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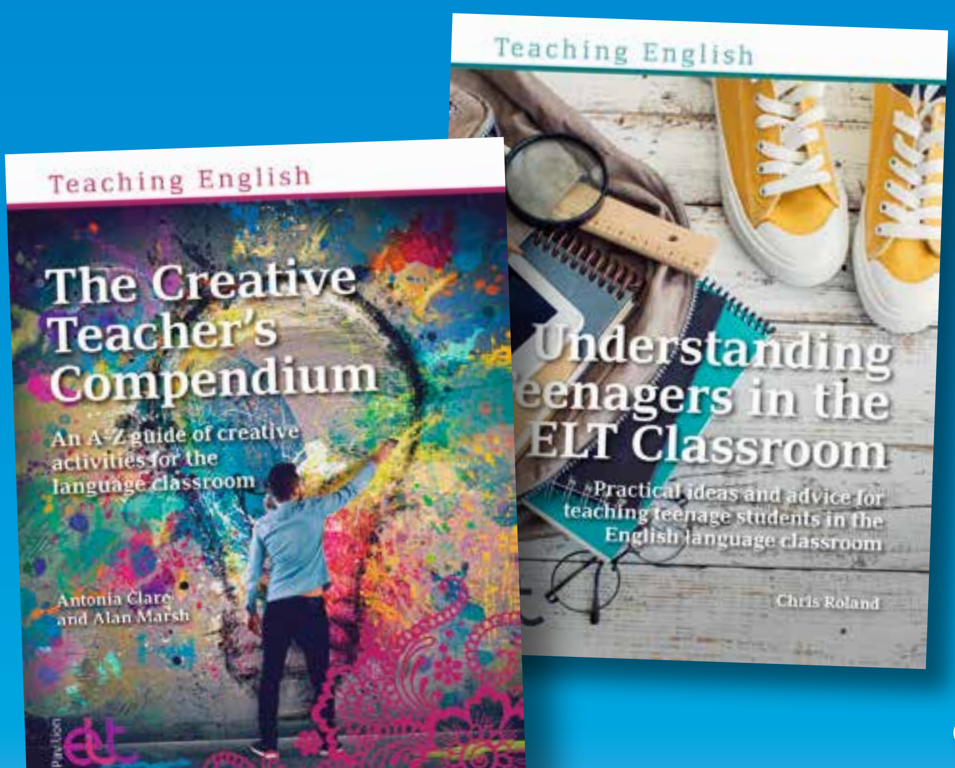

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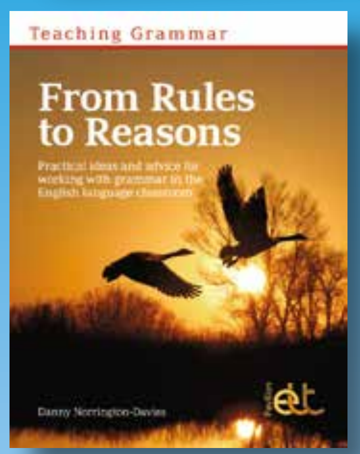

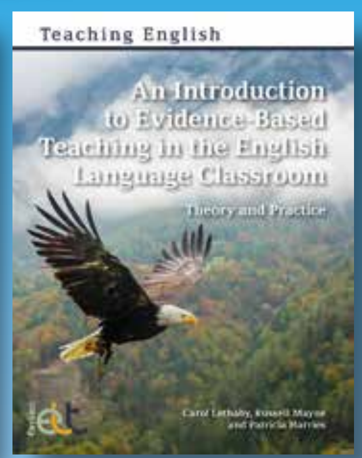

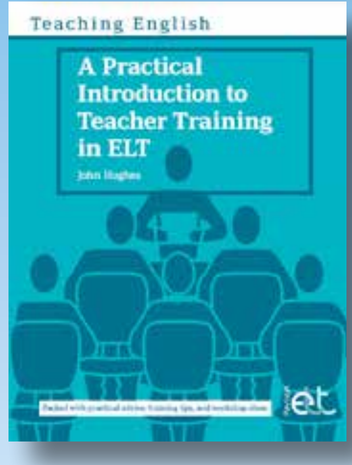

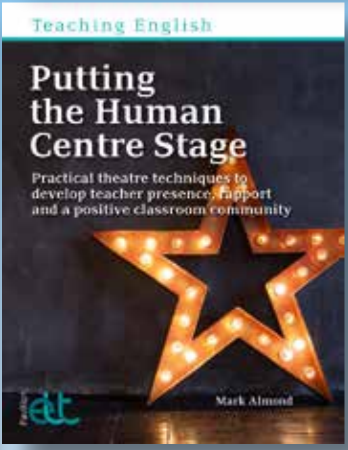

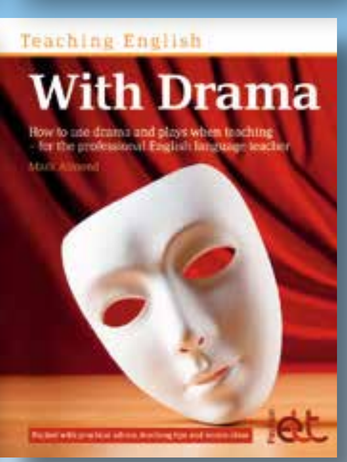

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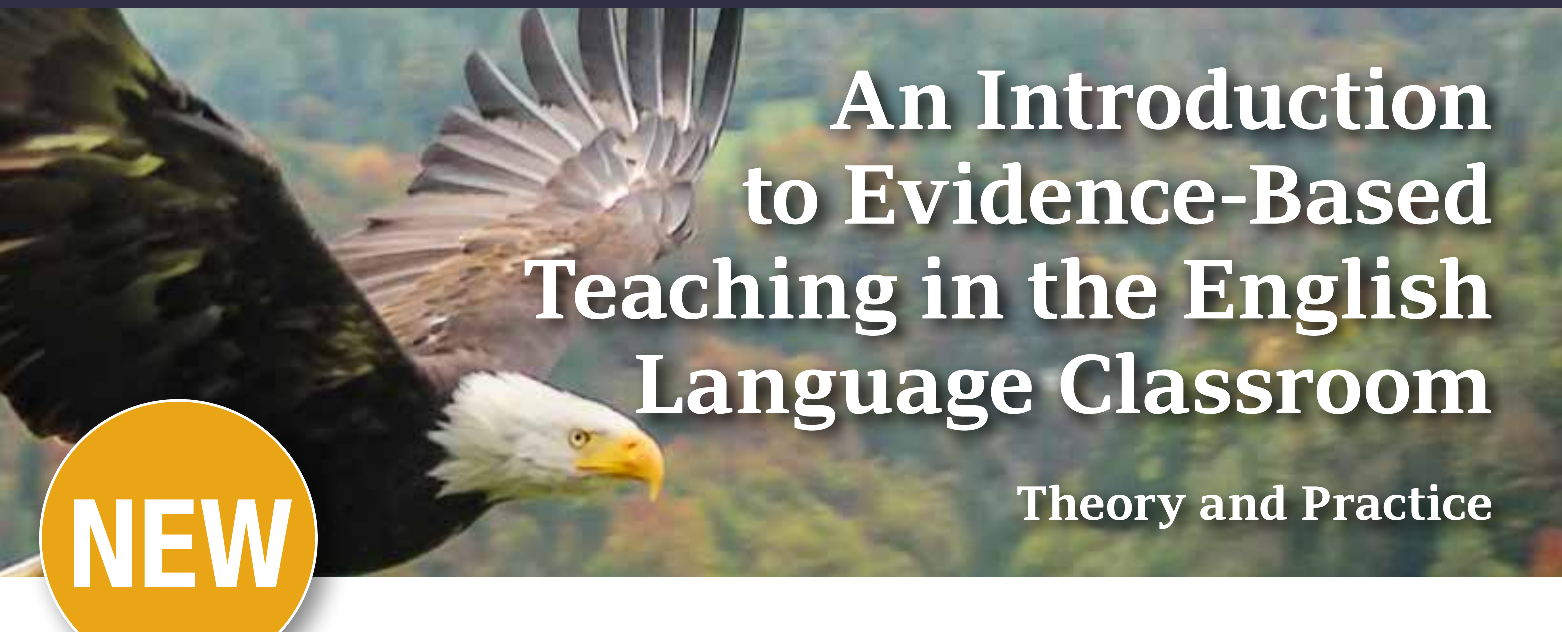

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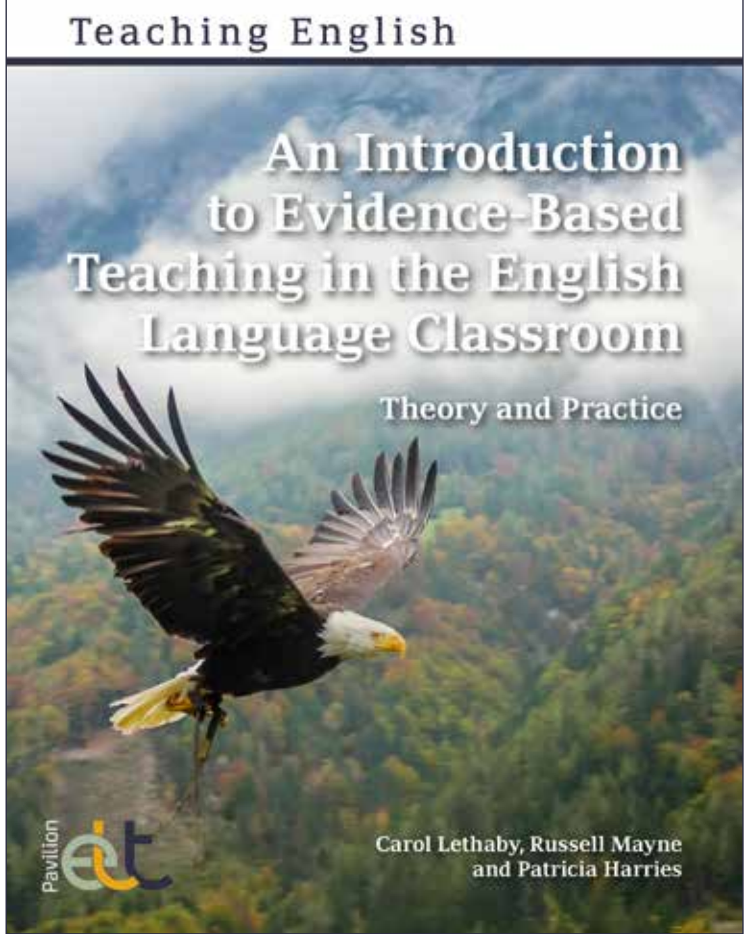

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Editorial

A note from the editor

There is no doubt that the events of the last twelve months have had a massive impact on English Language Teaching, to such an extent that many institutions and the people connected to them will never recover. Here in New Zealand I feel incredibly lucky that we are continuing to teach our classes in normal classroooms, unmasked and pretty much safe. We have had the odd scare and moved back to Zoom occasionally but it is quite probable that for the rest of the semester we will be fine. Numbers, however, are far from fine and we are really going to struggle without international students. We have a large population of migrants and former refugees who need to learn English in order to stay here and train or get a job, but with the borders closed, international students cannot come, no matter how many might want to.

The impact in the private sector has been particulary severe, with language schools in many destination countries simply closing due to the lack of students. Other schools which have always had a percentage of international students are also suffering, as are the universities. The tour operators and agencies who have provided language courses over the years suddenly find themselves with no destinations to send students to, and the homestay families are similarly losing their customers. Of course, the pandemic will end at some point but a lot of the above will not be coming back. Online delivery has become the new normal for the time being and there are all sorts of implications if that is to be the future. *What sort of pedagogic approach is best for online delivery?*, *what sort of materials should we be using?*, *what kind of progress can we expect?* and *how can it be accredited?* are some of the questions we need to get answers to.

So it seemed a little odd to choose Teacher Development as our theme for this issue. At first I did not get a huge response to the topic and I was getting slightly concerned I had chosen an irrelevant theme. But then as the months went by, things started to happen. I spoke to a couple of people who reached out to people they knew and suddenly I had a few more articles. I spoke to one regular contributor who replied with an article including the advice to reach out to colleagues as a regular part of professional development. How very apt! I attended a webinar at four in the morning New Zealand time and was amazed to find a couple of hundred people there, there is definitely a hunger for it when it is good. One contributor began with a story about not doing things the same old way and I was amazed to find a similar idea in the article I was writing for this issue. Great minds…! And it is this tip about trying to do things a little differently which stays with me. Getting a magazine out and running a course are very similar, so easy to do in the same old way, but so much more rewarding if you tweak things a little.

A lot of people have talked about reflection as a key part of teacher and/or personal development and I have to agree with them. How you go about that reflection process is absolutely up to you but the ability to experiment and judge the effect of changes made is a critical part of teaching. So for an issue which I began worrying about at the beginning of the year, I am now happy to say how pleased I am with it. There are some excellent practical ideas, some very pertinent classroom observations and some well-written opinion pieces. As ever, I am sure you will find something to take back in to your classrooms or back to your next Zoom session. I hope you are enjoying your classes and keeping your students happy and engaged wherever you are. Stay safe.

Robert McLarty

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A five-phase framework for reflection

Thomas Farrell describes how teachers might get a more complete view of their teaching.

Introduction

One day a young girl was watching her mother cooking a roast of beef. Just before the mother put the roast in the pot, she cut a slice off the end. The ever-observant daughter asked her mother why she had done that, and the mother responded that her grandmother had always done it. Later that same afternoon, the mother was curious, so she called her mother and asked her the same question. Her mother, the child's grandmother, said that in her day she had to trim the roasts because they were usually too big for a regular pot (from Farrell, 2018).

I have told the above story many times, at many different conferences, in many different countries, and each time I ask the audience the same question: 'Are we cutting the slice off in our classrooms without knowing it?' In other words, are we following routine in the way we teach our classes without really knowing this? Some teachers may say that they have experience as a teacher and the more experience they have, their rationale goes, the easier it is to routinely teach. Yes, a certain amount of routine is useful not only for teachers but also for students to be able to follow what is expected from them. However, without any reflection on our experience, such as the non-reflecting child's mother in the opening story above, we end up 'cutting the slice off the roast' each time we teach without realizing it and without considering the consequences of our actions. In fact, years of teaching experience is not enough to achieve expertise as an effective teacher, for we do not learn much from experience alone as much as we learn from reflecting on that experience. Through reflection, teachers can make more informed decisions about their practice because they have a deeper knowledge and understanding of their *who* they are, *what* they do, *how* they do it, *why* they do it, and *where* they do it (Farrell, 2018, 2019, 2021). I will cover all five of these in this article using a framework that I have recently developed for language teachers to use; it is called the *framework for reflecting on practice* (Farrell, 2015).

Reflective practice framework

I developed the *framework for reflecting on practice* in part because I noticed that many of the other available reflection frameworks tend to restrict reflection to a retrospective role and focus solely on problems in the classroom. This retrospective approach, or as Freeman (2016) calls it, 'post-mortem reflection' (p. 217), usually limits the focus to reflection-as-repair to address some perceived problem that must be solved or fixed, and has led reflection to become a mechanical act of filling out checklists designed by others. How is this true reflection, given that others are asking teachers to look for what *they* think is important and not the teacher? Indeed, over the recent years this recipe-following fill-in-the-checklist approach has produced a gap between the teacher who is doing the reflecting, the problem perceived (usually by others), the act of teaching, and reflection. However, just as we cannot separate the dancer from the dance, I believe we cannot separate the teacher who is reflecting from the act of teaching. With this in mind I developed a more holistic approach to reflective practice for TESOL teachers that not only focuses on the intellectual, cognitive and meta-cognitive aspects of reflection that many of the other approaches include (and limit themselves to), but I also include the spiritual, moral and emotional non-cognitive aspects of reflection (Farrell, 2015). Thus, this framework acknowledges the inner life of teachers. The framework has five different stages/levels of reflection: 'philosophy', 'principles', 'theory', 'practice', and 'beyond practice' and each of these stages or levels cover the questions I posed about *who* they are, *why* they do *what* they do, *how* they do it, *what* they do, and *where* they do it.

Philosophy

The first stage of the framework, *philosophy*, examines the 'teacher-as-person' (the *who* above) and can be considered a 'window to the roots of a teacher's practice because a philosophy of practice means each observable behavior has a reason that guides it even if it is implicit' (Farrell, 2019: 84). By talking about past experiences that may have shaped their philosophy, teachers obtain self-knowledge as they reflect on their backgrounds (i.e. heritage, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, family, and personal values). While teachers can simply write an in-depth autobiography, another way to engage teachers in this stage is through narrative frames where they tell a story of their experience or accounts of their life through prompts (i.e. *I became a teacher because…*). Narrative frames can help language teachers

answer the 'Who am I?' question related to their identity. Here are ten narrative frames teachers can complete (adapted from Farrell, 2015).

1. I became a teacher because …
2. When I first started to teach I …
3. The place where I teach now is …
4. My students are …
5. The best aspect of my life as a teacher is …
6. The worst aspect of my life as a teacher is …
7. I know I've done good work when …
8. I know I've done bad work when …
9. I feel best about my work when …
10. When I leave this school my students and colleagues will remember me for …

Principles

The second stage, *principles*, encompasses a teacher's reflections of their beliefs (the *why* above) about teaching and learning English as a second or foreign language. Because teacher beliefs are often held tacitly, it is important to articulate such beliefs because teachers can then better evaluate if these articulated beliefs were still appropriate or not in light of what they observe from their practice (see below). To articulate beliefs, teachers can use metaphors, or choose statements that best reflects their beliefs about teaching and learning. Indeed, metaphors can be valuable clues to the way teachers view teaching and a guide to the way they act in the classroom. Teachers can decide what metaphor they use for themselves as a teacher (e.g. 'a teacher is a facilitator') and then explain what it means to them. Teachers can also ask if their metaphor(s) has changed over time since they became a language teacher. Teachers can also reflect on the following related to beliefs:

- What are your beliefs about teaching and learning English to speakers of other languages?
- How do these beliefs influence your teaching?
- Where do your beliefs come from (source of beliefs)?
  - Your past experience as a student
  - Your experience of what works best
  - Established practice in my school
  - Your personality
  - Research you read
  - Method(s) you follow.
- What do your learners believe about learning?
- What do your learners believe about your teaching?

Theory

The third stage, *theory*, requires teachers to reflect on theories (the *how* above) that underlie their practice, whether those are based on hunches, teacher training, books, journals, etc., to see how they translate in the classroom. At this stage, the teacher focuses on *how* they plan their lessons, more specifically, their planning (i.e. backwards, forwards, or central planning) and choice of activities, techniques, and methods. Here are some questions teachers can reflect on at this stage:

- How do you plan lessons?
- Do you use a set syllabus? If yes, who made this and how is it designed? If not, do you make your own syllabus? Daily, weekly, monthly etc.
- Do you plan extensively (e.g. do you write detailed lesson plans? If yes, what do you usually write? If no, why don't you write an extensive plan?).
- When planning lessons do you begin by considering the *content* that you will be teaching first?
- When planning lessons do you begin by considering the *methods* and *activities* that you will be teaching first?
- When planning lessons do you decide on the desired *learning outcomes* first?
- Do you ever go into a lesson without planning?

Practice

The fourth stage, *practice*, is what constitutes the tip of the iceberg and examines observable actions while teaching (the *what* above). This stage is strongly connected to the first three stages as development of awareness of the convergence or divergence between philosophy, principles, theory and practice is the start of 'a process of reducing the discrepancy between what we do and what we think we do' (Knezevic, 2001: 10). Classroom observations can be used to compare what a teacher says they do and what they actually do using category instruments, or audio and video recordings. This stage of practice can bring to light the reasons for convergence or divergence by helping teachers draw connections between their philosophy, principles, theory and practice to develop the ability to reflect during a lesson (reflection-in-action), after a lesson (reflection-on-action), and reflect prior to teaching (reflection-for-action). Here are some questions teachers can reflect on at this stage:

- Do you begin your classes the same way each day?
- Do you end your classes the same way each day?
- Do you follow textbooks by page numbers exactly (routinely)? If you answer no, what do you with the prescribed textbooks you must use?
- Do you stand/sit in the same place each class?
- Do you call on the same students to answer questions?
- Are the students required to raise their hands and wait to be nominated before asking or answering a question, or can they shout out and participate more spontaneously in your classes?
- How and when are students expected to interact with other students?
- Can students move around the room whenever they want?
- If a student needs help with something, when and how does the student approach you?

Beyond Practice

The final phase, *beyond practice* or critical reflection, explores the moral, political, emotional, ethical, and social issues that impact teachers' practice within a particular context (the *where* above). These issues are not examined much in the TESOL profession; however, teachers deal with them on a daily basis. At this stage, reflection helps teachers to understand the deeply-rooted power dynamics in education and to question

beliefs which may have been externally imposed. With the knowledge gained from this stage, teachers can 'contribute to social change for the betterment of students, colleagues, community, and society at large' (Farrell, 2015: 86) as well as reflect well beyond classroom teaching practice (i.e. textbook, syllabus, curriculum, working conditions). Here are some questions to reflect on at this stage:

- What are your viewpoints about power relations in your classroom and where do they originate from?
- Is there a noticeable rank order of staff at your school? If so, where do you think you rank, and why?
- Does your school or office of education have policies in place to help differently-abled students? If so, have you been informed of these policies and your place within them as an English language teacher?
- Have you ever been concerned about job security?
- If so, what prompted this concern?
- What actions did you take to try to protect your job, or not?
- Is collaboration with colleagues encouraged or discouraged?
- If it is discouraged, why is it?
- If it is encouraged, how is it encouraged, and why?
- Does your status as a TESOL teacher affect your life inside and outside the classroom (positively or negatively)? If so, how do these effects emerge in your teaching practice?
- What links to you perceive between your morals and/or religious beliefs and your practice?
- Do you have any conflicts between your personal morals and anything in your work context: students, colleagues, materials, administrators?

So far, I have outlined a framework for teachers reflecting on practice and now I will outline some main tools that teachers can use as they navigate the different stages of the framework. Apart from classroom observations noted above, the two main tools teachers can use to help mediate their reflections is through dialogue and writing. Teachers can come together in pairs or groups either physically or virtually and engage in reflective discussions. When teachers talk together it gives them more scope to not only reflect together and develop their problem-solving skills, but also compare and share ideas that teachers reflecting alone may not have access to. Teachers who reflect together can also receive more emotional support (see *beyond practice* above) from other teachers as they begin to deconstruct, analyze, and interpret critical professional events for individual members and for the group as a whole.

Teachers can also write their reflections as they have a lot of experience writing within their workday, be it on lesson planning, reports on students' progress or the like; however, it is my experience working with English language teachers worldwide that they seldom take time to write for themselves professionally about their practice. Understandably, many teachers say they have no time to write and I agree, somewhat. I started my own entry into reflective practice by writing my thoughts before, during and after my classes. I wrote whatever came to my mind and I wrote on the back of chocolate bar wrappers once during a class when I got an idea. My main point is writing about practice does not have to be elaborate and can begin anytime and anywhere. *Why write*, you may ask? Writing has its own built-in reflective mechanism; the process entails that writers must stop to think and organize their thoughts before writing (either with a pen or computer) and then decide on what to write. After this they can 'see' (literally) their thoughts and reflect on these for self-understanding. By writing regularly, teachers are able to identify and address issues critical to their practice within their teaching contexts, and as a result provide more learning opportunities for their students.

Conclusion

This article has outlined one way of implementing or operationalizing reflective practice in TESOL by using the framework for reflecting on practice that has five stages: *philosophy*, *principles*, *theory*, *practice* and *beyond practice*. In this way teachers can use the framework (through talking and/or writing) as a lens through which they can view their professional (and personal) worlds—what has shaped their professional lives—as they become more aware of *who* they are, *what* they do, *how* they do it, *why* they do it, and *where* they do it. I believe that such a holistic approach to reflection produces more integrated TESOL teachers who have self-awareness and understanding to be able to interpret, shape and reshape their practice throughout their careers. The information that is produced from reflecting during each stage can be compiled together to paint a more complete portrait of a practicing teacher rather than a 'drive-by' observation of five minutes of teaching, as is the usual case. In such a manner the teacher is not separated from the act of teaching when reflecting or being evaluated: the teacher *is* the teaching just as the dancer *is* the dance!

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Thomas S.C. Farrell is Professor of Applied Linguistics at Brock University, Canada. Professor Farrell's professional interests include Reflective Practice, and Language Teacher Education & Development. Professor Farrell has published widely in academic journals and has presented at major conferences worldwide on these topics. A selection of his work can be found on his webpage: www.reflectiveinquiry.ca

Reflective practice: what is so special about it?

Atsuko Watanabe considers just why reflective practice is so useful.

Reflective practice has established itself as a major underlying philosophy of teacher development. Many teacher development programmes in the world embrace reflective practice as one crucial part of their whole. But what is so special about reflective practice? We, teachers, coming out of the classroom after a lesson, have always talked to ourselves and often to our colleagues about how the lesson went. So, what is different about reflective practice? In this article, I would like to write about what I think is special about reflective practice.

Just as any other abstract concept, many scholars have defined reflective practice and reflection in numerous ways. One drawback of reflective practice is often argued to be the diversity of its interpretations in terms of what is meant by reflection, its purpose, and the process one can follow. However, interestingly, it is also pointed out that the diverse interpretations allow teachers, with any philosophy about teaching, to take up the practice. Before starting the discussion about reflective practice, I would like to introduce my own definition. I define reflection as 'the activity of looking back over one's actions, thoughts, written and spoken ideas, feelings, and interactions, all with the goal of making new meaning for oneself, and an activity conducted in dialogue with the self and with others' (Watanabe, 2017b: 47).

As an approach to professional development, it is not too much of a stretch to credit the popularity of reflective practice (RP) to the publication of the seminal book by Donald Schön, *Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (1983). One aspect of what is special about reflective practice is that it has changed the interpretation of practice and the status of the practising teachers. Schön's illustration of the paradigm shifts brought out by RP can be encapsulated as outlined below.

Practitioners' experiences as professional knowledge

The first paradigm shift is that practising teachers' experiences, or what can be described as 'tacit' teacher knowledge, are regarded as professional knowledge. Knowledge has often been associated with findings of researchers through their scientific experiments. However, problems in the real world of classrooms are not simple and straightforward, and so often cannot be solved by the findings of experiments or through the solutions explained in books. What can solve such problems is the know-how of the practising teacher, accumulated and internalised through long years of teaching in the classroom. Reflective practice regards know-how of the teachers as professional knowledge. Teacher knowledge often remains tacit as teachers do not necessarily verbalise

their expertise. Reflective practice allows the teachers to verbalise the know-how of their expertise and demonstrate it as professional knowledge.

Practitioners as owners of knowledge

The second shift which is associated with reflective practice is that practitioners are regarded as the owners of knowledge. As I discussed in the earlier section, it has long been considered that researchers create knowledge and teachers are bestowed with the knowledge created by the researchers. As practitioners' experiences are professional knowledge, teachers are generators, owners, and creators of knowledge. Johnson and Golombek (2002) describe teachers' ownership of knowledge as teachers being 'legitimate knowers' (p. 3).

Reflection as one way of professional development

The third change that reflective practice has brought about is that reflection, or looking back at one's practice, has become recognised as a form of professional development. Traditionally, professional development has tended to mean attending lectures given by teacher educators or reading books written by experts. However, since tacit knowledge is professional knowledge and the teachers are legitimate 'knowers', there is now greater appreciation that reflecting on one's experiences represents professional development.

How should we reflect?

Through the discussion of how we can reflect, I would like to discuss how reflection is different from just thinking about and talking about teaching. Several frameworks of reflective practice, such as Kolb's experiential learning cycle (Kolb, 1984) and ALACT model (Korthagen *et al*, 2001), have been employed to explain the process of reflective practice. These frameworks are very helpful in understanding the process and the cyclic nature of reflective practice. I would like to introduce my own diagram

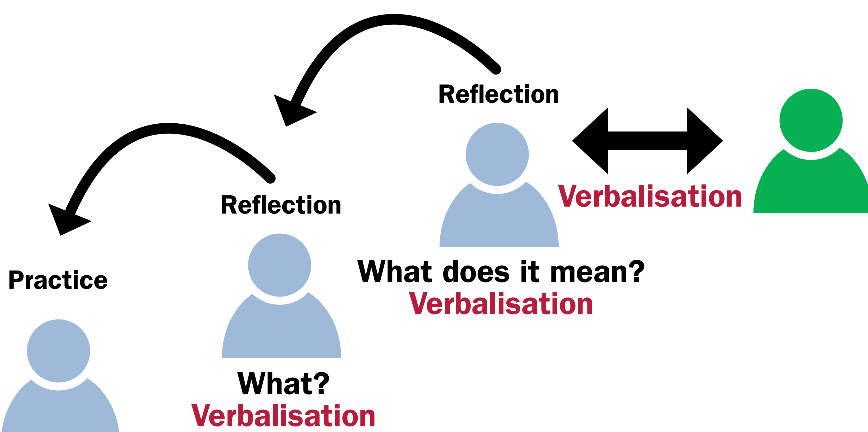

Figure 1 The phases of reflection

conceptualising reflection, which delineates reflection in a different way, that is, emphasising the importance of looking at one's practice through different layers of metacognitive perspectives. Figure 1 describes four different phases of reflection. I will explain each phase by providing my own example.

Practice

The first phase, practice, is what teachers do in a classroom. The person in Figure 1 below 'Practice' is one who reflects upon one's teaching. An example of my own reflections comes from one episode of teaching on an English Language Teaching Methods course, after asking students to generate some ideas for enhancing students' participation. One student responded, '*I ask students discussion with others*.' I did not correct her by indicating that she should have said '*I can ask students to have a discussion with others*' but went on teaching.

Reflection: what?

The second phase is reflection through asking questions about one's experience such as '*What happened?*', '*What did I do?*' or '*What did I feel?*' The person in blue is the same person but is placed a little higher, as one is looking at one's experience from different perspectives. Let me share an example reflection:

I was happy that the student responded to my question in English, but I did not correct her errors. I did not correct the error because we could understand what she wanted to say without making the correction. Also, I wanted to show her I valued the fact that she was speaking in English and that I know that error correction in front of the whole class is not always beneficial; the student may not be able to respond to the correction as she was nervous speaking in front of everyone and that making the correction might have just ended up embarrassing the student. However, I still felt uncomfortable as I feel I should probably correct students' errors as I am teaching a group of pre-service teachers who want to be English language teachers at pre-tertiary institutions. The students will probably be confronted with a similar situation in a classroom and I feel I should demonstrate how error correction can be handled. I also feel uncomfortable wondering what the other students may think of me not correcting the errors. Some might be thinking that I should correct the errors.

In reflection, it is crucial to verbalise one's thoughts rather than just thinking about it. Verbalisation here involves writing rather than speech as one is having a dialogue with oneself. Reflective practice is often considered to be time-consuming especially when it engages teachers in writing. Writing, however, is one important aspect of reflection as it is a way to look at one's experience through different perspectives. What is written is a product of oneself expressing one's experiences, thoughts and feelings in letters and characters, yet it is a separate entity which allows us to look at experiences objectively (Watanabe, 2017a).

Reflection: what does it mean?

Reflection is not completed simply through describing what happened. The crucial question we need to ask ourselves is 'What does it mean?' This allows us to make meanings for ourselves in terms of what we did and what we felt. The blue person under 'Reflection' is the same individual but is placed above the other two as we are looking at our practice and our feelings through different metacognitive perspectives. Here is an example of my reflection:

What does it mean that I felt uncomfortable? As I wrote earlier, I felt uncomfortable not correcting the errors because I am teaching pre-service teachers. I feel that I should show them how error correction can be done in a lesson, but it is difficult for me to correct errors of the students. This might mean that I am still perplexed with what and how I can teach pre-service teachers. This is my fourth year at this university, where I teach mostly pre-service teachers, which is an exciting new challenge for me. Even though I do believe that error correction is not always helpful, I feel that I can demonstrate and discuss how teachers do (or do not do) error correction in a classroom. What I can do is go over different types of errors and discuss various styles of error correction. I can ask the students' view of error correction and I can share my view with the students.

Through asking myself question '*What does it mean?*', I was able to gain one interpretation of my dilemma, which is that I am still exploring ways to teach pre-service teachers and that error correction is one part of it. Asking the question, '*What does it mean?*' epitomises what is special about reflective practice, or how reflective practice is different from just talking about lessons. In thinking and talking about lessons, many of us are likely to focus on the questions '*What happened?*' and '*What did I feel?*'. In order to improve our teaching, we need to look it through different metacognitive perspectives and the question '*What does it mean?*' brings us to understand why we do certain things in a lesson and how we interpret certain things in certain ways.

Dialogue with others

The person in green is a person with whom we can have a dialogue. Having a dialogue with others is also a crucial aspect of reflection as it engages us to verbalise our reflection to others and learn from their views; which allows us to gain new perspectives and possibly to make new meanings of our experiences. Dialogues can take place face-to-face, via email, via Zoom, etc.

As the diagram of the conceptualization of reflection shows, one's experience is interpreted through different phases, which brings one to look at the experience through different perspectives, understand one's interpretation of the experience, and make new meanings of one's experience. Generating a solution is an important aspect of reflection, but making new meanings for oneself, understanding our practice and our emotion, is the crucial aspect of reflection.

Final thought

To respond to the question which I posed in the title, reflective practice is special because it changes the position of the practising teacher as owner of knowledge; and the interpretation of practice as professional knowledge. It is special also because it engages us in not only looking at what we did but also exploring what it means that we teach in certain ways and interpret our teaching in certain ways. It allows us to make meanings of our practice and also of ourselves.

Although I have introduced my definition of reflective practice, this is not the only definition, and different scholars vary in the elements they emphasise. Reflective practice is a journey of self-exploration and depending on the phases we are in, our interpretations of reflective practice differ, and as we develop our insights into and understanding of reflective practice, the definition will continue to change. Although the diversity of interpretations is sometimes considered a drawback of reflective practice, Farrell (2013) points out that this can also be beneficial, as it engages teachers in thinking of their own definitions. The varied definitions signify why reflective practice is special, in that reflective practice embraces practitioners with diverse ways of thinking situated in myriad contexts.

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Atsuko Watanabe, *PhD*, is Professor in the Faculty of Language and Literature at Bunkyo University. She obtained her doctorate from Institute of Education, University of London, and has 30 years of teaching experience at tertiary institutions in Japan. Her publications include *Reflective practice as professional development: Experiences of teachers of English in Japan* (2017). Her research interests include reflective practice, researcher reflexivity, and qualitative interview methods.

How to keep Teacher Development going at a distance

Beth Melia-Leigh and **Nicholas Northall** suggest ten ways of delivering TD online.

We all know that Teacher Development (TD) is an integral part of being an effective teacher. However, as Covid-19 began to sweep through the globe last year, and teachers and schools grappled with the need to quickly switch to delivering lessons online, the focus for most was learning how to deal with the tech needed to teach – and survive! – online from home. With the pandemic throwing up so many unprecedented issues to deal with, in many cases any kind of sustained programme of TD has been neglected in recent months with other things - understandably - needing to take priority. Although some places are now out of lockdown, and others are learning to deal with the 'new normal', for many the realisation has dawned that online learning and teaching is not going away and at least some of our work is likely to remain online. Language schools, academic directors or managers and teachers themselves may now be starting to consider how this can be sustained effectively with the necessary support and opportunities for continuing professional development in place for teachers working remotely. With this in mind, this article presents 10 (plus one extra) ideas for implementing an online TD programme in your school. If you don't work at a school – perhaps you are freelance or have your own business – you will find many of the ideas are also applicable.

