

the bel**ta** bulletin

Issue 4, Spring 2015

Phil Wade

John Arnold

Dinçer Demir

David Harbinson

Malu Sciamarelli

Dimitris Primalis

Elena Xidopoulou

Maria Theologidou

Marjorie Rosenberg

Vicky Papageorgiou

Rob Szabó and Peter Rutherford

The Power Of Music

with Sibel Taşkın Şimşek

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A day of development
for English language
professionals



with plenary speakers

Hugh Dellar



John Hughes

25th of April, 2015 at Odisee, Brussels

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A Word From The President

Welcome to the next issue of the BELTA Bulletin, brought to you right in the middle of the busiest time of year for us at BELTA. Our annual conference, the BELTA Day, is just a few weeks away and right now we are working hard on all the preparations. There are speakers to choose, a programme to edit, registrations to count, finances to manage, a venue to prepare, a website to update, the list goes on...

If this sounds like I'm complaining, please don't misunderstand me, as the BELTA Day is one of the highlights of my year and every minute of the hard work that goes into getting it ready is an absolute joy. This passion is shared by my BELTA colleagues and we take a great deal of pleasure in getting it ready for you.

So what can you expect at this year's event? As usual, we have two fantastic plenary speakers in Hugh Dellar and John Hughes, both of whom are well known to teachers in Belgium. You can expect the usual high quality you associate with both presenters and previous BELTA Day plenary speakers Philip Kerr, Jeremy Harmer and Luke Meddings.

Elsewhere on the schedule we have our usual high calibre of talks with presenters both from Belgium and across Europe. We are delighted to be joined by Laura Patsko from the UK, Christina Rebuffet Broadus from France and Marjorie Rosenberg, future



IATEFL Vice-President, from Austria among other visiting speakers. From Belgium we will be joined for the first time by Joris Van Den Bosch, and Bruno Leys and we welcome back former BELTA Day speakers Ada Peters, Nerina Conte, Anna Varna and Angela Lloyd. And don't forget there are two presentations by BELTA board members, Joris De Roy and yours truly!

As is traditional at the BELTA Day, we'll be finishing the day with our swapshop which gives delegates the opportunity to get together and share experiences, opinions and ideas based on what they've seen during the day. For me, this is always one of the highlights of the day, as I love to hear what you've got out of your BELTA Day and share it with your fellow attendees.

So, if you haven't already, head over to beltabelgium.com/bel

ta-day where you can find out more and, most importantly, you can find the registration form so you can be part of this year's special event. We can't wait to see you there!

Many thanks to all of the contributors to this latest issue of the the BELTA Bulletin, and thanks for your ongoing support of BELTA. 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.

Best wishes,

James Taylor
BELTA President



A Message From The Editor

The First Issue of Year Two

Here is our fourth issue, of our second year! We would like to thank all the writers and readers for your support.

In This Issue

Vicky Papageorgiou helps us learn more about Anna Sfard's metaphors of 'acquisition' and 'participation' in technology enhanced learning. **David Harbinson** gives us great tips about students who arrive late to class, which can be a serious issue for a lot of educators. **Dinçer Demir** takes us on a journey to digital storytelling and how we can implement it on our classes. **Phil Wade** writes about the importance of editors' comments for writers and how they are made.

Marjorie Rosenberg stresses the significance of cooperative learning and gives us great tips. An educator from Greece, **Maria Theologidou**, contributes Part 1 of her ideas for spicing up our lessons in reading and writing! For our students with learning difficulties, **Elena Xidopoulou** gives us super ideas. **Sibel Taşkın Şimşek** shares her award-winning website and ideas on how to use songs in the classroom! **Malu Sciamarelli** from Brazil introduces us to creative writing through listening.

Our regular columns are here, again! **Rob Szabó** and **Pete Rutherford** continue their superb column **On The Radar**, and **Dimitris Primalis** shares his mistakes in teaching and how we can fix them in **Mea Culpa**.

The Interviews

In **Meet the Board** in this issue, we get to know the fantastic Mieke Kenis, **BELTA Co-President and Finance Officer!** Mieke is one of the three founding members of BELTA and she shares her BELTA journey with us so far.

Thank you!

A huge thank you again for reading us, and please feel free to share your articles or comments with us, at vickyloras@yahoo.ca.

My warmest thanks,

Vicky Loras
BELTA Bulletin Editorial Officer



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links in this
issue are
clickable**

The Power of Songs on Fridays

Sibel Taşkın Şimşek

"Can we leave early? It is Friday today, please". "Can we do a fun activity in the last lesson please? Today is Friday". "Please let us do something different in the last lesson, today is Friday"... Like me, you must have heard such words from your students many times, because Fridays are generally known as one of the most difficult days to motivate students to focus on a task, especially if it is the last lesson, after working hard all through the week. Knowing that the weekend will start soon, their motivation starts to decrease and it becomes really hard to keep them in class. At any moment, they are likely to pack their books, notebooks and leave the room, so how can we keep them in the class, motivated and engaged? To ensure that learners get the academic challenge to stimulate their desire to study, we, as teachers feel the need to look into various ways and techniques.

I teach EAP (English for Academic Purposes) at Sabanci University, School of Languages, Istanbul, Turkey and we use our own institutional book, [Beyond the Boundaries](#), which is "an academic course book series designed to cater for the needs of students in the 'preparatory' schools of English-medium universities". Mostly the students at the university find the topics and

the texts and tasks in the book challenging on Fridays in the last lessons and want to do something different.

At the beginning of the academic year in 2013-2014, while setting my annual targets, I was inspired to create the "Friday Song Project" not only by my students' requests, but also by the quote from Jeremy Harmer (2001): "*Music is a powerful stimulus for student engagement precisely because it speaks directly to our emotions while still allowing us to use our brains to analyze it and its effects if we so wish. A piece of music can change the atmosphere in a classroom or prepare students for a new activity. It can amuse and entertain, and it can make a satisfactory connection between the world of leisure and the world of learning*" (242). Knowing that songs have a great potential in the process of learning, the focus of the project is "popular songs" among teenagers. When the song is a popular one or the lyrics are familiar, learners - even the weaker ones - can easily experience a sense of fulfilment of their hopes and successes. Rather than seeing the last day of the week as a battle, I want to give them a chance to develop their autonomy, increase their engagement & performance. Therefore in my project, asking them to choose the songs of their own preference creates a feeling

of being more involved and responsible for their own learning. Designing something achievable by everyone in the class helps the learners avoid having the sense of monotony during the last minutes of the week.

Giving priority to keeping the learners motivated until the last 15 minutes of the last lesson on Fridays, the simple procedures of the project done on a voluntary basis are as follows:

1. At the beginning of each week, preferably on Monday, a volunteer is chosen.
2. That student chooses a popular song and on Tuesday, sends the video clip link & the lyrics to the teacher. This is to make sure the student is on task and will prepare a song for Friday.
3. The same student prepares a gap-fill activity and brings the printouts to class on Friday.
4. In the last 10-15 minutes the class listens to the song, does the activity.
5. The teacher posts both the lyrics and the link to the video clip on the class blog or wiki, if there is one.

At Sabanci University, we have our own institutional platform, namely SUCoursePlus (SCP), both for our

classes (Section SUCoursePlus) and levels (Route SUCoursePlus). Teachers are the managers for their Section SCP; therefore, for further reference, I post the videos and worksheets prepared by the learners on our Section SCP (Figure 1).

Although the project has simple steps, the way of presenting the project is very important. It should give the learners the impression that it is not something obligatory or imposed on them, but to create a positive atmosphere to finish the week (Figure 2).

Since 2013-2014 academic year, I have been doing the project with my students and from the feedback I gathered from them during and at the end of each course, I have learned that they loved the idea, enjoyed being part of it and waited eagerly for their turn to prepare a new song. They all wanted to be present in that lesson; even the ones who missed the first lessons of the day came to school only not to miss the Friday Song, which proved that the project achieved its aim. The only complaint I received was about not being able to prepare one for the class.

I have never made any comments on their choices of songs or gave feedback on the task they prepared, because it is not their

job to create a perfectly designed gap-fill activity. Instead, I allowed them to listen and enjoy the lyrics to finish the week in a nice atmosphere. However, after a few songs and activities, they commented on how to choose a song and how to create a gap-fill activity for a song and we created our own simple criteria.

Here are their suggestions on how to choose a good song and create a good activity:

1. Choose a song at a suitable level that can be understood easily


2. Do not delete words that are repeated somewhere else in the lyrics

3. Do not choose a song that everyone knows by heart

To conclude, let them enjoy the miracle of the songs in the lessons from time to time or regularly like we did in the last minutes of the week, which will help them be filled with positive feelings while leaving the school for the weekend.

Figure 1: Here is the task that I posted on our Section SCP on the first day of the academic semester:

Friday Song



Friday Song

You are going to present a popular song to the class! We need volunteers every week :))

What are you going to do?

1. Choose a song related to the theme of the week.
2. Find the video & the lyrics.

You can find the lyrics for your song at Lyrics Mode. Here is the link:


<http://www.lyricsmode.com/>.

3. Choose 5-10 useful expressions or interesting vocabulary. By deleting these words create a "fill-in the blanks" activity and send a copy to me (Sibel). **Due date:** Every Tuesday afternoon by 17:00.
4. Get my feedback and edit your work if necessary.

For Friday: Make enough print outs of your handout for your friends.

On Friday: Be ready to listen to the song and fill in the blanks on Friday in the last lesson :)) & have fun :))

The videos and the lyrics will be kept here :))

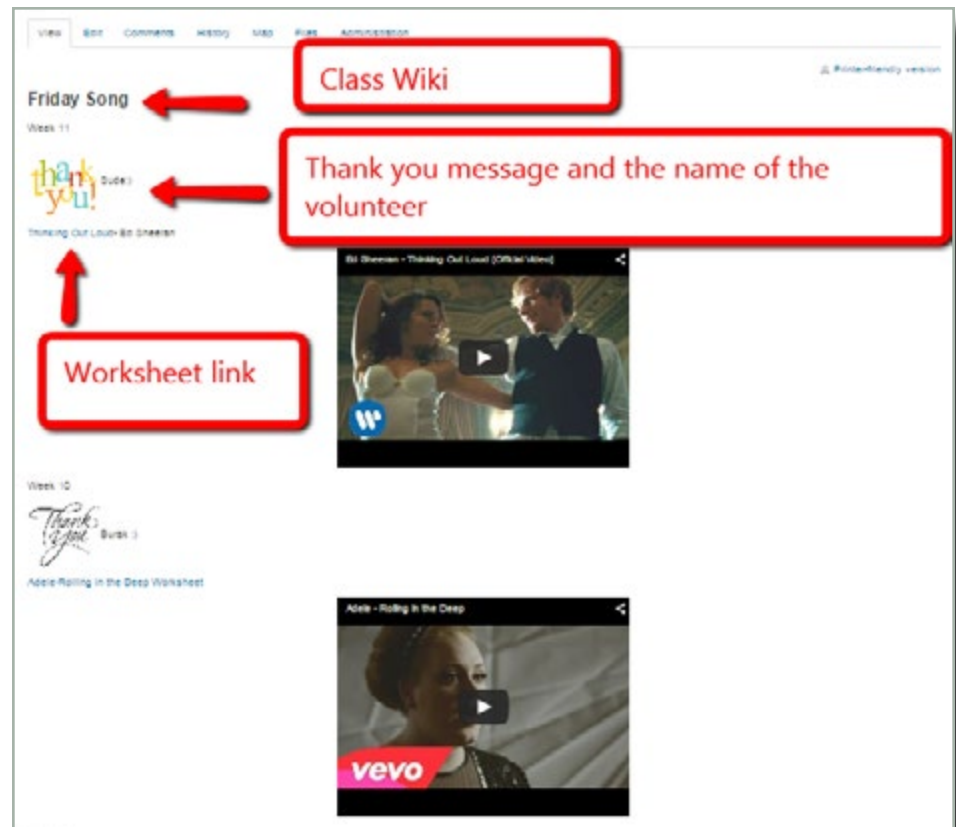


Cover Story

Figure 2: I prepared the first one as a sample for my students and asked for a volunteer for the following week. At first they all hesitated but as is the case usually, there was a volunteer after a few minutes' silence. This continued until the last week of the academic year with new volunteers without hesitations anymore, and new songs every week. They were all eager to choose a song and prepare materials for them and the best thing was to see that they were all on task until the last 15 minutes of the Friday lesson, when it was time to listen to the song of their peers' preference.

