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Editor's Corner

Selected papers from the 22nd Annual
International Conference of BETA-IATEFL

First call of the 23rd Annual International
BETA-IATEFL Conference

Forthcoming Events

SEETA News





Openness and Connectedness: Exploring the Landscape of English Language Teaching in the Modern World

**Selected papers from the
22nd Annual International Conference of BETA-IATEFL
(21st – 23rd June 2013, Varna, Bulgaria)**

All papers in this issue of the E-Newsletter have been peer-reviewed.

Editorial Board:

Sylvia Velikova

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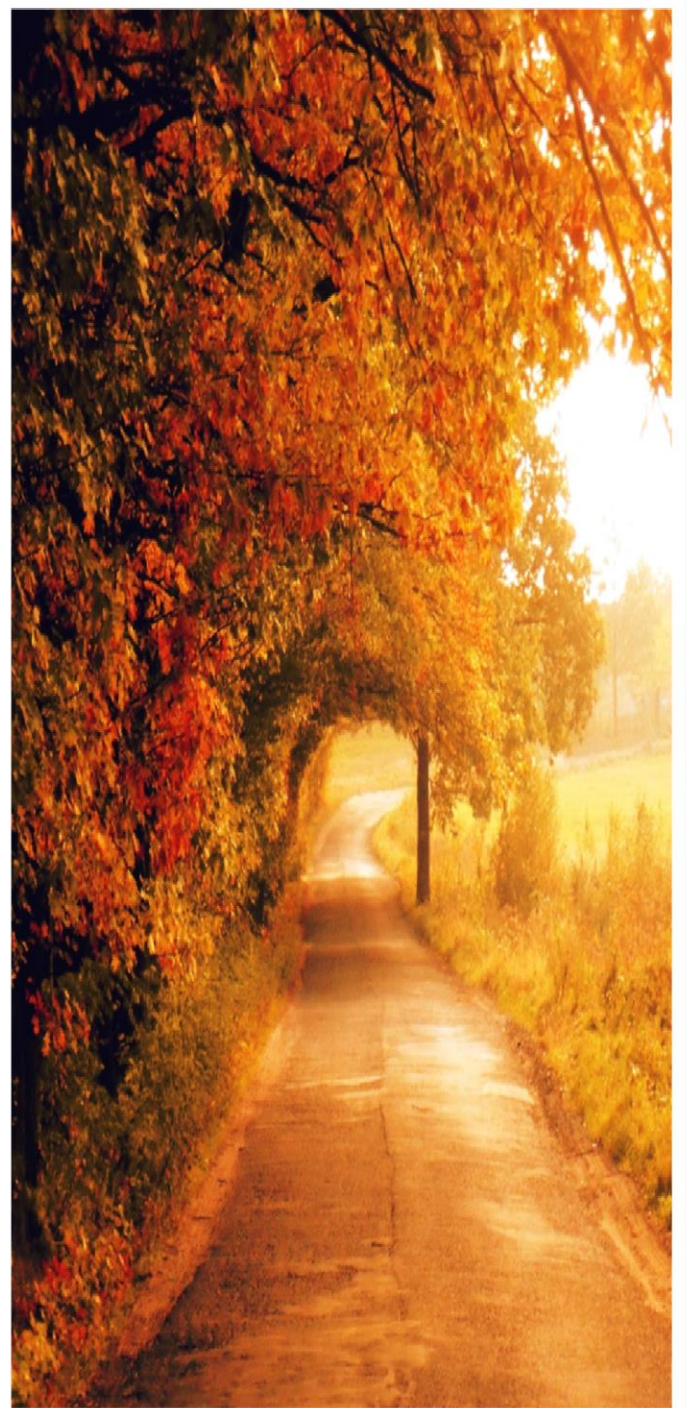
Editor's Corner

Welcome back! The school year has just started and we are ready to face the new challenges that our students have prepared for us!

But the start of the school year is also the time for packing up the sweet and warm emotions of the summer. For us – the BETA-IATEFL Committee, the summer was also the time when we had the 22nd BETA-IATEFL Annual International Conference in Varna. We would like to thank everyone who helped in the organization and who attended this wonderful event which again proved that conferences are not only a place to learn new things, share ideas, but meet old friends and make new ones!

This issue of the E-Newsletter brings to you some of the talks delivered at the conference! Many thanks to the contributors who have made this issue possible!

Tsvetelina Harakchiyska





Kaizen and Appropriate Methodology: Innovation in the Provision of Pre-service Education and Training for English Language Teachers

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INTRODUCTION

This article is a version of a plenary talk that I delivered at the 22nd BETA-IATEFL Annual International Conference that was held in Varna, Bulgaria on 21st – 23rd June 2013. The article develops some themes introduced in Mann and Edge (2013) and also refers to some of the contributions in the British Council publication (Edge and Mann2013).

It is true that pre-service education and training for English language teachers has not received the attention that it deserves and I am grateful that the British Council

has funded a publication that foregrounds important and practical innovations in a range of different countries (including Bulgaria). However, innovation is not always a good thing. Innovation can be foisted on teachers from ministries and school hierarchies without consultation. Innovation can also be pushed by publishers who are often more motivated by pressure to increase sales than making sure innovations are appropriate to potential users.

I hope this article makes clear that the kind of innovation that I think works best is small-scale, gradual and based on the principles of reflective practice. Dewey is widely credited for turning attention to the importance of experiential learning and reflective thought as the 'sole method of escape from the purely impulsive or purely routine action' (Dewey 1933: 15) and this is still highly relevant for language teachers. Teachers need to be careful not to get stuck in rut but they also need to be careful about uncritically adopting so-called innovations without considering whether they are relevant and appropriate in their contexts.

This paper aims to consider and comment on what we mean when we talk about 'innovation' in PRESETT. It also considers what we do with our trainees and why these processes are important. In addition, it provides some examples of innovations in materials and how these are not always successful. The article ends by talking about the value of teacher trainers practicing what they preach.

A QUICK TASK

Before you read any further it might be useful for you to consider what you think is an important innovation in ELT in the last 20 years. Also if you are teacher-trainer you might consider what innovations you have made in your training. Are there any recent ones and what are they? Take a moment and perhaps jot down a few ideas. If your temptation is just to read on without doing this, you are probably not practicing what you preach (for language teachers and trainers routinely ask students to do pre-listening and pre-reading activities and expect students to complete them).

INNOVATION: SOME BACKGROUND

The British Council has invested some serious energy in the last decade in promoting innovation. Taken as a whole, most of these efforts have been worthwhile. Some might think that the ELTON awards are a pale imitation of the Oscars but they are the closest that teachers, publishers and those involved in teacher education will ever get to a red carpet and some kind of recognition! The ELTONs, sponsored by Cambridge ESOL, are the only international awards that recognise and celebrate innovation in the field of English language teaching. I haven't got one yet but I live in hope! What is good about the ELTONs is that they promote ideas that are new and above all ideas that are practical and usable. This is the kind of philosophy that Julian Edge and I adopted for our Innovations book (Edge and Mann 2013). We wanted accounts of practice which foregrounded practical steps and procedures. This is also the rationale for other contributions in the Innovations series (British Council 2013). I could suggest a couple of other links if you want to consider other perspectives on innovation. You could perhaps start with the World Service (2013) which has six instructive programmes on innovation which were made in 2006. However, it is interesting to note how quickly these date. I do not think if they were commissioning the series of programmes in 2013, there would be two programmes on the Interactive Whiteboard. It shows that innovation moves at a fast rate.

HOW SUCCESSFUL HAVE INNOVATIONS BEEN IN ELT?

The next question to consider is how successful innovations have been in ELT. Obviously in an article of this length we have not time for an exhaustive survey but, although innovation in ELT has grown apace in recent years, much of it has been unsuccessful (see, for example Waters 2009). Martin Wedell argues that this is because of a failure to take into account lessons from innovation theory (Wedell 2009). He is not talking about rocket science here – simply rudimentary SWOT analysis (strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats). He is talking about thinking about who will use the innovation, how they will use it and what barriers there might be in successful adoption of an innovation. In simple terms, he is talking about who is likely to be using these innovations and under what conditions. This consideration of innovation and its relation to context is 'situated' and therefore should be concerned with the development of an appropriate methodology (Holliday 1994).

WHAT ARE THE ATTITUDES TO AN INNOVATION?

Rogers (2003) considers different attitudes or orientations towards innovation from teachers and I reproduce them here with some comments. As you read through, you might consider which group you belong to. Innovators range from early birds (who are first to grab the worm) and laggards (who do not want to change their diet at all):

- *Early birds*: they are innovators by nature and can be seen as ‘venturesome’ and pioneers;
- *Early adopters*: they tend to be respected within the teaching profession and are seen as sound judges of the value of potential innovations;
- *Early Majority*: they are characterized by ‘deliberateness’ and tend to have a ‘wait and see’ approach;
- *Late Majority*: they tend towards scepticism and need a lot of convincing and often demonstration. Their typical attitude is a critical one;
- *Laggards*: they tend to be traditional and have a preference for the status quo.

INNOVATION IN PRESETT

At this point in the article, it might be useful to tell you more about the British council publication I have been involved in. Edge and Mann (2013) includes 14 different articles that feature an innovation in a PRESETT context. Initially there were over 150 proposals (showing huge level of interest in the project), confirming the British Council view that there were plenty of practitioners who would like to share practice in this area. When we sent guidelines to the authors we asked for specific detail of the innovation. In other words, we wanted clarity in description of the procedures and process. It was also important that we heard from those on the receiving end of the innovation: What were their views? How had it gone for them? In addition, we wanted practitioners to be reflexive about the process in a similar way to the style that Julian Edge promotes (see Edge 2011). The following table provides a guide to the range of innovations in the different contexts and is based on Mann and Edge (2013). I have reproduced key quotes in the table below:

Chapter topic and author	Details and comments
Chapter 1 Kurtoğlu-Hooton UK	<p>This article provides an example of how a particular web-based tool (PebblePad) provides flexibility in course design. The innovation involves encouraging reflection outside the traditional face-to-face seminar. What is interesting about the chapter is that both PRESETT teachers and teacher educators have to make accommodations and changes in their use of the e-portfolio based system. Kurtoğlu-Hooton's account makes clear that although a particular new tool or technology may have potential, it is the modifications and tweaks in its implementation and use that make it an appropriate methodology for the featured context. I will come back to this notion of tweaking later in the article</p>
Chapter 2 Mawa Samb Senegal	<p>Samb's chapter gives us insight into a process of bringing in formative assessment in Senegal. This is a geographical area of constraint where classes tend to be very large and working conditions for teachers and pupils are far from ideal. Although the movement to formative assessment might not seem radical to the reader, it actually is in Senegal. It is interesting that the British government seems to be moving in the opposite direction in England (BBC 2012).</p>
Chapter 3 Leo Mercado Peru	<p>Mercado provides a discussion of his institutional approach to the induction of novice teachers. This is an interesting overview of innovation and offers an explicit response to Farrell's (2012) call for the gap between pre- and in-service teacher education and development to be bridged. We all struggle with</p>

	helping novice teachers make this move from the teacher education context to the real world of school-based teaching.
Chapter 4 Martha Lengeling Mexico	Lengeling deals with observation and feedback. She shows us that there is still important work to do in considering observation and feedback are approached and managed. She adds a new dimension as she creatively ‘borrows’ techniques from ethnography and uses them innovatively. She shows that requiring PRESETT teachers to take notes in a less prescribed and judgemental way can help them better understand and learn from the teaching that they have observed. The PRESETT innovation in this chapter lies in the ways that an ethnographic approach to ‘objectivity’ and ‘estrangement’ provides a new basis for awareness-raising and the building of evaluative capacities.
Chapter 5 Bob Oprandy with Robyn Addington, Chris Brown and Michelle Rutter the USA	Oprandy and colleagues deepen our understanding of avenues for <i>reflection</i> by focusing on the nature of professional communication itself. In this chapter, PRESETT trainees learn ‘how teachers can work collaboratively on “talking shop” about their work/craft without succumbing to the usually evaluative nature of such discussions’. The interaction reported in this innovation has far-reaching implications for the potential richness of alternative relationships between pre-service trainees, novice teachers and their experienced colleagues.
Chapter 6 Cheng Xiaotang China	Cheng introduces well-elaborated principles of materials design. In China’s recent past, teachers rarely had to concern themselves with such principles, as textbooks were uniform and prescribed. Student teachers now learn how to

	<p><i>apply</i> these principles in order to engage with the types of decision that materials writers need to make. In this way, pre-service teachers are encouraged to develop critical awareness and build a sense of agency. Such awareness is in line with Northcote and Lim's (2009: 27) observation that teacher educators miss an important opportunity for '<i>building the capacity of pre-service teachers</i>' if they only maintain '<i>traditional teaching and learning methods in their courses and programs</i>'.</p>
<p>Chapter 7</p> <p>Linda Hanington and Mary Ellis</p> <p>Singapore</p>	<p>Hanington and Ellis provide an account of making optimal use of both the face-to-face and the virtual environments available to novice teachers in the pre-service training context. However, they also know that viable and meaningful learning with technologies is something that teachers will increasingly be expected to be comfortable with in their future classrooms, as they will need to integrate network-based learning into their students' language learning. Hanington and Ellis provide an account that shows how practitioners need to continue to devise and revise an approach in order to make it usable by pre-service teachers.</p>
<p>Chapter 8</p> <p>Lesley Dick</p> <p>Sri Lanka</p>	<p>Dick is perhaps the most trenchant advocate of the importance of teacher learning being grounded in practical <i>action</i>, with the principles involved, the 'top tips', having to be derived anew on each occasion. This makes her subsequent reflection on having written her chapter all the more powerful. First of all, she finds her practice strengthened by her reflection on it.</p>
<p>Chapter 9</p> <p>Nikki Ashcraft and Sally Ali</p> <p>UAE</p>	<p>Ashcraft and Ali work in the United Arab Emirates. In the UAE, money is available and innovation is encouraged in the attempt to develop a national education strategy that is not dependent on migrant workers passing through, attracted by the salaries</p>

	on offer. This makes possible Ashcraft and Ali's <i>Continuing Professional Development Practicum</i> , which extends the concept of the observation of classes and the shadowing of the teacher's day, to include membership of professional associations, attendance at conferences and other aspects of a professional life.
Chapter 10 Besime Erkmen Northern Cyprus	It is clearly valuable to Erkmen's trainees to shadow a teacher through a full working day. The particular strength of Erkmen's innovation is the way in which she scaffolds the shadowing experience in order to enable trainees to make informed judgements about just what to copy.
Chapter 11 Alev Özbilgin and Steve Neufeld Northern Cyprus	In some ways, Özbilgin and Neufeld's account shows mixed results. The immediate benefits of their corpus-based approach (iCorpus) in their teacher training context are relatively limited, but such innovations need a longer term view and careful consideration and this is the case they make. What is valuable about Özbilgin and Neufeld's account is the way they consider not only the innovation in the teacher-training context but also how it relates to the experience of teacher trainees in their first years of teaching.
Chapter 12 Sylvia Velikova Bulgaria	Velikova focuses on the importance of reflection and provides evidence of the way it is promoted through a portfolio development framework. Here we have an inside view into how many different aspects of the course (e.g. teaching practice, the interactions between beginning teachers) are made more reflective experiences through the adoption of the European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (EPOSTL). As well as giving examples of specific portfolio-based reflective procedures, Velikova's contribution shows that, although pre-

	service teaching is necessarily an evaluated space, the portfolio at least provides a balance where individuals and peers can assess their own competences and skills.
Chapter 13 Eline van Batenburg The Netherlands	Squarely in the area of language teaching methodology, van Batenburg reports on her growing awareness of the need to augment the standard sequential relationship of theory/practice, in which trainees are taught theory and then expected to put it into practice, with a ' <i>sense-making process ... where theory serves to re-organise students' lived experience</i> '. This approach to <i>theorising</i> leads her beyond the age-old dichotomy between theory and practice towards a more integrated view of <i>praxis</i> in line with recent sociocultural thinking.
Chapter 14 Jo Gakonga UK	Gakonga's innovation is to develop an on-line grammar course. This is an interesting idea from two perspectives. Firstly, given the daunting problem of lack of contact time, she provides a potential solution <i>before</i> the training begins. Secondly, Knowledge About Language (KAL) is usually dealt with as a process of transfer of knowledge to the group, whereas this is a process that is both personalised and interactive. As PRESETT teachers have flexibility of access, they can revisit the site (http://www.elc-training.com) and they also have opportunities for interaction.

