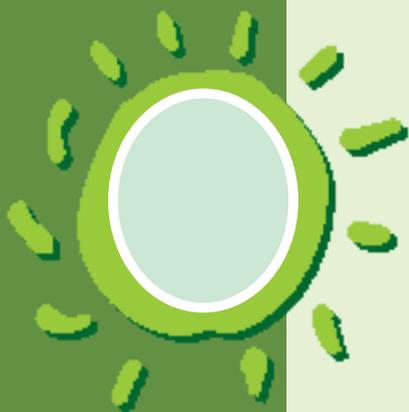


ENGLISH TEACHING *professional*

Issue 58
September
2008

The Leading Practical Magazine For English Language Teachers Worldwide



Dealing with diversity

Paola Vettorel and Alan Maley

I think, therefore I learn

Tessa Woodward

In private

Alan Marsh

Poised for learning

Carla Wilson



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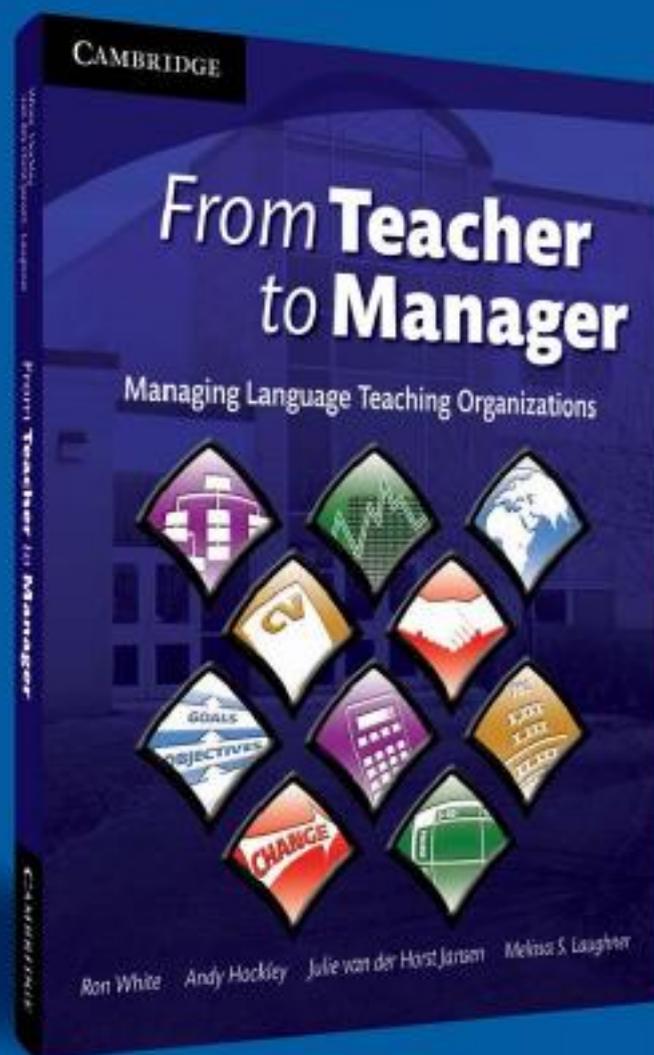
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Editorial

The board, as Glenda Demes da Cruz explains, was invented in the 19th century by a young maths teacher with an uncontrollable urge to write on his classroom walls. It is certainly one of the oldest pieces of equipment that survives to the present day in classrooms all over the world, whether in its old-style manifestation as a chalk-covered blackboard or as a modern interactive whiteboard, putting the endless possibilities of a computer at the teacher's fingertips. Hailed by Rose Senior in her regular column as the teacher's best friend, the board, perhaps more than any other item, shows us that there is room for the survival of the old and trusted alongside the new and exciting.

The same could be said of many things in the world of ELT. New ideas come and go, or come and stay, finding a place alongside old ideas and techniques. Russell Stannard surfs the internet to find material for his classes, Annette Margolis finds inspiration on the television, Jamie Keddie takes digital photos of his students and Jon Marks mirrors the modern fashion

for speed dating in a classroom activity. But Blanka Klimová, while incorporating the new, insists on the value of the old. The resulting 'blended learning' exemplifies the absorbent nature of our profession – its ability to incorporate new ideas and technology without entirely discarding the old ones.

This is also true of the English language itself. The possibility of new varieties of English, the notion of English as an International Language or English as a Lingua Franca are hotly debated around the world, and yet, as Alan Maley points out in conversation with Paola Vettorel, tolerance of infinite variety in language should not mean abandonment of old standards.



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Publisher: Sarah Harkness

Published by: Keyways Publishing Ltd,
PO Box 100, Chichester, West Sussex, PO18 8HD

© 2008, Keyways Publishing Ltd

ISSN 1362-5276

Subscriptions: Keyways Publishing Ltd,
PO Box 100, Chichester, West Sussex, PO18 8HD

Printed by: Matrix Print Consultants Ltd,
Rothwell, Northants, NN14 6JG Tel: 01536 713811

Número de Commission Paritaire: 1004 U 82181.
Prix à l'unité = EUR14.75; à l'abonnement (6 numéros) = EUR59.
Directeur de la Publication: Sarah Harkness

Cover photo: © iStockphoto.com / iofoto

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Dealing with diversity

Paola Vettorel
interviews **Alan Maley**
on varieties of English.

This interview followed the *GlobEng International Conference on Global English*, held at the University of Verona, Italy, in February 2008.

Alan Maley *Before I address the questions below, I would like to make a few things clear.*

All these questions circle around the major issue of how teachers in their day-to-day work can deal simultaneously with teaching a standard variety of English to satisfy curricular and examination requirements within an educational bureaucracy, while also preparing their students in some measure for the bewildering variety of English usage they will certainly encounter in the outside world. There is no simple answer to that question, no magic formula! I would be fooling myself as well as you if I suggested that things were otherwise.

One key issue is the limited amount of exposure to English which students receive in classrooms. I shall suggest that we need to expand the opportunities and incentives for students to encounter and engage with English outside the classroom. That is, after all, where most of us learn what is useful to us in the real world. Given the massive expansion of

multi-media and electronic communication, getting an education outside school is now a far easier task than it once was.

I must make it clear that I do not subscribe to the notion that ELF¹ is a variety of English. What I do believe is that we are all faced with a multitude of unpredictable contexts in which English is being used internationally. This will include all manner of combinations of human subjects: nativised users (such as Indian, Nigerian or Malaysian speakers), non-native-speaker users from the 'expanding circle'², and native speakers from any of the many varieties in use. Any of these users may encounter any others. It is the way they handle the interaction which is of primary concern (the process), which is crucial to the success or otherwise of the encounter, rather than some hypothetical new ELF variety (a product).

Paola Vettorel Despite growing research interest, there is still resistance to the acceptance of ELF, developing particularly in 'expanding circle' countries. Intelligibility in communication among non-native speakers seems to be governed more by a focus on mutual communication rather than adherence to 'standard English' norms.

We are all faced with a multitude of unpredictable contexts in which English is being used internationally

AM *Here I would interject that such interactions are not confined to non-native speakers. Native speakers, whether they are communicating with fellow native speakers or with anyone else, are also focusing on mutual comprehension, rather than on a standard norm.*

PV As you pointed out during the conference, ELF seems to be more a context of use than a concept in itself – or maybe a plurality of contexts of use where diversities and similarities

interweave to allow communication through a multifaceted medium.

This should first of all promote an attitude of tolerance: tolerance for the different varieties of English which have developed and are developing around the world, thus moving away from the concept of one best, standard variety, but also tolerance in terms of communication for those aspects which are still considered as 'linguistic sins' for learners, despite the fact that they are, according to Barbara Seidlhofer and Jennifer Jenkins, developing as characteristics of ELF.

AM *I dispute the idea that those aspects are somehow becoming characteristic of an ELF variety. However, this does not mean that we should not develop tolerance for a wide range of English usage: whether we are referring to geographical, social or generational differences. In fact, we have no option but to exercise tolerance because variety is a fact of life in a globalised world.*

PV This would, in the first place, mean exposing learners to different varieties of English, which are already being introduced in teaching materials, albeit slowly, but also valuing and developing the communication strategies and accommodation skills which play such an important part in effective communication. How do you see this possible in terms of teaching? How do we reconcile integrating these things with the need to have a model to refer to?

AM *As I pointed out at the outset, teachers are faced with an impossible task. They are expected to square the circle. With limited time, institutional constraints of syllabus and examinations, they are additionally expected to raise awareness of the reality of the variability which their students will face, if ever they have to use English internationally. The best they can do, in my opinion, is to make students aware that, although they are learning a 'standard' variety of English, they will inevitably meet many other varieties in the outside world. In practical terms, this may mean exposing them to some of these varieties in comprehension mode, making it clear that they are not learning to produce such varieties. It may also mean introducing some strategies for dealing with situations where comprehension is not immediately transparent. For example,*

some instruction in repair and accommodation strategies ('Could you say that again, please?', 'Do you mean ...?', 'No, what I meant was ...', etc, and in paraphrasing utterances) would be highly valuable and not that difficult to introduce.

PV Promoting tolerance would, in the first place, mean fostering teachers', and therefore also students', awareness of the fact that it is *Englishes* in the plural we should be talking about – so in a way starting to spread the news that the models of reference cannot any longer be only British or American. However, there still seems to be little evidence of this in the ELT world, due in part to the often anglocentric vision portrayed in teacher training and classroom materials. A step in this direction would be to include in these materials models of the language spoken by competent non-native speakers. Particularly with adult learners, listening materials which include non-native models often prove much more intelligible to learners, thus providing also a degree of reassurance that learning is possible.

Do you think taking steps in this direction could lead to an increased tolerance for diversity, and promotion of communication skills and strategies in ELF?

We have no option but to exercise tolerance because variety is a fact of life in a globalised world

AM *I am sure it would. One thing that stands in the way of this, however, are the vested interests and ingrained opinions of both institutions and some of their older and more traditional servants: the teachers themselves. There is a big job of re-education to be done among teachers. This is a major teacher development issue. We should never lose sight of the fact that teachers have invested heavily in terms of time, effort and self-esteem in acquiring a variety of English which is as close to a standard variety as they can*

We also have the responsibility for trying to develop a sense of appropriacy through our classroom teaching

manage. To acknowledge the ubiquity of variability flies in the face of all their previous experience. This is why I would in no way disparage the efforts of teachers to acquire a standard variety. In fact, we should continue to encourage it. But at the same time, teachers need to acknowledge the infinite variation in the language they are teaching.

PV Students already encounter different varieties of English outside the classroom (in videogames, songs, MTV, the web, YouTube, etc). ELF is often already a reality for them – probably much more so for them than for older generations, including teachers. For them, as Herbert Puchta puts it, often 'sitting in a class is like being in the car with your parents on a long road trip without your CD-player'. Should we not take this into account, exploiting the experiences learners as users already have of the English language by:

- raising their consciousness of different usages (where ELF is one of the choices on offer)?
- using their local, community and pop culture as a starting point to develop cultural and intercultural awareness?

AM *As I mentioned at the outset, students will learn far more outside the classroom than in it. It is inevitable that they will do so anyway. Through popular songs, rap, email and the rest, they will acquire aspects of English we have no way of teaching in the classroom. They are already primed and motivated to do this. Our role is to encourage, rather than to discourage it. But we also have the responsibility for trying to develop a sense of appropriacy through our classroom teaching. Anything goes, but not all the time and in every situation. We have to try to help them navigate the troubled waters of convention.*

Dealing with diversity

PV Fostering attitudes of tolerance needs to be considered not only in strictly linguistic terms, but also as regards cultural materials. We need to raise awareness, in both teachers and students, of the existence of a larger world. At times even the inclusion of Australia and New Zealand in lessons on culture still seems to be regarded as exotic. As you pointed out, it is true that teachers teach what they know, but this may result at times in a focus on a rather monolithic version of English which conforms to a traditional view, rather than on what is actually happening in the use of ELF.

Would you agree?

We can choose to embrace or to stigmatise variety, but we cannot deny its existence

AM I do indeed agree with you. One way of doing this is to focus on texts written in English from non-metropolitan regions. Whether in Europe, Africa, Latin America or Asia, there is now such a wonderful and exuberant literature in English that we would be foolish not to tap into it. Books (and the films they give rise to) such as Samuel Seldon's 'Lonely Londoners', highlight the immigrant condition, as do novels such as Timothy Mo's 'Sour Sweet' (also a film). Poets such as Benjamin Zephaniah and John Agard often write about the language as well as the condition of immigrant communities. In countries where there is already a flourishing literature in English – India, Malaysia, Singapore, West Africa, the Philippines – it would be madness not to use this resource. Perhaps, though, we need to distinguish between

using such texts in the European situation, where they would open up horizons for students previously conditioned to think of English literature as consisting of the traditional canon, and their use in their countries of origin, to give a sense of pride and identity to students from those countries. During the conference, I mentioned a small-scale creative-writing project I am involved with, which is designed precisely to foster this kind of identity and confidence. Since 2003, a small group of teacher-writers from some ten Asian countries have met in a different Asian country once a year to write poems and stories in English designed to be used with students in Asia. The books (seven volumes in all) have been published by Pearson Malaysia. This is just one way to foster a personal voice for expressing local cultural identities through the medium of English. Teacher development projects of this kind should certainly be encouraged.

PV Students' pop cultures, their experiences of the language outside school, could be a starting point, as a means of inclusion and of learning, using and experiencing the language in connection with its actual use. Could ELF play a major role in fostering and developing different visions of culture and expression of identities?

AM I believe that English is increasingly being used as one among several modes of self-expression. In a global society characterised by hybridity, we must expect a variety of hybrid forms of self-expression. We can choose to embrace or to stigmatise such variety, but we cannot deny its existence.

Having said that, the classroom is not the ideal location for developing desirable kinds of attitude and action in relation to variation in English. The time allocated to English classes is not adequate even to acquire a standard variety of English, let alone to unpack fully the reality of variation in the outside world. And teachers are under pressure to deliver results in the form of examination grades, which militate against the kind of flexibility we would ideally like to see.

Given these constraints, the role of English language teachers in institutional settings (state schools and universities) should be to teach something close to a standard variety. At the same time, they should do everything they can to draw attention to the real diversity 'out there',

which can be accessed independently by students through extensive reading, the internet, film and exposure to the range of accents now common on international news channels. There is no way we can **teach** diversity, the students need some basis from which they can confidently reach out to it. But we can teach **how to deal with** diversity, through developing a tolerance for difference and a positive attitude to accommodation. And that will be the key to survival in the world outside the classroom. **ETP**

1 English as a lingua franca (ELF) The use of English as a medium of communication by speakers for whom it is not a first language.

2 Expanding circle A reference to Braj Kachru's model which divided English speakers into three circles, an inner circle (speakers from traditional anglophone countries such as the UK, the USA, Ireland, New Zealand, etc), an outer circle (speakers from countries where English is not the official language but is important for historical reasons and plays a part in the nation's institutions, such as India, Nigeria, Malaysia) and an expanding circle (speakers in those countries where English plays no historical or official role but where it is widely used as a foreign language or lingua franca, such as Japan, China, Russia, etc).

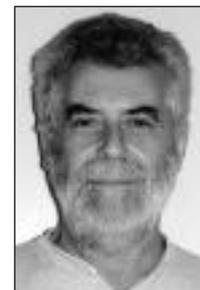
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Differentiation 1

Doug Evans looks at ways of meeting the needs of a wide variety of students.

I know you can get it. We just have to find out how.

ELT teachers typically are accustomed to being creative and flexible in their approaches to teaching. Owing to the strikingly broad range of students encountered, a hallmark of ELT teaching is willingness by teachers to adapt their lessons to the specific needs of their ever-changing student compositions. As a result, when introduced to the concept of differentiation in the educational context, ELT teachers often find immediate common ground and discover that it already matches their teaching sensibilities. Moreover, teachers will often see that they are already structuring lessons and facilitating outcomes that directly match the precepts of what is considered effective differentiation. However, to some, differentiation can seem to be just another educational buzzword that has no real value in and of itself. It is for this reason that this article, divided into two parts, will answer questions about the principles of what constitutes effective differentiation and then provide practical differentiation strategies for the ELT teacher.

What is differentiation?

Differentiation is an ongoing process designed in a specific way to provide students of differing subject backgrounds, topic interests and skill levels with a variety of starting points, ending points, classroom tasks and testing options. The intention is for these options to provide students with the most attuned and relevant classroom environment possible. In other words, within a class of differing abilities, motivations and background knowledge of the target topic or outcome, a teacher who differentiates skilfully can work with several different groups in a way that is relevant, engaging and approachable.

What are the principles?

Although it varies widely in scope and depth of possibilities, there are three fundamental building blocks to effective differentiation: *Assessment*, *Task worthiness* and *Frequent student interaction*.

Assessment

A well-differentiated class will be assessed before, during and after a unit of teaching. Pre-assessing gives teachers the necessary information to group students effectively and to gauge the necessity of altering class targets and goals. When teachers start a new unit, they know exactly where they want the minimum level of the students to be by the end of the unit, but before beginning the first lesson, they give them a mini-assessment to determine the level of mastery the students already have of the topic and targeted outcomes. This assessment might include a range of tasks, from simple vocabulary identification (*What is this a picture of?*), through sentence unmixing (*don't I know I if should the steak order or chicken the*), to the generation of sophisticated language structures (*The truth is that I have (been) here only once*).

Once the teacher has assembled and analysed the data gathered, different tasks can be assigned and starting points for the various levels in the class determined as needed. This assessment might contain questions to gauge student interest in the topic and in options that the teacher might be considering for the upcoming unit. That, combined with some inquiries into the students' preferred learning styles, is often enough to tip the scales of students who are 'on the fence' about a particular unit or even an entire subject. The better a teacher knows a group of students, the less necessary these two question types become. However, this kind of student input is

usually consistently effective, regardless of whether it is sought at the start or the end of a school year. This approach provides students with a certain amount of empowerment and the teacher with a deeper understanding of the students.

Ongoing assessment typically comes at one or more times during the course of a unit of teaching and is designed primarily to help the teacher determine the effectiveness of the instruction. It may be used to help determine students' grades, but this is not its main purpose. This assessment may come in the form of a quiz, self-reflection, direct questioning or some other task. The teacher then uses this information to decide if there is a need to adapt or adjust the activities for the class or for individual students.

Assessment at the end of a unit of teaching is not just a way of *measuring* understanding. It can also be a means to *enhance* understanding. If the results of an assessment at the end of a unit show that certain students have not sufficiently mastered the information, a teacher proficient in differentiation will use the results of the assessment to provide additional learning opportunities for the areas still in need of improvement, particularly if those areas are critical to subsequent information.

Task worthiness

Teachers may encounter students who consistently perform either below or above average in the target skills. Being required to perform at an average level is not advantageous to either of these types of students, and may, in fact, damage their motivation to strive to perform at their best. If a student can quickly understand and solve certain maths problems with very little effort, then there is little reason to require this student to continue to do a pageful of problems of this sort. It becomes a menial task or 'busy work' – in other

words, the task is not worthy of the student and is just set to keep them occupied. A well-differentiated class might have this student doing more sophisticated tasks of a similar type.

Similarly, it serves no purpose in the eyes of the students to be asked to perform tasks that are too difficult for them. They know they can't complete these tasks well, if at all, which can lead to doubts about their own worthiness as students and as people. Instead, effective differentiation gives the students tasks that are appropriate for their background, interests and skills, while still meeting targets and outcomes.

Frequent student interaction

Teachers who differentiate effectively earmark substantial time in their lessons for both teacher–student and student–student interaction. By frequently interacting with the students, a teacher can more effectively monitor student progress and scaffold skills and outcomes. The teacher rotates from student to student, pair to pair, group to group, depending on need. Just as critical is student–student interaction. This provides valuable time for inter-student support, communication and practice. Students should have frequent interaction with a variety of other students for a variety of purposes.

Meeting students' needs

Teachers can find it challenging to work with both struggling and advanced learners, particularly when they are in the same class. Teachers who differentiate skilfully keep the following ideas and strategies in mind in order to help prevent these challenges from becoming too involved and costly in terms of time and energy.

For struggling learners

- Be conscious that they might be anxious about the given task, and give extra attention to relieve potential anxiety which may interfere with classroom progress.
- Look for and note the positives.
- Be sure that tasks are relevant and engaging.
- Develop strategies for helping students tackle higher-order tasks, such as breaking the assignment into smaller parts or using visual aids as needed.

- Have different plans of action with varying levels of sophistication ready for students to use and choose from when encountering a potentially difficult situation.

For advanced learners

- Be conscious that students might find some tasks unchallenging and thus boring. Design sophisticated lessons specifically to combat this potential boredom.
- Be sure that tasks are relevant and engaging.
- Develop lessons that push the students to just beyond their comfort level.
- Encourage student choice in setting advanced goals and criteria.
- Provide advanced materials on a class topic or theme.
- Exempt students from practising pre-mastered skills.
- Provide learning opportunities with less concrete outcomes.

A typical differentiated class

Teachers starting out in differentiation can be confused as to whether they are doing it 'right'. As in most areas of education, there is no one correct way, but a typical way of working might be as follows:

Pre-assess students at the outset of the year

- Determine and understand students' interests, preferred ways of learning and their fundamental skills.
- Use quick comprehension, spelling and writing checks.

Identify underlying concepts

- Determine what all the students are expected to understand.
- Clarify the difference between concepts and the contents needed to develop those concepts.