1. Bulletins

One of the most important aspects of TD is ensuring that the teachers you work with know what is available. Although many teachers would like to develop aspects of their teaching or perhaps know more about their profession, it is sometimes difficult to know where to begin. Therefore sending out a regular bulletin or newsletter outlining what developmental opportunities are available to your teachers is a good way to start. Consider carefully how often it is appropriate to do this, however: too many bulletins clogging up people's inboxes can become annoying, yet too few means events and opportunities may be missed. Of course, if you suddenly find out about a relevant, soon-to-happen event at a time when your regular newsletter isn't scheduled to be sent, then do ensure that you send out an additional email to advertise it.

2. Peer observation & team teaching

One of the best ways to develop as a teacher is to observe other teachers

at work. This is especially important since we have moved to online teaching and are continuing to hone our skills as we get to grips with new or unfamiliar ways of working. There are many different considerations when embarking on any kind of peer observation, such as whether to use an observation task, how to approach the observation and what the focus of the observation is. Our book *ETpedia Teacher Training* (Melia-Leigh & Northall, 2020) has a whole section on this. One of the most non-intrusive ways you can observe your colleagues is by team teaching. That is, you both teach the same class together. This is a great way to not only observe your colleagues, but to also support each other online. For example, one of you might be giving instructions whilst the other answers questions in the chat box or sets up breakout rooms. Team teaching is also useful if one of you loses connection and is kicked out of the online classroom!

3. Communities of practice

In order to develop, it is important for teachers to be able to share their day-to-day classroom experiences and this is something that many teachers feel they are missing out on while working remotely. A good way to facilitate this is to set up online communities of practice, perhaps via WhatsApp or Google Hangouts groups, in which groups of teachers can discuss classroom practice and share ideas. By sharing best practice – and problems or concerns – you can get ideas and suggestions from your colleagues as well as sharing advice about how you approach your lessons. These kinds of groups in some way represent the staffroom chat in which teachers bounce ideas off each other, finding out what works and what doesn't, and picking up new ideas to try in their own classrooms.

4. Buddy system or Mentoring

A more personal way of encouraging teachers to work together to share

"By sharing best practice – and problems or concerns – you can get ideas and suggestions from your colleagues as well sharing advice about how you approach your lessons."

good practice is to create some form of buddy system. This is where two teachers work together to share lesson ideas, plan lessons, and even team teach where possible (see Idea 2 above). With a buddy system, it is worth considering carefully what pairings are likely to be successful, taking into account amount of experience, teaching loads and personality traits. This could be taken a step further by setting up some sort of mentoring scheme in your school. In a mentoring relationship, two individuals work together to support each other in the process of professional development. Although the mentor may have more experience than the mentee, the relationship is purely supportive with no evaluation or judgement and the mentor's role is simply to offer guidance. (See Unit 45 of *ETpedia Teacher Training* for more ideas about mentoring).

5. In-house TD sessions

Where possible, consider implementing a programme of formal in-house TD sessions run by your teachers and managers. Just because the sessions are delivered online doesn't mean that they cannot be engaging and include many of the same elements we would expect to find in an in-person TD session. One way in which teachers can be actively involved is to be working collaboratively in breakout rooms. It can also work well to get groups to record their ideas on a Google Doc (or similar), which can then be shared with all participants and teachers who were unable to attend. Such a collaborative space is a great way to pool suggestions and can serve as a useful resource to refer back to later. If possible, it may be a good idea to record such sessions and then make them available to all teachers later via email, or perhaps store them all together on an online portal where they can form part of a bank of recorded TD sessions. Of course, the contents of such sessions really depend on your teachers' needs and wants. These could be determined via a needs analysis, (virtual) suggestion box or as a result of observation or student feedback.

6. External speakers & webinars

As well as having in-house TD sessions (see Idea 5 above), why not try to get external speakers to deliver a session to your teachers? These external speakers do not have to be well-known experts in their field but could simply be teachers working at another school who may have some excellent ideas they want to share with your teachers. If you are unable to get any speakers to deliver talks only to your teachers, you could also find out which speakers are delivering public talks. There are a wealth of such talks taking place all the time. Pavilion ELT often holds a variety of interesting and engaging sessions – see their facebook page for more details. If you want to watch a recent webinar delivered by the authors of this article, please see this link: https://event.webinarjam.com/login/gv7yysn1bq9h13t6sl .

7. Development days

If you are able to get either or both internal and external speakers, you might decide to host a development day. Essentially, you organise a day (or even a half-day if this works better in

your situation), in which your speakers deliver their workshops one after the other. Or, if you have enough speakers, several sessions could be delivered at the same times as various streams. Essentially, a development day is like a mini-conference and provides a good opportunity for teachers to get together to share ideas and attend a variety of different sessions. If you think it would work in your situation, you could also consider offering some sort of social event(s), such as a quiz or a virtual drink, at the end of the day where participants can spend time together more informally in order to replicate a real conference.

8. Reading

There are a wealth of informative and up-to-date articles available online from publishers such as Pavilion ELT (*Modern English Teacher* and *English Teaching professional*) which you can make known to your teachers via your weekly bulletin (see Idea 1). Although some of these pages may require a small subscription to view most of the content, it is worth paying this to ensure that your teachers are able to read relevant articles. You may decide that you want to spend some time looking at the available articles online and then distribute only the most relevant to your teachers. After reading such articles, you could arrange a reading circle or 'book club' to give your teachers the opportunity to engage with the articles even more and to share their experiences of perhaps putting some of the ideas into practice. Nicholas Northall in his article 'Reading journal articles' (2013) discusses sending out a weekly recommendation of useful, relevant articles to other teachers in his centre. Each recommendation includes a short summary to help teachers decide if they should read the whole article.

9. Bite-size videos

A less time-bound way of sharing ideas is to create short videos of up to 20 minutes in which a teacher demonstrates and talks about good classroom practice. In such videos the teacher gives practical advice which can be used immediately in the classroom. The teacher giving such a talk uses some form of screencasting software or could simply open a Zoom or Google Meet session and record this. The video is, essentially, a short, practical talk for teachers to access in their own time, which may be more appealing to certain teachers than something which requires a more fixed time commitment. Where possible, the talk should be supported with links to useful websites or with usable handouts.

10. External courses

If time allows, consider either registering for a place on an externally delivered course or, if you have a lot of ideas and activities you want to share, actually delivering such a course yourself. There are many different types of courses available online, including ones that can be taken at any time. These tend to include asynchronous content and are ideal for self-study. Sometimes such courses may also have some form of tutor involvement perhaps via an active forum. Other courses may involve both asynchronous and synchronous content in which tutors give interactive workshops or talks involving the course participants. Obviously the latter type of course tends to be more expensive! If you are interested in a course for teacher trainers run by the authors of *ETpedia Teacher Training*, please watch this space …

10+1. Tea and chat

The more formal TD suggestions made above could be complemented with opportunities for teachers to just socialise. A good way to do this is to arrange some form of informal chat via an online platform like Google Meet, Zoom or Microsoft Teams. These chats could be scheduled in advance on perhaps a weekly basis, or you might prefer to arrange them on a more ad-hoc basis. Even if you decide to schedule such meetings, ensure they are informal to allow your teachers to simply enjoy a cup of tea or coffee and a catch-up with their colleagues. These kinds of informal chats are really good for teachers' mental health and allow them some human contact which doesn't have to be work-related.

Hopefully at least one of the ideas presented here will be relevant to you in your context. We do hope that you consider trying some of the suggestions and, where possible, consider implementing a programme of teacher development with the teachers you work with. If you have any other suggestions about promoting teacher development, then do please contact us at the email address below.

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Beth Melia-Leigh is an experienced teacher trainer, both face-to-face and online, and CELTA assessor. She currently works at the ELTC, University of Sheffield, where she coordinates and delivers a number of programmes, including CELTA, Delta Modules and TKT. She supports practising teachers through the centre's teacher development programme and also works on the University's MA in Applied Linguistics with TESOL.

Nicholas Northall is an experienced face-to-face and online teacher trainer and EAP teacher working at the English Language Teaching Centre at the University of Sheffield. He currently teaches on Delta, CELTA, CertTESOL and MATESOL courses.

Beth and Nick are the authors of *ETpedia Teacher Training: 500 ideas for teacher training in English language teaching* (Pavilion Publishing).They can be contacted at practicalteachertraining@gmail.com

Reach out

Nick Michelioudakis looks outside teaching to find novel ways of getting professional development.

How to move forward

Complete this sentence. _________ leads to opportunities being lost; prospective friends, clients and dates going uncontacted; and chances to increase connectedness being squandered' Martin & Marks (2019: 175). Make a mental note of the answer and let us move on to another question: 'I am a language teacher. How can I develop professionally?' The answers we normally give to this one are along the lines of 'I can attend a training course' or 'I can watch online webinars' or 'I can read some books or articles'. What these answers have in common is that they focus on us, as individuals. Instead, it might make more sense if we were to look at other people. Remember the first sentence? The missing first part is that 'Failing to reach out to other people'. I think this is the one thing I would advise new colleagues to do. Here are three specific ideas:

Step 1: Build up your network

According to leadership expert H. Ibarra (2015), whichever field you want to make progress in, you can do little without first building up some contacts. It is colleagues who will give you advice, help you get jobs, share ideas with you and function as sounding boards for your own. But how can you find these contacts? Here is a little story:

Maggie Hsu was a Business Consultant who had heard something about a grand project that Tony Hsieh, the founder and CEO of Zappos, had started. She thought this was something she would like to be involved in, so she got in touch with him and he invited her to visit him in the US so she could get a better idea of the whole thing.

Hsu arrived in Las Vegas expecting that Hsieh would have arranged for her to visit places or take part in meetings with various stakeholders. Instead, when she got to her hotel, she found a simple email in her inbox. The text was a list of eight names, along with a short message: 'Meet these people. Then ask them who else you should meet. Tony.' Hsu was completely taken aback. 'Is that all?' she thought to herself. 'Is there anything else I should do?' she asked Hsieh. 'You'll figure it out' was the reply. Left with little choice, this is exactly what Hsu did. And it worked like a charm. She liked the project so much, she ended up moving to the states! (Coyle 2018: 67–68)

What an amazing idea! Here are four little things worth noting: 1) There was no agenda. Hsieh is a firm believer in autonomy and the idea that random 'collisions' between people are bound to lead to positive outcomes (although you could argue that these meetings were not entirely random). 2) The fact that it was Hsieh who had brought Hsu in contact with these other people generated some kind of obligation; they could not very well refuse to help her. 3) Obligations aside, people are generally happy to help others – especially if it is not something that takes too long (see below). 4) The whole thing was set up as a 'chain reaction'; Ms X could refer Hsu to Mr Y and he in turn to Ms Z.

The Moral

Follow Hsieh's advice. Let us say you have decided you would like to move from teaching to teacher training. Find a trainer you know and trust, and ask them what you should do, what qualifications are best, and generally how you should go about it. Then ask them to put you in touch with someone else they know who could give you some pointers. Then repeat the whole process.

Step 2: Ask colleagues for help

How many times has this happened to you? You need some help with a Web tool or a lesson plan and you want to ask your great colleague Mary for help, but then you think to yourself 'Hmm – I'd better not; she might be busy…'. If this has prevented you from reaching out to others for help, you are not alone.

OK – let us try a thought experiment: imagine you are at the metro station; your cellphone battery has run down and you need to call home for some reason. If you were to ask 100 people, how many people do you think would lend you their phone so you could make a brief call? Please write down a number. Now let us try a second one: imagine you are at a University campus and you would like to find the gym. You ask a passing student to direct you, but then you tell them you are confused and ask them whether they could actually escort you there. If you were to ask 100 students, how many do you think would do that? Please write down a second number.

Researchers asked a large number of people to predict what would happen in these situations. On average, the predictions were 30% in the first case and 14% in the second, since the request would be more of an imposition. But the predictions were both wrong. In actual fact, when psychologists run these experiments, the results were 48% and 43% respectively! (Flynn & Lake, 2008). Naturally, such results sparked other studies as well. One of the biggest, involving 14,000 subjects, was conducted in 2016 (Bohns, 2016). The pattern was exactly the same: subjects predicted that the number of people prepared to help would be small, but in fact it hovered around the 50% mark.

"….the very process of asking students for their opinions sends a powerful message: it shows them that we value them not only as learners but as individuals too.

Now think about it for a moment: if the figure is so high among total strangers, you can imagine what things would be like if you were to ask friends or colleagues. Yet time and again, when the time comes to ask for help, we hesitate. According to Martin & Marks (2019: 184) 'we typically underestimate the likelihood of a positive response by about half'. This means that we routinely fail to make the most of our contacts. Not only do we fail to get help, but we also miss an opportunity to strengthen the bond between us and members of our network.

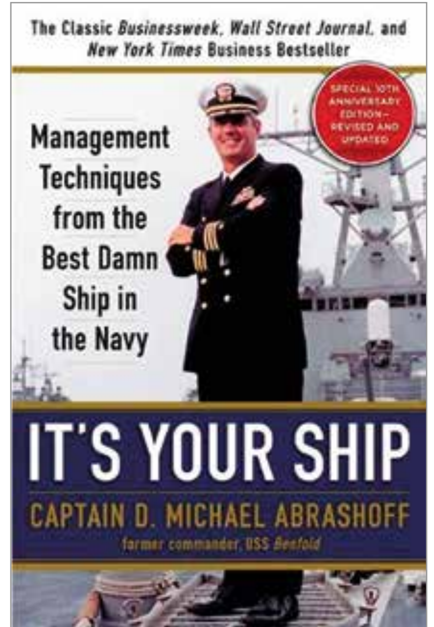
The Moral

Do not be afraid to ask colleagues to help you. Whether you are at a loss for fun activities for your young learners' class, or you need advice about the best books for IELTS preparation, or you need some pointers for your new Business English class, do not hesitate to reach out to your friends. Chances are they will be pleased to help and this will make your friendship stronger still.

Step 3: Ask students for feedback

Just how useful can feedback be? Well, consider the case of Amanda, a manager at Nike (Heath & Heath, 2011). She thought she was doing quite well; she was always there for her subordinates and kept an open doors policy, despite her heavy workload. You can imagine then how she felt, when the evaluation report came in and it turned out that her team thought she was distant and not really paying attention to them (watch this short clip: https://bit.ly/33J1Xrn).

So Amanda managed to tackle this problem, but she only found out about it by accident. Noticing how helpful such information can be, some people have decided to be much more proactive in seeking it out. One such person was captain Abrashoff (Coyle 2018: 83–84). When captain Abrashoff took command of the US destroyer Benfold, its performance scores showed it to be one of the worst in the whole navy. Captain Abrashoff decided that



something had to be done – but what? He started out by having face-to-face talks with the sailors – individually. This took quite some time, as there were 310 of them and each interview lasted for around 30 minutes. Abrashoff asked the sailors three simple questions: 1) What do you like about the ship? 2) What do you like least about it? 3) If you were the captain, what would you change?

Whenever a sailor came up with an idea that could be immediately implemented, Abrashoff would immediately announce this to everyone in the ship – and give credit to the sailor. So effective was all this, that within three years, the Benfold shot up the ratings to become one of the top-ranked ships in the US navy.

The take-away from these two stories is that if something is so useful for managers (or officers), perhaps it could be helpful for us teachers too. Notice three additional reasons why feedback can be useful: 1) The Illusion of Attention: psychologists have repeatedly demonstrated that we fail to notice even obvious things and this is particularly relevant in a teaching situation when we are focused on lesson delivery and classroom management. It is easy to miss things. 2) The Curse of Knowledge: because we know the things we teach, we tend to assume it is easy for learners to understand these as well. This is not so. 3) The Not-Invented-Here Bias: We resent being told what to do. It is much easier for students to accept ideas that they have recommended themselves than ones the teacher has come up with.

The moral

Ask your students for feedback. What activities do they like? What do they find difficult? What practices do they find most helpful? What things are they most interested in? Not only will this give us insights into our students likes and preferences, it may also reveal our own blind spots. More importantly however, the very process of asking students for their opinions sends a powerful message: it shows them that we value them not only as learners but as individuals too.

The power of the group

Here is another idea: instead of using others as sources of information to learn more and get better, why not try collective professional development? Studies have shown that it is easier for people to lose weight or kick a bad habit as a group. Why not harness this? Service & Gallagher (2017) describe an interesting initiative in which the Behavioural Insights Team of Australia challenged the London team to see which group could get fitter within a 30-day period. What an amazing idea! Now imagine a team of, say, TESOL Greece members challenging a team of IATEFL Poland colleagues for instance, to see which group could make greater progress in a PD contest. Points could be scored for completing training courses, and for delivering webinars or writing articles for colleagues from other countries. Now that would be fun, wouldn't it?

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Nick Michelioudakis (B. Econ., Dip. RSA, MSc [TEFL]) has been active in ELT for many years as a teacher, examiner and teacher trainer and he has given presentations in numerous countries. He has written extensively on Methodology, though he is better known for his 'Psychology and ELT' articles in which he draws on insights from such disciplines as Marketing, Management and Social Psychology. For articles or worksheets of his, you can visit his blog at www.michelioudakis.org.

Supporting pre-service teachers and graduate instructors

Ekaterina Arshavskya offers some ideas, insights, and resources.

Image by Henning Westerkamp from Pixabay

As a beginning language teacher, I was often looking for role models. I was searching for my own teacher identity while emulating expert teachers' practices in the classroom. And while I have developed a stronger teacher identity and am now teaching teacher education courses at a university, I still remember my first years in the language classroom as being filled with uncertainty and nervousness. In my work with pre-service language teachers and graduate instructors, I aim to find the most effective ways to help these groups of educators develop a professional teacher identity and find their voice to add to the ongoing educational discussions. In this article, I will overview the latest research related to supporting new teacher learning and share several practical ideas that were helpful in my teacher education courses.

Recently, the field of teacher education has focused on exploring teacher identities (Yazan, 2019) and promoting teacher-authored narratives (Canagarajah, 2012; Johnson & Golombek, 2002). In these narratives, teachers externalize thoughts and challenges related to teaching and self-mediate towards better understandings of themselves, their students, and their classrooms (Verity, 2000). In *Teacher development in a global profession: An autoethnography*, Canagarajah (2012) states that such narratives can help develop 'a perspective on more egalitarian and dialogical relationships between global teaching communities in TESOL and advocate for professional identities that negotiate

such institutional relationships critically' (p. 260). In other words, by letting teachers' voices be heard, we embrace various perspectives and contexts and aim to bridge the traditional classroom 'teacher vs. university researcher' divide. Similarly, Yazan (2019) claims that teacher-authored narratives allow us to 'gradually assert agency and engage in purposeful identity work' (p. 16). This suggests that by starting to communicate who we are inside and outside the classroom as pre-service teachers, we may develop more articulate identities as classroom teachers.

Teachers, like all of us, possess stories that need to be heard in order for them to thrive throughout their professional trajectories. It could be about their personal narratives about how they became teachers, why they do what they do in the classroom, etc. As teacher educators, we need to create conditions and spaces which enable new teachers to tell these stories in their own words (Canagarajah, 2012). Sharing stories also allows us to connect to one another. Here, I share several ideas and projects that were helpful in creating these conditions and spaces in my own teacher education courses.

1. Teacher-authored video series

In my work with new graduate instructors (GIs) and international teaching assistants (ITAs), I often rely on more experienced classmates to share their teaching experiences and insights during class discussions. Following recent developments in open educational resources (OER), I created a series of teacher-authored videos (Arshavskaya, 2019) where more experienced GIs and ITAs share advice about first-year teaching challenges with new teachers. Additionally, this video series contains voices of the university faculty. Similar projects have been carried out at other universities (e.g., video-recorded interviews with language teachers working with heritage language learners at Pennsylvania State University). The videos 'create spaces for reflection, knowledge exchange, and inspiration' (Arshavskaya, 2019: 13). In arguing for the use of teacher-authored narratives in teacher education, Elbaz (1991) highlighted that 'the story affects those who listen, and possibly also the teller, through the dialogue that may take place between story-teller and audience, sometimes even changing the story' (p. 16). In terms of encouraging teachers to share their stories about teaching, the videos become a platform for teachers to share stories about their classrooms and students, thus contributing to teacher identity construction. Importantly, video-recorded interviews can be also used in higher education contexts more generally to engage new teachers in discussions about teaching.

2. Professional communities' resources

In my sessions with ITAs and new GIs, I guide them towards developing a sense of professional identity through work with other teachers. Such professional connections and relationships can be established and maintained through engagement in local, regional, national, and international teacher organizations. Of particular interest are book labs, or reading circles, where teachers read a book on some educational issue together and discuss how this particular research or ideas relate to their own classrooms. It has been suggested that such book labs are often preferred by instructors over larger professional conferences since they offer specialized knowledge in a more private collaborative environment. Oftentimes, such book labs can attract faculty from the same university program or department, while at other times these labs can be multidisciplinary. In practice, the readings selected by teachers to discuss can be practical in nature or they may contain new, enlightening perspectives that reflect current changes in educational context and/or student population (e.g., diversity, multilingualism, etc.). For example, in one such book lab, we read *Small teaching online* by Flower Darby and James Lang (2019), and all the strategies described in the book were particularly relevant for using in college courses taught online.

3. Demonstrating care and support

In view of the changing educational landscapes, many of our classes are taught partially or fully online. In *Small teaching online*, Darby and Lang (2019) as well remind us that despite the changing environments, we are still teaching humans and it is necessary to connect to our learners (in this case, teachers) in an empathetic and caring way. In *How humans learn*, Eyler (2019) also underscores the role of caring relationships to facilitate learning.

Perhaps one of the most significant things we can do as teachers is to care for our students as learners. Caring pedagogies do not require us to lower standards or cross boundaries. They simply require that we be present for our students as fellow human beings and that we invest ourselves in helping them succeed (p. 148).

Some of the ways to develop this caring relationship in online settings is to send personal emails to course participants asking about their progress in the course, to create a discussion board where course participants can post their queries about it, to develop a series of video lessons in more personal and less formal settings (e.g., giving a short video lesson while hiking with your dog) and/or to allow flexibility for the student-teachers to attend office hours online and/or in-person, among many others (adapted from Darby & Lang, 2019). Incorporating such small changes can help establish a more trusting relationship and a more empathetic environment, wherein student-teachers may be more willing to share their voices and stories.

4. Critical autoethnographies

Encouraging pre-service language teachers to write and to share their critical autoethnographies is another way to help teachers develop a sense of professional teacher identity. By this I mean articulating one's journey into teaching and various societal and personal contradictions and challenges that we encounter and/or discover through this journey. In order to facilitate this activity

in a teacher education course, it is helpful to read together and discuss several published critical autoethnographies (e.g., Canagarajah, 2012; Solano-Campos, 2014; Yazan, 2019). While some teacher educators assign this project as one of the course assignments, Yazan (2019) recommends working with students on this project during an entire semester, offering prompts, guidance, personal and group discussions.

5. Learning with curiosity

In *How humans learn*, Eyler (2018) highlights the important role of students' questions in facilitating learning. Drawing on research about curiosity and creativity, he claims that curiosity may make us who we are as humans and therefore, educators need to create conditions wherein learners, for example, can ask questions to learn course content. In a teacher education course, an instructor can start a lesson by stating a question of the day, by asking course participants to prepare discussion questions for an assigned reading, and/or by asking questions upon a presentation of course material. These strategies also allow educators to create spaces wherein pre-service teachers may be more willing to clarify doubts and to express their voices.

6. Learning through dialogues

All learning is social (Vygotsky, 1978), and it is important to create conditions which will enable new teachers to learn through dialogue and interaction. Such dialogues do not only involve the instructor and course participants, but also the authors of the readings discussed in a teacher education course. In my lessons on critical autoethnographies, student-teachers discuss the published autoethnographies and in this way, participate in a kind of dialogue with these authors.

7. Creating a space to experiment with and reflect on teaching identities

Of equal importance is the necessity to create spaces wherein new teachers can reflect on and experiment with teaching identities. In my teacher education course, I strive to add practical components which allow teachers to practise the skills and/or knowledge we discuss in the course. While some of the new teachers may not be able to give classes to 'real' students, microteaching (i.e., teaching peers) can be a useful alternative.

Any or all of the above activities may present some challenges when being incorporated into a teacher education course. Some of the challenges I encountered while implementing the ideas and projects described in this article related, for instance, to finding willing participants for the video series project. Explaining the benefits of the project to the participants and establishing trust can be some of the ways to encourage teachers to participate. Another dilemma I often encounter concerns ideas related to 'demonstrating care and support'. Oftentimes, it is hard to draw a line between supporting students versus letting them find their own coping skills to be successful. Perhaps, there doesn't exist a single recipe to solve this dilemma and every teacher can decide on what is the best for his/her students at a given moment.

In concluding, I would like to highlight that 'the classroom, with all its limitations, remains a location of possibility' (bell hooks, 1994, as cited in Eyler, 2018: 219), and it seems that this possibility, or a potential for transformation, concerns all the participants, i.e., teacher educators, beginning teachers, and students. By putting into practice some of the above ideas and projects, we can facilitate this potential for growth on behalf of the student-teachers, students, and teacher educators due to their focus on what makes us human (i.e., curiosity, collaboration and telling stories.

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Ekaterina Arshavskaya is an associate professor in the intensive English programme at Utah State University. She is also in charge of the international teaching assistants' training and is involved with pre-service language teachers' education at USU. Her research and teaching interests include intercultural learning, multilingual literature, computer-assisted language learning, critical pedagogy, and L2 teacher education. She is actively engaged with Intermountain TESOL and International TESOL (ITA- and CALL-IS).

Teacher development in the digital age

Kat Robb shares some of her ideas on improvement.

Penny Ur (1996) argues that 'teachers who have been teaching for twenty years may be divided into two categories: those with twenty years' experience and those with one year's experience repeated twenty times' (Ur, 1996: 317). We are all guilty of repeating the same activities with new courses because we know they have worked previously with learners, but what works with one class may not work with another – one size does not fit all. So, while we are tired, pushed for time, and struggle to fit marking and lesson preparation into our busy schedules, especially with the current blurred boundaries between our professional and personal lives that are both taking place in the four walls of our homes, how can we possibly consider finding yet more time for teacher development? Well, even small changes have a big impact, and while we may not be explicitly searching for impact, personally I feel it would be a shame to think we just 'did our best' and not what was 'specifically required', in order to meet learner needs and reach learning objectives.

Professional development begins with personal development

I don't think I'm alone when I say that a bad night's sleep or a personal issue has a negative effect on my day and how I perform at work? What I am saying is that our personal lives can affect our professional output, so if we try to develop personally it will also have an impact professionally. I recently took a free course on FutureLearn about well-being and resilience at work. While this does not directly relate to classroom practice, it focuses on reliance and adaptability at work, both of which I have had to learn quite quickly when using one specific online platform for teaching that crashes regularly, and that does not allow students who have poor internet connections to download documents or turn their cameras on. Online teaching is full of little challenges that test our resilience, patience, and adaptability because we are not in control of the technology we are using. There are lots of free courses both on FutureLearn and Coursera so I would recommend having a look, because now more than ever it felt really good to belong to an online community, discuss work issues with others and learn how to do things differently.

Learn a language

You may have dabbled in learning a language through one of the plethora of apps or courses available today, but how often have you put yourself in your learners' shoes and thought about what if feels like to be a language learner? Not many of us actually learnt about the grammar of our first language at school, yet here we are trying to explain it clearly and succinctly to other learners who probably haven't learnt about grammar at school either. It is easier to gauge comprehension in a classroom but not so much online. What better way to understand how it feels than to choose a language you know nothing about and try to teach yourself? What is it you like about the materials you are using, what is it

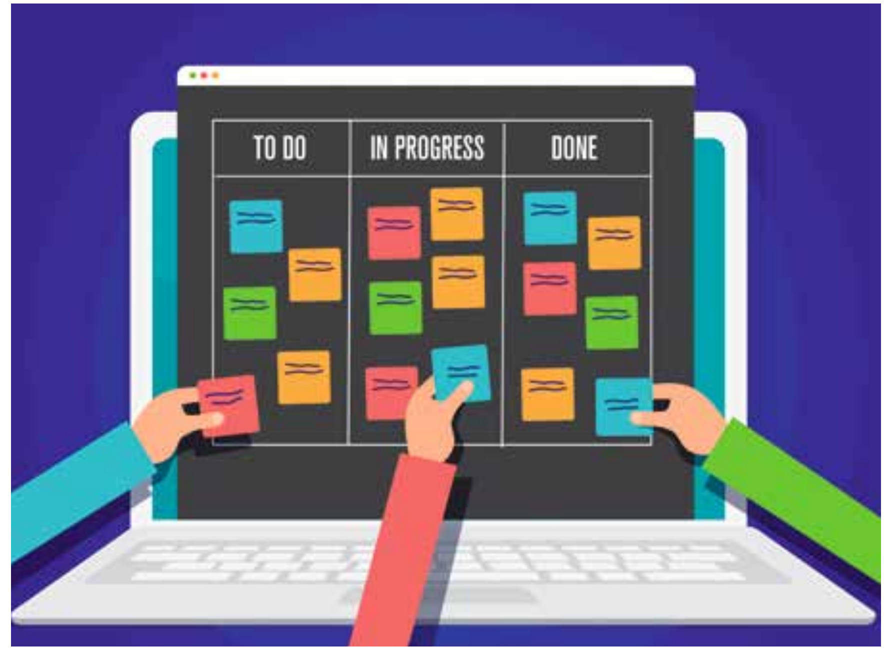
that really helps you understand the mechanics of the language, where are the materials or the explanation weak? These are all questions you can reflect on and map the responses for the strengths and weaknesses onto your own teaching practice.

Bullet point reflection

Bullet journaling is a personal organisation method using scheduling, reminders, and to-do lists to organise your personal life. The idea is based on the tenet of tracking the past, organising the present, and planning for the future and having that all in one organised place, so no more to-do lists on post it notes or scraps of paper.

This year I have started using the bullet point idea for my own reflective practice and action research in my usual desk diary. At the beginning of each day I look at what I have organised (the present) and decide how best I am going to approach the tasks. At the end of the day, I look back on how webinars, classes, training sessions, researching and writing went (the past), and bullet point a few reflections. I then look forward to the next day (the future) and see if I can employ any new strategies to help me improve the way I approached something. The next morning I will look back at the previous day and reflect on what I did and how I can make changes or improve on the things I was not satisfied with. It all sounds like a lengthy process, but if you use a desk diary anyway, it does not require much more effort. Despite the option for digital reminders and notes on my desktop and phone, I personally find the physical process of writing with pen and paper more cathartic, but I am sure you could use the same strategy in digital format and it would be equally effective.

"Online teaching is full of little challenges that test our resilience, patience, and adaptability because we are not in control of the technology we are using."



Write an article

And of course, last but by no means least, there is the wonderful opportunity given to us by MET to put our thoughts into writing and share them with the teaching and learning community globally, by contributing an article. Writing is the best form of reflective practice and can help us pinpoint areas for improvement and/or interest that can be worked on through action points. For example, if you write an article about a topic you know little about, it can encourage you to research it to find out more before putting your ideas in writing. Or maybe you write about something you feel confident about, but even then there is always room for growth, so you can ask yourself if you put into practice the suggestions you are proposing. As Buddha once said, 'An idea that is developed and put into action is more important than an idea that exists only as an idea.'

In the course of writing this article I have taken the topic area suggested by the magazine, reflected on my own personal experiences and ideas, given them some sort of structure and, finally, tried to put them down in a way other teachers throughout the world will understand and find a link with. In terms of teacher and personal development, that is a good exercise worth repeating.

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Kat Robb has been involved in ELT since 1995, and during this time she has spoken at conferences, authored, taught, and trained teachers globally. Her passion lies within educational technology, which has seen her move increasingly in the direction of authoring digital teaching and learning solutions, including AI and autonomous systems. She can be contacted at trinarobb@hotmail.com

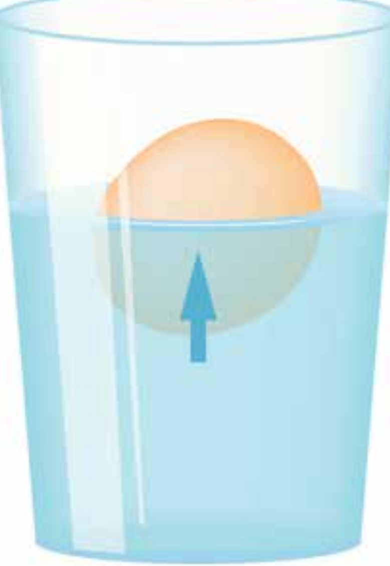
A positive approach to (online) English language teaching

Jeffrey Dawala Wilang offers advice on being aware of your learners' feelings.

Learning English is a daunting task for many students, especially in an EFL setting. So teachers need to contemplate how to promote learners' well-being in language learning. Experts believe that teachers must maintain a positive attitude in teaching – from designing instructional materials for learners to giving feedback after a given task. In line with 21st-century skills, Mercer *et al* (2018) believe that learners' well-being should be promoted alongside linguistic development. Well-being, herein, narrowly refers to positive feelings or emotions when learning the English language. Through positive psychology interventions (PPIs), programmes or activities can be intentionally designed (Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009) to cultivate positivity in cognition and affective aspects of language learning. In the same vein, in teaching, I believe that PPIs could help teachers become aware of learner issues, such as those with low well-being.

The experiment

The floating egg experiment was conducted during a forum entitled 'Positive Psychology in SLA: Pedagogical and Research Implications' in a reputable university in Thailand. Data were collected during the activity by using an open-ended questionnaire. The question was, '*Suppose your students have low well-being in English language learning (for example, low motivation, high anxiety, among others, what actions would you take?*' The participants in the forum were graduate students and lecturers in the English language department. In the activity, the participants were asked to group themselves voluntarily. Eleven groups with two to three members volunteered to partake in the study. Each group was given a half-full glass of water, a jar of salt and an egg. They were told that the egg symbolises a student with low well-being, the half-full glass of water as the learning environment, and the salt denotes a positive action designed by the teacher to help the students flourish. Under normal circumstances, if the egg is put in a glass of water, it will sink to the bottom. However, when enough salt is added to the water, the egg floats. The participants were asked to do the activity for up to 15 minutes then share their responses in the big group.



To analyse the data, the action of adding salt into the half-full glass of water was counted to know the frequency of positive actions done by each group. Meanwhile, the responses from the open-ended questionnaire were coded inductively to generate specific actions to answer the question.

Outcomes of the experiment

To answer the question in the questionnaire, the specific actions

Table 1. Frequency and list of specific actions

Group	Specific action
1 (*n*=5)	Using the learner's first language to help them understand the lesson; focusing on meaning; not imposing British or American standards; allowing learner mistakes; being tolerant of learner errors
2 (*n*=6)	Verifying learner comprehension; using games in teaching; being supportive to learners; encouraging learner whenever necessary; having enough patience; having a well-organised teaching environment
3 (*n*=6)	Using formative rather than summative scores; applying student-centered approaches ; paying more attention to meaning; valuing the distinct ways of learning a language; using the communicative approach; reducing corrective (negative) feedback
4 (*n*=7)	Negotiating with the learners about the learning goal; using a humanistic approach; using task-based language teaching; providing detailed feedback; having an accurate pronunciation; giving an assignment
5 (*n*=5)	Allowing learners to use L1; choosing students to answer questions randomly; empowering students; being patriotic; having a teacher-guided learning environment
6 (n=12)	Allowing the use of L1 when necessary; giving specific and attainable goals; giving different goals for different students; knowing about individual differences; flexible teaching approach; encouraging learner language output; having a good image; being friendly; being open-minded; being kind; creating a relaxing environment; believing in positivity in teaching
7 (*n*=7)	Respecting learner culture; adapting materials to suit learner culture; using multi-approaches in teaching; giving encouraging feedback; believing that learner contributes something to the world; having a technology-aided learning atmosphere; having an internationalised learning environment
8 (*n*=9)	Adopting multilingual instruction; using an individualised approach; accepting different cultures; assessing to improve learner proficiency; providing positive feedback; being sensitive to learner needs; believing in a learner-centered approach; allowing learners to sit with their peers; having a friendly environment
9 (*n*=8)	Tolerating cultural differences; using scaffolding techniques; using an individualised approach; surveying learner needs; believing in equality; giving real-world tasks outside the classroom; providing encouraging feedback; giving positive feedback
10 (*n*=12)	Using L1 to prioritise comprehensible input; embracing the diversity of learner culture; accepting a variety of English as an outcome; making students aware about World Englishes; using holistic assessment; providing constructive feedback; giving metalinguistic feedback; showing sincerity to learner needs; being a trusted friend to the learner; creating a positive learning atmosphere; having relaxed lessons; having causal classes
11 (*n*=7)	Allowing L1 and L2 use in class; accepting a multicultural class; negotiating assessment with the learner; being flexible; being well-balanced; designing various tasks; using gamification in class

are illustrated in Table 1. It highlights the multiplicity of positive actions taken by the teachers. The varying frequency, for example, *n*=12, could show how the teacher must take numerous considerations into account to facilitate positivity in English language learning. For instance, in group 1, specific actions have considered the learner's first language, the lesson's goal, the purpose of learning and the teacher's attitude toward learner mistakes or errors.