References:

Harmer, J. 2001. *"The practice of English language teaching"*. 3rd ed. Harlow, England: Pearson Education

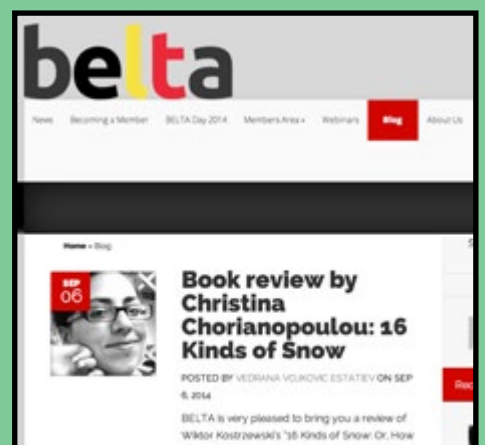
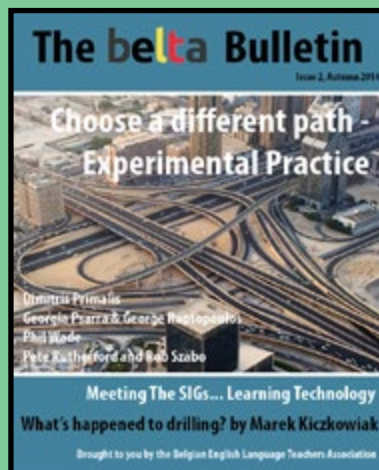


About Sibel:



Sibel Taşkın Şimşek is an EAP instructor and a member of the On-line Learning Support Project Team at Sabanci University, Istanbul, Turkey. Her interests include technology integration into teaching, learner development & motivation. Her blog songstoteachenglish.edublogs.org has recently won the Edublog Awards 2014 "Best Educational Use of Media".

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

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.

Mea

“NO! WRONG!”

What happens when a teacher cannot resist the temptation to correct mistakes on the spot? How do I know which type of correction is suitable? How can technology help?

Our teacher was bedridden with the flu. She'd been trying hard to encourage us to produce language beyond the usual drills. Our inhibition had somehow been lowered and we were gradually speaking more and more in L2. A stern-faced teacher appeared at the classroom door and stood in front of the board. "Let's check homework. What did you have to do for today?" The best student raised his hand and said: "Miss Mary ask us to read the text and talk about it in class."

A roaring sound followed his words. "ASKED, NOT ASK! Use the Past Simple to talk about the past." The class sank into silence and for the next 55 minutes – despite the teacher's efforts – nobody produced any real life language chunks, apart from the letters of

the alphabet which corresponded to the multiple question items. A moment of awkwardness had broken the progress achieved with much effort and endless support.

Very often teachers feel that if they do not correct the learner errors on the spot they are not doing their job well and conversely, some students may think that the teachers are incompetent if they do not spot their mistakes. There seems to be a thin line that can be easily crossed without realizing it. Below you can read some tips that can help you prevent misunderstandings and problems that may arise:

Plan before you act

- Think of the best type of correction (soft, delayed, on the spot) for the activity that you want your students to do in class.
- At the beginning of the lesson, explain briefly how you

culpa...

Error Correction and Feedback

intend to correct your learners and why. For instance: "Today, I will note down your mistakes and we will discuss them after the speaking activity. In this way, we can focus on them without interrupting you when you talk"

- Decide if you want to correct every single mistake or focus on a specific area and let your students know when you write on the board the lesson aim or announce it to the class.
- If you decide to follow a correction code when marking your students' pieces of writing, make sure that they understand how it works and that it requires more work on your part than the more "traditional" methods.
- Allow ample time for feedback during the lesson and design a task or two based on the commonest errors if you are planning to give delayed feedback in the next lesson.

In class

- Avoid any comments that may embarrass the learner or sound offensive.
- Convey the message that mistakes made in class, remain there.
- Keep reminding students that it is only natural to make mistakes and the class is an ideal place to deal with them effectively.
- Promote the notion that the whole class can benefit from a mistake a learner has made because this will give the teacher the opportunity to focus more on this area and they will gain a better grasp of the language.
- Ensure that no one makes fun of any student's mistakes, from the very beginning of the year. If you manage to make learners feel they are in a safe en-

vironment, they will accept error correction and feedback easily and take risks in class using structures and lexis newly acquired.

- When giving feedback, try to refer to strengths and weaknesses. Referring to positive points shows the learners that you are as objective as possible.
- Avoid correction on the spot if the learners are very shy or doing a fluency activity. It will simply increase their inhibition.
- Marking with a green pen rather than a red one, makes the learner feel better.
- With younger learners, you can add some comments with emoticons, i.e. a smiling or sad face. They tend to read them because of the faces.



Technology at a teacher's service

For students who use technology, you can provide personalized feedback in the form of audio, video, written comments or a combination with the aid of some web 2.0 tools or apps. The simplest way is to email the student your comments.

- If you want to save time or focus on pronunciation, you can use www.vocaroo.com, a free Web 2.0 tool that allows you to record your voice and email it to your students.
- If you use Microsoft Office 365, Onenote® and Officemix®

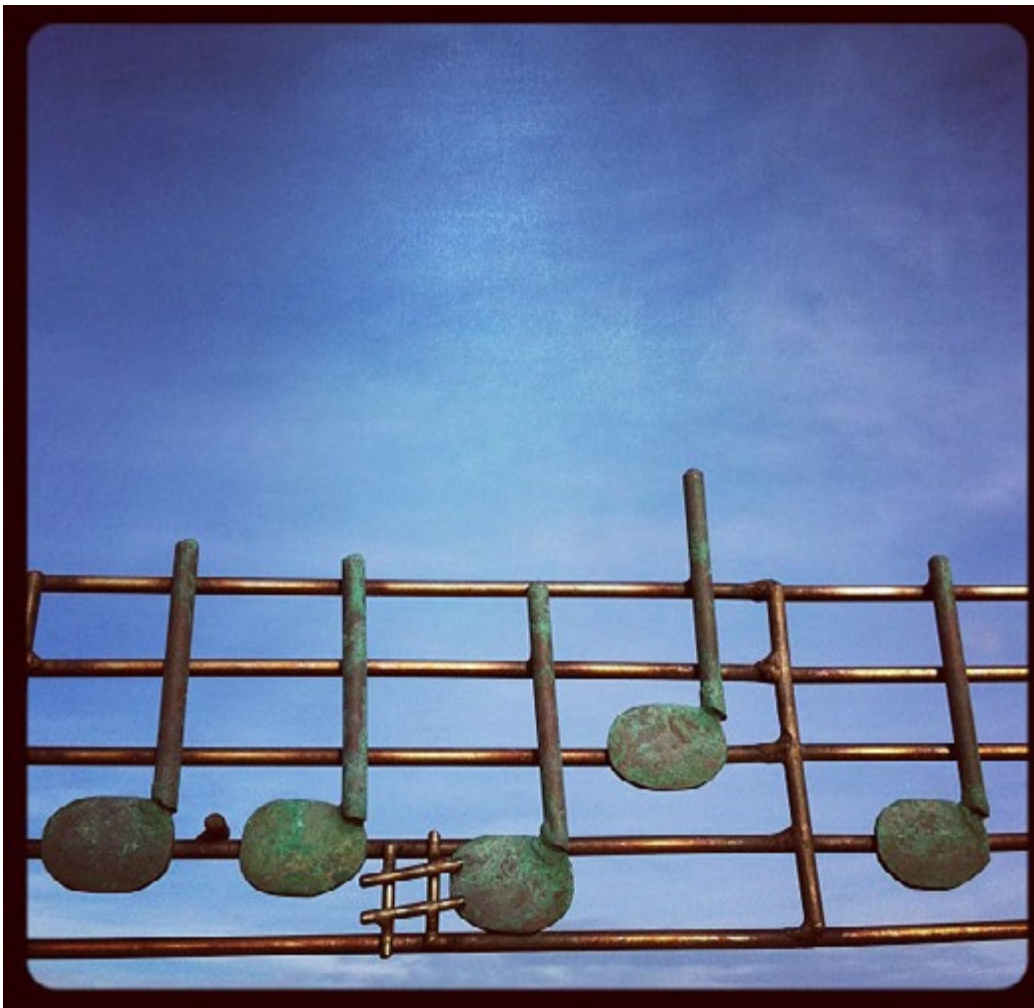
allow you to record a video, or your voice while highlighting weaknesses on a text or underlying specific words. Microsoft Word® also allows you to write comments on a text.

- Jing® is also a free web 2.0 tool that allows you to screencast and share your comments and work in the form of video.
- If your institution has a Learning Management System, you can start a conversation on the most common mistakes made in class or contact students individually and provide feedback in a safe digital environment.

A few more thoughts

The learner's reactions tend to be affected by the overall relationship with the teacher. Throughout my career, I have seen students reacting negatively to extremely soft correction or carefully worded feedback while others responding positively to rather heavy – constructive - criticism and correction on the spot. Building mutual trust and understanding are critical factors that can affect openness to feedback. From my experience, once students feel that you respect their personality and you care for their progress, they are willing to discuss their errors and make an effort to improve using your feedback as a compass.

Our Cover Photo



This issue's cover photo was taken by Victoria Boobyer, a teacher based in the UK. Victoria is one of the original founders of ELTPics, so we are very happy to feature her here.

I took this photo on Southwold Pier which is in the south east of England. Every Christmas, my husband and I go there to stay with relatives and we have hot chocolate on the pier. There are lots of strange metal sculptures and a most unusual poor taste arcade. I'm a music nut and so this sculpture really appeals to me.



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

Photo of Clarice Lispector statue credit: 'Estátua de Clarice Lispector - Praça Maciel Pinheiro - Recife, Pernambuco, Brasil.' by A. Júnior available at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/82566904@N05/8646983781/> under a Creative Commons Attribution 2.0. Full terms at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0>.

Clarice Lispector's 'Writing by Ear' For the Creative Writing Classroom

Malu Sciamarelli

Born in Chechelnyk, Podolio - Ukraine on December 10th, 1920, Clarice Lispector is one the most important writers in Brazilian Literature. Internationally acclaimed, her innovative novels and short stories have also been comprehensively studied. Both her life and her writings have been the subject of numerous books, and references to her work are common in Brazilian literature and music (Moser, 2009).

