Little Ideas

for Great Changes

Conference Selections

21st

International *IATEFL*
Slovenia Conference

Index

Editor's introduction

This year's conference was our 21st. What a long way we have come! From beginnings, through The Golden Years and from a slump we rose. The past decade has been all but kind to our organisation and mistakes were often made, but hopefully also corrected. The dedication of everyone involved cannot be overstressed, as volunteers take on un-paid and often undervalued work in addition to their already plentiful duties.

Similarly, the enthusiasm of the writers that have contributed to this publication can be excellent motivation for us all. Taking the time to so thoughtfully share their work and their expertise with the world, they show us what the profession means for many of us.

This booklet will try to give you, the reader, many new ideas on classroom activities, be it WiFi tools and memes to keep up with the modern world or the tried and tested Cui-senaire rods and the age-old art of storytelling. Several authors have dipped into that great and mysterious pool of creativity, either finding it in routine or in creative writing and poetry. They haven't forgotten professional development nor the always-interesting learning styles.

We hope that you will find this booklet a welcome reminder of what has frequently been labelled by the participants as "the best conference so far". We are looking forward to outdoing ourselves next year and hope you will share this experience with us.
From teachers to teachers, enjoy the booklet.

Yours,
IATEFL Slovenia Editorial board

Using storytelling to foster children's appreciation of arts

Ivana Bankovic

Primary school "Branko Radičević", Sedlare, Serbia

Introduction

We all love stories. We still remember the ones we heard from our parents, we retell them to our peers when we are children, and we tell them to our children when we become parents. The literature itself had been predominantly oral for a long time – stories were told and transferred from generations to generations and in those days storytelling was a highly esteemed art (Haven 2007: 4). Today, with the development of technology, various print techniques, television and video games, the art of storytelling has lost its leading position. However, it is not forgotten, especially in early childhood education.

In the following paragraphs, we will explore the topic of storytelling in relation to the children's attitude towards the arts. Writing about the importance of storytelling in early childhood may seem like a 'tale already told' since as Haven reports 'the findings of many hundreds of research studies unanimously confirm the effectiveness of stories for a variety of teaching, leadership, outreach, and communications functions' (Haven 2007: 89). However, this paper will not only focus on the importance of storytelling in ECEC 'per se', but will mainly investigate how stories, as art themselves and as an impulse for other creative activities, can be used to foster development of artistic appreciation in children, and why this issue is important in early childhood education.

Storytelling and story reading

Storytelling is more than just presenting a text in oral form, and there is a difference between storytelling and story reading. One of the main features of storytelling is that 'the words are not memorized, but are recreated through spontaneous, energetic performance, assisted by audience participation and interaction' (Isbell et al 2004: 158) unlike the reading in which 'the primary reference is the text, as fixed upon the page' (Isbell et al. 2004: 158). Stories can be defined in different ways and in different terms, in narrower or broader sense. For the purpose of this paper a story is regarded as 'a detailed, character-based narration of a character's struggles to overcome obstacles and reach an important goal' (Haven 2007: 79). The children can be actively involved in the process of storytelling and they can participate in numerous ways. Moreover, it 'provides the opportunity to interpret for the child life forces which are beyond his immediate experience, and so to prepare him for life itself. It gives the teller the chance to emphasize significance rather than incident' (Greene and Baker 1996: 33). Therefore, stories can be a powerful tool for informing, preparing and giving the opportunity to children to deal with certain issues which are still beyond their world.

Arts in early years

Many researchers have investigated how children perceive works of art, how creative activities can be incorporated in early childhood curriculum and how their aesthetic judgement could (or should) be developed (Prentice 2000; Sharp et al. 2001; Weier 2004). It should be noted that aesthetic education does not have the objective to raise children as artists, but to create individuals who 'know how to look and see, comprehend life, lead happy lives and develop multiple interests, become more creative in their lifestyle, question and criticize, have strong self-confidence and virtues, and adopt civilized, peaceful and free thinking' (Acer and Ömeroðlu, 2008: 336). Thus, a great importance is given to the role of teacher. Teachers of arts (and the same can be said for preschool teachers as well) should 'educate the sensuous responses of children: help them look and see, listen and hear, touch and feel, move and sense their own moving, encounter each other dramatically and be

aware of each other's enacting' (Ross 1978: 78). It is argued that teachers help children to acquire craftsmanship as well as control symbolic media of expressive representation while fostering children's imagination and keeping their imagining 'rich and fruitful' (Ross 1978: 78). This illustrates how arts play a significant role in children's development and how important it is for children to be exposed to arts from an early age.

Storytelling as an artistic impulse

A story itself is a form of art and exposing children to it will help in developing their appreciation of art, like exposing them to any other art form (a music piece, a painting, etc.) does (Eisner 1985, as cited in Feeney and Moravcik 1987: 8). However, storytelling can also be a great impulse for other creative activities which provoke children's artistic reflection (Ross 1978: 81). In that way, after hearing a story, children can recreate this experience by drawing a picture of their favourite episode from the story or making a sculpture. Furthermore, a story can be followed up by a short dramatization or a role-play and could also serve as an impulse for the children's pretend-play during free play time (Eckler and Weininger 1989). Consequently, this artistic impulse from the 'outside' world will be transferred to children's imaginary world and recreated in the way which is adapted to their age. Furthermore, stories can be combined with music in various ways – either during the storytelling to create atmosphere, or singing a song about the events from the story or connecting musical pieces with parts of the story (to express character's mood, illustrate events, etc.) as a follow up activity. Storytelling can also be used for development of artistic expression in language – by asking children to make up alternative endings, to try to guess how the story will continue, etc. All these examples illustrate that storytelling not only exposes children to art, but also serves as a great impulse for other creative activities, thus providing a variety of possibilities for follow up. This enables children to deal with one subject in many different ways, giving them opportunity to express and reflect on their own feelings and thoughts about it.

The effects of storytelling

The research up-to-date has proved that stories have multiple positive effects on different areas of children's development. They can improve students' comprehension, logical thinking and general (cross-curriculum) learning, creating meaning from narrative, motivation to learn (and to pay attention), building a sense of community and involvement, literacy and language mastery, writing, and memory (Haven 2007). Although I found it important to mention these aspects here, I will not elaborate on them further since the focus of this paper is on storytelling and children's appreciation of arts.

Research has also shown that storytelling 'can enhance children's imaginations as well as encourage them to create mental pictures' (Aina 1999, as cited in Isbell et al. 2004: 158). Hearing stories told gives children practice in visualization. As children listen 'they create the scenes, the action, the characters. The ability to visualize, to fantasize, is the basis of creative imagination' (Greene and Baker 1996: 37). This aspect is very important since it provides a basis for other creative activities mentioned above and we can say that one of the values of storytelling is in its ability to provoke children's imagination which can later be expressed through different art forms (drawing, crafts, drama, dance). In this way children are given an opportunity to express themselves in a way which best suits their individual strengths. 'When students experience environments and instructional strategies that acknowledge their particular strengths and interests […] they are more likely to feel engaged and satisfied and to want to participate' (Sidelnick and Svoboda 2000: 175), which is in line with the well-known Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences (Gardner 2006). According to this theory, everyone has not only one but multiple intelligences, including musical, bodily-kinaesthetic, logical-mathematical, spatial, interpersonal and intrapersonal, and as a consequence have different learning styles (Gardner 2006). The research has shown that the majority of children demonstrate strength in at least one domain as well as weakness in at least one domain (Gardner 2006). The same research also illustrates how storytelling can be a good motivator for those children which demonstrate weaknesses in other domains (in activities such as visual arts session, creative movement sessions). It also gives a report which illustrates the use of storytelling to provoke child's interest in artistic activities, stating that:

> '[…] a child, who exhibited outstanding ability in storytelling, yet remained motionless in the creative movement sessions, moved with uncharacteristic expressiveness when storyboard props were used as a catalyst in one of the exercises. She also transformed tasks in visual arts, social analysis, and mathematics into occasions for further storytelling. […] Her drawings in art often served to illustrate accompanying narratives. Her mother reported that she often made puppets and dolls at home, modelling them on characters from the books she was 'reading'. (Gardner 2006: 97)

This presents one of many examples how storytelling can motivate children to engage in different art forms, get more exposed to arts which consequently leads to their better appreciation of arts.

Furthermore, having in mind that our attention is selective, that our attitude determines how we perceive our surroundings (Stolnitz 1969), we can argue that in order to develop art appreciation children need to have their attention focused on the aesthetic value of certain objects or activities. However, the 'focusing' itself can present a problem to a certain number of pre-school teachers, especially the ones which did not have adequate formal instruction in arts during their education. Storytelling can be a good tool for those teachers who do not feel comfortable with other art forms to create a basis they will build on and to focus children's attention to the artistic aspects. In that way they can engage children in creative activities and focus their attention to aesthetic aspects by using a technique they feel comfortable with and which offers multiple opportunities to be related to other art forms.

Finally, not everyone has equal opportunity to experience art through visits to various museums, galleries, theatres in his/her community. In some areas, such as small, remote towns or areas with difficult socio-economic background, it may be hard for a teacher to organize visits to these institutions with the aim of developing children's appreciation of art. Those children may be deprived of the aesthetic experiences which are available to their peers in big cities. Storytelling can be a way of experiencing art for them, something which will evoke their curiosity and arouse their interest in art.

Conclusion

In conclusion, storytelling offers a lot of opportunities to expose children to art and to engage them in various creative activities which can be integrated with the storytelling itself. By exploring the effects of storytelling on the development of children's appreciation of art in early childhood education, we have argued that storytelling can be used as a basis for integration of multiple artistic activities with the aim of fostering children's appreciation of art in the way which is most adequate for them individually (based on multiple intelligences theory). Furthermore, storytelling can help those teachers who do not have possibilities to organize activities in relation to children's aesthetic development outside the Early Childhood Education and Care institutions as well as those teachers who lacked formal instruction in arts during their education. Since storytelling is usually connected to children's cognitive and language skills development, more research is needed on the issue of using stories in early childhood and the impact they have on children's appreciation of arts.

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ivanabankovickg@gmail.com

Creativity in Routine?

Silva Bratož, Mojca Žefran
Faculty of Education, University of Primorska

Introduction

It is a well-known fact that efficient routines facilitate teaching and learning. Especially in lower levels, teachers are well aware of the benefits of using familiar routines and predictable patterns in their daily classroom life. Learners are reassured by the existence of classroom routines because they know exactly what is expected of them and how they are supposed to act. Moreover, by using predictable patterns, teachers can save valuable classroom time and focus on meaningful instruction. We would like to argue in favour of using a variety of established procedural and instructional routines in second language (SL) classrooms as well as developing new routine formats and thus capitalizing on the habitual and repetitive nature of routines. We also discuss routines as effective scaffolding strategies and finally look at creativity in the context of SLT by emphasizing the use of previously learned knowledge in new and creative ways.

The power of routine

Routines can be defined as established patterns of behaviour or courses of action in which all the people involved know what is expected of them and how they should behave. Several authors in the area of SLT have emphasized the benefits of developing and reinforcing routines in the SL classroom. Cameron (2001) argues that routines give learners the opportunity to make predictions while at the same time providing a platform for variation and novelty where children can experiment with more complex language.

Routines are especially valuable in lower grades of primary school where establishing predictable patterns of behaviour represents one of the most important instructional goals. Familiar routines, such as greeting the children, taking the register, starting and ending activities and tasks, moving around the classroom, collecting and returning homework, going to the toilet, tidying up and others have several positive effects. Children feel confident about what they are expected to do in the classroom, they are encouraged to cooperate with their classmates in different situations and thus develop a sense of belonging to a community.

In addition, establishing routines in a SL settings is related to the communicative goals of using as much of the target language as possible. By relying on daily routines teachers can maximise the exposure to English and promote its use by pupils. Classroom communication is characterised by a high frequency of activities, such as turn-taking, giving instructions, maintaining discipline, as well as a wide range of other routine practices and characteristic communication patterns, allowing for an almost unlimited repertoire of repetitions. This constant and natural exposure offers a vast intrinsic potential in foreign language instruction.

Aside from familiar routines which are characteristic of everyday classroom interaction there are several other routine-like activities and situations which can be exploited for teaching purposes, such as following the calendar, telling the time, reporting on the weather and celebrating birthdays and holidays. Teachers can make the most of such events and situations by introducing routine formats in their classes and thus give learners plenty of opportunities for repetition and prediction of characteristic language patterns.

There are numerous advantages to be gained by using a variety of established procedural and instructional routines in SL classrooms. However, we can do more than just exploiting the standard routine patterns

which typically constitute everyday classroom life. We would like to argue that we can capitalise on the habitual and repetitive nature of routines by establishing additional, unconventional classroom practices which can cater for different teaching objectives. For example, a teacher may decide to introduce a routine five-minute 'keeping-fit activity' in which learners in small groups take turns giving each other instructions on how to do the exercises. Besides the general goal of developing learners' speaking skills and increasing their confidence in communicating in a foreign language, this activity can be related to some specific teaching objectives, such as learning the language of instructions.

