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Editorial

There's a lot to celebrate about this number of the IH Journal, not least the fact that we have -again - had more material submitted than we were able to include in one issue. There is no space to mention all the articles we have managed to include in this crowded issue but it is really good to have so much from so many different sources. It was great to hear from teachers with less experience as well as from the great and the good of the ELT world. We need to be reminded of what it feels like at the start of the profession. Many many thanks to all our hard-working contributors: keep 'em coming!

However, there are some considerable gaps: the letters page is invisible again and it would be good to have some informal news and views from IH worldwide. Just send us whatever you like whenever you like - the wonders of e-mail. Extracts from your own newsletters - we see examples here from time to time - photos and pen-portraits of your school - anything is welcome and all is interesting.

There are some important hails and farewells.

Joining the International House Organisation Worldwide as CEO on a permanent full-time basis, is Alan Pentecost, whom you may remember reading about in the previous issue. It's good that Alan can now devote his considerable talents wholly to our cause. We hope to inveigle him into writing something about his vision for IH in a future Journal.

Farewell, alas, to those members of our Editorial Committee who are leaving us for sunnier climes (Roger Hunt and Pippa Bumstead) or higher education (Rachel Day). Pippa has already left us as we type and we miss her flair for design and keen sense of logic. Roger was a tower of experienced strength when we first began as tyro editors, and his help has been invaluable throughout. The good news is that both Roger and Pippa have volunteered to stay on the committee and continue their sterling work from their new posts. Rachel joined us on the board more recently as subscriptions editor and advertising manager. She's already done a great deal to restore order to the chaos we had created in these areas and we hope her successor will find time to continue to keep us in order. We'll very much miss her enthusiasm and smiles! A big welcome to Nigel Beanland who has very kindly agreed to join the board as reviews and advertising editor. We greatly look forward to working with him on the next issue.

Finally a plea to DoSes, and Directors: PLEASE try to make sure that at least one copy of this issue makes its way to the staff room! We've heard from several teachers that they haven't ever had a copy of the Journal anywhere near them and some don't even know it exists!

Susanna Dammann and Rachel Clark

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The Secret Garden

Jeremy Page

Jeremy Page has been a Director of Studies at IH London since 1995. Last year he co-ordinated the Curriculum Review Project. [In the days before the National Curriculum, James Callaghan referred to the 'hidden' curriculum in mainstream education as a 'secret garden'.]

To the best of my knowledge and belief International House has never before had its own written curriculum. There is anecdotal evidence that teachers and directors of studies throughout the organisation - or most of them - have always subscribed to the same essential beliefs about teaching and learning. Some years ago, at a Directors of Studies conference, Jim Scrivener initiated a debate on whether these beliefs and principles could be identified and written down. This was the beginning of a process which culminated in the production of the first (written) IH Curriculum, which was presented at this year's DoS Conference.

the members of the committee were navigating without maps

In attempting to renew the organisation's curriculum, the Curriculum Review Committee, comprising representatives from IH London and the Affiliate Network, faced a number of challenges. In a very real sense the members of the committee were navigating without maps. Paradigms for an ELT curriculum exist, certainly, but locating examples of the 'thing itself' proved infinitely more difficult. The various models were useful in clarifying the Committee's thinking on what kind of curriculum we wanted to create and in confirming our conviction that our guiding principles should include, above all, respect for the views of those who would be charged with delivering the curriculum: teachers.

Our first task was to identify the components of the curriculum. Clearly the syllabus would form part of it, but some statement of educational belief seemed equally essential. This was to prove the greatest single challenge for the committee. Various documents that Jim Scrivener had presented to the assembled directors of studies provided a focus for debate, and in the course of a series of teacher development meetings at IH London the question of organisational core beliefs was discussed and debated. It was heartening and encouraging to note that serious divergence of view was quite rare. More of an issue was deciding what needed to be stated and what was so obvious that to state it would risk patronising the very people whose cooperation and commitment was essential to the delivery of the curriculum. For example, did we need to state that 'International House teachers are expected to respect their

students as learners and individuals', or could this be taken as read? In the end we decided that it was a principle that was worth enshrining in the document, if only for the sake of the curriculum's student readership. Was it really necessary to state explicitly the expectation that IH teachers would 'make every lesson a worthwhile learning experience for their students'? Again, the feeling was that it was important to identify this as a legitimate expectation, particularly in view of the trend for students to demand hard evidence of their progress.

Further debate focussed on the issue of whether teachers should always 'take the opinions of their students seriously'. Students, it was pointed out, sometimes make comments of a racist or sexist nature which a teacher should not be required to treat with undue respect. Finally, though, it was agreed that 'take seriously' did not mean either 'respect' or 'condone', and the statement appeared in the final version.

'make every lesson a worthwhile learning experience for their students'

Various ethical issues also arose in the process of renewing the curriculum. For example, who was it being written for? Teachers? Students? Sales managers? What would we do if pedagogic principle conflicted with the demands of the marketplace or the perceived expectations of students? It was decided that the curriculum would be written first and foremost for teachers, since they would be charged with delivering it. Areas of possible sensitivity for students were acknowledged and therefore, on occasion modified, though never distorted, statements of principle. For example, the statement 'we will encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning' evolved into 'we will encourage students to share responsibility for their own learning', a proposition that is both more accurate and arguably less intimidating to prospective students.

Another key issue was that of whose English should form the subject matter of the curriculum. This involved consideration of the cultural and historical identity of IH and questions of 'linguistic imperialism'. IH publicity posters used to bear the

legend 'It's raining cats and dogs - English is a funny language' - and not so long ago.

There was an implicit assumption here that English was to some extent the property of the British, and that IH was fundamentally a British organisation. Both of these assumptions seemed decidedly at variance with the zeitgeist at the turn of the century and also with the way in which most people in the organisation see themselves, the English language and their roles as language teachers. There was consensus within the curriculum review committee and also in the wider forums of debate that the English we should aspire to teach is English as a global or international language, for all the questions this raises. As Jeremy Harmer remarked in a recent article, 'English is just as much Arandhati Roy's language as it is Ian McEwan's, for example; it is just as much Wole Soyinka's as it is Terry McMillan's. It is just as much the student's as it is the teacher's.'

Respect for persons was another ethical issue that arose, most significantly with regard to the question of what kinds of activities adult learners should and should not be expected to participate in in the language classroom. The debate was informed by the concept of infantilisation as a feature of ELT practice, and focussed on more informal classroom activities such as running dictations and board races. Again, consensus was reached, the view emerging that a reasonable guiding principle was that teachers would not expect their learners to participate in activities they would not themselves be happy to participate in.

It is perhaps not surprising that the curriculum statement, in seeking as it does to express deeply held beliefs about learning

and teaching as well as the nature of the learning environment, should prove to be the most difficult part of the curriculum to draft. The other components, once they had been agreed, were more straightforward. Organisational aims and objectives had been identified in 1997, and a document showing IH levels and their correspondence with ALTE, UCLES and Council of Europe levels existed. Communicative skills profiles for the levels were developed and refined, and the IH London core syllabuses comprising course objectives and core competencies reviewed.

it is essential that it continues to embody principles that teachers are happy to embrace and subscribe to

By December 2000 the curriculum was complete. The challenge now is to maintain a dynamic curriculum and to ensure that it remains relevant to learners and, above all, to the teachers who are charged with delivering it. If it is not to become a document that gathers dust on shelves throughout the organisation it is essential that it continues to embody principles that teachers are happy to embrace and subscribe to. To this end, the curriculum will be subject to regular review, with the first scheduled for this autumn. It is anticipated that the focus will be on the syllabus. 📄

The International House Curriculum



Raising the standards of language teaching and training worldwide

We want International House students to realise their full individual potential and believe this happens when:

- they are actively involved in their learning;
- they are challenged by what they are asked to do;
- they are motivated by their studies.

International House teachers are expected to:

- hold appropriate professional qualifications;
- engage in on-going professional development;
- respect their students as learners and as individuals;
- be interested in their students and care about their progress;
- encourage their students to participate in class and continue their studies outside class;
- take the opinions of their students seriously;
- know their subject and be able to clarify details for students;
- correct their students appropriately;
- be well-informed and sensitive to cultural issues;
- be able to use both modern and more traditional teaching methods effectively;
- make appropriate use of available technology;
- make every lesson a worthwhile learning experience for their students.

Our students can expect International House teachers to:

- introduce them to new language;
- provide them with opportunities to practise new language;
- give them guidance on how to improve their language level;
- encourage them to participate in their language of study in the class;
- help them become more confident about using their language of study;
- develop their ability in speaking, listening, reading and writing;
- assess their level, their progress and their language skills;
- use up-to-date material from a wide range of sources;
- use a wide range of activities and techniques to activate their language of study;
- manage their classes effectively and involve students fairly and equally.

We will encourage our students to:

- share responsibility for their own learning;
- show respect for each other, their teachers and their school;
- participate actively in class and respond positively to the challenges of language learning. 🌐

The DoS Gets the First Word

Carol Dowie

Carol Dowie worked in IH Viseu for 7 years as a teacher then DOS. She then moved to Seville and was YL Co-ordinator at English Language Institute until she returned to IH last year and is currently DOS at IH Seville.

This was the end of my first year as DOS here at IH Seville. What I really wanted to do in our last teacher development meeting was to have a kind of review of the year. As our students had just finished doing their end of year exams, I saw no reason why the teachers couldn't do the same. So, part of the last meeting was dedicated to teachers writing a 'mini-composition'. This could be in any format and using any text type, but had to be an account of their thoughts and opinions about this past academic year.

Although they were free to write whatever came to mind, I did stipulate that they had to write something positive. Not because I wanted to hear about the good things, but because I think that the tendency is to focus on the negative. Although there have been many positive aspects to the year, they tend to get overshadowed by the day to day niggles. So, I wanted the teachers to end the year by focussing on something positive.

Below are some of the 'edited highlights'. As you will see there were many different types of texts, those who wrote reports / letters / diary entries and Ben - who wrote a creeping letter to get a job for next year!!

All names have been taken out to protect the 'innocent' (except Ben, of course, who we don't mind embarrassing).

Brownies

Well, it's been a mixed year teaching-wise, but here are some of the high points:

Teaching little kids (with the obscure, but actually strangely fitting name of "Brownies"!)) has been one of the more rewarding experiences of the year. I never imagined myself teaching such young children and I'm certainly not the maternal type, but I was really pleased that I managed to a) establish a nice atmosphere, b) keep them under control and c) teach them lots!!!

These are the things I always aim for but don't achieve in every class, especially when it comes to kids!

It was lovely to teach children when they are still at the age when they want to please the teacher, when they get excited about a saying the fruit and veg that they like, or when a game of "telephone" (ie whispering a word to each other) can go on for hours!!! And of course, they're absolutely adorably cute.

Maybe I was lucky with the class, but they were a lovely little team. Nobody was left out, and although there were the inevitable "Carlos said a bad word" and "Marissa hit me", mostly

I didn't have any major problems.

I also enjoyed the chance to be a bit creative and implement some ideas from the teacher development meetings - finding ways to get them writing without it being boring. It helped a lot when we got the books and I was surprised how well it worked because books are usually terrible to use with children. It started me doing more pairwork and the stories were great.

Just one thing though, please fix the air conditioning in my room as it's horrific with 10 kids in there.

Dear Diary

Dear Diary,

The 2000 - 2001 school year is winding up and as I always do (just kidding - this is the first time!) I like to sit down and think about all the good things that have happened to me. Off the top of my head, I think of the much improved relations with our boss. It's never been easy for him or us to talk freely about 'company matters', so-to-speak. At times there has been tension but now thanks to some good management and teacher co-operation, we seem to have bridged a gap in that area.

Another thing that's been a plus for me is having access to the internet at work, (both for use with students and as a source of authentic materials) and having someone on hand to help me when I have computer-related problems.

As for my personal growth as a teacher, I've felt the same frustrations as I have for the past 16 years - that my classes aren't as good as they could be or as I'd like them to be, but..... finally, slowly, I've realised or maybe I should say I'm realising that there's only so much I can do and having to teach 6-7 different levels and books, it's not always easy to have great classes. I have tried out or made up several NEW lessons. Not all have been what I wanted, but making the effort is what counts.

Also, although I've always got on well with past DOSes and had no complaints, I sincerely like my DOSes this year and are impressed by their organisational / management skills. I hope I can learn something from them and become more organised myself. I also appreciate their sense of humour.

Well, I'm sure there's more but I've come to a blank. Some negative things come to mind, but I've decided not to concentrate on them!

See you tomorrow!

An Interesting Year!!

My first year as a TEFL teacher has been an interesting one and has seen a lot of changes in me and my teaching. Fresh from the CELTA course, I found life in a real teaching situation more difficult than I'd first anticipated, but after a couple of months and with good support and ideas from fellow staff, it has become more enjoyable ever since.

I have also noticed a much bigger difference between classes than I'd expected: classes I looked forward to, classes I hated, students in whom I genuinely enjoyed seeing an improvement and those I wished would just *****!! (well you can imagine what!). Generally though, there have been many more of the first category I'm glad to say.

I like the classroom feel and the rapport you can get with students, who over a period of time (and a few beers in the bar) become your friends.

Fantastic!

Will I do this again?

Certainly. After a couple of months off relaxing on the beach

Leaving

I'll definitely leave here with more under my belt..... experience that is!!

Actually, it was a very lucky year. From the moment I walked into the building I knew I wanted to work here. Apart from being aesthetically pleasing, I liked the feel of the place. People seem to enjoy themselves here. They probably learn a little too!!

Teaching the Spanish has been enjoyable. While they're not generally too serious as students, they never seem to make me feel nervous or uncomfortable. Well, not the adult learners anyway. I had a lot of laughs.

I have also enjoyed the friendly relationship between staff (all staff that is - including secretaries, cleaners, DOSes and teachers of all languages)

When I leave here it will be with a lot of happy memories. I don't know where I'm going to put them all though - there's no more room left under my belt!

French Thoughts

I'm very happy professionally with what I have achieved this year because I've been able to adapt to a completely new way of working. (Last year I was in an academy with only 5 teachers, and a different approach to teaching).

At the beginning it was really difficult for me because I started teaching the day after my interview and had the sensation that it was all disorganised! However, with time, I began to adapt and now looking back on the year, I feel there have been very positive results.

Also, I think that I've learned lots especially about methodology and class preparation. Even the 'little problems' I had with French 4 at the beginning of the year had a positive outcome. It isn't just a case of you adapting to the students, but the students also have to be able to adapt to you.

Whereas before I was teaching kids of age 3 and 4, now I'm teaching adolescents and adults. It's been a good experience, but it requires a lot more work for me in terms of preparation.

All in all, I think I've managed very well this year.

(French teacher)

Letter from A Teacher's Pet

Dear Carol,

As you already know, I want to carry on working here next year. I believe that this shows how much at home I feel here and how much I enjoy my job. The school really benefits from a great atmosphere, both in the class and in the staffroom. There is all kind of help available (resources, supplementary books, teacher support...) so that we can continue improving (professionally speaking, that is!).

If you asked me to complain about something, I really couldn't think of anything to say. Working as a teacher here and living in this fantastic city, it's almost impossible to ask for more.

Kisses

Ben (the teacher's pet)

PS. Do you think I've said enough to get a job for next year?

Staffroom Solidarity

For me, the most pleasing thing has been the unity and togetherness shown in the staffroom. Although we are quite clearly a mixed bag and different groups of people, the positive atmosphere in the workplace has been a pleasure to be part of. Let me just say that this year there were no loose cannons or people working /pulling in different directions. This has not always been my experience - both here and in my previous schools. I really hope that we can continue this into the new academic year as we welcome new members of staff to the team.

Nine Years and Not Out!

It's quite motivating to think that you can just have finished your ninth year as a teacher, yet still find the job satisfying, enjoyable and hard enough work to make it a challenge. This has definitely been one of the more stimulating years as I've had to teach a lot of higher level classes, which normally means that I'm learning

things as well.

I've had a couple of really nice kids' classes too, and I felt the benefit of having done the CELTYL when teaching them.

On a 'personal goals' front, I feel I've made a bit of progress too. I've had the challenge of leading some of the teacher development sessions, and been involved a little in the CELTA course. What's more, I feel very pleased and excited to be watching a course in July, with the CELTYL hopefully happening in September.

I've also felt motivated by becoming an FCE Oral examiner. So all in all, it's been a pretty good year (at least as far as work is concerned...!!)

.....and the Last Word

Having read all the papers handed in, I am happy to see that teachers in general were content with their students, happy with their own progress (and I have to confess, quite pleased that the DOSes came out of it quite well!!)

What did surprise me, was that almost all the teachers without exception commented on 'the atmosphere among the staff'. I'm really pleased that this featured so frequently. A good atmosphere is not something that you can provide, it can only be created by the people who work there. And good relationships are not something that you can be told to have, only something that can develop through mutual respect.

