the be**lt**a bulletin

Observe to Learn
Priscila Mateini

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with **Aviva Dunsiger**

Including
Hana Tichá **John Arnold**
Brian Aspinall Higor Cavalcante

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the be**l**ta bulletin

Issue 7 Spring 2016

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If you would like to contribute to the journal, we would love to hear from you. You can find the guidelines for submission on our website: www.beltabelgium.com/the-belta-bulletin/

Our cover photo

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A Word From The President

Welcome to the latest edition of the BELTA Bulletin. We are thrilled that you are receiving this in your post if you are a national member or reading it online if you are an international member.

As you can tell from the name at the end of this letter, I am not James Taylor. That's right – changes are afoot here at BELTA.

As of 7 March 2016, James Taylor – one of our founding members and the president of BELTA for the last four years – has stepped down to pursue other professional endeavours. James has been a great leader – taking BELTA from an upstart teaching association to a respectable teaching association that is recognized around the world for its pursuit of quality professional development. The BELTA Board is indebted to James and all his hard work. He will continue on in a limited fashion as an advisor, working on the Bulletin and publicity materials. For that, we are truly appreciative. Remember to stop over at his blog and wish him luck!

Unfortunately, James is not the only BELTA Board Member to step down. In February, our tireless secretary – Vedrana Vojković Esta-tiev, along with her husband who felt like part of the family – returned to Zagreb, Croatia. It was Vedrana who continuously updated our Blog, assisted with the Bulletin, and kept us on-track during our meetings. She will be missed, but we know that we can always find her on social media!

So, who am I? Well, I am an American, who has lived and worked in Belgium for the last ten years. I joined BELTA at their initial kick-off almost five years ago! Some of you might know me as the Events Officer – the person hounding you for your head shot for the BELTA Day programme or your slides for a webinar. I am honoured to have been asked to step into James' shoes for the time being. I believe that BELTA is an extremely important organisation for Belgium and I hope – with the help of the BELTA Board – to see it grow even more.

One thing that has not changed is the quality of our upcoming BELTA Day Conference. This year marks our 4th Annual Conference, and like previous years, it just keeps on growing. The theme of this year's conference is 'Connected Classrooms' and our plenary speaker, Gavin Dudeney, will kick things off with his session entitled 'New Literacies, Teachers & Learners'. As one of the co-authors of Pearson's *Digital Literacies* book, we expect that Gavin's session with enlighten us all. We have 17 40-minute sessions and 5 85-minute sessions. The sessions cover a diverse range of topics: flipped classrooms, an English teacher's online toolkit, Shakespeare, practical classroom techniques, using home languages, grammar (including visual and drilling) and CLIL. Speakers will be joining us from France, Wales, Germany, Greece, Poland, Brazil, England, and – of course – Belgium!

For more information, please head over to www.beltabelgium.com/belta-day to register and to meet our speakers.

Finally, I would like to thank all the authors who contributed to this issue of the Bulletin and to Vicky, of course, for putting it all together!

If you would like to write for the Bulletin or have suggestions for me as the new president of BELTA, please drop me a line at president@beltabelgium.com.

Enjoy!

John Arnold
BELTA President

A Message From The Editor

It is the end of winter here in Europe. Winter always reminds me of Canada where I grew up – the snow, the cold and the nice things you can do inside, like reading. Reading our brand new BELTA Bulletin, for instance!

And speaking of Canada, we bring you two spectacular Canadian educators. Aviva Dunsiger shares her personal story related to Differentiated Instruction and Brian Aspinall delves into establishing 1 to 1 con-nections with the students, first of all.

This first issue of the year comes with a new column: *Thought Piece*, which will start with Higor Cavalcante and his article on non-native teachers and language development. Hana Tichá from the Czech Republic shows us great ways of going materials-light in our classes and Priscila Mateini from Brazil discusses observations as a learning experience. For our Tech Tools column, John Arnold introduces us to some new tools and the way he and his stu-dents use them. John has also written up his spectacular way of connecting Shakespeare and Alexander Hamilton in his teaching and the responses he got from his students… and their students in turn!

Enjoy this BELTA Bulletin and feel free to submit an article anytime!

Many thanks,

Vicky Loras
BELTA Bulletin Editor

Observe to Learn Priscila Mateini

I was preparing a presentation for a group of teachers when I came across the word observe. I stopped and remembered how many times I had been observed by teachers, coordinators, trainers and so on. For two years, the institution where I used to teach never sent someone to observe my classes, so I had free rein for a while. However, I used to follow the coursebook exactly the way the teacher's guide asked me to and, even worse, I had no idea that I was completely lost and alone on this road called "teaching".

At a specific moment in my presentation, I asked the teachers to close their eyes and visualize a person in a crowded classroom. In this room there were lots of people from many parts of the country, talking about their ideas and expectations. Then, I asked them to imagine an unprepared and insecure teacher. After that, they opened their eyes. This activity took three minutes at least. The three minutes were over and that's when I told them the person I asked them to visualize was myself in 2009 (feeling uncertain about being observed).

When I decided to teach, I thought it was going to be a piece of cake. Actually, many people think that. I have some "good" friends that once told me something like, "You don't work, look around, you listen to music all the time, watch TV series and party." Well, if they knew exactly how many nights I have gone to bed at 4 o'clock because of preparing "wicked awesome" lesson plans for 8 o'clock morning classes, they would reconsider that. It's not that easy!

In fact, this talk was to help them to improve themselves to learn by observing. Not observing my talk, but each other.

