ELT Ireland bulletin

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Email us to write for the next ELT Ireland Bulletin!

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Welcome to our 9th Bulletin!

by Laura O'Grady (President of ELT Ireland)

The ELT Ireland committee of 2022 was unchanged from the previous year with all members continuing in their roles. I want to extend my heartfelt thanks and admiration to our committee, who volunteer their time and energy to ensure that ELT Ireland can be an engaging network for English language teachers. In 2022, ELT Ireland and our members took the reins of their 'New Beginning' and enabled our committee to, once again, step up to the plate and ensure that our scheduled ELT Ireland events proceeded. It is due to their commitment that ELT Ireland is able to host a variety of events throughout the year for our members and non-members alike. Throughout the last year, we've been able to ensure that our members had access to our ELTed events (hosted by Linguaviva Centre, SEDA College and Mary Immaculate College), our Manager Meet-up, our Bulletin and our Annual Conference.

The ELT Ireland Committee at the 2022 Conference

Pic by ELT Ireland

Our 9th annual conference is once again taking place in Griffith College this year on the 18th and 19th February 2023. The theme is "Back to a Future" and we are looking forward to welcoming our plenary speakers Mary Grennan, Julia Aliverti and Aoife Hurley. 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!
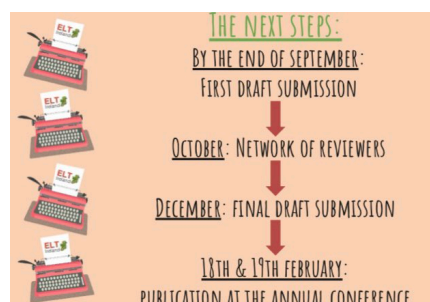
Membership of ELT Ireland continues to grow gaining members from both within and outside the ELT community. The committee will also be gaining some members for the remainder of 2023 and in the lead up to the 10th Annual Conference in 2024. With in person events retuning to pre-Covid engagement, we are placing an extra focus on how we organise our events throughout the year with Levente Szolga, Camila Oliveira and Carolina Farinha coming onboard to lend a hand while Daragh McMunn will take over from Amanda McGeer with the publication of the yearly Bulletin. We would like to extend our thanks to Amanda for the work she has done with the Bulletin over the last couple of years.

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, am looking forward to growing our membership in the year ahead.

Letter from the Editor

by Amanda McGeer (Bulletin Editor)

This edition of the ELT Ireland Bulletin that you have in your hands or open in your browser did not happen overnight. In my second year as editor, I have had the privilege of working alongside eight 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 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.

Welcome to the ELT Ireland Article Writing Forum!

Bring your creativity, leave with an article idea.

September 7th 2022
6pm – 8pm

THE NEXT STEPS:

BY THE END OF SEPTEMBER:
FIRST DRAFT SUBMISSION

OCTOBER: NETWORK OF REVIEWERS

DECEMBER: FINAL DRAFT SUBMISSION

18TH & 19TH FEBRUARY:
PUBLICATION AT THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Slides from the 2022 Article Writing Forum

Pic by ELT Ireland

ELT Ireland Membership

by Anna Maroutian (Membership Officer)

Having lived through the extremely uncertain times brought on by the pandemic, we have always appreciated the support from our loyal institutional as well as individual members. Our conference last year brought back a lot of familiar faces and the committee was very generous to have agreed to keep membership costs at a 'covid-rate' to help our valuable members get back on their feet. This year we are happy to report that promising numbers have shown interest in attending this year's events with many institutional member participants kicking off the year with our first management event hosted by Peter Lahiff. Although membership prices have now gone back to their original rate, we are very pleased to see active membership renewals once again. Thank you to all our members for allowing us to continue to serve our community.

ELT Ireland Newsletter

by Ben Dobbs (Newsletter Editor)

Throughout the past year, ELT Ireland's biweekly email newsletter has continued to keep readers up-to-date with events, news and more. The newsletter has, at the most recent count, just short of 400 subscribers with a regular readership of around 50% of those. We are endeavouring to obtain more updates, news and offers from our readers that they are keen to share with others; happily, this has increased over the past year with information shared on conferences, webinars, publications and more.

From the audience to an excited committee member

by Camila Oliveira (New Committee Member for 2023)

I was invited to attend an ELTed event last May when I had just returned to teaching after a 3-year gap due to burnout. I found the topics of the talks interesting and decided to join some colleagues on a sunny Saturday morning -   especially because we would go out for drinks later! Little did I know how motivated I would leave The Linguaviva Centre that day. Seeing teachers passionately talking about their experiences in the classroom was inspiring and filled me with ideas, not only for my classes but also for my career: in the months following the event, I took a TESOL course and have started a DELTA.

ELTed Talks Speakers

Pic by ELT Ireland

Last October, SEDA College, the school I work in, hosted another ELTed and I was invited to present a talk. During the organisation process, everyone was so kind, and on the day of my talk, they were so welcoming that I decided to join ELT as a committee member. No regrets! Being part of the team has been a great opportunity to share ideas, get inspired, network and get energised by all the amazing people who take part in each event. I cannot wait for all the brilliant gatherings that are being organised for this year!

Why and How Do You Do It?

by Peter Lahiff

ELT Ireland is a members organisation powered by its voluntary committee and as the longest serving committee member I am sometimes asked why or how we do it. It is true that there is often times that work and family commitments make it hard to get near the to do list for ELT Ireland. The longer the emails are unanswered and the more unread messages there are in the committee group chat the harder it is to get back into the swing of it. At those time you really do ask yourself, "how am I going to do this?" Then at other times you are taking time out to persuade people to take part in an event and getting very little response and you ask yourself why. The second of these two questions is the big one, it is important to know why you are doing something. You could complain about the state of things and how there should be more done to improve the image of English Language Teaching and there should be more opportunities to develop as professionals. Being part of the ELT Ireland committee is an opportunity to do something about that, there is no real satisfaction to be hard in complaining. Once you know *why* then *how* is about making a deal with your friends and family that some time will be dedicated to this "Hobby" or sometimes an understanding boss in the run up to an event will see the benefit if allowing you a bit of time to dedicate to to it. It is important to know you limitations (as with anything you try and do) and not bite off more that you can manage. It has been great to be part of it since 2014 and to those who have not been involved in making something like this happen, I would say, "you're missing out". Drop us a line or corner us at the conference for a chat. Getting involved is easier that you think and more satisfying that you imagine.

The Ways of Raising (Inter)Cultural Awareness in EFL/ESL Settings

by Eylül Karabulut

Recently, in English language teaching, the idea of teaching culture and raising (inter)cultural awareness/competence has gained importance. For that reason, terms such as sociolinguistics competence, and intercultural communicative competence proposed by Byram (1997) are used frequently in EFL/ESL settings. In this article, I will briefly mention what culture is and its relation with language teaching, and how we as English teachers can raise (inter)cultural awareness in our classroom. Finally, I will provide some practical ideas to improve the (inter)cultural competence of language learners.

Pic by Min An on Pixels.com

What Is Culture?

Before delving into the integration of culture in EFL classes, the concept of culture should be defined. Culture is defined as "the shared repertoires of values, beliefs, and experiences that a group of people use for understanding and engaging with the world around them" (Decapua,2018 p.1).In other words, it can be defined as the social norms, beliefs, values, and products (i.e.foods, clothes, traditional dances) of a particular community. In addition, there are some elements of culture called practices, perspectives, and products – also known as the 3P s of culture (Frank,2013). Practices can be defined as the way that members of a community interact and communicate with each other. Perspectives, on the other hand, are related to the feelings, values, and beliefs of the members of a culture. Finally, products are the things that the members of a community create and pass down to the other generations – such as foods, clothes, and dances (Frank, 2013). These concepts also fall into two categories as Big C and Small C (this was proposed by well-known applied linguist Claire Kramsch). While the former refers to products (e.g., foods, clothes), the latter is related to perspectives and practices (e.g., the way they greet each other).

> **" Culture is an indispensable part of the language learning teaching/ learning process"**

The Relationship Between Culture and ELT

Teaching a language without including its culture is nearly impossible as culture and language are strongly bonded. As language is a social phenomenon, "it is strongly affected by the social contexts in which we see, hear and experience even though we do things with words" (Kavaklı,2020). To put it differently, the social context where a language is used influences the way it is organized, used and shaped. It even affects the choice of the lexicon and grammar structure. Keeping all these in mind, when it comes to the relationship of culture with English language teaching, it can be stated that culture is an indispensable part of the language learning teaching/learning process. Firstly, the language teachers themselves should be equipped with the essential knowledge and skills with regard to the language learning process such as how language is processed, and organized, and the influence of native language and culture on the use of L2.

When it comes to language learners, the concept called communicative competence presented by Dell Hymes comes into play. It encompasses discourse competence, strategic competence, grammatical competence, and finally sociolinguistic competence. As our topic is concerned, in English language classes, the learners should also have sociolinguistic competence, which means that they are supposed to know not only the formal qualities but also the use of the target language in a certain social context, and they are supposed to know how to use the language appropriate to social variables such as age, gender, status, etc.

The Ways of Raising (Inter)Cultural Awareness

Cultural Iceberg (Frank, 2013):

As mentioned above, we can divide culture into categories such as Big C and Small C. In order to help our students to gain awareness of this concept, this kind of task presented by Frank (2013) can be used. Firstly, the teacher gives the students a worksheet on which there is an iceberg. Afterward, the students are supposed to find the products that belong to their own (local)

culture because it is more effective to move from known to unknown. In the meantime, the teacher can display some examples such as foods, and clothes in the UK or in other countries as English is now the lingua franca and international means of communication. After they discuss surface culture, it is time for them to talk about the most important aspect of culture, subsurface culture. The teacher can encourage the students to talk about their own thoughts, beliefs, and values, and how they use non-verbal language. As in the previous one, the teacher can bring some examples to make them recognize the hidden aspects of society and how they use verbal and non-verbal language.

