The belta Bulletin

Issue 3, Winter 2014

John Arnold

Larissa Albano

Dimitris Primalis

Vicky Papageorgiou

Rob Szabó and Peter Rutherford

Getting Down to Business with IATEFL BESIG

Think Positive with Katherine Bilsborough

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A Word From The President

Season's greetings! It's the time of year, when alongside the usual indulgences of food and gifts, we also reflect back on the year that is about to end. Although, to be honest, I probably do more of the former than the latter!

As BELTA president, I look back on our second full year with great fondness and pride. 2014 has seen us continue our progress and now we offer more professional development opportunities for our members than we could have imagined were possible back when we started in November two years ago.

In March we had our second BELTA Day, and we were overjoyed by the amazing turnout, which was double the year before, and the fantastic quality of the presentations. What sticks in the mind most, however, are the atmosphere, and the interaction between the attendees. To see people coming together in that spirit of discussion and sharing was wonderful. My personal highlight was overhearing one delegate say "I'm just a student, but today has really inspired me to become a teacher".

One of our biggest new initiatives was the introduction of this journal, the BELTA Bulletin, back in April. Offering a range of articles on a wide variety of subjects, the BB as I like to call it, has improved with every issue and I hope will become required reading for all

English teachers in Belgium.

2014 also saw the TOBELTA online conference in collaboration with our friends at TESL Toronto. Not only was this our first joint project with another international teachers association, it was also our first online event and was attended by hundreds of people around the world. We have also continued our very popular webinar series, Sundays With BELTA, and have had eight talks this year with speakers based in Belgium, the UK, France, Brazil, the Netherlands, Turkey and South Korea.

And most recently, we had our first ever BELTA social event in Leuven in November. BELTA members got to know each other, all while sampling some hard to find British beers. We look forward to spending more time together in the future.

In short, we think it's been a great year for BELTA and we hope you do too. As always, I'm very keen to receive your feedback, so if you'd like to get in touch with me, email me at president@beltabelgium.com. And if you'd like to know more about what we've got planned for future, be sure to read my profile on page 28.

May you have a wonderful holiday season with your loved ones, and here's to a great 2015, full of professional growth and new opportunities.

James Taylor

BELTA President

A Message From The Editor

Our First Milestone

This is already our third issue – which means almost a full year of the BELTA Bulletin! A huge thank you from us all here, for reading, writing for us and all your support. Our first year has been great! We hope you have enjoyed it as well.

This Issue

In this issue, once more you will find a great variety of articles. **Katherine Bilsborough** delves into a very important topic for educators, that of self-esteem – her writing and tips will uplift you! **Vicky Papageorgiou** teaches us, teachers and students, more about paraphrasing and why it is such an important skill to master. **Dinçer Demir** shares a great teaching idea, *The Ping Pong Effect*, on how to teach comparatives and superlatives. **John Arnold**, our very own BELTA Events Officer, has given us a Belgian insight into *taaltaak*, or language tasks and the assessment of students. **Larissa Albano** describes the five extra jobs we need to be able to do, if we teach teenagers.

The Interviews

We continue getting to know the IATEFL SIGs. In this issue, **Marjorie Rosenberg**, BESIG Coordinator, introduces us to the Business English SIG.

We are also starting a new series, **Meet the Board**, so you can get to know more about the people behind BELTA – the people who work so hard and love BELTA so much! In this issue, we get to know **James Taylor**, BELTA President.

Our Regular Columns – Plus a New One!

Rob Szabó and **Pete Rutherford** continue their column **On the Radar**, sharing their action research. **Dimitris Primalis** shares his latest *culpa*, in his series, **Mea Culpa: My Mistakes as a Teacher**.

This issue has a new column! **John Arnold** opens up his **Technology Toolkit** and introduces us to new tech tools. In this issue, **Flipgrid**, and how to get students to speak.

Wishes From Us All

As it is the last issue of the year and the end of the year as well, we would like to thank you once again for getting the BELTA Bulletin off the ground. We would also like to wish you a wonderful New Year!

If you would like to write and share your articles and ideas, please contact me at **vickyloras@yahoo.ca**.

My warmest wishes,

Vicky Loras

BELTA Bulletin Editorial Officer

The BELTA Bulletin

Issue 3 Winter 2014

Published by the Belgian English Language Teachers Association

Editor - Vicky Loras
Editor-in-chief and designer: James Taylor

www.beltabelgium.com

Note: All links in this issue are clickable

Think positive, increase your self-esteem, and become a happier teacher

Katherine Bilsborough

If you are an English Language Teacher, then I am pretty certain that at some time or another you've had some of these negative thoughts:

- Most of my colleagues are better teachers than me
- I feel like a fraud because I don't know everything I should know
- My students didn't like today's lesson
- My students don't like me
- I'm the only one in my school who doesn't know how to use (the IWB)
- My English pronunciation is terrible
- I'm no good at (explaining grammar)
- I can't (draw) very well
- I wish I didn't have to teach today
- I should have a better level of English after all this time.

Worry, self-doubt, lack of confidence, stress and low self-esteem are as familiar among ELT professionals as they are in all other professions. In some cases, where conditions are particularly poor, the numbers are probably higher. Therefore, if you have had some of those negative thoughts, you are not alone - everybody else has had them too.

Think positive

Much has been written about self-esteem in general; usually about the negative effects that low self-esteem can have on every aspect of a person's life - and on the lives of those around them. One thing that psychologists agree on, is that one of the best ways of increasing self-esteem is by focusing on the positive rather than the negative. As a gesture to that spirit, I will resist the logic that tells me to start this article by talking about how many people in our profession suffer from low self-esteem. Nor will I write about the many causes.

I will focus mainly on how to reach a more positive place.

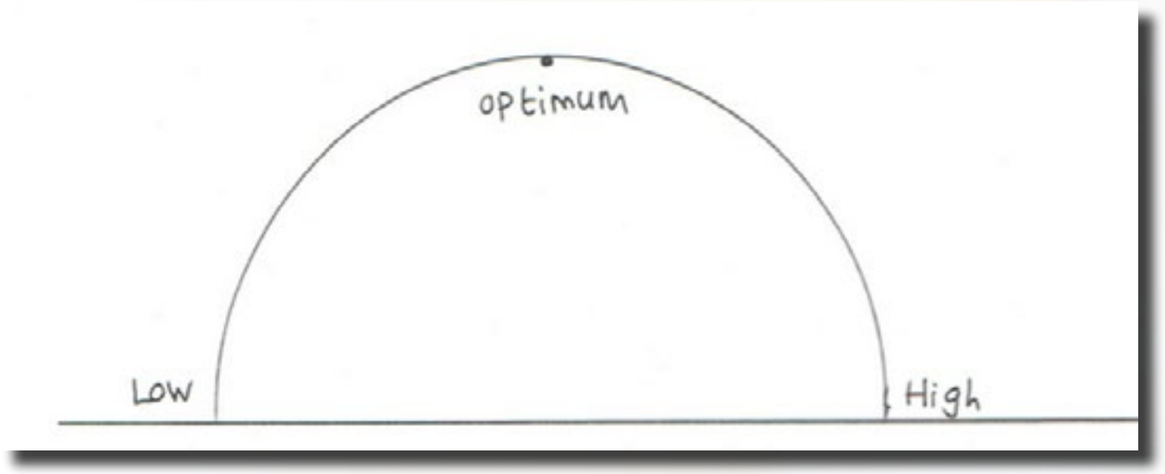
The psychology of self-esteem

In research, self-esteem is often quantified as a number on a curve, with the optimum level in the centre and with low and high levels on either side.

See diagram on previous page

Having an optimum level of self-confidence means having a good opinion of your strengths and attributes while recognising your weaknesses and flaws. It is easy to recognise teachers with a healthy level of self-esteem. They focus on the positive – on growth and self-development, on progress and opportunities. When they have a problem they figure out a way of solving it.

