the question for each answer Ginger gives using the prompts in the activity. After this, ask your students to watch the fragment again and check their answers.

## CONCLUSION

I have shown three lesson plans that have worked effectively for my students. Exposing learners to English in class through films encourages them to practise their listening skills outside the classroom, and this language exposure has a clear impact on their language level.

On a more personal note, I would like to finish with a line from the film “Seven” where William Somerset (Morgan Freeman) and David Mills (Brad Pitt) discuss how steady optimism can be. They say:

“Ernest Hemingway once wrote that the world is a fine place and worth fighting for. I agree with the second part (...) although, on reflection, the world gave us jazz and literature and some mighty fine hats. Hemingway knew his shit.”

I like to project this reflection onto language teaching, and I think that it is true: we have difficult times ahead. However, this new century is giving us music, cinema, the Internet and a digital revolution that is making languages more accessible than ever. It is making our job easier, more fun and definitely worth fighting for.

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- <http://www.teachwithmovies.org> (organize films by theme and by genre)
- [www.script-o-rama.com](http://www.script-o-rama.com) (scripts)

# Classroom activities



## Sliding doors

You are going to see a film, called *Sliding Doors*. It shows us the two different ways in which *Helen's life would have continued depending on such a simple thing as catching a train*. Watch the film and write A or B if the sentences below belong to the first version (Helen with short hair) or to the second one (Helen with long hair/a band aid on her eyebrow).

What would have happened anyway

- Helen is sacked \_\_\_\_\_
- Helen catches the underground and meets James, though she's not interested in him at first. \_\_\_\_\_
- Helen catches her boyfriend with another girl \_\_\_\_\_
- Helen misses the underground, goes out and gets mugged \_\_\_\_\_
- Helen dumps (leaves) her boyfriend \_\_\_\_\_
- Helen gets drunk in a bar. \_\_\_\_\_
- Helen stays at her friend's \_\_\_\_\_
- Helen suspects that Gerry, her boyfriend is lying \_\_\_\_\_
- Helen accepts a job as a sandwich delivery person \_\_\_\_\_
- Helen changes her hairstyle \_\_\_\_\_
- Helen starts going out with James \_\_\_\_\_
- Helen follows Gerry to the library \_\_\_\_\_
- Lydia tells Helen off for delivering poisoned sandwiches \_\_\_\_\_
- Helen gets a loan and starts her own business \_\_\_\_\_
- Helen falls asleep just when Gerry was about to tell her the truth about him and Lydia \_\_\_\_\_
- Helen faints \_\_\_\_\_
- At Clive's party, Gerry tries to convince Helen to go back to him \_\_\_\_\_
- Helen finds that she's pregnant. \_\_\_\_\_
- She also finds out that James is married \_\_\_\_\_
- Helen finally gathers that Gerry is seeing someone \_\_\_\_\_
- James tells Helen that he will soon be divorced. \_\_\_\_\_
- Helen turns up at Lydia's apartment because Lydia had offered her a job (of course she just wanted to set Helen up) \_\_\_\_\_
- Helen falls down the stairs \_\_\_\_\_
- Helen is run over by a car \_\_\_\_\_
- Helen is taken to hospital. \_\_\_\_\_

## Sliding doors (answer key)

- Helen is sacked A/B
- Helen catches the underground and meets James, though she's not interested in him at first. A
- Helen catches her boyfriend with another girl A
- Helen misses the underground, goes out and gets mugged B
- Helen dumps (leaves) her boyfriend A
- Helen gets drunk in a bar A/ B



- Helen stays at her friend's A
- Helen suspects that Gerry, her boyfriend is lying B
- Helen accepts a job as a sandwich delivery person B
- Helen changes her hairstyle A
- Helen starts going out with James A
- Helen follows Gerry to the library B
- Lydia tells Helen off for delivering poisoned sandwiches B
- Helen gets a loan and starts her own business A
- Helen falls asleep just when Gerry was about to tell her the truth about him and Lydia B
- Helen faints A/ B
- At Clive's party, Gerry tries to convince Helen to go back to him A
- Helen finds that she's pregnant. A/ B
- She also finds out that James is married A
- Helen finally gathers that Gerry is seeing someone. B
- James tells Helen that he will soon be divorced. A
- Helen turns up at Lydia's apartment because Lydia had offered her a job (of course she just wanted to set Helen up) B
- Helen falls down the stairs B
- Helen is run over by a car A
- Helen is taken to hospital. A/ B

Put the verbs in brackets in the right tense in order to make correct conditional sentences.

