

# ENGLISH IN ACTION 24/7

The huge impact that internet has had in our lives tends to obscure the fact that only 20 years ago most of us did not know what email was and had never accessed the world wide web. With more than one million users today, and plans for two million users in 2020, internet will have drastically changed the way we access information, and the way we consider education and learning takes place.

How are these changes materializing? It's not about resources any more. For some years now, teachers at conferences have been sharing links to online dictionaries, exercises, videos, podcasts, speech recognition and error analysis systems, all for free. However, the wealth of resources available were used basically as additional inputs, or extra practice materials and had not yet changed the structure of our classes, nor the role of the teachers.

Recent developments using web 2.0 technologies aimed at catering for personal learning styles and rhythms such as [PLE](#) (Personal Learning Environments) [MOOCs](#) (Massive Open Online Courses) are making their way into our society and will surely reshape our classrooms and our role as teachers. Connectivity, networking and life-long learning are the basis in both approaches, and full responsibility stays with the learners, who can and must decide the content, the method and the timing with learning opportunities now available 24/7.

What is the role of the teacher of English in this context? Web 2.0 technologies and free availability of courses online offer a learning paradise but they also present challenges which are diverse for the different educational levels. Many questions arise, to which we still have no answers. Will diversity in the classroom increase with 24/7 accessibility? Do we teachers still have a role as content providers? What should be our role? How can we help students streamline the wealth of opportunities according to their needs and interests? What should the links be between the classroom and round the clock accessibility?

We hope to be able to share our questions in the coming APAC ELT Convention, and look forward to finding some answers.

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# EDITORIAL

The organizing committee has been working on the the 2014 APAC-ELT Convention for many weeks now, and it is bound to be a great success. Meanwhile, the APAC editorial board has been putting together the articles it has received from the speakers in the last convention, and now we are getting the first of two sets out to you. For those of you who attended the 2013 event, this will be a reminder of the presentations you listened to and a way to find out what was said in the ones that you had to miss. For those of you who were not able to come to the gathering, this and the next issue of the journal will allow you to get a taste of the talks. Hopefully it will whet your appetite for the real deal, and you will find a way to come to the 2014 meeting of minds. This issue is devoted to the more theoretical presentations, dealing with reflections, findings of studies, learning theories, and other underpinnings of our profession. The next issue will feature classroom experiences, projects, materials, and other nuts-and-bolts aspects of what we do.

The 2013-2014 school year will most likely be another difficult one for teachers, with large class sizes, more contact hours with students, cuts in pay, and reductions in resources. We all know that solutions need to come from the education administration, but APAC is trying to do its share as well, with its annual convention, publications, award competitions, and myriad other behind-the-scenes endeavours. We not only want to be a presence in the teaching community but also an instrument of improvement, by helping, encouraging, extolling, and inspiring the implementation of good practice in language classes and, whenever possible, in education in general.

We are sure that the ideas discussed in this issue will help all of us in rethinking and revamping our syllabuses and lessons, introducing changes and new approaches that will contribute to making our classes more effective and more enjoyable, leading to broader, deeper, and more durable learning.

As always, we urge you to take a few hours out of your busy lives and write up a brief description of approaches, projects, materials, experiences and other aspects of your teaching that you feel would benefit your fellow teachers. The APAC journal is not dedicated exclusively to the ELT convention; there is plenty of room in it for anything that is worthwhile for teachers to learn about. So, please, send us “your two pennies’ worth” about something that is working well for you. A good length would be around 2500 words (“tuppence” can go very far in some areas of today’s world), but even 1500 words could be fine (sometimes the addage “less is more” holds very true). We can all learn a lot from each other, and “many hands make light work”.

Best wishes,

**The Editorial Team**

Dear colleagues,

A couple of decades ago, English was the kind of good one would try to buy abroad. English was to be found in the UK or the US, in Ireland, Canada or Australia and, so, we all did our best to travel far away to get in touch with the odd beast. That was the past. Access to English is now but a click away and in a variety of exciting formats. As we put it in the presentation of our upcoming APAC Convention-2014, “[t]he huge impact that internet has had in our lives tends to obscure the fact that only 20 years ago most of us did not know what email was and had never accessed the world wide web. With more than one billion users today, and projections for double that number by 2020, internet will have drastically changed the way we access information, and the way we consider the places where learning takes place”. The motto for the Convention – “Active English 24/7” – suggests the main issue we want to address: What is the role of the teacher of English in this context? As usual, a number of distinguished researchers will be with us to discuss this and related questions in the spirit of APAC’s big family reunion, that is, in sharing ideas and finding common ground between research and classroom practice. Once you’ve checked the program I know you would consider it a careless mistake not to join us.

I imagine you have been receiving our regular newsletters and are well aware of the coming publication of a new volume in APAC’s monograph series exploring the effects of the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for languages) ten years after its publication. The volume offers a comprehensive perspective on the issue and its content has benefited from experts and practicing teachers alike.

By the time this journal reaches you, I suppose we’ll have a reelected executive body (the general assembly is scheduled for October) that will keep pushing APAC towards the future and make our association relevant and useful to you all. APAC is, more than ever, a 24/7 home where everyone is most welcome.

Best wishes,

**Miquel Berga**

President



# APAC-ELT Convention 2013.

## Opening Ceremony

By Miquel Berga, APAC President

Sr. Secretari General de la Conselleria d'Ensenyament, Sr. Director del British Council a Barcelona, APAC members, friends,

It is a pleasure and a privilege to welcome you all, once again, to the APAC-ELT Convention. Your continuing support makes this event a landmark in the field of English Teaching in our country: hundreds of participants, more than forty presentations, and the big hall just in front crowded with publishers producing all kinds of teaching and learning materials.

Our motto this time is "The value of English". One can view the concept of "value" from many angles: Is it the cost of English? The worth? Or is it, simply, its usefulness? Or are we to include its benefit, its importance, its significance? Whatever the angle, though, in the context of this Convention we have to consider the value of English in the broad perspective of educational aims. Most plenary sessions today and tomorrow will try to tackle the issue along these lines. I hope we'll come out of it with deep insights into what is really valuable about teaching and learning English today and how this very process becomes a satisfactory and meaningful experience. APAC members and participants in this convention are particularly qualified to diagnose the state of English in Catalan society and consider the relationship between means and ends in this respect. (And, by the way, I feel uncomfortable distinguishing between APAC members and participants in the Convention:

Why don't you all become APAC members and make our Association even bigger? You'll get our publications, you'll save money and you and I will be the happier for that!)

I am very pleased to have the two gentlemen sitting with me at this table today. One is Chris Dove, Director of the British Council in Catalonia. And he is here today for a very special reason. His institution is celebrating 70 years in Catalonia. It all started in 1943. Now, the political circumstances in Spain in the 1940s -with General Franco, a dictator who got material support from Hitler and Mussolini

during the recent civil war-, were, of course, not very sympathetic to British culture and the English language for that matter. And yet, by 1943, two years after opening premises in Madrid, the British council expanded its presence in Spain, opening the British Institute in Barcelona. It took a Catholic Irishman and Franco sympathiser with a love for music and a charismatic personality to do the trick. His name was Walter Starkie. As soon as the fortunes of Nazi Germany started to decline, especially after the Normandy landings in 1944, the Spanish fascists

quickly decided to make things easier for the British Council.

As it happens, Franco remained in power for almost four decades and it is only fair to say that the British Institute in Barcelona gradually became a sheltering place for lovers of free expression and for defenders of Catalan culture.

It all makes a fascinating political tale, but it is very good news that Franco is no longer around, while the British



Council in Barcelona is still with us and APAC wants to join in the celebration.

I am also very pleased to welcome the other gentleman at this table: Mr. Joan Mateo i Andrés, who holds a very important and influential post in the Conselleria d'Ensenyament. He is the Secretari de Polítiques Educatives del Departament d'Ensenyament, with the responsibilities of planning and implementing education policies and fostering innovation. The area of his concerns is especially relevant to all that APAC stands for.

Let me read from the Conselleria webpage and you'll see why:

*Entre les responsabilitats del Dr. Mateo en el aquest càrrec destaquen la d'impulsar els plans i els programes per aplicar i desplegar les polítiques educatives del Departament, elaborar les propostes i línies d'actuació en matèria d'ordenació i innovació del sistema educatiu, exercir la direcció de la Inspecció d'Educació, impulsar el coneixement i l'ús de les diferents llengües en el sistema educatiu de Catalunya, i donar suport a projectes de renovació pedagògica i promoure la innovació curricular i la difusió de bones pràctiques educatives.*

Joan Mateo holds a Ph.D. in Pedagogy and has been Dean of the College of Pedagogy at the Universitat de Barcelona. He has been director of l'Institut de Ciències de l'Educació (1999-2004) and director of the Gabinet d'Avaluació i Innovació Universitària de la UB (1999-2009). He has directed fifteen doctoral theses and is the author of over fifty articles and ten books, most of which are dedicated to research methodology and educational measurement and assessment, among which *Medición y evaluación educativa* (2008) and *Retos europeos en la educación del siglo XXI* (2011) stand out. At present, he also holds the post of President del Consell Superior d'Avaluació del Sistema Educatiu de Catalunya.

We are very honoured to welcome him to APAC, and we are grateful that he has accepted to say some words on the topic of Assessment and Evaluation, a field he is an expert on not only from the theoretical point of view as Catedràtic de Mètodes d'Investigació i Diagnòstic en Educació de la UB, but also from a practical point of view, as his hands-on involvement in the planning and development of assessment instruments for the Departament d'Ensenyament goes back to the mid-1990s.

We thought that with the growing importance of assessment and evaluation in our daily lives as teachers, and with the impact of the recent publication of the results of the PISA counterpart for foreign languages, "The European Indicator of Language Competence", Dr. Mateo's knowledge could help us get "the global picture" of how things stand today, and get a good idea of where we are heading.

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Benvolgudes i benvolguts membres d'APAC

És un plaer tenir l'ocasió de dirigir-me a vosaltres

a l'inici de la APAC ELT Convention. La Consellera m'ha demanat especialment que l'excusi aquest any; malgrat l'estima que té per l'APAC i l'interès que tenia en poder compartir amb vosaltres tot allò que s'està planificant en relació amb l'aprenentatge de l'anglès a Catalunya, qüestions d'agenda ho han fet del tot impossible.

L'aprenentatge de l'anglès és un objectiu estratègic de la nostra societat i no podem defugir la necessitat de millorar la competència en aquesta llengua al nostre sistema educatiu, en una comunitat amb dues llengües pròpies, amb un model lingüístic singular, i amb més de 240 diferents llengües a les escoles. Avui més que mai cal posar en valor la llengua anglesa. El Departament d'Ensenyament s'ha proposat per aquesta legislatura un pla molt ambiciós per al plurilingüisme efectiu dels nois i noies de Catalunya, apropant al màxim els objectius del govern i les demandes europees. Per tal de portar-lo a terme vol engegar diferents actuacions amb diferents objectius amb una única finalitat, que és la millora del nivell d'anglès a Catalunya. Crec que un context com aquest és el més idoni per a presentar com a primícia un primer dibuix d'aquest pla.

Les actuacions que es preveuen s'estan encara dibuixant, i n'hi ha que són a curt termini i d'altres a més llarg termini, cal pensar en fer una bona planificació per un horitzó de cinc anys, per al 2018. Presentaré a continuació les dues primeres que estan ja prou clares.

La primera actuació, que preveiem iniciar ben aviat és la d'aproximar els aprenentatges als nivells marcats pel Consell d'Europa en el Marc Europeu Comú de Referència per a les llengües. Ens proposem aconseguir que la majoria d'alumnat que finalitzi l'etapa de l'educació primària pugui acreditar un nivell A1 i que un 50% d'aquests mateixos alumnes pugui acreditar un nivell A2. Pel que fa a la secundària, la proposta és d'arribar a un nivell A2 per la gran majoria de l'alumnat al finalitzar el quart de l'ESO i acreditar un nivell B1 per al 50% d'aquest alumnat. Assolir aquesta fita no és fàcil, i en aquests moments s'estan estudiant les actuacions que poden fer-la possible, tant de caire curricular, de formació del professorat, d'organització de centres o de caire normatiu.

Un altre actuació que es veu necessària és l'augment de l'exposició a la llengua anglesa. No n'hi ha prou amb la classe d'anglès, i cal veure com podem impartir continguts curriculars en anglès. S'està contemplant la possibilitat de facilitar la inclusió de mòduls o blocs en llengua anglesa dins de diferents matèries, treient el màxim partit tant del professorat excel·lentment format que ja tenim com dels materials disponibles al mercat. Això implica gestionar canvis estructurals que implicaran a tota la comunitat escolar, la reorganització dels centres, dels seus horaris i dels seus recursos humans.

Per tal de portar a terme aquest objectiu tant ambiciós, ens cal la col·laboració de professionals com ara vosaltres i també el compromís de la societat, des de tots els contextos i estaments. Avui, precisament, s'ha fet – crec – un pas molt important, amb un acord amb TV3 per tal de mostrar alguns programes de la franja infantil en versió original, sotstitul·lats en català.

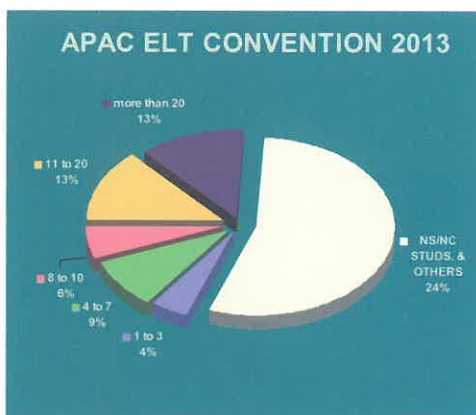
Com veieu estem davant d'un repte molt important que ens mantindrà molt enfeïnats. Comptem amb tots vosaltres com a professionals i com a especialistes, i ens comprometem a tenir-vos al corrent dels desenvolupaments.

# APAC-ELT Convention - Assessment 2013

## The Value of English

### Years of Teaching

ELT CONVENTION 2013  
416 ATTENDING  
68 SPEAKERS



1 to 3	4 to 7	8 to 10	11 to 20	+ 20	NS/NC-STUDENTS & OTHERS	TOTAL
18	39	24	55	52	228	416

of language school teachers, 3% of University teachers, 1% of VET teachers, and a growing 17% of students to become teachers, while almost 20% of the people registered do not tick this particular field.

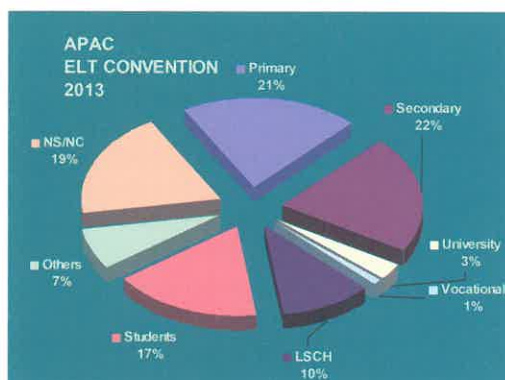
Regarding the years of teaching experience, we find 4% of “rookies” so to say, 9% of teachers with 4 to 7 years’ experience, 6% with 8 to 10 years, 13% with 11 to 20 years, 13% with more than 20 years (!), and a 55% are either students or teachers who do not answer. This picture does not differ dramatically from previous editions: we know that the core of our audience belongs to the Primary and Secondary strands, we know that students of the masters in pedagogy are increasingly interested in sharing a couple of days with more experienced teachers and gather information from the horse’s mouth, and we know that people come no matter how long they have been teaching for because we all need to freshen up ourselves and classrooms...

This is probably why we don’t move away from the regular scheme, although we also try hard to track the latest tendencies in ELT and give them voice. We are also aware that, for instance, we need to include more VET in our offer, especially now that many CFGM and CFGS are incorporating English into their syllabuses. The 2012 Panel Session with prizewinning cook Joan Roca and the former APAC board member José Antonio Martín, put English for Professional Purposes upfront once again, and we are now committed to looking for the best VET professionals for our 2014 program.

## The Value of English

### Professional Field

ELT CONVENTION 2013  
416 ATTENDING  
68 SPEAKERS



Primary	Secondary	University	Vocational	Language school	Students	Others	NS/NC	TOTAL
85	88	13	4	43	72	31	80	416

Dear friends and colleagues,

Here is the assessment of this year’s convention *The Value of English*. It gathered 416 attendees, 68 speakers, 25 sponsors (9 of them publishers), almost 20 people in the APAC organising committee and help team, and the technicians of the UPF backstage. Congrats and thanks, once again, to all those who made it possible and successful.

The information you will read below comes, as you know, from the registration data and from the processing of the recording booklets you carry around during the convention to record your attendance. For us, it is of utmost importance to get your impressions on the lectures and workshops to ensure that our choices when we prepare the program meet your expectations, year after year.

If we want to get an overall idea of the audience profiles regarding the professional field, we get a 21% of primary teachers, 22% of secondary teachers, 10%

Let us begin at the beginning: the Opening session on Thursday afternoon featured Professor Herbert Puchta and his *Foreign Language Teachers Can Make a Difference* that aroused comments such as “inspirational session” and “enthusiastic speaker” not to talk about the “food for thought” of the contents. Before his speech, we had the regular delivery of the APAC – John McDowell British Council Awards, that has become a *nurse pond* of hard-working talented teachers and ground breaking experiences, and the address by the authorities, the Departament d’Ensenyament represented by its Secretari General, Joan Mateo. You will find the transcripts of the speeches and the *actes* of the Awards in this issue.

The three simultaneous sessions after the Welcome



Cava were the Round table *The Level Of English in Catalonia: A Perspective From the Educational System*, Tim Murphey's very dynamic *Value Added English Learning for Personal-Social-Global Purposes and the Altruistic Turn* and, Professor Miquel Llobera and *The Value of Perspective*. The first two were full to the brim and had active audiences willing to participate. The Round table in particular had a 30-minute TV3 report as a starting point and counted on the presence of the editor, an inspector and a teacher to comment on the different sequences and revert to the audience. It was an agile and productive 90 minute session though some say they regret not having had more time to tackle the actual problems to be faced in the classroom.

Friday morning started with the traditional Keynote Speech, again with Professor Herbert Puchta who had agreed to do the Opening session too when, only a week before the Convention, we got an email from Professor Keith Morrow saying that he would be unable to make it at APAC due to last-minute transient health reasons. It was the silver lining on the cloud: a chance to listen twice to Mr. Puchta after 5 years away from APAC. It is always a pleasure to listen to his proposals: "great", "awesome", "a good communicator", "an inspirational session" are some of the notes we get from the audience.

The three sessions after that featured Professor David Block, Roger Marshall from the British Council and Luke Prodromou's *The Price and Value of Education: A Dickensian Approach* that, despite the technical problems with the computer system at the auditorium managed to entrance (trap) the audience. "Inspiration comes from teachers like him. Thanks a million", we read in one of the booklets.

Friday afternoon marks the starting point of the massive workshop-lecture strands. This is where grass-root teachers present their experiences, publishers present their materials and ICT novelties are put into discussion ... The first strand at 3pm presented Professor Puchta's last session at APAC before departing for Mexico. Again, it was considered a very relevant paper on how to achieve excellence when dealing with Pre-schoolers. Some even asked for a written version of it. Jade Stevens (on ICT in Secondary) and the duet Durrant-McLoughlin (Active classrooms) were the most acclaimed. At 4:30pm Tim Murphey's *Pursuit of Wow!* and Luke Prodromou's "*Difficult students*", delivered two very active and inspirational workshops after their successful plenary sessions. The other 4 sessions had a divided audience in terms of interest and usefulness of the topics presented.

The 6 to 7pm session, the last of a very long fruitful day, featured 5 very successful presentations: Dreger and Garcia's *Zürich Paradigm* with a bounty of 2.0 resources, Forjan and Sanchez's *Augmented Reality Project* impressed the audience, Lockhard successfully showed the teachers how to use *Prezi* as a story-telling tool, Rómulo Neves from APPI-Portugal tackled brilliantly the issue of learners with special needs, that is not taken into consideration as much as it should be, and Stephanie Williams presented speaking activities for Secondary with plenty of resources. And back home to start again at 9:30am on Saturday!

Saturday's early birds with better feedback were,

in alphabetical order, APAC John McDowell 2012 winner primary teacher Oscar del Estal, Joanna Gore on the always painful phrasal verbs, Carol Ibañez, Geraldine Laboria and Luke Prodromou. Oscar, a participant of the Friday Round table, opened his classroom to other primary teachers to share his classes with them. This was highly praised and appreciated. Carol Ibañez showed how to make the most of games with the young ones, Ms Laboria gave an "inspirational" and "enjoyable" session about *Brain-based learning* and Luke Prodromou made his personal homage to all women teachers with his brilliant *Shakespeare's Unruly Women: Silence, Voice and Identity*.

After the always crowded coffee break at the exhibition hall, the 11:15 sessions had five highly praised sessions: a VET joint presentation by 3 experienced teachers of different CF with lots of relevant information, we read in the booklets, Brian Engquist Blended Learning for Digital Teens was considered "interesting and with ideas ready-to-use", the duet Forjan and Sanchez had their second successful session on Communicative skills ("lots of resources and very good ideas!"), Ian James' speaking on-line was "Fantastic and with plenty of resources". Mark Hancock's Map of ELT was described by some as a good general perspective on ELT.

And, to put a brilliant end to a busy morning, nine of the 12:45 speakers. Richard Bradley's *EFL – Extinct Form of Learning* was defined as a "great speaker with fresh creative ideas". Anne Dwyer's *Aiming at 90%* was considered a set of very useful

proposals (advice), the duet Fusté and Santamaria were considered "excellent speakers" and the session "a good balance between theory and practice, with interesting projects". Vanessa Reilly's *Harmony in the Primary Classroom* and Zanatta's *Scrapbooks* got many attendees that said they had enjoyed a lovely, useful and dynamic session. And the triplet Díaz-Pavon, Méndez & Roman brought an awful lot of materials done by their students to show the result of their efforts. Many thanks to all of them for their generosity in sharing their ideas and views with all of us.

There are also other comments aiming at more general issues, such as the timetable. Somebody suggested that the convention should be held on three different Saturdays along the year in order to be able to attend it fully, as many teachers find more and more difficulties to be allowed to miss lessons on a Thursday afternoon or a Friday morning-early afternoon. We are well aware of this and we have often thought about other formats ... but it is not so easy! By the time you read this, we will be cooking the 2014 program of the "English in Action 24/7" Convention.

We really look forward to seeing you at "the Pompeu" in February! In the meantime, enjoy this edition of APAC's journal, and the one to come in January, featuring the most relevant issues tackled in February 2013.

With best wishes,

APAC's organising committee



Associació  
de Professors i  
Professores d'Anglès  
de Catalunya

APAC – British Council John McDowell Award

S'obre la convocatòria dels premis 2013 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 2012-2013. 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 2012-2013. 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 200 euros en material de la llibreria COME IN

### Per la MODALITAT B

**1r premi:** Tablet PC

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

### Per la MODALITAT C

**1r premi:** un val de 300 euros en material de la llibreria COME IN

**Accèssit:** val de 100 euros 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 durant l'*opening session* de les Jornades 2014 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 2013 en suport paper (en mà o per correu postal) o electrònic a: Oficines de l'APAC:

Gran Via de les Corts Catalanes 606, 4t 2ª despatx F-G - 08017 Barcelona  
[info@apac.es](mailto:info@apac.es) – 933170137 (horari d'oficina)

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## APAC - PREMI John McDowell 2012

Acta del jurat:

En la **Modalitat C, premi col·lectiu adreçat a professorat i el seu alumnat**, el jurat ha concedit un premi i un accèssit.

- **Premi:** Consisteix en un val de 300 euros per a material didàctic i un diccionari electrònic CASIO. Ha estat concedit al treball *The Sights and Traditions of Alcanar*, un projecte 2.0 que situa Alcanar al mapa per tal de donar a conèixer les diferents facetes d'aquest indret. Un projecte ampli que recull totes les tradicions d'Alcanar i descriu les diferents característiques d'aquest lloc. Aquest treball el presenten els alumnes de **4t d'ESO** de l'**Institut Sól de Riu** d'Alcanar. Passen a recollir el premi un grup d'alumnes en representació de tota la classe.
- **Accèssit:** Consisteix en un val de 100 euros per a material didàctic. Ha estat concedit al treball *Stonehenge*, un molt bon exemple de projecte CLIL. Els alumnes fan un molt bon ús de les noves tecnologies i on es nota que els alumnes han après a l'hora que han gaudit. Presenten aquest treball els alumnes de **1r de Batxillerat** de l'**Escola Túrbula** de Sant Adrià del Besòs. Ens acompanyen un grup d'alumnes que passen a buscar el premi.

Pel que fa a la **MODALITAT B , treballs de recerca presentats per alumnes de Batxillerat**, 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 *Beyond Lost*, on l'autor aprofita una sèrie de gran èxit mundial i troba connexions filosòfiques i artístiques que no s'esperarien d'una sèrie de televisió. Presenta el treball en Pol Cruells, de l'**IES Bosc de la Coma** i ha estat dirigit per la seva tutora, la Carmina Martí. En Pol passa a recollir el premi.
- **Accèssit:** Consisteix en un val de 100 euros per a material especialitzat. Ha estat concedit al treball de recerca *Artist Personal Management. How to best enhance a professional career*, l'autora analitza una professió que no té res a veure amb professions relacionades amb el món de les llengües i presenta el món dels managers deixant de banda els aspectes típics d'aquest entorn i ho enfoca des d'una manera gens frívola. L'autora és la **Carol Calzada**, del **Col·legi Sant Miquel** i ha estat dirigida per la seva tutora, la Cristina Matellán. La Carol està avui aquí amb nosaltres. U

Pel que fa a la **MODALITAT A, treballs presentats per professors o futurs 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 *A different project*. L'autora, la **Cristina Fernández Currubí**, aprofita literatura infantil tradicional i treu el màxim profit de manera significativa i exhaustiva per treballar amb alumnes de cycle inicial i així integrar l'anglès en el dia a dia dels seus alumnes. Un fort aplaudiment per a la Cristina que passa a recollir el premi.

**Premi:** Consisteix en un curs al Regne Unit patrocinat pel British Council i ha estat concedit al treball **Sant Gregori's English Wiki: an ICT project in the English class**, un exhaustiu treball amb la intenció de fer un projecte 2.0 d'escola, un projecte transversal que cobreix totes les competències. La seva autora és la Usoa Sol que passa a recollir el premi.

El jurat vol felicitar a tots els guanyadors per la qualitat dels treballs presentats i l'entusiasme de professors i alumnes per tal de fer-los possibles. El jurat també vol animar a tothom a participar en la propera edició dels Premis Apac-John McDowell 2013.

# SANT GREGORI'S ENGLISH WIKI

By Usoa Sol

Since my first days as an English teacher, I have always been really keen on finding new ways of engaging students (especially teenagers) in the learning process. That is why when I was first introduced to wikis, I soon realised the great potential they had as an educational tool to increase the students' motivation and to provide them with a real reason to use English in a meaningful way.

Sant Gregori's English Wiki first started as an experiment and was piloted with ESO 1 students in 2008. It was officially launched as the school's English Wiki in 2009 and since then it has gone from strength to strength. It is currently used by Primary 5 and 6, as well as ESO 1 - 4 and Batxillerat students and it is a valuable resource for English classes.

The reason why I decided to present this project is to show that wikis can prove really useful to boost students' motivation, foster team work and create a positive learning environment.

## What is Sant Gregori's English Wiki?

It is a collaborative website created using the free online software, Pbworks. It is intended for use by both teachers and students inside and outside the classroom and is written exclusively in English to maximise the use of this language; students are fully aware of this fact, as it is one of the first points on the wiki "netiquette" they are introduced to at the beginning of every school year.

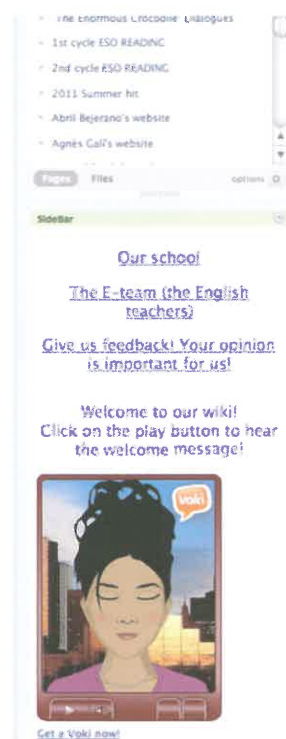
Every student has a different username and password and is identified at all times. This means that the teachers are always "in control". As the administrators, they choose what is posted on the wiki and what is not. The teachers can also keep track of who has done what, and at exactly what time, as an email is sent to them every time the wiki is modified. This works to their advantage, as students know that they are being monitored at all times (thereby preventing misuse of the wiki).

Usoa Sol is currently Head of the English Department at Sant Gregori School in Barcelona, where she teaches English to Primary, ESO and Batxillerat students. She is particularly interested in the psychology of teenagers and believes in the use of ICT to motivate students and to help them in their learning. She's also a keen wiki user and the administrator of [www.santgregorienglish.pbworks.com](http://www.santgregorienglish.pbworks.com). Apart from being a teacher, Usoa is also a teacher trainer and develops materials and resources for ELT publishers.

## WELCOME TO SANT GREGORI SCHOOL'S ENGLISH WIKI!

This is the place to improve your English!  
We hope you find it useful.  
Happy learning!

<a href="#">PRIMARY STUDENTS</a>
<a href="#">ESO STUDENTS</a>
<a href="#">BATXILLERAT STUDENTS</a>
<a href="#">DICTIONARIES</a>
<a href="#">OFFICIAL EXAMS PREPARATION</a>
<a href="#">FESTIVALS IN THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING WORLD</a>
<a href="#">MUSIC</a>



This is Sant Gregori's English Wiki's main site, which you can access freely at [www.santgregorienglish.pbworks.com](http://www.santgregorienglish.pbworks.com).

### How does it work?

At Sant Gregori School, in English class the students work on the wiki in monthly sessions which take place in the school's computer lab (as well as from home). The instructions for each of the sessions are posted on the wiki so the students can work as autonomously as possible. Some of the tasks are done individually, but a lot of the work is done in groups to foster collaboration.

In ESO 3 and 4, students also use the wiki as a place to put into practice what they have learnt in the subjects of ICT and Technology.

In Batxillerat, the wiki is used mainly as a repository of resources for the students to revise and study, but also as a platform for them to upload their work (basically, their presentations and projects) for their classmates to see.