"There is only one way to avoid criticism: do nothing, say nothing and be nothing." Aristotle

I started asking my coordinator about observations, because I realized that something was wrong with their attitude. No one in two years had appeared in my classes. What shocked me was her awful answer, "You don't need to be observed, you are quite good and all your students like you; no one has complained about you. Actually, I can't waste my time doing this." Perhaps she thought

I should be flattered after that answer. However, I felt like a complete idiot. So to have someone observe my class, there was only one way: have a student go to the coordinator's room and complain about me. Mmm, quite interesting, don't you think!? This was not for me, and I quit my "job" then. At that time, I was doing my postgraduate degree in English Studies, and I was feeling very insecure about my "English". Actually, I was totally confused about languages. I had finished my Linguistics Studies in Barcelona, where I had to learn Spanish from the beginning. Portuguese was interfering a lot in the process. It was pretty hard but I survived! That time, when I came back to university, I really

Our cover picture by Hannah Shipman

understood what it was like walking in my students' shoes (when my adult students try to explain how they feel about learning a new language, I can really relate.) It is tough and demands all of our attention and dedication.

Thus, the time had come to quit the school. Some could say that I was in heaven, in my comfort zone, with nothing to worry about, but it was not for me – I love sharing and learning. I cannot live isolated!

Moreover, I got a place in another institution and, during my trainee period, I had to observe classes at many levels, so that I learned about the methodology and how I had to apply it in my lesson plans. Frequently, a mentor or coordinator came to my classes to observe my interaction with my students, creativity, procedures and so on. Then, we had a moment in which they gave me some feedback. It was a nice cycle of learning and sharing. No judgment, no shame! It was something very close to what I was looking for.

When I finished my story, I asked the teachers in the room to look at the board and read the definition of the verb OBSERVE.

'If you observe a person or thing, you watch them carefully, especially in order to learn something about them"

(Cobuild Advanced Learner's Dictionary)

Then, we step into our field – SEN. When we teach children with special needs, we have to be prepared to understand how they feel when someone is observing their classes. Most of them do not feel comfortable. They will avoid contact, perhaps they will leave the room or they will avoid direct questions such as: "Who are you?" "What are you doing here?" or "Teacher, who is this lady?" A good suggestion is, if you are dealing with this kind of student, prepare them before the visitor comes to your class. You can say something like, "Next week, we will have a person in our classroom. She is a teacher like me and she will be here learning with us. Please, guys, do not forget, this is really important to us." I assure you they will not forget and they will be waiting for the person. Explaining what is going to happen is the best choice for all of us. The same situation may also happen with our regular students – 3 possibilities might appear in some observations:

#1 They will talk to each other, whispering, "Who is he or she?" That is the best day of our class. If by a miracle they are not noisy, they become the best class ever…

#2 If they are shy, they will be even more shy.

#3 If they are very young learners, they will look at you and say, "I like you, but I prefer teacher…" most of the time…

Another suggestion: take a couple of minutes and read this fabulous post by Vicky Loras.

To finish off, be observed or observe a special classroom or a traditional one! It is a great time to learn and share with great educators and teachers. Most of the time, our students enjoy the moment and some of them give us support that we can never imagine. In all observations, I could have done my best but we have to keep in mind that we are not robots and mistakes are welcome in our classes and our lives. "We live, we learn."

Editor's Note: This was originally posted on Priscila's blog, PMateini's Blog.

About Priscila:

Priscila Mateini has over 6 years' experience in the English Language Teaching field in Rio de Janeiro. She holds a BA in Classical Languages and English Language, Post-graduation in Linguistic Studies (Spain) and she is currently an English mediator and researcher on adapted material for SEN.

Although the concept and application of formative assessment is not new, the concept has reached a new high thanks – in part – to Web 2.0 tools and apps. In this column, we will take a look at five specific formative assessment tools that can be used on student device.

All five of these tools are labelled as 'student response systems (SRS)'. The general idea of any SRS is for the teacher to create a series of questions that the students answer in real time; once answered, the teacher can display the results or download the results. The teacher can use the results to see how well the students have mastered the material. If they have demonstrated an understanding of the concept, then the teacher can move on; if they have not, the teacher can reteach or revise the material and then test again.

The five tools reviewed in this column do just that! So, what makes them different?

For me, we need to look at some key features to determine which tool to use in any given situation. I use different tools in different situations in my classes. (I teach future teachers of English during the day and adults learning English in the evenings.) My teacher trainees have to look at, review and use a variety of ICT tools in their final teaching practice. Usually, my students find a tool they like and learn to use it for everything. It is not until later in the semester that we start truly comparing features that they understand the concept that

Shakespeare the Wordsmith

1 question
Are you ready?

there is NO ONE solution for every classroom.

So, we will look at this five tools in terms of what makes them different not the same. All these tools are FREE to use at this point.

Kahoot!

https://getkahoot.com/ (to login and create)

https://kahoot.it/#/ (to play a game)

Available on any web browser; also available as an app for both iOS and Android

One of things that I love about Kahoot! is their willingness to keep developing and improving the tool. I think, in time, this will be a much better tool than it is now. Basically, Kahoot! is the tool with the most limitations (right now). Basically, it is a game-based platform. It only allows multiple-choice questions (this is one of the features I would love for them to change). HOWEVER, even with its limitations, my students (and consequently their students) love the game-like features of this tool. I often use it either at the start of my lesson or at the end because the students tend to get very excited while using the tool.