Table 1: Innovations in different contexts

What is important in the accounts that are summarized in Table 1 is that they provide the detail of innovation and evaluation. We get a clear sense of procedures, steps, and materials. This is important because it gives a detailed emic view but it also makes possible replication. No set of findings are easily

generalisable in another context but if we have access to the concrete detail of implementation, we can at least try it.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTEXT

Innovations are not easily generalisable because each context has its own constraints, affordances and dynamic. This is why an in-depth appraisal of the innovation context is vital before introducing an innovation. The 'hybrid model' (Henrichsen 1989) provides a thorough system for identifying contextual factors likely to facilitate or hinder the change process and this gives us a good start in responding to Holliday's (1994) call for the recognition of the importance of a detailed, ethnomethodological understanding of the innovation situation in making judgements of appropriacy. The idea of being 'appropriate' chimes with ideas of 'situated learning'. If we embrace the ideas of appropriate methodology in both what we are aiming to get our teacher-trainers to achieve and in what we aim for it moves us away from ideas of generalised 'best practice' towards 'praxis'. This is essentially where we currently 'live' in a period of 'post-method condition' (Kumaravadivelu 2001). This is a time when there needs a renewed and corresponding recognition of the importance of situated learning and appropriate methodology.

DEVELOPING SITUATED OR APPROPRIATE TOOLS

In order for appropriate and situated methodology and learning to happen, tools need to be sufficiently flexible that they can be tailored to specific contexts and facilitate the kind of detailed, up-close, 'ecological' (van Lier, 2000) professional understanding that RP was originally designed to foster. This is why some of the accounts in Table 1 are important. For example Kurtoğlu-Hooton (2013) shows that RP can and should be *taught* on pre- and in-service teacher education programmes but in a more systematic way. Her tools enable close-up and data-led attention to teaching.

NEW IN CONTEXT

One of the key ideas of Mann and Edge (2013) is that a new idea is not the same as an innovation. Innovation demands that the practitioner concentrates on process;

it demands ongoing self-evaluation and reflection; it asks that we pay as much attention to how we teach or train as to which topics get covered along the way, or the tools that we employ. This is why we asked contributors to Edge and Mann (2013) to make clear the steps and detail of introduction, implementation and

evaluation of their efforts, because it is the realisation of an '*idea in action*' that constitutes 'genuine innovation'. So, as I said before – it is not that Mawa Samb's article on formative assessment would be seen as a new idea in most contexts. However, it is an innovation in Senegal. Likewise Lesley Dick's work in Sri Lanka may not immediately sound like a head-line grabbing innovation. We have all used 'top tips' haven't we, with our teacher-trainees? However, the innovative aspect of Dick's work is that these top tips are an outcome of a bottom-up process of discussion. They are renewed and revisited with each new group. We get a sense from Lesley that the reflective process (stepping back) has established the nature of the task itself:

I have used TOP TIPS in input sessions and in teaching practice feedback sessions for years but have never really taken a step back and queried why it worked and what it did (Dick 2013: 143).

KAIZEN

There is a Japanese concept that is used in management and business called 'kaizen' and I think it is useful as a metaphor for the kind of innovation that I am promoting in this article. 'Kaizen' can be translated as kai ("change") and zen ("good") and, taken together has the meaning of something like "improvement". Its intended effect on the 'workforce' is to engage all workers in the continuous improvement of design and efficiency. The 'workers' are not only encouraged to engage in a process of continuous evaluation and potential improvement but there are empowered to feel that they have both a voice and input. If we apply the same concept to teaching and teacher training, we can focus on the following:

- The practice of continuous quality improvement within one's teaching;
- Innovation is based on many small changes rather than radical changes;
- Ideas for change and improvement come from teachers and students themselves;
- Teachers take ownership for their work and related improvements.

For me this is a potentially powerful way of looking at innovation. For most of us it will not be eureka moments that make a difference to quality. Rather it will be a series of much smaller scale modifications and small changes. I remember Jane Willis once talking about the importance of small tweaks in task-based learning and teaching. These kinds of tweaks are very much what the concept of kaizen foregrounds.

ICARUS AND NARCISSUS

Having explained that I think kaizen can help us characterize innovation as a reflexive process of small actions, I want to pause and share with you the central comparative metaphor in Julian Edge's most recent book. It is called *The Reflexive Practitioner in TESOL (2011)*. It is certainly worth reading but I only have time to share its central metaphor. You probably know the individual stories of Icarus and Narcissus. Icarus had wings and flew higher than he should. Narcissus stayed too long observing himself and put down roots. They are both seen as failures. However, Julian Edge argues that they represent a dynamic and inevitable tension that propels us forward in our professional practice, where the 'the mutually-shaping interactions between our roots and our wings, our self-knowledge and our environmental knowledge' provide awareness so that we can 'commit ourselves to future action based on that combined awareness' (Edge 2011:17). We need to know our context and ourselves (where we currently are) in order to make the kind of small-scale innovation that is appropriate future action. Of course, the tension between Narcissus and Icarus is not the only one we have to negotiate as teacher trainers. We need to negotiate a balance between direction and reflection (see Farr 2011) and we need to negotiate between constructing monologic and dialogic classrooms (see Mann and Copland 2010).

INNOVATION IN MATERIALS

One of the clearest historical views of innovation we get is looking back at how materials have developed over time. John Gray (2010) has provided some excellent work in this area and he captures the way materials have evolved from largely text based paper-based versions, to looking more like a magazine and then to more blended materials. We can certainly see the innovation over time. We can also see the changing ideologies. If you look at Gräf and Hoffmann (1968), you will see the

clear influence of socialist ideals (with dialogues based on explicit mention of Marxism, workers' museums and Lenin). If you look at Soars and Soars (2002), you can see neo-capitalist ideologies (with pictures of successful and famous people and stories of successful business men and women). Materials change over time, influenced by different ideologies, fashions and theory and it is interesting to track these developments.

WRONG TIME, WRONG PLACE

Some materials are innovative but they are perhaps introduced in the wrong time and in the wrong place. I believe Willis and Willis (1988) is such an example. Many of us would agree that the design (bringing together a lexical approach with task-based learning) was principled and well thought out. The idea was a good one. However, despite millions of pounds of investment (through the whole COBUILD project) teachers were simply not ready to shift from a traditional form-focused approach (with fabricated and simplified dialogues) to a much more meaning-based approach based on lots of small tasks and dialogues performed in real-time by native-speakers. We might agree that the materials were designed on clear principles and that they were innovative but they were too radical for most teachers. The change was too great. Scott Thornbury captures this rather sad failure in the following description:

It was perhaps the absence of convert grammatical labels along with the innovative task-based approach which scared off potential converters and which accounts for the fact that the Collins COBUILD English course was less than a runaway success...one can't help regretting that this was the case in a market where publishers are conspicuously reluctant to back innovation. The failure of a project so brave and so principled was the publishing equivalent of the Titanic going down (Thornbury 1998: 8).

I believe that Willis and Willis produced a potentially excellent course but a series of good ideas do not always turn into a successful innovation.

INNOVATION AND APPROPRIATE MATERIALS

If we believe that an emphasis on ‘appropriate materials’ is essential, we need to put the emphasis on whether materials are going to work and be helpful in real classrooms. We want teachers to be critical and reflective about materials. We need to show them that kaizen is a better model than revolution. Cheng (2013) provides a good model of how we might develop the critical and reflective abilities of teachers. We need to recognize that times change. The paper-based coursebook is not the only show in town. Moving beyond the coursebook is the topic of a recent book (Copland and Mann 2011) and we need to show teacher-trainees how to make the most of internet/on-line possibilities in making sure language learners know where to look for language learning input and tools. There are other good resources and I would recommend the work of Russell Stannard at <http://www.teachertrainingvideos.com/top20.html>

Russell uses screen capture software (Jing/Camtasia) to demonstrate innovative tools for teachers. He shows you how to use such tools as:

- *Vocaroo* – click one button and the students record themselves. Click another and they can send their recording as an e-mail;
- *Jing*, *Snagit* and *ScreenR* – screencapture software;
- *Brainshark* – you can load up your pictures, documents, powerpoints and even video and then add commentary.

PRACTICING WHAT YOU PREACH

My final point is that teacher trainers need to practice what they preach. There is no point in telling trainee teachers all about reflective practice and the importance of innovation if there is no sign of it from the teacher trainers. Moon worries that ‘while teacher educators promote reflection among teachers’, they ‘seem to have less tendency to consider reflection as a method for their own practice’ (Moon 1999: 57). Edge (2011: 20) talks of ‘consistency’ and this is a good point to finish with. Teacher trainers need to make sure they are engaged in kaizen because this is the best way to demonstrate that decisions about methodology are not black and white. It is the grey areas and the puzzles of teaching that provide our wings. We do not need to be as ambitious as Icarus or as obsessively reflective as Narcissus but ambition, tweaks, reflection and kaizen keep us in the moment at the cutting edge of what we do.

CONCLUSION

In this article, I have introduced examples of innovation and argued that we need to prepare teachers who are ready to take risks, modify tasks, supplement and extend activities. They do this to make them appropriate, relevant and usable. This is the idea behind kaizen. It recognises that we can improve things in small and achievable ways. I would like to thank the 14 authors in Edge and Mann (2013) for their innovations and their commitment to the communication of them. Their writing has helped clarify my ideas for this article. I hope that you will read this collection. It is available from my website as a free pdf download at

http://englishagenda.britishcouncil.org/sites/ec/files/C442_Innovations_PRESETT_FINAL_WEB%20ONLY_v2.pdf

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to put on record my appreciation for the British Council funding my visit to the 22nd BETA-IATEFL ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE held in Varna, Bulgaria on 21st – 23rd June 2013. In particular, I would thank Tzvetanka Panova (Partnership projects manager) for making arrangements. I would also like to thank Sylvia Velikova for her commitment and research. I was struck at the actual conference by the high level of commitment to teacher training. This was evidenced from those who are relatively new to Bulgaria (like Ann Wiseman and Erinn Struss) but also those who have been doing a good job here for a long time. It was a privilege to work on the panel with Irina Ivanova, Zarina Markova and Svetlana Dimitrova-Gyuzeleva. I have since read a number of publications which certainly show innovation and reflective practice in Bulgaria. For example, Dimitrova and Tashevskia (2005) on portfolios, Dimitrova and Tashevskia (2007), Harakchiyska et al. (2006) and Dimitrova et al. (2006) on quality assurance. I would like to thank Fiona Copland, Sue Garton, Jaeyon Heo, Steve Walsh and Bushra Khurram for their valuable comments on my writing in this area.

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Openness and Connectedness – Can We Teach That?

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INTRODUCTION

Effective communication involves much more than just a good command of the foreign language itself. Can we prepare our students for the challenges of “real-life” communication and empower them to become good communicators? This article offers the rationale behind the claim, as well as some practical activities that can be used in the EFL classroom to improve our learners' interpersonal skills in the foreign language through providing them with opportunities for communicative practice, awareness-raising and group reflection.

THE RATIONALE

It is often said that speaking is the most important of the communicative skills. Indeed, many language learners regard speaking ability as the measure of

“knowing” a language. They associate language fluency with oral communication and interaction – i.e. with the ability to effectively converse with others – much more than with the ability to read or write. They regard speaking as the most important skill they should acquire if they want to function normally in the foreign tongue and use it in parallel with the mother tongue to secure employment and economic prosperity, to fully utilize the benefits of education, to form social relationships and participate in society effectively, and even to develop psychologically and make full use of their cognitive and emotional potential. The validity of these claims is strengthened by the fact that employers too now rate communication skills (in the mother tongue and the foreign language alike) as their highest priority, even above qualifications, when recruiting staff. This preference is explained by the tendency of modern occupations to require much higher levels of language, literacy and numeracy in comparison of the manual labour jobs predominant in the last century¹. (Without these, i.e. with poor language and communication skills, young people have limited opportunities of getting into employment or are “unemployable”: significantly, 47% of employers in England report difficulty in finding employees with an appropriate level of oral communication skills (UK Commission for Employment and Skills, 2009). Given the above, it is easy to conclude that communication skills belong to our generic linguistic and communicative competence and that they tend to be somewhat universal in nature. So, to a large extent, teaching speaking skills in the foreign language means unlocking the potential we have built in the mother tongue over the years and providing our learners with ample opportunities for meaningful practice, so that they can transfer it and adapt it to the new context, and/or supplement their repertoire of communicative skills and strategies as necessary.

Now let’s take a moment to consider what effective communication involves. Traditionally, foreign language teachers have identified it with speaking skills per se and focused on the following three areas of language knowledge in their classes:

- mechanics – pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary – i.e. using the right words in the right order with the correct pronunciation (notably, that aspect would include not only considerations of grammar accuracy, vocabulary appropriacy and pronunciation precision, but also a striving for a good range of lexis and grammar structures, as well as knowing when clarity of message is essential and when precise expression / understanding is not required);

¹ The findings come from a 2000 study on communication skills and employment in the USA by R J Ruben “*Redefining Survival of the Fittest: Communication Disorders in the 21st Century*”).

- language functions – transaction (getting things done) and interaction (cooperating with others) – i.e. being able to use the language appropriately to perform communicative acts like asking, directing, inviting, apologizing, complaining, etc.;
- social and cultural rules and norms – register and intercultural competence – i.e. understanding how to take into account who is speaking to whom, in what circumstances, about what, and for what reason.

However, in addition to the verbal component of oral speech (related to speaking as outlined above), communication is also characterized by some paralinguistic and pragmatic features. The former include the non-verbal components of communication such as eye contact, facial expression or body language; the latter relate to the learner's interpersonal skills for interaction and discourse management like the ability to turn-take, to be attentive and supportive during the interaction or to alter your language to suit the occasion (paradoxically – or not – we are assessed on these pragmatic features of communication when taking oral foreign language exams and criteria based on them feature large in the marking scheme²). Usually we do quite well at teaching *speaking* skills in the classroom but fail to cope with the development of our learners' *communication* skills – even in the mother tongue – although we are well aware of their significance for achieving the desired openness and connectedness in real-life communication.

Furthermore, when teaching speaking skills we tend to lay more emphasis on the role of the speaker, often forgetting that it takes two to tango – i.e. that the role of the listeners in communication is essential and rarely a passive one:

communication =

speaking /talking & getting the message across/

+

listening /attending & understanding the message/

In other words, both parties work towards “openness” and “connectedness” and contribute to the success of the communicative endeavour. Here are some of the factors that determine the success of the participants in the conversation:

² For example interaction criteria may often include involvement in the interaction, sensitivity to the norms of turn taking, ability to maintain or repair the interaction, contribution to the development of the task, while discourse management ones will refer to the relevance of the contributions, their extent or length, their flow (i.e. instances of hesitation and/or pausing) and coherence (i.e. clear and logical discourse organization and development of ideas).