My first contact with her work was when I was about 10 or 11 years old in my Portuguese classes, when my teacher introduced the book *The Hour of the Star* (Lispector, 1984) to our classes. I confess that at first I did not like it very much. However, after an in-depth study for a class project, I started to understand a little more about Clarice Lispector and fell in love with her books. When I re-read *The Hour of the Star*, I started to wonder what was so unique about her way of writing and learned from this book, published just before her death on December 9th, 1977, that she herself wondered about her way of writing:

'The question is: how do I write? I can verify that I write by ear, just as I learned English and French by ear' (Lispector, 1984, p.18).

A better understanding of her work, and especially, her



'writing by ear' was only possible at university, in my Brazilian Literature and Translation classes, in which her books were a must. In order to practice translation, I needed to understand her way of writing and only then did I finally understand what Lispector's 'writing by ear' meant: the connection between written words and the sense of hearing.

To illustrate this concept of 'writing by ear', many studies, among them Librandi-Rocha (2011), have examined examples from her two novels: *A Breath of Life* (1978), and *The Hour of the Star* (1984). In the first novel, Lispector's description transforms her character into a musical instrument: 'Ângela is the vibrating quake of a tense harp string that has been plucked: she remains in the air still, speaking

to herself, speaking - until the vibration dies out, spreading in foam on the sands. Then - silence and starts' (*A Breath of Life*, 1978, p. 41).

In *The Hour of the Star*, Lispector writes 'Macabéa is dead. The bells were ringing without making any sound. I now understand this story. She is the imminence in those bells, peeling softly' (1984, p. 97). In the same novel, another important expression that reveals Clarice Lispector's 'writing by ear' can be found: 'searching for words in darkness'. (Lispector, 1984, p.70). In the words of Librandi-Rocha (2011), Macabéa's death 'coincides with the hour of the star that shines in the darkness and with the written word that pulsates silently' (p.1). Critics assert that for Lispector, the notion of

blindness is a fundamental aspect connected to 'writing by ear'. Blindness intensifies the sense of hearing, enabling one to capture the sounds and write the words (Librandi-Rocha, 2011, p.2). As Lispector puts it lyrically: 'The words are sounds transfused with shadows that intersect unevenly, stalactites, woven laves, transposed organ music. I can scarcely invoke the words to describe this pattern, vibrant and rich, morbid and obscure, its counterpoint the deep bass of sorrow. Allegro con brio' (The Hour of the Star, p. 16), quoted in Librandi-Rocha (2011, p.2).

After studying Clarice Lispector's work for so many years, reading, and re-reading her books, and trying to understand her 'writing by ear', I decided to introduce the concept to my classes. This decision was based on two main points: first, wanting to introduce universal literature to my classes, I decided to start with writers whose mother tongue was not English. My main objective was to make students listen to the sounds of the world, and try to find the words hidden behind them, while also expanding their vocabulary and enhancing their familiarity with words. Second, I thought that 'writing by ear' would spark their creativity for every time they listen to sounds, situations, and music, and describe them, they would have to use precise words. To begin, I introduced some background materials about this author and her work, read some parts of the two books mentioned above, and then developed an activity to introduce the concept

of 'writing by ear'. First, I selected and recorded various sounds, whose origins might be difficult for students to identify. These sounds were:

1. Submarine sonar
2. Diving into water
3. Thunderstorm
4. Rooster crowing
5. Breaking glass
6. Elephant trumpeting
7. Typewriter
8. Whale call
9. Explosion
10. Crashing a car
11. Heart beating

I then played each of these recordings after which the students had to write a brief description of what they had just heard, without writing the name or the kind of sound. After all the recordings were played and the notes taken, students took turns reading their descriptions out loud in a different order than they were played, while their classmates listened and tried to identify what was being described. Following Lispector's method, the objective here was to make students 'develop a method of trial and error, a process of immersion that is more unconscious than conscious' (Librandi-Rocha, 2011, p.2). They would first listen to the sounds without the words, then listen to the words used to describe the sounds being read out loud, minus the sounds. At this

moment they were attempting to 'write by ear', which means hearing the sounds and inscribing them through words. It also means writing the language that is heard before its meanings are understood, the way a child learns its mother tongue naturally.

Having done this first part of the exercise, the students were asked to take their notes home, with the memory of the sounds and descriptions from their peers. Each student was responsible for one sound and was asked to write a longer description, adding their personal touches, still without mentioning the sound it represented.

Before getting the students to read their own texts in the following class, I ask them to read the poem Magic (Burnham, 2013, p. 6).

Read this to yourself. Read it silently.

Don't move your lips. Don't make a sound.

Listen to yourself. Listen without hearing anything.

What a wonderfully weird thing, huh?

NOW MAKE THIS PART LOUD!

SCREAM IT IN YOUR MIND!

DROWN EVERYTHING OUT!

Now, hear a whisper. A tiny whisper.

Now, read this next line in your best crotchety-old man voice:

"Hello there, sonny. Does your town have a post office?"



Statue of Clarice Lispector in Recife, Pernambuco, Brazil

Awesome! Who was that? Whose voice was that?

It sure wasn't yours!

How do you do that?

How?!

It must've been magic.

My main objective here was to show the magic of the written text and to show that we generally separate the writer from the reader, and the reader from the text. To summarise Librandi-Rocha (2011), 'writing by ear also requires readers who are able 'to

hear' the written text, in order to capture what passes between the lines' (p.2). In 'writing by ear', according to Librandi-Rocha (2011), 'Clarice Lispector opens the door to a world that is still little explored in the literature universe: the acoustic properties of writing, present not only at the moment of fictional creation, when the writer 'hears' voices and inscribes them, but also during silent reading, when an imaginary world is awakened by the vibrations of the words' sounds and images' (p.2). Reading also means to hear voices from different speakers and different

sources (cf. Peter Sloterdijk (2011). Interview. Something in the air in Librandi-Rocha, 2011, p.2).

After reading this poem, each one of my students was asked to read the texts they had created and written. For each text that was read, we stopped and discussed not only what these writings represented and the language and choice of words that was used, but also what each student could hear, feel, and see from their classmates' texts. Although the students knew the sounds from the previous classes, some of them said they could hear different sounds - an inspirational moment.

The last part of the exercise was writing the final draft. Students took their texts home and were asked to first read in silence and then out loud. There were asked to either keep their text the way it was written, or change it according to what they heard, after reading in silence and out loud.

Surprisingly, all of them changed their texts. We read them again as a group, and again all perceptions changed. I then observed that each time we read and heard what they wrote, students would revise their texts. I realised that Clarice Lispector's 'writing by ear' also means, in Librandi-Rocha's words (2011), hearing in order to define and 'redefine the text as an object with an unstable ontology that changes over time' (p.1). I had subconsciously realised it years ago when I read and re-read Clarice Lispector's books, and now reinforced the idea with this

exercise with my students.

Obviously, Clarice Lispector's 'writing by ear' is not simple but a complex process. The words present in her work not only describe sounds but the whole word around them. I used her work and simple sounds to introduce this concept in my classes, enhance my students' creativity and range of vocabulary, and to show them the magic of literature.

We are still reading parts of literary books and short stories, discussing, hearing sounds, and attempting to 'write by ear'. One thing, however, is very clear to me after this first attempt, and after all those times I read and re-read Clarice Lispector's work. I feel that every time I read books and stories, I am tackling a new perspective. Think about your favourite writer – do you get a fresh perspective and new ideas each time you open a book? Do you think that this perspective or these ideas will change in the future every time you open these books and read these stories?

I invite you all to bring the concept of 'writing by ear' to your classes, teach your students to hear sounds, write words, close the book and hear the sounds it contains, gain new insights, and have ideas again and again every time it is opened. Listen, see, and appreciate the differences.

Author's Note:

Clarice Lispector died in 1977, at the age of 57, just after *The Hour of the Star* was published. She wrote 14 books, five of them for children, nine short story

collections, several journalism texts, and other shorter writings. In the 1960s she began to paint and also translated the works of Edgar Allan Poe and Oscar Wilde into Brazilian Portuguese. She has been described as the most important Jewish writer since Franz Kafka. Several of her books, including *The Hour of the Star*, were reissued in English Language by Penguin Classics (January, 2014).

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About Malu:



Malu Sciamarelli has been working in Brazil for over 21 years as a teacher, materials designer, Cambridge English freelance speaker, teacher trainer, and speaking examiner. She has taught in schools, language institutes, and in companies. Currently, her main interests are creative writing and creativity in English Language Teaching. She is an associate member of The Asian Teacher-Writer Group, and a member of The C Group (Creativity for Change in Language Education).

Anna Sfard's metaphors of 'acquisition' and 'participation' in technology enhanced learning

Vicky Papageorgiou

The use of new technologies and investigating how technology can enhance learning has contributed to the emergence of new trends in theories about human learning and cognition. Learning cannot be defined unambiguously, because it is not a scientific process and this is one reason why there is so much research on how people learn. While there might not exist a clear definition of learning, when thinking about teaching nowadays, the terms interaction and acquisition play an essential part. Considering what these terms mean for us is equal to our understandings about learning. The reason for this is that all modern teaching theories revolve around these two terms.

Core of this discussion is an article that Anna Sfard published in 1998 where she discussed learning theory through two metaphors: an acquisition and a participation metaphor. What lies at the heart of Anna Sfard's article *On Two Metaphors of Learning* is that metaphors are basic units of conceptual development and not just linguistic features. In fact, she maintains that there is only a limited number of fundamental ideas in which our beliefs are rooted, that are carried from one disciplinary domain to the other by use of language.

Acquisition and participation

Sfard steps aside from a specific theoretical position and tries to underpin the two metaphors, 'acquisition' and 'participation', as central to the discourse about learning. In her view, learning is not considered a static process, which is why 'dominant theories of the past continue to operate as the default framework affecting and driving current practices and perspectives' (Shepard, 2000 : 4), but at the same time some kind of 'merged theory' also ends up being 'accepted as common wisdom and carried into practice' (Sheppard, 2000 : 6). As such, we can make use of various theories

and not just one. Sfard claims that 'each (metaphor) has something to offer that the other cannot provide' (Sfard, 1998 :4).

Whereas, for her, acquisition is seen as the accumulation of concepts which are basic units of knowledge, which takes place gradually and not as something static, participation, on the other hand, is seen as constant action. In the acquisition metaphor, we can see the influence of cognitive models where learning is seen as transmission, as well as the constructivist idea of the construction of meaning. Transmission and internalization are the key terms.



In the participation metaphor though, the learner engages in discourse and communication, in activities, rather than accumulating knowledge. Beyond that, learning takes place within the context of a community of which the learner is an integral part (Sfard, 1998 : 3). So, the key concepts here are: community, practice, discourse.

I think one of the most significant notions in Sfard's description of participation is this constant action, a 'constant flux of doing', as she calls it (Sfard, 1998:2) and 'communication'. Yet, her argument most worth noticing is that while learning theories can be described either as acquisition-oriented or participation-oriented, the fact is that in most cases both metaphors are used. No category can exclude the other. Instead, because learning is a complex process, these theories in fact, complement each other.

The two metaphors and technology enhanced learning courses

How is this then applied to TEL courses? Let us begin by agreeing that an understanding of using technology for learning is that learning technology can assist learners in building their own understanding in a variety of ways:

- As an opportunity to promote participation among the learners, exchange of ideas and construct meaning. Forums, webinars and audio conferencing are some of the most popular

tools used lately to facilitate conversing with colleagues. On-line conversation, in any of the ways mentioned here, encourages learners to share individual understanding as well as experiences and compare ideas, and it seems that they feel quite enthusiastic about it (Goodyear, 2006). In its turn, this opens the way to two more: cooperative learning and reflection.

