Proceedings. APAC-ELT Conference 2015

**METHODOLOGY**
CLIL, MOTIVATION, PRONUNCIATION

**ICT**
E-MAILS, DIARIES, WEB TOOLS

**HANDS-ON EXPERIENCES**
ROLE PLAYS, LABS

# APAC ELT JOURNAL

## Editor's Note

### It's that time of year again!

As you can see from this issue's front page picture, we have the annual APAC ELT Convention right around the corner! It's been thirty years since the association began "connecting the dots," and we are eager to celebrate it. We're working on special things, like five years ago when we published a monograph in celebration of our 25th anniversary. Stay tuned!!! This year also marks 400 years since Shakespeare shuffled off this mortal coil, and he will also be featured in this year's convention, from the Opening Session to the workshops, as different presenters will strut and fret their hour upon the stage and give us ideas for learners of all ages.

Pleasure and action make the hours seem short.

W. Shakespeare

The current issue continues with proceedings from the 2015 Convention, with the first seven articles from talks and workshops given last February. The first one, by Mireia Trenchs, stems from our commitment to include research in our convention. It's important to have information on

background issues that have a bearing on our classes. In this case, Dr. Trenchs gives us a glimpse into the lives of Latin American and Chinese students and how they perceive and deal with having to learn up to three new languages upon their arrival here. This is helpful in enabling us to understand their points of view on what we are trying to teach them and to find approaches that might better fit their needs.

The next 6 articles are of a much more hands-on nature. "In a Real Job" shows how English can be made an integral part of Vocational Education courses, both in English language classes and in core subjects of a given specialization. "My Diary" also deals with English in the curriculum, this time in a project which students (and parents) engage in every year from pre-school through sixth grade, and with a spin-off project that the whole school participates in throughout every academic year.

"Fictitious E-mails" also deals with a primary-school project, motivating pupils to work together, giving them more self-confidence, and increasing their willingness to communicate in a foreign language. And "Recipes for Creative Writing" sheds light on how to be creative and offers a plethora of activity types to spur students on to becoming much more imaginative.

"Keep It Up" discusses some very interesting and useful activities that ESO and Baccalaureate students have carried out and that have fostered their growth in many ways: in language, in motivation, in empathy, and in group cohesion. And "Motivation through Pronunciation" calls on us to remember to put some focus on pronunciation in every lesson if possible. It offers ideas for brief, 10-minute activities that can help learners improve in stress, intonation and sounds, with some proposals aimed at young learners and other more suitable for older ones.

The last two articles are non-convention submissions and are quite interesting. "Improving Students' Writing" provides some good advice on how to set up writing tasks and a model for analyzing the feedback that is given to students throughout the writing process. And, last but not least, "Managing Conflict" offers keen insight into how to approach different situations of discord, and defuse them rather than contribute to making them grow into clashes. The author, Tom Maguire, will be delving deeper into this topic in this year's Convention.

So, we hope to see you there in a few weeks. Don't wait to read about it in the next APAC ELT Journal. As Shakespeare once wrote: "Let every eye negotiate for itself and trust no agent."

P.S. Test yourself: try to guess where the different Shakespeare quotations in the journal come from, like the one you've just read, then click on them and see if you're right.

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# Letter from the President

Dear colleagues,

2016 marks the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death and, as it happens, APAC celebrates its 30th anniversary. Now, could that be a mere coincidence or is it, simply, a good omen? Be that as it may, both milestones will be in the air during this year's Convention: Sweet Will is going to be our guest star in the opening session and the motto of the conference – "connecting the dots" – resonates with the many significant aspects involved in teaching and learning that APAC has explored and disseminated for the last thirty years. APAC has always put the focus on TEFL methodology as part of our ultimate aim: investigating education. Inasmuch as we do not lose sight of our role as educators, our annual gathering becomes truly meaningful. It is, indeed, a family reunion of a sort, and it becomes really successful when it proves able to combine professional exchanges and the latest research with the feeling of sharing common goals and concerns.

In these thirty years, APAC has been an agent in reshaping ELT in Catalonia. We have seen pedagogies being re-thought, and learning moving towards the "flipped classroom" where "fact learning" is relegated to independent work on the part of the learners and frequently accessed electronically. We have seen teachers becoming facilitators and promoters of classrooms understood as hives of activity, exploration, discussion, reflection, and collaboration. Few would doubt today that the Internet revolution has been instrumental in widening the possibilities for teaching and learning. And few would also doubt that this has created new problems around issues of accessibility and accountability. All in all – and beyond the exploration of more or less effective methodologies in English teaching –, I'd like to state, once again, that APAC's ultimate goal is a commitment to the importance of developing learners who are culturally sensitive, globally aware, and who behave in ethically responsible ways.

To discuss all this and more, we have our annual Convention, a place and a time for APAC followers to meet and to share ideas and concerns, to remind ourselves that even in the Internet era we happen to be real people, members of the human race – as Chesterton once put it – "to which so many of my readers belong." That is why, even though we live in a digital world, I hope to see you in the flesh in the UPF this February so that we can all help in making our thirtieth Convention a significant and memorable event.

With best wishes,

Miquel Berga
President

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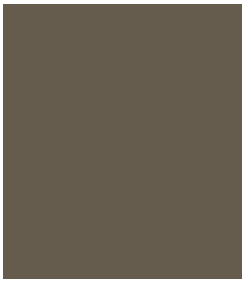

"Though this be madness, yet there is method in't."

"The best is yet to come."

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# Multilingualism in Catalan Secondary Schools: An Exploration of Language Practices and Challenges

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## Abstract

This article summarizes some of the results of an ethnographic research project investigating the language practices, attitudes and ideologies of secondary school students of immigrant origin in Catalonia. It identifies some of the educational and linguistic challenges that the migration experience as well as societal and individual bilingualism pose for such students. In sum, the study points at the development of flexible translingual practices, pragmatic ideological standpoints and the need to foster educational practices that value the students' multilingual abilities.

## 1. Introduction

Language policy in Catalonia aims at a multilingual, cosmopolitan society with the Catalan language in a socially integrating role (see *Pla per la Llengua i la Cohesió Social*, Generalitat de Catalunya, 2009). In fact, the latest research describes present-day Catalonia as a linguistically and culturally complex society that has become the perfect site for investigating globally-relevant sociolinguistic phenomena. In Catalonia researchers seek to understand, among other issues, the interface of societal and individual bilingualism and multilingualism, as well as the adaptation processes of speakers from different backgrounds to this society and its language practices. In particular, educational sociolinguists have taken a special interest in recently-arrived youth and in how the Catalan school system provides them with opportunities for social, academic and linguistic integration.

From this perspective, the GREILI-UPF[1] research group has explored the language practices, attitudes and ideologies of secondary school students of immigrant origin in Catalonia, with a focus on students of Latin American and Chinese origin. With this study, researchers have intended to answer the following research questions, among others:

- What are these students' language practices in interactions inside and outside of the school?
- What are these students' language attitudes and ideologies?
- What challenges do they experience as regards the migration experience, societal local bilingualism and the school's Reception process?

These questions are pertinent in a society that in the last two decades has received high numbers of international migrants and where two co-official languages — one with an international projection and one historically identified with the territory — are used daily by the local population. In fact, if younger than sixteen, the children of this immigrant population enter schools which have

[1] The author and her research colleagues belong to GREILI-UPF (i.e. *Grup de Recerca en Espais Interculturals, Llengües i Identitats* from Universitat Pompeu Fabra) and conducted this research with the financial support of Recercaixa Project 2010ACUP-00344 and AGAUR-Generalitat de Catalunya Projects 2009ARAFI-00049 and 2010ARAFI-000017. For more information see http://www.upf.edu/greili-upf.

Catalan as the medium of instruction and follow an educational model that rebalances the unequal presence outside the school (in favour of Spanish) of this language and Spanish. Besides, schools also facilitate the learning of at least one other language: most frequently English, but also French, German or Italian.

Since the 1990s, Catalonia has seen how the two local languages increasingly share space with more than 250 languages spoken by people who have come from around 160 countries. Significantly, meaningful percentages of those who do not have Catalan as their mother tongue view it as their language of identification and as their most habitual language when older than fourteen (see IDESCAT 2014 for more information). These statistics point at the existence of what Pujolar and González (2013) have called *mudes lingüístiques*, namely, linguistic changes in one's life history.[2]

To explore such issues, several types of data have been collected by GREILI-UPF in seven secondary schools from Barcelona and its metropolitan area: (a) interviews with 4th ESO students, (b) interviews with language teachers and with those in charge of the Reception classes,[3] (c) interviews with students' parents, and (d) researchers' observational data in the schools both in and outside the classroom. The group has already analyzed these data in depth in previous publications[4] but they will be synthesized here, with a special focus on language practices, opportunities and challenges as explained by the students themselves.

## 1. Adoption of local bilingual language practices

Upon arrival in Catalonia, students of either Latin American or Chinese origin very often do not notice that the local population speaks two different languages until they start classes in school. They arrive from their countries of origin unaware of the existence of Catalan; thus, Catalan signs on the street may appear as Spanish to Chinese students and as Peninsular Spanish to the Latin American youth. For example, when a researcher asked Enrique[5] "y ¿no te parecían los rótulos los letreros que había dos idiomas [*on the street*]?", he answered "no no me fijé". Nevertheless, for those for whom bilingualism is a new experience, bilingual practices may be considered — as Colombian Juan Manuel put it — "una experiencia muy bonita a mí me gusta mucho porque, [...] es para mí muy muy impresionante ver un profesor que habla castellano y con sus profesores (*sic*), con sus compañeros habla en catalán a veces castellano."[6]

Even if they very often socialize with students from their own or similar cultural background (i.e. Chinese students with other from China and Latin Americans with students from their same or other Latin American countries), they interact with local students and do so both in Catalan and

[2] Pujolar and González (2013) further define this concept as "changes in language use that are important for people's self-presentations in everyday-life, but whose implications for ethnic ascription are open to negotiation and contestation."

[3] See Trenchs-Parera and Patiño-Santos (2013) for more information on Reception classes in Catalonia.

[4] This article synthesizes the main results published in the following articles and book chapters: Newman, Patiño-Santos and Trenchs-Parera (2013), Trenchs Parera (2013), Trenchs-Parera and Patiño-Santos (2013), Trenchs Parera, Patiño, Canós and Newman (2013), Trenchs Parera and Tristán Jiménez (2014), Trenchs Parera, Larrea Mendizabal and Newman (2015), and Newman and Trenchs-Parera (June 2015, in press).

[5] Pseudonyms are used in all cases to ensure students' anonymity.

[6] For the sake of legibility, transcriptions, although literal, have been shortened and simplified as regards the transcription of phonemes and intonation patterns; shortenings are indicated by the sign [...].

Spanish. And, as occurs with the local population, the language used in first encounters frequently determines the language used in future interactions:

Zhang: sí sí tenim un grupet sí
Researcher: que són de, totes totes les nenes, les noies són d'aquí?
Zhang: mh
Researcher: i amb amb les altres també parles castellà
Zhang: sí amb els de l'altre cole parlo castellà i amb els d'aquest cole parlo català […] sí que vam començar a parlar en castellà i llavors jo també contesto en castellà.

In fact, what most interviewees share is the normality with which they approach two common phenomena in Catalonia: (1) speaker's accommodation to the language of the interlocutor, and (2) what several of our interviewees describe literally as 'speaking *barrejat*':

Researcher: tú hablas catalán aquí y con tus amigos pero ¿y cuando vas por la calle y tienes que hacer cosas? ¿lo hablas?
Xiaobai: hum depende de los amigos
Researcher: ah sí ¿por qué?
Xiaobai: si es de china hablo xinès y catalán si es catalán
Researcher: y en el bar también hablas a veces catalán ¿cierto?
Xiaobai: sí barrejat.

## 2. Echoes of local language ideologies and attitudes

Students of immigrant origin adopt local language practices as well as local language ideologies and attitudes. Thus, although they view the public presence of the two local languages as normal, they think that "a l'escola el català és més important però al carrer és més important l'espanyol [...] quan li pregunto a algun espanyol en català, alguna persona diu que no ha sentit bé però en espanyol pot respondre més," as Longhui explains. The academic language is then seen as different from the social language, be it Spanish, Mandarin or a vernacular such as Wu or Tianjinhua:

Longhui: [*talking about classroom notes*] sempre els escric en català [...] em sembla que els xinesos que surten de la Xina i van a l'escola a aprendre amb els seus companys parlen espanyol però amb els professors no ho sé
Researcher: no ho saps, i tu creus que de petits els haurien d'ensenyar l'espanyol o els haurien d'ensenyar el català?
Longhui: català perquè quan és més gran i va a l'escola, els companys parlen espanyol ja però de petits han d'estudiar català.
Researcher: perquè així és més fàcil després, no?
Longhui: perquè a l'escola els llibres tots són en català i si estudien l'espanyol no els poden entendre en català.

Nevertheless, Latin American students may have diverging feelings towards Catalan and Peninsular Spanish. Some of them verbalize an ideology that invests the least international language with less importance. For example, Ecuadorian Johan says regarding Catalan: "para mí es un idioma secundario." Cuban Dionisio — who arrived when he was three years old — explains that Catalan "no molesta tampoc" but admits that "a mi tampoc m'agrada parlar, a part de que no és la meva llengua doncs, no m'agrada parlar, em sento raro." In contrast, for others, such

as Ecuadorian Kevin — who arrived in Catalonia very young —, there is a clear hierarchy of languages led by Catalan:

> Cuando escuchas hablar a un catalán dices hostia este este tío tiene cultura digamos que no siempre es así pero dices este tío es listo este tío es no-se-qué, o escuchas a un tío hablar en castellano o a un un sudamericano hablando ahí con su forma que no estoy despreciándolo porque yo soy de Sudamérica y a veces de broma digo esas palabras tipo de no-se-qué la verga digo cosas de estas así de broma, yo lo digo pues lo ves que dices este chico no es digamos no sé listo culto no es culto.

## 3. Everyday opportunities for authentic language use

According to our participants, life outside school brings a wealth of opportunities for authentic language use. First of all, these students frequently take on roles that force them to interact with local adults in either of the two co-official languages. For instance, we have found both Chinese and Latin American students who act as language brokers for the family. Moreover, they may take on work responsibilities that call for authentic language use:

Researcher: a més a més d'aquestes classes, has après català o castellà d'alguna altra manera fora de l'escola?
Chunzhen: sí al bar del meu oncle que té les clients sempre parla castellà la meva cosina també ella que també fa dos anys però sembla tres, ella treballa al bar i sempre parla més millor que a mi el castellà
Yingmei: jo també i treballo al bar i toda espanyol alguna vegada habla català i alguna vegada parla castellà i todo junto.

Sometimes, the role these students adopt is that of a language teacher, as Esther and Nieves explain:

Esther: […] mi papá también en ocasiones me habla [*in Catalan*] para que a él no se le haga difícil como a mí entonces le vamos hablando y le ponemos libros para que los lea en catalán
Nieves: mi madre cuando estaba haciendo el curso nos pedía que le hiciéramos de pareja y lo hablábamos pero ella no respondía.

These students, however, also practice translanguaging for their own personal purposes. Thus, when asked on what occasions he uses Catalan or Spanish, Sanping answers:

> no sé porque por ejemplo tenemos una tienda y queremos comentar algo del cliente que necesita no sé qué cosa y lo hacemos en chino para que él no sepa que estamos agobiados y que no sabemos qué hacer en chino cuando estamos en la familia con los parientes un comentario sobre ellos sobre los platos en catalán cuando tampoco hace falta que nos entiendan

Or, as Nixiang explains, Catalan and Spanish may be used with relatives when knowledge of the L1 fails: "con mi hermano también hablamos en dialecto pero a veces no nos entendemos mucho usamos palabras del mandarín y ya nos acostumbramos a hablar en catalán o en castellano." The mother tongue — Mandarin or the Chinese vernacular in the case of Chinese students, and Spanish, in the case of Latin American youth — remains the language of the time spent watching

TV. However, Longhui explains that he often chooses to watch soccer on the Catalan television channel because "si miro televisión es para estudiar y aprender el catalán."

## 4. Presence and role of the first language

Nixiang's quote above hints at the presence at home of two different languages from her country of origin. In Catalonia, Chinese families may speak both Mandarin and a vernacular at home. In some cases, Mandarin is used as a sort of lingua franca, as in Sanping's home: when the researcher assumes that "en tu casa hablan el dialecto de Tianjin", Sanping corrects her by saying "no porque mi padre habla dialecto de Fujian y ellos [*father and mother, who speaks Tianjinhua*] no pueden comunicarse así y tienen que comunicarse en mandarín". In other interviews, students hide the family use of the vernacular because they believe that Mandarin is more prestigious than any other Chinese language: "jo parlo xinès com de poble perquè hi ha el mandarí i el de poble", explains Samuel, a student who had come from the region of Sheng in China and who used a Biblical name.

Students of Chinese origin may do translanguaging at home between two or even three languages whereas Latin American students may feel torn between two "Spanishes." The differences between Peninsular Spanish and the Latin American variety the family speaks pose several challenges for them. In the following extract, South American Nieves and Dominican Juan illustrate some of these conflicts:

Nieves: sí a ver habitualmente cuando estamos con los compañeros lo disimulamos el sho sha[7] cosas así más que nada porque en teoría dicen [*the local peers*] que se acostumbrarían pero mentira porque se burlarían. Lo he intentado, personalmente, y se ríen hasta el cansancio […]
Researcher: ¿y seguís usando el vos o has cambiado al tú?
Nieves: habitualmente sigo usando el vos sobre todo fuera de clase pero dentro uso el tú […]
Researcher: ¿qué tal con el vosotros?
Nieves: al principio fue horroroso porque no sabía utilizarlo pero ya me he ido acostumbrando
Juan: y más en Santo Domingo mi padre desde que ha estao aquí en este tema me la ha cogido con con las palabras de tío y esas cosas […] cuando fui pa'llá me relajaron mucho con estas palabras.

## 5. Presence and role of other languages

The mosaic of the languages present in the daily lives of these students would not be complete if we did not acknowledge the presence of, at least, two more languages: Korean and English. With regard to the Korean language, we detect a strong impact of the Korean culture in the leisure time of our young Chinese participants. Moling explains the normality with which she accepts the presence of the Korean language, a presence that has triggered in her the desire to learn yet another language:

Researcher: Super Junior, què és? un actor?

[7] In phonetic transcription, [ʃo:] and [ʃa:].

Moling: és un grup de trenta persones
Researcher: i per què t'agraden? què fan ells?
Moling: perquè és molt bonic i canten molt bé
Researcher: canten també? i en quina llengua canten els Súper Junior?
Moling: coreà i xinès
Researcher: i per què t'agradaria aprendre coreà?
Moling: perquè jo sempre miro pel·lícules de coreà […]
Researcher: i en quin llengua parlen ells els coreans? parlen en coreà? però tu com ho fas per entendre'ls?
Moling: parlen coreà i aquí tenen xinès
Researcher: ah en subtítols en xinès.

Also among Latin Americans societal bilingualism sparks an interest in language learning. For example, when asked which *Batxillerat* he was going to study, Ecuadorian Jorge says:

> [...] humanístic per anar a turisme a la universitat perquè des de que vaig aprendre el català ràpidament en tres mesos doncs m'he interessat en les llengües en tot perquè crec que dono bueno i això que vaig a turisme a aprendre moltes llengües […] el francès l'italià el portuguès l'anglès.

As regards English — the foreign language that all our interviewees study at school —both Latin American and Chinese youth share the belief that the English language may prove useful for international mobility and this belief becomes a motivating force, as Álvaro explains: "Me gustaría aprenderme el English […] porque si voy a un sitio que no hablan catalán y hablo yo pues a lo mejor no me entienden y entonces vale más aprender un idioma que se hable más."

English is also seen as useful in Catalonia when one of the interlocutors in the conversation may have faulty knowledge of the local languages. Longhui explains this case as follows:

Longhui: sí si hi ha alguna paraula de vocabulari no entenc en algun hospital o algun lloc puc parlar en anglès o xinès si ells parlen en anglès
Researcher: aquí vols dir? aquí?
Longhui: sí algun metge no parlen bé el català parlen anglès
Researcher: però tu parles bé el català pots parlar en català
Longhui: no alguns que no que no sé com parlar algunes paraules.

Nevertheless, such multilingualism in everyday life may entail some cognitive challenges beyond the fact that Catalan — and also Spanish for Chinese students — is a major academic obstacle for many of these students. As an illustrative example, we will provide a final quote from the interview with Xiaobai, a speaker of Wu and Mandarin who had studied English in China for four years; his reaction when asked about the English language speaks for itself:

Xiaobai: anglès? no m'agrada anglès
Researcher: per què no t'agrada l'anglès?
Xiaobai: perquè és difícil tens que aprendre castellà català i anglès la tercera no puc.

## Conclusions

As we have seen, the students interviewed tell us that the migration experience results in flexible multilingual practices and in rich functional repertoires that they consciously use in different contexts, with different interlocutors and for different purposes. They have also given us insights into a pragmatic language ideology that values several languages for different reasons:

- Catalan holds prestige and utility for everyday life in Catalonia;
- Spanish is seen as a useful language for everyday life in Catalonia and for state-wide and international mobility;
- the language (such as Mandarin, Tianjinhua or Wu) or variety of origin (such as Colombian Spanish or Argentinian Spanish) is valued for communication within the family and for maintaining links with the culture of origin;
- English is valued as an international language that facilitates international mobility and as a third/fourth linguistic resource in Catalonia when command of other languages fails;
- finally, other languages — such as Korean in the case of Chinese students — may be present and are normally accepted by students in leisure time.

These ideologies often reflect preconceived ideas that are held in the family and in the country of origin. Nevertheless, the students' spontaneous multilingual practices and the new experience of the local active bilingualism challenge and modify those preconceptions. Such changes and practices are not exempt from conflict. However, rather than ethnic, students experience the emerging challenges as predominantly cognitive. Therefore, the difficulties they go through should be addressed directly by those in charge of their education by giving multilingualism the academic — and social — value it deserves: in Liu et al's words (cited in Kamwangamalu 2010, p. 129), "in an increasingly globalized world, code changes may need to be added as a curriculum objective, a required skill for life".

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**Biodata**

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"… those that understood him smiled at one another and shook their heads, but, for mine own part, it was Greek to me."

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# In a Real Job: Teaching English in Vocational Learning

**Tònia Cladera Bohigas**
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## Abstract

Over the last few years I've been training in CLIL methodology (Content and Language Integrated Learning) in vocational learning in the field of the health care: I have developed several teaching plans which I like to share with other teachers.

In this article, I'll start by explaining why it is important to use English in vocational qualification programs. Then, I will present some ideas about teaching methodology in this field, shedding light on the bases of CLIL methodology and making a point on the importance of setting the activities in a professional environment. Some useful tricks and resources will be provided to help teachers improve their lessons or even begin with a subject in English. Afterwards, I'll share my experience in class, describing how I organize my subjects and supplying links where one can find complete teaching plans. To end the article, I'll explain several CLIL activities that can be adapted to any subject and recommend web tools and resources.

## Introduction. Why teach English in a vocational training program?

Some years ago, a few vocational education teachers shyly implemented activities in English in our subjects. We were odd species in our schools, and some mates, even members of the directorate, didn't understand this decision, considering it a waste of time.

We were eager to use English in class and help our students maintain the level they had gained in ESO. We were aware that all students needed English for several reasons: to go on to study advanced degrees and to fulfill requirements for many jobs, for instance. But we could find other reasons, such as students taking the decision to work abroad.

A few years ago, the LOE (Ley Orgánica de Educación) inserted changes in the design of vocational training. In Catalonia, one of the changes to be introduced was the teaching of a new subject, Technical English. Another one was the requirement to do at least a part of a module (subject) in English. This novelty meant training for the novice vocational English teachers (VETs), who had to cope with diverse challenges, depending on their starting point:

- English teachers that had always taught in ESO or *batxillerat* and had to update their teaching materials for a very different kind of education, more technical and practical.
- Vocational teachers keen on using English but who didn't how to prepare a lesson in this language and were afraid that the students wouldn't be able to follow it.

