APAC ELT JOURNAL

Proceedings II

... and other articles
2014 APAC ELT Convention

apac Associació
de Professors i
Professores d'Anglès
de Catalunya

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ELT - Convention
2015

The Dynamics of Motivation

February 19th, 20th & 21st

Universitat Pompeu Fabra
Campus Ciutadella
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Barcelona

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Contents

Motivation has always been considered one of the most important factors in the process of teaching and learning a foreign language, and it is equally crucial for learners and for teachers. Researchers have tried to characterise motivation, and have identified the differences and similarities between external and internal motivation and worked hard at enhancing motivation inside and outside the classroom. We at APAC have discussed and problematised such issues in past Conventions.

In many respects, the sources available since the 1980s (R.C.Gardner 1985, Dornyei 2001, amongst others) perceived as useful and relevant, have informed activities and work in our EFL classrooms. However, for the past ten years, a growing feeling of discontent has emerged, not only due to the difficulties of catering for the diversity of needs in our classrooms but also to the challenges of meeting as members of an increasingly besieged profession. Some motivating activities are perceived as "entertaining but not really relevant to curriculum objectives or content" and both teachers and learners seem to be in need of a "shake up".

This is why APAC has decided on this topic for the 2014 Convention. Fully aware that the **dynamics of motivation** are complex, and include biological, emotional, social, and cognitive forces that drive behavior, we think it is time to look at current research on motivation within the framework of innovation (Valerie Hannon http://www.innovationunit.org/our-people/our-staff/valerie-hannon, Dörnyei. Z., MacIntyre, P., & Henry, A. (Eds.) 2014), and also at the powerful approach which builds on the concept of engagement, in really organizing classrooms and projects which illustrate learning by doing and are centred on the learners.

We are working hard to get the best speakers for the 2015 Convention, and we encourage our members to come to the Universitat Pompeu Fabra next February and share their thoughts and ideas.

Apac Organizing Committee

EDITORIAL

Dear members,

First and foremost, we'd like to wish you a good 2015. Right off the bat, it seems like it's going to be a year full of uncertainties on many levels. The intention of APAC is, as always, to continue to make progress and help all the English teachers in Catalonia make the improvement they're striving for.

You have quite probably seen APAC's involvement, through our president, in the program on the El PuntAviu TV channel, but nevertheless we wanted to include his appearance in Catalonia Today in this issue for those of you who have not heard about it.

The journal in your hands brings you the articles that we received from the speakers in last year's convention and that we weren't able to fit into the previous issue. The article by Carme Muñoz, Elsa Tragant and Marisa Camuñas, "Transition: Continuity or a Fresh Start", the one by Donna Lee Fields, "The Importance of Community in Distance Learning", the one by Sònia Marcos and Carme Dilmé, "My Vegetable Garden", and the summary of the APAC Round Table are the material that had to be relegated to our "Last But Not Least" category.

We would like to express our gratitude to two teachers for sharing their classroom experiences with all of us: Vicky Gasch, with her article on Multiple Intelligences in the Preschool Foreign Language Class; and Ana Araceli Guarinos, with project for learning biology and English carried out in secondary school and entitled "Let's Play with the Nutrition Function."

The results of the research on translation carried out by Maria Gonzáles Davies in Catalan schools that you will find in "Humanising Translation Activities: Tackling a Secret Practice" will help resolve some of the questions that dog us in our everyday classroom lives.

And, to top off an already interesting journal, we thought it would be good to add two articles that the Jaume Bofill Foundation has given us permission to reprint and that go beyond classroom English teaching and could interest us as educators. We are sure you will enjoy reading "How Can We Build Student Engagement and an Educational Community?" by Valerie Hannon and "Families and Public Education: The Multiple Impacts of Participation" by Annie Kidder.

We hope that reading this issue will spur you to attend the upcoming APAC-ELT Convention in a few days.

The Editorial Board

BRITISH COUNCIL

Learn English Teens

Get ahead

The British Council's LearnEnglish Teens website is designed especially for 13–17-year-olds

The website helps teenagers improve their level of English with school-style language practice, tips for exams, and grammar and vocabulary exercises. At the same time, there are lots of fun activities and games including a video zone, a magazine and puzzles.

LearnEnglish   LearnEnglish Kids   TeachingEnglish

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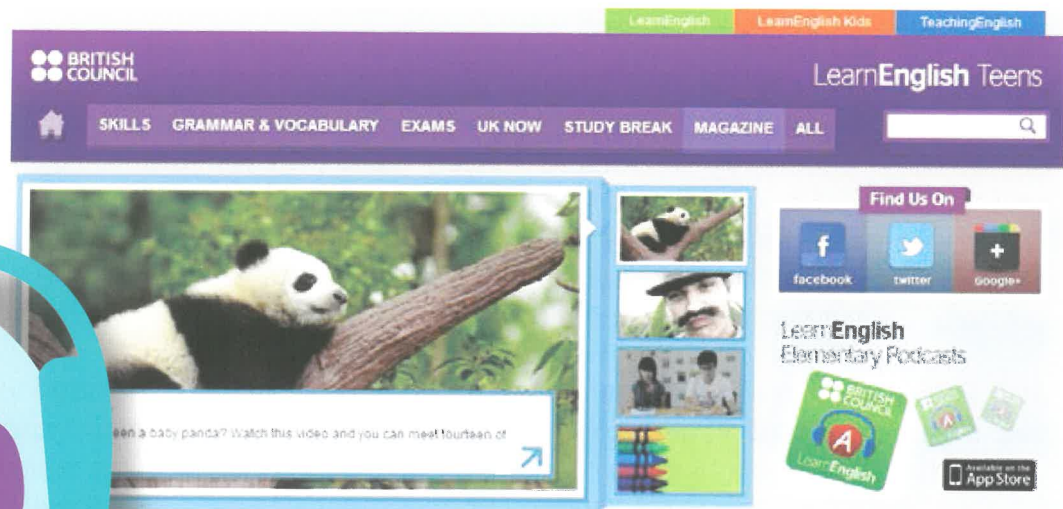
Learn**English** Teens

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear colleagues,

Motivation (motivating learners/motivating teachers) has always been a key issue to anyone involved in our profession. Simple classroom observation does suggest the dynamic character and the temporal variation of motivation, but we do know that we cannot do without it, whatever new forms it might take. To explore the nature of motivation and its role in a rapidly changing world, increasingly interconnected and technology-driven, we have chosen "The Dynamics of Motivation" as our motto for this year's convention, and we are delighted to have a prestigious expert in the field, Dr Joan Shin from the University of Maryland (USA), to deliver the opening lecture of our 2015 Convention. Dr Shin has developed her own courses on Teaching English to Young Learners and Teaching English to Teens, and the title of her talk couldn't be more to the point: **The Keys to Motivating 21st-Century Learners**. If you check the programme you'll discover this is only the tip of the iceberg, but I'd like to think that it will prove exciting enough for you to feel, well, motivated to attend — once again — APAC's Convention and join us at Universitat Pompeu Fabra on February, 19th. APAC members have always been at the forefront in bridging research findings and classroom practices and I feel that your active participation in our annual conference is a way of sealing your commitment to our organization. Only you can make the endeavours of the organizing committee worthy and meaningful. See you there!

There is life, though, beyond APAC's Convention and I am especially pleased to let you know that APAC has been instrumental in developing what I consider a breakthrough concerning the presence of English in Catalan media. For the last three months an open TV channel (El Punt Avui TV) broadcasts in English every day (more information inside). "English Hour" offers the series "The Class" around the learning dynamics a group of first-year students in their English class and their life in a state school in a working-class neighbourhood in Barcelona. It also includes "Story Time", where teachers tell children stories in English. The daily "English Hour" caters for grown-ups, too, and offers chat shows and interviews in English with native speakers and Catalans alike. On top of that, every day the paper edition of the newspaper "El PuntAvui" includes two pages of information and articles in English based on the news of the day. Overall, it does represent a substantial increase of English presence in what some like to call our "communicational space", and few would doubt that it is going to make lots of potentially significant (and motivating!) materials available for teachers of English in Catalonia. Could we see it as a small step forward into the shaping of a naturally trilingual society? Why not?

With best wishes,

Miquel Berga

Making linguistic history

With El Punt Avui Televisió's English Hour underway – coordinated by Catalonia Today – we get the **lowdown on a key programme that follows the English lessons of primary class**

NEIL STOKES

The Class, the new documentary from El Punt Avui TV, follows the English lessons of a primary class in a Barcelona public school, allowing viewers a privileged glimpse into the inner-workings of Catalonia's education system.

Every Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 6 pm, El Punt Avui TV's English Hour features The Class. What was your involvement?

–Let me start by saying that the El Punt Avui group has become a pioneer in incorporating English programming into its schedule. It is the parent company of Catalonia Today, which for some time has been providing content in English for El Punt Avui's Sunday supplement, Presència. I have been involved with all of these projects since the beginning and now we are taking advantage of the opportunities provided by having a space on a television channel.

The Class was also your idea. How did it come about?

–The original idea was mine, but straight away I took steps to bring people from the audiovisual world into the fold, as well as taking advantage of the human resources in my own professional sphere. The initial idea was to put a camera in a primary classroom during English lessons in a public school in a Barcelona neighbourhood, placing the lens at the level of the children to observe or document the learning process – in this case, the English language – as well as the dynamics of a working classroom.

You are a lecturer at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra and president of APAC (Asso-

Miquel Berga had the original idea for The Class. / MANEL LLADÓ

ciació de Professors d'Anglès de Catalunya). What was their role?

–A decisive role in many ways. For a start, the audiovisual department of the UPF provided interns for the production, in collaboration with the production company Playtime, directed by Marta Andreu. The director of the masters programme in documentary creation in UPF, Jordi Balló, lent us his wisdom and experience in developing the concept. As well as that, APAC teachers offered their valuable perspectives on certain aspects of the production.

What was the attitude of the Departament d'Ensenyament to this 'intrusion'?

–In my opinion, excellent, because it was not seen as an intrusion but rather as an opportunity to share with society what happens in a public school. The department was instrumental in facilitating access to the schools, while the management of the Splai school in Nou Barris, the parents of the pupils and the teacher, Oscar del Estal, have all shown extraordinary generosity. That is why I like to say that The Class presents English lessons in a primary class as a public and moral space from within the public education system.

The Class is accompanied by the programme Storytime. What is that?

–The series explores questions that go beyond learning English, but we wanted to complement it with more conventional materials that are nevertheless decisive when learning languages: stories and extended exposition in spoken language. For Storytime we have three native English teachers who act as narrators, each day telling a different story. For this we have the British Council in Barcelona to thank, and especially its Young Learners Centre.

What effect could this have on the field of learning English in Catalonia?

–I have no doubt that El Punt Avui Televisió is making linguistic history. And it is worth mentioning the rest of the programming in English, coordinated by Marcela Topor from Catalonia Today, which includes interviews, debates, and so on. I believe it represents an unprecedented explosion of the English language in our media. If schools, teachers and society sign up to it, we are potentially facing a genuine qualitative step forward. Perhaps now more than ever we can start to glimpse the possibility of a genuine trilingual society.

English Hour, daily on TV

Every day from 6-7 pm, El Punt Avui TV broadcasts a different programme in English including debates, interviews, story-telling and a series, for adults and children alike.
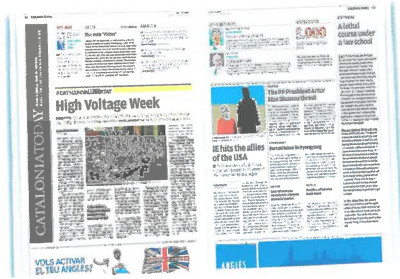
Two pages in English every day

El Punt Avui publishes two daily pages in English, including a summary of the day's main stories and opinion to give an overview of what is happening today in Catalonia.

New website

Our brand new website (www.cataloniato-day.cat) allows access to information online and latest news published in the monthly magazine, Presència and El Punt Avui.

Putting English first

On November 10, **Catalonia Today launched three new projects** with El Punt Avui to provide original English content on television, in the newspapaper and on the Internet

MARCELA TOPOR

More necessary than ever, English has become a universal language and indispensable for study, work, on the Net, in business and travel. The policy of establishing a third language is one of the great challenges of our time and El Punt Avui, along with the Catalonia Today team, are proud to of a pioneering media project: offering daily news, interviews and debates, all in the language that opens a portal to the world.

The English hour team: from top left: Nicole Millar, Neil Stokes, Roser Mas and Barney Griffiths; first row: Marcela Topor and Matthew Tree./ JUANMA RAMOS

OPINION

MARCELA TOPOR mtopor@cataloniatoday.cat

The project to turn English into Catalonia's third language continues

The situation of English today is not the same as 10 years ago. Even if the socio-linguistic objective of establishing a third language in Catalonia has not yet been fulfilled, there has nevertheless been exceptional progress.

Ten years ago, Catalonia Today was born, a publication that since the beginning aimed at publishing Catalan content in English, for the numerous English-speaking residents as well as the increasing number of locals for which the universal language has become indispensable– for work, social or academic reasons. From the beginning CT aimed to do something ambitious: to turn English into an everyday language that could be used to learn what was going on in the country.

A decade later, with the same ambition and objectives, we are renewing our project through a new formula that combines different formats. Since November 10, there have been daily pages in English in El Punt Avui newspaper, a daily hour in English on TV, repeated at weekends and available online, and a new website that includes all of this content online.

Catalonia still needs to improve its English for sure, especially as that is what most people want, and as it aims to become a new state within the EU. We hope this new project will help the ambition of establishing a third language to become a reality, sooner rather than later. It is said that languages die with their speakers, but they are also born with them. With English, we face a fortunate situation: we can assist in making the trilingual community a reality, where the native language, Catalan, exists alongside other official languages, such as Spanish and, hopefully, the emerging international lingua franca.

Apac - 2014 Roundtable

If you can read this, thank a teacher

In this panel, the speakers addressed issues that they consider crucial in terms of understanding the role of the teacher in the teaching-learning process, a role that they believe (in the light of their several decades of accumulated experience) has come under threat from a number of directions.

1. How have textbooks impacted on the role of the teacher?

Jeroni: The production of English textbooks usually comes out as a result of following a specific methodological framework. But I don't think that textbooks always take into account the characteristics of the learners. Let me point out three areas where the learning material may not have adapted to serving the needs of the learners:

a. Second language versus foreign language

When learning English became a worldwide concern, applied linguistic researchers and textbook writers mainly relied upon the existing state of the art, which was teaching English as a *second* language. And the resulting books adopted many ideas which would have been valid for immigrants in an English speaking country but not for people in a foreign environment. Having said that, students are exposed to English much more than ever before, thanks to the use of English as the main - sometimes the sole - language on the internet. Likewise, the advent of CLIL, where school subjects are taught through English, means that English is less a foreign language than a common language. So, perhaps the present situation of English learning does justify an approach in English really is a second, as opposed to a foreign, language.

b. Children versus adult learners

In the 70s and 80s the influence of immersion studies on bilingual children suggested that an artificial environment should be developed in the class, as if the students were children learning at home. As a consequence, textbooks for *adult* learners of elementary English also became childlike - and sometimes even childish.

c. Monolingual teachers versus multilingual students

The whole idea of second language teaching and methodology, so widely adopted in foreign language teaching, has not paid much attention to the linguistic background of the students: the predominant monolingual mentality of speakers of the main languages is that being multilingual is not an asset.

2. How do teachers apply what they read in books or learn at conferences? How have *you* used/interpreted the literature you read during your career?

Scott: Hopefully (and I say this as a writer

of methodology books) teachers interpret the recommendations of others – whether based on research or not – in the light of their own experience and teaching context. No methodology book, however good, is going to be appropriate to every context. Advice as to how to teach in an English as a *second* language context may be irrelevant in an English as a *foreign* language context (as Jeroni suggests above). And vice versa. As N. Prabhu reminded us, way back in 1990, teachers need to select a methodology that they find *plausible* – i.e. one that makes the greatest sense to them in their context, because without 'a sense of plausibility' they will lack conviction, and the teacher's conviction in their classroom procedures (I suspect) has a very important bearing on their learners' motivation. We have all had a teacher who didn't seem to be very committed to their teaching approach or to their materials, and we know, therefore, how de-motivating such a lack of commitment can be.

At the same time, teachers who uncritically follow the same approach year after year, and irrespective of the age, disposition, learning trajectory, or level of their learners are likely to be equally ineffectual. What worked once, when the teacher was in their first flush of enthusiasm, may no longer work ten or fifteen years later, when it has become reduced to a routine – a ritual, even.

Hence, I am a great believer in experimentation in the classroom, and where better to get ideas to experiment with than in methodology and resource books, especially those that are informed by some understanding of how languages are learned.

In terms of how I myself have 'used or interpreted' the literature, I owe a lot to a few key texts that I read at key points in my career, where I was probably ready for a change. Like many teachers at the time, I was influenced by the work of Stephen Krashen and, while I no longer subscribe to his Input hypothesis in its strong form, his argument for the role of comprehensible input was a useful antidote to the prevailing

'drill and repeat' methodology I was initially trained in. Likewise, the work of Earl Stevick, the great humanist methodologist, helped me re-think the processes and goals of language learning, and to situate these in a 'whole person' framework, rather than in a purely cognitive one.

3. What has changed in the last 50 years?

Jeroni: What has changed? I'll first refer to students and teachers. Our school leaving students know more English now than in 1993. This is partly due to the increased exposure, thanks to the increasing availability of on-line resources. The downside is that, while the use of IT has enhanced students' autonomy, in some cases it has also promoted laziness. Plagiarism and the use of automatic translation tools is much easier now than before.

As for the teachers, my impression is that teachers are put under much higher stress than before, and this is partly due to their being blamed for systemic failures in education generally. Let's stop blaming teachers!

What has *not* changed? The main thing that has not changed is the attitude towards the language. We still look at the language as a difficult target to achieve, one that only proficient students can deal with. That may not be the case!

