ELT Ireland bulletin

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IN THIS EDITION

From the ELT Ireland Committee (Pages 2-3)

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Welcome to our 8th Bulletin!

by Laura O'Grady (President of ELT Ireland)

2021 saw ELT Ireland welcoming its new committee members, Amanda McGeer (Bulletin), Anna Maroutian (Membership) and the stepping down of Former ELT Ireland committee members Austin Brailey-Jones (Social Media) and Liam Tyrell (Membership).

I want to say a heartfelt thanks and admiration to our committee, 2021 saw ELT Ireland adapting to the challenge that is our 'New Norm' with all our committee stepping up to the plate and ensuring that our scheduled ELT Ireland events proceeded. It is due to their commitment that ELT Ireland were able to host a variety of events throughout the year. Throughout this pandemic we have been able to ensure that our members had access to our ELTed events, our Manager Meet-ups and our annual conference. Membership of ELT Ireland continues to grow gaining members from both within and outside the ELT community. Our 8th Annual Conference will be taking place in person on the 19th and 20th of February 2022. The theme this year is "A New Beginning?" and we are looking forward to welcoming our plenary speakers Michelle Hunter, Fiona Bonke and Debbie West. We will also be hosting a large number of speakers from home and abroad, along with sponsored talks, talks with our exhibitors and exciting networking opportunities in person! We are looking forward to having our face-to-face conference in February and it is important to us that this goes ahead. It means that we, as professionals, can network, reach out and interact with our peers after not having been able to do this in person for quite some time. We decided to go ahead with a face-to-face conference for that very reason. ELT professionals need to interact and share our ideas together, in person and with willing listeners. What is involved this year? In line with government guidelines, we planed the conference, liaised with our exhibitors, plenaries and speakers. Working with Griffith College to ensure that our 8th Annual ELT Ireland Conference will proceed.

As President of ELT Ireland, I would like to thank you all for continued support, commend the committee for working tirelessly throughout the year to bring you so many worthwhile events and, as always, I am looking forward to growing our membership in the year ahead.

Letter from the Editor

by Amanda McGeer (Bulletin Editor)

I joined the ELT Ireland committee as bulletin editor in 2021 after writing for the previous edition. The edition that you have in your hands or open in your browser did not happen overnight. I have had the privilege of working alongside ten creative and dedicated ELT professionals from Ireland and beyond in order to create this edition. Ahead of the call for articles, most contributors attended the annual ELT Ireland Article Writing Forum, an online event that looked at previous editions, the style sheet and allowed for small group brainstorming activities which proved to be incredibly useful for first-time writers. Once first draft articles were submitted, the contributors became part of the "Network of Reviewers". This was where they read and provided anonymous feedback on an article by a fellow contributor. While this meant that writers received a review from both myself and a member of the network, writing the reviews also helped

Slide from the Article Writing Forum

Pic by ELT Ireland

them to reflect on their own article in preparation for final draft submission. I hope you enjoy reading this edition of the bulletin as much as I have enjoyed putting it together. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank and commend the hard work done by this year's bulletin contributors. If you would like to contribute to the next edition, please email your article idea to info.eltireland@gmail.com and keep an eye on our social media for everything bulletin related.

ELT Ireland Events

by Gabriele Pozza (Events Coordinator)

In what continued to be challenging times globally, the ELT Ireland community did not stop. We kicked off 2021 with the 7th Annual Conference, which was held online, and had David Fisher, Anna Nunan, and Peter Lahiff as plenaries, in addition to 30 talks by Irish-based and international passionate speakers. Additionally, we held 5 fantastic ELTed webinars last year, where we tackled teachers' emotional burnout, how to better work with the 4 skills in the classroom, and several other strategies to better connect and engage with our students. You can watch all of the talks from 2021 and previous years on the "ELTed Talks" section on our website. Last but not least, 3 manager meet-ups were held, and topics such as post-pandemic health and safety and dealing with uncertainty were discussed. We would like to once again thank our members who have made it all possible during these challenging times. You are the ones who keep ELT Ireland alive! ELT Ireland are looking forward to another year of great achievements.

ELTed Talks December 2021

Pic by ELT Ireland

ELT Ireland Manager Meet-Ups:
Because managers need a "Staff Room" too.

by Peter Lahiff (Web Editor**)**

As any teacher will tell you, one of the resources they most rely on is their staff room. Being able to bounce lesson ideas off colleagues and get suggestions on how to deal with challenging situations in the classroom is really valuable. Managers, in contrast, don't have a peer group that they can call on in the same way and, especially in smaller institutions, the role can be quite isolating. We came up with the concept of the ELT Ireland Manager Meet-Up in response to this. The idea was to bring people involved in management together for a structured discussion about the common challenges they face. These are not seminars and the aim is not to tell people what they should be doing. Instead, we pick a topic and some prompts to spark conversation and share experiences.

With all the tasks that have to be juggled, the hectic role of the academic manager often leaves very little time for reflection and discussion, which is why dedicating time each quarter is beneficial. We originally scheduled the meet-ups on Wednesday evening, but people found it difficult to take part after work, so we have been doing them online on Friday afternoons (2:30pm - 4pm) for a year now. As we prepare to return to face to face events, this is one that we are planning to keep online so that managers wherever they are, can log in from their desks and take part in the discussion. The topics covered over the last year have been, Dealing with Uncertainty, Managing Visa Dependent Courses, Post-COVID Health & Safety and Recruitment. After each session we post the discussion points to our ELT Management Ireland LinkedIn Group. The Meet-Ups are held three times a year in January, March/April and November. We hope to see you at the next one!

Become a member of the ELT Management Ireland LinkedIn Group.

21 January 2022   14:30 - 16:00

ELT Ireland
Manager Meet-up
on the topic
Recruitment

Sign up on Eventbrite

ELT Ireland's Manager Meet-up is an opportunity to talk to other academic managers to share ideas, and look at the common issues that come up in the course of ELT management. These meetings will offer an online forum to allow communication and professional relationships to develop after each Meet-up.

Manager Meet-Up January 2021

Pic by ELT Ireland

ELT Ireland on Social Media

by Dimitra Gkotosopoulou (Social Media Coordinator)

ELT IRELAND
@ELTIreland Follows you

ELT Ireland is a network for English Language Teaching professionals, promoting learning, development and best practice. bit.ly/2IOalOd

⊙ Ireland 🔗 elt-ireland.com 📅 Joined January 2014

2,233 Following **3,879** Followers

ELT Ireland Twitter profile

Pic by ELT Ireland

Be part of our growing online community on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter & LinkedIn - @ELTIreland. You can take advantage of the opportunity to communicate with thousands of ELT professionals around the world, find professional development ideas, and get notified about ELT Ireland and other ELT events. Feel free to DM us if you would like us to share an ELT related post of interest on our social media.
Check out the back pages of the bulletin for links to all our social media channels.

ELT Ireland Newsletter

by Ben Dobbs (Newsletter Editor)

Throughout the past year, ELT Ireland's newsletter has been sent on a biweekly basis to both members and subscribers. Along with ELT Ireland's social media channels, the newsletter is one of our main ways of communicating events, news, calls for papers and more to anyone interested in ELT Ireland and its activities. The newsletter underwent a slight revamp in structure with the intention of making it more accessible. There are currently 300 subscribers to the newsletter. We are always looking for news, events both in Ireland and elsewhere, research requests, materials and more to share so continue to encourage members and readers to get in touch with anything of interest. If you are not already a subscriber, you can sign up on our website.

Exploring Online Reading: The Case of a WebQuest Lesson.

by Maria Karageorgou

Education in the 21st century has undergone remarkable changes. Emergency remote teaching due to COVID-19 restrictions imposed globally has created new challenges and opportunities for teaching and learning. Henceforth, learner autonomy in the new technology enhanced learning environment comes to the forefront as a broad target of education. The use of technology in class amplifies 21st century skills which are essential in a global education context and lead to the evolution of ICT skills and cognitive skills such as transforming learning from a plethora of resources available online. With this in mind this article will present how to implement an online reading lesson using a WebQuest. Reading as a receptive skill can be challenging over other skills. In many cases, readers are not necessarily engaging with digital texts effectively or efficiently. A WebQuest is one effective strategy to promote and train learners to exploratory learning.

> **"A WebQuest is a lesson scenario which revolves around a central investigatory activity that focuses on solving a problem for which digital information and data processing is necessary. "**

The term 'WebQuest' was introduced by Dodge (1997) to describe structured learning activities that explore digital and non-digital sources, such as websites, digital libraries, databases, magazines, newspapers, etc. A WebQuest is a lesson scenario which revolves around a central investigatory activity that focuses on solving a problem for which digital information and data processing is necessary. WebQuest fosters the development of high order thinking skills, such as analysing, synthesizing and evaluating information but also allows students to apply the information and the knowledge they have acquired in everyday life situations.

The theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of the WebQuest is based on Vygotsky's (1978) socio-constructivist theory. The learner in this procedure assumes an active role and creates knowledge by integrating information and by discovering something rather than 'learning about it'. According to Godwin-Jones (2004:9) "WebQuests tend to be student-oriented and collaborative, with students engaged in constructivist activities resulting in shared learning experiences and new knowledge based on inquiry-oriented language use and Web research skills".

The WebQuest procedure apart from reading online texts looking for specific information; fosters the employment of other sub skills such as writing, speaking and listening. Tasks are meaning oriented, with a real-life purpose, in the WebQuest described in this article learners are given a budget to organize their trip, and a communicative goal which offers the sense of accomplishment to learners who assume roles in order to follow through the demands of tasks. There is a correlation between task-based learning and WebQuest because learners need to complete certain steps in order to reach an outcome. This 'learning-by-doing' environment constitutes a student centered and self-directed learning environment. In this assignment's WebQuest the teacher follows the project-based approached as a branch of a learner-determined lesson to promote collaboration culminating the production of a PowerPoint presentation in this technology-enhanced lesson.

Description of the stages of the WebQuest lesson

The following WebQuest is designed for B2 level students. Learners are interested in using technologies in all facets of their everyday life. In an oral discussion with this focus group the teacher gets information about the interests of the learners. Furthermore, a school trip for the students at school is organised annually; so it is a good chance to offer them a WebQuest; a topic to look information for- that is related to real life situations and will keep them interested. Topics like travelling, studying abroad, scholarships and careers are their fields of interest and they are partially intrigued by a unit of this textbook about fascinating places around the world. Therefore, learners have acquired topic vocabulary about travelling.

This WebQuest lesson is implemented across four hours. The purpose of this quest is for students to collect over two different tourist destinations and finally organize and present to class the suggested plan for the annual school trip. Students need to vote after the presentations. Voting is necessary so that each and every student pays attention to their classmates' presentations and in order to select the best organized program for their school trip. The WebQuest which can be designed on the Zunal software online consists of six critical attributes as shown in the figure.

Six Critical Attributes

Introduction → Task → Resources → Process → Evaluation → Conclusion

WebQuest Attributes

Pic by Author

At the introduction the teacher addresses the students and sets the scene for the following stages. At this first step the teacher welcomes the students and announces the main goals of the WebQuest.

The role of the teacher during the WebQuest lesson is a facilitator and observer of students' performance. At the task stage, the main purpose is to set what is expected from them by the end of the course. Then in the process stage, resources and specific tasks are given by the teacher so as to guide the whole procedure.