In 2003, with these fears and eager desires, we embarked on the new curriculum in the mid-level training progam, "Pharmacy and Healthcare Products". I am going to outline how I conceive of

English training in vocational learning and, more concretely, in the qualification program I teach in.

## Some methodological reflections

Both vocational education teachers and English teachers must take into account that all the activities in class must be related to *a real job*. I mean, the tasks carried out by the students shouldn't remind them of the *old* English lessons they had had in ESO, but rather they must talk about the actual professional tasks that will be required of them. For instance, in the field of Pharmacy, future technicians will have to deal with customers, write e-mails, have telephone conversations, and read scientific information, among other tasks. If the students feel that their learning process is related to their professional needs, they will get involved and will gain self-esteem.

We can't forget that the English level of our students tends to be very low, and we will have to adapt the activities in order for them to be comprehensible. Nevertheless, we can set up engaging activities to catch their attention and make them feel confident and satisfied with the result.

The most useful methodology for teaching English in vocational learning is CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning). A lot has been written about this methodology and here I am just going to explain its main principles and describe several projects that I have carried out.

In CLIL, the students learn both content (in my case, related to becoming a pharmacy technician) and a foreign language. To carry out a CLIL lesson, the teacher must carefully design several steps in it:

- Supply key words (most of them, technical vocabulary).
- Propose tasks in an increasing order of difficulty.
- For certain activities, supply scaffolding language, by which I mean useful language structures that help the students construct messages in English.
- Try to cover all the communicative skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) in a professional environment.
- Encourage students to create "something great" following a proposal. Creativity is the key to training skilled professionals.
- Assess the content (in a typical module) or the language (in the module "Technical English").

I have found it very useful to implement experimental projects in English (cooking and laboratory practices, for instance).

Recently, web tools have been making the teacher's task easier, as they provide an enticing environment in which to create activities for all levels.

## How to start: useful tricks

The first year I started to teach Technical English, I found a good bank of resources, a professional book to start off with without going into a panic:

*Nursing 1. Oxford English for Careers*, by Tony Grice and published by Oxford University Press (ISBN 978-0-19-456977-4).

This publisher offers books for other professions.

Three years ago, the Catalan Department of Education started a project to encourage VETs to create materials in English through a course called "Creació de materials en anglès per a la formació professional". All the projects designed in this course are published in the website "ARC": http://apliense.xtec.cat/arc/

Once you get in, go to "Cerca els teus recursos" and choose your professional family.

I strongly recommend it, as at present you can find more than 50 sets of material for teaching in Nursing, Mechanics, Industrial Chemistry, and many more professional fields. Each set of material is designed for at least ten hours of class.

Throughout the following sections I will detail more resources and useful websites.

**Sharing my experience: Including English activities in subjects usually taught in Catalan**

The current curriculum dictates including activities in English in at least one module of the Pharmacy program. Therefore, what do I do in my lessons?

- Sun protection. This is a problem-based learning activity in which the students learn how to avoid a sunburn, by answering questionnaires to determine their phototype and reading texts about products for this aim. The two teachers of Module 3 (*Dispensació de productes parafarmacèutics*) carry out this project in 5 hours.
- Let's have brunch. The students apply what they have learnt about nutrition by writing a recipe, doing a nutritional analysis of it, and cooking it. Finally, we have brunch all together. The two teachers carry out this project in 10 hours, in Module 3 and Module 12 (Technical English).
- Chemistry procedures. The students carry out chemical tests following a written procedure (see Figure 1). A good source of information is going to be published soon on the ARC website: *Physico-Chemical Assays of Solids*, by Francisco Javier Marin.

**Figure 1.** Doing lab work in English.

**At last, a new module: Technical English**

To design the sections of this module, the curriculum needs to be attentively studied and developed, taking into account that all learning activities must be framed in a professional environment. Briefly, the curriculum states that the learning results must be:

The student…

1. Recognises professional oral messages.
2. Understands professional written texts in a pharmaceutical context.
3. Produces oral messages in a clear and structured way.
4. Participates as an active agent in professional discussions.
5. Writes simple texts in standard language, using the proper register in each situation.
6. Shows professional attitudes and behaviors in accordance with international conventions.

Therefore, the teachers of Technical English in Pharmacy in my school have developed the following Formative Nucleuses (NF). In each NF most of the learning results are worked on:

NF1. Knowing your way around a medical environment (published in ARC by Jennifer Serarols, see Serarols (n.d.)). This material is a good introduction to our module because it allows students to learn the vocabulary regarding the body and health, to understand and explain symptoms, and to advise their patients on how to relieve their problems. It proposes activities using audios, *quizlets*, memory games, crossword puzzles, fill-in-the-gaps, writings, readings, and role playing.

NF 2. Symptoms and medication. In this unit the students learn basic vocabulary regarding symptoms and the appropriate medication, routes of administration, side effects, and recommendations for the patient. Among the activities I have designed, I would highlight two CLIL methodologies:

- Dictogloss (a listening in which they have to order word cards as they hear them, and then they try to explain the contents with their own sentences).

- Running dictation (a pair activity in which students have to fill in an incomplete aspirin leaflet by running to a wall where the whole text has been hung, memorizing the missing words, and coming back to dictate them to their classmate).

To learn more about dictoglosses and running dictations, see the sections entitled *Some useful resources and activities* and *References*.

NF 3. Cold, flu and related symptoms (published in ARC by myself, see Cladera (n.d.)). The aim of this unit is to learn about the prevention and treatment of colds and flus, to describe the symptoms associated with these illnesses, and to give advice to customers. It has a CLIL structure (key words, increasing difficulty of tasks, and creative activities to deal with customers). In this project the students end up performing a role-play. They work in pairs. One of them is a customer with several flu or cold symptoms and the other one is the Pharmacy Technician, who must be able to ask questions, give hygiene-related advice, and recommend the best treatment (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2.** Role-play of a customer-technician exchange in a realistic setting.

NF 4. Nutrition. A unit aimed at learning basic vocabulary regarding food and nutrition, giving nutritional advice to people in good health or in chronic disease situations, and being able to choose a meal in a restaurant when we travel abroad. We study this unit in the module Technical English and in Module 3 (*Dispensació de productes parafarmacèutics, UF3 Dietètica*) at the same time.

NF 5. Dermopharmacy (published in ARC by Thira Sánchez, see Sánchez (n.d.)). In this unit the students learn about the skin: its function, parts, kinds of skin, and the suitable products for protecting it. The unit contains a section on sun protection that can be worked on in Module 3 simultaneously.

NF 6. English for your career. The aim of this unit is to give the students tools for working abroad or interacting with foreign suppliers. They start by reading about pharmacies in England, then they watch some TED videos regarding job interviews, and afterwards, they perform a job interview role-play. Finally, they finish the unit off by creating a résumé through the Europass web page (https://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/en/documents/curriculum-vitae).

**Some useful resources and activities**

As I have already said, teaching English in Vocational Training must be related to *a real job*. The students should feel that they are the main character in their learning process. To achieve this goal, we teachers can find good help in CLIL courses, books and web tools.

Here I am going to describe some typical tasks in CLIL lessons that I carry out with my students. You can apply them no matter what your students are studying.

Among CLIL activities, we can use:

Find the odd one out. I propose this game to start a lesson, in order to review classifications already studied. I show 4 or 5 words, and the students must say which one doesn't fit and why. We can add an extra ludic component if we pass a ball among the pupils.

Flash cards**.** Used for studying or reviewing key words. You can use them on paper or as a web tool. I recommend having the students create them. They must write the definition or look for a

picture of the concept, and on the other side they write the word to learn or review. I like to use the cards for reviewing key words before each lesson. Flash cards that are created by using the web-tool *quizlet* (https://quizlet.com) are very attention-grabbing and students feel very competent with digital tools.

Dictogloss. The teacher gives a set of key words to each pair of students. Then, they listen to or watch a video and try to put the words in order as they hear them. Finally, they try to explain what they have learnt through the video by using their words. Therefore, they practise listening and speaking.

Substitution table**.** This kind of activity aims to encourage students to construct sentences and to speak. The teacher proposes a topic and the students construct sentences following the examples given (Table 1):

**Table 1**. A substitution table. (Example taken and modified from: *Nachqualifikation Englisch für die Primarschule im Kanton St.Gallen.*)

<table>
<tr><th>word class:<br>noun<br>subclass:<br>pronoun</th><th>word class:<br>verb</th><th>word class:<br>noun</th><th>word class:<br>verb<br>subclass:<br>+ / - form</th><th>word class:<br>adjectives</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">I</td><td rowspan="2">think<br>would say<br><br>don’t think<br>…</td><td rowspan="2">this treatment</td><td>is</td><td>efficient<br>dangerous<br>Correct</td></tr>
<tr><td>isn’t</td><td>adequate<br><br>right<br>incorrect</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">sentence</td></tr>
</table>

Running dictation. The teachers hangs several copies of a whole text on a wall and gives an incomplete version to each pair of students. One of them must remain seated and try to fill in the gaps with the help of their classmate, who must run to the wall, memorise the words that are missing and then come back and dictate them.

Jigsaw reading**.** This is an activity aimed at working on a long text in groups. First, the teacher briefly explains what the text is about to the students. The text is divided into five fragments. The

students form five groups of experts (numbered 1 to 5, for instance). Each group read their fragment and try to understand it and summarize it. Then, they separate into five new groups, so there is an expert on each fragment in each group. Each expert explains his or her fragment to the others. The aim is that all students get a general idea of the whole text.

**Web resources**

Among the wide range of web tools available, I like the following ones:

**quizlet.com**. Very easy to use, it is intended for creating flashcards. Once the students have created their list of words, pictures, and definitions, the app offers several games using them.

**edpuzzle.com**. An amazing resource created by a young Catalan teacher that allows teachers or students to take any video from YouTube, cut, insert quizzes, and even insert their voice. We can design a good didactic resource very easily with it.

**voki.com**. A web tool for creating a cartoon featuring your voice. I invite my students to give a speech in English and assign it to the character they prefer. Then they click on "Play" and…. Voilà! A funny dog speaking about the topic they are studying in their voice!

**Other web-resources:**

**listenaminute.com**. A great deal of listening exercises to choose from, at a basic level.

**linguee.com**. A website for translating groups of words, taking them from texts on the web.

**Conclusion**

Teaching English in vocational qualifications requires setting all activities in a professional environment. We can introduce English in every professional module, even when most of them are also taught in Catalan (in this case, the students learn professional contents in English). Moreover, many qualifications have a Technical English module; in this case, the aim is to learn the language in a professional context.

CLIL activities and web tools can help teachers design outstanding lessons. We shouldn't renounce being ambitious. I think that well-designed lessons will develop skilled technicians, able to respond to professional situations, even in English.

To sum up, CLIL methodology encourages students to learn in English and to be creative. At the same time, designing CLIL activities turns out to be a stimulating challenge for teachers.

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Decret 124/2012, de 9 d'octubre, pel qual s'estableix el currículum del cicle formatiu de grau mitjà de farmàcia i parafarmàcia.

http://www.xtec.cat/alfresco/d/d/workspace/SpacesStore/52043fc7-69c8-4017-a8d0-88513ab6c5b8/DOGC_T_Farmacia_parafarmacia.pdf

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**Biodata**

**Antònia Cladera** holds a degree in Pharmacy from the Universitat de Barcelona and is a Vocational Education and Training teacher in the field of the Health Care. She worked as a regulatory affairs technician for a multinational pharmaceutical company for seven years. She has improved her English by dealing with customers and traveling around. In 2005 she started to work as a VET teacher in Escola Solc Nou (Barcelona) and since 2011 she has been teaching at Institut Eugeni d'Ors (Badalona). In addition, she is presently collaborating with the Catalan Department of Education, coordinating a course related to CLIL in Vocational Learning (VL).

She loves teaching because she learns a lot from young people, and she helps them to develop personally and professionally. She feels committed to innovating in VL with two goals in mind: to motivate students by using practical methodologies and to integrate English into their learning process.

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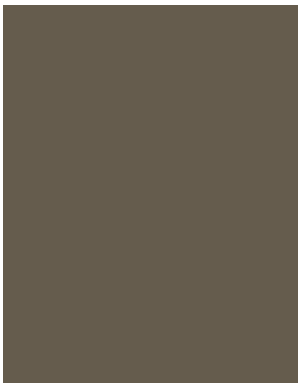
"O true apothecary! Thy drugs are quick."

"Thou art a very ragged wart."



"Fillet of fenny snake,
In the cauldron boil and bake;
Eye of newt, and toe of frog,
Wool of bat, and tongue of dog,
Adder's fork, and blind-worm's sting,
Lizard's leg, and owlet's wing,—
For a charm of powerful trouble,
Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.
Double, double toil and trouble;
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble."

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# My Diary

**Irene Roquet**

## Abstract

When learning a foreign language, developing productive skills is not an easy task, let alone considering the human resources for dealing with crowded classrooms. Another obstacle is students' fear regarding language production, and sometimes, also, a lack of motivation can lead to very modest and low production. Very Young Learners tend to listen but they hardly ever speak. These students probably have some words in their vocabulary but they do not feel ready to produce. Some other students will feel capable of repeating whatever the teacher says. In these cases they are actually imitating rather than acquiring and producing the foreign language. Therefore, foreign language learning should be taught in a significant and meaningful context, in which the input received leads to comprehension and production.

## Introduction

*My Diary* is a linguistic approach created out of the spoken stories (*contes dialogats*) by Josep Maria Artigal in his series *"Ready for a Story!"*. The first one to put this idea into practice was Xaro Mas, a teacher from Granada, who used *My Diary* in all her English lessons. Artigal took the idea from Mas and developed it. Now, they work together. The main idea of this approach is to introduce the foreign language through stories in which students can understand the language by living it. In other words, at a very early stage children feel ready to produce, and thanks to gestures they can convey the meaning of their productions, which are based on repetitions. Later on, they show the language, by making it public in a notebook, called *My Diary*. *My Diary* is a personal record book in which students use language to retell lived experiences very much related to their personal lives, such as holidays, school trips, a favourite book, the weekend, their meals… After using and mastering the language orally and individually with some linguisitc support (further explained in the section *How*) they later on put the structures down into words in their diary, making it public. Students move ahead in the upper levels with the same diary, where all their progress can be seen.

## *My Diary* within our school linguistic context

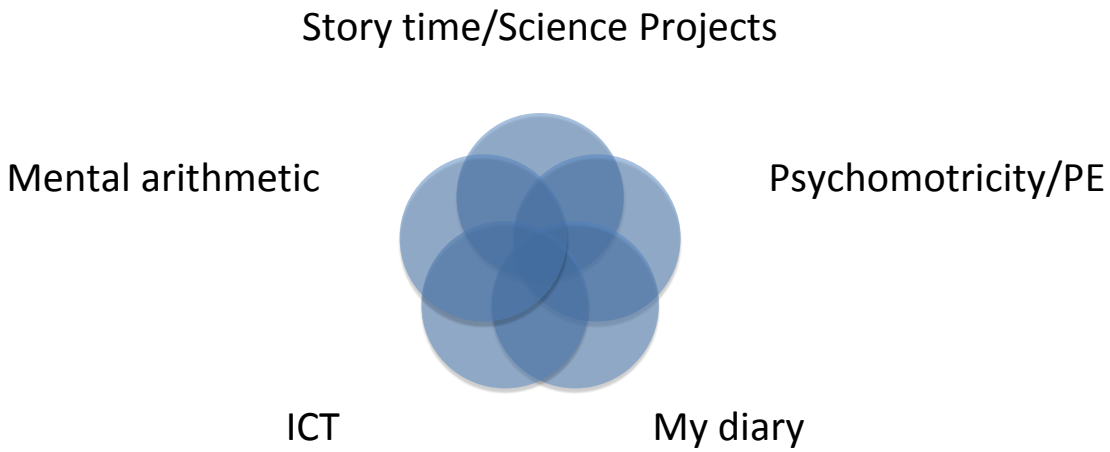
In Escola Marta Mata, in Torelló, the main idea of the English project is "to have fun and learn in English", in other words, "Live the English Language" rather than "Learn English". Our aim is for students from a very early age (3rd term of P3) to be aware that English is a language to be used, to tell stories, to play, to dance, to perform little role plays… These very young learners in Preschool Education are exposed to and immersed in the English language for 3 to 4 hours a week, and this exposure grows as they get older, until in the last Primary Cycle they are immersed in English for 6 to 7 hours a week (see Table 1). Our main objective is to make it an ongoing project throughout the Primary stage.

**Table 1.** English in the curriculum of Escola Marta Mata.

| PRESCHOOL **EDUCATION** | **SESSIONS PER WEEK** |
|---|---|
| READY FOR A STORY! | 1 |
| Psychomotors skills (from P4 on) | 1 |
| ICT (from P4) | 1 |
| **1st PRIMARY CYCLE** | **SESSIONS PER WEEK** |
| English Project | 2 |
| PE | 2 |
| ICT | 1 |
| **2nd PRIMARY CYCLE** | **SESSIONS PER WEEK** |
| Eglish Project | 3 |
| PE (3rd level) | 2 |
| ICT | 1 |
| Mental arithmetic | 1 |
| **3rd PRIMARY CYCLE** | **SESSIONS PER WEEK** |
| Eglish Project | 3 |
| PE (3rd level) | 2 |
| ICT | 1 |
| Mental arithmetic | 1 |

Although we consider this approach quite highly, *My Diary* is not the main methodology in the school, because we deal with English from many different perspectives (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1.** Curricular areas in which English is used.




Each area has its specific vocabulary, but at the same time there is also a great number of communicative functions which are shared amongst the different perspectives, specially classroom management language (asking for permission, starting the class, organising the class, tidying up…); instructional language (to start working, during computer time, in the gym…); functional and communicative language and finally the structures and vocabulary specific for each area.

**WH- questions around *My Diary*:**

As teachers, we may ask ourselves some questions when planning and developing lessons. These are the questions which could wrap up *My Diary* in a nutshell:

***What?***

In terms of content we focus on:

- Personal information.
- Class/school events.
- General information about close context.
- The topics above sequenced throughout the different levels. (See Table 2.)

In terms of format:

- Text (help students to organize the pages from a very early age). (See Figure 2.)
- Photograph/drawings/stickers to support their written production.

**Table 2.** Content of *My Diary* throughout the curriculum.

**MY DIARY**

| P5 | | 1r | | 2n | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **TOPICS** | **LANGUAGE** | **TOPICS** | **LANGUAGE** | **TOPICS** | **LANGUAGE** |
| 1.NAME<br>2.AGE<br>3. FAVOURITE COLOUR<br>4.LIKES + FOOD<br>5.EXCURSIONS<br>6.WEATHER | 1. My name is …<br>2. I am …years old<br>3. My favourite colour is…<br>4. I like …fish/I don't like…<br>5. We went to …<br>6. Today it's …..sunny/cloudy/raining/windy/ hot/cold | 1.MY FAMILY<br><br><br><br>2. SCHOOL TRIPS<br><br>3. MY PRESENTS<br><br><br>4. LIVE<br><br>5. PETS<br><br><br>6. WEEKEND. (Saturday and Sunday)<br><br><br><br><br>7. TRANSPORT | 1. My mummy is … How many brothers and sisters have you got? I've got 2 brothers.<br>2. We went to …<br><br>3. My Christmas presents are…<br>My favourite present is…<br><br>4. I live in Torelló<br><br>5. Have you got any pets at home? I have …1 dog.<br><br>6. On Sunday I went to ….with my …<br><br>7. My favourite transport is…because it is… I go to school on foot/by… | 1. HOLIDAYS<br>2. WEATHER<br>3. PRESENTS<br><br><br>4. SEASON: SPRING<br><br><br><br>5. EASTER<br><br><br><br><br>6. EXCURSIONS<br><br><br><br>7. WEEKEND<br><br><br>8.FEELINGS | 1. On holidays I went to ….<br>2. Today it is …<br>3. Dear wise men: This year I would like a …<br><br>4. In spring there are …<br>The weather is……<br>We are wearing…<br><br>5. At Easter we ate …<br>Easter eggs, Easter cake, chocolate eggs…with my …<br><br>6. We went to … by…<br><br>7.On Saturday /On Sunday I went to …with… by…<br><br>8.I feel /I am happy/sad/angry/sleepy/surprised |

| 3rd | | 4th | | 5th | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **TOPICS** | **LANGUAGE** | **TOPICS** | **LANGUAGE** | **TOPICS** | **LANGUAGE** |
| 1. HOLIDAYS<br><br><br>2. INTRODUCING ONESELF: hobbies… can / can't<br><br><br><br><br>3. MY BIRTHDAY<br><br><br>4. MY HOUSE<br>4.1. MY BEDROOM | 1. I went to … with my family.<br>I went by…<br><br>2. My name is …<br>I am …<br>I live in…<br>I have …(family)<br>I have …(pets)<br>My favourite colour is …<br>I practice (sports)<br>I can /can't…<br><br>3. My birthday is in……<br>I am……<br>In my cake there are …candles<br><br>4.I live in a (house/flat/farm..) in (town)<br>It is …big/small/medium sized…<br>It has got … rooms : …bedrooms, kitchen,…<br>There is/are…<br>In my bedroom there is a ….(objects ..)<br>Prepositions : in/on/under/next | 1.HOLIDAYS<br><br><br><br>2. HOBBIES<br>2.1. MY AFTER SHOOL ACTIVITIES (sports, instruments, arts)<br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br>3. SEASON: WINTER | 1.I went to…<br>By… with…. On….<br>We had dinner in …<br>We had fun.<br><br>2. I practice… (sport)<br>I can/can't…<br>My favourite sport is…<br>because…<br>Frequency (once/twice a week, 3 times…on Monday…)<br>(space) In……<br>To practice… I need…<br><br>2.1. When I finish school at…I do some /one activity /ies.<br>I go to ….from (digital time) to…<br>We learn to……<br>I like it because …<br><br>3. In winter it is …<br>Winter is in (months)<br>I don't like/like winter because…<br>The colours of winter are…<br>In winter:<br>-we can ski, …<br>-we can't go to the beach…<br>-we celebrate… | 1.MY HOLIDAYS<br><br><br><br><br><br><br>2..MY FAVOURITE SPORT<br><br><br><br><br><br><br>3.MY DREAM SCHOOL<br><br><br><br><br><br>4.MY FAVOURITE CATALAN TRADITION | I went to…<br>I travelled by…<br>I travelled with…<br>One day, I……<br>I like it because…<br><br><br><br><br>2. My favourite sport is…<br>I play …on a …(place)<br>I need …to play /practice…<br>There are …teams of ….players each.<br>It is an individual sport.<br>( revision of frequency)<br>I like it because…<br>My favourite …….(sport) player is …<br><br>3.My dream school is(a science school/robot school …because you can …<br>There is /are …<br>It is under/near/inside/on /next to/…<br><br><br>I'm from …<br>One of my favourite celebrations in my country |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5. SEASONS: AUTUMN/ MONTHS<br><br>6.MY FAVOURITE SHOP<br><br>7. MEALS AND FOOD<br><br>8.HALLOWEEN<br><br>9.WEEKEND : days of the week | to/between)<br>Upstairs/downstairs<br><br>In autumn it is ...<br>Autumn is in (months)<br>I don't like/like autumn because...<br>The colours of autumn are...<br>In Autumn:<br>-leaves fall....<br>-the trees are ...<br>There are ...<br>We can see...<br>Birds fly away<br>We celebrate ...<br><br>6. My favourite shop is ...because.....<br><br>7.Yesterday I had...for (breakfast/lunch/dinner)<br>It was healthy/unhealthy<br><br>8. Halloween is in ...<br>We eat sweets and candies.<br>Children wear costumes.<br>There are pumpkins.<br>Children walk in the streets asking for candies<br><br>9. I went to ...with...<br>on Saturday /Sunday... | 4.CHRISTMAS<br><br>5. ASKING FOR HEALTHY PROBLEMS/ GIVING ADVICE<br><br>6.CARNIVAL<br><br>7. SCHOOL TRIPS | - At Christmas we eat ...<br>.We wear...<br><br>4.Who (Who did you celebrate Christmas with?)<br>How (How did you celebrate Christmas?)<br>Where (Where did you celebrate Christmas?)<br>My favourite Christmas present was...<br><br>5.. I'm hungry/thirsty/tired/ I have a cold/<br>Sore throat /stomach ache...<br>Go to the doctor/eat /drink, have a rest/sleep<br><br>6. For/At Carnival I'm going to put on a ....costume.<br>For it, I need....(dressing complements)<br><br>7.We went to ...by...with...<br>To+ objective<br>We (verbs in simple past)...<br><br>8.On ... we have...<br>At... (digital time) | 7.MY FAVOURITE PLACE IN THE WORLD AND WHY | is ...<br>At...(festivities)...we (activities)...<br>We sometimes/never/always ...<br>We (activity) because...<br>I usually celebrate...with ... |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10.SEASONS: SUMMER CLOTHES<br><br>11. SCHOOL TRIPS | 10.In Summer it is very hot.<br>We can go to the beach/swimming pool<br>We are wearing...<br>I like Summer because...<br>We can play...<br>We can eat...<br><br>11. we went to ...by...with... | 8.TIMETABLE (subjects, digital time , days, teachers)<br><br>9.MY EVERYDAY ACTIONS<br><br>(GOING TO A RESTAURANT) | With ...(teacher)<br><br>9.Time expressions(in the morning/afternoon/evening/at night)<br>Everyday actions | | |

| 6TH | | |
|---|---|---|
| **TOPICS** | **LANGUAGE** | |
| 1MY FAMILY: members, names, age, jobs, likes and dislikes, abilities.<br><br>THE LAST BOOK I READ<br><br>2.THE LAST FILM I WATCHED<br><br>3.RAISING MONEY CAMPAIGN | She is good at ...<br>She works in a ...<br><br>4. To raise money for... we could.... | |