Socrative

http://www.socrative.com/ (there is a separate login for teachers and students)

Available on any web browser; also available as an app for both iOS and Android

Socrative is one of the oldest SRSs on the web. It is very simple to use. The dashboard is uncluttered because it has three basic features: quiz, quick questions and exit cards. The exit card uses a simple, three-question
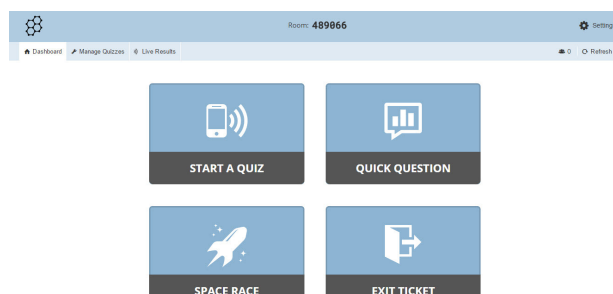
format that allows teachers to measure understanding. The quick question allows the teacher to ask a questions on-the-spot while the quiz features allows the teacher to prepare a quiz ahead of time. The last feature, Space Race, turns any teacher-generated quiz into a game. For me, I like this tool when I want a traditional exit card at the end of a lesson. The quiz allows for multiple-choice, true/false and short answer questions, which is a plus.

Formative

http://goformative.com/

Web-based only

This is probably my favourite formative assessment tool. Although it is only a web-based tool (which is not a problem in a BYOD class), it – for me – is the most attuned to a teacher's needs. It allows for the three basic question types, but it has whiteboard feature which my students love. Students can draw an answer or solve an equation using the white board tool. In addition, the live results section has a nice layout, allowing the teacher to see everyone's results without a lot of scrolling. One additional feature – that some other tools have – is the ability to create different classes.

GoSoapBox

www.gosoapbox.com

Web-based only

GoSoapBox is a more mature formative assessment tool; it is marketed towards training companies and higher education institutions. Because I teach in a teacher training program at one of university colleges, I really like to regularly use this tool. Within one tool, I can create quizzes, polls and discussions. This way, my students need to login to one tool, instead of three or four different tools during a lesson. In addition, students let me know if they are confused with a concept, or not, simply by registering their understanding on the confusion barometer.

Class Responders

www.classresponder.com/

Available on any web browser; also available as an app for both iOS and Android

Teacher Created Resources created Class Responders, which accounts for its interface. It is probably the only SRS that I have used designed specifically for an elementary population, although it can be used in middle and high schools as well. It comes with some basic lessons for grades 1 – 6 (in the American system), but allows teachers to add their own content as well. One of the drawbacks is that it allows a teacher access to only room, which works best in an elementary setting but not in a secondary setting. I have used this system in my teacher training program, but we have focused on it use outside our class and in their schools. My students have reported that their students in the first grade of high school here in Belgium, which consists of two years, enjoy it better than their older students.

Any one of these systems will work well for your situation, but think carefully about your audience and your objectives before deciding to use one of these 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 President and Event Officer for BELTA.

Go light! Hana Tichá

Everybody would probably agree that material-light or material-free lessons often turn out to be the best ones. I don't know why it is so, but I suspect that the feeling of not being pressed by the material one has (decided) to cover in the lesson is what makes this type of teaching so fresh and satisfying for both the teacher and the student. Maybe it feels so fresh to me because I don't teach unplugged on a daily basis, so it's a nice tweak to my regular teaching techniques. And my students can obviously sense the freshness too.

I'd say that any material – provided it's in the centre of the teacher's attention – can be a hindrance rather than an aid. The material lying there on your desk ready to be used diverts your attention from your students – it makes you constantly think of the timing and it often forces you to interrupt your students in the middle of an exciting, fruitful activity – just because you have another fabulous plan (read: material) up your sleeve.

The truth is that you can design a successful lesson in less than a couple of minutes and all you and your students need is paper and a pen. This is something I did earlier this week and I'd like to share my little success here on my blog.

Czech students of all ages and levels generally struggle with determiners. Articles are undoubtedly the most notorious linguistic troublemakers belonging to this group. However, I don't really panic if my students use them incorrectly because I consider this type of error just a cosmetic imperfection, so to speak (with some exceptions, of course).

However, quantifiers, for example, can be more important for the intelligibility of the message and/or they can completely change the meaning if used incorrectly. For instance, the difference between a few and few is not trivial. Yet, my students keep messing these two up. For some reason, they also struggle with each (of us/person), every (one of us, person) and all (of us/people/of the people). No matter how many exercises and gap fills we have done and how much extra homework I have assigned, they keep making the same errors.

Earlier this week, I suddenly felt desperate about my students' inability to grasp determiners, so before the lesson, I quickly scribbled the following 10 sentences.

1. Every Czech person should be able to speak some English.

2. Few people like poetry.

3. Most Czechs are fat.

4. Every student should read a few books a year.

5. Some people in the class are very talented.

6. It's better to have no siblings.

7. All teenagers should get a little pocket money.

8. Pupils should get little homework at school.

9. Each of us can achieve anything in life.

10. There isn't much to do here in Šternberk.

I decided to go really light and although I felt the temptation to give students printed copies, I finally did not type the statements. Instead, I divided the class into A students and B students, and I dictated the sentences one by one – the A students recorded all the odd number statements and the B students took down the even number statements. This shortened the writing stage, but at the same time it made the students concentrate much more than if they just had to look at a handout. An A student then got into a pair with a B student and they shared their statements. Their task was to say if they agree or not and why.

I was surprised how lively the discussion got in a matter of seconds and what great ideas the students kept coming up with. They were discussing commonplace statements, after all, which I had created in only five minutes. I don't really know why some conversation activities go well and why some topics are totally uninteresting for my students. After so many years of experience, I can never quite estimate in advance whether students will like the topic or not.

Nevertheless, I stopped the chatter after about 15 minutes and we went through all the statements together. Each time, I asked one student to express his/her opinion and the others could react briefly. This was also interesting, and more useful language as well as new ideas were generated throughout this stage.