Routines as scaffolding strategies

Routines can also be perceived as effective scaffolding strategies. The concept of scaffolding derives from cognitive psychology and has its roots in the conceptual framework referred to as the 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD), a metaphor proposed by Vygotsky (1978: 86) to illustrate the distance 'between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem-solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers'. In a classroom context, this may be seen as the gap between what learners can achieve independently and what they can do with the help from a more knowledgeable individual. According to Vygotsky (ibid.), children develop cognition and language as a result of social interaction with other people, but they gradually move away from relying on others and become more independent in their actions and thinking. This is achieved with the "internalisation" process which does not just transfer or copy the external social interaction to the child but transforms it into a new form of interaction which guides the child's actions (see Cameron 2001). Read (2004) emphasises that the ZPD provides a useful conceptual framework for SLT purposes which can help the teachers calibrate the level of challenge and complexity in activities and tasks.

Cameron (2001) discusses various scaffolding strategies which can be efficiently applied in language teaching, for example, teachers can help learners to attend to what is relevant by praising the significant or providing focusing activities. She also suggests that language teaching can benefit from Bruner's concept of 'formats and routines' which refers to particular events which 'combine the security of the familiar with the excitement of the new' and are intended for scaffolding purposes (ibid.:10). Bruner's most famous example of 'formats and routines' was based on parents routinely reading to their children bedtime stories. The types of books change as the child gets older but the basic format remains always the same. What changes in time is also the interaction between the child and the parent as well as the scaffolding strategies of the parent whose verbal and non-verbal input is greater when the child is very young but is gradually reduced as the child develops linguistically and becomes more independent. For example, at a later stage the child may ask for explanations of words or give comments about the stories read. In a foreign language classroom context, similar formats and routines may provide valuable opportunities for developing SL competence. As suggested above, the routine practices and procedures need not be limited to the standard classroom routines but can be extended to include other activities and tasks which can be adjusted to fit a routine format.

Read (2004) argues that it is helpful to identify what counts as scaffolding since not all kind of help provided by the teacher can be defined as such. For example, it is important to establish what skills, concepts or level of understanding are meant to be developed. However, this does not mean that scaffolding needs to be based on a well-defined activity, it just means that it has to be clear what kind of help can be provided by the teacher to accomplish clearly defined learning goals. Read (ibid.) also emphasises that we need to see the result of scaffolding, i.e. some kind of evidence that the child has achieved a higher level of competence and is able to function autonomously.

Creativity in second language classroom

Tin (2013: 387) defines creativity as 'playful use of language to construct new and surprising meanings' and compares communicative tasks, where 'teachers often set up an information gap between students to promote a communicative desire to use language', with creative tasks, where 'it is important to set up conditions to enhance a creative desire' (Ibid.: 395). According to Tin (ibid.) there are several conditions that can help to establish a creative zone or creative desire, such as multicultural experiences and constraints. She argues that creativity can also occur as a result of multicultural encounters which may lead one to see familiar things from a different perspective. On the other hand, owing to constraints, such as rules or boundaries, learners are guided to produce new meanings from unknown data instead of relying on what they already know.

At this point, however, it needs to be stressed that the general terms 'language creativity' and creative uses of language' acquire a substantially different meaning when applied in the SLT context. It is clear that from the perspective of language learners, a creative use of language is significantly different from what native speakers of the language would consider 'new and surprising'. This is well illustrated by Pinter's (2006: 20-21) example of a young language learner calling a cactus a 'hedgehog flower' because he did not know or could not remember the word 'cactus'. In this way, the language learner is using the limited language resources available to him/her to generate a new idea with respect to his/her previous knowledge. A similar example is provided by Moon (2005: 4): a child makes up the phrase 'flower's stick' for the stem of a flower by combining previously learned language (flower, stick) in a new and creative way. Moon (ibid.) points out that for such creative uses of language to occur the pupils need to feel confident enough in the learning environment and the teacher's task is to show interest, be supportive and provide feedback so the learners feel reassured about how and what they communicate.

Pinter (2006) also suggests that, given the right opportunities, children will play and experiment with the language they are learning. We would like to argue that with the appropriate type of scaffolding we can create the right environment for the learners to be able to confidently experiment with language and thus use the limited language data available to them in new and creative ways.

Conclusion

The paper looks at second language teaching from the perspective of two concepts which are rarely considered together, i.e. creativity and routine. We first discussed the advantages of using a variety of routines in the daily classroom life arguing that as learners become increasingly familiar with routines, they grow in confidence and autonomy which enables them to take responsibility for their actions. We discussed different ways in which routines can be applied as scaffolding strategies aimed at developing oral proficiency and encouraging peer-peer interaction. The implication here for teachers is that, given appropriate opportunities, learners will use the second language in meaningful, creative and spontaneous ways.

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silva.bratoz@pef.upr.si
mojca.zefran@pef.upr.si

The Word-Catcher: A Creative Writing Experiment

Estera Deželak

The paper provides reflection on important aspects of writing viewed through the scheme of creative writing workshops and their value in establishing a writer's sense of self. I expound on this significant facet of writer development at the end of the paper, where I make a connection between voice, style and self. The title "the word-catcher" connects with the idea of what creative writing is. Essentially, creative writing consists of searching for the right word, the precise expression that captures the exact meaning we would like to convey; it is running after the butterfly with a net or, in this case a dictionary, and catching it, if we are in luck.

During my presentation at 21st IATEFL Slovenia conference we searched for answers to a number of questions: Is all writing creative? Can writing literature be taught? Can we all write, produce literature?
All writing, be it fiction or non-fiction, is creative. Paradigmatic and syntagmatic processes are involved in the creation of any text. The selection of each word in each sentence is a process that occurs on the vertical axis called the paradigm; the selected words then subsequently enter into sequences on the linear axis or syntagm. This process is a highly creative, however, mostly a subconscious act. All writing involves making choices, whether conscious or not. When it comes to literature, this act of selecting and combining is much more deliberate and careful. And once certain choices are made, then other choices are closed off to the writer.

Writing can also be taught in the sense that the word, or rather the text, can act as a teacher. The contact with literary examples serves as fertile ground for imagination to run wild. The close and detailed study of literary examples further teaches structure, form, genre, literary devices. In creative writing workshops, the examples are specially selected and used as a template for individual study and progress. The craft as such can be dissected, laid out for observation, taught and internalized; however, what cannot be taught is 'the attention to detail and the empathy of imagining and feeling something you have never experienced. […] Attention and empathy, more than diction, syntax, vocabulary, help us avoid the generic and stereotyped scenes we so often see in 'good enough' fiction' (Morley and Neilsen 2012: 14).

If a person's mind is not attuned to recognizing details, tracing connections and patterns to construct a character for example, you cannot teach him/her how to do this. If the writer lacks imagination and is not able to see the multitude of ways he could move the plot along and select the one which suits his story most; if he cannot select the most credible outcome, it is extremely difficult to configure this into his train of thought.

You cannot use something to effect if you do not understand it, in spite of the example that might be laid out before you. But, '[t]here is more in your head than you know and by writing, you can access it. Things will emerge from your memory, from events earlier in the day, from your imagination, from your youth, your victories and troubles' (Morley and Neilsen 2012: 13). Everyone has the material for writing and each of us can dabble with words and enjoy the creative process; however, writing, producing literature, especially for print, is something very different; which is why the answer to the question whether everyone can write well is no. There is room for improvement, but not everyone is born a writer.

Creative writing workshops create the perfect atmosphere for learning and improvement. Employing snippets of literature and various kinds of invocations in creative writing workshops is common practice, since

mimicry leads to the improvement of style, and the examples as such enhance our understanding of just what kind of goodness literature performs. The examples stimulate imagination and are often adapted and reconfigured into new texts. Literary pieces which in this way purposefully emerge are indeed transformations, re-shapings, re-visions of existing pieces and are not strictly speaking original, but they are not necessarily of lesser value than texts created and thought out from scratch either. What is particularly interesting is how intertextuality is actually present in every literary work. 'Language always bears the traces of former uses, other contexts and discourses' (Smith 2005: xi). Texts will allude to other texts, a certain structure or choice in wording may reveal the flavor of a particular author; the allusions may be infinite without even being planned.

Julia Kristeva, Roland Barthes and others talked about the concept of intertextuality (Smith 2005: 65). It describes the intertwining of all existing texts. No text is ever completely new, original or independent of other texts; 'writers are always, to some degree, reinventing what has already been written (Wolfreys 2004: 120).

Writing is rather like recycling paper, you give the texts you have read another life through the way you re-shape them. Or to put it another way, when we write we are constantly scavenging from what we have read in the past, either directly or obliquely. We pilfer (though in the most law-abiding way), not only from literary texts, but non-literary ones such as newspaper articles and a wide range of visual and oral media such as TV or radio. (Smith 2005: 65)

A text may connect to other texts intentionally or unintentionally; however, the principle of creative writing remains: 'be creative, (but) be critical.' Creative writing is as much relinquishing control as it is regaining it. Imagination is left to wander at will, but is simultaneously tied down by revision. Word choice is always what a creative writer has at the forefront. Not only does a writer think about how the words convey the content and act as vehicles of information, but more importantly how they become representations of emotion, beauty and creativity. Creative writing emerges from creative and, most importantly, also critical thinking. A critical eye eliminates clichés, dead metaphors and any ineffective imagery or vocabulary. Each sentence or verse is intensely scrutinized and observed for ineffectiveness while the prime objective always remains innovation, originality, freshness.

Rather than developing our critical eye, the main intention behind the creative tasks during the conference presentation was to highlight each individual's creativity. We are ultimately individuals with unique imaginative processes, different backgrounds, experiences and allusions. Everyone creates a different poem under the same instructions and ascribes different meanings to the same symbolic picture. Everyone sees something different in a densely clouded sky. We generate a multitude of voices when striving for originality, and if we try our hand at writing, dissimilar literary voices emerge.

A writer is considered to have a particular voice and style, and 'learning to write is a matter of finding that voice as if it were preexistent' (Smith 2005: xi). Style and voice in particular are seen as unalterable, defining features ingrained in the writer's identity just waiting to be discovered. 'In fact a writer does not have one voice but several, and these contrasting voices may emerge in different texts, at different times, or sometimes in the same text' (ibid.). The writer's voice is as such an abstract and fluid notion – a manifestation of the 'writer self' which partly represents the author's identity. The author, the man, the person behind the story shapes the voice to suit his needs and the needs of the story. The voice is molded into narrative, characters, motifs; it materializes in a text as the idea or viewpoint the writer generates and can take many forms. It represents the invisible core of a text.

Voice comes very close to style. Style is '[t]he sum and substance of all elements of writing' (Cognard 2006: 317); that said, the crucial distinction between voice and style is that voice resides in the realm of the abstract while style is more concrete. Style can be observed, analyzed and categorized in terms of figures of speech, devices, sentence length, choice of words and much more. A writer's individual style is composed of every conceivable aspect of writing he employs. Anything that finds its place in a text and particularly the way it is integrated into that text pertains to style. Everything that makes up style makes up voice as well. Another distinction between style and voice is that style must necessarily include the idea, but it does not originate from it like voice does. Voice is the abstract, the invisible core that encapsulates the idea, and style is its sur-

face or realization. The substance of voice is the idea, but the substance of style is the expression, the aesthetic form.

If we deprive William Carlos Williams' The Red Wheelbarrow of its enjambment, its regularity of syllables per line, its Imagist features, and more still could be mentioned, we have taken away its stylistic component. What now remains is the writerly voice with the idea of the poem at its core. The idea involves the red wheelbarrow, the chickens, and even water as objects that could roughly be termed as characters or participants of a kind in the poem. The idea of the poem reaches further and connects to human existence. The critic Peter Baker says the poem revolves around perception and its necessity for life. The poem itself can thus 'lead to a fuller understanding of one's experience' (Baker n.d.: par. 1).

Voice and style are indeed 'the centerpost[s] of an author's writerly self' (Cognard 2006: 317), but they are not the self alone. The writerly self is the identity of the person as a writer. It does not include the speaker, narrator or persona; these are created and contained in the realms of voice and style. The proposed hierarchy thus goes like this: first there was the man, and then there was the writer. The writer generated a voice, the core of which was the idea. The idea surfaced and was realized as style. The French rhetorician Comte de Buffon said that style was the man. His statement internalizes the whole hierarchy from start to finish: 'Style is, indeed, the writer, the person, the self' (Cognard 2006: 317). The man is the creator and his creation, in addition to the text, is style.