Pre-assess at the start of each unit of teaching

- Evaluate what the students know and understand, and their abilities.
- Take into account learning styles and multiple intelligences.
- Use this information to adapt lesson outcomes.

Meet with small groups within the class

- Make small teacher-led groups a matter of routine as this can be good

for hearing students lost in the larger group.

- Re-teach those who are struggling.
- Extend learning for those who already know the content.

Use multiple presentation/teaching modes

- Move out of your comfort zone.
- Plan with the intent of varying your approach.
- Allow for differentiated participation based on a student's skill level.

Scaffold reading success

- Pre-teach essential vocabulary, for example by posting it on the wall and referring to it as the unit progresses.
- Verbalise the critical thinking process.
- Use context cues, captions, tables, personal connections, educated guesses, etc.
- Highlight texts. This can be done individually or in small groups and assists students who struggle to cope with whole chapters. Mark critical text points.
- List internet sites on the same topic but at different reading and complexity levels. Find sites in the languages of the students in the class.
- Read aloud to the students, putting them in groups with similar needs. This can help with sounding out or making sense of a text.

Differentiate homework

- This helps avoid 'busy work' for those who have already mastered the content.
- It can be an opportunity to work backwards to master missing skills or content.

Encourage students to learn and express mastery in varied ways

- Allow for student choice.

Differentiation-specific assessment

Assessment in differentiated classes may take the traditional forms found in quizzes and end-of-unit tests, but additionally there will be critical ongoing assessments throughout a unit of teaching. Here are four samples of assessments. The first two (A and B) could be done at the start of the year. C could be presented at the start of the year or at the beginning of a unit. The last sample, D, uses fast, low-cost markers to help students and teachers evaluate student progress within a unit.

Differentiation 1

A About me

What interests me:

- 1
- 2
- 3

In my free time I like to _____.

At school, I prefer to study:
by myself.
with a partner.
in a small group.
in a big group.

I learn best when _____.

It's hard to learn when _____.

My favourite subject is _____.

My best subject is _____.

I would describe myself as a _____,
_____ and _____ person.

My favourite school memory is _____.

The best teacher I ever had was good because
_____.

It is important for my teachers to know that I
_____.

I study best when it is quiet. T/F

I am able to focus on my work when others are being loud. T/F

I like to work at a table or desk. T/F

I like to work in my bedroom. T/F

I try hard at school for myself. T/F

I try hard at school for my parents. T/F

I complete my homework as well as I can. T/F

Sometimes I do not finish homework because:

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| a) it is boring. | d) it is too easy. |
| b) I get frustrated. | e) I don't like the subject. |
| c) I don't like the teacher. | |

With homework, I prefer for the teacher to tell me what to do and how to do it. T/F

With homework, I prefer to have flexibility to do what I want. T/F

I usually finish assignments ahead of the deadline. T/F

I learn better by doing. T/F

I learn better by listening. T/F

I learn better by sitting. T/F

I learn better by moving. T/F

B Foreign cultures

These are the English-speaking countries we will be studying in the first semester. Which country are you most interested in or which sounds the most interesting?

USA UK Australia New Zealand Canada

C Phrasal verbs

- 1 Which of the following is a phrasal verb?
a) find out b) look before you leap c) have been going
- 2 Where is the best place to put *it* in the following sentence?
I can't ___ figure ___ out ___.
- 3 Which of the following phrasal verbs are inseparable?
a) add up b) get around c) burn down
- 4 Correct the following sentence:
She started to catch on the science lesson.
- 5 Fill in the blank with the best word from the list.
The boy fell _____ the stairs.
a) away b) next c) down

D Check yourself!

point by point

What's the difference between a haiku and a limerick?

daily

Three things the class learnt today ...

One question I still have is ...

by concept

Why do we need to have good eye contact when giving a speech?



In the second part of this article, I will discuss how not to confuse differentiation with accommodation, and provide examples as to how one might creatively structure certain differentiated tasks and outcomes. 

Costa, A *Activating & Engaging Habits of Mind* ACSD 2000

Tomlinson, C 'Differentiating instruction – why bother?' *Middle Ground* 9(1) 2005

Tomlinson, C *How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed-Ability Classrooms* ACSD 2001

Cummings, C *Managing to Teach* Teaching Inc 1996

Eaton, V 'Differentiated Instruction' www.quasar.ualberta.ca 1996



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Resuscitating reading

Rosalind Southward
wonders if we neglect to
teach reading skills in exam
classes.

Admittedly, the Cambridge ESOL FCE reading paper is an exam which students cannot study for outright. There are no definitive vocabulary lists to learn, no grammar structures which we can say will definitely appear. It seems there is nothing concrete that we can tell FCE students to study. However, should this mean that we ignore this paper completely in favour of spending time on the more challenging use of English or writing papers? I am increasingly inclined to say no, and feel that there is a wealth of techniques and skills which we can finely tune to help students maximise their potential in the reading exam.

Although this article focuses on the FCE exam, the ideas I suggest will be equally relevant to students at lower levels. A greater focus on skills work from the beginning of a student's learning career provides the foundations which will facilitate their progress later on.

Why bother with reading skills?

Many students in Europe want or need to pass the FCE exam in order to increase their education or employment opportunities in the future. Similarly, FCE is a stepping stone to higher-level exams such as CAE or Proficiency. It is clear that there is a vast difference in the linguistic challenges presented at FCE and CAE, and in my experience, even strong students initially struggle with the CAE reading paper. The sheer amount of text that they are faced with is a daunting prospect, added to the fact that the level is academically more

challenging than anything they are likely to have encountered previously. By equipping students with better reading skills at FCE level, we can provide them with a better bridge to CAE. At the same time, we are also helping them to develop vital techniques which can be utilised when reading in their first language.

How to teach reading?

My students read too slowly ... They treat me like a walking dictionary ... Have you ever thought these things in the middle of a reading lesson? Preparation for the reading exam stretches far beyond forcing students to do time-controlled reading exercises in class. Effective use of the 60 minutes students have in which to do the exam is, of course, vitally important. Yet as teachers, we need to teach the techniques which will enable our students to achieve this, using interesting yet pertinent materials, which, as we all know, can't always be found in the set coursebook.

An authentic reading lesson

I am a big fan of authentic text. It is real, relevant and gives students the confidence boost of knowing that they have read and understood something that a native speaker might actually read, too. So, how can we take an average newspaper or magazine article and make it into something we might find in the FCE exam? Here are some ideas for a reading lesson that attempted to make the most of an authentic text.

I love Paris in the springtime ...

The first point is to choose a topic which will generate interest or opinion. I took an article from a British newspaper on a notorious blonde, Paris Hilton. When asked, most people admit to either hating or loving Paris, with a plethora of reasons supporting their viewpoint. Last year, when I worked in Asia, some of my students thought I looked like Paris. (I am blonde and Western – of course I look like Paris!) So I started my lesson by getting my Spanish students to guess which celebrity they had thought I resembled. My personal anecdote made them laugh and immediately generated opinions and comments about Paris's life.

Before the lesson, I took the article and blanked out a number of sentences, which I then typed onto a separate worksheet with one extra 'red herring' sentence thrown in for good measure. In very little time I had created an 'authentic' part two FCE reading exercise (in the exam, students have to match sentences removed from a text with gaps and there is always one sentence that they don't use). The article itself discussed the notion that our obsession with celebrities such as Paris Hilton represents a decline in Western society. Gossiping about celebrities has become a means by which we can connect with others in a fast-moving society where family ties and close relations are becoming obsolete.

What does this word mean?

As a result of its sociological viewpoint, the article presented my students with some challenging vocabulary. After the first skim-read, I asked them to turn over their papers and discuss what they remembered with a partner. I was immediately faced with vocabulary queries. As teachers, we have two options: be a walking translator/dictionary or steer students towards developing the skills of guessing unknown language. The former is useful only in monolingual classes where the teacher speaks the

Students often forget that it is not necessary to know the exact translation of a word

students' first language. It may be the easier option, but there are two things we really need to be doing: firstly, helping students decide which unknown vocabulary actually interferes with their understanding of the text in terms of being able to complete the task they are given, and secondly, helping them then use the context to determine possible meaning. Students often forget that it is not necessary to know the exact translation of a word, merely that they only need to understand its contextual significance. Throughout my reading lessons, I encourage my students to make these important considerations, and help them to use their language knowledge, alongside the context they are dealing with, to find their own answers. Questions from the teacher, such as *What part of speech is it? Is the meaning negative or positive? and How do you know?*, help students achieve this.

How and why?

Having aired our initial thoughts on the article, I then gave my students the task to complete. Part two of the FCE reading paper can be challenging if students have not been made aware of the best ways of approaching it. So many students jump in head first: they try to match the sentences to the gaps without considering *why* a particular sentence fits into a particular place. I normally elicit from my students *how* they are going to go about doing an exam exercise, and how they will know if they have done it correctly. When they discuss part two of the reading paper, it is amazing how many never consider using the vital clues provided by grammatical and lexical links, such as pronouns or verb tenses, and how few recognise the need to check for the logical sequence of ideas. The 'red herring' sentence often plays on our tendency to interpret a text in a particular way, basing answers on our interpretation and not on what is stated in the text.

Multi-tasking

Even once we have used a text for a reading exercise, we are still left with a multitude of valuable extension activities we can do. After discussing selected items of vocabulary with my class, I then had them examine specific words and manipulate them into a different part of speech – incredibly useful practice for the

Expressing ideas and opinions on abstract topics mirrors what students are expected to do in the final part of the speaking exam

word-formation exercise found in the use of English paper. I then broadened the topics introduced in the article and asked the students to discuss their views in small groups. Expressing ideas and opinions on abstract topics mirrors what students are expected to do in the final part of the speaking exam. In a subsequent lesson, I gave the students a copy of the full, original article on Paris Hilton and asked them to blank out twelve words and write them down on a separate sheet of paper. They then exchanged texts with a partner and tried to complete the open-cloze exercise their partner had made for them. Having already spent a lesson working with the text in a different way, students were really able to focus on language analysis: an essential skill for part two of the use of English paper.



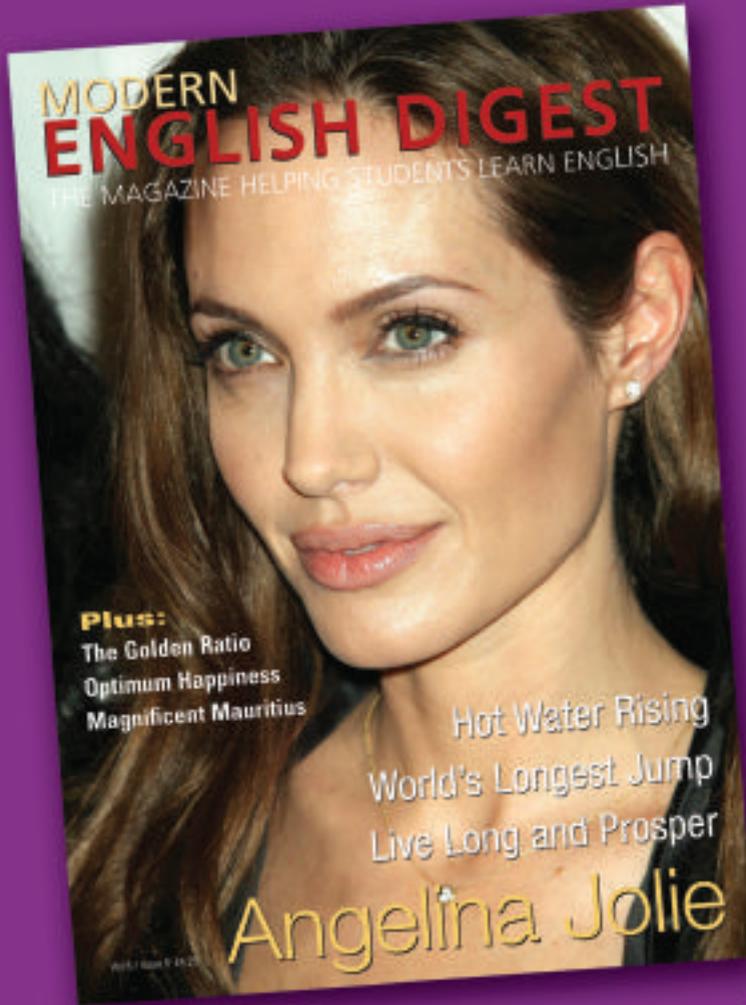
Teaching in Asia meant that I spent a large amount of time teaching young children how to read. No one would contest that learning to read a different written script is a difficult challenge. Maybe it is time we reviewed the challenge of reading and showing extensive comprehension of three, non-related texts in 60 minutes. Gaining a high score in reading at FCE is no mean feat, and perhaps teaching students to achieve this could be more enjoyable and worthwhile than you think. 



After completing her CELTA in 2001, Rosalind Southward spent six years teaching in Barcelona, Spain, and a year in Thailand. She has also worked as a freelance writer, and is currently teaching at the British Council in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

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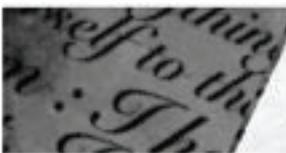
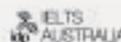
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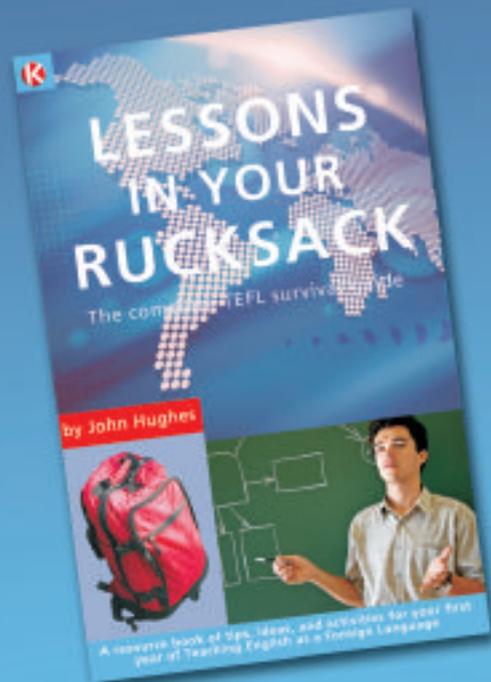
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Let us play

Glenda Demes da Cruz uses board games to keep her students from getting bored.

According to Jeannine Dobbs, the first teacher to write on the walls of his classroom was Reverend Samuel Read Hall (1795–1877), a dedicated maths teacher in Maine, USA, who started the development of visual tools for learning by recognising that something performing the function of a board was missing from his classroom, even before the board itself was invented.

In 1816, Hall started writing on a piece of black paper mounted on the wall. Some time later, this black paper was replaced by a black wallboard made of plaster. This new teaching aid became very popular among teachers around the

second half of the nineteenth century, and it has remained popular ever since.

The invention of the blackboard was the first example of technology influencing education and it set off a revolution. Since Hall's time, there have been numerous developments in the visual presentation of information, from the simple handout to the slide projector, the overhead projector, the video projector and the interactive whiteboard.

The importance of using the board in the classroom may be questioned, but never its effectiveness. Teachers need the board to make the students' learning easier. But what makes the board so useful, so indispensable?

The invention of the blackboard was the first example of technology influencing education and it set off a revolution

A visual resource

Visual aids are very important in the classroom. The use of the board is beneficial to students whose learning is motivated by visual stimuli, and it also helps students focus on what is being presented, and to understand and remember what they hear.

When we draw or write on the board, we can go on to explain what we have drawn or written. The information is given gradually, and this gives the students time to question any points they don't understand.

The board can be used with various



Let us play

objectives, such as to display messages the students need to remember, to present new information, to review information which has previously been given, and to record what teachers and students have said.

A resource for teachers

Classes can be greatly enhanced with the help of the board and some creativity on the part of the teacher. The board and the teacher's creativity can – and should – be used in tandem to make classes dynamic and motivating. There are various ways of doing this. Here are some suggestions:

- Before the class starts, or in the first five minutes, write on the board some provocative or polemic sentences, riddles, tongue twisters or jumbled sentences using language you want the students to learn, etc. This gives those who arrive early something to do, as well as potentially getting them to start to focus on the target language.
- Draw pictures or abstract shapes on the board. You can then ask the students to talk about them.
- Write up words, questions or statements and ask the students to discuss them or write about them.
- Use the board to write up, clarify, illustrate, emphasise, organise, practise and list any information given in class.
- Record key words or a brief outline of the language presentation you are going to make.
- Write up examples of sentences using vocabulary which you have taught previously.
- Draw pictures to illustrate grammar points.
- Summarise the most important concepts introduced in a lesson.
- Write up a guide to the activities to be done in the following lesson.
- Keep a record of the students' participation (their answers and comments) on the board, using their own words.

A resource for students

We can also allow our students to write on the board. When we do this, we provide an opportunity for them to practise and develop their critical thinking skills as they can then compare their work with that of their peers. Allowing students to write on the board has many advantages:

- A different atmosphere is created. Writing in groups on the board allows students to interact not only with the others in their group, but also with the class as a whole. In group activities where the students remain seated at their desks, interaction with other groups within the class is rare.
- Students are no longer able to conceal their participation in groupwork, since evidence of their participation is on public display.

Students become so involved in the game that they stop feeling anxious about their mistakes

- Communication cannot be monopolised by one student, as written discourse does not allow for this in the way that oral discourse sometimes does.
- The ability of the teacher to monitor the class is enhanced. The teacher can observe what one student is writing on the board at the same time as walking around the students who are working at their desks.
- Some students are less sensitive to criticism when they use the board. This is because their participation is voluntary and last-minute. Planned written work demands time and preparation and may cause them to ask too much of themselves.
- It is a good option for those students who feel safer writing a foreign language than speaking it.
- Some students who don't like to ask for help, or have difficulties in expressing themselves, will like the idea of having their peers and teacher see their mistakes and offer to help.

A resource for play

Using the board to play games in the classroom facilitates group interaction and enhances learning. The activities suggested on pages 19 and 20 are usually quite challenging, and since the language which the students produce during the game is unpredictable, the teacher can steer the students to some extent, but cannot entirely manipulate the result. These games have always worked well with my classes.

While playing language games, students can be exposed to the target structures. However, because this is done in the context of a game, they relax and forget that they are being watched. They often become so involved in the game that they stop feeling anxious about their mistakes.

To be effective in the language classroom, games need to be those which will allow the students to use the target language frequently and with flexibility.



There are many different ways to use the board in the classroom, and many reasons why teachers choose to do so. Motivation is one of these reasons and is an important one. The use of the board to play language acquisition games helps students relax and learn without pressure. While they are absorbed in a game, students forget that they are in the classroom; they feel as if they are different people, living in that moment and interacting with others.

We all use the board to teach. Why not make it even more useful than it already is? 

Dobbs, J *Using the Board in the Language Classroom* CUP 2001

Klippel, F *Keep Talking: Communicative Fluency Activities for Language Teachers* CUP 1996



Glenda Demes da Cruz has been an EFL teacher and teacher trainer for 14 years. She is a professor at UECE (a state university in Ceará, Brazil). She holds a degree in Letras and a Master's Degree in Applied Linguistics from the same university.

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Let us play

1 The alphabet game

Aims: to raise students' awareness of what they already know; to recycle vocabulary

Level: any

1 Put the students into numbered groups.

2 Draw the following grid on the board and write the alphabet (with the students' help) down the side:

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
A				
B				
C				
D				
E				
...				

3 Tell each group to think of one word beginning with each letter of the alphabet. Set a time limit of two to three minutes for this.

4 When the time is up, call out a letter and ask each group to say which word they chose. Write their words in the correct place in the grid.

5 Award points as follows. If one team chose a word that no other group chose, they get two points. Teams who chose a word that was also chosen by one or more of the other teams get one point. If, for example, Group 1 chose *apple* for letter A, Group 2 chose *and*, Group 3 chose *apple* and Group 4 chose *ace*, Groups 2 and 4 get two points and Groups 1 and 3 get one point each.

6 Continue in this way through the alphabet.

Variation: The rules may vary, depending on the level of the group. For example, the students may be asked to come up with words over five letters long; they can be asked to write words on a theme, such as things that can be found at the beach, in the bathroom, and so on.

You may or may not decide to tell the students in advance of the criteria for awarding points.

2 Football English

Aim: to practise reading

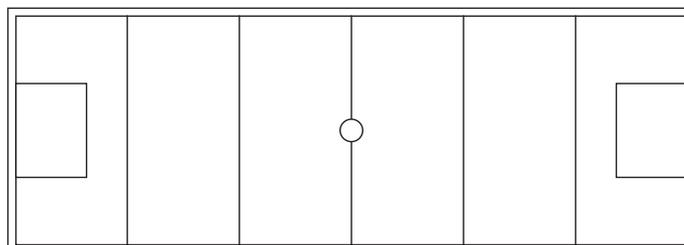
Level: any

Materials: You will need a button to represent a football and some sticky tape to attach it to the board.

1 Choose a text for the students to read. This could be one from the lesson you are about to do or an entirely new one. Prepare about 20 questions on the text.

2 Ask the students to read the text and give them about 10 to 15 minutes to do this.

3 When the time is up, draw the following football pitch on the board and divide the class into two teams. Allow them to choose their own team names and ask them to appoint a team captain.



4 Toss a coin and ask the team captains to call *heads* or *tails* to see who starts. Place the ball in the centre of the pitch and decide which team is playing in which direction.