Finally, we focused on the determiners a bit. I got students to change the determiners to make

sentences that would express their real opinion, e.g. It's better to have a few/many/some siblings. Some/many Czechs are fat.

I should stress that although the activity was originally designed and tailor made for a group of 18-year-old B1/B2 students, and it was supposed to last up to 10 minutes at the most, I also did it with two lower level classes later on, despite the fact that according to the syllabus, we were not supposed to 'be doing' determiners. Obviously, the groups came up with different language out-

put, made different errors and expressed different ideas, but the activity worked equally well in all groups.

This brings me to the thought that it's perfectly possible and pretty easy to design meaningful, material-light activities/lessons which are adaptable, versatile, recyclable and save the teacher a lot of time and energy. And I believe it's worth putting some effort into such activities.

Editor's Note: This was originally posted on Hana's blog, How I See It Now.

About Hana:

Hana is an EFL teacher with more than 20 years of experience with learners of all ages. She holds a BA degree in teaching English as a foreign language to young learners, and an MA degree in TESOL from Masaryk University in Brno, in the Czech Republic. She loves thought-provoking discussions on ELT topics, education and (applied) linguistics. Hana is passionate about social media and the plethora of possibilities they offer, and is constantly seeking opportunities to develop professionally, especially through blogging and connecting with her PLN..

The Real 1:1 Is Not About Devices Brian Aspinall

THE REAL 1:1 IS MORE ABOUT MAKING PERSONAL CONNECTIONS WITH EVERY STUDENT AND LESS ABOUT THE NUMBER OF DEVICES YOUR CLASSROOM HAS.

@MRASPINALL

Full disclosure: Much of this comes from conversations with my administrator Chris Moore (@icprin). I would like to acknowledge him before you continue reading.

The more and more I think about changing my classroom practices, the less and less I consider technology. Perhaps I should celebrate how embedded in practice it has become since I no longer consider it an event. It takes time for this natural fit. Time and energy.

Two things teachers don't have much of during the week – time

and energy. Between raising families, coaching sports teams, planning lessons and marking at night (forget having a social life), it can be challenging to learn about new tools and technologies. Trying a new app with a full class of kids generates a lot of anxiety and fear. What happens if the technology fails?

I am starting to wonder if these are excuses. "If we worked in industry and didn't keep up with best practices we would be fired." via @icprin. That's a scary thought.

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I am starting to wonder if these are excuses. "If we worked in industry and didn't keep up with best practices we would be fired." via @icprin. That's a scary thought.

However, more so than focusing on technology – whether it is an event or not – we should consid-

er changing pedagogies. How do you plan to implement something like Genius Hour if you are still off and away? Is giving every kid an iDevice and telling them to all complete the same task anything different than not using the iDevice at all? Using "AppName" for the sake of using the app seems backwards. Green screens are fun, but what are we truly learning in the process? Let's talk about that in class instead of who made the coolest video.

While there is no app for great teaching, the proper implementation of technology has the power to make all kids successful. Yes – all! But making all kids successful puts a tremendous accountability on them to want to learn. This process takes time. We need to move away from structured charts and rubrics that seem to baby step kids through tasks and focus on big ideas, inquiry and student passions. Sure, many kids need the scaffolding, but the one-size-fits-all model of schooling is no longer acceptable. If our goal is to truly personalize learning, differentiate instruction and scaffold lessons, every student's program is unique. Technology allows this to happen, but it won't happen overnight and this throws a giant monkey wrench into current methods of assessment and evaluation where there is a grade level standard. What about those kids above grade level? They need as much attention as those "below" grade level "standards".

Since "school" began, we have always focused on student weaknesses and next steps. "Little Johnny excels in math but needs help reading, so let's focus on that." I highly doubt little Johnny is going to pursue a career in reading. Don't get me wrong, I am not suggesting we ignore the gaps in little Johnny's learning, I'm just suggesting that we have tools and technologies to assist little Johnny with his reading – now can he go change the world in math? There is a reason I studied Computer Science at University and it wasn't because I loved to read and write.

If we acknowledge the one size model does not work, why do we use it to "test" students for some level of brilliance? Sometimes kids are just really good test takers. Besides, these enrichment programs are nothing more than STEM – which happens in many classrooms nowadays with makerspace, coding, etc.

Shouldn't All Students Be Able to Participate in Gifted Programs?

> If gifted lessons are so good, why can't all the students participate?
>
> – Dr Douglas Green

Changing the mindsets and culture takes a tremendous amount of time. And it shouldn't start in classrooms. If we want to make significant impacts on education paradigms, new pedagogies must begin in the office with administration. Education 2.0 is about student voice and choice.

Let's create a school culture where kids want to bang down the door to get in - not out!

Why else do Google employees socialize at work? They have daycare facilities, built-in restaurants, social clubs, etc. because Google never wants their employees to want to leave.

The real 1:1 is more about making connections with the students and less about the number of devices

There has been a strong quote floating around the edu-twittersphere. I will do my best to paraphrase it:

Would you want to be a student in your class?

While I admire the quote and the origin of it, I don't think it is enough. Instead ask yourself:

Would you want to be a student in your school?

About Brian:

Brian Aspinall is a grade 7 & 8 teacher and Microsoft Innovative Educator Expert who develops web applications to support 21st century learning practices and pedagogies. His latest project, edmettle, is a tool to support and develop student feedback over grades. He speaks professionally on the topics of 21st century education, assessment and evaluation and has given two TEDx talks on education reform. He has a Bachelor of Science in Computer Information Systems and is currently completing his Masters of Professional Education in Math & Computational Strategies at Western University in London, Ontario.