During the pre-reading phase students are provided with guidelines and they are reminded of the main purpose of their 'quest'. In this WebQuest during the first task students are requested to create groups; each group is to look for information about a different trip destination and they are assigned roles within their team. They are given guidelines on how to conduct the group work and then they should start by browsing the hyperlinks given in order to collect the information they need in order to organize their trip. The hyperlinks attached on the WebQuest are provided by the teacher who collects them from various official internet sites. Some of the criteria for choosing them pertain to:

- ✓ User is able to quickly determine the basic content of the site
- ✓ The author of the material is clearly identified
- ✓ Content is updated frequently
- ✓ Links to other sites are current and working properly
- ✓ The content achieves the intended purpose effectively
- ✓ The content is well organized and easy to understand
- ✓ The information is accurate based on user's previous knowledge of the subject
- ✓ There are links to other sites that are related the needs and purposes of the lesson

Then in the second task, which is part of the while reading stage, the questions given aim at helping them reflect and finalize details that will be needed for the program of the trip.

In the third task, students could watch a video with English subtitles from the Expedia website about travel guides to different countries which provides an overview of the country they investigate and then in groups they take a Kahoot quiz which is attached as a hyperlink in order to consolidate the information. For example, the quiz could contain questions on details and information worth to be mentioned in the presentation afterwards so it is a way to focus students' attention.

Finally, at the post-reading phase, they are given guidelines on how to make a PowerPoint presentation with Google slides in order to present the program they have organized for their excursion so as to vote for their final destination.

Rationale of the WebQuest material and procedure

The choice of texts for this WebQuest was based on the criteria aligned by McLachlan (2002). The texts pertained to tourist destinations, monuments, restaurants, hotels and airline websites. Most of the resources provided are taken from official tourism sites which are updated, the content is well organized and relevant to the purpose of the 'quest'. It is essential to train learners on a criteria checklist involving the date, domain, publisher, author and information which is considered important not only in the selection of websites but also in order to evolve autonomous research skills. Another pivotal criterion is related to choosing websites which are highly multimodal enhanced with 'semiotic resources' such as visuals and sounds. Based on the flow model initially mentioned by Csiksezentmihalyi, the importance of keeping our learners motivated and engaged in an activity and their attention at maximum is also called 'optimal experience' and in the selection of these online reading pages the level of language of them was also considered. The language level is a criterion also implied by Krashen's i+1 theory (Krashen, 1982) which suggests that the text should be a level more difficult from the one the learners are so as to keep them involved cognitively.

The choice of tasks is linked to the development of cognitive and metacognitive skills such as reading skills, research skills and higher order thinking. Subskills like, note-taking, summarizing and paraphrasing, skimming and scanning reading strategies and synthesizing information were the main objectives. Online reading is non-linear in the sense that readers rarely have just one text in front of them. Given that students need to browse links and collect information. A web page often presents multiple texts, pictures, videos and advertisements and readers tend to click on those links, moving rapidly from one site to another and occasionally returning to the original page.

In the first task, where learners need to browse the websites, it is important to remember the rubrics in order to keep in mind the purpose and remain concentrated on what they need to know. In addition, metacognitive skills such as evaluating the information and especially scanning specific information and developing reading strategies are also required (Grabe and Stoller, 2011).

During the second task, the comprehension questions address higher order skills that require synthesizing information from various resources and as well note taking skills that help students get organized.

In the third task, learners are required to watch a video and then take an online quiz to consolidate knowledge. The reason that this task involves a video is for the learners to raise intercultural awareness and reflect on what they have read and get prepared for the next task.

The fourth task, which is the post reading phase of the WebQuest, pertains to their PowerPoint presentation which is considered "a good activity to bridge the cognitive processes associated with personal learning and those associated with communicating with an audience" (Clyde and Delohery, 2005:168). Their presentation can be implemented on Google slides as well which lets students easily collaborate and share a slide deck. The last task in the WebQuest is about evaluation.

The criteria for evaluation are determined mainly by the teacher and then by the demands and the purpose of the assigned 'quest'. Learners complete a group self-assessment checklist and they will be assessed on a variety of criteria by the teacher as well. Peer involvement in assessment aims to help students "better assess themselves" so it beneficial to be included as well.

The criteria focus on note taking, skimming and scanning websites, compare and contrast, group work, positive attitude, focus on task, time management, research skills and finally organizing the excursion plan of the 'quest' which were needed in order to complete this WebQuest. Assessment is multifaceted and continuous. This procedure promotes the positive 'washback effect' optimizing learners' performance and language acquisition.

By following the link or scanning the QR code, you can find an example of the WebQuest described in this article.

http://zunal.com/webquest.php?w=455723
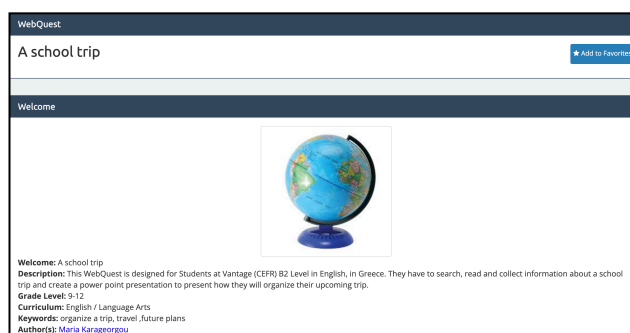
Screenshot of WebQuest lesson

Pic by ELT Ireland

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Effective Teacher Professional Development for Educational Institutions in the Private Sector.

by Le Dinh Bao Quoc

Introduction

There is a strong consensus in the body of literature that professional development (PD) plays an indispensable role in improving the quality of teaching in any school. In reality, educational institutions are paying more and more attention to develop their PD program for the teaching staff, especially during the time of the COVID-19, when most teachers have been facing the sudden change in their professional career.

However, most studies in the literature are conducted in the settings of public K-12 schools (schools from kindergarten to grade 12) and universities but not at specific private extra-curriculum English centers, which have different features compared with public schools or universities. In this article, "private extra-curriculum English centers" are defined as the English language schools in non-English speaking countries like Vietnam, offering after-school English classes.

With their distinctive characteristics and context (described in the next section), schools in this segment find it challenging to develop their own PD program with appropriate forms and delivery modes to suit their teachers, most of whom are inexperienced and have relatively low commitment. Therefore, a case study has been conducted so that a strong, sustainable, and compatible PD framework can be specifically designed for the newly-recruited expat teachers of this distinctive type of school.

> " **Schools in this segment find it challenging to develop their own PD program with appropriate forms and delivery models to suit their teachers.** "

The context

The school where the case study was conducted (hereafter referred to as the School), shares the same characteristics as other educational institutions in this sector. First of all, it is a business, and therefore, typically and differently operated. The school offers evening and weekend English courses for students of all ages. In terms of academic matters, it has developed its own curriculum and teaching quality system, based on the internationally standardized language framework Common European Framework Reference (CEFR).

In terms of teachers, to meet the market-increasing demand, the School hires expat teachers who have different experiences in teaching English. These teachers work part time and earn by teaching hours. Therefore, they usually work for different schools to make the most use of their availability. Some even teach at private K-12 schools during the day and at English centers in the evenings or weekends. This leads to their low commitment to the School and to the PD activities it provides. In addition, this low commitment results in the high turnover rate, continuous recruitment, and training for new teachers.

Therefore, an effective and specialized PD program, if successfully designed and implemented, will be beneficial not only to the School but also other institutions of this type. They will be provided with guidelines on what should be emphasized when designing PD for their teachers such as what to be included, strengthened, and avoided when conducting the program.

The case study

The case study was conducted as an endeavor to measure the newly-recruited teachers' PD needs and preferences and identify the framework for an effective PD program for these teachers at a private extra-curriculum English center.

This research included 40 newly-recruited part-time expat teachers, who had been onboard for 2 months at different campuses of the School. They answered a questionnaire about their PD needs and preferences, and then 25 of them participated in the proposed PD program specially designed for them. In addition to these teachers, 15 mentors were also invited to join the research. They were the School Academic Managers, who were experts in ELT and in charge of the teaching and learning quality of different campuses. In this research, these mentors supported the teachers during the PD and then assessed the feasibility and effectiveness of the PD program after it had been conducted in their campuses.

In order to conduct a thorough study with high level of reliability and validity, this research was designed based on the "research onion" suggested by Saunders et al. (2007) and adopted a variety of research strategies and mixed methods of data collection, using both quantitative and qualitative data. This allowed the researcher to reach significant insights that could have been missed or skipped if only one of the methods had been utilized and achieve a well-rounded understanding of the facts involved.

Teachers' PD needs and preferences

Most studies on teacher PD agree that effective programs start with PD needs analysis of both teachers' and the schools' sides. Consequently, this was the first step in this case study. Indeed, it was crucial to understand these low-commitment part-time teachers' PD needs to ensure the proposed program satisfies them. Forty teachers were asked to complete a questionnaire about their PD needs and preferences. Below are some highlighted results.

Most teachers (76.5%) were self-encouraged to improve professionally. They were willing to participate in PD activities like attending workshops or webinars, observing classes, and joining mentoring sessions.

The top 5 areas of development they expressed interest in were:

- Teaching activities and games,
- Techniques for teaching online,
- *Teaching techniques* (such as giving instructions, engaging students, etc.)
- Using teaching aids and technology in class, and
- Dealing with learners' cultural aspects.

This result reflected the situation well. Most of them were new teachers so they were in need of practical training (compared with theoretical topics). Online teaching, which has been in need during the COVID-19 pandemic, was not taught during their TEFL training courses. The last one about learners' culture would help them solve issues when they teach learners from a culture they were not yet familiar with, Vietnamese culture.

Besides the contents, the teachers' top 3 favored types of PD activity were peer-observations, workshops or webinars, and video-based training (video-taped instructions with self-corrected quizzes). These activities were expected to take no more than 3 sessions per week (30-45 minutes/ session) and done both online and offline in a self-paced manner. These preferences reflected their busy teaching schedules for different schools.

In addition to those highlighted above, the teachers suggested some enablers and barriers to their PD. Enablers included constructive feedback, incentives, and reflection opportunities. On the other hand, what they considered barriers were their busy schedules, limited communication, and lack of bonus.

The proposed PD program

Besides the teachers' needs and preferences, it was important for the School to know what its teachers really needed in their authentic classrooms. Therefore, observations were conducted, and the observer took notes of the teachers' areas for improvements based on the School academic requirements. The data collected from the observations proved the gaps between their teaching practices and what was expected by the School.

Based on the teachers' PD needs and preferences, together with the observation data, a PD program for these teachers was designed. This program balanced the needs of both the teachers and the School, instead of focusing on only one side and neglecting the other. Below are some brief descriptions of the PD program used in this study.

- *The design:* The whole program was 6 weeks long with 3 sessions per week. The first two sessions were video lessons where teachers self-learned two topics and planned for their application of the learned knowledge in their real-life classes. The last one was a mentoring session with the mentor where they discussed the teachers' reflection after application.
- *The duration and scheduling:* Teachers would spend 15 hours in total (without pay) to complete the PD program. There was a mixed schedule, combining the flexible time for the teachers to self-learn the video lessons and the fixed time for the mentoring sessions. Each session was 45 minutes.
- *The contents:* The program included 11 video topics compatible with the teachers' and the School's needs. See the list of topics below.
1. Building rapport with students
2. Class closure activities
3. Classroom management
4. Cultural traits of Vietnamese learners
5. Maximizing the use of English in class
6. Online teaching techniques
7. Planning a lesson
8. Teaching listening
9. Teaching reading
10. Teaching speaking
11. Teaching vocabulary
    * Week 1 had only 1 video session to give time for the induction session, introducing the program to the teachers.