- It prompts reflection. A discussion with fellow students can prompt reflection and critical thinking afterwards, as it helps us think about ideas we have encountered and it can also be a thoughtful examination of these ideas. For example, many educators use blogs to motivate learners to interact and to reflect. Williams & Jacobs (2004) explain that, in fact, using blogs is a popular means exactly because of the interaction between them.
- It encourages cooperative learning. A constructivist idea in its core (Vygotsky, 1978), cooperative learning, of course, can take place in a traditional classroom as well, but the fact is that a classroom with computers to use for teamwork has better results in terms of collaborative work. It seems that using blogs, forums (Farmer, Yue and Brooks, 2008) or wikis (Ben-Zvi, D., 2007) creates a sense of belonging in a community which motivates the learners more.
- So, is the modern trend in technology enhanced learning

mainly about participation? Sfard warns us against "theoretical excesses", as she calls them, referring to the exclusive use of one metaphor only. Different study preferences and learning ways should be taken into account and used in educational practice. There is no doubt that technology enhanced learning courses provide a constant thread of opportunities to reflect upon various ideas, to communicate our ideas to others, to comment on others' ideas, to liaise with them critically. Posting, for example, on a discussion forum, critically discussing ideas and students being expected or urged to post comments on other students' comments are all examples of this.

Yet, participants in TEL courses are also asked to read articles, which is a rather internal and individualistic activity and closer to what we would recognize as accumulation of knowledge. Other examples are the use of databases, concept maps, and text processing. In other instances, learners have to research information about specific topics and write essays, both of which could be also seen as part of the acquisition metaphor.

However, having to reflect on these articles, this material afterwards, always aims at new opportunities for a dialogue. The same happens with all the information stored online. Researching, selecting and retrieving all this information results in not just using this information but participating in a network of people and participating in a dialogue, blurring, in

this way, the boundaries through 'acquiring information' and 'participating within a community dialogue', all of which is done with the use of technology.

Final thoughts

Sfard argues that, on one hand, learning theories can be classified as participation-oriented or as acquisition-oriented, as two extremes. On the other hand, most conceptual frameworks use elements of both metaphors.

'A realistic thinker knows he or she has to give up the hope that the little patches of coherence will eventually combine into a consistent global theory...we must learn to satisfy ourselves with only local sense making.'(Shepard, 2000).

Sfard's perhaps most compelling argument of 'metaphorical pluralism', opposed to the use of any theoretical extremes (a post-modern thought obviously), understands as more productive and useful a co-existence and interdependence of the two, because they can be mutually constitutive of each other. No more talking, therefore, about a 'unified, homogeneous theory of learning'. Participation can, therefore, cover some areas but never the entire field. One might feel compelled to contest that, thinking how 'trendy' the use of the idea of 'participation' is and how the modern theories are based on it. Yet, it cannot really cover all the areas and neither can it cover all learners' needs.

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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.

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News



Blog

Lexical Sets/Topic Vocabulary by Andrew Walkley

POSTED BY VEDRANA VOJKOVIC
ON JAN 31, 2015

In our next webinar for Sundays we will be joined by Andrew Walkley. Andrew has almost 25 years experience as a teacher, trainer and materials writer. His current coursebook series is Outcomes (National Geographic Learning). As he's interested in getting teachers more with language and getting closer to meeting their students' language needs, he's the co-founder of Lexical Sets company...

Teaching Introverts in the Classroom by Phil Wade

POSTED BY VEDRANA VOJKOVIC
ON JAN 24, 2015

We are delighted, once again here at BELTA, to have a blog post by Phil Wade. Phil Wade teaches Business English to executives and academic courses to university students. He uses technology to enhance his classes and maximise both in the classroom and outside. In the Introduction I have recently come across a few articles and posts about the challenges of teaching introverts in companies and also in classrooms. This got me thinking about...

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Self-observation and the trouble with truth claims

Rob Szabó and Peter Rutherford

In our last column, we outlined our aims for a classroom test of our communicative competence model in the form of a workshop with the Bachelor of International Management (BIM) students at the Fachhochschule Düsseldorf (the Düsseldorf University of Applied Sciences). 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 our workshop formed part of (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. We decided to take part in some action research related to changing models of communicative competence.

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*)

Truth Claims

As we wrote the last column before the workshop and we are writing this one after the fact, it is interesting to be able to review our ideas and adapt them. Indeed, that is the very stuff of action research. We made some truth claims in the last column that need to be addressed. Now, Google provides the following definition of a priori claims:

a priori

/ ˌeɪ ˈprɪəriˈɔːri, ɑː ˈprɪəri/

adjective

1. relating to or denoting reasoning or knowledge which proceeds from theoretical deduction rather than from observation or experience.

"a priori assumptions about human nature"

synonyms: *theoretical*, deduced, *deductive*, inferred, *scientific*; [More](#)

adverb

1. in a way based on theoretical deduction rather than empirical observation.

"sexuality may be a factor but it cannot be assumed a priori"

synonyms: *theoretically*, from theory, *deductively*, *scientifically*

"the words were not necessarily the ones which would have been predicted a priori"

of their own communicative competence in a corporate context. A lack of business experience makes it difficult for them to assess their own ability." Now this statement looks a little shaky. The Fachhochschule Düsseldorf BIM students demonstrated an impressively detailed knowledge of their own failings. You could argue that Pete and I made the previous claim a priori, before observing and communicating with the students themselves. You could also say that we made the mistake of generalising from past experience with Azubis (apprentices) in German companies.

In our last column we made the claim that "pre-work students of business English often have an under-developed or vague sense

See picture of next page for an example.

a posteriori

/əˈpɒːstɪrɪˈɔːriəl, ɑːˈpɒːstɪrɪˈɔːriəl/

adjective

1. relating to or denoting reasoning or knowledge which proceeds from observations or experiences to the deduction of probable causes.

adverb

1. in a way based on reasoning from known facts or past events rather than by making assumptions or predictions.

Here are a number of a posteriori claims based on observation:

A majority of the BIM students feel that current language level assessments fall short of a complete picture of what it means to be competent in business English.

Most students (admittedly members of what is an elite group of international management students) expressed the opinion that the radar chart approach helped them articulate their impressively detailed (but perhaps latent) self-knowledge.

The use of a blank communicative competence radar chart can be a powerful tool to facilitate self-assessment and to focus minds.

The workshop had three essential stages:

- 1) A presentation of the radar charts approach to communicative competence
- 2) Exercises based on familiarising students with self-assessment and assessment of others based on the charts.
- 3) A case study that integrated

the radar charts model into a HR candidate selection puzzle.

On the whole, the workshop was well-received and we may well repeat it with future classes. Pete and I would now like to write a few more case studies and to refine the documentation explaining the different competences to students, HR departments and any other stakeholders. We are also now in the process of looking into the implications of this model of communicative competence for testing and assessment.

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About Pete and Rob



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.



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.

Dealing with Students Who Come Late to Class

David Harbinson

Having students come late to class is something that every teacher has to deal with. For some it might be more problematic than others. I work at a private language academy for adult students in Korea where tardiness is something I encounter quite frequently.

Many of the ideas in this post have arisen through discussions with other teachers. I am especially grateful to the members of the Daegu KoTESOL Reflective Practice group for sharing their opinions on the topic.

The problem

One of the biggest issues that I have with students coming to class late is that it interrupts the dynamic in the classroom. It can be quite frustrating to spend 10-15 minutes warming a class up and setting up an activity, only to have a latecomer arrive and mess up the groups you've just put together. Or to have someone complain/ask questions about the activity because they missed your explanation at the start of class. I always like to start my classes nice and easy to help the students settle in and get comfortable. If a latecomer has had to rush to class, they're probably going to be 'cold' and not ready to speak English.

So, what can a teacher do to deal with latecomers? This will of course depend on your context. Teaching adults in a private language academy is not the same as teaching elementary school students at a state

school. Where I work, my students are treated as customers. They're there of their own accord (mostly) and are paying for the privilege. In school though, the students are there because they have to be. While there are differences, I hope that some of the ideas below will be adaptable to a number of teaching contexts.

Deal with it before it becomes too big

It's good to have ground rules from the very beginning of a course. If you suspect that students might come late (or even if you don't), lay out your expectations at the beginning of a course. One teacher told me that she makes it very clear when the students should be in the classroom. She tells them: "You need to be in the classroom before I am. I will start to make my way to the classroom as soon as the bell rings." This, she says, gives the students plenty of warning.

You can also make it clear at the beginning of a course how important it is to you that students arrive on time. Mike Griffin talks about his [experience on his blog](#) with a group of teacher trainees who were regularly late, and how he found success in encouraging the trainees to attend on time by talking to them about it one day.

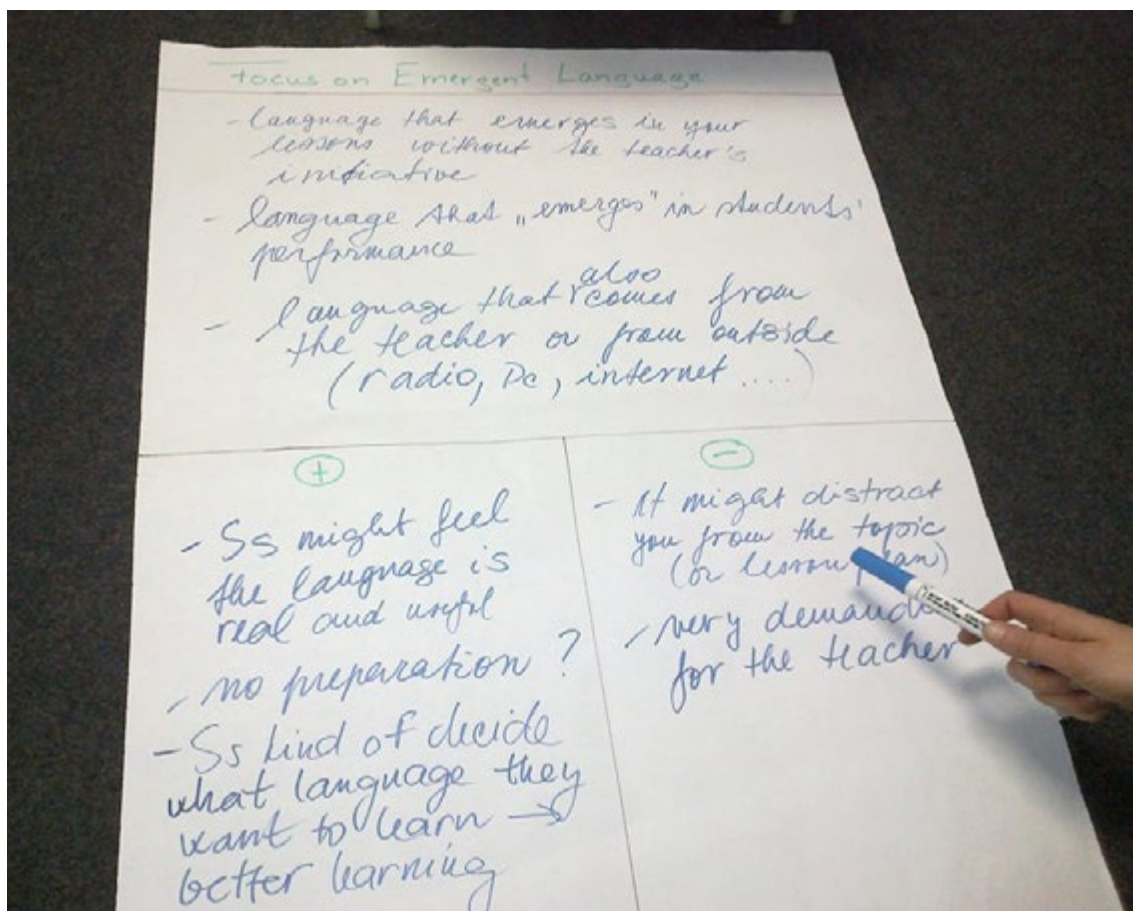
Learning contracts are another tool that the EFL teacher can make use of. There's a lot that has been

written about learning contracts, and if you get your learners to help draw up the contract at the beginning of a course/semester, then they will ultimately be responsible for the content. It's also a good opportunity, through discussions, to find out students' opinions about being late.