Source: https://blogs.missouristate.edu/international/2020/05/27/idiom-tip-of-the-iceberg/
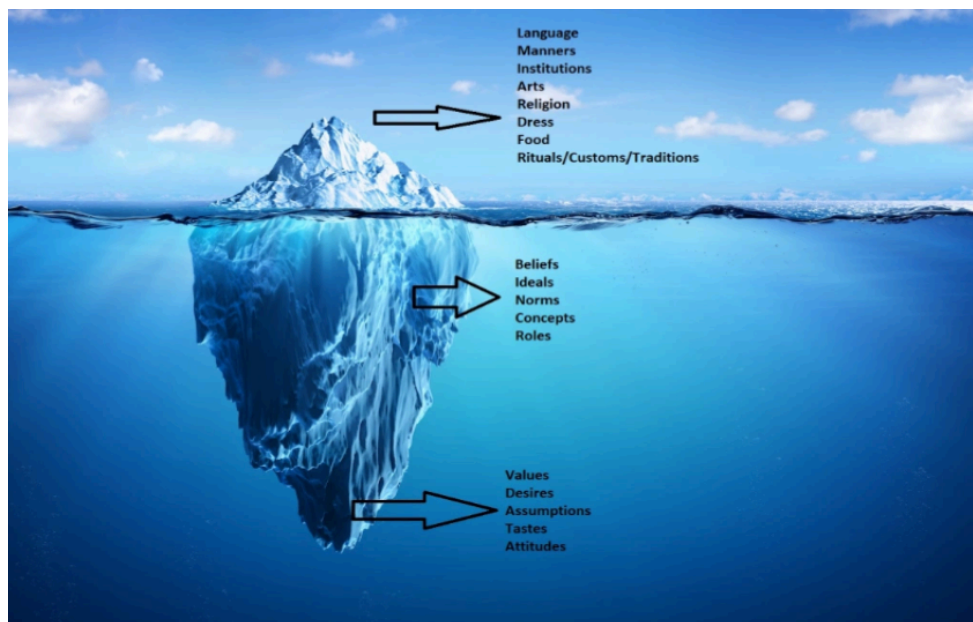
Role-Play

Role-play activities are one of the influential ways to integrate culture and promote critical cultural awareness. Experiential learning comes into play in this part as the learners learn by doing. For example, the teacher may want the students to act out a dialogue where a communication breakdown occurs. While they are acting it out, the other students can make them stop and they can discuss the problems in that dialogue (Frank, 2013). This in return fosters critical thinking. The other task can be assigned by the teacher. That is, the students can be assigned to certain countries to do research. In the next lesson, they can behave as if they are from that country and they can even imitate the accent and the body language that is specific to that culture. In addition, the students can search for the meaning of that body language in order to eliminate the possible stereotypes towards that culture. In this way, the students will learn how to behave and how to use the language in a real encounter. Therefore, it can also be called simulation.

Integration of Technology

With the advancements in technology, we have access to an abundance of information. Newly developed technologies such as culture and language exchange sites can be influential when teaching culture. Especially, social media sites which are now being used globally with a staggering number of 7.7 billion which means that social media is used by one in three people in the world – these statistics belong to 2019 Ortiz-Ospina, 2019. For that reason, it is one of the most important tools that a language teacher can use. However, the question is how can we integrate it into our classes, and what is its relation with culture? For example, TikTok has a wide range of language content where some people record short videos regarding their cultural practices or their experiences in another culture. These videos can be added to English language classes. For example, learners can be assigned to record these kinds of videos where a cross-cultural encounter occurs.

In addition, WebQuests can be used while teaching culture. That is, the learners can be assigned some questions and do research on the web. In the next lesson, they can present their findings and discuss them. The questions can be related to the traditional dishes and holidays of a certain country. However, it does not mean that an English teacher can integrate the cultures of The USA or The UK. As English is now considered a lingua franca, it is possible to integrate a wide range of cultures.

Culture Assimilators

Culture assimilators were developed by Fiedler, Mitchel, and Triandis (1971). They are defined as learning experiences where learners are exposed to the customs, behaviors, and attitudes of other cultures. They are also seen as one of the most useful and functional techniques to be used in foreign language classes (Yılmaz, 2020).

In general, culture assimilators include some incidents where communication breakdowns occur because of cultural differences. Students are introduced to incidents with 4 or 5 options that are the possible interpretations of the problem raised during the communication. For example, the encounter of two people can be given. One of them gives importance to being punctual while the other one does not care much about the allocated time because of the cultural values that each one has. A scenario can be created where a student from a certain culture, where being punctual is not paid much attention, is always late for meetings, and has a problem with communicating with the teacher regarding that situation. Following that,   interpretations of this situation regarding the reasons for the student being late can be provided. The students are supposed to choose the most appropriate interpretation of the breakdown. In this way, they get an insight into the differences in other cultures and some issues that arose because of them. They can also interpret the different perspectives which belong to a certain culture. Besides, by interpreting the problem and its result, they manage to come up with different strategies to be used during the communication.

These are some of the techniques and ways to increase (inter)cultural awareness of language learners. As language teachers and student teachers, we should have this awareness first so that we can equip our students with the essential skills and knowledge regarding the use of the language appropriately and suitable for the given culture/social context.

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Eylül Karabulut is a graduate student at Ondokuz Mayıs University. She holds her BA degree in English language teaching and she is currently studying for master's degree. She has been working as an English as a foreign language teacher at a private institution. She has been teaching English at a primary level. Besides, she is a researcher and her research areas are intercultural communication, integration of ICT into EFL & ESL settings, English language teacher education.

The Do's and Don'ts of Using Technology in Your Classroom

by Daragh McMunn

Teaching today is facing challenges that it has never experienced before. The world has evolved into an extremely fast-paced society, and nobody seems to have time or patience for anything. Unfortunately, this same situation is reflected in our classrooms. Studies have suggested that, on average, students can focus and keep their attention on one topic for 10-15 minutes. This means that our classes also need to evolve and become faster, more dynamic, and have a variety of activities. So how can we achieve all of this? One readily available solution is starting to use more technology in our lessons.

During my time teaching in Mexico, I had the privilege of working in an ADS (Apple Distinguished School) and the honour of becoming an ADE (Apple Distinguished Educator), but like many educators who use technology in the classroom, the majority of what I learned and practised was self-taught. Unfortunately, today there is still a lack of formal training in this field, especially for ESL teachers. A study by the OECD in 2018 showed that in the US, only 45% of teachers described themselves as "well-prepared" for using technology in their classrooms, while in Europe, the UK rated the highest, with 50% of teachers describing themselves as the same. This relates to what I have found in my personal experience. I am an ESL teacher who started using technology in their classroom around eight years ago and has never looked back. The journey could have been more straightforward, and like learning any new skill, it takes patience and practice. Nevertheless, implementing technology has taken my classes to another level and truly enhanced my students' learning process. In this article, I will give some of the best tips I have learned over the years.

> **" With technology, today's expert can often be tomorrow's novice. Some of your students might be a lot more tech-savvy than you, which can be a good thing."**

Part of my professional experience includes giving training on the implementation of technology, and a common question that teachers often asked me was, "How can I bring technology into my classroom?" The answer is more straightforward than you may think. First, it's important to recognize that the technology is already in our classrooms. Most students will come to class with a smartphone, tablet, or laptop and be comfortable users of the technology, so the real question is, "How can we start to integrate technology properly in our classrooms?"

If you are an educator interested in implementing technology in your classroom, here are some of the things I discovered from my experiences, both good and bad! Let's start with the things you should definitely do. The tips are complemented by some of my favourite apps and other online platforms that I have used in teaching, found at the end of the article.

Research and Explore

Your first step is an obvious one but an essential one! You need to know the technological tool that you want to use. Whether it's an app, an online platform, or a new device you will introduce, make sure you have explored it first. You don't need to be an expert on it, but you need to know what it can do and its limitations. You should also consider if the tool has the same functions depending on your students' devices; this is especially true for some apps. One of the biggest failures with technology in the classroom is that sometimes as teachers, we have amazing ideas; however, if we don't try them out first and identify possible issues, it can lead to difficulties in the classroom. Make sure that before you use the tool, all your students can use it and have access to it. Finally, downloading apps or exploring the technology at the end of one class so it's ready and students are at least familiar with it for the next class can save lots of time.

Be Flexible

Due to so many different apps and other tools being available, you need to be flexible. First, consider your learning objective, and once that is accomplished, that is what your main goal should be. For example, if you want your learners to create a video using some lexis or grammar you have been working with, don't be limited to just one app. They may have another app other than the one you suggested, and once they are comfortable using it, let them use it. Always stay focused on the learning objective of your class, and remember that the technology is there to help your learners achieve it. Using technology should not be the goal of your class. It is only a tool you use to help achieve and improve classroom learning. Nevertheless, it is true that, especially with younger learners, some limitations are needed because too many options can be overly complicated for them.

Further Your Professional Development

Although there may not be an abundance of formal training courses to attend, you can still do a lot of self-paced training. This is another major plus of using technology in education. Technology producers strive to be successful in education, and teachers are their best promoters. Many have their own courses online with accreditations that look great on your CV. You can become an Apple Teacher, a Microsoft Educator, or an ambassador for many apps, all from the comfort of your own home. Many of the courses are free, help you develop the skills you and your students need, and may boost your career growth possibilities. There are also many platforms (websites & apps) that allow you to publish materials online for other teachers and students to use. You can build up followers and users, which can help develop your teaching portfolio.

As we all know, some of our best learning comes from our mistakes. However, being more prepared and aware of some of the pitfalls can help a lot. Considering that, let's look at some things we should avoid doing.

Don't Think You Are the Expert

Technology is developing rapidly; therefore, only a few can genuinely classify themselves as experts. Apps and other platforms are constantly releasing updates, and new ones are entering the market. With technology, today's expert can often be tomorrow's novice. Some of your students might be a lot more tech-savvy than you, which can be a good thing. When I started using technology in my classroom, I was given a tablet with very little training and had zero experience. However, I learned so much from my students. So don't be afraid to be the teacher and simultaneously the student. If a student can show you how to do something, openly accept the advice. Likewise, talk to your colleagues and see if and how they use technology. Social media is also full of groups of educators who are openly sharing their ideas and advice.