- *The PD activity types:* In addition to the video and mentoring sessions, there were 2 peer-observations and 2 campus-based workshops for these teachers. These added a variety of PD activities to the whole program.

- *The expected achievements:* Teachers who completed the PD program successfully would pass the probation, be awarded the certificate of completion, and be assigned more teaching hours.
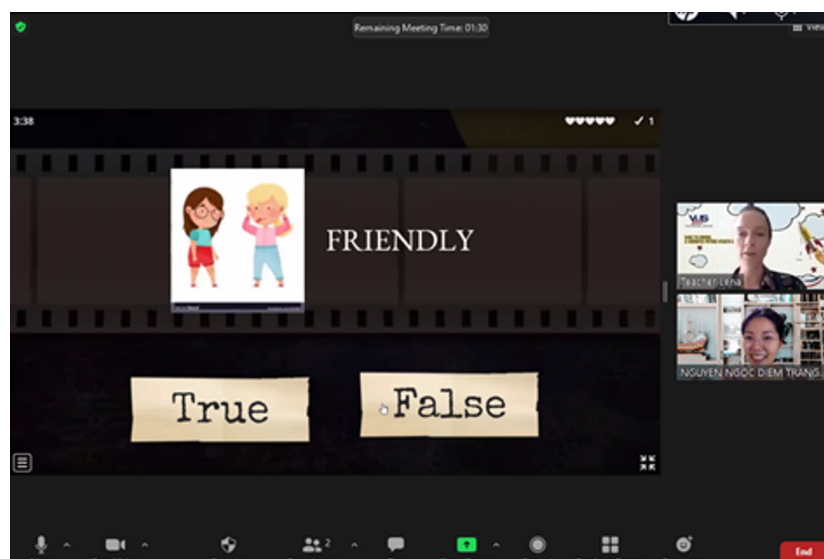

1:1 mentoring session conducted via Zoom

Pic by Author

The study's highlighted findings
Out of 25 teachers participated in the PD program, two of them did not complete it successfully due to other commitments. The rest of the teachers demonstrated improvement in their teaching practices after completion. This result was proven by the average positive 7.4% difference between the observation scores before and after the program. Moreover, the teachers' records of their reflection during the program illustrated how effectively the teachers applied what they learned in their real classes.

Another factor that proves the effectiveness of this PD program was its operational feasibility when operated. All the mentors agreed that the program was well organized, efficient, and compatible with the newly-recruited expat teachers' needs and the campus context.

Framework for effective teacher PD for private extra-curriculum schools
Based on the findings of the study, a framework for effective PD for private extra-curriculum schools was suggested.

Framework for effective PD for private extra-curriculum schools

Pic by Author
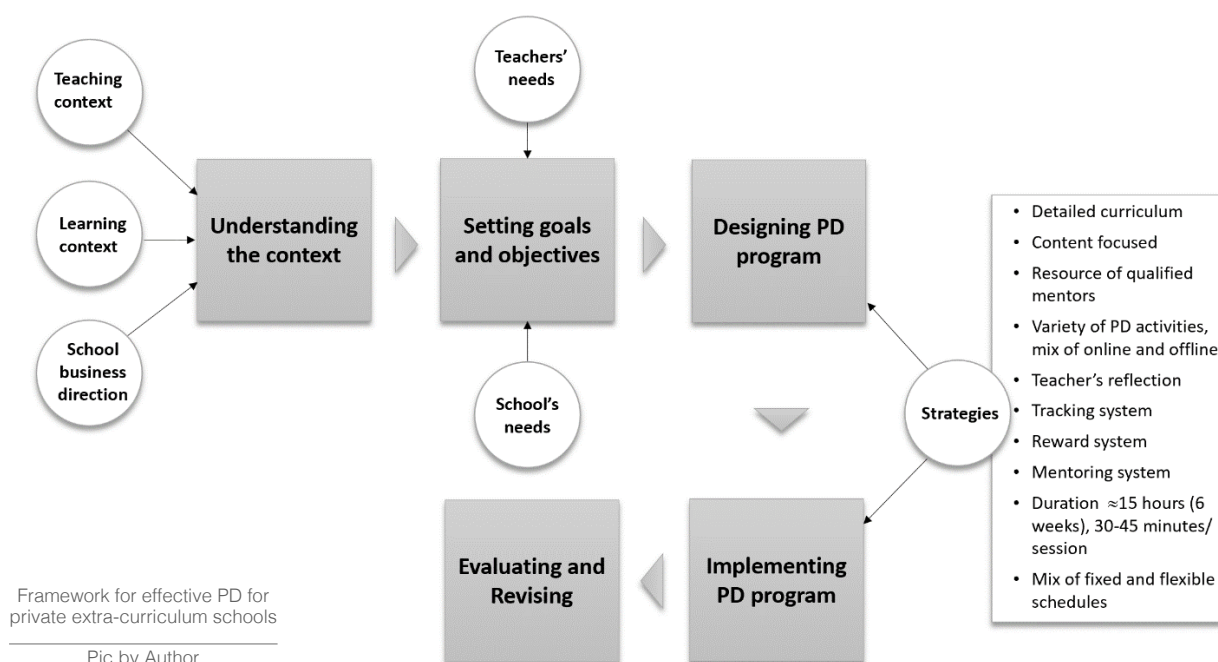
The framework illustrates five main stages for designing and implementing an effective PD program.

1. ***Understanding the context*** in which the program takes place. The PD designer should look into the teaching context (teachers, curriculum, program, etc.), the learning context (students, learning objectives, motivations, etc.), and the school business direction (what are the school business goals and how it expects the goals to be achieved).

2. ***Setting the goals and objectives*** for the PD program, based on intensive needs analysis of both sides, teachers and the school.

3. ***Designing PD program***. In this stage, the designer must focus on the specific strategies for this unique type of school.

    •   The program must be detailed and content focused, consisting of elements from teachers' real-life classroom, not theories or something detached from the teachers' context.

    •   A variety of PD activities must be utilized and conducted in both offline and online delivery modes.

    •   There must be a tracking system, together with effective mentoring and monitoring provided by qualified mentors, to encourage the teachers' reflection on how they effectively apply what they learned. Figure 2 shows a sample of the tracking system on the teacher's reflection.

    •   There should be a reward system to motivate the teachers to participate in the program.

    •   The program must be as short as possible with a mix of fixed and flexible schedules to better suit the teachers' schedule.

4. ***Implementing PD program***. During this stage, the program will be conducted with the strategies planned in the previous stage.

5. ***Evaluating and Revising***. PD results will be evaluated if they meet the goals set from the beginning. However, evaluation is not just looking at the teachers' results after the PD, but it should be looked from different perspectives from simple to more complex, according to Guskey (2000, p. 82), which are participants' use of new knowledge and skills, organizational support and change, and student learning outcomes.

Conclusion

Effective PD for extra-curriculum schools in the private sector has increasingly been needed, especially in the context of non-English speaking countries. Teachers at these schools have their unique characteristics compared with those teaching at public schools or universities. Therefore, the proposed framework for effective PD in this article will contribute greatly to the current literature, helping PD designers from these schools to construct an effective contextualized PD program for their teachers.

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Le Dinh Bao Quoc holds a Doctorate in Education (Ed.D). He's been working in ELT for 20 years and is now the Training and Development Manager for VUS, the biggest English language school in Vietnam. He has presented at numerous international TESOL conferences. His research interests include education management and teaching practices.

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What the Future Looks Like for Non-Native Teachers

by Meri Maroutian

Six years have passed since Silvana Richardson's eye-opening plenary gave an insight into how non-native teachers were struggling to find equal opportunities as native English speakers. Even though many field professionals are highly aware of the discriminatory behaviours of school employers, not much has changed in the job advertisements looking to hire unqualified native speakers over qualified professionals. It is a long battle which can be won only by raising enough awareness towards the preconceived notion of what constitutes being an English teacher.

The reasons behind the preference of Native Speakers

There can be a variety of reasons for the preference of native speaker teachers, depending on the country one lives in. Private schools in Italy claim that a native-teacher is what students want. They are convinced that their customers are willing to pay for lessons that are conducted by teachers who solely come from the UK, US, Canada, New Zealand and Australia, because of the authenticity of the learning experience. This leads to many recruiters requesting a copy of the candidate's passport to make sure they are in fact citizens of one of the nations mentioned above. Another explanation schools use to attract clientele is that their teachers are mother tongue speakers. They like to perpetuate the idea of one accent being superior to another, insinuating that anyone who speaks with a different accent is therefore an "inadequate teacher" who does not provide the English model which is familiar to the entire world of English speakers.

Addressing the issue from a rational point of view

Nowadays, very few people in the world live in the exact same place as they were born. Whether it is for a job opportunity or studies, people move, travel and settle in any place their hearts desire. We can say that this is definitely one of the great perks of living in the 21st century. Subsequently, many children today come from a variety of backgrounds, there is a mixture of cultural contexts, accents and races that simply cannot and should not be ignored any longer. It is not unlikely to find more than one nationality in the same family, or children of immigrant parents who are attending a school in a language that is foreign to that of their own. What is different today, compared to the not so recent past, is that the personal situations of every individual are now enriched with unique experiences and stories. These distinguishing features that make up a person need to be taken into account regardless of where one was born, and it is extremely important that we keep that in mind at all times if we want to go past the traditional definitions of what constitutes being a native speaker or teacher in 2022.

The post-colonial varieties of English are conventionally called "non-native" varieties, therefore, a heated dispute emerged in the Journal of Pragmatics with some linguists arguing that it was implicitly racist to use such terminology, as English was in actual fact the native language of many speakers of those varieties (Singh et al. 1995; Singh 1998). Whether or not one agrees with such divergence among linguistic definitions, we can all agree that during a recruitment process, most qualified "non-native" teachers pay a high price for such whimsical and pre-historic definitions used to categorise language teachers. While it is unlikely that we will hear about Indian English or Singapore English being taught at an international school level, we must understand that varieties of English are not to be demonised. If we consider the vast array of English accents and what model of Received Pronunciation we should foster (traditionally the British English accent is regarded as the standard RP), we might find it impossible to determine what "neutral" or global English sounds like. The truth is: most of the world is not made up of native speakers - as much as it might pain British English traditionalists to admit - and local varieties can do much more for English language learners.

Joan Pujolar and Bernadette O'Rourke, in their position paper entitled *The debates on "new speakers" and "non-native" speakers as symptoms of late modern anxieties over linguistic ownership,* speak of how the discomfort with the concept of "native speaker" in the area of English language teaching had been growing for some time. According to Crystal (2003), non-native speakers of English outnumber native speakers by three to one, which makes all the difference, because most publishing corporations market their teaching materials towards non-native teachers and speakers accordingly.

To sum up: We all know that the majority of English teacher professionals are not native-speakers; We are aware that most of the published materials in ELT are directed towards non-natives teachers and learners; We have developed an understanding that a main standard model English simply does not exist because of the different varieties of English even in those countries known to have English as their "Native Language".

