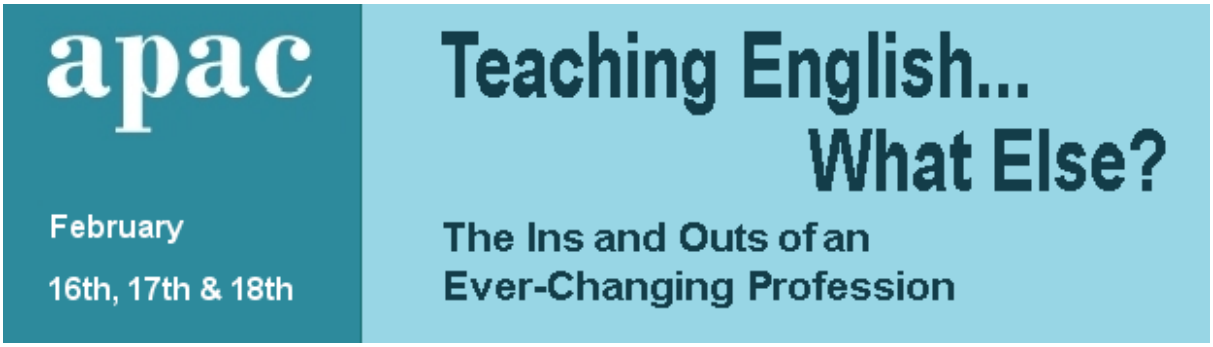
Proceedings. APAC-ELT Conference 2016

METHODOLOGY
CLIL, READING

ICT
HOLE-IN-THE-WALL, FALLING SILENT

EXPERIENCES
REFUGEES, MOTIVATION

APAC ELT JOURNAL



An issue that will touch your hearts

Although Valentine's Day is right around the corner, this issue of the APAC ELT Journal will not deal with romance. However, it does contain articles that will stir up heat in different ways, and hopefully generate some love. The world is in quite a state of turmoil, and it would behoove a great many influential people to reflect on what they are doing. Teachers also wield a great deal of power, and we need to remind ourselves of that from time to time. It's so easy to get caught up in the day-to-day business of helping students learn the difference between the past simple and the present perfect that we don't pay enough attention to the non-curricular aspects of our jobs: how we affect our students as people. We can raise them up, and we can tear them down. And it's the little things that matter, things that we may not realize or things that we are in too much of a hurry to deal with. This issue of the Journal contains many reflections that will make you pause and take stock of yourself.

Cooperation and collaboration among students is a powerful practice. It encourages bonding, empathy, friendship. It opens the channel for long-term communication among peers. It helps people with different skill sets complement each other and accomplish a goal they can be proud of. Two articles in the journal deal with this, by describing projects carried out in classrooms. In *Reading in Pairs,* Maite Oller discusses how she teams students up to promote reading among them, and you will see that the students benefit from this in many ways. In *Land of Volcanoes*, by Ana Guarinos, you will see a well planned out and executed CLIL project that

> The purpose of human life is to serve, and to show compassion and the will to help others.
>
> Albert Schweitzer

has the potential to get dormant talents in the students to awaken and erupt in a forceful flow of creativity. It's the kind of project that can create synergies and teamwork that may go beyond the school walls and have lasting positive effects.

Another project that perforates walls and seeks to create long-term benefits in children is the famous "hole-in-the-wall" project, which Luke Prodromou finishes discussing with two back-to-back articles. He makes the case that the information and communication technologies are not the be-all and end-all of education. And he brings out ways in which they can be detrimental. All of our gadgets, and our students' gadgets, are little things that matter, for better or for worse.

Counterbalancing these articles on hands-on learning is Ian Gibbs' article on elephants in the classroom. He is not discussing the biggest teacher's pets we've ever had, but rather the things we do that demotivate students and the things we can do to maintain their motivation. It's so easy to put students off, maybe even permanently, that his reflections are a must-read. Again, we find that little things make a big difference and that we have to keep them in mind and try to make them become second-nature in us.

One thing that Ian Gibbs mentions is that teachers should show students that they value them by letting their home culture and language have an influence on how and what they are taught. Eve Schnitzer puts this into practice in *It's* Your *English!* by looking for and developing material that touches upon her students' culture in some way and broadens their understanding of other cultures. This is a way to counteract the still existing native-speaker biases in the culture and language content of many ESL materials. She is promoting ELF and the role of her students as full-fledged members of this worldwide speech community.

Another article which deals with the roles of students' languages and cultures in the classroom is Vasiliki Sarantidou's. But, it deals with so much more than that. It deals with a teacher's growth through taking stock, reflecting and implementing teaching practices that really focus on students as people, as individuals with experiences, needs, and emotions that have to be well cared for. Her students are refugees from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Russia and other countries wracked by war, famine, and other scourges of today's world. They've been through a lot, and Sarantidou discusses how she had to change in order to remotivate them for learning and for piecing their lives back together. It's another example of how influential we are, for good or for bad, and how important it is for us to develop practices that promote positive outcomes in the many facets of our students' lives.

All together, this issue's articles can help us get back to the essence of good teaching: improving our student's short-term, mid-term and long-term lives in as many immaterial and material ways as possible. It's not so much about the past simple and the present perfect as it is about promoting love, respect, and communication. In a word, humanity.

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Letter from the President

Dear colleagues,

If you ever doubted about the social relevance of your profession, the CIS (Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas) has come to the rescue. The latest survey by the CIS revealed that 60% of Spaniards have no clue about English and that Spain fails miserably in learning foreign languages. The survey, published last December, shows that 59.8% of the people polled admitted that they are clueless when it comes to English: they do not speak it, read in it, or write in it. Nevertheless, the majority do not consider this to be a social problem. However, while the majority of those surveyed don't study any foreign languages, 64.2% consider it very important to know one and 30.6% consider it quite important. English is the language that the greatest number of people want to learn. But when it comes to whether or not the education system gives importance to knowing a foreign language, only 16% consider that it gives this issue a great deal of importance.

In other words, we teach the kind of stuff almost everybody would love to master, and there's a big consensus on wanting the education system to do more to make it happen. The motto of our APAC-Convention this February hints at this social context: "Teaching English: What Else?" But do please notice the sub-heading: "The Ins and Outs of an Ever-Changing Profession". Ay, there's the rub. The challenges (and the nightmares!) are many, and we are well aware that the demands of the discipline go beyond an outstanding command of the foreign language and a solid EFL methodological background. Teaching English – and teaching in general for that matter – has become an increasingly complex profession to deal with the new generations of students. We are in the middle of a technological revolution of still unknown personal and social consequences. In the meantime, English teachers at all educational levels are expected to be some sort of acrobatic multi-taskers. We have to be able to manage time efficiently, show empathy, be emotionally intelligent, challenge, motivate and inspire students, and establish effective group dynamics... And, yes, we should cater for Howard Gardner's famous multiple intelligences for the future, that is, to foster the five minds: disciplined, synthesizing, creating, respectful and ethical. Teaching: the ultimate profession!

One could look at those ambitious claims and despair. Or, perhaps, utter some cynical comment. I understand. But one could look at it as an extraordinary opportunity for personal growth while being useful to others. If that is the case, I know you'll be actively present at Universitat Pompeu Fabra, ready for this year's Convention, ready for learning and reflecting on the ins-and-outs of our multi-faceted profession. Teaching English? Well, let me sip my coffee, and I'll tell you: What else?

Miquel Berga

APAC President

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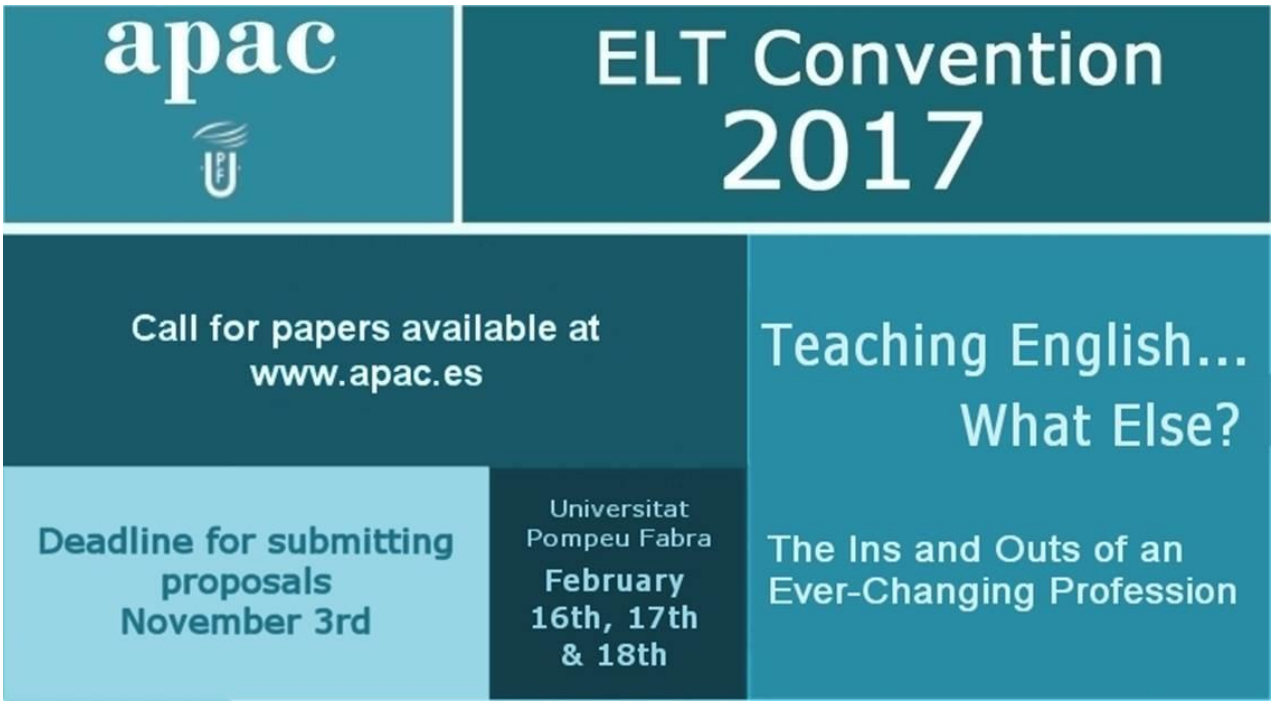
2017 APAC-ELT Convention: *Teaching English… What Else? The Ins and Outs of an Ever-Changing Profession*



(Recognised by the Catalan Department of Education: Codi GTAF REC0120472)

It is undoubtedly the case that with time, teaching English, like teaching in general, has become an increasingly complex profession, given that an outstanding command of the foreign language and a solid EFL methodological background are now felt to be insufficient to successfully deal with the new generations of students.

Nowadays, English teachers at all educational levels are expected to be the ultimate acrobatic multi-taskers. We have to be able to manage time efficiently, show empathy, be emotionally intelligent, challenge, motivate and inspire students, and establish effective group dynamics. We also have to be flexible enough to participate in CLIL classes and in English for Specific Purposes courses in VET contexts, in businesses, institutions and trade schools. Last but not least, we have to keep up to date with technology and new educational trends – all simultaneously. And at this point in time, when technology is blurring the boundaries between our personal and professional lives, teaching is more than ever a 24/7 job.

These considerations should obviously have a major impact on the training provided in pre-service courses, as well as on competences developed in in-service teacher development programmes. That is why this year's Convention aims at reflecting on the ins-and-outs of this multi-faceted profession and on the training and skills required to be not only English teachers, but actually effective educators to equip our students for the real world.

Registration

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Reading in Pairs Programme: How Students Can Improve EFL by Working Cooperatively

Maite Oller Sánchez

Abstract

Reading in Pairs is an educational programme based on peer tutoring to improve the reading and speaking skills in English as a foreign language in Primary and Secondary schools, particularly from 10 to 14 years old. It is promoted by GRAI (Research Group on Peer Learning) of the UAB (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona).

The programme organises students in pairs and makes the most of the difference in ability of the members, so that both learn from each other. One of the student acts as the tutor, the person who helps their partner by facilitating the learning process, and the other fulfils the role of the tutee, who learns from the help offered by the tutor.

It has been developed by 35 schools in Catalonia from 2014 to 2016 with the support of the Departament d'Ensenyament de la Generalitat de Catalunya, collecting evidence of the programme's effectiveness in reading and speaking competence in EFL and introducing sustainable innovations due to the programme materials and the teacher's training.

Background and objectives

The *Reading in Pairs* programme (Duran *et al.,* 2016) is based on the previous experience of GRAI in similar programmes designed to promote reading skills in Catalan (Flores & Duran, 2016), Basque and Spanish. Over a ten-year period about 300 schools, 1500 teachers and 30,000 students have developed these programmes.

The main objectives of these programmes are:

- Promoting instructional methodologies for inclusive education. Peer learning, and peer tutoring in particular, allows for experiencing diversity as a positive value: it is the difference (in this case between tutor and tutee) by which we learn.

- Developing new forms for language teaching. Peer tutoring and family support can complement the performances of language-skill teaching and learning that commonly occur in our classrooms, building spaces for personalised aid with high levels of oral interaction in schools, but also at home.

- Improving the reading competence, and especially reading comprehension, of students. This systematic use of comprehension strategies can help to meet the challenge noted in the latest PISA report — that all students must reach a sufficient level of reading ability for lifelong learning.

- Fostering cooperation among students. Cooperation is a key competence in today's knowledge society and is, in itself, a valuable competence that develops social skills and basic attitudes for democratic life.

- Promoting the involvement of families in school activities and increasing the range of opportunities for participation. After a brief training session, parents have the possibility to tutor their sons or daughters in reading at home.

- Offering teacher training models based on peer learning among colleagues and working in teacher's networks.

Conceptual bases

This section reviews the four conceptual elements on which the *Reading in Pairs* programme rests — peer tutoring, reading and speaking in EFL, family involvement and teacher's network —, basing them on psychopedagogical research and educational knowledge.

- **Peer tutoring**

It is known that peer tutoring is based on people from similar social groupings helping each other to learn and learning themselves by so doing (Topping & Ehly, 1998).

In *Reading in Pairs*, peer tutoring is understood as a peer learning method based on the creation of pairs of students with an asymmetrical relationship (derived from the adoption of the role of tutor and tutee respectively) and a common objective, known and shared, which is achieved through a relationship framework planned by the teacher. These pairs can be organised in fixed or reciprocal roles and with the same or cross age. Tutees learn because of the adjusted and permanent help received from tutors, and tutors learn because teaching can be a good way of learning (Duran, 2014).

In addition, research valuing the effectiveness of peer tutoring (Topping, 1996) points out that this method increases academic efficiency, social skills, work habits, and a positive attitude to the academic world, while also promoting a high level of satisfaction and decreasing the rate of academic failure.

- **English as a foreign language**

Providing students with a high quality EFL education has become an important goal of most education programmes in Europe. In line with the recommendations of The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001), *Reading in Pairs* adopts the communicative approach to develop oral language skills. This approach promotes the creation of circumstances in language lessons that approximate genuine communicative contexts. The *Reading in Pairs* programme contributes to this field that follows the three relevant strategies to help students improve their oral English as pointed out by Jarauta and Imbernón (2012): increasing exposure time and language use, having high expectations and prioritizing oral use.

Reading in Pairs also promotes active listening through the use of conversations that go beyond a single question-and-answer interaction, which is often the only possibility they are given in traditional radial structures.

Regarding the way of approaching reading comprehension within *Reading in Pairs*, it is important to know that each session of the programme is centred on an authentic text. Each text is presented as an uninterrupted unit, and students work on it as a whole. Students work first on understanding the entire text and then concentrate on the grammar or vocabulary they do not understand.

Moreover, and no less important, the structure of the sessions promotes the internalisation of effective reading techniques. Students get used to making predictions before reading the text by looking at its title and main features, which highly influences comprehension (Smith, 1987). They also practise several reading strategies defined as relevant by Solé (1992): focusing on essential information, evaluating the consistency between text content and previous knowledge and paying attention to their comprehension level while reading the text.

- **Family involvement in school activities**

The third component of the programme focuses on family support in reading carried out at home. Studies in different geographical contexts (Martínez, 1992; Nailing, 2010; Ofsted, 2001) conclude that when families participate and collaborate actively with the school, their children increase in academic performance because they feel the continuity between home and school and, in addition, the school improves its quality of teaching.

But, as is known, facilitating family participation is not an easy task. In this sense, it seems urgent to provide families with resources through strategies for stimulating and supporting their children in learning and education, with the aim of favouring the creation of family environments that promote the development of positive attitudes towards learning and the generation of expectations of school success (Martínez, 2004). Wolfendale and Topping (1996) collected studies that demonstrated the positive influence on school performance that the collaboration of members of the family (parents, grandparents or siblings) had when learning from home.

It is necessary to break down barriers, to believe in the potential of families and to establish a framework of respect and trust, and, for sure, this work corresponds to the school. With *Reading in Pairs*, families can collaborate effectively in specific homework and be more active. They can contribute positively to their children's learning, an opportunity that teachers cannot waste.