Alexander Hamilton & William Shakespeare –

Every two years, I have the pleasure of teaching a 3 study point/a 24-hour class contact project called 'Giants in Literature.' The 'giants' in question are Chaucer and Shakespeare – the fathers of British and American literature. Now, I love both these authors and enjoy rereading their works, but my students struggle with both. My students are either in their last year of our three-year teacher training program or in their second year. Many of them have never read a Shakespearean play before the course and almost all of them know nothing about Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales,* unless their high school visited Canterbury for a day. So, every two years I grapple with the best approach to teach this course, especially since the course has become more popular - students who are not studying English have decided to join in.

This year I decided to try something different: focus on how the works of these 'giants' have been adapted for different media. I also knew that – because 2016 marks the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death – we would go to London and spend a good part of the day at The Globe. I have to say that the final products that my students produced exceeded even my expectations.

So, how did the students and I accomplish this?

Well, it starts with a bit from the version of this course I taught in 2013. In that course the students had to adapt a tale from Chaucer into a rap song, along the lines of what Baba Brinkman did (http://music.bababrinkman.com/album/the-rap-canterbury-tales). The final products were interesting. This time, I decided that the students could choose to produce a rap song from a Shakespearian play (only one group did – the Othello group), but it would be a choice (surprisingly, some students are just not good rappers!). Either way I would use rap music as a thread throughout the course. Rap/hip-hop music would allow the students to explore how to adapt classic material and it would (painlessly) teach the pupils how to read both Chaucer and Shakespeare. Plus, we would have some fun!

For the rap music, I decided to use the Broadway sensation, *Hamilton The Musical*, written by Lin-Manuel Miranda based on Ron Chernow's biography of the forgotten American founding father, Alexander Hamilton. Personally, I was obsessed with the musical; I could only hope that my students would appreciate my passion for this musical. It is always difficult when the teacher inserts himself into the students' world by altering one of their favourite things. Before the course began, the students had to read the first two chapters of this 800+ page work. My students were confused – what does Alexander Hamilton have to do with Shakespeare? Very little actually. But I decided to dive in!

Teaching Iambic Pentameter

Teaching students to read iambic pentameter found in the works of Chaucer and Shakespeare can be painful. In the past, I used different types as outlined in Fiona Banks' *Creative Shakespeare.* The students and I have clapped out the beat; we used a Haka approach and a gallop approach. The students always struggled because they had no frame of reference.

This year, we used rap to learn how to count out the beat. The TED video, 'Hip-Hop & Shakespeare'? Akala at TEDxAldeburgh, is an excellent starting point. By the end of the video, Akala raps a Shakespearian sonnet – the students can now use rap music to explore the beats explored by Chaucer and Shakespeare.

The key element of rap music is the beat. It is not always iambic pentameter, but because it so pronounced in the final version, it is easy for the students to find and perform the beat. In class, we explored the songs, 'My Shot' (which is the anthem of the musical) and 'The Schuyler Sisters' (which introduces the main female leads). Students could hear the pronounced beat in both songs and mimic it. We then moved to the 'Prologue' of *Romeo and Juliet*, which is pure iambic pentameter. I found that students could easily make the transition from rap/hip-hop to Shakespeare better than students I had taught in previous years.

We then looked at the same two songs from Hamilton to study the word choices. We looked at how Miranda manipulates the language to keep within his beat. We then looked at the 'Prologue' again with the same purpose. This was an important task because the students had to take a pop song and turn it into a Shakespearean sonnet – no easy task unless they understood iambic pentameter and word choice.

What's The Connection? John Arnold

The final part of this task was to look at five pop songs that Erik Didriksen turned into Shakespearean sonnets in his book *Pop Sonnets*. We compared these transformations in terms of their beat and word choice. Then, in groups, the students had to transform a pop song. Here are two examples. Can you guess the original song? *(Answers in the footnotes.)*

1) When darkness fell, thou begg'd to give thee voice
For mine love is what thou desir'd most.
Thus confusion did all, just leave me joyce
Our rekindle forsaken with thy boast
I left the city, gone from thy deceit
Wonted solemny for fardels in dole
Resorting in wassails, belike repeat.
Thy weed abated, it casted a role

O and thy ignorance still I question
Mine imagination thought-sick suffers
Has thou turned Turk?
Now thee true-self threaten
I wish thou crave mine heart, for I crave hers.
Thy missives could only mean one thing
For the perish'd time, I will rest thy King

2) Tis I who wondered upon the thought of
once more summoning thee aft'r many moons
Time was to be a healing aid for love Allas,
it proved futile to mend these wounds .
Good day, how art thou fairing presently
It is in my unsavoury nature
To discuss myself quite elaborately
It's known that fleeting time is no stranger.
I shall greet thee from beyond the confines
O'er a thousand tries I have left in dust
To seek pardon to which your hurt aligns
Though not a word seems to regain your trust.
For it matters no more, how much I care
No longer you feel need your love to share.

Adapting Material

As I mentioned earlier, the students had to read the first two chapters of Chernow's biography, which focus on Alexander Hamilton's life before he arrived in the British Colonies. After an initial activity to see what they remembered from the two chapters, we delved into the Miranda's musical. The students listened to the opening number from the musical; during the second listen they had to identify elements from the two chapters that Miranda kept, changed or discarded. We collected these in a Padlet wall and used them as the foundation of our discussion on adapting materials to another media.