4. Where is the teacher in all this?

Scott: As Jeroni mentions above, teachers are often at the receiving end of a 'blame game', the persistence – and even vehemence – of which can result in a lack of professional self-esteem. This can be particularly acute for language teachers, since the success rate in foreign languages (despite the improvements mentioned above) is still woefully low, compared to other countries in the European community. The situation has been exacerbated in recent years by a wave of what has been called 'techno-fundamentalism', itself a form of 'solutionism', in which technology

is seen as the be-all-and-end-all of educational progress. Where once teachers were exhorted to embrace new methods uncritically, they are now exhorted to embrace educational technology – and blamed if they don't. Edtech, indeed, is the new 'method'. There is even a suggestion that teachers – and especially language teachers – may soon be redundant. The amassing and deployment of 'big data' by educational multi-nationals is seen as a 'teacher-free' means of programming the teaching and testing of learners in ways that supposedly 'adapt' to each individual learner's learning trajectory.

But we have heard all this before. Similar claims were made for radio, TV, film and micro-computers. The language laboratory spelled the end of classroom teaching. Except it did not: language laboratories gather dust while teachers still do what they have always done well: provide language learning opportunities that are tailored to the specific needs and dispositions of their learners.

Teachers would be advised, therefore, to resist the pressure from 'pushers' of educational technology or of 'the latest method' and, instead, hold firm to the practices that underpin generations of inspirational teaching – the ability, for example, to listen, to respond, to give feedback, to encourage, to scaffold, to inform, and to motivate. No single technology, method, or textbook is going to be able to do as much without the mediation of a dedicated teacher.

5. What's it like to be a student again?

Jeroni: Being a student of foreign languages has made me less dogmatic about criticizing stigmatized methods. Repetition can be helpful: drills in Russian have helped me a lot as a student. And when we deal with class management, I have learnt that sometimes communicative tasks may not come out as well as planned. And that the students perceive when a teacher is dedicated or not. And I guess that being dedicated as a teacher, and teacher with the enthusiasm of a student, are the main issues here, regardless of textbooks or the use of the new possibilities offered by information technology.

Scott: Being back in the classroom again has reminded me of how well-adapted classrooms are as laboratories for experimenting with the language – trying things out, taking risks, getting feedback and support. I feel much less anxious 'making a fool of myself' in the classroom than I do in the 'real world'. As teachers, we need to remember to encourage our learners to take similar risks, to use the classroom as a rehearsal space, and to do everything we can to make the learner feel supported and worthy of our attention.

Neus FIGUERAS holds a PhD in language testing from the University of Barcelona. She is catedràtica d'escola oficial d'idiomes and has worked in the Departament d'Ensenyament de la Generalitat de Catalunya coordinating the certificate exams for the EOI. She has also been lecturing part-time at the University of Barcelona and the Universitat Pompeu Fabra. She has been involved in a number of international research and development projects (Speakeasy, Dialang, Ceftrain) and collaborates regularly with the Council of Europe in the dissemination of the Common European Framework of Reference in relation with testing and assessment. She has published articles in the field of language teaching and assessment and is one of the authors of the Manual for Relating examinations to the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2009).

Jeroni SUREDA learnt English working in hotels, and later graduated in English Philology, Law and Political Science. He has spent all his academic life with young and adult students, first at the EOI Drassanes in Barcelona and then at the UAB. At present, he is engaged in a research project dealing with exploiting teaching resources, based on materials used by professionals. He has been studying languages since he was 8, and this has helped him see the classroom environment, not only as a teacher, but also as a student.

Scott THORNBURY is currently curriculum coordinator on the MA TESOL program at The New School in New York. His previous experience includes teaching and teacher training in Egypt, UK, Spain, and in his native New Zealand. His writing credits include several award-winning books for teachers on language and methodology. His most recent book is Big Questions in ELT, available as an ebook from The Round. He is series editor for the Cambridge Handbooks for Language Teachers. His website is www.scottthornbury.com

Transition: Continuity or a Fresh Start?[1]

By Carme Muñoz, Elsa Tragant and Marisa Camuñas

Introduction

In recent years early start policies have become common in many countries. As a result, the period devoted to English language teaching-learning in primary education is as long as or even longer than in secondary education, which highlights the importance of continuity between the two stages. In fact, continuity in English language teaching has been seen as a matter of concern in reports on early foreign language programmes in the European Union (see Blondin et al., 1998).

With the aim of gathering evidence with respect to the transition process from primary to secondary school in our educational context, we undertook a study in 2012-13, in which we asked 28 students and 20 teachers about their perceptions of transition, and about their views concerning English lessons at the primary level and at the secondary level. The students form part of a longitudinal study that extended over the length of primary school and up to the first year of secondary school (1 ESO). For the present study we triangulated data from individual interviews with the students and teachers, from classroom observations, and from teaching and students' materials from grades 5 and 6 of primary school, and from the first year of secondary school. Five primary schools and eight secondary schools in the Barcelona area participated in the study.

In this article we will report on the evidence gathered from all these different sources in order to provide an answer to the question in the title: is there continuity between teaching methods and conceptions, between knowledge acquired before transitioning to secondary school and in secondary school? Starting off with brief

case studies, the following sections focus on: the (lack of) liaison between English teachers from primary and secondary schools; the new start for grammar; and the move to formal teaching-learning in 1 ESO.

Lack of liaison

> Roser and Isabel have been working in a primary and secondary school, respectively, for more than ten years. Most of Roser's students in primary school transfer to Isabel's high school year after year. The two schools are close to each other, yet these two English teachers have never met, observed each other, or exchanged any documents.

Our data shows that this is not an infrequent case. Coordination between secondary and feeder primary schools takes place at a whole-school level with the involvement of first-year tutors and management teams. Nevertheless, there tends to be a lack of communication between primary and secondary English departments (*"we are unconnected"* / *"estem desconnectats"*). Generally, there is no institutionalized contact nor do instructors seek it out informally. Most of what secondary school teachers know about English in primary school comes from what they see or are told from their first-year students and from their own children. And on that basis, many of the teachers we talked to applied their own teaching strategies to smooth their students' transition to secondary English, such as making regular references to what students had learned in primary school, working on study habits, establishing very clear routines, etc.

Nevertheless and probably influenced by this disconnection, some of our students have been observed to experience apparently contradictory teaching practices in their move from primary to secondary education. For example, from the participation in a full theatre play in English in primary school to mainly learning dialogues from the class book in secondary school; from doing oral communicative activities to reading aloud from graded readers; or from free to focused written tasks or to even no writing; from doing extensive reading in primary school to none in secondary school. The list could go on.

This lack of liaison may be caused by different factors like teachers' tight schedules, an unstable teaching staff in some schools, some mistrust between primary and secondary teachers, a lack of tradition for subject matter teachers to make connections at the two levels etc. The official curricula for foreign languages in the upper cycle of primary education and 1 ESO do not foster a smooth transition, either. The comparison of the two documents does not give clear clues to teachers regarding gradience, that is, how difficulty increases from upper primary to 1 ESO.

A new start in grammar

> Andreu, Bibiana, Pau and Joan started learning English in the same primary school at the age of six. Since then they have been learning English with a popular class book and activity book that the teachers followed closely. On their first day of English class in high school, they are asked to take a diagnostic test including fourteen activities. Seven of these activities are about grammar (plurals, a/an, have/be/can, and simple present), four of which require sentence correction. These four students are now in two different classes in high school and have two different English teachers but both instructors say they basically start from zero.

For these students secondary school begins with a test. Primary school finished with another test (*proves de competències bàsiques*) that, somehow surprisingly, does not seem to satisfy the new teachers' needs. Instead, a common procedure in secondary schools is to administer a diagnostic test commonly developed on the basis of the grammatical syllabus followed by the textbook used in 1 ESO. In order to complete this test successfully students need to use explicit knowledge of English grammar, which they may find very challenging coming from primary classrooms where there is a limited explicit focus on form. Test results may be rather poor which leads to a more or less extense revision of the primary education syllabus. This revision is also used as a way of making students' levels more homogeneous, given the great diversity of levels stemming from students and also feeder primary schools. A clear tendency to start (almost) from zero in this revision and the demotivating effect this may have on some students is observed in teachers' answers (*"we start practically from zero because there are students who come with a very low level. This raises many problems for more advanced students because they find what we do in class to be very boring."*/ *"es comença de zero pràcticament perquè hi ha alumnes que venen amb un nivell molt fluix. Planteja molts problemes pels alumnes que van molt avançats perquè troben molt avorrit el que fem a classe"*).

Some teachers specify that this is the case of grammar mainly. Some teachers also note that the review is fast and that it expands on what students have already been taught. The crucial role of grammar in 1 ESO is seen in the identification of the verb *to be* as the zero point for English teaching-learning (*"we start from zero, from to be"* / *"es comença de zero, des de to be"*).

Teachers can be quite specific about what students bring with them to secondary school and what students lack. They generally praise students' listening comprehension skills and even sometimes their oral production skills, as well as their high interest and enthusiasm. On the other hand, teachers generally find that students lack study habits and systematized grammar knowledge. That is, students have acquired (some) explicit grammar knowledge that needs to be "reorganized", and (some) implicit knowledge of the underlying grammar generalizations of which they are not aware (*"they follow their intuition, what is familiar to them"*/ *"es mouen per la intuició, el que els hi sona"*).

A move to formal English teaching-learning

By the end of the fall term in secondary school Pau is positively impressed by the 'new' emphasis on explicit grammar in his English lessons. In primary school a structural-syllabus was followed and plenty of practice done but grammar was little prominent in the textbook as well as in the teacher's discourse. Pau's experience contrasts with that of Anna. She went to a primary school where English was taught through a learner-centered approach and grammar was learned in meaningful contexts. In her case, the move to explicit grammar in secondary school is experienced critically.

The methodological change that students experience in secondary school is often characterized by a more formal approach to English. Grammar is awarded more prominence than in primary school through teachers' explanations, charts on the blackboard, the study of word lists and rules, language-focused compositions, and the use of notebooks, among others. Grammar also occupies a prominent place in the teaching materials, where there can be as many as 23-40 such exercises per

unit (including the grammar reference pages and the workbook). The nature of some of these exercises (i.e., translations, error correction) is indicative of the more explicit attention to accuracy at this level. Also, the use of the L1 in the grammar reference pages is indicative of the important value grammar is awarded.

Our students experience this methodological move to formal grammar and written work differently depending on individual characteristics. Some students in 1 ESO welcome this change and become critical about primary English (*"now it is more difficult because it's not the typical nonsense (vocabulary). Here verbs, conjugations...*/ *"ara és més difícil perquè ja no són les típiques tonteries (vocabulari). Aquí els verbs, les conjugacions"*). For these students the change is positive because now they are required to work more and to learn more "serious" things. Some of them remember the fun activities (games, songs) they did in primary school but they are not aware of having learned much English from them. In contrast, other students still show a preference for games and oral work and think they learn best through them.

How this more explicit approach to English is implemented in 1 ESO also has a strong impact on our students, as can be illustrated through the cases of Pau and Anna above. In Pau's class it is done skillfully and, as a result, he has an awareness of learning that he did not have before, an awareness that is already higher because of his greater cognitive maturity at puberty. When asked about whether he is learning in a different way now, he responds : *"I was not aware of what I learned (last year) and here I am (aware), they tell us what we are learning"* / *"Allà no me'n adonava del que aprenia i aquí sí, que ens avisen del que estem aprenent"*. He goes on to say that in primary school they were doing exercises but they were not given the explanations that they have now (*"(Now) they explain*

grammar to you. Before, they didn't explain it to you... last year it was exercises."* / *"(Ara) t'expliquen la gramàtica. Abans no te l'explicaven...l'any passat eren exercicis"*). This comment and that of other students with similar experiences seem to indicate that some of the language practice at the upper primary level may have been done rather mechanically or without enough awareness on the part of the children. This leads these students to undervalue what they learned in primary school: *"They made us learn songs that later were of no use"*/*"Feien aprendre cançons que després no et servien de res"* and to think that grammar is what a language is about: *"I did not know about the verb* to be, *... but now I know that it is the most important thing"* / *"el verb* to be *no sabia què era això, ... però ara he après que és el més important"*. The result is the feeling that they are learning more now.

Pau's experience contrasts with that of Anna. In her class this more 'serious' approach to English is poorly implemented, partly because it is too dependent on class materials (*"here we write and write (...) we do that with the textbook, we keep doing exercises and she (the teacher) explains some things"* / *"aquí fem escriure, escriure (...) ho fem amb el llibre, anem fent exercicis i ens explica algunes coses la professora"*). In cases like this, when the textbook is not brought to life and the teacher does not add enough value to it, some students feel discouraged. This is what happened to Anna, who prefers the more wholistic approach she experienced in primary school (*"there (in primary school) we did more listening activities, more oral exercises, in pairs and so (...) (here) I find it rather boring (...) We keep doing exercises and correcting them"* / *"allà (a primària) escoltàvem més, més exercicis orals, de parelles i això (...) (Aquí) se'm fa una mica pesat (...) És tot fer exercicis i corregir".*). She has also the impression that she was learning more then.

Pau's and Anna's experiences highlight

different contradictions in the system. Yet in both cases what students learned in primary school is not fully taken advantage of in secondary school. Theoretically, children are expected to acquire English implicitly and they are expected to do it better than older learners because of their alleged superiority at learning implicitly (as babies do) because of their young age. And this is one of the reasons given for teaching English to younger and younger learners: they can absorb language like sponges. However, implicit knowledge is, by definition, knowledge which one is not aware of. So, if students are not made aware of their implicit knowledge in primary school, as in Pau's case, then they perceive that what they have learned until transition has not prepared them for the 'new' classroom activities (beginning with the diagnostic test, as we saw). This results in some learners undervaluing what they brought with them. This lack of recognition on the students' part of what they have learned in primary school may lead them to perceive 1 ESO as a new start, just as their teachers do.

Conclusions

In sum, the data collected from teachers, students, and classrooms indicate lack of continuity at transition, sometimes even an abrupt change in the transition from primary to secondary school. A new start involves the risk of leaving behind what students learned in primary school, that is, of throwing out the baby with the bath water. Teachers and students' comments also indicate a waste of time and interest. We have noticed that in 1 ESO a lot of time is spent going over things that are familiar to students and without sufficient advance in challenge. This makes some students lose their interest in class and reduces their engagement with English learning. Moreover, a fresh start after a minimum of six years of English teaching suggests that we are not fully benefitting

from an early start, even more so when the type of knowledge that may have been acquired in primary education is not fully acknowledged by teachers or by students themselves.

With respect to the educational system, we have seen that there is not enough connection between the primary and secondary levels in terms of syllabus, methodology, and evaluation. A clear implication is the need for educational authorities to take action to guarantee continuity in syllabuses and to establish the necessary effective coordination mechanisms between primary and secondary school teachers. Another clear implication is that teachers in both phases ought to have a wider view of their students' learning needs. For example, fostering students' language awareness in primary school or effectively building on what students bring with them in secondary school.

Our findings accord with those from other studies of transition for different school subjects and generally, both in our country and in the international context. Olano (2005) gave a similar picture of the English language subject in our own context almost a decade ago, which suggests that transition has not yet been given the attention it deserves as a major factor in students' levels of attainment. Negative consequences have been observed by studies in different parts of the world indicating a drop in attainment and motivation during transition associated with three main causes: lack of curriculum continuity and failure to build on the students' previous knowledge, different teaching styles in the two phases and lack of appropriate liaison between schools including poor transfer of information (e.g. Hunt et al., 2007; Jones, 2009; McGee et al., 2003).

Clearly, transition from primary to

secondary education is a complex and challenging issue that needs to be addressed on several fronts. Meanwhile, and on the basis of our observations and findings, we believe that the following proposals would be efficient and feasible:

- to implement training courses and workshops specifically for transition teachers (1 ESO) and grade 6 teachers, together and/or separately.

- to design specific forms for grade 6 teachers to convey information to 1 ESO teachers about what their students can do with and in English.
- to publish graded and commented on samples of students' writing in the *proves de competències*.
- to acknowledge the complexity of teaching 1 ESO students and to establish mechanisms to assign experienced teachers to 1 ESO groups.

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The Importance of Comunity in Distance Learning

By Donna Lee Fields

This paper is based on a talk given at the APAC conference in February of 2014 on the planning of virtual classes and the perspective one needs to have in order to be successful. Creating successful online classes is more than the simple transference of lessons from the physical classroom to the virtual. It requires familiarization with online tools and the adjustment of educational methodology. Consciously designing a structure which will create and support a feeling of community for the all participants is the core to creating a safe learning environment for students. The marriage of these elements will infuse the classes with humanity, and will give a physically separated group of students a sense of community.

Introduction

The digital domain has affected and transformed the world in dramatic ways, yet the methods of addressing these changes -above all in the sphere of education- is still a work in progress, mostly because most educators do not yet wholly understand the demands of this new venue. Online classes require a philosophical perspective fundamentally different from that of the physical classroom. To ensure its viability and success, and with even more necessity than in the material

realm, instructors, administrators, and technological support teams of a virtual platform have to be able to communicate quickly and efficiently, educators must be willing to keep abreast of technological resources and advances, methodology must be considered and revised, and, above all, teachers need to find ways to simulate the warmth generated by the human presence in the physical classroom within the virtual one. Irrespective of whether teachers philosophically support virtual learning, object to the all-embracing stance the education community has generally taken regarding technology in the classroom, or bewail the loss of kinesthetic activities now being sublimated by touch screens, mobile phone applications, and web quests, they must accept the reality that educational tools are changing and that adaption to the new educational panorama is fundamental.

Technology has created a duality in education which has divided instructors into two extremes — neither of which are desirable. On the one hand, computers, interactive boards, and other technological supplements, are now such an inherent part of most classrooms in the Western world, that incoming teachers who have never had to work without these resources do not know how to plan without them. One of the dangers of this stance is that they direct their students' attention to computer screens, and so by default replace essential class time which could and should be used as interactive time on a physical level — students looking at and working with each other — with interaction with technology in and out of the classroom. These new teachers are unwittingly promoting a type of disconnection in the populace.