> **Even though many field professionals are highly aware of the discriminatory behaviours of school employers, not much has changed in the job advertisements looking to hire unqualified native speakers over qualified professionals.**

The questions I would like to pose are: How can we move forward from here? Will there be a change for Non Native Teachers across the globe? Can we overcome this hurdle together?

How to promote equal job opportunities for a better tomorrow
Non-native learners and teachers are a potential source of resistance, because they have the chance to object to this lapsed hegemony as aware and active participants, and as people who have witnessed and experienced the negative perception that recruiters and unaware students have against non-native teachers. We now have the right tools to bridge the gap of understanding, social media being one amongst many, and do something about how non-native teachers will be regarded in the future.

One of the most traditional and powerful ways to spread information is through word of mouth. It is something that everyone can do. Therefore, simply speaking about the problem can go a long way and raise awareness on the issue. This is what any individual can do starting right now. *Example Situation: Any time someone wants a reference to a language teacher and asks you where the teacher is from (expecting to hear New York or London), be sure to make the effort in explaining the difference between where one is from and what qualification one holds.*

Schools should promote the inclusion of globally recognised qualifications as a requirement to enter public and private institutions for teaching English as a foreign language. From a personal point of view, I have had little to no attention despite holding a DELTA Cambridge in Parma, Italy. My name and nationality have been the biggest difficulty I have had to overcome every single time I have had to apply for a job.

We need to realise that we are not alone, and that these instances of malpractice against non-native teachers have already been addressed legally by official communications on the matter.
In fact, according to the Official Journal of the European Communities, article 21:"Any discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, **language,** religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, **birth**, disability, age or sexual orientation shall be prohibited."

Hence, we should all be more alert towards advertisements and job offers coming from institutions and people who claim that having a qualification to teach is *preferable but not necessary*. These claims discredit professional teachers who have invested in their education and careers to help learners advance in their own chosen paths.
The more we, as a community, insist on seeing the same respect and opportunities given to non-native teachers as to native and mother tongue speakers or teachers, the sooner our future as English language teachers will begin to seem brighter.

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Meri Maroutian is a Delta qualified teacher based in Parma, Italy. Having lived and studied mostly in Malaysia, America and Italy, she has become aware of the social injustices reserved for those who are forever perceived as foreigners or "non-native" speakers of any given language.
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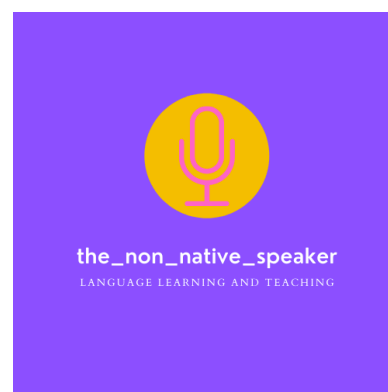
the_non_native_speaker IG Logo

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Project-Based Learning in the ESL Classroom.

by Paula Rosana Asad

I discovered Project Based Learning while I was looking for alternative ways to assess my students. At that time, I was not satisfied with the way my students were learning. They acquired many concepts by heart, and during oral exams, they felt extremely nervous and anxious. Therefore, I wondered what I could do to make learning a more pleasant experience.

One day I came across this wonderful book called "Hacking Assessment" by Starr Sackstein, and it literally blew my mind! In this book, the author says that projects lead to optimal growth and opportunities to learn in a more relaxed and friendly way. That is what I needed for my students, and from that day on, I have devoted hours and hours to learn about PBL and design projects that spark curiosity and drive language learning.

PBL, as it is known today, evolved from schools of medicine in Canada. It was pioneered by Barrows and Tamblyn at the medical school program at McMaster University in the 1960s. They wanted to design a syllabus that emphasized student-centred and multidisciplinary education. Barrows understood that medicine students had to memorize a large number of facts that may not be relevant to medical practice, so he thought that learning through problem solving would be more effective and beneficial for future doctors. Then, the adoption of PBL expanded to elementary schools, middle schools, high schools and universities.

" Project-Based Learning is a teaching method in which students acquire knowledge and skills by trying to respond to an engaging question, problem, or challenge. "

Why PBL?
Project-Based Learning is a teaching method in which students acquire knowledge and skills by trying to respond to an engaging question, problem, or challenge. Students work collaboratively using and developing different skills like creativity, critical thinking and communication.

The Stages of PBL.

Stage 1: The Driving question
It is the challenge or problem that the students must solve. The answer of a driving question is not easily found on google. It makes students think, explore and stay focused. Driving Questions are also open-ended questions; they allow students to approach the challenge from different viewpoints. A driving question calls for in-depth learning exploration and critical thinking. Referring back to DQ for each stage of the project is crucial to push learners in the right direction.

Stage 2: Entry Event or Project Kick-off
It is the activity that will engage learners in the project. It might be a song, a short reading, a video, or a quiz. It is the hook that will generate interest and the need to know more. The entry event should be short but memorable. Novelty can also help to activate the dopamine system and speed up learning.

Stage 3: Knowledge Construction
During this stage, students will build the necessary knowledge to answer the driving question. This knowledge usually involves the subject content and knowledge of the target language. Language is used to mediate and structure knowledge.

Stage 4: Project Development
At this stage, students will work in groups to create a product or develop an activity or task. When students create something of their own, they feel empowered and the drivers of their own learning path. Giving them voice and choice at this stage will truly motivate them to achieve their goals. It is also important to teach collaborative skills to have an optimal learning experience.

Stage 5: Project Presentation
Presenting a product in PBL requires an authentic audience. This audience might be other students, parents, or the community. Authentic audiences help students connect what they did in the classroom to the real world. For the teacher, demonstrating what students have learned is a way of gauging how much knowledge and skills learners have acquired.

Stage 6: Self-evaluation and reflection
The use of rubrics is essential to help learners assess their own work. In education, a rubric means "a set of criteria for grading assignments". It is important that students know the rubrics very well before doing their project so they know what is expected from them. Teaching students to be critical evaluators is key if we want to empower them and help them gain independence and autonomy.

Dream Up Academia de Ingles

Pic by Author

Examples of some of the projects I designed with my students:

Super Heroes!

Summary: Students will investigate superheroes and find out similarities and differences among them. What do they look like? What superpowers do they have? What can they do? What can't they do? Then, students will create their own superheroes, and describe their abilities and physical appearance.
Optional: They can also create a mascot/pet as their helpers. They will write a paragraph describing their Super Hero and finally, they will design their costumes.
Language Content: Physical Descriptions. Abilities.
Level: A1
The takeaway: We are ALL special.

Stages of the Project:
Stage 1: Driving Questions: How do my Superhero look like? What makes a Superhero?
Stage 2: Guess the Superhero Game: Students choose a card with the description of a Superhero and they try to guess their name.
Stage 3: Find information about your favourite Superhero and talk about it in class.
Stage 4: Students create their own Superhero and complete a worksheet with certain information like secret identity, physical appearance, mission and super powers. Then, they write a paragraph about it.
Stage 5: Students present their Super Heroes to their families.
Stage 6: Finally, they complete a simple form to do a self-evaluation based on the rubrics.

International Cuisine

Summary: Students will learn about food, collect different recipes from around the world and create a blog to teach others about Cultures through food.
Language Content. Food. The Language of recipes. Countries and nationalities
Level: A1+/A2
The takeaway: Food is an expression of cultural identity.

Stages of the Project:
Stage 1: Driving Question: How can I create a blog that will teach other people about Food around the World?
Stage 2: Students discuss in pairs the following quote "Food is an expression of cultural identity". Then, they share their opinions with the rest of the class.
Stage 3: Listening and Reading Comprehension Activities. Students watch a video about Food lunches across the world and then, read a short text about traditional foods from different countries.
Stage 4: Learners choose a country and in small groups (3 or 4), they create a blog that will teach other people about its food. They give their blog a name, share recipes, videos, pictures, interviews, etc.
Stage 5: Students present their blogs and visit other students' blogs to give positive feedback and ask questions if necessary.
Stage 6: Finally, they complete a worksheet to do a self-evaluation and reflection based on the rubrics.

You can see some of my learners' projects on this Padlet.

https://padlet.com/academiadreamup/tu2r49q4tgrn1wqn

My Vegetable Garden

Summary: Students will learn about plants and what they can grow in the garden school or their homes. They will prepare the soil; add organic compost, mineral rock pellets, etc. Then, they will plant the seeds in different containers and then put them wherever they want as long as the plants get plenty of sun and a good supply of water.
Language Content: Plants. Food. Environment.
Level: A1
The takeaway: Be patient, nature has its own process of growth.

Stages of the Project:
Stage 1: Driving Question: How can I create my own vegetable garden?
Stage 2: Students learn a song called "The Plant Parts"
Stage 3: Learners read a short text about how plants grow and then label a flower. They also listen to a story called "The Red Moon".
Stage 4: Students choose a location for their vegetable garden and start planting the seeds. They are given a worksheet to keep record of the growth of their plants.

Stage 5: Students share their learning experience on a Padlet that then will be shared with parents.

Stage 6: Students do a 3-2-1 self-assessment. That is, they draw THREE things they liked about their project, write TWO things they learnt and finally, write ONE thing they want to improve next time.

You can see some of my learners' projects on this Padlet.

https://padlet.com/academiadreamup/lw78h80xwfhsed13

My Video Game tutorial

Summary: Students will plan their video game tutorial/walkthrough. Then, they will record and produce their video. They will pay close attention to grammar, vocabulary and how they pronounce words. Finally, students will add transitions, effects, and captions to their videos and publish their work!

Language Content: Vocabulary related to games. Conditionals 0 and 1.

Level: A2/B1

The takeaway: We can ALL teach something. We are always teachers and learners.

Stages of the Project:

Stage 1: Driving Question: How can I create an entertaining and useful video game tutorial?

Stage 2: Fishbowl: Two learners sit in the middle of a circle and discuss a question about video games. The rest of the class makes observations and then rotate into the circle. Questions: What do you think are the bad consequences of spending too much time on playing games? Would you like to be a game designer? What kinds of games would you design? Have you ever played pac-man? If your answer is "yes", how do you play that game?

Stage 3: Students do a reading comprehension activity about PAC-MAN. Then, watch different video game walk-throughs.

Stage 4: Students plan their video game walk-through, record and produce it. Then, add transitions, effects and captions to their tutorial.

Stage 5: They publish their work on YouTube.

Stage 6: Finally, they complete a worksheet to do a self-evaluation and reflection based on the rubrics

You can see some of my learners' projects on this Padlet.

https://padlet.com/academiadreamup/wp4unkabnxjs5kt5

Overall, I recommend using projects in the EFL classroom. It is highly motivating for students as they have a voice and choice, and it reproduces an authentic context. Students also learn to work in groups, develop autonomy and learn about multiple subjects apart from English. I hope you like the project ideas I mentioned here, adapt and adopt them in your own classrooms.

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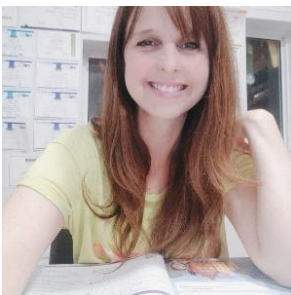Ross Cooper and Erin Murphy (2016), *Hacking Project Based Learning*, Hack Learning.