If Helen (catch) Gerry in bed with Lydia, she (split up) with him she (start up) her own business, (change) her image and she (start) a relationship with James. She (have) some problems with him, though, and she (be run over) by a car, consequently losing her baby and dying.

If Helen (miss) the train, she (not know) anything about Gerry and Lydia sleeping together but she (suspect) something strange was going on. She (have to support) Gerry financially but in the end she (realise) what kind of man he was. She (fall down) the stairs but she (survive).

Key :

If Helen had caught Gerry in bed with Lydia, she would have split up with him, she would have started up her own business, changed her image and she would have started a relationship with James. She would have had some problems with him, though, and she would have been run over by a car, consequently losing her baby and dying.

If Helen had missed the train, she wouldn't have known anything about Gerry and Lydia sleeping together but she would have suspected something strange was going on. She would have had to support Gerry financially but in the end she would have realised what kind of man he was. She would have fallen down the stairs but she would have survived.

## About a boy (Cards)

This is the story of Will, hip unmarried Londoner who is in his late thirties. He lives on his own, but his life gets suddenly disrupted when he meets Marcus.

It all began when Will started dating Angie, a single mum. He noticed that going out with these women had certain advantages, like the fact that they would always consider him better than their previous partners and that they were commitment-free relationships. While all this happens, Marcus is having a hard time both at home and school. Everybody bullies him and to make matters worse, his mum suffers from severe depression. So, after Angie dumped him he set out to look for these women and he joined SPAT (Single Parents Alone Together).

At his first SPAT meeting, Will makes up the story of his life, including a 2-year-old: Ned, whose mum had run off with Will's best friend. Suzie feels sympathetic and she begins going out with Will. Suzie is friends with Marcus' mum (Fiona) and one day she invites him to a picnic with Will. When Suzie asks Will what he does for a living, he tells the (so far) only true fact about him: he doesn't need to work since he lives off the royalties of a song his dad had written years before. At the end of the day something terrible happens: Marcus' s mum had tried to commit suicide.

Just when Will decides the whole single-mum plotline is getting too complicated for him, Marcus tries to set him up with his mum since he feels the two of them isn't enough to make a solid family. But Will doesn't share his views: he doesn't mean to help them. In fact he doesn't mean to help anyone.

Marcus insists, though. He follows Will everywhere and finally tells him that he knows that he doesn't have a child at all. He pushes his way into Will's home and life and begins visiting him regularly after school.

Shortly after that, Will finds out that Marcus is being bullied by his schoolmates. His advice is for Marcus to become invisible, to blend in with the crowd and takes him shopping for a cool pair of trainers. But they get stolen, so Marcus has no choice but to tell his mum what's been happening lately. Fiona is not happy about this and speaks to Will in a restaurant in front of lots of people. Will reminds her that she's being insensitive towards the kid.

Christmas arrived and Will is invited over to Marcus' s for dinner together with the child's father, his girlfriend and grandmother. Suzie turns up but the angry feelings eventually disappear and they all have dinner together. Then, something important happened to both Will and Marcus: they got a crush on a girl.

On New Year's Eve Will meets Rachel, who ended up assuming he had a 12-year-old child

Marcus meets Elli, who was a bit unfriendly with him at first. They became friends and this earned Marcus his schoolmates' respect.

Will asks Marcus to pretend he's his son, and takes him to Rachel's house, so the two kids can meet and play together. It turns out that Ali (Rachel's son) is in the same school as Marcus and he feels terribly jealous of everyone around his mum. He doesn't seem to like Marcus either.

One day Will decided he had to break the news to Rachel: he was not Marcus' natural father. Rachel felt very disappointed and she believed Will was not being honest. So she leaves the restaurant and leaves him all alone.

## Predict the ending (you may select more than one option)

- a) Will and Marcus finished their friendship
- b) Will and Rachel made things up and began a relationship which didn't last long
- c) The four of them became a crazy sort of family (which included Fiona)
- d) Marcus went back to his old weirdo ways
- e) Will starts dating Fiona

ACCENTS AND STEREOTYPES: CHICKEN RUN

Look at these characters from the film *Chicken run*. In the film they speak with a distinct accent that is a bit different from standard English. Listen to your teacher and fill in the gaps below



1-These are Mr and Mrs Tweedy. They are from \_\_\_\_\_.



2-This is Rocky Rhodes. They are from \_\_\_\_\_.



3-This is Mac. She is from \_\_\_\_\_.