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esty.g@windowslive.com

Online and face-to-face professional development for Business English teachers

Akos Gerold

University of Novi Sad, Serbia, Freelance Business English and intercultural trainer,
IATEFL BESIG Development and Administration Coordinator

Online courses proliferate, but old habits die hard

The last few years have seen an increase in the number of online professional development courses on offer in the TEFL sector and within it in the Business English field. Still, teachers opting for online courses are often seen as the rare species of technically very savvy colleagues who may sometimes uncritically embrace everything done online. This could be one of the reasons why online professional development seems to be viewed by the majority in the TEFL world as inferior to its face-to-face counterpart or not suited for their individual needs. Another reason could be that teachers have been attending face-to-face courses throughout their professional lives, and some still may just feel a little too comfortable with the old and tried methods and insecure about venturing into the unknown waters of online courses.

An unbiased overview

The unknown has always caused most humans to become tentative in the best of cases and biased in the worst. However, experiencing the new and unknown is the best way to dissolve a bias. Part of the author's personal journey through TEFL and Business English helped him experience both online and face-to-face professional development courses and thus see the advantages and disadvantages of both. These experiences served as the basis for the session, which was designed to help participants make a well-informed and objective decision when facing a choice between the two modalities of course delivery. The other aim of the workshop was to survey the different courses available for Business English teachers and thus provide an overview of what is on offer, which should help further with the informed decision.

What to consider as a trainee

Even when our choice of professional development course remains unbiased, there are a number of factors to consider both from the trainees' and the trainers'/moderators' point of view. And these factors will affect which is the most suitable course for each of us individually. The major factors to think about when weighing up the options in hand involve cost, time away from work, focus, motivation, relationships with other course participants and with the moderator/trainer, geographical availability and mobility, reflection time, and time management.

Time and money

It seems that the two most influential factors for choosing a professional development course are time and money. The time we have to spend away from work and the timing of the course may hinder us in attending a face-to-face course. But, in the case of freelancers, time away from work will also cut into earnings. Online courses are easier on our wallets thanks to not having to travel and stay away from home. If the course is held in a foreign European country, the travel, accommodation and food costs can add between 100-150% to the course fee. Having said this, it should not be forgotten that some employers do cover their teachers' professional development costs and there are also grants available.

Focus and learning style

If the above two considerations do not limit our choice, then the next two most important factors are focus and learning style. Our focus improves when we are away from home and do not have to deal with work and

family-related issues. Being trained in a face-to-face setting can, however, adversely affect how much we benefit from the course if we favour quiet reflection and a slower pace when learning something new. On the other hand, some people thrive on the dynamism of learning as a member of a group, which makes face-to-face courses ideal for them.

Motivation and relationships

As face-to-face professional development is typically intensive and its online counterpart is typically extensive, the length of the course can affect motivation and the relationships we form with the other course participants and the trainer/moderator. The longer the course is, the more difficult it is to maintain motivation. However, spending more time together, even if it is online, is likely to produce relationships that last longer, which is useful for expanding our professional learning network.

Geographical availability and mobility

Because online courses are usually asynchronous, with a possible periodical and short synchronous component, such as a group Skype session, their great advantages are geographical availability and mobility. Geographical distance is not a forbidding factor in the age of the internet and online courses are often attended by participants from all over the world. A good example for this is the Trinity Cert IBET, which has been attended by teachers based on six continents. Another one is the joint TESOL and IATEFL BESIG Electronic Village Online (EVO) Developing Business English Teachers course, which has around 70 participants from several continents. Mobility is another key advantage. Trainees can start a course on one continent and finish it on another, or travel for pleasure or work while doing their coursework.

Time management

Although online courses have a lot going for them, doing them alongside work and private obligations calls for excellent time management skills. Time management is a life skill that teachers need to be excellent at in order to cope with the rigours of their work, but adding a course on top of everything can be more challenging than it initially seems. When committing to a course, it may also be difficult to foresee an unexpected hike in workload due to a fellow staff member's illness or other circumstances. Such unforeseen influx of work can in rare cases lead to a participant abandoning the course. Therefore, it is probably best to inform our superiors of any online courses we have enrolled for and ask them not to send extra work our way during the course if possible.

What to consider as a trainer

The number of teacher trainers working online still seems to be very low compared to their counterparts who do only face-to-face training. The main reason is the extra skill set needed for delivering training online, which presents a high entry threshold. However, the number of teachers considering training up to bridge this gap is gradually growing. Thus two questions immediately beg for an answer. What does it take to become an online trainer/facilitator/moderator? And will the investment in the necessary training pay dividends?

We don't need no rock stars

Despite the learner-centred mantra having been around for a couple of decades, some teacher trainers are natural born performers and thus dominate the training room. Trainees may or may not enjoy the charismatic performances, but unfortunately for such teacher trainers, their approach does not work well in an online setting, where a facilitator mind-set is required. If an online course is well set up and well moderated, a lot of communication takes place in the fora, which is in turn an important source of peer-to-peer learning and peer-to-trainer learning too. Even if a teacher trainer does not crave the limelight, online moderator skills have to be learned and practiced.

Time is money

Experienced online moderators/teacher trainers/facilitators/tutors say it takes between three and five hours to prepare and set up one hour of online training. The investment of preparation time is much smaller in the case of face-to-face training. On top of this, good online moderators acknowledge participant contributions and respond to questions regularly and quickly, which requires continuous work throughout an extensive course. It is difficult to calculate the per hourly rates of online moderators because they are paid a lump sum

for a course and their pre course work has to be followed by regular moderation, the amount of which depends on how active a particular group is. Thus unfortunately for online moderators, the above suggests that they earn less for more work. So why are teacher trainers interested in delivering online courses at all?

Global markets and long-term orientation
Because of the long-term advantages. One is that online trainers can reach a global market with their offerings. This does not only mean they are less reliant on local demand and changes in the market but it also means they build a global rather than a local name for themselves. This can pay off in the long run. Another advantage is that offering one's services online is becoming a staple of good quality educational services. Top-notch universities, including many Ivy League ones, have understood this and are jumping on the bandwagon. By the time the above dawns on technophobe teachers, the tech-savvy ones will have already established themselves as online teacher trainers.

What is on offer?
There are a number of free and fee-paying professional development courses on offer for Business English teachers. Some of these courses are directly focusing on this area of TEFL, while others offer training and knowledge in skills that may not belong to TEFL but deal with fields that are relevant for business people.

Courses with a Business English focus
The London Chamber of Commerce and Industry's First Certificate for Teachers of Business English (LCCI FTBE) is an entry-level course for EFL teachers who wish to move into Business English training. The course takes teachers through all the relevant stages involved in tailoring Business English training to clients' needs and lasts between six and ten days, depending on the training provider. Those who wish can sit the exam and if they pass, they will receive a certificate. The LCCI FTBE is only delivered face-to-face.

A course with a similar focus is the Trinity College London Certificate in International Business English Training (Cert IBET). The only difference is that not only novices to Business English but also experienced teachers are likely to benefit from this course and that it is offered both online and face-to-face, with the former lasting ten weeks and the latter six to eight days.

While the above two are fee-paying courses, the Developing Business English Teachers course is free. It is a five-week online course offered by TESOL America and the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language Business English Special Interest Group (IATEFL BESIG) on the Electronic Village Online (EVO) platform. The course takes a modular approach and zooms in on different key aspects of teaching Business English. Each module is led by an expert in the specific aspect that the module focuses on.

The IATEFL BESIG and their website, with a rich archive of recorded simulcasts from conferences, online workshops, teacher resources, a newsletter, scholarship offerings and much more, is an excellent address for professional development. IATEFL BESIG also organises an annual conference, a SIG day at the IATEFL annual conference and often one more face-to-face event in every calendar year. These events are the premier meeting places for Business English professionals.

Useful courses in related fields
Business English teachers need to go beyond pedagogical knowledge and skills and they need have a good understanding of how business is done and how it works, soft skills and business psychology, to mention only a few non-TEFL-related areas. Luckily, several dozens of well-renown universities, some of which are among the best in the world, offer free online courses in some of the above fields. A full list of courses can be found at edx.org.

A well informed decision
The range of professional development courses useful for Business English teachers is wide and choosing the course most suitable for our individual needs and preferences can seem like a daunting task. The choice of delivery mode depends on a number of factors detailed in this paper and it is up to each individual teacher to set up their own hierarchy of factors and thus make their choice a well-informed one.

I teach meme!

Nina Jerončič

Teenagers and adults of the developed countries, where internet is a part of the everyday life, are a very different group of learners than those who were the target audience ten years ago. They read differently, communicate differently and, of course, learn differently. However, the digital natives that mostly represent today's English language learners are not the only aspect of the English language teaching that has changed in the recent years; the English language itself is undergoing major changes as we speak. Every day, new words and collocations created on the internet are entering the vocabulary and some phenomena are even starting to affect the grammar. Most importantly, these changes to the English language, mostly fuelled by the immense number of speakers of English as a lingua franca on the internet, are not limited solely to the virtual environment of its origin, but are starting to seep into the everyday usage in the real world, thus becoming a legitimate and growing variety of slang.

A key word in this flood of changes is meme. The workshop *I teach meme!* thus dealt with raising awareness of different needs and interests of digital-native youths and familiarizing teachers with the concept of a meme, its internet variety and examples. It also offered some ideas on how to use them, with a variety of aims, in a classroom with teenage learners or young adults.

First of all, what is a meme? The term was originally coined by the evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins in his book The Selfish Gene as an attempt to explain how cultural information spreads, just like biological information spreads across the gene pool. As examples of memes, he lists melodies, catchphrases and fashion. However, the term has been somewhat hijacked by its subcategory – the internet meme.

Internet memes can take the form of pictures, videos, websites, hyperlinks, words or catchphrases and in some cases even intentional misuse of grammar and spelling. Basically, anything that spreads virally can be considered a meme and the speed of spreading across the internet is one of the main characteristics of a meme; this is partly due to the fact that anybody can create a meme. There are plenty of so-called meme-generators available online where users can create and upload or download their own memes. Some popular websites have also contributed greatly to the popularity of certain memes, most notably 9gag.com, icanhas.cheezburger.com, 4chan.org as well as many Facebook pages that do nothing but post memes.

But are memes at all relevant for English teachers? The answer is yes; many new vocabulary items that an average teenage English learner will use or at least recognise have a memetic origin. If the English language is developing so quickly, teachers cannot and must not be left behind in the dark. What is more, knowing, understanding and even using this language can help teachers build a more lasting and sincere connection with their students. Memes can capture the attention of the students, make them motivated and establish a more positive atmosphere in the classroom. Moreover, they can be exploited in a number of activities that encourage speaking, writing, creativity and even practicing certain grammar items.

Admittedly, it can be time consuming for teachers to get familiar with memes, but knowing all memes is not that important and maybe not even realistically possible. What is important, however, is the appropriate usage of memes. Each meme has its own meaning and while appropriate use should provoke positive reac-

tions from student, wrong usage will more likely result in sneers and mocking. One website which provides a lot of information about memes is knowyourmeme.com – a kind of meme encyclopaedia. The website is a fairly trustworthy source when it comes to researching the origins, meanings and examples of various internet memes.

Knowyourmeme.com has a particularly good coverage of memes in the form of a picture and pictures are also the type of a meme that has had the biggest impact on the English language. This is because most pictures are accompanied by a comment of some sort, most often in the form of a caption. This type of a picture meme is called an image macro; it can be divided into 4 subcategories, but the most influential subtype is undoubtedly Advice Animals. The name of this meme type is tricky because Advice Animal memes can contain animals or people and usually, they have nothing to do with actual advice. The pictures usually show a stock character and are captioned by at least one line of text on the top and one line on the bottom of the text. Quite often, one of those lines is occupied by a catchphrase typical for that meme, for example "one does not simply [do something]" in the meme which shows Sean Benn's character Boromir from the Lord of the Rings; the original phrase being "one does not simply walk into Mordor".

One Advice Animal that does live up to its name is the "Actual Advice Mallard", which gives advice on a variety of topics. One example of a caption: "If you have to yell, you've already lost the argument". For teachers, giving advice is an every-day occurrence and very often, students do not listen to it. This is where the "Actual Advice Mallard" could come in handy for establishing classroom rules, studying strategies and grammar rules, as the memes are less threatening and less straightforward then instructions and commands.

Of course, the mallard could also be used to practice the structures of advice giving, especially with modal verbs 'should' and 'ought to'. Two more memes who are very useful in this context are "Captain Hindsight" and "Super Cool Ski Instructor"; both, incidentally, are lesser characters from a popular animated show *South Park*. "Captain Hindsight" is known for giving belated advice on how things should have been done, usually in the form of the following structure: "If you wanted [something], you shouldn't have [done something]". Variations regarding the negation in both sentences are possible. As such, this particular meme is very well suited for practicing advice and for remembering the 'shouldn't have' phrase as a chunk. "Super Cool Ski Instructor", on the other side, gives advice or warnings about how things will be if someone does a certain action. The phrase typical of this character is: "If you [do something], you're gonna have a bad time". Aside from practicing warnings, this catchphrase can also help students remember how the type 1 conditional clause is built. Besides practicing grammar, memes can also be exploiting to raise the students' awereness of grammar and common grammatical errors. The phenomenon that is particularly suitable for this task is represented by "Grammar Nazis", who are people who always correct other people's grammatical mistakes. Quite often, a meme called "The Grammar Guy" is featured for correcting mistakes; the meme is most commonly attached to a screenshot of a certain grammar error. A useful idea is to have students act as grammar nazis and collect examples of mistakes from online sources (Life of a Perpetually Disorganised Teacher).