Don't Be Afraid

One of the significant issues teachers have is the fear factor. They think it will be too confusing, it will take too much time, or it won't work. If that is you, the problem is that you are in your comfort zone! It is true that, at first, it can take a bit of time to get everyone comfortable and up to speed with the technology. In addition, like anything, technology, at times, can fail, and yes, if you are not careful, it can be a distraction. However, technology is used everywhere today in society, and when it is used correctly in the classroom, it can make your classes become more: time efficient, engaging, creative, student-led, and motivating. A study done by Dillion and Murray (2021) found that some of the benefits of using technology included increased student engagement, motivation, and greater autonomy. Another advantage is you can teach language and digital literacy skills simultaneously, both of which will have an extremely positive impact on your students' lives.

Don't Let It Be a Distraction

It is a big fear, and it can be true that technology can be a distraction in class. Teachers think that the moment they allow their students to use their tablets, smartphones, or other technology in the classroom, they will lose their class. Sometimes we think that technology will take focus from us, and we stop being the centre of the class. However, we shouldn't be the centre of the class; the students should. We should teach our target language or skills and step back and allow our students to explore and develop them. That's when authentic learning takes place. Bearing that in mind, there must be many teaching moments in a class, so it's essential to set clear technology expectations. When it's time to listen and focus, technology should be off or away and not a distraction. I would start by using the technology for specific tasks and putting it away in-between. Also, set time limits for tasks with technology. Set short web quests where students have a short period to investigate and share some information that they found online in five minutes or create a video where they practice the pronunciation and meaning of some new vocabulary in ten minutes. Allow learners to suggest the time limit together, but stick to it. When times up, times up!

In conclusion, like any new teaching tool you wish to introduce to your classroom, there will be pros and cons. You will need to be patient and prepared to become the student too. However, from my point of view, the advantages heavily outweigh the disadvantages. There are virtually no workspaces that are not using technology to some degree in the world today, so why should your classroom be any different? Your class won't change, only improve. You will give your students many different ways to demonstrate their learning. You will develop their digital literacy skills while improving their language skills. These are two skills vital for today's world and two that go perfectly hand in hand. Best of all, you don't need to spend a fortune! With a little bit of investigation, you will find the perfect tool for your students' needs without spending a cent! For those reasons and more, today is the day to start or continue your plan to use technology in your classroom.
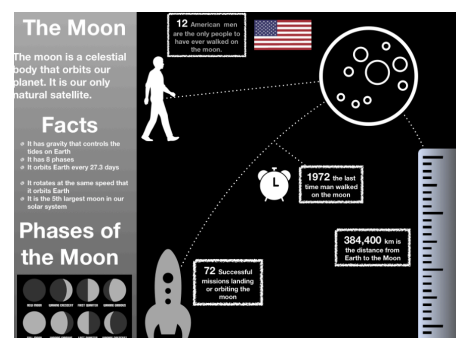
Infographics made with Keynote

Pic by Author

Finally, here are some of my go-to apps and platforms for different activities. They are user-friendly and perfect tools to get started with in your classroom. All of these are available for free.

Videos

Flip: Available as an app or online platform. It can be like your own private class YouTube. Make videos and share them with zero fuss. Also, find ready-made ideas to use. This app is also ideal if you like the flipped classroom approach.

Clips: Only available as an app. It's incredibly creative and easy to use. You keep adding small video clips or photos to create videos. It has a wide range of filters, stickers, and live dictation, which is great for pronunciation practice.

Posters and Presentations

Keynote: A great app for making presentations, posters, infographics and more. It has lots of templates to choose from and is easy to edit, and you can even make GIFs or simple animations. Unfortunately, it's only available on iOS; **Google Slides** is a great alternative.

Canva: Available as an app or online. It has a fantastic selection of templates for presentations, posters, CVs, and more. Very creative and user-friendly. It has many paid pro features, but they are free for teachers.

Portfolios/Sharing

Wakelet: Available as an app or online. You can use it as a class or teaching portfolio, or if you want your students to research a specific topic, you can give resources to investigate. Add links, images, PDFs, and more really quickly.

Seesaw: Available as an app or online. Great for a class portfolio and sharing work. Add drawings, videos, photos, notes, and so much more. There are even ready-madel essons for you to share with your students.

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About the Author:

Daragh is an ELT teacher with over ten years of classroom experience. He recently returned from Mexico to study a Masters in TESOL at UCD. He became ADE in 2019 due to his track record of using technology to enhance the learning process within his class. He is an educator who believes in creativity and the power of technology in learning. He is also a content creator who has published 1000s of digital learning material around the Americas.

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How to Build Your Students' Confidence and Self-Belief
by Erin O'Byrne

It's been a strange couple of years, hasn't it? Some of us became unemployed, some of us started working online immediately after we were sent home and some of went on temporary unemployment. I was in the latter group.

Time alone indoors gave me space to think. I've always loved my job but I was starting to get a little bored delivering the same lessons over and over (sorry, English File...), so after many a fruitful conversation with a former colleague-turned-neurolanguage coach, I decided to follow her example: put the *human* at the centre of your lesson.

But Erin, I already do that! Do you, though? I'm pretty sure you put the *student* at the centre of your lessons: You have your lead-in discussion or brainstorm, they check their answers together, they collaborate, you have a follow-up discussion or speaking activity, all planned out in neat little timed segments on your lesson plan. But what's the point of marking out dedicated spaces in your lesson plan for students to speak if they can't or *don't want to*?

Do you have shy or unconfident students? This is something I have come across time and time again in my teaching career. This fear can stem from a number of places, from cultural reservation to students who are terrified to speak for fear of judgement. Age is by no means a limiting factor in lack of confidence either. Fear and anxiety are indiscriminate.

In addition,if your student is coming into your class stressed or anxious about speaking English, learning will not happen. If you are able to dig deeper and find where these learning barriers come from, more power to you. In the meantime, what you *can* do in class is make a concerted effort to build your students' confidence and sense of 'I can'. There are a number of ways you can do this.

Source:https://www.tmc.ac.uk/employers/blog/self-confidence-7-ways-build-and-maintain-it/

Here are some ideas you can build on in class but I always say, you know your students best. Think about the following suggestions and how they will respond:

Rome Wasn't Built in a Day

…and neither is a confident attitude. This process will take time. Think about your own self-esteem – it's a daily battle that has to be worked on consistently. Apply this logic to your students' confidence levels but don't forget to be patient with both them and yourself.

Think: W*hich students of yours could do with a change of mindset?*

Only Nominate Students if you Know they are Willing to Speak

Some will be ready, some won't. The first step is to find out why, which will influence your course of action. Some students need a little time to build their confidence (please see my first point). When they speak, praise them. They will visibly relax and they might even crack a smile!

Teach your Students Common Phrases to Communicate with Each Other as well as with you

This is essential! How often do you teach 'classroom language' that is just communication between you and your students? Think about the phrases they need to speak to each other. Consider when they're checking an exercise together: are you finished? Shall we check together?   What do you think about number 1? These chunks are invaluable and will encourage your student to communicate. Repetition of these phrases will build confidence so make sure students use them every time they have to work together. Make the phrases you want them to use visible every time they use them – absorbing and using these chunks will take some time and praise the shyer students for using them or producing any English when you hear it. Compelling Conversations by Eric H Roth is a good resource for this.

Think: W*hat tasks in class require your students to communicate with each other and what phrases might be useful?*

Give Students More Time to Think and Formulate their Answers

I think we're all guilty of asking a student a question and filling that awkward silence with another question, followed by another question. Your poor student is probably still processing the *first* question! Talk about stress! It can be excruciating waiting for them but maybe they just need that time: ride the silence!
One possible solution or scaffolding technique could be to provide your students with material in advance of class.

Think: D*o you give your students enough time to think and answer? Do I encourage groups to give* each other *time and space to answer in discussions?*

Praise is Everything

Never underestimate it. No one is too old to hear positive messages from their teacher. Take the time to give your *really* shy students a little extra attention and *heap* that praise upon them. It can be a game changer.

Think: *What opportunities for praise will present themselves in your next lesson?*

> ❝ **What's the point of marking out dedicated spaces in your lesson plan for students to speak if they can't or *don't want* to? ❞**

Get Students to Share

Do activities that get students to talk about themselves, their lives or something where they can show a part of themselves to you and their classmates. A simple example is personal photos: there are so many activities you can do with just a little imagination. Only today, I asked my students to dive into their bags and pull out something to show their group and talk about it. You would be surprised what they have in their bags.

Think: W*hat and how can you get your students to share in your next lesson?*

Give your Students Choice

Choice is very empowering: it increases engagement and motivation, which are two essential factors in learning effectively.
Here are three very simple things you can do immediately:

• Students the output of a project or homework: do you want to write, or make a short video?
• Who would you like to work with?
• Do you want to work alone or in pairs for this writing task?

Think: *How many simple ways can you give your students choice?*

SMART goals

Specific · Measurable · Achievable · Realistic · Time-bound

Source:https://nwtcsocialmediamarketing.home.blog/2021/09/17/how-to-set-smart-goals-sam-hirbod/

Work on Positive Mindset and Mindfulness

Use S.M.A.R.T goals and anything else you can find in an article, a Ted Talk or a Youtube video. Memes are also good for this, as they provide a springboard for discussion. For example, find a quote like 'Small steps in the right direction can turn out to be the biggest journey of your life'. My personal favourite is from Rupaul: "if you can't love yourself, how the hell are you gonna love somebody else?"

Don't forget to use collective breath too. It can be a very powerful tool for focus, energy, discipline and stress levels. Another game-changer.

Think: what kind of mindset work would be suitable for your students?

Leadership

Choose some students and give them a supporting role – can they assist weaker students by helping them when they're stuck, explaining things to them, being the leader of a group when checking their answers or be a project manager if there is group work. They can also praise the students they help. Don't forget that these students need training – monitor and support them and watch them flourish. This also takes the pressure off you. Win-win!