**TRANSVERSAL TOPICS:**

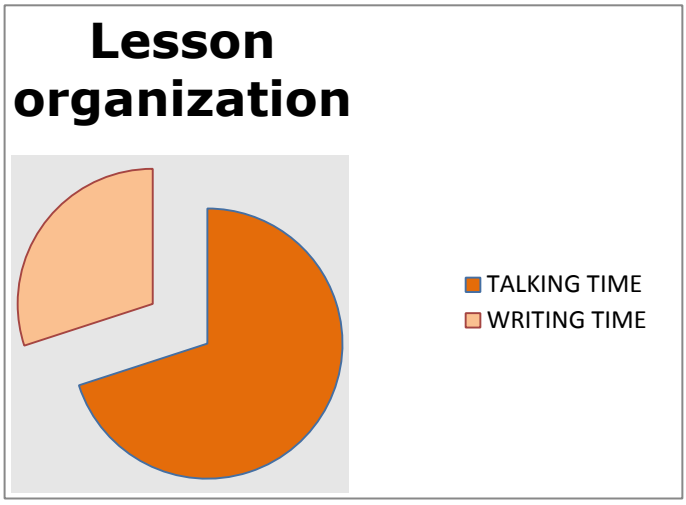
- WEEKEND
- SCHOOL FESTIVITIES: castanyada, Halloween, music week, TV3's Marató, Christmas, St. George...
- SCHOOL TRIPS

**Figure 2.** Continuous work with page layout from the earliest ages on.

***How?***

In terms of how we organize a lesson, as you can see from the diagram below (Figure 3) we devote much more time to speaking than writing. Students practice and master a particular set of linguistic structures orally, which they afterwards write down in words without much difficulty.

**Figure 3.** Proportions of time devoted to speaking and writing in a typical lesson.




During the talking time, we start out with a question, and as said before, a question around a topic close to the students and their interests. Another aspect to consider is modelling. Modelling before children produce is crucial to provide them with examples of what we expect them to produce and for encouraging them to take an active part in the communicative activity in a "natural setting".

We always use language to help students produce, and this language support varies depending on the age of the target students.

Figure 4 is an example of a substitution chart in 2nd grade. They have many options and they choose the one that best fits their talk — or ask to add a new one. Later on, to increase the level of difficulty we can remove the vocabulary and ask them to reproduce their speech. This is the idea

that pervades *My Diary* at all times: scaffolding, that is, supporting the learning process but at the same time promoting a deeper level of thinking.

**Figure 4.** An example of language support in a second-grade class.

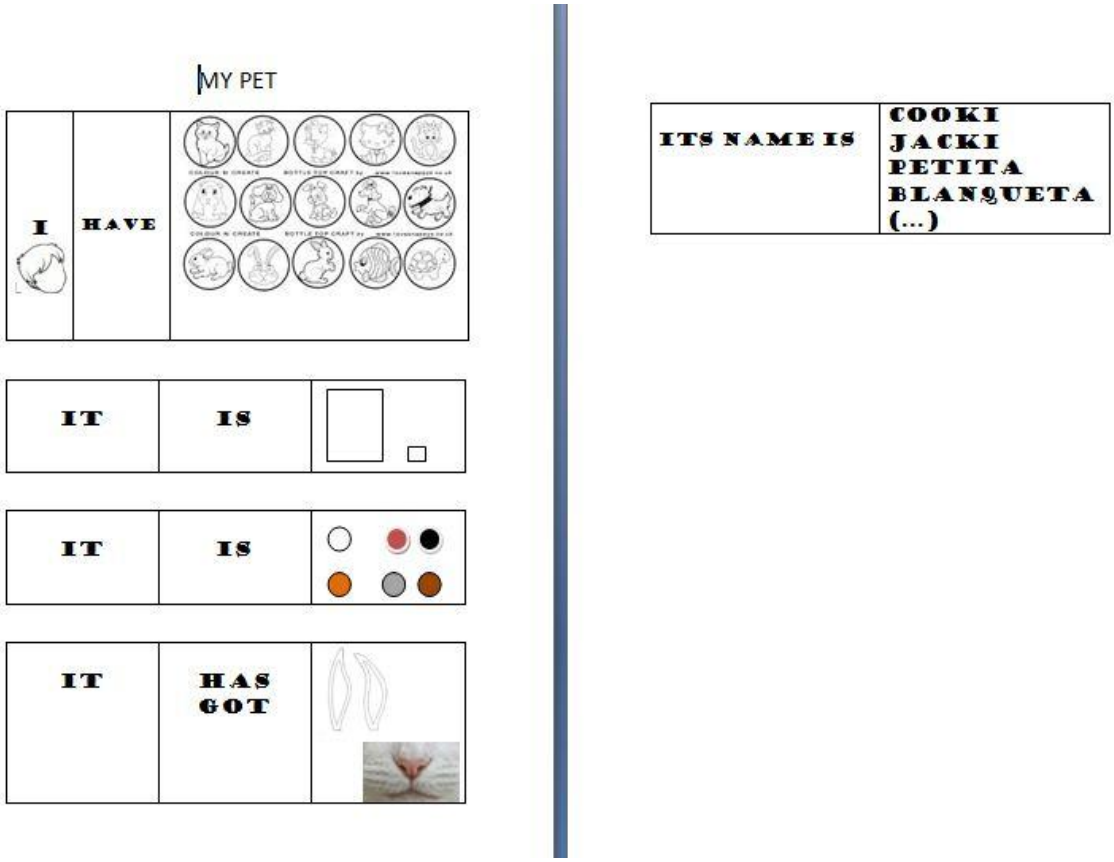
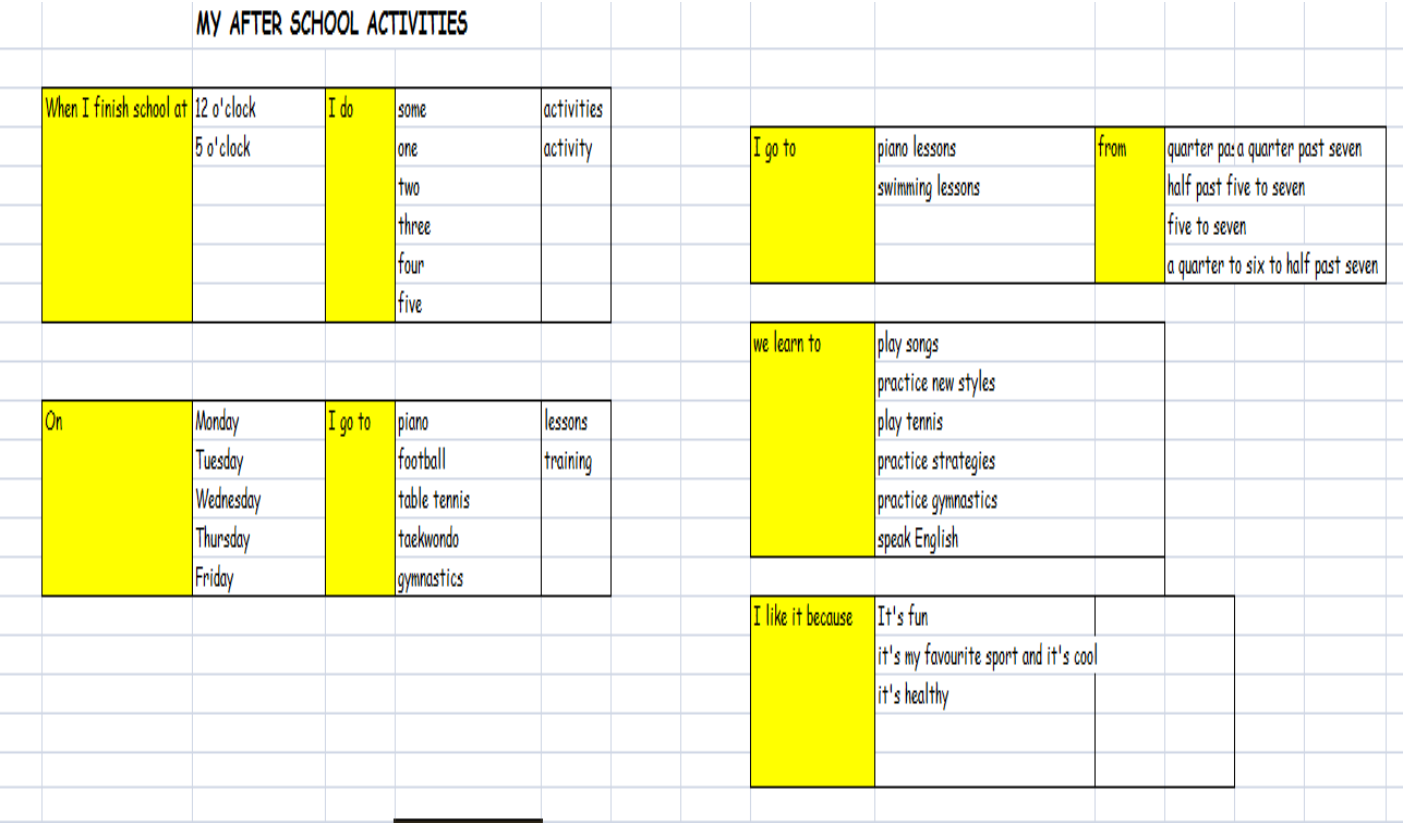



Figure 5 is another example of language support in P5. It combines text and images. We have to consider that at this point they cannot read, so the images support their production. The "topic" covered (in this case food) is also worked on in Artigal's spoken stories, which gives even more sense to what is being done and facilitates children's oral production.

**Figure 5.** A more visually oriented language support for P5 students.

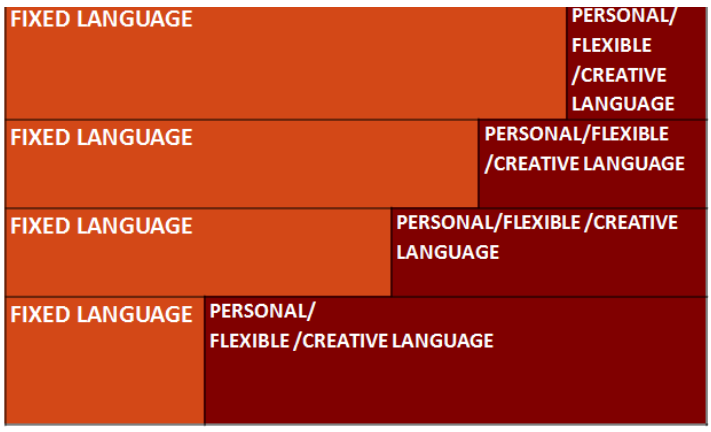
Figure 6 is an example of a 4th-grade language support. Students are responsible for creating it, since it is something absolutely personal and they should not be conditioned beforehand. We can also provide it filled in and they choose the most appropriate option.

**Figure 6.** Language support generated by fourth-grade students.




At this point, we can cleary see how we continually take steps forward with the written part of *My Diary*. At the very beginning of it, there is a lot of fixed language and little room for flexible or creative language use. As the students grow older, there is a great deal of freedom for personal language, and the amount of fixed language decreases (see Figure 7).

**Figure 7.** Changes in the ratios of fixed language to free language and content over time.



Again, in Figure 8, you can see the evolution of their written language production with some real examples. I consider that this evolution is tightly linked to Bloom's taxonomy, which goes from the most simple cognitive skills to the most complex ones. According to Bloom's taxonomy, in a way, we set objectives from the concrete to the abstract.

**Figure 8.** Examples of how students' writing changes over time.

- **1- Complete sentences with a word (or image) of personal information.**

*On holidays I went to the*

- **2- Complete a sentence with a phrase.**

*On holidays I went to the beach with my mummy, my daddy and my brother.*

- **3- Complete a sentence with the nouns and complements (they only have the connectors)**

*On Saturday I went to the beach with my family by car.*

- **4- Complete a sentence with the nouns, verbs and complements.**

*On Monday I go to piano lessons from half past five to seven o'clock. We learn to play new songs. I like it because it's my favourite instrument and it's fun.*

***When?***

Ideally, these actvities are done in split-group sessions. Sometimes I have the support of a student's au pair, who comes weekly on a volunteer basis. We can resplit the groups, and they can also report each other's explanations, using the 3rd person. *Ada's favourite book is… She read it in 3rd grade…*

**Figure 9.** My Diary activities in split-group classes.

***Why?***

Why do we do regard *My Diary* as an ongoing project after 1st grade, which is what Artigal and Mas suggest?

Because when doing *My Diary*, motivation is high. Learners are eager to speak, either because they are interested in the topic and have something new to say about it or because they want to contribute to achieving a task objective.

It is "English to take away," that is, they can leave the English lesson with something to produce. When they are very young it can be done through a mediator, which is a puppet, a story, a song and it speaks English, and they take it home with them to help them speak. It is also a nice way to link family and school.

Furthermore, needless to say, families play a very much important role in the children's learning process. This is why every now and then *My Diary* goes home, so that apart from students, families are involved. Their role consists of listening to their kids and reading their productions with them. Sometimes they also help by providing photographs, which are extremely useful for supporting the text and consequently supporting students' production. *My Diary* is also an "excuse" so that parents and children spend some time together and the adults have the chance to praise the young ones for their work. Finally, the written feedback that they give us from time to time is very important for us teachers to take into consideration, both positive comments and comments on areas in need of improvement.

Another reason why we firmly believe in *My Diary* is because children play the role of the main character during the learning process while working on the 4 skills and interacting and sharing information with other students. In other words, they work with the language in a holistic approach. They also learn to organize the page (text and photographs), and this leads to raising their self-esteem and their motivation to improve and keep learning. After all, motivation is a key element for learning to take place! So if there is motivation, learning comes along.

Moreover, although *My Diary* focuses on personal information of the students, sometimes we can start to introduce grammar points and semantic fields as well as comment on some functional structures. It is easy to link to the concept of the project which is being worked on in the English class. Table 3 is an example.

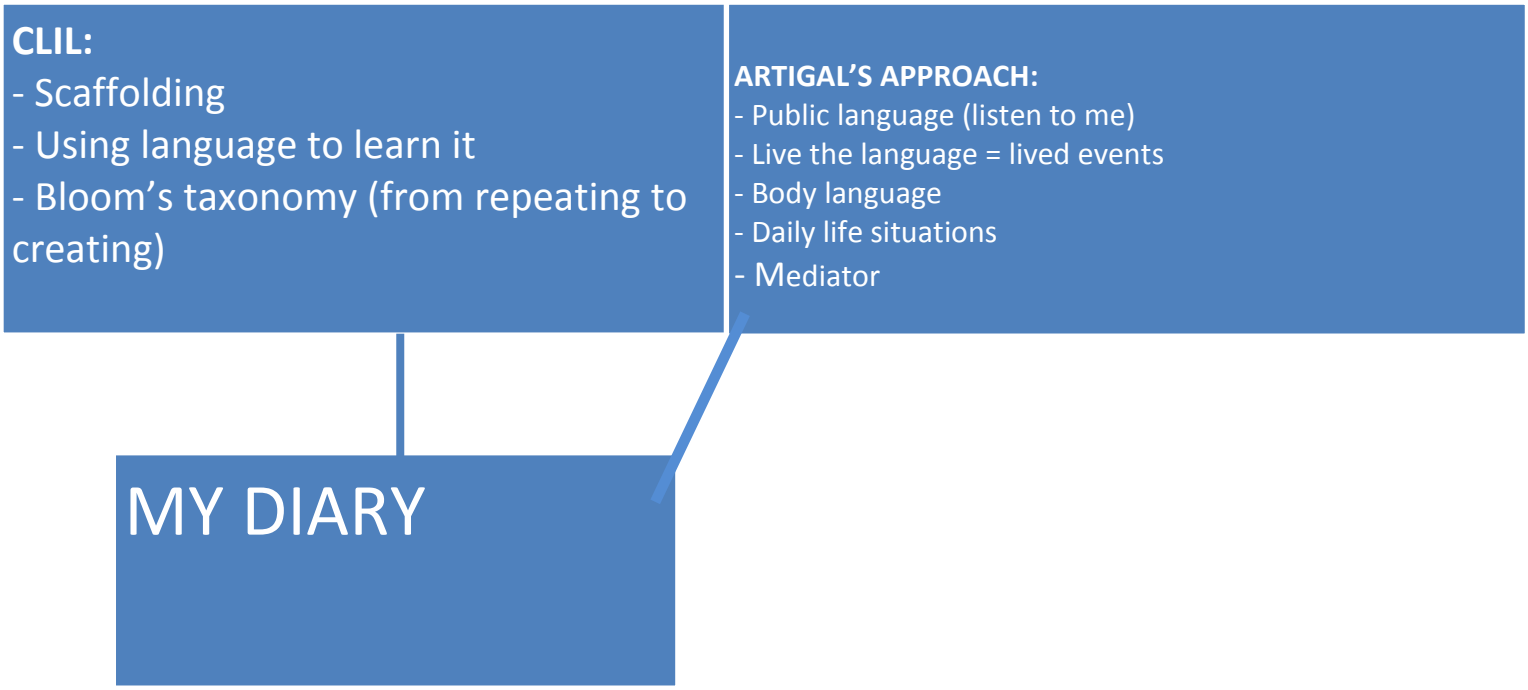
**Table 3.** A topic in *My Diary* with grammar, lexical, and functional language objectives.

| **MY HOBBIES** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| GRAMMAR POINTS:<br>Like + ing<br>Affirmative / negative<br>Do / don't<br>Adverbs of frequency | VOCABULARY:<br>Sports<br>Instruments<br>Leisure activities<br>Days of the week<br>Time | FUNCTIONAL STRUCTURES:<br>Asking and talking about our own hobbies<br>Talking about frequency | PROJECT:<br>THE OLYMPIC GAMES<br>FREE TIME / HOBBIES |
| | | | |

Apart from *My Diary*, which is a personal record book, together we also make the *School Diary*. It is placed on a public wall in the school, and whenever we pass by, I stop students and ask them to read or explain what they see in the pictures. This diary grows as the school year progresses. It gathers texts about school trips, school celebrations, or any other special event affecting some students in the school. Once it is finished, they take it home and share it with their families, and they then give us some feedback, which we consider crucial.

To sum up, we consider that when working with *My Diary*, we are aware that we are using some ideas from CLIL and some ideas from Artigal (see Figure 10).

**Figure 10.** Relationship between *My Diary*, CLIL, and the ideas of Josep Maria Artigal.




To finish off, I would like to summarize the whole article with what I consider essential: Living the language and practicing for perfection are a MUST.

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**Biodata**

**Irene Roquet** has been an English teacher since 2009. She studied at the UAB, and she carried out one of her training periods in Richmond-upon-Thames (London, England). She loves challenges and regards herself as a lifelong learner with a great interest in project-based teaching and learning. And this is what she bases her Primary School English syllabus on. Ms Roquet is currently taking an expert course on CLIL. She took a course at the NILE Specialist Teacher Development Institute for teacher training. She has been teaching 3- to 12-year-old children in state schools all around Catalonia. Now she is working in a large school in Torrelló called Marta Mata, where she develops all these skills.

**********

"I'll call for pen and ink and write my mind."

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# Fictitious Emails and Their Use as a Motivational Strategy

**Julie Waddington**
*Universitat de Girona*

**Yasmina El Bakouri El Farri**

## Abstract

This article aims to show how a fictitious email persona and fictitious email correspondence can be used to motivate students within the English classroom, thus helping to achieve curriculum objectives while also fostering an active and stimulating environment. Practicum activities carried out in the upper stages of a state primary school in Catalonia are presented as an illustrative case study which provides various examples of how to deploy the kind of motivational strategies proposed by Zoltán Dörnyei (2001) in *Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom.*

## Introduction

Given the increasing accessibility of ICT resourses, it is not surprising that teachers-in-training are making more and more use of such resources when designing potential teaching/learning activities as part of their assessed work. The pedagogical justification for such activities often rests on a simple claim that they are entertaining, dynamic, innovative, motivating and so on. Over recent years there has been a notable shift towards what could be deemed an overuse of such resources or, to be more precise, to an uncritical use of them which overemphasises aspects such as innovation and motivation over and above the pedagogical justification for deploying a particular strategy or resource. The importance given to innovation and originality (by an innovation-obsessed society in general and by potentially misleading assessment criteria within the university setting) sometimes exacerbates this problem and misdirects students' focus of attention. Instead of considering how the activities they design meet curriculum objectives or may contribute towards generating positive learning outcomes, the question, instead, becomes 'Is it innovative enough?'

This trend notwithstanding, an interesting and effective use of ICT resources has recently emerged, which provides the focal point of this paper. This use involves the creation of a fictitious virtual persona to frame a teaching proposal. The idea is that the virtual persona and not the teacher is the one who introduces students to a new topic or invites them to embark on a new project. The teacher then mediates what follows, but the instigator of the action is the virtual (and fictitious) persona. Throughout the project, this persona reappears periodically via email correspondence or through a webquest to provide further instructions, guidelines, feedback and other information, and to maintain the guiding thread which frames the overall project.

The most successful example of this seen to date was observed in the context of Practicum activities in 2014. This case provides an illustrative example to help identify the significance of such a strategy in terms of 1) engaging students; 2) providing a structure for effective classroom organisation; 3) facilitating learning by doing in a learner-centred way; and 4) completing a set of activities that develop basic skills.

This paper will present this case as an illustrative example of an effective motivational strategy, while also suggesting that the use of a fictitious email persona opens up interesting questions

related to existing theories on motivation and, in particular, to the concept of willingness to communicate.