Memes can also be used as a writing exercise and as a way to stimulate creativity and thinking outside the box. This works very well with the "Archaic Rap" meme, also known as "Joseph Ducreux". This meme features an eccentric-looking portrait and lyrics of well-known songs written with their synonyms, which should be as archaic-sounding and wordy as possible. For example: "Use moderate force on me once again" for "Hit me baby one more time." This exercise is very motivating for students, as they can use lyrics of their favourite (or least favourite) songs. It can also be combined with practicing other skills, for example using a dictionary or a thesaurus.

Writing can also be practiced by another popular type of an image meme, although not an image macro: ragecomics. Ragecomics are webcomics which are extremely easy to make either in Microsoft Paint or with online tools. Ragecomics are notable for breaking certain grammar rules, for example, it is very common to find the French article 'le' in front of nouns, and even gerunds, pronouns and verbs. The faces that appear in the comics also have specific meanings and can be considered stock characters. Ragecomics generators usually have the option to insert the characters directly into the comic, while the rest of the picture is usually drawn in in a more or less clumsy way. By creating ragecomics, students can practice writing or certain

grammar structures, for example present simple or continuous. But the main reason why ragecomics should be used over other tools for making comics is that students will immediately associate them with fun, free time and humour, so they may accept them with more enthusiasm and not see them as real work.

Another way of stimulating writing is using the phenomenon of the hashtag (#). Hashtags are used for searching purposes on websites like Twitter, Tumblr and Facebook. Usually, they are either strategically placed in front of key words or accumulated in the end of a text, where they can also express the feelings and opinions of the writer or as a quick summary of the text and if a hashtag becomes very popular, it is considered a meme as well. A writing exercise using hashtags would be giving students a few words as hashtags and having them write a story with the help of the given words. Alternatively, they could be used in reading comprehension, more specifically for reading for gist by having student hashtag the keywords within a text.

As demonstrated, memes can be used in a variety of different situations and to practice different skills as well as grammar structures. With their tendency to reflect everyday life in a humorous way, they are very motivating for teenage learners and should therefore be considered a legitimate source for English language teaching.

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About Montessori

Marša Meznarič
Montessori Institute

In *The Montessori Controversy* (Chattin McNichols 1998) we read that when trying to explain what Montessori is, we easily get confused. We might be talking about the people; Maria or her son Mario Montessori, Montessori teachers, parents or children, perhaps we are referring to the Montessori philosophy and its applications or do we mean to talk about Montessori schools and organizations? All these different areas are often referred to simply as *Montessori* and so describing *Montessori* might become a complex task.

Maria Montessori

Maria Montessori was a great human rights activist (nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize three times), a feminist, a fiery advocate for peace, an amazing scientist and pedagogue, and a true pioneer in many fields. Her contribution to education is immense. Schools adopting the concepts of her philosophy are numerous and are being opened worldwide - the children in these schools thrive.

Maria Montessori was a smart and eloquent young girl, who had high aspirations. She wished to study medicine, when this was thought of as inappropriate for women. She did it anyway. She became one of the first woman doctors in Italy. Later on, she also became a pedagogue, although she always claimed she would never be a teacher. Many times she acted in ways influential people did not approve of. When Mussolini ruled Italy, she decided to leave her country and abandon her schools, because she saw that his financial support to her work came mostly because he wanted children to learn fascist principles. She fled first to Netherlands and then left for India, where she stayed for quite some time. There she deepened and confirmed a lot of her research.

The Montessori Philosophy - Education for Peace

Montessori philosophy is an educational philosophy, also called *cosmic education* or *education for peace*. It is profoundly spiritual and academically very systematic. In the book *To Educate the Human Potential* (Montessori 1948: 6) Montessori claims that the mind of the child at 6 wanders and that it needs to be anchored. The child can then become peaceful and '*satisfied, having found the universal centre of himself with all things.*'

The Five Great Lessons

Among other lessons, she also wrote *The Five Great Lessons* which touch the deepest parts of children's imagination: about our planet in the universe, how life came to Earth, about the arrival of the human, the story about communication and one about numbers.

The stories are true, but simplified. Children hear them every year in their first four years of primary school. They spark the children's imagination and give them an explanation to why we are learning what we are learning, why everybody needs to play their role in this universe and how grateful we should be that all this work has been done so that we can live as we do today.

Following the *Great Lessons* children are then given *presentations*, which are short lessons in groups of four or five or individually. Montessori was convinced that in this early period we are here to plant seeds – yes, to

give information to the hungry mind… but only to leave traces in the memory. This, she believed, truly shapes the person and the way one views the world. For teaching children between 6 and 12 she says that

> '*the secret of good teaching is to regard the child's intelligence as a fertile field in which seeds may be sown, to grow under the heat of flaming imagination. Our aim therefore is not merely to make the child understand, and still less to force him to memorize, but so to touch his imagination as to enthuse him to his inmost core.*' (Montessori 1948: 11)

The Environment

Montessori found many truths about children that today we see as self-evident: the furniture accustomed to the children's height, quality hygiene for babies, the importance of observation and the importance of the environment for the child's development. She believed – based on years of her scientific observation of children all around the world – that *children have an inner need to learn and thus love learning.*

She set out to prepare environments for children of different ages in which they could satisfy their hunger for learning. She first adapted the environment physically: she lowered the furniture, she designed materials children could train their senses with, materials with which they could prepare their hands for writing, materials with which they could teach themselves a concept and even correct themselves or each other. She also constructed groups of children who were of different ages: between 0-3 years, 3-6 years, 6-12 years and 12-18 years. She believed that children learn best in such settings, where all are mentors and all are mentees at a certain point in time regardless of the age difference. There is much less competition in such environments, children do however look up to older schoolmates, who know more, have heard more lessons and are working with more sustained attention and concentration, but can still also learn from younger ones, especially about patience and caring.

Then she started preparing the adults to work in such an environment. When she opened her first *Casa dei Bambini* in 1907 she had few demands: her assistant would love children and had not been a teacher before. Today people of different backgrounds, also teachers, read her books and are trained in a similar manner she trained her assistants. The American branch of associations (AMS – American Montessori Society) is considered to be a bit less traditional than the European branch (AMI - Association Montessori Internationale).

Observation

Something both branches strongly agree on is that Montessori teachers need to learn how to observe children, take notes and then analyze their notes with the philosophy and the theories of child development in mind. Observation is of key importance in Montessori pedagogy. If you see a Montessori classroom in which teachers do not sit down for at least a while during the morning uninterrupted work time to observe, this should not be called a Montessori classroom (Discussions on what is authentic *Montessori* and what is not are very present all over the world and with the expansion of the philosophy in Slovenia they might soon be here as well.). By observing we learn to calm down, to move with more dignity, to be present, to truly be in awe of the children, to respect the children's work and their efforts. During observation we are quiet and concentrated and as such also a good example for the children.

Freedom

'The Montessori method is quite structured in the demands on the teacher for the creation of a rich, stimulating, but orderly environment. It also demands very structured activities of her in maintaining the ground rules, introducing materials to the children, and displaying high expectations of the children's ability to learn independently. These structures in teacher behavior and environment make the freedom of the children possible. Without these limits, licensee rather than freedom exists.' (Chattin McNichols 1998: 17)

Yes, the child is free to choose work, free to choose the time to do work, free to choose who to work with if at all, free to develop in her own pace, free to rest, free to eat at her own chosen time, free to express and free to socialize, but all this freedom is framed with ground rules, teacher behavior and the environment. The child learns to plan her own work, to make choices, to understand that choices have consequences, to work independently and acquires social skills that teach her to be respectful to all creatures and things.

Montessori Teachers, Children and Parents

We, Montessori teachers, refer to ourselves as *Montessorians*, and sometimes you hear parents say '*we are very Montessori*'. What do we mean by that? We follow her principles of respect towards the child and we understand something about child development and how it influences behavior. We understand that observation and environment are essential for the development of the child, and that freedom comes with responsibility. It most probably also means that we have had some sort of training and have worked in a Montessori setting for at least a couple of years.

Sometimes you may hear people say '*now, that is a true Montessori child*'. Most probably the speaker refers to a child that is eager to learn, is respectful and *normalized*. The term was used by Montessori, and does not sound very respectful in translation today. *Normalized* child is not what is considered *average* or *normal*. She used this term to describe a process that happens in a child:

Only "normalised" children, aided by their environment, show in their subsequent development those wonderful powers that we describe: spontaneous discipline, continuous and happy work, social sentiments of help and sympathy for others. . . . An interesting piece of work, freely chosen, which has the virtue of inducing concentration rather than fatigue, adds to the child's energies and mental capacities, and leads him to self-mastery. . . . One is tempted to say that the children are performing spiritual exercises, having found the path of self-perfectionment and of ascent to the inner heights of the soul.
(Maria Montessori, The Absorbent Mind, 1949, retrieved from Montessori NAMTA)

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meznaric.marsa@gmail.com

Little Concepts for Great Learning: Cognitive Approach to Phrasal Verbs

Nizama Muhamedagić, Ilhana Škrgić

Elementary School "25. novembar", Velika Kladuša, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Cognitive approach to phrasal verbs

Phrasal verbs learning in elementary and secondary school can sometimes be difficult for students since those procedures are commonly based on traditional views of grammar. These verbs present a constant confusion to learners who see them as obstacles to their proficiency in English (Boers: 2000). This confusion seems to be obvious for learners whose mother tongue lacks phrasal verbs (South Slavic languages are apparent examples, including Bosnian). Verbs in Bosnian language are, among other processes, created by prefixation and suffixation of the existing verbs, but never by adding a satellite which creates a phrasal verb, as in English. Having in mind the typological differences between Bosnian and English, it is implied that the main problem of understanding and learning of phrasal verbs for Bosnian EFL learners lies in the lack of awareness of possible orientational meanings of particles contained within phrasal verbs. Bosnian EFL learners have the tendency of learning the meanings of phrasal verbs "by heart", without trying to understand them or even being aware that the particle contributes greatly to the whole structure of the phrasal verb.

Cognitive linguistics views phrasal verbs i.e. their particles as orientational metaphors, which are connected with the spatial orientations arising from embodied experience (Lakoff and Johnson: 1980). The knowledge of spatial orientations of the particles can assist EFL learners in their acquisition of phrasal verbs and overall EFL proficiency. Phrasal verbs can be grouped according to the spatial orientation of their particle i.e. the conceptual metaphor contained within, e.g. MORE IS UP: open up, show up, etc.; LESS IS DOWN: cut down, calm down, and other examples. Another pair of common particles is "in" and "out", and this refers to the conceptual metaphors based on the view on things as "containers": ENTERING/CONTAINING IS IN: go in, fill in, etc., as well as REMOVING/EXCLUDING IS OUT: go out, fall out, etc.

Advantages in grouping idiomatic expressions based on a cognitive set of meaning rather than simple alphabet were recognized by contemporary lexicographers as well, presumably under the influence of cognitive linguistics. For instance, in Longman's Idioms Dictionary (1998 edition and later) readers can find a special section that contains "10 basic concept words", which are further divided into groups of idioms that have similar meanings. This so-called "Idiom Activator" (pp. 192-199) features a visual web of idioms connected with one concept word - for example, the concept word "easy" presumes groups (abbreviations present in the dictionary were written using full words) "something is easy" ("be a piece of cake"), and "somebody does something easily" ("somebody can do something in his/her sleep"). This is an obvious move towards a conceptual arrangement in such dictionaries, since Kövecses and Szabo (1996: 329) noted that prior systematization was based only on formal property (for example, entries based on the word "fire", such as "set fire to" and "fire away").

The present study

Relevant studies in acquisition of phrasal verbs by Kövecses and Szabo (1996), Boers (2000) and Yasuda (2010), involving university level EFL learners, indicate that enhancing conceptual metaphor awareness (CMA) of the learners helps them learn phrasal verbs more efficiently. Considering that all three studies were conducted among older learners, the aim of this study is to determine whether CMA can be used in elementary school as well. Yasuda (2010) points out that the ability of interpretation of the meaning of metaphor-

based idioms is influenced by the age of the learners, i.e. that younger children rely greatly on the contextual information and as they get older, their interpretation seems to be based on the semantic relations between the individual words and their figurative meaning. We claim the CMA is equally applicable to younger learners. In order to perform this task, we will follow the advice of Kövecses and Szabo (1996: 351) who say that 'the answer might be that people *need to be aware* of the metaphor-approach before they can put it to use. The passive existence of metaphorical motivation, that is, the mere presence of conceptual metaphors in the mind, does not seem to be sufficient for their active use in the learning of a foreign language. Students might need to be taught about the notion of conceptual metaphors in an explicit way, before they can use the strategy of employing metaphors and discovering new ones in the foreign language.'