Think: *write down the names of your students who would make natural leaders.*

Build your Community

Students need to trust each other too. Getting them to share, work together, having leaders in each class. Leave time for students to reflect and discuss how they feel. Give them surveys. Do lots of task and project-based learning. Promote collaboration. Spend a couple of minutes breathing at the beginning of your lesson. The possibilities are endless.

Think: *what community-building activity would my students respond to?*

My mantra is that *everything in life is a process*, especially things that need a little work. With this in mind, making your students reflect and feel good about themselves is a constant endeavour. This is just as important as the traditional content you deliver.

How can you incorporate a little positivity and confidence-building in your classroom every day?

About the Author:

Erin O'Byrne is a teacher trainer and producer of Everything EFL Podcast. She has been in the ELT industry for almost 20 years and has been a teacher, ADOS, Junior Programme Manager and Teacher Trainer. Her passion is teacher development.

Beyond the Classroom: Staying Connected in ELT

by Orla Ni Sheaghdha

In March 2020, the English Language Teaching (ELT) sector got turned upside down when the Covid-19 pandemic struck Ireland. Many schools had to move online overnight and reduce their number of classes due to travel restrictions imposed on international students. This placed significant economic strain on teachers who suddenly found themselves with fewer teaching hours or in some cases, none at all. The pandemic proved challenging for the entire ELT sector with many dedicated teachers and staff changing careers to gain financial stability, myself included.

As the sector recovers and rejuvenates, with students returning to Ireland, this also provides an opportunity for academic managers to re-engage with past staff members.

By sharing my own experience, it may inspire others who left the ELT sector during the pandemic to find a way to reconnect and hopefully provide some ideas for academic managers who may want to reach out to former teachers.

How can we keep the door open beyond the classroom?

> **"I was working on reduced hours which meant less money coming in each month and being constantly worried about bills and rent. So, I had to make the difficult decision to give up doing something I loved for financial security."**

Career Change

Almost two years ago I left my position as Student Services Manager in Frances King to pursue a career in eLearning. I'm no stranger to switching careers. Before doing my CELT course, I spent four and a half years training and working as an accountant, a role that just wasn't for me. I left my job and retrained as an English Language Teacher, joining Grafton College in October 2017 where I fell in love with teaching. When Grafton closed in December 2018, I joined Frances King dividing my time between teaching and placing students with host families.

As with every other school in Ireland, Frances King struggled during the Covid-19 pandemic. I was working on reduced hours which meant less money coming in each month and being constantly worried about bills and rent. So, I had to make the difficult decision to give up doing something I loved for financial security. In April 2021, I left Frances King and ultimately the ELT sector to join the eLearning Team at the Citizens Information Board.

Moving from ELT to eLearning

There are a lot of similarities between eLearning and English Language Teaching which has helped me to transition smoothly from one to the other.

My current role is rooted in learning and development so I have been able to bring a lot of transferable skills from English Language Teaching. Designing a course in eLearning follows a similar pedagogical approach to planning an effective and engaging class for English language students.

As with any good lesson plan, you need to outline the learning objectives for the eLearning course by considering the question –"What are the key takeaways for learners?"

This then informs the structure and content of the script and how information should be presented in the lesson. Any good English class will include a range of activities to suit different learning styles and the same is true of eLearning. A well-designed 40-minute lesson should include theory, case study examples, knowledge check questions to keep the learner engaged and short video or audio clips as appropriate, as well as a visual design that enhances the content.

Where eLearning falls short is the lack of interaction with the learners. I have never met the people that I have designed these courses for, nor am I likely to. Instead of planning weekly lessons for a class of 15, I design courses with a long shelf-life for almost 12,000 people in different parts of the country. There is no opportunity to develop a rapport with the learners or for them to share their experiences with each other.

This is the thing I miss most about English Language Teaching; getting to know students, developing friendships and learning about their culture. Ask any teacher who has since left and they will tell you the same. The students make the class.

However, when you factor in the extra work that goes into planning lessons and curating materials, pining for a lost connection with students isn't enough to draw me away from a career that is as equally fulfilling, more stable and provides a better work-life balance.

The same will be true of a lot of teachers and staff who left the ELT sector during the pandemic. If they have found a stable job which allows them to use and develop their skills and build a meaningful career, they may be unwilling to give that up and return to a job which many lost overnight.

However, that doesn't mean that they are ready to abandon the world of ELT altogether. I can't see myself returning to the classroom but I have tried to find other ways to stay connected.

Ways to stay connected in ELT

- Friends –I am still friends with many of my students and former colleagues. One of my close friends is currently teaching in Abu Dhabi and two others work in the same language school in Dublin. The four of us try to meet up at least two or three times a year to catch up, swap stories and reminisce about our time working together. For me, this is the most meaningful way to stay connected to the world of English Language Teaching.

- Social Media – A great way to stay connected to a school, even after you have left it, is to engage with them on Social media. I taught in Linguaviva for a few months before I changed career so I regularly interact with them on Instagram. It's nice to see photos of staff and students that I recognise and it keeps the connection to the school. They also frequently post questions, polls and mini-quizzes to their stories. These are usually directed at students but there's no reason why staff can't participate as well. It's a quick, fun and simple way to stay involved with a school even after you've left.

- Activity Programme – The activity programme is the perfect opportunity for managers to encourage former staff to continue to be involved in the school, even if they are no longer teaching. A musical teacher will more than likely have brought their guitar to class once or twice, so why not ask them to host a music night in the school. If one of your teachers plays Gaelic football, or any other sport, get them to teach the students how to play.

- CV Workshops – Students usually appreciate advice when it comes to job hunting, writing CVs and doing interviews in English. If you know a teacher who has since changed career, invite them to give a talk about their work or do a CV workshop with your students. They're in the best position to advise students on what to expect and how to prepare their CVs. They may even be willing to do a few mock interviews for some speaking practice.

- ELT conferences – Taking part in conferences and the ELTed events are great for staying connected to the wider ELT network. The coffee breaks are just as important as the talks as it's a chance to chat to other like-minded ELT professionals and form new connections. One of the best things about conferences is the opportunity to learn from your peers and get different perspectives. Present on a topic you're interested in, even if it's not related to teaching. I spoke about my experience in eLearning at the ELTed event in May 2022 which sparked the idea for this article.

- Write a learning resource – Start small and share a simple activity that worked well with your students, for example a listening activity based on your favourite song. You could also create a cultural lesson for St. Patrick's Day. During the pandemic, I wrote an activity book on learning English through Irish Culture and contributed a number of articles to another one on ELT in Ireland. It was a fantastic way for me to revisit and enhance some of my old lessons and create new ones for other teachers to use, even if I never get to try them myself.

Conclusion

There are plenty of options for staying connected in ELT, whether you are a teacher who recently left or a manager looking to reconnect with former staff members. The key is to find a meaningful way to stay involved – through transferable skills, personal relationships, sharing a talent or writing on a topic of expertise. Once you've found a way that appeals to you**,** take the first step to re-establish the connection and go from there.

About the Author:

Orla Ni Sheaghdha is an eLearning Executive Officer with the Citizens Information Board. She worked as an English Language Teacher for 4 years and still strives to stay connected to the sector by taking part in ELT conferences and contributing articles.

Building a Successful Teacher Team in ELT
by Alan Hall

"Your staffroom has now become your classroom, the teachers are your new students." Were the words of advice from a mentor and friend as I was moving out of a teaching and teacher trainer role, and into a full time Director of Studies (DoS) position. Having spent the last fifteen years working across Europe in private language schools, community centres and local colleges, I knew from my experiences (some great, some not so) that a quality teaching team with a positive working atmosphere was not just key to the success of the school as a whole, but also teacher retention and job satisfaction. Through trial and error, we, as a team, developed a system where each teacher can take control of their CPD (Continued Professional Development). The intention of this article is to share ideas and raise awareness for managers of how to easily train their teaching staff internally, building a team around the classes that are available at any given time.

From my own experience, the schools I look back on fondly were the schools where a team of teachers worked with each other, perhaps not every day, but certainly several times in a week. We would review lessons, throw ideas around the staff room, share horror stories or laughs and mistakes in the classroom, but always come out feeling better for it. On the other hand, schools where the teacher was expected to simply appear when students were present, then leave once the classes finish were not exactly constructive working environments for staff, and so happened to have much higher turnover of staff. This affected even simple CPD tricks, such as one I picked up while working in a school in Spain. In one school we had a 10 minute break between each class. We also had CPD Notebooks which were submitted to the DoS every Friday, where we made comments and notes on every class which had just finished. This meant the lesson was fresh in our minds, and anything we wanted to work on could be noted instantly. It also meant that we would recollect the lesson much easier when planning the next, as well as being able to focus on individual student performances. Of course, if a class went fine we could simply jot down "grand" in the comments section, but when we wanted to work on, say exam preparation technique or language grading, we could, and we would then self-evaluate the lesson once it was over. This is in stark contrast to some schools where I worked which had classes change every 90 minutes with no breaks. This meant that by the end of the working day, the teacher had forgotten the students' names from the first two lessons at least, never mind activities carried out and how they went. This led me to consider what sort of classes and school I would prefer to run further down the line, taking the best parts from multiple schools taught in previously.

The statistics on teacher retention around Europe are quite startling, for teaching as a whole, teacher turnover is 30% of staff per year(Federičová, 2021), in English Language Teaching it is 50%, where only 10% of teachers remain in the same school after two years (Bentley, 2022). It is no secret that ELT has a teacher retention issue so in the process of opening a new school, steps have been taken to ensure that job satisfaction, teacher training and team building became part of the everyday.

As our new school opened its doors, we were lucky, from a pedagogical standpoint at least, in that we had more teachers than students. This gave us a great advantage in that we had more freedom to experiment, but above all, to simply get to know each other. This was when we initially started team teaching – when two teachers are in the one room teaching the class together. As class numbers increased with students joining on a weekly basis, teachers were paired up, to 'lighten the load' on teaching, so teachers were able to plan together, share ideas, and combine lessons. This was initially carried out by pairing up more experienced teachers, with fresher teachers more recently off their teacher training courses. Once each teacher was able to gauge the room and students, several recommendations were made to cater for teachers' 'always on' feeling in the classroom. Some teachers were both always teaching together, so bounced off each other in the room when an activity was being run. Some teachers instead decided to take the lessons activity about, alternating the points on the lesson plan, while others planned 30 minute or 90 minute sections of the 3 hour lessons students were present for. Generally this was successful, although some personality types within the classroom led to some teachers wanting more control than others. After a 3 week period, teachers then swapped levels, which allowed them to both experience a new level, as well as work alongside another colleague in the team.