## Theoretical framework: Willingness to communicate

According to MacIntyre et al. (1998, p. 547), 'the ultimate goal of the learning process should be to engender in language students the willingness to seek out communication opportunities and the willingness actually to communicate in them.' The creation of *willingness to communicate* (hereinafter WTC) is thus seen as a proper objective of L2 education and one whose absence from teaching programmes may be indicative of their failure. The concept of WTC was first introduced in relation to first language communication by McCroskey and Richmond (Willingness to Communicate Scale 1985, 1987, and 1992), who conceptualise it as a personality construct (1990, p. 21). Thus, while they consider WTC to be 'a volitional choice which is cognitively processed,' it is the personality of the individual that ultimately acts as the main factor in determining how the choice is made and what decision they reach (to communicate or not to communicate). This construct therefore posits personality traits such as anxiety, communication apprehension, shyness, introversion and reticence (underpinning an unwillingness to communicate) in opposition to other traits such as talkativeness, self-confidence, and extroversion, which are understood to underpin and promote WTC.

It is clear, however, that many other factors come into play when considering WTC in relation to second language learning, and most authors agree that its manifestation in L2 cannot be viewed as a simple extension of its manifestation in L1. Self-perceived competence is just one of the factors that can play a significant role in determining willingness or unwillingness to communicate, as McCroskey points out (1992, p. 22). Despite such qualifications, the model still remains heavily biased towards a personality-based approach. By contrast, and in a way which is particularly pertinent to the study of second languages, MacIntyre et al. (1998) argue that WTC need not be limited to a trait-like variable and can be treated, instead, as a 'situational variable with both transient and enduring influences.' In a move which is of interest to our present study, they also set out to extend the focus beyond that of merely speaking, to take into account the influence of WTC on other modes of production, including writing and comprehension of spoken and written language forms (1998, p. 82).

The importance of conceptualising WTC as a situational rather than personality-based variable cannot be underestimated in L2 learning insofar as classroom situations can be moulded, framed, created and manipulated by teachers in order to optimise WTC among their students. In the model presented by MacIntyre et al. (1998), two immediate precursors of WTC are proposed as situational antecedents to communication: (a) the desire to communicate with a specific person and (b) state self-confidence. Although the latter may at first sight recall the personality-based model, it is not intended to describe a general personality trait but, instead, a transient state within a given situation (thus we may find a 'shy' child entering into a state of self-confidence if the situation manages to foster this). It is, however, the first antecedent — the desire to communicate with a specific person — that will provide the main focus of our study here. According to MacIntyre et al., the majority of communication episodes in which this desire to communicate is manifested can be explained by the interpersonal purposes of *control* and *affiliation*, where *control* is conceived of as a motivational orientation which instigates communication and establishes its parameters and limits, and where *affiliation* depends on the interest in establishing a relationship with the interlocutor and is prompted by personal characteristics of the interlocutor, such as attractiveness, similarity, physical proximity, and repeated exposure (1998, p. 550).

The case study presented here provides a clear example of a teaching proposal which effectively created WTC among students by providing the situational antecedents to communicate indicated by MacIntyre et al.: (a) the desire to communicate with a specific person and (b) state self-confidence. In the case of the first antecedent, the fact that the specific person is a fictitious persona introduces a new element into the concepts of *control* and *affiliation* that will be discussed later. And in the case of state self-confidence, we will show how this is created and maintained through the deployment of a series of carefully planned motivational strategies.

## The case

The case discussed was a real experience implemented by a student (the second author of this article) of the Primary School Education degree of the University of Girona during her fourth year of Practicum in the 2013-2014 academic year.

## Context

After observing classes and talking with the class teacher about the content the pupils were going to work on during the term, the student teacher designed a teaching unit according to the pupils' needs and interests. The unit plan, called *Password Inspectors,* was designed for fifth-year primary students and consisted in a webquest to be used to develop English language skills. The webquest can be viewed at https://sites.google.com/site/webqueeest .

The main idea of the unit is that someone (Mr. Kalvin) sends an email to the students because he needs some help: his computer is locked and he cannot unlock it. His password has been stolen by a hacker. The hacker tells Mr. Kalvin that if he wants his password back, he has to find and solve some clues. But these clues are hidden in a school in Catalonia. Since it is impossible for the professor to go to the school, he is asking the fifth graders from the school for their help.

The proposal was carried out with a group of ten students in El Rodonell school, located in Corçà (Baix Empordà, Catalonia). Although the level of English in this group is generally high, abilities and attitudes at an individual level vary considerably, with some who are eager to take on new challenges and activate their existing knowledge, and others who are more reluctant to speak up in class and have more difficulties completing tasks than their classmates.

## Different stages of implementation

The unit was carried out once a week on Fridays, during the usual English class period of one and a half hours, over a period of six weeks. The activities took up about one hour of class time, with half an hour being left over for free reading activities at the end of class. A description of the activities and the sequence in which they were carried out can be seen in Table 1. In general, however, the proposal has three stages of implementation, which are detailed below.

**Table 1.** Sequencing and grouping of unit activities.

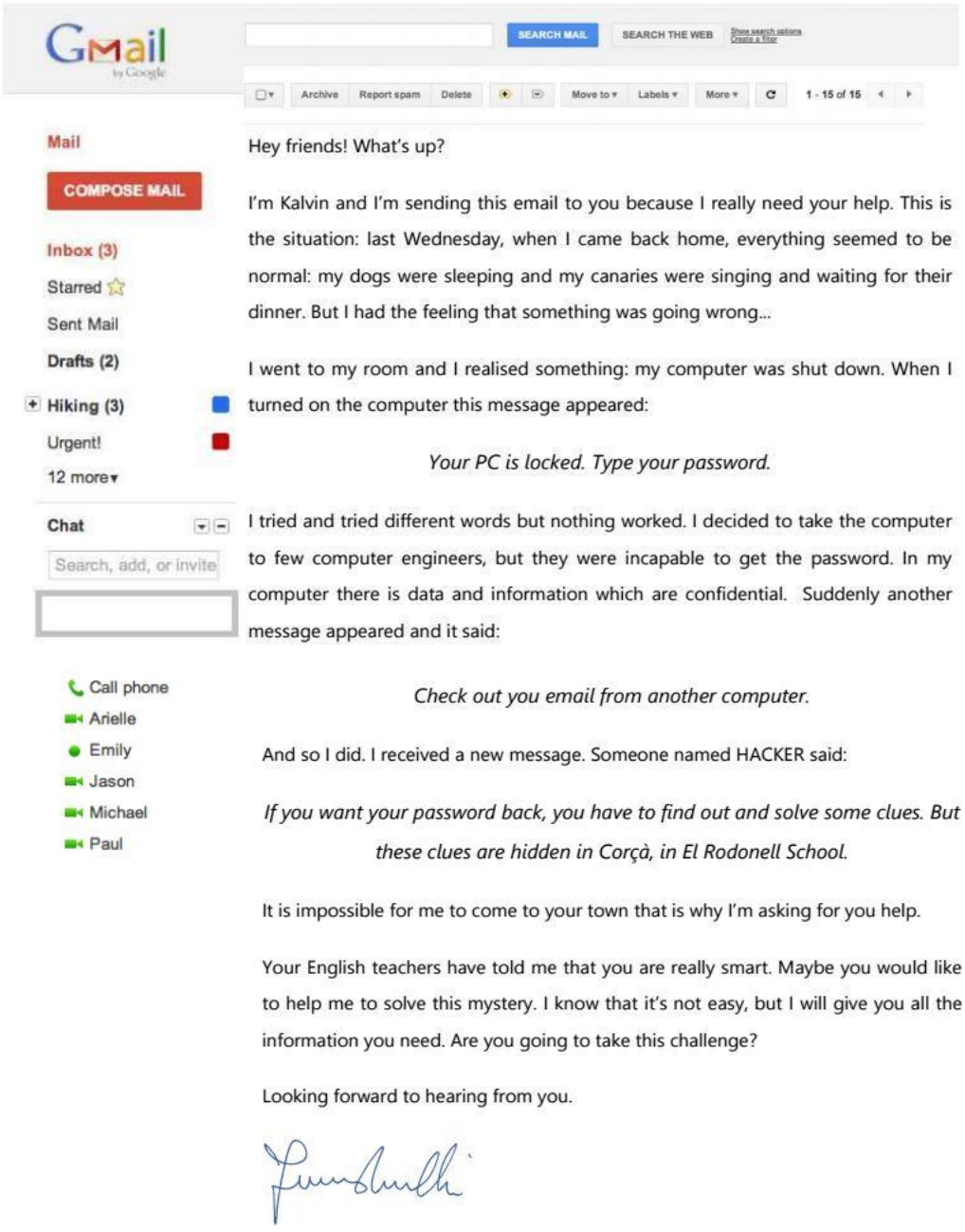
| **SEQUENCE OF ACTIVITIES** | **GROUPING** | **TIMING (approx.)** |
|---|---|---|
| Introduction to the webquest. Reading of the received email. | Whole group | 40’ |
| *Are you ready to take up the challenge?* Reading of the agreement paper and acceptance of the conditions. | Whole group | 10' |
| Let’s guess the first clue.<br>Follow the instructions. | Groups of 3-4 | 20’ |
| Guessing the meaning of the pictograms, putting them together to get the first clue. | Groups of 3-4<br>Whole group | 25’ |
| Let’s guess the second clue! Riddles, scrambled sentences and pictograms. | Groups of 3-4<br>Whole group | 45’ |
| What’s the third clue? Read the instructions posted on the webquest. | Whole group | 10’ |
| Team work: solving the quiz! | Groups of 3-4 | 25’ |
| Compiling the list of aquatic animals and sending it to the hacker. | Groups of 3-4 | 15’ |
| Revision: Is the mysterious animal on the lists? | Whole group | 10’ |
| The last clue, reading of the message received in the webquest/email. | Whole group | 10’ |
| Following the instructions | Groups of 3-4 | 10’ |
| Reading the instructions found inside the envelope and solving the brain teaser. | Groups of 3-4 | 30’ |
| Sending the answer, the password, to the hacker briefly explaining the process followed and their impressions. | Groups of 3-4 | 15’ |
| Final activity: delivery of diploma | Whole group | 5’ |
| Self assessment and evaluation of the Unit. | Whole group | 15’ |

***First stage: introduction and request for help. Are you ready to take the challenge?***

Here the new topic is introduced by a virtual persona, in this case Mr. Kalvin. He invites the students to take the challenge of looking for clues and solving them in order to retrieve a stolen password. The teacher acts as mediator between the students and the fictitious character (who has previously been created by the teacher). In this first stage, Mr. Kalvin contacts the students via email asking for their help. This activity is carried out as a whole group as indicated in Table 1.

The teacher therefore mediates, telling the students they have received an email, opening it on the projector/smartboard and reading through it as a whole-class activity (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1.** Initial email from Mr Kalvin.



During this activity the student teacher checked that the pupils understood the meaning of the written text by asking them comprehension questions while reading through the email. Having understood what they were being asked to do, the students then read and signed an agreement contract (Figure 2) before proceeding further.

**Figure 2.** Contract with students.

# AGREEMENT PAPER

**INSPECTOR'S TEAM NAME:**

**Names of the members:**

**We sign this paper because we agree and we will work as a team following the points stated below:**

- Start and end the tasks on time.
- Use Internet tools (or others) to find information.
- Don't interrupt when a person is talking.
- Respect the views of all participants.
- Everyone needs to participate.
- Each person takes responsibility for his/her actions and results.
- Speak openly and honestly.
- Members can disagree without fear. Disagree with what was said, but not with who said it.
- Give specific positive feedback (recognition).
- Give negative feedback appropriately.
- If you don't understand something, ask for clarification.
- If you see a problem that others haven't noticed, bring it to someone's attention.
- The information needs to be circulated to everyone in the group. This is a team work.
- Use the task time and keep the activity focused on the group's final objective.

**Date:**

**Signature of all team members:**

***Second stage: development of the project and solving of the clues.***

In this phase, the students are in contact with a second virtual persona, the hacker. He reappears periodically during this stage via email correspondence to provide the students with the clues to solve the mystery, various instructions and constant feedback. This character is crucial because he maintains the guiding thread throughout the unit.

***Third stage: recovering the password.***

The last stage is when the students have solved the final clue and they have sent the discovered password to the hacker, briefly explaining the process followed and their impressions. This is the last contact they have with him via email. When the password is confirmed by the hacker, the students then send this new password to Mr. Kalvin. As a sign of gratitude, he sends them a Master Inspector Certification (see Figure 3). To close the unit, the students self-assess their work and evaluate the project.

**Figure 3.** Certificate received by students.

## Motivational results of the experience

### State self-confidence

Returning to the two antecedents to WTC discussed above, the second of these — state self-confidence — is effectively promoted in the case described above in a variety of ways. The dynamic nature of the project in itself helps to foster an active and stimulating environment which promotes students' state confidence by the fact that it relates so closely to their own interests (internet, games, etc.) and also includes an element of intrigue and challenge. Apart from the overall framework, we can also identify particular points at which specific motivational strategies are used to maintain motivation throughout the project in a way which corresponds to Dörnyei's recommendations (2001).

Dörnyei's *Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom* offers teachers 35 different strategies that can be used to motivate students in the language classroom. Some of the strategies carried out in the teaching experience described above clearly correspond to Dörnyei's proposals and thus provide a good illustrative example of how such strategies can be deployed with children

in the language classroom. In the first place, the overall presentation of the tasks corresponds to *Strategy 18*, which suggests 'making learning stimulating and enjoyable for the learner by increasing the attractiveness of the tasks' (2001, 77). After having set up the project in an interesting and attractive way, different motivational strategies are then deployed at key moments.

During the initial stage, when the students are invited to help Mr. Kalvin, the email from him states that 'we've been told you're smart.' This corresponds to *Strategy 24*, which advocates building learners' confidence by providing regular encouragement (2001, p. 91). The students' attention is immediately drawn to their own strengths, and their confidence is boosted by knowing that their teacher has spoken about them in such a positive way with a third party (Mr. Kalvin). In this sense, the effect generated is probably more powerful than if the teacher told them directly that they were capable of completing the tasks. The word 'smart' is also important here as it alludes to other skills and abilities (investigative, collaborative, social, etc.) over and above specific linguistic skills. Value is therefore ascribed to these different skills, and the students are encouraged to imagine how their own 'smartness' may contribute towards solving the mystery. The simple comment 'we've been told you're smart' thus has the twofold effect of recruiting the students and ensuring their full participation in the tasks, while also boosting their confidence and encouraging them to focus on their own individual strengths and abilities.

Once the learners have agreed to help Mr. Kalvin, they are asked to follow the first instruction, which involves reading and signing an Agreement Paper (Figure 2). This corresponds to *Strategies 21* and *22*, which propose the use of contracting methods to formalise goal commitments (2001, p. 86). The goals listed in the Agreement Paper focus, above all, on the promotion of positive group work and key social skills. Behavioural expectations are established and the act of signing the Agreement encourages the students to feel committed to abiding by them. Hanging the Agreement Paper on the classroom wall gives the students a visible reminder of these expectations and helps to promote a positive classroom climate and constructive group behaviour. If, for example, some students are participating much more than others in the completion of group tasks, the teacher draws their attention to the Agreement Paper and reminds them that 'everyone needs to participate' as they initially agreed upon. This is therefore a very effective strategy which involves students in the classroom management process and in the monitoring and promotion of positive behaviour, as well as attending to the difficult task of ensuring that all students of all levels participate in group tasks.

Although the students are focused on the ultimate goal of retrieving Mr. Kalvin's lost password, their mission is broken down into smaller learning experiences which offer regular opportunities for completing tasks and experiencing frequent doses of success, as advocated by *Strategy 23* of Dörnyei's proposal. The successful completion of the tasks, which entail different degrees of difficulty and also draw on a range of abilities, encourages students to identify their strengths while also pointing out areas for improvement. The students are therefore committed at each stage of the process, and this commitment is rewarded on a regular basis. Their sense of achievement upon finally completing the mission and retrieving the lost password is evident. To provide a visual record of this sense of achievement, the groups are presented with a Master Inspector Certificate in recognition of their work. In line with *Strategy 34*, this ensures that students are rewarded in a motivational way which provides them with a lasting visual representation of the experience.

Through the careful deployment of the different motivating strategies described here, state self-confidence was boosted significantly, with WTC being effectively maximised. Students participated fully and enthusiastically in tasks which were consistent with curriculum objectives for this age group: reading and understanding short written texts; writing their own short texts;

using ICT as a tool, and interacting in oral communication. The meaningful context provided ensured that students were not only willing to communicate, but were in fact eager to do so. Proof of this was evident when the university tutor (first author of this article) visited the school to observe the student teacher. The visit was carried out in the afternoon when pupils came back to school after lunch, a time when pupils often lack motivation and when energy levels can be on the low side. The tutor was greeted by the sight of enthusiastic students running up to the student teacher, asking if she had received an answer back from the hacker. Pupils were eagerly awaiting class and anticipating the next step on their mission.

## Affiliation and control

With regard to the first antecedent to WTC — the desire to communicate with a specific person — the case described here brings into question some of the premises upon which current theoretical models are based. *Affiliation* is conceived of in the literature as being dependent on personal characteristics of the interlocutor such as attractiveness, similarity, physical proximity, and so on. In our case, the action was instigated by a fictitious persona whose personal characteristics remained a mystery to the students and whose presence was only ever virtual. Nevertheless, an immediate affiliation was established and the students responded enthusiastically to the call. With regard to *control*, the parameters of the tasks are set and limited by the fictitious persona who instigates the project (Mr. Kalvin) and subsequently by the second fictitious persona, the hacker. In this scenario, the power dynamics and hierarchical relationships associated with control, and which are commonly present in the classroom, are altered significantly. The teacher becomes the mediator in an environment in which the students have committed fully to carrying out whatever tasks need to be done. The fact that the students engaged so wholeheartedly is highly indicative of a 'willingness/propensity to be motivated' even in the absence of power or coercion as understood in previous models.

## Conclusion

When designing dynamic and innovative activities, as much attention needs to be paid to what students actually do and what their learning outcomes are as to the question of whether they are motivated or not. It is not just a question, then, of *if* they are motivated, but *how* this state of being motivated is effectively exploited for pedagogical purposes. In the intervention described in this paper we see clear examples of how the students' state of being motivated was fully exploited and put to pedagogical use by the teacher. This required careful preparation, effective classroom management, the design of clearly structured tasks and careful monitoring and observation of these tasks.

The strategic use of fictitious email personas discussed here has prompted us to reconsider existing theories on the concept of WTC. Further research is required to develop these ideas more completely and to explore the interesting questions that come to light in view of the more complex interpersonal relationships that are emerging with the increasing use of ICT in classrooms.

Finally, on the question of ICT use, an important issue should be highlighted here in relation to the question of internet safety. The project described involves young students communicating with a stranger online. This should immediately raise alarms and prompt questions about entering into relationships with strangers and believing the accounts and stories they present to us. Rather than seeing this as a reason not to introduce fictitious personas in the classroom, it can in fact be viewed as a way of providing a real opportunity for raising these issues, for increasing students'

awareness of the dangers of entering into such relationships, and for emphasising the importance of talking through their concerns and checking with an adult if they are in doubt in any way about the authenticity of or intentions behind online communications. As mediator in this particular instance, the teacher can model an appropriate and responsible use of the Internet while successfully developing students' English language skills in a motivating and rewarding manner.

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"The play's the thing wherein I'll catch conscience of the king."

"… be not afraid of greatness. Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon 'em."

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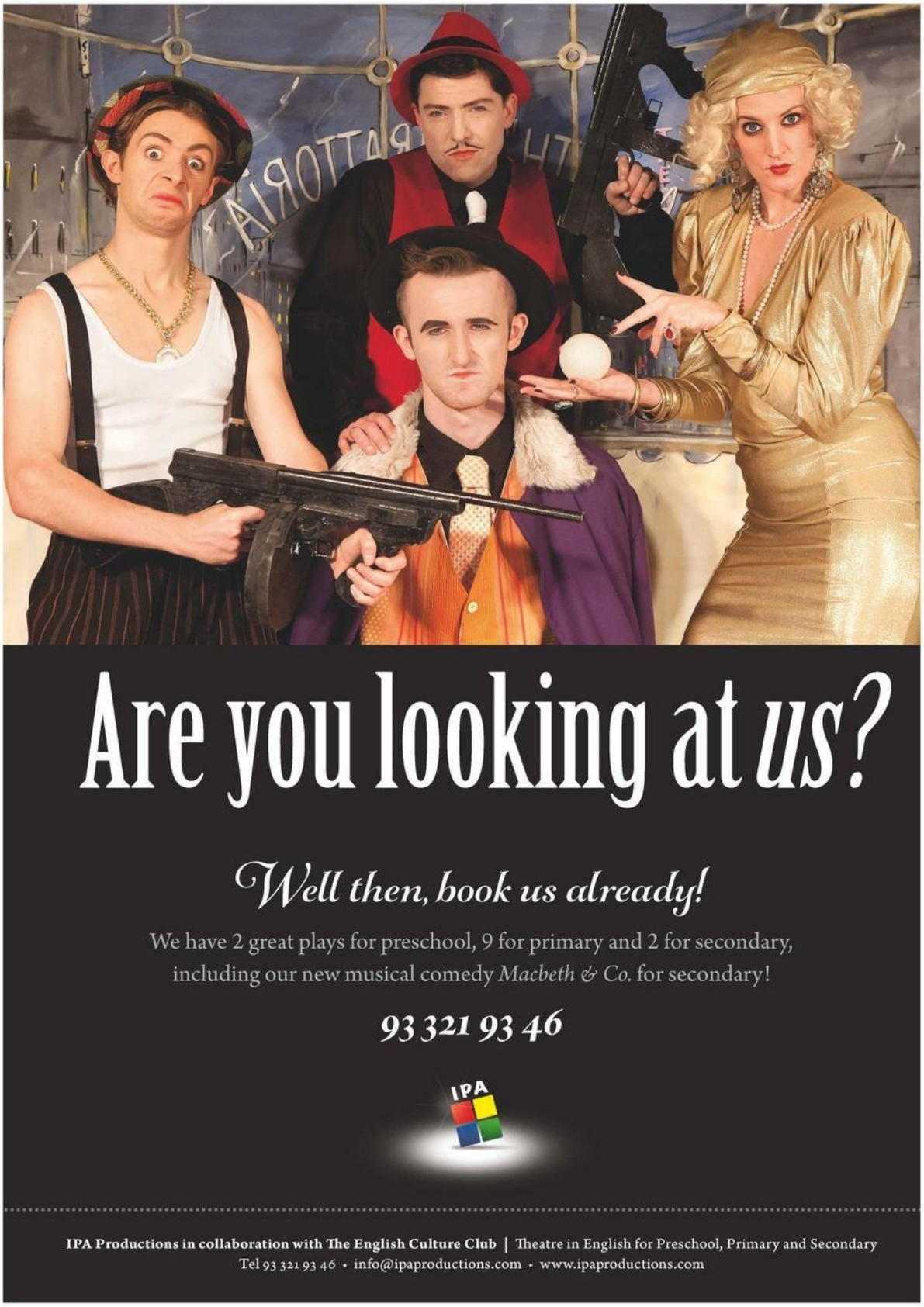
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# Recipes for Creative Writing

**Kirk Moore**

**Abstract**

Creative writing can be far more than just a break from the classroom routine. Using just a few principles gleaned from research on creativity – seeing creative writing as a kind of transformation, contemplation, as well as a practice – teachers can provide learners with an opportunity to see how their assumptions and the language they use play a role in their experience of life and the world. Creative writing can become an exercise in transforming the world through transforming our perceptions and understanding of it.

## Introduction

The initial inspiration for the research and experimentation that led to this paper was the lack of interest in writing I observed among many of my learners. A good number of them struggled with it, many seemed to loathe it and even those who could comfortably produce accurate, structured texts seemed to take little pleasure in doing so. Although many of my learners were most concerned with producing texts for standardized exams, and even though it was of no immediately apparent benefit for improving their exam writing, I began to experiment with some creative writing tasks in class, thinking that learners would at least find them more motivating.