So, just in case I didn't make a good job of telling our teachers, I'd like to do it now: Well done everybody. It's been a good year!

PS You'll be happy to know that Ben got the job!

What Have the Corpus Linguists Done for Us?

Dave Willis

Until last year Dave Willis was Senior Lecturer at the Centre for English Language Studies at Birmingham University. He is now retired, but still works part-time as a freelance writer and consultant.

At this year's IATEFL one speaker, Hugh Deller¹, argued with great force that corpus linguists are not doing themselves any favours in the way they present their findings at conferences like IATEFL. Too often, he claimed, they insist on talking with great enthusiasm about the minutiae of their research without stopping to wonder if what they are saying is really relevant to the business of teaching. One eminent corpus linguist, Ron Carter², spoke with great enthusiasm at IATEFL about the use of the word like in spoken English. He made the point that one of the most frequent uses of like in informal spoken English today is to mark direct speech. Speakers say things like: ..and I was like "Wow, is that right?"... Another equally eminent linguist, Michael Hoey³, looked, among other things, at the way the names of jobs and professions are used in conversation. He remarked on the fact that while it is quite usual to speak of my doctor or my accountant, it is not usual to speak of my carpenter or my bricklayer.

As someone who has made great use of corpus linguistics I find insights like this quite fascinating. I spent some time after Mike Hoey's talk speculating on just which job/professions are introduced by my or our and which by the or a.

Do we, for example, talk about my window cleaner? I came to the conclusion that the only way to decide for sure is to look at a corpus.

Hugh Deller's claim, however, was that teachers find minutiae like this irritating and irrelevant. He asserted that much of what corpus linguists tell us can actually be retrieved simply by

examining our own intuitions about language, and he seemed to be saying that if something cannot be retrieved from intuition it is probably not worth teaching anyway. I am absolutely sure that he is wrong in this, but I also feel that he may be representing the views of very many teachers when he says things like this. It may well be that many teachers share Deller's impatience and, as a result, are likely to switch off corpus linguistics altogether. I would like to argue the case here that the findings of corpus linguistics are of absolutely central importance to language teaching. They provide us with all kinds of specific insights which are of importance for teachers and learners. And they provide us with a general insight which ought to revolutionise the way we design and use teaching materials.

the findings of corpus linguistics are of absolutely central importance to language teaching

First let's look at one or two specific insights concerning the word would:

1. Would is used to indicate past habit. In this use it has much the same meaning as used to: Often as many as three of them **would** play the same game together. 'Damn it, I'm exactly the

same age as Hitler' he **would** say. This makes up around 20% of occurrences. In fact would meaning used to is three times more frequent than used to meaning used to.

2. The most frequent use of *would* is to express a hypothesis in sentences like: I think The Tempest **would** make a wonderful film. Putting a private detective on your trail ...

3. ... **would** probably cost more than you are fiddling. This use accounts for almost half of the occurrences of would.

4. When *would* expresses a hypothesis it is sometimes found in an if clause as in : You **would** be surprised if I told you what my credit is. If he wasn't such a reactionary I **d** feel sorry for him. But this only accounts for 8% of its occurrences.

When my wife, Jane, and I were first given the information contained in 1 above, we refused to accept it. Our intuitions told us very strongly that the use of would for past habit was rather formal. We were convinced that it was relatively infrequent, particularly in spoken English. We were so convinced of our intuitions that we insisted on checking the words out for ourselves. Our search confirmed the picture given in 1, and further confirmed that this use is just as frequent in spoken as in written English.

The fact that would is three times as frequent does not mean that it is three times as important. If you look at the evidence one thing that emerges is that frequently a string of woulds are introduced by a used to: When I was a kid **we used** to go to my grandmother's at the seaside. **And we'd** get up early every morning and dash across to the beach, and **we'd** spend ages in the sea, even if it was freezing... So maybe in sequences like this it is the used to which marks the function of the string of clauses that follow, and which is the primary marker of meaning. The occurrences of would or, more frequently 'd, which follow may be there because they are less salient and do not offend our general dislike of repetition.

We cannot know for sure what the reason is but there are two pedagogic conclusions to be drawn. First we should draw attention to this meaning of would relatively early in a course. It is not an unusual form which is used only in very formal circumstances and should therefore be left until the late intermediate stage. Secondly we should be careful in demonstrating the use of used to for learners. We should take account of the fact that in use it is quickly replaced by would and is therefore rarely repeated again and again. If we choose to indulge in this repetition in order to offer a stark presentation of used to, we should also inform students that sequences like this are unlikely to occur outside the classroom. We should demonstrate very quickly the true relationship between used to and would.

Look next at facts 2 and 3 about the word would. It seems to me that if we take these facts into account we have two possible teaching strategies. The first is to begin by highlighting the use of would for hypothesis and then, at a later stage to point out that this hypothetical meaning is often found in an if clause. The second strategy would be to introduce would for hypothesis in the context of an if clause, and then go on very soon to show

how it carries this same hypothetical meaning in all kinds of other contexts. The usual strategy in teaching materials, however, is to present this meaning of would in an if clause and leave it at that. Learners are shown how it is used in 8% of its occurrences (in if clauses) and left to infer for themselves how it is used for hypothesis in around 40% of occurrences without the accompanying if.

It seems to me, then, to be quite clear that we need this kind of frequency information about the very frequent words of the language if we are to make informed and effective teaching decisions. It is also clear that this kind of information is not available to our intuitions. We cannot retrieve these facts about the language simply by sitting back and thinking.

I could mention other features of language which are revealed by corpus studies. I could demonstrate how language is generally much more abstract than we might think. A word like thing which we tend to think of as referring to concrete objects much more commonly refers to arguments, ideas and propositions. One of its recurrent phrases is The ___ thing is ... as in the annoying thing is ..., the interesting thing is ... and so on. I could show the importance of 'vague language', how phrases like sort of and kind of are used again and again by competent speakers of the language and, by implication, how difficult it is to manage without this kind of vague language.

These are all important points, but I would like to go on to make a much more general point, and to justify the claim I made earlier that corpus studies provide us with a general insight which ought to revolutionise the way we design and use teaching materials. In 1988 John Sinclair identified what he called the idiom principle: The principle of idiom is that a language user has available to him or her a large number of semi-preconstructed phrases that constitute single choices, even though they might appear to be analysable into segments ... The overwhelming nature of this evidence leads us to elevate the principle of idiom far from being a rather minor feature, compared with grammar, to being at least as important as grammar in the explanation of how meaning arises in text. (Sinclair 1988)⁴

What Sinclair is saying here is that very much of the language we use is made up of prefabricated phrases which we carry around in our heads as chunks, in the same way as we carry lexical items. It is easy to call to mind all kinds of chunks like as a matter of fact; it's up to you; the ...thing is and so on. Phrases and frames such as these are very much like vocabulary items. We do not compose them afresh each time we use them, any more than we compose afresh the word unhappiness from the parts un-, happy- and -ness. We carry them around as set items and slot them into the message like single items.

Some of these chunks seem to be more or less arbitrary. There are a few phrases which follow the pattern as a matter of ... (as a matter of course; as a matter of urgency), but they are very few.

It	BE	adj.	to-infinitive
It	was	nice	to meet you.

But it is important to recognise that many chunks and frames are far from arbitrary. There are, for example, a number of common adjectives in English which are commonly found with the pattern:

They occur in a frame composed of the word it followed by part of the verb to be, followed by an adjective, followed by the to-infinitive:

Here are some examples:

1 It'd be very **difficult to** go through your working life living up to the image that you gave at your interview, if it isn't you.

2 I've found in interviews that it's actually **better to** say, I'd like a moment to think about that. I hadn't thought of that before. I'd like a minute - to digest the information and think of an answer

3 It's **easy to** say 'Have confidence in yourself', but not so easy to achieve

4 It's **polite to** knock before you enter an office if the door is closed

5 It's **important to** create a good impression at the interview

6 He said it's very **unusual to** find a well at the top of a hill. And if there's water up there, near the summit, then there's almost certainly even more water down in the valley

7 Although it is **possible** for certain individuals **to** live to unexpectedly great ages, most crocodiles and alligators live for about 30 years.

8 This would be the twofold effect of getting the job done cheaply and making it **safe** for the local people **to** cross the river.

An important point to recognise is that if you look carefully at these adjectives you will see that they are not a random selection. They all function as an evaluation of some sort and they can be divided into groups according to meaning.

Group 1: GOOD/BAD: better; polite.

Group 2: EASY/DIFFICULT: easy; difficult; possible

Group 3: USUAL/UNUSUAL: common; unusual.

Group 4: WISE/FOOLISH: important; safe.

Words which share a given pattern are likely to share meaning and function.

It is possible to identify other adjectives commonly found with this pattern and allocate them to the same groups: nice, interesting, fashionable, impossible, simple, rare, usual, necessary, essential, silly, dangerous etc. In some cases you might see a word as fitting in more than one group. The word fashionable, for example, may be seen as either GOOD/BAD or USUAL/UNUSUAL, depending on the context. But the principle is clear. Words which share a given pattern are likely to share meaning and function.

Patterns may be based on adjectives, as in the example above, or on verbs or nouns. There is an exhaustive list of these patterns in Francis et al. (1996 and 1998)⁵ and a detailed account of the thinking behind this work is to be found in Hunston and Francis (1999)⁶.

The importance of the idiom principle is recognised by Skehan (1992)

(a user) ... achieves communication in real time not by the complexities of producing utterances on the basis of a rule system, constructing anew each time, but instead draws on ready-made elements and chunks, without the need to construct each chunk independently and to lose time planning internal organisation. (Skehan 1992: 186)

This suggests that the ability to produce language fluently depends on familiarity with a repertoire of chunks and patterns which can be produced and strung together rapidly in real time.

This seems to me to have several clear implications for language teaching:

- We need to encourage students to search for frames and patterns in the language and to recognise the importance of these patternings.

- We need to show how words which share a pattern are also likely to share function and meaning, and we need to group words according to the patterns they share.

- Perhaps we need to see language acquisition less as a problem solving process and more as the gradual accumulation of chunks and patterns.

- We need to reconsider the way time is spent in the language classroom. It may be more useful to spend time encouraging students to build up their repertoire of chunks and patterns and putting these to work in communication, and rather less time insisting on accuracy in the use of the tense system, the determiner system and so on.

- This would involve basing much of what happens in the classroom on language use rather than on language presentation. There would be more time spent on 'skills lessons' and less on the presentation of the grammatical system

And if we are to shift the emphasis in language teaching to place a much greater emphasis on the acquisition of patterns, then corpus studies clearly have a central part to play in identifying and elaborating on these patterns in different varieties of spoken and written English.

Corpus linguists have an important part to play. They must begin to emphasise the centrality of corpus studies, and perhaps spend less time on the minutiae of cutting edge research. Teachers and material writers for their part should look carefully at the wider picture presented by corpus work, think about the implications for the classroom and begin to work on methodological techniques and sequences that will enable us to take advantage of this exciting new view of language. 🗨️

1. Hugh Dellar: Why don't general English courses actually teach general English?

2. Ron Carter: Language and context in ELT: new directions and developments.

3. Michael Hoey: What does the dictionary say (and leave unsaid)?

4. Sinclair J. M. 1988. 'Collocation' in Steele R and Threadgold T. Language Topics Amsterdam : John Benjamins Publishing Company. (Republished in Sinclair J.M. 1991. Corpus, Concordance, Collocation. Oxford: Oxford University Press.)

5. Francis, G., Hunston, S. and Manning E. (1996) Grammar Patterns 1: Verbs Harper Collins (1998) Grammar Patterns 2: Nouns and Adjectives. Harper Collins.

6. Hunston, S. and Francis, G. (1999) Pattern Grammar John Benjamins.

Which English Shall We Teach? (or Wi ol go tok wan Inglis, init ?)

David J.W. Hill

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[The following article connects not only with the article by Rod Fricker in IHJ issue 9, but also articles by Paul Roberts and Cathy Ellis in issue 10 - Eds]

A comment regarding American English in a previous issue of IHJ, ('Perennial Present Perfect Problem' Rod Fricker, IHJ issue 9), sparked some debate in our teachers' room and on the IH discussion listbot. Some of what was said was funny, some rather heated. So, the purpose of this article is to look more calmly and carefully at the issues involved, namely: The current state of English in the world, its possible state in the future, which English we should teach to our students, and which goals may be appropriate for learners of English in the early 21st century.

A Spanish teacher of English in our school recently asked me whether she should teach her class "pavement" or "sidewalk", by no means an uncommon question-type from "non-native", (a term which I will question later in this piece), teachers. Her students may in the future be dealing with those speaking British or American English, or with other non-natives who have learned one or other of these Englishes, (and what of those studying in Australia, New Zealand...?). My reply was that, bearing in mind the above factors, she would be doing her learners a disservice were she not to teach them both items of vocabulary, pointing out that learners need not feel intimidated by this, as the differences are relatively few, and rarely lead to incomprehension or confusion.

This answer is the answer which I nearly always give to such queries, believing that any other answer would be irresponsible, unprofessional and culturally narrow-minded. The exceptions to this general response are when students are in preparation for a particular examination: Cambridge, I believe, will now accept "Americanisms", so long as they are consistent throughout, (not saying or writing, "at the weekend" and then "Monday through Friday"), for example. In TOEFL, I believe the examiners remain rather hidebound, and will mark the first of these as an error. But when I think of the sheer number of occasions when I have observed teachers correcting an American usage as "wrong", or treating them as some marginal freak, I realise that such blinkered thinking is far from rare.

The same applies to the teaching and correction of pronunciation: Why, when the majority of native-speakers do pronounce "r" after vowels, is to do so frequently regarded as wrong, rather than merely one of two acceptable variants? Once, in a lesson which I observed, the main aim was the "correction" of this pronunciation, which, in any case, never interferes with

intelligibility. I walked out in disgust. I would do the same thing were a Scottish or American teacher to claim that the dropping of the "r" was an error.

However, this pluralist position towards English, while being the only intellectually and culturally honest and viable one, does leave us with one pretty big problem: There are currently many Englishes in the world. Which one should we teach?

We know something is alive when we see it move.

The above quotation, from David Crystal [1], may be applied to our teaching approaches and methods in ELT, as it was in a recent lecture by Jeremy Harmer[2], but it was originally written with reference to the language itself.

Unlike, for example, Spanish, which still clings to Castillian as its "pure" form, English no longer has such notions of "standard" or "purity", nor much sense of being in any way "fixed", a fact which some will celebrate, while others feel a sense of vertigo and anxiety. The language became international for the, in my opinion, very negative reason of British imperialism, largely in the 19th century. Its global proliferation continued in the 20th century for the equally negative reasons of American military, economic and cultural hegemony. It is this shift in power which, (along with the post creole-continuum of the English of the colonised feeding back into the colonising language), has done more than anything to erode such comfortable notions of "standard" and "purity".

We can no longer seriously consider The Queen's English as a candidate for any global standard

We can no longer seriously consider The Queen's English as a candidate for any global standard, (the woman's vowels, which may be studied annually in her addresses to parliament are in any case, shifting towards the "estuarial"). BBC English? The Corporation now seems to be in the hands of the Scottish, Irish

and Caribbean, and none the worse for that. RP? Received from whom, exactly, and how? Such models would be politically untenable, even if they did still exist in actual speech. This elimination of false standards, however, leaves us no closer to a solution.

“Which native speaker? George W Bush? The Queen? Bob Marley? Eminem?”

Above, I mentioned a teacher’s question which threw some light on this subject for me. A student’s comment may also be of assistance. I’ve been told by many students, especially when teaching in London, “ I want to speak like a native-speaker.” My reply to this is, I hope, neither unhelpful nor cruel. Firstly, I must ask, “Which native speaker? George W Bush? The Queen? Bob Marley? Eminem?”. Secondly, I must ask, “Wouldn’t your valuable time be better spent learning some words?” Such a goal, whether only applied to pronunciation, or to other areas of language, is unrealistic for nearly all learners and therefore likely to be extremely demotivating when it is not achieved. And even were it to be achieved, it would take years of indescribably hard and frustrating work for most people, even in a native-speaking environment.

The goal of “native-like” language-use, whether set by teachers, examiners or learners themselves, is not a valid one. Much more helpful, in that it is achievable by all and presents us with a valuable worldwide standard, would be one such as “ Optimum Global Intelligibility”, a notion developed and discussed in great detail by Jennifer Jenkins [3]. One might wish to add to this descriptor the words “and Credibility”: In the well-known example of “sailing across the ocean on a sheep”, for example, one will rarely be actually misunderstood, but may not be taken very seriously (by a native-speaker at any rate).