5 Ask the first team a question about the text. If the answer is correct, the ball moves one line towards the opposing team's goal. The same team then has another turn and the ball only passes into the other team's possession if they get the answer wrong.

6 Whenever a team scores a goal, the opposing team gets to start again from the centre. The aim is to score as many goals as possible (20 questions should produce at least three or four goals).

7 You are the referee. You can give out yellow/red cards to teams who speak their mother tongue or are too rowdy. Two yellow cards (or one red card) gives the opposing team a penalty: they only have to answer one question in order to score a goal.

3 What's the word?

Aim: to recycle the target language (good for small texts and dialogues)

Level: any

1 Before the lesson, choose a short text or dialogue (similar to one the students have already studied) and write it into a chart, one word per space, as shown here.

2 In class, draw the empty chart on the board and write a title which will give the students a clue to its content, eg *In a shop*.

3 Put the students into teams, and ask them to guess the words contained in the chart, scoring points for each word guessed. For example, in the chart here, if one team guesses *I*, they will get three points as this word occurs three times in the text. When a word has been guessed correctly, write all instances of it in the chart in the correct places.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
A	Good	morning.	Can	I	help	you?			
B	Yes,	I	am	looking	for	a	pair	of	trainers
C	for	my	boyfriend.						
D	What	size	does	he	take?				
E	He	is	a	size	forty.				
F	Well,	these	ones	here	are	on	sale.		
G	How	much	are	they?					
H	Thirty-nine	ninety	nine.						
I	That	is	cheap!	I	will	take	them.		
J	OK.	How	would	you	like	to	pay?		
K	In	cash.							
L	That	is	thirty-nine	ninety	nine,	please.			
M	Here	you	are						
N	Thank	you.	Here	are	your	trainers	and	your	receipt.
O	Thanks.	Bye.							
P	Goodbye.								

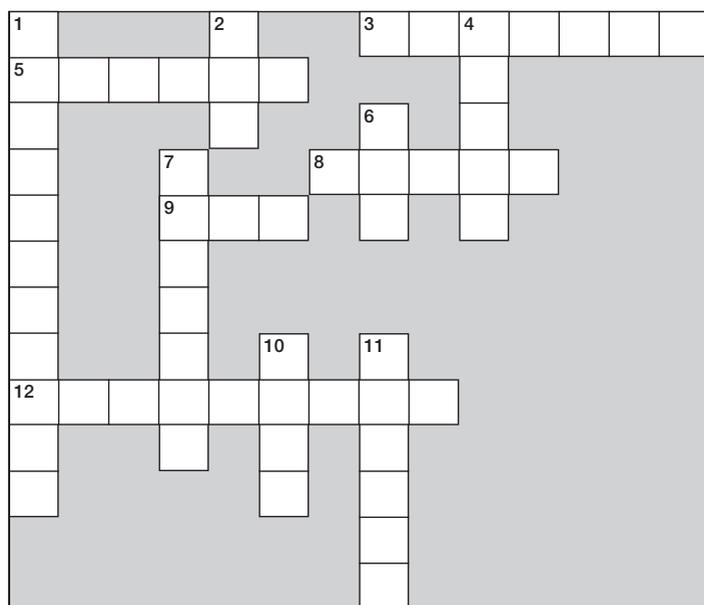
Let us play

4 Boardwork puzzle

Aims: to practise speaking, listening and writing; to encourage cooperation

Level: intermediate/advanced

1 Draw the following puzzle on the board. Note: This one has an animal theme, but you can create your own puzzles at www.crosswordpuzzlegames.com.



2 Divide the class into groups. (The number of groups, as well as the number of students in each group, will depend on the size of the class, but the fewer the better.)

3 Tell the class that you will call out a number and say its direction on the puzzle (across or down). Then, you will read out the definition of the word that fits that place in the puzzle. (The clues for the example puzzle are given here.)

4 Ask the groups to discuss a possible word to match the definition and to raise their hands when they think they know the answer. If the word is correct, one of the team members writes the word on the board. Each correct word is worth one point. With advanced classes, you can make it a rule that if certain target language is not used during the discussion, the team will not get the point.

Across

- 3** A sea creature with a soft oval body and eight tentacles (= long arm-like parts).
- 5** A large greyish green lizard of tropical America.
- 8** A large animal with a long neck, that lives in the desert and has one or two humps (= large raised areas of flesh) on its back.
- 9** A bird with a flat face, large eyes and strong, curved nails, which hunts small mammals at night.
- 12** A large, hard-skinned reptile that lives in and near rivers and lakes in the hot, wet parts of America and China. It has a long nose that is slightly wider and shorter than that of a crocodile.

Down

- 1** A small, brown European bird known especially for the beautiful song of the male bird which is usually heard during the night.
- 2** A very small insect which lives under the ground in large and highly-organised social groups.
- 4** A large wild animal of the cat family with yellowish orange fur with black lines, which lives in parts of Asia.
- 6** A small rodent, larger than a mouse, which has a long tail and is considered to be harmful.
- 7** A sea mammal that is large, smooth and grey, with a long pointed mouth.
- 10** A young sheep, or the flesh of a young sheep eaten as meat.
- 11** An animal that lives in hot countries, has a long tail and climbs trees.

5 When the puzzle has been completed, announce the team that is in the lead, but tell the students that the game is not over yet. (Note: it is important not to tell them in advance that there is a second part to the game or they will try to do both parts at once.)

6 For the final part of the competition, tell the students to use the initials of all the words in the puzzle to form a short definition of a word (if they need help, tell them it is a two-word definition). The team that first finds the word corresponding to the definition gets two extra points.

(Answers: 1 nightingale, 2 ant, 3 octopus, 4 tiger, 5 iguana, 6 rat, 7 dolphin, 8 camel, 9 owl, 10 lamb, 11 monkey, 12 alligator. The letters of the words in the puzzle form the clue 'animal doctor' so the final word is *vet*.)

5 Calefabenadle what?

Aims: to practise reading and writing; to review vocabulary

Level: intermediate/advanced

1 Write a paragraph on the board, changing some of the original words for words that do not exist. For example:

I can't **trymplist** men any longer! They always **briscol** me. Every time I start **popling** someone, I get hurt. My **repertemenst** do not last very long. After a month, the prince turns into a frog. When a date is arranged, he always **himbleds** later than he should and every time I try to have a **colfes** with him, I have to think twice about what to say, because I don't want to hurt his **grapertugers**. What **grapertugers**? Well, I guess all I can do is **flait** for a prince that doesn't turn into a frog. The question is: do they really exist?

2 Ask the students to identify the invented words and rewrite the paragraph, substituting words that fit the text.

Answer:

I can't **tolerate** men any longer! They always **disappoint** me. Every time I start **dating** someone, I get hurt. My **relationships** do not last very long. After a month the prince turns into a frog. When a date is arranged, he always **arrives** later than he should and every time I try to have a **talk** with him, I have to think twice about what to say, because I don't want to hurt his **feelings**. What **feelings**? Well, I guess all I can do is **wait** for a prince that doesn't turn into a frog. The question is: do they really exist?

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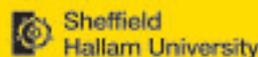
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Keeping them interested

Lucia Maffione considers how to motivate children when teaching vocabulary.

In his book on teaching vocabulary, Scott Thornbury quotes Wilga Rivers, a leading authority on second language learning, who wrote some years ago: *'Vocabulary cannot be taught. It can be presented, explained, included in all kinds of activities, and experienced in all manner of associations ... but ultimately it is learned by the individual. As language teachers, we must arouse interest in words and a certain excitement in personal development in this area ...'*

This certainly does not mean that the teacher is redundant. On the contrary, the teacher should play a pivotal role in motivating young learners during their vocabulary acquisition because only motivation will sustain them as they carry out this complex learning process with its long-term goals. By *complex learning process*, I mean the understanding of new words and the ability to store them and afterwards to retrieve and use them in appropriate situations.

Motivating young learners to enrich their own vocabulary is undoubtedly a challenging task for teachers. Consequently, some simple directions about how to make vocabulary activities motivating may be helpful.

Elicitation

As Scott Thornbury points out, 'young learners need to be actively involved in

the learning of words'. One technique that might achieve this involvement is *elicitation*.

A standard elicitation procedure is for the teacher to present the meaning of a word (eg by showing a flashcard) and to ask the learners to supply the form. For example:

T: (showing a picture of a skyscraper) *What's this?*

S: *Building?*

T: *Not exactly.*

S: *Skyscraper?*

T: *Good.*

This activity maximises speaking opportunities and involves the learners, keeping them alert and attentive.

Personalisation

Another important way to involve and motivate learners is to make them personalise new lexical items.

Personalisation is the process of using new words in a context that is real for the learner. According to Scott Thornbury, even unmotivated learners will remember words if they have been set tasks that require them to make decisions about them. The teacher can use tasks that ask students to think about their personal response to words. One such activity is *subjective*

categorisation, where students have to categorise a list of new words which the teacher has just introduced and explained. These categories might be *Friendly/Unfriendly* or *I like/I dislike*. Afterwards, the students compare their own answers with those of a partner to see if they agree. In so doing, they express their own points of view, and, at the same time, practise the new words. As Gough points out, it is important that students do not agree all the time so that they have something to talk about.

Peer teaching

Another motivating activity is *peer teaching*, in which students teach vocabulary items to each other. The teacher might, for example, divide the class into small groups and give each student a piece of paper with a newly-encountered word written on it, together with a definition from a monolingual dictionary. Each person has to make the other members of the group guess their word without actually saying it. Techniques and strategies they might employ include using synonyms, antonyms, mime, drawing, comparison, etc. Students generally enjoy this activity because guessing words is motivating and to succeed they have to communicate with each other.



Fun

A further feature to consider is the importance of *fun*.

The learning experience should involve as much fun (or at least enjoyment and satisfaction) as possible. Students (and many teachers) often think that to be effective, learning tasks have to be boring. In fact, the opposite is the case because it has been shown that a relaxed atmosphere may facilitate the learning process. The simplest way to provide fun vocabulary activities is to play games in the classroom. Here is an example of a very nice game, useful both for practising vocabulary and encouraging students to produce language.

Hot seat

First, the class is divided into two teams. The students sit facing the board. An empty chair – one for each team – is put at the front, facing the team members. These chairs are the 'hot seats'. One member from each team has to come to the front and sit in the chair so that they are facing their team-mates and have their backs to the board. The teacher has a list of vocabulary items that students will use in this game. The teacher writes the first word from the list clearly on the board. The aim of the game is for the teams to describe that word using synonyms, antonyms, definition, mime, etc to the student who is in the hot seat. When students are in the hot seat, they cannot see the word on the board and must listen to their team-mates and try to guess the word from the clues they are given. The first hot-seat student to say the word wins a point for their team. Then a new member of each team sits in their team's hot seat. The teacher then writes the next word on the board.

This activity is motivating because it requires both mental and physical involvement from the students. The importance of physical activity is often overlooked in language teaching, and it is beneficial in encouraging students to be both mentally and physically active, rather than just sitting passively. This is also a very *student-centred* activity because the teacher acts only as a facilitator.



Philip Burrows

Different contexts

Another important way to motivate students in vocabulary activities is to introduce and use words within *different contexts*.

Lexical competence doesn't consist simply of remembering a set of vocabulary items. It involves mastering the use of them in appropriate contexts.

When learning new words, students need to recognise how and where they can be used. This goal may be achieved through roleplays. Here is an example.

Door to door salesman

This is a pairwork activity. In each pair, one student plays at being a salesperson who tries to sell objects to the other student, who pretends to be a potential client. To make this activity work, it will be necessary to pre-teach some expressions which will enable the students to accomplish the task. For example: (for the client) *I don't need it, I am busy, I can't afford it ...* (for the salesperson) *It could improve your life, you can try it, you can have a refund ...*

The essential thing about roleplays is that they provide a memorable way to use new words or expressions. In this respect, they are helpful both for learners trying to memorise new words and for teachers who want to maintain their

students' motivation. Moreover, through this activity students are encouraged to focus on the use of the language rather than on the language itself.



Elicitation, personalisation, peer teaching, games and roleplays are just some strategies to motivate the learners when you are using vocabulary teaching activities. Whilst these techniques cannot force the students to learn new words, they can at least ensure the learners' willing participation in the learning process. **ETP**

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Poised for learning

Carla Wilson suggests you use yoga to promote relaxation and concentration.

Having practised yoga for several years and taught it to adults since I qualified as a yoga teacher in 2006, I have seen the many positive effects it has, such as increased concentration and focus, and reduced stress and anxiety. It became evident to me that these benefits would be very useful in a children's language classroom and so I decided to incorporate some very simple yoga techniques in my lessons with children.

Suitable

Students' ability to learn a language can be hampered if they are anxious, upset or self-conscious. Yoga can help alleviate these problems through its promotion of relaxation, concentration and self-esteem. However, most research in this field has been done with students using their native language rather than in an EFL or ESL setting. This is probably because these settings pose a communication problem – many yoga techniques, particularly guided meditation, require good language comprehension skills.

The students with whom I wanted to use yoga didn't have the language skills necessary for many yoga activities. My choice, then, was between conducting the activities in Japanese or adapting



them so that they were suitable for students with low-level English. As my students have only one hour a week of English study, I felt it was important to maximise the use of English in that time and so I chose the latter option. For the same reason, I wanted all the yoga activities in my classes to have an English component as well as a yoga component.

Safe

Some yoga experts, including the teachers at the ashram where I trained to teach yoga, recommend that many asana (yoga postures) should not be

used with children under about the age of 12. This is because their bones are still relatively soft, and there is a perceived danger of damaging bone formation through excessive twisting of limbs, and so on. While these same asana are thought to be perfectly safe for children by many other yoga experts, I chose not to use them with my students. Instead, I opted for breathing activities, relaxation activities, visualisation activities and asana that are universally thought to be safe for young children. This also has the advantage that they are activities that teachers can do without any formal yoga training.

Successful

I have been using yoga over a period of several months in my weekly classes. The students have shown an improvement in concentration and in confidence. The most noticeable difference has been in students who were particularly lacking in concentration ability and confidence previously. Moreover, in some cases, an unanticipated benefit of the yoga has been that it is something that weaker students can do just as well as, if not better than, the students who are usually stronger. This was the case with the *Palm tree balance* and *Visualisation* exercises.

Yoga for you

Here are the yoga exercises I use in my lessons and which you might like to try. I usually use one or two per lesson, interspersed through the main language-learning activities. Breathing exercises should be conducted so that the students never get short of breath. Breathing should always be through the nose.

I Letter breathing

A letter or word is slowly written on the board, either by the teacher or by a student. The students breathe in as upward strokes are written and breathe out as downward strokes are written. (Horizontal strokes such as the cross of a *t* can be accompanied by holding of the breath.) This is a particularly good exercise to do with words that can't be read phonetically, such as *what*. It will help students become familiar with the



pattern or shape of such words. This exercise is also useful when students are first learning the alphabet. It encourages them to focus on their breathing, which improves concentration and promotes relaxation.

2 Stomach breathing

Students sit, stand or lie with their hands resting on their stomachs. The teacher or a student gives instructions to breathe in and out. Students try to make their stomach grow big as they breathe in and grow small as they breathe out. Instructions can be 'Big, Small' or 'Fat, Thin' or 'Breathe in. Breathe out'. (Don't use just 'In, Out' as the breathing is opposite to the movement of the stomach and this may cause confusion, ie as we breathe in our stomach moves out and vice versa. Breathing in and out from our stomach promotes full lung capacity breathing, which gets more oxygen into the blood. This helps to re-energise students, as well as providing the benefits of focusing on breathing mentioned above.

3 Stretching and crouching

Students breathe in as they stretch tall with hands in the air and crouch down as they breathe out. The teacher or a student gives instructions such as 'Tall, Short', 'High, Low', 'Big, Small', 'Tree, Stone', 'Giraffe, Mouse'. Stretching and crouching promotes circulation, which energises students. Focusing on breathing has the benefits mentioned above.

4 Palm tree balance

Students stand with their arms above their heads, palms together and balance on their toes. This is a yoga asana that is safe for children of any age to practise as it stretches all the muscles and bones in one upward direction. This can be done as a competitive game with students seeing who can balance for the longest while the teacher, one student or all the students count. It can also be done as a cooperative game where points are awarded for how many students are left standing after a given time, again with someone counting.



Alternatively, it can be done without any kind of scoring element. If students lose their balance, they simply try again, and the whole class counts to 50 or 100. Variations are to use a song or backward counting. This asana improves concentration. Physical and mental balance are strongly connected, and any improvement to physical balance will probably give a corresponding improvement in mental balance.

5 Chanting

Several flashcards are put where everyone can see them. The students take turns to say the word or phrase associated with each card in order around the class until all the cards have been used. The teacher times the process. The students then repeat the exercise and try to do it in a faster time. This activity imitates the use of chanting in yoga, but with the use of normal English rather than special sacred words. All the students must keep very focused so that when their turn comes round they are ready. All other thoughts are wiped from their minds as they concentrate on the cards and what their classmates are saying.

6 Body parts

The teacher or a student names a body part and the students breathe in while tensing that part. The teacher or a student then gives the instruction to

relax, and the students breathe out while relaxing the named body part. This exercise promotes concentration and relaxation.

7 Visualisation

The teacher or a student says a series of colour and noun combinations (eg *pink cat, green house*, etc) while the students mentally visualise the objects. The words should be said quickly enough that students don't get bored, but slowly enough so they have time to visualise each one. Prepare a list of about ten (more or less depending on age and ability). The activity can end here or students can then try to recall what they visualised either orally, in writing or as a picture. Students can also take the role of describing. For more advanced students, other information can be added, such as actions (*The pink cat is eating, The green horse is jumping*, etc). Visualisation helps improve concentration and encourages a direct link between the English word and the concept it represents, making translation to the student's first language less likely.

8 Extra-sensory perception

Several pictures, words or sentences are put on display. One student secretly chooses one of the pictures, words or sentences, and then tries to send messages telepathically to the other students about which one he or she has chosen. Students should close their eyes to help them avoid feeling silly. After several seconds, ask for a show of hands to see how many students received the telepathic message. This activity helps students to concentrate, and promotes intuitive thinking. It is also a good activity to calm down an over-excited class. **ETP**



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In private

Alan Marsh explores the world of one-to-one lessons.

Some teachers love them, some hate them: one-to-one lessons, 121, private lessons, individual lessons – they go by different names, but they all come down to the same thing: you're alone with a learner, and usually you're their only teacher. Sometimes the learner may also be taking part in a group course, and may have opted for an extension. Their reasons for doing so are various, but usually it's because they want to focus on a specific area, or they want individual attention, or both.

I've often been asked to write down some tips and advice for teachers who feel unsure about teaching one-to-one, and perhaps to run a workshop. I've been to several workshops myself, and although they often provide useful insights and some practical techniques, they have the problem that all learners are different, with different personalities, learning styles, strengths and weaknesses, practical needs and language learning experiences. As a result, 121 workshops (including my own) tend to gloss over the topic and end up being somewhat unsatisfactory. So I decided to sit down and think about what I actually *do* with my one-to-one learners.

- What are the principles I (sometimes unconsciously) adopt?
- What techniques and activities do I use over and over again?
- What risks do I take?

For the purposes of this article, I'll be looking at levels pre-intermediate (around B1 on the Council of Europe scale) and above, as following a coursebook will often suffice for lower levels. I will also group together both

business and general English one-to-one learners, although there are, of course, differences.

Setting the tone

One of the advantages of 121 lessons is that you're dealing with an individual learner and not a class. This means you can do all sorts of things you can't do in a group. These include:

- giving the learner maximum attention – including listening to them talk about anything that interests them;
- focusing on the learner's particular strengths and weaknesses;
- developing a rapport that can be closer than is normally possible.

I think the last of these points is particularly important. It's so easy to lose sight of the person because we're focused on the role. A useful thing to remember here is that we don't teach English; we teach *people*. It's the same when it comes to English for Specific Purposes (ESP). We teach *people*. What kind of people? People who need to use English for professional purposes. So first and foremost, I think, it's important to break down the barriers and try to

You need to set the tone and establish that the lessons are professional and based on the learner's real and perceived needs

get through to the *person*, rather than the student/client/executive/learner. Here are some thought-provoking aphorisms from Mark Powell, an internationally renowned teacher trainer who has written several successful business English courses:

- 1 *We don't teach business ... we teach people who do business.*
- 2 *Nobody is 'just a business person' ... and yet everybody does business.*
- 3 *Knowing a lot about people will give you ... what you really need – rapport.*
- 4 *Get to the person first ... and leave the job for later.*
- 5 *'Executive' is a role ... not an identity.*

Having said that, first of all you need to establish some sort of face validity. That is to say, you need to set the tone and establish that the lessons are professional and based on the learner's real and perceived needs (these are not always the same). So carry out some kind of professional needs analysis, such as the one on page 28. There are plenty of these in coursebooks, but often the simpler, more direct and shorter they are, the better. I like to give these needs analysis questions out and ask my learner to *think about* the answers to them.

After that, the learner talks, using the questions as a framework. As they talk, it's important to leave silences. If they pause, don't jump in, but give them a chance to formulate what they want to say, to search for the word they need, to think. *Don't be afraid of silence*. It can be very productive. By leaving silences,

In private

▶▶▶ you are allowing your learner space and time. Often teachers feel they need to jump in because a silence can embarrass a learner, and they want to help out. But if you give them space and time, they will usually come up with something themselves. So leave some silence first (say three to five seconds), then offer a prompt if necessary.