On the opposite extreme, educators who were trained for and entered the classroom before technology began its incursion are abstaining from participating in digitalized forums. This resistance, more insidious than it may initially seem, is creating a generation gap deeper and more damning than those in the past, as students by and large more attuned than their teachers to the changes and benefits of technology are 'growing increasingly intellectually disconnected at school because of the "keep out" signs posted in the virtual knowledge ecology' (Breck, 2006:7).

Intimidation may be the reason many teachers reject technology in the classroom, feeling that computers are here to supersede them. In the same spirit of caution, those instructors who do take the plunge and incorporate technology into their lessons need to understand that careful deliberation in assimilating electronic tools into their classroom is imperative; without close attention to how, how often, and to what end these advances are utilized in the educational field, without having training in resolving the paradox of creating a physical connection in a virtual environment (thus ensuring identification and visibility of the participants in what is otherwise digital anonymity), very soon these teachers will have unintentionally created a generation of learners who lack the wherewithal to connect emotionally with their peers on a physical plane.

Already, digital platforms are monitored by instructors who, for want of experience, and faced with technology they are not acquainted with, become quickly frustrated in their inability to express themselves online, and feel impeded in their desire to establish a connection with their students. These teachers suffer from the social isolation which the very nature of the virtual environment can engender; they need to feel backed up emotionally and at a technical level, or they will experience abandonment caused by lack of administrative support (Murdoch & Muller, 2011). This is exacerbated by a consequent decrease in the student count, which can provoke a sense of failure in the more conscientious educators.

Even students knowledgeable in technology can also suffer from isolation, on their end precipitated by classes given by untrained educators. A student can be expected to accommodate the inexperience of their instructors only up to a certain point, and then impatience turns further into resentment.

To avoid this progression of events, educators on every level need to recognize that online learning is not simply the transference of lessons from the physical classroom to the virtual, but rather a venue which requires a shift in paradigm and philosophy, and definitive training. With practice, a teacher can learn to successfully manipulate the online tools to then find ways of creating electronic learning environments — communities — which celebrate energetic and authentic connections between all participants.

Community as Part of Genetic Programming

Humans are social beings. We are genetically programmed to seek out others such as ourselves, to share our feelings, to commiserate, to find people who can offer us support, advice, approval. This desire to connect is seen in all civilizations throughout time. Folk tales — globally accepted as cultural indicators and reflections of our societies — are filled with this yearning to establish communities. From Greek mythology, Psyche (arguably one of the most daring daughter-in-laws of classic literature), faces one of Mt. Olympus' most powerful and vengeful goddesses just to be reunited with her husband. Pusillanimous though he may be, he is, after all, her only family after she is abandoned by her parents and betrayed by her sisters. The Russian beauty Basilisa, relinquished into the hands of her torturers — her stepmother and stepsisters — by her father, who was well aware of the torment they rained over the girl, subjects herself to the cruelties of one of the cruelest of

witches in folklore —the Baba Yaga— hoping that by doing so her adopted family will finally warm to and accept her as one of them. And Rumplestilstkin, in his desperation to form his own family/community, accomplishes the impossible and turns straw into gold.

Defining Community

Almost as complex as reaching a consensus on the nature of space, defining community is a complicated venture. Its parameters change with almost the same frequency as the needs of each group. While some may identify a community according to its 'unity of will' — a group based on feelings of togetherness and mutual bonds (Wirth, 1926), others conclude that it must have as a co-axis content, frequency, intensity and centrality (Glock, 1972). Still others assert that every community must be composed of inclusivity, commitment and consensus. More generally, that which forms a community is normally a common value, whether idealistic, risk- or materially-based.

A working definition of community for this study is a compilation of the above: a space in which the participants accept each other, work to transcend their differences, make decisions which take into consideration the multiple perspectives of the members, are introspective regarding the interaction of the community, work to know and accept oneself as an individual, are comfortable with the common goal of helping others to feel genuinely accepted, feel safe enough to share and show vulnerability even and especially when conflicts occur, and share the ideal that the group be directed, to varying degrees, by all of its members.

Educational Methodologie Transferred to the Virtual Environment

The amorphic nature of the virtual environment adds to the complexity of defining the communities which form and

function within it. Perhaps in the future, the an educator's need to have a physical reference point for a functional community may be redundant; however, as virtual platforms can still be considered a part of what is a relatively new field, teachers who participate in electronic classes will do well to first evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching styles in their face-to-face classes before attempting to simulate those methods in a space which has fewer concrete and immediate indicators (body language, real-time exchanges, etc.). Virtual space is bred for that methodology which leans toward a more egalitarian, student-centered vision of the teacher-student relationship.

Those Educators Entenched in the Authoriatarianism Model

The traditional teacher-centered model, also known as *essentialism*, is an authoritarian form of teaching which originated in the early 18th century in Prussia, and was championed in the western world by William C. Bagley. It stresses strict and rigorous practices of traditional subjects — reading, writing, math and science — in a highly structured environment. The teacher in this methodology is the center of the classroom both physically and figuratively, and is responsible for keeping order, for setting the tone, and for meting out rewards or punishments based on adherence to classroom rules and scholastic performance.
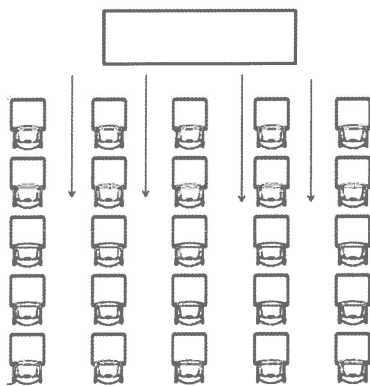
The layout of a teacher-centered classroom, with all information going in one direction, from teacher to students as passive recipients. (Fields, 2013)
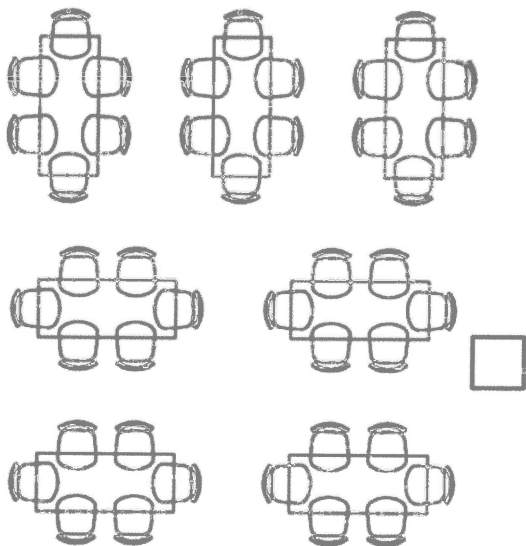
The philosophy of *essentialism* is manifested in the very physicality of the classroom and in the didactics of the teaching. The schoolroom, with its rectangular, grey walls housing straight lines of individual desks, faced by that of the teacher dominating the front of the room, simulates the industrial floor design of most factories. Even 200 years later, schools are still being built with what is essentially the same blueprint, and though many teachers try to soften this stark environment with colorful decorations and pithy posters, the rooms never lose their unforgiving nature.

Curriculums developed within the tenets of *essentialism* followed — and follow — strict codes, the two most basic being that a) lessons were given in the form of repetitive exercises with the objective of reinforcing dogged, undisputed 'truths', and that b) students would move from their seats minimally during the 7-8 hour school day, only when permitted, and only for specifically approved motives. This first tenet achieved two purposes: the student body's proclivity towards obedience to all authority figures, and, for lack of practice and training, their subsequent inability to analyze and evaluate their surroundings with any sophistication; the second tenant was of equal importance, preparing the future workers for the 12 to 15 hours that they would later spend working in confined spaces behind heavy machinery which required unvaried, rote, physical movements.

Manifesting Methodologies in the Physical Enviornment

The manifestation of the student-centered model can be seen in the physical layout of the classroom, which highlights the changes in paradigm between the traditional teaching style and the egalitarian one. Instead of rows of individual desks facing the front of the room, the tables in the constructivist classroom are joined together to accommodate cooperative

student work. Idealistically and literally, the students look at each other in order to complete their assignments. The teacher's desk can be placed in any part of the room, as her/his role is that of a facilitator, functioning more as support than as the omniscient figurehead who needs to dominate the front of the class. Instead of directing the flow of information, this teacher aids the students in designing their own method of working, helping them search for their own answers to problems, and supporting their decisions in choosing the materials which might help them complete their assignments. The teacher of the student-centered class still creates the lesson plans, presents the projects and follows the progress of the group's work; however, instead of the focus originating from her and extending out, it now begins at the center of each group of students and then synergistically flows between them.

centered classroom — the former rigid and the latter malleable. The layout of the egalitarian classroom reflects the acknowledgement that students assimilate knowledge differently. For the linguistically inclined of the student body there is a library of books and/or Internet access; for those aurally or musically inclined there is an audio center; for those with logical and mathematical leanings there is a game center filled with different problem-solving challenges; for those with spatial intelligence there is a place to draw and create; to promote interpersonal skills, a student-centered classroom will often offer a place where students can congregate comfortably away from their desks; and for those who need quiet time there are usually corners where students can read or complete assignments individually.

The teacher acts as facilitator, helping groups advance in their projects. (Fields, 2013

A student-centered classroom with desks grouped together to promote and support cooperative activities and study. The placement of the teacher's desk is irrelevant. (Fields, 2013)

A classroom library. (Fields, 2013)

The theory of multiple intelligences — unrecognized in the essentialist classroom — is the basis for the student-centered model. Just as the layout of the teacher-centered classroom mirrors its outlook on education, so does the distribution of materials and furniture in the student-
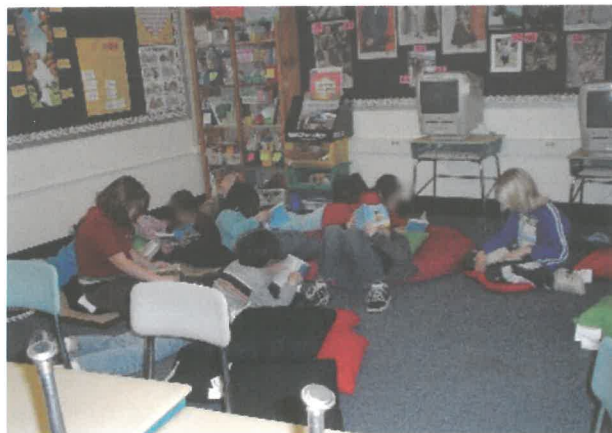
Virtual Platforms Support Student-Centered Methodologies

The traditional model in which information is presented uni-directionally — from the teacher to the students — will not be logical to students who regularly use multiple and simultaneous means to exchange information; it is impractical and confusing for students who, for the most part, will already be accustomed to multi-tasking and finding information autonomously.

An audio-visual center. (Fields, 2013)

Anyone who has experience giving synchronous virtual classes will know that while the teacher is presenting information and talking about projects, some students will be listening, but most will also be sending each other messages, they will be exchanging documents that may or may not have to do with the class at hand through one or more e-mail servers, they may be working together on documents through Google Drive-like programs, communicating through SMS messages on their cell phones, calling each other to speak, searching through information about the topics the teacher has mentioned, or completing work from an entirely different class. Mono-directional communication is simply counter-indicated in this venue, shouldn't be expected, and the teachers need to adapt.

Freedom to study in alternative areas (Fields, 2013)

On the other hand, given the manipulations possible in the virtual platform, the philosophy and practice of student-centered learning and distance learning are harmonic. Each element in the egalitarian classroom is mirrored in the virtual platform:

library: uploaded documents — the teacher can make material pertaining to the course available to the students.

audio/visual center: a folder which contains recordings and videos pertinent to the class.

break center: the Forum — students can post messages to each other asking for clarification about questions, or simply commenting on class activities, for instance.

class time: virtual classes — participants work as a whole class, in groups, or independently depending on the assignment.

As diagram 9 shows, the students have access to all of these resources at all times.

A dedicated area where students can relax and socialize. (Fields, 2013)

Consciously Creating Communities in Distance Learning Classes

In a physical classroom, the merging of personalities, the acceptance of different roles, the dynamics between the teacher and the students, happen more naturally. There is more (and more familiar) information for the senses to process: body language, tone of voice, insinuating rhythm of speech, suggestive pauses. The students push and the teachers set limits. We're all familiar with these dynamics, but they change every year, for every class, and almost every day. Most of the talk behind closed doors in the teachers' lounges has to do with responding to all of these signals. They discuss aggressive students, those that are bullied, some that don't respond or those that are not challenged. Essentially, what they are discussing and sharing is the formation of class communities.
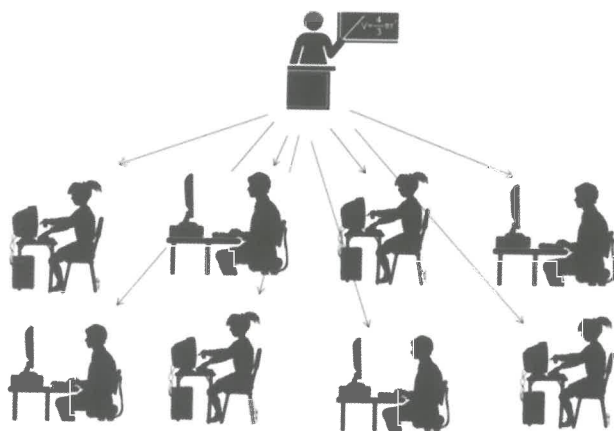
8 The traditional teaching model transferred to the virtual class. The students do not have access to each other and learn in a isolated environments. (Fields, 2013)

In distance learning classes, neither the students nor the instructor can rely on clues from body language, as for the most of the class the cameras are off and when on, only the torso is shown, tone of voice may be artificial as many have to raise their voices to be heard through inadequately programmed microphones, a shy student in a virtual setting will often hide behind excuses of malfunctions in their equipment so as not to have to speak or be seen, etc. An educator cannot depend on the same factors that help form communities in a physical classroom in a virtual one. And so the structure and the strategy must be deliberately and carefully planned from the inception of the course.

9 The student-centered classroom adapts seamlessly to the virtual platform. (Fields, 2013)

Further Strengthening the Community

There are other elements which can help enormously in solidifying the spirit of community in virtual space. For instance, simply using the students' names whenever possible, changes the dynamics and involvement of the participants for a myriad of reasons. In the first place, it helps otherwise anonymous participants to feel seen within a spatial environment so ambiguous and unintelligible that it was first coined a 'consensual hallucination' (Gibson, 1995). Secondly, though technology has advanced greatly, most platforms still do not have the means to permit more than six participants to activate their video cameras or microphones at the same time. It then behooves the instructor to make every effort to recognize distance learners personally and directly, augmenting their sense of inclusion and visibility.

The argument that, as some educators claim, calling on students by name in a physical or virtual class, might embarrass or make students feel nervous, is contradicted by studies which clearly show that, in fact, the

virtual environment offers a more equitable and nonthreatening forum — especially for women and nonassertive personalities. 'Network exchanges seem to help all individuals...engage more frequently, with greater confidence, and with greater enthusiasm in the communicative process than is characteristic for similar students in oral classrooms' (Blake, 2013: 4-5).

Some final thoughts. Though the teacher is no longer expected to be omniscient, she or he must still maintain a certain level of authority, part of which entails being at least as familiar with shared tools as the students. The exponential growth of the internet is at times overwhelming and we cannot be expected to keep abreast of all new technology; however, we can also not expect respect from our students or the right to authority over them if we do not at least try. 'Kids should not have to mentor adults' (Breck, 2006:20). An instructor can rely on the students to help them with unfamiliar programs and tools only up to a certain point. Once we make the commitment to teach with technology, we have the responsibility to keep abreast of new educational tools as much as possible. We expect our students to learn from us and they need to see us willing to learn as well.

Conclusions

This study had dealt with the importance of building community within a virtual environment. In a community, our inner strengths, experiences and truths are supported. Having a community within digital space gives participants the opportunity to maximize their learning and to then venture out into the physical world with more confidence and positive energy.

Many educators mistakenly believe that mastering the technological aspect of virtual classes and then transferring their lessons from the desk to the screen is all that is necessary to adapt to the digital age; however, the true key to successful distance learning is in consciously using the available resources to their greatest advantage. This requires both skills: familiarization with online tools and the adjustment of educational methodology to the new venue.

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My Vegetalbe Garden
(Escola Els Estanys, Sils)

By Sònia Marcos Bou and Carme Dilmé Burjats

"My Vegetable Garden" is an English language Project that started 5 years ago in our school. It is intended for pupils aged 3 to 5 and it takes 3 hours a week with half groups.

The methodology used is based on the communicative approach and CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning).

With this project we aim to increase English language exposure, to provide a meaningful context for pupils to use the foreign language in while learning new concepts and to reinforce new contents learnt in other areas.

By splitting groups we offer pupils more opportunities to produce language either through games, songs, poems, stories and experimentation. We plan our activities so that pupils have to produce little chunks of language and not just unconnected vocabulary.

Children are very curious and so we offer them activities where they can manipulate and experiment in real situations as a means of keeping them motivated for learning. Sensory activities are also a very good way to integrate leaning. We have started to use sensory baskets, which pupils love.

The range of motivating activities is

wide and they are the main core in each session. Our sessions usually start with the teacher going to the classroom to get a group of pupils, and they sing a song or say a chant while heading to the English classroom. Once there, pupils sit in a circle and do different routines such as roll call, the weather, the days of the week and vocabulary revision games. After that, there is a main activity and when it is time to finish we sing a tidy-up song and a line-up song to go back to the classroom.