Teachers with low self-esteem tend to have a negative focus. They worry about *not* making mistakes, about *not* failing, about *not* doing as well as they should. Another interesting point is that people with low self-esteem tend to exaggerate the things they perceive as being negative. As a teacher trainer who has had the opportunity to observe trainee and qualified teachers in the classroom I am very familiar with this. If I had a euro for every time I heard *That was a disaster!* after a minor hiccough that usually went completely unnoticed by anyone except the teacher and me …



What kinds of teachers have low self-esteem?

It would make sense if inexperienced teachers were more likely to have lower self-esteem than experienced teachers, but this is not necessarily the case. While new teachers face the obvious challenges, more experienced teachers worry about *new* challenges they face – some of which have direct implications on their teaching practices. This is especially the case with new technologies. My colleagues at the British Council, Bilbao will remember how stressed I was a few years ago, when all the classrooms were kitted out with new interactive whiteboards. While most of my younger colleagues were *oohing* and *aahing* my main thought at the time was *how can I manage to bluff my way through an academic year without using the IWB at all?* I was convinced that I was the only person who felt intimidated by the new technology and instead of shouting for help I buried my head in the sand and worried about being discovered.

How can we move towards optimum self-esteem?

Self-esteem is inextricably linked to confidence and the key to both can be found in self-development. In *The Terrifying Case of the IWBs* it became apparent that I was not alone in my fear of the new. Teachers were offered in-house training sessions and I attended a few. Shortly afterwards, a couple of my more tech-savvy colleagues kindly allowed me to watch them as they planned their lessons on an IWB. Later I found some useful *IWBs for Dummies* tutorials on the Internet. I learnt the basics until I had the confidence to *have a go*. Nobody died.

A few practical ideas for increasing your self-esteem

Know your subject matter as well as you can by studying it further. More knowledge and a better understanding will increase confidence and, in turn self-esteem. Do an online course, join in a webinar, read a journal, visit some blogs, attend a conference.

Increase your understanding of the theories that underpin *teaching* and *learning*. Read some articles and books about areas you know little about. Make some notes about the most interesting things you learn.

Get to know your students. The better you know them, the more effective your teaching (and their learning) will be. You can do this informally by chatting to them during the lesson or more formally, through questionnaires or learner diaries.

Know your work context well. If you have access to a staff room, find out where supplementary materials and reference books are kept. Learn how to use the technical equipment at your disposal.

Have a daring approach towards your teaching. Instead of doing the *same old thing*, try something

new. Keep a journal and record the results. Self-reflection and increased self-awareness go hand-in-hand with self-development. Start with small things at first – a new seating arrangement or a change to the usual structure of your lesson. Then try out new teaching methodologies or new technologies.

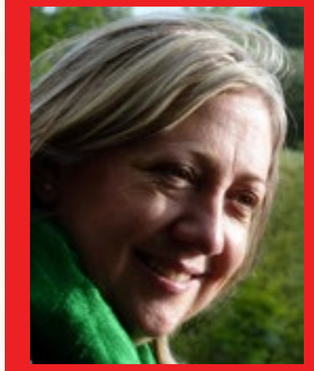
Have realistic expectations. So, for example, if you go into class expecting all of the students to speak English all of the time, you are likely to be disappointed. This disappointment feeds into low self-esteem. If you go into class expecting some of the students to speak English some of the time, you are more likely to achieve your expectations.

Above all, try to develop and maintain a positive attitude towards teaching and your role as a teacher.

You are not alone!

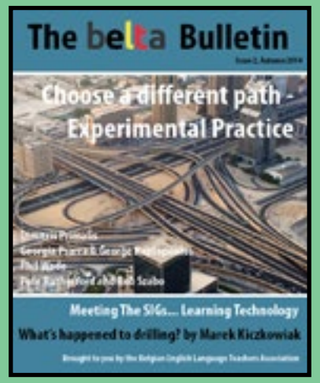
Finally, although the issue of self-esteem is, by its very definition, all about *you*, don't adopt the mistaken assumption that you are part of a small minority. Lots of other English teachers feel exactly the same as you and some feel a whole lot worse. By talking to others and sharing experiences and ideas, we can help others as we are on the road to helping ourselves. Look for a teachers' group in your area. If you can't find one, start one up with a colleague. Join one of the growing number of online teachers' groups or start following a blog.

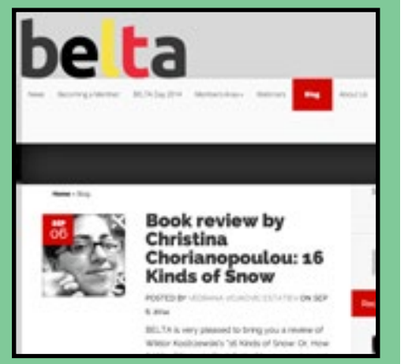
About Katherine:



Katherine Bilsborough has worked in ELT for more than 25 years as a teacher, trainer and ELT author. She writes monthly lessons for the British Council's website www.teachingenglish.org.uk/ and digital materials for BBC World. She also co-curates the Facebook page 'Free and Fair ELT'. Katherine lives and works in a small village in the mountains in northern Spain.

MAKE THE MOST OF belta





FOR MORE INFO CLICK ON THE PICTURES OR GO TO BELTABELGIUM.COM

Get Them to Speak With FLIPGRID™

A common complaint from teachers of English as a foreign language is the lack of time available for speaking activities. I teach English to a variety of Dutch-speaking and non-Dutch speaking students in the evening. There are some opportunities to speak English outside our classroom if my student has enrolled in an English-language degree program or is working in a company where English is the primary language of communication. On average, only 3 out of 20 of my students are in these situations. Even though I try to spend an average of three hours per week out of six on speaking, this is still not enough time to build the confidence the students need to complete the final assessment, 40% of which is based on their speaking ability.

Over the last few years, I have spent considerable time searching for and testing out applications that allow my students to practice their speaking outside of the classroom. I began by using Audacity (http://audacity.sourceforge.net/). It worked rather well. Some of my students thought it was a bit cumbersome to use; others, who were not 'techy' types, found the interface confusing. My problem with the program was the fact that you needed to download it to your computer. I, like many of my students today, work in a cloud-driven environment and really do not like to download programs. Once I found programs like Vocaroo (http://vocaroo.com/) and AudioBoom (http://audioboom.com/) I uninstalled Audacity and used these programs. Both are web-based programs; no download is necessary. For the most part, my students found them easy to use, but some still could not follow the two-step progress of recording and sending the file or the link to me. In addition, I always thought something was still missing. I am not a huge fan of just listening to a voice playing through my computer. I missed seeing my students' faces. Sometimes, a turn of the head or a roll of the eyes tells me something very interesting about the speaker.

Recently, I stumbled over two web-based tools created by LT Media.lab, a research center at the University of Minnesota (http://lt.umn.edu/): Flipgrid™ and Avenue; the latter will be discussed in the next issue of the BELTA Bulletin. The first thing that caught my eye was the fact that both of these could be accessed via the web or an app. I was already happy; as more and more students move to a mobile-platform environment, it is important to find tools that are cross-platform. The second thing that I liked about both tools was the use of video that is captured and saved within each tool. No need to download; no need to send files or links. Everything is in one convenient place.

Flipgrid™ allows a teacher to create a class (a grid) and then place short discussion-based questions in that grid for the students to answer. The students, using a unique grid code and password (optional), record a 90-second video response to the question. Within one grid, a teacher can post an unlimited number of questions. Each question is self-contained; so, when a student clicks on it, they see only the question and any responses their colleagues have posted. Flipgrid™, like other video-based tools, accesses the computer's web cam and microphone. The student can record an answer, review it, and upload it. Additionally, the student can review the response, discard it and rerecord if necessary.