As they speak, ask any follow-up questions, eg *So what do you want to do most? What are you strongest/weakest in? How do you feel about (grammar)? Are you good at it? Is it a priority for you? Can you use it well when you're speaking? Do you feel you need more words and expressions (vocabulary)? How do you feel about your pronunciation? Is it good enough for you? Do you want to practise it? Do you understand when people speak quickly? Can you speak quickly, or do you find yourself searching for words?*

Regarding the question about spare time interests, here's something a colleague in Malta told me:

'I also discovered that it's very important to find out what the student enjoys talking about. I had a Japanese lady who was mad about football so I found this e-lesson from Macmillan about Ronaldinho and she really enjoyed it and said it was a good change from the usual stuff women tend to talk about, like fashion, family, etc.'

Getting personal

To be able to work on the learner's needs, you need to get them to provide data. When it comes to speaking, they need to speak. And most people like talking about things that are relevant to them: their experiences, their hopes, beliefs, families, jobs, cultures, their favourite food, music, holiday experiences, etc. But many may be reluctant to – unless you give them a way in. And one effective way of doing that is by first of all talking about these things *yourself*. So be prepared to talk about your own life, family, hopes, etc. Once you've opened the door and invited the learner in, the chances are that they'll walk on through and feel comfortable talking about their own lives.

A ten-point analysis

- 1 What do you do for a living? What is your job? What do you do, exactly?
- 2 Do you use English in your job? Will you use English in your job in the future? Do you need English for anything else, for example travelling?
- 3 If you use English (now or in the future), do you/will you use it ...
 - on the phone?
 - to write (emails, reports, messages)?
 - face-to-face?
 - with native speakers?
 - with non-native speakers?

4 How have you learnt English in the past? When? How long?

5 Think about your spoken English. Where would you put yourself on this line?



What about your ability to understand natural spoken English? Where would you put that on the line?

6 Think about your ability to read and understand authentic English (newspapers, articles, emails, reports, etc). Where would you put yourself on this line?



What about your written English (formal and informal letters, messages, emails, etc)? Where would you put that on the line?

7 How do you feel about English? Do you like it, or not? Is it easy or difficult for you?

8 What do you expect from this course? What do you want to be able to do by the end of the course? What is most important for you?

9 What are your spare time interests and hobbies?

10 Is there anything else you want to tell me?

Here is an original task, which will enable you to do this. This is how it works:

- 1 Each of you has a ME-diagram (see page 31). You take the A instructions and your learner takes the B instructions (see page 30).
- 2 You each fill in information on the ME-diagram, following your individual instructions.

3 You both put your instructions aside, look at your ME-diagram and try to remember why you have written what you have. If you don't remember, go back to the instructions.

4 Exchange ME-diagrams.

5 Ask your learner: *Why have you written [...] for number [4]?* Your learner tells you. As they do so, ask

back-channelling questions to get them to expand, clarify and explain, eg *Why was that exactly? Really? That's interesting ... can you tell me a bit more about that?*, etc. Remember to leave pauses, silences for your learner to fill.

- 6 Then your learner chooses a number on your ME-diagram and asks you: *Why have you written [...]?* Explain, describe, expand and give lots of information. The aim is to share your experience(s), and also to show your learner that that is what is expected of them.
- 7 Every 15 minutes or so, stop and give some feedback on language used (again, this gives the chat more face validity). Comment on language used well; show errors (grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, phrasing) and ask your learner to see if they can correct them; introduce better, more idiomatic ways of saying what your learner wanted to say. To do all this, keep brief notes while your learner explains their ME-diagram, but do it discreetly so that it doesn't stem the flow.

Twenty tips

- By all means revise and extend grammar, but remember that learners want to *use* language (grammar and vocabulary) to talk about the things that are important to them, eg their lives, experiences, jobs, families, holidays, hopes, hobbies, etc. Don't let grammatical accuracy be the yardstick for everything.
- Allow plenty of time for fluency activities. Look at speaking fluency books, such as *Discussions A-Z*. Chatting in English gives most learners a sense of achievement – they may never have been able to do this before.
- Learners often 'know' a lot of basic grammar, but often have difficulty in using it in real-life communication. So focus on real-life communication – but don't forget to work on the supporting systems (lexis, grammar, phonology and discourse).
- Learners often have limited vocabulary. *Extend* it. Look at the excellent series

English Vocabulary in Use, for example. Get the student to do an exercise first. If they don't do it well, teach or elicit the rules and uses. Then get them to do the exercise again. Make sure you do those exercises where they have to personalise the new knowledge by extending it to their own lives and experiences (usually the last exercise). Don't be afraid to extend these conversations by asking lots of questions.

- Recycle vocabulary. For example, set up a vocabulary box where you put each new important item of vocabulary (including lexical chunks) on a slip of paper which goes into the box. The next day, pick out some items randomly, give the definitions and ask the learner to say the words. Remember, most learners need to encounter a vocabulary item at least seven times before they've learnt it!
- Keep getting focused feedback. Instead of asking *Is everything OK?* ask *What would you like to do more of or less of?*
- Sometimes record your learner. Give them the cassette player and ask them to stop the cassette whenever they want feedback (they ask you if something is right, or if there's another way of saying things, etc). Try not to correct them *while* they're talking. Play back the cassette afterwards, and you or your learner can stop it whenever you want to focus on a particular utterance.
- Change the environment now and again, if the learner is willing – go to a museum, a café or a garden. But take your materials with you so that the lesson goes on. (Check that your Director of Studies knows and approves.)
- Take regular, *short* breaks – both of you! One-to-one is tiring!
- Stand up and move around – again, both of you. This can be done in roleplays or if the learner comes to the board to explain things to you.
- If you are teaching in a country where English is spoken, try to set up a meeting with someone local in the same line of business, eg a bank

manager, a politician, a factory manager. Prepare interview questions and go along to the meeting. Do feedback together afterwards.

- Have a variety of tasks so that boredom doesn't set in and the pace is right.
- If a learner needs to do something in English in real life, prepare and practise it in the lessons (a presentation, speech, report, showing people around the company, etc).
- If learners are going to be asked questions in English (eg for a job interview, or for showing visitors around, or as part of an oral exam in English), get them to think of as many questions as possible which they might be asked. Help them put these into English. Prepare answers and rehearse them (and record them if possible for feedback).
- Rehearse real-life tasks, record them and do feedback.
- Recycle language and repeat tasks.
- Use a coursebook as a framework, but use your own materials, too.
- Ask if your learner wants homework. If they do, give it regularly and give feedback on it promptly.

And finally, last but not least:

- Listen. Show you're interested (use eye contact, back-channelling and body language).
- Keep up that rapport which you have so carefully established. 

Redman, S *English Vocabulary in Use: Pre-intermediate and intermediate* CUP 2005

Wallwork, A *Discussions A-Z* CUP 1997



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Tell me about yourself (A)

Look at the questions below. Think about your answers. Write short answers in the numbered spaces on the 'ME-diagram'. When you've finished, look at all your answers and see if you can remember what they refer to.

If you can't remember, go back and look at the original questions. Exchange 'ME-diagrams' with your student. Ask why they have written what they have. Try to find out as much as you can about your student as a person.

A

Write the following pieces of information about yourself on the 'ME-diagram':

- 1 The name of a city or country that you have visited in your job.
- 2 Three of the most important things you have to do in your job.
- 3 The biggest challenge your company or institution faces in the future.
- 4 The three most essential qualities of a person who does your job well.
- 5 Three things that you would like to improve in your job performance.
- 6 The name of a book or article that you have read which has really influenced you in your work.
- 7 Three things that would irritate you in a colleague.
- 8 What you are most looking forward to in your job in the weeks or months ahead.
- 9 The year when you were happiest up to now in your professional life.
- 10 A personal achievement in your work that you are especially proud of.

Tell me about yourself (B)

Look at the questions below. Think about your answers. Write short answers in the numbered spaces on the 'ME-diagram'. When you've finished, look at all your answers and see if you can remember what they refer to.

If you can't remember, go back and look at the original question. Exchange 'ME-diagrams' with your teacher. Ask why they have written what they have. Try to find out as much as you can about your teacher as a person.

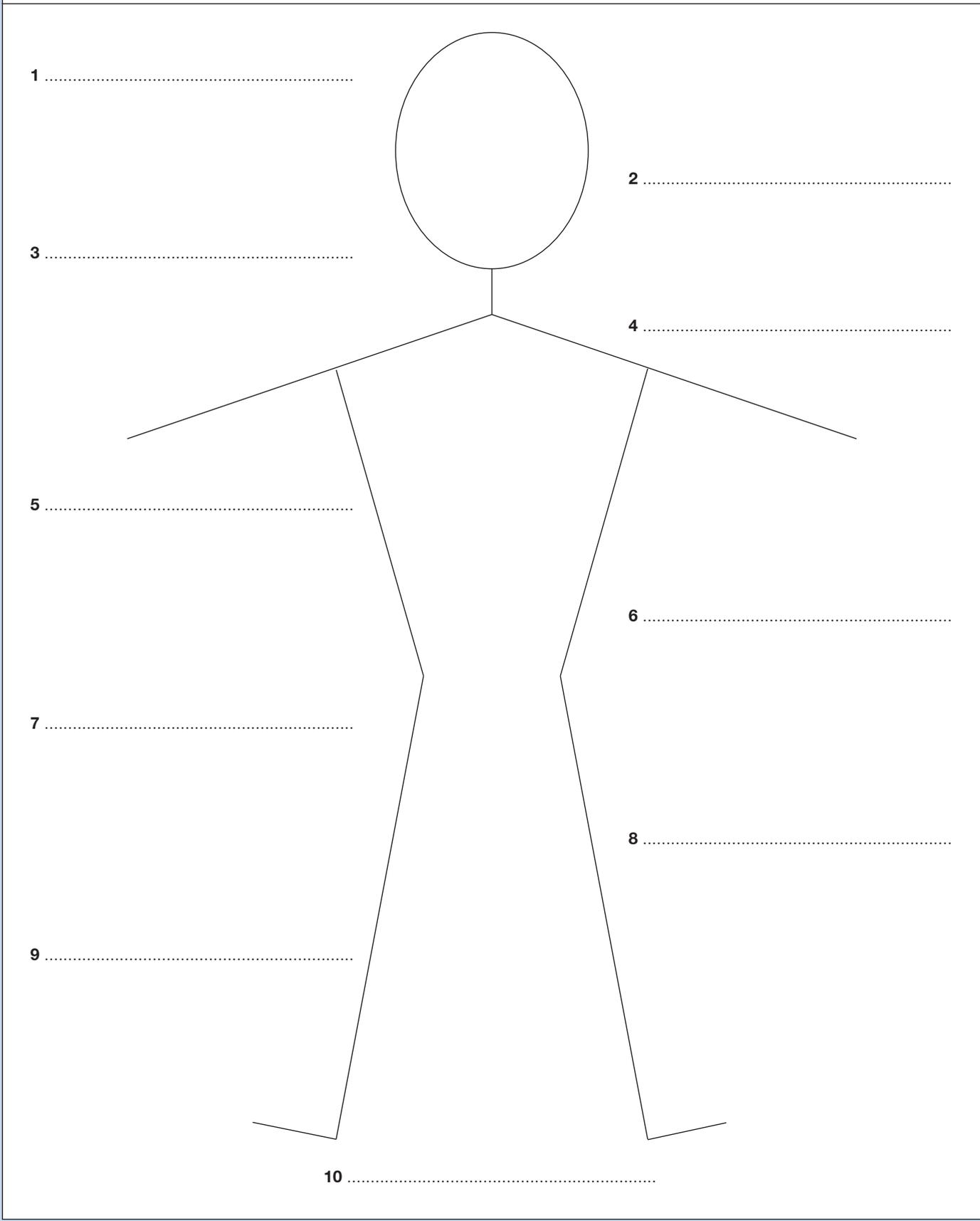
B

Write the following pieces of information about yourself on the 'ME-diagram':

- 1 The name of a person you really admire in your field, or anyone else you really admire because of the work they have done.
- 2 The name of a person you enjoy or have enjoyed working with.
- 3 The three most important qualities of a person in your line of work.
- 4 The name of a country which you consider is good for business for your company's product, or which has contributed a lot to your field.
- 5 What you are most looking forward to in the next few weeks (or months) in your job.
- 6 Three things you would like to know about your teacher's job.
- 7 The most challenging or difficult aspect of your job.
- 8 Three things you really like about your job.
- 9 Three ambitions you have in your job.
- 10 What job you would like to do if you didn't have your present job.



ME-diagram





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I got it off the TV

Annette Margolis goes square-eyed in her pursuit of lesson ideas.

My students and I enjoy a good game of 'Things we don't do'. This usually starts off with my admission that I don't watch TV. (Not all Italian television is poor quality, but listening to the radio is less angst-inducing and gives me the opportunity for limited multi-tasking.) The result is a game of questions (see below) in which a student will ask 'Why don't you watch TV?', followed hot on the heels by my 'And why do you watch it?'

In fact it is not strictly true that I don't watch TV. During holidays in the UK, visiting my mobility-challenged mum, and those with my sister in rural France, there is little to do except watch TV. And so, like other dedicated colleagues before me, I have profited from this enforced viewing to come up with new teaching input. Many of the ideas described below are from quiz shows. No plagiarism is intended but I am unable to put a name to them all.

The Fake Phone-in

Students have to think up a list of famous people they would like to speak to on a TV phone-in programme. They then invent questions to ask the personalities. One lucky (?) student is chosen to come to the front of the class as the star (in the state school where I teach, in which classes are mixed ability, I might choose someone whose English is either better than the average or is confident in manipulating the little language they have) and another as the presenter, who fields calls of the type:

'We've got Giovanni on the phone from Modena. He'd like to ask ...'

And, of course, as it's a phone-in, the questioner has to hold a phone to their ear as they're speaking and everyone else has to listen.

Questions, Questions

I got this idea from David Crystal, who described it at a conference, rather than from the TV, but it is based on an idea from the TV show *Whose Line is it Anyway?*

Students either plan or improvise a dialogue in which each speaker must

answer a question posed by the other speaker with another question. A possible model might be a typical conversation between a mother and her grown-up offspring or even between lovers, one of whom is jealous:

A: How are you?

B: Why do you want to know?

A: Why don't you want to tell me?

B: Do you think I don't love you?

Blind Date Speed Dating

In this quick-change version, pairs of students think up three important questions for the partner of their dreams. Potential partners sit in two concentric rings and ask their questions to the person facing them. One ring moves round one place after, say, five minutes. In classes where one sex predominates, I persuade same-sex groups to ask their questions to either a girl or boy as appropriate. The latter can say who they felt asked the best questions.

My students tell me that when they go out to a bar, they use questions/messages on post-it notes to pass to someone who takes their fancy. So presumably this predominantly spoken activity can be changed into a written one!

QI

I think the idea of the TV show *QI* (Quite Interesting), in which the winning answer to a question is the most interesting one and not the boring albeit correct one, might be applied more extensively in order to liven up classroom talk.

Patently Obvious

This programme had a short run on the BBC in the seventies. Basically, opposing teams of scientists had to guess the function of some pretty strange-looking objects. I use this when I am clearing out stuff from underneath the sink and can bring to class some of those odd objects that tend to lurk under sinks, together with any broken bits and bobs whose function has been all but forgotten. Teams of students present their new uses to their classmates and with any remaining enthusiasm can also design their own advert to sell them.

The Shopping Channel

This might be thought as the sister programme to the one above. Bring in, or encourage your students to bring in, some truly naff jewellery, knickknacks and unwanted Christmas presents that are normally kept hidden from human view. Encourage your students (working in pairs) to 'sex them up' in order to re-gift them to other students. After they have tried it once, show them an extract of how the professionals from the shopping channel do it. This provides excellent practice in adjective order, as in a *delightful, miniature, hand-painted, wooden fairy house*.

Word Coining

Ashley Harrold, a poet in my hometown of Reading in the UK (www.afharrold.co.uk), alerted me to his presence on a radio show (as opposed to a TV show), where he and his fellow bards took turns to invent new words and definitions by blending, suffixing and compounding. If you have an inventive class, you might like to try it with them.



I'm sure some enterprising, mathematically-minded English teacher has managed to adapt the internationally-franchised TV show *Deal or no Deal* – perhaps for practice in using modals of probability. I haven't as yet, although I do use some activities similar to those in *Think of a Number*, even if somewhat sparingly as not all my learners love mathematics. Also, mathematics, even on an exploratory basis, has a tendency to limit the number of correct responses.

If anyone out there can help me put a name to those programme titles I've forgotten, I'd love to hear from them, as I would from any game-show addicts who have succeeded in the knotty problem of transforming them into presentable lesson ideas. 



Annette Margolis teaches learners of all ages in the Latina area of Italy. She is now an assistant tutor/trainer for the Cambridge CELTYL.

annettemargolis@usa.net

I think, therefore I learn 1

In the first of a new series, **Tessa Woodward** shares her thoughts on the need to encourage thinking for both teachers and learners.

'I'll be more enthusiastic about encouraging thinking outside the box when there's evidence of any thinking going on inside it.'

Terry Pratchett

As language teachers, we think hard about our lessons. Students, too, do a lot of thinking when trying to understand and use a new language. So it may sound odd to suggest that we start teaching thinking or that some of our classroom routines actually stop it dead. I'll explain! Let's start by looking at two different kinds of thinking.

1 Practical thinking in everyday life

These days, in many settings, we and our students receive masses of information and ideas from many different sources. Along with newspapers, books, radio and TV, we've now got emails and text messages, podcasts and internet chat lines bombarding us with messages. We have to sort all these out somehow, analyse them, recognise assumptions, evaluate arguments, make decisions and judge consequences. In this era of swift technological change, moving populations, short-term employment and family break-up, we have to plan, adapt and solve problems.

2 Thinking in language classes

Within language learning, we and our students also need to perform mental exercises such as: identifying, defining and analysing pieces of language, scanning for patterns, working out rules, devising mnemonics, memorising, coming up with creative alternatives when meeting gaps in our knowledge, recognising categories, evaluating the credibility of sources, being aware of feedback and reacting to it, diagnosing problems, being sensitive to context, predicting what comes next and evaluating our own and other people's work. We also have to deal cognitively with all the tasks and materials of a lively communicative classroom.

Whichever of these two kinds of thinking we're involved in, whether we

are queasily sorting out a hail of information in a storm of change or studiously manipulating new language, we need to stay calm and focused so that we can deal with it all and keep a sense of humour. We all, students and teachers, need to keep our wits about us. So let's check that we are allowing this thinking to happen in our classes.

A thinking classroom

There is a belief now that thinking can be encouraged through overt instruction in how to do it. This instruction, plus plenty of practice, it is believed, leads to an improvement in student performance, intelligence and achievement of tasks. But before we get to the specifics on overt instruction, there is much that a teacher can do to set the tone for mental exercise.

Being warm and encouraging, having high expectations of students, giving students the freedom to express opinions, to explore and take risks are all mentioned in the research literature.

Teacher behaviours

When searching for advice on how to achieve the kind of classroom climate that stimulates thinking, I came across a list of recommended teacher behaviours, which I have adapted below. We can:

- set/negotiate ground rules well in advance;
- provide well-planned, non-threatening activities;
- show respect for each student and accept individual differences;
- be flexible and positive;
- show that we are thinking, too;
- acknowledge every response;
- allow students to be active participants;
- create success-oriented experiences that are doable at least part of the time by each student;
- vary our methods.

(Based on Thacker, in Gough 1991)

Student questions

From the list above, we can see that encouraging students to be active and acknowledging every response are both important. Sometimes, when a student

asks a tricky question, not like 'Can we go now?', but more like 'Is a "mandate" the same as a "manifesto"?', some teachers may feel that the student is trying to catch them out. However, if we reset our mental compass, moving it away from the point labelled 'Giving my lesson' and towards the lodestar of 'Genuine curiosity', we can learn how our student is attempting to make sense of the lesson. So, as we ourselves become curious and observe and listen to our students carefully, being open about our own ignorance and showing the sources we use to check things out, we model behaviour that is valuable in a learning environment.

Let's think about it

Maybe, if I look at the list above of recommended behaviours for encouraging thinking, I can be tempted to think, 'Oh! I believe I already do all those!' But if I am honest, I'm not absolutely sure that I *hear* all student contributions, let alone acknowledge them all properly. If I really want to find out my patterns, I need to invite a couple of colleagues in to check this for me or record myself on audio and then analyse the tape afterwards.



In my next article I'll look at how teacher questions, wait-time and follow-up questions can encourage or can close down thinking! 

Paley, V 'On listening to what children say' *Harvard Educational Review* 56(2) 1986

Thacker, J in Gough, D 'Thinking about thinking' USA National Association of Elementary School Principals 1991



Tessa Woodward is a teacher and teacher trainer at Hilderstone College, Broadstairs, UK. She also edits *The Teacher Trainer for Pilgrims*, UK. She is a past president of IATEFL. Her latest book is *Headstrong*, published by TW Publications, which is reviewed on page 44.

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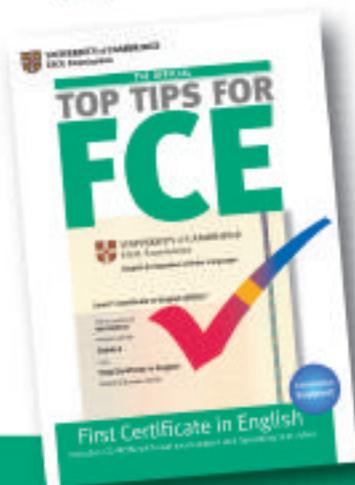
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Activity corner

Jon Marks offers two photocopiable, thematically-linked communication activities with an element of innovation.