The units involved in the project are related to the vegetable garden. We try to exploit a subject in many different ways so that pupils are motivated and have plenty of opportunities to be exposed to the language. In autumn we start with **pumpkins**. We observe different pumpkins and we talk about size and colours, we classify them, we observe how pumpkins grow and their maturation process, we see if they float or not, we touch and count pumpkin seeds and do different craft projects with them, we memorize a pumpkin chant, we tell pumpkin stories and watch some videos, we make pumpkin soup or pumpkin muffins, etc..

a scarecrow chant and we tell and retell stories while children take part in them.

In winter we talk about **weather** changes and clothes, we tell snowman stories and learn different songs and chants, we experiment with water and ice, we give weather forecasts.

When it is time to plant **seeds**, we observe different seeds and experiment with plants, we watch different videos to illustrate the growing process of a plant, we play boardgames and memory games related to the process, etc…

When we build a **scarecrow** for our garden, we learn about clothes, the body, the face and autumn colours, we experiment and observe different leaves, we learn

When it is time to work in the garden we remove the weeds, water the plants, collect some vegetables and prepare a market stall for parents and observe the "**minibeasts**" that live in the soil.

We tell different stories about insects and minibeasts, we talk about their characteristics, we count spots and legs, we learn songs and play games to learn different names, etc...

When the summer is near we learn many things related to **fruit**, we taste them, we play with numbers, we collect some fruit in the garden, we make fruit salad or juice, we stamp with fruit, etc...

Our vegetable garden offers many great opportunities to learn both content and language. These are the units we have been exploiting so far, but the range is even wider. We encourage everyone to make the most of real context while teaching a language, because the results are vey rewarding.

In spring we go out looking for **flowers** in the fields surrounding the school and in the playground, we take pictures of different flowers; we review some colours and do some flower crafts, etc...

Sònia MARCOS has been an teacher of English since 1993, she graduated in Translation at UAB in 1991, she took a year's leave at Kyoto Gaikokugo Daigaku 1991-1992 and she graduated at UdG in Ciències de l'Educació in 2002. She has been Lecturer at UdG since 2006, she collaborated with TP13 -Trobades Pedagògiques 2013 in Santa Coloma de Farners, she is coordinator of PILE "Who wants to be the bad wolf?" 2013-2015 in Escola Els Estanys; she was the coordinator of PELE "My vegetable Garden" at Escola Els Estanys (Sils) 2010-2013, and co-responsible of PELE "English is Natural" at Escola Sant Jordi (Bonmatí) 2006-2009.

Carme DILMÉ has been a teacher of English since 1991, she is co-founder of TP13-Trobades Pedagògiques 2013 in Santa Coloma de Farners; coordinator of PILE "Who wants to be the bad wolf?" 2013-2015 at Escola Els Estanys; coordinator of PELE Arts and Crafts in Primary a l'Escola Jacint Verdaguer (Sils) 2006-2009; co-founder of The English Day in Santa Coloma de Farners and is the coordinator of several English workshops in Girona. es.

MI in the Preschool Foreign Language Class

By Vicky Gasch

The importance of Foreign Language Learning at an early age has become very popular in the last decade. Most Catalan schools have started to introduce English as a Foreign Language in their Preschool units. The strategies used for teaching English at this age-level in an effective way must be a bit different than the ones applied in higher classes. Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI) sets a variety of abilities that should be kept in mind in order to reach each child's learning preferences. Keeping variety in mind, we can use activities related to the different capacities included in the Catalan Preschool Curriculum, and we will be using Content Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) at a very early age.

Why teach English to Preschool children? How can we make language teaching to young learners effective? We will try to answer these questions and also, taking into account the experience at Guillem de Mont-rodon School in Vic, we will make a proposal for a Preschool Foreign Language lesson plan containing different kinds of activities related to MI.

Why teach English to 4 and 5 year-olds?

There are many reasons for teaching English to Very Young Learners; but we think that there are certain things that we should keep in mind:

☺ **Global comprehension:** young learners are able to understand messages in a global way before understanding the single meaning of a word; they are able to understand the meaning of a story without knowing the meaning of all the words.

☺ **Communication and socialization:** young children have a great need for communication, they need to know about anything that happens around them and they are always willing to share their own experiences. Learning a foreign language will help them to be aware that there are different languages spoken in the world and encourage them to learn about other cultures and to respect them.

☺ **Acquisition of the music of the language (phonetics, intonation and stress patterns) and an innate sense of grammar:** young learners have a gift for foreign language phonetics, due to the ease with which they reproduce intonation and the words' sounds. They are always willing to repeat what has been said by one of the story's characters, in the song's lyrics and in the teacher's instructions and are able to do it in a precise way. Children learn new words, structures and chunks through repetition without being aware of it.

☺ **Open and enthusiastic children:** preschool children are open-minded and they are willing to learn new things. They show a great deal of motivation and enthusiasm to learn about the new language and its culture.

☺ **Unconscious learning:** young children usually learn the language by playing, practicing the daily routines and doing activities that are fun. That's why a high percentage of what they learn is acquired in an unconscious way. They assimilate the language naturally, rather than being 'taught'.

How can we make language teaching to young learners effective?

To make language teaching to very young learners effective, we should keep in mind a few aspects:

☝ **Use and contextualization of the language:** English should be the language used by the English teacher in the class and in the rest of schools' facilities (if possible) in order to find real communicative situations outside the classroom (Flores and Corcoll, 2008). The children should obviously be allowed to communicate in their mother tongue until they feel comfortable enough to use the target language. They will go through a silent period and will not speak until they are ready. Before being able to communicate in the foreign language, they will probably go through what Flores and Corcoll call a 'Substitutive period' mixing English and Catalan words. When they use the mother tongue, the teacher can translate what has been said into English in a way that they do not feel corrected. The language used in class should be contextualized in order to allow for the students to comprehend it. The contextualization will also help the children to learn words and chunks in a meaningful way. The contents should be close to the students' previous knowledge and reality.

☝ **Cross-curricular contents:** in order to teach in a global way, the contents introduced in the English class should also be linked to the ones from other curricular subjects. In Preschool we work with activities related to languages (verbal, body, mathematical), self-knowledge, environment discovery, etc.

☝ **Verbal and non-verbal communication:** young children have a great need for verbal and non-verbal communication. According to Albert Mehrabians' (1971) statistic for effectiveness of spoken communications: 55% of meaning is in body language and facial expression, 38% is in the way the words are said (intonation and environment), and only 7% is in

words. It is very important to keep this in mind while communicating with students that are coming into contact with the foreign language for the first time.

☝ **Sequencing the activities:** we must set a sequential plan for the activities that will be done in class. They should be short and varied because young learners have a short attention span and we should avoid overloading the lesson with activities to avoid overstimulating the students. They also need time for themselves: withdrawal and intimacy (Williams, 2008). Routines will be a great help in conducting the activities and letting the children know what comes next.

☝ **Respect for different learning styles:** while using varied activities we will grant respect for the different learning styles and we will help each child to develop his/her own learning strategies. We should take into account the students' MI (Gardner, 1983).

THE THEORY OF MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES

When Howard Gardner initially formulated the Theory of MI he recognized seven intelligences. The first two were the ones that have been typically valued in schools (Verbal Linguistic and Logical Mathematical); the next three were usually associated with the arts (Musical, Bodily-Kinaesthetic and Spatial-Visual); and the final two were what Howard Gardner called 'personal intelligences' (Interpersonal and Intrapersonal).

Since the original listing in *Frames of Mind* (1983) there has been a great deal of discussion as to other possible candidates for inclusion (or exclusion). The Naturalist intelligence was recognized as the eighth intelligence in *Intelligence Reframed* (2000).

Lately, the Existential and the Pedagogical Intelligences have also been considered possible candidates to the theory but Howard Gardner (2013) affirmed that he is not doing anymore research on MI and they have not been evaluated yet in order to be included to the theory.

Everyone has some of each of the intelligences, but we are all different. Each person has a different level of development of each intelligence, there are not two identical twins. According to Gardner (2013), at school, on the one hand we should **individualize** teaching, learning and assessing, and on the other hand we should **pluralize** presenting ideas in several ways.

Lesson planning from the Multiple Intelligences perspective

As an English teacher in the Guillem de Mont-rodon school in Vic, I have tried to keep in mind MI while planning my lessons. We start teaching English at the age of 4 and we spend three weekly sessions of about 45 minutes on ELT. One of the sessions always takes place in the psychomotricity room and the other two in the regular class (one of them in split groups). We usually work on different stories and propose a variety of activities related to the story that we are working on. While the English teacher is in the class, this person is also responsible for all the activities related to habits and routines such as putting smocks on, going to the bathroom or getting a drink of water. The English teacher usually speaks English in all the school's facilities: the classroom, the corridor, the playground, etc.

How to create mi lesson plans?
According to Armstrong 2009, there are certain steps that we have to follow in order to create a MI lesson plan:

- ➢ Focus on a specific objective or topic
- ➢ Ask Key MI Questions
- ➢ Consider the possibilities
- ➢ Brainstorm
- ➢ Select the appropriate activities
- ➢ Set up a sequential plan
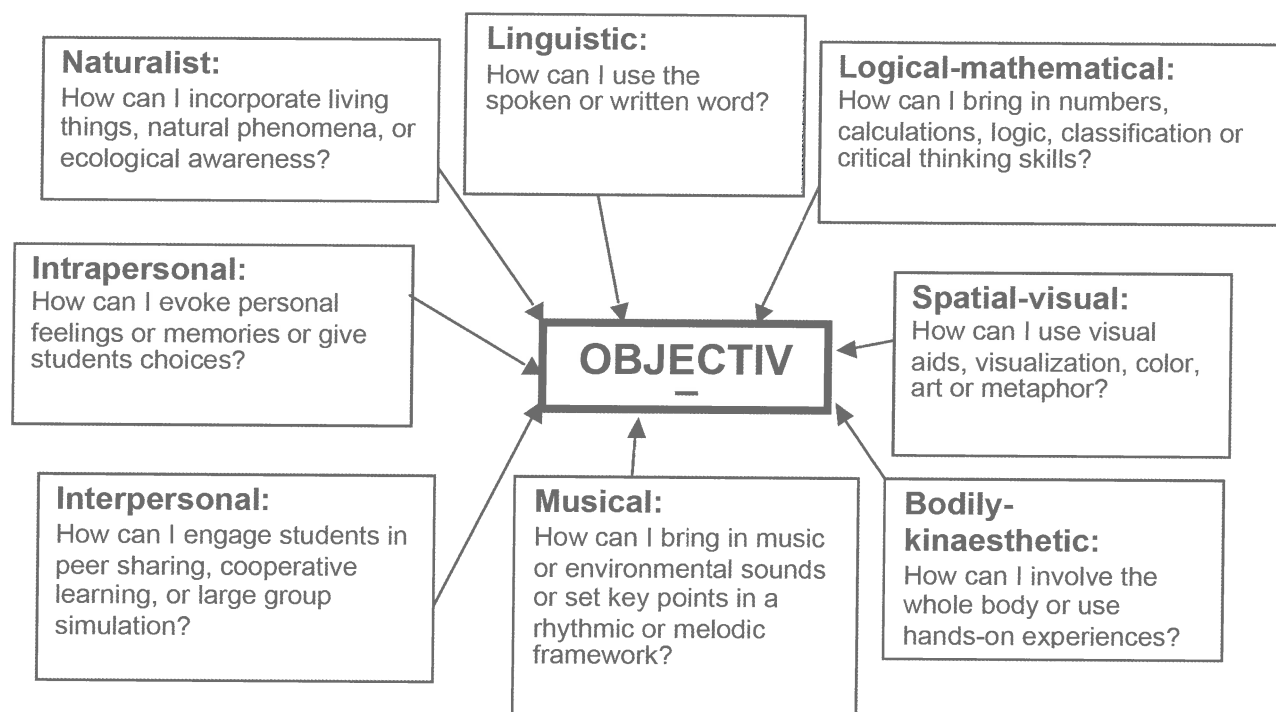- ➢ Implement the plan

Multiple Intelligences planning key questions

After deciding on the topic that we want to work on, we can start thinking about the MI questions and looking for activities related to all of them. The Internet is a great resource to get ideas; also, talking to the students to find out what activities they enjoy the most can also be useful, and sharing ideas with other English Teachers can also help.

centred in Eric Carle's Book *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. The same idea can be carried out with any other story suitable for Preschool classes. We are going to describe the activities according to different techniques:

A. Storytelling

Before listing the activities related to storytelling, we think that there are a few things that we should keep in mind while choosing a story: the **content** must be interesting and close to the children's reality; the **characters** should be interesting and must have positive attitudes and values (in this case eating fruit during the week / getting a stomach-ache from eating food that might not be that healthy on Saturday); the **action** has to be simple and has to contain structures that are easy to understand (repetition is a great tool to ensure the understanding

Naturalist:
How can I incorporate living things, natural phenomena, or ecological awareness?

Linguistic:
How can I use the spoken or written word?

Logical-mathematical:
How can I bring in numbers, calculations, logic, classification or critical thinking skills?

Intrapersonal:
How can I evoke personal feelings or memories or give students choices?

Spatial-visual:
How can I use visual aids, visualization, color, art or metaphor?

OBJECTIV__

Interpersonal:
How can I engage students in peer sharing, cooperative learning, or large group simulation?

Musical:
How can I bring in music or environmental sounds or set key points in a rhythmic or melodic framework?

Bodily-kinaesthetic:
How can I involve the whole body or use hands-on experiences?

MI Planning Questions (Armstrong, 2009:65)

The Very Hungry Caterpillar — classroom activities

Following the Multiple Intelligences key questions, we propose a lesson plan

and memorization of language chunks); the **linguistic contents** should be rich, well contextualized and adapted to the children's knowledge.
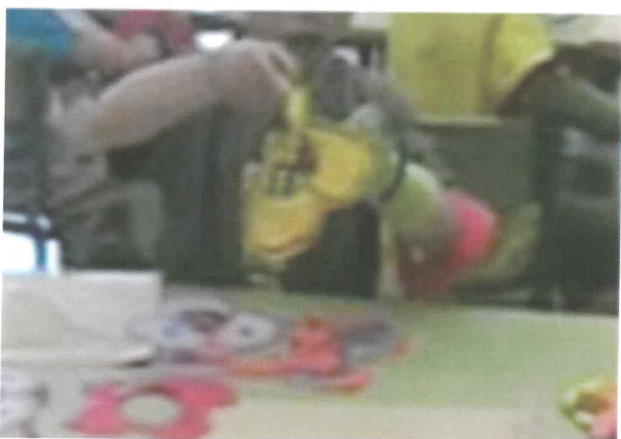
A. 1. TELLING THE STORY TO THE WHOLE CLASS

The teacher tells the story to the class a few times while working in the same story. The first time it can be told using the book. Then, it can be told in other ways: using a video, using flashcards or props, asking the children to predict what comes next or asking the students to take part in the storytelling.


A. 2. CHILDREN AS STORYTELLERS

Towards the end of the unit, the children will probably be able to reproduce the main parts of the story. Then, they can use their own props and become storytellers. After practicing in school a few times, the props can be taken home and the story can be shared with their families. The parents can write a feedback note with positive comments to be shared in class.

A.3. STORY SEQUENCE

We ask the students to sequence the story to make sure that they have understood it.

The activity can be done individually or with the whole class.
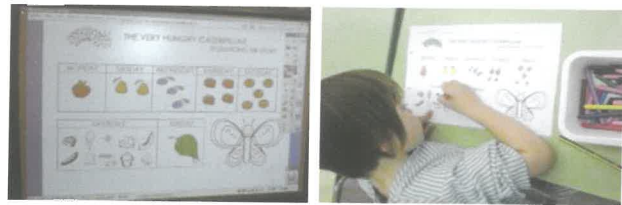
A. 4. DRAWING ABOUT THE STORY

The students are asked to draw a picture related to the story. The children will be able to choose what they like the most and it will provide the teacher with a great opportunity to spend some time with each child individually.

A. 5. READING THE BOOK BY THEMSELVES

If the children have some time to read books on their own in the class, having a few copies of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* will allow them to go through the story one more time and observe every little detail at their own pace.

B. Games

Games are also a very useful tool. We can use visual games, memory games, group games, and moving games, among others.

They must be short, varied and easy to explain. We should avoid using competitive games because at this age it is very difficult to accept losing. We will make sure that the children know how to play by giving an example before starting the game.

B.1. FRUITS AND NUMBERS PUZZLE

The activity can be done with the whole class at the beginning and in small groups (3 or 4 people) further on. The students have to find the matching pairs — number and fruit. Once they have a pair, they have to say the number and the name of the fruit aloud.

B.2. MEMORY GAME

The activity can be done with the whole class at the beginning, to make sure that the children understand the procedure, and in small groups (3 or 4 people) further on. When the children are not familiarized with the vocabulary, we can just use one card of each and hang them on the wall inside out. No one knows where each picture is, so, when the teacher asks a child to find where one of the elements is, the children will not feel frustrated if they get it wrong. It will give them the chance to practice and hear the vocabulary a few more times. Once the students are familiar with the names of the fruit, we will use all the cards. They will be put upside-down on a table. The children will take turns and they will have to turn over two cards at a time trying to find the matching pairs.
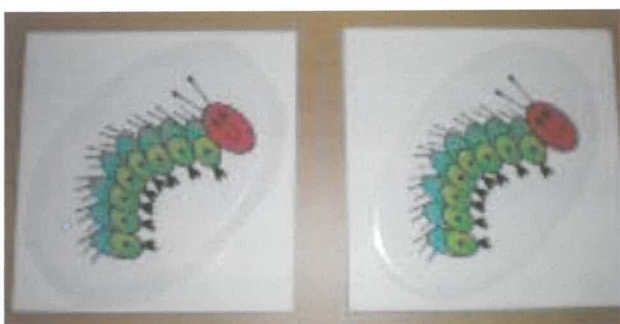
B.3. FRUIT SALAD MOVING GAME

At this age students need movement; they cannot be sitting and listening for a long time. This game can help energize them. Each child gets a sticker with a fruit and sticks it on his/her forehead. The children have to dance around listening to music. The teacher stops the music and calls for one or more fruits, the students that have been called have to move to the centre of the room. When the teacher calls fruit salad, everyone has to go to the centre of the room.