Keep a record

Keep a record of how often students come late, or how many minutes late they are to class. With the information, you can make a visual representation of students' attendance. Then you can sit down with students and show them how often/much they are late visually. They might be surprised when looking at the whole picture. If it is a student who persistently comes late, perhaps they don't see the individual impact that it's having each time. 5 minutes here, 10 minutes there doesn't seem like much at the time, but over the course of 6 months it will add up.

If you record how many minutes late a student comes to class, you can total up the amount, which might have a bigger impact. Let's say a student has one class a week, and they are on average 5 minutes late for every class. If your classes are an hour long, that's more than two whole classes your student has missed just from not turning up on time.



Personalization

Sometimes it is best to sit down with students on a 1-to-1 basis. If you really want to get to the bottom of the problem with a particular student, find out what's causing the problem. They might have a genuine reason for being late that they don't want to share with other members of the class. If you keep a record of students' attendance, you can try to find a way to relate the problem to the individual student in a way that connects with them. If they're paying for a course, for example, you can show them how much money they've wasted. Or perhaps they really are eager to learn, but don't see the impact that their lateness is having on their development, so you can try to point out the learning opportunities that they have missed during

their absence. Being late doesn't necessarily mean that the student is a 'bad learner'. People think differently, so find which angle to approach the problem from for the individual.

Personalizing discussions with students, either on a 1-to-1 basis, or as a group, shows that you care and take their learning seriously. It can help students feel that there is someone who cares about their learning process. Many of the teachers I have spoken to believe that it takes time though. You can't expect a persistent latecomer to suddenly start coming to class on time after one meeting. So aim to check in regularly with students, and show that you are interested in their learning throughout a course.

One teacher told me how he handled the issue with his students in the US. While they didn't all start to come on time, over the year, they began to turn up less and less late, and miss fewer classes, which he took away as a success considering the difficult circumstances he had to teach in.

Find opportunities

While it's not ideal to have someone enter the class late, especially if the other students are mid-activity, it can provide an opportunity for other students. I usually like to ask the latecomer to join an existing group, typically one with stronger students. This gives those students who have come on time the chance to explain the activity. It also gives you, the teacher, a chance to listen in and see how

well the students have understood your instructions. You might even be surprised to find that they can explain an activity in a way that you hadn't thought of. On more than one occasion I've heard one student explain something to another and thought 'wow' that was great, only to find myself using it in my next lesson.

The issue of tardiness can also provide opportunities for students to practice apologising and making excuses. One of the only phrases that I can remember from my school French lessons is *Désolé, je suis en retard*. It was the first thing that my French teacher taught us, and she wouldn't let a latecomer enter the class until they had said it. You could even devote a whole class (or at least part of one) to making excuses. One teacher suggested to me brainstorming a list of lame excuses for being late on the board and having the students discuss them, asking "How do they feel to you?" This, she believes, can help students to be more honest and avoid hiding problems.

Another idea for a class activity/discussion is to have students talk about being late in different situations, such as meeting a friend for coffee, going to the movies, attending a business meeting. For some people, being late might not be such a big problem in their lives, and they may not realise the impact it has on others.

Don't give in

Some teachers I've spoken to in the past have told me that their students continually arrive late, and that they've resorted to spending the first 10-15 minutes of the class doing fillers or 'meaningless' activities until

the majority of students have filtered in. While this may seem like a good idea at first, it might end up backfiring. If the students don't see the start of the class as being beneficial to them, you may find that they continue to come late, or worse get even later. Instead, make sure that start of the class is useful, and something that the students don't want to miss.

In a 2011 article for English Teaching Professional (£), Chris Roland describes a technique that he uses at the start of class. He primes his students with a pep talk that includes the lesson's key TL and explains any difficult vocabulary that will appear in the class later on. Roland describes how by doing this, activities go more smoothly later on because some of the key expressions are already fresh in the students' minds. While at first your students might not know what you are doing, building this routine into classes will help to make the start more meaningful.

Conclusion

Through my discussions with other teachers, there were a number of ideas that kept coming up:

- Being late is not culture-bound. It's a human trait. The fact is that *some* people are always on time, and others are regularly late. Not just for English classes, but also in their day-to-day activities.
- It's important to minimize the impact on the students who do arrive on time.
- There are things that teachers can do, but dealing with the

issue takes time. If it's a problem now, it's not going to be fixed overnight. It's a gradual process, much like the learning process. If students still continue to come late, don't get frustrated, adapt.

Questions

1. What do you do when a student comes late?
2. How big a problem is tardiness where you work?
3. What opportunities can be created when students join a class late?
4. Is it better to have a student join late or not join at all?
5. How do you try to make the beginning of your class meaningful?

About David:



David Harbinson has been an English language teacher in Daegu, South Korea, since 2007. He is currently a freelance teacher working mainly for a private language academy for adults. He can be found on Twitter (@DavidHarbinson) and his blog is davidharbinson.com.

Board Member Profile

It is time to meet another member of the BELTA Board: Mieke Kenis, BELTA Co-President and Finance Officer! Mieke is one of the three founding members of BELTA.

Vicky: Thanks so much for this interview, Mieke!

Mieke: My pleasure, Vicky!

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

Mieke: I have been teaching English since 1980. For the last 30 years I have worked at the Business Department of Thomas More, a university college in Flanders. I teach Business English to young adults who are studying for their Bachelor's Degree in Business Management or Office Management. Apart from teaching, we are involved in projects and we coach students during their work placement. We help them with their portfolios and their final work.

I was also the international coordinator of our department for 9 years, but now my "international" work is limited to teaching one group of international students and accompanying my students on their London trip. Our school is currently the only Belgian examinations centre for the LCCI examinations and I'm responsible for organising the exams.

In my spare time, I like spending time online and interacting with the international community of teachers I have discovered there.



Mieke during her presentation at the BELTA Day in 2013

I have very many interests, and I still don't take the internet and all that is available there for granted. It's so reassuring to know that I will never ever get bored as long as there is wifi. Other things I like are: making too much noise in our local with my colleagues on Fridays, watching TV series that make me laugh and cry, crossing the Channel to visit cathedrals and historical stately homes where they do a great afternoon tea, attending ELT conferences and of course: doing the BELTA bookkeeping!

Vicky: And now some things about your work. How did you become involved in the field of education?

Mieke: It seems like from day one in nursery school I wanted to become a teacher. I admit I never really seriously considered any other job. I loved languages at secondary school (three foreign languages on the curriculum) and when I was about 16, I had decided I was going to study Dutch and English at Leuven University. In those days, the majority of the "Masters in Germanic Languages" went into teaching. After five years in a secondary school, where I taught mainly drama and some Dutch and English, I was offered a job in my current school. I am lucky and privileged to be able to work with motivated young adults in the best circumstances and with a lot of freedom as to the contents and the

Board Member Profile



Mieke with Guido and James at the first ever BELTA meeting

methodology of our classes.

In recent years, I have discovered the international community of ELT teachers via social media. I have learnt that many of them travel the world, change jobs regularly, work mainly in private schools, teach students with different L1s and sometimes find it hard to make a living of it. It is very interesting to see that although many aspects of our job are of course very similar wherever we teach in the world, the circumstances can be really different.

In Belgium, many teachers spend their whole working lives in the same state school, where all students speak our own mother tongue. They are rather well-paid as civil servants and have state pensions. The discrimination that teachers who are non-native speakers of English encounter in so many places in the world is non-existent in Belgian state schools. On the contrary: almost all English teachers in Belgian secondary schools are non-native speakers of English. They are Flemish or Walloon teachers,

whose mother tongue is Dutch or French respectively, who studied English at a Belgian university (college). It is not easy for foreign nationals, native speakers of English, to get a position in our state schools. I might write an article about this in the next Bulletin!

Another example is the frustration so many teachers in the world feel because they have to teach to the test. Again, in Belgium this is not the case. We have no standardized exams like the GCSEs in England or the baccalauréat in France, nor do pupils take e.g. IELTS, or TOEIC or Cambridge exams in our state schools. Each Belgian school can make and set its own tests. We are well aware of the positive but also of the negative consequences of this practice.

Vicky: What interesting things we have just learned about teaching in Belgium! Thank you for this, Mieke and we would love to have you again in the next Bulletin. Let's move on to the birth of BELTA: It was three of you – James Taylor, 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?

Mieke: As James wrote in the previous issue of the BELTA Bulletin,

Mieke Kenis (Co-President)

tin, it began with some banter on Twitter. He was surprised there was no English teachers association in Belgium so he asked jokingly why we did not set up one ourselves. I remember applying for the position of tea lady at TESOL Belgium! Afterwards the three of us met up to discuss it seriously, and from then on it all started: the name, the logo, the website, the statutes, the board, the first members and so on... It has been a very exciting journey ever since the moment I became involved.

Running a teachers' organisation is teamwork of course, and we have a great team, but James Taylor was and still is the driving force behind BELTA.

Vicky: Why is it a good idea for someone to become a member of BELTA?

Mieke: BELTA is an association for teachers with very different backgrounds, who work in different contexts but who all share the same enthusiasm and passion for teaching and for English. There are the obvious member benefits like the newsletter, the webinar recordings and the BELTA Bulletin of course, but more importantly our members feel they belong to a community of fellow professionals. The small world of their own school opens up, they can learn from and with each other and become involved in the

way they like: by attending our events, being a volunteer, writing for our blog or the Bulletin or presenting at the BELTA Day. It is the members who make BELTA what it is, their involvement and input are the core of the organisation.

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

Mieke: We are still young, so the first priority remains to get better known all over Belgium. We would love to get more members so that we can organise more activities both nationally and locally, where members can actually meet each other and become more involved.

And of course I dream of a two-day BELTA conference in the future with some great evening event ;-)

Vicky: I truly hope so too and that would be great! As a conclusion to this interview, what advice would you give educators about their careers in general?

Mieke: As teachers and educators we work with (young) people, who spend a lot of their time with us and who deserve the best we can do for them and their future.

My best advice is: open up your world and connect with other educators, in your own country and all over the world. You will learn so much, find inspiration,

motivation and support and you will realize we have one of the most rewarding jobs.

If you don't know where to start: join a teachers' organisation!

About Mieke:



Our co-president **Mieke Kenis** has been an English teacher for over 30 years. Year after year her enthusiasm and passion for English win over her university college students. Mieke's insatiable appetite for information led her to discover Twitter and the global world of ELT and she has been an addict ever since. As well as being one of BELTA's founding members, she is also our Finance Officer, and is a moderator for the #eltpics resource for teachers. Mieke has a Masters of Germanic Languages from the University of Leuven.