Two 'speed pairing' activities

If speed dating isn't something you've heard of, it works like this: half a group of people who are seeking a partner sit at tables, while the other half circulate, sitting for just a few minutes at each table and exchanging personal information. The idea is that it's a quick and efficient way to find someone who shares your interests and whom you might like to date. The two 'speed pairing' activities here are loosely based on this format – although without the dating element, of course. The first is based on the idea of job interviews; the second involves the exchange of personal information to find similarities and differences.

While each activity is in progress, monitor the language being generated. Afterwards conduct a feedback session. What language problems did the students find they had? What errors did they make? How could they have expressed themselves better?

Both activities could also be done without photocopies. You could instead put the grids given here on the board for students to copy into their notebooks (in the second activity, writing 'S/D' rather than 'similar/different' 30 times!).

1 Job interviews

Level: Pre-intermediate and above

Time: A minimum of 20 minutes

Preparation: Make a copy of the handout on page 38 for each student (there are two given on the page to reduce photocopying). You may like to reorganise your classroom furniture so that interviewers and interviewees can sit facing each other – for example, by having two facing rows of chairs. (However, if this isn't practical, the students can just sit next to each other.)

Method

1 Brainstorm various types of job with the class. Which jobs are difficult to get? What qualifications/experience are needed? Which jobs would the class most like to do? What would they really not like to do? Choose a colourful job from the

suggestions you receive – *lion tamer* or *actor* will make for a more interesting activity than *cleaner* or *shop assistant*.

2 Divide the class in half and tell one half they are interviewers and the other half candidates for the chosen job. Give the interviewers a moment or two to think of the questions they are going to ask the candidates for the job. Meanwhile, the candidates think up an imaginary identity for themselves. This should be someone who has suitable qualifications and experience for the job. Avoid rushing this phase – check that everybody is ready before continuing.

3 Each candidate chooses an interviewer and sits down to be interviewed. They roleplay the interview, and the interviewers make notes on their handouts. Assist any pairs who are having trouble getting started.

4 When the interview is complete, the candidates stand and find another interviewer to repeat the process. There is space on the handout for up to seven interviews, but I would suggest that in most cases three to five will be about right.

5 To finish, each interviewer finds the person they thought most suitable, and offers them the job.

6 If you wish, begin the whole process again with a new job, and with the former candidates becoming interviewers and vice versa.

2 Similar or different?

Level: Intermediate and above

Time: A minimum of 20 minutes

Preparation: Make a copy of the handout on page 39 for each student.

Method

1 One way to use this is as a 'getting-to-know-you' type of activity. However, if that might generate unwelcome contrasts in social or financial status, or if the students know each other well already, you could

instead ask everybody to think up an imaginary identity. This could be something linked to a coursebook unit you have been using. For example, if the unit is about music, each student could pretend to be a famous musician or singer, imagining that person's personal circumstances and likes and dislikes if these are not already known.

2 Give each student a copy of the handout on page 39. Sections 7, 8 and 9 have to be completed by the students with their own ideas (food, music, TV, weather, book, clothes, etc). This could either be done by brainstorming suggestions and everybody writing in the same thing, or by each student privately writing in their own ideas.

3 Organise the class into random pairs – preferably people who don't usually sit together. The pairs then have conversations in order to find out in which areas their experiences and tastes are similar. As in a real-life conversation, there is no clear cue as to who should start and how the conversation should progress. As you monitor, assist any pairs who are faltering.

4 When the conversations have run their course, repeat with two further pairings. Approaching such an open and loosely-structured activity may have been quite challenging. Repeating it will give students the chance to improve on their first attempt and gain confidence. At the end, each student can tot up the scores to find which of the people they spoke to is the most similar to themselves.



Jon Marks is an ELT writer and editor, based in Italy. Recent publications include the *Puzzle Time* series and *IELTS Resource Pack* (both DELTA Publishing) and three titles in A & C Black's *Check Your English Vocabulary* series. He is currently developing teenager courses for China, and also draws the *Langwich Scool* cartoon in *ETp*.

j_g_marks@hotmail.com



Job interviews

Job

Name	Qualifications	Experience	Suitability

Job interviews

Job

Name	Qualifications	Experience	Suitability

Similar or different?

Name:
1 Family:	similar / different	similar / different	similar / different
2 Job:	similar / different	similar / different	similar / different
3 Residence:	similar / different	similar / different	similar / different
4 Leisure interests:	similar / different	similar / different	similar / different
5 Favourite type of holiday:	similar / different	similar / different	similar / different
6 Favourite type of film:	similar / different	similar / different	similar / different
7 Favourite type of:	similar / different	similar / different	similar / different
8 Favourite type of:	similar / different	similar / different	similar / different
9 Least favourite type of:	similar / different	similar / different	similar / different
10 Hopes for the future:	similar / different	similar / different	similar / different
TOTAL SIMILAR:	____ / 10	____ / 10	____ / 10

PREPARING TO TEACH ...

Can

John Potts displays his potential.

Ai I **can see** clearly now the rain has gone.
(Johnny Nash)

Aii I **can't dance**, I **can't sing**. (Genesis)

Bi You **can leave** your hat on. (Joe Cocker)

Bii You **can't have** my heart. (Joe Cocker)

Biii Baby, **can I hold** you? (Tracy Chapman)

Ci Smoking **can damage** your health.

Cii My iPod **can hold** 40,000 songs.

Di If it makes you happy, it **can't be** that bad. (Sheryl Crow)

Dii It **can't be raining** if they're still playing on Centre Court.

Diii It **can't have been** a good party if everyone left early

▲ MEANING

Ai refers to **physical ability** to do something.

Aii refers to an **acquired** or **learnt ability** (or not, in this case!).

In **Bi** the speaker **allows** someone to do something.

In **Bii** the speaker **refuses to let** someone do something.

In **Biii** the speaker **asks to be allowed** to do something.

Ci says that smoking is **inherently** dangerous – it's **potentially** dangerous.

Cii refers to the **inherent capacity** of my iPod – its **potential** capability.

In **Di** the speaker **assumes** that, from what she knows, it isn't so bad.

In **Dii** the speaker **assumes** that it isn't raining, based on the evidence.

In **Diii** the speaker **assumes** that it wasn't a good party, based on the evidence.

The basic concept of *can* is 'potentiality' – this encompasses notions such as potential ability, possibility and inherent capacity. These in turn are often expressed functionally – see *Function*.

▲ FORM

All ten sentences contain a form of *can*, which is a modal auxiliary verb.

Like most modals, *can* is followed by the infinitive without *to*. There is no third person *s* in the affirmative.

Aii, **Bii**, **Di**, **Dii** and **Diii** use the contracted form *can't*. The full form is written as one word: *cannot*.

Dii shows how modals can take on present progressive meanings by adding *be* + present participle.

Diii shows how modals can take on past meanings by adding *have* + past participle.

▲ FUNCTION

Modals are frequently associated with functions, and any modal may express a number of different functions. *Can* has four main functions:

Ai and **Aii** express **ability** (whether physical or an acquired skill).

Bi, **Bii** and **Biii** express, refuse or request **permission**.

Ci and **Cii** express **inherent capacity** or **potential**.

Di, **Dii** and **Diii** express **assumptions** and **deductions**.

▲ USE

Ai, **Aii**, **Ci** and **Cii** are used widely in both formal and informal contexts.

Bi, **Bii** and **Biii** are often felt to be informal and spoken, and some speakers prefer to employ *could* or *may* when expressing permission.

Di, **Dii** and **Diii** tend to be found in more informal and spoken contexts; in more formal registers, verbs such as *assume*, *presume*, *deduce*, *conclude*, etc may be used instead.

▲ PRONUNCIATION

In rapid fluent speech, *can* is often pronounced quite weakly. The negated form *can't* is pronounced kɑːnt in British English and kænt in American English.

▼ CONCEPT QUESTIONS

Aii *I can't dance, I can't sing.*
Am I able to dance or sing? (No.)
Why not? (Perhaps you never learnt how to.)
Is it possible to learn? (Yes – everyone has the potential!)

Cii *My iPod can hold 40,000 songs.*
What is the maximum number of songs on an iPod? (40,000.)
Do I have 40,000 on mine? (We don't know – perhaps it isn't full yet.)
But it has the capacity for 40,000? (Yes.)

Dii *It can't be raining if they're still playing on Centre Court.*
Do we think it's raining? (No, we don't.)
How do we know? (Because they're still playing on Centre Court.)
Are we 100 per cent sure it's not raining? (No, not 100 per cent.)
So how sure are we? (99.99 per cent!)
Why? (Because it's logical – when it rains they stop playing, so ...)

PREPARING TO TEACH ... *Can*

▼ SITUATIONS

I can, I can't Prepare a questionnaire for your learners to do in small groups. Include questions about languages, musical talents, skills such as driving or riding, technical skills, unusual skills, etc. Then each group member presents someone from the group and says what they can do.

Variation 1: This can also be done as a 'Find some things in common' activity.

Variation 2: It can also be done as a 'Find someone who can ...' walk-around activity.

Living here Ask the class to prepare some guidelines for visitors to their town or country, including things that one can or can't do – eg *you can buy bus tickets at a shop or kiosk, but you can't buy them on the bus.*

Dos and don'ts You can combine practising *can/can't* with *must/have to/mustn't* and make a list of dos and don'ts – either for a town or country, as above, or as school rules, etc.

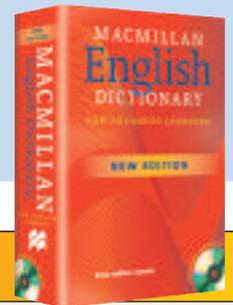
Can I? cards Make sets of cards (or simply a worksheet) with visual and/or word prompts, eg a cigarette, a car, a parking sign, a dictionary, a pen, a camera, etc (use Microsoft Clip Art as a source for the visuals). The students work in pairs and take turns to use a prompt card to ask for permission to do something (eg *Can I smoke here? Can I borrow your pen?* etc). Provide some exponents for the reply (eg *Yes, of course you can. No, I'm afraid you can't. Yes, you can, but only if you ...*).

Carrier bag clues (Note: this activity practises both *can't/can't have* and *must/must have* when making deductions and assumptions – you'll need some items of realia.) Take to class a carrier bag containing objects which reveal something about the owner (eg a cigarette lighter, several chocolate bar wrappers, an unused tram or bus ticket, a dated receipt, a comb, a lipstick, a boarding card stub, a French-English dictionary, a city street plan, a photo of a young man/woman, a phone card, etc). Students take an object from the bag one at a time and make deductions about the owner – for both the present and the past.



John Potts is a teacher and teacher trainer based in Zürich, Switzerland. He has written and co-written several adult coursebooks, and is a Joint Chief Assessor for the Cambridge/RSA CELTA scheme.

johnpotts@swissonline.ch



COMPETITION RESULTS

6	20	4	24		17	15	3	22	3	19	23	15
K	E	Y	S		T	H	O	R	O	U	G	H
18		3	24		3			12		11		12
N		O	S		O			A		P		A
20	7	19	12	17	3	22		17	3	9	20	21
E	Q	U	A	T	O	R		T	O	W	E	L
20		18		13		22		13		12		14
E		N		I		R		I		A		F
16	13	23	13	17		3	16	3	19	22	24	
D	I	G	I	T		O	D	O	U	R	S	
20			8			22				16		19
E			C			R				D		U
20	12	22	17	15	4		22	12	13	24	13	18
E	A	R	T	H	Y		R	A	I	S	I	N
11		12				24		22				8
P		A				S		R				C
	3	26	10	20	8	17		22	12	16	13	3
	O	B	J	E	C	T		R	A	D	I	O
26		26		18		19		13		20		19
B		B		N		U		I		E		U
20	25	13	24	17		16	20	5	20	21	3	11
E	X	I	S	T		D	E	V	E	L	O	P
12		17		20		13		20		17		21
A		T		E		I		E		T		L
1	19	24	15	22	3	3	1		23	12	2	20
M	U	S	H	R	O	O	M		G	A	Z	E

Congratulations to all those readers who successfully completed our Prize Crossword 28. We apologise for the fact that the wrong number was printed in one of the squares of the quotation. The winners, who will each receive a copy of the *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*, are:

Hiltrud Hartmüller, Ludwigshafen, Germany
Karolina Kaminska, Burton-on-Trent, UK
Jeevan Sagar, Pithora, India
Francesca Ferri, San Michele all'Adige, Italy
Magdalena Horajko, Reading, UK
Melissa Martin, Stuttgart, Germany
Noemi Strohmeier, Basel, Switzerland
Sandy Willcox, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Susan Ruston, Wokingham, UK
Fiona Maclean, Veyrier, Switzerland

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
M	Z	O	Y	V	K	Q	C	W	J	P	A	I
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
F	H	D	T	N	U	E	L	R	G	S	X	B

9	3	22	16	24		21	13	6	20		18	12	17	19	
W	O	R	D	S	,	L	I	K	E		N	A	T	U	
22	20			15	12	21	14	22	20	5	20	12	21		
R	E	,		H	A	L	F		R	E	V	E	A	L	
12	18	16		15	12	21	14	8	3	18	8	20	12	21	
A	N	D		H	A	L	F		C	O	N	C	E	A	
	17	15	20		24	3	19	21		9	13	17	15	13	18
	T	H	E		S	O	U	L		W	I	T	H	I	N

Tennyson, *In Memoriam*

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IT WORKS IN PRACTICE

More tested lessons, suggestions, tips and techniques which have all worked for ETP readers. Try them out for yourself – and then send us your own contribution.

All the contributors to It Works in Practice in this issue of ETP will receive copies of *Destinations Grammar & Vocabulary*, levels B1, B2 and C1 and C2, by Malcolm Mann and Steve Taylore-Knowles, published by Macmillan. These books were reviewed in Issue 57 of ETP. Macmillan have kindly agreed to be sponsors of It Works in Practice for this year.



Teaching Las Vegas style

Using dice with common classroom activities can turn monotonous drilling into lively, giggling sessions that whizz by faster than you can say 'double six'. The element of uncertainty jolts the students out of the stupor often induced by the anticipation of repetitive tasks. Handling dice is also a bonus for your tactile learners. The final advantage, which will have you leaping for joy, is that it requires virtually no extra planning, and after a few tries you can instantly introduce them at any time. My dice are a permanent part of my teaching bag and I use them at least a couple of times a week. Normal six-sided dice can liven up drilling, grammar formations and many other activities. However, if you get addicted (as I have done), you can purchase a range of special dice, with ten, 12 or 20 sides, and instead of numbers, parts of speech, modal verbs or even the entire alphabet! But let's start with the simple, traditional dice.

 For pronunciation, simply write a list of six items for drilling next to the numbers 1 to 6 on the board. Put the students into pairs and give each pair a die. They take turns to roll it and say aloud the corresponding word. The edge-of-seat attitude which replaces the seen-it-all-before yawning has to be seen to be believed. The items can either be individual words, or useful phrases and sentences.

 This can be expanded into other areas very easily by making the six items on the list prompts – for example, each number could correspond to a different question word, and the student has to make up a question using that word. Alternatively, the number could represent a question which the student must answer, or a grammatical structure which they must use in a sentence. The options you can apply this to are limitless!

 Make a long list of words; students roll the dice to pick words from the list and then make a story with the chosen words.

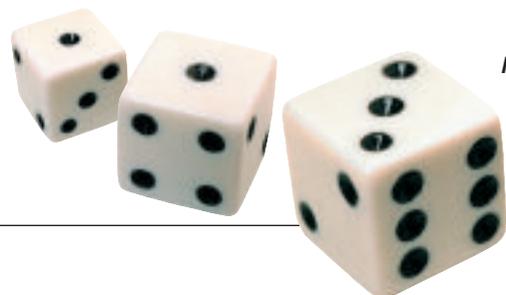
 Ask the students to roll the dice and think of a word with the corresponding number of syllables (4, 5 and 6 can be made to be secondary representations of 1, 2 and 3).

 Make two lists of words. The students roll the dice twice to choose a word from each list and then make a sentence using both words. The lists can include combinations of things such as weather and days of the week, verbs and places, clothes and countries. As long as they are grammatically correct, nonsensical sentences (eg *I wear shorts in Siberia*) simply add to the entertainment. A particularly good use for this is to practise the third person *s*, with one list of pronouns and the other of verbs which they must adjust or not as appropriate.

 The advantage of ten- and twenty-sided dice is that they allow the above exercises to encompass more items. There is also the obvious advantage of being able to drill numbers instantly. To begin with, the students simply roll the ten-sided die and say the number it lands on. Then they can progress on to the twenty-sided die, and finally, by giving them two ten-sided dice and having one represent 'tens', all the numbers up to 100 can be drilled.

 The word and letter dice mentioned above have more obvious uses, but more limited scope. The modals and parts of speech dice can again be used, alone or in conjunction, as prompts for practising making grammatical sentences, and the alphabet dice can be used for drilling the alphabet, or saying words starting with a particular letter.

*Kat Brenke
Reading, UK*



Cow story

This is an entertaining jigsaw-reading activity involving two versions of the same story. The example below is adapted from *Stranger than Fiction* by Phil Healy and Rick Glanville, published by Penguin. After I did this activity, my class were well motivated to read the book.

1 Divide the class into two groups, A and B. Give all the A students a copy of Story 1 and the B students Story 2 and ask them to read their stories and look at the instructions below them.

2 Have all the As pair up with a B. They take turns asking one question each until they have solved the mystery of the cow.

STORY 1

Once there was a TV news reader. He had a very fast, open car. He was driving to work very quickly. Suddenly something fell into the back of the car. He jumped. What was it? He stopped the car to look. There in the back seat was a big, dead cow. He looked at his watch. It was 8.30 am. He was a famous TV person. He did not want people to see him with a dead cow in the back seat. He tried to move the cow. The cow was too heavy. He needed help so he kept going. He stopped to get something to drink. The people in the shop asked him why he had a dead cow in his back seat. He said he did not know. He said it came from the sky. The people thought he was telling a story for TV. Then someone laughed.

TV news reader

You meet a farmer while you are having a drink. Ask him:

- 1 Where have you come from?
- 2 What is your work?
- 3 What car do you drive?
- 4 Have you had a good journey?
- 5 What happened on your journey?
- 6 What time did it happen?

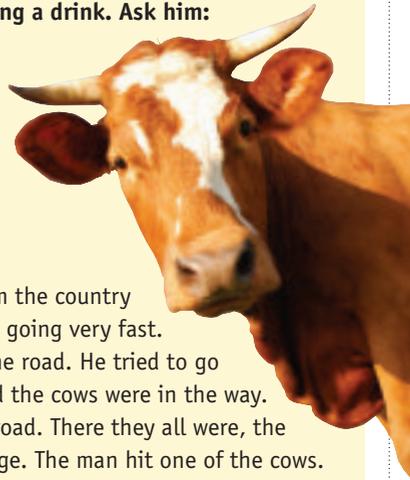
STORY 2

Once there was a farmer travelling from the country to the town. He was in a truck. He was going very fast. Suddenly there were a lot of cows in the road. He tried to go round them. He was going too fast and the cows were in the way. He was driving on a bridge over a big road. There they all were, the cows, the man and his truck, on a bridge. The man hit one of the cows. The cow fell off the bridge. It fell down to the road underneath. The driver got a fright. He stopped. He looked over the bridge. He could not see the cow. He looked over the other side. There was no cow. Where could such a big cow go? He did not know. He looked at his watch. It was 8.30 am. He went on and stopped in the next town to get a drink. There was a man from a TV station having a drink as well. He had a very strange story to tell. The man heard the story and he laughed.

Farmer

You meet a TV news reader while you are having a drink. Ask him:

- 1 Where have you come from?
- 2 What is your work?
- 3 What car do you drive?
- 4 Have you had a good journey?
- 5 What happened on your journey?
- 6 What time did it happen?



Sandy Willcox
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Listening for punctuation

This activity raises students' awareness of the importance of punctuation as well as being great fun to do. It shows how non-verbal signals in spoken language can be reflected in punctuation. Students listen to a passage and punctuate it according to how it is read.

1 Write the following on the board:

cough, er, um, pause = comma

long pause = full stop

laughter, sigh = exclamation mark

decrease/increase volume = open/close brackets

rise in intonation = question mark

2 Give a copy of the following text to each of the students and ask them to listen as you read it and add punctuation according to the instructions on the board. Don't forget to remind the students that all new sentences need to begin with a capital letter.

Students' version

While I was at school I played tennis I wasn't very good at tennis one day I lost a game 6-0 6-0 6-0 no one was watching fortunately so what was my favourite sport table tennis I think anyway sport was not my strong point but I loved drawing I spent many happy hours sitting in the art room with my pad and pencil just drawing what fun I had there

3 Read the text aloud as follows:

Teacher's version

While I was at school (pause) I played tennis (long pause) I wasn't very good at tennis (laugh) one day I lost a game 6-0 6-0 6-0 (decrease volume) no one was watching fortunately (increase volume) (long pause) so what was my favourite sport (intonation rises) table tennis (er) I think (long pause) anyway (cough) sport was not my strong point (er) but I loved drawing (long pause) I spent many happy hours sitting in the art room with my pad and pencil (um) just drawing (long pause) what fun I had there (sigh)

Solution

While I was at school, I played tennis. I wasn't very good at tennis! One day I lost a game 6-0 6-0 6-0 (no one was watching fortunately). So what was my favourite sport? Table tennis, I think. Anyway, sport was not my strong point, but I loved drawing. I spent many happy hours sitting in the art room with my pad and pencil, just drawing. What fun I had there!