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Literature as a Bridge between Cultures.

by Vanesa Polastri & Stella Maris Saubidet Oyhamburu

Ireland and Argentina are 11,143 kilometres apart. One is in the Northern hemisphere; the other, in the Southern hemisphere. One is an English-speaking country, the other one is Spanish-speaking. One is European, the other is Latin American. There is an ocean in between. Many contrasts separate these two lands, yet there is something that connects them: literature. The following is an educational experience that took place in the subject "Language and Culture 1" at the English Teacher Training College N° 41, a state-run institution in the suburbs of Buenos Aires. We decided to develop a teaching sequence around Irish and Argentinian literary texts. In spite of the obvious differences in these cultural artifacts, the especially selected stories gave us the chance of not only working with authentic material as a source of L2 (English as a foreign language), but also dealing with their varied layers of meaning, as well as reflecting about self and other. As a result, we were able to appreciate points of contact that Ireland and Argentina share, through literature as a bridge between both cultures.
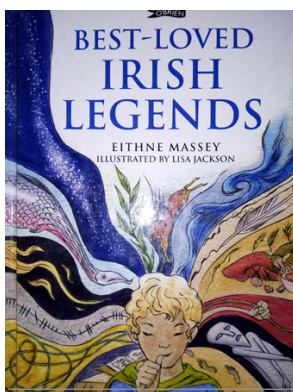
> **"The literary sources were chosen with a clear idea in mind: they would become bridges that would enhance intercultural mediation."**

Fionn and the Giant

Pic by Author

The literary sources were chosen with a clear idea in mind: they would become bridges that would enhance intercultural mediation. The first text selected was "Fionn and the Giant", and it was taken from *Best-Loved Irish Legends*, a book written by Eithne Massey and illustrated by Lisa Jackson. According to the CEFR levels, our students belonged to the B2 level of proficiency. Yet, we decided to use authentic texts with them. This meant working with material that was developed for native speakers of English and even more specifically, those based in Ireland. Following a top-down reading pattern (from general to specific), we started by analysing the paratext, both the title and the illustration on the first page, so as to predict characters, setting and conflict. Then, while reading aloud, we checked comprehension and focused on inferring from textual hints. We asked students orally about the purpose of the character's actions and whether their reactions were the expected ones or not. We also explored literary devices, such as onomatopoeia ("Bang, bang, bang"), alliteration ("tartan trousers"), hyperbole ("the giant was five times bigger than she was"), and cultural terms such as "haggis", which is a typical Scottish dish. Finally, as a single group, we reverted the reading pattern, going bottom up (from specific, the details we analysed, to general, whole storyline) we built the narrative structure together: Introduction - Conflict - Resolution.

The Legend of Neuquén and Limay

Aiming at connecting both cultures, not only did we use sources from Ireland, but also from Argentina. The second literary text used was "The Legend of Neuquén and Limay" (names of two rivers that flow into a third river: *Río Negro)*. This story was taken from *Legends from the Southern Region*, written by Fabrizio Origlio and Mario Cali, and illustrated by Iñaki Echeverría. In this case we selected a legend from the *Mapuche* community, native inhabitants from the Argentinian territory. We argued that English can be used to tell the world about our culture and our roots. Our students had to read it silently and individually, gaining autonomy as we moved away from the teacher read-aloud. Then, they had to reconstruct its narrative sequence

Pic by Author

collaboratively in pairs, putting into practice what we had discussed in the previous lesson. Afterwards, the students shared their reconstructions in a whole-group oral discussion. The changes in the interaction scheme, from teacher-whole group in the first lesson to student-text, student-student and sharing afterwards with the other mates provided different steps in the scaffolding of task complexity and also enabled the progressive autonomous use of English.

Points of contact

After analysing the legends from these two distant and distinct countries our students were able to see the differences between them but were still unable to identify their connections. Finding those connections was our next challenge. We compared those texts to discover what they had in common. We agreed that in both literary sources there was a fight between two characters and the explanation of a geographical landmark: the Giant's Causeway and the fusion of two rivers into one. Our teacher trainees completed a Venn diagram to synthesise the comparison and contrast of the stories. They did online research on relevant information about the geographical spots in question, they inferred the protagonists' driving forces and judged the decisions taken by them. Such varied cognitive tasks, together with enough thinking time and the appropriate scaffolding led them to dive into the different layers of meaning in the legends.
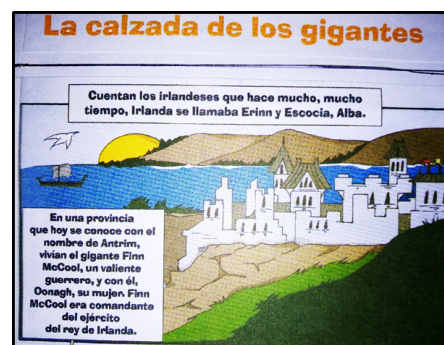
Finally, as a follow up, the students had to invent a non-scientific explanation for the creation of a natural element from anywhere in the world. They worked in groups and uploaded their written productions to the forum section in our virtual classroom.

Intertextuality

Within the actual paradigm of teaching foreign languages, we consider it enriching to work with a variety of literature genres in the ELT class, and better still, to explore genre intervention (Pope, 1995), i.e. paying attention to meaning, students are invited to go from one genre into another one, turning the text into a different genre, "playing" with genres. In this respect, in our next lesson, we began by plunging into a different version from the legend of "Fionn and the Giant" this time, in Spanish and made into a comic strip by the Argentinian (of Irish origin) writer Olga Drennen. We asked our students to put the panels in order, based on their knowledge of the plot from the previous lessons. Then we made them reflect upon the differences between the hypotext and this hypertext. They realised that this version had many more contextual details and explanations because its intended audience was Spanish-speaking children from

Pic by Author

our country, unfamiliar with the story and its characters. They also paid attention to different aspects: from genre characteristics to the exploitation of onomatopoeia. A key point in choosing a text in Spanish was making it clear that our mother tongue has no lesser value than that of the target language, reinforcing, in this way, our identity. Another genre that enriched our classes was a brochure from the Giant's Causeway, another piece of authentic material. At this stage, our students obtained a scientific explanation of the formation of the marvellous hexagonal basalt stone pillars through a non-literary text. In this way they were able to delve into the richness of both fictional and nonfictional texts.

Conclusion

Dealing with an array of genres -two legends, a comic strip, and a brochure- together with reading strategies and adequate scaffolding gave our students the opportunity to reflect upon the singularities and similarities of apparently two different countries and to bridge cultural distances. In order to deal with literature it is compelling to see texts as fields of meaning-making and as discourse, i.e. situated language in a communicative context, in intertextual relation ("bridge", in our words) with other discourses (Bombini, 2005; our translation). As educators of future teachers of English we make use of literature for multiple reasons. Literature brings the context for the language to be analysed in use. It is concretised in different genres with distinctive features whose recognition fosters autonomy as readers, writers, listeners and speakers of a foreign language. But mostly, it tells about

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ourselves and others allowing for intercultural sensitivity development, as well as identity construction. Therefore, it is our purpose to contribute to our students' training, not only as language proficient users but also as intercultural mediators.
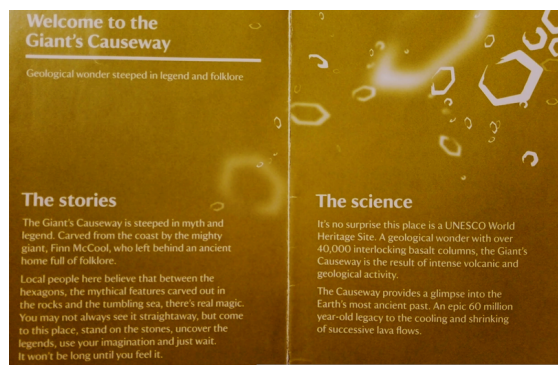
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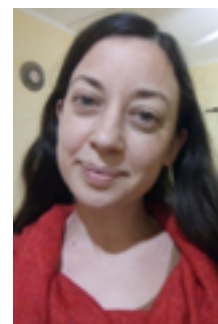
Do you teach enough vocabulary? Vocabulary Practice vs Grammar Overload

by Domenico Locatelli

We all know grammar is very important in English language teaching and learning, but what about vocabulary? How can you students benefit from studying more vocabulary on a regular basis and why should they? Answers to all the aforementioned questions will be given in this article.

This article will, firstly, analyse **the context** in which my idea was developed, which is the Irish ELT sector, and highlight a few **hurdles** that students and teachers face that could be overcome by means of teaching more vocabulary. Then, the focus will shift to **my idea in theory and in practice**, with some useful tips on how to include more vocabulary in your ELT lessons and some examples of classroom activities. Finally, **student feedback and benefits inside and outside the classroom** will be brought to your attention.

> **"When we try to learn a new language, we are putting together a puzzle; the technique used to put the pieces together is the grammar and the pieces themselves are the vocabulary. "**

The context. The Irish ELT sector is dominated by visa students mainly from South America and Asia; Brazil is the country where most students are from followed by South American Spanish speaking countries. Some English Language schools, especially the upmarket ones, have a balanced nationality mix in their students' pool, but many do not, resulting in many classes being (almost) monolingual. As a result, it is not uncommon to see students using their native language a lot in the classroom, especially among lower-level students. In addition to that, Spanish and Portuguese share a lot of vocabulary, 89% to be precise (1), so they are mutually intelligible in most cases, making it easier for lower-level students to use their L1 as lingua franca instead of English.

The hurdles. Both English language students and English language teachers face some hurdles in the context previously laid out.

The learners are sometimes taught in (almost) monolingual classes. Lower level students struggle to understand basic instructions and commands so they might find it easier to revert to L1 to ask a fellow student rather than trying to formulate a sentence using the vocabulary and grammar they know. This could cause a strong L1 reliance and hinder their progress in the long term. Also, in my career as an ELT teacher Ihave found that, oftentimes, the teaching is very traditional and textbook oriented, and textbooks tend to focus on grammar very heavily. This type of teaching finds its roots in the poor design of the syllabus, the units are just a copy of the textbook, and based on the conception that grammar trumps vocabulary.

The teachers are equally faced with hurdles. They must follow the sometimes poorly designed syllabi, which are heavy on grammar and light on vocabulary as they often follow the index of a random textbook word by word. In addition, some students are used to a very traditional and grammar-oriented type of teaching, which they might have experienced in their country of origin or in Ireland, and they will expect it.

After having said all of this, however, I must clarify my point. I am a student in Applied Linguistics, and I am, therefore, tackling this issue from a linguistic point of view. By no means am I criticising the operations of the administrators, managers, and directors of Irish ELT schools. They are doing a great job in dealing with difficult internal and external stakeholders and they have all my respect and admiration. Last but not least, visa students must take an exit exam at the end of their visas to show their progression and to ascertain that they have learned something valuable during their lessons. These exams test students using a lot of grammar questions, and they follow the grammar topics contained in traditional textbooks. Therefore, overcoming the hurdles previously mentioned is not quite as straightforward as it seems, and I intend not to criticise nor to belittle the efforts of my former Irish ELT colleagues whose hard work and dedication are exemplary.

My idea in theory. The importance of vocabulary in ELT is present in many studies. However, the study I got my idea from was made by University of Nottingham Professor Norbert Schmitt, who found a linear relationship between vocabulary and comprehension.

I thought that, as well as comprehension, vocabulary could also influence production and therefore fluency.

The metaphor I often use to describe a new language is "the puzzle". When we try to learn a new language, we are putting together a puzzle; the technique used to put the pieces together is the grammar and the pieces themselves are the vocabulary. Therefore, if your technique is good but you don't have the pieces, the puzzle can't be done.