C. Realia

Realia is also very effective for achieving meaningful learning. Using real objects in the Preschool English class helps make the learning experience more memorable for the learner. Using realia appeals to a wider range of learner styles than a simple flashcard picture of the item.

C.1. HAVING REAL CATERPILLARS IN CLASS

Having silkworms in class will give the kids an opportunity to observe the life cycle of caterpillars, from the egg to the butterfly, in person. They will be learning language and science at the same time. The silkworms can be kept in a shoe box in one of the class corners and have to be fed with mulberry leaves. The whole process takes about 7 or 8 weeks.


C.2. CATERPILLAR OBSERVATION SHEET

While the silkworms are in theh class, we keep a record of the process in their

life cycle. The observation sheet can be very simple, just the date and a photo taken weekly, and will allow the children to compare the size of the silkworms and the different steps from the egg to the butterfly.

C.3. EXPERIMENTING WITH FRUITS

The teacher brings in some of the fruits that appear in the story and can ask the students to count the fruits and compare the amount of fruits with the amount of fruits eaten by the caterpillar in the story. The students can touch, smell, observe the outside and inside colour of the fruits and finally try them. Afterwards, they will be able to decide which fruit they liked the most.
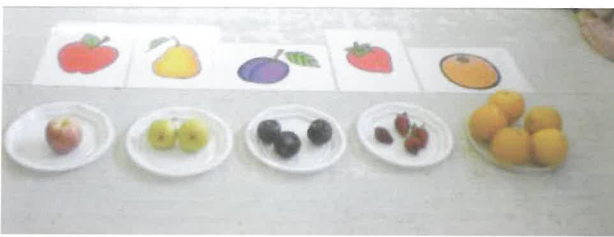
C.4. CLASSROOM FRUIT SURVEY

After experimenting with fruits, the teacher asks the students to decide which of the fruits they liked the most and they can write their names in the corresponding part of the survey grid. Afterwards, they can count how many children like each fruit and answer some questions such as: what fruit was chosen the most/least? How many boys/girls chose apples?

D. Music, Songs and Dances

Music is a very helpful resource in the English class and especially when dealing with young children. Songs can be used to introduce new vocabulary or to link the activities within a lesson. They allow the students to play using the target language and give them good patterns for practicing rhythm, intonation and pronunciation. At this age, children need to move and take part in what we are doing at any moment, that's why it is very useful to choose songs that can be mimed and danced to.

D.1. CATERPILLAR CHANT

Creeping, crawling on the ground
Creeping, crawling on the ground
On my caterpillar trip
Looking for something to eat!
The students memorize the lyrics while practicing the actions of the chant, pretending to be caterpillars. Afterwards, the chant can be used for the role-play (G).

D.2. FIVE RED APPLES

Five red apples hanging on a tree
Five red apples hanging on a tree
But, if one red apple should accidentally fall
There'll be four red apples hanging on a tree.
(The same with four, three, two, one)

The students can memorize the lyrics while dropping the apples from a cardboard apple tree (they are held on with Velcro). We can also use the tree with other fruits from the story and adapt the song: five yellow/green pears, five purple plums or five orange oranges.

D.3. FRUIT DANCE

The children can dance to the rhythm of the music and follow the actions. After

freezing, one of the kids chooses a fruit and we do the fruit dance.

Lyrics: *Do the fruit dance*
Everybody jump and dance
Move your feet and stretch
your hands
- Freeze-
Apple! Do the apple dance

E. Arts and Crafts and Visual Support

Visual aids help the students to understand some of the situations. Young children learn by doing. Following instructions while making a craft can help them to remember the steps and the vocabulary in the target language. Arts and crafts activities should always have a linguistic purpose when used in the English class: storytelling, a mural, etc. After being used they can be hung on the classroom walls or brought home to be shared with the families.

E.1. MAKE A CATERPILLAR PUPPET
The students are asked to bring in a green sock. The teacher will provide a pipe cleaner and two googly eyes to each kid. The pipe cleaner will be used to make the caterpillar's antennae and the googly eyes will be stuck on as the caterpillar's eyes. The puppet can be used for the children's storytelling (A2).

E.2. MAKE THE PROPS FOR THE STORYTELLING
The teacher provides the students with templates for the fruits, the rest of the food, and the butterfly. Each template has a hole in the centre to allow the caterpillar puppet go through it. The props can be used for the children's storytelling (A2). (See the "Useful Websites with Resources" section for the templates.)

E.3. MAKE A MURAL OF THE STORY
The students work together to classify the food. They also measure and compare the caterpillars and then match each caterpillar's size to the correct day of the week.

F. VIDEO

Videos are a very useful resource for giving real linguistic patterns to the students. They should always be used when the students can understand what they are watching, towards the end of the unit. It is very important to take into account that they must be short (maximum 10 minutes), because preschool children are not able to concentrate on a video for a long time. (See the "Useful Websites with Resources" section.)

G. ROLE-PLAY

Role-playing might seem like a very difficult activity to practice with preschool children. In fact, it is not; it can be very useful if it is used it in a very simple way, just letting the children follow instructions while performing or through very short, simple dialogues. Young learners need to take part in the stories that have been told, taking the role of one of the characters in a story is very motivating. This activity takes place in the psychomotricity room. All the

students play the role of a caterpillar while following the teacher's instructions.
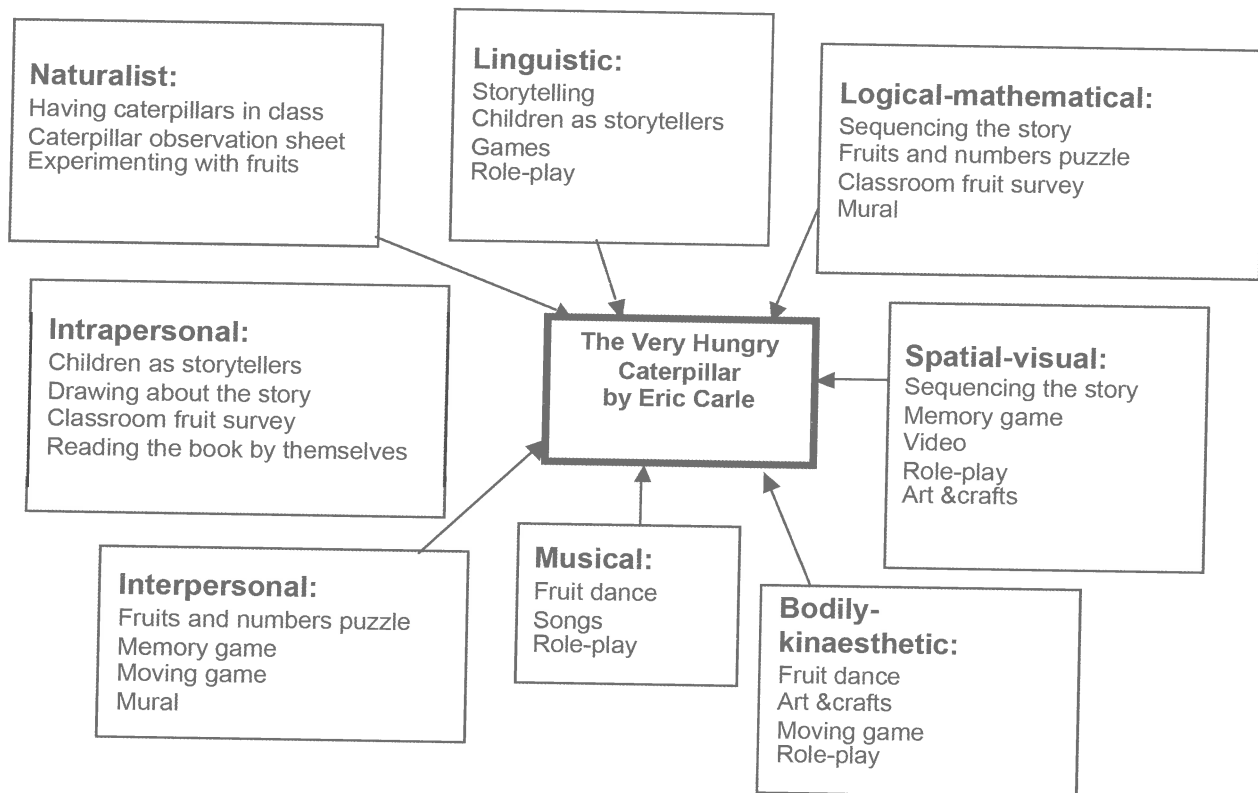

Sequencing the Activities

Once we have the activities, before implementing the unit, we set up a sequential plan. Since some of the activities, such as the storytelling, will be carried out more than once, we are going to sequence them according to the first time that they will be used.

> A1 - C1 - C2 - A4 - B2 - A5 - E1 - B3 - D1 - C3 - C4 - B1 - E2 - D2 - A3 - E3 - D3

TASKS RELATED TO EACH INTELLIGENCE

Naturalist:
Having caterpillars in class
Caterpillar observation sheet
Experimenting with fruits

Linguistic:
Storytelling
Children as storytellers
Games
Role-play

Logical-mathematical:
Sequencing the story
Fruits and numbers puzzle
Classroom fruit survey
Mural

Intrapersonal:
Children as storytellers
Drawing about the story
Classroom fruit survey
Reading the book by themselves

The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle

Spatial-visual:
Sequencing the story
Memory game
Video
Role-play
Art &crafts

Interpersonal:
Fruits and numbers puzzle
Memory game
Moving game
Mural

Musical:
Fruit dance
Songs
Role-play

Bodily-kinaesthetic:
Fruit dance
Art &crafts
Moving game
Role-play

Useful Websites with Resources

Fruit and number puzzle:
http://www.4shared.com/dir/12286592/ba97acbe/Very_hungry_caterpillar_number_puzzles.html

Fruit dance video:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NycPFlN_WAM

Role-play video:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=diNjG86rn9g&feature=player_embedded#

Storytelling video:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6PyUhxBMm0Y&feature=related

Templates props storytelling:
http://edtech.kennesaw.edu/traci/insects/food.htm

Templates pictures sequencing, memory, flashcards:
http://www.dltk-teach.com/books/hungrycaterpillar/index.htm

The Very Hungry Caterpillar video:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HpISHA8Fs4w&feature=related

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Vicky GASCH holds a Degree in Teacher Training (Foreign Language) and a Degree in Translation and Interpreting from the University of Vic. She started a PhD program at the same university and was doing research on Multiple Intelligences and Foreign Language Teaching to Very Young Learners. At present, she works in Escola Guillem de Mont-rodon, a State Primary School in Vic, where she has been teaching English to young learners for over thirteen years and she has coordinated a PELE (Pla Experimental de Llengües Estrangeres) to improve English Language Teaching in the preschool levels.

Let's Play with the Nutrition Function

By Ana Araceli Guarinos

"Teacher, may we bring our Christmas toys to play with in class?"

That is what my 14-year-old students asked me before the holidays, and then an idea occurred to me: *"Let's turn Christmas homework into a game and play it"*, I said.

Context

This activity was carried out in the Isaac Albéniz Secondary School in Badalona, as part of the Biology and Geology course for 3rd of E.S.O.

The school is located in a middle-class neighbourhood in the city. Most students are born in Badalona, the immigration rate being low.

Following the school's educational project, the students are grouped according to their learning speed. Groups showing a lower speed or those having an adapted curriculum present a lower student-teacher ratio, which makes individual attention possible. These groups are flexible and are checked at the end of the year so that they can be rearranged according to the evolution and the needs of the students.

We carried out this experience with the group showing a faster rate of learning. This group is composed of 31 students of a medium socio-economic level. Some of them study English in language schools. Among them, there is a student with curricular adaptation due to a Nonverbal Learning Disability (N.L.D.). The adaptation carried out is detailed in the "attention to diversity" section.

2. Aims

- To consolidate the contents of the subjects dealt with in class.
- To incorporate scientific vocabulary in English related to anatomy and human physiology.
- To promote teamwork.
- To promote co-evaluation among students.

3. Curriculum and programme

A brief explanation about the curriculum of the subject is needed in order to better understand the goals of this activity and its timing. The syllabus of Biology and Geology of 3rd of E.S.O. dedicates a high percentage of its total working time to Human Biology and only a small part of the curriculum to the study of Geology.

With the aim of providing a context to our activity, we are going to focus on Human Biology. All the systems of the human body that coordinate to carry out a vital function, such as nutrition, interaction and reproduction, are developed within this bloc of content. Therefore, when talking about nutrition, not only do we refer to the fact of choosing and ingesting food, but also to a much more complex process that allows us to obtain the energy that the body needs to work.

To clarify what the nutrition function is and the common theme for the activity that we propose, we shall briefly comment this process. In a first stage we transform food into nutrients; this task is performed by the circulatory system up to the cells and, once there, they combine with oxygen captured by the respiratory system to produce the energy that is necessary to work, go to the gym, read a book or write an article in English. Nevertheless, we cannot forget that a series of waste is generated through this process, which must be expelled from our organism by the excretory system.

NUTRITION FUNCTION
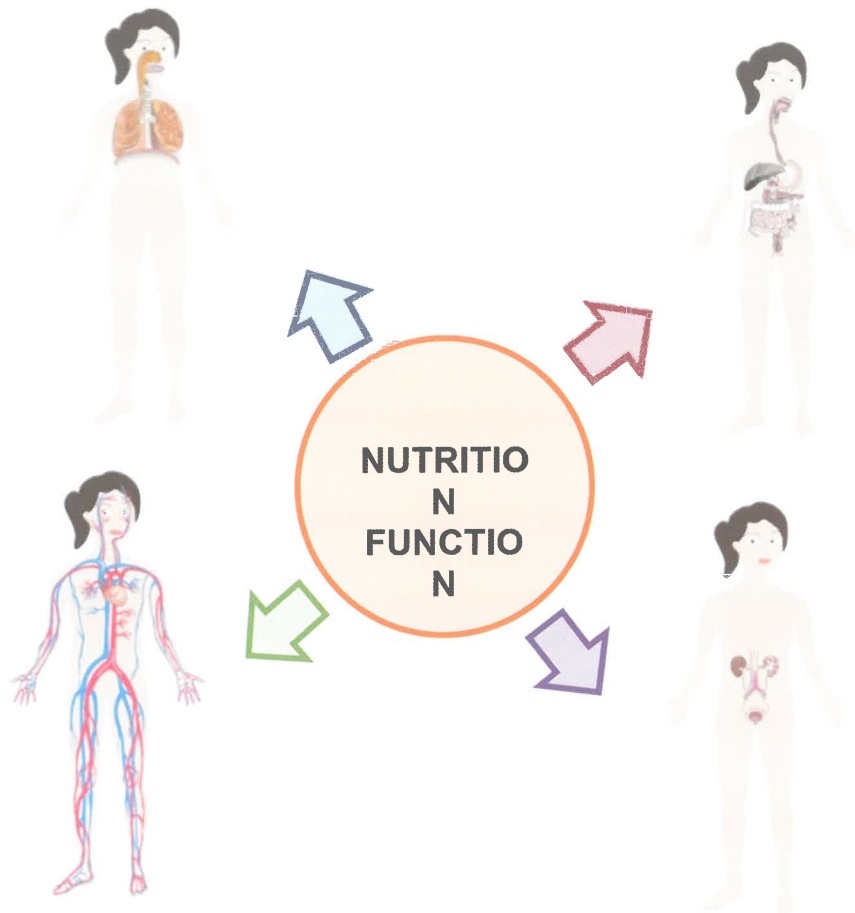
Explaining this content in more detail should take, according to our schedule, from the beginning of the course until the Christmas holidays. The subjects that will be the basis of our board game are:

· Nutrition and nourishment

· Respiration

· Blood and lymph circulation

· Excretion

3. Timing and methodology

As I commented in the last section, the contents related to the activity should have been explained in class from the beginning of the course and were evaluated through the appropriate tools (exams, notebook, laboratory…).

The work was showed to the students the week before Christmas holidays, as homework for those days off. Besides the explanation in class, all the instructions were written down on a worksheet that they could download from the Moodle platform of the school (read section 4).

4. Activity

Below, you will find the activity as it was given to the students.

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CHRISTMAS HOMEWORK
BIOLOGY AND GEOLOGY 3rd ESO

- **Aim:** Preparing a board game whose topic is the nutrition function.
  The idea is to prepare a game summarizing what we've learnt about the nutrition function and the systems that are related to it, and one you could really play.

- **3-4 person groups**

- **Guidelines**

- The board has to be the diagram of the circulation of the blood divided into squares.
- It has to be a question-and-answer game. The questions have to be related to the:

  DIGESTIVE SYSTEM
  RESPIRATORY SYSTEM
  CIRCULATORY SYSTEM
  EXCRETORY SYSTEM (you have to read the chapters from the book and formulate the questions)

 - You have to prepare a total of 40 questions, and the answers should be indicated too (you can use Trivial Pursuit cards as an example).
- You have to establish some written rules for your game.
- If any cards, counters or dice are needed, you will have to bring them too.
- The game has to be prepared in English (questions and answers, game rules, etc.)

</div>

5. Evaluation

This activity was evaluated twice since the students themselves evaluated their classmates' games (co-evaluation) and, moreover, they were all evaluated by the teacher.

Back from the holidays, the students handed the game in and a whole laboratory hour (during which the class was split into two) was devoted to playing.

During this session, the instructions given to the students were the following:

- They could not play their own game
- They had to switch games every 15 minutes

They had to do the evaluation of the games using a chart that was located next to each of them, and that had the same format as the following chart:

GAME NUMBER X	1	2	3	4	5
The game contains everything that is necessary to play					
Accuracy of questions and answers					
The rules of the game are clear and easy to understand					
The vocabulary and the use of English are correct					
Attractive presentation					
The game is fun					
Global evaluation.					