The goal of the present study is to determine whether the cognitive approach in learning phrasal verbs can facilitate a higher level of knowledge in ninth grade students (age 13 - 14), thus opening possibilities for EFL teaching based on CMA. This can be viewed as the first such research in a Bosnian educational setting, involving EFL learners whose mother tongue is Bosnian.

The participants were 54 Bosnian pupils attending two classes of the ninth grade of the public elementary school "25. novembar" in Velika Kladuša, Bosnia and Herzegovina. They have studied English for five years prior to ninth grade, all during formal education. They have been assigned to their particular class on the basis of their previous achievements in education and upbringing, which means both classes were equal in terms of general success at school. Both groups, the experimental and the control group, consisted of 27 students each.

The phrasal verbs used for the study were chosen on the basis of their particle. Four particles grouped in pairs were used: in and out, up and down, and the following verbs were used: *bow down, calm down, cut down, eat up, fall in, fall out, figure out, fill in, finish up, give in, go in, go out, go up, knock down, make out, open up, slow down, sneak in* and *wake up*. These verbs were introduced to students in both groups, but using different teaching methods. The control group learned phrasal verbs through traditional approach of memorizing verbs listed alphabetically one at a time, while the experimental group was introduced to the concepts and conceptual metaphors behind the particles with the help of a checklist and using Total Physical Response (TPR) as methods in lieu of the traditional approach. After learning the concepts such as COMPLETION IS UP with examples of verbs "eat up", "go up" and "wake up", students were then introduced to the "Verb Machine". This is a TPR method used to connect teaching of meaning with physical interpretation of language. Students were divided into six groups (4 or 5 students in each) and were given two tasks, from which they needed to choose one to interpret physically. Example of a task follows:

Verb and meaning	Proposal of the activity for the Verb Machine
Slow down – usporiti (Bosnian)	A car whose driver is slowly decreasing speed

Both groups were later on tested with a list containing 38 sentences where they were required to fill in the gaps with appropriate particles (in, out, up and down). Sentences, taken from the online Merriam-Webster and Cambridge Learner's dictionary, contained 19 known and 19 unknown phrasal verbs which were based on the same concepts previously taught.

The following hypotheses were proposed by Yasuda (2010) before the analysis of the results and they are adopted for this study as well:

1) The performance of both groups will be equally good on the exposed list of phrasal verbs.
2) The performance of both groups will be equally poor on the unexposed list of phrasal verbs, if memorization plays a role in helping the students to learn phrasal verbs.
3) If enhancing cognitive metaphor awareness indeed plays a role, the students in the experimental group will perform better than those in the control group, on the unexposed list of phrasal verbs. This means that students will rely on metaphorical thought when the phrasal verbs are not stored as a unit in their mental lexicons.

Results

The results of this study correspond to the results of Yasuda's study:

1) The performance of both groups was equally good on the exposed list of phrasal verbs, with 62.18% for the control group and 62.77% for the experimental group.
2) This hypothesis is disproved by the results of hypothesis 3).
3) The students in the experimental group have performed better than those in the control group on the unexposed list of phrasal verbs, with 33.92% for the control and 38.99% for the experimental group.

Table 1: **Control group**

Student	Exposed	%	Unexposed	%	Total	%
1	16	84,21	10	52,63	26	68,42
2	15	78,95	6	31,58	21	55,26
3	11	57,89	6	31,58	17	44,74
4	13	68,42	6	31,58	19	50,00
5	8	42,11	4	21,05	12	31,58
6	7	36,84	5	26,32	12	31,58
7	13	68,42	4	21,05	17	44,74
8	9	47,37	3	15,79	12	31,58
9	11	57,89	5	26,32	16	42,11
10	7	36,84	5	26,32	12	31,58
11	12	63,16	9	47,37	21	55,26
12	13	68,42	10	52,63	23	60,53
13	13	68,42	9	47,37	22	57,89
14	13	68,42	8	42,11	21	55,26
15	8	42,11	4	21,05	12	31,58
16	13	68,42	11	57,89	24	63,16
17	8	42,11	3	15,79	11	28,95
18	13	68,42	6	31,58	19	50,00
19	15	78,95	7	36,84	22	57,89
20	18	94,74	8	42,11	26	68,42
21	17	89,47	7	36,84	24	63,16
22	9	47,37	6	31,58	15	39,47
23	11	57,89	6	31,58	17	44,74
24	15	78,95	12	63,16	27	71,05
25	8	42,11	4	21,05	12	31,58
26	16	84,21	5	26,32	21	55,26
27	7	36,84	5	26,32	12	31,58
	11,81	**62,18**	**6,44**	**33,92**	**18,26**	**48,05**

Table 2: **Experimental group**

Student	Exposed	%	Unexposed	%	Total	%
1	16	84,21	11	57,89	27	71,05
2	17	89,47	11	57,89	28	73,68
3	4	21,05	6	31,58	10	26,32
4	16	84,21	11	57,89	27	71,05
5	10	52,63	4	21,05	14	36,84
6	14	73,68	14	73,68	28	73,68
7	3	15,79	5	26,32	8	21,05
8	7	36,84	5	26,32	12	31,58
9	14	73,68	5	26,32	19	50,00
10	16	84,21	11	57,89	27	71,05
11	13	68,42	8	42,11	21	55,26
12	12	63,16	8	42,11	20	52,63
13	11	57,89	9	47,37	20	52,63
14	17	89,47	12	63,16	29	76,32
15	17	89,47	9	47,37	26	68,42
16	11	57,89	5	26,32	16	42,11
17	10	52,63	1	5,26	11	28,95
18	11	57,89	4	21,05	15	39,47
19	9	47,37	4	21,05	13	34,21
20	8	42,11	3	15,79	11	28,95
21	15	78,95	6	31,58	21	55,26
22	9	47,37	5	26,32	14	36,84
23	9	47,37	6	31,58	15	39,47
24	16	84,21	9	47,37	25	65,79
25	18	94,74	13	68,42	31	81,58
26	6	31,58	5	26,32	11	28,95
27	13	68,42	10	52,63	23	60,53
	11,93	**62,77**	**7,41**	**38,99**	**19,33**	**50,88**

These results support Yasuda's hypothesis no. 3) that, after being exposed to CMA, students were able to extract meaning from known concepts and apply it to unknown phrasal verb constructions in order to complete them with an appropriate particle. This provides evidence for the claim that learning of phrasal verbs can be greatly improved by making students aware of the conceptual metaphors ingrained in phrasal verb particles, than by insisting on traditional approaches to learning.

Conclusion

Cognitive metaphor awareness approach represents an innovative method of teaching difficult elements of English language, such as phrasal verbs. By using conceptual metaphors embedded in particles, instead of the traditional approach of teaching focused on the verb itself, EFL learners are enabled to grasp the intricate web of conceptual metaphors hidden within phrasal verb particles. The study, conducted in an elementary school environment where EFL learners were divided into two groups, showed that the experimental group, after being exposed to concepts driven by conceptual metaphors and instructed accordingly, achieved better results when confronted with unknown phrasal verbs that contain the same concepts previously explained. This research is one of the first conducted with younger learners, and has proven that CMA can be used in elementary school as well, which is a conclusion that invites further research in this field.

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nizama.muhamedagic@gmail.com
ilhana.skrgic@bih.net.ba

Cool Tools from Wi-Fi EFL World

Irena Sinovčić Trumbić
Centar znanja, Split

Magda Pašalić
Faculty of Economics, Split

Introduction

Today's technologies are changing how we learn and teach. We have explored this change through the paradigm of interwoven relation in the circle Education -Teachers-Students-Tools (Picture 1). Advancements in technology and wide Wi-Fi availability equip the teacher with resources for the creation of student-centred learning environments. We climbed the Bloom's Taxonomy pyramid while exploring two free web tools that range from the basic vocabulary acquisition to joining a visual story telling community and embarking on a creative writing adventure for all ages.
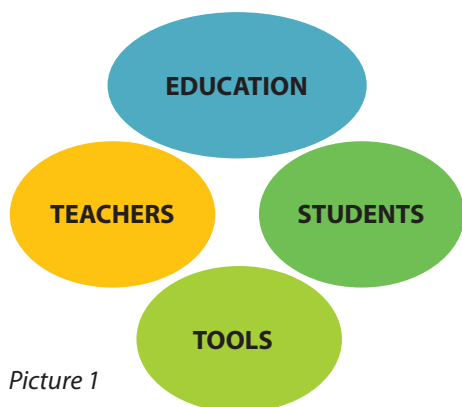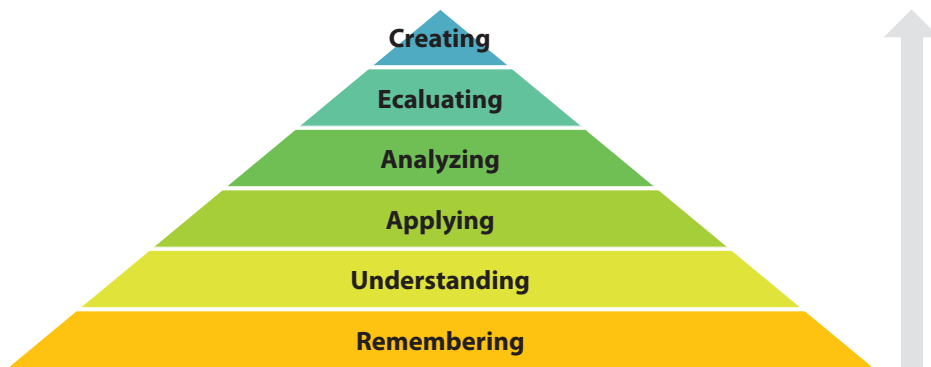

Picture 1

Education

We have presented our vision of education supported by words and ideas of one of the principal voices of our times, professor emeritus, Sir Ken Robinson and notoriously widespread Bloom's Revised Taxonomy of learning.

The well-known English author, speaker and international advisor on education, knighted in 2003 for services in education, in his last appearance on TED Talks Education from April 2013 titled *"How to escape education's death valley* outlined three principles crucial for the flourishing of the human mind. According to him human beings are naturally *different* and *diverse*, *curious* and *creative*. We consider these three principles to be something that every educator should keep in his mind. Unfortunately, these principles are 'contradicted by the culture of education under which most teachers have to labour and most students have to endure ' (Robinson 2013).

Another important feature that aligns very well with Robinson's ideas on education is The Revised Bloom's Taxonomy, a classification of intellectual behaviours important in learning. It was originally developed in 1956 by Benjamin Bloom and a group of educational psychologists. In the 1990's other group of cognitive psychologists, led by Lorin Anderson, updated the taxonomy for the 21st century work. The Revised Taxonomy is presented in a form of a pyramid with lower order thinking skills at the bottom and higher learning skills at the top (Picture 2). We start with *Remembering* (students recall or remember the information), *Under-*

standing (students explain ideas or concepts), *Applying* (students use the information in the right way), *Analyzing* (students distinguish between the different parts), *Evaluating* (students justify a stand or decision), *Creating* (students create new product or point of view).