The results were modest, but my learners did seem to pay more attention to what they wrote, gave more relevant feedback to their peers, and their texts made for more enjoyable reading. So I looked for and experimented with more ideas for creative writing tasks. As I searched for such activities, I realized I wanted to better understand what creativity was. I found numerous online resources on the topic of creativity which were useful in thinking about how creative writing could be more than simply something more interesting to do in class. As I considered what these mostly non-academic and non-ELT experts said about creativity, some common themes began to emerge. These became a set of principles that I put to use in thinking about creative work in general and how to use creative writing in the ELT classroom. Part I of this paper explains these three principles and Part II is an annotated list of some of the creative writing tasks I found in my research and have used in class.

Of these three principles, the one that I think has the most potential is that of contemplation. As I speak of it here, contemplation is the practice of developing an awareness of, and familiarity with, the intersection between one's view of the world and one's experience of it. Much like the curiosities we find traveling to new places, contemplation provides a chance to see that our views about ourselves and the world are built on assumptions. Seeing that our assumptions are only one possibility among others is an essential component of critical thinking, language learning and education in general. In this way, creative writing with a contemplative focus can become an exercise in transforming our world through transforming our perceptions and understanding of it.

## I. Principles

### *Creativity as transformation*

When we think of creativity, many of us tend to think first of the work of figures such as Albert Einstein, Pablo Picasso or Ferran Adrià, but in actuality it is something within the reach of everyone. While these creative geniuses can serve as inspiration, regarding them as our examples

can also obscure the fact that everyone is creative in some sense or another. As the dancer and creativity expert Twyla Tharp (2003) understands it, "Creativity is not just for artists. It's for business people looking for a new way to close a sale; it's for engineers trying to solve a problem; it's for parents who want their children to see the world in more than one way." Creativity is thus a resource we use in engaging with the world in a constructive way.

Just as Tharp brings creativity down to a more mundane level, so does Steve Jobs demystify the origins of creative work. As he said, "Creativity is just connecting things. When you ask creative people how they did something, they feel a little guilty because they didn't really do it, they just saw something. It seemed obvious to them after a while" (Wolf, n.d.). In a similar argument in his *Embrace the Remix* TED talk, filmmaker Kirby Ferguson (2012) claims that "the basic components of all creativity are copy, transform and combine." Just as Tharp sees creativity in ordinary life and Jobs sees the origins of creativity as making connections, Ferguson's formula for creativity is so simple it means that anyone can do it.

Unlike much of the writing that we do in our daily lives and in class, which is transactional, i.e. an attempt to get something done, creative writing involves the kind of connecting or transforming that Jobs and Ferguson speak of. It would be wrong to take this contrast to an extreme, as of course persuasive transactional texts can be quite creative, and many creative texts also seek to achieve an end, but for the most part, the distinction between transactional writing and creative writing can be understood in this way. Think of the differences between a business letter and a poem. Although writing a business letter is certainly a craft, and not something to be denigrated in the least, learning to write a poem has far more intellectual and educational potential in terms of both communicating an idea and using language to express it. In general, it's safe to say that most requests ("I am writing to express my dissatisfaction with X") cannot compare with love, nature or pain ("Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?") in terms of their potential for emotional or intellectual depth, not to mention lexis, syntax and figurative language.

The process of transforming ideas, emotions and experiences – connections are also a type of transformation, as previously unrelated ideas are brought together to create something new – is the heart of the creative process. Many of us engage in this kind of work instinctively, but there are processes that we can follow to get thinking creatively. Ferguson examines how artists such as Bob Dylan, Woody Guthrie and others follow the basic formula of "copy, transform and combine" and claims that this is the motor of all creative work. Guthrie, for example, talking about songwriting, advised, "The words are the important thing. Don't worry about tunes. Take a tune, sing high when they sing low, sing fast when they sing slow, and you've got a new tune." Ferguson's talk examines numerous examples of this kind of "remixing" – the term he uses to emphasize his point about the nature of creativity as a combination of previously existing elements – and argues that much of what we sometimes think of as new creations are a kind of remix.

Reflecting on her experience using paintings in the classroom, Cassano (2014) describes a similar three-step process (observation, interpretation and creation) in her discussion of how she engages her students in transmediation, that is, creating a "text" in one sign system based on a "text" in a different sign system. As an example, she describes using a painting as a prompt for a story and how this process enables learners to not only reflect on the story a painting could be telling, but also bring their own experiences to bear on the painting as they create a new narrative based on the painting.

***Creativity as contemplation***

Contemplation is the practice of developing an awareness of one's inner world and its relationship with the world at large, and creative work is itself an important contemplative practice ("The Tree

of Contemplative Practices", 2015). Contemplative practice has the potential to show us how "the worlds we live in are created out of our minds as much as from the natural environment" (Robinson, 2001, p. 16). Much like what we experience when we travel to new places – doors that pull out instead of in, insects for lunch, commuters on bicycles even in the cold and the rain, restaurants closed after seven p.m. –, in contemplation we get the chance to see that our views of ourselves and the world are built on assumptions. These assumptions may benefit us or they may not; we may want to change them or we may not. But what is eminently clear is that we can do nothing about them until we know that we have them and see them clearly.

The making of connections and the transformation that were discussed as the heart of the creative process in the previous section are contemplative in that they have the potential to expose our assumptions. What did a miniature hard drive and digitally encoded music have to do with one another? Nothing, until the birth of the iPod. How things have changed since the actually very simple connection between these two elements was made!

Such insights and the processes we go through in order to have them can be motivating, but they can also be unsettling. When I began experimenting with creative writing in the classroom, I sometimes framed the periods of creative work in class with the sort of scaffolding that any teacher is familiar with, and other times, especially in the beginning, opted for framing the work simply as "something different," as I assumed that creative work would be intrinsically motivating for learners due to the fact that it allowed for more open responses (no right or wrong answers) and involved personal expression. Some of them enjoyed this, but others were quite uncomfortable with it and complained that it had no value. Perhaps they needed more scaffolding, but it's also possible that the evaluation of their assumptions that the creative work asked of them made them uncomfortable.

Hadfield & Dörnyei's (2013) work on the application of dynamic systems theory to understanding motivation in SLA proposes a process in which essentially learners create a vision of their "Ideal Future L2 Self," which is a form of contemplation. The general idea is that learners' ideal selves – the target vision of what kind of L2 speaker they would like to be – motivate them to close the gap between their actual and ideal L2-speaking selves. The process is too complex to describe here, but the rest of it essentially involves learners engaging in specific reflections and practices in order to "actualize" their contemplative visions.

### *Creativity as a practice*

A key element in both descriptions of the creative process as well as contemplation is the importance of engaging in them repeatedly. We are all familiar with notions such as the brilliant artist working in isolation, struck by an idea as if by lightning. But what I saw over and again in my research were those who described their work or art as a practice, i.e. an activity one engages in repeatedly in order to master it.

The artist Jolie Guillebeau shares a story she adapted from a novel and that she told herself to help her maintain the practice that she had set for herself as a goal – that of creating one finished painting every day:

> *[Imagine] a pottery class where half the students are graded on the quantity of the pieces they make – no matter what the quality, at the end of the semester all of their work would be placed on a scale and if the work weighed more than a certain number of pounds they'd receive an A. The other half of the class would only be graded on one single piece — they didn't have to create anything else that semester. Of course, the first half not only created*

> *more, but the work they made was better than the half who spent dozens of hours perfecting the one single work. I decided this applied to my own work as well.* (Tartakovsky, 2013)

The idea that practice is essential to developing mastery is nothing new, but I wonder if the principle of making numerous imperfect attempts at producing a piece, which appears to go against the principle of drafting in writing, could be applied successfully in the ELT classroom. Or could drafts be regarded as different texts? Might learners be more apt to make significantly different versions? Guillebeau does not indicate whether some days she attempts to perfect something created an earlier day, but it seems reasonable to assume so. Improving on what one has already started, based on feedback, is key to any sort of mastery.

The more important point, at least for my purposes, is that this kind of practice engenders creative production. Genius artists or physicists might be struck with ideas as if by lightning, but before the lightning strikes, they have been playing in the storm clouds. Picasso did this – it is estimated that he created 50,000 pieces of art ("Pablo Picasso", n.d.). Counting every day of his 92 years alive, that's approximately 543 pieces per year, or 1.5 per day. Like the seeds cast by trees each year, not all of the ideas that are born from this play take root, or even should, but developing this kind of practice is in itself a worthy enterprise.

## II. Recipes

The creative writing activities in this section are classified according to the principles of contemplation and transformation discussed above. Rather than being a mere list of activities, the organization of these activities by principles provides a framework for thinking about them that can be extended to other activities that teachers are already familiar with or find in their textbooks and materials. What other activities that you already use could you add some sort of transformation to? Which ones could be used for contemplation? And, adding the third principle of practice, could any of these be used as a writing practice?

### *Contemplation*

#### *Counting technique*

Silently and with your eyes closed, count backwards from 50 to 1, paying close attention to your thoughts and feelings as you do so. When you finish, write down what you experienced, however mundane or pointless it may seem. Describe it in as much detail as possible.

This and the following technique allow learners to get a glimpse of their mental process in a way that they often do not (Pflaum, 2012).

#### *Music technique*

Learners listen to music that the teacher plays for 10 minutes, all the while writing down whatever passes through their minds. These texts could be handed in anonymously and read out by the teacher another day as a topic for discussion. Alternatively, they could form part of the learners' journals and could be prompts for further reflection later on (Pflaum, 2012).

#### *The ideal future L2 self*

Create a vision of your Ideal L2 Self through writing. How do you see yourself using the L2 in the future? Be as specific as you can. For example, if you imagine you'll use English at work, what job will you have? At what company? In what specific tasks will you use English, and how will

you feel as you use English there as your Ideal Self? See Hadfield & Dörnyei (2013) and Mackay (2015) for more.

***The sun in socks***

Learners view two seemingly unrelated images that the teacher displays and then must write a short text explaining how they are related. These texts could be read out, shared anonymously or form part of the learners' journals.

For example, how could the sun and a pair of socks be related? The sun, in fact, can be related to almost anything on earth, as it provides the energy that plants need to grow, which animals need to eat, etc. (inspired by Nhat Hanh, 1991).

***Transformation***

Using the process of observation, interpretation and creation that Cassano (2014) describes, learners could engage in creative writing by "translating" a text from one system to a written text. For example, they could write a story or poem based on their interpretation of a painting. A few examples of the wide range of possibilities follow:

***Transmediation (photo to text): Photo for the IWB***

Learners are given two seconds to look at a photo and then have five minutes to write a description and reflection about what they saw. Learners then exchange their texts and discuss each other's reactions, whether orally or in writing. Walton mentions the importance of choosing quality photos, such as those in National Geographic, as they can lead to richer language (Walton, 2014).

***Transmediation (music to text): Writing from a medley***

The teacher prepares six short diverse musical excerpts and tells learners they will hear the soundtrack from his/her holiday and plays the music. Learners are asked to take notes about what they think might be happening, and they are told they will need to write a text about this holiday after listening. Learners then use their notes to write six first-person diary entries that go with the music. Learners can exchange their writing and listen to the soundtrack again while reading (Lindstromberg, 2004).

***Transmediation (one literary style to another)***

Learners compare texts with different styles, comparing features of each style in detail. A scene is chosen from one text and then learners transform it into the style of the other. For example, here is the beginning of one of the numerous versions of the biblical story of David and Goliath:

> *A champion named Goliath, who was from Gath, came out of the Philistine camp. His height was six cubits and a span. He had a bronze helmet on his head and wore a coat of scale armor of bronze weighing five thousand shekels; on his legs he wore bronze greaves, and a bronze javelin was slung on his back. His spear shaft was like a weaver's rod, and its iron point weighed six hundred shekels. His shield bearer went ahead of him.* (1 Samuel 17 New International Version)

And here is the first paragraph of R. J. Palacio's *Wonder*:

> *I know I'm not an ordinary ten-year-old kid. I mean, sure, I do ordinary things. I eat ice cream. I ride my bike. I play ball. I have an XBox. Stuff like that makes me ordinary. I guess. And I feel ordinary. Inside. But I know ordinary kids don't make other ordinary kids*

> *run away screaming in playgrounds. I know ordinary kids don't get stared at wherever they go.* (Palacio, 2012)

The biblical text could be rewritten in the style of *Wonder*, or vice versa, e.g.:

> *There was a young boy named August, who was from New York. His height was three cubits and a span. He had a baseball cap on his head and wore a coat of denim weighing 40 shekels; on his feet were Nike running shoes, and a schoolbag, weighing more or less depending on its contents, lay slung across his back. His parents and sister walked with him, whilst the children he met scattered before him, screaming.*

It's best to work with a short text first as a class, discussing the features of each style. What is the structure of the text? What details are described, and what are some that are not? Teachers then let learners choose their own fragments — ideally longer than the examples above — to transform or assign one. The advantage of the latter method is that learners can then more easily compare their transformations with one another.

Another possibility is for learners to write about an experience of their own and then transform this text into the style of a text they've read. (I participated in this exercise as a student of Susan McCloskey in 1988.)

***Transmediation (oral text to written text)***

This works best if the class has previously discussed the elements of narrative, e.g. suspense, pace, humour, etc.

Learners name and/or describe the teacher's clothing or accessories (e.g. backpack, mobile phone) and then choose one or two items they'd like to know more about. The teacher tells the story behind the objects, using the elements of narrative previously discussed, or leaving them out and then asking learners how the story could be improved by using them.

In pairs, learners then tell the story of one or two of their own items of clothing or accessories, asking questions. Later, they write their partner's story, using the elements of narrative identified previously. Learners could also embellish the story by introducing one or two elements into it that their partner did not include. (This idea is not my own, but I don't remember where it came from.)

***Remixing: The Story Box***

This is a set of cards divided into three different types: Characters, Setting, and Action. The cards provide basic information which the learners can use to write a story. A Character card, for example, might read, "Lisa: 33 years old. Works in a museum as a guide. Loves working with children. Afraid of spiders." Learners pick one setting card, two character cards, and one action card to start. The information on the cards provides them with prompts to start writing. If learners get stuck in the middle of a story, the teacher could have them pick another Action card, which usually gives their imagination enough of a push to help them move on (Stein, 2014).

***Form-oriented frames***

There are many writing frames that make use of different forms. Below are a few examples, but there are many others, e.g. Acrostic poems, Haiku. See the PIZZAZ and Writing Exercises websites for more great ideas for such form-oriented writing frames, at http://pages.uoregon.edu/leslieob/pizzaz.html and http://writingexercises.co.uk/index.php.

In all of these activities, afterwards let the learners exchange their texts and ask each other questions (orally or in writing). This is an opportunity for them to give and receive feedback. Time could be allowed for learners to incorporate feedback if that seems appropriate.

***Six-word stories*** — Learners view examples of six-word stories and then they write their own. An image could also be displayed as a source of inspiration. A couple of my favorite examples are the one attributed to Hemingway: "Baby shoes for sale. Never worn." and another from theporkfork: "T.H.C., L.S.D., D.U.I., C.P.R., D.O.A., R.I.P." Both can be found on http://www.sixwordstories.net/

***ABC sentences*** — Write a word or phrase down the left side of the paper (e.g., Music festivals). Learners write sentences beginning with each letter (or within first word) that have to do with the topic indicated (Lindstromberg, 2004).

***Write in the shape*** — Learners draw the outline of an object important to them (e.g. iPhone), about size of their hand. Learners write inside the outline from a word or phrase the teacher gives (e.g. "Before I…", "Once upon a time,…"). This same method can also be followed with specific shapes, e.g. a door, a key, window, etc. (Lindstromberg, 2004).

## Conclusion

Late in my research, I came across Jim Jarmusch's (2005) advice on film-making, which eloquently summarizes much of what I have tried to say here:

> *Nothing is original. Steal from anywhere that resonates with inspiration or fuels your imagination. Devour old films, new films, music, books, paintings, photographs, poems, dreams, random conversations, architecture, bridges, street signs, trees, clouds, bodies of water, light and shadows. Select only things to steal from that speak directly to your soul. If you do this, your work (and theft) will be authentic. Authenticity is invaluable; originality is non-existent. And don't bother concealing your thievery — celebrate it if you feel like it. In any case, always remember what Jean-Luc Godard said: "It's not where you take things from — it's where you take them to.*

We may feel that we are "stealing" from others, but as Jarmusch himself and Ferguson (2012) observe, this is simply false. My own remix of Godard's comment on authenticity is that perhaps one of the possible destinations of creative thought and expression is the realization that we are all in this together. As teachers, we can encourage learners to leave home and make their own journeys.

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**Biodata**

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"The lunatic, the lover, and the poet are of imagination all compact."

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# Keep It Up (Or Making Motivation Last)

**Usoa Sol**

## Abstract

Motivation is a key element in teaching and learning, especially with foreign languages, but it's short-lived and needs to be renewed periodically. So, how can you keep your students (and yourself!) motivated without losing your sanity in the process? In this paper I'll share my ideas on how to deal with motivation in the classroom and show some sample activities that have worked well to get both my students and myself engaged and interested!

## Introduction

Last year, in order to do some research for my talk on motivation in the 2015 APAC-ELT Convention, I carried out a survey amongst 50 English and other subject teachers from several secondary schools in Barcelona. The survey was written in Catalan, as some of the teachers taking it were not English teachers and did not speak English, and I asked them the following two questions:

1. What does motivation mean for teachers?
2. What motivates you to work as a teacher?

The survey results, seen in Figure 1, show that three things that motivate teachers most are:

- Making an impact on students' lives.
- Getting feedback from the students and seeing their work reflected in the students' progress and results.
- Being creative and innovating.

**Figure 1.** Data from survey on motivation from teachers' perspectives.

ESO 1-ESO 4 and Batxillerat 1-2 students were also asked to complete a similar survey, but this time the questions were:

1. In your opinion, how important are the following items for an English teacher?
   a) Creating a positive classroom environment.
   b) Taking interest in the students.
   c) Setting up practical tasks to apply content taught.
   d) Making classes dynamic and fun.
   e) Acknowledging our work and effort.
   f) Being creative and looking for new teaching methods (using ICT, doing original activities).
   g) Being enthusiastic and showing that he/she really enjoys his/her job.
   h) Being up-to-date and dealing with topics that are interesting and relevant to us.

2. What motivates you to learn English? How important are these elements for you when learning English?
   a) That it's the first language used for communication worldwide.
   b) That it's essential for finding a job in certain work fields.
   c) That it enables you to travel and meet people.
   d) That it enables you to understand the TV shows, films and music that you like.
   e) That it enables you to surf the Internet and look for information from many different sources.

The students' survey results, seen in Table 1, showed that what they actually find the most important for an English teacher is the following:

- The teacher creating a positive atmosphere in class.
- The teacher taking interest in them.
- The teacher setting up practical tasks to apply content taught.

**Table 1.** Results of survey on motivation from students' perspectives.

| | Gens important | Poc important | Bastant important | Molt important |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Que creï un ambient positiu a l'aula. | **0.00%** 0 | **2.00%** 1 | **20.00%** 10 | **78.00%** 39 |
| Que s'interessi pels alumnes. | **0.00%** 0 | **6.00%** 3 | **32.00%** 16 | **62.00%** 31 |
| Que plantegi tasques practiques per practicar allò que ens ensenya (per exemple, projectes, treballs, exposicions orals). | **0.00%** 0 | **6.00%** 3 | **36.00%** 18 | **58.00%** 29 |
| Que faci classes amenes i dinàmiques. | **2.00%** 1 | **6.00%** 3 | **32.00%** 16 | **60.00%** 30 |
| Que ens reconegui l'esforç i la feina que fem. | **0.00%** 0 | **6.00%** 3 | **40.00%** 20 | **54.00%** 27 |
| Que sigui creatiu / creativa i busqui nous mètodes per ensenyar (ús de les noves tecnologies, activitats originals). | **2.00%** 1 | **12.00%** 6 | **38.00%** 19 | **48.00%** 24 |
| Que sigui entusiasta en allò que fa, que li agrada la seva feina. | **2.00%** 1 | **2.00%** 1 | **38.00%** 19 | **58.00%** 29 |
| Que estigui al dia i que tracti temes que ens resulten interessants i rellevants. | **0.00%** 0 | **14.00%** 7 | **30.00%** 15 | **56.00%** 28 |

After analyzing the survey results, the question is: how can we take all of these elements into account when teaching teenagers to keep them (and ourselves!) motivated?

## Sample activities

Here are four activities that have worked extremely well with my teenage students and which have contributed to their learning English, as well as to keeping them motivated:

1. Family e-book
2. Personalized poetry
3. Iconic building project
4. "Unusual" celebrations

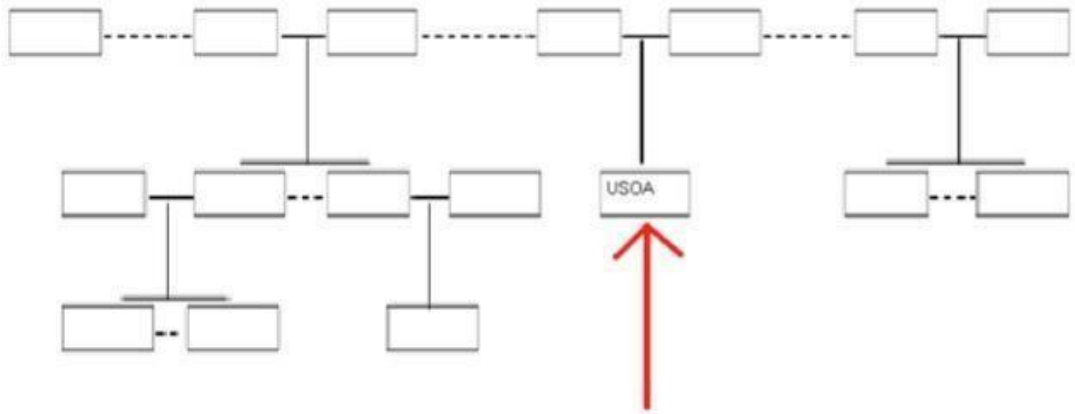
## Activity 1: Family e-book

I designed this activity for ESO 2 students to work on jobs and personality adjectives and to get them to describe their family members to their classmates.

These are the steps I followed when doing the activity:

1. I presented my own family, and students took notes to then complete my family tree. To help them, I started by writing my name in the tree and then told them that the left side of the tree was my father's side and the right side was my mum's; finally, I wrote my relatives' names on the board so students wouldn't have to think about how to spell them (see Figure 2).

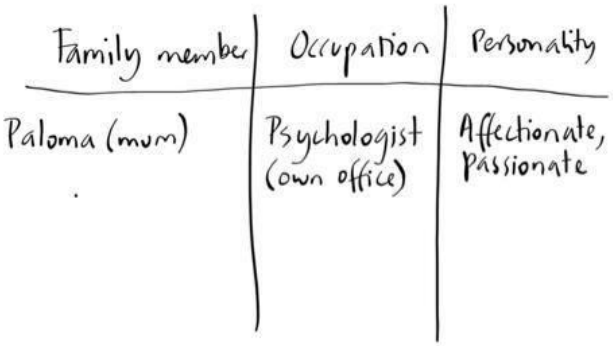
**Figure 2.** My family tree.