4-This is Fowler. He is from \_\_\_\_\_, he speaks \_\_\_\_\_

**Key:**

1. Yorkshire
2. America
3. Scotland
4. Great Britain, Old fashioned English

**In pairs, match each nationality with what you think is its corresponding cliché. Check answers with your teacher**

American  
Scottish  
Yorkshire  
Old British

thick, conservative  
old fashioned, not trusting foreigners  
easygoing, friendly,  
clever, hard working

**Key:**

American: easygoing, friendly; Scottish: clever, good engineers;  
Yorkshire: thick, conservative; Old British: old fashioned, not trusting foreigners

Now watch one scene where the hens are getting organised to escape. You will hear all the characters speaking. Do not worry if you cannot identify the accents, just try to understand what they talk about. Put the pictures in the right order. The captions will help you.





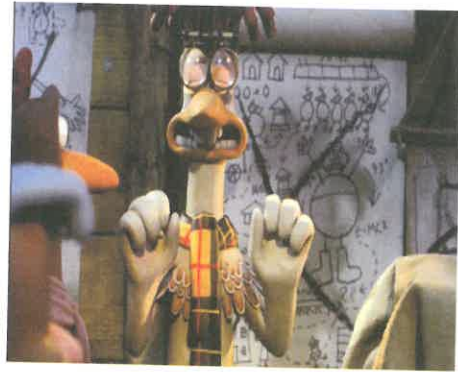
a) \_\_\_\_\_ What a load of tripe!



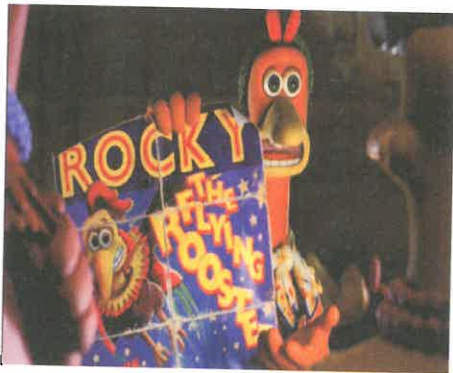
b) \_\_\_\_\_ Freedom!!!



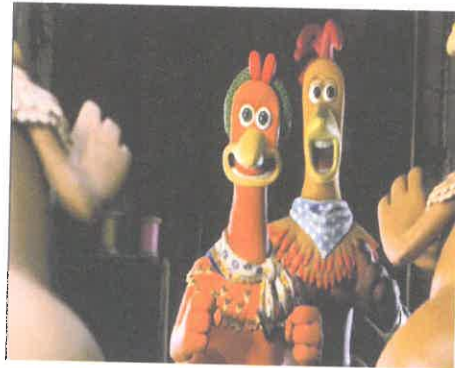
c) \_\_\_\_\_ all the beautiful English chicks



d) \_\_\_\_\_ That didn't work



e) \_\_\_\_\_ what's on the poster?



f) \_\_\_\_\_ I knew it was possible!



g) \_\_\_\_\_ It's all in me head



h) \_\_\_\_\_ Pushy Americans!



i) \_\_\_\_\_ Order, order!



j) \_\_\_\_\_ the turnip's bought it



k) \_\_\_\_\_ Thank you ladies and gentlemen!

Key:

a-5	d-2	g-4	j-3
b-6	e-10	h-8	k-7
c-9	f-11	i-1	

Now listen to Ginger trying to encourage the other hens to escape, some of the hens do not understand her very well. What questions does Ginger ask?. The prompts below will help you.

he on I s holiday  
 farmer live does the where  
 is farm the where  
 feeds Who us

- (1) \_\_\_\_\_ ? - We feed ourselves.  
 (2) \_\_\_\_\_ ? - There is no farm. (3) \_\_\_\_\_ ? - There is no farmer.  
 (4) \_\_\_\_\_ He isn't anywhere. Don't you get it?

Now watch the fragment again and check your answers with the transcript.

"The problem is the fences aren't just round the farm, they're up here in your heads. There is a better place out there. Somewhere beyond that hill. It has wide-open spaces and lots of trees. And grass. Can you imagine that?

Cool, green grass.

- Who feeds us? - We feed ourselves.
- Where's the farm? - There is no farm.
- Where does the farmer live? - There is no farmer.

Is he on holiday?

He isn't anywhere. Don't you get it?

There's no egg count, no farmers, no dogs and coops and keys, and no fences!  
 In all my life, I've never heard such a fantastic load of tripe!"

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