With multiple teachers in a classroom at a time, this also led to the added bonus of running teacher training sessions with half the staff at a time, while the others taught longer lessons, allowing everyone to carry out CPD in teams, while still within working hours. This gave myself as the director of studies the ability to run the same meeting, several times, with different members of the teaching staff present, then collate the notes together for emails to all, ensuring no one missed anything and the expertise was still shared.

As well as the standard observation sessions that are run four times a year for all teachers, and once within the first fortnight of a new teacher arriving at the school (which involved a feedback session with the DoS), teachers had the freedom for peer observation. This was planned in advance so that the DoS could cover a 90 minute section of their class, while they observed another teacher with either the same or a different level of student and then both of those teachers could sit down together, and discuss the lesson. Thus far within the school, this has been a highly popular activity, possibly due to the fact that out of a dozen teachers, no two teachers share the same nationality, bringing with it a massive range of experiences, cultures, mother tongues and angles from which they view learning the English language.

There was also a shorter form of peer observation planned as teams in the school. As classes were 3 hours in length, with a 15 minute break when the teacher decided (normally 90 minutes into the lesson), teachers could plan when they took breaks with other teachers, so breaks didn't clash, and instead 'drop in' observe a lesson for 10 minutes of their break. This allowed for quick fire observations around the school, with teachers often deciding to peer observe multiple lessons and multiple levels over the course of a week - and usually stealing the best bits from every classroom.

One final point on the observations within the school was that teachers could request observations to work on a specific point of teaching, or even based on certain students in the room. One current teaching point that teachers are working on together with peer and DoS observations has been to work on gamifying their games more constructively in class – that is, how to adapt certain games already within the classroom, so it can act as a brain break or more 'fuller' activity in the room, rather than just a randomly placed part of class that lasts two minutes. Some teachers also requested parts of class to be observed due to certain students in the room, particularly if they had not taught that culture or nationality before, ensuring the student was getting the most out of the class, or if they were struggling with a new concept to perhaps discover why. Shadow teaching was also an option for teachers here, where instead of simply observing the lesson, parts were observed, then the DoS or another teacher would also take part in the lesson as the primary teacher, or even as an additional student, depending on what the original teacher wished to work on. This was planned in advance while lesson plans were written, and then an after class feedback discussion was had, working as a team on what was observed and experienced.

Extra rooms were also set aside for team planning sessions, where everyone who was teaching a particular level could plan as a group, sharing ideas, experiences and techniques on planning their specific level. These opened into the sharing of ideas with all levels via shared online folders which everyone could access, or simply just by mixing the planning teams each week, to see what ideas other teachers had at any point.

So as to not always have teachers working in larger groups, a buddy system was also set up with teachers where teachers would work with the person in the neighbouring room, regardless of level. This helped share ideas, check up on one another and keep bonds between teachers up.

Some challenges and issues still remain. As teachers we prefer or need 'ownership' of a class, and in terms of team teaching with rolling enrolments in a school this is not always possible from a logistical standpoint – it depends on the students coming into the school each week. Three week changes to classes were made permanent after a while to help with stability for teachers, as well as small classes given to more teachers ensuring they had a permanent room and ownership of a class, while still able to work with another teacher in the next room. Another unexpected downside which arose was when team teaching was that teachers used their non-teaching time to formalise their lesson plans before submission as another colleague was in their place teaching. This meant that when the school increased in size and teachers moved to working alone in each class (and therefore were able to take up their complete allotted contracted teaching hours) there were complaints of their lesson plan time eating into their spare time. This then encouraged myself, the DoS, to run training sessions on streamlining lesson planning and how to use time constructively.

> **" With teacher retention, job satisfaction and teacher energy levels low coming out of a pandemic it was vitally important that we attempt to create a team of well qualified and motivated teachers."**

With teacher retention, job satisfaction and teacher energy levels low coming out of a pandemic it was vitally important that we attempt to create a team of well qualified and motivated teachers. These are a few of the ideas we have implemented in a new school in the hope that they help build up rapport between teachers, keep spirits up and encourage each other to try new things and be comfortable getting things wrong in the classroom as a teacher. Only time will tell whether these steps work in the long term and how constructive they are in managing a team.

Extra-curricular team building activities were also planned, including this group painting session contains artwork from all teacher nationalities

Pic by Author

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Redefining the Roles of Teachers in Post-Covid Education

by Le Dinh Bao Quoc

The ongoing worldwide pandemic has spread for over 3 years and changed our lives in all aspects. In education, the sudden change in teaching and learning has put teachers in difficult situations. According to the report *Language teaching experiences during Covid-19* published by British Council (Mavridi, 2022), an overwhelming majority of teachers struggled in their professional life and with their well-being.

On the brighter side, though the pandemic is still there, "the end is in sight", said Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus at a virtual press conference on September 14, 2022. Things now seem to have returned to normal in most parts of the world. However, the current normal is not exactly the normal we used to enjoy. It is the new one with many *challenges,* which force teachers to adjust their *roles* and equip themselves with essential *skills* to ensure the effectiveness of teaching and learning.

The Post-Covid Education challenges

The first obvious challenge is that the pandemic has innovated our teaching philosophy, practices, and routines. Whether we want it or not, we must adapt to these new changes. An example of this is that teaching now is not seen as teachers standing in front of the class, but teaching now can be virtual with the students interacting with the teachers via tech tools.

> **"The pandemic has innovated our teaching philosophy, practices and routines. Whether we want it or not, we must adapt to these new changes. "**

Second, we need to learn new technologies to cope with the situation. It is true that before the pandemic we did use technologies, but during the COVID, everyone has witnessed the boom of tech tools, which will definitely continue after the pandemic.

The third challenge – emotion – has a huge impact on all education stakeholders. Due to the mandatory and unprepared shift to online classes, everyone suffered traumas or negative feelings of isolation, stress, and uncertainty. Therefore, teachers must be well aware of their own and others' emotions and how to deal with these feelings effectively and cleverly.

Fourth, despite the physical and emotional distance during the pandemic, it is critical for teachers to maintain and strengthen the relationships with students, parents, and colleagues. It is said that strong relationships in-and-outside school can significantly improve students' motivation and learning outcome. (EdTrust, 2021)

As hard as it may sound, with all these formidable challenges, teachers must continue to ensure and enhance students' learning outcome in this Post-Covid Education. What roles should we play as teachers in this challenging time?

Teachers' new roles

Role 1: Autonomous lifelong learners

A joint statement from UNESCO, ILO, UNICEF and Education International issued in 2020 emphasizes the significance of learning: *"To build a more resilient teacher workforce in times of crisis, all teachers should be equipped with digital and pedagogical skills to teach remotely, online, and through blended or hybrid learning, whether in high-, low- or no-tech environments."* (UNESCO, 2020).

Learning helps us to adapt to the sudden changes in education. New research findings and advancements in methodologies and Edtech are reported every day. Only with learning can we utilize new technologies, improve our teaching practices, and enhance students' learning. Learning also helps us to improve our life skills, such as communication, building relationships, or controlling our emotions. All these enable us to overcome the challenges mentioned above.

Role 2: Life-skill educators

"Our world is changing fast and we need to prepare our students with the skills and experiences that go beyond simply learning an additional language." This quote is from Cambridge in reference to the *Life Competencies Framework* for the students.

Despite the tradition, a teacher's job now is also to empower students to become independent citizens, who can live and work in the uncertain time. Students in the New Normal need not only scientific knowledge but also need teachers to teach them the life skills, which according to the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework, are as follows:

• Lifelong learning	• Digital Literacy
• Collaboration	• Critical thinking
• Problem-solving	• Creative thinking
• Communication	• Social responsibility
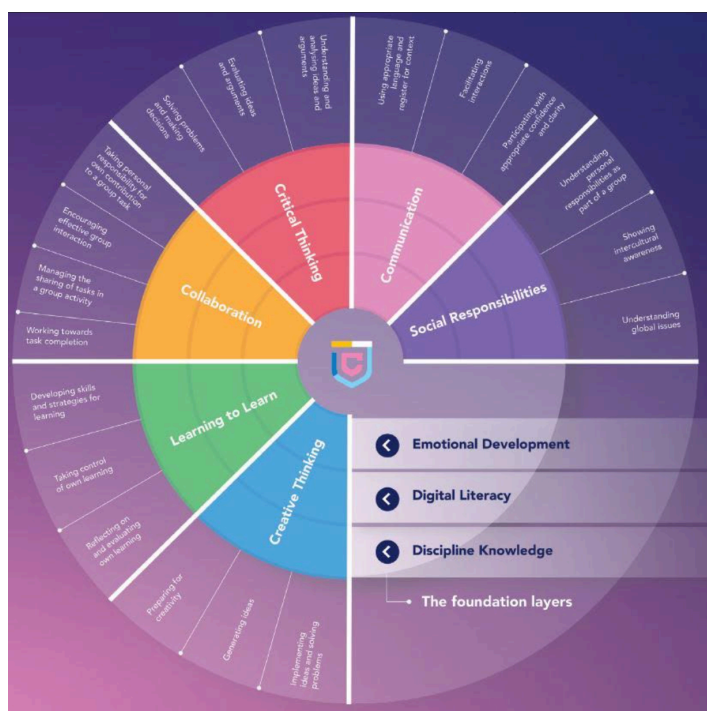
Cambridge Life Competencies Framework

Source: Cambridge.org

Role 3: Innovators of change

With what the pandemic has brought to us, innovation has become more critical in education. As for teachers, they are no longer the "content dispensers", but they must always try to be the "creators of engagement."