80% of English used worldwide today does not involve a native-speaker as one of the interlocutors

On the touchy subject of native-speakers however, there is a much discussed, but never sourced [4], statistic which states that 80% of English used worldwide today does not involve a native-speaker as one of the interlocutors. Whatever the veracity, accuracy ,or otherwise, of this claim, it is obvious that our students will be, and are now, using English not merely to

communicate with native-speakers, but to talk to others who have learned English as a second/third language. In such contexts, native-like speech may even be a barrier to successful communication.

When I and some friends were out on the town recently, Patrick spoke with a Canadian accent, Judith with a Trinidadian, Andy a West Country, Chris a Scots, Bozena a Polish, Sibel a Turkish, Alexei a Russian and Sophie a French accent. So what? As Joanne Kenworthy has pointed out [5]:

“What we are really dealing with is a phenomenon on a level with the other accents of English - Australian accent, American accent, Scottish accent, foreign accent. Speaking with a foreign accent is only a ‘problem’ if it leads to a breakdown in communication”.

Again, while one may doubt the accuracy of the 80% statistic, it seems reasonable to say that, at the very least, a highly significant and rapidly increasing proportion of English spoken around the world involves no native-speaker, or is between native and non-native. It also seems reasonable to assume that, if we natives do not already account for only a minority of English used, we soon will.

English is not Latin, which proliferated for similarly imperialistic / militaristic reasons, and then divided into what were to become Italian, Romanian, French, Spanish... Technology has saved it from that fate: The global umbrella of electronic media will ensure that the hegemony of English is unchallenged, but these media, especially the internet, are decentralising and deregulating by the minute: Who uses the language dictates its future, as we have learned from the adoption of a descriptive, rather than a prescriptive approach to grammar. It would be interesting to see the universities compile a corpus of truly global English use, especially that found on the internet and that of non-native language users.

A huge proportion of E-communication is in non-native English. At present it is in a hybrid form of “written-spoken”, but with the pace of technological development, we should all be sending sound files instead of sending emails, or simply talking to each other through microphones, within a few years. It seems likely that English will split, but only into two groups: Inherited or Native Users, who will be seen as using a quaint , ornate, and rather archaic dialect, and Non-Inherited or Non-Native Users, who will truly speak International English, and who will form the vast majority.

Even in its literary forms, the language has long since passed out of the control of the English, as will be obvious to any readers of James Joyce, Samuel Beckett, William Burroughs, Alasdair Gray or Derek Walcott, to name but five. But can even the dominant position of such native-users, of five remarkably different Englishes, be maintained? We already have enshrined in our literary canon, (another highly questionable and Èlitist notion), the works of Joseph Conrad, that pioneer of the modern novel, and Vladimir Nabokov, regarded by many as one of the great stylists of English prose. The former was a Pole, who learned English as

his third language whilst working on merchant ships, the second was, of course, a Russian ÉmigrÉ. Inspirations to us all, but especially to learners of English.

Returning to the night on the town mentioned above, when a Pole, a Turk, a Russian and a Frenchwoman are conversing together in English they are, by definition, talking in Pidgin, unless of course they are aware of, (and care about), being listened to by a teacher, in which case they are speaking Learner English. Here is that definition of “pidgin”, from the New Oxford Dictionary of English; “a grammatically simplified form of a language... with a limited vocabulary...used for communication between people not sharing a common language.” [my italics]

In instances of pidginisation, grammar tends to become simplified. An example: It occurred at the very inception of English as we know it, (which is already a creole; a pidgin which has become a first language), when the French of the Norman conquerors was grafted onto the Germanic dialect of the British natives. The complex system of inflection in Old English began to be simplified, eventually becoming the minimal inflection we know and use today: “ed” for the Past Tense, 3rd person singular “s” in Present, etc.. To this day, more formal language tends to have a Latinate root, e.g. “construct”, as opposed to the more quotidian, “build”, etc.. The language of the victors is still regarded as in some way superior to that of the conquered.

In our present situation, as this Global Pidgin proliferates, as more and more non-natives use English as a means of intercommunication, it seems inevitable that such structural simplifications, and also lexical simplifications, will occur. Try this experiment with a broad-minded, multilingual class: 1) Ask them to carry out a fluency-based task. 2) Ask them to discuss and reach consensus on the aspects of the language which they most despise, or find absurd, cumbersome and pointless. The answers are fairly predictable: Grammar / Lexis; irregular verbs, he / she / it “s”, prepositions, multi-word verbs, question tags, (why not just “init”, a usage which may have become widespread having started life in Stoke Newington as Turkish “degil mi”[6]). Phonology; both “th” sounds, the “sh” sound, certain consonant clusters. 3) Ask them to repeat the task, or to carry out a similar one, eliminating these features, paying no attention to them, or regularising or simplifying. Nothing could be easier for them, or more welcome. This is, after all, what they do anyway when talking to one another in an authentic, non-lesson context. Pure pidgin. Truly International English.

Which brings us, at last, to the tenuous position of the native-speaker, the cause of so many clumsy quotation marks earlier. Surely, given the fact that speakers of English as a first language are, or will soon be, a minority, that English is used as a bridge between speakers of other languages, that native-like use may no longer even be desirable, and that many of our most accomplished and professional colleagues, (who have actually wrestled with learning the language, who have properly studied the grammar, who can often better understand learner needs and responses), are themselves “non-native speakers”,

The whole mystique of the native speaker and the mother tongue should probably be quietly dropped from the linguist's set of professional myths about language.

Such terms as “native”, (related to the words “nativity” and “nature”), and “mother tongue”, imply that the language is somehow naturally passed on, rather than learned, that such inheritance implies competence in the language and a comprehensive understanding of it, and that one either is or is not a member of the “native” set . All of these implications are patently false; language, while we have an innate capacity for it, is learned in a social setting, one may have been born into a language-group, but have a poor grasp of it, and one may move from one group to another, changing one's loyalty from one language to another.

The needs of learners are often already at odds with the language-goals assigned to them by teachers.

Difficult and painful it may be, for many native-speaking teachers, to relinquish their so-easily-gained sense of superiority and mystique. Threatening it may be to throw out the myths from which we have gained so much professional standing and self-esteem. But in the future the language will not be as we imagine it to be now. The needs of learners are often already at odds with the language-goals assigned to them by teachers.

Again though, if we are to be such iconoclasts regarding established, but now invalid concepts, we must be constructive enough to suggest replacements for them too. If we are no longer to use the terms “native-speaker” or “mother tongue”, what shall we say? In a brief but fascinating article, MBH Rampton [8] has suggested the following :

...the concepts expertise, inheritance and affiliation ...tell us to inspect each native speaker's credentials closely... They also remind us to keep our eyes on social affairs.

Expertise may be assessed by objective criteria, which may be reviewed or challenged. It is a relative term (one may attain degrees of expertise) and it is certifiable. Why are “natives” not made to sit an examination testing their knowledge of English grammar before entering a classroom in a “professional” capacity, while their “non-native” colleagues must sit such examinations?

Inheritance of a language has a weaker implication of competence that “mother tongue” or “native”. We may inherit something and misuse it, and we can all think of those who have inherited English but who we would under no circumstances allow within a kilometre of our classrooms. The inherited is an

object to be used, rather than an innate quality.

Affiliation is not fixed: Our loyalties can change, even regarding language. The notion of “native” is one of exclusion; one cannot become a “native-speaker” any more than one can become a virgin. Yet such an exclusive notion would fail to pay sufficient respect or attention to the words of Conrad, Nabokov or any other person who has learned English other than as a first language .

Aren't we teaching English as an international language? Aren't we International House. We must, if we are to prepare our students to communicate competently and efficiently in English, now and in the future, take off our cultural/linguistic blinkers concerning varieties of English, and concerning notions of “native” and “non-native” users. Tomorrow, in class, remember that you are not the future of the language, your students are.

Notes:

1] **Crystal D.**, Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language (1995, CUP, page 179).

2] **Harmer J.**, Back to back with your arms around your neck, unpublished lecture, International House, London, 2001.

I'm grateful to Mr Harmer for letting me know the source of this quotation.

3] **Jenkins J.**, Changing Priorities -Speak Out, (Journal of the IATEFL pron special interest group), summer 1996

- Changing pronunciation priorities for successful communication in international contexts -Speak Out, January 1996

- Teaching Intonation for English as an international language: Teachability, learnability and intelligibility -Speak Out, December 1997

Which Pronunciation norms and models for English as a Foreign Language? - ELT Journal, April 1998

Changing pronunciation priorities for successful communication in international contexts, Speak Out, Jan 1996.

Many thanks to Alan Stanton for drawing my attention to these articles

4] If anyone does know the source of this modern myth, I'm sure we'd all love to know...

5] **Kenworthy J.**, Teaching English Pronunciation, Longman 1987.

6] I know there should be an accent on the “soft G”, but my computer can't do that. T,m t,rk okuyuculara z,rlerimi iletirim.

7] **Kachru B.**, Meaning in Deviation: Towards Understanding Non-Native English Texts, in Kachru B., (ed), The other tongue: English across cultures, Pergamon, 1982.

8] **Rampton M.B.H.** Displacing the ‘native speaker’: Expertise, affiliation, and inheritance, ELT Journal, April 1990

QTT vs TTT: never mind the quality, feel the width?

Steve Walsh

Steve is director of teacher education programmes at the TEFL Centre, Queen's University, Belfast, N. Ireland. He has worked as a teacher and trainer (not with IH, alas!) in Spain, Hong Kong, Hungary, Poland, the Republic of Ireland and China. He is interested in the effects of teacher talk on classroom interaction and language learning in the context of teacher education and teacher development.

The TTT Phobia

Teacher trainers are constantly striving to persuade their trainees to reduce their TTT (teacher talking time). CELTA and DELTA feedback forms the world over, I suspect, are littered with comments like the ones below taken from a recent CELTA course which I was involved in:-

- Careful with high TTT and teacher echo.
- Too much TTT at times.
- You're beginning to run away with your TTT a bit.
- A good language activity but in the end you talk over a bit too much.
- I felt I had to do a lot of TTT to elicit answers.

Felt I did less TTT, got ss to work more on their own and in pairs.

Keep working on reducing TTT.

(CELTA TP feedback forms, February 2001)

It is immediately obvious that both trainers and trainees have an obsession with TTT, almost a phobia; the comments above are really the tip of the iceberg - I could have included many others. Why is it that we are so concerned to get trainees to cut down on their teacher talk? In the angst that has developed over the insistence on student-centred, communicative language classes, teachers have perhaps neglected themselves, forgetting that

they are still central to the learning process; that through their talk and that of their learners, interaction and learning opportunities occur.

Classroom interaction is important and we do want our trainee-teachers to get learners talking, but, I propose that reducing TTT is not the way to achieve these ends. My basic point in this article is that the notions of high and low TTT are far too simplistic: instead of getting trainees to reduce their teacher talk, as trainers we should be concerned to make teachers more aware of the effects of teacher talk on opportunities for learning, and encourage QTT (quality teacher talk).

Social constructivism and language learning

The starting point for the study I am currently involved in is the position statement which is by now so familiar to everyone in the field: learning a foreign language in a classroom occurs primarily through the interaction which occurs (cf Long, 1983, 1996; Pica, 1994; Foster, 1998). While few of us would deny that interaction is central to the acquisition process, the precise nature of 'optimum interaction' still defies definition; more and more practitioners are coming to the conclusion that interaction, in itself, is not necessarily 'a good thing' and certainly not enough to promote learning (see for example van Lier, 1988; Seedhouse, 1996).

A currently held and pretty well-documented view which is gaining both credence and credibility in our field is that the learning (in a formal, L2 classroom context) occurs through talk which is jointly constructed by teachers and learners. Under this social constructivist theory of learning (see Vygotsky, 1999; Wertsch, 1985; Bruner, 1990; Lantolf, 2000) teacher and learners have co-ownership of the classroom discourse which they construct through goal-directed classroom activities. Even though participants may have different agendas, teachers and learners work towards one common institutional goal: learning English; it is this goal-oriented activity which determines both the direction and content of classroom discourse. Interaction patterns can be best understood when attention is given not only to the talk, but also to the pedagogic purpose, the goal behind a particular exchange. Under this view, terms such as high and low TTT become meaningless; teacher talk is understood and adjusted according to teaching/learning objectives at a given moment in a lesson and by recognising that any lesson is made up of a number of different contexts, not one.

The quality of teacher talk is more important than quantity (Kumaravivelu, 1999; Seedhouse, 1997) and teachers are primarily responsible for creating and maintaining classroom communicative competence (cf Johnson, 1995; van Lier, 1988, 1996). Classroom communicative competence is based on an understanding that opportunities for learning are jointly constructed but primarily determined by the teacher.

In the words of Ellis (1998:166):-

Opportunities for giving learners control of the discourse will arise naturally in the course of a language lesson. The extent to which teachers grasp these opportunities ... may well prove more crucial for creating the optimal conditions for learning to take place than any planned decisions they make.

In light of the importance still attached to classroom interaction and particularly in view of the fact that teachers do have considerable responsibility for creating the 'right conditions' for learning opportunities to be realised, it is perhaps not unreasonable for teacher educators to increase their trainees' understanding of teacher talk: comments about high or low TTT will not achieve this end.

Interestingly, teachers of content subjects like science and maths have been aware of the need to understand classroom communication for some time. In our haste to be 'communicative', it seems that we have overlooked the simple fact that the EFL classroom is a social context in its own right. Instead of trying to make it more like the 'real, outside world' we would do better to understand the interactional processes which create the 'real, inside world' of the EFL classroom.

To go very briefly back to the 'content subject' teachers, researchers like Moje (1995) and Musumeci (1996) have documented quite convincingly the importance of teaching students to talk the talk of their subject. By that, I mean very simply that students who, for example, learn to 'talk science' outperform those who do not. 'Learning conversations' and 'instructed conversations' (c.f. Roehler et al, 1996) have been found to be very effective means of improving, for example, literacy among young learners. In all of the studies I have just mentioned, the use of language and good interpersonal and communication skills took precedence over teaching methodology. Given that we are in the business of communication, would it not seem logical for us to become more aware of the language we use in the classroom?

L2 Classroom Modes

If, then, we can reduce the amount of time we spend trying to import the 'real world' into our classroom and instead focus on what is going on around us, I believe that classes can become significantly more interactive, with higher quality teacher talk and increased opportunities for learning. The first step is to raise our and our trainees' awareness.

Following Seedhouse (1996), the current study has identified four classroom micro contexts, which I term modes, identified according to pedagogic goals and interactional features:-

Mode	Pedagogic Goals	Interactional features
Managerial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To transmit information; • To organise the physical learning environment; • To refer learners to materials; • To introduce or conclude an activity; • To change from one mode of learning to another. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A single, extended teacher turn which uses explanations and/or instructions; • The use of transitional markers; • The use of confirmation checks; • An absence of learner contributions.
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide language practice around a piece of material; • To elicit responses in relation to the material; • To check and display answers; • To clarify when necessary; • To evaluate contributions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predominance of IRF pattern; • Extensive use of display questions; • Form-focused feedback; • Corrective repair; • The use of scaffolding.
Skills and systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To enable learners to produce correct forms; • To enable learners to manipulate the target language; • To provide corrective feedback; • To provide learners with practice in sub-skills; • To display correct answers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of direct repair; • The use of scaffolding; • Extended teacher turns; • Display questions; • Teacher echo; • Clarification requests; • Form-focused feedback.
Classroom context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To enable learners to express themselves clearly; • To establish a context; • To promote oral fluency. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended learner turns. • Short teacher turns; • Minimal repair; • Content feedback; • Referential questions; • Scaffolding • Clarification requests.

The framework is intended to be representative rather than comprehensive. The four modes depicted are quite clearly delineated by pedagogic goals and interactional features; while there are some similarities, there are also differences which make description possible. Yet the modes do not claim to account for all features of classroom discourse, nor are they sufficiently comprehensive to take account of each and every pedagogic goal. The main focus is on teacher-fronted classroom practice: interactions which are not teacher-fronted, where learners work independently of the teacher cannot be described. Rather, the framework is concerned to establish an understanding of the relationship between interaction and learning; specifically, the interface between teaching objectives and teacher talk. In essence, as a tool for teacher education, the framework has to enable teachers to describe interaction relatively easily and unambiguously.

Examples of each of the modes are included by way of illustration.

Extract (1)

- 61. ah correct pronunciation anybody?
- 62. LL: prison
- 63. =prison good right everyone say prison
- 64: prison=
- 65. =good do you understand prison Junya? what is a prison?
- 66. L1: I I don't know
- 67. L: ((2))
- 68. last night (laughs) right when the police take you ... and ... they lock you

away ... yes I think maybe the American English is penitentiary ... perhaps that's what you have in your dictionary I don't know but anyway PRison=

69. L. =a shallow kind of prison=

(Author's data, 2000)

As can be seen in the this very familiar exchange, the main focus is on a particular language system (vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation) or skill (listening, reading, writing, speaking). The prime orientation is the language itself, reflected in the work-in-

progress and corresponding 'learning talk'. Teacher turns are often extended, and consist typically of explanations, confirmation checks, display questions, while learner turns are correspondingly shorter, made up of short answers or requests for further clarification. While TTT is high, it is 'supposed' to be high given the mode in force, which in this example is skills and systems.