My idea in practice. Now, after having read all of the above, you are probably starting to wonder how to approach this from a practical point of view. This can be done by approaching syllabi and textbooks in a different way. They should help us with the structure of the course yet not dictate what we should be teaching at any given moment.

What I used to do in my day-to-day teaching was to follow the topic suggested by the syllabus and supplement the topic of the day with some relevant vocabulary. I would either expand the vocabulary given by the book or find some new vocabulary, which changed the angle on the topic suggested by the book.

There are many good vocabulary resources out there, my favourite being "Oxford Vocabulary".

In addition to supplementing existing vocabulary with new one, there are two activities that my students used to enjoy and that I am going to share below.

The first one is called 'stop'. It is a category-based vocabulary game which can be tailored to the TL. Firstly, the teacher draws a table on the whiteboard containing five-six columns and several rows and divides the class into small groups and sets five-six categories, for example animals, cities, countries, etc. Then, the teacher shouts a letter of the alphabet and the learners must find a word beginning with the chosen letter to fit each box in a single row. When a team finishes, they shout 'stop!' and tell their words to the teacher who writes them on the whiteboard. If they are correct they get the point. This activity is perfect as a warmer or a cooler and for vocabulary consolidation at either the beginning or the end of a lesson.

The second one is called 'scattergories'. It is a variation of the first one which is suitable to higher levels, unlike the first. Firstly, the teacher draws a table on the whiteboard containing 3 columns and several rows and divides the class into small groups and sets 3 categories, for example animals, cities, countries, etc. Then, the teacher set the time of the activity and shouts a letter of the alphabet and the learners must find as many words as possible beginning with the chosen letter in each category, at least one per category. When the time is up, one student per team writes their words on the board. The team with the most correct words gets the point.

"Scattergories"

Pic by Author

Student feedback and benefits inside the classroom. Although I have never done any scientific research on my students, so I don't have any hard data to support my statement, the benefits of helping my students expand their vocabulary were great.

First of all, my students increased their fluency and their comprehension within months. Their motivation and engagement increased significantly in a matter of weeks. I could really see the difference in the way they spoke to each other and performed certain tasks. Having taught for some years before that, I could really notice and appreciate the difference.

Also, my learners tended to level up quite quickly compared to other students in the same level. Thus, expanding their vocabulary helped them pass their level tests as well as boost their comprehension skills, production skills, and confidence.

Benefits outside the classroom. In addition to having the aforementioned benefits in the classroom, there are also two benefits outside the classroom I would like to mention.

The first benefit is, by boosting their confidence, learners feel less social "awkwardness" when interacting with speakers of other languages. This exponentially increases their chances of speaking English outside the classroom and practicing the language they study in the classroom.

The second and last benefit is, by improving their comprehension skills and expanding their vocabulary, students lapse back to their L1 less and less and they rely on their L1 less and less. This creates a virtuous cycle that could benefit L2 acquisition exponentially.

Conclusion. This article focused on the importance of teaching vocabulary in general and in particular in the Irish ELT context. Its aim was to present the reader with the hurdles that both students and teachers face in the aforementioned context and suggest some ideas on how to overcome these hurdles by increasing the teaching of vocabulary. Both theoretical and practical ideas were discussed and two examples of classroom activities were given. Finally, some benefits from the increased vocabulary teaching were presented.

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Making Content More Relevant to Students - How to do it.

by Ana Carolina Cardoso Bedenik

Connecting content to learners is important in order to engage students in the lessons and build rapport with them. As teachers, we have always been told that we need to make content relevant to students. In an ideal world, we would only teach things which are relevant to our students and of interest to them. However, when we need to follow a coursebook and a syllabus, this does not happen as often as we would like. Many colleagues have reported the difficulty and time-consuming nature of trying to relate what they need to teach to their students' lives.

Although it is not always easy and we might feel that we lack creativity on some days, there are a few simple things we can do to make our lessons a bit more personal and relevant to students.

> **" One idea, which is quite simple, is keep the activity but change the subject or the people. "**

Adapting activities from the coursebook

It is not unusual to come across activities in the coursebooks that do not really speak to our students. For example, asking tweens to describe George Clooney's appearance or students who are not into sports to write about their favorite sportsperson. They are not bad activities, and many times their aim is good, they just need a little twist.

One idea, which is quite simple, is keep the activity but change the subject or the people. If the activity requires the student to ask and answer questions about a famous actor and you know they are interested in basketball, you can easily make a card with important information about a player and use that instead.

Another idea is, when talking about appearance, use actors or characters from their favorite TV shows to create a Guess Who game. In order to do this in a time-efficient way, you can use ready templates that can be found online, create your own on Canva or simply give students a list of characters or actors. It is more likely they will remember the vocabulary if they associate it with something they see often.

Using students' interests to present a new topic

This is a good way to engage them in what you want to teach. Let's say you are teaching parts of the body. I used to love using sticky notes in the pre-pandemic world and face-to-face teaching. Students would be in pairs and put the sticky notes, that had parts of the body written on them, on each other, or even on the teacher, that was great fun. However, this has changed with online teaching and we have to find other ways to keep them engaged. So, why not use a photo of their favorite singer to teach them parts of the body? Here is an example of an activity that was created in less than five minutes using a photo of Dua Lipa and the website Wordwall.

Example of activity using Canva

Pic by Author
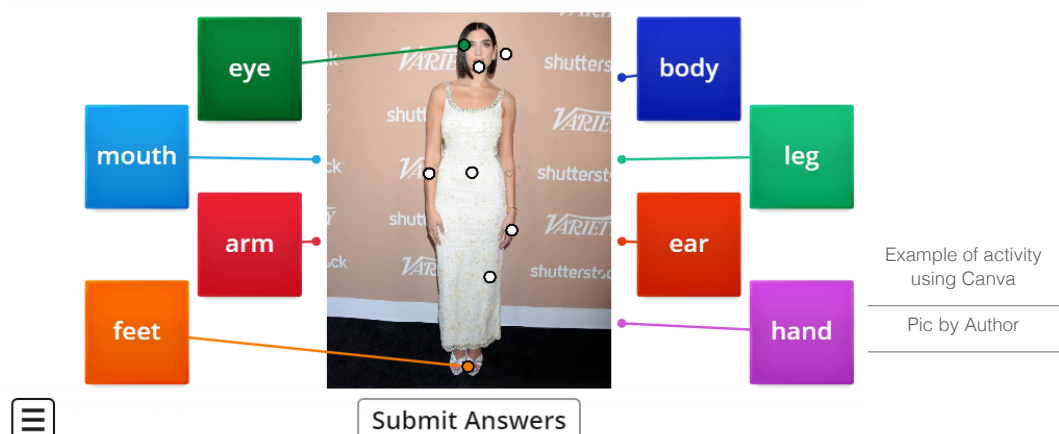
Using students' interests to present a topic does not take long. You can find photos, movies and songs that they like and that are easily accessible on the internet. These can be used to create simple activities such as describing a scene of their favorite movie, teaching the present continuous or reading the lyrics of a song they enjoy to try to work out the rules of a grammar topic.

An example of this was an activity created using Jamboard for a student who is a fan of Taylor Swift. She had to read the lyrics and choose between possessive adjectives and possessive pronouns. Afterwards, she listened to the song to checked her answers to try find out why one was used instead of the other. This was very productive as she had the chance to work out the grammar rule by herself and also had fun listening to a singer she liked. It was definitely more meaningful than if we had just gone through the rules and some examples that weren't relevant to her interests.

Using students' lives and experiences to present grammar topics

This is one of my favourites. It requires little or no preparation and all we need is a board, whether it is a physical one or the whiteboard on Zoom.

I like to use it a lot when teaching B2 First classes, because they already know the grammar topics and it is usually a review, so taking a personal situation works wonders when trying to elicit a sentence using third conditional, for example.

Once I drew on the students' experience when working with mixed conditionals. One of them had mentioned she had slept badly the previous night, so I took advantage of that to illustrate the topic.

Another time was when I wanted students to revise *seem like, look as if* and these kinds of structures. As they were all friends from school and used to joke about arguing with each other, I wrote a little story about them fighting and apologizing. They got really engaged because they wanted to know where the story was going and they even suggested some sentences and different ways to say what I wrote. That obviously required a bit more preparation, but still, it wouldn't take you more than ten minutes to create a few sentences using your students' lives as the main topic.

Example of activity using Whiteboard

Pic by Author

Both examples were from B2 First classes, but that doesn't mean it doesn't work with lower levels. Once in an A2 class, I had planned to teach modals of obligation using school rules. However, at the beginning of the class they told me they were going on a camping trip. That was the perfect opportunity to include their forthcoming trip in our class. I gave them the beginning of the sentences and asked them to complete them with things related to the trip. The result was surprising, as they managed to create more sentences than I predicted and kept talking for longer than I expected them to. They showed genuine interest in that.

Using students' interests for extra practice

Sometimes it can be more difficult to use something students like to present a new grammar topic or vocabulary. When this happens, we can always try to use their interests when doing a controlled or freer practice exercise. This tends to be helpful when they really like something in their native language, such as a TV show or a song. In this case, it is harder to illustrate a grammar topic, for example, using   lines from the TV show, but we can use scenes as the basis for a gap-fill activity, for example.

I have tried this with a class who was keen on Big Brother Brasil. As the whole program is in Portuguese, I did some research on the internet about the participants and found some photos of them on the show. Then, I turned that into a gap-fill exercise in which students had to complete the sentences using simple present or present continuous.

Example of activity using Baamboozle

Pic by Author

Do we always have to cater for students' interests?

If relating content to students' lives and likes is this important, does it mean we have to do this all the time? Do we need to adapt every single thing from coursebooks?

It might be argued that by trying to relate the content of the lessons to what students enjoy outside the classroom we might be depriving ourselves of the chance to introduce them to new things like other cultures, different writers and genres, and TV programs they do not know and would perhaps take to. And that is why I believe there needs to be a balance.

Taking my context as an example, I would not change a text from the coursebook that talks about Hogmanay and replace it with one talking about Carnival just because the students like and are familiar with this festival. I want them to know other cultures as part of learning a new language is also knowing the culture of the countries where that language is spoken. On the other hand, if my students have never watched a Jude Law movie, I do not think an activity that asks them to find out if Jude Law is his actual name would bring any benefit.

In other words, we need to know our students and their interests, as well as what might or might not be relevant, in order to make the best decision when adapting materials.

Tools that can make our lives easier

There are many options available for us when we want to create a new activity or adapt something from the coursebook to make it more dynamic.

If you want something quick, Wordwall offers a great variety of activity templates and all you have to do is type your questions. It takes less than five minutes to create an activity.

When choosing to design your own game, such as the Guess Who mentioned, I strongly suggest using Canva as once you create a template, you can easily edit it for other classes. This way, although it might take you longer the first time, it is something you can reuse time and time again.

Baamboozle and Blooket are good options when you want to use games. You can include pictures and personalize the questions based on your students' interests, and they come in handy when you are tired of students' asking to play Kahoot every class.

Conclusion

Both teachers and students can benefit when lessons are made more personal and, despite what many may think, preparing something that caters a little more for the students' tastes is not that time-consuming, especially if you prepare activities that can be reused.

With so many resources available, it is worth giving it a shot as this usually results in more motivated learners. Having said that, try to always keep a balance between what students are keen on and new things that they might become interested in once they have the chance to learn about.