- **Teachers' and schools' network**

The *Reading in Pairs* programme is based on peer tutoring among students and also among teachers. In this sense, GRAI has devised a system of teacher training that promotes peer learning at three levels: among students, among teachers and among schools working in a network to implement the programme. This is a coherent system understanding that cooperation can be established in both teaching and learning.

Many research studies and experiences confirm the efficiency of teachers' collaboration and the usefulness of a networking structure to enhance the implementation of peer tutoring in classroom.

The *Reading in Pairs* network is established as a workspace among schools in order to provide training and support to teachers who develop the programme in their classrooms. The network is intended to support innovation and ensure its success by joining the repertoire of usual educational activities.

The network is based on peer learning among teachers, because teachers who work together reflect on their practises, generating learning. Teachers are at a similar level of knowledge and their learning practises swing from cooperation to peer tutoring. Such networks (Katz & Earl, 2010) can generate spaces where teachers create knowledge, test it in the classroom, and evaluate and disseminate it to promote substantial and guaranteed changes in the students' learning.

The proposed training model shows consistency with the conviction of the effectiveness of peer learning practices, whether it is students, or teachers and schools who overcome the difficulties of incorporating cooperative learning practices into classrooms in a sustained and effective way (Sharan, 2010). Research, in this sense, demonstrates the need to move towards teacher training models that support real changes in the classroom through the implementation of innovations based on learning processes between teachers and institutions.

Programme description

This section describes the most significant aspects of the programme.

- **Training for teachers, students and families**

The programme requires an investment in the training of teachers and the participants (students and families) in order to ensure the correct functioning of the different stages within the programme and, particularly, to give students a highly structured framework of relations between tutors and tutees and the characteristics of each role.

The teacher's training is based on a mix model combining three face-to-face sessions and work in a virtual classroom. The training usually is done over the course of three years with two teachers from every school every academic year working in networks with the commitment of the head teachers.

Talking about the programme in schools, teachers have to determinate the number of initial training sessions. The programme suggests three, and here you have an example of the organisation of these three sessions. The first session could be organised around an introduction to peer learning and its benefits for both members of the pair. To promote commitment and responsibility in tutors and tutees, students could express the attributes they value in both roles and the ones that the group agrees upon and could be listed on a sign on the wall. The second session could be focused on the structure and the tasks per session. For the third session an explanation of the assessment plan is suggested. In this last session, teachers usually administer the initial assessment which will allow them to pair the students appropriately and can also be used as indications of improvement when compared to the final assessment.

Regarding the training for families, a single session of initial training is suggested. This is followed by a second meeting to assess performance once they have done several *Reading in Pairs* sessions with their children. This session is generally done with all the interested families together, and its main goal is a brief presentation of the programme that includes modelling of the activities and explanation of the support materials.

- **Pairing students**

Before starting the programme in classrooms, teachers create the pairs taking into account the English level of the students and their socio-emotional relationships. There are several ways of pairing students, with each of them having advantages and disadvantages, and some may fit some schools' context better than others.

First, it is necessary to decide whether to opt for a cross- or same-age tutoring model. A cross-age tutoring model should be organised with students who differ by no more than two or three years.

This will ensure that the academic content is still relatively challenging for the tutor, therefore ensuring their progress in English and fostering motivation. In a cross-age tutoring model, students with the higher English level of each age group should be paired together.

Teachers can also choose a same-age tutoring model that can be either fixed or reciprocal tutoring. To organise the pairs of a fixed same-age tutoring, teachers divide the group of students into two halves (higher and lower competence). Again, they will pair the students with the highest competence in the first group with the students with the highest competence in the second group. This method of pairing helps maintain competence difference between the members of all the pairs. Teachers can also opt for a reciprocal same-age tutoring model in which students will swap roles every session or two. In this case, students should be paired with a classmate who has a very similar level of competence to ensure that both of them can perform each role. The preparation of the sessions will give the tutors the confidence to exercise their role.

- **Activities in tutoring sessions**

The *Reading in Pairs* programme suggests a thirty-minute session per week for fifteen to twenty weeks. The first step of each session takes place before the session starts. Tutors receive the *Activity Sheet* with the *Language Support and* its *Audio File*, containing the text recorded by a competent reader. Tutors should pay attention to intonation and pronunciation and be sure they understand all the vocabulary in the text and the activities. They are also expected to think about possible questions their tutees may have. This preparation can be done during school hours or at home as homework.

- Before reading.

During the first minutes, the pair explores the general characteristics of the text (format, title, structure, etc.) and the tutee is asked by the tutor to make a hypothesis about the content. There are continuous texts (comics, poems, songs, recipes, letters, stories, news, menus, rules of games, riddles, listings, etc.); discontinuous texts (plans, schedules, tickets, graphics, posters, maps, advertisements, fact sheets, flyers, tables, etc.); and multiple texts, which combine continuous and discontinuous texts. Tutor and tutee also explore their prior knowledge on the subject, which awakens their interest.

- Reading aloud.

The reading part of the session starts with the tutor reading aloud for their tutee, acting as a model of pronunciation and intonation. The tutor's task is facilitated by the previous preparation of the texts using the *Audio File.* Right after, tutor and tutee read aloud together, which gives the tutee an opportunity to imitate the correct pronunciation and intonation. Then, it is the tutee's turn to read aloud alone while the tutor applies the Pause Prompt Praise (PPP) Technique (Mc Naughton, Glynn & Robinson, 1987). This scaffolding strategy consists in pointing out the tutee's error and then waiting a few seconds to allow for self-correction. In cases in which the self-correction does not happen, the tutor is expected to offer ono or several prompts. The correct answer is only given by the tutor when these hints do not work. The PPP routine always ends with positive reinforcement. During this third reading, tutees stop after each paragraph or section and paraphrase what those sentences were about. This helps the tutor determine if they need some support to better understand the content.

- After reading.

The second half of the sessions starts with the reading comprehension activities. First, the pairs talk about whether the initial hypothesis was fulfilled or not and what information in the text allows them to determine this. The following comprehension activities have various levels of challenge. The first ones ask the tutee to retrieve information from the text in different ways (filling out a table, finding explicit information, etc.). The subsequent questions require some interpretation, for example, an identification of the main topic, listing supporting evidence for some of the statements, etc. The last questions are guided towards reflection and evaluation. The pair may evaluate formal aspects of the text, or talk about related topics, connecting the content with their previous knowledge.

The *Activity Sheet* includes a range of comprehension activities that are as varied and rich as possible: closed- and open-ended questions, extracting main ideas, making schemes and inferences, connecting previous knowledge with the content of the text, etc. Or course, these activities can be adapted to the needs and preferences of the students.

- Expressive reading.

The last reading aloud of the text is done by the tutee and it is named "expressive reading". At this point, when the tutee has a clear understanding of the meaning of the text, she or he should be able to do a more "natural" reading of it, focusing on pronunciation and intonation.

- **Pairs' self-assessment**

Every four sessions the pairs evaluate their progress using a guide that the programme proposes and teachers and students negotiate and modify depending on their interests and needs. This suggested guide includes open- and closed-ended items that refer to the appropriate fulfilment of the roles and respect of the structure of the sessions. The self-assessment document can also contain goals that each pair has set for themselves in the previous self-assessment session.

- **Extra activities**

This activity routine has the advantage of facilitating the establishment of good work dynamics but the disadvantage of repetition. In some pairs, allowing decisions about the time to devote to each activity block may be enough to break any feeling of monotony. In others, this may not be enough. Thus, it is convenient to generate a series of activities that break sporadically with those of the script.

Some of these activities, which are called "extra", may be derived from the tasks in the *Activity Sheet*. For example, the preparation of oral presentations may be allowed at the start of the next class along with regular work. From any concerns which appear in the pair's self-assessment, tutors also prepare extra activities for the nest session.

- ***Reading in Pairs* at home**

As has been said at the beginning of this article, the involvement and participation of the students' family members is an aspect that favours the students' process of learning academic contents. In this sense, it is important that teachers be motivated when talking about participation in the programme so they can encourage parents to participate. Providing the families with guidelines on how to support their children proves to be an effective procedure.

However, involving families in school activities is not an easy task, especially when it involves a subject such as English, which many families may not be proficient in. Teachers should make sure that what is proposed to the students' families is a set of achievable challenges which show their consistency and commitment throughout the process.

Some ways to participate are:

- Parents acting as their children's tutors following the procedure in the *Activity Sheet*, which should be different from the ones used at school but following the same scheme and interactive pattern.

- Swap roles so that children become tutors of their family members.

- The programme offers a series of activities in English taken from different websites with the aim that children have continuity between the school context and home and that they do English activities when families find *Activity Sheets* difficult to follow.

- **Assessment**

The assessment of the progress of students who participate in the programme can be done by taking into account the information that comes from different sources. The following are suggested:

- Initial assessment. At the beginning of the programme, all students undertake a language knowledge test to assess the actual level of their linguistic competence. The results can be useful in creating pairs. The test has the same format as the *Activity Sheets* that students will work on in the programme, but in individual format.

- Follow-up of the paired self-assessment guideline. Following up on the agreements of every pair when they evaluate their academic progress offers valuable information on their progress to teachers.

- Observations of pairs through record keeping. The teacher observes the pair's performance helped by a grid, recording data referring to the tutor and the tutee, individually and as a pair.

- *Activity Sheets* made by tutors. Once students have seen enough examples of *Activity Sheets*, they develop two sheets to work on in the classroom with their partner.

- Final assessment. During the programme development, activities of some sessions can be used as continuous assessment. Likewise, with the sheet done at the end of the set of sessions, the individual progress of each student can be seen in comparison with the results of the initial test.

- Portfolio assessment. At the end of tutorial sessions, students will have to submit a dossier containing the ordered *Activity Sheets* that have been worked on. Individually or in pairs, the tutor will provide additional material by way of explanations and short reflections on improved curricular aspects. At the same time, tutees should provide activities that they have completed at home.

- Information that comes from family tutoring. For those students who also have used the programme at home with a family tutor, available information should be taken into account in overall student progress.

Initial results

This section presents the results of the initial implementation of *Reading in Pairs* in 27 schools throughout Catalonia and Navarra from 2014 to 2016. The main focus of the research is the evaluation of the programme's effectiveness in reading and speaking competence in EFL.

The Movers Cambridge Young Learners English Test (Cambridge, 2011) was selected to measure the improvement in reading comprehension and oral skills in EFL with a pre-test/post-test design without group control. The time between the two tests varied between 13-18 weeks depending on the school, with an average of 15 weeks.

The sample consisted of 974 students aged 11-13 and 35 teachers spread over 4 schools in Navarra and 23 in Catalonia. For the oral communication skills, a subsample of 288 students was selected.

The hypothesis for the study was a significant improvement in the measured skills, as measured by the *Movers* test (Cambridge, 2011). This was expected, given the opportunities for oral interaction in the programme and the academic benefits of peer tutoring that have been shown in previous research.

The pre-test/post-test analysis showed a significant difference in the reading comprehension section of the Cambridge Movers pre-test and post-test scores. All students, regardless of their role, had significantly higher results in the reading comprehension post-test. The students involved in reciprocal tutoring (i.e. experiencing both roles) show the largest improvement. As for the students involved in fixed tutoring, a similar improvement in tutors and tutees can be observed.

Regarding the oral communication section, a significant difference in *Movers* pre-test/post-test scores was also observed. The pre-test/post-test oral communication results show significant improvement in the fixed tutoring condition for both tutors and tutees. It is also observed that tutees show a higher increase in oral expression than tutors. Regarding the reciprocal tutoring condition, a t-test analysis showed less improvement compared to fixed tutoring, but it was also statistically significant.

To conclude, the pre-test/post-test results suggest that *Reading in Pairs* has an important influence on the development of reading comprehension, both in fixed and reciprocal tutoring and among tutors as well as among tutees. These results also indicate an improvement in oral communication skills for tutors and tutees that take part in fixed tutoring, and also in reciprocal tutoring. As a whole, the results in reading comprehension are strongly positive. Even though the lack of a control group prevents us from confirming a casual effect of the programme, the results are a solid indicator of the potential benefits.

Conclusions

The results of the initial implementation of *Reading in Pairs* show the potential of this programme for the development of reading and oral communication skills, falling in line with other research conducted in previous programmes such as *Llegim en parella* (Flores & Duran, 2016).

These results have been obtained using the differences among students; in other words, peer tutoring allowed them to experience diversity as a positive value and contributed to the development of inclusive methodologies in schools.

Some teachers point out specific parts of the programme that help students to improve in reading comprehension and speaking such as:

- The structure of the programme.
- Reading the text several times using the *Audio File* as a model.

- The significant use of oral EFL.
- The prior preparation to improve vocabulary and intonation.
- The active role of tutor and tutee.
- The positive work environment with students more confident in front of a classmate rather than in front of a wider audience.

Besides, students feel the responsibility for the role and the interdependence between them. Several teachers said that tutors provide adjusted aid to tutees, who ask the tutor about things they do not understand, and as a consequence both can learn and also improve in cooperation. However, sometimes tutors do not give time to tutees to try to solve their mistakes and have difficulty in finding clues to help tutees. It is important to reinforce this part because it is a way for both tutors and tutees to learn.

Regarding families, it was difficult to involve them. Only about 20% of the students' families worked with the *Activities Sheets* at home. It is necessary to reinforce the idea that teachers should encourage families to participate and give them support to do it.

Last but not least, teachers state that they can learn from their colleagues. They said that in the same school working with another colleague and having the support of other more expert teachers is important. They think that the visits among the schools are an example of peer learning among teachers and schools.

They also feel that they are part of the teachers' network and always have the possibility of being helped or of helping other teachers. In their opinion, this is a good way to introduce the innovations because they do not feel alone.

To sum up, *Reading in Pairs* could be an important and valuable contribution to the field of EFL education and needs to be improved upon through the research and the feedback that the GRAI group continuously seeks out and receives from the participating teachers, students and families.

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Biodata

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It's *Your* English!

Eve Schnitzer

Abstract

This interactive, practical presentation first addressed the position of English as an International Language (EIL) or English Lingua Franca (ELF), aiming to elicit discussion of attitudes to English found among teachers of English and of CLIL, and among their students. We examined how to adjust our teaching and evaluation towards task-based and performance-centred activities and approaches that reflect the international nature of the English-using communities.

I further provided activities to use with students and also to spark ELF awareness in workshops that English teachers may offer to CLIL colleagues. These activities focus on strategies for analyzing both cultural and linguistic content and form. I wanted to provoke an exchange of thoughts and concrete ideas for working with the essential communicative vehicle that English has become.

Introduction

In these times of isolationism in Britain and Trumpian ravings in the US, it is perhaps more than ever significant for learners of English to recognize that what they need to acquire is the major language of international, intercultural communication and not that of any particular culture. It is surely important to their openness to the language, and thus helpful to their ease of acquisition and use, to be reminded of this fact. It can also be helpful for them to have the opportunity to discuss their feelings about English, as well as to address cultural issues in the classroom in order to be better prepared for the very wide world of EIL/ELF users.

A little history

Let me first give you some background, a brief introduction to explain where I'm coming from. I began teaching English in Spain in the '70's, first for a year at International House in Cordoba and then, for many years, at ESADE Idiomes in Barcelona. I had the opportunity to work with native English speakers from all over the world and participate in workshops with some of the most interesting and relevant figures in EFL – English as a Foreign Language, as it was then known – theory and methodology. Slowly but surely, I realized that, despite some of my colleagues' and the specialists' best efforts, most of the students I encountered, whether in ESADE or at intervals spent back in Ottawa, were learning English to join an international community of users. Many, even those spending a term or more abroad in Canada, had no overriding interest in any English-speaking culture, and certainly did not wish to learn to behave like the British or Americans, or like any group other than the ones they were already part of. This was probably easier for me to absorb as a Canadian, as we tend to think that no one is really interested in our culture, and we even wonder if we have one!

So, from back in the '70's with the first widespread demand for English, the concerns of learners were primarily to be able to travel and interact with ease, to have access to a wider range of pop culture, perhaps to participate in professional meetings, or to study or live abroad for some time. But even in the case of study abroad, as time went on there were more and more opportunities to

do so in English while living in non-English-speaking societies, as American universities opened campuses all over. International firms often required English, no matter what the origin or location of the companies themselves. Nowadays we find many university programs given all or partly in English all over Europe. EFL has become ELF, or English Lingua Franca, quite clearly over the years.

In the early 1990's I did an MA in Applied Linguistics back in Ottawa, and found that what seemed most relevant after many years of teaching in Europe was to look at intercultural theory and activities as well as read up on the new theories of EIL – English as an International Language, as it was known at first – from people like Braj Kachru, Larry Smith, or Joshua Fishman in the US, or the very erudite and amusing Henry Widdowson and many others in Britain, as well as Elana Shohamy in multilingual Israel. I read as much as I could in that year at university, and came out at the end with a very long research paper entitled "A Common Language for Diverse Cultures: English in Europe".