(Rate from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree) the following items.

Once these sessions were finished, the teacher did the evaluation following the next guideline:

GAME NUMBER X	1	2	3	4	5
Punctual delivery					
The game contains everything that is necessary to play.					
The game board was made following the instructions given in class.					
Conceptual accuracy of the questions and the answers.					
The rules of the game are clear and precise.					
The vocabulary in English is correct					
The use of English is correct					
Attractive design					
Evaluation from the students					

7. Attention to diversity

As was explained in the "timing" section, we had to deal with diversity given that there was a student suffering from Nonverbal Learning Disabilities (N.L.D.). The difficulty for this student do noy lie in his habits or his intellectual capacity (which are both very developed). His problems are related to his poor ability for hand-crafted activities, a consequence of a low level of development of his psychomotor activity, his problems in interacting with his classmates, and the ensuing difficulty in getting integrated in the class.

The adaptation made for him was simple. Differently from the others, he was allowed to work individually, he was not forced to do the work in a group, and the layout of his work was not taken into account.

This activity, carried out in groups of low learning rate, in Catalan, did not need a big adaptation. The only stage at which they need a higher degree of help is in designing the board. To remedy this, they have to copy a drawing of the blood circulation that is drawn on the blackboard, and that should be used as the base for their board. Since the activity is generally created by the students, they do it to the extent possible. So, the rules of the game or the questions designed are usually more basic but achieve the goals of the activity anyway.

8. Problems and improvements

PROBLEMS	SOLUTIONS
Although our schedule indicates that the syllabus related to this game should be taught before Christmas, the truth is that it was impossible for us to follow that completely, so we could not teach the last topic: excretion.	Students were asked to read the lesson as part of their homework (as can be read in the activity). In this way, apart from making the game, when the lesson was taught at the end of the holidays, we could make faster progress thanks to the previously acquired knowledge.
Students had to travel on holidays and couldn't work in groups.	They were given the possibility of working individually.
Wrong English vocabulary.	At the moment of implementing the activity it was not possible to coordinate with the English Department. However, doing it and getting cross-curricular work would provide the activity with richer contents and more significant learning.

7. Conclusions

Students never stop surprising you, especially in activities requiring a high level of creativity. It is not common to find teenagers passionately arguing about the number of cells contained in a lung alveolus or about whether plasma is the same thing as lymph or not. That is the reason why, when you watch them meeting around the games they have created, speaking in English, discussing and reviewing their scientific knowledge, you end up thinking that it is worth it to let them bring their Christmas toys in to play with.

The goals of the activity were totally achieved and in a fun and enjoyable way, so we achieved that thing we talk so often about but we seldom put into practice: learning through playing.

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foreign language teaching, not translation as professionals have always carried it out. Enns-Connoly (1986) describes how classes centred round the teacher's model: "Under those circumstances it was difficult for any student whose translation differed from the master version to gain confidence in their own work. When I volunteered a rendition that the teacher believed to be inaccurate, I hesitated to enter further discussion afterwards" (1986:2-3). Motivation and self-confidence — crucial for translating well — were, obviously, absent. This need not be the case at all if translation is understood as a communicative and team activity where the students can feel that their own work is appreciated and accepted.

The second point in common in the questionnaires referred to doubts concerning the following:

- ✓ misgivings for not following the principles of the Communicative Approach, which had shaped the teachers' professional training,
- ✓ misgivings for not being bilingual and, so, for not having sufficient command of the languages involved, and the biggest of all...
- ✓ misgivings because they feared that their students' progress would be hampered by interference problems and that they would never let go of their mother tongue.

As to confusion, it is worth a mention because many teachers took translation to be only "translating the odd word or grammatical form", or "using the mother tongue in the classroom", when there is much more to it than that, as we shall see.

The students' answers, on the other hand, provided the following percentages:

- a. Do you use translation as a strategy to learn a foreign language? 82% (usually)
- b. Do you use translation as a strategy

to learn new vocabulary? 98% (often, always)
- c. Do you use translation as a strategy to learn new grammatical forms? 94% (sometimes)
- d. Do you use translation as a strategy to understand a message in the foreign language? 55% (sometimes)

So, if translation is used significantly anyway, instead of rubber-stamping it as a painful and boring practice and keeping it secret and forbidden, why not make it surface and channel it in a positive and communicative way so that the classroom atmosphere becomes more relaxed and collaborative? It certainly looks like this is one of the issues worth exploring behind Guy Cook's words "... something is seriously wrong when a widespread practice is considered wrong" (2000).

I would like to take each of the teachers' misgivings above, refocus them and suggest activities to counteract their (apparently) negative connotations and, hopefully, throw some light on how translation can be presented and explored in a totally student-centred way. The activities I will propose can be carried out in most language combinations although, for practical reasons, I will be using mainly English/Spanish. First, though, we have to agree on what kind of translation we are talking about.

Translation as dynamic communication

A lot has been happening in what is now known as Translation Studies since the '80s and we have come a long way from considering translation as a one-to-one replacement of words between languages. In fact, it has mostly been considered as such by Grammar Translation followers, not by translation practitioners or scholars: even Cicero in his *De optime genere oratoria* as far back as 1 B.C. argued that translation should be *sensum de sensu* (sense-oriented)

Humanising Translation Activies: Tackling a Secret Practice[1]

By Maria González Davies

Introduction

We can ... make a binary, exclusive choice or we can use our sense of doubt to seek the truths which lie in apparently conflicting fields and incorporate them into a principled, varied and integrative teaching matrix (Simon Marshall, 2000)

Some years ago I sent out a questionnaire to EFL[2] teachers in different contexts: Primary, Secondary and Language Schools, to find out whether they included translation in their classes (16 answers). At the same time, I sent out another questionnaire to their students (115 answers). The global result? Teachers and students were working at cross-purposes as far as translation is concerned!

The teachers' answers reflected three things in common: a very traditional, teacher- and text-centred approach to translation, a certain amount of misgivings, and confusion. Let me explain:

There is no need to go into the well-known negative connotations of the Grammar Translation Method that made the practice of translation in the classroom similar to a "painful visit to the dentist" in Alan Duff's words. Translation was taught in a void and without considering the students' solutions at all — only the teacher's model translation was valid and classes usually consisted in the students reading translated sentences aloud one by one and in correcting them at the same time. This is really a false idea of translation made up for

change cultural references, word play and so on. A clear example is Xavier Bru de Sala's translation-adaptation of Gilbert and Sullivan's play *The Pirates of Penzance*, which he justifies in the hand programme. Some of the changes he has performed to bring the source text close to the target culture are:

Source text	Catalan translation (1997)
Penzance (England)	Costa Brava (Girona)
Victorian ladies	Catalan ladies who have studied at the "Dames Negres"
Bobbies	"Els Quatre i el Cabo" (Spanish Civil Guards)
Gilbert and Sullivan's music	Occasionally, notes of a Catalan *sardana* have been added to the original music

This is the area of truly creative translation, of re-creating the original text.

Misgivings for not following the principles of the Communicative Approach

Publicity, newspaper headlines and songs provide a rich source of ready-made material that can be taken to the classroom by the teacher and by the students, who can then pool them and choose the source texts they wish to translate. This they will have to do according to different degrees of fidelity that will depend basically on two things:

    a. the choice between keeping mainly the meaning or the effect of the source text;
    b. the translation assignment, i.e., who the translation is for.

The following are two examples used in a secondary school class of 14 year-olds in Barcelona (Satorres, 2000: 20-25):

    A. CLARKS shoes
    Source Text: Act your shoe size, not your age.
    Student's translation: *No importa tu edad, sólo tu número.*

Backtranslation: Your age doesn't matter, only your shoe size.

    B. BOURJOIS cosmetics
    Source Text: Are you taking a shine to me? High shine lip colour.
    Student's translation: *¿Te gusto? Tus labios siempre brillantes.*

Backtranslation: Do you like me? Your lips will always shine.

Isn't the above example a communicative activity that involves the students' imagination, self-confidence and thinking skills? Problem-spotting and -solving skills are put into practice as well as social and collaborative skills, first when they pool the ads, then when they discuss the problems and look for different solutions, and, finally, when they compare and discuss them in teams.

Here we can address the first of the teachers' misgivings directly, for we are talking about a real-life activity that requires flexibility, decision-making, assessing a social situation and accuracy. What's more, avoidance strategies that are sometimes used when writing a composition, for instance, cannot be used: the original message simply *has* to be conveyed.

In the questionnaires, quite a few teachers voiced the feeling that most of the above points, especially accuracy, have been left aside in the purest forms of the Communicative Approach (CA). More to the point, there seems to be a contradiction in an approach that supposedly favours

and not *verbum pro verbo* (word-oriented)! In Basil Hatim's and Ian Mason's words, translation is now mainly considered as "a dynamic process of communication" (1990: 52), *communication* being the key word here. Any translator knows that to communicate an L1 message in an L2 faithfully, one has to be flexible, e.g. "Wet Paint!" is not *Pintura Mojada* in Spanish, but *Recién pintado* (literally, "recently painted") and so on.

Different texts require different degrees of fidelity depending on their purpose and on who will be reading them. A technical text translated for a specialised journal requires a different approach from the translation of a joke, a poem or an ad. In the first case, the translation will probably follow the source text very closely using what Hervey et al. (1995 — see Haywood et al. (2009) in References section for bibliographic information) call a balanced translation (see below). In the second, the effect on the reader matters more than the actual words or the syntactic layout — the translator will probably opt for an idiomatic or a free translation. To illustrate this point, let's see what happened to the following text written to attract business to Barcelona in the year of the Olympic Games (1992).

> Source text: *Barcelona se escribe con 'B' de Beneficio* (literally, "Barcelona is written with a 'B' for Benefit").

> Translation in *The European* (4-6/X/91): "Barcelona: it's spelt with 'B' for Business".

There are no changes in the message that has to be conveyed, that is, in *what* has to be said, or in *who* it is addressed to, but there have been changes in how it has been rendered for lexical and pragmatic reasons — is this being "unfaithful" to the original text or, on the contrary, has the translator been more faithful by (apparently) moving away from the original words and syntax?

This is the kind of activity that gives the students a chance to use their creativity to the full, as this kind of text has to be translated idiomatically or in a free way (see below).

Let's take a look at the cline proposed by Hervey et al. (1995: 13-14) which helps clarify ideas and answer the well-known question put by the students to teachers who use translation activities: "How close should I be to the source text?" It depends, as we can see (González Davies 2000: 27-29):

> Source language bias
> Interlineal - Literal - Faithful
> Target language bias
> Balanced - Idiomatic – Free

Interlineal translation is useful to understand how a language works syntactically, for example, but not to produce fluent texts: A horse of a different colour — *Un caballo de un distinto color.*

Literal translation moves a step further towards the target language and is "correct" syntactically but can produce calques, for instance: A horse of a different colour — *Un caballo de otro color.*

Faithful translation is more fluent but still neutral and follows the source text meaning closely: A horse of a different colour — *Esto es diferente.*

Balanced translation tries to convey a similar effect on the reader of the target text: A horse of a different colour — *Este es otro tema.*

Idiomatic translation conveys a similar effect on the reader of the target text and can imply changing the words or syntax of the source text: A horse of a different colour — *Harina de otro costal.*

Free translation emphasises the effect without changing the message, but can

other student who has to write it down in English. In a final brainstorming session the sources are written on the blackboard so that all the students benefit from each other's research.

Sample:
... the computer and ... the power. ... the monitor, the console, and the speakers. Wait for the computer to ... . If necessary, ... your password.

Key: plug in (*enchufa*), turn on (*enciende*), switch on (*enciende*), start up (arranque), type in (*teclea*).

Misgivings for not being bilingual and, so, for not having sufficient command of the languages involved

Everyday professional practice and the fact that academic research is not conclusive suggest that not all bilinguals are competent translators and that not all competent translators are bilingual, thus underscoring the idea that translation requires other skills besides language acquisition. The activities presented up to now do not require a native level in any of the languages involved. In fact, the texts in most coursebooks can be used to implement most of them as well as authentic material to be found outside the classroom: It is a question of pitching the level according to the needs of the moment.

Besides, with translation we are empowering the student: the teacher need not have all the answers. If we work in a monolingual or bilingual community, the teacher and the students will share a common ground against which the students' work can be assessed clearly. In a multilingual setting, the teacher and the students can learn even more from each other's way of shaping their language and their world. The students can discuss and give options that can be as valid as those of the teachers or as those used by professional translators, and other languages besides those usually dealt with can be explored. Their self-confidence is encouraged and their intrapersonal intelligence can grow as they apply self and peer monitoring skills.

An activity that consists in editing published howlers is always popular and will develop accuracy as well as flexibility. Journalism, menus, tourist leaflets, dubbed or subtitled films, etc., are rich material sources. There is no need to be bilingual to spot the problem and solve it. Let's take a look at these examples taken from a task to learn about food and drink (the following are the worksheets for the students):

A. WHAT'S COOKING? Look at the two columns and decide what has happened. Why wouldn't the translations in the second column be acceptable? Can you think of more adequate translations? Work in pairs and, when you've finished, in groups of four.

Source text	(Mis)translation
Sandwich vegetal	Vegetal sandwich
Coca de tomate	Tomato cook
Ensaladilla rusa	Kind of salad with mayonnaise sauce
Plato de la casa	Plate of the home

Suggested key: Egg & mayonnaise sandwich; Bread with tomato, Catalan style; Potato and tuna salad / Russian Salad; Chef's speciality

B. THINKING SKILLS. TRANSLATION STRATEGIES. Now look at these translations. Can you make a list of strategies that have been used and will help you if you ever have to translate a text on food and drink again? Work with a partner and add other strategies to your list by sharing your information.

using the students' prior knowledge to help build on their language and communication skills but then leaves aside what could be considered the most solid and far-reaching store of learning they take with them to class: their mother tongue! There seems to be a point in calling into question certain principles behind the CA. This does not mean that the CA has not been a positive innovation in TEFL. This is not a call for a comeback of the Grammar Translation Method at all. The suggestion here is that translation activities can be included in the EFL class only when relevant to add or boost values and skills such as those mentioned above and also to cater for students who prefer more reflective activities, who favour self and peer monitoring and who may wish to become translators or interpreters in the future. Some examples:

A. TOURIST LEAFLETS. THE UNDER-GROUND IN BARCELONA. This activity allows for a range of possible translations by the students, all of which can be accepted as long as the source message has been kept and the language is correct.

a. The students compare a first source text and its corresponding published translation and comment on any problems or disagreements they may have, justifying them and — if they choose to do so — trying to give a better translation than the published one before criticising it! By observing — but not blindly accepting — the experts' work, they can learn to develop their own options.

b. The students then translate a second source text from English into their mother tongue and compare their work with that of other students and the published version, giving their opinion and changing their text — or not — depending on whether they can justify their own translation.

c. Finally, they translate a third source text

into English and follow the same procedure as in (b) above to self and peer assess it.

> Sample:
> Source text: *Es mejor que no guardes la cartera en los bolsillos traseros de los pantalones, sino en los delanteros.*
>
> Published translation:
> It is better to carry your wallet in your front pocket than in a back pocket.

B. ACCURATE PHRASAL VERBS. In this activity for 14 year-olds, translation is carried out to encourage collaboration, thinking and resourcing skills, and as another tool to help memorise what is one of the most difficult areas for most foreign language learners. It can be carried out in three parts (adapted from Closa 2000: 16-19):

a. The students sit in pairs and receive a worksheet with a gapped text on using a computer (see below for sample). Next to the text there is a list of phrasal verbs that can be used to explain how it works: plug in, turn on, switch on, start up, type in... The text will have been divided in half so that each student has half the phrasal verbs that fit his or her text and the other student has the other half.

b. Each student uses as many sources as necessary to fill in his or her text with the corresponding TRANSLATED phrasal verb. The students in each pair pool the most useful sources they have found. Once they have filled in their part of the text, they switch texts and carry out a reading activity in which they read out the text to each other, and translate the phrasal verb orally back into English when they come across it.

c. Finally, to consolidate the previous activity, they both get the complete gapped text and each student has to dictate the phrasal verb in their mother tongue to the

A. COLLOCATIONS. In pairs, look for the incorrect collocation and then think of others. Are there any exact correspondences in your own language? How would you translate those that do not correspond?

Now you prepare similar word stars with correct/incorrect collocations to give to another pair of students to solve. You may use any sources you like.

B. FALSE FRIENDS. NOUGHTS AND CROSSES. In pairs, play noughts and crosses and give the adequate translation of the words in the grid.

Tramp	Conference	Career
Dramatically	To forge	Library
Demonstration	Physician	Eventually

Now you prepare a similar grid with false friends to give to another pair of students who are working together. They will also give you a grid that they have prepared. You may look at your notes, dictionary or any other sources you like.

Key: *FALSE FRIENDS (possible interferences)*

Trampa	*Conferencia*	*Carrera*
Dramáticamente	*Forjar*	*Librería*
Demostración	*Físico*	*Eventualmente*

Key: (correct translation)

Vagabundo	*Congreso*	*Vida profesional*
Drásticamente	*Falsificar*	*Biblioteca*
Manifestación	*Médico*	*Finalmente*

C. BILINGUAL TEXTS. MENTAL AGILITY. REVISION. In this activity, the students read a text in which two languages alternate at random or with a specific purpose such as revising verb tenses or words belonging to a certain semantic field. They have to read it at normal reading speed if possible. Once again, texts that they already know from their textbooks or readers can be used and the students can prepare "bilingual texts" for each other once they understand how the activity works.

Worksheet: In pairs, take turns reading the following text. Read each part in a different language from that in which it has been written and as close to a natural reading speed as possible.

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

When Mrs Griffiths had left the room Gwyn lifted la bufanda del cajón and pressed it to his face. The scent of roses todavía era fuerte. Bethan seemed very near. How good she had looked con su bufanda amarilla, con su pelo oscuro and her red mac, all bright and resplandeciente. He remembered now; llevaba la bufanda that night; the night she had climbed the mountain para no volver. Why had Nan kept it secret all this time, and given it to him now, en su cumpleaños?