There are a number of possible uses for a tool like this one. You can post questions and have your students respond, which is what the site was designed for. Once they have responded, you can review the answers and give the students feedback on their speaking. I focus on the target vocabulary and the target grammar. I make a list of things they have used effectively and things that should be changed in future responses. My students really enjoy this extra practice and for me, it mirrors the final assessment, which consists of a section dedicated to questions and answers.

You can also use it as an entrance card or exit card. Before you begin a new topic, post a question related to the content. Have the students respond. You have activated their background knowledge and you have given yourself vital information on what they know about the topic. You can also have the students summarize, in 90 seconds, the content of a lesson or respond to a question to see they have understood the concepts presented in class – like an exit card. If you are daring, you can have students respond to each other's responses. This way you can create a threaded discussion which practices speaking instead of writing.

There is one drawback to Flipgrid. Even though it has a 21-day demo period, after that you will need to pay a yearly cost. But, at 60 US dollars, I think it is still a bargain!

In the next issue of the BELTA Bulletin, we look at another site from LT Media.lab, Avenue, which takes Flipgrid to one step further.

Photo taken from flipgrid.com

About John:

John Arnold is an American who lives and works in Belgium. Presently he teaches 1st, 2nd and 3rd year students in the Secondary Teacher Training programme at Thomas More University College. He has presented around Belgium on EFL methodologies and approaches and has recently presented at the RATE conference in Cluj, Romania. He serves as the Event Officer for BELTA.

Mea culpa...

Dimitris Primalis is revisiting his most common mistakes in his 20-year teaching career and is sharing tips and hints on how to prevent or cope with them.

About Dimitris

Dimitris has been teaching English as a Foreign Language for more than 20 years to a wide range of levels and age groups. He has written five test books for Macmillan and is the winner with Chryssanthe Sotiriou of the 2013 IATEFL Learning Technologies SIG scholarship. He is interested in integrating technology into the syllabus and likes to share his experiences in education writing articles and blog posts and giving workshops at conferences such as the IATEFL, TESOL France, TESOL Macedonia-Thrace, Northern Greece and ISTEK. He works at Doukas primary school in Athens, Greece.

Rebel without warning?

I had worked in that language school only for a couple of months, but the class was a strong one with students who were willing to work hard and actively participated in the lesson. They seemed to have picked up the past simple and continuous tenses in no time, and I felt it was time to move to freer practice with story writing.

I hurriedly unearthed a sequence of cartoon pictures with youngsters visiting a ruined mansion at night that were ideal for working on the first paragraph of a narrative. I had used it frequently in the past - the students had responded with enthusiasm in class - and they had all finished the story at home giving their own, imaginative versions.

As anticipated, the lesson was successful, the students took detailed notes, drew an outline of the story and were highly motivated in class; a number of new words were elicited and recorded and the language production in class was more than satisfactory. By the end of the teaching hour, everyone had a clear picture of what they had to do and was eager to finish the story at home. "Another great lesson", I thought. Little did I know…

The next day I was approached by a concerned coordinator, who told me that I should have let the school know about the extra activity. After her initial hesitation, she shared a "horror story" they had experienced a few years earlier with a mother who had complained about a literature book with mystery stories used at the school, because it could potentially be disturbing for children. On top of that, a few parents were unpleasantly surprised because there was no model to guide their children step-by-step – contrary to the practice followed at that particular school.

Even though the lesson was successful in terms of achievement of learning goals, the repercussions were far from pleasant for a newcomer. Reflecting on the steps I followed, I realized I had skipped two crucial steps:

Introducing innovation and change in class

Get to know the culture of the institute

Every school sets up their own working – learning in this case – "routine" with a rather fixed approach, which learners and teachers tend to follow. Even though occasional breaks from this routine are usually welcome, a ground-breaking one may make students feel insecure. Change takes time and patience. One has to carefully choose the changes and integrate them smoothly to avoid resistance from the other stakeholders (students, parents and members of the staff). This may involve forms of interaction (pair/group work), material, types of correction, or any other change one may wish to introduce.

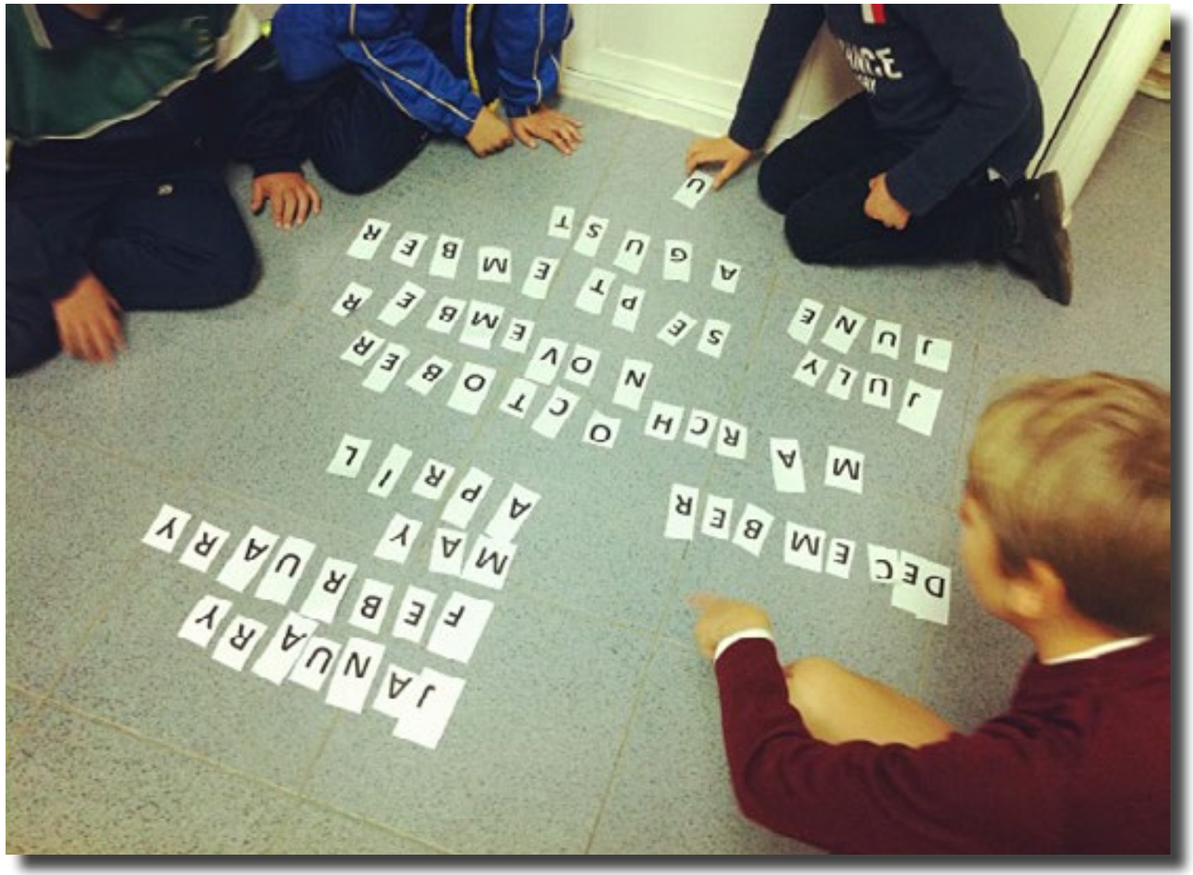
Explain what you are about to do and why you do it

From my experience, very few people like surprises in education. However, if they have been told beforehand and are given a brief rationale or explanation why the new technique or approach should be adopted, then directors of studies, fellow teachers, students or parents tend to be more willing to try. Some may even be motivated to help by giving constructive feedback.