While most of our schooling systems and classroom practices still linger on the lower levels of the taxonomy (remembering, understanding), we as teachers should strive for and find the ways and tools that can take us (teachers and students) and the process of learning in our very own classrooms to the top, to the realm of creation.

```
                    Creating
                   Ecaluating
                    Analyzing
                    Applying
                  Understanding
                   Remembering
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Picture 2 Going up - From low to high

Students

In his book *Growing Up Digital* (1998) Tapscott states that students in today's elementary, high school and college are changing, and so must we as their teachers. According to him they use technology to actively seek out the information they need at their own pace and the Internet is their primary source of information. They actively pursue, evaluate, and construct meaning from the acquired information.

This different approach to the learning process, communication and consequently the world of this generation is visible through some of the figures from their everyday life:

- **50** is a median number of text messages teenagers send every day (Pew Research: 2010)
- **43%** of 18-24 year-olds say that texting is just as meaningful as an actual conversation with someone over the phone (eMarketer: 2010)
- **48%** say word-of-mouth influences their product purchases more than TV ads. (The word-of- mouth is basically perceived as other people's comments on various social networks.)
- **41%** of N-Generation have made a purchase using their smartphone.

Teachers

Most teachers that are in classrooms today grew up when the main media was TV and teaching process was perceived as a passive reception of information. They (we) come from and base their teaching ideas on the times when learning was predominantly an individual process, it almost had a limited beginning and an end, it basically happened in schools because all other sources of information and instruction were scarce or more difficult to access and were separated from the rest of life's activities.

With technological advances, our reality changes and so does the learning process. With technology, learning can become seamless. It can take place anywhere, any time. Still, while talking about changes we must reconsider our vision of reality and be aware that we are in a middle of an ongoing process. We have not reached the point in which these changes slow down or stop, on the contrary, these changes continue. When we look at the technological advances humankind has made in the last dozen years it is hard to foretell where we will be in another dozen. For example, when we think about our not too distant future, the world in the year 2025, the world in which our elementary students will graduate from college, it is already difficult to pinpoint some basic issues of this future world. What can we say about future when we are all

aware of the fact that top ten jobs in 2010 did not exist in 2004. Still, our role as teachers is to educate and prepare our students for this world, to give them the knowledge and the skills that will make them rightful and employable citizens of this, undoubtedly, predominantly digital world. What gadgets, super smart devices, augmented realities, wearable technologies will be available to us, our students and eventually be present in our classrooms in that future? These questions are really difficult to answer since we can only guess what skills will be important in this world of tomorrow. Nevertheless, we strongly believe that taking the road of creativity, critical thinking and collaboration can help our students navigate this world of tomorrow.

Tools

There are virtually thousands of useful and good quality applications freely available to EFL teachers that can meet our goal of promotion of better classroom practices, broader opportunities and deeper engagement of our students in the learning process. We decide d to present the tools Storybird and Quizlet due to their ease of use, good quality and adaptability to different levels of EFL students and most importantly for our predominantly visual world the importance they give to the image and application of knowledge. This aligns well with research findings of William Glasser on learning techniques by which we remember only 10% of what we read but 70% of what we discuss and 80% of what we apply (Picture 3 Learning techniques).

80% APPLY

70% DISCUSS

50% READ, HEAR, SEE

30% SEE

20% HEAR

10% READ
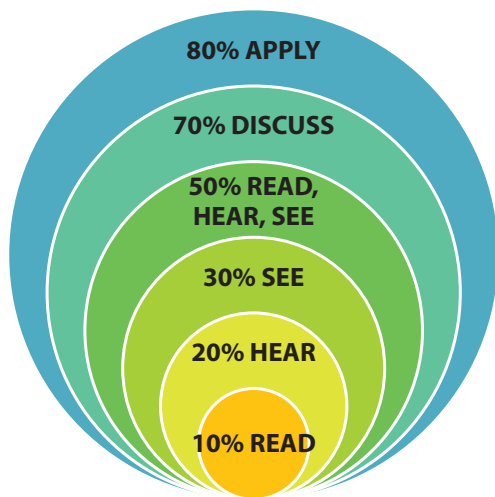
Picture 3 Learning techniques according to W. Glasser

Storybird (https://storybird.com)

Storybird is a free website that comes with an introductory opening *Storytelling for everyone*. The site is all about storytelling but starting from the visual part of the story. It offers wonderful art images that serve as a starting point and inspiration for your student's own creation, their own stories. The students use the art images they like combining them in order they prefer and follow by their own text. The site can also be used just for the promotion of reading skill practice because you can browse and read the stories of other users who chose to publish their work online. One can therefore go through the site following the principles of Bloom's Revised Taxonomy where you start by exploring, reading but end up at the top of the pyramid – creating. It can be explored in different ways: by topic , artists or age. Teachers can also make their closed classrooms and give assignments to their students and even mark them and comment them. Students can collaborate on line while writing a story and once they are finished the stories can be published online, embedded on some other site. There is also a possibility to download the finished stories or order printouts but these options are charged.

Quizlet (www. quizlet.com)

Quizlet is a free website largely popular with teachers and students all over the world that provides learning tools for students starting with flashcards but offering many more. It was created in 2005 by high school student Andrew Sutherland and now contains over 400 million study sets. All the content is generated by

their users. It is not specifically made for EFL students but there are millions of study sets dedicated to EFL. Students can use Quizlet from basically two points of views: to study (where they use different modes created by their teacher or other worldwide users) or they can create their own sets. The study part offers six different modes: *Flashcards* (with or without images, they can hear the word pronounced), *Speller* (they have to type the word they hear), *Learn* (they track their answers and have to take again ones they miss), *Test* (the test with different possible options to choose from is generated on the specific flashcard set), *Scatter* (it is a game in which students have to drag and match the term with the definition), *Space Race* (another game in which the students have to type in the answer as the term scrolls down the screen). If one decides to make his own flashcard sets, he can make them from scratch or he can reuse the ones already available on the Internet. The cards and the tests can also be downloaded free of charge and used in an off line version. The specific set you create can also be shared on different social networks, like Facebook or Twitter, or embedded on your Web site. There is also a free mobile application version to be downloaded. Quizlet is an application that is both user and creator friendly because students of all levels of EFL can easily create their personal cards, adapt them to their needs, share and play with them.

Conclusion
We have gone through the whole circle of Education-Students-Teachers-Tools. Although the changing times and millennial students require the adoption of new tools, still the teacher role is not diminished in any way, it is only changed. Current researches on these topics have shown that 'the confident *digital native* is not necessarily a confident *digital learner*' (Johnson and March 2013). We will conclude our article with Sir Ken Robinson's words: 'There is no system in the world or any school in the country that is better than its teachers. Teachers are the lifeblood of success of schools.' (Robinson 2013)

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magda@efst.hr
isinovcic@hotmail.com

Cuisenaire rods in ELT

Gregor Pirš
Yurena Novo mesto, Slovenia

The introduction

This article will give you a short presentation of how cuisenaire rods can help students to learn, practice and improve language skills. I will give you some practical ideas on what to do in your classroom. These ideas are there to give you a sense of what tactile learning is. As you read them, try to think how these activities can be adapted to suit your students, how can you make students to be more autonomous. The article is finished by theoretical background of humanistic learning and its influence on the teaching with cuisenaire rods.

Cuisenaire rods were introduced to teaching in 1950s. Their invention was inspired by music and the relations between melodies and their first applicable usage can be found in teaching maths (multiplications, ratios, fractions etc). Silent method presents the first practical application of cuisenaire rods into an FL classroom. In the later years, silent method was replaced by other approaches to teaching a foreign language and cuisenaire rods lost their place in the language classroom.

Before the teacher uses the rods in a language classroom

Before using the rods in an ELT classroom, the teacher must know her/his students; her/his classroom and her/his box of cuisenaire rods very well.

Students are the key factors of success. The teacher must be aware of any reasons why students may have problems with using the rods (e.g. colour blindness or allergies to certain materials). Apart from that the teacher needs to know the exact number of students in his group to plan the number of rods needed for the lesson. The rule is five or six students per box of 300 rods. The teacher also has to know whether the students are already familiar with the rods through other subjects or not. If the students are not familiar with the rods, the teacher will have to prepare the students for their use by explaining the rules on how are they made and similar.

The next factor is the classroom. Although classroom management does not play a big role during the lesson it is very important that the teacher set the classroom before the lesson. The best desks to use are circular so each student has easy access to rods. Wobbly desks or too small desk may cause the rods to keep falling to the floor or the students may not be able to create anything. Alternately, the teacher may consider doing activities on the floor – if the floor is clean enough and it doesn't have a carpet. The last thing to consider is the set of cuisenaire rods you are using.

Picture 1: Recommended set of rods

Each box contains a different layout of the rods – so the teacher needs to look at what sort of rods are in the box: is the colour of the rods contrasted enough; also the teacher needs to think about the quantity and size of rods available. The best results are achieved by use of natural materials as oppose to using plastic – it's a different feel and students know it.

Some practical ideas to be used in the classroom
Cuisenaire rods can be used at any stage of the lesson: as a warmer, practice activity, speaking activity etc. The teacher needs to be aware that she/he will not only develop student's cognitive skills but also collaborative learning, student's autonomy and multisensory learning.

The learning process is above teaching therefore during activities teacher is only the facilitator. Intentionally the aims of each activity will not be discussed in great detail. That's for the teacher to think about and decide what s/he wants to achieve with the activity. Just remember using the rods is not a one-time occurrence. It has to happen over and over again – if you don't plan to use them at least two or three times a year, it's not worth it. You will just see it as a waste of time and the students will not fully enjoy the activities.

A good idea to begin with is to use the rods to increase students' self-esteem. Rods in general have a positive influence on the students as (1) teacher will never say that something is correct or something is wrong and (2) students are creators of their work – they are also the only ones who know how to interpret their work. An activity that builds on interpersonal intelligence is when students build their own faces from rods. This activity helps to build group dynamics, it gives students realia to speak about and "the faces" present a good point of discussion. With this activity the teacher also avoids asking the textbook questions but she/he gives the students' the opportunity to make their own presentation (sometimes the students are not even aware that they are speaking English).

The tasks one can do with rods are suitable for all types of learners. In primary school a lot of students are kinaesthetic learners. Another activity (especially suitable for kinaesthetic learners) is "build your dream town". Students work alone. Their task is to use as many rods as they wish to build a town of their dreams. After the teacher stops the activity, the students are invited to go for a walk through this magical town. The teacher decides where the first stop is and she/he asks the students to stop there. The author of the town is asked to describe it. The teacher may ask questions regarding the colour and size of certain buildings e.g. "Why is your hospital black? or "I'm surprised that your tree is higher than the skyscraper".

Using rods on the board
Rods are also very helpful for teaching grammar. They can serve as a good colour coding aid for teaching tenses and other structures (e.g. comparison of verbs, sentence structure and similar – note picture for details).

When the teacher decides to use the rods on the board, s/he has to be careful that the same colour-coding system is used with the same structures (e.g. light blue for past continuous). The reason for this is very simple. When the teacher sticks to the same colour coding system in teaching grammar students get the opportunity to reactive previous knowledge through a new learning channel. This way of teaching is also suitable for a visual learner.

Different sizes of rods on the board help to stress the importance of certain structures. Past continuous can be coded with
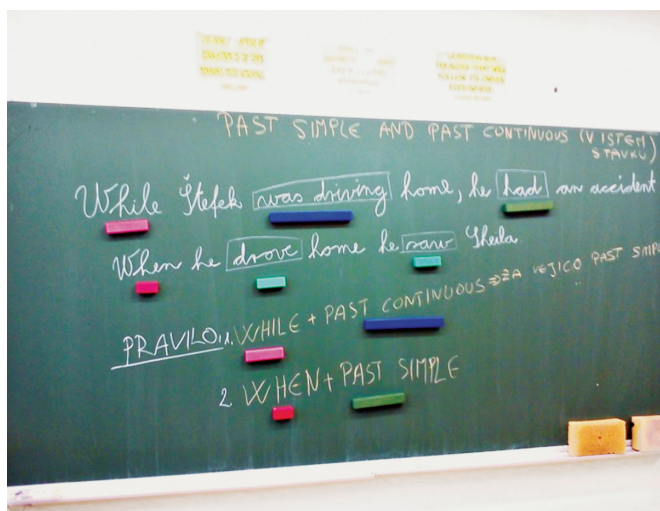
Picture 2: Using cuisenaire rods on the board

a longer rod because it is formed by means of main verb and auxiliary verb, shorter rods can be used to emphasize endings (e.g. s ending for present simple).

Tactile (humanistic) learning and its influence on the learners

Tactile learning – learning by touch – is learning by doing. Most of the teaching approaches in the past have been criticised as they were lacking personal connection between the students and the learning material. The first approach to claim to have this was CLIL (Marsh et al. 2010). The connection in CLIL is different as it aims to connect students' aims/needs with the content. Most of the cognitive research about learning claims that learning is most effective when more than one "receiving" channel is active (e.g. listening and writing). Some writers claim that teaching with cuisenaire rods falls under the category of humanistic teaching (Norman 2003). An important element of humanistic teaching is that all activities are learner centred, the emphasis is on learning not teaching and the students are autonomous in their learning (Saraswathi 2005). The elements of humanistic teaching which are present, when cuisenaire rods are used, and the fact that Norman also considers teaching with cuisenaire rods to be a way of effective learning gives positive results in students' self-esteem. I noticed that students who have shorter attention spam or are not active during lessons seem to be more creative with rods. Their products are much more detailed and they always know what the function of which rod in the product is. A fact that students are creative during learning means that teacher is also creative during teaching. S/he is no longer syllabus-bound so the students are no longer syllabus-bound (Wallace 1991). When dealing with students who are syllabus-free, the need for testing reduces as the students no longer pursue solely the aims of the course (Parlett 1974). As the stress of marking and achieving standards is (almost) removed from the class, the sense of a learning community is much stronger. Awareness of a learning community in the end enables collaborative learning to kick into action and the students work together for a common aim so no one is left behind.

Final words

This article's aim was to equip the teachers with basic idea on how humanistic learning should work in an FL classroom. The media which was used is a simple wooden stick called ELT rods (cuisenaire rods). After reading the article, the reader is able to critically think about how his/her teacher time can be reduced. The outcome of this reduction is a better learning experience for both the learner and the teacher.

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gregorpir@yahoo.com

Spotlight on learning styles

Marjorie Rosenberg
University of Graz, Graz, Austria

How my journey began