Complete source text:

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

Original name of recipe	Names of recipes (Torres: 1987)	Translation Strategies used
Pan con tomate	Bread with tomato, Catalan style	description of ingredients + ... style
Pollo escabechado	Chicken marinated in vinegar and wine, spices and herbs	cooking process + ingredients
Queimada	Witch's Brew	coinage of a new term
Sangría	Red wine and fruit punch	main ingredients + name of a similar drink in target culture

The teacher can expand on the previous strategies and techniques with others that can be spotted in other recipes and menus well translated by experts. The following list can be useful:

USUAL TRANSLATION STRATEGIES FOR FOOD AND DRINK. Translate literally when possible; describe the ingredients; describe the cooking process; keep the original word in italics if totally unknown to the intended readers and follow with either strategy 2 or 3; keep the original word with no other explanation if probably known by intended readers (e.g. an alternative translation of *sangría*); make up a new word; any of the above followed by *X style*; be careful with dishes which have kept their name but mean something completely different (e.g. Spanish *pudin* is definitely not English *pudding*!)

Finally, ask your students to translate a text or recipe that includes the previous.

MENTAL AGILITY. REVERSE DICTATION. Use your reading texts in a different way by dictating them so that the students take them down *in a different language* from the original. This can be done from English into their mother tongue or vice versa. The level of difficulty will be set by the text; if you use texts they have already seen and worked with, this popular activity can be used as a revision as well. In this activity developing thinking skills is the priority, and accuracy can be practised by asking the students to "polish" their text for homework or in the following class. If the level is adequate, they can dictate the text to each other to improve their reading aloud skills, thus shifting the centre of attention away from the teacher.

Misgivings that the students' progress will be hampered by interference problems and that they will never let go of their mother tongue

According to the answers in the questionnaire, most teachers seem to think that, if translation is used, their students will never be free of interference between their native and their foreign tongue: false friends, syntactic calques, etc. If this were true, why is it that — usually — the more languages one has learnt, the easier it becomes to learn another? Observation also seems to confirm that bilinguals are more efficient foreign language learners than most monolinguals in spite of inevitable code-switching and a certain degree of interference which does not hinder understanding significantly. Moreover, research in psychology and neurology as well as everyday practice seem to show that to avoid falling into the same trap twice, one should have faced it at least once! If translation happens anyway, why not face the problem and design activities to raise awareness of interference and, so, decrease its frequency? Some suggestions:

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(Endnotes)

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[2] From now on, EAL (English as an Additional Language) to follow more recent research and good practices. This implies that the learners operate in classrooms that are plurilingual spaces where they have more than one language at their disposal. Thus, interlinguistic connections can be established and identities recognized far from strict compartmentalisations. These connections, however, should be informed as, for instance, in the TOLC Approach (Translating for Other Learning Contexts) (González Davies 2014).

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CONTRIBUTIONS

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

Confusion... and Conclusion

It should be made clear that, although they may have their uses too, here we are not talking only about using the mother tongue or translating the odd word that the students do not understand. Also, we are not talking about translation as a one-to-one static correspondence between languages but as a dynamic communicative activity that can be practised with everyday texts, not necessarily only with high-brow literature. So, either authentic or graded material on translation can be prepared, each of which can be used according to the needs of the learners at different moments.

It should also be made clear that we are not talking about going back to the Grammar Translation Method but about using translation as one other activity that can be exploited fruitfully in the foreign language class for different reasons. Therefore, it is not a question of memorising translated vocabulary lists or of including an error analysis and an exam-oriented activity but of situating vocabulary in context and becoming aware of the importance of the pragmatic aspects of a language and a culture. At the same time as the students learn to spot and solve problems in different ways and to accept other possibilities, they go through a decision-making process and move toward choices that can be justified and are creative. This will also raise awareness of different ways of thinking about reality and expressing it and, in multicultural settings, will help include students with different mother tongues in the group and contribute actively and relevantly to the learning process. As Jane Arnold has written: "What is important is to take a broader perspective on the learning process, using more tools at our command in order to maximize language learning" (2000).

Moreover, it favours both individual and team work, catering for both the more reflective students and for those who prefer working with others. Far from the passive teacher-centred approach of the Grammar Translation Method, translation can be included in EFL classes following a real student-centred approach: it can favour self and peer monitoring since, when the class participants share the same language(s) and can check their answers and opinions against a clear, concrete piece of writing, they do not depend only on the teacher's or the textbook author's opinion and can develop their own reflective intelligence.

I would like to end with an extract from an online chat on the topic of the use of L1 in the classroom that indicates that the misgivings and confusion visible in the questionnaires are really out there but that, fortunately, they are now being voiced and explored (A.P.A.C. of News, 2001: 22):

> *Mario Rinvolucri*: In the '70s, when I was a virtuous no-language-1 teacher, I tried to mime the word 'although'. Can you guess what it looked like? It is clearly more efficient to slip in a quietly voiced translation into L1.
>
> *Michael Martin*: When I translate, the students understand almost immediately, with a low % of usage mistakes. Shall we keep on avoiding the use of L1?
>
> *Mario Rinvolucri*: I can't see why.

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Families and Public Education:
the multiple impacts of participation

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By Annie Kidder

Families have a key role to play in their children's education, and most policy-makers have come to recognize the importance of parents' role not only with their own children, but in the education system as a whole. Many schools now have some form of parent advisory body and many departments of education recognize that it is vital to both communicate with and consult parents.

But families' participation can and should go far beyond the education of their own children – it is vital for healthy public policy that families also participate as citizens. Many people appear to think that public policy is something over which they have little influence; that it is a mysterious complex "thing" developed by people working in the bowels of government buildings. But when families participate in public debate, when they let their "voices" be heard, they can have a tremendous impact.

It is important to recognize – on the other hand – that parent advocacy is a complicated beast. And just as it is impossible to discuss "parents" as if they were a single, like-minded entity (despite people's predilection for saying things such as "parents think" or "parents want"), it is impossible to talk about "parent advocacy" as if it falls neatly into a single category.

1. Parents having high (but reasonable) expectations of their children

   ☐ A series of systematic review articles found high parental expectations (followed by reading with children and talking about school) had the greatest impact on student achievement (Jeynes, 2003, 2005, 2007). When parents consistently communicate their belief in their children's potential and communicate that they expect them to be able to succeed academically, students do better.

2. Parents talking with their children, particularly about school

   ☐ A major study of 25,000 U.S. schoolchildren showed "home discussion"—parents talking with children about school activities and programs—had a greater impact on academic achievement than a wide range of other parent actions. Simply talking with kids about school was shown to have more of an effect than contact between parents and the school and parental volunteering. Talking also had more of an impact than various forms of parental "supervision," such as monitoring kids' homework, parents being at home after school, or limiting TV time or the time students were allowed to go out during the week (Ho & Willms, 1996).

   ☐ The same study also provides evidence that confronts stereotypes that some racial groups, or working class families, place less emphasis on schooling or think that education is the school's responsibility (see also Henderson & Mapp, 2002 for similar findings). This finding underscores the importance of education policy that focuses on supporting home-based discussion because it is more likely to be useful to *all* parents, rather than only those parents who choose to be involved at school. A focus on school-based involvement may reach only a select minority of parents. In fact, focusing on parents' participation with their children *at home* may begin to help address the current 'achievement gap' between high-, and low-performing students, which is often related to socio-economic status and race.

3. Parents helping their children develop positive attitudes towards learning and strong work habits

   ☐ As children grow older, many of the factors that *directly* affect achievement are out of parents' control. Like it or not, parents can't teach children everything they need to know or make sure students decide to apply those skills when called upon. Parents' most critical influence on school success is found in how they shape children's attitudes, their sense of personal competence, and work habits including persistence, seeking help, and planning (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornsbusch & Darling).

   ☐ This means that rather than trying to directly "teach" their children, the more important work of parents can be found in helping kids handle distractions, negotiating crises of confidence, praise for effort and persistence or constructively handling conflict while being positive

Parent involvement for student success

There is thirty years of research showing that parents' involvement in their children's education has a significant impact on children's academic and developmental goals (Epstein, 2001; Nye, Turner & Schwartz, 2006). But *how* parents are involved matters — and the involvement that makes the biggest difference to students' chances for success in school isn't what many would expect.

There is also significant research – and People for Education's hands-on experience – which shows that parents and families can play a vital role in the public realm of education, including governance, policy advocacy and influence through the media.

But let's start at the beginning

Two basic categories of parent involvement

Researchers divide parent involvement into two basic categories:

- ☐ **Home-based activities and attitudes,** such as having high expectations, talking together about school, building work habits and a positive approach to learning, or reading together.

- ☐ **School-based activities,** such as communicating with teachers, attending meetings about a child, volunteering in the classroom or school council work.

A review of the research shows that it is the home-based activities and attitudes that are more closely linked to students' academic achievement, but even then, it is the *kind* of home-based activities that matters most. School- or system-based involvement, on the other hand, offers important opportunities for community-building, decision-making, communication and building social networks and a stronger

constituency for public education (see e.g. Epstein, 1995).

Home-based activities

While it is tempting to focus all of our attention on the parent involvement we can *see,* it is vital that we do more to bridge the divide between family and home in order to get important messages to parents where they are. The majority of parents are not involved at their children's schools, or in the education system in a visible way; they are at home, trying to figure out the most effective ways to bring up their children and to ensure that they are successful at school.

The experts agree that schools need to be more effective in their communications with parents about the importance of their participation with their children's education at home. Ho and Willms conclude that "relatively few schools have strong influences on the learning climate in the home. We expect that big gains in achievement could be realized through programs that give parents concrete information about parenting styles, teaching methods, and school curricula" (1996, p.138).

The job then, of the system, or of the groups who are engaged at the school level, is to figure out more effective ways of communicating with parents at home. And the messages they could and should be communicating are about the wealth of research showing that there are concrete, proven effective, ways that parents can help their children succeed at school.

What follows are results from numerous international studies involving many thousands of students.

It's not about homework

More important than limiting TV time, or even monitoring homework, there are four things that lead the pack when it comes to making a difference:

activities with their children. Invitations from teachers are particularly important for parents who are less confident in their ability to help their children in the school system, and for older children where parents may not realize they have a role to play.

Two-way communication

Direct communication, seeking information from parents about what they want and need for their child's success, helps build strong school-family connections. A shared understanding about what the child will learn this year and how their learning will be assessed helps parents support their children and helps maintain communication all year (Patel, Corter & Pelletier, 2008).

Effective outreach also makes a difference in school-wide achievement. Schools that actively tackle challenges such as communicating with parents who cannot make it into the school, or who speak different languages, have better overall achievement (Sheldon, 2003). It means educators on the front line, need to look for a menu of different ways of communicating with and hearing from parents (Mapp & Hong, 2010).

Careful policy work is required to make help home-based parent participation in education visible and make it "count" for teachers and principals (e.g., Flessa, 2008), and programs and interventions work best when they include strategies that respect the needs of families and **address barriers to involvement such as childcare, transportation, and scheduling conflicts. Furthermore, for culturally diverse families, programs that recognize, respect, and address cultural and class differences are more effective. Programs that are reflective in this way, invite more parental participation** (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

While it is vital that we build capacity in our schools to support parents' participation where it has the most direct effect – it is important to acknowledge that parents have many other roles that they can play i n education.

They can be on councils at the school, they can help build connections between the school and the community, they can speak out about education policy and they can be directly involved in governance. All of these forms of parent involvement can have multiple impacts.

The pros and cons of parent advocacy

Parent advocates seem, for the most part, to be born from three distinct impetuses: a desire to fix something for one's own child; anger about a new policy being imposed; or a group drive to create a new service or program. The greatest motivator of parent advocacy is nearly always a "problem."

And just as it is impossible to relegate all forms of advocacy into one category, it is vital to remember that the capacity to advocate or to participate in governance is not distributed equally among all families. Advocacy often requires a great deal of social capital along with an ability to know how to "work the system." In Canada, for example, it is much easier for an English-speaking parent to advocate for his or her child, and a great deal easier for an English-speaking, university educated, middle- or upper-middle class parent who went to school in Canada to advocate. Doors open to those with the social capital to open them.

For these reasons it is essential that education systems maintain a balance – between truly listening to and supporting parents and families, and ensuring that underlying all decisions is a foundation of both equity and evidence.

There is an institutional conundrum about parents' advocacy as well. On the one hand much education policy encourages parent involvement, and parents are often asked to be partners in their children's education by doing things like communicating with

about school as a whole. Bit by bit, this effort builds a solid foundation for success.

4. Parents reading to or with their children

- Reading is one of the main foundations of all education. And parents' can make a major difference by reading and talking about books and stories with their children.

- While the letter-sound correspondence that children learn at school is vital, the motivation, comprehension and strong oral language skills children develop through conversation and reading together with their parents creates the crucial foundations for successful literacy in primary years and beyond (RAND Reading Study Group, 2002; Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998).

- Reading and talking in a child's home language builds these skills as effectively as reading and talking in the language of the school (August & Hakuta, 1997).

On reading these findings, the president of the Ontario Principals' Council said, "Oh, you're saying there is too much parenting at school, and too much teaching at home." The answer to that is yes. Schools cannot expect parents to be their children's academic instructors, but they can and should communicate with parents about effective strategies that have been shown to have the most positive impact on student success.

So the first, most vital message is that parents need support and information – at home – so that they can be involved in the way that matters most for their children's long-term success.

The good news is that school practices can make a difference, but it's less about *programs* and more about communication, collaboration and building relationships (Mattingly et al., 2002).

Building relationships and trust

There is a strong body of research showing that there are some core elements that create effective working relationships with parents. And those relationships do have a positive impact on students. Collaborative relationships with teachers and others at the school are linked to improved attendance, better student engagement, more positive relationships (Harris & Goodall, 2007).

Achievement improves, when communication *builds trust* between teachers, students and parents (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Trust and communication make it easier for kids to move between home and school with a positive attitude about both, which supports resilience and achievement (Pianta & Walsh, 1996).

But for those collaborative relationships to be established effectively and be relevant for *all* parents, schools – including the administration, teachers and the parents who are involved at the school level – must take the lead.

Invitations

Many factors that affect parents' decisions to participate more in their children's schooling are within control of the school. Parents need to be invited—both in general and specific ways. Those invitations can come directly from the teachers or the school, from the recognized parent body at the school or indirectly through the students.

A general invitation comes by creating an inviting school climate, and through teachers' welcoming, facilitative attitude. Specific invitations include communications from teachers that suggest parents get involved in particular

working with the media – which is often where advocacy efforts are won or lost. The story got play across the country, and the board eventually reversed its decision. In similar ways parent advocates have at various times pushed back against cuts to programs viewed as outside the "core" such as music and arts programs, outdoor education programs and resources to support community schools.

Sometimes the advocacy goes beyond fighting for one program or service. A number of states in the U.S. have instituted "Parent-Trigger" laws, which give parents in a so-called failing school the right to close the school, convert it to a charter school, fire the principal and half the staff, or demand new programs. Former California State Senator Gloria Romero, co-author of California's recently passed Parent-Trigger law, says, "We want not just parental involvement, we want true power."

Over the years, calls for more "parent power" has led to many positive changes in education, including funding for local school councils, schools with staff dedicated to working with parents and the inclusion of parents at many government policy tables.

But parent power can also lead to problems. Some of the things that parents want may not be backed up by evidence. For example, it is hard to be sure if or why schools in California are failing, but there is no evidence that turning them into charter schools or firing the principal is going to help. Calls for class size caps raise similar issues. It instinctively seems like a good idea, but capping class sizes is very expensive and many studies have shown that it is not the "magic bullet" some expect it to be (Bascia, 2010)

Perhaps the question we need to be asking ourselves now is how can we balance parents' knowledge, with the expertise of researchers and educators? And how can we build a system that operates on mutual respect, with the various players recognizing what each other brings to the table.

I will start by explaining a little bit about the organization I run.

The history of one Canadian education advocacy organization

People for Education is an organization based in Ontario, Canada. Our main activities are advocacy and research. Our advocacy is evidence-based, and over the last 17 years we have become a very strong voice for public education in Ontario and Canada.

The organization was founded by a group of parents in 1996. We started at a time in Ontario when there was an atmosphere of division and polarization in the education system. Teachers were fighting with the provincial government; the provincial government was fighting with school boards; and parents were caught in the middle. It was hard for parents to find objective information about what was going on, because all sides in the debate were saying that they were "putting children first."

We decided there needed to be someone providing information that parents could trust; information that was as objective as we could make it, that was in plain language, and that was based in evidence.

At the time, there were substantial changes being made to the education system, including cuts to funding. In order to keep track of the effects of all of the policy and funding changes, we developed a survey that goes to all of the province's 5000 publicly funded schools. Data from the survey allows us to report each year on the state of resources and programs in schools.

The survey is, in part, an engagement strategy in that it helps parents and the general public understand that policy eventually has an impact, and that, with evidence to support them, parents and

the teacher, fundraising and volunteering at school. But schools sometimes have a hard time with the sense of entitlement or strengthened capacity to advocate that comes from that involvement. Once parents are more involved in a school, they may want more "say" about what goes on – either for their own children or in the school as a whole. In this way, parents and families are often viewed by the "system" as both a blessing and a curse.

Parent advocacy isn't only a complex issue because it's difficult to manage. Reforms instigated by parents can sometimes result in changes that entrench greater inequity in the system (it's hard to keep equity in mind when you really want something for your own child), or in changes that are based on more on political popularity than strong evidence (caps on class sizes come to mind).

Special education is perhaps the most common instigator of individual parent advocacy. Discovering one's child may have special needs, or having a child start school who has already been identified through the health care system, can be the beginning of a long training ground in effective advocacy techniques. Many parents find themselves becoming experts in the complex world of exceptionalities, accommodations and appropriate support. At the same time, parents can find themselves up against a system that may be patronizing in its reaction to parents' concerns, dismissive of parents' knowledge or simply unable, because of financial constraints, to provide the requested program or support. This is where knowing how to "work the system" comes into play.