- effective speakers' contribution: appropriate eye contact and body language, good rhetoric structure (incl. micro- and macro-strategies like building suspense, using dramatic pauses and cliff-hangers, incorporating rhetoric questions, ensuring logical structure and good flow between the parts, etc.), display of enthusiasm and involvement, inviting cooperation and checking understanding, etc.;
- effective listeners' contribution: minimal responses (i.e. predictable, often idiomatic phrases that conversation participants use to indicate understanding, agreement, doubt, and other responses to what another speaker is saying), questions and prompts, negotiation of meaning, sounds and expressions of acknowledgement, display of empathy, mirroring (both verbal and non-verbal), appropriate eye contact and facial expression, etc.

Last but not least, effective communication in the modern world strongly relies on the intercultural (not only language-related) competence of the participants in the communicative act. Learners should be aware that both verbal and non-verbal speech components and techniques for achieving openness and connectedness are culture-specific. For example, eye contact usually conveys interest in the topic of conversation, respect for the speaker/listener, understanding or agreeing with what has been said; it also often demonstrates trustworthiness, self-esteem and confidence on part of the talker. However, in Japanese, African, Latin American and Caribbean cultures the avoidance of eye contact is a sign of respect: it is considered rude for a person who is considered subordinate by age, gender or position in society to look you in the eye. With a language like English, which is often used as lingua franca and the medium of communication between the representatives of different cultural communities, learners should be especially sensitized to these culture-dependent variables of effective communication.

So, can we teach effective communication skills? For me the answer is not just YES, but also we have to, because the true goal of teaching speaking is communicative efficiency. How can we do it? Well, reading aloud a dialogue in roles, following a model we have heard, will not take us far: it may practise speaking (esp. pronunciation) and help internalise some useful phrases through repetition but no more than that. We need motivation to communicate: i.e. speaking with an aim and listening for a reason. In everyday communication, spoken exchanges take place because there is some sort of information gap between the participants – therefore if we are to train our students to adequately meet the demands of “real-life” communication, we should try to include in our lessons more authentic

speaking activities like surveys, interviews, discussions, role plays in “real-life” situations, etc. Very often we prepare our learners for the communicative activities by providing language guidance and controlled speaking practice, but then fail to make the final step and involve them in authentic communication: this lapse often has a detrimental effect on our learners’ communicative competence because such activities are of key importance in the process of learning as they perform an active learning rather than a study function – students learn from experience and by doing things, they put their knowledge and skills to the test and then carefully reflect on their performance and what they have learnt. In other words, there are three major benefits of giving students authentic communicative tasks:

- rehearsal in a face-saving simulation context – i.e. getting students to perform a dialogue or a role-play, conduct an interview, tell a story, etc. gives them the chance to rehearse – and hence it empowers them – to have the same conversation outside the classroom;
- feedback for both the teacher and the students – i.e. communicative activities where learners try to use all and any language they know in context provides useful feedback on their “real” language competence and communicative performance;
- task involvement and learner engagement – i.e. authentic communicative activities can be fun and highly motivating for the students because they can easily be adapted to allow for personalization (e.g. learners get a chance to express their personal opinion, topics/settings relate to their personal experience and interests, etc.).

THE WORKSHOP

The activities below are presented as they were used during the workshop at the 22nd BETA conference to illustrate the points made to the participants there but they can easily be modified and adapted to provide the same learning points about effective communication skills in the EFL classroom.

Activity One

Procedure: Before discussing how to teach “openness” and “connectedness” we should try to reach some consensus about what they mean in the context of FL teaching and learning. For 1 – 2 min. brainstorm participants’ associations for

“openness” and “connectedness” and generate some ideas about their interpretation. Then invite participants to share their ideas with a partner and write down their associations on post-it notes, which you stick on the board for general review and brief discussion.

Contributions from conference participants: communication [skills], interpersonal skills, cultural differences, tolerance, understanding/accepting “otherness”, dialogue, good listening skills, risk taking and not being afraid to be vulnerable, etc.

Activity Two

Procedure: This is an awareness-raising activity helping participants realise that there is more to effective communication than just speaking (meaningful use of verbal exponents). Divide the participants into pairs and ask everyone to introduce themselves to their partner saying who they are, where they are from, which their favourite place in the world is and why they like it so much. Listeners should not only listen to what is said but also be able to make some comment about HOW the message was delivered. At the end participants should be prepared to introduce their partner and make a comment on how they communicated their message. Depending on the size of the group, give the floor to 3 – 4 people to introduce their partners. Take record on the board of their comments about how speakers conveyed their positive feelings related to their favourite spot.

Contributions from conference participants: fluttering of the eyelids and a dreamy look, display of excitement and enthusiasm, expressive body language and facial expression, elevated tone of voice, etc.

Note: If the audience is multicultural, you can also try to identify during the pair activity and/or elicit after its end some of the culture-specific characteristics of the communicative act “introducing oneself” (e.g. who would initiate the conversation, how closely together partners would sit while conversing, any significant differences in eye contact, etc.).

Activity Three

Procedure: In the classroom we tend to be preoccupied with developing the communicative skills of the speakers, but we also need to devote some time and attention to preparing the listeners for their active listening role. This activity is

based on an excerpt from the popular sitcom “Friends” (season 4, episode 1, “The Jellyfish”³) in which Monica and Chandler recount to their friends an event which happened to them earlier on the beach, and it illustrates some of the speaking and listening strategies which good communicators use attempting to achieve openness and connectedness. Divide the participants in two groups: ask the first one to watch the excerpt carefully and say what makes Monica and Chandler effective speakers, and the second one – what makes Rachel and Ross [and Joey to some extent] effective listeners. Before collecting feedback and facilitating group reflection, team up the two groups and invite them to exchange ideas about the speakers’ and the listeners’ repertoires of communicative strategies [respectively].

Contributions from conference participants:

- speakers’ strategies: avoiding eye contact (displaying lack of confidence, shame, humiliation), body language (gestures and pacing around), rhetoric structure (e.g. building suspense, using dramatic pauses and cliff-hangers, rhetoric questions, exaggeration, sequencing devices), display of pathos, etc.;
- listeners’ strategies: effective use of minimal responses, questions and prompts, negotiation of meaning and mirroring, sounds and expressions of displaying emotional reaction and empathy, soliciting eye contact and emotionally expressive facial expression, etc.

Note: Again, if the audience is multicultural, you can invite the participants to comment on the “appropriacy” of such behaviour in their cultural context, explaining what the alternatives for each party (speakers or listeners) would be.

CONCLUSION

Realising what effective communication involves could be the cornerstone in preparing our students for the challenges of “real-life” communication and empowering them to become good communicators not only in the foreign language, but also in their mother tongue or any other language which they may use as the medium of conversation. Openness and connectedness are not “default” dimensions of communication and it takes a conscious effort on part of the learner to achieve them and thus ensure the success of the endeavour.

³ The video-recording used can be substituted with any other available example of effective communication skills.



Academic Presentation Skills for PhD Students

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INTRODUCTION

Presentation skills are extremely important for all learners since various subject-specific oral presentation tasks are assigned throughout their course of education, as well as course projects and diploma theses are defended in front of an audience. It is expected that university students have some experience in the field from their secondary school studies but practice shows that they usually feel uneasy and unconfident about this task. The situation with the mix-proficiency groups of technical students is indicative of the fact that these skills are not sufficiently developed in the mother tongue. In addition, the limited linguistic knowledge does not allow effective transfer of extralinguistic knowledge or relevant communication and intercultural communication strategies from L1 to L2. Therefore PhD students are considered a special group of highly motivated learners who should master their linguistic and communicative skills for academic purposes in order to become successful professionals, scientists and lecturers.

It is a common problem that the majority of the students feel anxiety about presenting in public. On the other hand, the audiences often experience difficulty in comprehending the 'presentation in terms of its content and structure, but most

often in terms of its delivery' (Alexander, Argent & Spencer 2008: 245). The authors emphasize that EAP courses are extremely important for solving these common problems by offering 'graded presentation tasks which raise students' awareness of what constitutes good performance, and provide practice in a supportive environment' (Alexander, Argent & Spencer 2008: 245).

ENGLISH LANGUAGE SYLLABUS FOR PhD STUDENTS AT THE TU-VARNA

The *English Language Syllabus for PhD Students* has been implemented for about a decade at the TU-Varna. The idea for the organization of the course content in the form of Academic Skills Modules was novice for the time since the common practice at tertiary level was for PhD students to attend obligatory General English courses (120 academic hours at the TU-Varna). The latter could not meet the requirements for developing academic study skills and prepare competitive PhD students confident enough to communicate in English in a professional academic environment. The process of extending and updating the syllabuses for the respective Bachelor's and Master's degree programs naturally called for the revision of the aims and objectives of the English Language syllabus for PhD students.

At present the PhD students at the TU-Varna are offered an English language course divided into 4 modules. A total of 120 academic hours, 30 academic hours per module, gives the opportunity to raise students' awareness of the essentials of academic communication. Module 1 is devoted to *Grammar Revision*; Module 2 introduces the specificities of *Scientific and Technical Texts*. *Technical Translation* techniques are demonstrated and practiced. *Academic Writing* conventions are in the focus of Module 3. English language instruction for PhD students finishes with Module 4: *Oral Presentation Skills*.

The overall evaluation of the *English Language Syllabus for PhD Students* for the period of time of its implementation is beyond the scope of the present paper. In order to do this a large team of lecturers who have been involved in conducting the different modules over the years should contribute. Moreover, a special evaluation model and criteria should be developed, since on the one hand, the syllabus is veryflexible, and, on the other hand, the groups and the mode of education vary from year to year.

The author is going to focus on Module 4: *Presentation Skills* by sharing experience, discussing common problems and suggesting practical methodology solutions.

MODULE 4: ORAL PRESENTATION SKILLS - AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

According to the updated *English Language Syllabus for PhD Students* at the TU-Varna the course content of the present module covers the following basic topics:

1. Oral presentation – forms, content and style.
 - a. Monologue (statement, paper, lecture, presentation)
 - b. Dialogue (interview, discussion, conference)
2. Presentation structure: starting, provoking and sustaining interest, summarizing and concluding.
3. Techniques for effective presentation of information and feedback.
4. Visual aids. Describing graphs and trends.
5. Taking part in discussions. Asking questions and giving answers; expressing opinion; agreeing and disagreeing.
6. Simulation of a scientific mini-conference – individual presentations and group discussions.
7. Presentation analysis – conclusions and recommendations for oral presentations on a scientific topic in a foreign language.

Module 4: *Oral Presentation Skills*, being the final module of the *English Language Syllabus* for PhD students, is designed to integrate the knowledge and skills acquired throughout the previous modules. The lecturer can rely on the input from Module 3: *Academic Writing* since most of the skills are transferable and the academic vocabulary required is the same. (Since the PhD Syllabus is designed to be flexible enough and to correspond to the needs of the particular group of PhD students, the lecturers have the freedom and choice to compile ‘personalized’ sets of teaching materials. In terms of course organization, the four modules are taught by different lecturers, featuring individual teaching styles and respectively adopting different teaching approaches. Thus the natural continuity between Module 3 and

Module 4 content is more implicit than explicit, but still the Module 4 lecturer can refer to the Module 3 input when comparing and contrasting the specificities of written and oral academic texts.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT. COMMON PROBLEMS

Since the number of PhD students varies from year to year it is not always possible to divide them into subgroups according to their General English language level as was the original practice. This restriction causes inconveniences in terms of mixed-proficiency or extended number of students within a group. Moreover, the PhD students come from different faculties and specialities which means that, for example, students studying technical subjects, social sciences or arts are grouped together. The different background of the learners is a factor to further consideration since the teaching-and-learning materials selected should be versatile enough and suitable for all students. Lecturers compile different sets of materials meeting the syllabus and the needs analysis requirements.

In addition, PhD students' EAP study skills are still underdeveloped and the majority lack relevant experience in giving oral presentations on subject-related topics even in the mother tongue. Syllabus restrictions (only 30 academic hours per module) are an important factor. English language instruction is conducted within the first year of PhD students' studies and in a way precedes their academic experience and performance in the respective professional field which is an additional hindrance.

However, the role of the English language lecturers is to raise PhD students' awareness of the Academic Presentations structure, techniques and strategies, as well as to activate and to incorporate their EAP vocabulary into the subject-specific ESP terminology. To this end every English language instructor relies on needs analysis and compiles a set of teaching materials in order to meet PhD students' needs.

A TAILOR-MADE SET OF MATERIALS

A common set of selected materials incorporates the following resources:

Theoretical input – related articles from academic literature, Internet resources. The students are given the materials at the beginning of the module and are

assigned home-reading tasks. In this way they can comment and discuss issues during the classes. This is very convenient since the time limitation for face-to-face instruction is a very big problem. The teacher's role is to be a facilitator and a mediator in this process. In view of the fact that the course is practically-oriented, this is a handy way to digest the lecture-specific content from the point of view of the PhD students with technical and/or scientific background.

Practical exercises – (e.g. Freitag-Lawrence, A. (2003); Grussendorf, M. (2007); extra materials from different EAP resources, published by OUP, Longman, Macmillan, etc.). These handbooks give the opportunity to recycle and to activate phrases and expressions common for the language of the oral presentation. It is extremely useful to apply the functional/ thematic approach in order to organize the vocabulary items or to raise the learners' awareness of the different stylistic devices such as signals, reference words, emphatic constructions, etc. A well-proven practice is that the teacher assigns tasks for homework and during the lessons the answers are checked and commented. In this way the lecturer can elicit various grammar, lexical and syntactical issues in case the students still have problems with some items covered in the previous modules. Special attention is paid to typical constructions, collocations and usage of academic vocabulary.

Video Course – (e.g. Williams, E. J. (2008)) suitable for demonstrations during the second part of the module; prepares PhD students for their final presentations; visualizes different techniques such as body language, intonation, using visuals; gives an opportunity for critical observation of model presentations, and analyzing the stages of the presentation, rhetorical techniques, individual styles, etc.; provides authentic examples of good and less successful presentations. Watching video recordings of peer presentations adds to the supportive environment needed for overcoming the difficulties connected with the structure and content, anxiety and delivery. The latter helps students set realistic goals and standards for giving a talk. Successful performance is viewed as a long-lasting process of learning-by-doing instead of striving at achieving the near-native proficiency and competency overnight (Alexander, Argent & Spencer 2008).

Internet EAP resources – modern technologies, YouTube in particular, allow learners to gain authentic experience. They are found extremely useful with engineering students who can apply their technical skills and experiment recording their own oral presentations (e.g. podcasts /video recording).

Speaking exercises for simulating the essential parts of the oral presentation: e.g. introduction, conclusion, body of the presentation, asking and answering questions, which serve as a preparation for the final presentation and reduce student anxiety. Learners' confidence is built by giving various mini-presentations and getting immediate feedback from both the teacher and the peer students. Rehearsing the different components of the presentation leads to automaticity in using the core vocabulary, fixed phrases and markers. Pronunciation, pace, stress and intonation are other important factors which are to be drilled.

Evaluation sheet – (based on Williams, E. J. (2008)) containing the following criteria: *Start; Signposting; Structure; Delivery; Visual Aids; Techniques; Positive and Dramatic (optional); Love the Audience (optional); Dealing with questions; Finish.*

FINAL EXAMINATION AND MODULE EVALUATION

Considering the fact that Module 4: *Oral Presentation Skills* is the final module of the PhD English language course it in a way incorporates and summarizes the academic content and input from the previous three modules. Therefore it is reasonable to apply different strategies for the evaluation of students' performance. Every lecturer is given the freedom to decide on the final exam format and procedure depending on the General English level of the particular group and the needs analysis outcomes. The author has found it reliable to combine a written and an oral component in the final examination and evaluation of PhD students.