Here are a few Dos and Don'ts if you are thinking of adopting something innovative or fairly new in class:

Do:

- Consult the coordinator or Director of Studies before implementing your ideas in class. They will be able to reassure parents or children if they know what the changes are about.
- Inform briefly parents when meeting them about what is new in class this year and why this is happening. For instance, students will be asked to work in pairs this year because this will give them more opportunities to interact in English.
- Gradually introduce changes in class – as much as possible. This will allow students more time to get used to them.
- Explain in simple words to your students what the intended goal is. For instance: "I don't want to interrupt you when you speak during this activity but I will note down your mistakes and when you finish, we can talk about them".
- Be patient and give your students time to feel comfortable with the changes. Every change is a challenge for them and some may need more time than others.
- Reflect on the changes you have introduced and keep the ones that seem to be working but modify or omit the ones which have been unsuccessful.



- Help your learners feel that the new elements in your teaching will not threaten the security provided by the routine they have had so far but in fact, they will help them become even better.

Don't:

- Introduce too many changes at once.
- Leave the school staff in the dark. In fact, they can help you with comments or ideas so that you avoid pitfalls in class.
- Ignore the background of the class and the approach followed before you. There are definitely some good, solid elements that you can rely on.
- Underestimate the parents' role. They can be powerful allies and support you at home when students express doubts.
- Expect all the students to respond positively and carry out the new tasks in a satisfactory way. Repetition and time can help them get used to it.
- Take it for granted that what worked for your previous class should work equally well with your new one. Every class has its own unique idiosyncrasies, strengths and weaknesses.

Final thoughts

As I mentioned above, innovation and change take time, patience and good planning. A key factor for success is good communication to avoid resistance from any of the stakeholders: students, parents – when teaching young learners and teenagers – and the school leaders. Wishing you the very best in your effort to raise the standards in your class!

Our Cover Photo

This issue's cover photo was taken by Brenda Kaya, a teacher based in Toronto, Canada. Here she explains what inspired her to take the fantastic photo we choose as our cover image.

We've had some exceptionally cold winters recently here in Toronto, Canada. In an attempt to try embracing the season instead of dreading it, my husband and I have started going for local hikes to some of our favourite summer locations.

This was taken at a park called the Scarborough Bluffs, just east of Toronto. The mist from the lake water had frozen on this row of rocks and although it was about -20'C, the beauty was compelling.

All of the images, except those provided by the authors, were taken from the ELTpics photo sets. They have been used with permission under a creative commons licence, photos taken from http://flickr.com/eltpics by Ana Maria Menezes, Brenda Kaya, Fiona Mauchline, Hana Tichá, Ian James, Nik Mark White, and Steve Nickodemski, used under a CC Attribution Non-Commercial license, http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/.

For more information on eltpics, including how you can use them in the classroom, go to eltpics.com

Why is paraphrasing important?

Vicky Papageorgiou

What is paraphrasing?

Paraphrasing is restating someone else's ideas in your own words. It plays a significant role in academic documents, articles, journals, and so on. It requires important thinking and writing skills, in order to rephrase a document in your own words.

Paraphrasing helps you reshape information, to allow you to demonstrate your understanding and interpretation of a text. A paraphrased piece of work could, in the end, even exceed the length of the original text, but the structure is totally different from that of the latter; it also has a different set of words. What is more, the resulting piece of work can be more concise than the original piece of writing.

Why paraphrasing is important

Paraphrasing is an important practice and a valuable skill for everyone trying to develop their academic skills. It allows a person to present their understanding, without copying someone else's work. If you want to write in an effective manner, paraphrasing is in fact the most important skill, for various reasons:

- Paraphrasing means that in order to use your own words to restate something, you need to fully understand your material. In other words, you need to exhibit a command of the subject matter.
- It allows you to write a piece of work using your very own style, expressing your own personality. You use information provided by other sources but, through assimilation, you reshape it depending on your own style. You emphasize the aspects you consider to be more important, and you can even re-arrange the structure of a whole text and not just the sentences.
- It actually requires you to use critical thinking in order to make the decisions discussed above.

Problems faced by ESL learners

Students learning English as a Second Language (ESL) frequently face a difficult problem - their inability to paraphrase reading passages. This hinders their ability to express themselves effectively, both in oral, as well as written speech.

Generally speaking, ESL students have limited paraphrasing skills and this is an obstacle they need to overcome with the help of their teacher. Poor vocabulary is one of the factors that can interfere and hinder paraphrasing significantly (Fountas and Pinnell, 2006).

An example of a bad paraphrase because of poor vocabulary is the following. Consider this excerpt:

'Our preferences are shaped by the way our brains respond to the world. Maybe this little bit of biological psychology can help us all by allowing us to appreciate how and why others might like different things from us.'

The following is a bad paraphrase of it because it only substitutes some words, and in some cases not even successfully:

'Our inclinations are molded by the way our brains react to the world. Possibly this smidgen of natural brain science can help all of us by permitting us to acknowledge how and why others may like diverse things from us.'

Another problem is the interference of L1 as well as cultural aspects of their knowledge (Orellana & Reynol, 2008). Here is an example:

'More specifically, 10000 people from Pakistan entered Britain from 1950 until 1960.'

It may easily become as follows for a Greek speaker:

'Especially, 10000 from Pakistan…..'

More than that, a paraphrasing task requires critical thinking skills if someone wants to produce effective and concise writing. In other words, a student who paraphrases a piece of work needs to analyze the passage and synthesize the specific information from it in order to construct a general conceptual framework from it (in accordance with Bloom's taxonomy). This is why, before a student starts paraphrasing, they have to first think about the purpose, the meaning and the reasoning of the original text.

A successful paraphrasing process is a complex one, for the reason that it requires reflective thinking (Hamilton, 2005). It is critical for reflective thinking that the learner becomes aware of how they learn. By reflecting on their concepts and misconceptions, the way their knowledge is constructed and through metacognition, an individual can understand their own learning process better and learn to control it. This is a process that is demanding, however, and not all learners are willing to dedicate their time and effort to it.

Some reflections

Paraphrasing is a complex and highly significant practice which can help learners enrich their language. They have to look into language in so many different ways: synonyms, antonyms, change of structure, grammar (changing the voice), culture, prior knowledge. It is a unique way to plunge into the depth of meaning.

Even so, learners might complain about working on paraphrasing. It is a challenging process and this is why it is so difficult for them to engage in this effectively. On the other hand, I often wonder if any part of language learning could be done in an easy way. In the end, I always decide there is no easy way. Giving motivation and being well prepared as teachers, could be two good incentives for the learners as well.

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About Vicky:

Vicky Papageorgiou is a foreign language teacher (English, Italian, Greek) with approximately 20 years of experience with mainly adult learners. For over 15 years she has been preparing students for English language exams of various exam boards. She holds an MA in Education (Open Univ. of Cyprus) and an MA in Art (Goldsmiths College, UK) and she is currently studying at University of Wales Trinity Saint David for her PGCE in Technology Enhanced Learning. She studied in Greece, Italy and the UK but also participated in an international project for the McLuhan program in Culture and Technology for the University of Toronto, Canada. Her fields of interest are Inquiry Based learning, ESL and Art, translation, use of video. She is currently based in Thessaloniki (Greece) working as an Adjunct Lecturer at AMC College for the past 5 years, preparing students for IELTS, teaching ESP and General English.

Getting Down to Business with IATEFL BESIG

It is time for a new SIG interview of our new series, continuing from the last issue. We are all very happy to present you with an interview with Marjorie Rosenberg, BESIG Coordinator. For more information on BESIG, visit their website at http://besig.org/

Vicky: A huge thank you, Marjorie, for this interview. We would love to introduce you to our readers. Please tell us some things about yourself and your work.