The specific actions were categorised into twelve aspects of positivity in English language teaching, including approach in teaching (i.e. using a humanistic approach), assessment (i.e. negotiating with students), good language teacher (i.e. being sensitive to learner needs), ideology in teaching (i.e. being positive in teaching), learner's culture (i.e. respecting learner culture), learner's needs (i.e. surveying learner needs), learning goals (i.e. negotiating learning goals), norms in teaching (i.e. allowing learner mistakes), out-of-class activity (i.e. providing real-world tasks), teacher feedback (i.e. reducing corrective feedback), teaching environment (i.e. relaxing learning environment), and use of L1 (i.e. allowing use of L1).

Interestingly, the act of giving feedback was the most frequent keyword. This is very interesting as it serves as a caution for English teachers. Giving feedback, if not handled appropriately, could be detrimental to low-proficient students. Hattie & Timperley (2007) suggest that providing corrective feedback may enhance new skills and tasks. Moreover, learners appreciate feedback with specific written comments that are given individually.

Implications for (online) teaching

Multiple challenges have been reported since the shift from face-to-face to online teaching. One of which is the learner's low engagement. This could be a result of high anxiety or low motivation in English language learning. To increase learner

"Experts believe that teachers must maintain a positive attitude in teaching – from designing instructional materials for learners to giving feedback after a given task."

engagement, the teacher can consider using specific acts to alleviate stress and increase motivation. In this case, the 12 particular actions listed by Group 6 are demonstrated below to show how they could help improve the engagement of learners with low well-being.

The first focuses on allowing the use of L1 when necessary as it may help learners comprehend the lesson, thereby allowing them to become more confident and respond to questions. In many cases, learners are unwilling to communicate their ideas in L2 as they are afraid to make mistakes and to 'lose' face. Another action is to set specific and attainable goals. Knowing the challenges of online learning, teachers may have to lower their expectations concerning the lesson's outcome. The third action focuses on giving different students different goals and is related to the fourth action, knowing individual differences. Accordingly, knowing learner limitations can help teachers design the 'right' scaffold to encourage class engagement. The next action is being flexible. If the class is passive, the teacher can encourage learners, whether verbally or written. If some learners are not comfortable turning on their videos while speaking, allow them not to do so. Due to proximity in online teaching, teachers may have to possess a 'pleasing' persona, such as having the right image, being friendly, being open-minded and being kind. For example, showing concern to learners' language difficulties may increase their participation. Another action that creates a relaxing environment may include randomly asking questions to learners or asking for volunteers before calling out names. Lastly, believing in positivity in teaching may help increase learner participation in online learning settings.

Final thoughts

A positive approach to English language teaching involves a multiplicity of positive actions including but not limited to adopting a humanistic approach, negotiating learning goals and assessment, being sensitive to learner needs, allowing learner mistakes, providing real-world tasks, reducing corrective (negative) feedback, creating a relaxing learning environment, and allowing the use of L1 in the classroom. It can be concluded that a single positive action may not be enough to help a low well-being student to 'flourish' in English language learning.

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Jeffrey Dawala Wilang hails from Dilong, Tubo, Abra. He recently moved from a university in Bangkok to the School of Foreign Languages, Institute of Social Technology, Suranaree University of Technology, Nakhon Ratchasima, Thailand. His research interests include psycholinguistics and English as a lingua franca. If you have any comments or suggestions, please send an email to wilang@g.sut.ac.th.

We've always done it that way

Robert McLarty looks at ways of improving your view of your own teaching.

Three times in my career I have moved from one country to another to take up a senior position in a language learning institution. Each time one of my first steps was to take a look at the teaching to get an overall feeling about the house style. This initial snapshot is intended to give you a view of what the average student will be guaranteed to get which, in turn, gives you confidence in selling courses, promoting your school and actually placing learners in the appropriate class. It is vital that there is complete trust that wherever you place a student, they will get a satifactory (at least) language learning experience. Each time I gave general feedback to the staff with pointers to where I hoped there might be room for tweaking. This is where it always got difficult. Experienced teachers often feel comfortable with their approach, their materials and, sometimes, their lessons. Asking them to continue to reflect on their own potential and areas for change could be construed as disrespectful. If you have just arrived from another country, culture and learning environment, you need to be very careful when wording your suggestions.

Any school has to be certain that their average teacher, at the most difficult time of the day or week, is always delivering satisfactory teaching, which means that teachers are under pressure to perform for a large majority of their working week. I would even argue that that is more than what a lot of professions ask for, where results might matter more than the performance. As teachers, we not only have to guarantee good results but we have to do it in a way which is safe, positive, interesting and welcoming. On top of that, we are working in front of a demanding audience who we are obliged to inform, entertain, teach, educate, manage and get on with, most of our working week. Some teachers might have eight different classes a week – others might have just one – but however many you have, we need to be at our best as often as we possibly can. It is my belief, as someone who is now teaching more than ever in my career, that we simply have to keep innovating, amending and experimenting to remain fresh and engaging. So how can we go about this without crushing the individuality out of the teachers by insisting on 'best practice'?

For best practice to be achieved we have to accept that each teacher has their own inimitable style, experience and motivations. What a school is aiming for is for each teacher to be as good as they can be by adding their own skills, techniques and activities to the institutional aims, objectives and values. In other words we should be looking for each teacher's individual best practice set within, and not opposed to, the framework of the service being provided.

Professional Development should work along similar lines, offering a range of activities from which teachers should choose according to what is useful for them as well as accepting general

upskilling deemed necessary on an institutional basis. A case in point is the use of textbooks. Over the years, coursebooks have moved from being the source of materials to teach from, often with a strong author voice and identity, to a huge array of materials for both online and offline use, with classwork and homework resouces, audio and video files and usually a further set of activities online. They not only influence the syllabus, they often *become* the syllabus. This can be quite daunting for a teacher who wants to teach in an individual, personalised way. Where is the room for their lessons, activities or tips within the teaching week which is often defined through schemes of work or pacing schedules? Finding the right balance is one of the key decisions teachers make each lesson. '*How am I going to use the material?*' And this is where reflection is so important. As you will read elsewhere in this issue, looking forward and looking back are so revealing of how you teach. Let me be quite specific – I am not expecting changes and tweaks after every lesson but as you find time to reflect on what happened as opposed to what you had hoped to happen, I am sure there will be valuable gains made.

As an institution, one way of helping teachers develop as individuals within a whole is to introduce a kind of circle of quality. These were first introduced in the 1970s in the Japanese automobile industry and the idea was that everybody concerned in the manufacturing process of a car had valuable insights into what actually happened on the production line. The smallest observation could influence a change which would benefit everyone. In the language teaching world we can adopt the same approach. Within a particular level or age group, teachers are usually tied to a set of learning outcomes and often, as I have said above, to a particular set of resources and/or timetable. Where they can add value, not only to the institution's performance but more importantly to their own, is to look at aspects of the teaching and learning with a view to making small amendments and improvements.
By meeting regularly to discuss their thoughts and observations, all members of the team can contribute to the overall development of the courses.

"In other words we should be looking for each teacher's individual best practice set within, and not opposed to, the framework of the service being provided."

At our institution, just as an example, we are putting in place something along the above lines. The first step, right at the start of a course, will be for teachers to choose some areas to reflect on. This might be something very practical, related to their own delivery, such as the way they give instructions to the class or the way they illustrate grammatical concepts. It could be something more psychological or behavioural about the way they view their learners or the tone they use with them. It could be purely research based, timing the amount of practice activities given or collecting data on who responds in class and whether everyone is treated the same. A teacher might want to try something experimental by borrowing from a more radical approach such as the Silent Way (see page 69) or something 100% learner-centred. Whatever it is, they should choose and share their choices with their colleagues.

The institution will then have an automatic feed into topics of interest for PD sessions and, potentially, people to run them. Teachers will find colleagues interested in similar areas and can set up small groups to discuss their progress. Articles can be sourced with more information on the topics posted on a forum for teachers to read and discuss along with other media from webinars and lectures online. As the term goes by, teachers can keep records of their reflection in ways which suit them as they build up to the final stage, the dissemination of their findings. This can be low-key like a post or a poster presentation or slightly more high-profile such as an article for a journal like *ETp* or *MET* or a conference contribution.
By the end of the term, those topics can be parked and new ones chosen or the same ones done in a different way.

I am doing exactly the above this semester and the topics I have chosen to look at are: the first fifteen minutes of a lesson, encouraging listening for pleasure and raising awareness of pronunciation. All of these topics will have ideas I can share and swap with my colleagues.
My classes will also know what I am working on and will give me objective feedback. And possibly, but only possibly, there might be a conference contribution and/or an article for this magazine. Whatever the results, there will be a slight change in the focus of my teaching and hopefully an improvement in the learning of my classes.

Wherever I have worked over my career, whether in teaching, training or publishing, the one thing I dreaded hearing was what the famous Goff cartoon illustrates. An employee is staring at a notice on which is written upside down, 'Because we've always done it this way'. This way is not wrong, just don't restrict yourself to that one way. Think about it.

In his career **Robert McLarty** has taught and managed in Paris and Oxford as well as writing for and managing the Business English and ESP publishing for Oxford University Press. He has been editor of *Modern English Teacher* for seven years and currently teaches and trains at Wintec in Hamilton, New Zealand. He has recently co-authored *ETpedia Management*.

English language assessment concerns: stakeholder voices

Anthea Fester discusses the lack of assessment as a topic in teacher-training.

I vividly recall my initial venture into English language teacher training. It was the focus of a directed study I completed as part of a Postgraduate Diploma in Second Language Teaching. Having this option of a directed study, I felt that I was closer to making one of my professional dreams (of becoming an English language teacher trainer (ELTT)) a reality. For all the years I worked as an ELTT, I remember thinking, notwithstanding the labour-intensive nature of the teaching practicum course, I thoroughly enjoyed ELTT. My professional interest in ELTT led to me very recently conducting a survey focusing on the current state of English language teacher training in New Zealand. In this article I will focus on a small part of the data gathered in that survey, as well as data available from a Teachers of Speakers of Other Language Aotearoa / New Zealand (TESOLANZ) members' survey. TESOLANZ is the largest professional body that English language teachers in New Zealand tend to join.

Popular coursebooks used in ELTT: Assessment

There is a smorgasbord of textbooks for language teachers or their institutions to choose from. There is arguably a much smaller selection of practically-focused textbooks (including Harmer, 2015; Scrivener, 2017; Thornbury & Watkins, 2007; and Hughes, 2015), that guides ELTT content, from which language teacher trainers may choose. What is worth noting, though, is that most of the popular ELTT textbooks state that their main purpose is language teacher training, but the authors do not seem to include a chapter on assessment *per se.* They tend to focus on classroom management strategies, but do not introduce assessment guidelines. Having said that, there are several widely used and popular textbooks in our industry that focus solely on aspects of language assessment (Dimova, Yan & Ginther, 2020; Fulcher, 2010; Green, 2013) and these can also be used for professional development for English language teachers. Therefore, the lack of coverage of assessment in the practically-focused textbooks could be justified by the fact that there does not appear to be a shortage of textbooks on assessment in English language learning (ELL). However, based on the data reported in this article, it may be worthwhile for English language teaching (ELT) textbook writers to address crucial aspects of assessment. One of the exceptions is the book by Parrish (2019), *Teaching Adult English Language Learners: A Practical Introduction*, which includes a chapter devoted to formal and informal assessment processes for assessing ELL and teaching.

Background

As mentioned above, for this focus on practitioners' views on assessment, I draw on two sets of data. The data highlights the point that one of the most challenging issues in English language teaching today continues to be concerns related to assessment, from the perspective of language teacher trainers and teacher needs for professional development (PD). The first set of data reported on in this article is from a survey conducted by the author early in 2020 where the participants were English language teacher trainers in New Zealand. The second data source was a survey conducted by the executive committee of Teachers of Speakers of Other Languages Aotearoa / New Zealand (TESOLANZ). The main aim of the TESOLANZ survey was to ascertain the professional development needs of teachers across the ELT sectors (including primary, secondary and tertiary).

Data analysis and discussion

Essentially, the data speaks for itself, but the focus of this analysis is about views on *Assessment issues* as a concern for different survey cohorts.

Language teacher trainers' voices

Figure 1 shows the ELTTs' responses to the survey question, *Put a tick next to any of the items that are included as specific sessions in your qualifications.* 'Assessment focus sessions' had the most ticks, with more than 87 % (21 out of 24) respondents indicating that these were included in their language teacher training qualifications. Since assessment knowledge is such a

valuable part of teacher knowledge, it is surprising that some institutions do not include sessions on Assessment in their language teacher training programmes.

In a follow up question, participants were asked '*Which of the above areas mentioned in Question 30 do you think language trainees find most challenging*' (Figure 2). More than 52% (12 out of 23) of the participants indicated that they thought that the sessions on the 'Theory of second language acquisition' were the most challenging for the language teacher trainees. The participants chose 'Assessment focus sessions' as the second biggest challenge for trainees, with a total of 11 out of 23 (almost 48%). A further aspect of assessment in ELTT that is worth mentioning, but is outside the scope of this article, is the process of assessing language teacher education, which has its own challenges, particularly as it has also diversified over the past couple of decades.

English language teachers' voices

A joint conference of the Applied Linguistics Association of New Zealand (ALANZ), the Applied Linguistics Association of Australia (ALAA) and The Association of Language Testing and Assessment in Australia and New Zealand (ALTAANZ) was held in Perth, Australia, in November 2019. The President of TESOLANZ, Daryl Streat, presented a session on the findings of a survey that the TESOLANZ executive committee had conducted with its entire membership as a needs-based enquiry. Participants were asked what their professional concerns were as ELTs, with *Assessment Practices* being the second most popular choice (Figure 3).

A follow up question asked participants which areas they felt they needed professional development in. Across all the sectors (primary, secondary and tertiary), one of the four top areas mentioned (See Figure 4) was *Assessment*, with this area being of most concern to teachers in the secondary sector.

Ultimately, what all this data shows is an ongoing and real concern around assessment practices from key stakeholders (trainers and teachers) in the ELTT industry. This has the potential to impact on teaching development content across sectors. It suggests that we need to view assessment practices for professional development and language teacher trainees' knowledge through a fresh lens and take all stakeholder voices into account. It also suggests that we need to step outside of our comfort zone.

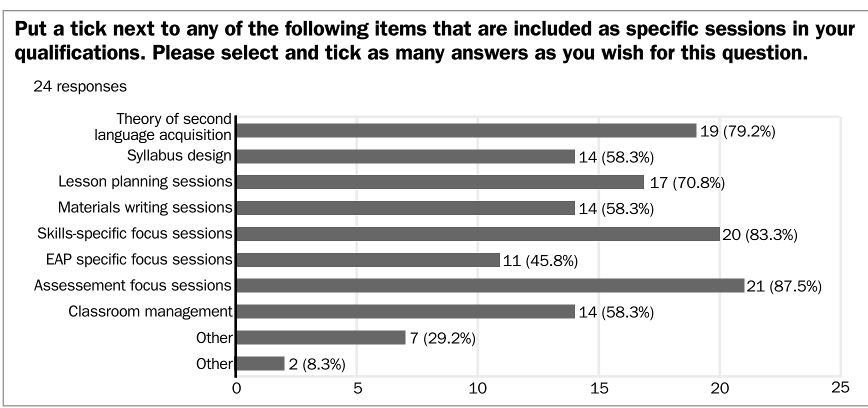

Figure 1 Main topics covered in language teacher training qualifications

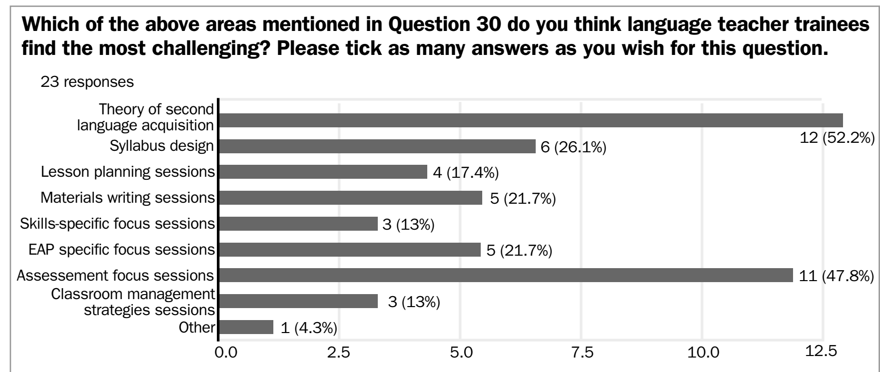

Figure 2 Language teacher trainers' views on which sessions trainees find most challenging

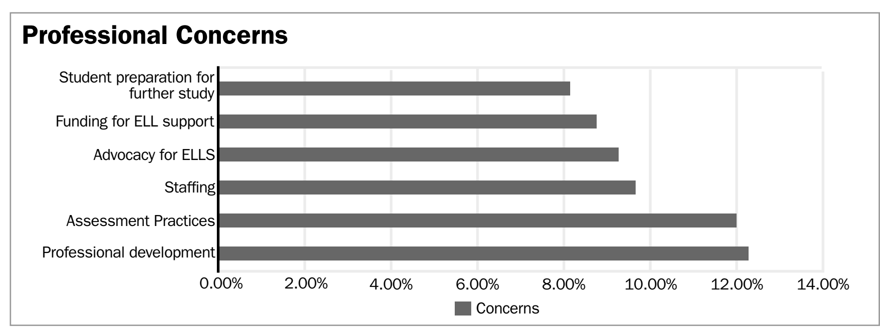

Figure 3 TESOLANZ members professional concerns

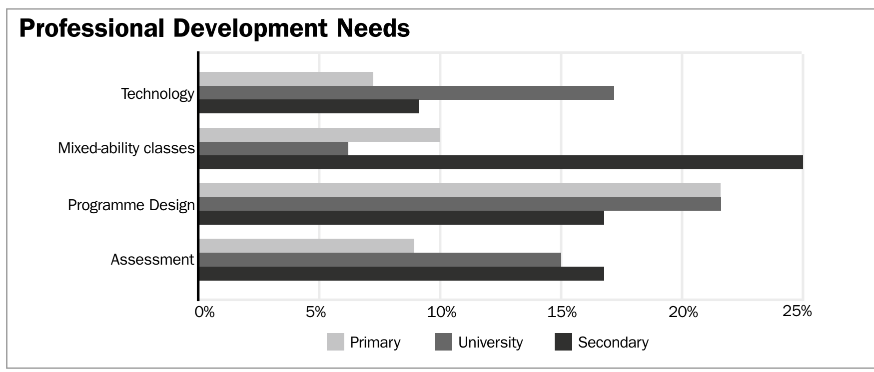

Figure 4 TESOLANZ members top four professional development needs

How might we address these assessment issues?

Initial thoughts: What have we done?

To address this need for professional development in *Assessment practices*, the first day-long national Assessment and EAP Symposium was held on 13 July 2019 at the Waikato Institute of Technology, Hamilton, New Zealand. The need for this kind of focused professional development event was highlighted and validated by the successful turnout on the day, with registered attendees almost triple what we had initially expected. On 13 February 2021, we hosted our second Assessment Symposium, which was planned for last year, October, but had to be postponed due to Covid-19 – no surprises there! Once again there was a bigger turnout than expected, and in the conversations the organising committee had with attendees across sectors, the feedback was that they would like to see this Assessment Symposium running every year.

Further suggestions

In Table 1, I suggest some possible options for addressing this dilemma around assessment. It is a bit of a brain dump, but really intended to spark some initial shift in our thinking around assessment and our ongoing effort to make engagement with assessment more manageable for stakeholders.

<table>
<tr><th>PD for language teachers</th><th>Language teacher trainers</th></tr>
<tr><td>■ Offer regular assessment symposia or workshops, and include opportunities for participant feedback to ascertain how they thought it met their needs and what else they would like to see in future symposia or workshops (institutional, regional and national).
■ Individual teachers could broaden their assessment knowledge and practices by including mini research projects on aspects of assessment of concern to them in their annual professional goal-setting.</td><td>■ When designing or reviewing teacher training courses, consider the extent to which changes are being informed by the demographic of trainees and their prior assessment knowledge, experience and expectations.
■ Teacher trainers could review their current practices to include more or other aspects related to assessment, such as having more hands-on collaborative analysis and workshops on assessment grading.</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="2">Both PD and training for language teachers</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">■ Conduct surveys for both language teacher trainees as well as language teachers to gauge exactly which aspects they grapple with around assessment practices so that any input session becomes fit for purpose and participant-driven.
■ Teacher trainers and PD organisers – using alternative ways of teaching content, e.g. using self-accessed videos, assessment role play for suitable skills, doing writing tasks themselves (trainers and teachers), co-marking assessments by speaking through choices made, e.g. for speaking activities and listening activities that they would use with language learners, and discussions related to case studies involving novel assessment approaches.
■ Encourage pertinent and directed critical thinking-based conversations around marked assessment.
■ Promote the use of reflective journals around assessment practices that trainees and teachers are engaged in – including emotional shifts around managing aspects of the assessment process from design to grading (including managing marking rubrics, guiding document interpretation, responses to global and analytical marking guides).
■ Promote the use of reflective journals specifically focusing on trainers' and teachers' own responses to being assessed and evaluated, e.g. whether from teaching practice grading, classroom observations, peer observation, departmental management requirements.
■ Encourage commitment to change through action, based on reflections in reflective journals.</td></tr>
</table>

Table 1 Some initial options for addressing assessment concerns amongst language teachers and teacher trainers

Concluding remarks

Practically-focused textbooks on ELTT generally include very little on the subject of assessment. However, English language teachers and trainers list assessment as one of their major concerns. This short article, through suggesting a few options for both teachers and trainers to consider as a way of increasing and diversifying their knowledge of assessment practices, hopes to stimulate discussion and debate around assessment issues in a rapidly changing industry.

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Anthea Fester (PhD) is a senior academic staff member at the Waikato Institute of Technology. She teaches on the New Zealand Certificate in English Language programmes (NZCEL). She has a PhD in EAL curriculum and syllabus design from the University of Waikato, where she has had extensive teaching experience in EAP, applied linguistics and language teacher training.

Communicating lesson aims

Brian Cooke looks at the difficult area of lesson aims.

Lesson aims and objectives are part of the well-worn fabric of teaching in English language schools. Academic research has spawned hair-split variants of such nomenclature in that field, including, for example, the softer generally applicable 'outcomes', and the more specifically targeted variant, 'student learning outcomes', with its elevated 'SLO' abbreviation. Mercifully, the British Council states for the benefit of lesser mortals engaged in English Language Teaching that 'Aims are what teachers (and learners) want to achieve in a lesson' (British Council, 2019).

Not yet extinct, my generation is one which experienced school classroom teaching wholly devoid of stated aims or any thought that absence of such might signal the decline of the species. I confess to regarding this need for educational accountability to be akin to other changes in management in the UK which were readily imported from the USA in the 1980s. These determined that the further down the food chain you might be, the more answerable you were to a raft of specific demands written by your superiors to make sure they never took the blame for anything. I worked in state adult education over several years from the 1990s, when thousands of courses were offered through one college, many of which had a waiting list. I remember halfway through my time there the principal announcing that 'the day of the gifted amateur was over' and that we as tutors were now to become 'professional'. When the sun rose, we began accounting for every breath we took. In full daylight, the service has all but suffocated, today offering only a couple of hundred courses. But, in the name of raising standards, no doubt everything is accounted for and no authority can be harmed in the process.

Putting politics and personal reflection aside, what do the experts have to say? As late as 1991, Penny Ur (p. 225) writes of lessons 'I am aware of my teaching objectives, but I do not write

them down.' Jim Scrivener (2011: 135-136 & 142) seems to concur by clearly noting that 'it is useful to be able to state what (lesson) aims are' before going on to acknowledge that teachers sometimes 'change the aims while they are teaching.' Scrivener then validates alternatives to the 'aims-plus-procedure plan' on various grounds. These include methodological considerations, restrictiveness, in other words not allowing the students any room to take the lesson in another direction, and the lesson aim emerging during the class rather than being pre-decided.

Consideration to the lesson in the context of a scheme of work is given by Jeremy Harmer (2007a: 364-367), who presents the paradox of responsiveness and pre-determination, citing the notion of a greater value to less experienced teachers of having more of a plan. Acknowledging the way in which teachers are trained and assessed, Harmer (2007b: 371) then describes the aims as 'the most important element' of a lesson plan.

With the general acceptance of defining lesson aims and some personal observations in mind, I wondered how our English teaching community in Britain approaches this aspect today and decided to carry out a small survey. 29 non-managerial teachers of adults responded in relation to pre-Covid classroom teaching. The survey questions concerned four major areas:

"…..there is broad support among teachers for the notion of referring to lesson aims even if not applied in all cases but a minority remain unconvinced"

1. the communication of lesson aims at or near the start and/or end of the lesson
2. student responsiveness to being given or not being given lesson aims
3. school management expectations and other influences
4. why a teacher may not communicate lesson aims

The results reveal that of the respondents (72%) always or usually present lesson aims orally at or near the start of a lesson while 55% do so in writing. Just over half, at 52%, contextualize lesson aims within a scheme of work which covers a longer period. An examination of individual responses showed only two instances where a teacher usually or always puts a lesson in context of a scheme of work but does not usually present individual lesson aims. This suggests overall a greater focus given by teachers on the individual lesson rather than its place in the scheme of work.

Reference at or near the end of the lesson to aims given orally or in writing at the beginning of the lesson is lower, at around 30% in each case. This begs the question as to why fewer teachers check the achievement of aims with their students.

With regard to learners, 33% of teachers report at least usual acknowledgement of the lessons aims being given while 25% report that students rarely or never exhibit a noticeable response. Where lesson aims are omitted, 80% of teachers say that students rarely or never remark on it. The value attributed by students to lesson aims cannot necessarily be determined by noticeable responses but, clearly, it is not discernibly high.

Reported Management expectations show twice as many managers requiring mention of lesson aims at or near the start of lessons as not. The fact that there is a higher proportion of teachers who present lesson aims at this point orally than those who do so in writing is ironic given that somewhat more specify the requirement of written reference. While a minority are unsure of management demands in these areas, six out of eighteen teachers who are instructed to give written aims usually do not do so, although two of these present them orally. By contrast,

five other teachers who either are either not asked to do so or are unsure of what is expected in this respect, refer to lesson aims orally.

Regarding the end of lessons, figures for expected reference to aims are similar to those where it was not expected at around 30% in each case but here a remarkable 40% of respondents were unsure of management requirements. This suggests that managers overall are less clear in communicating expectations for the end of lessons than for the start and may go a long way to answering the question as to why fewer teachers check achievement of aims.

Interestingly, the requirement by management to refer to lesson aims in a broader context, such as a weekly scheme of work, is reported overall as significantly more common (as applicable in 81% of cases) than the requirement to refer to individual lesson aims, excluding responses from those unsure. Again, ironically, given the weighting, almost half of teachers more often do not comply with this instruction and this appears to underline the previous assertion that teachers focus more on the individual parts and stages of a lesson.

Among four potentially motivating factors for teachers referring to lesson aims, those factors with the most reported influence overall are habit and responding to students' appreciation, the latter being somewhat paradoxical given the limited appreciation shown. 'Being necessary for inspections' is less influential and the least influential is 'following management instructions'. Two-thirds of respondents cite habit as at least a moderate influence while a half acknowledge management in similar measure.

Comments about referring to aims in a lesson polarise, with 12 wholly in support, 4 with reservations and 6 against. The predominant themes among those in favour concern clarity, structure and direction, while those against include an unhelpful effect on learners and the uninterest of students. One refers to strong pedagogical arguments for not basing lessons on aims and challenges institutions for unquestioningly following the British Council assessment criterion to do so.

When asked why on occasion they might fail to refer to lesson aims, simply 'forgetting to do so' was reported as quite or very likely by 50% of teachers, they consider it the wrong methodology generally by 11% and they consider it wrong for that particular lesson by a notable 57%. While over 80% claim to be in the habit of presenting lesson aims in some way and/or seeing the point of doing so, the notion of this being rightly applicable to every single lesson is rejected by a majority.

To summarize, there is broad support among teachers for the notion of referring to lesson aims even if not applied in all cases but a minority remain unconvinced. There is evidently potential for more teachers to check stated aims at the end of the lesson. Among students, the significance given to stated aims appears questionable. Probably unsurprisingly, the ranks of EFL teachers can demonstrate initiative or reluctance to conform.

Finally, I would like to illustrate something which is important to me personally with a copy of a form on display in the staff room at my school. While we aim to do the best for students, this does not necessarily mean that we always have to take ourselves so seriously.

Our less-than-exemplary objectives

Week:	Any/Every
Student needs from last week/planned review:	No need – finished last week
Objectives	
1. Speaking/Pronunciation	Can ask to go to toilet in lesson
2. Reading	Can follow text on phone under the table
3. Listening	Can guess place in book when nominated
4. Grammar	Can ask to buy grammar book as ownership of language
5. Vocabulary	Can apply bar talk to lessons
6. Writing	Can send text by phone under the table
7. Learner training	Can ask to go up to next level when not ready
8. Links to UK & social programme	Can blame the weather, the bus, hours of daylight...

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Brian Cooke is the Assistant Principal at Colchester English Study Centre, now in its sixth decade of operation. Over his 20-plus years' teaching at this renowned establishment, Brian has compiled pre-IELTS writing courses and has gained recognition as an official English language examiner for the German Foreign Office. Becoming deputy head has underlined his belief in pragmatism in teaching as well as the value of humour in all situations.

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Creating material for a CLIL philosophy '101' course

Andrew Boon describes the process he went through to produce a new course.

Introduction

I remember this particular committee meeting well at the Japanese university where I work. It was towards the end of 2015 and during the meeting, it was announced that the teacher who was assigned to teach philosophy to first-year students on our four-year Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) program, International Careers Program (ICP), had decided to leave the school. Knowing my educational background, the ICP director requested that I teach the course from April 2016, the new academic year. Although I have a vast experience of ELT and course and material design, I felt that my philosophy days were long behind me – an undergraduate BA (Hons) in English literature with philosophy awarded 20 years previously. Nevertheless, I accepted the challenge to take on a one-semester (15-week) CLIL philosophy course and began my preparations.

For teachers who are given new courses to teach, often the first port of call is to search for an appropriate coursebook that may serve as the course syllabus (Davies & Pearse, 2000) and can provide the 'central learning resource or language input for the learners' (Boon, 2019: 11). This can save teachers valuable time and stop them from having to reinvent the wheel. However, there may be cases in which no suitable commercially-made material is available or a teacher wishes to make their own unique learning resources. In respect of the CLIL philosophy course I had been asked to teach, I knew that I would need to create my own material. Philosophy is a niche subject and not a focus of mainstream ELT publishing; therefore, finding a suitable coursebook would be very challenging. On the other hand, using authentic philosophy literature would be too difficult for the CEFR B1 level first-year students.

This short article begins by situating the philosophy '101' course within the ICP structure and CLIL paradigm. I will then describe the process of designing the course and selecting/creating the material. Using the material from 'Lesson 2: Socrates' as an example, it provides the rationale for each section on the worksheet, explains the tasks that students engage in within a lesson, and describes the role of the YouTube videos. Finally, comments from 2019 ICP students are included.

ICP and CLIL

ICP is a four-year program that was established in 2014 at a private

university in Tokyo in line with the institution's mission to develop independent, globally-minded individuals with 21st-century skills, with the aim of increasing its reputation and continuing to attract new students in an increasingly competitive market (Brown, 2015). Based 'loosely' around the CLIL approach of teaching academic subjects via the L2 (Ball, Kelly, & Clegg, 2015), ICP offers students a variety of language and content courses in the first year and a half of their studies. Students are then required to study abroad for a year in an English-speaking country before returning to undertake a number of ICP and regular faculty courses as well as a graduation paper in English within their final year and a half of studies.

The CLIL philosophy '101' course is offered as an elective to first-year ICP students in their second semester of study. Although it is an elective, most students opt to take it. Regarding the approach, it can be classified as a 'soft' rather than 'hard' CLIL course (Ball, Kelly, & Clegg, 2015). In other words, I am not a trained philosophy subject teacher; my specialism is English-language teaching. Moreover, the primary aim of the course is to build students' language skills via a basic introduction of the subject matter, philosophy. Thus, developing basic subject knowledge is subordinate to learning the language itself.

Designing the course and material

Step one: Researching

Recognizing that I would need to go down the more creative path of developing the course material 'from scratch' (Graves, 2000), I began to research philosophy texts that could help me to revise the subject matter I had learned at university. Firstly, I repurchased, read, and took notes on Hollis's (1997) book, '*Invitation to Philosophy*,' as this was the core text on my undergraduate first-year introductory philosophy course (my original was stuck in the attic back at my parent's home!). I also sought out texts that had been written for entry-level 'subject' learners of philosophy (Buckingham *et al*, 2011; Patton & Cannon, 2015), so that I could get a sense of how the writers simplify complex philosophical concepts and ideas for their readers. I could also take notes from these books and adapt some of the information for use in an EFL class.

"....I find it is always best to leave the initial syllabus with room for flexibility for both teacher and learners."

Additionally, I searched for interesting philosophy videos on YouTube. By watching the videos, I could restudy the content and at the same time consider whether they would be appropriate with regards to their length and linguistic difficulty to introduce to my ICP students for pre-class or post-class learning. One great series of videos that I found and used was *The School of Life 'Western Philosophy'* series (See https://www.youtube.com/user/schooloflifechannel).

Finally, I sought advice about philosophy course design from my peers by crowdsourcing via social media. Because of a request I posted on Facebook, a friend of mine in Osaka who had designed a similar introductory-level philosophy course shared his syllabus with me. Although it was aimed at students with a much higher level than CEFR B1 level, it gave me valuable insight into how I could map out my course.

Step two: Writing the syllabus

At my institute, syllabuses for courses for the new academic year are due around the end of January. This meant that by January 2016, I had to commit to the Philosophy '101' course description, goals and objectives, method of assessment, scope and sequence of units, and a brief description of individual lessons across the 15-week learning period. However, as syllabus design in the first year of a new course can often be 'little more than an educated guess,' (Boon, 2011: 172) until one has met the students, taught the course, reflected on it, and made the necessary revisions, I find it is always best to leave the initial syllabus with room for flexibility for both teacher and learners.

After examining the syllabus that I had received from my friend, and considering his suggested thematic approach to teaching philosophy (e.g. logic, knowledge, free will, ethics and so on), I decided to make it easier for my students by having each lesson as a self-contained unit that would focus on one famous philosopher at a time and proceed chronologically from ancient to modern world philosophers. This sequence was inspired by the organization of *The philosophy book: Big ideas simply explained* (Buckingham *et al*, 2011) and was practical due to the time constraints of the subject needing to be delivered via a one-semester course. Wishing to leave room in the course for an introduction lesson, presentations, and examinations, I made a choice to focus on 10 philosophers only and selected them based on their chronology, their influence on philosophy, my previous studies of the field, and the books I had read during the research stage of course design. I then created my sequence of lessons (see Table 1).