Final Examination Format

- Written test
 - exercises on recycling the vocabulary input throughout the course;
 - translation exercises focusing on the equivalence between typical academic vocabulary expressions and syntactical structures.
- Oral presentation
 - 15-min. presentation on a subject-specific topic using appropriate visual aids (usually PPP) and demonstrating the techniques discussed and acquired throughout the course;

- Presentation evaluation and assessment – overall presentation impression; essential components of the successful oral presentation; vocabulary used; etc.;
- Evaluation Checklist – applied for detailed feedback and giving advice.

CASE STUDY

The participants in the following small-scale research are a group of 15 PhD students who had their EAP language instruction during the academic year 2011-2012. The majority had a good command of General English which can be proved by the outcomes for the respective modules:

- Module1 – Average Mark: **Good 4** (B1-B2);
- Module 2 – Average Mark: **Very Good 4.88** (B1-B2);
- Module 3 – Average Mark: **Good 4.83** (B1-B2);
- Module 4 – Average Mark: **Good 4.57** (B1-B2):
 - **Written Part: Good 4.22**
 - **Oral Part: Very Good 4.92**

The **Final Written Test** was designed with the aim to challenge the learners with a variety of tasks for recycling academic vocabulary, paragraph organization, translation of common and clichéd phrases and constructions typical of the oral presentations discourse. The percentage, which is indicated in bold, gives the average progress per written exam components while the numbering stands for the highest and the lowest results respectively.

Ex.1 Order the following tasks as you would do them when preparing a presentation (***task type:** ordering; **what we want to test:** awareness raising; knowledge of the preparation stages of oral presentations*); **45% - 8**

Ex.2. Fill in the missing words in the beginning of a presentation given below (***task type:** cloze; gap filling; **what we want to test:** Use of English: grammar, vocabulary, discourse markers, signals, etc.*); **50% - 7**

- Ex.3.** Write out the following sentence fragments in the correct order to make a complete presentation extract (**task type:** *jumbled sentences*; **what we want to test:** *paragraph organization; coherence*); **93% - 1**
- Ex.4.** Choose one of the expressions from the Wordbank for the following situations (**task type:** *matching; defining*; **what we want to test:** *transfer from everyday English into academic vocabulary*); **65% - 4**
- Ex.5.** Complete the following phrases and sentences by adding appropriate prepositions and articles (**task type:** *using notes to make sentences*; **what we want to test:** *grammar and vocabulary; collocations, prepositions, phrasal verbs, set phrases, articles*); **57% - 6**
- Ex.6.** Underline the verbs which best fit in the following presentation extracts (**task type:** *multiple-choice*; **what we want to test:** *academic vocabulary, synonyms, collocations*); **43% - 9**
- Ex.7.** Put the following sentences into the correct order (**task type:** *scrambled sentences*; **what we want to test:** *grammar, syntax, knowledge of phrases and expressions typical of the language of oral presentations*); **74% - 3**
- Ex.8.** The language of academic presentations. Translate into Bulgarian (**task type:** *translation into Bulgarian of useful phrases and vocabulary common for the oral presentations discourse*; **what we want to test:** *adequacy and equivalence in selecting grammatical and lexical items when translating academic vocabulary and expressions from English into Bulgarian*); **74% - 3**
- Ex.9.** The language of academic presentations. Translate into English (**task type:** *translation into English of useful phrases and vocabulary common for the oral presentations discourse*; **what we want to test:** *adequacy and equivalence in selecting grammatical and lexical items when translating academic vocabulary and expressions from Bulgarian into English*); **59% - 5**
- Ex.10.** Match the phrases from the two columns to make sentences used to talk about visuals (**type of task:** *matching parts of jumbled sentences* ; **what we want to test:** *communication skills connected with describing visual aids; academic vocabulary*); **87% - 2**

In terms of statistics the average progress based on the above outcomes is 62%. It could be concluded that the **automaticity exercises** show very high results (ex. 3, ex. 10, ex. 7, ex. 8) in comparison with the tasks requiring **productive skills** where

the average results are **50%** for the exercises checking academic vocabulary and grammar accuracy.

Ex.1 – 45% 8

Ex.2 – 50% 7

Ex.3 – 93% 1

Ex.4 – 65% 4

Ex.5 – 57% 6

Ex.6 – 43% 9

Ex.7 – 74% 3

Ex.8 – 74% 3

Ex.9 – 59% 5

Ex.10 – 87% 2

Total: 62% out of 100

The Oral Presentation component showed that the majority of the students had successfully acquired and applied the key points of the Oral Presentation in terms of *Start/ Signposting/ Structure/ Visual Aids/ Finish*. Some of them had attempted at incorporating the additional techniques but obviously because of the insufficient confidence in delivering a longer speech or presentation in English and the average lower level of learners' General English, their presentations were not as rich in such signals/components as the ones of the presenters from the model video demonstrations. This is natural considering the difference in the context of their educational environment – a small group of Bulgarian PhD students studying in Bulgarian at a Bulgarian university in Bulgaria vs. a group of international students studying in an English-speaking environment at a British university.

The teacher used the *Evaluation Checklist* from the video course as an evaluation checklist for verification of the overall achievements. The general impressions from the PhD students' presentations could be demonstrated in the following way:

Evaluation Checklist

(based on Williams, E. (2008))

- **Start** ✓
- **Signposting**..... ✓
- **Structure** ✓
- **Delivery**..... ✓ ; *Anxiety*
- **Visual Aids** - *too much info; long sentences; dependence; reading*
- **Techniques** - *partially applied*
 - *E.g. repetition; rhetorical questions; quotations; metaphor, anecdote, etc.*
- **Positive and Dramatic (optional)** X
- **Love the Audience (optional)**..... X
- **Dealing with questions** - *uneasy; panicking*
- **Finish**..... ✓

Mistakes: *Pronunciation; Grammar; Word-formation; Linking, etc.*

With this group of students the lecturer experimented to introduce the evaluation checklist as a means of raising awareness of the Oral Presentation specifics, as well as a peer evaluation tool. Unfortunately, the PhD students were very tense, waiting for their turn to come, and literally refused to take notes. This approach could be exploited as an additional exercise during the course in order to introduce note-taking and error analysis. The author herself filled in the checklist for every student and after each presentation commented on both the strong and the weak points in general, without giving marks.

METHODOLOGY SOLUTIONS

When it comes to methodology solutions for such a specialized tailor-made course it is essential to start with the good old Needs Analysis approach. Thus the lecturer can optimize and adapt the existing syllabus, which is originally designed to be

flexible enough, in order to meet the needs of the particular group of PhD students. The common problems connected with this type of courses, which were mentioned earlier in the paper, are successfully solved during the tutorials which are part of the mode of instruction according to the PhD syllabus. The simulation of a mini-conference as a final stage of the course and the evaluation procedure has proved to be highly motivating for the individual students and fruitful for the group as a whole. The time allowed for group discussions and error analysis gives an opportunity for detailed feedback, critical listening, sharing and dealing with anxiety. As a result PhD students' confidence is raised, their L1 and L2 EAP skills are compared and contrasted in order to achieve the goals of English language instruction at the academic level required.

CONCLUSIONS

Developing oral presentation skills for PhD students is a great challenge for both learners and lecturers. It is essential for the EAP teachers to introduce the conventions of this discourse as clearly as possible, to provide supportive classroom environment and to allow learners to experience and simulate all the stages of the academic presentation. PhD students, in turn, should take the risk to apply and experiment with the different strategies and approaches offered in order to become self-confident and independent speakers and presenters. Last but not least, designing, updating, rethinking and evaluating EAP syllabi and courses should be an ongoing task for the educationalists at tertiary level. Thus higher flexibility, competitiveness and effectiveness of language education can be ensured at institutional, national and international levels.

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A Tertiary Level Project for Enhancing Foreign Language Skills

A MODULE FOR IMPROVING FOREIGN LANGUAGE COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN HEALTHCARE

*Operational Programme “Human
Resources Development”*

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this article is to share some information about a project at Varna Medical University for enhancing foreign language skills while working with students of Medicine, Dental Medicine and Pharmacy. The main objective is to make the language for specific purposes taught and acquired more closely related to students' immediate needs once they graduate from the university.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

One of the major aims of the project is to improve the quality of teaching foreign

languages at tertiary level and make it more relevant by performing a number of activities such as:

- investigating the needs for Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) and communication skills in healthcare institutions;
- providing new equipment that would allow lecturers to integrate different aspects of blended learning in everyday teaching;
- upgrading and designing new syllabi for teaching LSP at tertiary level.

On the basis of the upgraded and updated syllabi, new teaching materials will be designed for the seminars and a module for blended learning will be developed. These will be implemented in the regular LSP courses and a mandatory second foreign language will be introduced in the curriculum.

PARTICIPANTS AND PARTNERS

The main participants in the project teach at the Department of Foreign Language Communication and Sports. They are eight foreign language lecturers of Bulgarian to foreign students, German and English and three colleagues from the administrative staff of the university. The Director of the Department is the project manager and the lecturer in German is the project coordinator. The official partners from healthcare Institutions come from St Marina Hospital, Varna; Euro Hospital, Vinitsa; Dental Clinic, Dr Kouneva and Manolova Pharmacies Ltd. It is expected that in the course of time more colleagues and partners from other health institutions will join the project.

TIMING AND ACTIVITIES

The Project has been envisaged to last for twenty-four months. The first step of the project is to **design questionnaires** for healthcare providers and patients that would elicit some tendencies in doctor-patient communication and both, communication and communicative skills that students of different healthcare subjects need. The process was a snowball activity. First, each participant/language teacher worked individually and formulated questions for the prospective questionnaires. Then lecturers collated the questionnaires in pairs. Next, they worked in groups of three or four. Finally the whole group of eight foreign

language professionals, lecturers of English, German and Bulgarian as a foreign language got together and discussed, edited, fine-tuned the formulation and wording of the questions, the possible multiple choice answers, and eventually rewrote and distilled the final versions.

The team came up with four different questionnaires altogether. The first questionnaire focuses on healthcare workers and their communication skills with patients. The second one concentrates on different healthcare professionals and the necessary linguistic knowledge and communicative skills that they need on an everyday basis. The third questionnaire aims at investigating the patients' opinion of the doctor-patient communication and the fourth is trying to pinpoint the customers' experiences in pharmacies.

The next step is to **administer the questionnaires**. On completing them and collecting some 400 copies, the questionnaires will be analyzed, the statistical data available will be processed and then results will be summarized. These results will be reported before healthcare providers from the partner institutions and discussed in details at a one-day professional meeting.

The next activity is concentrated on **adapting** and **upgrading** the existing syllabi, as well as **designing** new ones for the specialty *Medical secretary* and again **developing new syllabi** for introducing a second foreign language. On the basis of these syllabi **new teaching materials** will be designed for future pharmacists, doctors and dentists, as well as nurses and midwives and most of these should be online materials suitable for *m-learning* and *e-learning* so that ultimately the blended learning approach could be implemented in the foreign language teaching. All these activities would be impossible without buying and installing **new equipment** such as laptops, digital projectors, etc. Once the materials have been developed, several **language courses** will be organized to **pilot the materials**. At the end of each course there will be a test that will be administered to groups that work following the old and the new syllabi respectively. The idea is to check whether the new syllabi and materials, and blended learning as a whole work better. If this turns out to be the case, the new materials will be approved and implemented in the regular courses of language for medical purposes. There will be one more final meeting with the partners from pharmacy chains, dental offices and hospitals at which the results of the pilot courses and the whole project will be reported. The next step is to **disseminate** the project product by designing

brochures, leaflets and other materials that will advertise the project outcomes and promote the new courses. Finally an international conference on developing communication and communicative skills in healthcare will be held at the Medical University of Varna.

CONCLUSION

Hopefully the project will ensure a much better quality of foreign language teaching at medical universities in Bulgaria and other countries. It could inspire colleagues from other universities to develop such programmes concerning communication skills in their own specific spheres of foreign language teaching. Additionally, the blended learning approach is expected to meet the students' needs, motivate them to learn and acquire two foreign languages at university level. This will help them to respond more appropriately to the demands for modern foreign languages in the respective systems of higher education.



Project Work in the Context of Blended Learning

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INTRODUCTION

The use of project work has its sound traditions in FLT. It is widely used in the foreign language classroom and the benefits of this approach are unquestionable. But the developments in the contemporary learning context presuppose the need to rethink certain aspects of project work today. The basic assumptions underlying this paper are the following: (1) Project work is viewed as an invaluable tool for boosting students' motivation to bridge the gap between learning a foreign language on the one hand, and using this language in authentic, real life situations on the other hand, i.e. the gap between being a language learner and being an independent and self-confident user of the foreign language; (2) Blended learning integrates the traditional classroom environment with the electronic learning environment so that the student can benefit from the advantages of electronic learning and the traditional classroom methods of foreign language teaching. It can be argued that by implementing project work in the process of blended learning both language students and teachers can achieve results which are highly satisfying.

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

The following terms are used in the paper:

- *e-learning* - 'E-learning is a new way of enabling, extending, and enhancing learning. It requires not only new technologies, but also new ways of working, new relationships, new frameworks, and new priorities.' (Cross & Dublin 2002: 3)
- *blended learning* – 'Blended learning is a formal education program in which a student learns at least in part through online delivery of content and instruction with some element of student control over time, place, path, and/or pace and at least in part at a supervised brick-and mortar location away from home.' (Staker & Horn 2012: 3)
- *collaborative learning* – 'In practice, collaboration [...] usually aims at achieving: (i) work sharing; (ii) using differing knowledge and expertise to improve quality and/or take account of varied viewpoints; and (iii) building or consolidating a (learning) community.' (Hartley 1999)

BLENDED LEARNING AND THE CONTEMPORARY LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Electronic learning is becoming more and more common in FLT. It is generally agreed that electronic learning comprises various approaches but they all depend on the use of information and communication technologies. Today electronic learning has acquired a new meaning – it is seen as a new way of enabling, extending and enhancing learning. The new priorities, technologies and methods of working, based on the new relationships between the participants in the process of learning, help to intensify learning and broaden the horizons for teachers and students. Foreign language learning is no exception to this trend.

Blended learning is a more flexible form of e-learning. Generally speaking, blended learning can be viewed as an approach in which different learning contexts are integrated – these are the learning contexts of electronic learning and the traditional classroom-based learning. Blended learning offers a great freedom as to the extent in which these contexts are integrated, so there are various blended learning models. These models are very flexible and can be adapted to the way learners learn best by individualizing the materials and procedures so as to

meet the learners' needs.

Blended learning thrives on the positive effects of collaborative learning. On the basis of work sharing and using the differing knowledge and points of view of the students, a learning community is built. When the learning context is that of online or blended learning, it can be called an online/electronic learning community.

artley (1999) discusses the distinction that is made between *cooperation* and *collaboration*. Cooperation requires an agreement between the participants on the objectives of a shared enterprise, but it doesn't necessarily imply strong interaction between those participants, the process of work may only imply a collection of the participants' work. Collaboration, on the other hand, emphasizes interaction in the process and the goals which should not only relate to the product but include developing a sense of community.

This distinction touches upon some of the most important characteristics of collaborative learning, namely interaction and active negotiation of understanding, and the role of collaboration for utilizing the differences in knowledge, skills and attitudes with the aim of developing a sense of community. Motivation and self-confidence are key factors in this exchange of information and ideas.

ONLINE LEARNING COMMUNITY

Presumably, collaborative learning cannot take place without the formation of online learning community. Palloff and Pratt's view of the online learning community takes into account three main factors (Palloff & Pratt 2007). These are:

- *people*
- *purpose*
- *process*

The interrelation between these factors gives rise to the engagement of the students with the content, with one another and with the instructor.

Blended learning requires a great degree of interaction and collaboration between the learners, and the creation of electronic learning community is an important aspect of collaborative learning. Within the electronic learning community the learners share information, offer feedback, participate in group work. Step by step, with the support of the teacher, the students become autonomous learners.