2. We read the sample text about my family and did some language work on personality adjectives.

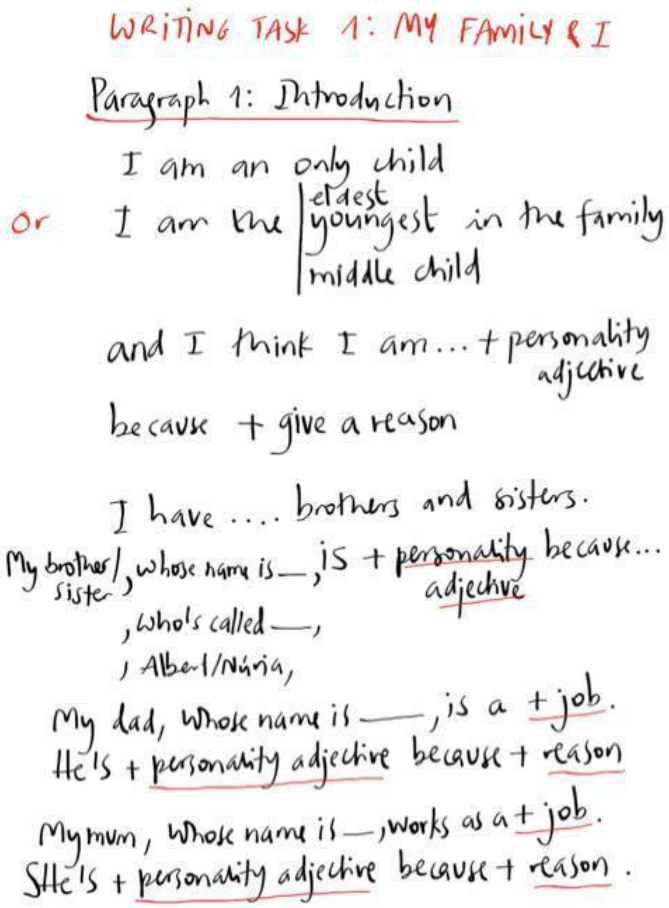
3. The students then drew their own family tree and wrote down some key information for each of their family members (see sample chart in Figure 3). This was done in class, and we brainstormed ideas together so I could help them with the vocabulary they needed.

**Figure 3.** Chart on students' family members.




4. We read my sample text again in class, looking at the text structure, and I provided scaffolding for students to use in their texts (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4.** Scaffolding for students' texts.




5. Students then wrote a draft text, which I corrected and they then typed up.

6. Finally, the corrected versions of the students' texts were posted online in an e-book designed by using mixbook.com which was entitled "Our Family Album 2014-2015".

Each student had two double pages in the e-book assigned to them. Apart from inputting their texts, they added photos and online stickers to illustrate them. See Figure 5 for examples of real students' work:

**Figure 5.** Examples of the e-book pages of 3 students.

Why did this activity work with teenagers?

- First of all, it made writing meaningful, as the students were writing a text for their classmates and they were creating an end product (namely, the e-book, which was then posted on the School's English Wiki).
- It allowed students to show their work and it gave them a "minute of fame" to talk about their family. In turn, this allowed students (and teachers) to get to know each other better.
- Since all the texts were posted onto one single e-book, this activity contributed to bringing the group together and to making them feel like a team, which definitely created a more positive environment in the classroom.

**Activity 2: Personalised poetry**

I came across Roger McGough's poetry during a three-week stay in Exeter in August 2011. I remember thinking that his poems were very easy to relate to and also very funny, so I decided to look them up online and use them for an activity in class.

I did this activity as an experiment with my ESO3, ESO4 and BTX1 students at the beginning of last school year, and it was a great way to set the tone after the long summer break.

This is how the activity was done in class:

1. I introduced the topic of starting at a new school, especially the very first time you go to school, and asked the students to try to remember their first day at school (at least, primary school) or to think about a relative of theirs who had just started school.

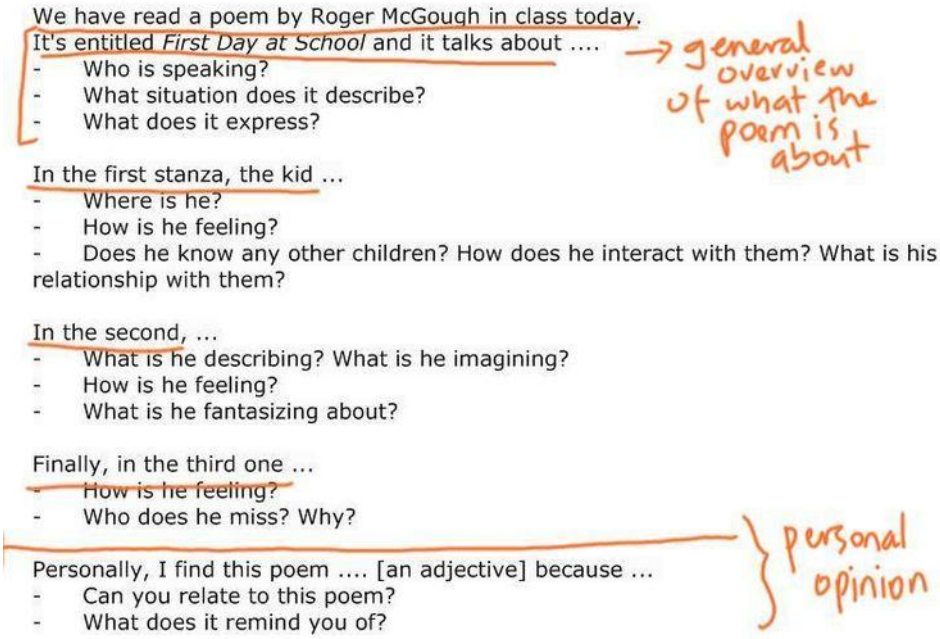
2. We listened to the poem by watching this video:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iUNUfI2oCbs

3. Then we read the poem in class and discussed it. We also did some vocabulary work on it.

4. The students then reacted to the poem and wrote a short text summarizing their thoughts on it, using the following worksheet as a scaffold (Figure 6).

**Figure 6.** Worksheet for preparing texts on the poem.




5. Finally, in small groups, they adapted two stanzas of the poem using their own ideas. They were supposed to follow the structure below and include the underlined sentences in their own poem (Figure 7):

**Figure 7.** Aspects of the poem to use in their own versions of it.

Here are two examples written by Batxillerat students:

FIRST DAY AT SIXTH FORM, by Jan, Martí and Xavier

On the top floor overlooking the city,
waiting for the teacher
to start the class.

Why is the teacher arriving late?
So late I'm tempted to leave
on my first day.

And my classmates,
what about my classmates?
Are the also tempted to leave on their first day?

And then exams…
All day, exams.
Things that don't let you sleep at night
Things that really get on your nerves
Perhaps they're to make our lives difficult.

I wish the day was already over
My brother had told me
It would be very long
Like commercial breaks while you
Are watching an interesting film.

I think I will have to change my mindset
Perhaps that will help me…

FIRST DAY AT SIXTH FORM, by Júlia and Alberto

On the top of Collserola's hill,
Waiting for my friends to come,
Impatient, nervous, but also excited.

Why is the summer so short?
We need more holidays
And less homework!

And exams,
All day exams.
Are they to make our lives more difficult?
Are they really things to help us learn?
Things to prevent us from having a social life?
Perhaps they serve to stimulate memory.

I wish I could remember all my friends
The moments we spent together.

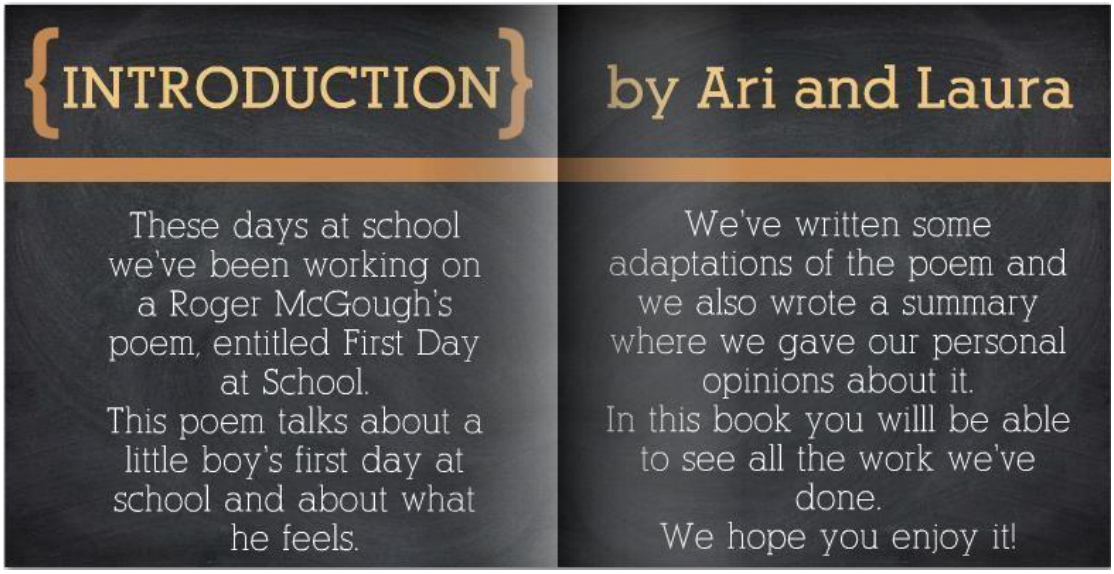
Like laughing at break time.
Talking. I wish they were here.
I think I can't live without them.

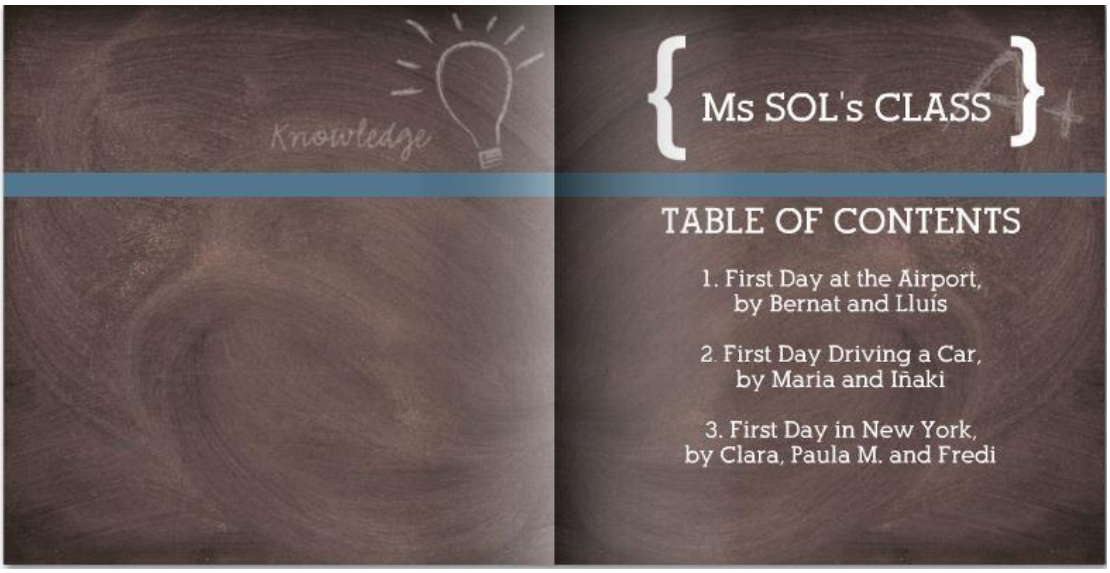
And now… Sixth Form starts.

6. When all the students had finished their texts and I had corrected them, every group read their poem out loud, and as a class, students voted for the best three poems.

7. Additionally, with one of the groups (namely, the ESO 4 one), I also created an e-book with all the students' texts, which they illustrated with photos. Below (Figure 8) are two pages from the ESO 4 Mixbook, in which the students introduced the poem, summarized it in groups, gave their opinion on it and finally adapted it using their own ideas and illustrated it with photos.

**Figure 8.** Pages from e-book of "First Day" poems.



Why was this activity successful with my teenage students?

- First of all, because it worked on empathy and encouraged self-reflection. Students put themselves in the kid's shoes and this brought back past memories from when they were children themselves.
- Apart from that, it was a collaborative activity, because the students adapted the poem in groups.
- Also, personalizing the poem using their own ideas fostered the students' creativity.
- Finally, the end product (adapted poem) made the task tangible and gave students a reason for doing it.

**Activity 3: Iconic building project**

We did this project with ESO 2 students related to the topic of house and home. It was an end-of-unit consolidation project and it aimed at getting the students to learn about some famous buildings in the world.

These are the steps we followed when doing the project:

1. We brainstormed ideas to activate students' previous knowledge on famous buildings in the world.

2. We showed them this Animoto to check their answers:
   https://animoto.com/play/ttDptXc0qi37ebKiUBhq5w

3. We gave a sample presentation about the Sydney Opera House and gave the students the sample text for them to use as a model.

http://prezi.com/kumt50z_nsmn/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy&rc=ex0share
(Thanks a million to Jazmeen for the original presentation I based mine on).

4. The students got into groups and chose a famous building.

5. They looked for information and discussed it in class in order to complete the fact file we provided them with (see Figure 9).

**Figure 9.** Fact file card for students to fill in.

**UNIT 2: BUILDING PROJECT**

**Listen to your teacher's presentation and complete the following fact file.**

FACT FILE

Name of the building in English:

Location:

Designed by:

Built in:

Officially opened in:

Size:

Appearance:

Use:

Interesting facts and figures:

6. Then they wrote a draft text in class based on the model text; in their draft, they had to answer the following 5 key questions (see Figure 10):

**Figure 10.** Handout with questions for students to answer.

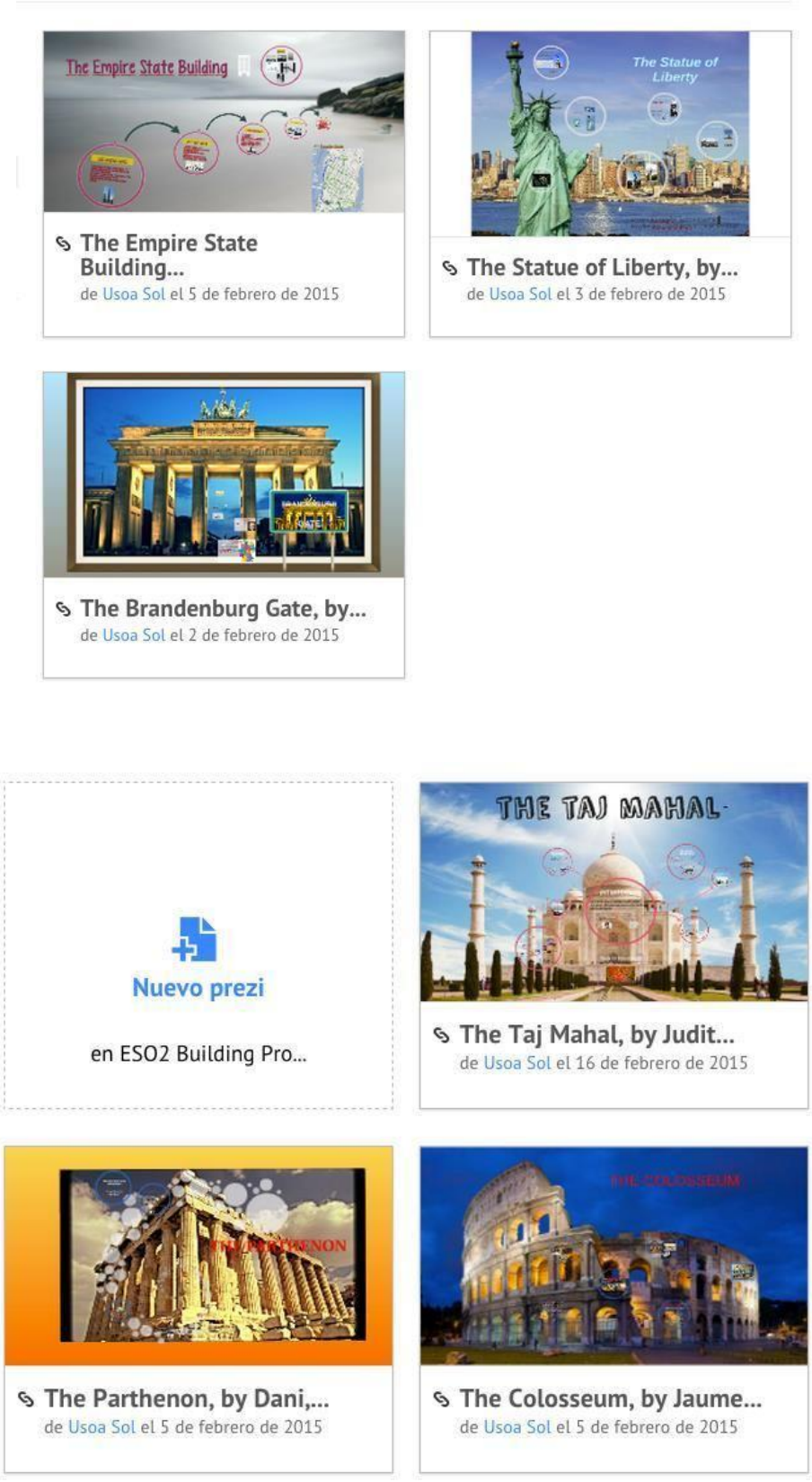
**Now match the following questions with the corresponding paragraph below.**

1. What's the name of the building in English? And in it's original language? Where is it located?
2. Who was it designed by? When was it built? When was it officially opened to the public?
3. How big is it? What does it look like?
4. What is/was it used for?
5. What interesting facts and figures do you know related to it?

7. They typed up their final version in a Google Drive document, which we corrected online.

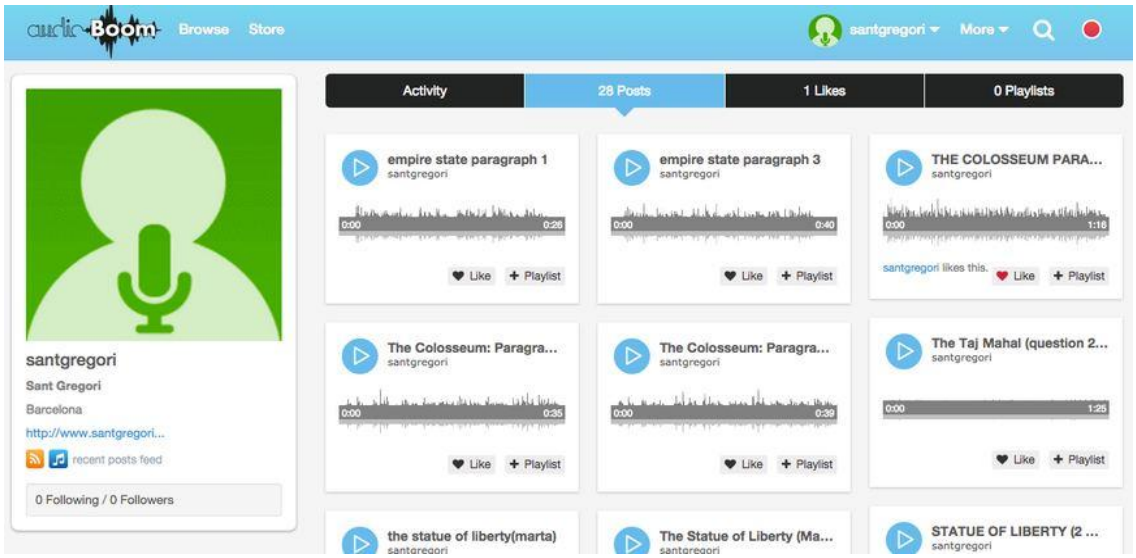
8. Finally, they designed a Prezi presentation summarising their ideas. You can see some samples below (see Figure 11).

**Figure 11.** Cover pages of students' prezi presentations.




9. Optionally, they recorded their part of the presentation using Audiboom (this was conceived of as a rehearsal for their real presentation). (See Figure 12.)

**Figure 12.** Screenshot of students' audio recordings.




10. They gave a presentation in class using the Prezi they had designed. Their classmates (as well as the teacher) marked their presentation using an evaluation rubric that had previously been discussed with the students in class (see Figure 13).

**Figure 13.** Rubric for assessing presentations.

| ICONIC BUILDING PROJECT - ORAL PRESENTATIONS | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | |
| ESO 2 2014/2015 | | | | | | | | |
| eSG escola SANT GREGORI | | | | | | | | |
| Language: uses language correctly | | | | | | | | |
| Pronunciation: speaks clearly; uses intonation; sounds native speaker-like | | | | | | | | |
| Content: describes building in detail | | | | | | | | |
| Interaction with audience: controls body language; faces and engages audience | | | | | | | | |
| Delivery/fluency: develops ideas using keywords without reading; uses fillers | | | | | | | | |
| Visual support: content&information on slides; slides enhance presentation | | | | | | | | |
| Overall mark | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |

Why did this activity work?

- It's appealing for students, as the buildings are famous and they enjoy learning about them.
- Students get a choice as to which building to present, so they can decide according to their personal preferences.
- It's CLIL in action: the project deals with art, architecture, history and geography all in one, which means that all the students find something that interests them (different subjects cater for different students' tastes).

- It's a collaborative project, so students are doing the work together and helping each other out.
- In the oral presentation, the students get peer-to-peer feedback, which they really appreciate.
- Integrated skills (listening, reading, writing, speaking).

**Activity 4: "Unusual" celebrations**

Last year, my mum, who's a psychologist, gave me the idea of celebrating World Mental Health Day at school.

World Mental Health Day is on 10th October and according to the World Health Organisation (WHO), "it is observed every year, with the overall objective of raising awareness of mental health issues around the world and mobilizing efforts in support of mental health."

We did this activity with ESO 3-4 and Batxillerat 1-2 students, and here's the procedure we followed:

1. We started brainstorming ideas with the students by asking them the following two questions:

    a) What do you associate with mental health?
    b) What does it mean to be mentally healthy?

    You can see the results in Figures 14 and 15.

**Figure 14.** Results of brainstorming with ESO 4 students.

**Figure 15.** Results of brainstorming with Batxillerat 2 students.

2. After the respective brainstorming sessions, we showed the clip "We All Have Problems" (Mental Health Awareness Ad, 2011), which you can watch by clicking on this link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kPFxnMO3QYE

3. After watching the clip twice, we discussed it in class by going over the questions below:
    a) What is happening in the clip?
    b) How is the girl feeling at the beginning of the clip?
    c) Who is the boy sitting next to her?
    d) How do you think the girl reacts when he asks her if she's ok?
    e) Have you ever felt like the girl in the clip?

4. We then read the transcript of the text, clarified some new vocabulary and had a follow-up discussion on the importance of mental health.

5. Finally, the students were asked to give their opinion about the activity in writing and this is what they wrote.

**ESO 4 students' comments on the activity:**

"Psychological pain can become physical pain, for example when you have an anxiety attack." (Ariadna and Anna)

"Sometimes body problems are related or caused by your mind, like eating disorders such as anorexia; or, for example, when you're nervous because of something important you have to do and you end up feeling sick." (Blanca and Laura)

"Like the video we watched suggested, when you're not mentally healthy you stop taking care of yourself and end up feeling bad about yourself. That's why it's important to keep mentally healthy." (Blanca)

"Our mind is our life, so if our mind isn't healthy, our life won't be, either." (Octavi)

"Mens sana in corpore sano: our brain controls our body, so without good mental health, there's no actual health." (Bernat)

"Being mentally healthy is key to achieve your goals in life." (Anna)

"Being mentally healthy involves feeling good about yourself, thinking that your life is worth it and seeing the bright side of life." (Blanca)

"Having unrealistically high expectations is likely to end up in frustration." (Paula)

"The only real ultimate goal is happiness." (Laura)

"Happiness is something you have to work on, and it takes some sacrifice." (Marta)

"You're the architect of your own happiness." (Marta and Bernat)

**BTX 1 students' comments:**

"If your life doesn't have ups and downs, that means you're not alive anymore." (Carla, Joana, Maria)

"Mental health is key to feel good with yourself, to be happy and to have a fulfilling life." (Ferran, Cecília, Maria)

"Mental health is very important because your brain is what controls your body and your feelings. If you are mentally healthy, you will see your life more clearly." (Gabriel)

"Like the video we watched mentions, we all have problems, but if you're mentally healthy you are able to cope with those problems more efficiently, so that they actually end up becoming smaller." (Pau)

**BTX 2 students' comments:**

"Mental health is a state of mental and emotional stability." (Dani)

"Being mentally healthy is being able to control your mind and not let your mind control you." (Aleix)

"Being mentally healthy is a state of mind which enables you to manage your emotions so they don't overwhelm you." (Berta and Lluís)

"There's no health without mental health because your body is a reflection of your state of mind." (Lluís and Berta)

The activity was successful for many different reasons:

- First, because it gave the students room to open up and discuss an issue that is touchy for them.
- It contributed to the students' bonding, as everyone had at some stage felt like the girl in the video, so they could all relate to her. The activity was like a group therapy session and it was great for creating a better classroom environment where students were listening to each other and getting closer.
- As a teacher, this activity helped me to get to know the students better, and it showed the students that they could trust me and open up to me.
- Finally, it gave both the students and myself a great break from the "everyday" language class and it raised awareness of the importance of mental health.