In the second extract, the teacher is in managerial mode:-

Extract 2

32 all right so here in this ... bundle there are more ... right and what you do is one person from each group will come up ... er one after the other ... take a word ... read it ... and try to decide where it goes now if you're not really sure or if you've no idea you can guess and write the word under the category ... if it's wrong ... the other groups have a chance to look it up in the dictionary but don't call it out don't give me the answer you can wait until possibly next time you have a chance to write it up yourself ... so you get a point for every correct word in every correct category is that clear

(Author's data, 2000)

In this mode, as illustrated in the second extract, the main focus is on setting up or getting feedback on an activity. It is quite normally dominated by the teacher whose task is to give instructions or explanations and check understanding. The communication is one-way, typically with no learner involvement at all. This mode is found most frequently at the beginning of a lesson or lesson stage, or between different stages.

Compare the following extract with the previous two:-

Extract 3

89 [the match] was ... what?
 90 L: [match]
 91 LL: nil nil
 92 nil nil (reading) and it remained the same after 30 minutes OF (3)
 93 L5: extra time
 94 extra time very good Emerson (reading) but then Italy?
 95 L5: lost (2)
 96 but then Italy ... what?
 97 L5: lost=
 98 =lost ok 3 2 in the penalty shoot-out after Venessi and Bagio (mispronounced) both missed
 99 L: Bagio (correcting teacher's pronunciation)
 100 Bagio yes Spanish (reading) this was the fourth time that Brazil had?
 101 =won=
 102 =won ...
 103 LL: /won won/
 104 the World Cup very good (5) and ((2)) what's that word? ((5))

(Author's data, 2000)

In extract 3, the interactional organisation is almost entirely determined by the materials and managed by the teacher. Teacher and learner turns are mirrored by the material: the teacher elicits responses (89, 92, 94, 98, 100) and learners respond (91, 93, 95, 101). The sequence is 'classic IRF' (teacher

Initiation, learner Response, teacher Feedback), the most economical way to progress the interaction, with each teacher turn functioning as both an evaluation of a learner's contribution and initiation of another one. There is only one turn (99) which is not determined by pedagogic goals, though it is related to it; unusually, it is a learner's correction of the teacher's pronunciation! Very little interactional space or choice of topic are afforded since the interaction is focused exclusively on the material. Extract three is an example of materials mode.

Finally, in extract 4, an example of classroom context mode is presented:-

Extract 4

256 L3:=ahh nah the one thing that happens when a person dies ((2)) my mother used to work with old people and when they died ...the last thing that went out was the hearing ((4)) about this person =
 257 =aha (2)
 258 L3: so I mean even if you are unconscious or on drugs or something I mean it's probably still perhaps can hear what's happened (2)
 259 L2:but it gets ((2))=
 260 LL:/but it gets/there are ((2))/=
 261 L3: =I mean you have seen so many operation ((3)) and so you can imagine and when you are hearing the sounds what happens I think you can get a pretty clear picture of what's really going on there=
 262 L:=yeah=
 263
 264
 265 =yes=
 266
 267
 268 =you think it's a kind of spirit =
 L: =and and ...
 L1: but eh and eh I don't know about other people but eh ((6)) I always have feeling somebody watching watch watches me=
 L4: =yeah!=
 L1: =somebody just follow me either a man or a woman I don't know if it's a man I feel really exciting if it's a woman ((4)) I don't know why like I'm trying to do things better like I'm eh ...look like this ...you feel! it ...I don't know=

(Author's data, 2000)

In this extract with a group of advanced learners, the teacher's stated aim is "to generate discussion prior to a cloze exercise on poltergeists" and learners have been invited to share their experiences. The turn-taking is almost entirely managed by the learners, with evidence of competition for the floor and turn gaining, holding and passing which are typical features of natural conversation. The defining interactional feature of classroom context mode, then, is interactional space: extended learner turns predominate as participants co-construct the discourse. Teacher feedback shifts from form- to content-focused and error correction is minimal. In short, the orientation is towards

maintaining genuine communication rather than displaying linguistic knowledge. The predominant interactional feature of extract 4 is the local management of the speech exchange system; learners have considerable freedom as to what to say and when. This process of 'topicalisation' (Slimani, 1989), where learners select and develop a topic, is significant in maximising learning potential since "whatever is topicalised by the learners rather than the teacher has a better chance of being claimed to have been learnt" (Ellis, 1998: 159)

While this framework is as yet somewhat rudimentary and certainly insensitive to all interactions in the EFL classroom, it does, I suggest, have considerable value as a tool for promoting awareness of language use in teacher education programmes. This paper concludes with a discussion of some of those applications.

Implications for teacher education

The discussion so far is summarised:-

- The EFL classroom is a social context in its own right; the patterns of discourse which prevail are jointly constructed by teachers and learners who are, to a large extent, engaged in a goal-oriented activity.
- That goal-oriented activity is shaped by and for the work-in-progress of the lesson; teachers and learners adjust their use of language according to the task in which they are involved.
- Under this view of classroom contexts or modes, a blanket 'high or low TTT' is not responsive, I suggest, to the complex interactional processes at work.
- Four modes were presented, characterised by their pedagogic goals and corresponding interactional features. By learning to understand the interactional organisation of each mode, teachers can train themselves (or be trained) to appreciate that language use and pedagogic purpose are inextricably linked and that teacher talk varies according to mode.
- Quality teacher talk occurs when pedagogic purpose and language use are at one; TTT may be high under one mode and low under another. High TTT may be entirely appropriate depending on the mode and pedagogic purpose in operation.

The framework can be used in a number of ways on initial and in-service teacher education programmes:-

1. Based on short (10-15 minutes) recordings, trainees analyse their classroom interaction, identifying examples of each mode according to pedagogic goals and interactional features. Given the highly structured nature of the framework, it is envisaged that analyses could be based on untranscribed recordings;
2. The framework allows the development of QTT by facilitating a more sophisticated range of skills relating to teacher talk, such as the importance of scaffolding when eliciting and the need for judicious use of teacher echo;
3. By making teachers aware that, for example, TTT varies according to mode, an understanding of appropriate teacher talk

can be fostered: teachers can facilitate learning opportunities by tailoring language use to pedagogic purpose and by understanding that teacher talk varies according to mode;

4. With a little training, trainees can be taught how to use the framework and make simple but useful interpretations about their language use in an endeavour to gain a closer understanding of the interactional processes at work in their classes;

5. There are implicit in the data indications that the framework could be adapted to groups of learners, enabling a more objective look at their classroom discourse with a view to promoting communicative competence in the EFL classroom.

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A TOPIC- driven Strategy for Language Lesson Design: Reconciling reactive TBL principles within a proactive, syllabus oriented ELT world.

Derrin Kent

Derrin has been a teacher and CLETA trainer with International House in various locations for eight years. He is the editor of the IATEFL Teacher Trainers SIG Newsletter.

In a recent issue of the IHJED Karl Kaliski and I wrote about how we were running our pre-service (CELTA) courses with TBL as the driving paradigm. At that time we were confronting the question as to how best to prepare trainees to deal with coursebooks and the syllabuses they contain while remaining faithful to the principles and practice associated with a TBL-type methodology.

In this article I am going to offer a heuristic for lesson design which I have been using more recently on my CELTA courses at

International House, Barcelona. The model is my attempt to reconcile a TBL-style methodology, emphasising a reactive focus on form, with the proactive teaching requirements arising from the imposition of a pre-selected grammar syllabus (which frameworks the coursebooks and the testing process employed by most language teaching institutes).

Much debate has raged in recent years as to the relative merits and drawbacks of different lesson models which we can provide pre-service trainees with. A recent trend has been to seek to

Table 1: A TOPIC-driven strategy for language lesson design

	KEY CONCEPTS	LEARNER ROLES	TEACHER ROLES
T TASK / TEXT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-task • Identify / Create a need • Model text (of task) • TAVI Focus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate: receptively / productively • Noticing (& recording?) gaps 	Selecting texts/tasks; Generating interest; Animating production; Identifying errors/gaps/good examples; Facilitating comprehension of a text; etc.
O OBSERVE FORM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TALO Focus & 'Noticing' • Language as: Lexis/Grammar/ Vocabulary/Discourse/ Function/ etc. • Exercises, drills and activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making Hypotheses • Noticing Form • Recording Form • Restricted Language Use 	Setting 'guided discovery' challenges; "Spotlighting" form in context/co-text; Clarifying where required; Providing focus exercises/drills/activities; etc.
P PREPARE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accuracy and Complexity • Stretch output • Focus on Form 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing thematically (ideas) • Preparing linguistically (useful language) 	Animating; Acting as a language resource; Intervening to shape: Stretching for complexity + correcting for accuracy; monitoring and recording form; etc.
I INTERACT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audience and Performance • Outcome: A reason to... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicating • Seeking to achieve a communicative outcome? • Experimenting with target language form? • Authentic Language Use 	Animating and directing; Participating; Possibly intervening (but not interrupting) to shape; monitoring and recording form; etc.
C CONCLUDE/ CLARIFY FORM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback on Outcome • Reactive Focus on Form: errors, gaps and good examples 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noticing Form • Recording Form 	Drawing the topic to a close; "Signposting"?; Drawing learners' attention to their output: errors, gaps & good examples; Providing focus exercises/drills/activities; etc.

(Derrin Kent 2001)

develop reflective practitioners i.e. to encourage trainees to critically assess their own practice and not to assume that there is one particular way to teach. I, too, put great store by this principle. However, I do find that, certainly in the early stages of a pre-service course, a lesson framework provides trainees with something to 'scaffold' their lesson planning. They can throw the whole thing up in the air for themselves when they feel ready to.

The TOPIC model places a clear emphasis on preparation before the task, gives a sense of audience and outcome for the task and makes the teacher clearly responsible for reacting to the quality of learners output

The TOPIC framework for lesson design (see table 1) provides the novice (or not so novice) teacher with an element of choice/flexibility as to whether to proactively take on a particular language point or not. Reducing the 'O' stage to a quick glance at a couple of phrases or e.g. useful character adjectives and then including e.g. text-based focus and practice activities in the final 'C' stage will make lessons following this model look rather like a TBL lesson. A full-on presentation with controlled practice activities in the 'O' stage results in more of a 'communicative PPP' type lesson. The teaching here, however, benefits from having a heavier emphasis placed on the 'PIC'. As Karl and I said in the last article, we have seen too many lessons on pre-service courses in which the trainee teacher 'runs out of time' for the third PPP stage of 'Production', leaving little or no time for students to actually communicate in English. The TOPIC model places a clear emphasis on preparation before the task, gives a sense of audience and outcome for the task and makes the teacher clearly responsible for reacting to the quality of learners output, both by shaping learner language during the 'Preparation' stage and by picking up reactively on language difficulties learners encounter during their language use via the 'Clarification' stage. Let me now give you a cursory overview of the model.

The TOPIC-driven model.

See Table 2 for an overview of how the model works. Let me briefly address each stage.

TOPIC

The lesson is designed around a topic area. This topic area will often be prompted by the coursebook content. Let's say, for example, that the syllabus item the coursebook has required us to focus on is: [modal+have+past participle] for past speculation/deduction. A modern coursebook will usually provide us with a reading and/or listening text which includes this language item in roughly-tuned but fairly natural use. The text provided will usually prompt us with the idea we need for the topic the learners' task is to be built around. Just suppose that for our example language point the coursebook has given us a text in which two people are discussing mysteries such as the Bermuda Triangle and the Loch Ness monster.

Text/Task

This part of the lesson can include either a task or a text... or both. The teacher may start with a pre-task, providing a list of well-known mystery stories and some basic facts about them and have the students try to come up with the best rational explanation they can for the mysterious event. The students may also/instead be required to go through the standard receptive skills procedures often featured on pre-service courses with the listening text. They will be required to treat the Text As a Vehicle for Information (Ray Williams), listening, for example to establish what the speakers' explanations are and whether or not they agree with them. At some point during this stage the learners will be told that they are to perform a similar task (in the Interaction stage coming up) to the text they are being exposed to.

Observe language

As I have said, the teacher decides to what extent and how this happens. A deductive presentation of our example modal structures accompanied by an exercise from the workbook focusing on that piece of language, or a drill, may be used here. The students will be told in these circumstances that this language being focused on now will be useful for them in the Interaction stage coming up. An alternative/additional language focus task here could be to treat the Text As a Linguistic Object (completing Ray Williams' TAVI/TALO distinction). One way of doing this would be to have students read the tapescript of the text they listened to in the earlier 'T' stage in order to identify and highlight useful lexical chunks which they would like to use as they interact later, perhaps making a record of those and clarifying any queries they have with the teacher.

Prepare

At this point in the cycle the students are required to prepare both linguistically and thematically for Interaction they are about to engage in. They are thinking about what their justifications for the mysterious events are, coming up with their speculations and deductions. In so doing they may be drawing on the modal verbs focused on in the 'O' stage (if they were) or upon those useful lexical chunks they identified from the text which they scrutinised as a linguistic object. They may be actively being encouraged to incorporate this language (if they can / want to) into what they are to say later. The teacher's role during this stage is to actively engage with the individual students as they work. The teacher will pick up on and correct errors they identify, feed-in useful bits

of language the students ask for or that the teacher feels will benefit the student (gaps) as they think of how they want to express their ideas. This process is referred to as shaping as it is more than simply correcting. The teacher is not only trying to make the learners' output more accurate but to stretch the quality of their output, to make it more sophisticated than it would have been without the teacher's intervention. 'Peer-shaping' may also be encouraged.

The word 'Interact', of course, is another way of saying 'perform the task'.

Interact

The word 'Interact', of course, is another way of saying 'perform the task'. It includes, however, the concept of audience. If a learner is speaking, who is listening... and why? If a learner is writing, who is reading... and why? In the majority of my classroom Interactions the audience are the other students in the room (the audience could be someone reading what the learner has placed on the internet or they could be a group of students from another class, etc.). The point is that the audience is provided with a clear, communicative reason to listen to or read the messages the other students are intending to convey. The TBL concept of outcome is also a useful one here. The students will (often) be speaking/ writing 'in order to...' achieve some communicative goal/objective/outcome. The outcome may not always be so explicit, sometimes we may be relating our personal views to one another simply for the sheer interest value of listening to what we all have to say. Coming back to our example lesson, the students here are presenting the speculations as to the truth behind these mysterious events to one another. The other students are listening in order to refute or support their hypotheses. It may add some spark to the lesson if we provide the outcome of having to decide which group of students have come up with the most plausible explanation for an event... or we may decide to simply chat for the sake of telling each other what we think.

During this stage the teacher is actively taking notes as they monitor students' language use. The teacher may wish to intervene to shape learner output on occasions but is more concerned with collecting areas of form (errors and gaps) which they feel will merit attention in the 'Clarification' phase coming next. The priority for the learners is to Interact, to genuinely express their meanings. I think it can be healthy, though, if a teacher issues reminders to the students as they do this to try to make use of the language focused on in the 'O' stage (if they did). This is where, if there is a weighted 'O' stage, the TOPIC model veers from TBL and moves closer to a presentation and practice-type methodology.

Conclude/Clarify

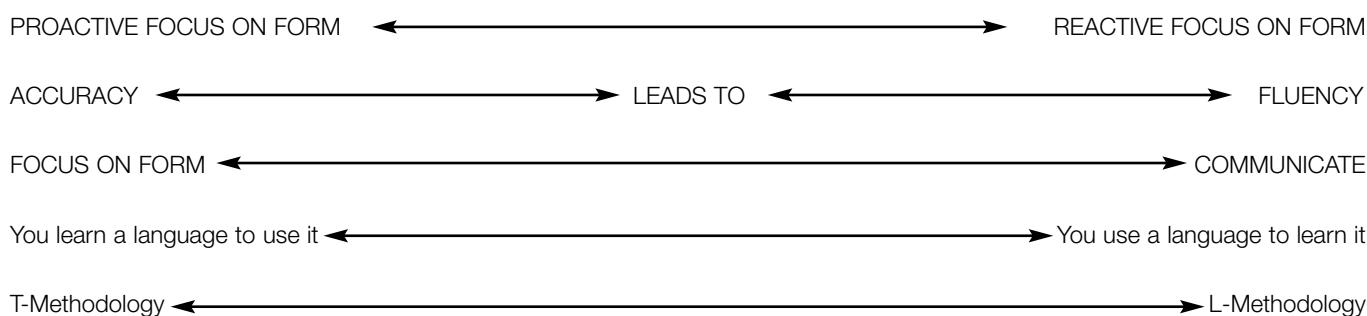
It seems appropriate to round off a topic-driven lesson with some meaningful conclusion, or at least a parting shot. A chat as to what we made of the other peoples theories on the mysterious events would be a natural way to do this. This stage also requires the teacher to clarify. This entails correction of errors (grammar, pronunciation, appropriacy, etc. problems), feeding in on gaps which arose and the highlighting of good examples of language the teacher has noticed in use. If our teacher has placed an emphasis on the use of those modal structures, they will be particularly concerned to feed back to the students as to their success in using those BUT the teacher should feel free to pick up on any and every item of language they feel it would be useful to draw students attention to. Pre-service trainees, incidentally, have little or no problem with doing this in my experience. They might not be able to explain why something is wrong as neatly and concisely as a more experienced teacher but they can certainly identify what is wrong or needed and are, far more often than not, quite capable of providing a reasonable alternative. The teacher may go on, in this lesson or a subsequent one, to provide exercises or activities which react to the linguistic needs they noticed the learners encounter. They may also expose them to a text of native speakers interacting in the same way, on the same topic, as the one the learners have just engaged in and go through some TAVI to TALO type process.