### What does Sant Gregori's English wiki aim at?

Sant Gregori's English wiki serves multiple purposes:

1. Motivating students to use English both inside and outside the classroom by contributing to it and personalising its contents.
2. Providing a space for students to show friends and families the work done in English class.
3. Giving students a real reason to write/speak in English and to do their utmost (bearing in mind the "real audience").
4. Integrating technology in the EFL classroom.
5. Boosting students' learning autonomy, initiative and creativity.
6. Developing students' language skills and key competences (learning to learn, digital competence, information processing and ICT, and linguistic communication).
7. Encouraging students' appreciation of their classmates' work and asking them for constructive feedback, both on their classmates' work and on their own.

### What activities is the wiki used for?

Apart from self-learning and oral comprehension tasks, the wiki is used for multimedia activities. Here are some examples of what the students at Sant Gregori have done using the wiki.

ESO 1 and ESO 2 students have set up their own wiki pages to describe their hobbies.

## PERE'S ICE SKATING PAGE

### HISTORY

Ice skating started some 4000 years ago in the south of Finland. Originally, skates were with bone attached to the sole. Adding edges is the first human created the modern skates in 13th or 14 century.

Originally in the Netherlands, ice skating was considered for every one, but when James II of England went to Netherlands, he loved this sport and he imported it to England. In England this new sport was for aristocracy. King Louis XVII of France built a skating rink in pairs during his reign.



This is a picture of ice skating in 17th century

Nowadays there are many forms of ice skating:

Bandy (played on ice using a single round ball. Two teams of 11 played each compete to get the ball into the other team's goal using sticks, thereby scoring a goal.), figure skating (artistic skating is an Olympic sport.), ice hockey (there are two teams in the rink. Their objective is to score in the opposing goal.), Ringette (is a team sport. Ringette requires the use of straight sticks to control a rubber rink, the objective is to score goals.), short track (is a competition, where multiple skaters skate on an oval ice track with a circumference), tour skating (is a sport and recreational form of long distance ice skating on natural ice)

*This is Pere's ice-skating page. Check it out through the link below:*

<http://santgregorienglish.pbworks.com/w/page/52727771/Pere%27s%20website>

## MY ORIGAMI PAGE

*by Paula Martín*



Origami is an art based on folding paper to create figures. The word *origami* means "folding paper" (oru: fold, kami: paper). There are lots of different types of origami and there are also famous origami artists.

*This is Paula's origami page. Go and see it through the link below:*

<http://santgregorienglish.pbworks.com/w/page/52907217/Paula%20Martín's%20website>



ESO 2 students have also written a poem using the letters in their name and have designed a Wordle cloud using the words in their poem.

#### LUCAS' ACRONYM

The letters in my name define me:  
 L is in friendly; I always want to meet new people.  
 U is in cheerful; I love cheering my friends up when they are sad.  
 C is for chatty; I always talk a lot and teachers tell me to be quiet.  
 A is in warm; I'm affectionate with the people I love.  
 S is for sensitive; I love my friends and my family very much.  
 Friendly, cheerful, chatty, warm, and sensitive. Yes, this is me!!)



This is Lucas' poem and Wordle cloud. You can see its full-size version as well as other students' poems at <http://santgregorienglish.pbworks.com/w/page/48880726/ESO%202%20Standard%20My%20English%20Acronym>

ESO 3 students have recorded some dialogues (using a list of keywords as prompts to help them) and have written some questions for their classmates to answer. They have also transcribed the dialogues so their classmates can check if their answers are correct.

Click on each of the dialogues to listen to it.

<a href="#">Patricia and Toni's dialogue</a>
<a href="#">Nacho and Marc's dialogue</a>
<a href="#">Lluís Barnadas and Martín's dialogue</a>
<a href="#">Lluís Franco and Llorenç's dialogue</a>
<a href="#">Gemma and Helena's dialogue</a>
<a href="#">Gina and Georgina's dialogue</a>
<a href="#">Camila and Laura's dialogue</a>
<a href="#">Blanca and Fernando's dialogue</a>
<a href="#">Alejandra and Júlia's dialogue</a>

Then answer the questions below and send your answers to your teacher by email.

#### Helena & Gemma's group questions:

1. What is Helena studying?
2. When is Gemma starting university?
3. Where does Gemma want to work?

#### Alejandra & Júlia's group questions:

4. Is Alejandra sure about what will she study?
5. What will Júlia study ?
6. Where will Alejandra work?

#### Martín & Lluís's questions:

7. Where will Martín and Lluís go?
8. What condition does Martín give to go to the party?

#### Blanca & Fernando's questions:

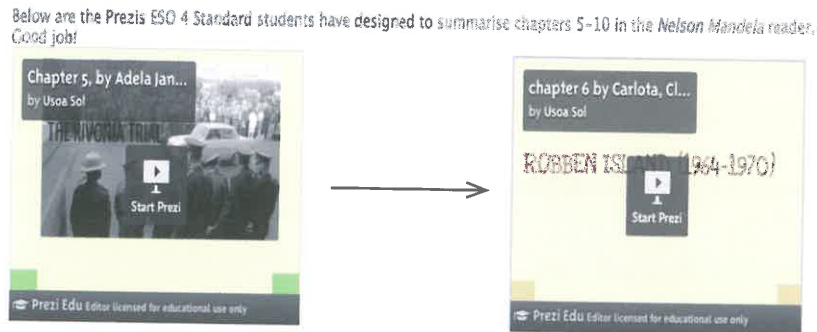
9. Is Fernando happy about the wedding?
10. Are Fernando and Blanca good friends, why?
11. Why doesn't Blanca invite to Fernando to the wedding?

These are the dialogues ESO 3 students have recorded (together with the questions they have come up with for their classmates). You can listen to them by accessing this link:

<http://santgregorienglish.pbworks.com/w/page/48756985/Units%204A-4B%20ESO%203%20dialogues>



ESO 4 students have created some presentations using Prezi to summarise each of the chapters in their reader about Nelson Mandela.

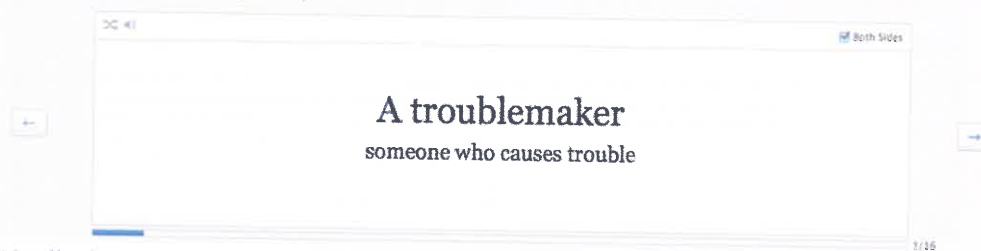


Apart from that, they have also designed some online flashcards using Quizlet to illustrate the vocabulary from each of the chapters.

Below are the vocabulary lists that ESO 4 students have created corresponding to chapters 1, 2 and 3 from the reader.

NELSON MANDELA CHAPTER 1 PART 1 by Jan and Clara

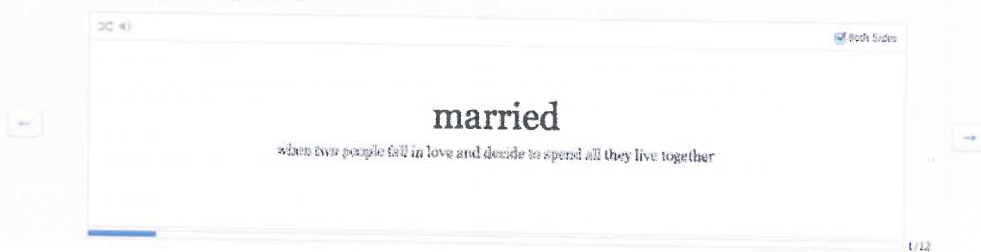
Nelson Mandela chapter 1 (part 1) Cards



[Dazzlet.com, home of free online educational games](https://www.quizlet.com/terms-of-free-online-educational-games) Study these flash cards Choose a Study Mode Scatter Learn Flashcards

NELSON MANDELA CHAPTER 1 PART 2 by Alejandra and Adela

Nelson Mandela chapter 1 (part 2) Cards

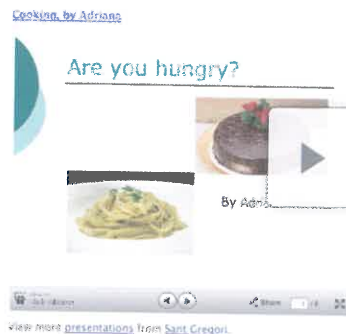


Use the link below to see all the Prezi presentations and sets of flashcards.

<http://santgregorienglish.pbworks.com/w/page/50264172/Nelson%20Mandela%20reader>

Batxillerat students have created some PowerPoint presentations, which they have then used for their oral exams.

These are the Power Point presentations BTX 2 students from the Standard group prepared for their oral exams. Enjoy!



These are the first slides of two presentations by Batxillerat 2 students. You can have a look at the complete presentations through this link:

<http://santgregorienglish.pbworks.com/w/page/28996667/BTX%20%20WRITING>

## Conclusion

To sum up, I am extremely happy to say that the wiki has definitely had a positive impact on the students' English and it has helped them in many ways, basically giving them a sense of ownership ("this is *our* English wiki") and making English learning relevant, purposeful and enjoyable for them.

This is what some of the students at Sant Gregori actually had to say about the English wiki:



## Acknowledgements

I would really like to thank my colleagues from the English Department at Sant Gregori for their encouragement and dedication. I would also like to thank the Principal and Vice-Principal at Sant Gregori for their support. And of course, a big thank you note to all the students at Sant Gregori for their enthusiasm and hard work!

# A DIFFERENT PROJECT

By Cristina Fernández  
School: La Bobila de Cambrils

Catalan teachers that teach English are special. We are always going up and down, lining up kids, displaying our works on the wall, repeating words, saying traditional English expressions again and again... We teach English language every single day in our schools, a place where kids come happy and with a beautiful smile on their faces. I am one of these young learners' teacher. Often (or always), when they see me in the corridor they just come up to me and say: *Hello Teacher!* And only, and only, only if you are or you have been a teacher of English can you understand and realize about the huge background hidden in these two words.

My lessons go from the youngest to the oldest, from the shortest to the tallest, from the naughtiest to the quietest. Children are all different; on occasions they might not listen to you, they might not pay attention or they just might not be into the mood for learning. But, what is sure is that if you show them a storybook (especially a big and colourful one among the big collection of attractive English traditional storybooks) their cute and curious little eyes will go straight into it.

As I learn more about storytelling, I find that many teachers and other professionals have long known the importance of storytelling with young children. Children's reactions to stories intuit their importance, and research endorses their value for any skeptics.

In a climate where children spend more and more time in front of televisions, computers, and video games, storytelling's educational impact is augmented as never before. Rather than passively receiving images, children must actively engage in making images themselves. When they listen to stories, children's imaginations are enriched and stimulated. While reading out loud, I often play with speech rhythms and the flow of language. Telling stories to young children also increases their vocabulary and so listeners encounter both familiar and new language patterns

Furthermore, many of the types of stories we choose to tell can help young children deal with their own fears, challenges, and difficulties. The *traditional English Storybook* I chose when developing my project was devoted to this topic: *Elmer*, by David McKee, is an extremely amusing, colourful book with a lovely moral to it. It tells the story of a multi-coloured elephant who, for once in his life, wants to mingle with the rest of his herd and be like all the others. When he does this, he finds out what his true purpose in life is and that is to make the other elephants **happy**. A lovely story to read to a child and enjoyable for adults, too.

I wish every single teacher of English could handle this project and deal with it. Of course it's taken me days and thousands of thoughts to create it, but now it is all set and ready and especially standing in the way Catalan teachers of English like it, in the way Catalan teachers of English have to do it.

*Objectius, Continguts propis de l'àrea, Descriptors Generals, Competències Bàsiques, Criteris d'Avaluació and Indicadors d'assoliment* are the main worries for teachers when programming a **project** or a didactic Unit. Wouldn't it be amazing if teachers could just go to a library and buy a storybook with a CLIL project on the back cover of the book? That was my aim. So, hopefully, with time, I will be able to keep on creating new models of cross-curricular projects related to other traditional English storybooks.

# BEYOND LOST

STUDENT: POL CRUELLS ABEL

SCHOOL: INS BOSCH DE LA COMA

TUTOR: Carmina Martí i Costa



My project, “Beyond *Lost*”, was about delving into the inspirations of the creators of the famous TV series, *Lost*. It was also about the key features that turned *Lost* into a cult TV series around the world.

The main reason for doing this research was that, in the future, I would like to work on something related to the world of audiovisual communication, especially TV series or the cinema. So I thought that with this project I could learn more about what made *Lost* a phenomenon in America and how it revolutionized broadcasting in the United States at the beginning of this century.

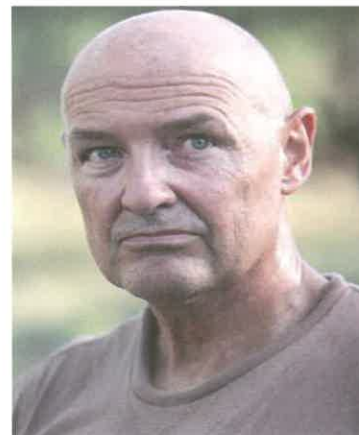
Indeed, *Lost* set the television world on fire, from 2004 to 2010, especially in the United States. Its pilot episode, which was the most expensive one in the history of television to date, created such expectation about the series and such a loyal mass of fans that the first episode of the sixth season cancelled out President Obama’s speech about the State of the Union. This is just a sign, but it reflects the degree to which this series affected people. In addition, *Lost* became a referent in American culture because it broke moulds from the beginning, generating enthusiastic support among audiences and critics, thanks to its plot twists and brilliant scripts.

My research paper was split up into two different parts. The first part, which was a kind of introduction to those who had not seen the series, was an explanation of its success, and the second part focused on the philosophical and literary sources *Lost* was inspired by.

With *Lost* as a TV revolution, I tried to explain the keys to its success: its author, J. J. Abrams and his

“Mystery Box”, the beginning of *Lost* on TV and finally its controversial ending. Moreover I talked about the show’s producers, director, scriptwriters, and other brains behind the series.

In terms of the philosophical and literary elements in the series, I started by talking about the main characters and their characteristics, the “Dharma Initiative”, the numbers (one of the great mysteries in the series), and finally the recurrent thematic and cultural references that *Lost* is based on.



*Lost* is inspired by lots of references, for instance some of the philosophical names of the main characters. Moreover, it could be interpreted as human life: a group of people trapped on an island and rediscovering themselves as they evolve to become human beings. In this part of the paper, I explained and developed the similarities and differences between the different philosophers and their namesakes on the show: Locke, Rousseau, Hume, etc. It was very interesting to see how the creators of the series bestowed each philosopher’s way of thinking on the characters. It affected their behavior on the island and their per-



sonal thinking as far as their theories about the conception of life and the world are concerned. But, from my point of view, if the show creators wanted to show that philosophy is important in daily life, they forgot lots of great philosophers, such as the nihilistic Nietzsche and the existentialist Kierkegaard.



There were also relationships between famous works of universal literature and different events that occurred and facts that arose during *Lost*. Viewers could make connections with such writers as Shakespeare, Dante, Virginia Woolf and Marcel Proust. However, “*Lost*” not only includes philosophical and literary references but also elements from popular culture, such as references to the Bible or to the Seven Wonders of the World.

I think *Lost* is for curious people who do not only want to spend their leisure time watching TV but who want to know about the working of society. For example, *Lost* led me to know more about philosophy and society behavior than what I learned in class and also guided me to meditate on philosophical themes that other series don’t bring up. In this part of my analysis, I reached one clear conclusion: in *Lost* nothing is there by chance.

Apart from all of that, “*Lost*” got its unexpected and amazing success due to the fact that its creators included three different ways of telling a story: flashbacks, flash forwards, and flash-sideways. The first were included in every episode of the first and second seasons, while the flash forwards were included in the third, fourth and fifth, mixed with flashbacks. But in the last season, we got into a new kind of narrative technique, which consisted of a flash-sideways, a different plot in a parallel world.



Finally, the last episode of *Lost* generated a lot of controversy, since the public didn’t understand the aims of the creators very well. So, like in my paper, “*Beyond Lost*”, this summary ends with the last dialogue in the series, in which Jack Shepard, the main character, interacts with his father. This dialogue took place in a “universal church,” where it was revealed that the events had not been a dream

or something strange, as many fans thought, but a “real” experience which had happened to these people and which we were able to follow for six seasons.

*VOICE: Hey, kiddo.*

*[Jack turns around to see his father standing behind him.]*

*JACK: Dad?*

*CHRISTIAN: Hello, Jack.*

*JACK: I don’t understand...you died.*

*CHRISTIAN: Yeah. Yes I did...*

*JACK: Then how are you here right now?*

*[Christian sighs.]*

*CHRISTIAN: How are you here?*

*JACK: I died too...*

*[Jack begins to cry as he remembers.]*

*CHRISTIAN: It’s okay...it’s okay. It’s okay, son.*

*[Christian approaches Jack and they hug each other.]*

*JACK: I love you, Dad.*

*CHRISTIAN: I love you too, son.*

*JACK: You...are you real?*

*CHRISTIAN: I should hope so. Yeah, I’m real. You’re real, everything that’s ever happened to you is real. All those people in the church...they’re real, too.*

*JACK: They’re all...they’re all dead?*

*CHRISTIAN: Everyone dies sometime, kiddo. Some of them before you, some...long after you.*

*JACK: But why are they all here now?*

*CHRISTIAN: Well, there is no “now” here.*

*JACK: Where are we, Dad?*

*CHRISTIAN: This is the place that you...that you all made together, so that you could find one another. The most...important part of your life was the time that you spent with these people. That’s why all of you are here. Nobody does it alone, Jack. You needed all of them, and they needed you.*

*JACK: For what?*

*CHRISTIAN: To remember...and to...let go.*

*JACK: Kate...she said we were leaving.*

*CHRISTIAN: Not leaving, no. Moving on.*

*JACK: Where we going?*

*CHRISTIAN: [smiling] Let’s go find out.*





# TEACHING ENGLISH

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# APAC Roundtable 2013

## Introduction

Leading the discussion at this year's APAC Roundtable was Miquel Berga, president of APAC. He was accompanied by Roser Olivé, journalist and director of "Do You Speak English?", the documentary broadcast on TV3 that got everyone in Catalonia discussing English learning on their coffee break, and which acted as the springboard for the debate. Representing the educational experts, there were Josep Miquel Lucea, inspector of Foreign Language Teaching; Oscar de l'Estal, primary school teacher and soon-to-be TV celebrity after his appearance in the documentary; and a roomful of teachers willing to share their views and expertise on the state of English instruction in Catalonia.

The idea for the documentary, says Roser Olivé, originated in her realisation that she often found it hard to communicate in English when working abroad, much more so than many of the other international journalists she met. "Do you speak English?" was therefore designed as a question with many underlying questions, hoping that it would provide an insight into the reasons why we Catalans tend to answer "no, we don't." We may think it should have been longer, or more thorough, or perhaps more academic. It seemed perhaps a bit tongue-in-cheek at times, but this documentary certainly got people to see the elephant in the room, and it pointed at many issues that influence language learning besides formal education, such as dubbing and the treatment of foreign languages in public media. Accordingly, the roundtable was structured into three converging blocks:

- The role of English in present-day Catalonia: threat or opportunity?
- Learning English in school: teacher education, CLIL and further questions.
- Dubbing vs. subtitles: learning as a social process.

### **The role of English in present-day Catalonia: threat or opportunity?**

Even though many Catalans view English as a professional opportunity, a door-opening skill for their careers, it is still largely a deterrent to job applicants of all trades. As more and more foreigners move here, foreign language skills become as important as professional skills. Many companies, even small, family-owned businesses such as the hairdresser's we see in the documentary, have invested in English training for their workers, as evidenced by the blooming in-company teaching business. Adults enrol in all kinds of English courses; there is an overabundance of both public and private workshops in English, from yoga courses to scrapbook or knitting groups; there are English newspapers and magazines, English reading clubs, you name it. Socially,

there is an it-is-now-or-never atmosphere, and this section of the documentary seems to end on a positive note, with the hairdressers practicing their English small-talk.

The English problem permeates all spheres of society, as shown in the documentary. Politicians do not set a good example, either, with some rare exceptions. Spanish politicians come across pretty much as clueless as many of our students! Shamefully enough, it is the English PM who speaks a foreign language! One can't help but think that this must necessarily undermine our image abroad and hence our chances of establishing profitable international partnerships.

In spite of the advantages derived from being a bilingual nation, with more and more multilingual Catalans born every year, Catalonia is far behind many European countries.





picture 01: English is an essential skill in the current job market.

In general, many teachers in the audience said they feel frustrated because they put a lot of themselves into their students' learning, but they do not see much in terms of results, and the means available are getting more and more scarce. It was suggested that at pre-service level all university degrees should: 1) incorporate English

Students know a lot about English grammar, but they remain unable to communicate. Is it because the teaching methodology is often very traditional and teacher-centred? Perhaps teachers need better training opportunities, perhaps they are not too confident themselves about their level of English. Everyone agreed on the need to increase people's exposure to real-life English, but the truth is that citizens feel insecure, we need a shift in attitude.

### Learning English in school: Teacher education, CLIL and further questions

By the time they finish secondary education, Catalan children will have gone through 735 hours of formal English instruction, 315 in primary school, and 420 in secondary education. And what do they have to show for it? Not much, according to the heart-wrenching scenes we see at the beginning of the documentary. What went wrong with the young people we see in the documentary? What did they do throughout those 735 hours of English lessons? Didn't their teachers notice? Didn't their parents notice? In the roundtable, it was suggested that there are problems to fix which affect teacher pre-service and in-service training, but also problems that affect the whole educational system and beyond.

as a vehicular language in order for future teachers to have a better command of it, since new teachers are currently only required to have a 5th year EOI certificate; and, 2) implement content-based methodologies throughout all the cycles of education, since many teachers apparently mimic in their classrooms what they have experienced as students as the proper way of learning. Some teachers in the audience argued that it was necessary to provide more continuity to the work done in the school - by not changing teachers all the time, for example, or by sharing syllabi within and across departments, and other such initiatives. External assessment was also perceived as a deterrent rather than as a spur. For starters, having to undergo external assessment tests such as PAU greatly influences what aspects of the curriculum one may prioritise in class. In many Catalan schools, Batxillerat ends up becoming the foreign language equivalent of a driving school. On top of that, it seems incongruous that the department of education tells teachers to use communicative language teaching if they are planning on assessing students in the opposite way. As children get older, these contradictions become more acute, as evidenced by a comparison of sixth-grade primary tests with PAU tasks.

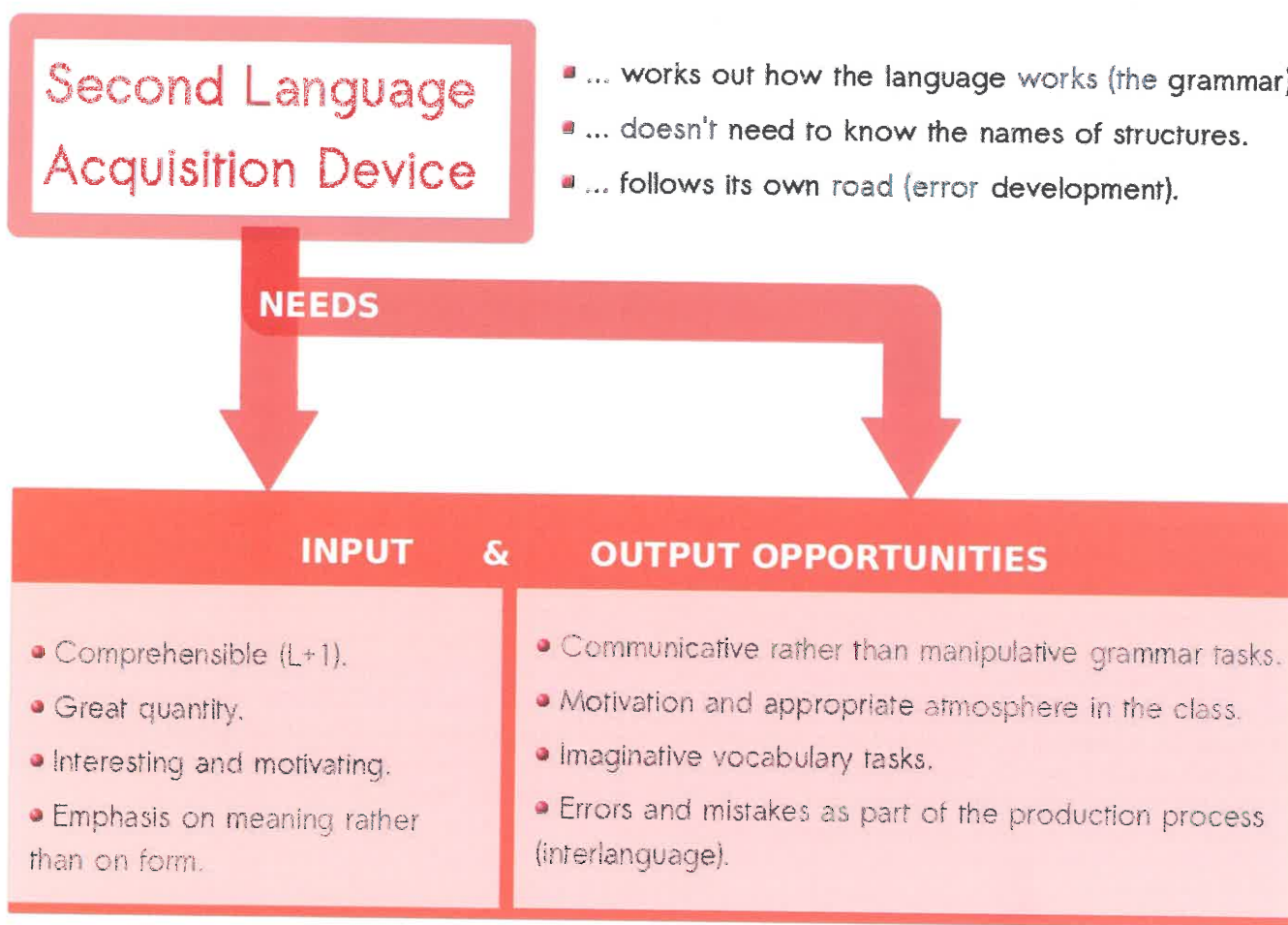
Josep Miquel Lucea suggested a thorough revision of the current linguistic approach to EFL in order to turn it into a psycho-linguistic one that truly reflects the way students' brains work in accordance with their current stage of development. Teachers work very hard, and they are very committed to students' learning, but how can we tell whether or not we are working in the right direction? We should make sure our teaching instincts do not go against what is best for students' learning, and this demands a lot of classroom observation and very thorough pre-service and in-service



picture 01: English is an essential skill in the current job market.

training. After over four-hundred hours' worth of classroom observation, J. M. Lucea had some inkling of what may be going wrong: Who would have thought that teachers' L2 output only amounts to about 7 or 8 minutes per lesson? This, he thinks, is not nearly enough. The psychological and linguistic processes that make up language learning are not taken into account when designing the curriculum. Children are not stimulated enough in the foreign language classroom. Their brains are starving because the input is neither sufficient nor adequate. Language learning requires a lot of input, in more quantity and in better quality than what youngsters are getting at the moment. Moreover, input in L2 needs to be comprehensible, meaningful and relevant. The current curriculum is based on assessing production, thus overseeing the students' language acquisition device and the need for input.

future courses (in Catalan)? Some teachers were concerned that the content aspect may be undermined, blurred by students' poor English skills. It is hard to find (or train) teachers with a good level in the foreign language, subject contents and learning strategies. On the other hand, CLIL would dramatically increase the amount of meaningful input students receive; plus it would help them develop useful life skills such as negotiating meaning, distributing tasks, overcoming language obstacles, etc. Studying *in* a language feels more natural than studying *a* language, after all. Just the very idea of considering how the I in CLIL is implemented, how to integrate content and language, could help many of us reconsider the way we approach language learning, and to what extent we can (or cannot) work as a team across the curriculum.



picture 03: Language acquisition process, courtesy of JM Lucea.

Òscar de l'Estal thought that there are many silver linings, and we probably thought he was one of them: Oscar's kids' and his own honest commitment to learning are certainly one of the key feel-good moments in the documentary. But there are indeed many positive initiatives out there, and teachers have certainly not given up on students' learning to communicate in English. For example, CLIL sounds like an interesting option, even though it also poses many challenges: How does one integrate language and content learning? What kinds of teachers do this best? Is CLIL teaching "natural"? Is it useful for students to learn terminology in English for their

Arguably, there are many things teachers should or should not do, but we were all certain of one thing: the need for more social support. At the roundtable, teachers complained about being used as a scapegoat for the foreign language problem. However, many felt that students' learning was not only a matter of what is done in school or other formal contexts. Language learning surpasses these constraints and goes well beyond them. In other words, learning a foreign language can only happen if it becomes a social matter, something students can share with their environment, and something everyone in their environment is responsible for.

### Dubbing vs. subtitles: Learning as a social responsibility

By looking at the example of Holland, where students start English lessons at age 10, only do half an hour a week of mainly grammar instruction, and have prompts mainly written in Dutch in their textbooks, we may infer that school is not such a determining factor for students' learning. Are Dutch kids particularly gifted? Or is it (perchance!) connected to the total absence of dubbing on TV and in cinemas? What about the example of Portugal? We need to reconsider the roles of school and society in FL teaching.



Picture 04: *The two sides of the debate.*

To dub or to subtitle? The documentary authors' opinions are quite on the side of subtitles, as Roser Olivé herself reckoned at the beginning of the debate. The contrast between the suit-clad, money-obsessed defender of the dubbing lobby and his younger, dynamic and matter-of-fact Portuguese counterpart leaves no room for discussion. Let us recall the arguments that are volleyed back and forth in the documentary. The list of points in favour of dubbing is, to say the least, idiosyncratic. We heard, for example, that refusing to watch dubbed films is pedantic; subtitles are very uncomfortable and it is easy to miss out on key information; dubbing can provide the audience with a more complete, faithful version of the film;

and, finally, dubbing is more successful economically, it is what people really want. Not much to be proud of here, but perhaps we are a bit biased by trade - apart from being terribly pedantic. As for the arguments against dubbing and in favour of subtitles, the main one is that exposure to an L2 makes audiences familiar with its pronunciation, intonation, vocabulary and so on; this exposure is much more effective than formal instruction, because films are much more meaningful to learners, especially when they get to choose them. In other words, informal learning is more important and efficient than formal instruction, and watching films in

English provides wider, more intensive exposure to it. Secondly, subtitles are much cheaper and easy (and faster) to get, which is quite important in the stressful, present-day scene. Finally, it is more natural to hear the actors' real voices, thus not undermining the realism of the film or providing involuntary spoilers ("Hey! That's the voice of the evil man!"). Films in English also motivate people to learn the language, so that they can understand the plot of their favourite show while they naturally and effortlessly improve their foreign language skills.