Everett and Drapeau (2001) outline some basic requirements for the creation of an electronic learning community:

To create the electronic learning community, a facilitator approach that encourages a free-flowing, interactive environment, which empowers learners to share content and participate in peer feedback, is imperative. To enhance meaning and learning and to promote a sense of autonomy, initiative and creativity in the online classroom, group activities, collaboration, simulations, open-ended questions, shared goals, and teamwork can be used. The instructor becomes the facilitator of learning and not just the source of knowledge. The instructor's role of facilitator enhances the meaning of self-directed learning. (Everett & Drapeau 2001)

In order to meet the changing demands of the students and the requirements of the new learning environment, teachers have to apply new methods in the electronic classroom like involving the learners in the online activities; developing interactive patterns of work and closer relations between students and between students and teacher; creating and utilizing communication opportunities.

Everett and Drapeau (2001) theorise that in online courses the instructors have to adopt new pedagogical strategies, e.g. active learning, collaborative techniques, the instructor's role as a facilitator in the process of learning. That way, with the enhancement of communication opportunities, the students can easily overcome the feeling of 'distance'. They can also modify their behaviour in accordance with the online learning context. As a result, teachers have a deeper understanding of their students' needs in the online environment than in the offline environment. The implementation of the above pedagogical strategies makes online interaction successful and rewarding.

Palloff and Pratt (2007) outline the following outcomes that should be observed if a community has formed successfully:

- Active interaction involving both course content and personal communication;

- Collaborative learning evidenced by comments directed primarily student to student rather than student to instructor;
- Socially constructed meaning evidenced by agreement or questioning, with the intent to achieve agreement on issues of meaning;
- Sharing of resources among students;
- Expressions of support and encouragement exchanged between students, as well as willingness to critically evaluate the work of others (Palloff & Pratt 2007: 3)

It can be argued that learning and sharing knowledge and information within the electronic learning community is more successful and stimulating than in the traditional classroom context. Personal responsibility acquires a new meaning; group work and collaboration result in greater commitment to the process of work and to the final product, thus creating the real possibility of positive transfer of skills and knowledge from the electronic learning context into the everyday lives and professional development of the students.

Everett and Drapeau (2001) underline the importance of online learning for the students. Among the most valuable advantages are content retention; involvement and commitment to the outcome; sharing in the successes and failures of teamwork; integration of the results into the students' personal lives.

PROJECT WORK

According to Hutchinson (1992), all projects share some common characteristics. Projects are:

- the result of *hard work* – the authors of the project are involved in the project activities from the search for information to the final presentation.
- *creative* – each project is a unique piece of communication and its creativity refers to both content and language.
- *personal* – in the projects students present aspects of their own lives.
- *adaptable* – project work can be used at every level and with all ages.

Fried-Booth (1990) points out that a full-scale project involves three stages:

1. *Classroom planning* – when the students, in collaboration with the teacher, discuss the content and the scope of their project, and predict their specific language needs.
2. *Carrying out the project* – at this stage the students perform the tasks they have planned, using the four language skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening) in a naturally integrated way.
3. *Reviewing and monitoring the work* – this stage includes discussions and feedback sessions, advice and comment by the teacher, group analysis and self-monitoring.

Fried-Booth continues to describe the stages of development that each project passes through (Fried-Booth 1990):

1. *Stimulus* – this stage involves initial discussion of the data.
2. *Definition of the project objective* – this stage involves discussion, negotiation, suggestion and argument.
3. *Practice of language skills* – the students use the language that they feel is needed for the initial stage of the project.
4. *Design of written materials* – the students design the materials required for data collection.
5. *Group activities* – these activities are designed for gathering information.
6. *Collating information* – it is usually done in groups and involves reading of notes, explanations, but the emphasis is placed on discussion.
7. *Organization of materials* – this stage involves developing the end product of the project by means of discussion, negotiation, reading for cross-reference and verification.
8. *Final presentation* – the manner of presentation depends on the form of the end-product and on the manner of demonstration.

The above classifications can be successfully used in the context of blended learning. The contemporary communication technologies offer a plethora of opportunities for gathering information and for communication between the participants in the process of work – both students and teachers. Since the basic steps in the development of the project do not depend heavily on the learning context, the technological innovations can only add to the variety of resources and interaction patterns, which are major components of project work.

Hutchinson (1992) outlines the following benefits that projects bring to the language class:

1. *Motivation* – project work is a powerful means of generating positive motivation for several reasons:
 - project work is *personal* – it is a very personal experience since the students present aspects of their own lives, which is definitely motivating for them.
 - *learning through doing* - project work is also a very active medium and involves learning by doing, which is another means of boosting students' motivation.
 - *sense of achievement* - project work enables students to create a worthwhile product, which gives them a clear sense of achievement.
2. *Relevance* – another benefit of project work is the fact that it helps students see the language as relevant to their own lives by focusing on:
 - *integration of language with other skills* – project work creates connections between the foreign language and the learners' own world, it enables learners to exploit other spheres of knowledge and encourages the use of communicative skills.
 - *the real needs of language learners* - project work is a powerful means of making language more relevant to the learners' actual needs.
 - *language and culture* – with project work the foreign language acts as a bridge between the culture of the student and the culture of the people speaking that language (e.g. for the students of English as a foreign language this is the culture of the English-speaking world), thus making communication between these two cultures possible.
3. *Educational values* – the third benefit is related to the educational values since project work contributes towards the general educational development of the learner. It stimulates:
 - *independent investigation* – project work is an invaluable tool for encouraging initiative and independence and for developing research skills.
 - *cross-curricular studies* - project work gives students the opportunity to use the knowledge they gain in other subjects in the foreign language class.

These inherent benefits of project work are widely recognized by language teachers. In the context of blended learning it is not only possible to carry out

project work, but also highly recommendable, since the benefits of this approach are indispensable for the formation of electronic learning community.

PROJECT WORK AND BLENDED LEARNING

Project work can be widely used in adult education. Adults are expected to take responsibility for their own learning and the prevailing majority of adult students are willing to do it. It is often the case that self-directed learning is the only possibility for an adult learner to combine work and studies. In the context of blended learning, project work provides the prerequisites that adult learners need in order to gain control over the pace, the place and the time of learning.

Since project work is highly adaptable to the individual needs of the students and the course objectives, it can focus on a wide range of topics like aspects of students' personal lives, challenging and topical issues or aspects of the foreign culture in general. If given the freedom to choose a topic for a project, the students are likely to select topics that reflect their personal ideas and experience.

Both *planning* and *carrying out* the project can be largely delegated to the adult students, with the teacher offering support when needed. Although students should be stimulated to choose pair work or group work as interaction patterns for the development of their projects, sometimes it can be virtually impossible to avoid individual work, especially in classes where project work appears to be a new type of activity. Some students may be reluctant to work in a team for various reasons – they might be too shy, they might lack self-confidence, etc. Online learning helps such students to overcome their reservations and find their place in the electronic learning community. Gradually, they come to understand the real value of collaborative teamwork.

Project work does not finish with the creation of the final product. An equally important stage of the whole process is the project presentation (individual or as collaborative teamwork) and the post-presentation discussion. Hopefully, a presentation should provoke a fruitful discussion. Blended learning makes it possible to carry out this discussion in the traditional classroom context and online.

Online discussions give a chance to those who have missed the class to catch up with their fellow students. This is of crucial importance for the busy adult learners. Besides, online post-presentation discussions save valuable time in the classroom. *Reviewing and monitoring the work* can be done online and classroom time can be

left for activities that require direct contact between students and teacher. And last but not least, this is a natural way of communication for the students of today.

.Finally, a few words should be said about the role of the teacher in the project planning and development, and the post-presentation discussions. Even in a learner-centered approach as project work and in a flexible learning environment as blended learning, teachers have their place and should receive a fair share of attention. The teacher is a *facilitator* – especially in the process of the planning and the development of the project; a *partner* with equal rights and obligations – especially in the post-presentation discussion; and lastly, the teacher is a *member of the e-learning community* – at every step of the process.

CONCLUSION

The rapid development of information technologies makes their introduction in foreign language teaching inevitable. However, classroom interaction, in which students come into direct contact with each other and with the teacher, is impossible to neglect. Blended learning ensures the integration of these learning environments but the degree of integration may differ according to the learners' needs. Project work in the context of blended learning stimulates creativity, collaboration and autonomy and develops personal qualities such as responsibility and team spirit, thus leading to the creation of e-learning community. The results are rewarding for the teachers and, most importantly, for their students.

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Class-wikis: Building up Collaborative Learning Environments

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INTRODUCTION

Wiki, a virtual learning environment, provides less monotonous ways with activities and encourages learners' participation in collaboration. This paper is about an experience in university preparatory classes to practise grammar and develop writing skills using a class wiki. Starting with some explanations about 'wiki' and its characteristics and use in teaching, it will focus on the practical side to provide variety and effective collaboration. Some findings based on students' performances will also be discussed.

WHAT IS A WIKI?

Wiki, one of the most popular Web 2.0 technologies 'for online communities' (Foley & Chang 2006) 'allows users to easily create and edit web pages collaboratively' (Raman 2006; Foley & Chang 2006; Chao 2007; Trentin 2008; Cole 2009). A wiki, as 'an emerging user created content technology', has a 'great impact on language learning classrooms' (Yates, 2008).

CHARACTERISTICS OF WIKI TECHNOLOGY

Wiki is a collection of interlinked people-centered web pages used and edited easily. It is mainly based on text, but it is possible to upload pictures, videos and audio files, or podcasts. You can have as many pages as you need, so it is expandable. It allows interaction and collaboration to react to others' work and complete activities and tasks. It does not require knowledge or skills to use wikis. It is also easy to enhance your own work or others' work anytime anywhere.

WIKI USE IN EDUCATION

Wikis can be used for different purposes. As Duffy & Bruns (2006) suggest they can be used as 'distance learning environments', for learning support materials, feedback and 'encouraging knowledge sharing around topics' (Parker & Chao 2007). They are very popular these days, especially on MOOC platforms as a textbook or a handbook (Ravid & Kalman & Rafaeli 2008). They are encouraged to be used 'for collaborative work (e.g. answering the same questions, watching the same video and making a summary in groups)' (Tonkin 2005). Wikis have been used to 'build communities of practice' (Cuningham & Leuf 2001; Godwin-Jones, 2003). They are chosen 'to promote the close reading, revision, and tracking of preliminary work (Lamb, 2004). Wikis are to 'humanise students' learning through social interaction with other students' (Sigala 2007).

They are also practical to provide 'a low-cost but effective communication and collaboration tool (with an emphasis on text rather than software) and to ease students into writing for a wider audience' (Lamb 2004). They can be used 'for project-based learning and collaborative story writing' (Schaffert, Bischof, et al. 2006) and for seeing 'the evolution of a written task' (Duffy & Bruns 2006).

COLLABORATION WITH WIKI

Collaborative learning is suggested to increase motivation, enhance learners' performance, help them participate in activities very actively. Learners exchange ideas and produce knowledge while working together and reacting to each other's work. When they support one another, they learn better (Arnold & Ducate 2006 in Kessler 2009). For any collaborative work, there should be participants (learners), a tool (a wiki site) and the context (activities and projects). Collaborative activities

‘lead learners to reflect on their own language production as they attempt to create meaning’ (Swain 1995 in Kessler 2009). According to Kessler, wiki pages are ‘in a constant state of potential collaborative change’. As wikis are easily editable and accessible from anywhere, they are “ideal for project collaboration’ (Chao 2007). When users are ‘serious about collaborating and willing to follow the group conventions and and practices’, wikis are always effective (Godwin- Jones 2003).

LANGUAGE LEARNING & WIKIS

Learning takes place as long as learners ‘exercise, verify, solidify, and improve their mental models through discussion and information sharing’ (Lin & Hsieh 2001). They work in groups ‘with both personal and team accountability for conceptual understanding’ (Cole 2009). Wikis, as many other Web tools, ‘can be used to enhance the learning process’ (Parker & Chao 2007). Students can ‘understand the learning material better in collaborative e-learning environments enhanced by wiki technologies’ (Cole 2009). In short,

A wiki is a web communication and collaboration tool that can be used to engage students in learning with others within a collaborative environment (Parker & Chao, 2007).

WIKIS IN MY TEACHING CONTEXT

I was doing an online course about Learning Technologies. It was on a Wiki platform. We put activities and commented on each of the activities written by the participants with discussions on different topics and tasks. I enjoyed doing all and I found it quite different. One of the topics was on Wiki technology and choosing a wiki website. As the participants of the course we all put tasks we created on the course wiki. Then, I started reading articles about wikis and their use in language classes. I decided to start a class wiki for my classes on www.wikispaces.com

After planning and writing the activities and projects, in one of the lessons, I took the class to the computer room. I started a class wiki. I clicked on **Members area** on **home** page and then clicked on **Invite People** button on the next page. Each of the students came one by one and wrote their e-mail address on the first box and hit **Send** button. After receiving an automatic message, they subscribed.

I put one or two activities prepared beforehand going to **Pages and Files** and hit **New Page** button. I also showed the students how they could edit and save their work. They went to **home** page. Then, they saw the activities. They clicked on the first one. When the page was open, they first hit **Edit** to write and then **Save** buttons after finishing it.

My students did different activities put on their class wiki. For example, one of them was about leaflets or brochures. After seeing a leaflet about a silicon spreader on the class wiki, they found a product with a leaflet and wrote about it putting a picture as it was possible to upload a file (see Appendix A (1)). They also wrote about their happiest moment answering the questions given (see Appendix A (2)). They had to rewrite a story told in class by working together in the library and posted their work with a picture to tell their friends they did it together (see Appendix A (3)). They wrote comments on each other's written work. This was also read by the teacher, and they were asked to rewrite some bits, but the main work was done by the peers.

I also put projects on **Projects** area. As it automatically arranges groups, it made my job easier and for each project work it was possible to have different groups to work with different tasks. For example, while the class was learning and practising 'If Clauses' for unreal, or imaginary situations, each group dealt with different characters. One group wrote what they would do if they were Barak Obama and another wrote what they would be doing if they were the head of the Higher Education Council in Turkey (see Appendix B (1), B (2)).

While editing and saving, the learners experienced some technical difficulties and they complained that their work was deleted and we asked for help from the website support group.

Feedback

In order to see their reactions, the learners were given a questionnaire and a survey. The online questionnaire was on www.kwiksurveys.com . It was with 2

questions. They chose YES or NO to answer whether they liked to do things on their class wiki to improve their English.

They were also given a survey to answer 10 questions on a piece of paper (see Appendix C). The reactions were quite positive.

Results

Two classes comprising of 45 students (SS) joined the class-wiki. For both groups the same activities were provided with the same questionnaire and survey. There were only two boys in one class who said 'No' for the questionnaire. They, later, told me that they only accepted the traditional way to learn and computers were for something else. For the survey:

- 42 SS out of 45 found wiki very good and helpful as out-of-class activity.
- 45 SS said they had fun while working together, learned from their friends, helped one another to learn better & they learned a lot about each other.
- 44 SS said they learned a lot of new words and different sentence types while doing internet search, watching videos and reading their peers' work.
- 45 SS said they learned about different Web 2.0 tools and different websites.
- 43 SS said they have learned that technology can help them improve their English.
- 2 SS said while doing wiki activities and doing their internet search they read some blogs and they have decided to start their own blog.
- 8 SS said some of their friends just copied some sentences from one another.
- 43 SS at least once their work was deleted and this was the problem they often came across.
- 2 SS said they prefer direct feedback from the teacher on their paper only.