It is always interesting when discussing the concept of learning styles with educators. Although research has been carried out over the last fifty years or so it is still considered by some to be controversial. Those who feel that learning styles do not exist or have a place in the classroom can point to a wide variety of websites and scholarly articles while proponents of learning styles can also find a large number of journal articles and research results attesting to the validity of the theories. My interest in this field began in the early 1990s in a course on 'superlearning' techniques where I heard about visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learners for the first time. It was as if a door had opened for me and I finally understood why my years of trying to learn French through the audio-lingual method had been so resoundingly unsuccessful. As a visual and kinaesthetic learner, being told 'not to picture the words in my head' was the wrong way for me to first be confronted with a language. Just listening to the sounds and finding automatic responses or sitting in a language lab with nothing to look at did not help me at all. Years later, when I learned German, I wrote words down myself, carried a dictionary around to look words up and made use of a number of visual aids. This method was certainly more rewarding for me and suddenly finding out what the difference was in the two experiences began my journey into this fascinating area. As a language teacher I became very interested in finding out how I could help my learners to have positive experiences both inside and outside the classroom and discovering and development different possibilities of doing this became a mission.

Definitions

As one of the first questions which comes up refers to the definition of styles, it seems best to quote some of the experts in the field. For example, Guild and Garger (Guild and Garger 1998: 23) say 'The way we perceive the world governs how we think, make judgments and form values about experiences and people. This unique aspect of our humanness is what we call "style"', while J.W. Keefe (Keefe 1979:4) contends that styles are 'characteristic cognitive, affective and psychological behaviours that serve as relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with and respond to the learning environment'. Kinsella (Kinsella 1995: 171) comments that learning style refers to 'an individual's natural, habitual and preferred ways of absorbing, processing and retaining new information and skills which persists regardless of teaching methods of content area' and Dunn and Dunn (Dunn and Dunn 1992, 1993) and Dunn, Dunn, and Perrin (Dunn, Dunn, and Perrin 1994: 11) say that 'learning style is the way each person begins to concentrate on, process, internalize and retain new and difficult academic information.' They go on to suggest that 'More than three-fifths of learning style is biological; less than one-fifth is developmental.'

Importance in learning

Moving on to the importance or use in learning is a subject which inspires debate from all corners of the globe and from people involved in a variety of educational situations. An argument is often made that it is not possible to change instruction to suit every learner and even in cases where this is done, it has no particular effect on the success of the learning outcome. While this may be true, it is only one part of the equation. However, 'it is possible to strive for uniform outcomes but to intentionally diversify the means for achieving them' (Guild and Garger 1998:19). Harmer (Harmer 2007: 85) addresses this issue as well when he says that 'The moment we realise that a class is composed of individuals (rather than being some kind of unified whole) we have to start

thinking about how to respond to those students individually so that while we may frequently teach the group as a whole, we will also, in different ways, pay attention to the different identities we are faced with.'

This is not to say that we need to constantly change our instruction to make sure that we reach each and every learner all of the time. But a mix of methods can provide learners with new possibilities and resources for them to explore outside the classroom including those which are new and different for them. In addition, encouraging learners to try out new methods for themselves can encourage them to become more independent and autonomous learners, another goal of helping them to discover their styles. Cohen (ed. Schmitt 2010: 162) sums this up by saying, 'Indeed we learn in different ways and what suits one learner may be inadequate for another. While learning styles seem to be relatively stable, teachers can modify the learning tasks they use in their classes in a way that may bring the best out of particular leaners with particular learning style preferences. It is also possible that learners over time can be encouraged to engage in 'style-stretching' so as to incorporate approaches to learning they were resisting in the past'.

Myths and misconceptions
As there are a number of misconceptions about learning styles, this is an important area to cover in any discussion of the topic. For one thing, learning styles are not an excuse. Finding out about one's strengths and weaknesses does not mean that one is allowed to simply give up because he or she is not particularly good at something. The goal instead is to create a mindset in which the person is made cognizant of their particular situation and to expand on it and grow. In any discussion with learners about their styles, the option of falling back on a weakness as a reason not to do something is simply not on the table. It would also be a misconception to assume that learners cannot stretch out of their styles. Although the style can be seen as a foundation, most learners have incorporated methods ascribed to other styles to learn and acquire knowledge. Being aware of the wide range of possibilities in learning does not mean that a learner will not make use of them if necessary to achieve a particular goal or when learning a particular subject. And if the learner is successful with this, motivation may improve resulting in a positive self-fulfilling prophesy.

Another misconception is that teachers tend to label or pigeon-hole learners once they know their styles. This is most certainly not the aim of those of us working in this field. It is interesting to observe students and to be aware of their styles as it makes giving advice to particular questions easier but it does not mean that a teacher should assume a learner cannot grow or change. Teachers can reassure leaners that *any* strength or strategy which will help them achieve a goal is fine, there is no need to only use ones most commonly employed by the style. However, they also need to have the self-confidence to use strategies comfortable for them, even if they have been told in the past that these strategies will not help them to learn. In addition, styles are not 'right' or 'wrong' they are valueless. No style is 'better' than another style; one may be more suited to learning a particular skill than another but each of the styles has their strong and weak points. Style and competence should not be confused. In a language class it is certainly possible that two people with very similar learning style profiles are at completely different levels of language. So many other factors must be considered that simply basing all conclusions about learners on style would be a mistake. It could also be that a learner is enrolled in a programme which is not the right one for him or her. Discoveries about style could lead to making a change but it may also simply lead to finding new ways to learn material.

Implementation
There are a variety of ways in which learning styles can be implemented into the foreign language classroom. In *Spotlight on Learning Styles* teachers are provided with checklists which they can go through with their students and discuss. Particular characteristics of styles are given as well as tips and strategies. The styles of both the teacher and the students are looked at and suggestions are made as to how to expand a teacher's repertoire in the classroom. As many of us teach in the way we prefer to learn, we may overlook learners' needs whose styles are very different from our own. *Spotlight on Learning Styles* has been written to remind teachers about the types of students in our classrooms and provide tips, hints and ideas to ensure that teachers can reach as many of their students as possible and find both satisfaction and joy in doing so.

Style types
As there are a large number of learning styles and surveys to determine them used by researchers and practitioners it was necessary to decide which ones to focus on in *Spotlight on Learning Styles*. For this reason the

choice was made to choose three particular areas. This logical sequence of gathering information led to the choice of three distinct areas to cover, beginning with visual, auditory and kinaesthetic modalities (sensory channels of perception), global / analytic thought processes (cognitive processing) and Mind Organisation (behaviour based on perception and organization of information). By adding on to the knowledge provided by one style, a more composite picture of a learner can be made. After doing all three surveys the individuality of each of the learners becomes more apparent, the uniqueness of each learner can be appreciated, and suggestions for strategies can be tailored to the particular learner and situation. As Cohen says, 'Although numerous distinctions are emerging from the literature, three categories of style preferences are considered particularly relevant and useful to understanding the process of language learning: sensory/perceptual, cognitive and personality-related preferences' (Schmitt ed. 2010:163)

VAK Learners

The standard model of VAK generally includes visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learners. These were researched early on by Barbe and Swassing (Barbe and Swassing 1979: 1) who defined what they called modalities as 'any of the sensory channels through which an individual receives and retains information.' However, after working in adult education and teacher training for some thirty years, it seems that adults tend to be either kinaesthetic motoric (tactile) learners or kinaesthetic emotional ones. The exact age as to when this split takes place has not been determined but it seems to show up in the later years of high school and is certainly apparent by the time learners reach tertiary level education or take on a job. For this reason *Spotlight on Styles* looks at these two areas separately and provides ideas for working with both types. Visual learners generally remember best when they can see something or write it down. Examples of activities for them include noticing things about them, using colours, drawing or creating pictures in their minds, recognizing shapes, and describing items or people in writing. Auditory learners remember what they hear or say. Therefore the activities for them include passing on sentences to each other orally, telling stories or putting them in the correct order through listening, describing people aloud, asking questions, and matching beginnings and endings of jokes they hear.

Kinaesthetic emotional learners need to feel comfortable with others and want to have the feeling of belonging. Therefore, they are given the chance to work together in groups to plan joint events, tell each other's horoscopes or fortunes, come up with positive adjectives to describe classmates, or tell others how they feel about a particular topic within a safe setting. The kinaesthetic motoric leaners need to move about and learn best when they can try things out for themselves. They are given the opportunity to walk around and mingle to gather information, create the moving parts of a machine in a group, pass on a word by writing on someone's back, or act words for others to guess. The last section has mixed activities which are designed to appeal to all learner types such as describing, drawing or 'becoming' pictures, playing memory in groups, remembering and repeating unusual definitions, as well as kinaesthetic bingo and gap texts. Students are also encouraged to contribute to the activities and if some are more successful than others, they can be asked to help fellow students or give personalised tips on how to remember things better.

Global / Analytic Learners

Moving onto cognitive processing, we take a look at the global / analytic learning style. One of the first researchers to look into these styles was Witkin (Witkin 1981) who worked with fighter pilots to discover what influenced their decisions while piloting planes. He came up with his theory of field-dependent (global) learners and field-independent (analytic) learners based on this research and went on to develop the 'Group Embedded Figures Test', still used today to determine cognitive learner styles.

Global learners tend to process information holistically and by remembering the entire experience rather than just details. They are also relationship-oriented and may be more emotional than analytic learners. The activities designed to appeal to them include a group drawing exercise to create a person, writing stories about others in the class, coming up with an idea for a class excursion and playing games like 'You-Robot'. Analytic learners, on the other hand, like details and structure. They may prefer to work alone as they prefer not to be distracted. They are generally self-motivated and may be quite goal-oriented. The activities created for them include finding mistakes, solving logical puzzles, figuring out a detective story, and creating rules for specific activities.

Mind Organisation

The last of the styles looks at behaviour and is created by putting together the idea of perception as concrete (using the senses) or abstract (using ideas and feelings) and the element of organisation (either systematically or non-systematically). This gives us four distinct styles which created by Bowie (Bowie 1997) who began her research working with adolescents. She devised a learning style survey called 'Mind Organisation' and used it as a basis for counselling high school students and helping them to learn. Her four styles include:

- Flexible Friends who perceive abstractly through ideas or feelings and organise non-systematically.
- Expert Investigators who perceive abstractly through ideas or feelings and organise systematically.
- Power planners who perceive concretely using their senses and organise systematically
- Radical Reformers who perceive concretely through their senses but organise non-systematically

Flexible Friends like to work in groups, especially those in which they like the other people. They are creative and intuitive and value personalised learning experiences. They are also enthusiastic and express their empathy for others. Language activities which appeal to them include setting personal goals, writing down sentences which are true for them in a dictation exercise, learning to use vocabulary of emotions and feelings, completing sentences about their partner, and finding things in common with others.

Expert Investigators are logical and systematic learners. They tend to be perfectionists so prefer to work at their own speed. In dealing with others they are generally logical and rational. They especially like to do research and to know where they can get information from. The language activities designed for them include working with facts and informative materials, finding errors and doing research for a class excursion followed by a report on how it went. Power Planners like to be organised and are generally detail- and task-oriented. In groups they may take on a natural role as a leader and enjoy hands-on activities. The language tasks designed for them include putting processes in order and explaining them to others, finding explanations and rules for difficult grammar points, using linking words correctly to create plans and setting priorities.

Radical Reformers are risk-takers and are often curious about a number of different fields of study. They generally rely on their institution to solve problems but pride themselves on finding unique ones. They tend to 'think outside the box' and value creativity and ingenuity. In groups, they may inspire others and value real-life experiences. The activities for them include realistic role plays, creating and acting out a scenario based on a true story, buying and selling everyday items to each other by finding unusual uses for them, creating statements about themselves which the others guess are true or false.

Moving on

The information presented here is the start; the end of the journey is up to the readers and users of the book. As learning styles and the discoveries which occur when people become aware of them is a never-ending story, the goal of this article and the book itself is to open up a perspective on learning which perhaps had not been considered before. Moving on to personal research or professional development, stretching outside your own comfort zone, or helping students to realise their true potential are only some of the places these ideas can take you. The excitement of discovery remains to those who use the information to delve into themselves and their teaching as well as their students and their learning in whichever way they choose. The impetus is here, the joy of further discovery is up to you.

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Marjorie.Rosenberg@tele2.at

Teaching poetry workshop

Katja Rotar
Gimnazija Moste Ljubljana

The aim of the workshop was to share some ideas on teaching poetry, particularly poetry prescribed in the current final exam Matura, as most secondary school teachers would be interested especially in that. Hopefully though, the ideas might elicit favourable experience that will encourage teachers to use poetry even when they do not 'have to' and get positive feedback from students.

Why teach poetry?

Besides the fact that it is in your curriculum, also because it is fun. If fun is not a good enough reason, then maybe I can refer to Samuel Taylor Coleridge who said that poetry is 'the best words in the best order'. And you would certainly want students to learn from the best, right?