And yes, most people are literate and can do more than one thing at the same time.

In Miquel Berga's words, one often leaves a good discussion with more questions than answers, and this year's roundtable was certainly no exception. There is no magic formula, no recipe for fixing things. It all depends on many factors, within and without Catalonia. As teachers, we are partly responsible for our students' learning, but we should bear in mind that this is no less (and no more) than a national matter; so every citizen needs to chip in and partake of the blame and the rewards.

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# Shakespeare's *unruly* women



By Dr. Luke Prodromou

The ELT profession is dominated, at least in quantitative terms, by women. Their voices are often not as influential as their numbers would suggest. This article, about Shakespeare's struggle to give women a voice in a patriarchal society, is dedicated to the women in ELT. In this article, I will illustrate the fluid, diverse and often contradictory way in which Shakespeare approaches the role of women in Elizabethan and Jacobean society. We will encounter women in conflict with the conventions of the time and we will see how those conventions attempt to constrain and restrict the unruly tendencies of females in search of their own identity – or identities.

## Shakespeare's unconventional dialogue

Throughout his career as a poet and playwright, Shakespeare was engaged in dialogue with writers who held conventional views of women. Until Shakespeare came along, for example, the sonnet was largely a poem dedicated to idealizing women as inaccessible goddesses: their beauty was incomparable, they were ethereal beings of almost

divine perfection. Poets under the influence of the great Italian, Petrarch (1304-1374), would write about women using romantic metaphors and similes, through which the object of the poet's love was compared to the sun, the stars and the moon, etc. In this context, we can imagine the impact of the following poem describing Shakespeare's imperfect but passionately real Dark Lady:

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*My mistress' eyes*  
(Sonnet 130)

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;  
Coral is far more red than her lips' red;  
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;  
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.

I have seen roses damasked, red and white,  
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;  
And in some perfumes is there more delight  
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.

I love to hear her speak, yet well I know  
That music hath a far more pleasing sound;  
I grant I never saw a goddess go;  
My mistress when she walks, treads on the ground.

And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare  
As any she belied with false compare.

This is the poet Shakespeare speaking, bringing women literally 'down to earth', as creatures of the real 'breathing world'.

### The boy actor: types of ambiguity

An equally good place to begin in order to understand the fluid and contradictory nature of women in Shakespeare's world is the theatre – and, in particular, the convention of the boy actor on the Elizabethan stage. It is crucial to remember when exploring the diversity of women in Shakespeare's plays that they were all played by boys: Rosalind, Viola, Juliet, Cordelia, Imogen, Desdemona, Cleopatra and Lady Macbeth, with the vast range of human emotions they expressed, were played by incredibly versatile boy actors, whose voice had not yet broken.



This means that automatically a certain degree of ambiguity is introduced in the presentation of masculine and feminine gender in Shakespeare's comedies, histories and tragedies. The fixed, binary nature of gender – either masculine or feminine – is disrupted by the convention of the boy actor and Shakespeare's dramatic use of disguise through cross-dressing. There is a built-in complexity to his women, not necessarily present in the male characters, simply because they embody both male and female qualities.

An even more complex picture is created in cases where the boy who played a girl then pretended to be a young man, as is the case of Julia in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Viola in *Twelfth Night* (Cesario) and Rosalind in *As You Like It* (Ganymede), Portia in the *Merchant of Venice* and Imogen in *Cymbeline*.

This multiple 'role-play', based on disguise, allows Shakespeare to experiment with gender, and, in particular, to extend the boundaries of male and female.

It is this bold 'gender bending' on the stage that made the mu-

nicipal authorities of London persecute the actors; for the local authorities and the puritans of Elizabethan London, the theatre's presentation of boys as girls and girls as boys disturbed the established order. A boy dressed as a girl disturbed the established order; a boy dressed as a girl who then pretends to be a boy who pretends to be a girl disrupts the social order even more profoundly. This is what happens in *As You Like It* with the role of Rosalind.

But it is not only the form of the plays that is subversive: it is also what women say that shakes the established patriarchal order.

### Comedy: the equality debate

In the *Comedy of Errors*, possibly Shakespeare's earliest comedy, the unruly Adriana – referring to men - asks her conservative sister: 'Why should their liberty than ours be more?' Adriana is reacting to her husband's freewheeling



**LUCIANA**  
O, know he is the  
bridle of your will.

**ADRIANA**  
There's none but  
asses will be bridled  
so.



life about town while she is stuck virtuously at home. Her more conventional sister defends the role of men in controlling women's passions ('will', here, refers to desire but also sexual passion)

The plays that follow the *Comedy of Errors* explore and negotiate the question, 'Why should their liberty than ours be more'? And they explore the conflicting claims made by these two sisters.

The issues of equality and submission are debated in the *Taming of the Shrew*: an irate father wishes to marry his daughter off by force. The bridegroom-to-be is a dowry hunter; the girl is an extension of the father's property. The daughter, Katerina, resists, and in her battle with the male chauvinist, Petruchio, who tries to tame her, she gives as much as she takes, in terms of blows and insults.

In the end, she submits and marries her tamer. She says, addressing herself to women:



KATERINA

Such duty as the subject owes the prince  
Even such a woman oweth to her husband



Does Shakespeare present this submission sincerely or ironically? The controversial ending of the *Shrew* goes against the progressive currents of thought of that time – both in the theatre and in humanist or even puritan philosophy. It also goes against the spirit and letter of Shakespeare's work, as we shall see.

The early modern –or 'Renaissance'– view of gender referred to a greater balance and reciprocity between male and female – albeit within the culturally-loaded framework of marriage.

That the ending of the *Shrew* is ironic and not to be taken at face value (as regards the submission of the female) is suggested by the words of Adriana in the *Comedy of Errors* – 'why should their liberty than ours be more?' and

'only asses will be bridled so' – as well as all the plays that followed. These plays present a more complex view of the role of women in society than that suggested by Katerina's apparent submission.

The fact is that for Katerina there is no escape: she is trapped. There is no dream forest or disguise to hide in or to transform her oppression into empowerment, as we shall discover later in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *As You Like It*.

Thus, in comedy, the conflicts of gender end in a harmony which is frequently unconvincing: a harmony which is forced onto difficult theatrical material. What happens in tragedy?

### Tragedy and the woman as property

*Romeo and Juliet* includes the familiar motif of a father – Capulet – attempting to impose patriarchal authority by force as he attempts to marry off his daughter, 14-year-old Juliet. Her father threatens her with violence and treats her like an extension of his real estate; he refers to her as 'baggage'. Overpowered by the discovery of her own adolescent sexuality, Juliet resists her father and social convention and takes the brave decision to fulfill her love for Romeo:



JULIET

Come, civil night,  
Thou sober-suited matron, all in black,  
Hood my unmann'd blood, bating in my cheeks,  
With thy black mantle, till strange love grow bold,  
Think true love acted simple modesty.  
Come, night, come, Romeo, come, thou day in night;  
Come, gentle night, come, loving, black-brow'd night,  
Give me my Romeo...

(*Romeo and Juliet* Act 3 sc. 2)

But this is not comedy; there is no wood and no disguise in which lovers can lose themselves or reinvent themselves. Juliet does not manage to impose her personal choice but she does make the adults and political authorities recognise the error of their ways and blame masculine violence for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet.

*A Midsummer Night's Dream* begins with an explosion of anger from a father who wishes to impose his



will on his daughter, with the help of the Athenian state and its draconian laws. Hermia is threatened with the loss of freedom, an imposed chastity and even death if she does not accept the husband chosen for her by her father.



#### DUKE THESEUS

**Either to die the death or to abjure**

**For ever the society of men.**

**Therefore, fair Hermia, question your desires;**

*(A Midsummer Night's Dream Act 1 sc. 1)*

As with Adriana, Katerina and Juliet, the female, Hermia, is expected to tame her passions, to channel them where patriarchy dictates. Hermia refuses this cruel choice. An escape is provided in the wood near Athens, the wood where dreams are free. There, eroticism is allowed free play and Freudian fantasies are allowed to roam freely throughout the forest. In the end, the couples return to court or conventional society and they all marry and all's right with the world. The girls, Hermia and Helena, do get their way and their man. The fantastic wood has facilitated the successful expression of their personal wishes.

In the case of Portia in the *Merchant of Venice*, her father tries to shape her choice of partner even after his death, through the device of the caskets: gold, silver and lead. The correct choice intended by Portia's father is that the right man for her should choose on the basis of love and respect for the girl's personality and not for money and power; thus, lead is the correct choice. This marks some progress in the view of woman as property and an attempt to rein in the dowry-hunting instinct of the men.

Notice that when Portia is disguised as a man, she acquires power over herself and the world of men, a world dominated by money, racial conflict and debt. It is Portia's hybrid masculine-feminine judgement that saves the men, Bassanio and Antonio, from death and resolves the conflict between the debtor and the moneylender on the basis of the law but of humane justice, too.

Compared to the dull, one-dimensional Bassanio, Portia, both as a woman and when disguised as a man, shows a richness of personality that the men cannot compete with. One wonders how happy this intelligent and complex woman will be with her new husband. How happy is the happy ending of this so-called comedy?

#### *As You Like It*: several types of ambiguity

In *As You Like It*, these patterns of gender and power are developed even more fully than in previous plays. Celia

and Rosalind are cousins. Celia's father banishes Rosalind as part of his feud with her father over property and power. Celia, expressing female solidarity with Rosalind, escapes with her to the forest of Arden. Rosalind is disguised as a young man.

This disguise allows her to experiment with her identity. Rosalind moves back and forth from feminine to masculine and she acquires, as do the audience, greater understanding of what it means to be both male and female. Thus, we have a good example of the way the custom of the boy-actor gave Shakespeare an opportunity to explore the nature of gender.

The theatrical device of the boy-actor was a necessity, but Shakespeare turned it to good advantage. It gave him an opportunity to endow women with masculine attitudes and skills, in combination with feminine qualities. Thus, when Rosalind speaks to Phoebe and to Orlando as Ganymede, she shuttles back and forth from one gender to the other.

Her game of love and marriage with Orlando, disguised as she is as Ganymede, the beautiful boy-servant of the gods of Olympus, highlights the fluidity of gender roles in the play. This gender-bending recalls sonnet 20, the famous 'master-mistress' sonnet:

#### Sonnet 20

A woman's face with nature's own hand painted,  
Hast thou, the master-mistress of my passion...

Rosalind does not only change her appearance; she changes her identity and she redefines the choices open to her. Like Portia in the *Merchant*, Rosalind shows initiative, she solves problems. All this is made possible while the interlude in the forest of Arden lasts and before the return to the patriarchal conventions of the city. With the return to normality, the fantasy of transformation ends. The fluid nature of gender is restabilized. The free woman in love in the forest is contained and constrained as she returns to the urban world of marriage conventions and the reassertion of the patriarchal system. Rosalind's last speeches are a 'voluntary' reentry into patriarchy; to both father and husband she says:

#### ROSALIND

To you I give myself for I am yours

But before Rosalind's return to social convention, she and the play have performed for us a kind of desire which is rich and ambiguous. But the performance of a liberated sexuality is confined to the forest, far removed from the reality of power and rigid social hierarchies. At the end, when the show is over and the audience go home, the world of alternative possibilities remains as a half-explored potential. It cannot be erased from the art form, the poetic theatre of the mysterious William Shakespeare.

#### The music of love in *Twelfth Night*

The story of gender ambiguity is taken up in Shakespeare's next great comedy: *Twelfth Night*. The date in the title refers to Epiphany. This date was originally a Catholic holiday and it had become a day of revelry and so-

cial disorder. Servants often dressed up as their masters and men as women. It was a day of Carnavalesque festivity, when the world was turned upside down.

The setting of the play, Illyria, is a place where strange things can happen, where the normal order is subverted. It is a place of passion, like the wood in a *Midsummer Night's Dream* and *As You Like It*, where the madness of love reigns.

The character who embodies the master-mistress in this play is Viola: in her disguise as a young man, Cesario, she falls in love with Orsino, who starts off in love with the beautiful, idealised aristocrat, Olivia, and ends up with Cesario-Viola. Olivia marries Viola's twin brother, Sebastian, and the drunken Sir Toby marries the servant, Maria. Illyria is like the magic flower of Cupid in a *Midsummer Night's Dream*, which makes people mad with love.

Shakespeare once again uses the device of disguise as a pretext to explore the nature of women and to subvert gender stereotypes. Viola, pretending to be a man, demonstrates she can do what men do quite successfully: take initiative, solve problems and in the end, be a more complete woman than if she had not played the part of Cesario. As in all of the comedies, at the end we return to reality, but it is not a return to things as they were before the play. New potential has been established, at least on the stage and later – when the plays were printed – on the page. Viola, like Rosalind, identifies with her role and she is so closely integrated with it that Shakespeare finds it difficult to return her to everyday routine.

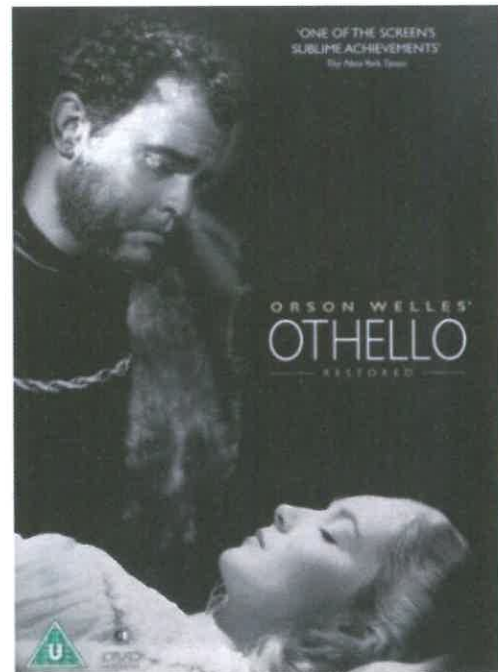


My **master** loves her dearly  
 And I, poor monster, fond as  
 much on him;  
 And she, mistaken, seems to dote on me.  
 What will become of this?  
 As I am **man**,  
 My state is desperate for my  
 master's love;  
 As I am **woman**, -now alas the day!-  
 What thriftless sighs shall poor  
 Olivia breathe!

The ending of *Twelfth Night* is awkward, as is often the case with Shakespeare: the harmony of comedy is forced, far-fetched – it does not accommodate the Viola who has grown before our eyes. The girl's conventional clothes no longer fit her or Rosalind – they are both more developed characters when they pretend to be young men than when they return to everyday reality. The men who are assigned to them in marriage – Orlando and Orsino – seem too small for them. Is Olivia really going to be happy with a one-dimensional Sebastian? Is Orsino really going to settle down happily with a wife who was more exciting and more intelligent when disguised as a man? The men, too, it seems, are in need of transformation.

### Desdemona and Cordelia

Desdemona in *Othello* asserts her right to choose her man, lover and husband, Othello, the moor of Venice, against her father's wishes. She is one of the boldest of Shakespeare's women – she has the courage to break the boundaries of family, society and race, in choosing to marry a black outsider. She – a 'fair warrior' – insists on going with Othello to the war zone of Cyprus, where she hopes to live freely with her chosen partner in life. But Cyprus is not the forest of Arden. It is a place of strife. In Cyprus, masculine and, indeed, military authority dominate. The 'moth of peace', Desdemona, is crushed by masculine violence.



The tragedy begins in Venice. It stems from Desdemona's transfer of her submissiveness from her father to her husband. She rejects her father's authority but accepts Othello's. The seeds of Desdemona's tragedy are sown from the beginning, when she transfers her loyalty from one male 'lord' – her father – to another: her husband. She submits her will to the male, so, when the time comes to resist, she is powerless. She has handed in her weapons, the power of words: when Othello treats her unjustly she is silent, consistent with the traditional role of women. Desdemona is the victim of women's silent submission to patriarchy.

Notice the key words in Desdemona's speech to her father:



DESDEMONA  
My noble father,  
I do perceive here a divided **duty**:  
To you I am **bound** for life and education;  
My life and education both do learn me  
How to respect you; you are the **lord of duty**;  
I am hitherto your daughter: but here's my husband,  
And so much **duty** as my mother show'd  
To you, preferring you before her father,  
So much I challenge that I may profess  
Due to the Moor **my lord**.

If Desdemona has agreed to be dutiful and silent, even when she is wronged by gender violence, her servant, Emilia, has not; she is articulate in her defence of women in words which recall those of Adriana in the *Comedy of Errors*.

EMILIA:  
I will not charm my tongue;  
I am bound to speak

Emilia questions and rejects the silence of women when she sees the unjust consequences of this silence:

EMILIA  
Let husbands know  
Their wives have sense like them: they see and smell  
And have their palates both for sweet and sour,  
As husbands have. What is it that they do  
When they change us for others? Is it sport?  
I think it is: and doth affection breed it?  
I think it doth: is't frailty that thus errs?  
It is so, too: and have not we affections,  
Desires for sport, and frailty, as men have?  
Then let them use us well: else let them know,  
The ills we do, their ills instruct us so.

But unfortunately, *Othello* is a tragedy and the word that gives silence meaning and woman a voice is absent. Women are not given the chance to activate their potential. Desdemona dies.

This will be the fate of the unforgettably wise and courageous Cordelia in *King Lear*. Like Desdemona,

Cordelia remains silent when she is confronted with the irrational demands of male authority. The play begins with the father attempting to impose an eccentric plan whereby the personality of the daughters is identified with property; they will receive property and power according to how much love they express for their father, in words:

LEAR  
Which of you shall we say doth love us most?  
That we our largest bounty may extend

GONERIL  
Sir, I love you more than words can wield the matter

Women are allowed to speak, but they must use the words demanded by patriarchy. Cordelia, the youngest of the three daughters, refuses to play the game of money-for-love and remains silent: 'What shall Cordelia speak? Love and be silent'.

Cordelia's silence is a challenge to patriarchal authority, an act of resistance to the father-master and an assertion of ownership of her own words. At this stage, the father figure assumes that this silence is empty:



LEAR  
Now, our joy,  
...what can you say to draw  
A third more opulent than your sisters? Speak.

CORDELIA  
Nothing, my lord.

LEAR  
Nothing!

CORDELIA  
Nothing.

KING LEAR  
Nothing will come of nothing: speak again.

CORDELIA  
Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave  
My heart into my mouth





But the choice to be silent is a sign of Cordelia's sincere love and independence of spirit: she refuses to debase her words and identity by exchanging them for power and property. Thus, she symbolically breaks the power of patriarchy over her and goes her own way, into exile from England.

By the end of the play, abandoned on the wild heath, shorn of his wealth and trappings of power, Lear will come to see the light: he will come closer to nature and discover the value of Cordelia's silence. She returns from exile, a warrior of freedom and figure of justice, a symbol of feminine virtues, which, the play tells us, are close to the 'blessed secrets of the earth'.

In *King Lear*, we do not have a magic wood that transforms reality into imagination, but we do have the wild heath on which Lear discovers the truth and rewrites that reality: he condemns the corrupt system of power and property that led to his own patriarchal authority and to his daughter's exile and death.

### Conclusion

Feminism in Shakespeare is expressed by the constant expansion of the limits of masculine and feminine, but particularly the feminine. The device of disguise or cross-dressing redefines the way the audience sees the potential of women and enriches their repertoire of roles. Society in the real world does not change, but it is undermined and subverted in the poetic world of the play; it is transformed in the exploratory, experimental nature of Shakespeare's theatre. When the play is over, things can never be quite the same again.

In other words, the radical dimension of Shakespeare's work does not lie in specific proposals for a new social order. It is to be found, rather, in the characteristic polyphony of his theatre – the multiplicity of perspectives and the plurality of voices with which women are presented. Shakespeare's drama is a site full of conflict and contradictions that need to be resolved; but we are often left with a fluidity and an open-endedness, in spite of attempts to fix and tie up the loose ends tidily, according to prevailing conventions of marriage and property.

There is no political, social or feminist manifesto in Shakespeare, though *Lear on the wild heath*, in the storm, which is both real and spiritual, exposes and denounces the system of power and property that makes injustice possible.

Today in the 21st century, what do these plays have to tell us about the role of women in society? Let us not forget that there are, at this moment, millions of women trapped in the tyranny of conventions of dress and behavior imposed on them by patriarchal authority; women are still trapped in the suffocating roles men allow them; they are still trapped in the invisibility and silence from which Shakespeare's unruly women are, at least for a brief historical moment, liberated.

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# The Price and Value of Education: A Dickensian Approach

By Dr. Luke Prodromou

‘Nowadays, people know the price of everything and the value of nothing.’

‘A cynic is a man who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing.’

— Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

‘An economist is someone who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing.’

-Anon

‘You have come here to be educated, and taught a useful trade. So you’ll begin to pick oakum to-morrow morning at six o’clock.’

-*Oliver Twist*



## Introduction

*Oliver Twist* is a good place to begin in exploring the world of Charles Dickens, our contemporary. The scene in which Oliver asks for ‘more’ is one of the most famous in Dickens, and we are so familiar with it that its real significance may escape us. We all know Oliver’s anguished words: ‘Please, sir, I want some more’. More of what? Oliver’s plea has become a catchphrase with a life outside of the book that inspired it and outside of the many films that the book has spawned. It has become an archetypal image, expressing the needs of an innocent child in a cruel world. But, the scene in which it occurs also expresses so many of the preoccupations that shaped the life and writing of Charles Dickens. If readers were asked to choose one issue that shaped his creative imagination more than any other, most would probably choose ‘poverty’. Oliver is a poor boy and he is hungry – hungry for food and I would add at a deeper level, hungry for education.

The figure of Oliver Twist reaches straight into the heart of humanity because he is the symbol of the hopes and aspirations which life offers every child. (Manning, 1959: 87)

The scene is the workhouse where the poor ended up when they became a threat to society. Life in the workhouse - or poorhouse - was cruel. You couldn’t expect to eat much there, which is why we have the scene where the hungry Oliver plucks up courage and asks for ‘more’.

The poorhouse was a place of confinement for the poor of all ages, including young boys and girls. After poverty, the theme which is ubiquitous in Dickens is children, their suffering and their right to a better life. What happened to children in the poorhouse? The voice of one of the ‘gentlemen’ in authority tells Oliver he was in the workhouse to be ‘educated and taught a useful trade’; but in fact the poorhouse was really a place where children were used as cheap labour, virtually slave labour. It is a ‘Workhouse’ not ‘a ‘Schoolhouse’. Workhouses depended on the local parish ‘tax’ to enable them to run; using these slender resources on education rather than cheap labour would not have been profitable. The cheap labour provided by the inmates of the workhouse helped to cover its running costs. We shall see that the private schools of the time, such as the one described in *Nicholas Nickleby*, were also run largely to make a profit and not to educate the children, whose labour they exploited.

Thus, in order to understand the conditions in which education was developed (or not) we need to take into account the economic context in which poorhouses and schools were



f o u n d e d .  
Then, as now, the country was suffering a financial crisis: then, as now, the poor found it difficult to make ends meet. Debt was a huge

but before that, he was a journalist, a job which gave him ample opportunity to observe 'the everyday life of everyday people' and to put the stuff of everyday life into his novels. The injustices he saw provoked a variety of responses in him: he wrote about them, talked about them, they aroused his philanthropic instincts. But beyond philanthropy, Dickens also became a radical social reformer, seeking to change the laws and the attitudes which institutionalized and perpetuated social injustices: Education was one area where his work as an artist, journalist and campaigner was to help change the laws that legitimated ignorance and to move towards a free education for all.

problem. If you got into debt and were unable to pay, you would end up in the poorhouse or in prison.

There is one more strand I would like to focus on in exploring the value that Dickens gives to education, and that is the role of women in his work and in Victorian society. In *Oliver Twist*, one person who takes pity on the poor boy and wants him to be given a chance to be educated and to live a crime-free life is the prostitute, Nancy; she is a member of a gang of thieves headed by Bill Sykes, a burglar and Nancy's 'protector', and Fagin, who teaches boys how to steal. Nancy herself is a victim of poverty and exploitation by these male criminals. In real life, we shall see how Dickens responded to the plight of women like Nancy by trying in very practical ways to provide them with an education and thus an opportunity to start a new life away from the clutches of organized crime.

### The Dickensian puzzle

In this paper, then, I look at Dickens as an educator in the framework of his over riding concern for the poor and social injustice in a time of economic inequality and rampant debt

I will show how the four themes (poverty, children, women, and economic inequality) are inextricably linked. I will draw on these four themes to highlight specific formative influences on Dickens and his creative writing: his father's imprisonment for debt; Dickens' experience of working in a factory as a boy; the schools Dickens attended and, finally, his founding of a home for educating 'fallen women', such as Nancy in *Oliver Twist*.



It is already becoming clear that Dickens was a man of many parts: he was the greatest novelist of his time,

### Formative influence 1: The poor

In a passage from *Hard Times*, one of the most intensely educational of Dickens' novels, the author addresses the British establishment and especially 'economists and schoolmasters' to warn them of the consequences of neglecting the education of the poor and failing to alleviate their suffering:

'(economists and schoolmasters)! *The poor you will have always with you. Cultivate in them, while there is yet time, the utmost graces of the fancies and affections, to adorn their lives so much in need of ornament; or, in the day of your triumph, when romance is utterly driven out of their souls, and they and a bare existence stand face to face, Reality will take a wolfish turn, and make an end of you*'. (*Hard Times*, Book 2, Chapter 1).

Dickens appeals to the powers-that-be, including our own profession of 'schoolmasters', to develop in the poor the power of the imagination ('fancy', 'romance') and feelings ('affections') and to add beauty to their lives ('adorn their lives'). These are the basic ingredients of the humanistic education Dickens promoted in his novels, letters and the speeches he made while campaigning for educational reform. Dickens refers to the 'bare' existence of the poor; this is to be taken to mean bare on a material and spiritual level. Without a life of dignity and beauty ('graces'), the poor will eventually, out of desperation, rise up in revolt and destroy the system which has caused their suffering ('Reality will take a wolfish turn, and make an end of you').

Instead of cultivating the humanity of the poor through education and a decent living, the system made laws such as the Poor Law, which prescribed life in the workhouse for those who could not survive life on the streets. But the workhouse was made as unattractive as possible to deter the unemployed; in effect, it amounted to slow starvation. Officially, children in the workhouse were supposed to receive education in the four Rs: reading, writing, arithmetic and religion, and some training in a 'trade,' to allow them to go out into society and work. In practice, as the text of *Oliver Twist* suggests, the children were forced to work long hours, 'oakum picking'.

*'Well! You have come here to be educated, and taught a useful trade,' said the red-faced gentleman in the high chair.*



*'So you'll begin to pick oakum to-morrow morning at six o'clock,' added the surly one in the white waistcoat. ('Oakum' is fibre obtained by untwisting old rope and then used to seal cracks in the wood of ships.)*

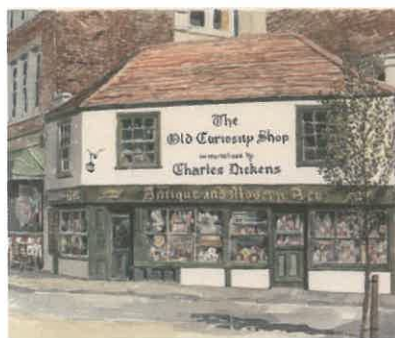
## Formative influence 2: The debtor's prison

Dickens' novels are haunted by debt and its terrible consequences. His father went bankrupt and was imprisoned in the notorious debtors' prison, the Marshalea. This experience had multiple consequences on Dickens and his work. It reinforced the fear of poverty and its consequences but it also highlighted the role of education as a means of escaping from poverty. His novels, on the one hand, are full of characters who suffer from their failure to pay their debts; the most famous example, inspired by Dickens' father, is Mr. Micawber, in *David Copperfield*, Dickens' most autobiographical novel: Mr Micawber runs up debts he cannot pay and as a result he is imprisoned; a life of 'poverty, misery, houselessness, hunger' and loss of freedom, all resulting from bankruptcy inspires in him the following conclusion:

*'Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure nineteen ninety-six, result: happiness. Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure twenty pounds nought and six, result: misery'.* (*David Copperfield*, Chapter 12)

W h i l e Dickens' father was only locked up in the debtors' prison for a few months, another one of his characters punished for debt, William Dorrit in *Little Dorrit*, is imprisoned for 23 years, and, like Denmark in *Hamlet*, the prison becomes a metaphor for life itself. In *The Old Curiosity Shop*, the main characters are 14-year-old Little Nell and her only protector in life, her grandfather, owner of the old curiosity shop. Secretly obsessed with ensuring that Nell does not die in poverty as her parents did, Nell's grandfather attempts to obtain for Nell a good inheritance by gambling at cards. He borrows heavily from the evil Daniel Quilp, a malicious moneylender. In the end, he gambles away what little money they have, and Quilp seizes the opportunity to take possession of the shop; he explains to the old man the importance of interest on the loans as a device for making a profit:

*I have been deceived ...you assured me you would make of my loans treble and quadruple by the interest you paid me.*



The moneylender/creditor had invested in lending the grandfather money and hoped through the interest accruing on the loan to make a handsome profit out of the desperate old man. When the debtor can no longer pay, the moneylender obliges him to sign over all his property to him, and his granddaughter as a result is condemned to a life of poverty or the threat of imprisonment. In effect, the creditor evicts Nell and her grandfather from their home and source of income and thereafter they live as beggars. They escape in true Romantic fashion into the open countryside, far away from the corrupt city:

*Let us be beggars,' said the child, 'I have no fear but we shall have enough, I am sure we shall. Let us walk through country places, and sleep in fields and under trees, and never think of money again, or anything that can make you sad, but rest at nights, and have the sun and wind upon our faces in the day.* (*The Old Curiosity Shop*, Chapter 9)

F o r the reader of today, *The Old Curiosity Shop* may well symbolize the penalty paid by indebted home owners who lose their homes to



the banks that lent them money for a mortgage; latter-day moneylenders like Quilp are the managers of the big banks that manipulate interest rates to make a profit and speculate on the needs of ordinary citizens. The financial crisis has seen massive profits for creditors and massive evictions of people from their homes, increased poverty, unemployment and homelessness. Little Nell represents hope for the future, and a hope which is dashed by the greed of the moneylenders, or the 'markets' as they are collectively known as today. Education is one means of escape from this dead-end which is beyond the reach of the victims of social and economic oppression, as are Little Nell and her grandfather.