Based on my prior experience of course design at the institution, I selected and decided upon the different weightings for the assessment – students would complete two written examinations (20% x 2 - Lessons 7 and 14), undertake a research project on one of the philosophers on the course (Lesson 7) and give a final presentation to the class

(20% - Lesson 15), keep and submit a notebook (20% - Lessons 1-15), and be scored on their overall performance throughout the course (20%).

As mentioned, the aims of the course are primarily to develop language skills via the subject of philosophy. Thus, my goals and objectives for the course reflected this intention (see Table 2).

Step three: Creating and selecting the material

Once the syllabus had been finalized and submitted to the school in January 2016, I turned to other projects that I was engaged in and did not begin step three until the week before classes commenced in April 2016. Generally, I like to be only one to two weeks ahead of my lesson preparation, as I want to create the new material while the course is in process. In this way, I can tailor it to the needs of the particular students enrolled in the course and adapt it later, as necessary, when repeating the material with future learners. To provide the main source of language and subject-matter input for learners, I created worksheets for each of the 10 philosophers featured on the philosophy '101' course (see Table 1) and selected and sent weekly YouTube philosophy videos prior to each class via a messenger group on *Line* that we set up in Lesson 1 (See https://line.me/en-US/). Each philosopher worksheet is structured around the same set of tasks in order to familiarize students with and simplify the learning process of each lesson. (see Table 3).

In the next section, an explanation of each task is provided using excerpts from the worksheet for 'Lesson 2: About Socrates' as an example.

Task 1: Review task and Homework task (Lesson time: 15 minutes)

Students are asked at the beginning of the lesson to share their research homework with their classmates. Students work in groups of four or five to give short presentations to each other based on the theme of the previous lesson. Listeners are encouraged to take notes in their notebooks; end-of-semester

Table 1 Sequence of lessons

Lesson 1	Introduction: What is philosophy?
Lesson 2	About Socrates
Lesson 3	About Plato
Lesson 4	About Aristotle
Lesson 5	About Thomas Hobbes
Lesson 6	About René Descartes
Lesson 7	Mid-term examination on philosophers 1-5 / Introduce project
Lesson 8	About John Locke
Lesson 9	About David Hume
Lesson 10	About Immanuel Kant
Lesson 11	About Friedrich Nietzsche
Lesson 12	About Bertrand Russell
Lesson 13	Review and project preparation
Lesson 14	Final examination on philosophers 6-10
Lesson 15	Project presentations / Submit notebook

Table 2 Goals and objectives

1. Students will be able to improve English speaking, listening, writing, and reading skills.
2. Students will be able to gain a basic understanding of philosophy and philosophers.
3. Students will be able to build vocabulary.
4. Students will research and give a presentation in English based on one of the philosophers studied in the course.
5. Students will improve critical thinking skills.

Table 3 Sequence of worksheet tasks

Task 1	A **review task** in which students give a 1 or 2-minute presentation based on their homework task.
Task 2	An **introductory task** related to one of the particular philosopher's main ideas.
Task 3	An **online research task** to find out basic information about the particular philosopher.
Task 4	A series of philosophical **discussion questions** related to the particular philosopher's main ideas.
Task 5	**Lecture notes** to help students follow and understand a 'mini-lecture' about the particular philosopher.
Homework	A **research homework task** to find out more information about the particular philosopher.

notebook submission being part of the course assessment. At the beginning of Lesson 2, for example, students present on the Lesson 1 topic and homework task – *What is philosophy?* (see Table 1). At the end of Lesson 2, students are instructed to research Socrates for their homework (See Figure 1).

Students may choose to review the lesson worksheet, watch the related YouTube video (Kevintora, 2011; The School of Life, 2016) I send, and/or search the internet for new information on Socrates. At the beginning of Lesson 3, students then share their homework.

These worksheet tasks have been designed not only to help students to review the content of each lesson, but to be exposed to further authentic subject language, to foster interaction and cooperative learning among the group members (Ball, Kelly, & Clegg, 2015; Mehisto, 2012), and for individual learners to begin to develop the skills required for autonomous learning of the subject matter (Mehisto, 2012). The starting review task also allows the teacher to clarify whether students have understood the content of the previous lesson and to then revisit any key areas that are omitted in student presentations.

Homework
Research more about Socrates. Get ready to do a 1–2 minute presentation next week.

Figure 1 Homework task from Lesson 2 worksheet

Task 2: Introductory task (Lesson time: 15 minutes)

In Lesson 2, the next task on the worksheet (see Figure 2) introduces students to Socrates' method of dialogical questioning; a means of reassessing the assumptions that we often base our fundamental beliefs on that may be undermined once we think more critically about them (Buckingham *et al*, 2011).

Task 2 – The Socratic method of arguing

Socrates used this method of questioning to show someone they may be wrong about what they believe. The idea is not to prove you are right but to prove the other person is wrong by a series of questions and statements.

1. Find out what the other person believes – '*Grass is green*.'
2. Find an example where the statement is false – '*Is grass green for someone who is blind?*'
3. Change the person's statement – '*So grass is green for only people who can see.*'
4. Challenge the new statement with a question – '*If grass is in an empty field and nobody can see it, is it still green?*'

(Adapted from Brown, 2006)

Figure 2 Introductory task from Lesson 2 worksheet

The teacher may begin the task by asking students the question: '*What colour is grass?*' After students answer, the teacher may confirm their response by asking: '*So, you believe the colour of grass to be green, right?*' Then, the teacher may question students further: '*Is there any situation in which grass is not green?*' The teacher may accept a number of answers (e.g. when the grass is very dry). The teacher then refers students to the example Four Steps of Socratic Arguing in Task 2 (see Figure 2). Depending on the class level, it is possible to extend the task by putting students into groups to follow the steps questioning other basic beliefs they may have (e.g. 'fruit is healthy').

The aim of this introductory task is to gain students' interest in the new philosopher and ease them into the academic language and critical thinking skills (Mehisto, 2012) they require to engage with the ideas of Socrates. It provides guided input that leads to subsequent output and interaction by the students (Ball, Kelly, & Clegg, 2015) and begins the scaffolding process that is necessary for greater learner understanding of the end-of-lesson 'mini-lecture' on Socrates.

Task 3: Online research task (Lesson time: 10 minutes)

Next, students work individually, using their smartphones to search the internet and find the answers to six basic questions about Socrates (see Figure 3). They then work in pairs to share their answers (Please note that '5' is a trick question – Socrates did not write any books. It was his follower, Plato who wrote down Socrates' thoughts and teachings).

Task 3 – About Socrates
Use the Internet to answer the questions.

1. When was Socrates born?	
2. When did he die?	
3. How did he die?	
4. Where did he live?	
5. How many books did he write?	
6. Who was Socrates' most famous follower?	

Figure 3 Research task from Lesson 2 worksheet

The pedagogic rationale for Task 3 is for students to acquire some basic knowledge about the philosopher, to develop elementary academic research skills of locating L2 content information via the internet, and to provide scaffolding for the homework task (see Figure 1) in which students may discover (or be guided towards) useful sites to gain more information about Socrates. In this way, the task encourages learner autonomy with

"Generally, I like to be only one to two weeks ahead of my lesson preparation, as I want to create the new material while the course is in process."

respect to students being encouraged to find additional learning resources on their own (Mehisto, 2012).

Task 4: Discussion questions (Lesson time: 30 minutes)
Students are placed in small groups to discuss a number of philosophical questions related to the philosopher (see Figure 4). I ask the students to use the L2 for discussion whenever possible but allow them to use the L1 (Japanese) for questions which they may find it difficult to express their thoughts and ideas in English. After groups have worked through the questions, they feedback their answers using the L2 to the whole class.

Task 4 – Let's discuss

1. What is good and what is evil?
2. What is virtue?
3. What is ignorance?
4. Which is more important, wealth and status or knowledge?
5. Which is worse, to harm or be harmed?
6. '*I only know that I know nothing*' – What does this mean?

Figure 4 Discussion questions from Lesson 2 worksheet

Task 5 – The philosophy of Socrates

Socrates is thought of as the founder of Western philosophy.

He has no theories of his own – he asked questions that interested him – here he developed the Socratic method (sometimes called Dialectical method because it is a dialogue between two people)…

(NB: This is an excerpt from the 3-page lecture notes. If you would like a copy of the complete worksheet for Lesson 2, please feel free to contact me.)

Figure 5 Excerpt of lecture notes from Lesson 2 worksheet

The purpose of the discussion questions task is to provide scaffolding for the 'mini-lecture' on Socrates. The questions are written to introduce students to the main themes that will be covered in the lecture. It also provides students with exposure to the key lexis and thus, the opportunity to look up, clarify, or ask the teacher about any unknown vocabulary. Moreover, it 'fronts' student involvement and interaction (Ball, Kelly & Clegg, 2015). In other words, students are encouraged to think critically about the philosophical issues that Socrates raises prior to the teacher's transmission of information about the philosopher to them.

Task 5: Lecture notes (Lesson time: 20 minutes)
Students listen to and take notes on a short lecture on the philosopher. The lecture notes are provided on the worksheet to facilitate student understanding (see Figure 5). However, additional information and explanations may be provided by the teacher during the lecture.

Although the transmission of information via lecturing may reduce students to a passive role and can be deemed an ineffective means of learning (Schmidt *et al*, 2015), it is 'the most employed tool…in higher education' (p. 12). As one of the main aims of the ICP first-year program is to prepare students for study in overseas higher education institutes in their second year, the 'mini-lecture' task readies students for this endeavor in the respect of providing practice of listening

to L2 explanations of complex subject-matter concepts and of note-taking. The lecture also provides information that may facilitate the research homework task assigned at the end of the lesson.

What my students think

I conducted a short questionnaire via SurveyMonkey with my 2019 ICP students to obtain feedback on the worksheets I had created and the YouTube videos I had provided. Unfortunately, only five out of nine students in the first-year group responded. Therefore, any conclusions drawn from the data can only be very superficial:

- **Did the worksheets I provide help your learning/understanding during the philosophy course?**

  All students commented that the worksheets were helpful, easy to understand, and useful for the examinations. One student commented that the pictures and metaphors had facilitated their understanding.

- **How did you use the worksheets outside of the classroom?**

  Students used the worksheets to prepare for the weekly research presentations (see Figure 1), to study for the examinations (Lessons 7 & 14), and the final project presentation (Lesson 15).

- **Did you watch the YouTube videos I posted?**

  All students indicated that they had watched the videos. Students stated they wanted to get more information about the philosophers and the videos helped them to prepare further for the weekly research presentations. One student stated they did so because 'the teacher said that you should watch the video.'

Conclusion

This article has explained the process of creating material for a one-semester CLIL philosophy course that landed on the author's lap three months prior to the start of a new academic year. It has described the process the author underwent of

"As one of the main aims of the ICP first-year program is to prepare students for study in overseas higher education institutes in their second year, the 'mini-lecture' task readies students for this endeavor in the respect of providing practice of listening to L2 explanations of complex subject-matter concepts and of notetaking"

locating existing resources that were suitable for entry-level 'subject' learners of philosophy; researching and making use of the content; designing a tentative syllabus; and developing philosopher worksheets that included a series of tasks based upon the author's expertise of ELT, prior experience as a philosophy student, interpretation of CLIL, and understanding of the aims of the institutional program (ICP). Comments from 2019 ICP students have illustrated the importance of the material in helping them to complete the course successfully and facilitating their understanding of philosophy. It is hoped that the article provides readers with insight into the process of designing 'soft' CLIL material and is of use for teachers who find themselves in a similar situation of needing to prepare new courses at relatively short notice.

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Andy Boon is a professor in the faculty of Global Communications at Toyo Gakuen University, Tokyo. HE has been teaching in Japan for over 20 years. He holds a PhD in Applied Linguistics from Aston University. He has presented at numerous domestic and international ELT conferences and has published many articles on teacher development, motivation and methodology. He is author and co-author of various coursebooks and graded readers. Andrew.boon@tyg.jp

Writing materials for live online lessons

John Hughes describes some of the differences between online and live teaching materials.

When so many of us started teaching live online lessons with tools like Zoom and Microsoft Teams early in 2020, I soon started to consider how this may impact the use and design of classroom materials. As someone who writes materials both for publishers and my own lessons, I was interested to see how materials created for face-to-face teaching would transfer to a live online lesson. Reassuringly, many aspects of creating materials for live online lessons remain the same. However, there are differences that affect the writing and design of our materials for online teaching; some of these are very noticeable and some are more subtle.

1. The format of your materials

I remember from one of my first live online lessons how I sent all my students a copy of a worksheet I'd written. It was a one-page A4 worksheet which I'd originally created for a face-to-face class so naturally I'd written it in portrait (with the long edge down the side). However, when I shared the worksheet on my screen at the beginning of the lesson, it was annoying to have to scroll up and down between different parts of the worksheet. For another class, I re-designed the same A4 worksheet in landscape (with the long edge across the top) so it would fit perfectly onto the screen of a laptop or tablet without the need to scroll and I sent the same worksheet in landscape to my students. In a recent article considering the use of digital books on screens, Christopher Walker (2021) also comments on the limitations of portrait in materials design: 'Interactive tasks like matching exercises need more space than the portrait form can accommodate' (p. 46). Further to this, author Lindsay Clandfield also points out that when considering the layout of materials for screens, 'less is more' because aside from the fact that teachers tend to get through less material in an online class, 'many students are using a mobile phone to follow their class so you might need to adjust the materials to have less text on it' (Clandfield, personal email correspondence with the author).

2. Exercises for using the technology

Course books I've written for face-to-face classes have often included a unit on technology but with live online lessons I suddenly found that I needed to write exercises which helped students with the hands-on aspects of using the technology required for the lesson. This provided opportunities to teach some useful phrases. Here's an example (Hughes, 2020) of such an exercise which is introducing the language which students need for solving problems in an online lesson with Zoom.

Match the problem (1–5) to a useful phrase (a-e).

Problems	Explaining and asking for help
1. You can't see another participant.	**a.** 'Can you repeat that? I didn't hear it.'
2. No one can see you.	**b.** 'My video isn't working.'
3. Your teacher's audio stopped working for a second.	**c.** 'Can you show me how to…?'
4. You don't know how to watch in 'speaker view'.	**d.** 'Have you turned on your video?'
5. Nothing is working properly!	**e.** 'Let's leave the room and log on again.'

Answer key: 1 d, 2 b, 3 a, 4 c, 5 e

3. Choice of topics

Recently I wanted to teach a lesson with modal verbs for rules and strong advice such as *must/should/can*. For years, my lesson of choice has contextualised this language point in the topic of travel where students read sentences about travelling to another country such as: *You must get a visa before you leave. / You shouldn't change money at the airport because it's more expensive.* But suddenly in these days of Covid 19 and Zoom none of my students are getting on planes anymore or even leaving the house, let alone travelling. So the topics of my materials have changed in recent months. Nowadays, to teach model verbs, the context of online netiquette seems so much more relevant and you can introduce it using sentences such as: *You should switch your online microphone off when you aren't talking. / You shouldn't write in capital letters in the chat.*

4. Instructions

The ability to write clear instructions is key for any materials writer but with online materials, it seems even more important. As Andrew Barker comments in *Modern English Teacher*: 'A challenge with online delivery is ensuring that learners stay on track without the benefit of the tutor to steer them when needed.' (Barker, 2020: 4). Here, Barker is referring specifically to materials for asynchronous teaching but also in live teaching our materials need to be even more explicit; for example, when students go to do group work in the breakout room, it isn't the same as a face-to-face classroom where they can easily get your attention and check their understanding of a task. The group needs their instructions to be written down and given with explicit signposting for each step.

> **"....there are differences that affect the writing and design of our materials for online teaching; some of these are very noticeable and some are more subtle."**

5. Work in pairs? Work in groups?

Following on from the point about instructions above, we're very familiar with face-to-face materials which often instruct students to do things like: '*Work in pairs and answer the questions*', '*Compare your answers with a partner*' or '*Solve the problem in groups*'. But as Lea Bertacco (2000) points out, whilst many of us are still using materials designed for face-to-face lessons, activities such as '*Turn to your partner…*', '*Discuss…in your group*' take up too much time in online lessons. She writes: 'the time involved in moving into breakout rooms groups makes such brief activities impractical, reducing the frequency of these short interactions online' (Bertacco, 2000: 17). So when we do write the instruction to work in pairs or groups for live online lessons, it's wiser to include it less often and make sure that it really counts when we do.

Those are just five of the differences I've noticed when writing and designing materials for online lessons. Thankfully, the majority of other qualities required by materials for face-to-face lessons generally remain the same for online lessons because 'at the heart of the process remains the ability to produce good materials for language teaching' (Clandfield and Hughes, 2017: 13). But if you have noticed other key differences in your materials writing for live online lessons, I'd be interested in hearing from you!

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Thanks also to Lindsay Clandfield and Antonia Claire for their input on this.

John Hughes is an ELT author on various course series such as *Life* and *World English* (National Geographic Learning) and *Business Result* (Oxford University Press). He is also the series editor for the *ETpedia* teacher resource series (Pavilion ELT).
You can contact him via his website at www.johnhugheselt.com.

Creative writing tasks for online teaching

Judit Fehér concludes her series of online writing tasks with the topic of shopping.

A. Introduction

This article is the last of a miniseries of three articles on creative, communicative and personalised writing tasks adapted for online teaching. In the first article, you can find the background and the general rationale to the activities, some notes on the use of technology, and the descriptions and all the materials for two creative, communicative and personalised writing tasks to teach indirect speech adapted to online teaching. In the second article, there are two writing tasks to teach about jobs.

The activities in this article – just as in the other two – have all the elements of structured writing tasks. They contain steps to introduce the topic to motivate learners; tasks for learners to share their knowledge and experience, and to pool their ideas; they also provide input and guidance, and encourage group and pair work; they give suggestions as to how learners can share their work with each other, too. The activities are described with integrated task sheets so that the teacher does not have to read about certain steps twice and can have the instructions ready. The descriptions are written with a teacher-led step-by-step approach for two reasons: 1. the process is easier to follow step by step; 2. it is easier for the teacher to take away from the tasks than to add: if you think your students don't need a certain step or to be told how to do something as they know it/can figure it out and decide how to organise their own work, just delete the step, and let the students be autonomous. In the task sheets, the parts where the teacher is supposed to add information, e.g. a link, the deadline, grouping of students, a key or where students need to post/send a completed task, are

"The activities are described with integrated task sheets so that the teacher does not have to read about certain steps twice and can have the instructions ready."

Webshop Hunt – Step 1

Task

1. a. Write as many examples of goods in the categories as you can. Avoid repetitions. You have two minutes.

groceries	homeware	clothes	shoes	electronics	books	sportswear

b. Choose a category of goods to research. Write your name below. Max. 4 people in a group.

Webshop Hunt – Step 2

Task

You will find, research and compare web shops, and then write your findings up in a blog post or record it as a vlog post.

1. Individually, search the net for the best sites to buy the goods of your choice. Save the links to the best ones. You have 5 minutes.

2. Talk to the students in your group. Allocate one site to everyone.

3. Work individually. Check in detail how your shop works and what it has to offer from the moment you land at the site to delivering the goods. Also check available customer ratings and opinions. You may want to take screen shots/cuts and add your notes to them. You have 10 minutes.

4. Talk to the students in your group. Present your findings to each other and compare the shops.

5. Decide if you will write up or record your findings.

If you write:

- Create a new Google online document.
- Make this your first line of the document: *Webshop Hunt + Your Initials*
- Use the same text to rename the document such as: *Webshop Hunt_KCs_BA_KJ_ML*
- Make the document editable and share the link with your group mates and your teacher.
- Write up your post together. Change only your own text. Make suggestions and comment on what other students write.

If you record:

- Agree on the general structure of the recording. Your draft should have as many main parts as there are students in your group.
- Allocate who presents which part of your recoding.
- Agree on the person who will merge the individual videos (using e.g. Microsoft Movie-maker, Clideo or a mobile app).
- Agree on how to send your recordings for merging.
- Set a deadline for sending recordings.
- Stop your discussion.
- Individually, record your part. Plan and rehearse first!
- Send your recording to your group mate to merge it. Keep to the deadline!

NB Both for blogs and vlogs

- State your purpose.
- Make clear recommendations.
- Give your reasons using facts and data. You may want to use your screenshots/cuts, too.
- Summarise and draw conclusions.

6. Post your blog or vlog here.

Do it by

7. Read/watch other groups' work. Comment and like.

highlighted. On the other hand, they do not have all the steps leading to the level of skill that make doing these activities appropriate for a learner group, e.g. they do not contain any work on the grammar or vocabulary needed for the task, or they do not have tasks to introduce and teach a certain genre of writing, or any student instruction on using the platforms; in other words, these are structured writing tasks: no less, no more.

The two writing tasks in this article deal with the topic of shopping. The first one gives learners some practice in writing or recording a blog/vlog entry, while the second one gives them the opportunity to write a customer complaint about a terrible experience with an online shop.

B. Tasks

Webshop Hunt

Focus: Comparing, shopping online, writing/recording a social media post (blog/vlog).

Gist: Students research and compare different online shops for a type of goods. They write up or record their findings in a blog or vlog post.

1. Copy the content of Webshop Hunt Task sheet into a document you can share online with your class.

2. Put students into groups of their choice and assign groups to breakout rooms. Share the Webshop Hunt Task sheet and follow the steps.
3. Monitor and help students as they are working. Comment and like posts.
4. Run a feedback session.

Variation

You may want not to offer your students a choice of blog or vlog.

Adaptations

Web hunts can be done focusing on different service providers such as travel agents, online schools, food delivery, news sites, estate agents, bank loans, etc. Evaluating and comparing them teaches an important life skill, not only language.

Online shopping blues

Focus: Shopping online, writing about a bad experience

Gist: Students watch a video for inspiration to write a true or imagined story about a disastrous online shopping experience as a customer complaint posted online.

1. Post this Task sheet and the Keys online and follow the steps.

Online shopping blues – Step 1

Task
You'll watch a video on online shopping, and then you'll write a true or imagined story about a disastrous online shopping experience.

1. In what order might these happen when shopping online? Put them in order moving the boxes.

select delivery options | **type in username** | **screen freezes** | **log off**

type in verification code | **tick terms and conditions of use**

type in post code | **unclick insurance** | **getting timed out**

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.

2. Watch 'Online shopping offline' (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lLi3K_6iYIQ) on YouTube and answer the questions below.
a. What is strange about this online shopping?
b. What problems are there?

Find Key at

3. Watch the video again. In what order do the activities in 1 happen? Change your order as needed.

Find Key at

4. Have you ever had a bad online shopping experience or have you heard of one? Can you imagine a disastrous experience with online shopping? Think of one and write it up as a customer complaint posted online, e.g. on the company's site or on a site that compares different online shops. Include as many problems as you can think of.

NB: Make sure that:

- you state when the events happened and what you were trying to do.
- you not only pass judgment, but you also give facts: what you did and how the system reacted.
- the order of events is clear.
- you summarise and make a request and/or suggestions.
- you keep your tone polite but factual and assertive.
- you use the past tenses correctly.

Post your story here.

Do it by

5. Read others student's posts, comment and like.

Keys

2. 1. It is happening face-to-face in a real shop, the cashier acts as the computer; 2. Once the screen freezes and the customer has to start again; the customer can't read the verification code; there's a problem with the price; the customer has had enough and leaves without the product.

3. 1. type in post code; 2. tick terms and conditions of use; 3. getting timed out; 4. screen freezes; 5. type in username; 6. type in verification code; 7. select delivery options; 8. unclick insurance; 9. log off

3. Monitor and help students as they are working. Comment and like posts.
4. Run a feedback session.

Variations

1. Instead of or besides providing keys for the exercises with the video, you can give feedback orally.
2. Instead of individual work, pairs or groups of three could work together on (some of) the tasks.

Extension/Adaptation

Doing other online activities offline can be a source of enjoyable learning. Students could act out, for example, a video meeting offline or an online class offline.

C. Summary

The two tasks presented in this article deal with the topic of online shopping. The first one gets learners to practise writing or recording a blog/vlog post in which they compare web shops they have researched, and make recommendations, not only practising writing but also an important life skill along the way. In the second one, they write a complaint in the form of an online comment about a bad online shopping experience with a web shop. They use their humour and imagination while learning to do something of practical value.

The activities in this series of articles were designed to work in 100% online classes while maintaining the variety, open-endedness, individualised and communicative nature of offline creative writing tasks. Running them, however, needs a variety of platforms, which the teacher has to manage; teachers also need to get the students to do these complex tasks without the much greater immediacy, spontaneity, dynamism and warmth of working face-to-face. When we have the chance to work fully or partly face-to-face, we can decide which steps of these tasks might work better using, and which without using technology in our contexts. The variations and combinations are limitless.

> **"When we have the chance to work fully or partly face-to-face, we can decide which steps of these tasks might work better using, and which without using technology in our contexts. "**

Judit Fehér is a freelance teacher, teacher trainer and materials writer. She has extensive teaching experience ranging from pre-school to post-graduate. Judit runs courses for Pilgrims and gives workshops and talks at international conferences. Most of the teaching materials she has written target secondary students. These include textbooks, workbooks, resource books and online materials. She is co-author of *Creative Resources* with Bonnie Tsai (IAL, Atlanta); her articles were published by the British Council, English Teaching Professional, Humanising Language Teaching and The Teacher Trainer. Her main interests are materials writing, creativity and CLIL. jr.feher@gmail.com

A framework for project-based learning in TESOL

Jason Anderson looks at ways of using this collaborative and communicative approach.

While teachers of all subjects have made use of projects for many years, there has been a steady increase in interest in project-based learning to engage and inspire learners in the English language classroom over the last decade at primary, secondary and tertiary levels, paralleled by increasing evidence of its positive impact on learning and engagement (e.g. Astawa *et al*, 2017). This article provides an original definition for project-based learning for TESOL, examples of possible project types and a framework that teachers can use to plan and implement projects in the English language classroom.

Projects have been a part of mainstream education for many decades. I remember my own enthusiasm for two projects in my own rather traditional education in the UK in the 1980s. However, with an increased interest in cross-curricular education in school systems around the world (Barnes, 2015), project-based learning (PBL) has come to the fore as an original and appropriate means to structure learning, and a number of frameworks for PBL have been developed to help teachers to bring together and apply learning from different subjects to practical, often real-world problems and situations (e.g. Grossman *et al*, 2018). However, there is less clarity regarding exactly what PBL means for language teachers – How do we define PBL in our field? Is PBL just a longer version of task-based language teaching (TBLT)? What projects types are appropriate and possible for language learning? And – fundamental to all of these issues – how exactly do we use projects in the classroom to facilitate effective language learning? This article provides possible answers to these questions, offering a personal opinion for critical appraisal.

A working definition of PBL for language learning

This working definition of PBL draws critically upon several influential sources, both in language teaching and mainstream education (Grossman *et al*, 2018; Moss & Van Duzer, 1998; Thomas, 2000; Turnbull, 1999) to identify key elements that are likely to support language learning effectively.

Project-based Learning in the additional language classroom (e.g. TESOL) involves learners working in

> **"…..by focusing on the products of learning, PBL not only allows, but encourages translingual interaction between learners during the process, providing that the products themselves meet our assessment criteria."**

fixed groups for a planned period to research a phenomenon or study a problem, and produce one or more 'products' in the target language (e.g. English) as evidence of their enquiry. It is cross-disciplinary (i.e. linked to other subjects), provides agency to learners (e.g. to choose their topic focus), develops higher order cognition, and encourages the use of practical skills in collaborative environments that simulate real world contexts (e.g. work, academic research, etc.).

While learners can engage in projects alone, this definition views collaboration – a means to facilitate peer instruction and develop social skills – as key to maximising the potential of projects, and sees only the products of the project as necessary outputs, avoiding making any impositions on the processes involved during the research and development of the product. As such, PBL is here defined as a *product-*, not *process-based* approach.

This definition provides a basis for us, as English teachers, to design our own projects based directly on our learners' needs with regard to both language learning and other educational interests. It also allows for flexible levels of interaction between English and other subjects, and cooperation with other teachers. A project with a subject-specific focus (e.g. history, biology) could easily be extended to the English classroom – providing some products require the use of English. In such instances, the English teacher may take on a CLIL-support role of sorts. Alternatively, a cross-curricular project can include one or two products in English, which is feasible at primary levels when one teacher often teaches all subjects to the class.

How project-based learning is different from task-based learning

While some writers see PBL as essentially an extension of task-based language teaching (e.g. Bilsborough, n.d.) I think it's important to separate the two. In TBLT, the focus is on creating opportunities for meaningful interaction in English, particularly spoken, with task cycles typically taking place wholly within single lessons and no requirement for a tangible product as a result of the interaction. As such, it tends towards a focus on process as a means to facilitate language learning, and is particularly effective in 'mixed L1' classrooms, where learners are essentially forced to communicate in English as the only or main lingua franca. This can be much more of a challenge in a 'shared L1' classroom, where learners often, quite logically, switch to their other language(s) to complete the task – succeeding in the goal, but short-circuiting our hope that they would acquire English during the process.

In contrast to this, by focusing on the products of learning, PBL not only allows, but encourages translingual interaction between learners during the process, providing that the products themselves meet our assessment criteria. Depending on our aims, these could include producing written documents (e.g. reports, stories), audio-visual displays (e.g. Powerpoint presentations or online vlogs), or spoken presentations

(e.g. TED-type talks or drama presentations). We can complement this by providing further input materials in English (e.g. texts or videos), or project focuses that require learners to conduct research in English (e.g. on a place, custom or person for whom there is little information online in the students' L1), to ensure that PBL encourages them to engage in both receptive and productive skills work involving the target language. Given that many of our learners will go on to jobs or academic study in multilingual contexts, where their L1s will often play an important role in social interaction at work (see Anderson, 2018), it can be argued that PBL creates a more realistic – 'authentic' even – work-like environment for learners to use English as part of their wider languaging repertoire, thereby sidestepping the 'English only' communication fallacy that is basal to TBLT.

Examples of project types

Table 1 provides examples of six common project types, structured from simpler to more complex (from a management perspective), with the latter projects often also requiring greater creativity, evaluation, synthesis and application of ideas – thus developing higher order thinking skills (Anderson *et al*, 2001).

A framework for project-based learning

Figure 1 provides a basic framework to help you and your learners to plan, implement, assess and learn from projects. At each stage, several key areas of importance are highlighted. While it is likely that the planning and materials development will be the teacher's responsibility initially, once your learners gain experience in PBL, they may also be able to plan projects with you, create materials (e.g. each group writes a business case study for another group's business problem project), and assess both their own and their classmates work (e.g. by providing anonymous feedback on peers' products).

Table 1: A taxonomy of six project types

	Project type	Description
simpler	**Research and present projects**	Presentations to classmates on people, hobbies, places or other areas of interest (e.g. a favourite English language song).
↓	**Writing projects**	With original texts as the key product, either fictional or true, narrative or analytical (e.g. local news stories, written for classmates and published via a free school newspaper).
↓	**Drama projects**	Often work best as PBL if they involve creative interpretations of real historical events (e.g. a national independence struggle) or contemporary problems (e.g. the Covid epidemic) to encourage factual research and synthesise with fiction.
↓	**Design problem projects**	The project brief typically asks learners to solve a specific problem or fill a gap in our day-to-day lives (e.g. design a park for wildlife and people in our city; design a monument to a leading figure in our country; design an invention for 'Dragon's Den').
↓	**Business problem projects**	Similar to the previous, but involves case study synopses of business problems, especially useful in tertiary contexts (e.g. save a failing cafe or restaurant; improve a well-known supermarket chain or transport service).
↓	**Research projects**	Useful in academic contexts, with students working together to answer (usually qualitative) research questions through original data collection and presentation (e.g. How happy are students with university services? How has life changed since our parents were children?).
more complex	**'Real product' projects**	The product of these projects is shared and used in the real world (e.g. develop a website for English learners planning to take an important exam; improve the events calendar for the school; design, print and hang subject-specific 'learning posters' in the university canteen).

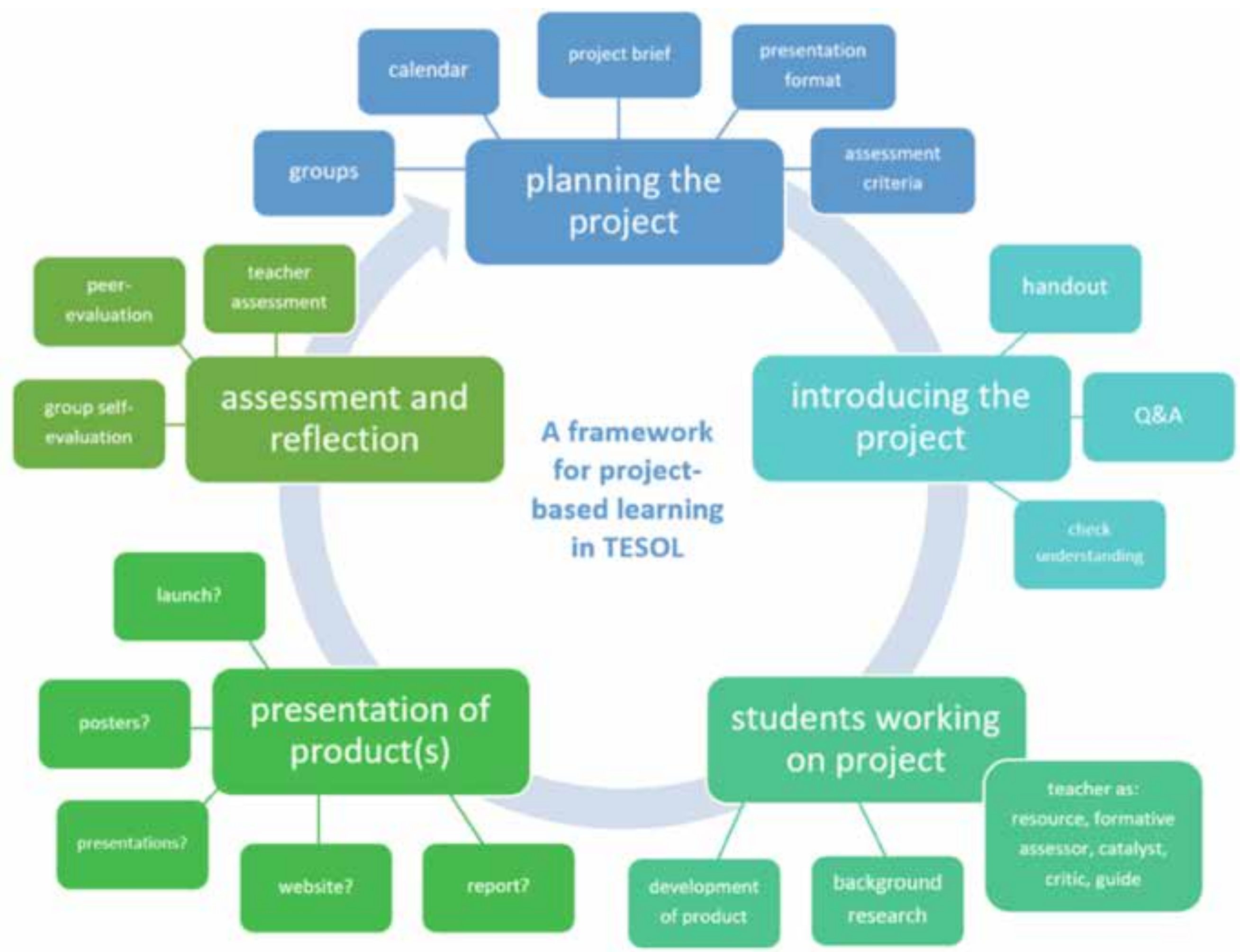

Figure 1 A framework for project-based learning

Of all the stages shown in Figure 1, it is usually planning that is most important to the success of a project. Firstly, it is important for us to select the members of each group carefully (avoid groups of over five members if possible: Anderson, 2019); we may sometimes opt for mixed ability groups if, for example, we want to prioritise shared interests, and sometimes for similar ability groups to ensure that all group members are challenged and contribute equally. Secondly, time needs to be planned carefully, both how much we can devote to project work each week, and how long the project lasts; one project per term is probably more feasible in secondary and tertiary contexts. But perhaps most important at this stage, and sometimes overlooked, are the project assessment criteria. These will typically divide marks between different products, and between different aspects of the product (e.g. structure, originality of ideas, quality of English). You can also apportion marks for teamworking skills to encourage learners to work well together; and sometimes even for peer evaluation. Thus, your final assessment weighting for a Research and Present project could be similar to the one shown in Table 2. You should also provide brief descriptors for full marks for each of these elements (e.g. '*The report is clearly organised with appropriate headings and sub-headings in a logical order.*').