Marjorie: I teach general and business English at the University of Graz here in Graz, Austria and work with corporate clients at a local bank. In addition, I hold workshops for teachers on a variety of subjects such as NLP (Neuro-Linguistic Programming), learning styles, cooperative learning and business English. The other part of my job involves writing. I have published 'Spotlight on Learning Styles' with Delta Publishing, was the author of 'English for Banking and Finance 2' for Pearson, wrote 'In Business' for Cambridge University Press several years ago and recently wrote two of the workbooks for the Business Advantage series. The other writing I do for CUP is for Professional English Online, the website which provides teachers with free, printable activities and so-called 'Jargon Busters'.

Vicky: Could you also introduce us to IATEFL BESIG and its activities, and how are you involved in it?

Marjorie: IATEFL BESIG is the largest of the SIGs with about 600 members from more than 65 countries. We have held a yearly conference in November since 1998, starting with the first one in Bielefeld, Germany. Since then we have had twenty-five annual conferences with the 27th coming up in Bonn. Altogether the conferences have been held in 24 different cities in 11 countries including the UK, the Netherlands, Monaco, Italy, Croatia, Poland, and Hungary.

We aim to serve the needs of the business English teaching community through online weekend workshops which take place every month, by live-streaming our conferences and by offering at least two face-to-face events a year including pre-conference events at the IATEFL Annual Conference and/or a summer symposium based on a particular topic. In addition, we publish *Business Issues*, the IATEFL BESIG newsletter three times a year, two times in hard copy and electronically and once only electronically. IATEFL BESIG has also run a course in the TESOL EVO (Electronic Village Online) for the past two years with over 200 participants in 2014. Our website was revamped several years ago to include a members-only area for the archives of our weekend workshops, live-streamed events, newsletters and most recently, eBooks we publish with conference selections from our annual conferences.

As coordinator, my job is to oversee all the aspects of the SIG. SIG coordinators attend meetings three times a year organised by IATEFL where we share best practice ideas and submit reports on what we are doing. I have gotten several ideas from other SIGs such as contacting lapsed members (from LASIG) and offering links to videos on our website (from GISIG). I also make sure that we submit articles to Voices on what we are doing and have done and put together the submission for the eBulletin on future events. This is sent to all IATEFL members and is a good way for us to inform others of what is happening in the SIG. The other jobs a coordinator does is to organise and set the agenda for committee meetings, oversee activities within the SIG and the committee and generally be there if someone on the committee needs help.

IATEFL BESIG was the first of the SIGs to hold an online conference in June 2013, with two plenary speakers and 4 parallel slots with sessions. Some 125 people logged in to take part in the event.

Since 2008, IATEFL BESIG has been offering the 'David Riley Award for Innovation in Business English Writing' in conjunction with Macmillan. It has been awarded to a total of eight authors or publishers since then and is always a highlight at the annual conference opening ceremony.

Vicky: How did you initially become involved in BESIG?

Marjorie: I went to my first IATEFL BESIG conference here in Graz in 1995 and joined IATEFL and BESIG at that time. I began going regularly to the annual IATEFL BESIG Conference in 2000 in Munich and have not missed one since then. Last year I also organised a summer symposium here in Graz.

I was interested in getting more involved in the organisation and ran for the position of Joint-Event Coordinator in 2008. After joining the committee, I helped organise the 22nd annual conference in Poznan, Poland. The next year I was elected to Joint-Coordinator and have been sole coordinator since 2011.

Vicky: A very active coordinator, and a very busy SIG! It all sounds great, and such a supportive atmosphere. Now another question. When educators become members of IATEFL, they are asked to join one or more SIGs. What does being a member of BESIG offer?

Marjorie: In addition to reduced rates to our face-to-face events, an archive of recordings, our newsletter, and blogs on our website, members have the chance to be part of a vibrant and engaged community of business English teachers around the world. Our new Facebook group already has over 400 members and people exchange ideas and materials there. For the past several years we have offered significantly reduced rates to teachers from specific countries to attend our annual conference and when possible arrange host families for them to stay with. We instituted the BESIG Facilitator Scholarship to bring a BESIG member to the Annual IATEFL Conference by covering their PCE and conference costs as well as travel, accommodation and food. Colleagues from Uruguay, Argentina, India and Brazil have benefitted from this scheme and this year we have colleagues coming from Croatia and Ukraine.

Vicky: As an ending to this interview, what would you like to tell ELT educators?

Marjorie: I personally feel that being a part of IATEFL and BESIG is an excellent way to develop a PLN (Personal Learning Network) as members are always willing to lend a hand and exchange experiences and ideas. The IATEFL BESIG conferences are known for being places to meet people and get to know others in the field, as well as find out the latest information about what is going on in business English. But for me, it is the people who make the SIG great, we look forward to getting together at these events and the social aspect is in many ways as important as the professional one.

Vicky: Thank you ever so much for this interview, Marjorie!

About Marjorie:

Marjorie Rosenberg teaches general and business English in the language department of the University of Graz, works with corporate clients and trains teachers. She has written 'Spotlight on Learning Styles' (Delta Publishing), 'English for Banking and Finance 2 (Pearson), 'In Business', 'Business Advantage Intermediate and Advanced Personal Study Books' (Cambridge University Press), and writes regularly for Professional English Online, the CUP website. Marjorie is also a Cambridge Speaking Examiner and Presenter and recently revised CD ROM activities for CUP books based on the new FCE and CAE exams. In addition to being the IATEFL BESIG coordinator, Marjorie is on the Membership Committee of IATEFL and organizes the IATEFL Webinar Series. Most recently she has been on the Organising Committee of the first IATEFL Web Conference which took place in October 2014.

Five jobs you need to know if you teach teenagers

Larissa Albano

We all know we can't judge a book by its cover. Teenagers are not as bad as they are described. Personally, they have been teaching me a lot and they helped me improve my expertise in teaching and even in other fields. So when I teach my teenage students I usually do five more jobs - luckily not all together.

Personal Trainer - At school students spend many hours sitting at their desk, they need to move a little if you want to keep their attention high.

An exercise I usually do with my students is "up & down". It is a true-or-false game I use to revise what we learnt in the previous lesson. Here is how it works: I make a statement. If it is true students stand up, but if it is false they keep sitting down.
Another activity that makes students move is the gallery walking. I give my students a gap-filling text and I write the answers on post-it notes, which I put on the wall of the classroom/corridor of the school. Students walk around to fill in the gaps of their text.

Finally, when it is time to revise vocabulary at the end of the lesson, I often divide the class in two teams in order to do a relay race. One student has a whiteboard marker, they write a word/phrase on the board and then they pass the marker to the next member of their teams.

IT Expert - Teenagers love technology. So why don't we use their passion to teach them English? There are hundreds of apps, websites, and software designed for education purposes.

An online learning tool I often use with my students is **Glogster** (http://www.glogster.com). It is a website aimed at creating online posters. If you are teaching another subject such as History or Science through English, this is the right tool to put your students' work on paper… I mean, online.

I also like using social networks such as Facebook. For each class, I have a group chat where my students can share their questions about homework and ask each other questions about the course. Once a month, I also post a picture from the graded reader book we are reading to ask students to predict what happens in the next chapter. My students write their predictions through comments on the photo and when we read the new chapter, they are able to say by themselves who guessed or at least was close to the right answer.

Artist - Pablo Picasso used to say, "Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once we grow up". I cannot agree more with him. To engage teenagers you must be as creative as possible.
Not only do I draw in my lessons, but I also use music and role plays. Drawing helps students understand the meaning of new vocabulary. Music is an excellent strategy to engage teenagers at the beginning of the lesson, or to re-engage them when they lose their attention. When we learn about real life situations such as ordering at the restaurant or buying a concert ticket, I usually play a role to model the activity. In this way they are more confident when it is their turn.