## Conclusion

As I mentioned in the introduction, what actually motivates the students the most is:

a) The teacher creating a positive atmosphere in class.
b) The teacher taking an interest in them.
c) The teacher setting up practical tasks to apply content taught.

So, in conclusion, what strategies can we implement to create a more positive atmosphere in class?

- Address students as people with unique interests and personalities.
- Deal with "hot topics" (such as mental health), which contribute to the students' personal development and growth.
- Use texts (both written and oral) to foster positive group dynamics and group cohesion and make the classroom a safe place where all students feel welcome and at ease.

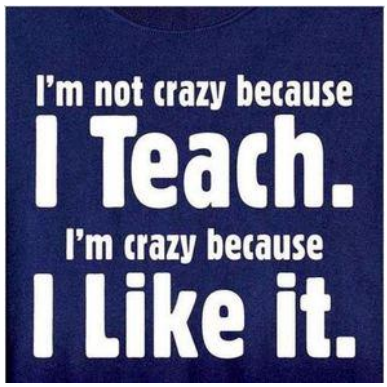
How can we show interest in the students?

- By finding out about what's going on in their lives.
- By being sensitive to what they're going through.
- By giving and asking them for feedback and room to "be heard," so they see that their opinion matters (obviously, to a certain extent).

How can we set up practical tasks?

- By getting students to do the work and to create for their classmates, so they are acting as the teachers (role-reversal).
- By fostering cooperative learning and getting students to share their ideas and their work.
- By involving students in tasks and giving them a choice so that they take responsibility for their own learning.

To sum up:




(Image taken from: bestlifemistake.blogspot.com)

**Biodata**

**Usoa Sol** is a secondary English teacher and the head of the English Department at Sant Gregori School, in Barcelona. She teaches ESO and Batxillerat students and believes that technology is a great tool for enhancing their learning and increasing their motivation. She's especially keen on wikis and is the administrator of Sant Gregori's English Wiki, which she uses with students in her English classes. Apart from being a teacher, Usoa's also a material writer and teacher trainer.

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"Then the whining schoolboy with his satchel and shining morning face, creeping like snail unwillingly to school."

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TEACHERS AND PUPILS IN SPAIN CAN JOIN OUR CELEBRATION OF THE LIFE AND WORKS OF THE UK'S GREATEST EVER PLAYWRIGHT, WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Photo: by Camilla Greenwell.

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# Motivation through Pronunciation

**/ ˌməʊtɪˈveɪʃn̩ θruː prəˌnʌnsɪˈeɪʃn̩ /**

**Maria del Mar Rodríguez Sánchez**
**Carmen Santamaría Pena**

## Abstract

Pronunciation plays a crucial role in the language learning process. That is why our main goal is not only to make teachers aware of its relevance, but also to encourage educators to work on vowel and consonant sounds. Likewise, working on sounds that differ from our mother tongue can be a powerful tool for making our lessons more interesting.

The present paper will discuss three main aspects:

- Introducing the most challenging sounds through motivating games.
- Working with stress and intonation through engaging activities.
- Providing a wide range of ready-to-use activities.

## Introduction

The aim of the present paper is to provide our readers with a series of effective strategies along with motivating and dynamic activities to incorporate pronunciation into their daily basic practice. From our personal experience as non-native, 21st-century English teachers, we are very focused on the importance of good pronunciation in communicating effectively. We have a common interest in working on English sounds in Primary Education and helping students, particularly in the Superior Cycle, to get familiar with the transcription of words. Even though there is a great variety of accents, we can guide our pupils in developing a proper style of pronunciation so as to avoid misunderstandings. Sometimes, as educators, we are very worried about grammar or vocabulary and we forget that accurate pronunciation is also essential.

## Why is it important to work on pronunciation?

It is well known that there is a significant loss in ability to discriminate between sounds from childhood to adulthood. Therefore, it is imperative to start working on pronunciation as soon as possible to take advantage of this capacity. In order to see students' improvement, teachers should devote part of their teaching program to working on this skill regularly, even if it is just ten minutes per session. By doing so, the kids will become aware of the different sounds in the foreign language, and that makes them notice the quality and length of the sounds. It is positive and extremely useful for our pupils to identify the main differences among the three languages (Catalan, Spanish and English), so they can be more conscious of the most difficult sounds that they will come across in the learning of the new language.

Keeping this in mind, we prepared a dialogue for our students to help them understand how significant good pronunciation skills are. The dialogue is set in a restaurant and there are some misunderstandings due to bad pronunciation. As you will see in the following script, there are important word confusions caused by a simple change in a sound. For instance, the customer orders a soap instead of a soup and a stick with papers instead of a steak with peppers, etc.

***Activity**: AT THE RESTAURANT (Script)*

***Waiter***: Hello. Can I help you?

***Sally:*** Hi! Yes… can we have a table for two people, please?

**Waiter:** Yes, of course. Follow me, sit down here, please.

- At the table
**Sally:** Excuse me! We'd like to order some food.
***Waiter:*** Would you like to have a starter?
***Kim:*** Yes, we'd like a bowl of SOAP, please.
***Waiter:*** And what would you like as a main course, some shampoo maybe?
***Sally:*** Ooops, sorry, we'd like a bowl of SOUP.
***Waiter:*** OK. That makes sense, haha. What would you like as a main course?
***Kim:*** We'd like a STICK with PAPERS, please.

***Waiter:*** You mean… a STEAK WITH PEPPERS?

***Kim:*** Oops! Yes, that's right! I'm so embarrassed.

***Waiter:*** What would you like to drink?
***Kim:*** I'd like a BEAR.
***Waiter***... A BEAR?
***Sally:*** Oh my God!! I'm so sorry, she means BEER.

***Waiter***: Your food and drinks are ready. Here you are.

***Kim:*** Thanks… I apologize for the previous misunderstandings... You know, I have an English T-SHIRT...
***Sally:*** TEACHER!!!
***Kim:*** OK, I have an English teacher who doesn't pay much attention to "PRONUNTIATION".
***Sally:*** PRO-NUN-CI-A-TION!!!
***Kim:*** Ok, PRONUNCIATION.

***Waiter***: That's fine and… I recommend you go to the APAC conference; there's a talk about pronunciation this year!
***Kim:*** That sounds great!! Thank you very much for your PIES of advice!
***Sally:*** PIECE of advice, Kim! Ha ha!

When we help kids reflect upon both languages, we are giving them tools to be autonomous learners. Thus, working on pronunciation helps them to use dictionaries, start to understand phonetic transcriptions, listen to audio dictionaries and be able to identify sounds without the need of a teacher.

**Pronunciation: aspects to focus on**

**Sounds: Vowels**

Regarding vowels, English has short and long vowels, which our mother tongues do not have. For that reason, it is important for students to get to know this, which can be brought about through engaging activities such as the following game:

*Game: "**Flashcards & Sounds**"*
Instructions: The game consists of a set of flashcards with a picture on each one that contains a particular vowel sound. For example: a door, a moon, a dog, a leg, etc. Kids are given a flashcard and they group themselves according to the vowel sound they have got on it. To make it easier for them, some cards with a different vowel sound on each one (twelve in total) are hung on the walls around the class, so they go and stand underneath the one that corresponds to their sound. In the end, the group with the same sound says the words out loud. By doing that, they become aware of the vowel sound itself and we encourage them to exaggerate it, especially if it is a long sound since they do not have it in their mother tongue.

Table 1 shows the words we use on our flashcards to work on short and long vowels:

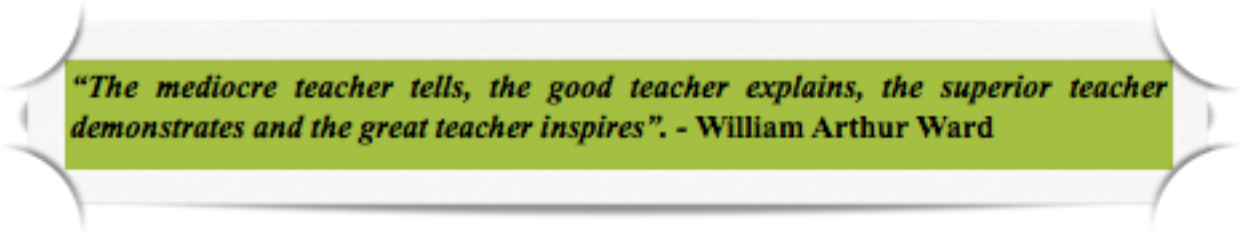
**Table 1.** Items for practising different vowel sounds.

| Short Vowels | Long Vowels |
|---|---|
| **/æ/** ant / cat / bat / rat / map<br>**/ʌ /** cup / cut / up<br>**/e/** egg / pen / bed / red / pet / vet / leg<br>**/ɪ/** six / milk / fish / sick<br>**/ɒ/** dog / clock / socks<br>**/ʊ/** good / book / cook | **/ɑ**:/ car / farm / arm / star / scarf<br>**/u**:/ zoo / two / moon / soup / room / shoe<br>**/i**:/ sea / tea / three / cheese / tree<br>**/3**:/ bird / worm / nurse / skirt / shirt<br>**/ɔ**: **/** four / ball / floor / horse / door |

***Songs***

Songs are also an excellent way to practise pronunciation, and they should be exploited more to work on difficult sounds such as /3:/, /v/, etc. We find it useful to select a song and focus on a certain sound that we want to work on and then take the words out, so that students have to put them into the corresponding gap when listening to the song.

**Sounds: Diphthongs**




Regarding diphthongs, there are certain ones in the English language that contain the s*chwa* sound and thus make it more difficult to pronounce them properly. Many are the activities that can be focused on for working with these sounds. We have thought of the following:

*Game: **"Word Maze"***
Instructions: We prepared a maze to distinguish between /ɪə/ and /ɛə/ diphthongs, but other mazes can also be easily created. It's just a matter of observing what pupils tend to mispronounce the

most and developing the activity. What students have to do is to follow the path with the words that contain the same diphthong until they exit the maze.

*Game*: ***"Odd Man Out"***
Instructions: Another commonly known exercise that can be focused on is spotting the sound that does not correspond to the one given. We give our students a piece of paper containing some words and they have to spot the odd man out in every line.

**Sounds: Consonants**

Concerning consonants, it is desirable to work on those sounds that are more difficult for our students. From our experience, we find it very helpful to play kinesthetic games to help pupils discriminate between and among sounds that are quite similar to each other and that do not exist in the kids' mother tongue. For instance, we created the following games:

*Game*: ***"Lets' Move with Sounds!"***
Instructions: It consists of having the children line up and, depending on the sound they hear, move right, left or just stay in the middle. In case there is not enough space in the classroom, the kids can remain seated, and then they clap, stamp their feet or touch their head depending on the sound they hear. In particular, we usually play this game to help kids to discriminate between /b/ and /v/ as well as /s/, /z/ and /ʃ/. Table 2 shows the words we selected to work on those consonant sounds:

**Table 2.** Minimal pairs for /b/-/v/ and /s/-/z/-/ʃ/ discrimination work.

| /b/ | /v/ | /s/ | /z/ | /ʃ/ |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| BEST | VEST | SUE | ZOO | SHOE |
| BERRY | VERY | SIP | ZIP | SHIP |
| BAN | VAN | SO | ZONE | SHOW |
| BOAT | VOTE | SET | Z | SHED |
| BET | VET | SEAL | ZEAL | SHE'LL |
| BOYS | VOICE | | | |
| BEE | V | | | |
| ROBE | ROVE | | | |

Aspirated consonants such as /h/ and /p/ cannot be forgotten. As it is quite common to mispronounce them while having a conversation, it is important to work on them and make pupils aware of their proper pronunciation, even though we need to exaggerate them.

*Game*: ***"Challenging Dialogues!"***
Instructions: The kids are asked to practise a dialogue making an effort using a proper style of pronunciation, and then they are requested to say it with extremely poor pronunciation. Finally, the students listen to the two versions of the dialogue, and this helps them become aware of how different they sound. It is also helpful to record those kids who have specific difficulties with a particular sound, as it can help them understand what they are mispronouncing and it can be, indeed, very revealing to them. We encourage the use of voice recording rather than video recording, since it allows them to concentrate just on sounds. Particularly, we created the following dialogue for working on the */h/* sound with many words containing that particular sound such as *home, hospital or head.*

***Heather:*** Hello!
***Hannah:*** Hi! Is Harry at home?
***Heather:*** Who's calling?
***Hannah:*** It's Hannah.
***Heather:*** Hi Hannah. Harry is heading to the hospital.
***Hannah:*** How come? Has something happened? I hope he's fine.
***Heather:*** He was hopping and he hit his head.
***Hannah:***: Oh, he has to have a rest, then. Hope to hear from him soon. Have a nice day, Heather.
***Heather:*** Thanks, Hannah. Have a nice day, too.

**Consonant Clusters**

Truly important it is, as well, to work on consonant clusters, which commonly cause mistakes. Children should pay attention to the */sp/, /st/, /tr/,* etc., clusters at the beginning of a word. In order to practise them, we created the following game:

*Game: "**Guess the Good One!**"*
Instructions: Students are shown some flashcards containing words that have one of these clusters. The teacher pronounces them twice, once correctly and once incorrectly. The students have to guess which one is the good one.

**Tongue Twisters**

Tongue twisters are a great tool for making our students improve their pronunciation. They are great fun and you cannot imagine how fast students can learn them by heart. If you haven't had the chance to use them, we encourage you to give them a go, and you will see how impressive the results are.

*Game: "**Tongue Twister Mini-Book**"*
Instructions: Students are given a piece of paper with some tongue twisters. They have to cut and fold it in order to make the mini-book. Then, they practise them in class and wherever they want to because it is very handy.

**Homophones**

These are another way to see how words that are pronounced the same way present a totally different meaning and vary in spelling.

*Game: "**Homophone Domino**"*
Instructions: Look for some homophones and prepare a simple domino with some cards. Then students can play in small groups.

**Rhymes**

These help more than one can imagine, and as English offers many possibilities for making words rhyme, what about trying it out with a song or a rap? Your pupils will definitely love it. You can also use rhyming riddles and create a bit of suspense for the kids! They love guessing things and hence you keep them thinking actively.

**Stress**

After deeply discussing how to work on both vowel and consonant sounds, we are going to concentrate on stress. Is word stress important when speaking a language? Of course, without a doubt stress also plays a crucial role when communicating. Therefore, we also take this aspect into account when designing tasks to foster pronunciation skills among our pupils and work on those words which are usually mispronounced in terms of stress.

*Game*: ***"The Elastic Band Game!"***
Instructions: The students are each given an elastic band, the teacher pronounces a word, and then the pupils are asked to move the rubber band according to the word stress pattern they hear. For example, for the word *recipe*, which is very often mispronounced, the kids will move the elastic band vigorously for the first syllable and then they will move it just a little for the second and third one. It is a way to give the children not only a sound pattern but also a physical pattern and make it easier for those students who need to move or do other things in order to learn. Table 3 shows the words we have identified as being frequently mispronounced concerning stress:

**Table 3.** Words in which students often stress the wrong syllable(s).

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| hotel | dessert / desert | chocolate | menu | history / story | vegetables |
| karate | museum | violin | recipe | Japanese / Chinese | afternoon |
| balloon | interesting | giraffe | guitar | fifteen / fifty | photography |

*Game*: ***"Clap & Guess"***
Instructions: The teacher writes some words with a different stress pattern on the blackboard such as *banana, menu, violin* and *vegetables*. Then, the teacher or a student claps the rhythm of one of the words, putting emphasis on the stressed syllable, and the rest of the class tries to guess which word has been clapped. The following words can be used to play this game:

| banana | menu | fifteen | interesting | afternoon | vegetables |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| _ * _ | * _ | _ * | * _ _ | _ _ * | * _ _ |

**Intonation**

Needless to say, intonation plays a vital role when speaking in English and it should be crystal clear. While Spanish or Catalan are flat languages, English has a varying pitch which has to be constantly taken into account. The meaning of a word or a sentence can easily change and lead to confusion if not expressed properly. That is why, in order to show that to our students, we decided to create the following game:

*Game*: ***"Interactive Story"***
Instructions: The teacher tells a story, and at certain moments, he/she pauses in order to get the reactions of students, who have to show a flashcard with a sentence that suits the dramatic mood of the character at that particular moment. By the end of the activity, the kids have used over twenty-five everyday phrases in English with the correct emotion and intonation.

**Conclusion**

As Mark Vandoren states, ***"The art of teaching is the art of assisting discovery"*** (http://thinkexist.com/quotes/mark_van_doren). In fact, when we teach pronunciation, both students and teachers discover a new world which is very challenging and stimulating. We strongly think that devoting part of our teaching program to working on pronunciation is very beneficial for our students, and, at the same time, they are given the irreplaceable opportunity to discover an interesting part of the English language. Doubtless, being familiar with the phonemic chart is like having an empowering tool that helps learners in their independent study outside the classroom, making them more autonomous.

**Biodata**

**Mar Rodríguez** is a primary school teacher specialized in English. She is passionate about language teaching and deeply interested in innovating methodologies. Currently, she is both the English teacher and the CLIL coordinator at Els Pinetons school. During her 7 years of experience, Mar has participated in a wide range of projects such as the Comenius school association and network, PILE and PELE projects, and *Estancias profesionales*. Mar has also participated in several conferences, giving talks at Pompeu Fabra University and the Autonomous University of Barcelona and workshops at the British Council in Barcelona.

**Carmen Santamaría** is a passionate primary school English teacher and philologist who has over 10 years' experience. Since 2007 she has been working at Diputació school, carrying out a CLIL project in the area of science with excellent results and awards in several competitions. She likes innovating, which is why she has decided to devote part of her lessons to working on pronunciation and sounds and why she is trying to help other teachers become aware of its importance. Carmen has also participated in several conferences on the subject, including giving talks at Pompeu Fabra University and workshops at the British Council in Barcelona.

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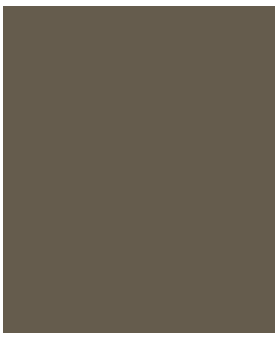

"There's the short and the long."

"Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounce it to you, trippingly on the tongue..."

"Mend your speech a little, lest you may mar your fortunes."

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# Improving Secondary Students' Writing in English through Feedback

**Nuria de Salvador**
**Nuria Juan**

## Abstract

While feedback is potentially a powerful tool to improve English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing, every teacher knows that things are not as simple as they may seem from the outside. Feedback is time-consuming to give, and students do not always seem to take much benefit from it. We know as teachers that providing feedback can be a frustrating experience, even if we still believe students need it. For this reason, in this article we will reflect on how we can improve our feedback as English language teachers to help secondary students with their writing.

## Introduction: EFL writing instruction in Catalonia

The way we teach EFL writing in Catalonia has much room for improvement. In the results of the 4th ESO external exam for the last two years, the number of students whose competences in English were below threshold was 20% in 2014 (Consell Superior d'Avaluació, 2014) and 19% in 2015 (Consell Superior d'Avaluació, 2015). If we look at the results for writing skills, the percentages of failure double, showing a quite discouraging 44.6% in 2014 and a 39.5% in 2015. Not only that, while the results for high-achieving students was considerably high (24.7% in 2014 and 31.7% in 2015), the percentage of those with a high competence in English writing decreases to 20.4% in 2014 and 17.5% in 2015. What these data tell us is that we teach writing worse than we teach other skills. More effective teacher approaches are needed, and understanding feedback better may be one of them.

## Feedback in EFL writing

If we look for guidance in research on EFL writing, we do not find much help. The literature has not concluded what is best for helping students in the area of EFL corrective feedback. There has been a 20-year-long discussion among scholars on the usefulness of written corrective feedback (WCF). It started when Truscott (1996) claimed that it is useless to try to help students with errors in writing. According to him, correction is unlikely to have much effect if not pitched at the appropriate stage/level because students would not be able to make sense of it. Furthermore, according to Truscott, error correction would pose harmful effects on the learning process because it would be a source of confusion if students were not ready to understand the feedback they receive. On the opposing side, those in favour of WCF argue that error correction is effective when we focus just on a few errors. Furthermore, it provides metalinguistic understanding, which can help students to self-regulate and become more efficient language learners (Ellis et al., 2008).

The lesson that we can learn from the state of the art in error correction is that it is understandable that some students react passively or negatively to our feedback. We can also understand why many teachers find teaching writing difficult. However, the fact is that we still need a strategy to cope with the feedback our students expect from us.

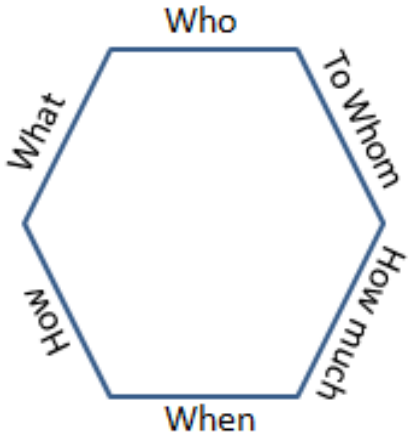
The fact is corrective feedback is not the only feedback we can provide. Feedback has a lot of dimensions that can make the experience of guiding our students to improve their writing skills more rewarding and efficient. We have to start thinking about feedback in wider terms.

**Students will improve if we think about feedback in the following terms**

It is worthwhile to take a broader look at what the literature has concluded about feedback in general. Research defined feedback as a complex, multidimensional information process to help students understand where they are in their learning process, and which steps may lead them to their learning goals (Black & William, 1998; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Narciss & Huth, 2006; Shute, 2008). Feedback is important in learning because it influences students' behaviour and the decisions they reach in the process leading to self-regulation (Gibbs & Simpson, 2004; Mauri & Rochera, 2010).

However, providing and receiving feedback and making sense of it is not easy (Evans, 2013). For this reason, it is important to remember that there are six essential dimensions that we should take into account if we want to provide quality feedback (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1.** Feedback Hexagon (based on Tejada, 1991).




***1. Who should provide feedback for writing tasks?***

Both the teacher and the students can provide feedback. While teacher feedback can be more specific and rigorous, student feedback can be more immediate and ease the teacher's burden (Coll, Rochera & De Gispert , 2014).

***2. Who should feedback address?***

We can provide feedback to individual students, to groups of students or to the whole class.

***3. What should feedback highlight?***

We should avoid providing feedback that is above the student's level of English. For this reason, it is important that we try to be selective when we decide what to give feedback on. If we set clear objectives when we design a writing task, our feedback will also become more specific.

When we provide feedback, we need to cover three important aspects: content, task type and student engagement. **Content** is related to the theoretical knowledge that our students have to learn (i.e. *grammar and vocabulary and writing conventions*). **Task type** would be related to the specific characteristics of the task (i.e. "*Use as many linkers of reason, contrast and addition as posible."*). Finally, our feedback should consider guidance related to students' **engagement** (i.e. *Whether he has handed in assignments on time or followed instructions*).

***4. How much feedback should be provided?***

Feedback should be a continuous, integrative part of all our teaching activities, to help students make sense of it. It is important to establish some feedback routines that are sustainable and adapted to the students' age.

***5. When should feedback be provided?***

Timing is important when we consider feedback. Feedback is helpful if students can still remember what they did. Otherwise, its impact will be considerably weakened.