I returned to ESADE with a strengthened conviction that English should and could be seen and thus taught somewhat differently, primarily as an international language, enabling users to get some idea of how people from different backgrounds see the world, as well as to display their own beliefs and attitudes. It is a tool, a vehicle for multifaceted communication and, hopefully, understanding of any individuals and cultures we may meet in ELF environs. Meanwhile, however, texts and other materials continued to display native-English-speaking cultural biases, in terms of the presentation of content and the focus of activities. Moreover, anecdotally, from what I have seen up to now, and what I was told by participants at the APAC Conference in February of 2016, this continues to be very much the case. The linguistic and cultural models, norms and expectations are still centred on native speakers, with little or no recognition of the multiplicity of accents, forms of use, behaviours, attitudes and interests that users of ELF are most likely to encounter. This is in strong contrast to the situation of Spanish, which I now teach in Canada: while it is spoken in many varieties by people with highly varied backgrounds and outlooks, the focus of learners' interest is always on those native-speaking contexts, which is where they are, almost always, going to use the language.

What is ELF and how can we teach it?

Widdowson said many years ago, wryly and incisively – and in a context which now escapes me – something very close to the following: "We are not always appreciated for bringing culture to people who previously only had their own." ELF learners and users generally must take some interest in the other cultures with whom they cross paths, by the very nature of the vehicle they are using, but they come at the ELF-using world from their own corners and may or may not be changed by what they see. Their primary concern is to get around in English, adjusting only as much as necessary for successful interaction; they may well use ELF without ever setting foot in a native-English-speaking country or even leaving home, but always leading a more globalized life. They want to be understood, sometimes only professionally, and sometimes culturally on a more or less deep level.

Thus, teachers of English should assume nothing, enable learners to come at the language as they wish and remain themselves in using it. Materials must change, and come to include more models of spoken and written input from anywhere and everywhere, expressing ideas and transmitting information of all sorts, and provoking students to want to express their own outlooks, attitudes, questions and curiosity. But for now at least, any teacher with internet has access to a lot of

authentic material in English about or from different parts of the world, which we can quite easily adapt for use in our classrooms in high schools, universities and language academies.

First and foremost, however, I would be concerned about learners' attitudes to the language, as they have not chosen English and need to be fully aware of its distinct nature among the foreign languages, its disconnection from native-speaking cultures and its fairly neutral uses as a tool for international, personal or professional access and communication. Thus I have provided below, at the end of this article, a couple of worksheets on beliefs about English (see Appendix 1): one for possible use with colleagues teaching CLIL who may not have had the opportunity for such linguistic ruminations, and another for use with teenage or adult learners. I trust they will give you some ideas for developing further statements that may be more relevant to your own contexts. Beyond such statements for discussion, teachers can look for articles and videoclips on the use of English: there are many topics often touched on in the media, such as the lives of students who go abroad, the dominance of English on the internet, or international business issues. There are blogs in English where writers from different backgrounds recount personal experiences of travelling, living, working or studying abroad. These materials do not need to deal at all with English-speaking cultures, but rather can be exploited as 'critical incidents' in intercultural understanding in general.

Then, once you have tuned in to the issues surrounding ELF, you can quite easily keep an eye out for articles that could be provocative for your students. I provided the following examples at the convention:

-"Barcelona becomes the fifth most popular tourist destination in Europe"
http://elpais.com/elpais/2015/07/30/inenglish/1438264073_156652.html

-"What do foreign tourists spend their money on in Spain?"
http://elpais.com/elpais/2015/08/20/inenglish/1440090145_983960.html

-"The life of a Spaniard in Poland: The 11 biggest surprises"
http://www.cafebabel.co.uk/lifestyle/article/the-life-of-a-spaniard-in-poland-the-11-biggest-surprises.html

-"Number of Spaniards emigrating hits new high since crisis began"
http://elpais.com/elpais/2015/12/04/inenglish/1449241351_850187.html

-"Canadian Sephardim mull Spanish citizenship offer"
http://www.cjnews.com/news/canada/canadian-sephardim-mull-spanish-citizenship-offer

The accompanying worksheets can be found, too, at the end of this article (Appendix 2). You will see that I have attempted to find topics of likely interest to learners in Catalonia, and within those topics, to provoke some discussion of current issues or intercultural questions as well as to get students to express and explain their own cultural and personal outlooks. The classroom is surely the best place to work out problems and negotiate prejudices, to ask questions and gain insights – surely preferable, at any rate, to the complicated 'real world' they will be thrown into once they can get around in ELF.

Therefore I strongly encourage you to broaden and enhance your curriculum with more international material that will help your students learn about any and all parts of the world and be able to talk about where they come from. You will find rich troves of material, whether for reading

or watching, which you can edit or excerpt or simply back up with some explanation of context and vocabulary, in the following sources, for a start:

http://www.cataloniatoday.cat
http://elpais.com/elpais/inenglish.html
http://www.cafebabel.co.uk

I feel sure you will find other useful sources you can share with colleagues in order to develop a truly ELF curriculum. Focus on strategies for comprehension and communication: setting up a framework for the context of the material, predicting and learning some of the language around the topic, identifying topic-centred vocabulary in the material, finding cognates, looking at discourse markers and what they signal, as well as comparing the topic to others that learners are familiar with, and questioning the ideas presented, even if – or especially if – these come from their own cultural context.

I would very much encourage you to focus on intercultural discussion: to get learners to search out and explore further information on how others live and see the world, and to explore their own milieu, not only to gain confidence in explaining where they come from but also to question their assumptions and broaden their perspectives from both within and without. You might like to start with a simple exercise in self-exploration such as "Catalans tend to be…/believe…/like…/dislike…". Once again, there is a wealth of material online; just google "intercultural communication", make a few quick selections and try them out in class. Get students to predict some of the content.

- http://www.englishandculture.com/blog/bid/71208/Your-Intercultural-Communication-Skills-5-Ways-to-Improve
- http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/intercultural-communication.html

Finally, when it comes to evaluation, once again you can use similar types of material and set tasks which require students to predict, get the gist, respond to ideas, relate them to other material they have seen in class, frame their own questions and express their own viewpoints. They could identify vocabulary related to the particular topic, even if they cannot define it all; that will at least show they will know what they need in order to completely grasp a topic in 'real' situations. Try to give credit for evident interest, effort and inventiveness, as long as they are getting their point across, rather than for absolute correctness or flashier vocabulary. No phrasal verbs? Oh, dear – perhaps cognates will do! Or not the exact word – but does it give the idea sufficiently clearly?

The aim of the ELF instructor is not 'purity', not native-speaker-like linguistic or cultural behavior, but clarity in both comprehension and self-expression. That clarity can be achieved in all accents and from all points of view. You can be yourself in ELF!

Biodata

Eve Schnitzer taught English to adults at ESADE Idiomes in Barcelona for 18 years, returning to Ottawa, Canada, to work in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) at Carleton University and train language teachers at Algonquin Community College. She has been teaching Spanish at Carleton since 2000, when foreign languages joined the School of Linguistics and Language Studies (SLALS). Her interest in EIL goes back to 1992 and her Masters research paper entitled "A Common Language for Diverse Cultures: English in Europe".

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Appendix 1

LEARNERS' BELIEFS ABOUT ENGLISH

1-It is very useful to know English for/to….

2-Learning English is quite different from learning any other foreign language nowadays.

3- The important thing for a nonnative speaker is to communicate clearly enough.
Sounding like a native or using lots of expressions is generally unimportant.

4-Native English speakers also need to make the effort to communicate clearly!

5-Native English speakers should appreciate that we can use their language.

6-Not learning any foreign language at all is a disadvantage because…

7-I like English because…

8-I don't like English because….

Eve Schnitzer, Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada, 2016

BELIEFS ABOUT TEACHING and LEARNING ENGLISH

1-ELF has distinct characteristics, as opposed to other foreign languages.

2-The distinct nature of ELF has implications for teaching approaches and materials.

3-The NS teacher has no inherent advantages over the NNS teacher.

4-Learners of ELF should feel they are joining a community of international users.

5-It is worthwhile for learners to examine the distinct position of English and consider how it may affect their learning and use of the language.

6-Learning a language also entails learning how to learn language.

7-English and CLIL teachers can work together to develop bilingual programs.

8-The main concern for CLIL teachers is to acquire the vocabulary and any particular genre styles and skills related to their disciplines.

Eve Schnitzer, Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada, 2016

Appendix 2

Barcelona becomes the fifth most popular tourist destination in Europe
http://elpais.com/elpais/2015/07/30/inenglish/1438264073_156652.html

Pre-reading:

-Why do you suppose so many tourists come to Barcelona? What groups – in terms of age, nationality, interests – do you think come most? And what are the major attractions and activities in and around the city?

-What are the pros and cons of so much tourism in a city like Barcelona?

Vocabulary:

-a recovery – recuperation, revival / to recover
-an investor – person who puts money into a business / to invest, an investment
-to place/put on hold – to postpone, make something/someone wait
-to flood – inundate, overwhelm

Comprehension and discussion:

-Who carried out the study? Explain in your own words what they found exactly.

-How does Barcelona compare to Madrid as a destination? Why do you think this is so?

-What has happened recently that could affect this growth negatively? And do you consider that that would be a good thing?

Further study:

Look into the history and development of tourism in Barcelona – its beginnings, how and why it has evolved so strongly in recent decades, the reactions to mass tourism from citizens, businesses and administrations. Furthermore, make a formal list of the pros and cons of mass tourism, and finally, put forward some ideas for improving the situation, either by limiting tourism or altering it in some ways.

Some students might like to look into tourism in the other major destinations – London, Paris, Berlin and Rome – to find parallel information to compare. Do these cities have similar problems with mass tourism, and how do they deal with them?

Eve S, 2015

What do foreign tourists spend their money on in Spain?
http://elpais.com/elpais/2015/08/20/inenglish/1440090145_983960.html

Pre-reading:

-How would you answer the question in the heading, in terms of which tourist groups tend to spend more, where, and on what articles or activities?

Vocabulary:

-to spend, spending/ expenditure
-the lion's share – the greatest part
-to splash out – spend extravagantly, overspend, splurge
-a survey – collection of data on the opinions or habits of many people, a poll

Comprehension and discussion:

-Explain in your own words what kind of information the survey found.
-How is this BBVA survey different from the annual reports on tourist spending done by tourism authorities? Is the BBVA information useful?

Further practice:

"Foreigners **outspend** Spaniards…" = spend more than

Look at other verbs using the prefix "out-" – more, faster, greater, longer, etc., … and try them out in your own examples related to the topic of tourism. Examples:

> "to outrun, outlast, outeat, outdrink, outnumber, outsmart/ outwit, outgrow, outlive, outsell, outweigh (=be more important than...), outdo"

There is an expression "to outstay your welcome" – what do you suppose it means?

Eve S, 2015

The life of a Spaniard in Poland – the 11 biggest surprises
http://www.cafebabel.co.uk/lifestyle/article/the-life-of-a-spaniard-in-poland-the-11-biggest-surprises.html

Pre-reading:

-Make your own predictive list of what you think might be the 11 biggest surprises for a Spaniard living in Poland. Do you think it would differ according to where the person was from exactly?

Vocabulary:

-to catch sm off guard – take them by surprise, be unexpected
-a person from Poland is a Pole, or a Polish citizen
-wise – prudent, makes good sense
-a bonfire – large fire made in an open area, as in many festivals or at camp
-to run out of something – to have no more, use all that you had

Comprehension and discussion:

-After looking at Carlos' list, what stays in your mind?

What surprised you? And is there anything you would disagree with?

Further practice:

-Form several groups to make lists of what you know or imagine would surprise you about life in other countries (one per group).

-Finally, make a list of what you think surprises foreigners about life in Barcelona, or wherever you live. Be specific about where they are from, as far as possible.

Then compare and see what you've all come up with! Does it tell you anything particularly interesting about where and how you live?

Eve S, 2015

Numbers of Spaniards emigrating hits new high since crisis began
http://elpais.com/elpais/2015/12/04/inenglish/1449241351_850187.html

Pre-reading:

-What do you know about the topic? Say what you can about who has been emigrating, why and where they are going.
-Does the figure of 50,000+ given in the subheading seem high to you? Do you know if the numbers are going up or down?
-What about foreigners coming to live in Spain – who are they and why do they come?

Vocabulary:

-to stem the flow – decrease or stop the movement
-unstoppable – *How is this word formed?*
And what other words do you know or can you make up with a similar formation?
-to shrink, shrank, have shrunk – get or make smaller
-ageing – getting older
-to forecast – tell or predict the future
-the welfare system – social security, pensions, healthcare and the like
A contributor is someone who contributes, and a recipient is someone who_____

Comprehension and discussion:

-What are the trends described in the article as far as population flow into and out of the country? What about population growth or decline, as compared to other EU countries? Is there anything here that surprises you?

-How does population decline affect the economy? What is needed to stop this trend?

-Why do you suppose certain parts of the country are growing in population while certain others are shrinking?

-Do you think immigrants to Spain, or to Catalonia or your area in particular, have been generally well-received? Why or why not?

-Do you think something can or should be done to improve their integration?

-Finally, would you live abroad for any length of time? Where, and for what reasons?

What assistance and supports would you like or expect to find as an immigrant, or perhaps as a foreign student?

Eve S, 2015

Canadian Sephardim mull Spanish citizenship offer
http://www.cjnews.com/news/canada/canadian-sephardim-mull-spanish-citizenship-offer

Pre-reading:

-What do you know about the Sephardi(c) Jews, or Sephardim?

-Are you familiar with any places in Catalonia or elsewhere where the remains of Jewish culture can still be seen?

-Have you heard anything about the recent citizenship offer to the Sephardim?

Vocabulary:

-to mull (over…) – consider carefully, contemplate, think over
-to expel – throw out by force – vb rel to 'expulsion'
-eager – anxious, avid, enthusiastic, with a strong desire to do something
-a procedure – part of a process, an official step
-a hurdle – an obstacle, something you have to jump over
-disappointment – dissatisfaction, frustration, disillusionment / to disappoint
-acknowledgement – recognition / to acknowledge- to recognize, confirm
-forgiveness – pardon, exoneration / to forgive

Comprehension and discussion:

-Why are many Sephardim in Canada not enthusiastic about the possibility?

-On the other hand, what advantages does it provide for some?

-What happened in the 15th century? Do you know anything about the culture of the Jews in Spain before that time? What about where they went afterwards?

-What are the requirements/prerequisites for application? Which ones are most problematic and why?

-Why do some people think the new law is important, even if they do not plan to return, or even to apply to live in Spain?

-What is your opinion of this measure? Do you see any particular pros and/or cons to it?

Further study:

Find out more about the history of the Sephardim, their arrival, culture and achievements in Spain or particularly in Catalonia, their expulsion and subsequent places of residence and conservation of their culture and language.

Eve S, 2015

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From Socrates to Sugata Mitra: A Dialogue with Digital Natives Part 2 – A Critical Response to Digital Technology in Education

Luke Prodromou

Where is the wisdom
We have lost in knowledge
Where is the knowledge
We have lost in information?

T. S. Eliot

Abstract

In this article, I summarise the positive ways in which digital technology has shaped our teaching and our lives in in the 21st century before going on to make a few critical comments on the digital revolution, from a pedagogic and personal perspective. It is because the changes that we have seen in the last 30 years are indeed revolutionary, and far-reaching, penetrating nearly every aspect of our lives, that it is important to engage with the implications of this revolution in an open and inquiring manner. Not only will critical engagement with the effects of technology allow us to make the most of the opportunities it offers to us as classroom practitioners but it will make us alert to its possible dangers in the classroom and outside the classroom. I will end with a sketch of a possible way forward in the 21st-century classroom.

Digital learning: why it's a good thing

In the first part of this article, we saw how predictions have been made that education would go digital by the early part of the 21st century: mobile devices, tablet teaching and apps, it was expected, would be an integral part of mainstream teaching worldwide, from 'Kindergarten through twelve' (NMC Horizon Report, 2012). As I write (2016), this prediction has yet to be fulfilled in any countries, apart from a few (e.g. Uruguay, the Basic Information Educational Program for Online Learning (CEIBAL), which aims to provide all public primary school students and teachers with free laptop access). Hardware and software producers do their best to make the switch to digital education tempting and irresistible, and the future may well be 'owned' by digital technology and its creators (Lanier, 2014).

Most teachers nowadays acknowledge the necessity of incorporating digital technology into their teaching; technology enables teachers to do things in the classroom to enhance their teaching which were impossible in the past; many of the activities valued in traditional teaching can also be done much more easily and efficiently.

For example, it is so much easier and quicker nowadays to prepare materials for students, to store them, adapt them and make them accessible to all students; tests can be produced and graded more easily; students can collaborate and share with their classmates in the same room and in other classrooms anywhere in the world; interactive whiteboards (IWBs) enable interactivity of various kinds. Tzouris (2016) explains how Netflix enables students to immerse themselves in watching films in English, with or without English subtitles, whenever they like, wherever they like. This is a good example of the way digital technology facilitates an activity which teachers and students did in the past – learning from films in the target language – and does it better.