## Formative influence 3: The blacking factory

Little Nell's fears and sufferings are a reflection of those Dickens himself felt. The imprisonment of his father for debt had a traumatic impact on the 12-year-old Dickens; it meant he had to leave school and go and work in a factory to help feed the family. He felt humiliated and desperate, deprived as he was of an education:

*'I had no advice, no counsel, no encouragement, no consolation, no assistance, no support, of any kind, from anyone...'* (Charles Dickens, biographical fragment).



A vital refuge and stimulus to his imagination at this time was his reading of books his father had collected, especially the *Arabian Nights*, *Don Quixote* and 18<sup>th</sup>-century novelists.

Eventually, he did go back to school. The Wellington House Academy was not a good school, at least by today's standards: the teachers were badly trained, discipline was poor, the atmosphere was bleak, and the headmaster, Mr. Jones, was an ignorant, sadistic tyrant who had no sympathy for children. In spite of these shortcomings, Dickens was happy at the school and he did well. The pupils were allowed to put on plays, in which Dickens played a leading role. Above all, school was a way out of the blacking factory and a guarantee of not having to go back there again: like Pip, Dickens saw education as a way of making his great expectations a reality.

### David Copperfield

Eventually, his education allowed him to work as a journalist, and it was in that capacity that Dickens saw at first hand schools that were considerably bleaker than the ones he had attended. There were private schools in Yorkshire, run for profit, where children were treated barbarically, in some cases suffering torture and starvation. Dickens' outrage at the abuse of children in these schools was the inspiration behind the school scenes in *David Copperfield* and *Nicholas Nickleby*.

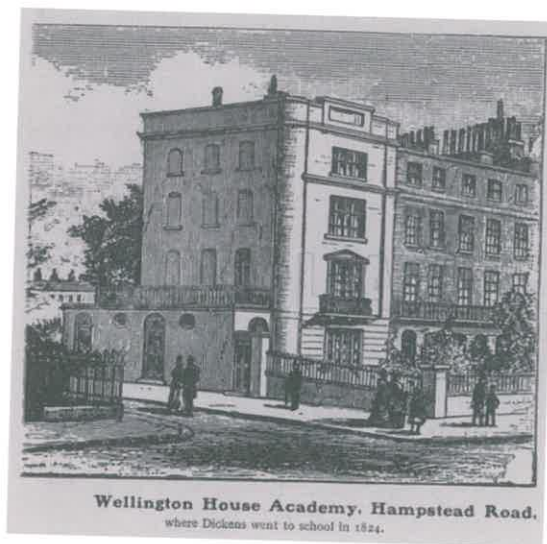
At Salem School there are several factors designed to destroy David's motivation for learning:

1. the schoolroom is 'forlorn': bleak, smelly and dirty.
2. the teacher/headmaster, Mr Creakle, is bad-tempered.
3. the teacher/headmaster, Creakle, is threatening.
4. the teacher/headmaster is violent.
5. David is obliged to wear a sign on his back which says 'take care of him, bites'.

In terms of Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1954) the smells and dirt will not satisfy the boys' 'physiological needs' – as any teacher will know who has tried to teach in a room which smells unpleasant; moving up Maslow's pyramid, we can infer that David's feeling of safety will not be enhanced by the headmaster, Creakle's, foul temper and threats:

*'Do you know what I am? I'll tell you what I am. I'm a Tartar. When I say I'll do a thing, I do it. Do you see this cane?'*

As for cultivating a feeling of love and belonging,



David is marked out from his peers by the placard which warns them to keep away from him if they don't want to get bitten. So he will have his work cut out to be accepted and loved by the other pupils. Most important of all the 'needs' in Maslow's hierarchy is self-esteem: the feeling of self-respect and being respected by others. Apart from the sign on his back that tells the world that David is to be feared, there is his own low opinion of himself, shaped by the negative opinion of others:

*I always fancied that somebody was reading (the sign). I knew that all my fellow pupils read that I was to be watched carefully, for I bit. I even began to be afraid of myself.*

David dreads what this label on his back will do to his self-esteem and rapport with other boys and begs the teacher to let him take it off:

*If you please, sir, if I might be allowed to take this writing off, before the boys come back...*

Maslow's pyramid is crowned by the motivation we all need to fulfil our personal potential, what Maslow calls 'self-actualisation'. In Dickens' writing, this is, ultimately, the aim not only of the motivation behind education but the motivation behind the creative process itself, including the novel. David will achieve some measure of self-actualisation, through love and creativity but his is a process achieved not only through institutional schooling but the education provided by interacting with others, in society and becoming aware of one's own potential and the potential of others for a life of 'graces, fancies and affections'.

### Nicholas Nickleby

The school scenes in *Nicholas Nickleby* are more horrific than those in *David Copperfield* and reflect the barbarity witnessed by Dickens himself in the so-called Yorkshire schools of the time, which his writing helped to abolish. The young teacher, Nicholas, is appointed to a school run by the sadistic Squeers. The school, however, is a scam: it takes in mostly poor or abandoned children (most of whom are illegitimate and/or unwanted) for a high fee, and starves and mistreats them as slave labour while using the money sent by their parents to pad the pockets of its schoolmaster.

The classroom is dreary and the atmosphere miserable:

*'There was none of the noise and clamour of a schoolroom; none of its boisterous play, or hearty mirth.'*

The pupils are suffering from malnutrition:

*'The children sat shivering together... half-a-dozen scarecrows.'*

The teacher, Squeers, is giving the new teacher, Nickleby, a demonstration lesson in the method used at the school; it is a macabre anticipation of Total Physical Response, in which the activity is that of working for nothing on Squeers' farm:

Squeers: *We go upon the practical mode of teaching, Nickleby; the regular education system. C-l-e-a-n, clean, verb active, to make bright, to scour. W-i-n, win, d-e-r, der-winder. When the boy knows this out of book, he goes and does it. Where's the second boy?*

Pupil: *Please, sir, he's weeding the garden.*

The method also involves a great deal of repetition of texts from 'antiquated spelling books' and in this manner the 'morning drags heavily on'. In the novel, Nickleby intervenes to stop the cruel beating of one of the boys and he gives Squeers himself a good beating before he leaves the school. In real life, Dickens' description of these prison-like schools in his journalism and in his novels led to their abolition.

### The good teacher

But what kind of school did Dickens imagine would fulfil his humanistic vision? In *David Copperfield*, the young protagonist, after the violence and humiliation of Creakle's establishment, experiences the power of self-esteem for the first time. Dr Strong, David's new teacher, bases his 'method' on encouragement of pupils and a belief in their good nature. The teacher's strength is his personality:

*But the Doctor himself was the idol of the whole school...for he was the kindest of men; with a simple faith in him... (David Copperfield, Chapter 16)*

A reciprocal relationship is created whereby the respect Dr. Strong feels for the pupils inspires in the pupils respect towards him and a pride in the school. The success of Dr. Strong lies in his building self-esteem in his pupils: he assumes the children are honourable unless they act differently; he builds on their good qualities by making them feel they 'had a part in the management' of the school. All this motivates the children to please him and to maintain the good reputation of the school.

### Hard Times

Dr. Strong's school is a private school and Dickens has much praise for it. In *Hard Times* he paints a more complex picture of the operation of private schools than we find in *Nickleby* and *Copperfield*.



HARD TIMES.



Many of the abuses in the educational system of Dickens' time can be traced to the pressures created by the Industrial Revolution. The demand was for school to be useful in terms of the huge demand for skilled and unskilled labour made necessary by the growth of factories, railways, banks and the burgeoning bureaucracy required to administer an increasingly complex society and an Empire covering a third of the planet. Making a profit was, directly or indirectly, the driving force of these activities, including education. In *Hard Times*, the owner of the school is a politician, Mr Gradgrind, and this is how he explains his educational philosophy to a new teacher:

*'Now, what I want is, Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts: nothing else will ever be of any service to them.'* (*Hard Times*, Chapter 1)

This is a 'utilitarian' philosophy which was supposed to encourage the 'greatest happiness of the greatest number', just as the free market economics of our time was supposed to create wealth which would trickle down to all levels of society. Mr Gradgrind extends the philosophy of material usefulness to the education of his own children; the method is based on the mechanical memorization of facts:

*'This is the principle on which I bring up my own children, and this is the principle on which I bring up these children. Stick to Facts, sir! In this life, we want nothing but Facts, sir.'* (*Hard Times*, Chapter 1)

This approach to education has no time for personalisation, rapport and the cultivation of the emotions. One of Mr Gradgrind's pupils is Sissy Jupe, whose father works in a circus. Gradgrind excludes anything which relates to her personal background and identity from the classroom:

Gradgrind: *Pupil number twenty! I don't know that girl. Who is that girl?*

Pupil : *Sissy Jupe, sir.*

Gradgrind: *Sissy is not a name. Don't call yourself Sissy. Call yourself Cecilia.*

Pupil: *My father calls me Sissy, sir.*

Gradgrind: *Then he has no business to do so. Tell him he mustn't. Cecilia Jupe!*

Pupil: *Sir!*

Gradgrind: *What is your father?*

Pupil: *He trains horses in the circus, if you please, sir.*

Gradgrind: *Your father trains horses, does he? Well, we don't want to know anything about that, here.*

(adapted for performance from *Hard Times*, Chapter 1)

Indeed, Sissy's life in the circus symbolises a world of pleasure and imagination; it is the opposite of Gradgrind's world of dry 'facts'. Thus, a horse is not the beautiful and clever animal known by Sissy Jupe and her father but a scientific entity, the definition of which is learnt by heart by the best pupil, Bitzer:

*Bitzer: Quadruped. Graminivorous. Forty teeth, namely twenty-four grinders, four eye-teeth, and twelve incisive. Sheds coat in the spring; in marshy countries, sheds hoofs, too. Hoofs hard, but requiring to be shod with iron. Age known by marks in mouth. A horse!*

Gradgrind, in sum, banishes all 'fancy', 'affections', and adornment" from the educational process, qualities which, Dickens says, are essential if the poor are not to rise up against the system which deprives them of these human needs (as seen earlier in this article).

*'adorn their lives, so much in need of ornament; or...when romance is utterly driven out of their souls...Reality will take a wolfish turn, and make an end of you'. (Hard Times, Book 2, Chapter 1).*

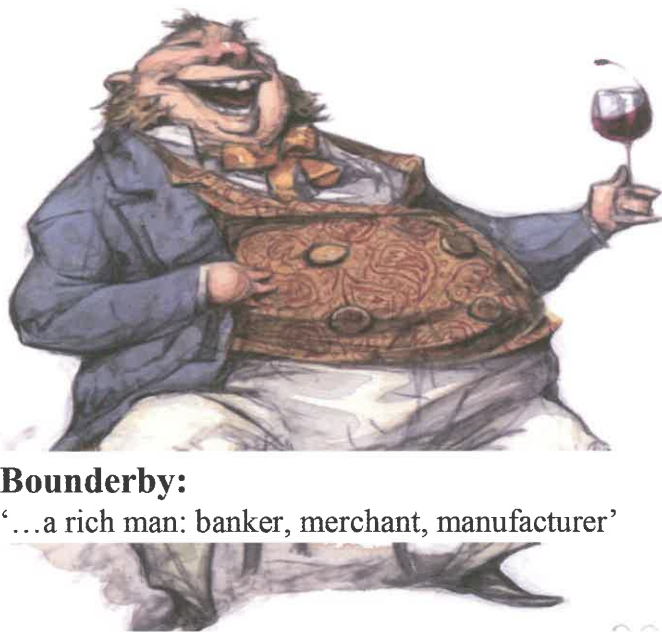
When Gradgrind, on his way home from his impersonal, utilitarian school, catches his own children, Louisa and Tom, peeping at the circus performers through a hole in a fence, he reprimands them for wasting their time on trivial things, contrary to everything he has taught them.

One day, when Louisa is old enough she will be obliged to marry Gradgrind's best friend, Bounderby: 'rich man: banker, merchant, manufacturer and what not'. A self-made and self-taught man, Bounderby boasts of not having had a proper education:

*'Tell Josiah Bounderby of Coketown, of your district schools and your model schools, and your training schools, and your whole kettle-of-fish of schools; and Josiah Bounderby of*

*Coketown tells you plainly: he hadn't such advantages...the education that made him won't do for everybody, he knows well — such and such his education was, however, and you may force him to swallow boiling fat, but you shall never force him to suppress the facts of his life.'*

'Facts', then, and a pragmatic work ethic and the wealth it brings, are what unite Gradgrind and Bounderby. In their alliance, we see the alliance of education, politics, banking and industry. The marriage to Louisa that Bounderby proposes to Gradgrind (he does not ask Louisa herself) is the marriage of their two worldviews: education is an accumulation of facts, as industry is the accumulation of material goods and profit. But the foundations of the systems are rotten: Bounderby is a liar who has rejected all family ties and who ruthlessly exploits his workers, like the other great banker in *Little Dorrit*, the richest man in England, Merdle (note the French meaning of the root of his name), who builds his wealth on fraud and speculation. Some of the main characters in the novel, as well as many ordinary people, have invested all their savings in his bank.



### **Bounderby:**

**'...a rich man: banker, merchant, manufacturer'**

When Merdle goes bankrupt, the poor who trusted him and depended on his bank end up in the workhouse:

*'he had never had any money of his own, his ventures had been utterly reckless. Old people...would have no place but the workhouse...legions of women and children would have their whole future desolated by the hand of this mighty scoundrel' (Little Dorrit, Chapter 25)*

Here we see how the macro-economic situation of banking, credit and speculation impact terribly on the lives



of innocent people. This is Dickens' judgement on the rich banker who cheated millions:

*'He was simply the greatest forger and the greatest thief that ever cheated the gallows.'*  
(*Little Dorrit*, Chapter 25)

In our own time, the media are full of stories of modern 'Merdles' – CEOs (Chief Executive Officers) of major international banks, who, driven by greed and visions of grandeur, have cheated the people who trusted them, by taking risks with other people's money and driving their banks into bankruptcy. Needless to say, none of these great bankers are punished; as in Dickens' day, they 'cheat the gallows'. But the suffering they caused - poverty, homelessness, unemployment, cuts in education and health - remains, a bleak legacy of global market greed. Greed is infectious in the system for those who work in the banks and pin their hopes of wealth on rising in the bank's hierarchy: Gradgrind's son, Tom, eventually gets a job working in Bounderby's bank and is caught embezzling funds. Gradgrind plans to send Tom secretly out of the country to avoid prison and asks Bitzer, his erstwhile star pupil now an ambitious bank employee, to help him. Bitzer refuses. Gradgrind pleads with him to show compassion: 'Have you a heart?' Bitzer's reply sums up the strong link between education, moral values and human relationships:

*'I am sure you know that the whole social system is a question of self-interest. What you must always appeal to, is a person's self-interest. We are so constituted. I was brought up in that catechism when I was very young, sir, as you are aware.'* (*Hard Times*, Book 3, Chapter 8)

Thus, Gradgrind's educational methods have produced in his best pupil a belief in self-interest as the supreme human value. Refusing to show compassion to his old teacher, Bitzer argues that his education was a business arrangement: 'My schooling was paid for; it was a bargain'. Bitzer wishes to make the most of the market value that education has given him:

*'my schooling was cheap; I was made in the cheapest market, and I have to dispose of myself in the dearest'*

It was a fundamental principle of Gradgrind's educational philosophy that 'everything was to be paid for' and feelings such as gratitude and compassion have no market value: 'Nobody was ever ... to give anybody anything or render anybody help without purchase'. Gradgrind, in other words, is an example of someone who knows the 'price of everything and the value of nothing':

*'the existence of mankind from birth to death was to be a bargain across a counter'* (*Hard Times*, Book 3, Chapter 8)

Thus, human relationships are reduced to a market price.

This principle is extended to love and marriage. The marriage of Gradgrind's daughter to the rich banker, Bounderby, will be determined simply on the basis of 'fact', not irrelevant emotions such as love, passion, the 'heart's experiences', which Louisa refers to as 'fire'. Louisa tells her father that his teaching has deprived her of 'fancies, affections and dreams' and agrees, against her will, to submit to the marriage deal with the factory owner. However, after the marriage, with her emotional life in ruins, Louisa denounces her father's teaching methods, which she says have starved her imagination and robbed her of 'the graces of my soul and the sentiments of my heart', the school in which she would have learnt to change the world for the better.

Gradgrind      Louisa



*'if I had been free to exercise my fancy I should have been a million times wiser, happier...'*

*'What have you done, O father, what have you done, with the garden that should have bloomed once, in this great wilderness here!'*  
(*Hard Times*, Book 2, Chapter 12)

Gradgrind's materialist educational philosophy, which in social terms identifies human relationships with money and status, has destroyed the thing he values most, his daughter's happiness:

*'He saw the pride of his heart and the triumph of his system, lying, an insensible heap, at his feet.'* (*Hard Times*, Book 2, Chapter 12)

Louisa's story confirms Dickens' belief in the real value of education, which is to empower the individual to fulfil his or her potential as a human being able to act on the world to make it, as Louisa says, a better place, rather than merely a place where people can increase their market price. The novel also illustrates Dickens' awareness of the subordinate position of women in a male- and money-dominated society. He gives Louisa a powerful voice and she articulates very eloquently what is wrong with the education she has received.



## From crooks to books

But in his work Dickens also expresses the silence of women who have received no education at all. One example of this is Nancy in *Oliver Twist*, the prostitute and thief with a good heart. She risks her life in her attempt to help poor Oliver escape

from the clutches of the criminal gang (led by Bill Sikes, her lover, and Fagin, who teaches the young boys how to steal). Oliver finds refuge in a middle-class home full of books, and with literacy, love and affection he is on the road to a better life. Nancy tries to protect him from the criminal world she is trapped in, and she pays for her kindness with her life. The fate of many women in Victorian England was indeed a bleak one: prison, the workhouse, exploitation by ruthless men.

In *Oliver Twist*, Nancy is not given the option of escaping from this miserable life through education. She is resigned to her fate. But in reality, Dickens provided many women in similar circumstances to Nancy's with a home in which they would be taught to read and write and learn a craft from which they could live independently. The home was called Urania Cottage. In this refuge from prison and prostitution, Dickens wanted to provide an environment where these women, victims of a society that knew the price of everything, could learn the value of reading and writing, gain domestic skills, and work toward reintegrating themselves into society. It is thought that about a hundred women graduated from Urania Cottage between 1847 and 1859. Dickens' system of education for these women was based on the carrot rather than the stick which the women were used to in prison, workhouses and the street. He aimed to encourage them and restore their self-esteem through teaching them practical skills which would help them make a fresh start and restore their sense of worthiness in life. This is education as the practice of freedom – or at least the beginning of escape from slavery: '(the women)' says Dickens, 'will learn many things it is profitable and good to know and will begin life afresh and be able to win a good name and character'.



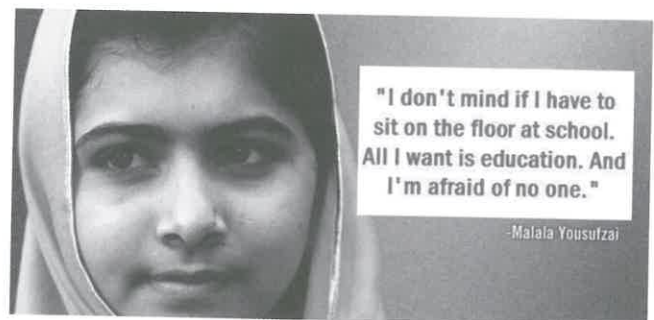
Urania Cottage

Dickens wanted to provide an environment where 'fallen women' could learn to **read** and **write** and gain **domestic skills**

## Conclusion

'In the UK, inequality is rapidly returning to levels not seen since the time of Charles Dickens' (*OXFAM MEDIA BRIEFING*, 18 January 2013)

In our own time, there are millions of women all over the world who are denied education simply because they are women; many have risked their lives in protesting against this inhuman treatment. One girl who has rebelled against this disorder of things is Malala Yousafzai, who claimed the right – and the rights of other Pakistani girls – to be educated. For her courage, she was shot by the Taliban but, fortunately, survived the attack. In one interview, when she was 11 years old, Malala Yousafzai said,



## Malala Yousafzai

Malala's words are a fitting conclusion to the work of Dickens on education and its transformative power in a society that needs to learn the difference between the price and the value of children learning not only to read and write but learning to make the most of their humanity.

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### On Malala Yousafzai:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/shot-by-the-taliban-the-14-year-old-campaigner-riding-the-school-bus-8204461.html>

**On inequality** today and a return to the bad, old, Victorian age:  
<http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/cost-of-inequality-oxfam-mb180113.pdf>

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# Value Added English Learning for Personal-Social-Global Purposes and the Altruistic Turn

By Tim Murphey

***“I think the human spirit always wants to make a contribution. And I don’t think there are enough invitations”***

(Angeles Arrien in Brisikin et al., 2009, p. 156).

This paper’s goal is to highlight several general human drives that can be easily accessed in the service of English learning. Very few students actually want to learn a language because the language itself is interesting. More often, it is what we can do with a language that makes it attractive: make friends, tell our stories, understand songs, travel comfortably, explain ideas that are important to us, meet new people, and realize other meaningful goals. This is what is meant by “value added.” To illustrate these things, please bare with me as I ask a few questions below and take you through some anthropology, evolutionary neuroscience, and describe our altruistic tendencies.

Questions naturally make us curious and thus I start with the following playful questions. Research by Rodiger and Finn (2009) show that, even if you initially get answers wrong, having thought about the possible answers first (wrong or right) makes your retention stronger (once you get the right answers) than if you were just given the right answers immediately. Struggling with possible answers creates neurological networks that are more robust. Please try to answer the questions below for a moment before reading the rest of the article.

## Questions first

1. Why do you think humans stood up 6,000,000 years ago?
2. Why do you think women started birthing earlier about the same time?

3. What were the negative and positive results of early birthing?

4. Why is a turtle trying to fly more beautiful than a bird sitting in a tree?



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## An anthropological view

Anthropologists actually estimate that humans began standing up six million years ago. Why this is important for linguists and teachers will soon become apparent. There are several theories about why we stood up—the most likely being we had a sense of curiosity and wanted to see farther. Some think it was so we could run faster, but actually quadrupeds run faster than bipeds. So standing may have allowed us to see farther, for example some dangerous animals coming, but standing also made our getaway slower. Others believe it was to reach higher fruit in the trees. But since we were already climbing trees, that seems unlikely.

One result of standing and walking on two legs was that our hip structures were reshaped. This resulted in the reshaping of the birth canal of women and they began giving birth to babies much earlier. Women went from having babies after 13 months of gestation to nine months. This perhaps had dangerous repercussions for the species, possibly reducing our numbers at first until we figured out how to take care of prematurely born children. However, gradually caretakers realized the infants needed more care and started attending to them longer and longer. This *attending* was crucial not only for the survival of the individuals but also for the development of the species. I stress this *attending* because it meant caretakers spent more time with infants and bonded with them such that they probably started more extended and intensive communicating. Language may very well have evolved through caretakers and infants babbling to each other playfully and affectionately, and staying long enough with each other to develop a shared repertoire of signs (Lee et al., 2010; Murphey 2011).

Another innovation that occurred in every known group of humans on the planet is the advent of midwives. Having birth three or four months earlier was not only hard on babies but coping with narrower birth canals meant that women needed help, midwives, to assure they and their infants lived. Premature children with a difficult birthing, along with communal hunting and gathering of food, brought people together to help each other survive, and blossomed our developing sense of altruism. These beginnings of communities led to cultures and eventually civilization, as we know it (not perfect even yet, but improving with ups and downs).

The initial drives above in humans are interesting to note: curiosity, adaptability, and altruism through bonding. It seems we are often at our best in the worst of times. These are some of the best characteristics of the species. But we also have the opposite tendencies at times: i.e., to merely do what has been done, force old ways, and to care for only the self. And while community and belonging help us survive, they are not always positive and can lead to some negative things (like prejudice against non-members, war, and group-think). As for the last question, about the turtle trying to fly, the answer will come in due time. Relax.

## The propensity to adjust incrementally over time

Adjusting to stay in more or less harmony/rapport with others creates our social capital. It opens our ZPDs (zones of proximal development; Vygotsky, 1978) and ZPAs (zones of proximal adjusting; Murphey 1996a, 2000, in press) in which we develop, activate, and expand our abilities to learn incrementally and adjust to others so they in turn can open up their ZPDs and ZPAs and learn more from us. The use of the concept ZPA implies that we all have different and developing capacities to adjust to others in different contexts (Murphey in press).

This ability to move and to process information and change as need be (to harmonize) is similar to Carol Dweck's (1999, 2007) incremental theory (growth mindset) in which learners accept that they learn little by little and mistakes are part of the territory of learning. When students operate with an entity theory (fixed mindset), they believe that, whether good or bad, that is the way they are and that nothing changes it, and thus they don't really try to change things. Even if they have a positive first appraisal, "You're great!" they do not want to risk losing the label "great" by trying things that they might fail at. When they operate with an incremental theory or growth mindset, they accept that they are forever changing, moving, and learning how to adjust to make harmonious relationships and attune themselves to others. Students with such beliefs are more open to learning new things and accepting mistakes as they go along. Harmony in relationships with others and fluency in language are incrementally realized through a growth mindset that naturally has ups and downs. Incremental theories are process-oriented harmonizing theories for continually emerging realities and symphonies.

## Homogeneity and diversity

Among the crucial survival strategies that we have developed are our abilities to commune, collaborate, and communicate, from which comes our social capital, i.e., the worth of our connections. And the more we exercise our social intelligence (Goleman, 2006), i.e. our abilities to commune, collaborate, and communicate, the more we can learn, act, and control our own lives, increasing our social and cultural capital. We would indeed be shooting ourselves in the proverbial foot if we cut off the main source of our autonomy which very clearly is our modeling and learning with others in groups. While balancing our time with community and self can be tricky, it is clear that we need both but that at times we stray too much to extremes. While more autonomy for the individual may be the goal, paradoxically this learning of autonomy may happen most often in highly interactive groups (Thornbury, 2012), or in another way of describing them, positive present communities of imagining (PCOIz) (Murphey, 2009a&b; Murphey & Falout, in press; Murphey et al. 2012). A good read on community is *The Power of Collective Wisdom and the Trap of Collective Folly* (2009) by Briskin, Erickson, Ott, and Callanan. While focusing mainly on the positive, the book also describes some of the terrors of group-think and group protectionism from harmful and unjust prejudicial social acts to violence.

Through writing substantially about self and community, I hear Walt Whitman in my mind shouting delightfully from his rooftop, “Do I contradict myself? Well then I contradict myself! I contain multitudes!” He might as well have said, “I contain communities!” since it is from our communities that we draw so much of what we know, do, and say. As Bakhtin says (1981, p. 294): “The word in language is half someone else’s. It becomes ‘one’s own’ only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention.”

### Neuroscience: Dopamine and mirror neurons

Dopamine is the neurotransmitter in the brain that shows we are excited about a variety of things, but especially when we realize we can control something and understand it, or what we call *agency* (Sapolsky, 2009). Learning to use language meaningfully can cause a dopamine rush because it gives us more control over our environments. These feelings seem to happen most often in interactive situations when we can actually do something with language with others. When teachers can create opportunities for students to experience autonomy and agency, students begin to feel more in control and excited about learning.

Pearce (1971), and certainly others before him, intuitively sensed how, “a kind of rough mirroring takes place between our mind and our reality” (p. 1) shaped greatly by our community. Hatfield, Cacioppo, and Rapson’s 1994 volume on *Emotional Contagion* detailed how we catch each other’s emotions. A little later I described near peer role modeling (Murphey, 1996; Murphey & Arao, 2001) in which not only emotions were caught by others, but strategies, beliefs, and behaviors. In 1998, Judith Rich Harris woke a lot of people up with her book *The Nurture Assumption*, showing with powerful data the subtitle, *how parents matter less and peers matter more*. At about the same time in the 1990’s, mirror neurons were discovered in monkeys, and now are confirmed in humans as having great importance for our learning and socializing habits, as well as the spread of civilization (Ramachandran, 2011). Ramachandran even goes so far as to call mirror neurons “Gandhi neurons”, since they often elicit altruistic tendencies.

### Diversity modeling

Most people naturally do near peer role modeling (Murphey & Arao, 2001; Singh, 2010) which works mostly in the domain of homogeneity, and teachers can use this natural tendency to help students learn more, getting them to model other effective classmates. But life is pretty boring if you just stay with people who are like you. Getting out and mixing with diversity leads to a richer and fuller experience of what is offered to us on the planet. My ideal for my students would be to stray to the side of diversity. Of course when things are too diverse, they can get very complicated and chaotic. So even something as good as diversity has its limits and we need to be careful of extremes.

In Stephen Johnson’s book *Where Good Ideas*

*Come From* (2010), he uses the metaphor of the coral reef and the cafe as places steaming with diversity, creativity, and activity—somewhat scary places for many who have not ventured far from the cave. However, it is only in venturing out that we can interact with diversity and *become* someone different through incorporating others into our mental networks and increasing our social capital. And once we are in different communities, our role models tend to shift as our minds, and our mirror neurons, naturally model the different people around us, and we begin *diversity modeling* (Murphey, in press) through simulation (Iacoboni, 2008). This could also be called *diversity peering* which is the bringing of diverse people who are quite different from us into our realms of imagination and modeling them, such that they become our peers (even if only imaginary). Children tend to do this much more easily and are adaptable and flexible in these regards, not only with people but animals, sentient beings, and even objects in the world.



Note that it is also quite frequent that whole fields migrate toward homogeneity in search of a firm identity (Kuhn, 1970), but in doing so they can greatly deprive themselves of diversity resources. In our own field of SLA, we had a strong movement for a while that suggested *theory culling*. But then some brave people dared to speak up for the rights and benefits of diversity (see *The Social Turn in SLA*, Block, 2003; and more recently *Alternative Approaches to SLA*, Atkinson, 2011). Of note is Lourdes Ortega’s final chapter in Atkinson’s volume, in which she describes our choices:

...[W]e have a choice in SLA studies among entrenchment, incommensurability, and epistemological diversity. Entrenchment is likely to be a temperamental reaction that is unsustainable in the long run. Incommensurability is an option that some may find merit in at this juncture in the history of SLA studies. I want to argue that the third option, epistemological diversity, is the best choice (Ortega, 2005, p.176)

Peter Block (2008) citing Putnam and Feldstein (2003) describes two types of social capital (i.e., community-network benefits) which interestingly allows us to see epistemological diversity in an even better light:

Bonding social capital are networks that are inward looking, composed of people of like mind. Other social networks ‘encompass different types of people and tend to be outward looking—bridging social capital.’...And as Putnam and Feldstein



(2003) put it 'A society that has only bonding social capital will be segregated into mutually hostile camps. So a pluralistic democracy requires lots of bridging social capital, not just the bonding variety' (p. 18).