I knew it was a bit of a gamble to use Miranda's musical – I love it, but I am not sure if my students will appreciate my foray into their world. Luckily, my students fell in love with the musical based on this first listen; they wanted

Romeo and Juliet vs. West side story
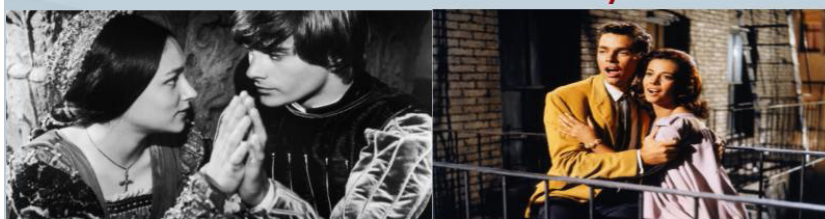
The famous play Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare has been adapted in many forms. One of those adaptations was the hit musical West Side Story. In this infographic we will take a look at how two specific scenes from Romeo and Juliet were adapted into the musical

Romeo and Juliet: Act 5 scene 2

In the play,Friar John has failed to deliver Juliet's letter to Romeo thanks to the fact that the city is in quarantine. This means that Friar Lawrence has not been able to keep his promise to Juliet and it also means that Romeo has no idea that Juliet is not truly dead.

In the musical, Anita deliberately changes the message Maria told her to pass along. This because The Jet's nearly raped Anita and she does not feel that she can trust Tony with the safety of her friend. The altering of the message leaves Tony to believe that Maria has died.

Conclusion: Although the message in the musical is delivered, unlike in the play the result is still the same. Both Tony and Romeo believe their love one to be dead.
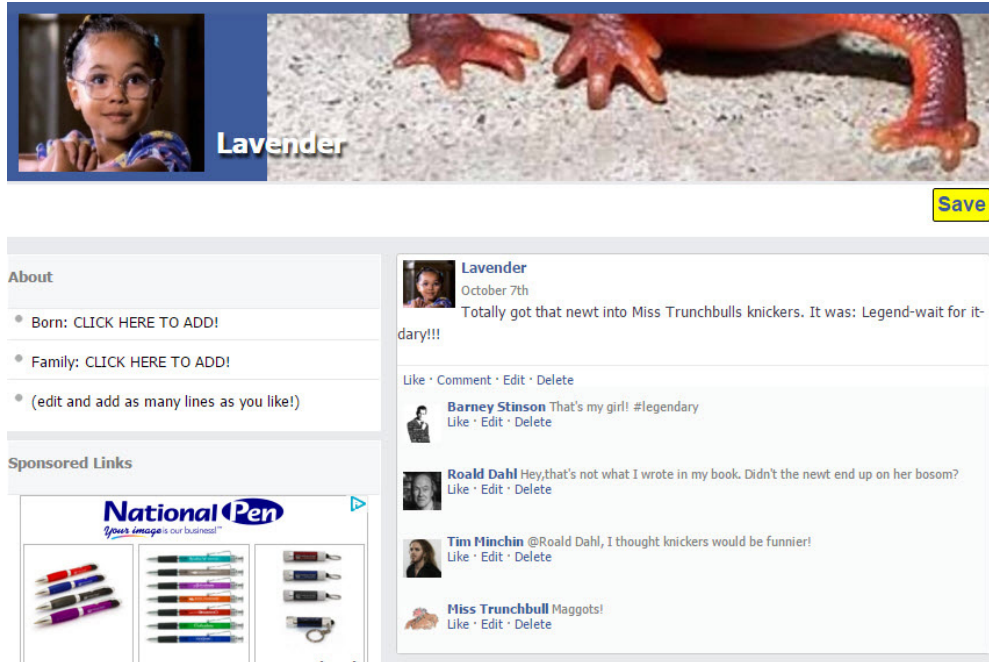
Romeo and Juliet: Act 5 scene 3

In this scene Romeo and Paris encounter each other in Juliet's tombe and fight to the death. Paris perishes and Romeo then says goodbye to Juliet after which he drinks the poison he got from the apothecary. He wants to die in order to be reunited with his loved one. Juliet wakes up to find Romeo dead and kisses his lips in order to die as well. The Prince and both families then show up to find both Romeo and Juliet dead. The prince bemoans the losses that have been had thanks to the fighting of the two families and admonishes them to make their peace, which they do in order to honour their lost children.

In the movie Tony wanders the street trying to find Chico so that Chico can shoot Tony, like Tony believes he shot Maria, in order for Tony to join his love in death. However before Tony finds Chico, Maria finds Tony and for a short moment the two are reunited. Unfortunatly Chico does show up and shoots Tony. Tony dies in Maria's arms. Maria is heartbroken and blames both the Jets and the Sharks for ruining her life and the lives of those around them. The scene eventually ends with both groups looking ashamed and Maria crying on the ground.

Conclusion: This scene has been totally changed from the play. In the musical only Tony dies and both Chico and Maria survive. Personally we found the ending in the musical to be stronger as the Sharks and the Jets are forcefully reminded of their folly by a heartbroken Maria

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Lavender
October 7th
Totally got that newt into Miss Trunchbulls knickers. It was: Legend-wait for it-dary!!!

Like · Comment · Edit · Delete

Barney Stinson That's my girl! #legendary
Like · Edit · Delete

Roald Dahl Hey, that's not what I wrote in my book. Didn't the newt end up on her bosom?
Like · Edit · Delete

Tim Minchin @Roald Dahl, I thought knickers would be funnier!
Like · Edit · Delete

Miss Trunchbull Maggots!
Like · Edit · Delete

to hear more and some students went home and purchased the cast album – they just couldn't wait!