At the heart of project-based learning is the collaborative project work itself. This includes two basic activity types: background research (including accessing, processing and drawing on texts, both written and oral, created in English) and product development, which involves producing something in English, both as the primary product (e.g. the posters, website or news stories mentioned in Table 1) and also as descriptive supplements to a concrete or abstract product (e.g. an invention or a 'solution' respectively). During this stage, learners are expected to work without the teacher's direct support in their project groups for periods of time, and the teacher is able to respond when required to learner needs, questions, problems, etc. As the project progresses, the teacher's focus is likely to move from checking that groups are on task and working appropriately, to visiting groups for short periods of time (project tutorials) to get an update, offer advice, support and even critique to push learners to develop their projects appropriately. Obviously, you as teacher can also create English-use opportunities at such times by speaking mainly or only English, and encouraging or requiring that they respond in English, creating a further functional reason for learners to use English.

While products are presented at the end of a project, you will need to think carefully about the presentation

formats at the start of the project – this is necessary to ensure both that the project meets your intended outcomes, and that these are reflected in the assessment criteria (which should always be provided to the learners at the start of the project); another reason why your project needs to be carefully planned. A well planned, term-length project may have two or more different products, including, for example:

- Oral presentation to class (with or without PowerPoint, each group member contributes)
- Written presentation (e.g. structured report, submitted article)
- Online presentation (e.g. blog post, website, YouTube video/vlog)
- Drama presentation (e.g. of historical event)
- 'Pitch' presentation (e.g. Dragon's Den; pitching an idea to the board of directors)
- Poster presentation (with a mingle activity involving mini-presentations throughout)
- Launch of a 'real world' product
- Publication of a research article (e.g. in a university department or academic journal)

Taking the first steps: a project-based approach to implementing PBL

A closing piece of advice relates to how you might begin to implement PBL in your institution. Obviously, it's a good idea to start with a fairly simple project as your initial 'pilot study', and to do so collaboratively with two or three colleagues to share the workload – also get the support of your head of English/director of studies whenever possible. As such, you can turn this first experiment into a CPD project for you and your colleagues: planning collaboratively, implementing at the same time (you could even get classes to present products to each other), and then engaging in reflection and self-evaluation as a team at the end of the project. You can plan to present to colleagues at a CPD workshop, a conference, or through an article in a periodical such as this one. Finally, make sure your role in this venture is documented in your own professional development appraisal, and on your CV.

Table 2: Weighting of marks for an example Research and Present project

40%	**Presentation**	■ accompanying audio/visual elements (20%) ■ oral presentation (20%)
30%	**Report**	■ organisation (5%) ■ detail (covering all required areas) (10%) ■ clarity of English use (5%) ■ usefulness of recommendations (10%)
20%	**Teamwork skills**	■ harmony (5%) ■ division of labour (5%) ■ drawing on everyone's strengths (5%) ■ peer support (5%)
10%	**Peer assessment**	■ based on number of votes from other teams for each presentation

If everything goes well with the pilot study, it may be possible to assign a portion of your learners' yearly assessment to PBL projects (i.e. continuous assessment), thereby reducing the pressure of high stakes exams at the end of the year, and increasing the range of skills, qualities and types of English use you value among your learners to develop the range of twenty-first century skills they will likely need in their future lives (Robinson & Aronica, 2015).

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Jason Anderson is a teacher educator, educational consultant, award-winning author, and researcher, who works in both language teaching and mainstream education. He has supported teachers in over 20 countries for organizations including UNICEF, the British Council and Warwick University, and published research on areas including multilingualism, teaching methodology, teacher reflection and lesson planning. His website includes a wide range of free resources and talks for language teachers and teacher educators: www.jasonanderson.org.uk

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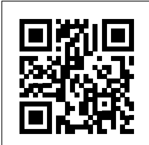

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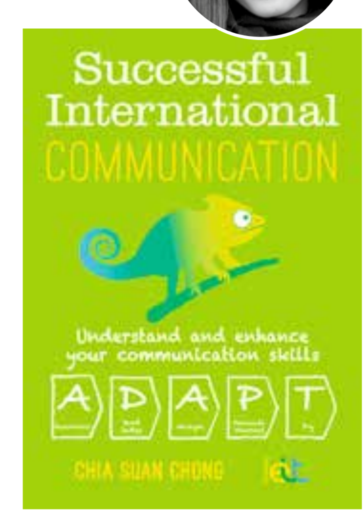

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Online learning for non-native speakers: a hindrance or a help?

Alison Shepherd discusses the issues from both the learner's and teacher's perspective.

I am a teaching assistant and PhD student in a School of Education at a large university in the USA. This meant that when the COVID-19 pandemic hit in Spring 2020, I had to both learn and teach online. As we all know, this move away from classroom teaching caused issues for students and teachers alike, such as isolation from classmates, zoom fatigue and headaches from using a computer all day, to name a few. Add to this the fact that myself and many other international students found themselves 'stuck' outside of the US when President Trump closed international borders, which added an additional layer of difficulty studying in a different time zone. As an English teacher, on top of all the aforementioned factors, I was interested in knowing if and how the switch to online learning was differently affecting the non-native English speakers in the subject classes they shared with native speakers. I assumed this would again complicate learning for such students but my assumptions were challenged as a number of them reflected on some of the benefits, which I will discuss later.

First, let's take a quick look at the pros and cons of online learning for all students. Obviously, there is the huge benefit of keeping people safe from the virus. That said, most people have mentioned the difficulties both in informal conversations and in class discussions about learning online. Some issues have affected all students, others

"Common issues include a loss of campus life and community which is important to everyone but particularly young undergraduates living alone for perhaps the first time with high expectations for university life."

have exacerbated existing inequalities for low-income students. Common issues include a loss of campus life and community which is important to everyone but particularly young undergraduates living alone for perhaps the first time with high expectations for university life. This disappointment is heightened by extremely expensive US university fees – especially for international students who are often charged much more for tuition.

Secondly, it is harder to build class community via a screen (though I was lucky enough to be in a class with a professor who did this really well and have learned from him in this regard – more on that later). Thirdly, students seem to agree that synchronous virtual meetings cannot replace face-to-face class meetings. Many reported it being much harder to concentrate listening to a screen, the world at your fingertips on the other tabs of your laptop (a laptop that some students have had to borrow as not every student has access to expensive technology), arguing that they needed a lot of self-discipline when study is more self-motivated. Continuing with technological concerns, there is also the eternal battle with internet strength, reliability, and – in some cases – access. Internet in the US is not cheap so this also highlighted disparities. Specifically for students studying from China, browsing US websites calls for a virtual private network (VPN) which they have reported is prone to instability and can make trying to participate in online classes extremely frustrating.

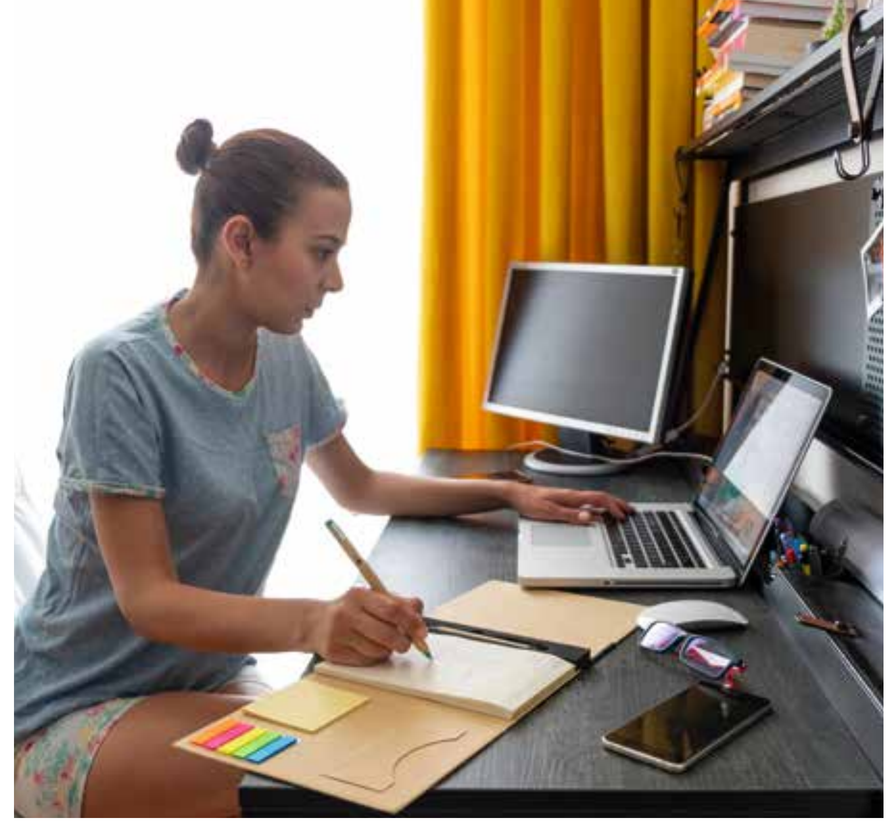
Groupwork becomes more time-consuming, with students reporting that face-to-face groupwork can be done within one session, whereas asynchronously it can take days to schedule a time everyone is free before you can meet. Because of this, some

Chinese students studying outside of the US ended up only working with other students in the same time zone, limiting their opportunities for interaction with native speakers. Group discussions in general are more stilted, there are often time lags, some people don't turn their camera on (not that they should be forced to as they may be in an environment they do not want to broadcast but seeing each other would help create classroom atmosphere), and sometimes I wonder if students are even there at all or if they sign in and take a nap or go to cook dinner ...

There is also something to be said for embodied cognition (the interaction between brain, action, and environment) which includes associating, for example, the school or library with learning and home with relaxing. Furthermore, as my students are *studying* education, learning in their homes is not a great model of what happens in a classroom – unless they decide to specialise in online learning, then this time will be a great learning experience! Also, finding a space to study at home is difficult if you share a house, which many students do.

Lastly, some students have struggled with continuing high expectations from their professors or department, whether that is perceived or actual pressure to continue 'business as usual'. I know that some students have felt uncomfortable admitting that they are struggling or asking for help in the first place, which is a cultural institutional issue. Saying this, I must point out that I know many professors who have responded empathetically (i.e. appropriately) during the pandemic by offering flexibility and understanding. Thus, students' reluctance to speak out may stem from an overall reduction in supervision from teachers and less informal interaction with other students to be able to know that others are also struggling or that it is okay to ask for help.

On the flip side, some students reported that they like having more flexibility to attend classes in different locations – from their bed was a popular one – and they had more time for studying as they had less travel time getting to and from school. For students who work as well as study, this also freed up some precious time. As you can see, though, the overall pros and cons are heavily weighted in the negative direction. However, this balance tipped slightly when it came to English language learners (ELLs).



Some background information: to get accepted onto an undergraduate course in the US, international students who are non-native speakers must provide evidence of having passed an English-language proficiency exam. Despite this, such exam preparation is often 'taught to the test' and is not a perfect representation of, or adequate groundwork for, what it is actually like to study in a second or additional language (nothing personal towards English exams, I feel this way about most standardised tests). Language thus continues to be a challenge for many international students and this, I assumed, would be exacerbated by the switch to online classes.

Indeed, many international students did report some negatives of online learning such as the time difference I have previously mentioned for synchronous classes if they chose to stay in their home countries to be close to family (or free healthcare!) or got 'stuck' overseas. Despite the benefits of being able to be in a familiar environment with loved ones during a pandemic, many students had to live a vampiric life, sleeping during the day and working at night with a less-than-ideal timing of classes at 2am and office hours 4-6am. That said, I know some professors are mindful of this issue and try to schedule a more convenient time for those outside the US.

Regarding language, learning online blurs or removes the subtle facial expressions or body language that we know assist with communication (it is much often easier to talk to someone face-to-face than over the phone and misunderstandings are much more easily rectified!). There are also fewer opportunities to use English in informal situations such as chatting to other students before class starts, getting coffee between classes – baristas, don't underestimate how a nice interaction can cheer someone's day – going for lunches or joining clubs, and making

those friendships that allow more exposure to and practice of language, as well as cultural exchange.

Alternatively, I heard a number of benefits mentioned specifically related to language for those who are studying in a non-native language. Writing production is often easier than speaking production as you have more time to think about what you want to say and can check any errors before pressing 'send'. Participating in class via typing into the chat box thus became a less stressful way for non-native speakers to offer their thoughts (though I have found that this may also apply to any students who are more introverted or shy so feel more comfortable speaking in the chat or when their cameras are off). Additionally, it takes away the added worry about pronunciation for non-native speakers whose pronunication may hold them back from speaking in class under normal circumstances.

Finally, a number of students mentioned that recorded lectures mean that they can rewind or re-watch classes if they didn't catch something the first time. This means that students don't have to risk embarrassment asking for something to be repeated (or continue none-the-wiser if they don't want to risk losing face) as opposed to struggling to keep up with lectures in regular classes, which I know some students do.

That said, as teachers we want students to feel comfortable and empowered to speak up in class and contribute to debates with classmates, so what can we do to support non-native speakers studying in a second language, both during online classes and into the future? Of course, English teachers can help with their language preparation *before* students start studying at university (as well as continued language support available during their studies), helping them get accustomed to different accents and authentic speech – at authentic paces! – and practice their oral production, academic language, and essay construction. But how can other teachers support those students in their mainstream subject classes when language is the vehicle for studying rather than the subject of study?

My institution has a great teacher training department where trainee teachers specialise in either additional educational needs or English language support. This makes a lot of sense to me and I hope to see more and more training programs doing this. It seems that it would be beneficial for university professors to undergo, as it is sometimes the case that some professors are brilliant scholars but lack solid teacher training, despite teaching being a huge money-maker for higher education. NB: I am not blaming the professors as it is the way the system has evolved and I also know that institutions offer a host of (albeit optional) teaching workshops.

"Participating in class via typing into the chat box thus became a less stressful way for non-native speakers to offer their thoughts"

With this in mind, I finish with some suggestions for supporting non-native English-speaking students during (and after) online teaching, whether at university level or otherwise. Firstly, make time to build an online class community which will help all students as well as ELLs feel comfortable speaking in class. This could be done via daily ice breakers, warmers, or check-ins as well as encouraging students to turn their videos on when speaking as, when everyone does it – even if they are in their pyjamas or in bed – there is less pressure for everyone to look perfect on screen. Flexible office hours can help students in distant time zones, as trying to articulate something to your teacher in another language at the crack of dawn is not an easy task. These daily check-ins or opportunities to interact with the teacher could be how you find out that someone is struggling; particularly – though by no means exclusively – for international students who may be alone, far from home.

Teachers could also consider recording classes after learning returns to normal so that students can access lectures after class to check something they didn't understand: a benefit for all students not just ELLs. Some online teaching platforms also have the option to have a live transcription service (though they can always be hit-and-miss). Finally, there are many training opportunities available – online, of course – about how to optimise online teaching. Here I will say that teachers have been brilliant during this pandemic, as switching everything online is no small task and they have lost the interaction that so many love about teaching and are less able to read body language and ensure different forms of support – all while juggling their own home environments (and in many cases their own children's learning too). Thus, I realise that additional training means even more work for teachers during a stressful and challenging time, though I hope we can find a way to balance educational quality for students and teacher self-care.

Ally Shepherd is a British teacher, writer, researcher, and current PhD Student in Education Policy Studies who has lived and worked in eight different countries. She loves everything education- or art-related, and believes there is strength and beauty in diversity.

Improving skills through e-portfolios

Shiromi Upulaneththa describes a way of improving trainees' writing skills.

This research explores a simple approach to improve English writing skills of pre-service teacher trainees through 'e-portfolios'. A pretest conducted using a group of 30 trainee teachers of English had revealed that their writing skills were not up to the standard expected.

Since the digital trend is inseparable in modern teaching-learning processes I thought to address this issue through a simple platform, which is available on every mobile phone: WhatsApp. The intervention was done in two phases. The first phase involved a variety of writing activities, starting with simple write-ups such as paragraph writing, picture description, guided writing and autobiographies. The students sent their write-ups within a week during the session in the following week, they were asked them to select one write-up from their peers and add their suggestions and ideas to their peer's write-up.

The second phase focused on academic writing through editing sample essays, writing reports and interpreting graphs. This was also implemented through the WhatsApp platform. At the end of three months, the final edit of all their writings was sent through their own WhatsApp group, and the trainees produced hard copies of the same content.

The Mahaweli National College of Education, where I work, is one of the Colleges of Education which recruits teachers of English and trains them and places them to serve in the government schools in Sri Lanka. Linguistics, reading and writing skills are essential components of their studies. However, it has been noticed recently that the teacher trainees were less interested in learning linguistics and also, that their reading and writing skills were not at the desired level. Some of the trainees did not attend classes regularly. This fact was further confirmed through analyzing their end-semester examination marks. As a research project we decided to develop a user-friendly approach based on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to improve their reading and writing skills.

Mobile computing and its applications are popular all over the world especially among the young generation. The teacher trainees are also very keen on using their smart phones. What is more, they often use social media such as Whatsapp, Viber, Facebook etc. The activity became popular among the teacher trainees and they actively engaged with it.

Recent research has shown a number of advantages in using ICT in education. Brush, Glazewski and Hew (2008) mentioned that ICT can be used as a tool for students to discover learning topics, solve problems, and provide solutions to the problems in the learning process. ICT facilitates knowledge acquisition more easily, and concepts in learning areas are understood while engaging students in the application of ICT. Chai, Koh and Tsai (2010) stated that ICT develops students' new understanding in their areas of learning. Furthermore, ICT provides more meaningful solutions to different types of learning inquiries. Koc (2005) mentioned that using ICT facilitates students to communicate, share, and work collaboratively anywhere at any time. For instance, a teleconferencing classroom could invite students around the world to gather together simultaneously for a topic discussion.

Levin and Wadmany (2006) mentioned that based on a constructive learning approach, ICT helps students focus on higher-level concepts rather than less meaningful tasks. McMahon's study (2009) showed that there were statistically significant correlations between studying with ICT and the acquisition of critical thinking skills. As Lowther et al (2008) stated, there are three important characteristics which are needed to develop good quality teaching and learning with ICT: autonomy, capability, and creativity. Autonomy means that students take control of their learning through use of ICT.

My approach to my students was based on this research. The class consist of 30 trainees. First, I created the Whatsapp group and asked them to create a cover page with their profile. Then everyone created their profile with a photograph and other personal information. This shows the positive feelings towards this activity. I conducted a pre-test for the trainees to evaluate their current state of reading and writing skills. The test was similar in the format of the final examinations including an essay. The pre-test marks are considered as the base-line marks. Then I planned the intervention process. It was done in two phases.

For the first phase, I uploaded a variety of writing activities starting with simple write-ups such as paragraph writing, picture description, guided writing, autobiographies. During this first week, I taught them how to build a cohesive paragraph with a thesis statement and provided enough practice for it. Furthermore, I helped them understand about discourse markers and their use in context. Within the second week everyone sent their first write-up to the group and during the session in the following week, I asked them to select one write-up from their peers and do the peer corrections and add their suggestions and ideas to their peer's write-up. Every trainee got the opportunity to read and correct a different write-up from their class. The error correction codes were used as follows:

“......there are three important characteristics which are needed to develop good quality teaching and learning with ICT: autonomy, capability, and creativity.”

G Grammar mistakes

S Spelling mistakes

WO Word Order

GI Generating Ideas

Once the write-ups were corrected, the writer needed to go through it and write the final draft and send them to the lecturer via another thread where only the final drafts were stored. This method was followed throughout the period.

The second activity was based on picture description. It was done in a very naval way. I used a simple method called 'SALUTE' which was introduced by the writer James Clanton published in *ETp* magazine in May in 2019. SALUTE stands for;

S Size (How many are there in the picture)

A Activity (What do they do)

L Location (Where is the place)

U Uniform (What are they wearing)

T Time (What time, day, month or a season is it)

E Equipment (What equipment is being used)

This simple but effective guide was used by the trainees for the picture description. The pictures were selected by their choice. The same platform was used to get the peer feedback and the edited write-ups were sent to the lecturer.

Finally, guided writing and autobiographies were used in the class.

In the second phase I focused on academic writing through editing sample essays, writing reports and interpreting graphs. For interpretations of graphs I gave the students a list of useful phrases which can be used in graph interpretation. The same approach which was implemented as in the first phase: via the Whatsapp platform. During this period it was observed that the trainees were enthusiastic and motivated for

these activities. At the end of three months the final editing of all their writings were sent through their own WhatsApp group. Moreover, the trainees produced the hardcopies of the same.

Results of the study

Finally the post-test was held in order to see whether there was any improvement in the trainees' writing skills. As it turned out, the post-test shows that there was a significant improvement in their writing skills compared to the pre-test.

This research has shown that a considerable number of trainees lack grammatical knowledge. The research further shows a considerable proportion of their errors can be attributed to the fact that they have not mastered basic rules, such as how to form complex sentences .

Writing errors covered three main areas:

1. syntactical problems
2. morphological problems
3. orthographical problems.

I would like to make the following suggestions for overcoming these problems in future:

1. The use of e-portfolios is an effective method for improving writing skills.
2. The implementation of new strategies to motivate the trainees towards better learning in writing skills.
3. To draw more attention to grammar and give more weight to teaching and practicing writing activities through e-learning.
4. To draw more attention to using mobile apps as a learner-friendly tool in classroom teaching to set up a stimulating and supporting learning environment.

Limitations of the study

There were certain drawbacks that may have affected the findings of this study. In collecting data for the investigation I could not use a questionnaire and in fact I was only able to collect written feedback from the trainees after the intervention process. Had I been able to use another data collection instrument, then these findings would have been more comprehensive. Another drawback was that I was unable to attend to all the activities which I planned. For various administrative and timetabling issues I was unable to meet the trainees as regularly as I would have hoped.

"Using a simple approach through WhatsApp, available on every mobile phone, helped the trainees to increase their intrinsic motivation through an extrinsic motivational tool."

Conclusion

This research, which was based on e-portfolios was carried out in order to improve the writing skills of pre-service teacher trainees in Colleges of Education. Although this study was of a minute scale, it produced some noteworthy facts. The feedback from the trainees on this assignment revealed that it was interesting and helpful to those wishing and needing to improve their writing skills. They engaged in this activity with much enthusiasm. Using a simple approach through WhatsApp, available on every mobile phone, helped the trainees to increase their intrinsic motivation through an extrinsic motivational tool. This leads me to conclude that a variety of activities can be applied through e-portfolios to motivate trainees and gain better performance in writing skills. If systematic and methodical planning is implemented alongside good technical know-how, teachers will be equipped in both ICT and English and become effective and knowledgeable resources for their learners. I hope that some of the above will be put into action so as to prepare our trainee teachers better in future.

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Shiromi Upulaneththa is a Teacher Educator at the Mahaweli National College of Education, Kandy, Sri Lanka, which provides courses for pre-service teachers of English. She holds a Master's Degree for Linguistics. She has been teaching English for over 20 years. Her research interest includes teacher education, teacher development and bilingualism. She can be reached at shiromiu@yahoo.com or supulaneththa@gmail.com

The what and how of teaching digital skills online

Emily Bryson describes how her learners are as prepared as possible for online learning.

Once upon a time we lived in a world where classes were mostly taught face to face but we've since been catapulted into a realm where online learning is the norm. Many learning organisations are now re-assessing the way they work, and the majority will undoubtedly not return to a fully face-to-face learning scenario.

As with many teachers, when I was teaching in a classroom, I would integrate some element of technology into my lessons. I used the interactive whiteboard to show videos or present language. I put course notes, activities and assessment dates on the virtual learning environment. Students would email me their written work, and we would have sessions in IT labs where we could complete online tasks or work on presentations together.

However, the digital skills within each class were always polarised. Some students were confident with computers, while some needed support to switch their computer on or type their password. When lessons moved fully online last year, this digital divide became even more evident and was exacerbated by digital poverty. Some learners could not access lessons due to outdated mobile phones or lack of access to a good internet connection.

In 2020, Lloyds Bank Consumer Digital Index found that 17% of the UK population did not have full basic digital skills, while 9% had no basic digital skills. This effectively means that at least one or two learners in every adult class need support in order to participate successfully in an online learning programme. In reality, depending on the demographic of your learners, this could be much higher. It certainly was for my class of refugees and asylum seekers.

So, *what* skills do students need in order to learn online? Scotland's Adult Literacies Curriculum Framework (SALCF) (Education Scotland, 2016) advises that students should be supported to participate in online communications such as writing text messages, emails and social media posts or using online 'chat' facilities' and any other technology required for their educational programme.

The UK's Essential Digital Skills Framework (2019) Foundation skills include:

- using available controls in a device (e.g. touchscreen to use annotate function in video conferencing)
- using assistive technology (e.g. text-to-speech tools)
- opening and accessing an application (e.g. web 2.0 tools such as Padlet)
- connecting to the internet
- setting up an email account
- communicating using email or messaging apps
- sending photos via messaging apps or email
- using and sharing word processing documents
- using search engines

In my experience, learners also benefit from knowing how to use translation tools, change case, click to select, use the return key to start a new line, open new windows, copy links and save files. Over the years, many of my learners have shown difficulties with these basic skills, which has caused miscommunications, submissions of poorly punctuated texts and inability to participate in the Zoom chat room. Moreover, students who haven't mastered changing case find case-sensitive passwords prohibitive. This essentially makes virtual learning environments inaccessible for learners with limited digital or written literacy.

Nicky Hockly (2012) highlights the importance of 'new literacies' such as texting literacy, mobile literacy, search literacy and hypertext literacy. When our learning programme first moved online, it became clear that hypertext literacy was crucial. Learners needed to be able to identify and select the relevant links in order to enter their Zoom lesson or access their asynchronous learning activities. Moreover, I have found it crucial to share links as hyperlinks, because students don't always have the skills to copy and paste link addresses in order to access them.

Sending hyperlinks is just one way that teachers can support learners with low digital skills to learn online but, wherever possible, teachers should endeavour to make the online learning process as simple as possible. Various research studies have found that learners who find accessing their work straightforward are much more likely to participate fully and succeed. Ekizoglu *et al* (2010, cited in Kuama, 2016: 52) expressed that students can experience 'computer anxiety' if technology is too difficult or does not work well, which can lead to disengagement.

One of the risks of teaching digital skills online or using online tools that are above the students skill level is that it may distract from their language learning. In a webinar for MN ABE Professional Development in 2020, Amy Van Steenwyk suggested engaging learners with tools they are already familiar with (e.g. WhatsApp), thus reducing the need for teaching digital skills and allowing teachers to focus on language.

Van Steenwyk also advised teachers to check-in frequently with learners, keep online tasks simple, allow students to master one online activity at a time and use language familiar to the students, rather than digital jargon. For example, when using Zoom, she advised that learners 'click blue' in order to select the blue 'join' button and enter a breakout room, rather than asking students to 'click join'. This example may have been outdated by the Zoom update allowing teachers to automatically assign students to breakout rooms, thus removing the need for students to know how to manually enter. However, the guidance to use familiar or accessible language rather than digital jargon remains logical, as with all classroom instructions.

In addition, Van Steenwyk highlighted the importance of instructional videos or screenshots when teaching students to use new technology for language learning. Her previous advice can be applied when creating these; they should be simple and they should use accessible language. 'Edutopia (2020) recommends that instructional videos should be short, and that visuals or diagrams…' should be used rather than lots of text. If possible, post-tasks should be included to check understanding and the teacher should be encouraging.

Just as beginner learners need to learn classroom language such as 'open your books', 'use a pen' and 'match' or 'circle', online learners also need vocabulary for navigating their screen (e.g. top right, middle, bottom left), submitting their work (e.g. taking a photo, sending an email) or troubleshooting a video conferencing tool (e.g. mute, turn on your video, click the pen icon).

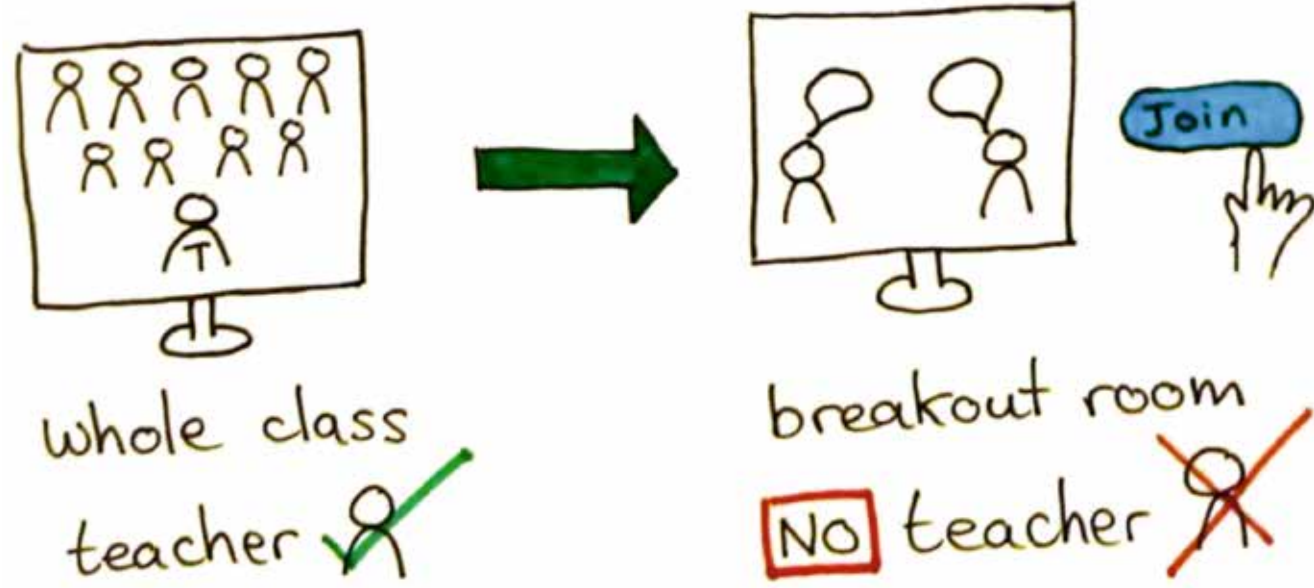
The Education and Training Foundation (2019) note that, since students tend to use devices in their first language, allowing them to do so can support learning. Thus providing instructional videos and screenshots in L1 can support learning. This supports Van Steenwyk's advice to ask students to interpret for each other and for teachers to get to know the family members who support them. Since fostering an atmosphere of peer support has long been considered good practice in ELT, it could therefore be an option to pair students with stronger digital skills as mentors for those who need additional support.

This year I have been teaching low level learners in a fully online programme. One class are ESOL Literacy (A0) learners whose first script is not Roman. The other class is a beginner (A1) level class. In both classes, the digital literacy and access levels of the students are diverse. Some are confident using their laptops, while others are sharing one device and limited mobile data with the whole family. As both classes have limited English, I have found visuals immensely beneficial when instructing learners. I keep on my desktop a Powerpoint presentation of icons for the tools we use. For example, when describing to learners how to use annotation tools in Zoom, I simply ask them whether they are using mobile or computer, then show them the relevant icon to select and where to find it.

I found that breakout rooms were a particular challenge. The first few times I monitored them, students had disappeared, weren't talking or were just staring blankly at the screen wondering where I had gone. The terms 'breakout' and 'breakout room' have not yet made it into English Vocabulary Profile's word list, let alone been profiled. But if they were, I reckon they would have been B2 or above (before the online teaching boom, of course). So the first step is to teach students what 'breakout room' means. I quickly sketched this visual, then I explained that it's 'a room with no teacher', 'a room with only students' and 'you talk to students in a breakout room'.

The first time students use a breakout room, it's advisable to give them a *very* simple task, for example, introductory questions about themselves, or practising a scripted dialogue. Sadly, Zoom does not allow host screen sharing in breakout rooms, so if your students don't know how to screen share, ask them to copy the task, or take a photo of it and share it with them in the chatroom or a class WhatsApp group. The rest is similar to face-to-face teaching: give the instructions, demonstrate the task, check understanding of the task, monitor the task. When monitoring, I'd recommend turning your video off, as having the teacher appear out of nowhere can be distracting. Nothing can kill a conversation quicker than a well-meaning teacher joining the room to check their learners are on task!

Another way to support digital skills is to signpost learners to additional IT classes. In Scotland, prior to Covid-19, community libraries and educational organisations offered courses such as 'Getting started with computers' or the 'European Computer Driving Licence' (Glasgow Life, 2020). These were popular with students learning English, however, during the pandemic it was not possible for these courses to run. There are, however, online courses that students can do. Learn My Way (2020) offer 'Make it Click' courses for learners who already have a good grasp of English (perhaps from B1+). These include 'Introduction to email' and 'How to create a document.' In England and Wales, The Department for Education's (2019) Essential Digital Skills programme



offers courses in using devices and handling information, creating and editing, communicating, transacting, and being safe and responsible online for A2+ learners. Microsoft and Google also offer various online digital skills courses (in multiple languages) and learners can also use online tools such as typingclub.com or the mouse control tutorial on learnfree.org.

Overall, it is essential for learners to be supported to attain the digital skills required to participate in their online learning programme. Learners may face a number of barriers to digital skills acquisition: digital poverty and/or limited self-study skills as well as limited literacy and/or language skills. However, digital skills are essential skills for life and study. In order to participate fully in an online learning programme, learners need skills such as device control, using assistive technologies, identifying hyperlinks, and sending documents, photos, texts and emails. Teachers can support their learners by using technology learners are familiar with, using visuals and grading their language and the language within instructional videos. They should also communicate frequently with learners and set simple online tasks, supporting them to master one digital skill before progressing to the next. Finally, teachers can signpost towards relevant courses and utilise L1 as a means of instruction, alongside support from peers, family and friends.

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Emily Bryson iis an ELT materials writer, teacher trainer and ESOL Lecturer. She has written digital and print materials for a number of publishers including Macmillan Education, The British Council and ELT Training Library. She has been teaching ESOL at City of Glasgow College since 2007 and in that time has gained experience teaching all levels and developed a wide range of ESOL for Vocational Purposes courses. She has delivered projects for Education Scotland, Scottish Refugee Council and ESOL Network project. She is currently writing an adult coursebook series for National Geographic Learning. Her two books, *A-Z of ESOL* and *50 Ways to Teach Life Skills* are available in print and digital format. You can follow her blog at www.emilybrysonelt.wordpress.com or Twitter @E_Bryson.

Understanding language learning in online teaching

Vijayakumar Chintalapalli and **Shakul Tewari** look at input, intake and output – online.

Michael Halliday's three register variables, namely *field*, *tenor* and *mode* are useful in understanding the dynamics of online pedagogy. They provide a heuristic model of communication through which we can efficiently implement effective pedagogic strategies that enable learning. According to Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar, these three variables impact the type of language we choose to use in a situation (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). Although the field—the *what* or the topic of the context—and the tenor—the relationship between the interlocutors—aspects mostly do not change in online education, the 'mode' (the distance between the interlocutors) transforms the nature of communication in many ways. In this article, we will attempt to discuss the effects of the register variables on the process of language learning—input, intake, and output—and provide practical ideas for effective online teaching through data obtained from students who have been attending online classes in India.