Bonding social capital, good group dynamics, and near peer role modeling are powerful tools and understandings for classroom teachers. However, for teachers seeking broader international understandings, bridging social capital, socio-cognitive conflicts (Murphey, 1989), and diversity peering are more advanced educational management tools. Inviting bridging social capital and Ortega's epistemological diversity creates spaces for diversity peering and enlarging the autonomous self through identifying with others. Ergo, we contain multitudes.

### The altruistic turn

Our species' initial drives (curiosity, adaptability, and altruism through bonding as we saw in anthropology) have served us well. However, as noted above, too much bonding social capital can sometimes create more conflicts and we need to look at how we can build more bridging social capital and identify with diversity. I invite you to see ourselves as being in the invitational profession. We can invite students to look into the diverse lives of others who have become human rights activists, pacifists, ecological advocates, and adopted international postures (Yashima, 2009). We can identify with not only those strangers in the street, but with those diverse others in strange lands through the massive media networks. With animal rights and ecological activists, we might even start identifying with all of nature, and finally with Gaia herself (Earth) as a living entity (Cates, 2005). These sideway steps of identification are imaginable because our brains are wired for such imagination to stimulate survival—not just survival of ourselves but of others and the planet because we essentially depend upon each other: "The entire reach of the biosphere envelope is less than 40 miles from ocean floor to outer space. Within this narrow band, living creatures and the Earth's geochemical processes interact to sustain each other" (Rifken, 2009, p. 597).

Some people commute 40 miles daily to school or work. It's just a thin layer of life on a large planet that already has a few holes here and there—like icing on a cake. With Rifken, I am curious whether we have the adaptable capacities necessary to survive as a species on the planet, or whether our energy addiction practices will in the end disable life on the planet. Our propensity toward altruistic action may be our saving grace—an altruism that expands exponentially in groups of people who belong, bond, and bridge. We will need our imagination.

To recap, our curiosity created a challenge six million years ago that we survived and are still surviving. We are still curious and apparently hooked on challenges and agency. With a bit of imagination, teachers can indeed bring these into the classroom and make learning a foreign language more exciting by making it meaningful to students' goals and interests—value added language learning. To paraphrase Cervantes' words:

*The greatest madness, the greatest sadness, is to see life only as it really is,  
And not as it could really be. Reality is desperately in need of imagination.*

And in the words of Gandhi and Michael Jackson

*Be the change you wish to see in the world  
I don't serve my dear world by pretending to be small,  
I'll stand tall, I will stand tall.  
When you change yourself, you change the world.*

Finally, to paraphrase Robert Sapolsky: I know of no better prepared group of people to change the world, than you. So go and do it, and have a good life.

And remember... invite your students to join you.

*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has. Margaret Mead*

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# The values of Englishes

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This short paper is a summary of some of the points raised during the plenary session I gave at the APAC conference on 22 February 2013. In this session, I attempted to take seriously the conference theme, 'The Value of English', by examining different notions of value as related to English in the world. However, I opened the session with a more general discussion of English in the world, thinking that it would be a good idea to establish what we mean by 'English' and 'Englishes' before taking on what value(s) it/they might have. Reflecting the order of events, while doing a fair amount of editing, here I will go through three of the issues which I dealt with during the session. I start with a consideration of thinking about English in the world today, examining models of English and the functions of different Englishes, before moving to a discussion of what value different Englishes and uses of English might have, depending both on the context and the interlocutors involved.

## Issue 1: Braj Kachru's 3 circles and beyond

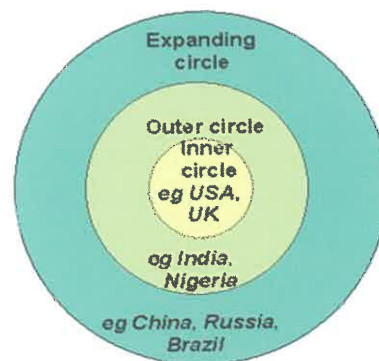
One important issue arising in discussions of English in the world is how different speakers might be classified and how the different Englishes in the world might be categorised. In recent years, most in-depth discussions of English commence with Braj Kachru's (1992) famous attempt to capture the spread of English, where it is used and how it is used. Kachru divided the English-speaking world into three circles. These circles were described by Kachru as follows:

**Inner circle** – The location of the so-called 'traditional bases' of the English language, the countries where it is and has been, historically, the primary language: the USA, the UK, Ireland, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

**Outer circle** – The location of the early spread of English in colonial times, to where the language was not previously known. Locations where English has come to be a chief mediator of institutions and practices. Examples include: Singapore, India, Nigeria and 50-100 other nation-states and territories.

**Expanding circle** – Nation-states where the importance of English (its status as *the* international language) is recognised and has become part of the embrace of globalization as a guiding notion. These national states have neither a history of colonization by members of the inner circle nor the need for English as the mediator of local institutions and practices. A long list of national states includes China, Japan, France, Poland, Brazil and Colombia.

Pictorially, the model looked as follows:

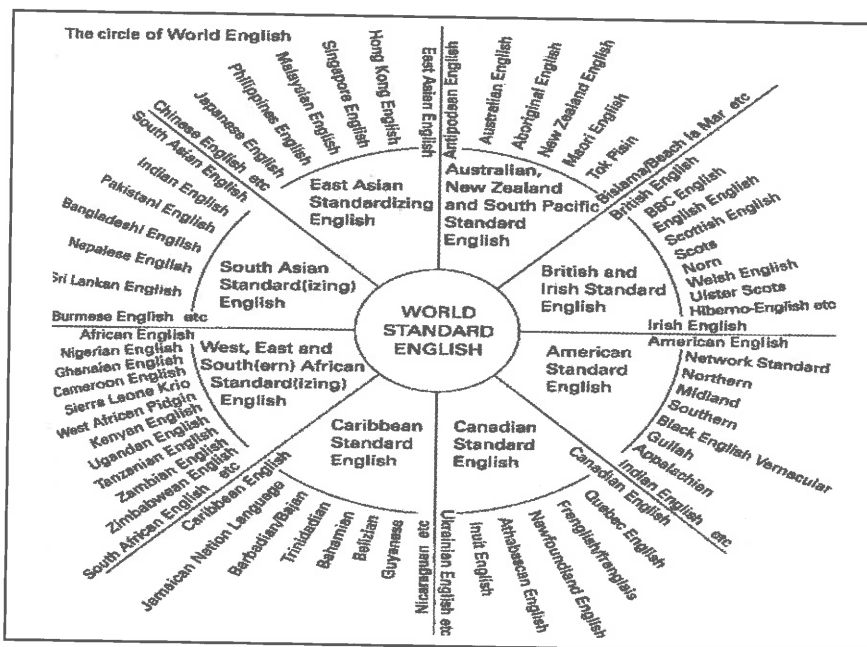


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As I stated above, Kachru's notion that English is spread worldwide across three general circles proved to be a seductive one, and to this day it serves as a reference point for most World Englishes scholars. However, these same scholars have identified numerous problems with the model, a good example being Jennifer Jenkins (2009). For Jenkins, the model is based on the notion that English is inherited through bloodlines and that there is nothing in it about how the individuals living in the countries in the three circles affiliate to English and/or Englishes. She also questions the strict geography whereby (apparently) it is impossible for native English speakers to be born and raised in expanding and outer circle locations. She further sees the model as unable to keep up with changing times, in particular how over the past three or four decades the borders between the circles have become increasingly fuzzy with the rise of nativised varieties of English in countries like Singapore, Nigeria and India and the concerted move to English as the medium of instruction in higher education in the Scandinavian countries. In addition, as English has spread as the most common language of business, academia and other areas of activity, many non-native speakers have acquired greater proficiency as regards their vocabulary, fluency, formal writing, academic reading and so on, than many people classified as native speakers. Finally, given her interest in the notion that English is no longer 'owned' solely by native speakers, Jenkins is keen to note that '[t]he term 'Inner Circle' implies that speakers from the ENL countries are central to ... [the ongoing development of English], whereas their worldwide influence is in fact in decline' (Jenkins, 2009: 21). In sum, Jenkins sees Kachru's model as over-generalising and lacking in nuance in an increasingly complex world. Of course, neither Kachru nor the many people who have drawn on his model over the years actually believe that it is the one and only way to frame discussions of English in the world. Rather, they see it as a heuristic which helps people think about English in the world.

A lesser-known attempt to represent English in the world was developed some years later by Tom MacArthur (1998), in what he called the 'Circle of World Englishes'. A pictorial representation of this model looks as follows:



MacArthur's model has an idealized 'World Standard English' at its centre, which some would argue does not exist, but which others would say is an 'ideal type' and a useful construct which works as a 'holder'. In this case, it is as if we have a vague idea that there is an amorphous and ever-shifting standard English worldwide, emerging in different domains of activity as more and more speakers join these domains. In the realm of English language teaching, it could be something of a hybrid with British, American, Australian (and so on) features. However, if this centre proves to be too contentious for the reader to accept, perhaps the rest of the model is more acceptable. There is an attempt to capture big varieties ('American Standard English', 'East Asian Standard English', etc.), and then list sub-varieties. All of this is tidy, and surely it makes sense to some extent. However, like so many models, it is both over-generalising and over-simplifying in nature.

Elsewhere, other authors such as Marko Modiano (1999) and David Graddol (2006) have also written about how English is distributed around the world. While the former has devised a model which still makes a distinction between ENL speakers and non-ENL speakers, Graddol (2006) has in recent years argued for the need to abandon notions of clear divisions between ENL and non-ENL speakers. Instead, we should consider the variety of English language competences spread around the world. Thus, as noted above, non-ENL users of English may have greater command of the language in particular domains of activity, an example being a Finnish university student with a greater command of formal written and spoken English than the majority of individuals born and raised in Anglophone countries such as the US and the UK. In addition, this Finnish student may also be able to socialize very competently in English in a wide range of settings. For Graddol, such an example means that we need to reconsider the idea that we can easily differentiate between ENL and non-ENL users. I agree with this assessment but would add that it also means that the individual in question may be said to possess English as an integral part of his/her sense of self. In effect English mediates a range of practices engaged in by the individual, and this has a profound impact on his/her sense of self.

To sum up this section, Kachru's model provides food for thought about English in the world, and it leads us to pose interesting questions relevant to this topic. First, we might think about how the context in which we work fits into this model, entertaining the prospect that in a location like Catalonia, no doubt situated in the 'expanding circle', there are emerging elements of 'outer circle' activities such as English in higher education, alongside English language instruction, learning and use which is very much 'outer circle' in nature (e.g. English is still seen by many as a 'foreign' language). In addition, we need to note how models like the one proposed by MacArthur are still skewed very much toward native speaker models as central to

any discussion of English. Indeed, in this model, European versions of English beyond the UK and Ireland are left out of the equation. All of this leads us to the issue of who owns English and who has a right to declare him/herself a legitimate English speaker (or user). One way to take on this issue is to consider the functions that English has in different contexts, the topic of the next section.

## Issue 2: Functions of English

A second big issue in discussions of English in the world today is different ways in which varieties of English are classified according to function. In the world of language teaching, one encounters a range of different terms and this can be confusing. Helpfully, Philip Seargeant (2010: 102-104) suggests six terms and corresponding functions. These look as follows:

**English as a second language (ESL)**, that is, ‘English in countries where it has some official status, most often as the result of a colonial history [or] English in countries in which it is the predominant means of communication and is being learned by people from non-English speaking backgrounds ...’

**English as a foreign language (EFL)**, that is, ‘contexts where English is neither widely used as a means of (intranational) communication, nor as a medium of instruction within schools (or in the majority of higher education institutions)... [but] is taught as something that is explicitly associated with... countries traditionally perceived as English-speaking.’

**English as an additional language (EAL)**, that is, ‘an alternative term for ESL,... when a basic distinction is needed between English as a native language (ENL) and other varieties... [where] English will be a speaker’s third, fourth, fifth, etc., language...’

**English as an international language (EIL/international English)**, that is, ‘as a replacement for EFL,... to acknowledge that in countries where English is not used for intranational purposes... , the language is... used specifically for international communication, often by speakers from different countries who do not have English as a mother tongue.’

**English as a lingua franca (ELF)**, which is ‘[c]losely related to the concept of EIL, but intended to be more specific about the usage it defines,... specifically highlight[ing]... English used for lingua franca purposes...’

**World standard spoken English (WSSE)**, that is, the ‘suggestion... that there exists a worldwide standard of English,... a converging speech style [which] is emerging within the global community. ...’

Of course, one could argue that a seventh function is that which refers to English as a native language (ENL), that is, English as the language which one is born into

and then raised and educated in. Most likely, such contact with English over a lifetime would take place in one of the recognised Anglophone nation-states (e.g. the US, Canada, the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand), what Braj Kachru calls the ‘traditional cultural and linguistic bases of English’ (Kachru, 1992: 356). ENL might be a convenient holding term, but it needs to be used alongside recognition that there are several problematic notions that go with it. First, there are always multiple variants of ENL in a single nation-state, which leads to a problem identifying which one variant stands for the whole (e.g. which variant of American English represents all others?). In addition, there is the issue of ENL family units living in non-ENL territories, a prospect which I raised above in my discussion of Kachru’s expanding circle. Are children raised in such environments still ENL users? Third, not all ENL users are equally competent (or at least not competent in the same way) in English across a range of domains. This raises the issue of relative membership in the group called ‘ENL users’. Finally, as Jan Blommaert (2010) notes, not all Englishes are equal in the current global age, and this notion applies to ENLs as much as it does to non-ENLs. For example, regional accent prejudices (e.g. against a Scottish accent; against a southern American English accent; against an African American English accent; against a New Zealand accent; and so on) mean that not all ‘native speakers’ are treated the same and that a prospective native English language teacher may well encounter problems finding employment if he/she has what is deemed to be a ‘strong regional accent’.

Taking the previous discussion into account, it might be useful to think about our contacts with English thus far in our lifetimes, and consider which of the seven functions/types of English outlined above we have had experience with. Which one function/type of English are we closest to being a user of at present? Answering these questions requires a breakdown of the different activities that we engage in using English so as to see the different functions for which we use it. For example, I may be classified as native speaker of English by many, but in international fora, am I also a user of EIL, ELF and WSSE when I engage with non-native speakers? We might also ask if teachers of English are using, as part of their professional activity, ESL, EFL and EAL. One obvious answer to such questions is that English is a moving object for all its users and that different individuals have broader or narrower English language repertoires which are deployable in a wider or narrower range of contexts. Nevertheless, these same individuals are not just free agents moving in and out of contexts using their English under no constraints, a state of affairs which leads to a third issue discussed in my plenary talk: the power of reception and the power to impose reception that some users of English have and others do not. Or, in other words, the different values of different Englishes in the world.

## Issue 3: Power and the value of different Englishes in the world

For the millions of individuals producing English language texts every day, matters can be complicated, especially with regard to authors’ claims to being legitimate English language producers. To make this point we might examine an example provided by Jan Blommaert (2003).

Blommaert reproduces a handwritten letter from Victoria, the 16-year-old daughter of one of his friends in Dar es Salaam in Tanzania. The letter was written as a follow-up to Blommaert's visit to Dar es Salaam, during which he spent time with Victoria's family. It looks as follows:

20/9/1999

Dear !

Uncle Jan

*How are you? I hope you  
The main aim of this letter is to tell  
you that, here in Tanzania, we have  
remember you so much. Dady, Mum, Uzuri  
Patrick, Furaha, and Veronica and other members  
like Kazili, Helena, Bahati, Fatima and  
and others. Other people forget to write for you  
a letter, great all your family I don't  
have much to say. Sorry if you will  
came Tanzania we will go to beach*

Bye Bye From VICTORIA MTANGULA  
(Blommaert, 2003: 618)

Blommaert identifies Victoria as 'a member of the local middle class, a class which uses proficiency in English as an emblem of class belonging' (Blommaert 2003: 617). However, while Victoria's English may be considered 'good' in her local context and while among her teachers and peers it may afford her a degree of prestige and distinction (Bourdieu, 1984), it does not necessarily travel well if we take as an example the letter above. As Blommaert explains:

... as soon as the document moves across the world system and gets transplanted from a repertoire in the periphery to a repertoire in the core of the world system, the resources used by Victoria would fail to index elite status and prestige... The indexicalities of success and prestige, consequently, only work within a local economy of signs, that of Tanzania, an economy in which even a little bit of English could pass as good, prestige-bearing English (Blommaert 2003: 618-19).

All of this is something of a restatement of Pierre Bourdieu's (1977) ideas about legitimacy in language use. Bourdieu first noted that questions of relative value in language use are not about the intrinsic qualities of the language used, but about relations of power in society, which we can here extrapolate to the global level:

Arguments about the relative value of different languages cannot be settled in linguistic terms: linguists are right in saying that all languages are linguistically equal; they are wrong in thinking they are socially equal. (Bourdieu, 1977: 652)

And further to this point, he wrote that:

...the dominant usage is the usage of the dominant

class, the one which presupposes appropriation of the means of acquisition which that class monopolizes. The virtuosity and ease which figure in the social image of linguistic excellence require that the practical mastery of language, which is only acquired in a home environment having a relation to language very close to that demanded and inculcated by the school, be reinforced but also transformed by the secondary pedagogy which provides the instruments (grammar, etc.) of a *reflexive mastery* of language. (Bourdieu, 1977: 659)

The issue here, and the topic worth carrying forward into future discussions of English is what value the different Englishes which we use, in both written and spoken forms, have in the contexts in which they are produced and taken up. Following Blommaert, we see that an English may be perfectly acceptable and even highly valued in one context only to be questioned or even denigrated in another. This applies to nonnative varieties of English but it also applies to native varieties. Thus in the film 'The Limey' (1999), a speaker of Cockney English finds that his American interlocutors do not understand him. Terence Stamp plays the part of a petty English gangster named Wilson, who uses his Cockney English with the equally petty American gangsters he comes across as he searches for his missing daughter in Los Angeles. This English includes numerous lexical turns of phrase which distinguish it from standard Southern British English, as well as the following pronunciation features:

Glottal stop /ʔ/ for voiceless dental plosive /t/	I can wri[ʔ]e like simple le[ʔ]ers bu[ʔ] I can speak Gujara[ʔ]i ...
Voiced dental fricative /ð/ replaced by voiced labiodental fricative /v/	'bruver' for 'brother' 'together' for 'together' 'wiv' for 'with'
h-dropping	Look at 'im. It's 'orrible.
Voiceless dental fricative /θ/ replaced by voiceless labiodental fricative /f/	'fing' for 'thing' 'fink' for 'think' 'frough' for 'through'
[l] pronounced as a semi-vowel /w/ when it is followed by a velar /l/	[mɪwk]) for 'milk' [fiw] for 'Phil'
non-standard negation, e.g. ain't and double negation	'I ain[ʔ] seen im' 'I don[ʔ] wan[ʔ] no one to know'
'was' for all grammatical persons	'We was talkin' 'They was there'
the all-purpose tag question 'innit'	'You live in London innit' 'He's crazy innit'

In the following scene, Wilson is talking to Feather, a local gangster whom he thinks might have information about his daughter. In the monologue that opens this short exchange, Stamp/Wilson rambles, moving from an



acknowledgment that the 'boss' is Feather, to an attempt to extract himself from any ongoing conflicts between Feather and others, to a story about the virtues of patience learned in prison.

### Transcription conventions:

/ = normal and natural pauses between sections of speech

(X) = pauses of greater length

? = rising intonation

CAPS = raised voice;

Cockney pronunciation features as outlined above

WILSON: *how'ya doin then? / a/w/ight squire? / now look squire / you're the guvner here / I can see that / I'm on your manor now / so there's no need to get your knickers in a twist / whatever this bollocks is that's going down between you and that slag Valentine / it's got no/ffin to do with me / I couldn't care less / a/w/ight mate? / lemme explain t'ya / when I was in prison / second time / ehr no / tellin a lie / /f/ird stretch / yeah / /f/ird / /f/ird / there was this screw / wot really had it in for me / and that geezer was top of my list / two years after I got sprung / I sees im in Holland Park / e's sittin on a bench / feedin bloody pigeons / there was no one about / I coulda gone up behin im / and snapped is fuckin neck / wollop >clapping his hands together< / but I left it / I coulda nobbled im / but I didn't/ 'cos what I /f/ought I wanted / wasn't what I wanted / what I /f/ought I was /f/inikin about / was sompin else / I didn't give a toss / it didn't ma/?/er see / this berk on the bench / wasn't wor/f/ my time / it meant sod all in the end / cos you got to make a choice / when to do sompin / and when to let it go / when it MATTERS / an WHEN IT DON'T / BIDE YOUR TIME / that's what prison teaches you if no/ffin else / bide your time and every/ffin becomes clear / and you can act accordingly /*

FEATHER: *there's one thing / I don't understand (1) the thing I don't understand / is every motherfucking word you're saying /*

Throughout the film, Stamp does not always manage to pull off the Cockney accent. In addition, the use of Cockney turns of phrase in this exchange (e.g. 'squire', 'guvner', 'on your manor', 'get your knickers in a twist', 'bollocks', 'nobble', etc.) comes across as rather forced, as if there was an attempt to see how many iconic Cockney lexical items Stamp/Wilson can fit into one minute. And finally, there is the questionable behaviour of the film's protagonist: Would a Cockney speaker, or anyone for that matter, make no concessions to interlocutors who cannot reasonably be expected to understand his dialect of English (see Feather's response)? Notwithstanding these and other questions about what is at best a fair piece of cinema, the scene does make the very good point about how well or badly Englishes travel. Thus, Wilson, the native speaker of Cockney, is not understood by Feather, the speaker of

standard American English, and we can therefore say that Stamp/Wilson's Cockney English does not travel well. And this, in my view, is food for thought.

### Conclusion

To conclude this short summary of a portion of what I said to the APAC audience on 22 February 2013, I suggest that the issues raised and discussed here are issues for English language teachers around the world to consider. However, I would add that they are also issues for English language students to consider, as ultimately they will enter the sphere of circles, differentiated functions and assigned values if and when they go out in the world and use the English that they have learned in the classroom. Thoughtful discussion of what English means and how it is valued would serve to enrich their language learning experience and, in addition, prepare them better for what awaits them in English-mediated contexts. Thus, while teachers may discuss with their students learning strategies, as a way to help the language learning process along, they should also think about the social endpoint of this language learning process, which means talking with students about the relative values of different Englishes in the world today.

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# Seeing double

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# Brain-Based Learning – Revisited

By Geraldine Laboria

*“In a gentle way you can shake the world”- Gandhi*

This article is based on the talk sponsored by Cambridge University Press and presented at the APAC Conference in February, 2013. It deals with “revisiting” some of the more important facts about the ways our brains work and how this can usefully help us in the context of the classroom. We will look at the structure and needs of the brain and consider the ways we can integrate this information into our lessons.

As teachers we cannot control everything, but we can help in a lot of small ways, and by using some of the available knowledge we can, as Gandhi says, “shake the world in a gentle way”.

## Introduction

Brain-based learning is not a new concept. Information gathered from the exciting research into the structure and working of the brain began to filter through to the general public throughout the 1990s. Those of us who were teaching at the time were suddenly made aware of the fact that all the different behaviours and reactions we were used to witnessing every day in our classrooms, from smiling to frowning, from listening and learning to forgetting, were happening as a result of the chemical and electrical activity taking place in the amazing “thing” that lay hidden between our students’ ears!

At that time, many of us jumped at the chance to learn more, signing up for courses and absorbing as much information as we could. Personally speaking, I can remember feeling convinced that with all these facts we would bring about a huge learning revolution and help students to use more of their brain power to become super-intelligent beings – it felt like being part of a crusade, and we teachers were going to become part of an army of Joans of Arc, or Mother Teresas of Calcutta, leading and nurturing this new, highly-intelligent race! Twenty years on, where we are? Exactly where we were before, possibly even worse! Why? Because Brain-based learning is an incredibly simple concept, there are no gadgets to use or methods to follow and it has been completely swept aside on the gigantic waves of the technological revolution. Teachers and pupils have come to rely more on their computers and the wonders of modern technology in the teaching/learning process instead of asking

themselves one very short, simple question: “What is good for the brain?”

The answer can be found in the results of all the research undertaken in the multiple fields of chemistry, neurology, biology, psychology and genetics. It does not give you a methodology to follow, but it does make you consider the power of the brain and how it naturally learns. By using that knowledge we can learn more and help more of our students to do the same.

## A Few Facts about the Brain

This article is not the place for a detailed look at the structure of the brain; we are teachers not psychologist or neurosurgeons. But, a little knowledge and a few scientifically-proved facts can go a long way to helping us in our daily jobs. One thing which has puzzled me for a long time is this: if someone wants to become an electrician, the first thing they are shown and taught about is how a fuse box works, so why aren’t teachers also taught how the “human fuse box” works? It really is amazing that basic knowledge of brain function is not a compulsory part of a teacher-training course! What is the point of being taught how to teach different concepts or deal with behaviour problems or how to use flash cards or pair work without knowing why? Also, how can we really be sure we are making the “right connections”, that, metaphorically speaking, we are “connecting the right wires in the right places” and, instead of ending up with all the lights turned on, we end up with a black-out, or worse still, a total power-failure?

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We all know what a brain looks like on the outside. Our first image is usually that of the two hemispheres which together form the cerebrum. This section is the largest, about 80% of the total brain, and it is the most developed, responsible for logical, higher thinking and decision making. Every single brain is unique, even those of identical twins, but we all share a few common facts:

1. Our brain is approximately the size of two fists joined together.
2. It weighs between 1.5 and 2 kg.
3. It is over 70% water.
4. It is approximately 2% of our total body weight and uses 25% of all heart activity to keep it supplied with oxygen.
5. It gets its energy from sugar and oxygen in the blood and uses 750 ml every minute. This creates a lot of heat, making it the hottest part of the body. It is said that you could power a light bulb from the energy it produces!
6. It is a pinkish-grey colour, very soft and has a strange smell somewhere between cauliflower and blue-cheese!
7. The cerebral cortex is wrinkled and folded and about as thick as an orange peel. This is a very sensible “packaging” on behalf of Mother Nature because it allows the brain to sit very neatly inside our skulls; if all the folds and wrinkles were ironed-out each hemisphere would be about the size of a family pizza.

All things considered, it is really quite ugly and it has never surprised me that during the embalming rituals in ancient Egypt the high priests were not impressed by it at all! They respectfully removed the heart, liver and lungs and reverently placed them in sealed jars to accompany the dead Pharaoh into the after-life, but the brain was the too ugly to bother with, and all they did was to put a hot wire through the nasal cavity, wiggle it around a bit to scramble the brain, pull it out and throw it away! (By the way, pupils love hearing about that and it is a great way to teach a bit of history and a bit of biology all in one go!).

Our brain is actually the most complex of all our organs. It has approximately 100 billion cells, and, although we begin to lose cells at birth, because of its plasticity we keep increasing connections between them, and research shows that when linked together the number of possible connections could be more than the estimated number of atoms in the known universe! Although it is hard to believe sometimes, we really are capable of being very intelligent beings!

However, as teachers, there are some things we really must keep in mind:

1. It takes a long time for the brain to mature: 20 to 30 years. The last part of the brain to be fully developed is the prefrontal cortex, which is where we have our personality and the ability to make decisions. Even if children are the same age there can sometimes be as much as 2 to 3 years differences in how far along their brains have matured. Many secondary teachers get frustrated because they expect mature reactions

from their teenage students, who outwardly, physically appear adult, but are still completing their neural development. As Andrew Curren said, “You can’t be older than your brain.”

2. Experiences we have as children produce physical changes in the architecture of our brain. The effects of the behaviour of adults, especially parents and teachers, who spend the most amount of time with children, will determine how their brains develop, for good or bad. We have a very big responsibility in shaping the brains of the future, so perhaps, as teachers, we could all swear our own personal oath based on the first rule of the Hippocratic Oath taken by doctors: “I will do no harm”.

### A Quick History of the Brain

About 2.5 billion years ago living organisms began to develop more complex systems, and gradually, about 400 million years ago, we developed a spinal cord and a brain stem, the Reptilian brain, responsible for instincts, survival and motor actions like walking, etc. It is extremely basic, but even today it is responsible for the arousal of the brain, giving us higher energy levels to wake up and lower levels to go to sleep. (Teachers: remember you will always feel more wide awake if you stand up and move, so with teens integrate some movement into your lesson time and keep using lots of TPR activities with infants and primary school learners).

The second area to develop was the Limbic System, or Paleomammalian brain, approximately 180 million years ago. It makes up about 20% of the brain and includes different sections: the hippocampus, thalamus, hypothalamus and amygdala. It is responsible for our emotions, hormones, sexuality, memory, smell, and it is the area where most of the brain’s chemicals are produced. (Teachers: remember that emotions and memory are closely related and our emotional reaction will decide how we store and remember facts and events. Try to use positive emotions to embed new learning).

The cerebrum, or Neomammalian brain, is the largest part of the brain, and it developed approximately 3.5 million years ago. This is the area where the two hemispheres are clearly visible. The cortex, which covers it, is rich in brain cells and accounts for about 70% of the nervous system. It is amazing to consider that the neurons in this area are connected by 150,000 to 180,000 kilometres of nerve fibres! There are four lobes which make up the cerebrum:

- a) The Occipital; responsible for vision.
- b) The Frontal; responsible for planning, creativity, decision-making and problem-solving.
- c) The Parietal; responsible for some language functions and sensory processing.
- d) The Temporal; responsible for hearing, meaning, memory and other language functions.

(This is only a very basic division, because the brain is extremely complex and there is usually some overlap between lobe functions).

In 1968, Roger Sperry won the Nobel Prize for his work on the left and right brain hemispheres, and although we are whole-brained and rely on both areas working and

interacting together, Sperry defined certain functions which relate more to one side than the other. The left brain deals more with logic, sequencing and order whereas the right tends more to creativity and emotion. However, it is worth remembering that the right brain learns over 1000 times faster than the left, so try to include activities which take whole-brain learning into consideration. Paul and Gail Dennison have done a lot to help in enabling the two sides to reconnect and work together with their simple, but very effective, exercises of Brain Gym® or Kinesiology. Before learning begins, or before taking a test, teach students how to Cross March. This can be done either sitting or standing, although standing is better. Ask them to touch a part of the left side of their body with their right hand or elbow. Ex: right hand to left knee or foot and then do the opposite movement, left hand to right knee. If they do this about 10 times, breathing deeply at the same time they will increase the blood flow across the two hemispheres and create a good learning state.