The wide variety of screen-based activities is undeniable. The question is: does it all help us achieve the twin objectives of motivating students and encouraging second language acquisition?

Research evidence

There is some research that suggests learning is enhanced by the use of such technology, especially when combined with traditional practices (US Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, 2010). For instance, some of these research findings suggest that the creative use of interactive whiteboards enhances engagement in language learning (Kaczuwka, 2008): editing photos, audio-files and film-clips and adding a script in English to visual material can be very motivating. The question remains, however: is the motivation sustainable, and does it actually promote second language acquisition — and how does one measure that?

Warschauer and Liaw (2011) review research that suggests 'new technologies provide more tools than ever before for adult learners to hone their language skills through autonomous reading, listening, writing, and interaction'. Warschauer and Liaw focus particularly on the evidence for a positive impact of online resources on student autonomy. They refer to the successful use of a wide range of online applications used in ELT for promoting learner independence: podcasts for listening comprehension and pronunciation; blogging and wikis for collaborative and interactive writing; fanfiction.net for the social nature of writing; concordancing for increasing vocabulary and collocational awareness; second life/avatars for integrating several online applications and developing a wide range of language skills, and multi-player games for enriching vocabulary.

Critical dialogue with IT

Thus, both in principle and practice, we can acknowledge the importance of the digital revolution: its importance means it deserves to be engaged with and understood in terms of its powerful effects and unintended side effects, in the classroom and in our personal relationships (Turkle, 2011).

In this part of the article, we dig deeper into the arguments for digital education from a critical pedagogic perspective; by 'critical' I mean an approach which asks questions about where ideas come from and whose interests they serve, especially as regards power: who has it and what do they do with it?

The oldest approach for fostering critical thinking in education and in life is Socratic teaching, with its dialogic procedures and search for 'virtue' (*areti*). In Socratic teaching, the focus is on asking questions, and through dialogue, finding answers to what constitutes the good life: what is right, what is wrong. In the case of ELT, 'virtue' can be translated as when a certain educational practice is 'good' for the students or not: does it help or hinder language acquisition and does it make learning a motivating process of personal fulfillment?

In modern times, the Socratic tradition finds its full political flowering in the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire, the great Brazilian educator; Freire explores ways in which educational practice can raise awareness of relations of power in the classroom and in society, leading to action to transform society towards greater equality and liberation (Freire, 1970/2006). Freire's prioritizing of learner input in the educational process, as a step towards raising awareness of the political

implications of schooling, will be a useful framework, along with Socratic moral questioning, in our quest for digital 'virtue' – or the strong points of information technology in the classroom.

Is there a question of vested interests?

A critical engagement with digital pedagogy will thus involve questioning on two levels. First, we ask: what evidence is there for the claims made that learning is enhanced by IT? And, secondly, what does the technology mean for power relations in the classroom – and outside?

Let's take the case of the New Media Consortium (NMC), which, as we have seen, investigates and makes predictions about the growth of digital education and its positive impact. If we look up the NMC on Wikipedia, we discover that a major donor to the Consortium is the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Bill Gates, as we all know, has invested a great deal in the development of digital software and hardware and, as a result, has become one of the richest individuals in history. Of course, the fact that someone stands to make a profit from the latest technology does not mean that the technology doesn't have a useful role to play in the classroom or elsewhere. After all, Thomas Edison, no doubt made a profit out of the lightbulb – this doesn't cancel out the usefulness of the lightbulb in the classroom and in life! (Bish, 2013). Indeed, in ELT, stakeholders such as publishers and media manufacturers have always profited from the supply of learning materials and equipment; nothing new there. We could add that in the past, despite individual differences, all students used pen and paper and textbooks on the assumption that 'one size fits all' – and it can plausibly be argued that IT is potentially more capable than pen, paper and textbooks, of responding to students' needs.

However, what the overlap of educational opinions and financial interests *does* mean is that we teachers – who are at the receiving end of these opinions – should question them critically, just as in the past we questioned the role of textbooks; we will bear the brunt of the changes on a day-to-day basis so we have the right – and obligation – to 'interrogate' those who would introduce radical innovation into our practice. This critical approach is in the best tradition of teacher development, which encourages teachers to have an inquiring mind, as well as to continue to grow professionally. Thus, one level of critical engagement with the claims made on behalf of digital pedagogy is to query where the claims are coming from, to put the claims into context: who is making them and why? Are they impartial educators furthering the aims of education or are they speaking on behalf of a particular set of interests, for example economic or ideological interests?

Wants and needs

To take another example: in the first part of this article, we saw how the man who coined the term 'digital natives', Mark Prensky (2001), suggested that 'teachers who are "digital immigrants" are unable to relate to their students' affinity with ICT...'. (10). Prensky makes a bold assertion that on the surface seems plausible and designed to encourage teachers to grow in the direction of where their students are at: they are at home with digital technology and teachers should join them. Prensky advises digital immigrant teachers to 'stop grousing' and 'just do it', (like any good user of NIKE sports shoes?). They should accommodate to the digital natives' way of getting and processing information or risk missing the educational boat.

Before teachers agree to do this, however, they are entitled to ask for evidence that the use of technology in the classroom is actually having a positive impact on students' learning. Enthusiasm

for the frequent and ubiquitous use of technology should not be accepted as the sole basis for serious educational practice.

Prensky's assertions assume that non-digital teachers get in the way of learning and that technology is a Do-It-Yourself (DIY) approach to education in which traditional teachers may be redundant. He also seems to assume that the teacher's role is to do what learners want – otherwise they risk getting left behind: students like social media and computer games, therefore, the classroom should include them, Prensky seems to be saying.

But teachers have always done more than respond to students' *wants*: their job, traditionally, as 'experts' or 'knowers' (reactionary though these roles may sound in a learner-centred age), has been to use their expertise and knowledge to meet students' *needs*, as well as take their *wants* into account. Teachers, for example, – if they are present in the learning process – will not only use web 2.0 activities, which presumably (but not necessarily) students *want* to do (because they are digital natives) but they will also, for instance, monitor their students' progress and, where appropriate, correct and make use of their errors to further their knowledge and acquisition of English. These teacher 'behaviours' will respond more to students' *needs* than their *wants*, as few students, one imagines, *want* to be 'monitored' and 'corrected' by adults!

Bax (2011), in his response to Prensky (11), writes that Prensky's claim that educators should simply alter their approach to suit young people who are 'digital natives', ignores essential elements of the nature of learning and good pedagogy. The 'needs' that Bax refers to are: modelling of language, scaffolding and challenging students – all things students probably *need* for effective learning to take place but may not *want*.

Is there a political question?

Presky's ideas have thus been challenged on a pedagogic level but less so on a political or ideological level; so let us dig a little deeper into the ideological context in which Prensky's 2001 article on 'digital natives' – 'On the Horizon' – was written. Here is an extract from the entry on Prensky in Wikipedia:

> 'Prensky began his career as a teacher in Harlem, New York. He has taught in elementary school, high school and college. He worked for six years (1981-1987) as a corporate strategist and product development director with the Boston Consulting Group, and six years (1993-1999) for Bankers Trust on Wall St...'

From this, we discover that Prensky is coming from both an educational and business background. The statements about digital natives and digital immigrants, for which Prensky is best known, were made at the time when Prensky had already been working for 20 years as a corporate strategist, product developer and advisor to bankers on Wall Street. This does not mean, as I have already pointed out, that a market-oriented and Wall Street-employed business entrepreneur is incapable of putting forward useful educational ideas, as we have seen Bill Gates and Tony Blair doing earlier in this article. These education-and-business connections do suggest, however, that we should, at least, be asking where Prensky is coming from in the debate over digital education – just in case his educational passions are clouded in any way by his business commitments. It also has to do with the nature of 'expertise': Where does Prensky get his authority from? On whose behalf does he exercise this authority? How can we challenge this authority and the policies it promotes in collaboration with Ministries of Education and a market-driven private sector?

Criticisms of the Hole-in-the-Wall

Another highly influential educational movement in recent years has been Sugata Mitra's 'Hole-in-the-Wall. In part 1, we summarised the arguments put forward by Sugata Mitra based on his 'Hole in the Wall' experiments with children in the rural slums of India. Mitra points out that though many of these children had never seen a computer in their lives were able, when left alone with computers in kiosks, to teach themselves everything from 'character mapping' to advanced topics such as 'DNA replication', without adult assistance. Mitra suggested this would lead to 'unstoppable learning', through a 'worldwide cloud' where children would pool their knowledge and resources, in the absence of adult supervision, to create a world of self-promoted learning. In other words, Mitra describes a variation on Prensky's DIY approach to education, with a minimal presence of teachers, who, in the autonomous digital world, often get in the way of learning.

Critics have questioned whether leaving computers in villages – and letting students get on with it – results in gains in subjects such as math and in the acquisition of other skills. According to Michael Trucano (2015) no evidence of increases in these key skills has been found. Trucano writes from a sympathetic perspective on digital education – according to Wikipedia, his work is sponsored by the World Bank; he is the World Bank's *Senior Education & Technology Policy Specialist* and *Global Lead for Innovation in Education*, serving as the organization's spokesperson on issues of technology and education in middle- and low-income countries and emerging markets around the world.

At a practical level, Trucano provides policy advice, research and technical assistance to governments seeking to utilize new information and communication technologies (ICTs) in their education systems. Thus, whether Trucano comes down for or against the Hole-in-the-Wall, he can hardly be considered a neutral observer on the role of technology in education. The involvement of the World Bank in promoting digital innovation in global education confirms at least that claims for digital education are often bound up very much with economic and political issues and teachers should approach such claims with critical circumspection.

Some critics see the idea of promoting digital learning on a global level as potentially 'dumping hardware in schools and hope for magic to happen' (Trucano, 2013). The long-term sustainability of the Mitra's DIY kiosk system has been questioned; for example, Arora (2010) investigated the failure of two Hole-in-the-Wall projects in Himalayan communities; the researcher identified problems arising from unsupervised learning around a computer (dominance by boys, competition, bullying, playing around, etc.)

Similarly, UK education researcher Donald Clark (2013) accumulated evidence suggesting that the fate of a Hole-in-the-Wall site is often abuse and abandonment, unless it is inside a safe sanctuary, such as a school. Moreover, Clark found that the computers were often dominated by bigger boys, excluding girls and younger students, and mostly ended up being used for entertainment, not education.

Deep reading

The most important insights that research into digital education has to offer language teachers will have to do with more effective acquisition of language, in the traditional 'four skills' of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Recommendations such as those made by the prestigious teachers' organisation, TESOL International, that teachers 'should recognize the need for integrating

technology in their teaching' (TESOL Technology Team, 2011), should be considered in the light of evidence for the efficacy of technology in achieving SLA.

One assumes that the strong suggestion made by TESOL (notice the modal verb 'should') is made on the assumption that we have firm evidence that multi-media deepens comprehension and strengthens learning. Nicholas Carr (2010) in a fascinating study claims that this assumption, long accepted without much evidence, has been contradicted by research.

Carr refers to evidence that suggests that the division of attention demanded by multimedia strains our cognitive abilities, diminishing our learning and weakening our understanding. The Internet, argues Carr, presents information not in a carefully balanced way but as a concentration-fragmenting mishmash. The Net is, by design, an interruption system, a machine geared for dividing attention (Carr, 2010). This capacity of the Net to distract us, to prompt us to leap from link to link to connect with it, whenever we like and wherever we are, whatever we are doing, is its charm. The beauty of digital devices, paradoxically, lies in their power to keep us skating on the surface and not get lost in texts as we did in traditional reading of books or articles.

Carr explores the concept of 'deep reading': the ability to know a subject in depth for ourselves, to construct within our own minds the 'rich and idiosyncratic set of connections that give rise to a singular intelligence' (Carr, 2010). He quotes research that suggests reading in the real world leads to greater comprehension than reading on the Internet.

Carr is not a Luddite – he writes as someone who enthuses about the benefits and pleasures of the Internet, but he questions whether software and hardware experts are also experts in education: the internet wasn't built by educators to optimize learning. Where can we turn to reconcile these conflicting views of IT in ELT?

A way forward: blended learning

Bill Gates (n.d.) may point the way forward when he says 'technology is just a tool. In terms of getting the kids working together and motivating them, the teacher is the most important.

Prensky himself recommends that it is time to reassess what 'good and effective teaching' means in a digital age and how to combine what is important from the past with the tools of the future. Good and effective teaching, according to research reviewed by Borg (2006), means that, among other qualities, teachers are both technically skilled and emotionally intelligent.

Research conducted by the US Department of Education (2010), involving over 1,000 case studies, suggests that students achieved better results where ICT was used – with the greatest improvement when technology was **blended** with traditional teaching.

All this points in two directions: first, that we should be using modal verbs like 'should' less and using 'can' more. 'Can' can accommodate the wide variety of learning and teaching styles contained in the language teaching profession. It opens the way for the second direction in which our discussion has pointed us: we need to make the most of the virtues of traditional teaching and integrate them with the opportunities offered by digital learning. An approach which seems to lend itself to this integration of old and new is blended learning:

> 'a formal education program in which a student learns at least in part through delivery of content and instruction via digital and online media with some element of student

> control over time, place, path or pace… While still attending a "bricks-and-mortar" school structure, face-to-face classroom methods are combined with computer-mediated activities' (Wikipedia – 'Blended Learning').

The fact that there are many definitions of 'blended learning' need not bother us; the multiplicity of views as to what blended learning is may be good news, if we stick with 'can' rather than 'should'. The vagueness surrounding blended learning will give us greater flexibility in our attempt to accommodate more students and more teachers: if blended learning is, in essence, a combination, in varying degrees, of online and face-to- face learning, paper and electronic material, real-world and virtual world experience, then already we have the framework for marrying the old with the new. Different learners can choose the appropriate proportions according to personal learning style; the same applies to the teacher, who can blend digital tools and classroom instruction according to the resources available in her institution and her own professional skills as a teacher.

The teacher's voice

Twenty-first century teachers are engaged in a perpetual race to keep up, not only with digitally-innovating colleagues, but with their own digital-native students. Technology is, by definition, attractive insofar as it is the 'latest', the most 'up-to-date'. Teachers, on the whole, genuinely want to be competent in the most recent approaches, methods and techniques, and today much of these revolve around the integration of digital technology into teaching. At the same time, teachers bemoan the lack of support and training in their efforts to be 'up-to-date'.

In the best of times, schools in the public sector were unable to invest in the latest technology, even if that investment were a one-off. In these days of cuts and systemic underfunding, and with the market constantly coming up with new ideas and 'updates' to old ones, the public sector and probably the private sector, too, are fighting a losing battle to keep up-to-date.

Apart from falling behind in the hardware and software stakes, all schools, especially state-run, suffer from a teacher training deficit: even if teachers are fortunate enough to be offered a short training course or the occasional workshop by peers or visiting trainers, there are few resources and little political will to sustain training on a regular basis to meet the challenge of perpetual digital innovation. Cash-strapped and time-pressed teachers are forced back on their own resources, if they wish to continue their training in technology – and to keep up with their digital-native students.

There are two sides to digital pedagogy: the teachers' competence is one half of the digital deal; the other half is the students' willingness to co-operate – their readiness to be motivated by our digital bag of tricks. For most of our students, the computer means the internet, social media and entertainment. Therefore, when students are asked to use the same media not for purposes of pleasure but in connection with learning and obligations such as homework they may at first be pleasantly surprised and motivated; however, when the novelty wears off they may begin to find it irritating that the adult world is invading 'their space'. This is particularly a danger when school computers are out-of- date and thus offend the students' sense of 'new is good' and the 'latest is the best'. Students often own an i-pad or the latest smartphone, whereas the school I.T. lab may have equipment which is 10 or more years old. The digital revolution is in a constant state of renewal: this is part of its appeal. Teachers, too, need to be in a constant state of renewal, but this is usually not possible due to economic and political factors. Where can one turn?

The Greek oracle

Teachers are under pressure – from educational authorities, international organisations and the markets – to adopt digital technology into their teaching. Influential and powerful media figures, such as Rupert Murdoch, have joined the chorus of voices urging us to jump onto the digital bandwagon:

> 'Like many of you...I'm a digital immigrant...my two young daughters, on the other hand, will be digital natives. They'll never know a world without ubiquitous broadband internet access...we may never become true digital natives, but we can and must begin to assimilate to their culture and way of thinking' (Murdoch, 2005).

Murdoch's argument is important because *he* is important. He may not be a scholar and he may not present the results of empirical research, but he is one of the masters of the media world. He wields considerable power: what he thinks and does today may well affect the way we live tomorrow. The point he is making, like Prensky, seems to be that we adults need to go with the youthful digital flow or get left behind – or out. We can call this the 'jumping on the bandwagon' argument. If something is popular (Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat...) it must be OK, or at least we must be part of it; if you can't beat 'em, join 'em!