4 After checking answers, as a follow-up, get the students to read their final versions aloud, using the same methods to indicate the punctuation.

Simon Mumford
Izmir, Turkey

Reviews

Headstrong

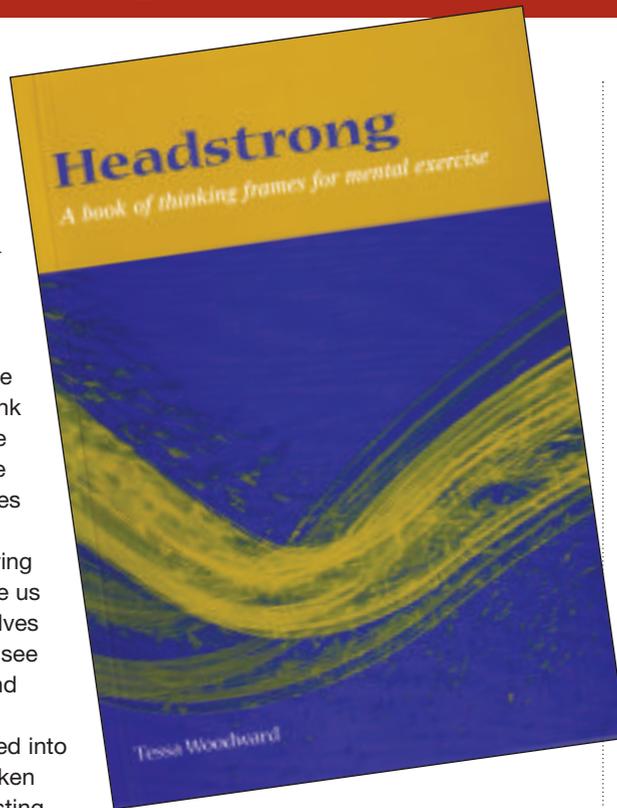
by Tessa Woodward
Tessa Woodward Publications
2006
0-9547621-1-8

Headstrong is a delightful and approachable book which examines different ways of thinking and recommends that we take a step back and actually think about our thinking, identifying the different types of thinking that we employ and then making ourselves mentally fitter by consciously practising these methods and trying out alternative ones. This will give us a deeper understanding of ourselves and also of others, helping us to see why people react to situations and experiences as they do.

In this book, thinking is divided into various frameworks: some are taken from everyday life, such as the listing and categorisation that most of us engage in, some from the fields of psychology, Neuro-Linguistic Programming, drama, Buddhism and education. Tessa Woodward describes each framework and exemplifies it clearly, often with personal stories. She demonstrates how to spot a particular type of thinking at work and identifies the effects that it has or is likely to have on ourselves, the situation we are in, and on other people around us. She also suggests practical ways in which we might want to use each framework to improve our lives, solve a particular problem or enrich our experience at work or at home.

At the end of most of the 11 chapters is a section with ideas on how English language teachers can use the frameworks productively with their students. Teachers who want to reach their students by finding ways of approaching them that complement the students' own thinking styles will find this useful. The book will be good, too, for teachers with an interest in how people think, and who want to expand their students' thinking repertoire or challenge them to try out different ways of thinking and working.

Martin Richardson
London, UK



Fifty Ways to Improve your Telephoning and Teleconferencing Skills

by Ken Taylor
Summertown Publishing 2008
978-1-905992-065

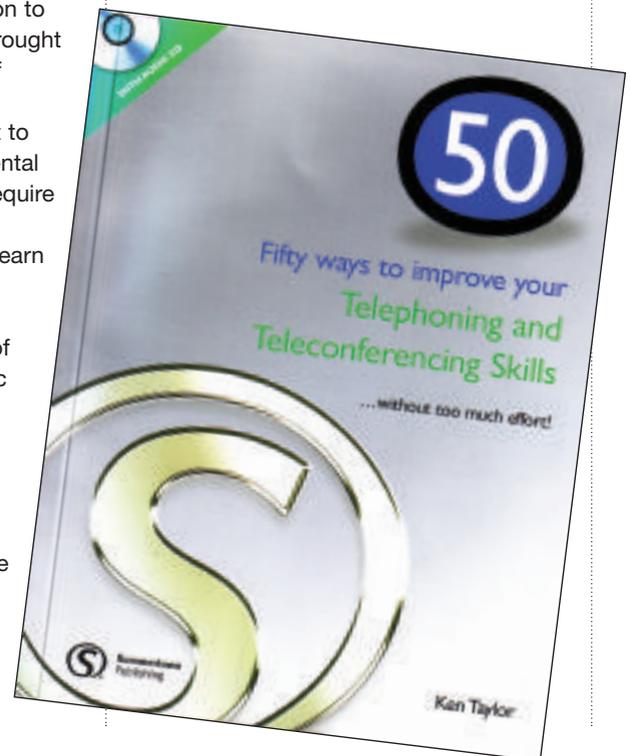
This self-help manual for business people tackles head-on the new dimension to telephone calls which has been brought about both by the development of sophisticated digital telephony technologies and the pressure not to travel unnecessarily for environmental reasons. Students now not only require skills for dealing with one-to-one telephone calls, but also need to learn techniques for being involved in teleconferencing.

This book covers both types of call. It teaches and practises basic telephoning techniques but also includes three modules on the specific requirements of teleconference calls. Here it goes into the technicalities of making teleconference calls, as well as the protocol and 'rules', together with tips on acting as the chair of the discussion or just getting your voice heard as one of several participants.

Self-study materials need to be very clear and easy to follow and the structure and layout of this book are impressive. Beginning sensibly with a self-assessment sheet so students can establish where they are at present and where they hope to be, the book progresses in clear logical steps from preparation for making a phone call, through the basic practicalities of getting through, to the actual phone call itself. Where the book scores highly for me is in the little extras: students are not just taught how to be polite on the phone, they are given techniques for managing the atmosphere, including presenting negative information in a 'good news sandwich'; they are not just taught what to say when making small talk, they are shown how to find opportunities for making small talk by listening to and picking up on what other people say.

'Top tips' and 'Test yourself' boxes are scattered throughout the ten modules. The tips are helpful and well thought-out and the tests give students a chance to check their progress as they work through the material. Module summaries at the end of each one draw the most important points together as a final reminder.

The final module is a language summary, which brings together all the



Reviews

most useful phrases and expressions which have been introduced in the book. These are clearly categorised by function. This section provides a very useful reference, almost a language bank, which students can refer to quickly when they need a particular expression for a particular occasion.

The book comes with an audio CD attached to the inside back cover and the tapescripts are all printed at the back.

Tim Smith
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

teachers and students working towards international exams value good vocabulary development material and this is very good material indeed.

Many of the books in the series are by Rawdon Wyatt, who has a proven track-record for producing great worksheets and photocopiable materials. The instructions are clear and the activities, including exercises, puzzles, quizzes and word games, are motivating and easy to use.

A lot of thought has gone into these books so that they target not only the vocabulary areas which are likely to appear in the exams, but also the specific focus of the vocabulary testing that occurs in the exam questions. So where exam questions

frequently test words with similar meanings, there are plenty of practice exercises that show such words in context and help students differentiate between them.

Where an exam has a focus on

topic-based

vocabulary, there are sections which broaden the students' range of vocabulary within those fields.

These books may not be all that students need to pass these various exams, but students who have done the amount of vocabulary work

contained within them will certainly have the edge over those who have not.

Louisa Judge
Toulouse, France

Check Your Vocabulary for ...

by Rawdon Wyatt, Tessie Dalton and David Porter

Macmillan 2008

PET 978-0-230-03359-7

FCE 978-0-230-03363-4

IELTS 978-0-230-03360-3

TOEIC 978-0-230-03362-7

TOEFL 978-0-230-03361-0

Academic English

978-0-230-03364-1

There are six volumes in this series, each geared towards a different international exam. They are designed for either self-study or classroom use and each aims to bring the students' vocabulary level up to that required by the particular exam it targets.

The claim on the front cover of each book: *All you need to pass your exams!* is, perhaps, a little exaggerated. Most of these exams require rather more than a sound grounding in vocabulary, but there is no doubt that this series will prove invaluable as a step along the way. Both



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Images

10

Jamie Keddie's classes go digital.

Photography has been thrust into a new phase of its history. The development of digital cameras and camera phones, as well as online photo sharing sites, image manipulation software and other applications, has resulted in our taking and sharing more pictures than ever before. In the news media, we see an increasing number of images that have come from ordinary people, and last year the mayor of New York City even announced a programme in which members of the public will be able to send mobile phone images of crimes in progress directly to the emergency services.

Inevitably, photographic devices find their way into the classroom. At their worst, they can be disruptive and cause privacy concerns. But at their best, they can be a valuable classroom resource. In this article, which is the last in the series, we will look at a few ideas for ways in which they can be used with our language learners.

Privacy

Of course, if you intend to photograph your students, it is absolutely essential to consider their privacy. Most people are unenthusiastic about having a camera thrust into their face, especially if it is first thing on a Monday morning. If possible, give prior warning of your

intentions. That way, at least, everyone will have the opportunity to make themselves look good on the day should they want to. Alternatively, focus in on the extroverts who will do anything for a laugh and shy away from those who may feel self-conscious. Use your discretion.

If you intend to photograph young learners, you must get permission from their parents first.

Idea 1: Remembering students' names

For classes of good-humoured students, creating mug shots is an effective way of learning new names at the beginning of any new course. Start off by showing them a real police booking photograph (there are thousands at www.mugshots.com) and then asking individuals to write their names clearly on pieces of paper before posing for the camera.



Later in the lesson, when your new students are engaged in an activity, you can discreetly scroll through the photographs in your digital camera and memorise their names.

Your students will want to see their pictures, so prepare a slideshow for the next day, and use the images to teach, practise or drill language such as:

- *Julio looks very serious.*
- *Elke is smiling.*
- *Elke is grinning.*
- *Pilar looks like she is trying to keep a straight face.*
- *Pilar looks as if she is trying not to laugh.*

Idea 2: What were we wearing?

Take a group photograph of your class and before the next lesson prepare a number of statements – some true and some false – which describe what individuals were wearing. For example:

- *Safa was wearing a T-shirt that said: 'I am the boss'.*
- *Daniela and Graziella were both wearing white blouses.*
- *Teresa was wearing a waistcoat.*
- *Marta was wearing her hair tied back.*
- *Toni was wearing a light grey suit.*
- *Lourdes was wearing a T-shirt that had little hearts on it.*

The next day, dictate the sentences to your students, ask them to decide whether they are true or false and then show them the previous day's photograph to let them check their answers.

Idea 3: Snap the board

Digital cameras are ideal for documenting the language that arises in the classroom and gets written up on a non-interactive whiteboard. Simply write the date in a corner of the board and take a picture at the end of the class for your records.

Photographs of the whiteboard can



also be used to revise and recap language at later dates. For example, I used the following display to represent nine things that a group of Italian learners on a summer course in England said they would have to get used to if they lived in Britain.

If I lived in England I would have to get used to:

- ... driving on the left.
- ... spicy food.
- ... carrying an umbrella everywhere.
- ... having two showers a day because there are no bidets.
- ... having dinner at half past six.
- ... being polite all the time.
- ... the rain.
- ... big coffees.
- ... using an adaptor for electrical appliances.



Later that evening, I emailed the photograph of the whiteboard to each of my students. Their homework task was to send me back an email containing the nine sentences written out in full. Note: During the speaking activity, I had not let any of the students take notes or write down the target language.

Idea 4: Scared students

For this activity, which practises adjectives of emotion ending in *-ing* and *-ed*, I started by writing the following on the board:

- *Your pet hate*
- *A time when you felt very tired or exhausted*
- *The most boring job in the world (What do you think it would be?)*
- *Your phobias*
- *What do you do to relax?*
- *A confusing aspect of the English language*
- *An embarrassing incident that you remember (When you are embarrassed, your face goes red.)*
- *The most disappointing/over-rated/predictable film you have ever seen*

Before getting students to share their ideas in pairs, I told them about some of mine. For example, my pet hate is people who block the escalator on the Barcelona metro. The most boring job in the world has to be the one that Mr Bucket had in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* – screwing tops onto tubes of toothpaste.

Once everyone had discussed their ideas, they were encouraged to share them with the rest of the class. Following these exchanges, the students were invited to select one of eight banners to describe how they felt/would feel in the situations considered (*annoyed, tired/exhausted, bored, frightened, relaxed, confused, embarrassed and disappointed*).

The students were then photographed holding the appropriate banner and acting out the emotion.

Finally, I sent the images to my students on a pdf file and asked them to send me their original ideas and experiences (pet hates, etc.) **ETP**

Thanks to Maria Grazia (annoyed), Roberto (tired and exhausted), Daniela (bored), Graziella (relaxed), Marta (confused), Gloria (embarrassed), Teresa (disappointed), Elena (bored), Delia (frightened), Monica (embarrassed), Santina (disappointed), and Rossella (frightened).

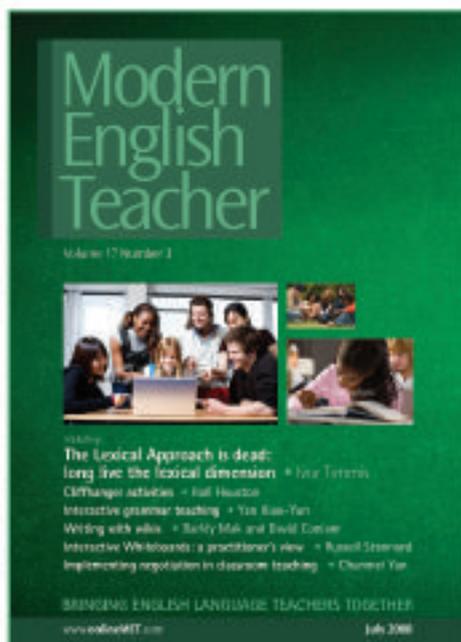


Jamie Keddie is a Barcelona-based teacher and teacher trainer. He blogs at jamiokeddie.com and also runs teflclips.com, a site dedicated to the possibilities of YouTube in language teaching.

jamiokeddie@hotmail.com

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ISSN 0308 0587

Four issues per year

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Danger: Assimilation!

Christie Murphy warns of the hazards of living amongst non-native speakers.

In a field rife with acronyms (TEFL, TESOL, TEAL, PPP, ARC, TBL, NST, NNST, etc) I would like to suggest another: ABNST – Assimilated Bilingual Native Speaker Teacher.

Ania, my colleague at a language school in Poland, teaches her own children English at home. She recently told me, with some embarrassment, that her six year old had been correcting his pre-school English teacher's accent. *'In English they don't roll their Rs, you know,'* he mentioned to her helpfully. And he reported to his mother that the teacher had promptly 'cleaned up' her pronunciation.

I had a moment of native-speaker arrogance: What was the teacher thinking? Why would anyone model the wrong pronunciation if they knew better? But Ania had a different take on the situation: The teacher probably thought the children would find it easier to understand an accent closer to their own.

More astonished superiority on my part ... and then I realised that I do exactly the same thing! I'm one of those teachers who has settled long-term in one place and acquired a new language – in my case, Poland and Polish. My occasional use of Polish-English usually involves lexical or structural errors rather than pronunciation, but they could be misleading for my learners and others with whom I sometimes speak English.

Admittedly, there are huge advantages for teachers in really knowing the homeland and culture of their students, and it is an immeasurable plus to speak their L1. We understand why learners make certain errors, and it's easier to help them. Beyond that, showing respect for the local culture and the language (by learning it) gives a teacher credibility and goes a long way toward building trust. The nature of such relationships, in the classroom and beyond it, is totally different from what the drive-by ELT teacher can experience.

Deceptive disadvantages

However, the disadvantages include assimilating the inter-language of those learners and using some of it ourselves – which deceives learners as to the real nature of English. This probably happens much more outside than inside the classroom, but we can never shed our role of being English language models, no matter where we are.

Why do conscientious teachers fall into these patterns of errors? I can think of five reasons.

- 1** We hear the same inter-language errors so many millions of times that they begin to sound normal. Once I heard myself tell a friend quite naturally, *'I said him that ...'* and was then struck dumb with shock. But with other, less striking errors I've hardly caught myself, and I know other ABNSTs are the same.
- 2** We lose the energy to fight deeply rooted errors. One example in Polish-English is to call evening 'afternoon'. Polish has separate words for morning, afternoon and evening, but the corresponding time of day connected with each is different from that in English-speaking countries. Furthermore, I often use the 24-hour clock, as Poles do in all contexts, when speaking of times of day, rather than am and pm, in order to avoid confusion when speaking English with Poles.
- 3** We want to avoid social awkwardness. Recently I invited a friend to a restaurant for lunch. We were speaking English, so I said *'I invite you'*, a direct translation of the Polish way to say *'My treat'*. Because the idea of my paying could have been slightly uncomfortable for him, I took this

shortcut to move us through the situation quickly, rather than explain an English idiom. No one wants to 'play the teacher' always and everywhere.

- 4** Home language becomes generalised. Many ABNSTs live with native speakers of their new language, and over time create their own dictionary of blended lexical items. Sometimes this is a form of normal language play, but others hearing it won't know that.
- 5** To make things easier. Like the pre-school teacher, I just want to make it easier for my listeners. Subconsciously I decide, *'So many things are difficult for them; I'll be kind and go more than half-way in creating understanding.'*



There are regions of the world where blended forms of English are the norm, but it probably isn't the role of the native speaker teacher to lead in their formation. Our students need a solid grasp of International English, and trust us for an accurate model.

What to do? We ABNSTs need to stay aware of our tendency to be influenced by our L2 and actively resist it, at least in the company of our students. Regular immersion visits back to our country of origin are a good reality check! **ETP**



Christie Murphy has been a teacher of English in Poland since 1989, first in a language school (including a stint as director of studies) and now in a theological college, where she is the entire English department. She is also a CertTESOL trainer with International Training Network in Bournemouth, UK.

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Eye on the classroom

A regular series by **John Hughes**, with practical ideas for observing teachers in the classroom and an observation sheet to photocopy and use straight away.

2 Focused observation

We often assume that a classroom observation should involve watching and noting down comments on everything that happens. In fact, an observation is often more valuable when the focus is on only one aspect of the lesson. This means that any feedback you give to the teacher will be very precise and much clearer. It also means that you can observe for an area that you personally want to develop in your own teaching.

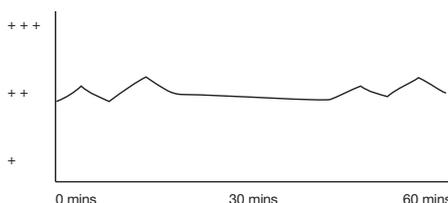
In this article, we'll look at a number of areas of teaching which you can focus on individually. There is an observation sheet on page 51 for you to photocopy and use. Unlike many of the observation sheets which we use for note-taking during classroom observation and reference afterwards, this one takes the form of a graph, which provides a very clear visual representation. The Y-axis represents the length of the lesson or length of the observation (in this case, a 60-minute lesson) and the X-axis, as we will see below, can represent a number of different aspects of classroom teaching.

● Pace

Pace is important in any lesson and it is sometimes mistakenly assumed that lessons must always be fast. In fact, many lessons benefit from regular changes of pace (especially with younger learners) so observing for this can be helpful. You can monitor the pace of a lesson with the observation sheet on page 51 by using the X-axis to represent a faster or slower pace. The observer draws a line during the course of the lesson which shows when the pace becomes faster or slower. A lesson with regular changes of pace might look like this:



On the other hand, a lesson with few changes of pace or difference in activity type might look like this:



In addition to drawing the trend line along the graph, the observer can also make notes about what caused a change of pace. For example, maybe the pace quickened when students stood up to do a roleplay or it slowed when they completed a controlled practice exercise in their books.

● One student

Sometimes we want to observe one student in particular, so we build a picture of how this individual is working within the whole class. This is also a useful exercise to remind us that a class is a group of different individuals, not a homogenous whole!

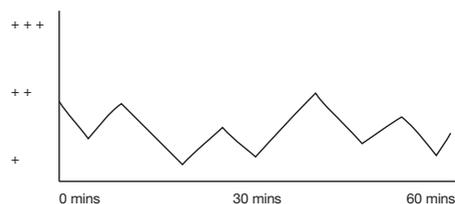
Choose a student to monitor, or perhaps the teacher will ask you to concentrate on a particular student they are concerned about. The X-axis on the graph represents the student's level of interest, motivation and involvement. As you draw the trend line, you can also make notes on the graph to comment on what they were doing that either displayed high interest in the lesson or low interest. Afterwards, in a feedback session, you can discuss what might have raised the student's interest at all stages of the lesson. This activity is even more interesting if there is a group of observers all watching different students. By gathering the graphs together, you create a wider perspective on why some students are responding positively to a lesson and why perhaps some aren't.

● Authenticity

The graph also allows us to monitor how authentic a task is or how real the response of our students is. When you think students are giving very authentic responses, perhaps to classroom discussion, the trend line rises. If the exercise seems very controlled or inauthentic then the line drops. As with pace, you would hope to see plenty of fluctuations, with perhaps more authenticity towards the end of a lesson.

● Learner-centred or teacher-centred?