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Ana Carolina Cardoso Bedenik is an ESL teacher based in Brazil. She has been teaching for 10 years and currently works as an online private teacher and a Cambridge speaking examiner. Ana holds a B.A. in Languages (UNESP), the CELTA, the TKT certificates and the Train the Trainer.
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How Teachers Can Leverage the Power of Gaming.

by Sean Laurence

Have you ever played a video game with friends? Please allow me to paint a picture. You're in your living room. You're sitting on the couch in front of a big TV with some friends. Everyone has a game controller in their hand. You're playing Nintendo's Wii Tennis. Your friend just hit a supersonic serve and you missed the return. Someone cracks a joke. Or maybe you are in mortal combat with your best friend on the PlayStation. Everyone is cheering you on as you battle your friend. Everyone is laughing, making comments and doing their best to win. What would happen if your new friend came over? Your friend recently moved from another country. He's learning English and only understands some of what people are saying. He doesn't understand everything but he does understand the shouts of excitement when someone wins and the loud groans when someone loses. Some say that music is a universal language, I would like to propose that gaming is a universal language too.

This article will help you tap into the power of gaming. Reading a book can be very enjoyable because it can transport you anywhere, but reading might be a chore and something language learners want to avoid. Gaming is a visual medium. It helps language learners understand what is happening.

> **"Games can reach out and touch you with their stories. They are a form of interactive entertainment that goes beyond watching a movie or reading a book."**

Games can be enjoyed in many ways (alone or with friends). You can take on the role of an archaeologist seeking buried treasure or a space marine vanquishing demons on Mars. Games can reach out and touch you with their stories. They are a form of interactive entertainment that goes beyond watching a movie or reading a book. Games allow language learners to explore the English language in a completely new way. It is appealing and they want to come back for more.

Teachers might encounter parents who are against gaming. It can be detrimental to a students' academic performance. Only if there isn't a balance between studying and gaming. Teachers can help parents understand that gaming can be an opportunity for learning, growth and connection. They can suggest a simple contract between parents and children - "If you finish your homework, you get three hours of gaming time". Parents should embrace gaming. They shouldn't cut the cord to completely prevent any sort of gaming.

Teachers can get their students excited with Minecraft homework. Students usually don't associate the adjective "exciting" with homework. Many of your students think Minecraft is exciting though. Cambridge English thinks so, too. They made a Minecraft level which helps your students get better at English while playing the game. Minecraft is a massively popular game which is easy to play. What Cambridge English made will excite and engage your students.

English Adventures from Cambridge English is a Minecraft world. You can get it after you install the Minecraft Education Edition. When you start English Adventures for the first time, there are simple quests. To solve the library gate quest, you must unlock the padlock with a four letter word. The immersive reader feature in Minecraft is helpful for students. They can see parts of speech, slow the voice speed for any character and translate.

My students had a lot of fun completing the Minecraft homework I had assigned to them. Before playing the first time, they were given questions. The answers were waiting for them to discover in the game. Some students explored the level even further. They learned gaming can be for education in addition to entertainment. Students had to write the answers as complete sentences in their notebooks. I gave my students a surprise quiz on the day the homework was due. The questions in the quiz were the same as when I assigned the Minecraft homework. If they already answered my homework questions, the quiz was a breeze for them.

Other teachers around the world have used Minecraft innovatively. They have used it to educate their students about sustainable cities, computer programming and understanding volcanoes. Anyone can create anything in Minecraft. Teachers can even ask their students to create their own Minecraft level around a topic. The Minecraft website has many resources for teachers such as training, lesson plans and community forums.

Students are part of the gaming universe in many ways. Teachers can educate students how gaming can be woven into their education. Students like watching other people play games. Live Streamers speaking in English on Twitch and YouTube are funny and entertaining. Play Together is an app which lets students talk in English with other players. Quiz your English is an app which tests your English grammar skills with players around the world. Teachers can open the door for their students if they educate themselves about the ways in which gaming can be educational (and fun) for their students.

I want to give some more advice to teachers. They can share it with their students.

- Gaming should be inclusive. It's for everyone. Try to get all of your students to play. Even the non-gamers.

- Students can tap into a worldwide community. They can make new friends, share experiences together and get exposure to different cultures.

- Encourage students to change the language of the game to English. They should keep a notebook where they can write new vocabulary or grammar.

- Students can voice chat (within the game or with Discord) with other players to improve their English listening and speaking skills. Search YouTube for Real English for Gamers. It's an excellent resource for students to get started.

- Start an after-school gaming club. Students can meet online to improve their English skills while playing together. Think of it like Zoom with games.

- Create an online community for you and your students. Discord is free, fun and easy to use.

I started Language Legends. We meet online every week and play games like Uno. In the future, I want to play more complex games with my members. I'd like to try Garctic Phone, Codename and an MMORPG. Search Facebook for Language Legends [5] and you'll find my group.

Teachers can use the power of gaming to engage, excite and educate their students. Students can think of gaming as not only a form of entertainment but also as a form of education. Putting entertainment and education together is a winning combination.

seanlaurence.com/minecraft

Pic by Author

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How to Develop Cultural Awareness Competence in the ESL Class

by Meritxell Blanco

Context of cultural awareness competence

The globalisation and the technological breakthroughs of the past years have brought the necessity to integrate culture into the education curriculum. In 2018, the Council of the European Union set eight key competencies needed to reach personal fulfilment, development, employability, active citizenship, and social inclusion. One of these key competencies is cultural awareness and expression described as: "the appreciation of the importance of the creative expression of ideas, experiences, and emotions in a range of media, including music, performing arts, literature, and the visual arts". (EU Parliament and of the Council, 2018, p.15).

This article aims at showing different ways to integrate cultural elements while raising students' cultural awareness and expression in the ESL (English as Second Language) classroom. Developing this competence will facilitate the understanding and expression of different cultures. As Yurtsever and Özel (2021) suggest, knowing a culture means being aware of the differences, similarities, and uniqueness of any cultural element.

> **❝ The typology of activities can be classified into two categories. The short and isolated activities done at any moment of the academic year and the projects which integrate cultural elements. ❞**

Activities to develop cultural awareness competence in the ELT class

The first step, before preparing activities or integrating culture within a project, is to reflect upon your teaching context: Where do you work? What is your teaching methodology? Do you teach young learners, teenagers, or adults? Do you do cross-curricular projects in your institution? Do you teach English through CLIL (Content Language Integrated Learning)? After considering your context, you can decide which adaptations are more suitable for your class. You do not need to make big changes in your curriculum but find ways to develop this competence within your context.

In the following section, I am going to present different ideas you can use and adapt to your context. Most of these ideas are developed especially in primary education, but most of them can also be adapted to other teaching contexts. The activities will be ranged from shorter to more complex ones.

Activities:

The typology of activities can be classified into two categories. The short and isolated activities done at any moment of the academic year and the projects which integrate cultural elements among its development.

The first activity I would like to present is from the first category. Working on clothing with students aged 9-10 years old, you can do a reading activity that talks about traditional clothing in different countries. To make the activity more engaging, you can prepare a jigsaw activity. Students, in groups, will become experts on a text, for example, a country. Then, they will join a different group, in which each student will explain their text to the rest of the group. Once everyone knows and understands all the texts, they will do a comprehension activity. By doing this task, students are not just developing reading and speaking skills or learning grammar and vocabulary, but also learning about the cultural background behind this topic. This activity will probably take two or three sessions depending on the level, age, and context of your students.

There are other concrete activities, applicable to all levels, that can be done in isolation to what your learners are doing at that moment. For example, you can do an activity about greetings in different countries at the beginning of the school year. It can be done as a unique session or even be integrated into a lesson plan. There are different objectives in this activity; students will learn how people greet when they meet someone in different cultures while they learn how to say "hello" or "nice to meet you" in other languages. Moreover, it is a lovely way to start the year and build rapport with your students. On the other hand, this activity can be included in the annual planning. Give a passport to your students and once a month make them travel to a different country. Apart from learning how to greet, they can also learn something about what they are learning at that moment. If they are working on food, they can learn about typical dishes there.

Greetings around the world (Pixabay)

Pic by Author

Another good idea for your ELT class is carrying out a cross-curricular activity in collaboration with other subjects and teachers. For example, you can collaborate with the P.E. teacher and work on traditional sports in different countries. You can also collaborate with the Music teacher and learn about the place of origin of some instruments and create a short song or rap about it.

The next proposal I would like to share is related to literature. It was a project I did as a student in high school in the Spanish class, but I think it can be done in the foreign class with the proper adaptations. We were distributed in groups of 4 and each group was assigned a short traditional story of a country. We started reading the story and

looking at its context. Then, we adapted the original story to a short play's representation in which we also had to explain some basic information related to that tale like the origin of the story and a fact we learned about that country. Finally, we made the representations and shared our findings with the rest of our classmates.

The following idea I am going to share is about a project I did with my students in grade 2 (7-8 years old). It was a project about the animals of the world, and it had two parts: 1) The investigation of different animals and their habitat in the five continents; 2) Learning about how some animals are a national emblem in some countries.

Students worked in cooperative groups, and each group researched the information of a specific continent. It was in the second part of the project, where cultural awareness took place. From the animals that students had researched, they chose one which is a national symbol in one of the countries of that continent. Moreover, they had to find the reason why it is symbolic.

To facilitate the process to my young learners, I shared with them two Genially presentations with videos and websites about the information they had to research. Once each group finished their investigations and completed their datasheets, they shared their findings with their classmates. My students prepared a short presentation explaining the main information they found but, depending on the age and level of your students, they can also create a poster or even do a video with their main findings.

Animals of the world - collage by author

Pic by Author

Finally, the last idea I would like to share is related to joining an international project with other schools. This is one of the most significant ways to help students raise their cultural awareness while finding a real use of language learning. In the projects my school has participated in, students have exchanged postcards and letters with students from other countries. In the first letter, they usually presented themselves and ask some personal questions to their penfriend assigned. Then, in the next letters, they exchanged information about a topic that was decided previously with the other teachers. The projects done were about the traditions in our country. Moreover, they also shared Christmas postcards with them.

In another project we participated in, the students in grade 6 shared different videos showing their school, describing their schedule, and explaining the festivals celebrated in the school. In the upcoming projects, we would like to move a step further and integrate virtual meetings within the project activities. In most of the cases, as English was the only language the students had in common, they found a real purpose in learning a foreign language while doing these projects. In addition, they also developed cultural awareness by getting familiar with other cultures. We have done all these projects through the European platform, eTwinning.

To sum up, there are different ways to raise students' cultural awareness without making it time-consuming. It is essential that students understand the cultural and linguistic diversity of a country and in the world. Therefore, it is our responsibility as teachers to help students build the necessary skills to become respectful, tolerant, and empathetic citizens.

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Integrating Skills in the ELT Lessons via LMS.

by Firos Kalarikkal

Introduction

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has stalled almost every sphere of life temporarily. While other sectors face a huge deadlock, educators turned the challenges into opportunities. Many more innovations came into practice in the teaching and learning process during the pandemic. However, there are many more issues to be faced and dealt with successfully. Integrating all the four language macro skills of English language while delivering lessons via online platforms including Learning Management Systems (LMS) is such a key issue that teachers faced during their online teaching. Since LMSs are web-based technology and these software systems facilitate platform to plan, implement and assess a learning module or a course, technology has an increased grip on day to day teaching learning process. This influence is more evident in EFL/ESL classes where effective online tools on varied LMS provide room for tailored teaching and better academic performance of learners.