On the surface, this approach, of adjusting to the will of the majority, sounds like common-sense: it is open-minded and democratic. But long ago, in Ancient Greece, the cradle of an albeit imperfect democracy, these words were written at the entrance to the oracle at Delphi:
'Pay no attention to the opinion of the multitude'.

I would modify this motto, if I may beg to disagree with the wise oracle, to read: '*be critical of* the opinion of the multitude' – and be prepared to go against the grain, after having weighed the evidence for a particular set of educational principles or practice. Socrates, one of the first great educators in history, said 'the unexamined life is not worth living'. I take this to mean that a good teacher and a good citizen is by definition one who questions received wisdom even if that wisdom is the opinion of the majority.

Socrates, also learned from the oracle that other famous Greek philosophical principle: 'know thyself'. Individual teachers in diverse contexts around the world will have their own strengths and weaknesses, their own culture and experience of teaching. Continued teacher development involves being aware of who we are as teachers, what we do well and what we do less well. A good teacher is, among other things, one who is constantly ready to learn – and however many years of experience he or she may have and however many generations of students he or she may have successfully got through important examinations or helped to acquire communicative skills in English, he or she will always be ready to learn. Socrates put this state of readiness to learn in his famous statement:

> I know one thing: I know nothing.

A good teacher, then, engages in continued teacher development, in a constant exercise in renewed self-awareness and critical evaluation of old and new principles and practices. It is sometimes said that computers will never replace teachers but that teachers who are skilled in education with computers will replace those who 'know nothing' about computers and therefore do not use them in teaching. By implication, this is another one of those 'should' statements: it is more likely that, in the future, teaching will have a place for teachers and learners who can teach with or without

technology. The important thing is to motivate and inspire the learner to acquire English – this was possible before the arrival of computers and it will be possible if, one day, the lights suddenly go out and we can't connect our computers. Technological and traditional educational resources will co-exist, alone or together.

In the third and final part of this trilogy of articles on the digital revolution, I will reflect on the impact of IT on a personal level.

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Biodata

Luke Prodromou graduated from Bristol University and has an MA in Shakespeare Studies (Birmingham University), a Diploma in Teaching English (Leeds University, with distinction) and a Ph.D (Nottingham University). He has been a plenary speaker at many international conferences in Europe and Latin America, including IATEFL, UK. Luke is a founder member of *Disabled Access Friendly Campaign* for which he wrote – and performed, with D. Gibson – the 'Wheelchair Sketch' (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y6TxkEOkxt8). He was a member of the theatre group: *Dave'n'Luke English Language Theatre (https://davenluke.wordpress.com/)* and now performs as *Luke and Friends: English Language Theatre.* He is the author, with Lindsay Clandfield, of the award-winning handbook for teachers, *Dealing with Difficulties*. He has also written 20 or so course books, including: *Jackpot, Smash*, *Flash On* and *The Longman First Grammar and Vocabulary.* He gives talks and performances related to Shakespeare and Dickens, their lives, work and relevance to issues of modern times (gender equality, globalization, power and the financial crisis, etc.).

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From Socrates to Sugata Mitra: A Dialogue with Digital Natives
Part 3 – A Personal Meditation

Luke Prodromou

'To see a world in a grain of sand
Heaven in a wild flower
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand
And eternity in an hour'.
William Blake

My friend Amstrad

I remember 'Amstrad', my first computer, with its green monochrome screen. It was the late 80s and the personal computer revolution was in full swing. This first of what was to be many computers in my life didn't do much; it sat there like an ugly Cyclops, its one green eye staring at me, winking at me occasionally.

My Amstrad was basically a word-processor but it revolutionized the way I worked. I was a teacher, trainer and writer of ELT textbooks. Up to that point in my teaching career, I had relied on others to type my lesson plans, my manuscripts and classroom materials: professional typists, friends and family. Using other people's typing skills made my work look nice and professional and it saved me time: but it was still a long, laborious process, especially when it came to correcting mistakes. There was a constant process of passing the typed sheets back and forth with mistakes and corrections, helped by the use of deleting fluid and bits of paper stuck on to the original script to cover the errors.

Having written a text, if I changed my mind about the order of the sentences, paragraphs or even words, it was a time-consuming hassle to make the changes. As it cost me time, money and stress to make mistakes, I tried hard to avoid them and make sure that what I wrote in my *first* draft was as close as possible to the *final* draft; I strove to write accurately. It made my writing slow and careful; but typos, though taboo, and changes of mind were unavoidable and I was stuck in the relationship of dependence on the services of typists.

Typists were doing brisk business in those days; till the word-processor came along.

The repercussions of the word-processor were multiple and far-reaching. It wasn't only the gain in speed and facility of writing: there were two more profound implications of word-processing that I discovered as the use of the word-processor in society at large and in my own work became the norm.

Firstly, this new 'digital typewriter' was a liberation from the *fear of error*. Mistakes, slips, errors, false starts...whether of spelling or the choice of word, could be corrected in seconds quite painlessly – they were without consequence.

Secondly, the freedom to make instantly-correctible errors facilitated and accelerated the *creative flow* of writing. The 'terror of error' having been removed, the mind was free to wander and explore, to try out ideas, whether of language or content, knowing there was nothing fixed or final in the choice of text. You could change your mind and no harm done. This actually led to a different quality of writing; it wasn't just a matter of writing more text, more quickly. The writing became more exploratory: it literally became freer, unhampered by fear; as a result, one could

write down any ideas that came into one's mind, trying things out, changing them at will – till one came up with the best option. This quick and easy process of first draft-second draft, 'vision and revision', allowed one to produce better texts - instead of settling for less than the best, in an attempt to economize on time and the 'to and fro' with professional typists.

The potential of the word-processor to make one a more fluent and creative writer had pedagogic implications for the classroom, too: a long-term concern in my teaching career had been dealing with students' errors. One feature of EFL classes I had taught over the years was their mixed-level composition and the frequency of errors made by the 'weaker' students. The fear of making errors would inhibit the willingness of students to take risks in both their spoken and written work. Besides, writing texts by hand and producing second and thirds drafts was laborious and - covered in red corrections - disheartening for the student. And particularly in the Greek teaching context, where exams were the main driver of motivation for learning English, errors in punctuation, grammar, vocabulary were penalized, meaning marks were lost, often with devastating results. Then, the error-friendly word-processor came along to free the student from 'error-as-terror', as it had freed me from error-phobia as a writer.

Digital distractions

But the days of the PC and desk-top computer eventually gave way to lap-tops, ipads or tablets, mobile phones, iphones or smartphones. The exponential developments in digital communication have revolutionized the way we live; and they struck the classroom like a pedagogic earthquake. It is not my aim here to go over the personal and pedagogic issues raised by digital technology; many more qualified authors have explored the terrain in great detail (eg Carr, 2010; Turkle, 2011; Morozov, 2012; Lanier, 2013). I will limit myself to anecdotes that have affected the way I/we relate to our students and to others. My focus will be on the effect of digital connectivity on our 'being present', at a particular moment, in a particular place and with particular people. The importance and fascination of 'mobile digital technology' is that we can take it with us everywhere and it can shape our behavior everywhere. Our manner of being in the world and with other people can be shaped radically and in a very short time by a small digital device.

My Auntie Polly falls silent

Aunt Polly (80 years old) liked to talk. She was talkative, even garrulous, but we loved her all the same; we even found her verbosity entertaining at times. She seemed to remember a lot about her long life and insisted on sharing her memories with friends and family; no detail of her childhood, or her teenage years in a small provincial town in northern Greece, had been lost in the mists of time. Her courting years, her marriage, the dark years of the civil war, her years as a mother and the lonely times that followed when she became a widow, were ever and clearly present in her mind. She seemed to conjure up the past in all its detail at will. And the past was a country with an endless source of anecdotes with which she regaled her captive audience of nephews and nieces whenever she saw them - but especially at Christmas time. In the festive seasons, Aunt Polly would come to stay... and not only did she have endless stories to tell, but she had opinions about everything under the sun. Whenever she asked what you thought of some current issue or other it was really the prologue to her reciting at great length her own views; views which were repeated again and again - either because she had forgotten that she had already treated you at great length to the same opinions the previous Christmas or because she believed that if her opinions were worth hearing once, they were worth hearing twice. Or thrice...

One thing I particularly dreaded was being caught in a small space with Auntie Polly for a great length of time. I often had to drive her to her hometown 300 kilometers away and was exposed, for at least three hours, to her loud, high-pitched voice, with no escape. She did not use commas, full-stops, colons or semi-colons when she spoke; her speech was a stream of non-stop, unpunctuated inanity.

Then, suddenly, last Christmas, Polly fell silent. She sat at the living-room table or sank into a comfortable armchair and said virtually nothing for the whole day, her head down. Had she gone deaf? Had she been struck dumb? Had she run out of stories and opinions? Had we offended her mortally? No.

She had turned up with a shiny new tablet. All her OAP friends had acquired one and had stopped listening to her. They often went on trips together and when the other old ladies were all securely captured in the coach, Polly would unleash her narrative skills on the company of hard-of-hearing octogenarians, screeching louder to make herself heard over the engine. The old ladies had stopped listening and talking to each other - something they had done for half a century or even 70 years of friendship - and had switched to sending each other messages and photographs on their shiny new tablets. They downloaded video clips, uploaded selfies and googled one thing after another, thus producing an endless stream of silence.

Polly could not beat them, so she joined them. And last Christmas, for the first time in her life with her nephews and nieces, she virtually said nothing. She was still physically present but her attention was elsewhere. She might have not been there at all. The turkey that Christmas was one of the tastiest ever, but Polly made quick work of it and went back to her shiny new tablet.

The professor who fell silent

Let us now go farther afield, to Latin America.

In December, 2015, Leonardo Haberkorn, lecturer in Communication at the University ORT in Montevideo, Uruguay, suddenly resigned. Haberkorn is a journalist who had been teaching Communication for ‘many, many years’ to Uruguyan students. So why did he resign? ‘I was fed up’, he wrote on his blog, ‘of telling them off about their mobile phones, Whatsapp and Facebook’. He stopped giving classes for the degree course in Journalism because he was sick and tired of pouring forth his soul about subjects he felt passionate about to students who couldn’t take their eyes off their smartphones. Their shiny devices sent and received a non-stop stream of selfies during his lectures. Not all students were glued to their screens instead of listening to him: but the numbers of screen-struck students increased by the day.

Until a few years ago, imploring students to switch off their devices for 90 minutes produced a co-operative response; ‘that’s no longer the case’, says Leonardo. ‘Perhaps it’s all my fault’, he adds, ‘perhaps I’ve burnt myself out in the fight to get attention; or perhaps there’s something I’m not doing right as a teacher...’. But one thing is certain, says Leonardo: ‘a lot of these young people are not aware of how offensive and hurtful their behaviour is. It is increasingly difficult to explain how journalism works to people who have no contact with it and don’t see the point in being informed about what’s going on. Had any of them heard of the great Nobel Prize winning novelist Mario Vargas Llosa? Yes, but had any of them read any of his books? No. What with their lack of culture, their indifference to and alienation from culture – what with their lack of curiosity and their inability to spell...I no longer want to be part of this vicious circle. I was never like that and I never will be. I always did what I did because I liked to do it and do it well. I

believe in excellence. Every year on my courses, I introduced students to outstanding reporters, writers who touch your soul. This year, I showed my students the film *The Informer*...about two heroes of journalism and life - and I saw students sleeping during the film and others chatting on Whatsapp and Facebook. I have seen the film dozens of times and I still find it difficult to watch some of the scenes and hold back the tears.

I showed them Oriana Fallaci's interview with the dictator Galtieri and the questions about the thousands of 'disappeared'... to be met only by silence, silence, silence. They just wanted the class to be over. So do I.' So Leonardo the lecturer reigned his post and fell silent.

As a teacher all my working life, I was intrigued and moved by the resignation of professor Leonardo Haberkorn from his position. It confirmed the addictive power of digital devices, especially when they make it so easy for us to be connected to other times, places and people... while disconnecting us from the present moment, the present people. For Professor Leonardo Haberkorn, the challenge of keeping his students' attention was direct: they preferred to be on social media than to listen to him; they preferred the trivial flow of ephemeral exchanges with real-world friends and digital 'friends', than the challenge of critical thinking about issues of importance to society (the freedom of the press, democracy, and so on).

In our ELT classrooms, the distractions from the present pedagogic moment may come from the physical presence of mobile devices in the classroom or from the culture of the internet which is diffused through our everyday lives outside the classroom. But it has changed the nature of teaching and the process of getting students' attention and keeping it. 'Motivating' content is not enough, it seems; the equipment is often more powerful than the presence of a passionate teacher. The little screen which connects the student with the outside world often has a greater pull on the majority of students than the things which are happening in the classroom. Or so it seemed to Professor Leonardo Haberkorn - and who knows how many of our ELT colleagues.

What we type into that little screen seems so weightless and temporary, but in reality it can come back to haunt us. Though it may feel ephemeral it is permanent. And potentially disastrous.

Going fishing

Personal data today is big business. Government and businesses have become a colossal marketplace for personal data. Our email address and its contents as well as all the traffic on social media that we engage in (not much in my case) are goods that can be bought or sold. Our privacy has been privatized and is available on the free market for ruthless profiteers.

On the internet, we are helpless, unprepared and vulnerable to thieves, manipulators and enemies.

I remember the first time I got a 'phishing' message from my bank, warning me politely that my account would be blocked if I didn't renew my personal details, including bank account numbers and PIN words. Alarmed at the prospect of losing money or not having access to my money, I set about filling in my personal data, which included a PIN number, on the attachment that the 'bank' had sent me. I was in the middle of filling in my details and sending them to what I thought was my friendly, reliable bank, when my technologically-savvy son looked over my shoulder as I mumbled something about 'getting a message about my PIN number from the bank', when he stopped me in mid-sentence to point out that I had fallen victim to a well-known scam: I was a few keyboard strokes from financial disaster. And it had all been so quick and easy.

Years on, using email and the internet, reading about and discussing 'phishing' attacks that claim to come from banks, I know better. Whenever I get such messages from 'banks', email servers, rich Africans wanting to share their wealth with me, beautiful Russian ladies wanting to share their free time with me, I automatically delete them, without bothering to open them. I was alarmed recently to get a message from a good friend of mine, Steve, with an attachment which I was invited to open. It began 'Hi, Luke...' so I assumed for a split second that the message must be real – till I remembered that Steve couldn't possibly be sending me an email message: he had been dead for several years.

Public shaming

Computers are simply not designed to be safe: electronic communication is subject to surveillance and can be intercepted by all kinds of agencies, official and semi-official. Users of digital communication can be divided into two groups: those who feel comfortable with surveillance and exposure of different kinds and those who feel they might be harmed because their reputation is precarious.

Both groups are potential targets. The average happy user of the internet faces insidious risks when he or she least suspects the danger; the culprit may be an anonymous colleague who uses the internet and is sitting next to you in a seminar or someone you know and trust: apparently, the most common way in which reputations are destroyed instantly in the internet age has nothing to do with hackers, corporate-government surveillance or data profiteering: a single joke on twitter can lead to ridicule – or someone may overhear you say something politically incorrect about gender or race as they attend one of your conference presentations – this comment gets posted on the net and leads to abuse and death threats; not only is your reputation smeared forever, but you may lose your job, have a nervous breakdown or worse…

This is the threat of 'public shaming'…whether by mobs of the righteous, who can be instantly mobilized or manipulated by the person responsible for the posting, or by one's colleagues, if it is an issue sparked off in the work environment. The only way you can protect yourself from public shaming is to ensure that you will never publicly say something thoughtless and that nothing you say may be misunderstood.

Images are also potentially vehicles of public shaming with the usual gamut of consequences, ranging from mild embarrassment to disgrace and suicidal despair. Friends and acquaintances can take pictures of us – with or without our permission – embarrassing or flattering (usually the former) and upload them onto the internet. Thus, a fleeting moment becomes fixed forever. And once a file is shared it goes forth and multiplies. The single biggest danger we face online is to our identity and reputation. I have come across photos of myself on the net which I hate because they do not show me as the young handsome guy that I am in reality – photos taken while I was attending a conference, having a meal, flirting shamelessly or otherwise making a fool myself.

Private photographs or photographs taken of us surreptitiously in compromising poses may appear in the social media without our knowledge and cause us a great deal of embarrassment and distress. I was at a dinner and dance celebration recently in which dozens of people gathered to enjoy themselves with fellow members of a dance group. As always on such occasions, souvenir photos are taken of the event, with the participants posing awkwardly, grinning into the camera, hugging each other and so on, important monuments in the background. Taken out of context, some of these pictures may suggest an intimacy which in reality is non-existent: people sitting close up in a crowded room; going very close to the other person's ear to be heard over the loud

bouzouki music a posture – from certain angles - which may be indistinguishable from a kiss. These 'compromising' photos find themselves on the internet where eventually they are seen by 'significant others' who mistake them for betrayal and all chaos is let loose.

The person taking the photo and posting it may be simply naïve, mischievous or deliberately malicious, motivated perhaps by jealousy – in all cases, the damage is done and is difficult to remove.