You can also measure where the focus is at different stages of the lesson. For example, in the graph below, the high points show that the lesson was learner-centred with students working together. The low points show that the lesson was very focused on the teacher. The graph also shows us that the majority of the lesson seems to be very teacher-centred. This isn't necessarily negative, but most lessons would normally aim to be more student-centred.



Observing objectively

You will probably think of more ways to use this approach to observing. For example, you could also use it to measure the balance of teacher and student talking time. One important point to note about this graph, however, is that it is an example of an observation tool which reports back on the lesson rather than one which forces you into making judgements about a lesson. There is some level of subjectivity when using it and it certainly isn't 100 per cent scientific. Nevertheless, it does provide a useful overview of an aspect of teaching. It offers a useful starting point for discussion after a lesson between teacher and observer. It can quickly highlight causes of difficulties or demonstrate why a lesson has been successful. Finally, with different observers in one lesson all focusing on different aspects of the lesson, a collection of graphs together builds into an accessible perspective of the lesson.



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Focused observation

Focus:

+

+

+

+

+

+

0 mins

30 mins

60 mins

Length of lesson/observation

Getting involved

Sandee Thompson adds up the advantages of professional development.

There are many things that we can do as teachers to 'keep up with the ELT Joneses', but for some of us, it all seems either too overwhelming, too much work or unnecessary. So here is a list of reasons *why you should* and *how you can* get involved in your own professional development, and also *how* and *where* you can do it.

Why should you get involved?

First of all, professional development is good for you, as well as for your students. Learning about new techniques, methods and approaches helps you avoid becoming stale and ensures that you remain interested in your field and that you continue to learn. If you are interested in what you are teaching, the chances are greater that your students will also be stimulated – or at least curious enough to see the lesson through to the end!

Secondly, keeping up with what is new in the field provides you with more options in the classroom. It is never too late to find a new technique that 'speaks' to you, and providing variety in lessons means that all of the students are engaged, not just the ones who are accustomed to your individual style or who respond to your personality.

A third reason to get involved in professional development is to advance your career, which often means monetary gain, a self-confidence boost and new connections. Unless you hope to keep the same job for your entire life,

and many people don't, making contacts in the field is one way to discover what else is out there.

If you are in a senior position in your place of employment, you can also set a good example for newer teachers. *Life-long learning* is the new catchphrase for a reason and, since you are working in the field of education, it is also good to practise what you preach to your students.

Learning about new techniques, methods and approaches helps you avoid becoming stale and ensures that you remain interested in your field

How and where can you do it?

Resources for professional development come in a variety of shapes, sizes and price tags. They can be of a short or long duration and can be directly or indirectly related to ELT. You can do them as solitary activities or join others in your quest for knowledge.

It can be as simple as joining an online chat group, searching the web for new materials or articles, becoming a member of a national TESL group or picking up a journal at the library. It

can also be more complex, such as joining a TESL board, designing a conference workshop or setting up a peer observation schedule in your workplace. Whatever you do, big or small, you are contributing to your professional development and, possibly, are acting as a model for others to follow.

So, what specifically can you do?

Continue your education

Starting with your individual self, you can begin with your education. Certificate courses abound, some good and some poor, but all will offer you something. These can be done online, as distance courses, and as intensive, month-long courses like the CELTA or Trinity certificate. These are the starting-off point and are considered pre-service certificates by many.

Once you have got your feet wet, the next course of action is to take the Cambridge DELTA (diploma), or the Trinity diploma. Some opt to go the Masters (MA) route, and still others do both since they tend to focus on different aspects of teaching, methodology and theory. DELTAs and MAs come in a variety of options to meet everyone's needs or preferences. DELTAs can be done distance, in-house or as intensive 8- to 10-week courses. MAs can be done online or on campus over two years or four, with a dissertation or a practicum, or without either! There is something for everyone out there and they are accessible to anyone who can get to a mail box or click an icon on their computer screen.

Most boards and conference organisers want 'new blood', so don't be shy about volunteering in some capacity!

You can take an MA in linguistics, teaching, translation, with a focus on youth, business or just about anything.

Some teachers, those who seem to know what they want to do in life right out of high school, go into the Second Language Education field for their first degree and then work in the regular school system. Whatever you do here, and in whichever order you do them, it is never too late to take one of these courses: universities worldwide are screaming for students and it is unlikely that you would not be able to find one that interests you!

At the other end of the time-scale, one-day training opportunities are also prevalent in our field. Being trained in First Aid or Safety in the Workplace is just as important in a language-teaching institution as being trained as an IELTS examiner or learning to teach a new level. They are also wonderful opportunities to learn something new and to contribute to your school's corporate plan.

Join professional organisations

Joining a professional organisation is another terrific way to ensure you continue your growth in the field. In Canada, membership of any provincial affiliate group automatically ensures you also become a TESL Canada member. In my province, Nova Scotia, we hold an annual conference each autumn and a half-day conference every spring. Members are given a discount if they present a workshop, and round-table discussions of new and up-coming issues are also very popular. The USA and the UK, as well as countries such as Japan, Korea, Brazil and Mexico, all have TESL organisations that promote learning, fellowship and professional standards.

Serving on a board or committee that you are interested in is a wonderful way to meet other like-minded people, become actively involved and make connections for future job opportunities, as well as to continue your growth as a professional. Most boards and conference organisers want 'new blood', so don't be shy about volunteering in some capacity! It can be as mundane as licking envelopes or as

Being aware of current issues and methods in the field, as well as understanding the history of language teaching, is both interesting and informative

interesting as finding guest speakers for conferences. Whatever you are able to do, you can be sure it will be welcome.

Keep up with current ELT literature

Being aware of current issues and methods in the field, as well as understanding the history of language teaching, is both interesting and informative and can expand your own knowledge base. There are so many resources available to you: the web (current university papers, studies and dissertations, e-magazines, chat rooms), magazines and journals (*ETp*, *Modern English Teacher*, *ELT Journal*, *TESOL Quarterly*, *TESL Canada Journal*), newspapers (*EL Gazette*) and, of course, books available through publishers aimed specifically at English teachers. There is Pearson's *How to teach ...* series, the Oxford and Cambridge teachers' series and a multitude of other texts and readers that explore everything from Multiple Intelligences to discourse practices. Nowadays, being well-read is easy, and working in a remote location or not being affiliated to a school is no longer a deterrent or excuse! I ordered 80 per cent of the books I required for my MA from Amazon and had them within two weeks of ordering them.

In Canada, you can also get a university access card that allows you to borrow books from universities all across the country, so if your local community does not train English language teachers, you can still have access to materials delivered to your door or to your local university or college.

Getting involved

Organise observations

Another way you can continue your development as a teacher is to ensure you continue to receive feedback on your teaching. Asking students to evaluate your lessons on a regular basis is always a good idea, and so is asking your supervisor or DOS to observe your classes. Even if your DOS does annual or bi-annual observations and provides you with feedback on your teaching, setting up a peer-observation schedule is also a great way to gather new ideas and to help your colleagues in their personal growth as well. If you work at a teacher training school, you are likely to have trainees sitting in your class as well. Asking the trainer for feedback from the trainees is another way to get input into your teaching.

Keeping tabs on your development is also important. Using a checklist like the one on page 55 is a way of ensuring you are developing new ideas, trying new things and staying on top of what is current in the field.

Get involved in mentoring

At my school we have a mentorship programme that helps get everyone involved. Whenever a new or new-to-us teacher begins, a mentor is arranged to provide support. This includes everything from how to write a report, to where the extra toilet paper is kept. Everything that will help them to feel comfortable and to assimilate into the team as quickly as possible is included. Being asked to be a mentor means that you have been around long enough to know where things are and have demonstrated that you care about the school and your colleagues. It is considered a privilege and an honour, and it always interests me to see how much confidence the role instils in the person doing it.

Participate in workshops

The best way to learn something is to teach it, or so some people say. In keeping with this idea, researching, designing and presenting workshops is one of the best ways to expand your horizons. Start small by doing it for your colleagues. Once you discover how easy it actually is, you can then do it for your provincial organisation – it is only a very small step after that to doing a workshop for a national conference! Volunteering to do workshops at the local library or YMCA for people who volunteer to teach in the community is always welcome, and so is volunteering to work with newcomers who would like to put a workshop together themselves!

Another way you can continue your development as a teacher is to ensure you continue to receive feedback on your teaching

Strive to be the best you can be

You are in charge of your own destiny. Whenever possible, it is helpful to demonstrate to your supervisors that you are not afraid of change or challenges. Ask to be given different classes to teach and, if possible, do some peer observations to demonstrate your interest and to gather ideas prior to teaching the class. If you generally teach lower levels, try teaching some exam classes or business classes to see how the other half lives. The difference in perspective will be very eye-opening as high-stakes exam classes are often filled with students who are extrinsically motivated, and that difference in dynamic will be another opportunity for professional, and personal, growth.

Give yourself a break

Finally, the last area to look at when it comes to professional development involves ensuring that you are a well-rounded person. While there is not room in this article to explore this area in depth, suffice it to say that a well-rounded, emotionally healthy person is more apt to contribute to the overall atmosphere of a school and a classroom and is more interested in growing professionally than someone who is burnt out and in need of a break. Taking time away from the classroom and your students is essential if you are going to gain, or keep, a healthy perspective and continue to be inspired by your classes. I am a strong advocate of taking short mini-breaks, while some of my colleagues prefer to take month-long sojourns away from it all.



Whatever you do to keep yourself inspired, continue to do it. It certainly can't hurt you in any way and may even inspire others to do the same. And remember, while it is certainly a lot of work to keep abreast of changes in the field, your students will appreciate the effort and since, after all, they are the reason we are in the classroom in the first place, it makes good sense to keep them inspired. **ETp**



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Writing for ETp

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Personal checklist

In the last 12 months, have I ...	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1 taken a related course?												
2 attended a workshop?												
3 attended a conference?												
4 given a workshop?												
5 read any ELT-related materials?												
6 been observed by my DOS?												
7 been observed by a colleague?												
8 been observed by a trainee?												
9 observed someone teach?												
10 volunteered in the community?												
11 taught a different class?												
12 asked for feedback from my students?												
13 read an ELT journal or magazine?												
14 supported a new teacher?												
15 served on an ELT board or committee?												

SCRAPBOOK

GEMS, TITBITS, PUZZLES, FOIBLES, QUIRKS, BITS & PIECES,
QUOTATIONS, SNIPPETS, ODDS & ENDS,
WHAT YOU WILL

Ten household truths

Have you ever noticed that the laws of household physics are every bit as real as all the other laws in the universe?
Here are a few examples:

- 1 Children's eagerness to assist in any project varies in inverse proportion to their ability to do the work involved.
- 2 Leftovers always expand to fill all available containers plus one.
- 3 A newly-washed window gathers dirt at double the speed of an unwashed window.
- 4 The availability of a ballpoint pen is inversely proportional to how badly it is needed.
- 5 The same clutter that will fill a one-car garage will also fill a two-car garage.
- 6 The potential for argument is in direct proportion to the number of TV remote controls divided by the number of viewers.
- 7 The number of doors left open varies inversely with the outside temperature.
- 8 The capacity of any hot water heater is equal to one and a half showers.
- 9 What goes up must come down, except for chewing gum and kites.
- 10 Place two children in a room full of toys and they will both want to play with the same toy.

Motel nemesis

Rita Dawson had a serious, but surprisingly common, telephone problem. But unlike most people, she did something about it.

A brand-new luxury motel had recently opened nearby and had been assigned a telephone number which was very similar to Rita's.

From the moment the motel opened, she was besieged by calls which were not for her. Since she had had the same phone number for years, she felt that she had a case for persuading the management of the motel to change theirs.

However, the management refused, claiming that it would cost too much to reprint all the stationery. The phone company wasn't very helpful, either. Rita was told that a number was a number, and just because one customer was getting someone else's calls 24 hours a day, the company couldn't be held responsible. After her pleas fell on deaf ears, Rita decided to take matters into her own hands.

One evening at 9 o'clock the phone rang. It was someone trying to book a room at the motel for the following Saturday. 'No problem,' said Rita. 'How many nights would you like to stay?'

A few hours later there was another call. A secretary at an oil company wanted a suite with two bedrooms for her boss for a week. Emboldened, Rita told her the Presidential Suite on the 12th floor was available for £300 a night. The secretary said that she would take it and asked if the motel required a deposit. 'No, that won't be necessary,' said Rita. 'We trust you.'

The next day was a busy one for Rita. In the morning, she booked an electrical appliance manufacturers' convention for a bank holiday weekend, a college graduation party and a reunion of the Scots Guards veterans from World War II.

Her biggest challenge came when a mother called to book the ballroom for her daughter's wedding in June. Rita assured

the woman that it would be no problem and asked if she would be providing the flowers or whether she would prefer the motel to take care of them. The mother said that she would prefer the motel to handle the floral arrangements. Then the question of valet parking came up. Once again Rita was helpful. 'There's no charge for valet parking,' she said breezily, 'but we always recommend that the client tips the drivers.'

Within a few months, the motel was a disaster area. People kept showing up for weddings, bar mitzvahs, reunions and conferences and were all told there were no such events.

Rita had her final revenge when she read in the local paper that the motel might go bankrupt. Her phone rang, and an executive from a big hotel chain said, 'We're prepared to offer you £200,000 for the motel.'

'We'll take it,' Rita replied, 'but only if you change the telephone number.'

Snail's pace

At a recent snail-racing contest, the participating snails wore numbers and were painted so that they could easily be recognised as they sped past the finishing post. Only one snail wore the same number as the position it finished in. Mike's snail wasn't painted yellow or blue, and the snail which wore number 3, which was painted red, beat the snail which came in third. Rachel's snail beat Helena's snail, whereas Chris's snail beat the snail which wore number 1. The snail painted green, Chris's, came second and the snail painted blue wore number 4. Helena's snail wore number 1. Can you work out whose snail finished where, its number and the colour it was painted?

Answers	Final position	Owner	Number	Colour
4th		Helena	1	yellow
3rd		Rachel	4	blue
2nd		Chris	2	green
1st		Mike	3	red



A balancing act

Mike put his winnings from the snail race (£100) into his bank account. He then made six withdrawals, totalling £100. He kept a record of these withdrawals, and the balance remaining in the account, as follows:

Withdrawals	Balance remaining
£50	£50
£25	£25
£10	£15
£8	£7
£5	£2
£2	£0
£100	£99

When he added up the columns, he assumed that he must owe £1 to the bank. Was he right?

Answer There is no reason whatever why Mike's original deposit of £100 should equal the total of the balances left after each withdrawal. The total of withdrawals in the left-hand column must always equal £100, but it is purely a coincidence that the total of the right-hand column is close to £100.

Ten Zen teachings

- 1 Do not walk behind me, for I may not lead. Do not walk ahead of me, for I may not follow. Do not walk beside me for the path is narrow. In fact, just go away and leave me alone.
- 2 Always remember you're unique. Just like everyone else.
- 3 Never test the depth of the water with both feet.
- 4 If you think nobody cares whether you're alive or dead, try missing a couple of mortgage payments.
- 5 Before you criticise someone, you should walk a mile in their shoes. That way, they're a mile away and you have their shoes.
- 6 If at first you don't succeed, bomb disposal is probably not the career for you.
- 7 Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach him how to fish, and he will sit in a boat and drink beer all day.
- 8 If you lend someone £20 and never see that person again, it was probably well worth it.
- 9 Generally speaking, you aren't learning much when your lips are moving.
- 10 Experience is something you don't get until just after you need it.

Ridiculous replies

It was mealtime during a flight from the UK.

'Would you like dinner?' the flight attendant asked a man, seated at the front.

'What are my choices?' he asked.

'Yes or no,' she replied.

A woman was picking through the frozen turkeys at a supermarket, but she couldn't find one big enough for her family.

Seeing a young man stacking shelves nearby, she asked him, 'Do these turkeys get any bigger?'

The assistant replied, 'No, madam, they're dead.'

A lorry driver driving along on a busy road passed a sign saying 'Low Bridge Ahead'. Before he knew it, the bridge was right ahead of him and, sure enough, his lorry got stuck under it. The queue of cars behind him stretched for miles.

Finally, a police car drove up. The police officer got out of his car, walked over to the lorry driver, put his hands on his hips and said, 'Got stuck, huh?'

'No,' replied the lorry driver. 'I was delivering this bridge and I ran out of petrol.'

Blended learning

Blanka Frydrychová Klímová's experience shows that melding the traditional with the technological is a way of increasing the quality of teaching and learning.

The term *blended learning* has become extremely fashionable nowadays, particularly in corporate and higher education settings. But what does it actually mean? *Blended learning* is quite difficult to define since the term is used in diverse ways by different people. Overall, the three most common meanings are as follows:

- 1 the integration of traditional learning with web-based online approaches;
- 2 the combination of media and tools (eg textbooks) employed in e-learning environments;
- 3 the combination of a number of teaching and learning approaches irrespective of the technology used.

As Curtis Bonk and Charles Graham claim, blended learning is part of the ongoing convergence of two archetypal learning environments. On the one hand, there is the traditional face-to-face learning environment that has been around for centuries. On the other hand, there are new learning environments which have begun to grow and expand in exponential ways as new technologies have increased the possibilities for distance communication and interaction. In this article, I shall follow Andrew Littlejohn in perceiving blended learning as an integration of face-to-face teaching and learning methods with online approaches.

Why blend?

In the literature on blended learning, the most common reason given for its implementation is that it combines the

best of both words. Charles Graham and his colleagues cite three main reasons why blended learning should be chosen:

- improved pedagogy;
- increased access/flexibility;
- increased cost effectiveness.

Pedagogy

Blended learning undoubtedly contributes to the development and support of more interactive strategies, not only in face-to-face teaching but also in distance education. Developing activities linked to learning outcomes places the focus on learner interaction, rather than content dissemination. In addition, distance learning can offer more information to students, better and faster feedback and richer communication between a tutor and a student with more opportunities for both face-to-face and online communication.

Access

Access to learning is one of the key factors influencing the growth of distributed (computer-mediated) learning environments. Students can access materials at any time and anywhere. Furthermore, they can proceed at their own pace. Consequently, blended learning can create higher motivation and give greater stimulation to students.

Cost effectiveness

An increase in cost effectiveness is particularly noticeable in corporate environments where people are

permanently busy and can hardly ever afford the time to attend full-time, face-to-face classes. Blended learning enables them to start learning after fulfilling their work, family and other social commitments. Blended learning is also popular with universities, which are always looking for quality enhancement and cost savings, and is particularly appropriate to distance learning courses.

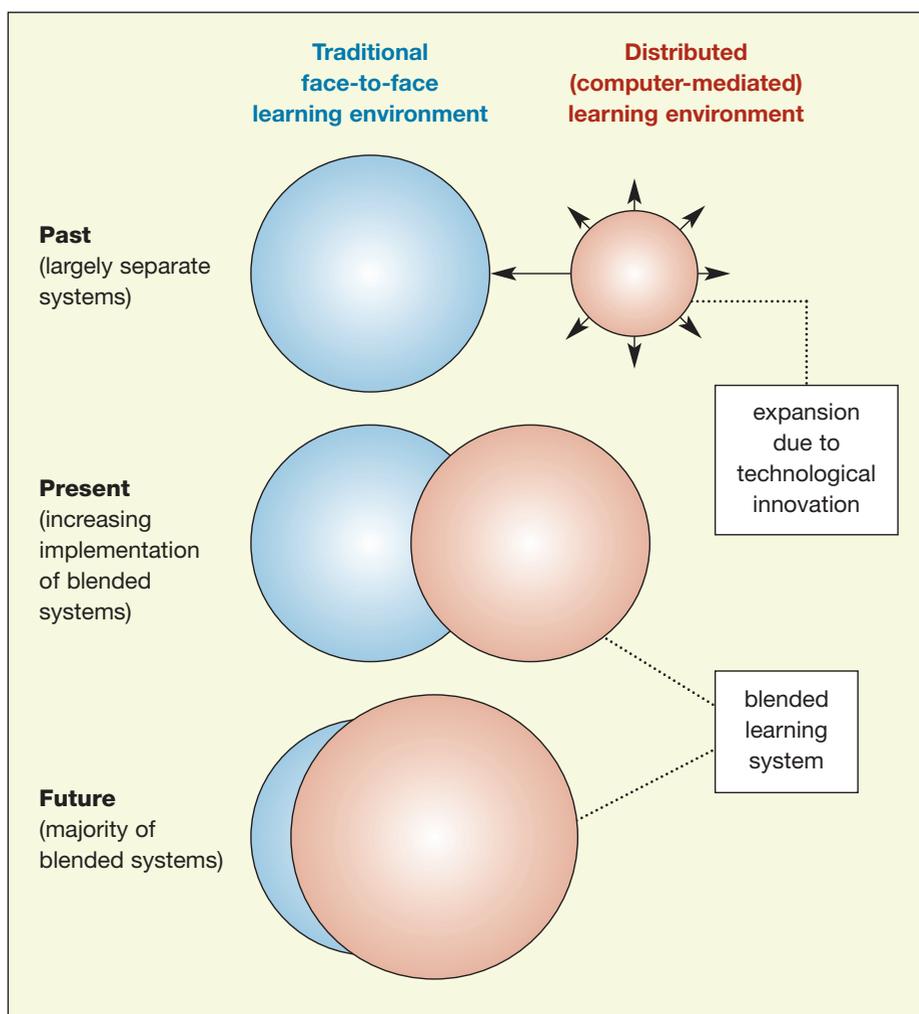
Nevertheless, there are some drawbacks to blended learning. There is no doubt that it is time-consuming and makes great demands in terms of creation, preparation and evaluation. The possibility of randomly-occurring problems with technology also needs to be taken into consideration.