LEARNING IN MY TEACHING CONTEXT

In both classes, with the help of our class wiki, my students learned a lot. They learned how Web 2.0 technologies and visiting different websites can contribute to

their learning. They also learned that they could do online search to find information to do the tasks and projects. They were able to understand everything they did through the class wiki. It helped them improve their reading and writing skills with different sentence types while reading online and watching videos and clips. Watching these videos also helped them improve their listening skills and pronunciation. Working on their own or together with their friends and project teams, visiting different websites and reading each other's work, they could learn new words and improve their vocabulary. They were convinced that they were able to read their classmates' work and enhance it. Doing online exercises assigned through their class wiki, they were able to practise grammar points. Most important of all, they found out themselves that they could learn more about everything and one another by working in collaboration and interacting with their peers.

CONCLUSION

Considering all the work done by the learners, it can be concluded that using a class wiki had a positive effect on most of the students because they learned a lot together by discovering many new things such as Web 2.0 tools and websites to improve their English and by enjoying many things they did together, including working in the library as a team from time to time and enhancing each other's posts on the wiki although they were a bit hesitant at the very beginning.

Our class wikis brought a different colour and synergy for all of us and since then I have been using the wikispaces.com for different skills such as reading, writing and listening. I would like to say, if everything is designed and implemented properly, wiki technology can support collaboration in a class atmosphere and learning with limitless pages created and edited.

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Appendix A (1)

ISIK2011TR1R

Wiki Home
Projects
Pages and Files
Members
Recent Changes
Manage Wiki
Search Wiki

All Pages
home
a quiz
a story
a survey on our class-wiki
a video
another video
comparative adjectives and adverbs
comparison
holidays
leaflet or prospectus
my favourite website
new year's resolutions
questions
Questions 2
questions 3
rewriting Roger's story
story 2
What would you do...?
Writing a story together!
Your dream
see more

★ leaflet or prospectus

Edit 0 0 3 ...


When we buy any product, we come across with a leaflet, brochure, or prospectus that tells us what it is about and how it is used.

Below you see one about KIFIDIS SILICONE TOE SPREADER.

(Teacher's note: Toe spreaders are used for keeping two different toes apart. In conditions like overlapping toes when one toe lies at the top of the other toe, a discomfort is felt because of the friction in between the two toes. In this condition products like gel toe caps, toe spreaders are used to keep the two toes apart.)

Read it carefully and find a leaflet/prospectus at home, in a shop or on one of the internet sites. You can put a picture or a link here with the description.

KIFIDIS SILICONE TOE SPREADER



Description: Separates the first and second toes and holds overlapping toes in their correct position. Its elasticity and softness allow it to fit all toes.

Notes: Note: After washing with soapy water, sprinkle some baby powder on it.

http://isik2011tr1r.wikispaces.com/another-video

Appendix A (2)

ISIK2011TR1K - happiest moment

isik2011tr1k.wikispaces.com/happiest+moment

Bu sayfanın dili İngilizce Çevrilmesini istiyor musunuz? Çevir Hayır

Seçenekler

Wiki Home
Projects
Recent Changes
Pages and Files
Members
Settings
Search

edit navigation

★ happiest moment

Edit 0 39 ...

Write about your happiest moment answering the questions below:

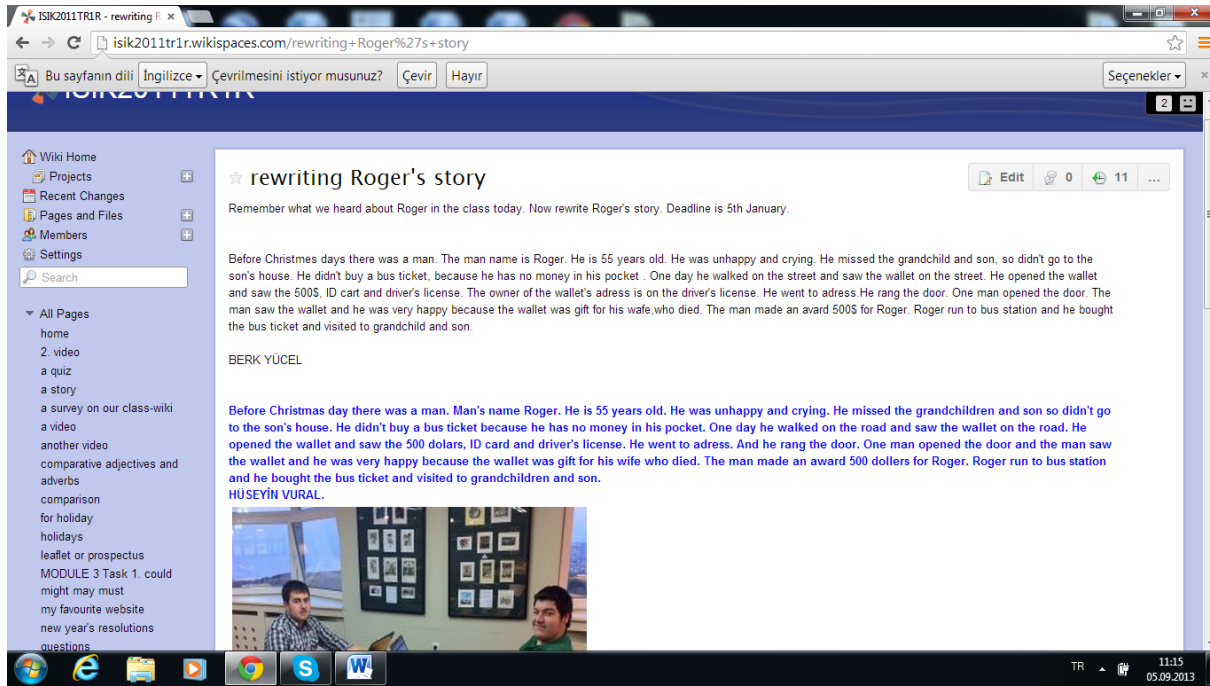
1. Where were you?
2. Who were you with?
3. What happened?
4. How did you feel?
5. Did anyone see you?
6. What happened at the end?

My Best Day

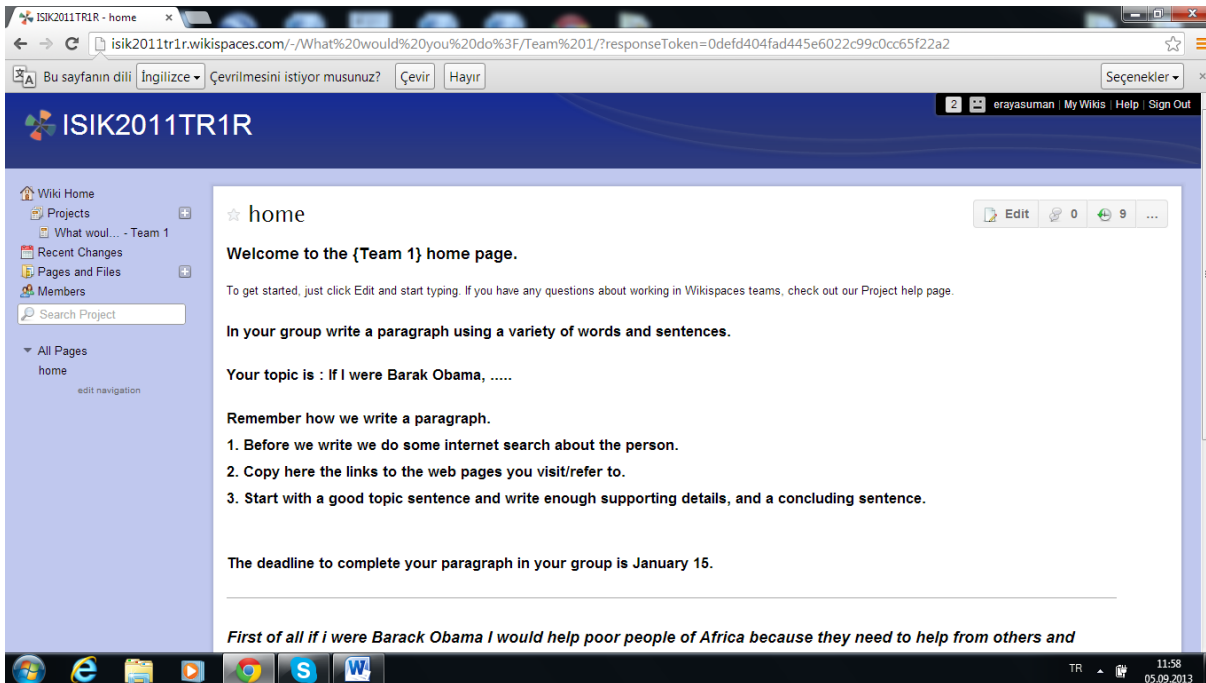
My best day was on July 12 in the summer. I went to holiday with my boyfriend in the summer. That was the happiest day in my life. We boarded the ship before I went to Avşa. We had become friends with many people on ship. After 3 hours we arrived in Avşa. We settled in to a hotel together with our friends. We went to Avşa as soon as we got dressed and went to disco. When I went disco with my friends and my boyfriend, I dance more crazy than they. Then we went back to the hotel. We went to hotel as soon as we sleep. We got up in the morning. We went to beach after we had breakfast. We played guitar on the beach after we were swimming. Then my boyfriend decided to grill for I was hungry. It eats 10 minutes for me so I went into the sea before them. I shocked my head, we went to back the hotel. There was concert so we went to the concert together. Then we lit a fire on the beach. We sang a song until the morning. A few days the weather was rainy so we rode bicycle with our friends. The phones withdrawal in the Avşa for we went to up the hill. We had very nice things on vacation for 15 days. I was the best holiday and best day of my life. CEYDAAA AKGÜNN.

My best day was on July 12 last summer. I went on holiday with my boyfriend. That was the happiest day in my life. We boarded the ship before we went to Avşa. We made friends with many people on the ship. 3 hours after departure we arrived in Avşa. We checked into a hotel together with our friends. We went downtown as soon as we got dressed and went to a disco. When I went to the disco with my friends and my boyfriend, I danced more crazily than they did. Then we went back to the hotel. We were very tired, so we slept as soon as we went to the hotel. We got up in the morning. We went to the beach near the hotel after we had breakfast. We played the guitar on the beach after we swam. Then my boyfriend decided to grill some food for I was hungry. It was ready in 10 minutes. I went into the sea before I ate. After the meal, I slept. I was

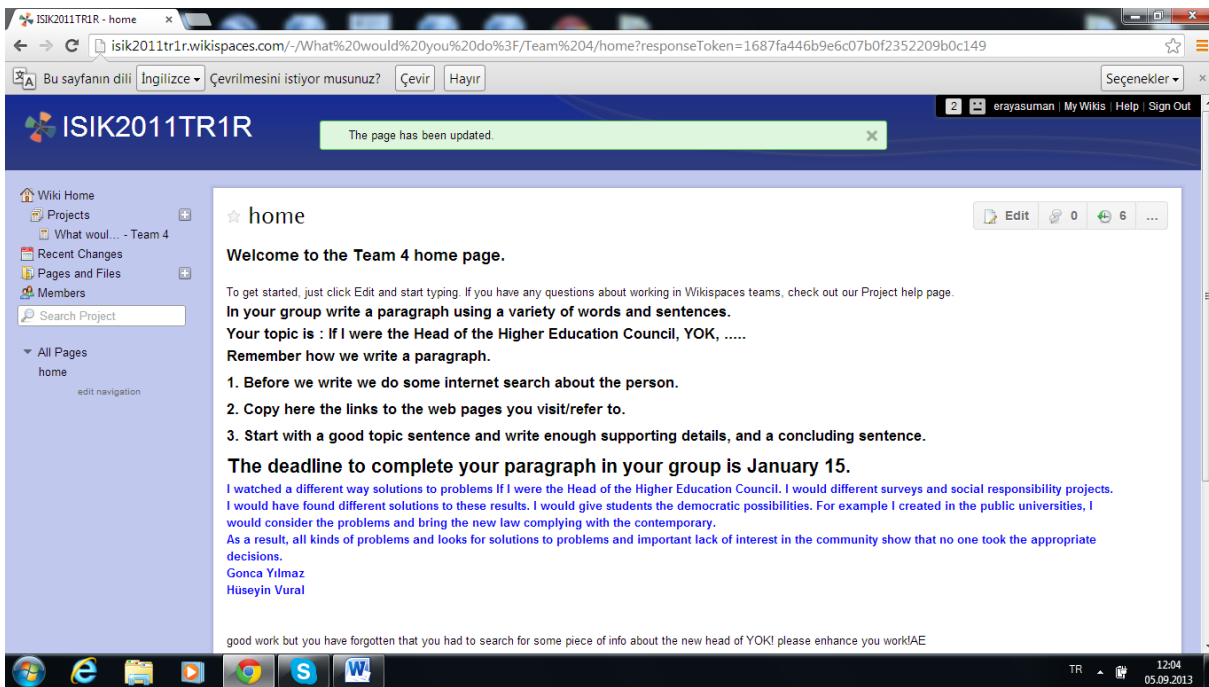
Appendix A (3)



Appendix B (1)



Appendix B (2)



Appendix C - SURVEY

My wiki experience

- What sort of experience was our class wiki for you as an out-of-class activity?
- Was it beneficial as a call-lab activity at school?
- What sort of experience was it for you as a group work while doing your activities/projects?
- Have you learned a lot of words through wiki activities?
- Did wiki activities help you learn different types of complex sentences?
- Did wiki help you learn about new Web tools, such as wiki and youtube?
- Did wiki help you learn more about different websites?
- Did you have any technical difficulties?
- What was it like as a total experience?
- Would you like to add any extra comments?



Change of Activities and Cross-Curricular Connections in the Kindergarten

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INTRODUCTION

Very young learners have a very short attention span. Therefore, the activities have to be changed often. They inevitably involve using the language taught in various contexts thus realizing cross-curricular connections with all the disciplines in the curriculum.

The article suggests a few activities used either to reinforce material or to ensure rest and physical activity in order to keep children's attention.

CHANGE OF ACTIVITIES AND CROSS-CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

In order to keep learners' motivation, it is necessary to use interesting and lively materials connected to their daily life (Georgieva 2004, Frohlich-Ward 1991). As Klein (2005: 12) emphasizes 'the teacher has to be inventive in selecting interesting activities, and must provide a great variety of them.' These can be short rhymes and especially rhymes combined with physical activity, drawing, cutting, pasting, making applications and collages. Very often teachers invent their own texts and

activities depending on the needs of the group and the requirements of the curriculum.

Working with young learners, we work for their holistic development. Taking under consideration the needs of the child makes early foreign language education motivating and a valuable part of the child's education. This opinion is supported by Georgieva (2003a, 2003b) and Read (2003).

The holistic approach activities establish connections between the language and the surrounding reality creating all kinds of interdisciplinary or cross-curricular relations.

According to Read (2003) part of the conditions for whole language learning are:

- to allow humour and fun in the classroom;
- to provide opportunities for creativity, fantasy and imagination that are an important part of the children's world;
- to build relations:
 - 'to other areas of learning e.g. art and craft, science, music
 - to the child's real life experience at home and at school.' Read (2003: 48).

Shin (2006: 6) claims that cross-curricular connections are very useful in teaching young learners since they 'make the learning experience richer'. Interdisciplinary relations are realized through children's knowledge about nature and the world and their skills acquired during the other lessons. Children love drawing, cutting out, pasting and are usually very skilful in all these activities. In Cameron's (2001) opinion arts work is very important in foreign language education.

Shin (2006: 4) recommends to teachers of 5-10-year old learners fast change of activities as 'children tend to become bored easily' because of their short attention span and use of a related TPR activity after a song, rhyme or a story. This way they not only provide a variety of activities but activate various types of memory and intelligence (for memory and intelligence see Berman 2000-2012, Gardner 1993, Granovskaya 1984, Hothersall 1985, Trifonov 1996).