My technological incompetence exposed

Texts, too, by us or about us, can be not only embarrassing on a personal level but damaging to our professional status or prospects. I remember attending an international conference as a plenary speaker in Izmir, Turkey a few years ago. There were two other distinguished plenary speakers from the UK, with both of whom I thought I had a long-standing professional relationship and I assumed we were also good friends. At the conference, we each gave a talk to an audience of about 400 teachers from Turkey and other countries. My talk was on 'Self-esteem: 21st century skill number 1'. The point I was trying to make in my title was that amidst the dazzling technological aids which are now at our disposal (mobiles, ipads, IWBs, etc.) still one of the most powerful ways to get students' attention and motivate them is to build their feeling of self-respect: if we believe in them we can make them believe in themselves and this will lead to more successful second language acquisition.

Part of this presentation on self-esteem in the classroom made use of a 3 minute video clip from the film masterpiece by Ken Loach, KES. The film is about a boy from a deprived social background in the north of England – who is a poor student in both senses of the word 'poor': he is totally demotivated at school and his teacher despairs of him until it becomes known that this ne'er do well student, Billy Kasper, has a passion: he loves taming and training his pet hawk, 'Kes'. Once the teacher discovers the pupil's passion and makes use of it in class the boy is inspired to talk and take constructive part in the lessons, which hitherto he had shown zero interest in. The moral of the tale is clear: build on the students' strengths and interest and you will build their self-esteem and language skills. Don't dwell on what they don't know but on what they are good at.

One thing I am not good at is technology. I am a digital immigrant who makes minimal and unimaginative use of the electronic media in my teaching, training and conference presentations. I know that. But over the years I've managed to get the hang of powerpoint, including the use of video-clips and audio files. At the time of the Self-esteem talk in Izmir I was unsure of how to do anything too fancy with video but I had successfully embedded the video clip from KES into my powerpoint presentation and had selected the option on the menu which made the clip appear automatically when the slide changed. To my dismay, when I clicked my remote control the slide with the video appeared instantly – magic! – but just as instantly it then disappeared; the screen went blank; my precious video-clip had disappeared down a black hole. 'Black magic'.

I didn't want to keep the audience of 400 teachers waiting while I pressed buttons trying to recover the video so I called jokingly to the Turkish technician 'Mustafa, help!' and carried on with my presentation. Mustafa climbed onto the stage and like a technological magician he made the clip re-appear from the black hole in the laptop in 2 seconds. The rest of the talk was uneventful and 50 minutes later I brought it to what I thought was a reasonably successful conclusion. I received the usual routine words of 'thanks' and 'well done' from my colleagues including the other two plenary speakers.

Blogging as a tool for scoring points

My fellow plenary speakers were not only amongst the most well-known on the Conference circuit, they were both popular bloggers, read by many thousands of our colleagues all over the world. Imagine my surprise when next day I decided to read the blogs out of idle curiosity and saw, on one of them, a detailed description of the point in my plenary where the video clip had disappeared and my reaction to the unfortunate glitch in the technology. The blogger described me as technologically 'incompetent' and looking 'silly' in front of 400 colleagues. He had decided to 'share' my apparent failure with the technology with his myriad followers on the net. I watched in horror as the discussion on the post unfolded, involving more and more colleagues from all around the world, my embarrassment intensifying with every new contribution to the 'thread'. After this demonstration of the power of blogging to hurt by public shaming I decided never to start my own blog and to have nothing to do with twitter, Facebook and the other social media so beloved of the 'twitterati'.

My digital passion: me and my ipods

I am not a digital luddite, in spite of my reluctance to get involved in social media. Like most mortals nowadays, I am enamoured of - and sadly addicted to - certain digital devices - and one in particular. If I had to choose the one digital device for which I feel nothing but enthusiasm it would be my beloved ipod. The humble ipod is my candidate for the greatest invention of the digital era. Why do I feel this passion for this modest-looking device? It does not connect me with the outside world (which can be a time-consuming headache); I can't send and receive emails on it, so work and bosses can't find me on it; I cannot send instant messages and photographs, so I am not bombarded with memory-consuming trivia every minute of the day. I cannot phone anybody with it and those who wish to sell me things cannot find me on it. There are no 'false friends' on it, no insincere 'likes'.

But this palm-sized gadget can hold thousands and thousands of things I like to listen to: music, poetry, audio-books, plays, broadcasts, recordings of friends, video-clips. And it can do this wherever I am, whenever I feel I want to listen to any one of my thousands of audio CDs or files downloaded from iTunes or audible.com or from wherever. At home or outside; in a hotel or at

bus-stop; in any place on the planet, alone or with friends, I can enjoy music and literature, podcasts of my favourite radio programmes.

One of my two ipod classics (160GB) contains 18,000 tracks of music of all kinds and spoken word items. The two ipods together represent the whole of my audio CD library, which I have been collecting for more than half a century and which had taken up rows and rows of shelf-space in my various homes over the years. The ipod gives me non-stop joy - and it doesn't require an internet connection; no wi-fi. It is portable and almost infinite pleasure that fits in the pocket or in the palm of your hand. If I want to use a track with my students or conference audiences, for whatever purpose, it is easily done. It doesn't tire my eyes out and it doesn't give me headaches. It is eternal delight.

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Biodata

Luke Prodromou graduated from Bristol University and has an MA in Shakespeare Studies (Birmingham University), a Diploma in Teaching English (Leeds University, with distinction) and a Ph.D (Nottingham University). He has been a plenary speaker at many international conferences in Europe and Latin America, including IATEFL, UK. Luke is a founder member of *Disabled Access Friendly Campaign* for which he wrote – and performed, with D. Gibson – the 'Wheelchair Sketch' (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y6TxkEOkxt8). He was a member of the theatre group: *Dave'n'Luke English Language Theatre (https://davenluke.wordpress.com/)* and now performs as *Luke and Friends: English Language Theatre.* He is the author, with Lindsay Clandfield, of the award-winning handbook for teachers, *Dealing with Difficulties*. He has also written 20 or so course books, including: *Jackpot*, *Smash*, *Flash On* and *The Longman First Grammar and Vocabulary.* He gives talks and performances related to Shakespeare and Dickens, their lives, work and relevance to issues of modern times (gender equality, globalization, power and the financial crisis, etc.).

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Land of Volcanoes

Ana Guarinos

Introduction

When I started to work as a natural sciences teacher some years ago, I came across a topographic map of Croscat volcano. I used it to work with different kinds of students and I always had good results. But when I arrived at my current school and I noticed the linguistic diversity of the students in it, I thought that I had to take advantage of my experience and of the new situation to improve and transform my old activity.

The result is an activity in which different languages are the instrument for studying volcanic phenomena in their world contexts.

1. Context

This activity has been carried out in the Montserrat Secondary School in Barcelona, as part of the elective "Biology and Geology" for 4th of E.S.O, and with the collaboration of the Foreign Languages Department of the school.

INS Montserrat is an important academic center in a high-class neighbourhood. Most of its students were born in Barcelona, in upper middle-class families. Some of them have one parent born in European countries like Great Britain or Germany. These students usually have a good command of Spanish and Catalan (as their second language), besides their mother tongue.

According to the educational project of the school, students are grouped in heterogeneous classes, which promotes peer learning and strengthens relationships among classmates. Also, the school has a support unit for special education (USEE in Catalan), where students with special educational needs follow the core subjects. In addition, students showing a lower learning speed (but who have not been officially ruled as special needs students) may have their curriculum adapted if needed. These adaptations are reviewed at the end of the year to assess the development and needs of each student.

One of the features of the educational project that makes this center special is the teaching of languages. The school offers English, French and Italian as first or second foreign languages and also the Bachibac (French baccalaureate). This is one of the elements which made the "Land of Volcanoes" activity possible.

1.1. The group

We carried this experience out with two groups (36 students) enrolled in the elective of Biology and Geology for 4th of E.S.O. The students belonged to different classes in the aforementioned grade and had different learning levels. However, there weren't any USEE students.

Most of them were studying either English or French as a first or second foreign language. Students for whom English is their mother tongue or students studying English in a language school usually choose French and Italian as a foreign language.

2. Aims

- To consolidate the contents of the subjects dealt with in a natural sciences class.
- To give support to theoretical and abstract learning through hand-on activities.
- To deal with scientific vocabulary related to geology in different languages.
- To find information on the Internet.
- To motivate students in lower grades to choose the elective of Biology and Geology for 4th of E.S.O.
- To promote peer work.

3. The activity

3.1. Presentation

The activity, carried out in pairs, consists of two exercises:

- The construction of the model of a volcano based on a topographic map, so that students can see how the contours work.
- The creation of a poster about the geological features and the history of the volcano. This poster has to be written in the native language of the country where the volcano is located. All the chosen languages are taught in the school.

Each pair could choose from the following options*:

LANGUAGE	VOLCANO
English	Hawaii
	Mount Saint Helens (1979)
	Mount Saint Helens (1981)
Spanish	Teide
Catalan	Croscat
Italian	Vesuvius
French	Pelee

On the next page, readers can find the activity as it was given to the students. The worksheet was written in Catalan because each couple had to do to the work in the language they chose so I decided to use the instrumental language in our class.

* These options correspond to the languages that are taught in the school.

ACTIVITAT: TERRA DE VOLCANS

- **Objectiu:** Realitzar la maqueta d'un volcà i presentar un mural on n'expliqueu les principals característiques geològiques i les erupcions més importants (llegiu les indicacions).

- **Treball per parelles**

- **Orientacions**

LA MAQUETA:

Per fer la maqueta seguiu aquest procediment:

1- Cada component de la parella ha de resseguir, amb el retolador, al seu mapa, corbes de nivell alternes (un resseguirà les parells i un altre les imparells).

2- A sobre dels cartrons que us serviran per fer el relleu, col·loqueu el paper carbó i a sobre, el mapa topogràfic.

3- Ressegueix amb un bolígraf les corbes de nivell que ja havies resseguit abans.

4- Retalleu les corbes que heu pintat, amb molt de compte i sense sortir-vos de la línia.

5- Prepareu el cartró que us servirà de base per aixecar després el relleu.

6- Enganxeu les plaques de cartró retallades a sobre la base, seguint l'ordre de l'altitud que representen.

7- Pinteu i adorneu la maqueta per fer-la més realista, de forma que es continuïn veient les corbes de nivell.

8- Recordeu posar el nom del volcà i el lloc on es troba, el Nord i l'escala.

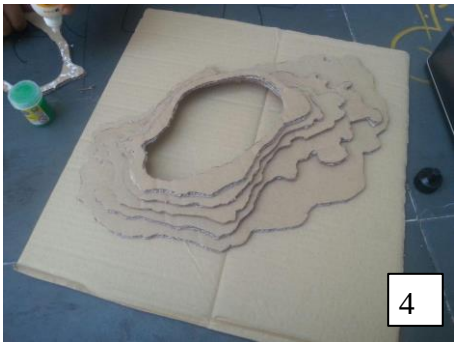
EL MURAL:

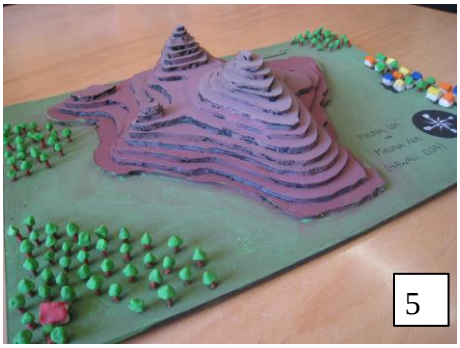
- Recordeu que ha de ser visualment atractiu (lletra adient, imatges, etc.)
- Ha d'aparèixer la següent informació:
  - Mapa situació geogràfica
  - Context tectònic
    - Tipus de marge: convergent/divergent, constructiu/destructiu o intraplaca
    - Nom i tipus de plaques involucrades (continental/oceànica)
  - Situació tectònica: punt calent, subducció, dorsal, rift
  - Mapa topogràfic
  - Perfil topogràfic: l'heu de fer a partir del mapa topogràfic
  - Característiques
    - Tipus d'erupció: efusiva (hawaiana) o explosiva (estromboliana, vulcaniana, pliniana o peleana)
    - Tipus de magma: Bàsic/intermedi/silícic
    - Contingut en sílice del magma: Indicar el percentatge
    - Viscositat: Alta/Baixa/Intermèdia
    - Tipus de con: Volcà en escut/estratovolcà/con d'escòries…
  - Història i erupcions més importants

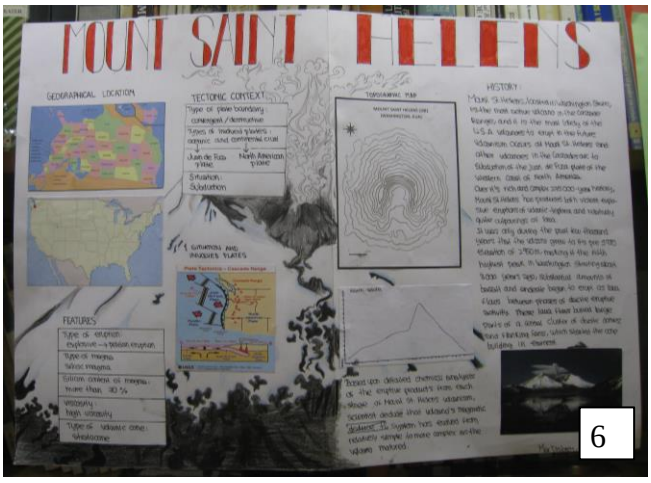
3.2. Material

FOR THE MODEL (EACH PAIR)	FOR THE POSTER
2 photocopies of the topographic map 2 markers 3 poster boards, DIN A-3 size (2 for the contour and 1 for the base) Carbon paper 2 cutters or scissors Glue Paint and other items that they choose to decorate their model	They have to create the poster on a DIN A-1 sized sheet of cardboard (approximately) but I expect them to be creative so, they can choose how to do that.

3.3. Example of the process and results







1.- Student drawing contour map.
2.- Students using carbon paper to copy the contours onto the cardboard.
3.- Student cutting the contours.
4.- Pasting contours with glue to raise the relief of the model.
5.- The model as finished, painted and decorated with trees and houses made of clay.
6.- Finished poster of one of the volcanoes.

4. Curriculum and programme

The syllabus of Biology and Geology for 4th of E.S.O. dedicates roughly 2/3 of its total working time to Biology and 1/3 to the study of Geology. We started the school year with the former and finished it with the latter. The main topics we delve into in the Geology area are:

- Inner structure of the Earth
- Tectonic plates
- Seismology
- Volcanism
- Topographic maps

As this activity includes concepts of volcanism and topographic maps, we did it at the end of the course. In addition, there are some goals that justify the activity:

- In order to do the handiwork making a model of the contours from the topographic map, the students need to acquire significant knowledge of topography.
- Students usually love hands-on work and creative work like this.
- Volcanoes are motivating, which arouses students' curiosity.

These elements make this activity a good way to achieve the concepts in the syllabus and to finish the school year by carrying out a different and motivating activity.

5. Timing and methodology

The contents related to the activity were explained in class and evaluated through appropriate tools (exams, notebook…). It allowed teachers to introduce the task to the students as a final project that included knowledge of some of the geology topics in the syllabus. Finally, this project was expected to be exhibited in the library so that all the other students could see the final work.

I introduced the activity two weeks before the end of the course. Besides the explanation of the activity given in class, all the directions were written down on a worksheet that they could download from the school's Moodle platform.[†]

We dedicated some time in class to starting the activity up and to solving the students' first problems. We took:

- 30': To explain the activity. It may be helpful to show some pictures of finished models from previous years.
- 1h: To start creating the model. Most students drew the contours on the cardboard and some of them cut them out. They finished the model as homework. This first part is the most complicated and it is when more help from the teacher is needed.
- 1h: To do some research online for the poster, in the computer room.

[†] See section 3.

Due to the huge language content of the activity, some foreign language teachers did some extra activities in their classes, related to volcanology, which helped complete the activity as a whole and significantly improved the students' command of the vocabulary.

6. Evaluation

This activity had a double evaluation, from the Natural Sciences and from the Language areas. Regarding the Language areas, the teachers evaluated the correct use of the language used in the poster. Also, they corrected the previous exercises done in class related to the content of the activity, if applicable.

In the subject of Biology and Geology, which I teach, I did the evaluation following the guideline below:

GROUP X		1	2	3	4	5
Poster	Timely delivery					
	It is done in the native language of the country of the chosen volcano					
	All the information required appears in it					
	Conceptual accuracy of the information displayed					
	Correct use of geology vocabulary					
	Scientific writing					
	Attractive design					
Model	Timely delivery					
	It has all the contours of the topographic map					
	The contours are well placed					
	It has all features required in the guidelines (name of the volcano, scale and North arrow)					
	Made from recycled materials					
	Attractive design					

Rate from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree)

In some cases, in order to follow these guidelines, French and Italian teachers had to help me since my limited knowledge of these languages didn't allow me to correct the text in depth.