In conclusion....

My working title for this article was: 'Oh crikey! Not yet another model...!'. I've been as worn down as you probably have by the preponderance of models (usually three-letter ones, curiously enough) which have arisen in recent years. For me there has not been too much difference between these models as I try to show below. While not for a moment claiming to offer a 'model' for designing the ideal ELT lesson, I do find my that my trainees respond well to having a framework to hang on to during their initial forays into ELT lesson design. I have had the audacity, then, to throw up another mnemonic because I feel this one offers something different. It takes on board many important principles from TBL, bringing lesson design more in line with recent SLA research and theory, while allowing a teacher to work with a syllabus list of discrete items of language (be they verb tenses, exponents of a function or lexical chunks). It requires a teacher to focus reactively on form and to be attentive to the cognitive 'clicks' (see below) learners go through as they acquire a second language. It simultaneously provides the language teacher with the option of saying something like: "OK, I want to focus on and encourage creative use of [**modal+have+past participle**] for **past speculation/deduction**. I'm going to see if, in a proactive way, I can make my learners reach an 'Ah hah!' realisation with this language item THEN go on to see if they can 'click' it while I'm with them". I'll leave debate as to the merits of having a discrete-item syllabus or not having one for elsewhere. In the current ELT climate, pragmatically speaking, this option to proactively present a language item is a necessary one for language teachers. Let's face it, even the most 'cutting edge' of modern coursebooks, which may overtly claim a task-based approach, are in fact only packaging their tasks and texts around a list of discrete items of language which feature prominently in the contents page and in the end of unit tests.

Table 2: An overview of current 'models' for language lesson design.
 ©(Derrin Kent)

70's Communicative Approach	Jim Scrivener	Jeremy Harmer	Michael Lewis	Test Teach Test	Scott Thornbury	
		ENGAGE		Test		Engage
PRESENT	CLARIFICATION AND FOCUS	STUDY	OBSERVE	Teach	Text	Ah-hah!s
PRACTICE	RESTRICTED USE	ACTIVATE	HYPOTHESISE	Test	Task	& Clicks
PRODUCE	AUTHENTIC USE		EXPERIMENT			



When working with a TBL paradigm I was excited and 'refreshed' to see pre-service trainees actually chatting away with learners in a meaning-driven environment, yet still providing a rich, useful language focus for the learners to 'take home'. Pre-service lessons, as Karl and I said in the last article, did not so frequently feature a teacher standing at the whiteboard explaining, or getting learners to produce a couple of isolated sentences, incorporating the target language of the lesson, of the "I like pink fish." variety (i.e. carrying little or no genuine meaning). Our TBL-style approach foregrounded meaningful communication while requiring teachers to focus actively, reactively, on form. So much had been gained but, something WAS missing. Other models had clearly required teacher trainees to take on the mantle of building a new piece of language into their learners' linguistic competence.

Despite the protestations of so many linguists and second language experts, as a language teacher, I still feel I am capable of doing this. The TOPIC model gives me the space to do so. In my teacher training I feel I threw out the proactive language focus baby with the bathwater. The new task-based bathwater was more fragrant. I reckon I can now throw the baby back in.

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Not Just Getting Through The Hour

Jane Delaney

Jane Delaney is Director of Studies of International House Tarragona, Spain. She is a teacher trainer on the RSA/UCLES CELTYL, and is especially interested in the field of Very Younger Learners and the Montessori method.

What kind of INSET and support do we provide for teachers of Younger Learners?

I think that if you ask most inexperienced teachers of children what kind of help or training they want with regard to Younger Learners, the most popular answer may well be 'lots of practical activities, please'. In my experience, the most popular input sessions and workshops with YL teachers tend to be those which give ten ready-to-go activities, or result in a queue for the photocopier at five o'clock. Negative feedback on input sessions usually consists of 'nice to know some theory, but more practical ideas, please.' This is understandable, given the pressure and variety of most teaching timetables.

However, is providing teachers with a variety of classroom activities really enough, however? What should we really be focusing on with new teachers of YLs?

Many new members of staff arrive fresh from the CELTA and from teaching teenagers on short summer courses. Although undeniably valuable experience for the in-at-the-deep-end of a 25 contact hour teaching timetable with a range of different classes, teaching these same classes throughout the full nine month academic year is more difficult. Not only does it require a different attitude on the part of the teacher, it also requires a different kind of long term planning.

Tell the truth: how many times have we sent our YL teachers into class with little more than 'there are ten of them, this is the book, they're seven years old and watch out for little Jordi because he can't sit still'?

Is that all they really need to know? The teacher goes bravely into the class with a lovely variety of activities, a change of pace every five minutes, some TPR, nice bright visuals, a lot of movement and their own and the students' enthusiasm. But there is a danger that all this, and the teacher too, can fall horribly flat on its face. What about the other stuff they need to know? Can the children read in their own language? Can they cope with crossword puzzles yet? Can they really do this for homework? To what extent can we teach grammar explicitly with this age group? How do we establish rules? When they say they want to go to the toilet, do we let them?

Maybe if we help teachers with these areas we can reduce some of the apprehension that some have when faced with a wide range of YL classes. If teachers have a better idea of what to expect from different ages and levels, then we can take away some of the fear of the unknown, and help them to get to know

their students sooner and better. YL classes might then become more enjoyable for both the children and the teacher. The same might go for the parents, too.

As well as providing teachers with help in these areas, we need to encourage them to look more closely at WHY we do the things we do in the YL classroom.

Activities and games only have real value if we understand why we are using them

Activities and games only have real value if we understand why we are using them, if they form part of an informed series of decisions at the lesson planning stage. If not, then we are only playing bingo, hangman or noughts and crosses because they help us to get us through the teaching hour.

Of course, we need activities to teach the language, and of course there are times when we play games in the class for the sake of having fun or letting off steam, but maybe we need to be a little more reflective about our aims. Some lessons have the feel of being a series of one-off activities, great in themselves but not really forming a part of a whole.

It's tempting to concentrate on the immediate, by focusing only on giving teachers help on a practical, activity-based level, but I think that in the long run, over the course of the nine months of the academic we could do more and better.

Many teachers at the beginning of the academic year complain of the bad habits of their classes. These are the groups who are used to the constant hyperactivity of a game every ten minutes and bingo or hangman to finish off every lesson. For a new teacher, classroom management with these groups can be exhausting.

Let's think more of our aims for the year, then, rather than solely our aims for the next sixty minutes. Let's also let teachers know that those activities which stir, settle, or motivate a class of six year olds are not the same as those which work with a class of eleven year olds or teenagers.

With very new teachers of children, I quite often tell them not to worry so much about the actual teaching aspect for the first week or two of term. I tell them to relax (easier said than done) and concentrate more on their classroom control and management. Many new teachers spend hours preparing materials and thinking of activities that may only serve a limited purpose in the lesson, in terms of aims and time. It is very discouraging to spend hours preparing a lovely looking card only to find that students either don't use the language (or any language not in L1, come to think of it), or race through the activity in three minutes flat. Teachers also worry about having to constantly 'perform' like a holiday camp entertainer or game show host.

Teachers also worry about having to constantly 'perform' like a holiday camp entertainer or game show host.

We need to encourage new teachers to gradually find their feet with their new YL classes, and let them know what they can expect from their groups in terms of language and behaviour before they enter the classroom.

Here in Tarragona, I ask both new and old teachers during our Induction period in October, what areas of YL training they would like to see covered in the INSET programme. I ask the same question again, retrospectively, at the end of the academic year in June: what help do you wish you had asked for? What did you really need to help you with your classes? Teachers then write down one question or more that they wish they had asked. They do this along with one piece of advice to new teachers of YLs and one thing they should have done or not done with their classes. This helps to plan for the next year's INSET.

Normally, comments include requests for more on classroom management, child development, what to expect from students at different ages, dealing with parents, and showing students' progress. The questions I posed above have all come out of this exercise. Maybe this could give us a clue as to what we should be focusing on in our in-school input sessions and workshops.

I would argue the case then for a little bit more theory to help us inform our teaching. In this part of Europe, at least, we can no longer afford to be comfortable. State schools, their teachers, and the coursebooks they use are getting better and better, and offering us more and sharper competition. We really need to start thinking about what more we can offer Younger Learners and also their parents: maybe a focus on fluency and native-speaker pronunciation in our classes isn't enough. If we are to meet the challenge, we need to inform and arm our teachers with a more long term view of teaching children. If we don't already do this, then maybe we need to re-evaluate the support and training that we give them. 📌

Why Teaching Young Learners is Fun.

Carrick Cameron

Carrick Cameron is 27 and has been teaching English, on and very off, for the past ten years, what with summer schools and all. He is now happily still being a child at International House Huelva, in Spain, and has been sharing a classroom with other children aged between 5 and 55.... and what fun we've all had, I can tell you.

I admit it, it was a relief when I re-entered my classroom at 8.30 last Wednesday evening to find that it was now devoid of the wall-to-wall noise and chaos of the previous four hours. It had become an oasis of tranquility, disturbed only by the motorbike buzzing past outside and, of course, by the civilised conversation of my waiting First Certificate students. I also admit that teaching young learners for four hours in the middle of the week bends your mind, and that when you see real live adults it can get to the stage where you feel like hugging them, as if they'd just rescued you from a desert island. I would also say, however, that it is always a breath of fresh air to spend so much time in the company of young learners, simply because

they are such extraordinary people.

When was the last time one of your students started bottle-feeding a doll during a round of Simon Says? Almost certainly never, I would imagine, partly because Simon Says isn't a common feature of adult ELT classes (as far as I know), but partly also because most structurally-sound adults leave their dolls at home due to the confines of social appropriacy. Cristina, being only six, is still a novice in the ways of what is deemed to be appropriate behaviour, as are her classmates, who didn't bat an eyelid. Along the same lines, here are some of the anticipated problems I recently wrote on a lesson plan for a colleague about to teach my group of 5-6 year olds on a class swap arrangement:-

When was the last time one of your students started bottle-feeding a doll during a round of Simon Says?

Rom-n: cannot sit still and regularly adopts rather dangerous postures on his chair.

David: stream of consciousness who attaches enormous importance and seriousness to everything and will start telling you things at any given moment. Takes 5 mins to start anything.

Juan Carlos: has a tendency to fling himself on the floor, face down, and spin himself around on his stomach propelled with his hands and feet, while making highly disturbing guttural noises.

Miriam: is a lunatic who lives in a soap opera ("Pobre Diabla"). Never concentrates and occasionally pretends to be a dog, wandering around class on all fours, yapping.

Part of the enjoyment of teaching young learners is being able to harness this energy and imagination, while having fun as well.

Tapping the enthusiasm of young learners (and I'm talking pre-adolescent here) is extremely easy by means of games and activities which are simple, both in planning and in execution, and which cannot possibly lead to any embarrassingly awkward, unforeseen questions regarding the use of mixed conditionals. Action songs, colour dictations, bingo, etc. may not inspire many a childproof EFL teacher, who would feel mortified at having to read a story about three young children (one of them a talking baby), their supernatural teddy and their imaginary friend who fires rainbows at people. Some would shudder with the sheer horror of it all. However, missing out on this means also missing out on an entirely different (and entirely surreal) way of teaching, which provides a very welcome change from both teaching adults and being with adults in general: that is to say, variety.

Every children's teacher must go through an initial feeling of ridicule - thinking, "Oh God, I hope there isn't a hidden camera in here filming this..." as you are performing an action song while pretending to be a frog, that sort of thing. After a while, though, you realise that your students don't see you as ridiculous for breathing life into a nursery rhyme, and so you begin to lose your inhibitions, and eventually you begin to enjoy your activities more than them...! (Fully-grown adults who play with a Play Station are merely one rung further up (?) the evolutionary ladder from fully-grown adults who used to play with our train sets and Scalextric - everybody has the ability to regress!)

At early adolescence (12 to 14) things begin to get ugly. It is rarely fun watching as a herd of sprouting, disproportioned, hormonal youths skulk reluctantly into your room for the first time, with their gigantic trainers and a choking cloud of cheap after-shave and body odour trailing behind them. However, they too can provide in-class entertainment, which usually stems from cutting sarcasm and cheekiness. This can border on the unacceptable, and is essential to keep in check, but by allowing humour to accompany the class you make life so much easier for yourself, both in terms of the smooth running of your lesson, and in terms of you enjoying your work. While the merest mention of sullen teenagers will, inevitably, inspire groans and visible signs of despair from every tired teacher, it is important to remember that the opportunity for an energetic, entertaining and productive class is there. It just needs to be taken. I can remember very few occasions when an adult student jumped up, fists clenched, punching the air like a footballer who'd just scored a goal when they'd won a snail race based on the uses of the present perfect, whereas that was the reaction of a "sullen teenager" in one of my classes last Tuesday.

a herd of sprouting, disproportioned, hormonal youths skulk reluctantly into your room for the first time, with their gigantic trainers and a choking cloud of cheap after-shave and body odour trailing behind them

I realise that young learners' classes are not a lot of teachers' personal nirvana. I am not saying that adult classes are universally tedious, uninspiring and sterile - they have no reason to be so. Nor am I saying that teaching young learners is a utopian world full of little pixies, who laugh and dance and sing joyfully all the time - that would be revolting. All I'm saying is that it's fun. 🎮

Really Speaking: Helping Younger Learners to Do This

Jennifer Dobson

Jennifer teaches and is joint Local Supervisor for the RSA Diploma at IH Cordoba, and gives teacher development sessions all over Spain. She is local coordinator for TESOL Spain and has given this talk at IATEFL this year.

Teacher: 'What time does Karen get up?

Student: 'She gets up at 8.00.'

This exchange could well occur in many of our classes, but how useful is it to our students? How far are students learning language with authentic meaning or just for show? And do any of them really care what time Karen gets up?

Learning

When we acquire our own first language we learn through doing things and achieving our objectives not through someone drilling us and overtly correcting us. Should we not be trying to recreate conditions as similar as possible to those in which we learnt our own language when learning a second?

Memory

Frequently the language most remembered by our students is precisely not that which we set out to teach, like 'Can I clean the blackboard please?'. This is because the language has personal significance and meaning to the students and we should maximise on this in our classes.

Challenge

Over the years teaching I've realised that you can push the students more and more. I recall teaching one class to say the somewhat absurd expression 'no memory' when they had forgotten to do their homework, which at the time, I thought would be easier for them. However, the concept is perfectly clear and they have a real need to use the language, so now I teach 'Sorry, I didn't remember to do my homework'.

**you can push the
students more and more**

Real purpose

Let us take for example something as seemingly simple as making a name badge. If the students are to be able to complete this task they may need colours, scissors, thread, pencils and a holepunch. The language they will need may be, 'Can I have a pencil please?' 'Here you are'. 'Thankyou.' 'Can I borrow your

red?' 'I haven't got scissors.' etc.

This language serves a real purpose; they need it to complete the task. By giving students responsibility for handing out the materials, a kind of mini dialogue is established. If we can aim to try to make the language used in the classroom as meaningful and as close to real life as possible, students are more likely to use and see the point of it. We can teach this simply by giving students the expressions as the need arises.

In this way children even from infant level can produce whole sentences. However, these are based on what they want to say not on what their course book wants them to say.

The topic of clothes, which I am currently doing with a class of six year olds, is introduced in one book with the structure 'I like...I don't like'. This strikes me as being somewhat ridiculous. How often do we go around in life saying 'I like blue jumpers!' Neither do we often say 'She's wearing a red hat, green shirt and jeans'. The aims of the language here seem to be to introduce a grammatical structure rather than to enable the students to actually do anything useful with it. I therefore often try to adapt the books, such as teaching a mini dialogue based around 'What a nice dress!' 'Thank you'. This, along with buying clothes in a shop, I think is a much more true to life situation.