Project Manager - If you want teenagers to succeed, give them a project to carry out. They will not let you down. One of my last projects with teenagers was about famous people. They had to create a fact-file about their favourite star. They made a power point presentation describing the life of the famous person they had chosen and they showed it to their classmates.

The project we are working on right now is about our town. Everyone is developing an aspect of the city such as museums & monuments, nature, shopping, etc. and all together we are going to create a blog to promote our town on the internet.

Referee - Teenagers like competition, but they prefer it when they play in teams. Being a referee means being neutral, doesn't it? Well, it depends. In order to create harmony in the class, the result of any competition must always be a tie. When I divide students in teams - either pairs or groups - I always try to find a balance so that everyone is the winner.

To sum up, do you want to be successful in teaching teenagers? Be eclectic.

This article was original posted on the British Council Teaching English blog.

About Larissa

Larissa Albano has been a teacher of English as a foreign language in Italy since 2009. She set up her own language studio in her hometown in 2011. She teaches mainly teenagers and adults in small groups. Her teaching approach combines the use of everyday life objects and technology.

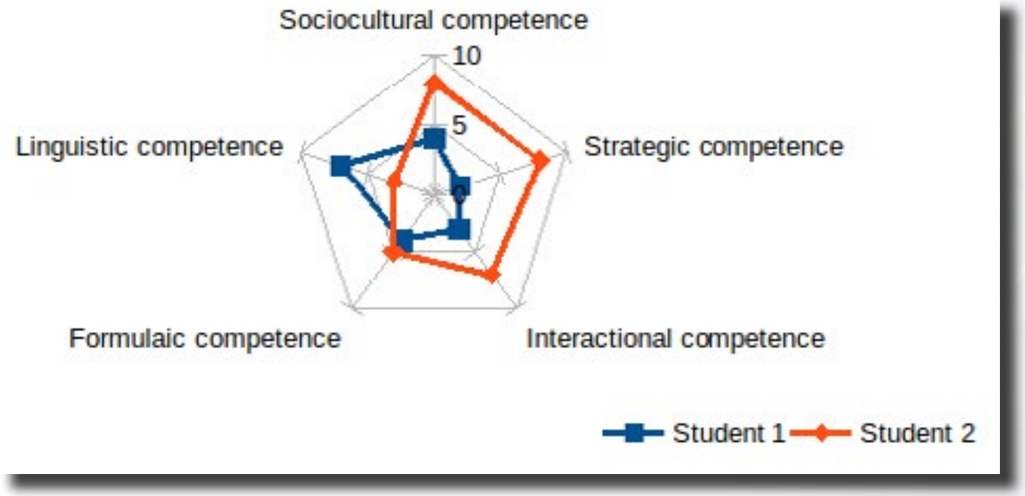
Action Research at the Fachhochschule, Düsseldorf

Rob Szabó and Peter Rutherford

In the last column we spoke with Gareth Humphrey, Director of Studies at Marcus Evans Linguarama Düsseldorf, about the introduction of a radar chart model (previous BELTA Bulletin, p. 14-17) for visually representing the various aspects of communicative competence. He expressed a number of reservations regarding the practical applications of including socio-cultural capabilities, alongside linguistic skills. This unease was echoed by others from human resources and psychology backgrounds. It seemed clear at that point that in order to gain wider acceptance of our model, we would need to conduct a series of real-world case studies testing their relevance and utility. Indeed, one of the reasons that Pete and I initially approached Vicky Loras at the BELTA Bulletin about writing this column was that we both felt that ongoing professional development and evidence-based practice was critical for the professional integrity of business English as a field. A simple and effective motor for this development is provided by the concept of action research.

Action research is a form of investigation designed for use by teachers to attempt to solve problems and improve professional practices in their own classrooms. It involves systematic observations and data collection which can then be used by the practitioner-researcher in reflection, decision-making and the development of more effective classroom strategies. Parsons & Brown (2002)

With this in mind, we were only too happy to accept when we were invited by Erica Williams to work with the Bachelor of International Management (BIM) students at the Fachhochschule Düsseldorf (the Düsseldorf University of Applied Sciences). Erica had attended a talk that Pete gave at the University of Graz in Austria on using radar charts to represent communicative competence. She explained that she was interested in a session exploring what being a C1 speaker means in the corporate environment with specific focus on the responsibility of the non-native speaker for effective communication.



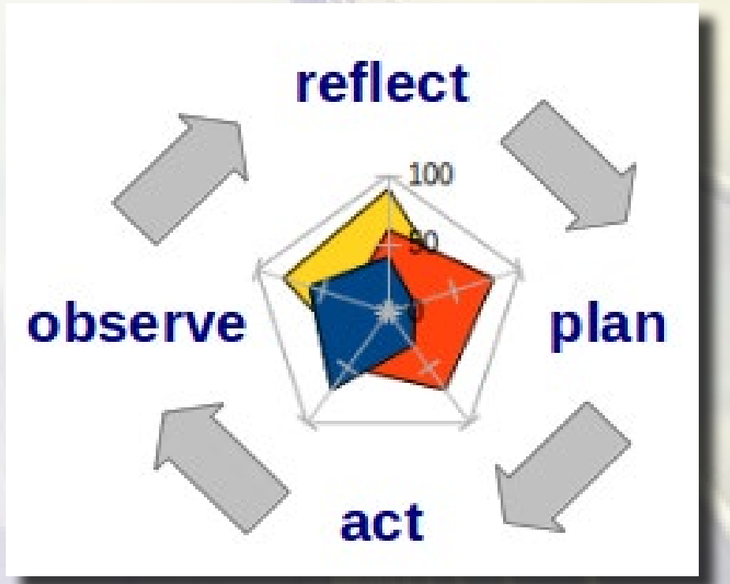
BIM students require a B2 level on the Common European Framework as a minimum to enter the course and have intensive English classes over 4 semesters, with the 5th semester spent abroad. They are expected to reach C1 by completion. The module that we will be assisting with (Corporate Culture & Communication) is a new module in the 7th semester just before the students graduate. The CC module is designed to build awareness of corporate culture and to analyse how communication works or breaks down due to culture.

Our action research will follow a similar pattern to that which Kurt Lewin laid out in 1946.

Initial Reflection

In this stage, we consider the real-world problem that we want to focus on. In this case, the issue is that pre-work students of business English often have an under-developed or vague sense of their own communicative competence in a corporate context. A lack of business experience makes it difficult for them to assess their own ability. This means that lecturers working at business schools can face a very different teaching experience to those training in-company. We were interested in how we could help pre-work students develop the accuracy of their self-evaluations regarding their communication skills in English, raising an interesting discussion around what we mean by this accuracy. Validity is a term often used in social sciences academia:

Validity in self-assessment typically means agreement with teacher judgments (considered to be the gold standard) or peer rankings (usually the mean of multiple judges which tend to be more accurate than the results from a single judge).(Ross, 2006)



Planning

Now that we have established our objective, we must go on to define a strategy in the classroom. We have decided to use a lesson plan that employs blank radar charts that students fill in and present in groups. We will also be looking at different aspects of communication common within

On The Radar

the working world and presenting common issues reported by our in-company students. We will be working with large groups and it is vital that we present a relevant and challenging session. To do this, we need to be clear in our practitioner-researcher roles. This is where the ethics of action research will be relevant.

Action

What actually happens in the classroom will surely deviate from our imagined structure at various points. The skill is in adapting and remembering that our objectives are realisable in various ways. If new insights arise, they should be integrated into our thinking. Evidence will be collected at this stage: completed charts and interview excerpts, for example.

Observation

This may take the form of a follow-up evaluation by the regular lecturer further down the line. We would be interested in seeing if these self-perceptions of ability shift over time and what is behind any changes that may occur.