When People for Education compared school-by-school data from our annual surveys with demographic data from Ontario's Ministry of Education, results showed that in schools with a high proportion of students living below the low-income cut-off (approximately $30,000 for a family of four), students are more likely to be on special education waiting lists and less likely to be receiving appropriate special education supports. We think that these **differences in access and support may be at least in part caused by** differences in parents' capacity to engage in the advocacy necessary to ensure students are getting the help they need.

Systematic recognition of the importance of parent advocacy in special education, and systematic support to assist the parent advocates who need it, would go a long way to making access to special education services more equitable.

While special education is often the impetus for *individual* advocacy, broader programs (in Canada, French Immersion for example) are more likely to lead to some form of *collective* advocacy. In these cases, when the advocacy is for a program, parent advocates can have a great deal of strength, but that strength is dependent, at least in part, on parents' capacity to understand complex points of influence, engage the media in their cause, and identify themselves as voters.

Funding decisions bring up similar difficulties. Across Canada schools are closing because of declining enrolment. For parents, there is little that is as upsetting as facing the closure of your child's school. So parents fight. They lobby, they form advocacy groups, they hire demographers and they protest.

Education policy and goals also has an impact on what is funded. This can, at times, lead to decisions to cut or reduce certain - which can lead to other forms of parent advocacy. In Ontario recently one school board decided to lay off the staff in all its school libraries and move the books from the libraries into classrooms. The board insisted it wasn't closing the libraries, simply "re-purposing them". Parents felt differently. They, along with many students from the board, launched a loud and effective public campaign, and they appealed to the Minister of Education to intervene. These particular parent advocates understood the importance of

school communities have the capacity of having a reciprocal effect on policy.

None of the individuals who work at People for Education are educators – we're former lawyers, real estate agents, accountants, designers, business women, academics, editors, and students. Since our beginnings as parent activists in the mid 90s, we've matured as an organization, so that now we occupy a unique position on the educational landscape. We are equally at home in the land of parents, of academics, educators and policy makers. In fact, we often act as a bridge between all those worlds.

Working for civic engagement

Our goal is to engage the public in conversations about education, with a hope that it will help all of us be better advocates – for our own children, for our schools, for our school boards and for the public education system itself.

important sense of belonging in their children's schools? What is the definition of education? What do we want from our schools? What should our schools look like if they are to meet the needs of the 21st century?

Measuring what matters

Currently, at People for Education, we think there is an overarching issue to be addressed in education. And we see this as an issue that affects all aspects of our education policy.

It has an impact on public education systems' capacity to overcome intergenerational cycles of poverty and class; it affects students' chances for long-term success; it influences system capacity to work in an integrated way to support good overall outcomes for children and youth, and it affects funding and policy choices.

We think there is an overarching question

People for Education – Areas of Activity			
Parent Support and Community Development	**Research**	**Communications**	**Policy**
• Multi-lingual tip sheets for parents • Annual conference • Parent support phone line • Parent support in the online community • Research on parent involvement • Parent involvement manual	• Annual survey of schools and of school councils • Annual report (audit of Ontario's public education system) • Research projects with universities • Subject specific reports (northern schools, urban schools, the arts, high school streaming, etc.)	• Newsletter to all schools in the province • Extensive social media presence • Media outreach • Website and online community (approximately 16,000 unique visits per month) • Public speaking • e-newsletter (13,000 individuals)	• Sit at provincial policy tables • Cooperate on other public policy (e.g., all-day early learning; libraries and reading; poverty strategies, etc.) • Develop policy recommendations through research and in cooperation with other individuals and organizations

While we all cared individually about what goes on *inside* schools, as an organization our focus is more on the *outside* – how do our education policies ensure every child has an equitable chance for success? How are our education policies linked to other facets of public policy? How can we ensure that all families feel that all-

that all of us should be asking:"Are we providing students with the complete education they need for long-term success?"

Right now, we have no real way of answering that question.

Over the last two or three decades we

have seen a growing global movement to measure and compare success in education. That movement has led to many important international discussions, but it may also have led to a narrowing of the very definition of education itself.

Scores in reading, writing and math are now used to analyze success and failure of whole systems. While it goes without saying that literacy and numeracy are vital foundational skills, there is a glaring lack of information regarding systems' success in other areas. This leaves large gaps in our understanding of how well schools and systems are meeting the broader needs of students and the expectations of parents, policy-makers and the public.

We know, for the most part, how students are doing in terms of their literacy and numeracy scores, but the evidence is clear that, to prosper in the 21st century, students are going to need much more than the three Rs.

Our students need to have the ability to think creatively and to innovate. They need to be mentally and physically healthy and have the social, emotional, and citizenship skills necessary to thrive in today's – and tomorrow's – complex world. And the research is clear that when students attend schools where there is a focus on positive relationships, where there is effective communication between the school and families and where the school has strong links to its community, students are more successful. But we are currently, limited in our capacity to judge whether our schools are providing students with the skills, competencies and supports they need to prosper.

People for Education – working with experts from across Canada and internationally – is embarking on a five-year initiative to broaden the definition of school success by expanding the indicators we use to measure it.

Up to now, no one has tried to develop an easy-to-understand set of indicators that reflect broad educational goals, and that

answer the question "are we providing students with the education they need for long-term success?"

Working with teachers, parents, principals, school boards, member of the business and labour communities, representatives of provincial government and subject matter experts, we will develop a "suite" of measures that will include things such as creative expression, health, citizenship and school climate.

Our goal is to ensure that our next generation will be the engaged citizens, the innovators and collaborators our societies need to meet the challenges ahead.

The potential impact of families on education policy, on equity and on student success

It is clear from the research and from experience, that families can and do have an impact on students' chances for success and on the education system as a whole.

It is also clear that these roles and interactions can take many forms.

In our discussions about family involvement it is vital that we keep this multiplicity in mind. Parents come from many different "places," both literally and figuratively. They have an enormous range of opinions about how things should work; they have a wide range of political perspectives; and they operate in an equally wide spectrum, in part based on socio-economic status, of capacity for impact.

The politics of education is complex – but it is important to recognize the hard fact that politics plays a significant role in education policy and decision-making. It may be equally important to recognize that many parents, families and school communities may not fully understand the potential power they hold.

Parents and families – provided with information, support, outreach and the right kinds of system "welcomes' – can

have a substantial impact at many levels – on their own children's chances for success; as advisors in their local schools; and as advocates at the regional and national level. There is no one "silver bullet" that will allow families to live up to that potential. But simply recognizing it is a vital first step.

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How can we Build Student Engagement and an Educational Community?

(Transcript of Valerie Hannon's keynote speech at MACBA Auditorium. Barcelona, July 2, 2014. Debates on Education. First published by Fundació Jaume Bofill , November 2014)

By Valerie Hannon

I am from the Innovation Unit, based in London. We are a not-for-profit social enterprise which was born out of the conviction that our public services are not fit for purpose. We were initially entirely focused on education, but we have become increasingly involved in most public services, including health, local government, juvenile justice, mental health services — a very wide range of public services — and we believe that social innovation is critical to all of them. They are too expensive, they are not meeting users' needs and they are not fit for the 21st century as we face it.

I'm so pleased that you've elected to think about this issue of student disengagement, together with the issue of community, because I do believe it is a symptom of the underlying unsuitability and failure of education systems around the world.

This is not a phenomenon which is special to Catalonia or to Spain or to Europe or even to the rich northern hemisphere. We have the good fortune in the Innovation Unit to be working globally. And I have been working in places as disparate as Finland, which has been at the top of PISA for so very long, and Kwazulu Natal, the biggest province in South Africa. Both of these jurisdictions are concerned (from differing perspectives) about the level of student disengagement that they are facing.

Across the world you will see many jurisdictions concerned about disengagement amongst students. But this can mean that students disappear — they are out of the door either as soon as they legally can be or even before it's legal. Others are disengaged because they are 'gone in their heads'. They are achieving

reasonable results, perhaps, sometimes even doing quite well, but whether they are really engaged as learners is another question. And perhaps many of you sitting here will, in your own sons and daughters or young people you know well, come across young people who seem to be achieving but actually who aren't really in their heart and in their soul turning into passionate learners; they're doing just what they need to do to get by.

Research worldwide tells us that this is important because it's associated with a large number of life outcomes. Students who are not engaged with their learning are likely to learn at a slower pace and, of course, achieve worse. That's research from 2004. John Hattie, whose meta-study of effective teaching methods is well known, points out that motivation and engagement in schools have a higher effect on student achievement than numerous other in-school factors. In other words, it's a kind of golden key.

Research also shows that engagement in learning at school decreases with age. The longer students are in school, the more disengaged they get. And we know that disengagement is a far bigger problem for the most disadvantaged children. Numerous studies from across the world have shown that. So if you're poor, if you're from a one-parent family, if you're from an ethnic minority, your levels of engagement with schooling are very likely to be much lower.

However, I want to pose the question of what we really mean by engagement. I want to distinguish between engagement in *learning* and engagement in *schooling*: we don't think that they are the same thing.

Research into engagement in schooling has generally used 5 criteria or 5 characteristics. Does the student attend? Do they seem to be attentive? In other words, are their eyes open and are their eyes looking vaguely in your direction? Do they conform or are they coming to school in strange, ripped clothes and showing that they're placing themselves apart from the school community. Are they achieving good exam results? Is their behaviour good or bad?

Now, that is the set of criteria which researchers have used to determine levels of engagement in school. But would you say that those are levels or criteria for engagement in learning? We don't think so. We think that if you are serious about engagement in learning you mean different things. Are they energetic and enthusiastic? Is there passion there? Are they learning all the time everywhere? Are they taking responsibility for their own learning, rather than just doing what somebody else tells them, looking things up, trying to find new spaces to learn, taking their own responsibility and achieving a wider set of learning outcomes?

If a student can talk to you about their learning with passion and interest, you know you've got an engaged learner, don't you? But those are not the things that researchers classically try to measure, and we think we need to shift the focus away from engagement in schooling, which has fundamentally been about compliance, towards engagement in *learning*.

How do we measure that? Too many surveys focus on conformity and compliance with schooling. Together with the University of Bristol, therefore, and with the help of the OECD survey specialists, we have created a learner engagement survey for a programme I'm going to tell you about, called *Learning Frontiers*, working across Australia. This survey takes a very different view. If we are concerned with real motivation and real engagement, there are five things we ought to be concerned about.

- Is learning a part of a student's identity?
- Is it pervasive, does it extend beyond the school?
- Is learning social?
- Is it deep?
- Does it result in memorable and meaningful experiences, and is it relevant?

So, a survey has been constructed using those five constructs, to try to get at really serious areas of engagement, and we piloted this with four jurisdictions. These are all members of the Global Education Leaders Programme (http://gelponline.org). I won't say much about this other than to say 14 jurisdictions worldwide, in the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, China, Brazil, South Korea, have all participated in a programme to share thinking about radical innovation in education.

The four jurisdictions which piloted the engagement survey were: Finland, Kentucky, South Korea and Australia, and our colleagues in those jurisdictions had samples of very varying sizes. But I want to give you one sample only, which is the Finnish sample.

They took this very seriously. They surveyed 15,000 students in the age range of 13 to 15. And here we are talking, let's remember, about what is supposed to be one of the best schooling systems in the world, and what they found was that young people appreciate learning, but they were frequently deeply bored at school.

So, for example, one of the items on the questionnaire is, 'how often do you pretend to pay attention whereas in fact you are thinking about something else entirely?' and a huge number said, 'very often'. They're just not there. They're doing what they need to do. So even in this top system, young people found school very boring.

The pedagogies didn't suit them, but yet they were eager to learn.

And there were significant minorities, even, where you could tell a good news story: for example, 70% seemed engaged, 30% were displaying signs of lack of engagement across most of the underlying constructs. However that is a very big minority and this is in a reasonably successful system. The other outcomes were worse, but I don't have time to discuss them with you. We think it's a very interesting beginning, and these jurisdictions are committed to improving the survey and using it *not* to rate themselves against other countries, but *to have good conversations with principals of schools, with teachers in schools and with learners themselves about what's going on.*

The question that thinking about engagement in *learning* really raises is: what is an education worth having today, wherever you are? Because if a young person believes an education is worth having they will engage with it. I said at the beginning that in some of the surprising places around the world we are finding disengagement. In South Africa, in Kwazulu Natal, where the youth unemployment is just horrific, 70, 80%, you would think that young people would see education as their route to a good life and would seize every opportunity they could get for some kind of education. In fact the reverse is true. Young people are dropping out of the system very early, at 15, just to be unemployed and hang out on township street corners. Why? Because they don't think that what is being offered in school is an education worth having, even in those desperate circumstances.

And in wealthier countries we know that the same is true. Young people know that there's supposed to be a connection between education, schooling and the rest of their lives, but they don't buy it. They don't see that that is necessarily the case.

So the question is being asked wherever you are, and it's particularly being asked in countries which have been so deeply hit by the global financial crisis, here in Europe particularly, but all across the world, even in North America, which did not get such a bad economic shock.

What will matter in the future is your capacity to learn, and to learn fast, your confidence in your learning, your resilience in your learning, and your adaption to new circumstances. This poses a new challenge for schools. Not least in a world where we've had an explosion of information technology which has changed the context, and young people know these days that with the avenues and routes to knowledge and skills increasingly open and online, they look to schools for different things. I'm not saying that schools are going to become irrelevant, but they no longer have the monopoly on access to learning.

Does this mean school does not have a role? I don't think so at all. I may not sound like it, but I am a passionate believer in schools, because I think they have many other functions to play, but they must change. In my view they must change radically. And if you don't believe it, take a look at what my book-of-the-year was for 2013: Al Gore's book *The Future*, a really extraordinary look across what is going to happen to our world in the next two decades, and his conclusion is a simple one. Amongst scientists, amongst predictors and social commentators there is a clear consensus — the future now emerging will be extremely different from anything we have ever known in the past. It is a difference not of degree, but of kind.

If you accept that, this is the most extraordinary challenge to humankind, and therefore **an education worth having** needs to be one which equips young people to deal with the seriousness of these challenges. And we're not even close.

Young people themselves, it seems to me, really are much more value-driven and concerned about some of the critical issues facing our planet than we are. After all, they are going to inherit it and it strikes me that some of the issues that really engage and make young people passionate, schools hardly reflect upon at all. The major threats to our planet and how we are going to deal with those. Now this is not a problem in waiting. This is a problem which communities, and I'm coming back to that business about learning communities, are dealing with now. And when young people engage with that in a real and authentic sense, then we find that they make connections with their learning in fascinating new and powerful ways.

How should education leaders respond?

How should education leaders respond to all of this? Well, it really will depend upon your beliefs about change and about human motivation. Let me explain what I mean.

I was in the United States for a while recently and two things caught my attention. The first was a copy of a well-known journal called *Education Week* which was an issue on motivation and was looking at some attempts by schools to crack this very difficult problem of unengaged students. They were running a cash rewards system so that students who did well in their grades were able to claim cash rewards at the end of their semesters: that's one way to go. Another approach was finding ways for teachers to make their lessons more *entertaining* — in the belief that to be engaged you need to be entertained.

Let's look at some of the research again. If you want a pretty good round up of the research on motivation, look at Daniel Pink whose 2009 book, *Drive: The Surprising*

Truth about What Motivates Us, takes a very broad view of psychological research, social science research and also research done by economists, and he says there are three big things which motivate us as human beings. It's not cash, and it's not being entertained. It's about autonomy: that is, your sense of choice and control over what you do. The second is mastery, a growing sense that you have mastered a set of skills or a subject and the excitement that you get through your growing sense of mastery. And the third is purpose: that you can connect this learning with purpose either to problems you are facing in your own life, in your own community or as you see them affecting the society that you are going to live in.

Now if these are key — autonomy, mastery and purpose — there are some very clear implications for how we organise schools and how we organise learning. And I think most teachers know this in their hearts, but the difficulty is translating that into pedagogical practice. However, there are now many jurisdictions around the world really moving fast in this direction, and I'd like to describe some of that activity.

1. The Harris Student Commission on Learning - London

The Harris Federation is a set of schools in a very poor area of South London, with high numbers of black students who are living in poverty and achieve, or were achieving, very low levels. What the schools did to address this was to create a *student commission on learning.* This was about the learners themselves starting to become a powerful force for innovation. Across 10 schools they set up a commission of around 70 students, they supported them with resources for research and staff members who would help them with their undertaking. The student commission was asking a single question: What will make learning powerful in our schools? And the students set about researching worldwide

examples of really powerful learning. They set up Skype interviews, they invited people to come into their schools, they emailed researchers around the world, they gathered a huge amount of evidence and what was impressive was it was global. These students put together the evidence that they were getting about what was really powerful learning that could go on in schools and came up with a series of recommendations. By the way, I should say that the Principal of the school, actually a chain of them, said that whatever the student commission on learning comes up with, he would implement. In other words, he made it meaningful so the students knew that it mattered. (If you Google the Harris Federation, The Student Commission on Learning, you will find a huge amount on this example and I think you will find it inspiring). These students have pointed the way for change, and the pedagogies they want are those which motivate and engage them. The schools have changed enormously as learning environments.

2. New York City iZone

Schools in New York City are a huge system where examples of improvement have been terrific, but, in the view of many people, much too slow. Mayor Bloomberg, when he was in office, set up the Innovation Zone, which was a group of 300 setting out not to improve schools, but to transform them. They are committed to radical innovation in their contexts, particularly around this issue of engagement.

The iZone is dedicated to personalizing learning. They are rethinking structures, creating new models and promoting innovation across the system. They are changing their spaces, their classroom design, their curriculum, assessment, staff and student roles, programmes and schedules. In the past, students had to fit in with old patterns. Those things were fixed: if they didn't suit students, too bad.