Impact of modality on online interaction

In online teaching, teachers' seemingly compulsive desire to provide scaffolding often tricks them into delivering extended monologues, which fail to recreate the dynamic and dialogic environment of the physical classroom. In addition, the distance factor seems to affect the interaction quality and many teachers are resorting to using linguistic choices that implicitly perpetuate 'distancing' in online classes. For example, the teacher's dependence on the passive voice (expressions that signal distancing such as *it has been found that* or *it can be said that*,) and formal instructional registers, as opposed to engaging interactive discussions are widening the gap between not only the teacher and students, but also between the peers themselves. Furthermore, frequent use of passive voice constructions seems to have the effect of establishing a formal and authoritative relationship between the teacher and the students, consequently affecting the process and the outcome of tasks. This effect extends its purview beyond teacher talk. We will classify these effects on three major aspects of a lesson: *input*, *intake*, and *output*, and discuss how we can recreate a better learning environment (Kumaravadivelu, 2005).

Input

Input is defined as 'potentially processible language data made available, by chance or by design, to the language learner' (Truscott & Smith, 2011: 498). This processible linguistic data is presented, usually by the teacher, in two forms in online teaching: aural-visual (images, diagrams, videos) and textual (oral and written). The negotiating discourses

around this input – how it is structured, displayed, shared, discussed – determines what is to be consciously noticed and understood by the learner.

Visual input (pre-designed PPT vs context-sensitive interaction)

Teachers seem to rely heavily on PPTs to communicate the ideas and provide input. While a PPT itself is not a problematic tool, overcrowding the slides with information which is available to students through other channels is the problem. Although occasionally, some tasks are administered through *Kahoot* and other online platforms, the use of synchronous learner-participatory activities (worksheets, practice exercises, break-out room discussions, synchronous writing) has significantly reduced. In academic contexts, pictures, charts, and diagrams can be extremely useful. As a couple of my students who are regularly attending online classes put it:

> **Student 1:** "In General Biology, some of our faculty had just one picture or cartoon per slide and they would explain using the slide as an entertaining visual. I felt that this was a good model. Similarly, one of our faculty in mathematics used a tablet to write on as he explained. This was also a good model since it was analogous to writing on a chalkboard (which I prefer personally over usage of slides as I feel more connected to the topic). Hence, I feel either of these models would be better than verbose slides, which can often lose the attention of the students."

> **Student 2:** "Good visual aids like perhaps an attention-catching informative video could be helpful. The slides could be supplemented with examples as reading what's in front is less vulnerable to an attention lapse than having to listen to a concept without relevant captions to refer to and make notes from."

The more the information we pack the slides with, the lesser the effect of them on the students. Moreover, text processing, particularly of different font types and sizes, becomes very challenging under stressful time constraints. This can even force students to give up their interest in learning.

Textual input (activating learner background knowledge)

One of the challenges of online language instruction is the distribution of time to various stages of a lesson. Since we generally contextualize our focus through texts and themes, it is important that our students are familiar with the concepts, values, characters, and the ideas from the texts before they engage in language production. Some key aspects of a text can help us with the problem: text length, lexical density, cultural context of the text, grammatical complexity, and register. Depending on the challenges the texts pose, we can either share the reading or listening materials (model texts or input texts) beforehand with clear instructions as to what the students should look for (popularly known as blended learning strategies), or we identify smaller authentic texts (100–200 words) with a focus on specific rhetorical moves. Maggie Charles's DIY corpus course (Charles, 2012) is an example of the latter. She used smaller authentic texts (100–200 words) to drive the point home. However, we do have other planning ideas to organize input such as:

A. Pre-task – Task – Post-task (textbook model)

B. Preparation – Presentation – Practice – Production (classroom teaching model)

C. General to Specific/ Macro to Micro (Text based model)

D. Activity 1 – Activity 2 – Activity 3 (discrete model)

E. Listening to Speaking/ Reading to Writing (skill-based model)

F. Group work to Individual work (learner-centred model)

Intake

'Input which becomes part of the learning process is called intake' (Batstone, 1996). In the classroom-based F2F mode, we use explicit noticing strategies such as repetition, rephrasing, restating and colour codes to direct our learners' attention towards specific aspects of language use. We also emphasise through overt manifestation of body language the key aspects to be noticed. While noticing does not necessarily mean 'comprehension', it is important that we design activities which require the learners to understand the input and act on it subsequently. Comprehension facilitates analysis and evaluation: if the learner has not understood the input, he will not be able to process and assimilate it. Usually, textbook-based reading and listening is followed by a series of comprehension check activities, which make the learners revisit the text with a focus on general and specific details. However, in online instruction, due to distance and time factors, this stage is often taken for granted or approached in a piecemeal fashion.

In order to foster critical thinking and language learning, we need to emphasise input comprehension. It can be done explicitly through teacher or peer questioning, or implicitly through enabling criteria (rephrasing, reducing the pace of speech, highlighting keywords, multimodal texts, lexical density control and syntactic complexity control). When students act on the comprehended input and produce verbal or written examples or solutions through focused gap-filling exercises, quizzes, and discussions/dialogues, they actually let the existing knowledge of language to interact with the new input, which Truscott & Sharwood Smith call 'intake'.

> **Student 3:** "I feel that we should take small non-evaluative tests at the end of every class. This could be taken with the help of Google Forms. I feel that this could give people a greater incentive to stay focused and attentive in the class."

Intake is a necessary condition for the development of language. In

online teaching contexts, where the tenor dimensions typically favour formal registers, creating conditions for language processing is central to language learning. While flipped and blended modes of instruction prepare the students to cope with the task requirements, it is the classroom conditions that provide opportunities to learners to process the input purposefully and consciously.

Output

An opportunity to express and share ideas is a serious concern in online language teaching. In the classroom-based F2F mode teachers could conduct group activities and role plays to ensure students applied or synthesized the intake in new contexts. For example, having taught politeness expressions (*Could you please…?, Would you mind if…?*), teachers could ask students to form into groups and engage in a role play where the participants had to use these expressions to seek clarification, get more information, or to make requests. However, in the online mode conducting such real-time practice for a large number would be challenging, unless we create breakout rooms and even then, there are difficulties monitoring large numbers.Often the tools used might not be compatible with the chosen modality.

However, we can rely on two modes of output: discrete fixed-response type (True/False, MCQ, Scales, match the concepts/definitions) and contextualized open-ended type. While Google or Microsoft Forms and apps such as Kahoot and other LMS tools can help us elicit the responses, auto-correct them, and provide feedback instantaneously on discrete fixed-response items, online tools such as *Compleat Lextutor* and *Wordandphrase.info* (by COCA), and other AI automated writing tools can offer comprehensive feedback on text quality. Similarly, we can also conduct real-time videoconferencing with students, for example, through Microsoft Teams to help them understand the tasks and perform better.

> **Student 4:** "To teach what's right is obviously important, but to teach what's wrong (from actual evaluated answers, perhaps, illustrating what the marks were cut for) can help reducing exam stress of a student substantially as he now knows at least what to look out for."

We can devise guided as well as unguided production tasks which require students to produce language outside the classroom. Take home assignments, project writing, collaborative reading and writing tasks, discussion forums, debate clubs, teacher-controlled student blogs, video-recorded presentations, corpus-based DIY tasks which provide students with the necessary guidance in the selection and use of context-specific lexico-grammar are some of the asynchronous production or output activities the students can engage in. Some students shared the following views:

> **Student 4: "**Probably one way to reduce alienation would be to divide the class and have debates, or ask some students to present a small topic/example or their inferences for a few minutes."

> **Student 5:** "… there should be a portion in the course which focuses on reading of research papers so that we can be more comfortable with them during our academic pursuits."

Conclusion

Language learning, as mentioned in the beginning of the article, is a complex process. Several external factors (noise, distance, register, and task types) and internal ones (attitude, memory, anxiety and motivation) affect all three stages of input, intake, and output. In traditional classroom-based teaching, the teacher, by minimizing the effects of external factors, can channel the students' attention to language use through various means (body language, peer-collaboration, worksheets). In the online mode, however, teacher-control on external factors is minimal, and in many cases absent. For that reason we feel that mode has a significant impact on learning.

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Vijayakumar Chintalapalli is currently a faculty member in BITS Pilani, India. He has a PhD in ELT from EFL University, India. He has designed and taught EGP and EAP courses in India and Saudi Arabia. His major interests include corpus-based language teaching, pedagogic lexicography, and English for academic purposes.

Email: c.vijayakumar@pilani.bits-pilani.ac.in

Shakul Tewari completed her PhD in ELT from EFL University. She was a Fulbright scholar (2014–2015) at Michigan State University, USA. Her major research interests include second and foreign language listening, metacognitive strategies, and mobile assisted language learning.

Email: shakultewari19@gmail.com

It's time we talked about student retention

Steve Tulk explains how important it is to encourage your students to continue studying – with you.

The need for language schools to maintain student numbers is very real. In this article, we look at why it is more important than ever to consider how students make the decision to either re-enroll or stop studying – and a practical solution to encourage re-enrollment.

In the '*bon vieux temps*', I would spend my days travelling around the UK, talking about materials and resources with my colleagues at language schools, universities and colleges. We would drink tea and solve the ELT world's problems. Alas, none of us thought that one of those problems would be the need to keep our beloved industry afloat during a global pandemic.

I'm still in touch with the same ELT colleagues, and these days we catch up in Zoom-rooms, Goto calls and at Teams-time. It's not the same, but it's what we've got – and we are making it work.

'Making it work' has been the challenge of the last 12 months, and boy have you risen to that challenge!

The ELT world moved to fully online classes, and then back to traditional classrooms (albeit socially distanced). Next everyone went blended. Then some of you went hybrid. Then it was back to fully online. Then face-to-face again. And through it all you've kept doing what our industry does so well – teach, teach and teach some more.

As I speak to school managers, academic managers, teachers, DoSs and students, I am never less than impressed by how flexible, reactive, efficient and effective everyone has been.

But – and it's a big but – student numbers aren't what they used to be. Finding new students for online, blended or hybrid courses is undeniably hard and sometimes feels impossible. So it goes without saying that we absolutely need to treasure the students that we already have – we can't afford to lose them.

And so, with this in mind, I have one thing to say – it's time we talked about student retention.

Retention is all about education

Retention is different from loyalty. Loyalty is a supermarket having a points card to make you go back the next time you need milk. This is not retention.

Retention isn't about being someone's go-to choice for English classes. It isn't making sure our student likes us on Facebook and follows our Twitter feed. It isn't getting our ex-students to recommend us. All of this is incredibly important (and all schools need a good loyalty strategy), but it's not what we are talking about here.

Student retention is all about keeping our student in class NOW – making sure they re-enroll, and making sure they don't go elsewhere.

Retention brings us stability. When a school is good at retention, they are automatically more financially secure

than one that leaves it to chance. Greater financial security means improved job security for all. But in these trying times it may simply mean survival.

Luckily, retention is all about education – and we are good at education, right? It's about educating the student to understand the value of staying in class (and why that class should be YOUR class).

But before we look at convincing them to stay, let's think of their alternatives to re-enrolling.

What about the competition?

Most of us think of our competition as the language school down the road. That may be the case when we are looking for new students, but it's less important for student retention. And one word will tell you why: familiarity.

If a student has already decided to continue working on their English, they'll stay at their current school because of familiarity. Not only do they know the routine, love their teacher and get along with their classmates, but they've also bought the book, and the class schedule has become part of their daily schedule.

Why would they go elsewhere and start with a new teacher, new times, new classmates and a new book? Generally, students don't change schools – they stop altogether.

So if the other schools in town aren't the competition, who is? Your competition is those people that good old marketing stalwart Philip Kotler calls our 'dollar competitors' (Kotler, 2011: 00) – simply put, it's all those other businesses that want your students' money. And they are working hard to get it.

Gyms, online retailers, photography courses, at-home spinning classes, internet diplomas, motivation sessions, life coaches – they are all busily beating a path to our students' doors, ready to tempt them with something else to spend their money on in the spirit of self-improvement.

This is where we need to pull out the big guns. We need to convince our students that staying in class, continuing to study at your school, pushing forward with their language development is *absolutely* the single most important thing they could do with their self-improvement budget.

Bring on our influencers!

People of influence

The vast majority of humans are indecisive to one extent or another – especially when spending hard-earned money is concerned. To buy or not to buy: that is the eternal question. A lot of brainy marketing types have spent a lot of time studying how humans behave when faced with a buying decision.

One thing that Mr Kotler (and many other marketing gurus) will tell you is exactly how important other people's opinions are to us. 'People of influence' play an important role in any buying decision. Let's face it, we've all bought something simply because the right person gave us the right nudge at the right time.

But who are these influential people who know how to nudge us? In the case of the student currently sitting in our online classroom, we don't need to look too far. *The person most likely to influence their decision to re-enroll is their teacher.* This is especially true now that students see far less of any other team member at your school.

Teachers hold more influence over a student's choice to re-enroll than anyone else – fact.

This can be problematic.

Not in my classroom

When I was a teacher, I was asked by my academic manager to sell copies of a local English-language newspaper in class. Selling? Collecting money? I clutched my pearls and said, "not in my classroom!"

Without a doubt, there can be resistance from academic staff – who are very busy with their teaching responsibilities - to accept a role in anything they see as 'commercial' - "Our students are students – not consumers"; "We are a school, not a business".

Scullion and Molesworth looked at the education sector in 2016 and found that schools were getting better at seeing themselves as consumer-led organisations. They saw conversations

around consumerism becoming increasingly commonplace. We all know this to be true, evidenced in the day-to-day routines and practices of our schools - student satisfaction surveys, collection of marketing data, discussions about 'the student experience', and the promotion of optional extras in class.

But they also reported continued resistance from academic staff to playing an extended role in any commercial initiatives. But that was back in 2016. Nowadays, it's fair to say that it would be a quite foolhardy teacher who wasn't ready to step up and do what they can to help improve school revenue.

We're all in this together

In our new reality, teachers understand the need to retain students, and are more willing to play a greater role in ensuring retention. But there is still a need for buy-in. People are always more likely to implement something if they have been involved in its design. I suggest meeting online as a whole school to discuss student retention: listen to each other, share feedback, find the answers together and most importantly, make a plan. Involve, don't enforce. It is important for everyone to be heard and for everyone to feel they have a hand in ensuring their own survival.

Practically speaking

The big question that remains unanswered is – what can we do?

We need to focus on the GDP

No, not that GDP, this one:

- Goals
- Dreams
- Progress

Goals: make sure that your teacher knows exactly what their students want to get out of this specific course. Is their goal to get a 6.5 at IELTS or a B1 certificate for a work visa? Maybe become a more confident speaker or a better writer? Everyone joined the course for a reason. With student counsellors and front-desk teams taking a back seat, it is essential that the teacher knows why each student is in class.

Dreams: What does the student want to achieve in their life that is beyond the end of this course? Work in fashion? Study at a top university? Become a lawyer? Again, this is basic information that the teacher needs to know. Class activities can easily retrieve this information for us – but it needs to be noted somewhere.

Progress: It's not enough to say 'you're improving'. The student needs tangible proof of what they have achieved. Progress tests will help here, as will can-do statements and reflective journals. I find that taking a moment in class for students to list the things they can do now that they couldn't do a week ago works wonders.

The GDP meeting

Give your teachers time to hold regular one-to-one 'GDP' sessions with all students. The teacher should remind the student of why they are in class (their goals) and how their work is moving them towards the realization of their dreams, and then share with them how they have moved closer to achieving both (their progress). It should be a conversation – not a set of bullet points. It should flow and be natural.

At the end of the session, the student and teacher should agree an action plan. The plan should focus on the achievement of the goals, the attainment of the dreams and build on the progress so far. The plan should involve staying in class. The plan should involve re-enrolling. The plan should be written down by both teacher and student.

Retention is possible

Back in 1936, Dale Carnegie wrote in his seminal work *How to Win Friends and Influence People* that the only way to influence anyone was to remind them of what they want – and then show them how to get it. By taking time to talk to students about their goals and dreams, showing them how well they have done so far – and then giving them a plan for continuing to study, teachers are able to influence without being 'commercial'.

And of course, the quality of your teaching, the engaging nature of your lessons and the books, courses and materials you choose – alongside a pro-active registration team – will no doubt do the rest.

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Steve Tulk is the Macmillan ELT consultant for the UK. Looking for a change from his career in Marketing, Steve became an ELT teacher and has taught for many years - in Europe, the Middle East and in the UK. He is an experienced teacher trainer and has also held academic management and school management positions in the UK and overseas.

Steve's particular areas of interest within the ELT classroom are the need to place a greater emphasis on meaningful communication practice, and increasing the representation of international accents in our class materials. Outside of the classroom, Steve's interest lies in how the ELT sector can develop stronger marketing and commercial skills.

As a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (the RSA), Steve enjoys the networking opportunities that this brings. He is a firm believer that, whilst the level of knowledge and experience in our industry is outstanding, the answers to our questions don't always come exclusively from within the ELT world.

A mini guide to teaching beginners 2

Rhona Snelling concludes her series on teaching at a very low level.

Having considered common definitions of the level and relevant SLA theories in the first article, we will now look at eight essential skills for teaching this level along with activities for each language system and skill.

Aims and planning

Lesson planning is where the magic of your lesson starts to bubble and, for low levels, I would encourage you to be even more meticulous with preparing your potion. Think carefully about *what* you're going to teach, *when* (remember Krashen's Natural Order Hypothesis (Krashen, 1982)?), *how* you're going to teach it and *why* you're teaching it. In short, be able to justify your aims for the lesson. How do each of the activities and stages within the lesson contribute to the aim? If there isn't a clearly useful or identifiable aim to an activity, remove the stage from your lesson plan. And don't be surprised if it takes you a full hour to get through one page of your course book! That hopefully means you are making a clear presentation, providing sufficient opportunity for students to practise, and allowing time to observe, monitor and praise/revise your students' output.

Achievability

This builds on lesson planning and the importance of making sure the stages and aims in the lesson are achievable, which, in turn, supports the Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller, 1988) and the necessity to keep the 'load' of work at a suitable level. What I mean by that is we are not overloading our students with more input than they can comfortably and easily cognitively process, for example, trying to teach too many lexical items or a grammatical point that is too complex at this stage. Also, bear in mind that this level is all about setting the foundations for the rest of the student's language journey – get it right, and they will have a smooth and pleasant passage; get it wrong, and they'll regret ever planning the trip.

So, what is achievable? Anecdotal research suggests students are able to 'learn' around 6–9 new lexical items per lesson. This may appear to be a small number at first glance but we need to consider that each single lexical item comes with a complex amount of new information: with its own orthographic pattern, spelling, phonemes, graphemes, syllable stress, form, usage and relative frequency.

A group of unrelated words will be more semantically challenging for students to learn than a group of related words, such as 'Food and drink'. This topic is an example of one where a slighter greater number of items may be presented. It would not be unreasonable or unnatural to have 12–15 items in this set. It's conceptually easy and has the added bonus of being a visual translation of the L1 word.

Monitoring

Sometimes, of course, what you think is achievable, may not be achievable. This brings me to the importance of monitoring. This is your opportunity to get feedback on how the class and individual students are coping, and it's their opportunity to get some one-to-one time with you. Monitoring is an incredibly valuable interaction for teachers and students. Aim to monitor, especially with larger classes, as much as you practically can. Maybe that means listening to three pairs do their role-play in one activity and then, in the next written activity, checking another three pairs are using the correct grammar in an exercise. Don't forget to consider your correction and feedback preferences. What are you going to do with the incorrect language you've observed? How and when will you correct it: will you keep a list and use it later in a whole class activity on error correction or will you supply the correct language on the spot for the individual student?

Teacher-Talking-Time (TTT)

In the communicative approach, the pedagogical goal is to reduce TTT and increase Student-Talking-Time (STT). By allowing students more opportunity to practise and produce new language, we are enabling them to activate it and, hopefully, move it from working memory into long-term memory. Whilst low-level students possess a relatively small lexicon and have less working knowledge of the language, we should still endeavour to increase STT. In fact, it's arguably more important with low-level students.

So, what about your TTT and the language (or input) you use with your students? This input will, of course, include far much more than classroom instructions – it includes all of your oral output, such as the greetings you use when students enter the classroom, how you praise or correct, and the way you set up classroom activities. For a B1/B2

student, teachers do not need to be so aware of their own output as the students are that much more advanced and have a larger working lexicon and schemata in L2 in their long-term memory. For low-level students, teachers will need to regulate their output if they wish their students to comprehend (as in Krashen's (1982) Comprehensible Input Hypothesis) and successfully process language without feeling overwhelmed or anxious (as in Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis).

So, your output should always be clear and concise for this level. For the very first beginners' class I taught, I created a draft script for my greetings, instructions, classroom management, board work (let's not forget this is another input source for students) and feedback. It's something I still do and serves to remind me of the need to be aware of a teacher's impact on the lesson, and the importance of communicating effectively and successfully.

L1

It's impossible to discuss TTT without pondering the use of L1 in the classroom. It's a controversial and wide-ranging topic in itself. In my experience, it has its advantages and disadvantages. The positives for students are that it can provide reassurance when encountering new and challenging language (e.g. students can check the translation of concrete nouns against the L1 equivalent); and it may be less emotionally daunting and intellectually demanding than a class that is wholly in the L2. It also allows teachers to quickly set up activities or explain grammar rules in more depth. These advantages only exist, however, if the class is monolingual or all speak one common language and the teacher is a competent speaker of that language, or if the teacher competently speaks multiple languages in a multi-lingual class.

The disadvantages of using the L1 is that it can create an over-reliance on a linguistic comfort blanket that will unlikely be available in an L2 environment. It also reduces students' exposure to the target language. It's a bit like going to the gym but being denied access to many of the machines; it thwarts maximum opportunity to engage with all the available resources.

My personal opinion is that there are valid reasons to use L1 on select occasions, but I would counsel teachers not to make L1 usage the norm or at least aim to reduce it as students progress.

Total Physical Response (TPR)

The practice of using physical movement to aid the learning of language is useful for any level and is often popular with younger classes and teens, as well as some adult classes. This can include any over-exaggerated physical movement, such as miming or gesturing, and is a valuable tool in helping students 'see' the language independent of any written prompt. It changes the pace of the lesson and it can help students feel more engaged, aid understanding and reduce the need for L1.

You can use mime to teach vocab (such as a big yawn and stretch for *I'm tired*). Gestures can communicate classroom instructions (*listen to* – pointing to your ears, *open your books* - opening the palms of your hand to simulate a book opening) and actions can assist in demonstrating functional language. For example, the teacher drills pen with the class and individual students and then asks one student '*Can I borrow a pen?*' whilst pointing to the student's pen and to himself/herself. The student offers the pen and the teacher uses it to scribble something in a notebook and returns the pen saying '*thank you*'.)

Repetition

Repetition leads to consolidation of language and confidence using it. It will help nudge that new language through the working memory and into the long term memory, and build those all-important neural networks of knowledge. According to McLeod (2017), the LTM is the large (potentially unlimited) database of all our knowledge, and once language has graduated to this location, it has successfully become part of our explicit and implicit knowledge. This means it will be easier for us to recall the correct language – and use it more automatically. Make sure there is plenty of opportunity for practice of the target language following the presentation; moving from controlled practice, to semi-controlled, and then freer practice.

You can create opportunities for repetition through managing student interaction – ask students to mingle, swap pairs, change groups, interview students in another class or interview a host family. Each fresh interaction allows the practice experience to be slightly different, but still purposeful. You can also offer repetition by differing the types of practice activities and games: flashcards, realia, props, roleplays, board races, and so on. And don't forget to revise the previous lesson at the start of the next one, and to review.

Empathy

Last but by no means least. Rapport, emotional intelligence, kindness, listening, patience, soft skills – it's that sentiment of respecting the student as a human being, someone who is new to a subject and willing to learn, and helping them achieve their potential. This quality is a prerequisite for teaching, in my opinion. Empathy brings to mind Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, and the notion of considering the student's emotional state and optimising their receptivity to learning.

If I asked you to reflect on your own experience as a L2 student, how would you describe it? What did your teacher do to facilitate the whole learning experience? Reflection is a valuable tool for a teacher's self-development, as it prompts us to keep the students' needs at the forefront of our mind and reminds us to always question our actions and decisions in the classroom.

Classroom activities

Let's now look at some classroom activities that practice each of the four language skills (the passive/receptive skills of Reading and Listening, and the active/productive skills of Writing and

Speaking) and each of the four language systems (lexis, grammar, phonology, and function). Each of these systems and skills are interlinked and mutually dependent, so endeavour to provide a balance of these from day one.

Reading

To locate information in a text: ask your colleagues in the staff room to lend you their ID card, travel card, business card, library card, or any card with some personal details that they are willing to share with your class. Show these to your students and ask them to locate names, addresses, countries, addresses, telephone numbers, etc. Elicit sentences with *to be* (e.g. '*Emma is from London*'.) or possessive *'s* (e.g. '*This is Emma's ID card*'.)

Listening

To listen for gist and for detail: ask a colleague to talk about their close family (it could be fictional), either in a recording or live to your class, and to state (and spell) names and give ages. Ask students to listen and choose the topic of the monologue from some options on the board: family, jobs, sport. Students listen again and select or complete the details in 3–4 sentences on the board:

Bella has one brother/two brothers.

Her brother is [Louis]. She is [15] years old.

Speaking

To provide freer practice of introductions: for new classes, run a class mingle and ask students to introduce themselves to all their classmates using phrases on the board:

A: *Hello, what's your name?*

B: *I'm Rhona. Nice to meet you! What's your name?*

A: *My name's Andreas.*

Monitor and remodel any errors (grammar, pronunciation, or stress) on the spot.

Writing

To provide freer written practice of *be* information questions and answers: ask students to exchange simple questions and answers in written format, by writing personal information questions (**How are** you? **What is** your email address? **Who is** your favourite teacher? **Where are** you from? **What's** your address?) on a piece of paper or in a WhatsApp message and giving/sending the questions to classmates who then reply in a full sentence (*I'm fine, thanks. My email address is rhona@me.com*). Students can work in pairs, groups or whole class, but should swap roles so that they practice both questions and answers.

Lexis

To revise the lexical set of Food and Drink: divide the class into two teams (or 3–4 for larger classes) and play *Pictionary* on the board. Role a dice to decide which team starts. The winning team sends one student to the board, the teacher shows or whispers to him/her a food and drink word, then he/she draws it on the board and his/her team has to guess the word. Only confirm the word is correct if the team can give correct spelling, pronunciation, and an example sentence. A correct answer means another go (with a new student drawing) from the team. An incorrect guess means the other team has a go.

Grammar

To consolidate understanding of correct sentence structure and word: choose 5–6 sentences that exemplify a recent grammar point and use these to prepare a set of cards – one set per sentence, with each card in the set having one word from the sentence on it. Jumble each set of cards and ask pairs or groups to reorder into a correct sentence. You can increase the challenge, by also including one or two distractor cards within a set, i.e. cards with an irrelevant and incorrect word, or you can give two sets of cards/sentences at the same time, or give the first and last words of a sentence for them to complete the rest of the sentence, or simply set a time limit.

Phonology

To introduce syllables and word stress in nationalities: say *A-me-ri-can* and leave a clear pause between each syllable. Drill the word in the same style and ask students to identify the number of syllables or parts in the word (4). Confirm answers by writing the syllables on the board or by using your fingers to count the number of syllables. Confirm which syllable is stressed (the *-me-*). Then dictate other nationality words and ask students to write the word and the number of syllables. Drill the words with the class and ask them to identify the stressed syllable.

Function

To revise and provide authentic practice of a specific exponent (e.g. ordering a drink in a coffee shop): choose a short dialogue that includes the functional language exponent and write it on the board. Ask a pair of students to role-play the dialogue to the class, before pairs then role-play the same dialogue together. Monitor and encourage appropriate use of intonation and sentence stress. Then remove (i.e. wipe off/delete) core chunks of language from the dialogue. Put students into new pairs to roleplay the dialogue again. If possible, and with smaller classes, take the class to a coffee shop to order and pay for a drink. (Do check with the coffee shop employees first.)

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Rhona Snelling is a freelance ELT author, teacher and editor. She qualified with International House and has extensive teaching experience in Europe and Australasia. She has also worked as a content editor for Pearson and OUP, and holds a MSc in Applied Linguistics and SLA from the University of Oxford. Rhona has authored many best-selling ELT coursebooks, including *Speak Your Mind* Starter level and *Get Ready for IELTS.*

The Silent Way – speaking volumes

Martina Dorn looks at a cognitively demanding and engaging approach.

Since the outbreak of Covid 19, the delivery of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) programmes has seen a major shift of focus from direct instruction to online, blended and hybrid modes. Even before the pandemic, a substantial amount of attention was dedicated to these types of instruction.

Amid this quiet upheaval, some practitioners, like myself, have returned to classroom teaching. With the spectre of a second wave of the virus threatening to send us all back online, I try to make the most of my situation. Indeed, this is why I dusted off my sets of Cuisenaire rods and began utilising them in a range of speaking, writing and grammar activities. The students' keen interaction with the rods brought life and creativity into the classroom, captivating their imagination. I was pleasantly reminded of the effectiveness of this teaching and learning resource and its validity when employing the Silent Way approach in the EAP teaching setting.

While there are practitioners unaware of and some even unsure of Cuisenaire rods and how to use them, the teaching resource has a long history and is firmly embedded in English language teaching (ELT). Cuisenaire rods were invented in the 1940s by Emile-Georges Cuisenaire, a Belgian primary school maths teacher. He found them to be an effective means of helping his students grasp arithmetic. In his book *Les Nombres en Couleurs* (*Numbers in Colour*), Emile-Georges Cuisenaire outlined a new teaching method, and Cuisenaire rods were formally introduced as a teaching and learning aid. Through what seems like playing, the rods provide learners with physical algebraic models and also enable them to personally investigate mathematics (The Cuisenaire Company, 2018).

Thanks to a providential meeting between Emile-Georges Cuisenaire and Dr Caleb Gattegno, the use of Cuisenaire rods became more widespread. Dr Gattegno embraced both the method and resource to bring improvements to mathematics teaching at the primary and secondary school levels. He noticed that when students used Cuisenaire rods, a lot of precise language was generated, and he realised the rods' potential for teaching languages. In his book *The Common Sense of Teaching Foreign Languages*, Dr Gattegno suggested using Cuisenaire rods as a tool for creating unambiguous situations for presenting and practising language in foreign language classes. He created and championed a new pedagogical approach to teaching foreign languages, the Silent Way. Its main objective is for students to work as autonomous learners and to construct meaning for themselves. Dr Gattegno famously said: 'I don't teach, I let them learn' (Caleb Gattegno, 2019).

The Silent Way is frequently wrongly referred to as a teaching method. It is, however, an approach because it states a point of view, a philosophy, and its supporters are encouraged to be creative in its application in teaching. This is in stark contrast to teaching methods, which are procedural and prescriptive. The Silent Way approach is largely based on behaviourism (Hall, 1999), whereby the acquisition of language takes place through imitation and repetition of a correct model that is believed to lead to positive habit formation, especially if it is subsequently reinforced via feedback. The difference is that the Silent Way approach advocates the inductive method to present, practise and acquire target

language, which makes the learning process more cognitively engaging and demanding. As for correction and feedback, self-correction rather than explicit corrective feedback and praise for correct imitation is promoted. The Silent Way teacher hints at what is wrong, enables learners to identify their errors and lets them correct themselves.

The Silent Way is a learner-centred approach which also has tenets in constructivism, another influential educational theory (Lightbown & Spada, 1999). Two of the theory's fundamental beliefs are encompassed in the Silent Way approach: knowledge is constructed rather than passively absorbed, and learners should take an active role in the learning process. The purpose of the Silent Way is to bring learners in touch with themselves, the 'self', and their own potential for learning. Some of the attributes of the 'self' include: will, adaptation, patience, discrimination, imagination, concentration, perception and abstraction. It is thought that learning can take place through simultaneous engagement of many of the attributes.

Cuisenaire rods lend themselves to facilitating the Silent Way's realisation of its philosophy. Firstly, they appeal to different senses (touch, vision and hearing), as well as intelligences (spatial, logico-mathematical, bodily-kinaesthetic, inter-personal and intrapersonal), and make learning more memorable. Hall (1999: 46) finds them 'an excellent way of taking into consideration different students' learning styles'. Next, Cuisenaire rods have a positive impact on their users and make learning memorable. As Newton (2000) remarks, 'The classroom encounter, the touch, the sound of bits of wood clicking together, the colour is remembered,' (p.14). Also, the resource is believed to lower learners' affective filter by unblocking their ability to absorb comprehensible input (Krashen, 1982), and enabling them to be creative and expressive in multiple ways. Scrivener (2005: 316) describes them as 'almost cinematic in scope', especially when combined with the user's gestures and facial expressions. Furthermore, because of their novelty factor, learners are often tricked into being more message than form focused. Cuisenaire rods are effective at diverting focus away from language onto the activity, which generally initiates greater creative use.

Speaking: anecdote telling

The anecdote-telling activity, suggested as optional in the Week 5 teaching overview, presented me with the perfect opportunity to utilise Cuisenaire rods. I felt my students would benefit from some short speaking practice for two reasons. Firstly, it is a little-known learning tool in the Chinese culture while it is frequently encountered in English-speaking countries. Secondly, it could be made use of in the 'Dragons' Den' pitching activity scheduled to take place in the second half of Week 5. Naturally, the students were intrigued by the rods when they first spotted them on the desks. I did not explain anything and observed how some of them could not resist picking them up. Cuisenaire rods have a hint of a childhood toy, which has a positive and motivating factor for learning. Scrivener (2005: 313) believes that they might help to 'set people a little freer from the "adult" behaviour they feel is expected of them.'

Presentation stage

To present the 'model', I asked the learners to listen to a short anecdote (pre-recorded and played through the sound system) with their eyes shut, and to remember as much as they can. In their groups, they were next tasked with retelling the anecdote. The students were told to use the rods to illustrate what they say. I demonstrated my request by briefly placing several blue rods on the desk to represent the ocean, some orange rods to signify the coast and a brown rod for Angela, the protagonist of the anecdote. I repeated the first sentence, pointed to the relevant rods as I did, and moved the brown rod to show that Angela was swimming. The groups got on with the task in hand enthusiastically. They initially spoke to each other in order to piece the anecdote together from what they remembered. Once the students established who, what, where, when and why, they then collectively picked a selection of rods and created their own representations of the anecdote. These ranged from simple to very elaborate and creative depictions. I monitored and stayed 'silent', only occasionally pointing or encouraging self-correction. In the end, the groups retold the anecdote in full.

Practice stage

The students were presented with another anecdote, which they were able to read from the screen. Again, individual groups were asked to retell the story and use the rods to illustrate it. It was fascinating to observe how the students negotiated their roles and made decisions about which rods represented what. I did not interfere, and the learners did not seem to be compelled to involve me. I monitored and did my best to indicate any errors as unobtrusively as possible. After that, the structure and language of both anecdotes were examined more closely, namely ways to start and end anecdotes, sequencing, adverbs and the use of past tenses. The learners compared the two anecdotes and highlighted the similarities and differences between them, and also noted the impact they had on listeners.

Production stage

At this point of the session, the students were relaxed about doing speaking practice and working collaboratively. Now familiar with the anecdote-telling task itself and at ease using Cuisenaire rods, when asked to come up with their own anecdotes and tell them to their groups, the learners did not hesitate. Most of them automatically used the rods and told their anecdotes without preparation. The other group members listened intently because they would need to vote for the best / funniest / most interesting anecdote in their groups. The shortlisted anecdotes then became the contenders for the 'anecdote of the day' prize. The lesson was wrapped up by the learners' evaluation of the session, namely its usefulness and effectiveness, as well as the students' perceived performance in the anecdote-telling task.