Because the musical hooked the students, our transition into the next two tasks was smooth. First, the students had to read the opening chapters of Roald Dahl's *Matilda*, which was the musical they would see in London during our trip. They watched the opening number via a YouTube clip with the purpose of analysing how the authors of the musical used Dahl's material. Their final group product was to read a number of assigned chapters from the book and compare them to the musical in terms of the process of adapting material to another media. We followed this task with a comparison of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* with the film musical *West Side Story*. The final product was the same type of comparison. (NOTE: In all my tasks, students can produce whatever type of product they want which satisfies the needs of the assignment.)

Now that the students had a basic understanding of how classic material is adapted to different media, it was their turn to adapt a play from Shakespeare and a tale from Chaucer. (For the rest of this article, I will focus only on Shakespeare.) The task was simple: take the play of choice (from a list of choices I gave them that focused mostly on tragedies, a couple comedies and one history play) and adapt it for use in your future English classes. That is, teach the basic story, including characters and themes, using a different medium. As with the comparisons of *Matilda* and *Romeo and Juliet* with their musicals, the students could choose any media they wanted.

The majority of the nine groups chose to adapt their Shakespearian play into a children's book using an online book maker (like Storybird.com). I considered this to be the hardest medium because you have a play like *The Merchant of Venice* with its pound of flesh or *Henry IV Part 1* with its rudeness and violence into some-

thing younger children could read and understand. A couple of groups decided to turn the play into a music video in which they used a pop song, or a series of pop songs, to relate the story. One group chose to produce a rap song.

I have done adaptation projects in the past, but I must confess that these were the some of the best projects I have seen in my 30+ years teaching. When it came time to debrief with the students, all 40 students indicated that having studied Miranda's musical of Chernow's book was a key element in their success! Our students are presently in their teaching practice periods; a number of them are now using rap and/or Shakespeare in their lessons. The response from their students have been extremely positive.

So, next time someone asks: What's the connection between Alexander Hamilton and William Shakespeare? You can answer 'rap music'.

Answers: 1) 'Hotling Bling' by Drake & 2) 'Hello' by Adele

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 President and Event Officer for BELTA.

Thought Piece

Being a NNEST (non-native English-speaking teacher), I have always been fascinated by the language aspect of a teacher's development. Peter Medgyes says in Non-Native Educators in English Language Teaching – and I heartily agree – that 'the only way we NNS English teachers can command more respect (…) is through mastery of the English language.' He also says that 'an EFL teacher with faulty English may be compared to a music teacher who can play no musical instrument and sings out of tune', and that 'for NNS English teachers to be effective, self-confident, and satisfied professionals, first we have to be near-native speakers of English. After all, throughout our career, this is the subject and language of most of our professional endeavors.'

As is obvious from his use of 'we' in the excerpt above, Peter Medgyes is himself a NNEST, from Hungary. Scott Thornbury and Jeremy Harmer, however, respectively native-speaking teachers from New Zealand and England, and two of the most respected and widely cited ELT writers in the world, seem to agree with Medgyes. Thornbury tells us that "among the consequences of (…) a limited knowledge of language are: a failure on the part of the teacher to anticipate learners' learning problems and a consequent inability to plan lessons that are pitched at the right level; (…) an inability to deal satisfactorily with errors, or to field

learners' queries; and a general failure to earn the confidence of the learners due to a lack of basic terminology and ability to present new language clearly and efficiently (in About Language)".

Harmer, similarly, says "teachers need to know a lot about the subject they are teaching. (…) Language teachers need to know how the language works. (…) a knowledge of the grammar system and understanding of the lexical system. (…) They need to be aware of pronunciation features such as sounds, stress and intonation. (…) Students have a right to expect that teachers of the English language can explain straightforward grammar concepts, including how and when they are used. They expect their teachers to know the difference between the colloquial language that people use in informal conversation and the more formal language required in more formal settings" (in The Practice of English Language Teaching).

In fact, it would be very hard to find someone in ELT who would disagree with Medgyes, Thornbury and Harmer regarding the vital importance of English teachers knowing a lot about the language they teach. But if that is the case, and if indeed it is a fact that we teachers of English must know a lot about the language we teach, why don't we ever talk or write about it?

I have had the great opportunity to attend quite a few talks by some of

the most prominent ELT speakers in the world, and I have never seen any of them address the importance of language development for teachers with their NNEST audiences. In the IATEFL conferences I have had the pleasure to attend so far (in Brighton in 2011, Glasgow in 2012 and Liverpool in 2013) there was not a single talk on this issue in any of them. II don't recall ever seeing an article in any ELT periodical that dealt exclusively with this very unproblematized area of a teacher's development.

Even though the global majority of English language teachers in the world is made up of NNESTs, the vast majority of ELT writers, conference speakers (especially in plenary sessions), teacher trainers and similarly high-profile positions in ELT are almost exclusively filled by NESTs (native English-speaking teachers). More specifically in Brazil – although conceivably all over the world – "NS teachers are preferred to NNS teachers, irrespective of their training or experience" (Scott Thornbury, in An A-Z of ELT). It is as though there were a tacit agreement in the ELT profession, especially among professionals in high places and opinion formers, not to address what seems to be the veritable elephant in the ELT room: a considerable number of NNESTs has very serious difficulty to communicate in English (and in some cases simply cannot communicate in English at all), but we should not speak of that for fear of hurting

Can we talk about our English?
Higor Cavalcante

their feelings.

I have over the years asked a number of colleagues and friends in ELT – both native and non-native speakers of English – if they agreed there was a certain avoidance among ELT professionals to discuss teachers' language, especially NNESTs', and in their opinion, this seeming 'gap' in the market is really there, glaringly so. Some excerpts (some translated from Portuguese):

"I know a few teachers who did the CAE test at the beginning of their careers and now, 5 or 10 years later, don't have that level anymore and would possibly not pass the CAE today. Some schools offer free courses for teachers taught by more experienced, more proficient teachers, but many don't take those courses and keep on teaching lower levels. (…) I don't know any SIGs or magazines that deal with that."