***6. How should feedback be given?***

Our proposal is to combine three strategies. Firstly, we suggest concentrating on selective content feedback that is as focused as possible on specific, norm-regulated aspects of language and writing conventions. Secondly, we recommend designing task instructions that scaffold students' writing and to which we can refer in our feedback. Finally, we advise including comments on how well our students engaged in the task. Such strategic behaviour would make our feedback clearer to students and easier for us to give.

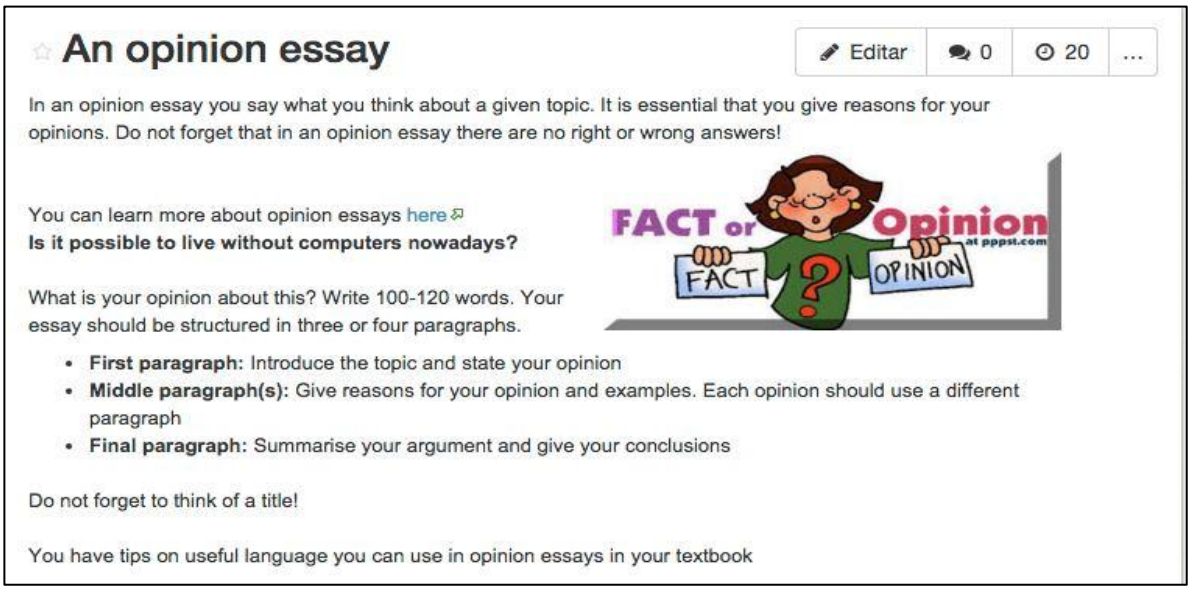
## A possible way to organise writing feedback in the secondary class: an opinion essay activity

We will now provide an example in which we implemented the six dimensions we have just defined in 2nd Batxillerat. The model can be applied to any level, although you may decide not to apply the full model to a single writing task, in the case of younger students.

***1. Task design***

As homework, we ask our students to write an opinion essay after explaining its characteristics to them. We give them clear instructions about how we want them to write it (Figure 2 shows the basic instructions that we designed for this task). Task instructions can be longer or shorter, depending on the quantity of scaffolding students need. Instructions vary depending on the students' level and age, but they must include some model and clear quantitative elements that are easy to check. The clarity of task instructions will make our feedback faster to give and easier to understand. It is very useful to have a blog, wiki or workbook that students can go back to if they want to review the instructions. You should try to make tasks meaningful, either by connecting them with what the students like or relating them closely to what students have just learnt.

**Figure 2.** Instructions for a 2nd Batxillerat opinion essay.
(From ***https://futureprofessionals.wikispaces.com/An+opinion+essay***)




### *2. First draft feedback – Peer feedback based on task instructions*

Students bring their handwritten opinion essays to class, and then they peer-correct them using checklists. Hopefully, this initial peer revision will help students follow instructions more closely in their second drafts and spare the teacher some basic corrections. They will be able to understand these corrections more easily after they have had a chance to fix things that they had not caught on their own in their first draft, and this will reduce teacher burnout from ignored feedback. Furthermore, if the students have not learned their lesson from the checklist, then the teacher can be more severe with them in her feedback. We cannot improve the students' writing if they do not engage in the task fully in the first place. In Table 1 you can see the checklist for 2nd Batxillerat on an opinion essay.

**Table 1.** Checklist for 2nd Batxillerat on an opinion essay.

| **Criteria** | **Task objective: an opinion essay** | **Clearly** | **To some extent** | **Not really** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Task achievement**<br>2.5 points<br><br>(Are you following the conventions of an opinion essay?) | Does the essay have a title? | | | |
| | Is it at least 100 words long? | | | |
| | Does it show a clear opinion in the first sentence? | | | |
| | Does it provide different facts and opinions? | | | |
| | Does it include connectors of addition?<br>***(furthermore, in addition (to), besides, and, also, too, as well as)*** | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Does it use appropriate phrases to convey opinion? ***(As I see it, in my opinion, there is no doubt that, I think / I believe that / I agree / disagree that, I feel that)*** | | | |
| | Is the essay structured in at least three paragraphs? | | | |
| **Coherence, cohesion and register** 2.5 points<br><br>(Do you not only follow instructions but also manage to write an effective essay, even if there are some errors in grammar and vocabulary?) | Does the title make sense? | | | |
| | Is the variety of linking devices used efficiently? | | | |
| | Does the essay have an opening, a body and a closing paragraph? | | | |
| | Is it well organized? | | | |
| | Does it use the right register? | | | |
| | Is there a good use of commas and full stops? | | | |
| | Do the facts and opinions provided make sense? | | | |
| **Grammar** 2.5 points | Does it show a variety of grammatical features?<br>Is the English accurate? | | | |
| **Vocabulary** 2.5 points | Has it employed a wide variety of words and expressions?<br>Are words used accurately?<br>Is the vocabulary used relevant? | | | |

### *3. Second draft feedback – Individual personalized teacher feedback*

Students rewrite their compositions, producing the version that the teacher will correct. Then the teacher provides them with individualized feedback (see Figure 3). As this feedback is given online, the students can respond to the comments that the teacher makes (see Figure 4).

**Figure 3.** Online opinion essay.

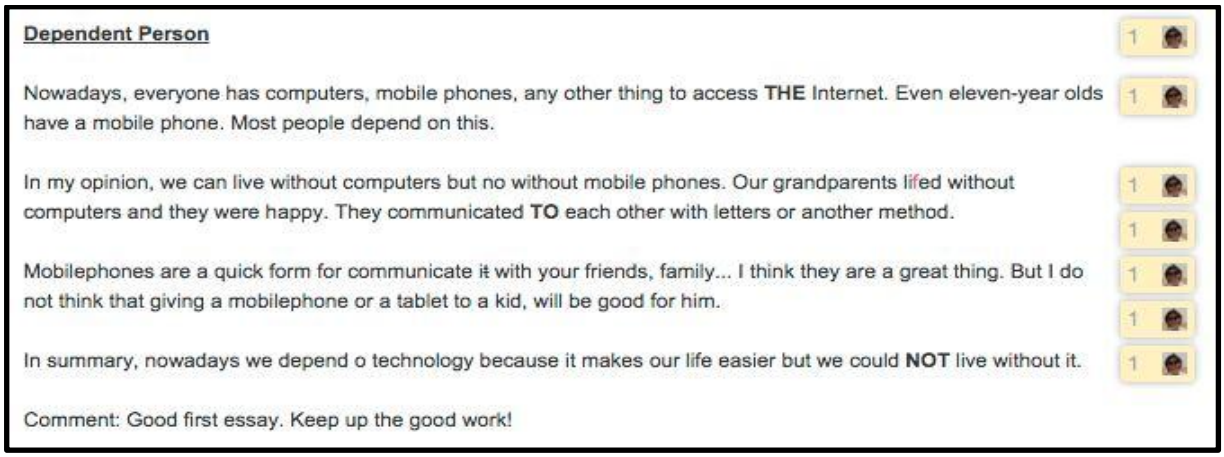
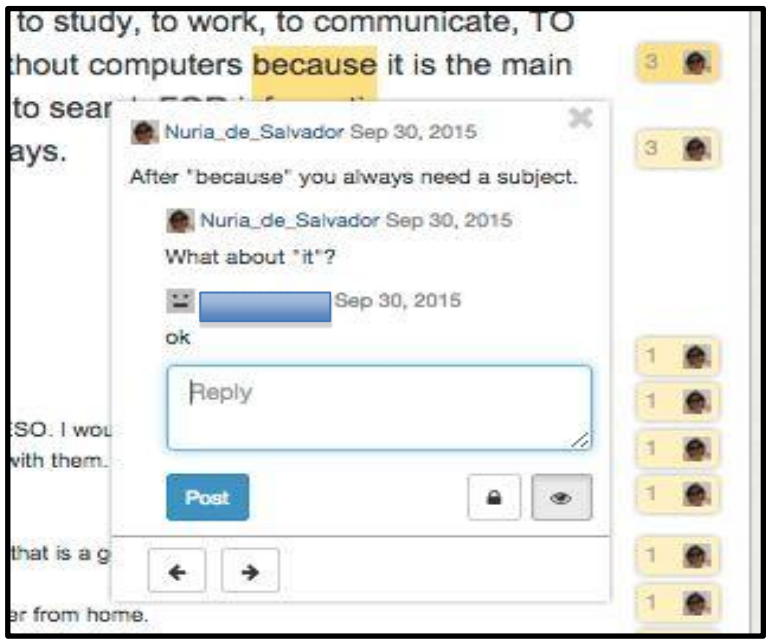


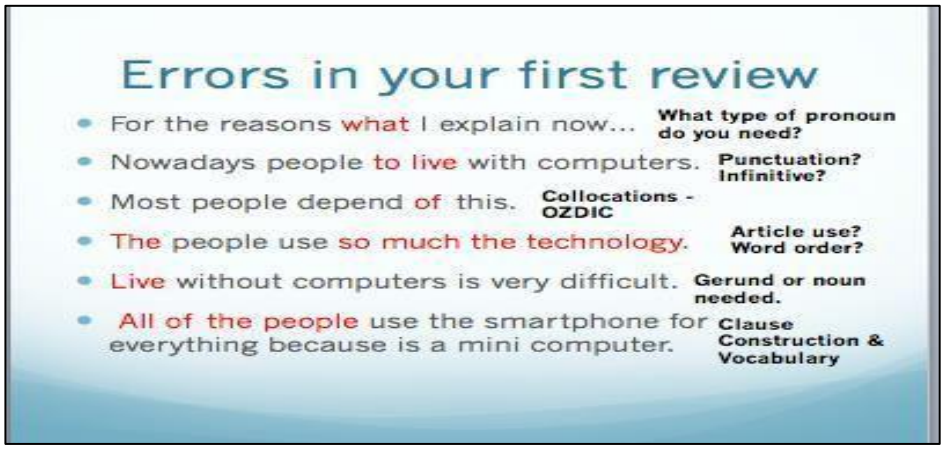
**Figure 4.** Example of online feedback.




### *4. General teacher feedback addressed to the whole group*

After we have corrected all the writings, we can choose the most common errors and comment on them in class. In Figure 5 we can see general corrections for the opinion essay.

**Figure 5.** General teacher feedback addressed the whole group.




### *5. Summative and formative assessment*

The writing exam should be closely related to the writing assignment, so that students see a purpose in completing the whole process. Furthermore, the rigour with which students carried out the practice we described is also considered as part of the formative assessment mark. Finally, students know that anything that was included in the general teacher feedback can become a question that is included in the grammar and vocabulary sections of the exam.

**Integration of the Feedback Hexagon into the opinion essay activity**

Now we will ascertain whether or not the six feedback dimensions we defined previously are present in this implementation, as Table 2 shows:

**Table 2.** Feedback Hexagon plan for opinion essay activity.

| Feedback process | First feedback Draft 1 – Peer review | Second feedback Draft 2 – Online | Third feedback General feedback | Fourth feedback Exam |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Who** | Student (supported by a checklist) | Teacher | Teacher | Teacher |
| **To whom** | Student | Student | Group of students | Student |
| **Focus** | Task | Content<br><br>Engagement | Content | Content<br><br>Task |
| **How much** | *Continuous and integrative in all writing activities* | | | |
| **When** | Two weeks before the exam | One week before the exam | The first class after the essays have been corrected | One week after the exam |
| **How** | Ticks and crosses | Online, specific and clear. Teacher shows where the mistakes are and helps students, using prompts when possible.<br><br>Online feedback encourages dialogue with individual students. | General feedback, specific and clear | Handwritten, specific and clear |

## Conclusion

Feedback is a powerful tool for improving students' writing in English, but we need to plan how and when to use it in our teaching. Otherwise, it could be useless for students and frustrating for teachers.

Unfortunately, there are no magical solutions to ensure that our feedback has an impact on all of our students nor to avoid its time-consuming nature. Nevertheless, there are strategies that can improve its effectiveness or our capacity to sustain it in a continuous approach. In this article, we have discussed the Feedback Hexagon, and provided an example of its use in a real writing task.

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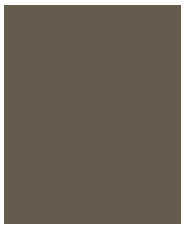

"And since you know you cannot see yourself,
so well as by reflection, I, your glass,
will modestly discover to yourself,
that of yourself which you yet know not of."

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# Managing Conflict in Your Classroom

**Tom Maguire**

## Abstract

Many teachers have to deal on a daily basis with conflict in their classrooms, and yet they must also retain enough trust in order to lead their groups. Conflict cannot be avoided, but teachers can learn to handle volatile situations while maintaining a positive leadership of the group. So, how can they manage class relationships to achieve this? The article offers tools to reach this win-win deal. The various strategies are included within two sections: building a relationship and dealing with conflicts. All the techniques are based on non-verbal communication and you will find them practical and immediately applicable to your classroom.

## Introduction

Two children fight over an orange. In an effort to compromise, their mum splits the orange down the middle and gives half to each child. The first child discards the peel and eats the fruit. The second child discards the fruit and uses the peel to bake a cake.

What is the moral of this story? People argue a position: “I want the orange.” The mother negotiates a deal by addressing that position: “Let’s split the orange in half.”

However to create the most effective deals we need to look past the positioning, to the underlying reasons: “I'd like some fruit or I need orange peel for my cake.” Both children could have had more fruit and more orange peel from this approach.

Underneath each conflict there lies a relationship. Maintaining this personal link while dealing with the issues is what this article is about. You will learn how to keep your orange and eat it.

## Building trust

In the above story the parent intervenes in the conflict, and her kids accept the decision because she is the authority but also because her children trust her to make judgements that are fair.

In a similar way the teacher's first job is to establish a relationship of trust with the group so that she can later intervene credibly to defuse a conflict.

One of the most straightforward ways to create a trusting relationship within the classroom is to strive for optimal communication with the group. You promote a positive relationship in this way because you are seen as caring for your class. Here are three techniques for achieving this:

### *Go visual*

In the early days of air transport, when you arrived at your destination, loudspeakers would bark out your airline, flight origin and the appropriate carousel on which to find luggage. Some people got the message, but many were simply confused by such a cacophony of city and airline names plus carousel numbers. It wasn't until the same information began to be displayed visually that passenger confusion and anxiety subsided.

When presenting information in class, make sure that it is available visually on the board as well as saying it. Naturally visual material added to auditory input doubles the sources of information available to students and thus leads to a fuller learning experience.

Some students already know something about what you are presenting, others don't, many process slowly, a few understand more quickly. Visual information allows you to cater for the different speeds at which your pupils process content, so it keeps the group unified. More importantly, the teacher is viewed as caring for individual needs.

***Hand/Eye coordination***

Think back to the last time you watched the weather forecast on TV. Notice that when the meteorologists talked while facing the camera you looked at them, but when they looked at the weather map you also looked at it. This is because the listener follows the speaker's eyes.

Now consider the classroom. You are speaking to the class and want them to look at a visual backup of what you are saying. If you speak while facing the group, they will pay no attention to the information on the board but will look at you. To have them view the visuals, you must lead your listeners' eyes to the board by looking at it yourself. It is even more effective when you coordinate your hand and eye movements to swing the learners' attention to the visual information. Be careful, unsynchronised hand/eye movements can confuse the focus of your audience and make you look incompetent. It is worthwhile practising this coordination in front of a mirror so that you can lead your class competently, reinforce their cohesion and appear to them as natural and credible.

***Pause!***

The most effective presentation tool is the pause. It affects both speakers and their audiences. The slow presenters who never pause will finally bore the listeners, especially if their voices are monotone; the fast-talking speakers will end up overloading their audience's brains, particularly when no visuals are used. To avoid both pitfalls, a judicious pause while inputting information is required. It enables the onlookers to process the content, and it allows presenters to inhale and keep their brain oxygenated.

Coupling a pause with a frozen hand gesture adds impact to this brief stopping point. The importance of this latter gesture was noticed at a conference where the speaker's words were being translated consecutively onstage by a person holding a hand mike while the main presenter used a lapel mike. It was observed that the audience paid more visual attention to the translator than to the guest speaker. The reason for this is that the hand mike kept the translator's arm in a static or frozen position, which tends to mesmerise onlookers and hold their attention. So the pause accompanied by a frozen hand was adopted as a leading presentation tool.

Teachers can make use of this strategy to manage their classes, maintain attention and proactively avoid conflict. When presenting material, make sure you pause often to allow your students to process your input. During the pause keep the hand still that you hold the chalk or pen in. When you start talking again you can accompany your speech with gestures. The formula for retaining audience attention, allowing yourself a breather and leading the group onwards is this: Speak > Pause + Frozen hand > Speak > Pause + Frozen hand > Speak... Practice of this basic technique will help you maintain a proactive leadership of the class, managing conflict preventively.

**Dealing with conflict**

In the introductory story about the two children and the orange, you will notice that, despite their confrontation, each child had a positive intention: one to obtain fruit; the other to get peel.

Before managing any conflict, it is wise to remind yourself that 'All behaviour has a positive intention.' You may not be able to discern this intention at the outset, but if you continue to act on this belief then your attitude will remain open-minded and your offers of negotiation will be accepted. The alternative option is to believe that those in conflict with you are acting in bad faith. If you adopt this stance you will be seen as a judge, and negotiation will turn into a polemic vicious circle and possibly escalate out of control. Your goal is to preserve the relationship while negotiating the issues.

With this in mind, let's look at some practical techniques to manage a classroom conflict.

***Separate the person from the problem***

Think back to when you last corrected a pile of your students' homework essays. They were mostly substandard grammatically, used simple vocabulary and poor phrasing and were altogether unimaginative. It is your duty to give back this negative feedback to the group. The question now is how to break this bad news to them while maintaining enough class empathy to lead them forward. The recommended non-verbal answer is:

Have the essay papers in front of you and **look and point at** them when talking about the problematic homework; make **eye contact** with the group when your topic is neutral or positive.

So the scene might go something like this:

(Teacher looks at group and greets them.)
(*Looks & points at bundle.)* I have corrected your essays and have them here.
PAUSE.
*(Looks at group.)* With some exceptions I must say that in general
*(Looks and points at essay bundle.)* they were substandard in phrasing,vocabulary and grammar.
PAUSE.
*(Looks at class.)* Now we are going to do X,Y & Z to improve your essay writing.

By simply being aware of where you look and point you can communicate negative news to your class yet retain a positive rapport with them.

***Use voice patterns systematically***

If we review the above situation from an auditory point of view, remember that it is important to use your voice congruently to back up the visual and kinaesthetic non-verbals. This is achieved by using an appropriate voice tone which can range from credible to approachable. The credible voice is used to send a clear message; the approachable voice helps maintain a positive relationship with the group. Here's how to put this into practice:

To produce a credible voice, you use a flat tone which descends at the end of the sentence. It sounds like the pilot's announcements to plane passengers. Notice that pilots use several pauses and do not rush their delivery. The credible voice sounds like a series of statements.

The approachable voice has a wavy tone which curls up at the end. It sounds similar to a question. The cabin crew announcements on an aircraft are made in this way to create a friendly and personable atmosphere.

Teachers can use the credible tone to send clear information, for example homework to be done, announcing exercises in class or for grammar instruction. In the above essay example the teacher would use a flat voice to backup the negative feedback on the group's writing.

On the other hand, the approachable voice stimulates interaction, as in class discussion or eliciting answers to the teacher's questions. In the example it would be appropriate when the teacher makes eye contact with the group.

Used systematically, these voice patterns will help teachers avoid group confusion and disruption through mismanagement by leading and communicating their intentions clearly and separating issues from relationships.

***Use specific descriptions***

This is particularly recommendable if a conflict arises between the teacher and a disruptive student during the course of a lesson. The error would be to enter a word battle with the student, which just leads to light entertainment for the rest of the class and a leadership failure on the teacher's part. The recommended goal is to face up to the interruption, deal with it as fast as possible and get back to your teaching agenda.

For example, you may think that a particular student's behaviour is causing disruption by him constantly talking to his neighbour. You focus attention on the pupil and say, "X, you should not be talking during class time." This may provoke the response, "I was not talking." The word battle has begun and it's about the interpretation of whether or not X was talking. Avoid entering the contest by describing specifically what you observed and what you want: "Well, when you turn to your neighbour and open and close your mouth with sound coming out I consider it disruptive for learning, so refrain from doing that." He may come back with, "I wasn't doing that!" Keep calm by breathing low in your abdomen, look at the group and reply, "I am saying that opening and closing your mouth while making a noise is disruptive for everyone's learning, so avoid doing it."

On another occasion, you tick off a student for bad behaviour and he retorts "You are always picking on me!" Instead of becoming offended at this attack on your fairness ask, "Always?" Then leaving your pupil to ponder on the answer, move slightly out of your present location and draw the class's attention back to the lesson content: "...turn to page 41 in the reader and look at chapter 6..." Physically moving out of your teaching position helps to induce group amnesia about the incident and create a new situation which you take advantage of to lead the class back into your agenda.

In order to defuse a volatile situation proactively instead of engaging in a battle of wits with argumentative students, remember to pin down the exchange to specific responses. The aim of this is to avoid interpretations and remain as near to the facts as possible. Some catch phrases which help to pinpoint a factual approach are: "How exactly?", "What exactly?" and "How do you know?" Note that it is recommended to *avoid* asking "Why?" since that implies guilt and will evoke a defensive response.

## Conclusion

To end, a short story: a little boy was playing quietly in his room with some new toys. His mother was in the kitchen preparing lunch. Suddenly there was an almighty crash, as some plates slipped out of mother's grasp and clattered to the floor, smashing into smithereens. On hearing the resounding noise, the startled little boy immediately left his toys and ran into the kitchen shouting, "It wasn't me! It wasn't me!" The child had been managed by his parents through guilt, and so felt that every accident or catastrophe was his fault.

In the past, the teacher was often a figure of authority who controlled the class by playing on feelings of guilt or threatening pupils into submission. As a short-term discipline, this sort of sentimental blackmail will work quite adequately. However, in the long run these methods will erode the very self-respect educators propose to instill in their pupils. The power to impose your will by threat or shame is, in the end, not useful for educating responsible citizens. We are obliged to find and act out new patterns of discipline which will lead to self-control and not simply obedience. Instead of using the influence of power, we need to use the power of influence. We can do this through positive management. Its aim is to give teachers the resources they need to maintain the balance between controlling pupils' behaviour and fostering the growth of positive human values.

This approach will also have wider-reaching results. As pupils experience their teacher using influence instead of power, they too will learn how to relate positively to others. The students will spread the same approach and so begin to create their own virtuous cycle of relationships based on positive management. In this way when we use non-verbal influence as the foundation for our classroom relationships, we are also teaching our students how to understand and interact positively with others. This is surely a basic goal of education.

## Recommended reading

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## Biodata

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"Suit the action to the word, the word to the action."

"Things done well and with a care, exempt themselves from fear."

"Let me embrace thee, sour adversity, for wise men say it is the wisest course."

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