The integrative approach fosters connections between the language being taught and the surrounding reality. The variety of activities fosters children's motivation and interest and ensures successful learning and acquisition.

ACTIVITIES REALIZING CROSS-CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS IN THE KINDERGARTEN

ACTIVITY 1

Aims: to revise colours, to learn easily the names of the seasons in English

After the first situation the aim changes: to revise colours and seasons, to experience the pleasure of reciting, to change activities

Objectives:

- **Vocabulary:** colours, seasons, bloom
- **Grammar:** 3rd person singular -s of the present simple tense
- **Skills:** pronunciation

Time: 15 min

Age: 4-7

Materials: pictures (crocuses, sky, trees in bloom, autumn leaves of various colours (or dried leaves), winter pictures, summer pictures / sunny weather), the presentation⁴

Possible interdisciplinary links: arts, literature, nature world, optional – physical education (PE)

Procedure

I. Warm up

Revision of colours using the pictures of spring flowers – orange, blue yellow; sky – blue, tree – green, tree in bloom – white, tree under snow – white, yellow, red and brown autumn leaves.

A game: The teacher shows a picture, and the learners say the colour

II. Introducing the seasons in English using the same pictures: spring, summer, autumn, winter

A game:

⁴ https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/16Uh7Fh3fLDIlFXDebl97CmmUcGA7mxBLg-UsoPktt3c/edit#slide=id.gec5c13a5_05

A) The teacher shows a picture, the learners say the season.

B) The teacher says a season, the learners respond with a colour or with what they see on the picture (e.g. the teacher says 'spring' showing a tree in bloom and answers 'bloom' introducing this way the new word)

III. Introducing the rhyme

SEASONS

Orange, blue

Spring and bloom

Red and brown

Autumn comes down

Winter's white,

Summer's bright!

Repeat the rhyme once or twice depending on the children's enthusiasm.

IV. Close up

The teacher concludes the situation praising the children and summarizing the new material learned

Methodological comment

The pictures with spring flowers and nature in all seasons contribute to children's ecological education. Bartels-Bland (2011: 12) views an ecocritical approach that 'looks at the relationship between humans and the natural environment. Children should grow up within a natural environment, appreciating and protecting it. Adopting an ecocritical viewpoint towards texts and pictures in the classroom can demonstrate the significance of our environment it portrays.'

ACTIVITY 2

Aims: to learn a rhyme for a TPR activity to change the pace of the situation, to channel children's energy or to stir them up

Objectives:

- **Vocabulary:** left / right, jump, hop, go, stop, numbers
- **Grammar:** imperative
- **Skills:** pronunciation

Time: 3-5 min

Age: 4-7

Possible interdisciplinary links: physical education (PE), maths

Procedure

This activity is used when the children need physical activity – they are tired of sitting still listening and repeating, answering questions.

I. Preparation:

Stand up! Let's make a circle!

II. The activity

Go left, left, left. (walking left)

Go right, right, right. (walking right)

Jump one, two three.

Hop one, two three. (left leg)

Hop one, two three. (right leg)

Now stop!

Let's do it once again!

III. End of activity

The teacher says: "Thank you very much!", "You are great!" and "Now sit down!"

Methodological comment

Sometimes the children want to do it once again and even more. This way they gradually acquire the verbs: *go, jump, hop, stop*. They get used to counting, acquire the words and the notions *left* and *right*. In Shin's opinion (2006) establishing certain routines helps managing young learners. 'The teacher can clap short rhythms for students to repeat. Once the students are settled down, the teacher can start the lesson by singing a short song that students are familiar with ... or a chant they particularly enjoy.' (ibid.: 5) Certain chants with TPR 'get students ready to begin the class.' (ibid.: 5) Activity 2 can be one of them – used either at the beginning as a warm up, at the end as a close up or when we need to change the pace of the situation.

ACTIVITY 3

Aims: to revise vocabulary and have fun, receiving feedback on the acquired vocabulary.

Objectives:

- **Vocabulary:** sun, sky, clouds; flower, tree, grass; house, fence
- **Grammar:** imperative
- **Skills:** pronunciation, arranging an application under dictation

Time: 30 min

Age: 4-7

Materials: a piece of paper for each child, figures for the application (a tree, flowers, clouds, sun, etc.), glue, colour pencils

Possible interdisciplinary links: arts, nature world, physical education (PE)

Procedure

I. Warm up

Revision of words:

Flowers, tree and grass using suitable pictures

A game:

Stand up! When you hear tree – stretch your hands up, when you hear grass – squat, when you hear flower – stand still.

Sun, sky, clouds using suitable pictures

A game: sun – smile, sky – hands up, clouds – cover your eyes with a hand / hands

House and fence

A game: house – make a roof with your hands over your head, fence – make a circle with your finger (drawing a fence)

Friend – the children can listen to a friendship song (e.g.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z6VlaZ-eCQQ> or

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1i4wIFqbNn0>)

II. Listen carefully and try to show what you hear among the figures in front of you

Put / make a flower

Put / make a tree

Blue sky and sun

Clouds and house

And green grass

Make the fence

And meet your friends

III. Listen once again and arrange your pictures.

IV. Now glue your pictures

V. Close up

Exposition and discussing the children's works. Figure 1 shows an example of the application.

Methodological comment

This activity can be done after all the vocabulary items in it have been acquired. It can serve as a test (e.g. as a dictation) to receive feedback which vocabulary items can be successfully identified by the children (when they hear the word to pick up or draw the appropriate picture). It also provides change of activities and realizes cross-curricular connections. The activity is suitable for primary school as well if the verb *make* / *put* is substituted by *draw*:

Draw a flower

Draw a tree

Sun and blue sky

Clouds and house

And green grass

Make the fence

And meet your friends



Figure 1. An Application as a result of activity 3

CONCLUSIONS

Children are usually very enthusiastic about new things (e.g. learning English) but since they have a short attention span they need short and attractive activities to keep them engaged, to foster the different types of memory and intelligence, to challenge their various interests. We can summarize:

- Children need variety of activities;
- Variety provides opportunities for realizing cross-curricular connections thus contributing to the holistic development of the child;
- The suggested activities provide change and a variety of cross-curricular connections.

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Diversity of Subjects in English Imperatives

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INTRODUCTION

There is a variety of views about imperatives. Different authors have used the term with the thought either of the form, or the meaning, or both. Although the meaning is really important, the idea of this paper is to deal with the form rather than the meaning. Therefore, the definition suggested by Eirlys Davies (1986) is appropriate for the purpose. She claims that imperatives have three major characteristics:

- optionality of subject (along with the restrictions what subjects are possible);
- lack of tense inflection;
- the necessity for *do* with negation or emphasis (even with *be* or auxiliary *have*) (Davies 1986: 7).

It is generally accepted that imperative sentences have a very simple structure and perhaps this is the reason why they are taught almost right from the beginning of learning English. It is true especially for very young learners who acquire the language easily by means of Total Physical Response activities.

LACK OF SUBJECT

What makes the structure simpler than the rest of the English sentence types is most probably the lack of subject. It is usually implicit and some linguists call it 'you-understood' (Feigneubaum 1985: 32 – 35). We can easily supply examples of this type. All task instructions in any students' book share this pattern or have at least one sentence presenting it in any task. We can have a number of examples from the simplest *'Ask and answer'* (Blue Skies) to a bit more complex ones like *'Make a sentence about the people using an idea from the box'* (New Headway, Pre-intermediate, Student's book, p. 104/ex.3). Such examples are found in children's poems and songs as well. In a corpus of 300 poems and songs gathered randomly from the Internet, we have found 144 works with imperatives. From those 92.1 % are subjectless examples, such as in Get a Ticket:

Get a ticket, ticket, ticket for the train.

Get a ticket, ticket, ticket for the train.

Don't stand out in the wind and rain.

Get a ticket, ticket, ticket for the train.

POSSIBILITIES FOR SUBJECT

Overt subject *you*

Students get used to subjectless imperatives and if asked whether an imperative sentence with an overt subject *you* is true or false, they would most probably give a negative answer. A questionnaire given to 19 students (1st year students, false beginner level) proves it right. At the end of the school year (June, 2013) this group of students from College-Dobrich was offered the following positive sentences:

1. Look here.
2. You look here.

In part 1 they had to circle the option that they had found most appropriate:

Answer A – only the first sentence is grammatically correct.

Answer B – only the second sentence is grammatically correct.

Answer C – both sentences are correct.

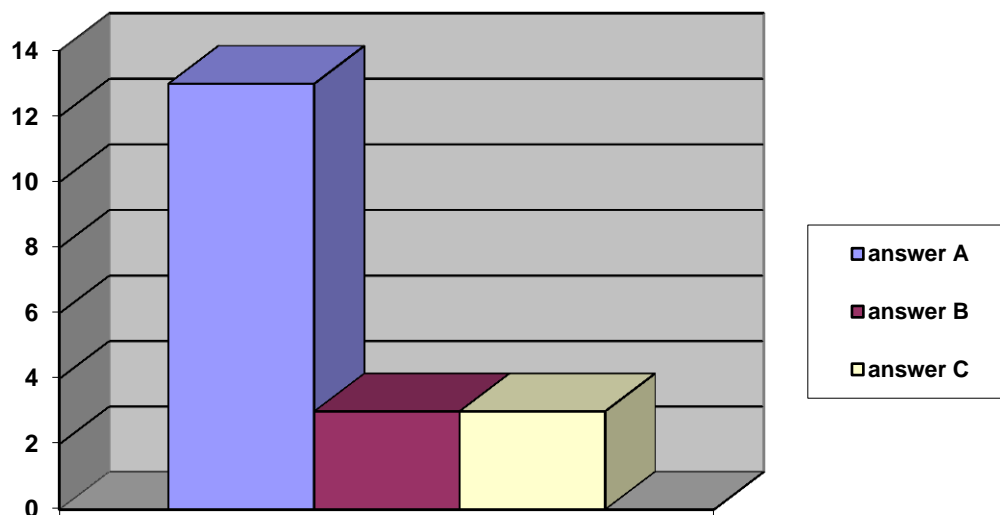


Figure 1. Results from a questionnaire (part 1) - Positive sentences

As it is seen in Fig. 1 most of the students (68%) think that the first example is the only possible one as a sentence which could be used as an imperative. The rest of the answers are equally divided between the two other options (B and C) by 16% each. Answer B says that only the second sentence is a correct imperative while answer C expresses the idea that both examples are correct.

The students were also given two negative sentences (1. Don't say a word and 2. Don't you say a word) and were asked to choose the correct answer (part 2). Answer A says that only example 1 is a command. Answer B says that only example 2 is a command. Answer C says that both examples could be used as expressing a command. Answer D says that both sentences are commands but each of them has a different shade of meaning.

The results (Fig. 2) confirm that most students recognize only subjectless imperatives as imperative structures. Yet there are 16% who think that the positive sentence with a *you* subject can have an imperative meaning, while 16% think the same about the negative sentence. The equal results make us come to the inference that it is not the fact of a sentence being positive or negative that is the decisive factor for *you* subject possibility.

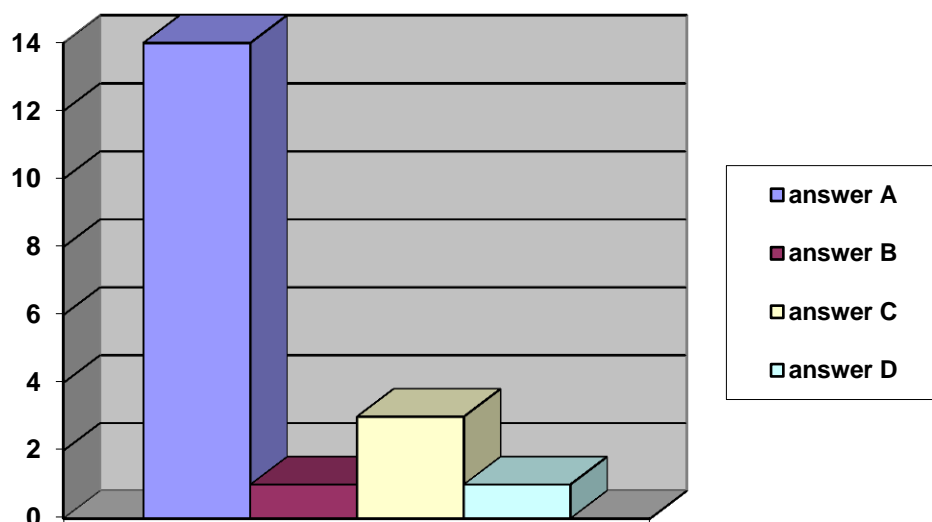


Figure 2. Results from a questionnaire (part 2) – Negative sentences

The only student who had chosen the option D suggested that the difference between the two sentences was that the second one pointed at a particular addressee to do the command. Although this opinion could be accepted as correct it is somehow incomplete because this is not the only reason possible to explain the usage. It has been noted by Potsdam (1996) that English imperatives with an overt *you* subject signal the authority of the speaker over the addressee:

Pass the salt!

You pass the salt! (Potsdam 1996 in Portner 2007: 361)

The author also points out that this example would be considered odd without the right kind of annoyed or angry intonation.

From all of the imperative examples in our corpus 3.8 % are sentences with *you* subject such as '*Oh, don't you cry for me*'. It is a small percentage but it confirms that the second person pronoun *you* is a possibility for an imperative subject.

Other subjects

There are other possibilities for imperative subjects (i.e. someone or other 3 person pronoun), phrases introduced by *whoever*, partitive expressions with *you* and demonstratives, bare noun plurals, certain definite nominal phrases, or proper nouns (Rupp 2003: 2).

Rupp gives examples for each of the mentioned possibilities (Jensen 2010: 150).

Nobody move!

Someone call my wife!

Whoever took the money return it immediately!

The tallest of you sit at the back!

Those in the front row stop giggling!

(You) truck drivers keep to the right!

(New) students sign up at the front door!

The boy in the corner stand up!

Chris stand by the door and Shirley watch the window!

The percentage of indefinite pronouns as subjects of imperative sentences in our corpus is 9.5 % of all imperative sentences with a subject. Actually, the only indefinite pronoun used is *everybody* (e.g. '*Everybody get some toys*'). There are other possibilities for a subject. What occurs as a subject in our corpus and is not in Rupp's list of imperative subjects is the case of common nouns in singular (as in '*Now head rest on my knee*'). Another thing we come across in our corpus is the use of *thee* which is the objective case of *thou* that is the archaic form for second person pronoun (e.g. '*Lay thee down and rest*'). But most of the examples are proper nouns (e.g. '*Polly put the kettle on*'; '*Suki take it off*').

Subject and/or vocative

It is sometimes confusing in terms of proper names. And quite similar is the case with the subject *you*. As Portner (2007: 361) puts it, it is important not to allow a pause between *you* and what follows, since this would give rise to a vocative interpretation of *you*.

Perhaps in oral communication it is more evident whether it is a subject or not. But in written language we should rely either on its first place in the sentence or the lack of comma after it. Although Thorne (1966) advocates the idea that vocatives and imperative subjects are two instantiations of the same phenomenon, there are others (Schmerling 1975) who dispute this view (Jensen 2004: 153).

VOCATIVES

Britta Jensen (2004) suggests some criteria to identify vocatives and 'eliminate them from the discussion of imperative subjects'(Jensen 2004: 153). Here are mentioned only those that are related to the English language.

Vocative criteria (Jensen 2004: 154)

- 1) Prosodic: special intonational contour, usually including a prosodic boundary between the vocative DP and the VP.
- 2) Syntactic: can not trigger 3rd person agreement, even when the vocative DP is 3rd person.
- 3) Phrase structure: occupy a clause-external position.
- 4) Semantic: reference only to the addressee.