"Nope. (…) Not a single book (in the area of language development for teachers). They (schools) tend to lump teachers and advanced students under the same generic umbrella. But if an advanced student says "slangs" it's not the end of the world. If a teacher does, it's another story I think."

"Some don't, some do (answering the question of whether teachers care about their language development). Some people don't really know their limitations and have never had proper feedback. There are people who look for courses and ways of improv-

ing, but they're still a minority, even if there are more people nowadays in that group than in the recent past, I think. As for the ELT market, I think there are many schools that simply don't want teachers to develop."

"I don't know anything that exclusively concerns itself with language development. There are chapters in some books talking about teacher's development, but not specifically about language development. Richards (2011) talks about the importance of developing confidence and fluency, but does not talk about how to do so."

Some harsher than others, but there seems to be very little doubt in their minds – and in mine, most definitely – that we tend not to consider language development as being an integral part of teacher development. It's apparently more important – in today's TD discussions, anyway – to be proficient in classroom technology than in English. Demanding high from our students is also apparently a lot more worthy of study and discussion than proficiency in English. Actually, there doesn't seem to be a single topic in the realm of TD that is not more important than a teacher's language proficiency.

Now, I'm a great enthusiast of technology in the classroom, Demand High, extensive reading, oral correction, Dogme etc, but I just can't get my head around the fact many of us believe knowing (a lot about) English is not, at the very least, just

as important as everything else, or that we should somehow take for granted every teacher is linguistically – for lack of a better word – 'ready'.

I'll end here then by repeating the question in the title of this article: Can we talk about our English? Would it be acceptable for us to start addressing the elephant in our room, or shall we just keep on accepting it when schools and students prefer native-speakers over us simply on account of where they are from?

Editor's Note: This was originally posted in the BRAZ TESOL Quarterly, March 2015.

About Higor:

Higor Cavalcante has been in ELT for going on 18 years now, and his main interests in the area are extensive reading, phonology and language development for teachers. He holds, among others, CPE, CELTA, and he's currently working on his DELTA. He's currently second vice president of BRAZ-TESOL (Brazilian Association of TESOL), and works as a teacher and teacher educator in his hometown of São Paulo, Brazil. You can contact him by writing to higor@higorcavalcante.com.br.

Differentiated Instruction for the Adult Learner
Aviva Dunsiger

I am that kid.

The one that fidgets if I have to sit still too long.

The one that takes almost nothing in without a visual: talk to me too much, and I can't tell you anything about what you said.

The one that never comes prepared with a pen or a pencil, although I always have numerous devices.

The one that misplaces just about every paper I've ever received … one of many reasons that I love my devices.

The one that knows what I need to succeed, and am not afraid to speak up to get it.

Some people find me outspoken. Others applaud my honesty. I think that I'm okay with both, as I don't think that change happens if we sit around quietly.

I'm a huge believer in differentiated instruction in the classroom, and using assistive technology, hands-on learning experiences, open-ended questions, and inquiry to really help reach EVERY child. These approaches work for children. They also work for adults.

I just came home from a full day of workshops about Kindergarten. This morning, we discussed inquiry, observation, and documentation, and this afternoon, we focused on supporting social and emotional development in the early years. All of the presenters were eager to share. They had lots of information for us, and they provided us with opportunities to talk and learn to-

gether. This afternoon though, I started to feel overwhelmed. Why?

There were so many handouts. I know the thinking behind giving them out. At our table, at least half of the teachers said that they preferred paper, and they wanted to have copies of the presentation and the ideas. I can understand this thinking, but I think differently.

It's not about the trees … although I'm happy to help save the environment.

It's about seeing how much there is to read.

It's about seeing the small print and the number of words on the page.

It's about the worry of where to store these papers so that I can find them again.

It's about not getting distracted by the handouts, and still being able to focus on the speaker.

As I'm sitting at the table, taking some deep breaths and trying to calm down (and I'm serious when I say that I was doing this), I couldn't help but even think about my personal reading habits. It's no secret that I love to read. Here's something that not everybody knows about me though: I read almost exclusively on a device. Why?

Because then I'm less overwhelmed by the size of the book.

I can focus on one page at a time. I can set the print size and font. I can read calmly … and reading should be a calming experience.

Now just like with my handout comment, I know that not everyone agrees with me. Some people love reading a "real book" and almost never read on a device. They have the choice for this option though. Are we giving the choice in our PD sessions? What if the learning was shared online — through a GoogleDoc perhaps — and then those that want a hardcopy can make one, and others can use the electronic copies?

Our Board is looking at transforming learning everywhere. How do we do this in our professional learning? We've done a lot of talking about the SAMR Model and how teaching and learning has changed, or needs to change, in our classrooms. What about professional development? I wonder what impact consistently modelling this change would have on creating this change in the classroom environment. What do you think? What would you suggest?

Editor's Note: This was originally posted on Aviva's blog, Living Avivaloca.

About Aviva:

Aviva is a Senior Kindergarten teacher at Dr. Davey School in Hamilton, Ontario. She is about to begin her 15th year teaching, and she's taught everything from Kindergarten to Grade 6 in some capacity. Aviva was one of the 2013 recipients of the Canadian Prime Minister's Award for Teaching Excellence. In an effort to try and reach every student, she lives by the mantra: "If they can't learn the way you teach, teach the way they learn!" (Author Unknown)

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