Reflection

This is a critical stage involving the summary of what worked, what did not, what we have learned and how we are going to adapt our professional approach in future. Russell Mayne has been active in bringing evidence-based practice into the ESOL world and his arguments have been controversial and disruptive. You can discover more about his talk at IATEFL Harrogate on his blog: http://blog-efl.blogspot.de/2014/04/iatefl-harrogate-online-russell-mayne.html

We will be conducting our action research over the next few months and plan to report back in the next issue of the BELTA Bulletin.

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About Pete

Pete Rutherford is a Düsseldorf-based business English teacher and teacher trainer employed by Marcus Evans Linguarama. He started in education and training in 2003, as a high school business economics teacher, and has worked in Germany, Spain and South Africa. He is a member of the IATEFL BESIG online team.

About Rob

Rob Szabó specialises in facilitating clear and effective communication between individuals, departments and companies. He is currently completing his Master's degree in Education with a specialisation in Applied Linguistics, his research interests lying in the areas of sociolinguistics, intercultural communication and job mobility.

News

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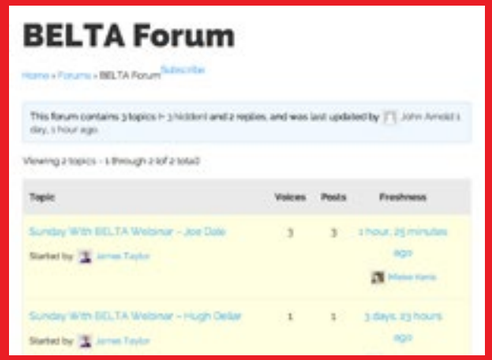

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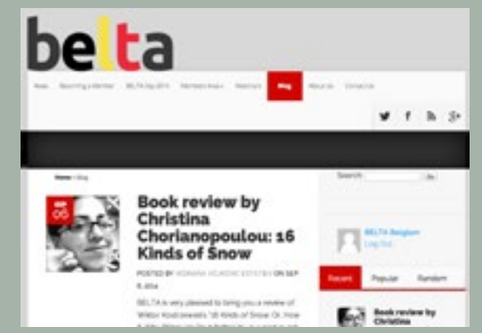

Five Things We Can Learn From A "Road Test"

John Arnold

Since 2009, a new curriculum for Modern Foreign Languages has been rolling out in Belgium. As of September 2014, all grades in the Flemish secondary schools are responsible for implementing this curriculum. These curricula, based on the End Terms (Standards) developed by the Ministry of Education, has introduced and modernized the language classroom. The curriculum states that we can no longer assess only using selective-response questions; we must use transfer and communicative assessment types as well. We now teach five skills instead of four. We should be aware of the levels associated with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages; we need to differentiate. Finally, we should be assessing our students using taaltaak, or language tasks.

This last concept has been a proverbial 'thorn' in many Flemish teachers' side since the new End Terms were posted. The Ministry of Education has described a language tasks as 'what people do with language' (iemand doet met taal). In their description of the language tasks, some key vocabulary is noted:

- Communicative
- Variety of texts
- Meaning
- Relevant
- Construction

By expanding this original definition, a more complete picture of a language task emerges:

A language task is a meaningful and relevant communication situation based on how people use the language in which the students use a variety of texts to construct a response.

In short, a language task is a type of performance-based assessment.

Performance-based assessment is not a new concept in education; it has been around for a long time. Vocational programs have always used performance-based assessments: Can a future hairdresser successfully wrap a perm? Can a future carpenter read a blueprint to build a mission chair? Researchers, like Wiggins and McTigue, suggest that performance-based assessment should be used by all academic subjects as well, including foreign language instruction.

The other problem many teachers face revolves around a question of when should one do a 'language task'. Some teachers believe that every lesson should contain a language task. This is an admirable goal, but one that does not fit the definition. A meaningful, relevant language task in which the students construct their response cannot be accomplished in every lesson, although sub-skills associated with a language task can be accomplished in every lesson.

Now, for a language task to be most effective, it should be viewed as the summative assessment type at the end of a unit or a period of time. In short, it can compare to getting one's driving license.

Every year, hundreds of thousands teenagers dream of passing their driving test and crossing that threshold into adulthood. A driving license is a rite of passage for many. If you look at this rite objectively, you see that is nothing more than a performance-based assessment. Most teens have older brothers and sisters or friends who have talked about the dreaded 'road test'. Everyone knows what is expected of them before they begin to practice. They know that they will have to drive down a street, check their mirrors, make a left/right turn using their blinker, parallel park and do a three-point turn. The nature of the performance is known. Based on the past experiences of siblings and friends, the criteria are known as well. Often, before they get behind the wheel of a car, these teens will need to spend some time learning the rules of the road and the various traffic signs. Once they know the criteria, expectations and some knowledge, they begin to practice their skills: turning on the car, checking the mirrors, looking over your shoulder, using the blinkers (instead of the windshield wipers), turning the lights on/off, and so on. Many times, a teen will engage an instructor of some sort – a sibling, a parent, a driving instructor. These instructors will start small and build up to the expectations of the performance. When the teen and the instructor believe s/he is ready, they sign up for the road test. Hopefully, all goes well. If not, they can start again.

If we think of a language task as similar to a driving test, then we can use this information to effectively assess our students' use of the language in meaningful, relevant, communicative situations. In short, we can take away five tips from a road test and apply them to our classroom assessment procedures:

1. The expectations and the criteria of the final performance (summative assessment) – the road test – are known beforehand. For students to be successful engaging in language tasks, they need to know the expectations of the task before a unit begins. The students can be given a copy of the language task at the beginning of a unit. (In a future article, we will discuss how to construct a language task.) They can be asked to determine what knowledge and skills might be necessary to complete this task successfully. The teacher can offer some guidance. Then, as the lessons proceed, the teacher can indicate the relevance of the new material to the language task. The final performance is based on both near and far transfer. The final road test is conceptually similar to the knowledge/skills gained, but on the whole looks differently than the lessons. The language task should be designed with similar constraints in mind. In addition, both the road test and the language task are based on 'high road' transfer: using all the gained knowledge and skills to construct a response to the present situation.

2. The criteria for the road test are known beforehand as well. Students can be given a generic rubric or a specific rubric. They can see how they will be scored/judged on this task. Just because the students see the scoring criteria beforehand does not mean that they all will pass (although that should be the goal); it just means that the students are aware of the categories of the scoring. (This author failed his driving test twice and he knew the criteria well ahead of time!)

3. Driving lessons are created based on the final expectations of the performance. If the language task is created before a unit begins, then the lessons for that unit can come from the language tasks. Break up the language task into sub-skills or knowledge. Each lesson should be created focusing on one or more of these areas. Students will see a connection between what they are learning in class and the final performance. Teachers will be scaffolding lessons to help the students succeed. These lessons should focus on incorporating near and 'low road' transfer concepts.

4. Short tests and quizzes should be used, formatively, to ensure that the student knows the necessary knowledge leading up to the final performance. Many countries have a written test that is administered before the road test. In addition, those who hire a driving instructor are often given short tests and quizzes based on new knowledge presented. These scores, by the way, are usually not included in the final score for the performance.

5. In preparation for a final road test, the sub-skills are practiced until they are successfully learned. Therefore, these skills are practiced again and again until they become rote. This type of 'low road' transfer ensures that the participant can draw on these skills while completing the final performance. The various sub-skills for the language task need to be practiced in a similar manner. The students should be given ample opportunities to master the sub-skills, in a spiral approach, so they can be employed during the construction of the response to the language task.

About John:

John Arnold is an American who lives and works in Belgium. Presently he teaches 1st, 2nd and 3rd year students in the Secondary Teacher Training programme at Thomas More University College. He has presented around Belgium on EFL methodologies and approaches and has recently presented at the RATE conference in Cluj, Romania. He serves as the Event Officer for BELTA.

Board Member Profile

James Taylor (President)

In this new series, we will start by getting to know one of the members of the BELTA Board: James Taylor, BELTA President! James blogs at theteacherjames.com and has been BELTA President since the beginning in November 2012.