What is an Integrated Language Lesson?

Integrated language teaching and learning happens when different language skills are practiced with focus concurrently. All the four macro skills of a language, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing are in the limelight of the lesson. Richards and Rogers (2001) defined integrated language lessons in this direction as lessons involve activities that relate listening and speaking to reading and writing. Afnan (2014) stated that this approach employs two or more language skills in a lesson or a task. In other words, by integrating skills, language classes are a bit different from the traditional style of teaching skills separately. Teachers need to plan well in order to have full-fledged integrated skill teaching elements even in their lessons given via LMSs.

High Demand for Integrated Lessons.

The arguments and debates over if integrated or segregated approaches are suitable for language learning are a thing of the past. According to Jing (2006), integrated methods are widely discussed and recognized as the best means for the development of communicative competence. This pertains to the ever widening need of a learner to be involved in a process that reflects real life challenges of using a foreign language. Jing (2006) substantiates his argument by saying that multiple skills are used for communication in day to day life. Staying with this point of view, Nunn (2006) also opined that the holistic approach for integrating skills in language lessons has gained prominence in the ELT world. Teachers around the globe had been constantly practicing this approach in their face to face lessons before the pandemic. However, integrated lessons became a real challenge when the lessons went online and thus this topic has been brought even more to the forefront.

> **"Integrated lessons became a real challenge when the lessons went online and thus this topic has been brought even more to the forefront."**

The Challenge

Though there are plenty of LMSs for different purposes, there is not enough specialized learning software to impart language lessons meritoriously. This affects the appropriate application of language teaching-learning methodologies including the integrated skills approach and eventually it will result in not achieving learning objectives. For example, having group work was not possible on Microsoft Teams until it introduced the breakout rooms facility. Even breakout room activities for group or pair work should be assigned carefully. Giving roles in the group/pair will ensure potential input from individual students. In order to add quality to the integrated skills lessons online, the young learners, especially at tertiary level, can benefit from the audio/video lessons by means of social networks. It should be done in view that the listening as a passive skill can enrich the learner's speaking skill as a productive skill. Thus, more careful and practical study and suggestions need to be popped up. An example situation is explained below:

(Lesson courtesy: https://elllo.org/english/1501/1525-RachelTodd-PastNow-Teens.htm)

Here, the teacher aims students to reinstate past tenses and by a listening activity followed by a speaking task. The topic of the listening script is about 'How life was different in the 80s in America and New Zealand.' The teacher plays the video/audio from and students listen to/watch it in small groups taking notes of important information in bullet points. After the first and second listen, students discuss their notes in their groups and form ideas on how to present these notes in the form of speaking. The teacher facilitates and monitors the activities to ensure the smooth transition from one skill to another. In this scenario, main skills like listening and speaking, sub-skills such as grammar and study skills such as note-taking are beautifully integrated and well-practiced. The flow chart below explains how a listening activity well lead to speaking practice.

Integrating listening skill into speaking skill - flowchart by author (lucidchart.com)

Pic by Author
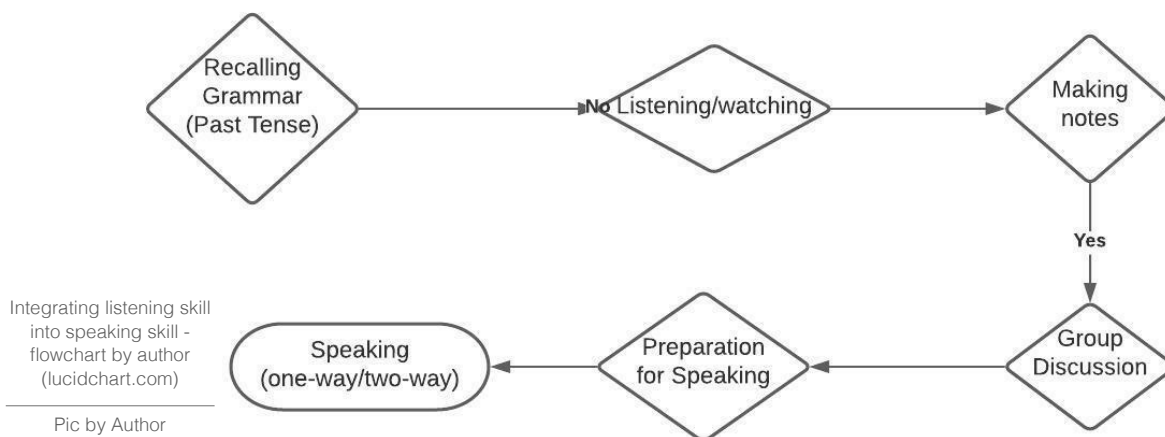
Teachers have to take their practice of the holistic approach of language teaching into the online lessons. The real life situations demand the learner to be immersed into all four interwoven skills. In other words, the classroom should not lose the vicinity of the real world. In this direction, teachers are encouraged to give ample space for collaborative learning among students. This can be achieved by framing the lesson plan with a room for integrated practices in reading and writing for some lessons and in listening and speaking for some other occasions. As reading (Passive Skill) facilitates ideas for writing (Active Skill) tasks and listening (Passive Skill) gives tips for speaking (Active Skill), the integration happens to bring better learning. The rendering of the lesson activity suits the purpose of creating social nature of the tasks by group work or pair work in all the skills. This will enable the learner to use the language in context. Also, it is found that interchanging classroom activities for above mentioned skills will add up more cognitive ability. Devising and administering proper activities is a real challenge of the time as most lessons are given through varied LMS. Thus, teachers are required to update themselves to facilitate effective integration of skills in their lessons.

Text book contents vs Self-prepared materials
In order for teachers to provide integrated lessons, careful and blended use of content from both prescribed textbooks and self-prepared material. Therefore, a well devised plan for the lesson is needed. The plan should incorporate all the three folds of ELT lessons namely skills, system and phonology. The last two items-system and phonology- can be sub themes of a skill lesson. For example, if the main focus of the lesson is speaking (skill), the elements of phonology should be made as one of the sub-targets. The lesson will include a listening part and eventually, this particular lesson becomes integrated. As a facilitator, you need to provide students with ample opportunity to engage and practice the language they encounter in their day to day life. Likewise, in a writing lesson, guided reading can be given to prepare students for the writing task.

Online Classes
As many teachers have experienced during the pandemic, having skills integrated in a lesson that is delivered on LMS can be highly challenging. However, it is not a herculean task as many platforms give features to facilitate collaborative learning such as group or peer activities online. According to Harasim (2012), Online Collaborative Learning (OCL) provides a model of learning in which students are encouraged and supported to work together to create knowledge. For instance, on Microsoft teams, the 'Breakout Rooms' is a fine tool for productive collaboration. Small groups of students of a class can work on the assigned task and then the teacher can invite members from different groups to present the results of their work. Using the 'class notebook' facility is another convenient resort on MS Teams. Here, teachers can assign roles to individual students and lead to the whole class production of end-result. In a writing lesson, the teacher pastes a sample text and asks Comprehension Checking Questions (CCQs) to familiarize students with the format of the particular type of writing. In the case of an email writing context, learners will be able to understand the format and style of email writing by reading the sample email that the teacher presented in the class notebook area of MS Teams. After eliciting the different steps of email writing, the teacher can lead students to 'a chain writing' task in which volunteers (or teacher assigned students) produce parts of the email. The final result will be learners' full comprehension of writing an email without error.

Moodle is another platform where teachers can use many of its features such as forums, chats, blogs, and workshops to apply different ways of interaction and collaboration for the content they want to teach. The integration of skills and sub skills can be achieved by segregating the whole class into small groups and assigning tasks to them to produce the lesson objectives.

An asynchronous way of learning has got an impetus in this time of online learning and therefore, all LMS platforms have the facility to provide audio-video lectures, study materials, mock tests etc. These can be accessed by the students anytime they prefer and go through at their own pace. Therefore, teachers need to carefully prepare, upload and assign assignments periodically in such a way that all the macro skills can be practiced concurrently. This will enable students to achieve the envisaged aim of the course outline.

Conclusion

English language learning can get a paradigm shift through careful and effective use of learning management systems for integrated language lessons to promote meaningful application and synthesis of skills. The key role to bring this change into effect lies in the hands of educators and they must be aware of e-learning pedagogy with practical strategy.

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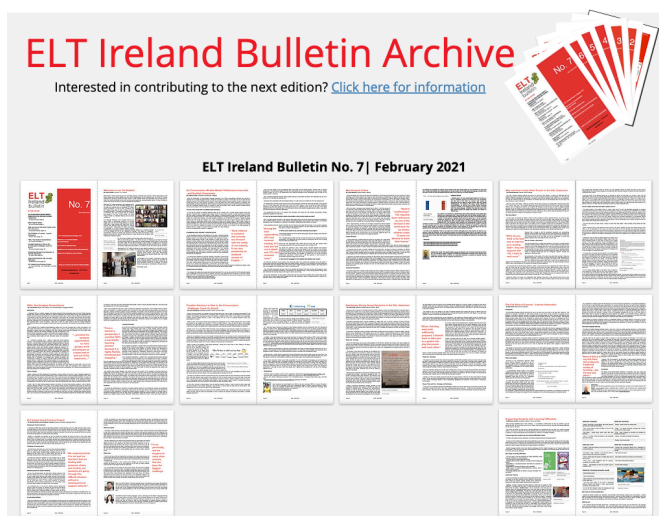
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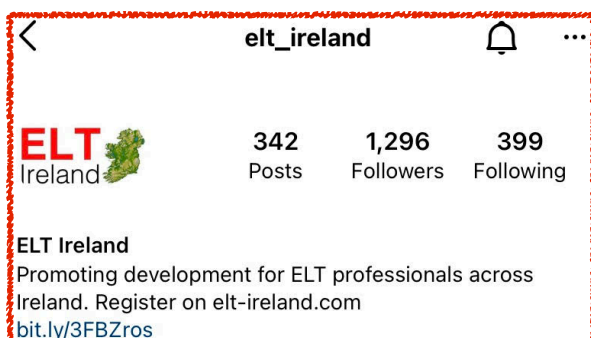Scan the QR code to find out how you can become a member and what a membership entitles you to.

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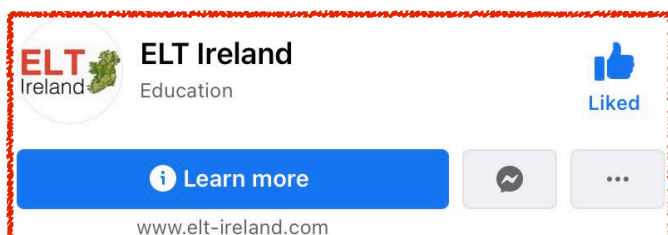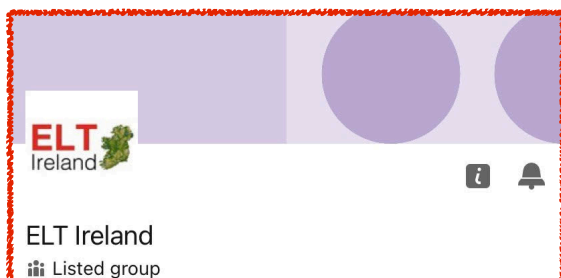
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