Likewise I often adapt the vocabulary sets introduced. Referring back to the examples of clothes, I have found my first priorities in deciding which items of clothing to teach are based on those the students are wearing. So, words such as: headband, watch, and earrings might be key items.

We can also try to encourage short dialogues as much as possible, such as 'Hello, how are you?' at the beginning of classes. 'See you on Wednesday' at the end.

Encourage whole sentences where appropriate 'Can I have...' is three syllables, 'pencil sharpener' is five and is arguably therefore more difficult. There is no reason why we should not be able to teach students whole sentences, or as large a chunk as possible, from the very beginning. Much more useful, more generative and more meaningful than the old, 'Is it a...?' way of thinking. The students do not need to know that can is an auxiliary verb, comes before the subject in questions, does not have an s in the third person singular etc. to be

perfectly capable of using it.

We should also remember that there are also times when it is absurd to insist on a long reply when a simple 'yes' or 'no' is much more natural.

Please, thank you and sorry

So essential in English and easily forgotten by adults and children alike. We can easily encourage our students to use these by not giving them things unless they use please and taking them back if they don't say thank you. I have also found the use of sorry to be a great help dealing with conflicts in class.

Maximise pair and group work

Language rarely exists as a soliloquy so if we can insist on virtually English only in class, any pair or group work will involve a conversation. However, it will be necessary to give the students the expressions to enable them to do this, such as 'What's the answer to number 3?' 'I think it's... because..'

I used to think playing games could be a waste of time in class. However, I have had great success with students making their own board games and teaching them expressions such as: 'It's your turn' and 'Throw the dice'.

One such set involved students drawing pictures of household jobs such as making the beds, washing up etc (this can be completed as homework) on a game board with the question 'How often do you.....?'. They then asked me for expressions such as 'miss a turn' and 'move forward two spaces'. They also soon filled up the other squares with pictures of their own e.g. play video games, go to the cinema. Students value much more their own material. Early finishers can play the games when they complete an activity in class and the games can be played again for recycling purposes.

Grammar does not have to follow a syllabus

We sometimes assume we can't teach the past, for example, before we've taught the present. Yet how often do the children want to tell us what they did at the weekend? I believe we can easily teach them a few past tense verbs, such as 'I went to..'and 'I played...' as items of vocabulary without worrying about which tense they are. In this way we enable the students to be able to communicate something real and personal to them in another language. Surely it is much more motivating to tell everyone what you did at the weekend than to talk in third person present simple.

We need to be prepared to listen to the children to be flexible in what we introduce, as language the students have asked for is more memorable.

One simple way to do this is to take in colour photos from a magazine (e.g. someone playing football, a picture of the countryside), put them on the board and, having first made clear the concept of the weekend, ask the students what they did giving them the options of the photos, e.g. 'I played football' 'I went to the country' etc.

Make skills work meaningful too

Where possible try and make the other skills as true to life as possible. For example, while working on the topic of food, take in real food. Writing menus and shopping lists is a much more real way of recording this vocabulary than simply copying it into notebooks.

When working on the topic of clothes my six-year-old students practised their early writing and reading skills making simple price labels for a clothes shop. Older learners can include more detailed information, such as the sizes, colours and prices in different countries.

Keep the language visible and keep recycling it

If the children can identify with clear visual clues, such as a picture of a toilet for 'Can I go to the toilet please?' its very easy for the teacher just to point to these to remind the students of the language they need to use. We can play many guessing games with these by turning the flashcards back to front and the children try to remember what the pictures were, or by putting them round the room and then, after removing them, drilling the spaces where the cards were.

My children made posters of classroom language such as 'How do you spell..?' 'What does ... mean?' 'What page did you say?'. This was started in class in groups and finished at home ,cutting out photos from magazines and drawing pictures to illustrate the expressions. The posters then serve as a constant reminder for the students to use this classroom language.

To conclude

Of course, it is not always possible to make all our teaching real and meaningful. However, I do suggest that when possible we should keep experimenting with activities which go some way towards this. It is very rewarding and motivating to help our students really speak. 🗣️

Naturalness - A Consideration of Language used in Part Two of Cambridge FCE and CAE Speaking Exams.

Chris Hubbard

Chris has worked in Thailand, Hong Kong, Britain and Poland for various organizations including British Council, Hong Kong City University and International House. He was the DOS of IH Koszalin for 7 years. He has been an oral examiner for UCLES exams since 1996 and was Team Leader for a centre in Poland. He now works in the performance Testing Unit at UCLES.

The Problem:

Whilst examining students in the December exam session I became aware of an area which did not seem to be covered in the marking descriptors provided by Cambridge. That was the part 'naturalness' plays. For the first time I realised that the extent to which the candidates match a subconscious model of naturalness, in relation to native speaker talk, plays a part in our judgements. This is especially true when deciding high marks.

We can all recall candidates who rattle out a string of pre learned discourse phrases, and despite the fact that all the phrases are correct, and have a perfect and frequent function in the world of communicative English, in the mouth of the exam candidate they sound out of place.

If the language is OK, what is the problem? It must come down to task. As teachers, we spend time teaching phrases and conversation techniques, which, in the exam environment, make candidates sound unnatural. I'm thinking about items like 'In my opinion....', 'In the front right hand corner....', 'Moreover', 'Whereas in this picture in the other picture...' and a number of others. But why do they make candidates sound unnatural? To answer that question it is necessary to think more about what the 'subconscious model of naturalness', mentioned earlier, really is. In other words what linguistic resources would native speakers draw on to perform the examination tasks? Just thinking about the question begins to give us an insight into what may cause the initial problem: namely the fact that we select language for learners to use whilst they carry out a wholly artificial task. Until recently, I had never compared and contrasted two pictures in one minute, thinking about why the people may have been doing the actions shown. Therefore the language that I have selected to help students perform the task could only really have been informed guess work.

The experiment:

I decided to find out what language real natives would use to perform an examination task and for this I selected Part two of the speaking exam ie comparing and contrasting two pictures. The findings I will outline below are from a very limited look at 10 interviewees. The subjects selected were people who did not

have experience of teaching/examining exam classes, and so were, hopefully, not being influenced by what they had been teaching. I also tried to select subjects from different professions.

The number of participants was small as I wanted to see if there were common elements in a small group, and if what native speakers said was organised and delivered differently from the way the majority of exam students go about the same task.

The experiment was very simple. Each candidate was asked a typical 'FCE/CAE Part Two' type question, (comparing and contrasting two pictures in one minute). None of the candidates knew what they would be asked to do until they arrived, (I realise that this is not the way it works with exam candidates but I wanted to get their first responses). The performances were recorded and the content analysed.

Findings:

a. Native speakers use quite a limited range of linguistic tools with which to organise this kind of speech and to speculate. They also like to qualify speculations as such, maybe in order to prevent them being identified with a particular supposition that later turns out to be incorrect.

1. The most common phrases used for speculation were phrases which express modality for example:

I think they're probably ...
possibly...
'It could even be...
It's probably...
So it could be ...
Sometimes this can ...

Phrases containing the words 'probably', 'possibly', 'could' and 'can' were much more frequent than phrases containing the words 'must', 'might', or 'may'.

2. Phrases used to qualify speculations:

I don't know... this could...
I don't quite know what ...

I'm not sure which/what

3. Phrases used to describe/speculate using 'look':

It looks like ...(a car/ he is walking)

He's reading **what looks like** a letter.

He **looks to be** reading a letter

It looks to me as if ...

4. Common phrases used to introduce a speculation:

I think ...

I reckon ...

I'd say...

b. In addition to being quite economical in the number of phrases they may use, native speakers think nothing of repeating the same ones a number of times in one minute.

c. The amount of the text that was made up of content, as opposed to these discourse phrases, ranged from 60% to 85%. From this it can be seen that what makes you sound natural is concentrating on the content rather than trying to impress with a number of discourse phrases.

d. An interesting point worth mentioning is that most of the native speakers found it quite

difficult to talk continuously for a minute

about two pictures they hadn't seen before! Maybe we as teachers and markers should take this on board more when evaluating how successfully our students achieve this type of activity.

e. I feel that the results have shown me that there are similarities and that exam students are not familiar with the features of native speech which make it 'natural'. So, clearly there are very strong implications for our teaching.

Conclusions:

As a result of these findings, I would like to say that I am aware that a more extensive study could have vastly different results. I also think further investigation would be useful, not only for Part Two but also for the interaction stage in Part Three of Cambridge main suite speaking exams. So, if anybody is interested in looking at this in more depth or carrying out a similar study with more native speakers, I'd love to hear from you.

Using Authentic Texts at Lower Levels

Kyra Beguiristain

Kyra has worked in Turkey for a few years and she is currently teaching at IH London.

In this article, the term 'authentic texts' refers to articles taken from any publication aimed at a native English speaker; newspapers, magazines, brochures, leaflets etc. By 'lower levels' I mean Elementary (as opposed to Beginner) and Pre-Intermediate students. It goes without saying that an authentic text can be used at any level by adapting the task, but my focus in this article is primarily on dealing with such texts at lower levels only, which entails a rather different approach.

It is a common misconception that students can only deal with authentic texts at intermediate level or above, and that any student below that level will be overwhelmed by a sea of words, and incapable of coping. This is where the role of the teacher is of utmost importance, as the success of the lesson relies very heavily on the teacher's handling of the material and how they feed it to the students, rather than on the text itself. Students need to be guided very carefully through the text.

Some reasons why using authentic texts at lower levels can work:

a) It is often forgotten that the format of a newspaper/magazine is already very familiar to students in their own language, so sections such as weather reports, TV listings, adverts are areas

where the students have a very clear idea of what to expect.

b) Interest in the lesson is developed the moment the students see that they are going to work with 'real' material, even though they realise it will be challenging. And it is highly motivating and encouraging at the end of the task to feel that they have succeeded in doing something 'difficult'.

c) Authentic texts are also intrinsically interesting because they are up-to-date and deal with current issues.

d) The idea of 'learner training' is a key one here, even though the students themselves may be unaware of it; the teacher is literally teaching the students to pick out key ideas from a potentially incomprehensible text, and giving them the confidence to handle unfamiliar language without panicking. This is a skill needed at all levels of English learning.

Some hints for teachers:

a) Introduce the idea of using authentic texts gradually.

b) The fact is that the majority of articles in a newspaper or magazine are quite simply unusable at lower levels, so choose carefully.

c) By the end of the lesson, the students should feel they have a fair measure of control over the text, as opposed to feeling they have been bombarded with something they can't cope with.

Unfortunately, this requires a lot of preparation from the teacher, as the students need to be very carefully guided through the material. It is the teacher who decides on the vocabulary to be focussed on, and who provides a specific set of tasks for the students to follow. In this way the lesson is always (apart from at the new vocabulary input stage) leaning towards what the students do know rather than what they don't. For this reason, 'look up any word you don't know' is avoided (partly because it would take days!). What the students do with a dictionary out of the classroom is up to them.

I have categorised authentic texts into three types and I shall give an example of each type below.

1) Texts in graphic form ie: tables, diagrams and maps.

These are usually accompanied by an article which may well be unusable at a lower level, but they usually include lots of dates/numbers which are a vital springboard as the students are guaranteed to understand them.

I avoided the article completely as it was fairly technical, and I felt that it wouldn't have been worth the struggle.

Procedure:

I began the lesson with a quick revision slot on numbers and

Example 1: What the pound buys at home and abroad

	UK	Spain	France	Greece	Ireland	Czech Rep	Norway	Florida
Litre of petrol	81p	46p	72p	46p	56p	51p	75p	22p
Pint/half-litre of lager	£2	93p	£1.09	93p	£2.10	28p	£3.56	£1.03
Can of Coca-Cola	59p	37p	41p	27p	47p	34p	91p	34p
Burger and fries	£2.99	£2.06	£3.17	£2.23	£2.92	£1.36	£3.71	£2.48
20 Marlboro lights	£4.25	£1.42	£2.00	£1.30	£2.89	85p	£3.79	£1.89
Ice cream	80p	£1.03	£1.62	74p	51p	10p	£1.21	68p
Suntan lotion (200ml)	£5.99	£3.75	£4.52	£4.66	£7.12	£1.87	£4.55	£5.86

saying prices in pounds and pence. This led into a short discussion on prices in the UK as compared to prices in the students' own countries (a bit of a hot topic especially when it comes to cigarettes and alcohol!).

I then split the class into As and Bs and gave each student a copy of the table (having Tippexed out some of the prices beforehand).

Language focus: *How much is/are...?*

A packet/can/bottle/litre/pint of...

Students then did a jigsaw gapfill exercise.

Students then personalised the activity by writing figures for their country and comparing with their partner.

Follow up: introduce/revise comparatives/superlatives.

Anything visual (eg: weather reports, maps, survey results) can be used to a similar format.

2) Biographies, obituaries

These are often highly exploitable because:

- a) they are usually about interesting people (famous actors and actresses, politicians, writers...)
- b) like the text types looked at above, they contain lots of dates and numbers
- c) the past simple is usually used in a very clear context
- d) they contain lots of key language (eg: get married/get divorced/have children/buy/get a job...)

Example 2:

'The Queen of Romance who Wooed the World' [London Metro]

Procedure:

We looked at a photo of Barbara Cartland (who had died that week) and the students talked about what sort of woman they thought she was.

We then did some verb-noun collocation work of key vocabulary:

Can you match column A with column B?

write	vitamins
say	a novel
to be obsessed with	an Egyptian tomb
publish	a proposal
write	charity work
move	a gossip column
receive	a novel
consume	with sex
to be committed to	in high society
visit	a prayer

I then split the class into As and Bs; the As looking at numbers in the article, the Bs looking at dates.

GROUP A

- What do these numbers refer to?

723	1 000 000 000	49
23	£150	36
80		

GROUP B

- Can you write events in Barbara Cartland's life on this timeline?

1901		
1923		
July 9		
1927		
	1933	
	1936	
		1965
		1991
		May 21 2000

The groups then shared information.

The students then did the general comprehension questions together.

Questions

1. What was Barbara Cartland's favourite colour?
2. What was her job?
3. What did her father do?
4. What was her lifestyle like?
5. What sorts of books did she write?
6. What was the connection between Lady Diana and Barbara Cartland?
7. Did she have a big family?

Follow up: eccentric people from the students' own countries (mini-presentations) and then class timelines/biographies (not obituaries!).

Tips: - the lead-in (photo and prediction) is vital as it gives the students an idea of what to expect

- splitting the tasks means the article does not drag on too long and become tedious, and it also encourages student interaction

[NB: The original article has not been included due to copyright laws, but you should be able to get the gist from the handout].

3) Small ads

Key areas: lonely hearts, job ads, flatshare ads

These are usable because The students are already familiar with the format as it's likely to be more or less the same in their own countries, so they know what sort of language to expect; and they are very rich in adjectives, and are ideal for monolingual dictionary work and peer teaching (with careful monitoring).

They are mainly suitable for use within a topic-based lesson, and can be used to widen the students' vocabulary and/or as a springboard for an activity.

a) Lonely hearts:

These are rich in adjectives for character and appearance (attractive, slim, professional, easy-going, unconventional...) as well as descriptive phrases (to have a good sense of humour, to be gay...). They also cover interests (I like/enjoy/love/I'm into...travelling, films, eating out, clubbing...).

[On the board, I write up abbreviations such as GSOH, WLTM, NS... as they are so genre-specific.]

Follow up ideas: match up male and female ads/ find people their perfect partner/ write your own ad...

b) Job ads:

At this level they need to be carefully selected. I tend to choose ads for jobs which are not too technical, eg: secretary, receptionist, shop assistant...

They are rich in character adjectives (outgoing, enthusiastic, responsible...) as well as job vocabulary (part time, full time, temporary, excellent training...).


Follow up ideas: mock interviews (bringing in question forms and the present perfect/past simple)

c) Flatshare ads:

Again, these are rich in character adjectives as well as flat-sharing language (more useful if the students are living in the UK).

Conclusion:

As you can see from this brief outline, authentic texts can be used both to generate new language and to consolidate language previously taught. I have found them both very rewarding (for the teacher and students alike) and great fun to use in the classroom.

Finally, a note for teachers abroad: don't forget that most major publications can be found on the internet. 

Using Letter Writing in the Classroom

Mario Rinvoluceri

Mario needs no introduction to our readers; he came to the Artifice conference, held at IH London in February this year, and gave a typically thought-provoking and inspiring talk illustrating and commenting on some of the techniques he uses in his classes. This was one of them.

February 10th 2001

Dear Room C3, IH, Piccadilly People,

Writing you a letter to get this session going mirrors my normal way of starting a morning session both with language students and with trainees. I find that, though I can be a noisy boisterous person, this use of the written channel allows me to communicate somehow more quietly and allows the recipient more receptive freedom, since the words on the page are so much less full than spoken words.