### How Our Brain Works

Very simply, our brain works by electrical impulses which are constantly being fired by a neuron across a microscopic “synaptic gap” to the next neuron, integrating and generating information in the process. Every neuron is composed of one axon and many fibrous branches called dendrites, which interact with each other.

Information passed from neuron to neuron only flows in one direction; the dendrites receive input from axon terminals, which then passes to the axon. The axon then transmits the information to the cell body, moving it out to the dendrites, which will communicate with neighbouring axons. All this happens at the amazing speed of about 120 meters per second (i.e., over 400 km per hour)! Axons which are used a lot become myelinated by a fatty liquid which speeds up the electrical impulses and reduces interference from other reactions, and in this way memory is formed, allowing us to perform the hundred and one things we do every day, from cleaning our teeth to switching on the light, without having to re-learn how to do them every time. (Teachers: remember that the brain physically changes with every new experience we have. If the stimulus we receive is novel and/or challenging, our electro-chemical reactions will be activated to create new connections and memory paths, if the stimulus is not interesting or meaningful the information will not be considered important and only a weak connection will be made, and, possibly, lost at some future moment. When planning classes and activities try to remember the need for positive emotions, reduce stress levels to improve memory and present new information in as stimulating a way as possible).

### What the Brain Likes and Needs

Compared to how amazingly powerful our brains can be, their likes and needs are extremely simple. But, if we want to get the maximum benefit, we really should know what they are. Basically these are the things they want:

- a. Change and breaks.
- b. A relaxed atmosphere (no stress), with fun, laughter, challenge and motivation.

- c. Fresh air, plenty of oxygen and movement.
- d. Music.
- e. Good diet and sleep.
- f. Water.

Now let us look quickly at each one and how it impacts in the classroom and what we, as teachers, can do to make sure our students’ brains are getting some of the things they need.

- A. Change and breaks. we all have our own individual body clock, circadian rhythms, or bio-cognitive cycles, which peak and dip at different times during the day. Our bio-rhythms affect both our physiological functions, such as pulse rate and blood pressure, and our psychological functions, such as mood changes and concentration levels. Every 2 hours there is a release of hormones into our blood stream which affects both our mood and learning. This means we all have highs and lows throughout the day, and research has shown that students can learn more when they are allowed mental breaks of 5 to 10 minutes every 90 minutes. Breaks can be programmed into lesson time and they do not have to be “wasted time”: they can include the opportunity to review, discuss or mindmap what the students have been learning.
- B. A relaxed atmosphere, fun, laughter, challenge and motivation. Contrary to what many people believe, the brain will learn more in a relaxed, positive atmosphere where there is the right amount of stress to encourage learning, rather than distress which kills it. Research shows that when we are afraid, or under stress, different areas of our brain do not communicate well and we fall easily into the “fight or flight” syndrome, dating way back to our primeval survival instincts when brain reactions allowed us to either fight or run away in order to stay alive. Despite time and evolution we still possess these reactions, and, in times of fear or stress, chemicals flood the amygdala area of the limbic system, preparing our bodies for action and overriding our ability to think calmly and logically. If we remember the famous Maslow triangle showing the “Hierarchy of Needs”, we can clearly see that certain basic necessities must be in place before we can achieve higher learning states. Our lessons need to be non-threatening, which does not mean they should be over-easy: they should have a good balance between high-challenge and low threat so that students feel motivated to rise to the task required, but confident that they have sufficient help and support for them to achieve it. We need to make students aware that there is no shame in making a mistake, just the opposite, they are necessary in order to learn. Keep in mind one of the basic theories of NLP (Neuro-Linguistic Programming): “There is no failure, only feedback”. Socrates was a firm believer in the power of laughter in the learning process and insisted on his students having fun in their lessons! Research has proved that we all react positively to a happy face and a smile. So, even though it can be extremely hard some days, try to have a smile as you walk into the “lion’s den”! It is you versus “them”

and there are more of them, so beat them with a smile! The great thing about smiling is that it is free and can do a lot of good! When the corners of our mouths turn upwards as we make a smile, there is a chemical reaction in our brain which releases endorphins, the “feel good” hormones which we have when we eat chocolate or fall in love! Our brains, clever as they are, cannot distinguish between a true smile and a false, rehearsed one; we get the same chemical reaction. So smile, it will make lessons less stressful and create a better atmosphere in the classroom! Research shows that teachers who use laughter as a learning tool can have as much as a 20% increase in class achievement. Laughter reduces heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and colds! Happy people have 50% more antibodies to fight off the diseases, and the best bit of all is that happiness is absolutely free and you do not have to pay tax on it! What more do you want?

- C. Fresh air, oxygen and movement. Remember, our brains work through electrical impulses being fired, and to do this they need plenty of oxygen. When we move we circulate the oxygen and, in fact, within 45 seconds of standing up there is 15% more oxygen in your brain! Teach students how to breathe correctly. That might sound obvious, but most of us only use between 10-25% of our total lung capacity. Stale air lacks oxygen, and that starves the brain. Open windows if possible and programme some movement into lesson time. A very simple but effective way is to have a “break” and get students to chant the months of the year, it does not matter how old they are, and, when they say the month of their birthday, they have to stand up and then sit down again. Do this a couple of times and you will have integrated movement and fun all into one very short brain-break!

Alternatively, you could teach them the words to the song of “My Bonnie”. This is one of the most popular, and the funniest, of the brain-breaks and can be used with all ages. Give them the words to the song and then tell them that every time they sing a word beginning with the letter “B” they have to change position. If they are sitting, they have to stand up and keep standing until they sing the next word with “B”, when they sit down. The length of the song is a constant up and down movement, and when they get to the chorus they usually get so mixed up that the activity ends in hilarious laughter! The results are music, movement, laughter, a great atmosphere and 100% happy students with happy brains!

- D. Music. There is definitely a valid argument for using music as a learning tool in the classroom, and not just for accompanying songs. Music is a core learning intelligence, and brains love it! It appeals to both the left and the right hemispheres: the left processes the rhythm and lyrics while the right listens for the melodies and the harmony. It also connects with each section of the brain: the Reptilian brain hears the vibration, the Limbic System hears the feeling and emotions and the cerebrum hears the sound intellectually. Music is a universal language which reaches people’s intelligence, and, as a result, it

breaks down the barriers of resistance, makes people feel engaged and touches our emotions to allow for greater levels of understanding and communication. It also connects directly to our long-term memory, allowing us to recall events and facts in the best possible way. All teachers of young learners know how well children learn and remember through the use of timeless classroom favourites like the “Alphabet Song” or “Head and Shoulders, Knees and Toes”. Teens and adults can do the same if we choose songs carefully to appeal to them.

- E. Good diet and sleep. We need to help our students to learn about healthy food which will enrich the brain. Their diets should include fresh fruit and vegetables as well as some fish and nuts, not just pizzas and pasta! Texts and worksheets can easily integrate this knowledge at any age or level into an English class. Many course books include the food pyramid, and even little children can be encouraged to put names and pictures of different foods on a “Food Rainbow” and be encouraged to eat a variety of different coloured foods, for example orange carrots, red tomatoes, green lettuce, etc. Teach older students that, in order to function, the neurons in their brains need oxygen, glucose and water, and the brain itself needs proteins, so that the neurotransmitters will function correctly. Teach them about brain foods and also about the absolute need to eat breakfast before coming to school! Brains that have been working all night while we are sleeping desperately need nutrients after a fast of about 7-8 hours. They cannot be expected to work correctly until 11 a.m., when students finally eat a “breakfast” sandwich! Remind teens, too, that their brains need them to rest and get enough good-quality sleep; without it, learning and thinking can be impaired.
- F. Water. The last, but definitely not the least, need is for water. This fact is overlooked, or usually ignored, by a vast majority of both teachers and students. The basic fact is that our brains are between 70-80% water, and even the slightest dehydration will lead to a drop in a concentration and learning. When water is either absent, or restricted, our animal-survival-instinct kicks in and increases our levels of a stress hormone called cortisol, which can lead to behaviour problems, boredom or sleepiness. The good news is that 5 minutes after drinking water, the stress hormone drops and behaviour becomes more normal. Ideally, we should drink between 8-12 glasses of water per day and have access to a sip of water to keep our brains in the best condition every 60-90 minutes. When working with computers, this should be every 40-45 minutes, because the electrical impulses coming from the computer screen can dehydrate our brains very quickly.

#### **Other factors to keep in mind**

Brain-based learning teaches us that we need to include both emotional intelligence and social intelligence in our classrooms in order to create a positive atmosphere for



learning. Research has discovered that on average we have about 5000 thoughts per day, of which 60% are negative! We really are not very kind to ourselves. By learning, and practising, a few simple ideas from emotional intelligence, we can teach ourselves to be kinder, both to ourselves and to each other! The two most basic principles of emotional intelligence are:

- Treat others as you would like to be treated yourself.
- Be you own best friend.

Maybe this all sounds too simple, too good to be true or too much like trying to be Mary Poppins! It is not; being emotionally intelligent can be extremely difficult at times, and, as teachers, we need to constantly remind ourselves that we are human beings dealing with other human beings, not machines. We all have good days and bad days, and we all have to deal with children and/or teens, some of whom we like and some we do not, but our job is to teach them to the best of our abilities and try not to judge them. Research has shown that, in general, school children hear 16 negative statements to every positive one from their teachers, friends and family, which is really very sad. Did you know that there are at least 99 ways to say “Well done”? See how many you can think of, here are a few to make a start: “Congratulations!”, “Very Good”, “Great”, “Fantastic”, “Super”, etc. Try using them more often in class, and swing the 16-to-1 balance the other way!

This leads on to the necessity for self-esteem in the learning process. Think back again to Maslow’s Triangle: a low self-esteem is one of the greatest barriers to learning anything and, if left unchecked, can seriously ruin the chances of a good job and lifestyle.

A child’s self-esteem is a fragile, priceless thing, and, as teachers, we need to make sure we do everything we can to keep it intact. If children come to our classroom with low self-esteem, we need to learn the ways we can help them to recover some of it. Don’t put labels on the children! Labels have a habit of staying all through a person’s schooling by being passed from one teacher to another. Personally, like so many of us, I have bad memories of being labelled as “stupid” by a maths teacher, who, unfortunately, I had for 3 very long years at secondary school, resulting in the fact that both I and all the rest of the class were totally convinced that I really was stupid at maths! Fortunately I had other teachers and my family who finally managed to convince me that although I found maths difficult I was not stupid. Without that input I doubt I would be a teacher today. In my classes I try to include texts about famous failures, and I have a poster on the wall, made by myself and one of my students, which includes a fascinating thing I was told when I was studying NLP. It is about bees, and it says, “According to scientific research, due to the weight of its body and the short span of its wings, a bee cannot fly! However, no-one has told this to the bee, so it flies! The bee doesn’t put limits on its abilities, so just think what you could do.” We should all try our best to get our students to believe in themselves.

## Conclusion

To sum up I would like to say that by learning a little about our brains and their needs, we can offer brain-based learning to our students and meet their needs for:

- Positive emotions.
- Stimulation and motivation.
- A reduction of stress levels.
- Movement.
- Self-esteem.
- “Time out” for both learners and teachers!
- Chances to make mistakes and still keep learning.
- Oxygen, water, music...and lots of smiles!

Finally, please, share this text with your students:

## YOU ARE A VERY SPECIAL PERSON

Be true to your dreams and keep them alive,  
Be true to the light that shines in you and us it to  
light the path of others,  
Be true to your hopes and your joy for life,  
Fill your heart with good feelings and your mind  
with positive thoughts,  
Be generous, kind and learn how to forgive,  
Be your own best friend and listen to your inner  
voice, it will tell you what is best for you,  
Be true to yourself and the paths you choose, follow  
your passions and share your talents,  
Paint your own rainbows, sing your own songs and  
enjoy the beauty which is around you,  
Never let anyone or anything make you feel inferior  
or doubt yourself,  
Always remember the brightest light can be found  
inside yourself...  
Because you are a very special person.

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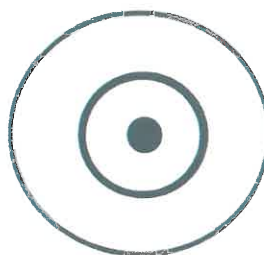


# A Map of ELT

By Mark Hancock

The idea of a Map of ELT was born on a train to Budapest. I was with Annie McDonald returning from a conference, and we were trying to make sense of the information overload that we'd just experienced. So many concepts, and so little relationship between them. Things like CLIL and the lexical approach, or Dogme and English as a lingua franca: they seemed as incompatible as oil and water. How did they fit together? Then I found something interesting in the paper: it was a map of modern art, put together by BBC art critic, Will Gompertz (2012). I found that aspects of modern art I hadn't understood made more sense to me now. Annie and I decided that perhaps this is what was needed for ELT, and we set about drafting the map there and then.

There is a Chinese proverb which says, 'If you don't climb the mountain, you can't see the plain' (Crystal, 2006). If the world of ELT is the plain, then to see it properly, we would need to climb a mountain - or perhaps fly! After all, what we want is a bird's-eye view of the territory. But given that this territory is conceptual, not real, this all has to happen in our minds. Where to begin?



If you take a look at a world map from Roman times, you will see that the landmass - Europe, Asia and Africa, is roughly circular, and right at the centre is the Roman Empire. This is a very



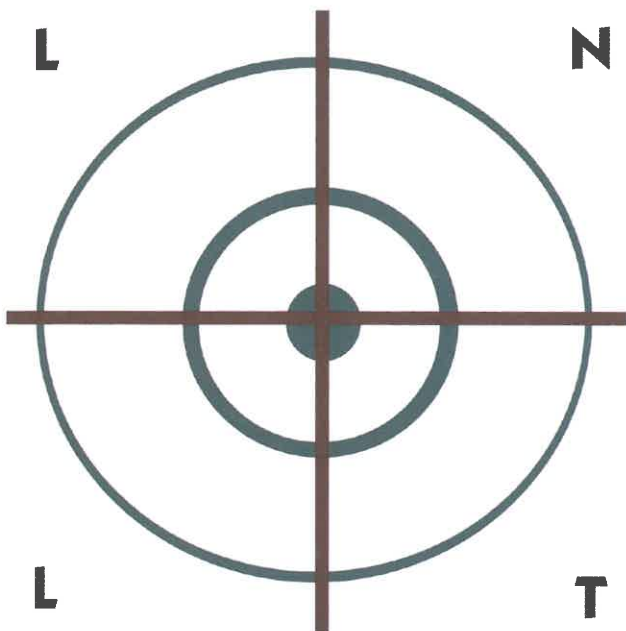
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Mark Hancock graduated in geography and philosophy in 1984. Since then, he has done an MA in Teaching English, and he has been an English teacher on three continents. Since the early 1990s, he has also been an ELT materials writer. His first book was *Pronunciation Games* (CUP 1995). He co-founded, with Annie McDonald, the ELT resource website, [hancockmcdonald.com](http://hancockmcdonald.com).

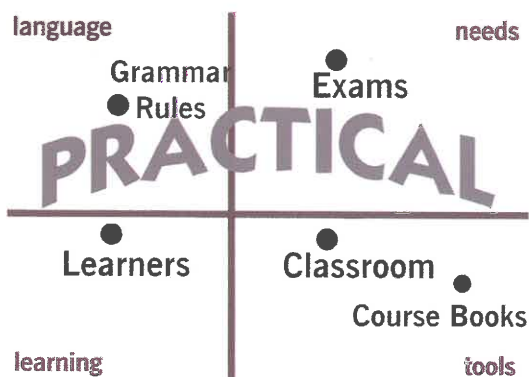


egocentric map, but then, many are. And egocentricity has become a feature of our map of ELT, too, but in our case, the centre of the map is an idealized, newly qualified English teacher. This is not to be confused with the pejorative idea of being 'teacher-centred', it merely states that this is the world of ELT as seen by a teacher.

So now our map has a dimension of centre-periphery, where closer to the centre is nearer to the concerns of a newly qualified teacher, and closer to the edge is further remote from those practical concerns. Next, we segment the map into quarters. We put a vertical line through the centre of the map, dividing it into east and west, and a horizontal line dividing it into north and south. The North West (NW) is the territory of the target language and linguistics. The North East (NE) is the territory of the skills that need to be acquired. The South West (SW) is the territory of learning and psychology, and the South East (SE) is the territory of the tools and means which are available to the teacher.



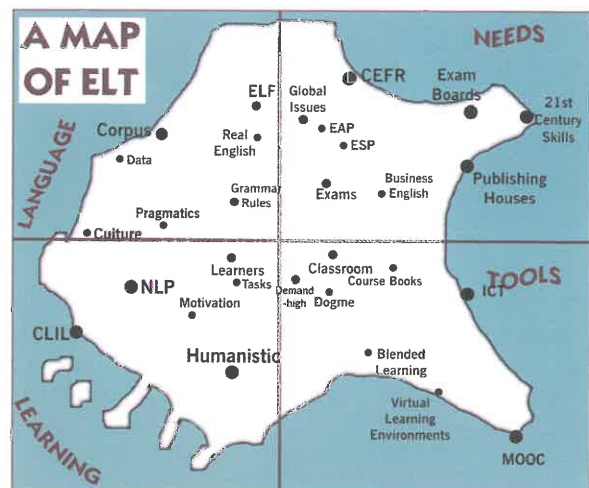
From their vantage point in the centre of the map, the beginning teachers will perhaps see one hill in each direction; in the NW, a hill which is the simple pedagogic grammar - a sequence of tenses from simple to complex; in the NE, a hill which are the skills they have to teach - not least of which being getting them through the next exam; in the SW, they see their classroom full of learners; in the SE, the room, the books, the board and whatever technology is available.



Before going on to explore the four corners of the map in more detail, let us first take a look at it as a whole. The map has two layers of labelling. On the first layer, we see words in a large grey font printed at various different angles. These are the 'temperament labels'. For example, near the centre is 'Practical', which represents a key idea for inhabitants of this region - people who are most concerned with practical classroom common sense. Some of the other temperament labels include, for example, 'Descriptive' - where the inhabitants are most concerned to accurately describe the target language; 'Analytical' - where the inhabitants want to analyse students' needs as closely as possible; 'Creative' - where the people believe creativity is key to life-long learning, and 'Social' - where the locals like to learn by being connected up together, via the social media, for example.



The second layer of labelling shows points on the map together with labels in a smaller black font. These represent key concepts and ideas in contemporary ELT - although by no means all of them! Notice that these represent key concerns in ELT today - this map is a snapshot of the territory now, not a history. So, it is time to explore the corners in a bit more detail.



There is a Finnish proverb which says, 'The more you walk, the more hills you see' (Crystal, 2006). As our new teachers walk to the top of each of the hills described above, they discover there are more hills beyond, which they may not even have imagined to exist. For example, on reaching

the hill of pedagogic grammar, they then see that grammar is actually description rather than prescription, and that there are various alternative models of it. They see the hill of corpus linguistics and come across ideas like the lexical approach. They see that there are other aspects of language they'd never thought of before, such as discourse and pragmatics. All of these things are in the NW.

In the NE, our teachers come across the idea that different students have different needs, and some of these needs might be quite specialist - for example, English for academic purposes, English for special purposes or business English. They will find more and more detailed descriptions of the target skills which students need to acquire, as described in the Common European Framework of Reference "can do's". They will inevitably experience the washback effect from the big exam boards and the requirements of their local ministries of education, and the resultant syllabuses in coursebooks.

In the SE, our new teachers will soon find that there are many other means to use in the classroom than just a coursebook. And of these, perhaps the most salient is Information and Communications Technology (ICT). First of all, they will see how these tools can be used in their classrooms to add variety and motivation. Then they will discover that their classroom is actually a virtual space, and as much work may be done outside the physical walls as within them. If they go far enough in this direction, they might even find that the physical classroom and teacher disappear altogether, to be replaced by Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC)! Meanwhile, our teachers will also discover the idea that actually, materials and tools are not necessary after all - that much more important is the learning that emerges from interaction in class.

Now let's consider the uses of the map. First of all, it serves the purpose of **orientation**. When you hear about



a new idea at a conference, on the web or wherever, you can try to locate it on the map, and in the process, this forces you to consider what the main thrust of the idea is, and what the neighbouring concepts are. Take for example the idea of '21st-Century Skills'. This is a label given to a package of skills taken to be newly significant in this new century, ranging from life and career skills to learning skills and ICT skills. I have located this

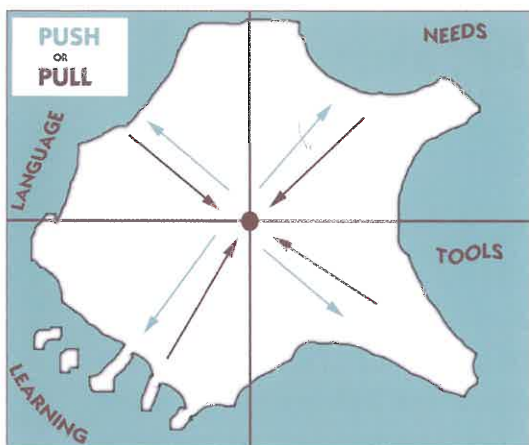
In the far north, our new teachers will come across ideas which are critical of the mainstream 'truths' about how the target language is to be described and what counts as being a competent user of it. They will come across the idea of English as a Lingua Franca - and not the 'property' of a 'native-speaker'.

In the SW, our new teachers will encounter the idea of student-centredness, different learning styles, motivation and creativity. They will find people who propose classrooms which are less narrowly focussed on just teaching language and instead, which seek more complete educational purposes - for example Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL).

in the NE because the main thrust of the idea is a redefinition of target needs or competences. I have located it remote from the centre because it extends quite a long way beyond the basic teach-the-language brief that is the main concern of the newly qualified English teacher.

This brings us on to a second purpose of the map - **comparison** of competing ideas in ELT. An interesting pattern here are the two opposing forces of 'pushing out' and 'pulling back'. The idea of '21st-Century Skills' is a good example of pushing out. It is an idea from beyond the territorial limits of ELT, which some ELT thinkers have imported into our profession, perhaps with the idea of enriching it. However, in pushing out from the centre, an idea

runs the risk of losing touch with the practical purpose at the centre - language teaching. This gives rise to the reaction force of pulling back. Again, with reference to '21st-Century Skills', the pull back idea can be expressed like this: 'Wait a moment - all this talk of life and career skills etcetera is all very nice, but it's beyond our remit - we are here to teach language!'



And finally, we turn to the third, and perhaps most important purpose of the map - **balance**. A map such as this serves to constantly remind us of the bigger picture, lest our enthusiasms and specialist interests should give us tunnel vision. This image illustrates what such a tunnel vision might look like: the next picture.

There is a proverb in Liberia which says, 'You can't tie a bundle with one hand' (Crystal, 2006). It's a very graphic image. You need at least two hands for that job. And for English teaching, four - one for each corner of the map.

A language teacher needs knowledge of the language (NW), understanding of needs (NE), an understanding of how people learn (SW) and an ability to coordinate the tools and means available (SE). Just having one 'hand' is not enough. For instance, there is a lot of excitement at ELT conferences these days about technological tools, and very often the discussion proceeds with no reference at all to questions of language, syllabus or learning psychology. This is very one-handed. No matter how powerful the new tools are, they don't absolve us from considering the other three corners of the map as well.



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# Going for 90%

By Anne Dwyer

Around three decades ago, I started teaching English in Germany. At the time, we were piloting *Follow Me*, and the ‘communicative’ teaching method (CLT) was starting to take over from both the Audio Lingual method, which was how I had learned French and the Direct Method, with which I had acquired German. Out the window went many language drills and ‘listen and repeat’ exercises. Gone forever were the ‘classics’ like *First Things First* and model sentences like “My tailor is rich”; in came the *Strategies* series. Those teachers who were not sure of this ‘revolution’ held on to the *Streamline* series of books, *Kernal Lessons* and *Contact*. Many students were now exposed to a variety of approaches as they tried to acquire what seemed, at first, to be an accessible language and later became frustrating, as ‘the mistakes were always the same’.

Then, in the late 80s, academics presented us with ‘corpora’ studies: thorough research into ‘what L1 speakers’ do/use, with what frequency and ‘for what purpose’.... With and based on this research, the language learning books changed the order in which ‘items’ were being taught. With corpora came books like the *Cambridge English*, and the *Headway* series also followed ‘the new order’ of things, and books used in primary and secondary schools followed suit. With the exception of books based on the ‘lexical approach’,

most books on the market have followed a very similar pattern in regard the type of language items focused on/taught and the order in which they are dealt with.

What is the net result of all of this? What has changed? Certainly the level of English language competence is significantly higher than it was three decades ago. Teachers today, especially in primary and secondary education, are both more professional and better trained, partly because successive governments have ‘poured resources’ into the

Originally from NZ, Anne Dwyer is a sociologist and a linguist and has been teaching, training, and coaching soft skills for more than half her life. She now divides her working time between business students, professionals and in-service teacher training. Anne is especially interested in discovering ways to teach and learn languages and other subjects and also to communicate more effectively. Her two trilingual sons went to state schools and their English is great. In her free time Anne does bits of stand-up comedy, theatre in Català and has fun with friends and family.

teaching of English (remember the days when people who had holiday English were teaching in primary schools?). Children start learning English earlier than in the past and know more than they did. Nevertheless, in spite of having more contact hours than in many countries, the average level of proficiency elsewhere is or seems to be much higher than it is here... so what can we do to improve? What is not working? Why are so very few students leaving secondary schools with a B2 level of English and so many leaving with only an A1 or A2 level?

*“I’m not surprised kids never end up learning English, Mum. Every year they start with the same grammar item”  
Daniel Torres Dwyer, 14 (2005)*

## BE DARING! CREATE A STUDENT-CENTRED SYLLABUS AND TEACHING ORDER

I recently took a look at series of English books used in our secondary schools today: THEY ALL START with a revision of the two present tenses! This is not motivating, this is not student-centred, this is not effective.

Of course we need to recycle language items, one student’s LAD<sup>(1)</sup> (language acquisition device) may not be working at the same pace as someone else’s. But we do not need to start the year on Page 1 of X textbook; some teachers don’t, most do. We don’t need to follow the textbook 100%. We can move units around and in this way both address student interests better and create a ‘surprise’ element.

## “ASK AN INTERESTING QUESTION AND YOU’LL GET AN INTERESTING ANSWER”

Norman Coe, 1981, British Council

Starting every year with the same area of grammar is NOT about asking interesting questions ... not for the teacher or the students. It is poor syllabus design<sup>(2)</sup> (see Nunan, 1988), and we have been allowing publishers to do this to us and our students for years. So what do I suggest? I suggest we embrace some of Nunan’s advice and begin each year differently:

1<sup>st</sup> ESO: many students will not know each other and they need to see who is similar to themselves: copula, *can, do you like*.

2<sup>nd</sup> ESO: the teacher will want to clarify the aims for the year and to establish new ground rules: going to future as model verbs will do that!

3<sup>rd</sup> ESO: what happened over the holidays is key at this age; the perfect moment to revise the closed past.

4<sup>th</sup> ESO: students need to focus on their future and which path they want to take. What better moment to start the year with the 1<sup>st</sup> conditional, *need to, have to*.

## DO NOT AIM FOR PERFECTION; IT DOES NOT EXIST. AIM FOR 90%

The theory of 90% (which is applied by engineers and many other professionals) says that if you aim for 100 (i.e., perfection) you are likely to end up with 70%; go for 90% and you might even get 99%; perfection does not exist! Apply the 90% rules described below **and you will take your students a lot further**. They will develop a strong, reliable ‘monitor’ which will help them communicate better.

## 90% ‘RULES’ FOR YOU AND YOUR STUDENTS TO USE! PRONUNCIATION

British paediatrician, Penelope Leach, comments in her book, *Your Baby and Child* (1997), that when learning to talk, youngsters rarely get vowels and word order wrong<sup>(3)</sup> (see also Gotzke & Sample Gosse, 2007). If that is true, then these two factors are key to communication; they therefore need to be at the core of teaching and learning... but are they? Here are some 90% rules that can really impact on language acquisition.

## STUDENTS NEED TO SPEAK WITH AN ‘ENGLISH MOUTH’ TO GET THEIR PRONUNCIATION 90% RIGHT

When I learned French (with ALM), we spent the first day practicing the ‘French mouth’. Pat Mills of Esade used to say ‘if your mouth doesn’t hurt after 20 minutes, then you haven’t been speaking English’. The ‘English mouth’, as Jim Wingate says in *Open Up a Teacher* (1985), moves between the vowels L1 speakers use as pauses: the *um* and the *er* (as in *her*). The easiest way to form the ‘English mouth’ is to keep the upper lip stiff and to place the tongue so that it is ‘glued to your upper back teeth’ ... try speaking your own language with this mouth position ... you will be surprised how foreign you can sound!

To help students, encourage them to begin with *er* and *um*. Create tongue twisters for these two key sounds to improve diction:

‘It’s an emergency’ the nurse said to the surgeon.  
‘Work’ is not the worst word in the world.  
One son is having fun in the sun.

## FOCUS ON LONG VOWELS, NOT WEAK ONES

Understanding how vowels work is key. Many students (and teachers) seem to believe that pronunciation in English does not follow rules ... this is not 100% true; 90% DOES follow rules (albeit complex ones). Why are some long and some short? How do the letters ‘r’ and ‘l’ and ‘w’ change the ‘shape’ of the vowel? Please, stop focusing on weak vowels;<sup>4</sup> they are 90% less important than strong vowels.

<sup>1</sup> Krashen, 1981, 1982

<sup>2</sup> See Nunan (1988) Syllabus Design, OUP

<sup>3</sup> The Canadian Language & Literacy Research Network makes some interesting comments in the sense. <http://www.theroadmap.ualberta.ca/vocalizings/parents/13-34>

<sup>4</sup> Many textbook series focus on “weak” vowels (when what our students need is to focus on “strong” vowels) and other exercises that can be quite “frustrating” for the learner. Interestingly, to my knowledge, NO rhymes and songs for L1 English speaking children focus on weak vowels. Focusing on weak vowels is an invention of EFL.