Vicky: Thanks so much for kicking off this series of interviews, James!

James: My pleasure Vicky.

Vicky: Let's start with getting to know you. Can you tell us a few things about yourself?

James: Okay, professional things first. I've taught English in Brazil, South Korea, Belgium and Costa Rica and I love having had the opportunity to get to know each culture. As a teacher, I've been able to spend a lot of time speaking to people about their lives and their countries, so I feel like it's been a great gift to have had this experience.

Personally, I love travelling (not surprisingly, based on what I just said!), music, film and TV, video games, reading, the arts, sport, photography, I could go on...!

Vicky: And how did you enter the field of education?

James: Because I had no choice! I moved to Brazil in 2007 and I needed a job. Like so many people in my position, I didn't really have much of an alternative other than to try English teaching and I almost instantly loved it. I've never looked back, and I still find it as challenging and enjoyable as I did back then.

Vicky: Let's move on to BELTA now. It was three of you – Mieke Kenis, Guido van Landeghem and yourself - who initially came up with the idea of an association for Belgium, which then grew into what we know today as BELTA. How did it start and how did it become an association?

James: It started as a discussion on Twitter between the three of us, and to be honest, it wasn't entirely serious - but then I think we independently all thought "why not?" We realised that there wasn't any reason why we couldn't do it ourselves and waiting around for someone else wasn't going to work.

The process of starting the association took some time, mainly because of the bureaucracy involved in setting up a non-profit, but once we got past that stage we were up and running. I'm very happy with how it's been going ever since.

James speaking at our BELTA Day in March 2014

James with Jeremy Harmer at the BELTA Day

Vicky: What can BELTA offer a future member?

James: We offer a number of tangible benefits, including access to this journal, our webinar archive, regular updates in a newsletter, and reduced entry to BELTA events. But the thing that is most important to me about being a BELTA member is becoming part of a community. I want our members to feel that they belong to a supportive network of fellow professionals. Everyone who volunteers to run BELTA does so because they believe in the idea of collaborative communication and we want our members to be part of it too.

So I would urge everyone reading this to get involved. If you're the kind of person who takes the time to read this journal, then you're the kind of person who will benefit. Come to our events, tell anyone you know who might be interested, interact with us on Facebook or on Twitter, write an article for this journal, and give a talk at the BELTA Day. As someone myself who has been through this process, I can't begin to describe to you how rewarding it is.

Vicky: How would you like to see BELTA develop in the future?

James: There are some national associations that have been around for 25 or 30 years, so we are still very young compared to them, but I think we've made a great start. We need to expand our membership, especially in Wallonia where we are still not very well known. I'd like us to do more local and social events where our members can get to know each other better, and generally increase the involvement of our members. We have lots of other ideas and if you'd like to help out and get involved, let me know!

Vicky: To close this interview, what piece of advice would you give educators about their careers in general?

James: Make yourself available to the wider world of ELT. There are lots of interesting things going on around the world which you can be a part of just by picking up that smart device in your pocket. This will lead to you finding yourself and your ideas about teaching being challenged, and you'll become a better educator as a result. We hope BELTA will be your gateway to this world.

Vicky: Thank you so much, James!

About James:

To say that our president has seen the world is an understatement. James is originally from Brighton in the UK, but he has been based in Brazil, South Korea, Belgium and Costa Rica. His idea to found a Belgian English teaching association made BELTA a reality.

James is a private English teacher who teaches business and general EFL to adults. He is also our Communications Officer, has his own blog, theteacherjames.com, moderates #ELTchat (a twice weekly discussion on Twitter with teachers from around the world), presents the #ELTchat podcast and is an iTDi mentor.

Lesson Idea

The Ping Pong Effect by Dinçer Demir

A few days ago, I implemented a game with Ping-Pong balls, which is open to adaptation for different subjects, in my classes for teaching *comparatives*. It was fun and challenging and also instructional for learners. I named it The Ping-Pong effect.

My students both revised the subject and found a chance to practice it while playing the game.

Because of the fact that I have seen its effects on students' learning, I want to share it with you and I hope you like it and you may use it in your classes. If you use it, I would be very happy and I really would love to see the reactions (photos, comments) while students enjoy playing it.

Before I implemented the game, I taught them the rules of comparatives with example in the previous lesson, so this is for practice of the subject.

Target Group: Mine is 7th grade (but I think this is adaptable for each grade and group)

What you need:

- Ping-Pong balls for each student
- Three boxes
- Pictures which inspire students to compare (two animals, two famous people, two cars, two countries and so on)
- Different adjective cards for each students (all of the adjectives address each type of rules for comparative forms of them)

Procedure:

Step 1:

Each student has a Ping-Pong ball. Then I assign them an adjective and I ask them to write the assigned adjectives on their balls.

Then I collect the balls in a bag.

Step 2:

I group students. It depends on the number of the class. My class is crowded and each line of desks is a group. It is a contest, so it becomes more challenging and enjoyable.

I put the boxes in front of the board and each box is a category for each form of comparatives. So then we have:

- A box for ***+er / +r /+ier***
- A box for ***more***
- A box for irregular adjectives (like ***good*** and ***bad***)

Then, I inform them about the rules of the game. Now, the arrangement of class is ready for the game.

Step 3:

I name the groups like A-B-C-D (this grouping can be done in any way, or they can name themselves).

Students are expected to get a Ping-Pong ball from the bag randomly. Then, they try to remember the meaning of it and throw the ball with the adjective into the relevant box from some distance (this can be adapted according to students' age level). If they know the meaning, they get one point for their group. And also, if they can throw the ball into the right box, they get one more point.

The reason I prefer to do that is that each student has a chance to get a point, because some students feel uncomfortable with the subject. So, if I only wanted them to focus on their knowledge, they could have the feeling of failure when they don't remember the meaning of it. Additionally, it is challenging. Students like challenge and contests.

One student from each group comes in turn and plays the game. When all the students play the game and it is over, we check the table. But this is not the final result; we have another step.

Step 4:

I give some time to the groups to choose a representative for the next step. While they are choosing a representative, I put all the balls into the bag again and stick the pictures of the comparatives endings on the board. At this step, we don't need boxes, so you can put them away.

When time is up, I start the next step. One student from each group comes to the board in turn and gets a ball again randomly. The student is expected to write a comparative sentence with the adjective on the Ping-Pong ball according to the pictures on the board. They are free to choose the pictures to compare. If the student writes the sentence correctly, their group gets three points. You can make them play this step according to the time left.

Optional Step:

This is for compensating their scores for a final score and creating a much more challenging and simultaneously supportive environment.

Representatives come again but at this step, if they write correctly, they get three more points but if not, I erase three points. This is the trick.

They don't choose their representatives this time - I choose the student. This student is someone who feels lack of self-confidence about the topic. The reason for this is that the student gets a chance to gain confidence again, because I eliminate most of the balls and choose easy ones. Before starting this step, I give them some more time to get prepared. Here, other group members help them and this supports peer learning. And all of the group members support them by applauding and then, they come again and do the activity.

Final Step:

I give two points for each member of the winning group and one point for all students of other groups for their effort and success - so they are all happy!

My Observation:

Almost all of the students stayed tuned during the activity and I can frankly say that most of them are now capable of creating comparative sentences.

About Dinçer:

Dinçer Demir is a teacher of English, working in a state school for 7 years and a MA student in Educational Technologies at Bahçeşehir University, Turkey. He is also a teacher trainer and gives face-to-face and online training on social media, web 2.0 tools and event management through social media tools. He has a blog and writes about education, educational technologies, learning and teaching at www.dincerdemir.com

He also tries to take part in some volunteer work by running, creating awareness and training their volunteers. And, his motto is "If you believe in change, you can change".

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