A blended language course model

A blended learning approach is particularly suited to language learning, where conventional face-to-face teaching is sometimes necessary for developing speaking communication skills. For this reason it is used for language courses at the Faculty of Informatics and Management at the University of Hradec Králové in the Czech Republic. Students here undertake reading and writing tasks on their own, which enables the teachers to concentrate more on listening and speaking activities in face-to-face classroom teaching.

E-learning has been an important feature of courses at this faculty since 1999 and is seen by teachers as a useful tool for improving the quality of their teaching. It has been found to be both effective and efficient in delivering the desired results. In 2001 the administrators of a few selected courses for part-time students created a virtual learning environment for their courses

At face-to-face tutorials, students have the opportunity to discuss the problems they encounter when they are doing various types of tasks and writing assignments



Development of blended learning systems (adapted from Bonk and Graham 2005)

and web communication tools were introduced for the students. By 2002 online courses were also beginning to be used to support the teaching of full-time students. At present, more than 90 e-courses are being fully exploited in teaching at the faculty, 40 of these in the teaching of English. Some of the English courses, such as those teaching written business English, can be taught completely online. However, most of them are blended as there is a need for some tutorial work. At face-to-face tutorials, students have the opportunity to discuss the problems they encounter when they are doing various types of tasks and writing assignments. This method is particularly suitable for distance students and those involved in an inter-university study project. In addition, e-courses are used as reference sources for regular classes. Students can go online to read again information that has been given in class, and they can do further online activities to practise what they have learnt. These online courses are also very useful for revision.

A blended course on academic writing

A good example of the blended courses on offer at the faculty is an optional one-semester course on academic writing. The course is aimed at training students in the whole process of writing and gives advice on how to write professionally. It teaches the different stages of the writing process: envisaging what to write, planning an outline, drafting passages, writing the whole text, revising and rewriting it, and finishing it in an appropriate form, together with publishing all or parts of it. In addition, it focuses on those features of academic writing which are different in English and Czech, such as structure, register and referencing. There are separate sections on grammar structures in written English, lexical structures and punctuation.

By employing a blended learning approach, the course tries not only to address students' lack of knowledge about formal writing in English, but

Blended learning

▶▶▶ also to approach it in a new way. Students meet their teacher once every two weeks to discuss and clarify any mistakes they made in their written assignments (essays). They then do further and more detailed self-study online, before rewriting their essays.

In the summer semester of 2007, 12 students of management and tourism attended this course. At the end of the course, they were asked to complete the following evaluation form, in an attempt to discover whether the integration of face-to-face teaching and learning methods with online approaches was successful.

- 1 Please comment on the overall structure and content of the course.
- 2 Did you find the online course on referencing motivating/not motivating and why?
- 3 List three activities which were the most useful to you.
- 4 Were there any activities you did not find useful. If so, why?
- 5 What or who motivated you to attend the course?
- 6 Did you welcome the opportunity to have face-to-face tutorials once every two weeks or would you prefer to have these every week?
- 7 Would you recommend the course to other people?
- 8 Do you have any further comments?

Thank you.

In general, all 12 respondents were satisfied with the overall structure of the course. They stated that the information given to them during the course had been very useful. Moreover, they thought this subject should be compulsory in the second year of study when preparing to write academic papers.

As far as the online element of the course was concerned, it was also deemed to be quite useful and motivating. Students appreciated its clear structure and the self-study exercises. They liked the fact that they

The main motivation factor for attending the course was students' eagerness to improve their English, especially their skills of formal written English

could do these at any time, could receive immediate feedback on their work and see what mistakes they had made, and the fact that they could print out all the materials if they wished. Only two students mentioned technical problems with the system – they found it annoying when the system did not work.

The most useful activities according to the respondents were: writing essays, discussing common mistakes which appeared in students' essays, discussing the structure of an academic paper, using the online course and translating. In fact there was no activity that the students considered not worth doing. Only two students commented that there had been too many tasks in the online course, and that not all were useful.

As for question 5, the main motivation factor for attending and studying the course was students' eagerness to improve their English, especially their skills of formal written English. The second motivation factor was their intention to write an academic paper in English. Among the other factors mentioned were that this course was another way of obtaining needed credits or that a friend recommended the course to them.

Two respondents said they would have liked to have had the face-to-face tutorials every week. However, everybody else was happy to have them once every two weeks. Overall, the responses to the given questions were very positive, and it is noteworthy that respondents indicated in their answers to question 7 that they thought the course would be useful for all students at the faculty.



The experiences described above demonstrate both the institution's and the teachers' desire to apply new educational

technologies to improve the quality of teaching and learning at the faculty. While inevitably there were some problems, these seem to have been outweighed by the advantages. In particular, blended learning gave the opportunity to provide good quality distance learning, thereby increasing students' chances to be able to participate in university-level education.

Modern information technologies offer challenging ways of teaching and learning languages. The benefits include easy access to study materials, the opportunity to proceed at one's own individual pace, the ability to choose the time and place for study, and almost immediate feedback on writing with e-mail tutorial support. These benefits are, however, only a partial solution for learners who need to develop speaking skills. This gap could be filled to some extent by using telephone and video conferencing. Nevertheless, conventional face-to-face training is still necessary to provide the practice and feedback on performance that can really help to improve speaking skills. As a result, blended learning would seem to be an ideal solution to a number of problems. As Pete Sharma says, 'on the one hand, technology is here to stay. On the other, the teacher will never be replaced. I believe it is crucial that the teacher remains in control as the person creating the course programme, meeting the learners, interpreting or assigning the material and honing the course. The technology should not "lead"'. 

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Sharma, P 'Future in the balance' *English Teaching Professional* 42 2006



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In this issue I want to point out some of the best sites on the internet for children. You can use them in class, if you are lucky enough to have computers for the children to work on. If not, then they are sites that you can recommend the students to use outside class.

www.ur.se/sprk/engelska/index.php

There are several games on this site, but the one I want to concentrate on is called 'Decorate'. It is a really fun activity and very simple. Basically, you have to help Roger to decorate his room. Just follow his instructions and click on the correct furniture and the right colours and patterns. This is a very well-designed game. It is easy to play and has clear learning objectives, yet at the same time it is engaging for students.

http://vocabulary.co.il/index_main.php

This site has all the standard vocabulary games, such as wordsearches, crosswords and hangman, but there are one or two more which I really like. Try 'Letter Blocks'. You first click on a letter and then you can click on any of the letters which are adjacent to that letter. The idea is to build a word. To tell the computer you have created a word you simply double click on the last letter and it increases your score. Again, this is really simple but very engaging.

www.eduplace.com/kids/sv/books/content/wordbuilder

On this site, you can hear sentences being read out and you have to spell a missing word (you are given some help). Once you have spelled the word, you click on it and you will be told if you are correct or incorrect. You then move on to the next sentence. This is well designed in terms of interaction—click ratios: it is important that you don't have to click needlessly on the screen to make things happen which can quite easily be done automatically by the programme. This site has lots of useful content.

www.britishcouncil.org/kids-games-fun.htm

The British Council material is superb. They have invested heavily in the web and there is a lot of fun vocabulary practice on this site. Try 'Trolley Dash' – it is addictive! You are given a list of things you have to buy in the supermarket, and you have to 'run around', going to the right sections of the supermarket and clicking on the items so that they are added to the shopping trolley. This is enormous fun. You have only one minute to buy everything on the list (you can click the list at any time to remind yourself what you need). I have happily wasted a few hours of my life playing it and have also used it with my students (including adults).

Another good game on this site is 'Clean and Green'. You have to click on objects and put them into the correct recycling bin. There are many other games here, too. For teaching purposes, you will need to spend a bit of time on the site assessing the suitability of the games for your students as the level of the activities jumps around a little, but they are all worth looking at.

www.hello-world.com/English/index.php

This site has lots of material and you will need a bit of time to look through it. You can easily miss some of the good things as

the site is, unfortunately, not that well laid out. A lot of what you find on the opening page is presentation material for colours, numbers, etc, but if you click on 'Children's games and activities', you will find another page full of activities. Try some of the 'Play Bingo' games. I did the clothes one. Someone calls out an item and you have a limited time to click on it before another item is read out. The game flows well, it is good for revising vocabulary and there is plenty of content. I like the matching games, too. All the words are read out so that the students are continually hearing the pronunciation of the words while practising them. I tried some of these games out in French (a language I am learning) and I found them pretty useful. You can even play the games in pairs, so you are competing with someone. This can be useful if you are doing them in class. Most of the activities here have a choice of levels, too.

www.bbc.co.uk/schools/ks1bitesize

On this site, the content is not really aimed at ELT students, but I believe that it would work fine with them. Click on 'literacy' and then you have a whole host of games to choose from. I have never used this material in class but it looks good. I tried out 'Rhyming Words', where you have to select the word that has the same sound as a word the programme reads out for you. All the games are set in nice contexts and there are different levels that you can choose, too. This is well worth looking at.

To make things easier, I have created a free video that takes you through the sites I have written about here and points out some of the games that you can play. There are also some extra sites that I haven't included in the article, to encourage you to watch the video.

<http://trainingvideos.hscs.wmin.ac.uk/kidsVocab/index.html>

www.spellingcity.com

Just one last thing. There is a very good site called 'Spelling City'. The great thing about this site is that you can enter your own content. You write in the words you want to practise and it makes spelling games out of them. I really like activities where you can control the content because this means you can use them time and time again. This is definitely one to recommend to your students as they can write in words that they continually spell wrong and then practise them. I have created a video to help you with the this site, too. Go to <http://trainingvideos.com/spell/index.html>. 



Russell Stannard is a principal lecturer at the University of Westminster, UK, where he teaches using technology on multimedia and TESOL courses. He also runs www.teachertrainingvideos.com, a website that trains English teachers to use technology.

Keep sending your favourite sites to Russell:
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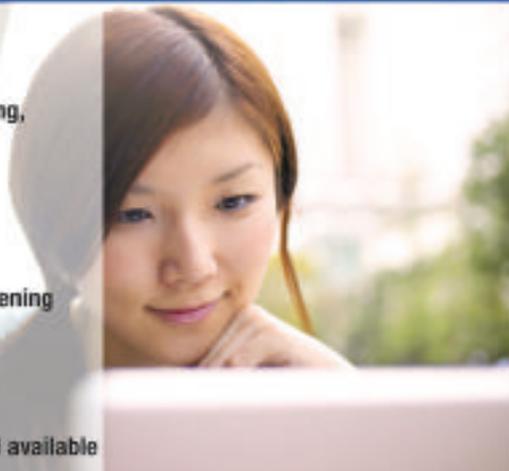
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In this column **Rose Senior** explains why certain teaching techniques and class management strategies are effective, and identifies specific issues that can assist all language teachers in improving the quality of their teaching.

The teacher's best friend

Wherever they teach and whatever their teaching circumstances, most teachers have access to a tried-and-tested teaching aid located at the front of the room: a large blank surface upon which they can write or draw pictures during the course of lessons. These large flat surfaces, with their versatility and attention-focusing power, are variously known as *blackboards* (together with powdery chalk sticks that leave the hands of every user coated with dust), *whiteboards* (together with felt pens that must be of the water-soluble variety), or more technologically-advanced (but not necessarily more effective) *interactive whiteboards*.

In this article I will use the term *board* to refer to all forms of this teaching aid, so useful in the classroom that we could call it the teacher's best friend.

Although classroom language learning can occur very effectively without any reference to the written word, through songs, rhymes, chanting, repetitive actions, physical responses to oral instructions, and so on, most language teachers – literate individuals who themselves rely heavily on the written word – find themselves depending on their boards when teaching their lessons. How precisely do they use them, and why are they so effective?

In classrooms where students have neither textbooks nor access to photocopied materials, teachers obviously require students to copy down information for consolidation and future reference. The very act of copying words and phrases from the board is an important step in committing language to memory. Teachers must, of course, write legibly so that students neither copy words incorrectly nor interrupt the lesson with urgent requests for clarification. Teachers must avoid the cardinal sin of rubbing information off the board before the class has had time to copy it down. Nothing can be more frustrating! Some teachers routinely request permission before cleaning the board.

Boards are particularly useful for the consolidation or expansion of lexical

knowledge during the course of lessons. Teachers can remind students of which words go together in terms of similarity of structure, form or meaning by bracketing them together on the board. They can show pairs of words that contrast in sound or meaning by placing a forward slash between them (*ship/sheep*, *hard-working/lazy*, and so on). They can emphasise phonological aspects of English by dividing words into syllables with slashes, accenting syllables to

Even teachers without artistic skills can draw stick figures

indicate word stress, or drawing sloping up-and-down arrows above sections of sentences to indicate sentence stress. Teachers can make a habit of indicating the part of speech of new words by placing a code in brackets after each one (*n*, *v*, *adj*, *adv*, and so on). They can also use different coloured pens or chalk, distinct forms of underlining and a variety of symbols including equals signs, asterisks, arrows, sweeping circles, and so on to help students reach deeper levels of lexical understanding.

Teachers with drawing talents can use their boards to create quick drawings or images that establish contexts for learning. Teachers can also use them to depict familiar objects or to help students understand the meaning of new words, concepts or relationships. Even teachers without artistic skills can draw stick figures, do stylised representations of objects such as hearts or clouds, or portray simple items ranging from houses and furniture to plants and animals. If their classes laugh at their efforts, teachers can exclaim 'You *know* I'm not good at drawing!' or 'Guess what this is meant to be!' Alternatively, they can enlist the help of a willing student with artistic flair – a practice that not only engages the attention of the class but also raises the status of the individual concerned.

To prepare students for writing tasks, teachers can write a topic (such as *technology*, *happiness* or *health*) in the centre of the board and then surround it with words and ideas suggested by the

class until the board is filled with clusters of words branching out from the central word in the form of a mind map. During speaking or writing activities, students often require additional words or phrases with which to express thoughts, feelings or opinions. By writing requested linguistic items on the board – and leaving them up for the benefit of others – teachers show that they value student input. As a result, lessons become more dynamic, with students understanding the true purpose of language: to satisfy genuine communicative needs.

Teachers of classes containing up to, say, 30 students can – provided the classroom allows for easy movement – involve the whole class in board-writing activities. Scribes can be appointed to write up items brainstormed by particular student groups. (Having a line of scribes at the front of the class, particularly when groups are in competition, creates high levels of involvement.) When the energy level of classes is low, an old favourite is *Hangman*, the vocabulary game where the entire class pits its collective wits against the person standing at the board – either the teacher or a student. A popular end-of-term activity involves dividing the class into two

Teachers can enlist the help of a willing student with artistic flair

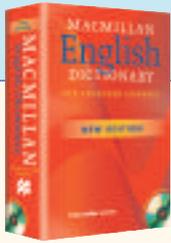
teams and having randomly-selected pairs of students (matched in ability) from opposing teams rush to the board when their number is called to spell a designated word correctly. Activities such as these vitalise language classes, confirming that classroom language learning is a collective endeavour involving the whole class.

The message of this article is: Don't forget the board! Regard it as your trusted friend which, unless its surface is damaged or you run out of chalk or whiteboard markers, will never let you down. Make sure you enlist its help in as many ways as you can! 

Dr Rose

Rose Senior is a conference presenter and teacher educator. She is the author of *The Experience of Language Teaching*, published by Cambridge University Press.

www.roseseniore.com



Prize crossword 31

ETp presents the thirty-first in our series of prize crosswords, and this one, again, has a very different format. Try it ... and maybe win a prize! Once you have done it successfully, let your students have a go.

Send your entry (not forgetting to include your full name, postal address and telephone number) to Prize crossword 31, ENGLISH TEACHING professional,

Keyways Publishing, PO Box 100, Chichester, West Sussex, PO18 8HD, UK. Ten correct entries will be drawn from a hat on 10 November 2008 and the senders will each receive a copy of the second edition of the *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*, applauded for its unique red star system showing the frequency of the 7,500 most common words in English.

12	2	24	2	22	6	21	25	2	9	19		2
	11		1		6		16		6	13	9	
25	1	4	19		23	4	4	14	2	4		24
1		22		20		4		1		4	7	23
8	2	2	4	2		23	12	22	2			11
9		2		19		3				12		6
23	9	24	2	4	19	23	8	1	19	23	6	9
18		2			22		22		24			25
23			19	1	17	23		4	2	23	10	2
26	14	19		19		19		6		9		9
2		6	3	19	1	23	9		5	2	1	19
9	6	13		23		2			2		22	
19		9	2	26	2	4	4	1	11	23	22	15

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
	E											
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
									I			C

To solve the puzzle, find which letter each number represents. You can keep a record in the boxes above. Three letters are done for you. Start by writing these letters in the other boxes in the crossword where their numbers appear. The definitions of the words in the puzzle are given, but not in the right order. When you have finished, you will be able to read the quotation.

23	19		23	4		1		11	23	12	12	22	2
	13	11	1	21	21	2	12		23	9		1	
25	15	4	19	2	11	15		23	9	4	23	12	2
	1	9		2	9	23	8	25	1				

Winston Churchill

VERY FREQUENT WORDS

- *** Always, in every situation
- *** At the present time
- *** A car whose driver is paid to take you to a particular place
- *** Change, growth or improvement over a period of time
- *** To get something that you want or need, especially by going through a process that is difficult
- *** An injury on your skin made by something sharp
- *** To legally have something, especially because you have bought it
- *** The place in which people live and work, including all the physical conditions that affect them
- *** A place where people live and work that is larger than a village but smaller than a city
- *** The process of trying to find out all the details or facts about something in order to discover who or what caused it or how it happened
- *** A pronoun for referring to a woman or girl who has already been mentioned
- *** To put food into your mouth and swallow it
- *** The quality of being hot, or the degree to which something is hot
- *** The same in value, amount or size

- *** Subjects that people discuss or argue about
- *** Things that might happen or be true
- *** The whole of an amount or every part of something
- *** A word for adding another fact or idea to what you have already said

FREQUENT WORDS

- ** Like a god, or relating to a god
- ** The part of a piece of clothing that covers your arm
- ** A period of time that has a particular quality or character
- ** Planes that can fly very fast
- ** To take something using official power and force
- ** To throw something somewhere gently or in a slightly careless way
- ** Very impressive and beautiful, good or skilful

FAIRLY FREQUENT WORDS

- * To slide over snow, as a sport or as a way of travelling

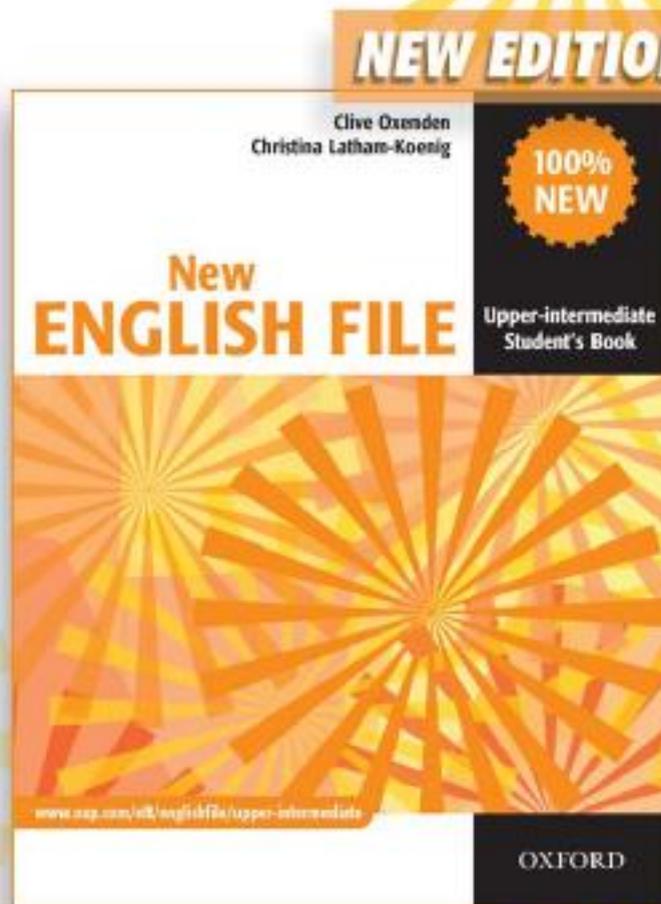
LESS FREQUENT WORDS

- A tall pole that sails hang from on a ship
- Large white or grey birds with long beaks
- Lazy, or not being used
- The room in a house under the roof



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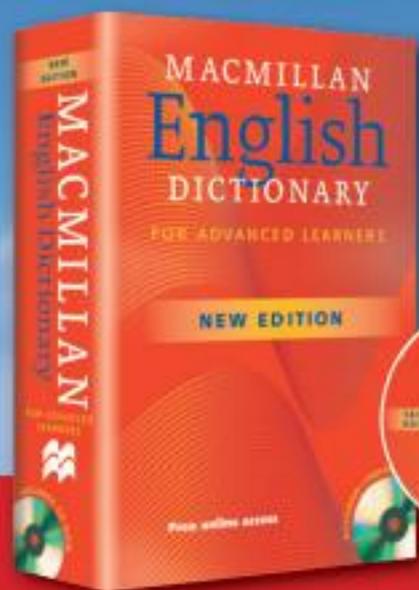
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