7. Attention to diversity

As explained in section 1.1, I didn't have any students with special educational needs. However, there were some students with a slow learning pace.

The difficulty for these students didn't lie in the creation of the model nor in the geological contents of the poster, but in the foreign language. For that reason, they chose to work in Spanish and Catalan. Rather than being an obstacle to the activity, these languages became a way of increasing multilingualism in it. The only stage in which they needed a higher degree of help was when they started making the model. However, as the activity was initiated in class, I could help them to solve their problems.

8. Improvement proposals

It was the first time I did this activity, so I encountered some issues that I would change on upcoming occasions in order to improve the cross-curricular edge and the students' participation in the evaluation (co-evaluation).

- I would suggest a higher coordination between science and language teachers. It would be good for all the students to do the same kinds of extra activities in language classes or, at least, following the same standards.
- To increase cross-curricular teaching we could encourage the participation of the History and Geography teachers, because most of the volcanoes proposed had a great impact in their connection with humankind.
- For the next school year, I want to change the order of the contents of the subject: that is, to start with the geology block and then biology. This way, we will have more time to do co-evaluation while keeping the goal of having an attractive activity by the end of the geology block.

To do the co-evaluation, students would visit the exhibition and rate their classmates' projects during a class period so that their mates could help to clarify the language questions that might arise.

There are some items that students could evaluate:

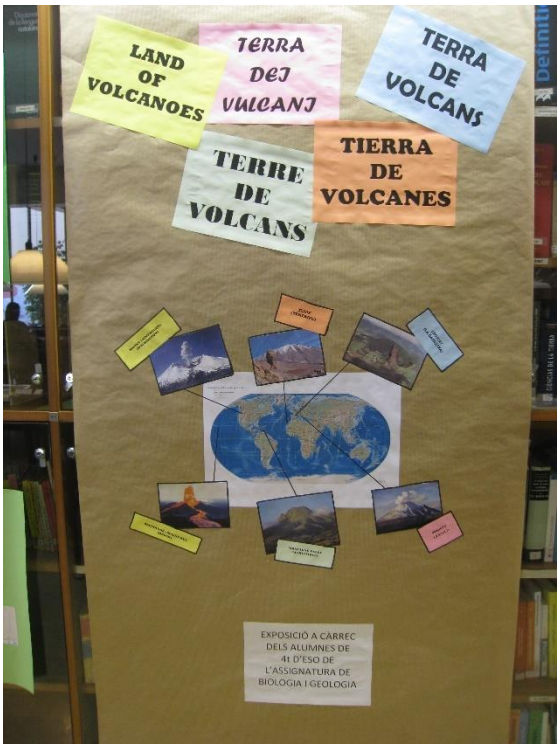
GROUP X		1	2	3	4	5
Model	It has all the contours of the topographic map					
	The contours are well placed					
	It has all elements required in the guidelines (name of the volcano, scale and North arrow)					
	Attractive design					
Poster	It is done in the native language of the country of the chosen volcano					
	All the information required appears in it					
	Accuracy of the information shown					
	Correct use of geology vocabulary					

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

In class, each pair can also explain the main geological features and the history of their volcanoes, and afterwards students could prepare some questions in the Moodle platform or evaluate it in the general exam of the subject. I discarded this last option because I wanted to do this activity on the subject of topography (as I justified in the previous sections), as volcanology was not a part of the exam.

7. Conclusions

When I began to consider doing this activity I didn't think it could produce such good results.



Students never stop surprising you, particularly in activities that involve creativity and handicraft like this. Generally speaking, they did a great job on both the model and the poster. In addition, some of them asked for permission to give a presentation in class about their volcano. It was a pity we didn't have enough time to extend the activity.

The aims related to this part of the curriculum were achieved by working differently, with an activity that combines scientific, technological, artistic and linguistic competences (in different languages) along with the competence of learning to learn.

Finally, I would like to make a request. As you can see, I only have one volcano from each country (with the exception of the US), so I hope this activity will encourage other teachers to find and/or make more topographic maps of other volcanoes of the world. Thus, we will increase the diversity and wealth of the activity, maybe even introducing new languages and making this activity more transversal than it already is.

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Biodata

Ana Guarinos graduated with a degree in Geology from the Universitat de Barcelona. She has been a secondary school Natural Sciences (Biology and Geology) teacher since 2008. At present, she works at INS Montserrat in Barcelona.

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The Elephants in our Classroom

Ian Gibbs

After two years living in Barcelona I thought it was about time that I seriously studied Catalan. I signed up for the first course of the Normalització Lingüística. I joined up and looked forward to my new venture. But in spite of the efforts and energy of the teacher, I soon found myself struggling to motivate myself to attend; the teacher seemed ambivalent to my presence, the rest of the group seemed entirely made up of Bolivian housewives, and, as they already seemed to have Castellano nailed (mine was still pretty shaky), they seemed able to pick stuff up (like conjugations and genders) much, much quicker. Suffice it to say, I dropped out after just a few months and sadly never returned.

I mention this small chapter of my life to illustrate that, although as a teacher we can put a lot of effort into preparing and presenting our classes, the amount our students learn (or fail to learn) is governed just as much by other factors that can lead to serious demotivation, which, if not dealt with, can have devastating results.

In my presentation at APAC 2016, I pointed out that in his book *The Happiness Hypothesis* Jonathan Haidt compared the task of trying to consciously inhibit our basic urges and emotions to a rider sitting on top of an elephant. The rider represents our executive brain (the rational decision making bit) and the elephant represents our limbic system (the bit in charge of making us feel angry, frightened or elated). We all have our own emotional, irrational elephants which cause us to have negative as well as positive feelings. In my presentation, I identified and outlined 8 key factors that can cause our pupils (and in fact all of us) to get upset and thus demotivated. These 8 factors can be used as a ‘demotivation check’ not only for our classes but for any aspect of our lives. The first 6 are universal, whereas the last 2 I feel are more for secondary students and adults, although I'm perfectly happy to be proved wrong. If these 6(8) factors are not addressed and dealt with properly then your students are going to be demotivated in your classes even if you stand on the desk and start dancing while giving out free sweets.

To be succinct, these 8 factors I call

Status
Fairness
Certainty
Novelty
Autonomy
Tribism
Progress
Altruism

It is important to get a reasonable score for each of these factors with every child in your class. If one factor is found lacking then this could hinder learning, if two or more are lacking, then the student will be substantially demotivated and their grades are likely to seriously suffer as a result.

Let's clarify and briefly consider each one.

Status

By *Status* I mean recognition, acknowledgement, being valued, being viewed as worthwhile. Nothing hurts quite like being ignored, overlooked or forgotten. Prisoners in solitary confinement cause havoc just to get any sort of human attention. We give recognition when we go around the class while pupils are engaged in some activity observing, nodding and making positive noises of approval to each child in turn. Praise is another obvious example of increasing an elephant's feeling of status. When we mark homework, although correcting mistakes seems like the rational thing to do, it rarely motivates the pupil, whereas acknowledging what the child got right, recognising any extra effort the child has made and praising it (e.g. "excellent choice of vocabulary") even if it was misspelled, is much more likely to get the child to take pride in his or her work. There are many, many ways that we can reinforce our pupils' feelings of status, especially with the weaker ones. How many are you doing? How many are you overlooking?

Fairness

Life is not fair. It's true – but it still hurts. Injustice is a major cause of unrest and resentment in the world. How many people have killed themselves (and others) in the name of justice? The problem with justice is that what might seem fair and reasonable to one person might seem completely unfair and unreasonable to another. If this weren't the case, then the divorce settlement courts would disappear overnight. For example, giving a test in class where the pass level is 60% for everyone might seem fair to you, but for little Johnny who always comes last, 60% might seem completely unattainable and, so, not fair at all. However, if the test was to simply beat the result that each child got in last month's test then that might be considered fairer by the weaker kids: the challenge is more within their capabilities, and it would also give the more able kids reason to stretch themselves instead of just coasting along without making too much effort. What do your pupils say is unfair? Could they have a point?

Certainty

Super Nanny constantly repeats ad nauseam the importance of rules and boundaries: we all like to know where we stand. The older your pupils are, the more useful it is to make it crystal clear the who-what-whys of what they are learning: What are they expected to learn? What are the reasons for learning it? How much time will be spent on each topic? When will the exams be held? How often will tests be set? How are they graded? The more information about what is expected of them, the more they will understand the importance of the lessons and the more certainty they will have.

Novelty

It may seem contradictory after pointing out the importance of certainty, but once the certainty framework has been clearly established then the content within that framework has to vary as much as is healthy to keep everyone interested and motivated. In my experience, novelty is the topic where teachers score highest. Variety is important to all of us, isn't it? Just following the textbook is simple and scores well on the certainty factor but it's also predictable and uninspiring. But, of course, you don't do that, do you?

Autonomy

It's been clearly shown that patients in hospitals recover quicker if they have a certain control over their surroundings: choice of food, choice of TV channel, room temperature, etc. Similarly, if children have some control over their studies they will be more likely to be interested in them. A clear example of this is project work where each child can decide what context they want to apply their learnings. But autonomy doesn't just mean project work. Could your pupils each have a choice (options) for what homework to do? Could they choose what chapter to study? Could they choose how to study? How many minutes they have to carry out a task in class? Individually or in pairs? What material is used in class? To have a choice, or at least to feel that you have a choice, strengthens our feeling of autonomy and thus our motivation.

Tribism

By *Tribism* I'm referring to the old 'us and them' syndrome. It is in our genes to want to be part of the right group, 'our' group, and we yearn to be accepted. Peer pressure, fashion, groupthink are all manifestations of this same factor. As you probably already know, this desire can be leveraged by using popular or 'trending' public figures. I'd give examples but as I'm over 50 most kids just roll their eyes and say 'Huh, Justin Bieber? He's soooo out of date!' Your kids know whose tribe they want to be in. But it doesn't just exist outside school. You, as the teacher, are one of the most important figures in your pupils' lives; your pupils crave your attention and praise (see Status above) but this means they are competing against each other. They most likely have divided up into mini-tribes within your class, and some pupils will even have been rejected and isolated by the rest of the class. These pupils will struggle in class. How many of the activities done during lessons encourage teamwork rather than rivalry? Not just carrying out an exercise in pairs but work where cooperation leads to success and lack of cooperation leads to failure? Cultivating a sense of acceptance and belonging increases the feeling of belonging, the feeling of being accepted.

Progress

I have a friend who has a great job, with great conditions and a great salary. She hates it. Why? Because she's been doing exactly the same thing for 22 years. Although there is constant variety and challenges in her job, she is not making any progress. Lack of progress, or to be more specific, the *sensation* of a lack of progress can be a killer. Think of sitting in agonisingly slow-moving traffic or unsuccessfully trying to lose weight. Not only do we need to progress in our fields of endeavour, but we need to perceive our progress, too. If students are able to recognise their progress, then they will respond accordingly. Assuming that your pupils are progressing, how can you actually tell? How can they tell? What can they do today that they couldn't do last month? How much of the syllabus have they covered to date? How much new vocabulary have they acquired? And above all, how can you demonstrate this to be true?

Altruism

Helping others. We all like to be of service, after all, that's why most of us went into teaching in the first place, wasn't it? We like to know that what we are doing can be of help to others. Pointing out that 'English is a useful language because it can help get a job' might seem logical, but it's not a here-and-now concept. Pupils can realise English is really useful right now if you frame it accordingly. The school my children go to has a mentor system where older kids help younger ones in their studies. That's an example of direct help. It strengthens our self-esteem and

self-confidence, which are both great motivators. But Catalonia is full of English-speaking tourists. Keep your ears out for any examples of students who have used their English to help real people in real life. These stories also serve to show that English is not some abstract concept limited to Hollywood and MTV. It's a useful skill not only for ourselves but useful for helping others, too.

So, going back to my abysmal attempt to learn Catalan all those years ago, what could the teacher have done to pacify my elephant? Well, firstly it would have been nice for her to have paid as much attention to her students as she did to her lesson plans, by getting to know them a little and at least pretending that she was concerned about us and happy to see us. Secondly, any sort of activity where I could have got to bond a little with the rest of the class would have been nice; the interactions were almost entirely student-teacher or simple pair-work reading stuff. Finally, if she had acknowledged that as an Anglophone I might need a bit of extra support regarding bizarre conjugations and the illogical gender of inanimate objects (why is a 'llibre' male but 'llibreta' female, anyway?), then I might have felt that things were a little bit fairer and I'd have been a little more motivated to stick it out. I know that these comments might seem rather egocentric, but they are undisputedly real and we are all egocentric deep down, aren't we?

These 8 factors aren't just limited to our students. Consider how they might apply to you and the rest of the staff at your school. How might they apply to your social groups or to your family or even your marriage? Identifying and addressing weak spots that we might not have thought important can help keep our elephants happy in all aspects of our lives, and that is a very good thing… isn't it?

If you are interested in this article and would like to explore, discover or vehemently argue to the contrary the points I have raised here, I will be running a workshop on this subject at the 2017 APAC Conference, where I'll be getting attendees to share their experiences and look at what we can do to keep the little elephants in our classrooms happier. Hope to see you there!

Biodata

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A Journal of Teaching and Learning in a Multi-Cultural School in Thessaloniki

Vasiliki Sarantidou

The First Day

I had heard the expression ‘to be thrown in at the deep end’ and I thought I knew what it meant. After all, I have been teaching English for about thirty years. In my time, I have taught all levels, all ages, both in the private and the public sector, in big cities, small towns and villages - all over the country: I have taught primary and secondary education, general English and special English, students preparing for exams, mechanics, engineers - and beauticians - at Vocational Schools. I survived the experience of teaching in a mountain village in Crete.

I have had the pleasure of teaching well-behaved, highly motivated students and I have seen them make real progress in acquiring English. However, I have also experienced the horror of coping with rowdy adolescent young men - and a few rowdy young ladies – whose hormones seemed to be totally out of control and who seemed incapable of - or unwilling to - learn anything: their only reason for coming to class seemed to be to make my life difficult; there were times when I even felt genuine fear.

But no students I had ever taught before could have prepared me for my first classes at the Multicultural School in the centre of Thessaloniki at the beginning of the current school year. My experience in this school would require me to rethink much of what I had taken for granted as a teacher and - in some cases - as a person.

My new school is one of the two in Thessaloniki which hosts refugees from countries at war (Syria, Afghanistan) but also children of economic migrants from countries as diverse as China, Albania, Turkey, Pakistan and Russia. Some of my new students live in the neighbourhood of the school with their immigrant parents while others are brought into the city centre on buses arranged by NGOs. There are some Greek students, too, all with difficult home backgrounds.

From the very first day in my new school, I was impressed by the fact that the prefix - ‘multi-’ was relevant to every aspect of the work done at the school: it covered a wide range of diverse people and situations; it literally contained ‘multitudes’.

Vicky with some of her students.

The cultural context

Diversity was the name of the game, and I would need to learn to cope with this diversity in all its dimensions in a very short time.

For example, I had students of various ages in the same class, ranging from 12-18, and in some cases even older. At least in the past, my classes were, more or less, homogeneous, from the point of view of age. But things were more complicated than the age of the students. The really Big Issue was Culture.

Cultural differences in Greek schools have always existed - in mild forms - affecting a relatively small number of students. They had begun to appear towards the end of the 20th century as a result of increasing globalization and the shifting populations in a world without borders or porous borders which could no longer 'keep out' the casualties of globalisation.

Greece had for many years been a more or less homogeneous country from the point of view of language and religion, with the exception of the ethnic minorities in Thrace. With the fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of the Cold War and the sudden collapse of Soviet communism, Greece began to be more and more multi-cultural, with economic migrants from the Balkans, Eastern Europe and as far afield as China.

But the Arab Spring - and the series of conflicts in the Middle East that followed - led to new waves of political refugees, asylum seekers and economic migrants. This time, war and its consequences (death of loved ones, homelessness and exile) were not to be 'somewhere else', at a safe distance from our own daily routine; this time the impact of war was much closer to home and indeed reached our own classrooms: when these changes on the world stage are translated into everyday reality on the ground, for teachers it means a uniquely different set of challenges: my new students come from different countries, cultures, religions and, in some cases, even when they come from the same country, they often speak different dialects.

It is vital not to forget that most of the students in these multi-cultural classes have fled from countries either engaged in war (Syria) or struggling to recover from war or civil conflict (Afghanistan). Quite a large number of them have lost their families during the war and have miraculously managed to survive and reach Greece on their own. As a result, they are vulnerable and traumatized and have had experiences that no child or teenager should ever have to suffer. Now, in Greece, they are striving to get by in a foreign country – some still alone, with no relatives or host families to support them. A large number of my students are living in refugee camps on the outskirts of the city. This means that they have a very early morning start. By the time they come to school, they are already tired and hungry - and anxious for the 10 o'clock breakfast provided by NGOs.

Pedagogical implications

These students need not only *physiological* support – food, water, warmth – but constant *psychological* and *emotional* support - they seem to welcome every word of praise. One encourages them to pursue their dreams and never give up. A simple word of encouragement, like 'well done + *name of student'* can have a significant impact on motivation.