To do this, teachers should not only focus on how to link innovations to teaching or learning, but also bring innovations to change education systems. This addresses the diversity of the new teaching and learning context, offers more supports for teachers and learners, and provides all teachers and learners with the necessary skills to create a better future for themselves and their communities.

Role 4: Motivators

In this era of uncertainties, being an effective motivator is one of the keys to success. For ourselves as teachers, that is how we motivate ourselves to learn, to stay up-to-date with technologies, and to fulfill our teaching job the best we can.

For our students, one of the essentials is that we must motivate them both inside and outside the classrooms.

While doing this in face-to-face classroom sounds more familiar, motivating them in virtual classes can be challenging. How can we motivate them when they are not within our sight physically or when they leave Zoom and turn off their computers? An effective tip for this is to create projects or problems for the students to work on. As the final purpose of learning is solving problems, teachers can create personalized, hands-on, real-world problems for students to solve. Working on these projects, they will connect their lives and their world with the content and the tasks, which let them in turn see the purpose of learning and increase their motivation.

Role 5: Bond builders

As relationships play a very important role in our society and education, building the bonds between teachers and other stakeholders is essential if we still desire to ensure and enhance the quality of teaching and learning.

To become effective bond builders, teachers need to build relationships with students, parents, and colleagues both inside and outside the classroom. Teachers can utilize technology like emails, video calls, or social networking sites to build and maintain these relationships with their "clients". Good relationships will allow us to motivate students, understand their problems, and stay connected with our colleagues emotionally and professionally.

Teachers' skill box

Acknowledging our new roles is only the prerequisite in becoming effective teachers in the Post-Covid Education. The sufficiency is how to train ourselves to fulfill these roles successfully. Which skills should be in the teachers' skill box?

Skill 1: Lifelong learning

Generally, lifelong learning is a form of self-initiated education, which allows us to improve personally or professionally. We can train and keep upskilling ourselves to become efficient lifelong learners by

- *Developing our growth mindset.* With a growth mindset, we strongly believe that we can improve ourselves by learning.

- *Taking control of our own learning.* That means becoming autonomous, maintaining motivation, and staying focused to achieve the best results.

- *Improving our learning-to-learn skill.* The American futurist Alvin Toffler, in his book Future Shock, said: "The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn." In this rapid-growing society, anything we learn yesterday can become outdated today. We need to learn how to unlearn old ideas to learn something better and more efficient in our current situation.

- *Reflecting on and evaluating our own learning.* This helps us to learn from our mistakes and experiences.

Skill 2: Digital literacy

The second skill we need in this technological era is certainly digital literacy. How can we imagine living in this current world without digital literacy right? What do we need to do to get this skill?

- *Understand the digital trends* like AI, IoT (Internet of Things), Edtech, AR, VR, etc. It is not necessary to understand what they are and how they work technically, but it is beneficial to know what they can do for us.

- *Learn how to search for reliable information*. Searching for information is considered the most widely used function of the Internet, but we cannot trust all the information we found on the web. Thus, it is vital to evaluate the information sources carefully.

- *Master the tech tools for teaching and learning*. How can we and our students survive in this online education world without tech tools?

- *Being safe in the virtual world*. They say the virtual world is dangerous with numerous scams or traps. We must think carefully before posting something on Facebook or Twitter, clicking on a link, or downloading a picture.

Skill 3: Creativity and Innovation

Creativity and innovation empower teachers to enhance their teaching practices, motivate their students, and establish the social relationships more effectively.

Below is an example of creativity and innovation by a teacher from Wisconsin.

During digital learning, I've heard students say that they miss collaboration and working with partners to construct learning, so I've developed activities to meet those needs. I offered students the opportunity to collaborate in groups as they developed proposals for a business idea. I've also offered simulation games via Zoom conferencing so students can spend time with their friends despite social distancing.
(A Social Studies teacher from Greendale, Wisconsin, Edweek, 2020)

To train ourselves to be creative and innovative, we must

- *Face and accept changes*. Hiding from them or staying in our comfort zone only brings us nothing for our personal and professional development.

- *Think outside the box*. Look at things from different perspectives and change our ways of thinking.

- *Try new solutions to old problems*. Doing this creates more innovative ideas and alternatives.

- G*et the following phrases out of our mind: I'm afraid... I'm scared... I don't think it'll work...* They will lock us in our personal shells and prevent us from innovative ideas and solutions.

Skill 4: Emotional intelligence

This skill is the ability to identify and deal with the emotions of ourselves and others. As the pandemic is proven to negatively affect people's emotion, this skill becomes one of the must-haves for teachers in the Post-Covid Education. As teachers, it is critical to understand the emotions of all stakeholders so that we can address them effectively, ensuring the teaching and learning outcome.

For example, if we feel we are getting angry, we should pause our speech, calm down, breathe and concentrate on our breath to switch our focus away from the source of the anger. Or if we notice a student of ours is unmotivated, we can assign a more challenging problem for him to solve.

Skill 5: Connection with people

Research shows that "strong relationships provide a foundation for student engagement, belonging, and, ultimately, learning. The more high-quality relationships students have with their teachers, the better their engagement in school." (EdTrust, 2021). Connecting with people, therefore, becomes a must-have in a teacher's skill box, especially after the pandemic. The following tips can help us develop this important skill.

- *Understand people's needs for connection*. Everyone has different needs for connection, which we need to understand and adjust our connection with them accordingly.

- *Be truly present in conversations*. When talking with people, show that we are engaged and interested by listening actively and asking questions. Do not break the connection by checking phones or looking around.

- *Have empathy*. Feeling the emotions of others and with others allows them to connect with us.

- *Emphasize the positives*. Our students always need recognition. Praising makes them feel happy, excited, and motivated to learn.

Conclusion

There is no training program that could have prepared us to teach during or after the pandemic. The onus is on us to prepare ourselves and our beloved students for this difficult time. Acknowledging our five new roles and preparing ourselves for them will contribute to our professional development and students' learning outcome, making learners not only better prepared and skilled at their academic work but also more adaptable to the uncertainty.

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From Anxious & Angry to More Confident & Empowered: Emotional Wellbeing in Education

by Anna Machura

"Overwhelming", "Crushing", "Heavy" – these are a few adjectives that came to a boy's mind when he was asked to describe a moment of anxiety/anger he had experienced. *"I have to shout", "I want to run away from the place", "I am so scared",* he said after an episode, which was more of an inner cry of his anxious and angry mind. *"It's coming and I can't control it. It's very strong!",* he added with visible signs of resignation. You could tell there was an emotional battle going on in the boy's mind. A very tough one.

Indeed, managing powerful emotions, such as anger or anxiety, is always challenging. For a child who is not familiar with a sense of losing control in a difficult situation, especially when suddenly confronted with a perceived threat, this feeling might be truly crippling. The worry and fear - commonly known as anxiety - are often linked to anger, which, in turn, is coupled with a sense of annoyance. Even though most of adults would probably be able to sense and react to danger in time, a child needs a lot more guidance here. The inner mental *"shield"* to be put on requires both strength and courage to face the situation, before fear takes over and the amygdala in the brain sends out an impulse to *"fight, flight or freeze".* Sometimes, the fight-flight-freeze response is overactive. This happens when non-threatening situations trigger the reaction. Surely, most teachers have had to deal with these issues in the classroom. Below, we can see the most common examples of behaviours often exhibited by a child who feels threatened.

The acronym of FEAR is *"False Expectations Appearing Real".* *(J. B. Taylor)*

Fight-Flight-Freeze response in the classroom

Source: camhsprofessionals.co.uk (2022)

In fact, if we imagine something vividly, our body is going to react to the image. Real or false – it does not really matter. It's the power of imagination, the subconscious mind. Our **thoughts** produce physiological responses while **actions** just follow our thoughts. Therefore, it is beneficial to plant a lot of helpful, constructive thoughts in our heads. Dr Joseph Murphy in his well-known book *"The Power of Your Subconscious Mind"* (2011) reaffirms that all our experiences, events, conditions and acts are the reactions of our subconscious mind to our thoughts.

When it comes to emotional outbursts, can we talk about single episodes only or is it a more complex issue? What we normally observe in case of anxiety is a gradual build-up of disruptive impulses, emotions or feelings such as dissatisfaction, resentment, rejection, sadness, worry, guilt, fear or hurt. Then, this pulsating negative energy gets trapped in the body, and once accumulated for a prolonged period of time, it's ready to explode. It can be triggered by even the smallest of incidents, seemingly unrelated. For instance, when a learner accumulates all this negative energy and hears a simple *"no"* from their teacher, they may become extremely aggressive - start shouting, kicking or even damaging things.

Bottling up emotions, i.e. frustration, fear or suppressing an emotional conflict, while being unable to cope with stressors, lowers the child's self-esteem and often leads to passive aggression or even depression. Although it might seem that sudden outbursts of anger are rather uncontrollable, there are effective ways children can use to manage the emotions, at the conscious level. Applying such techniques regularly reinforces positive changes and teaches a young mind how to take control over one's individual reactions. Consequently, it boosts the child's self-esteem and increases overall self-confidence and trust in one's abilities.