Writing: paragraph analysis

I did not need to look very far to identify another opportunity to apply the Silent Way approach and make use of Cuisenaire rods. One of the compulsory tasks in the Week 5 teaching outline, 'analysis of two sample problem-solution

paragraphs with focus on the block and point-by-point organisation', would lend itself perfectly. In Week 4, the learners had analysed a paragraph and were encouraged to use different colours to differentiate between topic, supporting and concluding sentences, and main ideas (problems and solutions). It became apparent to me that the students would be acquainted with the basic concept of sentence function analysis and using various colours to mark them to make a distinction between them. Therefore, I designed an activity which built on the students' prior learning experiences while employing the Silent Way approach and utilising Cuisenaire rods.

Colour code

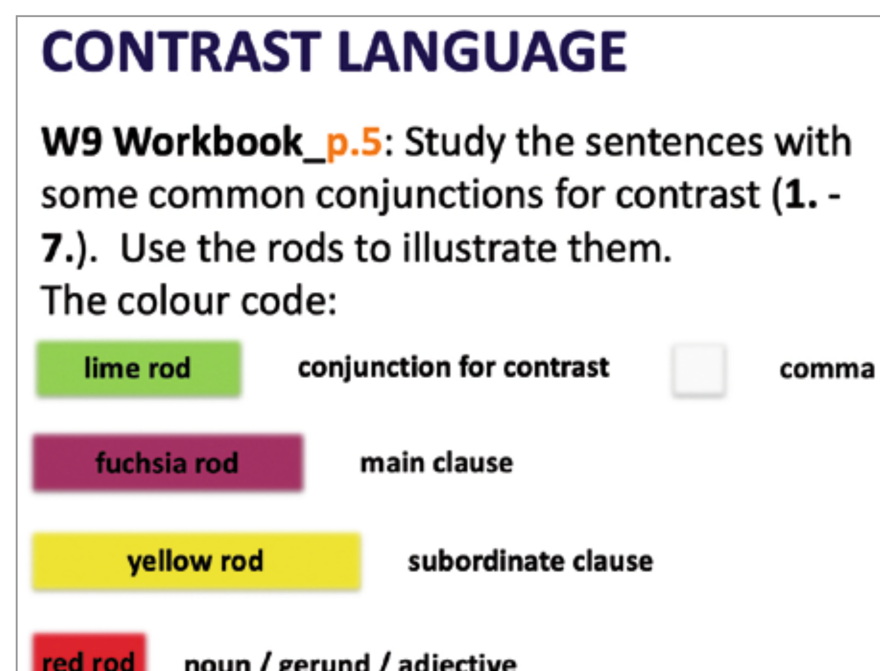
The students were presented with two sample problem-solution paragraphs (in their workbooks as well as projected onto the screen) and given the following colour code: orange rod = topic and concluding sentences, green rod = problems, blue rod = solutions, yellow rod = supporting sentences (definition, explanation or example), and brown rod = other. Next, we tested the colour code on the Week 4 paragraph and there seemed to be no issues with its application. I checked the instructions with the students one last time to ensure that they understood what they needed to generate with the rods (two models placed either side by side or one above the other, with the rods illustrating the functions of the sentences).

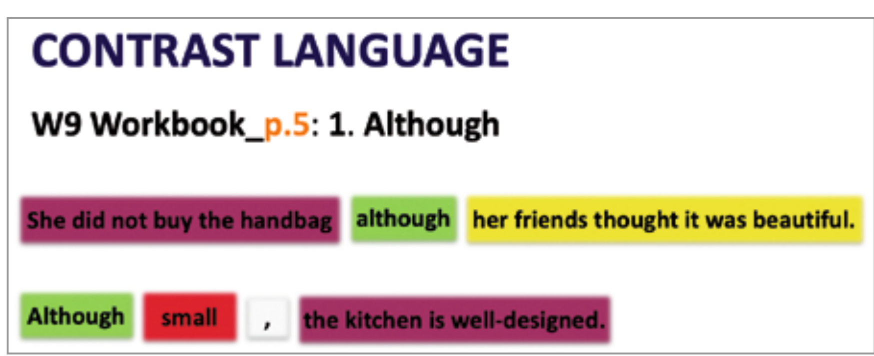
Identification of sentence functions

The learners collaborated in groups trying to determine the function of the sentences in the paragraphs. I actively monitored all the groups and, as before, I stayed 'silent'. My involvement, when encouraging self-correction, was minimal. I witnessed a lot of discussion being generated by the task, and a range of skills (both lower and higher order thinking skills) being employed, especially when the students thought they had come across a sentence which was 'other'.

Summary formation

The groups were able to check their answers against mine (virtual rods illustrating the two sample paragraphs projected onto the screen) and questions were encouraged to clarify any queries. The learners were prompted to contrast the two structures and summarise the differences. All groups identified the 'other' sentence correctly. Through further questioning, we established the function of that sentence – transition – and why it is advisable to include it in the block paragraph structure.





Grammar: complex sentences

A further opportunity to utilise the rods did not arise for three weeks. Then, in Week 9, the teaching outline included a review of complex sentences with conjunctions for contrast. Not keen on teaching grammar explicitly, I devised an activity which employed an inductive method accompanied by Cuisenaire rods. I find utilising the rods while teaching grammar highly effective and agree with Hann (1999: 29) who claims that 'students particularly like the opportunity of handling and manipulating "grammar" themselves in concrete form.'

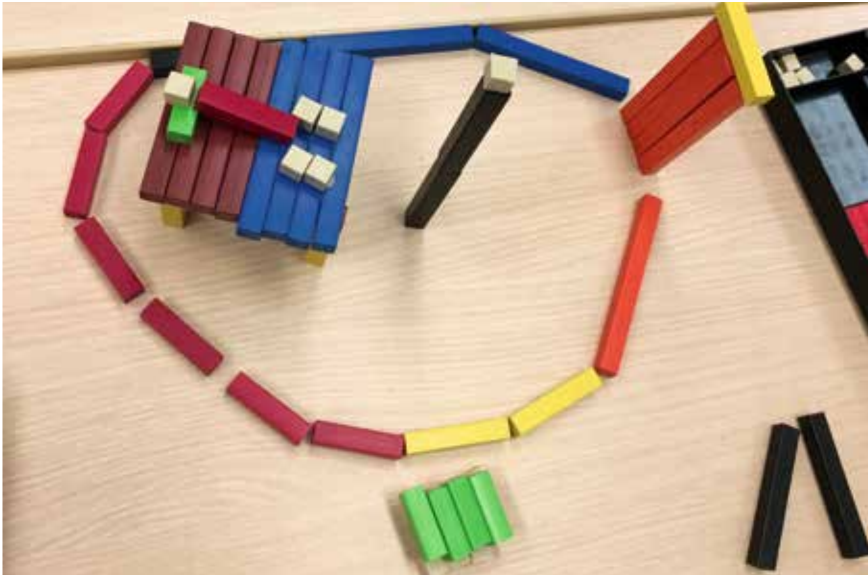
Colour code

The colour code I gave the groups on this occasion included metalanguage. Therefore, I gave the students ten minutes in which to research the definitions: lime rod = conjunction for contrast, fuchsia rod = main clause, yellow rod = subordinate clause, red rod = noun / gerund / adjective, and white rod = comma. I then demonstrated the application of the colour code on two carefully selected sentences. I also ensured all the different rods were used, which gave me an opportunity to clarify every grammatical term.

Identification

Students worked in groups and illustrated the different parts of the remaining twelve complex sentences by applying the given colour code.

As before, I monitored the groups' progress discreetly. When I spotted an inaccuracy, I pointed at the rod, which prompted the students to speak to the other group members and correct their rod selection accordingly. When the time was up, the groups' answers were checked in plenary feedback.



Formulation of rules

The final group task was to establish some rules related to colligation in complex sentences with the target conjunctions for contrast. The students were encouraged to observe the patterns, highlighted by the rods of different colours, and formulate three rules: 1. determine the positions of conjunctions and subordinate clauses; 2. what constitutes subordinate clauses; and 3. when and where commas are applied in complex sentences. Once each group had formulated the rules, they shared their findings with each other and justified their conclusions. As an observation, this task was exceptional at encouraging group and individual interactions to work out the rules.

Having employed the Silent Way and utilised Cuisenaire rods three times this semester, how do I rate both the approach and resource? The answer: very highly. Did they aid me in achieving the session objectives? Absolutely. Were the students engaged? Undeniably. Would I consider the approach and resource in my EAP teaching in the future? Without a doubt. Some may point out that the Silent Way belongs to face-to-face teaching. However, I would argue that the principles upon which the approach is based could be explored and adapted to online teaching practice. For example, by ensuring that online activities are designed to cater for different learning styles, promote collaboration, meaning construction and self-correction. As for Cuisenaire rods, the kinaesthetic aspect cannot be fully replicated in online teaching. However, there is a lot to be argued for virtual rods and how these could be exploited in apps, such Google Docs and other software which enables editing. Collaborative activities including colour coding, identification of patterns and formulation of rules are, therefore, feasible options when teaching online, and the Silent Way could continue to 'speak volumes' in the digital world.

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Martina Dorn has had a number of roles (teacher/lecturer, director of studies, teacher trainer, assessment specialist and IELTS examiner) in the UK, UAE and China. Martina is currently employed as a Senior Language Lecturer by the English Language Centre (ELC) at Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University (XJTLU) in Suzhou, China. She is interested in effective teaching and positive learner experience. She can be contacted at www.linkedin.com/in/martina-dorn-11a59b23.

Where does VR fit in the classroom?

Flora D. Floris, Agnes K.C. Dewi, Ivania Tanoko, & Kezia G.I. Setiawati describe using VR.

Who would have thought that English language Teaching would have evolved to the stage where learners can be inside a hedgehog's house watching him blow out the candles on his birthday cake? Thanks to virtual reality (VR), this has now become the norm. VR seems here to stay and to make an impact on classrooms all over the world, at all levels, from primary to tertiary.

A virtual reality system is an interactive technology that serves as a human-to-computer interface and enables the user to be in a three-dimensional environment created by the software, hardware, and other objects (Meinhold, 2013). Initially developed for flight simulators and astronaut trainings, VR technology is now widely used for different purposes such as museum visits, marketing and education. The high levels of authenticity, engagement, and immersion offered by VR help users to have realistic experiences within their helmets or cardboards and to understand complicated or abstract ideas easily (Christou, 2010).

Studies note that through VR technology, students can be exposed to a specific cultural and language context; and this experience stimulates their communication in the target language (Morrison, 2017). The use of VR in language classrooms helps students to enhance their vocabulary, speaking skills, and reading comprehension (Morrison, 2017). Furthermore, students like completing tasks with VR because the activities are interesting and the environment offered is dynamic with an appealing content (Chen, 2016).

"Initially developed for flight simulators and astronaut trainings, VR technology is now widely used for different purposes such as museum visits, marketing and education."

Considering the benefits of VR in language classrooms, scholars suggest language teachers act as facilitators and use VR as a means of increasing students' interest and attention when learning a target language. However, studies show that many teachers are still reluctant to incorporate VR into their teaching because they might not know where to start (Kessler, 2018).

The following are some starting ideas on how the potential of a VR application *Oculus Story Studio: Henry* can be explored as a learning resource. The suggested activities hopefully will inspire English teachers to bring *Oculus Story Studio: Henry* or any other VR applications into their classrooms.

Oculus Story Studio: Henry: An Overview

Oculus Story Studio: Henry is a 10-minute-VR movie narrated by Elijah Wood and directed by Ramiro Lopez Dau for *Oculus Story Studio*. It tells a story of a hedgehog named Henry who loves to hug – which is quite problematic for a hedgehog with thorny spines. As Henry celebrates his birthday, he makes a special wish which magically comes to life (Oculus VR, 2016).

Oculus Story Studio: Henry was first shown at a premiere event on July 28, 2015. It won the 68th Emmy Awards for Outstanding Original Interactive Program. In fact, it is the first original narrative in VR to win an Emmy (Oculus VR, 2016).

To fully immerse in the VR experience offered, the users need an *Oculus Rift* headset or *Oculus Rift* head-mounted display (HMD). When the headset is on, the users will share the same virtual 3D space with Henry. They will be at Henry's house watching him glance back at them, smile, and blow out the candle on his birthday cake. The story unfolds all around as if a live cartoon performance is happening.

Suggested Activity 1

- The teacher watches *Oculus Story Studio: Henry* and divides the whole story into some parts/scenes.
- The students are asked to work individually or in pairs.
- All students watch the first part of *Oculus Story Studio: Henry.*

- They then work individually or in pairs to write up their prediction of the next scenes.
- Classroom discussions should follow on naturally after all students complete the task.

Suggested Activity 2

- The teacher watches *Oculus Story Studio: Henry* and divides the whole story into some parts/scenes.
- The students are asked to work in pairs or in small groups depending on the number of the scenes.
- The group members will take turn to watch the VR movie.
- The VR viewer is asked to describe what he/she is watching while her/his partners are writing the description.
- More advanced students can also be asked to describe how they feel about the VR experience they are having.
- Each pair/group is asked to present or submit their writing.
- Classroom discussions should follow each pair/group's presentation/ submission.

Suggested Activity 3

- After watching *Oculus Story Studio: Henry*, the students are asked to think about the continuation of the story.
- Next, in groups of 3–4, the students are asked to prepare a skit or a short role play on what they imagine happens after the last movie scene. The roles given are Henry, the turtle, the dog, and if necessary another additional character decided by the students or the teacher.

Suggested Activity 4

- After watching *Oculus Story Studio: Henry* and having discussion about it, the students are asked to create a poster to promote this particular VR movie.
- Advanced students can also be asked to talk about the poster they created as well as to act as a guide to their classmates that are going to experience VR *Oculus Story Studio: Henry* as something new.

Suggested Activity 5

- Traditional classroom activities such as answering some comprehension questions, writing a brief summary about the VR movie, or noting down dialogues or scenes that are hard to understand might work well especially with beginner or lower intermediate students.

Added values

In addition to improving students' language skills, the aforementioned activities also bring at least two added benefit for the students.

The first one is that the students learn to improve their communication and social skills. As they are asked to work in group and present their group work, they need to cooperate with others to come up with a good result. Discussions, arguments, and negotiations may occur to strive for the best result.

The second one is that the students learn to empathize with others. *Oculus Story Studio: Henry* invites its users to immerse in an emotional story with a cuddly hedgehog whose prickly spikes scare his friends away. The VR technology enables the viewers to feel like they are actually in Henry's world, looking around and interacting with him. The emotions of being sad, disappointed, lonely, and happy will enhance the students' emotional skills.

Conclusion

VR technology provides students with unforgettable experiences and at the same time stimulates them to develop language skills along with social and emotional skills. Using VR application such as *Oculus Story Studio: Henry* enables students to learn and experience English in real time inside and even outside the four walls of the classroom. This is the type of language immersion that perhaps only VR can provide – and is certainly a feature of 21st century learning. Hopefully, the ideas presented in this article will make English teachers believe that incorporating VR in their classes is feasible.

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Flora D Floris is a senior lecturer at Petra Christian University, Indonesia. Her main interests include language teacher professional development, teaching English as an International Language, and technology-enhanced language learning.

Agnes KC Dewi is a final-year student at English Department of Petra Christian University. She loves screenplay writing.

Ivania Tanoko is a final-year-student at English Department of Petra Christian University. She has a keen interest in theatre production.

Kezia GI Setiawati is a final-year student at English Department of Petra Christian University. Her academic interest is on the area of translation.

Noticing through song

Daniel Costa describes the importance of noticing when learning languages.

Learning by noticing

When I moved to Greece a few years ago, it was literally all Greek to me and the prospect of acquiring a seventh language as a twenty-seven-year-old adult seemed exciting yet daunting. Shortly before leaving the country more recently, I was interacting practically exclusively in the local language, in both personal and professional contexts. Many people were surprised at the fact that I was able to communicate accurately, both when writing and speaking, given the fairly limited amount of exposure to the language as well as a lack of formal training or exposure to a Greek-speaking environment at home. Some suggested that my experience growing up in a multilingual environment played a role and one even humorously posited that my very distant Greek roots could have as well. Learning Modern Greek, however, was a challenging endeavour for two main reasons. Firstly, it uses an alphabet which is different from the one used by the other languages I know. Secondly, it shares its branch in the Indo-European language tree with no other language, making it one of a kind. While a significant number of words in European languages have roots in Ancient Greek, Modern Greek has many words that bear no relation to them let alone to other languages.

When reflecting on my own experience learning the language by acculturation, I cannot overlook the power of noticing. Noticing enabled me to conclude, for instance, that there are three genders, and that certain endings can tell us – but not always – which one it is. I recall learning the alphabet simply by inferring what the letters were by looking at words that were the same as, for instance, the Romance or Germanic languages I was familiar with. This could be confusing, since, visually, the Greek *P* was in fact an *R*, phonetically speaking, for someone used to the Latin script. Another challenge was acquiring the notorious diphthongs that pervade the language or understanding the cases, yet such obstacles were overcome primarily if not solely by noticing. As an educator working in student-centred contexts, such thoughts provided me with a helpful stimulus to try to trigger learners' independence by prompting them to notice given aspects of the language, which has become an important aspect of communicative language teaching, where eliciting plays a major role. While we can't expect students to necessarily think like linguists or language teachers, we can embrace noticing as a means of enhancing accuracy.

The Noticing Hypothesis

In 1990, Richard Schmidt posited that consciously noticing the input is essential for second language acquisition to occur. In a context where language teaching was dominated by theories substantiating the claim that languages should be learnt subconsciously, the researcher spent three years observing a Japanese speaker, whose communicative competence was commendable, yet his grammar lagged far behind. Despite extensive exposure to English, he said things such as 'Yesterday I'm go beach', thereby overlooking correct tense usage, as well as prepositions. Schmidt concluded that adults cannot, like children, acquire the grammatical forms of language without paying conscious attention to input.

Schmidt also pondered on his own experience learning Portuguese in Brazil, which combined classroom instruction with interaction amongst native speakers. He concluded that his utterances were not correct unless they used language features he had consciously noticed. Moreover, despite being corrected by his interlocutors, he persisted in making the same mistakes because the linguistic features hadn't been pointed out to him and therefore did not prompt intake of the target forms. He called this second hypothesis 'noticing the gap', whereby learners are to notice a gap between target language input and their output (Schmidt, 2010). Such contentions have been criticized by John Truscott (1998), on the grounds that the hypothesis is too vague as it does not target grammar and also that it is restricted to metalinguistic features of the language rather than competence, while Schlachter suggested that not all aspects of language require noticing (Schmidt, 2012). More recent studies, however, have corroborated the claim that noticing plays a significant role in language learning (Bergsleithner *et al*, 2013).

Noticing through song

In this context of language learning in the classroom, songs can provide a stimulating template for learners to notice grammatical features of the language, such as the past simple, one of the major struggles of the research participant in Schmidt's case study. The classic *Stars* by the British band Simply Red is an example of a song that includes several verbs in the past simple and can therefore be used for learners to notice the difference between regular and irregular verbs, as well as the relevant forms. Needless to say, prior knowledge of the verbs used is necessary in order to understand the meaning of the song, but the focus of the tasks suggested in this article is to notice grammatical features.

1. **Listen to the song Stars and fill in the gaps with the words provided.**
What do they have in common?

held	*thought*	*taught*
wanted (x2)	*tried*	*hurt (x2)*
told	*caused*	*came*

Anyone who ever _______ you
Would tell you the way I'm feeling
Anyone who ever _______ you
Would try to tell you what I feel inside
The only thing I ever _______
Was the feeling that you ain't faking
The only one you ever _______about
Wait a minute can't you see that I

I wanna fall from the stars
Straight into your arms
I, I feel you
I hope you comprehend

For the man who _______to hurt you
He's explaining the way I'm feeling
For all the jealousy I _______you
States the reason why I'm trying to hide
As for all the things you _______me
It sends my future into clearer dimensions
You'll never know how much you _______me
Stay a minute can't you see that I

I wanna fall from the stars
Straight into your arms
I, I feel you
I hope you comprehend

Too many hearts are broken
A lover's promise never _______ with a maybe
So many words are left unspoken
The silent voices are driving me crazy
As for all the pain you _______me
Making up could never be your intention
You'll never know how much you _______me
Stay can't you see that I

I wanna fall from the stars
Straight into your arms
I, I feel you
I hope you comprehend

2. **Match the past simple form above with the infinitive below.**
e.g. held – hold

want	*think*	*try*	*cause*
tell	*teach*	*hurt*	*come*

What do you notice?

Do all the verbs change?

3. **Arrange the verbs accordingly in the table below.**

Regular	Irregular

What other examples can you think of?

4. **Write a biography of an artist you like using regular and irregular verbs in the past simple (250 words**

All of the above will work with any song or poem provided, as always that the choice of resource is interesting and engaging, either through its essential quality or through its use of interesting language.

Daniel Costa is a Senior Language Educator at Woospeak Learning Center, headquartered in France, providing online Business and General English language training, as well as Italian and Portuguese, to learners from several countries and companies. He holds a CELTA, a certificate in Business Language Teaching and a COLT, and an MA in English Language Teaching from the University of Southampton and British Council

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World Englishes: theory and praxis in English language learning

Lok Yong Chia looks at ways of categorising the different Englishes now used around the world.

The concept of world Englishes (WEs) can be seen coming from as early as 1965 (Kachru, 1992). However, major study within the field of such a conceptual framework only began after conferences which foregrounded the issue in 1978 (Kachru, 1992; Bolton, 2006a). Using the terminology 'World Englishes' (WEs) directly advocates for a pluricentric approach per se, since it views the spread of English not as a monolithic block but as heterogeneous and includes autonomous entities of what could be loosely seen as evolutions of English. Using the term 'variety' has been seen to be problematic in subsequent discussions of the form of these Englishes, indicating either 'heteronomy…to the common core of "English"' (Bolton, 2006b: 289, original emphasis) or the existence of a spectrum of Englishes which may not reasonably meet the social or linguistic criteria of a variety (Mauranen, 2017). WEs have been approached at from a multitude of perspectives, including sociolinguistically, historically, lexicographically/institutionally, or critically (Bolton, 2006a). Given the rich diversity of WEs seen globally, it is clear that attempting to provide a model which encompasses all these factors and accurately reflects reality is a difficult challenge. I will first discuss a process-oriented model in Schneider's model of post-colonial English. I will then analyse and present three popular models of WEs: (1) Kachru's Three Circles, (2) McArthur's Wheel, and (3) Yano's Cylinder Model.

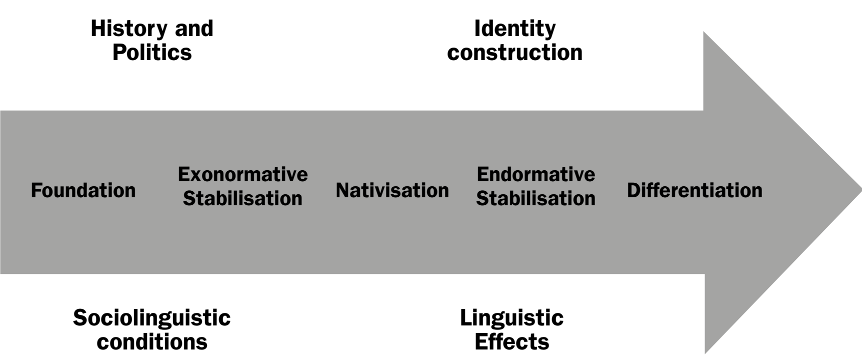

Figure 1 Schneider's Model of Post-Colonial English (Adapted from Schneider, 2007)

Schneider's Model of Post-Colonial English

Although this model does not attempt to describe WEs, it provides valuable insight into what a process-oriented approach to modelling WEs could look like (see Figure 1).

Various stages of post-colonial English can be categorised in various ways. One way, which is through acknowledging register and prestige, ranges from the basilectal form (least prestigious, most informal) to the mesolectal (mid-point) and then acrolectal form (most prestigious, most suitable for a range of registers). Another method is through identifying the forms of the language. Pidgins are simply a *lingua franca* or contact language which is a rudimentary bridge between two languages, lacking formalised grammar. Creoles, on the other hand, refer to pidgins which have developed a formalised grammar, and are often a first language of users. This model describes five stages which English goes through, starting from when it is first introduced through colonialism: (1) foundation, (2) exonormative stabilisation, (3) nativisation, (4) endonormative stabilisation, and (5) differentiation. These are all described through the dimensions of history and politics, identity construction, sociolinguistic conditions, and linguistic effects. This holistic analysis allows a more accurate representation of language within a fine-grained framework. It is inclusive of the full range of linguistic realities ranging from the multifaceted representation of basilects to acrolects, pidgins to creoles, and allowing any on the range of the spectrum to be clearly and saliently identified and described

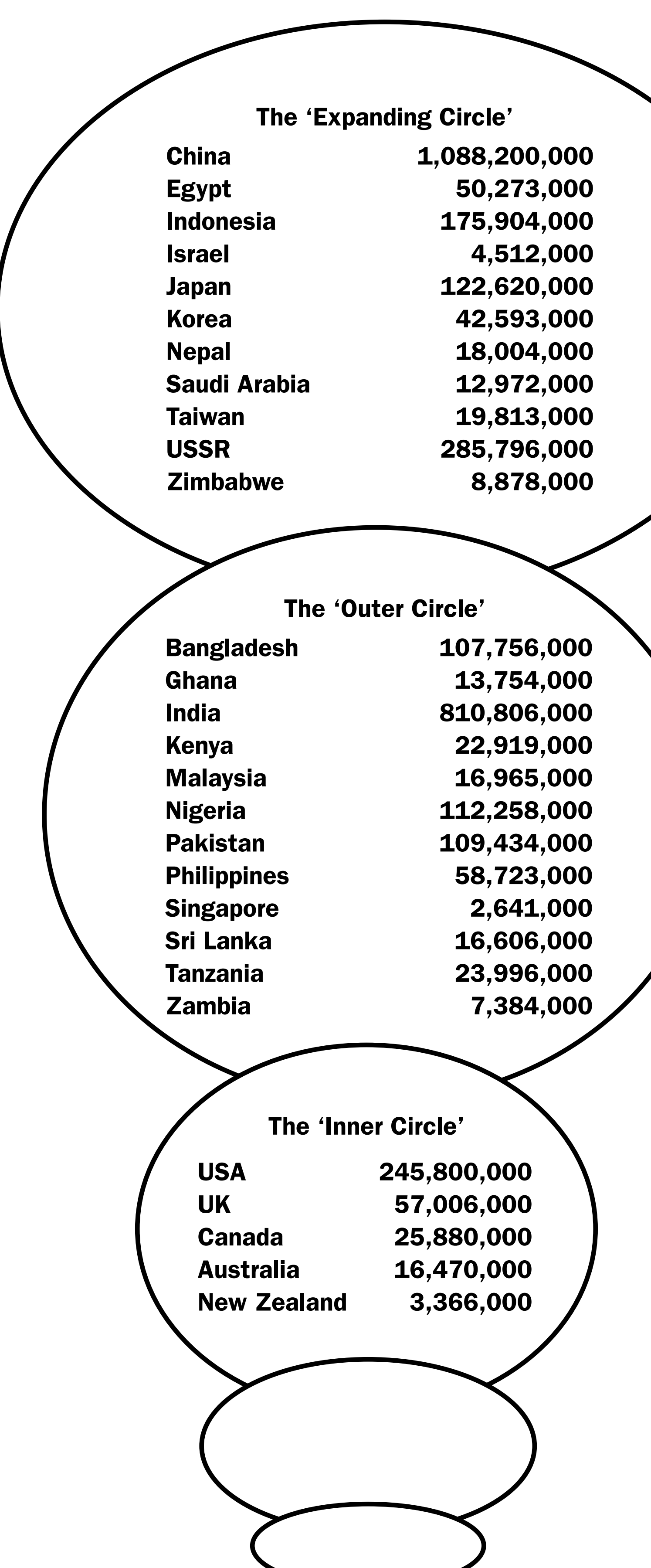

Figure 2 Kachru's Three Circles Model (Kachru, 1992: 3)

through this model. This model also explicitly contextualises the socio-political histories which are missing from other models of WEs. Although the other models discussed here may be at risk of becoming outdated as languages change and evolve, a process model such as this one can accurately represent the sociolinguistic realities of any language over time.

Pedagogical application

Having students be aware of the stages of language development can help give credence to basilectal forms of language as valid in their own right, and help build their self-confidence towards their own linguistic resources. Concepts such as identity construction and socio-political histories of English in their local environment will likely be relevant and pertinent subjects for many learners to think about. Etymology and loan-word constructions will likely be of intrinsic interest to learners as well. These all potentially contribute to increased engagement or motivation in the class, while at the same time presenting a wide variety of teachable moments in the form of raising awareness of the fluid nature of language in today's globalised world.

Kachru's Three Circles of English

Kachru's model of English (see Figure 2) has been extremely influential and it catalysed the entire field of research into WEs and similar fields, such as English as a lingua franca (ELF). Most of the literature of language teaching and language acquisition still references and informs research based on Kachru's delineation of English in this model. One of the reasons that it has been so impactful is that it falls neatly into the more traditional categories of English as a native language (ENL), English as a second language (ESL), and English as a foreign language (EFL). This method of distinguishing communities of English users has a strong link with informing pedagogy. It is no surprise then that the model that best reflects a pragmatic use for teaching seems to be the most adhered to model. Distinguishing English users into 'native speakers' and 'nonnative speakers' also seems

to match most teachers' intuitions, regardless of whether or not these constructs stand up to scrutiny. The strength of Kachru's model is that at a glance it seems to match up with most teachers' basic beliefs about language and language use. Countries which do not have some institutionalised use of English – those in the 'Expanding Circle' should logically place lower social value on competence in the language, as opposed to those in the 'Outer Circle' which have official uses for English, such as India, Singapore, or Malaysia.

Kachru's model also clearly indicates that even with conservative estimations on users of English, ESL and EFL populations far exceed ENL users. However, Kachru's model seems to imply a hierarchical distribution of language users, prioritising those in the Inner Circle. Unfortunately, this presents the potential misconstrual of there being a 'standard' variety of English. The fact that Kachru also classes each of these circles as norm-exporting, norm-generating, and norm-importing, for the Inner, Outer, and Expanding Circles respectively, only serves to embolden the perception of of the norm-exporting varieties having greater value, rather than their being the inevitable result of geopolitical and historical realities. Another big issue is the inconsistency with which the classifications can be assigned. For example, there is inconsistency as to whether South African English is considered Inner or Outer Circle, or whether creolised varieties such as Jamaican Patois or Papua New Guinean Tok Pisin are considered Outer or Expanding Circle. As with most categorisations of language, boundaries are not as hard as represented in this model and it is more likely a spectrum. There is no specific reason to expect that Expanding Circle Englishes do not have norm-generating mechanics, either. One last criticism that can be levelled at this model would be that there is no indication of depth within these varieties. For example, American English is represented as monolithic, although there is significant linguistic variation within American English. In other words, the national boundary as represented here is an arbitrary property and can be seen as potentially conflating linguistic realities.

Figure 3 McArthur's Wheel Model (McArthur, 1987: 11)

Pedagogical application

Recognising that many countries outside of the few Inner Circle countries have national or institutional use for English can help raise learner awareness of the wide instrumental benefits of having a good command of the language. It also presents the important point that a majority of English users will not come from Inner Circle countries and so it is valuable for learners to have strong communicative strategies and skills to successfully interact with people who may not adhere to Inner Circle norms. For courses that place more value on intercultural orientation, it may be useful to have learners look at a case study of the sociocultural histories of English in one of the non-Inner Circle countries, as it may well have parallels to their own situations.

McArthur's Wheel Model

This model takes a different approach from Kachru's model in the visual representation of WEs. Most notably, it attempts to place each WE on an equal plane, in an attempt to validate each of them as an autonomous WE. In other words, the problematic hierarchical representation seen in the Three Circles model is significantly reduced, although not completely removed. This is due to the fact that there is still a spatial bias when it comes to representing WEs. For example, the WEs seen in Kachru's model as Inner Circle varieties now take up half of the entire wheel. In contrast, all African Englishes are seen crammed into one sixth of the wheel. This can once again be seen as giving more linguistic legitimacy to Inner Circle WEs. An improvement over Kachru's model can be seen that smaller denominations are represented in this model. For example, there are WEs delineated in ways other than simply using national borders: Aboriginal English, Maori English, BBC English, or Black English Vernacular (see Figure 3). Unfortunately, this may also be seen as a potential negative, as this more fine-grained representation is not extended to non-Inner Circle WEs.

It may be much more difficult to provide labels for basilectal varieties of each of the WE denominations, but this bias in representation is still salient. This

bias can be seen in the way McArthur (1987) interprets some of the WEs. For example, he writes 'like Tok Pisin in Papua New Guinea and Krio in Sierra Leone are bafflingly far removed from the standard language, and are most patently distinct languages.' (ibid: 10). He also mentions, 'In Papua-New Guinea, it might be reasonable to assert that Tok Pisin (or Melanesian Pidgin English) is so distant from the root stock of English as to constitute an entirely distinct language to be listed (if listed at all) on the outermost fringes of the circle of World English' (ibid: 11). This is in spite of the fact that acrolectal versions of Tok Pisin can be seen to have significant overlap in lexicon and phonology, making it likely intelligible to most users of English. This goes on to the problematic issue of discussing mutual intelligibility, which it seems is often conflated through the comparison of basilects rather than acrolects when it comes to arranging WEs in models. Glaringly, the entire continent of Europe is excluded from McArthur's wheel. One last criticism against this model is the suggestion of a 'remarkably homogeneous but negotiable 'common core' of World Standard English.' (ibid: 11). Despite claims that there are WEs that are significantly different from the anglocentric forms of English, McArthur insists that there is some 'common core' which is shared between all WEs. This issue can be equated to and seen in the entire inquiry of research into ELF, where the codification of such an entity is unequivocally denounced (see Kiczkowiak & Lowe, 2019, for a review).

Pedagogical application

Despite most of this model's flaws, one of the key takeaways of McArthur's model is the acknowledgment of linguistic variation within national borders. Highlighting this can once again serve as a platform for improving students' self-confidence, acknowledging and legitimising their own stages of language development as valid and natural, not simply as deviant from a 'standard'. Finding local parallels of learner L1 variation can serve as a good analogy. Tasks such as researching lesser-known dialects of WEs can serve as an engaging exercise for learners.

Yano's Cylinder Model of English

This last model is likely the best collective visual representation of WEs out of all the models reviewed (see Figure 4). Each acrolectal form of the WEs represented is displayed on an equal field, having no semblance of a hierarchical structure. There is also no disparity between each representative area, shown as a cylinder in this model, besides linguistic depth, which is portrayed via the height of the cylinder as the range between basilect and acrolect. On top of this, there is no representation of the misleading notion of a 'core' of English in this model. Each cylinder is seen as separate from the others. At the same time, the overlap between the acrolectal varieties is signified via the dotted lines, which allows space for the clear fact that there is some overlap between WEs, otherwise what is commonly discussed as 'international intelligibility' would not be possible, i.e., they would simply be separate languages. In the face of speculation of the future form of English, this representation also allows for the possibility of WEs to develop further apart, or to build upon characteristics of mutual intelligibility. Interestingly, Yano's model has a somewhat updated view on the boundaries of ESL and EFL, ignoring the categorical ENL completely, discarding the complex baggage brought on by the term 'native speaker' (see Holliday, 2006 for an overview of native-speakerism) and instead supposing some other form of English as a Global Language (EGL). Although this model serves most of the users of English, it is clearly missing monolinguals or L1 English users.