Allow me to quote some more poets on what poetry is, in order to make my point. For example, 'Poetry is life distilled' (Gwendolyn Brooks), 'Poetry is language at its most distilled and most powerful' (Rita Dove), 'Poetry is a way of taking life by the throat' (Robert Frost) and not to forget the funny side, 'Poetry is the synthesis of hyacinths and biscuits' (Carl Sandburg). But maybe the best known statement about poetry is the one from the film *Dead Poet's Society*, 'We don't read and write poetry because it's cute. We read and write poetry because we are members of the human race. And the human race is filled with passion. And medicine, law, business, engineering, these are noble pursuits and necessary to sustain life. But poetry, beauty, romance, love, these are what we stay alive for.'

The question is how to make our students agree with these prominent authors and respond accordingly? I think it is mostly by making poetry an enjoyable experience for them and by allowing them to realize that it has heightened their sensibility to language and life only in hindsight. Here are some techniques that I use in class, with positive feedback.

Change words

I have found that presenting a classroom with a poem does not bring a good response - unless a poem is well hidden. However, students are used to doing grammatical and vocabulary gap fill exercises, so one rudimentary way of dealing with a poem is to make it look like a gap fill, or 'circle-the-right-word' exercise. Students would dig straight in with the practised skill and do it by ear (the same way they do grammar), and usually do it quite well. Naturally, they get a certain amount of praise and encouragement especially if they do not feel very self-confident about their answers. Only when they are asked to explain their choices and a discussion develops on how a different word would change the meaning or why one word works better than another, does their conscious knowledge strike in. The teacher's job in this activity is to keep a good pace and not dwell too long on each line.

Compare poetry with non-poetry

Another way of raising sensibility to poetic language is by presenting poetic and non-poetic text side by side and ask the students to decide which poem is the best and why. For example, I took descriptions of cities and towns from advertisements and chat rooms on the net, cut them in lines so they take the form of a poem, and put them next to 'real' poems such excerpts from Wordsworth's *Upon Westminister Bridge* or Sand-

burg's *Chicago*. Students inevitably discover which are real poems and come up with good arguments to support their opinion, especially with regard to the choice of words, rhyme, and rhythm. And that is exactly what I want them to do. I ask a lot of 'why's' because I want them to explain and they do.

Somehow, 'ordinary' in the sense of 'non-poetic' language also seems to encourage them to try writing themselves, which they are otherwise reluctant to do. After discussing *Upon Westminister Bridge* in this way I ask them to write a poem about their favourite part of town. Since they have seen different examples of how this can be done, they are not too frustrated about writing 'bad' poetry and they actually do it.

Compare similar poems

Comparing poems that are similar in style or topic or anything else also trains the students in critical reading and adds a practical edge for discussion. I find this particularly helpful when a poem seems to be so simple, so obvious, that there is nothing much to say. For instance, Hughes' poem *I, Too, Sing America* is an example of a poem where students quickly seem to run out of ideas, so comparing it with Maya Angelou's *Still I Rise* gives them a new start. Of course, the first thing they notice is that Angelou's poem is longer, but then it helps open up the whole male – female issue, social aspect, the time perspective, the rhythm, repetition and other figures of speech. Maybe I find *Still I Rise* so convenient here just because I think it is a wonderful poem and I look for excuses to disseminate it, but it works. Maybe you have some poem you like a lot and you can use this trick to make your students read it too. Similarly, one could put side by side certain Shakespeare's and Petrarch's sonnets or any other poems and so kill two birds with one stone.

Compare poems by the same author

Emily Dickinson's poems are so charming that I think it is impossible to read just one so I always give students at least three of her poems to read and compare. After the usual introductory discussion on why they like or dislike a certain poem, I want to know in what ways her poems are similar and in what ways they are different. In this way we already start a discussion about the language and the main idea of the poem. In the end I try to elicit what all the poems have in common and then discuss how they feel about it. Different classes may come to different conclusions and then they have to write something about it. They have to continue sentences such as "Loneliness is …", "Death is …", "Unrequited love is ..." or even "I am …" as a reply to the first line of "I am nobody! Who are you?" Since letters, the means of communication that Emily Dickinson used, are not fashionable anymore, you can ask students to send her a text message with whatever they want to tell her from her mobile. If you really allow them to do it during the lesson it will feel much more as if she is a real person and if you print out those messages, you can make a nice display in your classroom that will remind the students of Dickinson's poems for a long time – or at the least until their final exam.

Make it longer – or shorter

When a poem feels like a description, or a story, you can stretch it out into a text. Liberally add sentences and work out the details and then ask students to find the poem hidden in the text by crossing out all the unnecessary bits. This gives them power over the text; a feeling that they own it and can do whatever they like with it - which is good. They cannot deal with a text if they are afraid of it. This activity also ingrains the awareness that poetry is language distilled, well thought out, and that there are no superfluous words in it.

I like to do this with Yeats' poem *The Lake Isle of Innisfree* and some of Robert Frost's poetry. After the original poem is revealed we discuss why they have made certain choices. Again, they rely on the rhythm, the words which create the meaning and atmosphere, and rhyme, and they pay much more attention to these aspects than they would if they just had to read the poem. Furthermore, I ask them to shorten the poem. I want them to cut out everything else until only the very essence remains and the poem becomes rock hard. This is the more difficult part because many beautiful lines have to be left out. I advise them to shrink each stanza into one line and then shape it into a haiku, or something like a haiku. Thus they are left with what they find the most important in the poem and it is short enough to memorize.

Draw, Sort out, Translate

If you want students to read a poem carefully, ask them to draw it. I always use this approach with Shakespeare's *Sonnet 130* – I want to know what his mistress looks like. They have to know that she does not have long blond hair. Mysteriously enough, after a detailed reading of the poem, they all draw her with an envia-

ble cleavage which I have failed to notice regardless of the number of times I have read the poem. Drawing seems to have become a forgotten skill for most of the children by secondary school so they quite enjoy doing homework with colour pencils for a change. Naturally, they are very pleased when they find their drawings displayed on a classroom wall and that is all the reward they need.

If you show your students a poem or just read it to them, you can also do the following activity. Cut the poem into words or phrases and ask them to put it together in groups like a jigsaw puzzle. The winner gets a prize. In this way they train their memory, work as a team, but also pay attention to rhyme, feet, and structure of the poem. I am sure this can be done in electronic version as well, although I have not tried it yet.

Finally, although Robert Frost said that 'Poetry is what gets lost in translation', I think that translating a poem forces students to pay attention to all the nuances of meanings in every line and raises their sensitivity to language and how it influences us in every way. Students can be challenged to translate any poem. Especially the very talented ones will be highly motivated and will produce remarkable translations. Some will even be inspired to write their own poetry.

To sum up, the techniques presented here; drawing, translating, playing with a poem as if it were a jigsaw puzzle, making a poem longer or shorter and comparing poetry in different ways are just a few of the infinite possibilities that teaching poetry offers. As poetry is wildly creative so can be approaches to teaching it. I believe a teacher can make poetry at least likeable if not delightful or even necessary for students. A lot of ideas can be found on the internet and in poetry books but it is a teacher's job to find out how to make it work for the students and use it to bring some soul into the language learning and life.

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katja.rotar@guest.arnes.si

Using British Council's LearnEnglishTeens website to teach secondary school students

Sandra Vida
Dvojezična srednja šola Lendava, Slovenia

Introduction

Technology, the Internet and social networks have become unavoidable for almost everyone, and even more for teenagers. Inevitably then, educational technology has become an important part of our teaching. Teachers try to catch up with the teens in different ways, some with more, some with less success also, depending on how much time and effort they are prepared to put into teaching themselves about it. Unfortunately, in this rush to catch up they often forget to include the essentials and the obvious, often focusing merely on teaching from the coursebook, and forgetting about teaching for life. I am not blaming anyone though – we were not prepared for this world either and too often we do not see the forest because of the many trees. Luckily, there is help if you want it and one of the really useful resources for teaching students by using the Internet is also by letting them explore the British Council websites.

In the following article, I will explore the ideas and reasons behind the need for teachers to include work with computers in their everyday teaching, but making it meaningful, educational and relevant.

Why British Council website?

The internet has become a universe in itself. Its vast landscape is often too confusing to navigate. In addition to that, the recent changes in how search engines order the results people search for, depending on their previous searches or the money some websites invest in being among the top hits, make it harder and harder to find the resources that are really good quality and at the same time free to use. On the other hand, teachers often do not **have the time or knowledge to evaluate websites effectively. This is why it is often best** to try the ones that have been proven good first. British Council has a long tradition in helping teachers and learners get the necessary knowledge and resources. For me, it stands for professionalism and good quality, so I do not have to worry about that when I prepare activities for my students. For some time now, http://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/ has been around specifically aimed at teenagers. It offers a great variety of materials suitable for the age and level of teens and is therefore well worth exploring either during preparation and lesson planning or even during classes if your school has the needed equipment.

The importance of a thoughtful registration process

Nevertheless, even before the students start using this website (or any other), each teacher should go through some really important points for every Internet user, such as registration process. This process can offer some important lessons, not only about the English language, but also about life, digital citizenship and proper conduct online. By giving this issue precious class time, you are teaching your students about its importance. You can use the opportunity to talk to your students about the reasons behind it. Questions to resolve and talk about while registering are the following: Why does it say, "Don't use your real name"? Take time to talk to your students about online security, data protection laws and how they can and have to protect themselves. The British Council website only allows students between 13 and 17 to register. Ask your students why they think this is an important factor and what it means in terms of their security.

Do you agree with the Terms and Conditions?

How often have you ticked the Terms and Conditions box without taking the time to read them? If you think

carefully, it is irresponsible not to, and yet we have all done it. Somehow, the need to get ahead is bigger than the need to take it seriously. Teaching our students to be better digital citizens is therefore essential. After the initial part, the website will prompt you to read the terms and conditions of use together. This is not a waste of time at all. They include a lot of good vocabulary students need to understand and as a text it is therefore far more valuable than any general reading comprehension text could ever be. At the same time, you can teach them that clicking the "I have read the terms and conditions" box will make them legally responsible for what they do really soon. Often we are too careless with terms and conditions, especially online, and this carelessness could have serious consequences. The terms and conditions on this particular website are also carefully written with the idea that teenagers would be reading them and include a lot of really useful vocabulary on one side but are at the same time written in a language that is still comprehensible for teens.

Strong password?

Passwords have become a part of our lives as much as the food we eat. Most websites nowadays require registration and that includes passwords. In my experience, students often choose either the same passwords for all sites so they do not forget them or use different passwords, but then have difficulties the next lesson to remember which one they chose. Neither of the options is good and often it takes a good discussion to get them thinking about this issue. During the process of registration to LearnEnglishTeens, the students will be prompted to choose a password. It is important that teachers use this opportunity to have them discuss what a good password is and what not. If you search Google for "bad passwords" it will give you a list of most used really bad passwords that you can use as an example or you can have student devise good and bad passwords themselves and discuss them. Talk to them also about who is it appropriate to disclose their passwords to and in which situations.

What level am I?

LearnEnglishTeens website offers a variety of activities for all skills at all levels. This will come in handy when they have to complete their Europass document or talk to an employer about their foreign language skills and even before that, it is important for them to know what they mean, which level they are at and where they need to get. It will get them thinking about their own learning and possibly motivate them for more. The levels on the website are carefully written in "can-do" sentences, which will prime the students into the positive way of thinking about their own language learning.

And now?

Once your students are all successfully registered and know their level, show them how learning English can be interesting by having them choose topics of their own. Give them some independence within a controlled environment. This will boost their self-confidence and make their learning personalized and student-cantered. It is also beneficial for motivation if you give them the feeling of being in charge of their own learning. After this, get them involved by asking them to comment on topics. Force them to think, act and react. Invite them to participate. The fact that they will be sending their comments into the outside-of-classroom environment usually has them think twice before they post something. At the same time, it is good if they start formulating their own opinions in the target language, no matter how small they start. There is a great sense of achievement when somebody responds to his or her commentary and the feeling of being a part of something big and international usually brings even more motivation. Last but not least, let them play the games. The games offered all have a value beyond killing time, so do not worry that the time is wasted. Therefore, whether you can explore the website during classes or if you set it as homework, it should bring a lot more opportunities to learn than meets the eye. It would be careless from teachers not to use this opportunity to teach them important lessons just because they did not see them being offered.

Conclusion

There is more to a website than just games, exercises or reading texts. The sooner we see the potentials for language learning in the seemingly unimportant things we do online almost on a daily basis, the better we can assist our students in becoming digital citizens who can navigate the landscape with confidence and ease. Moreover, these issues are not merely for students to learn, they are a way for us all to become more responsible in using the Internet. We are all heading the same way. Inevitably, we all have online profiles and we need to treat them with the seriousness they deserve. Therefore it is high time we start teaching responsible use of technology to ourselves and to our students.

Notes