Eliminating negative emotions is neither possible nor recommended. Instead, the focus here should be on empowering the child to be able to act, rather than react. We all need to work out an action plan in advance to avoid so called *"amygdala hijack".* Teaching emotional intelligence brings amazing results. It often turns out that the real problem is not just anger or anxiety as such, but communication. When a child is unable to express what they feel, it exacerbates the whole situation making it more complicated than it really is. **Communication is the key.** *"You don't understand!"* – a statement like that heard from a child can be a masked projection of their own feelings of confusion and powerlessness. In fact, *"you"* can be replaced with *"I".* What the child is actually trying to say is: *"I don't understand what is going on now. Help me, please!"*

I can recall multiple classroom situations (while working with primary school pupils, often neurodivergent learners) where I successfully put my professional therapeutic skills into action by applying certain strategies that helped a child open up in a safe

unhurried way…*"I can see you are thinking of something very important now. I do not know what it is. I would love to feel what you are feeling so I can understand it better. Could you take a deep breath, close your eyes for a few seconds and describe the things for me, please? I'll draw a picture"*. While doing so, I was acknowledging every step the child made, creating a big mental picture to identify the trigger(s) and address the issue appropriately. *"You know, our thoughts are like clouds – they come and go – you can let them go or keep the images and emotions they bring for longer"*, I continued. *"You can control them whenever you need to. Let me show you how…one, two, three…this thought goes away and disappears like a cloud in the sky. It's gone. Now your mind is clear"*. I showed the technique to the whole class; now we often start a lesson with a question: *"What's on your mind today?"*

Moments like these are absolutely priceless, truly empowering, and can change a child's life. Therefore, I think emotional intelligence is more important than any other school subject. Teaching children empathy, kindness and the ability to self-regulate should be embedded in the process. Thought and feeling are inseparable brain processes; hence, I use and strongly recommend brain-friendly techniques, multisensory approaches, creating associations or patterns. Additionally, using memory-improving techniques (with colours, rhymes, songs, story-telling), lots of awareness-based activities (e.g. mindfulness) as well as projects that enhance creativity and allow for personal expression.

Realising what is happening in the moment is the first step before taking action.

> **" Teaching emotional intelligence brings amazing results. It often turns out that the real problem is not just anger or anxiety, but communication."**

Anxiety does not appear overnight; anger is often a secondary emotion. These two are frequently preceded by a period of a low depressive mood, withdrawal from social interaction with peers or total avoidance. Therefore, the approach should be aimed at gradual transformation. Not only is it therapeutic in nature but also very constructive in the long term. This way, we can break unwanted patterns and start developing the right mindset; steering away from *"anxious"* towards *"more confident and empowered".* There are a lot of fantastic books worth recommending that cover the topic in more detail, for example: *"Don't feed the monkey mind. How to stop the cycle of anxiety, fear and worry"* by J. Shannon or *"Mind Power. Change your thinking, change your life"* by J. Borg.

It's crucial to teach children about different emotions and feelings. Anxiety and anger are somewhat natural responses of the mind - they often signal the *"true"* hidden subconscious reactions. When anxiety is unacknowledged or unexpressed, it often leads to frustration, which in turn can lead to anger. Therefore, every effort should be made to recognise and calm an anxious & angry mind as early as possible. Strong emotions can be managed and controlled up to a certain level; however, they should generally be prevented. Experiencing frequent stressors puts the mind and body in the *"survival mode",* which is neither healthy nor needed in a safe environment. Undoubtedly, comforting a child, normalising their feelings and validating their experience can strengthen the relationship with them, build rapport, and facilitate them to exercise so called "psychic muscle" – the ability to cope with heavier mental load (childmind.org).

Please remember that everyone is different, and so are our triggers. Children need to be told clearly what is happening to them and how they can process their emotions themselves. Being overprotective - by trying to remove the root cause of a negative reaction every single time - might lead to creating (and reinforcement) of a false belief that negativity can be eliminated from the environment in an instant. Instead, it's much better to identify certain events or situations that can be the triggers for the young mind, for example feeling ignored, rejected, unappreciated, undervalued or humiliated. It's worth mentioning that feeling rejected does not mean the same as not being

accepted. For instance, a child might feel really *disappointed* that they didn't get chosen for the school play. As they wanted it so badly, and I tried so hard, they felt *left out* because their friends made it and they didn't (kidshealth.org). On another occasion, a child might just be jealous that another pupil got a better mark or upset – when someone else finished a task faster again. Yes, children constantly compare themselves to their peers, tend to measure their self-worth based on single, often unsuccessful, situations and process the aftermath much longer than us, adults. What is more, they usually shape their vision of the world / future through some negative core beliefs.

The cognitive triad of negative core beliefs

Source: Byrne and Fenn (2013)

As we know quite well, it is not possible to control everything around us, and we cannot guarantee that only pleasant *"bearable"* experiences are going to happen in the child's future. The duality of our existence - good days versus bad days, positive feelings blended with negative ones - forces us to acknowledge the fact that happiness is not a lack of uncomfortable moments, but the

state of a balance between our experiences. Similarly, <u>keeping the balance between *"happy"* and *"not-so-happy"* moments is the right approach when dealing with emotions and feelings</u>. Thus, teaching children how to deal with complex emotions, encouraging them to use effective techniques, such as deep breathing, to appreciate the power of the mind and think about their thinking process ("metacognition") seem to be the well-sought after elements in the post-pandemic classroom.

Children usually experience more than we think – that's why they need a supportive environment and great care. It is our responsibility, as educators, to create the right conditions and opportunities for the learners, which will help them thrive and blossom. It is a never-ending process of setting smart goals (Byrne and Fenn 2013), developing a growth mindset and dreaming big. As Harry Edwards put it: "We must teach our children to dream with their eyes open."

Let's continue to support them on their journey to becoming independent individuals!

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Movies: The Magic That's Missing in Language Learning

by Frank McGirr

Introduction

Film offers students a rich, sensory portal into the language and culture of other people. A window on the world. A way of seeing new places, understanding other cultures, learning about different ways of life and gaining new perspectives. Unlike literature, which is based on abstract symbols, film communicates directly through images and sound. The simple act of watching movies allows learners to see, hear and experience language in context. The process, in many ways similar to L1 learning, enables students to observe language in use, absorb everyday phrases and vocabulary and demands little in return aside from watching the unfolding adventure. The magical quality of film, with its continuous stream of sound and vision, stimulates our senses and provides a total immersive experience that remains unmatched by all other media. So how can this amazingly rich, emotional resource be integrated into the language classroom? The following article details my experience of setting up an English Language film club and provides a template to help you make the most out of language learning through film.

> **"Unlike literature, which is based on abstract symbols, film communicates directly through images and sound. The simple act of watching movies allows learners to see, hear and experience language in context."**

Why a Film Club?

I set up a film club because I wanted my students to see and hear authentic English in use. In Germany (France, Italy and Spain) almost all TV and cinema is dubbed. Unfortunately, for language learners that's a real disadvantage. Since 2011, EF Education First have produced a yearly English Proficiency Index which measures the English communication skills of adults in countries where English is not an official language. In the last ten years, the top five places have alternated between The Netherlands, Singapore, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland. Among all EU countries, the last spots are usually occupied by France, Italy and Spain.

Research by Robert Vanderplank, Henrik Gottlieb, Jennifer Lertola and many others have show that there's a clear link between how a country chooses to broadcast foreign language programmes (sub-titles v dubbing) and language proficiency. [2] In the EU: The Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland all use subtitles.

Seeing and hearing a language in context is key to its acquisition. Context provides the framework within which meaning is conveyed. Without context, words and grammar are meaningless. Context is also important because it can help learners to understand the culture of the new language. Outside of moving to a country in which the language is spoken the immersive quality of movies provide the single greatest impression of being there.

English Language Film Club

The English Language Film Club was established in Bremen, in 2011. I wanted the course to satisfy two criteria: 1) it had to contain language learning elements similar those found on a standard course (reading, listening, vocabulary, etc.) and 2) feature length films had to be screened in their entirety. Apart from the obvious language difficulty, movies present a secondary problem: they're long, often more than 90 minutes, which is the standard class time. To meet the criteria I settled on showing a movie every second week. Week one would be dedicated to the more formal aspects of language– vocabulary/reading exercises, comprehension questions and paired discussion – allowing us the freedom to watch an entire movie the following week.

In 2011 there wasn't a blueprint on how to run a language learning film club and I had to experiment with how to use the available time as efficiently and effectively as possible. I believe that physical activities are a great way at getting students involved in a lesson so for our first movie, Roman Polanski's "Chinatown" I created maps and handouts to help explain the California water wars. The first task for the students was to work in pairs and complete a jigsaw map of the USA. Almost immediately they were animated, talking and joking in English, which was great. But it took far longer than the ten to fifteen minutes I'd anticipated, and that affected the time that was left for the reading/comprehension articles I'd created on William Mullholand and the Owens Valley aqueduct. So I was forced to rush that aspect and ended up with a lot of frustrated students. In retrospect, I should have created a simpler map with the smaller eastern states all clumped together as one element. And I could have focused less on the reading material, because once the maps were complete, it was easier for students to understand the issues involved in diverting water along a 400 km aqueduct that runs through the Mojave Desert to Los Angles.

On the whole, I was so involved in preparations and leading the discussions that term that I had little time to consider the effectiveness of the course. However, I started to pick up rumblings of discontent while the movies were playing, especially films set in Ireland, the North of England, or the Deep South in America. Movies that contain little or no received pronunciation. Students complained that the actors spoke too fast or mumbled their words. Some suggested the actors, like me, didn't speak proper English. ("filum" and "cup") Another complaint was not having enough time to read subtitles – that the text was appearing

and disappearing too quickly– and the suggestion that the subtitles should actually be in German. More alarmingly, the general consensus was that I had a terrible taste in movies. Centre stage can be a lonely place when the mob smells blood.

From the outset I wanted the course to feel different from a typical language course where students often feel under the spotlight and teachers are viewed as the sole experts. I wanted something like a favourite coffee shop or restaurant. What I hadn't anticipated was the workload and creativity that's involved in creating a themed lesson plan every two weeks and integrating it smoothly into a ninety minute session. And I certainly hadn't expected to be getting heckled from the sidelines and dealing with people's taste in movies. There's a term that's often used in football punditry that nicely sums up my feelings by the end of term one – losing the dressing room. Something had to change.

Term 2: Feb-June 2012
I began term two with a lesson on "The Grapes of Wrath", a movie that echos some of the events and locations seen in Chinatown. This time I focused more on using images and distributed photos created by Dorothea Lange and others from the Farm Security Administration. In one image, migrants are seen in an overloaded car finally reaching California. Before going into detail, I asked pairs to list everything they could see in the image.

Dust Bowl refugees Reach a "Promised Land" - California - 1936
Photo by Dorothea Lange
Source:https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/object/108H58

After we had written up words on the board I asked new pairs to talk about the image and gave the following handout.