In Maslow's model of motivation (Maslow, 1954), the needs we have to meet are initially physiological but they also include the need to belong to a group and feel welcome in that group; the need to be loved and be given self-esteem. All this 'theory', which I was familiar with from my University days, suddenly became urgently relevant.

Time and again, there are incidents amongst students which may undermine the cohesion of the group and their motivation. For example, the Afghans complain more often than the rest because they think the Syrians are given preferential treatment over other nationalities.

Another peculiarity of refugee classes is the fact that the composition of the classes is constantly changing since some of them leave when they are sent to other countries while new students are arriving all the time; this makes the situation even more complex and perplexing to deal with. One has to start planning from scratch every so often.

The English Teacher

Where does the school subject of English and the English teacher fit in to this mosaic of misery, diversity and resentment? The first week was really hard, as I tried to adjust to a completely new environment – I had had no previous experience at all in dealing with what turned out to be acute social and psychological problems. In some cases, I was faced with the resentment and resistance of the students, partly because of my insistence on using only English in the classroom; I discouraged them from using their mother-tongues during the lesson in the hope of promoting language acquisition.

In fact, it was sheer Babel when they did use their mother-tongues: Chinese, Russian, Arabic, Albanian, Georgian, Farsi, Turkish, etc., were often spoken simultaneously and serious discipline problems very quickly came to the surface.

On the level of English competence, most of my motley crew of refugees and immigrants have very limited vocabulary but somehow manage to communicate. Forced by the circumstances they are faced with, they do use English with the other teachers, but they seemed reluctant to use English in my classes let alone pay attention to grammar and vocabulary exercises; some of them even pretend not to speak English at all during the English lessons. I reminded them of the usefulness of English in helping them integrate into the new home country, whether they decided to stay in Greece or even more so if they migrated to northern European countries in search of better prospects. In this light, English was not just another subject but an essential tool for Greece and other European countries in dealing with the huge waves of settlers who could hardly communicate with members of the host community. Command of a major western language and, above all, English as a Lingua Franca, would help the refugees not only to blend into the local community but to find work and defend themselves against discriminatory practices.

Course material

The situation was initially exacerbated by the complete lack of teaching material at the school. No textbooks were provided, nor supplementary materials of any kind. The coursebooks 'provided' by the Ministry of Education for Junior High School students are completely inappropriate. They are not suitable for my multi-cultural students since they are aimed at teaching Greek students of a specific level (beginners or intermediate) – students who have attended Greek Primary School and have been taught English for a certain period of time, through the use of specific course books.

This situation demanded that decisions be made to remedy the lack of material: there was an urgent need to find material and organize a syllabus adjusted to the unique characteristics of each class. For example, I needed texts that would interest the majority of students, taking into consideration their differences in linguistic level, age, L1, cultural background, religion, previous experience and learning styles.

Lesson plans had to be drawn up based not only on the students' ability but also on their personal aspirations and plans for the future. For instance, some of the refugees are planning to stay on in Greece and to study, while others long to move on to other countries, especially European countries like Germany or Sweden where jobs are available, or even further afield, such as the USA or Canada. Texts, therefore, needed to be chosen that would meet their diverse needs and match their varied interests.

In short, lessons would have to be carried out in different 'gears', that is to say, pitched at different levels, with material chosen and organized according to the different contextual factors I have outlined. On the one hand, for lower level students, I would have to choose easier texts and exercises – but my teaching skills would be stretched to enable me to present and explain the material in such a way that I would not discourage the students; the last thing I wanted was to make them give up the effort to learn; on the contrary, I wanted to give them the feeling that, like all students, they are able to make progress in learning English. I had to gain their trust both as a teacher and a person.

So, for beginners I started to use simple tasks, drawing on everyday vocabulary items, which they may already use in their daily lives, often without noticing that they are doing so. This encouraged them to believe in their potential to learn.

On the other hand, intermediate and more advanced students could be expected to work on texts with more complex vocabulary, including collocations, and to perform more complex tasks. So, I gradually started to 'differentiate' my teaching according to individual needs and styles.

In terms of classroom management and interaction, pair and group work seemed completely impractical to begin with; but gradually, as the students grew more confident and rapport improved, we managed to overcome some of the difficulties and actually did carry out some of the tasks using pair and group work. I will come back to the fundamental issue of rapport later in this article.

But the lack of coursebook material meant I had to – at first – use my intuition and make the lessons up as I went along. Apart from the lack of direction this gave my lessons and, consequently, the increase in discipline problems, I couldn't just improvise from lesson to lesson. It was hard work and ineffective. Moreover, the insistence on the exclusive use of English in the classroom was also counterproductive. Hearing only English in class seemed to make them restless and frustrated. For some of them, their English was simply not good enough to benefit from an 'English only' policy. And of course, I could not draw on their diverse mother-tongues. So, I had to rethink the use of 'Greek as a lingua franca' in the classroom.

Lesson planning

I decided it was important not only to have a regular source of material but to have a lesson plan and *to be seen* by the students to have a lesson plan. Going in to class with handouts and a step-by-

step strategy I hoped would give my lessons purpose and me, the teacher, confidence and increased authority. And so it came to pass...

First of all, I ransacked old textbooks in my collection and others contributed by a colleague to find appropriate texts for my mixed group of Arabs, Chinese and Russians et al. – any texts which mentioned the Arab world, China or any other country relevant to the group I considered potentially useful and earmarked it for future use. The level I considered appropriate was elementary to intermediate.

Here is Phase 1, the warm-up stage, in a lesson about China, with comments:

Lesson about China

1. **Warm-up**

   Aims: To revise countries and nationalities – to build rapport by using their names – and getting them to use *each other's* names.

   Activity

   Students give short oral responses to questions – 'where are you from / where is X from? I'm from ...what is your nationality? I'm Chinese…', using vocabulary from previous lessons.

   'My name is...I come from ...I'm .....'; focus on 3rd person

   'His name/Her name is...'.

   Check difference between country and nationality (China – Chinese) and add language (Chinese).

   Comments

   It was important for me to have specific language aims – this gave my lessons a sense of purpose and direction which had a positive knock-on effect on discipline. Students tend to get swept along by a well-structured lesson, with clear aims.

   Building rapport: names

   Above all, I wanted to create positive rapport, by making extensive use of 'nomination' techniques. When students are not sure of each other's names and rarely hear their own names they tend to 'switch off'. I needed not only to know the students' names well and to know how to pronounce them (not as easy as it sounds) but I needed to use the names with confidence. The rapid alternation of names and the choice of names from different parts of the classroom (front/back, left/right) kept students alert – as well as giving them ample opportunities to answer questions and get them right; a process which builds students' self-esteem and fuels further language acquisition. On hearing the names of students from other countries and cultures, the class was given a chance to learn each other's names and to get closer to each other, in a word, to 'bond'.

   Phase 2 of the lesson was largely one of pre-teaching vocabulary. For example:

2. **Presentation of new lesson**

   Aim: to pre-teach vocabulary from reading text.

   Activity

   Write on board and ask students to copy:

   'million' = 1,000,000

   'billion' = 1,000,000, 000

   'population': the population of Thessaloniki is 1 million... the population of Greece is 11 million

'border': Greece has a border with Albania, Bulgaria, Turkey....
'capital' 'capital city': the capital of Greece is Athens; the capital of China is...? The capital

Comments

At this stage, I was still trying to avoid the use of Greek as a lingua franca to explain 'difficult' vocabulary to students; it was, therefore, important to make my explanations in English clear and simple.

Secondly, I made a habit of asking students to *write* more, whether it was words from the board (as in this phase of the lesson) or dictation or short pieces of writing. There are two advantages of writing in classes such as my multi-cultural classes: first, the students will have a record of work done during the class and this over time would help them develop a sense of progress. This, in turn, should increase motivation. Secondly, writing - *any* writing – tends to be discipline-friendly. It helps to keep students quiet.

Phase 3 of the lesson focused on developing reading skills as well as dealing with the - by now - familiar classroom management problems.

3. Reading Comprehension

Aim: to develop reading comprehension skills

Activity

Look at questions 1-5: X (name) read question 1, Y (name), read 2, Z (Name) read 3 etc.
Now read the text and find the answers – silently!
Elicit as many correct answers as possible (especially from Chinese students, but not only)
Read the text again – aloud - bit by bit, with students taking it in turns to read – check answers as you go along; make a point of including the weaker students at this stage.

Comments

I tried to involve the maximum number of students by *naming* them and getting them to read both the text and the questions aloud. I made use of the Chinese students a little bit more as they had previous knowledge of the subject (China) and this gave them a chance to shine and share their culture. But it was important to involve non-Chinese students in a lesson about China, so feelings of mutual exchange and respect would be reinforced.

Phase 4: In developing reading skills with any group, but especially a group as varied culturally as my new refugee/immigrant classes, it is vital to make the content of the text interesting and valued in the eyes of the students. The students' reaction to the text is, in this phase, crucial.

4. After reading

Aim: to generate follow-up activities after reading.

Activity

Before leaving the text, ask: is there something you don't understand? Any questions? Any comments? Involve other students in trying to come up with the answers to any queries: nominate, across the room, back and front and side to side, and keep up the pace – use the technique of 'surprise' nominating.

Comments

As in all phases of the lesson, I was attempting to keep a balance between teaching language and content, on the one hand, and effective classroom management, on the other. Thus, in the lesson notes above, I encourage students to learn from each other ('scaffolding') as well as from me, but I also make maximum use of naming techniques, to get the students' attention and, hopefully, keep it.

HOMEWORK *even if most of them don't do it – it looks good to give it and ask for it.*
Write 10 facts about your country/Greece/Germany/the UK/any European country.

Comments
Giving homework adds to the seriousness of the course and sense of purpose. When students are taken seriously, as people who can work autonomously, even if they do not always respond by actually doing the homework, their sense of self-esteem is boosted. Teaching refugees and building self-esteem become parallel processes.

This was confirmed when I set them the task of translating a poem into their mother tongue. This is the subject of the last part of the article.

December

It is winter. Christmas is approaching. Lessons are scheduled to end and the traditional festivities will have to be held. My classes are largely non-Christian. I will have to come up with something both festive and appropriate.

While searching on the internet for suitable texts to teach at this time of year, I came across a poem by Mahmoud Darwish, a well-known Palestinian poet, which I decided to use in my classes: the poem is called 'Think of the others', and with its theme of pity for those less fortunate than ourselves, the text seemed to be appropriate for the festive season. Moreover after having used the lesson about China and Chinese language I wanted to teach a poem originally written in Arabic.

Think of the Others

As you fix your breakfast, think of others. Don't forget to feed the pigeons.
As you fight in your wars, think of others. Don't forget those who desperately demand peace.
As you pay your water bill, think of others who drink the clouds' rain.
As you return home, your home, think of others. Don't forget those who live in tents.
As you sleep and count planets, think of others. There are people without any shelter to sleep.
As you express yourself using all metaphorical expressions, think of others who lost their rights to speak.
As you think of others who are distant, think of yourself and say 'I wish I was a candle to fade away the darkness.'

The poetry lesson

Arab students were given the original in Arabic and English; the rest of the class were given the text in English translation. Students were asked to translate a verse or two into the L1 but to my surprise they were touched by the lyricism of the poem and offered to translate the whole poem each in his or her L1. Thus, we ended up with numerous translations – in Georgian, Turkish, Chinese and Albanian.

When two newly arrived refugees read the poem, they told me about the hardship of war and what they felt as the bombs were falling: their only concern was to survive. Now, having reached the

relative safety of Greece, their thoughts went back to those left behind in Syria and how lucky they themselves felt to be given a chance to restart their lives in Greece, including going to school and doing English – an opportunity to make a fresh start. The poem helped to make them see more clearly what they had been through and where they found themselves now.

The students' translations were read aloud on the last day of lessons (23rd December) just before schools closed for the Christmas holidays, and it was very emotional.

This task turned out to be very useful in another sense, too: as the mere mention of 'Christmas' among Muslims may be considered offensive by some, the choice of a text from the students' world allowed me to celebrate the Christian event in a culturally neutral way. In this way, in collaboration with the Religious Education teacher and the Music teacher, the Christmas celebrations were carried out successfully.

Vicky with a student from Russia dressed as Santa along with the school's music teacher.

Wishes for the future

In addition to this activity, as part of the same series of 'Christmas' lessons, students were asked to write down a wish for the New Year. They were excited at the idea. Having written down their wishes in their L1, we translated them into English.

The most moving text was written by a Syrian girl who found it very difficult to make any wish than for peace in the world. Having experienced the atrocities of war at the sensitive, innocent age of thirteen, her words brought tears to everyone's eyes. The young Arab girl read it in English and Arabic. The text speaks for itself:

What I wish for The New Year, 2017

I feel awfully sad, when I think of the new year that is coming; thinking about our life and about life in Syria...the way life used to be before the war – during the war – how life is now for Syrian people ...How will it be in the future?

What can I wish for the new year with all the blood in Syria, with all the lost dreams for the thousands of kids that were killed. You can see it all over the world. The happiness of the children when they choose the trees, the cookies for the Christmas while the Syrian kids are dying every day and those who survive are crying because they are left alone after the death of their family.

There is only one thing I can wish for. I wish for peace to return to Syria so that Syrian people can go back to their country – their homes.
Peace in the world in every country! Love and happiness for every human being and for Greek people who were so kind to us, showed us respect and support and proved that we can all be humans.
(Student's original text – language errors have not been corrected).

Conclusion: Four lessons

I began the new school year feeling shocked: the challenges of teaching in a multi-cultural school seemed insurmountable. The move from a Professional High School (EPAL) with its routine problems of discipline and motivation to a multi-cultural school with a pupil population made up largely of refugees from war and civil strife was overwhelming. The motivation of the students seemed to be non-existent and their respect for me minimal. After the first term, I now look back and see it has been a steep learning curve for me as a teacher and as a learner. In this article I have tried to share my experiences with colleagues who may find themselves in a similar situation or be able to draw lessons from this special and unique situation to the teaching of English in more conventional contexts. I would like to finish by summing up what I have learnt and by making one or two suggestions for improving a very difficult situation for Greece and especially for the teachers who bear the brunt of the pedagogic consequences of a global problem – with acute local consequences.

Lesson 1: Team teaching

First of all, the problems inside the kind of multi-cultural classroom I have described can best be dealt with if teachers work together, not alone. In practical terms, this means team teaching would be a very useful strategy in dealing with the problems that arise when a teacher faces a large class of rowdy students; this problem is more acute when the teacher is a female and may lack the confidence of male students for cultural or religious reasons. If there is no discipline there can be no learning. At least occasionally, two teachers should be assigned to the same class: not only will this reduce outbreaks of misbehavior and disrespect towards the defenseless teacher but it will also make lesson planning more productive: two heads are better than one. The actual teaching can be shared, with each teacher delivering a different part of the lesson and the rest of the time helping with the considerable task of classroom management.

Lesson 2: Evaluation

Evaluation being a very important issue in the Greek Educational system makes it one more thing that worries me as the new four-month school term reaches its end.

How am I going to deal not only with designing tests of different level in the same class – what worries me the most is the fact that many of the students will be discouraged at their low marks, and all the effort we have been making to motivate them could be in vain. One therefore must rethink the role of evaluation and the importance of giving marks, grades, numbers - and handing out potentially devastating reports to students like mine.

Lesson 3: The role of the mother-tongue and 'Greek as a lingua franca'

When I began teaching these classes, I treated the use of Greek and the students' L1s as taboo. Wanting to adopt a 'communicative approach' – I expected students to *use* the language, not just to *talk about* it; so I refused to use Greek to give instructions or explain grammar and vocabulary. I ignored their protests – expressed in broken, but effective Greek. However, the disruption and demotivation got worse, not better.

Having re-thought the role of L1 and the classroom lingua franca (Greek) in the light of the special characteristics of the classes (multi-lingual, multi-cultural, mixed ages, mixed levels, etc.) I decided to take a more 'creative approach' to the problem.

First, it came as a relief to most of the students when I made limited use of Greek to make sure they understood instructions and explanations of grammar and vocabulary. After all, some of them had so little English, they could not follow what was going on. It is true that a couple of the top students in my classes were not happy with my adoption of even limited Greek in the classroom. But I had to prioritize the interests of the majority of students and in particular the weaker ones.

Secondly, as in the example of the translation of the Palestinian poem, the practice of English was facilitated by my activating the students' mother-tongues. We were moving from 'other tongue' (English) to the 'mother-tongue' (their L1s) and back again, in a creative flow from one culture to another. This process I find is good for students' understanding of English but also good for building their self-esteem and respect for each other.

Lesson 4: Love and belonging

Most of my students are victims of hate and cruelty. The trauma of war, loss and alienation may have taken from them the trust in their fellow human beings and - at the end of a long day - their will to live, let alone to learn English! As their teacher of English, I have found that if they come to believe that you are not there to punish them, but actually respect them, believe in them and like them, then pedagogic miracles are possible.

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Biodata

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