	LONG	SHORT	+R	+W/L	COMMENTS
A	ATE /eɪ/	AT /æ/	ART /ɑː/ *PARENTS /eə/	ALL, AWFUL /ɔː/	
E	WE /iː/	WET /e/	WERE, HER /ɜː/	NEW /iuː/	
I	BITE /aɪ/	BIT /ɪ/	BIRD /ɜː/		
O	NOTE /əʊ/ *TOY /ɔɪ/	NOT /ɒ/ *SON /ʌ/	NOR /ɔː/ *WORD /ɜː/		Work is not the worst word in the world!
U	TUNE /iuː/	FUN /ʌ/	TURN /ɜː/		

### THE -ED MORPHEME

Students spend hours of their life on ‘discriminating exercises’, trying to work out whether the final *-ed* of regular past tense verbs is pronounced /d/, /t/, or /ɪd/. This is frustrating; it also teaches a ‘rule’ that is less than 90% true.

**So what IS the 90% rule?** What guidelines are better?

**90% of the time we do not pronounce the e in the final -ed of regular past verbs**, because it will often be understood as the pronoun *it*, and this really interferes with communication. The pronunciation of the final *d* depends on what comes afterwards: the *d* in “They played two games” does not sound the same as in “They played inside” because of elision. The ‘rule of thumb’ is:

To pronounce regular past verbs, just make them longer!  
Play → plaaaaayd  
Try the following rule/rhyme:

**“Always pronounce the D but never the E, except when it comes after a T or a D”**

It’s a 90% rule ... much better than having people understand /I play it yesterday/

### SYLLABLE STRESS WITHIN A WORD

In both Spanish and Catalan, people count syllables from the end (last, second-to-last, third-to-last). These are concepts most students here have ingrained in their minds, and yet in English classes and EFL books, people teach 1<sup>st</sup> syllable, 2<sup>nd</sup> syllable, 3<sup>rd</sup> syllable. There are pages of complex rules and exceptions (which some students are made to learn by heart). Apply the “second-to-last, third-to-last” syllable rule to English and we get 90% accuracy! Please throw away those pages of rules and exceptions: **the 90% rule is: in 2-syllable words the stress falls on the 2nd-to-last syllable, in 3+ syllable words the stress falls on the 3<sup>rd</sup>-to-last syllable.**

Oh! And so encourage *students* to use/write their accents on words. You’ll be surprised at how quickly they onboard this information.

### SYLLABLE STRESS WITHIN A SENTENCE

Here the 90% rules are very simple:

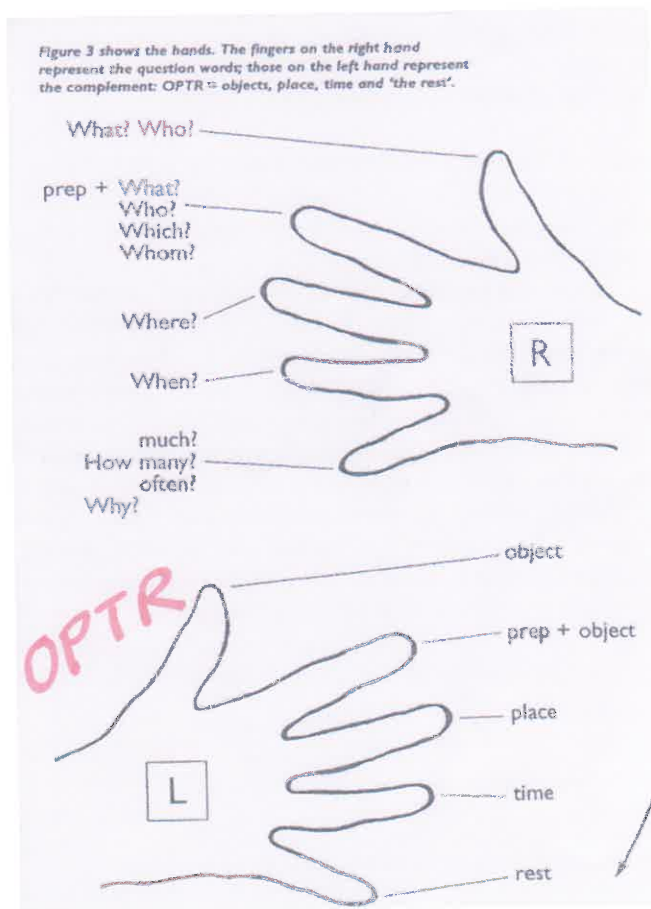
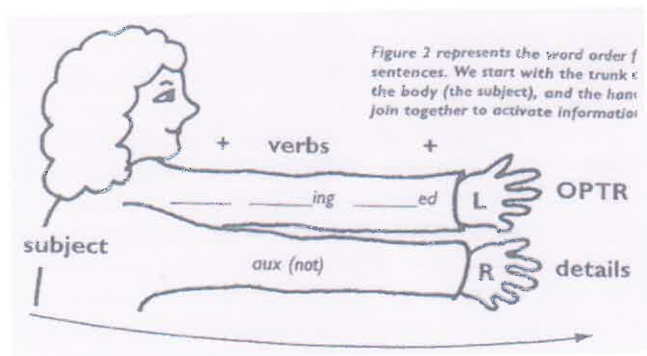
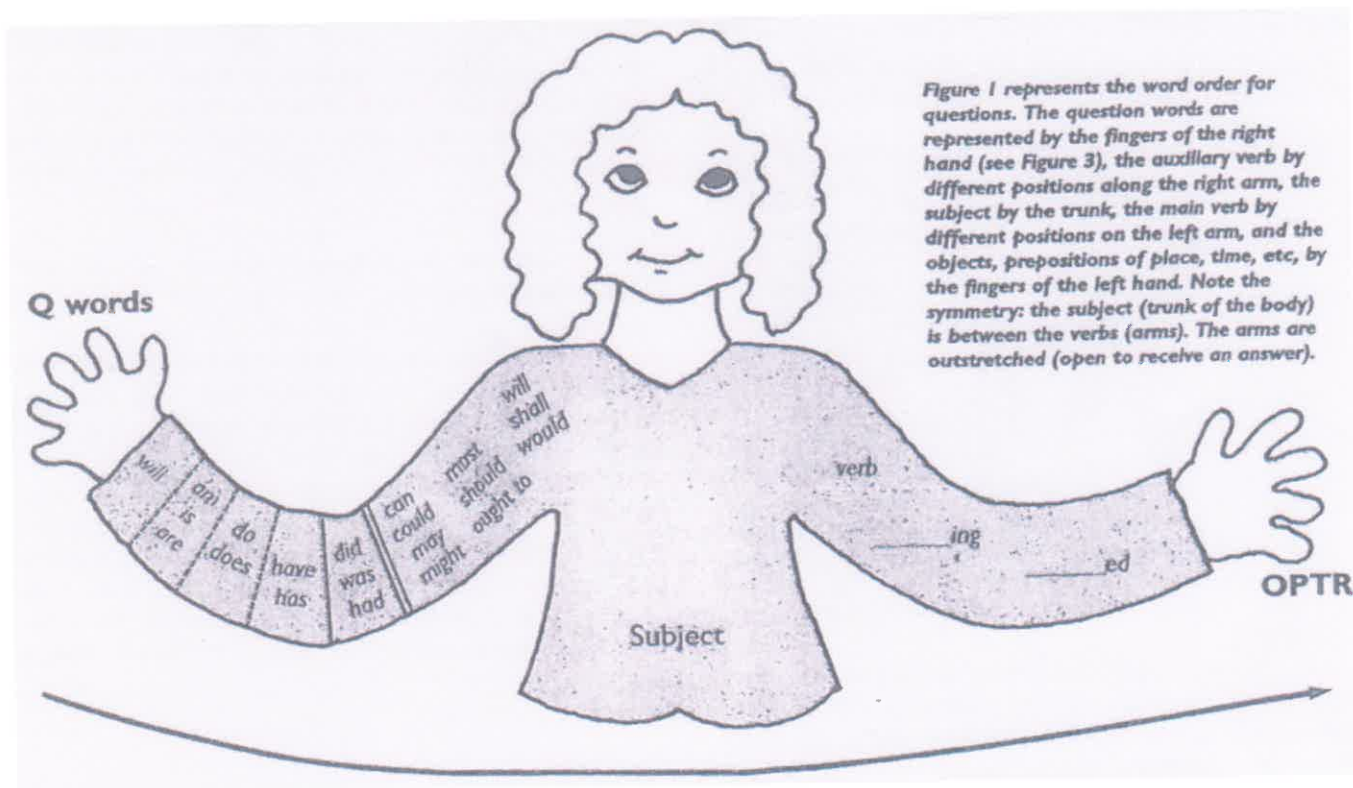
- a) one smile every 3-5 words (and you get the tonic vowel as well); and
- b) stress **KEY** words and **ATTENTION** words, such as **adjectives and numbers**, as in a **BLUE** car, **BLACK**berry, **THREE** reasons.

### WORD ORDER

Word order can really make the difference when it comes to effective communication. Poor word order is often a result of word-for-word translation and creates stress for the decoder as s/he tries to reconstruct the intended meaning by rearranging the pieces. Poor word order leads to communication breakdowns. Yet, for decades only three types of word order exercises have been published: where to place adverbs; adjectives + noun; and the basic sentence structure, Subject + Verb + Predicate. This is, was, and has always been insufficient. How does the learner acquire correct word order ‘within the predicate’? And when asking direct and indirect questions? How are students going to understand and remember that word order is quite strict in English (unlike Catalan and Castilian, which are very flexible)? Thirty years ago, after getting frustrated with correcting word order (especially in questions) again and again, I suddenly realized how wonderfully symmetrical the English language is and I came up with the idea of ‘the grammar on the body’. The body becomes a simple tool we carry around with us wherever we go; stress on behalf of the encoder and the decoder disappears; **word order becomes 90% correct and we end up using strong, positive body**



language when asking questions and also when showing.



<sup>5</sup> This simple idea was published seventeen years after I developed it, in October, 2000, in ETp 17. The drawings come from that article.

To personalize and therefore make the idea sit in the mirror neurons (i.e. even better), ask students to buy and illustrate a wooden figure of their own as they learn the verb forms. These figures are on sale in art shops, some bazaars and occasionally you can even find them in Ikea!



Textbooks for EFL focus on one area of word order: the order of adjectives. This is another area of grammar that is made far too complex; **the 90% rule is ‘the order moves from the most general to the most specific’**. Of course students can learn the complete, 100% rule, but do they really need to? The chances that you will be using more than three adjectives are relatively small for practical and also rhetorical reasons. See the following web page for the 100% rule: <http://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en/english-grammar/adjectives/order-adjectives>

## PREPOSITIONS AND PHRASAL VERBS

How many teachers find it easy to ‘justify’ the use of one preposition instead of another in phrasal verbs? How many students become ‘good at guessing’? In how many cases is the preposition logical?

**Understanding 90% of phrasal verbs lies in understanding what I call the ‘personality’ of prepositions.** This is true for German, and I believe it is also true for English.<sup>6</sup> The Germans divide prepositions into 3 types: accusative, dative and genitive; I also divide English prepositions into 3 types: moving, stationary and ‘conceptual’. It is the conceptual prepositions (and series of prepositions) which, when combined with verbs, create challenges for learners of English: *for*, *of*, *with*. Asking students to ‘offer a better or an alternative preposition’ is an excellent way to help them understand the personality of prepositions.

Understanding that *in* and *on* are both ‘fixed’

or ‘stationary’ but that *in* is 3-dimensional whereas *on* is 2-dimensional helps us understand the difference between *in television* and *on television*. It also helps us understand why a New Yorker will say both *on the street* and *in the street*, whereas many people from Ireland prefer to say *on the street*. Not surprisingly, many L1 speakers now use a ‘hybrid sound’, /*hmn*/, which they use when they themselves are not sure.

What is the difference between *in* and *into*? Movement! Nothing else.

*On*, *above* and *over* also seem to cause confusion. In some languages they are translated with the same preposition, whereas in English they have quite a different ethos: *on* and *above* are both ‘fixed’, but *on* involves contact whereas *above* implies having space in between; *over*, on the other hand, involves movement. As a result *get on* means ‘establish contact’, *get above* means ‘create (superior distance)’ and *get over* means ‘put it behind you’ – the meaning lies in understanding the preposition; translation will not help you (unless you want to become a ‘walking dictionary’!).

## TENSES

In the 1970s and 1980s, language items were taught in the order of L1 acquisition (the ‘natural order hypothesis’):<sup>6</sup> copula, *there is/are*, possessive, imperative, *can*, *have got*, *-ing*, *going to*, auxiliary *do* with *like*, general present and past of *be*.<sup>7</sup> When ‘corpora research’ was presented, we discovered that native speakers use the ‘simple present’ far more than the present continuous, and, according to linguists, this tense should therefore be taught first. In line with and perhaps as a result of the corpora research, curriculum developers seem to have adopted the premise ‘teach the language that L1 users use’. Nowadays all books at secondary and adult levels start with the general present (in *Streamline Departures*, with 80 units, students met this in Unit 30).

This raises several questions: firstly, does corpora research classify language in terms of interlocutor factors? After all, purpose matters. Furthermore, teenagers use language very differently from children, and from adults; doctors use language differently from business people; Americans use language differently from New Zealanders and so on. Be that as it may, this is not reflected in textbooks (except perhaps in ESP texts, and, even then, there is plenty of room for improvement – how many times have I heard, “doctors don’t speak like that, at least not here” and “that advice is bad for business; we would never say that”?).

<sup>6</sup> In this respect I disagree with Larsen Freeman when she says “Unfortunately, for the ESL/EFL student there are far more instances of figurative phrasal verbs (e.g. to run into, meaning “meet by chance”) where a knowledge of the meaning of the verb and the particle is of little help in discerning the meaning of the phrasal verb. Larsen-Freeman (1991: 279-283), *Teaching Grammar in Celce-Murcia M.* (1991)

<sup>7</sup> Brown (1973) Villiers and de Villiers (1973) Dulay and Burt (1974, 1975) Bailey, Madden, and Krashen (1974) quoted in <http://www.sdkrashen.com/Principles and Practice/012.html>

<sup>8</sup> The Larsen-Freeman order of grammatical morpheme acquisition for learners of English in a natural setting is:  
• -ing, copula, article, auxiliary, short plural, regular past, third person singular, irregular past, long plural, possessive in contrast, Larsen Freeman states that the order for learners of English in a structured, classroom setting is:

• Copula, auxiliary, third person singular, -ing, regular past, irregular past, article, long plural, short plural, possessive

Is it logical, indeed, is it helpful to teach the 'present simple' before the 'present continuous'? Doctors certainly use the general or 'simple present' more than the concrete, 'continuous' form; after all they are interested in our routines, in our habits. Who says teenagers need to and will master this form first? Who says teenagers are motivated by routines? For a teenager, routines may be necessary but they are probably more of a drudge than anything else. In this Smartphone and FB era, the continuous form has become very useful.

So, the characteristics of the interlocutors are important. Textbooks do not seem to have understood this. While teaching methodologies have been focusing on 'student-centred learning', the publishers produce 'uniform' books without a student-centred order of language items.

I question whether we ever needed to 'teach the language that L1 speakers use' and whether this is helping our students learn effectively. Do we really want to speak like the 'average L1 speaker'? Which average speaker are we going to use as a model?

## TIME

Time in English is conceptual and not linear (unlike many languages). Understanding this is key to **getting tenses 90% right**. One of the most common practices in EFL is to use the 'Latin' terminology to denote verbal forms, e.g., *present perfect*, *future*. This is not always helpful, as such terminology is endowed with meaning that comes from students' L1. When we tell learners that this is the 'present simple' they unconsciously onboard a whole series of uses for that verbal form based on their own language; these 'uses' are not correct in English because 'English is different'. When we teach students 'this is the present perfect', for most Europeans this term is endowed with a double meaning: the action is recent and it is over. In English, however, the action is nearly always 'still open'. When we contrast the present perfect with the simple past, we are focusing on 'linear time' and on potential errors that are rarely a communication issue. Does it really matter if we say, "He's just arrived" (correct in UK English) or "He just arrived" (correct in American English)? We really need to contrast this 'open past' with the 'general present' because this is where communication issues lie. "How long are you here for?" refers to the future in English; most 'continentals' would understand this to refer to an open past. When we ask students 'How long have you lived at your current address?' this feels contradictory: "But, I still live there", they will reply. The **90% rule is 'do not use the present to refer to the past' ... simple as that**.

I believe we need to stop using terminology that is going to be misleading and is going to make learners spend lots of €s, spend hours and hours, endure frustration after frustration as they, through 'trial and tribulation', try to get things right. It is my belief that we need to introduce our students to new labels.

**LET'S BE PRAGMATIC! SAME TENSES AND CONCEPTS: DIFFERENT, MORE USER FRIENDLY LABELS**

To stop this counter-effective overuse of grammar terminology, try using **the following concepts – they are 90% valid:**

**Uncountable v countable > Singular v plural**

Nobody (except EFL teachers) goes round with the concepts 'countable' and 'uncountable' in their heads. **The 90% rule is:**

**Uncountable = singular; countable = plural.**

Remember, singular and plural are concepts that we all understand.

**Present Tenses Simple vs. Continuous > General v Specific/Concrete**

There is nothing simple about the 'Present Simple' tense; most of the time the 'Present Continuous/Progressive' is neither continuous nor progressive. These labels are not helpful. As an alternative, I suggest that we make a distinction between General and Specific/Concrete PRESENT: e.g., *every week* = general, *this week* = concrete; *every Monday to Friday* = general, *this Monday* = specific.

**Past Tenses Simple v Present Perfect > Closed v Open**

For the PAST, students will get 90% accuracy if they distinguish between the Open and the Closed, e.g. *this year* = open, *last year* = closed; *go to kindergarten* = closed, *live in my present home* = open. Help learners deal with the 'psychological dilemma' that comes with using the open past instead of the present by recommending that they use fixed reference points and verbs like *start* and *stop* to clarify meaning, e.g. 'I started living in my flat when I was 5'. Remember, to our students, indeed to most people in Europe, 'I have read 10 books this year' is not the same concept as 'I have lived in my home for 10 years'; to most people in Europe, the first sentence describes an 'ongoing, open concept', the second describes something that has recently finished (and is closed).

## Used to

Do not translate *used to* with *solía hacer*; young people don't use this phrase, it means nothing to them. So, what teachers think is helpful is actually a disturbance. 90% of the time, *used to* is equivalent to the imperfect tense ... simple as that.

## Future Time

For the FUTURE, do not start with *will*. The *going to* future is by far the most flexible and is therefore the most useful; *will* is really not very 21<sup>st</sup> century. Distinguish between (almost) 100% sure (concrete present (continuous), 80% sure (intentional – *going to* future) and the 'pure' (*will*) future – the unforeseeable, uncontrollable, unplannable, spontaneous future. Teach students the 'escape route' which



is 100% sure, as in “I will be playing basketball on Saturday” (‘I will play basketball on Saturday’ is the ‘pure’ future and therefore not sure).

#### **OTHER SUGGESTIONS:<sup>9</sup> BE PRAGMATIC! CREATE ACRONYMS**

Acronyms are a great memory tool and very useful for learning languages. My favourites are:

COPA/PACO = 2<sup>nd</sup> conditional: conditional + past;

past + conditional

OPTR = the order of items in the predicate: objects +

place + time + the rest (*very much, a lot ...*)

As we have seen, there are, in my view, several key reasons why we are not succeeding as well as we could. In this brief article I have shared what we need to change and why. I hope I have also offered practical, alternative, 90% solutions, applicable to key areas of language acquisition, solutions that will improve the performance of what Krashen called our ‘internal monitor’. I hope and trust these guidelines will benefit every reader and his/her students in the future.

Good luck and have fun!

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<sup>9</sup> Franz Ludescher shares a series of very interesting pointers for teaching grammar on his website.

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## **CONTRIBUTIONS**

APAC encourages teachers and APAC-ELT  
Conference speakers to submit their work  
for publication in the journal.

# CLUC: The Catalan Universities' New English-Language Certificate

By Sònia Prats i Carreras

This paper presents a new multi-level inter-university exam, called “CLUC” (*Certificat de llengües de les universitats de Catalunya*), designed to assess level of English. The examination (first held in February 2013; June and November 2013 sessions programmed) was created by members of the Catalan University System to assess candidates' level of English (B1, B2.1 and B2). This paper outlines the examination and details the phases of its development, describing the background, creation and characteristics of this new Catalan university English exam.

## Introduction

The universities of Catalonia share a need to have suitable resources for diagnosing and improving the language skills of the university community—most particularly as these concern English—as well as instruments for accrediting language level. At their board meeting in December 2011, the *Consell Interuniversitari de Catalunya* (the Inter-University Council of Catalonia) agreed to proceed towards solving these needs in a concerted manner on the basis of applying and expanding the experience gained to-date with the examining and accrediting of Catalan under the auspices of the Inter-university Committee for the Teaching of Catalan, CIFOLC (*Comissió Interuniversitària de Formació en Llengua Catalana*). Specifically, one of the agreements was to promote the creation of inter-university language-level tests for students in accordance with the criteria established by ACLES (*Asociación de Centros de Lenguas en la Enseñanza Superior*) and CercleS (the European Confederation of Language Centres in Higher Education), and within the framework of the CEFR. In light of this, the

creation of an inter-university multi-level examination for English was jointly proposed by all the universities within the Catalan university system.

## Justification

The CLUC examination corresponds to a deeply felt need within the Catalan university system for an English examination that was an organic and structured part of the highly professional language-teaching organisations within those universities, and that would be developed and produced by these institutions as opposed to them simply functioning as client users of other external examinations. The essential motivation for this is that an examination produced by these universities would be far better placed and equipped to serve the specific requirements of this university community. This objective goes back several years; in 2003, the *Consell Interuniversitari de Catalunya* under the presidency of Professor Mas-Colell created a forerunner to the CLUC in the *Prova Universitària de Competència* (PUC: University

Language-Skills Test). As this involved the participation of the Catalan universities, it was therefore also an inter-university English exam. Indeed, the PUC was an essential and highly useful foundation for the CLUC in that much of the necessary groundwork in setting up an examination of such characteristics and aims had already been carried out, and the work that had been produced by specialists from the various universities could—in many cases and to a considerable extent—be used in producing this new undertaking.

In addition to these considerations, it was also recognised as important that other inter-university projects in a broadly similar ambit were working well and had shown that projects of this type were plausible, practical and effective. These include the work on Catalan examinations by CIFOLC (referred to above) and the teaching and learning resources made available to the university community such as *Argumenta* or *Com Comunicar*.

Finally, as all language centres within the Catalan universities carry out highly effective language-assessment roles (and, in doing so, provide a vital service to the academic and institutional requirements of their communities), it is a logical step that this assessment be supported through the existence of a university-specific English examination, an instrument that thereby facilitates and formalises the work that these centres carry out for the Catalan university system.

#### **CLUC: The examination; the candidates; the assessment**

CLUC is an inter-university language certificate recognised by the *Consell Interuniversitari de Catalunya* that, through one single examination, allows candidates' level of English to be accredited at CEFR levels B1, B2.1 and B2. The multi-level examination evaluates and certifies candidates' level of each of the four language skills (speaking and writing, listening and reading), as well as their use of language. In this way, candidates take a single English examination that enables them to accredit their level in accordance with a universally recognised framework.

The examination is specifically addressed to the students, lecturing/research staff and administrative staff at all of the Catalan universities. But it is also available to members of the public (aged 18 or over) who may need to accredit their level of English. The examination has been created and funded by the 12 Catalan universities—see below—and, with the assistance of an Interlingua grant from the *Generalitat de Catalunya* (such grants being awarded to Catalan universities for actions promoting and using languages in higher education), is offered at the reduced cost of €75 for candidates belonging in one capacity or other to those universities. For candidates who do not belong to the universities, the cost is €150.

In 2013, three examination sessions have been programmed: February (which saw 550 candidates taking the examination), June and November.

Participant members in the project are the 12 Catalan universities, whose involvement is articulated through their respective language centres. The project has been led by the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB), with the coordinating support and central involvement of the University of Girona (UdG) and the University of Barcelona (UB)

#### **Initial development**

The participating members agreed from the outset of the project to make extensive use in creating the new examination of a computer-adaptive test termed Simtest, developed in an on-going manner by the UAB since 2001, to evaluate use of language and listening skills.

Additionally, a further early stage involved producing a considerable series of 'base' documents, of central importance to defining the character of the examination. These included the specifications for writing, speaking and reading tests; the assessment criteria for these skills, and draft versions of the different sections, including a wide range of reading exercises (developed through text-mapping techniques) that were subsequently to be piloted.

#### **Piloting of items and examination papers**

In November 2012, prior to the first official sitting in February 2013, the examination was substantially piloted in all its facets. A sample group was used, consisting of 450 students of English at B1, B2 and C1 levels, all taking courses at one of five Catalan universities: the UAB, the University of Lleida (UdL), BarcelonaTech (UPC), the Pompeu Fabra University (UPF) and the University of Vic (UVic). Within this piloting phase, we created two online feedback questionnaires to gain highly specific data both from the teachers involved and from the students who took part in the piloting of one or more of the exercises or papers being trialed for the examination.

Once the exercises and/or papers had been collected and marked, the piloting then moved into a psychometric phase in which every individual item was closely analysed by specialist UAB psychometricians, experienced in the technical assessment of educational-testing material. Together with the results of the online questionnaires, this post-examination phase led to improvements in or modifications on the following issues:

Further selection was made of oral and reading texts in accordance with examination suitability; most especially, the feedback and psychometric phase determined that the text cut-off point in several cases needed modification.



Deriving primarily from the online feedback from teachers and students, the examination-instruction rubric was substantially rewritten to ensure maximum clarity. Similarly, in response to comments and observations from teachers involved in correcting, the marking criteria for each section was also slightly reformulated in order to facilitate a more uniform understanding of the applicable benchmarks per section.

In the reading test and use of English/Simtest section, a few items were eliminated due to their general unsuitability for the purpose in hand.

The initial estimation of timing per section as applied to the pilot version of each of the papers was confirmed as valid.

The oral test was partly restructured, resulting in a distinct ordering of its constituent parts. This was felt to be clearer for the candidates and, through a more logical structuring, facilitated their sense of ease with the test.

Of critical importance to developing the examination and to drawing up items for subsequent sessions, video recordings were made of a number of oral tests and writing samples taken from the pilot candidates. This is of enormous value for future reference and use in establishing a 'gold standard' (essential in fine-tuning assessment when so many different assessors and universities are involved) by which to gauge the suitability and relevance of the examination material produced.

Finally, this feedback phase made it clear to the examination developers that more scripting (and of a more detailed nature) was fundamental for examiners and invigilators in order to guarantee their fuller comprehension of the specific objectives of the examination and to facilitate their ease with each section and its constituent questions or items. But this is also important to ensure that information given and action taken by everyone involved (for instance, as regards the question of timing) was in accordance with uniform indications.

### **Additional considerations**

The feedback phase and the experience gained from the first official examination session in February 2013 have highlighted a range of additional considerations that—in our view—are essential to guaranteeing the suitability and reliability of language assessment tests such as ours. Specifically, these include the following:

The choice of examination assessors is of primary importance to the success of the examination. Careful consideration must be given to the qualities and experience required of these assessors. This can be approached—as was the case with CLUC—through highly structured norming

sessions aimed at making transparent the assessment criteria for each session, and determining the degree of agreement or discrepancy amongst participant assessors. However, it also requires the centralised decision-making capabilities of the examination administrators when selecting assessors to ensure that such assessors meet adequately professional standards for the examination.

All feedback on the examination, at all stages (initial conceptualisation, pilot, official sessions...) should be collected in a planned and structured manner. This needs to form part of the general developmental procedure for the examination, as was the case with CLUC. This is important not simply for the obvious reason of being able to review this feedback, but also because where it forms part of a methodological procedure, it facilitates subsequent action deriving from this feedback. Additionally, and of no small significance, this is essential since the examination developers and administrators will naturally be replaced over time, and the effective evolution of an examination—in response to feedback and decisions taken on this—need to be clearly recorded and catalogued for posterity.

Document creation and storage is an issue of fundamental significance. The creation of documents is made more efficient if this corresponds to structural and formal criteria that have been established in advance and that are made available through clear examination objectives and detailed style guides that govern issues of language form, thus ensuring a standardisation of language use throughout. Discrepancy in this matter is corrosive in the evident sense that it undermines the professional character of the examination as a product (all aspects of the piloted and first-session CLUC were rigorously revised and/or translated by the Language Assessment and Translation Unit at the UAB Language Service, in strict accordance with official nomenclature and the Catalan Universities' University Style Guide for English). Document-sharing and group-editing applications are, predictably, an essential component in the effective coordination and working of examination developers working—as was the case with CLUC—in different places and at different times. In addition to this, it is essential that all formal documentation of any type whatsoever be centralised in one single place of storage, with the strictest of access, possibly limited to the coordinating team. This not only also implies responsibility on the central coordinating team for the necessary storage-security procedures (virtual copies; storage in external disks, etc.) but also means that the examination—again, as a product—must ensure that it recognises as valid only one single version of a given sitting's scripts, and imposes the necessary administrative procedures to guarantee that this is so.

Producing and collecting the final results for each section is a process in which a series of errors or misunderstandings can occur; if this should happen, the feasibility and—critically—the reliability of the examination may be seriously undermined. In this sense, it is essential

that procedures be set in place to ensure a more effective and streamlined manner of recording these results and of limiting difficulties with awarding grades. CLUC made obligatory use of a single specific Excel sheet created for examiners, which included previously entered formulas for the rapid and precise calculation of points and final grades and was sufficiently detailed to allow subsequent psychometric analysis of each item.

Additionally, it is essential to produce and ensure compliance with specific administrative regulations for each one of the different tests. This is basic in guaranteeing that the examination proceeds in a uniform manner and is perceived as such for all participating universities, examiners and candidates.

At a different level of concern, though no less important as regards the overall professionalism of the examination and its effectiveness, clear procedures must be in place, and must be followed throughout, as regards its essential administrative organisation. This includes highly standardised practice for providing general and specific information, for publicising the relevant details of examination sessions and for the subsequent publication of results and issuance of certificates. Not least in all these logistical concerns is the overriding need for a single and identifiable corporate image as regards document production, most particularly the examination certificate itself.

With respect to publicity, this raises important issues of transparency of information. CLUC has taken strenuous steps from the very outset to make fully available to all potential users, formal candidates, participating teachers and any other interested party, all aspects of the examination. This emphatically refers to examination fees but—more significantly still—the quality standards applicable to the examination, including the general purpose and specific format of the examination, but also detailed information on the assessment criteria applied to evaluation. The CLUC webpage (<http://clucangles.wordpress.com>) has been a key instrument in this publicity, and as of May 2013 had been accessed by over 30,000 readers.