I want to use this letter to set out a few of the precepts that lie behind my attempt at humanistic language teaching. For a much richer look at the same area I suggest you go to www.hltmag.co.uk, click on current issue and then on major article and read Bernard Dufeu's article on his work over the past 25 years. His book, *Teaching Myself*, (OUP 94), carries the same message in greater detail.

1. Offer the students exercises that are language useful but which make them experience something new.

The first exercise that we do after you have finished reading and reacting to this letter, will, hopefully, be of this sort. They are taken from the work of Orage who worked with Gurdjieff.

There are many activities which have this sniff of newness about them, and they give the language learning a kind of yeast, a kind of lift.

2. Base your work on the relationship between you and the students and among the students.

This is the principle underlying this letter and all we will do in this hour. This letter is a unique text written only for the people in this room. This makes it very different from an article text or a book text, which aims at the sky. If we were to meet again tomorrow, my letter then, would manage to be much more focused and person-centred than a first letter to a group can ever be.

The second activity we will do this morning is look at some woggles of letters students have written to me, which illustrate developing relationships between the students and me in the course of their learning of English.

3. Rely on the huge creativity of the people in front of you.

I hope to illustrate this with a visual exercise which will draw on your ingenuity in a number of ways.

4. Base your work on wonderment.

If you notice the person before you and notice beyond the first few layers of the onion, there will surely be wonderment. This

delight in expecting the unexpected is a force that buoys me up at 60 half-way through my teaching career. I hope to illustrate this with a story-telling activity.

There could be time for a fifth activity but I doubt it.

Where do people find time for course books? In a way these are almost as surreal as manuals for good dinner-table conversations. Surely it is natural for lessons to develop from the coming together of the people concerned. Is anything more needed since one thing people produce with ease is text of every sort?

This letter shares with you a sort of lesson plan.

What a clown I am!

How can I, sitting in my study the North Kent marshes of Faversham, know how our meeting this morning may develop? This kind of planning is hubristic ... and I certainly don't feel bound by these foolish lines.

I think there are some themes in this letter you may want to talk about to some one sitting next to you. I am also aware that my mapping of the themes may be very different to what you see in these lines. Your neighbour may see and feel quite different things from you.

Can you take a few minutes talking to people near you about what comes to mind?

Mario

[Eds: Here is one reply to Mario's letter]

International House 106 Piccadilly, London

14th February 2001

Dear Mario,

First of all a series of thank yous: thank you for your extremely interesting letter; thank you for leading the enlivening and illuminating discussions that followed; and finally, thank you for agreeing to read this and answer it.

I was interested to see how an idea you mentioned in one of your books - namely writing letters to your students as a teaching and learning tool - actually worked in practice. It was good to see a session start in total silence. One point we raised was 'Do you

ever have any difficulty getting students to enter into this sort of correspondence?' and 'Isn't it very time consuming?' I think the readers of the Journal would also be interested to have your responses to these questions.

It was a privilege to read some letters from your students, some of which were very moving. You said that you didn't correct them, (which would indeed be inappropriate) so did you use other writing activities to work on the sort of skills needed to pass the FCE? Or do you find the practice acquired in writing to you, in fact helped the students to improve by osmosis as it were? I liked the idea of being open to entering into an intensely personal relationship with each student individually, though it's quite a dangerous thing to do. But then I like to live dangerously. How do you avoid potential dangers?.

I enjoyed the exercise where we had to count backwards and forwards in turns:

A: 12345

B: 54321

etc.

It was great fun as well as being impossible! It is an odd psychological quirk that number is the one thing we cling to in our L1, even when we live eat and dream in L2. I knew a Swiss shop-keeper once who had lived and worked in the UK for thirty years who still counted in Romansch. I can easily see how one could use it in a business classroom and look forward to trying it with in my next Financial English session. The variations suggested in Orage's book *On Love and Psychological Exercise* looked fascinating too.

The drawing exercise, where we each drew an item on the board in order to gradually build up a story, was also illuminating and fun. But don't you ever get students who simply refuse to draw on the board? Or object to sharing their feelings about how the story developed? Of course everyone has creativity within them but some people are firmly convinced they don't!

And do you sometimes have students who say 'That was fun but I don't see how it improves my English'? And if you do, what do you say to them?

Finally two things which struck me about your teaching skills: The first was that you were putting into practice something which I learnt from your books: namely that we often learn best when we are doing two things at the same time.

And secondly, that you asked us the time at exactly twelve o'clock. Very clever!

Thank you again for sharing some of your ideas with us.

I look forward to hearing (seeing?) from you.

Best wishes

Susanna

[EDs Note: We are sorry these letters are so out of date: there simply wasn't room in the previous issue! We'd like to encourage more of you to reply to Mario and also look forward to receiving Mario's response to this letter] 🗨️

Proof of the Pron Pudding Part Three - Sounds Easier

Brita Haycraft

With her husband John, Brita founded International House London and has written and spoken about her concern for the way we teach phonology for many years.

Problems

Two major shocks await learners of English worldwide: strange spellings and unlikely pronunciations. The consonant side is ok-ish, despite the w, (especially when it occurs in final position) and the wh, sh, th and final -gh.

It would certainly make it easier for learners not to see th spelling, given that English sounds in themselves are not especially difficult to produce. There may, though, be people in the remotest corners of the world who have wondered all their lives about spellings like Shakespeare, Brown, or Night, thanks in part to Hollywood.

Thus learners may arrive with 'pronunciation prejudice' in their luggage.

Prioritising

The classroom reality is that learners today are expected to communicate in English from day one, and rightly so, but with little time available for pronunciation help - unfortunately. The answer, for the moment, is to prioritise and select.

Which sounds would you attend to first?

Those that make your students' pronunciation more natural, like the unique /o/ as in oh, or the typically English /a:/ as in ba? Unbearable mistakes: /r/ rolled like thunder, th said as /s/ or /z/? Sounds all nationalities struggle with? What about consonants that are wrong in one place only, but fine elsewhere?

The list is long and grammar is waiting.

Action

Things become more manageable if we put mistakes caused by confusing spellings in a separate group, as simple information on paper can solve those problems. Students would be relieved to know, for example, that o, u and ou are pronounced alike in love, luck and country and in some twenty other common words. Just half a dozen useful word lists would reduce the workload considerably.

put mistakes caused by confusing spellings in a separate group

It's also very useful for the teacher to know which students are used to consonant clusters. A spelling like Trst on a sign-post in Europe, for example, tells you that anyone from that country is experienced in the art of producing consonant clusters. The neighbouring country (Italy) whose citizens spell it Trieste, is obviously one from which students will require some 'vowel support'. Basically, Germanic and Slav speakers find consonants easy and so have far fewer problems with English than speakers from the Latin belt, who favour vowels and find it hard to use plural or past tense forms. I have also noticed that Japanese and other Far Easterners, Arabs and East Africans may struggle with the very common consonant clusters spl-, spr- and scr-. It'd be interesting to know if this is just a /l/ /r/ problem or general cluster avoidance. A brief overview would be very handy. We have to be positive. There may be hundreds of languages in the world, but if we can whittle them down to half a dozen groups with similar characteristics to English, teachers can correct more appropriately.

Practice, Polish and Perfection

i. Integrated practice.

There are good opportunities to practise some target sounds in grammar settings.

There is the diphthong /**əʊ**/ in No and Don't. Just let the students imitate this elusive sound.

The consonant /**th**/ is firmly resisted, as no one wants to lisp seriously. Learning to say the dates, however, gives intensive inadvertent practice in both the voiced and voiceless pronunciations of th. Obsessive argument about dates can help take students' minds off the problem and give good results: eg. - The 3rd or the 4th? -The 3rd. -No the 4th. -Or the 5th? -No, the 6th.

The consonant sounds /s/ and /d/ are constantly exercised in verb practice. They are easier to say for Latins, who tend to leave them out, when they are linked to a following vowel, eg. lives in, arrived at, as opposed to lives with, arrived late.

ii. Pronunciation rules

English pronunciation rules are well hidden. Nevertheless, one simple one worth laying down is the silencing of the letter r. Students managing to do so immediately sound about 50% more English. Hearing Italian, Spanish or French students saying, for example, supermarket or car park without the articulating the /r/ is a refreshing experience, not least for the students themselves. It's the easiest of all English pronunciation rules: just say nothing. And it's a bonus to any nationality with 'r trouble'. However, any student with an American /r/ should be encouraged to keep it, as it usually sounds authentically American. Otherwise, though, it is safer to ban it. Teachers with the audible r in their own English should prohibit it, too, as it's in their students' interests. Another good reason is that it gets in the way of consonant clusters. Consider, for example, how students struggle with the word birthday.

Another rule of enormous help right from the beginning is the same /r/ pronunciation of ir, er, and ur, and or preceded by w, as in first person or urgent work. You can see the students' disbelief at first, but there are numerous well-known examples to practise with: Turkish, service, circus, world, etc. But remember: no /r/. On the classroom wall, I'd also hang word lists of the confusing ways ear is pronounced. Why beard but earth, hear but heard? Nobody knows, but if we back up both pronunciations with enough common examples, a pattern might emerge.

Words known worldwide make ideal pronunciation practice

iii. International Words

Words known worldwide make ideal pronunciation practice. There are thousands of these familiar words and names around: thermometer, photography, curry, dynamic, virgin, Europe, Palermo, Bermuda, Warsaw, etc.

When a Japanese speaker pronounces Tokyo /tɔʊkiu/ or an Italian says Martini as /ma:ti:ni/, they sometimes seem to sense the very Englishness of those sounds. This is also a quite fun exercise and may just do the trick and make learners more willing to play with English pronunciation.

Many English word-endings are also internationally known and students greatly appreciate lists of -age words to practise: village, marriage, carriage, luggage, etc. or -ture words: nature, future, culture, mixture. The possibilities are endless.

iv. Using Phonemic Script

There is no hope of learning everything about English sounds. And the phonemic chart is certainly no solution. It is not even a good start. It gives students and indeed teachers the impression

they are having to learn a whole new code along with everything else, which might put them off pronunciation forever. Unlike French, which becomes easy to speak through phonemic script, English often looks more difficult in phonemics than in the Roman alphabet eg. /gəʊ/ or /niəɹə/ for go and nearer. It's impossible to show in writing how this unknown diphthong o should sound. Simple imitation of Madonna's way of saying Don't in Don't cry for me, Argentina may work better than any drawings of the mouth or tongue positions, or a phonemic symbol.

However, I'm not against using the phonemic script, only against displaying the whole chart to the newcomer and teaching it systematically. Instead, the ordinary letters can simply be picked to convince students that a strange spelling is, in fact, easy to pronounce: /kʊd/ for could, /'bɪznɪs/ for business. But /wɔ:k/, for example, with its odd backward c and colon, is no help for walk. Once the symbols have been gradually absorbed, of course, phonemic script is invaluable in dictionaries, as long as the stress is shown and publishers can agree to use the same symbols!

If only the Queen was there on tape to model it!

In class, however, on the board, it can be more effective to write the word normally, just crossing out the silent letter: walk, car, interesting. Or, bypassing all the other symbols, just insert the schwa symbol: **doct ə**, **pr ə fess**, the one symbol that seems to work, precisely because it rings no bell. Meanwhile, Oxford tends to get pronounced correctly if written Oxf-d or Ox-fd. So Buckingham: Bucking-m or Buckingm. If only the Queen was there on tape to model it!

Falling in love with the sound of English

When we take account of all the pitfalls, it's clear that tongue and mouth diagrams have little to offer. Yet they dominate university pronunciation books the world over, when in fact the biggest problem is probably the spelling complications, closely followed by omitted consonants and inserted vowels, which are preventable through word-linking and speaking more quickly. Some sounds are just avoided because they sound absurd, like /th/, or / a u /, or the schwa because students have difficulty in seeing weak forms as 'correct'. More practical solutions are required. They simply have to fall in love with English sounds.

Many non-Germanic and non-Slav students need to inject more force into their rather feeble plosive consonants. This is not difficult to do: they must practise saying their final /d/ with pride, as in Good! Very good indeed! Consonant clusters will benefit from similar 'energy input': Splash! Strike. Scream.

Clearly, consonant sounds like /b/ and /v/, commonly confused by Spanish speakers, and their final /m/, mispronounced /ng/, should be easy to correct. So, too, sounds faulty in one position in the word but not in another. With encouragement, students could coach themselves to get a number of sounds right. That leaves just a few sounds that are actually difficult to correct,

physically, such as sh, both fore (as in shop) and aft (English), and in all the endings -tion, -cion, -cial, -tious, etc. Not even the hush-sound is universal. The pure nasal /ng/ consonant is hard to form without a following /g/, but as this can also be true for native speakers, it can wait.

They simply have to fall in love with English sounds

As can the /tʃ/ in bad, and the /D/ in lot. More urgent is the /ʌ/ in luck and still more the /f/ in feel and the /I/ in bit. There have to be priorities and maybe the last sound will sort itself out through inspiration or intuition. Self-consciousness can often hinder practice, and it seems to work better if the teacher doesn't look directly at the student trying to form the sounds.

Practising some useful examples alone at home where nobody can snigger is well worth it. In contrast, what a relief for all to practise sentence stress - a much less grey area! - in class.

Which English Sounds?

A brief word on the issue of American versus British English. The fact is that few students seem to notice the difference, until it is pointed out, so why worry? Also, whichever English they learn, it'll work wherever English is spoken. It would seem to be an advantage to have both accents available in the staffroom. Interestingly, students seem to adopt the American style of speaking far more readily than the British way. Could this have anything to do with to do with Hollywood or a subconscious desire to be 'casual'?

The desirability of exposing students to a variety of regional British accents, however, is more debatable, though it may be understandable from the teacher's point of view. But this may involve bringing issues of linguistic politics into the classroom. And no-one has yet decreed where you draw the line. Glottal stops, for example, are now acceptable, but only at the end of a word. It simply wouldn't do for a Wimbledon umpire, or commentator, to score 'thir?y-for?y'. Not yet. So why involve the learner? There are other, more pressing concerns.

Conclusion

In this series, part one dealt with teaching sentence stress and the ensuing word compression and linking, with the desired intonation added. Part two covered word stress in long words, compounds and phrasal verbs. In part three I have outlined the main difficulties of teaching English sounds under a ticking clock, and suggested priorities. What matters is the students' conversational needs, both now and later. Pronunciation teaching has almost stood still since Professor Higgins. I wonder why. In conclusion, I'd like to list strong arguments for a 'top-down' way of helping learners get to grips with spoken English without delay:

1. We speak in sentences, not in sounds. Children first speak in stressed words, only later filling in the rest. Why don't we let our learners do likewise?
2. Phonologically and phonetically, weak forms are determined by the speaker's choice of sentence stress so it is pointless to study these first.
3. Sentence stress works logically, is easily understood and corrected, without tears and fears, unlike sounds, which can be infinitely more subtle.
4. Sentence stress can be integrated with general language practice whereas practising sounds tends to interrupt it.
5. Sentence stress operates in the same way in all native varieties

of English with no regional variations.

6. Sounds are very time-consuming to learn. If you start with them, there's often no time left for stress and intonation.

So there are compelling arguments for approaching pronunciation through sentence stress. After all, appropriate sentence stress is a key issue in effective communication; the production of immaculately formed sounds isn't.

For more exercises, information and ideas, see English Aloud 1 & 2. 🎧

Brainstorming Phonemics

Gerry Aldridge

Gerry completed his CELTA 3 years ago. Since then he has been working for IH Lisbon in Portugal.

This year, in addition to our regular teachers' meetings, we decided to change the format of our in-house seminars slightly. We thought it might be interesting to create seminars where everyone took more responsibility for their own development and, thus, become the kind of autonomous learners we often tell our students they should be.

The first meeting was aimed at compiling a list of ELT-related topics which teachers wished to investigate further. A topic was chosen from the list approximately once a month. The only thing each one of us was then required to do was to go out and 'play' with it in our classrooms and be ready to feedback on what we'd done in a subsequent meeting.

Thus far, the idea has worked well as, with no pressure whatsoever, we have all generated enough enthusiasm and interest to make our feedback sessions enjoyable and to all ends productive.

*some of us would
like to have strangled
the person who put it
on the list*

Our most recent research topic focussed on phonemics. Admittedly some of us would like to have strangled the person who put it on the list, but anyway...

Some of us here at IH Lisbon felt somewhat hesitant when it came to demonstrating the importance of pronunciation and being able to give students a tool with which to go away and work. Our lack of confidence is understandable: Portuguese students have excellent English pronunciation

and the phonemic alphabet is still alien in parts to a few of us. However, we persisted and discovered we enjoyed looking at this area again.