Spicing Up Your Lessons Part 1 - Focusing on Reading and Writing!

Maria Theologidou

Variety is the spice of life. Although it may sound cliché, it couldn't be closer to the truth, especially when we consider our classrooms and the teaching methods we use. We are all aware of the benefits of breaking the class routine - an environment where students are exposed to various materials helps them express their creativity and individuality. Since job demands have become greater, the inevitable question always pops up - do I have the time to change or can I always change what I teach? I believe that variety should be seen as a twist, not a transformation. By simply differentiating our approach to the way we present skills, we can excite our students' imagination and inspire motivation. What you will find below are simple activities all of us can use to add an alternative touch to the more traditional methods we might be using in our classrooms.

Reading

The key to making students develop an interest in what they read is to involve them in the process - personalization and improvisation do wonders!

1. **Twist it - Fix it - Trade it:** Take colored paper and create 3 sets of "Twist it - Fix it - Trade it" cards. Every time your students complain about not enjoying the text you're working on, tell them to take one of



the 3 cards. The 3 cards stand for the following: **Twist it!**: Change the ending of the story, **Fix it!**: Make the story more interesting, **Trade it!**: Choose another story from the book or bring your own story to class next time. Preferably, you can also have your own stock of stories and ask students to choose from them.

2. **Narrator of the Day:** One of the simplest things to do - especially with long texts - is to have students be the narrators of the day. An extension of this idea could be to ask students to record the text on their mobile phones, so that the whole class can listen to their class-mate-narrator reading the text instead of the book audio.

3. The Untold Story: There are always untold details in the stories we read. Ask students to imagine what the story would be, by seeing it from the perspective of different characters.

4. Story in Parts: Asking students to rearrange the story is an old, yet great, activity! Apart from cutting the story in strips of paper, you can photocopy the text and cut it into the shape of puzzle pieces. Or even better write the text on post-it notes and stick them on the class walls!

5. Exam Classes Fun: In case you're working with scientific texts, cut parts of the text or write key words in strips of paper and ask your class to predict what the text is about. Another strategy I often follow is to put students into the examiners' shoes and ask them to create their own exam material. Finally, if you have students struggling with multiple-choice tasks, you can have a classic class auction where students will place bids on the correct answer.

Writing

1. What if ... - mobile picture prompts: Visual prompts are always a great source of inspiration, but instead of bringing

your own, ask your students to take pictures with their mobile phones and bring them in class. Then, they can exchange pictures and write what they would do in the place/environment/situation where the photo was taken.

2. Dress it up!: Many times it's not that students are unwilling to write, it's that the tasks themselves can be predictable. If you have to deal with tasks your students have been exposed to in the past, „dress them up“, as I say. That is keep the task, but change the people/places etc involved. Why have John write an email to Mary when you can have Batman write an email to Robin?

3. Rewriting stories/fairy tales: There have been many great writers that have rewritten fairy tales, like Angela Carter, so why not try it with your class, too? Apart from practicing their reading skills, students also have the chance to add their own touches to the story and act them out in class, too.

4. Words/Story prompts in the bag - It's as simple as it sounds! Students choose words/prompts from the bag and spend 5 minutes writing a short text with all of them.

5. Writing Mission - If your students are really reluctant to write, you can organize writing missions. You only need a notification board and some envelopes. Tell them that every week/month etc. there will be missions waiting for them in their envelopes. Then, at the end of the school year you can create a class book filled with students' articles, stories, comic strips and so on.

About Maria:



Maria Theologidou has been working as an EFL teacher and translator since 2004. She graduated from Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in 2005 and also holds an MA in Audiovisual Translation from the University of Surrey. She's interested in promoting creativity and fostering critical thinking in the classroom and has presented workshops in TESOL seminars in Thessaloniki and Athens, Greece.

Digital Storytelling

Dinçer Demir

A Historical Route Towards Storytelling

The profession of teaching English to the speakers of other languages (ESOL) does not date back to very old times when it is compared with language teaching. Although the need to learn foreign languages is almost as old as human history itself, the origins of modern language education are in the study and teaching of Latin in the 17th century (Language education, 2012).

With the Grammar Translation Method, which is one of the ancestors of modern language teaching methods, the adventure started professionally for language teachers and learners. After the Grammar Translation Method, new language teaching methods, approaches and techniques were born, and this development hasn't come to an end yet.

From the first to the latest ones, language teaching methods have gradually increased their focus on communication, rather than pure grammatical elements. This means that the interest in accuracy is giving priority to fluency. In spite of the fact that having accurate language knowledge is still an important goal, it is obvious to see that language learners' needs and interests also play an essential role for language scientists while developing new methods. In other words, the stress on communicative skills in language teaching

methods has increased.

Today's communicative methods actually have a relationship in terms of communication reasons with the first communication attempts, because they were based on telling what they experienced like a story. This is the link. They used to use storytelling as an ancient means of communication. That reality shows that storytelling has been used since the first communication occurred.

The Necessity of Storytelling and Reasons Why It Is Being Used for Language Teaching

As Robert E. Jones (2012) has remarked that "the human need to communicate personal experiences makes storytelling a natural way to design lessons that help students develop their English language skills." This point of view deals with a crucial requirement that teachers of the language may find themselves in, because one of the most encountered issues in language classes is to create an engaging and challenging environment for learners. To be able to increase learners' motivation and engagement to participate in the learning process, teachers try to implement various kinds of teaching activities. Some of them work as they are expected; however, some of them do not work because of the fact that they do not address students' needs and interests. That is the point why storytelling is commonly used

in language teaching process. It also provides effective solutions for applying activities supporting learners' productive skills which are speaking and writing. The reason for difficulty with activating their productive skills is that learners sometimes cannot find themselves in natural communication that draws their attention.

There's room and need for much deeper engagement forms of authentic interaction with stories, which will help them internalize language in an unconscious and effortless manner (Osvath, 2012). This necessity of authentic interaction can be fulfilled by storytelling, because it has many advantages for both language skills and social attitudes. Mariana Andone (2012) lists some reasons why storytelling is essential.

- Storytelling aids in the development of children's ability to interpret and understand events beyond their immediate experience. Children's perception changes as they 'make it real' and identify with the story on a personal level.
- Storytelling is a medium of shared experiences. This helps children to empathize with the characters, to feel elated at another's joy, sad for their misfortunes. It is a tool for social and interpersonal development.
- Storytelling aids language development. Children need to be exposed to language to ful-

ly understand its implications. This will also have a beneficial effect on reading skills and being able to associate meanings and emotions with words.

- Storytelling helps with listening and speaking skills. Children will learn the importance of listening, of how to communicate ideas and interact with others. They will develop their vocabulary and learn when and where to use words and phrases.
- Storytelling stretches the imagination. It encourages children to escape into a fantasy world, and supports their daydreams, which has positive benefits on mental health and clarity leaving them better able to cope with day-to-day situations (fairy tales are ideally suited for this purpose).
- Storytelling entertains and excites, which is an important part of learning. If children are having fun they are involved, and motivated to learn more. You can almost see them anticipating what comes next and discovering the real meaning of the tale.
- Storytelling helps children appreciate different cultures, in addition to helping them examine and value their own personal heritage.
- Storytelling is the natural way to introduce children to the wonderful world of books and reading. The next stage is for the class to create their own stories and learn how to com-



municate their ideas individually and in groups.

Why Digital Storytelling

The University of Houston (2013) defines it as follows: "Digital Storytelling is the practice of using computer-based tools to tell stories. As with traditional storytelling, most digital stories focus on a specific topic and contain a particular point of view. However, as the name implies, digital stories usually contain some mixture of computer-based images, text, recorded audio narration, video clips and/or music." This transition from traditional storytelling to digital provides educational benefits in the way students enjoy and make most of learning. There is no doubt that today's children are very interested in technology. When their interest and teachers' educational goals are brought together in this digital era, it becomes very easy to see much more motivated and participative students in the classrooms. Because of the fact that storytelling

offers opportunities to be an active member of learning process, digital storytelling has additional and influential benefits. They are listed below:

- It draws students' attention since it is directly related to students' interests.
- The digital world is everywhere. Everybody can profit from it everywhere. That means it gives students the feeling of real freedom.
- Digital features target different learning styles, so they facilitate learning.
- It reaches shy and reserved students, because these students can find an appropriate way to tell something in the digital world.
- It supports awareness of group work and community.
- Students' computer skills, which are vital today, will develop in the future

- With the various tools of digital world, students improve their imagination and creativity.

It can be found out that digital storytelling has changed traditional storytelling and it has opened a new and great gate for language learners and teachers. I think that one of the most important advantages of digital storytelling is that every kind of student finds an opportunity to appear on the stage of learning. Because of the fact that digital storytelling tools address and include different learning styles, each student is able to notice something in the task as a listener or a storyteller as it is also stated that each individual is different, so every student approaches the learning environment in a different way. (Alharbi, Paul, Henskens & Hannaford, 2011). The main result of all these advantages is that it provides multisensory learning including auditory, visual and kinesthetic stimuli.

How to Implement Digital Storytelling

Digital storytelling is such a powerful way of language learning that it can be the expression of a student who has been waiting to express themselves for a long time. Even that waiting process can be the starting point of the story. As it is mentioned, everybody has a story and these stories are good inspirations for language learners to talk. Digital storytelling renders a great deal of opportunities as long as it is used efficiently.

Storyboarding is a great tool to

start a project for storytelling. Storyboards are visual representations that aid in the creation process of digital storytelling. Storyboards lay out images in sequential order to create the flow of the production (University of Houston, 2011). I would like to present the flow of the digital storytelling production in five steps.

Step one:

In order to be able to start a digital storytelling adventure, the student needs a story to tell. Although each person has many stories in their lives, it might not be easy to find one among those stories. At that point, the teacher may coach and guide the student with some on point questions. These questions can help the student to form and evaluate the story; they are also going to let the student brainstorm about the adventure before starting the journey. The questions for the story-mapping may cover *where, when, how, who and why* questions.

Step two:

After making a decision on what story is going to be told, the step is to plan storytelling. A storyboard guides and helps the student to organize the progress. It also gives the teacher a chance to follow the steps and give feedback during preparation step. At this stage, the student collects images, researches to enrich the presentation, sequences the story and finds audio files.

Step three

The student is ready to create a concrete production. They have the idea of story, outline of it, visual and auditory aids. According to the sequence of story, the student starts creating a script which is a considered text – a piece of writing, often based on a scene, which is deeply reflective (Lanir, 2012). When all of these elements are prepared, the student gives the first start on storyboarding as a draft. Before beginning the real project, drafting prevents the students from wasting his effort and time. At the step of constituting a storyboard, the student puts the events in order, chooses suitable visual aids and plans where to add audio files to enrich his presentation.

Step Four:

Student comes to an end with the draft of presentation including script, audio and visual aids. The teacher as facilitator should guide the students and give feedback before the student transfers his story in digital platform. On the other hand, the student may need technical support in addition to language support. To be able to fulfil this student's need, they may work in collaboration with ICT teachers. When the student is well-equipped with language and the technological background, they start to create their presentation. During this process, the student may benefit from smart phones, flip cameras, and voice recorders to enhance the presentation. The students need to focus on how to use the tech tools not

only to learn in a more entertaining way, but also to stay focused on the learning objectives as well. The concentration must be on effectiveness of the story and the student should know that digital tools are a good back up to show the real worth of the story.