Finally, the certification awarded brings with it a range of considerations. This must be of immediate and pragmatic value to the examinee (an issue guaranteed in the context of the Catalan universities since CLUC is recognised throughout this system, but also of broader value in that the certificate is clearly articulated in terms of the levels established by the CEFR and the quality requirements stipulated by ACLES). Yet it should also be perceived, even

at a physical level, as a valuable and important qualification to the individual's academic or professional advancement. We believe that the certificate awarded fulfils this requirement most adequately (see attached image).

## Conclusion

The first conclusion that we would draw attention to in this inter-university project is the very high quality of the work undertaken and produced, and the highly effective cooperation amongst participating members. Although this was in part expected on the basis of earlier projects of a concerted character, this complex and time-intensive undertaking has been characterised throughout by the professional effectiveness of each of its constituent phases. The second element of importance is its considerable acceptance by the candidate public, which attests to the fact that this certificate was indeed a need that had to be covered by the Catalan universities themselves. This fact has been reflected by the significant response to CLUC that has been shown by the media, which has provided coverage of this initiative both on Catalan radio and in the press.

The examination has involved—and continues to involve—an enormous input of time and energy. But it has been a hugely enriching and valuable experience for the participant members, has provided the candidate public with a valuable and practical qualification and has been able to respond to the urgent needs of the Catalan university system for a professional, competent and context-specific examination that attends to, meets and solves its linguistic needs. In a global context that calls for solutions of a universally valid nature but that, paradoxically, also calls for responses to the highly specific demands of the academic and professional requirements in one's immediate environment, we firmly believe that the CLUC examination has established itself as a significant player in the world of English-language accreditation.

## Acknowledgements

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

# OBVERSE AND REVERSE SIDES OF THE CLUC CERTIFICATE



## Certificat de llengües de les universitats de Catalunya

### ANGLÈS

expedit pel rector de la Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona a

## Language Certificate of the Universities of Catalonia

### ENGLISH

issued by the Rector of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona to

### [Nom i Cognoms]

amb document d'identitat [00000000X], per haver obtingut, a la convocatòria [de febrer] de [2013], el nivell d'anglès

holding National ID/Passport [00000000X], on successfully completing the following level of English in the [February] [2013] session:

### [B1]

definit pel Consell d'Europa en el *Marc europeu comú de referència per a les llengües* (vegeu el detall de nivells per competència al revers d'aquest document)

as defined by the Council of Europe in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (attained levels of individual language skills are detailed on the reverse side of this document)

Bellaterra (Cerdanyola del Vallès), [6] [de març] de [2013]

La persona interessada,  
The Certificate Holder

El rector,  
The Rector

La directora del Servei de Llengües  
The Director of the Language Service

[Nom i Cognoms]

Ferran Sancho Pifarré

Montserrat Balagueró Baró



Universitat de Barcelona - Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Universitat de Lleida - Universitat de Girona

Universitat Oberta de Catalunya - Universitat de Vic



Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya - Universitat Pompeu Fabra

Universitat Rovira i Virgili - Universitat Ramon Llull

Universitat Internacional de Catalunya - Universitat Abat Oliba CEU



#### Detall de resultats per competències Attained level of individual language skills

Comprensió escrita <i>Reading comprehension</i>	[B1]
Comprensió oral <i>Listening comprehension</i>	[B1]
Expressió escrita <i>Writing</i>	[B2.1]
Expressió oral <i>Speaking</i>	[B1]
Ús de la llengua <i>Use of English</i>	[B1]

Aquests resultats demostren una aptitud comunicativa global suficient que permet acreditar el nivell

### [B1] d'ANGLÈS

*These results demonstrate an overall level of communicative competence corresponding to level*

### [B1] in ENGLISH

Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona  
Àrea d'Afers Acadèmics  
Número de registre universitari propi [XXXX]

Bellaterra (Cerdanyola del Vallès), [6] [de març] de [2013]

Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona  
Servei de Llengües  
Número de registre \_\_\_\_\_

Bellaterra (Cerdanyola del Vallès), \_\_\_\_\_

Montserrat Masoliver Puig  
Cap de l'Àrea d'Afers Acadèmics

Joan Carles Torres Oliva  
Secretari del Servei de Llengües



# Perspective transformation in the ICT-aided English language classroom

By Nouredine Azmi

The present study investigates the impact of ICT and the Internet in particular on students' perspective transformation, i.e., changes in assumptions, values and attitudes, in the English language classroom. It gives an overview of perspective transformation in English language teaching through a review of the literature and a critical analysis of the potential benefits and concerns about the use of ICT-enabled transformative teaching in the language classroom; then it moves on to examine, through the use of an interpretive qualitative study, the impact of ICT-aided English language teaching on students' perspective transformation. According to the findings, an ICT-enabled English language teaching environment boosts students' critical thinking skills, allows them to examine different meanings attributed to previous events and experiences and broadens their minds about other cultural perspectives and values; but it does not trigger revision of their value and belief system.

## Introduction

A large number of EFL instructors nationwide have committed themselves to some form of computer technology initiative, and the number may be increasing. The Moroccan Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Higher Education, Professional Training and Scientific Research have recently considered several instructional information technology plans that range from simple computer software to much more advanced and sophisticated web applications. These programs have the potential to change, for better or worse, significant aspects of English language teaching and learning in the country.

One of the growing concerns that may spark considerable controversy is whether the use of ICT-enabled English language teaching triggers perspective transformation and revision of belief and value systems in

the language classroom. Using ICT in English language teaching brings the world into the classroom and exposes students to a cultural content that is discrepant with theirs. The digitalization of class content may turn out to be a risk that threatens the security and stability of students' local culture and values.

Perspective transformation and transformational learning in particular have triggered a large number of discussions and debates, with growing concerns over its determinants and potential outcomes. Mezirow (1978, 1991, 1997, 2000), Taylor (1998), Merriam (2001), and Cranton (2006) have published articles, papers and books on various aspects of the transformation experience. Attempts have been made to identify the factors that trigger perspective transformation along side participants' roles, course contents, learning environments and the evident common themes in the transformation experience among learners.

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The present study investigates the impact of Info-Tech use in the language classroom on students' perspective transformation and sees if there is research evidence on how an English course content that utilizes information technology enhances the development of critical thinking skills, inclusion and openness and allows students to maintain their local values and beliefs.

## 1-Review of related literature

### Perspective transformation: Basic principles and theories

Jack Mezirow defines transformative learning as a process by which our taken-for-granted frames of reference are transformed by making them more *"inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change and reflective"* (Mezirow 2000).

Mezirow's learning theory is based on human communication and the construction of meaning structures in particular, trying to understand and make sense of what others *'communicate concerning values, ideals, feelings, moral decisions....and concepts of freedom, justice, love, labour, autonomy, commitment and democracy'* (Mezirow 1991, p. 8). Transformative learning is mainly concerned with the process of revising 'meaning structures' through newly encountered experiences and challenges. These changes in meaning schemes happen regularly and may help us reconsider our assessment and perception of right and wrong, good and bad, and appropriate or inappropriate. (Mezirow 1991).

An individual, in the course of their life, may go through a dramatically different learning experience, be it institutional or accidental, which may push them to reconsider pre-acquired views and meaning perspectives. If the individual manages to examine the view, open themselves to other alternatives and consequently change the way they see things, they have transformed some part of the way they perceive the world around them. It is this change in meaning perspectives that is the core of Mezirow's theory of perspective transformation.

### Transformative teaching

Transformative or transformational learning occurs when the learner is forced to encounter an event or situation that is inconsistent with their existing perspective. Patricia Cranton (2006) has provided an overview of transformative teaching and explored ways in which educators may set up conditions to foster transformations. She has reduced the 10 phases designed by Mezirow to only 7 facets of transformative learning and introduced them as a guide to set up a learning environment to promote transformation. Cranton argues that teaching for transformation requires teachers to *'set the stage and provide the environment in which students can articulate and critically reflect on their assumptions and perspectives'*. (Cranton 2006, p. 63).

The 7 facets of transformative learning are as follows:

- **An activating event** that typically exposes a discrepancy between what a person has always assumed to be true and

what has just been experienced, heard, or read;

- **Articulating assumptions**, that is, recognizing underlying assumptions that have been uncritically assimilated and are largely unconscious;
- **Critical self-reflection**, that is, questioning and examining assumptions in terms of where they came from, the consequences of holding them, and why they are important;
- **Being open to alternative viewpoints**;
- **Engaging in discourse**, where evidence is weighed, arguments assessed, alternative perspectives explored, and knowledge constructed by consensus;
- **Revising assumptions and perspectives** to make them more open and better justified;
- **Acting on revisions**, behaving, talking, and thinking in a way that is congruent with transformed assumptions or perspectives. (Cranton, 2006).

Both Mezirow and Cranton argue through their theories that exposure to a different learning situation triggers substantial changes in the way learners perceive the world around them. Nobody can argue against such evidence. The purpose of any learning experience is to initiate change, enrich students' experience and broaden their minds about other cultural experiences and practices. However, exposing students to viewpoints that are discrepant with their own may not always ensure a positive perspective transformation, which is likely to pose a threat to the local culture and value system and boost an alarmingly sweeping global model. The appropriateness and usefulness of the transformation experience is a critical issue that should be addressed. Educators have a moral obligation towards their students. Their duty is not only to ensure that a change takes place in the classroom, they need to make sure that the change is a positive one. It is not a plea for monitoring students and censoring their choices but rather a call to manoeuvre within the cultural and value system limits of the educational curriculum.

### ICT-aided English language teaching as an enhancer of transformative learning

Research devoted to ICT-aided English language teaching and its impact on students' perspective transformation examines the role of ICT and the Internet in particular as it relates to English language acquisition and investigates whether the experience fosters students' critical skills and changes their perspectives on several issues. In his book, *Blogs, podcasts and other powerful tools for the classroom*, Will Richardson argues that *'the use of ICT in the language learning process might have an impact well beyond the language classroom, as students not only develop linguistic and socio-cultural expertise through ICT but also acquire ICT-related skills through the target language. On this basis, it could equip the individual to 'participate fully in all aspects of modern society (Kaspar 2000, p.105) within a dynamic and an ongoing process of perpetual transformation'*. Cynthia Lee backs up Richardson's argument and claims that through learning humans recreate themselves and re-perceive the world around them. The same principle of transformative learning, she adds, applies whatever learning technologies we use (Lee, Jor and Lai, 2005).

The potential of ICT-aided English language teaching in the development and transformation of students' perspectives has been investigated in a few studies, and a large part of them have actually been devoted to the impact on the development of students' critical thinking skills. It is true that a change in perspectives takes place in the classroom, but its efficiency and usefulness is only a potential.

It is well recognized from the English language teaching literature that the EFL experience even before the emergence of information technology has had many possibilities for perspective transformations. Research has shown that English language learners experience a change in their mindsets and perspectives. Three themes of perspective transformation experiences usually emerge from the accounts of participants: language learning, cultural awareness and personal change (King, 2009). Participants recognise a change in their assumptions about the language, a development in intercultural awareness and a feeling of empowerment and self-esteem through the learning of the language and its culture. It is unarguable that changes actually do take place and that learners go through a transformation experience, but it really is hard to agree on the appropriateness and usefulness of the changes themselves.

If English language teaching, even without the use of information technology, can contribute to students' perspective transformation, then the impact is expected to be greater with the integration of ICT and the Internet in particular in the language classroom. Though they are few, most studies conducted claim that EFL learners experience perspective transformation, and the most common themes of the transformation experience include basically the activation and acquisition of critical thinking skills, which is an extension of 'critical reflection' introduced earlier by Mezirow as a common theme in the transformation experience and a process whereby prior knowledge is reviewed and revisited. Critical thinking skills can be applied in conventional language teaching settings and are more solicited in ICT-aided teaching settings, where virtual mobility may surprise learners with a large set of controversial issues and arguments.

Faizah Binti Mohamad (2004) from the International Islamic University of Malaysia investigated the effects of an Internet-assisted language learning (IALL) environment on the development of L2 students' critical thinking skills and found a significant improvement in their critical thinking skills and a positive correlation between their critical skills and their perception of the Internet. Students with a positive perception of the Internet were more likely to improve their critical thinking competencies.

Kokkas (1999) argues that Internet-enhanced language teaching boosts students' language learning achievement and helps them develop and improve their linguistic skills and competencies. They gain more confidence in using the language, and they develop autonomous learning skills and strategies, which allows them to be both receivers and providers of knowledge. He further explains that since knowledge and information are channelled non-linearly through the Internet, students are encouraged to explore and make choices, which enhances their critical thinking skills.

With the use of ICT and the Internet in particular, English language professionals can help students interact,

cooperate and actively contribute to the construction of their learning, which is likely to mark a shift of roles in the classroom. The Internet-enhanced environment offers students active learning roles and opportunities and requires them to go through advanced cognitive processes. This boosts their critical thinking skills and empowers them to evaluate and assess any piece of information they may encounter in the language classroom.

However, and since nobody can argue against the fact that the use of critical thinking skills is an advanced level of language learning and acquisition, a large number of students may be left behind in the Moroccan language classroom. Low achievers, such as students with language deficiencies, may find it difficult to find a place in a learning setting where they are required to use cognitive procedures and contribute to the development and construction of their own learning.

An ICT-enabled English language teaching environment not only provides opportunity for the development of critical thinking skills but also paves the way for perspective transformation. Salem Ali Al-Salem (2005) argues that Saudi EFL college females have experienced perspective transformation as a result of their exposure to the information provided by the Internet as well as the mode of interaction facilitated via the Internet. The experience, he continues to explain, has increased their self-confidence, broadened their minds about other cultures and given them more opportunities to make social contacts, which we think is a substantial step forward if we take into account the conservative aspect of the Saudi society.

Diane Susan (2002) conducted a study on intact groups of non-native English speakers enrolled in an Internet-aided ESL programme. The investigation showed that most of them experienced perspective transformation, and it concluded that class discussions largely contributed to the transformation experience. Both researchers found that interaction and class discussions, facilitated by the Internet, played a key role in the transformation experience and brought changes into the language classroom, which is again an extension of Mezirow's theoretical theme of 'critical reflection' and a recognition of the importance of critical thinking skills to the transformation experience.

In another study devoted to the investigation of how the use of information technology can enhance the process of transformative learning, Judith E. Parker (2005) examined qualitative comments from the end-of-course survey and reflection assignments, and she concluded that the use of both an asynchronous discussion board and the virtual classroom (chat room) fostered the transformative learning characteristics of inclusion, openness and facilitated critical reflection. The worldview was enhanced during the online format of classes through making it possible for students from other places in the world with different views to participate in the course.

## **2-Methodology**

### **Qualitative / quantitative content analysis**

Qualitative content analysis is not only counting words or examining meanings, themes, tendencies or patterns; it also allows researchers to investigate issues using a scientific



procedure. The main reason for conducting content analysis is to be able to investigate and establish, if possible, links between variables. For the present research case (between ICT use in the English language classroom and students' positive perspective transformation), when students are exposed to ICT-enabled learning material that includes controversial issues, does it make them reflect on their learning experience and transform their perspectives and viewpoints?

The process of content analysis includes the following steps:

- Selecting, determining and coding units of content;
- Counting and weighing;
- Drawing conclusions.

Students were asked to submit paragraphs about a set of controversial social issues. They were told to react to a set of writing prompts and use specific reasons and examples to support their position. Many students from the experimental group volunteered to give ICT-enabled presentations on the same writing prompts. They were encouraged to use web material and introduce controversial views alongside their own comments and reactions. On the other hand, the students in the control group did not attend any ICT-enabled presentations and were required to react to the same writing prompts. Since the scope of this study does not allow us to include reactions to all the writing prompts, we have

narrowed our study to include content analysis of paragraphs related to one writing prompt.

### Writing prompt

*Forced abortion is a medical operation to end a pregnancy because the fetus is considered to be the carrier of defective genetic traits. How do you feel about this issue? Use specific reasons and examples to support your position.*

### Research question

To what extent does ICT-enhanced English language teaching trigger positive student perspective transformation? And what common themes are evident in the transformation experience?

### Research hypothesis

ICT-enhanced English language teaching triggers students' perspective transformation. Common themes that are evident in the transformation experience include development of critical thinking skills, inclusion and openness.

### 3-Presentation and discussion of findings

#### a) Selecting, determining and coding units of content



Arguments used by Experimental group	Code
1-Ending a pregnancy is a killing. It should not be accepted unless the life of the mother is in danger.	A
2-Termination of a pregnancy is a right only when it threatens the life of the mother.	A
3-I am against forced abortion because it is a murder of a helpless baby.	A
4-Forced abortion is against God's instructions and teachings even if the fetus is carrier of defective genetic traits.	A
5-It is a choice left to the parents. They are the ones to decide whether to end the pregnancy or not.	F
6-The fetus, whatever the circumstances are, is a human life and has the right to live.	A
7-It is a punishment for the unborn baby and the operation is life-threatening even for the mother.	A
8-It should be left to the family to choose. It is their own right to maintain the pregnancy or to terminate it.	F
9- It will not be easy for parents to meet the needs of a mentally or physically challenged child.	F
10-Ending a pregnancy is a murder of an innocent life	A

Arguments used by the Control group	Code
11-Maintaining the pregnancy will cause a lot of suffering and agony to parents and their future child.	F
12-It is not a solution. The mother may give birth to a normal baby.	A
13-It is not a good decision to make. It may have dangerous consequences.	A
14-Forced abortion is a killing. The child should have a chance to live.	A
15-Even if the baby is carrier of defective <u>genetic</u> traits, the pregnancy should be maintained.	A
16- It should be left to the parents to decide though it is not an easy thing to do.	F
17-The pregnancy shouldn't be stopped unless it poses a threat to the mother's life.	A
18-I don't think it is a good solution because the operation is life-threatening.	A
19-Our religion warns against abortion because it is murder.	A
20-Our religion forbids such an act. It is permitted only if the life of of the mother is threatened.	A

b- Counting and weighing

Perspective \* Group Cross Tabulation

		group		Total
		C	E	
perspective A	Count	8	7	15
	% within group	80,0%	70,0%	75,0%
F	Count	2	3	5
	% within group	20,0%	30,0%	25,0%
Total	Count	10	10	20
	% within group	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

The sample includes 20 arguments used by students to support their position towards forced abortion. A large majority of the students in the control group (80%) maintained the conventional position towards forced abortion, while about (70%) of the students in the experimental group did so. About a third (30%) of the students in the experimental group

have managed to examine the view and open themselves to other alternatives while only a fifth (20%) of the students in the control group have done so. Only the implementation and interpretation of Chi-Square tests would determine differences among groups and help answer the research question.

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	,267 <sup>a</sup>	1	,606		
Continuity Correction <sup>b</sup>	,000	1	1,000		
Likelihood Ratio	,268	1	,605		
Fisher's Exact Test				1,000	,500
N of Valid Cases	20				

a. 2 cells (50.0%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.50.

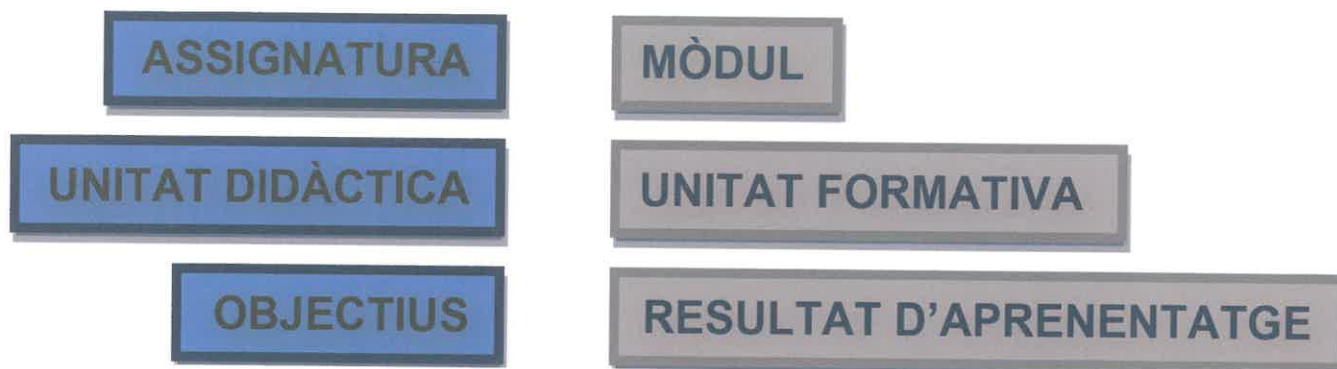


Fig.1: Vocabulari equivalent

D'aquesta manera, s'entén que hi ha una gran diferència entre es graus mitjans en els quals l'anglès és un Mòdul, i la gran majoria dels graus superiors, en els quals l'anglès és un Resultat d'aprenentatge.

Tot i això, hi ha cicles formatius de grau superior que tenen mòduls d'idioma. Això es dona, per exemple, en cicles com el de COMERÇ INTERNACIONAL, on és totalment lògic que es doni una importància major a la llengua anglesa.

En funció del nivell educatiu, es nota més o menys un efecte que es dona en tots els nivells educatius. Es tracta de la diferència de nivell d'anglès dels alumnes en funció de l'estrat social del qual procedeixin. Aquest fet, és bastant més acusat al grau mitjà on hi ha un nombre superior d'alumnes d'origen immigrant. En funció de l'origen majoritari dels alumnes, el seu coneixement de l'anglès canvia molt. Però també canvia en funció de la situació socioeconòmica de les famílies, ja que alumnes de classes mitjanes poden haver seguit cursos extraescolars d'anglès, un fet que gairebé no es dona en classes baixes. Al grau superior, també es nota si els alumnes provenen d'un grau mitjà i curs pont, o del batxillerat, tot i que aquesta diferència no és tan acusada.

En els darrers temps, s'afegeix a aquestes diferències, la presència de persones que ja han estat treballant durant anys, i que gràcies a les mesures flexibilitzadores, tornen a estudiar. En funció de les tasques que han desenvolupat en la seva vida professional, aquestes persones marquen una forta diferència en el grau de coneixement de l'anglès respecte a la resta d'alumnes del grup.

Així doncs s'han apuntat alguns factors externs al centre que compliquen l'aprenentatge de l'idioma. Però hi ha factors interns, i per tant controlables, que cal tenir en compte:

Si ens centrem inicialment en el grau mitjà, el mòdul d'anglès pot ser impartit per professors tècnics amb una titulació de nivell B2, o per professors d'anglès. En qualsevol cas, cal tenir en compte alguns requeriments que no sempre es compleixen:

1. Centrar-se en l'ús oral de la llengua.
2. Contextualitzar el vocabulari i la gramàtica a la família professional del cicle.
3. Practicar situacions que es poden donar amb clients, proveïdors, col·laboradors en les quals sigui necessària la comunicació en anglès, sobretot oralment i via correu electrònic.
4. Interpretació de documentació tècnica.

Pel que fa al grau superior, es dona el mateix cas

en aquells cicles formatius que tenen l'anglès com a mòdul. En la resta de cicles, dependrà dels professors tècnics, i de com apliquin el que ordena el currículum als seus mòduls formatius. De manera obligatòria, un dels mòduls del cicle ha d'incloure un resultat d'aprenentatge que diu alguna cosa així com:

*Interpreta informació professional en llengua anglesa -manuals tècnics, instruccions, catàlegs de productes i/o serveis, articles tècnics, informes, normativa, entre d'altres, aplicant-ho en les activitats professionals més habituals.*

Aquest resultat d'aprenentatge, s'avalua segons els següents criteris d'avaluació:

- CA1. *Aplica en situacions professionals la informació continguda en textos tècnics o normativa relacionats amb l'àmbit professional.*
- CA2. *Identifica i selecciona amb agilitat els continguts rellevants de novetats, articles, notícies, informes i normativa, sobre diversos termes professionals.*
- CA3. *Analitza detalladament les informacions específiques seleccionades.*
- CA4. *Actua en conseqüència per donar resposta als missatges tècnics rebuts a través de suports convencionals -correu postal, fax- o telemàtics -correu electrònic, web-.*
- CA5. *Selecciona i extreu informació rellevant en llengua anglesa segons prescripcions establertes, per elaborar en llengua pròpia comparatives, informes breus o extractes.*
- CA6. *Complimenta en llengua anglesa documentació i/o formularis del camp professional habituals.*
- CA7. *Utilitza suports de traducció tècnics i les eines de traducció assistida o automatitzada de textos.*

Es pot veure, doncs, que es tracta d'una inclusió de la llengua molt superficial, gairebé agafada amb pinces, que caldrà millorar en un futur.

Afortunadament, hi ha casos de professors que van més enllà d'aquesta obligació i, de manera voluntària, imparteixen els seus mòduls en anglès de forma més àmplia. Més endavant es veurà un exemple aplicat d'aquests casos, però resumint, es podria dir que es donen tres casos:

1. El professor reparteix la documentació d'una unitat



formativa o de tot el mòdul en anglès, però les explicacions es fan en català o castellà.

2. El professor reparteix la documentació d'una unitat formativa o de tot el mòdul i fa les explicacions en anglès, però els alumnes lliuren els treballs i parlen a classe en català o castellà.
3. El professor reparteix la documentació d'una unitat formativa o de tot el mòdul i fa les explicacions en anglès, i a més, els alumnes han d'expressar-se en anglès i/o lliurar els treballs també en anglès. Aquest cas és típic que es doni quan els alumnes fan estades de pràctiques a l'estranger.

En qualsevol cas però, el professor es troba amb dues dificultats bàsiques a l'hora de plantejar-se la formació ELT:

1. Trobar traductors per al vocabulari tècnic. No és fàcil trobar diccionaris o aplicacions web que facilitin aquesta tasca, i els que existeixen, no són complets, sobretot per algunes famílies professionals.
2. La pronunciació. Encara que els alumnes sàpiguen anglès, en funció de la pronunciació que faci el professor i dels vídeos que es passin a classe, els alumnes entendran millor o pitjor el que s'exposa. Per això cal anar amb molta cura, especialment a l'inici del curs.

Un cas pràctic de l'aplicació de l'anglès a l'aula, es presenta a continuació per a un cicle formatiu, el de Disseny en Fabricació Mecànica, que no té cap mòdul d'idioma, i que per tant no es pot assegurar que els alumnes, que potser fa anys que no han utilitzat l'anglès, entenguin les expressions bàsiques. Dani Bernard, professor de l'institut La Garrotxa, imparteix tot el mòdul de projectes del segon curs en llengua anglesa, lliurant el material i realitzant les explicacions en anglès. A més, donat que alguns dels alumnes fan estades de pràctiques a l'estranger, com a mínim el darrer projecte que presenten cal que sigui presentat oralment en anglès, i de forma voluntària, també la documentació del projecte.

Des de l'any 2008, el professor, utilitza l'anglès des del primer moment que entra a classe al setembre, i no canvia l'idioma fins al final del curs. Aquest fet podria representar un handicap per a les persones amb menys coneixements d'anglès, però el mòdul té certes peculiaritats. Tal com està programat, la part dedicada a lliçons o exposicions del professor representen aproximadament un 20% del temps total del cicle, la resta es dedica a la realització dels projectes que els alumnes fan en grup. D'aquesta manera, en cas que algun alumne tingui dificultats per entendre el que s'està explicant, ho manifesta i el professor repeteix amb altres paraules el concepte, i utilitza totes les eixes gràfiques i gestuals disponibles per donar a entendre quin és el significat del que està dient. Això pot fer allargar el temps d'explicacions fins a un 25% del mòdul, però no representa cap problema perquè en la programació ja es contempla d'aquesta manera.

Per altra banda, el professor utilitza presentacions powerpoint per fer les explicacions, però amb molt poques paraules, de manera que obliga als alumnes a prendre apunts del que s'està dient a classe. D'aquesta manera, si l'alumne no entén al professor, cal que pregunti per poder disposar més tard de la informació.

El mòdul, a més, està plantejat de manera que els alumnes han de fer set presentacions orals de 15 minuts al llarg del curs. D'aquesta manera, entre les aportacions a classe, i les exposicions orals, es va animant als alumnes a expressar-se en anglès, i tot i que no s'aconsegueix que el 100% dels alumnes ho facin, si que n'hi ha que accepten el repte. Per descomptat, els alumnes que faran pràctiques a l'estranger, fan la darrera presentació en anglès, però la majoria comencen abans i acostumen a fer les tres darreres utilitzant aquesta llengua.

Tot i la bona voluntat de la majoria d'alumnes, fins al moment només s'han atrevit a presentar la documentació en llengua anglesa, aquells alumnes de nacionalitat índia que han cursat el cicle, ja que tenen un bon domini de l'idioma i un gran interès a realitzar les pràctiques a l'estranger.

Com a eines de suport, els alumnes disposen de connexió a internet, diccionaris anglès-català català-anglès, i de diccionaris tècnics que els ajudin a entendre el que es diu, el que llegeixen quan realitzen els projectes, i a preparar les presentacions.

Per sort o per desgràcia, la tipologia de projectes que es plantegen durant el curs, obliga als alumnes a buscar informació en anglès, cosa que reforça, per una banda l'ús de la llengua, i per l'altra, el convenciment que saber anglès és necessari per la vida laboral.

La valoració que fa l'equip docent de l'experiència, és positiva, entre d'altres coses per:

- Els alumnes milloren el nivell d'anglès, especialment l'oral, que en ocasions també és necessari per entendre la documentació que s'utilitza en altres mòduls.
- Les empreses han notat el canvi, potser no tant en el nivell d'idioma, sinó en l'actitud i predisposició dels alumnes a afrontar el repte idiomàtic.
- Hi ha un professor del departament, que des de l'any passat ha decidit lliurar la documentació del mòdul de materials que imparteix al primer curs, també en anglès. Aquest any, un altre professor que està estudiant 4rt a l'EOI, s'ha compromès a preparar la documentació del mòdul de tècniques de fabricació de primer, també en anglès.

La conclusió general és que la impartició de mòduls en anglès és un bé comú. Per part del professor, la tasca complementària de traduir, trobar materials, o expressar-se en una llengua que no és la materna, compensa el resultat obtingut. Els alumnes, tot i les reticències inicials, al final també ho valoren positivament, sobretot després de passar un temps d'incorporació al món laboral. Les empreses ho troben un puntal de la seva capacitat d'internacionalització. I fins i tot per aquells alumnes que continuen els seus estudis a la universitat, que cada cop incorpora més crèdits impartits en anglès, també representa un avantatge. Cal no oblidar que els alumnes universitaris hauran de certificar un nivell d'anglès equivalent a B1, i per tant una més àmplia pràctica de l'idioma a la formació professional, ajudarà a aconseguir aquesta fita més fàcilment.

Així doncs, només queda animar a tot aquell que llegeixi aquest article, a impulsar dins de les seves possibilitats, la impartició de mòduls de FP en anglès.

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