One criticism of Yano's idea of what EGL may be is that he implies that some form of simplified or synthetic English is likely to be the future, despite the various failures of such projects in the past (e.g., BASIC English). His description also suggests an ELF-like form of a contact language, which somewhat contradicts the conceptual notion of an acrolect and is more focused on a descriptive framework of strategies of communication. This

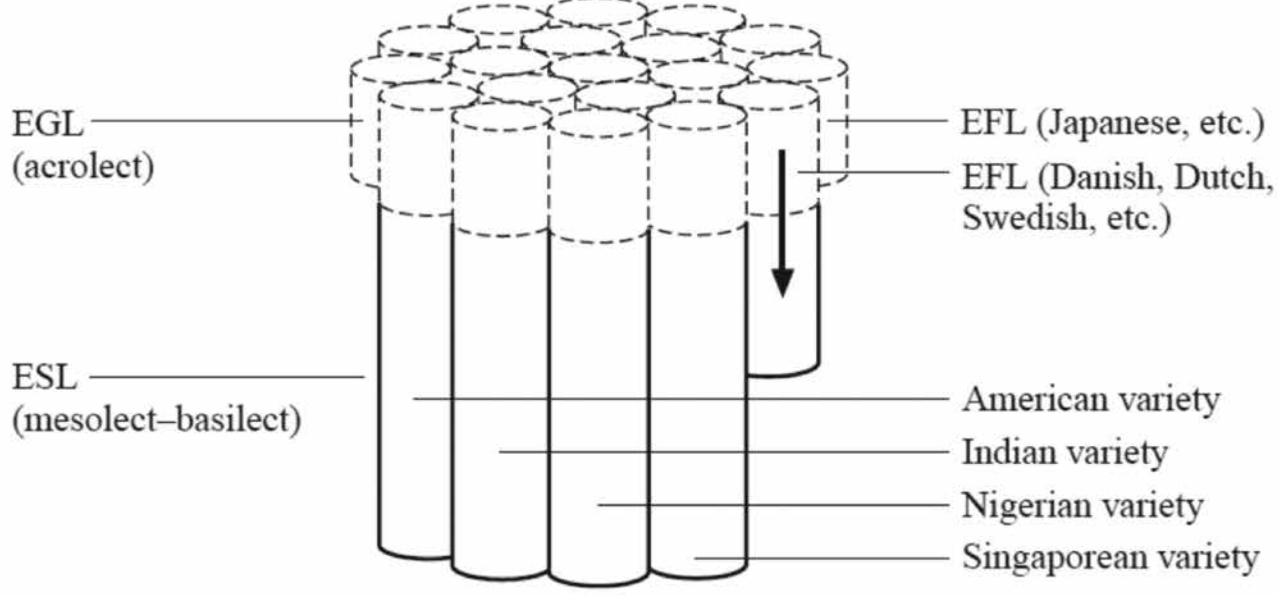

Figure 4 Yano's Cylinder Model (Yano, 2001: 124)

highlights the somewhat contradictory objective of trying to represent the wide range of linguistic variance between WEs while maintaining mutual intelligibility between them.

Pedagogical application

Yano's model moves away from the representation of some 'standard' or 'core' variety of English that learners inevitably seek. Instead, it shows that learners of all backgrounds can improve their linguistic skills through heading towards the acrolect. This model also incorporates similar teachable points previously raised, such as the fact that there is variation within WEs, and presenting reasons as to why this variation is deeper in some compared to others.

Discussion

Through the framework of WEs and the various models presented, I propose three principles of presenting WEs in a language learning class.

Principle 1: Learners should understand that their language is not simply a deviant form of a 'standard'.

Learners should be constantly encouraged to maximise the use of their current linguistic resources in any language learning course. Improving self-confidence is one way this can be promoted through raising awareness of WEs. By understanding that language itself is often as fluid as the process of learning a language, learners may develop more positive perspectives of their own linguistic capabilities and resources.

Principle 2: Learners should be encouraged to explore their identity where it intersects with the target language.

Attitudes towards the target language and its speakers is a key part of the initial stage of motivation, or choice motivation (Dörnyei, 2001). Juxtaposing local environments with the global background of WEs should give learners a better picture of how they are positioned in the world. Building a positive self-concept in the target language is a major component of motivation (Dörnyei, 2009). Providing a richer context through raising awareness and discussing the global use of English, as well as local and more immediate positionings of the self within the context of English globally should encourage a more well-defined or stronger ideal L2-self.

Principle 3: Sociocultural histories and realities of language are valuable resources for learners to learn from, draw parallels to, and to develop an intercultural orientation.

Understanding the evolution of language can be an enjoyable exercise that raises interest through looking at language from a different perspective. Understanding etymology or the production of new language through processes such as loanwords or neologisms might provide insight into the language in a way similar to how understanding derivational morphemes will. Appreciating dialectal variety in language, especially through acknowledging local examples which learners may be well acquainted with, should empower learners with more linguistic resources to draw from and to develop an understanding of the importance of adopting effective communicative strategies. This strategy may also complement typical language exercises such as learning about cognates and false cognates.

Conclusion

The global spread and development of English is a widely studied and researched topic. The concept of WEs is yet another resource to aid language learner development. The modelling of WEs has struggled to aggregate theoretical constructs in a suitable descriptive model. As it stands, each of the models discussed here has a variety of positive and negative points in its representation of WEs. Currently, Yano's model is probably the most visually appropriate, but it is not without its issues. Perhaps a more process-oriented, descriptive model of WEs, similar to Schneider's model, might be a more useful resource in the future, especially for pedagogical application. For now, it is better to make use of the positive aspects of the WE models discussed in this article when developing pedagogical activities and material.

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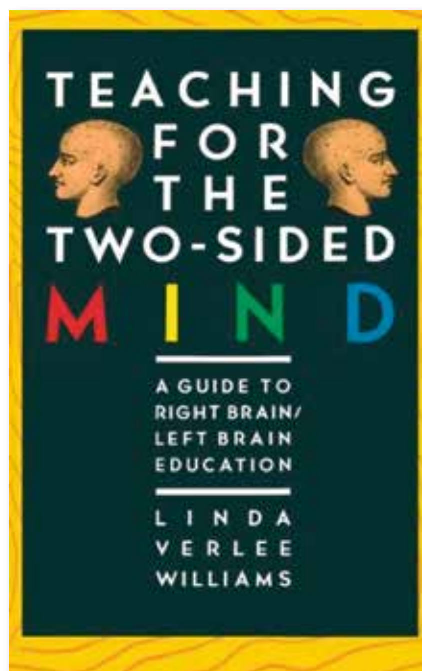
Lok Yong Chia's qualifications include a BSc in Accounting & Finance from the London School of Economics & Political Science, and he is currently pursuing a M.S.Ed. in TESOL at Temple University, Japan. He has two years of teaching experience and teacher training in Japan. His research interests include corpus linguistics, cognitive linguistics, and bilingual education.

The book I always refer to

In the first of a new series, **Richard Gabbrielli** chooses his go-to title.

A Review of *Teaching for the Two-Sided Mind: A Guide to Right Brain/ Left Brain Education* (1983/1986).

Linda Verlee Williams
New York: Simon & Schuster
ISBN: 0-671-62239-0
Reviewed by Richard Gabbrielli



If you take a book with you on a journey … an odd thing happens: the book begins collecting your memories … Yes, books are like flypapers. Memories cling to the printed page better that anything else.

(Cornelia Funke, author of the *Inkheart* trilogy).

When I am designing materials and courses, planning and preparing for classes, there are various books on my shelves that I instinctively reach for to help me. There is, however, one particular book that I naturally gravitate towards, a book that I am always happy to dip into or dive into depending on the task at hand. I welcome it as a good, wise, trusted friend and I have valued it as a steady companion on my eventful, rollercoaster journey through my career in teaching and exploration of learning. The book in question is: *Teaching for the Two-Sided Mind: A Guide to Right Brain/ Left Brain Education* by Linda Verlee Williams. It is a book that ensures I stay focused, grounded and receptive to the creative flow as I pursue the challenge of bringing my classes, courses and learners to life. Each time I turn the pages, I am reminded of past faces and characters in my classroom, the approaches I adopted and the decision-making steps I took when embarking on previous projects. In scope, *Teaching for the Two-Sided Mind: A Guide to Right Brain/Left Brain Education* is about thinking (a metacognitive workout and workbook), the mechanisms and systems in the brain, how we learn, our learning preferences, and how our brain allows us to make sense of the world inside us and around us. From a teaching point of view, a key part is about the educational implications of the different functions of each side of the brain, In practice, it is an applied guidebook about the art of learning and how teachers can approach the craft of nurturing and nourishing it more successfully in the classroom.

About the book

The book is divided into 10 chapters (with a four-page preface, an annotated bibliography and an index):

1. Learning With the Whole Brain

- The Two-Sided Mind and Education

This chapter deals with logical, linear thinking, insight and creative discovery. It examines processing styles and how teachers can balance teaching and learning techniques so as to make sure that the right hemisphere is not neglected at the expense of the left hemisphere.

2. Scientific Theory and Education in Practice

- Differences between the Hemispheres
- A Model of Specialization

- Implications for Education
- Learning Styles and the Hemispheres
- Teaching Techniques for the Right Hemisphere

This chapter discusses verbal and spatial thinking and highlights the communication channels between the two hemispheres. It also sets out a landscape of the topics that are discussed further in subsequent chapters.

3. How do You Think?

- Strategies and Modes of Thinking
- Teaching Students Process Awareness
- Solutions to Exercises

This chapter stresses our awareness of how we solve problems and the various frameworks and strategies we use to do so. Exercises include using visualization to create and manipulate mental images to solve problems.

4. Metaphor

- Advantages of Metaphorical Teaching
- Using Metaphor in the Classroom

This chapter explores how the holistic, metaphorical mode of teaching can encourage learners to make 'connections' and understand the patterns and general principles that give meaning to the learning of factual information.

5. Visual Thinking

- Training Perception
- Graphic Representation
- Visualization

This chapter investigates the role of visual thinking in the classroom and focuses on three aspects: the gathering and interpreting of information which the author calls 'seeing,' the graphic representation of information to clarify thinking processes, and the importance of visualization in order to generate and manipulate visual stimuli.

6. Fantasy

- Experiencing Fantasy
- Observation Fantasies
- Identification Fantasies
- Fantasy as a Basis for Self-Expression
- Evaluating the Products of Fantasy
- Using Fantasy in the Classroom
- Further Applications

This chapter outlines the role of fantasy as a creative way to offer new perspectives and as an opportunity to remember information at a deeper level beyond short-term surface learning. The chapter underscores how relaxation, alertness and a receptiveness to inner imagery are the essential elements in how we experience fantasy.

"In practice, it is an applied guidebook about the art of learning and how teachers can approach the craft of nurturing and nourishing it more successfully in the classroom."

7. Multisensory Learning

- Sensory Learning in the Early Primary Grades
- Sensory-Motor Integration
- Kinesthetic and Tactile Learning
- Kinesthetic Learning in Academic Subjects
- Kinesthetic Perception in Physical Learning
- Smell and Taste
- Nonverbal Auditory Learning (Music)

This chapter looks at our five senses and the ways in which learners utilize them to create, reflect and express human experiences in the classroom. The chapter also talks about the historically Western separation of mind and body which is regarded by some as detrimental to cognitive functioning.

8. Direct Experience

- Laboratory Experiments
- Field Trips
- Real Objects and Primary Source Material
- Simulation
- Role Playing

This chapter proposes an experiential, holistic, direct-interaction approach to learning that stimulates personal involvement in the learning process. Practical classroom examples given range from the introduction of real objects, primary source materials, to simulations, role play, field trips and experiments.

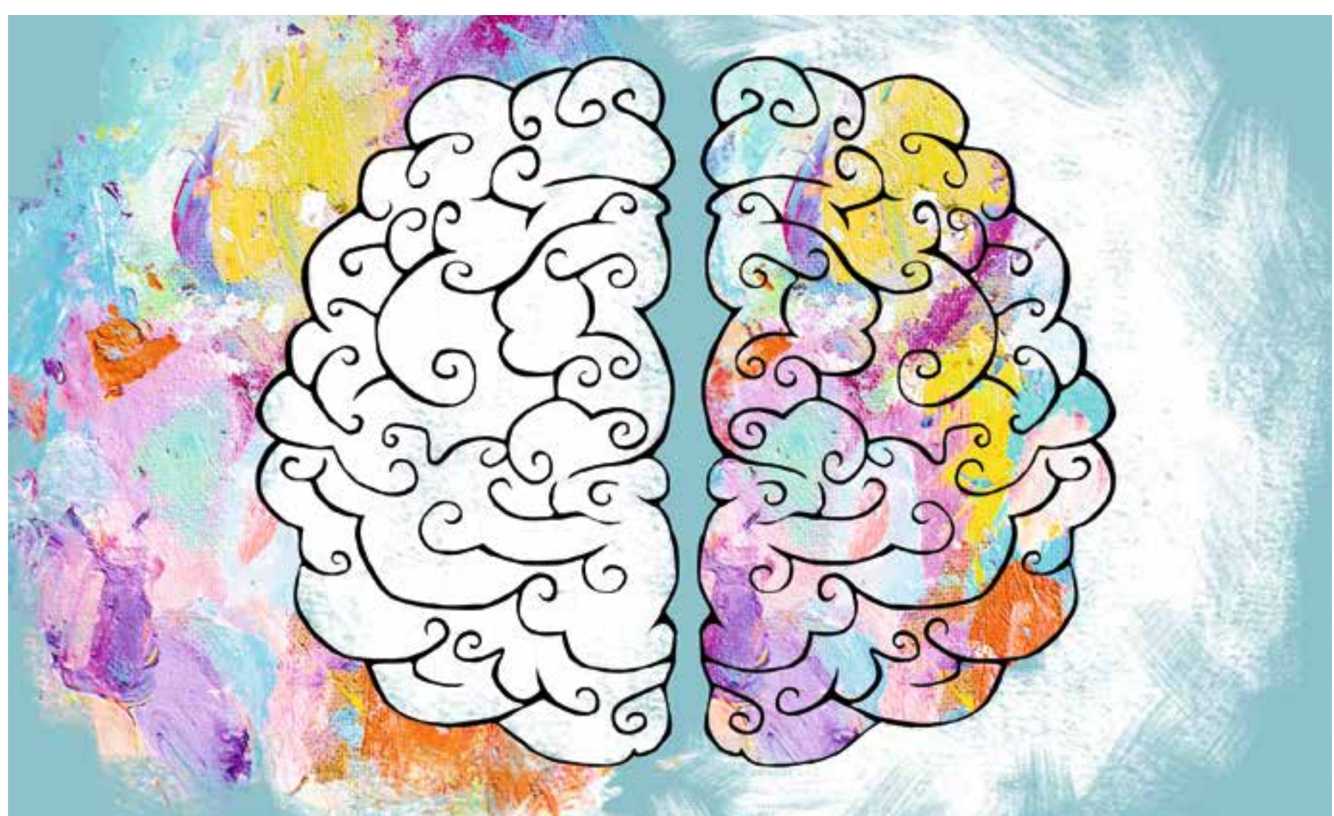
9. How to Start

- Planning for Change
- Starting Now
- Intangibles
- Rediscovering Your Subject
- Personal Growth
- Working Together
- Support Groups

This chapter offers a series of 'pictures' and 'mirrors' to help teachers reflect on their teaching style, thought processes, and the support networks that can make their teaching (more) successful. The thrust of this chapter is the construct of 'rediscovery' and the development of teachers' daily practice.

10. Conclusion

In this concluding chapter, Williams argues that both 'willingness' and



'ability' are the all-important keys necessary to becoming successful learners in the classroom. On the last page, Williams leaves us with something positive and inspiring to think about: "The banquet we spread becomes a potluck feast to which both students and teachers contribute and from which both draw nourishment" (ibid: 196).

Thoughts and reflections

Within the much broader context of the brain-friendly revolution movement advocated by Fletcher (2000) and others, notable whole-brain and humanistic approaches to learning and teaching, and highly influential research into multiple intelligences and learner preferences, *Teaching for the Two-Sided Mind: A Guide to Right Brain/ Left Brain Education* concerns itself with an all-inclusive approach to teaching and learning based on different learning modalities, even though Williams leans towards right-brain learning throughout the book. The book was published in 1983 (reprinted in 1986), and it is now dated as far as the science concerning brain function is concerned. Specifically, neuroscience (and neurolinguistics in particular) has since debunked the polarized right-brain/left-brain learning model (see below) as an oversimplification:

Left Hemisphere	Right Hemisphere
Analysis	Creativity
Logic	Intuition
Language	Imaginaiton
Writing	Personality
Reading	Spatial abilities
Mathematics	Arts
Left Hand	Right Hand

Although Williams compares the left hemisphere of the brain to a 'computer' and the right to a 'kaleidoscope,' she does concede in her book that the two hemispheres do act in a complementary way and that more research would yield a fuller and more comprehensive picture of how the brain works in learning. Of late, the field of neurolinguistics (a term coined in 1971 by Harry Whitaker to bring the fields of neurology and linguistics together to explore how language – especially spoken - is processed, represented and controlled by the brain) has offered new insights into what biological factors make human communication possible, how we process and understand language, and how the brain's 'plasticity' deals with communication problems. In ELT, the application of neurolinguistics (how the limbic system in the brain functions as a semiotic/communication system) offers new pathways to enhance social interaction and behaviour in the classroom and to promote subconscious acquisition – as seen with the emergence of CLIL (Gabbrielli, 2016).

Teaching for the Two-Sided Mind: A Guide to Right Brain/Left Brain Education does indeed stand the test of time well and continues to shine brightly decades later precisely because it was written by a classroom teacher and not a (neuro) scientist. Above all else, it is a book that speaks to teachers about teaching and learning from the perspective of the learner and the learning environment. The message is still a vibrant and relevant one: how do we get learners excited about learning and maximize their learning potential? This is still a valid question if we accept that around

the world, different learning styles (and classroom life baggage, extraneous variables) and educational restrictions (sociocultural, institutional, national, etc.) continue to pose significant challenges to teachers in diverse educational contexts. Therefore, the creative, holistic teaching approach that Williams puts forward (anchored in her own classroom experience) can be viewed as an important reminder to all teachers of their unique place, role and function as educators: how the remit of stimulating and igniting learning, fostering motivation, and providing meaningful and personally successful learning opportunities defines who we are as teachers. Importantly, Williams states in her preface, 'The techniques in this book deal with how material is taught, not what is taught. Therefore, they are applicable to any subject and any grade level' (Williams, 1983: xii). The book is therefore designed to be a flexible, useful resource, professional tool and guide that resonates with anyone invested in the teaching profession.

Teaching for the Two-Sided Mind: A Guide to Right Brain/Left Brain Education is written in a very clear, logical and accessible style, with a highly thought-provoking path paved with golden nuggets of information and facts and dotted with a treasure trove of ideas and thought experiments to keep teachers engaged and on their toes throughout. With a healthy balance of theory and practice, it inspires us to step out of the box and ask those characteristically head-scratching questions about building bridges between teaching and learning.

While each chapter is definitely worth reading for its easy-to-follow narrative, constructive advice and practical exercises, chapters 4 and 6 really stand out for me – the intriguing role of metaphor and fantasy in learning. Metaphor, Williams claims, is about intuition and making connections and, 'is probably the most powerful of the right-hemisphere techniques because it makes explicit the process by which learning occurs' (ibid: 59). Her approach to teaching and learning in this chapter hinges on the overarching premise that learners should make use of what they already know (not tabula rasa) in order to gain insight as opposed to being passively exposed to prescriptive, predetermined and compartmentalized learning conditions promoted in standard learning resources.

"Above all else, it is a book that speaks to teachers about teaching and learning from the perspective of the learner and the learning environment."

On the subject of fantasy, Williams contends that 'Fantasizing is something that everybody does but relatively few people use' (ibid: 116). In this chapter, fantasy is defined as a 'door' to our own inner worlds where our imagination creates its own realities without limitations. She contends that fantasy should be honed as a tool in the classroom (referencing its effectiveness in relation to how Albert Einstein used his flights of fantasy productively to make his various discoveries). Some of the creative activities she offers in this chapter predate the guided-meditation activities now commonly found in various ELT materials and resources for teachers. Significantly, all the teaching activities in this chapter are designed to help learners develop and use imagination as a skill and then help them apply it beyond the classroom walls to situations in real life. In this respect, fantasy, as a tool, can be described as a real-world life-training technique.

To conclude this review, *Teaching for the Two-Sided Mind: A Guide to Right Brain/Left Brain Education* is still a respectable and relevant volume in 2021 and worth its place on any teacher's shelf alongside the teacher-training/teacher-development giants of ELT. I have many fond memories connected with this book and its chapters are indeed just like 'flypapers'. I wholeheartedly recommend it (despite its age and obvious limitations), especially if you are a reflective practitioner looking to validate or rethink your teaching philosophy or seeking to develop learning/teaching resources from different angles and perspectives. Whilst reading, you may well come across activities, exercises and theoretical underpinnings that are already familiar to you (which this book probably helped to popularize back in the 1980s and 1990s). On a final note, Williams' book can be described as one that reflects a personal, authentic, heartfelt classroom narrative stemming from a wealth of experience in the field.

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Richard Gabbrielli has 30 years of teaching experience both in the UK and Japan. He is an associate professor in the Department of International Tourism and Business at Yasuda Women's University in Hiroshima, Japan. He is particularly interested in communication theory and ELT.

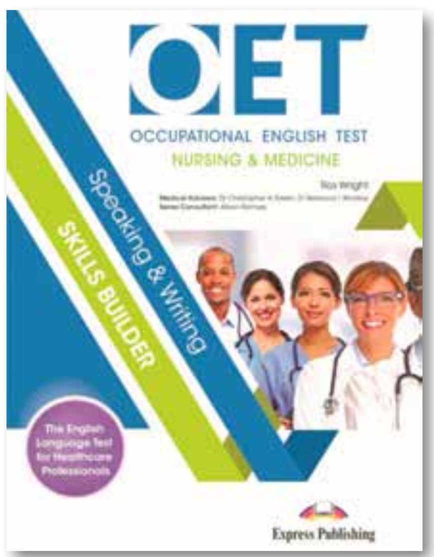
Reviews

OET Speaking & Writing Skills Builder: Nursing & Medicine

Ros Wright

Express Publishing (2020)

See page 88 for details



OET Speaking & Writing Skills Builder: Nursing & Medicine is Express Publishing's new title for candidates preparing for the Occupational English Test (OET) in nursing and medicine. In accordance with the requirements of OET grade B, which is equivalent to CEFR C1, the course is intended for learners who have reached at least a CEFR level B2 of English. Although the book is primarily designed to help candidates prepare for the OET, it is also a valuable resource for both prospective and practising healthcare professionals seeking to embark on and further careers in English-speaking environments.

The course is organised into eight units which gradually familiarise candidates with the format and criteria of the OET speaking and writing sub-tests, beginning with general tasks and moving on to more specific exam tasks and techniques as the book progresses. Although primarily aimed at helping learners to develop OET speaking and writing skills, the book is also a great resource for improving the skills and language required in work-related situations. All thematic units of *OET Speaking & Writing Skills Builder: Nursing & Medicine* focus on a relevant area of professional knowledge and practice, as they are built around topics related to different medical specialities, e.g. cardiology, neurology, endocrinology, and paediatrics. Moreover, all of the units provide learners with plenty of opportunity to practise a range of medical communication scenarios that they are likely to encounter in their professional environments. To this end, a number of communicative tasks, including role-plays which replicate real-life medical interactions, are exploited.

Each unit of *OET Speaking & Writing Skills Builder: Nursing & Medicine* follows a relatively linear sequence and contains two OET Speaking sections which introduce activities for oral interaction and the development of communicative strategies. They also provide useful exam tips and increase learners' awareness of the relevant principles of oral communication in medicine, such as employing a patient-centred approach, demonstrating empathy and understanding the patient's perspective. This is followed by Medical Focus, in which learners are encouraged to both share and expand their knowledge of the content area, as they are introduced to specific medical topics, e.g. cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and depression. Additionally, the Medical Focus component offers vocabulary work in which new items are presented in a meaningful context. Not only does it introduce professional terminology, which is essential within the context of communicating with other healthcare professionals, but it also focuses on patient-oriented language. Thanks to the latter, candidates become familiar with the lexis commonly used by healthcare consumers and are thus prepared to bridge the terminology gap between healthcare professionals and patients. Following the Grammatical Expression and Lexis sections, which draw learners' attention to grammatical structures and vocabulary specific to OET, each unit concludes with OET Writing. In the writing sections learners are introduced to the most common types of medical writing, including case notes, discharge letters and letters of referral and they are offered practice in OET writing tasks. Similar to OET Speaking, the writing sections also provide useful test tips. The units are followed by additional resources, sample role plays and letters, grammar reference, audioscripts, an answer key and a medical acronyms and abbreviations list. The course also includes audio recordings and a digibook access code.

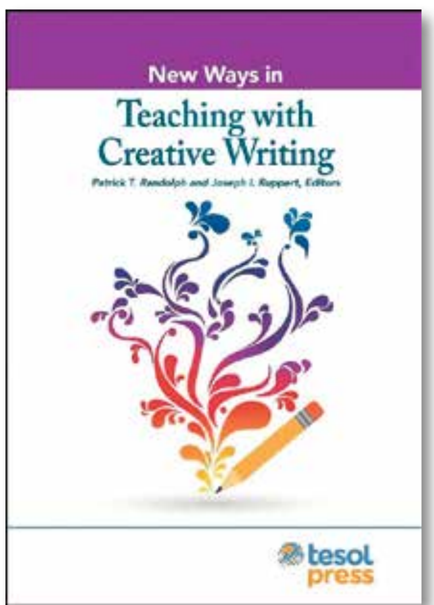
OET Speaking & Writing Skills Builder: Nursing & Medicine is not only a great resource for preparing for the Occupational English Test, but it also provides learners with the vocabulary, language and skills that are required when working in a medical environment. The course prepares students for different types of interactions in healthcare settings both by introducing them to a range of examples of spoken and written English and by providing them with opportunities to practise a number of medical communication scenarios that they are likely to encounter in the workplace. Its careful selection of content and a wealth of speaking and writing activities, which

replicate those in OET as well prepare learners to perform effectively in a variety of healthcare scenarios, make this course a truly valuable title on the medical English landscape. The book can be used either on its own or with the companion volume *OET Reading & Listening Skills Builder.*

Agnieszka Dudzik
Agnieszka Dudzik, PhD, is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Foreign Languages at the Medical University of Bialystok, Poland.

New Ways in Teaching with Creative Writing

Edited by Patrick T. Randolph and Joseph I. Ruppert
TESOL Press (2020)
See page 88 for details



Most English learners don't have many opportunities to write creatively in class. Furthermore, students often view writing as a boring task – something to fulfill a teacher's requirements and be done with. But Patrick T. Randolph and Joseph I. Ruppert, co-editors of the book *New Ways in Teaching with Creative Writing*, published by TESOL Press, want to change that.

The book opens with an introduction that explains the importance of using creative writing in the English language classroom. Many teachers focus on teaching academic writing but neglect creative writing. Randolph and Ruppert argue that creative writing should have a prominent place in the curriculum, too. Academic writing can often feel forced and formulaic, whereas creative writing requires students to imagine, to reflect on their own personal experiences, and to experiment with new writing techniques. Through creative writing, students can have fun in class, improve their writing abilities, and increase their motivation to learn and write more.

The book contains over 95 different ideas for how to engage students in writing creatively. At the beginning of each activity description, the editors helpfully list the student level appropriate for the activity and the approximate amount of time the activity will take, which make it easy to quickly find appropriate activities for class.

The creative writing activity ideas are divided into four sections: poetry activities, prose activities, dialogue activities, and creative writing projects. I was happy to see the large number of poetry activities because poetry writing is often neglected in classes. Many students rarely write poetry and usually think of it as something difficult, often assuming that poetry needs to rhyme or be written in esoteric language on a deeply profound topic. But the book offers many different activity ideas to get students writing poetry. Several of the ideas can even be used with lower-level students. For example, in the 'Visual Verse' poems, students simply use adjectives to describe a season of the year. The writing is simple, but it's an opportunity for students to think creatively and express their own unique ideas.

One of my favorite prose activities in the book is 'Emoji Stories'. Students are presented with several emojis and must create a story that matches them. When I tried it with my students, they enjoyed interpreting the emojis and imagining the story they represented. It was fun for us to hear the varied stories that students came up with, all using the same emojis as a prompt.

A few of the activities in the book are well-known creative writing exercises, but many are new, which means the book can be appreciated by both new and seasoned teachers.

And although the book focuses on creative writing, some of the activities can help prepare students for academic writing, too. The 'Paraphrase Telephone Game' is a fun way to have students practice paraphrasing their classmates' ideas, which can help them understand how to paraphrase in academic writing, too.

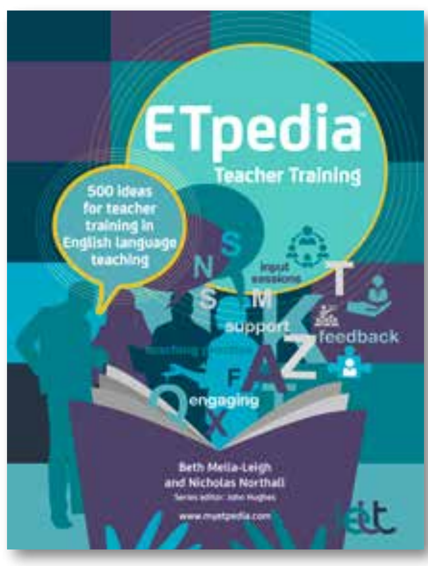
The activities can act as a supplement to any curriculum. With so many activity ideas, teachers can easily pick and choose what to use, deciding whether to make creative writing a major component of their class or just something to sprinkle in occasionally.

Randolph and Ruppert make a convincing argument about the importance of creative writing, and then they give us the tools to use it in class. With the long, varied list of activities, I won't run out of ideas anytime soon.

Allison Lewis
Allison Lewis is an adult ESL instructor in Chicago, Illinois, USA. She also has experience in curriculum design and materials writing. She is the author of My Fake Boyfriend, a graded reader for English learners.

ETpedia Teacher Training: 500 ideas for Teacher Training in English

Beth Mella-Leigh and Nicholas Northall
Pavilion Publishing and Media Ltd (2020)
See page 88 for details



I don't often fall in love with books at first glance, but I have to admit I was pretty close to it when I opened my kindle version of *ETpedia Teacher Training: 500 ideas for Teacher Training in English*. The book is comprised of 8 sections and a total of 50 units. Each 'unit' contains 10 ideas – ways of doing things, tips, questions to ask yourself, considerations, benefit, tasks or concerns, hence the title. The book is organized in such a way that you can go directly to the 'unit' you need inspiration from, whether you are a teacher looking for guidance on how to become a teacher trainer or an experienced trainer looking for a new idea for today's feedback session, or you need a reminder of activities you have lost along the way, though I felt it was predominantly meant for new trainers.

Each of the 8 sections are practical. Section one, 'Getting started', touches on how to move from teaching to training to how to get your first training course started. This is followed by sections on 'Input sessions', 'Teaching practice and lesson planning', 'Lesson observation', 'The feedback stage' and 'Assignments and written tasks'. As a CELTA Tutor and Assessor, I found each of these sections practical and full of golden nuggets for the novice trainer. But there were also many useful tidbits for more experienced teachers and trainers.

In *Unit 14: 10 activities for input sessions on teaching language*, there are a variety of means for introducing and conveying meaning in teaching target language. Everything from ranking to noticing the features of language to providing learners with jumbled texts – all very useful.

Unit 17: 10 tasks for reflection and consolidation, I liked the variety of task types that were suggested: everything from ranking your top three ideas you gleaned from an input session to trainees creating their own action points to work on. The eighth tip was about giving the trainees on a course a short quiz based on the input session's content. – another nice touch.

In *Unit 39: 10 ways to mark written tasks*, for example, the authors remind us to norm and double mark assignments, especially those that are marked and carry marks towards a pass or fail grade. This is something we do in the department where I work for every written assignment and exam. While time consuming, it does ensure a standardized marking system which ensures some level of objectivity.

Unit 42: 10 ideas for working with varied cohorts was one of the units which held the most interest for me since I've recently volunteered to do workshops for different departments in our college. This week coming will be about how different ways of learning can also affect how we interact with colleagues. While I had planned on sending out a quick questionnaire to everyone the day before the session, it was also good to be reminded to provide some post-session tasks for the participants as a reflection tool.

As our EFL Program is also doing blended learning at the moment and I am doing CELTA input sessions and assessments online, *Unit 43: 10 considerations for online and blended teacher training* was the second most relevant unit for my context. The third point in this unit was to provide students with a checklist of what equipment etc. they will need for the course. Providing this in advance of the course ensures everyone comes prepared, so time is not wasted. It would further serve you to provide the trainees with a basic 'how to' sheet to be able to manoeuvre around whatever platform you have opted to use for your course. Probably the most important tip of all was about time management. Most of us have likely experienced onscreen fatigue in the last 12 months since Covid-19 took our planet by storm, so being able to manage your time, organize times to collaborate with colleague on other continents, and work both synchronously and asynchronously are crucial for online courses to be effective.

Finally, as the coordinator of a busy program, *Unit 45: 10 ideas for mentoring*, was also of interest to me. We always assign a mentor to new teachers to provide them with support and we attempt to put new instructors with a member of the same teaching team to ensure their questions can be answered, not only about what platform we are using and how our grading works, but also about how that particular course and teaching team is organized. I liked how this unit focused on being open and empathetic, and not just on the tasks one might carry out as a mentor.

The final unit was all those pesky 'What if?' questions that you worry about when you are first becoming a trainer …. *What if they don't like me? … What if I don't mark them accurately and they complain? … What if someone asks me for a reference letter that I don't want to provide them with?* The authors offer practical advice that would be comforting on a first course.

Finally, in the appendices, the authors provided photocopiable samples of weekly plans, plagiarism declarations and agreement forms and activities like the infamous 'Find someone who …' . They have also included ready-made checklists for trainers and participants. I thought the one on page 278, 'Reading Subskills', was particularly useful.

Truly, for a new CELTA tutor or teacher trainer in a different context, this book will be a 'go-to' resource for many years to come. I'm delighted to have had the opportunity to review it and look forward to adding it to my resource list for new trainers!

Sandee Thompson
Sandee is currently the EFL Coordinator at CNAQ in Qatar as well as a CELTA tutor and assessor for Cambridge.

Title	Page	Author	Publisher	ISBN
OET Speaking & Writing Skills Builder: Nursing & Medicine	86	Ros Wright	Express Publishing (2020)	978-1471596-988
New Ways in Teaching with Creative Writing	87	Edited by Patrick T. Randolph and Joseph I. Ruppert	TESOL Press (2020)	978-1942799-863
ETpedia Teacher Training: 500 ideas for Teacher Training in English	87	Beth Mella-Leigh and Nicholas Northall	Pavilion Publishing and Media Ltd (2020)	978-1913414-160

ETpedia™

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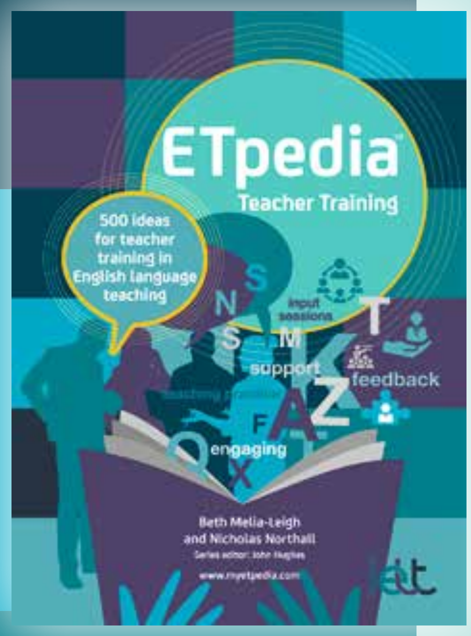
500 ideas for teacher training in English language teaching



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