When the presentation is ready to be published and presented, the student should rehearse it. This will give them one more chance to check the product for the last time.

Step Five:

Finally, the product is published or presented and it is high time to celebrate the result. The student must experience the feeling of achievement. Digital storytelling provides this opportunity and I think that is why digital storytelling has its place in the language teaching world.

Conclusion

Although storytelling derives from the first attempts of communication in the ancient history, it keeps its freshness again with the alignment of digital powers. What makes storytelling so instrumental is not that it merely makes the learning process much more participative and fun, but it also motivates even shy students due to their interest in technology. In addition to these, especially while learning a new language, students find the learning action artificial. According to the fact that everybody has a story to tell, digital storytelling which benefits from all opportunities of technology is

a great solution that copes with these circumstances and turns the process into real-life situation.

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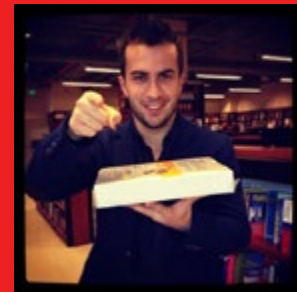
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About Dinçer:



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 place in some NGO work voluntarily by running, creating awareness and giving trainings for their volunteers. And, his motto is "If you believe in change, you can change".

Phonemic Awareness - its importance and how we go about it

Elena Xidopoulou

The very important issue of Learning Difficulties is present nowadays and - thankfully - we are capable of recognizing it. Furthermore, there are plenty of resources and good bibliography to help us teach students effectively, meaning the way they can understand and process information.

Whoever is diagnosed with any kind of LD is unable to learn the same way as average students and the way most students are taught in mainstream classes. As English teachers, in our (mainstream) classes we may teach students who are diagnosed with dyslexia, ADHD or even autism. As a result, the need for a differentiated approach to teaching is more than urgent!

Let's move on to what the common characteristics of dyslexia are. The list is not exhaustive though, and further down I will give you the most common characteristics of students.

Children diagnosed with dyslexia at school age have multiple and profound difficulties. Remember that we may not be able to determine if a child has dyslexia but we usually detect early signs that suggest further assessment by a team of professionals.

Some of these signs are:

- A student appears intelligent and articulate but still he/she is unable to read, write, or spell. This is diagnosed when the child goes to the first grade of primary school (usually after 3-4 months in the first grade).
- Most probably, students may appear "lazy", "careless", "immature" and teachers may label them this way. Some other times they can be the "class clowns", troublemakers or too quiet.
- Dyslexic students have poor self-esteem, hide or cover up weaknesses and get easily frustrated and emotional about reading or testing. That is why they sometimes seem to "zone out" or daydream, get lost easily or lose track of testing time.
- They learn best through hands-on experience, experimentation, observation, play and visual aids.
- They confuse letters, numbers, words, sequences.
- Their reading or writing shows repetitions, additions, transpositions, omissions, substitutions and reversals in letters, numbers and/or words. (I have been greatly helped by the use of [Elkonin boxes](#))
- They read and reread with little or even no comprehension. When reading aloud, they have a slow pace and often ignore punctuation.
- They have trouble with writing or copying.
- Their pencil grip is unusual; their handwriting varies or is illegible at times. This may, as well, be a sign of dyspraxia.
- They often have directionality confusion and can confuse right and left, up and down or even first and last, before and after.
- They have difficulty telling time, managing it, learning sequenced information or tasks, or being on time (especially during the official tests).
- When talking or writing they may use the wrong word or a similar word. Dyslexic students may know what they want to say but have trouble finding the actual words to express their thoughts.
- They have poor memory skills and complete assigned work more slowly than expected. At times they cannot even complete it.

- They have difficulty separating sounds in words and blending sounds to make words.
- The way they organize written information seems rather unusual.

Very often we encounter students with LDs who have been taught the language for some years, yet they cannot even read words correctly. This is the time when we begin thinking that something went wrong during their Phonemic Awareness instruction. And now, a question of major importance; Do we really spend enough time on Phonemic Awareness instruction or we just assume that our students will automatically make their own associations? For example, the student has seen and heard the word "play" lots of times. What will happen when it comes to reading the words "say", "pray", "delay"? Will they read them correctly?

What do we think or do when we realize that our instruction is poor or even nonexistent?

According to numerous studies, conducted in England and the States, the key to learning a language successfully is Phonemic Awareness. Unfortunately, none of the books available in the Greek market, systematically teach digraphs, blends, how we segment words, isolate, identify, categorize, delete phonemes, how we substitute sounds and so on. This is a major gap we are obliged to bridge and something that I have sworn to bridge in order

to help other teachers as well or through my teaching to help my SEN students.

Below, there are samples of exercises that can be given either as exercises throughout our lessons or as a kind of informal assessment. All these exercises are contained in my book, entitled "My jolly phonics, book 1" ISBN 978-618-80596-0-3.

Phoneme Isolation Exercise

Instruction: Does the /l/ sound come at the beginning, middle, or end of the word /lemon/? Beginning ☐ Middle ☐ End ☐

(This exercise can be given orally or in written form if there is great difficulty.)

1. Does the /c/ sound come at the beginning, middle, or end of the word /cat/? Beginning ☐ Middle ☐ End ☐
2. Does the /r/ sound come at the beginning, middle, or end of the word /jar/? Beginning ☐

Middle ☐ End ☐

3. Does the /a/ sound come at the beginning, middle, or end of the word /hat/? Beginning ☐ Middle ☐ End ☐
4. Does the /n/ sound come at the beginning, middle, or end of the word /fan/? Beginning ☐ Middle ☐ End ☐

Phoneme Identification Exercise

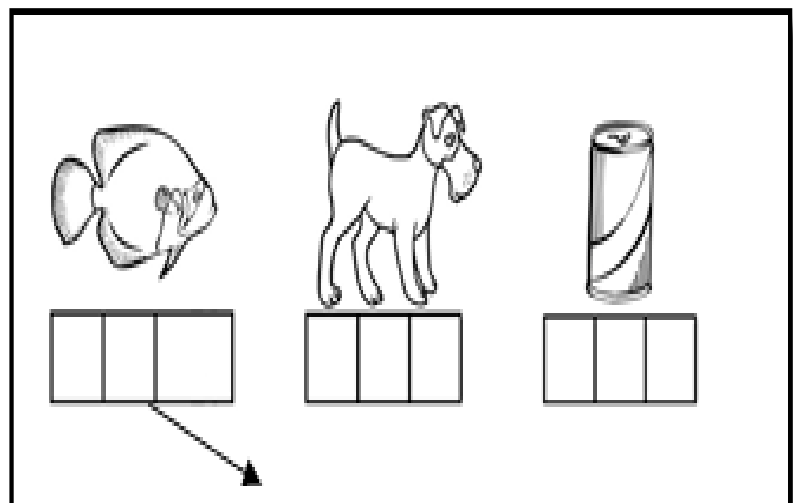
Instruction: We pronounce the words, students listen to them carefully and then they write the sounds/ phonemes in the boxes provided below.

See picture below.

These boxes are called Elkonin Boxes.

Variation of this exercise

Instruction: What sound is the same in the words "cap", "car" and "cat"



Phoneme Categorization Exercise

Instruction: I will pronounce some words and you must tell me the word that doesn't belong in the specific group of words.

Sat	pan	Sad
Small	tall	Sell
Cap	mad	Man
Bug	pin	Pan
Book	cook	Zoo





Phoneme Blending Exercise

Put the number 1 in the box with the picture that has the sounds ... /l/, /e/, /m/, /o/, /n/

Put the number 3 in the box with the picture that has the sounds... /c/, /a/, /t/

Put the number 4 in the box with the picture that has the sounds... /d/, /o/, /g/

Put the number 5 in the box with the picture that has the sounds... /n/, /e/, /s/, /t/

CORRESPONDING PICTURE	CORRESPONDING PICTURE
 _____	 _____
 _____	 _____

And now, what happens if a child is ready to read, write, faces learning difficulties and also has severe memory deficits? Let me show you some methods that have helped me throughout my lessons.

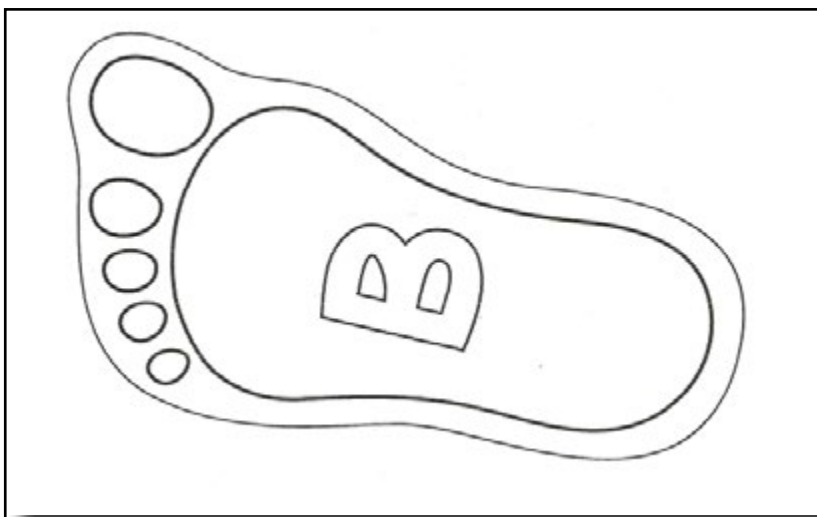
First and foremost, we should not forget that students with LDs are greatly helped by the use of pictures. By using **the picture-association technique** students are easily able to access words and “discover” their meaning. For example, look at the following pictures. Can the student infer the double meaning of the word “help” here?



Source: The above picture was designed by Sarah Major and is included in the method called [SnapWords®](#).

Additionally, have your students look at the word to be learned. Tell them they must first make an association or connection with that word. Since we know from medical research that our brains actually learn and recall through pictures and associations, it is very important that students create this connection first.

You can also have students make flashcards and highlight the difficult spots on the word. Then try to teach words by spelling patterns and teach "cake," "bake," "take," etc. in one lesson. Hang words from the ceiling during study time or post them on the board or wall as constant visual cues. If possible provide a tactile/kinesthetic aid for spelling. For example, use these flashcards and have your students step on them in order to write the words correctly.



All in all, I truly believe that students with LDs are not inferior to other students in a mainstream class. They surely need a different approach to learning things, but once they manage to overcome some of their difficulties and be shown another way of perceiving things, then they excel!

About Elena:



Elena Xidopoulou was born in 1978. She is a married mother of two and lives permanently in Athens, Greece.

She earned her MA from London Metropolitan University in 2007 and after finishing her studies in the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and the University of Macedonia (specialization in Autism) she started teaching students with LDs. She has been conducting seminars for English teachers as her primary aim was to help them face all the difficulties with their students who have got LDs.

Her overall goal is to help students learn the English language and prove that it is totally achievable when you teach with considerable knowledge and respect to the student's needs and strengths.

More Speaking With Avenue.™

In the last issue of the BELTA Bulletin, we took a look at Flipgrid™, an easy and simple tool that allows your students to practice their speaking skills at home. My students, both my teachers in training and my adults, love this tool. After a period of time, they are able to easily assess their own speaking, noticing mistakes that need attention. Recently, one of my teacher trainees has started to use Flipgrid™ with her French secondary school students: they love it!