We came up with a variety of ideas, old and new, which may be adapted for the entire range of levels. They are as follows:

1. LISE'S RELAY

This activity may be used to practise anything. We practised confusing vowel sounds such as / i / and / e /

- a. First draw 2 ladders on the whiteboard and, at the top, put a different sound above each ladder, using the phonemic script of course!
- b. Divide the class into 2 teams. One team member at a time comes to the board and writes down a word which contains the sound assigned to their team. The next person only goes up once the previous player is once again seated.
- c. The activity continues until one team has reached the top of the ladder by filling all the rungs of the ladder.
- d. The teams then shout out the words so that a variety of sounds may be practised within the space of a very short time.

2. STUDENT-STUDENT DICTATION

In this activity the students are dictating words to each other.

- a. First, prepare about 20 word cards which correspond phonetically to the sounds you are focusing on, and number them 1-20.
- b. Then divide the cards between the students and give them a moment to look through their words. Make it clear that they will only have 1 chance to say each word and must, therefore, speak audibly, first time!
- c. The student holding word card number 1 says his/her word

and the rest of the class write down what they have heard, then number 2 and so on ...Halfway through, it is highly likely that you will hear giggles as the students realise that it couldn't possibly be `ship `for the 3rd time or cheap for the 4th.

- d. When all the words have been said, spread the cards on the floor for the students to work out their score. Remember to deduct the number of cards each person has from 20 to get an individual total. i.e. 5 students, 20 cards = 4 cards each so the total will be out of 16.

- b. Now assign 3 sounds to each pair of students (or individual student) and tell them to brainstorm words which contain those particular sounds. Monitor and check for mistakes.

- c. The next stage involves the students writing similar sounding words on either side of a joining line so as to create a phonetic 'seam'. The outside edges should be left blank.

- d. When you are sure the students have completed the task successfully, ask them to carefully cut up the puzzle. Colleagues can now exchange puzzles and try to complete the puzzles created by their classmates.

Regardless of level most students were only hearing about 60% of words correctly

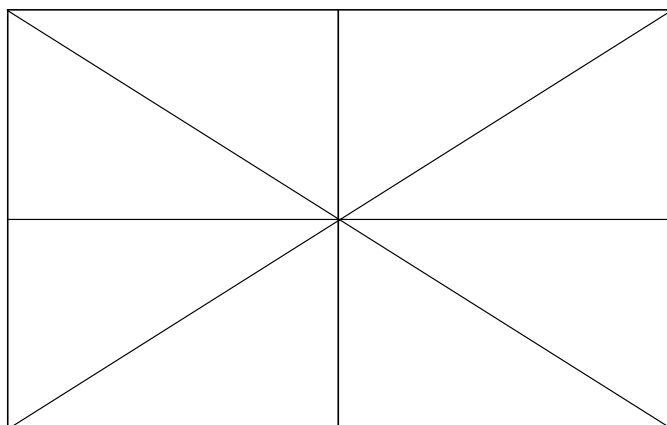
Regardless of level most students were only hearing about 60% of words correctly. This is not only an engaging, awareness activity for the students, but also for teachers. In addition this is a gentle reminder of the importance of certain sounds when communicating effectively.

3. PHONETIC JIGSAWS

In this activity students are designing jigsaws which fit together by sound. For the most part this is a consolidation rather than a clarification exercise.

- a. First give each student a rectangular piece of card and tell them they have to divide it up into about 10-12 random shapes.

Important : the shapes must all be connected by an entire side. It doesn't have to be symmetrical, but each full side must be attached to one shape only. (See example below).



This activity involves the students in every stage of the process, they are thinking about and practising the sounds throughout as well as developing learner autonomy - the students are, in effect, creating their own activity. They also receive instant correction when doing the puzzle since if they choose the wrong piece, it does not fit.

Someone raised the point that students could probably complete the jigsaw using only the shapes to guide them. For this reason, it is probably best to make a symmetrical pattern for the jigsaw so that even if they complete it the teacher is able to check the seams are also phonemically aligned.

4. PRONUNCIATION CHUNKING

This activity is based on the assumption that the students are fairly familiar with the phonemic alphabet. The object of the following activity is to pre-teach chosen lexis for a class listening. The idea behind chunking is that students benefit more from hearing new vocabulary in connected speech than in isolation, and so are more prepared for the listening.

- a. Before the lesson the teacher needs to prepare 5 or 6 chunks of language taken from the intended listening and write them out in phonemic script.
- b. Give them to the students, who have to decipher their spelling.
- c. When you are satisfied that the students have transcribed the chunks correctly and you're sure they know what each chunk means, they should then practise saying them.

The students are now ready to begin the listening, thoroughly prepared, and hopefully confident about doing the task before them.

CONCLUSION

All in all, this was an extremely productive exercise and we all enjoyed doing it immensely. Most of the teachers who participated felt they had made an important step towards understanding phonetics and now feel much more ready to use it as a learning tool within the classroom. 🎧

What's New in The Affiliate Network

The International House World Organisation continues to grow and expand internationally. We currently have 125 schools with several more who are in the process of making applications.

Membership

New schools this year include a number of new ventures set up by current IH schools.

IH Cairns has not only opened a new school in China, IH Qingdao, after the success of IH Jinan, but is also about to open a new school in Brisbane, Queensland.

IH Campobasso are opening a school in Naples, which has been IH-less for a long time, and IH Mexico has opened a new school in Veracruz. IH Sydney has taken over a school in Melbourne which is now affiliated.

Training courses are being run this Autumn in Dhahran, Hanoi and Bangkok in order to fulfill pre-affiliation recommendations, and other new affiliations in Jakarta and Santiago, Chile are in process.

Conferences


The International House World Organisation Directors' Conference 2001 took place in Istanbul in May. 85 directors and 3 potential affiliates attended (one of which, Boston School in

Queretaro, Mexico, later affiliated). The Board of Trustees was represented by 4 members and Glen Davie officially handed over the position of Chair of the Board of Trustees to Frances Pinter. Alan Pentecost, Chief Executive, outlined his ideas for the future of the Affiliate Network and Directors gave presentations on subjects as diverse as Merchandising and Teacher Training projects with charitable organisations. Activities included a guided tour of the city, an excursion to IH Istanbul - Suadiye and a dinner-dance cruise on the Bosphorus.

The 10th anniversary of the death of Ben Warren, the co-founder of IH Madrid and founder of all the schools in Catalunya, was observed with a minute's silence.

The IH Young Learners Conference will take place in Prague, November 15-18. During the autumn it is hoped that there will be a regional conference, in Hungary or Poland, for IH schools to discuss IT & ICT developments in language teaching.

Teacher Training

The first pilot of the new standardised IHC YL Training course was run successfully in Spain over the summer, using the new Trainers' Manual and session notes commissioned by the network. This will now be produced in a final form on CDROM and offered as a new product to all schools. 

Educational services & resources

The Ben Warren Prize 2001


The Ben Warren prize for 2001 was won by Lynne Cameron for her book *Teaching Languages to Younger Learners CUP 2001*. The award was presented at IH Barcelona and was timed to coincide with the opening of the new ground and basement floors of the school. The judges this year were Jonathan Dykes and Scott Thornbury of IH Barcelona, Paul Roberts of the University of Hertfordshire and myself, Roger Hunt.

The book combines theory and practice very neatly with a strong argument (and evidence) in support of Vygotsky's ideas on the role of language in cognitive development as opposed to Piaget's environmental problem solving approach, but do not think this book is only for those who teach younger learners - it is of relevance to, and will be of interest to all language teachers. Watch this space for a proper review.

Roger Hunt

The new IH World DOS Handbook, edited by Jane Delaney of IH Tarragona, is now in production and should be in schools in October.

All schools have been supplied with a CDROM of promotional design materials, and new designs are being completed currently. The new designs include a map of the world showing all the IH locations marked on it, as a design for posters, wall signs etc., and new point-of-sale dispensers for promotional literature.

The first Student Practice Pack (available on CDROM) has been produced and piloted. It is hoped that schools will buy the CD in order to sell to their students locally. 

IH Valladolid - a profile

Valladolid. The name which nobody in Viseu 2000, nor in London this January, could pronounce!!!

Situated in a modern suburb of the historic city, (Cervantes wrote Don Quixote here, Columbus died here, imprisoned for his crimes against the native Americans, it was the adopted capital during the plague years...) we are one of International House's newest affiliates. The school was founded in September 1998 by William Ott and Nydia Diaz as California School and last year it became the first IH in the central Spanish region of Castille.



Initially, the school had only 50 students, all younger learners. However, during that year, and in every year since, the school more than doubled the number of students. In fact, given that Valladolid reportedly has the highest birthrate in western Europe, (in a country where the falling birthrate is regarded as a national crisis! Must be something in the water...), the greater part of our student-base have yet to be born. The average age in our area, Parquesol, is 14, and falling fast...We're going to need to expand our premises very soon.

We should have around 400 students next year, not including our adult groups, and not counting our business clients throughout the city, principally in the legal, financial and electronic sectors. We also have a splendid French department, (called Sandrine). During the current academic year, the total number of adult students has multiplied by four! Wall Street really don't like us much, which is good. But why are we so popular?

The region and the city are rather conservative regarding teaching: PPP is considered to be dangerously radical! We are one of the very few schools here to be concerned with more modern approaches than simply translating or filling in the gaps and because of this both younger learners and their parents regard us as a breath of fresh air: Our students can actually have conversations. They actually want to be here in the evenings.

The area is equally conservative in its consumer choices: Advertising and logos mean less than nothing: Only word of mouth works, only tried and tested products sell. Obviously, the value of our emphasis on communicative language-use, and on fun, has been appreciated.

We've recently launched a number of new ventures, including our Spanish in Spain programme this summer, which many of you have been very helpful in promoting. We will be running one to four week, residential courses at all levels and expect to receive accreditation very soon from one of the local universities.

We have also been working closely with the local government's education department, for whose teachers our senior staff have delivered lectures and seminars on methodology, classroom management, motivation....

In July we will be operating one-week teacher training courses for local teachers of English. We'll see if we can save some students from hours of tedium, Grammar Translation and gap-filling.

We have a lot to learn from our colleagues in International House, and have benefitted greatly from our recent affiliation, but in Castille, we already lead the way by miles. With IH we can continue to do so, simply because, for the first time in this area, we are applying truly global standards to language education. 🌐



**Does anyone fancy thinking of a good caption for these pictures?
We'll try to come up with an interesting prize for the best entry. Eds**

Book reviews

Planning Lessons and Courses: Designing sequences of work for the language classroom

Tessa Woodward (CUP) 2001 (ISBN: 0521633540).

Written in the first person as a dialogue with the reader, and illustrated with examples from both her own and other teachers' experience, this is a very accessible book for those training to be teachers and those who already are teaching.

It takes as its starting point clarification of what Woodward means by planning; this was useful as I, along with other trainers, immediately assumed that the book would cover issues relevant to formally assessed lesson planning: articulating aims, anticipating problems and knowing what knowledge to assume students bring to any particular lesson. Woodward, however, defines planning as:

"...what most working teachers do when they say they 're planning their lessons...: considering the students, thinking of content, materials and activities that could go into a course or lesson, jotting these down, having a quiet ponder, cutting things out of magazines and anything else that you feel will help you teach well and the students to learn a lot, i.e. to ensure our lessons and courses are good."

With this in mind, the book is organised into 8 chapters, posing and answering 7 questions that underlie teacher thinking - consciously or unconsciously: Who are the students? How long is the lesson? What can go into a lesson? How do people learn and so how can we teach? What can we teach with? How can we vary the activities we do? What are our freedoms and constraints? and (the one which isn't entitled with a question) Getting down to preparation.

Each chapter then sets out to discuss or address issues posed by the question in the title, and intersperses the discussion with ideas for activities which teachers could use with their classes. In the chapter on learning, for example, Woodward organised the first section into 4 different ways that people learn - by finding out for one's self (noticing and experiencing), by having someone explain, by being exposed to something and learning unconsciously (periphery learning), and by using and refining something which is not yet fully understood/learned; each of these four is then set in the classroom context - with suggestions for activities for each.

The second section addresses ways that learning opportunity and/or instruction can be organised (test-teach-test, TBL, PPP and staging a receptive skills focus). There is a lot here, and it

could be read at various depths. For the inexperienced teacher, the information is presented in a way that is clear and supportive; for experienced, reflective teachers it makes conscious what many of us already do and/or question and so may serve as the basis for more critical reflection.

Chapter 8 addresses the freedoms and constraints that we as teachers have in our classrooms.

Rather than sitting down and reading whole chapters at a go, Woodward suggests the reader dip into chapters and read what seems relevant and/or important to her/him at any particular time. Chapters also contain useful references to further reading that can be done.

The book is reassuring, very practical and informal in style; the map of the book is clear and makes moving around within the book straightforward. Most of the chapters include ideas for activities, which are easy to follow and will be easy to adapt to specific classes if necessary. Sections within each chapter are short and there are drawings throughout, some of them humorous. Without doubt, there are experienced teachers who will benefit from reading this book; for many of us depth and more of a challenge to current practice and thinking would be in order. It is definitely a book that I would recommend both for teachers in training and for teachers with some experience. It will encourage thinking as well as reassure and hopefully inform us so that we will make our practice more principled and more effective. (BN)

English for Primary Teachers

Slattery, M & Willis, J. (OUP 2001)

Don't be put off by the drab title. The cheery cover of **English for Primary Teachers**, bearing bright pictures by children more accurately reflects what is inside. It combines methodology, advice, ideas and activities making it rival Susan Halliwell's now classic book **Teaching English in the Primary Classroom**, (Longman 1992). This new book is primarily aimed at non-native teachers of English because of the emphasis on Classroom English and pronunciation work. However, teacher trainers will also find this a valuable resource to dip into as a reference for activities and to help build teachers' confidence in their ability to use English effectively.

So how come Mary Slattery and Jane Willis, the two authors, now university trainers who have not been in a young learner classroom for some considerable time have come up with a winning formula?

This “handbook of activities and classroom language” has several selling points:

- It gives examples of activities used in real classrooms around the world.
 - It provides transcripts and a CD of contextualised classroom language.
 - There are some quick, easy to follow teaching tips (for example, to help build vocabulary and aid word recognition, it is suggested that teachers “use a new password each day in class”. The students need to remember it to begin the class).
- * It can be used as a self-study book with activities for teachers to do and a key at the back.
- It’s also good to see that they have put a table of the phonemic symbols on the inside cover, something which was definitely lacking in the previous edition.

English for Primary Teachers also has a modern feel to it with new, larger, photocopiable young learner format, a clear layout, fun activities and appealing illustrations. Teachers will also find useful the resources section which lists activity books, websites and very big books for reading aloud. Another feature is the glossary, which demystifies some of the jargon commonly used, such as “cross-curricular” or “checking question.”

So this book has lots to recommend it and I feel that, particularly for less experienced non-native speakers of English, it fills a gap in the market and is able to provide some answers and solutions to commonly asked questions. These might include “How can I set this activity up?” or “How can I get the students to talk together in English?”

My only frustration was with the “free” CD, (which as far as I can see is not free at all but an integral part of the package costing £10.13) but more importantly the production of the CD. This has been re-recorded by actors in a studio. Although we are reassured that the actors heard the original tapes and kept as close to the original as possible, it is a shame that the same cannot be said of the children’s voices featured. They are clearly native speakers of English making bizarre attempts to sound foreign.

Still the novelty value of the teacher training tips and the focus on classroom language sets this book apart and will undoubtedly make it recommended reading for young learner teaching and teacher training.

(Nancy Wallace)

A-Z of English Grammar and Usage

Geoffrey Leech, Benita Cruickshank and Roz Ivanic (Longman 2001)

It’s always good to come across a familiar old friend and so when I saw that a new edition of the A-Z had just come out, I knew it would be good.

I was not disappointed. The authors have kept the useful parts of the book that we all know and love and at the same time have managed to make the book feel much more up to date. They’ve added entries such as ‘email’, ‘writing’ (this includes help with those old nutshells that we always find hard to remember- eg the difference between style and register- as well as mention of ‘genres’) and ‘reference’ (with useful diagrams showing anaphoric and cataphoric references).

It’s also good to see that they have put a table of the phonemic symbols on the inside cover, something which was definitely lacking in the previous edition.

The layout is much better than before: they have made good use of colour to highlight headings and to make a much more pleasing overall effect, the index gives much-needed detailed page references and the tables and illustrations are bigger and clearer than in the previous edition.

The authors have used Corpus data for guidance with entries and as a result, the examples chosen feel more ‘real’. We also learn interesting and surprising facts about frequency of usage of words - for example, would you have predicted that ‘bind’ was more frequent than ‘bend’?

The final addition that I liked was the inclusion of the common mistakes/ errors sections and the helpful corrections that go with them. We have all seen this before in *How English Works* and *Practical English Usage* (M. Swan) and know what an asset this is.

Overall, a reliable old friend who’s had a face lift and has come out looking and feeling much better as a result.

(Rachel Clark) 

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