Discuss the following questions in pairs:
- What year do you think this photograph was taken? Why?
- What is happening in the image?
- Where do you think the people are going?
- Why are they travelling?
- What problems might they have encountered on their journey?

Jack Whinery and his family - New Mexico - 1940
Photo by Russel Lee
Source: https://www.loc.gov/resource/

Discussing documentary photographs helped students appreciate the themes explored in The Grapes of Wrath. The images of young, destitute families - forced to abandon their homes and meagre possessions - illicit empathy and give meaning to the events that occurred during the largest migration in United States history. The lesson made watching the movie a more pleasurable experience because students were able to relate to the experience of the characters seen on screen. It also stopped students thinking simply in terms of liking or not liking and old black and white movie from the 1940s.

Other movies that term included *Billy Elliott* (North of England, working class culture, boys/girls, triumph over adversity) *Moonstruck* (death, following your head or heart) *Crimes and Misdemeanours* (morality, use metaphors to convey an idea) and *Forrest Gump* (significant historical and social events in recent American history, discrimination against those who are different)

Students loved the introductory lessons that accompanied all these movies but, unfortunately, the comprehension problems while watching them continued. It was as if the introductory lesson wasn't helping..at all. And, I was beginning to doubt the feasibility of using feature lengths films in language learning. Was I being overly ambitious, or naive, in expecting B1 students to simultaneously read subtitles, listen to authentic, idiomatic laced dialogue, comprehend what was being said and all the while follow an often convoluted plot ? It seemed highly likely. I was, however, certain that students loved the course and the notion of watching movies as an aid, but I could also feel how frustrated they were, especially with the speed at which language is presented in movies. The problem remained: How can you help a non native speaker to watch a ninety minute movie in its entirety? Is it even possible?
The solution, when it presented itself, was written in the stars.

The Script

"To make a great film you need three things ,the script, the script and the script". – Alfred Hitchcock

Movie making is a collaborative process involving hundreds of people including actors, producers, directors, editors, cinematographers and the studio. The glue that binds this whole process together is a script. No movie is ever made without one. A script will include the movement, actions, expression and dialogue of characters. It tells the time period and locations. An average script consists of approximately one hundred and twenty pages of dialogue and text. Everyone working on a movie, form choreographers, costume designers, dialogue coaches, location managers, make up artists and set designers, work from the script. As the second term was drawing to a close it suddenly occurred to me that language students could be added to that list of people.

Eureka Moment

The key to incorporating feature length movies in language learning is to provide B1 learners, and above, with comprehensive input (key dialogue, vocabulary, plot and background information) in advance–outside the classroom. This subtle, but transformative, shift offers huge benefits in terms of time and content. Students can read at their own pace. They have time to stop and look up words if they wish. Learners "choose" which exercises they need to focus on. Some might want/need to read all the key dialogue, others may not. Some might focus on understanding the plot, others might want to work on vocabulary exercises, especially the idioms and phrasal verbs. Providing learners with martial in advance means it's no longer an issue if one learner needs x amount of time while another needs double that. Unlike in a classroom, one doesn't affect the other. Another key benefit is content. In the classroom, reading and listening exercises are purposely designed to be average. Because there simply isn't enough time to deal with all the possible comprehension problems that might arise in a class of twenty-thirty students. This restriction is not necessary outside the class and that allows for far more comprehensive and authentic material to be used.

Casablanca Film Script
Pic by Author

Casablanca Film Guide
Sample Pages 4, 5, 36 & 38
Pic by Author

Term 3: Sept–Dec 2012

Homework and Classroom.

I started preparing for our third term in June, 2012. I'd decided I was no longer going to use an introductory lesson. Instead, students would receive homework in advance of watching a movie every week. I set about creating "film guides" to accompany each film. When finished, the guides contained a list of major characters, plot summary, key dialogue, vocabulary/idioms exercises, background information and any available web links. To ensure my students complete the homework, I set aside fifteen minutes before every movie for them to compare answers in pairs. This isn't an option. Students are required to take part. Any student who does not regularly take part in this element is asked to leave the course. Checking homework is important for a number of reasons: – it ensures students do the tasks (reading, listening, vocabulary) it provides them with an opportunity for speaking English, it clearly demonstrates to students the link between input and output and it teaches them that they are fundamentally responsible for their own learning.

The current film guides contain approximately thirty pages. (see below) It's not something I can throw together in a couple of hours. I do it because the students want it. At various times over the years I've asked the question: "would you like more or less homework"? The unequivocal answer has always been more. It's really quite remarkable and, given the time that I already spend on each guide, it's not necessarily something I want to hear. But it demonstrates the magic of movies. The payoff for learners in doing two, sometimes three, hours of homework is the knowledge they can watch a feature length unencumbered by issues of comprehension.

The model I've established has four components. *(student are required to be active participants in all four)*

    1: Homework   (2-3 hours per week)
    2: Check Homework (15 minutes)
    3: Watch a Movie   (90-140 minutes)
    4: Discuss a Movie (20-20 minutes)

A Typical Film Guide
  •   A list of major characters
  •   2-3 pages of background information
  •   15-20 pages dialogue   (an average of 8,000 English words)
  •   26 keywords
  •   20-30 idioms/phrasal verbs
  •   50 word plot
  •   80 mins YouTube videos

Students receive the film guide six days in advance. At home, they will encounter some words both in the dialogue and vocabulary gap-fill /idiom exercises. In class, they revisit these words again. First, as part of the homework checking exercise, then in large print as subtitles on screen as well as in audible form spoken by the actor- and in the context in which the words are used. Providing them with key dialogue in advance means comprehension is not an issue. With no distractions, they can now be completely immersed in the story world. They are there, watching and sharing in the emotions of characters. They are seeing and hearing language in context. Recalling dialogue that was recently studied, perceiving how written words are spoken and sound, and discussing the total experience in a welcoming environment afterwards. This is how language is learned.

Lastly,and importantly, cinema is not restricted to the English speaking world. Every major country has a film industry that has recored its own language and culture since the advent of sound. The model I've created–providing key dialogue and vocabulary in advance – is applicable to all languages. Italy, Spain, France, Denmark, Sweden, Turkey, Iran and Japan are all home to renowned filmmakers who have made significant contributions to world cinema. Pedro Almodóvar, Jean-Luc Godard, Ingmar Bergman, Federico Fellini, Akira Kurosawa and many, many others have helped to shape world cinema into what it is today: a diverse and dynamic field that offers language learners an incredible window into so many languages, cultures and ways of seeing the world.

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Frank Mc Girr was born in Ireland in 1965. After finishing college in 1987 he moved to London, where he lived for almost twenty years. Before moving to Germany, he completed a CELTA course at St. Giles College in Highgate, London.

He is the founder of vhsteacher.com, a website dedicated to helping English learners advance from simple direct forms of communication (B1), to speaking fluently and spontaneously on a wide variety of topics(C1). The site hosts three courses: Immersive English,The English Language Film Club and the Online Conversation Course. All three combine comprehensive homestudy with classroom/Zoom elements, and were specifically designed to ensure students receive maximum "input" and "output".

In 2011, Frank set up the first English Language Film Club–a weekly course that combines homestudy with watching and talking about classic and modern films in class. With over ten years experience, he is now a leading authority on the use of feature length films in language learning.

He is a regular presence at The Image Conference and member of The German Speakers Association. Frank holds a Fine Art Degree and a Postgraduate Diploma in Photography from Central Saint Martins College of Art.

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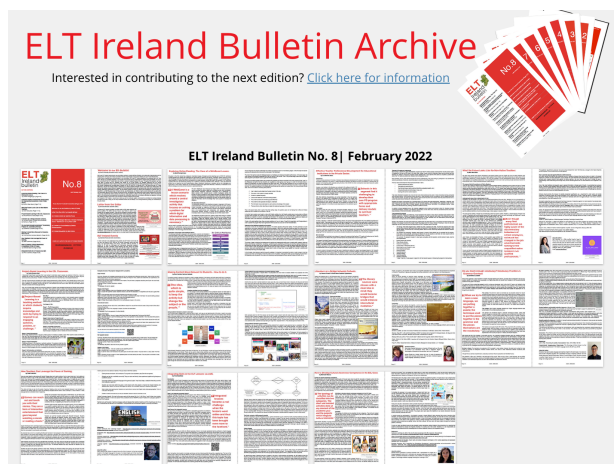
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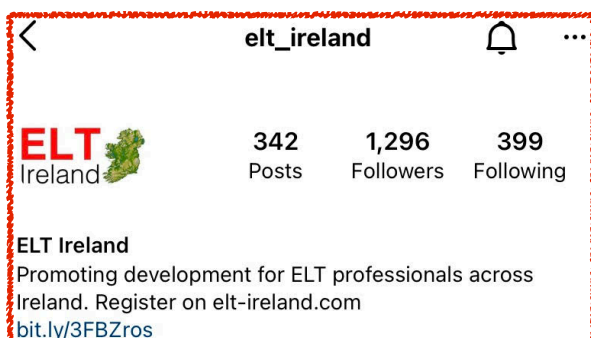
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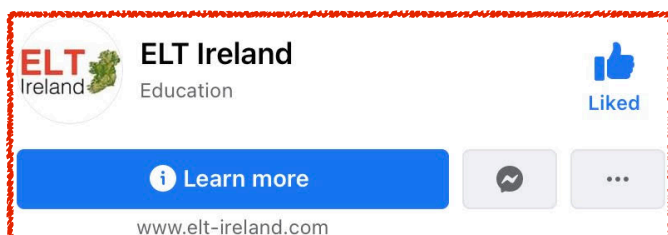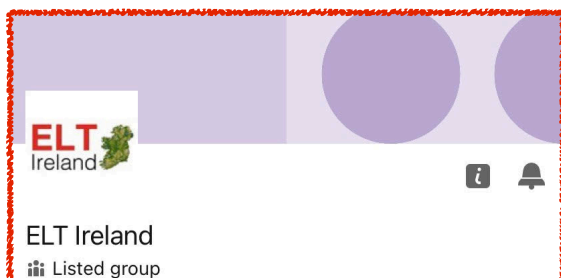
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