Flipgrid™ was created by LT Media.lab, a research center at the

University of Minnesota (<http://lt.umn.edu/>); they have another tool that is just as accessible and easy to use: Avenue.™ (<https://avenue.umn.edu/info/>) [Note: the full stop is part of the name.]

Like Flipgrid™, this tool can be accessed via the web or an app. This tool also uses video that is captured and saved within a controlled environment. The major difference is the purpose of the tools: Flipgrid™ allows students to answer very specific questions; they only have about 90 seconds of recording time available. In Avenue.™, the students complete a language task; they have more

recording time and a rubric is embedded in the task.

Avenue.™ allows the instructor to create language tasks that the students can complete at home. This concept alone is critical to the world of EFL; many of us are looking for alternatives to paper-and-pencil (discrete) exams and are moving to permanent/continuous assessment. A big part of permanent/continuous assessment is the language task: authentic, real-world situations in which students receive some information and then produce something with that information.

The screenshot displays the Avenue.™ web interface. At the top, the word "Instructions" is centered, followed by five blue buttons: "View Media", "Align Camera", "Record Video", "Self Assess", and "Complete". Below this, a task titled "Language Task: Feelings" is shown. On the left, a video player displays a man with glasses and a striped shirt, with a large white pause icon overlaid. Below the video player is a red "Delete Video" button. To the right of the video player is a list of five numbered instructions in blue circles: 1. "Look at this picture. Can you name the feelings? Can you tell a story about one feeling?", 2. "You will align yourself in front of the webcam.", 3. "Name the feelings - two ways. Tell a story about you and a feeling.", 4. "How well did you do?", and 5. "Your task is complete." At the bottom, there is a "Task Name" field containing "TM.ENG.2-Feelings", followed by three buttons: "Save" (green), "Return to My Tasks" (blue), and "Help" (blue).

(See the last issue of the BELTA Bulletin for an introduction to the language task.) With Avenue.™, you can create your own language task, or you can choose an existing language task in their online database. In addition, you can use their media library or upload your media.

The only drawback I can see to the site is that it indicates that it is still a demo. You can register for a free demo account which expires after 21 days. On the other hand, I have been using my 'demo' account for almost a year now. Also, at this moment, Avenue.™ is free. I have written them about both the demo accounts and their plan for charging; if I receive a reply, we will update you in the next Bulletin.

Once you set up an account, you will go into the Dashboard. You can choose to set up your classes, upload media or create/choose a language task. Setting up a class is very easy. You give each class a name and a code; once the class is set up, you simply send a link to your students asking them to join the class. This is a lot easier than entering all of your students' names.

Now, it is time to set up a task. This, too, is very easy. From the Dashboard, you click on TASKS. In the next screen, you can choose from existing tasks or click the '+' to create your own. The text boxes in the task screen do not hold a

lot of characters, so I use the video to record the instructions for the tasks. You have up to three minutes to record your instructions. If you are not happy with the result, delete it and try again. There is no limit to how many times you can re-record. In the next screen, 'View Media', you can upload the media; you can upload videos or pictures. In the 'Align Camera' view, the students are shown how to sit in front of their web camera for optimal recording. Once, they have viewed the media and aligned their camera, they can record their video. You can give up to 95 seconds to record the video; you can also decide how many 'rerecording tries' they can get. I usually put in five.

Once the students have recorded their video, they can assess their performance. You can add up to four criteria, which use a sliding scale you can adjust. My students are given a general rubric that uses a sliding scale of 5. They can view their video and rate themselves at the same time. Once the students complete all parts of the task, they save it so you can go into the environment and review it.

After you have created and saved the task, you can assign it to one of your classes. Any students who are enrolled in the class using the link you gave will receive an email indicating that a task is now available and ready to be completed.

Although both Avenue.™ and

Flipgrid™ limited the speaking/recording time, both tools are worth your time and your students' time. Both tools have an easy-to-use interface and an uncomplicated management side for teachers. Both are worth exploring!

I only wish that the LT Media.lab would design a tool that allows two students to have a conversation while recording it with a webcam. Who knows – maybe that is in the pipeline!

In the next issue of the BELTA Bulletin, we explore some great formative assessment tools.

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 Events Officer for BELTA.

Editing the Editor

Phil Wade

Every writer probably knows the feeling. The dread of seeing that email from your editor pop up with the attachment icon resting next to it, along with the 're: Comments' subject. It is your first/second/twentieth draft and all those comments/track changes are all there waiting for you. Comment about comment about change after change. The second editor commenting on the first editor and then the series editor and various other people chipping in until an all-out 'editing war' erupts.

The editor and writer relationship is what makes a project work. The better you work together, the more successful the end product and the more enjoyable the process. Great editors are helpful, supportive, knowledgeable, flexible and never seem to sleep. As a result, you'll do anything for them. 6th draft? For you, no problem. Another 500 words? No sweat. Record my own listening examples? Sure.

In contrast, other editors can be quite direct, leaving comments like 'What the heck?' in margins and bubbles, deleting your hard work and generally turning it inside out. When you've slogged away for weeks or months on a project, hardly slept, not been out of the house, rarely showered (err) and given it your best, it can be hard to go through negative comments, corrections and rewrites and especially, not to take them

personally. After all, the work is your baby, your creative masterpiece. It sometimes feels a bit like a little kid spending all day at school making a castle out of toilet rolls, coming home, and being given an awakening review by an honest parent.

With this in mind, I have collated a list of some quite direct editor comments I have received, read and heard of from other writers over the years. These are from book, digital and journal projects. Next to each is a basic translation and then a more polite version which I think would be more motivating for most writers.

See table on the following page.

Replying to comments

Perhaps my favourite was a comment on a recording I did. The editor wrote something like "this sounds like Dracula talking from inside his coffin". I was very tempted to say it was :). Now that also raises the issue of how we reply. For me, writing is very creative and personal, negative comments are hard as we put so much work into writing. Perhaps some editors see their job as just that, a job. They are all about quality control and have the feet firmly on the ground. Obviously, this creates some conflict. They may be managing 6 projects all at once, dealing with deadlines, writers, artists and all



Editor comments	Translation	Polite versions
????	What?	Sorry, I'm not sure what this is.
No! No! No!	This is wrong!	It's not quite what I asked for/You might want to check this again.
This is just plain wrong!!!	You made a mistake.	Could you check this again, please?
Are you a native speaker?	There are grammar errors.	Did you spell/grammar check?
This is not the style the writers want.	They don't like it/you. The writers would prefer you to write in their style.	Look at their work and copy the style.
This 1000 word text isn't working out. Do another!	Bin it! Start again!	This isn't working. Could you do another?
I know I said to write anything but this isn't what I want.	I don't like it.	Do you have anything else?

the daily grind of getting things done. While we writers have our heads in the clouds and are happy to spend time perfecting and being creative, their job is to keep us on track.

Can you add any other comments to this list?

How about editors, what kind of comments do you send writers? Which kinds are the most effective?

Links

Find out what R.R. Martin thinks of editors: <http://www.georgermartin.com/about-george/speeches/editors-the-writers-natural-enemy/>

Reasons freelancers dislike editors: <http://diaryofamadfreelancer.com/five-reasons-writers-hate-editors-and-one-reason-it-doesn%E2%80%99t-matter/>

Learn to love your editor by reading this: <http://editmore.com/top-10-ways-to-make-your-editor-love-you/>

About Phil:



Phil Wade teaches Business English to executives and academic courses to university students. He uses technology to enhance his classes and maximise learning both in the classroom and outside it.

Learning Cooperatively

Marjorie Rosenberg

Cooperative learning is a technique which is based on ideas by the educators John Dewey, Kurt Levin and Morton Deutsch in the 1930s and 40s. In 1994, David and Roger Johnson and Edythe Holubec published 'Cooperative Learning in the Classroom' (1994 Johnson, Johnson & Holubec) which set out the fundamental principles of the method as well as instructions for teachers to follow. This approach was developed in order to address certain problems which many teachers were facing. Growing diversity in classrooms was making it more difficult for teachers to find commonality among learners, as mixed levels and a variety of mother tongues were presenting new challenges to frontal instruction. However, traditional group work often led to one or two learners working while the others (the so-called 'hitch-hikers') would sit back and let their colleagues do the work.

The basis for cooperative learning is to set up the classroom so that learners are positively interdependent on each other. Cooperative activities are 'structured group work' within a framework, enabling learners to take an active part by setting parameters and often assigning specific roles. It is also an excellent combination of cognitive and social skills. The teacher is responsible for giving out the instructions, setting up the groups and the task and helping when help is needed. However, the bulk of the work is actually

done by the learners who have to help each other to complete the tasks that are set for them.

There has been concern that high and low-achievers will have difficulties working together. In fact, cooperative learning helps the low-achievers by reducing the stress of frontal instruction and giving them more individual help, and high-achievers can solidify knowledge by explaining concepts to classmates and learn to take on leadership or mentoring roles. In addition, the skills learned in cooperative learning activities are exactly those sought by employers who stress team work and soft skills when looking for new employees.

There are certain factors necessary for cooperative learning activities. The learners must sit close enough together to collaborate. Each of the learners has to have a sense of individual responsibility and understand that his or her contribution is important to the team. Groups should be heterogeneous as much as possible and feedback should be discussed within the group and by the teacher. An essential element is good planning to make sure the activity runs smoothly.

In addition, there is a set of rules to follow which will help to ensure success.

- Learners should stay in their own groups.
- Everyone should speak quietly.

- Ideas and information should be exchanged and other people's ideas should be carefully listened to.
- Group members should help each other.
- The teacher only helps when the group is unable to continue.
- Everyone should stop working when the teacher gives a signal to stop.

These are mistakes to avoid:

- Making groups too large – between 4 and 6 learners is an ideal size.
- Giving unclear instructions – it is important to find out what needs to be done before beginning a task.
- Creating groups that are too homogeneous – members should have different abilities and skills.
- Not setting the right amount of time – too little or too much time can be problematic for successful completion.
- Having group members sitting too far away from each other – the groups need to sit close enough to hear each other speak at a normal volume.
- Ignoring the groups – groups need to be monitored to make sure that they are not having any problems.
- Ignoring social skills – make sure that not only cognitive

aims are considered.

- Focusing on the negative – make sure that feedback includes positive aspects of group work.
- Not using group work very often – the more this is used, the better use learners can make of it.

Some examples of cooperative learning activities:

Home-expert groups

Put students into a group of three or four and give each group a different text to read. Ask them to read the text and either write a summary, or answer specific questions which are handed out with the text. Then form new groups, making sure that each group has at least one person who has read the original text. The so-called 'expert' in each group tells the others about the text they read. Then the teacher can ask questions of the class, and appoint one of the oth-

er people in the group to answer it. The group discusses the answer with help from the expert and then answers the question. The teacher does not say if the answer is right or wrong but instead asks the other 'experts' in the class.

Cooperative crossword puzzle

Create a crossword puzzle with terms to review. Write out four sets of clues for this puzzle ensuring that all the clues are necessary to guess the word. Make groups of four giving each student a different set of clues and tell them they have to solve the puzzle together. Each member of the group has to read his or her clue aloud and then they can guess which word needs to be filled in until they have completed the puzzle. These can also be created by learners for other learners as writing the clues is an excellent learning process as well.

References

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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 was on the Organising Committee of the first IATEFL Web Conference which took place in October 2014.



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