While we can have vocatives in different positions in the sentence, it is not the case with the subjects. It is claimed that vocatives require special prosody ('comma intonation' (Jensen 2004: 154)) and can iterate.

Our corpus provides 52 examples with vocatives, which is 15.4 % of all true imperatives from the corpus. Vocative 'can be sentence initial or sentence final or even sentence medial' (Jensen 2004: 154 – 155). In most cases it is easy to find it in the sentence because it is usually separated by comma.

e.g. *'Yankee Doodle, keep it up.'*

Sentence initial vocatives

Vocatives are sentence initial in 34.6% of our examples. 73.3 % are proper nouns (e.g. *'Jack, be nimble, Jack, be quick'*) and the rest are common nouns (e.g. *'Silly goats, run away!'* or *'Oh playmate, come out and play with me'*). There are examples with more than one vocative in the sentence – *'Mommie, dadie, please don't smoke'*. As it was already mentioned, vocatives can iterate, e.g. *'Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear, touch the ground'*.

The lack of comma makes it difficult to decide for sure if it is a subject or vocative, – e.g. *'Thumbelina dance, Thumbelina sing'*.

There are some examples, though, in which the use of exclamation words makes us think that it could be a vocative rather than a subject despite the comma being omitted.

e.g. *'Hey defender get that ball'*.

Sentence medial vocatives

In 21.2 % of the vocative examples, the vocatives are in a medial position. What we have noticed is that in such cases the same verb or a synonym of it is used after the vocative which follows a verb:

e.g. (1) *'Hush, little baby, don't say a word'*, i.e. hush and don't say a word are synonymous.

(2) *'So go, Alice, go'*.

(3) *'Hear the wind blow, dear, hear the wind blow'*.

(4) *'Jump, Lady, Jump!'*

Sentence final vocatives

The greatest number of examples are with a sentence final vocatives – 44.2%. Proper nouns seem to be used more frequently.

e.g. (1) *'Don't put your trousers on your head, Fred.'*

Fasten up your buttons and your zip, Pip.

Don't put the zipper round the back, Jack.

And don't wear your gloves upon your feet, Pete'.

Or e.g. (2) *'Fly away, Peter!'*

Fly away, Paul!

Come back, Peter!

Come back, Paul!'

It is possible to have more than one in a sentence and the following example confirms it.

e.g. *'Come Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, and Vixen,*

Come Comet, Cupid, Donner, and Blitzen'.

Common nouns occur too.

e.g. (1) *'Twinkle, twinkle, little star'.*

Or e.g. (2) *'Come, little leaves'.*

The lack of comma is not as confusing as it is when the vocative is in an initial position. The impossibility of having Verb – Subject (VS) word order makes the things clear that it is nothing else but a vocative.

e.g. *'Wake up sleepy farm!'*

Downing and Locke (1992) argue that the *you* form is less polite than the vocatives like *'Bill, prof. Jones, doctor...'*. And they also point out that it is possible to have both vocative and subject in one and the same sentence:

e.g. *'Bill you stand by with the camera!'*

e.g. *'You stand by with the camera, Bill!'* (Downing & Locke 1992: 196)

CONCLUSION

On the whole this paper confirms the assertion accepted in general that imperatives are mostly subjectless. However, there are some options for imperative subjects. Some of them occur in our corpus, too. What is claimed to be possible as an overt imperative subject (the 2nd person pronoun *you*) is in fact not present in the textbooks that our English language students use during the seminars. Therefore, these students are not aware of this possibility and tend to think of such examples as grammatically incorrect. Fortunately, in their students' books one may come across examples with indefinite pronouns at times. There are some examples with *everybody* (e.g. *'Everybody smile! I want to take a photo of you all'⁵*) not quite common, though. But this might be one of the things that helps the students judge similar instances as acceptable.

⁵ Example excerpted from Soars and Soars (2007b) – ex. 4, p. 73

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Interactive Digital Storytelling in the Primary Classroom

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INTRODUCTION

One of the main tasks of the foreign language education nowadays is to provide authentic language and natural communicative atmosphere in the classroom. The English tales for children are a perfect source of authentic language. It is well known that ICT has become a powerful learning tool, both in and out of the classroom. Primary school English teachers should use this tool in order to increase the quality of the foreign language communication and to provide teacher-student and student-student interaction. Sophisticated knowledge of computers, websites or programming is not required. Anybody with a computer and fresh ideas can create a digital story today.

INTERACTIVE DIGITAL STORYTELLING

The educational goals for teachers using interactive digital storytelling are to generate interest, attention and motivation for students of the 'digital generation' in foreign language classrooms. It stimulates imagination by allowing students not only to be passive listeners and observers of the story but also to direct it or even to create their own story. There is nothing more activating for the learners than having their work published on the Internet for others to view and comment. This

way children become personally engaged and acquire English without effort. Continuing the story, thinking of a different ending, changing the protagonists is real fun. Even shy students take part in storytelling because they feel safe in these group activities.

The digital version of a traditional English tale is a powerful audio-visual mixture. 'Digital Storytelling is any combination of images, text, audio and music to create a digital story, either fictional or non-fictional.' (Saumell 2012:1). It appeals to a great diversity of learning styles which is a benefit for the students. The multimedia story presentation engages young learners in different cognitive activities in which children practice the four language skills: listening, reading, speaking and writing. Today children acquire computer and Internet skills 'just as they learn basic reading and writing' (Lewis 2004). They constantly use computers, videogames, music players, cell phones, etc. All these tools of the digital age have become an integral part of their lives. They 'are all "native speakers" of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet.' (Prensky 2001:1). In Prensky's (2001:4) opinion teaching materials have to be adapted to 'the language of Digital Natives,' the content we teach has to be 'digital and technological'. Although VanSlyke argues certain concepts in the Digital Natives' theory, he also states that the Internet is 'a primary medium of this emerging culture.' The teacher 'uses computers to create an environment where students engage in active, self-directed learning.' (VanSlyke 2003:1). This way they contextualize learning.

Stories set language in a meaningful context, motivate learners, realize cross-curricular links, teach about ethical behaviour, citizenship and cultural awareness, teach ideas and concepts, provide repetition and recycling of language, improve pronunciation, develop fluency and creativity, 'enable children to make critical judgements and express opinions, develop students' learning strategies' (Watts 2011:7). Stories can be used for fostering vocabulary development with young Learners (see Ilieva 2008), for integrating English, Arts and other subjects in the curriculum (see Ilieva 2009, 2012), for developing sociocultural communicative competence (see Ilieva 2010).

The article offers a story for interactive digital storytelling and a lesson plan to it realizing various interdisciplinary relations.

The STORY

The Flying Ladybird

by Lidiya Dimitrova

Once upon a time there was a small ladybird. Her name was Daisy, like the flower. She lived with her big family in the wood. Daisy had a father, a mother, a grandfather and a grandmother, five sisters and two brothers. She had six shiny shoes. Every shoe was a different colour: orange, blue, yellow, green, pink, grey. Daisy's favourite shoe was the pink one.

One day Daisy and her family went on a picnic. They took a lot of food: vegetables /onion, tomatoes, carrots, aubergines, pepper, lettuce, wheat/, fruits /bananas, grapes, cherries, plums, apples, an orange, kiwis/, bread, water, chocolate, nuts /walnuts, peanuts, almonds, cashew, pistachios, hazelnuts/. The ladybirds walked through grass and over a rock. Daisy was so small. She was very tired and stopped for a while near a tall flower.

Daisy felt very strange. Something was wrong. Daisy noticed that she had lost her favourite pink shoe. She started crying. There was a butterfly on the flower. She heard the small ladybird crying and said:

- Hello, tiny ladybird! Why are you sad?
- Hello, kind butterfly! I lost my shoe. I can't walk without it. How will I find my family now?
- You can fly!
- No, I can't.
- Yes, you can.
- No, I can't. My wings are very stiff and hard.
- Yes, you can. I will show you.

The kind butterfly took Daisy's hand and said:

- I know just what will help you.

They walked through the flower and the butterfly said:

- Come. Follow me all the way to the top.

They climbed to the top and looked all around. It's hard to feel sad so far from the ground. Daisy smiled. She saw hills and trees and the whole countryside.

Suddenly the butterfly pushed the ladybird from the flower. Daisy screamed and began to fall down. But at the last moment she spread her red wings. There were other softer wings under the hard red wings of the ladybird. And ... Oh, what a miracle!

- I can fly! - laughed Daisy.
- Yes, you can! – smiled the butterfly.

Daisy was happy. She was the first ladybird who learnt to fly. Daisy lost her favourite shoe, but she found her wings.

The End

The LESSON PLAN

Aims:

- Providing opportunities for students to learn words and phrases while enjoying the story .
- Developing students' communicative skills using the dialogue from the story in the story context and in another context.
- Realizing interdisciplinary links between Arts, Literature, Nature, Maths.

Objectives:

- Vocabulary – By the end of the lesson students should be able to use vocabulary for colours, family, food, numbers, insects, environment, antonyms (small – big; sad – happy).
- Grammar – By the end of the lesson students should be able to understand the use of present simple, past simple, modal verb “can”, imperative.
- Social language – students should be able to greet each other.
- Skills – listening comprehension , speaking.

Time: 40 minutes

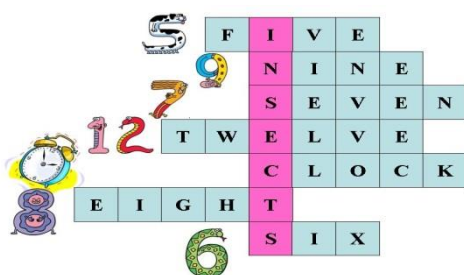
Age: 9- 10, 3rd grade

Materials: the story 'The Flying Ladybird', the power point presentation, handouts

Procedure

I. Warm-up

A crossword – revision of numbers; leading in the topic of insects. The students fill in the crosswords in their handouts and then we check with the power point presentation. (activity 1 on the handout)



Revision of the names of the insects in English using pictures/slides (activity 2 on the handout);

Discussion about insects - preparation for listening. *What kind of animals are they? What's your favorite insect? Are lizards insects? Are spiders insects? Why not? Now you are going to listen to a story. The characters in it are insects. Listen carefully and find out who the main character in the story is.*

- II. **Introducing the story** 'The flying ladybird' by an interactive storytelling - using power point presentation; stopping the storytelling and asking '*What follows next?*'
- III. **A short discussion for understanding.** The teacher asks learners: *Who is the story about? ,What happened?*
- IV. **Put the parts of the story in the right order** (activity 3 on the handout) – The teacher reads the story and the students listen to it. After that the learners should put the mixed sentences of the story in the right order. This exercise improves listening comprehension skills.
- V. **What did the ladybird's family forget to take for their picnic?** Choose five items. Start from the most important. (Activity 4 on the handout)

- VI. Storytelling** – The teacher tells the story again but this time with the active participation of the class; adding five of the items (from activity 4) Daisy and her family would need for the picnic; listing all the fruits, vegetables, nuts that are in the baskets.
- VII. What else could Daisy possibly see from the top of the flower?** (e.g. a mountain, a river, a sea, a town)
- VIII. Discussion over the moral of the story;** about losing something and finding something else which is more important; about being optimistic. *In the beginning of the story Daisy is sad and at the end she is happy. Why?*
- IX. Discussion – continue the story.** *What will happen when Daisy's family finds out that she can fly? Will Daisy stay with her family?*
- X. Close up** – Singing a song about colours / numbers. For example:
- The Rainbow Colors Song – <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tRNY2i75tCc>
 - 10 Little Numbers <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dk9Yt1PqQiw>

Homework: Make an illustration to the story.

CONCLUSION

There are different ways in which digital storytelling can be integrated into teaching young learners. The powerful combination technology – storytelling opens up new opportunities to increase collaboration and interaction in the classroom by engaging children in different cognitive activities.

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THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOM: CAN RESEARCH MEET PRACTICE?

23rd BETA-IATEFL Annual International Conference

11th – 13th April 2014, Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria

FIRST CALL

DEAR COLLEAGUE,

The Bulgarian English Teachers' Association (BETA-IATEFL), the South-West University and the Regional Inspectorate of Education - Blagoevgrad are pleased to invite you to the 23rd BETA-IATEFL Annual International Conference, which will take place from 11th to 13th April on the campus of the South-West University in Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria.

The aim of the 23rd BETA-IATEFL conference is to provide a platform for a stimulating exchange of practical ideas and research findings on a broad range of topics. Traditionally they include, but are not limited to: *Applied Linguistics; Blended Learning; Content and Language Integrated Learning; Global Issues; Literature, Media and Cultural Studies in ELT; Teacher Education and Development; Teaching English for Specific Purposes; Teaching Young Learners and Teenagers; Testing, Evaluation and Assessment.*

As usual, internationally renowned professionals in the field of English language teaching and research are invited as plenary speakers. A book exhibition of major ELT publishers and service providers will accompany the conference. A programme of social events including a trip to the UNESCO World Heritage Site Rila Monastery will offer the opportunity to combine professional growth with delightful experiences.

SPEAKER PROPOSAL DEADLINE: 12th January 2014.



For speaker proposal forms, fees and accommodation, please check:

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We look forward to seeing you in Blagoevgrad!

With best regards,

The Conference Organising Team



Raising Awareness of Issues Affecting People with Mobility Disability

COMPETITION

The **Disabled Access Friendly campaign** has teamed up with ELT Teacher 2 Writer and Burlington Books to bring you this opportunity to use your worksheet writing skills to inform students about issues affecting people with mobility disability.

All suitable entries will be published online on Disabled Access Friendly's site, which is visited by ELT colleagues from over 120 countries

There will be three prizes:

1. 200 Euros towards the cost of professional development, such as an online writing course or participation at an ELT event (kindly sponsored by Burlington Books)
2. 100 Euros towards the cost of professional development, such as an online writing course or participation at an ELT event (kindly sponsored by Burlington Books)
3. A set of six ELT Teacher 2 Writer modules:
 - How To Write Vocabulary Presentations And Practice
 - How To Write Reading And Listening Activities
 - How To Write Critical Thinking Activities
 - How To Write ESP Materials
 - How To Write Graded Readers
 - How ELT Publishing Works

What is the Disabled Access Friendly campaign?

Disabled Access Friendly is a voluntary campaign that provides ELT teachers with online material that raises awareness about mobility disability. All this material is completely free. The site has lesson plans, reading texts and video clips at all levels that can be used as supplementary material, for projects and examination practice. The material allows teachers to provide insight and information about life as a person with a mobility disability, thus building pathways for caring and action. By stepping into someone else's shoes, the students explore their own and other people's attitudes and become aware while learning English.

What is ELT Teacher 2 Writer?

ELT Teacher 2 Writer is a database of ELT teachers who want to write. Publishers search this database when they're looking for writers. It is also a series of training modules designed to help teachers write better ELT materials, either for publication or to improve the quality of their self-produced classroom materials.

What are the competition guidelines?

1. You choose the mobility related topic, language area and level. For ideas we suggest you look at Disabled Access Friendly's reading texts, video clips and lesson plans, and read disability blogs and published articles.
2. Find the full writing guidelines: http://www.disabled-accessfriendly.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=269&Itemid=258

Who are the judges?

- Adir Ferreira, teacher, teacher trainer and content writer
- Disabled Access Friendly campaign
- ELT Teacher 2 Writer

How to submit your entry

Entries should be submitted electronically as a word doc. attachment to: disabledaccessfriendlycampaign@gmail.com

Please save your file as follows:

Your surname, Your first name. Title of worksheet e.g.
Smith, Susan. My wheelchair friend

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Sneza is an English teacher but also teaches Serbian to foreigners. In her SEETA blog , Sneza will be comparing her experience as a native and a non-native speaker teacher – two in one 😊

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